

ECUADOR ROSE INDUSTRY

By Robert Young

Roses. The beauty of which is appreciated by millions the world over. Nothing says I care, I love you, I appreciate you, I hope you feel better than roses. Better than a third of all roses available in the United States are supplied by Ecuador. The Ecuadorian Andes climate with its equatorial proximity to the sun is ideal for the rose industry. Ecuador is the world leader of “long-stem” cut rose’s production leading Ethiopia and Columbia. Very fertile volcanic soil is coupled with sunny days and cool nights making for ideal growing conditions. There are over 30,000 varieties of roses in the world today. They are no longer a product of small farmers. Large producers dominate the market. A Rose costs on average 17 cents to produce in Ecuador and are sold for 8 dollars and up. Labor is cheap (most workers make above minimum wages), and the largest expenses are shipping and pesticides. Ecuador has long been criticized about the pesticide usages in the past; however there are more growers concentrating on organic and green procedures. There are no pesticide regulations governing Ecuador. Roughly 80% of the workforce is female. After cultivation and shipping preparation (preservatives to prevent rotting), they are chilled then flown overnight to Miami. From there distributed to various stores and flower shops throughout the United States.

Ecuador has enjoyed subsidies from the United States in the past as an incentive to steer the country away from the drug trade already prevalent from its neighboring border countries. Ecuador has also enjoyed duty-free status on roses and other items in the past. This has been very helpful to Ecuador as 45-50% of exports go the United States. Since 1991 when the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) passed Ecuador’s flower industry has flourished (excuse the pun).

A brief history of the long stemmed rose has the tea rose of Europe being crossbred with a rose from China in the 1800s producing a single rose with ability to repeatedly bloom throughout the year. Red roses represent romance and love traditionally. Pink represent gratitude and appreciation. Yellow are cheerful representing friendship and joy. White is represented for sympathy, remembrance. Orange signifies passion and desire. Purple represent royalty, fantasy.

So whatever the occasion treat yourself, your loved ones, or your friends to a bunch of roses on your next visit to Ecuador. Guaranteed fresh and inexpensive, from the rose capital of the world; Ecuador.