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Growing a Movement for Sustainable Farming in Kenya: The Story of the CA-Kenya Hub

John Mbae: Agriculture and Livelihood Technical Advisor for East Africa

INTRODUCTION

A Community of Practice (CoP) brings together farmers, practitioners, researchers, and partners who share a common interest in improving agricultural systems and livelihoods. Through regular interaction—whether in meetings, field visits, or digital platforms—members exchange experiences, solve problems collectively, and build on each other's knowledge. In agriculture, where conditions are constantly changing due to climate, markets, and innovation, a CoP provides a practical space for continuous learning, adaptation, and collaboration, helping communities move from isolated efforts to more coordinated, impactful action.

In Kenya's drylands and farming communities, the effects of climate change, soil degradation, and unpredictable rainfall are becoming increasingly visible. Farmers are struggling with declining soil fertility, rising production costs, and changing weather patterns that threaten their livelihoods. Yet within these challenges, a growing



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movement is helping farmers rebuild resilience and restore their soils—the **Conservation Agriculture Kenya Hub (CA-Kenya Hub)**.

A VISION THAT BEGAN WITH COLLABORATION

The story of the CA-Kenya Hub began in **2011**, when a small group of organizations came together with a shared vision: to promote **Conservation Agriculture (CA)** as a pathway to sustainable food production in Kenya.

The initiative was initially supported by the **Canadian Foodgrains Bank**, bringing together international partners including Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM), World Relief Canada (the now Tearfund Canada), World Renew, and ADRA, alongside Kenyan organizations such as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), Utooni Development Organization (UDO), and Sahelian Solutions (SASOL).

A RAPIDLY GROWING NETWORK

Over the years, the CA-Kenya Hub has continued to expand its reach and influence. From an initial group of eight founding organizations, the Hub has grown into a vibrant network that now includes **new institutional partners, government actors, research institutions, private sector actors, development partners, farmer organizations, and individual experts** passionate about sustainable agriculture. Today, the CA-Kenya Hub community has grown to **over 15 partners and over 184 individual members**, reflecting increasing national interest and commitment toward promoting Conservation Agriculture in Kenya. This growth has strengthened the Hub's ability to share knowledge, coordinate programs, and amplify the impact of sustainable farming initiatives across the country.

The Hub is hosted by the **Africa Conservation Tillage Network (ACTN)** at KALRO Kabete in Nairobi and continues to serve as a meeting point for organizations working to transform Kenya's agricultural systems through Climate Smart Agriculture Techniques.

LEARNING, SHARING, AND SCALING SOLUTIONS

Over the past decade, the CA-Kenya Hub has built a strong community of practice around Conservation Agriculture—an approach based on three core principles: Minimal soil disturbance; Permanent soil cover, and crop rotation. These practices help farmers restore soil fertility, improve yields, reduce labor, and build resilience to climate shocks.

Through regular meetings, training events, and knowledge exchanges, the Hub has enabled partners to share experiences and strengthen their programs across Kenya. A key milestone was the **Kenya Conservation Agriculture Conference held in 2018** and the **Kenya National Conservation Agriculture Symposium held in 2025**, organized by the hub, which brought together national and international stakeholders to advance the CA agenda and strengthen collaboration. During the Symposium, several CA champions were honored for their excellent work in promoting and practicing CA.

Members of the Hub have since implemented Conservation Agriculture initiatives across multiple counties, reaching thousands of farmers and helping communities adopt more sustainable farming practices.

RESPONDING TO A CHANGING AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

As Kenya's agricultural sector continues to evolve, so too has the role of the CA-Kenya Hub. Devolution has increased the role of county governments in agriculture, while climate change has intensified the need for resilient farming systems.

Recognizing these shifts, the Hub developed its [Strategic Plan 2023–2026](#), providing a roadmap to strengthen collaboration and expand the reach of Conservation Agriculture.

The strategy focuses on five key priorities: **Scaling Conservation Agriculture:** Supporting farmers through training, demonstration sites, and awareness programs to increase adoption of CA practices; **Strengthening Research and Capacity:** Collaborating with universities and research institutions to generate evidence, develop innovations, and build the next generation of CA practitioners; **Advocacy and Policy Engagement:** Working with national and county governments to integrate Conservation Agriculture into agricultural policies and development plans; **Communication and Knowledge Sharing:** Expanding digital platforms, media engagement, and learning resources to promote awareness of CA innovations and success stories; and **Resource Mobilization:** Building partnerships and securing investment to support the long-term growth and sustainability of the Hub.

