

A UNITED VOICE FOR BANANA WORKERS IN AFRICA

A report co-authored by Alistair Smith (Banana Link)
and Guillaume F. Tossa (IUF)

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TOWARDS A UNITED VOICE FOR BANANA WORKERS IN AFRICA

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PREFACE

The publication of this report comes at a critical moment for the future of banana workers in the African Network of International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).

From their experience working together over the last six years, the unions represented by the IUF are conscious that the process is always a work in progress. The road towards a united voice that represents the tens of thousands of women and men who depend on the banana industry in Central and West Africa is a long one, but with careful and measured steps we have begun the journey, and are well on our way.

This report provides an broad overview of the current situation and presents itself as valuable tool for African trade unionists and those who work with them on this journey.

The partnership between the IUF and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) is proving to be of paramount importance in building a united voice. The World Without Hunger project provides both a global vision of why this initiative is needed and a framework that helps us to inspire people beyond the world of banana exports.

Building strong and influential trade unions in the banana industry, with an emphasis on collective bargaining, good-faith dialogue, and a focus on gender equality, is a priority for the IUF. Strong and influential trade unions are the foundation for true social justice in the world of work, as much in Africa as in any other continent on the planet. The work in Africa contributes to

and reinforces the IUFs' wider global strategy for the banana sector.

There is still much to be done. But although we have a long path ahead of us, but we will not give up on our deeply held convictions.

We would like to wish the Network every success in the future, and above all, to all those who are reading the words contained in this report, we hope you enjoy.

Sue Longley

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Geneva, Switzerland*

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1. INTRODUCTION

We chose to call our report "Towards a United Voice for Banana Workers in Africa" because its very existence results, on the one hand, from the real need to have a baseline of current but useful information, and on the other, from a clear desire to contribute towards making the information about the banana sector in Africa publically available. Specifically, this report examines the situation of workers employed in the production and export of the Cavendish variety of dessert bananas.

We do not claim to have compiled the vast and diverse information that make up the profound realities of the Banana sector in Africa, including its undeniable benefits, into a single report. Bananas and plantains are, for over half the population of Africa, a staple food and one on which the food security of rural households depends. The subject of subsistence farming of bananas in Africa, while of undeniable importance, is outside the remit of this report.

As these are deep-rooted realities, we believe it necessary to focus on the characteristics of the sector from the perspective of exports from Africa.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BANANA SECTOR IN AFRICA

The banana sector in Africa is expanding, and is characterised by a number of key elements:

- Companies that operate on an industrial scale and are recruiting workers.

- The investment of significant sums of money.
- The creation of direct and indirect jobs.
- Industrial production that operates almost exclusively in a monocultural system with production geared towards exports.
- A 'hidden' presence of small producers who are not well organised or structured.
- A small percentage of the total volume of production is earmarked for local or sub-regional consumption.
- Salaries that constitute income for several tens of thousands of employees.
- Resources invested by companies into the countries where they operate, in the form of taxes, that contribute to GDP and therefore to the building of national economies.

While the economic characteristics of the sector seem very encouraging, we are obliged to take a critical look at the social environments that they engender.

Companies involved in the industrial production of bananas in Africa offer many jobs and use the skills of thousands of men and women as wage earners.

But what conditions do these men and women work under on a daily basis?

Working conditions and relations (employment contracts, working hours, wages, transport, health and safety, role classification, training, promotions etc.) in the banana sector are still not up to scratch for several reasons. Among these, two fundamental issues can be identified :

1. Obsolete national legislation that no longer reflects the reality of the working environment, or does not include it in its wording , but is still in force. For example, the Labour Code in Cameroon, which has been pending review for more than seven years.
2. Some companies and employers who do not comply with the legislation that is currently in force, in order to minimise labour costs and maximise profits by any means possible.

In some countries, strong social inequality still exists between men and women working at the same level or in similar jobs ; between men and women working in the head office, the plant nursery, the packaging station or the plantation at the same company. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, some workers are paid the SMIG (salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti — minimum guaranteed interprofessional wage), while others are paid the SMAG (salaire minimum agricole garanti — minimum guaranteed farm wage).

Workers paid the SMAG—as a result of a strategic choice on the part of employers but with national legislation as the main justification—earn up to **three times less** than workers paid the SMIG.

- The current level of worker representation and social dialogue is unable to meet the needs of the African banana sector. Workers find themselves grouped into micro-organisations, resulting from the fragmentation and proliferation of unions, with low capacity, leading to unequal power relations and unfavourable outcomes for workers and their causes. The specific rights of female workers are still not recognised or respected because of the inability of their trade unions to listen to them and grant them due care.
- In some companies in the sector, human rights in the workplace are not respected, which means that workers in these companies do not have unions, cannot organise meetings, cannot participate in training sessions etc., for fear of redundancy or retaliation, despite it being the 21st century.

Faced with this critical situation and a gloomy diagnosis, what should be done?

We must act decisively at two separate levels:

- ✓ At company level
- ✓ Within an operational framework for action at the regional level.

What have we done within companies?

In some companies, we have implemented one of the most innovative tools of modern social science, the New Social Dynamic, which is both a process and a mechanism:

- It is a process, allowing us to implement planned actions to achieve specific results.
- It is a mechanism, allowing us to combine methods and elements to achieve specific objectives.

In concrete terms, what has this allowed us to do?

- To establish a formal framework within a company that can unite all social forces, allowing business leaders and trade union leaders to come together, to think together, to act together and to evaluate actions and results together.
- We have worked to pool all social forces within companies, which has enabled us to:
 1. Improve the representation of workers from a qualitative perspective, through a **platform of trade union organisations that operates within a company as the sole contact point for the company's management.**
 2. The beginnings of social dialogue and qualitative improvements to collective bargaining, as part of a

group effort and with meetings planned throughout the year.

3. Qualitative improvements to labour relations.
4. Qualitative improvements to working conditions.

In light of the situation that confronts us, strong and influential trade unions are needed in businesses operating in the African banana trade.

In order to develop strong and influential trade unions within companies, an operational structure at the regional level was required. Thus, in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) in 2014, the **IUF African Banana Workers Network** was founded.

This Network is implementing the vision, policy and objectives of the IUF for the banana sector in Africa through on-the-ground projects and concrete initiatives, often with compelling results.

Of course, given the challenges, there is still much to be done, despite the progress that has been made in a very short amount of time.

We therefore wish the Network a long future and every success in its work.

2. THE GLOBAL CONTEXT OF BANANAS

2.1 – A key crop with critical importance for food security

Bananas are the third largest tropical fruit crop in terms of planted area. With up to 85% of production consumed locally, the crop plays a major role in food security in more than 70 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Globally - after dairy products, rice, and wheat - dessert bananas and plantains are the fourth most important agricultural sector in terms of household food security, and are more important than maize on a global scale.

Key banana statistics

- Between 110-130 million tonnes of bananas are produced each year.
- More than 50 million tonnes of dessert bananas are produced each year, with 18 million tonnes being exported.
- Around 50 million tonnes of cooking bananas (plantain and others) are produced each year.
- There are more than 150 producer countries.
- There are at least 1,000 cultivated varieties.

2.2 – The global market

Bananas are both the most internationally traded fruit and the most popular tropical fruit worldwide. They are the leading fruit

exported in terms of volume, and are second only to citrus fruit in terms of value. The banana is a basic perishable commodity, but is also a sensitive product in economic terms and from a social, environmental and political perspective.

In 2019, total exports topped 20 million tonnes, according to figures from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Latin America continues to dominate international trade with six of the seven main exporting countries. These six countries supply 80% of the global market.

Côte d'Ivoire is currently in eighth place among exporting countries, and Cameroon in tenth, assuming that the Dominican Republic returns to its 2018 level of export volumes.

Ecuador has continued its unstoppable growth and occupies a more dominant position today than it did a few years ago, with 36% of the world market. The other country that has experienced significant growth is Guatemala. Today, Guatemala is by far the largest supplier of bananas to the North American market, given its geographical proximity, its impressive productivity and low wages in the vast plantations of the Pacific coast, where workers' unions have been unable to organise owing to threats of violence.

