

# CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2025 • VOLUME 11 • ISSUE 2

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Conservation Agriculture Plus- the way to adopt climate change: A case study conducted by CFGB

Highlights of the 10th Canadian Foodgrains Bank's Africa Partners Networking Conferences

Partner Profile: Zimbabwe Council of Churches

ALTA Travel Schedule

## Conservation Agriculture Plus - the way to adopt climate change: A case study conducted by CFGB

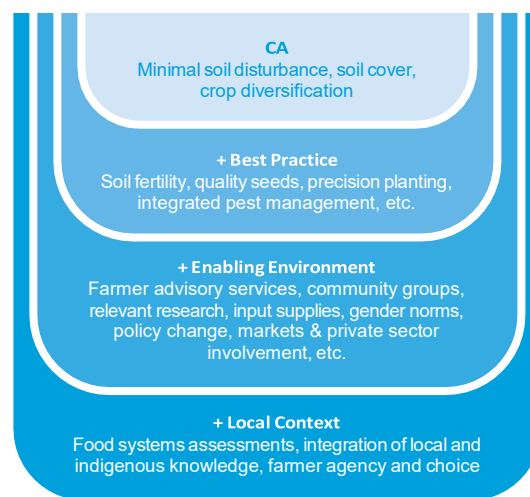
[The case study \(click here to see the full document\)](#)

CFGB undertook a case study in Ethiopia and Kenya to assess how participants in sub-Saharan Africa, who have been practicing Conservation Agriculture plus (CA+) for more than five years, have adapted to climate change impacts. The study used a mixed-methods approach, with a comparison of the biophysical parameters of CA+ fields against "business as usual" fields. Qualitative data was also gathered through key informant interviews and micro-shadowing.

### FROM CA TO CA+; WHAT IS CA+ IN THIS CONTEXT?

Conservation Agriculture has focused, in the first instance, on three principles: minimum soil disturbance, continuous organic cover, and species diversification. Recognizing the low adoption rates resulting from physical barriers-land and market access- and social barriers-in particular, gender-the concept evolved to CA+. CA+ integrates the three foundational principles of CA with locally contextualized best practices, such as soil fertility and quality seeds, within a more holistic systems approach. Critically, this integrated model adds political elements, including enabling policies and advocacy, and also focuses on personal transformation, in terms of trusting, gender equality, and mindsets, toward faster yield gains, overcoming the barriers, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

### CA+ Model



## IMPORTANT FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS:

The Conservation Agriculture Plus initiative has delivered a range of positive outcomes that started with very strong environmental benefits. The system significantly enhanced soil health; it showed increased soil organic carbon, water infiltration, and aggregate stability, along with reduced soil compaction, with farmer field assessments strongly correlating with quantitative scientific data. Additionally, biodiversity was higher under CA+, with more overall insect diversity and beneficial insects, increased agroforestry, and the reappearance of beneficial soil organisms. Critically, it has proved to be an effective climate resilience strategy, supporting adaptation by way of more resilient cropping systems, diversified crops, and better water harvesting; it also contributed to climate mitigation through increased soil carbon storage.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS:

CA+ also generated significant socio-economic benefits for small-scale farmers and communities. It significantly enhanced food and nutrition security along all four pillars, with substantial yield increases (Availability), surplus income to purchase diversified foods (Access), diversified and nutritious crops and cooking demonstrations (Utilization), and stabilization of food access, to the extent that some communities have graduated from food aid programs (Stability). Stability, together with lower operational costs and higher output, contributed to economic empowerment and a transition toward diversified, income-generating farm enterprises. Farmers received financial inclusion through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) and increased market power through organizing into cooperatives. Importantly, CA+ promoted increased gender equity by reducing the labour burden on women, opening new economic opportunities to them, and enhancing their confidence and role in household and community decision-making.

### POLICY AND MINDSET CHANGES:

CA+ led to significant policy and personal transformation. The demonstrable impact of CA+ on the ground, supported by partner advocacy, resulted in significant policy change that led to the formal integration of CA into national extension systems, government mandates for its adoption on cultivated land, as well as inclusion into university agricultural curricula in Ethiopia. In Kenya, these coincided with the promotion of "climate smart agriculture". At the personal level, CA+ fostered deep-seated mindset change, which was made possible through the creation of trust via local engagement. This was perhaps most true in terms of testing traditional norms—for example, successfully rebranding farmers who adopted minimum tillage from "lazy farmers" into "wise farmers"—and proved the power of participatory approaches along with visible success.

