

What it Means to Give Roses this Valentine's Day

Colombian Workers Benefit From Flower Gift-Giving

Soon, flower retailers will be abuzz filling all the flower orders in time for Valentine's Day. This is good news for the nearly 45,000 Colombians working for the more than 163 Florverde® participating farms. The Colombian flower industry and Florverde® growers depend upon Valentine's Day flower exports – which make up 20 percent of annual shipments – to help support the many social programs that help provide a better quality of life for workers and their families.

“Colombia's flower industry not only produces beautiful, fresh-cut blooms for the world to enjoy, it also produces hope and opportunity for thousands of Colombian families,” said Augusto Solano, President of the Association of Colombian Flower Exporters, Asocolflores. “Sales of flowers at Valentine's Day support a variety of social programs ranging from education and training to health care and housing.”

Commitment to Social Development

Information collected through Florverde® helps in determining needs and planning social programs designed to improve the quality of life of flower workers and their families. Current programs in place on many Florverde® farms include:

- **Continued Education Program** - Aimed at eradicating illiteracy among flower workers, more than 1,700 workers participated in literacy, elementary and secondary education programs in 2007.
- **Flowers are Home Program** - Conducted in cooperation with subsidized housing programs and public-private partnerships to help workers purchase and improve their homes, this program has benefited more than 6,000 workers since its inception in 2002 – with more than 2,000 families receiving a subsidy toward purchasing a home.
- **Childcare Program** - Consisting of high-quality childcare centers on or near farms that provide daycare services for children while their parents work, more than 18,000 children benefited from this program in 2007, which is run jointly with the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF).
- **Oral Health Program** - Approximately 35,000 area children between the ages of four and twelve have participated in this program and received instruction on proper dental hygiene.

- ***School of Floriculture for Displaced and Vulnerable Colombians*** – With the support of the United ***States Agency for International Development (USAID)*** and Florverde®-certified flower farms, this program enables families displaced by violence in the countryside to find jobs, generate income and recover dignity. Those who join begin as apprentices and earn a salary, while learning flower-growing skills and techniques. After one year of training, apprentices can become permanent workers on flower farms. More than 1,600 families has benefited from this initiative.
- ***Cultivating Peace in the Family*** - Also supported by USAID, *Cultivating Peace* is contributing to building peace and tackling violence in Colombia. The program teaches workers to manage conflict in peaceful ways in the family, work and community. Since 2000, approximately 50,000 workers and their families have received training in workshops.

In addition to established social programs, Florverde® farms offer additional benefits to workers as well as strict compliance with U.S. and global environmental and social standards.

- On-site medical assistance and clean drinking water, dining rooms, hot meals, restrooms and changing rooms.
- Discrimination of all types, including gender bias, is prohibited in both hiring and on-going employment
- Chemical risk prevention programs and ergonomic equipment designed to protect workers.
- Florverde® farms provide their workers with health insurance, disability and retirement benefits.
- The average work week in member companies is 46.5 hours vs. the legal work week of 48 hours. The average wage of workers in member companies is 20 percent over the minimum legal wage.
- Workers on Florverde®-certified farms are required to be over 18 years old.
- Half of all Florverde® companies have a Cooperative Worker Association, similar to credit unions, which allow workers to save a portion of their salary each month and receive small mortgage credits.
- Many Florverde®-certified companies provide employees and their families with time for sports and other recreational activities.