



## AFRICAN CONSERVATION TILLAGE NETWORK

*Partnering for improved food security, a better environment and regional development*

### **April 2013 – Updates and Hottest Issues**

#### **1. Good News!!!! ACT's CA Champions Distinction Scheme; Model farmers and Stakeholders' contribution Recognition scheme**

The African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) joins **Prof. Ricardo Ralisch** to warmly congratulate **Herbert Bartz**, the pioneer Brazilian no-till farmer for his well-deserved recognition from State University of Londrina for his exemplary CA innovations who received his **Honorary Doctorate degree** on 30 April.

*No-till was an unheard of concept in Brazil in 1970. Some four decades later, 75% of the nation's cropland is grown under no-till systems, and it's all thanks to one farmer – Herbert Bartz - who dared to think outside the box (Farm Future, 2012).*



*Brazilian no-till pioneer Herbert Bartz  
(Courtesy of Farm Futures, April 18 2012)*

In sowing the seeds to follow Herbert Bartz's footprint, **ACT is launching, with effect from 2013**, its scheme to recognise and honour the National and Continental CA Champions in Africa.

**Append: More to come on selection criteria and rewards, don't miss**

For More: (Herbert's CA issues) <http://farmfutures.com/blogs-south-americas-till-pioneer-3181>  
More Info; Contact [info@act-africa.org](mailto:info@act-africa.org)

#### **2. Eastern Africa Conservation Agriculture Policy Makers Tour To Zambia And Zimbabwe**

ACT, a premier network of excellence in promoting sustainable agriculture and ecosystem management for improved livelihoods and wealth creation in Africa, in light of its mandate **organized and coordinated policy makers tour** hosted by the Ministries of Agriculture of Zambia and Zimbabwe with other local/national (Golden Valley Agricultural Research Trust; Conservation Farming Unit of Zambia; smallholder farmers; large scale commercial CA farmers; equipment manufacturers; and agricultural training colleges) and regional institutions (CIMMYT, COMESA, FAO and NEPAD).



**The objective of the visit to Zambia and Zimbabwe** was to increase awareness on conservation agriculture (CA) among Eastern Africa government and decision-makers, in the endeavor of *Turning Conservation Agriculture Knowledge into Action* in the region. Specifically the tour was intended to: *Expose Policy and Decision-makers from the Ethiopian, South Sudan, Kenyan, Ugandan, and Tanzanian Governments and stakeholder organizations to Conservation Agriculture; providing a platform to share existing efforts and current developments on CA and promote increased/wider uptake CA in the region.* The tour brought together **twenty three participants** drawn from Directors of Departments from Ministries of Agriculture of Ethiopia, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Others are Senior CA practitioners from NGOs, Universities, Research and Development Institutions, District Executive Directors, and the Media.

More Info; Contact [info@act-africa.org](mailto:info@act-africa.org)

### 3. Pasture Cropping: A Regenerative Solution from Down Under

*“Courtesy of Winona Farms & Courtney White”*



Harvestable oat crops—for sale as food or forage—growing above the grasses later grazed by sheep

***A two-for-one deal.*** Since the late 1990s, Australian farmer **Colin Seis** has been successfully planting a **cereal crop** into **perennial pasture** on his sheep farm during the dormant period using no-till drilling, a method that uses a drill to sow seeds instead of the traditional plow. He calls it ***pasture cropping*** and he gains two crops this way



Courtesy of Winona farm

from one parcel of land—a cereal crop for food or forage and wool or lamb meat from his pastures—which means its potential for feeding the world in a sustainable manner is significant.

Through innovative farming methods, Colin Seis of New South Wales, Australia is able to raise cereal crops and sheep on the same land.

For more, get an excellent article from: <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/1261>

Courtney White: [www.awestthatworks.com](http://www.awestthatworks.com)

### 4. Launch of the East and Southern Africa Global Soil Partnership (GSP)

*ACT, participated in the launch of the Global Soil Partnership in the East and South Africa region held from 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013 in Nairobi, Kenya and organized by FAO in cooperation with CIAT.*

East and Southern Africa GSP is a newly established **regional network** of the new Global Soil Partnership for Food security and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation. The launch was attended by participants from 21 national and regional soil institutions and initiatives who presented the status, needs and priorities for sustainable soil management in their countries. The workshop prepared “The **Nairobi Communiqué**” in which the urgent need to promote the sustainable management of soils for the current and future generations was expressed. The starting point was establishment of the Global Soil Partnership in the region to undertake five main priority actions identified as: (i) *Developing, updating and disseminating harmonized national and regional soil information*, (ii) *Developing and implementing training and capacity development programs*, (iii) *Guiding and enabling the implementation of sustainable soil management practices and restoration of soil health*, (iv) *Addressing soil degradation* and (v) *Establishing linkages and networks with other initiatives that impact soil health*.

