

Fair Trade Banana Producer Profiles

George De Freitas

George works for the company that exports bananas from the Windward Islands as well as being a banana farmer himself.

"St. Vincent is completely dependent on bananas. Whereas other crops might only be harvested once or twice a year, bananas give people a weekly income. Farmers do plant other crops but these are usually used as food for the family.

There are still some younger people on the farms but lots have left. Farmers paint such a gloomy picture of what it's like that the youth don't want to get involved. good price to a good market. If there was a growth in the market for bananas then more people would get involved in production again."

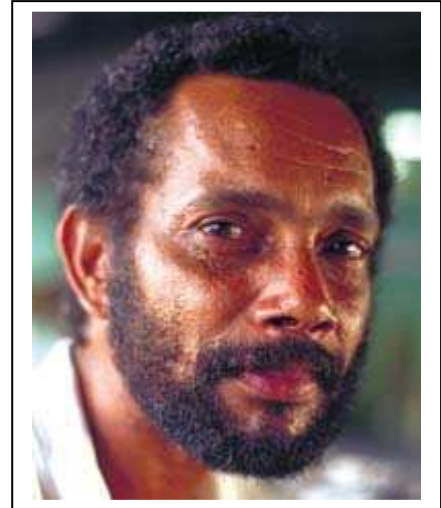


Photo: Abigail Hadeed/Oxfam

Fair Trade

"The benefits of Fair Trade for us have been reduction of chemicals on the environment. The social premium has also really made a difference. We're thinking about trying to open a nursery school and improve the roads around us. Anything we can do to make life better for the community, we'll try and do.

We'd like to see the Fair Trade market increase as we have many farmers who want to become involved in Fair Trade. They too want a fair price for a fairly produced banana."

Regina Joseph



Photo: Abigail Hadeed/Oxfam

Regina is a 42-year-old banana farmer from Dominica. She has been involved in banana farming since she was 16.

"I spend the whole day on the farm. The farm isn't too far away. Mostly women do the tasks like washing and packing the bananas. Sometimes my daughter helps me pack, but I always do the selection of bananas to sell myself."



Fair Trade

"I started selling Fair Trade bananas last year. I find that with Fair Trade bananas I get a better income."

Deryck Smart

Deryck is a 21-year-old banana farmer. He sells both fair trade and non fair trade bananas.



Photo: Abigail Hadeed/Oxfam

"The problem with the bananas you don't sell as Fair Trade is that the price always goes up and down.

I cut bananas on a fortnightly basis. My girlfriend washes and helps with the packing, and sometimes my dad might help out as well. Basically all the family is involved.

My mum and dad have noticed a lot of differences over the years. They say things have got much harder now."

Fair Trade

"I'd like to thank the people in the UK who buy Fair Trade. Please keep on buying and then hopefully the quotas will get bigger and maybe we can sell to places like America and Canada. We've lost a lot here over the years. If things don't improve then banana farming will be a dead industry."

Nioka Abbott



Photo: Abigail Hadeed/Oxfam



Nioka has been a banana farmer on St Vincent for 15 years and is now the Chairperson of the local Fair Trade Group.

"There's been big changes since the 1970s. Now it's just more expensive to produce bananas. It's more work and less money.

I harvest every week or fortnight. Bananas are better than any other crops for regular harvesting. You get an income all through the year. That's why banana is so popular as a cash crop. It would be hard to find a replacement."

Fair Trade

"The good thing about being involved in Fair Trade is the social premium we get. Last year we bought chairs with ours. Before, when we held meetings everyone had to stand.

I ask people to buy more Fair Trade bananas and start putting pressure on supermarkets who don't buy Fair Trade. The market now is so small for Fair Trade that we need to get more supermarkets to buy them. If we could produce at a larger volume then we'd get a larger income in return."