



National Association of Small-scale Farmers

Technical support : CETIM

Report on the Promotion and Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas in Cuba

Havana, November 2025

"Year 67 of the Revolution"

1) Introduction and context

Following the triumph of the Revolution on 1 January 1959, the situation regarding the rights of peasants and people living and working in rural areas underwent a profound transformation in Cuba. From the perspective of the political authorities at that time, it was necessary to address the complex conditions that characterized rural life, particularly in light of the agricultural and rural policies imposed by successive pro-imperialist dictatorships, which sought to maintain complete control over agricultural and food supply chains through large U.S. agribusiness corporations that owned the country's best lands and natural resources.

In response to this inherited situation, the Cuban Revolution, from the very year of its victory, adopted public policies aimed at recognizing and protecting the peasantry. Rural populations had not only been subjected to a systematic process of dispossession of their means of livelihood and production but had also remained largely invisible in the eyes of public opinion. This political commitment materialized through the enactment of the **First Agrarian Reform Law** on 17 May 1959 and, subsequently, through the establishment in 1961 of the **National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP)**, the organization responsible for representing the interests of peasants before the institutions of the Cuban Government and State.

Among other reasons, these measures prompted the Government of the United States to impose, in February 1962, the economic and financial blockade against Cuba. This blockade has been progressively intensified by successive U.S. administrations, significantly limiting the full enjoyment of peasants' rights for more than six decades. As a result, Cuba has continuously had to reassess its food production strategies in order to strengthen food sovereignty, a process in which peasants and other people living and working in rural areas have played a leading role.

The current Cuban agrarian structure is organized around the Ministry of Agriculture, whose mission is to implement State public policies related to food production for the population. To achieve this objective, it coordinates the work of agricultural workers, peasants, and rural communities through State-owned enterprises and agricultural cooperatives. During the 1960s, **Credit and Service Cooperatives (CCSs)** were established, bringing together landowners, usufruct farmers, and their family members. In the 1970s, **Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CPAs)** were created by land-owning peasants who voluntarily combined their holdings into a form of collective ownership. In the 1990s, **Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UBPCs)** were

established, composed primarily of agricultural workers from State-owned enterprises. The Cuban agrarian structure also includes the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) and the Agricultural and Sugar Workers' Trade Unions.

Over the decades, the Revolution has adopted numerous public policies and legal instruments to safeguard the rights of Cuban peasants. Among the most significant are:

- **First Agrarian Reform Law (17 May 1959):** Granted more than **150,000 land titles** to peasants who had previously been deprived of land ownership.
- **Second Agrarian Reform Law (October 1963):** Limited private land ownership to a maximum of **67 hectares** and eliminated the rural bourgeoisie.
- **Agricultural Cooperative Development Process (from 1975):** Promoted the establishment of agricultural production cooperatives with the objective of creating rural communities and improving living conditions through access to electricity, schools, roads, communications, hospitals, rural medical clinics, quality housing, more efficient land use, and the application of science and technology in agriculture.
- **Law No. 36 on Agricultural Cooperatives (July 1982):** Adopted following the establishment of Agricultural Production Cooperatives.
- **Decree-Law No. 63 (1982):** Regulated the inheritance of land and other agricultural assets owned by peasant farmers.
- **Decree-Law No. 65 (August 1988):** Established the social security system for members of Agricultural Production Cooperatives, providing pensions to approximately **35,000 people during its first year**.
- **First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (1975):** Adopted a number of policy theses concerning the Cuban peasantry, their rights, and strategies for agricultural and rural development.
- Throughout subsequent decades, legislation and public policies protecting the rights of Cuban peasants have been continuously updated and strengthened.

Against this background, the following sections present the principal advances achieved in Cuba's rural areas through public policies adopted following the approval by the United Nations, in December 2018, of the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)**. These developments demonstrate the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Declaration.

This report not only illustrates the progress made by Cuba in protecting and promoting the rights of peasants, but may also serve as a source of inspiration and reference for other United Nations Member States seeking alternative models of inclusive and sustainable rural development. Furthermore, it constitutes a good practice that may be considered by the **UN Working Group of Experts on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas**, which supports States in implementing the Declaration, by providing concrete examples of policies and legal measures that have produced positive results in enhancing the dignity and rights of rural populations.

