Geoscientific Model Development Discussions

A site-specific agricultural water requirement and footprint estimator (SPARE:WATER 1.0) for irrigation agriculture

S. Multsch[1], Y. A. Al-Rumaikhani[2], H.-G. Frede[1], and L. Breuer[1]

[1]Research Centre for BioSystems, Land Use and Nutrition, Institute for Landscape Ecology and Resources Management, Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Giessen, Germany
[2]National Centre for Water Technique, King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Correspondence to: S. Multsch (sebastian.multsch@umwelt.uni-giessen.de)

Title Page

Abstract	Introduction
Conclusions	References
Tables	Figures

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Abstract

The water footprint accounting method addresses the quantification of water consumption in agriculture, whereby three types of water to grow crops are considered, namely green water (consumed rainfall), blue water (irrigation from surface or groundwater)
5 and grey water (water needed to dilute pollutants). Most of current water footprint assessments focus on global to continental scale. We therefore developed the spatial decision support system SPARE:WATER that allows to quantify green, blue and grey water footprints on regional scale. SPARE:WATER is programmed in VB.NET, with geographic information system functionality implemented by the MapWinGIS library. Water
10 requirement and water footprints are assessed on a grid-basis and can then be aggregated for spatial entities such as political boundaries, catchments or irrigation districts. We assume in-efficient irrigation methods rather than optimal conditions to account for irrigation methods with efficiencies other than 100 %. Furthermore, grey water can be defined as the water to leach out salt from the rooting zone in order to maintain
15 soil quality, an important management task in irrigation agriculture. Apart from a thorough representation of the modelling concept we provide a proof of concept where we assess the agricultural water footprint of Saudi Arabia. The entire water footprint is 17.0 km^3 yr^{-1} for 2008 with a blue water dominance of 86 %. Using SPARE:WATER we are able to delineate regional hot spots as well as crop types with large water footprints,
20 e.g. sesame or dates. Results differ from previous studies of national-scale resolution, underlining the need for regional water footprint assessments.

1 Introduction

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2012a), 70 % of consumed surface water and groundwater is used by irrigated agriculture. For the analysis of wa-
25 ter utilization in the agriculture sector on large scales Hoekstra and Hung (2002) have developed the concept of the water footprint (WF), which is an indicator for direct and

indirect gross water consumption of commodities. WF consists mainly of water necessary to meet the needs of crops represented by green (WFg) and blue (WFb) water, which are represented by rain for the first type and groundwater or surface water for the second, respectively. The total WF is formed by adding a third type of water, necessary to dilute pollutants in the water to meet water quality standards, which is known as grey (WFgr) water. Therefore, the WF is defined according to Hoekstra et al. (2011):

$$WF = WFg + WFb + WFgr \tag{1}$$

where WF is given in unit water per unit biomass (yield) or area (in case of crop production). Using this approach, several WFs have been estimated. These studies offer insight into the WF of sectors, products or nations. However, all these applications focused on large scales with an emphasis on nations (Chapagain et al., 2008; Hoekstra and Chapagain, 2007; Hoekstra and Hung, 2002) or commodities produced worldwide (Chapagain et al., 2006; Gerbens-Leenes et al., 2009).

However, the continued deterioration in the quality of irrigation water as well as different irrigation methods requires the consideration of local environmental conditions. A closer look at the local WF of cotton crop, for example, highlights the need for such an approach. The area under cultivation for cotton production shows a large spatial variability of cultivation and management condition all over the world. According to Chapagain et al. (2006), the water footprint (WF) of cotton varies between 5404 and 21 563 $(m^3 t^{-1})$ for China and India, respectively. Hence, the influence of spatial variation on the water footprint is more visible at the local level, especially in case of irrigation management. However, the regional approach to get an accurate estimate of the water footprint requires high spatial resolution data to capture the local variations of soil, climate and especially management practices, which in turn requires high-resolution models. Recent modelling approaches to estimate WF are as follows. A large body of literature exits in which the CropWat model (Smith, 1992) was used to simulate crop water and irrigation requirement of agriculture crops (Hoekstra and Chapagain, 2007; Chapagain and Hoekstra, 2008; Mekonnen and Hoekstra, 2010), but without the consideration of

irrigation practice. The WF is then derived by dividing the simulated water requirement by the crop yield. Often, authors derive information on crop biomass from agriculture statistical data, which is provided from national departments or can be found in public available datasets such as FAOSTAT (FAO, 2012b). Others have used more complex models, regarding to biophysical processes, to estimate the WF. For example, some of these models simulate crop biomass in addition to water requirements. Furthermore, the models are using geographic information systems (GIS) to capture spatial variability. Liu et al. (2007) have incorporated the EPIC model (Williams et al., 1984) into ESRI's ArcGIS to estimate global green and blue water from agriculture land. The Soil Water Assessment Tool (Arnold et al., 1994), another GIS-based model, was used by Schuol et al. (2008) to derive green and blue water estimates of the African continent. The water resource model H08model (Hanasaki et al., 2010) and the dynamic vegetation and water balance model LPJmL (Fader et al., 2010) have been applied to derive water consumption on a global scale. Most of these applications are limited to blue and green WF, without taking into consideration the inherent significance of irrigation practice on blue water footprint. Furthermore, the grey water footprint has not been considered and thus local water quality is not represented, although agricultural production often reduces the quality of surface water and groundwater. Some studies considered the impact of pesticides and fertilizers by the estimation of the grey water footprint (Dabrowski et al., 2009; Mekonnen and Hoekstra, 2010; Ene and Teodosiu, 2011). Liu et al. (2012) have calculated past and future phosphorus and nitrogen inputs into rivers and their effect on the grey WF. The grey WF in these studies refers to the water needed to dilute the pollutants to national quality standards. However, irrigation with relatively poor water quality due to salinity in arid/semi-arid regions could contribute significantly to land degradation. Along with low irrigation efficiency, the leaching of salts in irrigation soils increases the demand for water to get the maximum productivity of crops. Apart from geogenic background and weathering, the irrigation water itself is a major source of salts, which finally accumulates in the rooting zone. To maintain the soil quality it is required to leach out salts from the rooting zone by means of additional

◄ | ►

◄ | ►

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

irrigation water. Currently, this quantity of water is not considered in WF estimations of irrigation agriculture and an accounting approach for leaching water needs to be defined to enhance the calculation of the grey water footprint.

The required amount of leaching water to counteract salinization can be quantified by empirical equations, steady state assumptions or transient models. Recently, Letey et al. (2011) and Corwin et al. (2007) reviewed steady state and transient models. In general, transient models (Corwin and Waggoner, 1991; Simunek and Suarez, 1993) are very complex, aiming at capturing physical and chemical processes and thus require a large amount of input parameter. In contrast, empirical equations (Ayers and Westcot, 1994) as the steady state models WATSUIT (Rhoades and Merrill, 1976) and WPF (Letey et al., 1985) are less complicate and require only a small number of parameters. The former has been further developed by Visconti et al. (2011). In another study Visconti et al. (2012) have assessed leaching requirement under Spanish conditions and have stated that WATSUIT, empirical equations and SALTIRSOIL produce similar results, whereby the latter one considers the most processes. Hussain et al. (2010) have recommended the application of empirical equations for leaching management under arid conditions such in Saudi Arabia.

The aim of this study is to develop a spatial decision support system, SPARE:WATER, for the assessment of green, blue and grey water footprint in irrigation dominated regions. Our goal is to provide a computer program, based on very well established irrigation guidelines, which can be used in areas with limited environmental information. In contrast to the concept of water footprint assessment by Hoekstra et al. (2011), we seek to extend the calculation of the blue water footprint of growing a crop by two important characteristics of irrigation agriculture, i.e. the irrigation efficiency and the irrigation method. Furthermore, the grey water footprint in this approach refers to the amount of leaching water required to preserve soil quality for maximum crop production, in contrast to the original concept of grey water, which aims to dilute contaminants in surface water and groundwater to acceptable standards. The spatial WF data management and analysis are achieved by integrating all calculations in a geographic

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

information system (GIS) environment. In the following, the software tool, its technical layout and structure are described. Afterwards, a proof of concept is presented by calculating the water footprint of the agriculture sector of Saudi Arabia.

2 Model concept, equations and software

2.1 Model concept

The spatial decision support system SPARE:WATER consists of four basic components: simulation models, a database, a graphical user interface and relevant stakeholders (Fig. 1). The current version uses three models to assess agriculture water footprint. Site specific simulations of crop water, irrigation and leaching requirement are assessed in accordance with FAO irrigation guidelines (Allen et al., 1998; Ayers and Westcot, 1994). The water footprints are estimated by aggregating simulation results with agricultural statistical data by the concept of Hoekstra et al. (2011). A database with site specific information on climate, irrigation management and agricultural statistics is used to setup the simulation models. Modelling steps in SPARE:WATER are supported by a graphical user interface (GUI) for an easy and straightforward utilization by non-GIS experts. The software is implemented in VB.NET and available for Microsoft Windows. The software utilises an open source spatial programming library called MapWinGIS Active X (http://mapwingis.codeplex.com/) for management of grid and shape files as well as the GIS-based GUI.

SPARE:WATER combines statistical site specific data, i.e. crop yield and harvest area, with simulations of water requirements to derive the water footprint of a crop for any geographical location. The three consecutive steps involved in this calculation are illustrated in Fig 2. Firstly, environmental data as well as data on irrigation management are used to simulate water requirements for each grid cell. The water requirements are aggregated with statistical crop yields to derive the crop water footprint (WF_{crop}) for each grid cell. In the second step, the WF_{crop} of a certain geographical delineated area

is estimated, which is represented by the average value of gridded WF_{crop}. Such a geographical delineated area is represented by administrative units, catchment boundaries, and agro-ecological zones. Finally, total crop production and WF_{crop} are aggregated for the regional water footprint assessment of WF_{area} in the cultivated region. The underlying equations are presented in the upcoming chapters.

