

## PEOPLE

Timothy A. Hunt

# FLORIDA PRODUCE PURSUING WAREHOUSE FACILITY IN CUBA

Firm News

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Tampa-based, Florida Produce of Hillsborough County, Inc. (Florida Produce) is pursuing negotiations with the Cuban government under a new U.S. license which permits the firm to open a warehouse facility in Cuba designed to enable trade between U.S.-based companies and Cuba.

The announcement of the permit comes on the heels of revisions announced by U.S. Department of Treasury and the Department of Commerce this fall which expanded upon initial regulations introduced earlier this year. Under the guidelines, firms that fall into one of twelve designated categories will be allowed to establish a physical presence in Cuba, employ Cuban nationals, open and maintain bank accounts in Cuba, and employ U.S. citizens to work in Cuba.

The Florida Produce facility is expected to store a variety of significant supplies, equipment and much-needed everyday staples. It will also serve as a physical location which will enable parties to directly transfer title and goods upon payment, as permitted under the newly expanded guidelines.

Recently, Mike Mauricio, his Florida Produce partner Manuel Fernandez, and his legal counsel Tim Hunt with Hill Ward Henderson, met in Washington D.C. with members of the U.S. State Department. On the same day, the Florida Produce representatives met with Cuban government officials at the Cuban Embassy in Washington D.C. Florida Produce presented a proposal to establish its Warehouse Distribution Facility in Havana.

After presenting the proposal, Mr. Mauricio and Mr. Fernandez traveled to Havana for the International Fair and Trade Show. During this trip, Mr. Mauricio and Mr. Fernandez participated in three days of discussions with the Cuban government regarding the warehouse which is expected to store food, drinking water, beer, wine, liquor,

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telecommunications equipment, building equipment, restaurant equipment and agricultural equipment.

"Our meetings with the Cuban government officials have been very positive and they are excited about the prospect of this business relationship," said Florida Produce President Mike Mauricio. "We are expecting a response from the Cuban government in the next few weeks and hope to negotiate a lease agreement on an existing warehouse facility in January of 2016."

Parties interested in consultation services or learning more about doing business in Cuba should contact Tim Hunt of Hill Ward Henderson, Attorneys at Law, at [tim.hunt@hwlaw.com](mailto:tim.hunt@hwlaw.com), or by calling (813) 227-8451.