

# *Expansion of self-employment categories announced in Cuba*

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Havana, February 8 (RHC)—Cuban authorities announced the approval of the expansion of self-employment categories, allowing small private businesses to operate in most fields.

According to the Economy and Planning Minister, Alejandro Gil, this is an important step for the increase of jobs, in line with the Ordering Task that the country is implementing since January 1.

The measure, coming as the Caribbean island seeks to recover from an economic slump, will expand the field from 127 activities to more than 2,000 Labor Minister Marta Elena Feito Cabrera said at a recent meeting of the Council of Ministers that approved the policy.

President Miguel Diaz-Canel said last year the country faced an international and local crisis and would implement a series of reforms to increase exports, cut imports and stimulate domestic demand.

He said the measures would include “the improvement of the non-state sector, with immediate priority in the expansion of self-employment and removal of obstacles.”

The non-state sector - not including agriculture with its hundreds of thousands of small farms, thousands of cooperative and day laborers - comprises small private businesses and cooperatives; their employees, artisans, taxi drivers and tradespeople.

The labor minister said there were more than 600,000 people in the sector, some 13% of the labor force. They are all designated as self-employed. An estimated 40% depend mainly on the tourism industry or work in public transportation.

Over the last six months, the government has also moved to grant access to wholesale markets for small businesses and import and export through state companies.

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