



## August 2013 – Updates and Hottest Issues

### 1. Report: Soil Conservation Could Help Reduce Climate Change-Related Crop Losses



*A new NRDC report says that while American farmers are increasingly turning to crop insurance to manage weather-related risks, including crop loss; soil conservation would be a better long-term solution.*

From 2001 to 2010, the Federal Crop Insurance Program averaged about \$4 billion a year in payouts to farmers for lost crops. Last year, that amount was a record-breaking \$17.3 billion to farmers across the country... nearly all for crops lost because of drought, heat and hot wind.

More than \$1.5 billion of that money went to farmers in Kentucky and Indiana. [But a new report](#) from the Natural Resources Defense Council suggests an alternative to this insurance program. Because extreme weather events - like drought - are **projected to increase under climate change**, Agricultural Policy Analyst Claire O'Connor says it won't make economic sense to keep relying on crop insurance. She says farmers should change the way they farm to reduce their risk.

“And so what our proposal does, it says ‘let’s incentivize farmers to start adopting practices that not only reduce the risk of losing their crops in any year, but make them more resilient to the extreme weather we expect to see in the future,’” she says.

These practices include [cover cropping](#) and [no-till farming](#). “Both refer to practices that can build soil health,” O'Connor says. “Make soil the insurance policy. Because healthy soil can filter more water, it can retain that water and save it for when growing crops need to use it.”

O'Conner says healthier soil will help crops withstand the weather variations caused by climate change, as well as have other ancillary benefits for the environment.



**Read More+:** <http://www.nrdc.org/water/soil-matters/files/soil-matters-IP.pdf>

## 2. Highlights of the Sustainable Intensification Systems Workshop Side Event, Africa Agriculture Science Week, July 2013, Accra

Every three years, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) convenes a continental gathering of all stakeholders involved in Africa agricultural development. This gathering has become known as the Africa Agriculture Science Week (AASW). During this year AASW under the side events program, sub-theme II Innovations to improve productivity and Resilience attention was also focused on accelerating Sustainable Intensification in Africa: A farming systems framework for targeting investment.

This side event had **the following objectives**: To inform participants about *1) the development of a comprehensive classification and analysis of African farming systems across the continent in the form of a book and web-based spatial and statistical data platform; 2) the outcomes and recommendations of a 4-day pre-AASW workshop on sustainable intensification systems (SIS);* and to plan for strengthening system-oriented approaches for sustainable intensification programs.

**The Recommendations derived from the workshop includes**: Institutionalize farming systems frameworks into the Africa Agriculture Science Agenda, CAADP national investment planning and the New Alliance Technology Platform, as well CRPs and national R&D and higher education programs to accelerate the sustainable intensification of agricultural systems; and build system research capacity in university curricula and greater donor championing for system approaches in R&D programs.

These led to development of the following **action plans** relevant to address the recommendations for the next three years (2014 – 2016): Synthesize key elements of approaches for developing and managing sustainable intensification systems programmes into a synthetic booklet for policy makers and non-research audiences; Convene another sustainable intensification systems workshop in 2014; Establish a functional community of practice to advance sustainable intensification systems approaches and Continue to exploit synergies among R&D sites where various SIS programs are implemented.

**For more information:** <http://www.fara-africa.org/scienceweek/side-events/>

## 3. Building capacities of senior rural development staff for the promotion of CA in West and Central Africa

ACT in partnership with the University of Bobo Dioulasso (UPB) has since 2008 built capacities of rural development staff by hosting and offering academic internships with full scholarships to 21 students of IDR/UPB including 8 BSc and 13 MSc. These students conducted their researches in the fields of CA-based climate smart cropping systems, knowledge management and, CA technical and organizational innovation process and farm and territory scales. Most of the support was provided under the IFAD –financed smallholder conservation agriculture project (SCAP) <http://scap.act-africa.org/>.

