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MOVE
Market Oriented Value Chains for Jobs and Growth in the ECOWAS Region

Mitigating Climate Change Impacts through Conservation Agriculture

For decades, growing populations and rapid urbanisation have reduced the amount of available farmland. Fallow periods have shortened, forcing most West African farmers to cultivate the same plots of land year after year. Many still use conventional methods such as slashing and burning or extensive ploughing. These practices strip the soil of biomass, leaving it bare and vulnerable to degradation, which ultimately reduces fertility and yields. Traditional shifting cultivation can no longer sustain soil health under these pressures. Long-term farm productivity requires systems that mimic nature's ecological processes and promote natural vegetation cover.

Conservation Agriculture for a Greener Future

Conservation agriculture (CA) offers a promising path forward. It combines agricultural and forestry practices to promote sustainable land management, protect the environment and support the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. The core idea is straightforward: by mimicking natural processes, soils can heal and adapt to climate change while improving livelihoods in a sustainable way.

The Farming Method is guided by three closely linked principles:

- Minimal soil disturbance
- Permanent organic soil cover
- Diversification and Agroforestry (crop rotation, crop association)

Training Design and Outreach

To promote conservation agriculture as an effective method of environmental protection, MOVE, supported by Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), created a targeted training program (Conversation Agriculture Training) to encourage the widespread adoption of these practices.

The training is split into two parts:

1. Theoretical sessions cover the principles of CA and Agroforestry (AF), integrating species like cashew and topics on land preparation, soil health, cover crops (e.g. Mucuna pruriens), productivity-boosting practices, and natural weed control.

2. During the practical field sessions, participants gain hands-on experience in areas such as land preparation, planting, soil cover and weed management. They also devise immediate action plans for their own farms.

August 2025

I now understand how to manage soil fertility using organic fertilizers and the benefits of cover cropping. I learned how cover crops help protect the soil and improve its quality.

~ Emelia Nibebiir, farmer

Mainstreaming Gender for Equitable Agricultural Development

Gender considerations are integral to the approach to agricultural development, ensuring the active participation of both men and women. The training specifically addresses gender-related constraints that could prevent the adoption of CA/AF, such as issues relating to land tenure, access to training, labour availability, resources and information. Discussions cover both gender mainstreaming and gender transformative approaches to ensure equitable benefits.

However, particular care is also taken in the selection of participants who act as extension agents. Participants are selected by MoFA from various regions and districts. After participating in the training, they share their newfound knowledge with farmers in their operational areas.

The Conservation Agriculture Training in Numbers

In Ghana, almost **200 farmers** and extension agents have been trained since 2023

81 female participants

111 male participants

In Burkina Faso, almost **900 farmers** and extension agents have been trained since 2023

384 female participants

500 male participants

Plans are in place to extend the programme to Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

The Market Oriented Value Chains for Jobs and Growth in the ECOWAS Region (MOVE) project is co-funded by the European Union (EU) under the Samoa agreement with Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

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