

Carlos

His passion

Carlos' passion is farming. "I am a farmer. My father is a farmer and his father before him. I feel part of a great tradition of farmers. Both my grandparents were farmers working in the sugar cane fields which they later traded for citrus fields from the state."

His daily life

Carlos leaves his house at around 6.00am, and typically works until 6.00 – 6.30pm, with a 2-hour lunch break. It is not a fixed schedule, and he does as much as he can each day. His house is on the outskirts of the town, close to the countryside; it is wooden and 8 years old. Carlos' wife works as a public health supervisor. Carlos earns 270 pesos/month; he says he can more or less manage on this money. "Life is hard

but we get food from the co-operative (part of what we produce)." Every once in a long while my wife and I are able to go out for dinner to a Chinese restaurant in Ciego de Arila, the 'Romagnola'. The food is very good there.

Cubans love dancing, and Carlos is no exception. "We take children from the schools to sing in a choir. I take my own cassette player there so they can dance. We love meringue and casino. Even the children dance. It is in our Cuban blood. It comes naturally to us, it really does!"

Carlos is an orange producer from Cuba.

He is married, with one child

A better deal

The farmers have only a small room where they go for meals as a group and where they hold cultural activities. There are about 70 farmers and they have no space where they can all come together. "With Fairtrade we have the opportunity to spend money on houses for the co-operative farmers and something for recreation."

Compared to some of the poorest in the developing world, Carlos is relatively lucky, but he lives just a hurricane away from a crisis. In the meantime he is grateful for the security Fairtrade provides, guaranteeing minimum prices, as well as the social premium which boosts the farmers' incomes. "For the future I hope to improve my house by building a cement house but, at present, cement is hard to come by because of the economic condition of the country. I have a refrigerator, a TV, water and electricity, an iron, mixer and electric fan. The toilet is outside in the yard. In the bathroom (made of brick) I can take a shower (cold of course!)."

"Everyone who plants something will harvest something. When a tree is born twisted, no one can straighten it up. Life for farmers is changing for the better, and Fairtrade is an important part of that. We are very grateful."