

Evidence-based opportunities for out-scaling climate-smart agriculture in East Africa

Working Paper No. 172

CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change,
Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS)

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RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
**Climate Change,
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Correct citation:

Lamanna, C, Namoi N, Kimaro A, Mpanda M, Egeru A, Okia C, Ramirez-Villegas J, Mwongera C, Ampaire E, van Asten P, Winowiecki L, Läderach P, Rosenstock TS. 2016. Evidence-based opportunities for out-scaling climate-smart agriculture in East Africa. CCAFS Working Paper no. 172. CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). Copenhagen, Denmark. Available online at: www.ccafs.cgiar.org

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The CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) is a strategic partnership of CGIAR and Future Earth, led by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). The Program is carried out with funding by CGIAR Fund Donors, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Australian Government (ACIAR), Irish Aid, Environment Canada, Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Netherlands, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical (IICT), UK Aid, Government of Russia, the European Union (EU), New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with technical support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

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Abstract

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is being widely promoted as a solution for food insecurity and climate change adaptation in food systems of sub-Saharan Africa, while simultaneously reducing the rate of greenhouse gas emissions. Governments throughout Africa are writing policies and programs to promote CSA practices despite uncertainty about the ability for practices to meet the triple CSA objectives of CSA. We conducted a systematic review of 175 peer-reviewed and grey literature studies, to gauge the impact of over seventy potential CSA practices on CSA outcomes in Tanzania and Uganda. Using a total of 6,342 observations, we found that practice impacts were highly context (i.e. farming system and location) specific. Nevertheless, practice effect across CSA outcomes generally agreed in direction. While our results suggest that CSA is indeed possible, lack of mitigation data precludes a more conclusive statement. Furthermore, the inclusion of potential adoption rates changes the potential of CSA practices to achieve benefits at scale. Given the uncertainty and variable impacts of practices across regions and outcomes, it is critical for decision makers to prioritize practices based on their desired outcomes and local context.

Keywords

Climate-smart agriculture, Tanzania, Uganda, adoption, resilience, maize, decision making

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Acknowledgements

We thank A. Poultouchidou, A. Akinyale, P. Bell, D. Grunzel, M. Ravina, S. Rayess, and Z. Cheng for assisting with reference screening and data extraction. This work was carried out as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). Data collection was supported by the ‘Increasing Food Security and Farming System Resilience in East Africa through Wide-Scale Adoption of Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices’ project, funded with support from the International Fund for Agriculture Development Grant number 2000000176. C. Lamanna and T. Rosenstock were supported by CCAFS Flagship Project ‘Partnerships for Scaling Climate-Smart Agriculture’. JR-V was supported by the Climate Smart Agriculture Flagship of CCAFS.

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Introduction

Currently, food production in much of Africa falls short of both need and potential productivity [1-3]. Projected future increases in growing season temperature, the unpredictability of precipitation patterns, and the frequency of extreme events threatens production even further [4,5]. Yields of maize and beans, the most widely planted crops in SSA, may decrease by 25 to 50 % by 2050 [5,6]. Locally, the projected rates of productivity decline may be even higher. For example, yields of beans are projected to decline in Tanzania by up to 75 % by 2040 if no adaptation actions are taken [8]. Productivity of livestock is also likely to decline. Feed intake by cattle declines 2.5 % for every degree above 30 °C, which will have cascading impacts on productivity of milk and meat. Given both persistent and widespread food insecurity in SSA and future risks to food production from climate change, new solutions are urgently needed to improve the productivity and resilience of smallholder farmers in the region.

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA), agriculture and food systems that (1) enhance food security, (2) improve resilience to climate variability and change, and (3) mitigate greenhouse gas emissions where appropriate [9,10], may be a solution to the food and climate challenges facing sub-Saharan smallholder farmers. Many farm-level management practices have been identified as being climate-smart, from agroforestry to improved storage of grain postharvest. However, not all CSA practices deliver “triple-wins” in all locations. For instance, in sub-humid western Kenya, conservation tillage depressed maize yields by approximately 16% and decreased rainfall infiltration compared to conventional tillage [11], whereas in drier areas such as southern Zimbabwe, conservation tillage has increased maize yields, rainfall

infiltration, and soil carbon [12]. Such conflicting results illustrate the main challenge for CSA planning: context specificity. That is, practices may produce the desired CSA benefits in one place but may have contrasting impacts in others. Therefore, decision-makers must carefully choose those agricultural management practices that have the highest likelihood to deliver the desired outcomes locally.

Recognizing the potential of CSA for agricultural development, political institutions and governments across sub-Saharan Africa are creating CSA-specific policies and programs. In 2015, Kenya, Uganda, Namibia, Botswana, and Tanzania drafted CSA Country Programmes that set national agendas on CSA [13]. At the same time, learning alliances are forming to operationalize the plans and move CSA into action [14]. However, programmes and policies have largely been based on a limited amount of data and evidence, because systematic evidence on the effectiveness of potential CSA practices across multiple CSA outcomes is lacking [15].

Here we conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of agricultural management practices and technologies for two countries in East Africa, Uganda and Tanzania, to determine the evidence-base and identify opportunities for CSA planning in the region. We first compiled peer-reviewed scientific and grey literature on potential CSA practices. We included grey literature in the systematic review as it may contain a significant amount of evidence on the impact of agricultural practices on CSA outcomes, particularly in developing countries, and failure to include grey-literature in meta-analyses may bias results [16]. We then used the resulting data, along with probabilistic simulations, to identify evidence-based opportunities for out-scaling CSA, given various decision-maker contexts and priorities.

Results

Dataset

The systematic review resulted in a pool of 61 peer-reviewed studies in Tanzania, and 33 in Uganda, for a meta-analytical inclusion rate of approximately 10-13% in both countries.

Screening of the located grey literature resulted in 56 studies included from Tanzania, and 25 from Uganda. The final dataset consisted of 6,342 observations of the impact of a practice on a CSA outcome relative to a control, split almost evenly between Tanzania and Uganda, and between peer-reviewed and grey literature. All CSA technologies and outcomes were organized into hierarchical classifications to allow for analysis at different levels of aggregation. For a list of technology and outcome classifications see Appendix I and [15].

Data gathered from Uganda covered 26 different practices from 25 and 33 studies in grey and peer-reviewed literature respectively. Grey literature contributed 66% of the data, but did not cover any practices that were not already covered in the peer-reviewed literature. The most studied practice was inorganic fertilizer application (35.4% of the observations). Other well-represented practices included organic fertilizers (9.5 %), crop rotation (3.4%), and green manure (3.4%). Millet was the crop with the most data available (26% of the observations), followed by maize (17.8%), the cash crop sesame (15.2%), and roots and tubers like cassava (11.5%). In total, 12 different agricultural products were covered in the database. While the geographic coverage of the studies was not limited to only one farming system or region of Uganda, there was little to no information available from the northeastern region, which is the most arid part of the country, dominated by pastoral and mixed crop/livestock systems (Figure 1).

