



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



# BANANA

Market Review 2023





# BANANA

Market Review 2023

Required citation:

FAO. 2024. *Banana Market Review 2023*. Rome.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

© FAO, 2024



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: “This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [English] edition shall be the authoritative edition.”

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

**Third-party materials.** Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing. FAO information products are available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)) and can be purchased through [publications-sales@fao.org](mailto:publications-sales@fao.org). Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: [www.fao.org/contactus/licence-request](http://www.fao.org/contactus/licence-request). Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org).

# CONTENTS

Note on methodology .....	iv
Foreword .....	vi
Developments at a glance .....	vii
Developments in global banana trade 2023 .....	1
Exports .....	2
Imports.....	5
Risks and uncertainties.....	8

## NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

This report describes full-year results on developments in global banana trade in 2023 and represents an update to the Banana Market Preliminary Results 2023. The analysis contained herein is based on data on trade quantities that were compiled from the following sources: country responses to the 2024 questionnaire of the FAO Intergovernmental Sub-Group on Bananas; data from the UN Comtrade database, Global Trade Tracker Inc. and Trade Data Monitor Inc.; communications with national sources and industry partners in trading countries; and secondary data and information from desk research. The findings incorporate revised data and information as available up to the end of May 2024. All data in this report should be considered as provisional. FAO is continuously monitoring global trade flows of bananas and will update these results should revisions of officially reported data be released.

All datasets refer to global trade of fresh bananas, excluding plantains, as covered by HS code 080390 under the harmonized tariff nomenclature system of the World Customs Organization. Net imports in these datasets are defined as imports minus re-exports. Data on the import volumes of the European Union exclude the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland since February 2020.

Unless otherwise specified, the source of the figures is the author(s)' own elaboration of various data sources as explained above.

Primary data on global trade flows and prices were kindly provided by the following organizations:

- Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca, Argentina
- Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia
- Statistics Austria
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture Bahrain
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
- Banque Nationale de Belgique
- Ministry of Agriculture, Belize
- Ministerio de Desarrollo Rural y Tierras, Bolivia
- Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Statistics Canada
- Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences
- Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería, Costa Rica
- Ministry of Agriculture, Croatia
- Statistical Service of Cyprus
- Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Republic
- Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark
- Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería, Ecuador
- Agricultural Office - Embassy of Arab Republic of Egypt
- Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería, El Salvador
- Statistics Estonia

- Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), Germany
- Hellenic Statistical Authority
- Planeamiento del Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Alimentación, Guatemala
- Hungarian Central Statistical Office
- Statistics Indonesia -- BPS
- Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan
- Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia
- Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania
- Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Élevage, Madagascar
- Ministry Of Agriculture And Food Security, Malaysia
- Secretaria de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, Mexico
- Ministarstvo poljoprivrede, šumarstva i vodoprivrede, Montenegro
- Ministère de l'Agriculture, de la Pêche Maritime, du Développement Rural et des Eaux et Forêts, Maroc
- Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand
- Norwegian Agriculture Agency (Landbruksdirektoratet)
- Ministerio de Agricultura y Riego del Perú
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Poland
- Ministério da Agricultura e Pescas, Portugal
- National Institute of Statistics, Romania
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Natural Resources and Co-operatives, Saint Lucia
- Ministry of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, South Africa
- Department of Agriculture Sri Lanka
- Jordbruksverket, Sweden
- Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand
- Turkish Statistical Institute
- Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Uruguay
- General Statistics Office of Viet Nam

## FOREWORD

The *Banana Market Review* is issued on an annual basis to Members and Observers of the Sub-Group on Bananas of the Intergovernmental Group on Bananas and Tropical Fruits, which is a subsidiary body of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP).

It is prepared by the *Team on Responsible Global Value Chains*, Markets and Trade Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome.

The Team on Responsible Global Value Chains collects data and conducts analysis on trade in bananas and tropical fruit, and provides research and analysis on global value chains and agricultural commodities. Regular publications include market reviews, outlook appraisals and projections for bananas and tropical fruits. The team also provides technical assistance to developing countries in designing and implementing national policies regarding responsible value chains in agriculture.

The report is available at the following FAO website:

<https://www.fao.org/markets-and-trade/commodities/bananas/en>



© iStock kaiedvils



## DEVELOPMENTS AT A GLANCE

- ▶ Global export volumes of bananas displayed modest growth in 2023, marking a slight recovery from the relatively strong decline seen in 2022.
- ▶ Full-year estimates indicate that global export volumes grew by 0.3 percent from their 2022 level, to 19.3 million tonnes in 2023.
- ▶ However, developments throughout the year showed strongly diverging trends among key global banana exporting countries, with most suppliers affected by negative growth and only a few registering large increases.
- ▶ Meanwhile, demand remained firm in most key global import markets, driven in part by the relative affordability of bananas compared to other fruits.
- ▶ Against this background, key factors that affected banana trade in 2023 were reported as:
  - Production shortages caused by adverse weather conditions in several key supplying countries
  - High costs for fertilizers in 2022 and early 2023, which hampered the productivity and quality of banana cultivation in the first half of the year
  - Losses and additional expenditures stemming from the spread of plant diseases, importantly the Banana Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4
  - Losses and additional expenditures stemming from cases of placement of illegal substances into banana containers originating in some exporting countries in Latin America
- ▶ These difficulties affected the ability of producers and exporters to supply bananas in adequate quantities and to the quality standards expected in export markets in several key regions.
- ▶ Developments on the import side were accordingly hindered by low supplies, which, combined with generally firm demand, caused prices to increase, notably in the European Union and the United States of America.
- ▶ The situation improved in the second half of the year, with the profitability of the sector benefiting from lower fertilizer prices and transportation costs, alongside higher export and import unit values.



