INCAA - INnovative Conservation Agriculture Approaches:
Food Security and Climate Action through Soil and Water Conservation
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Background

Conservation Agriculture (CA) is promoted in Africa
• to increase food production on the basis of more sustainable farming practices,
• to address the problems of soil degradation resulting from agricultural practices (e.g. organic matter, nutrient content),
• To increase crop yields and lower production costs.
Yet, success with adopting CA on farms in Africa has been limited.

Objectives

• to mentor and analyse a trans-disciplinary learning process that supports innovation of CA in Kenya and Burkina Faso,
• to assess the benefits and adaptations of CA in innovation systems around partner projects involving smallholder farmers,
• to integrate institutional and individual dimensions into tools that assess the applicability of CA,
• to design a learning process involving all stakeholders towards innovation of CA as a strong basis for future transnational partnership.

Reported constraints for adoption

• Lack of information, education and training
• Economic factors rank far ahead of other considerations
• Hindrances by government legislation, incentives and subsidies
• Using crop residues for soil cover or as feed for cattle in arid regions
• Poor physical access and affordability of CA services (e.g. for direct seeding; cover crop seeds; herbicides applications)
• Farmers are not adequately involved in the development of new technologies
• Gender related obstacles for women

Preliminary results from Kenya

Qualitative interviews in Laikipia county among farmers:
• Farmer field schools often mainly attended by women.
• Women practising CA are considered “lazy farmers”.
• Only ploughing means “real farming”.
• Rather strict gender division between social or professional activities - “We only go to church together”.
• Decision-making regarding the adoption of CA is ultimately validated by men.
• Men are largely in control of cash.
• Livestock raising and milk selling represent important sources of income.
• Farm residues are perceived as important to sustain this income.

Outlook

• Based on field studies in Kenya and Burkina Faso new insights on adoption obstacles will be generated.
• Analyze institutional influence on CA adoption.
• Compare Kenyan experience to Burkina Faso.

Project partners:
• African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT), Kenya
• Universidade de Évora, Instituto de Ciências Agrárias e Ambientais Mediterrânicas (UE/ICAAM), Évora, Portugal
• BOKU-University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Centre for Development Research, Vienna, Austria
• Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), Nairobi, Kenya
• Université Polytechnique de Bobo Dioulasso - Institut du Développement Rural (UPB - IDR), Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso