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## **Panama: Banana Packers Return To Work**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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On Oct. 31, about 1,000 employees of the Chiriqui Land Company returned to work after settling a weeklong strike over new export packing guidelines. The strike, which came in response to a new Chiriqui policy calling for use of extra packing material to reduce bruising of bananas, affected 13 of the company's 20 packing plants in Changuinola. Francisco Smith, the union's secretary general, said the new requirements translated to a pay cut for packers since earnings are calculated on a piecework basis, i.e., quantity of fruit (not paper). Under terms of the strike settlement, Chiriqui agreed to drop the extra packing material requirement. The Chiriqui Land Company exports over 100,000 18-kg. boxes of bananas per year with earnings estimated at around US\$18 million. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 10/31/91)

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