**About**

Who are we?

Project Banana is a not-for-profit co-operative based in Eindhoven, which works for fair and sustainable banana trades. We raise awareness of the poor living and working conditions faced by plantation workers and small producers all over the world.

Your support can help us to make some impact. Buying tropical fruit is often the closest relationship any of us have with the developing world. The consumer choices we make can – and do – have a direct impact on how people are employed and paid, and how their environment is treated.

Our Mission

Project Banana works for fair and equitable production and trade in bananas based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Our vision is a banana world where:

* Every worker in the chain receives a living wage and is able to exercise all her/his individual and collective rights in the workplace.
* All economic stakeholders along the chain pay a decent wage and respect all relevant international labour standards.
* Small-scale and family farmers make a decent living from selling to international banana markets.
* Consumers can buy good quality bananas and understand the need for pricing that will guarantee decent livelihoods for producers and workers.
* The negative impacts of banana production on the natural environment are understood and addressed.

Our values

* Impartiality and rigour in the collection and analysis of information and evidence.
* Openness and inclusivity towards all players in the chain who seek equitable and sustainable solutions.
* Independence from governmental and business interests.
* Highest standards of ethical conduct: integrity, transparency and accountability.

**Foundations**

World Banana Forum is a permanent space of assembly for participants representing the global banana supply-chain to promote open dialogue on challenges facing the banana industry.

More: The mission of the World Banana Forum is to:

• inspire **collaboration** **between stakeholders** that produces pragmatic outcomes for the betterment of the banana industry; and

• achieve an **industry-wide consensus of best practices** regarding workplace issues, gender equity, environmental impact, sustainable production and economic issues.  
  
This **ground-breaking initiative** brings together producers, their organizations, trade unions, cooperatives, exporter groups, fresh producing companies, retailers, traders, consumer associations, governments, research institutions, universities and civil society organizations.

FairTrade International is an alternative approach to conventional trade based on a partnership between producers and traders, businesses and consumers. The international Fairtrade system - made up of Fairtrade International and its member organizations - represents the world's largest and most recognized fair trade system.

More: When a product carries the FAIRTRADE Mark it means the producers and traders have met Fairtrade Standards. The [Fairtrade Standards](http://www.fairtrade.net/standards.html) are designed to address the imbalance of power in trading relationships, unstable markets and the injustices of conventional trade.

Corporación Bananera Nacional (CORBANA) is a non-governmental public institution, established in the year 1971 by the ratification of a law of the Republic of Costa Rica. Its major objective is the development of the banana industry in Costa Rica and to serve the banana producers.

More: This institution develops research programs aimed at strengthening the quality of banana farming, provides state-of-the-art technology to producers, maintains lines of credit to facilitate the operation and recovery of the plantations struck by natural disasters in the Costa Rican Caribbean, among other commitments to improve the industry.

Bioversity International is a global research-for-development organization. We have a vision – that agricultural biodiversity nourishes people and sustains the planet.

More: We deliver scientific evidence, management practices and policy options to use and safeguard agricultural and tree biodiversity to attain sustainable global food and nutrition security.

We work with partners in low-income countries in different regions where agricultural and tree biodiversity can contribute to improved nutrition, resilience, productivity and climate change adaptation.

Euroban is a network of European civil society organizations that work collaboratively with civil society organisations in other continents to help achieve socially just, economically viable and enviromentally sound tropical fruit industries.

More: The vision of Euroban is to work towards:

* Full respect for social, human and labour rights throughout tropical fruit supply chains;
* Full respect for women‘s rights throughout tropical fruit supply chains;
* Secure livelihoods for and female and male workers and female and male small- scale producers;
* Fair commercial conditions for producers in tropical fruit industries with an overall sustainable distribution of income along value chains;
* The elimination of enviromental damage caused by tropical fruit industries;
* Synergy with organizations that share our objectives, whether or not their core activities are in the same or other social, economic or geographical areas as EUROBAN.

**Support Project Banana**

Your contribution will help the Project Banana spread the knowledge about the fair and sustainable banana trades and the importance of implementing solutions together. Your donation is an act of solidarity that will make a real impact on the ground.

**Learn More**

Yellow Fruit

Bananas are the most popular fruit in the world. The banana is, in fact, not a tree but a high herb that grows up to 15 metres. It is believed that there are almost 1000 varieties of bananas in the world, subdivided in 50 groups. The most commonly known banana is the Cavendish variety, which is the one produced for export markets.

