

BANANA SPLIT GAME

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OBJECTIVE // To introduce the banana supply chain and how the profits from the sale of a banana are divided among those involved in the supply chain.

TIME// 20 to 40 minutes

GROUP SIZE // 6 to 36 participants

PREPARATION // Print and cut out the role cards

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME //

Tell the group that you are about to play a game that traces the path of the banana from its growth on the banana plantation (in Latin America or the Caribbean Islands) to your hand, ready to eat.

First Round:

1. Divide the group into five groups to represent each of the different roles in the banana supply chain. Allocate the roles.

- (i) Banana worker
- (ii) Plantation owner
- (iii) Shipper
- (iv) Importer and ripener
- (v) Shop or supermarket.

Make sure everyone has a role to play!

2. Space the groups out in the room. Give each group their role card and a few minutes to read the information and discuss what their roles might involve.
3. Tell the group that each banana costs 30 cents when it is sold at the supermarket.
4. Ask each group to decide how much of the 30 cents they should get for the jobs/work they do in the banana chain. Give them a few minutes to discuss their share of the profit, and to prepare their reasons for deserving that share.
5. Have each group share the amount they think their group deserves and present their reasons, beginning with the Supermarket and working back to the Importers and Ripeners, the Shippers, the Plantation Owners, and finally to the Workers. Keep track of the share of each group and add these together. To make a stronger impact, give the Supermarket 30 pennies, and have them take their share when they explain their reasons and pass the remaining pennies to the next group. Even when no pennies remain to be passed, allow the other groups to state their share and their reasons.

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Second Round :

Inevitably the total from all the groups will be more than 30 cents. The groups will need to renegotiate.

1. Choose a spokesperson from each group to negotiate a price until the amount comes to 30 cents. The facilitator will have to mediate this negotiation and ensure each spokesperson has a chance to speak.
2. When they have agreed on the division of profits, reveal the true breakdown of who gets what from the final price of a Latin American banana.

For greater impact, give 30 cents to the group to represent the supermarket. The group keeps their part and gives the rest to the importer who in turn gives to the carrier and then to the planter and then the worker.

Questions for Discussion //

- Do you think this is a fair situation?
- Why is the 30 cents shared out as it is?
- Who has power and why?
- What could be done to improve the situation?
- What role can we play as the people who buy the bananas?
- Would you be prepared to pay more for your bananas if you knew workers and farmers got a price that would enable them to meet their basic needs?

Answers //

Banana Worker	1 cent
Plantation owner	5 cents
Shipper	4 cents
Importer and ripener	13 cents
ISupermarket	7 cents
Total :	30 cents

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KEY POINTS //

- We are connected with people around the world through the things we buy and eat.
- Many products in our shops are made from raw materials imported from poor countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean Islands.
- Many workers do not earn enough to meet their basic needs: food, shelter, clothes, medicine and schooling. This is unfair.
- Fairtrade labelling has been introduced so that we, the shoppers, can guarantee that workers get a fair deal for their work and products.

Equitable Markets //

Note: This breakdown is fairly accurate, but is obviously simplified for the game. Each banana exporting country will have a slightly different breakdown. There is also a difference in the way profits are distributed from bananas exported from small farms and large plantations.

People often ask about the breakdown for a Fairtrade banana. This game is about 'conventional' bananas – the way most bananas are produced, and the issue of Fairtrade is best dealt with later on in a workshop as the debate can get bogged down about the specifics of Fairtrade. Another issue is that the amount received by a Fairtrade banana farmer varies from country to country, as the price is determined for each country's specific circumstance. The price paid means that farmers and workers receive a 'living wage' – in other words a wage that pays for them to shelter, feed and educate their family and have a small amount left over for discretionary expenditure.

As a group of Fairtrade workers or small farmers, they are also paid a 'social premium' which the group themselves determine how to spend: it could be to increase wages, support community development projects, improve production practices or environmental concerns

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BANANA SPLIT ROLE CARDS//

There are five main roles in the banana chain (This is a slightly simplified version of the real world, but is appropriate for the purpose of this game).

These role cards can be used by the **facilitator** to tell each group about the work they have to do.

BANANA WORKER

12-14 hours per day of hard physical labour in hot conditions.

Selecting the best bananas.

Washing bananas – you will have your hands in water all day.

Cutting bananas – you will have to carry heavy loads of bananas on your back.

Applying fertilisers and pesticides – can lead to health risks such as cancer and other diseases. Pesticides are also sprayed from planes – they are likely to fall on your home or the local school.

Worry: Will you have enough money to buy food, pay medical bills or to send your children to school?

You may not be allowed to meet together with other workers to complain about your pay, the way you are treated at work or where you live. You will be discouraged from joining a trade union.

PLANTATION OWNER

Plantation running costs: You will have to pay for expensive pesticides, fuel for pesticide-spraying aeroplanes, tools and machinery.

Cost of lawyers: In case workers sue you for work accidents.

Waste: Regulations in most countries in Europe and most shoppers want “perfect fruit” – no mark on the skin, nice shape etc. This takes a lot of skill and money to achieve. If any of your bananas don’t meet these high standards they have to be scrapped – so you lose money.

Risk factor: You bear the cost if the harvest is bad, or a hurricane or pest destroys your crop.

Modernisation investments: You need money to keep paying for the latest machines and ideas, so your plantation stays up to date and you stay in business.

Cost of land: The longer your land is used to grow bananas, the more the goodness in the soil will be used up and you will need to pay for expensive fertilisers, or buy new land!

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SHIPPER

You face the following costs:

Ships: Big cargo ships are very expensive to buy and keep in working order.

Fuel: You need to pay for fuel for the ships – one load between Latin America and Europe may be at sea for up to five weeks.

Insurance: If a cargo is lost or damaged, it may be your fault and you may have to pay for it.

Refrigeration: On board, the bananas are kept in big fridges to prevent them from ripening during the time at sea. If they ripen too soon they will be spoilt by the time they arrive at the shops.

Port fees: You will have to pay for your ships to be in port at both ends of the sea journey.

STORES AND SUPERMARKETS

Staff: You have to pay the people who work in your store.

Running costs: Lighting, transport, designing of staff uniforms, carrier bags etc.

Competition: You need to take on new ideas, maybe build a bigger shop, buy new machinery – all to make sure you make more money than other shops and stay in business.

Risk: If the bananas are handled badly or arrive on the shelves over-ripe, your customers will not be happy – they may decide not to shop at your store any more.

Advertising: You will need to advertise what you sell and to show how good your shop is so that shoppers come to buy their shopping at your store rather than going anywhere else.

IMPORTER AND RIPENER

Transport: By truck from the European port to big ripening centres, and from there to the shops.

Contracts: You will have to promise the plantation owner that you will buy a certain amount of bananas each week. You will have to promise the shops you will provide a certain amount of bananas each week.

Whatever happens, you will have to keep the promises, even if something goes wrong in the supply chain and you are let down.

Licence fee: You will have to pay for an import license to bring your bananas into the European Union.

Big offices: Importers "need" big, fancy office buildings for the work that their role involves.

Ripening gas: Ethylene is used to ripen bananas.

Repackaging: After ripening the bananas must be repackaged so you will have to pay for the materials and for the workers to do this.