

Devon Fairtrade Schools' Conference 2021 Commentary

1. Welcome and Introductions

This year the Devon Primary Schools' Fairtrade Conference will be focussed on bananas with Veronica Browne who is a small- scale Fairtrade banana producer from St Vincent which is part of the Windward Isles in the Caribbean. Veronica came to visit us here in Devon as a Fairtrade producer 2 years ago.

2. Today we are going to meet Veronica and we are going to learn how she grows bananas, find out the challenges she is facing at this time, highlight the benefits of the Fairtrade Premium and how we all can make a difference. During this presentation if you would like to ask a question then please do – your teacher will alert me.

3. Hopefully, you will all know what the Fairtrade mark is – I am wearing a Fairtrade badge this morning and when we start the presentation you will hopefully recognise the Fairtrade mark on the screen. What does it remind you of? Teacher to aid with responses

Slide 1 – Welcome to our Devon Fairtrade Primary Schools' conference 2021

Hopefully you all have a map of the world in front of you and you have filled in the continents and the oceans.

Slide 2 – Where do you think bananas grow? What type of climate do they need? Tell your partner what you think (5 secs) Teacher to assist with responses

Slide 3 – Answer to slide 2 Bananas need regular sunshine all year round and a fair amount of rain – Devon receives about 90-100 cms per year. Bananas need 200-250 cms per year so that's more than double the amount we receive!

Slide 4 – Here is a world map showing the imaginary lines of the Equator and The Tropics – Capricorn and Cancer – Perhaps you could draw these lines on your map? Between the tropics the majority of the world's bananas are grown for export

Slide 5 – This is a world map showing where bananas grow (animated). Can you point to South America, Africa, India and China on your map? The bananas grown in Asia are for local consumption. The bananas that are exported for us to eat are grown in The Caribbean, South America – Columbia, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Equador.

Slide 6 – Now let's think about where we think the Caribbean might be? On your world maps discuss with your partner you think it is. Teacher to assist

Slide 7 –(animated)So, here is the Caribbean – between North and South America. Were you right?

Slide 8 – Now let's go to St Vincent which is part of The Windward Isles

Slide 9 – If we zoom in further between North and South America we can find St Vincent. It is a very small island on the southern tip of the Caribbean islands between St Lucia to the north and Grenada to the south.

Slide 10 – Here we have the island of St Vincent itself. It is a very small island with an Area that is 1/20th of the size of Devon but it's population is only 1/10th of the population of Devon so it is more densely populated than Devon. The economy of St Vincent depends on agriculture and tourism. We will look again at the map of St Vincent a bit later on.

Slide 11 – Here is Kingstown the capital of St Vincent– can you find two similarities and two differences to your town/nearest town with your partner? Teacher to assist

Slide 12 – Tourism – how do you think tourists come to St Vincent? Teacher to assist

Slide 13 – This is a typical beach that you will find on St Vincent – what do you think about it? Teacher to assist

Slide 14 – Some people may go to St Vincent to observe this interesting physical; feature – the volcano La Grande Soufriere which means 'big sulphur outlet'. It recently erupted in December 2020 and continues to cause major problems for the people on St Vincent.

Slide 15 –(animated) Let's meet Veronica Browne and her family –here she is with her husband and her two sons. They all work on the banana plantation with her. She is a small- scale Fairtrade farmer and belongs to WINFA which is the Windward Islands Farmer's Association. The Islands are St Lucia, Grenada, Dominica, St Vincent and The Grenadines and here she is again outside her packing shed.

Slide 16 – Here we have the map of St Vincent showing us where Veronica lives. She lives on the Eastern side of the island. If you look closely at the map you may notice something about the place names – teacher to assist. Yes, there are both French and English names which reflects the rich history of the island.

Slide 17 – How are bananas grown

Slide 18 – This is a new site on Veronica's farm that has been cleared for a new banana plantation. Every 2 meters a banana sucker or bulb is planted in the ground. The banana plant is a perennial plant which replaces itself.

Slide 19 – (animated) It takes 9-12 months from sowing a banana bulb to harvesting the fruit. The banana flower/blossom grows first and from there the fruit grows. It needs rich, dark fertile soil, steady moisture in the air and ground with good drainage. At first the fingers grow out straight with little flowers on each finger.

