

Agricultural trade: Talks between the US and Cuba in Havana



The fifth agricultural conference took place last Monday (13.05) at the Hotel Nacional in Havana (Source: [Prensa Latina](#))

Delegates from the Cuban government, and US representatives from politics and business as well as farmers, have met for a dialog in Cuba's capital. The fifth agricultural conference at the Hotel Nacional once again focused on bilateral trade and the role of the ongoing US sanctions in the relationship between the two countries.

Cuba's Agriculture Minister Ydael Pérez Brito told the Spanish news agency Efe that the aim was to "bring the two agricultural sectors closer", with the greatest barriers to trade existing on the US side. Cuba's government is "always ready for an exchange on a respectful basis", said the minister. As Brito emphasized, numerous facilitations had been created for the private sector and investors in Cuba.

The lawyer and former US Congressman Joe García, who is advising the US delegation on trade issues, explained that Havana still had to allow foreign investment in the private sector and provide legal protection, among other things. This step has already been announced by the Cuban government, but has not yet been implemented. In addition, the expansion of licenses and the legalization of the use of agricultural property for trade are also necessary. The Cuban government must "be more open to the interests of its citizens abroad, especially Cuban-Americans", demanded García.

For her part, Johana Tablada, Deputy Director of the US Department at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, recalled that the food sector was "the only significant open window" given the sanctions, but emphasized that this only applied to the import of products to Cuba and not to sales to the US: "Today we know that the regulations, laws, and decisions of the US government do not go in the direction of making relations with Cuba more flexible or allowing trade relations. Furthermore, we know that for the non-state [Cuban] sector, there has been a lot of talk about changes, none of which have been implemented. Hopefully they will come," said Tablada.

As the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina points out, the support of North American agricultural producers played a central role in the easing of the US blockade on food imports introduced in 2000. Since then, Cuba has been able to buy food from the USA, although until today still exclusively in cash. ([Cubaheute](#))