



By Mike Knowles

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Ecuador: banana prices 'not enough'

While welcoming a planned increase by Aldi Süd, industry officials have called on retailers and consumers to pay more



Photo: Aldi Süd

Officials representing growers and exporters in Ecuador have welcomed the news that Aldi is preparing to increase its banana price, while also renewing their calls for retail buyers and consumers to pay more for bananas in the face of rising industry costs.

"German apples are three times more expensive in a German discounter than bananas that come all the way from Ecuador," said a letter written on behalf of various industry associations, including AEBE, Acorbanec and Agroban.

"Our sector is attacked by NGOs as being unfair, when in fact it's the other way around. Adding a few cents to the banana kilo at the shops makes no impact to consumers, but it relieves a lot of the burdens facing the Ecuadorean banana sector."

In October 2018, the Ecuadorean banana industry hit back at plans by Aldi to cut the price it paid for its bananas, claiming that, by continuously driving down prices, European retailers were undermining efforts to improve the lives of workers and protect the environment.

As was the case 12 months ago, this week's open letter was apparently prompted by a report in ReeferTrends, which suggested Aldi will pay more for bananas next year.

"The Ecuadorean banana sector sees this as positive action, but it's not really an increase that reflects the reality of the business," the letter stated, arguing that the cost of supply was being inflated by new regulations designed to curb sulphur dioxide emissions from shipping, the need for better biosecurity defences measures to guard

against disease, and various efforts to improve corporate social responsibility and environmental protection.

"The world wants vessels with cleaner fuel, less emissions, bananas that are protected from the threat of TR4, sustainably grown with integrated and technical pest management, with the best practices that protect workers and ensure living wages, that have full traceability, that are clean and perfect, adjusted to specification requirements and that use less plastic," it continued.

"That is all good, we embrace and encourage that, but who pays for that? Because it certainly isn't free."