Conservation Agriculture
Global Prospects and Challenges

Edited by Ram A Jat, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, Patancheru, India and Directorate of Groundnut Research, Junagandh, India, Kanwar L Sahrawat, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics and Amir H Kassam, Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations, Rome, Italy and University of Reading, UK

Provides an up-to-date review and status of Conservation Agriculture at the global-level

The book covers the spread of Conservation Agriculture (CA) in countries including Brazil, Argentina, the USA, Canada, Australia and emerging CA destinations in Europe, Asia and Africa. Topics covered include the performance of CA as an approach to sustainable crop intensification and how it can contribute to enhancing productivity, improving food security, reduce land and environmental degradation, enhance the flow of ecosystem services, and respond to climate change. Each chapter is based on the latest scientific and empirical evidences regarding the productivity, environmental and socio-economic benefits that can be harnessed through CA. The book will be useful to teachers, researchers, extensionists, farmers, and students interested in environmental quality, as well as to institutional leaders and policy-makers in promoting sustainable agricultural intensification and development.
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José Graziano da Silva

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Global Prospects and Challenges
Dedication

This book is dedicated to the global Conservation Agriculture movement but particularly to all the pioneer farmers, researchers and extension agents as well as all the champions in the public, private and civil sectors and in the donor community who are making Conservation Agriculture a global reality.

Acknowledgement

Editors are very grateful to Theodor Friedrich for his wholehearted support and guidance to edit this volume.
Conservation Agriculture

Global Prospects and Challenges

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Preface

The quality of the natural resource base, especially of soil and water, plays an extremely critical role in enhancing productivity and crop quality, and sustainability of various production systems. Moreover, even the agronomic potential of genetically improved crops or cultivars cannot be achieved in practical agriculture on a degraded soil resource base as a result of multiple soil-related physical, chemical and biological constraints. Hence, to meet the ever increasing demands for food, feed and fibre in a sustainable manner the maintenance of soil health is a prerequisite.

It is known that agricultural practices influence the quality and integrity of the natural resource base, especially soil and water quality and availability, which in turn impacts the sustainability of the production system and food quality. Over the last several decades, a general trend in the degradation of soil resource base has been observed. This degradation has been most severe in the developing nations, where the need for increased nutritious food is also the greatest. Lack of required investment in maintaining the quality of the soil resource base coupled with improper management of natural resources, has indeed led to large-scale soil degradation, which is further jeopardizing environmental quality and food security especially for smallholder, resource-poor farmers in the developing world.

However, it is not necessary that agricultural activities should lead to degradation of the natural resource base. In fact, agricultural practices that are focused on soil health and are in harmony with the ecosystem are sustainable in maintaining productivity at an enhanced level. Among the several practices used in diverse intensified production systems, especially in tropical agriculture, soil tillage and the lack of adequate organic matter input to the soil have a heavy toll in maintaining the integrity of the soil.

Nothing short of a new agricultural production paradigm is needed to sustainably enhance the soil resource base and productivity and simultaneously rehabilitate degraded soils. Conservation Agriculture has indeed provided an alternative way of agriculture that conserves and enhances soil and water resources, and thereby is helpful in maintaining soil health in the longer term while at the same time achieving the highest productivity. Of course the success or otherwise of conservation agriculture depends on numerous factors including those related to soil, climate and socio-economic condition of the farmers, to name a few. Nevertheless, Conservation Agriculture has been researched and applied in most regions of the globe.

The aim of this book is to provide an up-to-date state-of-the-art review on various aspects of Conservation Agriculture by reviewing the past and current research from various regions.
of the globe so that all others interested in Conservation Agriculture could benefit from experiences gained under different agroclimatic and socio-economic conditions across the globe. This review would aid in learning from the past experience regarding the success or otherwise of Conservation Agriculture. Knowledge gained from this volume should further help in the implementation of Conservation Agriculture and in the understanding of the role and importance of Conservation Agriculture to secure sustainable crop intensification for the benefit of future generations as well. The challenges in implementing Conservation Agriculture that need to be resolved through future research and development for a larger scale support and the spread of Conservation Agriculture are considered. We hope that this volume will further stimulate interest in advancing research and development as well as policy support on this new paradigm of agriculture.
If you tell farmers to stop ploughing their land before they plant the next crop because it harms the soil, most of them will either laugh or give you that kind of look that implies you are crazy. More and more farmers, however, will nod their agreement.

