

Bananeras de Urabá is a family owned banana business located in the tropical northwest region of Colombia and is comprised of six Fair Trade Certified farms. Founded in 1963, Bananeras de Urabá has experienced many highs and lows due to numerous domestic conflicts



and unstable regimes. Since Fair Trade certification in 2005, the association has focused its efforts on developing social and environmental programs for its workers and families. As a result, workers have better access to international markets, educational institutions and sustainable farming methods. Basic necessities such as clean running water and electricity were scarce before, but Fair Trade premiums have now helped workers access more funds to rebuild their homes, send their children to school and save for future investments.

Fair Trade at Bananeras de Urabá

The organizations farms are located in Urabá in the state of Antioquia, Colombia with 415 farm workers and 60 administrative employees. Among its workforce is 30 women and 445 men. Traditionally, banana workers of Colombia have been underestimated, abused and badly



The workers break room - built with Fair Trade premiums

treated. While ethical principles and human talent has always been the key to its operations, Rosalba Zapata, a women and principal owner of the business since 1988, understands this and made transcendent decisions to get involved with Fair Trade in 2005. Fair Trade for Bananeras de Urabá meant that the organization was no longer at the mercy of the volatile market, and that they received a minimum price for each box of bananas, on top of the of \$1 community

development premium.

To manage the Community Development Premium, Bananeras de Urabá, has an Administrative Board. This is an interdisciplinary team called the "Joint Body". The Joint Body is made up of several farm workers and employees who represent the organizations needs and handle the Fair Trade premium, according to the Fair Trade criteria.



At the core of the investment plans put forth by the Joint Body are aims to improve the quality of life for workers, their families and the community. Main projects include housing loans for farm workers and scholarship programs for farm management, as well as technological or university education for the workers and their entire family.

With these resources workers also receive other benefits, among which is momentum of recreational and sports practices, acquisition of basic household appliances, and support in case

of emergencies or natural disasters, to meet their basic needs and to repossess their belongings. Likewise the communities where workers live have received important benefits such as the provision of libraries, chairs, improvement of infrastructure and computers for schools and colleges, supporting cultural and community activities

From Columbia to the United States: The Banana’s Journey

More than 40 years ago, several Colombian banana growers grew discontent with selling their products to big, multinational corporations and formed their own export cooperative named Uniban. Uniban now exports for 25 Fair Trade Certified Farms in Columbia. In 1980, Uniban parented Turbana Corporation, a U.S. based importer. Around 20% of Uniban’s exports are sold in the US market directly to the United States through Turbana and Turbana’s Fair Trade Bananas can be found at Whole Foods Market and Sam’s Club.

Jorge William Restrepo

Jorge was born in the city of Concordia, a little town South West of Antioquia in Colombia. He has been working at Bananeras de Urabá for over 20 years and has risen to a position in which he handles relations with the union, the workers, employees, and suppliers. Before coming to Bananeras de Uraba, Jorge managed to



Figure 1 Jorge (left) visiting the housing construction site where Fair Trade premiums are being spent to build new homes for farm workers

pay his way through college studies at a Polytechnical University in Columbia. He worked for 12 years on a banana farm before landing his current role and this time married his wife and had a son. Jorge is a member of the Bananeras de Uraba's Joint Body and has participated in all of the Fair Trade trainings in Columbia over the past 7 years, including a standards development committee for Fair Trade banana estates.



Felipe Echeverri Zapata,

Born in the city of Medellin, Colombia, Felipe is the son of Rosalba Zapata, Bananeras de Uraba's CEO. He is married with three sons and has worked with his mother since 1988. 15 years ago, Rosalba decided that, as a company, Bananeras de Uraba had to differentiate itself from the other estates and they started to invest in the development of healthy facilities for the workers and better environmental principles. Felipe believes that this decision opened the organizations hearts and minds which in turn has built a organization with positive relationships with the worker, management and local unions. Seven years ago the family decided to officially embark on Fair Trade Certification and it would be an important complement for the social well-being

of its workers and community's overall health; and it has brought a wealth of social development to this community. Since then, the company triggered investments on several packing stations, better bathrooms facility and break rooms.

Felipe has first job with Banners de Uraba was implementing the quality control program, afterwards with the administrative role.

Both individuals are eager to share with you how Fair Trade has affected the lives of their families, their colleagues and their community!