



# Updates & News Alert

January/February  
2020**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

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## New Year 2020 Message from ACT Executive Director

Dear Valuable Colleagues,

The year 2019 had its challenges and excitements for ACT. The vision to empower hundreds of mechanized Conservation Agriculture service providers in the region was still not quite done. But towards the end of last year, ACT, FAO, the Government of Uganda and Partners concluded a highly successful regional sustainable agriculture mechanization hire services provision workshop in Kampala Uganda, which set the stage to realization of the targets, and beyond. ACT continued to build new and stronger partnerships with UN Agencies, International NGOs, National Governments, Farmer Organizations and the Private Sector. Our goal remains, to innovate new and more efficient frontiers for serving farmers and other stakeholders while contributing to global and regional alliances to unlock policy and investments support for Conservation Agriculture (CA) and Sustainable Agriculture Mechanization (SAM) in Africa.

ACT is also prioritising SAM in its re-engineered strategy for promoting Conservation Agriculture in Africa, since it plays an important role in the food value chain development. The CA stakeholders who attended the Second Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture (2ACCA), <https://africacacongress.org/>, in October 2018 highlighted and recognised via the Action Statement <https://tinyurl.com/vhz2o7b> that SAM is an important enabler in accelerating widespread adoption of CA, and attainment of the Malabo Declarations' Vision 25 x 25 and the Agenda 2063. It urged ACT to advance appropriate African focused mechanisms and thrives that will largely deliver suitable SAM and support the propagation of self-sustaining development of the agricultural mechanization in Africa.

Thank you all for your patronage in 2019. We are looking forward to new opportunities in 2020, to work together again to develop new research, better methods and wealth creating innovations.

With genuine appreciation,

**Eng. Saidi Mkomwa**

## Editor's View: Introducing the January – February 2020 CA News Alert



In attainment of the Zero Hunger by 2025 vision, as stated in the African Union Malabo Declaration of 2014, Goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Prosperous Africa We Want (as spelt out in Agenda 2063), we recognise and re-affirm the Action Statement of the 2ACCA participants, that CA is critical in achieving sustainable development and therefore would play a critical role in the efforts to bring agriculture to the fore in the pursuit for job and wealth creation, and entrepreneurship opportunities for many of the continent's populations including those in rural areas and in the development of sustainable food systems. We also appreciate that CA has an immense contribution in halting land degradation, mitigating the negative

effects of climate change, improving biodiversity and cushioning vulnerability of people in the advent of climate change.

Conservation Agriculture, a farming strategy based on three principles of minimum mechanical soil disturbance (e.g. by no-till direct seeding), permanent vegetative soil cover and crop biodiversity (rotations/associations) is seen as the alternative to tillage, with multiple benefits including productivity and sustainability. The first two core principles of CA call for specialized machinery for seeding on unploughed fields with residues, and for management of cover crops or crop residues and for weed management. Direct seeding and management of soil cover are also the most difficult to implement without access to appropriate farm machinery and, in

essence, are the weakest links in the CA adoption chain. With two of the three principles of CA being about mechanization and use of specialized machinery, the role of mechanization in facilitating the massive adoption of CA by millions of smallholder farmers in Africa requires a closer look.

Recognising that Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (SAM) is an important enabler in accelerating widespread practicing of CA and attainment of the Malabo Declarations' Vision 25 x 25 and the Agenda 2063, ACT has embarked on advancing appropriate African focused mechanisms and thrives to deliver suitable SAM and support the propagation of self-

sustaining development of the agricultural mechanization in Africa. The initial initiatives focus on sustainable agricultural mechanisation equipment hire services' provision and are being implemented in partnership with FAO, African Union, NORAD and National Governments in Eastern Africa. We are appealing to the private sector and community based organizations to come on board with innovative partnerships and seize the business opportunities.

ACT being a continental leader in promotion of Conservation Agriculture and Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization, has its current focus in the niche pillars and intervention areas in the table below.

ACT acknowledges the various sources, authors, reporters, organizations and practitioners whose articles appear in this January – February 2020 issue. We encourage you to share your CA and SAM views and articles capturing the status and extent of adaptation and adoption of these technologies in any country in Africa or beyond for sharing with others. Please submit articles, links or views to [kim@act-africa.org](mailto:kim@act-africa.org). Use the [#conservationagriculture](#), [#africamechanize](#) to share links on articles, journals, news on CA and tag us on twitter [@ACTillage](#).

