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## SECOND INTERNATIONAL BANANA CONFERENCE

### **“REVERSING THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM”**

**Dates:** 28th,29th,30th April 2005

**Venue:** Flemish Parliament /Vlaams Parlement

Rue Ducale/Hertogstraat 2  
1011 Brussels (Belgium)

### PROGRAMME

#### **Thursday 28th April**

- 08.30 **Registration**
- 09.30 **Welcome by *Fientje Moerman*, Flemish Minister of Foreign Trade**
- 09.40 **Welcome and organisers'statement**  
*Gilberth Bermudez, IBC Secretariat/COLSIBA, Costa Rica*
- 10.00 **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION ON BANANAS : A BRIEF HISTORY**  
*Presentation by Pascal Liu, Commodity Specialist, Commodities and Trade Division, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations*
- 10.15 **Keynote presentation: “REVERSING THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM”**  
*Stephen Pursey, Adviser, Office of the Director-General, International Labour Organisation*
- 10.50 **THE MACRO-ECONOMICS OF THE BANANA CHAIN**  
*Presentation by Eva Carazo, independent consultant, Costa Rica*  
*Followed by debate in plenary*
- 11.45 **LABOUR RIGHTS, LIVING WAGES, FAIR PRICES: WHAT COMMITMENTS DO WE NEED?**  
*Interactive plenary chaired by Alistair Smith, Banana Link with representatives from banana workers' unions, small producers' associations and consumers: Iris Munguía and German Zepeda, Latin American Banana Workers' Union Coordination (COLSIBA), Honduras; Patrick Vewessee, Fako Agricultural Workers' Union, Cameroon; Josephine Dublin-Prince, WINFA, Dominica; Joaquín Vasquez, Union of Campesino Organisations of the Coastal Plain, Ecuador; Rafael Hernandez, Spanish Farmers' Union (COAG), Canary Islands, Spain; Leo Ghysels, Oxfam Wereldwinkels, Belgium; Lewis Akenji, Association of Conscious Consumers, Hungary.*
- 13.15 **Lunch**
- 14.30 **ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH IMPACTS: WHAT COMMITMENTS DO WE NEED?**  
*Panel of researchers' presentations and testimonies:*  
*Dr Raúl Harari, Corporation for the Development of Production and the Working Environment (IFA), Ecuador; Dr Catharina Wesseling, Instituto Regional de Estudios en Sustancias Tóxicas (IRET-UNA), Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica; Dr Thierry Lescot, Centre for International Cooperation in Agronomic Research for Development (CIRAD), France; Nioka Abbott, WINFA, Saint Vincent and Doris Garcia, ATC-Trabanic, Nicaragua.*  
*Questions and debate in plenary*
- 16.00 **Break**
- 16.30 **POLICIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE TRADE IN BANANAS**  
*Presentation by Dr Claudius Preville, Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery*  
*Reactions from Ambassador Méntor Villagómez, Mission of Ecuador to the European Union and European Commission (name to be confirmed)*  
*Questions and debate in plenary*
- 18.00 to 19.00 **Musical presentation: *UEPA'JE - Orlando y su conjunto***

**Friday 29th April**

09.00 **Summary of Day 1**

09.15 **CAN VOLUNTARY STANDARDS PROVIDE SOLUTIONS?**

*Presentation by **Anne-Claire Chambron**, Coordinator of the European Banana Action Network (EUROBAN)*

09.45 **WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF A SUSTAINABLE BANANA ECONOMY?**

*Panel of government and company representatives: **Mariano Jimenez**, National Banana Corporation (CORBANA), Costa Rica; **Ambassador Edwin Laurent**, Special Envoy for the Eastern Caribbean States (Dominica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines); **Reybanpac**, Ecuador (name to be confirmed); **Manuel Rodriguez**, Chiquita Brands International; **Sylvain Cuperlier**, Dole Europe SAS; **Guido de Vos** Head of Fruit and Vegetable Sector, Carrefour Belgium; **Karl-Friedrich Falkenberg**, DG Trade, European Commission.*

10.30 **Break**

10.50 **PANEL OF INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES (PART 2 )**

13.00 **Lunch**

14.30 **WHAT IS THE CASE FOR AN INTERNATIONAL BANANA AGREEMENT?**

*Presentation by **Thomas Lines**, independent consultant, UK*

15.00 **WORKSHOPS (choose one in advance)**

**1. Towards a permanent forum for banana dialogue**

**FACILITATOR:** John Daly, Irish Fair Trade Network; **RESOURCE PERSON:** Pascal Liu, FAO;

**RAPPORTEUR:** Cristiano Calvi, CTM Altromercato, Italy

*Why is a permanent forum necessary?*

*Who should be involved? Who would be the main actors?*

*What is the basis for their inclusion/participation?*

*What are the mechanisms of operation of the forum? How does interaction between stakeholders/actors take place?*

*What are the aims/objectives of this dialogue?*

*How do they relate to IBC2 and its outcome?*

*How can such a forum/dialogue contribute to creating a sustainable banana economy?*

**2. Is an international banana agreement feasible?**

**FACILITATOR:** Peter Robbins, Independent consultant; **RESOURCE PERSON:** Tom Lines, Independent consultant; **RAPPORTEUR:** An Lambrechts, Oxfam Wereldwinkels

- *What issues need to be addressed by an International Banana Agreement?*
- *Could some or all of these issues be addressed by some other means?*
- *What types of banana supply management are feasible?*
- *How to deal with issues of concentration in the supply chain?*
- *Who would be the members of an IBA? Producers and/or consumers?*
- *What types of banana should an IBA cover?*
- *What are the next steps to begin the process of establishing an IBA?*

**3. Reversing the erosion of labour rights**

**FACILITATOR:** Sue Longley, IUF; **RESOURCE PEOPLE:** German Zepeda, COLSIBA and Clifton Grant, United Agricultural Workers' Union (UAWA), Jamaica; **RAPPORTEUR:** Raúl Harari, IFA

- *What is the current situation in relation to labour rights?*
- *Do we need to differentiate between countries where there has been a loss of rights and those where rights never existed?*
- *Are there any areas/issues that have been hardest hit? Who has been most affected? Do we need specific strategies to assist the most vulnerable?*
- *Should we go beyond reversing the decline to campaigning for decent jobs in the industry?*
- *What measures can be taken to ensure a legal basis for rights? Do ILO Conventions assist in this regard? And, if so, what can we do to get ratification and implementation?*

#### 4. Creating a future for small farmers

**FACILITATOR:** Cecil Ryan, Saint Vincent Banana Growers' Association; **RESOURCE PEOPLE:** Raymond Austrie, Dominica Banana Producers Ltd. and Joaquín Vasquez, UROCAL, Ecuador; **RAPPORTEUR:** Richard Sellán, FENACLE, Ecuador

- How can we ensure a future in bananas for small farmers?
- What should be the main ingredients of a stable future?
- Smallholder production and the environment: what are the inter-relations?
- Role of small farmers and their organisations in the international banana trade
- What instruments are necessary to guarantee a profitable future for small farmers?
- Given the current threats from agriculture, trade and competition policies, what space exists for farmers to create leverage?

#### 5. Living wages and fair prices: whose responsibility?

**FACILITATOR:** Leo Ghysels, Oxfam Wereldwinkels; **RESOURCE PEOPLE:** Harriet Lamb, Fairtrade Foundation and Ian Burgess, The Cooperative Group; **RAPPORTEUR:** Iain Farquhar, Banana Link

- What are the main reasons why living wages and fair prices are not paid in most cases?
- How can the concept of a living wage be defined in such a way as to apply to different socio-economic conditions in different countries/regions?
- Are there broad principles for defining a 'fair price'? How has it been done in practice by FLO?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure fair banana wages and prices: trade unions, plantation owners, governments, trading companies, retailers, consumers?
- Does the ILO have a particular role in defining living wages?

#### 6. Trade policy mechanisms for a sustainable banana trade

**FACILITATOR:** Liz Parker, EUROBAN; **RESOURCE PEOPLE:** Bernard Cornibert, WIBDECO and George Malick, Ministry of Trade, Costa Rica; **RAPPORTEUR:** Michael Joseph, Saint Lucia Banana Corporation

- Can tariff-only contribute to a sustainable banana industry?
- To what extent could tariff differentiation on the basis of sustainability, tariff recycling into a sustainability fund or other banana trade policy mechanisms contribute to preservation or enhancement of the environment and to poverty reduction?
- What governance structures are needed to make this happen?
- What should be the role of, and inter-relationships between, the main stakeholders: producer and consumer country governments, international organisations, producers, traders, retailers, consumers?

17.30 Workshops end

### Saturday 30th April

09.00 Report back to plenary from the six workshops

10.00 Questions and clarifications

10.15 PRESENTATION OF DRAFT CONFERENCE DECLARATION

10.30 Break

10.50 FURTHER STEPS TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE BANANA ECONOMY?

Panel of reactions to a draft conference declaration from representatives of international institutions, governments, companies and civil society: **Mehmet Arda**, Commodities Division, UNCTAD; **Dr Roberto Hoyos**, AUGURA, Colombia; **Frédéric Rosseneu**, Agriculture and Horticulture Administration, Flemish Community; **Dr. Marshall Hall**, Jamaican Producers; **Domenico Capizzi**, Banana Buyer, Coop Switzerland; **Iris Munguía**, COLSIBA, Honduras; **Stephen Sellers** FLO International; **Sue Longley**, International Union of Food & Agricultural Workers (IUF).

12.45 Concluding remarks

**Hon. Montgomery Daniel**, Minister of State with responsibility for bananas in the Ministry of Agriculture St. Vincent and the Grenadines and **Renwick Rose**, WINFA coordinator

## **Feature: IBC II - CHANGING BANANAS FOR GOOD?**

*Dr. Iain Farquhar of Banana Link reflects on the evolution of debate, dialogue and on-the-ground changes between the two International Banana Conferences and at the IBC II event itself. Alistair Smith, editor of the Banana Trade News Bulletin, then goes on to consider what has happened as a result of IBCII and what this might mean for the future of the banana economy worldwide. The (unexpurgated) reactions to the conference of 4 out of 5 of the big banana companies are interspersed through the text in boxes.*

### **In the light of the first IBC in 1998**

At the first International Banana Conference in May 1998, there was a widespread recognition amongst the participating governments, companies, scientists and civil society organisations involved in the sector that the social and environmental conditions prevailing in the industry at the time were unacceptable. Given the highly fraught context at the time, there was no agreement as to how to move forwards towards an EU trade regime capable of encouraging sustainability. However, the IBC I was host to the first-ever debate involving all parties since the banana “trade wars” erupted in the early 1990s. Furthermore the organisers did succeed in producing the International Banana Charter, which has provided a framework for civil society action since then, although, not surprisingly perhaps, the key players in the industry did not feel able to sign up to a document which was conceived by their critics. So, what happened then in the intervening seven years?

On the whole, the banana producing and trading companies accepted the diagnosis of IBC I concerning the conditions prevailing in the industry and they made efforts to improve both socially and environmentally, either by themselves adopting a range of voluntary standards (both social and environmental) or as a result of having ‘quality’ standards (mainly environmental) imposed on them by their major customers, notably the ISO 14001 and EUREPGAP standards (the latter controlled by European retailers). In general it appears that the issues were taken seriously by many plantation owners – multinational and nationally owned – but some companies made deeper commitments than others.

Nevertheless, despite the proliferation of voluntary standards initiatives in the sector, achievements on the ground were fairly limited (see IBC 2 paper “*Can Voluntary Standards Provide Solutions?*”). Overall conditions – especially socio-economic conditions - in the industry appeared to have actually worsened rather than improved in the intervening period between the two conferences.

A new dimension in the lead-up to – and at - IBC II was a recognition of the importance of the big retail companies which distribute more and more of the bananas supplied by the production and trading companies. The retailers had been able to take advantage of the oversupply of the market to push for lower and lower prices from their suppliers. This in turn stimulated changes to the structure of the supply chain, involving relocation to ‘cheap’ countries with lower standards and/or the imposition of new working practices on workers who often ended up working for lower levels of remuneration.

At IBCII, participants broadly recognised that there was a need for a permanent stakeholder forum to halt further declines in standards, to seek to reverse the overall negative trends in the industry (the ‘race to the bottom’) and, notably, to find ways of limiting the growing power of supermarkets to depress prices to even more unsustainably low levels. On the issue of standards in the plantations and pack-houses, the ILO laid down a challenge to the sector, referring to its role as ‘guarantor’ of the Chiquita-IUF-COLSIBA agreement of 2001 as an indicator of the way an international institution could help reinforce the practical application of its own legally-binding standards in a context of continuing and systematic violations in several key exporting countries. No banana producing country and few consuming countries, for example, have ratified ILO Convention 184 on health and safety, the enforcement of which would make a huge difference to the daily lives of working men and women in small, medium and large-scale banana plantations across the tropics.

The conflicts surrounding the proposed reform of the EU import regime were, in one sense, an unwelcome ‘intrusion’ into the ambitious conference agenda, but one which the organisers had to take into account. All the more so, as it turned out that the outgoing WTO Director General announced the composition of the arbitration panel in Geneva only hours after the end of IBC II. The much delayed evaluation of the COM in Bananas (mainly focusing on the internal EU subsidy regime, with a limited

focus on third country economic impacts) was handed to the Commission on the last day of the conference, but was not yet a public document at this stage, despite its being originally conceived as a contribution to the reform debate. All these short-term factors tended to conspire against the conference's objective of focusing debate and proposals on what an EU trade policy capable of encouraging sustainable production and trade might look like.

Although total consensus on EU trade policy was elusive, the voices of the relatively 'powerless' were heard by the relatively 'powerful' and policymakers were left in little doubt as to the probable impact of the scenario which they had appeared to assume was more or less inevitable, when they first arrived at the event. Most participants, including some but not all major company representatives, saw 'tariff only' as damaging; many argued that a continuation of the current regime – the so-called 'status quo' – though not particularly desirable and far from ideal for some other players (such as smaller farmers in South America and some traders of organic and 'Fairtrade' labelled fruit) was much better than the proposed reform on the table. EC representatives appeared however, at least in public, to be fairly inflexible about putting the reform process into 'reverse gear'. It was decided at the conference, with no overt opposition, that participants should call collectively for an independent evaluation of the current regime.

