

The Maize Forum (endorsed by the Maize Trust) has identified Conservation Agriculture (CA) as one of the key focus area to enable farmers to achieve sustainable and profitable agriculture and to subsequently improve their livelihoods through the application of the three CA principles, namely minimal soil disturbance, permanent soil cover and crop rotation.

One of the objectives is to train a critical group of stakeholders in the principles of Conservation Agriculture. Students with this background and skills will be the champions to lead, introduce and promote Conservation Agriculture in South Africa.

One of the strategic goals is to have Conservation Agriculture included into the curricula of universities and agricultural schools. Multidisciplinary research is very important to support CA principles in the long-term. Besides soil science, it is necessary to have the support of the different agronomic fields (crop & soil science, plant pathology, weed science, soil microbiology, biochemical sciences, etc.).

A recent CA workshop of the Maize Trust has identified the need for the development of local experts to interpret international research results for the implementation and application thereof in our unique soil and environmental conditions.

The focus of the CA strategy is to improve the efficient use of agriculture's natural resources for food production, ensure their sustainable use and management, reduce poverty and increase the wealth of people and industries dependent on natural resource-based agriculture. The aim is to accelerate the adoption of CA principles nationally and

to mobilize, motivate, inspire, inform, empower and enable commercial, emerging and small scale farmers to promote Conservation Agriculture and practices in their production systems.

Educated local students will enable us to form a network of local expertise over time that could play a major role in benefitting present and future generations as far as CA is concerned.