AFRICAN CONSERVATION TILLAGE NETWORK
Partnering for Economic Growth, Improved Food Security and a Better Environment

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Updates & News Alert

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Editor's view: Introducing the May, 2018 CA Alert

Conservation Agriculture (CA), a modern approach to managing agricultural ecosystems, aims to increase productivity and ensure sustainable use of land, water, labour and other resources. CA can form the basis for further development of environmentally and economically sound crop and livestock production systems and can help address issues of food security, combat poverty, optimize livelihood in rural areas and reduce the cost of energy resources. The adoption of this technology requires that a managed farming system be created incorporating local knowledge and capacity and that a number of relevant practical skills suitable for farms be developed. In terms of production, CA can provide opportunities for intensifying crop production in rainfed and irrigated farming.

One of the main reasons for the slower than expected spread of CA in Africa is to the inadequate documentation and presentation of benefits from the adoption of different CA technologies on different commodities particularly by the small and medium scale farmers. In this May 2018 issue, we highlight some of the farmers' success stories as regard to CA from different African countries as testimony of the envisioned benefits being accrued in different regions. It has proven to be transformational and life changing experience for the few, but exponentially increasing, farmers who have fully adopted CA, considering the impact reports and case studies from the different parts of the continent.

This issue also gives priority to the second Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture (2ACCA) scheduled for **9th to 12th October 2018** in Johannesburg, South Africa. The event is organized by ACT in collaboration with the Government of South Africa, African Union Commission, the NEPAD Agency, Regional Economic Communities, International NGOs, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), European Union (EU), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN and various bilateral and multilateral partners. The theme of this Congress is "Making Climate-Smart Agriculture Real in Africa with Conservation Agriculture*: Supporting the Malabo Declaration and Agenda 2063*

ACT continues to appreciate and encourages stakeholders to plan to participate. Your participation will be highly regarded in shaping the promotion and adoption of Conservation Agriculture in Africa. For registration and more information about the 2ACCA, go to the congress website www.africacacongress.org or write to us at info@africacacongress.org

Nonetheless, ACT acknowledges the various sources, authors, reporters, organizations and practitioners whose articles appear in this May 2018 issue, their geo-diversity is a clear testimony of the enthusiasm and interest from various organizations, countries, researchers and scientists in Africa towards Conservation Agriculture.

We encourage you to share your CA views and articles capturing the status and extent of adaptation and adoption of CA in any Country in Africa or beyond for sharing with others. Please submit articles, links or views to kim@act-africa.org. Use the ***#conservationagriculture, #africamechanize*** to share links on articles, journals, news on CA and tag us on twitter **@ACTillage.**

Apologies for any cross posting of some articles.

The second Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture

The African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) as the CA think tank for Africa, in collaboration with the Government of South Africa, African Union Commission, the NEPAD Agency, Regional Economic Communities, International NGOs, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), European Union (EU), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN and various bilateral and multilateral partners, are organizing the 2nd Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture (2ACCA) to be held in **Johannesburg, South Africa**, from **9th to 12th October 2018.** The theme of the Congress is **"**Making Climate-Smart Agriculture Real in Africa with Conservation Agriculture: Supporting the Malabo Declaration and Agenda 2063".

The purpose of the 2ACCA initiative is to facilitate diverse and open sharing of experiences and information on CA thereby fostering learning and widespread awareness and interest in the uptake and spread of CA as an agroecosystem approach to sustainable farming and agricultural land use management across Africa. This includes CA's role in: enhancing sustainable agricultural productivity and profitability, adapting to and mitigating climate change, strengthening environmental and social resilience, and fostering efforts to provide for food and nutritional security as well as livelihoods and economic opportunities, especially for rural communities, including youth and women. The 2ACCA initiative provides "neutral space" for networking, collaboration and partnership to support the scaling-up of CA systems as the sustainable basis for CSA development across Africa.

