

# CAMPAIGNING, ADVOCACY AND DIALOGUE: IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS FOR BANANA AND PINEAPPLE WORKERS AND SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

Annual review 2016-17



Banana Link is a pioneering not-for-profit organisation working in close partnership with small scale farmers' and banana and pineapple workers' organisations in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean. We combine campaigning and advocacy with multi-stakeholder dialogue to promote fair and equitable production and trade in bananas and pineapples based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

## A year of achievement

### Make Fruit Fair!

The Make Fruit Fair! campaign (MFF) brings together twenty eight organisations from across the world to improve living and working conditions for the hundreds of thousands of people who grow, pick and pack the tropical fruit that we buy in our shops every day. The campaign is calling on the EU, governments, supermarkets and the wider food industry to ensure that a fair price is paid for tropical fruits that are produced without violating human rights or polluting the environment.

### Freedom & Fairness for Fyffes Workers!

In January 2017, Banana Link successfully brought together a global coalition of organisations in this campaign, which called on the Irish fruit giant Fyffes to take responsibility for labour rights violations in their supply chains. The campaign has demonstrated our approach of combining public campaigning and advocacy with multi-stakeholder dialogue to address problems, and improve livelihoods.

The campaign was launched in response to evidence we had collected of very serious abuses of core labour standards at specific Fyffes subsidiaries in Costa Rica and Honduras, and has been driven by the demands of the workers in both countries. More than 35,000 signatures have been collected so far.



*"They never contributed to social insurance and now I will not be able to retire or finally rest after so many years spent on the plantations. I have to continue looking for work to survive."*

Maria Gomez (65) who worked for nearly 30 years as a supervisor at Melon Export SA





In June 2017, Fyffes were temporarily suspended from the UK Government’s Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) as a result of evidence, submitted by Banana Link and the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF) that the company was in breach of the ETI Base Code of Labour Standards. Fyffes are now required to engage with the IUF “to create a mutually agreed framework for engagement” or face dismissal from the ETI.

Banana Link and other campaign members have also engaged with major retailers throughout Europe, many of whom have raised concerns themselves with Fyffes.

Banana Link has collected around £2500 in donations from branches of the GMB trade union in the UK, to help support workers in Honduras who currently have no work because of joining a trade union.



**Watch:** video of Iris Munguia, Coordinator, COLSIBA (the Regional Coordination of Latin American Banana & Agro-Industrial Workers’ Unions) talking about the importance of international support to the mainly women workers facing labour rights violations in Honduras - <https://vimeo.com/207100499>

### Supporting sacked asparagus workers in Peru

Following the sacking of the executive committee of the SITETSA (Sindicato De Trabajadores Empresa Talsa) in June 2017 by Peruvian fruit company TALSA, our engagement in constructive dialogue saw the company agree to enter into mediation, facilitated by the ETI. At the time of writing, the mediation process is still ongoing.

Our public campaign in support of the sacked workers saw over 21,000 people sign an online appeal calling on the company to stop lawsuits against the dismissed workers, reinstate the workers in their former work on the same terms of employment, and accept and start the re-negotiation of the collective bargaining agreement.

## Building trade union links in Latin America

### Flooding in Peru

In March 2017, members of Banana Link's Peruvian trade union partners, SITAG (Sindicato De Trabajadores Agrarios Del Peru), and SITETSA lost their homes in devastating floods. In response, we raised over £2000 in donations to help rebuild lives and homes, by helping to buy building materials, foodstuffs, clothing and beds.

### Towards collective bargaining in Peru's emerging organic banana industry

After several years of work by our union partner SITAG, an agreement on respecting workers’ rights



and union recognition was reached last August between the union and nine producer associations. This is designed to be a building-block towards the first ever collective agreements in the industry.

### **Organising workers in the traditionally non-union south of Guatemala**

Painstaking work to raise awareness of labour rights amongst workers in the world's largest non-union banana plantation area in the South of the country has started to pay off. Our partner SITRABI, which organises Del Monte workers in the North, is training new young leaders in the vast plantations. With support from the TUC, the US trade union Solidarity Center and the International Trade Union Confederation, and thanks to dialogue with the second biggest company operating in the sector, it is hoped that the violence of the past can be avoided when these efforts go public.

