

# Finca del Medio Casimiro-Rodriguez Agroecological Family Farm Sancti Spiritus, Cuba

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**F**inca del Medio (Middle Farm) is the Casimiro-Rodriguez agroecological family farm in the heart of Cuba, Taguasco, Sancti Spiritu. The farm was originally founded by Casimiro-Rodriguez Family's grandparents, who immigrated to Cuba from the Spanish Canary Islands. In 1942, the grandparents founded Finca Neuva (New Farm) in Cuba.



## Food Sovereignty in Cuba

was catastrophic and was the instigation of Cuba's small but important food sovereignty movement which exist today.

**Cuba Imports 80% of its Food.** Cuba still, however, imports 80% of its food today. I had a May 2017 discussion with Dr. Nilda Perez and her husband in their home in Old Havana. Dr. Nilda Perez is one of the three original founders of Cuba's Food Sovereignty Movement along with Dr. Humberto Rios and Dr. Fernando Funes Aguilar. Dr. Nilda Perez is also a brilliant, gifted Professor at Fructuoso Rodriguez Perez - University of Havana-Cuba's Agricultural University located outside of Havana. Said Dr. Humberto Rios: "They simply did not have time to truly become a "Food Sovereignty Nation" when the crisis hit due to the collapse of Cuba's most important trading partner.

*(Information was obtained from an Informal interview with Dr. Humberto Rios, Summer 2008 in Havana at Cuba's Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Agrícolas.)*

## Food Sovereignty Now

Cuba does now have a very important "Food Sovereignty Movement" which is a source of much needed fresh produce, such as vegetables, fruits, rice, spices, herbs and some

fish, poultry, pork and beef for the population. One might call this movement: "A thin green line of fresh produce, meats, fishes and other foods" separating the people from the complete lack of these critical foods and essential nutrients.

## Casimiro-Rodriguez Family Farm Returns

At this time, the Casimiro-Rodriguez family, who have been living in the nearby city, Zaza del Medio, returned to the family farm, Finca Nueva, taking one of its two parts and turning it into their family farm, Fina Del Medio, (Middle Farm) in order to secure their family food and nutrition amidst the crisis. The farm was severely deteriorated, due to the previous years of conventional, intensive exploitation including the use of heavy machinery for tobacco cultivation and subsequent abandonment. There was no water, soils were eroded, compacted, and degraded. Pests and weeds had invaded the farm. There was little infrastructure, including no internal and perimeter fences. There were no technological resources.

The farm home was in a dilapidated condition and had no electricity. The Casimiro-Rodriguez family began salvaging their part of the family farm. They never used agrochemicals. Nor did they use heavy machinery. Instead, Jose-Antonio, the father, designed new tools for the field and for animal traction. Says Dr. Casimiro, "We were already doing agroecology without knowing it!" Continued on pg. 5

## Farmer Agroecological

**Movement Visited The Family** Because their farm was transforming farming, the Cuban Farmer to Farmer Agroecological Movement visited the family in 2001 to further assist their transition to a fully functioning agroecological farm. After that visit, the farm became completely agroecological, using organic fertilizers and diversifying their crops. In 2005, they also learned and applied permaculture principles. In 2006, the family introduced technologies for the maximum use of renewable energy and locally available resources. They built their own biodigester, in which bacteria in the anaerobic environment breaks down organic material to produce a renewable energy called biogas (methane and carbon dioxide) and other material used as fertilizer on the farm.

## Finca del Medio is Now Thriving

As well, Leidy Casimiro subsequently obtained her Doctorate in Agroecology from the University of Antioquia in Columbia. Today, about 14 years later, Finca del Medio is a thriving integrated family farm farming agroecological and livestock system that grows 35 varieties of fruit including mango, guava, orange, acerola, cherry, tamarind, star fruit, mamey, coconut, avocado, loquat, canistel and plum. The farm also grows more than 15 varieties of vegetables: including tomatoes, corn, potatoes, taro, sweet potatoes, potatoes, sagu, and yucca and rice and beans.

The Casimiro Rodriguez family also raises cows, chickens, fish, rabbits, and turkeys. They produce milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and many fruit juices. They dehydrate meals of viands and fruit. In Cuba, all farmers must first sell a portion of all their produce to the government for set prices. The remainder can be sold



## Cuba's Farmer to Farmer Agroecology Movement

at market. Dr. Leidy Casimiro's job at the farm, along with her father, is to educate the vast numbers of visitors and guests who come to the farm. She is also an extensionist, traveling across Cuba, explaining the farm's philosophy of life, supporting other growers with technical knowledge and participating in events to which the farm is invited in Cuba and all over the world such as the International Slow Food Conference.

Her father also educates people and represents Cuba internationally. Dr. Casimiro also works with two academic centers in Cuba: The University of Sancti Spiritus and The Experimental Station Indio Hatuery. She also works with international projects such as Biomass Cuba which works with 28 nearby Cuban peasant farms.

## You Can Now Stay at Finca del Medio Bunkhouse

Recently, the Casimiro-Rodriguez family built a comfortable bunkhouse with bathrooms for guests to come and stay at the Finca del Medio for a modest fee from between 3 to 7 nights. Guests come to exchange about agroecology and Cuba and share during their amazing meals about their farm work and lives. I, myself, visited The Farm during Cuba's Bi-annual Agroecology Conference in 2008 and have never been able to forget that experience. I and other recent American guests highly recommend a visit.

## WEB SITES:

### THE FARM

<http://ffsg.blogspot.com/2019/05/lifetime-visitexchange-with-finca-del.html>

For more information about Finca del Medio and agroecology in Cuba, join the **Family Farm Defender's bilingual Cuba-USA Agroecology Solidarity Group on facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CubanSustainableAgriculture>

Also visit **Spiritual Agroecology: Healing Ourselves through Agroecology's "Cuban Work"**

**The Vermont Caribbean Institute**  
<http://www.vtcaribbean.org/>

And it's initiative,  
**The USA-Cuba Agroecology Network:**  
<http://www.agroecologynetwork.org>

Under the leadership of Dr. Margarita Fernandez:  
**Eco-Cuba Network**  
<http://www.ecocubanetwork.net>

**Food First Cuba's work**  
<https://foodfirst.org/cuba>