2.2 Equations

2.2.1 Regional agricultural water footprint (WF_{area})

The water footprint for a certain geographical delineated area can be expressed in the form suggested by Hoekstra et al. (2011) as follows (Eq. 2):

$$WF_{area} = \sum WF_{crop} \cdot Prod \cdot 10^{-9} \tag{2}$$

with the water footprint of a geographical delineated area (WF_{area}) in [km^3 yr^{-1}], crop water footprint (WF_{crop}) in [m^3 t^{-1}] and crop production (Prod) in [t yr^{-1}]. WF_{area} can be further subdivided in irrigation from groundwater or surface water (blue water), rain water (green water) as well as leaching water from groundwater or surface water (grey water) and is abbreviated for each type of water with WFg_{area} (green), WFb_{area} (blue) and $WFgr_{area}$ (grey).

2.2.2 Crop specific agricultural water footprint (WF_{crop})

The water footprint of growing a crop WF_{crop} is the sum of the green (WFg_{crop}) and blue (WFb_{crop}) water required by the specific plant for its growth, whereby the colours refer to the type of water source. In addition, grey ($WFgr_{crop}$) is needed to leach out salts from the rooting zone. Each component is derived by calculating the localized yield specific water requirements. The calculation requires the simulation of the crop water requirement (CWR) [m^3 ha^{-1}], the irrigation requirement (IRR) [m^3 ha^{-1}] and the

leaching requirement (LR) [$m^3\,ha^{-1}$] as well as effective rainfall (P_{eff}) [$m^3\,ha^{-1}$] (Eqs. 3–5).

$$\text{WFg}_{crop} = \frac{\min(\text{CWR}, P_{eff})}{Y} \qquad (3)$$

$$\text{WFb}_{crop} = \frac{\text{IRR}}{Y} \qquad (4)$$

$$\text{WFgr}_{crop} = \frac{\text{LR}}{Y} \qquad (5)$$

with WF_{crop}, WFg_{crop}, WFb_{crop} and WFgr_{crop} in [$m^3\,t^{-1}$], the yield Y in [$t\,ha^{-1}$] and P_{eff} in [$m^3\,ha^{-1}$] per growing season. WFg_{crop} thereby considers how much of the crop water required for crop growth can be matched by incoming precipitation. WFb_{crop} is derived from the amount of irritation water which is applied to the field. The third type of water, defined as WFgr_{crop}, is calculated from the leaching requirement to wash out salt from the rooting zone. WFb_{crop} and WFgr_{crop} come from groundwater or surface water resources

2.2.3 Site specific crop water (CWR) and irrigation requirement (IRR)

The calculation of crop water requirement (CWR) basically depends on the potential evapotranspiration (PET). The SPARE:WATER model implements four methods to estimate PET depending on the geographical location and available climatic factors as follows:

– Turc and Priestley–Taylor (Priestley and Taylor, 1972; Turc, 1961): based on solar radiation, temperature and humidity;

– Hargreaves–Samani (Hargreaves and Samani, 1985): based on extra-terrestrial radiation and temperature;

– Penman–Monteith (Allen et al., 1998): based on solar radiation, temperature, wind speed and humidity.

A dimensionless crop coefficients K_c is used to adjust PET to crop specific properties as described by Allen et al. (1998). Accordingly, crop development is divided into four stages, i.e. initial season (L_{ini}), growth season (L_{dev}), midseason (L_{mid}) and late season (L_{end}). Three dimensionless crop coefficients (K_c) are defined for L_{ini}, L_{mid} and L_{end}. For days between initial and midseason as well as between midseason and late season K_c values are linearly interpolated. However, an adjusted crop coefficient Kc_{adj} is reported by Allen et al. (1998) for specific climatic conditions ($20\% < RH_{min} < 80\%$; $1\,\mathrm{m\,s^{-1}} < u_2 < 6\,\mathrm{m\,s^{-1}}$; $0.1\,\mathrm{m} < h < 10\,\mathrm{m}$) in the midseason and late season according to Eq. (6). Under all other climatic conditions Kc_{adj} equals K_c:

$$K_{c\,adj} = K_c + \left[0.04 \cdot (u_2 - 2) - 0.004 \cdot (RH_{min} - 45) \cdot \left(\frac{h}{3} \right)^{0.3} \right] \tag{6}$$

with $K_{c\,adj}$ [–], wind speed u_2 in 2 m height [$\mathrm{m\,s^{-1}}$], minimum relative humidity RH_{min} in [%] and crop height h in [m]. In the next step, K_c, respectively $K_{c\,adj}$, is multiplied by PET to derive CWR (Eq. 7) (Allen et al., 1998):

$$CWR = PET \cdot K_{c\,adj} \tag{7}$$

with PET and CWR in [$\mathrm{m^3\,ha^{-1}}$]. The model accounts for the runoff losses (RO) as a constant ratio of 20 % of precipitation (P) ($RO = P \cdot 0.2$). Effective precipitation P_{eff} is calculated according to Eq. 8 (Allen et al., 1998):

$$P_{eff} = P - RO \tag{8}$$

with P_{eff}, P and RO given in [$\mathrm{m^3\,ha^{-1}}$]. When the available effective rainfall P_{eff} is not sufficient to meet the water needs of crops (CWR), additional irrigation water is added

Full Screen / Esc

to ensure the growth of plants. Irrigation requirement (IRR) from surface water and/or groundwater resources is estimated according to Eq. (9) as the difference from CWR and P_{eff} multiplied by the irrigation efficiency IRR_{eff} (Allen et al., 1998):

$$IRR = \max(CWR - P_{eff}, 0) \cdot IRR_{eff} \tag{9}$$

5 With IRR_{eff} in [%].

2.2.4 Site specific leaching requirement (LR)

Irrigated agriculture in dry locations with high temperatures often faces the problem of increasing soil salinity, due to evaporation of irrigation water. Leaching out the accumulated salts from the soil profile is a farming technique common to maintain quality 10 of the soil at the beginning of the growing season. The required amount of water for leaching, the so called leaching requirement (LR), is calculated by the total amount of IRR and a leaching fraction (LF) according to Ayers and Westcot (1976):

$$LR = \frac{IRR}{1 - LF} - IRR \tag{10}$$

with LR measured in [$m^3\,ha^{-1}$] and LF [–]. LF is estimated in two slightly different ways 15 depending on the method used for irrigation. For sprinkler/pivot and drip irrigation the maximal tolerable salt concentration of a crop ($EC_{e\,0\%}$) is used to estimate the leaching fraction (LF_p). Under surface irrigation an adjusted crop salt tolerance value ($EC_{e\,adj}$) is applied to derive the leaching fraction (LF_s). The calculation of LF_p and LF_s is given by Al-Zeid et al. (1988) as follows:

$$LF_p = \frac{EC_w}{2 \cdot EC_{e\,0\%}} \tag{11}$$

$$LF_s = \frac{EC_w}{5 \cdot EC_{e\,adj} - EC_w} \tag{12}$$

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

with EC_w, $EC_{e\,0\%}$ and $EC_{e\,adj}$ given in [dS m^{-1}]. The adjusted crop salt tolerance $EC_{e\,adj}$ depends on the site-specific yield response factor.

2.2.5 Site specific yield response (Y_{ratio})

Irrigation with saline irrigation water decreases crop yields, because high salt concentrations limit plant water uptake. Two thresholds $EC_{e\,100\%}$ (no limitation of crop growth) and $EC_{e\,0\%}$ (full limitation of crop growth) define the relationship between crop yield and electric conductivity of the soil solution and thus the yield response (Y_{ratio}). A straightforward function is used to calculate Y_{ratio} according to Maas and Hoffman (1977) (Eq. 13):

$$Y_{ratio} = \frac{100\,\%}{ECe_{0\,\%} - ECe_{100\,\%}} \tag{13}$$

with $EC_{e\,0\%}$ and $EC_{e\,100\%}$ given in [dS m^{-1}] and yield loss per unit increase in salinity Y_{ratio} [% (dS m^{-1})$^{-1}$]. High salt concentrations in the soil solution require a large amount of leaching water to maximise crop yield. However, in order to decrease the water requirement of growing a crop, the trade-off between maximum crop yields on the one hand and low leaching requirements on the other hand should be taken into account. For this reason, the user can set a target yield value (Y_{target}) in SPARE:WATER, which leads to lower crop yields, but less leaching water is required. Under such condition, the crop tolerable salt concentration will differ from $EC_{e\,100\%}$ and needs to be adjusted to the new Y_{target}. To do this, SPARE:WATER calculates the associated adjusted crop salt tolerance value ($EC_{e\,adj}$) according to Eq. (14) (Maas and Hoffman, 1977):

$$EC_{e\,adj} = \frac{100 + EC_{e100\%} \cdot Y_{ratio} - Y_{target}}{Y_{ratio}} \tag{14}$$

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

with $EC_{e\,adj}$ in [dS m^{-1}] and Y_{target} in [%]. All data and parameters required to calculate the site and regional specific WFs according to Eqs. (2)–(14) need to be provided in a database.

2.3 Database

SPARE:WATER data requirement is grouped into input parameter, spatial input data and forcing data. The required data are presented in Table 1. Input parameters are coefficients, which define a specific crop according to the crop coefficient concept reported by Allen et al. (1998). A specific crop is characterized by the length of growing season, crop coefficients, maximum crop height, salt tolerance as well as sowing and harvest date. These data are stored in look up tables. The spatial input data mainly consists of grid maps of the site of concern containing information on irrigation management (irrigation practice, efficiency and salt concentration of irrigation water) as well as target yields. Additional maps needed contain a digital elevation model and a shape file of political (e.g. county, province) or geographic boundaries (e.g. catchments) if predictions for certain spatial entities are requested. The forcing data of the model include gridded climate time series with monthly values.

