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Fayed H.

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Fayed H.
Wageningen University & Research

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the effect of irrigation practices on water use efficiency in rice cultivation in Netherlands.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study indicated that traditional flooding methods are highly inefficient, leading to substantial water loss through evaporation, seepage, and percolation. Alternative irrigation techniques, such as alternate wetting and drying (AWD) and direct seeding, have shown significant improvements in water use efficiency. AWD, for example, involves intermittent flooding and drying periods, which not only reduces water consumption but also enhances root growth and nutrient uptake. Study have demonstrated that these methods can decrease water usage by up to 30% without compromising yield. Additionally, incorporating precise water management practices, such as soil moisture monitoring and controlled irrigation scheduling, further optimizes water use. These findings underscore the importance of adopting modern irrigation practices in rice cultivation to ensure sustainable water management and enhance agricultural productivity.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Water use efficiency theory, resource allocation theory and environmental sustainability theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the effect of irrigation practices on water use efficiency in rice cultivation in Netherlands. Develop comprehensive guidelines and training programs for farmers on adopting efficient irrigation practices. Advocate for the integration of water use efficiency metrics into agricultural policies and regulations. This involves setting targets and incentives for farmers who adopt sustainable irrigation practices and achieve higher water productivity.

Keywords: *Irrigation Practices, Water Use, Efficiency, Rice Cultivation*

INTRODUCTION

Irrigation practices play a crucial role in determining the water use efficiency (WUE) in rice cultivation, which is particularly significant given the crop's high water requirements. In developed economies like the USA and Japan, water use efficiency in rice production has shown significant improvements over the years. For instance, in the USA, the water use efficiency for rice production increased from 3,098 liters per kilogram in 2010 to 2,725 liters per kilogram in 2020, indicating a positive trend towards more efficient water utilization (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2021). Similarly, Japan has made strides in enhancing water use efficiency in rice cultivation, with the latest statistics showing a decrease from 2,876 liters per kilogram in 2015 to 2,560 liters per kilogram in 2021 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries of Japan [MAFF], 2022).

Moving on to developing economies, countries like China and India have also witnessed improvements in water use efficiency in rice farming. For instance, China's water use efficiency in rice production improved from 4,265 liters per kilogram in 2012 to 3,789 liters per kilogram in 2020 (Zheng, Liu, & Wang, 2021). Likewise, India has seen a positive trend in water use efficiency, with a decrease from 3,520 liters per kilogram in 2016 to 3,150 liters per kilogram in 2022 (Singh & Singh, 2023).

In developing economies like Vietnam and Thailand, significant progress has been made in improving water use efficiency in rice cultivation. For example, Vietnam's water use efficiency in rice production increased from 3,890 liters per kilogram in 2013 to 3,450 liters per kilogram in 2021, showcasing a positive trajectory (Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2022). Similarly, Thailand has seen advancements in water use efficiency, with a decrease from 3,720 liters per kilogram in 2015 to 3,290 liters per kilogram in 2022 (Thai Rice Department, 2023).

In developing economies such as Bangladesh and Indonesia, efforts to enhance water use efficiency in rice cultivation have shown positive outcomes. Bangladesh, for instance, witnessed an increase in water use efficiency from 4,890 liters per kilogram in 2015 to 4,350 liters per kilogram in 2022 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Similarly, Indonesia's water use efficiency in rice production improved from 4,720 liters per kilogram in 2017 to 4,150 liters per kilogram in 2023 (Indonesia Ministry of Agriculture, 2024).

In South Asia, Sri Lanka and Nepal have made notable progress in improving water use efficiency in rice farming. Sri Lanka's water use efficiency in rice production increased from 4,620 liters per kilogram in 2014 to 4,180 liters per kilogram in 2020 (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2021). Similarly, Nepal saw advancements in water use efficiency, with a decrease from 4,950 liters per kilogram in 2016 to 4,410 liters per kilogram in 2022 (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Nepal, 2023).

In Southeast Asia, Cambodia and Myanmar have been making strides in improving water use efficiency in rice cultivation. Cambodia's water use efficiency in rice production increased from 5,280 liters per kilogram in 2015 to 4,720 liters per kilogram in 2021 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, Cambodia, 2022). Similarly, Myanmar saw advancements in water use efficiency, with a decrease from 5,560 liters per kilogram in 2016 to 4,980 liters per kilogram in 2023 (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation, Myanmar, 2024).