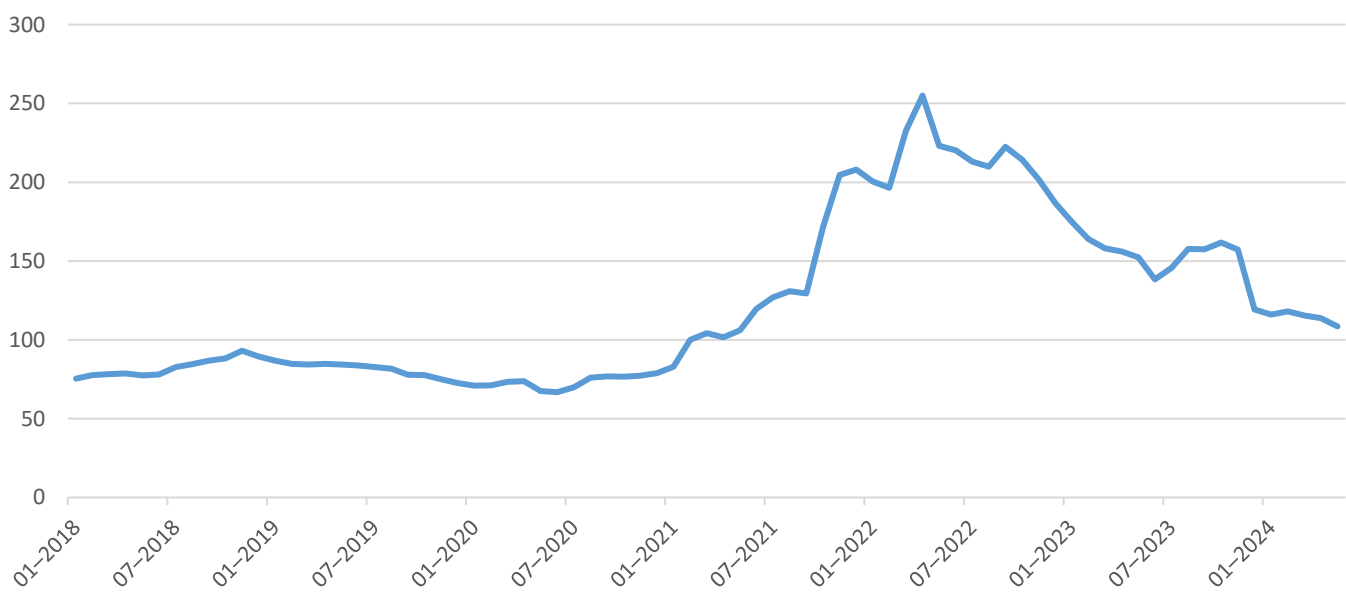
## Developments in global banana trade 2023

According to available data and information on developments over the full year of 2023, global trade in bananas displayed signs of recovery from the more severe supply shortages experienced in the previous two years. However, developments appeared to be significantly divergent among key global trade partners, as weather conditions and the economic backdrop proved to be beneficial to some, and adverse to others. Higher supplies were reported from Ecuador and Guatemala, where production growth was seen on the back of favourable climatic conditions related to the El Niño weather phenomenon. Conversely, excessive rainfall, flooding and tropical storms reduced supplies available for export from Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico. While world fertilizer prices displayed a downward tendency throughout the year, returning closer to their pre-Ukraine-war levels by July 2023 (Fig. 1), industry sources reported that the reduced application by farmers in 2022 continued to hamper the productivity and quality of banana cultivation in the first half of 2023. The spread of plant diseases, importantly the

devastating spread of the Banana Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 (TR4) disease in the Philippines and its alarming presence in Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, further continued to cause production losses as well as financial strain from the substantial costs associated with disease prevention. Suppliers in some Latin American countries were additionally impacted by losses and mitigation expenditures stemming from cases of placement of illegal substances into banana containers. According to industry sources, the implementation of preventative measures such as satellite surveillance and private security can cost the industry around USD 200 per container, while losses associated with the confiscation of contaminated shipments can amount to around USD 12 000 per container.<sup>1</sup>

Import demand for bananas, meanwhile, remained reportedly firm in most key markets. Amid inflationary pressures, bananas continued to benefit from their relative affordability compared to other fruits, which supported their popularity among consumers in both the European Union and the United States of America. However, in this situation of low supplies against relatively firm demand, average import unit values displayed increases ranging from some 6 to 15 percent in 2023 in most key markets. At the same

Figure 1. World Bank fertilizer price index, January 2010 = 100



Source: World Bank. 2024. Commodity Markets "Pink Sheet" Data. [Accessed on 1 July 2024]. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/commodity-markets>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecuavisa.com/noticias/ecuador/por-cada-contenedor-de-banano-que-los-narcos-contaminan-con-droga-en-ecuador-el-exportador-pierde-algo-mas-de-usd-12000-NM3284294>

time, importers to the European Union further stated that the appreciation of the Euro against the United States dollar as well as lower freight costs, which returned to near pre-pandemic levels by September 2023, resulted in improved profitability. The outlook for 2024 thereby looks more positive than in the previous two years, provided that price variations in real terms will continue to be favourable and price increases at the export and import stages are also captured by producers.

