Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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Sustainable mechanization innovations for economic growth of smallholders:

Partnership with African Conservation Tillage Network

The African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have been working together since 2019 to support African farming households in creating opportunities for economic growth through conservation agriculture and sustainable agricultural mechanization.

ACT and FAO have worked closely with farmers and value chain actors to promote mechanization hire services, providing directions for investments for sustainable mechanization, and piloting mechanization and digitalization innovations adapted specifically to local contexts. This partnership has supported farmers in making the transition from subsistence farming to commercially and market-oriented farming.

In collaboration with the African Union Commission, ACT and FAO have been working to raise awareness on new ways of funding in sustainable agricultural mechanization and develop capacity for mechanization hire service providers and policy makers in support of the implementation of the Framework for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization for Africa (F-SAMA).

Launched in 2018 by the African Union and FAO, the F-SAMA emphasizes the need for mainstreaming sustainable agricultural mechanization in agricultural development programmes, aiming to move smallholders from hand tool-based labour to innovative technologies. Sustainable mechanization cuts working time, relieves labour shortages, raises productivity and encourages youth into agriculture, and also aids in efficient use of agricultural resources, helping mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing harmful emissions and increasing farmer resilience.

■ Countries in ACT network

Source: United Nations Map No. 4170 Rev. 18.1, February 2020

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

MAIN AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

- Adoption and scaling up of conservation agriculture
- Sustainable land management and climate change resilience
- Capacity development and partnerships
- Knowledge management and exchange
- Business development
- Network management
- Awareness raising and advocacy of F-SAMA

CONTRIBUTING TO

FAO's FOUR BETTERS

SDGs

1 NO POVERTY | 2 ZERO HUNGER | 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | 13 CLIMATE ACTION | 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

KEY RESULTS

01 | Knowledge and information exchange

- The online Africa-Mechanize Platform (www.africamechanize.org) was developed and launched, becoming the core platform for exchanges on all aspects of sustainable mechanization in Africa, including capacity building, partnerships, and technical assistance.
- During the 8th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture (8WCCA), held in June 2021, the event entitled "Experiences and Investments in Conservation Agriculture and Sustainable Mechanization for Smallholders in Africa" was organized, during which the publication ***Agri-hire in sub-Saharan Africa – Business Models for investing in sustainable mechanization*** and five case studies on successful Conservation Agriculture practices in Africa were presented.
- F-SAMA Country Investment Highlights briefs explaining country specific investment actions in relation to the operationalization of the F-SAMA and promotion and use of conservation agriculture were prepared.

02 | Awareness raising

- In December 2019, a regional workshop was conducted in Kampala, Uganda on sustainable agricultural mechanization to share experiences and trigger investments and partnerships at country level.
- Webinars were held to raise awareness of F-SAMA and strengthen networks across the region and beyond, with materials widely shared through the Africa-Mechanize Platform.

03 | Capacity development

- Didactic materials were developed to undertake Mechanization Service Provider (MSP) trainings as well as guidelines for directions in investments to assist in shaping country investment briefs.
- Trainings responding to the needs of both investors and MSPs were conducted in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.
- A technical report on the operationalization of F-SAMA entitled "Capacity Building of Agricultural Mechanization Service Providers along the Agri-Food Value Chain" was produced in December 2020.

LOOKING FORWARD

ACT and FAO will continue to promote sustainable agricultural mechanization in Africa. In particular:

- The *Directions in Investments* publication is currently under development, analyzing the interlinked social, economic, institutional and environmental conditions needed for leveraging investments in sustainable agricultural mechanization. This document will be available in 2022.
- Ten country briefs will be developed on a variety of topics, including geographical differentiation (drylands/tropical agriculture), specific value chains, crops and mechanization options.
- Webinars will continue to be organized in support of the F-SAMA.
- Trainings are planned for rice farming in West Africa to be implemented with local partners in select countries.
- ACT will lead preparations for the 9th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture, to be held in June 2024 in Cape Town, South Africa.

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CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE

Conservation agriculture is a farming system that promotes minimum soil disturbance (i.e. no tillage), maintenance of a permanent soil cover, and diversification of plant species.

It enhances biodiversity and natural biological processes above and below the ground surface, which contribute to increased water and nutrient use efficiency and to improved and sustained crop production.

ABOUT THE PARTNER

The African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) is a fast growing pan-African non-profit organization that aims at bringing together stakeholders and players who are dedicated to improving agricultural productivity through sustainable utilization of natural resources of land and water in Africa's farming systems.

ACT is committed to the principal of mutual collaboration, partnership and sharing of information/knowledge on sustainable natural resources management and drawing on synergies and complementarities.

CONTACT

FAO Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations:
www.fao.org/partnerships/civil-society/en/
FAO-CivilSociety@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy

African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT):
www.act-africa.org
info@act-africa.org

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