

German

German is a tractor operator from Chacras, Ecuador. He is single, with no children, and is 65



His daily life

German's work on his tractor mainly involves hoeing to keep down the weeds. He also prunes and injects the trees against disease. 'I do everything. On harvest days, I organise the packing of the boxes, which is a tiring job, because it is non-stop all day long.' He earns \$30 a week, which is \$10 more than most workers on the plantation. However, he works an extra hour in the morning from 6 am and only has a 15-minute lunch break, before carrying on till 4 pm. He makes his own breakfast, and pays to have his lunch and dinner at the house of a local woman.

He'd like to be able to save money, but it's very difficult. The cost of food is high and is always going up. If he had more money, he would improve his house and help his family, who are also poor. His brothers live in a nearby town (Paisaje), and he visits them every two or three months.

Last Christmas he travelled there on his tractor - a journey which took two hours!

German has a house on the outskirts of the plantation, built for him by soldiers who stayed in the area during the border dispute with Peru. Using the tractor, German helped move supplies. Before the soldiers left they built him his house out of gratitude.

His passion

'I hope you enjoy and appreciate receiving the produce from this plantation,' is German's message to Fairtrade shoppers. 'Much love has gone into growing the fruit.' The 65-year-old bachelor operates a tractor on a mango plantation in Ecuador which is providing the first Fairtrade mangoes to go on sale in the UK. German is excited about the possible benefits for his community: 'My passion is to do something, not just for me, but to help other people. I am poor, but I sincerely want to help other people.'

A better deal

At the time German was interviewed (January, 2002), the Luis Ramon mango plantation had only just been registered with Fairtrade. As a result, German and his fellow-workers were setting up a worker's association - unusual in Ecuador, where organised labour is rare in the agricultural sector.

One of the first tasks the workers face is deciding how to spend the Fairtrade premium - a bonus on each sale of fruit that can be spent on a community project. The workers are full of ideas. Some want a small school for local children; others want to spend the money on accommodation for themselves and their families.

German thinks any benefits of Fairtrade should extend to the whole community, not just the plantation workers. He'd like the Fairtrade premium to be used to set up a small shop or pharmacy, so the villagers of Chacras don't have to travel so far to buy necessities. If sales of Fairtrade mangoes are a success, the modest aspirations of German and his fellow-workers may eventually be realised.