



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

### **1. Feeding the Soil or Feeding the cow; A documentary on where and how Conservation Agriculture works in Africa.**

#### **“Feeding the Soil or Feeding the cow?”**

Semi-arid Africa is characterized by a **fast growing population, increasingly erratic rainfall and degraded soils**. There is a clear need for **more sustainable farming practices**. Conservation Agriculture is one of the options to improve soil health and productivity.



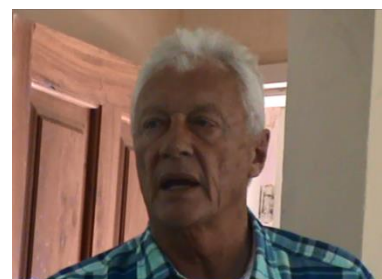
CA was first developed in the United States in reaction to the ‘dirty 1930s’ dustbowls that devastated wide areas of the mid-west. It is based on reduced tillage and keeping the soil covered. In Brazil, CA developed into a system following the 3 principles of minimum soil disturbance, semi-permanent soil cover and crop rotation or association. This system is widely adopted by farmers of different scale all over the world. In spite of its promises, success with adopting CA on smallholder farms in Africa has been limited. Then, how can CA make part of a solution to myriads problems faced by smallholder farmers in Africa?

This prompted ACT and other partners under the EU funded ABACO (<http://abaco.act-africa.org>) and CA2Africa projects to commission Greendocs to develop a documentary on the status of CA in Africa.

Watch the documentary at: <http://act-africa.org/videos.php?com=60&vid=12>

### **2. Her Majesty The Queen honours Mr Peter Aagaard**

The British High Commissioner to Zambia James Thornton has congratulated Mr Peter Aagaard, Executive Director of the Zambian Conservation Farming Unit (CFU), on the award of a MBE in Her Majesty The Queen’s Birthday 2013 honours list. Mr Aagaard has been recognised for his contribution in the improvement of conservation farming in Zambia



The High Commissioner said; “I am delighted that Peter Aagaard, Executive Director of the Zambian Conservation Farming Unit, has received an MBE in this year’s Birthday Honours for services to the development of conservation farming in Africa. In 1995, Peter founded the CFU as a way to integrate conservation farming practices, knowledge and technologies into Zambian small-scale farming operations. Conservation farming practice enable small and medium-scale farmers to move away from environmentally destructive, low yielding and costly conventional farming practices. It also raises productivity while lowering in-farm costs and environmental impact ... ..”

**More info+:** Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/hm-the-queen-honours-mr-peter-aagaard> or Visit: <http://conservationagriculture.org/>.

### 3. Conservation Agriculture: The foundation for Africa’s “Green Revolution”

*An interview of the ACT ES in the CIMMYT e-Infoma No. 1847 • 14-21 June 2013*

Get the current status and future of CA in Africa from the oral interview conducted by The Global Conservation Agriculture Program (GCAP) of CIMMYT with the ACT Executive Secretary as respondent and as reported in e-informa No. 1847. 14-21 June 2013. The interview captures, amongst other Africa issues; the current CA adoption status; role of CA in improving food security; challenges facing its promotion and adoption; and its contributions to improved livelihoods.



The CIMMYT’s Global Conservation Agriculture Program works closely with partners all over the world toward an ultimate vision of widespread use of sustainable systems by smallholder farmers, based on the principles of conservation agriculture (CA). Their key partner in Africa is the African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT).

**More info+:** Available at <http://blog.cimmyt.org/?p=10573> or Contact [info@act-africa.org](mailto:info@act-africa.org)

### 4. A Soiled reputation: Adverse impacts of mineral fertilizers in tropical agriculture.

*Study commissioned by Heinrich Böll Foundation and Authored by Johannes Kotschi, 2013*



Mineral fertilizers have never been used as much as they are today, and in developing countries they are experiencing a renaissance. But the efficacy of mineral fertilizers and the problems they entail have long been a matter of contention. This study provides an overview of the economic and ecological potential as well as the limitations and negative impacts of mineral fertilizers in the tropics and subtropics. It

focuses on the situation facing smallholder farmers.

