

Puerto Rico Strikes Alliances with USDA to Foster Agricultural Sector

SAN JUAN — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Puerto Rico government signed Tuesday two collaboration agreements to provide more incentives to small & midsize businesses (SMEs) in the agriculture sector, as well as internship and employment opportunities for local college students.

Through the Trade & Export Co. and House of Representatives' Fuerza PyME, a support program to Puerto Rico SMEs, the first agreement seeks to increase the participation of local companies in USDA programs, including those that facilitate access to financing. The local program would provide consulting for agricultural SMEs so they can take advantage of applicable federal programs.

The second accord between the USDA and the commonwealth government aims to develop joint programs that lead to increased employment and internship opportunities for young students within the federal agency, through the Economic Development & Commerce Department's Youth Development Program. Initially, a total of 22 college students will benefit from this agreement.



House Speaker Jaime Perelló and USDA's Dr. Joe Leonard take part in the Capitol's farm fair.

“These agreements with the Puerto Rico government represent our continued commitment with the people of Puerto Rico, not only from the USDA, but more importantly, also from the [Barack Obama] White House,” said Elvis Córdova, assistant undersecretary of the USDA's Markets & Regulation Programs.

For his part, House Speaker Jaime Perelló said it is time to recognize and support the efforts of a new generation of Puerto Ricans that has returned to rescue the island's agriculture niche.

Perelló also announced the first edition of Expo Fuerza PyME for farmers and local entrepreneurs in the agricultural industry. The event will take place March 3, at the Ponce Convention Center. A joint effort between the House and the Trade & Export Co., the Expo Fuerza PyME initiative seeks

to provide tools and solutions to business owners or potential entrepreneurs interested in establishing or expanding an SME. There have been 12 regional expos to date, with the participation of more than 10,000 people.