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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**STATE ANNOUNCES PARTICIPATION WITH CUBAN TRADE
CONFERENCE**

Potential Exists for Mississippi Businesses to Begin Trade to Cuba

JACKSON, Miss., - Officials with the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) announce they will be sponsors of the first official Cuban Business Conference in Mexico, January 30-February 3. The sponsorship provides discounted registrations for Mississippi companies to take advantage of this rare opportunity to gain qualified commercial information to assess Cuban business opportunities and meet senior Cuban contacts to provide entrée to the opening Cuban economy.

Amendments to U.S. sanctions laws last fall allow for direct sales of a broad range of goods related to agriculture, food, beverages, wood and medical products. The first negotiated sales to Cuban under the guidelines are currently taking place, with \$25 million of a projected \$40 million buy completed with Cargill Inc., Archer Daniels Midland and Riceland Food consisting of corn, wheat, and soybean oil. Sources for additional products to be purchased from the United States will be sought by the Cubans attending the conference in Mexico.

According to Liz Cleveland, manager, International Division, MDA, "The Cuban Business Conference will present the most current information on the transactional procedures for sales to Cuba including identification of buyers, sales terms, financing and shipment of goods. In addition, participants will be apprised of factual market assessment, procedures and policies related to doing business with Cuba."

The conference is open to both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, even though U.S. trade policy regarding Cuba to date has been focused on agricultural and health-related sectors.

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In addition to the conference, there will be an exhibition on-site at which Mississippi products will be promoted by MDA. There is also an additional optional trip to Havana immediately following the conference to allow each participant the opportunity to complement the information presented at the conference, visit facilities and sites of interest, meet with Cuban officials and build on the professional relationships established through the conference.

A conference brochure and additional information on the conference is available by contacting Liz Cleveland or Marsha Hamilton, MDA International Trade Office, telephone, 601-359-6672.