

Bananas: no agreement on import tariffs



## Banana trading pact still far off

### Greg Meenehan

An agreement on banana trading reforms could be as long as two years away, experts have warned.

Last week the World Trade Organisation rejected a proposed single tariff of €187/tonne on imports of Latin American bananas into the European Union.

Most in the trade now believe that with volumes already on order for the first quarter of next year, the European Commission's deadline of January for introducing the reforms will be missed.

Alistair Smith, international co-ordinator at trade body Banana Link, said the existing regime would have to act as a default solution for a period that could last for "at least a couple of years".

He said the Commission

should shoulder some of the blame for the lack of agreement.

"Although the EU keeps saying it is prepared to negotiate, it never really showed much will. Now it's time to sit down and have some proper negotiations and bring the parties together to try to find an alternative solution."

But Tim Kershaw, director of supply chain consultancy Libra Europe, said he was optimistic that an agreement was not as far off as some feared.

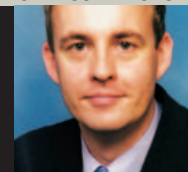
"I suspect negotiations will now go back to a period of thinking about it for November, then there will be Christmas when they won't be doing anything, and in quarter one there are other trade disputes to settle.

"I suspect it will be the middle to the end of next year before it gets resolved."

## Talking Point

>>DO NOT CONSTRAIN SUPPLIERS' ABILITY TO PROVIDE DECENT CONDITIONS

**Dan Rees, Ethical Trading Initiative director, says training will enable companies to put ethics at the heart of business**



This week I addressed a rich gathering of companies, trade union and development organisations and MPs at the launch of the Ethical Trading Initiative's new agenda for ethical trade at the Houses of Parliament.

I spoke about how retailers and brands could further their commercial goals and promote respect for workers' rights by putting ethical trade principles at the heart of businesses. I also spoke about the ETI's new training programme, which shows how to put the agenda into practice.

The ETI seeks to improve workers' conditions in vast and complex global supply chains. We have provided a safe space for buying companies to work alongside trade union and campaigning organisations to tackle the challenges of addressing workers' conditions.

I am encouraged by what ETI member companies and others have achieved. But for lasting change to happen, there remains a huge need for brands and retailers to make sure their business practices support ethical sourcing. This

includes making sure their buying practices (eg lead times and price negotiations) do not constrain suppliers' ability to provide decent working conditions. This is what our new agenda is about. It's about core business.

Some of our members are running ethical trade training programmes for buyers and technologists. Others are including ethical as well as commercial criteria when assessing new suppliers.

They are issuing contracts that include clauses requiring compliance with the ETI's base code, and including ethical criteria in job descriptions and appraisals of buying staff.

The ETI training programme, developed with the Co-operative College, has been launched in response to the huge demand expressed by companies for tools to implement ethical principles.

It offers the opportunity for a range of staff – not just ethical trade managers but also buyers, technologists and human resource managers – to find out what practical steps they can take to put ethical trade into practice.

**Would you like to write a Talking Point?** We're looking for contributions covering hot topics in the meat, fish and fresh produce supply chains. Email [richard.clarke@william-reed.co.uk](mailto:richard.clarke@william-reed.co.uk) or call him on 01293 610404

## Exotic tastes tip the scales of vegetable sales

Sales of exotic vegetables rose 22% in the past year, new figures show, suggesting consumers are becoming more adventurous.

The market for exotics, a heading that includes chillies, courgettes and asparagus, grew to £215m in the 12 months to October 9, according to TNS data published by the Mack Multiples-sponsored promotional body, Think Vegetables.

A spokesman said: "Exotics enjoyed the single biggest rise in demand and it appears we are getting a taste for vegetables which evoke a bit more glamour and mystery."

The same research showed that sales of



Chillies: sales of exotic vegetables are growing

all vegetables over the same period rose by 4.5% to £2.4bn. "Healthy eating messages, such as 5-a-day, seem to be making headway," the spokesman added.

Sales of asparagus alone rose by 37%, while those of broccoli grew 11.3%. Kale and sprouts are also enjoying a revival, but consumers are abandoning cabbage.

Root vegetables are bought by nine out of 10 people. The market is valued at £350m and rose by 5.9%.

More than half of all shoppers (52.6%) buy peas and beans. The market is valued at £181m.