In the framework of the setting of its MSc II training programme in Rural Development, the Institute of Rural Development of the University of Bobo Dioulasso has introduced a 30hrs training module on agroecology - sustainable intensification of agricultural production. The ACT West and Central Africa sub-regional Coordinator Dr Patrice Djamen animated this module during the 2012/2013 academic year. 52 MSc students preparing specialization in the field of crop production, forestry, animal production or rural economics and sociology attended the course. During the course, students reflected

on the application of CA in their specific fields but also on the linkages and complementarities that CA as a systemic innovation requires between their different disciplines.

The objective of the module is to develop capacities of [future senior rural development staff](#) to enable them to use meaningfully CA as an effective and sustainable alternative to meet the rampant food security, economic and environmental challenges the agricultural sector is facing. The course addressed the necessity of intensification of agricultural production, the potential contribution of CA to make the transformation more sustainable, modalities for the implementation of CA and strategies for the management of potential constraints related to the application of CA.

Through the engagement and support to Students, ACT is significantly enriching the existing local human resources and expertise on CA; to be mobilized for further research activities and/or the dissemination of CA both at national and sub-regional level. The ACT - IDR/UPB collaboration is envisaged to culminate to developing IDR/UPB a centre of excellence for CA.

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

## 4. European Union and partners plan to scale-out adoption of smallholder Conservation Agriculture in Kenya



### Fact Finding Mission by EU Delegation to Kenya to ABACO Project sites in Laikipia Kenya

Mission date: 20<sup>th</sup> August 2013

The European Union delegation to Kenya leads other partners in the development of plans to scale-out adoption Conservation Agriculture in Kenya from thousands of smallholders to millions. This was revealed by Dominique Davoux - Head of Agriculture and Rural Development for the EU delegation to Kenya during a visit to the EU funded ABACO project sites in Laikipia Kenya carried out on 20th August 2013.



Kalalu FFS members explain to visitors their CA demonstration plots.

The mission objective was to undertake monitoring of the ABACO project progress, assess effectiveness of Conservation Agriculture and gather the learning's of ABACO to assist mainstream CA into larger food security programmes for Kenya.

The EU delegation, also including Stephen Wathome, Programme Manager, Agriculture and Rural Development, **concluded** that:

- Results from CA projects have shown that CA practices offer substantial gains in term of yield in semi-arid climate where the preservation of the soil moisture and of the soil fertility is critical.

- The gain offered by the CA practices needs to be further tested and ascertained taking into consideration variations in farmer typologies, agro-eco zones, level/type of mechanization and use of smart inputs.

#### On the Way Forward:

- County governments and partners should be encouraged to mainstream CA as part of an integrated farm management practices into development programmes of the devolved Governments in Kenya.
- There is the need to address more strategically the conflict between CA and livestock keeping over the use of the mulching resources.
- CA effectiveness needs to be increased through integrated practice and infrastructure development.
- ACT should compile a paper describing achievements in the different countries and agro-ecological areas which will be distributed to the all stakeholders.
- A paper should also be produced eliciting the motivation of farmers to adopt/not adopt CA.
- ACT need to point out areas where further research is still needed.
- Evidently there is Low participation of youth in CA activities, and this needs elaborate documentation.
- The national CA task force in Kenya is not as active as in Zimbabwe & Zambia. EU should look at ways to support operationalization of a vibrant national task force.



CA service provider David Murira demonstrating use of the animal drawn direct seeder

An all-stakeholders **conference** including researchers and practitioners will be conveyed in **November 2013** to draw common conclusions on specific needs for further research and summarize the positive learning that can be subject to a broad base extension services. Get event details and/or participate by contacting:

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

## 5. INTERPOL Environmental Crime Program; Guide to Carbon Trading Crime

*Beware of a new environmental and financial crime – “carbon trading crime”!!*

**The international crime police organisation (INTERPOL)** has recognised carbon trading crime as a new and emerging type of environmental and financial crime. The organisation has released a report “[Guide to Carbon Trading Crime](#)” outlining a list of the carbon market’s vulnerabilities to criminal activities, recognising that “carbon markets are at particular risk of exploitation and require sufficient monitoring and robust legal enforcement to tackle the potential for environmental and financial crime.”

