



May 2015 Issue: Updates and News Alert

1. Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance for Africa launched

The inaugural session of the first Africa Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Alliance Forum took place 13th to 15th May 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Organized by the NEPAD Agency in conjunction with the African Union Commission, the Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance will be spearheading implementation of the African Union Vision to reach 25 million farm households practicing Climate Smart Agriculture by 2025.

The Forum was attended by 150 representatives and participants from Governments, Regional Economic Communities, Farmers' Organisations, Private Sector, Civil Society, specialized agencies and development partners, NORAD and GIZ.

Minister Councillor Tove Stub of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopian State Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Sileshi Getahun and Minister for Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Hon. Zenevu Tadesse, graced the occasion.



L to R: NEPAD Programmes Director E Fotabong, Hon Ato Sileshi Getahun, Hon Zenevu Tadesse and Hon Tove Stub at the CSA Opening Session



A section of the participants to the CSA Alliance Launch

From the experts teams, key presentations included the CSA Best Practices Guide to help practitioners determine farming techniques which, when practiced individually or in combinations, lead to improved adaptation and resilience of farming systems to the effects of climate change. Other presentations were the platform for geodatabase management and proposed Financing Mechanisms for CSA in Africa.

The forum endorsed a communique for the Africa CSA Alliance, which called for, amongst others regular meetings to share information.

For more information:

<http://www.act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=282> and/or

<http://www.nepad.org/climatechangeandsustainabledevelopment/news/3645/africa-climate-smart-agriculture-alliance-launched>

2. On-farm field days demonstrate Conservation Agriculture beyond the demonstration plots

Recent field days held both in Kenya and Tanzania are demonstrating the benefits from and farmer innovations in adoption of conservation agriculture. In the CA upscaling thrust, ACT in partnership with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), are supporting farmers to validate CA technologies in research/demonstration plots and innovate the same to suit their application on larger fields beyond the demonstration plots. Uptake of CA “beyond demo” is increasing and so are the



ACT Officer at the field day with visitors

innovations such as market demanded legumes (soya beans), dual purpose - soil enriching and livestock fodder - cover crops (e.g. desmodium), and locally fabricated weed scrapers.

The superiority of CA was consistently demonstrated during field days e.g. in Mbeya (<http://tinyurl.com/nq292xx>), with the visual treatment effects of crop stand, germination and yields far surpassing those of conventional farming with the plough. Cost-saving and improvement in soil life for sustained farming are the “silent” yet the fundamental benefits of CA not commonly fronted. “CA simplifies workload, keeps beneficial organisms in the soil, reduces soil erosion and greenhouse gas emissions” – so says ACT Field Officer for Southern Highlands of Tanzania. These sentiments were echoed by Ann Waweru during the field day in Laikipia County Kenya, who remarked “it now takes two days to *shallow weed* my field where I used to take two weeks with hand hoe weeding previously”. Indeed all of her farming land is now under CA.



Mrs. Ann Waweru at her beyond demo farm displaying a locally fabricated weed scraper

ACT collaborates with the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation – (KALRO) to do CA research on 30 mother demonstration plots and 200 demonstrations in Laikipia and Machakos Counties of Kenya. It also collaborates with SNV, RUDI and others in a similar CA research for upscaling undertaking in Sumbawanga, Kyela, Mbarali, Mbeya Rural, Momba and Mbozi Districts in Tanzania.

For more information:

<http://www.act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=283#.VW7Rs9Kqqko>

3. Conservation Agriculture in Africa: Where Does it Fit?

Article by Frederic Baudron, Christain Thierfelder and Isaiah Nyagumbo featured in CIMMYT's *informa* Newsletter

The controversial debate among researchers about the suitability of conservation agriculture for smallholder farmers in Africa continues while rural inhabitants in Africa face food insecurity and degrading resources. What is the role of CIMMYT's research on CA in Africa?

Research has proven the biophysical and economic benefits of CA for Africa, yet CA adoption and spatial expansion by African farmers is relatively low, compared to its acceptance in similar agro-ecologies in the Americas and Australia. The lack of widespread adoption in Africa has led some researchers to question the suitability of CA for smallholder farmers in Africa or the wisdom of spending resources to study and promote it. A divide between CA-for-Africa proponents and opponents in the research community has opened, obscuring issues and hindering unbiased examination of CA opportunities and constraints. Adding to the uncertainty, there is little research in Africa to assess where CA might make the best impact or, more generally, where conditions are simply too marginal for cropping systems of any type.