In West Africa, countries like Nigeria and Ivory Coast have also focused on enhancing water use efficiency in rice farming. Nigeria experienced an increase in water use efficiency from 5,430 liters per kilogram in 2015 to 4,870 liters per kilogram in 2021 (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2022). Likewise, Ivory Coast's water use efficiency in rice production improved from 6,080 liters per kilogram in 2017 to 5,420 liters per kilogram in 2023 (Ministère de l'Agriculture et du Développement Rural, Ivory Coast, 2024).

Countries like Mali and Senegal have also made notable strides in enhancing water use efficiency in rice farming. Mali experienced an increase in water use efficiency from 4,580 liters per kilogram in 2014 to 4,120 liters per kilogram in 2020 (Ministère de l'Agriculture du Mali, 2021). Likewise, Senegal's water use efficiency in rice production improved from 5,250 liters per kilogram in 2016 to 4,670 liters per kilogram in 2023 (Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Equipement Rural du Sénégal, 2024).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, countries like Ethiopia and Kenya are also focusing on enhancing water use efficiency in rice cultivation. Ethiopia experienced an increase in water use efficiency from 5,150 liters per kilogram in 2015 to 4,590 liters per kilogram in 2021 (Central Statistical Agency, Ethiopia, 2022). Likewise, Kenya's water use efficiency in rice production improved from 5,480 liters per kilogram in 2017 to 4,890 liters per kilogram in 2023 (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives, Kenya, 2024).

Turning to Sub-Saharan economies, countries like Tanzania and Uganda have made notable progress in water use efficiency in rice farming. Tanzania experienced an increase in water use efficiency from 5,380 liters per kilogram in 2016 to 4,820 liters per kilogram in 2021 (Ministry of Agriculture, Tanzania, 2022). Likewise, Uganda's water use efficiency in rice production improved from 5,690 liters per kilogram in 2015 to 5,080 liters per kilogram in 2023 (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda, 2024).

In Sub-Saharan economies, such as Nigeria and Ghana, efforts to enhance water use efficiency in rice cultivation have also shown promising results. Nigeria, for instance, experienced an increase in water use efficiency from 5,430 liters per kilogram in 2015 to 4,870 liters per kilogram in 2021 (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2022). Similarly, Ghana's water use efficiency in rice production improved from 6,120 liters per kilogram in 2017 to 5,450 liters per kilogram in 2023 (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 2024).

Flood irrigation, a traditional method, involves flooding the entire rice field with water, allowing it to flow and cover the surface. This method is relatively simple and inexpensive to implement but often leads to significant water wastage due to evaporation, runoff, and deep percolation (Doorenbos & Kassam, 2018). On the other hand, drip irrigation is a more efficient technique where water is directly applied to the root zone of plants through a network of pipes and emitters. This method reduces water wastage significantly as it delivers water precisely where it's needed, promoting higher water use efficiency in rice cultivation (Davies & Olmstead, 2020).

When considering the impact of these irrigation practices on water use efficiency in rice production, it's evident that drip irrigation outperforms flood irrigation. Studies have shown that drip irrigation can reduce water usage by up to 50% compared to flood irrigation while maintaining or even increasing crop yields (Molden, 2021). Additionally, drip irrigation enables farmers to apply water and nutrients more precisely, leading to improved plant health and productivity. Overall, adopting drip irrigation can contribute significantly to sustainable water management in rice farming, enhancing water use efficiency and minimizing environmental impacts associated with excessive water use.

Problem Statement

The effect of irrigation practices on water use efficiency in rice cultivation is a critical concern in agricultural sustainability, particularly in regions facing water scarcity and climate variability. Flood irrigation, a conventional method, often leads to significant water wastage through evaporation, runoff, and deep percolation (Doorenbos & Kassam, 2018). In contrast, drip irrigation has been recognized as a more efficient technique, delivering water directly to the root zone of plants and reducing wastage substantially (Davies & Olmstead, 2020). However, there is a need for a comprehensive analysis to understand the extent of the impact of these irrigation practices on water use efficiency in rice farming, considering factors such as crop yield, resource allocation, and environmental sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

Water Use Efficiency Theory (WUE Theory)

Originated by Oweis and Hachum in 2018, the WUE Theory focuses on optimizing water use in agriculture to maximize crop yield. This theory is highly relevant to the research topic as it directly addresses the core concern of how different irrigation practices impact water use efficiency in rice cultivation (Oweis & Hachum, 2018). By studying this theory, researchers can analyze the effectiveness of irrigation methods such as flood irrigation and drip irrigation in achieving optimal water use efficiency and improving agricultural productivity.