Conservation Agriculture has been spreading rapidly in Africa in recent years to address the ever-increasing food security, unsustainable farming and climate change challenges. As the world population grows, the demand for food, fuel and fibre will grow. CA allows producers to intensify their cropping systems to increase production without increasing the area devoted to agriculture with emphasis on 1) improving soil quality; 2) increasing efficient use of inputs (labour, nutrients, water); and 3) increasing cropping system diversity. However, increased stakeholder interest in CA has also resulted to a multitude of pilot projects and diverse efforts throughout Africa, which are largely uncoordinated resulting to huge redundancies and

cost-inefficiencies. Thus, in line with ACT's mission "to promote and facilitate information and knowledge exchange and partnerships in order to enhance support for the adaptation and adoption of CA principles and practices in Africa", ACT has initiated organization of these events, the first ACCA being held in Zambia in 2014. The objective of the 2ACCA is bringing together expert knowledge, information, and insights from practitioners from across different sectors and interests groups from the public, private and civil sectors under one roof to discuss and strategically agree on scaling-up CA as an integral part of the growing food and agriculture systems in Africa. The CA Africa Congress will also enable consolidation of Africa's experiences and positions for enhanced participation of the continent in the 8th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture in 2020 in Switzerland.

Preparations for this event are in full gear under the able leadership of the International Steering Committee. The event is expected to be attended by 600 participants – comprised of farmers, policy makers, researchers, investors and industry players - from Africa and across the Globe. It is an opportunity for YOU too to be heard and contribute to making climate smart agriculture real in Africa.

The event programme will surely include sessions to harness critical views and influences deemed necessary for the continental promotion and up scaling of CA. A few sessions are presented in this issue and more will be shared in the June 2018 alert.

SESSION IV. FARMERS FORUM

The 2ACCA organizers recognize the critical roles of farmers in promotion, adaptation and adoption of CA based technologies and systems. Any support - be it policy, research, learning/skills development, awareness creation – must thus be aligned to and address the challenges farmers face in realizing their full CA adoption vision.

The inclusion of this Farmers' Forum in this congress is an appreciation of the central role smallholder farmers play providing food, ecosystem services, family and community livelihoods. It provides an opportunity for CA smallholder to showcase their technologies, innovations, practices and products and to share experiences among themselves and with the Congress participants.

Facilitated by farmers themselves, the forum is intended to set the congress pace from less rhetoric to more practical discussions and deliberations. Outputs of the forum will include farmer-to-farmer links for possible future interactions, farmers' statement outlining key priority issues and concerns on CA adoption – to feed into other stakeholder groups' agenda.

SESSION V. PLENARY SESSION: REPORTING PROGRESS ON 1ACCA.

The 1ACCA congress established what was labelled as the "Lusaka Declaration" with the 10 point resolutions focused on how to effectively promote and up-scale Conservation Agriculture. This session's purpose is to monitor progress to achievements of targets and appraise on requisite corrective action measures by stakeholder groups. This will ensure that captured progress on the 10 1ACCA Lusaka Declaration points is presented and discussed. Prior to the 2ACCA, ACT will be conducting CA adoption status surveys for each country in Africa. This will be done in partnership with the National CA Task Forces (NCATF) and the ACT Focal Points. The process will ensure verifiable data is captured and reports shared during the session.

The outputs of this session will inform the development of more formal and robust CA Monitoring and Evaluation, and Impact Documentation Systems for tracking and reporting achievements of the 1ACCA and the African Unions Malabo Declaration Vision 25 x 25.

Other important 2ACCA sessions will be discussed in the June 2018 alert. Stay tuned to contribute and learn more from the Africa big event. **Warm up!!!** Do not miss this fundamental opportunity to participate. You can register for the congress and book a booth to showcase what counts on you at: https://www.africacacongress.org/registration.html

Spreading the news about conservation agriculture in Ethiopia

Mogise and Tesfaye Bukolo are farmers in the Kindo Koysha region of Ethiopia. They are learning to improve the fertility of their soil and increase their yields using conservation agriculture methods. (Photo: John Longhurst)

In the Kindo Koysha District of Ethiopia, staff at the Terepeza Development Association (TDA) are busy sharing the news of conservation agriculture.

The TDA, which is supported by Canadian Foodgrains Bank through its member Tearfund Canada, is sending out its staff—they call them "animators"—and training families and communities in a different way of farming in the dry and hilly area about 360 kilometres southwest of the capital of Addis Ababa.