Whatever happens on the trade policy front, there can be no doubt that any further price falls will damage all stakeholders. Even those big fruit companies, which were opposed to the continuation of the current EU import regime in any form, recognised that cooperation both amongst banana producers and with other stakeholders was necessary and valuable if the 'race to the bottom' was to be reversed.

## **In the light of what IBCII set out to achieve**

### **1. Tackling overproduction**

The first – and most unexpected – development following the IBC II was the new Ecuador government's decision to regulate their internal banana market and make voluntary reductions in their export volumes. To what extent this can be directly attributed to discussions about global banana supply management during the conference and its preparations is impossible to say at this stage. What is certain however, is that the Agriculture Minister, Pablo Rizzo and some of the major Ecuadorian exporting companies decided in early May that the series of producer strikes (and almost constant threats of strikes in the last few years) over the price paid by exporters when the international market is oversupplied required innovative action on the part of the government and the industry. Less than a fortnight after the first 'public' discussions of different supply management options in Brussels, a tri-partite agreement not only to guarantee payment of the minimum price to producers, but also to manage a reduction in exports had been signed and a Commission of government, producers and exporters put in place.

Given the political instability of a country which is seeing accelerated impoverishment of both the rural and urban majorities, and given the fragility of any attempts to stabilise relations between producers and exporters, Ecuador will almost certainly have to seek allies amongst the other major exporting countries. It is still conceivable that any such move to broaden out this brave unilateral move by Ecuador could take place in conjunction with efforts to present a common producer country position in Geneva. However, it would seem more appropriate in the medium to longer term to hold such discussions in a more formal – and rather less politically charged – forum than the fora in which debate on 'tariff/s only' or 'tariff quotas' is taking place. It is possible that the forthcoming Inter-Governmental Group on Bananas and Tropical Fruit meeting in Guayaquil in September, hosted by FAO and the Ecuadorian government, would provide an ideal forum.

### **2. A permanent multi-stakeholder forum**

The second development is one which can be justifiably attributed directly to the IBC II process: there is consensus amongst all the key participants in the banana market that a "permanent multi-stakeholder forum" is needed for the sector. However, to be sustainable – in the temporal sense of the word – such a forum would need proactive international institutional support from at least three or four inter-governmental institutions such as FAO, ILO, UNCTAD, WHO and/or the IFC. The organisers of IBC II are currently initiating consultations to explore the form such a forum could take as

well as the framework of principles on which it would be founded and would function. Examples from the coffee<sup>1</sup> and textile<sup>2</sup> sectors can be analysed in terms of the lessons they offer for the banana economy.

### 3. Towards a sustainable EU banana regime?

A third development, and one which is necessarily wrapped up in controversy, is that the majority of governments and companies represented at the conference support the continuation of some form of supply management in the EU-25. Discussions about how such a trade policy regime could be linked to improvements in socio-economic conditions as well as to improved labour and environmental standards were inconclusive, but got a good airing. Some form of tariff differentiation or graduation according to sustainability criteria is a debate which can no longer be kept under the table, in spite of the obvious challenges it poses to existing international trade rules and to WTO member states both large and small.

The conference declaration (see page 26 ) calls on the EU to undertake a *full* evaluation of the impact of the “Common Organisation of the Market in Bananas” in place since July 1993. This call will be *partially* answered when the much-delayed EC-commissioned evaluation report is finally published this summer. The Commission is now exploring the possibility of organising some kind of broad forum to discuss the report’s findings this autumn and points out that it will also be seeking feedback from most of the key European institutions – Parliament, Council of Ministers, Committee of the Regions, Economic and Social Committee, etc. However, securing a *full* impact assessment of different ‘tariff only’ proposals is not yet on the EU agenda, but many of the participants at IBC II are committed to trying to ensure that this happens. In the light of the radical impact which either a low, medium or high tariff would have on the whole banana economy, it would be astonishing if the EU could not agree to such an assessment before making the reform it has announced and which is currently subject to costly and time-consuming arbitration in the WTO. Would a full evaluation of past and present import policies and their impact on real people and real places not be the best way for the EU to lower the banana political temperature as governments prepare for a testing WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in mid-December?

### 4. Regulating the new ‘lords of the chain’

The fourth development has caused some large companies in the sector a certain amount of consternation, but may set a precedent for inter-governmental policy action in the longer-term. The “dawn raid” on the European offices of Chiquita, Dole, Del Monte and Fyffes in early June may well not have gathered evidence sufficient to prove any kind of “price-fixing cartel”, but it sends a signal that competition authorities can use their teeth – teeth which some thought had fallen out. This surprise “raid” could also be taken as advance notice for other bigger companies in the chain that sooner or later – although it is not going to happen just yet – anti-competitive behaviour upstream from the banana suppliers, notably abuses of *buying* power rather than just of *supplying* power, will be put in place along with effective regulation in order to protect all those back down the supply chain - from supermarket warehouse back to the fields, factories and homes of those whose lives and incomes they increasingly control. It was noted at the IBC II that there is currently a complete vacuum in the domain of adequate policies to control abuses of buyer power.

The UK banana market, which has gone from being a high-price-high-profit market for suppliers to a low-price-low-or-no-profit market in just three years, provides an interesting case in point, where the big four retailers sell three bananas in every four consumed; but it is unlikely that the competition issues posed by this phenomenon – notably the absence of any legal provisions for controlling ‘oligopsony’ – will be resolved at the level of one nation-state alone. However, participants at IBC II were close to unanimous in identifying the need to collaborate across the sector to help fill this policy vacuum. Could we not imagine fruitful cooperation between corporate lawyers and civil society interests, rather than the traditional mutual suspicion or open conflict?

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<sup>1</sup> The **Sustainable Coffee Partnership** set up by UNCTAD and the Canada-based International Institute for Sustainable Development in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The **Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) Forum** was officially launched on 8th June 2005, nearly 6 months after the MFA expired.

## **5. Sustainable production and fair trade**

The fifth area in which the 'post-IBC II' banana world is demonstrating constructive progress is more practical and immediate from a workers and farmers point of view: the gradual shift of sustainable production methods and production to 'Fairtrade' standards from the margins to the mainstream of the world banana market is accelerating. On June 8<sup>th</sup>, an agreement was signed between the Latin American Banana Workers' Union Coordination COLSIBA and Transfair USA, the leading Fairtrade labelling organisation member in North America (see the "*Issues: consuming countries*" section of this Bulletin). This agreement and the shift in trading patterns which it heralds are of vital importance to Latin American plantation workers and, of course, of great significance to US consumers. The former have been struggling to make Fairtrade a meaningful option for them for over a decade, whilst the latter have started to arrive relatively recently at the conclusion that they want the option to buy bananas which do not support the race to the bottom in standards and prices looming over the rest of the continent to the South.

Alongside this, the Windward Island industry in a single voice – governments, companies and farmers themselves who led the initiative back in the late 1990s - has declared its intention to shift the whole of production towards Fairtrade standards, as one of the instruments in its tool-kit for survival. Some voices worry, understandably, that the small farmers who have led the Fairtrade labelling movement could stand to lose out as large-scale plantation volumes are required to meet rapidly growing demand from consumers in national markets as diverse as Finland, Italy, the United States, the UK and Japan.

On the broader area of sustainable production methods, although many areas where organic or biodynamic production for export is possible have already converted – or are in the process of conversion to – these certifiable systems. FLO's environmental standards are also leading producers in that direction, partly because of the standards themselves, partly because of the additional guaranteed price incentive of 'double' certification. However, when it comes to publicly available research on low external input and non-chemical systems, the banana world remains a virtual desert. Despite regular appeals by the International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP) including, and despite a rather unfruitful and now defunct World Bank-backed Banana Improvement Programme, the industry itself – or at least the fruit multinationals who dominate the industry – has proved remarkably resilient to what too most observers looks like simple good sense.

If we want a sustainable industry, surely it has to be based on the sustainable use of varieties which are not only acceptable to consumers, but which are also not under threat from systemic disease problems. Industry and governments seem to agree that the exceedingly high human, environmental and economic costs associated with the dependency on one variety for nearly all bananas entering the international trade, but so far they have failed to put their money where their mouth is. For the conference organisers, this needs to change and there are international institutions and scientists just waiting for the right financial signals. Such research should surely be a product of public and private collaboration. This could become one of the key areas of work for a future multi-stakeholder forum.

## **6. Workers, farmers and gender equity**

The four million or so people who depend directly on the international banana economy for their livelihoods were well represented at IBC II. Trade unions, farmers' organisations and other civil society organisations from 20 producing countries or territories made their voices very clearly heard at IBC II. No participant can have been left in any doubt about the depth of the multiple crisis facing workers and small producers in particular. The catalogue of labour, trade union, social, housing, health, safety and environment issues has grown since 1998, just as efforts inside the sector and from international solidarity have started to be mobilised. However, the understanding of these issues, as well as the transnational capacity to deal with them, has grown very considerably.

Nor should anybody have gone away with the idea that the role of the women on the frontline' of the industry is secondary. Women banana workers and small farmers have been highly organised since the first IBC and held their own international conference in Germany in 2000. The women workers' agenda and analysis of the sector - not just in relation to the range of problems facing those employed in the industry and their families, but also in relation to their growing leadership role in negotiations over labour relations and trade arrangements affecting their employment – is often clearer and more coherently presented than those presented by many of their male colleagues from the industry itself and from their national governments.



As far as our objective of “securing commitments from governments and companies to respect/enforce labour and trade union rights and standards” is concerned, no conference could be expected to achieve such an ambition in itself, but there are some signs of hope that in the follow-up other banana companies will follow the lead taken by Chiquita following IBC I. Pacific Fruit/Bonita and Dole have both initiated meaningful dialogue with trade union organisations in the weeks and days leading up to the conference. Only time and practical results will tell whether these important discussions will lead anywhere. Del Monte also stated for the first time at IBC II that it is open to direct bargaining with the independent trade union in their plantations Cameroon.

On the government side, the new Ecuador government has given initial signals since IBC II that they might become more serious than their predecessors about enforcing labour and trade union rights, and it is to be hoped that the detailed submission by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to the WTO Country Review in June will be incorporated in the recommendations from that organisation to Quito. Although the US Administration was not represented at IBC II, the US and UK embassies in Quito have been playing quite a constructive role in trying to get successive Ecuadorian Labour Ministers to enforce existing legislation and make progressive reforms to reflect fully the core ILO conventions.

### **7. Fair prices and living wages**

On the complex issue of “defining a fair price” (to producers) and exploring how “living” wages might be paid, there was no evident consensus emerging from IBC II, but then this was a set of issues which the organisers of IBC I had felt we had to skirt around in order to bring people to a first international forum. At IBC II the economics of the sector took centre stage and debate was surprisingly mature and coherent. The development of fair and alternative trading arrangements, especially their arrival in the mainstream in Switzerland (over 50% of the market), has helped to clarify at least one definition of “fair price” at one crucially important stage of the chain. FLO’s fair pricing system has set a challenge to all traders in their business relations with producers. A fair price for shipping or distribution is another matter not easy to broach at this stage of dialogue.

As for a “living” wage, which if paid to all (whatever the technical definition chosen) would make a greater tangible difference to currently impoverished banana exporting communities than any other single change, there will be little movement as long as the market remains oversupplied and power relations between buyers and producers on the one hand and producers and their employees on the other remain so one-sided. The challenge is huge, but not insurmountable. Central American workers have pointed out that the most stable period of labour relations they can remember, when most workers received what *they* deemed to be a living wage, coincided precisely with the short period in the mid-1970s when the Union of Banana Exporting Countries (UPEB) was functioning efficiently to the benefit of producer governments. Is this just coincidence, or one of the more seminal lessons to be learned from our three days together in Europe’s political capital?

## ***Views from the major fruit companies***

### ***1. Manuel Rodríguez, Senior Vice President Government & International Affairs and Corporate Responsibility Officer, Chiquita Brands***

I was very pleased to participate at the International Banana Conference. The organizers deserve all credit for bringing about such a successful event, to which the meticulous preparation over the preceding weeks and months no doubt contributed. The conference demonstrated the role of dialogue and cooperation in raising standards in the banana industry. This kind of dialogue is an essential step in a process of sustained improvement.

Cooperation with civil society is in our company's point of view crucial to achieving improvements in our business and throughout the banana economy. A public commitment to high ethical, social and environmental standards independently verified by NGOs and trade unions; collective bargaining agreements with local trade unions supported by the IUF; our relationship with the Rainforest Alliance and public reporting on progress and problems are all key parts of our experience and confirm the importance of this dialogue.

Our framework agreement with IUF and COLSIBA has been a particularly valuable mechanism for improving labour relations and for structured and continuous dialogue on standards. It has promoted dialogue where there was confrontation, and has led to increased trade union membership and cooperation. We hope that other companies see the benefit of entering into similar agreements. The company was very pleased to see this view shared by many of the representatives at the conference.

Chiquita is keenly aware of the many opportunities and needs for improvement which we as a company and as an industry face. The IBC has highlighted those issues where progress is most urgent, such as occupational health and safety and the environmental impact of banana production. But no single company can tackle the systemic issues of the industry in isolation. As an industry, we must rethink together how we can pool resources and find solutions that will lead to progress in these and other areas.

I therefore would like to repeat my invitation to all the companies and banana producers to consider how we can work together to raise social and environmental standards in our industry, because we all have much to gain from a more sustainable banana economy. It is in this spirit that we support initiatives to establish a more structured dialogue to promote progress in line with the IBC final declaration.

The industry also faces impending changes in the EU import regime, which will have an important impact on the world banana economy and on employment and social conditions in the countries affected for years to come. We all need access to the European market, which is not only a source of profit but also of employment and social and environmental progress. As Latin American producers we are very concerned about the effects of a high tariff on the long term viability of our production and the transfer of investments to other regions; but we are also aware of the problems that for example the Windward Islands will face from the removal of its protective quota and preferential tariff. And we share the concerns of the IBC participants that the outcome could be a source of disruption, hardship and injustice.

It is only through dialogue and cooperation between civil society, industry and governments that we can meet these objectives. We encourage the EUROBAN network to continue challenging the industry and seeking improvements so as to raise the ethical, social, and environmental bar in the world banana economy.

