

Sugar industry at rock bottom: worst harvest in over a century



A sugar cane field in Matanzas Province (source: [LBM1948 /Commons/CC-BY-SA 4.0](#))

Cuba's sugar production has fallen to its lowest level in more than a century. According to [calculations](#) by the Spanish news agency *EFE*, the production result for the 2024/2025 harvest did not exceed 150,000 tons – less than half of the previous year's production and well below the modest government plan for this season.

A former official of the now defunct Ministry of Sugar Industry (Minaz), who ran a sugar factory and wishes to remain anonymous, described these figures to *EFE* as a “disaster.” He said that the production level was not sufficient to meet domestic demand, was causing difficulties for the Cuban rum industry, and would once again prevent the fulfillment of the supply agreement with China.

Only 15 active sugar factories

EFE calculated the figures based on around 30 partial reports from national and regional state media, as comprehensive information from official institutions is lacking. A request for an interview with the state sugar company Azcuba remained unanswered.

Of the 15 sugar factories in operation this season – less than ten percent of the plants once operating in Cuba – the planned targets were not even reached by a combined total of 280,000 tons of sugar. Despite the economic significance, the overall harvest results were not made public.

However, various media outlets separately published the production figures for ten factories, including the country's most important ones, such as the Antonio Guiteras sugar mills in Las Tunas and Ciego de Ávila, with a total of 95,584 tons. No public production data is available for the other five factories, but their combined targets of 52,068 tons are known.

Since, according to the official organ of the Communist Party of Cuba, *Granma*, only one of the 15 active factories achieved its target, it can be concluded that the 2024/2025 harvest did not exceed the 150,000-ton mark.

Dramatic production losses

Some factories performed particularly poorly. The Dos Ríos sugar mill in Santiago de Cuba, for example, produced only 2,700 tons of the planned 20,811 tons (13 percent), and Antonio Guiteras only 7,200 of the planned 45,000 tons (16 percent).

According to historical sources, Cuba had never produced less than 150,000 tons since the 19th century, apart from the years of the wars of independence against Spain, when production of the island's most important crop at the time was disrupted. In 1989, however, the country reached eight million tons.

Cuba was once the world's largest sugar exporter and had up to 160 sugar factories. Over the years, the country signed preferential agreements with the US (before the revolution) and with the Soviet Union.

Experts cite various reasons for the collapse of the sector: the aging of the factories, lack of investment and material resources such as equipment and fuel, power outages, adverse climatic conditions, a shortage of skilled personnel, and inefficiencies. As announced at the parliamentary session in July, the Council of Ministers expects that little growth can be achieved in the sugar sector in the coming years. ([Cubaheute](#))