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GMB AND BANANA LINK

WORKING TOGETHER IN SOLIDARITY

GMB International Solidarity Fund

Annual Report 2017-18

Many tropical fruit workers in Latin America live in poverty and their most basic rights fail to be respected in the workplace. The GMB International Solidarity Fund enables branches and regions to directly support the organising, legal and education work of Latin American agricultural trade unions. These unions need our solidarity to defend the rights of plantation workers and empower representatives to collectively bargain for Decent Work.

Freedom & Fairness for Fyffes Workers in Central America

The GMB has given significant support to the global campaign seeking to get the multinational giant Fyffes to respect labour rights on their plantations in Costa Rica and Honduras. Fyffes has been suspended from the UK Government's Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and are now in negotiations with the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF) to reach a mutually agreeable framework for engagement between local unions and management.



A new banana workers union in Ecuador

GMB support has also helped with the recent establishment of a new banana workers' union in Ecuador. Formed in September 2017, SINUTRABE (the National Union of Ecuadorian Banana Workers) was formed to organise men and women across the industry in a country where union membership remains very low.

The new union represents around two thousand workers, only some of whom currently enjoy collective bargaining agreements with their employers. The union is involved in the current fight within the country against the attempts of the newly elected business-friendly government, to reverse nearly ten years of positive labour legislation and minimum wage increases introduced under former President Rafael Correa.

Labour rights on Rainforest Alliance certified plantations

A large proportion of the bananas sold in UK supermarkets are certified by the Rainforest Alliance. However, despite the claims of the Alliance, that their production is sustainable, labour rights are not respected on many certified plantations. GMB and Banana Link have been instrumental in forming a global alliance of unions and

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NGOs who have raised concerns about this issue with the certifier. As a result, Rainforest are now in dialogue with plantation workers' unions in Latin America to address concerns about lack of Freedom of Association on certified plantations.

Fending off the bailiffs in Peru

The export agriculture sector in Peru has grown rapidly in recent years. In the midst of this, SITAG, the Peruvian Agricultural Workers' Union, has been able to negotiate an historic framework agreement on trade union rights with seven banana producers' associations, which has provided proper recognition of SITAG and formalised the deduction of union subscriptions by the employers.



However, as the Peruvian government will not allow SITAG to hold a bank account in its own name to hold members subs, the union was, in March this year, facing mounting debts and the threat of their office being seized, along with the cutting off services. Thanks to an emergency donation from the GMB, the threat was averted, but the union still faces the problem that employers still cannot pay union subscriptions deducted from workers' wages into a union bank account, despite wanting to do so.

We would like to support the GMB International Solidarity Fund with the following amount (suggested minimum donation £8.25 per month or £100 per year).

£ Monthly donation Annual donation

Contact name

Branch

Address

Email

I enclose a cheque payable to 'GMB International Solidarity Fund'

Post to Bert Schouwenburg, GMB, Mary Turner House, 22 Stephenson Way, London, NW1 2HD

Or you can donate online at www.bananalink.org.uk/donate