

NEWSLETTER

January– March 2016, Vol. 2



Murdoch
UNIVERSITY

Conservation Agriculture Project

PIO-Liaison Office – Murdoch University, Australia, House 4C, Road 7B, Sector 9, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: info@pio-mu.org

Overview:

The Conservation Agriculture (CA) project has been active in Bangladesh since 1st April, 2012 in Rajshahi, Rajbari, Thakurgaon, and Mymensingh with the funding support of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). The project is collaboration among – Bangladesh Agricultural University; Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute; Bangladesh Rice Research Institute; Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council; and Murdoch University.



The aim of the project is to develop and accelerate the adoption of CA for selected soils, crops and cropping systems in Bangladesh, especially in rainfed areas and those with supplementary irrigation, so that farmers and households can benefit from cost-saving crop production technologies and sustainable resource management. The objectives are to: (i) Improve adoption and spread of CA led by farmers with support from a service provider network; (ii) Design minimum soil disturbance no-till planters for improved operation and effectiveness; (iii) Redesign best-practice crop agronomy to optimize it for different types of minimum soil disturbance operations, targeted crop rotations and key soils; (iv) Quantify the benefits of CA for soil health and fertility; (v) Develop capacity for on-going research and development of CA in Bangladesh.

In Vol. 2 of the Newsletter we report major achievements of 1st quarter of 2016 (January to March).

Key Highlights:

- The 2nd planning meeting on Farmers and Service Providers Association of Conservation Agriculture was held at Rajshahi during 20-21 January 2016, A total of 24 participants including farmers, DAE personnel, Local Service Providers, and representatives from Integrated Crop Management/Integrated Pest Management (ICM/IPM) Clubs and Farmer Field Schools attended.



- An initial working group was formulated with 12 Local Service Providers (LSPs) from different districts to establish a LSP and CA Farmers Association.
- A total of 138 Farmer Associations from Dinajpur, Natore, Panchaghor, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Thakurgaon districts involving 7,801 farmers (6,521 male and 1,280 female) signed agreements with Project Implementation Office (PIO) of Murdoch University to work together for the promotion of Conservation Agriculture, farm mechanisation, unpuddled rice establishment, etc.

- A seminar on Conservation Agriculture and Farm Mechanisation was held at Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) on 25 February, 2016. Prof. Richard Bell presented a paper covering Conservation Agriculture and farm mechanisation. A total 61 participants including farmers, Professors of Bangladesh



Agricultural University (BAU), participants from BMDA, Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Non-government Organizations (NGOs), Versatile Multi-crop Planter (VMP) Marketing Company marketing company (Hoque Corporation) and Banks attended the seminar.

- On the 26 February 2016, the seminar participants from the previous day visited blocks of wheat, lentil, mustard, maize, etc. that established by the VMP service providers, CA field demonstrations and experimental trials; and discussed results with farmers at Durgapur, Godagari upazilas of Rajshahi districts. Field operation of the VMP was also demonstrated during the field visit.



- Mohammad Mobarak Hossain, one of the PhD fellows of Conservation Agriculture Project (LWR-2010-080) was awarded the “University Gold Medal Award-2016” BAU for outstanding academic and research performances. Honorable vice chancellor of BAU Prof. Dr. Md. Ali Akbar presented this award on the 7th convocation of the university.



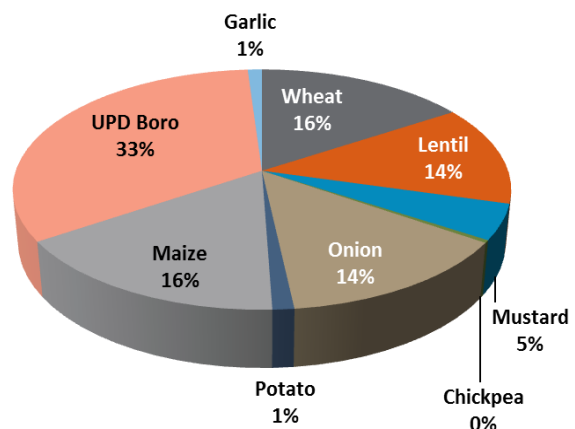
- The 2nd Conference on Conservation Agriculture (CASH-II) is planned to be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh during 14-16 February, 2017. ACIAR has agreed to fund the CASH-II, and FAO Bangkok has committed to participate in CASH-II and take part as a co-organizer of CASH-II. The

