

CALL FOR PAPERS:

REGIONAL CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE SYMPOSIUM

Johannesburg South Africa, 8-9 February 2011



THEME: The Science and Practice of Conservation Agriculture in Southern Africa

Southern Africa is home to some of the most food insecure communities in the world. Agricultural productivity in the region remains low, with average staple food crop yields lagging behind global levels. The use of inappropriate land management practices has led to soil degradation and desertification. This, together with underlying poverty and high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and malaria, prevent households from achieving optimal production. Droughts and/or prolonged dry spells often worsen the situation resulting in severe crop damage or complete crop failures. In a region where the majority of livelihoods are anchored on agriculture, it is clear that urgent measures must be taken to boost productivity and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and variability.

Conservation Agriculture

Conservation Agriculture has been and continues to be tested and promoted as a promising solution to the problem of low agricultural productivity in southern Africa. Conservation Agriculture is a farming concept centered on three basic principles: i) Minimizing soil disturbance, ii) Maintaining a permanent soil cover iii) Practicing crop rotations. When combined with other good agronomic practices such as timely planting and effective weed, pest and disease management, Conservation Agriculture has shown to sustainably increase crop yields and to help mitigate the impacts of droughts. However, uptake of the technology by farmers in Southern Africa remains

low due to policy, technical, social and environmental constraints, for which solutions are urgently needed.

Symposium Objectives

Results from the considerable research and development work on Conservation Agriculture, conducted in southern Africa during the last 20 years has not been widely shared. In response, the Southern Africa Conservation Agriculture Regional Working Group (CARWG) at its last annual meeting in September 2009 identified the need to bring together practitioners to share and debate existing knowledge, and explore ways to strengthen information and evidence generation.

CARWG with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), The African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) and the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is hosting a regional symposium on Conservation Agriculture in Johannesburg South Africa, 8-9 February 2011. The symposium has the following objectives:

1. To share and document information on the biophysical, social and economic impacts of Conservation Agriculture technologies in the region;
2. To share and document experiences on Conservation Agriculture scale up approaches and impacts; and
3. To identify key areas for research and development and explore institutional and policy innovations for Conservation Agriculture scale up.

Symposium Themes

Keynote addresses, poster and theatre presentations and panel discussions will be used to facilitate dialogue along three major themes on issues that impact the development and scale up of Conservation Agriculture in southern Africa.

Theme 1: Conservation Agriculture and Management

- *Global guidelines and instruments for Conserving Agriculture*
- *Performance of technologies in Conservation Agriculture in Southern Africa*
- *Conservation Agriculture options/techniques and their suitability for different environments*
- *Impacts of Conservation Agriculture technologies on soil health*
- *Crop residues and cover crops in Conservation Agriculture systems: what are the trade-offs to maintaining a permanent soil cover?*
- *Diversifying cropping in Conservation Agriculture systems: mixing and rotating crops –what are the drivers for and challenges of crop rotations under Conservation Agriculture systems?*
- *Conservation Agriculture and Ecosystems services*
- *Weed, pest and disease management under Conservation Agriculture systems*
- *Integrating Conservation Agriculture and agroforestry*

Theme 2: Conservation Agriculture and its Impacts on Rural Livelihoods

- *Conservation Agriculture and socio-economic development in Southern Africa Socio-economic and environmental considerations and impacts of Conservation Agriculture*

- *Conservation Agriculture risks analysis: where and when is Conservation Agriculture a relevant option?*
- *Drivers and approaches for scaling up Conservation Agriculture in southern Africa – the biophysical, environmental, social and economic environments*
- *Experiences for scaling up the impacts of Conservation Agriculture in southern Africa – decisions on promotion, dissemination extension approaches and methods to apply, impacts, challenges*
- *Crop-livestock interactions under Conservation Agriculture systems*
- *Putting farmers' needs first: tailoring the Conservation Agriculture packages*

Theme 3: Institutional Arrangements, Policy and Market Innovations for Conservation Agriculture in Southern Africa

- *Analysis of the policy environment as it affects Conservation Agriculture and recommendations for improved policy support*
- *Networking/partnerships, mechanisms and coordination approaches in Conservation Agriculture*

- *Availing appropriate tools and equipment for Conservation Agriculture farmers –a realistic strategy for southern Africa*
- *Conservation Agriculture and policy in Southern Africa*
- *Conservation Agriculture coordination approaches, mechanisms and partnerships/networking*
- *The role of national, regional, intergovernmental and development actors and the private sector in supporting Conservation Agriculture*
- *Input and output markets for Conservation Agriculture farmers*

Who Should Participate?

Professionals working in the fields of Conservation Agriculture research, extension, training, markets and policy in southern Africa. Keynote speakers will be invited from Eastern and Southern Africa, South America and Europe.

Contact Details

If you are interested in submitting a paper or in participating, send an email for details on the submission process to casymposium2011@fao.org. Alternatively, contact the organizers on +27 11 517 1808 or fax +27 11 517 1549. Selected papers will be published as symposium proceedings that will be widely distributed in print and electronic formats.

Key Dates and Deadlines

Abstract submission-**5 November 2010**

Notification on decisions –**19 November 2010**

Submission of full papers oral and poster -**21 January 2011**

Symposium- **8-9 February 2010**

Sponsorship

A limited number of sponsorships is available for Conservation Agriculture research and development practitioners working in southern Africa whose papers are accepted for presentation at the symposium.

