

It has been more than 15 days since a strike at a Chiquita banana production plant started in the province of Bocas del Toro, Panama that has reportedly caused millions of dollars to be lost.

For over two weeks the Atlantic Banana Division has held a sit-down strike in rejection of the installation of security cameras in the plantations and packing houses.

Although the company assures that it is a measure for the welfare of the workers, the general secretary of the Workers' Union, Francisco Smith rejects this Security System, according to [La Prensa](#).

It is not that they oppose the placement of perimeter biosafety cameras in the facilities, but rather those that are "fixed on the workers who carry out the packing process", since they feel "harassed and persecuted" technologically, La Prensa reported Smith saying.

Each day, about 65,000 boxes of fruit are produced that have not been exported, a Chiquita Panama source was reported as saying.

On top of the strike, the preventative treatment on 5,800 hectares for the Black Sigatoka disease is being pushed off as strikers are not allowing personnel to enter and prepare the fields.

At the same time, the fruit is ripening in the fields which represents even more loss.

"We have not been able to proceed to bag the bunches and it is an enormous amount of bananas that cannot be quantified. It will take more than three months to recover over the 21 farms distributed throughout the region after the strike," the source told La Prensa.

The situation is aggravated by the rains in the province since Wednesday that are already beginning to wreak havoc on the banana plantations.

Traders have also spoken out against the shutdown due to the effects this has on the local economy.

Some company workers are opposed to the strike as they fear that the same thing will happen as in Puerto Armuelles, Chiriquí province, where in 2002, after a labor dispute the company closed operations leaving more than 3,000 unemployed.

Chiquita Panama generates about four thousand direct and indirect jobs in Bocas del Toro, where most of the workforce comes from indigenous areas.

Annually, Chiquita Panana exports some 14 million boxes of bananas to the European market. Bananas have remained as one of the main export products.