Ploughing or digging the soil to turn it over has played a fundamental role in agriculture for thousands of years. It breaks up the soil, making it easy to create a fine tilth into which crops can easily be sown. It also reduces the extent to which weeds compete with crops by burying any vegetation and, in the process, may build up the level of organic matter in the soil. The invention of the plough made it possible for farmers to mechanize agriculture, first by harnessing oxen or horses and later by attaching ploughs to tractors, thereby enabling a family farmer to cultivate much larger areas of crops than was the case when he/she was restricted to manual labour.

The problem is that the rapidly growing demand for food has been pushing up the frequency with which land is cropped. Periods of fallow, which allow the organic matter content of soil to recover after several years of cropping, are getting shorter or have disappeared. When this happens, inversion tillage systems become a leading cause of soil degradation. With each movement of earth, soil particles become finer, allowing less moisture to enter the soil surface and less to be retained for uptake by crop roots. Rain tends to seal the soil surface, accumulate and run off, causing erosion and downstream flooding – and when the land dries out, the fine particles are picked up by the wind and carried away, as happened dramatically when the ‘dust bowl’ brought farming to a halt in the American prairies during the 1930s.

The structural damage to soils caused by their frequent inversion leads also to a progressive decline in their fertility and health. Organic matter content drops, and with it the extent of the biological activity that helps to make vital minerals and nutrients available to crops. The fertility decline is much faster in tropical than temperate areas because the higher temperatures lead to faster organic matter depletion.

This book shows how farmers all around the world – in both north and south – have woken up to the problems of excessive tillage and are abandoning their ploughs, spades or hoes. As a result of a movement that started in the 1960s, each year farmers now plant over 125 million ha of crops using no or minimum soil disturbance systems – and the area is growing rapidly. The various systems being applied are collectively known as Conservation Agriculture or ‘CA’.
Conservation Agriculture offers an important set of technologies to help feed the world sustainably. This is a central element of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) revised strategic framework that focuses the Organization’s work on five crosscutting strategic objectives.

Our first strategic objective is to contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The second strategic objective is to ‘increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner’ (the other strategic objectives are: reducing rural poverty, improving food systems and their fairness, and increasing resilience).

Our focus is, therefore, on sustainable agricultural intensification with the aim of raising agricultural productivity and output while enhancing and maintaining the health and resilience of agroecosystems. This shift has to take place at a time when farmers face the additional intersecting challenges of increasing competition for land and water, rising fuel and production input prices, and climate change.

In our Save and Grow approach to sustainable production intensification, we have made it clear that the present paradigm of intensive crop production based on tillage systems cannot meet the challenges of the new millennium. For agriculture to grow sustainably, we must learn to save by farming differently. Conservation Agriculture, by minimizing soil disturbance, protecting the soil surface with mulch and promoting cropping system diversification, is a central ingredient of Save and Grow, along with other good practices of crop, nutrient, pest and water management. Through their ability to harness nature, these can sustainably raise land productivity and efficiency of production while imparting ecological adaptability and resilience to rainfed and irrigated farming systems.

This is why, since 2001, FAO has been sponsoring and supporting the ‘World Congress on Conservation Agriculture’ process with national and international collaborators, and has played a strong and significant role in promoting CA globally as part of its general support for sustainable agriculture, food security, poverty alleviation, climate change adaptability and mitigation. Conservation Agriculture offers the prospect of a better future to both large-scale and smallholder farmers, and a means to raise productivity and secure economic and environmental benefits. The CA area is just about equally divided between developing countries and industrialized countries, and more recently, after a rapid spread in the Americas, adoption is increasing in Africa and Asia.

