

Evaluation of Chiquita's banana production compared to certification criteria for 'Better Bananas Project', BBP

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Objective

- To establish whether or not Chiquita observes the certification criteria for BBP laid down by The Conservation Agricultural Network, CAN
- To recommend changes, if any, that Chiquita should put into effect in order to comply with the certification criteria for BBP
- To recommend changes of the certification criteria for BBP

Introduction

Nepenthes is a Danish environmental organization, primarily working for the saving of forests in Denmark and in the tropics, further Nepenthes is trying to preserve the rights of natives. It is the objective of Nepenthes to promote certifications such as FSC and BBP.

In 1998 NAF International asked Nepenthes to establish whether or not Chiquita observes the BBP criteria and continuously evaluate these criteria in relation to other certifications of bananas.

The objective of the survey is to give the consumers better information about the production conditions of the bananas with a view to consideration of nature and human beings. Further the objective of the survey is to establish whether or not the environmental work of Chiquita at all times is continued.

The result of the survey is the work out of present report in which Nepenthes looks into a series of conditions regarding the production at some farms picked at random. The findings are based on observations in the fields and other relevant documentation. Based on the findings Nepenthes will suggest recommendations to Chiquita as to where efforts should be made in order to put the production in line with the certification criteria. At the end of the report Nepenthes suggests recommendations for changes of the certification criteria in order to secure a continuously growing sound production of bananas.

Upon publication of former reports Nepenthes has met with NAF, FDB, Chiquita and Rainforest Alliance and discussed the recommendations given in the reports.

In this report Nepenthes concentrates on the certification criteria that FDB and Nepenthes find most relevant especially with a view to environmental conditions and to a smaller degree with a view to workers' rights and conditions.

Further Nepenthes would like to refer to former reports from December 1998 and September 1999 and November 2000. These reports have all appeared on the home page of FDB.

Background

Last year very low banana prices caused a crisis in the banana industry. Due to the low prices the banana growers tried to limit their expenses in connection with the production, and the result was that many workers were sacked and then re-hired at lower wages, however this was not procedure followed by Chiquita. Several banana growers also postponed series of planned environmental improvements and establishing of new facilities. It could be feared that the low prices would also cause poorer working conditions and environmental care at Chiquita's. Nepenthes asked Chiquita if the crisis had led to deterioration, and Chiquita answered that this is not the case, however Chiquita tells that some big projects such as erection of new housing for workers in Panama will not be carried out as quickly as planned in the first place. This year banana prices are much better and more stable and according to Chiquita that market is more quiet.

CAN (Conservation Agriculture Network), who is responsible for the BBP certification, pays special attention to the producers to establish whether or not the crisis has led to deterioration. Based on the report of Nepenthes from 2000, CAN has visited some farms in November and December 2001 in order to find out whether or not the low prices have influenced the certification process negatively. The objective of the visits have also been to find out whether or not conditions have become so poor that the farms ought to lose their certification.

This year Chiquita started implementation of SA 8000. SA 8000 is an internationally recognized social certification. At present Chiquita does not know when this certification will take effect.

Due to unstable climatic conditions in 2001 Chiquita in Panama has produced 3 million boxes of bananas less in 2001. This means a loss of approximately 30 million USD. According to experts heavy nematode attacks in the plantations have also caused production deterioration. Chiquita has intensified the fight against nematodes and consequently the use of nematicides* has gone up. (*treatment against microscopic worms that destroy plant root systems).

For the first time ever Nepenthes met with Chiquita's CTO (Central Tropics Organization) – group, led by the research director of Chiquita Mr. Ronald A. Romero and besides of him other scientific workers are members of the group. Based on running monitoring in the plantations the group advises all Chiquita farms of sprayings against Black Sigatoka (a fungus disease), nematicide treatments and herbicides (all plant pests and nutrition and water management programs) and in this way the group is responsible for the major part of the pesticide programme of Chiquita. The group also advises on the amount of fertilizers to be used, packaging and the water consumption in the packaging halls.

Research Procedure

The research period ran from November 27 to December 5, 2001 a total of 9 days. In Costa Rica and Panama visits were paid to 5 plantations in each country. As in previous years biologist Dorte K. Rhode Nissen represented Nepenthes. Nepenthes met and talked with managers and workers on the farms visited.

In Costa Rica as well as in Panama Nepenthes singled out the farms to be visited in the morning of the visiting day, this meant that all visits were unannounced.

As Nepenthes wants to focus on buffer zones (i.e. areas bordering on to housing areas, free nature and rivers, a number of the farms singled out for visits borders on to big rivers. Buffer zones are very important as they secure that the spraying stay with the areas of the plantations, Nepenthes also decided to re-visit the farm Oropol to find out whether or not the buffer zone along the Rio Sucio had been put in order, since the last visit this was not the case.

