

Press Release No. 14 - Food Monitor Program
Regarding Recent Statements by the Cuban Minister of Food Industry

Havana, October 20, 2023

On Tuesday, October 17, during a televised appearance on the "Mesa Redonda" program, the Cuban Minister of Food Industry, Manuel Sobrino Martínez, claimed that "thanks to Fidel Castro's thinking, the Cuban food industry has sufficient capacity to produce food for the people," with 110 companies and 800 food processing factories. He then proceeded to blame the American embargo for the lack of necessary raw materials for the operation of these companies and factories.

However, just a few days earlier, Alejandro Gil, the Cuban Minister of Economy, in the same program, acknowledged that Cuba imports 100% of all products from the so-called basic ration book. He also stated that the country lacked the funds to purchase food and that Cuba was in the midst of a crisis.

Furthermore, official media outlets have reported that several food processing factories have ceased their operations and redirected their services to other sectors to avoid leaving their workers unemployed. In addition to this, several high-ranking government officials have proposed measures to promote individual self-sufficiency, ranging from cultivating pineapples in backyards to setting up fish farms, in an effort to counter the severe shortages on the island.

Before 1959, Cuba was self-sufficient in a little over 70% of its food and even exported the surplus. However, from 1960 until today, food imports have increased by more than 50%, and exports of products like sugar have declined to levels similar to those at the beginning of the 20th century. The same trend is evident in the meat, dairy, fisheries, and agro-industrial sectors.

These basic figures demonstrate that the state economic model and government decisions over the past sixty years have been a failure, leading the Cuban people into a severe food crisis. Moreover, Fidel Castro's ideas, from the Ten Million Ton Sugar Harvest (Zafra de los Diez Millones) to the Havana Belt (Cordón de La Habana), and the shift from extensive to intensive livestock farming, have proven to be complete failures, further deteriorating the food sector.

Furthermore, the government's decision to prioritize investments in tourism over the agro-food industry is a significant factor in the declining state of food development in the country. Food Monitor Program alerts about the consequences of perpetuating the cult of Fidel Castro's actions, as this masks the current government's responsibility in the food crisis that the country is experiencing. Likewise, the economic embargo is used as a scapegoat to justify the shortcomings of the state and government system, which have plunged Cuba into a sustained state of poverty.

We also want to point out the inconsistencies in the speeches of various leaders, whose words not only differ from reality but even contradict their own previous statements. This only leads the people to confusion, uncertainty, and anxiety that directly affects their right to a dignified life.