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AG:MARKETS 2 (HAVANA

WHEN THE FREE FARMERS' MARKETS WERE LEGALIZED IN 1980 THEY WERE HERALDED AS A METHOD OF INCENTIVIZING PRIVATE FARMERS AND MAKING MORE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AVAILABLE TO THE CUBAN PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE NORMAL STATE RUN CHANNELS.

SINCE THEIR LEGALIZATION THE MARKETS HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A HOT POLEMIC. ON THE ONE HAND, SOME GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SAID THEY FULFILL THE TASK OF ENCOURAGING PRIVATE FARMERS TO PRODUCE MORE PRODUCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE HAVE BEEN STRONG COMPLAINS THAT MIDDLEMEN CONTROL THE OPERATIONS AND THAT PRICES HAVE BEEN EXCESSIVELY HIGH. THE LAW EXPLICITELY PROHIBITS THE USE OF MIDDLEMEN IN THE TRANSACTIONS.

THE LAW STIPULATES THAT SMALL PRIVATE FARMERS HAD THE RIGHT TO SELL THEIR SURPLUS PRODUCE DIRECTLY TO THE OPULATION AT THE MARKETS ONCE THEY HAD FULFILLED THEIR DELIVERY CONTRACTS WITH STATE ENTERPRICES.

THE RESOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY YESTERDAY'S MEETING AND ITS SUPPORTBY CASTRO UNDOUBTEDLY SPELLS THE END OF THE EXPERIMENT WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HOED WOULD BOLSTER THE ECONOMY. ACCORDING TO ONE CUBAN OFFICIAL.
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