In Costa Rica and Panama environmental co-ordinator Mr Carlos Vegas from Chiquita participated. Nepenthes had also asked Chiquita for written documentation in some cases and Chiquita has honoured the request.

Prior to the visits to the plantations Nepenthes had talks with Chris Wille, manager of CAN and Tom Divney, technical chief of CAN, Rainforest Alliance.

Certification criteria for BBP

In order to obtain BBP certification a plantation has to produce in accordance with the rules stipulated in 'The Conservation Agricultural Network, Better Bananas Project, Standards and Indicators for Banana Farm Management'.

In order to obtain certification the production shall be economically, socially and ecologically sound. The main objective of the certification is to change the social and ecological conditions for tropical farming so that they become thoroughly sound.

In order for a farm to obtain certification a score of 800 out of 1000 shall be reached. The certification shall be considered a running process not a final goal. All certified plantations are evaluated through unannounced visits minimum once a year.

In 2000 in Costa Rica, Cobal the farms obtained between 831 and 941 points. 7 farms obtained the same number of points as in 1999 and 19 farms obtained more points than in 1999.

In the future the importance of increasing the number of points will be stressed, it is not good enough just to reach status quo. If this is the case, the farms will lose points Tom Divney informs.

Rainforest Alliance, a non-profit American environmental organization is usually taking care of the certification and for the evaluation of the certified plantations Rainforest Alliance co-operates with independent specialists.

The certification calls for immediate investments and typically a plantation will be able to obtain certification in 1 – 2 years. The certification calls for long term planning of the production and running monitoring of a series of conditions. The reduced use of pesticides causes an economic gain, however

other necessities such as e.g. advanced technology call for investments and buffer zones reduce the production fields. In general the certification is very expensive and a heavy burden for small plantations.

In 2001 the standards for BBP certification have been simplified and efforts will be made to implement the social criteria for SA 8000. This implementation has the highest priority for the certified farms in the year 2002. Besides the visits to the farms for evaluation and point giving will be unannounced. All the farms will know is that the visits will be sometime within the next three months. Two visits will be paid to big farms. During the first visit one half of the farm will be evaluated and during the next visit the other half will be looked into.

CAN is also co-operating with other certification organizations such as e.g. Max Havelaar and SA 8000 which means conformity between the certification organizations especially as far as the social criteria are concerned. This is also one of the conclusions of the research made by FAO in December 2001 on the various certification programmes for bananas, however Max Havelaar focuses more on the social criteria whereas BBP focuses on the ecological criteria.

Analysis of the conditions on Chiquita's farms in relation to BBP

The BBP certification process is based on the following points that are also the headlines for the certification:

1. **Protection of ecosystems**
2. *Protection of flora & fauna*
3. **Just treatment of workers and good working conditions**
4. *Relations to the surrounding society*
5. **Reduced use of a severe control with chemical agents**
6. **Complete, integrated disposal of waste**
7. **Protection of water resources**
8. **Conservation of soil**
9. **Planning and monitoring**

When visiting the plantations Nepenthes carried out interviews and went through any further documentation with a special view on evaluation of 7 of the main areas considered the most important. The main areas are typed in bold. The main areas in italics have not been evaluated.

In the following the conditions on Chiquita's farms will be dealt with in relation to the certification criteria.

The certification criteria are stated in bold (the numbers correspond with the certification criteria for BBP).

Then follows the observations of Nepenthes or other information relevant for the certification criteria in italics.

Finally follows in normal font the recommendations of Nepenthes for further requirements that Chiquita ought to live up to.

1. Protection of ecosystems

Protection of forests and re-plantation of forests where possible

1.2.4 A 10 m wide buffer zone shall be established between roads and plantation along all public roads bordering to or crossing plantations.

Nepenthes: According to Chiquita 5000 trees have been planted in Panama in 2001 in order to improve the buffer zones along roads housing areas and rivers. In excess of this 25.000 palm trees have been planted between the trees in the buffer zones. The palms ensure that the floor vegetation becomes dense. In Costa Rica, Cobal 13 ha trees have been planted this year in order to improve the buffer zones along roads, residential areas and rivers of 14 farms. The total area with planted trees is now 933 ha for all farms.

Buffer zones along public roads seem to have been improved, however not all requirements are met and improvements can still be made for instance along the public road through Farm 70 and Farm 66 in Panama. Also along secondary and tertiary roads through the plantations, buffer zones ought to be improved on some farms.

Nepenthes' recommendation: Buffer zones along all roads shall be improved.

1.2.5 Vegetative barriers shall be established in residential areas. Residential areas shall not be established closer than 30 m away from the plantation.

