



Banana Trade News Bulletin

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ISSUES	2
NOBOA VIOLENCE AGAINST NEW UNIONS.....	2
'LILI' DEVASTATES WINDWARDS.....	4
COSTA RICA: FLOOD DAMAGE HITS INDUSTRY.....	5
COLOMBIA: NEW VIOLENCE AGAINST BANANA TARGETS.....	5
LIMITED PROGRESS ON DBCP CLAIMS.....	5
HONDURAS: STRIKE HIGHLIGHTS CHEMICAL DANGERS.....	6
COLOMBIA: STRIKE THREAT AVERTED.....	6
GUATEMALA CALLS FOR UNITY.....	6
PHILIPPINES: BANANA TOURISM.....	7
WTO: TURKEY YIELDS TO ECUADOR.....	7
WTO: ECUADOR PROPOSES OBLIGATORY COMPENSATION.....	7
EVERYTHING BUT ARMS: LDCs NO THREAT FOR ACP.....	7
EU BANANA CONSUMPTION 2001.....	8
COTONOU AGREEMENT: NEGOTIATING INTEGRATION.....	8
NEW PRODUCER FUND IN CANARIES.....	8
ILLEGAL BANANA ALIENS.....	9
MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT BANS PARAQUAT.....	9
PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN BANANAS.....	9
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS UNDER REVIEW.....	9
PANAMA CANAL RATES INCREASE.....	9
PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE EU ENLARGEMENT.....	9
FAIRTRADE PROGRESS.....	10
AUSTRALIA BANS PHILIPPINES BANANAS.....	10
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CALLS FOR COMPANIES TO CLEAN UP THEIR ACTS.....	10
BRITISH BANANAS MAY HAVE TO CONFORM.....	11
BRITISH GET HIGH ON BANANAS?.....	11
SASA HARMONISING AUDITS.....	12
COMPANIES	12
DOLE CHIEF BIDS...FOR DOLE.....	12
CHIQUITA BUYS ITS GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR.....	12
CHIQUITA: OUT OF THE WOODS.....	12
COMPANIES JOIN ETI.....	12
SHARE PRICES CONVERGE.....	13
THE WORLD'S GLOBAL RETAILERS.....	13
DEL MONTE THREAT TO ABANDON GUATEMALA.....	13
PASCUAL HNOS. CHANGES HANDS.....	13
RUMOURS OF WAL-MART BID IN UK.....	13
FYFFES: PERFORMS BETTER IN 2001.....	14
FYFFES PREPARES FOR EU ENLARGEMENT.....	14
PUBLICATIONS/EVENTS	14

EDITORIAL

THE INFERNAL LOGIC OF COMPETITION

"Of course a box of bananas is cheaper in Ecuador, but it's also the case that workers have no rights there, no social security and they live in misery and hunger; we don't want to compete with that" said Edgar Williams of the PAFCO Workers' Union when announcing that workers were no longer prepared to give up any more rights in order to save Chiquita subsidiary PAFCO in Panama. Wages and benefits in Panama are the best in Latin America.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the chain, US retailer Safeway has circulated a video to its unionised workforce in North America to demonstrate the need for them to tighten their belts because of competition from non-unionised Wal-Mart. *"Cutting our wages and benefits to the level where WalMart employees are is nothing but a race to the bottom"*, responded one Canadian branch of the Union of Food & Commercial Workers.

Workers at either end of the banana chain, whether they be in rich world supermarkets or poor world plantations, cannot be accused of a lack of awareness of the so-called 'race to the bottom' and its consequences on their working conditions and livelihoods. However, being aware global citizens is not enough when you have very little power and are caught up in the infernal logic of competition.

But the very people with the most power to break the cycle and initiate a "race to the top" – those who have taken on the mantle of socially and environmentally responsible corporate citizens – seem unable or unwilling to act when it comes to the crunch. Instead, Ethical Trading Initiative members Tesco and Asda/WalMart have unleashed a consumer price war in the highly profitable UK market... and expect their suppliers – and therefore, in turn, their suppliers and

workers – to pay for the 25% price cuts by offering the retail giants a cheaper banana. To add insult to injury, the Tesco Financial Director had just had a 60% salary increase to nearly US\$2 million a year!

Nor, in this climate, should the banana producing multinationals be too surprised at cynical reactions to their claims of corporate responsibility. Dole has a lot of 'cleaning' to do before it can sponsor the SAI's "Clean Conscience Awards" with a clean conscience, especially given its massive investment in cheap bananas in Ecuador. And although Chiquita has come a long way in the last few years, it seems rather early to be being hailed as one of the Top 20 "sustainable businesses".

The Ecuadorian banana industry says it will be able to remunerate workers fairly when Ecuadorian producers receive a fair price. When a box of bananas arrives in the importing country at \$6 to \$10 but is sold to consumers at \$20 to \$25, there does indeed seem to be plenty of room for manoeuvre. If the retail giants who are gaining more and more control over the terms of trade by the day want real credibility as responsible corporate citizens then it is they who need to break this damaging logic of competition.

An 'unfair price' is certainly no excuse for the violent attack on workers at the Noboa Corporation's Los Alamos plantations in Ecuador; but supermarkets should not be seen to 'reward' those at the production end who choose to violate the fundamental human rights of workers by buying their fruit and saying nothing.

ISSUES

NOBOA VIOLENCE AGAINST NEW UNIONS

At 2:00 a.m. on the morning of May 16th, around 400 hooded men violently attacked workers on the Los Alamos plantations, owned by the Noboa Corporation in Ecuador. These workers have been organising for proper working conditions and their rights under Ecuadorian law. Workers have been on a legal and non-violent strike since May 6th. They report that a dozen or more workers were wounded, three seriously by gunshot wounds and that the workers' few possessions were looted. One worker, Mauro Romero, has had his leg amputated as a result of the shot wounds.



Mauro Romero photo Jan Nimmo

The violence that had begun at two o'clock in the morning on Los Alamos re-started at around six o'clock in the evening. An eyewitness from Banana Link described the scene, *That's when the gunfire started. I quickly realised that the gang weren't just shooting into the air or aiming at the ground, so had to take cover. Even the police weren't safe; one of them was shot in the arm. It became apparent that some of the workers had been wounded, one man lay on the ground having been shot in the stomach. We thought that he was dead as he was immobile. He was lying behind the police car but the police didn't help him. We quickly got him onto the back of a pickup along with another injured man and some other workers. We drove immediately to the clinic where they got some medical attention. While we were in the clinic another worker arrived. He had a bullet in his forehead but miraculously, although he still has the bullet in his head, the wound was superficial.'*

The three new unions representing the Los Alamos workers who are directly employed by three sub-contracting companies - Cliadi, Beducorp and Nenru - were registered at the Ministry of Labour in April. They are the first new unions in Ecuador for many years.



