



Seventh Grade – Honduras

Lesson 2: Finding the Top Bananas

Overview

The certification of banana production is one way to help conserve the tropical rainforest ecosystem and protect the livelihood of people who live there. In this activity, conduct a banana “scavenger hunt” at a local grocery store to learn more about what countries export bananas to the U.S., how bananas are used, and what costs are associated with bananas. The students then develop their own certification criteria and compare them to the Rainforest Alliance Certification standards.

Subjects

Social studies, Science, Math

Concepts

(From PLT Conceptual Framework)

International cooperation directed toward conserving resources and protecting environmental quality is beneficial to human health and the well being of other life forms. (5.3)

Human societies and cultures throughout the world interact with each other and affect natural systems upon which they depend. (6.1)

All humans consume products and thereby affect the availability of renewable and nonrenewable natural resources. (6.4)

Consumers “drive” the marketplace with their demands for goods and services. Such demands shift with time and may have positive or negative effects on the resource base and environmental quality. (15.2)

Skills

Establishing Criteria, Analyzing, Observing, Word Processing

Objectives

Students will: (1) look for different types of bananas and banana products at home or at a grocery store, (2) explore the concept of certification and identify possible criteria for certifying bananas, (3) compare the Rainforest Alliance certification process to the criteria they developed, and (4) develop a brochure that explains what banana certification is and how it helps to sustain the rainforest and the people who live in those regions.

Additional Resources and Student Pages

- **Resource Index** - Check out this page at <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/education/teachers/curriculum/resources/index.html> for additional supplemental materials that complement these dynamic units and to access many of the resources listed below.
- **Slideshow** – The Learning Site provides a slideshow that will introduce students to the country of Honduras, the wildlife and people of the country and the conservation issues they face. The slideshow can be downloaded for viewing in the classroom, printed out and read aloud or viewed online with the students.
- **Species Profiles** – The species profiles, available to view on screen or downloaded from the beginning of the unit or the Resource Index, include photos, along with information on habitat, foraging behavior, group relationships, threats, and many more facts.
 - Banana
 - Honduran White Bat
 - Orchid
 - Yucatan White-tailed Deer
- **Student Resources Pages**
 - Banana Scavenger Hunt
 - Standards for Certification
 - Growing Bananas
 - Banana Import/Export Diagram
- **Rainforest Poster** – Download and print out this colorful two-page poster, which is available for you to use in explaining the layers of the rainforest, its products and the environmental threats facing many rainforests around the world.
 - Inside the Canopy** - Structure and species of the rainforest
 - Status Report** - What is happening to the rainforest
- **Rainforest Products** – Visit <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/resources/forest-facts/lives.html> for a summary of products that we use in our everyday lives that originate in the rainforests. Both teachers and students will find information on the products found in their homes and supermarkets that either originated in tropical forests or are currently produced there.
- **Profiles in Sustainability** – Visit <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/profiles/index.html> for case studies on companies who work closely with the Rainforest Alliance to ensure that their practices protect wildlife, workers and communities.
- **Certificate of Accomplishment** - Print out colorful rainforest certificates for your students to commemorate their completion of these units.

Materials

Part A – copies of “Growing Bananas in Honduras” student page from the 7th Grade Activity (optional); copies of “Banana Scavenger Hunt” student page

Part B – copies of “Banana Standards for Rainforest Alliance Certification” and “Case Study: Growing Bananas in Honduras” student pages; sample brochures (optional); drawing paper and colored pencils, access to computers and layout software

Time Considerations

Part A – Two 30-minute periods, plus time to conduct scavenger hunt

Part B – One to two 50-minute periods

Background

With a market of nearly five billion dollars a year, the banana is the world’s most popular fruit, and the most important food crop after rice, wheat, and maize. Banana businesses are economic pillars in many tropical countries, providing millions of jobs for rural residents.

But, for much of its history, the banana industry was notorious for destructive farming practices. As companies tried to keep production high and costs low, they tended to grow only one crop in a plantation, which made the plants more susceptible to disease. To combat this, they would apply large amounts of pesticides, which would leak into the water table, pollute irrigation canals and drinking water supplies, and put workers in danger.

In 1991 the Rainforest Alliance, along with partner groups and other stakeholders, established the first standards for responsible banana production. Today, more than 15% of all the bananas in international trade come from Rainforest Alliance Certified farms.

These farms must demonstrate adherence to a rigorous set of standards that conserve ecosystems, increase water quality, promote sound waste management, reduce agrochemical use, and improve quality of life for farm workers and their families. The environment and the communities surrounding certified banana plantations benefit from both on-farm improvements and off-farm recognition, setting the pace for the rest of the banana sector.

In Honduras, for example, the Rainforest Alliance is working both with large and small businesses to achieve banana certification, ensuring that the rainforests are conserved and that the land and people are treated well. Honduras has a very diverse ecology, but it also facing an expanding urban population and an economy based primarily on agriculture – with bananas as one of the main crops. Practicing sustainable agriculture is vital here.

