

# Banana Link

## *Working towards sustainable tropical fruit economies worldwide*

Banana Link is a pioneering not-for-profit organisation working in close partnership with small farmers' and banana workers' organisations in fruit exporting regions in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean. Together we are working for fair and equitable production and trade in bananas and pineapples based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.



### **Our Strategic Objectives for 2014 – 2016**

We aim to achieve tangible changes in the lives of people working in banana and pineapple chains that incorporate:

- Fair and ethical trade practices, based on a fair living wage, equitable distribution of value along the chain, and competitive market access for small producers.
- Dignity at work and respect for labour and trade union rights.
- Sustainable production systems which reduce dependence on hazardous substances and minimise adverse health and environmental impacts on natural resources, workers and communities.
- Constructive dialogue between all economic and non-economic stakeholders that accelerates a transition to fair, equitable and sustainable banana and pineapple chains worldwide.

### **Since January 2014 Banana Link has achieved the following:**

#### **World Banana Forum**

Banana Link has continued to be a leading member of the World Banana Forum (WBF), a multi-stakeholder initiative that promotes open dialogue on the challenges facing the banana industry. This offers both us and our Southern partners critical opportunities, which would otherwise not exist, to collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure a transition to fair, equitable and sustainable production and trade in bananas and pineapples. We actively participate in and contribute to the activities of the three WBF Working Groups that drive forward change between physical WBF meetings and which have:

- Created a virtual online library enabling companies and small farmers to share environmentally responsible best practices, including ways of reducing use of the most toxic pesticides.
- Established a Task Force in response to the arrival of a devastating strain of Panama disease (Tropical Race 4) in Africa and the Middle East which includes awareness raising campaigns, training programmes, and the development of new TR4 resistant crops. A strain of this disease almost ended the banana agroindustry in the Americas in the 1960s.
- Monitored wage levels in 8 leading banana exporting countries to inform a range of initiatives aimed at calculating and working towards payment of a living wage at plantation level. Living wage levels are also a key factor being incorporated into work to establish Costs of Sustainable Production within Working Group 2 (WG02) on Distribution of Value, coordinated by Banana Link. As a result of WBF involvement, in close partnership with Banana Link, Tesco became the first retailer in November 2014, to guarantee the payment of living wages to all workers in its key sourcing sites by 2017. Tesco

is the biggest buyer of bananas in the UK and this move would improve the livelihoods of an estimated 10,000 workers in Latin America and Africa. Key WG02 actor the Ecuadorian government has raised minimum wages to a living wage level. Banana Link is working in partnership with Oxfam GB to share learning from this unique national initiative. We also actively engage in the Ethical Trading Initiative's (ETI) Living Wage in Agriculture group and related activity to aid learning and strategising between sectors.

- Launched an IDH (Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative) funded project to establish workplace committees that aim to improve health and safety standards on plantations within Ecuador and Cameroon (the two largest banana exporting countries in Latin America and Africa). Banana Link has coordinated the first project meetings in both countries and is leading work to develop education materials for use at plantation level.
- Undertaken the first comprehensive mapping of women's employment in three major banana exporting regions. Banana Link has led this research on behalf of the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) which will be presented at the next Global Meeting of Women Banana Representatives in early 2016 and inform collective strategy to increase and improve women's employment within the sector. Banana Link is also leading planning work for this Global Meeting.
- Produced a handbook, to be published this year, celebrating labour relations best practice in the banana industry. This work, coordinated by Banana Link, aims to encourage companies to see the benefits of trade union organising and collective bargaining.

## Research

Banana Link have contributed to a range of key research in our sector including:

- Value chain studies of the export of Ecuadorian bananas to Europe and Colombian Fairtrade bananas to the U.S. and UK.
- A major study on British banana value chains published by the Fairtrade Foundation which informed their main campaign in 2014/5 entitled 'Make Bananas Fair' which mobilised more than 100,000 consumers to lobby the UK's two biggest retailers to sell more Fairtrade bananas.
- Studies on the German banana market and negative impact of supermarket purchasing policy (published by Oxfam Germany); power relations within the agricultural value chains (Fair Trade Advocacy Office); and the Irish banana market (Fairtrade Ireland).