## **2. Sylvain Cuperlier, Manager, sustainability programs and communication, Dole Europe S.A.S.**

During the first international banana conference held in 1998, the banana industry was encouraged to speed up the implementation of environmental, labor and social programs while facing an increasing price pressure.

The issue of a sustainable banana economy is not limited to producers and banana companies. It is a much wider issue, which must be addressed taking into account the whole chain from the producer to the end-consumer. Since the first international banana conference, Dole has been very active in responding to the concerns of our stakeholders by developing ambitious programs in the environmental, social and labor areas, for example with the implementation of voluntary standards such as ISO 14001 and SA 8000 or the distribution of organic and Fairtrade bananas. Dole is also proud to have continued to invest in the countries where it employs workers and to have kept an on-going business relationship with its growers, even when times were difficult. Even though we think that there is still some room for improvement, we regret that some of our stakeholders do not always recognize these efforts and achievements.

At Dole, we are all the more proud of these programs given the fact that the context has been difficult, with a pressure on the price of bananas, driven by mergers in the food retail sector, the development of hard-discount stores and an increasing interest from consumers in buying the cheapest products.

Most of those who complain about the current situation in the banana production are also in favor of a *status quo* in the European banana regime. How can they support this position? The quota rent has been a good source of income for some EU players but there is little evidence that the quota rent has been re-injected in the banana economy in order to improve the quality of life in the countries of production.

Dole appreciated the fact that the organizers of the second international banana conference and the preparatory meetings held in London and Washington DC gave us the opportunity to present our positions on these issues and we are looking forward to continuing to exchange views with the stakeholders of the banana industry.

## **3. Philip Halpenny, Company Secretary, Fyffes plc**

For me, the most striking aspect of the Conference was the clear evolution in understanding the banana business by all of the stakeholders in the industry.

Since I first came into contact with NGOs about banana trade issues around the time of the setting up of EUROBAN in 1994, I have had numerous long and interesting debates about our business with hugely dedicated people like Alistair Smith of Banana Link, Jeroen Douglas of Solidaridad, Renwick Rose of WINFA, John Daly of the Irish Fair Trade Network, Oisín Coghlan of Christian Aid and Ron Oswald of the IUF, all of whom are eloquent and thoroughly committed advocates on behalf of small banana farmers and banana farm workers. Not surprisingly, we have not always seen eye to eye, mainly because, of necessity, we approach the business from different perspectives. However, an abiding concern of mine has been that all interested stakeholders should understand the commercial realities of the banana trade.

At this latest coming together of those stakeholders in Brussels, I was particularly struck by the context in which discussions took place. Commercial realities – structural over-production in the international market, returns being a function of supply and demand, the relative strength of the multiple retailers in the price equation and the need for viability at all levels of the supply chain – are now accepted by those seeking fair treatment for small farmers and workers. Now the debate can really move forward.

The Conference did not solve all of the problems in the banana industry. However, it made progress on understanding them and recognising the essential commodity nature of the business. In particular, it acknowledged the importance of the EU Banana Regime in providing the only market in the global trade where an attempt has been made to achieve a balance between the often competing interests of growers, workers, distributors, retailers and consumers. For this reason, I saw it as hugely important that the key conclusion of this influential Conference was that the European Commission should

undertake a comprehensive evaluation of that regime before implementing the proposed move to tariff only in 2006.

The regime provides the foundation whereby those with structural disadvantages are given a genuine opportunity to compete successfully. It should not be abandoned in the name of free trade, particularly if it merely results in an even faster “race to the bottom”.

#### **4. Eric Crisman, Senior Corporate Advisor and Director of External Affairs, Pacific Fruit/Bonita**

For Pacific Fruit, global distributors of Bonita banana, the event was stimulating and constructive. A broad range of participants from the supply chain openly discussed key issues that organizers identified as accelerating the “*Race to the Bottom*”.

In order to effect change in the banana industry, we recommend future IBC formats include greater participation from “big retail”. The organizers have correctly identified retail as contributing the greatest downward pressure on banana pricing. Their influence creates hardship and inequity on the banana worker/producer level. But “big retail” is in business to offer their stakeholders maximum profitability. Indeed, the goal of “big retail” is to continually improve efficiencies and lower prices for their customer. They have no incentive to respond to price issues without the aggressive inter-action of producer country governments and consumer pressure.

Therefore, we would like to see greater high-level participation from the governments of Producer Countries, and, influential international consumer groups. The duty of government is to craft laws that offer opportunity and protection. The duty of business is to comply with them. Business should never make the law. Equally important is a consumer awareness movement that actually changes its global purchasing patterns. Education of the consumer to the sensitive issues raised at the IBC should take into consideration supply chain distribution. The hope of price elasticity instead of “cheap bananas” will not occur in “big retail” without government and consumer involvement.

Pacific Fruit acknowledges and shares the concerns raised by the IBC organizers as regards the proposed fundamental changes in the EU banana regime. We repeat our statement made at the Conference that dramatically illustrates the impending crisis. Some of the world’s poorest countries currently pay 1.80 U.S. Dollars for the right to sell their bananas in the EU market. The current legislation proposes to increase this “tax on the poorest” to 5.50 U.S. Dollars beginning January 2006. The results are obvious, “the rich get rich and the poor get poorer”.

Pacific Fruit was vocal during the conference regarding the negative social and environmental impact of these changes, and endorse a moratorium on the impending dead-line while a more balanced evaluation takes place. Given the global scope of EU banana production and the plethora of self-interests, it is essential that a consensus among producer nations is established to counter-balance the EU proposal, or the effort will be futile.

More time must be spent by the organizers to amplify the constructive efforts made by the banana companies and to acknowledge the deeply rooted challenges that are faced in many of the producing countries. It is easy to attack. It is more difficult to share the burden of problem resolution. A greater Spirit of Cooperation must be fostered for healthy exchange.

For example, Pacific Fruit has a cooperative working relationship with EBNSA, the Ecuadorian trading company that originates Bonita banana for the global market-place. The independent producer network that offers fruit to the local market-place includes over 6,100 registered growers. Many are small family operations. EBNSA buys from a core group of more than 600 for Europe alone. Child labor is a serious problem in this vastly unregulated sector. Pacific Fruit in cooperation with EBNSA works aggressively to solve Child Labor issues standards through out-reach assistance, seminars and workshops. EBNSA is a charter member on the “Banana Social Forum” created by the Ecuadorian Government to eradicate Child Labor. The BSF includes representatives from the Ministry of Labor, CORPEI, INNFA, UNICEF, and producers, exporters, and workers of the banana sector. This

important information is not shared by the organizers; nor are the challenges discussed in a Spirit of Cooperation. We are pleased to share our pro-active programs, and invite comment and opinion.

Pacific Fruit found the IBC to be beneficial in initiating constructive dialogue. It is hoped that greater in-depth participation by the supply chain participants and consumer groups will foster an environment that creates collaborative policy-making and defuses the confrontational rhetoric that exists, in many quarters, today.

## Views from the major protagonists

### 1 - COLSIBA

It is clear that the first International Banana Conference, in May 1998, launched an important process of discussion, involving the majority of actors in the banana chain. The elaboration of the International Banana Charter was an important achievement in itself, as it put the major social, environmental and commercial problems in banana production and trade on the table, both at international and local levels. In the years following the IBC I, a process of tough negotiations was initiated by COLSIBA and the company Chiquita, leading to the signing of a regional agreement in 2001.

Fair trade in bananas underwent rapid growth in this whole period and, by the time of the second conference, had become an important player, competing with the big operators. All the signs are that this growth will continue and that the movement's competitors will not be able to ignore it in the coming years. As COLSIBA, we are delighted that our own efforts in this domain are bearing fruit and that both the first and second conference provided an important forum to promote fair trade in its diverse forms. Another important topic raised at the IBC II is that of the voluntary corporate responsibility initiatives which were not just 'on show', but were also exposed to scrutiny; this was particularly important since these initiatives have not yet managed to convince all the actors that they are really efficient in either their functioning or in the way in which they have been implemented on the ground in banana plantations and other sectors of the agricultural industry. The whole preparatory process of the IBC II was very enriching, as it was possible to debate different aspects of the banana chain in the regional workshops: from the problems of the lack of trade union freedom in major producing countries like Ecuador and Costa Rica, through to major issues such as environmental pollution, the lack of social security cover, health and safety provisions and job security. The specific problems affecting both women workers and small farmers were also made very clear. Small and medium-scale farmers from many countries were able to present their analysis as well as their proposals for more socially just and environmentally friendly methods of production.

One of the keys to the success of the process has been the fact that most of the players along the chain have come together. It was particularly important to have the participation of a few of the most important retailers as well as of all the marketing companies, some of which made important contributions to discussions on the key themes. It was inevitable that in many of the different discussion fora the problem of banana imports into Europe took centre-stage. Two principal positions could be clearly detected on this issue: those in favour of the "status quo", and those in favour of a single tariff whatever the cost, as if this were the solution to all the commercial, social and environmental issues in this market.

Major achievements of the IBC II include the adoption of a "Participants' Declaration", and the "Organisers' Statement", which reflects the maturity and the spirit of solidarity and humanity that inspires us to carry on building a platform which becomes stronger by the day. Also key is the proposal to create a more permanent forum for discussion and analysis of the themes raised in the conference. The participation of international bodies such as the FAO, ILO and UNCTAD – as well as the European Commission itself – is therefore crucial to the quest to create a legitimate counterweight to the position of some governments and to official trade negotiating structures such as the WTO and the EU's structures. We also believe that civil society has become stronger in its interaction with the official institutions which still, all too often, take decisions without taking into account representatives of different sectors of organised civil society.

It was a gratifying experience to work alongside WINFA, US/LEAP, EUROBAN and the IUF. COLSIBA values highly the level of coordination and joint action that we achieved. We especially value the extraordinary contribution of organisations like Banana Link and Oxfam in Belgium who ensured that the conference was so successful.

COLSIBA welcomes this success and we commit ourselves to continue with our involvement in efforts to turn banana production and trade into a job and a business with a human face, and less of an enemy of the natural environment which we still have left.

*Gilberth Bermúdez Umaña, Deputy Coordinador of COLSIBA and Southern Secretary of the IBC II, San José, Costa Rica.*

## **2 - WINFA**

The Caribbean banana sector has expressed satisfaction with the outcome of IBC II and looks forward to how it can best utilise the conclusions arrived at there. The Caribbean farmers' movement, WINFA, played a key role in both organizing the conference itself and in ensuring a strong Caribbean presence, and served as a catalyst for energising the Caribbean participants. This contrasted with the first IBC when Caribbean participation was very limited.

WINFA's approach this time was an inclusive one, seeking to involve broad participation from the industry as a whole. As a result, there were over 30 participants from the Windward Islands, the Francophone Caribbean and Jamaica – from banana companies and associations, state-owned banana institutions, government ministries, trade unions and fair trade farmers. In addition, the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, responsible for banana policy in CARICOM, took a leading role in both the Caribbean preparations – Prime Minister Hon. Ralph Gonsalves took an active part in the January seminar – as well as in the conference itself.

Another feature of the Caribbean participation was its level of preparedness. As well as the regional preparatory seminar, strategy sessions were held in St. Vincent and Brussels immediately before the Conference. At the IBC II itself, Caribbean participants played key roles with a major presentation from Dr. Claudius Preville of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) on sustainable trade policies, while other participants served as resource personnel. Fairtrade too, demonstrated its potential for human resource development through the contributions of farmers, Ms. Nioka Abbott and Mr. Amos Wiltshire. The strong female presence on the Caribbean delegation ensured that a gender perspective was always incorporated.

For the Caribbean, the conference was a huge success, judging by the number and level of participants, the quality of presentations and debate, the level of organisation and the outcome of the dialogue. Most, including representatives of major trading companies and governments, joined the workers and farmers in praise of the efforts of the organisers.

There was much satisfaction that concerns over the future of the industry in general, and the European banana regime in particular, were not only ventilated but that a certain consensus over solutions emerged. True, the farmer elements of the delegation would have been wished for even more specific commitments. However, they were particularly pleased by the collective call on the EU not to proceed with the implementation of its proposed "tariff-only" regime from January 2006 until it has made a comprehensive evaluation of the current and proposed marketing mechanisms and their impact on the lives of the people of the exporting countries.

The Fairtrade farmers welcomed the growing consumer awareness in Europe, leading to expanding markets for Fairtrade and organic products. They are committed to further pursuing both Fairtrade and organic production and marketing as part of their diversification strategy.

The Caribbean delegation looks forward in particular to the active pursuance of the agreement that a "multi-stakeholder forum should be created to find ways of tackling the social, economic and environmental issues in the industry" and are committed to play their part.

The IBC II, whilst a major advance along the road of dialogue and the search for solutions, is not an end in itself. It provided the opportunity for multilateral and bilateral exchanges, but these need to be followed through if real and lasting benefits are to be achieved. In particular, the embattled Windwards industry needs to act on the positive proposals, put its own house in order, pursue aggressive lobbying and advocacy campaigns and build alliances.

Above all, the battle for increased productivity, excellence in quality, maximum efficiency, democratic participation and transparency in governance needs to be waged with gusto.

*Renwick Rose, Coordinator, Association of Caribbean Farmers, WINFA, St Vincent & The Grenadines*

**Testimony - Amos Wiltshire,  
Dominica National Fair Trade Organisation, 29/04/2005**

*Contribution made at the second International Banana Conference in Brussels*

"Thank you very much and good morning. I am Amos Wiltshire from the small island of Dominica – an island which is between the French-speaking islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. I represent the Dominica National Fair Trade Organisation, also a member of the Windward Islands Farmers' Association. I am her to represent the interests of small farmers and farmers' communities in the various islands. I share the very same interests with the Latin American brothers, with the African brothers and sisters. We in the Caribbean are also on the same wavelength.

"My dear friends, we are in a vicious circle - a circle that does not allow the small and what I call underdeveloped states to survive. It seems that the giants of the multinationals are holding us, and that all the decision made are made merely based on profit and profit-making without looking at eh effects they are having on the small islands and countries. So we are in the same pot, and we are in the same race: a race to the end; a race to the bottom. I would like my Latin American brothers and sisters - and also my African brothers – to recognise that the fight is not a fight amongst ourselves; that fight we should be fighting is a fight for the survival of our children and for the survival of our countries and our states.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is rather hypocritical that the multinationals come to tell us that 'we are going to provide a cheaper banana to the supermarkets, and we're going to give more money to the producers'. How on earth?! What kind of [maths] are we going to use to do this calculation?!

