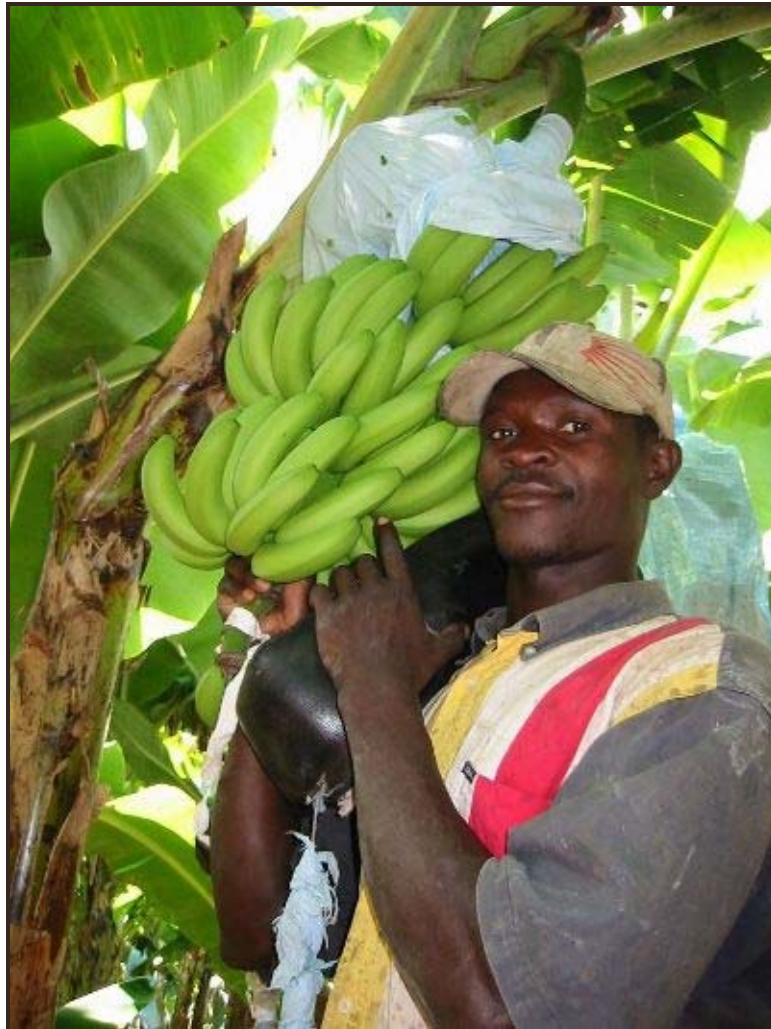


Bananas, Not so Sweet



A Fair Trade Banana Farmer

The truth about the banana industry
and what you can do to help change it

Chiquita Bananas Not so Sweet

Chiquita is the world's leading supplier of bananas. In doing a little research on the banana industry I began with their website. Reading over Chiquita's core values might give you new hope for the business world. Chiquita's stated core values include integrity, respect, opportunity, and responsibility.ⁱ However, a closer look at Chiquita tells another story.



History in Guatemala

In the 1950s Chiquita Bananas, then the United Fruit Company, owned a huge portion of land in Guatemala. In fact it controlled about 60% of the banana and pineapple trade worldwide. The newly elected Arbenz government in Guatemala was elected under the promise of remedying the unequal land distribution. In 1945 over eighty percent of the population was rural yet 2.2% of the populace controlled 70% of the land while using only 12%.ⁱⁱ

In purchasing back the land for redistribution, the Arbenz government based the price of land to be purchased back for redistribution on what the company had declared its value of unused land at during tax time. The United Fruit Company had undervalued its land, paying less than it was worth in taxes. Being much larger than the Guatemalan government, they began a lobbying campaign to remove the elected government, eventually gaining a hearing with U.S. President Eisenhower and the CIA. CIA agent Howard Hunt later felt betrayed saying, "Hey, you know, I'm working for the United States, I'm not a hireling for United Fruit."ⁱⁱⁱ

This connections between the United Fruit Company and the US government ran deep. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles ran a law firm that represented the United Fruit Company. His brother Allen was director of the CIA. Assistant Secretary of State for the Inter-American Affairs John Moors Cabot was the former President of the United Fruit Company.

CIA documents released in 1997 disclosed direct American support for the military coup that would topple the new democracy. **From the 1950s to the 1990s the US supported a series of Guatemalan military rulers that are responsible for 140,000 to**



250,000 deaths.^{1 v} For forty years we armed this tyrant state with only a brief interlude during the Carter administration. Bill Clinton, in 1999, made an official apology for US support of the Guatemalan military.^v

The political control of the United Fruit Company, Dole and other major players led to much of Latin America being coined the banana republic, a term that essentially recognized the political instability created by the small group of elite responsible for the fruit trade in Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Same Company, Different Name: From the United Fruit Company of Yesterday to Chiquita Today

In 1997 three Costa Rican workers were not warned about fumigation and were harvesting bananas when they became sick and nauseous. One went to the hospital where he remained on an IV drip for a few hours. Another reported the incident to his superiors and was sent home. One of the workers reported to work the next day, and the nausea returned. He was forced to stay. Two of the men reported the incident to Chiquita. They were fired.