### MAJOR CHALLENGES OF CA+

Conservation agriculture plus implementation is impeded on various fronts, which include cultural barriers, environmental unpredictability, market dynamics, and institutional constraints. The deeply entrenched cultural practice of intensive tillage and the perception of ground cover as "messy" inhibit the uptake of CA+. Precipitation variability (drought/flooding) compromises its effectiveness, while the high demand for mulch by cattle compromises maintaining soil cover. Mistrust, broker competition, and limited value addition due to poor infrastructure/training undermine collective marketing. Scaling is further constrained by government limitations, such as inadequate staffing coupled with high turnover, thereby limiting policy implementation.

## FUTURE FOCUS

Following successful CA+ projects, three key future focus areas emerged. Firstly, nutrition requires greater prominence; initial projects focused on calories, but diversified diets and broader nutritional components should be integrated at the outset in the future. Secondly, marketing becomes more critical as increased yields lead to crop surpluses, demanding investment in value-addition, improved storage, and more robust marketing networks. Finally, appropriate mechanization is required to enable farmers to scale up CA+ areas without increasing labour, since services for direct planting ripping are rare and linkages in mechanization markets are currently weak.

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## Highlights of the 10th Canadian Foodgrains Bank's Africa Partners Networking Conferences

*Edited by Nester Mashingaidze (Lead ALTA)*

What started as a single Conservation Agriculture conference in 2013 has now grown into three regional partner networking conferences spanning sub-Saharan Africa. Every two years, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank Partners' Networking conferences bring together hundreds of practitioners, researchers, and field experts across three regional hubs in Eastern, Central and West, and Southern Africa to share lessons, align strategies, and foster innovation. The structure of these meetings emphasizes active, peer-to-peer participation rather than individual presentations, making use of partner-sharing slots and targeted breakout sessions to ensure knowledge transfer is useful and contextually relevant. The three 2024/2025 conferences drew 328 participants who had an opportunity to actively learn and share knowledge to advance collective action towards ending hunger. Below we share some key highlights on outstanding innovations or outcomes and takeaways from the conferences.

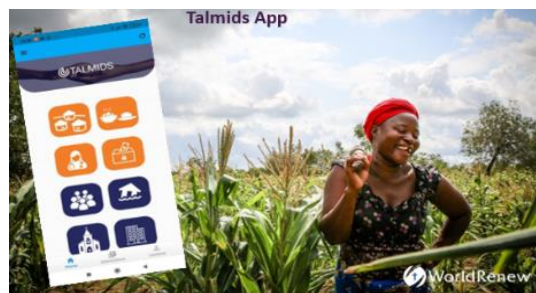
### A. ECHO EAST AFRICA AND CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK SOUTHERN AFRICA SYMPOSIUM

- The joint symposium was held in **Mponela, Malawi** on 20 - 22 August 2024.
- 130 (40F, 90M) participants from 11 countries and 52 organizations attended.
- **Theme:** *Sustainable agriculture and appropriate technologies.*



### DIGITAL LEARNING WITH THE TALMIDS APP

- **Talmids**, an android app developed by World Renew Malawi.
- Incorporates best practices in agriculture, health, household finance' regenerative agriculture, nutrition, VSLA and organizational development
- lessons use simple wordless animation, no need for language translation.
- Useful in different contexts as a conversation starter.



## B. EAST AFRICA CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK PARTNER NETWORK GATHERING

- Held in Soroti, Uganda during 5 - 8 November 2024.
- Attended by 104 participants (27F, 77M) from 6 countries and 34 Organisations
- **Theme:** *Future together for great opportunity*



## OUR EXPERTS, OUR STORIES



- With growth in expertise and experience, the CFGB partners now lead the conferences.
- **64%** of the presentations, group discussions and field visits were led by partners.
- Peer-led sessions on CA+, FMNR, Gender, VSLAs, Digital tools etc. deliver solutions grounded in actual experience, not theory.
- **Main findings from the participant satisfaction & opinion survey**
- 80%+ of survey respondents were satisfied with the conference.
- 90% of survey respondents reported making useful connections during the East Africa Conference.
- Climate change, CA+, M&E, Gender and Extension methods were top rated sessions.







