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Promoting food security through conservation agriculture: A case study of intensifying sustainable farming practices among smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Agriculture is a significant contributor to Zimbabwe's gross national product (GNP), yet the country has been plagued by perennial droughts, soil degradation, and limited machinery, resulting in low food production. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), crop yields need to increase threefold to feed the growing world population. Conservation agriculture, which promotes natural ecological processes to increase agricultural yields and sustainability by minimising soil disturbance, has been promoted by both donors and the government resulting in the participation of more than 1.8 million farmers in Zimbabwe. The primary objective of this case study is to investigate the hypothesis that conservation agriculture results in higher crop yields compared to conventional farming practices. By shedding light on how smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe can increase maize crop yields to improve household food security and nutrition, this study seeks to encourage the adoption of conservation agriculture practices. This case study will involve extensive literature reviews, key informant interviews, and field visits to examine the factors that have contributed to the low adoption of conservation agriculture by African smallholder farmers, such as farmers' resistance to change, knowledge and capacity gaps, and the withdrawal of donor support. The study will also highlight the benefits of conservation agriculture in improving food sufficiency. Investing in conservation agriculture is a suitable approach to promoting food security in Zimbabwe. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge on sustainable food systems by demonstrating the potential for conservation agriculture to increase agricultural yields and sustainability while minimising soil disturbance.

Keywords: Conservation agriculture, smallholders, Zimbabwe