FARMERS AT THE CENTER

At the heart of the CA-Kenya Hub's work are farmers and rural communities. Conservation Agriculture offers a practical and accessible approach that aligns closely with traditional farming knowledge while introducing innovations that improve productivity and environmental stewardship.

For many smallholder farmers, adopting CA practices has meant healthier soils, more reliable harvests, and improved household food security.

LOOKING AHEAD/FUTURE OUTLOOK

The journey of the CA-Kenya Hub demonstrates the power of collaboration in addressing complex agricultural challenges. By bringing together diverse partners and knowledge systems, the Hub is helping to build a resilient agricultural future for Kenya.

As the network continues to grow, its vision remains clear: a food-secure Kenya supported by climate-resilient farming systems. The growth of the initiative has sparked increasing interest across diverse sectors in climate-smart agriculture, including nature-based solutions, agroecology, regenerative agriculture, Farming God's Way, and soil and water conservation, among others.

Through partnerships, innovation, and farmer-centered approaches, the CA-Kenya Hub is not only transforming agricultural practices—it is nurturing a movement for sustainable farming that will benefit generations to come.

Expanding membership and diversity: Welcoming more farmers, youth, researchers, and private sector actors to enrich learning and innovation across the network.

Deepening knowledge exchange: Strengthening regular forums—both physical and digital—for sharing practical experiences, lessons learned, and emerging best practices in conservation agriculture.

Documenting and sharing impact: Capturing success stories, data, and evidence to demonstrate value and attract further support.

“It is inspiring to see how the CA Kenya Hub has grown over the years into a vibrant platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing. Its strength lies in the commitment of its members and the shared value they find in working together—demonstrating that collective action is far more powerful than working alone.” — Stephan Lutz, CA Hub co-founder/pioneer and former chairman
“The CA Hub, by bringing together diverse stakeholders, recognizes the multiplier effect of partnerships in scaling conservation agriculture”— Dr. Boaz Waswa, Current Chair of the Hub

Fostering innovation: Encouraging experimentation with locally appropriate technologies and approaches to address emerging challenges.

Ensuring sustainability: Developing long-term strategies for ownership, resource mobilization, and continuity of the Community of Practice beyond project cycles.

“The CA Hub story is one of shared vision and collective action—where partnerships turn ideas into impact, and learning becomes the foundation for lasting change.” “The CA Hub story is one of shared vision and collective action—where partnerships turn ideas into impact, and learning becomes the foundation for lasting change.”

Source:

[CA Hub Kenya Strategic Plan 2016-2018](#)

[CA Hub Kenya Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#)

Most Significant Change Story: The Promising Journey of Babu Beekeepers Group, Komto Landscape.

Tajebe Dibaba: Climate Resilience Manager (Food for the Hungry Ethiopia)



In the Komto landscape of Ethiopia, a quiet but powerful transformation is taking place among members of the Babu Honey Producers Group. Supported by Food for the Hungry Ethiopia in partnership with Mennonite Central Committee Canada, this group of 14 members—8 women and 6 men—is redefining livelihoods through sustainable beekeeping under the Nature+ initiative.

At the outset, the group relied on traditional beehives—small, inefficient, and often placed high in trees. Harvesting honey was risky and labor-intensive, with limited yields. The lack of protective equipment further restricted participation, particularly for women and more vulnerable members of the community.

Recognizing these challenges, targeted support was introduced. Members received hands-on training in modern beekeeping practices, honey production, processing, and marketing, facilitated by experts from the Holeta Beekeeping Research Center. Alongside this, the group was equipped with modern beehives, protective gear, and essential apiculture tools—creating a safer, more inclusive working environment.

The impact has been significant. With improved skills and equipment, the group established a honey production center (shed) and began saving collectively, accumulating 12,000 birrs (105CAD) to support their operations. Beyond production, the group meets regularly to address social challenges, contribute to a shared fund, and strengthen cooperation among members.

