

AN EVALUATION OF CONSERVATION FARMING AS A DRIVE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AT SIVOMO AREA, NKAYI DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to evaluate conservation farming as a drive towards sustainable agricultural production at Sivomo area which is located in Nkayi District, Zimbabwe. The evaluation was measured against the following indicators (i) the effectiveness and sustainability of CF practices in enhancing productivity of smallholder farmers (ii) the adoption and success of CF practices by smallholder farmers. The study applied the qualitative research design to assess the CF adoption and sustainability efficacy from 60 participants who included NGO employed field officers, Arex Officers, State employed Officers, and household heads. Findings that revealed the adoption of CA depends on farmers' choice which to a great extent is based on observation and trying out of the programme. The study also revealed that the use of crop residue as soil cover reveals complexities over priorities in smallholder farms. Smallholder farmers have insufficient paddocks for their livestock which end up destroying the soil in the farmland. Farmers have painted a vivid picture of some of these complexities by revealing how adoption is not an *event* but constitutes a *process* which varies from agent to agent as a result of differing decision-making procedures. Basing on these findings, the researcher recommends less technocratic approaches to agriculture to be adopted. Increased or enhanced use of social capital to leverage farmers against the CA's demand on labour is also of paramount importance.

KEYWORDS: Agricultural Production, Agrarian Policy, Conservation Farming, Conservation Agriculture, Sustainable Agriculture