Apologies for any cross posting of some articles.

The Niche Pillars		Interventions to address the niche pillars
<i>Conservation Agriculture</i>	An ecosystem approach to regenerative sustainable agriculture and land management based on three interlinked principles of: (i) continuous no or minimum mechanical soil disturbance; (ii) permanent maintenance of vegetative soil cover; and (iii) diversification of cropping systems.	<p><b>Capacity building and partnership</b></p> <p>ACT works to enhance capacity of partners at the <b>systems, organizational</b> and <b>individual</b> levels. Creation of “enabling environments” includes policies and plans, economic, regulatory and accountability frameworks within which institutions and individuals operate. At organisational level ACT focuses on the overall performance and functional capabilities as well as access to human, finances, information, technology, infrastructure and other resources for supporting CA/SAM adoption</p> <p><b>Communication, knowledge and information management</b></p> <p>ACT implements and supports investment in these areas in order to ensure CA/SAM knowledge is conveyed and contributes to adoption of CA/ SAM practices. Furthermore, ACT works with stakeholders to ensure acquisition, processing, storing, organizing and disseminating information on CA/SAM benefits stakeholders</p> <p><b>Entrepreneurship and business development</b></p> <p>One of the hold ups for adoption of CA is inadequate access to CA support inputs, equipment and services. Smallholder farmers largely do not own CA tools, equipment, draught animals and machinery for different farm operations. ACT has been supporting capacity building of farmers and their organisation in entrepreneurial and business development that helps them to realize and invest in mechanized CA/SAM equipment hire-services provision as a business.</p>
<i>Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization</i>	Sustainable agricultural mechanization (SAM) covers all levels of farming and processing technologies, from simple and basic hand tools to more sophisticated and motorized equipment. It eases and reduces hard labour, relieves labour shortages, improves productivity and timeliness of agricultural operations, improves the efficient use of resources, enhances market access and contributes to mitigating climate related hazards. SAM considers technological, economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects when contributing to the sustainable development of the food and agricultural sector.	
<i>Ecosystem Management</i>	Is a process that aims to conserve major ecological services and restore natural resources while meeting the socioeconomic, political, and cultural needs of current and future generations	

# Presentation of Conservation Agriculture to the Tanzanian Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Livestock and Water

A special committee of the Dodoma July 2019 National Stakeholders' Workshop, was invited and held a seminar on Conservation Agriculture to the Tanzanian Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Livestock & Water on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2020. The goal was to create awareness to the Honourable Members of Parliament on the opportunities presented to them, farmers and Tanzanians by adopting CA en masse; and subsequently seek for their ownership and endorsement of the CA Roadmap for Tanzania being developed.

By 2050, Tanzania must more than double food production to feed its population that is expected to increase by some 156%, from 53 to 137 million, within the same period. Poor, smallholder farmers in Tanzania are facing a risk of double exposure from food insecurity and dis-proportionate vulnerability to the effects of climate change. However, some 98% of the current crop production in Tanzania is managed under the conventional tillage agriculture systems, which is known to degrade the agricultural land resources and the environment, is inefficient in terms of resource use and the delivery of ecosystem services and contributes to global warming. CA has been proven to increase farmer resilience and is increasingly spreading in Tanzania with the view to address the ever-increasing food insecurity, unsustainable farming and climate change challenges.

The Ministry of Agriculture, ACT, CFU-Tanzania, CFGB and partners held between 3rd to 5th July 2019



**Committee Chairman Hon. Mahmoud Mgimwa (right) and Committee Member Hon. Dr. Mary Nagu (left)**

a National CA workshop in Dodoma Tanzania. They brought together key CA stakeholders within and outside the country to interact, synthesize and share CA developments and develop a Roadmap for Broadening Impacts and Integration in the Industrialization Agenda of the Country. The workshop generated a wealth of information on the short- and medium-term interventions to be undertaken by Tanzania in the endeavour to revolutionize the smallholder farmer to produce more profitability in sustainable way without robbing our children of their future. During the workshop, a Special Committee was formed to develop a roadmap for the creation of an enabling environment for massive adoption of CA.