Photo: Jan Nimmo

"I don't like unions. I will fight unions." said Alvaro Noboa in a meeting with a delegation from the US Congress and US/LEAP to Ecuador to investigate the violent attacks on striking workers at Los Alamos at the end of May. The delegation found that its concerns were not met with the seriousness they had expected. Alvaro Noboa and his lawyers acknowledged that the company had brought in the "security personnel" to Los Alamos, but belittled the violence as "minimal" and said it was necessary because the workers were destroying - or about to destroy - his property. No evidence has been provided to support this claim, which has been dismissed by the Minister of Labour. Noboa also described the workers as illegally occupying his land, but since the Los Alamos strike has never been declared illegal, the occupation can scarcely be declared illegal. Moreover, proper eviction procedure under Ecuadorian law does not include violence against workers in the middle of the night.



Conditions inside Los Alamos photos Jan Nimmo

Los Alamos workers remain on strike to demand that they are paid overtime, are inscribed in the Social Security system, and provided with healthcare facilities, fair wages and job security. The dispute has reached the stage of labour tribunals. Attempts by the company to introduce new 'special workers' committees that it had hastily established to replace the new trade unions were rejected in two of the three tribunals, but in a third tribunal it was judged that the union did not have the required majority of the workers signed up at the time of lodging their grievances. The union intends to appeal this decision.

Sources: FENACLE, Ecuador; Banana Link, US LEAP.

BAN ON CHILD LABOUR IN ECUADOR...

In late April a damning report on child labour and obstacles to trade union organisation in Ecuador's banana industry was published by New York-based Human Rights Watch (see *Publications/Events* section). The report caused heated reactions in industry and government circles, especially as the report was widely covered in the national media. Despite initial denials and accusations that the report was part of a 'dirty tricks' campaign by the Costa Ricans, exporters and producers decided to address the allegations of child labour more seriously, although they have not tackled the widespread abuse of the freedom to organise independent trade unions.

On July 24th exporters and producers announced an agreement to eliminate within 12 months the employment of under-15 year olds in the plantations. The agreement was signed by Ecuador's Labour and Education Ministers, UNICEF, ILO and four exporters including Noboa, the Bonita brand owner. According to CORPEI, the Export Promotion Corporation, 60% of exporters and 80% of producers signed up to the agreement. A Banana Industry Forum, intended to include trade union participation, will be formed to agree child labour eradication policies

Sources: *El Comercio*, *El Universo*, 24/07.

...AND HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH'S REPONSE

In giving the agreement a cautious welcome, Human Rights Watch points out that the four requirements of the 'Ethical Social Code' proposed by the industry—that employers not hire under-age workers, allow child workers who have not finished mandatory schooling to attend classes for two hours daily, prohibit children from performing hazardous tasks, and create special registries with relevant data on child workers—are already legal requirements under the national Labour Code. In other words, the industry is only saying it will certify people for abiding by current law. HRW proposes, in its letter of 20th August, that "an alternative, independent, objective oversight mechanism—such as a panel, including worker representatives, of independent experts on child labour and the banana industry—should be created to monitor compliance with the agreement" until the Ministry of Labour's Committee for the Progressive Elimination of Child Labour can effectively enforce both domestic child labour laws and the industry agreement. This oversight body should also be responsible for awarding the "social seal" through

a transparent process that includes independent monitoring and unannounced inspections, suggest HRW.

The organisation is also concerned that workers' representatives were not consulted when the agreement was negotiated nor were they invited to participate in the drafting process. On the issue of the obstacles to organising, which the Forum has effectively side-stepped, HRW "*urges the industry to negotiate an additional public agreement, in consultation with workers' representatives, to uphold the right to unionise*".
Source: Human Rights Watch, Washington, 20/08.

'LILI' DEVASTATES WINDWARDS

Once again the disaster-prone banana industry in the Windward Islands has been dealt another cruel blow. Already reeling from market insecurity, falling prices and rising costs of inputs, Tropical Storm 'Lili' devastated banana farms in St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Grenada on September 23rd. Worst affected was St Vincent where four people – three of them children – were killed by a landslide in Mount Grennan. As well as substantial damage to housing and public buildings, preliminary estimates are that between 50 and 75% of banana production in St Vincent and St Lucia has been destroyed. Farmers report that it is the most productive areas which have been worst hit. Some Vincentian farmers had only just begun to harvest again after replanting following strong winds last year.

As well as dealing a devastating blow to conventional banana exports, the damage from Lili threatens to undermine exports of fairtrade labelled bananas which had reached over 4000 boxes/week from the two islands. The Windward Island Farmers' Association (WINFA) has launched an appeal to the international community for help in rapid rehabilitation.

Please contact: winfa@caribsurf.com

ECUADOR: SIGATOKA INVADES EL ORO

In June, Ministry of Agriculture staff confirmed that half the 45,000 hectares of banana in El Oro province in Southern Ecuador had been destroyed by the black sigatoka fungus. Producers represented by ABO, the El Oro Banana Association, claimed that prices below the official minimum of \$2.90/box – and sometimes as low as \$1.80 – were to blame, as growers could simply not afford to apply the necessary chemicals. Ministry officials also blamed poor quality fungicides. Exports from the province fell to around 50% of normal volumes.

Source: El Universo, 13/06.

SURINAME: INDUSTRY ON ITS KNEES

In April, the government of Suriname closed Surland, the country's only banana producing and exporting company, on the grounds that with US\$ 8 million in debts it could no longer pay its 1,500 full-time and 600 part-time workers. In May, the government said it could reopen the company only if it fired more than one-third of its workers and cut salaries by 40%.

After months of strike (including a two week hunger strike), no solution was found to the conflict. Workers, whose wages have not been paid since February, volunteered in June to interrupt the strike and harvest the overripe bananas for fear of parasites and worms that could destroy the trees, but the government remains adamant that the two plantations will remain closed if they cannot drastically cut jobs and reduce salaries. The union said the workers would sell the fruit to farmers as cattle feed in an attempt to raise the \$40,000 necessary to spray the trees, but the company refused to let them saying that workers could not work unsupervised.

In September, the government announced a \$2 million plan to restructure the company prior to selling it: the plantations would be cleared, the land flooded, then replanted in time to re-start exports in January 2004. Workers received a second instalment on six months of back pay, but with no guarantee that any more of what is due would be paid out.

