

# Union-to-Union

**Building solidarity along the international banana supply chain**

Photo: Michael Eavis from Glastonbury Festival, Melvin Benn from Festival Republic and Bert Schouwenburg from BWTUC present a cheque for £74,000 to Jacqui Mackay, Banana Link's National Coordinator



## Glastonbury donation supports union organising in Latin America!

Support and coordination from the Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council (BWTUC) has helped ensure that the Banana Link Union to Union programme received a generous £74,000 of support from the Glastonbury Festival fund.

*“This generous gift from the Glastonbury festival will be used by trade unions in 6 countries in Latin America to unionise workers in the banana industry to secure an end to their exploitation and to help them negotiate with the supermarket chains in Britain to ensure that the prices paid for bananas are fair and enable them to have a decent standard of living”* says Bert Schouwenburg, BWTUC.

This BWTUC coordinated donation provides an example of how international trade union solidarity can directly contribute towards the respect of labour standards and reduction of poverty in banana exporting communities. Over the past 9 months this donation has funded the organising, legal defence and education work of eight plantation workers’ unions in Peru, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Honduras, including the costs of employing and deploying 13 trade union organisers and the equivalent of two full time lawyers. Previously, the Banana Link Union to Union programme has been supported by the Department for International Development (DfID).

On February 29th, representatives from Banana Link’s eight partner unions met in Costa Rica for the first time in 9 months to report back on the achievements and challenges of the Union to Union programme since the Glastonbury funding in June 2007 and discuss how to take this work forward over the next 6 months. The Latin American representatives were also joined by Bert Schouwenburg, of the GMB and BWTUC, and Ed Blissett and Roy Dunnett,

GMB London region Secretary and President to share ideas on ‘Union to Union’ solidarity work within the UK. Together, these union representatives discussed issues of Fairtrade, the power of multinational banana companies and supermarkets, potential campaigns and options for political lobbying at a national and international level and proposals for a Multi Stakeholder Banana Forum.

### And in the UK...

Banana Link and Battersea and Wandsworth TUC have worked in close partnership to promote the Glastonbury donation and the international solidarity that it represents in the South London area in which BWTUC organise. Recent action has been in support of the TescoPolity campaign, which calls on the Competition Commission to introduce stricter rules to curb supermarket power to ensure farmers and suppliers in the UK and overseas are treated fairly. BWTUC representatives, members of local Fairtrade groups and Banana Link staff spent their Saturdays asking passers-by and shoppers at a South London ASDA to sign campaign cards, which were then sent to the Inquiry Secretary at the Competition Commission and local MP’s. Banana Link has also been working with the BWTUC to develop education sessions for use within schools and colleges, looking at international workers’ rights issues, the role of trade unions and international solidarity. The first of these sessions have been carried out at schools in Norwich and Putney.

To find out more about the Union to Union Programme both in the UK and Latin America and how you and your trade union can get involved please contact Banana Link on [info@bananalink.org.uk](mailto:info@bananalink.org.uk) or visit [www.bananalink.org.uk](http://www.bananalink.org.uk)

# Youth organising across the Latin American region

Photo: Union to Union meeting in Costa Rica



On February 29th, Banana Link's Latin American trade union partners met for the first Union to Union meeting since October 2006 and shared their experiences of organising young plantation workers over the last 9 months of the Union to Union Programme. The meeting was hosted by our Costa Rican partners SITRAP, whose two youth committee representatives, Danny Vargas and Johanna Rodriguez, participated in the meeting and spoke about young member issues within the banana industry along with FENACLE Youth Secretary, Elias Aria Santana. Across the Latin American region over 70% of the banana,

pineapple, sugar, melon and mango plantation workforce are under the age of 30 due to the physically demanding nature of the job combined with high unemployment levels that allow employers to pick and choose the fittest and most exploitable workers. Organising young workers is therefore crucial to the current and future work of all the Latin American partner unions in the export agriculture sector.

