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A Call for a Brown Revolution in Africa

By Philanthropist Dr. Howard G. Buffett



Smallholder farmers throughout Africa are adopting Conservation Agriculture (CA) practices on their farms to improve their farming operations and their livelihoods. The soil health and resilience benefits of CA mean these families can now afford to send their children to school, have sufficient supplies of food, have more fertile and durable farmland; and have healthier livestock.

Protecting our soils and practicing smarter methods of farming is critical. *Brown Revolution: Save Our Soils, Save Our Future* is an initiative to raise awareness about and promote the adoption of CA practices. By educating farmers about the positive impact healthy soils have on productivity and conservation, as well as demonstrating an improved return on investment, we can feed the world more profitably and sustainably – now and for generations to come.

In a series of six articles, the Philanthropist Dr Howard G. Buffett, who is a farmer and an ambassador against hunger for the United Nations' World Food Program, Calls for a "Brown Revolution in Africa?" The six articles are titled as follows:

- You can listen to the academics or you can listen to the farmers.
- Africa's no-till revolution.
- No-till, African style.
- We are treating soil like dirt: It's a fatal mistake.
- One farmer's story of Conservation Agriculture.
- What does a \$100 billion asset manager say farmers should invest in? Soil.
- Losing the farm.
- Assessing Africa's real potential for agriculture.

You can read the full articles at: home3/actafrica/public_html/file/0198_20151124_call_for_a_brown_revolution_in_africa_by_philanthr.pdf

First International Conference Afro-Mediterranean Soils: Constraints and Potentialities for durable management- Marrakech- Morocco

The first International Conference on Afro- Mediterranean soils was held on December 18th and 19th 2015 at the Palmeraie Golf palace hotel in Marrakech- Morocco. The two day conference was organized by the National Agricultural Research Institute (INERA) of Morocco and the OCP Foundation of Morocco in partnership with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). The conference had six sessions aimed at highlighting the role of soils in minimizing the adverse effects of climate change, the need and strategies for the prudent management of soils.



Dr J. Mureithi (second left) in a panel discussion

The Conference was kicked off with a video address by Prof. Rattan Lal which was a befitting start to the conference.

The African Conservation Tillage Network was represented by Dr. Joseph Mureithi (ACT Board Director) who was among the twelve international

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First International Conference Afro-Mediterranean Soils

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key note speakers. He presented a key note paper titled '*Enhancing Access to Conservation Agriculture Knowledge & Information: Experiences of the ACT-Network*'. Other Key note speakers included Prof. Rattan Lal of Ohio State University, Dr. Jose Luis Rubio the vice Chair of the European Soil Bureau Network, Dr. Rainer Baritz, Soil Information Expert FAO, Rome, and Prof. Mamadou Traore of Polytechnic University of Bobo Dioulasso.

The conference itemized the crucial roles of soils in social, environmental and economical as well as food security challenges for the future wellbeing of African societies; while highlighting the urgent need to deepen south-south cooperation and enrich the exchange and sharing of technologies, resources, experiences and knowledge. The debate and discussions in the workshops helped the participants to get knowledge on the important traits to soils, crops, pastures and forestry including global

warming. Several management systems were addressed and science-based options were discussed in order to regenerate soil fertility and revitalize the environment.

More details about the conference can be accessed at <http://www.soilsagricconf2015.com> or http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=331#.Vq8_mFLeNJ8

Conservation Agriculture Regional Working Group (CARWG) for SADC Region Annual Meeting

The 2015 Conservation Agriculture Regional Working Group (CARWG) annual meeting took place in Pretoria, South Africa from 1 - 2 December, 2015 with the theme "Conservation Agriculture as a climate smart risk reduction approach in Southern Africa." The workshop conducted the usual CARWG business of sharing CA knowledge, experiences as well as sharing country work plans for 2016. It also facilitated the interaction of NCATFs and DRR focal points in order to increase the sharing of knowledge, experiences and contribute to the improvement of linkages between the two service structures at country and regional level. In this regard, CARWG invited DRR focal points in Southern African countries to be guests to a shared platform meeting. The event was attended by 43 participants from 12 countries, the majority from SADC.

The CARWG, established in 2007 is a voluntary platform that brings together practitioners and stakeholders operating at the regional level to share knowledge and experiences on CA. It aims to create a common understanding among stakeholders of the CA concept and practices. CARWG membership is drawn from representatives of National CA Taskforces (NCATF), farmers unions, academic, research institutions, private sector as well as NGOs and development agencies. At country level the ideals and vision of the CARWG is anchored and mirrored in the NCATF, whose structure may vary from country to country to reflect contextual needs. The event was financially supported by CCARDESA, USAID/OFDA and the FAO

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Reversing Land and Soil Degradation: Lest you forget...

From the 'Bonn challenge' of 2011 and the Rio+20 outcome document "The future we want" to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, land degradation is now being recognized as a global concern that needs decisive action. And indeed, the scale of the problem is very much global in nature: 20 to 25 % of all land worldwide is already degraded, and billions of tons of soil is lost to erosion every year (Global Soil Week).

At the same time, the demands placed on the remaining land are already high and increasing: 90 % of the food we produce stems from soils. Food production will have to dramatically increase between now and 2050 to feed a growing world population. And lest we forget, soils are also needed for carbon storage and other ecosystem services to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

To achieve global and national targets for degradation neutrality, soil protection and rehabilitation techniques need to be implemented locally by those who manage the land. Where agricultural land is concerned, 72 % of the 460 million farms across the globe are smaller than two hectares in area. Many of these farming households are food insecure and lack labour, capital or other resources to prevent further degradation of their land and preserve their livelihoods.