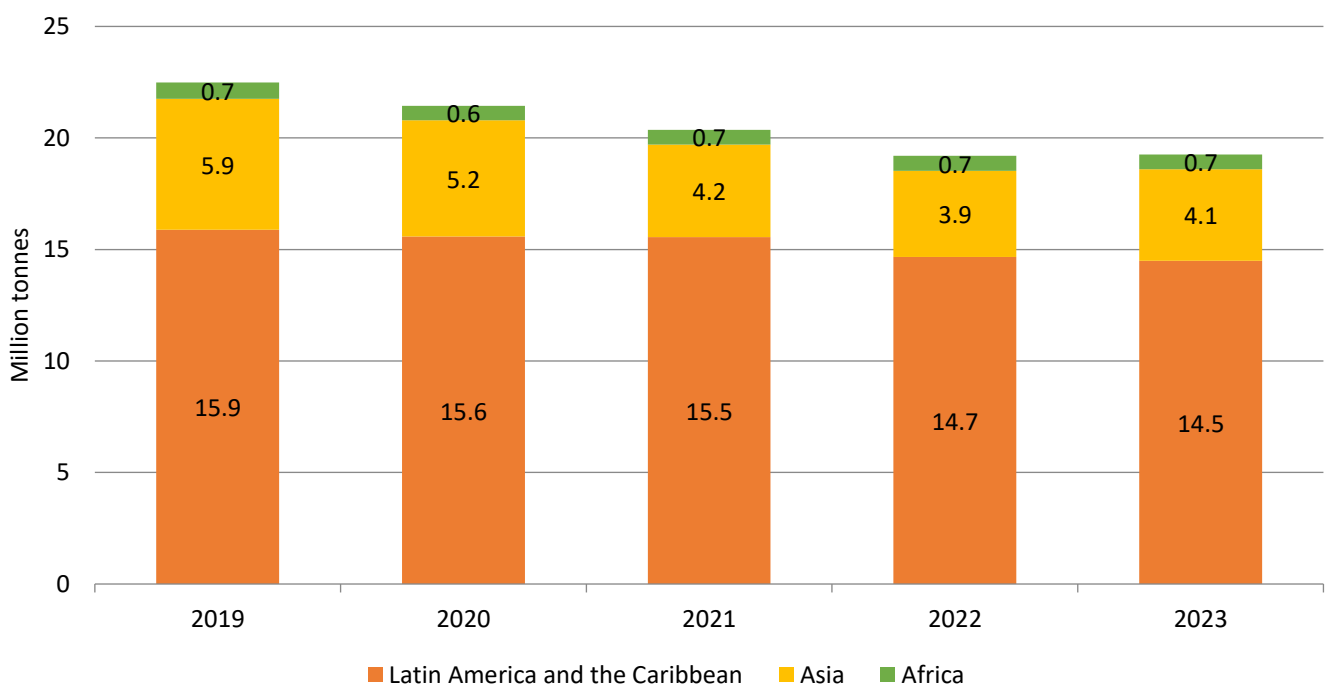
## Exports

Full-year estimates indicate that global exports of bananas, excluding plantain, experienced moderate growth of 0.3 percent in quantity terms in 2023, marking a more positive performance than the 6 percent decrease experienced in 2022. Total export quantities thereby reached some 19.3 million tonnes in 2023. However, available data show strongly diverging trends among global banana exporting countries, with most suppliers seemingly affected by declines, in several cases even at double-digit rates, and only a few seeing large increases.

Against this background, shipments from **Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)**, the world's leading exporting region, declined by 1.1 percent in 2023, to

14.5 million tonnes. Ecuador, the largest exporter of bananas globally, registered 6.7 percent growth in shipments, with total exports from the country rising to approximately 6.2 million tonnes. Industry sources reported that production in the country increased by nearly 10 percent year-on-year in the first half of 2023, alleviating the difficulties stemming from the production shortages experienced in 2022. Furthermore, lower shipping freight rates, which returned to near pre-pandemic levels, reduced the costs of importing bananas from Ecuador in the European Union, thereby additionally facilitating growth. The country also benefited from higher demand for organic bananas from the United States of America, with available data showing a 26 percent increase in shipments of organic bananas from Ecuador to the United States of America in 2023, to some 270 000 tonnes. However, despite these positive developments, pressure on Ecuadorian growers continued to be present, as profit margins reportedly remained tight amid high production costs and low minimum prices. Additional expenditures stemming from the necessity to maintain rigorous TR4 mitigation measures in view of the outbreaks of TR4 in neighbouring Colombia and Peru added further difficulty. Cases of placement of illegal substances into banana containers also continued to be of concern for exporters of bananas from Ecuador, with reports citing yearly expenses of around USD 100 million

Figure 2. World banana exports by region, 2019 to 2023, million tonnes



accruing to the sector as a whole for the implementation of preventative measures.<sup>2</sup>

