



MEDIA KIT ON THE EU CAMPAIGN FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS LABEL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Bananas from Guadeloupe and Martinique

The banana sector: Driving progress for Guadeloupe and Martinique



Bananas are one of the most important economic sectors in Guadeloupe and Martinique: 650 producers on both islands produce an average of 270,000 tons of bananas per year. Each week, a ship carrying 5,000 tons of fruit – 27 million bananas – leaves the islands for Europe. 80 percent of bananas are sold in France, and 20 percent are exported to other European countries. Bananas account for 75 percent of all products traded between the French Antilles and the mainland.

The distance from Guadeloupe and Martinique to the European mainland, the geographic limitations of their territory and market, their insular location, as well as climatic conditions and risks represent unfavourable conditions for the emergence of a large industrial sector with secure jobs. The unemployment rate in Martinique and Guadeloupe is therefore one of the highest in Europe. Against this backdrop, banana production on the two islands is of immense economic importance. With 10,000 direct and indirect jobs, the banana sector is the region's largest private employer. Approximately one in 20 people is employed in the banana sector. Different professions in the sector offer the young generation in particular a wide range of future prospects. Thanks to production levels which remain consistently high throughout the year regardless of market conditions or weather risks, the banana sector is therefore the engine driving progress on the islands.





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In order to remain competitive, UGPBAN (Union des Groupements des Producteurs de Bananes de Guadeloupe & Martinique) continuously invests in the education and training of producers and their employees (e.g. on safety, environmental protection, accounting, management, computer science), thereby enhancing their skills and career opportunities.

Respect for people and the environment



All 650 family producers share a passion for one fruit and a modern form of agriculture: top priority is given to, sustainability and respect for the environment as well as workers. Producers and employees are paid, following the French rules, by collective agreement, receive social benefits and trade union rights, work under special hygiene regulations and benefit from specific vocational training offers. In this way, cultivation methods as well as traditional know-how is passed on to the next generation.

Despite the regional and climate-specific conditions, bananas from Guadeloupe and Martinique must meet French and EU quality specifications. The greatest challenge from an ecological perspective is the control of pests and plant diseases. A study (Cihence Study 2015) demonstrates the unique wealth of flora and fauna on Guadeloupe and Martinique's banana

plantations. As the only habitat of many of these endangered animals and plants is found on these islands, they must be protected. There are up to 200 earthworms per square meter, over 200 species of insects, up to 780 frogs per hectare, dozens of species of birds and bats. Now, natural predators control banana pests and protect crops. The sector is constantly working on new innovations to optimise the energy industry, transport, waste, cultivation methods and packaging materials, to improve air, water and soil quality. Since 2011 the use of pesticides on plantations has been reduced by 75 percent and biodiversity has been





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strengthened as a result. For instance, the banana producers from Guadeloupe and Martinique are global pioneers in combating the plant disease black sigatoka (caused by a mushroom which burns the leaves of the banana tree) without any plane treatment.

The goal of the producers organisation UGPBAN is to develop new, particularly resistant banana varieties with a view to further reducing the use of pesticides, continually increasing the quality of the bananas. Producer reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable and responsible agriculture by launching the Sustainable Banana Plan. The first phase of this plan greatly strengthened the innovative capacities of producers through the creation (in 2008) of the technical institute for tropical crops (IT2) and collaboration with CIRAD (International Agricultural Research Centre for Development). 80 percent of the production is already certified by Globalgap and Banagap, and 100 percent of the bananas are guaranteed traceable.

Quality and taste



Thanks to the islands' nutrient-rich volcanic soils, permanent sunshine and Caribbean sea-spray, which is carried into the plantations by the ocean breeze, the bananas from Guadeloupe and Martinique have a unique taste.

The Figue-pomme, Ti-nain, Poyo and Cavendish varieties of bananas are cultivated here. Bananas differ in size, flavour and texture depending on the variety and cultivation area. For instance, bananas cultivated in the lowlands are characterized by their attractive, yellow colour and delicate flesh. Bananas cultivated at an altitude of over 350 metres – in Guadeloupe on the slopes of the Soufrière volcano and in Martinique on the slopes of the Pelée volcan – need about three months longer to grow because of the altitude. This longer growing period, combined with the nutrient-rich volcanic soils, gives them a particularly sweet taste and pleasantly firm flesh. One speciality is the pink banana. It is smaller than the classic banana and also contains more iron. It is especially appreciated for its pink skin and flavourful flesh. The banana is ripe when it softens and the skin darkens.

Find more info on www.exotictasteofeurope.eu.



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