The aim of this book is to offer a state-of-the-art assessment of the status of CA in the various regions of the globe, including drawing lessons from past experience regarding its success or otherwise. This, along with new knowledge being generated through research and farmer practice, should help in promoting the further spread of CA in developing countries as well as globally.

I am sure that this volume will further stimulate the mobilization of local, national and international development support for this important approach to sustainable production intensification.

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<td><strong>AAAID:</strong> Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development</td>
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<td><strong>AAPRESID:</strong> Asociación Argentina de Productores en Siembra Directa – No-Till Argentinean Farmers Association</td>
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<td><strong>ABACO:</strong> Agro-ecology based aggradation-conservation agriculture (Burkina Faso)</td>
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<td><strong>ABC Foundation:</strong> Cooperative foundation, which integrates three cooperatives: Arapoti, Batavo and Castrolanda (Brazil)</td>
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<td><strong>ABS:</strong> Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td><strong>ACIAR:</strong> Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research</td>
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<td><strong>ACSAD:</strong> Arab Center for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands</td>
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<td><strong>ACT:</strong> African Conservation Tillage Network</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A-C-W:</strong> Arid, cool winter, warm summer</td>
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<td><strong>ADAM:</strong> Support Project to Conservation Agriculture Extension in Mountainous Areas of Vietnam</td>
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<td><strong>ADB:</strong> Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td><strong>ADP:</strong> Agricultural Diversification Project (Vietnam)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AEACSV:</strong> Spanish CA Association for living soils – Asociación Española para Agricultura de Conservación – Suelos Vivos</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AFD:</strong> Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)</td>
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<td><strong>AIGACoS:</strong> Associazione Italiana per la Gestione Agronomica e Conservativa del Suolo (Italy)</td>
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<td><strong>AFD:</strong> French Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AIDS:</strong> Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td><strong>A-K-W:</strong> Arid, cold winter, warm summer</td>
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<td><strong>AN:</strong> Ammonium nitrate</td>
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<td><strong>APAD:</strong> Association to Promote Sustainable Agriculture – Association pour la Promotion d’une Agriculture Durable (France)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>APOSLO:</strong> Portuguese Association for Conservation Tillage</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>APSIM:</strong> Agricultural Production Systems simulator</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CLUSA: The Cooperative League of the United States of America
CNPT/EMBRAPA: Brazilian Wheat Research Centre, Rio Grande do Sul State (Brazil)
CO2: carbon dioxide
COMESA: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CONAB: Brazilian National Supplying Company
ConvA: Conventional agriculture
ConvT: Conventional tillage
CORS: Continuously Operating Reference Stations
CRS: Catholic Relief Services
CSIRO: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (Australia)
CT: Conservation tillage
CTC: Technical Cereal Center (Tunisia – now part of INGC: National Institute of Field Crops)
CTF: Control Traffic Farming
CTIC: Conservation Tillage Information Center (USA)
D. Wheat: Durum wheat
Defra: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK)
DNEA: National Directorate for Agricultural Extension (Mozambique)
DPRK: Democratic People Republic of Korea
DS: Direct seeding
E&S Africa: Eastern and Southern Africa
EC: European Commission
EC: electric conductivity
ECAF: European Conservation Agriculture Federation
EMATER: Rural State Extension Service, Brazil
EMBRAPA: Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation
EMBRAPA SOJA: Soybean Research Brazilian Centre – Londrina, Paraná State
EPAGRI: Research & Extension Institute of Santa Catarina State, Brazil
ESAK: Academic Agricultural Education School at Kef (Tunisia)
ETH: Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (Zürich, Switzerland)
EU: European Union
Fankhauser: Machinery manufacturer
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAT: Eidgenössische Forschungsanstalt für Agrarwirtschaft und Landtechnik (Tänikon, Switzerland)
FEBRAPDP: No-Till Brazilian Federation (Brazil)
FFS: Farmer Field School
FINCA: Finnish CA Association
Fitarelli: Machinery manufacturer
FRDK: Danish CA Association
FTC: Farmer Training Centre
GAPs: good agricultural practices
GART: Golden Valley Agricultural Research Trust (Zambia)
GHGs: greenhouse gases
GLS: Grey leaf spot
GM: gross margins
GMCC/gmcc: green-manure cover crops
GNSS: Global Navigation Satellite System
Gov: Government
GPS: Global Positioning System
Gralha Azul: First animal-drawn no-till planter prototype from IAPAR (Brazil)
GTZ: German Development Corporation
ha: hectare
HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAARD: Indonesian Agency for Agriculture Research and Development
IACPA: Integrated Arable Crop Production Alliance (UK)
IAD: Institute for Sustainable Agriculture – Institut de l’Agriculture Durable (France)
IADEL: Machinery manufacturer (Brazil)
IAPAR: Agricultural Research Institute of Paraná State (Brazil)
ICAR: Indian Council for Agricultural Research
ICARDA: International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
ICI: Imperial Chemical Industries
ICONA: Instituto Nacional para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (Spain)
ICRAF: International Council for Research in Agroforestry
ICRISAT: International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGME: Instituto Geológico y Minero de España (Spain)
IIAM: Mozambican Institute for Agricultural Research
IMASA: Machinery manufacturer
INE: Instituto Nacional de Estatística (Portugal)
INIA: National Institute for Agricultural Research (Mozambique)
INRA: Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (National Institute of Agricultural Research – France)
INTA: Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (National Institute of Agricultural Technology – Argentina)
IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPM: Integrated Pest Management
IPNI: International Plant Nutrition Institute
IRD: French Research Institute for Development
ISFM: Integrated Soil Fertility Management
ISTRO: International Soil Tillage Research Organization
ITAIPU: Bi-national Hydroelectric Power Company (Brazil and Paraguay)
ITCF: Institut Technique des Cereales et Fourrages (France) (new name: Arvalis)
IWM: Integrated weed management
Jahnel: Machinery manufacturer
K: potassium
Knapik: Machinery manufacturer (Brazil)
KRIGF: Kazakh Research Institute of Grain Farming
KTBL: Kuratorium für Technik und Bauwesen in der Landwirtschaft (Germany)
KU: Kasetsart University (Thailand)
LEAF: Linking Environment and Farming (UK)
LFC: Soil light fraction carbon
LIFE: Less Intensive Farming Environment (UK project)
LKV: Verordnung über die Erhaltung der Lebensgrundlagen und der Kulturlandschaft (Switzerland)
LOP: Landwirtschaft ohne Pflug (Germany)
MAFF: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (UK); 2002 merged into Defra
MAF(F): Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (and Fisheries)
Mafrense: Machinery manufacturer
MAGIC: Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, Industria y Comercio – Argentinean Ministry of Agriculture, Cattle, Industry and Commerce
MAP: Monoammonium phosphate
Marchesan: Machinery manufacturer
MBC: Soil microbial biomass
MCPA: 4-chloro-2-methylphenoxyacetic acid
METAS: Group of institutions, companies and specialists that work with no-tillage system development in Brazil
Mg: magnesium
Mha: million hectare
mm: millimetre
MOA: Ministry of Agriculture
MOFA: Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Ghana)
Mt: megatonnes
N: nitrogen
NAFRI: National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (Lao PDR)
NGOs: non-government organizations
NIR: National Institute of Rubber (Vietnam)
NOMAFSI: Northern Mountainous Agricultural and Forestry Science Institute (Vietnam)
NPK: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium
NSCP: National Soil Conservation Program (Canada)
NSW: New South Wales (Australian State)
NT: No-till/no-tillage/minimum tillage
NTA: No-till agriculture
NTCN: Controlled traffic with no tillage and full residue cover
NTG: No tillage, with grass mulch
NTL: No tillage, with legume mulch
NW: north-west
Offset ploughing: ploughing without driving in the furrow (for compaction control)
ORCATAD: Open Resource on Conservation Agriculture for Trade and Development (Lao PDR)
P: phosphorus
PADAC: Support Project for the Development of Cambodian Agriculture
PADER/BGN: Programme d’Appui au Développement Rural en Basse Guinée Nord
PAMPA: Multi-country Support Programme for Agroecology (AFD, France)
PASS: Development project for the South of Sayabouri Province (Lao PDR)
PB: permanent bed
PDRD: Programme de Développement Rural Durable
PES: Payment for Ecosystem Services
PHF: Rubber for Smallholder project (Cambodia)
PICOFA: Programme d’Investissement Communautaire en Fertilité Agricole
PIUCS: Integrated Programme of Soil Use and Conservation (Brazil)
PLUP: Participatory Land Use Planning
PMISA: Soil and Water Integrated Management Programme (Brazil)
PPILDA: Programme Promotion des Initiatives Locales de Développement à Aguie
PRB: permanent raised bed
PRECOP: Proyecto de eficiencia en cosecha y poscosecha de granos – Harvest and Postharvest Efficiency Project (Argentina)
PRODESSA: Project for the Development of the South of Sayabouri Province (Lao PDR)
PRODS/PAIA: Integrated Agricultural Production Systems as a Priority Area for Interdisciplinary Actions (PAIA) approach
Programa Paraná Rural: Paraná State Rural Development Programme (Brazil)
PRONAE: National Agroecology Programme (Lao PDR)
PROSA: Sector-based agroecology programme (Lao PDR)
PRP: Protracted Relief Programme
PSFI: permanent skip furrow irrigation
Qld: Queensland (Australian State)
QMS: Quality Management System
RELMA: Regional Land Management Unit of the Swedish International Development Agency
rpm: revolutions per minute
RT: Roto-tilling with straw cover
RTK: real-time kinematic
RTO: Refundable Tax Offset (tax terminology referring to depreciation of assets; Australia)
RUE: rainfall use efficiency
RWUE: rainwater use efficiency
RYC: Machinery manufacturer
S: sulfur
SA: South Australia (Australian State)
SA-C-W: Semi-arid, cool winter, warm summer
SA-K-W: Semi-arid, cold winter, warm summer
SAM: Mountainous Agrarian Systems Project (Vietnam)
SANRENM CRSP: Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program (Cambodia, the Philippines)

