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**US Blockade Of Cuba Limits Its Access To Food Market**

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The economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba for almost 60 years continues today, leading to Cuba being forced to import food and related products more expensively from international food markets because of the closure of US markets.

Although Cuba has one of the most comprehensive social protection programs in the world, and has achieved the eradication of both chronic and child malnutrition, the food sector is one of the most affected by the unilateral American blockade.

According to the report on the damage that the blockade has caused, which is to be presented to the UN General Assembly on Oct 26, between April 2015 and the April 2016 the cost of the blockade with respect to food exceeded US\$605 million.

The figure was calculated based on information provided by the Cuban ministries of Agriculture and Food Industry, says the text.

The effects are manifested in the rising prices of fertilizers, spare parts for agricultural equipment, seeds for production and other supplies that have to be acquired in geographically distant markets because of the prohibition of doing so in the United States.

In addition, there is the obligation to use intermediaries in third countries, which substantially increases the cost and sometimes affects food production on the island, as a result of the inability to make timely imports.

Similarly, the blockade causes an increase in the volume of stocks and the raw materials and supplies needed to ensure the production of eggs, milk, and meat for the Cuban population remaining in warehouses.

If they could be bought in the United States, the storage period of said products would be about 15 days, however, Cuba is required to retain them for six times that amount of time because of the blockade, points out the report, which also explains that the permanence in warehouses is in order to provide for an unexpected shortage in the international market.

In addition, the blockade limits the access of the Cuban pharmaceutical industry to raw materials needed for the production of vaccines against diseases affecting the livestock sector.

This situation forces them to resort to European suppliers, creating an increase in costs and complications due to the requirement for a Certificate of Origin, issued by an American veterinary institution.

For this reason, many suppliers are afraid to risk being detected and fined, through the traceability of such certification.

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