### **Improving union organisation in Costa Rica**

Our work, with the support of UNISON, has contributed to increased recruitment to SITRAP, the Costa Rican plantation workers union, particularly new women members, along with successes in legal cases leading to the reinstatement of workers, and an increased awareness among members about trade union rights. The plight of pineapple workers has also been put on the national agenda in Costa Rica, with the Deputy Minister of Labour, Patricia Mora, visiting plantations and raising issues in parliament.

We have raised money from branches of the GMB union in the UK to buy a motorbike to help the General Secretary of SITRAP with his organising work across more than 40 plantations.

### **Empowering women workers in the Ecuadorian banana and sugar industries**

With support from the UIA Charitable Foundation, we have been able to fund Carmen Banegas (pictured), the Women's Officer of FENACLE (Ecuador's National Federation of Agro-industrial Workers and Small Farmers) to achieve greater participation of women in the Executive Committee of FENACLE with women now comprising 50% of the committee; involvement of more women members in developing training and carrying out field visits, a definite increase in women's membership in the union at local level, and more women holding office at all levels of the union.



## **Making fruit fair in Africa**

### **Empowering plantation workers in West Africa**

Our education and empowerment programme in Cameroon and Ghana between 2013 and 2016 achieved measurable improvements in important aspects of workers' lives, including the negotiation of significant wage increases, threefold increases in awareness of labour rights, reductions in working hours and increased overtime payments, greater provision of personal protective equipment, and significantly fewer workplace accidents and work related illnesses.

In October, we hosted a group of European journalists to visit plantations in Ghana to celebrate good existing company practice, the impact of Fairtrade certification and achievements of our programme. We also produced a briefing about the West African banana industry to inform MEP members of the Committee on International Trade (INTA) visiting Cote d'Ivoire to look at the impact of EPAs. We enabled these MEPs to visit a banana plantation and meet with local union representatives, providing an opportunity to highlight the need to review minimum wage levels in the country's agricultural sector. Delegates acknowledged the value of meeting with NGOs and trade unions and hearing the views of 'everyone' rather than a select few.



Since our education programme ended, we have participated in a meeting of the Fairtrade International Workers' Rights Advisory Committee in Ghana, been actively engaged in the work of the IUF African Banana Workers Network to empower individual unions and their collective platforms, facilitated a three-day workshop for union representatives in Côte d'Ivoire to introduce the concept of a Decent Standard of Living (in which wages are one contributor to income alongside company contributions) and are working with IUF Africa to improve and increase women's employment with a major exporting company in Ghana.



**Watch:** Women taking the lead in promoting safe and healthy working on plantations in Ghana  
- <https://vimeo.com/217476803>

### **Banana workers' co-operative farm in Cameroon**

Inspired by our training programme in Cameroon, members of the Fako Agricultural Workers Union (FAWU) set up their own co-operative farm in 2016, to provide workers and their families with access to affordable food. To help support the farm, we have raised over £1200 in donations, which has enabled them to purchase much needed equipment.



### **World Banana Forum**

The World Banana Forum (WBF), hosted by the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), brings together stakeholders from the whole banana production and distribution chain, including supermarkets, trade unions, small farmers' organisations, fruit companies, UN agencies, NGOs and governments, to work towards sustainability and achieve consensus on best practices in the banana industry.



### **New research aims to improve women's participation in the banana industry**

2016 saw the publication of results of research undertaken by Banana Link, and funded by FAO, which analysed the participation of women workers and small producers in the global banana industry.

Intended to inform WBF decision making, the main finding was that women comprise less than a fifth of the global workforce in the banana export industry, with women's participation being influenced by various factors, including: levels of overall gender equity in local cultures and societies, provision of childcare, dependency on migrant labour, with men

more likely to migrate to work on plantations than women, the diversity of roles that are deemed 'appropriate' for women, company policy and practice that may promote, or discriminate against, women, and the extent to which banana farms are deemed as 'women friendly' workplaces.

