



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

## Bananas from the Canary Islands

### The banana sector: Gastronomic heritage and economic engine



Bananas are both the cultural heritage and economic driver of the Canary Islands. The region owes its decades of economic growth to them. With 8,900 hectares of cultivated land stretching across all the islands and an annual harvest of nearly 400,000 tonnes, bananas are the Canary Islands' most important agricultural products. They account for 19 percent of

the cultivated area and 67 percent of the agricultural products exported.

A large section of the population has earned its livelihood from banana cultivation for many generations – the fruit plays a pivotal role for thousands of families. Nearly 8,000 farmers devote themselves to banana cultivation. From cultivation, harvesting and packaging to distribution, the Canary Islands banana sector employs even more than 12,000 people full-time, and thus significantly contributes to reducing the islands' high unemployment rate. The industry is of immense importance especially for women, who make up most of the workforce in the processing, packaging and storage of bananas. In addition to its function as an economic driver for the entire region, banana cultivation counteracts the rural exodus and thus ensures demographic stability in the region.

Due to the lifting on import restrictions for bananas from non-EU countries, the Canary Island banana sector currently faces one of its most difficult economic situations of recent decades. So by eating Canary Island bananas, consumers not only enjoy high-quality food; they also contribute to the preservation of a gastronomic heritage, economic stability and the sustainable development of the region.





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### Carefully produced by hand, natural cultivation



Situated at an altitude of less than 300 metres, with an average temperature of 25 degrees Celsius and plenty of sunshine, Canary Islands plantations are ideally suited for banana cultivation. Thanks to the many different microclimates, bananas are cultivated since over 100 years year-round on all of the archipelago's islands, except Fuerteventura and Lanzarote. Timed to reach perfect ripeness at different times, they can be used to supply the European market throughout the year.

The topography of the cultivated areas makes the use of machinery impossible, which is why the bananas are still grown and harvested exclusively using traditional manual labour. The fruit is carefully nurtured and its development closely monitored until it is picked at the optimum degree of maturity. The high professionalized system guarantees high quality as well as an intense flavour.

Banana plants in the Canaries hardly suffer from pests, which facilitates ecologically sound, sustainable cultivation. Neither pesticides nor fungicides are used on the predominantly small plantations (< 1 ha). Instead, all of the archipelago's producers invariably rely on natural plant protection, such as indigenous insects that feed on specific pests or organic matter, which is added to the soil to prevent the germination of adventitious plants. This preserves the biodiversity of the islands and makes the bananas a healthy, natural and completely wholesome food. Additionally, the Canarian banana holds a carbon footprint certification that not only includes production, but also distribution and marketing. The producers' natural cultivation methods and associated sustainable development of the regions satisfies the consumers' wish for safe, high-quality food from environmentally friendly production. This controlled, certified production sets Canary Island bananas apart from those of other countries – which is why, in addition to the OMR seal, it carries the PGI (protected geographical indication) label, awarded by the European Union to give consumers a reliable guarantee of taste, quality and provenance.



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**Quality and taste**



The volcanic soils combined with Canary Islands producers' centuries of experience make the *Plátano de Canarias* a unique fruit. Thanks to the subtropical climate (mild temperatures, many hours of sunshine, high humidity) and geographical proximity to Europe, the Canary Island banana can ripen for six months - three months longer than other bananas. It therefore contains less starch which has become soluble

sugars, and more water and flavours, which makes it particularly tasty.

The banana is distinguished by its sweet taste, creamy texture and high vitamin, mineral and nutrient content. External traits include its small size as well as yellow, slightly spotty colour. In the Canary Islands, the banana is traditionally eaten as fresh fruit. Because of its intense taste, it is a popular ingredient in desserts, smoothies and juices.

Find more info on [www.exotictasteofeurope.eu](http://www.exotictasteofeurope.eu).

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