Some of the challenges to organising young plantation workers are common across the region, such the level of apathy amongst young people and the lack of access to information on their rights and the role of trade unions within schools, colleges and workplaces. However, each country also faces specific struggles, particularly in terms of levels of repression, not only of trade union freedom but of youth participation and activism in the country as a whole. The following information therefore highlights the variety of these struggles and the work that is being done to organise and train young banana workers in each of the six countries represented in the Union to Union Programme.

**Ecuador:** Our Ecuadorian trade union partner FENACLE has been a pioneer of youth organising work within the Latin American banana industry. They have now trained over 800 young activists and have a wider network of over 3,000 young people. FENACLE have been engaging youth in political action through training, active campaigns

Photo: FENACLE young members on political march



and protests whilst also using techniques of participatory education and photo imagery to train young workers on labour rights, organisation and leadership, political and citizen participation, environmental issues and reproductive rights. Much of this work has been carried out through direct support from the Northern TUC Young Members Network and Amicus.

**Costa Rica:** Organising young workers is especially difficult for our Costa Rican partners SITRAP and SITAGAH because of the indoctrination they receive from the *Solidarismo* movement, whose promoters, funded by the employer, carry out anti-union education through talks, training sessions and videos. To overcome these advanced anti-union tactics, SITRAP has been focusing on personalised visits to individual and small groups of young workers, to supplement their youth training workshops. They have also been working with the daughters and sons of banana workers to reach out to youth before they are subjected to the *Solidarismo* campaign. SITRAP young members have also been active in the campaigns and protests against the ratification of the Central American Free-Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in Costa Rica, which promoted activism amongst thousands of young people who will suffer the impacts of CAFTA in the future.

**Peru:** Banana Link's new union partner, SITAG-Peru, has been running a series of education sessions on the history and role of trade unions in banana community schools, where most students either do, or will work in the plantations themselves or have parents and family who are banana workers. Recently, the union has had some success organising in the mango sector too. They also aim to have an exchange of young workers from Ecuador and Peru to share experiences and work towards setting up a regional network of young members to promote and organise activities such as youth events and festivals in the hope of reducing the level of apathy and lack of awareness that is currently limiting their youth organising work.

**Guatemala:** The violent repression of trade unions in Guatemala, such as the recent killings of banana union leaders in the Pacific South, greatly limits the capacity of UNSITRAGUA to organise workers, particularly the young who have grown up in fear of this anti-union discrimination and violence. UNSITRAGUA have however continued to facilitate a number of workshops for young members, inviting outside facilitators, such as specialised lawyers to speak on the rights of young people within Guatemalan and international labour law.

**Nicaragua:** FETRABACH is currently in the first stage of their youth focused organising and education work and has adopted a system of 'study circles' to assess the needs and demands of their young members. Each of their member unions now has a youth committee, with over 50% representation of young women workers. FETRABACH are now extending their organising work to the free trade zones, commercial services and domestic sectors where the majority of workers are below the age of 30 and suffer systematic violations of their labour rights.

**Honduras:** Over 850 young members have joined COSIBAH in the last 9 months, despite the struggles to overcome the great apathy amongst Honduran youth. This has been the result of an ongoing project of basic training on parliamentary procedures and government policy to promote political participation amongst their young members as well as the development of their work with students in state secondary schools and colleges, running sessions on the history and struggles of the trade union movement. COSIBAH are also running a weekly radio programme on trade union issues to reach out to young workers.

Please monitor the Union to Union section of the Banana Link website for updates on young member organising and training work across the Latin American region and find out how to support this work through the Union to Union Programme.

