

Cuba to Spend \$2.2 Billion on Food Imports in 2015



Havana, December 3 (RHC) -- Cuban Economy Minister Marino Murillo says the island will spend \$2.2 billion in 2015 on food imports alone. During a recent meeting of the Council of Ministers, Murillo said next year's imports would be \$137 million more than the 2014 expenditure.

Murillo said Cuba would import more flour, soybeans, wheat and potato seeds. He said on a good note, Cuba would reduce imports of rice, beans and corn given the greater volumes being produced domestically.

The announcement came as an experiment launched last year by the Cuban government to facilitate the distribution of farm products and reduce prices for consumers has not met expectations, Granma newspaper said.

The reforms started on a trial basis in the western provinces of La Habana, Mayabeque and Artemisa, where farmers were allowed to sell their produce at markets - bypassing intermediaries - and prices were set by supply and demand.

An official at the Domestic Trade Ministry told Granma that due to the absence of a culture of buying and selling, participants "misinterpreted the so-called agreed price." Instead, the official said, "producers are imitating the prices set by stores."

Cuba's farm production grew 17 percent in the first half of 2014, but still is far from satisfying domestic demand, according to the Agriculture Ministry.

Increasing food production is considered a matter of national security, as the country imports 60 percent of the food it consumes.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/nacionales/40857-cuba-to-spend-22-billion-on-food-imports-in-2015>



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