

# Impact of future climate change on land and water productivity for wheat crop (Wasit Governorate, Iraq)

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#### ABSTRACT

In AquaCrop model was used to calibrate and verify the performance of the winter wheat crop in south of Iraq Al-Suwaira Research Station using data recorded in period 1/1/2008 and 31/12/2017. The results showed an increase in both annual and monsoon rains at the mid and end century periods for both RCP4.5 and REP8.5 scenarios implementing model GFDL-ESM2M. The annual and monsoon rains decreased in the EC-Earth model for both the RCP4.5 and RCP8.5 scenarios, while increased slightly in the CNRM-CM5 model under RCP4.5 and dropped with RCP8.5. Highest yield was recorded at the base period (2.36 ton/hectare) during the simulation period. The water productivity increased compared to the base period 2040-2050, while it was equal for both base period and the period 2020-2030 and in the RCP8.5 scenario.

**Keywords:** Climate change , Water productivity, Aquacrop model. **Article type:** Research Article.

#### INTRODUCTION

Wheat is considered as a very important crop in achieving food in Iraq, several programs were used to develop wheat cultivation and increase production for many years ago. The method of developing wheat cultivation was adopted through government support, where about one million hectares were used for wheat production. The study area (Al-Suwaira District, south of Baghdad) is one of the most important area that are famous for cultivating this crop. The climate of this region is hot, arid lowland , and the precipitation does not exceed 200 mm per year. Accordingly, irrigation is necessary for this area to avoid water stress and increase crop yield, as numerous researchers have reported that wheat is not sensitive to drought at different growth stages (Zhang & Oweis 1999; Sezen & Yazar 2008; Nassif et al. 2023; Al-Atrash et al. 2023). Its cultivation consumes a large amount of water resources worldwide (Geerts & Raes 2009; Andarzian et al. 2011), since the production depends almost entirely on irrigation, especially in dry conditions (Musick et al. 1994; Steven & Tolk 2009). Studying plant responses to different irrigation strategies in the field is challenging and expensive. In the same role, crop water productivity models are important to assess the effects of water on crop production (Heng et al. 2007; Farahani et al. 2009; Andarzian et al. 2011; Levidow et al. 2014; Hamza et al. 2021). The FAO AquaCrop is a simple, accurate, and easy to use model that can be used by water managers, water use organizations, economists, and policmakers to plan and analyze irrigation scenarios (Hsiao et al. 2009). Besides, the AquaCrop model predicts the yield response to water (Heng et al. 2009; Vanuytrecht et al. 2014). AquaCrop has been tested for different crops under many environmental conditions (Heng et al. 2009; Todorovic et al. 2009; Araya et al. 2010; Zeleke et al. 2011; Amoah et al. 2013; Ahmadi et al. 2015; Trombetta et al. 2016; Toumi et al. 2016). However, AquaCrop calibration and validation were focused on using experimental field data in this study. In Iraq several irrigation methods are used

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to irrigate wheat crop (sprinkler irrigation, rain-fed, and surface irrigation). The northern and western region, which includes the governorates (Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk, and Anbar) are among the governorates that specialized in cultivating this crop.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in the AL-Suwaira district, a part of the Wasit Governorate of Iraq and its distance is 35 km south-east of Baghdad , located at latitude  $32^{\circ}$  56' 25" N and 044° 38' 04" E (Fig. 1). Aquacrop model was used to calibrate and verify the performance of the winter wheat crop , using data recorded from the period of 1/1/2008 - 31/12/2017.

Table 1. The productivity of wheat for the Governorate of Wasit and AL-Suwaira district for the year 2016.				
Total	Production of	Its proportion	Production of	Its proportion to the production of the province
Production	Wasit	To the total	AL-Suwaira	
Of Iraq	Governorate	production	District	
(thousand tons)	(thousand tons)		(study area)	
			Thousand tons	
3052	631	% 20.7	136	% 20

#### The approved parameters and treatments used for the wheat crop

The parameters are divided into two parts: (i) Conservative Crop parameters, which are parameters that do not change significantly with the change of time, management procedures, geographical location, climate, and variety. Thus, they do not need to be calibrated; (ii) Variable (unstable) crop parameters that need to be modified when choosing a variety different from the one chosen when calibrating, or if the environmental conditions differ from those assumed when calibrating.



