



# Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Baucus Joins With Craig, Roberts on Cuba Ag Trade Bill**

*Senators Lead Unprecedented Bipartisan Effort to Ease Restrictions on Food Sales to Cuba*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus, Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, joined with Senator Larry Craig (R-Idaho), Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), and Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Dick Lugar (R-Ind.) to introduce legislation today that would end a two-month standoff with the Treasury Department that threatened to shut down U.S. agricultural trade with Cuba. On the day of introduction, the legislation already has amassed 20 cosponsors, 10 Republicans and 10 Democrats.

“The administration picked the wrong fight by trying to cut off U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba,” Baucus said. “Agricultural producers from Montana and all over the country have found a lucrative new market in Cuba. The Agricultural Export Facilitation Act will ensure that they can keep that market and continue to sell their products to Cuba as they have done without incident for several years.”

The legislation is intended to head off the Treasury Department from tightening rules governing payment conditions for food sales to Cuba that opponents argue will close the Cuban market to U.S. agricultural products. The bill defines cash payment in advance as receipt of payment before transfer of title and release of physical control of goods to the purchaser. Baucus has fiercely criticized any further restrictions with on agricultural trade with Cuba and last month reiterated his threat to block significant Treasury Department nominations until the issue gets resolved.

“Congress passed the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act in 2001 specifically to open Cuba’s market to American agricultural products,” asserted Baucus. “Since that time, U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba have reached over \$700 million, and Cuba has become our twenty-second most important agricultural export destination. I’m not going to let Treasury Department bureaucrats shut the door on Cuba trade that we in Congress purposefully opened.”

The act also includes several other key measures Baucus has championed that would facilitate agricultural trade with Cuba, including:

- A general license for Americans traveling to Cuba to sell, market, or service agricultural products authorized by Congress;
- Quarterly reports on visa processing procedures for Cuban agricultural trade officials and inspectors;

- Direct banking relations for agriculture trade-related transactions; and
- The repeal of Section 211, a measure tucked into the 1999 Omnibus bill that jeopardizes American trademarks registered in Cuba.

Baucus, a longtime advocate of dismantling the four decades-old embargo on Cuba, has led bipartisan efforts to lift the travel ban and introduced legislation last year to protect American companies' trademarks in Cuba. In December of last year, Baucus joined several hundred Americans at an agricultural trade event in Havana. In 2003, the Senator took a Montana trade delegation to Cuba and walked away with a \$10 million Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Cuban government to purchase Montana products. After completing the first MOU, Baucus signed a second MOU with Cuba for \$15 million.

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