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## Building links with UNITE young members

As part of Banana Link's work to raise awareness of the struggles faced by young banana workers and develop young member solidarity links, we facilitated workshops in a series of UNITE regional young member seminars, part of the UNITE Young Reps Project, described by Fazia Hussain, UNITE Regional Organiser and young member:

*"One of the (Young Reps Project) initiatives recently launched was the Young Members Network, through which we invited young members to attend regional weekend seminars to find out more about Unite and how to get elected as a work place rep. Young members have been encouraged to get involved in talking to other young people about the benefits of joining the union in schools and colleges. They are also getting involved in the fight against racism*

*and fascism and with international solidarity campaigns, taking activism to another level through social networking tools such as Facebook."*

Banana Link, as an example of an international solidarity campaign working with young trade unionists, ran a workshop at each of the UNITE regional weekend seminars, providing an introduction to the issues of international trade and workers rights and providing practical examples of how to get involved in young member solidarity. As a result of the workshops, all UNITE young member participants will be added to the new Banana Link Youth Action Network.

# Join the new Banana Link Youth Action Network!!

Organising, educating and empowering the new generation of young workers is a key priority for Banana Link's Union to Union programme partners, both within Latin America and the UK.

*'We need to use the language of young people if we want to counter the message of fear used by the companies, and communicate positive messages about the role of the unions in education, social and economic improvements, culture and sport'* explains Mireya

Rodriguez, SITRAP organiser in Costa Rica.

As part of Banana Link's work to develop practical solidarity relations between young workers at either end of the banana supply chain, we have set up a new Youth Action Network. Through this network, young members in the UK can share ideas and receive updates on youth solidarity events, projects, fundraising activities, actions and campaigning.

## Here are just a few of the ways you can get involved:

- Email [info@bananalink.org.uk](mailto:info@bananalink.org.uk) to join the new Banana Link Youth Action Network.
- Order copies of our new International Young Member Solidarity leaflet for distribution within your workplace, community and other networks, to raise awareness about the situation of young banana workers.
- Ask Banana Link to provide a speaker at young member events in your region, to facilitate a workshop or to provide education materials.
- Volunteer at festivals including Glastonbury, Latitude, Reading and Leeds. The Workers Beer Company will donate the money you earn to FENACLE Young Members and Education Appeal.
- Join the new Banana Link Facebook group and get your friends to join too – visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search 'Groups' for Banana Link.
- Submit a motion on labour standards and youth membership in the Latin American banana industry to your union's 2008 youth conference. Just get in touch with the conference details and contacts and Banana Link can provide materials or a speaker.

## GMB London celebrates 4 years of solidarity and commitment

GMB London region have entered their fourth year of direct solidarity with Banana Link's Costa Rican partner union SITRAP (Union of Agricultural Plantation Workers). To celebrate this long term relationship GMB London visited Costa Rica in February 2008 to meet, for the first time, their SITRAP brothers and sisters and witness first-hand the impacts of GMB solidarity on the organising and training of banana workers on the ground. The GMB London delegation consisted of Ed Blissett (Regional Secretary), Roy Dunnett (Regional President) and Bert Schouwenburg (Regional International Officer).

During the visit, the GMB delegates visited a number of

banana and pineapple plantations on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica and met with workers to hear about the conditions they face on the plantations, the struggle to organise in the face of anti-union tactics such as *Solidarismo* and the role that international solidarity can and has played in supporting workers in their fight for the respect of labour rights in the region.

Ed Blissett reflected on the visit in an interview with *Diario Extra*, Costa Rica's leading newspaper *"Before arriving in Costa Rica I had an image of a democratic and developed country, often described as the 'Switzerland of Central America', but what I have seen in the last few days has shocked and disgusted me. The way in*



Photo: GMB London and SITRAP organisers at the GMB funded training centre, Siquirres

*which workers are treated in the Costa Rican banana industry is in many cases inhumane; we met workers who are obliged to drink contaminated water not fit for human consumption, workers who receive far from a decent and fair wage, union members who are being sacked, in violation of the basic international right to join a trade union and, in one case, when we were trying to speak to workers in a public street after they had finished work, the human resources management of the plantations removed us from the area. This treatment of workers reflects very badly on such an otherwise beautiful country.” (Diario Extra, March 1st).*

During their visit, the GMB delegation did however visit one plantation where conditions are representative of what consumers want to believe when they pick a banana off the supermarket shelves in the UK. This plantation is Ecoturismo, where a new collective bargaining agreement was signed last year for the first time in the Costa Rican banana industry for 20 years. This plantation is sending an important message to the workers, plantation owners and

banana companies of Costa Rica; that the abuse of labour rights and environmental standards is not fundamental to the production of bananas in Costa Rica but is in fact harming the industry in the long term.

