



# Fairtrade Bananas and Climate Change



Living in the Caribbean, cyclones and storms have always been a feature of the climate, but in recent years, climate change has caused them to become stronger and more frequent. It is devastating for banana farmers, who rely on their crops for their income, to have their farms flattened by the storms. With prices for bananas so low, making it hard to build up savings for emergencies, the only way to recover and replant their farms is to take out loans. Some end up with large debts.

Practical efforts have been made by generations of banana farmers over many decades to combat these challenges by digging trenches and contours into the land to take away surface water quickly. Proving inadequate in recent times, the banana farmers of Las Mercedes Co-operative, have used their Fairtrade Premium to develop a disaster recovery fund, to help members should the worst happen. The Fairtrade Premium is for the co-operative to decide how to invest to benefit their businesses and communities.

Las Mercedes Co-operative is in the Dominican Republic, on the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with Haiti. The co-operative's Disaster Recovery Fund is ready to go at short notice. After any extreme weather, the farmers survey their farms for signs of damage. The co-operative's technicians recommend what needs to be done – be it planting, repairs to farm buildings or equipment. The funds are then made available to the farmers, either in cash, or in some cases, products such as fertiliser.

Pictured above, banana farmer Ángel Guzmán Santana, 54, knows what it's like to see his hard work swept away – the first time his farm was hit was in 2016. His entire plantation was destroyed and after replanting, in 2017 two hurricanes, Irma and Maria, swept in. He then had no income as there were no bananas to export. Without an income building back his business was impossible without financial assistance. Now the co-operative has a

disaster relief fund to help farmers get back on their feet.