

7th October 2009, World Decent Work Day

**DECENT WORK STARTS WITH REAL TRADE UNION FREEDOM...
BUT DOLE CONTINUES RESISTING CHANGES IN ITS PRACTICES**

In the last three years, since the publication by a coalition of civil society organisations of the *Dole: Behind the Smoke-Screen*, the fruit multinational has met on various occasions with trade union organisations in Costa Rica, Ecuador and Peru. A new report published by the same organisations October 7 notes that Dole has shown a certain openness to dialogue on the issues of trade union freedom and collective bargaining in those countries.

However, in Guatemala, the promises made by Dole to the unions in 2006 B to organise a meeting with unions and the national producers B have not been kept. Terror and impunity continue to reign in the South coast banana plantations of the country.

And despite the signing of an agreement on trade union rights in the company's plantations B and those of its suppliers B with Costa Rican trade unions in 2007, the Dole subsidiary in that country continues to fund people who promote anti-union messages. Even if, on 11th September this year¹, the company committed itself to *Areview the relationship with the John XXIII Social School² with a view to stopping the direct contracting of its services@* and announced that it would *Apresent our request to the Permanent Workers' Committees to withdraw references to Solidarismo as the company's philosophy³,@* nothing indicates that Dole will cease violating in practice the right of any worker to freely join a trade union.

Alf Dole and its suppliers do not reinstate sacked union members, do not even allow the unions to have notice-boards in all their farms, and carry on supporting the solidarismo movement, then what is the value of our Agreement?,@ questioned a Costa Rican trade union leader in a 29th September, 2009 statement.

We welcome the fact that there is now a dialogue between Dole and trade unions in countries where none existed when we launched the campaign in May 2006. However, dialogue must be turned into changes in attitude and practice. Otherwise, how is it possible to believe that the world's biggest fruit company is ready to engage in real social dialogue with its employees? How is it possible to speak of decent work and corporate social responsibility when the majority of plantation workers producing the Dole brand in Latin America are genuinely afraid of expressing themselves or organising freely?

--COLSIBA (Coordination of Latin American Banana Unions), International Union of Foodworkers (IUF), CGT, 3F, Peoples Solidaires, Banana Link, USLEAP and Banafair.

¹ Letter from Dole's Standard Fruit Company de Costa Rica to Coordination of Costa Rican Banana Unions (COSIBA-CR).

² An institution that promotes the Solidarismo movement in Costa Rican banana and pineapple plantations.

³ From the preamble of the so-called 'Direct Settlements' between Permanent Committees and management.