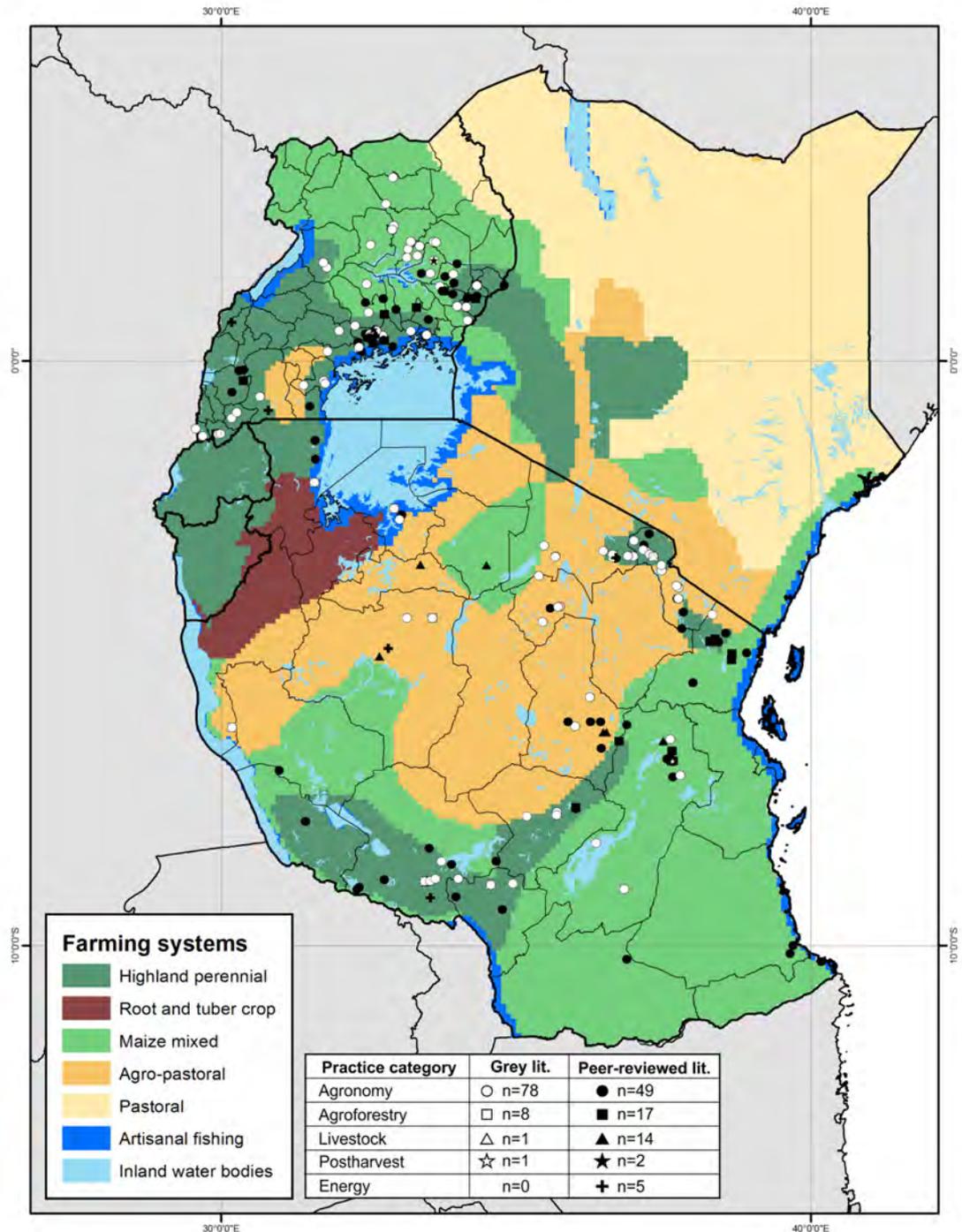


Figure 1: Location of sites of studies included in the meta-analysis in Uganda ($n=58$) and Tanzania ($n=117$), overlaid on the farming systems of East Africa [17]. Peer-reviewed studies are shown with black markers, and grey literature with white markers, while marker shape indicates the theme of the practice studied.

In Tanzania, a total of 29 practices were covered in the database, from 61 peer-reviewed and 56 grey literature sources. Grey literature contributed roughly one-third (37.6 %) of the

observations in the dataset, and added information on six practices that were otherwise not covered in the peer-reviewed literature, namely, conservation agriculture, crop rotation, hybridization of livestock, postharvest storage technologies, use of agroforestry prunings as soil amendments, and system of rice intensification. Inorganic fertilizer research was best represented (33 % of the observations), followed by organic fertilizer (11.2 %), intercropped agroforestry (7.8%), and reduced tillage (6.7 %). By far the most studied crop was maize, representing 52.5 % of the data collected. Other well-represented crops included legumes (11 %), sorghum (6 %), and rice (5%). Geographically, all of the farming systems in Tanzania were represented in the dataset, except for the root and tuber system (Figure 1).

Effect Sizes

At the aggregate level, the effect of practices on CSA outcomes varies both within and between practices. Some practices, such as nutrient management (which includes inorganic and organic fertilizers) have clearly positive and geographically consistent impacts on productivity (effect size = 0.34 ± 0.07 in Tanzania, and 0.37 ± 0.04 in Uganda, Figure 2). Other practices, such as agroforestry, have more variable impacts on productivity both within and between countries (effect size = 0.28 ± 0.11 in Tanzania, and 0.09 ± 0.11 in Uganda), suggesting substantial context dependencies. In Tanzania, the practices with the largest mean effect size on productivity are postharvest improvements (0.45 ± 0.17), soil management (0.37 ± 0.04), and water management (0.37 ± 0.11). In Uganda, livestock diet management (1.15 ± 0.33), nutrient management (0.37 ± 0.04), and soil management (0.36 ± 0.06) have the largest effect on productivity.

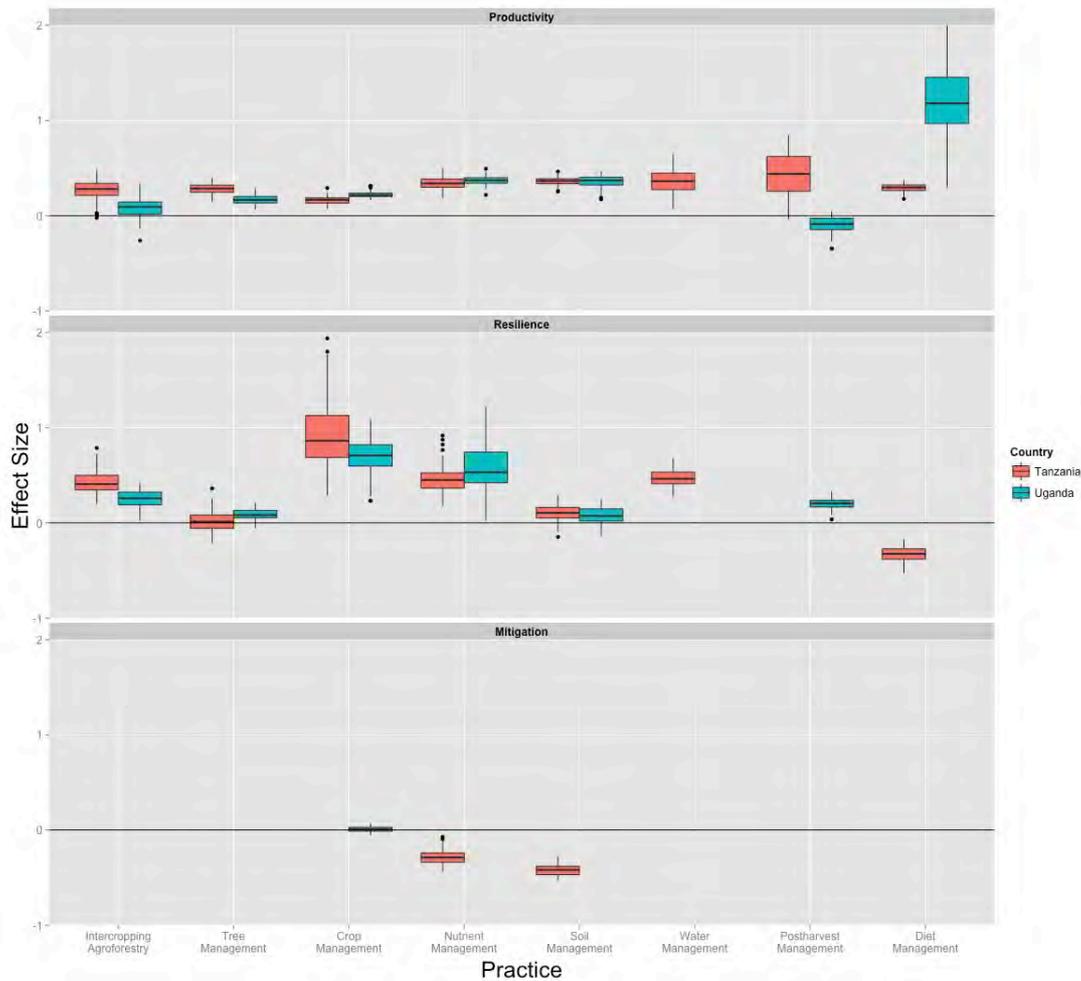


Figure 2: Weighted mean effect size of aggregate climate-smart agricultural practices on productivity indicators (top panel), resilience indicators (middle panel), and mitigation indicators (bottom panel), in Tanzania (red) and Uganda (teal). Box plots represent the median and quartiles of the weighted mean effect size from 1000 samples from the database. An effect size of 1 is a 278% increase in the value of the indicator for the practice relative to the control.

