



## MEDIA RELEASE

9 January, 2026

Dear Editor / Head of Department,

### **Strengthening School Nutrition Standards to Support Learning and Wellbeing**

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, has announced the introduction of stronger nutrition guidelines for foods and beverages sold and served in schools, reinforcing the Government's commitment to safeguarding the health, well-being and academic success of the nation's children.

Building on the 2017 prohibition of sugar-sweetened beverages in schools, the updated guidelines set clearer standards for snacks, meals and beverages available on school compounds.

The new measures respond to growing evidence that excessive sugar, salt, unhealthy fats, caffeine, and artificial sweeteners in children's diets increase the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and other long-term health conditions. International health agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), consistently emphasise the importance of school nutrition policies in promoting equity, learning outcomes and lifelong healthy habits.

#### **Key Features of the Updated Guidelines**

- **Prohibition of sweetened and caffeinated beverages**, including soft drinks, energy drinks, and juice drinks with added sugars.
- **Clear nutritional limits for pre-packaged snacks**, including restrictions on calories, sugar, fat, and sodium.
- **Approval of healthier beverage options**, such as plain water, unsweetened coconut water, 100% fruit juices in age-appropriate portions, and milk or plant-based alternatives with controlled sugar content.
- **Stronger standards for meals prepared or sold in schools**, encouraging balanced meals with fruits or vegetables, lean protein, and appropriate starches, using healthier cooking methods such as baking, grilling, steaming, or boiling.
- **Limits on deep-fried and high-fat foods**, alongside encouragement for iron-rich foods, legumes, vegetarian options, and culturally relevant healthy choices.
- **Restrictions on the marketing and promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages** within school environments.
- **Monitoring and compliance mechanisms**, including termly evaluations, reporting, and spot checks by District Health and Education officers.



The Ministry emphasises that nutrition is one pillar of a broader Health and Wellness in Schools framework. Alongside improved food environments, the approach promotes physical activity, health education, early screening, mental health and psychosocial support, and strong partnerships with parents, communities, and other Ministries.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health, the National Schools Dietary Services Limited, and other stakeholders, the Ministry of Education will also support:

- Vendor and concessionaire training on healthier food preparation;
- Collaboration with local farmers and suppliers to increase access to fresh produce;
- Innovation by manufacturers to develop school-friendly, compliant products; and
- Farm-to-table initiatives that encourage entrepreneurship and sustainability.

The stronger nutrition guidelines will be rolled out during the 2025/2026 academic year. Principals are responsible for sharing the guidelines with concessionaires, vendors, and Parent-Teacher Associations to support consistent implementation.

The Ministry remains confident that these measures will build on existing gains and continue to strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's education ecosystem in service of its most important asset - its children.

**END**

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