More details can be access on:

<http://globalsoilweek.org/thematic-areas/sustainable-land-management>
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/125438160?badge=0#>

Farming Forward for Climate Change: a Manifesto for Action

Global decision makers need to adopt sensible action plans for sustainable food production in a changing climate. Conservation Agriculture (CA) systems provide an appropriate response with proven technology and farmer support.

COP21 provided an opportunity to create the impetus for CA to move conventional agriculture toward more sustainable systems that are environmentally responsible. CA is practiced on about 160 million hectares around the world. It can spread much further with the help of networked farmer organizations willing to integrate their expertise and pragmatic experiences across nations.

Q. Is there a better way forward?

Farmers need to be convinced with credible information and prefer to be engaged with other farmers to learn how to successfully adopt new farm practices. Farmers perceive other farmers' experiences and learnings with credibility, often beyond that of researchers and academics. Farmers are willing to share but need to be enabled to help other farmers.

For More: <http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=327#.Vq9PtILeNJ8>

Mobile applications for weather and climate information: their use and potential for smallholder farmers



Mobile phones are increasingly being used to provide smallholder farmers with agricultural and related information. There is currently great interest in their scope to communicate climate and weather information. Farmers consistently identify demand for weather information and whilst ICTs may be one way of delivering this at scale there are concerns that this

should not be seen as a panacea. At a time when there have been a range of initiatives and projects that have been implemented, a study has been made and the findings seek to draw lessons and identify key considerations to inform the development of future mobile applications to provide climate services to smallholder farmers.

The study identified areas of considerable potential which include: the use of increasingly available mobile data connections to ensure locally relevant content (both historical climate information and forecasts) is available to farmers in timely fashion; development of participatory decision making tools to enable farmers to interpret information for their own contexts and consider implications and management options; use of visual applications and participatory video on mobile devices to enhance learning and advisory services for farmers; the potential for increased feedback between farmers and service providers as well as increased knowledge sharing between farmers provided by the use of social media.

For More: http://act-africa.org/news.php?com=68&com2=6&item=328#_Vq8_wFLeNJ8 or <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/69496>

Ecosystem-based farming comes of age: FAO urges broader adoption of it's Save and Grow paradigm for sustainable agriculture



A new FAO book takes a closer look at how the world's major cereals maize, rice and wheat - which together account for an estimated 42.5 percent of human calories and 37 percent of our protein - can be grown in ways that respect and even leverage natural ecosystems. Drawing on case studies from around the planet, the new book illustrates

how the "Save and Grow" approach to agriculture advocated by FAO is already being successfully employed to produce staple grains, pointing the way to a more sustainable future for farming and offering practical guidance on how the world can pursue its new sustainable development agenda.

"International commitments to eradicate poverty and tackle climate change require a paradigm shift towards a more sustainable and inclusive agriculture able to produce higher yields over the longer term," said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva.

The two recent landmark global agreements, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - which require eradicating hunger and putting terrestrial ecosystems on a sound footing by 2030 - and the Paris Climate Change Agreement (COP21), only underscore the need for inclusive innovation in food systems, he adds.

"The time has now come for ideas that have proven themselves in farmers' fields to be upscaled in more ambitious national programmes" says the FAO Director in the foreword to *Save and Grow in Practice: A Guide to Sustainable Cereal Production*, a book he described as "a contribution to creating the world we want."

For More: <http://bit.ly/1mw2wNk> or <http://bit.ly/1n8hxFV>



Different declarations on Conservation Agriculture made in different regions: Get updated and evaluate

- The 2014 Declaration of the First Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture (<http://bit.ly/1Sl1qSP>),
- The 2009 New Delhi Declaration on Conservation Agriculture (<http://bit.ly/1TW6qN2>),
- The 2003 Declaration of the 2nd World Congress on Conservation Agriculture, Iguassu Falls, Paraná State, Brazil. August 11-15th 2003. (<http://bit.ly/1Whi5oz>)
- The 2001 First World Congress on Conservation Agriculture (<http://bit.ly/20rWnzi>)

Upcoming Events

International Conference on Conservation Agriculture and Sustainable Land Use

The conference organized by Geographical Institute, Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences will take place at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, 31 May – 2 June 2016.

The conference main topics include: Soil science and geomorphology in Conservation Agricultural Systems; Agroecological research in Conservation Agricultural Systems; Yields and economy; Climate change and Conservation Agricultural Systems; Conservation Agricultural Systems and carbon cycle; and Land use and land cover change in the context of sustainable development.

For more information on the event, follow the link: <http://caslu2016.mtafi.hu/venue.html>

Symposium on Climate Change Adaptation in Africa 2016 “Fostering African Resilience and Capacity to Adapt”

Venue and dates: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 21st-23rd February 2016

The “**Symposium on Climate Change Adaptation in Africa**” will focus on “fostering African resilience and capacity to adapt”, showcase experiences from research, field projects and best practice in climate change adaptation in African countries, which may be useful or implemented in other countries in the continent

For more: <http://www.haw-hamburg.de/en/ftz-als/veranstaltungen/africa2016.html>

FACASI Review and Planning Meeting

The ‘Farm Mechanization and Conservation Agriculture for Sustainable intensification’ (FACASI) will be holding its annual meeting to review its third year of implementation and to plan for the following year from the 17th to 20th February 2016, at Arusha Tanzania.

For more information on the project: <http://facasi.act-africa.org/index.php?com=1>

The Event: <http://facasi.act-africa.org/events.php?com=6&item=95#.Vq9SBVLeNJ8>

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