

1 **Estimating soil available water capacity within a Mediterranean vineyard watershed us-**
2 **ing satellite imagery and crop model inversion**

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13 **Abstract**

14 Soil available water capacity (SAWC) is a key factor to be considered when assessing soil
15 capability to provide ecosystem services. The current study deepens the use of remotely sensed
16 data for mapping SAWC and its components from crop model inversion. The inversion was
17 conducted using the STICS (Simulateur multIdisciplinaire pour les Cultures Standard) crop
18 model along with the GLUE (Generalized Likelihood Uncertainty Estimation) algorithm on a
19 panel of 14 sites within a rainfed vineyard catchment located in Southern France. Several con-
20 straint variables derived from Landsat 7 ETM+ satellite imagery (leaf area index - LAI - and
21 evapotranspiration - ET) or in-situ measurements (surface soil moisture - SSM), were used in
22 the inversion process alone or in combination.

23 Three main outcomes could be reported when comparing retrievals of both SAWC and its com-
24 ponents against field estimates. First, retrievals were significantly correlated with ground esti-
25 mates for some SAWC components and some scenarios of constraint variables, although over-
26 all retrieving performances were quite poor. Second, poor retrieving performances for two sce-
27 narios of constraint variables were related to few sites for which specific processes were disre-
28 garded by the modelling framework, namely allochthonous water supply and waterlogging dur-
29 ing wet autumn and summer. Third, we could identify some promising combinations of con-
30 straint variables, after the removal of the aforementioned sites with specific processes. These
31 promising combinations were (LAI, ET) and even more (LAI, ET, SSM) for estimating SAWC
32 and root zone thickness, as well as SSM for estimating soil moistures at field capacity and
33 wilting point of the topsoil layer. Provided we can avoid site-specific processes, our approach
34 may further provide spatial sampling of SAWC and related components, to be used as surrogate
35 input data for DSM models.

36 *Keywords:* Digital Soil Mapping, remote sensing, crop model, inverse modelling, vineyard, soil
37 available water capacity

38

39 **1. Introduction**

40 Soil Available Water Capacity (SAWC) is defined as the maximum amount of plant available
41 water a soil can provide (USDA-NCRS, 2008). It is a well-known concept that has been used
42 for long to express the capacity of soils to store water for plants (Veihmayer and Hendrickson,
43 1927). SAWC has also been used for characterizing important soil functions such as biomass
44 production, erosion and flood control, water regulation and purification (Adhikari & Harte-
45 mink, 2016). SAWC is therefore a key factor to be considered when assessing soil capability to
46 provide ecosystem services (McBratney et al., 2014). SAWC maps are thus required for appli-
47 cations based on soil capability over large territories (Leenaars et al., 2018).

48 SAWC mapping is often hampered by low number of sites on which SAWC values can be
49 determined, since SAWC determination requires costly and time-consuming soil observations
50 and soil property measurements. The most current technique for SAWC mapping consists of
51 using conventional soil maps that require few SAWC measurements only at representative sites
52 of different soil classes (e.g., Dejong and Shields, 1988). However, Leenhardt et al. (1994)
53 showed that this approach had strong limitations in spatial resolution and accuracy, because the
54 scale of conventional soil maps is often less than 1:25,000. More recently, several attempts
55 were made to apply the principle of Digital Soil Mapping (DSM) for SAWC mapping (Piedallu
56 et al., 2011, Leennars et al., 2018, Roman Dobarco et al., 2019, Styc & Lagacherie, 2021).

57 The general principle of DSM is to predict soil properties by machine learning and/or geosta-
58 tistical models (McBratney et al., 2003). Both methods use available spatial data related to soil
59 forming factors (e.g., relief, climate, geology), and they are calibrated over in-situ measure-
60 ments of soil properties across several sites. In the case of SAWC that is characterized by scar-
61 city of in-situ measurements, pedotransfer functions (PTF) have been used to estimate SAWC
62 components from easy-to-measure soil properties (Van Looy, 2017). However, validation ex-

63 exercises showed that the mapping performances remained low as compared to other soil proper-
64 ties, with a non-negligible PTF contribution to the overall uncertainty (Roman Dobarco et al.,
65 2019). Therefore, increasing the number of in-situ SAWC estimates is a pre-requisite for im-
66 proving SAWC maps produced by DSM approaches.

67 Remote sensing represents a valuable source of proxy that may deliver spatial estimates of sev-
68 eral surface soil properties, with fine spatial resolutions and over vast spatial extents, but they
69 cannot be considered as possible techniques for a direct determination of SAWC. As far as soil
70 properties are concerned, some of them (e.g., clay, organic carbon, calcium carbonate) have
71 been successfully predicted from Vis-NIR hyperspectral remote sensing (Gomez et al., 2012),
72 Vis-NIR multispectral remote sensing (Vaudour et al., 2019) or gamma-ray spectroscopy (Wil-
73 ford, 2006). Recent studies reported some promising capabilities with reflectance or emissivity
74 spectra over the thermal infrared domain ($[8 - 14] \mu\text{m}$), but this remains prospective (Eisele et
75 al., 2015). Besides, such remote sensing methods are restricted to the retrieval of topsoil prop-
76 erties, since deeper soil layers remain inaccessible.

77 A possible alternative to overcome this problem consists of using remotely sensed proxies of
78 the soil-plant system characteristics, to be combined with dynamic models that simulate plant
79 growth in relation to SAWC. Although some prospective studies can be found in the DSM
80 literature (Taylor et al., 2013, Jin et al., 2018a), this alternative has been much more investigated
81 in the remote sensing community, through the use of inverse modelling. Inverse modelling is
82 the process of calculating, from a set of observations, the causal factors that produced them
83 (Knighton et al., 2019). It can be applied to SAWC mapping by assuming that SAWC is the
84 predominant causal factor of soil / plant variables observed from remote sensors, from which
85 SAWC can therefore be retrieved. Within this framework, estimates of SAWC, or of its com-
86 ponents, are obtained by using optimization techniques (Lammoglia et al., 2019; Prévot et al.,
87 2003) or Bayesian methods (Mertens et al., 2004; Scharnagl et al., 2011). These approaches

88 iteratively reduce the differences between remotely sensed observations of soil / plant variables
89 and simulations from crop / Soil Vegetation Atmosphere Transfer (SVAT) model, by modulat-
90 ing model values of SAWC or of its components.

91 Several soil and crop variables accessible from remote sensors have been considered as con-
92 straint variables for estimating SAWC components, following inverse modelling approaches.

93 On the basis of mechanistic soil water models combined with soil evaporation and plant tran-
94 spiration, several studies explored the retrieval of soil depth and hydraulic properties, (1) from
95 topsoil moisture (Montzka et al., 2011), (2) from both topsoil and root zone soil moistures
96 (Galleguillos et al., 2011a; b; 2017), (3) from surface temperature in relation to root zone soil
97 moisture (Coudert et al., 2006; Guillevic et al., 2012; Dong et al., 2016), (4) from both surface
98 soil moisture and surface temperature (Ridler et al., 2012), or (5) from evapotranspiration (Oli-
99 oso et al., 2002). Other studies relied on crop models (1) with plant canopy variables such as
100 leaf area index (LAI) or nitrogen absorption (Ferrant et al., 2016; Guerif et al., 2006; Launay et
101 al., 2005; Varella et al., 2010a), (2) with both LAI and surface soil moisture (Dente, 2008;
102 Sreelash et al., 2017), or (3) with both LAI and evapotranspiration (Charoenhirunyingyos et al.,
103 2011).

104 The panel of studies above-discussed have provided valuable insights about the opportunities
105 offered by the joint use of mechanistic models and remotely sensed observations. Nevertheless,
106 several methodological developments still are necessary for improving performances of SAWC
107 retrieving. First, the use of LAI as constraint variable has been extensively addressed, whereas
108 the use of surface temperature and evapotranspiration, both related to root zone soil moisture,
109 was moderately investigated (Feddes et al., 1993; Jhorar et al., 2004; Singh et al., 2010), be-
110 cause of methodological challenges related to the turbulent nature of surface temperature and
111 surface heat fluxes (Lagouarde et al., 2013). However, including surface temperature and evap-
112 otranspiration into the panel of constraint variables is likely to improve the performances of

113 SAWC retrieving from model inversion, and even more when considering operational satellite
114 that provide observations on a routine basis. Second, most studies focused on quite homogene-
115 ous vegetation canopies, and few of them only investigated heterogenous or discontinuous can-
116 opies, whereas the structural properties of such canopies induce methodological challenges in
117 relation to the partitioning of energy fluxes (Kool et al., 2014; Montes et al., 2014). Third, most
118 studies focusing on SAWC retrieving were conducted at the field scale, by involving heavy
119 experiments with numerous field measurements of soil and crop variables, whereas very few
120 studies investigated the regional extent (Todoroff et al., 2010; Coops et al., 2012). This is all
121 the more critical that the regional extent is appropriate for DSM while inducing methodological
122 challenges related to landscape heterogeneities (e.g., climate, soil, crops), whereas no validation
123 against SAWC ground-based measurements has been reported to date.

