

# SCAP newsletter



A newsletter of the Small Holder Conservation Agriculture Promotion project published by Africa Conservation Tillage Network

## Small Holder Conservation Agriculture Promotion (SCAP) in West and Central Africa

### In this Issue

2 Building the network

### Feature

1 Small Holder Conservation Agriculture Promotion in West and Central Africa

### News in brief

5 Training visit to Central Africa-Cameroon

6 Farmers Voice



### SCAP Project Website



### Upcoming Events

Conservation Agriculture trainings in West Africa

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The SCAP project aim is to strengthen livelihood strategies and socio-economic growth among farming communities in Western and Central Africa through sustainable application of conservation agriculture.

The general goal of the project is to reduce rural poverty, improve food security, conserve agricultural land and water resources, and foster economic growth through sustainable improvements in the productivity of agro ecosystems in West and Central Africa (WCA), through improved access on the part of poor rural communities to technical options inspired by the principles of conservation agriculture, with a primary focus on selected sites in Burkina Faso, Niger and Guinea.

The project will stimulate and facilitate community-led processes for the identification, assessment and generalized use of locally adapted crop, livestock and resource management practices inspired by the principles of conservation agriculture (CA).

The development objective of SCAP is to raise the productivity and improve the sustainability of natural resources in WCA, as a way to reduce rural poverty and to improve the rural poor's access to technology and natural resources including land and water.

### SCAP PARTNERS

The African Conservation Tillage Network ACT is coordinating the implementation of the Project in partnership with CIRAD and ICRAF. These three organizations are the main technical partners. They all have strong specific experience in CA development and dissemination which they will mobilizing in complementarity for the achievement of SCAP objectives:

# Building the network

**C**onservation Agriculture (CA) is a concept for resource-saving agricultural production that strives to achieve acceptable profits, high and sustained production levels while concurrently conserving the environment. CA relies on the simultaneous application of three basic principles at plot level of: (1) continuous minimum mechanical soil disturbance; (2) permanent soil cover using cover crops or crop residues; and (3) diversified crop rotations or plant associations. External inputs such as agrochemicals and nutrients of mineral or organic origin are applied at an optimum level and in a way and quantity that does not interfere with, or disrupt, the biological processes.

There are currently some 117 million hectares in CA systems worldwide, the majority being in the United States, Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. The uptake of CA in Africa is still very low with a contribution of only about 0.3% to the total area under CA worldwide. Nevertheless, CA presents a good potential to enable smallholders farmers to meet the challenge of the sustainability of their farming practices. It can become the agricultural mainstream in a variety of farming systems, leveraging on indigenous minimum tillage and intercrop approaches found in many parts of Africa.

The Smallholder Conservation Agriculture Promotion (SCAP) in West and Central Africa aims at exploring the potential of CA and to develop suitable modalities of its application in WCA taking into account the diversity of socioeconomic and agro-ecological zones. The implementation strategy of SCAP is based on bringing together different Soil and Land Management (SLM) stakeholders and players to develop synergies and partnerships as CA is rather a multidimensional technology with linkages with several aspects of rural activities, agricultural policy, farm inputs and equipment, access and management of natural resources.

The African conservation is leading the implementation of SCAP in partnership with CIRAD and ICRAF. During this first year of the project, one core priority is to complete the implementation set-up with the development of relationships with other key stakeholders, including mainly IFAD loan projects, Farmers and community based organizations, agricultural research and training institutions. The goal is not only to participatory build CA-based cropping and farming systems but rather to develop an efficient and self-driven network suitable for the adaptation and dissemination of CA in Western and Central Africa.

*From the Editor*

## Project Facts

### Project partners and donors:

The SCAP is a regional multi-stakeholder programme whose key implementation players, ACT, CIRAD, ICRAF and representatives of the four national IFAD financed projects, share collective responsibility in the overall programme implementation. SCAP Project is funded by IFAD and AFD with inkind contribution of ACT, CIRAD, ICRAF and IFAD loan projects.