2) UNDROP Articles Reflected in Cuba's Legal Framework and Public Policies

Article 1. Scope and Definition

Cuba's various public policies formally recognize peasants as a distinct social group, thereby preserving their social identity in all spheres of life and giving effect to the principles set forth in paragraphs 1, 2, and 4 of Article 1 of the UNDROP.

The National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) safeguards and promotes this concept of recognition for those engaged in agricultural work and the protection of their livelihoods. It also facilitates their integration into the different forms of agricultural cooperatives. Within the Cuban legal system, these individuals continue to be officially recognized under the traditional designation of "small farmers" (agricultores pequeños), as reflected, among other legal instruments, in **Decree-Law No. 76/2023 on Agricultural Cooperatives** and **Decree-Law No. 80/2024 on the Social Security System for the Agricultural Sector**.

Article 2. General Obligations

The Cuban State's commitment to the rights of peasants has led to significant progress in the implementation of public policies aimed at guaranteeing these rights.

Between 2018 and 2024, several legal instruments were adopted to implement public policies benefiting peasants and other people working in rural areas. These measures pursue objectives related to food security, food sovereignty, and nutrition, in accordance with **Article 77 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba**, which recognizes every person's right to healthy and adequate food and establishes the State's responsibility to create the conditions necessary to strengthen food security for the entire population.

Among the principal public policies adopted are the following:

Policy on the Allocation of Idle State Land

This policy, initially introduced on an experimental basis during the 1990s in selected productive sectors, has facilitated the implementation of **Article 17 of the UNDROP**, concerning the right to land.

In 2008, **Decree-Law No. 259** established a nationwide framework for the allocation of idle State-owned land in usufruct. The policy has since been updated on several occasions.

On 26 November 2011, the Council of Ministers approved the **Policy for the Consolidation of the Process of Allocating Idle State Land in Usufruct**. Subsequently, in October 2012, **Decree-Law No. 300** and its implementing **Decree No. 304** were adopted. These regulations were later revised, and the current legal framework is provided by **Decree-Law No. 358** and **Decree No. 350**, both adopted in 2018, which regulate the allocation of State-owned land to natural persons upon request.

Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Nutrition Policy

In 2022, **Law No. 148 on Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Nutrition** and **Decree No. 67/2022**, which implements the Law, entered into force.

These legal instruments effectively incorporate into Cuban domestic legislation the principles established in **Article 15 of the UNDROP**, recognizing the rights to adequate food and food sovereignty.

Policy on the Strengthening of Agricultural Cooperatives

In October 2023, **Decree-Law No. 76 on Agricultural Cooperatives** was adopted.

This legislation strengthens the autonomy of agricultural cooperatives while increasing institutional support from the State through the various public bodies that maintain working relationships with these organizations.

Social Security Policy for the Agricultural Sector

In 2024, **Decree-Law No. 80** established a special social security regime recognizing the right to pensions for peasants and other people engaged in agricultural activities, including agricultural workers and family members involved in farming.

Policy for the Development of Rural Communities

Approved in early 2023 by the Council of Ministers, this policy seeks to improve the living conditions of people residing and working in rural areas by ensuring decent standards of living, in line with **Article 16 of the UNDROP**, which recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living.

The policy is currently under implementation.

Agroecology Policy

More recently, a new Decree-Law establishing the legal framework for agroecology has been approved and is awaiting publication in the Official Gazette.

This legislation draws extensively on the experience developed by ANAP through its well-known **"Peasant-to-Peasant" (Campesino a Campesino)** methodology.

All of these laws and public policies were adopted following the United Nations' approval of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) in December 2018.

Article 3. Equality and Non-Discrimination

The right to equality and non-discrimination is guaranteed under **Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba**, which provides that all persons receive equal protection and treatment by the authorities and enjoy the same rights, freedoms, and opportunities without discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ethnic origin, skin colour, religious belief, disability, national or territorial origin, or any other personal condition or circumstance that undermines human dignity.

State institutions are responsible for monitoring compliance with these constitutional guarantees and are empowered to investigate and sanction violations whenever complaints are brought by affected individuals.

Article 4. Non-Discrimination Against Women

Cuba has consistently pursued policies aimed at the empowerment of women across all sectors of society, including rural communities.