124 The current study aimed to estimate SAWC and its components from crop model inversion.
125 The SAWC components to be estimated were root zone thickness as well as soil moistures at
126 field capacity and wilting point for topsoil and root zone layers. Crop model inversion relied
127 on three constraint variables, to be used alone or in combination, namely leaf area index (LAI)
128 and actual evapotranspiration (ET), both obtained from satellite remotely sensed data, and sur-
129 face soil moisture (SSM) derived from in-situ measurements, because remote sensing of SSM
130 remains questionable over vineyards (Lei et al., 2020). The experiment was conducted on a
131 panel of 14 sites within a heterogeneous landscape with discontinuous vegetation canopies,
132 namely a rainfed vineyard catchment located in Southern France. In order to address landscape
133 scale heterogeneity, we used remotely sensed observations with high spatial resolution only,
134 namely Landsat 7 ETM+ data that are operationally collected. The inversion modelling was
135 conducted using the crop model STICS (Simulateur multIdisciplinaire pour les Cultures Stan-
136 dard, Brisson et al., 1998) along with the GLUE inversion algorithm (Generalized Likelihood
137 Uncertainty Estimation, Beven et al., 1992). These methodological tools were chosen for their

138 robustness with regards to former studies at the field scale (Jin et al., 2018b). The paper is
139 structured as following. We first present the methodological strategy, including the experi-
140 mental setup, the data set with variability in SAWC ground-based measurements, and crop
141 model inversion. We next present the inversion results, including the capability of the inversion
142 procedure to make agreement between observations and crop model simulations, and the relia-
143 bility of SAWC estimates from the inversion procedure. We finally discuss these results in
144 terms of limitations and perspectives for DSM.

145 **2. Material and Methods**

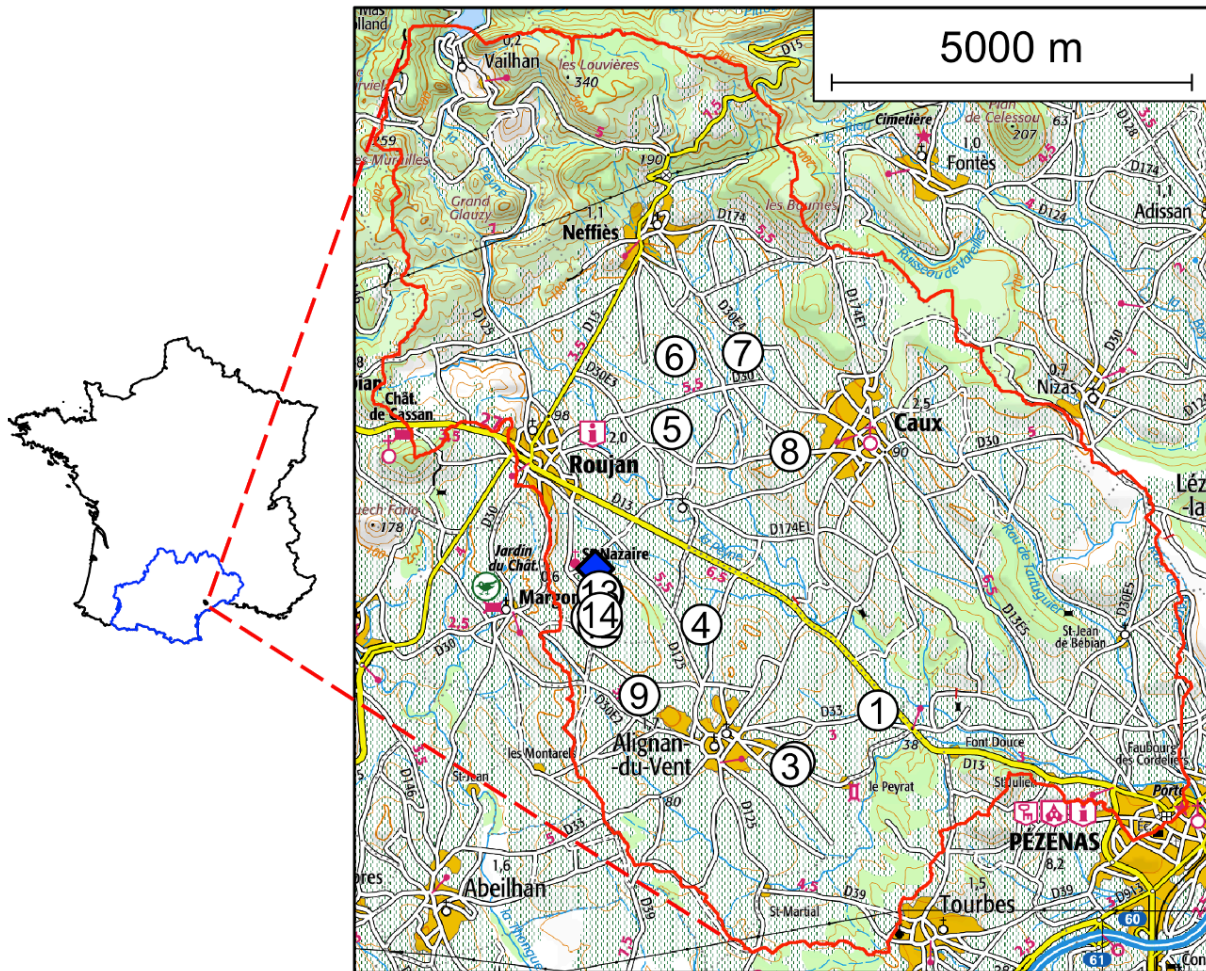
146 **2.1. Study area**

147 The study took place within the Peyne river catchment (43.49°N, 3.37°E), located in Southern
148 French Occitanie region (see Figure 1), throughout the year 2015. The spatial extent of the
149 Peyne catchment is around 65 km². Altitudes range from 20 to 230 m above sea level. The
150 Peyne catchment is mainly covered by vineyards, mostly rainfed, the remaining being covered
151 by other crops, forests and urban areas. It is typified by a Mediterranean climate, with an annual
152 value of 638 mm and 1109 mm for rainfall and reference evapotranspiration, respectively. The
153 soils depict a large variability in texture and depth, inducing large contrasts in soil moisture
154 regime within the root zone, and thus large contrasts in vine growth conditions (Taylor et al.,
155 2013). Also, permanent or temporary shallow water tables are present in some parts of the
156 catchment, which also affects the availability of water for plants (Guix-Hébrard et al., 2007).

157 **2.2. Site characterizations and ground-based observations**

158 We selected 14 sites (Table 1) which permitted to encompass a large part of the soil variability
159 within the Peyne catchment in terms of SAWC driving factors, namely soil texture, stone con-
160 tent and depth. Ground characterizations at each of the 14 sites were performed (1) to estimate
161 surface soil moisture (SSM) as a constraint variable that could not be obtained from remote

162 sensing, (2) to determine the observed values of SAWC and of its components that were further
163 compared with model inversions outputs (see § 2.6), and (3) to establish a prior knowledge on
164 soil texture variability used as input of the inversion procedure (see § 2.5.3.1).



165
166 *Figure 1. Left: location of the Peyne watershed in the Occitanie region (blue contour). Right:*
167 *limits of the Peyne watershed (red contour), location of the 14 sites (circles with digits, sites*
168 *10-13 are hidden by site 14) and of the Roujan meteorological station (blue diamond).*

169 2.2.1. Soil moisture

170 Soil moisture profiles were obtained using a 503-DR CPN neutron probe (Vectra, France). Ac-
171 cess tubes were set up at 13 sites out of 14. Soil moisture profiles were collected every 15 to
172 30 days according to rainfall events, between 8 April 2015 and 22 October 2015, which corre-
173 sponds to 10 dates. Measurements were conducted along the vineyards root zone, from the

174 subsurface (0.2 - 0.3 m) down to 1.9 m with a 0.2 m step, and from 2.2 m down to 4.2 m with
 175 a 0.4 m step. The neutron probe was calibrated against in situ measurements of soil moisture
 176 following Galleguillos et al. (2011a; b; 2017). For the remaining site (AW95), hourly soil mois-
 177 ture was recorded using SoilNet sensors (ring oscillators, Bogaen et al., 2010), installed at 0.15,
 178 0.3, 0.6, 1.1, 1.5 and 2.0 m depths.

