

Wherever agriculture is practiced, it affects – and is affected by – human activity. Agriculture provides food, fiber and many other recognised functions as landscape preservation, carbon sequestration; it contributes to rural development. However, in many cases agriculture affects adversely biodiversity, soil quality, the quantity and quality of water resources and the environment.

Agriculture often is subjected to political debate and scrutiny and is governed and shaped by multiple policies. In the recent past, agriculture was mainly driven by productivity goals. At present, however, the sustainability of the current agricultural model is being questioned. Besides, information on the theory and practice of sustainable agriculture is scattered around the world. In response to such concerns, several models for sustainable agriculture have emerged: conservation agriculture, direct-sowing, conservation tillage, no-till, resource-conserving technologies, organic farming, etc.

One of the most spread systems worldwide is conservation agriculture. It is being practiced in a number of places, including Australia, North America, the southern part of South America, the Indo-Gangetic Plains of South Asia and China. Its socio-economic and environmental impacts are thought to be favourable and significant. Understandably, conservation agriculture has become an item of widespread interest, also in Europe.

The objective of KASSA project – (Knowledge Assessment and Sharing on Sustainable Agriculture) was to make a systematic state of the art inventory of the global knowledge on conservation agriculture. During a 18 months period (September 2004- February 2006), the 28 international partners of KASSA had built up a comprehensive knowledge base on the experiences in conservation agriculture in Europe, Asia, Latin America and North Africa – its practices, approaches, systems, conditions, gaps and challenges – Results are assembled within this CD Rom. They apply to local stakeholders and among them, farmers and professionals, researchers and policymakers.