

MARKET LINK

for primary producers

A publication of the Market Information Service (MIS) - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
"Linking the market and Primary producers"

Banana



Banana is an elongated, edible fruit produced by several kinds of large herbaceous flowering plants in the genus *Musa*. In some countries, bananas used for cooking may be called "plantains", distinguishing them from dessert bananas. The fruit is variable in size, color, and firmness, but is usually elongated and curved, with soft flesh rich in starch covered with a rind, which may be green, yellow, red, purple, or brown when ripe. The fruits grow upward in clusters near the top of the plant. Almost all modern edible seedless (parthenocarp) bananas come from two wild species – *Musa acuminata* and *Musa balbisiana*. The scientific names of most cultivated bananas are *Musa acuminata*, *Musa balbisiana*,

Cavendish subgroup is essentially composed of cultivars that diverged from each other through mutations. It was locally known as 'fa'i palagi' but with the establishment of the new and improved variety, it has currently known now as 'fa'i isalaelu'.

The two new varieties of Cavendish which are *Asdia* and *Apollo* together with an improved of an already existing *William* variety were recently brought in Samoa to satisfy New Zealand export markets. It bears fruit 8 months a year and believed to be resistant to diseases such as banana bunch top (laufeti'iti'i) and banana black leaf streak (lausului).

The banana industry was one of the most exporting produce but due to the issue of pests and diseases which causes the inconsistency of supplies, New Zealand stopped Samoa from exporting of its fresh bananas.

Will this new variety of banana be able to revive back Samoa's banana industry?

After a long hiatus, the local banana growers has finally come back to put value on their produce. Thus, for the first time in more than twenty years, bananas from Samoa will return to retails and supermarkets in New Zealand but not in its green form as usual but as a frozen product.

Local Production

The initiative was from Ah Liki for its market in New Zealand however all the banana in Samoa has been affected. Therefore, the Ministry of Agriculture bounced back with a Revitalize Exportation Banana program for another opportunity to access New Zealand markets again.

The banana tissue cultures were from South Africa and the first two shipments were funded by the World Bank through the Samoa Agriculture Competitiveness Enhancement Project (SACEP).

²Another shipment of 31,500 banana tissue culture followed.
³This was funded by the Pacific Horticultural Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) as part of its aids program to assist the Ministry of Agriculture in provision of quality and healthy planting materials for farmers to enhance the production of banana industry in order to achieve New Zealand markets. The two varieties *Asdia* and *Williams* were separately delivered in two consignments with a total of 15,000 seedlings per consignment.

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and *Musa × paradisiaca* for the hybrid *Musa*

But the most common variety grown in Samoa is the "cavendish.

¹A Cavendish banana is the fruit of the banana cultivar belonging to the Cavendish Subgroup of the AAA cultivar group. The

¹(ProMusa)

²(Tissue Culture Team- Nu'u, 2018)

³(Tissue Culture Team- Nu'u, 2018)



Figure 1: Asdia Variety



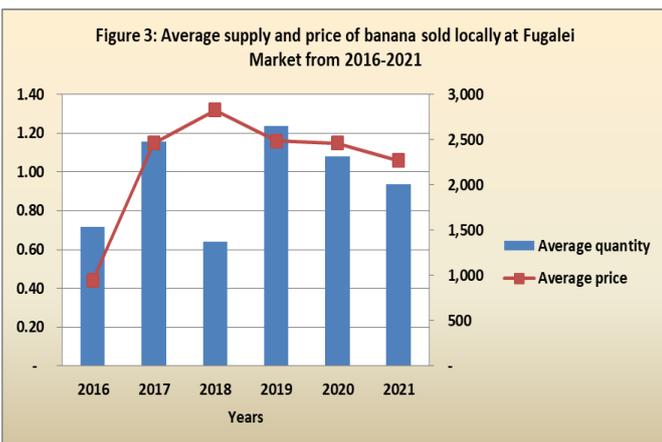
Figure 2: Williams Variety

The Ministry approved only 30,000 banana meristems and evenly distributed to banana growers in both Savaii and Upolu. Now, cavendish is everywhere, and almost 80% of households in the country have access to Cavendish planting materials.

