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Banana Trade News Bulletin

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EDITORIAL

WORKING WITH ORGANISED WORKERS IS MORE PRODUCTIVE

In Colombia there is an interesting phenomenon which the whole industry should be taking seriously: banana productivity has grown in tandem with the strength of the independent plantation workers' union. A single trade union, SINTRAINAGRO, now counts 95% of the workers employed on Urabá's 340 plantations in its membership. It has a rolling, annually re-negotiated collective agreement with the employers, who are grouped together in the Colombian Banana Producers' Association, Augura. Despite a history of terrible violence and exploitation, employee-employer relations are now second to none in the industry. On top of the industry-wide union contract in Urabá, a new environmental and social programme called *Banatura*, jointly agreed between the employers and the union, is being implemented on the ground.

Colombian producers will be the first to admit that they cannot hope to further increase productivity over this decade unless they go on developing the relationship of mutual respect and fairness which is at heart of Urabá's emergence as a beacon of social hope. If a strong union with a diverse range of practical development programmes in the banana communities of the region did not exist, it would have to be invented...; assuming that the goal is a banana trade which moves towards commonly agreeable ethical principles and towards a genuinely sustainable trade.

When, in 1998 at the first International Banana Conference, Augura President Fernando Devis spoke of the need for an 'ethical' banana chain from the field to the plate, he meant what he said; the fruits of his and his successor's labours in that direction are there for all to see who make the trip to Urabá. What has not been fulfilled is the other half of the bargain to which Devis also referred in Brussels: the need for the top half of the chain to 'get ethical', i.e. after the

banana gets to Turbo or Santa Marta, or Guayaquil, or wherever.

The companies who control the trade from Latin American and Caribbean ports to the markets of the North and the Northern supermarket chains who put the fruit in consumers' shopping baskets have found criticisms of their trading practices harder to deal with than criticisms of their environmental performance. Nor have they, on the whole, learned the 'Colombian social lesson': respect for the crucial role of labour brings reward for both parties, employers and employed.

The "Raising the Banana Standard" conference organised by Banana Link at the end of September in London was an opportunity for the industry to contribute to these debates and to take further steps in an ethical direction. One of the key debates which the conference catalysed was about the future roles of the emerging plethora of voluntary social standards as opposed to - or as a complement to - governmental and inter-governmental regulation.

In the wake of real potential success stories like the recent agreement between Chiquita, the Latin American Banana Workers' Union Coordination COLSIBA and the International Union of Food and Agricultural Workers (IUF), it is to be hoped that the industry will see that its best chance of securing a sustainable future is through a dialogue of equals with the people on whom it depends to do the hardest jobs in the banana chain. It is simply not 'sustainable' - in anybody's book - to base a business on economic injustice ... And some of the solutions may not be as traumatic for companies as they might first appear.

ISSUES

COLSIBA, IUF AND CHIQUITA SIGN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT

In June 2001 a workers' rights framework agreement on "Freedom of Association, Minimum Labour Standards and Employment in Latin American Banana Operations" was signed between the Coordination of Latin American Banana Workers' Unions (COLSIBA), the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) and Chiquita Brands International at the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Chiquita have agreed to respect core ILO conventions, including the rights of workers to freely choose to join an independent and democratic trade union of their choice and to bargain collectively. The agreement explicitly covers Chiquita's suppliers, contract growers and joint venture partners.

A joint IUF/COLSIBA/Chiquita Review Committee is to meet twice yearly to oversee the application of the agreement and review any potential areas of concern.

The agreement follows years of struggles between the unions and Chiquita, and is welcome potential for change in the company's attitude to its workers. It is expected that this will lead to improvements on the ground for banana workers.

The agreement can be read on the IUF website <http://www.iuf.org>

BANANAS PAVE THE WAY BEYOND QATAR

On 14th November in Doha, after months of uncertainty, the EU and ACP finally succeeded in getting agreement from fellow WTO members that bananas and other agricultural exports could continue to benefit from zero-tariff access to the EU market. Governments of Latin American banana-producing countries had blocked the agreement because of fears that they would end up paying higher tariffs than at present for getting their bananas into Europe come 2006 when the EU is committed to converting all existing banana quota and licensing arrangements into a single tariff.

In exchange for an agreement to two waivers – under Articles I and XIII of WTO rules – the ACP accepted that the Latin Americans should have the right to ask for a suspension of the waiver if the EU reduced market access for Latin American fruit.

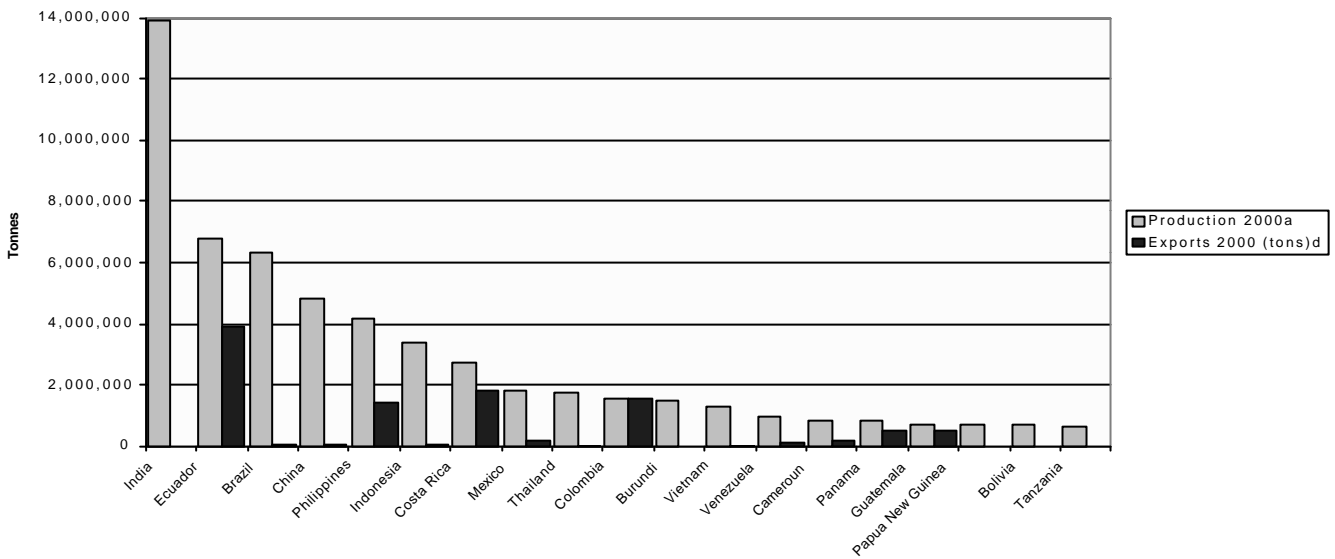
The waiver of Article I means that all the products given special treatment under the Cotonou Agreement between the ACP and EU can continue to have free access until 2008, unless the Latin Americans request arbitration at the WTO; whilst the Article XIII waiver means that the EU can go ahead and implement the second phase of its latest banana regime reform in the new year, giving traders of ACP bananas exclusive duty-free access to a (reduced) quota of 750,000 tonnes.