The Special Team which met the Parliamentary Committee was composed of experts from ACT,

Conservation Farming Unit, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), University of Dar es Salaam, St John's University Dodoma, Tanzania Agricultural Research Institution (TARI), the Mechanization Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Council of Tanzania, and the Private Sector.

The Parliamentary Committee members under the Chairmanship of Mahmoud Mgimwa, positively interacted with the Special Committee, generating many questions, answers and expressed needs and eventually committed to advise the government to review laws and policies to pave the way for conservation agriculture as a means of enhancing farm productivity and food security.



Get the PowerPoint presentation in the link [PPT PresentationTZ](#) and Media Coverage of the event at <https://bit.ly/2VHTSB8>

# Announcement! Conservation Agriculture - Massive Open Online Course (CA-MOOC) – Coming Soon



ACT with partners have developed a freely available Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Conservation Agriculture. The course available on-line and entitled Climate-Smart agriculture through Conservation Agriculture, should be of interest to anyone active in sustainable agriculture. The course has been developed by a team of experts, spanning from the ACT professional members, ICAAP Africa <https://icaap.act-africa.org/>, and the CA Centres of

Excellence all sharing their perspectives on this topic. Our course is for anyone looking for an accessible introduction Conservation Agriculture principles and practices. The course will last for 8 weeks and might be a possibility to get an insight into this special topic. You'll need about 8 hours per week, this includes reading the information and doing the 'homework'.

Although the topics are unusual, no prior knowledge is assumed. The content of

the course is spread over eight different modules.

Learn online and earn a certificate as powerful proof of your new competencies and use it to differentiate yourself in the job market and as a practitioner of CA. If you would like to participate in the MOOC, please register at [ACT-CA-MOOC](#) (this link will be activated soon) with your e-mail. The MOOC will start on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2020. Make sure you register before April 6<sup>th</sup> 2020.

## *Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Conservation Agriculture modules*

**Module 1.** Introduction to CA

**Module 2.** Cover crops and crop rotation

**Module 3.** Soil and water management in CA systems

**Module 4.** Weeds, pests and diseases

**Module 5.** Mechanization in CA

**Module 6.** Crop-livestock integration

**Module 7.** Hire services

**Module 8.** Converting to Conservation Agriculture



## Regional Mechanisation Workshop with special focus on Hire Services held in Kampala



**Regional workshop participants**

On December 10th - 12th, 2019, Country representatives, Heads of Agricultural Mechanization Departments and private sector players from Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zambia, Ghana, and Uganda convened in Kampala for a regional Workshop opened by Hon. Joy Kabatsi the State Minister for Animal Industry.

The Regional Workshop was convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) and the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries to allow

the countries to share experiences in the field of Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization hire services provision business models and case studies.

The regional workshop is part of the actions undertaken by the FAO and ACT following their recently signed Memorandum of Understanding to work together in the implementation of the Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (SAMA) Framework.

This is part of the operationalization phase of the SAMA framework is intended to contribute to agricultural transformation through mechanization supported by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the view

agricultural mechanization in Africa as an urgent matter and an indispensable pillar for attaining the Zero Hunger vision by 2025, as stated in the Malabo Declaration of 2014, Goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and Prosperous Africa We Want, as indicated in Agenda 2063.

As highlighted by Hon. Kabatsi, Africa must strive to feed its population and support the development of the region through a competitive agricultural sector, given the high population growth rate of 2.7 % and a regional population expected to reach 1.4 billion by 2025. "Africa's Agriculture should mechanize to address the key bottlenecks to our production targets by promoting investments in increasing mechanized farm operations in a sustainable manner, using mechanization to reduce the high post-harvest losses currently estimated at 30% and increase the use of mechanization in adding value to agricultural produce particularly the building of agro-processing capacity," Hon. Kabatsi said in her remarks. [Read More](#)

The workshop's presentations are available on the link: [Regional workshop presentations](#)



**Hon. Joy Kabatsi the State Minister for Animal Industry opening the regional workshop in Kampala.**

# Farmers are increasingly adopting Conservation Agriculture practices

Farmers are increasingly adopting Conservation Agriculture practices. This sustainable farming method is based on three principles: crop diversification, minimal soil movement and permanent soil cover. If not practiced sustainably, agriculture can have a toll on the environment, produce greenhouse gases and contribute to climate change. However, sustainable farming methods can do the opposite — increase resilience to climate change, protect biodiversity and sustainably use natural resources. One of these methods is Conservation Agriculture (CA). CA conserves natural resources, biodiversity

and labour. It increases available soil water, reduces heat and drought stress, and builds up soil health in the longer term.