Nepenthes: At the farm Nogal in Costa Rica a 30 m wide buffer zone has been established between the plantation and the residential area. Along the buffer zone 2 rows of trees have been planted in some places, in other places no trees have been planted so altogether the plantings are insufficient. At some other farms the vegetative barriers are sufficient.

Nepenthes' recommendation: A distance of 30 m from residential areas to plantations is an absolute minimum and therefore the vegetative barriers at the farm Nogal shall be optimized.

3. Just Treatment and Good Working Conditions.

3.1.1 Employment: It is illegal to discriminate against race, colour, religion, nationality, sex and political views when hiring people. ILO conventions 100 & 111

Nepenthes: At farm Cobal in Costa Rica, 1908 of the workers are Costa Ricans, 1274 workers are Nicaraguans. The workers are paid equal wages without a view to nationality. At the farms in Panama 5 different groups of native people are working side by side without any apparent discrimination.

3.1.2 Workers shall be hired directly by the management of the farm.

Nepenthes: Chiquita informs that 62% of the workers at the farm Cobal in Costa Rica have been employed for more than 3 months. All workers are offered permanent employment with the exception of the use of subcontractors for special tasks in the plantation such as for instance maintenance of the drain ditches

3.1.3 The workers shall be paid the minimum pay fixed by law for the type of job that they are doing.

Nepenthes: At the farms visited the wages paid by the day were public. Depending on the type of job the day wage is 3.460 – 8.300 colones per day in Costa Rica, which is above the minimum wage of 2.500 colones. The banana production workers are still the best paid within the agricultural sector in Costa Rica.

3.1.4 Workers under age must not be employed with agricultural activities in the plantations. The definition of under age is based on the laws for each country and the ILO convention 138, recommendation 146.

Nepenthes: The policy of Chiquita is that the workers shall be at least 18 years old. During the visits to the farms no workers under the age of 18 were seen.

Nepenthes: Chiquita informs that children have caused problems on some of the farms because when they live close to the packing hall they come there to play. In order to prevent this from happening in the future, fences have been put up around the packing hall of 4 farms in Panama. The plan is that all packing halls shall eventually be fenced in.

3.2 The right of joining unions and the freedom of opinion.

3.2.1 The workers are guaranteed their rights to join unions and to free negotiations with their superiors according to the rules of ILO 87 and 98.

Nepenthes: Costa Rica: COLSIBA (Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Sindicatos Bananeros) has in co-operation with IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association) signed a negotiation treatment with Chiquita in May 2001. Chiquita undertakes to respect the right to establish unions, the right to collective negotiations and the individual worker's right to join a union. In excess of this union representatives shall be allowed to pay visits to the working places. (ILO 87, ILO 98, ILO 135, ILO 29, ILO 105, ILO 138, ILO 182, ILO 100, ILO 111. With these measurements the banana workers' basic union rights should be ensured.

Chiquita has informed the workers about the IUF agreement, and this has resulted in the fact that workers organized in the free trade union are now making themselves known to a higher degree than previously.

In Panama all workers at the Chiquita farms are organized in the free union SITRACHILCO. All conditions regarding working conditions and workers' rights are described carefully in a contract between Chiquita and SITRACHILCO: "Convention Colectiva 1998 - 2002.Bocas". The contract is renegotiated every 4th year. The union is represented by a delegation that is heard in questions about workers' safety and environmental problems when the farms are evaluated in relation to the certification.

3.3 Health and the Job

3.3.1 The workers are requested to take lessons and practice skills and be in possession of the necessary equipment in order to keep up the necessary security as far as handling chemicals, machines and tools is concerned.

Nepenthes: Chiquita informs that this year 2.500 workers have been trained in the use of pesticides in Panama, Bocas. Workers who are not working with pesticides are trained as well.

In Costa Rica registration of occupational injuries takes place on the farms, and to a much higher degree than seen before, efforts are made to limit the number of occupational damages. This has resulted in a decrease of occupational injuries of 25 per cent during the past. Due to the increased efforts against occupational injuries Chiquita's contribution to the public insurance INS has gone down.

At the farm Nogal, in Costa Rica the workers have formed a committee to come up with recommendations for improvement of the safety on the farm.

3.3.4 Medical check-ups must be provided for the workers in order to secure that their physical condition is OK for handling of sprayings and for lifting heavy materials, such as for instance clusters of bananas, use of dangerous machines etc.

Nepenthes: Panama, Bocas: In the year 2001, 1.200 out of 4.000 workers handling agricultural chemicals including pesticides have had medical check-ups, workers who are not working with chemicals have had check ups too.

3.4 Basic housing conditions.

3.4.1 Workers living close to the plantation must be offered decent housing conditions with basic sanitary installations.

Nepenthes: At most farms the housing conditions seem to be OK, e.g. at the farms Guyacán and Nogal in Costa Rica.

