

Letters: How US can improve Cuba's situation and our own



A farm worker tills the land to plant lettuce, alongside his dogs in Havana province, Cuba, Jan. 28, 2026.
(AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

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Cuba faces acute challenges including food security, energy shortages, rising disease rates and ongoing economic contraction. Creating conditions that encourage citizens to remain and contribute to national recovery is critical. Cuba's private sector and agricultural community both are seeking avenues for economic advancement and self-determination — principles supported by the United States. U.S. agriculture can play a pivotal role by supporting Cuba's private sector and farm cooperatives.

The framework to support the Cuban people and ensure food security is already in place. U.S. law has permitted agricultural exports to Cuba for 25 years, yet there are significant opportunities for expansion if executive support is forthcoming. Over the past four years, Cuba has changed its import purchases from the government to its private sector, which today buys an estimated 70% of food imports. Despite this shift, U.S. exports including rice, wheat, pork, beef, soybeans, milk, animal feed, fertilizer and farm equipment remain limited.

To address this imbalance and to help alleviate food security, it is recommended to approve U.S. Treasury licenses for investment in Cuban private businesses and agriculture, contingent upon reciprocal measures from the Cuban government. Such steps would enhance the autonomy and productive capacity of Cuba's private sector, including farm cooperatives, many of which have the title to their land. Facilitating investment in these entities would foster mutually beneficial trade, thereby improving the competitiveness of U.S. agricultural exports by increasing their purchasing power.

Further, collaboration between agricultural producers, researchers and scientists should be promoted. Increased joint research is necessary to control common pests and diseases and safeguard shared natural resources. Importantly, Cuban farmers, researchers and scientists represent civil society actors whose contributions benefit both countries.

To achieve meaningful change in Cuba, it is essential to begin with shared priorities: ensuring food security and economic stability, with a dynamic private sector playing a key role.

Facilitating agricultural investment, promoting scientific collaboration and broadening bilateral trade would address pressing concerns, while encouraging Cuban citizens to remain and actively participate in the nation's recovery.

— *Paul Johnson, chair, U.S. Agriculture Coalition for Cuba, and partner, Focus-Cuba*