



The Great Banana Chain Game

Resource Sheet

General Banana Facts

- People have been growing and eating bananas from almost 10,000 years (TransFair Canada)
- Bananas are the most popular fruit in North America, and on average, one person eats 14 kg of bananas every year. (TransFair Canada)
- Bananas are the most exported fruit (by volume) and are the single most profitable item passing through the checkouts in the world's supermarkets. (Banana Link)
- The banana plant is the world's largest herb. It can grow up to 15 metres high. It is a perennial plant that replaces itself. The time from planting to harvest is typically 9-12 months, and bananas are available all year long. (TransFair Canada/UNCTAD Secretariat)
- 87% of bananas are grown on small family farms and eaten locally (TransFair Canada).
- 98% of the world's bananas are grown in developing countries. China, the Philippines, Brazil and Ecuador produced more than 60% of the bananas grown in 2007. (UNCTAD)
- There are 500- 1000 different types of bananas grown in the world, but 99% of the bananas exported to Europe and North America are of one variety, the Cavendish. (UNCTAD)

The Banana Market

- Five companies- Chiquita, Dole, Del Monte, Fyffes and Noboa- control 80% of the world banana market. (Banana Link)
- The difficulty of transporting bananas gives large corporations a significant advantage in the banana market. They control operations from cultivation through transportation, ripening, and sales to retailers. It is hard for small producers to compete with the low monetary costs associated with these mass-production operations. (TransFair Canada)
- Latin America and the Caribbean were responsible for 70% of world banana exports in 2006. Ecuador alone accounts for 30% of global banana exports. (UNCTAD)
- Banana imports relatively concentrate within the European Union, the USA and Japan, which together accounted for more than 70% of total world imports in 2006. (UNCTAD)
- Many developing countries depend on bananas. For example, 22.3% of exports from the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 2006, directly related to bananas. Other countries with high banana dependency include Saint Lucia (19.7%), Panama (10%), and Ecuador (9.3%). (UNCTAD)
- Retailers mostly determine banana prices, and this is due mainly to the growing dominance of distributors and supermarket chains. (UNCTAD)
- Workers can earn as little as 1% of the final price of the banana. (Banana Link)



Environmental and Human Impacts of the Banana Trade

- Bananas are very vulnerable to pests and diseases. Producers need to use agrochemicals to make sure their bananas make it to harvest time. These chemicals are often sprayed by hand or from backpack sprayers. (UNCTAD and Banana Link)
- An average banana plantation in Central America uses 30kg of pesticides per hectare every year. Some plantations use pesticides that are banned in North America (TransFair Canada)
- The pursuit of productivity and profit in the banana industry leads to intensive pesticide use, soil erosion and deforestation. (Banana Link)
- A high percentage of chemicals sprayed onto crops from planes end up on plantation housing and outside the plantation. (Banana Link)
- Workers have little or no job security and often don't make a living wage. Plantations commonly hire people on contracts for 3-6 months. They have few legal rights and are regularly prevented from organizing unions. (Banana Link)
- Workplace accidents are commonplace on plantations where people work long hours in high heat with few regulations to protect them. (Banana Link)
- In Ecuador, children as young as eight work on banana plantations. (Human Rights Watch)

Fair Trade Benefits

- With Fair Trade pricing, farmers get a guaranteed minimum price for their products. This guaranteed price allows them to cover the costs of production. (Fair Trade Foundation)
- The Fair-Trade price that farmers receive is often double what is available on the open market, which is volatile and controlled by large banana corporations. Fair Trade pricing puts a higher share of banana revenues in producers' hands. (TransFair Canada)
- In addition to Fair Trade pricing, farmers have access to the Fair-Trade premium, which enables them to invest in social and economic interests in their communities. Farmers also have access to pre-harvest lines of credit that can help them get through tough times. (Fairtrade Foundation, TransFair Canada)
- Approximately 1.5 million workers and farmers in 58 developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America benefit from Fairtrade. (Fair Trade Labelling Organizations International)
- In 2007 Fair Trade sales amounted to approximately C\$3.7 billion worldwide, a 47% increase over 2006. At the end of 2008, there were 872 certified producer organizations in 58 countries. (FLO)
- Fair Trade regulations prohibit forced labour and child labour. Children aged 15 and above are protected from work that compromises their health or education. (FLO)
- Fairtrade certified bananas generated more than \$10 million worldwide for farmers and workers between 1996 and 2008. (TransFair Canada)
- Regulations ensure that hired labourers receive the benefits of Fair Trade. Workers must be organized, usually in unions. (TransFair Canada)
- Fair Trade workers must have good employment conditions, including salaries that are at least at the level of the national minimum wage, set working hours, and paid overtime. Workers must also have access to sick leave and benefits. (TransFair Canada)
- Fair Trade banana producers must follow national and international environmental regulations and cannot use banned pesticides. Many Fair Trade bananas are also certified organic. (TransFair Canada)