CA is based on the interrelated principles of minimal mechanical soil disturbance, permanent organic soil cover with living or dead plant material, and crop diversification through rotation or intercropping. It helps farmers to maintain and boost yields and increase profits, while reversing land degradation, protecting the environment and responding to growing challenges of climate change.

To reduce soil disturbance, farmers practice zero-tillage farming, which allows direct planting without plowing or preparing the soil. The farmer seeds directly through surface residues of the previous crop.

Zero tillage is combined with intercropping and crop rotation, which means either growing two or more crops at the same time on the same piece of land, or growing two different crops on the same land in a sequential manner. These are also core principles of sustainable intensification. [Read More](#)

## What is Conservation Agriculture?

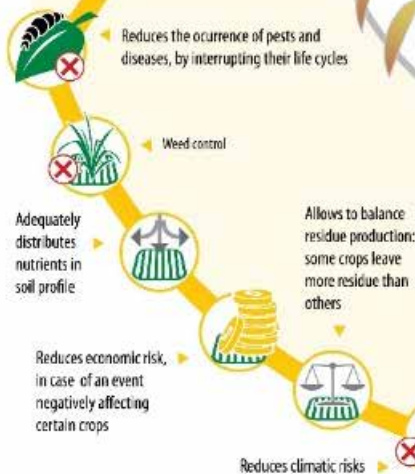
Sustainable farming system based on 3 principles

### What is crop diversification?

Intercropping is growing two or more crops at the same time on the same piece of land. Crop rotation is growing two different crops on the same land in a sequential manner.

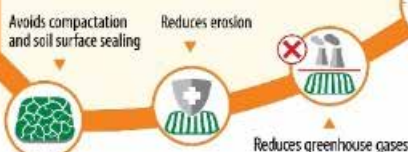
### Crop diversification

Benefits of crop rotation or intercropping



### Minimal soil movement

Benefits of reduced tillage

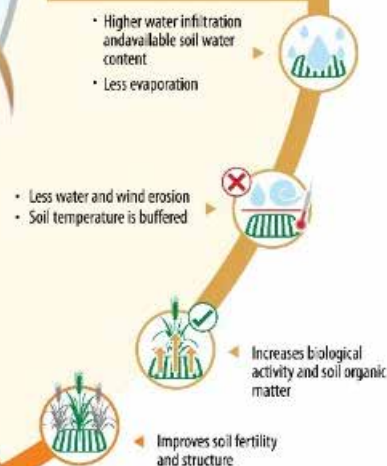


### What is crop residue?

Crop residue or stubble is the accumulation of dried up plant parts left on the field, including cover crops or green manure.

### Soil coverage with residue of the previous crop, cover crop, or both

Benefits of soil cover



**CIMMYT**

## Leasing scheme helps farmers purchase small-scale agricultural machinery

A new small-scale agricultural machinery leasing scheme became operational in Amhara region, Ethiopia, in December 2019. The initiative offers farmers and group of farmers the opportunity to buy agricultural machineries with only 15-20% advance payment and the rest to be paid during a three-year period.

This initiative, led by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the German Development Agency (GIZ), is one more step to expand small-scale agricultural mechanization in Ethiopia. CIMMYT and GIZ have explored this area of work since 2015, in collaboration with government and private partners.

Subsistence modes of production, shortage of quality agricultural inputs and farm machinery services are some of the impediments to expand agricultural productivity and enhance food security in Ethiopia.

