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Honduras: Banana Plantation Employees Return To Work After 12-day Strike

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In statements to reporters on Oct. 16, President Jose Azcona Hoyo said that about 10,000 banana plantation employees had returned to work after a 12-day strike. The president said the US-based Castle and Cooke agreed to give raises to 70 workers whose jobs at the El Huguerito plantation were eliminated when a packing plant was sold. The plantation is located 185 miles north of Tegucigalpa. The labor dispute began Sept. 18 when Castle and Cooke sold the plant to independent packers, and transferred the workers without offering them a pay hike. Under Honduran law, workers can be transferred only with their consent, and providing there are economic benefits. Azcona said the agreement with Castle and Cooke was reached four days ago in talks which he mediated. The amount of the raise is yet to be negotiated. Azcona Hoyo had threatened to declare a state of emergency after the Workers Confederation and the National Farmworkers Organization announced plans to strike. Combined membership of the two labor organizations is 500,000. The president said that the strike caused the loss of an estimated $5.3 million in export revenues. Honduras exports 50 million 100-pound crates of bananas per year to the US and Europe. Two US-based companies, Castle and Cooke, and United Brands, account for 60% and 40%, respectively, of Honduran banana exports. (Basic data from AP, 10/16/89)

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