Fyffes, the sole purchaser of Suriname bananas, appears to be a cause of the conflict. In 2000, they unilaterally decided to cut their purchase price from US\$8.00 to \$5.30 per box. Not surprisingly, Fyffes is interested in buying back the Suriname company, but the present owner, the government, would like to make shares available to other investors.

Sources: Fruitrop No. 91; Sopisco Weeks 25 and 36; Caribbean Star, 08/02.

PANAMA: MOST SERIOUS CRISIS IN 100 YEARS

8000 direct jobs and the whole economies around Puerto Armuelles and Changuinola are threatened if the industry collapses. Productivity shows an alarming decrease of 63% in the last eight years, according to the National Banana Commission, whilst exports fell by over 10% in the first seven months of 2002 compared to the previous year.

Despite serious attempts by the government to head off the crisis, including the allocation of financial aid to nationally owned banana

plantations, Chiquita has preferred to purchase cheaper bananas in Ecuador and Guatemala. In August, Cyrus Friedheim, the new president and chief executive of Chiquita Brands International, made things worse by declaring that *"Puerto Armuelles should overcome its inefficiency in the short term or close its operations, as Chiquita can't keep financing the high production costs in their plantations"*.

Following two years of hard negotiations with unions on both Pacific and Atlantic coasts, the unions accuse the company of trying to cause anxiety and desperation so as to oblige workers to accept its conditions. 40% of the Puerto Armuelles Fruit Company's workers have been unemployed for a year now; and during the latest negotiations the workers have seen their wages cut substantially.

Former workers of the five independent plantations last year are meanwhile sinking into poverty. In June, the Governor of Chiriqui province urged the government to seek international aid for the several thousand people facing hunger in the area around Divalá.

Source: Sopisco News, Weeks 23 to 36; La Nacion, Costa Rica, 11/06.

COSTA RICA: FLOOD DAMAGE HITS A DECLINING INDUSTRY

Costa Rica was once again hit by serious flooding in May, displacing over 3000 people and forcing 12,000 indigenous people out of their villages in search of food in the Talamanca region. The affected area represents 40% of the 44,000 hectares planted in bananas; 3,500 ha. were totally destroyed.

Costa Rica had hoped to reach annual exports of 100 million boxes in 2002, but now faces an immediate 5-million-boxes decrease, which could be 10 million boxes in 2003 if the rehabilitation is not completed in time for export next spring. Added to this, productivity has fallen from 2,700 to 2,200 boxes per ha since 1999, on a total cultivated area which declined from nearly 48,000 hectares in 2000 to 44,423 in 2001. In 2001 alone, six private producers and five co-operatives went out of business, with a loss of 2,400 jobs.

Corbana, the national banana corporation, has indicated that over US\$100 million is urgently needed to rehabilitate the industry: around \$75 million to pay the debts incurred by growers with the national financial institutions and \$25 million for growers to increase productivity. Corbana proposes that growers contribute to the fund by deducting a sum from each banana box exported.

The credit could be paid back by debiting 2 US cents from the 8 cents currently deducted as a levy from each box of bananas exported. This tax is scheduled to disappear within five years, decreasing by 2 cents every year, but Corbana's proposal is to retain the deduction of 8 cents per box as a contribution to the fund. The legal framework which would permit this course of action was put in place in 1993, but two successive governments have so far refused to release the funds.

Sources: La Nacion, El Financiero May 2002, CNN and Sopisco News, weeks 18 to 32, La Prensa 28/5.

COLOMBIA: NEW VIOLENCE AGAINST BANANA TARGETS

At the end of April, in a plantation near Apartadó, in Urabá province, nine people were killed. Seven banana workers were dragged out of the plantation and executed in cold blood. The assassins were reported to have carried with them a list of the victims checking the workers names off methodically after they were murdered. The other two just happened to be in the area where the workers were murdered.

The killings follow a period of six years of relative calm in Urabá, since the widespread violence and massacres of the 1980s and early 90s. The nine people are alleged to have been killed by members of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) forced out of the banana zone five years ago by the right-wing paramilitary organisation, AUC. SINTRAINAGRO, the union representing banana workers in this region, has repeatedly called on the authorities to protect threatened union leaders and members, but without success. Well over 400 SINTRAINAGRO leaders and members have been assassinated since 1989.

Source: IUF May 2002.

In August, a car bomb exploded in front of the offices of BANACOL, one of the leading Colombian banana exporting companies. No injuries were reported.

Source: Sopisco News – Week 32.

LIMITED PROGRESS ON DBCP CLAIMS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

On 10th July the Standard Fruit Company (Dole) offered an out-of-court settlement to Honduran banana workers who have been allegedly made sterile through use of the nematicide DBCP (dibromochloropropane) in the 1980s. The company is proposing to pay between \$2,000 and \$8,000 each to about 3,000 Honduran workers

provided they withdraw the lawsuit they filed in the US. Honduran victims began negotiating directly with Dole about four years ago because their lawsuit filed in 1991 in a US court was never resolved. An eventual settlement now depends on the workers' US lawyers who hope to gain 40% of all compensations granted in a US court settlement.

Meanwhile, in Nicaragua, 178 workers representing 3,000 ex-employees of the banana companies re-introduced a claim involving 7 US-based companies - Dole, Shell, Castle and Cook, Chiquita Brands, Del Monte, Occidental Chemical Corporation, Dow Chemical Company - and two Israeli companies: Dead Sea Bromine and Bromine Compound Ltd (the US Supreme Court is currently examining whether the two latter can legally be joined to the case). The workers, who are now represented by Asotraexdan (Asociación de Trabajadores y Ex-trabajadores Afectados por el Nemaqón), decided to take the case in front of a civil court in Managua after a new law was passed by the Nicaraguan Government to promote trials demanded by persons affected by the use of pesticides derived from DBCP (Law 384).

Sources: *El Nuevo Diario* 10 and 12/03 (Nicaragua), *Sopisco News* (wk 28), *Bananic International*.

HONDURAS: STRIKE HIGHLIGHTS CHEMICAL DANGERS

On 26th May, 2200 workers at Chiquita's Honduran subsidiary, Tela Railroad Company, went on strike to demand the negotiation of a new collective agreement, including increased wages. Another of the union SITRATERCO's demands was that Chiquita discontinue the use on its plantations of a chemical called 'chlorpiriphos' (brand name 'Dursban'). In common with many other plantations, Tela uses plastic bags treated with chlorpiriphos to prevent insects attacking the fruit. Workers complain that working with the insecticide causes them allergies, headaches and circulation problems.