Bananas are grown in more than 150 countries, producing 105 million tonnes of fruit per year. Dessert bananas account for 43 million tonnes per year and are of huge economic importance for many countries in the South.

It is believed that the earliest written reference to banana is in Sanskrit and dates back to around 500 BC. Their origin is placed in Southeast Asia, in the jungles of Malaysia, Indonesia or Philippines, where many varieties of wild bananas still grow today. They started to be traded internationally by the end of fourteenth century. The development of railroads and technological advances in refrigerated maritime transport subsequently enabled bananas to become the most important world traded fruit.

### **Some Banana facts:**

### On average each person in the UK eats 10kg bananas a year – about 100 bananas!

### The word banana comes from the Arabic word "banan", meaning finger

### The banana plant is not a tree, it is the world's largest herb

### Bananas could help you to feel happier as they contain tryptophan, a type of protein that the body converts into serotonin, known to promote relaxation and improve mood

### The inside of a banana skin can be used to polish shoes!

### The inside of a banana skin can be used to calm an itchy mosquito bite - many people find that rubbing the bite with the skin helps to reduce irritation.

### Production

### The banana is a perennial plant that replaces itself. Bananas do not grow from a seed but from a bulb or rhizome. The time between planting a banana plant and the harvest of the banana bunch is from 9 to 12 months. The flower appears in the sixth or seventh month. Bananas are available throughout the year - they do not have a growing 'season'.

### Bananas are grown in tropical regions. They require moist soil with good drainage. In fact, most bananas exported are grown within 30 degrees either side of the equator.

### Plantations are predominant in Latin America and they require huge investment in infrastructure and technology for transport, irrigation, drainage and packing facilities.

### Harvesting and ripening

After nine months, the bananas are harvested while still green. At the packhouse they are inspected and sorted for export. Buyers of fruit in the UK want unbruised bananas and so very high standards are set. If the bananas do not meet these standards they are usually sold locally at a much lower price.

They are then transported to ports to be packed in refrigerated ships called reefers (bananas take between six and twelve days to get to the UK/Europe).

Humidity, ventilation and temperature conditions are carefully monitored in order to maintain quality. When the bananas arrive at their destination  
port they are first sent to ripening rooms (aprocess involving ethylene gas) and then sent to the shops.

Dessert banana production for export (around 15 million tonnes per year) is of huge economic importance for many countries in the South. It relies on intensive monocultures, which are sustained by using massive quantities of toxic chemicals which are hazardous to both workers and the environment. This industrial-scale production also results in problematic waste management issues.

Where bananas are grown

Bananas are grown in countries of the tropics - Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Pacific etc. Many countries produce bananas as a staple food and only around 20% of all bananas that are produced are actually exported.

Most bananas sold on the British market are exported from Latin America, and increasingly West Africa, as companies relocate in search of ever 'cheaper' fruit, pursuing a 'Race to the Bottom' in terms of social and environmental standards.

**Problems**

Enviromental problems:

Most bananas exported to Europe are grown on large-scale plantations in Latin America, and increasingly, in Africa. Banana plantations are monocultures – where only one type of crop is grown. 97% of internationally traded bananas come from one single variety, the Cavendish. This lack of genetic variety makes plants highly susceptible to pests, fungi and diseases and therefore large quantities of insecticides and other pesticides are applied to the crops.

As the pests and diseases adapt, ever stronger, more harmful pesticides need to be applied. In several countries plantation owners spend more money on agrochemicals than on their workforce. Fertilisers and pesticides pollute water channels resulting in fish kills and the destruction of other aquatic life including coral reefs. Carelessly stored chemicals seep into the soil and water courses.

Key environmental problems include:

* contamination of water courses
* massive levels of waste
* soil erosion
* increased risk of flooding
* deforestation and destruction of habitats
* destruction of soil fertility resulting in high fertiliser use.

Social problems:

Working conditions:

Pressure along the supply chain to keep prices low is primarily felt by the hundreds of thousands of workers who toil long hours in tropical conditions to look after and harvest the bananas we consume. They often fail to earn enough to feed their families properly. As has happened throughout our global economy, a significant proportion of plantation labour has been outsourced to sub-contractors with companies keen to distance themselves from any responsibility for employment conditions and reduce costs. It is also much harder for sub-contracted workers to organise into trade unions.

