

Ashinie Bogale Gonfa

**Effects of alternate furrow
irrigation on physiological
response, agronomic performance
and physio-chemical quality of
tomato cultivars**

UNIVERSITÄT HOHENHEIM
Institut für Agrartechnik
Agrartechnik in den Tropen und Subtropen
Prof. Dr. Joachim Müller



**Effects of alternate furrow irrigation on physiological response, agronomic
performance and physio-chemical quality of tomato cultivars**

Dissertation

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
“Doktor der Agrarwissenschaften”
(Dr.sc.agr./ Doctor of Agricultural Sciences)

To the
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences

Presented by

Ashinie Bogale Gonfa
Bale-Goba, Ethiopia

2017

This thesis was accepted as a doctoral dissertation in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree “Doktor der Agrarwissenschaften” (Dr.sc.agr /Ph.D. in Agricultural Sciences) by the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences at the University of Hohenheim on 03.10.2017.

Date of oral examination: 24.10.2017

Members of the Examination Committee

Supervisor and reviewer:	Prof. Dr. Joachim Müller
Co-reviewer:	Prof. Dr. Oliver Hensel
Additional examiner:	Prof. Dr. Jens Norbert Wünsche
Head of the committee:	Prof. Dr. Thilo Streck

This work is the result of the scholarship granted from the Food Security Center of the Universität Hohenheim, which is supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the Higher Education Excellence in Development Cooperation (Exceed) program. The field work was financially supported by the Dr. Hermann Eiselen Ph.D. Grant from the Foundation *fiat panis*.

Schriftenreihe des Lehrstuhls für Agrartechnik in den Tropen und
Subtropen der Universität Hohenheim
herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. Joachim Müller

Band 13/2017

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**Effects of alternate furrow irrigation on
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physio-chemical quality of tomato cultivars**

D 100 (Diss. Universität Hohenheim)

Shaker Verlag
Aachen 2017

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Zugl.: Hohenheim, Univ., Diss., 2017

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Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-8440-5641-9

ISSN 1867-4631

Shaker Verlag GmbH • P.O. BOX 101818 • D-52018 Aachen

Phone: 0049/2407/9596-0 • Telefax: 0049/2407/9596-9

Internet: www.shaker.de • e-mail: info@shaker.de

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my deepest and heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Joachim Müller for accepting me as his student and offering me an opportunity of joining his working group. I am thankful him for his unreserved and aspiring guidance, invaluable constructive criticism as well as for his enthusiastic personality and friendly advice throughout the course of this study. I also extended my sincere thanks to my immediate tutor Dr. Wolfram Spreer for his constructive and insightful comments, suggestion and devotion of his time for corrections that substantially improved the manuscripts. In addition, I would like to thanks, Drs. Marcus Nagle, Setegn Gebeyehu, Sajid Latif and Miguel Aguila for their expert contributions during the field research and generous comments on the earlier version of the manuscripts.

The field work was financially supported by the Dr. Hermann Eiselen Ph.D. Grant from the *fiat panis* Foundation. The scholarship granted from the Food Security Center of the Universität Hohenheim, which is supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the Higher Education Excellence in Development Cooperation (Exceed) program is greatly acknowledged. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Getachew Ayana, General Director to the Melkassa Agricultural Research Center of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research for providing all the needed support during the field and laboratory work. Hence, I proudly would like to thank these institutions for their efforts during my research work.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the staff members and colleagues in the Institute of Agricultural Engineering, Tropics and Subtropics Group (440e) for all friendly technical support in the laboratory and cooperation during my study period, especially my thanks goes to Dr. Patchimaporn Udomkun, Sarah Fleischmann, Ute Waldeck, Alice Hack and Sabine Nugent. I am also indebted to my Ethiopian friends Samuel Tufa, Getu Bekele, Bilhat Chala, Tamirat Dibaba, Nizam Husen, Tigist Mideksa for their constant encouragement.

