



March 2015 – Updates and Hottest Issues

1. Scaling up Conservation Agriculture in Africa – linking the initiatives

Scaling up Conservation Agriculture in Africa – linking the initiatives, a keynote presentation by ACT Executive Secretary, Eng. S. Mkomwa, to ECHO East Africa Biennial Symposium 2015 Arusha Tanzania, 3rd February, 2015



This keynote presentation demonstrated why Conservation Agriculture (CA) is a must for Africa; justifying how and why ACT and partners are promoting it. The hold-up to adoption of CA by millions in Africa – inclusive of inadequate coordination of the initiatives, leadership and shortage of CA technological packages – are illustrated.

Get the content of this presentation at:

http://members.echocommunity.org/global_engine/download.asp?fileid=6C4DEB

[D6-0127-4EDE-ADFE-97D47B13051E&ext=pdf](http://members.echocommunity.org/global_engine/download.asp?fileid=6C4DEB)

2. Training of Extension Officers in Tanzania on Conservation Agriculture and ISFM

The training course was conducted at FM hotel in Njombe Region of Tanzania 24th – 27th February, 2015. The course was organized by ACT under the AGRA funded integrated project to increase agriculture productivity in the breadbasket area of Southern Tanzania. The course attracted 40 participants from four districts of Namtumbo, Songea Rural, Ludewa and Kilolo districts.



The Course Participants

The general objective of the course was to contribute and build the desired capacity and ability of Extension Officers in the development and promotion of CA technologies/ISFM, thereby enhancing their ability to respond to targeted farmers' needs.

3. Conservation Agriculture Training for Farmers Business Organization and Government Extension Staff

CA is progressively gaining acceptance among many stakeholders in the agricultural sector in Kenya. The most recent are **Technoserve Kenya** and **Kuresok Empowerment Organization** who intend to roll out the promotion of the technology within their areas of operations. They separately engaged ACT Kenya to conduct tailored CA training to their Extension Staff and selected lead farmers in their regions of operation.



Technoserve Kenya CA Training participant's at Nakuru Bontana Hotel

The main objective of these trainings was to enhance understanding of the principles of resource-saving and sustainable agricultural technology CA as the new way to farm; to provide practical



Kuresok Org. CA Training participants at Transmara East, Narok County

knowledge and skills in the application of sustainable agriculture practices for different socioeconomic and agro-ecological environments and enable ToTs to respond competently to sustainability and productivity needs of farmers as well as strengthen the competency of the service providers to facilitate learning of CA technologies to potential support staff (extension) and farmers.

More information: http://act-africa.org/lib.php?com=5&com2=21&com3=90&res_id=181

4. Status of soils: An often ignored but important resource in food security

Transitioning from the theme of family farming last year, this year focuses attention on an equally vital aspect in agricultural production, the Soils.

Last year highlighted the importance of family farming in food production and security. In 2015 the focus is on soils, an often ignored but very crucial aspect in agricultural activities.



Healthy Soil

Soils or land is vital in efforts towards achieving food security because without it, no food can be grown. It is noteworthy that indeed soil is the required support to most of the food produced in the world. However, soils are a finite natural resource and are non-renewable. But they are the foundation for food, animal feed, fuel, natural fibre, water supply, nutrient cycling and a range of ecosystem functions.

“Soils are a foundation for family farming. We must preserve them to achieve our food security and nutrition goals and to fight climate change and to ensure overall sustainable development.”

He also pointed out that soils, though vital, are often forgotten and the multiple roles of soils often go unnoticed. *“The synergies are evident. Family farmers depend on healthy soils as much as soils depend on them. And food production practices rely on both for sustainability,”* adds Dr Onesmus Semalulu, a soil scientist at National Agricultural Research Organisation, Uganda. *“We need healthy soils to achieve our food security and nutrition goals but we must fight climate change to ensure sustainable development.”*

For More + <http://www.act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=244#.VRJG0fyUfpU>

5. No-till could regenerate soils and cut production costs

According to [Adam Clarke's](#) article on Monday 2nd March, 2015; Regenerative agriculture – not just sustainable agriculture – is the aim for a Kent grower as he looks to improve his soils and reduce costs by implementing a no-till crop establishment system.

A recent study by University of Sheffield researchers estimated that UK soils only have 100 harvests left in them, with average soil organic matter content – a good measure of soil health – falling from 8% at the end of the First World War to about 2% in 2013. This points to a looming crisis for UK growers and highlights the need to change practices to halt the degradation of the agriculture's most important resource.



Read More on: at <http://www.fwi.co.uk/arable/no-till-could-regenerate-soils-and-cut-production-costs.htm>

6. New online series cultivates a change in thinking about how to feed a growing global population

AgTalks is an engaging new online video series produced by IFAD promising to keep issues affecting the world's 500 million smallholder family farms in focus. The objective of AgTalks is to share the latest thinking, trends and research on policies and innovations in small-scale farming.

In his AgTalk, Pablo Tittone, ACT Trustee, Professor and Chair of the Farming Systems Ecology Group at Wageningen University, argues that by taking advantage of soil's natural processes a lot more land could be used productively, helping to meet the world's growing food needs and to reduce agriculture's carbon footprint.



