

Dole reports motivation, health and safety, and productivity benefits from ISO 14001

Underlying an announcement by Dole Food Co. Inc., claimed to be the world's largest producer of high-quality fresh fruit, vegetables and fresh-cut flowers, that it has added certified organic bananas to its list of organically grown fruit products is a global environmental management system (EMS) approach to environmental protection. Sharon Hayes, Director of Environmental Affairs, reports that virtually all of the company's operations in Latin America, Thailand, the Philippines, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast and Europe are now certified to ISO 14001.



'Dole has been able to reduce the amount of crop protection products applied to fruit and has installed water treatment and recycling systems that have increased water conservation significantly, as a result of implementing ISO 14001,' says Sharon Hayes, Director of Environmental Affairs, Dole Food Co. Inc., seen here (circled) with members of the company's environmental management team.

Since January 2001, Dole Fresh Fruit Co., a subsidiary of Dole Food Co. Inc.¹⁾, of Westlake Village, California, USA, has been offering certified organic bananas to consumers as part of its policy of demonstrating environmental excellence while growing and marketing high quality food products. Initially, the organic bananas will be grown at Dole's ISO 14001-certified farms in Ecuador and Honduras, certified as organic by US-based certification agencies and inspected by the Independent Organic Inspectors Association to ensure organic integrity.

"For several years, the company has been conducting research into

the production of organic bananas, which are grown without the use of commercial chemicals and fertilizers. Emphasizing improvements in soil fertility, as well as biological and cultural approaches to pests and plant diseases, Dole is now able to add organic bananas to its list of fresh fruit products," says Sharon Hayes, the company's Director of Environmental Affairs.

The development is another step in Dole's environmental management system (EMS) approach to environmental protection, Ms. Hayes adds. "While some companies treat the environment as a public relations issue, at Dole, it's an operations issue. We believe that a quality product is

produced in a quality way and we strive to integrate consideration for the environment into everything we do."

Founded in Hawaii in 1851, Dole Food Co. Inc. is described as the world's largest producer and marketer of high-quality fresh fruit, vegetables and fresh-cut flowers, with over 60 000 employees, sales in more than 90 countries and 1999 revenues of USD 5.1 billion. The company has been ranked as having the number one environmental programme in the food industry by the Council on Economic Priorities, a non-profit organization headquartered in New York City that assesses Fortune 500 companies based on their corporate social responsibility performance.

First ISO 14001-certified banana-producing area

In June 1998, Dole's Latin American subsidiary, Standard Fruit Company de Costa Rica S.A., reportedly became the first major banana-producing area in the world to be certified to ISO 14001. "Now, virtually all of Dole's international farming operations are certified to ISO 14001 or will be by year-end 2001. This includes banana and pineapple farms in all producing countries in Latin America: Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Guatemala and Colombia, as well as other fruit operations in Chile. It also includes our operations in Thailand, the Philippines, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast as well as production areas in Europe. In addition, Americafloor, Dole's fresh cut flower division, became the latest operation certified to ISO 14001," confirms Sharon Hayes.

All ISO 14001 auditing and certification procedures at Dole farms were

We believe that a quality product is produced in a quality way and we strive to integrate consideration for the environment into everything we do



handled by SGS International Certification Services, Inc.²⁾.

The ISO 14001 programme

"Certification to ISO 14001 involves identification of each and every aspect of the operation that could have an environmental impact, ranking those impacts in priority order and establishing procedures to mitigate or eliminate them, and training of all employees in environmental awareness, prevention of pollution and safe practices," explains Ms. Hayes.

"In addition, the company must show evidence that it is in strict compliance with company policy and all applicable laws and regulations. A third-party, independent auditor certifies the operations and returns every year to check evidence of continuous improvement in environmental performance. Internal audits are usually performed every three to six months as well."

According to Ms. Hayes, Dole has been able to reduce the amount of

Workers at Dole's Bananito banana farm in Costa Rica where employee morale and crop yields have risen due to the success of its ISO 14001-based EMS programme.

1) Sharon Hayes, Director of Environmental Affairs, Dole Food Company, Inc., P.O. Box 5132, Westlake Village, CA 91359-5132, USA.

Tel. + 1 818 879 6725.
Fax + 1 818 879 6613.
E-mail Sharon_Hayes@na.dole.com
Web www.Dole.com

2) Greg Hansa, SGS International Certification Services, Inc., Meadows Office Complex, 201 Route 17 North, Rutherford, NJ 07070, USA.

Tel. + 1 201 935 1500.
Fax + 1 201 935 4555.
E-mail sgsics@ibm.net
Web www.sgsicsus.com

crop protection products applied to fruit and has installed water treatment and recycling systems that have increased water conservation significantly, as a result of implementing ISO 14001. The company has also reforested thousands of acres of land, and has implemented waste segregation, recycling and composting systems for its solid waste and crop waste.



Standard Fruit Company de Costa Rica S.A. (SFCOCR), was the first major banana-producing area in the world to be certified to ISO 14001, according to Dole Food Co. Inc. Seen here (left to right) at the ISO 14001 certification ceremony are *Gregg Hansa*, of SGS International Certification Services, Inc.; *Jürgen Schumacher*, President of Dole Fresh Fruit International Ltd.; *Samuel Yankelewitz*, President of the Costa Rican Chamber of Commerce; *Carlos Rodriguez*, Minister of Environment and Energy for Costa Rica; and *Peter Gilmore*, General Manager of SFCOCR.

Key benefits include strong employee motivation and loyalty which translates into reduced absenteeism and improved productivity, she says. An article published in the Costa Rica American Chamber of Commerce magazine describes the results of the EMS programme operating at Dole's Standard Fruit de Costa Rica subsidiary since 1991, culminating in ISO 14001 implementation and certification in 1998. It states that ISO 14001 "was especially recognized for obtaining significant reductions in accidents and the resulting sick leave", and describes EMS programmes as tools "to systematically target and control levels of safety and occupational hygiene".

'A solid return for Standard Fruit'

The article reports that the company's EMS provides assurance to its workers and clients that it handles agrochemicals well. "This covers the purchase, transportation, storage, handling and application of crop protection products and the disposal of empty containers." In conclusion, the Costa Rican AmCham feature states that Standard Fruit's EMS "is a vital element in the improvement of its workers' and families' health and in the minimization of the environmental impact of its activities. Furthermore, as employee morale has risen due to the success of the programme there has been a corresponding increase in farm yields which reinforces the EMS. Investment in the EMS was initially high but it has produced a solid return for Standard Fruit."



**Investment in the EMS
was initially high
but it has produced
a solid return**