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By Maura Maxwell

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Honduras targets eastern European banana market



Banana shipments forecast to reach US\$650m in 2018, making them the second biggest export after coffee

Honduras is looking to play a greater role in the eastern European banana market, where it has seen an increase in demand in countries like Russia, Ukraine and Croatia during the past year.

Hector Castro, president of the association of independent banana producers of Honduras, said the industry was on course to be the country's second biggest export after coffee this year.

"We are exporting our bananas to all of eastern Europe, as well as traditional markets like the US and central Europe," Castro told Hondudiaro.

"We're talking about large countries with significant purchasing power. This is very important for us as bananas are a major generator of employment, and we've already seen that, with 13,000ha, we are making an important contribution to the economy."

Banana exports are forecast to reach US\$650m in 2018, according to Castro, who added that if Honduras were to double its banana acreage export earnings could reach the same level as coffee.

He said that the Russian market was a huge opportunity for Honduran shippers as it consumed the same volume of bananas in a week that Honduras exports in a whole year.

"We believe that we have a great historic opportunity, especially since Ecuador has lost its competitive advantage due to global warming, and because most of its production ends in the first half of the year, which is when the market is stronger," Castro said.

"We already know how to produce bananas, can increase our volume during the first semester and above all, are able to reach those distant markets with

quality."