### **Gender EqualityEquity Task Force**

A proposal on how to address gender pay gap issues has been developed by Banana Link on behalf of the Gender Equity Task Force (GE-TF) of the World Banana Forum. It has informed living wage discussions and led to a commitment from the ISEAL Alliance (representing sustainability standards) to pilot this gender dimension in living wage benchmark work in Cote d'Ivoire in 2018

This work has been complimented by a practical guide produced by the GE-TF on how both to build the capacity of women to be part of the collective bargaining process and to successfully negotiate gender clauses, based on the experience of Latin American union partners.

Living wages and the gender pay gap are key items for discussion at the Gender Equity Meeting preceding the third international conference of the WBF in November. This meeting aims to agree joint strategies, activities and commitments for proposal and debate within the main conference plenary. BL is coordinating preparations and is fundraising to secure the participation of up to 20 women representatives from small producer organisations and trade unions in four banana exporting regions.

### **Banana Occupational Health and Safety Initiative (BOHESI)**

This initiative has seen the development of the first ever banana industry specific Health and Safety manual for use by companies, small producer and worker representatives. The manual is in two parts - a technical manual with accompanying training materials for OHS representatives plus a series of handouts for workers on OHS risks and preventions related to their specific workplace role.



The BOHESI manual was initially produced for the Ecuadorian context in collaboration with an OHS consultant, local industry partners and the Ministries of Agriculture and Labour. The manual has since been translated into French and English to be adapted for the Cameroon local context. The manual will be launched in Ecuador in August 2017. The manual will be used in subsequent BOHESI training programme with company, worker and government representatives will take place in Ecuador and Cameroon.

## Good practices in the banana industry

Banana Link has contributed to the development of a WBF online portal on sustainable agricultural practices in the banana sector which was launched in 2017. The portal will facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and adoption of good practices in the banana sector, being accessible to small producers and all participants in the value chain players, as well as providing a learning platform.

The portal provides material in three areas: environmental practices, designed to ensure sustainability in the banana industry and to mitigate effects on surrounding ecosystems; standards and certifications, both private and public standards and certifications can be used as ways of formalising and measuring improvements to industry practices; and social practices that can create better lives for banana industry workers.

## Living Wages

The WBF is now collaborating with a coalition of the main certifying bodies (including notably Fairtrade International and Rainforest Alliance) to produce living wage benchmarks for key banana exporting countries. Benchmarks already calculated for Ecuador and Costa Rica will allow us to measure the claims of retailers like Tesco that wages in their suppliers have reached living wage levels over the last three years.

In 2017, the WBF and Global Living Wage Coalition produced a benchmark for Ghana and have updated the benchmark for Dominican Republic, the UK's second biggest source of bananas, where wages are well below the living wage level.

Work is also under way, in collaboration with importer Fyffes and IPL/Asda, on a benchmark for Belize, while a benchmark study in Côte d'Ivoire, which has some of the lowest wages in the global industry, will be taking place in 2018. As referenced earlier, at our suggestion, this work will include the gender dimension to the calculation of Living Wages.

A declaration by producers and traders on their commitment to the work to raise wages is being drafted for signature ahead of the global conference of the WBF later this year.

## The threat of disease to Cavendish bananas

Banana Link is continuing to participate as a member of the WBF TR4 Task Force, which aims to coordinate an international effort to limit the spread of Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 from the epicentre of its first emergence in Asia to other regions. TR4 threatens the future of the banana export industry which is almost wholly reliant on Cavendish bananas, which have no resistance to this fungal strain. The work of the Task Force is focussed on awareness raising and the coordination of a strategy for preventing contamination (via improved border controls, phytosanitary standards, etc.) in the as yet unaffected areas. The group, in association with various technical institutes, is also encouraging research into new designs of footbaths and choices of chemicals to use in them, along with investigation of existing successful options for limiting yield loss in already affected areas.



## Supporting small-scale producers in the Caribbean

Banana Link has worked closely with the Windward Islands Farmers Association (WINFA) in the past year to ensure their voice is heard by importers and retailers, and to promote Caribbean bananas in new markets in Europe, including Portugal, Latvia and Lithuania.

## Rainforest Alliance certification

Since publication of our report last year - *Rainforest Alliance and the Discount Supermarkets: Low Prices and Easy Standards?* – we and local partners in Costa Rica have been in dialogue with the Sustainable Agriculture Network and Rainforest Alliance (who co-own the certification scheme) to address some of the issues raised by the report, in particular, ensuring freedom of association on plantations, and the certifier's engagement with trade unions as part of its auditing process.