GMB London have committed to continue supporting the work of SITRAP in the long term by providing an annual sum of £20,000 to cover the salaries of two SITRAP organisers and support union training, legal work and company and political lobbying. On top of this, GMB London has provided the funds for an independent scientific analysis of water samples on two plantations visited by the delegation, where workers were forced to drink contaminated water the colour of coffee. This testing will enable SITRAP to make an official claim against the company and request that the basic human right of provision of potable water is respected on the plantation, a request which the company has previously denied by providing their own scientific tests to disprove the claims.

## Irish solidarity provides decent housing for banana workers

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) have worked hard all year to raise funds for decent housing for trade union activists in Ecuador, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, where organisers face daily discrimination and often violence and live in fear of anti-union repression from employers. The decent housing programme was proposed by the Coordinating Body of Latin American Banana Workers Unions, COLSIBA, to help build houses for the activists who were forced to live in poor quality housing or cramped family homes. Recently, a new house was built for SITRAP activist, Bernardo Fallas Mora, who was sacked from the Benigna plantation for his union activities and has since become a union activist.

The Teachers’ Union of Ireland have also recently donated 1000 Euros for the building of another house. The beneficiary is Ligia Lamich Meléndez, Woman’s Officer with SITAGAH, a banana and pineapple plantation

workers’ union in northern Costa Rica. The amount is enough for her to carry out urgent repairs to her house which is in very poor condition.

*“Thank you for the great help which I have been needing so much. My house had been getting into a worse and worse state: a part of the roof has fallen in and I had to get somebody to help me lower the roof, but this means another part of the roof is now leaking. I have got holes opening up in the floor because it is so old. But now, thanks to you, my dream of being able to repair my house has become a reality. I have already started to get quotations for the materials and the work, and repairs should start in the second week of March. I thank God that people like yourselves with big hearts exist in this world.” Ligia Lamich Meléndez, SITAGAH*

In all, Irish union funds have built 12 houses - six in Ecuador and six in Costa Rica; plus one house repair also in Costa Rica. The priority now is to provide housing for three union activists in Colombia.

Photo: Bernardo Fallas Mora's house, built with funds from ICTU, SITRAP



Photo: A house built with ICTU funds for Mireya Rodriguez, SITRAP



## Scottish solidarity with FENACLE, Ecuador

The former president of the STUC, Katrina Murray, visited Ecuador as part of a Banana Link coordinated Youth Delegation in October 2006, aiming to strengthen solidarity links between unions at either end of the banana supply chain. As a result, the STUC and UNISON Scotland have generously donated £3,000 to Banana Link's Ecuadorian trade union partner, FENACLE. In Ecuador, as throughout Latin America, banana workers suffer appalling conditions including exposure to toxic chemicals and wages well below the cost of living. For a number of years FENACLE has been leading the struggle to organise, educate and empower plantation workers on the ground to defend their rights.

This funding will help to increase FENACLE's capacity to provide legal support to workers whilst also lobbying for changes to Ecuadorian labour laws which currently act as

a major obstacle to organising workers. The support has also been enabling further development of the FENACLE Youth programme, organising and training young workers, who make up 75% of the banana workforce in Ecuador.