179 *Table 1: description of the sites with ground characterisations. WRB stands for World Refer-*
 180 *ence Base for Soil Resources (<https://www.isric.org/explore/wrb>).*

Site	Name	Geological setting	Soil type (WRB)	soil depth (m)	observed SAWC (mm)
1	Cabrol	Alluvial stony deposits	Fluvisol (skeletic)	2.30	204
2	Peyrat_Bas	Old clayey alluvial deposits	Calcisol (vertic)	2.70	179
3	Peyrat_Haut	Old clayey alluvial deposits	Calcisol (clayic)	1.35	105
4	Cros	Loose sandstone	Gleyic Cambisol	1.55	197
5	Doustheissier	Alluvial stony deposits	Hyperskeletic Cambisol (clayic)	1.20	44
6	Ravanel	Loose sandstone	Calcisol	1.10	155
7	Benoit	Loose sandstone	Leptic Calcisol	1.35	121
8	Panis	Lacustrine limestone	Leptic Calcisol	0.65	123
9	Alary	Lacustrine limestone	Skeletic Calcisol	1.70	129
10	Aw104	Loose sandstone	Calcisol	1.55	202
11	Aw92	Loose sandstone	Calcisol	1.55	202
12	Aw124	Loose sandstone	Calcisol (gleyic)	2.00	208
13	Aw95	Loose sandstone	Calcisol	2.10	185
14	Aw126	Loose sandstone	Calcisol	1.65	217

181 We used the following procedure for making comparable SoilNet and neutron probe measure-
 182 ments. First, the SoilNet sensors were cross-calibrated with the neutron probe. Second, both
 183 neutron probe and SoilNet measurements were normalized along each profile, in accordance to
 184 their vertical representativeness. Third, we calculated daily soil moistures from the hourly val-
 185 ues. Finally, we used soil moisture records across the [0.2 - 0.3] m layer at all sites to estimate

186 SSM as a constraint variable of the inversion procedure (see § 2.4). For two sites without direct
187 measurements of SAWC components (aw92 and aw126), the soil moisture records from the
188 subsurface down to 2.4 m were also used as inputs of the SAWC determination procedure (see
189 § 2.2.2).

190 **2.2.2. Ground-based determination of SAWC and its components**

191 On 12 sites out of 14, soil pits were dug or soil cores were drilled in close vicinity of the neutron
192 probe access tubes or of the SoilNet sensors. Soil layers were defined as the soil horizons de-
193 termined by the morphological observations of the soil profiles, which led to consider between
194 3 and 5 soil layers. SAWC was classically determined from soil observations and analysis using
195 the following expression (Cousin et al., 2003):

$$196 \quad SAWC = \sum_{i=1}^n D_i * bd_i * \left(\frac{100-st_i}{100} \right) * (HFC_i - HWP_i) \quad (1)$$

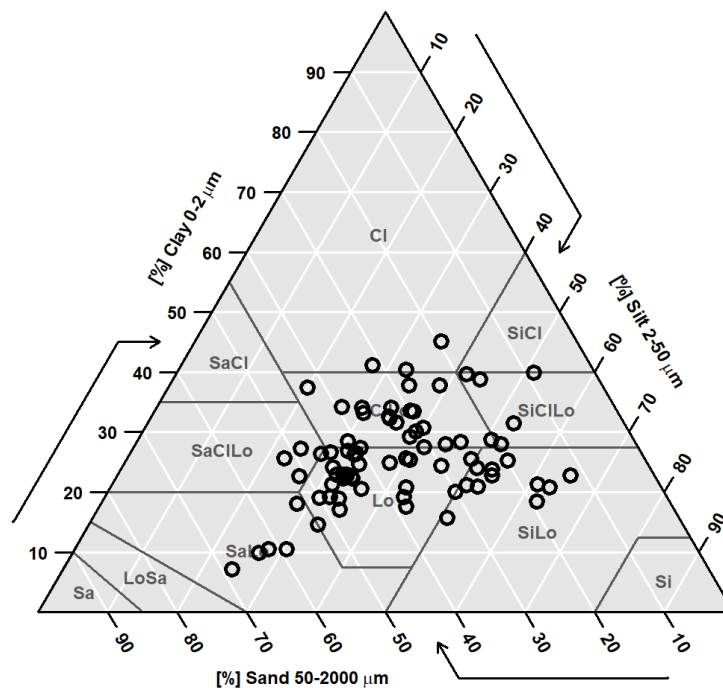
197 where for each soil layer i , D_i is the thickness of the layer (mm), bd_i is bulk density, st_i is the
198 coarse fragment content (% volumetric), and HFC_i and HWP_i are the soil moistures at field
199 capacity (FC) and wilting point (WP), respectively. The soil properties bd_i , HFC_i and HWP_i
200 were determined for each layer sample from core sampling using 100 cm³ stainless-steel cylin-
201 ders, a pressure plate extractor providing measurements of HFC_i and HWP_i (Klute, 1986). D_i
202 and st_i were determined from the observations made in the soil pits.

203 For the two remaining sites (aw92 and aw126), we estimated SAWC and its components using
204 the method proposed by Sreelash et al. (2017). The latter consisted of estimating SAWC and
205 its components from a statistical analysis of the times series for soil moisture neutron probe
206 measurements conducted over 10 years at same depths, and at several times each year in ac-
207 cordance to rainfall events. We also applied this method on 5 additional sites, in order to esti-
208 mate the uncertainty on SAWC components that was required for the inversion approach (see
209 § 2.5.3.1). In order to be consistent with the inversion scheme of the crop model, HFC and

210 HWP were finally averaged by considering two layers: a topsoil layer (0 - 0.3 m) and a root
211 zone layer (0.3 m to soil depth, derived from observations of D_i made in the soil pits).

212 2.2.3. Characterization of soil texture variability over the region

213 Soil samples were collected in 12 sites out of 14, and in three additional sites of the study area,
214 in order to complete the picture of the regional soil variability. Soil samples were collected for
215 each horizon determined by the morphological observations of soil profiles. A total of 77 soil
216 layers (five to six per site) were sampled. The granulometric fractions of the soil samples were
217 determined in the laboratory using classical laboratory techniques (Baize and Jabiol, 1995). The
218 variability of the granulometric fractions as observed on the set of samples is presented in Fig-
219 ure 2.



220

221 *Figure 2: Variability of texture over the 77 soil layers located in the Peyne Catchment.*

222 2.3. Meteorological data

223 A standard meteorological station (Enerco 400, CIMEL, France) was located in the Roujan
224 head catchment, within the Peyne river catchment (Figure 1). It provided hourly and daily val-
225 ues of solar irradiance, air temperature and humidity, wind speed and rainfall. Reference evap-
226 otranspiration ET_0 was calculated following FAO-56 (Allen et al., 1998). Since this meteoro-
227 logical station was installed in 1992 in the framework of the long-term observatory OMERE
228 (Molénat et al., 2018), it allowed the comparison of the hydrological year 2014-2015 (01 Sep-
229 tember 2014 to 31 August 2015) against the inter-annual average. Hydrological year 2014-2015
230 was characterized by heavy rainfalls during the fall of 2014 (388 mm), followed by both dry
231 winter (49 mm) and spring (77 mm), and a humid summer (135 mm, that occurred mostly in
232 august, with several high intensity thunderstorms). The cumulated annual rainfall amount was
233 649 mm, close to the inter-annual average (638 mm). Reference evapotranspiration ET_0 was
234 larger than the inter-annual average, except during august 2015, which led to an annual cumu-
235 lated ET_0 of 1187 mm, substantially larger than the inter-annual average (1109 mm).

236 **2.4. Constraint variables estimated from satellite images**

237 **2.4.1. Landsat 7 ETM+ imagery**

238 Eleven almost cloud-free scenes collected by the Landsat 7 Enhanced Thematic Mapper Plus
239 sensor (ETM+) were available between 8 January 2015 and 23 October 2015. They were down-
240 loaded from the U.S. Geological Surveys USGS website, Earth explorer Interface
241 (<https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov>, accessed June, 01, 2018). These 30-meter resolution images
242 were instrumentally corrected following Vermote et al. (1997), using the calibration factors
243 reported in the downloaded metadata files.

244 The Landsat images were atmospherically corrected to obtain top of canopy (TOC) reflectances
245 and surface outgoing radiances over the solar (visible and near infrared - NIR) and the thermal
246 infrared (TIR) spectral ranges, respectively. Two atmospheric radiative transfer models were
247 used: the 6S model (Vermote et al., 1997) and the MODTRAN model (Berk et al., 1999) over

248 the solar and TIR spectral range, respectively. The required atmospheric profile data for both
249 models (including pressure, temperature, and relative humidity) were available online
250 (<https://atmcorr.gsfc.nasa.gov>, accessed on June, 01 2018). There were vertically interpolated
251 using the National Centre for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) reanalysis data (Barsi et al.,
252 2003). Linear interpolation of the aerosol optical thickness (AOT) data at 340, 380, 440, 500,
253 675, 870 and 1020 nm were used to estimate AOT at 550 nm from the Toulouse location
254 (43.562N, 1.476E) of the AERONET network (Holben et al., 2001).

255 Masks were finally created for each acquisition date, to eliminate the missing data caused by
256 the failure of the scan line corrector (SLC) of the Landsat 7 ETM+ sensor (Chen et al., 2010,
257 Li et al., 2017), located in the northwest part of the study area, as well as to eliminate the few
258 clouds and their shadows that occurred for some dates.

