



## **October 2014 – Updates and Hottest Issues**

### **1. Awards for supporting farmers interest in Conservation Agriculture - Burkina Faso, West Africa**

Although CA has potential benefits for sustainable intensification of farming systems, its adoption in West Africa is low. The Agro-ecology Based Aggradation Conservation Agriculture-ABACO project aims to adapt the principles of CA to different zones of Sub-Saharan Africa including Burkina Faso in West Africa. The activities of the project conducted in Burkina Faso relied on innovation platforms where different tools of facilitation were used in order to support discussion with farmers and co-design adapted cropping systems.

In order to maintain farmers' interest for CA experiments, the research team organized awards to recognize and reward the best farmers



participating in the research in the different study sites of the project Koumbia, Sindri and Yilou located respectively in the sudanian and sudano-sahelian part of the country. A panel made-up of representatives of the innovation platforms and research scientists defined jointly a set of selection criteria which included management of the field, knowledge of the CA principles and constraints, capacity to explain the field experiment and its result. Fifteen candidates were awarded in a larger sample of 49 farmers.

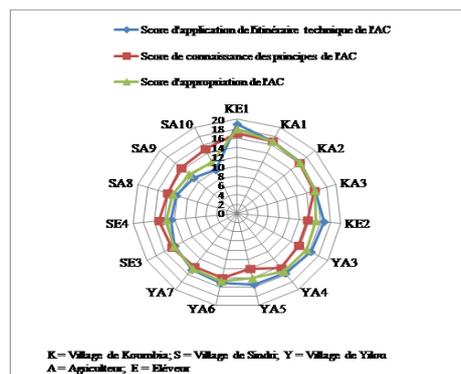


Figure 1: Scores obtained by types of farmers and by village for the main criteria of selection

For more: <http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=231#.VFku51dDEjY>

### **2. Farmers' Conservation Agriculture Community of Practice Launched at Laikipia, Kenya**

Launched in Nanyuki, Laikipia County, over one hundred and fifty farmers, county and ward officials, service providers and other private sector stakeholders from seven wards participated in this land mark event in the drive for the promotion of Conservation Agriculture (CA) as a Climate Smart agricultural strategy. With the County government of Laikipia committing 1.6 million Kenya shillings of its budget to Conservation Agriculture, Mr. Arthur Maathai representing the County Chief Officer, Agriculture reiterated the County's commitment to the promotion of CA.



Figure 2: Group discussions at farmers CoP formation meeting in Laikipia

The farmers expressed a unanimous commitment

and declared that the newly established CA farmers' COP was committed to establishing a model CA Community of Practice in Kenya by practically demonstrating this through promoting a wider adoption of the practice. This was demonstrated by the farmers own initiative of launching a fundraising drive at the meeting that realized a reasonable amount and set the framework for them to self-support activities of the COP.

For **more information**: <http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=237>

### **3. The Eastern Africa Sub-regional working group on Climate-Smart Agriculture meeting convened by FAO Eastern Africa, EAC and COMESA held in Nairobi- Kenya**

The initial steps towards the formation of an **Eastern African sub-regional working group on Climate Smart Agriculture** was initiated during a meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2014 hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Eastern Africa, and supported by the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Southern African Development Community climate change programme. The meeting appreciated that to promote the scale up of CSA at both national and sub-regional level, there is a need for the existence of functional and effective national CA coordination platforms as well as a means for countries within the sub-region (whether they have national CA programmes and coordination platforms or not) to learn from one another.

Eastern Africa Sub-regional working group on Climate-Smart Agriculture is expected to be composed of regional agricultural experts from Ethiopia, Southern Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The formation of the working group that will enable millions of farmers in the region to practice climate smart agriculture and thereby strengthen food security and improve farmers' livelihoods.

For **more**, find out on <http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=232#.VE9ECVdDEjY>

### **4. Uganda Government approved, 'the National Climate Change policy.'**

**Considered step in the right direction:** In efforts to address climate change problems, government of Uganda has approved a National Climate Change Policy that will help to broadly respond to challenges of climate variations in the country. It will also guide the transition of the country towards a low carbon climate resilient development. This is an important step for Uganda to tackle climate change issues. .... *The state minister for water and environment, Hon. Flavia Munaaba Nabugere expressed.* "The approved national climate change policy and its cost implementation strategy will help the country to be able to address the challenges of climate change," she noted. For **more insight**, catch it from <http://in2eastfrica.net/uganda-govt-approves-climate-change-policy/>

### **5. Point of no return? Rehabilitating degraded soils for increased crop productivity on smallholder farms in Eastern Zimbabwe**

Scientist from SOFECSA, University of Zimbabwe and Farming Systems Ecology, Wageningen University reported a three-year study conducted between 2009 and 2012 on smallholder farms in Zimbabwe to explore entry points for rehabilitating degraded croplands using principles of integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) supported through farmers' local knowledge of soils. The Authors conclude that short-term restoration of productivity of degraded sandy soils should

focus on high quality organic resource application and P fertilization to stimulate microbial activity and induce responses to mineral fertilizers. When coupled to P fertilization, herbaceous legume-based ISFM sequences provide a potential entry point for reversing soil degradation and offer opportunities for increasing crop productivity in dominant smallholder farming systems of Zimbabwe and other parts of Southern Africa. These results imply that most degraded soils may not respond to mineral fertilizer addition without management options that stimulate biological activity.

