

# Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group: Food Security & Conservation in Africa



*The Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG) comprises seven US-based conservation organizations with field programs in Africa. ABCG's mission is to tackle complex and changing conservation challenges by catalyzing and strengthening collaboration, and bringing the best resources from across a continuum of conservation organizations to effectively and efficiently work toward this vision of Africa.*

*ABCG has prepared a report compiling the experiences and lessons learned on biodiversity conservation and food security from field work and the collective expertise of the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Conservation International (CI) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), three ABCG organizational members. The objective of the food security and conservation working group is to develop an integrated set of foundation-year activities that will begin to allow enhanced understanding of the conditions necessary for sustainable agriculture intensification to improve food security, and improved on-farm uptake of biodiversity-sensitive intensification practices.*



## Member contributions to report: Two case studies and a review of tools

*Understanding trade-offs and synergies between food security and conservation in Africa is essential for sound planning and management decisions that affect the future of both poor rural people and wildlife.*

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**Wildlife Conservation Society** conducted a participatory land use planning process that defined zones for agriculture, hunting, and community use and followed up with input packages and technical support for the consolidation of stable farming systems within the agricultural zones.

**African Wildlife Foundation** worked with partners in the Zambezi Heartland to introduce conservation agriculture techniques and improved livestock breeds to increase yields, enable more productive family labor on areas already degraded, and work with farmers to adopt measures to reduce human wildlife conflict.

**Conservation International** connects the case studies with a complementary analysis of spatial planning and community engagement approaches in the context of 'lessons learned' from existing development experiences in Africa.





## Framework

As established by the working group, principles that allow the trade-offs between conservation and food security objectives to be optimized include:

- Longer term food security is underpinned by good environmental management and biodiversity conservation.
- In meeting shorter term food security needs, ecosystem health is often unavoidably traded off—particularly in times of shock.
- Supporting the introduction of more resilient agricultural systems for smallholders can improve the quality of these tradeoffs.

## Assessment of Tools

The report includes an assessment of various tools that can support decision-making where tradeoffs and synergies between conservation and food security can be better managed and can underpin participatory land use planning. The following categories of approaches were examined:

- Broad-scale Spatial Planning
- Localized Mapping
- Non-spatial Participatory

## Lessons Learned

Keys to designing conservation agriculture efforts that lead to effective conservation and food security include:

- *Issues of size and scale* – It is important to operate at the level of areas that are significant in terms of maintaining ecosystem functions and the biodiversity we are attempting to conserve.
- *Location* – Closely related to size and scale issues, land use activities and their positions on the landscapes influence dynamics and pressures between smallholder farmers and natural ecosystems.
- *Participatory Planning and Implementation* – Participatory land use planning (PLUP) allows local people to engage in an explicit and transparent process of assessing their livelihood options and developing a shared vision for using land and natural resources.
- *Importance of Partnerships* – Working on farming systems as part of a conservation strategy necessarily involves many actors from local to national levels.

## Next Steps for ABCG and Its Member Organizations

Beyond the actions to be taken by the organizations involved, this review identifies several areas where ABCG and its member organizations are exceptionally well-placed to have an important impact on how strengthening farming systems as part of a conservation strategy develops. These include:

- *Defining best practices* that ABCG members and their partners and donors apply and advocate in the course of their work;
- *Defining indicators* that document how farming systems are becoming more robust, the impacts that changes in farming practices have on ecosystems, wildlife and humans.
- *Linking with farmer-level innovation networks* to ensure that conservation agriculture approaches are 'on the menu' of options that farmers can consider.

**Download the report at  
[www.abcg.org](http://www.abcg.org)**



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