





From Bananas to Beaches

Middle American countries were once called *banana republics* because of their heavy reliance on one major export, such as bananas or coffee. Large land owners and foreign fruit companies dominated both politics and the economy. Now tourism provides much of the economic growth for this region. About 43 percent of the GDP in the Bahamas is from tourism.

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Many Caribbean farmers sell fresh produce, such as plantains, mangoes, and coconuts, at open-air markets like this one in Grenada.

ANNUAL MIDDLE AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Agriculture remains important to Middle America. Fruit and sugar cane are key exports for Mexico and Cuba. Costa Rica exports approximately 2 million tons of bananas to the United States and other countries each year.