Banana Chain Game Character Cards	
1. Consumer I'm Ali. I buy bananas because they are always cheap and tasty. I wonder how they can be so cheap when they come from so far away. Strangely, local fruits are more expensive even though they are grown close by.	2. Store Owner I'm Joanne, and I manage a grocery store. Every year we sell more and more bananas. We display them at the front of the fruit section because they have become part of my customers' regular diet all year round.
3. Transporter I'm Ted, the trucker. I start my day at 6 am in Los Angeles, where I pick up the banana cargo that arrived by ship earlier in the morning. I fill up with gas and drive bananas north to Canada.	4. Packager I am Denise, and I package the bananas, putting them into cardboard boxes so they can ship up to Canada without getting bruised. It's not satisfying work, but it's work!
7. Banana Picker My name is Wilberforce, and I pick bananas at the plantation. I harvest the bananas before they are ripe. They will ripen as they are transported thousands of kilometres to Canada.	8. Pesticide Sprayer I am Regina, and I apply pesticides to the banana plants. I often have headaches at the end of the day. I don't get paid very much, so I can't afford to go to the doctor.
9. Planter My name is Conrad, and I plant hundreds of banana seedlings every day at the plantation. When I was young, my family grew our food from the land, and we had more than enough to eat. When the price we got for our bananas fell, we had to sell our land. Now I can't grow my own food, and I don't make enough money to buy basic necessities for my family.	5. Big Bananas My name is Mr. James, and I am the CEO of a big banana-producing corporation. I make more money than I can spend, but if my company doesn't make a big profit every year, I'll lose my job. We own the plantation, export ships, transport trucks and food terminals, and this allows us to maximize our efficiency and profits.
10. Unionizer I am William, and I think all of the banana plantation workers deserve health care, healthy working conditions and liveable wages. I was fired for trying to organize a union to protect my rights and those of the other banana workers.	11. Logger I am Jose, and I am cutting down native rainforests so that banana trees can be planted. I dislike it; I played in these forests as a boy. It's hard to find other work as the whole economy is based on exporting bananas.
6. Plantation Manager My name is Mr. Emmanuel, and I run a large banana plantation here in Ecuador. I'm the boss of about 600 workers, so I can't take a personal interest in each of their lives. I know that they work, and I make a living from the big banana company.	





<h2 style="text-align: center; color: green;">Banana Chain Game Impact Cards</h2>	
<p>Consumer I represent the satisfaction of eating a banana. Yum!</p>	<p>Store Owner I represent the profit the store owner makes when someone buys a banana.</p>
<p>Transporter I represent the smog that was produced by the truck that delivered the bananas. During warm summer days, many people with respiratory problems can't go outside on smog days.</p>	<p>Transporter I represent the CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere from transporting bananas thousands of kilometres to the consumer.</p>
<p>Packager I represent a tree cut down to make a cardboard box. I could have absorbed 1100kg of CO₂ during my life, but now I won't be able to fight climate change, provide soil stability to prevent mudslides or offer homes for other plants and animals.</p>	<p>Big bananas I represent the independent transporter who went out of business when the banana company decided to 'vertically integrate' its operating system.</p>
<p>Packager I represent the greenhouse gas emissions produced by coal-fired power plants that powered the mill that made the cardboard box.</p>	<p>Packager I represent the bananas protected from bruising by the cardboard box.</p>
<p>Big Bananas I represent the profit that the banana company makes when the grocery store buys its bananas.</p>	<p>Packager I represent the paper mill that released toxic chemicals into the river while making the cardboard.</p>
<p>Plantation Manager I represent the money earned by the plantation manager.</p>	<p>Banana Picker I represent the lost nutritional value because we picked the banana while still green.</p>
<p>Pesticide Sprayer I represent the workers who can't afford health care.</p>	<p>Pesticide Sprayer I represent the fish that was poisoned by pesticides washed into the river near the plantation.</p>
<p>Pesticide Sprayer I represent the bird that ate the poisoned fish. My babies were so severely deformed that they did not survive their first season.</p>	<p>Pesticide Sprayer I represent the banana tree sprayed with pesticides, and was not affected by the Black Sigatoka disease that destroyed millions of other banana trees this year.</p>



<p>Planter I represent the local economy that is entirely dependent on cash crops like bananas. Cash crops are different than subsistence crops in that they are grown for money rather than to feed farmers' families. Small farmers used to produce cash and subsistence crops, but globalization and price drops have made it hard for family farmers.</p>	<p>Planter I represent the monoculture banana plantation that grows cropped that are more vulnerable to disease and pests.</p>
<p>Logger I represent the cleared land now used to grow food to feed people.</p>	<p>Logger I represent the forest habitat and ecosystem lost through deforestation.</p>
<p>Logger I represent the plant species lost when the rainforest was cut down. My benefits to humans- like medicinal properties, for example- are now lost forever.</p>	<p>Logger I represent the rare bird that lost its home when the loggers cleared the forest in which I lived. My species is now at risk.</p>
<p>Planter I represent the crop growing quicker because I was irrigated.</p>	<p>Planter I represent the water table, lowered by irrigation that supports thousands of acres of bananas.</p>

