
Cuba strengthened its sugar diversification in 2019

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The Cuban sugar agribusiness ratified in 2019 its strategic nature, by strengthening diversification of its by-products and its link with other branches of the economy.

More than sugar, today the greatest potential and priority of agribusiness is in derivatives, such as energy, animal feed and alcohols, according to the first vice president of the Azcuba Sugar Group, Noel Casaña.

For example, according to Azcuba executives, the Ciro Redondo mill's bioelectric plant (about 450 kilometers east of Havana), close to starting operations, will provide half of the electricity needed by the province of Ciego de Ávila, where it is located.

This facility, a joint venture with foreign capital, will use biomass as a raw material to generate electricity mainly from sugarcane bagasse, and also marabou, an invasive plant.

Likewise, the recent inauguration of the Cuban-Spanish joint venture Alficsa Plus S.A., the largest distillery in the country, located in the center-south of the island, represents the possibility of increasing the production and quality of fine alcohols and their link with the national spirits export industry.

The Azcuba public relations official, Liobel Pérez, told Prensa Latina that the waste from the production process in that factory will be used to recover carbon dioxide, obtain torula yeast (animal food with a high protein content) and other nutrients used in swine fat.

They may also be used in the fertigation of the areas (use of waste or effluents as organic fertilizer).

A momentous event was the realization, at the end of June, of the 15th International Congress on Sugar and Derivatives (Diversification 2019), which was attended by about 300 specialists from 21 nations, including France, Spain, Italy, Germany, India and Mexico.

The conclave included the debate of more than 200 papers on the most relevant aspects of this agribusiness, the realization of a business forum and a trade fair, including the portfolio of opportunities for investment in 2019-20 and the construction program of 19 bioelectric plants in the country.

The importance of the sector was also evidenced by the holding of two scientific-technical workshops, in September and November, organized by the Economic Society of Friends of the Country, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, and various organizations.

According to executives and specialists, the three events contributed to the knowledge of the place that sugar occupies in culture, society and productive chain of the country, and the importance of having a diversified, efficient and flexible agribusiness.

Repeatedly during the year, representatives of the top government and the Communist Party leaders of Cuba, indicated the need to comply with the plans for higher yields of sugarcane and producing derivatives, to guarantee growth in this area and income from exports.

In this 2019/20 campaign, which began in the second half of November, 44 mills participate, which will have the joint task of overcoming last year's production, despite the unprecedented resurgence of restrictions put by the the US blockade.

In the midst of a difficult economic situation and beset by new sanctions in Washington, Cuba intends to increase export revenues and substitute imports to boost the production of the sugarcane sector, food source, energy, boards, sorbitol, alcohols and other derivatives .
