

## Cuba to Ration More Products as Harder Times Approach

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In announcing the new rationing measures the government's official Granma newspaper ran this picture trying to project calm and an abundance of available meat products. Photo: granma.cu

**HAVANA TIMES** – Cuba will start rationing more food and hygiene articles in view of the country's worsening supply crisis, Domestic Trade Minister Betsy Diaz said Friday, reported dpa news.

As shortages increase, chicken, rice, eggs, beans, sausage, soap, detergent and toothpaste are among the items to be rationed in a bid for "fair and reasonable" distribution of scarce products, she the official.

The decision means less of these products will be available on the free market and thus less availability for small private food service vendors and cafes and "paladar" restaurants. The minister did not mention if availability for tourists resorts would be affected.

The Diaz Canel government says shortages are due to the stepped-up US trade embargo, while many economists blame them on the poor quality and quantity of goods manufactured in Cuba and the country's economy being overly reliant on its key ally Venezuela, on the brink of disaster itself.

In a barter arrangement, the Cuban government trades the work of poorly paid Cuban doctors and educators, sent on "missions" to Venezuela for cheap oil, which is used to keep the country running and partially resold to other countries by Cuba to obtain foreign currency.

However, oil deliveries from Venezuela had already been halved to 50,000 barrels a day due to that country's own economic woes. Now, the foreign shipping companies that transport that oil are subject to US sanctions that will make them divest any interests with US companies or their tentacles, or face a possible confiscation of assets.

Likewise, should the Maduro government fall in Venezuela, virtually all opposition forces have often announced they would cut all oil shipments to Havana and send home the tens of thousands of Cubans working in the South American country on government to government contracts.

Both the US and the opposition forces in the Venezuelan National Assembly accuse Cuba of providing key military and security assistance to the Maduro government.