"Ladies and gentlemen, I must go back to my island state (which is Dominica), where we had the Colonial Development Corporation operating for some time; and to the dismay of this little island, after the Colonial Development Corporation left that state, we had to go back and try to get out the chemicals that they put there because of the wrong way in which bananas were produced in these islands; because of the wrong way bananas were produced, the workers are sick today. We are having them in hospital, with all kind of maladies and all kind of deficiencies... and our population is now very sick because of the way that bananas were produced in my island state.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we must say thank you to the Fairtrade initiative that is now operating in Dominica, that is helping us to clean out the pollution, to get our water-base back in place, to get our children to be able to attend high school. I just heard one of the multinationals talk about how 'we're going to present documents to some of our countries'... when the population is not educated. What are you doing with the profits that you get from bananas? Cannot we put some back into education? Cannot we put some back into the health system? We are now doing that with the little bit that we're getting from Fairtrade in Dominica. We're helping the schools; we're helping the health centres; we're helping... but we are now calling on the multinationals to look at where you're going with the direction, where you're going with the profit that you're making at the expense of blood and sweat of the small people.

I thank you very much."



## **SUMMARY OF IBC2 WORKSHOPS' OUTCOMES**

### **Workshop 1 – Towards a permanent forum for banana dialogue**

*Facilitator: John Daly, Irish Fairtrade Network; Resource person: Pascal Liu: FAO; rapporteur: Cristiano Calvi, CTM Altromercato Italy*

Everyone agreed we need a permanent forum because:

- trust building
- followup conference
- continuing discussions
- communication channel
- exchange information
- mutual support
- help to solve crisis
- clear up perspective
- to work for solutions
- education ...

#### Which kind of forum?

Not only an electronic forum, but we also need to meet physically

#### What stakeholders?

Those present at the seminars: producers, trade unions, TNCs, fairtrade organisations, NGOs, environmental organisations, researchers.

We also need to include all stakeholders (including governments, supermarket chains, consumers, etc.)

Further suggestions: world bank, development agencies, ILO, UNCTAD, supermarkets, consumers, women's associations, governments, traders, etc.

#### How can we start?

The organisers of the conference and Pascal Liu of FAO could agree on who to contact as relevant stakeholders

The first step is establish an 'advisory group' which includes all the important stakeholders and if possible involve ILO and FAO officially

Promotion and facilitation through FAO electronic forum

Announce at IGG Intergovernmental group next meeting the possibility to build the forum

The group proposed another international conference in two years (possibly back to back with IGG)

## **Workshop 2: Is an international Banana Agreement feasible?**

*FACILITATOR: Peter Robbins, Independent consultant; RESOURCE PERSON: Tom Lines, Independent consultant; RAPPORTEUR: An Lambrechts, Oxfam Wereldwinkels*

### **Introduction and agenda explanation**

#### *1) What issues need to be addressed by an International Banana Agreement?*

Suggestions included:

- Income of small-scale farmers
- Wages, conditions and trade unions recognition for plantation workers
- ILO compliance
- Price of bananas
- Control by supermarkets
- Control by large traders (anti-competitive behaviour)
- Control of agricultural chemicals
- Environmental degradation

#### *2) Could some or all of these issues be addressed by some other means?*

*What other means could be used to address all the above issues?*

Answers to these questions included:

- Trade union activity – (involving other domestic unions?)
- Boycotting private companies – traders/supermarkets
- Dialogue with private companies
- Promotion of Fair Trade
- Setting of international standards
- Legal action
- Diplomatic initiative – WTO, UNCTAD, Regional economic agreements, etc
- Solidarity among international activists – alliance of sympathetic producer country governments, NGOs, pressure groups, consumers' organisations, trade unions, farmers' groups, etc.
- UN pressure
- Strengthening of FAO Intergovernmental Group on Bananas and Tropical Fruit (IGG)
- Promotion of multi-cropping
- Strengthening competition law
- Co-ordinate activity – web site
- Publicity – Films, Newspapers, TV Documentaries

#### *3) Who would be the members of an IBA? Producers and consumers?*

#### *4) What types of banana should an IBA cover? Sweet bananas; exported varieties;*

#### *5) What are the next steps to begin the process of establishing an IBA?*

1. Consider a step-by-step (bolt on agreement) covering the least contentious issues first.
2. Draw up set of standards (rules-based system) covering –
  - plantation workers' wages and conditions, collective bargaining, trade union recognition
  - agro-chemical protocol
  - environmental protocol
3. Set up a 'working group' on IBA feasibility and initial phases.
4. Linking with other tropical commodities initiatives
5. Making representations to FAO Intergovernmental Group on Bananas and Tropical Fruit (IGG), UNCTAD, WTO, ILO, etc.
6. Lobbying producer-country governments
7. Producing information packages for –
  - WTO negotiators
  - Pressure groups, consumer groups and NGOs

### **Workshop 3 – Reversing the role of labour rights**

*Facilitator: Sue Longley, IUF; Resource people: German Zepeda COLSIBA and Clifton Grant, United Agricultural Workers' Union, Jamaica; Rapporteur: Dr. Harari's, IFA*

1) Generalized deterioration of all the labour rights in all countries, in particular:

- Difficulty or impossibility to organise trade unions
- Lack of compliance or failure to comply with collective agreements
- Low wages
- Minimum health and safety at work
- Outsourcing (subcontracting)
- Absence or weakness of governments to apply the labour legislation.

2) The differences between countries can be explained as follows:

- Nicaragua and Honduras: lower wages (sell to the US)
- Guatemala: diverse wage situation
- Ecuador: diverse sectors
- Costa Rica, Panama and Honduras: higher wages (sell to the EU)

IT IS IMPORTANT TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN UNIONISED AND NON UNIONISED WORKERS  
(THE LATTER ARE FAR WORSE)

3) The most vulnerable are the non unionised workers and women.

4) It is fundamental to advance towards DECENT WORKING CONDITIONS defined by:

- The possibility of having stability, an adequate wage, training, health and safety at work, basic services, education, freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Workers' right to have influence in company decisions
- Respect for the environment
- Specific criteria for stipulating the minimum wage

5) Respect ILO Conventions (all of them)

- Establish regional and international agreements
- Set realistic commitments with governments on freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Concrete proposals in the face of labour migration
- New ways of trading
- New strategies and flexible trade union structures
- Trade union law

#### **Workshop 4 – Creating a future for small farmers**

*Facilitator: Cecil Ryan, St Vincent Banana Growers' Association; Resource people: Raymong Austrie, Dominica Banana Producer Ltd. And Joaquin Vasquez, UROCAL, Ecuador; Rapporteur: Richard Sellán, FENACLE Ecuador*

1. Governments and institutions should promote diverse policies and programmes aimed at small farmers, which include aspects relating to research, information and technology and securing stable markets for their products.
2. Developing networks and alliances between small farmers to facilitate information, the exchange of experiences and competitive market strategies.
3. Establish alliances between European consumers; ensure negotiating a special status for small farmers with the European Union.
4. Invite European NGOs and other related networks to take on the above objective.
5. Increase fair trade, inform other farmers about this alternative and involve further those already producing for this market.
6. Lobby European Members of Parliament to get them to support the idea of a special status for small farmers.
7. Fair trade should review their original principles in view of the criticism it is currently facing.
8. Look to establish alliances with small European farmers to put pressure together to obtain a special statute.
9. Promote alternative conferences between small farmers with the objective of creating spaces where they learn to exercise political pressure for market policies.
10. Rural life and production needs to be seen again as a worthy, dignifying way of living and activity. A special fund should be set up for investment on small-scale production.
11. Better legal and political arguments that favour fair trade and the proposal in respect of the provision for a special statute for small farmers by the EU.

## **Workshop 5 – Living wages and fair prices: whose responsibility?**

*Facilitator: Leo Ghysels, Oxfam Wereldwinkels; Resource person: Ian Burgess, The Cooperative Group; Rapporteur: Iain Farquhar, Banana Link*

All the actors in the banana chain are responsible. However there were doubts about who would be capable of achieving anything.

It is difficult for anyone to take action because of oversupply and low prices. Clearly plantation owners have a responsibility to pay living wages; for example, but if prices are too low they may find this impossible:

In practical terms therefore the discussion focused on the top end of the banana chain; firstly on consumers and secondly on supermarkets.

Consumers: there needs to be more education of consumers so that they understand that it is not reasonable for them to benefit their own health at the expense of the health and lives of workers.

Fair Trade remains the only option which guarantees a living wage in the immediate term. However an alliance with unions to promote a FT/union supported banana is desirable and could expand the market.

Supermarkets have too much power, although they can help promote FT. The EU needs to develop competition law to restrain their power. Supermarkets should not use bananas as weapons in their price wars:

Although these two were seen as the most important actors just not now, other actors have responsibilities:

Unions should build on collective agreements to improve living standards and conditions over time.

Owners must respect minimum wage legislation

Governments need to enforce this legislation

If consumers can be persuaded to pay more, for conventional not just FT bananas, owners, traders and retailers have to ensure that the higher prices paid go back to the workers and are not just used to swell company profits.

The ILO should put pressure on governments to enforce national legislation.

A permanent forum of all stakeholders is needed to discuss wages and prices.

ASEPROLA's concept of aiming at sustainable living wages not just a survival wage was accepted.

## **Workshop 6 – Trade policy mechanisms for a sustainable banana trade**

*Faciliator: Liz Parker, EUROBAN; Resource people: Bernard Cornibert, WIBDECO and Georges Malick, Ministry of Trade, Costa Rica; Rapporteur: Michael Joseph, St Lucia Banana Corporation*

Producers and workers' representatives and most other stakeholders at the Conference strongly opposed the move to tariff only because tariff only would inevitably lead to still lower earnings for producers and workers and to the rapid destruction of the banana industry in many supplying countries.

There was a widespread support instead for retaining the existing regime, which would provide a better foundation for sustainable production at equitable prices. The conference participants therefore welcomed the invitation from the Commission representative for stakeholders to urgently present a coherent alternative solution that they wished to propose.

Is recycling tariffs the way to achieve sustainability?

Perhaps, provided that:

The feasibility be researched

(as to the EU), the rules have to be changed depending on commitment to developing

Fight against poverty

In the meanwhile there is the possibility to set GSPs based on the respect of social and environmental criterias, as GSPs are WTO compatible.

For that purpose, we need to stop the clock and start discussions with all stakeholders.

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Topic: Trade Policy Mechanisms for A Sustainable Banana Trade

For the purpose of our deliberation the Group revised the topic to read:

**Are The Following Viable Options For Sustainability In The Banana Trade?**

1. RECYCLING OF TARIFF INCOME INTO A SUSTAINABLE FUND
2. AN EVALUATION OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE CURRENT EU AND PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE EU BANANA REGIME.
3. MAINTENANCE OF THE EXISTING REGIME
4. ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEGOTIATING BODY PARALLEL TO WTO NEGOTIATION PROCESS TO COME UP WITH A CONSENSUS PROPOSAL FOR THE EU REGIME
5. A TARIFF DIFFERENTIATION REGIME

### **THE MAIN ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED FOR SUB TOPIC 1 ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- The legality of allocating receipts from the tariff to countries of varying jurisdiction was questioned as per the existing legal framework. However it was noted that the seven hundred million Euros (£700m) fund to ACP countries are not reaching the intended producers due to administrative overload of procedural requirements and processes.
- A definition of sustainability was attempted to guide the discussion and there was general consensus that such a definition must be anchored on remunerative process for bananas so as to take care of living wages for farmers and producers and funding for social and environmental initiatives geared at maintaining balance in rural communities.
- It was suggested that some eco-conditionalities be established by the EU whereby criteria for benefits to aid be linked to the compliance with existing good agricultural practices, so as to justify entitlement to aid and for producers to earn licenses as entitlement to trade in bananas.
- The role of the supermarket would need to be factored in the approach to sustainability in the banana trade. On this score it was pointed out that the proceeds from the tariff may be

insufficient should MFN countries go out of production consequent upon a high tariff and so the contribution into the Fund by supermarkets should be considered.

- The discussion of a fund must be made to include the demand side as funds need to be allocated to finance consumers' awareness on issues such as fair trade practices so they can fashion their banana consuming habits from an informed basis.

#### **THE MAIN ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED FOR SUB TOPIC 2 ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- It was lamented that whilst the EU is about to make a massive policy shift to a tariff-only banana market regime, the evaluation on the EU Banana Regime (1993-2003) is yet to be considered and therefore will not be made to feature in the fashioning of the new regime. This is so whilst entities are required to prepare environmental impact studies in support of their projects and proposals. In this regard, it was suggested that a five-year moratorium be given to the existing regime whilst the EU civil servants be given the requisite mandate and time to commence the process leading to a comprehensive evaluation. The seriousness of this issue was manifested in a vote taken by group members for the inclusion of this proposals in the declaration of the conference.

#### **THE MAIN ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED FOR SUB TOPIC 3 ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- The current regime has been recognized for its imperfections but it was noted that no future system will be perfect. For instance, a high tariff will hurt the Latin Americans, a low tariff will hurt ACP producers and a middle of the road tariff will be no-good to anyone. The zero tariff of the US Banana Market has not delivered numerative prices at the expense of economic, social and environmental stability. A tariff-only free market EU banana market system would put small producers in the grip of transnationals and multinationals and make them all prey to the supermarket oligopolists. It was therefore resolved that the existing regime should be made to continue.
- The continuation of the current market system must be given greater prominence against the background of the annex to the WTO waiver which states that a final tariff could still be challenged by any WTO member country thereby setting off a brand new set of negotiations and therefore as far as possible discussions en route to a new system must recognize that no one tariff would simultaneously satisfy all producers of different geographical zone and size.

#### **THE MAIN ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED FOR SUB TOPIC 4 ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- There exist a need for stakeholders to establish a mechanism to approach a consensus of the sustainable issues of economy, society and the environment. However, in recognition of the fact that the WTO deal with the public authority of governments, then a vehicle would be required to provide a forum within the WTO for the three prong voices (economy, society, environment) of sustainability.

