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Information on Conservation Agriculture Supports Adoption: A Case Study of Lango Sub-Region in Uganda

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Abstract

The conservation agriculture method that the farmers in the Lango region located in Mid-Northern Uganda are using is based on the three classical pillars namely minimum tillage, crop rotation and maintaining a crop cover. These are similarly permanent planting stations also called 'basins' that are dug-out using hoes and or ripping done by ox-drawn ploughs for farmers that can afford to hire them; legumes and cereals grown in rotation cycles and leaving crop residues on the field to provide crop cover respectively. The maize mixed farming system specifically called the annual cropping and cattle farming system experiences a unimodal rainfall pattern that allows one harvest per year. Data from three districts show that there was reasonable uptake of CA long after completion of projects. The farmers' uptake of CA was attributed to knowledge disseminated by promoters and that gained between farmers and the former; the training and practical explanations that showed why these methods are important for maintaining soil fertility and getting better yields, hence improving their farming. The dissemination approach of the information also played a key role in increasing CA uptake owing to the history of violent conflicts in the region. The impact attributed to the use of CA at household level were improved yields as reflected in the increased incomes reported by farmers and household developments observed such as constructing and roofing houses with more permanent materials other than grass thatched huts and earth plastered with animal dung. Some of the constraints included the diminutive ratio of shared machinery between the farmers and hence delaying and shortening sowing periods; the minimum presence and involvement of extension services and seasonal rural markets dominated by middle men. Information access coupled with climate vulnerability related to droughts provided a window of opportunity for CA to penetrate and this could potentially cause a change in the farming methods. The people's perceptions were relevant for CA uptake within their socio-cultural context thus contributing to the further understanding of CA dynamics in this region in contrast to other agri-ecological zones in Uganda where CA is being promoted.

Keywords: Adoption, conservation agriculture, information, northern Uganda, knowledge

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