Small-scale agricultural mechanization, in the Ethiopian context, improves the quality of field operations. For example,



farmers are benefiting from row planting, optimal plant population, more precise seed and fertilizer placement, efficient utilization of soil moisture during planting window. The timing of operations is also very important — delays in planting could have a serious negative impact

on yield, and harvesting and threshing must be done at a time when there are no labour shortages. Small-scale mechanization drastically saves time and labour compared to conventional crop establishment systems, and reduces yield loss at the time of harvesting and threshing. [Read More](#)

## Soil health is crucial for agricultural sector's growth potential in Ghana

Inappropriate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides by farmers has been identified as one of the main causes of land degradation and contamination of the environment. This has vindicated the long-held position of the B&FT and other environmental advocates about the need to promote organic farming since it is in vogue, particularly for an increasingly health-conscious global population, and brings premium prices.

Conservative estimates have it that 69% of Ghana's total land surface is prone to severe or very severe soil erosion - the main manifestation of land degradation in the country, declining soil fertility is a result of inappropriate land management practices is increasingly affecting

soil resources and conditions in the country, thus undermining the agricultural sector's growth potential.

Although the agricultural sector's share of the GDP has reduced from over 50% to 21% as of 2018, the sector remains an important one-employing over 50% of the country's working population. Therefore, in order to maintain and increase crop production, it is important to adopt practices which prevent or minimise soil and land degradation. Realising the threat of land degradation to the country's food security, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) devoted Objective Four of its policy document 'Food and Agriculture Sector Development Programme (FASDEP II) to

sustainable management of land and the environment.

Currently, the United Nations FAO in collaboration with MOFA is implementing a Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) on Conservation Agriculture and integrated pest management, with the objective of contributing to sustained increased productivity and improving environmental management aimed at attaining zero-hunger and resilient rural livelihoods in at least 12 selected districts. Additionally, one of the sub-components of the Ghana Agricultural Sector Investment Programme (GASIP) is dedicated to mainstreaming climate change resilience and Conservation Agriculture practices into small holder agriculture in Ghana. [Read More](#)



## Africa Should Set its Sights on Feeding the World

With the world population expected to swell by 2 billion people over the next three decades, Africa has an opportunity to step up and become a major global food production hub. For the time being, Africa remains a net importer of food, despite its vast tracts of underutilized land and other enviable natural

resources. Its reliance on food imports weighs on the continent's current account and spells a missed economic opportunity.

But with the right policies, technologies and infrastructure in place, Africa certainly has the potential to first meet its own food requirements, and then

exceed them. The economic opportunity is immense. The agricultural sector is possibly the continent's biggest growth lever, and the potential for much-needed job creation is sizeable – particularly when considering that Africa is estimated to hold about 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land. And of the land that is cultivated, yields remain extremely low and irrigation techniques outdated.

The adoption of modern and innovative farming practices could spur a step change in the output of existing and new farmlands. The Netherlands, a country that is roughly 3.4% the size of South Africa by land area, provides a good example – being the world's second largest exporter of food by value, despite its size, thanks to high yields. Brazil, meanwhile, shows that it is possible for an emerging market to shift from a net importer of food to a net exporter. The South American country did so through trade liberalization and investments in agricultural research, among other initiatives.

Much progress has been made in recent decades, but Africa is still only scratching the surface of its potential in the agribusiness game. To shift the industry onto a new trajectory, a combined effort between policymakers, financial services firms and the industry itself will be needed. [Read More](#)

### CEMA calls on the new European Commission and on the EU Member States to mainstream Sustainable Agriculture Mechanization in Africa

**Brussels, 13th December 2019** – CEMA, the European Agricultural Machinery Industry Association, **calls on the new European Commission and on the EU Member States to mainstream Sustainable Agriculture Mechanization in Africa** as a key enabler in the new Comprehensive Strategy for Africa announced by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

The European Commission has declared its willingness to build partnerships between Europe and Africa in the areas of food security, climate action, sustainable management of resources, rural job creation, sustainable investment and fair trade. It builds on the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs as well as

on the 2019 Africa-Europe alliance political declaration for a stronger partnership in agriculture, food and farming.

By far, the EU is Africa's first partner in trade, in foreign investment and in development. Member States of the European Union collectively represent the largest global providers of Official Development Assistance (ODA), even if the effort remains fragmented at National EU Member State level. However, agronomic yields and agricultural mechanization in Africa remain low compared with other regions of the world, and food security concerns are exacerbated by the growing population and ever-increasing urbanization [Read More](#)

You can read the full position paper by CEMA [here](#).