### Project goals and objectives:

The development objective of the project is to be achieved through four general objectives:

1. *Building cropping systems:* Strengthen the capacity of poor rural communities to identify, assess and further adapt crop, livestock and resource management practices and cropping systems that are in accordance with the principles of conservation agriculture; that are compatible with local environmental, social and economic conditions; and that build on indigenous knowledge and skills.
2. *Farmer-innovators:* Foster networking among farmer-innovators as a means of adapting and accelerating the widespread use of suitable new practices.
3. *Knowledge sharing and management:* Expand the range of technical options from which communities and farmer innovators can choose, through sharing knowledge on NRM and conservation agriculture practices, including practices used in other communities and even in other regions.
4. *Capacity building:* Strengthen institutional mechanisms, including the consolidation of ACT, as a means of fostering knowledge-sharing and community-led assessment of conservation agriculture practices in the region.

# Small Holder Conservation Agriculture Promotion (SCAP) in West and Central Africa

The African Conservation Tillage Network ACT is coordinating the implementation of the Project in partnership with CIRAD and ICRAF. These three organizations are the main technical partners. They all have strong specific experience in CA development and dissemination which they will mobilize in complementarity for the achievement of SCAP objectives:

- The African Conservation Tillage network (ACT) promotes and facilitates sharing of information and experiences across sectors, disciplines and geographical boundaries among players and stakeholders involved in promoting adaptation and adoption of conservation farming principles and practices in Africa. ACT is an international association of stakeholders - private, public and NGO sectors, including farmers, input and machinery manufacturers and suppliers, researchers and extensionists - who believe that the adoption of conservation tillage principles and practices in Africa *“can not only reduce but reverse the environmental degradation that is devastating the continent”*. ACT is presently mainly active in Eastern and Southern Africa, but is also involved in development of CA in Ghana. ACT received from the Nairobi congress the mandate to develop a West African Francophone CA initiative.
- The Centre de coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) has been conducting hands-on research on CA for the past 20 years in a host of environments. It is a key partner of CA projects in a variety of countries in the developing world. Specifically in francophone Africa, CIRAD has several partnerships with AFD, specifically in the Sudanian zones of Cameroon, Guinea, Mali, and Madagascar and

soon in Burkina Faso (dealing with cotton production). A number of research units will be associated to the project: Direct seeding and cover crops, Water management, Livestock systems, UMR System and UMR Innovation and development, among others.

- The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) has invigorated the ancient practice of growing trees on farms, using innovative science for development to transform lives and landscapes. Our research focuses on four global themes: Land and people, Environmental services, Strengthening institutions and Trees & Markets. The Centre's headquarters are based in Nairobi, with regional centres throughout the developing world in more than 20 countries across Africa, Asia and South America, one of them (Bamako) is directly involved in the SCAP project.

The SCAP Project will develop a strong partnership / integration with ongoing IFAD financed projects providing infrastructure, selection criteria, a knowledge base and an organizational and institutional basis for this operation. Being the experimentation sites, they will provide a realistic basis for comparisons and observations (biophysical, economical and sociological aspects) over time. A regional team and country teams will implement project activities. Four ongoing IFAD financed projects in the three project countries (one in Niger, one in Guinea and two in Burkina Faso) are the primary institutional partners in the implementation of the project. The four IFAD financed projects will host pilot sites and the project thrust is expected to clearly and directly input to and support the attainment of development objectives in these projects.

The four IFAD financed projects have been selected as key primary partner institutions as their main agricultural

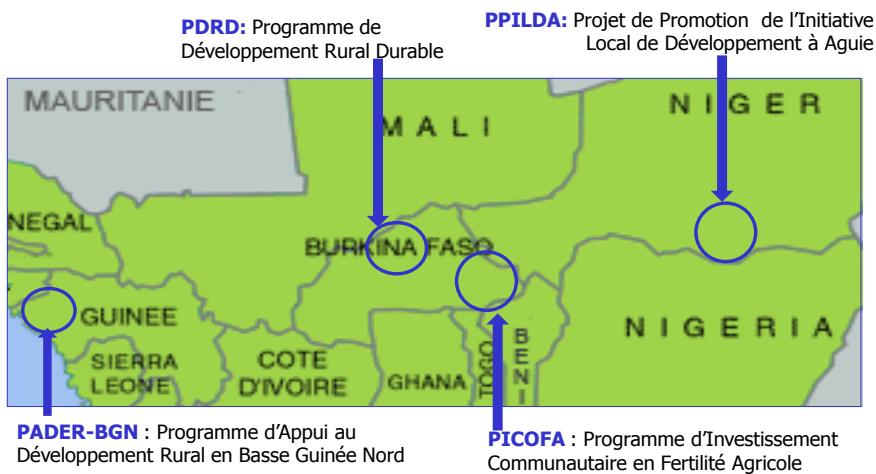
focus and approaches are consistent with the goal and strategies of the SCAP project and as the CPM and project leaders expressed interest in opening “their” project to SCAP. The four IFAD financed projects involved are:

