

# Cuba: The Situation with Fuel Also Affects Agriculture

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MADRID, Spain, - Cuban agricultural workers sounded the alarm about damages being caused by fuel shortages to the agricultural sector.

According to statements made by agricultural workers to *Radio Televisión Martí*, the shortage is already causing harm to short-cycle production for next quarter.

Tobacco worker Osmani Poveda Hernández, a resident of San Juan y Martínez in Pinar del Río province, explained that there is no fuel available for farm workers who have to find a way to start the tobacco harvest very soon “to counteract the delays that are already mounting.”

Daniel Alfaro Frías, a sharecropper in Artemisa province, stated that “agriculture is at cero, and most tractors are just sitting there because fuel is not being delivered.”

In central and eastern Cuba, the situation is similar.

“This is something that is having a negative influence in food production and also on the people in general. People are unable to purchase agricultural products by virtue of production being impacted by the shortage of fuel,” stated Yoel Espinosa Medrano, from Villa Clara province.

Farmer Vladimir Ríos Cruz, from the Los Cristales co-op in Jatibonico, Sancti Spíritus province, indicated that the shortage affects production of beans as much as that of vegetables.

“There will be no harvest plans for short-cycle products, therefore, the issue of feeding the population, of putting food at the table for this coming quarter, is very precarious, because [the government] has no way of delivering fuel,” he added.

In Granma province, toiling of the land in preparation for the harvest has been interrupted due to a shortage of fuel, according to farmer Emiliano González.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, the official daily, *Girón*, in Matanzas province, announced the rationing of fuel in the province.

On March 22, the majority of gas stations in Havana had stopped selling fuel, and long waiting lines of up to eight hours, ensued at the Servicupet establishments that were selling fuel before.

On the next day, the Cuban government stated that the increase in fuel demand was due, in part, to a malfunction of the thermoelectric plant (CTE) Antonio Guiteras in Matanzas province, Cuba’s largest generator.

This Saturday, Unión Cuba-Petróleo (CUPET, by its Spanish acronym) informed the public that shortages had been reduced by more than 60%, but that “the problem is still not resolved,” and “the situation with the marketing of fuel remains complex.”

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