

# Denise

**Denise is a banana farmer from St Vincent in the Windward Islands. She is single, with one child, and is 35 years old.**



## Her passion

"Growing bananas is our livelihood. It is our way of life. If you have grown up into a farming family it becomes your life. You know it from a child... You get satisfaction to see the plant grow and to reap the harvest."

## Her daily life

Life as a banana farmer is tough and one challenge follows the next. For example in August, Denise lost almost one third of her crop because of a "blow down" (hurricane). Everything has to be replanted, and it will take 6-8 months to see the results and harvest. The day starts at 7a.m. sometimes and lasts until 1 p.m. except on Monday, shipping day. Denise has three banana plots (1.5 acre; 1 acre; and  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre) located around 3 miles from her home and the plots are within 1-2 miles of each other. In the morning she either hitches a ride or takes a van to her field. She divides her time between the three plots. "Normally I work the land and on shipment days I wash the bananas, put them in bags, pack and label them. Sometimes a labourer helps if the shipment is over 30 boxes." "I socialise with other group members when we meet at group once a month. There is no other time available in my life. I attend church and spend my time looking after my sick father and helping out at home and making sure my son keeps up with his studies."

## A better deal

"As long as I am selling in Fairtrade I can earn enough to support my life. It is a vicious circle when you are not selling the Fairtrade bananas. The Fairtrade banana gives you a little better income - EC\$19.88 per box instead of EC\$16 - and it has helped supplement the bills...it is better than what you would get if you were selling ordinary bananas".

Being in the group has brought us farmers together as a family. We look out for each other. It has made us more aware of protecting the environment: Fairtrade has opened up my eyes a lot on protection of the environment. The group members have their problems that are similar to my own, and we support each other within the group. It is at Fairtrade meetings we get new tips and new methods how we can speed up our process."

"Please buy our Fairtrade bananas. It is an environmentally friendly banana - you have nothing to fear. By purchasing a Fairtrade banana you are helping to improve our livelihood here in St Vincent and the Grenadines."