The Philippines, which became the world's second largest exporter again in 2018, had seen its exports drop repeatedly in recent years as a result of Panama disease (Tropical Race 4) and adverse weather events linked to climate change. But the Philippines is not in direct competition with Africa, as it exports almost exclusively to Asia (China, Japan, South Korea, etc.) and does not export at all to the European market.

The main importing countries are the European Union (EU-28) - with Germany and the UK being the biggest importers - followed by the USA, with Russia, China and Japan in third, fourth and fifth place, respectively. These five destinations account for more than 70% of the bananas traded internationally.

The major exporting countries in 2017

Metric tonnes exported

Ecuador	6,548,000	Mexico	556,000
Costa Rica	2,428,000	Côte d'Ivoire	384,000
Guatemala	2,116,000	Dominican Republic*	172,000 (389,000 in 2016)
Colombia	1,989,000	Cameroon	285,000
The Philippines	1,668,000	Panama	275,000
Honduras	667,000	Peru	202,000

Source: FAO

* Exports severely affected by exceptional climatic conditions.

Historically dominated by three US multinationals, Chiquita, Dole and Fresh del Monte, the global banana trade has undergone a significant change over the last ten years. The oligopoly of these three companies has declined sharply to the point that they now

control less than 40% of the market, compared to more than 70% in the 1990s.

In addition, all three companies are now owned by other countries. Chiquita was acquired in 2015 by several Brazilian companies; Dole was acquired by an Irish group in 2018; and Fresh Del Monte is owned by a group based in the United Arab Emirates, even though its headquarters remains in the USA.

These three multinationals now sell the vast majority of their bananas on the North American market, while the European market has opened up to much more competition, with the leading company in the European Union being Fyffes, an Irish company that was taken over in 2016 by a large Japanese group.

Market share of the largest banana companies

<i>Company</i>	<i>Country of head office</i>	<i>Estimated percentage of the global market in 2017</i>
Total Produce/Dole Food	Ireland/USA	14
Chiquita Brands International	Switzerland	13
Fresh Del Monte Produce	United States	12
Fyffes/Sumitomo	Ireland/Japan	6
Compagnie Fruitière	France	4
Grupo HAME	Guatemala	4
Grupo Agroamérica	Guatemala	3

Source: Banana Link calculations based on publicly available business information

3. THE AFRICAN CONTEXT OF BANANA EXPORTS

According to official statistics provided by governments to the FAO, the average annual production of dessert and plantain bananas between 2011 and 2016 for Cameroon was 5.1 million tonnes, of which only 5% was exported. For Côte d'Ivoire, the production of dessert and plantain bananas amounted to an annual average of 1.9 million tonnes, of which only dessert bananas - accounting for 20% of the overall total - were exported. In Ghana, the average annual production of plantains for the period was 3.7 million tonnes. As in the other two countries, plantains are sold exclusively on the domestic market.

By comparison, the world's largest banana producer, India, averaged 28.4 million tonnes per year between 2011 and 2016, of which almost nothing was exported. During the same period, Africa's largest producer, Uganda, produced an annual average of 10.1 million tonnes of bananas and plantains.

Although exact figures do not exist, it is certain that dessert bananas, plantains and rice are the products that contribute the most to the food security of tens of millions of African households.

3.1 – Banana exports

Although banana exports from Africa have grown significantly in terms of volume - by more than a third in ten years - the continent's share of the global market has remained stable at around 4%, roughly the same now as it was in 2008. The

increasing volume of bananas produced in Africa is a result of the growth of the world market for bananas.

According to the FAO, the total volume exported in 2017 by the three countries covered in this analysis - Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana - was 735,000 tonnes. Ethiopia exported 12,000 tonnes.

Exports to the EU-28, 2017

	<i>UK</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cameroon	36,093	105,288	121,835	7,091	270,306
Côte d'Ivoire	68,272	153,118	81,347	13,120	315,855
Ghana	31,449	15,857	19,146	102	70,373

Source: Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development, CIRAD)/Eurostat, June 2018

The main final destination market is still Western Europe, with France and the UK being the biggest markets, representing almost two thirds of the consumption of all bananas exported from Africa. In France, almost two out of every five bananas consumed are from Africa, while in the UK, one in eight is from Africa.

Bananas exported to Belgium are distributed across various European Union countries and most do not stay in the receiving country.

Total exports (2006, 2011, 2016 and 2017)

	2006	2011	2016	2017
Cameroon	257,000	237,000	297,000	285,600
Côte d'Ivoire	248,000	273,000	308,000	383,900
Ghana	22,000	47,000	58,000	70,400

Sources: UN Comtrade and Eurostat (2006-16); FAO for 2017

There are two emerging phenomena that can be observed:

- An expansion of exports to regional markets in West and Central Africa.
- A diversification of sales within the European single market to countries in Central and Eastern Europe (via Belgium), and to Spain.

3.2 – Investment in banana production

There has been a very significant change in the origin of investment. A few years ago, large American multinationals were very interested in the potential of African bananas, but the following factors have intervened to create quite a different situation in the present day:

- The Geneva Agreement signed in 2009 at the World Trade Organisation, which ended the famous trade war, set out a timetable for a gradual reduction in the tariffs paid by 'third countries' (Latin America) to sell their bananas in the EU. This represented a reduction in the advantage that

African (and Caribbean) countries had in being able to sell their bananas freely in the EU. Simply put, it became less interesting, commercially speaking, to benefit from Africa's free access to the European market, especially as the liberalisation of the European Union market was making it increasingly unattractive in terms of price and therefore profit margins for the big multinationals to operate there.

- Problems relating to the acquisition of land resources had been underestimated by multinationals, especially when it came to the complexity of negotiations with traditional chiefs.
- Workers did not 'respond' to incentives for maximum productivity in the same way as their counterparts in Latin America. Even though wages are generally lower than in Latin America, banana production requires two workers per hectare in Africa compared to one in the Americas.
- In 2013, the new strain of Panama disease - previously only found in Asia - was discovered in Mozambique, putting an end to multinational investment in the region and perhaps wiping out the prospect of investment in Africa at all.

In concrete terms, the facts are as follows:

- Chiquita, which had already sold its operations in Côte d'Ivoire in 2008, abandoned its plans to partner with the Portuguese group Escom in Angola in 2009, and did not follow up on its prospective visit to Ethiopia in 2010.

- In 2013, Del Monte ended its marketing agreement and technical management role with the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) after 25 years.
- In 2014, Dole withdrew from its financial and commercial partnership with Compagnie Fruitière after 21 years.

The exception that proves the rule is the marketing partnership signed by Dole in early 2014 to distribute bananas of the South African company Matanuska in the Middle East. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the company assumes no production risk in this partnership.

Therefore, those who have invested in African banana production over the last ten years are not traditional multinationals - for whom there is no longer any economic benefit - but are new players, such as the Kuwaitis investing in Ghana, and investors who desire to form partnerships with local sources of capital. The most significant example is that of the investment by companies from the French West Indies in Côte d'Ivoire.

For Angola, where the multinationals failed, it was a Portuguese company that started regular exports to Portugal.

3.3 – The structure of the industry in Cameroon

Today, in Cameroon, three banana companies operate on a total of approximately 8,000 hectares:

- Plantations du Haut Penja (PHP), a subsidiary of the French group Compagnie Fruitière.

- Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), owned by the Cameroonian State.
- BOH Plantations Limited (BPL), established with Cameroonian investment.

Brief history

In 1907, while Cameroon was still under German colonial rule, bananas were first produced for export by German businessmen. Around a dozen companies and up to 10,000 hectares were engaged in the production of the Gros Michel variety of dessert banana.

In the 1930s, a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company (now Chiquita) was established in Francophone Cameroon, followed in 1946 by the British Commonwealth Development Corporation who established plantations on land in the Anglophone region which had been confiscated from the Germans following World War II. Following the ravages of Panama disease in the 1950s, Gros Michel was replaced by the Cavendish variety.

In the 1980s, a strategic agreement between the the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and the multinational Del Monte, and the purchase of PHP by Compagnie Fruitière, signalled a revival of production for export.