Slide 20 –(animated) Every little flower has to be removed by hand very carefully so as not to damage the fruit. Then the fingers start to grow upwards and the large flower/blossom at the bottom of the bunch is removed. The entire bunch is then 'sleeved' covered with blue aerated plastic to protect the fruit from the weather and insects. A coloured ribbon hangs from the bottom to denote when this bunch was sleeved and when it should be harvested – in 12 weeks time. Its difficult to see the ribbons but we will see them more clearly in a later slide

Slide 21 – Drainage channels are cut in between the rows of banana plants in Veronica's plantation to allow the water to drain away.

Slide 22 – (animated)The banana plants grow in groups of three –which are referred to as the grandmother (she produces the fruit), the daughter and the granddaughter. The oldest plant produces one bunch of bananas and then it is cut down. This plant is replaced by the daughter who then becomes the grandmother and produces the fruit and so on. When more suckers or bulbs grow they are removed and can be sold or used in a new plantation.

Slide 23 –(animated) This shows Veronica's very well - managed farm with drainage channels and beautiful unblemished fruit sleeved and protected from the weather and insect. In this slide you can see the different coloured ribbons hanging down. Now this bunch of bananas are ready to be harvested.

Slide 24– Harvesting – On Veronica's farm each hand is cut down separately and laid carefully on top of banana leaves on the ground.

Slide 25 – Here is Veronica's husband harvesting their crop. Harvesting bananas takes place all year round.

Slide 26 – Here is Veronica’s son carrying hands of bananas on his head to the packing shed.

Slide 27 – And here is Veronica’s family outside the packing shed.

Slide 28 – So, we now have Veronica inside the shed dressed in protective clothing – a large plastic apron, a hat and gloves ready to pack her bananas. Why do you think her husband is not inside the shed helping her?

Unshare screen

Now we are going to watch a video that Veronica sent to us before Christmas

VIDEO of Veronica packing bananas

Slide 29 – Usually all Veronica’s boxes of bananas are transported in a Geest container ship like this one and taken to the UK

We have now learnt how bananas are grown – does anyone have any questions before we do the first activity? Teacher to assist

Slide 30 – **You are now going to do and ACTIVITY in pairs and decide the order of these photographs. You can cut them, put them in order and stick them on a piece of paper and label them — Banana timeline** –Teacher to assist and keep me posted!

Slide 31 – Timeline complete

Slide 32 – In pairs discuss what challenges you think that Veronica has faced in 2020 and is still facing this year. Coronavirus, Shipping problems, Climate change (volcano eruption)

Slide 33 – Coronavirus figures, disruption in shipping,

Slide 34 – (animated) Showing the devastation of extreme weather such as hurricanes due to climate change which can completely wipe out a plantation

Slide 35 – (animated) What is being done to counteract this – Fairtrade help farmers such as Veronica to understand how her plantation can be protected with a buffer zone of trees which can be planted to protect the plantation from the prevailing winds. Drainage channels can be dug to take away the surface water after extreme heavy rain.

Slide 36 – Here we have an example of the disease Black Sigatoka which significantly reduces the fruit yield – a fungicide has to be applied to the plant to keep the disease at bay.

Slide 37 – So, we have seen how bananas are grown and met Veronica who is a small- scale Fairtrade farmer. So, what are the benefits to a Fairtrade producer such as Veronica – the most significant benefit is the Fairtrade Premium which is an amount of money that the co-operative receive regularly through their sale of Fairtrade bananas and this money can be used for the benefit of the community

Slide 38, 39, 40– Here are some examples of how Veronica’s co-operative have used the Fairtrade Premium

- A new pre-school has been built which has significantly improved children’s education
- A school bus has been provided for secondary school children – previously they would have had to walk several miles to get to school – notice the Fairtrade logo
- New roads have been laid with the Fairtrade Premium enabling farmers to move their produce more easily

Slide 41 – And finally the clinic that was built in Veronica’s community. This was invaluable to her family last year when baby Aria – her granddaughter was born. Mother and baby were monitored regularly at the clinic to make sure that all was ok and consequently a healthy baby was born!

Slide 42 – Baby Aria

Slide 43, 44 - Before I finish this presentation we will briefly look at a couple of activities that can be done with the children using banana fibre to make a friendship bracelet

Slide 45 - why not try an acrostic poem?

And finally Slide 46 – How can you be a Fairtrade Ambassador? We will now get into small groups and discuss what you as a class could do to promote Fairtrade. If you have any further questions you can decide with your group on what to ask.

Teacher to assist with feedback

On the Fairtrade Devon Facebook page there will be a video of how to make banana and choc chip cookies using Fairtrade ingredients.