The ACP waiver issue was not originally on the

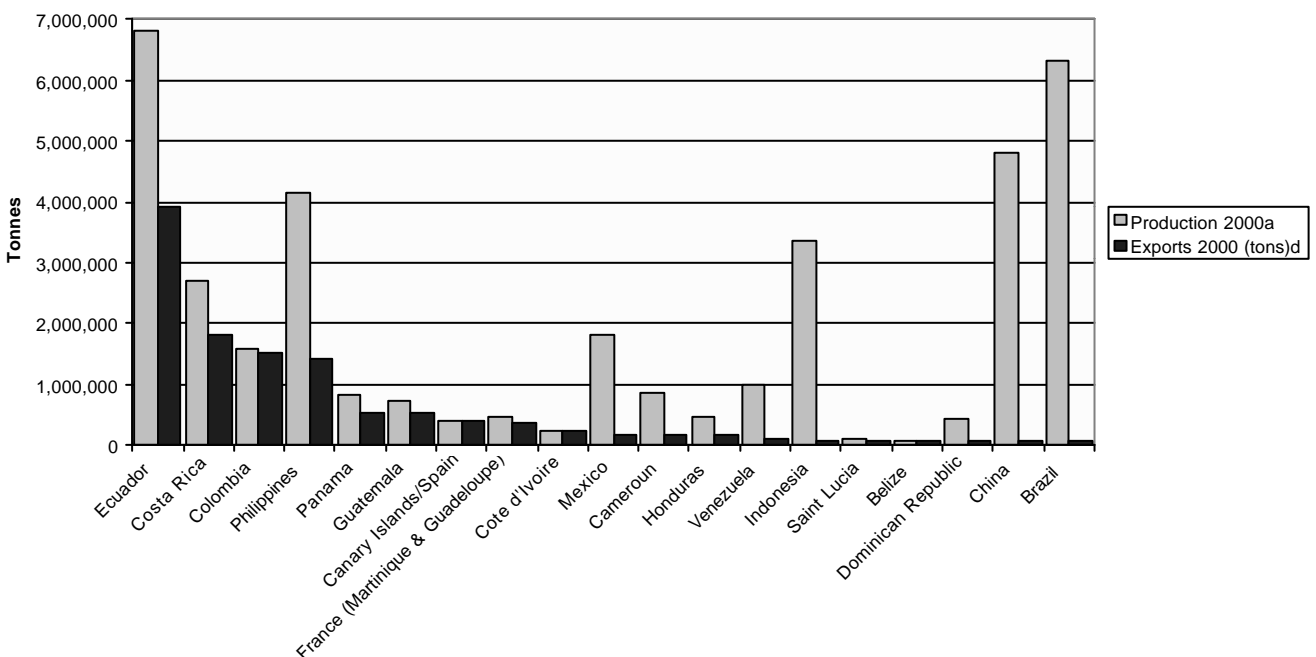
agenda of the 4th WTO Ministerial conference in Qatar, but a few days before the event the ACP issued a statement saying that they would block attempts by the rich countries (including the EU) to initiate a whole new round of trade liberalisation negotiations unless the waivers were agreed. With agreement at the eleventh hour (as has become customary for high-level banana deals), the road from Doha towards a new WTO round is now open.

Sources: *Inside US Trade*, Washington, 15/11/01; ACP Secretariat press release, Brussels, 07/11/01.

Top 20 banana producers and their exports



Top 20 banana exporters and their production



Source: FAO 2001

PRODUCERS' STRIKE BRINGS RESULTS IN ECUADOR

After 11 days of strike in August - which meant the complete blocking of Puerto Bolívar, losses in the region of \$27 million, and one death from live ammunition during the clashes - the negotiations between banana producers, government and exporters reached a final agreement.

On 4th September, the 'Banana Fideicomiso' contract was signed including a court request to guarantee the payment of the official \$2.90 price per box of bananas to producers. All payments for bananas bought from the producers by the exporters must now be made through National Financial Corporation, CFN, which will in turn deposit the money in the producers bank accounts. The *Superintendencias de Compañías* then has a couple of days to ratify such an agreement. The trust was expected to be implemented with effect from November 12th. It seems however, that out of more than 5,800 banana growers and 10-15 banana exporting companies, only around 200 growers and one exporting company had registered themselves at the Trust by week 44.

The Vice-President of the National Banana Association (ANBE), Simón Cañarte Terán, stated that the text of the agreement has been accepted and that exporters will abide by it in order to sell the fruit.

The El Oro Banana Association, made up of medium- and small-sized independent producers had, for a long time, been complaining that the banana exporting and marketing companies were not paying the official price. Segundo Solano, President of the local El Guabo producers' association, asserts that a small or medium producer spends about \$1.80/box on chemicals, fertilizers and packing, excluding workers wages and taxes. Thus, when exporters are paying such low prices as \$1.20 per box, profits were non-existent.

It's worth mentioning that the producers' strike had the support of some plantation workers, who argue that if the producer can earn more, so can they. Such was the case at the medium-sized La Rosita farm near Pasaje, where the workers participated in the strike whilst receiving full wages. Port workers however, had no financial support throughout the strike.

Revenue from Ecuador's top export products, crude oil and bananas, declined over the past eight months compared with the same period in 2000. Revenues from bananas fell from \$590.1 million to \$549.3 million.

Source: *El Expreso*, Ecuador 4.9.01, *El Comercio*, Ecuador 23.08.01; *Sopisco News Wk 43/01*, 44/01

PANAMA: UNION REACHES PACT WITH CHIQUITA

Panamanian banana workers signed an agreement in mid October with the Puerto Armuelles Fruit Co., a division of Chiquita Brands, averting the loss of more than 1000 jobs, a union official said. Leader of the union SITRAPAFCO, Edgar Williams said, '*The important thing about this agreement is the peace and tranquillity it will bring to the banana industry*', referring to the recent firings of hundreds of workers and the threat to withdraw from Puerto Armuelles, a region in which the economy depends upon banana production.

Under the terms of the accord, Puerto Armuelles Fruit Co. agreed not to fire 1350 workers and will give recently fired employees (400 workers were recently sacked) first preference for any new jobs. The accord also requires workers to adopt new methods of picking and packing so that the bananas are in a better condition when they leave port.

A month ago, the company halted exports of Chiquita bananas from Puerto Armuelles due to the quality of fruit not being high enough. Chiquita also stated that the high production costs at the plantations have cost the company millions of dollars.