259 **2.4.2. Leaf Area Index estimates**

260 In the literature, only few studies were devoted to estimate the leaf area index (LAI) of vine-
261 yards from satellite images. This is due to the discontinuous structure of vineyards canopies
262 (row crops, large bare soil fraction) and to the frequent changes in canopy architecture because
263 of trellis systems and pruning operations. Johnson et al. (2003) showed that LAI of vineyards
264 cultivated in rows can be estimated from normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) using
265 a linear relationship ($R^2 = 0.72$). Their study covered a wide range of vineyard geometries under
266 Mediterranean climate, and in particular a wide range of row spacings (between 1 and 3.7 me-
267 ters) that included those typically practiced in the Peyne watershed (between 1.8 and 2.5 meter,
268 mainly 2.5). Vineyard LAI maps were thus calculated at 30-meter resolution, using the linear
269 relationship proposed by Johnson et al. (2003):

$$270 \quad \text{LAI} = 5.70 \text{ NDVI} - 0.25 \quad (2)$$

271 where NDVI was calculated from ETM+ bands 3 (R: red) and 4 (NIR: near infrared):

272
$$\text{NDVI} = (\text{NIR} - \text{R}) / (\text{NIR} + \text{R}) \quad (3)$$

273 **2.4.3. Evapotranspiration estimates**

274 By focusing on the same Payne watershed, Galleguillos et al. (2011a, 2011b) investigated the
275 mapping of daily ET over vineyards by using the Simplified Surface Energy Balance Index (S-
276 SEBI, Roerink et al., 2000) method, along with ASTER satellite imagery. The latter includes
277 simultaneously observations over the solar (visible and NIR) and the TIR spectral ranges, for
278 the retrieval of albedo and surface temperature, respectively (Jacob et al., 2004; French et al.,
279 2005; 2008). By combining maps of surface albedo and temperature, the S-SEBI model pro-
280 vides estimates of daily ET (Gómez et al., 2005). Thus, Galleguillos et al. (2011a, 2011b) re-
281 ported an accuracy of 0.8 mm.day^{-1} for the mapping of daily ET over the vineyards of the Payne
282 watershed, when compared against ground-based references from eddy covariance method.
283 Further, Montes and Jacob (2007) compared the capabilities of ASTER or Landsat 7 ETM+
284 imageries to retrieve daily ET over the same watershed vineyards, by using the S-SEBI method.
285 They reported a similar accuracy (0.9 mm.day^{-1}) when using the Landsat 7 ETM+ imagery, as
286 compared to the use of the ASTER imagery (0.8 mm.day^{-1}). For the current study, and on the
287 basis of the above-discussed studies, we followed the approach proposed by Montes and Jacob
288 (2007) for the Landsat 7 ETM + imagery. Thus, we generated daily ET maps with a 30-meter
289 resolution, for each of the 11 Landsat 7 ETM+ imageries collected during the experiment.

290 **2.5. Model inversion approach**

291 Model inversion consists of estimating some model parameters by minimising differences be-
292 tween model simulations and in-situ / remotely sensed measurements (fitting process), for a
293 panel of constraint variables, on the basis of optimization techniques or Bayesian methods
294 (Montes et al., 2014). Obviously, the dynamics of the constraint variables must significantly
295 depend upon the parameters to be estimated, which explains why inversion methods usually
296 involve simultaneous sensitivity studies (Varella et al., 2010b).

297 Several studies were devoted to estimating soil hydrological properties or soil depth, by using
298 different types of models devoted to subsurface water flows (Šimůnek et al., 2016, Galleguillos
299 et al., 2017, Javaux et al., 2008), crop functioning (Florin et al., 2011, Dente et al., 2008 ;
300 Sreelash et al., 2017) or Soil - Vegetation - Atmosphere Transfer (Olioso et al., 2005, Gutmann
301 et al., 2010, Bandara et al., 2015). Follow on from the literature review we discuss in introduc-
302 tion, we considered in the current study the STICS crop model for estimating SAWC compo-
303 nents by inversion, and we selected three constraint variables for the fitting process, either alone
304 or in combination, namely leaf area index (LAI), evapotranspiration (ET) and surface soil mois-
305 ture (SSM). For LAI and ET, we considered the remotely sensed estimates from the Landsat 7
306 ETM+ sensor. For SSM, we considered the in-situ measurements, because remotely sensed
307 estimation of SSM remains questionable over vineyards (Lei et al., 2020).

308 **2.5.1. Implementing the STICS crop model**

309 The STICS crop model (Brisson et al., 1998) was developed to simulate the dynamics of agri-
310 cultural and environmental variables for various crops. STICS is a generic mono-dimensional
311 model (1D vertical fluxes), predicting daily budget of water, carbon and nitrogen within the
312 topsoil and root zone layers, on the basis of energy and mass transfer within the soil - plant -
313 atmosphere continuum. STICS involves more than 200 input parameters or variables, related
314 to soil profile characteristics, plant characteristics according to phenological stages, initialized
315 soil moisture and nitrogen profiles, climate data and agricultural practices (Brisson et al., 1998;
316 2003; Varella et al., 2010a, Guérif et al., 2006). Among many other crops, STICS has been
317 successfully applied to vineyards (Celette and Gary, 2013). In the current study, we used the
318 version V8.41 of the STICS model that can be freely downloaded at the following URL:
319 https://www6.paca.inrae.fr/stics_eng/Download.

320 For the current study, we ran STICS simulations for each of the 14 sites, and we estimated
321 SAWC components from the inversion procedure on the basis of the aforementioned LAI, ET

322 and SSM estimates. LAI and ET estimates corresponded to the 30-meter pixels of the Landsat 7
323 ETM+ imagery that matched each of the 14 sites, and SSM estimates corresponded to field
324 measurements within each site (see § 2.2.1). Table 2 summarizes the data used as inputs of
325 STICS simulations to document the model parameters that were not set to default values and
326 the meteorological forcing. The meteorological variables were provided by the Roujan meteor-
327 ological station (see § 2.2.4). For row geometry of vineyards and other soil parameters that
328 were not estimated for the inversion procedure, we fixed them to single nominal values across
329 the 14 sites, by averaging previous measurements performed within the La Peyne watershed
330 (Meyer, 2016; Molénat et al., 2018). The plant parameters of the wine crop were derived from
331 the STICS library. Soil nitrogen content was set to a standard value for vineyards, also provided
332 by the STICS library. Finally, we used the inversion procedure to fix root zone thickness and
333 hydraulic properties, namely soil moistures at wilting point and field capacity for topsoil and
334 root zone layers (see § 2.5.2). It is worth noting that none of the parameters was obtained by
335 measurements at the site scale, which ensured a potential application of the procedure over the
336 whole watershed.

337 *Table 2: Source of data for documenting the STICS parameters that were not set to the STICS*
338 *default values and the meteorological forcing. N and C_{org} stand for soil nitrogen content and*
339 *soil organic carbon, respectively. Vineyard and soil parameters were obtained in the frame-*
340 *work of the OMERE environmental observatory (Meyer, 2016; Molénat et al., 2018). The term*
341 *“scale” stands for the representativeness of the data, either “watershed” for meteorology and*
342 *for averaged measurements across the 14 sites, or “site” for in-situ data.*

	Data	Origin	Scale
Climate	Daily meteorological data	OMERE meteorological station in Roujan	Watershed
Vineyard	Row geometry	Averaged Measurements	Watershed
	Plant functioning parameters	STICS library	Site

Soil	Bulk density	Averaged Measurements	Watershed
	N, C _{org}	Averaged Measurements and STICS Library	Watershed
	Root zone thickness	Estimated from STICS inversion	Site
	Hydraulic properties	Estimated from STICS inversion	Site

343 The STICS starting simulation date was set to 01 January 2015, after a long period of rainy
344 weather, so that we could initialize soil water content to full water saturation. The ending sim-
345 ulation date was 31 December 2015, thus including the whole cycle of vine cultivation.

346 **2.5.2. Setting up soil layers and soil parameters**

347 In order to reduce the number of STICS parameters to be estimated from inversion, the soil was
348 split into two layers as proposed by Wosten (2001) and Varella (2010b). The boundaries of the
349 topsoil layer (ploughing layer) were set to 0 and 0.3 m depth, and the thickness of the second
350 layer (root zone layer) was included into the set of parameters to be estimated from model
351 inversion. Thus, five soil parameters had to be estimated from the inversion of the STICS
352 model: (1) soil moisture at field capacity HFC_i and wilting point HWP_i for both layers, with
353 $i=1$ or 2 for the topsoil and root zone layers, respectively, and (2) thickness of root zone layer
354 D_2 . The estimated soil available water capacity $SAWC_i$ of each layer was then calculated as:

$$355 \quad SAWC_i = (HFC_i - HWP_i) \times bd \times D_i \quad (4)$$

356 where bd is the dry bulk density of layer i , that was set at 1.5 in accordance to the average of
357 dry bulk densities observed in the catchment. Note that the coarse fragment content (sti) in
358 equation 1 is not considered in equation 4, in order to limit the number of soil parameters to be
359 estimated. However, the variations of coarse fragment content were implicitly included into the
360 inversion process through the modulations of the five estimated soil parameters. This point is
361 discussed in § 4.4.