The study showed that soils that are perceived to be degraded by farmers have not yet reached ‘*the point of no return*’, and herbaceous legume-based ISFM sequences are potential entry points for ‘kick-starting’ rehabilitation of such soils.

Funding for this work was provided by the European Union through the African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) under the Agroecology-based Aggradation–Conservation Agriculture: Tailoring innovations to combat food insecurity in semiarid Africa (ABACO) to (SOFECSA).

Get the **full paper** at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016706114003735>  
or <http://act-africa.org/library.php?com=5&com2=20&com3=92&com4=>

## 6. Mechanization and the adoption of Conservation Agriculture: “*Development of small/medium size no-till and minimum-till seeders in Asia: A review*”

The foregoing topic has been the subject of intense discussions lately. The paper by Li Hongwen et al titled “Development of small/medium size no-till and minimum-till seeders in Asia: A review” has stimulated interesting views. The paper expresses the benefits of conservation agriculture (CA) that have been widely recognized and widely adopted in many parts of the world. However, according to the paper, there are some factors that limit the widespread adoption of CA in Asia. The most prominent factor appears to be the lack of suitable CA seeders for small to medium sized land-holding (SLH) farmers. The paper analyses design features of the small to medium no-till and minimum-till seeders currently available in Asia.

For **more information**: [http://facasi.act-africa.org/file/20140908\\_development\\_of\\_small\\_medium\\_size\\_no\\_till\\_and\\_minimum\\_till\\_seeders\\_in\\_asia\\_a\\_review.pdf](http://facasi.act-africa.org/file/20140908_development_of_small_medium_size_no_till_and_minimum_till_seeders_in_asia_a_review.pdf) and <http://www.ijabe.org/index.php/ijabe/article/view/1399>

## 7. How healthy is our soil?

*When someone says the words ‘soil health,’ what comes to mind? How would you define healthy soil? How do you know if your soil is healthy? Will soil tests help explain this?* Soil health is becoming an increasingly interesting topic, and something worth paying attention to. Farmers, governments and scientists around the world are starting to pay more attention to our soil, and it has been said that we need to stop viewing it as only ‘dirt’. Monika Benoit / Northern Horizon, expresses the experience encountered during the 6<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Conservation Agriculture on June 2014 in Winnipeg. It was an eye-opening and worthwhile experience in the understanding of the soil health....



Get the **insight of the story** on: <http://www.northernhorizon.ca/local-highlights/agriculture/how-healthy-is-our-soil-1.1425766>

For [more information](#) on soil health, visit the following sites:

SH. 1: [http://www.rhizoterra.com/What\\_is\\_soil\\_health](http://www.rhizoterra.com/What_is_soil_health)

SH. 2: <http://soilhealth.cals.cornell.edu/>

## 8. Gender matters in Farm Power: FACASI workshop held in Addis to share and validate findings

To examine some of the Gender matters in Farm Power, the FACASI project held a gender analysis workshop to discuss and validate findings from a study supported under a MAIZE CRP competitive research grant. The Field work was conducted in two of the four FACASI countries in two sites in each country; Bungoma and Laikipia in Kenya and Asella and Hawassa respectively in Ethiopia. <http://facasi.act-africa.org/news.php?com=5&com2=14&item=64#.VE-d11dDEjY>.



**Figure 3: The Participants at the gender matters in farm power workshop at ILRI in Addis, Ethiopia**

The studies' analysis reveals that farm power is particularly scarce for women-headed households, who have limited access to human labour and often don't own (or are culturally forbidden to operate) draught animals. They are often the last households to access land preparation services (by male-headed households who own draught animals), with severe penalties for yield. Even in men-headed households, women supply most of the labour in farming and perform highly labour intensive tasks, such as weeding, threshing, shelling, or transport of inputs and agricultural commodities to and from the market by head-loading.