## KALRO, County government and CGA initiate uptake of technology and mechanization in agriculture

The Nakuru County Government is partnering with the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) and the Cereal Growers Association (CGA) to increase the uptake of new agricultural technologies by small scale farmers to avoid losses as a result of climate change and address food insecurity. The collaboration also aims to give more attention to research and knowledge sharing on how to incorporate technology in farming and variety of crops to invest in. It will further emphasize adoption of mechanized farming, innovation in areas like use of drought resistant varieties of seeds, environment friendly farming practices and better post-harvest management to reduce losses.

The County Executive Committee Member for Agriculture, Dr. Immaculate Nthunje Maina said the devolved unit had set up structures aimed at preparing and empowering farmers to adapt to climate

change through a project known as Climate Smart Agriculture.

"Kenya currently imports 30 percent of its food products, mainly staples, and it is predicted that by the year 2050, this figure will have peaked to 85 percent. By this time our population is projected to be 95 million. The implications are grim and in the face of climate change, they are likely to be worse," noted the CEC. Speaking during the Nakuru Farmers Open Day, held at KALRO Njoro grounds whose theme was "Innovative technologies for enhanced agricultural productivity" Dr. Maina stated that digitalizing the devolved unit's agriculture was one of the priority areas of the partnership. This she said would help ease agricultural processes, boost electronic commerce and provide open data for future farm use.

"When farmers embrace numerous mobile apps available they acquire genuine

information on proper and certified planting materials. We want smallholder growers to appreciate that the apps also help farmers identify and prevent crop pests and diseases that affect crops, and know the time for planting seeds," she observed. [Read More](#)

### CA Documentaries



The Three Principles of Conservation Agriculture Explained at the Example of Maize Farming in Northern Ghana. A comprehensive explanation of the concept behind Conservation Agriculture and how it is put into practice. [Watch the documentary here](#)

## Events and Opportunities

### Conservation Agriculture Stakeholders' Workshop, February 27-29, 2020, Hawassa Ethiopia

The Sustainable Land Management Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the Norway Embassy in Ethiopia are organizing a three days Conservation Agriculture Stakeholders Workshop being held at Lewi Resort, Hawassa.

The experiences sharing event, attended by farmers, extension workers, researchers, private sector, policy makers and development partners, will share learnings from previous research studies by Norwegian University of Life Sciences, a one-day field visit to CA practicing farmers' fields and a synthesis of research findings elsewhere. The expected workshop outputs include recommendations and a next action plan for CA upscaling.

For more information contact: **Habtamu Hailu**, National Program Coordinator, Sustainable Land Management Program, Ministry of Agriculture; [habtamuhailu@yahoo.com](mailto:habtamuhailu@yahoo.com) or [habtamuhailu910@gmail.com](mailto:habtamuhailu910@gmail.com)

### Regional Conservation Agriculture Working Group (CARWG) planning meeting: March 24 - 26, 2020; Johannesburg, South Africa

The CARWG will hold its annual planning meeting from March 24 to 26, 2020 in Johannesburg, South Africa. During this meeting, an inception for the CARWG support project will be held to review and validate planned project outputs and operational modalities. CA National focal points should come to the meeting with prepared workplans and budgets and also fill in a questionnaire. The meeting will in addition discuss opportunities for a longer term CA investment programme to ensure sustain farmer adoption.

Find out more on this link <https://tinyurl.com/v89qwx4>

### The 8th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture (8WCCA), 29 June to 2 July 2020- Switzerland

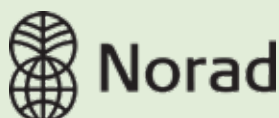


The 8th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture (8WCCA) is jointly organized by the European Conservation Agriculture Federation (ECAAF), and its member in Switzerland, Swiss No-till (SNT), with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT). It will be held in Bern, Switzerland, from 29 June to 2 July 2020.

The theme of the Congress is: **The Future of Farming: Profitable and Sustainable Farming with Conservation Agriculture**

Find out more on this link [8WCCA](#)

For more information, please contact: **Executive Secretary | African Conservation Tillage Network**  
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