



## Also in this issue

- 2 Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture rolls out series of Conservation Agriculture technologies in a move to mitigate Ghanaian farmers against climate change
- 3 Towards a Conservation Agriculture targeting tool for project implementers in Africa: Identifying the main elements with the QAToCA tool
- 3 Smallholder farmers and the Paris Agreement
- 4 Upcoming events

## Rural youth: who are they and how can we create opportunities for them in rural areas?



Group Picture © IFAD | D. Paqui

Central Africa. The meeting took place from 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> March in Abuja, Nigeria and was jointly organised by IFAD and the Government of Nigeria. It brought together more than 300 representatives from IFAD-financed projects, governments and development partners in the region. IFAD's programme of work is increasingly reflecting the needs and views of young rural people.

IFAD-supported projects and activities focus on enabling the transition to employment by involving young rural people in skills and vocational training, supporting an environment that generates decent jobs for young people on and off the farm, and by providing support to young entrepreneurs. They also aim to enable young rural people to gain access to the resources, inputs and services they need to be productive. And through its work, IFAD aims to improve the participation of young rural women and men at all levels of society and facilitate the organization of young people.

Young rural people represent a significant portion of the agricultural workforce and they play a major role in the development of rural areas. With their innovative ideas and motivation, young women and men have a great potential to contribute to the well-being of their communities. But young people are increasingly abandoning agriculture and rural areas in search of better livelihood options in cities or abroad. In addition, a range of access gaps constrain the productive potential of young rural people. Difficulties in accessing land is a major factor inhibiting young people's

participation in agricultural activities, and young women in particular, have few opportunities to access land. Constraints in accessing financial services prevents young women and men from investing in land or starting their own businesses in the rural non-farm sector. And limited access to markets and new technology makes it equally difficult for young people to participate in agricultural value chains or set up new businesses.

These challenges and questions were at the centre of discussions at the Regional Implementation Forum for IFAD-supported projects in West and

IFAD has partnered with ACT and CIMMYT to initiate successful youth-focused smallholder sustainable intensification Conservation Agriculture promotion projects in West Africa and Southern Africa respectively. These are the IFAD-financed ICRAF/ACT/CIRAD implemented Smallholder Conservation Agriculture Promotion (SCAP) project <http://tinyurl.com/act-scap>, and the IFAD-financed CIMMYT implemented project <http://tinyurl.com/cimmyt-ifad>.

For more, read the article on: <http://ifad-un.blogspot.co.ke/2016/03/rural-youth-who-are-they-and-how-can-we.html>

## Will we allow soil carbon to feed our needs?



If earth is the mother of all living things, then soil must be its womb, bearing richness beyond comprehension. Then too, carbon in soil should be considered the blood energizing the entire body, enabling the earth to provide a multitude of ecosystem services.

Soil properties and processes have underlying importance in addressing many global issues facing society during the coming decades. How can we grow food for billions more people without harming the environment even further? How can we manage soils in order to obtain a better balance for the dwindling pools of fresh water between agricultural irrigation and municipal needs? With increasing cost and scarcity of nutrients, how do we preserve and enhance the fertility of our soils while expecting larger harvests? How can we manage land to accommodate for the increasing demand for bio-based energy? How will impending climate change affect the productivity and resilience of our soils and broader environment? How can we better understand and enhance the diversity of organisms within and upon the soil to create more resilient and fruitful ecosystems? How can we better use soils as biogeochemical reactors to recycle wastes, thereby avoiding environmental contamination and maintaining soil productivity? How can we develop a seamless global perspective of lands, but still optimize management practices for local places and cultures?

These are all important questions evolving from the relatively unknown world beneath our feet, the quality of which is dependent upon carbon.

For the full article: <http://goo.gl/BC9Sli>



## Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture rolls out series of Conservation Agriculture technologies in a move to mitigate Ghanaian farmers against climate change

The Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) has rolled out series of Conservation Agriculture technologies in a move to mitigate farmers against climate change.

“Because of climate change, what the ministry is essentially doing is introducing farmers to technologies that will help them conserve the soil moisture, particularly where there is minimum tillage of the soil” says Dr. Cyrial Quist, Brong Ahafo Regional Director of MoFA, as quoted by the Business and Financial Times.

He said farmers are being taught innovative measures such as planting

pits, discouraging bush burning, and promoting the application of weedicides to preserve water and soil nutrients. According to him, the ministry is also promoting the growing of trees to change the macro-environment, and introduce farmers to the use of composts under a project known as “The Adaptation of Agro Ecosystem to Climate Change.”