For more information, and how to become a partner, visit:

<http://www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/>

## 5. Water productivity and climatic variability; soil rehabilitation and fertility management workshop

*ACT and Wageningen University (WU), through the EU funded ABACO project (<http://abaco.act-africa.org/>), organized a seminar on Water productivity and climatic variability; soil rehabilitation and integrated fertility management workshop from 14 – 17 May 2013 in Arusha Tanzania.*

The workshop objectives, targeting to document how conservation agriculture addresses climatic variability and soil fertility, included: (i) introductions to concepts of water productivity and climatic variability, soil rehabilitation and integrated fertility management; (ii) build capacity of participants on the themes; (iii) training on and calibration of the water productivity and soil fertility equipment; (iii) share and harmonize research protocols to be responsive to the ABACO expectations, and (v) measurements, data collection and analysis of on-farm trials.

The four day workshop was attended by managers, researchers, programme officers, partners and post graduate students participating in the implementation of the ABACO project. Participants shared experiences, undertook hands-on training at the Selian Agricultural Research Institute on-station trials in Arusha in addition to interactions with CA practicing farmers in two villages.

For more: [info@act-africa.org](mailto:info@act-africa.org)

## 6. Press Release: Conservation farming set to improve yields from crops.

(posted on February 26 2013 )

*“If you missed it, get a glimpse of CA in Western Kenya! Courtesy of Nation Media Group”*

The yields from Rosemary Oganga's **one acre-farm** in Siaya County have increased from almost **nothing to four bags** even though she did not have to till the farm or use fertilizers. She is among several other farmers in western Kenya who benefited from **conservation agriculture** through which growers suppress weeds using an **environmentally-friendly chemical instead of traditional weeding**. A novel technology, Conservation Agriculture, has seen a considerable increase in output per acre and cut production costs. As opposed to the traditional ploughing method, the technology keeps the farm moist through retention of crop residues that also prevent soil erosion.



Rosemary farm, Kakum village, Siaya County

**The technology focuses** mainly on sustainable production of crops under intensive cultivation of land where two crops, a legume and a cereal are inter-cropped twice a year. It comes hot on the heels of a food crisis and dwindling fortunes for maize farmers in Western Kenya following an outbreak of a deadly disease that wiped out the crop last season.

In Summary, the system involves use of eco-friendly chemicals to root out unwanted plants instead of the traditional and costly weeding.

For more, available on:

1. <http://www.nation.co.ke/Features/smartcompany/Conservation-farming-set-to-improve-yields/-/1226/1704352/-/lo5fgtz/-/index.html>
2. [http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/?articleID=2000064943&story\\_title=Farmers-embrace-conservation-farming](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/?articleID=2000064943&story_title=Farmers-embrace-conservation-farming)

## 7. Facts about No-Till farming: No-Till Club newsletter March 2013.

*From the March 2013 issue of the KwaZulu Natal No-Till Club newsletter titled “Bringing you the facts about No-till”, Editor Richard Findlay is bold to skeptics,*

*That No-Till now has “lift off” after many years of being considered “off the mark”*





## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

When the first space shuttle was launched, I remember clearly the announcement after countdown, *"We have lift off!"*

No-Till Conservation Agriculture has a similar history to the space programme. Sceptics thought that those talking about no-till were on the fringe and were one step from the "loony bin".

Space scientists venturing where they are not supposed to go! A waste of money which could be spent on needy causes! These *mad* people have enabled us to have GPS, better communications via satellite such as sport, as it

happens anywhere in the world, email, internet, Skype and many more money generating tools we take for granted.

No-Till now has *"lift off"* after many years of being considered *"off the mark"*. Non-agricultural media has been reporting on the practise of No-Till Conservation Agriculture:

- TIME magazine reports from the World Economic Forum which took place on 14 December 2012: *"What if the world's soil runs out?"*
  - John Crawford of the University of Sydney states that 40% of the soil for agriculture is classed as either degraded or severely degraded.
  - Soil is being lost at 10 to 40 times the rate at which it can naturally be replenished.
- THE NEW YORK TIMES' article, *"A simple fix for farming"* reports a rotation trial in Iowa to reduce reliance on too many chemicals used by farmers.

Should you want to read these articles in full, email me at [richardfindlay@intanet.co.za](mailto:richardfindlay@intanet.co.za) and I will forward you the link.

## 8. Upcoming Events

- **Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture (ACCA), 18-21 March 2014, Lusaka Zambia.** For more information, contact: [info@act-africa.org](mailto:info@act-africa.org)
- **6th World Congress of Conservation Agriculture to be held June 22-26, 2014, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.** The 6<sup>th</sup> WCCA announces [registration](#) is now open. Concurrent session tracks will explore the following areas of conservation agriculture:

Track 1: Growing more with less – the future of sustainable intensification

Track 2: Weatherproofing agriculture - the adaption of farming practices to address climate variability

Track 3: Increasing conservation adoption - how innovative technology and approaches can drive greater adoption of conservation systems around the world

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

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*Conservation Agriculture for Improved Livelihoods and a Better Environment*

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