

A significant portion of Panama's banana cultivation has been damaged by winds that pummeled the country's Atlantic coast near the Costa Rican border last week.



Atlantic Banana Cooperative (Coobana) labor director Chito Quintero told www.freshfruitportal.com the wind and rain hit the Bocas del Toro region on Sept. 21.

"For every hectare planted there are 2,000 plants, of which the wind put down 150 plants per hectare," Quintero said.

Coobana itself has around 550 hectares of Fairtrade-certified banana production, and Quintero expects to record losses in the order of US\$2.5 million.

The main destinations for the cooperative are England, Switzerland, Italy and New Zealand.

"The winds have calmed down and the days are normal now," Quintero added.

The representative said there were initiatives in place for growers to insure their farms, however due to the high premiums no member of Coobana had insurance.

He said the main result would be a rise in banana prices and fewer shipments overseas.

"We will end up exporting five containers per week. We were exporting 20 containers per week," he said.

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