Once all data are available in the required format, data are read into SPARE:WATER through the graphical user interface and a project folder is generated when starting a new session. This folder is subdivided in the four sub-folders Forcing data, Input data, Input parameter and Output files, which are structured as follows:

– Forcing data contains an entry of climate data set, stored in the form of grid maps (ASCII or ESRI grid format). The climatic data set includes monthly averages or sums of precipitation and temperature, and in dependence on the selected PET calculation method a number of further climatic variables such as radiation, sunshine hours, wind speed, and/or relative humidity. Moreover, this folder contains a table with specific information on crop production.

- – Input data includes a map of geographical units represented as shapefile and as grid map. Further data on elevation, three maps with irrigation data are stored here. Irrigation data contains irrigation efficiency, irrigation technique and electrical conductivity of irrigation water (salinity).

5   – Input parameter covers a text files on crop specific coefficients.

- – Output files consists of 8 sub-folders for storing results. Results are stored in form of grid maps (ASCII format). The following grid maps are stored during a session: PET, CWR, IRR, LR, P_{eff}, Y per crop and growing season as well as WFg_{crop}, WFb_{crop}, $\text{WFgr}_{\text{crop}}$ per crop.

10 Steps required to setup a project via the GUI is described in the upcoming chapter.

2.4   Graphical User Interface (GUI)

The graphical user interface of SPARE:WATER follows a two-tiered approach, which is represented through a setup-window and an analysis-window. In the setup-window, WF_{crop} is calculated under the current circumstances. The calculation consists of
15 8 steps which are sequentially processed. Results are then shown in the analysis-window. Here, site specific WFs are aggregated for each geographical unit (e.g. administrative units or catchments). The system includes a descriptive statistics analysis routine containing median, average and standard deviation for each WF_{crop} (separated in WFg, WFb and WFgr) and spatial entity.
20 Furthermore, an overall water footprint balance is calculated for the entire region and alternative crop production scenarios can be defined and evaluated. Results can be exported in the form of (.txt, .csv) or grid maps (ASCII or ESRI grid format). A proof of concept of SPARE:WATER is presented in the following chapter. For this, the tool has been applied to the agricultural sector of Saudi Arabia.

3 Proof of concept: Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has 24.6 Mio inhabitants and is divided into 13 geographical delineated areas, i.e. provinces. The capital city is Riyadh in the centre of the country. The country covers an area of 215 Mio ha and is the largest country on the Arabian Peninsula. Total potential agriculture land covers 52.7 Mio ha from which 1.2 Mio ha are actually culti-vated (Frenken, 2009). Rainfall is low with an average amount of 40 to 140 mm yr^{-1}. Exceptions include the Asir Mountains (south-west, Asir) and Oman mountains (south-east, Eastern Province) with up to 500 mm yr^{-1} rainfall. The reference evaporation is high and varies from 2500 mm yr^{-1} (north-west, coast line) to 4500 mm yr^{-1} in the desert (Al-Rashed and Sherif, 2000).

3.1 Data

Crop parameters for the main crops cultivated in Saudi Arabia were derived principally from Al-Zeid et al. (1988). These data include crop coefficients, lengths of growing seasons as well as sowing and harvest dates. The same source was used to obtain irrigation efficiencies of 55 %, 70 % and 85 % for surface, sprinkler and drip methods, respectively. Data from Allen et al. (1998) were used to get heights and rooting depths of crops, whereas crop salt tolerance data were taken from Ayers and Westcot (1976). For this study, a baseline scenario is adopted with relative good irrigation water quality of 1.2 dS m^{-1}, in-efficient irrigation technique of 55 %, and a target yield of 100 % for the whole country.

The weather data of the time range of 1985–2005 were averaged to monthly means (or sums in the case of precipitation) for each station, whereas a set of 30 climate stations (PME, 2010) throughout Saudi Arabia has been used. The analysis of variance from year to year of climatic variables was conducted for testing their suitability for time sets outside the observation period. The average annual standard deviation of minimum and maximum temperature, relative humidity and wind speed indicates a

very low inter-annual and intra-annual variation (Appendix, Figure A1) with values of 0.88 to 1.8 °C, 2.4 to 8.0 %, and 0.2 to 0.48 m s^{-1}, respectively.

Agricultural statistics were taken from PME (2010). The data set included crop yield and harvest area for each province (Fig. 3). The total amount of crops produced in 2008 summed up to 9.73 Mio t, differentiating into 20 single crops and into additional four categories namely other fodder crops, other vegetables, other cereals and other fruits, which represented the crops which are not allocated to a single crop category. The majority of these crops (> 68 %) were produced in four provinces (Ar Riyadh with 33 %, Al Jawf 13 %, Al Quasim 11 % and Hail 11 %). Figure 3 depicts the fraction of the four agricultural commodity categories cereals, vegetables, fodder crops and fruits in each province from the national sum of that category. More than half of fodder crops (58 %) and 44 % of vegetables were cultivated in Ar Riyadh. A high amount of cereals were produced in Al Jawf and Hail. Fruits were mainly grown in Ar Riyadh (19 %), Al Quasim (12 %) and the Eastern Province (14 %). Cereals were dominated by wheat (86 %), vegetables by tomatoes and potatoes (36 %), fodder crops by alfalfa with 76 % and finally fruits by date palms (63 %).

3.2 Simulation of water requirements in Saudi Arabia

Figure 4 illustrates calculated water requirements CWR, IRR and LR in Saudi Arabia. For most crops, median CWR range from 250 mm to 1250 mm. Overall highest values are simulated for alfalfa and citrus trees where maximum CWR exceeds 2000 mm. In case of date palm CWR varies from 839 to 1342 mm, which is two times lower than reported CWR (2100–2892 mm) from Alamoud et al. (2012), who have carried out field experiments in Saudi Arabia to measure CWR of date palms in comparison to alfalfa. In another field experiment Alazba et al. (2003) quantified the CWR of barley and wheat to 930 mm and 898 mm, respectively, which is also substantially higher than our own estimates of 486 mm and 563 mm. The differences can be explained by the differences in crop coefficients. In this study, crop coefficient values were taken from Al-Zeid (1988), where, for example, crop coefficients of date palms vary from 0.55 to

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

0.75. These values are lower than those quantified by Alamoud et al. (2012), which range from 0.8 to 0.99 for the same fruit.

Furthermore, the selection of the reference crop for the estimation of reference evapotranspiration plays a major role in estimating CWR. In this study, the FAO methodology has been applied, in which PET is based on grass reference evapotranspiration in contrast to Alamoud et al. (2012) and Alazba et al. (2003), where alfalfa is the reference crop. Abu Rizaiza and Al-Qsaimy (1996) have simulated CWR for a number of field crops and perennials for three sites in Saudi Arabia by using two PET methods (Modified Penman, Blaney-Criddle). The authors have reported the following ranges for CWR: vegetables vary from 308 mm to 669 mm, fodder crops and cereals from 364 mm to 884 mm and perennials from 849 mm to 1976 mm. Own estimates are in the same range of those reported by Abu Rizaiza and Al-Qsaimy (1996): vegetables (e.g. tomatoes, squash crop and potatoes with 568, 682 and 643 mm), cereals (e.g. barley and wheat with 486 and 563 mm), and perennials (e.g. dates, citrus and grapes with 1132, 1745 and 1139 mm). In conformity with this study, Al-Ghobari (2000) also highlights the use of the FAO-Penman equation, especially for southern Saudi Arabian conditions.

Irrigation requirement for most crops is close to 1000 mm (Fig. 4). Dry onions and okra have the lowest IRR while high IRRs are found for dates and grapes that exceed 2000 mm. Alfalfa and citrus trees have the highest IRR requirement and have an average requirement above 3000 mm. In the study from Abu Rizaiza and Al-Qsaimy (1996) reported IRR values are similar to our estimates for vegetables as well as for fodder crops and cereals. In case of perennials IRR ranges from 1202 to 4436 mm. While our estimates are in the same range with regard to average IRRs, the maximum values are slightly lower.

LR is lower than 200 mm for most crops, with a distinctly higher LR for maize (312 mm, Fig. 4). All other cereals have the lowest LR, e.g. barley 25 mm and wheat 40 mm. In case of vegetables LR for tomatoes, squash crop and potatoes is calculated with 113, 190 and 212 mm, respectively. Large amounts of LR are simulated for perennials such as dates, citrus and grapes with 128, 588 and 445 mm. A study by Corwin

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

et al. (2007) in California (EC of irrigation water: $1.23\,\mathrm{dS\,m^{-1}}$) quantified the LR with the same empirical approach from Ayers and Westcot (1994) for alfalfa and wheat to 283 mm and 31 mm, respectively. Our estimate of LR for wheat (40 mm) is similar while that for alfalfa (546 mm) is nearly two times higher, which is caused by larger amount of irrigation in SPARE:WATER with a difference of a 1722 mm while leaching fraction LF for wheat and alfalfa is almost identical in both studies.

In summary, alfalfa, citrus, dates and grapes have the highest water demand, resulting in large irrigation amounts to meet CWR. As a consequence, also LR is relatively high in comparison to other crops where LR plays a minor role for the total water requirement. Overall, grey water contributes 11 % to average total water requirements, whereby maize has the highest (22 %) and barley (3 %) the lowest fraction of grey water.

