Agricultural interventions for water saving and crop yield improvement in a Mediterranean area - an experimental design

G. G. Morianou1,2, N. N. Kourgialas1,2, G. Psarras3, G.C. Koubouris2, G. Arampatzis3, G.P. Karatzas1, E. Pavlidou4

(1) School of Environmental Engineering, Technical University of Crete, Polytechnicopolis, 73100 Chania, Greece (morianou@nagref-ch.gr), (2) ELGO DIMITRA, NAGREF, Institute for Olive Tree, Subtropical Crops and Viticulture, Agroklio, 73100 Chania, Greece, (3) ELGO DIMITRA, NAGREF, Soil and Water Resources Institute, 57400 Sindsos, Greece, (4) HYETOS, 54621 Thessaloniki, Greece

1. INTRODUCTION

An experimental design of agricultural interventions is performed for water saving and crop yield in the context of climate change. Ten (10) pilot farms, both organic and conventional ones, have been selected in the area of Platanias (part of the Tavronitis River Basin) in western Crete – Greece (Fig. 1). These pilot farms were selected as representative of the most typical crops in the area (olive & citrus trees), as well as of typical soil, landscape and agricultural practices (Table 1).

![Figure 1. Study area](image1.png)

![Table 1](image2.png)

2. AIMS & SCOPE

- Improve water efficiency,
- Increase the adaptive capacity of tree crops,
- Save water

under different climate conditions and agricultural practices.

3. METHODOLOGY

Every pilot farm has been divided in two parts (Fig. 2)
- one will be used as a control part,
- one as the demonstration part where the interventions will be applied.

![Figure 2. Pilot farm 11.01, divided in two parts](image3.png)

Agricultural interventions

a) Reduction of water evaporation losses from soil surface
   - Soil Mulching (Weed mowing, Shredding of pruning)

b) Reduction of transpiration water losses
   - Appropriate winter pruning (balanced canopy size)
   - Summer pruning
   - No weeds in critical periods

c) Reduction of deep percolation water and nutrient losses
   - Increase soil organic matter
   - Fertilization

4. RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

Expected results

1. Up to 50%-60% reduction of water evaporation losses through weed mowing
2. Up to 30% reduction of transpiration water losses through green pruning
3. Up to 10% and 30% savings in water and nutrients, respectively, through fertigation
4. Up to 50% reduction of surface runoff

Preliminary results indicate that water saving and crop yield can be significantly improved based on the above interventions, both at farm and river basin scale and under different climate conditions.

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