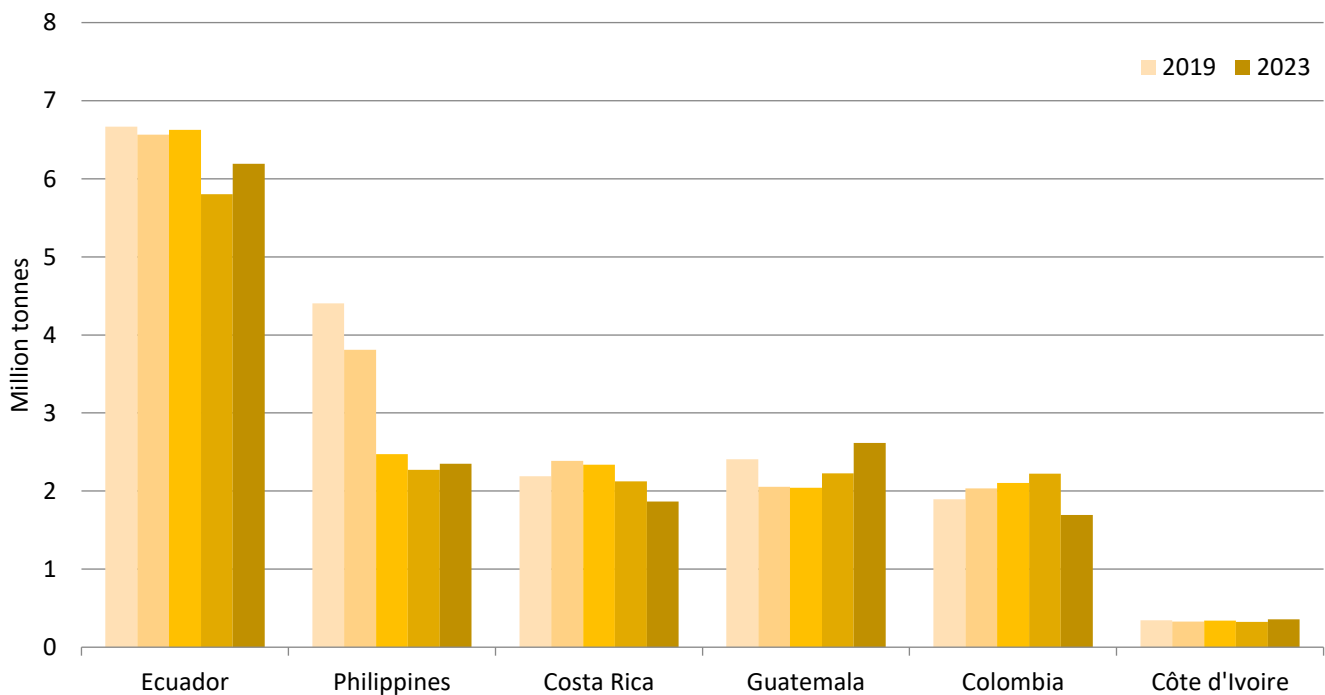
Shipments from Guatemala, the second largest exporter from the LAC region in 2022 and the leading exporter to the United States of America, registered growth of 17.5 percent in 2023, reaching a full-year total of 2.6 million tonnes. Favourable production conditions and prior investments in production expansion supported the ample availability of low-priced supplies from Guatemala, which facilitated export growth particularly to the United States of America, the main destination for Guatemalan bananas. At an average export unit value of USD 382 per tonne, bananas from Guatemala continued to be among the cheapest bananas available in global markets. Trade data by destination indicate that shipments to the United States of America increased by 5 percent year-on-year in quantity terms in 2023. Amid inflationary pressures, demand for bananas in the United States of America continued to be supported by the fruit’s relative affordability.

Meanwhile, exports from Colombia, the third leading supplier of bananas in the LAC region in 2022, were hindered by heavy rainfall during the first half of the

year, which reportedly impeded both the quantity and quality of supplies for export. Trade data disseminated by the National Directorate of Taxes and Customs of Colombia show that shipments to both key destinations, the United States of America and the European Union, were noticeably affected. Over the full year, total banana exports from Colombia thereby dropped to just 1.7 million tonnes, a decrease of 24 percent from 2022. This was accompanied by an 8.7 percent increase in the average export unit value. According to market sources, aside from the detrimental weather conditions in 2023, the banana export industry in Colombia continued to be impacted by higher costs stemming from the implementation of TR4 disease mitigation strategies as well as from the preventative measures to combat the trafficking of illegal substances in banana shipments.

Costa Rica, another significant exporter from the region and third leading supplier to the European Union (EU-27), similarly continued to be affected by production shortages in 2023, which largely resulted from less favourable weather conditions as well as the backlog of insufficient fertilizer application in 2022 impeding the productivity of plants. According to data reported by the Costa Rican National Institute of

Figure 3. World banana exports by selected origins, 2019 to 2023, million tonnes



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.freshplaza.com/europe/article/9557223/ecuador-s-banana-industry-invests-more-than-100-million-dollars-a-year-in-security/>

Statistics and Census, banana exports from the country fell to approximately 1.9 million tonnes in 2023, a decline of 12 percent from the previous year. However, as demand in the European Union and the United States of America, the two key import markets for Costa Rican bananas, remained firm, the average export unit value of bananas shipped from Costa Rica to world markets in 2023 increased by 6.8 percent compared to 2022.