Women peasants enjoy the same rights and opportunities as all other Cuban women and may hold leadership positions at every level of government and public administration. They are also represented by the **Federation of Cuban Women (FMC)**, the national organization responsible for promoting and protecting women's rights.

Today, women constitute the majority of members of the Cuban National Assembly, including women from rural and farming communities.

In addition, ANAP and the Federation of Cuban Women jointly operate **FMC–ANAP Brigades** in agricultural cooperatives throughout the country. These initiatives have significantly contributed to strengthening the participation, leadership, and empowerment of rural women in all areas of social, economic, and community life.

Articles 5–10

The rights enshrined in **Article 5 (Right to Natural Resources and Development)**, **Article 6 (Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Person)**, **Article 7 (Freedom of Movement)**, **Article 8 (Freedom of Thought, Opinion, Expression and Access to Information)**, **Article 9 (Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association)**, and **Article 10 (Right to Participation)** are recognized and effectively guaranteed in Cuba.

These rights are protected by the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba and are further implemented through public policies that benefit peasants and other people working and living in rural areas.

Article 11. Right to Information

In Cuba, peasants and other people working in rural areas participate in a productive system organized through agricultural cooperatives. Through these organizations they submit concerns, receive technical assistance, and obtain information on matters such as the marketing of agricultural products, land management, seed use, agricultural inputs, and payment systems for their production.

Relevant legislation includes **Decree No. 35/2021 on the Marketing of Agricultural Products**, which regulates these processes, as well as **Law No. 148/2022 on Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Nutrition**, together with other legal provisions addressing issues of collective interest to rural communities.

Article 12. Access to Justice

Law No. 141/2021 (Code of Procedure) guarantees peasants the right to bring legal actions before the courts whenever their administrative claims have not received an adequate response from the competent authorities.

As Cuban citizens, peasants are also entitled to seek judicial remedies against public officials whose actions cause them harm, in accordance with **Articles 98 and 99 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba**, **Decree-Law No. 76/2023 on Agricultural Cooperatives**, and the recently enacted legislation governing citizens' complaints and petitions.

Article 15. Right to Food and Food Sovereignty

In 2022, Cuba enacted **Law No. 148 on Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Nutrition**.

This legislation establishes a framework through which peasants participate, via their cooperatives, in an integrated system of agricultural production and marketing that benefits both rural communities and the population as a whole.

Peasants and other people working in rural areas receive various forms of support designed to enable them to produce sufficient food to meet the basic needs of their own families as well as those of Cuban society more broadly.

Nevertheless, these efforts continue to face serious constraints resulting from the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States. According to the Cuban authorities, this blockade severely restricts access to essential inputs and resources needed for agricultural production, thereby undermining the capacity of peasants and their families to fully realize their right to food.

Article 17. Right to Land

Through the **Agrarian Reform Law of 1959**, the Cuban Government granted more than **150,000 land titles** to peasant families. These property rights continue to enjoy legal recognition today under the constitutional framework governing private property.

In addition, any individual wishing to engage in agricultural production may apply for State-owned land under **Decree-Law No. 358/2018 on the Allocation of Idle State Land**. Applicants may initially receive up to 26 hectares, with the possibility of expanding their holdings to 67 hectares under the conditions established by law.

To date, more than 300,000 people have joined agricultural production through this programme.

Article 18. Right to a Safe, Clean and Healthy Environment

A broad range of laws and public policies has enabled Cuba to make significant progress in promoting agroecology, biological production methods, and restrictions on the use of chemical fertilizers and agrochemicals.

This productive model is based on the shared commitment of rural communities and public authorities to produce healthy food while protecting natural resources and the environment.

Article 19. Right to Seeds

Decree-Law No. 388/2019 on Plant Genetic Resources for Food, Agriculture and Seeds establishes the legal framework governing the use, conservation and protection of seeds in Cuba.

The legislation also recognizes the importance of traditional seed conservation practices, in which peasants play a central role through the preservation and transmission of agricultural biodiversity.

Article 22. Right to Social Security

In October 2024, **Decree-Law No. 80/2024 establishing the Special Social Security Scheme for the Agricultural Sector** entered into force.

This legislation protects all persons engaged in agricultural activities, including landowners, usufruct farmers, their family members, agricultural workers, beekeepers, and members of Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CPAs), Credit and Service Cooperatives (CCSs), and Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UBPCs).