In 2018, outside the Haut Penja region, PHP had operations in Tiko in the English-speaking region of the south-west and was developing up to 800 hectares of organic land in the south, in Déhané. The three BPL plantations are located around Missaka and Mouanda, in the English speaking region.

CDC, which has plantations in English-speaking Tiko and Ekona, finds itself caught up in the conflict between Anglophone secessionists and the national security forces, which has been affecting the region since 2016. As a result, the company has had to close 11 of its plantations.

In 1988, the Association Bananière du Cameroun (the banana producers' association of Cameroon, ASSOACAM) was established.

3.4 – The structure of the industry in Côte d'Ivoire

The banana export industry in Côte d'Ivoire currently has six key players with a total planted area of some 10,000 hectares:

- La Société de la Culture Bananière (SCB), a subsidiary of the French group Compagnie Fruitière.
- FB SAS (France Banane), formerly SAKJ/Canavèse, the second biggest exporter.
- Plantations Jean Eglin, belonging to Belgian group SIPEF.
- The CFA independent producers' cooperative belonging to the SPDCIE-BATIA Group.
- Banane Antilles Côte d'Ivoire (BANACI), owned by the Martinique-based group Bernard Hayot.
- BACIBAM and Société Ivoirio-Antillaise de Production Agricole (SIAPA) belonging to Guadeloupe-based investors, producing the Issi brand.

It would appear that Tiabam, registered at the beginning of 2018, has been acquired by BANACI.

Brief history

While a few attempts to export bananas had been made in Côte d'Ivoire from as early as the 1930s, it was not until colonial settlers arrived from Conakry (Guinea) in 1958 that the potential was really developed. Up until the 1980s, production in the country grew, with a record 160,000 tonnes exported in 1972 and the involvement of up to 750 small producers. Deregulation of the national market in 1989 and the creation of the single European market in 1993 put an end to the involvement of small national producers, leaving almost the whole industry open to foreign investors.

The new wave of investment by companies of French Caribbean origin in recent years has been hampered by shortages of skilled labour, among other things.

The companies are members of two professional organisations: OCAB (Organisation Centrale des Producteurs Exportateurs d'Ananas, Banane et Autres Fruits — Central Organisation of Exporters of Pineapples, Bananas and Other Fruits) set up in 1991; or OBAM-CI (Organisation des producteurs-exportateurs de bananes, ananas et mangues de Côte d'Ivoire — Organisation of Producers-Exporters of Bananas, Pineapples, Mangoes and Other Export Fruits of Côte d'Ivoire) set up in 2009.

Today, apart from the new zone of organic production around Bandama in the north, developed by SCB, the plantations are all located in the southeast of the country around Tiassalé, Niéky, Azaguié, Moyen-Comoé and Sud-Comoé.

Some 15% of exports are to neighbouring countries.

3.5 – The structure of the industry in Ghana

The industry in Ghana today has three key players and an area that exceeds 2,000 planted hectares:

- Golden Exotics Ltd (GEL), a subsidiary of the French group Compagnie Fruitière.
- Volta River Estates Ltd (VREL), a Dutch-Ghanaian joint venture company.
- Equatorial Capital Ventures Ltd (ECV) (Musamahat Farms), with Kuwaiti investors.

Brief history

The first commercial operations in Ghana date back to the late 1980s with Dutch investment in the Volta region. In 1996, VREL became the world's first certified Fairtrade banana producer. It remained the only certified producer until 2005, when a new Compagnie Fruitière subsidiary was set up in the same region. In 2012, ECV arrived to plant pineapples and papayas, and later bananas.

Three of VREL's five plantations were certified organic until recently, whilst GEL has developed more than 500 hectares of organic production, with the ultimate aim of introducing other crops and even animal husbandry into the system. Twenty per cent of exported bananas are sold in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin.

In August 2018, the three key players announced the creation of a professional organisation, the Ghana Banana Producers' Association (GBPA).

THE NUMBER OF JOBS IN THE VARIOUS COMPANIES

In July 2018:

Côte d'Ivoire

SCB	7,159, of whom 1,022 are women
Eglin	1,380, of whom 252 are women
Tiabam	213, of whom 87 are women
Canavèse	2,400 (bananas and pineapples)
BANACI	Approx. 1,500
SIAPA	Approx. 750
CFA	?

Cameroon

PHP	6,906, of whom 987 are women
CDC	7,000** - most of whom were laid off in 2018
BOH	600, of whom 150 are women

Ghana

GEL	2,762, of whom 180 are women
VREL	650, of whom 142 are women
ECV	Approx. 400

Approximate total for all three countries: 32,000 employees, of which 15-17% are women on average.

Sources: Estimates based on information provided by the trade unions and available on corporate websites.

*** Given the critical situation in CDC plantations in early 2018, it is impossible to say how many jobs are sustainable. By the beginning of 2019, almost all production had stopped and employees had not been receiving wages for a year in most cases.*

3.6 – Some African banana brands



3.6 – Afruibana: The first regional association of producers and exporters

Created in July 2017 and initially comprising ASSOBAACAM and OBAM-CI, Afruibana aims to be an open platform that brings together the continent's fruit producers to allow them to "make their voices better heard in international trade".



Afruibana is an association under Cameroonian law. One of its main roles is to represent the African industry in the renegotiations of the Cotonou Agreement that began in 2018, especially with EU institutions.

GBPA has been a member of Afruibana since its creation in August 2018.

"GBPAs' membership confirms the importance of setting up Afruibana to meet the expectation of African fruit producers", said Joseph Owona Kono, President of Afruibana, adding: "The European institutional agenda for 2018 and beyond is very full, and our Association will have to bring its full strength to defend African interests, both in regard to the tariffs applied to banana imports from Latin American countries and maintaining the EU stabilisation mechanism for bananas."

"We are proud to join Afruibana and contribute to the work of the association to defend the interests of our African producers in Brussels", said Anthony Kofi Blay, President of the Ghana

Banana Producers Association. "Ghanaian banana producers are particularly concerned about Brexit, as the UK accounts for a significant share of our European market opportunities."

4. AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS

Ten years ago, banana workers' unions in Africa were unaware of each other's existence. Workers themselves had even less awareness of the various unions competing to represent those employed in the banana sector. National borders and language barriers between countries, and language barriers within Cameroon, meant that those who produced the wealth in the fields and packhouses in Africa had no contact with each other. And this was despite the fact that more than half of African workers were employed by the same company.

Although not the subject of this report, it should be noted that the colonial legacy of the three countries, and of the different trade unions in Francophone and Anglophone countries, has been an important factor to deal with in the construction of the new, more horizontal relationships within the IUF Network. While the second section of this chapter focuses on the historical context of the trade unions of Francophone Africa, the discerning reader would be well aware that Ghana's history since the British colonial era has played a key role in the evolution of Ghanaian trade unionism since the country gained its independence 60 years ago. The French and British models are very different, so it is not surprising that the trade union movement that has emerged from the colonial era is very much characterised by the similarities with the workers' movements of the respective colonial powers. Moreover, the reactions of the colonial powers that partially defined the respective national trade union movements in France and the UK are partially reflected in the different post-colonial states. However, this is a complex topic, which would require detailed analysis in a report of its own.

In this chapter, it is important to make reference to the parallel with trade unions operating in the main banana exporting countries of Latin America. The banana workers' unions in countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala or Panama were among the first trade unions to be created in their countries, often emerging in situations of violence and bloodshed.

The massacres and major strikes that took place in Latin American banana exporting countries between 1928 and 1954, out of which the union organisations were born, just like the various waves of colonisation in West and Central Africa, have shaped the views and actions of organised workers in this vast industry (which dates back to the end of the 19th century in many cases).

As an introduction to this chapter, it should be noted that today there is a relative openness to trade unions by most of the companies operating in the African export sector when compared to the national and multinational companies operating in Latin America.

4.1- General context of the evolution of trade unionism in francophone West and Central Africa

Social life in African countries in general, and especially in Francophone Africa, is largely regulated by the trade union movement, which cuts across both political and economic life.

It is difficult, if not impossible, in these conditions to address the general context of the evolution of the trade union movement in Africa without reflecting on the colonial period.