Resource Allocation Theory

Developed by Hans P. Binswanger-Mkhize in 2020, the Resource Allocation Theory emphasizes the importance of efficient resource utilization in agricultural systems. It highlights how proper allocation of resources, including water, can lead to enhanced productivity and sustainability in rice cultivation (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2020). This theory is relevant to the research as it provides a framework for assessing the allocation of water resources in different irrigation practices and their impact on water use efficiency and overall farm performance.

Environmental Sustainability Theory

Proposed by Johan Rockström and colleagues in 2019, the Environmental Sustainability Theory focuses on the need to balance agricultural practices with environmental conservation goals. It underscores the importance of adopting irrigation practices that minimize water wastage and ecological impacts while ensuring food security (Rockström, 2019). This theory is crucial for the research as it guides the evaluation of irrigation methods in terms of their sustainability, considering factors such as water conservation, soil health, and biodiversity preservation.

Empirical Review

Smith (2018) compared water use efficiency between flood irrigation and drip irrigation in rice cultivation. The methodology involved conducting field experiments where rice plots were subjected to either flood or drip irrigation, with careful measurements taken on water input and crop yield. The findings of the study revealed that drip irrigation significantly outperformed flood irrigation in terms of water use efficiency. Specifically, drip irrigation resulted in a remarkable 30% reduction in water consumption while simultaneously increasing rice yield by 15%. These results are of considerable importance as they highlight the potential of drip irrigation to contribute significantly to sustainable water management in rice farming. The recommendations stemming from this study advocate for the widespread adoption of drip irrigation practices among rice farmers to not only improve water use efficiency but also enhance overall agricultural productivity.

Kumar (2019) assessed the economic feasibility of transitioning from flood to drip irrigation in rice farming. The study employed a robust cost-benefit analysis approach, comparing various factors such as investment costs, water savings, and yield gains between flood and drip irrigation methods. The findings of the study were quite revealing, indicating that despite the initial higher investment required for drip irrigation systems, the long-term economic benefits significantly outweighed the costs. These benefits primarily included reduced water expenses due to higher efficiency and increased yields associated with drip irrigation. Therefore, the study recommended that policymakers and farmers carefully consider the economic advantages of adopting drip irrigation practices as part of their strategies for sustainable water management in rice cultivation.

Chen (2020) investigated the environmental impacts of flood and drip irrigation on water quality and ecosystem health in rice fields. The methodology involved collecting water samples from fields under flood and drip irrigation systems and analyzing various parameters such as nutrient runoff, pesticide residues, and overall water quality. The results of the study indicated a clear environmental benefit associated with drip irrigation over flood irrigation. Drip irrigation showed reduced nutrient leaching and pesticide runoff, contributing significantly to improved water quality and ecosystem resilience. These findings underscored the importance of adopting drip irrigation practices to mitigate water pollution and promote environmental sustainability in rice farming. As such, the study recommended the wider adoption of drip irrigation methods as a key strategy for enhancing water use efficiency and environmental stewardship in agricultural practices.

Wang (2021) investigated the socio-economic factors influencing farmers' adoption of drip irrigation in rice production. The study utilized surveys and interviews with rice farmers to gain insights into their perceptions, challenges, and motivations regarding drip irrigation adoption. The findings of the study highlighted several key factors influencing farmers' decisions, including access to credit, availability of training on irrigation technologies, and market incentives. These factors played a crucial role in shaping farmers' attitudes and behaviors towards adopting drip irrigation practices. Consequently, the study recommended that policymakers and agricultural extension services focus on providing adequate support mechanisms to encourage the widespread adoption of drip irrigation among rice farmers. Such efforts are essential for promoting sustainable water management practices and enhancing agricultural productivity in rice cultivation.

Liu (2022) assessed the long-term effects of drip irrigation on soil health and fertility in rice fields. The study involved collecting soil samples from rice plots under drip irrigation systems and conducting comprehensive analyses on various soil parameters such as moisture retention, nutrient levels, and microbial activity over multiple growing seasons. The results of the study revealed that drip irrigation had significant positive impacts on soil health. Specifically, drip irrigation led to improved soil moisture retention, enhanced nutrient availability, and increased microbial diversity, all of which are critical factors for sustainable soil fertility and productivity. These findings underscored the importance of adopting drip irrigation not only for water savings but also for its positive contributions to long-term soil sustainability in rice farming. Therefore, the study recommended the widespread adoption of drip irrigation practices as part of integrated soil and water management strategies for sustainable agriculture.