Practices also vary in effect on different CSA pillars (i.e. productivity, resilience, mitigation), at both aggregate and disaggregate levels. The practices that have the largest effect size in productivity do not necessarily have the largest effect size in other pillars. At the aggregate level, crop management has the largest mean impact on resilience in Uganda (0.68 ± 0.18), followed by nutrient management (0.58 ± 0.03), while in Tanzania, crop management (0.85 ± 0.31) and nutrient management (0.49 ± 0.13) have the largest positive impacts on resilience indicators (Figure 2). While very little mitigation data was available for CSA practices in

Tanzania and Uganda, the data again show variable impacts of CSA practices on mitigation indicators between practices and locations. When practices are disaggregated into specific technologies such as green manure or water harvesting, the variation in effect size between pillars and locations is still apparent (Appendix II).

The effect sizes of specific technologies on CSA pillars are not significantly different between the grey and peer-reviewed literature ($p = 0.86$, two tailed $t_{85} = -0.17$). When plotted against one another, the effect sizes do not diverge from a 1:1 correspondence between grey and peer-reviewed literature at low effect sizes (Figure 3). However, at the highest grey literature reported effect sizes ($ES > 0.5$), the grey literature effect sizes are larger than the peer-reviewed effect sizes for the same subpractice, country, and outcome combinations ($p \approx 0$, two tailed $t_{16} = -5.76$).

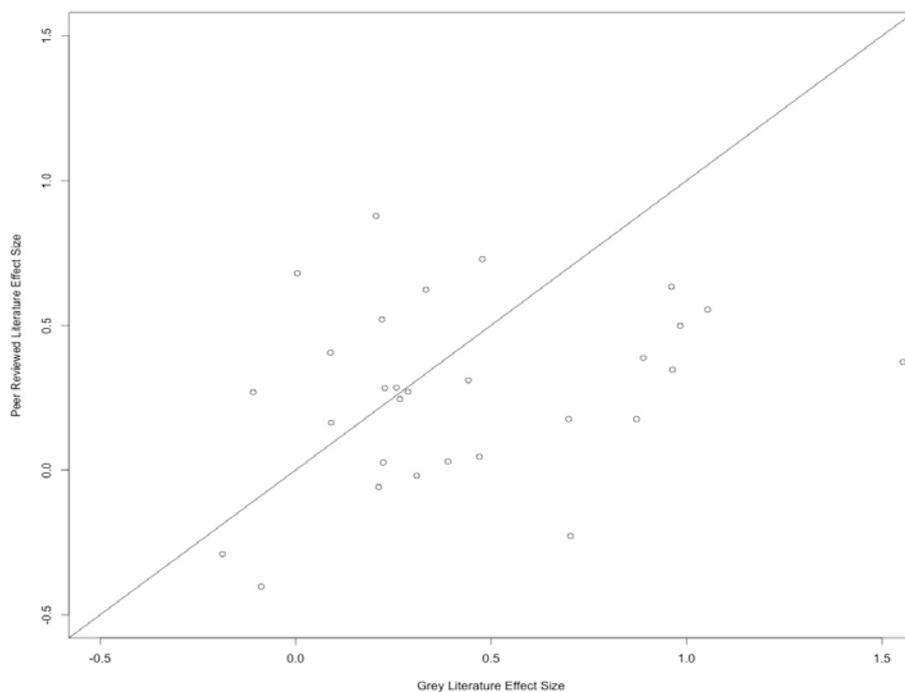


Figure 3: Comparison of effect sizes from grey literature versus peer-reviewed literature for each CSA subpractice, CSA pillar, and country combination with data from both the peer-reviewed and grey literature. Line showed is the one-to-one line, where the effect size from peer-reviewed literature and grey literature are equal.

Potential Yields under CSA

While practices differ in their effect on aggregated productivity and resilience outcomes, they also vary in their effect on the individual indicators of these outcomes (e.g. income, product yield, nutrient use efficiency, labour, soil carbon, etc. see Appendix III and IV). Furthermore, within one specific indicator such as product yield, practices vary in their suitability for different specific farming systems or agricultural products, and their potential adoption rates. Table 1 lists a major agricultural crop for smallholder farmers in each of Tanzania and Uganda, the percentage of smallholder households growing that crop, the mean yield per hectare and the total area of the crop under smallholder cultivation. While the mean effect of agroforestry intercropping on maize yield in Tanzania is to reduce yields (effect size = -0.13 ± 0.529), the largest mean increase in maize yield was seen with addition of organic fertilizers (0.63 ± 0.31) of all of the studied practices. Similarly, in Uganda, the biggest increase in yield of banana came from application of organic fertilizers (0.61 ± 0.16). However, these practices also vary in the uncertainty in the effect size, and in their likely adoption rates. When we account for these differences, the practice that produces the highest mean potential yield of maize in Tanzania is water harvesting via terraces, contours, ridges or bunds (1.57 t ha^{-1}), and mulching (6.53 t ha^{-1}) for banana in Uganda. Although the effect size for water harvesting in Tanzania is low (0.56) compared to some of the other CSA practices, its high adoption rates result in higher national-level change in maize yields. For a full analysis of all practice and crop combinations in Uganda and Tanzania see Appendix V.

Table 1. Potential yield of maize in Tanzania and bananas in Uganda under different climate-smart agricultural practices

Crop	% HHs ¹	Area ¹ (10 ⁶ ha)	Yield ^{1,2} (t ha ⁻¹)	Practice	Effect Size ³	Adoption (%) ⁴	Potential Yield (t ha ⁻¹)
-Tanzania-							
Maize	87.5%	4.09	1.33 ± 0.28	Agroforestry	-0.13 ± 0.52 _(12,98)	13 ± 8%	1.35 ± 0.31
				Green Manure	0.28 ± 0.36 _(7,70)	7 ± 7%	1.39 ± 0.30
				Improved Varieties	0.18 ± 0.15 _(7,147)	13 ± 10%	1.37 ± 0.30
				Organic Fertilizer	0.63 ± 0.31 _(11,126)	15 ± 13%	1.55 ± 0.41
				Reduced Tillage	0.47 ± 0.35 _(9,140)	24 ± 8%	1.54 ± 0.39
				Water Harvesting	0.56 ± 0.43 _(6,63)	20 ± 13%	1.57 ± 0.44
-Uganda-							
Banana	39%	4.02	5.34 ± 1.12	Agroforestry	-0.06 ± 0.59	16 ± 10%	5.46 ± 1.31
				Inorganic Fertilizer	0.26 ± 0.25 _(5,81)	5 ± 4%	5.43 ± 1.18
				Mulching	0.47 ± 0.28 _(4,37)	29 ± 27%	6.53 ± 1.86
				Organic Fertilizer	0.61 ± 0.16 _(1,20)	21 ± 17%	6.54 ± 1.60

¹Sources: United Republic of Tanzania National Sample Census of Agriculture 2007/2008 and Uganda Census of Agriculture 2008/2009. Area is the sum of area planted under that crop in the long rains and short rains. % Smallholder households (%HHs) is a percentage of total households planting the crop in the long rains and short rains. ²Yield the mean of yield per region weighted by area. ³ Numbers in brackets show the number of studies and number of data points behind each effect size. ⁴Adoption figures are means of published adoption rates from studies described in Methods

The full probability distribution for smallholder maize yield shows that the practice most likely to double maize yields in Tanzania is the addition of organic fertilizers, followed by reduced tillage, and water harvesting techniques such as contours and bunds (Figure 4a, top panel). However, when differences in adoption rates are taken into account, water harvesting becomes the practice most likely to double maize yields (Figure 4a, bottom panel). Regardless of whether adoption rates were accounted for, crop rotation was the practice most likely to halve maize yields. Similarly in Uganda, while organic fertilizers are the practice most likely to double banana yields (Figure 4b, top panel), the higher adoption rate of mulching makes it the practice most likely to double yields when accounting for adoption (4b, bottom panel).