## Union to Union programme

Through our Union to Union programme we build the capacity of trade unions in producer countries to address the needs of workers. We also build the capacity of our Southern partners to support the education and training of workers and to engage in constructive dialogue with common multi-national employers, by securing project funding from a range of donors, including UK trade unions and Comic Relief. Since the beginning of 2014 we have:

### *Latin America*

- Supported FENACLE (National Federation of Agro-industrial Workers and Small Farmers), our partner in **Ecuador**, to agree new gender clauses in two Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs), ensure all workplace unions have an elected women's representative and increase women's leadership by 20%

in the union. We have also secured funding to develop the work of FENACLE's Women's Secretariat for the next three years.

- Enabled SITAG (Union of Agricultural Workers), our partner in **Peru**, to establish three new joint health and safety committees and work towards a banana sector wide agreement to improve wage levels. Banana Link is also engaged in efforts, in partnership with the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) and ETI, to improve labour standards throughout the rapidly expanding export (non-traditional) agro industry which provides at least 300,000 direct jobs, with further growth expected in the next few years.
- In partnership with the TUC, supported local trade union leaders in **Guatemala** to encourage development of improved social dialogue in the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists. SITRABI (Izabal Banana Workers' Union of Guatemala) has succeeded in persuading the Guatemalan Labour Ministry to set up the first ever banana industry round table. The meetings are an historic first, and give the unions a chance to discuss key grievances in the sight of an independent, authoritative, third party. All parties have recognised the stability that has come from the meetings, with no significant labour disputes or attacks on union members since preparations for the round table began last summer.
- Raised significant funds for **Colombian** trade union, SINTRAINAGRO (National Union of Agricultural Workers), to deliver a programme for rural women workers, including skills training, to increase chances of employment for women, and support for the disproportionate number of women who lost their jobs following hurricane damage last year.
- Secured project funding to enable our **Costa Rican** partners, SITRAP (Union of Plantation Workers), to work towards the first new CBAs in the tropical fruit sector for many years as workers lose their fear of discrimination for joining a union. Last year, 400 new members joined SITRAP.

### *West Africa*

- Supported union partners in **Ghana** and **Cameroon** to deliver education to more than 6000 workers. In Cameroon this has doubled rights awareness to almost 80% amongst workers who have also received financial management education to enable them to better handle monthly cash wages. More than 100 elected representatives have also received skills training which has significantly improved social dialogue in the workplace resulting in improved conditions including a 48% reduction in pro rata deductions from wages. Representatives have also been empowered to deliver ongoing education to their fellow workers.
- Bargaining and negotiating capacity of FAWU (Fako Agricultural Workers Union of Cameroon) and GAWU (General Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana) has also been notably increased, delivering wage increases of up to 32.5% in **Ghana** and a revised National Collective Agreement in Agriculture increasing wages in **Cameroon**.
- In partnership with the IUF (International Union of Food and Allied Workers), Banana Link has provided training to build the capacity of banana workers unions in **Cote d'Ivoire**, **Cameroon** and **Ghana** to engage in international supply chain dialogue and learning through the World Banana Forum and to collaborate on a regional basis to develop strategic approaches to improve working conditions throughout the West and Central African export industry. In 2014 this led to the creation of the African Network of Banana Worker Unions.