Prof. Tittone during AgTalk's presentation

Watch his talk here:

- Dishing out Dirt: <http://www.ifad.org/agtalks>
- Feeding the world with Agroecology: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKtrwdsvIko>

Each AgTalk is recorded as part of a live event hosted by IFAD, and is released biweekly. [Subscribe to IFAD's YouTube channel](#) to be notified about every new release.

7. Farmers turn to minimum and No-till farming in Kenya.



According the Smart Farmer Magazine, Mr Wood, a Narok South farmer, has been using the no-till method for some years. He grows 200 acres of maize using the practice. He also does irrigation along Amalo River and dry land farming at his Engare Sabuk farm some distance away from the river, where he practices minimum tillage. A comparison of his one-month-old maize with that of his neighbours shows a major difference. Mr Wood says that although few people have heard about no-till

farming in Kenya, Madrugada in Nakuru, Kisima, Marania, and Wangu Mbori farms in Timau, and Lengetia farm at Ngobit between Nyeri and Nyahururu, have practiced it for many years.

For more: <http://www.smartfarmerkenya.com/page/article/82-farmers-turn-to-minimum-and-no-till-farming>

8. Minister Bucyanayandi leads partners to a Climate Smart Agriculture sites visit in Eastern Uganda



Minister Tress Bucyanayandi; Counsellor, agriculture and environment, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Lusaka Melby Hans Peter; and Dr Maclay Kanyangarara COMESA. Photo by M. Karake

Hon. Tress Bucyanayandi Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of the Republic of Uganda, on 11th November 2014, led a one day field visit to Eastern Uganda's different sites that are piloting and scaling up Climate smart Agriculture (CSA).

The field trip involved, Uganda government officials, COMESA and EAC, as well representatives of the Royal Norwegian Foreign Affairs Ministry and UKAID represented by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID) two of the major cooperating partners

for the COMESA-EAC-SADC multi donor funded programme.

Under this programme, COMESA awarded Uganda USD 740,000 to promote CSA practices in five districts in Eastern Uganda namely Budaka, Bugiri, Buyende, Busia and Namutumba. The support is expected to benefit more than 15,000 small holder farmers and 30 local schools. The field trip covered Bugiri and Namutumba.



A woman in Bukazito Village Buguri district Uganda explains why she chose to practice CA. Photo by Mweusi Karake

The purpose of the visits was to witness first-hand the impact on the ground as well as hear from actual beneficiaries. The team visited individual CSA adopters, farmers groups, cooperatives and schools that practice CSA in the above mentioned districts

9. Upcoming Events

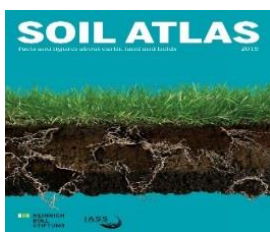
a). Beating Famine Conference; 14 – 17 April 2015; Lilongwe, Malawi

World Vision Southern Africa Region, WV Malawi and WV Australia, in partnership with the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), are organising a second 'Beating Famine' conference to be held from 14th to 17th April 2015 at Bingu International Conference Centre, Lilongwe, Malawi. The conference will showcase tools and techniques necessary for the empowerment of the 25 million smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2025.

To attend, please register at www.beatingfamine.com or e-mail info@beatingfamine.com

For more: visit the conference website at <http://beatingfamine.com/>

b). Third Global Soil Week 2015



The Global Soil Week is a collective process and a knowledge platform for sustainable soil management and responsible land governance worldwide. This year's Global Soil Week will highlight the importance of land and soil to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in this the UN designated International Year of Soils.

The international community has set itself three important goals: to stop the loss of biodiversity, keep global warming to 2° Celsius, and ensure everyone has the right to adequate food. Without fertile soil, none of these objectives will be achieved. In fact, the soil can do its job only if the life it contains is intact, the humus layer is healthy, and land rights are protected.

The third Global Soil Week 2015 will take place at the **Scandic Hotel Berlin Potsdamer Platz** from the **19th – 23rd April 2015 in Berlin**.

Registration: For registration, go to <http://globalsoilweek.org/global-soil-week/gsw-2015/gswregistration>. Registration will be open until 2 April 2015

For More information, visit: <http://globalsoilweek.org/global-soil-week/gsw-2015> or contact the organizers through: globalsoilweek@iass-potsdam.de.

c). 3rd Brazil in East Africa Expo 2015



3rd - 5th JUNE, 2015
SAFARI PARK HOTEL, NAIROBI, KENYA

The 3rd Brazil in East Africa Expo 2015 will be held from June 3rd to 5th 2015 at Safari Park Hotel. The event targets over 150 Brazilian companies to display their innovative products, share solutions that have been tested and proved for many years in Brazilian and Latin America market. Last years' event was graced by the Brazilian Ambassador to Kenya, Marcela M Nicodemus, with participation of Brazilian CA equipment manufacturer Vence Tudo, distributors BrazAgro and CA promoters including ACT.

Theme: Joining Opportunities.

More Info: For further information for this could be access through the link: <http://www.tech360s.com/index.php>

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

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African Conservation Tillage Network

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