Conservation agriculture

A manual for farmers and extension workers in Africa

Conservation agriculture holds special promise for Africa, where farming communities face the problems of low yields, impoverished soils, lack of capital, and labour shortages brought on by the scourge of AIDS. It is a way to improve the livelihoods of millions of people and achieve sustainable agriculture over a wide area.

Conservation agriculture is not a technology, but an approach to farming. It is based on three simple principles:

- Disturb the soil as little as possible,
- Keep the soil covered, and
- Mix and rotate crops.

Farmers can choose from many different technologies to do this. By applying these principles, they can improve their soil fertility and grow more food, using less labour, and at lower cost.

This manual aims to help Africa's farmers and extension workers understand the conservation agriculture approach and choose those technologies that best suit their situation.

The manual is based on the skills and experience of 90 farmers, extension personnel and scientists from 16 countries throughout Africa. It is written in clear, easy-to-understand language, and is illustrated with numerous clear line drawings.

Case studies throughout the book show how farmers in different situations have put conservation agriculture into effect.

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