


A banana supplier to Chiquita has defended its labor record following recent criticisms from the Federation of Agribusiness Worker Unions (FESTAGRO), which [alleged it denied union representatives access to the farm and fired a worker after an accident.](#) 

In a statement given to *www.freshfruitportal.com*, Finca Tropical head Hector Castro said the union in question, the Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (STAS), had been recognized and attended to since the company was made aware of it.

"Finca Tropical was notified in writing about the existence of a Sub-Branch composed of five company workers, belonging to the industry syndicate identified as the Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (STAS)...the legality and rights of STAS were issued by the Government of the Republic two years ago," he said.

"Currently the list of requests that the STAS presented is being negotiated and it is in the stage of direct negotiation."

He said since the company made an announcement about STAS' notification during an assembly, many workers had rejected the idea of joining the union as the majority belong to another union called "Trato Justo" - or "Fair Treatment" in English - which has been around since 2009.

"In no moment has the company taken actions that could be interpreted as a threat to dismiss workers belonging to STAS, or the union Trato Justo. At no time have we fired any worker. Since it began 11 years ago, Finca Tropical has operated with six-month contract in which the worker may decide to not continue working and not lose their unemployment rights in the case of resignation," Castro said.

"The workers prefer this system and this does not put the continuity of their work at risk.

"A banana farm has its peaks and troughs of production, so the amount of workers varies according to that. This type of contract is legal and has been observed by inspectors from the Secretary of Work and Social Security on many occasions."

FESTAGRO also alleged that worker Dilber Vásquez was fired after a work-related accident, but Castro concurred with his colleague Francisco Suazo that Vasquez never worked at Finca Tropical.

"In our payroll record there is no worker with that name. This worker does not pertain to, and nor has he ever pertained to, this company," Castro said.

The added the company adhered to Honduras' labor legislation to ensure the rights and welfare of workers, with a complaints procedure negotiated in the labor contract with Trato Justo

"There is a mechanism within the company such as complaint boxes or complaints made through representatives. We proceed to investigate the matter together with worker representatives and apply sanctions according to the seriousness of the case.

"In our disciplinary history we have several cases relating to administration and supervision personnel. Our base salary is above the minimum wage.

"Also, our workers are affiliated with the Honduran Institute of Social Security IHSS, which oversees the health and social security of our workers."

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