Over years of struggles and strengthening resilience, trade unionism has proved itself to be a key determining factor in the political, economic and social lives of workers - particularly salaried employees - and remains an effective structure for representing and defending their interests.

The roots of trade unionism in Africa can be traced back to the colonial period, when a broad social movement was galvanised in response to - and strongly against – colonialism. Trade unionism was one of the key manifestations of this anti-colonial social movement.

Despite this, it is important to note that the workers' movement in France had a strong influence on the social movement in French African colonies, where its replication had the effect of controlling and containing the strength of the burgeoning African working class.

The trade union confederations that existed in Africa reflected the conflicting divisions of the French trade union movement: the Confédération Générale du Travail (General confederation of labour, CGT), in the communist tradition; Force Ouvrière (Workers' force, FO) in the socialist tradition; and the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (French confederation of Christian workers).

Trade unionism therefore became a socio-political reality in the colonies very early on, but its legal recognition encountered

numerous difficulties, despite the provisions of the French Act of 21 March 1884. Although it applied to the colonies, this law was not enacted and therefore could not be imposed, as trade unionism was incompatible with forced labour.

Furthermore, in order for African workers to form groups of associations of more than twenty people, they had to obtain administrative authorisation so as not to break colonial law.

It was more than half a century before the decree of 11th March 1937 authorised the formation of trade unions in the colonies allowing local French subjects (i.e. African workers in the colonies) to organise. However the right to association was only granted to workers who could read, write and speak French and to those who held the Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elémentaires (primary school leaving certificate).

Despite the promises made by France at the Brazzaville Conference held between 30 January and 8 February 1944, it took until 10 May that year for the International Labour Organisation (ILO), through the Declaration of Philadelphia, to demand that the principles of tripartism and freedom of association be applied in both dependent and independent countries.

Two days later on 12 May 1944, the ILO adopted the recommendation on minimum standards of social policy in dependent territories.

Under internal and international pressure, France adopted a decree granting the right and freedom of association to French

subjects, again referring to their status as the "indigénat" (indigenous African subjects).

In 1952, full trade union rights were introduced as a result of the upheavals caused by the Second World War.

This caused France significant difficulties in justifying its suppression of the nascent trade union movement in its African colonies, and ultimately France was forced to make major concessions. The most notable was through the French Act of 15 December 1952 which established the Overseas Labour Code and put an end to all the restrictions imposed by the decree of 7 August 1944. It should be noted that the passing of this law was only effective thanks to the pressure put on France by the collective strikes of trade unions throughout the whole of French West Africa (FWA) on 3 November 1952.

The French Act of 1952 threw open the doors to the development of trade unionism in Africa. By 1956, for example, there were already 908 trade unions in FWA with 18,393 members, and 507 unions in French Equatorial Africa with 7,000 members. These unions were strongly committed to the struggle for social justice between indigenous African workers ("local French subjects") and French expatriate workers.

At the same time, these trade unions had a responsibility to play a leading role in the pursuit of national and international sovereignty in the countries of Black Africa, with the aim of guaranteeing the improvement of living conditions for their members.

Between 16th and 19th January 1957, in the midst of the campaign for national and international sovereignty, a trade

union conference was convened bringing together all the French-speaking trade union organisations of West and Central Africa in Cotonou, Dahomey (present day Benin). The conference had two objectives:

- To achieve trade union unity.
- To firmly engage the working class in the campaign for African independence

The resulting unification of the trade union movement led to the creation of the General Union of Negro African Workers (GUNAW), which intentionally voted "No" in the referendum on self-determination organised by France on 28 September 1958.

Unfortunately, and against all expectations, the "No" vote was not accepted, except by Guinea, and this plunged the GUNAW into turmoil, dividing the trade union movement in French-speaking Black Africa.

Once independence had been achieved, African governments, both civilian and military, showed a certain degree of mistrust towards trade unions with whom it had not been possible to secure genuine democratic participation in the design and implementation of economic and social development programmes.

It was therefore necessary to "invent" a policy of "responsible participation", which reduced trade unions to the role of an appendage of power, or a kind of conveyor belt between workers, their members and the powers that be.

Trade unions remained in this position for a long time in order to survive and avoid isolation, prohibition, repression etc. by communist-inspired or dictatorial regimes.

But in truth, the regimes during this period, whether civilian or military, communist-inspired or dictatorial, never succeeded in totally silencing the African trade union movement because of its determination and fighting spirit. They were also never able to dominate and control all the existing trade union structures, especially at grassroots level. Nonetheless, there was a serious disruption to the African trade union movement owing to its total submission during this era.

It took until the early 1980s for the trade union grassroots membership, born out of dissatisfaction with the feeble results attained during their subordination, and representing the true vehicle of social power, to exert sufficient pressure to call into question the relationships between trade union organisations and governments.

These relations were largely unfavourable to workers as a whole because of the very strong dependence of trade unions on the party-state, both in their organisation and in their functioning, coupled with the constant deterioration of workers' living conditions and the constant threat of losing their jobs.

With the profound political and socio-economic changes of the 1990s, we have therefore moved from the period of single trade union organisations to a period of pluralism in which the African trade union movement has regained its independence and autonomy thanks in large part to the conviction and determination

of the workers in charge of coordinating the structures at the grassroots level.

In this context of regained democratic freedoms, independence and autonomy, the African trade union movement finds itself facing new challenges which result from the poor regulation of exercising democratic freedoms (especially trade union and organisational freedoms).

We must have the strength to say, and the courage to acknowledge, that the African trade union movement is now at its lowest level, owing to the proliferation and profusion of trade union organisations. This has led to the atomisation and total weakening of social forces which have become incapable of adapting and effectively carrying out their original mission: defending workers' interests.

This proliferation of trade union organisations, with their divergent ideological and political affiliations, their competing leaderships and, above all, the dubious credentials of the men in charge, has not led to unified, effective and results-oriented trade union action that could meet workers' expectations.

It seems to have been completely forgotten that educating and training workers is undeniably the basis of trade union action.

Far from claiming to have made the whole diagnosis, we note with sadness and bitter regret that the African trade union movement is currently unfit for purpose; it is in deep decline as a result of the accumulated excesses and failures of many years.

Today, more than ever, there is a critical need to rebuild the African trade union movement. This reconstruction requires an overriding shift of objectives, a restructuring and above all a vitally needed transition from classical trade unionism to « development-oriented trade unionism ».

Classical trade unionism has certainly proved its worth and has perhaps had its moments of success, but it has to be acknowledged that, in the face of the harsh realities of today's constantly changing world with its complex and multiple challenges, it has sufficiently demonstrated its limitations and is no longer able to meet the challenges.

To overcome the bottlenecks, to move forwards, to progress and to succeed, we will have to build new guidelines, new strategies and new objectives.

4.2 – Country profiles of trade unions in the banana sector

In some fruit companies, the number of trade unions has increased, but defending workers' interests has been fairly ineffective owing to competition for the ear and favour of company management.

In Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, trade unions have mainly formed as company-based unions affiliated to different national trade union confederations. Their sphere of influence rarely extends beyond the company in which they operate.

This plurality of trade union organisations has led to a breakdown in relations between trade unions and company management,

very often at the expense of a concrete improvement in the working conditions of the vast majority of workers.

In Ghana, the General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU) is a national trade union that not only operates in the different agro-industrial sectors of the country, but has also been able to mobilise many small producers and self-employed workers. Until 2012–13, the GAWU worked with almost all employees in the banana industry, in the two companies operating at the time.

However, a strike at GEL (a Compagnie Fruitière subsidiary), which was rather poorly managed by the leadership of GAWU, caused them to rapidly lose influence within the company, to the extent that today almost all employees are instead members of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), another national union. ICU is not affiliated with the majority national confederation, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) of Ghana.

Trade unions in Ghana's banana plantations

The two unions that are members of the African Network are the GAWU and the ICU.

GAWU was founded in 1959, the year that Ghana gained independence. Since its foundation, it has been affiliated with the TUC of Ghana. At its peak in the 1990s, it had more than 30,000 members in the agricultural sector. It was one of the leading unions in supporting independent small farmers, especially cocoa producers.