362 **2.5.3. Inversion procedure**

363 For the current study, we used the GLUE method proposed by Beven et al. (1992) to estimate
364 the targeted STICS parameters (root zone thickness as well as soil moistures at wilting point
365 and field capacity for topsoil and root zone layers) along with their uncertainties. This method
366 consists of running the considered model over a large set of model parameter values, referred
367 to as the Numerical Design of Experiment (NDoE) hereafter, by following a given distribution
368 for each parameter. It next selects a subset of parameter values that provide best observation
369 fitting, which leads to the estimates of the parameters along with the associated uncertainties.

370 The framework we used here was very similar to the classical implementation of the GLUE
371 method, except when generating the population of sampled parameters. Indeed, our framework
372 included two steps: generating the NDoE in a first step, and estimating the parameters and their
373 uncertainties in a second step. Both steps are presented in the next two sections.

374 **2.5.3.1. Generating the Numerical Design of Experiment (NDoE)**

375 The NDoE was the population of SAWC components to be considered as input parameters of
376 the STICS crop model, namely populations of soil moisture at field capacity and wilting point
377 for topsoil layer (HFC_1 , HWP_1) and root zone layer (HFC_2 , HWP_2), as well as thickness of the
378 root zone layer (D_2). Rather than selecting these SAWC components within independent ran-
379 dom distributions, our NDoE aimed to represent the variability of the SAWC components ob-
380 served within the Peyne watershed. The experiment design was defined according to the fol-
381 lowing procedure.

- 382 • The 77 soil layers sampled in our experiment (see § 2.2.3) were used to define the ranges
383 within which textures were randomly sampled (Table 3). Clay and silt percentages were
384 first randomly selected from uniform distributions bounded by the defined ranges. Sand
385 percentages were then deduced as the complement to 100, and the samples having sand

386 percentages outside the observed range were eliminated. Given the textures, soil water con-
 387 tents at field capacity (HFC) and at wilting point (HWP) were calculated using the texture-
 388 class pedotransfer functions (PTF) proposed by Al Majou et al. (2008, Table 2).

- 389 ● In order to account for the uncertainties on these values, random noises were next added to
 390 HFC and to HWP, following a normal distribution. The standard deviations of the normal
 391 distributions were deduced by examining the differences between the SAWC components
 392 values determined from the laboratory measurements and those determined from in-situ
 393 time series of soil moisture measurements. These differences could be calculated on the 7
 394 sites where both determinations were performed (see § 2.2.2). The standard deviation val-
 395 ues were 1.57 and 2.37 for HFC and HWP, respectively.
- 396 ● We eliminated the samples with HWP values larger than HFC values, to ensure the coher-
 397 ence of the sampled data without SAWC negative values.
- 398 ● The boundaries of the topsoil layer were set to 0 and 0.3 m depth, according to Wosten et
 399 al. (2001) and Varella et al. (2010a). Then, the thickness D_2 of the second layer (root zone
 400 layer), was sampled by following a uniform distribution within the prior range adopted by
 401 Sreelash et al., (2017) and given in Table 3.

402 *Table 3: Ranges of the parameters used to set up the Numerical Design of Experiment (NDoE).*

Parameter	Range	Unit
Clay	7.1 - 45.1	%
Silt	20.0 - 65.2	%
Sand	8.0 - 68.5	%
D_2	0 – 2.7	m

403 For each location, 20,000 runs of the STICS crop model were conducted, corresponding to each
 404 set of the 5 parameters HFC_1 , HWP_1 , HFC_2 , HWP_2 and D_2 . All simulated variables of interest
 405 were saved in a simulation database for further use.

406 **2.5.3.2. Estimating the parameters**

407 For each of the 14 sites, 11 Landsat 7 ETM+ images were available between January and Oc-
 408 tober 2015, and therefore used to estimate leaf area index (LAI) and daily actual evapotranspi-
 409 ration (ET) (see § 2.4). Additionally, soil moisture measurements in the surface layer (surface
 410 soil moisture, SSM) were available on 10 dates between January 2015 and October 2015 (see
 411 § 2.2.1). Both Landsat estimates and SSM measurements were used in the inversion process as
 412 constraint variables, alone or in combination, which led to six scenarios for estimating SAWC
 413 components (Table 4). The first three scenarios involved remotely sensed observations only,
 414 whereas the last three scenarios involved both remotely sensed observations and in situ meas-
 415 urements of SSM. On the one hand, we did not consider SSM measurements only in the sce-
 416 narios because we anticipated that root zone properties (and thus SAWC) could not be retrieved
 417 by using SSM only in the inversion system, since SSM corresponds to topsoil moisture. On the
 418 other hand, we combined SSM measurements with remotely sensed estimates, in order to quan-
 419 tify the loss of inversion capability when disregarding surface soil moisture as a constraint var-
 420 iable.

421 *Table 4: Scenarios of constraint variables, to be used alone or in combination, for estimating*
 422 *SAWC components by inversion of STICS.*

Scenario	Constraint variables	Data source
L	LAI	Landsat 7 ETM+ imagery
E	ET	
LE	LAI + ET	
LS	LAI + SSM	Landsat 7 ETM+ imagery SSM from field measurements
ES	ET + SSM	
LES	LAI + ET + SSM	

423 For each run of the STICS model, among the aforementioned 20 000 runs, and each of the six
 424 scenarios of constraint variables in Table 4, we computed a likelihood function that compared
 425 the STICS simulations against the corresponding observations by combining multiple variables:

426
$$\lambda = \prod_j \left(\sum_k [Y_{j,k} - f_{j,k}(P, \theta)]^2 \right)^{-(n_j/2+2)} \quad (5)$$

427 where j specifies the observed variable, k the observation date, $y_{j,k}$ is the observation of the
 428 variable j at the date k , $f_{j,k}(P, \theta)$ is the model output of the variable j at the date k , obtained from
 429 the model inputs corresponding to the vector of parameters to be estimated θ , P is the vector of
 430 STICS parameters whose values are assigned prior to the inversion process, and n_j is the total
 431 number of observations of the variable j . The model errors for the different variables are as-
 432 sumed to be normally distributed and independent but may have different variances. Starting
 433 with the likelihood standard equation that corresponds to these hypotheses, the variance values
 434 that maximize this likelihood for fixed θ are substituted to obtain the concentrated likelihood
 435 (Seber and Wild, 1989). This allows the combination of information from different response
 436 variables, without having to weight them. More details can be found in (Buis et al., 2011) and
 437 (Wallach et al., 2011).

438 Then, we selected the 1 000 (5%) parameters vectors HFC₁, HWP₁, HFC₂, HWP₂ and D₂ of the
 439 STICS runs having the highest likelihood values λ (equation 5). Finally, each of the five pa-
 440 rameters estimates was computed as the mean value of the parameter over the selected set of
 441 runs.

442 **2.6. Assessing the reliability of the inversion procedure**

443 Four statistical metrics were considered to assess (1) the goodness-of-fit of the simulations to
 444 the observations for the constraint variables, and (2) the goodness-of-fit of the estimated SAWC
 445 to their corresponding experimental measurements (see § 2.2.2). These statistical indicators
 446 were: Mean Error (ME), Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), Coefficient of determination (R²)
 447 and Nash-Sutcliffe model efficiency coefficient (NSE). The definitions of these statistical met-
 448 rics are given hereafter:

449
$$ME = \frac{\sum_i^n (P_i - O_i)}{n} \quad (5)$$

450
$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i^n (P_i - O_i)^2}{n}} \quad (6)$$

451
$$R^2 = \text{corr}(P_i, O_i)^2 \quad (7)$$

452
$$NSE = \frac{\sum_1^n (P_i - O_i)^2}{\sum_1^n (O_i - \bar{O})^2} \quad (8)$$

453 Where P and O stand for predictions and observations, respectively, where observations are the
454 reference for a given variable, and \bar{O} is the averaged value of the observations for a given sam-
455 ple. These statistical metrics were complementary since (1) ME measures the bias between pre-
456 dictions and observations, (2) R^2 measures the strength of the correlation between predictions
457 and observations, independently from the bias, (3) RMSE measures the total error of prediction,
458 including systematic and unsystematic errors, and (4) NSE is an adimensional indicator, related
459 to RMSE, that permits to compare prediction errors across predicted variables and, if positive,
460 to evaluate the percentage of explained variance by the predictions.

461 It should be noted, however, that in this particular application of the inversion method which
462 consisted in providing soil input for DSM models in a spatially distributed manner, rather than
463 providing local SAWC predictions directly usable for decision making, a special attention was
464 given to R^2 . Indeed, the latter accounts for the ability to picture the spatial variability of SAWC
465 across the study region, regardless of bias.

