

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSJM 8029

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Trade & Economic Development

**Brief Description:** Petitioning to end restrictions on trade of agricultural products with Cuba.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Agriculture & International Trade (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Swecker, Hewitt, Sheahan, Prentice, Honeyford, Hargrove, Spanel, Hale, Brown, Snyder, Haugen, McAuliffe and Kline).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Trade & Economic Development: 2/25/02, 2/28/02 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Petitions the United States Congress to end restrictions with Cuba on trade of agricultural products.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Veloria, Chair; Eickmeyer, Vice Chair; Van Luven, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Chase, Fromhold and Gombosky.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Dunn and Mulliken.

**Staff:** Chris Cordes (786-7103).

**Background:**

Since 1961 the United States has imposed an economic embargo on Cuba under various laws, including the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (generally known as the Helms-Burton Act). Some of the embargo restrictions were eased in the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. This 2000 law terminated existing, unilateral agricultural or medical sanctions with Cuba and other specified countries, with some

exceptions. It allows the secretary of the treasury to authorize, on a case-by-case basis, travel to Cuba for the commercial export sale of agricultural commodities. However, the law prohibits payment or financing the sales of agricultural commodities to Cuba by United States persons or entities.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Washington Senate and House of Representatives petition the President of the United States and the Congress to end the policy of restrictions on trade of agricultural products with Cuba, and present the following information:

- Washington, as a leading agricultural state, has a historical and economic interest in promoting and expanding its agricultural market to Cuba. The agricultural market is weakened without economic access to neighboring countries.
  - Although Washington ranks twelfth in the nation for agricultural products, accounting for approximately \$29 billion of the state's economy, there are not enough apple, wheat, and potato markets in Washington.
  - Federal law has liberalized sanctions on exports of agricultural commodities to Cuba, but full access is limited by continuing restrictions.
  - An overwhelming majority of American people support normalization of relations with Cuba, according to polling results.
  - The Washington Legislature is committed to working diligently toward the goal of full normalization or relations with Cuba.
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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not Requested.

**Testimony For:** Cuba has a difficult time buying products from the United States. But Cuba is buying products from other countries that our states could supply. For example, Canada is one of Cuba's biggest trading partners. Agricultural products, in particular, are needed by the Cuban people. Washington's agriculture industry could greatly benefit from sales of many products such as potatoes, peas, lentils, wheat, and apples. The agricultural community is working together on proposals that will open wider markets.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Heather Lund, Washington State Farm Bureau; and Charlie Brown, Washington State Potato Commission.