In 2001 Chiquita has built 50 new houses for workers in Panama. The workers can buy these houses at reasonable prices. The houses are all built outside the plantations, and besides some of the old houses have been sold to the workers and the workers themselves are maintaining these houses. A great number of the workers have the expressed wish to own their own house. At Farm 11 the workers own all houses. On some farms the so-called Bachelor houses are still in a far too poor condition, this is for instance the case at Farm 43 and Farm 53. (note: it is a priority in the Capital Budget to rebuild bachelor quarters)

SA 8000 report from Costa Rica informs that especially one-parent families are not satisfied with the housing offered at Finca 6.

Nepenthes' recommendation: The certification criteria shall be kept so that all workers shall live under worthy conditions in the year 2002.

5. Reduced use of and strict control with chemical agents

5.1.3 Each farm has to procure evidence that the amount of poison in the chemicals used is being reduced.

Nepenthes: By applying monitoring on a monthly basis the use of agricultural chemicals, plastic and other materials are being reduced.

Pesticide use in the past year

<i>Herbicides: kg active material/ha:</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>
<i>Costa Rica:</i>	<i>2,31</i>	<i>0,81</i>	<i>0,64</i>	<i>3,12</i>	<i>2,19</i>
<i>Panama, Bocas:</i>	<i>1.39</i>	<i>2,69</i>	<i>2,15</i>	<i>1,49</i>	<i>1,50</i>

Used herbicides: (Ranger), (Reglone), Glyphosat (Roundup), (Finale), (Gesapax), Fluzifob-P-butyl (Fusilade).

Panama: The use of herbicides seems to be stable compared to previous years.

Costa Rica: The use of pesticides is going down, but not as much as could be wished for. This is probably due to the floor plantings being inadequate.

Nepenthes' recommendation: *The farms in Costa shall reduce the use of herbicides by more effective floor plantings.*

<i>Fungicides against B.S.: kg active material/ha:</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>
<i>Costa Rica:</i>	44,56	44,75	33,83	38,73	38,65
<i>Panama, Bocas:</i>	37,41	16,18	17,37	17,71	21,11

Fungicides used: (Anvil), Tridemorf (Calixin & Maneb), Manzozeb (Dithane MB & OS & 60), Propiconazole (Tilt), (Vondozeb), Bitertanol (Baycor), (Benlate), Azoxystrobin (Bankit), Fenbuconazole (Indar 50), (Sico), (Tega 7,5).

Nepenthes: Chiquita points out that the use of fungicides against Black Sigatoka cannot be reduced due to resistance, it is more likely to go up. Sprayings against B.S. is based on weekly monitoring of size and occurrence on each individual farm. Sprayings are only carried out when absolutely necessary. Resistance against the most toxic systemic fungicides is developed to a still higher degree and therefore the number of protective fungicides used is going up. The effect of the protective fungicides wears off rather fast and therefore bigger amounts must be applied and sprayings carried out more often.

In Costa Rica sprayings against B.S. are carried out 36 - 40 times a year, and therefore the use of these fungicides accounts for 70-80 per cent of the total costs to pesticides. In Panama sprayings against B.S. were carried out 28 times in 2001 which is 2 cycles more than last year.

Nepenthes' recommendation: the number of sprayings must be reduced in order to comply with the certification criteria. As the problem seems hard to solve when applying the growing methods of today, research should be made to establish new ways of planting banana plantations in order to fight the various diseases.

Sprayings against B.S. are made from air-planes and registered on a computer. The technique is being more and more effective and it is now possible to register how much each plane deviates from the planned routing and evaluate the quality of each spraying. Approximately 60 per cent of all sprayings are evaluated.

In spite of the sprayings being based on advanced technology used in tropical agriculture, some points are still insecure. For instance it was not possible to see on the computer how close the sprayings at the farm Oropel was to the river Susio (Sucio). The reason being that only the farm not the river is registered on the map.

The technique is based on the most efficient spraying for the plantation without a view to minimize the risk of spraying buffer zones.

Nepenthes' recommendation: The spraying techniques shall be based more on protection of the buffer zones and rivers, and roads and residential areas shall be marked on the maps.

NematicideNematicides: kg active material per ha:	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<i>Costa Rica</i>	6,16	6,29	7,10	14,85	15,17
<i>Panama, Bocas:</i>	5.18	7,20	3,46	6,49	10,29

Nematicides: Terbufos (Counter), (Mocap), (Vydate)

Chiquita informs that in 1998 & 1999 they tried to fight the nematodes in Panama with an organic product. Unfortunately the product did not work which resulted in loss of control with the nematodes in 2000. In order to get the problem under control, the amount of nematodes is now being measured once every month and based on these measurements nematicides are applied. The number of cycles in 2001 was 3, however it is expected that when the situation is back under control the number of cycles can be reduced to 2. A series of less toxic nematicides are being tested, however it seems difficult to find replacements for the very toxic agents.