466 **3. Results**

467 **3.1. Reproducibility of the constraint variables**

468 We compared the six scenarios of constraint variables for STICS inversion, on their respective
469 goodness-of-fit between (1) observed (SSM) or remotely sensed (LAI and ET) values of the
470 three constraint variables, and (2) simulations of these variables by the inverted STICS model.
471 The results of the comparison are given in Table 5, on the basis of the aforementioned statistical
472 metrics.

473 *Table 5: Statistical metrics for the comparison between (1) observations of the three constraint*
474 *variables (LAI, ET and SSM), and (2) simulations of these variables by the STICS model after*
475 *inversion. The comparison is conducted for each of the six inversion scenarios (see Table 4 for*
476 *definition).*

Constraint variable	Scenario	ME	RMSE	R ²	NSE
LAI (m ² /m ²)	L	0.71	1.12	0.32	-1.70
	E	0.62	1.29	0.18	-2.56
	LE	0.67	1.19	0.27	-2.04
	LS	0.75	1.22	0.19	-2.21
	ES	0.64	1.25	0.17	-2.34
	LES	0.71	1.18	0.26	-1.99
ET (mm/day)	L	0.50	1.00	0.38	-0.03
	E	0.40	0.79	0.57	0.34
	LE	0.43	0.83	0.54	0.27
	LS	0.56	1.00	0.38	-0.04
	ES	0.48	0.93	0.44	0.10
	LES	0.47	0.92	0.45	0.11
SSM (g/g)	L	2.61	5.73	0.01	-0.54
	E	1.88	5.12	0.04	-0.22
	LE	1.27	5.44	0.00	-0.38
	LS	0.00	3.38	0.47	0.46
	ES	-0.08	3.40	0.46	0.46
	LES	0.24	3.54	0.42	0.41

477 The overall quality of prediction of the constraint variables was low with few values of NSE
478 and R² exceeding 0.2 and 0.5 respectively (prediction of ET with scenario E and LE, prediction
479 of SSM with scenario LS, ES and LES). However, most of the differences were ascribed to
480 substantial biases (ME) relatively to the total error (RMSE). Also, RMSE values on LAI, ET
481 and SSM were close to the accuracy requirements regularly quoted in literature, namely
482 0.8 m²/m², 0.8 mm/day and 6.5 %, respectively (Montes & Jacob, 2017, Fang et al., 2019, Pré-
483 vot et al., 1993). Consequently, the relationships between the observations of the three con-
484 straint variables and the simulations of these variables by the inverted STICS model were ac-
485 ceptable. As expected, the smallest differences were obtained on a given constraint variable

486 when this constraint variable was included into the inverse modelling scenario (L for LAI, E
 487 for ET, LS, ES and LES for SSM). Including SSM as a constraint variable (scenarios LS, ES
 488 and LES) did not provide significant improvement on LAI and ET estimates. Conversely, it
 489 was difficult for STICS to correctly simulate SSM when the latter was excluded from the set of
 490 constraint variables (scenarios L, E and LE). Thus, including any constraint variable in the
 491 inversion scheme did not lead to better simulations for the other constraint variables (i.e., L
 492 versus E and SSM, E versus L and SSM, SSM versus L and E).

493 3.2. Estimating SAWC components

494 We compared the six scenarios of constraint variables for STICS inversion, on their respective
 495 capabilities to retrieve SAWC components, namely soil parameters HFC₁, HWP₁, HFC₂, HWP₂
 496 and D₂. For that, we compared the retrievals derived from STICS inversion against the ground-
 497 based reference derived from the in-situ measurements (see § 2.2.2). The results of the compar-
 498 ison are given in Table 6, on the basis of the aforementioned statistical metrics.

499 The overall performances of the retrieved SAWC components were low as shown by the neg-
 500 ative values of NSE, regardless of SAWC component and scenario (Table 6). Large biases
 501 contributed a lot to these low performances, whereas the predicted values were significantly
 502 correlated with observed ones (R^2) for some SAWC components and scenarios.

503 *Table 6: comparison of the SAWC components retrieved from STICS inversion against those*
 504 *derived from the in-situ measurements. The SAWC components are soil moisture at field ca-*
 505 *capacity (HFC) and at wilting point (HWP) for topsoil layer (label 1) and root zone layer (la-*
 506 *bel 2), as well as thickness of the root zone layer D₂. The comparison is conducted for each of*
 507 *the six inversion scenarios (see Table 4 for definition).*

SAWC component	Scenario	ME	RMSE	R ²	NSE
HFC1 (%)	L	-3.28	4.77	0.00	-1.81
	E	-2.76	4.09	0.01	-1.06

	LE	-1.91	3.88	0.03	-0.86
	LS	-0.22	3.12	0.21	-0.20
	ES	-0.12	2.99	0.25	-0.10
	LES	-0.55	2.84	0.28	0.00
HWP1 (%)	L	-1.25	4.32	0.41	-1.08
	E	-0.64	3.29	0.00	-0.20
	LE	0.00	4.12	0.08	-0.89
	LS	1.26	2.60	0.51	0.25
	ES	0.84	2.12	0.60	0.50
	LES	0.70	2.25	0.51	0.44
HFC2 (%)	L	-4.01	5.54	0.01	-1.16
	E	-3.47	5.30	0.00	-0.98
	LE	-3.64	5.64	0.06	-1.24
	LS	-4.70	5.83	0.35	-1.39
	ES	-4.26	5.68	0.01	-1.28
	LES	-4.27	6.00	0.15	-1.53
HWP2 (%)	L	-2.02	3.23	0.00	-0.67
	E	-2.31	3.26	0.15	-0.71
	LE	-2.20	3.23	0.11	-0.67
	LS	-1.61	3.09	0.27	-0.53
	ES	-1.88	3.10	0.03	-0.54
	LES	-1.87	3.20	0.01	-0.64
D ₂ (m)	L	0.37	0.63	0.31	-0.55
	E	0.85	0.97	0.15	-2.72
	LE	0.80	0.89	0.41	-2.13
	LS	0.39	0.65	0.05	-0.65
	ES	0.64	0.82	0.02	-1.67
	LES	0.65	0.77	0.35	-1.32

508 Using all the constraint variables permit to obtain the largest correlation for HFC1 only, and
509 the largest correlations between predictions and observations were obtained with different sce-
510 narios, from one SAWC component to another (LES for HFC1, ES for HWP1, LS for HFC2
511 and HWP2, and LE for D₂). For the topsoil layer, predictions of soil moisture at field capacity
512 (HFC₁) and at wilting point (HWP₁) were best correlated with observations when surface soil
513 moisture (SSM) was included in the set of constraint variables (scenarios LS, ES and LES). For
514 the root zone layer, predictions of soil moisture at field capacity (HFC₂) and at wilting point

515 (HWP₂) were best correlated with observations when LAI and surface soil moisture were in-
 516 cluded together in the set of constraint variables (scenario LS). For the thickness of the root
 517 zone layer (D₂) predictions were best correlated with observations when LAI and ET were used
 518 together as constraint variables (scenario LE). Overall, predictions were closer to observations
 519 for soil moisture at wilting point as compared to soil moisture at field capacity, apart from the
 520 LS scenario for the root zone layer. Also, predictions systematically underestimated (respec-
 521 tively overestimated) observations for HFC (respectively D₂), whereas predictions systemati-
 522 cally underestimated observations for HWP in root zone layer only (possible overestimation for
 523 HWP in topsoil layer).

524 3.3. Estimating SAWC

525 We compared the six scenarios of constraint variables for STICS inversion, on their respective
 526 capabilities to retrieve SAWC, calculated from the estimated SAWC components as defined in
 527 Equation 4. For that, we compared the retrievals derived from STICS inversion against the
 528 ground-based reference derived from the in-situ measurements (see § 2.2.2). The results of the
 529 comparison are given in Table 7, on the basis of the aforementioned statistical metrics.

530 The RMSE on SAWC estimated from the STICS inversion were larger than 60 mm with nega-
 531 tive values of NSE and small R² values, which denoted poor predictions. Biases (ME) were
 532 large, especially for the scenario E and LE, and often positive, which indicated a global over-
 533 estimation of SAWC.

