

# *Cuba increases distribution of rent-free land*

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As part of recent endeavours by Cuban authorities to expand the acreage under cultivation and to reduce food imports, the Government has announced the distribution of tens of thousands of acres of rent-free farmland to individual private farmers, many of whom are members of Credit and Service Cooperatives across the nation.

All those interested simply have to present a petition for the free assignation of land up to sixty hectares. A hectare covers one hundred square meters of land.

This decision places individual private farmers on an equal footing with state-owned farms and farms belonging to private farmer cooperatives.

Most of the new acreage is covered by marabù, a thorny bush that must be eradicated in order make the land available for cultivation.

The State owned land to be assigned to private farmers is not open for negotiation. However, the State has assured that it will not recover the acreage assigned to the farmer while it is under continuous production.

The whole endeavour being to turn scrub land into a productive area, whose profits will be accrued by the beneficiary.

The ultimate objective is to open a new avenue for increasing food production and an income to all those interested in taking on the challenge and who are ready to work hard, especially at the beginning.

There are a number of inducements available to agricultural entrepreneurs during the startup period. The Cuban State is prepared to negotiate soft loans, technology and equipment to participating farmers and help them to incorporate thousands of acres currently unexploited to the food production national system.

According to reports, this proposal has been embraced by private farmers across the land and not only by them: a significant number of city residents of rural origin are increasingly applying for unused arable land.

But after this first stage is over, the new crops will provide ample income to the new producers, who will be replacing costly food imports with domestically-produced foodstuffs.

A new era is opening for Cuban agriculture, and private farmers hold an important key to its success.

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