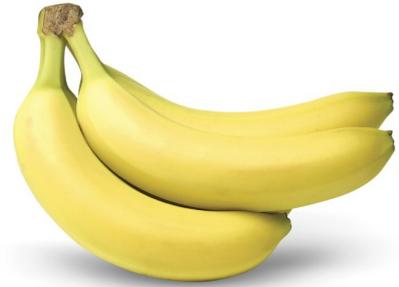




By Gill McShane

Wednesday 3rd September 2008, 10:57 GMT

Shake-up in banana import ranking



Russia and the European Union have overtaken the US to become the largest banana importers during the first six months of 2008

The US has fallen from second to fourth place in the global banana import ranking after Russia and the EU sourced larger volumes of the fruit from January to June 2008, according to [the Ecuadorean Banana Exporters' Association \(AEBE\)](#).

Russia accounted for 23.82 per cent (or 32.6m boxes) of the 136.9m boxes of bananas exported during the first six months of the year, followed in second place by the Mediterranean region (including Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey), with Belgium, Germany and Poland combined sharing the third spot.

The US imported 18.97 per cent of global volumes, or 25.9m boxes, during the same period, pushing the country down to fourth place in the ranking.

Meanwhile, Eduardo Ledesma, director of AEBE, added that Ecuador is losing market share in both the US and Europe.

"The US market is increasingly sourcing fewer volumes of bananas from Ecuador in favour of fruit from more aggressive suppliers such as Costa Rica and Guatemala," he explained.

Ecuador has also shipped

8 per cent fewer volumes to the EU so far this year in comparison to the year-earlier period.

The South American country is currently lobbying the EU to reduce the €176-per tonne import tariff imposed on Latin American bananas, which Ecuador claims is negatively affecting exports to the region.