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For Immediate Release
“Green Nobel” Prize winner has Canadian link
Goldman Prize winner a USC Partner

Ottawa, April 2010 - Humberto Rios Labrada, director of USC Canada’s program in Cuba, has been awarded the prestigious international Goldman Environmental Prize, also known as the “Green Nobel”. Dr. Rios will be honoured at an awards ceremony in Washington this evening.

Since 2007, with support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), USC Canada has been working with Dr. Rios and the National Institute for Agricultural Sciences on an innovative farmer-scientist research program that puts farmers in the driver’s seat. Dr. Rios found a kindred spirit in USC, whose award winning Seeds of Survival program is based on an ecological approach to agriculture, knowledge sharing, and farmer – scientist exchanges.

As with many industrialized nations since the 1950s, Cuba’s agricultural model embraced new technologies which became increasingly expensive and environmentally harmful. At one time Cuba was the highest per-capita consumer of agrochemicals in Latin America. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Cubans were compelled to explore a different approach to food production.

Dr. Rios, a researcher who had earned a PhD in Agricultural Sciences, began to notice Cuban farmers returning to the organic agricultural practices of an earlier generation. They included crop rotation and experimentation with indigenous seed varieties. He realized that these small farmers across Cuba were key to the revitalization of the island’s agriculture. He began to help farmers organize and share knowledge about crop biodiversity and to initiate seed fairs in communities across the island. Today, Cuba is food secure and making progress toward food sovereignty.

Since USC-Canada’s association began three years ago, the Cuban program has increased the availability of indigenous crop varieties and extended local seed saving practices.

USC Canada Executive Director Susan Walsh said, “USC takes great delight in the honour this award brings to Humberto, his tireless dedication, and to the important work of small farmers in communities across Cuba.”

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For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:

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ABOUT USC CANADA

USC promotes vibrant family farms, strong rural communities, and healthy ecosystems around the world. With engaged Canadians and partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we support small-scale farmers so they can stay on their lands and grow healthy food for themselves and their communities. We support programs, training, and policies that strengthen biodiversity, food sovereignty, and the rights of those at the heart of resilient food systems -- women, indigenous peoples, and small-scale farmers. For more information visit www.usc-canada.org.