

U.S. Agricultural Delegation Visits Cuba



Havana, March 2 (RHC) -- A large U.S. agricultural delegation began three days of meetings in Cuba on Monday, with the aim of establishing stronger business ties with the Caribbean island and pressing for the end of Washington's economic blockade on Havana.

Two former agriculture secretaries, a number of state agriculture officials and representatives of various state farm bureaus are among the 95 people whose visit was organized by the U.S. Agriculture Coalition for Cuba.

The coalition was formed after the December 17th announcement that the United States and Cuba would restore diplomatic relations.

"The message we hope will get back to Washington is that we are a unifying voice that would like to see Congress act in 2015 and end the embargo," Cargill executive Devry Boughner Vorwerk, chairwoman of the coalition, told Reuters.

The coalition says U.S. farmers have their eyes on the \$2 billion market so close to

home and frustrated by U.S. restrictions.

"We understand our competitors are here -- Argentina, Brazil, the Europeans -- and our hands are being tied behind our backs by our own government," Vorwerk said.

Previous relaxations of the U.S. blockade have allowed some food sales to Cuba under unfavorable conditions, which force Havana to pay cash up front.

The delegation is scheduled to take part in a press conference this afternoon, details of which we'll offer you tomorrow.



Radio Habana Cuba