

# *U.S. blockade impacts Cuban biotechnology industry*

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Sancti Spíritus, December 28 (RHC)—The U.S. economic blockade on Cuba impedes access to raw materials, technologies, and equipment necessary for the development of the biotechnology sector on the island.

Raúl Armas Ramos, director of the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) of Sancti Spíritus, told Escambray newspaper that the hostile policy forces the island to buy raw materials, equipment, spare parts and technologies in distant markets.

Armas added that this reality affected research and productions in that scientific institution, created at the initiative of the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, almost 30 years ago.

According to Armas Ramos, the production of diagnostic test strips kits for the detection of celiac disease (permanent gluten intolerance, a protein present in some cereals such as wheat, barley, and rye) is limited due to the non-existence of a new supplier of the raw material necessary for its manufacture.

In this regard, the director of Sancti Spiritus' CIGB said that given the impossibility of buying the raw material from the usual supplier, negotiations were made with U.S. companies. Still, they refused to sell the product due to the U.S. economic restrictions. Therefore, Cuba is looking for suppliers in Europe and Asia.

The Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology of Sancti Spíritus produces a wide range of biological reagents, used by the Cuban biotechnology industry in the control tests of its production processes.

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