

Alert No. 11 (9 July 2010)

1. **5th World Congress of Conservation Agriculture incorporating 3rd Farming Systems Design Conference, 26-29th September 2011 Brisbane Australia.**

The WCCA website is now online at <http://www.wcca2011.org/> . Australia, host for the 5th WCCA and 3rd FSD, welcomes scientists and practitioners to Brisbane to discuss current and future developments of sustainable agriculture next year.

The co-location of WCCA and FSD provides a great opportunity to explore the application of conservation agriculture practices and principles in a systems context. The common objective is the design of more productive, economic, and sustainable farming systems to meet the challenges of expanding population, global change, and environmental degradation.

Conference program options and tours will cater for different interest groups, and take advantage of Brisbane's proximity to intensive, extensive and sub-tropical farming, as well as to world leading research groups and facilities.

2. **“European Congress on Conservation Agriculture: Towards agro-environmental, climate and energetic sustainability”, to be held in Madrid 4th-7th October 2010**

The Spanish Conservation Agriculture Association / Living Soils (AEAC/SV), jointly with the European Conservation Agriculture Federation (ECAAF) and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) are organizing the **"European Congress on Conservation Agriculture: Towards agro-environmental, climate and energetic sustainability", to be held in Madrid 4th-7th October 2010.**

This European Congress offers a quality leap forward on issues under a holistic view within the field of Conservation Agriculture. This event will comprise presentations communications and experiences delivering the latest results achieved, not only in the traditional Conservation Agriculture areas of research, but also in those that have been opened in response to current problems facing the environment, including **climate change, energy saving and profitability**, and the search for models of **sustainability** in European agro-ecosystems.

Development agencies and donors, policy makers and administrators, environmentalists, farmers, agricultural scientists and advisors, and the agricultural industry are welcome to attend this event. The Congress has attracted among its keynote speakers and delegates, authorities and leading scientists on **conservation agriculture, soil management, agronomy, crop protection and global environmental issues.**

Additional details about this European Congress can be found in the flyer enclosed and in the Website: www.eurocongressca.eu

3. Updating CA Data base in AquaStat, FAO

We are updating the CA land area data base displayed in AquaStat (www.fao.org/ag/ca), and will be contacting our regular sources of information in the next few weeks. However, anyone else who would like to provide information on the land area under CA systems at the national level would be most welcome. Ideally, we would appreciate receiving the CA area information at the sub-national level, together with any relevant historical information on adoption, cropping pattern, farm size, agro-ecology, constraints, etc.

For the recording pls. adhere to the quantification of the CA definition on the FAO-CA website (<http://www.fao.org/ag/ca/6c.html>):

1. Minimum Soil Disturbance: Minimum soil disturbance refers to low disturbance no-tillage and direct seeding. The disturbed area must be less than 15 cm wide or less than 25% of the cropped area (whichever is lower). There should be no periodic tillage that disturbs a greater area than the aforementioned limits. Strip tillage is allowed if the disturbed area is less than the set limits.
2. Organic soil cover: Three categories are distinguished: 30-60%, >60-90% and >90% ground cover, measured immediately after the direct seeding operation. Area with less than 30% cover is not considered as CA.
3. Crop rotation/association: Rotation/association should involve at least 3 different crops. However, repetitive wheat or maize cropping is not an exclusion factor for the purpose of this data collection, but rotation/association is recorded where practiced.

We would further like to stress that the database counts actual land area under annual crops with CA (permanent no-till). Area under perennial crops will be recorded separately. No-till area by crop will not be recorded to avoid double recording of the same land area.

4. Articles on No-Tillage by Tom Borland in the South African Farmer's Weekly in 1980

Tom Borland published a series of articles in the Farmer's Weekly (South Africa) in 1980. Three of these articles were distributed in the CA-CoP Alert 10. Tom has kindly made all the articles available for distribution to CA-CoP subscribers.

[Borland papers 1-3](#), [Borland papers 4-6](#); [Borland papers 7](#)

5. 'Farming God's Way' By Ephraim Nsingo

GURUVE, Zimbabwe, Apr 2, 2010 (IPS) - Mbuya Erica Chirimanyemba is a marvel among women, and men! Watching her digging holes in dry ground earlier this year, her neighbours thought the old lady had gone berserk. But 60-year-old Chirimanyemba was putting an alternative farming technique into practice. And it has paid off so well her husband - who fled the district, defeated by perennial drought eight years ago - has come back home to see the wonders she is working on her farm. [Find the article here](#)

6. European Society of Agronomy Congress, 29 August to 3 September 2010, Montpellier -- <http://www.agropolis.fr/agro2010/index.html>

There will be a session chaired by Ken Giller at the forthcoming meeting of the European Society of Agronomy in September 2010 entitled: "S1.4: **Conservation agriculture: Did we fail in Africa and which research priorities for the future ?**"

There will be a keynote talk by Marc Corbeels and Pablo Tittone, and there will then be a round table discussion for half an hour. This will be a useful forum to exchange views so it is hoped that many of you will be there.