#### **THE MAIN ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED FOR SUB TOPIC 5 ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- The legality of this approach was questioned in the current scheme of things and therefore not elaborated in the absence of time.

## **ORGANISERS' STATEMENT TO THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL BANANA CONFERENCE, BRUSSELS, 28th-30th April 2005**

- *The coalition which organised the conference consists of EUROBAN (the European Banana Action Network), a pan-European alliance of trade unions, environment and development NGOs and fair trade organisations; COLSIBA (the Coordinating Centre of Latin American banana workers' unions); WINFA (the Association of Caribbean Farmers, based in the Windward Islands); the IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations); and the US Labor Education in the Americas Project (USLEAP).*

•

### **STATE THAT:**

1. structural overproduction in the international market, coupled with the accelerated search for a cheap banana by big retailers and the consequent pressure on production and producers, is creating a situation of permanent crisis for the workers, producers and, increasingly, for the marketing companies;
2. the downward spiral in buying prices has been passed on to the men and women working on the plantations. It has been directly responsible for migrant and/or contract workers displacing permanent local jobs and has led to increased poverty in most banana exporting communities. It has also led to lower standards, exacting a heavy toll on societies in terms of health and environmental damage;
3. the shift of banana companies from 'higher cost' countries and the expansion of banana production in 'low cost', non-unionised areas of Africa and Latin America is putting further pressure on wages and working conditions worldwide;
4. whilst recognising that the current EU banana import regime has been declared incompatible with a strict interpretation of WTO rules, it has been unable to halt a deterioration of conditions faced by workers and farmers, has generated market access problems for some groups of independent producers and permitted importers to take a quota rent. The current regime has nevertheless meant higher and more stable prices, and prevented a total collapse of the industry. It would therefore be advisable for the EU to undertake a formal evaluation of the positive and negative impacts of the current regime, as well as of the future impacts of the proposed tariff-only regime. It is feared that a tariff-only regime will generate more instability in the industry, lead to the bankruptcy of thousands of small producers, the displacement of tens of thousands of workers and an increase in poverty in many of the producer countries and regions. It is regretted that the concerned sectors of civil society have to date not been included in the debate;
5. as wages fail to keep up with the cost of living, there is an increasing risk of child labour on plantations;
6. for many years women have played an important role in the industry and made a crucial contribution to banana communities, especially as in many cases they are heads of households; but often their specific problems are not taken into account by industry and their voices not heard and their rights as women are not respected. Over the last decade there has been a rapid decrease in the hiring of female labour in plantations in several countries and companies; this is clearly discriminatory, given women's repeatedly demonstrated skills in all aspects of production;
7. over the last few decades, thousands of small producers – both men and women - entered the industry in different regions of the world to meet an increasing demand in the consumer countries,



but fierce competition and unfair pricing practices have led several thousand to abandon production. Small farmers are facing greater uncertainty than ever about their future and face the threat of worsening living conditions for their families. Many more could be forced out of the industry and into a trap of poverty, drugs and social instability;

8. the rights to organise freely in independent trade unions and to bargain collectively with employers have still not been established effectively in most producing countries.
9. the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions, though legally binding when ratified by governments, are poorly implemented and have thus proved ineffective in safeguarding freedom to organise and in protecting trade unions' right to operate.
10. deregulated labour policies and sub-contracting have generated a deterioration in employment, wages, social, health and environmental conditions;
11. voluntary social and environmental responsibility initiatives, including corporate codes of conduct and other corporate-led initiatives, have not shown credibility nor built the trust needed to solve the social, employment and environmental issues surrounding banana production. For the unions, these initiatives were never intended to replace national, regional and international legislation in securing the protection of labour rights in plantations.
12. producers do not receive a fair price for their product that allows them to cover the costs of production including fair wages, welfare and decent working conditions plus a reasonable profit margin. Workers in the chain do not receive a living wage, in accordance with the costs of living of the country in which s/he lives; wages paid to plantation workers and the prices paid to small farmers are insufficient to maintain a decent standard of living;
13. environmental and occupational health issues are far from being resolved, despite a few improvements; many areas still suffer the effects of production which respects neither the environment nor people; mono-crop dependency and genetic vulnerability, coupled with continuous pressure to increase productivity, require systems of production – including the application of highly toxic products - which continue to damage human health and lead to permanent damage to water-courses, the marine and coastal environment, fisheries, soils and biodiversity.

#### REGRET:

14. the pressure which supermarkets have put on banana prices in their efforts to compete in national markets in the North is translating directly into cuts in wages and benefits for the men and women working in plantations and abandonment of plantations; similarly, thousands of small producers in different countries have been forced into bankruptcy;
15. the strategy of banana companies to move away from 'higher cost' countries with better conditions and union agreements - and their subsequent relocation to non-unionised parts of West Africa, South and Central America - is driving wages and working conditions down;
16. the fact that some companies continue to invest their energies in anti-union activities and the general undermining of the very organisations which are in a position to ensure sustainable improvements in the working conditions and lives of workers – trade unions;
17. the increase of sub-contracting and labour migration, which are a result of the above policies, both of which lead to deteriorating working, health and living conditions;
18. the insufficient attention being paid to the specific problems of Caribbean islands and the fact that banana exports and incomes are declining rapidly in the whole Caribbean (apart from the Dominican Republic); the lack of proper solution to enable them to retain some trade and avoid the trap of poverty, drugs and social instability.

#### WELCOME:

19. the bilateral framework agreements signed in recent years between some producer companies and trade unions; these have brought positive results, create space for building a fruitful dialogue based on mutual respect and are of undoubted benefit to both workers and businesses;
20. the efforts made by some companies to carry out research into reducing risks associated with the use of agrochemical products to human health and the environment and into generally producing a more environmentally- and people- friendly banana;
21. co-operation between workers defending their rights to a safe and healthy work environment and a number of scientific institutions and individuals who are carrying out important research; this collaborative research has already produced positive results, as in the case of the company which stopped using the insecticide chlorpyrifos in its plantations in Honduras and Guatemala. Ending the use of high-risk products is an important step forward;
22. the support of some consumer country governments in raising awareness of consumers and facilitating closer contact among those involved in the banana production and marketing chain; this helps open spaces for dialogue, create markets for bananas produced under fairer conditions, and promote greater participation in the industry by trade unions, small farmers, NGOs and civil society in general;
23. that a growing number of consumers consider other factors other than just price: they do not want the fruit they buy to be associated with child labour, exploitation of adult workers, increasing poverty in the producing communities and irreversible degradation in some countries; this sector of ethical consumers is fast becoming the majority;
24. the efforts of fair trade bodies and companies which have for a number of years been making a considerable contribution to the improvement of conditions through a significant differentiation in the product, taking into account the social and environmental factors involved in the production and marketing of the fruit; this is a significant advance in the way that trade is carried out and understood; the future success of these initiatives is linked with continuous and genuine dialogue between all interested parties and the presence of an independent trade union for efficient monitoring in large-scale plantations;
25. the interest on the part of some retailers to support collaborative studies and research projects tackling social and environmental problems in producing countries and regions; what has been achieved to date is certainly not enough, but is an example for others to follow.

#### THEREFORE, WE PROPOSE:

26. that the EU and its principal banana trading partners negotiate a postponement of the planned policy reform [thus avoiding an arbitration procedure which is unlikely to satisfy any of the parties]; meanwhile that
27. the European Commission undertakes a full evaluation - with the participation of non-state actors - of the economic, social and environmental impacts of different tariffication and supply management scenarios for EU banana imports, incorporating the analysis contained in their evaluation of the 404/93 regime and its reforms [to be published in the coming weeks];
28. that the nine governments [- the MFN suppliers -] which have requested arbitration, together with the ACP suppliers, embark on a process of discussion [both amongst themselves and with the EU] in order to find consensus over reform of the EU banana regime;
29. Civil society actors represented in this conference offer our knowledge of 'on-the -ground' conditions to feed into both processes;
30. that national governments of North and South, the World Trade Organisation and UNCTAD consider further developing the proposal for differentiated tariffs put forward by the organisers; this

proposal represents an effort to take into account the human and environmental dimensions of production and trade, rather than seeing trade as just the exchange of products;

31. that government of consuming countries which have maintained managed markets (e.g. EU, Japan, China) explore the feasibility of 'recycling' banana tariff income into an international investment fund for sustainable production;
32. that governments of both producer and consumer countries support public programmes to enforce international labour standards; such programmes should develop structures at national and local levels to undertake the periodic monitoring of compliance with conventions and ensure that complaint procedures are accessible to all workers and handled efficiently; these should be supported by grassroots organisations thus ensuring greater understanding of how to implement, manage and enforce international standards and local legislation. In order for this to happen, the business sector needs to convey to governments that such programmes are welcome and will not lead to relocation. There is an urgent need to ensure the ratification and the enforcement of all relevant ILO conventions and for all suppliers and subcontractors of bananas to the international market to be obliged to comply with them. Existing banana workers' unions should participate in these efforts and their access to plantations should be guaranteed by multinational buyers. Trade unions should exercise their rights to make independent assessments of compliance with these conventions, as well as to inform workers' about their rights. Given the increase in outsourcing and subcontracting - and the problems this causes with respect to basic workers' rights, health, safety and environmental protection - unions should organise all workers regardless of their status;
33. that all parties promote bilateral and multilateral dialogue between the different actors leading to joint agreements between banana companies, trade unions, farmers' organisations, supermarkets, development co-operation agencies, NGOs, and fair trade bodies and companies; these dialogues and possible agreements should reflect the common interests of men and women workers, farmers and consumers; Mechanisms should be established as a matter of urgency to ensure that the right of each and every working man and woman in the production chain - to enjoy trade union freedom and participate in finding social, environmental and commercial solutions for problems facing the industry - is respected and actively promoted. All agreements and contracts in the sector should therefore contain clauses concerning the respect of workers' rights and trade unions' right of access to plantations;
34. that governments and research institutes design and implement research and development programmes to find effective measures for the prevention of occupational and environmental risk in banana production; and to implement education and empowerment programmes with workers in health and safety and environmental issues;
35. that governments and international institutions promote programmes which benefit small producers through stable markets for their produce, provide training designed to increase their productivity, cut costs and engage in environmentally friendly production. These programmes should help small producers at individual level to maintain/ increase market access, including through fair trade thereby guaranteeing them social and family sustainability;
36. that supermarkets engage in dialogue to seek mechanisms to guarantee fair prices that reflect the real social and environmental costs of production, in such a way as to ensure the participation of workers, small producers and consumers in determining this price;
37. that the ethical behaviour of companies should not be solely determined by voluntary compliance or by unilaterally declared policy statements, but should be negotiated bilaterally or multilaterally with the participation of recognised trade unions<sup>3</sup> at all levels. Trading companies and retailers should include clauses in their contracts that make it legally possible for them to break contracts when it is established that a violation has occurred;
38. that supermarkets multiply examples of good practice in supplier relations by collaborating with trade unions and other civil society organisations over action-research on achieving full compliance with the highest international and national social and environmental standards in banana production and trade;

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<sup>3</sup> IUF/UITA and COLSIBA are willing to provide details of unions that can be contacted in each banana country/region.

39. that a 'multi-stakeholder' forum should be created which involves civil society actors who are currently excluded from the debate, to find ways of tackling the social, economic and environmental issues in the industry, which not only affect hundreds of thousands of people directly in the producer regions, but also affect consumers. This forum would have to define its own way of working, but would, amongst other tasks:
- organise an annual conference;
  - explore mechanisms for ending structural overproduction;
  - define fair prices in each region for the buying and selling of fruit;
  - discuss the issue of wages, social benefits such as health, education, housing and future pensions for workers and farmers;
  - promote environmental improvement programmes;
  - promote scientific research into new products, marketing different banana varieties and improved growing practices;
40. that a Steering Committee comprising representatives of all stakeholders should be created to oversee the organisation of the conferences and make proposals to define a protocol leading to the implementation of the permanent multi-stakeholder forum; members of this Steering Committee would work together to achieve the open and active participation of each of the stakeholder groups during the process of agreeing a protocol (paying particular attention to the participation of trade unions and farmers' organisations);
41. that this process be about participation by - rather than just consultation of - stakeholders and be owned by all. The cost of the operation should be shared, e.g. 50% business sector - banana companies, retailers or certification companies; 30% governmental sector - government and producer associations; and 20% civil society sector - trade unions, farmers' organisations and other civil society organisations.

In Brussels, Belgium, on April 28-30<sup>th</sup>

**Gilberth Bermudez**

on behalf of  
The Coordination of Latin American  
Banana Workers' Unions  
COLSIBA -

**Renwick Rose**

on behalf of the  
Windward Island  
Farmer Association  
WINFA

**Sue Longley**

on behalf of  
International Union of Food, Agricultural,  
Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco  
and Allied Workers' Associations – IUF/UITA

**Stephen Coat**

on behalf of the  
Labor Education in the  
Americas Project - US LEAP

**Anne-Claire Chambron**

on behalf of the  
European Banana  
Action Network – EUROBAN

You wish to support this declaration, you can sign it online at: [www.abc2.org](http://www.abc2.org)

## **Reversing the race to the bottom**

### **Participants in the Second International Banana Conference – IBC 2 held in Brussels from April 28-30, 2005:**

**WELCOME** the initiative taken by the organisers to convene the Second International Banana Conference;

#### **ACKNOWLEDGE**

- that structural overproduction in the international market, coupled with the accelerated search for a cheap banana by big retailers and the consequent pressure on production and producers, is creating a situation of permanent crisis for the workers, producers and, increasingly, even for the marketing companies;
- that the downward spiral in buying prices has been passed on to the men and women working on the plantations and to small producers. It has been directly responsible for migrant and/or contract workers displacing permanent local jobs and has led to increased poverty in most banana exporting communities. In many cases this has led to a deteriorating quality of life for workers and small farmers, and to severe health and environmental damage;
- that women farmers and workers have been particularly affected. Often their specific problems are not taken into account by industry, their voices not heard and their rights as women are not respected. There is discrimination in employment and lack of health and reproductive rights;
- that the rights to organise freely in independent trade unions and to bargain collectively with employers have still not been applied effectively in most producing countries;
- that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions are often poorly enforced by governments. This results in failure to guarantee the freedom to organise and to ensure protection of the right of trade unions to operate.

**EXPRESS CONCERN** regarding the impact of the proposed fundamental change in the EU banana regime, given that the social and environmental consequences of the change have not been evaluated.