Fig. 1. A site map of the study area.

**Parameters types** 

Parameters affected by agriculture and management are presented in Table 2. Parameters that are affected by the characteristics of the soil section maximum effective rooting depth (Zx; 0.35 m) and time to reach a maximum effective rooting depth (75 day) are presented in Table 3.

#### Field irrigation management for wheat crop

Surface irrigation was adopted using plots 0.25 m high from the soil surface, with a moisture content of 70% of the soil surface, and an irrigation interval according to Table 5.

Seq.	Parameters	Crop data
1	Planting method	Seeding
2	Planting density	2100000 plant ha <sup>-1</sup>
3	Maximum canopy cover (CCx)	90%
4	Time to reach 90% of germination	15 day
5	Time required to reach Maximum canopy cover (CCx)	63 day
6	Time required for plants to begin shedding leaves	135 day
7	Time required for physiological ripening (crop cycle length)	160
8	Flowering start time	105 day
9	Flowering time	14 day
10	Reference harvest index (HI <sub>0</sub> )	38%

**Table 2.** Cultivation parameters of wheat crop.

Table 3. Parameters that are affected by the soil section of the wheat crop.

Seq.	Parameters	Data affected by the characteristics of the soil section
1	Maximum effective rooting depth (Zx)	0.35 m
2	Time to reach a maximum effective rooting depth	75 day

#### **Planting soil data**

Table 4. Soil parameters of wheat crop.		
Depth Soil data		
0-25 cm	Soil water content at saturation SAT (%)	46.35
	Soil water content at field capacity FC (%)	24.73
	Soil water content at permanent wilting point PWP (%)	12.33
25-120 cm	Soil water content at saturation SAT (%)	45.74
	Soil water content at field capacity FC (%)	25.13
	Soil water content at permanent wilting point PWP (%)	12
0-25 cm	Sand (%)	15.02
	Silt (%)	53.15
	Clay (%)	31.83
25-120 cm	Sand (%)	13.89
	Silt (%)	52.71
	Clay (%)	33.40
Hydraulic co	onductivity (Ksat) for depth 0-1.5 m (m day-1)	1.16

Soil layers and depth of each layer 1

#### Field management of wheat crop

Fertility level was about half of the fertilization at 50%, without soil surface mulching and moderate weed management (relative mulching of weed 25%).

#### **Climatic data**

The climatic data used are historical for the study area for the period from 1/1/2008 to 31/10/2017, which was recorded from the climatic station in region, such as besides, solar radiation speed, atmospheric pressure, wind speed and direction, soil temperature, and soil moisture, in addition to other information such as evapotranspiration (ET), thermal aggregation, and dew point temperature network center. Then, the data were transferred from the climatic station to the center (the Agricultural Meteorology Center) using the satellite system according to the following climatic elements.

	Table 5. Irrigation interval for wheat cultivation			
Seq.	Irrigation date	Irrigation time (day)	Net Irrigation Depth (mm)	Water salinity (dS m <sup>-1</sup> )
1	11.1	1	45	1.2
2	11.18	18	33	1.2
3	12.6	36	30	1.3
4	12.26	56	35	1.4
5	1.14	75	38	1.3
6	2.3	95	38	1.3
7	2.23	115	40	1.3
8	3.11	133	60	1.3
9	4.5	156	82	1.3

#### Statistical standards that have been adopted

It was calculated according to the following equations (Bhattacharyya et al. 2021; Lalit et al. 2021)

Pearson correlation coefficient (R)

$$r = \left[\frac{\Sigma(0_{i} - \overline{0})(P_{i} - \overline{P})}{\sqrt{\Sigma(0_{i} - \overline{0})^{2}\Sigma(P_{i} - \overline{P})^{2}}}\right]$$
(1)

Root Mean Square Error (RMSE)

$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (P_i - O_i)^2}{n}}$$
(2)