In 1995, the union approached the banana company VREL, where it was able to recruit all employees—men and women—and negotiated its first collective agreement, which has been renewed biennially ever since. Today, the GAWU is the only remaining trade union to operate at VREL, with 650 members.

In 2006/7, following the establishment of Compagnie Fruitière' subsidiary, Golden Exotics Limited (GEL), in the same region, GAWU organised almost all of the 1000+ employees at that time, and negotiated biennial collective agreements until 2014, when the ICU took over following the strike.

Despite the fact that it now only has a few dozen members, GAWU maintains a good relationship and dialogue with GEL. The two unions formed a joint women workers' committee in 2018.

In the newest fruit company, ECV (Musamahat), GAWU has organised all employees working on papaya and pineapple plantations, but has no presence in their new banana plantation.

Source: GAWU

The **Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU)** was founded in 1960, and was affiliated with the TUC of Ghana until 2005 when it left the congress to become independent. Although it has no history in the agricultural sector, the ICU joined GEL in 2013 and quickly recruited around 2,000 members who left GAWU following strike action. Today, it has some 2,300 members in the company and has taken over the role of partner in negotiating biennial collective bargaining agreements.

In 2016, when the banana plantation of the Kuwaiti company ECV was set up at Musahamat Farms, the ICU mobilised all employees and fought for non-permanent contracts to be regularised. In 2018, it had 547 members in the company.

Source: ICU

Trade unions in Côte d'Ivoires' banana plantations

There are now five trade unions at SCB, the national subsidiary of Compagnie Fruitière: SYNATRA-SCB (Syndicat Autonome de Travailleurs de la SCB — SCB workers' independent trade union); SYNTRA-SCB (Syndicat des Travailleurs de la SCB — SCB workers' trade union); SYNLITRA-SCB (Syndicat Libre des Travailleurs de la SCB — SCB workers' free trade union); SYNAP-SCB (Syndicat Agricole de Plantations de la SCB — SCB plantations agricultural trade union) and SYNADDT. The latter, set up from scratch for the 2018 union elections, is not part of the SCB platform of trade unions, which was set up in 2014. SYNAP-SCB, which registered the most members at SCB during the last union elections, was unable to provide any information for this

report. The information below was provided by the different trade unions.

SYNATRA was founded in 2003. It is affiliate to the Union Nationale des Travailleurs de la Côte d'Ivoire (National Union of Workers of Côte d'Ivoire — UNATR-CI). By 2018, it had 1,519 members in the company.

Its main actions are: health insurance for all; increasing the transport allowance; separating wage categories and performance bonuses; more public holidays; and adequate personal protective equipment.

SYNTRA-SCB was founded in 2001, after "a lot of resistance" from the company, according to reports in the press at the time. It is affiliated to the Confédération Ivoirienne des Syndicats Libres - Dignité (Ivorian Confederation of Free Trade Unions - Dignity), and in 2018 had 1,134 members in the company.

SYNTRA-SCB played an important role in setting up the platform of trade unions operating at SCB and emphasises the importance of constructing a common trade union dialogue with the company's management. In 2017, the union lost its historic leader following an assault near the plantation where he worked.

SYNLITRA-SCB was founded in 2010. It is affiliated to the Fédération des Syndicats Autonomes de la Côte d'Ivoire (Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Côte d'Ivoire). In 2018, it had 401 members.

Its main demands concern the wage disparity between workers classified as 'agricultural' (who are paid the SMAG) and those workers

paid the SMIG; reducing the number of people affected by the restructuring plan announced by the company; and offering health insurance.

In the other companies, two trade unions at Plantations Jean Eglin (SIPEF) work with the IUF African Network: SYNATEG (affiliated with Dignité), and SYNTEG (affiliated with UNATR-CI). Both of them have between 600 and 700 members out of a workforce of some 1,400 employees.

At Tiabam, it is reported that there are four trade unions, including Syndicat des Travailleurs Tiabam SAS (Tiabam SAS Workers' Trade Union) and INATRA Tiabam.

Trade unions in Cameroons' banana plantations

In 2018, at PHP (the national subsidiary of Compagnie Fruitière), there were six unions that have been part of the trade union platform that has operated there since 2013: SDEAPEM (Syndicat Départemental de l'Agriculture Pêche et Élevage du Moungo — Muongo Regional Trade Union of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock); SYATRABPM (Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs des Plantations Bananières du Moungo — Moungo Independent Trade Union of Banana Plantation Workers); SDLAMP (Syndicat Départemental Libre de l'Agriculture et Plantation du Moungo — Moungo Regional Free Union of Agriculture and Plantation); FAWU (Fako Agricultural Workers' Union); DISAWOFA (Divisional Syndicate of Agricultural Workers in Fako); and SATAM (Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de L'Agriculture du Moungo - Moungo Independent Union of Agricultural Workers).

There is also a newly-formed seventh organisation, which is not yet a member of the PHP trade union platform. According to the latest information from the human resources department of PHP, in September 2018, 79% of employees were unionised, compared to 67% in 2014.

Two of the unions have a presence at PHP in one of its divisions, although FAWU and DISAWOFA are based in the English-speaking region of the south-west and have a presence in CDC's plantations and the new BOH company in the district of Fako.

The information below was provided by the different trade unions concerned.

SYTRAPBAM was founded in 2007. It is affiliated to the CGT-Liberté (CGT-Liberty) of Cameroon and had 2,515 members in 2018. It campaigns for registration with the National Social Insurance Fund and participates actively in negotiations between the platform and the company in order to comply with all the provisions contained in the collective agreement, for a 'meal allowance' and a ration for sick workers. SYTRAPBAM strives to reduce the impact of the use of various chemical products on the environment and the health of workers, and to prevent and manage occupational accidents and diseases.

SDEAPEM was founded in 1972 at a time when there was no trade union diversity. It is affiliated with Union Nationale des Travailleurs du Cameroun (National Union of Workers of Cameroon, UNTC), an arm of the UNC (Union Nationale Camerounaise — Cameroonian National Union) political party. Today, it is affiliated with the CSTC (Confédération Syndicale des Travailleurs du Cameroun — Cameroon Trade Union Confederation of Workers) and has 2,100 members at PHP. It is currently suspended from membership of the trade union platform.

SATAM was founded in 2006 and is affiliated with the Confédération des Syndicats Autonomes du Cameroun (Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Cameroon, CSAC). It has 100 members at PHP.

SATAM is active in educating workers, reporting harassment and defending workers on reclassification issues relating to their duties. It is also considering the possible need for a sectoral agreement in the Cameroonian banana industry and beyond.

FAWU was founded in 1947 at the plantations of the state-owned company CDC. It is affiliated with the CSAC. In 2018, FAWU had about 5,000 members in the banana industry, the vast majority at CDC and BOH.

The union does a great deal of work in educating its members on all issues related to labour laws, health and safety laws etc. In collaboration with the GAWU and Banana Link, the union ran a successful campaign to involve more women in its structures. It is also campaigning for the ratification of Convention 184 on health and safety in agriculture (ILO) by the Government of Cameroon.

DISAWOFA was founded in 2004 in the CDC plantations. It is affiliated with the Cameroon Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Today, it has a total of 1,680 members in the three companies, of which 1,565 work at CDC. DISAWOFA focuses on training its members in health and safety committees and collective bargaining in the three companies.

4.3 – Structuring trade union platforms

The pooling of all social forces is a strategic priority of the « New Social Dynamic », and a prerequisite for genuine worker representation; it is the first of the four foundational pillars of the New Social Dynamic. With this in mind, some companies in the banana sector already have operational trade union platforms. For example:

- In Cameroon, the PHP platform.
- In Côte d'Ivoire, the SCB platform.

The trade union platform is an umbrella structure governed by both a charter laying out the principles and rules of its functioning, and an organisational chart that sets out the various bodies it comprises.

According to one of the provisions of the charter, the platform is the only authority for dialogue between workers' representatives and the management within the company. The company management must refrain from receiving trade union organisations individually.

The Presidency of the platform is held on a rotating or alternating basis to allow all leaders of the member organisations to exercise trade union democracy and democratic governance in the context of the transition from traditional trade unionism to development-oriented trade unionism.

