

April 28, 2010

Dear Representative (**Members of House Agriculture Committee**):

As representatives of America's agriculture and agribusiness community, broader business community and other advocates, we urge you to cosponsor and vote to report favorably from the Committee on Agriculture H.R. 4645, the *Travel Restriction Reform and Export Enhancement Act*.

Since sales of U.S. farm goods were allowed to Cuba in 2000, U.S. farmers have seen \$4 billion in sales into the market and payment has been received from the Cubans without issue. Unfortunately, due to continued arbitrary restrictions on U.S. agricultural sales, American producers have failed to realize the full potential of this market. Your support is important in helping America's farmers increase their export sales, especially in these difficult economic times.

H.R. 4645 will not repeal the U.S. embargo or lift the restrictions on credit. Cuban exports to the United States would continue to be prohibited. The bill simply clarifies how U.S. farmers and agricultural businesses conduct sales to Cuba and allows U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba, consistent with their ability to do so to every other country, including other U.S. sanctioned countries. These modest changes will establish and protect U.S. agriculture's reputation as a reliable supplier and provide the opportunity to maintain and grow U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba.

H.R. 4645 has three provisions:

1. It will reverse the controversial February 22, 2005, Office of Foreign Assets Control interpretation of the term "payment of cash in advance" for sales to Cuba. This regulatory restriction is contrary to the *Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000*, which allows for the shipment of agricultural goods under a broader interpretation of "payment of cash in advance" terms, consistent with practices successfully used by U.S. exporters with other importers, which prior to 2005 included Cuba.
2. The bill will eliminate the expensive and discriminatory requirement that payments to U.S. agricultural sellers must pass through banks in third countries. This process increases the cost of purchasing U.S. agricultural goods and puts U.S. agriculture at a competitive disadvantage.
3. The bill will enhance the ability of Cuba to purchase U.S. farm goods by lifting restrictions on U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba. Texas A&M University estimates that lifting these travel restrictions alone will increase U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba in the long term by \$336 million per year, creating up to 5,500 new jobs. In addition, public

opinion polls show that about 64 percent of Americans¹ and two-thirds of Cuban-Americans² support the ability of U.S. citizens to freely travel to Cuba.

H.R. 4645 represents an opportunity to remove unjustified U.S. barriers to our own agricultural sector in order to increase the export competitiveness of U.S. agriculture products in Cuba. We urge you to support the bill as introduced by Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) and Rep. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) without amendments.

Sincerely,

Alamar Associates
Alliance of Baptists
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
Arkansas Rice Federation
Arkansas Rice Growers Association
Bunge
California Rice Commission
Cargill
Center for Cuban Studies
Center for Democracy in the Americas
Center for International Policy
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America
Common Ground Education and Travel Services
Corn Producers Association of Texas
CubaPuentes
Cuba Travel Services, Inc.
Cuban American Commission for Family Rights
Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.
Emergency Committee for American Trade
Emergency Network of Cuban-American Scholars and Artists for Change in U.S.-Cuba Policy
Foundation for Normalization of US/CUBA Relations
Fund for Reconciliation and Development
Greater Houston Partnership
Illinois Corn Growers Association
Illinois Farm Bureau
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas
Indiana Corn Growers Association
Indiana Soybean Alliance

¹ According to the CNN/Opinion Research Corp. poll conducted April 3-5, 2009, 64 percent of the 1,023 Americans surveyed by telephone thought the U.S. government should allow citizens to travel to Cuba. And 71 percent of those polled said that the U.S. should reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba.

² According to the 2009 Bendixen & Associates poll, Two-thirds of Cuban and Cuban American adults - 67 percent - support the lifting of travel restrictions for all Americans so that they can also travel to Cuba freely.

Interactive Travel Services Association
Iowa Corn Growers Association
J Perez Associates, Inc
Latin America Working Group
Louis Dreyfus
Louisiana Independent Rice Producers Association
Louisiana Rice Growers Association
Louisiana Rice Producers' Group
Madison-Camaguey Sister City Association
Maryland Farm Bureau
Maryland Grain Producers Association
Minnesota Corn Growers Association
Mississippi Rice Council
Missouri Corn Growers Association
Missouri Rice Council
Missouri Rice Producers' Group
Molimar Export Consultants, Inc.
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Foreign Trade Council
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Tour Association
Nebraska Corn Board
North American Export Grain Association
North American Millers' Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Ohio Corn Growers Association
Ohio Wheat Growers Association
Organization for International Investment
Pet Food Institute
Port Freeport
Port of Corpus Christi
Port of Galveston
Port of Houston Authority
Rice Producers of California
Smithfield Foods

Texas Farm Bureau
Texas Forestry Association
Texas Grain Sorghum Producers Association
Texas Rice Council
Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group
Texas Wheat Producers Association
TriDimension Strategies, LLC
United Motorcoach Association
United States Council for International Business
United States Dry Bean Council
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
US-Cuba Cultural Exchange
U.S.-Cuba Sister Cities Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
US Rice Producers Association
U.S. Women & Cuba Collaboration
Washington Office on Latin America
Washington State Potato Commission
Western Growers Association
Witness for Peace
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom