



Tropentag, September 16-18, 2015, Berlin, Germany

“Management of land use systems for enhanced food security:
conflicts, controversies and resolutions”

Conservation Agriculture in Zambia — An Invention Fast Becoming an Innovation: Assessing Pre-Conditions for Farmers’ Adaptation and Adoption Behaviour

HYCENTH TIM NDAH, JOHANNES SCHULER, KATHARINA DIEHL

Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF), Institute of Socio-Economics, Germany

Abstract

In spite of reported obstacles to a wide scale adoption of conservation agriculture (CA) in sub-Saharan Africa, recorded results in some regions across the continent contradict the expectation of a negative trend. Zambia is one example where increased progress of CA adoption has been witnessed in the past years. The recent development, challenges previous pessimistic forecasts to the possibility of a wide scale adoption and diffusion of CA in the entire region argued by most authors. Emerging success stories equally deviate from the postulations of most studies that have projected CA as an example of a poorly adapted and adopted innovation in Africa with little hope for scaling up.

While most past studies on CA adoption in Africa have focus on failed cases, so far, not much attention has been given to the emerging pockets of success in countries like Zambia amongst others. Failure to analyse success cases has only helped to minimise chances of further up scaling of existing best practices/lessons which could benefit as well as accelerate wide scale adoption.

This contribution attempts to fill this knowledge gap by applying the QAToCA approach through focus group discussions complemented by semi-structure qualitative expert and farmers interviews to assess reasons behind a positive CA adoption trend in Zambia. There is a close examination of pre-conditions for its recorded success rate compared to other areas in the region. Specifically, this study 1) assesses the given institutional, socio-economic and cultural frame conditions which have boosted CA adoption in Zambia and, 2) systematically identifies the still-existing hindering factors for a wider CA adoption beyond the case study region.

Results highlight 1) positive institutional influence, 2) systematic approach towards CA promotion – encouraging a step by step adoption, 3) mobilisation of a strong marketing dynamics around CA, as main reasons behind Zambia’s success story. Results can help promoters of CA in and out of the region to reflect on their activities and to eventually adjust or redesign them based on a more explicit understanding of where problems and opportunities are found.

Keywords: Adoption, conservation agriculture, pre-conditions, QAToCA, Zambia