The term of office is 12 months, at the end of which an end-of-mandate General Assembly is convened in a spirit of "accountability".

At each end-of-mandate General Assembly, the following documents will be presented, with the outgoing President in attendance

1. A general report on the state of the platform.
2. An activity report.
3. A financial report.
4. A management and audit report.

The General Assembly deliberates over the reports, makes recommendations and takes final decisions. It is the General Assembly that elects the President for the following financial year.

With its own funding and the contribution of Fairtrade International, IUF carries out a performance audit each year before the General Assembly, which allows it to measure:

1. How meaningfully rooted the process is within the company, using the so-called 'penetration index'.
2. The performance of the structure and its bodies.

3. The progress made in social dialogue and collective bargaining and the adoption of negotiation techniques.
4. The efforts made by the parties involved (the company and the platform) to improve working conditions and the results obtained.
5. The quality of labour relations etc.

However, for the past two years, this audit has not been carried out due to lack of funding. We are hoping for the sympathetic consideration of organisations that understand the real benefits of such an audit.

5. AN EXPERIENCE THAT DESERVES TO BE SHARED:

THE LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE OF FEDERATING SOCIAL FORCES IN THE BANANA SECTOR SINCE 1993

La Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Sindicatos Bananeros y Agroindustriales (the Coordinating Body of Latin American Banana and Agroindustrial Unions, COLSIBA)

African trade unions must draw on the Latin American experience in the banana sector to develop their strategies for pooling forces. COLSIBA is a horizontal inter-union coordinating body that brings together some 40 trade union structures in nine countries from Guatemala to Peru, and celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2018. Today, it is the de facto counterpart network of the African IUF Network and develops solidarity-based relationships with IUF structures in Latin America and at the international level.

The first direct contact on the ground in Africa was between GAWU and COLSIBA, dating back to as early as 2008. The delegation of four leaders from COLSIBA, together with a delegation from the British trade union Unite (which organises agricultural workers in the UK), signed a memorandum of understanding on South-South-North inter-union solidarity that lays the foundations for a potential triangular relationship, should financial resources permit.

In 2014, an African delegation comprising representatives from FAWU, GAWU and IUF Africa visited Colombia at the invitation

of the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Agropecuaria (National Union of Workers in the Agricultural Industry, SINTRAINAGRO). The specific reason for the visit was in relation to the the sectoral collective agreement, which has been in place for over 25 years in Colombia's banana industry, through a collective agreement between SINTRAINAGRO and some 300 plantations that belong to a single employers' association. The Colombian case is documented in a publication co-authored by Banana Link and a Costa Rican consultant, and published by the World Banana Forum¹.

The participation of African trade union organisations in the **EUROBAN intercontinental network** has been historically irregular in the 1990s and 2000s, but in recent years an African IUF representative has been attending meetings held twice a year in Europe. Ideally, funding permitting, one representative per country should always participate in the meetings that set out the strategy of this alliance of civil society organisations from Latin America (COLSIBA), the Caribbean (WINFA — Windward Islands Farmers' Association), the Philippines (FARMCOOP — Foundation for Agrarian Reform Cooperatives in Mindanao), Europe and North America.

This alliance links organised workers and small producers with trade unions and NGOs in consumer countries. EUROBAN is the main tool for collective action, and will remain so as long as it maintains its unity of vision and action, as well as its common ethical values. The member organisations serve as a focal point

¹http://www.bananalink.org.uk/sites/default/files/0740%20WBF%20Report%20BOOK%20ENGLISH%20V0_2_01_11_17.pdf (also available in Spanish)

for relaying actions at the national level that are decided by the intercontinental alliance.

As COLSIBA said at a workshop organised by the Rethinking Value Chains collective in 2018: "It is vital to understand the real day-to-day issues and perspectives of those working on the ground (in plantations and packhouses) in order to develop relevant strategies and communicate clear and simple advocacy messages, making it easier to reach key influential media outlets, governments, the EU and other relevant bodies to influence companies that continue to violate our rights and fail to engage in social dialogue and negotiation".

What results have been achieved by COLSIBA as a leading player in the creation and evolution of this alliance over the last 25 years?

- ✓ A stronger trade union movement with more strategic unity of action.
- ✓ A common strategic agenda with EUROBAN allies (Europe; USA; small producers in the Caribbean, South America and the Philippines; African workers' unions).
- ✓ In-depth and shared knowledge of working conditions in the field on all organised (and some non-organised) plantations.
- ✓ A strong alliance with other trade unions, NGOs and relevant institutions, with EUROBAN helping us to be well prepared for inter-union coordination.
- ✓ The creation of the World Banana Forum, based on a vision of a permanent space for dialogue created by

COLSIBA and our European allies, opening up space for action and dialogue with key players who are members.

- ✓ Members of the Forum are kept updated on workers' .
- ✓ The intercontinental alliance gives us the opportunity to reflect (and to identify the risks and difficulties of certain courses of action).

COLSIBA also identifies certain risks, difficulties and needs, as seen at plantations and packhouses in Latin America. These ideas could be useful for the African Network:

- The risks of deviating from the common strategic agenda.
- The risk of financing that may compromise freedom of action.
- Trade union repression and the impunity of certain players within some private-sector companies and associations (in some countries more than others) provides an opportunity for unions to influence tactics used against them depending on the campaigns that are undertaken.
- The obvious difficulty of supporting long-term campaigns (time and resources).
- Left-wing political processes do not necessarily mean support and progress.
- A permanent, but often unmet, need for resources and time for education and training.

- A need to adapt education and training to each particular situation (company, country, export zone within the same country etc.)
- A need to identify (and to be able to employ) organisers and educators that come directly from the specific situations that they are trying to change (ie banana workers).
- A need to train a new generation of women union leaders on common issues and shared ideas and values.

The experience gathered by Latin American trade unions over the last 25 years is of huge value for African unions who have embarked on a similar path over the last 5 years. We will work to ensure that a South-South programme with adequate resources can emerge from 2020 onwards.

6. FOCUS ON A KEY PLAYER: COMPAGNIE FRUITIERE

Based in Marseille, Compagnie Fruitière is one of the six largest banana companies in the world, and is a private equity group founded 70 years ago by the Fabre family. Historically, it acquired plantations in the Haut Penja region of Cameroon in 1987 and 1991, in Côte d'Ivoire in 1997, in the Volta River region of Ghana in 2005 and in Ecuador in early 2018.

It is therefore the only multinational fruit company with export banana production on both the African and American continents. For some 20 years, the company had a partnership with the US multinational company Dole Food, but Dole's shares were acquired by majority shareholders in 2014.

Since 2001, it has its own shipping company, Africa Express Line, and today the company operates ripening centres in France, the UK, Hungary and Morocco.

In terms of areas planted, Compagnie Fruitière is the world's leading producer of Fairtrade-certified bananas (Cameroon, Ecuador, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, in descending order of volume).

6.1 – Its dominance in the African banana industry

With more than 9,000 hectares of bananas planted in three African exporting countries, Compagnie Fruitière is by far the largest on the African continent in terms of volumes exported,

number of employees and logistical capacity. It also has a subsidiary producing tomatoes in Senegal.

In 2018, the company was approaching 500,000 tonnes of bananas exported from Africa, of which about 450,000 tonnes were exported to Europe, mainly to France and the UK, but with significant volumes sold in central and southern Europe (Spain and Portugal) and other southern European countries.

It also sells more than 300,000 tonnes of bananas from Latin America for European customers. In total, Compagnie Fruitière is responsible for nearly 4% of world trade.

It exports nearly three out of every four African bananas : produced in Côte d'Ivoire by SCB, in Cameroon by PHP and in Ghana by GEL. The company employs more than 21,000 people, the vast majority—more than 17,000—in these three African countries.

Compagnie Fruitière is therefore the largest private employer in Cameroon and the second largest in Côte d'Ivoire.

Efforts to build unitary trade union platforms began with the two subsidiaries, PHP and SCB, in 2013 and 2014 following an agreement between the company, IUF, Banana Link and Fairtrade International on the need to support and train trade unions, especially in the context of the Fairtrade certification in Cameroon accorded in early 2013.