<http://facasi.act-africa.org/news.php?com=5&com2=14&item=65#.VE-d41dDEjY>

## 9. ACT Spearheads the National Taskforce meeting in Tanzania

Established in 2011, the Tanzania National Task force held an experience sharing workshop to share experiences on management and strengthening of the Task Force and to provide input to the 2014/15 National Task force work plan. The workshop attended by 29 participants from the government, universities, research institutions, nongovernmental organizations as well as the private sector, took place at SG Resort in Arusha Tanzania from 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014.

In attendance was a National task representative from Zimbabwe who provided useful insights and enlightenment for national task force development, growth and sustainability. The question of harmonizing the current CA national task force with other similar bodies at different levels was highlighted and actions must be taken. There is a wealth of knowledge about promotion of CA to be documented and shared widely among stakeholders.



**Figure 4 Tanzania CA Task Force Workshop participants**

For More: <http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=236#.VFkuzVdDEjY>

## 10. ACT holds the Investors forum on Entrepreneurial Conservation Agriculture Services Provision to Medium and Smallholder Farmers in Kenya dubbed - *Huduma Kwa Mkulima 25*

The purpose of the forum is to create awareness of the “*Huduma Kwa Mkulima 25*” intervention and highlight existing opportunities for-profit investment and partnerships in fulfilment of corporate social responsibility. In return the program endeavours to contribute to eliminate hunger, half poverty and induce resilience to climate change through the proactive and profitable adaption, development and deployment of climate-smart technologies and business models. One Million farm households are targeted to adopt CA principles and practices by the year 2025.

The Entrepreneurial Conservation Agriculture Services Provision to Medium and Smallholder Farmers in Kenya dubbed “*Huduma Kwa Mkulima 25*” is an initiative of ACT, Government of Kenya, NEPAD, NORAD and the EU. It aims to develop the infrastructural support, the launch pad for increased awareness and unblocked access to skills, financial, produce markets and other CA services along the value chain. The agribusiness based public-private- partnership investment intervention will form the nucleus and model for Africa for systemic adoption of profitable CA by one million farmers in Kenya by 2025.



The project drivers are built on the fundamentals of mechanization of smallholder farming; adoption of climate-smart agriculture by clusters of farmers; and engagement of the for-profit agribusiness innovations of the private sector to enhance access of services along the value chain.

For **more information**:

<http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=230#.VFkvBFdDEjY> or  
[http://act-africa.org/lib.php?com=68&com2=6&res\\_id=167](http://act-africa.org/lib.php?com=68&com2=6&res_id=167) or  
[http://act-africa.org/lib.php?com=68&com2=6&res\\_id=168](http://act-africa.org/lib.php?com=68&com2=6&res_id=168)

## 11. Upcoming Events

### [A] **3RD Biennial Conservation Agriculture Symposium 2014- November 24-27, 2014 Blantyre, Malawi:**

The Conservation Agriculture (CA) Symposium is a research, development oriented and interdisciplinary conference. It provides a platform for conservation agriculture research and development stakeholders in Malawi to network, share experiences and lesson learning towards enhanced capacity for implementing a CA innovation systems approach that results in biophysical, social, economic, institutional and policy impacts for agricultural and socioeconomic development in Malawi. The 2014 CA Symposium is jointly organized by the National Conservation Agriculture Task Force (NCATF) and the Department of Land Resources Conservation – in collaboration with stakeholders and development partners who support the Task Force.

**The 2014 symposium theme:** Scaling up CA for Resilient agricultural systems.

For more information on registration contact the organizers through the e-mails: [gkambauwa@gmail.com](mailto:gkambauwa@gmail.com) and [henryhunga@gmail.com](mailto:henryhunga@gmail.com).

**[B] The International conference on Conservation Agriculture (CA) for Smallholders in Asia and Africa, 7-12 December, 2014, Mymensingh, Bangladesh.**

Purpose to attend this [International conference on Conservation Agriculture \(CA\) for Smallholders in Asia and Africa](#) that brings together practitioners currently working towards the development and uptake of CA for smallholder farmers to present the current status of CA for smallholders, establish linkages among collaborators working on CA for smallholders and to chart a course for future developments that can help smallholder farmers find CA an attractive option. Much has already been learnt about CA for smallholders across Asia and Africa; hence this Conference provides a high level platform that enhances CA knowledge and information sharing.

**Themes:** i) **Machinery:** Design and development of CA-based crop establishment and herbicides spraying machinery, implements, tools for smallholders; ii) **Weed management:** Suitable weed management options (chemical, mechanical, crop rotation and biological); iii) **Soil, water and agronomy;** iv) **Commercialization** adoption and continuous improvement of CA-based technologies; and v) **Policy** and institutional framework for the adoption of CA.

To **Register**, visit; <http://www.scac2014.org/Registration.aspx#.VCUW11dvAqI>

..... *And for much more visit our website [www.act-africa.org/newsroom](http://www.act-africa.org/newsroom) .....*

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