In the past two decades, there has been increased action by the global community to limit the damaging effects of climate change. The most prominent and contemporary movement, under the Kyoto Protocol, has been to bind industrialized countries to a greenhouse gas emissions cap met either through trading carbon credits. This has led to carbon trading becoming the fastest growing commodities market in the world, with the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme alone valued at US\$148 billion in 2011. Africa has a mere 2% share in the global carbon credit market.

**Report (for more information) available at:**

[http://www.act-africa.org/file/20130829\\_guide\\_to\\_carbon\\_trading\\_crime.pdf](http://www.act-africa.org/file/20130829_guide_to_carbon_trading_crime.pdf)



## 6. Staff Changes at ACT



**Ms Janet Cox Achora**

Janet Cox Achora has just joined ACT as the [Knowledge and Information Management Manager](#). She brings to ACT vast experience working in the Knowledge and communication sector and ICT4D for over twenty years. A Ugandan National, her work experience involves International exposure having worked with the Aga Khan Education Service in Tanzania as a Learning Media Coordinator; and in setting up information and media centres. Janet is an ardent user of social media for development and belongs to various communities of Practice like the eRails of FARA, InfoDEV network and various Dgroups that facilitate the exchange of Agricultural Information. A current PhD candidate

in Agricultural and Rural Innovations at Makerere University, Janet holds a Master's degree in International Community Development, a Bachelor's degree in Library and Information Science and a Diploma in Librarianship.

[Hamisi Dulla Mzoba](#), former ACT [Knowledge and Information Manager](#), has been seconded for two years, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013, to the Conservation Farming Unit (CFU) of Zambia. Hamisi is the [CFU Tanzania Country Manager](#). The Conservation Agriculture work he manages in Tanzania covers the Lake Zone with the Tanzania Gatsby Trust; and with HRNS in the Arusha and Mbeya areas. A Tanzanian by Nationality, Hamisi shares with the new ACT partner (CFU) a wealth of field expertise on conservation agriculture from ACT, and Farmer Field Schools having worked with the FFS Foundation in The Netherlands between 2007 and 2008. He was, prior to that, an Associate Professional Officer with FAO-Kenya from 2004 to 2007 where he served as a Community Based Education Officer for several programmes. Hamisi holds an MSc in Natural Resource Management from Cranfield University UK and BSc Agriculture from Sokoine University, Tanzania.



**Hamisi Dulla Mzoba**

## 7. Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) making a shift to strengthen capacity in conservation agriculture in Africa

In an effort to strengthen the collective capacity and coordination of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) and the members within it, [posts are advertised](#) for CA Technical Officers (TO) for Southern Africa (one) and another for Eastern Africa. The [Mennonite Central Committee](#) (MCC) will hire and manage the TO for East Africa, with the person being based in Arusha Tanzania.

### [For more Info:](#)

Contact MCC Tanzania at: [mccrep@tanzania.mcc.org](mailto:mccrep@tanzania.mcc.org) or

Access advert at: <http://serve.mcc.org/positions/conservation-agriculture-technical-officer-tanzania>

## 8. Upcoming Events

### [A] COMESA Joint Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Meeting

The COMESA Joint Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources will be holding its 5th Meeting from 16 to 17 September 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The joint meeting of Ministers of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources will be held at the same venue from 19-20 September 2013. The Common Market for COMESA-EAC-SADC comprises 26 countries with a combined population of nearly 600 million people and a total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of approximately US\$1.0 trillion. ACT is a member of the technical committee and an implementing partner of the tripartite Programme on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.

