

# *Exploring new opportunities*

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## **Exploring new opportunities**

By María Josefina Arce

Exploring new opportunities for bilateral exchange is a purpose of the U.S. Agricultural Coalition for Cuba, which for years has not rested in its defense of a normal relationship with the Caribbean nation.

This will was reiterated during a meeting with Cuban diplomats at the Cuban Embassy in Washington, which was also attended by members of the Arkansas State Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee.

Formed in January 2015 to promote the development of agricultural trade between the two countries, the Coalition has expressed its opposition to the blockade that for sixty years has maintained its country against the Cuban people and that causes heavy losses to the different branches.

In agriculture alone, the hostile policy of the White House caused damages of around 271 million dollars between August 2021 and February of this year.

A few days after Joe Biden assumed the presidency, the group asked him to return to the policies of supporting the development of beneficial relations between the agricultural sector of the two nations.

In a letter to the president, it proposed that U.S. farmers, businesses, private organizations and universities work with their Cuban counterparts on the challenges of increasing productivity, adapting to climate change and building sound trade strategies.

Its members have emphasized that the two states are natural markets due to their proximity, which favors faster exports and imports at a lower cost. They have also affirmed that for the United States it would represent the creation of numerous jobs in this area.

Several meetings have already taken place between the Coalition and representatives of the Cuban business sector. The first one took place in 2018 and the second one a year later.

The III Cuba-U.S. Agricultural Conference was held in April this year in Havana and called to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the recent creation in the archipelago of micro, medium and small enterprises to produce together and invest in capital and knowledge.

Paul Johnson, president of the Coalition, pointed out that the agricultural sectors of both nations share the same objectives, to ensure sufficient food for the population.

The meeting took place in a difficult context for the island due to the intensification of the U.S. economic siege, which essentially remains intact and therefore, the same obstacles to trade, in addition to the global economic situation after two years of pandemic by COVID 19.

"We can and need to do much more," said the president of the U.S.-Cuba Agricultural Coalition, which despite Washington's hostile policy has worked over the years in favor of relations between the two peoples.

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