3.3 Crop water footprints (WF$_{Crop}$) in Saudi Arabia

WF$_{crop}$ has been calculated for 20 of the most relevant crops in Saudi Arabia (Fig. 5). On a national scale, average WF$_{crop}$ varies from $167\,\mathrm{m^3\,t^{-1}}$ (cucumber) up to $7026\,\mathrm{m^3\,t^{-1}}$ (sesame). Especially vegetables have a low WF$_{crop}$ with values smaller than $500\,\mathrm{m^3\,t^{-1}}$, e.g. for water melon, okra, tomato, dry onion and cucumber, which is in agreement with other reports of WFcrop (Mekonnen and Hoekstra, 2010). In general, WF decreases with higher crop yields, e.g. between $20\,\mathrm{t\,ha^{-1}}$ and $55\,\mathrm{t\,h^{-1}}$ for potatoes, tomatoes and cucumber in Saudi Arabia. Cereals range from $1701\,\mathrm{m^3\,t^{-1}}$ (barley) to $7026\,\mathrm{m^3\,t^{-1}}$ (sesame), whereby low values can also be observed for wheat and medium ones for maize and millet. Fruit trees such as data palms and citrus have an average high WF$_{crop}$ of 3439 and $5263\,\mathrm{m^3\,t^{-1}}$.

Average contribution of green water to WF$_{crop}$ is generally low in Saudi Arabia with less than $300\,\mathrm{m^3\,t^{-1}}$ (less than 4 % on average), reflecting the very low annual rainfall. The major proportion of water requirement in Saudi Arabian agriculture is taken from blue water resources, in this case almost entirely from fossil groundwater (Al-Rashed

and Sherif, 2000), thereby dominating the water footprint. Also grey water shows marginal importance for many crops with around 11 % on average. However, leaching is an important management task, especially under environmental conditions in Saudi Arabia (Hussain et al., 2010). Without annual leaching future crop yields would decline as a consequence of salt stress, especially in case of salt sensitive crops such as alfalfa, citrus, grapes and maize. These crops exceed average WFgr_{crop} values of around $1000\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$, even under low salt concentrations ($1.2\,\text{dS}\,\text{m}^{-1}$). For this reason, WFgr_{crop} plays a quantitative minor role but is essential in terms of qualitative aspects and sustainability of soil quality. The importance of such qualitative aspects in comparison to water quantity for decision making has also been reported from Dabrowski et al. (2009), who highlight the consideration of pesticides and fertilizer inputs in the frame of virtual water trade.

Average WF_{crop} for each crop in each province are depicted in Figure 6. The majority of provinces have an average WF_{crop} lower than $3000\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$, except Jizan ($3472\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$) and Northern Border ($6395\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$). Lowest values are found for Tabuk, Hail, Al Jawf and the Eastern Province, where the average WF_{crop} is lower than $1500\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$. No crops with high WF_{crop} are produced in these particular provinces, whereas in Jizan and Northern Border water intensive crops such as sesame, citrus or data palms are grown. The largest variation of WF_{crop} can be observed for citrus with very low values   in Tabuk of around $1000\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$ and very large values in the Northern Border province exceeding $8000\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$. But not all crops with large average WF_{crop} are produced in regions with large average WF_{crop}. For example, Asir, which has a large average WF_{crop} of $2248\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$, requires a low amount of water to produce dates with around $1600\,\text{m}^3\,\text{t}^{-1}$ – similar to the province Al Jawf, which has an overall very low average WF_{crop}. The low and high values for WF_{crop} for particular crops in different provinces are mainly attributable to variation in yields and only to a lesser extinct to differences in irrigation water quality or climate.

SPARE:WATER 1.0

S. Multsch et al.

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Own calculations have been compared with other global and national assessments for maize and wheat (Fig. 7). WF_{crop} estimated with SPARE:WATER are larger than in all other nations as well as on the global average for maize and wheat, whereby largest differences occur for WF_{crop} for maize, which is three times higher than other global estimates. Differences can be explained as follows: (1) a grey water footprint component is only estimated in SPARE:WATER and the Water Footprint of Nations (WFPN) model (Mekonnen and Hoekstra, 2010). For SPARE:WATER, $WFgr_{crop}$ contributes 22 % ($1041\,m^3\,t^{-1}$) to the total water footprint of maize, an amount that should not be neglected. (2) SPARE:WATER considers in-efficient irrigation methods while WFPN neglects this. In case of wheat, WFPN simulates for Saudi Arabia a WFb_{crop} of $1093\,m^3\,t^{-1}$ and SPARE:WATER $2233\,m^3\,t^{-1}$. If in-efficient irrigation is considered in WFPN, WFb_{crop} would increase to approximately $2000\,m^3\,t^{-1}$ and differences between the two models drop to 11 %. Differences highlight the fact that accounting schemes for water footprints should consider grey water requirements for desalinization of soils and that in-efficient irrigation can lead to large variations. To further analyse differences of result in this study to global estimates results have been correlated with those from Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010) in their Water Footprint of Nations ($WFPN_{global}$) for all crops, resulting in an $R^2 = 63\,\%$. While this correlation is satisfying for total WF_{crop}, large discrepancies occur for the blue water footprint ($R^2 = 15\,\%$), indicating that the proportion of blue and green water for crop growth is wrongly estimated if global scale data are applied to Saudi Arabia. One should acknowledge the fact that arid climate conditions in Saudi Arabia differ from global averages and for this reason only a national or sub national assessment can give insight into Saudi Arabia's agriculture water footprint.

To further validate SPARE:WATER, the results have been compared with data provided for Saudi Arabia in the work of Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010). On a national scale, the alignment of our own estimates with the Water Footprint of Nations for Saudi Arabia ($WFPN_{SA}$) is $R^2 = 71\,\%$ (Fig. 8), and therefore higher than that for $WFPN_{global}$.

Obviously, the higher spatial resolution accounts better for the local climate conditions driving the WF_{crop}. Especially the blue WF_{crop} is in better agreement with $R^2 = 79\%$. The remaining differences between $WFPN_{SA}$ and our estimates can be lead back to non-optimal irrigation conditions with an efficiency of 55 % which has been considered in this study, while Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010) assumed no losses through in-efficient irrigation methods. Green WF_{crop} correlates by $R^2 = 63\%$. Contrary to green and blue water, grey WF_{crop} shows no similarity with $R^2 = 9\%$. This can be lead back to the different accounting method in comparison to that proposed from Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010), whereas in this study $WFgr_{crop}$ has been calculated from the amount of leaching requirement and in the study of Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010) $WFgr_{crop}$ is derived from the amount of water needed to dilute pollutants to water quality stan-dards. The associated green, blue and grey WF_{crop} from SPARE:WATER, $WFPN_{SA}$ and $WPFN_{global}$ can be found in the Appendix (Table A1).

In summary, large differences between water footprints of this study in comparison to global and other national estimates highlight the importance of regional water foot-print assessment. The ratio between green and blue water in Saudi Arabia differs from that of global estimates, whereby water footprints in Saudi Arabia are dominated by the blue component while global values are dominated by green water. Such differences emphasize the importance of using regional climate data as well as regional crop coef-ficients and considering agricultural management, leaching and irrigation techniques. In case of Saudi Arabia, in-efficient irrigation methods are used and large amounts of water are lost through percolation and evaporation.

Under the climatic conditions in Saudi Arabia no return flow of irrigation water to rivers or groundwater exists. Thus, water pollution through fertilizers or pesticides usu-ally considered in estimating the grey water footprint component need not to be con-sidered in Saudi Arabian agriculture. Maintaining soil quality is more important, e.g. through low salt concentrations, and thus should be considered in water footprint as-sessment.

Title Page

Abstract | Introduction

Conclusions | References

Tables | Figures

◄ | ►

◄ | ►

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

3.4 Regional water footprint of Saudi Arabia

On a national scale, agricultural production consumed 17.0 km^3 yr^{-1} (WF$_{area}$) in 2008. Figure 9 illustrates this consumption distributed over all provinces in Saudi Arabia. A high percentage of 86 % is blue water, grey water contributes 9 % and a minor portion of 5 % is provided through green water. One has to acknowledge that blue water for irrigation agriculture in Saudi Arabia is almost entirely taken from fossil groundwater sources (Al-Rashed and Sherif, 2000) and thus these numbers indicate an unsustainable water consumption of the agriculture sector in Saudi Arabia. Assuming that most of the grey water is also stemming from the same groundwater resource it shows the dependence of agricultural production on this non-refreshable resource. Our results are in agreement with other work. Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010) estimated a blue water footprint of 8.6 km^3 yr^{-1} in Saudi Arabia, which equals 75 % of the average national water footprint in 1996–2005. This substantial lower value is a result of the differences in assumed irrigation efficiency. Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010) used a fixed 100 % efficiency, whereas in this study irrigation efficiency has been adapted to the dominant irrigation method in Saudi Arabia (surface and sprinkler irrigation) with an associated efficiency of 55 % (Al-Zeid et al., 1988). Considering this lower efficiency, reported values of Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010) would increase to 15.6 km yr^3, only 6 % above our calculated WFb$_{area}$. Green and grey water footprint has been estimated to 1.8 km^3 yr^{-1} and 1.1 km^3 yr^{-1} in that study, corresponding to our own estimates of 1.5 and 0.9 km^3 yr^{-1}, respectively. However, one has to consider that the WFgr$_{area}$ by Mekonnen and Hoekstra was calculated for the dilution of pollutants whereas in this study leaching requirement has been estimated for desalinisation in irrigation agriculture. Results by Hussain et al. (2010) for blue water consumption amount to 14.5 km^3 yr^{-1}, also in the same range, but slightly lower as our WF$_{area}$. However, this value was estimated for 1996 and is assumed to be higher today. Frenken (2009) analysed blue water resources in Saudi Arabia and reported an increase of water consumption from 6.8 km^3 yr^{-1} in 1980 to 21.0 km^3 yr^{-1} in 2006 (> 1.2 Mio ha cultivated

land). Their substantially larger estimate can be explained by the differences in calculation method. Frenken (2009) have estimated water withdrawal, which includes all water taken from surface water and groundwater resources for irrigation purpose. It includes also those amounts of water that are lost off-farm, while in this study only on-farm water use has been considered.