In Agriculture Census 2019, it has recorded that about 6,655 acres of agricultural lands in Samoa are covered by banana trees, and more than twenty thousand crop households growing banana.

Local Market Situation

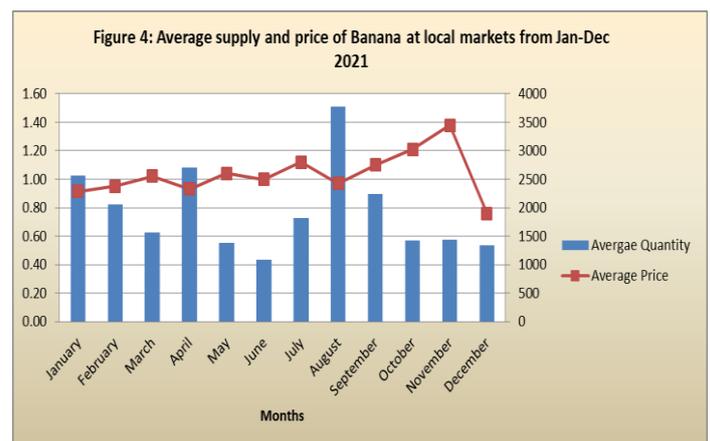
The new and improved variety is currently selling at local markets and supermarkets by few farmers either ripe or unripe. Unlike the prior varieties selling at the markets, the Cavendish banana differs itself in regards to its unique quality which consumers have favorably preference over it.



Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics

The arrival of the Banana bunchy top virus decimated the supplies of the banana in the local markets. In addition, cyclones have greatly caused more damage causing farmers to grow a different crop.

Figure 3 shows the trend of Average Supply and Average Prices of banana at local markets around the country from 2016 to 2021. The Average Supply has experienced a huge increased in 2019 after a few months of establishment of the Cavendish improved variety in the country. However, a slight decreased has recorded in 2020 and this is due to Covid-19 restrictions that limited the number of hours that allows farmers to sell their produced at the main local markets at Fugalei and Taufusi.



Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics

⁴ Figure 4 shows the monthly average supply and price for banana in 2021. Deceleration in supplying from August to November causes the price to reach its peaked of more than 10% in November but August has recorded the highest supply of more than 15% that pushes the price down to \$.97 per kilo

Export Market Situation

The exportation of fresh banana to New Zealand has been ceased in 2019 because of some biosecurity issues. However, exporting of frozen banana to both New Zealand and Australia markets has been increased more effectively nowadays.

⁴Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2021

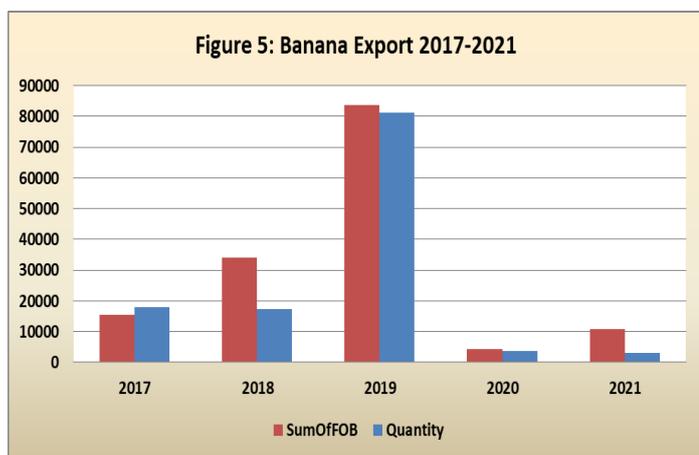


Figure 5 above indicates that 2019 has the highest volume of frozen banana being exported of more than eighty thousands kilograms of fresh banana exported overseas. It is a big increase of more than fifty percent compared to 2018, however a huge dropped was experienced in 2020 of more than sixty percent when Covid-19 strikes in late 2019 and limited the number of shipments going overseas for export products in the whole of 2020.