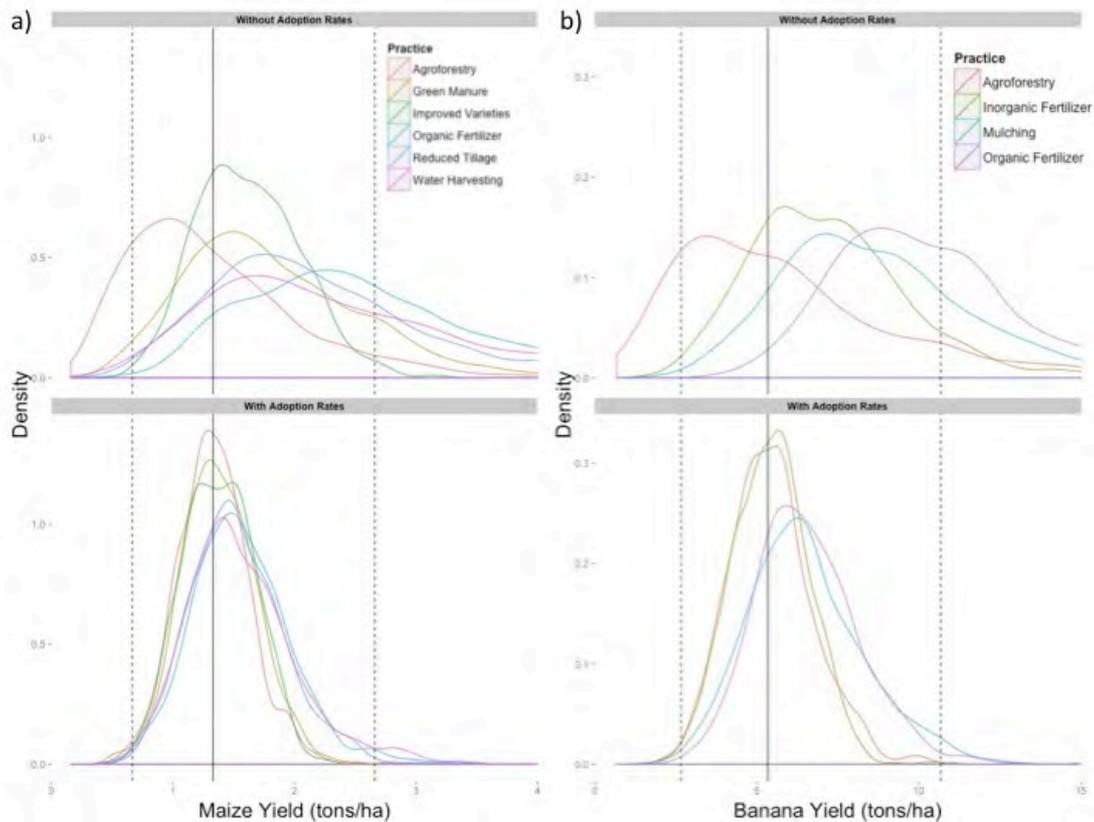


Figure 4: Likelihood of various levels of (a) smallholder maize yield in Tanzania, and (b) smallholder banana yield in Uganda under different CSA practices assuming 100% adoption of the CSA practice (top panels) and using published adoption rates for each practice (bottom panels). The current mean yields of each crop are shown in solid vertical lines, and the dashed vertical lines show halving and doubling of current crop yields.

Prioritization of CSA Practices

The ranking of practices based on effect size is highly sensitive to choice of outcomes or indicators in both Tanzania and Uganda, suggesting the choice of practices is dependent on how CSA is defined. Fig. 5 shows such a prioritization for the two countries, taking into account all resilience and productivity indicators. When only aggregated productivity indicators are considered (product yield, residue yield, income, etc.), improved fallows, organic fertilizers, and water harvesting are the ‘best-bet’ practices in Tanzania, while organic fertilizer, crop residue retention, and mulching are the highest ranked practices in Uganda (Figure 5). However, the ranking changes when only resilience indicators (soil quality,

erosion, labour, nutrient use efficiency, biodiversity, etc.) are considered. Notably, a unique optimization of practices results from each particular weighting of productivity relative to resilience indicators. In spite of differences in top-ranked practices across the two CSA outcomes, however, it is possible to identify the most climate-smart practices; that is, practices that are ranked high for both CSA outcomes.

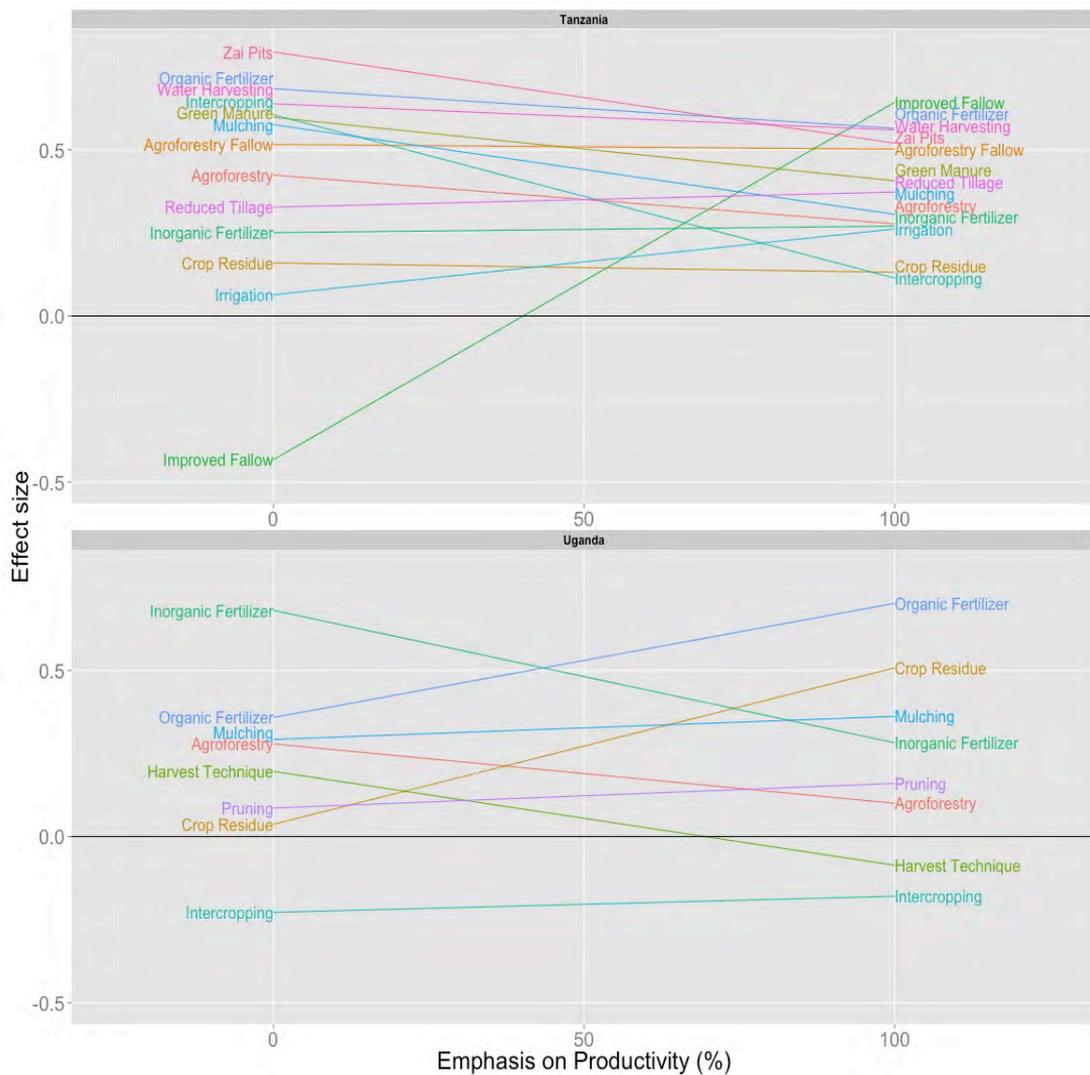


Figure 5: Ranking of CSA practices by effect size on productivity and resilience indicators in Tanzania (top panel) and Uganda (bottom panel). When emphasis on productivity is 100%, ranking reflects only the weighted mean effect size on productivity indicators. When emphasis on productivity is 0%, ranking reflects only weighted mean effect size on resilience indicators. 50% reflects an equal emphasis on productivity and resilience. Note different scales on the y-axis for each country.