If you are able to attend the conference and would like to participate in the debate as part of a panel, please contact Ken Giller directly at: ken.giller@gmail.com.

7. Linking soil and water quality in conservation agricultural systems by Alan Franzluebbers. Electronic Journal of Integrative Biosciences 6(1):15-29. 29 December 2008

Conservation agricultural systems (i.e., conservation tillage, cover crops, and pastures) that have high surface-soil organic C are highly effective in improving surface soil properties and processes, thus reducing water runoff and soil erosion and improving water quality. Literature was reviewed to document the important linkage that surface soil organic matter has on soil and water quality. Soil organic matter is a key property that drives many important soil functions, e.g. supplying and cycling of nutrients; infiltrating, filtering, and storing water; sequestering C from the atmosphere; and decomposing organic matter and xenobiotics. Stratification of soil organic matter with depth under various conservation agricultural systems was shown to influence water runoff volume and quality in studies across small plots, fields, and water catchments. Soil organic matter stratification with depth buffers soil and water quality against "normal" perturbations in agricultural systems. Perturbations of concern still remain with excessively high nutrient applications from fertilizer and manure inputs that can cause leaching of nitrate to groundwater and runoff of dissolved P to surface water bodies. To meet the human nutritional needs of the rapidly expanding global population while sustaining our invaluable natural resources, a multidisciplinary approach is needed to develop, characterize, and implement alternative, highly productive management systems that also conserve soil and water resources for the future. [For the full paper click here.](#)

8. No-Tillage Seeding in Conservation Agriculture 2nd Edition by C. J. Baker, K. E. Saxton, W. R. Ritchie, W. C. T. Chamen, D. C. Reicosky, F. Ribeiro, S. E. Justice and P. R. Hobbs. CAB International and FAO 2007

This book is now online [as full text version](#) (on the FAO CA website under publications). The book is a much-expanded and updated edition of a previous volume, published in 1996 as "No-tillage Seeding: Science and Practice". The base objective remains to describe, in lay terms, a range of international experiments designed to examine the causes of successes and failures in no-tillage. The book summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of no tillage. It highlights the pros and cons of a range of features and options, without promoting any particular product. Topics added or covered in more detail in the second edition include: · soil carbon and how its retention or sequestration interacts with tillage and no-tillage · controlled

traffic farming as an adjunct to no-tillage · comparison of the performance of generic no-tillage opener designs · the role of banding fertilizer in no-tillage · the economics of no-tillage · small-scale equipment used by poorer farmers · forage cropping by no-tillage · a method for risk assessment of different levels of machine sophistication.

9. WOCAT – World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies

WOCAT is soliciting cases for Sustainable Land Management (SLM), and has prepared the questionnaire. CA-CoP subscribers are requested to respond to WOCAT's initiative to inventory SLM cases dealing with CA systems.

We would encourage as many CA-CoP subscribers as possible to submit as many diverse examples of CA from diverse agro-ecosystems and climatic zones.

The WOCAT questionnaire states as follows:

“SLM in the context of WOCAT is defined as the use of land resources, including soils, water, animals and plants, for the production of goods to meet changing human needs, while simultaneously ensuring the long-term productive potential of these resources and the maintenance of their environmental functions.

The ultimate goal of this exercise is to improve the effectiveness of SLM by analysing field experience. To achieve this, we need to obtain a better understanding of the reasons behind successful experience with SLM – be it introduced by projects or found in traditional systems. Within SLM WOCAT focuses mainly on efforts to prevent and reduce land degradation through conservation technologies and their implementation approaches.”

There are two sets of WOCAT documents. For both categories of documents, there is a manual describing the format, a filled in example and a template to fill in. For the QT group, there is another file with the codes for the categorization of the systems

There are QT documents related to Technologies, i.e., describing the technology and what has been done, which in the case of CA-CoP subscribers would relate to functional CA systems.

[QT manual](#)

[QT template](#)

[QT example](#)

[QT codes](#)

There are the QA documents related to the Approaches, i.e., how it has been done, which could include farmer groups, or clubs, or associations or FFS or other extension or capacity development mechanisms etc.

[QA manual](#)

[QA template](#)

[QA example](#)

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