For more: [http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com\\_2=6&item=346#\\_VyBY-XreM\\_k](http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com_2=6&item=346#_VyBY-XreM_k) or <http://pulse.com.gh/agriculture/climate-change-mofa-to-introduce-conservation-agric-technology-id4880048.html>

## Some feedback and comments received from the March 2016 audience on the news alert

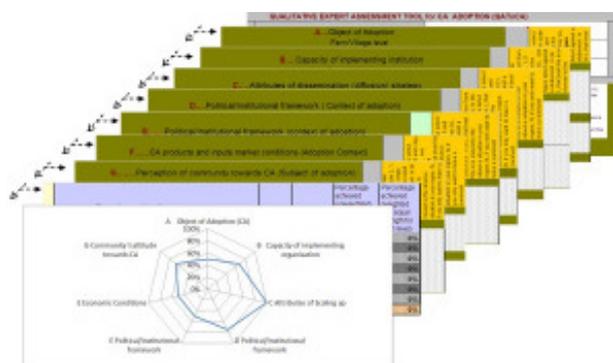
As envisioned, the ACT monthly news alert is reaching out progressively and drawing much attention from the audience. ACT appreciates your articles and feedback. We publish herein, extracts from some of the feedback and comments received.

**Jeff Esdaile, Australia** “Plenty of good reading there! Keep up the good work. It appears that much of the practical agronomy and farming system work for adoption of CA in Africa is now available. It is just a matter of convincing the farmer to take it on board. That is the hard part. Small area farmers of the developing world are a risk averse lot, and prefer to stick with a low productivity system with low risk, rather than a more productive system which requires more know-how and risk. I guess those pesky cattle are also a bit of a hindrance as they eat all of the mulch. I continue to do a bit more on 2WT, although a bit slower these days. I still hope to have a mechanical lift along with a seat, and ground following tines. It is good to see some Africans having a go with local manufacture - Special Musoni in Zimbabwe and Joseph Mutua in Kenya.”

**Rebecca Amukhoye, Country Director, Self Help Africa, Kenya** “thanks for this; what is the difference between climate smart agriculture and conservation agriculture; the newsletter is very informative.” A response to the question was sent directly to Rebecca.

**Klaas M, South Africa** “Very good articles. Keep it up, we will compile articles for your publication.”

# Towards a Conservation Agriculture targeting tool for project implementers in Africa: Identifying the main elements with the QAToCA tool



studies, and (market) institutional analyses have contributed significantly to our understanding of the adoption potential of particular CA practices in African smallholder agriculture, ex-ante targeting of diverse CA packages remains a high priority for donors, policy makers and other rural interventionists.

Although CA stabilizes and increases yields, conserves and improves soil quality, unique technologies are needed for Africa's heterogeneous agro-ecologies, farmer typologies, farming systems, socio-economic and institutional environments. Knowledge intensive CA does also require higher levels of management, notably to attain early planting, timely weed management, selection and use of fertility enriching cover crops and chemical fertilizers.

While on-station and on-farm agronomic experiments, farm-level economic

The QAToCA paper aims to contribute to the development of a CA suitability or 'adoption potential' tool that can quickly identify suitable CA options in area, and the categories of farmers that are likely to adopt these practices. Building on the expanding literature on CA use in African smallholder agriculture and experience with the use of qualitative assessment tools – notably the QAToCA15 tool the authors explore the key elements of a quick identification tool for targeting CA interventions in Africa.

QAToCA is a simple tool that was built with the aim to enable regional experts, research teams and/or managers of development projects with a focus on CA to assess the 'relative likelihood of CA adoption' or 'adoption potential of site-specific CA practices' in Africa. The tool consists of a list of questions with answer statements and scores that together determine the potential for CA adoption in a given project region. Questions deal with characteristics of CA as an object of adoption, the capacity of the promoting organization(s), attributes of the dissemination strategy; institutional frame conditions at village and regional level, market conditions at the village and regional levels, and the community's perception towards CA. In this way, the tool allows for diagnosing the supporting and hindering factors of CA adoption in a given area. QAToCA has been used as a quick assessment guide in a range of CA research and development projects across Africa.

For more: [http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=347#VyCvjnreM\\_k](http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=347#VyCvjnreM_k)

## Smallholder farmers and the Paris Agreement



As 60 million people around the world face severe hunger because of El Niño and millions more because of climate change, world leaders met in New York on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2016 to sign the Paris Agreement on Earth Day. This historic pact, formed during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference at the 21st session of the Conference of

the Parties (COP21), is the first universal climate agreement of its kind.

On this date, more than 130 countries signed the Paris Agreement, including the United States, China, and numerous countries in Africa and the European Union. These efforts come at a critical time as projections show climate change is only going to become more problematic.

"Agriculture on the one hand contributes to global warming, and on the other hand is suffering from its impacts," Laganda said. "Plus, different countries have different agricultural strategies, with some being more carbon-intensive than others. This makes it difficult to have an over-arching agreement that works for everyone. Agriculture was always an ambivalent topic in these negotiations."

The Paris Agreement overcomes this problem with the use of [intended](#)

[nationally determined contributions \(INDCs\)](#). INDCs communicate to the international community the steps governments are taking to address climate change gas emissions within their own countries.

