



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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# Smallholder Farmers in Mozambique Reap the Benefits of Conservation Agriculture



USAID

Araújo Njambo (right) stands in front of his conservation agriculture demonstration plot.

When Araújo Njambo, a small-scale maize farmer in Mozambique, first heard about conservation agriculture, he was not sure what to expect.

He was used to the traditional way of farming that his family has used for generations: every year in October, he would clear a plot of land and burn all the remaining plant residue on top of the soil to get a clean seed bed for his crops.

This labor-intensive method, known as swidden agriculture, is common among subsistence farmers around the world. Unfortunately, as demand for land increases, swidden farming can exacerbate deforestation and greatly deplete the nutrients in soil without giving the land enough time to regenerate.

With assistance from Feed the Future, farmers like Njambo in Mozambique are learning to practice conservation agriculture, a crop management system based on minimum soil disturbance, crop residue retention and crop rotations.

Sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development and implemented by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, [this project](#) introduces farmers to new agricultural practices and technologies that help them adapt to climate change and conserve scarce natural resources. In Sub-Saharan Africa, which is predicted to be strongly affected by temperature increases and more erratic rainfall, these new approaches can mean the difference between farmers being able to feed their families or having to go hungry.

For Njambo, swidden farming is now a thing of the past. He says he has learned the benefits of not burning off the moisture and nutrient-dense plant residue in his soil. "Only some of my neighbors still burn their residues and I have to be careful that fires do not enter my plot," he says. Last year, Njambo harvested his best yield in the last five years.

Now that he is able to cultivate enough maize to meet his family's food needs, Njambo has also diversified and started to grow cowpea, cassava, and pigeon pea for additional income. He wants to branch out into sesame and soybean production in the next planting season and expects to sell these crops for five times the price he could get for maize.

Njambo has been so successful using the new conservation techniques that he even established a small shop on his property to sell agricultural inputs like improved maize seed varieties and labor-saving herbicides to local farmers. Many of his neighbors not only buy supplies from his shop, but they also rely on him to pass on his farming techniques. Njambo has

trained about 20 local farmers on conservation agriculture and encourages them to use improved seed varieties that can increase yields by 30 to 50 percent.

As a result of his bumper harvest last year, Njambo built a new house for his family after he sold his maize crop. "I decided to build a new house instead of buying a car," he says. "But if I continue the way I have using these techniques, surely I will be able to buy my own car, too."