6.2 – Its evolution to being a responsible company and the challenge of trade unions

In 2009, the newspapers *Le Monde* and *Libération* published articles that linked a series of negative issues to the Compagnie Fruitière subsidiary, such as police violence against Cameroonian workers, negative impacts of agrochemicals on neighbouring communities and the natural environment, and violent demonstrations that had taken place several months before. A report by two French NGOs, published as part of the campaign for the European Parliament elections, relayed these allegations and accused the company of tax evasion, political collusion with the current government and even of having imprisoned the mayor of the local area.

Libération wrote: "The Comité catholique contre la faim et pour le développement (Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development (CCFD)) and Oxfam-Agir ici (Oxfam-Act here) rank CF as being among the most "unscrupulous" companies. They quoted a local agricultural engineer who stated that « the European Union should be aware that... the wealth produced by PHP, which exports all of its production, does not really benefit Njombé, the small town in western Cameroon, where it has its extensive banana plantations extension".

These articles and the NGO report were somewhat shocking for the company. Owners and managers were in denial and panic for over a year, but a more constructive reaction soon followed. In 2011, the first conversations with those who agreed to engage with the company took place in France. Banana Link played a pivotal role in trying to establish a new approach at Compagnie Fruitière.

In 2012, GAWU and Banana Link supported the initiative of the GEL subsidiary in Ghana to obtain Fairtrade certification. Then, at the beginning of 2013, a meeting between Compagnie Fruitière, IUF Africa and Fairtrade International, organised by Banana Link, led to the conclusion that it was necessary to work together to improve social dialogue at the PHP subsidiary that Compagnie Fruitière had just had certified as Fairtrade. Without more fluid engagement with the trade unions, the chances of really benefiting the lives of PHP workers were slim, we argued. PHP accepted the challenge to take a new path.

Meanwhile, Compagnie Fruitière brought in a French social auditing company to lay the groundwork for a new corporate social responsibility policy. The recommendations of the company and the regular conversations with IUF Africa and Banana Link have meant that this new corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy is not simply a piece of paper.

Internal discussions within the company have led to the development of a more integral policy that takes into account all aspects of the company's impact in the territories in which it operates, on all those it employs and on the entire chain from the purchase of inputs to the final customer.

If we analyse the development and detail of the CSR annual reports that the company began publishing in 2014 for its four African subsidiaries, we can see that there is real political will and a true integral vision on how to become a responsible company in all its spheres of operation and influence.

Above all, the concrete actions on the ground and with workers, and the development of its relations with the 12 unions represented in its three African subsidiaries, confirm that the company has taken strides in the right direction that bodes well for the future.

The Sustainability Report 2016, published in mid-2017, is one of the most concrete on a range of dimensions that many other companies treat superficially or not at all. Some of the headings in this report will suffice to set the tone for a quantifiable and verifiable content:

- Human resources within Compagnie Fruitière.
- Respecting human rights.
- Improving working conditions.
- Developing skills.
- Improving our farming practices.
- Reducing the environmental impact of our production activity.
- Adopting a responsible procurement policy.
- Contributing to the economic development of production territories.
- Improving the living conditions of local communities.
- Reducing the energy and climate impact of logistics.
- Limiting the environmental impact of ripening centres.
- Promoting more responsible consumption.

Since this flagship publication, in 2018, Compagnie Fruitière made an announcement about its intentions to convert all its banana production to agro-ecological (organic, if possible) and diversified systems. This announcement shook up the big players in this globalised industry:

‘Compagnie Fruitière is committed to increasing the share of its organic acreage in Africa from 5 to 20% by 2025 around its historical plantations, and through the acquisition of new organic plantations in Latin America. By 2025 in Ghana, 50% of banana plantations will not use synthetic phytosanitary products and 50% will be farmed organically ».

« In line with the French government's Ecophyto 2 Plan, which aims to reduce the use of phytosanitary products by 50% by 2025, Compagnie Fruitière is setting up a project in Ghana called '4x sans' (4x without). The objective is to phase out fungicides, neamaticides, herbicides and insecticides. This project will be implemented on an area of 1,000 hectares, representing an annual production of 50,000 tonnes of fruit. This conversion plan will eventually make it possible to certify 50% of banana plantations as organic and 50% as free from synthetic plant protection products. »

Published on the WWF France website in September 2018.

In light of this announcement and the actions carried out over the last ten years or so, we can say that all the workers in these three countries are fortunate to be working for a company that has not

only changed tack, but that is innovating and making concrete changes to the monocultural system of production, corporate culture and vision. Most importantly for this report, it has not been afraid to let itself be guided by trade unionists from elsewhere on the most sensitive issues of labour relations and working conditions.

A number of other economic players, notably VREL in Ghana, have undoubtedly encouraged Compagnie Fruitière to pursue this new visionary and responsible path, but the credit for the courage that this multinational company has shown should go to the shareholders and managers employed to put flesh on the bones of the beautiful ideas, and to convert them into good practices on the ground.

Compagnie Fruitière's contribution to the World Banana Forum is also becoming increasingly more significant. And let us not forget their exemplary initiative to overcome employment obstacles faced by women, carried out in 2018 at GEL in Ghana with Banana Link, trade unions and two major British buyers, as part of a programme co-financed by Britains Ethical Trading Initiative.

In 2020 and beyond, the unions hope to take the next step and have plans to negotiate an international framework agreement, organised into national chapters, with Compagnie Fruitière. If these plans are to prosper they could turn out to be as influential as the announcement on the accelerated evolution of its production methods.

In short, nothing is impossible in ten years' time! Even if not all the allegations of 2009 were justified, it is clear that a company

that wants to be a responsible citizen for the world of today and tomorrow must act differently.

The history of the industry in the Americas has been severely characterised by bloodshed and repression. Let's hope that the example of Compagnie Fruitière can inspire even the most reluctant companies to take a different course. In any case, this is what workers, consumers and other stakeholders want.

7. KEY STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

How is the banana sector looking to the future based on key actions from our past and our present? In this chapter, we will try to answer this strategic question.

7.1 – Five-year review of African networking by the IUF

The assessment and analysis carried out in 2013 in the banana sector in Africa revealed the need to have strong and influential unions in companies, as well as the need to develop an operational regional structure.

We cannot claim to have come to a full assessment in such a short amount of time because of the context and realities of the sector, but we will share, in just a few words, the path that has been followed over the last five years.

Our actions have generally focused on education, training, capacity building, and an annual regional meeting held on a rotating basis between Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana with convincing results and positive evaluations, as discussed below.

7.1.1 – THE REPRESENTATION OF WORKERS IN BANANA COMPANIES IN AFRICA

As revealed in the assessment carried out in 2013, workers in banana companies in Africa are represented through micro-unions. The number of these unions varies from two to six or seven depending on the company. They are mostly unable to

develop and successfully carry out their objectives because they are very divided, very poorly equipped, are permanently in fierce competition with each other, do not listen to the company management and act without mutual agreement or without consulting each other at all.

It is clear that in such conditions, the results do not live up to the expectations of the workers who are often disappointed and whose livelihoods are affected by declining productivity.

It was imperative for us to put a structure in place within the company that ensures a convergence of all forces in order to:

1. Think together.
2. Build strategies together.
3. Define the operating methods together.
4. Seek and achieve a good listening ear from management.
5. Act together.
6. Report together.
7. Evaluate results together.

The platform enables the different organisations to meet these conditions, which are essential for the success of any trade union action, as long as representation is inclusive and participatory, with decision-making essentially based on consensus.

Representation is therefore improved with favourable power relations and a willingness to listen from management.

7.1.2 – SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Social dialogue and collective bargaining is the second pillar of the New Social Dynamic.

In order to talk and negotiate, at least two parties are required: business leaders and united trade union leaders.

Through education, training and capacity-building, some trade union platform leaders are gradually learning about collective bargaining techniques.

The actions carried out over a number of years have made it possible to substantially improve the quality of social dialogue and collective bargaining because these decision-makers are gradually gaining proficiency in gathering demands, developing and prioritising a package of demands, and presenting them with the necessary arguments.

7.1.3 – WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions are increasingly viewed by stakeholders as a real lever for the development of the company. Because of their sensitive nature, the need to give working conditions adequate attention is now being recognised.