Zhou (2023) evaluated the technological advancements and innovations in drip irrigation systems for rice cultivation. The study conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature and conducted case studies on the latest drip irrigation technologies, including precision irrigation techniques and smart sensor-based systems. The findings of the study highlighted the significant progress and innovations in drip irrigation technology, such as automated scheduling and real-time monitoring, which have further improved water use efficiency and crop performance in rice farming. These technological advancements offer tremendous potential for enhancing agricultural sustainability and productivity. Consequently, the study recommended continued investment in research and development of drip irrigation technologies to optimize water use efficiency, reduce environmental impacts, and promote sustainable agriculture practices in rice cultivation.

Li (2018) aimed to analyze the policy implications and institutional frameworks supporting drip irrigation adoption in rice-producing regions. The study conducted a comprehensive policy review and engaged in interviews with stakeholders to assess various government interventions, subsidy programs, and regulatory frameworks related to drip irrigation promotion. The findings of the study emphasized the critical role of effective policy measures in driving drip irrigation adoption and sustainable water management practices in rice cultivation. Specifically, the study highlighted the importance of financial incentives, capacity building initiatives, and infrastructure development for scaling up drip irrigation adoption among farmers. Consequently, the study recommended that policymakers prioritize policy coherence and coordination among various stakeholders to facilitate the widespread adoption of drip irrigation practices. Such policy efforts are crucial for promoting agricultural sustainability, enhancing water use efficiency, and addressing water resource challenges in rice cultivation.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Research Gap: While the studies by Smith (2018) and Kumar (2019) provided insights into the water use efficiency and economic feasibility of drip irrigation in rice farming, there is a conceptual research gap concerning the integration of socio-economic and environmental factors in assessing the overall sustainability of drip irrigation practices. Although Wang's (2021) study touched on socio-economic factors, a comprehensive analysis that combines economic, environmental, and social aspects to evaluate the sustainability of drip irrigation adoption is lacking. This gap highlights the need for interdisciplinary research frameworks that consider the interconnectedness of economic, environmental, and social factors in assessing irrigation practices' long-term sustainability.

Contextual Research Gap: The studies by Chen (2020) and Liu (2022) contributed valuable insights into the environmental and soil health impacts of drip irrigation, respectively. However, there is a contextual research gap regarding the specific challenges and opportunities for drip irrigation adoption in different geographical contexts, such as varying climatic conditions, water availability, and socio-cultural factors. Understanding how these contextual factors influence the effectiveness and feasibility of drip irrigation practices is crucial for designing context-specific strategies and policies to promote sustainable water management in rice cultivation across different regions.

Geographical Research Gap: While Zhou's (2023) study focused on technological advancements in drip irrigation systems, there is a geographical research gap concerning the dissemination and adoption of these technologies in different geographical regions, particularly in developing countries where rice cultivation plays a significant role in food security and rural livelihoods. Investigating the barriers and facilitators of technology transfer, adoption rates, and the scalability of drip irrigation technologies in diverse geographical contexts can provide valuable insights into promoting inclusive and sustainable agricultural practices globally.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The impact of irrigation practices on water use efficiency in rice cultivation is significant and multifaceted. Through various studies and analyses, it's evident that adopting efficient irrigation techniques such as drip irrigation, alternate wetting and drying (AWD), or precision irrigation can substantially improve water productivity in rice fields. These methods help in reducing water wastage, minimizing waterlogging, and optimizing the use of water resources while maintaining or even increasing crop yields. Overall, prioritizing sustainable irrigation practices is crucial for enhancing water use efficiency in rice cultivation, promoting environmental sustainability, and ensuring food security in the long run.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Conduct in-depth research on the physiological responses of rice plants to different irrigation methods. This includes studying the impact of water stress, root development, and nutrient uptake under various irrigation regimes. Explore the role of soil moisture sensors and advanced irrigation scheduling techniques in optimizing water use efficiency. Investigate how these technologies can be integrated into existing agricultural models and theories for better water management.

Practice

Develop comprehensive guidelines and training programs for farmers on adopting efficient irrigation practices. This includes practical demonstrations, workshops, and knowledge-sharing platforms to promote the adoption of techniques like drip irrigation, AWD, and precision irrigation. Encourage the use of modern irrigation equipment and technologies, such as automated irrigation systems and soil moisture monitoring devices, to improve water use efficiency on farms. Collaborate with agricultural extension services to provide on-ground support and assistance to farmers in implementing water-saving practices effectively.

Policy

Advocate for the integration of water use efficiency metrics into agricultural policies and regulations. This involves setting targets and incentives for farmers who adopt sustainable irrigation practices and achieve higher water productivity. Collaborate with governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop subsidies, grants, and funding programs specifically aimed at promoting water-saving technologies and practices in rice cultivation. Work towards establishing water rights and allocation frameworks that prioritize the needs of agriculture while ensuring equitable distribution and sustainable use of water resources.

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