conference will cover the themes that are relevant to smallholders' Conservation Agriculture, namely: (i) Design and development of machinery, implements, and tools; (ii) Soils, water and weed management, and agronomy; (iii) Commercialization and adoption of CA based technologies and practices; and (iv) Policy and institutional framework. Announcements are coming in the www.cash-ii.com. The Organizing Committee is inviting abstract submission. Please contact e.haque@murdoch.edu.au or r.bell@murdoch.edu.au for details.

- Prof. Richard Bell, Murdoch University and Leader of LWR-2010-080 project visited Bangladesh from 23 February to 1st March 2016. During the visit, he and Dr. Md. Enamul Haque visited Bangladesh Agricultural University and met with the Vice Chancellor, BAU; Director BAU Research Systems (BAURES), Principal Investigators (PIs) of LWR-2010-080; also, they reviewed the progress of the project and the research of the PhD students. They also visited Rajshahi (project sites), Regional Agricultural Research Station, BARI, Ishurdi, Pabna to see the on-going pulses research programme, and visited Khulna University and on-farm sites of LWR-2010-080 project in Dacope, south of Khulna.
- On 23 February, 2016, Prof. Richard Bell and Dr. Md. Enamul Haque met with Dr. Bill Collis, CIMMYT Bangladesh; they then met with the Director General; Director Field Crops; Project Directors – Agricultural Mechanisation Project, and Pulses Promotion Project of DAE to share information on the technologies developed under Conservation Agriculture Project (LWR-2010-080) and to design a process for wider dissemination and uptake of CA technologies.
- With the funding support of KGF, BAU has been implementing a CA promotion project in three upazilas of Mymensingh and Tangail districts and PIO/Murdoch University has provided technical assistance to this project. A total of 65 farmers, having 1 bigha each (1 bigha=1336 m²), are practicing CA in unpuddled aman raifed rice – strip planted mustard – unpuddled irrigated boro rice crop sequences.
- National Conservation Agriculture Centre: Prof. Richard Bell and Dr. Md. Enamul Haque canvassed the proposal for a National Conservation

Agriculture Centre for Bangladesh with the Directors General of BARI and BRRI; Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC); Secretary of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh and BMDA, based at Rajshahi. The structure of the CA Centre has not been defined but could comprise: (i) National Steering Committee with representatives of members and the Chair of International Advisory Committee; (ii) Secretariat comprising a National Coordinator, CA Research Scientists, CA Local Service Providers Association, Training Officer, Office staff; (iii) Working groups: Machinery, Agronomy, Manufacturing, Policy; (iv) International Advisory Committee. Prof. Richard Bell is in communication with donors about supporting the proposed CA Center.

- Commercialization of VMP: The planting activities of the new LSPs in 2015 have been very encouraging. Eighteen LSP of VMP reported that they have sown 1,824 bigha (from Nov 2015 to 31 March, 2016) and served about 1,013 farmers. The training programmes and mentoring by



have resulted in high quality planting services by the new LSPs. There is evidence of growing demand for the VMP planting services. Hoque Corporation together with the CA Project continues to work on improvements to the VMP that enhance reliability and strength of parts while decreasing cost and weight.

- Prof. Richard Bell will give the keynote lecture on “Conservation Agriculture and Mechanisation for Smallholder Agriculture: A Win-Win for Agriculture and the Environment” at the International Conference on Agriculture and Environment: Food, Water, Soil, Air. 25-26 May 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

- Prof. Richard Bell has been invited under the Australia-India Education Council Eminent Researcher Lecture Programme to give a series of lectures during 27 June to 1 July in Delhi, Hyderabad and Kolkata on Conservation Agriculture and Mechanisation for Smallholder Agriculture.
- Field Crops Research has agreed to publish a Special Issue on Unpuddled Rice Transplanting or Zero Tillage for Rice Establishment: Options for inclusion of rice in Conservation Agriculture cropping systems. Prof. Richard Bell and Dr. Md. Enamul Haque will be guest editors. Of the 21 papers so far offered, 8 are contributions from the CA Project.