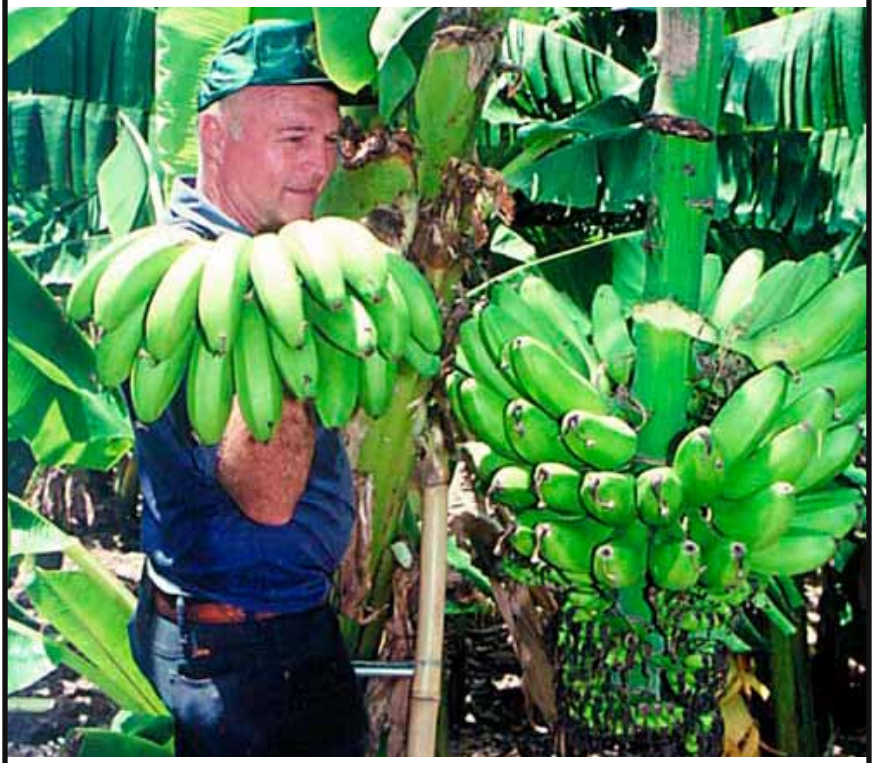
FHIA

HONDURAN FUNDATION FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

BANANA FHIA-03

A hardy cooking banana for home gardens and with a long harvesting period



Banana and Plantain Program

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INTRODUCTION

The hybrid FHIA-03, which was developed in 1987, is a dwarf cooking banana of the “Bluggoe” type. It has great potential for several countries in East and West Africa, which mostly have areas with marginal soils that do not allow the Cavendish banana to grow well. Presently the hybrid is being produced commercially in Cuba on more than 3500 hectares. It is also grown in countries like Burundi, Cameroon, and Nigeria.

CHARACTERISTICS

Morphology

The plant height is between 2.5 and 3.7 m it has decumbent leaves and a dark stem. The bunch is cylindrical and hangs vertically. The green fruits are straight at the distal part; the flower end is sharppointed.

FHIA-03 bunch.

FHIA-03 is a tetraploid that does not produce seed. Being a short and strong plant, it supports bunches of up to 50 kg without propping.

Phenology

The time from planting to flowering is between 271 and 307 days. The first production cycle requires 100 to 110 days from flowering to harvest. The second flowering occurs between 430 and 530 days after planting.

Production

The net bunch weight without the stalk is between 30 and 40 kg, and the number of fruits per bunch varies from 155 to 179.

The weight of one banana is between 155 and 179 g.

Resistance features

The hybrid is resistant to the Panama disease fungus, the Black Sigatoka fungus and to the Moko wilt bacteria; it also shows partial resistance to the nematode *Radopholus similis*, but is susceptible to *Pratylenchus coffeae*.

Bunches of FHIA-03 (left), the variety Bluggoe (middle) and a variety from East Africa.

AGRONOMICAL ASPECTS

Agro-ecological requirements

The hybrid is able to grow well in a range of agro-ecological conditions in which other similar varieties do not prosper. It is tolerant to prolonged periods of drought and produces even on poor soils. It is also adapted to higher altitudes.

Altitude:	FHIA-03 grows well at altitudes from 0 to 1,500 meters above sea level.
Soils:	it is able to produce on marginal soils.
Rain:	should be well-distributed and about 2000 mm per year.
Temperature:	the optimum mean temperature is 28 °C.

Crop Management

Plant densities of 1600 plants per hectare are recommended.

Fertilizer requirements should be based on the results of a soil analysis. Generally, under the prevailing conditions in

Sula valley (Honduras), annual applications of 300 kg of nitrogen and 250 kg of potassium per hectare are recommended.

Deleafing should be carried out every 4 weeks, eliminating the doubled leaves and removing the infected tips of other leaves. Young shoots have to be removed every 8 weeks. The removal of “sister shoots” should be done 4 months after planting.

Post-harvest

FHIA-03 has an excellent taste when cooked green. The ripe fruits have an “apple” flavor. Cooking time is only half of that required for the “Bluggoe” variety. It should be taken into account that, once the bunch is harvested, its green life is short. It is recommended for home consumption, not for market sales. Also, the hands should be harvested one at a time from the plants as needed.