Discussion

Data Availability

There is substantial empirical evidence available on the effectiveness of potential climate-smart agricultural practices to increase productivity and improve climate change resilience in smallholder farms in East Africa (e.g. REFs). However, there are still significant gaps in the available evidence. Most importantly, there is very little data available on the mitigation potential of most CSA practices in East Africa; only two practices in our dataset had mitigation outcomes reported [18,19]. Additionally, not all crops, practices, and farming systems in East Africa are well represented in the research literature, nor are data of a particular practice and system representative of a long period of time that would allow identifying Management-by-Environment interactions. While a large amount of work has been done on the impact of various fertilizers on maize yield, comparatively little has been done on other important crops, livestock, and promising practices in the region [20]. Despite these limitations in the available evidence for the impact of CSA in East Africa, pooling the existing evidence into one dataset and meta-analysis allows a novel approach for empirical evaluation of CSA options for agricultural development in the region.

The grey literature, particularly reports published by universities and national and international research institutions, contributes significantly to the pool of available information on CSA in the region, doubling the amount of data retrieved and adding novel practices and crops to an otherwise more limited evidence base. While grey literature is typically included in meta analyses to ameliorate a bias towards publishing only “big impact” results [16], we found no such publication bias in effect sizes between the grey and peer-reviewed literature we analyzed (Fig. 3). Indeed, grey literature effect sizes tended to be larger than peer-review reported values for the same practice, location and outcome

combinations, suggesting a potential lack of quality control within the grey literature data. Additionally, access to grey literature is somewhat limited. In person visits revealed that the majority of institutions did not have readily accessible grey literature in the form of searchable repositories. For those that did have available documents, challenges encountered included concern over data sharing, data only existing in hard copy form, or studies lacking quantitative data on non climate-smart practices (controls) or on project outcomes. Therefore, while the inclusion of grey literature can expand the pool of available information on CSA in a location, there are trade-offs in the amount of time and effort required to obtain that information, and the quality of the resulting data.

Making CSA Investment Priorities

The outcomes of practices across the three pillars of CSA are variable and context-specific, even within the East Africa region. Similar results have been seen in other regions, such as the Sahel, where some climate-smart practices such as green manure significantly improve maize yield, while others such as parkland agroforestry tend to decrease maize yields [21].

Furthermore, a practice that improves yield of one cereal crop (e.g. green manure for maize yield), does not necessarily improve the yield of another in the same region (green manure for millet). Some of this variability in the impact of practices on productivity and resilience stems from differences in climate and soil conditions. For example, conservation agriculture has been shown to improve maize yield in drier conditions, but decrease maize yields in more humid conditions [22]. Such climatic conditions may account for some of the observed difference between agroforestry impact on productivity indicators in Uganda (negative) and Tanzania (positive).

In addition to the variability in outcomes that stems from differences in biophysical conditions, uncertainty also arises from other sources, including weather fluctuations, variation in implementation efficacy or extent, adoption rates, and external risks such as conflict or market fluctuations. Planning for average conditions may result in unintended outcomes, as average conditions rarely occur now and are likely to become less common with climate change [23]. A likelihood approach such as the one used in this study allows decision makers to consider not only the best-case scenarios for an agricultural intervention, but the full range of possible outcomes from an agricultural practice including the likelihood of extreme outcomes. Additionally, ground-truthing of the likelihood-based results presented here in piloting sites of different agro-ecologies and farming systems would also be needed in order to allow better-informed decisions.

When prioritizing CSA options for investment and implementation, decision makers need to consider factors other than possible impact alone, particularly the potential uptake of each option. Low adoption rates of CSA practices are a major barrier to increased productivity and other CSA benefits [24], and adoption is often difficult to predict using socioeconomic and biophysical variables [25]. Our analysis shows that including realistic adoption rates for CSA practices alters the potential impact on crop productivity at national levels. The practices most likely to double maize yields are not those that deliver the largest increase in yield alone, rather they are the practices that deliver increases in yield *and* are highly adoptable. The practices analyzed here were among the most studied and promoted in Tanzania and Uganda, suggesting that adoption of even more novel practices that do not have an established history in the region will be even more challenging. Thus decision makers may choose to prioritize practices based on the best-case scenario of wide-scale adoption, or on which practices are likely to create the greatest gains given realistic adoption scenarios.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Contrary to expectations and despite some gaps, our analysis shows there is already ample empirical evidence available on the impact of climate-smart agricultural practices on productivity, resilience, and to a lesser extent mitigation benefits in East Africa to help inform planning and policy processes. We have shown in this study that there is likely no “best bet” practice that is the highest performer among candidate practices across productivity resilience, and mitigation outcomes. Existing data for mitigation indicators precluded the inclusion of mitigation as a CSA outcome in an explicit manner in our analysis. However, the available evidence suggests that the highest impact practices are unlikely to be the same for both productivity and resilience. Furthermore, when considering CSA options for scaling-up, potential adoption rates can significantly enhance or limit CSA benefits. Instead, decision makers must choose which priorities are most relevant to their desired outcomes, or choose to scale-up multiple practices to achieve multiple benefits.

Methods

Study Location

Two countries in East Africa were selected as the focus of this meta-analysis, namely Uganda and Tanzania. We chose to focus on these countries for a number of reasons. First, they capture the breadth of farming systems within East Africa, from dryland pastoral systems, to mixed-maize farming, to highland tea and coffee production, to lowland rice and sugarcane production. Second, they are representative of the development challenges and trajectories in the region. Uganda and Tanzania are agrarian societies exhibiting high rural poverty and significant population growth, which can be seen as emblematic for much of the continent. Third, they have robust national agricultural research programs and longstanding extension services. This suggests that there might be large amounts of evidence and research, in both the peer-reviewed and grey literature on potential CSA practices in these countries to form the basis of a meta-analysis. Finally, both Uganda and Tanzania have strong political support for CSA. Ministries of Agriculture and Environment in both countries have created national-level CSA programmes, and out-scaling of CSA is mentioned as a development objective in other policies (e.g. Tanzania's Agricultural Climate Resilience Plan). Tanzania has also established a CSA Task Force to oversee and implement CSA objectives in the country. These types of activities place Tanzania and Uganda at the forefront of action around CSA in sub-Saharan Africa, and thus provide a litmus test for both the opportunities and challenges other countries in the region might face.

Systematic Review

Scope and Methods

We compiled and assessed the peer-reviewed and grey literature on potential climate-smart agriculture practices to determine the effect size of a practice on productivity, resilience, and mitigation. Peer-reviewed literature containing evidence of CSA impact in Tanzania and Uganda was gathered through a systematic review of the English-language literature available from Web of Science [15]. Seventy-three priority CSA practices were identified through interviews with research organizations, international NGOs, development partners, and government institutions, and formed the basis of our search. Indicators of the outcomes of CSA practices were similarly selected through stakeholder interviews to represent as many dimensions of productivity (product yield, biomass, income, labour, etc.), resilience (biophysical, economic, and social resilience), and mitigation (GHG emissions, carbon storage, fuel consumption, etc.) as possible. Full details of the systematic review process, including practice definitions, descriptions of outcome indicators, and search strings can be found in ref. [15] and Appendix I. Initial searches were followed up with a recursive search, by locating all of the cited references from each identified study located in the two countries. In total, searches returned approximately 459 references potentially relevant for CSA in Tanzania, and 315 in Uganda.

In order to locate relevant grey literature on CSA in Tanzania and Uganda, we identified and physically visited 49 institutions deemed likely to have reports, dissertations, or other relevant documents in Tanzania, and 15 in Uganda (see Appendix VI for a list of visited institutions in each country). Potentially relevant documents were photographed, as most could not be physically removed from the institutions and did not exist in digital format.

Screening and Data Extraction

All literature identified via the peer-reviewed and grey literature searches were then screened for inclusion in this study. In order to be included in this meta-analysis, a study had to meet the following six criteria: 1) The study must include one of the 73 chosen practices, 2) It must include data on at least one indicator of CSA outcomes, 3) It must be a field-level study, 4) It must contain primary data, as opposed to model outputs or review data, 5) It must include an appropriate control or non-CSA practice as a comparator, and 6) It must be located in Tanzania or Uganda. References identified from the initial searches and grey literature capture were first screened by title and abstract against these criteria, and references appearing to meet the criteria were further screened in full text. We were unable to locate full text for approximately 11% of the references due to a lack of institutional access to the journal or a lack of digital versions of the article (mainly for those published prior to 2000 in some journals). These references were necessarily excluded from the analysis. Full citations of all the studies included in this meta-analysis are included in Appendix VII.