In Burkina Faso:

## **\* The Programme de Développement Rural Durable (PDRD) (Sustainable Rural Development Programme)**

The programme will assist the target groups (i) in their organizational capacities by empowering the beneficiaries to gain ownership in the planning and management of their own development. (ii) It will help them obtain secure land tenure. The programme involves the implementation of concrete pilot actions to improve land access and tenure rights on land on which agricultural production is hampered because of conflicts and land tenure and (iii) It will enhance the sustainable development of productive capacities by opening up economic opportunities so as to improve the livelihoods and the living conditions of the beneficiaries through: (a) watershed development, protection and management; (b) the intensification and diversification of agricultural production; and (c) support for income generating (iv) The programme is being implemented through village organizations “called comités villageois de gestion des terroirs” (village committees for land resource management), farmers associations and other grass-roots producer groups. The programme will create an enabling environment to strengthen collective action and community involvement. The approach of the programme is demand driven and participatory and focuses on community-development planning and gender balance. The Programme covers cinq provinces in the Northern





income generating activities (IGA) based on the transformation and valorization of crop and livestock products and livestock, as well as craft activities.

### In Niger, the Project for the Promotion of Local Initiatives for Development in Aguié



Targeting those rural farming classified as vulnerable to food insecurity and poor, the programme aims to empower the target rural communities in developing and implementing innovations and initiatives (in technical, economic or organizational areas) that could help reduce poverty, vulnerability and improve their food security. The programme expects to directly reach some 30 000 rural families (over 180 000 persons) including poor women and woman-headed households and the youth. The target communities will be organized and participate through local organizations based either on the concept of the terroir (territory) or upon other rationales (thematic, networking, etc.) and fostered at different levels (such as interest groups, intra- or inter-village, profession).

and Central Burkina Faso, with a total area of more than 21.057 km<sup>2</sup> (18 % of the National territory).

### \* The Community Investment Programme for Agricultural Fertility (PICOFA)

This programme is using a watershed approach with interest in both the upstream and downstream areas of lowlands. It aims to enhance sustainable agricultural productivity through the development and promotion of soil protection and rehabilitation through soil and water conservation techniques, soil restoration, agroforestry and grazing paths. Simultaneously the programme supports income-generating activities, facilitate improved access to credit and land by vulnerable groups (particularly women and rural youths). Among the key aspects in the programme's interventions is, on one hand, water supply, agricultural inputs and equipment supply, and on the other hand, institutional capacity building among farmer organizations, agricultural investments and infrastructure development and maintenance.

### In Guinea, The Project for the support of Rural Development in Northern lower Guinea (PADER/ BGN)

PADER/BGN is an initiative of the Government of Guinean with its partners. Its main objective is to contribute to the improvement of sustainable and equitable food security, incomes and living conditions of rural populations in Northern Lower Guinea. The specific objectives of PADER/ BGN are: i) strengthen the capacity of rural populations and those of their organizations; ii) to increase productivity in a sustainable agroforestry-pasture and iii) to diversify sources of income. Its intervention strategy is based on capacity building of poor rural people and their organizations, improving people's access to financial resources and markets. Hence, the Project is establishing progressively a center of expertise (technical and socio-economic), responsive to the demands of grassroots communities expressed in the main productive areas including: Sustainable intensification of crop and livestock routes, Facilities and development of lowland rice and their watersheds through agroforestry and reforestation; Promotion of

## Training visit to Central Africa-Cameroon

**D**u 18 au 30 octobre 2009, 17 personnes dont les trois membres de l'Equipe technique du projet SCAP, 10 producteurs (dont quatre femmes) et quatre points focaux de SCAP au sein des projets du FIDA au Burkina Faso (PICOFA, PDRD), Guinée (PADER/BGN) et au Niger (PPILDA) ont pris part à un voyage d'étude au Nord-Cameroun.

