

# *Cuban Sugar Harvest Gets Underway, Hoping for Output Growth*

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Havana, December 1 (RHC) — The 2014-2015 sugar cane harvest is underway in Cuba with expectations to increase the sugar output between 15 and 20 percent over the last harvests' total production.

The 2013-2014 harvest reported the largest growth over the past ten years, a four percent according to official statistics, but below the expected 1.8 million tons of sugar. The current sugar cane harvest will employ 50 sugar plants, two more than last year.

According to Celso Garcia, president of the AZCUBA Entrepreneurial Group, which replaced the former Sugar Ministry, they expect to exploit industrial capacities by more than 70 percent to obtain at least 43 tons of sugar cane per hectare and produce over 1.2 million hectoliters of alcohol, out of which 476,000 will be exported.

The current harvest will also produce more than 225,000 tons of animal feed and contribute power output to the national electric system, based on the processing of sugar cane waste.

The harvest is scheduled to wind up in May after a 100-day period of operations by all sugar plants.

The AZCUBA Group expects to revert the long-term slump of the industry, which produced 8 million tons of sugar in 1990, with projections for 2.4 million tons in 2015.

The ongoing economic reforms on the island prioritize the sustained growth of sugar production and the improvement of relations between the industry and sugar cane growers, along with diversification.

The Cuban sugar sector was considered the locomotive of the country's economy in the past but its production went down to only 1.1 million tons of sugar in 2010, the worst harvest over the past 105 years.

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