

CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE, PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH THE
HANDLING AND PURCHASE OF FRESH FISH.

Liseli Walker

Project Supervisor: Shirley Nicome

2010

Background: The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is an archipelagic state in the southern Caribbean, lying northeast of the South American country of Venezuela and south of Grenada in the Lesser Antilles. Its population is estimated to be 1.23 million (CIA 2010) with English being the official language. The diet on the islands is varied, with foods that are both imported and grown or made locally.

Objective: The purpose of this study was to identify consumers' knowledge, perceptions and practices of food safety issues associated with the safe handling of fish. The objectives were to (1) evaluate consumer's knowledge and perceptions to food safety issues associated with fresh fish and (2) identify consumers' self reported behaviours and practices when purchasing fresh fish.

Design: The study was conducted via a survey of consumers in Barataria and San Boucoud in Trinidad. The sample population consisted of one hundred and ten (110) male (n= 32)and female (n=77) consumers who purchased fresh fish and had achieved an age of at least twenty. The study was completed over a three week period in the month of February 2010, via a non-probability stratified sampling method. The questionnaire used had 28 items, asking questions on knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and demographic characteristics.

Results: It was found that consumers are well aware of food borne diseases and some of its symptoms. They however have limited knowledge on proper temperature management. It was also found that consumers consider fish sellers and the relevant authorities to be most responsible

for food safety. Many desire stronger regulations to ensure safe fish but believe that the authorities are not effective.

Conclusion: Respondents were seen to practice high risk activities when purchasing fish. Very little of the sample utilized cooling instruments to ensure proper temperature control for their purchase. They also purchased from vendors with unsanitary or improper conditions and from those that did not display food badges.