The quality of the negotiations and the manifest will of the parties involved are indicators of good decisions being taken that are conducive to the gradual improvement of working conditions, while being reasonable and obviously taking into account the capabilities of the company to invest in improvements.

The Regional Network supports the leaders of existing platforms and trade union organisations that are not yet involved in a platform in improving the working and living conditions of workers in banana sector companies.

Since 2013, progress has been made and very encouraging results have been achieved.

Examples include:

1. Improved wage levels.
2. Improved housing allowances bonuses.
3. Improved transport conditions.
4. Successful rearrangement of work schedules.
5. Improved packhouse conditions.

However, we must recognise that there is still much to be done in terms of working conditions in the banana sector in Africa, especially in terms of the exercise of freedoms and addressing social disparities in certain companies. This is why the Regional Network must resolutely and steadfastly support trade union organisations working in companies for greater efficiency and results.

7.1.4 – WORKING RELATIONS

Labour relations are the 'legal' link between employers and employees. Relations are created when a "worker" carries out an activity or provides services for an organisation under certain conditions and in return for remuneration.

Labour relations, however defined, set out reciprocal rights and obligations between the employee and the employer. These formal relationships have been and remain the main means by which workers obtain the rights and benefits associated with their jobs. Businesses need to define strategies, standards and practices that promote the establishment and maintenance of healthy, fruitful and harmonious relationships between the employer, employees and their proper representatives.

This task is not at all easy because it involves human relations within a framework (the company) where the director is committed to complying with his/her duties. There is no doubt about the delicacy of this. Conscious of this, the IUF African Regional Network has been involved and, since 2013, has been supporting trade unions and companies that show a certain openness in the construction of healthy, efficient and harmonious working relations based on the following principles

- Confidence in the people on the opposite side of the table.
- Mutual respect.
- Encouragement.
- Positivity.
- Availability.
- Very good listening: active listening.
- Effective and transparent communication.

In several companies in the banana sector in Africa, the various players are striving to establish and maintain healthy labour

relations, which enables them to take action and take decisions that are conducive to improving working conditions.

However, efforts still need to be made not only to achieve progress within participating companies, but also to convince those who are most reluctant to join the current movement and to integrate the principles of healthy and harmonious working relationships into their management system. This process cannot become a reality without quality 'human resources' in a professional environment that is conducive to the development of skills and know-how.

The Network will continue its actions and extend them to those companies in the banana sector that remain reluctant.

7.2 – Towards development trade unionism

In the general context of the evolution of trade unionism in West and Central Africa, we have highlighted the need for a regeneration of the African trade union movement and an urgent transition from classical trade unionism to development-oriented trade unionism.

Classical trade unionism has passed its apex and is not in a position to deal effectively with the harsh realities of today's world and its multiple and multi-faceted challenges.

This is why it is necessary and urgent to accelerate the transition towards development-oriented trade unionism.

The IUF Africa Regional Network has already begun this transition in some banana companies in Africa and the results have been extraordinary.

Development-oriented trade unionism is a social movement where activist action forms part of a responsible approach in which trade union members contribute to the creation of wealth and participate in its fair distribution. For this to be possible, certain conditions must be created, respected and nurtured. Among these prerequisites, the education and training of workers is of particular importance :

- The education of workers to provide them with the soft skills that will raise their awareness so that they feel more responsible.
- Training to provide them with the knowledge and soft skills required to be more efficient and to adapt to the daily changes that occur throughout their working life.

A whole programme has therefore been designed and implemented in this framework in some companies in the sector.

Development-oriented trade unionism presents itself as a new type of dynamic that focuses on social dialogue and negotiation. Its fundamental characteristic is that it is a social movement oriented towards the development of the company for collective and individual fulfilment in:

- Peace and social stability.
- Accountability.
- Harmony of vision, objectives and the means to achieve them.

- Harmony and social cohesion
- Synergy of action.

Orientations change with strategies that remain absolutely adaptable, but the well-being of workers and their collective and individual development remain at the heart of the dynamics of development-oriented trade unionism.

The Network will continue its efforts to support this momentum, which is up to the task and adapted to the realities of today's world.

7.3 – Key challenges to be addressed

The challenges in the banana sector are numerous and complex. At the risk of overlooking or omitting certain challenges, we discuss those that appear most pressing whilst acknowledging that this list is in no way exhaustive.

– **Fundamental freedoms and human rights at work.** Tactics and tools must be found to engage companies that are reluctant to respect these fundamental rights, so that they view the exercise of freedom by their employees not as an obstacle to their activities, but rather as a means of achieving mutually beneficial development.

– **Strong and influential unions** are the basis for building a united voice for workers. The concepts and practices of development-oriented trade unionism will free some unions from the straitjacket of certain practices that are all too common in

traditional trade unionism. The independence of the organised voice of workers is essential to make this transition.

– **The crucial issues of gender** must be put at the heart of the trade union agenda. It will be necessary to proactively promote an increasing number of women in trade union leadership positions through the ongoing treatment of issues such as women's employment (how to overcome obstacles to women accessing employment), discrimination in the workplace in all its forms and the elimination of violence and sexual harassment. Parallel to these internal trade union processes are gender issues that must also be addressed by company management at the same time as among workers. These processes involve raising awareness among men at all levels of the business on equality issues.

– **Social disparities and working conditions**, especially when there are radically different levels of remuneration, such as the case of Côte d'Ivoire, which is simply not acceptable in the 21st century. A specific campaign must be conducted to eliminate this fundamental disparity for those working on plantations.

– **An international banana market situation that allows companies to continue to exist.** Businesses must be able to operate in a balanced and fair global market environment if we are to guarantee the future of jobs that allow employees to make a decent living.

– **Permanent and fluid social dialogue** is the basis for the construction of stable and equitable economic relations. It is a responsibility of both parties to foster and maintain relationships through regular formal and informal mechanisms.

- **Collective bargaining by company and/or sector:** Colombia's example shows that the possibility of building sectoral banana negotiations at the national level is a viable solution that leads to a net improvement in working and living conditions for all. Trade unions must analyse on a case-by-case basis whether this option is viable and whether it would lead to better socio-economic guarantees than agreements and conventions at the company level.

- **The first international "framework agreement" with Compagnie Fruitière,** with its national sub-chapters, would provide a blueprint for the basis of fruitful relations for both parties and would have a demonstrable effect on other companies and unions in the sector. It is achievable, but the process leading up to its signature is just as important as the practical implementation.

- **Advocacy with government institutions** of exporting countries, not just their labour authorities, must be built in a more structured and strategic way.

- **The linguistic barrier** between English and French speakers in the Regional Network remains an issue to be resolved, especially outside working meetings where professional interpreters can be hired. The fluidity of horizontal communication is going rather well within bilingual Cameroon, but there is still work to be done between the unions of the Anglophone and Francophone countries and within the coordination team of the Regional Network.

– **More systematic communication with COLSIBA** through a South-South programme is proving to be a promising avenue for strategic discussions, exchanges of practices and policies, and intercontinental solidarity in the face of the most powerful stakeholders in the sector.

– **Permanent activity in the working groups and conferences of the World Banana Forum.** In order to achieve permanent and full participation in the Forum's processes, resources should be made available for this purpose, as well as for those in a position to facilitate such permanent participation.

8. CONCLUSION

As this non-exhaustive list of challenges shows, we are at the beginning of a long-term process, but we are resolutely committed to it. Long-term results will depend not only on the united efforts of workers through their independent and democratic trade unions, but on the willingness and ability of business leaders to pursue strategies for collaboratively constructing mature and mutually beneficial relationships for the two parties.

The united voice of African workers is still work in progress, but like all historically important processes, it will take time and depends not only on those who give of themselves, but also on the solidarity of allies in Africa and beyond.

Lastly, it is clear and irrefutable from our analyses that in order to be able to provide adequate responses to the many challenges of the 21st century, trade union organisations, wherever they may be, must build alternatives, such as:

- **Credible unity and solidarity.**
- **Viable and sustainable political, social and economic policies, in order to develop a balance of power that is conducive to developing and sustaining those alternatives.**