

Chiquita Advances Banana Innovation with Completion of Yelloway Banana Pan-Genome

Scientific milestone from global banana brand strengthens global efforts to develop disease-resistant, climate-resilient bananas

Fort Lauderdale, FL – February XX, 2026 – [Chiquita](#) has announced a major advancement in banana innovation with the completion of the Yelloway banana pan-genome, a foundational scientific breakthrough designed to accelerate the development of disease-resistant and climate-resilient banana varieties.

Advancing Banana Genetics Through Yelloway

Developed through Yelloway B.V., an innovation joint venture between Chiquita and [KeyGene](#), (“Yelloway”) the banana pan-genome provides a comprehensive view of banana genetic diversity. By capturing the full range of naturally occurring variation, the pan-genome enables more precise research, supports biodiversity preservation, and strengthens long-term breeding efforts aimed at protecting the future of bananas.

Yelloway was created to unlock banana genetic diversity and advance classical breeding, supported by advanced genomic technologies. The pan-genome was developed by Yelloway using Oxford Nanopore sequencing technology, in collaboration with partners across the banana value chain, including Innocent Drinks, which provided match funding through its Farmer Innovation Fund.

Responding to Global Disease and Climate Challenges

The completion of the pan-genome comes at a critical moment for the global banana industry. As Fusarium wilt Tropical Race 4 (TR4) continues to spread and Black Sigatoka drives more than \$100 million in annual protective costs, the ability to identify and deploy resilient genetic traits faster and more accurately has become increasingly essential.

Covering the genetic diversity of *Musa acuminata*—the species underpinning widely recognized banana varieties such as Gros Michel and Cavendish—the pan-genome allows Yelloway to move beyond broad genetic exploration toward targeted breeding decisions. This approach accelerates the development of banana varieties that are more resilient to disease, better suited to a changing climate, and aligned with consumer expectations.

Expert Perspectives on a Scientific Milestone

Professor Gert Kema, board member of Yelloway and emeritus professor of phytopathology at Wageningen University, said the pan-genome provides researchers with a new level of insight. “Imagine the genome as a landscape. To reach your destination, you need a map. Until now, we were driving mainly on highways, enough to reach major cities. But to reach every village, you need GPS coordinates, secondary roads, and sometimes unpaved tracks. The banana pan-genome provides that high-resolution map, allowing us to fully explore the entire genomic landscape of banana.”

Fernando Garcia-Bastidas, Head of the Yellowway Banana Breeding Program, emphasized its impact, stating, “The banana pan-genome allows us to analyze, select, and deploy the most relevant genetic material. It dramatically accelerates the development of improved banana varieties resistant to major threats such as TR4 and Black Sigatoka, diseases that endanger the banana as we know it today.”

Peter Stedman, Sustainability Director at Chiquita, also commented, “When we launched Yellowway, we knew the knowledge generated would extend far beyond a single organization. Completing the banana pan-genome is a landmark achievement that demonstrates the value of collaboration across the supply chain and has the potential to advance banana research and breeding worldwide.”

Global Dialogue at Fruit Logistica in Berlin

Chiquita shared insights from this work during Fruit Logistica in Berlin, where Stedman participated in the event’s Sustainability Panel, highlighting the role of science-based innovation and cross-industry collaboration in building a more resilient banana supply chain.

Supporting Industry-Wide Collaboration

As part of its commitment to shared progress, Yellowway will provide academic researchers with access to the banana pan-genome through a dedicated web portal, supporting collaboration and continued advancement in banana breeding and research.

About Chiquita Brands International

Chiquita is a leading global produce company that is committed to providing both consumers and customers across nearly 70 countries with the highest quality of fruit and service, making Chiquita the banana of choice. For more than 150 years, Chiquita has been proudly producing great-tasting, superior-quality bananas. The brand creates a positive impact by implementing the principles of sustainability throughout all of its business practices under the "Behind the Blue Sticker" initiative.

Recently named one of [America’s Most Loved Brands by *Newsweek*](#), and recognized as a 2025 *Good Housekeeping* Snack Award winner, these honors underscore Chiquita’s strong emotional connection with consumers and its long-standing reputation for trust and quality. Chiquita’s iconic Blue Sticker has been the seal of approval for high-quality fruit, and a celebration of fun, but it also represents an unwavering commitment to sustainable farming, biodiversity and giving back to the communities in which the banana plantations operate. Great-tasting and convenient Chiquita bananas are fat-free, and provide a source of potassium, fiber and vitamin B6. To learn more, visit www.chiquita.com and follow us on [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#) and [LinkedIn](#).