The regional training workshop brought together the representatives from FAO, ICARDA, CIMMYT, GIZ-Tashkent, ZEF-UNESCO project and representatives of countries in the region. Senior specialists from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan attended in the workshop. More than 50 participants with diverse background (Agronomy, Soils Sciences, Agricultural Machinery and Extension) attended the training workshop.

The Central Asian countries have a large and promising agricultural potential, and the majority of the population in these countries directly or indirectly derive their livelihoods from agriculture. In this picture, irrigated areas where most of the farming population resides are of major importance for national food security.

At present, in view of the increasing demographic pressure and internal market demand, there is an urgent need to increase agricultural production in all the concerned countries.

There are opportunities for implementing agricultural practices that improve production, contribute to optimization of water productivity and mitigation/prevention of further land degradation.

The experience gained by FAO through various national and international projects in the Central and Southern Asian region, shows that the use of conservation agriculture (CA) practices can lead to many ecological and economic benefits, as well as to an integrated rural development also in irrigated crop environments. CA is now practiced on about 125million ha worldwide, or about 9 percent of total crop land. Highest adoption levels (above 50 percent of crop land) are found in Australia, Canada and the southern cone of South America. Adoption is increasing in Africa, Central Asia and China.

The principles of CA basically include minimal soil disturbance and controlled traffic, crop cover, diversified cropping systems and active weed control management. Surface cover with crop residues, one of the most important principles of CA, is known for its capacity to moderate soil temperature in winter and summer, protect the soils against erosion, increase water infiltration and over time, increase soil organic matter content, facilitate nutrient recycling, cut back unproductive losses of soil moisture through evaporation and provide niches for beneficial microbes, soil fauna and flora to flourish. Mulches also reduce weed infestation in the long-term.

The main objective of the regional training workshop was to raise awareness on conservation agriculture (CA) among different stakeholders and to train them on the main principles and approaches of CA to promote the technology in the region.

On the first day, FAO, ICARDA and CIMMYT specialists delivered general information on key issues of the conservation agriculture development at global and regional level. These presentations gave a very comprehensive overview of conservation agriculture and highlighted some key constraints for the adoption. During the workshop, the participants were being exposed to different steps in implementation of key elements of CA and local adjustments in different component technologies.

On the second day, country representatives made presentations on promotion of conservation agriculture with the main focus on available resources, situation, progress and policies. The speakers from the participating countries demonstrated a wide diversity of experience on conservation agriculture and appreciated the opportunities for sharing that experience. There were fruitful
discussions after each presentation in the workshop. The interaction among participants during the discussion sessions was very lively and interesting.

Field visit was held on farmers’ information centre of Karshi, including demonstration of field activities on conservation agriculture. Demonstration of direct seeding wheat into cotton was noticed with high interest by the participants.

The afternoon session continued with a wrap-up session. The participants reported on their impression about the workshop and provided critical and valuable inputs for the recommendations of the workshop. The participants realized the need of promotion of the conservation agriculture practices in the region.

**Recommendations**
Recognizing the importance given to the development of the agricultural sector by the Governments of the region, and after reviewing the country reports on promotion of conservation agriculture in the region and considering critical issues, raised during the regional training workshop, the key conclusions and recommendations are summarized and presented below:

- All countries showed great interest in introducing and up-scaling conservation agriculture in general.
- Government commitment for conservation agriculture is needed for its promotion.
- Policy support was felt a crucial factor for up-scaling of conservation agriculture.
- Alternative strategies for policy makers that can be adopted according to the prevailing conditions in the region should be discussed with all stakeholders, including farmers in the region.
- Another crucial factor is availability of affordable and appropriate conservation agriculture equipment for the specific farming conditions.
- Awareness raising campaigns, demonstration sites, filed days, workshops and seminars need to be organized.
- During the discussion, several specialized short-term courses have been identified, which can be held at regional level.
- Close collaboration of all stakeholders for introduction and up-scaling of conservation agriculture, particularly farmers, farmer’s communities, NGOs, machinery industry, Government offices and institutions, universities, and also higher Ministry levels is suggested.
- The participants proposed establishing a regional network and a web site on conservation agriculture.
- A study on status of conservation agriculture in the region should be conducted.
- Participating countries are invited to seek a technical assistance in the introduction and up-scaling of conservation agriculture, if considered appropriate.
- Local zero-till drill development is absolutely essential for upscaling of conservation agriculture practices in the region.
- Many professional staff in the region have limitations in understanding English that greatly constrains the transfer of knowledge and experience during the training workshop. Therefore, it is important that participants attending conservation agriculture training workshops or seminars outside the region have sufficient knowledge of English and Russian to benefit from the courses.
- The report should be submitted to the government officials in Russian language.