

Unit 7: Flowers from Ecuador

Robin Peñaherrera: Well, we ship from the farm, on Friday night, gets on a plane on Saturday morning. It goes to Miami, and from Miami it is trucked all over the United States, and it takes anywhere between one to four days to get to the destinations all over.

Narrator: One of those destinations is Alan Woods Flowers. At the store, workers cut the flowers, and put them in water so they start drinking and growing.

Allan Woods: At this shop, we will sell about 4,000 roses on Valentine's Day itself. It's the single busiest day of the year for our shop in terms of dollar value—and stress. Most of them come from Ecuador.

Nathalie Cely: Last year, we export to United States around 660 million of fresh cut flowers. I would say that from that amount, a hundred million dollars are roses.

Narrator: Around 25 percent of roses in the United States come from Ecuador. Ecuador's flower industry has grown quickly in recent years. This has helped create employment for many people in the northern part of the country. Around 60,000 people now work in the industry.

Nathalie Cely: But for myself, this industry is very close to my heart because 50 percent of the job creation is for women.

Narrator: Many of Ecuador's flower companies also operate under fair trade laws. This means that workers can expect to receive a fair wage and good working conditions. Robin Peñaherrera has worked for 25 years in Ecuador's flower industry. He's seen the positive changes the industry has brought about in parts of the country. But why are flowers so popular?

Allan Woods: I've always enjoyed them. They're kind of addictive. Really brings a magic to an interior.