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Deborah Tyroler

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Costa Rica: Comptroller General's Office Reports Sale Of Government-owned Land By Chiquita Banana Company

by Deborah Tyroler
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According to a report released Jan. 18 by the Comptroller General's office, the US-based Chiquita International company sold nearly 10,000 ha. of land owned by the government. In 1975, the company donated the land in question to the Agrarian Development Institute (IDA) for settlement of agricultural workers. Then in 1986, Chiquita apparently reached agreement with the IDA executive board to repossess the land. The Comptroller General described this arrangement as "absolutely illegal." The Comptroller's office stated that the IDA lacked the authority to sell or transfer government property. Chiquita may have received several million dollars in sales to individuals who likely acquired the land "in good faith." The Comptroller has requested judicial authorities and cabinet members to determine whether criminal or civil sanctions are in order for notaries and government officials involved in the 1986 transaction. The United Fruit Company currently known as the Costa Rica Banana Company, began operations in Costa Rica in 1889. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 01/18/92)

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