As SPARE:WATER allows to refine the country scale WF assessment, WF has been broken down to the province level. A high percentage of 69 % ($11.7\,\mathrm{km}^3\,\mathrm{yr}^{-1}$) is consumed in four provinces, i.e. Ar Riyadh (30 %), Al Quasim (17 %), Al Jawf (12 %) and Hail (9 %). All remaining provinces contribute relatively minor proportions to the total water footprint, in total 31 % ($5.3\,\mathrm{km}^3\,\mathrm{yr}^{-1}$). A further division into crop categories (cereals, fodder crops, vegetables and fruits) within each province shows that more than 50 % of the WF_{area} in Ar Riyadh is attributable to fodder crop and vegetable production. Most water for cereal production is consumed in Al Quasim (23 %), Al Jawf (22 %) and Jizan (21 %), summing up to 66 %. Fruit production is dominant in Ar Riyadh and Al Quasim with together 41 % and another 34 % in Al Jawf, Al Madinah and Hail.

One could hypothesize that highest WF_{area} can be found in provinces with highest population, as production is located close to consumers. This would be reflected in the WF_{area} for Ar Riyadh and Al Quasim where production of perishable vegetables and fruits is concentrated. However, this explanation would only fit to Riyadh while other larger cities in Saudi Arabia are located closed to the Red Sea in provinces with a low WF_{area}. A more likely explanation is that the WF_{area} is correlated with the distance to major groundwater reservoirs, which are mainly located in the centre, the east and in the north of Saudi Arabia (Foster and Loucks, 2006). Irrigation in Saudi Arabia is sustained by fossil groundwater and therefore the largest WF_{area} can be found in regions of good groundwater access.

4 Conclusions

Sustainability of irrigated agriculture is a complex issue in arid and semi-arid ecosystems, especially when considering the inherited low irrigation efficiency in such regions. An explicit spatial water footprint system, accounting for specific environmental conditions and existing irrigation practices, has been developed. Against the existing concepts, SPARE:WATER can be easily adapted to new environmental information, cultivation sites as well as irrigation practice. Furthermore, SPARE:WATER gives non-GIS experts the possibility to make site specific calculations on their own, reflecting the importance of a simple GUI which has also been recommended by Renschler (2003).

In contrast to Mekkonen and Hoekstra (2010) non optimal irrigation with in-efficient surface irrigation techniques has been assumed. This assumption implicates, that the water footprints calculated with SPARE:WATER are related to all water applied to the field and not only to that water, which directly contributes to crop growth. Compared to temperate regions or regions with a shallow ground water table, the water lost in semi-arid and arid agro-ecosystems by insufficient irrigation systems is evaporated to the atmosphere or percolated to deeper soil layers, and for this reason, is not available for future water use. Furthermore, grey water is added for furnishing a healthy soil for plant growth in this study, in contrast to Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010), who defined grey water as the water needed to dilute pollutants. We conclude that only by accounting for insufficient irrigation techniques and leaching requirement results can be used to improve water resource management in irrigation agriculture. Although grey water contributes only a minor fraction to the entire water footprint on a quantitative perspective, it is essential in terms of qualitative aspects and sustainability of soil quality.

In case of the Saudi Arabian agricultural sector, the largest fraction of the water footprint is blue and relies on water taken from fossil groundwater aquifers. Water footprints for Saudi Arabia are somewhat higher in comparison to earlier published results, mainly because of considering non-optimal irrigation practices. Considering this

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

lower efficiency, reported values of Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010) would increase to 15.6 km yr^3, only 6 % above our calculated WFb$_{area}$.

The spatial explicit SPARE:WATER approach facilitates new directions of calculating water footprints. Many applications so far focus on the long term impact of agriculture on water resources and thus, monthly data to describe seasonal variability are sufficient. However, daily data could become relevant if the impact of weather extremes (droughts, shift of precipitation patterns and intensity) on water resources utilization are of interest. Furthermore, inter-annual variation of the water footprint and its change in response to climate change could become relevant in future water footprint application. We therefore suggest to further test SPARE:WATER and also investigate the uncertainties on water footprint accounting associated with regional input data and model.

Appendix A

Additional data

Figure A1 illustrates the climate variability in Saudi Arabia. Plots show 30 climate stations in Saudi Arabia with 21-yr long time series. Data has been used to estimate the standard deviation of monthly means in comparison to long term monthly means for each station and parameter.

Table A1 lists the water footprint of major crops in Saudi Arabia calculated with SPARE:WATER as well as published by Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2010).

Supplementary material related to this article is available online at: http://www.geosci-model-dev-discuss.net/6/645/2013/ gmdd-6-645-2013-supplement.zip.

References

5 Abu Rizaiza, O. S. and Al-Osaimy, M. H.: A statistical approach for estimating irrigation water usage in western Saudi Arabia, Agric. Water Manage., 29, 175–185, 1996.

Alamoud, A. I., Mohammad, F. S., Al-Hamed, S. A., and Alabdulkader, A. M.: Reference evapotranspiration and date palm water use in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Int. Res. J. Agric. Sci. Soil Sci., 155–169, 2012.

10 Alazba, A., Alghobari, H. M., Mohammad, F. S., and Alomran, A. M.: Measured and estimated crop et and kc for wheat and barley in central Saudi Arabia, Alexandria, J. Agric. Res., 48, 1–9, 2003.

Allen, R. G., Pereira, L. S., Raes, D., and Smith, M.: Crop evapotranspiration – Guidelines for computing crop water requirements, FAO Irrigation and drainage paper 56, Rome, 1998.

15 Al-Ghobari, H. M.: Estimation of reference evapotranspiration for southern region of Saudi Arabia, Irrigation Sci., 19, 81–86, 2000.

Al-Rashed, M. F. and Sherif, M. M.: Water resources in the GCC countries: an overview, Water Resour. Manage., 14, 59–75, 2000.

Al-Zeid, A. A., Quintana, E. U., Abu Khate, M. I., Nimah, M. N., Al-Samerai, F. H., and
20 Bashour, I. I.: Crop Water Requirement for Principle Crops in Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Agriculture and Water, Riyadh, 1988.

Arnold, J. G., Williams, J. R., Srinivasan, R., King, K. W., and Griggs, R. H.: SWAT: Soil water assessment tool, US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Grassland, Soil and Water Research Laboratory, Temple, TX, 1994.

25 Ayers, R. S. and Westcot, D. W.: Water quality for agriculture, FAO Irrigation and Drainage Paper 23, Rome, 1994.

Chapagain, A. K. and Hoekstra, A. Y.: The global component of freshwater demand and supply: an assessment of virtual water flows between nations as a result of trade in agricultural and industrial products, Water Int., 33, 19–32, 2008.

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Chapagain, A. K., Hoekstra, A. Y., Savenije, H. H. G., and Gautam, R.: The water footprint of cotton consumption: an assessment of the impact of worldwide consumption of cotton products on the water resources in the cotton producing countries, Ecol. Econ., 60, 186–203, 2006.

Corwin, D. L. and Waggoner, B. L.: TETrans: A user-friendly, functional model of solute transport, Water Sci. Technol., 24, 1991.

Corwin, D. L., Rhoades, J. D., and Simunek, J.: Leaching requirement for soil salinity control: steady-state versus transient models, Agr. Water. Manage., 90, 165–180, 2007.

Dabrowski, J. M., Murray, K., Ashton, P. J., and Leaner, J. J.: Agricultural impacts on water quality and implications for virtual water trading decisions, Ecol. Econ., 68, 1074–1082, 2009.

Ene, S.-A. and Teodosiu, C.: Grey water footprint assessment and challenges for its implementation, Environ. Eng. Manage. J., 333–340, 2011.

Fader, M., Rost, S., Müller, C., Bondeau, A., and Gerten, D.: Virtual water content of temperate cereals and maize: present and potential future patterns, J. Hydrol., 384, 218–231, 2010.

FAO: AQUASTAT – FAO's Information System on Water and Agriculture, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, available at: http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/main/index.stm, 2012a.

FAO: FAOSTAT – statistical database, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, available at: http://faostat.fao.org/, 2012b.

Foster, S. and Loucks, D. P.: Non-renewable groundwater resources: a guidebook on Socially-sustainable Management for Water-policy Makers, UNESCO, 2006.

Frenken, K.: Irrigation in the Middle East region in figures, FAO Water Report 34, 325–337, 2009.

Gerbens-Leenes, W., Hoekstra, A. Y., and Van Der Meer, T. H.: The water footprint of bioenergy, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci., 106, 10219–10223, 2009.

Hanasaki, N., Inuzuka, T., Kanae, S., and Oki, T.: An estimation of global virtual water flow and sources of water withdrawal for major crops and livestock products using a global hydrological model, J. Hydrol., 384, 232–244, 2010.

Hargreaves, G. H. and Samani, Z. A.: Reference crop evapotranspiration from temperature, Appl. Eng. Agric., 1, 96–99, 1985.

Hoekstra, A. Y. and Chapagain, A. K.: Water footprints of nations: water use by people as a function of their consumption pattern, Water Resourc. Manage., 21, 35–48, 2007.

Title Page

Abstract | Introduction

Conclusions | References

Tables | Figures

◄ | ►

◄ | ►

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Hoekstra, A. Y. and Hung, P. Q.: Virtual water trade: a quantification of virtual water flows between nations in relation to international crop trade, Value of water research report series No. 11, UNESCO-IHE, Delft, 27–29, 2002.

Hoekstra, A. Y., Chapagain, A. K., and Aldaya, M. M.: The Water Footprint Assessment Manual: Setting the Global Standard, Earthscan, London, 2011.

Hussain, G., Alquwaizany, A., and Al-Zarah, A.: Guidelines for irrigation water quality and water management in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: an overview, J. Appl. Sci., 10, 79–96, 2010.

Letey, J. D., Knapp, A., and Keith, C.: Crop-water production function model for saline irrigation waters, Soil Sci. Soc. Am. J., 49, 1005–1009, 1985.

