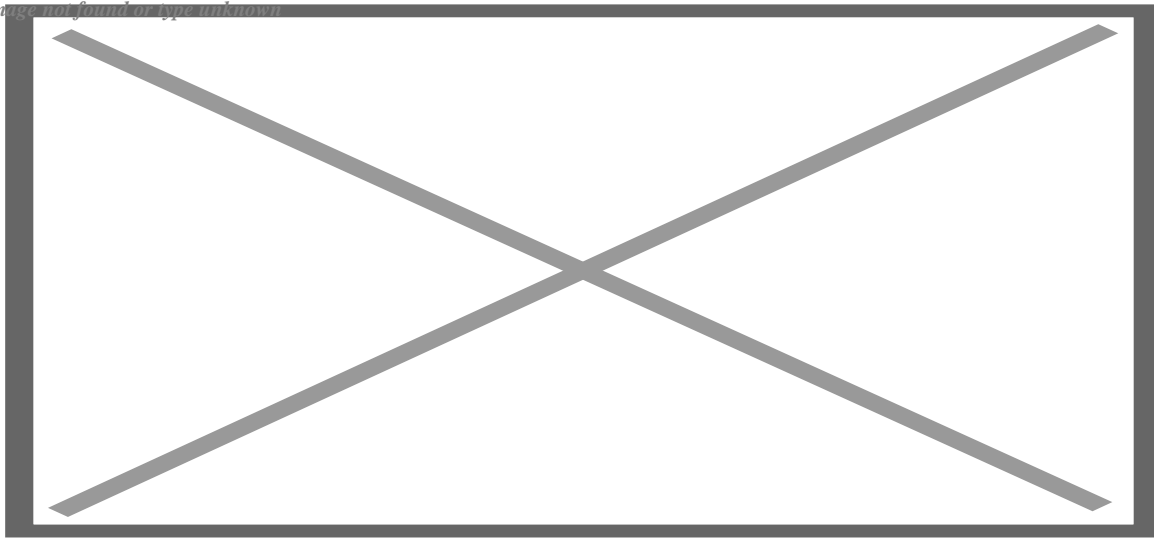


The impact of hurricanes on Cuban agriculture

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The impact of hurricanes on Cuban agriculture

By Maritza Gutiérrez

Agriculture in Cuba, a fundamental pillar of the country's economy and food supply, is facing increasingly complex challenges due to hurricanes and climate change. These natural phenomena not only devastate crops, but also threaten the sustainability of the island's agricultural practices.

Climate change is causing an increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes. These extreme weather events can wreak havoc on agricultural land, washing away crops, eroding soils and destroying infrastructure. Warmer ocean temperatures and rising sea levels are contributing factors.

Cuba's government program to combat climate change, known as Tarea Vida, includes a group of provincial and municipal actions led by the Ministry of Agriculture and CITMA.

To this end, regular training workshops are held to provide tools and a broad understanding of the importance of managing the effects of climate change in order to create a solid economic and productive base.

Hurricanes, especially during the hurricane season from June to November, cause catastrophic damage to crops.

In recent years, events such as Hurricane Irma in 2017 and Hurricane Elsa in 2021 have left deep marks on Cuban agriculture. Wind gusts and heavy rains destroy sugar cane, tobacco and vegetable plantations that are vital to the local economy.

In addition to the immediate destruction, hurricanes also cause long-term problems. Soil erosion from torrential rains reduces soil fertility, while salinization from coastal flooding affects water and soil quality,

making sustainable agriculture increasingly difficult.

What is certain is that climate change is altering weather patterns in the Caribbean, with more frequent and intense hurricanes. This poses an additional challenge to Cuban farmers, who are already having to adapt to changing conditions. There is an urgent need to implement sustainable agricultural practices to mitigate the effects of these phenomena.

Therefore, adaptation to climate change is essential for agriculture in Cuba, and in this direction the Life Task includes strategic actions and tasks such as: not building houses or facilities in areas close to the coastal zone, adapting agricultural activities, especially those with the greatest impact on food security, reducing the areas of crops close to the coast or affected by saline intrusion, diversifying crops, improving soil conditions, introducing and developing varieties resistant to the new temperature scenario.

All these actions require not only the responsible authorities and farmers, but also the promotion of resilience strategies. These include diversifying crops, improving agricultural infrastructure, and implementing soil conservation techniques.

For Cuba and in the face of climate change, sustainable agriculture is not only a desirable goal, but an urgent necessity in the current context.

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