SCAP: Smallholder Conservation Agriculture Promotion project (Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger)

S.D.: standard deviation

SEA: South-east Asia

SEAB-PR: Secretary of Agriculture of Paraná State, Brazil

SEMEATO: Machinery manufacturer (Brazil)

SFRI: Soils and Fertilizers Research Institute (Vietnam)

SG2000: Sasakawa Global 2000

Sgarbossa: Machinery manufacturer

SIA: Società Italiana d’Agronomia

SLM: Sustainable Land Management

SMB: soil microbial biomass

SMI: Soil Management Initiative (UK)

SOC: soil organic carbon

SOM: soil organic matter

SON: soil organic nitrogen

SOS: Save Our Soils programme (Canada)

ST: Subsoiling with straw cover

STCN: Controlled Traffic with Shallow Tillage and Full Residue Cover

Teagasc: ‘Learning’ (Gaelic) – semi-state Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Ireland)

TLC: Total Land Care

Triton: Machinery manufacturer

UFRGS: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

UFSM: University of Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil

UQ: University of Queensland (Australia)

USAID: United States Aid

VAAS: Vietnamese Academy of Agricultural Science

Vic: Victoria (Australian State)

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

US$: United States dollar

UZS: Uzbek soum (national currency of Uzbekistan)

WA: Western Australia (Australian State); West Asia

WANA: West Asia and North Africa

WB: World Bank

WCA: West and Central Africa

Werner: Machinery manufacturer

WESTCO: Fertilizer company (Canada)

WFP: World Food Programme

WHC: water holding capacity

WUE: water use efficiency

YAAS: Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Science (China PRC)

ZCFU: Zambia Conservation Farming Unit

ZNFU: Zambia National Farmers Union

ZT: zero-tillage
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