Banana Link would like to take this opportunity to thank STUC and UNISON Scotland, and in particular Katrina Murray, on behalf of FENACLE, for their generous donation to support this work. As Guillermo Touma, President of FENACLE, states *"Thank you to our trade union friends at the STUC and UNISON Scotland for this continued solidarity and support, increasing both our morale and organisational strength so that we can ensure that workers of all ages are no longer exploited. With this support we can continue organising and defending our companeros, the agricultural workers in the world's major banana exporting country, Ecuador."*

### FENACLE President elected to the Constituent Assembly

Guillermo Touma, President of FENACLE, has been elected to the new Constituent Assembly in Ecuador, charged with re-writing the country's Constitution. This opportunity to be directly involved in proposals for national labour law reform has provided new hope for FENACLE, whose organising work has been severely restricted by anti-union labour law in the country. As part of this process, a two-day workshop was held in March 2008 by FENACLE, with support from Banana Link and ICTUR, to explore options for how existing laws could be re-drafted, or new laws introduced, that enable more effective implementation of core international labour standards, in particular the right to organise and to freedom of association. The Labour Minister and President of the National Assembly participated in the workshop, alongside trade union lawyers and labour law experts from across Latin America, who have together produced a labour law reform proposal for agreement in the Ecuadorian Constituent Assembly.

### Dole: moving beyond an anti-union corporate culture?

For 25 years now Dole has been one of the major supporters of the *Solidarismo* movement in Costa Rica. The ideology of *Solidarismo* rejects the existence of any conflict of interest between employers and workers and actively seeks to rid the banana (and now the pineapple) industry of independent trade unions who were very strong until the early 1980s. The movement's "social school", the Escuela Juan XXIII – which receives generous financial backing from Dole, Del Monte and national companies – aggressively advocates an alternative 'model' to free trade unions and collective bargaining.

In practice though, in this model where 'permanent workers' committees' sign so-called 'direct agreements' on wage-rates and conditions with the companies, workers cannot freely express their grievances, defend their rights or negotiate collective labour contracts. The system is specifically designed to ensure that the unions never gain their former strength. This long-standing anti-union culture in Dole - and its Costa Rican subsidiary in particular

- makes the company's attitude and practices very difficult to shift.

Since the onslaught on the independent trade unions in Costa Rica that started in 1982 with the help of a generous donation from the US Embassy, the solidarismo set-up in Dole's own banana and pineapple plantations and those from which it buys (around 60 in total) means that most workers do not dare take the step of joining a trade union. They fear losing their jobs, being harassed, put onto the worst-paid jobs and black-listed from working in any other plantation. The 'new' message from the company to its workers since the framework agreement signed by the Dole Costa Rica subsidiary and COSIBA-CR (the coordinating body of four Costa Rican banana workers unions) last March is: "you're free to join the union, but we don't recommend it"!

There are many Dole workers and many more in their suppliers' plantations, including those met by the GMB delegation in February, who are afraid to join, even if they know it's the only way to improve miserable wages and harsh conditions. They really need our support if they are not to succumb to the company's pressure.

In the light of this, and with support from Norwegian fruit importing company Bama, COSIBA-CR has undertaken a series of evaluation workshops with their members of

what is working and what is not working in the March 2007 agreement with the Standard Fruit Company de Costa Rica. In the latest meeting with the company, the unions called for the company to set up meetings with some of its key suppliers (like the big national fruit company Grupo Acon that supplies British supermarkets), but no date has yet been fixed.

Although there are collective bargaining agreements on Dole plantations in Honduras and on some Colombian plantations, in Guatemala the company admits the area where they source bananas is "out of control". The large new Pacific Coast banana plantations are literally a no-go area for police, let alone unions. Dole has admitted that they feel unable to pressure their Guatemalan supplier companies on their behaviour. In Ecuador, Dole's key Latin American supplier, FENACLE has sent proposals to Dole asking them to consider collective bargaining for all of their plantations, but Dole-Ubesa claimed not to have received the written proposals. Now they have the proposal, the silence is deafening.

The continent-wide meeting of managers and union leaders that Dole and COLSIBA agreed at a meeting in Paris last October – and which the company is now keen to set up – pends a breakthrough in Peru.