534 *Table 7: comparison of the SAWC retrievals from STICS inversion against those derived from*
 535 *the in-situ measurements. The comparison is conducted for each of the six inversion scenarios*
 536 *(see Table 4 for definition).*

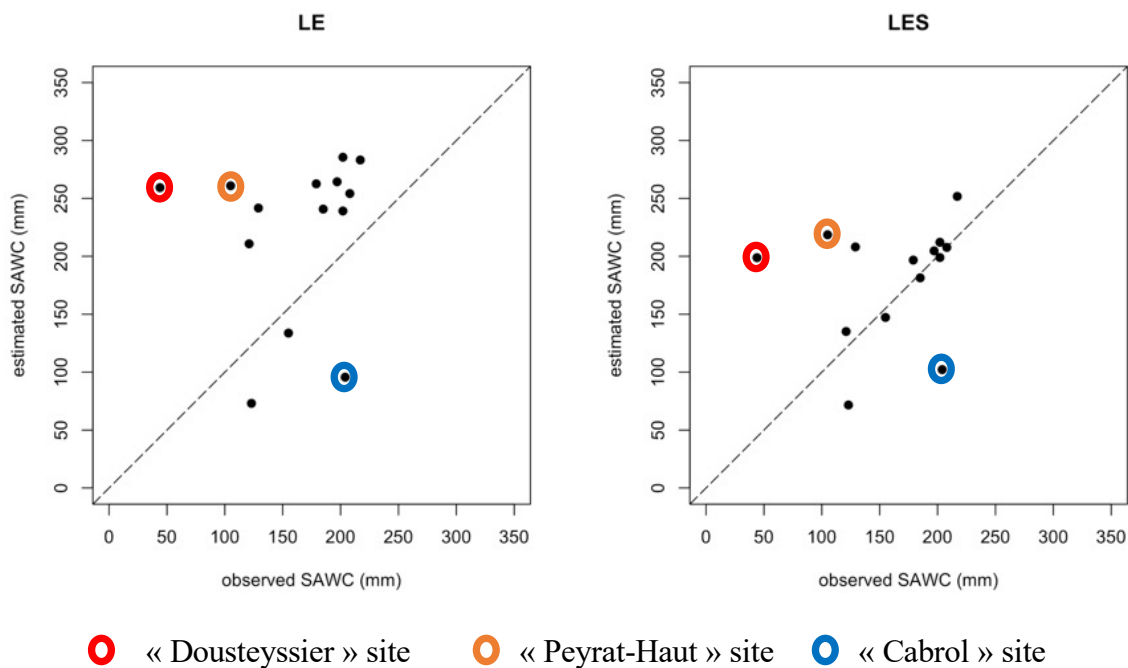
Scenarios	ME (mm)	RMSE (mm)	R2	NSE
L	10.89	70.51	0.15	-1.07
E	71.11	113.86	0.01	-4.39

LE	59.57	98.43	0.01	-3.03
LS	-21.51	51.60	0.14	-0.11
ES	17.50	67.11	0.05	-0.87
LES	18.86	64.42	0.04	-0.73

537 To explain these overall poor performances, a critical analysis of each of the 14 sites was con-
538 ducted, which led to distinguish three sites with peculiar soil water conditions:

- 539 ● The “Peyrat-Haut” and “Doustheissier” showed clear evidences of additional water supply
540 for vineyard, namely (1) lateral flows caused by recurrent overflows from a nearby ditch
541 for the “Peyrat-Haut” site (Site #3 on Figure 1), and (2) the presence of a shallow watertable
542 fed by the Peyne river for the “Doustheissier” site (Site #5 on Figure 1).
- 543 ● The “Cabrol” site (Site #1 on Figure 1) was characterized by a soil profile with hydromor-
544 phic characteristics for the deep soil layers revealing the occurrence of temporary waterlog-
545 ging (Tassinari et al., 2002).

546 Removing these three sites induced significant increases of performances for the LE scenario
547 (ME = 52 mm, RMSE = 70 mm, NSE = -3.08 and $R^2 = 0.47$) and, more importantly, for the
548 LES scenario (ME = 9 mm RMSE = 31 mm, NSE = 0.17 and $R^2 = 0.58$). Figures 3a and 3b
549 display the scatterplots when comparing the individual SAWC predictions against the corre-
550 sponding reference observations for these two scenarios, showing the three sites with peculiar
551 soil water conditions. Finally, these gains of performance when removing the three aforemen-
552 tioned sites were mainly due to significant increases in the prediction performances for root
553 zone thickness ($R^2 = 0.68$ for scenario LE, $R^2 = 0.58$ for scenario LES).



554

555 *Figure 3: Predicted vs observed SAWC for scenario LE (LAI and ET as constraint variables)*

556 *and LES (LAI, ET and SSM as constraint variables)*

557 4. Discussion

558 4.1. Overall performances of SAWC predictions

559 To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first that evaluated a crop model inversion ap-
 560 proach for predicting SAWC and its components in the current operational conditions of Digital
 561 Soil Mapping, namely over a large spatial extent with landscape heterogeneities, by considering
 562 discontinuous crops, and by including a large panel of plant status indicators derived from sat-
 563 ellite imagery. The results we obtained revealed poor prediction performances both for SAWC
 564 and its components. However, the best prediction performances we obtained for SAWC as a
 565 whole with the LES scenario, after the removal of sites with peculiar soil water conditions, were
 566 comparable with those reported in the few field-scale studies dedicated to the estimation of
 567 SAWC from crop model inversion. Indeed, Morgan et al. (2003) and Jiang et al. (2008) reported
 568 RMSEs respectively between 37 to 74 mm and 18 to 50 mm, respectively. Such performances

569 were also comparable to those obtained over the same study area at a different period by Cou-
570 louma et al. (2020) when predicting SAWC from carbon isotope discrimination ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$) in har-
571 vested grapes (RMSE between 35 and 61 mm). Besides, substantial parts of the prediction er-
572 rors were due to biases (as measured by ME), whereas some scenarios showed significant cor-
573 relations between predictions and ground measurements, with R^2 values up to 0.6. Finally, us-
574 ing SSM as constraint variable in addition to LAI and/or ET led to better predictions of SAWC.
575 Better results could theoretically be obtained by determining site specific values of STICS pa-
576 rameters (e.g., bulk density, row geometry of wine crops, soil nitrogen content etc...) instead
577 of setting constant values for these parameters across the whole study area. Some of these pa-
578 rameters (e.g., row spacing) can be spatialized using remote sensing techniques (Delenne et al,
579 2010). However, most of the STICS parameters cannot be locally determined in the absence of
580 any available proxy (e.g., soil nitrogen content), which makes unrealistic their spatialisation at
581 large scale because of subsequent errors that are difficult to reduce. Additionally, the spatial
582 mismatching between soil measurements (soil profile over $1\text{ m} \times 1\text{ m}$) and remotely sensed
583 constraint variables (pixels over $30\text{ m} \times 30\text{ m}$) can generate errors that may affect the inversion
584 procedure. Indeed, variographic studies performed in the same region showed that a non-neg-
585 ligible part of the soil property variations occurred at very short scale (Gomez et al, 2012, Fig-
586 ure 3). Finally, it can be anticipated that several nonreducible factors such as those cited above
587 may limit the precision of SAWC estimations. A sensitivity analysis of the inversion procedure
588 is necessary to study the respective impacts of these factors, and to identify the site specific
589 properties to be characterized first for further improvements.

590 **4.2. Comparisons of performances across scenario and SAWC components**

591 This study compared several scenarios involving different constraint variables among which
592 evapotranspiration (ET) that, contrary to leaf area index (LAI) and surface soil moisture SSM,
593 has been rarely considered in the literature.

594 On the one hand, errors on simulations and / or observations of constraint variables (LAI, ET,
595 SSM) were decorrelated from one variable to another. On the other hand, the sensitivities of
596 constraint variables to the soil properties obtained from STICS inversion changed from one
597 variable to another. This explained why (1) including any constraint variable in the inversion
598 scheme did not lead to better simulations for the other constraint variables, (2) the best predic-
599 tion performances for soil properties were not obtained with a unique set of constraint variables,
600 and (3) combining together the three constraint variables did not systematically provide the best
601 prediction performances for SAWC and components, apart from the prediction of SAWC as a
602 whole after removal of the three sites with peculiar soil water conditions.

603 The prediction performances obtained for the SAWC components with different scenarios of
604 constraint variables were physically consistent with our knowledge of the underlying physical
605 processes. First, we obtained better performances for soil moisture at field capacity and wilting
606 point in the soil surface layer when including surface soil moisture (SSM) into the set of con-
607 straint variables. Second, we obtained better retrieving performances for soil moisture at wilting
608 point than for soil moisture at field capacity. This was ascribed to large occurrences of water
609 stress periods with soil moisture close to wilting point throughout the vine growth cycle, as
610 compared to low occurrences of water availability periods with soil moisture close to field ca-
611 pacity. These large / low occurrences could also explain why predictions systematically under-
612 estimated observations for soil moisture at field capacity. Third, it was necessary combining
613 ET and LAI as constraint variables to obtain significant correlations between predictions and
614 observations for (1) SAWC components within the root zone layer and (2) SAWC as a whole
615 after the removal of the three sites with peculiar soil water conditions. This was explained by
616 the strong dependence of vegetation transpiration and growth upon root zone SAWC and com-
617 ponents, especially when vegetation faced water shortages.