**EXPRESS** deep disappointment at the absence of some key governments.

**RECOGNISE** the need for urgent action to address the issues in the industry.

Therefore we:

**PROPOSE** that:

#### **EU Regime**

**BEFORE** any change is implemented, the European Commission undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of the existing banana regime and its impact on poverty, income, wages, the environment, levels of development in all exporting countries, incorporating a gender analysis to these.

As the civil society participants insisted, the nine governments (i.e. the Most Favoured Nations suppliers) which have requested arbitration, together with the ACP suppliers, give priority to the process of negotiation, both amongst themselves and with the EU, in order to find consensus over reform of the EU banana regime; with the participation of civil society actors represented in this conference.

#### **Trade union rights**

**AGREE** that the rights to organise and bargain collectively, as set out in ILO Conventions 87 and 98, are the key tools to ensure decent wages and safe working conditions. These rights should be

implemented and enforced by governments and respected by national and transnational companies including through framework agreements.

### **Occupational health and environmental issues**

**CALL** on government, research institutes, companies and other appropriate organisations to design and implement research and development programmes to improve occupational health, safety and the environment in banana production. Health and safety committees, trade union safety representatives and worker and farmer training and empowerment are essential for implementing improvements.

### **Small producers**

**PROPOSE** that governments and international institutions promote programmes, which benefit small producers through stable or increased markets for their produce, including through fair trade. Fair contracts and access to credit should also be ensured. Training should be provided to help small farmers increase their productivity, cut their costs and engage in environmentally friendly production.

**CALL** for increased co-operation and co-ordination amongst stakeholders in the banana chain. Governments and international institutions should support and facilitate this process.

### **Banana forum**

**PROPOSE** that a multi-stakeholder forum should be created to find ways of tackling the social, economic and environmental issues in the industry. The idea for this forum should be presented to the governments at the next session of the Inter-governmental Group (IGG) on bananas and tropical fruit. It should also explore the feasibility of an International Banana Agreement with a social and environmental chapter in order to address structural overproduction and endemic low prices, and to promote sustainability.

### **Trade policy**

**CALL** on the European Union to insist within the WTO that the policies governing the banana trade be consistent with the concept of sustainable production of bananas, taking into account differences in the cost of production and productivity occasioned by small farm production, as against plantation production. A managed market is therefore seen as the most practical option and should be strengthened by competition policies governing the behaviour of transnational corporation, supermarket and retail chains, in order to ensure that a more reasonable share of value accrues to banana producers.

### **Supermarkets**

**PROPOSE** that supermarkets should guarantee fair prices that ensure a dignified life for small farmers and workers and reflect the real social and environmental costs of banana production. Long term sourcing commitments are useful in this respect. They should also ensure that accurate information is given to consumers on the way products are produced.

**ALSO PROPOSES** that the EU and USA investigate ways of developing their competition laws so that these can be used to limit the negative impact of the growth of supermarket buyer power and to prevent the manipulation of retail prices in ways unrelated to real market conditions.

### **Consumers**

**CALL** for consumer education campaigns to be initiated to increase understanding that prices should promote sustainability i.e. cover the social and environmental costs of banana production, including decent wages and livelihoods for workers and small producers

### **Voluntary Initiatives**

**INSIST** that voluntary codes and certification schemes should not be a substitute for labour legislation and enforcement. They should ensure rigorous compliance with established international labour rights and independent and expert assessment and verification. Trade unions should participate in the monitoring of such initiatives.



### IBC 2 Participants List

| NAME                      | COUNTRY                        | ORGANISATION                                       | RESPONSABILITY                                | MAIL                              |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| CHARLY KOUASSI POPPE      | Belgium                        | FAIR TRADE ADVOCACY OFFICE                         |   | poppe@fairtrade-advocacy.org      |
| Heimo Claasen             | Belgium/Germany                | Entwicklungspolitik                                |   |                                   |
| Adela Torres              | Colombia                       | Sintrainagro                                       |   |                                   |
| Adriana ISAZA             | Colombia/Belgium               | Embajada de Colombia                               | Consejero                                     | colombia@emcolbru.be              |
| Adriano Marzi             | Italy                          | Altreconomia                                       | Journalist                                    | adrianomarzi@hotmail.com          |
| Alessandra Cappellari     | Italy                          | Fairtrade-TransFair Italia                         | Responsible for bananas in the italian market | pm@transfair.it                   |
| Alex Danau                | Belgium                        | Collectif Strategies Alimentaires                  |   |                                   |
| Alex Yeboah               | Ghana                          | Volta River Estates Ltd                            | human resource manager                        | alexeyeboah2001@yahoo.co.uk       |
| Alistair Smith            | France                         | Banana Link  |   |                                   |
| Alvaro Gonzalez de Cossio | Spain/Belgium                  | Consejeria de Agricultura del Gobierno de Canarias | Legal Advisor                                 | agoncos@gobiernodecanarias.org    |
| Amos Wiltshire            | Dominica                       | Dominica National Fair Trade Organisation          |   |                                   |
| AN LAMBRECHTS             | Belgium                        | OXFAM-WERELDWINKELS                                | ADVOCACY                                      | an.lambrechts@oww.be              |
| Anatole EBANDA ALIMA      | Cameroun                       | Assobacam / Banacam                                |   |                                   |
| Ancelma Morgan Rose       | Saint Vincent & the Grenadines | WINFA  |   |                                   |
| Andrea Fromm              | Germany                        | ATTAC Germany                                      |   | andrea@attac.de                   |
| Anja Osterhaus            | Belgium/Germany                | Fair Trade Advocacy Office                         |   |                                   |
| Anna Chiara Torciano      | Belgium                        | Gplus  | Account Manager                               | annachiaratorciano@gplueurope.com |
| ANNA SNOWDON              | United Kingdom                 | University of Cambridge                            | POST-HARVEST PATHOLOGIST                      | anna.snowdon@gmail.com            |
| Anne-Claire Chambron      | France                         | EUROBAN  | Coordinator                                   |                                   |
| Annick HERY               | Guadeloupe - France            | CGTG   |   | cgtgconfederation@wanadoo.fr      |
| ANNIE LABAJ               | Canada                         | CANADIAN AUTO WORKERS                              | REPRESENTATIVE                                | annie@caw.ca                      |
| ANTON BOWMAN              | St. Vincent and The Grenadines | WINFA  | FARMER  |                                   |
| ARTHUR BOBB               | St. Vincent and The Grenadines | WINFA FAIR TRADE UNIT                              | SOCIAL WORKER-WINFA Fairtrade Unit Manager    |                                   |
| BARBARA CROWTHER          | United Kingdom                 | FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION                               | HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS                        | barbara.crowther@fairtrade.org.uk |
| BEN HUYGHE                | The Netherlands                | AGROFAIR BENELUX B.V.                              | QUALITY MANAGER                               |                                   |
| Bernard Cornibert         | St. Lucia                      | WIBDECO  | 3700 Parkway                                  | bcornibert@windwrds-bananas.co.uk |
| Bernard Feger             | Germany                        | Journalist   |   |                                   |
| Bernard Frampton          | St. Lucia                      | WIBDECO  |   |                                   |
| Bert Schouwenburg         | United Kingdom                 | GMB  |   | bert.schouwenburg@gmb.org.uk      |
| BERTRAM CLARKE            | St. Lucia                      | BANANA INDUSTRY TRUST                              | EXECUTIVE OFFICER                             | bananatrust@candw.lc              |
| Bertrand VALERY           | Martinique - France            | CGTM   |   | Cgtm.372@wanadoo.fr               |
| Bethany HEATH             |                                | Chiquita Brands                                    | Manager, Corporate Responsibility             | bheath@chiquita.com               |
| Bettina BURKERT           | Germany                        | Banafair   | Educational Officer                           | bettina.burkert@banafair.de       |
| Bienvenido Feliz Guzman   | Dominican Republic             | Cooperativa Agrícola Los Taínos - Cooprobata       |   | adm@cooprobata.com                |



|                         |                                |   |   |                                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Bill Hoey               | United Kingdom                 | Del Monte   |   |                                    |
| Bob Perillo             | US/Guatemala                   | US/LEAP   |   |                                    |
| Bolivar Mendez          | Panamá                         | SITRAIBANA  |   |                                    |
| BRENDAN ARCHBOLD        | Ireland                        | MANDATE   | TRADE UNION OFFICIAL                              | barchbold@mandate.ie               |
| Brice Lamarque          | United Kingdom                 | S.H. PRATT & CO (BANANAS) LTD                       | Technical Manager                                 | bricelamarque@shpratt.com          |
| CALVIN MCDONALD HERBERT | St. Vincent and The Grenadines | WINFA   |   |                                    |
| Carina Ceschi           | United Kingdom                 | Translator  |   |                                    |
| CARLOS VARGAS MASIS     | Costa Rica                     | COOPETRABASUR                                       |   | evargas@coopetrabatur.co.cr        |
| CAROL ANN KNAPP         | Canada                         | C.A.W. LOCAL 414                                    | RETAIL ,A&P STORE#382                             | wuzgoodwin@rogers.com              |
| Carol Doyle             | Ireland                        | COMHLAMH Development Workers Association            |   | carolmdoyle@eircom.net             |
| Cecil Ryan              | Saint Vincent & the Grenadines | Saint Vincent Banana Growers association            |   |                                    |
| Chantal Chapeaucou      | Ivory Coast/Belgium            | Ambassade de Cote d'Ivoire                          |   | cchapeaucou@yahoo.fr               |
| Charles de Wulf         | France                         | EURODOM   |   |                                    |
| Christopher Jones       | United Kingdom                 | Banana Link   |   |                                    |
| Christopher Wunderlich  | Spain                          | International Institute for Sustainable Development | Assistant Coordinator                             | cwunderlich@iisd.ca                |
| CINDY SCHMIDT           | Germany                        | SAVID   | SALES MANAGER                                     | cisc@savid.de                      |
| Clara Gaviria           | Colombia/Belgium               | Embajada de Colombia                                | Consejero Comercial                               | jcontreras.mincomercio@coditel.net |
| Clare Wenner            | United Kingdom                 | CW Associates                                       | Director  | clare@euro-pa.net                  |
| Claudius Preville       | St. Lucia                      | Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery            |   |                                    |
| Clifton Grant           | Jamaica                        | (UAWU)  |   |                                    |
| Constantin Kostyal      | Switzerland                    | Max Havelaar Foundation (Switzerland)               | Product Manager Fruit                             | c.kostyal@maxhavelaar.ch           |
| Cristiano Calvi         | Italy                          | CTM Altromercato                                    |   |                                    |
| DAFNE NIENHUYS          | The Netherlands                | Stichting MAX HAVELAAR                              | PRODUCTMANAGER FRUIT                              | nienhuys@maxhavelaar.nl            |
| DAVID MCLAUGHLIN        | Costa Rica                     | CHIQUITA BRANDS International                       | SR. DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL PERFORMANCE | dmclaughlin@chiquita.com           |
| DAVID MELLER            | United Kingdom                 | SAINSBURY   |   | david.meller@sainsbury.co.uk       |
| Dennis Christon         | USA                            | Del Monte   | Producer Marketer                                 | dchriston@freshdelmonte.com        |
| DOMENICO CAPIZZI        | Switzerland                    | COOP  | PURCHASING MANAGER                                | domenico.capizzi@coop.ch           |
| Donal Pierse            | United Kingdom                 | Windward Banana Company                             |   | dpierse@windwards-bananas.co.uk    |
| Doris García            | Nicaragua                      | ATC-TRABANIC  |   |                                    |
| Dorothy Agard           | St. Lucia                      | St. Lucia National Fair Trade Organisation          |   |                                    |
| Dr. Marshall Hall       | Jamaica                        | Jamaican Producers                                  | Chairman  |                                    |
| Edelina García Tanquino | Ecuador                        | Fenacle   |   |                                    |
| Edwin Laurent           | St. Lucia                      | Special Envoy of the Eastern Caribbean states       |   |                                    |
| ELENA ARENGO            | USA                            | SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY INTERNATIONAL                 | PROGRAM ASSOCIATE/TRAINER                         | elena@sa-intl.org                  |
| Elion Duran             | Republica Dominicana           | Comisión de Política Bananera                       | Productor de Banano                               | larimar13@verizon.net.do           |

