

January 21, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Congratulations on being elected President of the United States. We wish you every success and look forward to working with you and your administration. In particular, we express our willingness to work with you to bring immediate and full change with regard to U.S. policy toward trade and economic relations with Cuba. Open two-way trade and travel with Cuba not only allows Cuba to generate the foreign exchange it requires to buy more products from the U.S., but it also significantly improves our relationships with our other trading partners in the region.

Trade with Cuba is important to the United States for economic, diplomatic, and geopolitical reasons. We respectfully urge you to use your executive authority to open up U.S. – Cuba trade and travel by eliminating regulatory restrictions on personal and commercial travel to Cuba and allowing normal commercial transactions and direct payment terms. It is our understanding that such direct payment terms are currently allowed for payment of services provided by travel companies and telecommunications companies. U.S. payment and travel restrictions have been the two principal impediments to normalized trade flows with Cuba. Removing these unjustified obstacles at once after you have taken office will effect meaningful, meritorious change that is long overdue.

Furthermore, devastating hurricanes last year damaged homes, infrastructure, and crops across the island. Opening up unrestricted trade with Cuba would allow our nation to also focus on Cuba's humanitarian needs in an unimpeded manner.

Letters from 104 U.S. Representatives and 24 U.S. Senators, sent last year, demonstrate strong bipartisan Congressional support for improving U.S. – Cuba relations. In 2000, Congress reinforced the importance and value of agricultural and medical trade with Cuba with passage of the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA). Since then, Congress has demonstrated repeatedly its desire to open trade with Cuba by adopting legislative language in appropriations bills that would overturn anti-business regulatory impediments to U.S. – Cuba trade that interfered with the 2000 TSRA statute.

Page 2
January 2009

Our organizations' members represent a wide cross section of U.S. agricultural producers, food processors, and exporters who have strongly supported unobstructed trade with Cuba for many years. Unimpeded U.S. – Cuba trade and travel will immediately benefit U.S. agricultural, humanitarian, commercial/industrial, financial, and transportation, sectors.

Now is the time to change U.S. relations with Cuba to an unrestricted, unobstructed status that facilitates normal trade flows and open travel. We express our strong interest and willingness to work with you to bring about this timely and positive change. Thank you for your consideration of this key issue for our industries.

Respectfully,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Meat Institute
American Soybean Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Turkey Federation
North American Export Grain Association
North American Millers Association
Northharvest Bean Growers Association
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Grains Council
US Rice Producers Association
U.S. Wheat Associates