

The “Los Árabos” Project

Los Árabos

Los Árabos is one of the 23 Municipalities (*municipios*) that make up the Cuban Province of Matanzas.

It is situated inland, about 200km (120 miles) East of Havana, and lies halfway along the central highway that connects the cities of Matanzas and Santa Clara. There is also a railway connection to Matanzas City, which is about 100km (60 miles) away.

The main centre of population in the municipality is the small town of Los Árabos, which grew up around the railway station established there in 1852.

The other population centres within the Municipality are Israel Ruiz, Macagua, Zorrilla, and San Pedro de Mayabon.

The total area of the municipality is 760 square kilometres, and the total population is around 27,000 people.

The Project

The project which we propose to support will be carried out by the “Jose Martí” Agricultural Production Co-operative (CPA), which is located in the communities of Los Saez and Israel Ruiz, about 15 km North-East of Los Árabos town.

The aim of the project is to establish a plant house and nursery to grow trees (both fruit trees and those grown for timber), and other garden plants and vegetables, from seed. The young trees will be sold to other agricultural enterprises in the locality, and will be used for the reforestation of the area. Garden produce will also be supplied for local consumption, and to the existing food preservation plant. The project is expected to take twelve months to set up, and will aim to produce two million young trees per annum.

The Co-operative

The “Jose Martí” (CPA) was founded in 1981 and has 125 members, 98 men and 27 women. 18 are less than 30 years old.

This project will create 15 new jobs, specifically to employ women. This in turn will help to increase the income of local families.

Management Committee

The project will be managed by a committee which will include representatives of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), the co-operative itself, and national and municipal government agencies. Our contact with the Coop is Lázaro de la Torre, Project Director for ANAP in Los Árabos.

Costings

The total estimated cost of the project is equivalent to approximately £16,000. £5,000 of this requires hard currency purchases for building materials, fuel, tools and equipment, office supplies, and will be raised by Manchester Cuba Solidarity. The project will be self financing once established.

Agriculture in Cuba

In recent years Cuban agriculture has faced the following challenges:

- The decline in sugar production
- The switch from intensive to organic methods
- Attempts to diversify, and to be more self-sufficient in food production
- Measures to protect the environment, including reforestation

Overseas Partners

Two European NGOs are involved in similar projects in the area:

Oxfam (Belgium) is financing the sustainable rural development project "Farmer to Farmer".

Cosude (Switzerland) is financing the “*Post Harvest*” project, which promotes improved methods of storing and distributing agricultural products.

To make this project a reality, we need regular contributions. A Standing Order form is attached - Thanks! Any surplus will go to similar environmental and/or community development projects in Cuba.

Cuba Solidarity Campaign Manchester

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