"Where you have lots of soil erosion, conservation agriculture is the only way," says Bereket Tassew, director of TDA. "Where the land is deteriorated, it is the only way to grow good crops."

The TDA project is one of 11 across Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, which together, make up the Scaling-Up Conservation Agriculture in East Africa program of the Foodgrains Bank and its members Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Tearfund Canada (previously World Relief Canada) and World Renew.

Through the five-year, $18.6 million program made possible by a $14 million grant from the Government of Canada, farm families who struggle to grow enough to support themselves are being trained in Conservation Agriculture methods to increase the fertility of their soil and improve their yields

Halfway through program, over 21,000 farmers practising Conservation Agriculture; results include better yields, less hunger *Read More*

Differential Impacts of Conservation Agriculture Technology Options on Household Income in Sub-Saharan Africa, a publication that seeks to justify the benefits of CA

Conservation agriculture (CA), which consists of minimum soil disturbance, crop residue retention and crop rotation, is claimed to generate a number of agronomic, economic and environmental benefits. Recognizing these potential benefits, CA is widely promoted in efforts towards sustainable agricultural intensification. However, there has been an intense debate about its suitability in smallholder farming environments, and this has stimulated a growing interest in the adoption and impacts of CA technologies in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Using survey data from maize-growing households in nine SSA countries, this paper seeks to add to the extant literature by examining the drivers and welfare impacts of individual and combined implementation of the three components of CA. The paper employ inverse-probability-weighting regression-adjustment and propensity score matching with multiple treatment estimators. Overall, results show that adoption of a CA technology significantly increases total household income and income per adult equivalent. Disaggregating the CA components, we find that adoption of the components in combination is associated with larger income gains than when the components are adopted in isolation, and the largest effect is achieved when households implement the three practices jointly. Nevertheless, implementation of the full CA package among the sampled households is very low, with an average adoption rate of 8%. We identify key factors that might spur increased adoption, including education, secure land rights, and access to institutional support services. Results further show that the determinants and impacts of the CA components vary considerably among the study countries, suggesting location specificity of CA. Our results are consistent across alternative estimators. Read More

Ghana: Farmers learn no-till to increase productivity and income

Kwame Anane smiles as he walks onto a vast farm filled with various types of crops. He joins a group of farmers who are busy filling bags with harvested beans. The farmers come here to the Centre for No-Till Agriculture in Amanchia, Ghana, to learn no-till farming and other Conservation Agriculture (CA) practices.

Mr. Anane grows cocoa, maize, cassava, plantain, and other crops. After learning Conservation Agriculture techniques on the demonstration plots at the No-Till Centre, he started practicing on his own farm. One thing he learned is that it is not a good idea to burn crop residues, because it can cause soil erosion and decrease soil fertility over time.

He says, "Before I met Dr. Kofi Boa, who taught me [CA], I used to do this practice [of burning residues] so that the farmland can be easily cleared for planting."

Dr. Kofi Boa is the founder of the No-Till Centre. He says the centre has helped many farmers learn CA practices such as no-till farming, keeping the soil covered at all times, intercropping, and crop rotation, as well as related practices such as pest control in seedlings, and reducing the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. He adds that most of the farmers have stopped using chemicals and practices that reduce soil fertility such as burning residues. Read more

From living in a mud house to a fixed roof, this Malawian farmer knows the value of climate-smart agriculture

Mother of three, Grace Manda - from the outskirts of Blantyre - Malawi's commercial capital has lived part of her life complaining about high poverty levels. Manda could not live a decent life, something that tormented her in terms of how to raise children and other family members. Food was also a challenge in her family. She lives in Chilobwe, Blantyre, close to Chiradzulu District in the Southern Region of Malawi, one of the world's most impoverished countries, ranking 170 out of 182 countries on the Human Development Index.

"I lacked food, clothes, school fees for my children and as if that was not enough, I lived in a house made of mud. It was terrible during the rainy season as grass-thatched houses often leak," Manda told the reporter.