Source: *Associated Press 22/10/01*

EU PROGRESS ON TRADE, LABOUR AND ENVIRONMENT LINKAGE

The European Union's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) offers trade benefits to 90 developing countries, especially to those in Asia. Changes adopted by the Commission in mid-July aim to simplify the terms of the preferences offered and to establish extra incentives for those meeting core ILO-enshrined labour standards. Commissioners Pascal Lamy (Trade and External Relations) and Anna Diamatopoulou (Employment and Social Affairs) stated that: "*(EU) citizens consider that there is a need to establish an equitable global economic system that promotes social development and fundamental rights. The current mechanisms of global governance are not up to this task. Global governance of the market has developed faster than social governance. Our task is to rebalance the system with a view to promoting social development and ensuring globalisation that benefits every human being and all countries.*"

With the new GSP, initially fixed for 2002 to 2004, countries which respect fundamental

social rights and can ensure sustainable management of the environment will enjoy better access to the EU market. The so-called 'drug regime' offering extra preferences to the Andean and Asian producing countries was also prolonged for another 3 years. A month later the European Commission published a much-heralded Green Paper on Corporate Social Responsibility (see p.16) which is open to comments by 31st December. The Green Paper is due to be debated, revised and adopted by the Council of Ministers by spring 2002.

Sources: *EU Communiqués*, Brussels, 12/06 and 18/07/01; *Financial Times*, 14/06.

FLO PROPOSES SPECIAL INCENTIVES FOR FAIR TRADE

In a letter to the European Commission in June, the Bonn-based Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO) proposed that extra GSP preferences be offered to countries exporting Fairtrade-labelled products into the EU market. *"Promoting Fairtrade through the GSP system is a public-private partnership par excellence. We therefore call on the Council to include the appropriate regulations in its proposal to provide FT-labelled products duty-free access to the EU as of January 1st 2002."* The Commission is yet to respond. Bananas are the second most important FT-labelled product in volume terms; and Britain is now the largest market for Fairtrade bananas.

Source: *EFTA Advocacy Newsletter*, Maastricht, 07/01, available at www.eftafairtrade.org

DEBT FOR SANCTIONS SWAP PROPOSAL

Ecuador has proposed to the World Trade Organisation that it should swap the right to sanctions against the European Union as a result of the banana trade wars in exchange for reduction in its debt. Ecuador won the right to impose sanctions of US\$201million annually, but was unable to implement the right as to do so would raise the price of goods imported from Europe paid by Ecuadorian consumers.

Source: *El Universo* 25/10/01
<http://www.eluniverso.com/informab.asp?txtid=199714>
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EU LICENCE FRAUD CASE DRAGS ON

False banana import licences were used at customs clearance for bananas from South and Central America, reports the European anti-fraud office (OLAF) following joint checks by OLAF and the Italian and Belgian authorities, within an administrative and criminal framework.

Investigations have been extended to several other EU states (France, Portugal and Spain). So far it has been established that between early 1998 and 2000 at least 160,000 tonnes of bananas were imported covered by false French licences, and a further 60,000 tonnes covered by false Spanish licences.

Source: *OLAF Activity Report*, 01/06/00 to 31/05/01
http://europa.eu.int/comm/anti_fraud/reports/olaf/2001/en.pdf

GUATEMALA RETAINS GSP PREFERENCES

The US Trade Representative, Robert B Zoellick, has announced that Guatemala is to retain its trade benefits under the Generalised System of Preferences despite calls from trade unions to suspend them due to labour rights violations. The USTR claims that during the review of eligibility for GSP benefit, Guatemalan officials worked constructively to produce meaningful advances in labour law and practices. These included (1) a trial and conviction in March 2001 of those who violently intimidated SITRABI leaders in October 1999; (2) a package of reforms to the country's labour law and practices aimed at meeting obligations to the ILO conventions; and (3) the facilitated resolution of a labour dispute involving Del Monte banana workers.

However, workers rights groups have expressed anger at the USTR's decision. US/LEAP claim that USTR fails to report that (1) those convicted went free after paying a fine while the victims had to flee Guatemala for their own safety, (2) the labour code package did not make Guatemalan labour law ILO compliant and (3) the resolution of the Del Monte dispute was not thanks to the intervention of the Guatemalan government but due to the intervention of the International Union of Foodworkers. *'This bodes ill for the Bush Administration's promises to use a "toolbox" of mechanisms as a substitute for including effective workers rights enforcement provisions in multilateral trade agreements such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas'* said Stephen Coats, Executive Director of US/LEAP. *'Today in Guatemala workers feel abandoned by the US government while those who violate worker rights and commit violence with impunity are no doubt slapping each other on the back.'*

Source: USTR press release 31/5/01, US/LEAP press release 1/6/01 & newsletter 08/01

EU/PAKISTAN: "TRADE IS A WEAPON OF PEACE"

The EU will withdraw its request to the WTO for a waiver for GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) in order to include Pakistan in the list of beneficiary countries. The European Commission presented a comprehensive package of trade measures designed to significantly improve access for Pakistani exports to the EU. The first measure, under the EU's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme, would include Pakistan in the special regime for certain countries combating drugs. Though falling short of a Free Trade Agreement, Pakistan will benefit through having the best possible access to the EU (specifically trade in clothing and textiles, which account for 75% of exports to the EU), under the GSP scheme for countries combating drugs. Announcing the package, EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy said *"We have made this negotiation a top priority because Pakistan is in an exceptional situation... Trade is a weapon of peace. Through trade and the fostering of greater economic ties with Pakistan, the EU can contribute to alleviating in some measure its current difficulties."*

Source: European Commission press release 23/10/01
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/bilateral/prpak171001.htm>

COLOMBIA: AGREEMENT TO DOUBLE EXPORTS

In Colombia an export competition agreement has been reached by producers and the national, departmental and municipal governments, the objective of which is the promotion of production and increased banana exports. For the first time, the business sector is tying the success of one of its campaigns to the active participation of its workers - in this case represented by SINTRAINAGRO, the agricultural workers' union. UNIBAN - a leading national producer and exporter - had already started to develop a Social and Environmental Programme (Banatura), to integrate social, environmental and technical trends in more than 270 farms in the Urabá region. The four key aims are: improving the quality of life of 15,000 workers; improving fruit quality; decreasing production costs by 20% and selling 120 million boxes of the fruit to the US, Europe and Asia by 2010.

Source: *El Colombiano*, 07/08/01

BANANAS IN NEXT BIG GENOME PROJECT

A global consortium of publicly funded institutes have announced plans to sequence the banana genome within the next five years. The Global Musa Genomics Consortium, led by the International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP) are hoping to use the new genetic data to enable farmers to grow bananas that are able to resist Black Sigatoka as well as other diseases and pests.

The scientists are intending to sequence the genes of a wild banana from East Asia which should contain useful genes that could be added to edible varieties. According to Emile Frison, director of INIBAP, the consortium will focus on discoveries that will benefit the small farmers who grow 85% of the world's bananas, mostly for their own consumption, and added that *'one rule for joining the consortium is that any invention developed through the project and protected by patent will be made available through a royalty-free licence'*.

Some NGOs have given a cautious welcome to the development. *'The establishment of a public research initiative is welcome'* said Antonio Hill of Oxfam, but added that researchers should examine beforehand the socio-economic impacts of new varieties to ensure they don't end up damaging the livelihoods of the people they were intending to help.