Through this journey, members have gained more than just income—they have built confidence, developed technical expertise in bee colony management, and discovered new opportunities. Some have even begun establishing their own beekeeping enterprises at the household level.

Now, the group is preparing to supply its first batch of high-quality honey to the central market, meeting standards guided by ongoing technical support from the Holeta Beekeeping Research Center. These collaborations, including practical training and follow-up visits, have strengthened both product quality and long-term sustainability.

Looking ahead, the Babu Honey Producers Group is focused on growth. Plans are underway to increase the number of modern hives, upgrade their production facility (roofing of production shade with iron sheet), and diversify into improved livestock fattening. Their work is not only improving livelihoods but also contributing to ecological restoration through enhanced pollination and biodiversity.

As Birhane Hambisa (committee member) reflects: “Despite the challenges we have faced to get here, we have begun harvesting high-quality honey.”

This story is a testament to the power of knowledge, collaboration, and nature-based solutions—demonstrating how communities can restore ecosystems while building resilient and inclusive livelihoods.

Nature+ in Action: Building Resilient Landscapes and Livelihoods

Inside Fadhili Trust’s journey of restoring ecosystems and empowering communities in Kibwezi

John Mbae: Agriculture and Livelihood Technical Advisor for East Africa

OVERVIEW

For over 22 years, **Fadhili Trust** has walked alongside communities in Kenya, championing sustainable livelihoods, financial inclusion, and climate-resilient agriculture. What began as a home-based care initiative has grown into a trusted grassroots organization, working closely with churches, local leaders, and farmer groups to drive lasting transformation.

Since 2018, Fadhili has deepened its focus in **Kibwezi West, Makueni County**, where it supports communities through Village Savings and Loans (VSL), Conservation Agriculture (CA), and, more recently, nature-positive landscape restoration. Women—who make up 90% of VSL members—are at the heart of this transformation, strengthening both household resilience and community leadership.

Success story on Restoration: A Spring Returns: Nature's Revival in Kibwezi West: How restoration efforts are bringing water, life, and hope back to communities (narrated by Andy-CEO CFGB)



Figure 1 Andy- CEO CFGB at the restored spring

In the dry landscapes of **Kibwezi West, Kenya**, water has always been scarce, shaping the lives and livelihoods of the communities who call this region home. For years, a once-forgotten spring lay hidden beneath degraded land—its waters long gone, its presence only a memory among older residents.

Today, that story has changed. Standing at the site, **Andy, CEO of CFGB**, reflects on a remarkable transformation: a spring that disappeared decades ago has come back to life—flowing once again after years of restoration work under the Nature+ Project.

Just four years ago, this landscape told a very different story. The hills were bare, the soil exposed, and the ecosystem struggling under the pressure of erosion and prolonged drought. There was little vegetation to hold moisture, no cover to support rainfall cycles, and no sign of the spring that once sustained the community. But through intentional restoration—replanting vegetation, protecting the land, and allowing nature to regenerate—something extraordinary began to happen.

As greenery returned, so did the balance of the ecosystem. And then, the spring reappeared. What was once dry ground is now a vital water source, providing clean, tested water for drinking, irrigation, and household use. For the community, this is more than just a spring—it is a lifeline.

“This is exactly what happens when we allow nature to recover,” Andy explains. “When ecosystems are restored, they don’t just support the environment—they sustain people.” This revival in Kibwezi West is a powerful reminder that even the most degraded landscapes can be restored. With the right practices and strong community involvement, nature can heal—and when it does, it gives back abundantly.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Fadhili’s work has delivered measurable impact at scale

- 50,000+ members engaged in Village Savings & Loans
- 2,200+ savings groups formed
- Over USD 2.5 million mobilized in community savings
- 5,596 farmers trained in Conservation Agriculture, with 4,071 actively practicing
- 96 pastors and 368 church and village leaders equipped to lead community transformation
- 120 gender champions trained on GBV awareness creation & advocacy
- 400,000 + trees grown for the improvement of forest cover in degraded areas

NATURE+ PROJECT: A NEW CHAPTER IN LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

Building on this strong foundation, Fadhili launched the **Nature+ (Nature Positive Food Systems) Project** in the **Mbui Nzau landscape**—an area severely affected by drought, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and declining agricultural productivity.

