

ABSTRACT

The Utilization Of Starchy Fruits, Roots And Tubers Within The School Nutrition Programme

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The study focused on the feasibility of utilizing selected starchy fruits, roots and tubers (SFRT) in the School Nutrition Programme (SNP) in Trinidad from the socio-economical, nutritional and socio-cultural perspectives. Six SFRT were selected for research purposes. These were dasheen, cassava, yam, sweet potato, plantain and green banana.

The study examined the role that socio-cultural factors played on caterers' willingness to utilize these within the meal plan of the SNP. Hypotheses were formulated based upon the theoretical framework of the study and tested utilizing Chi-square statistics. A structured questionnaire was administered to 63 SNP caterers

The study found that there were significant associations between attitudinal variables related to catering operations and caterers' willingness to utilize the SFRT. These variables included attitudes towards profit changes as a result of the items' use, the ease of incorporating items, required preparation time and the reaction of the clientele (students). Overall, the highest degree of

association was found between caterers' attitude towards the ease of incorporating the items and their willingness to utilize the study's SFRT.

Economic and nutritional assessments were also conducted using the NCURT software in order to evaluate the economic and nutritional feasibility of including the study's SFRT in SNP meal plans. The results suggested that SNP meals presently offered successfully supplied stipulated allowances of nutrients, with the exception of calcium. The use of the selected SFRT served to increase the quantities of potassium, sodium, riboflavin, folacin, fibre and vitamin C provided in the meals.

The utilization of these items appeared to be economically feasible as staples in the vegetarian meal plans for the 4 – 7, and 8 – 12 age groups. However, when used as alternatives in the non-vegetarian meals, the study determined that the costing recorded for the older age range proved to be uneconomical for four (4) months of the year.

The study recommended that greater efforts and support be channeled into utilizing these items (SFRT) within the SNP meal plans. The study also suggested that attention be given to the issue of students' reaction to the use of SFRT within offered meals. Additionally, the portion sizes proposed for the incorporation of SFRT should be assessed.

Keywords: Food acceptance; consumption patterns; determinants of food patterns; nutrition and economic feasibility in food choices.