Sources: *Future Harvest Press Release*, 20/07/01, *New Scientist* 18/07/01

HONDURAS: HURRICANE MICHELLE WREAKS MORE HAVOC

Once again, the Northern Honduran and Guatemalan Caribbean coastal banana zones have been struck by climatic disaster. Most affected are Chiquita workers' housing and the trade unions' infrastructure around La Lima in Honduras. Chiquita estimates that 10% of its Honduran production has been destroyed in the storm at the end of October, just 3 years after Mitch destroyed the regional economy completely. Dole says its plantations in the

Aguan valley were not affected by Hurricane Michelle. The torrential rains and subsequent flooding drove hundreds of Chiquita workers and their families out of their homes, and it may take up to 6 months for the plantations they work on to be functioning normally again. The offices of the Honduran Coordination of Banana and Agri-Food Workers' Unions (COSIBAH) and of the Women's Secretariat of regional union coordinating body, COLSIBA, were completely under water by 1st November.

Until the disaster, the government had been expecting that export levels would reach the same levels as before Hurricane Mitch in late 1998. Trade Minister, Oscar Kapaty, predicted 2002 exports would reach 30 million boxes (c.550,000 tonnes).

Sources: COSIBAH, La Lima, Honduras; SOPISCO Wk 46/01

HURRICANE IRIS HITS BELIZE - 3/4 OF THE BANANA INDUSTRY DAMAGED

Packing 149 miles per hour winds with gusts to almost 200 miles per hour, Hurricane Iris slammed into the southern coast of Belize just north of Monkey River Village on October 8th, costing Belize over 500 million dollars in economic losses, and leaving at least 22 people dead, 8 missing, 38 injured and 13,000 homeless. The southern belt is the major economic belt for banana, shrimp, rice and corn.

The banana industry suffered immense damage - approximately 76% - resulting in about \$50 million dollars of losses to an industry that is one of Belize's most important income and foreign exchange earners. The majority of workers on the banana farms are migrant workers from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. It has greatly affected the banana workers and the fledging unionisation process on the plantations.

It is expected that the number of people affected and the financial damages will rise as villages and the agricultural losses have been assessed. While sugar remains Belize's chief crop, the banana industry is the country's largest employer.

Houses have been totally destroyed and roofings blown away. Urgent requirements are medication, food clothing and building materials, and the National Trade Union Congress of Belize has sent an appeal for assistance.

Please send all contributions to: National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB), P.O. Box 2359, Belize City, Belize Phone: 501 2 71596 Fax: 501 2 72864 Email: ntucb@btl.net

Source: NTUCB 15/10/01; The Associated Press 10/10/01

BELIZE: FORUM AGREEMENT SHORT-LIVED

In June 2001 six workers from Mayan King Farm Ltd who were leading efforts to sign up members to an existing, recognised trade union, the Christian Workers' Union, were fired. This came just three months after owners attending the Belize Banana Forum publicly acknowledged that workers have the right to join a union.

With the support of the Belizean NGO SPEAR and the National Trade Unions Congress of Belize, these workers have taken their case to the Supreme Court where it is awaiting a hearing. Meanwhile, the workers have won an injunction against the farm owner who had attempted to evict them. This is the first time that such a legal proceeding has been taken against a banana owner in Belize. A successful outcome in the case would give a tremendous boost to the confidence of those workers risking their livelihoods to organise for better conditions.

To support the workers send a message to Fyffes (Fax: 00 353 42 35451) asking them to implement their own code of practice by ensuring that the workers on the farms they buy from are free to organise without the fear of reprisal

Source: Banana Watch, Ireland; Christian Workers' Union/NTUCB, Belize City 06/01

SUSTAINABLE BANANA VINEGAR HITS MARKET

The Sustainable Banana Project on the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica has now begun working with the growers association ACAPRO to produce organic banana vinegar and organic dried bananas. The aim of the project is to educate tourists and consumers about conventional and organic farming methods and to earn extra money for the growers' organisation. In the following months they are hoping to get a second and larger drier that can produce greater numbers of fruit and aim to train families on how to make vinegar and dried bananas so that the project can continue into the future. Contact the Sustainable Banana Project for more information.

Source: The Sustainable Banana Project, Apdo 300 2050, San Pedro, San Jose, Costa Rica

NICARAGUA: A LICENCE TO GO TO COURT

Chiquita Brands International, the worlds largest banana producer, has sued its closest rival Dole Food for failing to transfer import licences to

Chiquita's distributor in the EU. Chiquita claims that its distributor, NV Bananic International, is entitled to receive import licences for about 4.2 million boxes of bananas until the 2005. In a first settlement in October Chiquita has received 2.6 million boxes-worth of licences. Chiquita claimed that Dole's 'sole justification' for not transferring the licences is that the banana trade rules are now 'radically different' since the apparent resolution of the US-EU trade dispute and so Dole claimed they were excused from the earlier agreement with Bananic. The suit's allegations also included intentional interference with contractual relations, interference with prospective economic advantage and unfair competition. The legal proceedings between the two companies over the remaining disputed licences are set to continue.

Source: Bloomberg, Los Angeles 2/8/01; ATC/TRABANIC, Chinandega 11/01

LIBYA SECURES MOZAMBIQUE SUPPLY AND MAKES AN OFFER TO THE CARIBBEAN

Banana farmers in Mpumalanga and Northern Province in Mozambique have sent their first batch of bananas to Libya in a bid to secure a new overseas market. The 45,000 cartons of bananas were sent on May 30th after Libya approached the association with a demand for 100,000 cartons per month. *'If they are happy with the quality of our product we will sign a long term contact with them'* said the manager of the Banana Growers Association, Wikus Joubert. He said the deal would challenge farmers to meet international standards and also created job opportunities.

Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi has also made an offer to buy up all the bananas in the Windward Islands to a top level Caribbean delegation on a visit to Tripoli in August. Banana production in Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Lucia and Grenada fell by 50% to 140,499 tonnes last year. Colonel Gaddafi claimed the deal would allow the islands to break free from what he described as the economic stranglehold imposed by the European Union and the World Trade Organisation.

Source: Sopisco News 23/01; Lloyds List 11/09/01

AUSTRALIA: COUNTING COST OF SIGATOKA

The banana industry in the Tully Valley region of Australia is slowly recovering after an outbreak of the fungus Black Sigatoka. The first case was discovered in April, followed by fifteen further case throughout the region. There was concern

that the whole valley could potentially become infected risking the livelihoods of the entire community. A concerted eradication programme of heavy de-leafing and fungicide treatment has been developed with and agreed to by the banana growers and appears to be bringing the outbreak under control. Several important markets have now be reopened to the Tully farmers, including Sydney. However access remains closed to Tully growers to markets in Western Australia, the Northern Territories and Southern Queensland, including Brisbane.

