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By Nina Pullman

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## ***Fyffes suspended from Ethical Trade Initiative***

Banana giant has been suspended from the ETI following an investigation into workers' rights in Central America



Fyffes is a banana and tropical fruit supplier

**B**anana and tropical fruit supplier Fyffes has been suspended from the Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI) with immediate effect due to an ongoing dispute over worker rights.

The decision follows an ETI investigation into a dispute between Fyffes, NGO Banana Link and the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF) over workers' rights at subsidiaries in Costa Rica and Honduras. The ETI is a UK multi-stakeholder alliance to protect and respect workers' rights across the world.

IUF and BananaLink have claimed there is an "anti-union culture" at some plantations, illustrated by an armed attack last month on Moisés Sánchez, union organiser at Fyffes' subsidiary in Honduras.

They lodged a complaint with the ETI that Fyffes was failing to properly respect Freedom of Association and the

right to Collective Bargaining and to provide a safe and hygienic workplace on their subsidiaries' plantations.

As well as the suspension, the ETI board said that Fyffes must now work with the IUF to reach a mutually agreeable framework for engagement within 90 days, or risk expulsion.

A Fyffes spokesperson said the company "has no issue with engaging with properly constituted unions who act within the legal framework of the country in which they are based".

"Fyffes welcomes the decision by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) to reject complaints made in relation to health and safety and payment of wages at its Honduran melon operations. In relation to the ETI's ruling that the company should go further in demonstrating 'an open approach to legitimate trade union activities', Fyffes, while having a difference of opinion with the ETI on the

matter, is prepared to accept this recommendation."

"The company is a respected and valued member of the community of Choluteca, Honduras, providing significant employment and supporting many local community activities," the spokesperson said.

IUF general secretary, Ron Oswald, said: "Fyffes' new owners Sumitomo and the company's many retailers should seriously reflect on the seriousness of the ETI's unprecedented action and now take concrete measures to rectify the abuses highlighted by the ETI and all those who have been campaigning to defend the fundamental human rights of workers in Fyffes' supply chains."

Banana Link's Jacqui Mackay said: "We sincerely hope that Fyffes are willing and able to put in place the necessary procedures to ensure Freedom of Association and a safe workplace

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throughout their global supply chains, and that they are successful in being readmitted to the ETI, as a company in full compliance with the ethical standards of the ETI Base Code.”

ETI executive director Peter McAllister said labour rights issues can be complex, with many different cultures and genuine ambiguity. “However, there is one constant for ETI that has been at the heart of the dispute

between IUF, BananaLink and Fyffes with respect to the Suragroh operations in Honduras; workers should be able to enjoy their right to be represented by those they choose and so engage with management,” he said.

“We know from many examples that when workers are properly represented and can engage with management through a meaningful process of social dialogue, worker representatives are able to help ensure good working conditions.

“Fyffes' suspension from ETI, whilst not a decision that has been taken lightly, offers a focused and time-bound opening to grasp the opportunity that such engagement represents.”