From each included study, we extracted data on location, environmental conditions, experimental design, and outcomes. Location data included reported latitude, longitude, and elevation of study locations, or the same information from named locations extracted from Google Earth if no latitude and longitude were given. Environmental information included reported mean annual temperature and precipitation, soil classification and texture, as well as basic soil properties including soil carbon and pH. Experimental design information included descriptions and coded categorization of the treatment and control practices, the number of replicates reported, and the duration of the experiment in years. For information about CSA outcomes, we included the object of the experiment (e.g. the crop, livestock breed or product, soil, tree species, etc.), the indicator of outcome reported (e.g. yield, net income, soil carbon,

water use efficiency, GHG emissions, etc.) with the units, the treatment value, the control value, and standard deviation if reported. Where the outcomes were reported for soil (such as soil carbon, soil moisture, etc.) depth of the measurement was also recorded.

Data Analysis

We calculated the effect size of CSA practices on outcomes using the log response ratio (L):

$$L = \ln\left(\frac{\bar{X}_T}{\bar{X}_C}\right)$$

where, L equals the natural logarithm of the measured mean outcome under the CSA practice (X_T) relative to the mean outcome under the control practice (X_C) [26]. Very few studies in our sample reported standard deviations; therefore each observation was weighted by the number of replications per study (n_{rep}) [27], and inversely weighted by the number of observations per study (n_{obs}) [22]:

$$(w) = \frac{n_{rep}^2}{2n_{rep} \times n_{obs}}$$

This assures that studies reporting multiple outcomes do not overly bias the results. As some practices were represented with many observations in the dataset and others by only a few, we estimated the mean and uncertainty in effect size per combination of practice, outcome, and location via bootstrapping. For each combination of practice, outcome, and location (e.g. productivity outcomes for agroforestry in Tanzania), we chose a random sample of n observations with replacement, where n is the number of observation for that practice/outcome/location combination, and calculated a weighted mean. Random selection was repeated 1000 times to determine a mean effect size of the practice on the outcome and variance around that mean.

The probability distributions of potential yield for major crops in Tanzania and Uganda under various CSA management practices were generated by Monte Carlo simulation using the following formula:

$$Y_p = Y_c \times (e^L \times a + (1 - a))$$

where Y_p is the potential yield under CSA, Y_c is the current yield, e^L is the response ratio, and a is the adoption rate of that CSA practice. For current crop yields we used the mean and standard deviation from the area-weighted mean smallholder maize yield reported in the respective national agricultural census data [28,29]. Mean and variance in adoption rates for different CSA practices were taken from national census data, as well as community level adoption studies at various sites within Tanzania [30-32], and Uganda [33-36]. Response ratios for CSA practices were calculated as above using only outcomes for product yield. For each Monte Carlo run, we chose a random value of Y_c and L from normal distributions, and a from a truncated normal distribution (0-100%), and calculated the resulting potential yield Y_p . This process was repeated 1000 times to generate probability distributions of crop yield under CSA with and without adoption rates.

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Appendices

Appendix I: CSA Technologies and Outcomes

CSA Technologies			
Theme	Practice	Subpractice	
Agroforestry	Intercropping	Leguminous tree intercropping	
		Nonleguminous tree intercropping	
	Fallows	Agroforestry Fallows	
	Tree Management	Pruning Coppicing Tree prunings applied to crops	
	Silvopasture	Silvopasture, Agrosilvopasture	
Agronomy	Soil Management	Conservation Agriculture	
		Reduced Tillage	
		Improved Fallows (e.g. with leguminous cover crops)	
		Crop Residue retention/incorporation	
		Mulching	
		Green Manure	
		BioChar	
	Water Management	pH Management (e.g. liming)	
		Irrigation	
	Nutrient Management	Water Management	Water Harvesting (e.g. bunds, contours, terraces)
			Zai/Planting pits
Rice Management (e.g. SRI, AWD)			
Inorganic Fertilizer (e.g. NPK, Urea)			
Crop Management	Nutrient Management	Organic Fertilizer (e.g. Manure)	
		Integrated Nutrient Management	
		Crop Rotation	
		Intercropping	
Livestock	Diet Management	Improved Varieties	
		Increased Farm Diversity (e.g. in rotations)	
		Improved Supplements	
	Pasture Management	Diet Management	Improved Protein
			Improved Digestibility
			Fodder Shrubs
	Manure Management	Pasture Management	Forage Legumes
			Rotational Grazing
	Breed Management	Manure Management	Manure Collection and Storage
			Manure Treatment
Postharvest	Harvest Management	Hybridization	
		Assisted Reproduction	
	Postharvest Storage	Breed Management	Improved Breeds
Improved Harvest Time			
Energy	Cookstoves	Improved Harvest Technique	
		Improved Storage	
	Biogas	Improved Preservation/Drying	
		Improved Cookstoves	
		Biogas	

CSA Outcomes		
Pillar	Indicator	Subindicator
Productivity	Product Yield	Crop Yield
		Animal Weight Gain
	Non-Product Yield	Animal Product Yield
		Land Equivalent Ratio
		Crop Residue Produced
	Income	Biomass Yield
		Gross Returns
		Net Returns
	Costs	Benefit/Cost Ratio
		Production Costs
	System Performance	Cost/Benefit Ratio
		Net Present Value (NPV)
		Internal Rate of Return (IRR)
Marginal Rate of Return (MRR)		
Payback Period		
Resilience	Soil Quality	Soil Carbon
		Soil Moisture
		Soil Nutrients (e.g. N, P)
		Bulk Density
		Erosion and Runoff
	Pest & Pathogen damage	Pest Loads
		Pest Damage/Losses
	Biodiversity	Beneficial Organisms
		Species Richness
	Labour	Person-hours
		Value of Labour
	Gender	Women's Labour
		Women's Income
	Efficiency	Nutrient Use Efficiencies
		Water Use Efficiency
		Total Factor Productivity
Feed Conversion Ratio		
Protein Conversion Ratio		
Mitigation	GHG Emissions	CO ₂ , CH ₄ , NO _x Emissions
		Emissions Intensity
	Carbon Stocks	Total Soil Carbon
		Total Aboveground Biomass
	Fuel Use	Fuel Consumed
		Fuel Saved

Appendix II: Effect size of CSA subpractices on CSA pillars.