Export Process

The Shipment will spend five days in transit before clearing New Zealand customs and landing in the hands of distributor who will transport them to their local retailers. Table 2 below shows the average retail price of 1 kilogram of frozen banana in New Zealand.

Table 2.

Product	Unit	Price \$NZ
Frozen Banana	1kg	\$6.00

Source: NZ Statistics

As mentioned above Australia has also opened their markets for Samoa to export its frozen bananas which is a great opportunity for the country to expand its banana markets.

There is a wide range of competitive frozen banana markets in New Zealand and it's unlikely that Samoa will ever be a major importer of frozen bananas. However, Samoa can manage its banana plantations from pest and diseases to increase production to be able to have consistent and stability on their supplies exported in the future.

There is a possibility for Samoa's banana industry to revive back since there is now potential for the locals to grow them; new and improved varieties has established, shipments has been exported to New Zealand markets and with commitment and effort to put in, to ensure production availability.

Pests and Diseases Control

- **Banana bunchy top virus**-is the most devastating disease of the bananas all throughout the period since planting until now. The infested stool will be sprayed

with an insecticide (tridex) to kill the aphids then removed the whole banana stool.

- **Black leak streak or black sigatoka**- this banana disease is caused by fungus *micosphaerellafijinesis*. Therefore, it is important to apply good management practices to maintain good bananas and avoid being affected to fungus. Removing of old leaves and spraying fungicides on banana plants.
- **Banana flower injection**- scab moths and thrips were the most devastating pests on banana flowers as a result of poor and unmarketable bunches. All emerged flowers should be daily injected with a tridex insecticide. As a result, will produce clean and good bunch.
- **Bunch clearing**- before the banana started flowering, it is necessary to clear all materials such as leaves that can become contact with it during its development causing damage. A sharp knife or cutting tools on pole can remove unwanted materials from contacting the bunch and this should be done daily.

Table 3: Average Prices at the Fugalei Market

Commodities (SAT\$/kg)	July 2021	August 2021	Lowest price for 2021 to date	Highest price for 2021 to date
Taro	1.99	2.51	1.60	2.51
Banana	1.12	0.97	0.92	1.12
Taamu	3.42	3.8	3.35	5.17
Coconut	0.94	1.01	0.94	1.01
Breadfruit	1.23	1.07	1.00	1.47
Yam	3.29	3.53	3.28	4.51
Head cabbage	7.31	6.56	6.56	11.89
Tomato	14.46	16.06	13.42	17.26
Chinese cabbage	5.72	4.54	4.54	7.21
Cucumber	4.58	4.54	4.11	5.21
Pumpkin	3.65	3.37	2.91	4.45

Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics

Table 4: Foreign Currency per Tala (SAT\$)

July-August 2021	USD\$	NZD\$	AUD\$	YEN\$	FJD\$	EURO
1 Samoan Tala SAT\$ =	0.39993	0.5804	0.5573	53.2900	0.8716	0.3959

Source: Central Bank of Samoa

Market Link Newsletter

This newsletter is published bi-monthly and it seeks to assist stakeholders (farmers, consumers, wholesalers, policymakers) make informed market and marketing decisions based on credible, relevant price and supply information. Help us help you by providing constructive feedback on market information issues that will improve the service which will lead to growing a healthy and wealthy Samoa. For more information contact the Policy, Planning and Communication Division and ask for Soo Iuvale.

Disclaimer

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Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
P.O Box 1874
Phone: (685) 22 561 Fax: (685) 28 097
Email: junior.iuvale@maf.gov.ws

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