Latin American banana growers seek fair pay

LEVEL B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. What fruits are common and cheap in your country?
2. How does weather affect food where you live?
3. What makes a fair price for farmers?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

producer
a person or company that grows or makes something to sell

drought
a long period with very little rain

rainfall
the amount of rain that falls in a place

export
a product sold to another country

earnings
the money a person or business gets from sales or work

resilience
the ability to recover after problems or stress

supplier
a company that provides goods to shops or other firms

legislation
a law or set of laws made by a government

III. READING

Banana producers across Latin America say they need better pay because extreme weather is cutting harvests. A super El Niño is bringing high winds in Colombia, heavy rainfall in Peru and Ecuador, and predicted drought in the Dominican Republic. The Fairtrade Foundation says these conditions are already hurting farms.

In the last El Niño, productivity fell 13% in the Dominican Republic, 22% in Ecuador and 6% in Peru. In 1983, El Niño affected 15% of Ecuador's banana area; exports fell 36%.

In Colombia's Caribbean region, exports fell 32% to $122m between July and September; September shipments fell 42%, with earnings near $40m, down from $70m. Growers' associations want international buyers to recognise real costs so producers can invest in resilience.

Fairtrade is also urging UK legislation to stop unfair trading practices. Some UK supermarkets buy only from Fairtrade suppliers, but prices at the till have barely changed for decades.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Banana producers in Latin America want...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of extreme weather are hitting banana-growing areas?
2. Which four Latin American countries are named in the text?
3. By how much did exports fall in Colombia's Caribbean region between July and September?
4. What do growers want international buyers to recognise?
5. What change is Fairtrade urging in the UK?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should supermarkets raise banana prices to pay farmers more? Why?
2. What risks do farmers face when weather is extreme?
3. How could buyers help growers build resilience?
4. Do you look for Fairtrade labels when you shop? Why or why not?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Connecting words

Connecting words link ideas (cause, contrast, time). Choose the form that fits what follows: because + clause; because of + noun; although + clause; despite + noun; while + clause; during + noun; so + result.

"Exports fell **because** *storms damaged plantations."*
"Some UK supermarkets buy Fairtrade, **but** *prices stayed low."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Fairtrade urged action (because of / because) unfair trading. _____
2. They invested (although / despite) higher costs. _____
3. Earnings dropped (while / during) September. _____
4. Heavy rain is falling in Peru (while / during) this El Niño. _____
5. Farms were affected (while / during) winds hit Colombia. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 10 minutes discussion. Combine grammar with reading or discussion time as needed.
- Pre-teach geography (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic) and El Niño in one sentence, plus money figures and percent signs to support scanning for data.
- Run a first silent read for gist, then a second read for numbers and connectors (because, so, but). Pair-check answers before brief whole-class feedback.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise one paragraph in two sentences; others underline causes and results in the text and compare in pairs.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick show of hands, then pair students with different views to exchange reasons and examples.
2. If ideas stall, board hazards from the text (winds, rainfall, drought) and elicit practical effects on farms.
3. Prompt with actions from the text: fair pay, contracts, and training; ask for one concrete idea each.
4. Have students bring an item from their last shop to discuss labels; allow answers about the news, not personal habits.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word buyer statement that recognises real costs and supports resilience.

Debate: Half the class argues for UK legislation on unfair trading; half argues for voluntary action, then swap.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Connecting words

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of extreme weather are hitting banana-growing areas?
   High winds, heavy rainfall and drought linked to a super El Niño.
2. Which four Latin American countries are named in the text?
   Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic.
3. By how much did exports fall in Colombia's Caribbean region between July and September?
   They fell 32% to $122m.
4. What do growers want international buyers to recognise?
   Real production costs so producers can invest in resilience.
5. What change is Fairtrade urging in the UK?
   Legislation to stop unfair trading practices.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Connecting words link ideas (cause, contrast, time). Choose the form that fits what follows: because + clause; because of + noun; although + clause; despite + noun; while + clause; during + noun; so + result. (Examples constructed.)

"Exports fell **because** *storms damaged plantations."*

"Some UK supermarkets buy Fairtrade, **but** *prices stayed low."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Fairtrade urged action (because of / because) unfair trading. **because of**
2. They invested (although / despite) higher costs. **despite**
3. Earnings dropped (while / during) September. **during**
4. Heavy rain is falling in Peru (while / during) this El Niño. **during**
5. Farms were affected (while / during) winds hit Colombia. **while**