Normalized Root Mean Square Error (NRMSE)

$$CV (RMSE) = \frac{1}{\overline{O}} \sqrt{\frac{\sum (P_i - O_i)^2}{n}} \times 100 \quad (3)$$

Nash-Sutcliffe model efficiency coefficient (EF)

$$EF = 1 - \frac{\sum (P_i - O_i)^2}{\sum (O_i - \overline{O})^2}$$
(4)

Willmott's index of agreement (d)

$$d = 1 - \frac{\sum (P_i - O_i)^2}{\sum (|P_i - \overline{O}| + |O_i - \overline{O}|)^2}$$
 (5)

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### Calibration of the AquaCrop Model of Wheat

Fig. 2 shows the extent to which the current yield of the wheat crop decreased compared to the observed yield, due to the presence of sharp differences in production for the study area. In addition to the lack of farmers marketing the crop to be recorded in the Ministry of Agriculture, and the fact that two readings of the crop during the years 2007 and 2008 were excluded due to inaccuracy of the yield results.



Fig. 2. Comparison between the calculated yield and the observed yield of wheat.

The statistical criteria that were adopted according to each of the equations (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) are listed in Table 7. Calibrating the productivity of the wheat crop indicates that there is a weakness in the total production. It is despite the availability of suitable conditions for cultivation in terms of the quality and quantity of water and the soil quality as well as the availability of conditions and other criteria for cultivation for the study site. This may due to the lack of accurate information for recording the total yield of the area and the poor management of the farmer.

Table 7. Statistical standards for wheat crop.			
Statistical standards	Value	Interpretation	
r	0.757	Moderate good	
RMSE	0.530	Moderate poor	
CV	19.790	Moderate good	
EF	0.226	Moderate poor	
D	0.460	Poor	

#### Studying the impact of climate change on productivity

The scenario is a set of conditions that represent different future situations. Scenarios are often used to estimate potential future outcomes and the willingness or response of individuals and organizations to them. For example,

business people use scenarios to decide whether certain strategies are appropriate or not. In the climate field, scenarios are used because of the high uncertainty in climate change at the regional level. Regional climate means the climate at the level of a subcontinent or the level of a region or a country. Although the temperature will rise in many regions of the world, significant changes in climate, such as precipitation, are uncertain in many regions. So the scenarios help to understand regional climate change and the response of ecosystems to these changes. There are different models to predict future climate data according to expected climate changes such as the Centre National de Recherches Météorologiques (CNRM), Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory (GFDL), Earth climate (EC\_EARTH). There are four different CO<sub>2</sub> files from RCP's (Representative Concentration Pathways) present in the AquaCrop database and these files are RCP 2.6 CO<sub>2</sub>, RCP 4.5 CO<sub>2</sub>, RCP 6.0 CO<sub>2</sub>, RCP 8.5 CO<sub>2</sub>. The RCP's represent a broad range of climate outcomes and each RCP file results from a different combination of economic and technology policies.



Fig. 3. CO<sub>2</sub> concentration chart according to four RCP scenarios.

#### Predicted climatic changes in the study area

Tables 8 and 9 show an increase in both annual and monsoon rains at the mid-century and end-of-century period for each of the scenarios RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 at the GFDL-ESM2M model, with a clear increase during the period 2040-2050 compared to the base period at Script RCP 4.5. Annual and monsoon rains decrease in EC-Earth for RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5, while annual and monsoon rains increase slightly in CNRM-CM5 under RCP 4.5 and drop in RCP 8.5. However, the maximum and minimum temperature changes are higher during the period 2040-2050 than the period 2020-2030 compared to the base period for both scenarios RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 together.