After Tela threatened to suspend 800 workers - or even to pull out of Honduras altogether - a Government commission was appointed to mediate between the parties. On 4th June, workers resumed work and the company agreed to appoint an independent international institution to establish whether the product has negative effects on workers' health or not. A preliminary report by the Government concluded - falsely, according to the union - that there was no risk at all involved in the handling of the bags. The text of the July agreement commits workers to improving

productivity and fruit quality and eliminating the problems caused by insects, while Tela pledges it will improve the salaries and benefits of the workers according to their performance.

Sources: *El Tiempo*, Honduras, 26/05; *La Nacion*, Costa Rica, 11/07; SITRATERCO.



Dumped plastic bags impregnated with insecticide

photo Jan Nimmo

COLOMBIA: STRIKE THREAT AVERTED

In Colombia's Urabá province an industry-wide strike called for 23rd May by SINTRAINAGRO was successfully averted with an agreement between the producers and the union which fixes a 9% wage increase for the 16,000 workers employed on the 316 banana plantations in 2002. This will be followed by another increase in 2003 equal to the inflation rate. The agreement also includes additional housing and education benefits for workers and their families.

Source: *El Colombiano*, *La Republica* 23/05.

GUATEMALA CALLS FOR UNITY

On a visit in June to Ecuador, Guatemalan Vice-President Juan Francisco Reyes Lopez called on Latin American banana producing countries to present a united front in order to improve their chances on the world market. Making particular reference to the trade dispute with the European Union, Reyes Lopez appealed for common negotiating strategies to be adopted. He favours a Convention between all Latin American producers, creating a "pressure group to improve sales of the fruit".

Source: *El Universo*, 13/08.

PHILIPPINES: BANANA TOURISM

15,000 hectares of banana plantations in the province of Davao del Norte in the Philippines are being developed to accommodate tourists who want to learn more about the banana industry. The authorities believe the plantations – which are considered among the world's most efficient with annual yields of \$10,000 per hectare – the packing houses and packaging plants, as well as the very advanced biotech labs for plant cloning could appeal to certain tourists and attract interest from visitors. Have they done their market research?

Source: *Sopisco News – Week 30.*

WTO: TURKEY YIELDS TO ECUADOR

On June 24th the government of Ecuador requested the setting up of a WTO dispute panel to resolve a two-year old dispute with Turkey over its system of banana import quotas. Ecuador claimed that the procedure for issuing import certificates was untransparent and discriminatory. Ecuador's Ambassador to the WTO, Alfredo Pinoargote, also claimed that Turkey was guilty of a "disguised barrier to trade" under the Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Agreement of the WTO because it did not apply the same rules regarding access to residue testing laboratories for nationally produced fruit as for imported fruit. Ecuadorian exports to Turkey had reached over 90,000 tonnes in 2000, but have fallen to about half that total.

However, on July 29th Pinoargote announced that Ecuador will drop the WTO case against Turkey, as the Turkish Government has agreed to revise its import procedures for fresh fruits.

Source: *El Universo, Guayaquil, 24/06 and 29/07.*

WTO: ECUADOR PROPOSES OBLIGATORY COMPENSATION

In July, in the light of its experience during the WTO dispute with the European Union, Ecuador proposed in July a procedure which would make compulsory the rapid payment of financial compensation by the country which is found to have violated WTO rules. This would include a deadline by which compensation should be paid, so as to avoid the situation where sanctions are granted but then not implemented (which is what happened in the banana disputes with the EU). The compensation package negotiated between the parties could also include debt relief, for example, Ecuador suggested.

Source: *EFE, Geneva, 17/07.*

PRESSURE TO CURB TRADE BENEFITS

The Bush Administration is under pressure not to extend preferential trade deals to the four Andean countries because of concerns ranging from labour practices in Ecuadorian banana plantations to software and music piracy. Human Rights Watch recommends denying new benefits to Ecuador, whilst the AFL-CIO trade union confederation raised concerns about labour practices in all four countries and urged the administration get "*written commitments from the Andean governments to take concrete steps to respect workers' rights and come into compliance with international standards.*"

Source: *Sopisco Week 38.*

STOP PRESS: In late September the US Trade Representative announced that Ecuador has not been designated new trade benefits under the Andean Trade Partnership and Drug Enforcement Act. The other three Andean nations were granted the new benefits.

Source: *US/LEAP, Chicago*

EVERYTHING BUT ARMS: LDCs NO THREAT FOR ACP

Under the "Everything but Arms" proposal, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) will be able to export to the EU duty-free from 2006. According to an EU report, the total production of bananas within the group of 48 LDCs is estimated to be around 5.7 million tonnes, of which 4.8 million tonnes are already produced by the ACP group and just over 700,000 tonnes by the non-ACP countries. While the total production of the LDCs exceeds the EU consumption by 2 million tonnes, most of these countries neither export nor indeed produce exportable bananas (their total exports only amount to 26,000 tonnes, all of which come from ACP countries). Cape Verde, Madagascar and Somalia are LDC countries who are also traditional ACP suppliers of bananas to the EU. In 1999, only 10 tonnes were imported from Cape Verde and 0 from Madagascar and Somalia, although previous exports of Somalia have reached 20,000 tonnes.

Source: "*EBA proposal: possible impact on the agricultural sector*"; can be downloaded from http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/pdf/eba_ias.pdf



EU BANANA CONSUMPTION 2001

<i>Origin</i>	<i>2001</i>
European Union	
Greece	2,909
Spain	420,919
France	322,758
<i>Martinique</i>	233,716
<i>Guadeloupe</i>	89,042
Portugal	20,682
Total EU	767,268
ACP countries	
Ivory Coast	217,855
Cameroon	215,923
Surinam	28,720
Somalia	0
Jamaica	42,958
Saint Lucia	34,727
Saint Vincent	30,829
Dominica	17,516
Belize	51,609
Cape Verde	0
Grenada	591
Madagascar	0
Non-traditional ACP	
Dominican Republic	86,043
Ghana	3,315
Others	148
Total ACP	730,234
Dollar zone	
Colombia	643,895
Costa Rica	633,891
Nicaragua	1,160
Venezuela	12,113
Ecuador	702,399
Honduras	106,540
Guatemala	3,132
Panama	347,326
Mexico	54
Brazil	16,624
Other	1,362
Undetermined origin	92,780
Total dollar	2,561,276
ACP + DOLLAR	3,291,510
TOTAL ACP+ DOLLAR + EU	4,058,778

Source: Eurostat

COTONOU AGREEMENT: NEGOTIATING INTEGRATION

Negotiations between ACP and EU member states on the new Economic Partnership Arrangements (EPAs) under the Cotonou Agreement start on 27th September. The Cotonou Agreement foresees the negotiation of new reciprocal and WTO-compatible trading arrangements which will build on regional integration processes in the ACP. The precise configuration of ACP countries that will enter into agreement with the EU is not yet defined, nor is the role of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) who are part of these regional groupings, but are allowed under WTO rules to retain preferential arrangements. The Agreement – which only 52 ACP and 6 EU countries have ratified so far – will last for 20 years with opportunities for revision every five years. Its central objective is to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty while contributing to sustainable development and to the gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy. The current phase of the Cotonou Agreement allows until 2008 to negotiate the new reciprocal EPAs.

