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U.S. Wheat Industry Supports Increased Trade With Cuba

The U.S. wheat industry urges Congress and the Obama Administration to immediately ease trade and travel restrictions with Cuba to allow U.S. wheat growers to fully realize potential sales.

As members of an industry that exports more than half of its production in a typical year, U.S. wheat growers rely on the ability to open and expand international markets. Cuba represents substantial potential for future sales of U.S. wheat with a population of more than 11 million that consumes close to 1 MMT of wheat per year. Cuba is the largest importer of wheat and wheat products in the Caribbean.

Though proximity and historical ties should provide a competitive advantage for U.S. wheat, the U.S. holds a less than 50 percent market share in Cuba, compared to a more than 85 percent market share in other Caribbean areas. Over the past ten years, Cuba has imported greater quantities of wheat from the European Union, Canada and Argentina, with an estimated cost to the U.S. wheat industry of the continued trade restrictions at upwards of \$40 million per year.

The U.S. wheat industry believes that the best way to help U.S. wheat growers fully realize sales potential in Cuba is to overturn the February 2005 change to financing requirements and to lift travel restrictions to allow for the freedom of reciprocal travel between the U.S. and Cuba for all citizens.

U.S. Wheat Associates, an export market development organization working in more than 85 countries, has continually stressed to the Obama Administration and its predecessors the harm current Cuba policy does to U.S. wheat's prospects with the island nation.

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), the industry's policy advocacy organization, strongly supports immediate legislative action to clarify the payment rules and ease travel restrictions hamstringing U.S.-Cuba wheat trade. **The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act (H.R. 874/S. 428), Agricultural Export Facilitation Act of 2009 (H.R. 1737) and others are vital to achieving these goals.**

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