



June 28, 2010

Dear House Agriculture Committee Member:

I write today to urge your "yes" vote on H.R. 4645, the Travel Restriction Reform and Export Enhancement Act, during the House Committee on Agriculture mark-up on June 30. Further, I would ask for your opposition to any amendments offered to the bill.

The National Association of Wheat Growers believes the time is right for Congress to make common-sense, incremental policy changes with respect to Cuba and to remove the trade and travel restrictions that do nothing but hurt agriculture's competitiveness and the U.S. economy.

H.R. 4645 would clarify how U.S. farmers and agricultural businesses conduct sales to Cuba, requiring that agricultural exports to Cuba meet the same payment requirements as exports to other countries. It would also allow U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba, consistent with their ability to do so to every other country. The travel portion of the bill would be critical to enabling Cuba to have the cash available to purchase U.S. agricultural products, considering we do not offer credit to the Cuban government as do our key competitors. We also believe this portion of the bill will help facilitate a closer trading relationship and increase demand for high-quality food.

Sitting just 90 miles off our shore and with more than 11 million mouths to feed, Cuba should be one of the United States' most natural trading partners. However, U.S. wheat exports to the island country are severely stymied due to existing payment and travel restrictions, to the point we have achieved only 40 percent market share in Cuba over the past decade versus higher than 80 percent market share in other Caribbean countries. This means tens of millions of dollars of lost wheat sales for our farmers each year.

Wheat exports are languishing this year in light of high stocks, which pushes down the price received by farmers and has a dramatic effect on rural economies. This may be one of the only trade votes presented to Congress this year, and it is critically important that you seize the opportunity to help make this common-sense policy change.

We urge you to vote "yes" on H.R. 4645, the Travel Restriction Reform and Export Enhancement Act, and urge you to oppose any amendments offered to the bill.

Sincerely,

Jerry McReynolds
President