For more info:
<http://www.ecdpm.org/en/cotonou/index.htm>

Source: Bridges Weekly Trade News Digest

NEW PRODUCER FUND IN CANARIES

Following an appeal by COAG, the Spanish farmers' union, 23 banana producer organisations agreed in May to set up a fund which will be fed by a levy of 0.03 euros per kg of bananas sold. This is designed to overcome the problems generated by EU compensation payments which have not taken account of the price at which producers actually sold their fruit. The new fund will be managed jointly by the producers and the government. It is expected to raise 12.6 million euros per year, 80% of which will be used to compensate for low prices (additional to the EU compensatory aid) and 20% to explore new markets and promote Canary Islands bananas.

The creation of the fund should put an end to 20 years of price war among Canary Island producers and will be the prelude to intensified lobbying actions to try to prevent EU market liberalisation in 2006.

Sources: Sopisco week 29 and COAG, August 02.

ILLEGAL BANANA ALIENS

5,741 tonnes of bananas were seized in Catania (Italy) in April. The bananas were imported illegally from Ecuador with fake import licences. Ongoing investigations have been extended to France and Spain where, between 1998 and 2000, OLAF, the European Anti Fraud Office reported illegal imports of 100,000 tonnes and 60,000 tonnes respectively. The import duties evaded so far are estimated to be 126 million euros.

Sources: *Sopisco Weeks 25-27, La Stampa, 23/04, European Anti Fraud Office.*

MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT BANS PARAQUAT

An international campaign by NGOs in several continents has had its first success in Asia (see also *Publications/Events* section). The Malaysian government announced in late August that Paraquat would not be re-registered and existing Gramoxone products would be phased out. Advertising the product will also be banned. It is a toxic herbicide widely used in plantations and by small farmers in Malaysia and worldwide. In the banana world, companies like Chiquita have phased out the chemical some years ago. Attention of campaigners is now shifting to getting its biggest producer, Syngenta, to stop production worldwide.

Source: www.panap.net

For campaign information see: www.evb.ch/stopparaquat8d.htm

PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN BANANAS

According to a report by Friends of the Earth, in 1997 the UK Government had tested fewer than 1 in every 100 million bananas imported into the country for pesticide residues. Figures in neighbouring countries are somewhat better: Italy carried out 8,000 tests over the same period as

compared to 6,000 in Germany, 3000 in France and 732 in the UK. Supermarkets in all European countries regularly test their food for pesticides but the results of these tests are not made available to the public. Test carried out by the British Pesticide Residues Committee recently show that 30% of all food products consumed are likely to contain pesticide residues which exceed safety limits and that half of the fruits and vegetables contain traces of chemicals which are not approved for use in the UK.

Source: *BBC, London, 19/06.*

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS UNDER REVIEW

The whole work of the international Rome-based organisation Codex Alimentarius is currently being evaluated. The Codex Alimentarius Commission was created in 1963 under the joint auspices of FAO and WHO. Its mission was to develop food standards, guidelines and related texts such as codes of practice under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. They would welcome feedback from national NGOs and business. The questionnaire can be downloaded at www.codexalimentarius.net

Source: *FAO Banana Forum.*

PANAMA CANAL RATES INCREASE

The Panama Canal Authority announced they will change the 90-year-old pricing structure of the canal to move toward a market-oriented business and released a formal proposal in July which will increase canal toll rates by 13%. They justify the proposal by saying that canal transit time has been reduced from 32.9 hours in 1999 to 23.9 hours in 2001 and vessel accident rates declined from 37 in 1996 to 17 in 2001.

This increase will mainly affect banana exports from Ecuador.

Source: *FAO Banana Forum, July 02.*

PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE EU ENLARGEMENT (total imports per country)

Tonnes	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Latvia	Lithuania	Estonia	Slovakia	Slovenia
1998	301,482	67,861	116,349	16,247	23,954	13,088	60,437	25,353
1999	347,420	83,073	130,616	19,507	28,141		61,583	28,691
2000	281,318		104,514				47,343	
2001			100,385				41,057	
Average 1994-2001	267,993	67,955	126,668	17,433	26,048	9,584	60,611	29,049

Sources: *CIRAD/customs authorities*



Dominican banana farmer

Credit: Philip Wolmuth <philipwolmuth@blueyonder.co.uk>

FAIRTRADE PROGRESS



FLO, FairTrade Labelling Organisations International, has completed its restructuring and is introducing a new logo common to all 17 national member organisations. The logo

will be used alongside existing national logos until 2003.

A new Fruit and Juice Product Manager was appointed in May and a cross-products certification committee has now been set up. In 2001, 29,065 tonnes of FT labelled bananas were sold. A further 9,500 or so tonnes of fairly traded bananas – but without the FLO label – were sold by CTM Altromercato in Italy and BanaFair in Germany.

The fairtrade market is facing an 'organic boom' in 2002 with an increased demand for 'organic fairtrade' products in Switzerland, Finland, Germany, Austria, Denmark and France.

In the UK, the biggest supermarket chain has agreed, following a consumer campaign, to stock FT bananas from Dominica in 30 of its London stores.

Sources: FLO International, BanaFair, Consorzio CTM Altromercato, Fairtrade Foundation.

AUSTRALIA BANS PHILIPPINES BANANAS

Australia announced its decision in July to definitively ban the import of bananas from the Philippines due to an unacceptably high risk of disease transmission, namely, Moko and Freckle diseases and Black Sigatoka. There are fears that Australian native frogs would be under threat too. Pineapples will be allowed entry, but under very strict quarantine regulations.

The Philippines industry was hoping to diversify away from its present exports to China and Japan. The government has appealed under the WTO against Australia's sanitary and phytosanitary measures saying: "developed countries, including Australia, should give the right signals to very co-operative and receptive countries like the Philippines, otherwise giving trading partners a difficult time after lectures on the virtues of free trade will lead to frustration, economic and social problems on the part of weaker members". The Philippines government took the first steps towards a WTO dispute in September and may also block Australia's proposal to create an ASEAN-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement.