Theme	Subpractice	Effect Size by Outcome Pillar ¹		
		Productivity	Resilience	Mitigation
-Tanzania-				
Agronomy	Conservation Agriculture	0.84 ± 0.47 _(2,14)		
	Crop Residue	0.13 ± 0.23 _(6,66)	0.16 ± 0.12 _(1,15)	-0.56 ± 0.35 _(2,28)
	Crop Rotation	0.23 ± 0.39 _(6,39)		
	Deficit Irrigation	0.26 ± 0.79 _(4,93)	0.06 ± 0.82 _(4,143)	
	Green Manure	0.41 ± 0.52 _(8,131)	0.60 ± 0.59 _(5,28)	-0.20 ± 0.35 _(1,10)
	Improved Fallow	0.64 ± 0.36 _(2,68)	-0.43 ± 0.15 _(1,6)	
	Improved Varieties	0.13 ± 0.58 _(12,268)	1.14 ± 1.43 _(1,4)	
	Inorganic Fertilizer	0.27 ± 0.71 _(44,1340)	0.26 ± 0.43 _(6,51)	-0.31 ± 0.36 _(1,18)
	Intercropping	0.11 ± 0.56 _(6,88)	0.61 ± 1.11 _(1,32)	
	pH Management	0.94 ± 0.64 _(1,6)		
	Mulching	0.31 ± 0.40 _(2,13)	0.58 ± 1.22 _(1,27)	
	Organic Fertilizer	0.57 ± 0.39 _(20,376)	0.68 ± 1.01 _(6,98)	-0.20 ± 0.35 _(1,10)
	Reduced Tillage	0.37 ± 0.41 _(11,213)	0.33 ± 0.44 _(6,59)	-0.10 ± 0.27 _(1,10)
	Rice Management	1.08 ± 0.68 _(3,14)		
Water Harvesting	0.56 ± 0.43 _(9,97)	0.64 ± 0.86 _(5,82)		
Zai Pits	0.52 ± 0.27 _(3,8)	0.79 ± 0.36 _(2,5)		
Agroforestry	Leguminous Intercropping	0.08 ± 0.58 _(11,197)	0.49 ± 1.12 _(5,49)	
	Non-leguminous Intercropping	0.45 ± 0.80 _(4,67)	0.25 ± 0.81 _(1,20)	
	Tree prunings applied	0.28 ± 0.47 _(7,82)	0.03 ± 0.32 _(2,16)	
	Agroforestry Fallows	0.50 ± 0.18 _(2,22)	0.52 ± 0.30 _(1,5)	
Livestock	Improved Protein	0.36 ± 0.29 _(4,17)	-0.44 ± 0.26 _(2,6)	
	Improved Supplements	0.24 ± 0.35 _(11,69)	0.61 ± 1.11 _(2,6)	
	Rotational Grazing	0.28 ± 0.23 _(2,11)		
	Fodder Shrubs	0.31 ± 0.53 _(9,59)	-0.15 ± 0.03 _(1,3)	
	Forage Legumes	0.51 ± 0.26 _(1,3)		
Postharvest	Improved Storage	0.44 ± 0.45 _(1,3)		
Energy	Biogas	2.41 ± 1.15 _(2,20)	1.75 ± 1.16 _(2,5)	2.13 ± 1.01 _(2,12)
	Improved Cookstoves			0.46 ± 0.15 _(1,6)
-Uganda-				
Agronomy	Biochar	0.20 ± 0.21 _(1,9)		
	Crop Residue	0.51 ± 0.71 _(4,46)	0.04 ± 0.01 _(1,2)	
	Crop Rotation	0.27 ± 0.41 _(6,114)		
	Green Manure	0.38 ± 0.36 _(6,103)	-0.18 ± 0.35 _(2,9)	
	Improved Fallow	0.42 ± 0.37 _(4,31)		
	Improved Varieties		1.07 ± 0.27 _(1,4)	
	Inorganic Fertilizer	0.28 ± 0.57 _(22,1145)	0.68 ± 1.08 _(3,12)	
	Intercropping	-0.18 ± 0.25 _(2,20)	-0.23 ± 0.26 _(1,3)	
	Mulching	0.36 ± 0.72 _(6,69)	0.29 ± 0.20 _(2,12)	
	Organic Fertilizer	0.70 ± 0.73 _(12,302)	0.36 ± 0.50 _(3,9)	
	Reduced Tillage	0.86 ± 0.71 _(1,10)		
Agroforestry	Leguminous Intercropping	-0.25 ± 0.49 _(3,32)	0.10 ± 0.26 _(2,55)	
	Non-leguminous Intercropping	0.14 ± 0.38 _(3,32)	0.49 ± 0.29 _(2,21)	
	Tree prunings applied	0.16 ± 0.37 _(2,65)	0.09 ± 0.18 _(1,8)	
	Agroforestry Fallows		0.67 ± 0.07 _(1,4)	
Livestock	Improved Protein	1.03 ± 0.76 _(3,5)		
	Fodder Shrubs	0.95 ± 0.79 _(3,5)		
	Manure Management	0.45 ± 0.26 _(1,5)		
	Rotational Grazing	1.88 ± 2.21 _(2,6)		
Postharvest	Harvest Technique	-0.09 ± 0.22 _(1,3)	0.20 ± 0.28 _(1,8)	
	Improved Storage	-0.08 ± 0.14 _(1,7)	-0.21 ± 0.29 _(1,10)	
Energy	Improved Cookstoves			0.36 ± 0.39 _(2,8)

¹Numbers in brackets show the number of studies and the number of data points behind each response ratio.

Appendix III: Effect size of CSA practices on CSA indicators in Tanzania

		Effect Size by Indicator											
Theme	Subpractice	Productivity				System Performance	Resilience			Mitigation			
		Product Yield	Non-Product Yield	Income	* Costs		* Labour	Soil Quality	Efficiency	* Pests & Disease	* Emissions	Carbon Stocks	* Fuel Use
Agronomy	Conservation Agriculture	0.85			0.76								
	Crop Residue	0.12	0.29				0.16				-0.66	0.09	
	Crop Rotation	0.24	-0.01										
	Green Manure	0.27	0.78	-0.05		-0.48	0.16	0.56	1.15		-0.49	0.09	
	Improved Fallow	0.68	0.71	-0.14		-0.43							
	Improved Varieties	0.98											
	Fertilizer, Inorganic	0.49	0.37	-0.14	-0.30	-0.08	0.01	0.63	0.29		-0.31		
	Fertilizer, Organic	0.58	0.38	0.45	-0.35	0.84	0.73	0.41			-0.49	0.09	
	Intercropping	0.11					0.61						
	Irrigation	0.59	-0.25	0.17		0.93		0.00					
	pH Management	0.94											
	Mulching	0.39	0.08			0.84		0.44					
	Reduced Tillage	0.43	-0.07	-0.04			0.09	0.78	0.67		-0.24	0.04	
	Rice Management	1.08											
Water Harvesting	0.56		0.50			0.64	0.35						
Zai Pits	0.52						0.79						
Agroforestry	Leguminous tree intercropping	0.07	0.02	0.76			0.49						
	Non-leguminous tree intercropping	0.45	-0.30	1.09	-0.22		0.25						
	Tree prunings applied	0.28					0.03						
	Agroforestry Fallow	0.50	0.48				0.52						
Livestock	Improved Protein	0.16		0.01	0.13					-0.24			
	Improved Supplements	0.24		0.29	0.28					-0.15			
	Fodder Shrubs	0.32		0.09	-0.23					-0.15			
	Forage Legumes	0.51											
Postharvest	Improved Storage			0.68	-0.04								
Energy	Biogas				2.42		1.76				2.30		2.06
	Improved Cookstoves												-0.46

Appendix IV: Effect size of CSA practices on CSA indicators in Uganda

Theme	Subpractice	Effect Size by Indicator											
		Productivity				Resilience				Mitigation			
		Product Yield	Non-Product Yield	Income	* Costs	System Performance	* Labour	Soil Quality	Efficiency	* Pests & Disease	* Emissions	Carbon Stocks	* Fuel Use
Agronomy	Biochar		0.20										
	Crop Residue	0.44	0.05	1.10			0.04						
	Crop Rotation	0.17	0.66	0.16									
	Green Manure	0.43	0.42	0.10		0.65	-0.23			0.70			
	Improved Fallow	0.44	0.62	0.04		0.65							
	Fertilizer, Inorganic	0.29	0.36	0.30		0.08		0	0.90	0.96			
	Fertilizer, Organic	0.56	0.98	0.69				-0.04	0.54	0.87			
	Intercropping	-0.18					-0.23						
	Mulching	0.48	1.3	0.39		0.08		0.31	-0.26	0.26			
Reduced Tillage	0.53		2.17										
Agroforestry	Leguminous Intercropping	-0.25						0.10					
	Non-leguminous Intercropping	-0.10		0.44				0.49					
	Tree prunings applied	0.16						0.09					
	Agroforestry Fallows							0.67					
Livestock	Fodder Shrubs	0.95											
	Forage Legumes	0.42											
	Manure Management		0.45										
	Rotational Grazing	1.26	2.05										
	Silvopasture	0.81											
Postharvest	Harvest Technique	-0.09								0.20			
Energy	Improved Cookstoves												0.1

**All signs indicate an improvement (+) or worsening (-) of the indicator. For the indicators marked with a star (*), positive values indicate a lowering of that quantity (such as costs, labour, or GHG emissions), while negative values show an increase.*

