

Cuba's Urban Agriculture is an Experience for U.S. City of Minneapolis



Havana, January 27 (RHC) — The Minneapolis-based Star Tribune newspaper published a report on a recent visit by U.S. City Council members to Cuba to look at urban agriculture efforts on the island.

Here are excerpts of the article:

Two Minneapolis City Council aides were part of a Twin Cities group that recently spent more than a week in Cuba, visiting co-ops and compost sites and gathering information on urban agriculture.

Robin Garwood, a policy aide for Council Member Cam Gordon and Ben Somogyi, policy aide for Council Member Lisa Bender, said the trip offered a chance to get a new perspective on agriculture efforts championed by both council members. The two joined 10 other people, several of them with Stone's Throw Urban farm, on the "food sovereignty" trip organized by think tank Food First.

The nine-day visit included visits to urban farms in and outside of Cuba's capital city, Havana. Garwood said the trip was organized months before the U.S.

announced it was taking formal steps to open up relations between the two countries. It was selected because the country is known for innovation in how it grows and uses food, particularly in urban areas. For the last few decades, Garwood said, Cubans have been perfecting a system that uses very few pesticides or other chemicals, because they were unable to import them.

Somogyi said Bender has been working on building up local opportunities for small-scale composting businesses, and the trip provided an up-close look at composting systems with a long history of success. Some of the stops on the tour included places that use worms for composting.

Tracy Sides, the founder and executive director of Urban Oasis, a St. Paul sustainable food center, said the trip was a useful opportunity for food-focused leaders to get to know each other and share ideas about work that could be done in the Twin Cities.

She said Cuba has an "enviable" level of connection between neighborhood groups and local and national government when it comes to growing and sharing food -- and she'd like to see a closer connection at home.

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