The use of nematicides is also going up in Costa Rica because the increased attacks of nematodes have had a negative impact on the productivity. Chiquita is of the opinion that control of the number of nematodes can be regained and the use of toxic agents reduced again. The use of nematicides is based on monthly monitoring and controlled very carefully.

Nepenthes' recommendation: It is bad that the use of the very toxic nematicides has been increased. The use of toxic agents should be reduced in order to comply with the certification criteria. Research should be made to establish whether or not it is possible to plant banana plantations and change the ways of growing in such a way that the problem can be reduced.

Nepenthes: At Farm 11 plastic bags with insecticides are being all year round. At other farms for instance Canfin 50 per cent of the bags contain insecticides, whereas the Oropel and Guyacán farms do not use plastic bags with insecticides at all, because they do not experience problems with insects. The use of agents is in accordance with the need. Plastic bags containing insecticides are opened in central places in accordance with the safety rules.

Nepenthes: It turns out that several farms are experiencing growing problems when it comes to reducing the use of pesticides. This is mainly due to the fact that the production drops heavily whenever the use of pesticides is reduced to a certain low amount. A high productivity and quality level thus reflects increased use of pesticides and reduced use of pesticides means a decrease of productivity and quality.

Nepenthes' recommendation: The problem must be discussed in connection with stipulation of the certification criteria. Chiquita shall work out a long-term strategy as soon as possible as to how they will solve the problem with increased use of pesticides. In 2002 a working group consisting of agronomists, research workers and environmental specialists ought to be

established to work out recommendations as to how certified plantations can reduce the use of pesticides considerably in the long run.

5.2. Legal and illegal chemicals

5.2.1. Chemicals are approved by EPA and in accordance with national laws – the toxic content of the chemicals are being evaluated

Nepenthes: Pesticides are purchased centrally by the farms and not individually. This means control of the materials used and avoidance of illegal pesticides. The cholinesterase inhibiting pesticides like for instance the nematicide Carbofuran and the insecticide Terbufos, both organic phosphates, have previously caused most of the poisoning cases. These pesticides are very toxic both for the environment and for human beings. When handled incorrectly by the workers, the result is acute poisoning. Unfortunately it still has not proven possible to replace these pesticides with other less toxic agents.

Nepenthes' recommendation: Efforts must be made to restrict the use of the most toxic pesticides and experiments carried out with the use of less toxic materials in concordance with the certification criteria. Tests with less toxic agents and biological fighting methods shall be carried out.

5.2.2 No internationally prohibited chemicals (“Dirty Dozen”) are used.

Nepenthes: None of these chemicals were seen in the storage rooms of the visited farms.

5.4 Storage of chemicals

5.4.1 The chemicals are stored in areas specially built for this purpose and they are only used for the storage of chemicals.

Nepenthes: At all the farms visited the pesticides were kept in special, locked up rooms that Nepenthes was allowed to inspect. The necessary precautions for storage of chemicals seemed to be OK.

5.4.3 The lowest possible amount of chemicals is kept in store and a register of the chemicals in store shall be kept with indication of date of purchase and application.

Nepenthes: All the visited farms only had small amounts of chemicals in store.

5.5 Use of chemicals.

5.5.1 Only persons educated and fit for handling chemicals are handling these.

Chiquita informs that in 2001 no occupational injuries due to the use of pesticides have been registered.

Nepenthes: Apparently the safety as far as handling of pesticides is as effective as it can be.

5.5.2 When spraying correct dosage and security equipment must be applied.

Nepenthes: In the tropical areas it can be difficult to use security equipment due to the heat, humidity and the nature of the soil, nevertheless the criterion observed.

Nepenthes' recommendation: Due to these conditions the worst pesticides shall be replaced by less dangerous ones as soon as possible.

5.5.3 When using chemicals all precautions must be followed in order to live up to necessary security for protection of the workers, residential areas and the nature.

SA 8000 report from Panama informs that none of the interviewed workers have problems with their skin and they do not know workers with skin problems either. None of the interviewed workers have been exposed to spraying from planes and they do not know any other workers who have been exposed to sprayings.

Nepenthes: Fungicides post harvest: The bananas are sprayed with fungicides on the cutting edges in electrostatic spraying chambers prior to being packed. At some farms for instance Nogal gloves are not used, and the worker who is marking the bananas is in direct contact with the fungicides.

Nepenthes' recommendation: The bananas ought to be labelled prior to spraying with fungicides, since the workers ought not be in direct contact with the fungicides when labelling and packing the bananas.

