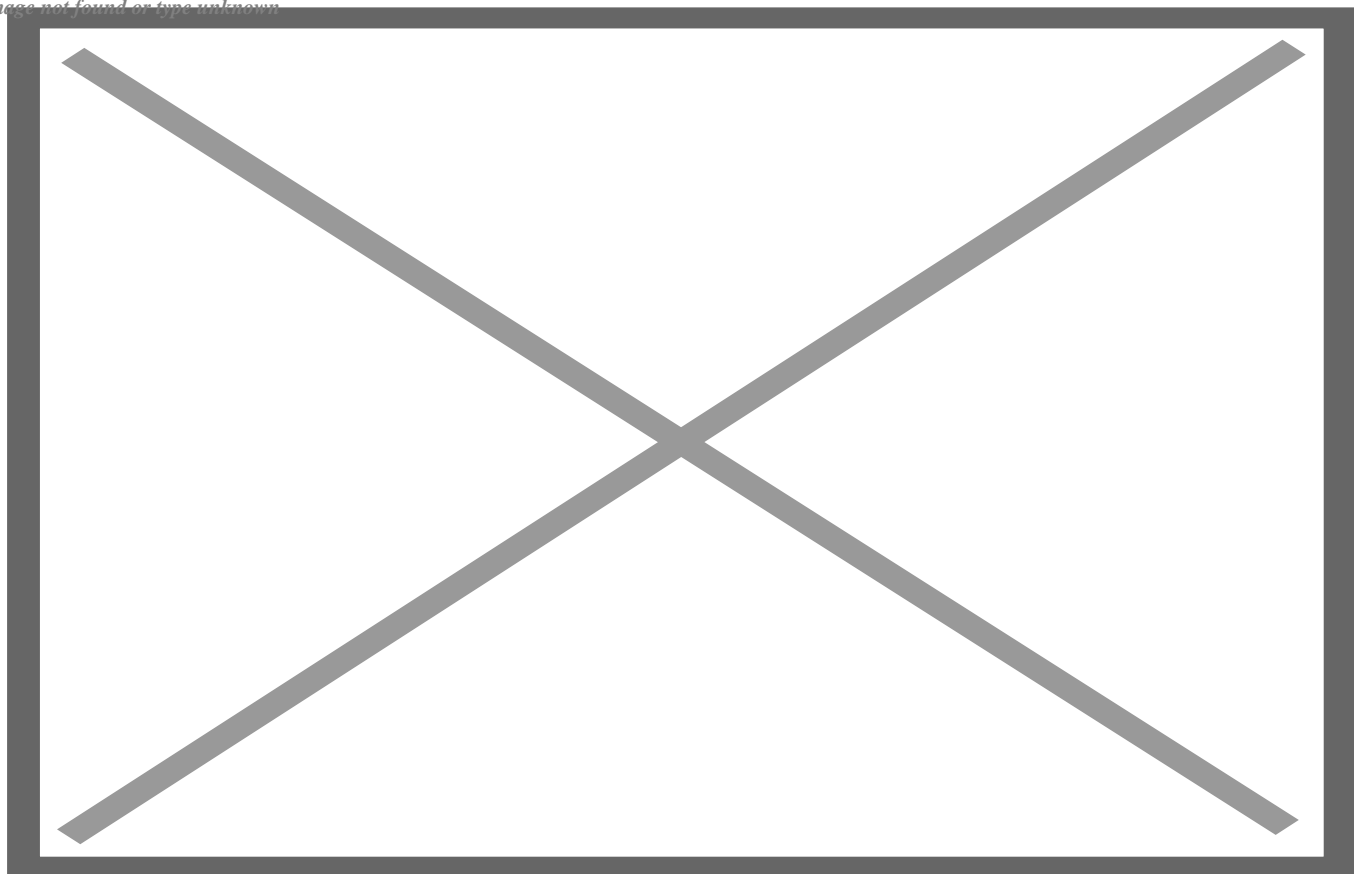


Recovering what was lost in agriculture must be priority

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Havana, November 12 (RHC) -- After the passage of Hurricane Rafael, the province of Artemisa was severely affected, mainly in the municipalities of Güira de Melena and Alquizar, Maury Hechavarría Bermúdez, deputy minister of Agriculture, assured the press.

He said, after a preliminary evaluation of the territory, that the main effects are centered on the plantain crop, exceeding 9,000 hectares; and now it must be replanted, "it is one of the strong actions that we are working on."

Likewise, more than 7,000 hectares of cassava have been affected - he said - as well as the planting of sweet potatoes, beans, vegetables and fruits; Poultry farms and pig farms also suffered damage, losing their roofs.

He acknowledged that something essential in this process is the will of agricultural and peasant producers. "There is a strong commitment from our producers, and we work tirelessly with the aim of recovering what was lost," he said.

Regarding the cold sowing campaign, he said that "we are going to work hard to be able to plant potatoes"; and as for the technological resources for this sowing, he asserted that "we have almost complete them in the country."

In Artemisa, around 43 irrigation machines were also affected; however, the specialized brigades from the eastern and central regions of the country are working hard to ensure their proper functioning, and thus ensure the potato harvest.

Given the financial situation due to the blockade imposed by the United States, there are several examples in agriculture that demonstrate the complexity of progress.

The Vice Minister of Agriculture said that by including Cuba in the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, banks are opposed to providing financing.

This, he said, "harms the transformation of the management model in agriculture," especially in reference to foreign investments that are carried out on the Island.

Hechavarría Bermúdez reported that 48 collaboration projects are already underway, and "they are aimed at providing technology and resources."

Among them, he mentioned the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Program (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and others from Peru.

He said that one of the main problems in the country is animal feed for the production of eggs, birds and pigs.

However, "work is being done to manage the production of animal feed; to recover the rice program; as well as in the planting of beans and corn," he said.

He also assured that there are already "five egg production projects; and what is intended is to market a part, at a lower price than what we have today in the markets, and allocate the other to the rationed family basket." (Granma)

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