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WR 343 economy

1982

by Lionel martin

havana, nov 25, reuter -- tobacco experts here are predicting that the famous vuelta abajo tobacco growing region of pinar del rio in western cuba will produce a bumper crop during the 1982-1983 harvest which recently began.

the region, famous for its leaf tobacco that goes into cuban cigars, is expecting its second largest harvest in history, according to the cuban news agency ain. the largest harvest was obtained in the 1980-81 campaign when the vuelta abajo region harvested over 36 000 tonnes of tobacco.

during the last harvest, 1981-82 tobacco production in the region fell to 27 272 tonnes. the shortage of the leaf tobacco has forced factories that manufacture cuba's famous export cigars to shut down or work part time. workers at the factories have been guaranteed 70 per cent of their wages.

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roberto veiga, the secretary-general of cuba's trade union movement, told a congress of tobacco workers last week that +agriculture has not met the necessities of the cigar industry either in quantity or quality.+ he said this was due in part to plagues, unfavourable natural conditions and low worker productivity.

the trade union chief called on the tobacco industry to increase its efficiency and to reduce waste to a minimum. he said that because of shortages of agricultural labourers in the tobacco fields it would be necessary +especially during the first half of next year, to paralyze the greater part of the centres that produce cigars for exportation.+ he called on 10 000 tobacco workers in the manufacturing sphere of the industry to volunteer for agricultural work in the tobacco farms.

--reuter lem/syl