**For more information contact:** Shamelidn Salim [smsalim@comesa.int](mailto:smsalim@comesa.int) or C. Miti [cmiti@comesa.int](mailto:cmiti@comesa.int)

### [B] CIMMYT Board comes to Kenya - to also have a glimpse of mechanised CA under FACASI: 26 – 29 September 2013

The CIMMYT Board of Trustees will be meeting in Kenya from 26-29 September 2013. The high-level delegation, partly hosted by the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, will also have the opportunity to visit several research sites including a demonstration of women friendly smallholder mechanization under the Farm Mechanization & Conservation Agriculture for Sustainable Intensification (FACASI) in Njoro.

**For more information contact:** Frederic Baudron [F.Baudron@cgiar.org](mailto:F.Baudron@cgiar.org)

### [C] The 6th Soil Science Society (SSS) Biennial Conference to be Held in Nakuru, Kenya, on 21st - 25th October 2013.

This is a joint Africa-wide conference organized by the Soil Science Society of East Africa (SSSEA) in collaboration with African Soil Science Society (ASSS). The conference is intended to critically analyse Land and Water Management (LWM) technologies, innovative products and services; and strategies benefiting small-scale agriculture in Africa.

**Theme of the conference** : Transforming Rural Livelihoods in Africa: How can land and water management contribute to enhanced food security and address climate change adaptation and mitigation?

**For more Info:** Contact: Dr. Barrack Okoba, Email: [okoba2000@yahoo.com](mailto:okoba2000@yahoo.com)

### [D] Conservation Agriculture Equipment Manufacturers and Inputs Suppliers Workshop; Diamond Jubilee Hall; Da res salaam Tanzania; 28-29 November 2013.

*“Enhancing Farmers’ access to Conservation Agriculture Equipment Services”*

The workshop intends to bring together stakeholders from within the Eastern and Southern Africa countries (Angola, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda) to establish the CA equipment supply chain players, the services they provide, challenges faced and opportunities to unlock them to foster growth in the sector through formation of a CoP. Specific emphasis will be on the CA equipment manufacturers based in the sub-regions.

**The workshop objectives include:** (i) To facilitate formation and networking of a CoP for CA equipment manufacturers, suppliers and service providers comprising CA equipment manufacturers, repair workshops, importers, hire service providers, and financial institutions from East and Southern Africa; (ii) To guide manufacturers on compliance to the standards, principles and guidelines of clients (with reference to those of FAO) for prequalifying to quality assurance by peers and international tenders; (iii) To develop a practical roadmap for expanding the development, manufacturing, supply,

spare and repair servicing of CA equipment and (iv) To Participate and create business opportunities through the Tanzania Trade Fair.

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

**[E] ACT Board Meeting: 29-30 November 2013; Dar es Salaam Tanzania.**

The 6th Board meeting of the ACT Network to be attended by all ten Directors will be held in Dar es salaam Tanzania from 29-30<sup>th</sup> September. Besides the usual agenda of enriching and approving the Institutions Work Plans and Budgets for 2014, the Board will approve the New ACT Constitution which seeks for stronger participation of sub-regions; affiliated institution; and wider stakeholder participation in the Network functions through Communities of Practice. Contact the Secretariat [atinfo@act-africa.org](mailto:atinfo@act-africa.org) for more information.

**[F] 1st Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture 18-21 March 2014, Lusaka Zambia**

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 adaptation of farming practices to address climate variability and (iii) Increasing Conservation Agriculture adoption - how innovative technology and approaches can drive greater adoption of conservation systems around the world.

**Register:** Now for the conference, visit the website

[http://act-africa.org/events\\_register.php?com=68&com2=67&item=109](http://act-africa.org/events_register.php?com=68&com2=67&item=109)

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

**[G] The 6th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture to be Held June 22-26, 2014, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.**

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 and (iii) Conservation Agriculture and Innovative Adoption.

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

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