

# Omnibus Bill Cuba Provisions To Allow Limited Agricultural Travel To Cuba

*Senators Menendez And Nelson Receive Assurance From Geithner*

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While the Omnibus bill recently passed appeared to open the door to trade between U.S. agriculture producers and Cuba, the reality is, little has changed. While travel to, from or within Cuba for the marketing and sale of agricultural and medical goods may ease with a change from the specific license to a general license, according to the Treasury Department, "because the Act does not amend the requirement in the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA) of 2000 that agricultural exports to Cuba be either paid for by "cash in advance" or financed using a third-country bank, TSRA's statutory provisions remain in place."

Secretary of the Treasury, Timothy Geithner, addressed Senator Robert Menendez and Senator Bill Nelson's, who oppose easing restrictions, concerns in a letter dated March 5, 2009. "Treasury believes that this change likely will have no influences on current financing rules."

"Because the bill's language does not modify or negate the statutory requirement in the 2000 Act, exporters will still be required to receive

payment in advance of shipment and will not be permitted to export to Cuba on credit other than through third-country banks.."

Geithner, in his letter to Nelson and Menendez stated, "we are, however, currently reviewing United States policy toward Cuba to determine the best way to foster democratic change in Cuba and improve the lives of the Cuban people. Your views and the views of others on Capitol Hill will be important to that review, and the President remains committed to consulting with you as we consider changes to Cuba policy." This collection of letters can be found at [www.billnelson.senate.gov/supporting/Cuba032009.pdf](http://www.billnelson.senate.gov/supporting/Cuba032009.pdf).

USA Rice Federation, Cuba Specialist, Marvin Lehrer said the passage of the Omnibus bill will not deter their efforts. "This is hopefully the first step in a series of normalizing open trade and travel with Cuba. By itself we do not see significant changes as a result of these measures and look forward to others so that the U.S. rice industry can take full advantage of such a huge rice market right at our doorstep. USA Rice has taken the leadership on Cuba related issues and we intend to pursue open trade with Cuba as a top priority for the U.S. rice industry." Δ



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