## South to South solidarity

We encourage South to South solidarity by enabling our Latin American partners to share their decades of experience of organising and educating plantation workers with our African partners, and to share ideas towards industry wide improvements on these issues. In 2014 this included the facilitation of an exchange visit for partners from Ghana and Cameroon to Colombia, to learn about an industry with the highest wages in the banana sector and other examples of best labour practice. As a result of the trip, Cameroonian union, FAWU, were inspired to negotiate early finishing times for 1420 workers previously working in excess of the legal maximum working week. Banana Link are partners in a programme funded by the French government's Comité Français pour la Solidarité Internationale to develop cooperation between worker organisations in Latin American and the French Caribbean to drive forward work on Occupational Health and Safety and pesticide reduction. A learning visit in early 2015 to Guadeloupe enabled Latin American union leaders to learn about how growers have reduced pesticide use to less than 10% of levels in countries such as Costa Rica and the impact of a ban on aerial spraying. Partners in the programme are engaged in advocacy towards the ratification of International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 184 on Health and Safety in Agriculture in nine Latin American countries and France (and its territories).

## Campaigning to Make Fruit Fair

Banana Link is one of nineteen partners in the second phase of the Make Fruit Fair campaign, again co-financed by the European Commission. With a focus on marking the European Year of Development in 2015, we are working in partnership with NGOs across Europe and with partners in the South to raise awareness of consumers and citizens on the interdependencies between the EU and developing countries exporting tropical fruits, mobilising them to urge corporate and political decision makers to Make Fruit Fair. This three year project is a major boost to our capacity to engage in awareness raising and grassroots education and will enable Banana Link and other Make Fruit Fair partners to continue our lobbying and advocacy for regulation by the European Commission to end the Unfair Trading Practices of retailers which impact negatively on the livelihoods, rights and environment of workers and farmers in the South.



[www.makefruitfair.org.uk](http://www.makefruitfair.org.uk)

## Fairtrade

Banana Link, as active members of Fairtrade International's (FI) Working Rights Advisory Committee (WRAC), participated in the revision of their Hired Labour Standard. This standard now guarantees the right of workers to freely organise and collectively bargain and have more control over how to spend the Fairtrade premium paid on all certified bananas. Banana Link continue to work in close partnership with both the Fairtrade Foundation and Fairtrade International to try to secure market access and fair prices for small farmers, in particular in the Windward Islands where more than 90% of farmers are certified, and towards living wages for plantation workers. We are also participating in a programme to support the documentation and organisation of migrant Haitian workers who make up over 70% of the banana workforce in the Dominican Republic, our key source of organic Fairtrade. Banana Link, the IUF and FI are also supporting a capacity building programme for the six trade unions organising in the newly certified Compagnie Fruitiere owned Penja Banana Plantations (PHP) to ensure that the unions can function effectively and enable more than 5,500 workers to benefit fully from Fairtrade certification.

## Education for the 'Responsible Management of Value Chains'

We have continued to develop our work on responsible and ethical management of businesses within the tropical fruit industry, by embedding lessons and experiences from Banana Link's work into education and training in responsible value chain management e.g. educational programmes in business and management schools. A doctoral student at the Institute of Business and Management Science is developing a European database and website for lecturers and researchers as well as a steering committee for a network for Responsible Value Chain Management Education.

### Core activity

Banana Link actively engages in ongoing bilateral dialogue with a large number of supply chain corporate actors including Tesco, Chiquita, Dole, Sainsbury, Compagnie Fruitiere and is developing relations with Carrefour. In addition, we continue to respond to national and international media requests that reach an audience of millions every year; influence trade media debate through our Banana Trade News Bulletin and constantly updated [www.bananalink.org.uk](http://www.bananalink.org.uk) site (with an estimated annual 200,000 unique visitors); inform nearly 4000 consumers on a regular basis about why and how to Make Fruit Fair; and provide volunteering opportunities for more than 50 people a year.

### Further information and contact

Banana Link  
42-58 St George's Street  
Norwich  
Norfolk  
NR3 1AB  
UK

Phone: +44 (0)1603 765670

Email: [info@bananalink.org.uk](mailto:info@bananalink.org.uk)

### Web

[www.bananalink.org.uk](http://www.bananalink.org.uk)

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