The Authors question, “AFTER 10 YEARS OF RESEARCH, WE FEEL IT IS CRITICAL TO LOOK OBJECTIVELY AT WHERE WE ARE WITH CA IN AFRICA. Specifically: What is CIMMYT’s comparative advantage in the research and development of CA systems? Does “business-as-usual”— that is, conventional tillage systems — provide better outcomes? Is there any form of alternative agriculture being adopted more quickly or widely than CA? Do we gain anything if we lose our comparative advantage as a leading global CA research institute and only focus on “good agronomic practices?”

Read more of this article at:

<http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=92&item=287#.VXgTCkaAv3Y>

4. Namibia: Farmers' Field Days in North a Huge Success

According to [AllAfrica](#) in one of the April 2015 articles, CA uses rip furrowing methods (rather than disc harrowing) for improved and sustained productivity, increased profits and food security despite increasingly negative climate-change impacts, such as droughts and floods. This was witnessed as by CA farmer, Hileni Shikongo, in Okaku constituency, Oshana region of Namibia who hosted a successful field day with a special focus on CA that attracted more than 150 visitors from the north central regions. In Shikongo's CA farms, it was evident that the CA methods are effective even in the face of drought. "I only received rain three times since planting last year, but I still will have a good mahangu harvest," explained Shikongo.

Inomusa Nyati, NCBA CLUSA International Country Representative, in his presentations at the Farmers' Field Day emphasized that "*CA is not only about land preparation and then hoping for a good harvest. CA is about being serious about farming; it's about adapting to the changing climate conditions; it's about creating sustainable livelihoods and household food security; and, in the extension, creating national food security.*" He added that "*CA is rapidly spreading across the world. I am immensely happy to be part of the CA movement in Namibia as I constantly witness the positive results, even under harsh climatic conditions.*"

For more information: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201504211509.html>

5. Why There Aren't More No-Tilled Acres- the current barriers to no-till adoption

The national agronomist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) says minimum tillage in 1975 was defined as reducing soil manipulation to the minimum that is biologically, technologically and economically feasible for a crop producer on a particular soil condition. Minimum tillage today is labelled as a non-inversion tillage system that maintains 30% or more residue cover on the soil after planting.

Ernest Flint, an area agronomist with Mississippi State University in Kosciusko, Miss., cites several reasons why reduced tillage was not adopted as extensively as predicted in 1975:

- A lack of appreciation for the need to conserve soil as a natural resource.
- A lack of education and understanding of the principles involved in making no-till effective.
- Extensive peer pressure from others in the ag community not to move to no-tillage.
- A tendency to follow the direction of lenders who want farmers to continue using the same techniques traditionally used through the years.
- Pressure from landowners who rent to farmers, as well as older farmers who exert influence on their sons to continue the cropping practices of the past.
- The simple enjoyment among many farmers of turning the soil with equipment, and overcoming the fact that many farmers are addicted to diesel smoke and seeing new paint on their tillage tools.



Frank Lessiter, agronomist

The article from Frank continues to discuss the major drawbacks to No-Till, Why managing residue is critical, the political concerns **and why the time for change is now!**

For more: <http://www.no-tillfarmer.com/articles/393-why-there-arent-more-no-tilled-acres>

6. Climate-Smart Agriculture on-line survey results now out-conducted by The IIEA/RDS Leadership Forum on CSA

The [IIEA/RDS Leadership Forum on Climate-Smart Agriculture](#) conducted a survey of key international stakeholders in agriculture and climate change. The survey findings suggest that the vast majority of respondents think that Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) is equally important and appropriate in both developed and developing countries. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents identified the three pillars of CSA: (1) Resilience & adaptation to climate change, (2) Farm incomes, productivity & food security, and (3) Mitigating greenhouse gas emissions; as important for all countries. The relative weight given to each pillar shifted according to context.

Unsurprisingly, when it comes to developing countries, respondents underlined the priority of farm incomes and resilience to the impacts of climate change, whereas in countries with advanced agriculture sectors they tended to see mitigating emissions as more important.