Letey, J. D., Hoffman, G. J., Hopmans, J. W., Grattan, S. R., Suarez, D., Corwin, D. L., Oster, J. D., Wu, L., and Amrhein, C.: Evaluation of soil salinity leaching requirement guidelines, Agr. Water Manage., 98, 502–506, 2011.

Liu, C., Kroeze, C., Hoekstra, A. Y., and Gerbens-Leenes, W.: Past and future trends in grey water footprints of anthropogenic nitrogen and phosphorus inputs to major world rivers, Ecol. Indica., 18, 42–49, 2012.

Liu, J., Williams, J. R., Zehnder, A. J. B., and Yang, H.: GEPIC-modelling wheat yield and crop water productivity with high resolution on a global scale, Agric. Syst., 94, 478–493, 2007.

Maas, E. V. and Hoffman, G. J.: Crop salt tolerance\-current assessment, J. Irrig. Drain. Div., 103, 115–134, 1977.

Mekonnen, M. M. and Hoekstra, A. Y.: The green, blue and grey water footprint of crops and derived crop products, Value of Water Research Report Series No. 47, UNESCO-IHE, Delft, available at: http://www.waterfootprint.org/Reports/Report47-WaterFootprintCrops-Vol1.pdf, 2010.

PME: Crop production data 2004–2008, Presidency of Meteorology and Environment, Riyadh, 2010.

Priestley, C. H. B. and Taylor, R. J.: On the assessment of surface heat flux and evaporation using large-scale parameters, Mon. Weather Rev., 100, 81–92, 1972.

Renschler, C. S.: Designing geo spatial interfaces to scale process models: the GeoWEPP approach, Hydrol. Process., 17, 1005–1017, 2003.

Rhoades, J. D. and Merrill, S. D.: Assessing the suitability of water for irrigation: theoretical and empirical approaches, FAO Soils Bull., 31, 69–109, 1976.

Schuol, J., Abbaspour, K. C., Yang, H., Srinivasan, R., and Zehnder, A. J.: Modeling blue and green water availability in Africa, Water Resour. Res., 44, 2008.

Siebert, S. and Döll, P.: Quantifying blue and green virtual water contents in global crop production as well as potential production losses without irrigation, J. Hydrol., 384, 198–217, 2010.

Simunek, J. and Suarez, D. L.: UNSATCHEM-2D code for simulating two-dimensional variably saturated water flow, heat transport, carbon dioxide production and transport, and multicomponent solute transport with major ion equilibrium and kinetic chemistry, Research report, US Salinity Laboratory, Agricultural Research Service, US Dept. of Agriculture, Riverside, Calif. (USA), 1993.

Smith, M.: CROPWAT: a computer program for irrigation planning and management, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy, 1992.

Turc, L.: Estimation of irrigation water requirements, potential evapotranspiration: a simple climatic formula evolved up to date, Ann. Agron., 12, 13–49, 1961.

Visconti, F., De Paz, J. M., Rubio, J. L., and Sánchez, J.: SALTIRSOIL: a simulation model for the mid to long-term prediction of soil salinity in irrigated agriculture, Soil Use Manage., 27, 523–537, doi:10.1111/j.1475-2743.2011.00356.x, 2011.

Visconti, F., Paz, J. M., Rubio, J. L., and Sánchez, J.: Comparison of four steady-state models of increasing complexity for assessing the leaching requirement in agricultural salt-threatened soils, Span. J. Agric. Res., 10, 222–237, 2012.

Williams, J. R., Jones, C. A., and Dyke, P. T.: Modeling approach to determining the relationship between erosion and soil productivity, Trans. Am. Soc. Agric. Eng., 27, 1984.

Title Page

Abstract | Introduction

Conclusions | References

Tables | Figures

◀ | ▶

◀ | ▶

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Table 1. Data requirements to set up SPARE:WATER.

Type	Description	Unit	Status	Format
Input parameters	Crop characteristics			
	Crop coefficient ($K_{c\,ini}$, $K_{c\,mid}$, $K_{c\,end}$)	[–]	Needed	Coefficient, look up table
	Length of growing season (L_{ini}, L_{dev}, L_{mid}, L_{late})	[days]	Needed	Coefficient, look up table
	Rooting depth (Zr_{max}, Zr_{ini})	[cm]	Needed	Coefficient, look up table
	Crop height (H_{max})	[cm]	Needed	Coefficient, look up table
	Crop tolerable salt concentration in the soil extract ($EC_{e\,0\%}$, $EC_{e\,100\%}$)	[dS m^{-1}]	Needed	Coefficient, look up table
	Sowing	[date]	Needed	Coefficient, look up table
	Harvest	[date]	Needed	Coefficient, look up table
Input data	Irrigation quality (salt concentration)	[dS m^{-1}]	Needed	Spatial, grid map
	Irrigation efficiency	[%]	Needed	Spatial, grid map
	Irrigation method	[–]	Needed	Spatial, grid map
	Yield target	[%]	Needed	Spatial, grid map
	Geographic units		Needed	Spatial, shape file
	Digital elevation model	[m]	Needed	Spatial, grid map
Forcing data	Climate			
	Precipitation, (monthly)	[m^3 ha^{-1}]	Needed	Time series, grid map
	Radiation (monthly)	[mJ m^{-2}]	Optional	Time series, grid map
	Sunshine hours (monthly)	[h]	Optional	Time series, grid map
	Humidity (monthly)	[%]	Optional	Time series, grid map
	Wind speed (monthly)	[m s^{-1}]	Optional	Time series, grid map
	Temperature (monthly)	[° C]	Needed	Time series, grid map
	Agricultural statistics			
	Yield per crop (annual)	[t ha^{-1}]	Needed	Time series, table or grid
	Harvest area (annual)	[ha yr^{-1}]	Needed	Time series, table

Table A1. Water footprint of major crops in Saudi Arabia calculated with SPARE:WATER and published data for Saudi Arabia and the global average from the study WFPN – Water Footprint of Nations (Mekonnen and Hoekstra, 2010).