5.5.4 Based on soil analyses fertilizing programmes are carried out and are adjusted to climatic examinations and analyses of leaves.

Nepenthes: This criterion is observed.

5.5.5 The workers have access to shower facilities and changing rooms. The facilities are located in an area where only workers using sprayings are admitted, and where the tools used for sprayings can be cleaned.

Nepenthes: Such facilities existed and seemed to be OK at the farms visited.

6. Complete, integrated waste disposal

All farms shall have an integrated plan for handling of all waste products.

6.3 Recycling: Plastic, paper, wood, metal and glass shall be recycled whenever possible.

Nepenthes: Generally the collection of plastic seems to be well functioning. In Panama, Bocas, 100 % of all plastic products including nylon strings are recycled. 10 years ago nylon strings were not collected. The old strings of another colour are collected several times a year as they pop up.

6.5 All farms shall be clean and without accumulated untreated waste.

Nepenthes: The farms visited all looked clean.

7. Protection of water resources

7.1 Protection of rivers

Along rivers, small streams and lakes a minimum 10 m wide buffer zone with trees preferably local tree sorts shall be planted.

Nepenthes: Panama: The buffer zone along a lagoon at Farm 62 is inadequate because illegal settlers have planted meal bananas in the buffer zone. The buffer zones of Farm 53 and 43 border the river Rio Sixaola. The buffer zone of Farm 53 is at present 800 m wide. Previously bananas were grown here, but due to the dynamics of the river a wider buffer zone has been established. At Farm 43 the buffer zone is up to 60 m wide and 1200 new trees have been planted.

Costa Rica: When last visiting the Farm Oropel bordering the big river Rio Sucio the buffer was only 6 m wide. The survey this year showed a buffer zone of approximately 25 m, and banana plants and planted trees have been cut down to re-establish the buffer zone.

The Farms Nogal and Guayacan also bordering to the river Rio Sucio also had good buffer zones along the river. A great number of banana plantations have borders up to big rivers and the rivers often change their flow due to heavy rise of the water level. This means that the rivers often eat the buffer zones that rapidly shrink to less than 10 m and thus the risk arises that pesticides carried by the wind or by the water end in the rivers.

New scientific researches in Costa Rica show that the highest concentrations of fungicides, insecticides and nematicides can be found in the surface water of the rivers near banana plantations. In some cases the concentrations are so high that they may be dangerous for all kinds of organisms in the river. This stresses the importance of making the buffer zones along the big rivers very wide. At the same time it is necessary to determine the kind of vegetation that yields the best protection against wash out and drift of pesticides.

Nepenthes' recommendation: The Certification Criteria shall be changed so that buffer zones along big rivers are widened from 10 to 20 m. Tests shall be carried out to determine the kind of vegetation that yields the best protection against wash out and drift of pesticides.

7.2 Rational use of water - Use of water requires common sense, and recycling must take place whenever possible.

Nepenthes: At the farm Guapinol a new technology is being tested at the moment. The objective of the new technology is to rinse and re-use the water from the tanks where the bananas are washed and the latex precipitates. Unfortunately the technique did not work. Chiquita is therefore now trying to find other methods to improve the rinsing of water from the latex tanks and they are among other things looking into the possibility of adding O3. Goal No. 1 is to reduce the amount of water used and consequently also have to be rinsed by making the tanks smaller and re-use the water.

8. Conservation of the soil

8.2 Control with the soil erosion. The plantations develop and put into effect a plan for conservation of the soil. A plan that aims at diminishing the risk of erosion, and that takes topography, characteristics of the soil, climatic- and growing conditions into consideration.

Nepenthes: In Panama 70 – 75 per cent of the farms have planted ground covers. In 2001 the percentage of farms with ground cover plantings only went up by 1 per cent. The 7 farms Guyacan, Roble, Gavilan, Coyol, Malinche, Oropol and Canfin in Cobal, Costa Rica only have 5% ground covers whereas the remaining farms have up to 25 - 70 per cent. The planting of ground covers has more or less stalled because the farms are waiting for recommendations from the technical group of Chiquita CTO, that is in the process of analysing the effect of ground covers.

Nepenthes' recommendation: It is absolutely unacceptable that planting of ground covers has stopped especially at the plantations with only 5 per cent covers. With the increased use of pesticides ground covers are even more required than before to neutralize the wash out of pesticides. Each farm should work out a plan to secure that ground covers are planted in all plantations during the next 5 years.

8.3 Treatment of the soil -The objective of the soil treatment shall be to further conservation and restore the fertility of the soil, the amount of organic material, biological activity and structure. Banana stalks shall be returned to the plantations.

Nepenthes: Apparently banana stalks are returned at random. At many farms all banana stalks are buried – this practice is the cheapest, but not in accordance with the certification.

