

Alert No. 15 (4 April 2011)

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

The 5th WCCA website is 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. 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. All inquiries regarding condensed papers for 5th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture incorporating 3rd Farming System Design Conference should be emailed to infowcca5@icmsaust.com.au.

2. Southern Africa Regional Conservation Agriculture Symposium, 8-10 February 2011, Johannesburg, South Africa

This Symposium was organised under the auspices of FAO, NEPAD, FANRPAN and ACT. The Symposium Communiqué issued at the completion of the Symposium is accessible at: http://www.fao.org/ag/ca/doc/Symposium_Communique_11Feb_2011.pdf

3. Significance, progress and prospects for research in simplified cultivation technologies for rice in China by M. Huang, MD. Ibrahim, B. Xia and Y. Zou. Journal of Agricultural Science, Page 1 of 10. doi:10.1017/S0021859610001097

Summary: Simplified cultivation technologies for rice have become increasingly attractive in recent years in China because of their social, economical and environmental benefits. To date, several simplified cultivation technologies, such as conventional tillage and seedling throwing (CTST), conventional tillage and direct seeding (CTDS), no-tillage and seedling throwing (NTST), no-tillage and direct seeding (NTDS) and no-tillage and transplanting (NTTP), have been developed in China. Most studies have shown that rice grown under each of these simplified cultivation technologies can produce a grain yield equal to or higher than traditional cultivation (conventional tillage and transplanting). Studies that have described the influences of agronomic practices on yield formation of rice under simplified cultivation have demonstrated that optimizing agronomy practices would increase the efficiencies of simplified cultivation systems. Further research is needed to optimize the management strategies for CTST, CTDS and NTST rice which have developed quickly in recent years, to strengthen basic research for those simplified cultivation technologies that are rarely used at present (such as NTTP and NTDS), to select and breed cultivars suitable for simplified

cultivation and to compare the practicability and effectiveness of different simplified cultivation technologies in different rice production regions. [Click here for full paper.](#)

4. Conservation Farming, Productivity and Climate Change by Peter Agaard, Conservation Farming Unit, Zambia, January 2011

CF/CA farming systems are proven and need to be promoted as vigorously and widely as possible. What is the alternative, a future of ever increasing disaster relief, deepening poverty and knee jerk responses to crises that eventually overwhelm us all? Perhaps this prediction is too dramatic but there is one certainty. The future of small-scale agriculture in Africa will depend to a considerable extent on how 1 family husbands their soils and by extension how many millions do. This article is not written as food for thought. It is a call for action. [Click here for full paper.](#)

5. No-till, rotation can limit greenhouse gas emissions from farm fields

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Using no-till and corn-soybean rotation practices in farm fields can significantly reduce field emissions of the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide, according to a Purdue University study. Tony Vyn, a professor of agronomy, found that no-till reduces nitrous oxide emissions by 57 percent over chisel tilling, which mixes crop residue into surface soil, and 40 percent over moldboard tilling, which completely inverts soil as well as the majority of surface residue. More at: <http://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/research/2010/101220VynNitrous.html>

6. Socio-Economic Analysis of Conservation Agriculture in Southern Africa. FAO Regional Emergency Office for Southern Africa (REOSA), Network Paper 02, January 2011 by Kizito Mazimavi

This Network Paper provides an analysis of the benefits and impact of CA in southern Africa. The paper focuses on the smallholder farming sector in three countries, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. [Click for full document.](#)

7. Climatic Risk Analysis in Conservation Agriculture in Varied Biophysical and Socio-economic Settings of Southern Africa. FAO Regional Emergency Office for Southern Africa (REOSA), Network Paper 03, January 2011 by Regis Chikowo

This Network Paper presents findings of a study that traces how CA has been implemented in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe and presents results of simulation models of climatic risk and returns to investment in CA under varied biophysical and socio-economic conditions. [Click for full document.](#)

8. No-Till Farming Systems can be translated into any language

The No-Till Farming Systems that WASWAC had published in 2008. If any country wants to translate to any other language, just let WASWAC know and they will cooperate by granting permission without any fee and will furnish original photographs in addition too. The book

contains no-tillage experience from about 20 countries. Contact: Dr. Samran Sombatpanit at: sombatpanit@yahoo.com or samran_sombatpanit@yahoo.com

9. Visual Soil Assessment (VSA) Field Guides

VSA Field Guides on Maize and Pastures have been added to the collection. These are available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/i0007e/i0007e00.htm>

10. 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 we have been contacting our regular sources of information. However, anyone 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 please 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.

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