**Small farmers:** Though the international community plays an important role in climate change mitigation, the real champions of this work are small farmers. "Smallholder farmers, as the custodians of natural resources, are a very important constituency and a critical pieces of the puzzle," Laganda said. "If we can empower them with better access to information and technology, and get more climate finance into their hands to build low-carbon farming systems in resilient landscapes, smallholder farmers can help us solve the problem."

For more, read featured stories in <https://www.ifad.org/stories/tags/19795921>

# FACASI Newsletter Issue January - April 2016



ACT and the project partners compile a quarterly newsletter targeting collation of new knowledge generated and disseminated to a wider audiences. The January-April 2016 Newsletter captures various articles including: the Kenya National policy workshop on smallholder agricultural mechanization; Appropriate mechanization: between contestations and farmers' reality; Tanzania FACASI experiences on Business Models; Arusha Gender Training; and Review and Planning meeting.

The overall goal of the FACASI project is to improve farm power balance, reduce drudgery, and minimize biomass trade-off s in Eastern and Southern Africa, through accelerated delivery and adoption of 2WT-based technologies by smallholders.

For more information, read the newsletter:

[http://facasi.act-africa.org/file/20160428\\_facasi\\_newsletter\\_issue\\_7\\_january\\_april\\_2016.pdf](http://facasi.act-africa.org/file/20160428_facasi_newsletter_issue_7_january_april_2016.pdf)

## Upcoming Events

### The First National Conservation Agriculture Conference, Kenya

The Conference is scheduled to be held on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> May, 2016 at the Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi. This Conference is jointly hosted by the EU, FAO and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock & Fisheries. The theme is: "Kuimarisha Kilimo Hifadhi – Boresha Maisha, Boresha Mazingira, Boresha Mapato."

The purpose of the conference is to officially launch the "Increased Productivity and Profitability of Smallholder Farmers through Promotion and Up-scaling of Good Agricultural Practices & Conservation Agriculture (IP-P-GAP) Project." The project is funded by the EU and implemented by FAO in collaboration with the Kenya Government. The objective of the IPP-GAP Project Launch is to propel the adoption of Conservation Agriculture (CA) in Kenya and hence spur the uptake of agricultural entrepreneurship across the country. CA is massively improving livelihoods, conserving the environment, and increasing farmers' incomes, even in the arid and semi-arid lands. It is therefore essential for Kenya to embrace CA in a greater way especially at this critical period when we are experiencing the adverse effects of climate change.

For more information contact CA-Conference-Kenya <[CA-Conference-Kenya@fao.org](mailto:CA-Conference-Kenya@fao.org)>

### AusQuest Farm Agronomy Field Day 2016 in Kenya

An invitation is extended to all agricultural professionals and commercial farmers to attend AusQuest farms annual field day on **Thursday the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2016**.

The day will feature various crop walks discussing mung beans (green grams), wheat, desi and *kabuli* chickpeas (*chana*) and sweet forage sorghum commercial trials, the opportunities and agronomy around these crops.

For more information Contact: [Stuartbarden70@gmail.com](mailto:Stuartbarden70@gmail.com) or you can also follow their blog on <http://stuartbardeninkenya.blogspot.co.ke/>

### INCAA project Meeting – Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso: 24-27 May 2016

The INnovative Conservation Agriculture Approaches: Food Security and Climate Action Through Soil and Water Conservation (INCAA) is an ERAfrica funded project that brings together development stakeholders with interdisciplinary expertise in agricultural and social research for development. These are ZALF, KALRO, UPB-IDR, UE/ICAAM, and CDRBOKU who partners with the CA networks of ACT and CIRDES that promote CA in Kenya, Burkina Faso and elsewhere in Africa. INCAA project is designed as an action research process that will target the challenging (and often missing) interfaces of science-driven technology and local realities in innovation systems. The overall objective of INCAA is

to mentor and analyse a learning process that supports the innovation of CA in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The INCAA project partners will be meeting at the UPD-IDR Bobo Dioulasso Conservation Agriculture Centre of Excellence from 24-27 May 2016, for its annual meeting combined with a workshop on institutional learning together with farmers, extension officers and high ranking officials.

For more information contact: Johannes Schuler, ZALF [schuler@zalf.de](mailto:schuler@zalf.de); <http://www.tropentag.de/2015/abstracts/posters/426.pdf>

### International Conference on Conservation Agriculture and Sustainable Land Use



The conference organized by Geographical Institute, Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences will take place at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, 31 May – 2 June 2016. For more about the event <http://caslu2016.mtafi.hu/venue.html>

For more information, please contact: **Executive Secretary | African Conservation Tillage Network**  
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**Norad**

ACT acknowledges the partnership and financial support provided by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) towards Promotion of Conservation Agriculture in Africa