Nepenthes' recommendation: A strategy should be worked out for each farm to secure that that the banana stalks are returned to the plantations.

9.Planning and monitoring

9.1 Planning

9.1.1 The plantation has a clear and detailed plan for reaching the environmental goals. The plan contains objective, responsible employees and work plan for activities necessary for improvement of social an environmental conditions in the short and long run.

Nepenthes: In Panama the monitoring is well functioning and in compliance with the BBP criteria. At most of the visited farms documentation is at hand for each criterion and for the goal of the year, and the managers knew and participated in determining some of the goals.

In Costa Rice the monitoring is to a higher degree centralised which means that the managers do not know the goals for the BBP certification on their own farm. For instance they did not know the amount of ground covers to be planted on the farms and they did not either where it had to be planted.

Nepenthes' recommendation: Monitoring and planning compared to all certification criteria shall be optimal on all plantations and documentation shall be available on the site in order to be able to live up to the certification criteria. Therefore the local monitoring on each and every farm in Cobal, Costa Rica shall be improved and as a minimum be equal to the monitoring of the farms in Panama.

Total Evaluation of Chiquita compared to the certification criteria

1.Protection of ecosystems

The buffer zones along public roads seem to have been improved by planting of more trees and palms, however something is still left to be desired. The buffer zones around residential areas have been widened and now they fulfil the certification criterion of a distance of 30 m to the plantation. But since this distance is a minimum distance it is very important that the vegetative barrier between residential areas and plantation is at its best and this condition should be improved.

3. Just treatment and good conditions for the workers

Apparently there is no discrimination related to nationality or race as far as pay and working conditions are concerned. The majority of the workers are permanently employed. The wages are above the lawful minimum wages and the banana workers are still the group of workers in the agricultural sector with the best pay. In Panama all workers are organised in free unions, contrary to Costa Rica where only a small percentage is organized. In 2001 Chiquita has signed a negotiation agreement in Costa Rica with COLSIBA and UIF. The agreement secures the basic rights of the banana workers. Some of the houses for workers especially the so-called bachelor houses are still too small and in a too poor condition.

5. Reduced use of and strict control with chemicals

The certification stipulates that each farm at all times shall be able to show a reduction of the toxic agents and the amount of chemicals used.

In 2001 Chiquita has not quite lived up to this certification criterion. In Panama the use of herbicides has been stable, and in Costa Rica it has been declining slightly. Due to the resistance developed that seems to be a problem for the whole banana industry the use of fungicides to fight B.S. has gone up in Panama where as it has been going down slightly in Costa Rica. The use of nematicides has gone up in Costa Rica as well as in Panama. An insufficient fight against nematodes in 1999 and 2000 has resulted in so aggressive nematode attacks that a more intensified fight had to be put up.

The use of pesticides is based on monitoring at all times in order to prevent that only a minimum of pesticides is used in order to save the production.

Apparently the safety rules are followed when using pesticides. Nevertheless it is alarming that the use of pesticides in the Chiquita plantations has been going up in 2000 and 2001 because new scientific findings show that several of these pesticides can be found in the surface water of the rivers even in concentrations damaging for the aquatic organisms. (It can however not be proven that the pesticides derive from Chiquita's plantations).

Chiquita has chosen not to use some of the most problematic pesticides, but some other very toxic agents are still used. These agents should immediately be replaced by some less dangerous agents, however these are not at hand on the market at present. Chiquita is at all times testing new environmental friendly agents on the market, however they do not seem to be working.

6. Complete integrated handling of waste

It looks as if Chiquita has a well functioning collection and recycling of non-degradable waste.

7. Protection of water resources

The buffer zones along the rivers have been improved and are now complying with the certification criterion of a 10 m wide buffer zone at the great majority of farms. Due to the dynamics of the big rivers it is necessary to maintain the buffer zone with planting of trees and palms and cutting of banana plants.

Furthermore Nepenthes finds that the certification criteria should be changed and the buffer zones along big rivers widened from 10 to 20 m. Tests will be initiated to establish the kind of vegetation in the buffer zones that neutralizes the wash out and drift of pesticides most efficiently.

8. Conservation of the soil

Apparently the planting of ground covers has more or less come to a stand still, which is rather problematic especially with a view to the use of pesticides going up. Total ground covers in the plantations prevent the wash out of nutritious matters and pesticides therefore it is absolutely unacceptable that some plantations only have 5 percent of the ground covered.

According to the certification the banana stalks should be returned to the plantations. It is rather haphazard whether this is done or not. A strategy ought to be worked out immediately for each farm to secure that the banana stalks are returned to the plantations.

9. Planning and monitoring

A well-functioning planning and monitoring in compliance with the certification criteria is the basis for the efforts to comply and improve these. In Panama the monitoring is functioning very well locally as well as centrally. In Costa Rica the monitoring in relation to the BBP is too poor on the farms and should be improved. An improvement will also secure that the managers and workers get a better knowledge of the BBP certification.