	SPARE:WATER WF_{crop} [m^3 t^{-1}]				WFPN$_{global}$ WF_{crop} [m^3 t^{-1}]				WFPN$_{SA}$ WF_{crop} [m^3 t^{-1}]			
Crop	Green	Blue	Grey	Total	Green	Blue	Grey	Total	Green	Blue	Grey	Total
Alfalfa	60	2223	351	2634								
Barley	108	1544	49	1701	1213	79	131	1423	194	800	227	1221
Carrots	23	427	67	517	106	28	61	195	70	556	179	805
Citrus	140	4281	842	5263	1145	62	35	1242	186	1162	82	1430
Cucumber	8	137	22	167	206	42	105	353	20	114	65	199
Dates	171	3059	209	3439	930	1250	98	2277	462	3042	143	3647
Dry onion	18	243	38	299	192	88	65	345	62	397	157	616
Eggplant	28	634	100	762	234	33	95	362	71	334	213	618
Grapes	72	1448	341	1861	425	97	87	608	113	754	66	933
Maize	154	3556	1041	4751	947	81	194	1222	367	1270		1637
Melon	28	549	87	664	147	25	63	235	54	151	42	247
Millet	167	4848	184	5199	4306	57	115	4478	527	2258		2785
Okra	35	398	63	496	1479	181	128	1788	93	305	390	788
Potato	24	524	103	651	191	33	63	287	14	265	84	363
Sesame	209	6568	249	7026	8460	509	403	9371	1750	3748		5498
Sorghum	292	3420	130	3842	2857	103	87	3048	1029	2329		3358
Squash crop	11	646	102	759	228	24	84	336				
Tomato	15	338	40	393	108	63	43	214	63	278	128	469
Water melon	26	407	64	497	147	25	63	235	88	225	47	360
Wheat	132	2233	97	2462	1277	342	207	1827	238	1093	185	1516
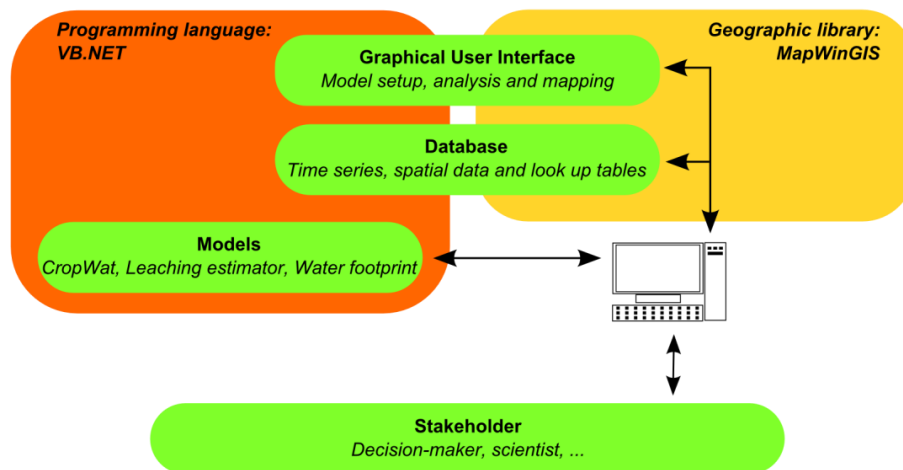
Fig. 1. The figure illustrates the four core components of SPARE:WATER in green. Models are implemented with VB.Net. Graphical user interface and database are programmed with VB.Net by using the spatial programming library MapWinGIS.
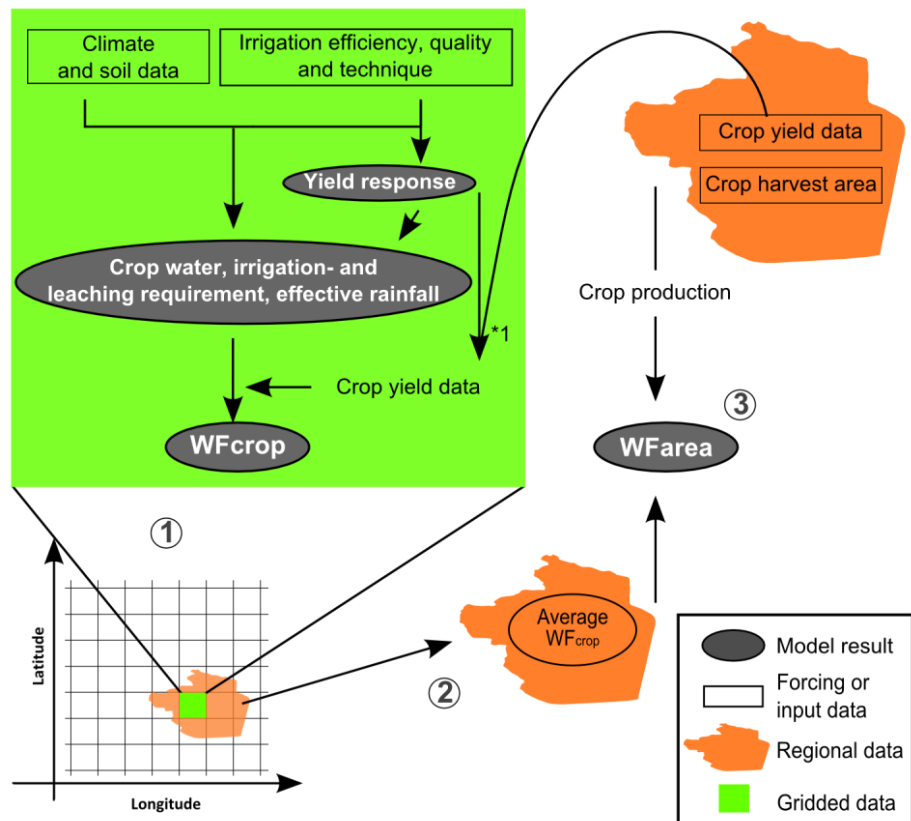
Fig. 2. SPARE:WATER uses gridded site specific data (1) to assess water requirements, yield response factors and the water footprints of growing a crop (WF_{crop}). Results are averaged for each geographical delineated area (2) and aggregated with agricultural statistical information (3) to calculate the water footprint of an area (WF_{area}). Agricultural statistics include crop yields per hectare as well as total harvest area for each region in hectare ([*1] crop yield data is taken from regional statistics and adjusted on the grid scale to account for salinity influences).
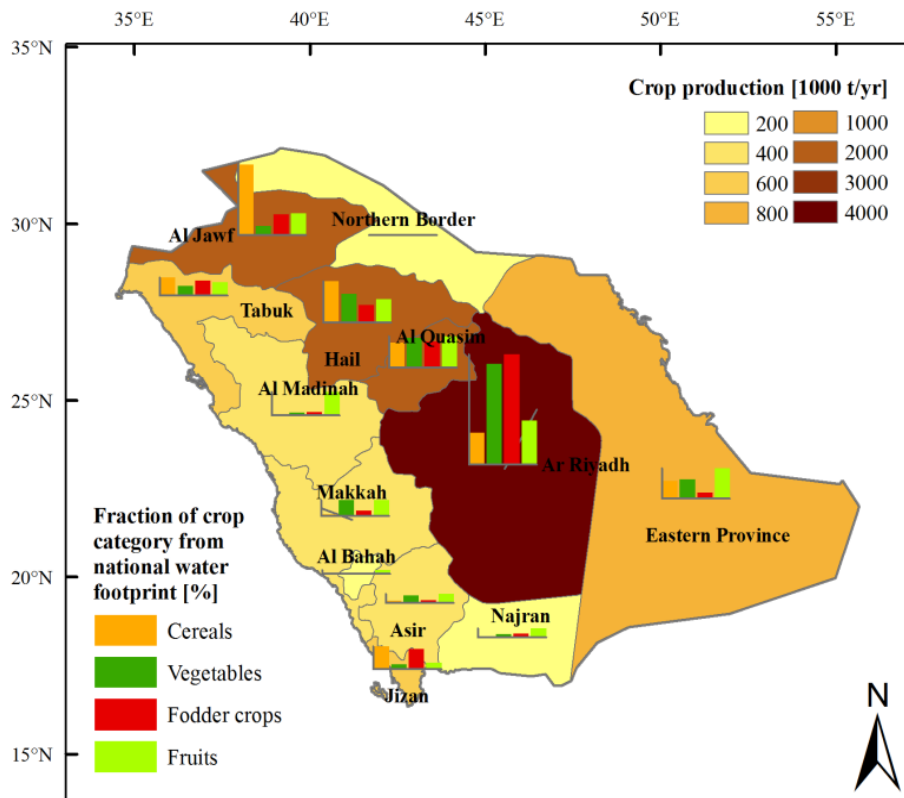
Fig. 3. Crop production in Saudi Arabia in 2008. Brown colours indicate the total amount of crop production in each province and coloured bar charts indicate the fraction of crop categories in each province from the national sum of that category. Total production in 2008 of all crops is 9.73 Mio t.
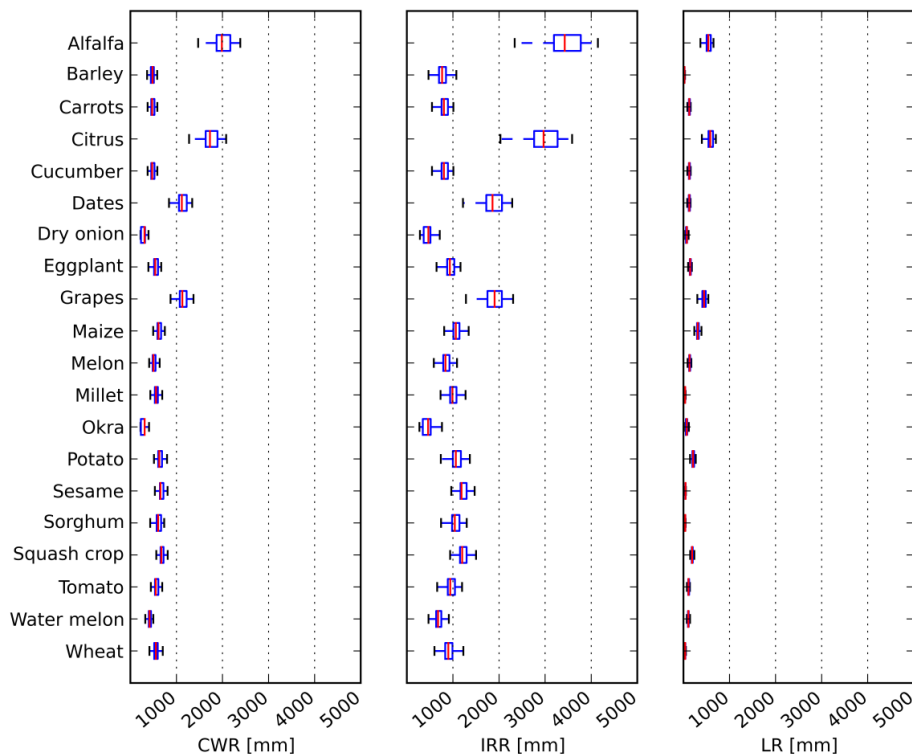
Fig. 4. Crop water (CWR), irrigation (IRR) and leaching (LR) requirement per growing season of 20 major crops grown in Saudi Arabia in 2008. Values have been calculated with long term average climate data. Box plots indicate range of different values in Saudi Arabia, red lines depict medians, length of blue boxes show inter quartile ranges, length of whiskers indicate values which are less than 1.5× inter quartile range. Extreme values are not shown.

Fig. 5. Green (WFg$_{crop}$), blue (WFb$_{crop}$) and grey (WFgr$_{crop}$) water footprint of 20 major crops grown in Saudi Arabia. Values have been calculated with agricultural census data for yields in 2008 and long term average climate data. Box plots indicate range of different values in Saudi Arabia, red lines depict medians, length of blue boxes shows inter quartile ranges, length of whiskers indicate values which are less than 1.5× inter quartile range. Extreme values are not shown.

