

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR EUROPEAN BANANAS?

WHAT STRONG MEASURES ARE NEEDED TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN BANANAS?

Banana production is irreplaceable in the ORs, as this production is so deeply woven into the social fabric and the rural life in these territories. But despite their efforts and dynamism, they will disappear unless a fair and equitable competition environment is established.

The APEB has put the following demands to the European public authorities:

- To maintain customs tariffs at €75/t on imported bananas as part of trade agreements without possibility to renegotiate any further concessions
- Introduce market regulation to replace the current stabilisation mechanism for bananas, which is completely ineffective
- Make it compulsory for all agricultural imports to be sourced from producers who comply with the same rules as their European counterparts, particularly with regard to the use of plant protection products
- Make sure that neither conventional nor organic farmers are able to sell their products in the European Union if they use plant protection products banned under European regulations
- European consumers are entitled to transparent information on how agricultural production models in the EU differ from those in third countries, in both the organic and conventional sectors; they are also entitled to expect clear labelling showing the origin of imported products

European consumers are entitled to transparency.
European farmers are entitled to fair competition.



Composition of the APEB:

- President, Laurent de Meillac
- UGPBAN - Union of producer associations of Guadeloupe and Martinique
- ASPROCAN - Association of banana producer organisations in the Canary Islands
- GESBA - Banana sector management company in Madeira

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THE BANANA FROM THE EUROPEAN OUTERMOST REGIONS: A SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT AND A VITAL ASSET FOR EUROPE





THE APEB: WHO ARE WE?

The Association of European Banana Producers (APEB) was created in 1989. Through its actions, it seeks to protect the thousands of banana producers in the European Union's Outermost Regions (ORs), who are threatened by international competition from third country producers who do not respect the same social, environmental, sanitary and phytosanitary rules. The APEB liaises with European and national authorities to ensure the survival of banana production in the Canaries, Madeira, Guadeloupe and Martinique, and to secure a decent income for these producers who play in a key role in their regions' economies.

Banana Plantation in Madeira



Banana Plantation in the Canaries



Sandra Bartel, Banana Producer in Martinique

BANANA PRODUCTION IN THE OUTERMOST REGIONS (ORS): A TRIPLE CHALLENGE: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL.

In the ORs, bananas are grown on family farms (0.15 to 13 ha on average) and by farmers' organisations. They produce a sustainable European banana using best farming practices and guarantee stability in rural areas through the activities and jobs they create.

While unemployment rates in some ORs are higher than in the Member States to which they are tied, banana production takes place year-round and is therefore a source of stable employment. 90% of banana producers are on permanent contracts with competitive benefits (social protection, trade union rights, vocational training, etc.).

The activities of this sector generate over €500 million in net GDP and nearly 40,000 direct and indirect jobs, illustrating the extent of their economic impact in the ORs!

They have carved out a place for themselves in their domestic markets in France, Spain and Portugal, thanks to their vitality, their innovation capacity, the development of several product segments that create value for the producers - such as the "fair-trade banana" in Guadeloupe and Martinique, which has boosted the income of small-scale farmers, or the designation of the "Plátano de Canarias" as a Protected Geographic Indication by the European Union since 2013.

Nearly 700,000 tons of bananas are produced and sold in Europe, according to strict specifications.

Banana producers in the ORs have made some outstanding agroecological changes. Despite their remoteness, the challenging topographic and climatic context in tropical and sub-tropical humid regions, and extreme pressure from plant diseases and pests, they not only comply with European regulations - which are currently the most stringent in the world - but they go even further by adhering to very strict self-imposed environmental requirements.

Banana producers in Guadeloupe, Martinique, the Canaries and Madeira are world leaders in terms of biodiversity and environmental protection, reduction of the use of plant protection products, cultivation practices, as well as research and training.

Thus, the reform of their farming practices has led to a 75% reduction in pesticide use in less than 15 years! Efforts are continuing: they fixed themselves the objective of a further 50% reduction by 2025. The objectives also include cutting carbon emissions throughout the production and marketing process, protecting biodiversity, training on innovative practices, youth insertion, and generational renewal.



THE GROWING LIBERALISATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MARKET: A THREAT TO THE EUROPEAN BANANA

Europe is the world's largest banana import market with 6.5 million tons of bananas consumed every year; it sources 75% of its needs from **Latin American countries**. But "dollar banana" producers are far from complying with the same social, environmental, health and phytosanitary obligations as their European counterparts..

In both the organic and conventional farming sectors, third-country producers:

- Can use plant protection products that are banned in Europe!
- Use aerial application, which is strictly prohibited in Europe
- Apply plant protection products eight to ten times more often than in Europe
- Have benefited from the lowering of customs barriers over the past ten years or more (from €176/ton in 2010 to €75/ton in 2020)
- Have access to very low-cost labour

A very unfair competition environment has developed as a result, which penalises banana producers in the ORs. In fact, the lowering of customs tariffs provokes the increase of import volumes of "dollar bananas" produced at very low cost. This relentless increase in supply in the EU market is driving prices down: between 2015 and 2018, the price of a box of bananas* dropped from €14.1 to €11.9, which is below the break-even point for European producers.

*The box of bananas contains 18.5kg of bananas.

The downward trend in prices is now well-established and is not just affecting the conventional farming sector. During the last ten years, the end price to consumers' differential between organic and conventional products has shrunk from 80 cents/kg to just 40 cents/kg!

The Organic label illustrates well this trend. Under the new EU Organic Regulation (2018), organic products from third countries are recognised through bilateral agreements under the "equivalence" system, promoting the existence of fake organic products.

Labelling is done according to a "convergence of standards" and the control systems are left to control bodies in third countries!

Third-country organic products that are not fully compliant with European production rules, yet on our supermarket shelves bearing the European organic label!

BANANAS - COMPARISON NET EU SUPPLY AND PRICES IN EUROPE (IN GREEN)

