


Mendoza-based banana importer Argenfruit has been firing workers after a [price fraud case](#) drastically reduced sales, website *Losandes.com.ar* reported. 

The story reported 11 workers lost their jobs at the end of January, while union secretary general Pablo Quevedo told the website there would likely be more jobs lost given current business conditions.

He said the company was operating at around 50% of its normal level, trading between 80,000-90,000 cartons each week instead of the usual 180,000 cartons, the story reported.

"In December they lost everything (imports and sales)," he was quoted as saying.

A letter sent to Argenfruit workers implied there could be more sackings.

"The dismissal is occurring because of the restructuring of the company, due to measures taken by the AFIP-DGI to the detriment of the company, which has led to decreased work, and significant losses and damages," said the letter obtained by *Losandes.com.ar*.

Quevedo added that the sackings compounded the negative image of the company as workers were fighting on the streets, the story reported.

An official government release in December said the company had gained undue benefits of US\$10 million from declaring Ecuadorian banana imports as 'first-to-superior value' when they were really of 'secondary value'.

The stated Cavendish bananas that Argenfruit imported were worth US\$4.44 a carton under Southern Cone trading bloc standards, but due to the false declaration of higher quality the company was able to sell at a price of US\$6.90 a carton.

However, Argenfruit lawyer José Previterra said the allegations were not possible.

"Ecuador fixes the minimum price for which a carton of bananas can be sold and it's US\$6.90, which is the price the company buys at, but Argentina determines that because of a tariff issue it can't be worth more than US\$4.40," Previterra was quoted as saying on website *Diariouno.com*.

Related stories: [Argenfruit denies banana import fraud accusations](#)

[Argentine banana importer under fire for price fraud](#)

Photo: Los Andes

www.freshfruitportal.com