Source: Sopisco News Wk 24/01, Wk 27/01

PHILIPPINES: AUSTRALIA STILL BLOCKING FURTHER IMPORTS

The Australian government are considering an application from the Philippines to export bananas into the country. The application is facing strong opposition from Australian banana growers who are worried about both the effect on their own industry of additional imports and the potential risk of importing diseases. According to Les Collins, Chairman of the Banana Growers Council Import Committee, *'the entire social and economic fabric of rural and regional committees would be undermined by imports of Philippine bananas'*. The Australian government are yet to make a final decision but said that any proposal will be carefully considered and would include a thorough risk analysis to be carried out by the Quarantine and Inspection Service's Bio Security Australia.

Source: Sopisco Wk 24/01 W 27/01

INDEPENDENT FARMS HIT BY MULTINATIONAL'S RETREAT

In Changuinola, western Panama, the 368 worker-owners of the Atlantic Banana Co operative were among the first affected by new survival strategies of the banana multinationals when Chiquita, which exports the co-operative's fruit, announced it was dropping its rate from \$3.11 for a 42-pound box of fruit to \$2.86. The Co-operative has not yet laid off any workers, but it may postpone a planned pay rise and the construction of 400 new houses to replace ageing company-built homes. The Co-operative's president, Bolivar Aguirre expects to sell just one million boxes in 2002, a 17% drop from past years. Panama's Central American Fruit Company has already created a marketing strategy around a banana it calls the Panabana, which it sells directly to Europe. *'Selling independently is better value for us but the risks are greater'* says Angel Hidrogo, the group's general manager.

Source: Andrew Bounds, *Freedom Magazines International Inc*, 06/01

EL NIÑO "WON'T REACH DISASTROUS PROPORTIONS"

A great majority of the scientists consulted by the World Meteorological Organisation agree that this year the effects of the 'El Niño' phenomenon will not have the disastrous consequences it had in 1997/98. They even consider that agriculture in Northern Peru and Southern Ecuador may benefit. It is predicted that shrimps will be plentiful, but a few types of fish will move away from their normal habitat. Regardless, Rodney Martinez from INOCAR, the Ecuadorian Army's Oceanographic Institute, declares that even though the strength of El Niño will range between 'weak and moderate...we'll have an early winter season, from late November or early December, and it will be relatively strong... (which) could affect the rice production'. According to Martinez, there already is a preventive plan in action.

Source: *El Comercio, Ecuador*. 23/08/01

COSTA RICA: PLANTATIONS DESTROYED

In order to prevent the expansion of the banana plant disease known as black sigatoka, 1,000 hectares of (mainly cooperatively owned) plantations were destroyed in the South Pacific area of Costa Rica. Another 937 hectares of land is also likely to meet a similar fate, because they are part of farms where bananas were grown. The losses are worth an average \$12,000 per hectare; also, some 1,200 workers lost their jobs in the process. Banana growers explained that the lack of buyers with long-term contracts to market the fruit, natural disasters such as hurricanes, and the lack of governmental aid have led banana growers to bankruptcy. The Government is currently funding the destruction programme, in order to prevent outbreaks of the diseases that, like black sigatoka, are likely in the abandoned farmers.

Source: *La Nacion Week in Review* 05/07/01

CANARY ISLANDS: ASPROCAN CALL FOR HIGH TARIFF IN 2006

Producer association ASPROCAN warn that the Canary Island industry faces ruin unless a tariff rate of at least €350 per tonne is set when the European Union banana import regime changes to a tariff only regime in 2006 at the latest. The banana growers claim that dollar bananas will flood the EU and force small growers out of the

market, if the tariff is set below this rate. 400,000 tones of the fruit are supplied to the EU every year, most of which is sold in mainland Spain, accounting for 70% of the Islands' GDP.

Source: *EUCOFEL* 05/01

NICARAGUA: HUNGER AND SOCIAL RESTLESSNESS ON THE INCREASE

Drought and low coffee prices have brought hunger to Nicaragua. Thousands of farms are being repossessed by creditors (banks, exporters and traders). In August, many starving families abandoned the government's 'food for work' plan, and started to 'roam' the streets. 4,000 peasant farmers marched to Managua to demand a solution to the problem. The solution should include the handing out of land, credits, seeds and technical assistance, in order to enable them to support their families. 'If our children die, we will bury them opposite the National Assembly', stated Catalino Aráuz García, one of the peasant leaders.

For banana workers in the north-western province of Chinandega, the closure of half the 13 plantations has provoked extremely high levels of redundancies. Some families are already suffering, or are close to suffering, from hunger. In the municipality of El Viejo alone, the rate of unemployment has reached 90% of the active population.

Sources: *FETRABACH, ATC/TRABANIC, La Prensa, Nicaragua; La Nación, Costa Rica* 08/01

Special Feature 1

DOLE AND LABOUR RIGHTS

A lay-off of 1,900 Dole employees in the southern San Joaquin Valley, California in February 2001 has again put a spotlight onto Dole's labour relations record. Its chequered record in the past decade has included two lawsuits filed by Californian workers accusing the company of gender discrimination, failure to pay mandatory travel time and an admission to locking out 120 union workers for more than a decade when their contract ran out at a vegetable cooling plant in Salinas, California. It has also successfully fought off a case filed in by Ventura County Strawberry workers who claimed they had been let go after voting to unionise.

Dole is also the last remaining corporate defendant in a lawsuit filed on behalf of 26,000 banana workers worldwide who claim they were sterilised through exposure to the pesticide 1,2-dibromo-3-chloropropane (DBCP). Attorneys involved in the case, which received worldwide attention in the 1990s, charged that Dole continued to use the pesticide for seven years after it was banned in the US. According to Duane Miller, a Sacramento attorney and DBCP expert who assisted the plaintiffs in the case, Dole bore no less responsibility than the other corporate defendants that paid \$52 million to settle the cases against them. *'After there was virtually indisputable evidence that DBCP had sterilised men in every plant it had been manufactured in the US, and after the product was banned, Dole decided to use this product without telling their workers or providing them with any more protection than is afforded by a t-shirt'*, Miller said.

However, company Vice President George R. Horne has said *'I can unequivocally state that that Dole has never - and does not - use pesticides that are illegal in the US the EU or the World Health Organisation'*. Dole are fighting the case, which is pending in the US 5th District Court of Appeals in Texas, on the issue of whether the plaintiffs had the right to bring the action in the United States.

The latest lay-offs in California occurred when Dole (which has an annual turnover of \$4.8 billion) announced it was selling 5000 acres of farmland in Tulare and Kern counties. According to Cynthia Rice, an attorney with California Rural Legal Assistance, which is investigating whether to file a lawsuit against Dole on behalf of the workers, this is believed to be the largest recent lay-off in the state's agricultural sector: *'I haven't seen a lay-off like this in at least the least five - if not the last ten-years; in terms of the magnitude of the lay-offs and the impact on the community ... this is pretty unique'*, she said.