Chiquita regularly intimidates workers using private militia as well as carelessly and dangerously using pesticides.^{vi} In the same year Chiquita was fined \$25 million by the United States Justice Department for its ties to Colombian paramilitary groups.^{vii}



Beyond Chiquita

Bananas are the world's most popular fruit. Farmer prices for bananas can be as low as six cents a pound, which in Ecuador can translate into many workers being paid around one dollar a day. Banana plantations in Central America apply around 30 kg of active pesticide per hectare, ten times the average of industrial agriculture in industrialized countries. Many of these chemicals are considered extremely toxic to humans.^{viii}

Beyond Bananas

It is unfortunately true that rather than being an exception, bananas represent the rule in international business. From child trafficking in chocolate, to sweat shops, to blood diamonds fuelling ongoing wars in Congo and oil in Iraq, it is time to recognize the blood on our hands. It is time to consume in ways that foster real prosperity and peace.

i <http://www.chiquita.com/CorporateCommitment/CoreValues.aspx>

ii Stanley, Diane (1994). For the Record: United Fruit Company's Sixty-Six Years in Guatemala. Centro Impresor Piedra Santa, p. 179.

iii <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/18/interviews/hunt/>

iv <http://www.consortiumnews.com/archive/story38.html>

v Babington, Charles (March 11, 1999). "Clinton: Support for Guatemala Was Wrong", Washington Post, pp. Page A1. Retrieved on 2006-12-26.

vi <http://www.peuples-solidaires.org/article801.html>

vii Matt Apuzzo, Associated Press writer, Chiquita to Pay \$25M Fine in Terror Case, ABC News, 15 March 2007

viii http://www.fairtradetoronto.com/pdf_files/banana_fact_sheets.pdf

World Hunger Relief and Fair Trade

Sustainable farming is more than nutrition and practices for growing food, but a balance between making food affordable while also paying farmers enough to sustain a healthy standard of living. That is why World Hunger Relief is involved in trade policy and running a fair trade store at the farm.

When all trade regulation is stripped away under free trade, the only thing left to determine what we buy is quality of product and price. The companies who are more profitable are largely the companies that skimp on costs of production, making their product cheaper. **Successful companies generally skimp on worker wages, raise work hours and disregard the environment.** Employment is moving to places like China where there are less human rights. Correspondingly, deficits for developed countries with good labor laws are growing under free trade.



Legislatively, this is not to disregard a need for a market, but to suggest that, as countries, we need to regulate the market to ensure higher trade standards and balanced budgets. Just as rules in sports ensure healthy competitions, so can rules in trade offer competition around strong minimum wages, benefits, etc. It is your right to have a say in these rules as a citizen.

As individuals we need to consume fairly traded products. Fair trade is a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable alternative. Fair trade might cost more, but for most of us getting enough is not the question, but rather enjoying what we have and acquiring what we consume in ways that bring justice and peace into our world.

So where do I go from here:

1. Support Local and National business
2. Support Cooperatives and Union Made
3. Support Fair Trade
4. Support Micro-Credit as a way of developing small businesses rather than international corporations. Please visit www.kiva.org & www.grameenfoundation.org
5. Sign our petition for fair trade bananas at HEB. Commit to pay up to 99 cents/lb for fair trade bananas in trying to encourage HEB to carry fair trade bananas.
6. Recognize that from banana wars to oil wars, things have not changed. Half your tax dollars are spent on the military. The US spends more than the rest of the world combined on the military. The best way to keep America safe is to stop fuelling hatred. The best way to support your troops is to bring them home.
7. Support fairer trade legislation and higher labor standards as an alternative to free trade with your vote. You can have the market while competing between agreed on living wages, environmental standards, etc.
8. Support International law and institutions with your vote and demand it of your Leaders. Part of being a democratic nation and supporting democracy worldwide is being a nation among other nations by respecting international democratic opinion and law.
9. Finally advocate for publicly funded elections. It would cost a dollar a person to have elections funded publicly. Right now they are funded by your corporations and so they answer to them, and not you. All it would take to have a President and Congress that answer to you is one dollar.
10. Talk to your neighbor about fair trade!!

Fair Trade in Waco

The Village Store at World Hunger Relief

-Coffee, Tea (loose leaf and bagged), chocolate, cocoa, almonds, cranberries, as well as a variety of kitchen and housewares, clothing, handmade artwork, bags, scarves, jewelry, and instruments, etc.

356 Spring Lake Rd, 254-799-5611, Open 9-5 Mon-Fri, Sat 10-3

The World Cup Café

-Coffee, and a variety of kitchen and house wares, clothing, handmade artwork, bags, scarves, and jewelry.

Corner of 15th and Colcord, 254-757-1548 Open 7-5 Mon-Fri

HEB (Wooded Acres)

-Coffee, Tea (loose leaf and bagged), Dr Bronner's Soap, Sugar, Molasses as well as some World of Good Handcrafts.

Drug Emporium

-Coffee, Tea (bagged and in liquid concentrate for Chai Latte's), chocolate chips, Vanilla, Sugar, Dr Bronner's Soap (5900 Bosque Blvd)

Connor Health Foods Inc

-Dr Bronner's Soap, Sugar, and Tea. (2625 W Waco Dr)

Wal-Mart

-Coffee

LOOK FOR THESE FAIR TRADE SYMBOLS