Available full-year data indicate that shipments from Mexico fell by approximately 15.5 percent in 2023, to 430 000 tonnes. On average, some 80 percent of Mexican supplies are destined for the United States of America, with the remainder primarily going to Japan. While Mexico continues to be a comparatively small exporter in global banana markets, the country emerged as the second leading supplier of organic bananas to the United States of America in recent years, behind Ecuador. In 2023, production in Mexico was reportedly affected by adverse weather conditions, high production costs and an unfavourable exchange rate with the US dollar. These factors resulted in a substantial reduction in supplies for export markets and a 6.7 percent increase in the average export unit value of bananas shipped to global markets.

Exports from the **Caribbean** sub-region fell by 21 percent in 2023, to some 278 000 tonnes. A reduction in shipments from the Dominican Republic, which accounts on average for some 95 percent of banana supplies from the Caribbean, was the key reason behind this. Banana production in the Dominican Republic was reportedly impeded by heavy rainfall and flooding that occurred at the beginning of the year. The passing of Hurricane Franklin through the country in August 2023 caused additional difficulty, with the damage to plantations further reducing shipments from the Dominican Republic for the remainder of 2023. In view of low supplies, the government of the Dominican Republic issued a temporary export ban on bananas in September 2023 to stabilize domestic banana prices.<sup>3</sup> Data provided by

the Office of National Statistics of the Dominican Republic accordingly indicate a 20 percent decline in export quantities in 2023, to 275 000 tonnes.

According to available full-year data, banana exports from **Asia** expanded by 5.9 percent in 2023, to 4.1 million tonnes. This marked the first sign of recovery following three years of consecutive declines in shipments from the region on account of COVID-19-related difficulties and the impact of TR4 from 2020 to 2022. The main exporter from the region continued to be the Philippines, which supplies some 60 percent of Asian banana shipments on average. Over the past decade, the country's banana production has been impacted by adverse growing conditions related to various factors, including the spread of TR4, occasional floodings and occurrences of political unrest. According to data and information released by the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association in February 2024, approximately 17 000 – 18 000 hectares of banana plantations in the Philippines are affected by TR4.<sup>4</sup> In 2023, reported logistical difficulties impacting the quality of Filipino bananas imported into Japan added further complications.<sup>5</sup> Available monthly export data show that these difficulties hampered shipments from the Philippines particularly during the first nine months of the year, notably to Japan and China, the two key destinations for bananas from the Philippines. The situation improved significantly in the final quarter of 2023. Officially reported data for the full year indicate that banana shipments from the Philippines rose by 3.4 percent in 2023, to 2.3 million tonnes, with exports to emerging destinations like the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia respectively expanding by 60 percent and 12 percent in quantity terms. The Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association attributed this remarkable turnaround to the industry's heavy investments in the containment of TR4 and the successful rehabilitation of some 3 000 to 4 000 hectares of previously infected plantations.<sup>6</sup>

Import demand from China and from some emerging importers in the Middle East, meanwhile, continued

<sup>3</sup> <https://dominantoday.com/dr/economy/2023/09/16/dominican-republic-suspends-banana-exports-seeks-to-ensure-price-stability/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/02/22/2335080/banana-exports-reverse-sagging-trend-rise-2023>

<sup>5</sup> <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/10/24/exec-logistics-woes-crimp-banana-shipments-to-japan/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/02/22/2335080/banana-exports-reverse-sagging-trend-rise-2023>

to drive investments in banana plantations in Viet Nam and India, two rising banana exporters from the region. Full-year data show banana exports from India rising to 500 000 tonnes in 2023, an expansion of approximately 38 percent from 2022, and those from Viet Nam growing to some 430 000 tonnes, which marked an increase of 6 percent from 2022. Banana exports from Cambodia, another emerging supplier to China, meanwhile, were affected by adverse weather conditions in the first half of 2023, with low profit margins in this sector causing farmers to switch to alternative crops. Export quantities from Cambodia accordingly declined by nearly 30 percent in 2023, to approximately 270 000 tonnes.

Based on available full-year data, exports from **Africa**<sup>7</sup> registered a decline of 0.7 percent in quantity terms in 2023, reaching some 660 000 tonnes. Lower trade flows from Cameroon were the main reason behind this. Cameroon ranks as the second largest banana exporter from the region behind Côte d'Ivoire, accounting for an approximate quantity share of 31 percent over the 2017 to 2021 period. In 2023, supplies from Cameroon were reportedly once again impeded by security problems in the country, which led to a decline by an estimated 11 percent, to approximately 190 000 tonnes. While at the time of writing, direct export data from Cameroon could not be obtained, available partner data from the European Commission's EuroStat show a decrease in imports from Belgium, the largest recipient of bananas from Cameroon, by 10 percent in 2023, to some 130 000 tonnes. Import data obtained from the United Kingdom HM Revenue & Customs for 2023, meanwhile, indicate that shipments from Cameroon to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland registered a drop of 22 percent compared to 2022, down to some 38 000 tonnes.

Supplies from Côte d'Ivoire, the largest exporter from the region, meanwhile, expanded by a reported 9 percent in 2023, to some 355 000 tonnes. Shipments from Côte d'Ivoire primarily go to the European Union, mainly France, which typically receives 50 to 60 percent of quantities every year. Available trade data by destination show that shipments from Côte d'Ivoire to France expanded by some 6 percent from 2022 to 2023, accompanied by an 8-percent increase

in the average export unit value. In November 2020, Côte d'Ivoire had signed an Economic Partnership Agreement with the United Kingdom, which encompasses tariff-free trade of bananas between the two partners. Export data for 2023 show some 30 000 tonnes of bananas exported from Côte d'Ivoire to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, more than double the quantity traded between the countries in 2020.

