Dairy without borders ...

Wendy R. Holm, P.Ag.,

egular WDF readers know about the Canada Cuba Farmer to Farmer Project.

Our first initiative, Enhancing Sustainable Dairy Production Capacity in Cuba, brought together farmers from both countries to develop a sustainable dairy model that has already tripled milk production at CPA 26 Julio and just won the AMEC Sustainable Development of Natural Resources or Protection of the Environment Award at the 15th Annual International Awards for Cooperation in May 2007.

Cuba's priority on dairy self-sufficiency (they import half their milk and most of their feed protein) means our next challenge is to replicate this suc-

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cess on a peri-urban level, close to consumers.

Bayamo, in the eastern province of Granma, was chosen as the site of the next project.

Beautiful, drought-prone Bayamo!

Hence the project STM Bayamo (sewage to milk in polite company) emerged, diverting residential sewage that would otherwise flow into the Bayamo River through a constructed wetlands treatment system (Canadian technology) to provide nutrient-rich effluent for the irrigation of pastures.

So what's new with this spiffy little international Canadian dairy project? So glad you asked - I've just returned from toiling in Cuban fields and

meeting in Havana offices!

For the first two weeks, myself, Ontario dairy farmer Morgan Donneral (nee Millson) and her electrician husband Darryl (fresh from their honeymoon) spent two weeks at CPA 26 Julio, "our" cooperative in Havana

While Morgan and I measured out 15 more hectares of rotational pastures and installed the electric fencing system, Darryl installed a 100 horsepower turbine for irrigation and a used proportioner/hammer mill for feed

We began work at first light; afternoon temperatures hovered around 40C and around 3 p.m. there was always a downpour of rain. The lighten-

ing storms were amazing.

Most exciting? Watching our 100HP motor gingerly lowered - by a crane with a leaky hydraulic - onto the wellshaft that sat on the other side of a 10-foot high concrete block wall. Most fun? Painting two large flags — one Canadian and one Cuban — atop the metal shipping container that houses the solar fencing equipment so the U.S. spy satellites have something more to wonder about.

Monday through to Thursday we stayed in a small countryside hotel. Weekends were spent in Havana.

It felt good to work so hard.

When Morgan and Darryl returned to Canada, I met with our project partners to put the final touches our proposal to CIDA's bi-lateral Canada-Cuba Modernization of the State Fund (MOSF).

Sustainable Cities (our Vancouver-based Canadian NGO partner) began

preparing this proposal last spring.

No build-it-and-they-will-come approaches allowed under MOSF — you must demonstrate how your project will modernize the structures of government, increasing the capacity of the state in areas such as taxation, communications and, in this case, policy development.

As an Agrologist, adding the MOSF component to the proposal was exciting stuff! We will be joining together, for the first time in a common policy yoke, the formidable resources of ANAP (our primary partner,



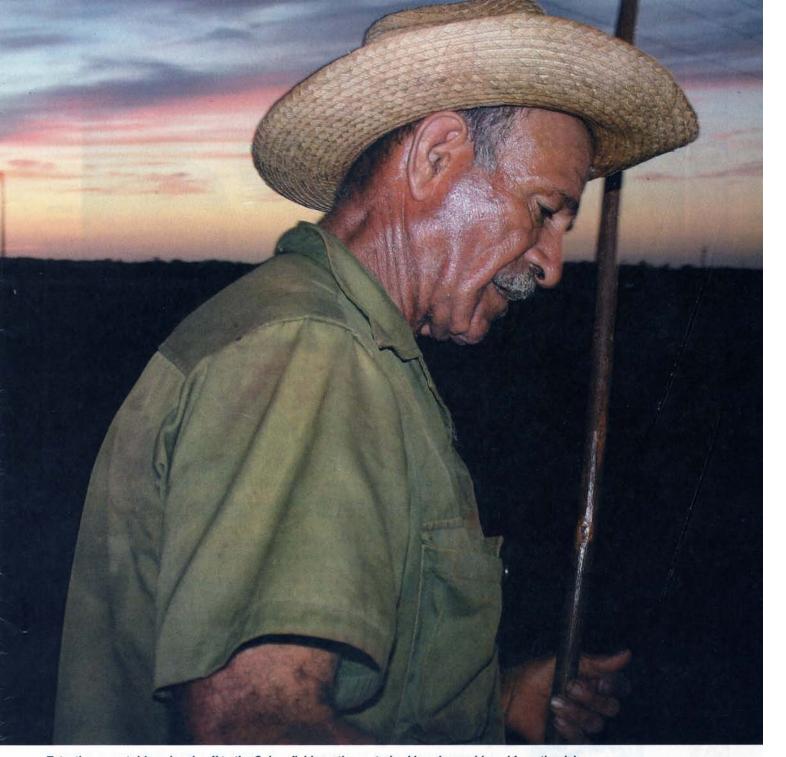
Cuba's independent farmers organization), the Ministry of Agriculture (state farms), and the Ministry of Sugar (now responsible for diversification of former sugar lands).

This new National Milk Committee will be charged with moving Cuba towards dairy self-sufficiency. Sustainable Cities will provide Secretariat services.

A second committee created at the national level will be the Si, Se Puede! Committee, comprised of senior policy makers from those ministries who have a stake in seeing Cuba achieve self-sufficiency in dairy and feed protein production. They include transportation, economics and planning, health, education, environ-

This pan-sectoral committee, convening at the call of the National Milk Committee, will ensure that those with a policy interest in its success are briefed twice a year, can send staff to





Tata, the ox cart driver, heads off to the Cuban fields as the easterly skies glow ruddy red from the rising sun.

visit the sites and, hopefully, will be more likely to support funding to further a dairy self-sufficiency strategy because — like God Mothers around a cradle — they understand their collective interest in its success and want to nurture its potential.

Two pilot working committees at the provincial level — again comprised of ANAP, MINVEC and MINAZ — will be formed in Habana and Granma provinces to develop a dairy information system and to bring together leading farmers from the private and state sector to share experiences and build networks. This process will be led by ANAP.

In Granma province, development of the water treatment and dairy circle components of the STM Bayamo Project will be led by ANAP in collaboration with MINAG, MINAZ, the City of Bayamo, the Institute for Hydrology, the Institute for Pastures and Forages, the Ministry of the Environment and the University of Granma.

The development of the new Dairy Circle in Bayamo and continued support to CPA 26 Julio will remain a farmer-to-farmer initiative.

Ontario dairy farmer Jim Millson has agreed to take the lead in this, with the support of his wonderful family.

Farmers from CPA 26 Julio will support the training effort in Bayamo. An education facility will be constructed at CPA 26 Julio for training and extension purposes.

The Proposal was finalized and submitted to Canadian and Cuban officials, Oct. 12. A bi-lateral committee has met to decide winning projects in late October.

More information is posted at www.theholmteam.ca