



REGIONAL CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE SYMPOSIUM

Communiqué

The Conservation Agriculture Regional Working Group (CARWG), with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) and the African Union Partnership for Africa's Development agency (NEPAD), hosted a successful and well attended Symposium on Conservation Agriculture (CA) in Johannesburg, South Africa on 8-10 February 2011. The symposium objectives were:

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

The Symposium brought together over 130 participants as follows: government representatives from 12 countries (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe), the Southern Africa Confederation of Agriculture Unions (SACAU), three national farmer organizations (CFU-Zambia, KZN No-Till Club, National Farmers Union of South Africa), eight NGOs (CA Academy, CARE, CHOPPA, CRS, EcoPort, KATC, Mennonite Central Committee, Peace Parks Foundation, RESCOPE), eight research organizations (ARC-South Africa, CIAT, CIMMYT, Food Security Research Project-Zambia, ICRAF, ICRISAT, Institute for Poverty, Land & Agrarian Studies-South Africa, Department of Research-Zimbabwe), 14 universities and agricultural colleges from nine countries (Botswana, Namibia, Netherlands, Norway, Swaziland, South Africa, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe), USAID/OFDA, Royal Norwegian Government, GRM International, FAO, ACT, FANRPAN, COMESA and NEPAD.

Main outcomes were:

1. A critical need for action to up-scale CA in the region as CA can contribute to food security, poverty alleviation, income generation and environmental sustainability was agreed upon by the majority of the participants,
2. The up-scaling of CA should be led by farmers based on farmers' needs,
3. The holistic systems nature of CA needs broader consideration and acceptance in both the design of research activities and in development programmes that promote CA,
4. That the research that supports the promotion of CA should be participatory action research that takes a broader integrated systems approach to ensure relevancy to farmer needs,
5. That there must be an increased emphasis on capacity building through accredited CA education and training at all levels, with a particular focus on farmers, extension and other change agents necessary for effective up-scaling,
6. That public-private partnerships and efficient value chains are necessary to achieve CA up-scaling,
7. Effective coordination of CA promotion efforts at national and regional level is critical for success,
8. That CA practitioners and stakeholders must engage in coordination and information sharing platforms and networks to ensure effective support to CA up-scaling, and
9. Governments were encouraged to develop and implement policies that support the up-scaling of CA, and particularly those that are evidence-based.

Way forward

The CARWG will review its workplans, taking into consideration the outcomes of the Symposium. A regional strategy for up-scaling CA and institutional arrangements with member countries will be created to implement the recommendations from the Symposium. Advisory notes will be produced for sharing with policy makers in the region and COMESA will present outcomes of the Symposium to the COMESA Technical Committee on Environment and Agriculture. A synthesis report on key issues emerging and the way forward for up-scaling CA will be published. Furthermore, technical proceedings containing papers and posters presented at the Symposium will be published.

10 February 2011