Sources: Sopisco weeks 17-38; FAO Banana Forum.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CALLS FOR COMPANIES TO CLEAN UP THEIR ACTS

Following its 1999 call for action on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) the European Parliament has passed a resolution on 30th May calling for:

- a European Social Label to endorse products where there is respect for human and trade union rights;
- the incorporation of companies' wider social and environmental impact into negotiations between employers and trade unions in Europe;
- all EU financial assistance to European businesses made subject to compliance with basic standards, including setting up a black-list of companies guilty of corruption;
- EU trade and development programmes to tackle abuses by European companies in developing countries.
- a European CSR Forum to give rights to stakeholders such as consumers, activist groups and NGOs to oversee policies alongside business and trade unions.

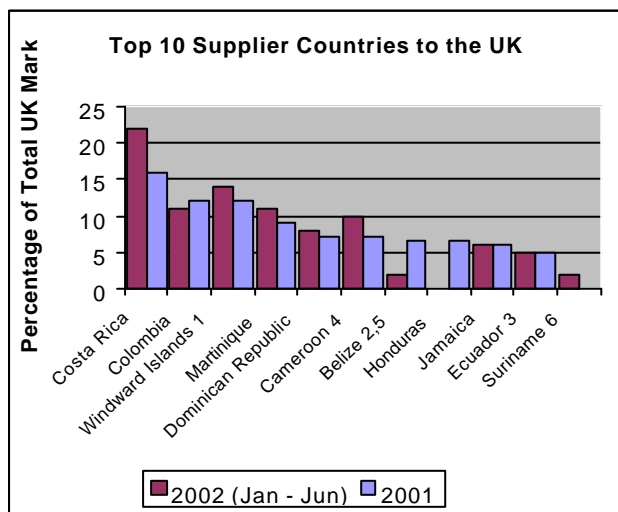
Among the measures proposed to ensure implementation of the resolution is a call for mandatory social and environmental reporting by

European companies, the idea to make Board members individually responsible for the social and environmental performance of the company, and the appointment of an ombudsperson responsible for EU companies in third world countries.

The Parliament voted for CSR to be built into all EU policies and programmes. In his speech introducing the debate, Richard Howitt, a British Member of the European Parliament and rapporteur on this issue, reminded members what this is all about: *"It is quite breathtaking that the European Commission and the European Investment Bank commit billions of euros of European taxpayers' money each year to the private sector – through contracts, regional aid, investment promotion – yet do not have simple contractual clauses to respect basic labour and environmental standards, nor clear monitoring and complaints procedures to enforce them. The Dutch Government has shown the way by linking access to export credits to compliance with voluntary standards. The EU must follow suit"*.

The resolution was passed on to the European Commission for inclusion in its forthcoming White Paper.

For more information, contact Richard Howitt's office in Brussels: tel:00 32 2 284 5477.



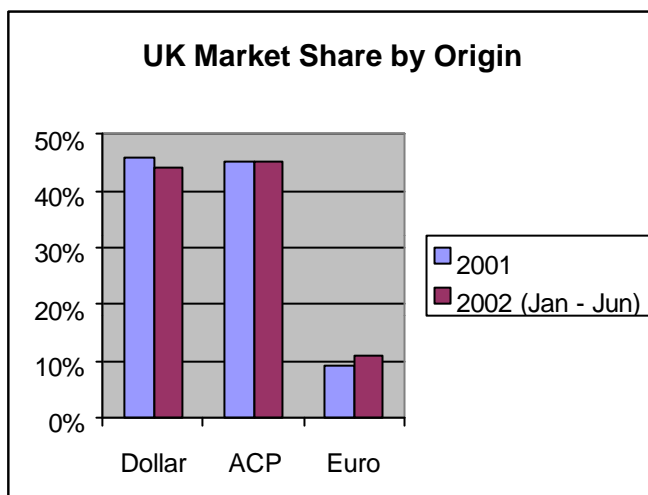
Statistics supplied by DEFRA, September 2002

- 1 Exceptionally poor year, mainly because of drought. 18% share in 2000.
- 2 Hurricane destroyed virtually all industry in October 2001.
- 3 Very few direct imports, so this figure is educated guesswork based on a significant proportion of fruit coming in from Belgium
- 4 2002: Steadily increasing volume leading up to Del Monte's taking over Asda business from Chiquita in May.
- 5 2002: Virtually no exports until May following hurricane.
- 6 2002: Strikes then a complete shut-down at Surland plantations from May mean volume collapsed. Had 4% share in 2001.

BRITISH BANANAS MAY HAVE TO CONFORM

The EU marketing regulations that apply to 40 fruits and vegetable and determine how bendy a banana and how long a cucumber should be have been found to be unenforceable in the UK where a 1973 law seems to prevail over EU legislation. EU regulations were designed to ensure minimum standards of quality, labelling and cleanliness, but they have proved a nightmare for importers and producers alike, especially for organic growers who have difficulty meeting EU requirements. The British Ministry of Agriculture (DEFRA) is looking into how to bring British laws in line with EU legislation.

Source: Freshinfo UK, 8/7/02



Statistics supplied by DEFRA, September 2002

BRITISH GET HIGH ON BANANAS?

According to The Observer newspaper, the British spend more money on bananas than any other supermarket items, apart from petrol and lottery tickets. The UK is facing an unprecedented banana boom: consumption of bananas now stands at 26.6 lb. per person the equivalent of two bananas per person per week. 3.5 billion bananas are eaten in this country each year

The boom might be partially explained by the fact that UK scientists believe bananas contain chemicals that stimulate the production of serotonin and dopamine, the same neurotransmitters set off by Prozac and Ecstasy.

Source: The Observer, London, 30/6.

SASA HARMONISING AUDITS

Social Accountability in Sustainable Agriculture (SASA) is a collaborative project of four social and environmental verification systems in sustainable agriculture.

- FLO International: the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations
- SAI: Social Accountability International (formerly the Council on Economic Priorities Accreditation Agency) responsible for the social accountability standard, SA 8000
- SAN: The Sustainable Agriculture Network (formerly Conservation Agriculture Network) a coalition of Latin American environmental groups working together with farmers and other stakeholders to develop social and environmental standards for eco-friendly agriculture
- IFOAM: the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

SASA objectives are to improve social auditing processes in agriculture and to foster closer co-operation and shared learning between the initiatives through 12 pilot audit exercises worldwide in 2002 and 2003.

