

Multi-commodity delegation visits Cuba on trade mission

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A delegation from the poultry, egg and soybean industries visited Cuba last week for a fact-finding trade mission. The delegation included Mike Brown, president of the National Chicken Council (NCC); Jim Sumner, president of the U.S.A Poultry & Egg Export Council (USAPEEC); Joel Brandenberger, president of the National Turkey Federation; Anne Alonzo, president and chief executive officer of the American Egg Board (AEB), and staff from the World Poultry Federation and the United Soybean Board.

“NCC and our members support the concept of free and fair trade,” Brown said. “Seeing our products here in Cuba gives me great hope towards future development. Because of our proximity, we would welcome the opportunity to provide more of our safe, wholesome and high-quality poultry to the Cuban people.”

The delegation met with poultry, egg and soybean representatives to learn more about Cuba’s food distribution system and to discuss biosecurity, food safety and nutrition issues. The mission’s focus was to assess the potential for greater U.S. agricultural trade as relations between the U.S. and Cuba continue to develop.

“Exports are a crucial part of our industry’s future,” Alonzo said. “We are always looking for innovative ways to grow egg demand and broaden commodity trade. Creating new partnerships and taking advantage of new markets for American eggs will benefit the entire industry.

“We believe that egg consumption is a relatively low-cost way to enhance the nutritional quality of the Cuban diet. We are excited about this important information exchange opportunity,” Alonzo added.

The mission represented the first delegation to Cuba backed by and funded by the soybean checkoff program. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said the U.S. Department of Agriculture is allowing 22 industry-funded agricultural research and promotion programs to visit Cuba to conduct trade research.

This historic visit to Cuba comes just weeks after AEB and USAPEEC led a highly successful, “first-ever, egg-only” trade mission to Mexico, where leading U.S. egg companies were introduced to key Mexican and U.S. private- and public-sector leaders and participated at a major bakery show, Mexipan.

Since limited agricultural trade with Cuba was first allowed in 2000, it has become the fourth-leading export destination for U.S. poultry by volume.

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