



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: **HIGH**

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services launches New Debit Card for Food Support

The months of November and December 2019 marked the commencement of distributions of the *New Debit Card* for all Food Support clients of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. This New Debit Card comes months after intense discussion with key stakeholders such as First Citizens Bank Limited, as well as meetings with the Supermarkets Association of Trinidad and Tobago. Card delivery to approved clients commenced in Tobago from November 25 and at selected TTPost outlets from Thursday 5 December 2019.

Over 24,000 households are expected to benefit from food support via the debit card system. In anticipation that they will be transitioned directly onto the new system beneficiaries were invited to become recertified during a process which took place from September 2018 to present. Following the exercise, over 14,000 persons were removed from the system, notwithstanding the numerous efforts made to contact these persons.

The card is built on a close loop system which allows only the pool of participating merchants to administer services strictly for food items. Merchants are required to acquire new card machines to facilitate the new debit card. The card has its own physical features, which allows easy management, monitoring of usage and reconciliation for both the bank and the Ministry. The card values are as follows:

Family Composition	Card Value
1 – 3 persons	\$510.00
3 – 5 persons	\$650.00
5 persons	\$800.00

The process is simple. Each customer presents the card at the cashier's register of the grocery or supermarket. Each card has an individual serial number and each client will be assigned a pin number in order to access funds once they swipe their cards.

It is the Ministry's goal to make the payments experience as seamless as possible for all clients under the Food Support Programme, which is why the Ministry is pleased to launch the new Debit Cards for simple payment at groceries, while providing convenience for customers and embracing the latest technologies to make life easier.

The Ministry looks forward to greater management, transparency and accountability for the Food Support Programme as the new Debit card system will ensure that only persons who were recertified and continue to satisfy the requirements of the programme will be transitioned to the new debit card system. It is also the Ministry's and the bank's efforts, to boost customer confidence and minimize risks consistent with industry standard best practices towards a safe, cost efficient, and accessible method of payment and strengthening the overall control and oversight framework for the Ministry.

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