



## The Rainforest Alliance's Better Banana Project

### **1. Conservation and Reforestation**

The rainforest is home to thousands of species, including endangered animals like the Three-toed Sloth, the Red-Eyed Tree Frog or Blue Morpho Butterfly. By conserving and reforesting, we can help to preserve the habitat of these unique creatures.

#### **Here's why conservation and reforestation are good:**

- Protecting or reforesting along watercourses creates wildlife corridors and avoids erosion.
- Planting tree 'screens' helps to keep pesticides where they need to be and away from people.
- Forbidding any deforestation protects natural habitats.
- Reforesting any land not used for banana production eliminates soil erosion.
- Using native species maintains the local ecosystem.
- Protecting existing forests and natural ecosystems (wetlands, lagoons, etc.) preserves a precious natural resource.
- Hunting and fishing are prohibited in many areas to protect rare species.
- Recycling materials helps minimize waste and uses less natural resources.

### **2. Waste management**

Bananas grow like crazy. A banana plant grows to a height of 4 meters in just 9 months. When the bananas are harvested, there's a lot of organic waste that needs to be handled.

Here are some of our solutions to cope with that:

- Banana leaves and stems are turned into compost to help fertilize the soil by releasing natural nutrients.
- The 85 composting trenches on our farms are also a favourite place for birds, deer, insects and frogs, because there's so much to eat.
- Banana plant compost prevents soil erosion from the heavy tropical rains and keeps the soil moist in the dry season.
- Not all bananas look good enough to display in the shop though they are still good to eat, so we make the rejects into a banana puree
- We also give the bruised ones to farmers who use them for cattle feed.
- All our packing stations have solid waste traps which help to keep the rivers and streams clean.
- Banana plants are protected by recycled plastic bags while they grow. The bags protect the stem or bunch from damage by insects, the sun and leaves.
- On our farms, you'll find water pipes, buckets, building materials, paving stones and other products made from recycled plastic bags. We even built a bridge in Costa Rica from recycled bags.

- Our farms recycle or reuse 3,000 tonnes of plastic per year; and you won't find any open waste dumps or waste being burnt in the open.
- Our banana farms are inspected by experts every year to make sure we continuously adhere to the criteria required for Rainforest Alliance certification. These inspectors can arrive on the farm at any time without warning.

### **3. Water conservation**

Water is precious everywhere. And using water carefully for farming is a fundamental requirement of the Rainforest Alliance Certified programme.

We know that water can't be wasted, so here's how we've made progress in developing water recycling systems and reducing water usage:

- Washing our bananas and gently transporting them around the packing stations is where we use most of the water. Our researchers are busy exploring new technologies which will further reduce water use.
- All of our packing stations have filters to prevent even small pieces of fruit from entering rivers and streams.
- We are very careful in preventing any chemicals from reaching rivers and streams. For example:
  - The banks of all natural watercourses are reforested and protected.
  - All drainage ditches on our banana farms are planted with cover crops and no chemical weed control is allowed.
- Independent laboratories sample and analyze the purity of the water in the rivers and streams leaving our farms.

### **4. Social conditions**

Responsible banana farming also means caring for the people who live and work on the farms. We do this not only by giving wages and benefits that are substantially higher than the legal requirements, but also in providing facilities like schools and medical care.

- Many children of our workers have become professionals themselves and have returned to the company to work as supervisors and managers.
- When families live on the banana farm, we build a primary school close by. Over the years we have employed many teachers.
- Our workers enjoy social security and medical care, which is quite unusual in developing countries.



- We apply the rigorous health and safety regulations required by Rainforest Alliance certification from which everyone in the community benefits.
- Since 2004, all of our banana farms been SA8000 certified. SA8000 is a voluntary standard for workplaces based on the core International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child.
- On many banana farms, we provide sport and recreation facilities like football fields and basketball courts.
- We recently made it possible for many of our workers to become home owners, and have built or co-funded over 2,000 new homes in Latin America. In April 2005, President Berger of Guatemala opened a new Chiquita home ownership project.
- We have also given our workers many other benefits in agreements (collective bargaining agreements) between the company and the workers' freely elected representatives.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **Growing better bananas, every day!**

We contribute to making a better world and grow better bananas. That means working hard every day to live up to all the Rainforest Alliance's requirements. So when you see the Rainforest Alliance's frog on our bananas... you know that they'll taste even better. Enjoy!

> Find out more about the Rainforest Alliance: <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>