Le voyage d'étude était organisé conjointement par SCAP, le CIRAD et la Société de Développement du Coton du Cameroun (SODECOTON) à travers le Projet Eau-Sol-Arbre (ESA) qu'il abrite. Ce voyage s'inscrivait dans le cadre des activités que SCAP développe pour rassembler les éléments susceptibles d'alimenter sa boîte à outils dans la phase actuelle de co-conception des systèmes qui seront diffusés par la suite. Il était également question à travers ce voyage de permettre aux techniciens et à quelques représentants des producteurs impliqués dans la mise en œuvre des opérations de SCAP sur le terrain de mieux se représenter in situ des cas concrets de pratiques d'agriculture de conservation dans un environnement assez proche de celui de SCAP. Une attention particulière était accordée aux intérêts multidimensionnels de l'AC mais aussi aux contraintes relatives à sa mise en œuvre.

Plusieurs thématiques ont été abordées dont notamment : la diversité des systèmes d'AC testés et le cheminement de leur construction ; l'approvisionnement en intrants (semences, herbicides etc.) ; les effets de l'adoption de l'AC sur le fonctionnement et les performances

de l'exploitation agricole ; la gestion des résidus de cultures et des plantes couverture ; la place de l'arbre et de l'élevage ; la gestion des déprédateurs ; la durabilité des systèmes testés et approches de pré-vulgarisation avec les organisations de producteurs. Tous ces thèmes ont été abordés dans le cadre des échanges directs entre pairs, des tables rondes et des visites de terrain autour des cas judicieusement choisis.

Au terme du voyage d'études, les producteurs se sont engagés à restituer auprès de leurs communautés respectives. Ces séances de restitution avaient deux objectifs majeurs : (i) partager avec les autres producteurs et les organisations paysannes, les acquis des échanges et des visites des sites d'agriculture de conservations telle que mise en œuvre au Cameroun et ; (ii) échanger sur la suite à donner à ce partage d'expériences, c'est-à-dire l'opportunité ou non d'introduire les pratiques d'AC dans les villages de SCAP au regard des limites réelles des systèmes de production actuels, mais aussi des avantages et contraintes des systèmes d'AC.

Dans la zone PDRD au Burkina Faso, ces séances de restitution ont été organisées dans la première semaine de décembre 2009. Elles se sont déroulées en assemblées générales villageoises auxquelles ont été conviés tous les acteurs intéressés (hommes et femmes) par les acquis du voyage d'études. La mobilisation sociale locale et l'organisation des séances de restitution ont été assurées par chacun des trois producteurs ayant participé au voyage au Nord-Cameroun. Un support sous forme d'aide-mémoire avec plusieurs illustrations (photos

notamment) avait été préparé pour faciliter les échanges. Ces supports illustrés ont été abondamment commentés, ils ont suscité plusieurs réactions chez les producteurs présents. Les questions portaient principalement sur la justification des principes de l'AC, les contraintes susceptibles de limiter leur application dans les villages (divagation des animaux, feux de brousse, aléas climatiques etc.) dont notamment : la disponibilité des équipements pour les semis, les besoins de formation et d'encadrement, l'appui éventuel du PDRD et du projet SCAP pour l'installation des clôtures ou haie vive défensive autour des sites d'expérimentation, la mise en place d'essais individuels ou collectifs au cours de la campagne hivernale 2009/2010.

Des éléments de réponses ont été fournis à toutes ces préoccupations des producteurs. Il leur a été notamment indiqué que dans le cadre du programme d'activités 2010 du PDRD et de SCAP, plusieurs opérations de promotion de l'agriculture de conservation ont été prévues (mise en place des champs école, appui à l'acquisition des intrants, visites d'échange intra et inter-villages etc.).

Au terme des échanges, les communautés locales ont été invitées à se mobiliser davantage et à se constituer en groupes pour la mise en place des **champs écoles où des opérations de démonstrations et de recherche action sur l'agriculture de conservation seront conduites.**

*By - Souleymane SANKARA  
& Patrice Djamen*



# Farmers Voice

Mr Yahaya Kima, CA-farmer, Kompiebiga village (Burkina Faso)

*“If all these administrative authorities, media and farmers from other villages have come far away to visit our CA plots, it is a proof that CA is something definitely good. It is also a sign that we have worked well. This visit encourages us to move forward moreover as we have started seeing the effect of CA on our yields. Next year there will certainly be more members in the FFS groups and farmers who will want to implement CA on their own plots”.*



## SCAP Project Website

Under the ACT Network [www.act-africa.org](http://www.act-africa.org) a project portal has been dedicated to SCAP project accessible under [scap.act-africa.org](http://scap.act-africa.org).



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