Innovative solutions for
SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NITROGEN

Conference proceedings

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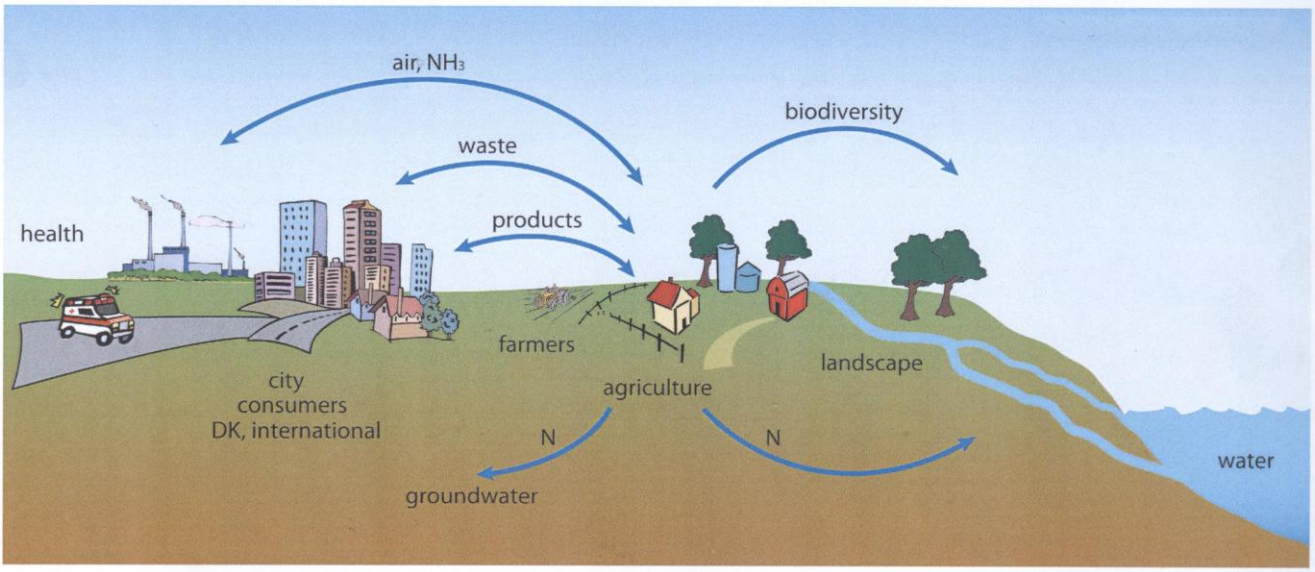

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TFRN LRTAP Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution

Innovative solutions for SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NITROGEN

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Monitoring maize N status with airborne and ground level sensors 52
Miguel Quemada, Jose L. Gabriel, Pablo Zarco-Tejada, Juan López-Herrera, Enrique Pérez-Martín, Maria Alonso-Ayuso

Canopy double sensor for precision nitrogen fertilization 53
Anton Thomsen, Mathias N. Andersen

Session A2: Local N solutions

Sustainable intensification and extensification of cropping system for biorefinery in Denmark-what does the nitrogen balance say? 54
Kiril Manevski, Poul E. Lærke, Uffe Jørgensen

Development and implementation of a simulation game for the introduction of a revised Fertilizer Ordinance in Germany 55
Gerlinde Wiese, Till Kuhn

Evaluating scenarios of land management practices in contrasted landscapes using a nitrogen landscape model: Comparing the effectiveness of optimizing agricultural practices versus landscaping on mitigation nitrogen fluxes 56
Laurène Casal, Patrick Durand, Françoise Vertès, François Laurent, Leterme Philippe, Jordy Salmon-Monviola, Nouraya Akkal-Corfini, Cyril Benhamou, Sylvain Ferrant, Anne Probst, Sabine Sauvage, Jean-Louis Drouet

A participatory protection within the Vittel mineral watershed: Making farmer the best experimenter to improve nitrogen use efficiency and water quality 57
Arnaud Gobillot, Marc Benoit, Julia Auzeral

Open landscape nitrate retention mapping – rOpen 58
Esben Auken, Troels Norvin Vilhelmsen, Anders Vest Christiansen