CONCLUSION

Nepenthes finds that in some areas environmental improvements have been made in the Chiquita plantations in Panama and in Costa Rica. The buffer zones along public roads, residential areas and big rivers have been improved by planting of trees and palms.

Based on Nepenthes' report from the year 2000 Chiquita worked out an action plan with the objective of implementing some of Nepenthes' recommendations, such as for instance improvement of buffer zones along rivers, residential areas and roads. After having visited another 10 plantations in 2001 it is the opinion of Nepenthes that some of the recommendations of Nepenthes have been followed. It has been a positive experience to see that the improvements made have been based on the recommendations of Nepenthes.

It has also been positive to see a well functioning monitoring in compliance with the certification criteria at the farms in Panama. The collection and recycling of non-decomposable materials is apparently functioning. As far as workers' rights are concerned a decisive break-through has taken place in the year 2001. Chiquita has signed a negotiation agreement with COLSIBA and IUF in accordance with which Chiquita undertakes to respect the right to form free unions, the collective right to negotiations and the individual workers right to join a union.

However environmental set backs on some of Chiquita's plantations have also been seen. It is problematic that Chiquita's use of pesticides as a total in Panama and Costa Rica has been going up during the last 2 years.

The increase is said to be necessary in order to keep up the production and the economic capacity be secured. But even if the use of pesticides is based on well functioning monitoring and the pesticides apparently are being handled in compliance with the safety rules, the increased use of pesticides is having a damaging impact on the ecological capacity.

Reduction of the use of pesticides is a problem hard to solve for the whole banana industry. However it is astonishing that the fact that a farm increases its use of pesticides considerably does not count more negatively in the certification process, since wash out of pesticides must be considered one of the biggest problems in connection with banana production.

Simultaneously with the increase of the use of pesticides, Chiquita has almost stopped the planting of ground covers in 2001. This is very problematic because ground covers in the plantations neutralize the wash out of pesticides. It is very expensive to plant ground covers, but nevertheless a task possible to carry out if the priority is high enough.

Since the certification is to be considered a process and not a goal in itself, it is also a problem that 7 farms in Cobal, Costa Rica in the year 2000 only obtained the same amount of points as in the year before. Since more of these farms have very poor ground covers and at the same time have increased the use of the most problematic pesticides, nematicides it is surprising that they still are certified.

The bananas from Panama sold by Chiquita are all from certified plantations. This is not the case in Costa Rica. 60 per cent of the Costa Rican bananas sold by Chiquita in 2001 had been produced by independent producers. Only 21 per cent of these farms are BBP certified whereas the remaining 79 per cent of the farms have not been BBP certified. This is a problem because the production and working conditions at these producers' are unknown. Chiquita ought to demand that the independent banana producers be BBP certified when they buy their bananas. The consumer buying a banana from Chiquita shall rest assured that the banana comes from a BBP certified plantation.

Proposals for change of the certification criteria for BBP

Based on visits to various certified plantations and talks with experts on environmental issues, Nepenthes comes up with following suggestions for change of the certification criteria for BBP.

- 1) The buffer zones along big rivers shall be widened from 10 to 20 m. Tests shall be carried out to determine the kind of vegetation in the buffer zone that yield the best protection against wash out and drift of pesticides.
- 2) In order to increase the biological diversity different varieties of local trees should be planted in the buffer zones and thus attract more birds and animals.
- 3) Rivers shall be marked on the computer maps so that they will not be exposed to sprayings of fungicides.

- 4) A firm time-scale should be made for full plantings of ground covers in the plantations.
- 5) The problem that it is difficult to continuously reduce the use of pesticides without harming the productivity should be evaluated – economic conditions shall be balanced and evaluated with the ecological conditions. Chiquita shall as soon as possible work out a strategy as to how to solve the problem with the increased use of pesticides. In 2001 a working group consisting of agronomists, researchers and environmental people should be formed to work out recommendations as to how certified plantations in the long run can reduce the use of pesticides considerably.
- 6) The use of pesticides should count more in the certification so that a considerable increase of the use of pesticides may result in loss of the certification.
- 7) Residential areas shall be placed minimum 100 m from the plantation in order that they are kept free of pesticides.
- 8) Bananas ought to be labelled prior to fungicides being added in order to avoid that the workers come in direct contact with the fungicides.
- 9) The term 'worthy housing conditions' shall be stipulated in detail so that small poorly kept houses for the workers are no longer acceptable.
- 10) Workers/unions or their representatives shall be involved in the certification process. This will further the understanding for the certification and good ideas and an increase the value of the certification in general may come forward this way.

Documentation

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