

Dominican Republic

Producer: Fransisco Emilio Matoz Sanchez

Product: Bananas

Project: Coopprobata

Date: 2009

Banana farmer Francisco Emilio Matos Sanchez, employed at Coopprobata in the Dominican Republic shares the following: 'A lot has changed already since we received the Fairtrade premium. The irrigation system and the packing station have been drastically improved. This helps us even more to improve the quality of bananas.'

'From now on we want to invest the Fairtrade premium in social benefits. There are lots of poor families here. We want to provide medical insurance for them and extend this beyond the co-operative to the community. In special cases, if someone needs to go to the hospital, we try to provide help to everybody, not only to farmers and their families within the co-operative.'

A few years ago one lady needed open heart surgery and we contributed to this. She now lives a happy and healthy life.'

fruitful

tasteful

respectful

Ecuador

Producer: Ana & José

Product: Banana

Project: El Guabo

Date: 2009

José and Ana were both born in the highlands of Ecuador. José worked there as a carpenter. Some years ago they moved to the coast, because they wanted to live closer to Ana's family, and bought a small piece of land there to grow bananas. Ana and José own 2 hectares of land each. One of their friends told them about Fairtrade and they decided to join El Guabo, the Association of small banana producers, comprising several hundred farmers, all suppliers of Fairtrade bananas. It is José's passion to grow his bananas as naturally as possible. He would like Fairtrade consumers to realize how little pesticide he uses for growing his fruit.

The Fairtrade system insists on sustainable production – that is, reducing the use of harmful pesticides - and José agrees wholeheartedly with this. “Finally we eat the bananas ourselves as well”. And he adds that without the guaranteed Fairtrade price it would be much more difficult to sustain this way of farming which enables them to preserve the natural surroundings”.

Because El Guabo is a cooperative the farmers decide together how they will spend the Fairtrade premium. One of the projects which Ana would like to see realized is the purchase of a cable transport system for transporting bananas from the farm to the packing station. This would make the work a lot easier and the bananas would suffer less damage. She also tries to save from her own income for the education of her children.

fruitful

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Ecuador

Producer: Angel Iniguez

Product: Banana

Project: El Guabo

Date: 21/09/2006

Angel is a married man and father of a small daughter. He has lived in the El Guabo village for the last 10 years since he finished his studies. Angel owns 6 hectares of land which his father bought in Angel's name, and the whole family works together on this farm. Angel tends the banana plants every day together with his father while his mother, sisters, brother and brother-in-law work in the washing and packing station.

"For us, being at El Guabo and selling Fairtrade organic bananas means that our whole family is well looked after and that we can stay together, as the farm provides an income for all of us. It was very hard here before we joined the El Guabo Association and Fairtrade. We had no security or stability in terms of price or volume because we sold our bananas to intermediary buyers for whatever price they offered us. We were never able to make improvements to the farm or to our home. Now we have been able to buy a fridge and to replace some of our very old furniture.

Since joining El Guabo our *finca* has improved a lot: with the assistance of El Guabo - who provided us with low interest credit, we built a fresh water source on our farm. At El Guabo, all farm workers have health insurance paid for them, they receive a food hamper once a month and an allowance for school equipment for their children."

Message to consumers:

The important thing is to keep helping us by buying our Fairtrade organic bananas. We are small producers and if you purchase our bananas, you are helping us and the workers on our farms to improve our quality of life.

Ecuador

Producer: Heriberto

Product: Banana

Project: El Guabo

Date: 2009

The impact of Banana Puree.

Heriberto is a banana farmer and is a member of the Association of small banana producers El Guabo in Ecuador.

'For me, Fairtrade is all about solidarity between farmers and workers who care for the land and the bananas, and also solidarity with consumers who buy Fairtrade bananas because they care about helping people.

As a result of Fairtrade certification many things have changed for the better. We work with much more awareness than we used to. We produce better quality bananas now and we care for the environment and the workers. The banana production is much safer now which means that we can look forward to a better future. But each crop contains bananas that are not good enough for the European market due to their appearance, although the quality of the fruit is perfect. Sending them for processing into puree is an excellent solution. We don't have to throw away any fruit and we benefit from the Fairtrade system in more than one way.'

'During the week I work here with 4 workers. On banana harvesting and packing days I employ another 10 workers. We usually work from 8 am until 4 pm. Thanks to Fairtrade my permanent workers have health insurance so that they can receive free medical treatment when they need it. They also receive a food hamper every month, paid for with the Fairtrade premium'.

fruitful

tasteful

respectful

Ecuador

Producer: Julia Heraz
Product: Orito Bananas
Project: El Guabo
Date: 2009

El Guabo (Ecuador) will most probably stop exporting baby bananas if the farmers haven't been able to find new markets for their products. Baby bananas just don't sell in Europe. Maybe they are too expensive and unfamiliar. The baby banana, or orito, represents one per cent of El Guabo's total production. The baby banana grows naturally in the mountains, and is organic. The farmers have sold their oritos commercially for the last 6-7 years.

- 'I don't know what we're going to do. We have to try to find new markets for the orito. We live here, and we don't know any other way to make a living. But in Cuenca, they pay only 50 cents per bunch of orito's, when Fair Trade pays 2,10 dollars for half a bunch.'

They can start cultivating regular bananas, which they already do on a small scale. But it's harder to make banana grow in the mountains, where it's colder than down on the plains. It's also drier in the winter, which means the bananas need irrigation. In La Florida there is no irrigation system. And the regular bananas are also vulnerable to the disease called sigatoka negra, and oritos are not.

Another problem for the orito farmers is El Guabo's new rule that every producer should be able to produce a minimum of 48 boxes of banana per week, in order not to be suspended from the co-op.

"Today we produce 10-15 boxes per week", says Heraz.

But the family wants to continue being part of El Guabo and Fair Trade.

'We get food packages every month, school materials for our children every year, and other social benefits' says Rosario Heraz.

'But the baby banana didn't become the expected export success. Maybe the consumers need more information' says the agro engineer Patricio Jaramillo. 'The baby banana is tastier and sweeter than the regular banana. Especially in milkshakes. You don't need any extra sugar, because the baby banana is so sweet in itself'.

Peru

Producer: José Mercedes Requena Rebolledo

Product: Banana

Project: Valle del Chira

Date: 2009

José Mercedes Requena Rebolledo knows all about bananas as he used to work together with his father on his land when he was a little boy. Now José has got his own land where he grows bananas. He is a member of the association Valle del Chira and by the other members chosen to be the treasurer.

'Before we established the association we used to sell our bananas to the local market. We got paid so little for our hard work that we couldn't make a living from it. Today, thanks to establishing of the association and exporting to AgroFair, we are in a better position. We get more money and a stable price and this has changed our lives in so many ways'.

'I feel very pleased with what we have achieved in the last years. When I was in Europe for the shareholders meeting of AgroFair in 2007, I realised seeing all the bananas in the supermarkets how important it is for us to tell consumers directly about the impact they are having when they choose to buy Fairtrade bananas. I want people to know how we spend the Fairtrade premium so that they are aware of why it is so crucial to support us. They help not only us and our families but also our communities. Thanks to the Fairtrade Premium we have built our own office and training centre. Valle del Chira is also supporting local schools in their activities and in health care and decided to spend the premium money for the purchase of school equipment and for organizing workshops for parents.