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Canadian dairy farmers triple milk production at a Cuban Cooperative

"What these Canadian farmers have done is nothing short of amazing" says Wendy Holm, the Bowen Island-based Agrologist behind an international project that brought dairy farmers from Canada and Cuba together "to make a difference".

Canadian dairy farmers Lorne Hansen (BC), Bruce Beattie (Alberta) and Jim, Gladys and Morgan Millson (Ontario) participated a one-year CIDA-supported farmer-to-farmer pilot project to increase milk production at an agricultural cooperative in rural Havana province.

"This international project, built on cooperation between Canadian and Cuban farmers, has opened doors and opened hearts," says Holm. "The sustainable, small-footprint model based on solar power, rotational grazing and good dairy management practices has already tripled milk production at CPA 26 July. Cuba imports half her dairy requirements. According to our farmers, there is no reason why Cuba can't be self-sufficient in sustainable dairy production. And in the true spirit of cooperation, Canadian farmers are working with Cuban farmers to help make that happen." Full details are posted at www.theholmteam.ca.

Here's what the Canadian farmers who volunteered for this project have to say about it:



Bruce Beattie

Bruce Beattie is a dairy farmer from Sundre, Alberta, Canada has a long history of good relations with Cuba — "I remember my parents cheering as Castro succeeded in defeating Batista and his thugs. Canada has a role to play in the world as a peacekeeper and builder and supporter of people who need help, of a generous society of farmers who survived in this climate by helping each other and working together. Supply management provides the cooperative framework that is success-

ful in ensuring Canadian dairy farmers are fairly compensated for their investment of labour and capital. We are unique in the world with that system, but the cooperative aspect is universal among farmers. I am privileged to live in a country like Canada, and if I can in some small way, help those with much less who are ready to help



Lorne Hansen

themselves, it makes Canada a better place and me a better person."

Lorne Hansen is a retired dairy farmer from Harrison Mills, British Columbia. ▶▶

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"I was happy to be part of a project that gave me a chance not only to see how the Cubans have adapted so well to their situation but also that we were able to help them with our input because of their appreciativeness and their willingness to grasp new ideas. I was also happy to be part of a project that saw such good results."

Jim Millson, his wife Gladys and children Ben, Elizabeth, Morgan, Laura and Angela operate a fifth generation dairy farm in Enniskillen, Ontario.



Jim Millson

Jim Millson: "The farmer-to-farmer relationship has been the most rewarding part.

CPA Julio 26 has become more than just a project, it has become our family hobby in which true friendships grow with each encounter and satisfy our mutual passion for improving the art of farming. It is also really good to know we have made a difference in the ability of the CPA to improve their production capacity. And then, when our hands get too dirty to shake, we have learned to find more meaning in rubbing elbows!"

Gladys Millson: "I am very proud to



Gladys Millson

be a Canadian in Cuba because you really feel that they warmly consider us their friends. We have embraced the project as just another challenge for our family

farm—with tropical benefits. All agree that the most important achievement of the project is the friendship developed between Canadian and Cuban farmers. To share their enthusiasm and optimism and to observe their sincere gratitude is the best reward. As with any other of our farm projects, we are committed to finish what we have started. It's also nice to see the Canadian flag flying at the CPA on every visit."



Morgan Millson

Morgan Millson, young farmer, 2006 Agribusiness Graduate, University of Guelph:

"This project has allowed me, a 22-

year-old "farmers daughter", the opportunity to travel to Cuba, and do something people my age don't normally get to do. Meeting and working with the members of the CPA has been very rewarding and wonderful experience.

Darryl Donneral, rural electrician and



Darryl Donneral

Morgan's fiancé: "It gives me a great deal of pride to be able to help a nation instead of just a single person. I just wish that I could do more to help. Of all the places I have travelled, the people at CPA 26 Juilo are, bar none, the best of the best. The hospitality down there is fantastic. I just wish that I could speak Spanish so I could speak more freely."

Next steps will be to repeat the success of this sustainable rural dairy model in a peri-urban setting, using recovered municipal wastewater for effluent irrigation. The nutrient-rich

water will be reclaimed through

Canadian constructed wetlands technology produced by Eco Tek Ecological Technologies Inc, based in Langley, B.C.

The Canadian NGO Partner is Vancouver-based International Centre for Sustainable Cities and the

Cuban NGO partner is ANAP (Asociación Nacional De Agricultores Pequeños).

The project was supported by \$75,000 in funds from the Canadian International Development Agency and \$82,000 in donations from Canadian farmers, Canadian farm suppliers (in particular, Gallagher

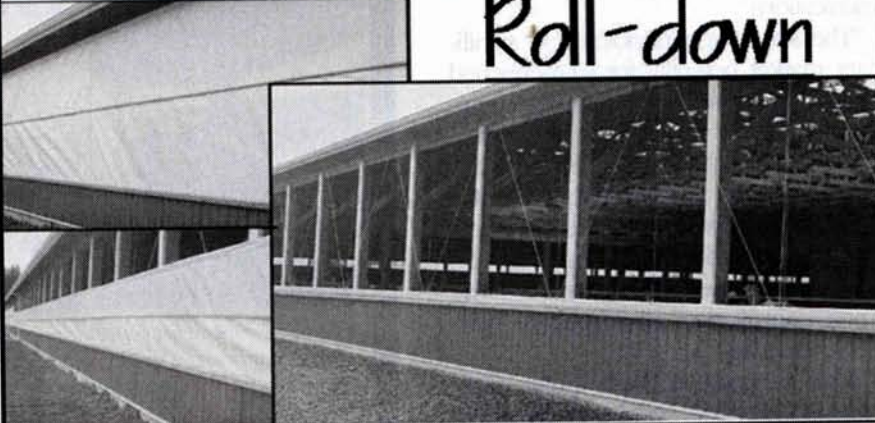
Canada and Gallagher New Zealand) and supportive Canadians.

For further comment, please contact Wendy Holm, P.Ag. 604-947-2893, www.theholmteam.ca

Wendy Holm is an award-winning Agrologist, resource economist and journalist based on Bowen Island, British Columbia

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