The first pilot audit was on bananas in Costa Rica and was completed in early June. The draft summary report is now available (in English and in Spanish) on the web. The document presents a series of recommended methodologies to be used in the application of an audit addressing labour and social issues. The document is for your review and SASA invites everybody to read it and send feedback and inputs.

For more information, to read the report and to send your comments, go to www.isealalliance.org/sasa/

COMPANIES

DOLE CHIEF BIDS...FOR DOLE

Dole Food Company's Chief Executive and largest shareholder, David Murdock, made an unsolicited bid in September to take over the company by buying up the shares which he and his family do not already own. If the board approves his proposal to acquire the other 76% of shares, then this would mean Dole becomes a private rather than a public quoted company, with all the consequences for corporate accountability that such a change would entail. Dole's global sales were over US\$4.5 billion last year, which included over one quarter of the world trade in bananas.

Source: *Financial Times*, 23/09.

CHIQUITA BUYS ITS GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR

Chiquita is set to buy Scipio GmbH, a company which in turn owns Atlanta AG, the primary distributor of Chiquita products in Germany and Austria. By taking Atlanta into direct ownership the company hopes to "improve Chiquita's long-term position in these Important European markets", said Cyrus Friedheim, CEO, in mid-September.

Source: www.worldfoodnet.com 17/09.

CHIQUITA: OUT OF THE WOODS

Nine years after Chiquita Brands International embarked on a trade war with the European Union, the company has emerged from bankruptcy with new owners and a new chief executive, Cyrus Friedheim Jr. He is a former vice chairman of Booz, Allen and Hamilton where his speciality was to help other chief executives restructure their businesses. Steven Warshaw and Carl Lindner remain on the board.

Chiquita claims to have lost over a billion dollars in Europe since 1993, and has nowhere near the 40% market share it once enjoyed. The company reported profits in the second quarter of 2002: 9% higher than the same period in 2001. As part of the terms of the bankruptcy, Chiquita gave 95.5 percent ownership of the company and five board seats to its shareholders, who in turn agreed to cancel debt worth \$700 million.

Sources: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Sopisco Weeks* 28-31.

COMPANIES JOIN ETHICAL TRADING INITIATIVE

Both Chiquita and Fyffes have become members of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) - an alliance of companies, non-governmental organisations and trade unions working to identify and promote good practice in the implementation of codes of labour practice. ETI has set three objectives for the period until 2004:

- identifying and promoting good practice in the implementation of codes of labour practice;
- supporting the existing members in implementing their codes, and recruit and support new members;
- building strategic alliances and relationships with other organisations to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of ETI's work.

ETI member companies commit themselves to adopting the standards that are contained in the

ETI Base Code. Member companies can adopt the Base Code in two ways: by adopting the ETI Base Code verbatim, or by incorporating the relevant standards into their own code.

Source: www.ethicaltrade.org

SHARE PRICES CONVERGE

Fyffes share price has increased 65% in the past year, a relatively poor performance when compared with Del Monte (178%), Chiquita (136%) and Dole (120%). But Fyffes' shares are now worth \$1.55 as opposed to \$1.19 per share for the 40 million new shares issued by Chiquita after its bankruptcy. Dole's and Del Monte's share values are similar at \$1.18 each.

Sources: *Sopisco News and Bananic International, August 02.*

THE WORLD'S GLOBAL RETAILERS

The Institute of Grocery Distribution's 'Global Retail Index' is an attempt to give a more accurate ranking of the world's leading global retailers than those rankings traditionally based on turnover size alone. The index includes a combination of 'hard' and 'soft' factors, which in IGD's view determine whether a retailer can be considered as global or not. The factors have been given a different weighting, depending on their relative importance to being a global retailer: Turnover (20%); Number of countries of operation (10%); Percentage foreign sales (10%); Presence in key NAFTA, Europe, Asia Pacific (15%); Home market dominance (10%); Clarity of global strategy (15%); Global culture (10%); Level of global learning and sharing.

Rank according to Global Retail Index	Rank by turnover	Company
1	2	Carrefour
2	5	Ahold
3	1	Wal-Mart
4	4	Metro
5	10	Tesco
6	8	Ito Yokado
7	21	Delhaize
8	20	Casino
9	17	Auchan
10	13	Aldi
11	16	Tengelmann

Source: IGD research

DEL MONTE THREAT TO ABANDON GUATEMALA

Bandegua, Fresh Del Monte's Guatemalan subsidiary, is studying the possibility of abandoning its operations in Izabal because of problems with independent suppliers who provide 40% of its exports. According to manager Marco Antonio Garcia, the company had had to cancel deliveries to various customers – and pay fines - because of labour conflicts in two plantations. Garcia said Del Monte's share price was also suffering as a result. In early September a group of workers from the two plantations had blockaded shipments from nine independent farms. The conflict revolves around a wage dispute.

Source: *Prensa Libre, Guatemala, 11/09.*

PASCUAL HNOS. CHANGES HANDS

Pascual Hermanos is a Spanish importing company based in Valencia, previously owned by both Chiquita (1991–96) and Dole (1996–2002). It was the first Dole subsidiary to have been granted SA 8000 certification at one of its Andalucian farms. In July Pascual was bought by G's España, Spanish subsidiary of British fresh produce company, GS Shropshire.

Source: *FruiTrop, June 02.*

RUMOURS OF WAL-MART BID IN UK

US retail giant Wal-Mart is rumoured to be in secret talks to buy the UK's fourth biggest supermarket chain, Safeway. Wal-Mart bought Asda in 1999 and now has 10.5% of the British grocery market. Together with Safeway's 6.5% they would rival the British No.1 Tesco with its 17.5% of the market. However, Wal-Mart would have to get the bid past British and EU competition authorities. Safeway has recently announced a 13% increase in its profits to over 500 million euros.

Meanwhile, in North America, Safeway has circulated a video to its unionised workforce to demonstrate the need for them to tighten their belts because of competition from non-unionised Wal-Mart. "Cutting our wages and benefits to the level where Wal Mart employees are is nothing but a race to the bottom", said a statement from a Canadian branch of the Union of Food & Commercial Workers.

Sources: *The Guardian, London, 07/09; L'Echo, Paris, July 02; UFCW Local 1518 website, April 02.*

FYFFES: PERFORMS BETTER IN 2001

Stronger sterling exchange rate against the euro and the dollar, the settling of the WTO dispute between EU and US, tariff preference guaranteed for ACP sources until 2008, and aggressive cost reduction initiatives including the amalgamation of Fyffes and Geest operations in the UK, the consolidation of shipping services, the amalgamation of UK port facilities and the reduction in supply costs and shipping rates. These are the reasons Fyffes gives for higher operating profits in 2001 in its latest report to investors. The report also gives preliminary figures of 1,955 million euros turnover for 2001 with an operating profit of 61.5 million euros, up from 27.7 million in 2000.