618 Including ET as a constraint variable permitted to increase the prediction of soil properties re-
619 lated to the root zone layer, which underlines the importance of developing robust methods to
620 estimate ET from remote sensing, where current challenges are related to discontinuous cano-
621 pies, heterogeneous landscapes and hilly areas (Aouade et al., 2020; Bellvert et al., 2021; Bou-
622 dhina et al., 2018; Merlin et al., 2014; Zitouna et al., 2012; 2015; 2018). Similarly, including
623 SSM as a constraint variable permitted to increase the prediction of soil moisture at field ca-
624 pacity and wilting point in the soil surface layer, which motivates continued efforts on the re-
625 trieval of surface soil moisture from remote sensing (Babaeian et al., 2019; Paolini et al., 2021),
626 and especially over complex crop canopies such as vineyard (Fernandez-Moran et al., 2015).

627 **4.3. Study area peculiarities, strengths and limitations**

628 This study addressed the retrieving of SAWC from crop model inversion within a Mediterra-
629 nean vineyard. The specificities of the study area should be thoroughly analysed to better un-
630 derstand our results and to anticipate possible improvements or applications to other areas.

631 Following Sreelash et al. (2017), the retrieval quality of SAWC components from model inver-
632 sion depends upon the agro-pedo-climatic conditions of the study area. Indeed, the latter drive
633 the modelling capabilities to account for vegetation types within the study area, while the per-
634 formances of the inversion largely depend upon the modelling capabilities to reproduce the link
635 between vegetation functioning and water uptakes within deep soil layers.

- 636 • In that respect, rainfed vineyard catchments can be considered as favourable areas for crop
637 model inversion. Vineyards are the dominant crops in such areas, which makes the crop
638 model inversion applicable on numerous sites covering a large variety of soils. Also, grape
639 vine is rarely irrigated, which makes the crop sensitive to deep soil characteristics and water
640 content, thus facilitating the crop model inversion. Todoroff et al. (2010) observed that rain-
641 fed sugar cane in dry years was another example of favourable agro-climatic conditions for
642 predicting SAWC from crop model inversion.

- 643 • Also, cropping systems with large water dynamics that include wetting and drying cycles
644 should be optimal for estimating SAWC components from crop model inversion (Sreelash
645 et al., 2017). This is not completely the case for the study reported in the current paper, with
646 larger occurrence of drying periods, which lead to large biases for the prediction of root
647 zone soil moisture at field capacity (§ 4.2).
- 648 • Finally, the specific climate conditions observed during the period of experiment increased
649 the limitations of our SAWC predicting approach from crop model inversion. In the exam-
650 ple of scenarios LE and LES shown in Figure 3, SAWC was strongly underestimated at two
651 sites (“Peyrat-Haut” and “Doustheissier”) because of allochthonous water supplies from
652 shallow watertable or nearby ditches (see § 3.3) during summer 2015 thunderstorms. Be-
653 sides, Figure 3 revealed that SAWC predictions strongly underestimated observations at the
654 “Cabrol” site with morphological evidence of temporary waterlogging. Such temporary wa-
655 terlogging was likely to occur during the experiment period after the wet autumn 2014
656 (358 mm), with subsequent depletions of the rooting systems that hampered the full exploi-
657 tation of the available water within the root zone layers. In such site-specific conditions, the
658 crop model could not represent water flows correctly, and the subsequent errors propagated
659 into the SAWC predictions. Besides, these errors might have been amplified by the well-
660 known spatial heterogeneities of the rainfalls in this Mediterranean area (Ducrocq et al.,
661 2014), that were not considered in our approach.

662 From this analysis, it can be deduced that SAWC prediction from crop model inversion could
663 be largely improved in the future by moving to a multi-annual approach. This would permit to
664 increase the number of wetting and drying cycles and to select the years with climatic conditions
665 that attenuate the site-specific problems discussed above. As an example, by adopting such a
666 multi-annual approach (four years) and by selecting years with favourable climate conditions
667 (three years out of four), Coulouma et al. (2020) increased their SAWC prediction performances

668 from carbon isotope discrimination ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$) in the harvested grapes, with RMSE decreasing from
669 [35 - 61] mm to 32 mm. Besides, rainfall heterogeneities could be better addressed in the future
670 by replacing climatic records from a unique weather station with high resolution rain maps as
671 now provided by terrestrial radar systems (Lengfeld et al., 2020).

672 **4.4. SAWC concept mismatches**

673 It should be noted that the SAWC field measurements (see § 2.2.2) and predictions from crop
674 model inversion (see § 2.5) did not share the same underlying concepts. On the one hand, the
675 SAWC field measurements relied on a “soil-based” approach involving static soil parameters
676 that together represent the maximum soil water storage to sustain plant transpiration, as stated
677 by Cousin et al. (submitted). On the other hand, the crop model inversion was a “plant-based
678 approach” involving proxies of water quantity withdrawn from soil by vegetation throughout
679 the crop growth cycle. Our study is a good illustration of statement by Cousin et al. (submitted):
680 “Depending on the climate conditions, this AWC-equivalent parameter [provided by the plant-
681 based approach] can be strongly different from the AWC evaluated from soil-based approaches.
682 In some situations, it can even be close to the Readily Available Water Content”.

683 Additionally, the SAWC field measurements (see § 2.2.2) and predictions from crop model
684 inversion (see § 2.5) did not rely on the same description of soil properties. On the one hand,
685 the SAWC field measurements relied on dug soil pits and drilled soil cores to characterize pro-
686 files of soil properties across different layers, with consideration for coarse fragment content.
687 On the other hand, the crop model inversion procedure considered two layers only, namely
688 topsoil and root zone layers, without explicitly consideration for coarse fragment content, alt-
689 hough profiles of soil properties and coarse fragment content were implicitly included into the
690 inversion procedure, since they drove plant status indicators to be used as constraint variables
691 (LAI, ET, SSM).

692 In spite of these differences in both underlying concepts and description of soil properties, we
693 observed that the crop model inversion provided useful predictions of “soil-based” SAWC in
694 most of the sites (11 sites out of 14 in black on figure 3). This demonstrated that both ap-
695 proaches can be combined to better map SAWC over regional extents, in spite of their different
696 underlying concepts and description of soil properties. Again, a critical analysis of the overall
697 climate and topography, as well as of the soil specific conditions, should permit to avoid large
698 errors caused by these differences.

699 **4.5 Implications for Digital Soil Mapping**

700 We explored a potential way to estimate SAWC in a spatially distributed manner, as this prop-
701 erty is sorely lacking in current databases. This new approach complements other means previ-
702 ously explored such as $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (Coulouma et al., 2020). As it does not require direct numerous
703 field measurements, it is quite inexpensive and open path for having a high spatial density of
704 characterised sites.

705 Lagacherie and Gomez (2018) mentioned two ways of using remotely sensed data for DSM:
706 either as exhaustive covariates, or as a provider of point sites characterised by the property to
707 be mapped. In view of the results, which clearly show the impossibility of obtaining an exhaus-
708 tive estimate of the SAWC due to particular situations that model inversion cannot consider,
709 the prospects for using SAWC estimates by model inversion clearly lie in the second way. The
710 introduction of these new data can therefore be considered as "soft data" in co-kriging proce-
711 dures, as already done with hyperspectral data (Walker et al., 2017) and with Field EM38 meas-
712 urements (Zare et al., 2021). It should be noted that such approaches require only that the “soft
713 data” should be well-correlated with the target soil property, and are insensitive to large biases
714 as those observed in our results.

715 To fully achieve the hybridization of model inversion techniques and Digital Soil Mapping,
716 data flow from the latter to the former should also be considered. In this study, the numeric

717 design of experiment of the inversion procedure used ranges of SAWC-related soil properties
718 (Table 3) that were deduced from the existing laboratory samples in the study area. Alternate
719 determinations of these ranges could also be deduced from excerpts of prior DSM products
720 available at the national or regional scales (Chen et al., 2022) and covering the study area.

721 **5. Conclusion**

722 The main lessons that can be retrieved from this study are the following.

- 723 • Using crop model inversion with remotely sensed variables related to vegetation transpira-
724 tion (ET), vegetation growth (LAI) and surface soil moisture (SSM) could potentially allow
725 the estimation of Soil Available Water Capacity and its components at low cost (no ground
726 soil measurements) and over large areas.
- 727 • The comparisons against ground measurements of SAWC in a Mediterranean vineyard re-
728 vealed overall poor estimation performances. However, acceptable correlations with ground
729 measurements of SAWC ($R^2 = 0.47$ and 0.58) were obtained for specific scenarios of con-
730 straint variables (LAI + ET, LAI + ET + SSM) after the removal of specific sites with pe-
731 culiar soil-water conditions. Surface Soil moisture was also found potentially useful for
732 predicting surface soil hydrodynamic properties.
- 733 • The poor estimation performances stemmed from a minority of sites for which unmodelled
734 processes (allochthonous water supply, waterlogging) occurred under the particular condi-
735 tions during the experiment period (wet autumn).
- 736 • With a multi-annual approach increasing the number of wetting and drying cycles, while
737 avoiding site-specific unmodelled processes, crop model inversion approach could be used
738 in the future for providing spatial sampling of SAWC and of its components, to be next
739 used as surrogate input data for Digital Soil Mapping models.

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