|                          |                    |   |  |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---|--|---|
| Elizabeth Gonzalez       | Panamá             | SITRAIBANA                                  |  |   |
| Enrico Reggio            | Italy              | CTM Altromercato                            | Manager  | enrico.reggio@fastwebnet.it                 |
| Eric Crisman             | Belgium            | Pacific Fruit Inc.                          | Director of External Affairs and Corporate Social Responsibility, Senior Corporate Advisor | mvercaut@bonita.com                         |
| Eustache Monroe          | St. Lucia          | WIBDECO                                     |  |   |
| EVA CARAZO VARGAS        | Costa Rica         | Independent Consultant in rural Development | SECRETAR?EJECUTIVA   | evacarazov@yahoo.com                        |
| Fazia Hussain            | United Kingdom     | AMICUS                                      | Regional Organiser   | faziahussainuk@yahoo.co.uk                  |
| Federico Cuello          | Dominican Republic | Embassy of the Dominican Republic           | Ambassador   | ambajadombxl@brutele.be / fcuello@gmail.com |
| Fenny Eshuis             | Netherlands        | Stichting Max Havelaar Foundation           | Policy Coordinator   | eshuis@maxhavelaar.nl                       |
| Fientje Moerman          | Belgium            | Minister of Foreign Trade, Flanders         |  |   |
| FLORIAN HUNDHAMMER       | Germany            | Banafair                                    | Campaign Officer   | florian.hundhammer@banafair.de              |
| Frank Vermeersch         | Belgium            | Max Havelaar                                |  |   |
| Frederic Recordon        | France             | EURODOM                                     |  |   |
| FREDERIC ROSSENEU        | Belgium            | MINISTERIE VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP              | POLICY OFFICER   | frederic.rosseneu@ewbl.vlaanderen.be        |
| Garry Chapman            | United Kingdom     | Del Monte                                   |  |   |
| George Bullen            | OECS/Belgium       | Embassy of the Eastern Carribean states     | Ambassador   | ecs.embassies@skynet.be                     |
| GEORGE JAKSCH            | Belgium            | CHIQUITA INTERNATIONAL SERVICES GROUP       | SENIOR DIRECTOR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY & PUBLIC  | gjaksch@chiquita.com                        |
| GEORGE MALICK UGALDE     | Costa Rica         | MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE                   | GENERAL DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN TRADE  | gmalick@comex.go.cr                         |
| German Zepeda            | Honduras           | COLSIBA/ COSIBAH                            |  |   |
| Gilberth Bermúdez        | Costa Rica         | COLSIBA/ SITRAP                             |  |   |
| Giovanni Gerola          | Italy              | CTM Altromercato                            |  | Giovannigerola@altromercato.it              |
| Giusi Chiovaso Rambaldo  | Belgium            | European Commission                         |  | giusi.chiovaso-rambaldo@cec.eu.int          |
| Gloria Reyes             | Nicaragua          | FETRABACH                                   |  |   |
| GORDON MYERS             | St. Lucia          | CARIBBEAN BANANA EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION      | SECRETARY  | gem.cbea@btinternet.com                     |
| Gregory Avril            | St Lucia           |   |  |   |
| Guido de Vos             | Belgium            | Carrefour                                   |  |   |
| Guillermo Rivera         | Colombia           | Sintrainagro                                |  |   |
| Guillermo Touma Gonzalez | Ecuador            | Fenacle                                     |  |   |
| Guy Lambrechts           | Belgium            | Ministerie Vlaamse Gemeenschap              | Diensthofd   | guy.lambrechts@ewbl.vlaanderen.be /         |
| Harriel Lamb             | United Kingdom     | FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION                        | Executive Director   | harriet.lamb@fairtrade.org.uk               |
| Hector Miguel Miguel     | Guatemala          | UNSITRAGUA                                  |  |   |
| Heimo CLAASEN            | Belgium / Germany  | Entwicklungspolitik                         |  |   |
| Hélène BOUNEAUD          | France             | CGT - Confédération Générale du Travail     | Conseillère relations internationales  |   |
| HELGE FISCHER            | Germany            | Banafair                                    | Campaign Officer   | helge.fischer@banafair.de                   |
| HENRY FAGAN              | Dominica           | DOMINICA BANANA PRODUCERS LIMITED           | CHAIRMAN   | hfagan-dbpl@cwdom.dm                        |

|                              |                             |  |  |  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| Hernan Correa                | Colombia                    | COOTRASABAN  |  |  |
| HERNAN ELI AMBE              | PHILIPPINES                 | SOBAGROMCO   | <b>CHAIRMAN OF COOP</b>  | farmcoop@mozcom.com  |
| HILARY LA FORCE              | St. Lucia                   | BANANA EMERGENCY RECOVERY UNIT                           | PROGRAMME MANAGER  | beru@candw.lc  |
| Hugh Stewart                 | St.Vincent & the Grenadines | St Vincent Banana Growers Association                    |  |  |
| Iain Farquhar                | United Kingdom              | Banana Link  |  |  |
| Ian Burgess                  | U.K.                        | The Cooperative Group                                    | resource person workshop 5   | <a href="mailto:ian.brugess@co-op.co.uk">ian.brugess@co-op.co.uk</a>             |
| Ian Graham                   | Belgium                     | IBC Media Coordinator                                    |  |  |
| Ian VOLLBRACHT               | United Kingdom              | UK Permanent Representation to the EU                    | First Secretary Trade Policy and Transatlantic Relations   | <a href="mailto:ian.vollbracht@fco.gov.uk">ian.vollbracht@fco.gov.uk</a>         |
| Iris Munguía                 | Honduras                    | COLSIBA/COSIBAH  |  |  |
| Isabelle Vertriest           | Belgium                     | OXFAM-WERELDWINKELS                                      |  |  |
| Jacques Thinsy               | Belgium                     | Ministry of Foreign Affairs                              | Conseiller General Affaires Etrangeres, Problemes Generaux de Developpement, Matieres Premieres et FAO |  |
| Jacqui Mackay                | ICA                         | Banana Link  |  |  |
| JAHIR LOMBANA                | Colombia/ Germany           | UNIVERSITY of GOTTINGEN                                  | PH.D. STUDENT  | <a href="mailto:jahirl@hotmail.com">jahirl@hotmail.com</a>                       |
| Jan Nimmo                    | United Kingdom              | Banana Link  |  |  |
| Jean Pierre Bartoli          | Monaco                      | Del Monte  |  |  |
| JEROEN DOUGLAS               | The Netherlands             | SOLIDARIDAD  |  | <a href="mailto:jeroen.douglas@solidaridad.nl">jeroen.douglas@solidaridad.nl</a> |
| JEROEN KROEZEN               | The Netherlands             | AGROFAIR EUROPE B.V.                                     | GENERAL MANAGER  | <a href="mailto:jeroen.kroezen@agrofair.nl">jeroen.kroezen@agrofair.nl</a>       |
| Jeroen Smits                 | Belgium                     | European Commission                                      | DG Trade, Agriculture Trade Unit (responsible for bananas)   | <a href="mailto:Jeroen.SMITS@cec.eu.int">Jeroen.SMITS@cec.eu.int</a>             |
| JESPER NIELSEN               | Nicaragua/ Denmark          | 3F   | OHS AND ADVOCACY ADVISER   | <a href="mailto:jnsid@inet.uni2.dk">jnsid@inet.uni2.dk</a>                       |
| Jesús Martinez               | Guatemala                   | SITRABI  |  |  |
| Joaquin Vasquez              | Ecuador                     | UROCAL   |  |  |
| Johan Declercq               | Belgium                     | Max Havelaar Belgium                                     |  | <a href="mailto:johan@maxhavelaar.be">johan@maxhavelaar.be</a>                   |
| John Daly                    | Ireland                     | Irish Fair Trade Network / BANANAWATCH                   |  | <a href="mailto:john.daly@actionaid.ie">john.daly@actionaid.ie</a>               |
| JOHN G. MASERI TATIS         | The Netherlands             | DAABON ORGANIC   | SALES DIRECTOR EU  | <a href="mailto:jmt.organic@tiscailmail.nl">jmt.organic@tiscailmail.nl</a>       |
| JOHNSON TEKE NDUMBE          | Cameroon                    | CAMEROON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION                         | MANAGING DIRECTOR C.D.C /DELMONTE BANANA PROJECT   | <a href="mailto:ekebbi@yahoo.co.uk">ekebbi@yahoo.co.uk</a>                       |
| JON TUGWELL                  | United Kingdom              | FYFFES   | ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGER  | <a href="mailto:JTugwell@fyffes.com">JTugwell@fyffes.com</a>                     |
| Jordan Bar Am                | Morocco                     | United Students for Fair Trade                           |  | <a href="mailto:baram@post.harvard.edu">baram@post.harvard.edu</a>               |
| Jorge Hernandez              | Spain                       | COAG Canarias  | SECRETARIO INSULAR DE LA PALMA DE COAG-CANARIAS  | <a href="mailto:coaglapalma@terra.es">coaglapalma@terra.es</a>                   |
| Jors Simon Schonk            | The Netherlands             | Fyffes   |  |  |
| Jose Antonio Yock            | Costa Rica                  | Del Monte  |  |  |
| JOSE MARIA LECARNAQUE CASTRO | Peru                        | CEPIBO   | PRESIDENTE   | <a href="mailto:cepibo@hotmail.com">cepibo@hotmail.com</a>                       |
| Josephine Dublin-Prince      | Dominica                    | WINFA  |  |  |
| Juan Alarcon                 | Colombia                    |  |  |  |
| Jude Abain Anguh Ndifon      | Cameroon                    | FAKO (Cameroon Federation of Agricultural Workers Union) |  | <a href="mailto:abainju@yahoo.com">abainju@yahoo.com</a>                         |
| JULIE VERMEIREN              | Dominican Republic          | SAVID DOMINICANA   | PLANIFICACION  | <a href="mailto:julie.vermeiren@savidrd.com">julie.vermeiren@savidrd.com</a>     |
| Julietta Carmona             | Belgium / Spain             | COAG   |  | <a href="mailto:coag.bxl@skynet.be">coag.bxl@skynet.be</a>                       |
| Karl-Friedrich Falkenberg    | Belgium                     | European Commission                                      |  |  |

|                            |                                   |  |  |  |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Katharina Wesseling        | Costa rica                        | IRET/SALTRA                                    | Regional Program Director  | ineke_wesseling@yahoo.com,<br>cwesseli@una.ac.cr   |
| KEVIN BRAGG                | Belgium                           | PACIFIC FRUIT COMPANY                          | MANAGING DIRECTOR PACIFIC<br>FRUIT EUROPE                            | mvercaut@bonita.com  |
| KORONADO APUZEN            | The Philippines                   | FARMCOOP                                       | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR   | farmcoop@mozcom.com  |
| KRISTIEN DE WAELE          | Belgium                           | PACIFIC FRUIT COMPANY                          | QUALITY, ENVIRONMENTAL<br>AND ETHICAL MANAGER,<br>NORTHE             | mvercaut@bonita.com  |
| KRISTINA MATTSSON          | Sweden                            | SWEDISH BOARD OF AGRICULTURE                   | DEPT. HEAD OF UNIT   | kristina.mattsson@sjv.se   |
| LAIMUTE GRYBAUSKAITE       | Lithuania                         | ASSOCIATION OF FRUIT & VEG<br>WHOLESALEERS     | PRESIDENT  | vaisiaiirdarzoves@mail.tele2.lt  |
| Leo Ghysels                | Belgium                           | OXFAM-WERELDWINKELS                            |  |  |
| Leslie Grant               | St. Vincent and the<br>Grenadines | Saint Vincent Banana Growers association       |  |  |
| LEWIS AKENJI               | Hungary                           | ASSOCIATION OF CONSCIOUS<br>CONSUMERS          | COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER   | lewis@tve.hu   |
| LIBUSE SOUNUPOVA           | Czech Republic                    | SAIF (STATE AGRICULTURE<br>INTERVENTION FUND)  | LICENCES UNIT  | libuse.soukupova@szif.cz   |
| Ligia Lamich               | Costa Rica                        | SITAGAH  |  |  |
| Lionel Hubbard             | United Kingdom                    | University of Newcastle                        | Senior Lecturer  | lionel.hubbard@ncl.ac.uk   |
| Lisa MACKIE                | Belgium                           | European Commission                            |  |  |
| LIZ PARKER                 | United Kingdom                    | EUROBAN  | CHAIR  | lizparker@onetel.com   |
| LOUISE GLASGOW             | St. Vincent and The<br>Grenadines | COMMERCIAL TECHNICAL & ALLIED<br>WORKERS UNION | TRADE UNIONIST   |  |
| Luc Hellebuyck             | Nicaragua                         | Bananic Internacional, S.A.                    |  | <a href="mailto:patricia@bananic.be">patricia@bananic.be</a>                                 |
| Luuk Zonneveld             | Germany                           | FLO- International                             |  | <a href="mailto:info@fairtrade.net">info@fairtrade.net</a>                                   |
| LUIS FERNANDO ARANGO       | COLOMBIA                          | ASOCIACIÓN DE BANANEROS DE<br>COLOMBIA-AUGURA  | Presidente Junta Directiva   | presi@augura.com.co  |
| Luis Manuel Bonilla        | Republica Dominicana              | Probanano                                      | Administrador Nacional   | larimar13@verizon.net.do   |
| Malachy Dottin             | GRENADA                           | Ministry of Agriculture                        |  |  |
| Manolo Redondo             | Spain                             | COAG Canarias                                  | RESPONSABLE TÉCNICO  | manoloredondo@yahoo.es   |
| Manuel Rodriguez           | USA                               | Chiquita Brands International                  |  |  |
| Marc Debunne               | Belgium                           | Ministry of Foreign Affairs                    | Attache Affaires Etrangeres,<br>Service Matieres Premieres et<br>FAO | <a href="mailto:marc.debunne@diplobel.fed.be">marc.debunne@diplobel.fed.be</a>               |
| Marcelino García           | Nicaragua                         | ATC-TRABANIC                                   |  |  |
| Marco Escobedo Aguilar     | Costa Rica                        | Standard Fruit Co de Costa Rica S.A.           | Representante Sistema<br>Responsabilidad Social                      | mescobedo@la.dole.com  |
| MARCO MACHORE LEVY         | Costa Rica                        | ASOCIACION de DESARROLLO PARA LA<br>ECOLOGIA   | PRESIDENTE   | machore@racsa.co.cr  |
| MARGARET ANN HARRIS        | Barbados                          | OXFAM GB                                       | PROGRAMME MANAGER  | mharris@oxfam.org  |
| Margarita Umana            | Costa Rica                        | Ministerio de Asuntos exteriores               |  |  |
| Maria Aguado ruiz          | Belgium                           | EC Banana Trade Association                    | Deputy General Delegate  |  |
| Maria Federica Leonarduzzi | Italy                             | CTM Altromercato                               | Project Manager, fund raising  | <a href="mailto:Federicaleonarduzzi@altromercato.it">Federicaleonarduzzi@altromercato.it</a> |
| Maria Furugori             | United Kingdom                    | Translator                                     |  |  |