Source: Fyffes Performance and Financial Strength, Preliminary Results 2001, Dublin, July 02.

FYFFES PREPARES FOR EU ENLARGEMENT

Fyffes acquired 70% of leading Czech Republic fresh produce company Hortim International in August. With this move, Fyffes becomes one of the main banana importers in the Czech Republic with a turnover of 100 to 120 million euros per year, second in volume to Chiquita and followed by VVISS, Cerozfruit, Taroko Banana and Tekoo. 100,406 MT bananas were imported in the Czech Republic in 2001, mainly from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama and Spain. With this acquisition, the Irish based group enters one of the most attractive and fastest growing markets of central Europe and should be able to control 25-30% of the banana import licences – should the Czech Republic become a full member of the EU in 2004 as expected.

Source: Sopisco News - Week 32.

PUBLICATIONS/EVENTS

TAINTED HARVEST

Report on Child Labour and Obstacles to Trade Union Organisation in Ecuador's Banana Industry, April 2002, New York

In May 2001 the US-based NGO Human Rights Watch conducted a 3-week mission in Quito and the Guayas and El Oro provinces of Ecuador to investigate human rights abuses on banana plantations. The publication of the report sparked a flurry of reactions, denials, accusations and other media coverage –

particularly of child labour issues – in Ecuador itself.

The report reveals widespread violations of basic human rights, and concludes that Ecuador's labour laws are not routinely enforced and, in some aspects, the laws fail to protect internationally recognised workers' rights.

Researchers interviewed 45 children (under 15 years old) working on plantations in Ecuador. They described 12-hour working days and exposure to dangerous working conditions. Although the money earned by the children was an important addition to the family income, the average income of those children who Human Rights Watch spoke to was only \$3.50 a day - 64% of the average wage earned by adults and 60% of the legal minimum wage for banana workers in Ecuador.

Laws on freedom of association, even if they were fully enforced, are inadequate to protect workers who attempt to organise trade unions, claims the report. Although the Labour Code guarantees the right to organise, it does not require employers to re-hire workers who have been sacked for belonging to a trade union. Instead an employer must pay a small fine, less than \$400 in most cases. Failure to enforce the Labour Code also allows employers to employ a "permanently temporary" workforce who are denied most basic rights.

The report calls on the Ecuador government to:

- allocate additional resources to the Ministry of Labour to provide for labour inspectors to guarantee effective implementation of child labour laws;
- amend the Labour Code to expressly prohibit the use of consecutive temporary contracts;
- amend the Labour Code to establish an effective deterrent against employers engaging in anti-union recruitment and hiring practices.

Human Rights Watch recommends that the banana-exporting companies, both national and multinational, should use their influence to put pressure on plantation owners to respect child and worker's rights.

Other recommendations include:

- companies should ensure that harmful pesticides are neither sanctioned for use nor actually used on supplier plantations;
- companies should report any violations of Ecuadorian labour law or international standards to the relevant authorities;

- companies should monitor labour standards and apply the same minimum standards to supplier's plantations as they would to directly owned plantations.

A copy of the report is available on www.hrw.org

ACORBAT TACKLES NEW TOPICS

ACORBAT, the Association for Cooperation on Banana Research in the Caribbean and Tropical America, is holding its 15th conference in Cartagena, Colombia between 27th October and 2nd November. As well as a wide range of scientific presentations, there will be three special panels on black sigatoka control, sustainable banana production (including presentations from Brazil, Cuba and Colombia) and consumer expectations. Also of particular note is Dr. Manuel Rodríguez from Chiquita Brands talking about their position on the entry of new countries to the EU and the tariff only system that will be implemented in Europe as of 2006.

Source: www.inibap.org

ANALYSING EU COMPENSATORY AID

A detailed analysis of compensatory aid for 2001 and its impact on banana producers in Martinique, Guadeloupe, the Canary Islands and Greece was published in the May issue of Fruitrop magazine. The article stresses that the comparatively low level of aid and above all the convergence of the average receipts of the main European banana producers would not encourage discussion of reform of the aid system. In its June issue, Denis Loeillet, editor of Fruitrop looks at whether compensatory aid should be regionalised. Today, EU regulations require the payment of the same level of compensation whatever the sales level obtained by the different production regions. Regionalisation would enable the accurate calculation of the effective loss by production zone and comparison of this with the real selling prices of the bananas.

For more information: denis.loeillet@cirad.fr. Subscriptions to Fruitrop cost 140 euros for 11 issues: odm@cirad.fr

TRADE & LABOUR STANDARDS STUDY

A comparative study involving about 100 countries at various stages of development between 1980 and 1999 was put together by Prof. R Flanagan of the Stanford Graduate School of Business. The study found that countries with low labour standards do not gain markets for international trade and investment. It looks at how these nations adopted standards

developed by the ILO such as abolishing forced labour or granting workers the right to bargain collectively and tries to assess whether ratification of ILO standards account for differences in countries' export income and foreign investments inflows.

*For more information contact:
Chang_Helen@gsb.stanford.edu*

POISONED AND SILENCED

A study of pesticide poisoning in the plantations (of Malaysia) by Tenaganita and Pesticide Action Network Asia and Pacific. New research from PAN Asia and Pacific reveals that the herbicide paraquat causes unacceptable injuries especially under the poor conditions of use in developing countries. Five public interest organisations (Foro Emaus, Berne Declaration, PAN Asia Pacific, PAN UK and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation) call on the manufacturers Syngenta to phase-out the production and use of this hazardous pesticide.

For more information and a downloadable copy: www.panap.net

FAIR TRADE YEARBOOK 2001-2003

The European Fair Trade Association's third edition of the Fair Trade Yearbook is out. The book provides information on production and trade of commodities on world markets and the history and achievements of the Fair Trade Movement. It is divided into 10 chapters showing the history of the most commonly fairly traded products; one chapter - written by EUROBAN co-ordinator Anne-Claire Chambron - focuses on bananas.

Can be downloaded (in six languages) at www.eftafairtrade.org

Banana Link website

<http://www.bananalink.org.uk>

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Banana Link 38- 40 Exchange Street, Norwich,
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and

BananaWatch PO Box 5206, Dublin 1, Ireland
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on behalf of the EUROBAN (European Banana
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