**CA for sustained wealth creation**

Although conservation agriculture (CA) has been around for decades, it's only lately started getting noticed by policymakers as an option to generate an increase in wealth among rural population.

Both policymakers and rural development practitioners increasingly recognize that a short-term focus on creating jobs or increasing income is insufficient to generate sustainable rural development or achieve a long-term reduction in rural poverty.

The focus of CA was either physical (improved soil characteristics) or technical (adapted equipment and machinery), but the economical and social implications of conservation agriculture have been undervalued, up till now.

The economic gains from Conservation Agriculture are easily identified on farms of nearly all types and sizes. The saving in labour for small farmers using animal traction or manual methods is especially significant. Data from southern Brazil show a dramatic reduction - 68.3% -in man-hours/ha, which is the most important factor influencing adoption of CA. Part of the satisfaction which CA generates, derives from the ability to undertake other economic activities in the time saved, and thus increase total income.

*Benefits for small farmers, amongst others, are mentioned to be:*

* Spare family labour capacity can be used in other remunerative activities;
* Preservation of the farmer's soil resource and the environment in general;
* Reduction in the level of drudgery for crop establishment provides better quality of life;
* The trend of rural out-migration is reversed.

However, in very few instances the “other activities” are specified and in even less occasions are quantified. It is assumed that the adoption of Conservation Agriculture leads to an increase of wealth, through an increase in income. Is Conservation Agriculture in Africa promoted in the context of enterprise diversification for added value in utilising saved time, labour and drudgery? It has at times been argued that CA in Africa is too much focused on grain yield.

Some definitions of wealth emphasize the value of marketable assets, while others include all valued assets, regardless of their marketability. Wealth can contribute to people’s welfare in many ways beyond increasing income, such as providing economic resilience in adverse circumstances or enhancing one’s power and prestige.

Creating wealth may come in many different forms, including:

* Educating farmers to improve their productivity.
* Providing previously unavailable products (such as spectacles or irrigation products) that people can use to directly raise their productivity.
* Providing startup businesses with capital and support so that they can add value over time.

Understanding the distribution of wealth across and within rural communities is also critical. Despite its importance, efforts to conceptualize and measure rural wealth creation have been limited.

Measuring wealth creation and its outcomes also creates many challenges, including the difficulty of conceptualizing and measuring intangible and nonmarketed wealth, the cost of measuring a broad array of wealth indicators, difficulties in evaluating outcomes along multiple dimensions, and challenges in how to scale up the knowledge gained from assessment efforts in different contexts.

**Propositions for discussion:**

1. If CA is so successful as it is claimed to be, is there proof that it also generates wealth among the practitioners or do the advantages of CA simply include improved soil and water characteristics?
2. Are subsidies a pre-requisite to attain critical mass of adopters’ thresholds? Conservation Agriculture will eventually unlock barriers to entrepreneurships in the supply chain, but this will only work when it is heavily supported by gouvernment initiatives, as was the case in Southern Brazil.
3. Is CA likely to increase gender disparities?

As a result of implementing Conservation Agriculture a shift in labour time allocation can occur, for instance a higher yield leading to a heavier work load for women, as they are responsible for harvest activities. Time saved for land preparation will be used for other (income-generating/of-farm) activities.

1. Will mechanization of smallholder CA spiral rural-urban migration?

CA has a direct influence on the number of small agri-businesses, either at the input side of the value chain (tools, equipment and other inputs) or on the consumer side (added value to agricultural products, diversification of production, etc.)

1. CA is for the Youth and the Elderly too.

In cases where heads of household are either elderly or female with limited options for off-farm employment, farmers would optimize earnings through the adoption of Conservation Agriculture.