## Legal triumph for banana workers over corporate giant Dole

Photo: Nicaraguan workers marching to Managua. Credit: Giorgio Trucchi (REL-UITA)



Trials took place last August to hold multinational fruit company Dole Foods Company Inc accountable for the impacts of pesticide use on the health of workers. The historic case marked the first time that an American company has gone

before a jury to face accusations that a pesticide has poisoned workers in plantations in another country. The chemical in question is Nemagon (DBCP), banned in the US since the late 1970's but used by US fruit companies until the mid-to-late 1980's on their overseas plantations, with reported effects including male sterility, birth defects and damages to the liver and kidneys. Finally, on November 15 2007, a Los Angeles jury found Dole guilty of rendering 5 Nicaraguan banana plantation workers sterile with the pesticide DBCP in the 1970's and ordered the company to pay punitive damages of \$2.5 million, representing a massive success in bringing the company to justice and giving hope to the thousands of other workers affected by DBCP. The recovery for plantation workers now totals over \$6 million against Dole and chemical manufacturers 'Dow' and 'Amvac Chemical Corporation'. The jury also found that Dole fraudulently concealed the toxicity and sterilisation dangers of the DBCP pesticide from the plantation workers.

The jury rejected claims that the "new Dole" is now a more socially responsible corporation and therefore should not be so harshly penalised. Duane Miller, the attorney representing the former workers, has said the company improperly applied the pesticide and used it in amounts exceeding guidelines. Even after it was revealed that Dole

workers in Costa Rica had infertility problems caused by DBCP, Dole never had a program to test its employees in Nicaragua. Dole continues to use the dangerous chemical Paraquat in their plantations long after their competitors have stopped using it due to the reported serious danger of brain damage to field workers.

Nicaragua's chief prosecutor said that the government would support the cases that workers are pursuing against fruit and pesticide companies and that the multinational corporations should assume their responsibility for the human and environmental damage that they have caused.

Attorney Juan J. Dominguez stated that, *"This case has set precedent for the thousands of other sterilised workers from around the world that for over 30 years have been denied justice, and provides an impetus for responsible global commerce, and for transnational corporate responsibility."*

Unfortunately however this precedent was short lived as, on 7th March, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge, Victoria G. Chaney reversed the verdicts on the punitive damages awarded by the jury in this case. The fact that Dole was using, rather than marketing the pesticide and that the resultant injuries were caused in a foreign country, and occurred more than 30 years ago, were stated as the main reasons for this ruling. It is hoped that this final verdict will not deter future cases from being brought before US courts.

A recently published Spanish book, "El Parque de las Hamacas", documents the workers' struggle for justice on this issue, with a focus on the 2002 march of over 2000 Nicaraguan workers to the National Assembly building in the capital, Managua, many of whom remained camped outside the Assembly in protest to this day.

# Workers strike over labour standards in Peru

The rapid growth of SITAG-Peru members in Dole subcontracting firm, SERAGRO.S.A has come to a halt as the company issued 40 letters informing workers that they were to be sacked for participating in a legal strike on January 16th. Of these 40 threats, 16 workers were sacked including SITAG-Peru Women's Officer Lina Raymundo. SITAG-Peru, with support from COLSIBA, has been in negotiation with Dole to ensure the rightful re-instatement of these workers but the latest news from a meeting with Dole on March 15th is that the company is still refusing to reinstate the workers and instead has offered dismissal pay. SITAG-Peru are doubtful that the workers will accept this offer, however, lack of income since the strike in January is reducing workers capacity to continue the fight for their jobs and right to organise. Money has been raised to temporarily support the families of the sacked workers through a 'solidarity collection' but this initial support will soon run out.

