

Special Issue

Conservation Agriculture and Management of Soil and Water

Message from the Guest Editors

The concept of conservation agriculture (CA), with the benefits to agricultural production driven by soil and water conservation, has been known since the 1950s. Nonetheless, large-scale adoption of CA did not occur until well into the 1990s and is still largely confined to developed countries, except for some places in South America. The adoption incentive in those agroecological environments is not yet driven by the need to manage agricultural enterprises as businesses but by increasing product quantity and reliability. Adoption is also hampered by the yield gap, which often applies when farmers change from conventional practice to CA, and there are competing uses for crop residues. Emerging issues in farming systems where CA has become common practice are stratification of nutrients and herbicide resistance, while mounting pressure on safe use of herbicides will also play a crucial role in the future of CA. Management options to overcome these problems may involve occasional tillage that may partly undermine the principles of CA. There are also questions about the ability of CA systems to sequester carbon, under what conditions it occurs, and where it does not.

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