## Imports

Available trade data for the full year of 2023 suggest that global net import quantities of bananas grew very slightly in 2023, by 0.3 percent, to some 18.4 million tonnes. While demand in most import markets remained firm, higher growth in quantities was hindered by a reduced availability of export supplies from key producing countries, especially from Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and, during the first nine months of the year, also the Philippines. These lower availabilities particularly affected the level of import quantities received by China, the European Union, Japan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which together account for around 50 percent of global imports.

Available monthly trade data show that net imports by the **European Union (EU-27)**, the largest importer of bananas globally, increased by 1.9 percent in 2023, to 5.1 million tonnes. Despite this growth, the total level of imports as well as net imports per capita remained slightly below their respective pre-pandemic levels. Supply shortages in some of the main exporters to the European Union, importantly in Colombia, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, were the main factors impeding further expansion. Industry sources meanwhile reported that consumer demand displayed a tendency to increase in most European Union markets, supported not only by the convenience factor and nutritional characteristics of bananas but also by their relative affordability. On the back of firm demand against low supplies, average import unit values rose substantially in most of the key EU destinations in 2023, notably at rates of 6 to 13 percent in France, Germany, Italy, the Kingdom of

<sup>7</sup> Data in this market review exclude intra-African trade.

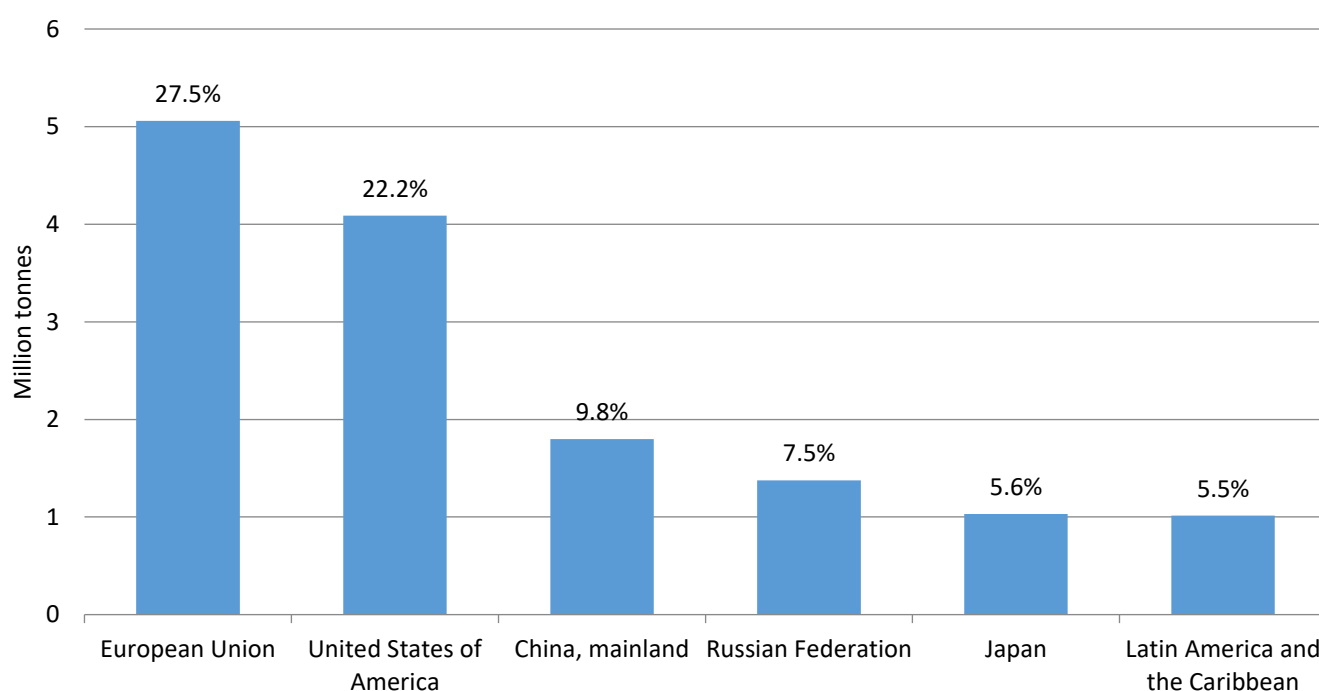
the Netherlands and Spain. On the other hand, prolonged hot temperatures were quoted as impeding demand in European Union markets during the summer months, leading to temporary conditions of oversupply and depressed prices, and causing a reduction in margins for importers and ripening facilities and some product losses in that period.