The current situation for Dole banana workers in Peru is just one example of the impact of company practices on labour rights and trade union freedom. The new Peruvian government has strengthened its alliances with trans-national companies, offering them room for manoeuvre

with tariffs and taxes and therefore repressing the social movement. The new Cabinet disregarded the calls for change from nearly 70% of Peruvians who disapprove of Alan García's rule and the government's close links with the previous governmental regime. This means that there continues to be a unfair distribution of wealth and power in Peru, as the same groups of families and businesses, who co-governed with the previous president Alberto Fujimori, actually benefit from the rise in prices of basic commodities, the lack of decent jobs and the decline in quality of public services (in areas such as health and education), whereas the majority of the population suffer.

In this context, SITAG-Peru continues the struggle for the respect of labour rights in the Peruvian banana industry. SITAG-Peru has also been working to build membership in mango plantations and a local mango juice factory. They are currently developing a campaign, with the support of the national union confederation, CGTP, to get the labour ministry to commit to sending labour inspectors to all of the agro-industrial plantations in Peru, to enable a full assessment of the extent of labour rights abuses within this sector.

## Guatemala: challenging impunity for killers of trade unionists

Guatemala is one of the most dangerous places in the world for trade unionists, but in the last year, after years of preparatory work, national union UNSITRAGUA successfully established the first plantation union, SITRABANSUR, in the lawless Pacific South. However, within days of the official announcement of the union's registration in mid-November, Frutera Internacional, a Chiquita supplier, sacked all 24 founders of the union. They were told that their lives were under threat if they continued efforts to organise and that they would not be employed in other plantations. Even the Interior Ministry called on local police to provide protection for the sacked workers whose lives were threatened.

Since then, five people in the country have been killed due to their activities as trade union leaders. In September 2007 SITRABI union (Del Monte banana workers) leader, Marco Tulio Ramirez Portelo was shot dead, and just four weeks ago the daughter of the General Secretary

of SITRABANSUR was raped by armed men. On 2nd March, Miguel Angel Ramirez, one of the founders of SITRABANSUR, was killed.

Pressure must be put on the Guatemalan government to ensure that the people responsible for these killings are brought to justice and the systematic violations of labour rights are put to a stop. As a result of a previous international campaign led by the IUF, EUROBAN and COLSIBA, the new Guatemalan president, Alvaro Colom, promised to take action so that the previous murder of SITRABI union leader Marco Tulio Ramirez is investigated by the authorities. Political pressure is needed to get EU governments to criticise the Guatemalan government for their lack of action on these violent and shocking cases of trade union repression and ensure that Alvaro Colom sticks to his commitments to end impunity and violence in Guatemala.

### Take action

1) In your own words, please write to President Alvaro Colom asking him to act swiftly to prevent further violence against SITRABANSUR founders and members in the Olga Maria plantation.

Send to: [cbarrientos@presidencia.gob.gt](mailto:cbarrientos@presidencia.gob.gt)

Please also send a copy to the US embassy, as virtually all Guatemalan bananas are sold in the US market: [guatemalaCRI@state.gov](mailto:guatemalaCRI@state.gov)

2) Write to Sr Mario Mena, representative of Chiquita subsidiary COBIGUA, asking him - in the face of a rapidly deteriorating security situation and in the framework of the regional trade union rights agreement between Chiquita,

COLSIBA and UITA/IUF - to transmit to the company's supplier that it is completely unacceptable for Chiquita brand bananas to be sourced from a plantation with such an appalling record of violence towards employees, who are simply exercising their constitutional right to form a trade union.

Sr. Mario Mena's email address is: [mmena@chiquita.com](mailto:mmena@chiquita.com)

Please CC your email to: [info@bananalink.org.uk](mailto:info@bananalink.org.uk)

Contact Banana Link for more information and monitor the Banana Link website to support any further call of action from our Guatemalan trade union partners to end this violence against their fellow union leaders and bring the perpetrators to justice.

This bulletin is published as part of our Union-to-Union programme, to develop further solidarity between Latin American banana workers at one end of the supply chain and, at the other end, you - trade union members and consumers in the UK. We can provide multiple copies of the bulletin for distribution within your union.

### Banana Link

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