### C. THE CENTRAL AND WEST AFRICA CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK PARTNER NETWORK GATHERING

- Held in Kigali, Rwanda on 13 - 16 May 2025
- Ninty six participants (25F: 71M) from 16 countries and 32 organisations

**Theme:** *Facing the future together for transformed food systems*

### FIELD VISIT TO TWO CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE SYSTEMS IN RWANDA

- Diversity in implementation of CA principles under smallholder farms in Bugesera.
- Peace and Development Network uses FFS, demos for CA integrated with promotion of savings and credit groups (AVECs), gender and nutrition.
- The Rwanda Institute of Conservation Agriculture has experimental plots, irrigation systems, and demonstration fields under CA and conventional tillage systems.
- Showcase the benefits of CA were evident.
- Of interest was the crop/livestock integration under CA.



## RESULTING SYNERGIES OR PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS ALL REGIONS

Southern Africa	East Africa	Central and West Africa
CARD contacted the Asian Rural Institute to explore staff secondment opportunities, opening the door for specialised training and knowledge exchange.	Discussions initiated on how to boost in-country and cross-country collaboration among Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania organisations on shared agriculture and livelihood priorities.	Consensus was reached on the need for stronger collaboration between NGOs, government agencies, and research institutions to effectively scale up conservation agriculture.
Several partners expressed interest in Chaya and GMCCs and received cuttings and seeds from ECHO to begin local trials.	Fadhili Trust has trained three partner organizations across Kenya on VSLA management and sustainability.	The joint CA promotion efforts by WFP, MCC, PDN, AEBR, district authorities, and RAB in Rwanda showcase a collaborative model that could guide similar initiatives across the region.
Malawian partners interested in the Maresha ripper were directed to ECHO for follow-up.	Partners in West Nile, Uganda conducted joint training sessions and continued to share skills through exchange visits. RICE-WN visited the Church of Uganda Nebbi Diocese CFGB Food Security project.	The Burundi team committed to initiate country-level advocacy for CA.
	ADRA Kenya has also trained and hosted partners on FMNR practices and provided follow-up support using a case study from a previously completed project in Mandera .	

## CROSS-CUTTING TAKEAWAYS

- Participants appreciated the opportunities to network and share experience with other development workers who attended.
- Partner and community-led presentations and sessions were consistently highly rated.
- Demand for climate resilient and Nature based solutions remains high as contextually relevant.
- There is a need for further support in MEL, livestock integration, strengthening market systems and diversification of livelihoods
- Renewed calls for farmer-centric collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders.

## KEEP THE MOMENTUM ALIVE!

The following were participant recommendations to sustain the energy until the next conferences:

- **Capture & act:** All organisations to document what worked, what did not, and what needs immediate attention ensuring that insights from the conference are turned into impact.

- **Stay connected digitally:** Launch a shared platform (forums, WhatsApp groups, knowledge hubs, central online platform) where participants continue conversations, share wins, and tackle unanswered questions together.
- **Bridge the gaps:** Foster real partnerships between organisations, communities, and institutions that facilitate collaboration across even borders for shared learning and lasting change.

The 11th series of the Canadian Foodgrain Bank Partner Networking Conference are planned for 2026/27.

Details to be confirmed in 2026

## Partner Profile: Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)



Demonstration on use of basin digger/ auger to make basins

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) is a communion of 31 mainline churches. Since its formation in 1964, The organization has made significant contribution in health, education, women's emancipation, community empowerment and the restoration of moral values and social justice.

The Zimbabwe Council of churches is a partner to Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) through United Church of Canada (UCC) since 2019. With funding and support from CFGB through UCC, ZCC has implemented projects



reaching more than 22,610 people in Zimbabwe. ZCC has implemented Humanitarian Food Assistance support, Humanitarian Early Recovery and Development (HERD) is currently implementing a 3-year Scaling Up Resilience project. The project is targeting communities in Gutu and Bikita prone to recurrent climate shocks which disrupt agricultural productivity, undermine livelihoods, and exacerbate gender and social inequalities.