Just one meeting on sustainable land and water management, including Conservation Agriculture, organised by the National Smallholder Farmers Association (Nasfam) -which she unwillingly attended - Manda's life was changed for the better. She adopted CA, promoted by TerrAfrica under Sustainable Land and Water Management partnership, which has proven to be a best practice farming for the future. This has enable Manda to build herself a better house and is taking care of her elderly mother and can now afford her children's school fees. "With the nature of my land, I realized that I have to promote Conservation Agriculture. We are doing soil cover and planting trees such as Nsangu, which add more nutrients to the soil" Manda adds.

She grows maize, beans, and pigeon peas. "Considering the gravity of climate change, which has affected most farmers, I am also more into climate smart agriculture," she said, adding that she sells her surplus maize and beans to buy fertilizer and lime and keep her family going.

Manda is one of the many farmers today in Malawi, who are championing Conservation Agriculture Read More

Family farming is key to better diets and better lives in Guinea

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Republic of Guinea signed a new financial agreement today, which will help more than 65,000 rural households raise their incomes, improve their diets and increase their ability to deal with climate change. The project will target 15 prefectures in the Upper and Middle Guinea regions, which are the poorest and most vulnerable in the country.

In Guinea, about 60 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, which constitutes 80 per cent of the country's poor people. The Upper and the Middle Guinea regions have poverty rates of 67.5 per cent and 55.4 per cent, respectively. Food insecurity affects 17.6 per cent of the population.

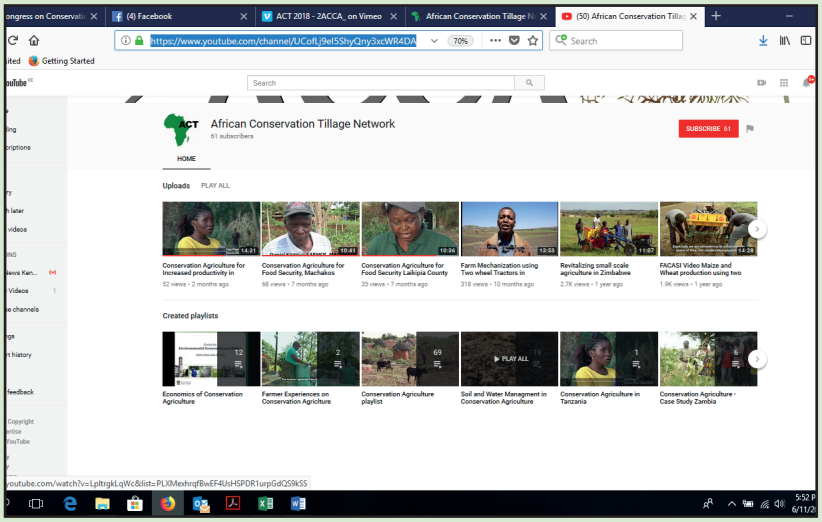
Guinea has underdeveloped agricultural potential, corresponding to an opportunity to increase incomes and food security. Despite the favourable soil and weather conditions, only 25 per cent of potential arable land is cultivated. The agriculture sector consists mainly of family farms focusing on food crops, rice, maize, tubers and palm oil, but is insufficient to meet the growing demand for food.

The new project will focus especially on women and young people. It aims to sustainably increase family farm production, as well as resilience to external shocks such as climate change, through better water management and by training farmers in improved and resilient cropping techniques. The project will also strengthen rural grass-roots organizations and associations, create jobs, and improve farm families' nutritional status. Read More

Interesting Videos and success stories on CA

Watch farmers' experiences and stories on CA on ACT-YouTube channel

ACT as a CA knowledge hub, strives to bring to the globe diverse farmers practices and experience on CA. Many farmers and actors in the agricultural sector from different countries appreciate and acknowledge the transformational effects of Conservation Agriculture on agricultural productivity and sustainability. To get more stories and farmers' perspectives, watch the several videos and clips commissioned and produced by ACT and partners in our YouTube playlists http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCofLj9el5ShyQny3xcWR4DA



Conservation agriculture puts Zambian farmers on firmer footing

With funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a UNDP-supported project entitled "Strengthening Management Effectiveness and Generating Multiple Environmental Benefits Within and Around the Greater Kafue National Park and West Lunga National Parks in Zambia" provides Conservation Agriculture techniques which are helping farming communities around the Game Management Areas in Zambia to produce better yields, high incomes and boost food security. The aim is to ensure that the biodiversity and carbon sinks of the Kafue/West Lunga protected area are better protected from threats and effectively managed by national and local institutions, communities and economic actors using sustainable forestry and land management practices. Video credit: ZNBC. View

