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Bananas



In the banana industry, production, profits, and power are highly concentrated. Just five corporations control

around 80% of the world's banana import market.

Below you can find out about:

- Problems facing banana producers
- Benefits of Fairtrade for producers
- Fairtrade certified producers
- Buying and selling Fairtrade bananas
- Standard for small banana farmers or for banana plantations

Problems facing banana producers

Only about 20% of the prices paid by consumers for bananas reach exporting countries.

Bananas are one of the most important foods for both consumption and trade. Almost 100 million metric tonnes of bananas are consumed every year, of which about 15 million are exported. They are the fourth most important food staple in the world and the fifth most-traded agricultural commodity (after cereals, sugar, coffee and cocoa), generating billions of dollars.

In the banana industry, production, profits, and market access are highly concentrated. Just five corporations control around 80% of the sales on the banana import market worldwide. Meanwhile, it is hard for small banana farmers and workers on banana plantations to earn a living, and they often work and live in difficult conditions.

Only about 20 % of the prices paid by consumers in supermarkets reach exporting country. Salaries of workers and income of farmers reflect only a small fraction of total revenue. Important cost components in banana industry include packing materials, fertilizers and pesticides.

The cheapest production process possible

While large plantations can efficiently produce cheap, export-ready bananas for Northern markets, there are a number of inherent problems in the system. Large corporations involved in banana production have historically had negative influence over Latin American governments in the countries where their plantations are based.

The conditions and prices prioritize the cheapest production possible, even when this violates labour rights or is environmentally destructive. For example, huge quantities of pesticide and fungicide spray are used to prevent the spread of disease on large plantations.

The typical banana plantation in Central America uses up to 70 kilograms of pesticides per hectare per year – over 10 times more than is used in the production of other crops in industrialized countries. These chemical sprays may have a serious impact on the health of workers and people living in the area, as well as the surrounding wildlife.



In many plantations, work days can be very long, often between 12 to 14 hours with unpaid overtime.

Moreover, as a result of the steady decrease in banana prices over the past decades, the daily life of many plantation workers and small farmers in producer countries is deteriorating. In many plantations, work days can be very long, often between 12 to 14 hours with overtime unpaid. The majority of workers lack work security or protection against sudden lay-offs, and many employers only offer short contracts of six months or less.

Benefits of Fairtrade for producers

Bananas bearing the FAIRTRADE Certification Mark have been produced by small farmer organizations or in plantations that meet high social and environmental standards. Farmers who produce Fairtrade certified bananas are guaranteed a Fairtrade minimum price to cover the costs of sustainable production and a Fairtrade Premium of US\$ 1 per 18.14kg-box of bananas to invest in projects in their communities.

The Fairtrade standards for banana production differ between small farmers' organizations and plantations. However the Fairtrade minimum prices and Premium are set at the same level for both types of organization.

Fairtrade Minimum Price and Premium

- Producer organizations are paid a Fairtrade Minimum Price which aims to cover average sustainable costs of production. The Fairtrade Minimum Price for bananas is different for each region and is based on the costs of sustainable production.
- The Fairtrade price for organic bananas is higher than for conventional. [Click here](#) to see the full list of Fairtrade prices for bananas.
- A Fairtrade Premium of 1 US\$ per 18.14 kilo-box of bananas is paid to producer organizations.

Fairtrade Standards for small banana farmers:

- Profits must be equally distributed among the members of the cooperative or association.
- All members of the producer organization must have a voice in the decision-making process and in the group organization.

To find out more about the Fairtrade Standards for banana production download and read the Fresh Fruit (including bananas and wine grapes) Standard.

Fairtrade Standards for banana plantations:

- A Joint Body is formed and includes workers and management to decide on the use of the Premium.
- The Premium must not be used to cover ongoing operating expenses, but rather to improve living and working conditions.
- Forced labour and child labour of children of 15 years and under is prohibited. Work for children over 15 must not interfere with their education. They must not do work that could risk their health.

- Workers have the right to establish or join an independent union.
- Salaries must be equal to or higher than the regional average or than the minimum wage.
- Health and safety measures must be established in order to avoid work-related injuries.

To find out more about the Fairtrade Standards for banana production download and read the Fresh Fruit (including bananas and wine grapes) Standard.

Fairtrade certified producers

You can read a number of case-studies of Fairtrade banana producers on the Fairtrade Foundation website.

To find out which banana producer organizations are currently Fairtrade certified, you can check the database available on the FLO-CERT website.

Buying and selling Fairtrade bananas

If you want to find out what products are available in your country, visit the website of your national Fairtrade organization. If you're interested in selling Fairtrade bananas in your country, see our information about selling Fairtrade.

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