

ABSTRACT

Numerous epidemiological and intervention studies have associated consumption of these tomatoes and tomato based products with lower incidences of chronic diseases such as prostate cancer and cardiovascular diseases. This study used a self administered questionnaire to examine the consumption of tomatoes and tomato-based products in Barbados and Trinidad, evaluate consumers' awareness of tomato health benefits and evaluate consumers' knowledge of antioxidants. 40% of the study population correctly identified tomatoes as a fruit. Among the type of tomato-based products most consumed $p= 0.043$ (100% Trinidadians; 96% Barbadians), ketchup ranked the highest, 96.5% in both countries; while in beverage form, $p= 0.002$, (8% Trinidadians; 1.5% Barbadians) ranked the lowest. A greater majority of Barbadians, 30.5%, compare to 21% Trinidadians stated they were health conscious $p= 0.026$. However, the majority of the study population were not very knowledgeable on the health benefits associated with tomatoes. A significant difference, $p= 0.021$, was noted for the belief of tomatoes preventing certain cancers (19.5% Barbadians; 27% Trinidadians). 1.5% of the study population believed tomatoes are best consumed processed, $p= 0.029$, while 5% said frying in oil increase the health benefits of tomatoes. 82.5% of the study population heard of antioxidants and 31% heard of lycopene. Respondents knowledge of antioxidants came mostly from television, a significance was recorded for radio, $p= 0.030$ and family $p= 0.029$. Being health-conscious impacted on consumers' belief tomatoes prevented certain diseases. However, there is a need to educate the public on the best form of consuming tomatoes that will increase the health benefits associated with tomatoes.