Over the past 15 years Dole has become one of California's largest agricultural employers. At one time they employed more than 20,000 people in the state according to industry experts. Dole spokeswoman Freya Maneki said that as of early July the company employed 5,950 people including 3,800 under union contracts. Al Bates, the Vice President of Dole's North American fruit operations, said the company is exiting the deciduous fruit business in California and laying off the workers because the returns in the sector *were not acceptable.* Whilst he declined to reveal the specific numbers that prompted the decision to sell the land he did reveal that about 85% of the land was used to grow table grapes. The California Table Grape Commission meanwhile reported that table grape growers enjoyed a record export year in 2000.

Worldwide the company's \$68 million profits for 2000 were up from the \$48million it reported in 1999 and the numbers appear to be going up even more this year because of cost cutting, mostly from the downsizing of operations. Dole project earnings from ongoing operations of \$49 million to \$52 million for the second quarter of 2001 compared with earnings of \$45.1 million in the second quarter of 2000. Dole officials said they are mindful of the 'bottom line' but also maintain that the company has never lost sight of the consequences its decisions have on its employees. *'Obviously we employ 60,000 people around the world. So we're very sensitive to employee needs as well as our shareholders and customers'* claims George Horne. *'Sure, we have to be sensitive to our bottom line, but this is not at the expense of the workers.'*

At the Ducar Ranch in Tulare County ex-worker Armandina Aguilera said word of the layoffs came with stunning finality, just as the workers were getting the vineyards ready for production. *'They tell us at Dole "No more"'* Aguilera said *'No "bye-bye," no "thank-you" No nothing.'*

Source: *The Bee, United Farmworkers, California USA 22/07/01; Reuters 19/6/01*

Special Feature 2: WHO IS HIT BY THE BANANA CRISIS IN COSTA RICA?

The crisis in the Costa Rican banana industry which has hit both the Atlantic and Pacific coastal banana zones took a turn for the worse at the end of 2000 (see *earlier issues of BTNB*). As the workers face poverty and a continuing struggle for their labour rights - and attempt to prevent plantations from being closed down - so the government insists on physically destroying plantations in order to control the spread of black sigatoka.

On 29th May 2001 Minister of Agriculture, Albert Dent, announced the obligatory destruction by aerial spraying of 1,000 hectares of bananas (five plantations paralysed since November 2000) in the South Pacific zone, near the border with Panama. This was deemed necessary by CORBANA and the government to stop the spread of the dreaded fungal disease that costs producers so much to control (up to three times what they spend on labour costs in some cases). But the former plantation owners and workers opposed the measure (the aerial spraying of toxic chemicals could affect their communities alongside the plantations), arguing that they wanted compensation payments and other legal guarantees before the destruction. Calls that the government should pay proper redundancy to the 1000 or so affected workers seem to have fallen on deaf ears despite the devastating impact on peoples' lives. There were reports of former workers trawling the beaches for crabs to supplement the bananas they were eating to survive. The funds of the cooperatives to provide some emergency food aid to former workers had run out by the spring.

Meanwhile, in the Atlantic banana zone, where the vast majority of the 180 or so plantations in the country are situated, wages have continued to fall, groups of workers are being laid off and the labour contractors are more and more active. These contractors, who prefer to hire cheaper migrant workers, are reported to be paying an average of nearly 30% less than permanent workers employed directly by the banana companies. Some farms were also abandoned. By the end of August 2400 hectares of bananas, accounting for 1850 direct jobs, had been lost in less than nine months. By the end of 2001, it is estimated that nearly 20% of total Costa Rican banana hectareage will have gone in three years, affecting some 10,000 workers directly and another 50,000 people indirectly.

Sources: Costa Rican press, 05-09/01

MARKETS

SAVID'S ORGANIC SUCCESS STORY

Some of the biggest increases in banana exports to the lucrative EU market have taken place in the Dominican Republic, where up to 80% of fruit are now certified organic. The company which led this organic boom is SAVID, run by Jetta van den Berg, a Dutch agronomist. Initially, SAVID concentrated on working with small- and medium-scale producers in both the Azua and Mao regions, supporting their attempts to produce export quality organic bananas. Now SAVID also has six farms of its own and is concentrating most of its production and trading efforts in the North (around Mao).

Since May 2001, SAVID has also been selling Dole organic labelled fruit to the US market. The boom in organic demand, especially in the German, UK and Italian markets, has fuelled expansion of nearly 20% per year to the point where SAVID now exports 45,000 boxes per week to the EU. Other independent importers, notably in Britain, have also developed a successful trade in organic DR fruit to top supermarkets and now account for 25,000 boxes/week of organic and fairtrade labelled bananas. However, threatened changes to the EU licensing regime in the new year may mean that the giant Fyffes scoops up business from the independents Pratts and Mack. Fyffes left the DR under a cloud in the 1990s, but are poised to start buying again using their huge surplus of licences for ACP fruit.

Sources: Eurofruit, 16/11/01 and Banana Link

WINDWARD ISLANDS: 'DRINKING IN THE LAST-CHANCE SALOON'?

After nine years of near-terminal crises in the Windward island banana industry, exports are set to fall to a record low of 84,000 tonnes for 2001, less than one third of what the four Eastern Caribbean islands exported 10 years earlier; this represents a 40% fall from 2000. The thousands of small-scale banana farmers, on whose shoulders the island economies have rested for 50 years, are now facing a possible melt-down if they cannot get their governments and industry to come up with a strategy to survive in a British market now dominated by their lower-cost competitors. Many farmers - and some in government and the industry - now see fair trade and organic certification as the only realistic route to survival in the cold winds of a less protected market. In November, the islands' export company WIBDECO announced its

intention that 10% of exports would be organically certified within 3 years. Meanwhile, since the launch of Fairtrade-labelled Windward bananas in British supermarkets in the summer of 2000, over 400 farmers have taken the future in their own hands and are exporting up to 7,000 tonnes a year under fair trade conditions. It now looks like a race against time to accelerate developments in this direction before their preferential access is eroded completely. Three years is a very short time in which to turn a struggling industry around and much depends on the industry's political will to implement what farmers themselves have been proposing for years. As one market analyst put it: *'The Windwards are drinking in last-chance saloon'*.

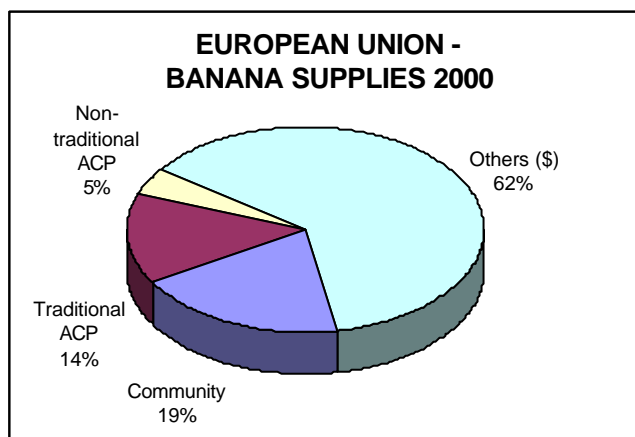
Sources: *Financial Times*, London, 13/11/01; WINFA, St Vincent; *Eurofruit magazine*, London, 15/11/01; *Promar International*, 19/11/01.

marketing, reception and purchase of fruit, product management and development and is going to establish an independent certification authority', says Prime Minister of St Vincent, Ralph Gonsalves. The EU's new banana import regime, implemented from July 2001, means the Windward Islands have to prepare for competition in the market, says WIBDECO's chairman Vanoulist Charles *'the current industry structure is inappropriate, inefficient and incapable of delivering market requirements or maximising returns to growers ... we want an organisation that can compete and that can deliver profits to the producers'*.