Other farmers' stories on Conservation Agriculture

Barza Wire is a service of Farm Radio International, which uniquely shares stories relevant to small-scale farmers and rural communities. Get more farmers stories about CA on: http://wire.farmradio.fm/en/farmer-stories

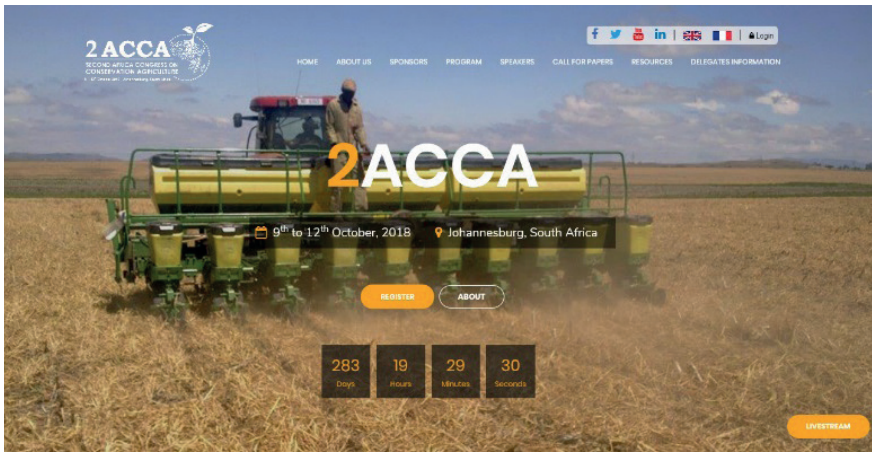
Conservation Agriculture in Kenya: beating drought and poor harvest

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the lives of most Kenyans with close to 70 percent of the population – mainly women – relying on it. Yet Kenya's agricultural potential has been low with productivity reported to be on a gradual decline, affecting families, particularly in the rural areas. Arid and semi-arid areas make up 80 percent of Kenya's territory, yet their agricultural potential has not been fully utilised.

FAO and the European Union are supporting small-scale women farmers to grow more food and earn more from their crops by adopting conservation agriculture (CA), and linking the farmers to the markets. Read more on "Conservation agriculture: what is it and how is it helping Kenyan farmers?"

2018 Events

The Second Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture (2ACCA) 9th -12th October 2018



The primary objective of the **2ACCA** is to bring together expert knowledge, information, and insights from practitioners from across different sectors and interests groups at all levels of agriculture development in the public, private and civil sectors. This diversity of knowledge and stakeholders is essential:

- to enable the desired multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral development of CA as a core production component of climate-smart agriculture; and
- for the sustained mobilization of policy, institutional and community support to accelerate the widespread adoption and management of CA as a core element of the expanding climate-smart food and agriculture systems in Africa.

This is in line with the Malabo Declaration, AU's Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. The purpose of the 2ACCA initiative is to facilitate diverse and open sharing of experiences and information on CA thereby fostering learning and widespread awareness and interest in the uptake and spread of CA. This includes CA's role in enhancing sustainable agricultural productivity, strengthening environmental and social resilience, and fostering efforts to provide for food and nutrition security as well as jobs and economic opportunities, especially for rural communities, including youth and women. The 2ACCA initiative provides "neutral space" for networking, collaboration and partnership to support the scaling-up of CA systems as the sustainable basis for CSA development across Africa.

The 2ACCA initiative brings together expert knowledge, information, and insights from practitioners from across different sectors and interests groups at all levels of agriculture development from the public, private and civil sectors. This diversity enables the desired multi-disciplinary and cross-sector "treatment" of CA for climate-smart agriculture – a feature essential for the success of CA scaling-up as an integral part of the growing food and agriculture systems in Africa.

For more information visit: [Second Africa Conference on Conservation Agriculture (2ACCA)]

ACT programs, projects and initiatives are firmly anchored towards achieving the 2030 SDGs.

Goal1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

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