**Table 8.** Predicted climatic changes of precipitation and minimum, maximum temperature for the periods 2020-2030 and 2040-2050 compared to the base period 1985-2005 for the models EC-Earth, CNRM-CM5, GFDL-ESM2M according to the scenario PCP4 5 for the wheat eron

sectiano Rei 4.5 foi une witeat crop.			
Parameter	2020-2030	2040-2050	
CNRM-CM5			
Rain annual (mm)	+ 18.3	+ 10.8	
Rain seasonal (mm)	+23.3	-8.9	
Maximum temperature (°C)	0.6	1.3	
Minimum temperature (°C)	0.6	1.2	
EC-Earth			
Rain annual (mm)	-7.9	-16.8	
Rain seasonal (mm)	-12.2	-23.6	

Maximum temperature (°C)	0.5	1.4
Minimum temperature (°C)	0.4	1.1
GFDL-ESM2M		
Rain annual (mm)	+ 25.1	+ 43.9
Rain seasonal (mm)	+ 25.1	+ 40.4
Maximum temperature (°C)	0.4	0.7
Minimum temperature (°C)	0.4	0.7

### Impact of climate change on the wheat crop

#### **Results of the RCP4.5 scenario implementation**

Table 10 shows the decline in productivity in the RCP 4.5 scenario when comparing the base period with the periods 2020-2030 and 2040-2050, as well as the relative change with significant differences between productivity during the base- and the simulation- periods, as the highest value of productivity recorded at the base period of 2.36 (ton/ha) during the simulation period.

**Table 9.** Predicted climatic changes of precipitation and minimum, maximum temperature for the periods 2020-2030 and 2040-2050 compared to the base period (1985-2005) for the models EC-Earth, CNRM-CM5, GFDL-ESM2M according to

the scenario RCP8.5 for the wheat crop.			
Parameter	2020-2030	2040-2050	
CNRM-CM5			
Rain (mm), Annual	-5.1	-3.4	
Rain (mm), Seasonal	-6.6	-7.1	
Maximum temperature (°C)	0.7	1.4	
Minimum temperature (°C)	0.7	1.2	
EC-Earth			
Rain (mm), Annual	-1.4	-4.7	
Rain (mm), Seasonal	-2.8	-19.9	
Maximum temperature (°C)	0.7	1.6	
Minimum temperature (°C)	0.6	1.3	
GFDL-ESM2M			
Rain (mm), Annual	+ 24.5	+ 21.2	
Rain (mm), Seasonal	+ 18.2	-3.2	
Maximum temperature (°C)	0.6	1.4	
Minimum temperature (°C)	0.6	1.3	

	Average change during the period 2020-2030	Average change during the period 2040-2050
Production in base year (ton ha <sup>-1</sup> )	2.36	
Absolute change (ton ha <sup>-1</sup> )	-0.03	-0.06
Relative change (%)	-1.23	-2.54
T-test	4.9E <sup>-02</sup> **	3.6E <sup>-04</sup> **

Note: \* N.S.;\*\* S.

Table 11 shows the increase in the water productivity of the wheat crop during the simulation period at the scenario RCP 4.5 compared to the base period, as the highest value of water productivity was recorded in the period 2040-2050, reaching  $0.9 \text{ kg m}^{-3}$ .

 Table 11. Water productivity during the base period 1986-2005 and the periods 2020-2030 and 2040-2050 for the scenario RCP 4.5.

Water productivity (kg m <sup>-3</sup> )	0.8	0.8	0.9

#### **Results of the RCP 8.5 scenario implementation**

In the case of the scenario RCP 8.5, it was observed in Table 12 that the average production of the wheat crop increased during the base period. Then, it decreased during the subsequent periods of the simulation with a significant difference in productivity, where the decrease reached during the period 2020-2030 with a relative change of -2.56%. However, it was also noticed a decline in productivity with a relative change of 3.65%, in the period 2040-2050 with a significant difference at a significant level of 0.05 between the average production during the base period and the period 2040-2050.

Table 12. Average productivity of wheat and predicted change in productivity for scenario RCP8.5

	Average change during the period 2020-2030	Average change during the period 2040-2050
Production in base year (ton ha <sup>-1</sup> )	2.36	
Absolute change (ton ha <sup>-1</sup> )	-0.06	-0.09
Relative change (%)	-2.56	-3.65
T-test	4.0E <sup>-03</sup> **	**4.51E <sup>-05</sup>

Table 13 also shows that the water productivity increased compared to the base period in the period 2040-2050 as a result of the elevation in productivity during this period and recorded the highest value of 0.9 kg m<sup>-3</sup>. Even though, it was equal in both the base period and the period 2020-2030 for the RCP scenario 8.5.