In May 2017, following complaints from our union partner and others, Rainforest Alliance suspended the certification of Grupo Acon, a banana and pineapple producer in Costa Rica. The reasons for the suspension relate to discrimination against workers who join a trade union, and having no complaint or grievance mechanisms in place to protect workers' rights.



## Responsible Global Value chains

1 in 5 workers is now employed in a global value chain. Banana Link, along with Peoples Solidaries / Action Aid France, coordinates a European network of civil society organisations, trade unions and academics to share expertise on the social, economic and environmental impacts of value chains and what actions can be taken collectively to ensure that global trade contributes to sustainable development in producing countries in both the south and north.

A series of meetings have taken place in both Paris and London to share expertise from diverse sectors such as agriculture (including bananas), textiles, electronics and minerals and assess the existing progress being made as a result of stricter regulation on due diligence and corporate behaviour at sector, national and European level.

Complimentary to this work, Banana Link continues to be an active member of the Responsible Global Value Chains network, focused on gathering and developing resources for use in management and business schools, and manages of the website - [www.responsibleglobalvaluechains.org](http://www.responsibleglobalvaluechains.org)

## Raising awareness

Banana Link invests considerable resources into raising awareness through analysis, dissemination and publication of information about banana and pineapple production and trade. As the "go-to authority on what is happening within the banana industry", we are regularly quoted in national, international, trade and local media. Our website receives around 50,000 page views a month, while our social media channels and online newsletters and bulletins, for both public and specialist audiences, regularly reach an audience of over 10,000. We also share our research and analysis widely amongst organisations and networks working towards fairer trade and sustainable food production.

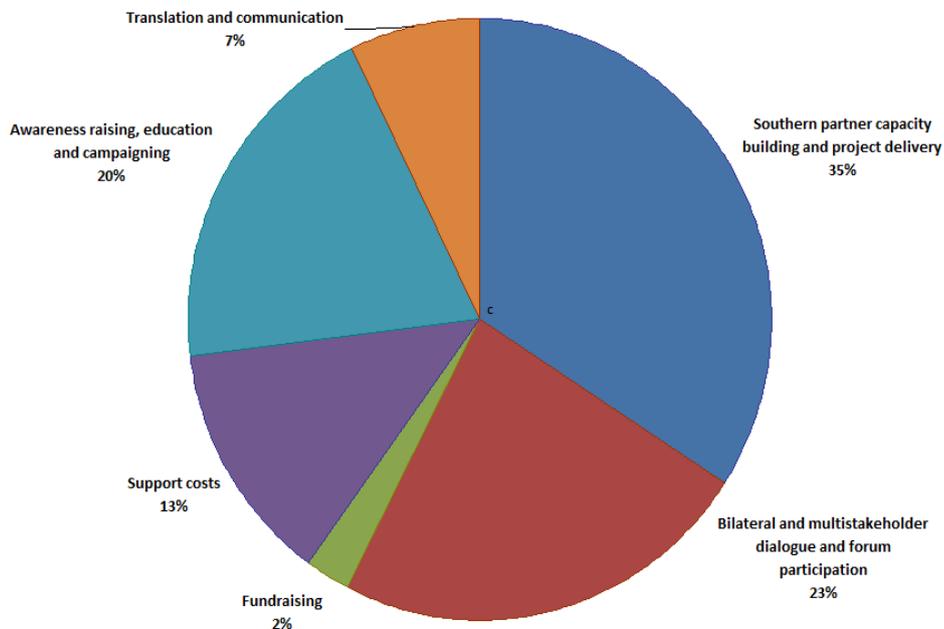
# Our Strategic Objectives

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.

# Income and Expenditure 2016

This chart is a representation of our expenditure in 2016. Please contact us for a detailed breakdown of income and expenditure for this period and a copy of our audited accounts.



Key funders in this period include: European Commission, Comic Relief, Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le Progrès de l’Homme, Fondation des Droits de l’Homme, Confédération Générale du Travail, UNISON, Oxfam, Bama Gruppen and the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH).

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