Designing decision support tools for targeted N-regulation – Experiences from developing and using the Danish dNmark landscape model 59
Andreas Aagaard Christensen, Kristoffer Piil, Peter Stubkjær Andersen, Erling Andersen, Henrik Vejre

Session B1: Policies and abatement

Towards protecting the Great Barrier Reef from land-based pollution – a focus on nitrogen 60
Peter Thorburn, Frederieke J. Kroon, Britta Schaffelke, Stuart Whitten

Cost Efficient Regulation of the Danish Agricultural Discharges of Nitrogen to Coastal Waters – Economic analysis of total cost and the distribution of cost 61
Marianne Nygaard Källstrøm, Ulrik Richardt Beck, Lars Gårn Hansen, Jørgen Dejgård Jensen ,Tommy Dalgaard

A sectorial and integrated approach to solve the Nitrogen Problem is necessary 62
Elisabeth Schmid, Markus Salomon, Annette Volkens

Comparing measures for nitrogen reduction in northern Europe 63
Martin Hvarregaard Thorsøe, Morten Graversgaard, Tommy Dalgaard

From field to factory: shifting regulatory focus to reduce nitrogen pollution 64
David R. Kanter, Timothy D. Searchinger

Effectiveness of markets in nitrogen abatement: A Danish case study 65
Line Block Hansen, Berit Hasler, Mette Termansen

Session B2: Monitoring and trends assessment

Groundwater nitrate response to sustainable nitrogen management 66
Birgitte Hansen, Lærke Thorling, Jörg Schullehner, Mette Termansen, Tommy Dalgaard

Monitoring maize N status with airborne and ground level sensors

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Background and aims

Remote sensing might improve fertilization by monitoring crop nitrogen (N) status using non-invasive methods. The main goal of this experiment was to test the ability of proximal and airborne sensors to identify the nutritional N status of maize.

Methods

We compared various indexes and combination of indexes to select those that provided the best estimation. As airborne images were acquired from different sensors and platforms (drone and aircraft) we compared the effect of spatial resolution on the indexes calculated. The study was conducted in a field maize experiment in Aranjuez (Madrid, Spain) during 2015. The experiment consisted in a complete randomized design with five fertilizer rates ranging from 0 to 220 kg N ha^{-1} and six replications. Readings at ground level were taken with proximal sensors (SPAD® and Dualex®), and airborne data were acquired by flying a hyperspectral sensor 330 m and a multispectral camera 80 m over the experimental site. The aerial imagery was used to calculate N status indexes for each plot.

Results

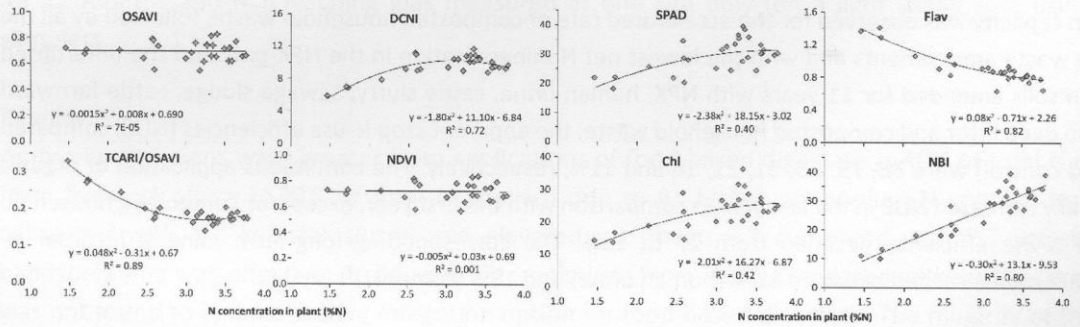

Fig1. Polynomial correlations between airborne/leaf clip indexes and N concentration (%N) observed.

Conclusions

Proximal and airborne sensors provided useful information for the assessment of maize N nutritional status. Higher accuracy was obtained with indexes combining chlorophyll estimation with canopy structure or with polyphenol indexes. Combined indexes improved the estimation compared to an individual index and mitigated the index saturation at high N concentration values. Plant N concentration was strongly related with TCARI/OSAVI obtained from airborne imagery but not with NDVI. The spatial resolution did not affect the performance of structural indexes whereas highly influenced the pigment indexes.

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