3) Promotion of Agroecology

On **29 September 2025**, the Council of Ministers of Cuba adopted **Decree No. 128 (Official Gazette GOC-2025-447-O79)**, establishing the general regulations, principles and procedures governing the implementation, promotion and facilitation of agroecology.

Agroecology occupies a central place within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), constituting a cross-cutting theme reflected in several provisions of the Declaration, particularly **Articles 16.4, 17.5 and 20.2**.

For this reason, and in view of Cuba's significant progress in promoting agroecology, particular attention should be given to this experience as a potential example of good practice capable of inspiring other countries and regions.

Following the severe food and economic crisis experienced during the 1990s, Cuba embraced socially committed agroecological agriculture as a strategy to overcome food shortages and reduce dependence on imported agricultural inputs, chemicals, machinery and food products.

The dominant monoculture model of the 1980s gradually gave way to a diversified agricultural system, resulting in one of the highest rates of food production growth in Latin America between 1996 and 2005. This transformation not only helped bring the country's food crisis under control but also laid the foundations for the institutional and social consolidation of agroecology throughout Cuba.

Supported by State policies providing credit, subsidies, agrarian reform and cooperative development, Cuban peasants strengthened their control over agricultural land and led the transition toward diversified and agroecologically integrated farming systems. In doing so, they assumed a leading role in supplying healthy and nutritious food to the Cuban population.

The positive results achieved by Cuba are largely attributable to the innovative horizontal methodology known as **Peasant-to-Peasant (Campesino a Campesino – CAC)**, through which farmers themselves become the principal actors in generating, adapting and sharing agricultural knowledge and technologies.

The CAC methodology is a participatory approach based on agroecological practices and guided by the needs, knowledge and cultural traditions of local farming communities. It places peasant knowledge at the centre of innovation, facilitating the exchange, dissemination and continuous improvement of practical agricultural experience.

The widespread adoption of agroecology among peasant farmers has coincided with a substantial increase in their contribution to national food security and food sovereignty. Agroecological family farming has also reduced dependence on imported agricultural inputs while increasing the resilience of the Cuban economy to increasingly frequent climate-related shocks.

Furthermore, restrictions on the use of hazardous pesticides and chemical fertilizers, implemented as part of Cuba's agroecological strategy, have produced significant benefits for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection.

Education and awareness-raising on agroecology begin at the primary school level and continue throughout secondary, university and postgraduate education. This comprehensive approach is made possible through collaboration among ministries and State institutions, schools and universities, research centres, peasant and rural organizations, religious institutions and international organizations.

Particularly noteworthy are:

1. The capacity-building programmes organized by the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), which provide agroecology training to approximately 12,000 participants every year.
2. The 2019 Food Sovereignty and Nutrition Education Plan, which promotes the realization of the right to food through urban agriculture, agroecology and food sovereignty, while incorporating a strong gender perspective throughout its implementation.

4) Conclusion

In summary, this report demonstrates that Cuba, despite the constraints imposed by more than six decades of economic, commercial and financial blockade by the United States government, has made significant progress in promoting and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. The political will of the Cuban Revolution, embodied in legislation such as the Food and Nutritional Sovereignty Act, the decrees on social security and land, as well as the promotion of agroecology through the 'Farmer-to-Farmer' methodology, constitute concrete examples of how it is possible to uphold the dignity of the peasantry and guarantee their rights even under adverse conditions.

However, the intensification of the United States' criminal blockade remains the main obstacle to the full enjoyment of these rights. The economic stranglehold imposed by this unilateral policy restricts access to inputs, fuel, technologies and markets, directly affecting the productive capacity of the Cuban peasantry and infringing upon their right to food, to development and to an adequate standard of living, amongst others. As long as this coercive measure remains in place, any domestic effort to achieve the full implementation of the UNDROP will come up against a glass ceiling imposed from outside.

For all these reasons, the United Nations' human rights mechanisms and bodies, together with governments around the world that stand in solidarity, must redouble their efforts to demand the immediate and unconditional lifting of the economic blockade against Cuba. Lifting this policy is not only a matter of justice and sovereignty, but a necessary and inescapable condition for farmers and people working in rural areas of Cuba to be able to fully exercise the rights enshrined in the UNDROP, thereby contributing to an inclusive, sustainable and sovereign model of rural development that serves as an inspiration for all humanity.