

# *Cuban companies eyeing opportunities at China Import Expo in Shanghai*

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Havana, November 5 (RHC) — Cuban companies get ready to participate in the upcoming International Import Expo in Shanghai, China's top import fair. Representatives from firms in the fields of agriculture, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, medical services, IT, telecommunications and education will be present at this major Asian business event.

The Cubans told XINHUA news agency that they see with interest the opportunities that may stem from the Shanghai fair. Ernesto Gonzalez, director for operations at Habanos S.A., the company that markets Cuban tobacco products around the world, confirmed that China is the fastest growing market for Cuban premium cigars, with sales increasing 33 percent annually. In 2019, said Gonzalez, Habanos S.A. plans to export a premium cigar made specially for the Chinese market.

Cuba's premium hand-rolled cigars were introduced to the Chinese market a decade ago and their sales still have much room to grow today.

Cuban rums are also among major Cuban exports to China. Cuba Ron S.A., a rum producer in Cuba, began selling its main brands in Beijing and Shanghai two years ago. Annual exports stand at close to

150 thousand bottles of eight different brands Cuban rum brands, and the potential for increase is “immense,” Jorge Cardoso, Cuba Ron S.A. export director said.

BioCubaFarma, the company in charge of marketing pharmaceutical and biotechnology products, has also indicated they want to consolidate ties with China, where the company already has three joint ventures. In Shanghai, BioCubaFarma will showcase therapies for treatment of ailments from cancers to cardiovascular diseases.

On November 8, in the framework of China's International Import Expo fair in Shanghai, representatives from 34 companies will participate in a China-Cuba Business Forum, covering areas like foreign investment, tourism, culture and health, and bilateral cooperation promotion.

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