

Economic Update February 26



US Supreme Court Ruling in Favor of Cuba Tobacco Company

A ruling this week by the *US Supreme Court* favored Cuba in litigation underway for several years against an American company, which was illegally marketing Dominican cigars under the *Cohiba* Cuban brand.

The Court refused to consider an appeal filed by the Delaware-based General Cigar company, thus keeping a ruling by a federal appeals court issued in June 2014 that favored the Cuban company.

Following last Monday's decision by the US Supreme Court, Cuba can request the cancellation of the patent on the *Cohiba* brand registered by *General Cigar*, which must be *addressed to the United States Patent and Trademark Office*.

General Cigar has been marketing *Cohiba* cigars, produced in the Dominican Republic, in the United States.

However, the Cuban company *Cubatabaco* is banned from selling its cigars at the US market due to the US commercial, financial and economic blockade against the Island, though it can do so in other countries.

Culbro Corp, a company purchased by *General Cigar*, registered the *Cohiba* brand in the States in 1981 and got the patent again in 1995; however, Cuba originally registered the brand in 1972 in its own territory, and later in over 100 countries.

In April 2013, Cuba accused the United States of stealing its local commercial brands, following litigation between *Cubatabaco Company* and *General Cigar*; nevertheless, the most recent measures announced by President Barack Obama allow US citizens visiting Cuba to import up to 100 dollars in cigars, one of the most famous products of the Island.

Tourism on the Rise in Cuba in January

Though the official figures haven't been released, there is a noticeable increase in the flow of international tourists who travel to Cuba this month, a destination that reached 3 million visitors for the first time in 2014.

Speaking to local ACN news agency, Maria del Carmen Orellana, commercial director of the Ministry of Tourism, said that the current winter season is going well with significant growth in the arrival of travelers.

Without mentioning any figures, the official said that January closed above estimates and the positive trend is expected to continue until April, all through the tourist high season on the Island.

"The season is showing encouraging results thanks to our efforts to improve and enhance the quality of services to reverse past mistakes," said Orellana, who added that beyond Havana and Varadero, main tourist poles in the Caribbean destination, the rest of the country has also enjoyed a remarkable growing in terms of foreign visitors in recent months.

"This is a good time to Cuba, so we must use all involved and do their best towards the development of tourism," the official said.

Recommended in recent days by the *The New York Times* paper as one of the favorite destinations to visit in 2015, Cuba stands today among the most popular places in the Caribbean.

Business Group AZCUBA Doubles Biostimulant Production

The *AZCUBA Business Group* produced in 2014 about 4.5 million liters of *Fitomas-E* biostimulant, the double of what had been achieved in the previous year, said Carlos González, director of sugarcane by-products of that entity.

In conversation with local *Prensa Latina* news agency, Mr. Gonzalez also said that the implementation in the period of a new plant at the *Ciro Redondo* sugar mill, about 400 km east of the capital, contributed to that result, satisfying the current demand.

Fitomas-E, a by-product of the Cuban sugarcane industry, is a biostimulant of rooting foliation application, to help, due to its anti-stress quality, to overcome the effects caused by nutritional deficiency, drought, excess of moisture, and pest attack, among others.

The production of the new plant joins to one pilot plant existing in the *Cuban Institute for Researches on Sugar Cane By-products (ICIDCA)*, a center that developed that technology some years ago, and which provides more than 2 million liters annually.

According to experts, this is a foliation substance that is added to irrigation water by sprinkler and its components are organic extracts, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, elements capable of benefiting 20 different crops, mainly sugar cane.

The biostimulant accelerates the germination of seeds of several kinds, increases vegetative and rooting development, and enhances the action of herbicides and pesticides, by which reduces crop cycle and increases their performance.

Talks on Agreement between Cuba and U.S. Telecommunications Companies Conclude

The *Cuban Telecommunications Enterprise S.A., ETECSA*, and the U.S. company *IDT Domestic Telecom, INC. (IDT)* have recently ended talks, with the purpose of signing an agreement of *Services for International Telecommunications Operations*, which will allow for direct interconnection between the States and Cuba.

However, the agreement is pending approval by the corresponding U.S. authorities to be implemented, according to information published by the Cuban telecommunications enterprise on its Web site.

The reestablishment of direct communications between both countries will allow for more possibilities and quality in communications between the peoples of the two nations.

Increase of French Tourists' Trips to Cuba Stressed

Cuban ambassador to France, Hector Igarza, stressed the increase of French visitors to the Caribbean island in 2014, states a note recently released by the embassy.

During that period, the indicator reached about 103,475 travelers, representing a 7.1 percent increase in the inter-annual comparison, Igarza said during a presentation of the Caribbean island as a tourist destination.

In turn, the head of the Tourism Office at the embassy, Rosa Adela Mejias, characterized each of the Cuban provinces and its particular attractions, which include sun and beach destination, culture, health, ecosystems, and diving, among others.

On the other hands, Cubana de Aviacion representatives and the Sol Latino operator explained the functioning of both agencies and efforts to provide a larger and better service to clients.

During the meeting, held at the Cuban embassy's Alejo Carpentier hall, air connectivity details were also provided with Cubana de Aviacion company, and the possibility to increase sales through Sol Latino operator.

France keeps on being one of the main tourist markets towards the island. The French market is a space in prospects of development and is increasingly showing greater interest in visiting it experts say.



Radio Habana Cuba