The study concludes, in part, that fertile soils are among our most important resources worldwide. Healthy soils store water, are home to a large share of biodiversity, and store carbon. Mineral fertilizer subsidies for smallholders have been common in developing countries for many years, and subsidy programmes are still popular. Current programmes show that food production can be increased significantly in regions where the food supply is short, though they fail to improve the soil fertility in the long term. Subsidies have a short-term effect, they do not result in sustainable food security, and they are of minimal importance to an economy's profitability. What is more, subsidy programmes are a burden on national budgets. In some African countries, fertilizer subsidies account for up to 70 % of the funding assigned to agriculture.

The negative effects of nitrogen fertilizers on the climate are undisputed. The production of nitrogen fertilizer uses a lot of energy, while fertilizing fields with nitrogen releases nitrous oxide – a gas that is 310 times more detrimental to the climate than carbon dioxide. And mineral fertilizer prices are linked to the price of oil because their production is so energy-intensive.

**Read More+:** Available at <http://www.boell.de/publications/publications-study-mineral-fertilizer-17343.html>

## 5. Canadian Food Grains Bank elevates Conservation Agriculture a notch higher ... .. after Rights to Food.

On the occasion of its 30th anniversary, [http://foodgrainsbank.ca/30th\\_anniversary.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/30th_anniversary.aspx) the Canadian Foodgrains Bank hosted a two-day - June 13-14, 2013 conference in Winnipeg



Canada - focussing on NGO-based activities that have a proven record of reducing hunger. At a time when official aid budgets are being cut and levels of hunger remain stubbornly high it is important to keep a focus on proven approaches that cut hunger. The purpose of this conference was to highlight the promise of three such approaches employed by the Foodgrains Bank partnership namely: (a) Implementing the human right to adequate food; (b) Conservation agriculture; and (c) Food assistance. The conference brought together the relevant leading

researchers and the grass-roots field staff employing these approaches to highlight the strengths and current challenges in using each of these approaches. The keynote speakers – including the ACT Executive Secretary Saidi Mkomwa – were required to answer the big question: '**How will the world feed 9 billion people by 2050?**' Bios and presentations are available at: [http://foodgrainsbank.ca/fighting\\_hunger\\_conference\\_details.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/fighting_hunger_conference_details.aspx).

**Read More+:** 30 Years as a Christian Response to Hunger at: [http://foodgrainsbank.ca/30th\\_anniversary.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/30th_anniversary.aspx)

## 6. Upcoming Events

### (A) NO-TILL CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

The KwaZulu Natal No-Till Conference 2013, has been announced for 3-5 September 2013 at Drakensville, outside Bergville, KZN, South Africa

For more info visit their dedicated conference page at [here...](#) or

**More+:** Contact Sandra Findlay on: 082 472 5987 or email: [sandrafindlay@intanet.co.za](mailto:sandrafindlay@intanet.co.za)

### (B) Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture (ACCA-1), 18-21 March 2014, Lusaka Zambia.

#### Registration now open

Purpose to attend the **First African Congress for Conservation Agriculture (1st ACCA)** that brings together key CA stakeholders, including farmers and their organizations, from the continent to interact and co-own a permanent CA knowledge and information sharing platform that takes into account the needs of farmers and for increased benefits from CA technologies.

#### Themes:

- i. Growing more with less – the future of sustainable intensification
- ii. Weather proofing agriculture - the adaption of farming practices to address climate variability
- iii. Increasing Conservation Agriculture adoption - how innovative technology and approaches can drive greater adoption of conservation systems around the world

**Register at:** <http://act-africa.org/events.php?com=68&com2=67&item=109#.Ud0UPaxp0xF>

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

### (C) 6th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture to be held June 22-26, 2014, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Plan to attend the 6th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture (WCCA) to learn, discuss and network about Soil Health and Wallet Wealth. Agricultural production systems are not sustainable unless they are profitable, and Conservation Agriculture (CA) holds the key to building and maintaining healthy soils and profitable farming systems.

**Themes:** (i) Conservation Agriculture and Sustainable Intensification; (ii) Conservation Agriculture and Climate Change; (iii) Conservation Agriculture and Innovative Adoption.

**To register for the conference, visit the website** <https://www.ctic.org/registration>

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

**Saidi Mkomwa**

**Executive Secretary**

**African Conservation Tillage Network**

*Conservation Agriculture for Improved Livelihoods and a Better Environment*

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