Health and Safety:

The health and safety of workers is compromised by routine exposure to toxic agrochemicals and a lack of appropriate safety equipment. Field work is very physically demanding, especially in tropical conditions. In packhouses repetitive actions cause strains and injuries. Robust independent trade unions are vital to educate workers about health and safety at work and ensure that national legislation as well as private standards are observed.

Trade union freedom:

Trade union membership is low in some exporting countries due to the widespread use of a range of anti-union tactics by national and multinational banana companies. In Guatemala banana workers face some of the worst conditions and trade union activists face violence and even assassination. In Costa Rica the banana companies use non-union committees and the ‘Solidarismo’ movement to prevent independent trade unions from forming or from gaining members. These committees sign so-called 'settlements' covering wages and conditons that the industry presents to the outside world as collective bargaining, but in which the workers have had no real say.

Who earns what from field to supermarket?

These diagrams illustrate how the value from the sale of bananas can be distributed along the supply chain.

**Articles**

[Lidl is the latest to switch to sustainable bananas. Will it make a difference?](http://www.bananalink.org.uk/lidl-latest-switch-sustainable-bananas-will-it-make-difference)

16.02.2016

Discount suppermarket Lidl has announced that it is to stock only bananas certified by the NGO Rainforest Alliance, joining Asda that already does so, and Tesco, which could follow suit soon. In addition, the Co-op, Sainsbury’s and Waitrose already stock only Fairtrade or organic bananas. However, although the UK may be the biggest market in the world for Fairtrade, organic and other certified bananas, it still has one of the lowest retail prices in the northern hemisphere. Meaning that producers are struggling to invest in working conditions and wages. Quoted in the Guardian, Banana Link...

[**http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/feb/06/lidl-sustainable-bananas-commitment-workers-dominican-republic-supermarket-prices**](http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/feb/06/lidl-sustainable-bananas-commitment-workers-dominican-republic-supermarket-prices)

[Fyffes accused of disrespecting plantation workers' rights](http://www.bananalink.org.uk/fyffes-accused-disrespecting-plantation-workers-rights)

12.02.2016

The GMB trade union has called for Fyffes to be thrown out of the UK Government's Ethical Trade Initiative, which promotes labour rights, over reports of abuses by subsidiaries of Fyffes in Costa Rica and Honduras.

Banana Link, also an ETI member, has said “We absolutely hear the frustration from unions on the ground. We’re keen to engage in dialogue with Fyffes in the hope that they’ll speak to unions on the ground.”

[**http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/feb/11/fyffes-accused-disrespecting-workers-rights**](http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/feb/11/fyffes-accused-disrespecting-workers-rights)

The imminent death of the Cavendish banana and why it affects us all

28.01.2016

For decades the most-exported and therefore most important banana in the world was the Gros Michel, but in the 1950s it was practically wiped out by the fungus known as Panama disease or banana wilt.

Banana growers turned to another breed that was immune to the fungus - the Cavendish, a smaller and by all accounts less tasty fruit but one capable of surviving global travel and, most importantly, able to grow in infected soils.

Though banana-growing habitats still have their own breeds, practically all bananas exported to foreign markets such as Europe, the UK and North America, are Cavendishes, clones of the first Chatsworth plant.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-35131751>

Philippines hit by Panama disease

12.01.2016

**T**he Philippines’ billion-dollar banana industry is losing plantations to disease and extreme weather, according to trade figures.

The Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) reported a loss of over 2,000ha in Mindanao during 2015, which represents 5.1 per cent of total banana acreage in the key growing region.

PBGEA executive director Stephen Antig told the SunStar newspaper that banana growers have suffered losses from Panama disease, as well as from the devastating effects of the El Niño weather pattern.

http://www.fruitnet.com/asiafruit/article/167563/philippines-bananas-struggles-with-disease

Bananageddon: Millions face hunger as deadly fungus Panama disease decimates global banana crop

Friday 4 April 2014

Scientists have warned that the world’s banana crop, worth £26 billion and a crucial part of the diet of more than 400 million people, is facing “disaster” from virulent diseases immune to pesticides or other forms of control.

Alarm at the most potent threat – a fungus known as Panama disease tropical race 4 (TR4) – has risen dramatically after it was announced in recent weeks that it has jumped from South-east Asia, where it has already devastated export crops, to Mozambique and Jordan.

http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/bananageddon-millions-face-hunger-as-deadly-fungus-decimates-global-banana-crop-9239464.html