European banana production grew to 654 515 tonnes in 2023, an approximate 12 percent increase from 2022.<sup>8</sup> On average, over 90 percent of European Union banana production take place in the overseas territories of Spain and France, namely in the Canary Islands and the French West Indies. Supplies from Spain, which typically accounts for over 50 percent of European Union banana production alone, had been heavily affected by an 85-day volcano eruption on the island of La Palma in 2022, a key cultivating area of the Canaries. Industry sources reported that in the first ten months of 2023, production in Spain had shown strong signs of recovery from this adverse event. Data provided by the European Commission in February 2024 accordingly show banana production in Spain to have expanded by some 24 percent in 2023, equivalent to an increase of some 83 000 tonnes from

the previous year. Quantities produced in France, meanwhile, fell by 6 percent year-on-year, reportedly on account of a drop in yields in the country's two production areas, Guadeloupe and Martinique, where plantations have been affected by the black Sigatoka fungus disease. Data by the European commission report a total of 194 029 tonnes of bananas produced in France in 2023, an approximate drop of 13 000 tonnes from the previous year. The average unit value of banana supplies from France in 2023 stood at EUR 730 per tonne, while that from Spain ranged substantially higher at EUR 840 per tonne.<sup>9</sup> In comparison, the average unit value of bananas supplied by Latin American origins to the European Union in 2023 ranged between EUR 620 and 690 per tonne, tariffs included.

Net imports into the **United States of America** grew by 1.3 percent in 2023, to approximately 4.1 million tonnes. Consumer demand for bananas in the United States of America continued to be driven by the fruit's relative affordability, with import growth further supported by adequate supplies from key origins, notably Guatemala and Ecuador. In particular, shipments of organic bananas from Ecuador

Figure 4. Banana imports by market (million tonnes) and share in global imports (%)



<sup>8</sup> Data provided by the European Commission in February 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Data refer to the estimated average unit value of EU green bananas based on average selling prices at the stage of delivery at the 1st port of unloading, as reported by the European Commission in February 2024.



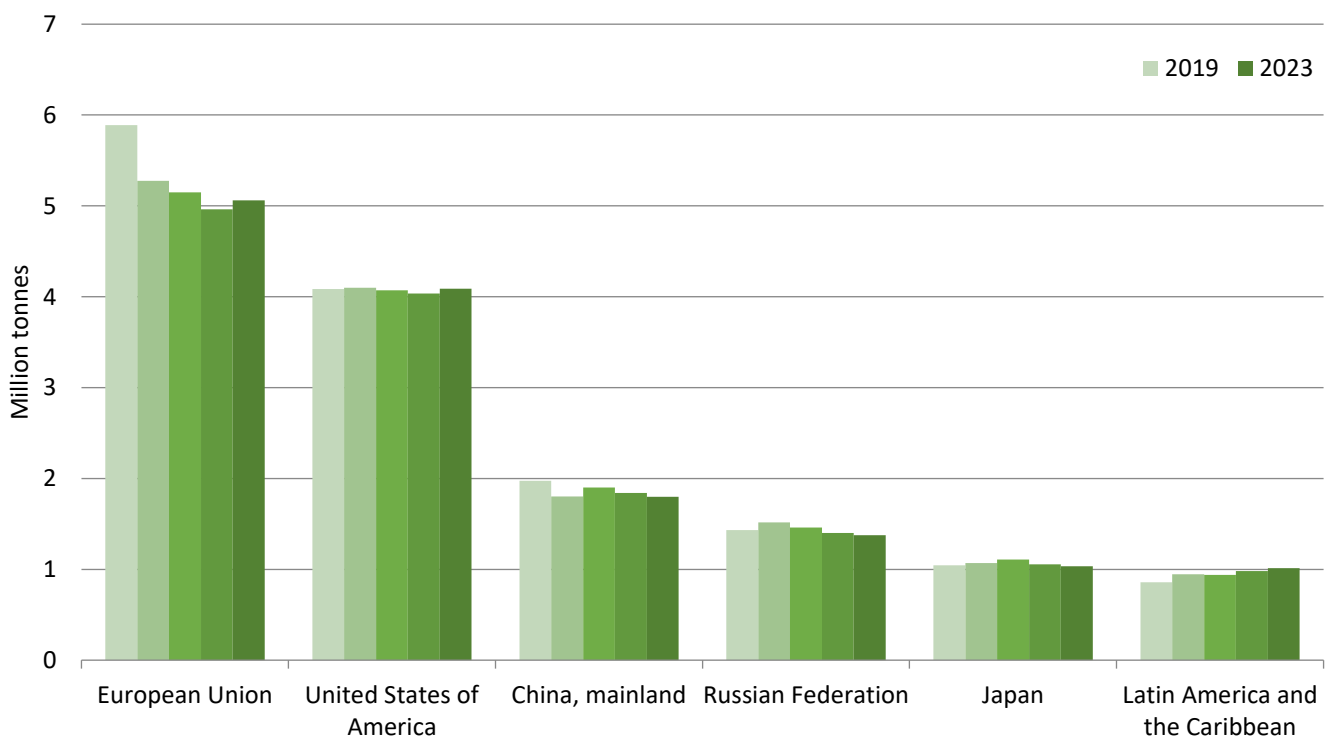
registered a strongly positive performance in 2023, increasing by some 25 percent from 2022, to around 300 000 tonnes. As this general increase in supply was more than offset by demand growth, United States of America import and wholesale prices displayed a tendency to rise in 2023, respectively averaging some 7 percent and 5 percent higher than in the previous year. Prices at the retail level, meanwhile, declined by 1 percent from the previous year, highlighting the fierce competition in the US retail market and the role of bananas as a loss leader product in US retail outlets.

