

Cuban Urban Agriculture Convenes Second SRI/SICA Workshop

The National Group of Cuban Urban Agriculture (UA) started promotion of SICA with a workshop in November, 2007. Now a second workshop has been held in February 2009 to discuss the results of its first year of trials and to plan future activities with respect to this new methodology. Ing. Salvador Sanchez of Cuba's Institute of Rice Research (IAA), also a member of the Urban Agriculture National Group, suggested that SICA has already changed, forever, the island's rice culture by: reducing the age of seedlings from 35-40 or older to 12-15 days; by reducing the time employed between pulling/transplanting from 12-24 hours to 30 minutes; and by reducing the number of seedlings per hill, from between 3-5 to one. He also emphasized the saving in seeds and the possibility, in some cases, of tripling yield. As seen below, average yield with SICA methods -- 5.55 t/ha -- is already about double the national average of 3.5 t/ha.

Dr. Adolfo Rodriguez, director of Cuba's Urban Agriculture Program, presented the following information (Table 1) summarizing the previous year's results in several provinces (attached [powerpoint](#) in Spanish). The Group agreed on a SICA program for 2009, including planting demonstration plots (a minimum of 0.5 hectares) in 140 of Cuba's 169 municipalities, i.e., in all rice-producing municipalities. The workshop concluded with a powerpoint presentation by Dra. Rena Perez reporting on an innovative application of SICA practices in Costa Rica by Sr. Oscar Montavo based on a rice-transplanting machine adapted for SICA, with suitably wide planting distances and using single seedlings. [link to Costa Rica page]

Table 1. Preliminary results with SICA demonstrations by Urban Agriculture program in Cuba

Province	Municipality	Yield (t/ha)	Observations
Pinar del Rio (2.9 ha)	Los Palacios	8.1	
	Pinar del Río	6.9	
	Guane	6.6	
	San Luis	6.5	
	Consolación del Sur	5.2	
La Habana (40.7 ha)	(average)	5.8	Organic fertilizer only
Matanzas (5 ha)	(average)	6.2	
Cienfuegos (4.2 ha)	Cruces	10.0	
	Rodas	3.8	
Villa Clara (0.4 ha)	Encrucijada	5.8	Problems with water pumps
	Santa Domingo	2.8	
Santa Spiritus (10 plots)	-	5-6	Control plots yielded 50% of SICA plots
Ciego de Avila	-	-	SICA yielded 2.5 t/ha more than non-SICA; using only worm humus
Camaquey (76 ha)	Florida	8.0	
	Esmeralda	3.0	
Las Tunas (3 ha)	Amancio	3.9	
	Manatí	3.7	
Holguin (2.2 ha)	-	-	No information as yet
Granma (2.5 ha)	-	4.6	
Santiago de Cuba	3 municipalities	-	Producers prefer non-SICA; Urban Agriculture will select 3 different municipalities in 2009
Guantánamo (3.2 ha)	-	3.5	SICA well-liked, particularly in areas of high salinity