Appendix V: Potential yields of crops under CSA

Crop	% HHS ¹	Area ¹ (10 ⁶ ha)	Yield ^{1,2} (t/ha)	Subpractice	Response Ratio ³	Adoption (%) ⁴	Potential Yield (t/ha)
-Tanzania							
Maize	87.5%	4.09	1.33 ± 0.28	Agroforestry	-0.13 ± 0.52 _(12,98)	13 ± 8%	1.35 ± 0.31
				Agroforestry Fallows	0.50 ± 0.18 _(2,17)	34 ± 10%	1.64 ± 0.39
				Crop Residue	0.17 ± 0.28 _(4,36)	34 ± 15%	1.45 ± 0.37
				Crop Rotation	0.02 ± 0.49 _(3,26)	36 ± 30%	1.40 ± 0.44
				Green Manure	0.28 ± 0.36 _(7,70)	7 ± 7%	1.39 ± 0.30
				Improved Fallow	0.68 ± 0.3 _(2,31)	34 ± 10%	1.84 ± 0.51
				Improved Varieties	0.18 ± 0.15 _(7,147)	13 ± 10%	1.37 ± 0.30
				Inorganic Fertilizer	0.56 ± 0.57 _(31,825)	32 ± 33%	1.84 ± 0.88
				Intercropping	0.23 ± 0.60 _(5,71)	57 ± 16%	1.71 ± 0.95
				Organic Fertilizer	0.63 ± 0.31 _(11,126)	15 ± 13%	1.55 ± 0.41
				Reduced Tillage	0.47 ± 0.35 _(9,140)	24 ± 8%	1.54 ± 0.39
				Water Harvesting	0.56 ± 0.43 _(6,63)	20 ± 13%	1.57 ± 0.44
Zai Pits	0.51 ± 0.43 _(3,7)	20 ± 13%	1.52 ± 0.38				
Legumes	46.8%	1.48	0.72 ± 0.11	Agroforestry	0.49 ± 0.72 _(5,40)	13 ± 8%	0.82 ± 0.25
				Improved Varieties	1.39 ± 0.22 _(1,6)	13 ± 10%	1.05 ± 0.26
				Inorganic Fertilizer	0.20 ± 0.31 _(11,175)	32 ± 33%	0.80 ± 0.19
				Organic Fertilizer	0.51 ± 0.71 _(5,96)	15 ± 13%	0.88 ± 0.39
				Reduced Tillage	-0.18 ± 0.22 _(2,12)	24 ± 8%	0.70 ± 0.11
				Water Harvesting	0.62 ± 0.64 _(3,17)	20 ± 13%	0.92 ± 0.35
Tubers	32.1%	0.29	1.94 ± 0.48	Agroforestry	0.52 ± 0.56 _(3,12)	13 ± 8%	2.15 ± 0.67
				Crop Residue	0.16 ± 0.15 _(1,3)	34 ± 15%	2.04 ± 0.51
				Improved Varieties	-0.47 ± 0.85 _(2,49)	13 ± 10%	1.93 ± 0.54
				Inorganic Fertilizer	0.03 ± 0.34 _(1,3)	32 ± 33%	2.03 ± 0.62
Rice	19.9%	0.91	1.58 ± 0.45	Crop Rotation	0.54 ± 0.19 _(2,7)	36 ± 30%	2.10 ± 0.70
				Improved Varieties	0.14 ± 0.69 _(1,42)	13 ± 10%	1.69 ± 0.56
				Inorganic Fertilizer	0.66 ± 0.63 _(3,40)	32 ± 33%	2.45 ± 1.62
				Organic Fertilizer	0.27 ± 0.10 _(2,4)	15 ± 13%	1.67 ± 0.49
				SRI/AWD	1.08 ± 0.68 _(3,14)	9 ± 8%	3.00 ± 2.52
				Water Harvesting	0.55 ± 0.42 _(2,5)	20 ± 13%	1.87 ± 0.62
-Uganda-							
Maize	49%	1.01	2.34 ± 0.67	Agroforestry	-0.42 ± 0.58 _(1,15)	16 ± 10%	2.25 ± 0.68
				Crop Residue	0.26 ± 0.30 _(1,23)	29 ± 28%	2.62 ± 0.86
				Crop Rotation	0.26 ± 0.35 _(3,51)	31 ± 10%	2.61 ± 0.83
				Green Manure	0.41 ± 0.25 _(4,65)	7 ± 6%	2.46 ± 0.70
				Inorganic Fertilizer	0.32 ± 0.32 _(6,102)	5 ± 4%	2.34 ± 0.68
				Improved Fallow	0.43 ± 0.23 _(3,13)	4 ± 4%	2.42 ± 0.71
Beans	47%	0.62	1.5 ± 0.3	Agroforestry	-0.22 ± 0.18 _(2,33)	16 ± 10%	1.46 ± 0.30
				Agroforestry Prunings	0.09 ± 0.16 _(2,29)	16 ± 10%	1.53 ± 0.31
				Crop Residue	0.23 ± 0.25 _(2,5)	28 ± 28%	1.66 ± 0.40
				Improved Varieties	0.14 ± 0.55 _(5,172)	36 ± 26%	1.70 ± 0.65
				Inorganic Fertilizer	0.20 ± 0.38 _(6,30)	5 ± 4%	1.53 ± 0.31
				Intercropping	-0.14 ± 0.23 _(2,14)	34 ± 12%	1.43 ± 0.29
				Organic Fertilizer	0.64 ± 0.86 _(3,4)	21 ± 17%	2.12 ± 1.66
Banana	39%	4.02	5.34 ± 1.12	Inorganic Fertilizer	0.26 ± 0.25 _(5,82)	5 ± 4%	5.45 ± 1.15
				Mulching	0.47 ± 0.28 _(4,29)	29 ± 27%	6.70 ± 1.93
				Organic Fertilizer	0.61 ± 0.16 _(1,20)	21 ± 17%	6.46 ± 1.61
				Agroforestry	-0.06 ± 0.59 _(1,2)	16 ± 10%	5.43 ± 1.35
Cassava	32%	2.89	3.33 ± 0.22	Improved Varieties	0.48 ± 0.54 _(4,315)	36 ± 26%	4.58 ± 1.93
				Harvest Timing	-0.09 ± 0.22 _(1,43)	20 ± 10%	3.29 ± 0.28
				Inorganic Fertilizer	0.25 ± 0.17 _(1,29)	5 ± 4%	3.38 ± 0.23

¹Sources: United Republic of Tanzania National Sample Census of Agriculture 2007/2008 and Uganda Census of Agriculture 2008/2009. Area is the sum of area planted under that crop in the long rains and short rains. % Smallholder households (%HHs) is a percentage of total households planting the crop in the long rains and short rains. ²Yield the mean of yield per region weighted by area. ³ Numbers in brackets show the number of studies and number of data points behind each response ratio. ⁴Adoption figures are means of reported adoption rates of practices in each country from sources described in Methods.

Appendix VI: List of Institutions Visited for Grey Literature

Tanzania

Government Institutions: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Cooperatives: Research and Development, Department of Mechanization, Department of Land Use Planning, Department of Crop Promotion, Department of Special Projects; National Agricultural Research Institutions: Uyole, Naliendele, Ilonga, Seliani, Tumbi, Hombolo, Mikocheni, Mlingano. Nongovernmental Organizations: Tanzania Traditional Energy Development Organization (TaTEDO), World Wildlife Fund Tanzania, CARE Tanzania, Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG), Mtandao wa Jamii wa Usimamizi wa Misititu Tanzania (MJUMITA), Wildlife Conservation Society Tanzania, African Conservation Tillage Network (ACT-Tanzania), Conservation Farming Unit (CFU-Tanzania), World Vision Tanzania, Catholic Relief Services (CRS Tanzania), Oxfam Tanzania, Concern Tanzania, Vi-Agroforestry, World Vegetable Center Tanzania (AVRDC-Tanzania). Academic Institutions: Sokoine University, University of Dar es Salaam, Ardhi University, Nelson Mandela University, University of Dodoma, Tumaini University, Open University of Tanzania, Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University. Research Organizations: World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF- Tanzania), Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), The Centre for Energy, Environment, Science and Technology (CEEST), Policy Research for Development (REPOA), Tanzania Forestry Research Institute (TAFORI), National Forest Resources Management and Agroforestry Centre (NAFRAC). Development Partners: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), African Development Bank (AfDB), German Institute for International Cooperation (GIZ), UK Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Irish AID, The Norwegian Embassy to Tanzania, The Embassy of Finland in Tanzania, Eastern Arc Mountains Endowment.

Uganda

Government Institutions: Kawanda National Agricultural Research Lab, National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI), National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI), National Forestry Resources Research Institute (NaFORRI), National Livestock Resources Research Institute (NaLIRRI). Academic Institutions: Makerere University: Department of Agricultural Production, Department of Environmental Management, Department of Commercial Forestry, Department of Agribusiness. Private Sector: International Fertilizer Development Centre, Coffee Research Institute. Nongovernmental Organizations and Development Partners: World Vision Uganda, United National Development Program (UNDP), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN Uganda), Sasakawa Africa Association.

Appendix VII: Systematic Review Bibliography

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