



Declaration of the First Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture

A. Background

The African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT) in close liaison with partners convened the 1st Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture (IACCA) in Lusaka, Zambia, from 18th to 21st March 2014. This was held under the theme “*Conservation Agriculture (CA): Building entrepreneurship and resilient farming systems*”. The Congress brought together 414 delegates from 42 African and other countries of the world to share experiences and lessons and facilitate alliances to unblock hindrances to expanded and scaled-up adoption of CA, especially among the smallholder farming systems and related industry in Africa.

The congress was convened in the backdrop that 2014 has been designated by African Union Heads of State and Governments as the year for agriculture and food security, and marks the 10th anniversary of Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). It also marks the adoption of a new CAADP results framework, which recognizes the role of climate-smart agriculture in addressing agriculture and climate change challenges.

This is in addition to the fact that, while worldwide hunger has decreased by 132 million people in the last 20 years, it has increased by 64 million (from 175 to 239 million) in Africa over the same period. Africa as a continent has remained a net importer of agricultural products in the last three decades. In 1980, Africa had an almost balanced agricultural trade when both agricultural exports and imports were at about USD 14 billion, but by 2007 its agricultural imports exceeded agricultural exports by about USD 22 billion. While global population is projected, by 2013 basis, to increase by 33% to 9 billion people by 2050, Africa's population is projected to increase by 115% (from 1.1 to 2.39 billion) by the same date; thus requiring a similar increase in food production. These figures point to the reality that urgent efforts are needed to transform agricultural production on the continent, in line with the CAADP framework to which African governments have pledged their support.

Conservation Agriculture is defined as a management system based on three principles that should be applied in a mutually reinforcing manner: minimum physical soil disturbance, permanent soil cover with live or dead plant material, and crop diversification in space and time. CA is now spreading at the annual rate of some 10 million hectares, and covers more than 130 million hectares globally. CA is a production system which uses all appropriate best management practices to minimize risks and ensure ecological sustainability and resilience to underpin economic and social sustainability.

B. Preamble

We, the CA stakeholders attending the First Africa Congress on Conservation Agriculture meeting in Lusaka from the 18th to 21st of March 2014:

- Acknowledging that CA is set to become a major contributor to achieving CAADP's goal 6% annual growth in the agricultural sector which employs 80% of Africa's rural population;
- Noting the documented impact and feedback from practicing CA farmers across Africa and in other developing regions, and its significantly positive impact on their incomes, livelihood, well-being and on empowerment of women farmers;

- Further noting that CA is one of the best food security and profitability options for farmers, in addition to being a climate-smart and environmentally sustainable solution that gives farmers the choice to apply CA principles to a range of production systems including, horticulture, agroforestry and crop-livestock integration, amongst others;
- Recognizing that governments are making great efforts in support of Food Security and sustainable agriculture intensification in general, but that these efforts need to be stepped up to create a more conducive environment for the adoption of Conservation Agriculture;
- Further recognizing the necessity of promoting farmer associations and platforms and strengthening their partnerships with governments;
- Realizing the need to strengthen partnerships, communication and information flow within the CA community of practice at national and regional levels;
- Considering that new knowledge and experience exchange are an important resource for uptake and spread of CA;
- Further considering that CA is a key to enhancing the capacity of all farmers to adapt to climate change effects;
- Underlining the importance of the three inter-linked principles of CA –minimum soil disturbance, maintenance of soil cover and cropping system diversity;
- Highlighting the crucial need to upscale mainstreaming of education on the science and practice of CA in existing educational systems at primary, secondary and tertiary levels;
- Further realizing the importance of South-South cooperation, in the form of exchange of expertise, information and experience; and
- Also recognizing the role played by women and the youth in the accelerated upscaling and adoption of CA; resolve as follows:

C. The Resolve

In order to achieve the CAADP goal of 6% growth of the agricultural sector, we resolve that:

POLICY, POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1. We call for commitment from all national and international stakeholders in the public, private and civil sectors to support the up-scaling of CA as a climate smart technology to reach at least 25 million farmers across Africa by 2025;
2. Governments are called upon to create a conducive environment for the adoption and development of CA by investing more in CA education and extension; integrating CA training in educational curricula, and supporting CA farmers and their organizations.
3. Governments are called upon to create enabling policy environment to allow investment financing, and technological development including private sector involvement in CA related value chains;
4. Development partners are urged to increase support to CA programmes under the CAADP Agriculture climate agenda;

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

5. Urge the Private sector to proactively support up scaling of CA through further innovations and increased investments financing in appropriate CA technologies and related services;

TRAINING, EXTENSION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, AND KNOWLEDGE SUPPORT

6. ACT is to establish a quality-assurance system for accredited agricultural training institutions to provide CA training certificates. Furthermore, ACT will collaborate with relevant stakeholders for the harmonization of CA training curricula;

7. Farmers who have adopted CA should be supported to be champions and educators for their counterparts. Furthermore, they should establish locally relevant collaborations, innovation platforms and associations that can engage with government and other CA actors;
8. Agricultural training institutions are requested to take up CA as an integral part of their training programmes and take part in farmer sensitization and training efforts;
9. Urge all concerned including FARA and the CGIAR to ensure research and extension on CA is farmer-focused and responsive to the needs of farming communities, and research findings should be communicated more effectively to inform decision making at different levels as well as to support knowledge management systems including extension and training;
10. ACT, in collaboration with FAO & Regional Economic Communities are called upon to support knowledge management by stakeholders, including the CA task forces.

The Participants to the IACCA

Lusaka, 21st March, 2014