The Nature+ Project represents a bold, integrated approach that connects **environmental restoration with food systems and livelihoods**, demonstrating that sustainable development is most effective when people and nature thrive together.

FROM DEGRADATION TO REGENERATION



Mbui Nzau Landscape, October 2024



Photo taken at the same location in May 2025

Across the Mbui Nzau landscape, visible transformation is underway. Communities are actively restoring degraded ecosystems through practical, locally driven solutions, including:

- Semi-circular soil bunds to improve water retention
- Gabions to control gully erosion and stabilize land
- Rehabilitation of fragile areas such as the Kalamba gully system
- Restoration of the Mbui Nzau hills by livestock exclusion, tree planting, soil and water conservation

These interventions are not only reversing land degradation but also rebuilding the natural resource base that communities depend on for survival.

CLIMATE-SMART FARMING FOR RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS

At the farm level, Nature+ promotes **climate-smart and regenerative agriculture** practices that improve productivity while protecting the environment. Farmers are adopting:

- Conservation Agriculture techniques
- Kitchen gardens to enhance household nutrition
- Innovative practices such as the use of Azolla for soil fertility and livestock feed

Through demonstration plots and farmer learning systems, communities are gaining the knowledge and confidence to transition toward more sustainable and resilient farming systems.

COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE

A defining strength of the Nature+ Project is its **community-led governance model**, which ensures ownership and long-term sustainability. Structures include: Project Monitoring Committees at the ward level; Community Development Committees at the sub-location level; Water User Associations and watershed committees, and Networks of trained community volunteers, including lead farmers, VSLA agents, and environmental champions

This inclusive system is reinforced through collaboration with county and national government actors, creating a strong ecosystem for accountability and scale.

FAITH IN ACTION: DRIVING TRANSFORMATION

Fadhili's **Church and Community Transformation (CCT)** approach continues to play a vital role in mobilizing change. Churches are not only places of worship but also hubs of development—empowering communities to: Plant trees and care for the environment; Support vulnerable households, including the elderly and orphans; Initiate savings groups and adopt sustainable farming practices, and Mentor youth in conservation and community service.

This integration of faith and development has strengthened social cohesion and inspired collective action at the grassroots level.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR LASTING IMPACT

At its core, the success of Fadhili Trust—and the Nature+ Project—is rooted in **partnerships**. By bringing together communities, faith leaders, government institutions, and development partners, the initiative harnesses the power of collaboration to scale impact.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

As the Nature+ Project continues to grow, the vision is clear: to expand landscape restoration, deepen climate-smart agriculture adoption, and strengthen community systems that sustain change.

Fadhili Trust is demonstrating that **when communities are empowered, ecosystems restored, and partnerships strengthened, transformation is not only possible—it is sustainable.**

ALTA TRAVEL SCHEDULES

Jean Twiringiyumukiza:

10-22 April

N'Djamena, Chad & Kousseri, Cameroon
CLWR-UFE Evaluation, and Partner Training
Workshop

29-30 April

Burera & Ngoma, Rwanda
CFGB Visit & Haitians exchange visit to PDN
&AEBR

04-08 May

Kigali, Rwanda
CFGB M&E Exchange Workshop

22-26 June

N.d, Rwanda
Master Trainer Refresher Session for Rwanda

Lilian Zheke:

20-24 April

Mponela, Malawi
MT session 3, Malawi partners

5-6 May

Masvingo, Zimbabwe
Country level workshop, Zim partners

8-12 June

Mponela, Malawi
MT session 4, Malawi partners

John Mbae:

30 -4 April 2026

Tharaka Nithi, Kenya
Training NCKK

7-10 April 2025

Mwingi, Kenya
ACC&S Support- Training

13-17 April 2026

Kibwezia, Kenya
Nature Plus CoP Exchange Visit

May/June 2026

Uganda
Country-level Workshop

May/June 2026

Tharaka, Kenya
Country-Wide Networking Workshop

Nester Mashingaidze

May/June 2026

Uganda Country-level Networking Workshop

1 – 6 June 2026

Kenya
Nature+ Partner Gathering