Taiwan

Taiwan is one of the first places in Asia to participate in the international banana trade. It started exporting bananas to Japan in the early 1900s. The banana industry expanded rapidly and reached its peak in 1967 when bananas were grown over 50,000 hectares, making Taiwan the second largest exporter, after Ecuador, with 26 million 16 kg boxes\(^1\). The industry started to decline as the Philippines developed its own export industry and Fusarium wilt race 4 spread through the plantations of Cavendish bananas. The volume of bananas exported to Japan declined from 20 million cartons in the 1960s to less than 1 million cartons in 2008\(^4\).

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Production systems

Most bananas are grown in monocultures of Cavendish types. About 30% of the Cavendish production is exported to Japan while 70% is consumed locally\(^5\). The main cultivars are Pei Chiao, a Giant Cavendish clone, and somaclonal variants of Chei Piao selected by the Taiwan Banana Research Institute (TBRI).

In the south, most of the farmers replant every year. The annual cropping system is designed to minimize damage by typhoons, which usually occur during the monsoon, from July to September. Planting starts in March through May for harvesting the next spring, when the quality of the fruit is highest because of the low temperatures between January and March. Tissue-culture plantlets started being used in 1982, in part to stop the spread of Fusarium wilt from infested fields to disease-free areas.

Production constraints

Besides typhoons and low winter temperature (see Production systems), the main constraint is...
Fusarium wilt, more specifically race 4, which was first observed in 1967\cite{6}. Because of the fungus, the banana production area declined from 50,000 ha in the 1960s to 5,000 ha in the early 1970s\cite{3}.

Research on bananas

Research on bananas is conducted by TBRI, which is best known for the selection of race 4-resistant somaclonal variants of the local Giant Cavendish, Pei Chiao. In 1984, it started a programme to screen for resistance to race 4 by growing tissue-culture plantlets in infested fields. The programme has produced a long list of clones whose resistance to race 4 varies from moderate to high. These clones, however, tend to be taller, have a longer cycle or smaller bunch than their parent cultivar. Further planting of these selections in farmers' fields has led to clones with improved agronomic qualities.

Quarantine pests

Two viral diseases, banana streak and banana bract mosaic, are listed as quarantine pests.

References

1. 2015 data from World Factbook
2. 2013 data from FAOSTAT - Production/Crops

See also on this website

Musapedia pages on banana-producing countries:
Australia
Bangladesh
Brazil
Burundi
Cameroon
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cote d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of Congo
Ecuador
Federated States of Micronesia