|                           |                                |   |  |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|
| MARIA-ALEJANDRA GONZALEZ  | Ireland                        | NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND - CISC                       | PHD STUDENT.   | magonzalez@nuigalway.ie        |
| Mariano Jiménez Zeledón   | Costa Rica                     | CORBANA   | SUBGERENTE DE ASUNTOS LEGALES Y CORPORATIVOS DE CO   | mjimenez@corbana.co.cr         |
| Marina GUEDON             | Spain                          | IBC North Secretariat                                       |  |                                |
| MARIO ABADELLA MANDALUNES | The Philippines                | DARBCO  | CHAIRMAN OF COOP                                     | farmcoop                       |
| MARIUS ISMAEL             | St. Lucia                      | ST. LUCIA NATIONAL FAIR TRADE ORGANIZATION                  | PRESIDENT  | slnfto@yahoo.com               |
| Marta Cano                | Germany                        | Interpreter   |  |                                |
| Maude Feral               | France                         | Peuples Solidaires  |  |                                |
| Mehmet Arda               | Switzerland                    | UNCTAD  | Head of Commodities Branch                           | mehmet.arda@unctad.org         |
| Melanie ridel             | Germany                        | Port International  | Imports Department                                   | Melanie@port-international.com |
| Méntor Villagómez         | Ecuador                        | Mission of Ecuador to the European Union                    |  |                                |
| Michael Dominique Raymond | Haiti/Belgium                  | Mission of Haiti to the EU                                  |  |                                |
| Michael Joseph            | St. Lucia                      | St. Lucia Banana Corporation                                |  |                                |
| MICHEL LOEB               | Belgium                        | CHIKUITA  | PRESIDENT EUROPE                                     | mloeb@chikuita.com             |
| Mika Iba                  | Japan                          | Pesticide Action Network- ASIA-Pacific                      |  | mika@mb.kcom.ne.jp             |
| Mike Port                 | Germany                        | Port International  | Managing Director                                    | Mike@port-international.com    |
| Mirza Orellana            | Guatemala                      | UNSTRAGUA   |  |                                |
| Monique Munting           | BELGIUM                        | Ecodesarrollo and Human Rights                              |  | mm@skynet.be                   |
| Montgomery Daniel         | St. Vincent and the Grenadines | Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture                  |  |                                |
| Nioka Abbott              | St. Vincent and the Grenadines | National Fair Trade Organisation                            |  |                                |
| OKA KEIKO                 | Japan                          | ALTER TRADE JAPAN, INC.                                     | MARKETING  | oka@altertrade.co.jp           |
| Osvaldo Cuadrado          | Colombia                       | Sintrainagro  |  |                                |
| Pablo Garrido Arauz       | Belgium                        | Embajada de Panama  | Ambassador   | embajada.panama@skynet.be      |
| PAMELA ROBINSON           | United Kingdom                 | Cardiff University  | RESEARCH STUDENT                                     | robinsonpk@cardiff.ac.uk       |
| Pascal Liu                | Italy                          | Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations     | Commodity Specialist, Commodities and Trade Division | pascal.liu@fao.org             |
| Patrick Vewessee          | Cameroon                       | FAKO Agricultural Workers Union                             |  |                                |
| Paul Lira                 | Nicaragua/Belgium              | Embajada de Nicaragua                                       | Consejero  | embanic-paul.lira@skynet.be    |
| PAULA HIPPOLYTE           | Belgium                        | OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY Of the Eastern Caribbean States | RESEARCH ASSISTANT                                   | paulinavhipp@yahoo.com         |
| Pauline Harris            | France                         | Translator  |  |                                |
| Peter Robbins             | United Kingdom                 | Independent Consultant                                      |  |                                |
| Peter Serieux             | St. Lucia                      | TAF   |  |                                |
| Philip Halpenny           | Ireland                        | Fyffes  | Company Secretary                                    | phalpenny@fyffes.com           |
| Philippe Mavel            | Cote d'Ivoire                  | OCAB - Cote d'Ivoire  |  |                                |
| POPPE CHARLY KOUASSI      | Belgium                        | FAIR TRADE ADVOCACY OFFICE                                  | CO-ORDINATOR   | poppe@fairtrade-advocacy.org   |
| PRUDENCIO DONQUE GOMEZ    | The Philippines                | AMSKARBEMCO   | CHAIRMAN OF COOP                                     |                                |
| Rafael Bosquez Foti       | Panama/ Belgium                | Embajada de Panama  | Economic Counsellor                                  | rbfpa@yahoo.com                |

|                             |                                |  |  |   |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Rafael Hernandez            | Spain                          | PRESIDENTE DE COAG-CANARIAS                | COAG- CANARIAS   | coag@inicia.es  |
| Ramon Barrantes             | Costa Rica                     | SITAGAH                                    |  |   |
| Raul Harari                 | Ecuador                        | IFA  | Executive Director   | ifa@ifa.org.ec  |
| Raymond Austrie             | Dominica                       | DOMINICA BANANA PRODUCERS LIMITED          |  |   |
| Rene Fuentes                | Honduras                       | COSIBAH                                    |  |   |
| RENWICK ROSE                | St. Vincent and The Grenadines | WINFA                                      | COORDINATOR  | celren@hotmail.com  |
| Richard Sellan Magaña       | Ecuador                        | Fenacle                                    |  |   |
| ROBERTO DE JESÚS HOYOS RUIZ | COLOMBIA                       | ASOCIACIÓN DE BANANEROS DE COLOMBIA-AUGURA | Presidente   | presi@augura.com.co                                       |
| Roberto Ruiz                | Nicaragua                      | FETRABACH                                  |  |   |
| Roger Gnango                | Ivory Coast/ Belgium           | Ambassade de Cote d'Ivoire                 | Conseiller   |   |
| Romain Bellay               | Martinique                     | Opam                                       | President  | opam@wanadoo.fr   |
| ROMAN OLIVE BLASCO          | Spain                          | FRUTA DEL PACIFICO, S.A                    | GERENTE  | oherrero@frutadelpacifico.com                             |
| Rory Mc Crae                | Belgium                        | Gplus                                      |  |   |
| Rudi Pfeifer                | Germany                        | Banafair                                   | Executive Director   | rudi.pfeifer@banafair.de                                  |
| SALUSTIANO DE GRACIA PEÑA   | Panamá                         | SITRACHILCO                                | General Secretary  | amlawyer17@hotmail.com / josemora@cwpanama.net            |
| Salvador Estevez            | Republica Dominicana           | Banamiel                                   |  | larimar13@verizon.net.do                                  |
| Sandy Norman                | United Kingdom                 | TESCO                                      | Category Technical Manager - Produce                               | sandy.norman@uk.tesco.com                                 |
| Selfa Sandoval              | Guatemala                      | SITRABI                                    | Coordinadora Nacional del Trabajo de la Mujer                      | sitrabi@itelgua.com / sindicatositrabi@yahoo.com          |
| SERGIO ESCRIBANO RUIZ       | España                         | CERAI                                      | DIRECTOR TÉCNICO   | sergi@cerai.es  |
| SERGIO LAPRADE COTO         | Costa Rica                     | CORBANA                                    | DIRECTOR EJECUTIVO DEL CONSEJO INSTITUCIONAL BANAN                 | slaprade@CORBANA.CO.CR>                                   |
| Sevki Isin                  | United Kingdom                 | Geest Bananas Ltd                          |  | sisin@si-consulting.co.uk                                 |
| Sigrid Janssens             |                                |  |  |   |
| Sophie Paton                | United Kingdom                 | Translator                                 |  |   |
| Stefano Magnoni             | Italy                          | CTM Altromercato                           |  | Coordinatore@chicomendes.it                               |
| STEPHANE PARMENTIER         | Belgium                        | Oxfam-Magasins du monde                    | Chargé de recherches et information                                | s.parmentier@tiscali.be / stephane.parmentier@mdmoxfam.be |
| Stephanie Joachim           | Dominica                       | Dominica National Fair Trade Organisation  |  |   |
| STEPHEN SELLERS             | USA                            | TRANSFAIR USA                              | CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER  | steve@transfair   |
| Stephen Coats               | USA                            | US/LEAP                                    | Executive Director   |   |
| Stephen Pursey              | Switzerland                    | International Labour Organisation          |  |   |
| Susan Longley               | Switzerland                    | IUF  | Agricultural Coordinator   | sue.longley@iuf.org                                       |
| Sylvain CUPERLIER           | France                         | Dole Europe SAS                            | Manager Responsibility programs & Communication, Europe and Africa |   |
| Tatiana Mateluna            | Germany                        | FLO International                          |  | t.mateluna@fairtrade.net                                  |
| THIERRY KESTELOOT           | Belgium                        | OXFAM-SOLIDARITE                           | AGRICULTURE AND TRADE CAMPAIGNER                                   | thierry.kesteloot@oxfamsol.be                             |
| Thierry Lescot              | France                         | CIRAD                                      |  | thierry.lescot@cirad.fr                                   |

|                         |                                |   |  |  |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Thomas Lustig           | Sweden                         | Swedish Society for Nature Conservation                             | Project officer                            | thomas.lustig@snf.se   |
| Tom Lines               | United Kingdom                 | Independent Consultant  |  |  |
| Tomas Garcia Azcarate   | Belgium                        | European Commission   | DG AGRI - Jefe de Unidad                   | Tomas.garcia-azcarate@cec.eu.int   |
| Tsala Belibi Michel     | Cameroun/Belgium               | Ambassade du Cameroun   | 1er Secretaire a l'Ambassade du Cameroun   |  |
| Vincent Van Dijk        | Nicaragua                      | Bananic Internacional S.A.  |  | <a href="mailto:penalba@bananic.be">penalba@bananic.be</a>                           |
| Wilberforce Emanuel     | St. Vincent and the Grenadines |   |  |  |
| Wilinton Leonardo Bravo | Ecuador                        | Asociación Pequeños Productores Bananeros "El Guabo"                |  |  |
| Wilson Navarrete        | Ecuador                        | Asociación Pequeños Productores Bananeros "El Guabo"                | Secretario Ejecutivo de la Junta Directiva | <a href="mailto:wilson_navarrete@hotmail.com">wilson_navarrete@hotmail.com</a>       |
| Zoltan Pinta            | USA                            | Del Monte   |  |  |
| Wouter Coussement       | BELGIUM                        | Kabinet minister Geert Bourgeois, Vlaams minister Buitelands Beleid | Kabinetsmedewerker                         | <a href="mailto:wouter.coussement@vlaanderen.be">wouter.coussement@vlaanderen.be</a> |
|                         | Ecuador                        | Reybanpac   |  |  |

## **Media Coverage**

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(all the documents are available on the website : [www.ibc2.org](http://www.ibc2.org))

#### **Cobertura en los medios latinoamericanos de la CIB2 / IBC2 media coverage in Latin America**

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| April 29, 2005 | El Comercio, Quito, Ecuador     |
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| April 29, 2005 | Hoy, Quito, Ecuador             |
| April 26, 2005 | La Nacion, San José, Costa Rica |
| April 28, 2005 | La Nacion, San José, Costa Rica |
| May 1, 2005    | La Nacion, San José, Costa Rica |

## ***Brief report o the whole IBC2 process***

The Second International Banana Conference, which has be held in the Flemish Parliament (Brussels-Belgium), on April 28th ,29th and 30th , aimed to establish a dialogue, which results in reversing the 'race to the bottom' as far as rights, conditions, socio-economic equity and environmental health are concerned.

The conference has been the outcome of a preparatory process, which has ensured that it was more than just another exchange of information. In order to broaden the basis for such an initiative and multiply its impact on the ground, other producer, environmental and consumer organisations has been involved in the preparation. A preparatory seminar in each region helped identify those organisations, specific regional problems both at production and consumption ends, as well as solutions put forward to tackle those problems

Between December and March, four preparatory seminars for 250 people in total were organised.

December 3 rd-4th 2004 – Latino American Seminar. San Jose – Costa Rica

January 22th -23 th 2005 – Carribean Seminar. St Vincent and the Grenadine

February 10th-11th 2005 – West European Meeting. London – United Kingdom

February 23th-24th 2005 – Northern American Seminar. Washington – United States of America

*(You will find the reports of the preparatory activities on the website : [www.ibc2.org](http://www.ibc2.org))*

Although the respective programmes of these 4 preparatory seminars varied greatly depending on the knowledge and needs of participants on each continent, they were all organised with the view:

- to identify and engage in the process key participants in each region;
- to assess the expectations/results of the latter for the conference and involve organisations and people at regional level who could not attend the event itself in Brussels;
- to identify the main production or consumption issues in each region focusing in particular at the changes/degradation for the past 6 years;
- to look at whether trade policies can be used as a leaver to improve the sustainability of the banana sector
- to assess whether and how economic issues can be addressed (economic issues had been avoided at the first IBC as organisers could not agree on a common way to deal with them)
- to level up knowledge about banana production and trade issues and familiarise participants with the rather technical themes (EU regime, differentiated tariffs, WTO dispute) which will be dealt with at the conference so that discussions can be started immediately;
- and to set up a network of active organisations/actors able to relay the messages coming out of the IBC to the wider public and to defend those messages during follow-up meetings with national and international decision-makers.

So far, results are very satisfactory. The preparatory process succeeded in gathering about 200 different organisations in the preparatory seminars, including producer organisations in Europe, unions in 'new countries' such as Eastern Europe and the US, government representatives in producing and consuming countries, two NGOs and consumer groups in Japan, the three main companies (Dole, Chiquita and Del Monte) and supermarkets such as Costco in the US, Asda and Tesco in the UK, Coop Italia and Carrefour France.

Finally, the preparatory committee researched, commissioned or wrote nine preparatory documents iexploring policies, strategies and trade tools to improve social, economic and environmental performance of the banana sector, including:

- the macro economics of the banana industry and the new role of supermarkets
- environmental impact of banana production and trade since 1998
- social impact of banana production and trade
- role of women, workers and small producers in the sector; how are they affected?
- expected impact of a tariff-only EU regime for producers and unions in developing countries
- an international banana agreement with social, environmental and economic chapters
- a system of tariffs which are differentiated – or graduated – according to social and environmental criteria acceptable to both producing and consuming countries
- Ethical trade and role and impact of voluntary certification schemes

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**The organisers of the conference would like to thank the following institutions for their generous support of the second International Banana Conference and its preparatory process:**

- DG EuropeAid, Commission of the European Communities
- Civil Society Challenge Fund of the Department for International Development, UK Government
- Oxfam in Belgium
- 3f (United Federation of Danish Workers), Denmark
- Svenska Naturskyddsforeningen (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation), Sweden
- Fondation pour les Droits de l'Homme au Travail, France/Switzerland
- Brot für die Welt, Germany
- Christian Aid, Great Britain
- Province of Flemish Brabant, Belgium
- BanaFair, Germany
- Novib - Oxfam Netherlands
- Fondation Charles Léopold Meyer pour le Progrès de l'Homme, France/Switzerland
- Terre des Hommes, Switzerland
- FNV (Dutch Trade Union Federation), Netherlands
- Cordaid, Netherlands
- Banana Link, Great Britain
- CTM Altromercato, Italy
- Oxfam GB, Great Britain
- Confédération Générale du Travail, France
- Max Havelaar Belgium
- Canadian Auto Workers
- Fairtrade Foundation, Great Britain

With special thanks to the members and staff of the Flemish Parliament.