Title Page

Abstract | Introduction

Conclusions | References

Tables | Figures

|◄ | ►|

◄ | ►

Back | Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion
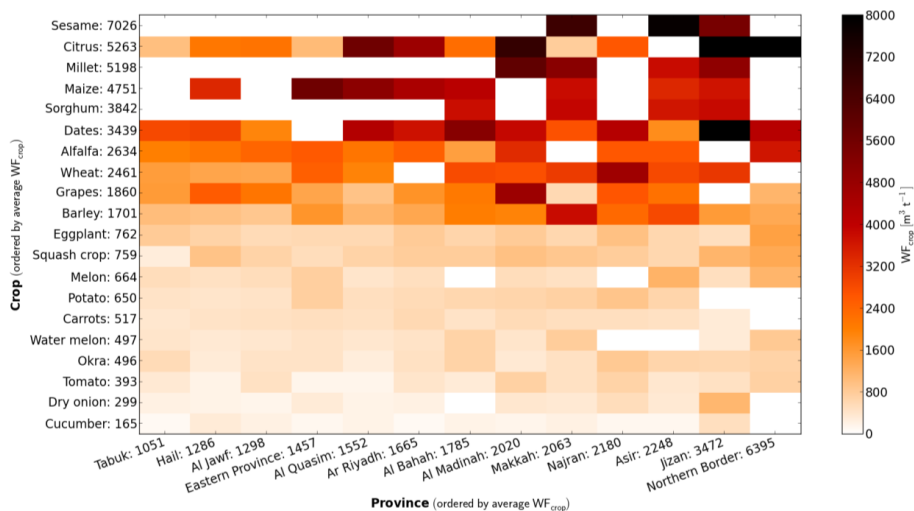
Fig. 6. WF_{crop} [$m^3\,t^{-1}$] of main crops and for each province in Saudi Arabia. Numbers along axis show the average WF_{crop} in each province or for each crop. White areas indicate no data values.
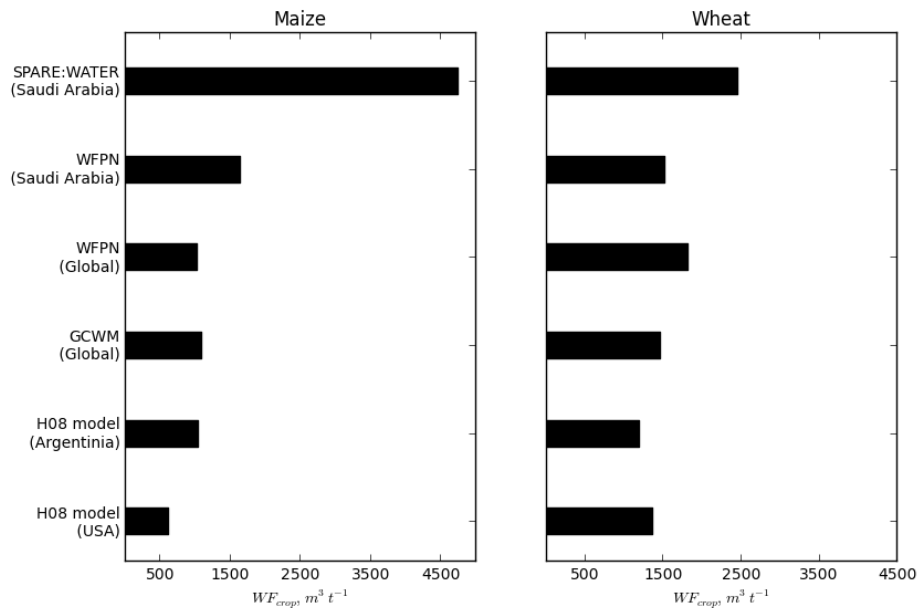
Fig. 7. Crop water footprint of maize and wheat from this study in comparison to WFPN – Water Footprint of Nations (Mekonnen and Hoekstra, 2010), GCWM – Global Crop Water Model (Siebert and Döll, 2010) and H08 model (Hansaki et al., 2010).
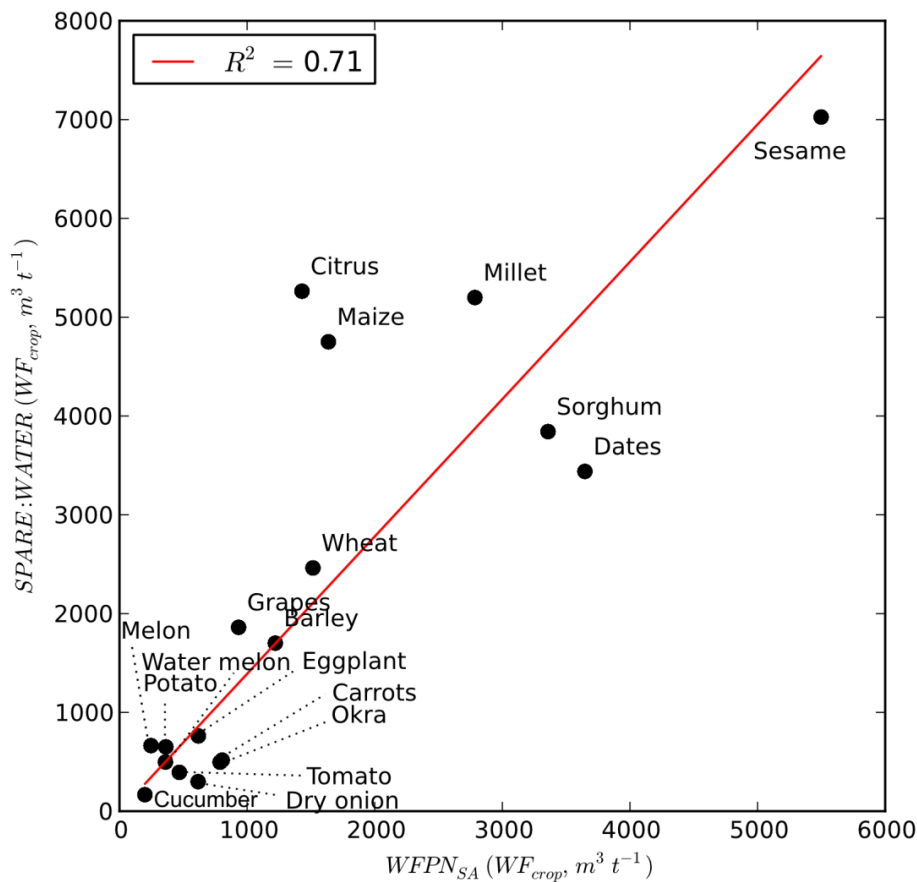
Fig. 8. Correlation of crop water footprint of Saudi Arabia estimated with SPARE:WATER and published data for Saudi Arabia from the study WFPN$_{SA}$ (Mekonnen and Hoekstra, 2010).
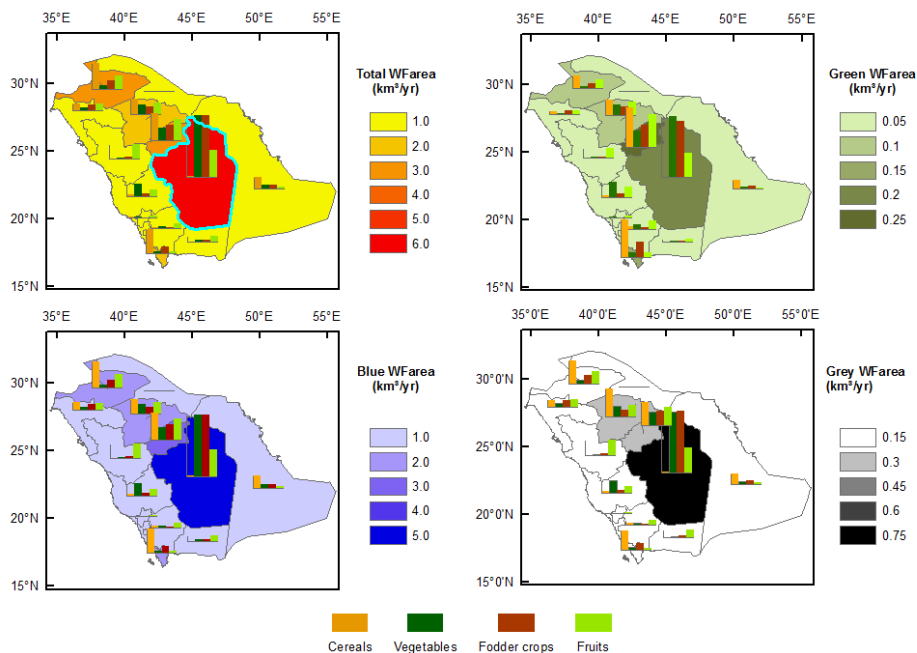
Fig. 9. WF$_{area}$ of Saudi Arabia's crop production in 2008. The four maps show total, green, blue and grey water consumption. Coloured bar chars indicate the fraction of a crop category in a province from the national sum. Total values are WFg$_{area}$ = 0.773 km^3 yr^{-1}, WFb$_{area}$ = 14.697 km^3 yr^{-1}, WFgr$_{area}$ = 1.574 km^3 yr^{-1} and WF$_{area}$ = 17.043 km^3 yr^{-1}.
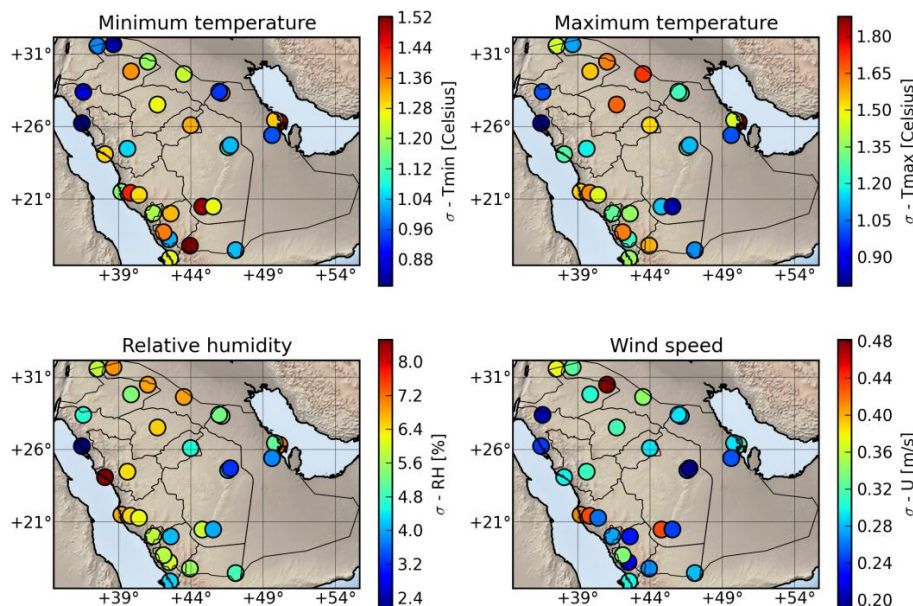
Fig. A1. Climate variability in Saudi Arabia. Plots show 30 climate stations in Saudi Arabia with 21-yr long time series. Data has been used to estimate the standard deviation of monthly means in comparison to long term monthly means for each station and parameter. (Source: figure and shaded relief has been created with Python Matplotlib and Basemap Toolkit; climate data from PME, 2010).