Net imports by **China** declined by 2.3 percent in 2023, to just below 1.8 million tonnes, driven by lower global supplies. Nevertheless, the country retained its position as the third largest importer of bananas globally, at a quantity share of 9.8 percent of global imports in 2023. Available information suggests that imports into China were hindered by supply shortages experienced in the Philippines and Cambodia, from where China procured some 50 percent of banana imports combined in recent years. Monthly trade data show that Chinese imports of Filipino bananas dropped by 9 percent year-on-year over the first ten months of 2023, which could not be offset by higher shipments during the remainder of the year.

Meanwhile, procurements from Cambodia declined by 22 percent in quantity terms in 2023. Chinese import demand, meanwhile, reportedly remained firm, supported further by a limited and decreasing availability of high-quality domestically produced bananas as production in the country was impacted by adverse weather events in the first half of 2023. In view of the shortages experienced both domestically and in key supplying countries, imports into China from Ecuador expanded by some 33 percent in 2023, to some 270 000 tonnes, despite featuring a relatively high average import unit value of 690 USD per tonne. Chinese imports from Viet Nam, an emerging supplier to China, grew by 8 percent in 2023, to some 500 000 tonnes, at an average import unit value of 483 USD per tonne, some 11 percent lower than the previous year’s average import unit value.

Available data indicate that net imports by the **Russian Federation** decreased by 1.8 percent from the previous year, to just below 1.4 million tonnes in 2023. The Russian Federation imports bananas almost exclusively from Ecuador via previously agreed contracts, which are settled in US dollars. Industry sources reported that overall growth opportunities continued to be restrained by persistently high

Figure 5. World banana imports by destination, 2019-2023, million tonnes



\*Import volumes of the European Union exclude the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland since February 2020.

transportation rates to this destination. In view of this, the average import unit value for shipments to the Russian Federation from all destinations increased by 8 percent in 2023, to USD 847 per tonne.

Net imports by **Japan** decreased by a reported 2 percent in 2023, to approximately 1 million tonnes. While demand for bananas in the country remained relatively stable, import quantities were reduced by the production shortages experienced in the Philippines, from where Japan typically sources some 75 to 80 percent of its banana imports. Logistical difficulties affecting supplies originating in Ecuador were another obstacle to meeting import demand. Available trade data by origin accordingly show declines in import quantities into Japan from the Philippines by a moderate 1 percent in 2023, and from Ecuador by 17 percent. Average import unit values from the Philippines increased by 8 percent in 2023, but declined by 2.3 percent from Ecuador.

## Risks and uncertainties

The outlook for global production, trade and consumption of bananas is subject to several potentially significant risks and uncertainties. Elevated inflation rates, high interest expenses and exchange rate fluctuations threaten to hinder demand in domestic and import markets, especially for consumers in poorer economic strata. With several ongoing wars affecting the global economy, the risks of potential future disruptions to local and global supply chains, fertilizer markets, transport routes and access to export markets add further uncertainties to the outlook. Geopolitical uncertainties that may result in the disruption of established trade relationships and potentially cause large effects on domestic and global markets are of additional concern.

On the supply side, the effects of global warming are resulting in a higher occurrence of droughts, floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters, which render the production of bananas increasingly difficult and costly. In the face of rising temperatures, more rapid and more severe spreads of plant pests and diseases

are additionally being observed, as for example is the case with the fungus *Banana Fusarium Wilt*. The currently expanding strain of the disease, described as Tropical Race 4 (TR4), poses particularly high risks to global banana supplies as it can affect a much broader range of banana and plantain cultivars than other strains of *Fusarium wilt*. Furthermore, no effective fungicide or other eradication method is currently available. Some breakthroughs in the engineering of resistant varieties have been achieved recently, but it remains to be seen if traders, retailers and consumers will accept these new varieties. According to official information, TR4 is currently confirmed in 22 countries, predominantly in South and Southeast Asia, but also in the Middle East, Africa, Oceania and Latin America, with Colombia reporting the first infection in August 2019, Peru in April 2021, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in January 2023.

Governments and producer organizations of producing countries have a key role to play in mitigating the possible impacts stemming from these various risks, particularly in view of their potential repercussions for smallholder banana farmers and workers employed in the industry. Close co-ordination of the capacity-development and extension activities of all concerned national institutions will be beneficial to the development of proper policies, regulations and strategic measures that address these challenges in a comprehensive way. The transparent collaboration among all stakeholders of the banana sector will be critical, especially with regard to containing a further spread of TR4 and managing the disease where it has already emerged. FAO is monitoring global developments closely and has implemented an emergency project under its Technical Cooperation Programme to help countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to contain the spread of *Fusarium wilt*. Under the umbrella of the multi-stakeholder World Banana Forum<sup>10</sup>, FAO has further established the TR4 Global Network<sup>11</sup>, a neutral platform for information exchange and global collaboration that supports collective actions worldwide to fight the disease.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wbf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fao.org/tr4gn/en/>





## CONTACT

Markets and Trade Division – Economic and Social Development

[www.fao.org/markets-and-trade](http://www.fao.org/markets-and-trade)

Team on Responsible Global Value Chains

[Tropical-Fruits@fao.org](mailto:Tropical-Fruits@fao.org)

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

Rome, Italy

© iStock wanakit waeonphachai

CD1721EN/1/07.24