 Table 13. Water productivity during the base period 1986-2005 and the periods 2020-2030 and 2040-2050 for scenario

 PCP8 5

KCF 6.J.			
	During the base period 1986-2005	During the period 2020-2030	During the period 2040-2050
Water productivity (kg m <sup>-3</sup> )	0.8	0.8	0.9

## Impact of the shortage of water resources available for irrigation on the productivity of the wheat crop Irrigation reduction 20 and 40% for scenarios RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5

Fig. 4 shows the decrease in the amount of productivity during the period 2020-2030 for the scenario RCP 4.5 as a result of reducing the amounts of added irrigation water by 20% of the total irrigation during that period. In addition, when reducing irrigation by 40% during the period 2040-2050 also led to the occurrence of a clear reduction in productivity. Moreover, the productivity of the wheat crop for the scenario RCP8.5 decreased during the period 2020-2030 as a result of reducing irrigation by 20% of the total irrigation. In the case of the period 2040-2050, a decline was noticed in productivity. In a very clear way, it is a result of a decline in irrigation by 40% of the total irrigation, exhibiting the impact of climatic changes on the plant productivity of the crop during the simulation period.



Fig. 4. Changes in the yield of wheat according to the reduction of irrigation to 20 and 40%.

Table 14 shows that the reduction in productivity during the period 2020-2030 had an absolute and relative change of -0.05 and -2.0, respectively. In the case of the period 2040-2050, the reduction in productivity as an absolute and relative change amounted to -0.18 and -8.0, respectively. Furthermore, there is a clear significant difference between the two periods compared to the base period 1985-2005 at a significant level of 5%.

 Table 14. Average productivity of wheat and the predicted change in productivity when irrigation is reduced by 20 and 40% for the scenario RCP4.5

	Average change during the period 2020-2030	Average change during the period 2040-2050
Production in base year (ton ha <sup>-1</sup> )	2.36	
Irrigation reduction (%)	20	40
Absolute change (ton ha <sup>-1</sup> )	-0.05	-0.18
Relative change (%)	-2.0	-8.0
T-test	3.3E <sup>-03</sup> **	1.97E <sup>-06</sup> **

Table 15 shows that the decrease in productivity for the RCP8.5 scenario amounted to 8-0.0 and 3.36% for both the absolute and relative change, respectively, during the period 2020-2030 when the water supply decreased by 20% from the total irrigation. Besides, a decrease of - 0.22 and - 9.34 % for the absolute and relative change, respectively, during the period 2040-2050 when the water supply decreased by 40% of the total irrigation, with a significant difference in productivity during the simulation period at a significant level 5%.

 Table 15. Average productivity of wheat and the predicted change in productivity when irrigation is reduced by 20 and 40% for the scenario RCP8.5.

	Average change during the period 2020-2030	Average change during the period 2040-2050
Production in base year (ton ha <sup>-1</sup> )	2.36	
Irrigation reduction (%)	20	40
Absolute change (ton ha <sup>-1</sup> )	-0.08	-0.22
Relative change (%)	-3.36	-9.34
T-test	1.2E <sup>-03</sup> **	1.8E <sup>-08</sup> **

Fig. 5 shows an increase in the water productivity of wheat crop in scenario RCP4.5 more than in scenario RCP8.5. It gave the highest value in the period 2040-2050 compared to the base period and for the case of the scenario RCP4.5 that amounted to 10.87 kg m<sup>-3</sup> despite the decline in irrigation 40% of the total irrigation. It also increased at the scenario RCP8.5 and in the case of irrigation reduction of 40% of the total irrigation, which amounted to 0.873 kg m<sup>-3</sup> for the crop. This is mainly due to the decrease in the amount of reference evapotranspiration and actual evapotranspiration in increasing water productivity.



Fig. 5. Water productivity during the base period 1986-2005 and during the periods 2020-2030 and 2040-2050 for scenarios RCP4.5 and RCP8.5 when irrigation is reduced to 20 and 40%.

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