According to Charles, WIBDECO's plan is for farmers to eventually take ownership of WIBDECO, and they have asked governments to make shares available to farmers. Their proposals are meant to create an industry that will be market-led rather than production-led.

Source: *Financial Times* 10/07/01

EU: 4 MILLION TONNE MARK EXCEEDED



Source: EUROSTAT in *Fruitrop* No. 80 05/01

WINDWARD ISLANDS PLAN BANANA RESHAPE

The Windward Islands are restructuring their banana industry as they prepare to meet competition for their European market share and hope to lift farmer's earnings. The Islands are still the biggest single source for UK imports, but have been suffering from falling production and low productivity.

The EU will provide most of the \$55m earmarked to restructure the industry, say government officials. The main difference from earlier restructuring efforts will be increased involvement of the Windward Islands Banana Development and Exporting Company (WIBDECO). *'WIBDECO will concentrate on*

Banana consumption in Europe rose to over 4 million tonnes in 2000 - a year of catastrophic prices and crisis in the banana industry. Non-traditional ACP supplies increased from 103,994 to the highest ever exports of 187,647 tonnes. ACP exports exceeded the quota ceiling of 750,000 tonnes set by the agreement between the European Commission and the United States in April to be introduced in January 2002, when the current quota C is reduced by 100,000 tonnes.

Source: *Fruitrop* No.84, 10/01

European Union - Evaluation of Banana Supplies (Tonnes)							
Year	Banana Type or Origin			Others (\$)	Sub-total	Exports	Supplies
	Community	ACP					
		Traditional	Non-traditional				
1988	719,270	513,043	1,018	1,644,100	2,877,431	17,265	2,860,166
1989	698,925	542,628	1,792	1,716,500	2,959,845	13,415	2,946,430
1990	710,635	617,353	4,523	2,024,243	3,356,754	36,219	3,320,535
1991	695,402	584,516	11,898	2,286,014	3,577,830	53,468	3,524,362
1992	711,191	641,005	39,161	2,366,800	3,758,157	39,689	3,718,468
1993	646,242	677,326	70,785	2,219,715	3,614,068	36,138	3,577,930
1994	584,622	629,595	97,338	2,102,375	3,308,068	58,044	3,250,024
1995	658,206	670,479	93,486	2,386,931	3,765,803	43,082	3,722,721
1996	684,605	682,526	116,866	2,466,380	3,916,508	30,598	3,885,910
1997	810,537	641,026	76,567	2,394,976	3,896,106	16,571	3,879,535
1998	786,232	537,349	77,812	2,393,350	3,794,745	26,448	3,768,295
1999	729,303	572,320	103,994	2,520,419	3,926,036	27,359	3,898,677
2000	782,176	569,161	187,647	2,528,172	4,067,156	35,527	4,031,829

Source: CIRAD-FLHOR Market News Service in Fruitrop October 2001 No. 84

COMPANIES

CHIQUITA FILES FOR 'CHAPTER 11' BANKRUPTCY PROTECTION

Just when the company has gained dramatically better access to the EU market, signed an international agreement on trade union rights for its own plantations and those of its suppliers and issued an impressively frank Corporate Social Responsibility report, Chiquita has had to file for protection from bankruptcy afforded under 'Chapter 11' of a domestic law covering US companies.

Sources: *The Guardian, London, 27/10/01*

SURVEY CLAIMS 40% OF RETAILING TO BE CONTROLLED BY 25 COMPANIES IN 8 YEARS.

According to a recent study by the Institute of Grocery Distribution (UK), 25 supermarket groups will control 40% of the world retail distribution sector in 2009. Three companies - Carrefour, Ahold and WalMart - are already certain of being among the group. After this leading trio, the Institute adds the German company Metro, the Japanese company Itoyokado (based on its position in Japan and China and its development programme for South East Asia and the NAFTA zone), and finally Belgium-based Delhaize (for its consolidation policy on the North American markets).

Source: *Fruitrop 05/01*

UK: CHIQUITA ENTERS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Chiquita is offering children in northern Britain the chance to apply for grants to boost ailing facilities and services. The banana multinational has pledged £100,000 to help regenerate local communities. The company is asking parents and schools to nominate projects – with those receiving the most support will be given the cash. Each school that nominated a scheme will also be entered into a draw to win one of five Apple iMac computers. Chiquita marketing manager Niamh O'Donnell said 'We hope as many people as possible participate to help build a better environment for themselves, their families and future generations'.

Source: *Fresh Produce Journal, London, 31/08/001*

DEL MONTE: POLLUTES FIRST THEN CLAIMS INNOCENCE

Over the last 10 years, the plantation workers' union SITRAP's Health, Safety & Environment Secretariat has been fighting to get banana companies to control the environmental damage they cause. For years in Rio Barbilla the shores have been the dumping ground of used plastic bags and other rubbish impregnated with poisonous chemical substances. After reporting unsuccessfully many times to the national

authorities, SITRAP's Secretariat was forced to report the case to Norwegian Television. CORBANA expressed surprise over this and Chiquita declared that in Costa Rica all environmental laws are respected. The general excuse presented by companies was that they all hold an ISO-14001 certificate. Finally the Regional Environmental Council, formed by provincial civil society organizations, checked and confirmed the accuracy of SITRAP's report.

Following negotiations, the company responsible - Del Monte subsidiary BANDECO - organised the cleaning up of about 400 truck-loads full of plastic bags and rubbish. The Union would now like to know what happened to these 400 truck-loads and what will be done with the 20 km of still polluted shores, from the Davao community to the sea. A similar situation is found on the shores of the Rio Reventazon, in Siquirres, which are also used by Del Monte as a dumping ground. In this context, BANDECO's participation in the official events celebrating 'Environment Day', which took place on the 5th June, caused indignation among the community. In an attempt to show itself as a leader in environmental protection, BANDECO initiated tree planting by students from Batan School on the shores of Rio Barbilla as part of the event.

Source: SITRAP, Siquirres, Costa Rica, 09/01

UK: NEW FAIR TRADE COMPANY LAUNCHED

AgroFair Europe BV, the Dutch based Fair Trade company, opened its first marketing board in the UK on September 5th. The company, which already supplies over half the Fairtrade bananas on the European market, are already supplying its Oke labelled bananas to the Co-op and are supplying Asda on a trial basis. Through the

establishment of the new board AgroFair UK, they hope to expand the UK market for fairly traded agricultural products such as bananas, citrus fruit and pineapple.

