

# *Cuban Economy Keeps Improving Despite U.S. Blockade*

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Havana, December 1 (RHC) — The Cuban economy will continue to improve despite the U.S. blockade, foreign financial restrictions and the international situation, said Economy Minister Marino Murillo as he submitted the 2015 Economic Plan at a meeting of the Council of Ministers presided over by President Raul Castro.

A report published in this morning's Granma newspaper explains that the plan aims at boosting efficiency, encouraging the performance of key economic sectors, the growth of investment in production and infrastructure in particular and maintaining basic social services.

The country's Gross Domestic Product is estimated to reach 1.3 percent this year, below the expected 2.2 percent, but it could grow to a little over 4 percent in 2015 with major results in the manufacturing industry, construction, trade, agriculture, ranching and forestry, the minister said.

As for food imports, the country plans to increase the budget dedicated to purchasing foodstuffs on the international market by 137 million dollars, which sets the figure at 2.1 billion, particularly in staples like soybeans, potato seeds, wheat and flour.

The non-state sector will continue to grow next year, particularly due to the transfer of catering and other services to private management modalities.

The most important issue this year has been paving the way for the elimination of the dual currency, said Marino Murillo, who referred to the expansion of purchases in the two currencies at hard-currency retail shops throughout the country.

The minister also said that by late September, over 476,000 Cubans had joined self-employment.

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