ZCC is promoting adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) including conservation agriculture plus (CA Plus) including, soil and water conservation and integrated pest management and soil fertility management. Farmers also access high quality drought tolerant seed such as sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet and short season cow peas. Labour-saving technologies such as the use of soil auger for basin making, herbicides for weed control, and ripping in land preparation are also being encouraged and demonstrated.

The use of technologies has also increased inclusiveness as women, youths are now competing to take charge of basin making especially using the fuel powered soil auger and Maresha ripper which have made CA less labour intensive.

The project is promoting peer to peer learning through lead farmer approach, field days and exchange visits. These extension approaches and labour-saving technologies have helped increase reach and improve adoption of drought tolerant crops and conservation agriculture. All the CA farmers have at least 0.125ha under either, sorghum or pearl millet or finger millet. The project has 1390 CA disciple/ model farmers in Gutu and Bikita. To date 1270 of the farmers have adopted all 3 principles of CA with 120 adopting at least 1 or 2 principles

Many of the CA plots under the project are fenced to preserve mulch as farmers have been able to invest in fences, agriculture inputs and other household needs through farming and income-generating activities. Income sources include poultry, small livestock production and Internal Savings and Lending (ISALs).

CA plus is helping increase production per unit area. The figures below show baseline the when the project started and the harvests for the last season.

Crop	2023/24	2024/25
Cow peas	0.15t/ha	0.6t/ha
Sorghum	0.025t/ha	1.6t/ha
Finger	0.25t/ha	0.9t/ha
Pear Millet	0.25t/ha	1.1t/ha

Adoption of CA principles coupled with other practices such as soil health management, pest and disease management and water harvesting and improved seed have contributed to improved yields

Conservation agriculture plus (CA+) approach together with income generating activities is helping improve resilience of farmers in Bikita and Gutu to reduce vulnerability to recurrent climate related shocks



Figure 2: Exchange visits on CA land preparation





Figure 3: Lead farmer training on CA using posters



Figure 4: Sabina Mabvundwi in pearl millet field

# ALTA TRAVEL SCHEDULES

## **Jean Twilingiyumukiza:**

17-26, January 2026

Nairobi, Kenya

Nature+ sense making meeting & annual planning

16-20, February 2026

Abalak, Niger

Project visit and team building

23-27, February 2026

Oronkua, Burkina Faso

Project visit and team building

23-27, March 2026

Rwanda

Refresher Master Training for Rwanda

## **John Mbae:**

5-9, January 2026

Mwingi, Kenya

ACC&S program Visit

17-26, January 2026

Isiolo, Kenya

Nature+ sense making Meeting + Annual Work Plan and Budget Meeting

15 –20, February 2026

Kibwezi, Kenya

CFGB Board delegation Visit

23-27, February 2026

Kibwezi, Embu, Marsabit Kenya

CFGB donors Learning Tour

## **Lidet Sitotaw**

17-26, January 2026

Nairobi, Kenya

Nature+ sense making Meeting + Annual Work Plan and Budget Meeting

9-13, February 2026

Chifra, Ethiopia

Chifra agriculture and livelihood project visit

23-27, February 2026

Alamata, Ethiopia

Tigray recovery project visit

9-17, March 2026

Wolaita, Ethiopia

To visit TDA Nature+ project and climate resilient food security project

## **Lilian Zheke:**

17-26, January 2026

Nairobi, Kenya

Nature+ sense making Meeting + Annual Work Plan and Budget Meeting

27- 30, January 2026

Blantyre, Malawi

Master Trainer Malawi-Session one

9-14, February 2026

PAOZ, Zimbabwe

Partner support and training Visit

16-21, February 2026

Blantyre, Malawi

Master Trainer Malawi-Session two

2-7, March 2026

Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Partner level gathering

17-21, March 2026

Blantyre, Malawi

Master Trainer Malawi-Session two

## **Nester Mashingaidze**

10-16, January 2026

Winnipeg, Canada. Canadian Foodgrains Bank Managers' Meeting

17-26, January 2026

Kenya, Nature+ sense making Meeting + Annual Work Plan and Budget Meeting

1-8, February 2026

Morogoro Tanzania, CFGB Master Trainer Refresher Training at SAT

23 February – 6 March 2026 (TBC), Lake Zone, Tanzania. Support field visits to AICT MUD and GEITA

16-20, March 2026 (TBC),

West Nile, Uganda. Support field visit to RICE-WN