AgroFair currently imports from producers in Colombia, Ghana, Ecuador and Costa Rica who produce their fruit in a socially and environmentally friendly way. Farmers receive a basic price that covers production costs and a supplement for social and environmental innovation. Fairtrade criteria include the right to the freedom to join trade unions, equal pay, social security provisions and safe and healthy working conditions. Environmental standards include requirements regarding waste reduction, use of pesticides and fertilisers, prevention of water pollution and waste composting. They also attempt to encourage organic production where possible, marketing organic fruit under the Eko-Oke label.

Source: AgroFair Europe BV

COSTA RICA IN NEW ROW WITH CHIQUITA

The Costa Rican government has accused Chiquita of not respecting the agreed minimum price of US\$5.20 per 18.14 Kg box of bananas. Independent producers state that Dole and Del Monte have respected this price, while the Compañía Bananera Atlantica, (COBAL), a subsidiary of Chiquita, has only paid US\$4.50 per box throughout the past month of July. This illegal action condemns producers to forced bankruptcy. Luis Umaña, Vice-President of the Camara Nacional de Productores de Banano (Anaproban), denounced those producers which provide the fruit to COBAL, who had last year signed inadequate contracts, when there was a bleak outlook for behaviour of the market in 2001. Conditions have improved considerably since then: prices throughout the first semester of the year have been at times in excess of those in 2000, and clearly better than those of 1999. Chiquita argues that there are different types of contract, the majority of which are conditional on the total volume of production in a determined area, and that in these cases the price paid has been higher than US\$5.20 per box. Tomas Dueñas, the Costa Rican Trade Minister, has not ruled out legal action against the multinational firm.

Source: La Nación, San José, Costa Rica. Finacial Times, 08/01

BANANA IMPORTS INTO EU-15, YEAR 2000

	FRA	BLEU	NETH	GER	ITA	UK	IRL	DK	GRE	POR	SPA	SWE	FIN	AUS	TOTAL
Ecuador	2667	167338	7499	200961	216291	180	0	4199	11861	24591	9307	7581	5356	16557	674388
Costa Rica	0	248053	5553	49059	26530	128602	988	1943	60	42143	66931	6940	12098	5852	657302
Colombia	566	316890	2560	115622	75096	1128	0	1532	3568	37342	40759	18623	984	2102	616772
Panama	0	104455	4217	129674	54372	4907	0	2107	4489	12587	6048	52716	7674	5768	389014
Cameroon	38511	46982	0	3789	70668	43811	0	747	0	0	1288	242	0	0	206038
Côte d'Ivoire	143549	44186	0	1371	160	10826	0	0	0	0	0	150	0	0	200242
Honduras	0	35239	0	625	0	39253	31488	0	0	0	0	1253	0	0	107858
St Lucia	0	0	0	0	0	72523	0	0	0	0	0	44	0	0	72567
Belize	0	0	0	0	0	59765	8796	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	68561
Dom Rep	0	15689	330	2580	6140	30286	33	0	0	4596	87	0	0	0	59741
St Vincent	0	0	0	0	0	42924	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42924
Jamaica	0	0	0	0	0	40943	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40943
Surinam	0	0	0	0	0	33790	0	0	0	0	445	0	0	0	34235
Guatemala	0	20226	615	574	0	7903	22	286	0	0	0	301	111	90	30128

Source: Fruitrop No.82 July/August 2001

EVENTS and PUBLICATIONS

RAISING THE BANANA STANDARD

100 representatives of key players in the banana chain gathered in London on September 27/28th for a European conference on voluntary social standards in the banana industry. Presentations were made by SAI, ETI, FLO, Better Banana Project, FAO, Fyffes, Chiquita, the Co-operative Group, ICFTU, COLSIBA, the Agricultural Ethics Assurance Association of Zimbabwe, Minister of Labour and Human Resources in Ecuador, ILO, Richard Howitt MEP and Co-op Italy.

A conference report is available. Copies of presentations are available under the 'Alternatives for the Future' section of the Banana Link website: www.bananalink.org.uk

EC DIALOGUE ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The European Commission have published a Green Paper, 'Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility' and are inviting comments before the end of 2001. More and more companies are recognising their responsibilities towards people and the environment and that the consideration of the economic bottom-line alone is not justifiable in the twenty-first century. The Green Paper presents an opportunity for trade unions, NGOs, companies, and other stakeholders to put forward their views on how the European Union

should develop its framework for developing corporate social and environmental responsibility.

Comments should be sent to csr@cec.eu.int

GOING CARIBBEAN BANANAS AT NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL 2001

The fifth Caribbean Banana float made its most striking appearance at Notting Hill Carnival in August. The Carnival is Europe's biggest, and is attended by more than 1.5 million people.

The float was accompanied by 200 people in carnival costumes and Caribbean banana t-shirts, giving away thousands of leaflets and hundreds of bananas.

Fairtrade-labelled Windward Island bananas were launched at Notting Hill Carnival 2000.

The Caribbean banana float is organised by Banana Link, Positive Productions and the Seventh Feathers Youth Club and supported by UNISON, Caribbean

Banana Exporters Association, Oxfam, A4A (National Lottery), Dalgarno SRB, London Arts Board.

TRADE JUSTICE PARADE

On Saturday 3rd November, thousands of people took part in a colourful, peaceful parade to call for global trade rules that put people and the environment before profit. The Trade Justice Parade was coordinated by the Trade Justice Movement, a new grouping of organisations in Britain who call for fundamental change to the unjust rules and institutions governing international trade.

IFOAM CONFERENCE ON ORGANIC GUARANTEE SYSTEMS

17-19 February 2002 in Nürnberg, Germany

The programme includes the 'IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) Basic Standards' day, which offers interested parties an opportunity to participate in the revision of the IFOAM Basic Standards. The following two days focus on the conference theme 'International Harmonisation and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture'.

The conference aims to clarify the current proliferation of standards and regulations. It aims to identify and recommend models for constructive interaction and cooperation between public and private sector in the field of organic standards/regulations, certification and accreditation.

Contact: IFOAM Head Office, Oekozentrum, Imsbach, D-66636, Tholey-Theley, Germany, Fax +49 6853 919 899, headoffice@ifoam.org, <http://www.ifoam.org>

IFOAM CONFERENCE WORLD CONFERENCE

August 2002 in Victoria, Canada

Speakers from around the world will address the central themes of the congress: Organic Production Methods and Environmental Responsibilities; Redesigning Food Systems; and People and the Process of Change.

The registration brochure with full details is available on the Congress website: www.cog.ca/ifoam2002 or from: C/o Building 20, 8801 Eats Saanich Road, Sidney, British Columbia, V8L 1H3, Canada. Tel: +1 250 655 5652 Fax: +1 250 655 5657 email: ifoam2002@cog.ca

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