Part A – Banana Scavenger Hunt

Getting Ready

1. Plan your schedule so that students have time to complete the scavenger hunt at home or as part of the family's normal shopping trip.
2. (Optional) For Part B, gather a variety of brochures as examples of what an informational brochure might look like.

Doing the Activity

1. Ask students whether they have ever eaten a banana. Have them name things that they know about bananas, such as where in the world bananas grow or how bananas grow.
2. If students do not know much about bananas and their cultivation, have them read the student page from the 7th Grade activity (<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/education/teachers/curriculum/honduras/seventh/studentpage/growingbananas.htm>).
3. Give students a copy of the Banana Scavenger Hunt student page. Explain to students that they should look at home or go with an adult to the grocery store to find as many banana products as possible. You might offer a reward to the student that finds the most.
4. Allow time for students to complete the scavenger hunt.
5. After the scavenger hunt, have students tally the number of products they found to see who found the most. Discuss:
 - Were there more or fewer banana products than you expected?
 - Which category had the most products?
 - What was the most unusual banana product we found?
 - Where do the bananas we eat come from?

Variation – Grocery Store Field Trip

1. Contact the manager of a nearby grocery store to arrange a class field trip for doing the scavenger hunt in groups of two or three students. If possible, also arrange a “behind the scenes” tour of the areas where produce is received, prepped, and displayed, with a special focus on bananas. You might plan to split the class into two, with half the class taking the tour while the others do the scavenger hunt with chaperones.
2. Tell students that they will be going on a field trip to a grocery store, where they will have a “behind the scenes” tour of how the store handles bananas. They will also have a “scavenger” hunt to look for as many different kinds of banana products as possible. Make sure that students understand the purpose of the field trip: to see how bananas are handled at the store, to learn where the bananas come from, and to find other products that contain bananas.
3. Explain that students must work in groups of two or three and follow strict behavior expectations, including (1) staying with their group and (2) being respectful of store employees, store patrons, and merchandise at all times. Make clear what the consequences will be for not meeting these expectations.

4. During the field trip, circulate among the various scavenger hunt groups to check on how many products they are finding and to refocus their search, if necessary.

Part B – Banana Certification

1. Ask students whether they've ever gotten a certificate for taking a class, completing a program, or doing a good job, and ask them to describe what it means to "certify" something. List some of their ideas on the board.

2. Explore the concept of certification deeper by asking students what qualities and qualifications they would want a lifeguard to have. Explain that in this case, certification ensures that a lifeguard meets the necessary qualifications. Discuss:

- Why do you think certification is important to all the parties involved (in this case, the lifeguard, the swimmers, parents, and the people who manage the pool or beach)?
- Why might it be significant that a "third party" does the certification (in this case, rather than lifeguards certifying themselves)?

3. Bring the discussion to bananas by asking: Does it matter to you where your bananas come from? If any of the bananas at the grocery store (from Part A) were labeled as "certified," what might that mean? Why might it be important to certify bananas?

4. Have partners or small groups create a list of criteria they would include if they were charged with the task of certifying bananas. Ask them to not only consider the healthiness of the bananas for consumers, but also the health of the land on which the bananas are grown, the health of the plants and animals in the nearby rainforest, and the well-being of the farm workers. Ask them to share elements from their list with the class.

5. Give students a copy of the "Rainforest Alliance Certification" student page and read aloud the nine standards for banana certification. Ask students to compare the Rainforest Alliance certification criteria to the ones they developed. Are there any criteria students didn't include in their lists? Are there any they would add?

6. Have students read the "Case Study: Growing Bananas in Honduras" student page. As they read, students should look for answers to the questions:

- How does banana certification help the tropical rainforests?
- How does it help the people who live in those areas?
- How does it help consumers?

7. Explain to students that they will use what they have learned to create a brochure that educates consumers about banana certification. The brochure should explain (1) what banana certification is, (2) the criteria included in Rainforest Alliance certification, and (3) the benefits of banana certification for the consumer, the rainforest, and other people.

8. If you have them, distribute sample brochures for students to peruse. Discuss:

- What information do you think people would want to know about banana certification?
 - In what different ways is information presented in brochures?
 - What ways would work for the banana certification information?
 - What different sections should our brochures contain (a title page, content pages, contact page, etc.)?
9. Give students time to create their brochures either individually or in small groups, using paper and colored pencils or computer software. Have them share their products with the class.

Enrichment

Conduct a study of area grocery stores to find out whether certified bananas are more expensive than non-certified ones. Discuss: Should certified bananas be more expensive? How much more would people be willing to pay for certified bananas?

Assessment Opportunity

For Part B, assess student brochures in terms of how well they explain what banana certification, the criteria for certification, and the benefits of certification.

Additional Resources

Virginia Scott Jenkins, *Bananas: An American History* (Smithsonian Institute Press, 2000). This book explores the role that bananas have played in the United States since they first became popular in the 1880s. It describes the ways that banana production has been intermixed with the politics of the United States and Central America for more than a century, and shows how bananas have influenced American culture.