Respondents could pick no clear global CSA leader among six advanced economy countries suggested in the survey: the UK, the US, the Netherlands, New Zealand, France, and Ireland.

Find the full summary findings and more on the Leadership Forum at the links below:

<http://www.iiea.com/blogosphere/international-survey-findings-climate-smart-agriculture>

<http://www.iiea.com/ClimateSmartAgriculture/index.html>

7. How to improve conservation agriculture: Zambia need conservation agriculture

According to Muleba Nshimbi, a natural resources management researcher and a columnist with Zambia Daily Mail, CA is ONE of the most efficient and scientifically proven adaptation options to climate change. Others call it climate-smart agriculture (CSA). Both CA and CSA are meant to improve farm productivity because they involve a set of activities at farm level including zero or minimum soil tillage, permanent soil cover with plant residues and crop rotation or intercropping.



A quick survey of most farms in Zambia reveals that not many farmers practise CA or CSA. If it was the other way round, the current farming season would not have generated fears of food shortages in some parts of the country. Lack or lower CA adoption rates can be attributed to less support offered to farmers by both the government and NGOs.

A quick survey reveals that not many farmers practise CA or CSA in Zambia. If it was the other way round, the current farming season would not have generated fears of food shortages in some parts of the country. Lack of or lower CA adoption rates can be attributed to less support offered to farmers by both the government and NGOs. Hence government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, should increase the budget towards meeting CA requirements. The efforts by the Zambian Conservation Farming Unit (CFU) are desirable and commendable, but to create a significant impact on farms, private sector involvement will be critical.

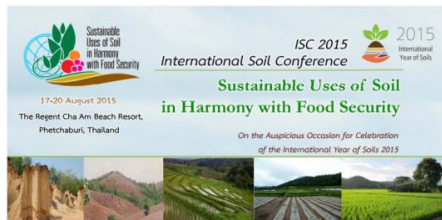
For more information, link to:

☞ <https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/?p=30017>

☞ http://www.worldagroforestry.org/newsroom/media_coverage/zambia-need-conservation-agriculture

8. Upcoming Events

a). International Soil Conference on Sustainable Uses of Soil in Harmony with Food Security on 18-20 August 2015 at Cha Am, Thailand



Land Development Department (LDD), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives Thailand, in collaboration with International Union of Soil Sciences, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Institut de recherche pour le développement, Asian Development Bank, Soil and Fertilizer Society of Thailand, Soil and Water Conservation Society of Thailand and Kasetsart University organize and

will host the International Soil Conference on Sustainable Uses of Soil in Harmony with Food Security on **18-21 August, 2015** at The Regent Cha Am Beach Resort Phetchaburi, Thailand.

This conference is a part of activities to celebrate the International Year of Soils (IYS2015) as declared by the United Nations.

Conference Themes includes: 1) Soil information for supporting sustainable uses and management; 2) Integrated soil management and conservation for food security; 3) Role of soil ecology in relation to climate change and food security; 4) Innovative techniques and tools for soil resources inventories and appropriate management; and 5) Public participation, networking and policy implementation on land management

For more information about the conference and importance dates:

☞ <http://www.act-africa.org/events.php?com=67&item=251#.VUcUw9Kqqko>

☞ <http://www.apaari.org/events/isc2015.html>

☞ congress webpage: http://www.ldd.go.th/WEB_ISC2015/Index.html

Attention!!!: Note the new important dates' changes

b). Reminder: Resource links for updates

⇒ Be checking on this link for constant updates: <http://www.act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&com3=>

⇒ You can join the CA Community of Practice (CA-CoP) - moderated by Amir Kassam http://www.fao.org/ag/ca/CA_CoP.html

⇒ See May 2015 CA-CoP postings: <https://listserv.fao.org/cgi-bin/wa?A1=ind1505&L=CA-Cop-L>

..... *And for much more visit our website www.act-africa.org/newsroom*

Eng. Saidi Mkomwa

Executive Secretary

African Conservation Tillage Network

Conservation Agriculture for Improved Livelihoods and a Better Environment

KARI NARL Compound, Waiyaki Way

P.O. Box 10375-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

Email: saidi.mkomwa@act-africa.org

Web: www.act-africa.org

Tel: +254 20 8076064; +254 710 122 251