



# sustainability at home >>> CHOOSING THE RIGHT BANANA

By Liz Davey, Produce Manager

Bananas have become such a common and cheap grocery item that we tend to forget where they come from. The journey bananas take to get to the United States is quite extensive. Equal Exchange has made it their mission to supply the United States with fairly traded and organic bananas. Equal Exchange works with three small farmer banana cooperatives in Peru and Ecuador. The Fair Trade certification of these bananas ensures that the farmers are receiving a fair price for their crop, and that their communities, lives, and environment are being positively supported. The small scale farmers that produce bananas for Equal Exchange each have about 5-10 acres of land.

Once the bananas are harvested by the farmers, they are sold to the banana cooperatives, put in containers, on a ship for 9-11 days, through customs, to a warehouse where they are ripened, and then on to a retail store (such as Bluff Country Co-op). Approximately 4 weeks after being picked the bananas arrive in our store. What coordination (and cooperation) that takes!

A conventional banana supply chain has a similar route. However, instead of starting off in the hands of farmers, the bananas come from plantations where workers toil in dangerous work conditions for next to nothing in return. The extremely large quantity of bananas shipped to the US by leading conventional brands and the money backing those companies makes it a breeze for them to supply grocery stores with dirt cheap bananas.

Equal Exchange sends about 4 containers per week to the US. They do not have their own ship or port so there are many hoops to jump through to ensure the arrival of the bananas. It is for this reason, along with the fair wage paid to the farmers, that Fair Trade bananas cost more than conventional. Currently,

Fair Trade and organic bananas are being sold for around \$ 1.19/Lb. This price is minimal compared to the amount of work that goes into producing and transporting these tropical gems. If bananas had not been mass produced as a cash crop to begin with, it would not faze us to be paying a few dollars for a good bunch of tropical fruit. So, when choosing what bananas to purchase, consider all of these factors. Choosing fair trade bananas supports families, communities, the environment, and a company that is putting in great amounts of effort to better the world.

**IN 2012, EQUAL EXCHANGE CUSTOMERS PURCHASED**

**11,000,000** EQUAL EXCHANGE BANANAS = **\$1,600,000** PAID DIRECT TO SMALL SCALE FARMERS

**2,230** SMALL-SCALE BANANA FARMERS

**OWN** 6,700 ACRES OF LAND

**SUPPLY** 350 CO-OPS & GROCERY STORES

**11,000,000** CONSUMERS

**\$143,000** PAID TOWARD

- HEALTH CARE
- FARM IMPROVEMENT
- RETIREMENT
- SCHOOLS

**THANKS TO OUR LOYAL CUSTOMERS**

**EQUAL EXCHANGE FAIRLY TRADED**

[www.BEYONDTHEPEEL.com](http://www.BEYONDTHEPEEL.com)  
ALL BANANAS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

