



The sustainability of Cuba

Posted by [Yankee](#) on June 29, 2005 - 4:56pm

I recently took a look at [The Community Solution](#), which Prof. Goose also posted about [over a month ago](#) and [the other day](#). The organization [advocates](#) developing small local communities with the following characteristics:

- Physically limited â€œ a small place
- Food production incorporated â€œ live closer to food sources
- Nature available for education and recreation
- Ease and safety of walking and biking
- Low energy â€œ minimal machine transportation
- Closer living to our work, schools, and shops

Community Solution also sponsors the [Second U.S. Conference on "Peak Oil" and Community Solutions](#), which features Richard Heinberg (author of *Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post-Carbon World*) as a keynote speaker.

In poking around their website, I found [this power point presentation](#) and [this newsletter](#) about Cuba. Cuba is an interesting case study, because they import very little oil and certainly don't have any domestic oil production. Once the Soviet Union ended its sponsorship of Cuba in 1989, the energy resources they'd been using suddenly evaporated. Community Solution argues that Cuba is already living in a post-peak-oil culture.

Of course, Cuba isn't exactly a utopian agrarian society today, but still, it survives. And under Communist control, at that! This [interesting pdf](#) from the USDA (of all places) details the current state (as of 1998) of agriculture in Cuba. In the early 1990s, the Cuban government began an economic recovery that allowed for increased foreign investment in some Cuban industries like mining, telecommunications, etc. But for the most part, Cubans grow their own food for domestic consumption. Yes, there's some importation of certain staples, but for the most part they are self-sustaining. This [Canadian website](#) provides more information on specifically how Cuban agriculture responded to the economic crisis of the 20th century.

(Edited to add: [Commenter Bart](#) points us to a few more Cuba links, including an excerpt of Bill McKibben's April 2005 article in Harper's called "The Cuba Diet: What Will You Be Eating When the Revolution Comes?". In fact, Bill Totten has the [whole article](#) on his website, and it's most definitely worth the read. Thanks, Bart.)

I'm not advocating Cuba as a model to strive toward. [This assessment](#) by the RAND Corporation does not paint a pretty picture. But I still think the Community Solution people might be onto something by looking at Cuba as a case study. Now, if only we were granted access to the country...

Technorati Tags: [peak oil](#), [Cuba](#)



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