I would like to express my warm thankful to all the staffs of Food Security Center (FSC) of Universität Hohenheim, especially Dr. Andrea Jost, Dr. Brigitte Kranz, Dr. Jenny Kopsch-Xhema, Dr. Nicole Schönleber, Dr. Heinrich Hagel and Mrs. Helene Stauss for all support and cooperation especially in handling all the administrative matters related to my study and offering me opportunity to learn from soft-skill courses organized throughout the study periods. My stay in Germany would not have been enjoyable without those individuals. Therefore, I express my deepest thanks to Shimalis Adugna, Milky Jote, Ulrike Delle, Christain Delle and all people who

provided me with facilities being required and created conducive conditions during my stay in Germany.

Summary

Agriculture in the arid and semi-arid regions of Ethiopia is facing imminent water shortage and recurrent drought which has complicated the national effort to alleviate and prevent food insecurity. The agricultural sector is the main user of water in Ethiopia which is utilized most inefficiently. Demographic growth and climate change will further limit the amount of water available for food production and threaten the overall food security and environmental sustainability. Competition for limited fresh water resources is intensifying among domestic supply and industry. Consequently, water resources available for agriculture will need to be used more efficiently. Regulated deficit irrigation (RDI) and partial root-zone drying irrigation (PRD), which is also practiced as alternate furrow irrigation (AFI) in surface irrigation, are among the novel irrigation techniques that have been reported as promising tools for conserving considerable amounts of irrigation water while improving water use efficiency (WUE). However, the yield response of tomato to AFI and RDI, particularly when the same amount of water is applied, has remained unclear.

Deficit irrigation strategies should take into account the critical phenological periods, different genotypes, soil types and the quantity of water available to the crops. Genotypic variations in general are insufficiently explored in most deficit irrigation studies and the studies conducted so far have mostly focused on yield response of a single crop cultivar. Moreover, knowledge on potential benefits of deficit irrigation in terms of nutritional quality and the main antioxidant component of carotenoids (lycopene and β -carotene), total phenols as well as the antioxidant activity in tomato is scant. Therefore, a study was conducted for two consecutive growing seasons (2013 and 2014) in a semi-arid region of Ethiopia to assess the agronomic performance in terms of marketable fruit yield, total fruit yield and water use efficiency as well as physiological and fruit quality responses of four tomato cultivars. Crops were subjected to full irrigation (FI) with total water applied to both sides of the ridges providing near to 100% field capacity, regulated deficit irrigation (RDI) with 50% of FI water applied to both sides of the ridges and alternate furrow irrigation (AFI) with 50% of FI water applied to one side of the ridge during each irrigation event and reversed weekly. Furthermore, a greenhouse experiment was also conducted at the University of Hohenheim to study the relationship between antioxidant contents (lycopene, β -carotene, vitamin C, total phenolics) and antioxidant activity in two selected tomato cultivars and water supply induced with PRD and RDI.

The results of this study indicated that the marketable yield, number of fruits per plant and mean fruit size were not significantly affected by AFI and RDI irrigations. WUE under two

irrigation techniques increased by 36.7% and 26.1%, respectively, while savings nearly 30% irrigation water as compared to FI. The increased WUE demonstrated the water saving potential of AFI over RDI. The responses of different cultivar to deficit irrigation treatments indicated the need for cultivar-specific management practices. The variations are not only due to differences in the distinct number of fruits per plant and fruit size, but are also due to differences in physiological attributes among the cultivars. *Cochoro* had the highest WUE under deficit irrigations which was characterized by higher fruit number per plant, larger fruit size, relatively longer maintenance of green vegetation during the ripening stage and fruit growth duration but had lower stomatal conductance (g_s). Therefore, this cultivar combined higher productivity, WUE and drought resistance mechanisms and is suitable to be used by both producers and breeders for areas with limited water availability. Similarly, it was observed that *Fetan* reacted with a pronounced stomatal closure and had the highest relative fruit growth and larger fruit size under water stress which explained its relatively better performance under deficit irrigations. Apart from higher yields, *ARP Tomato d2* had a higher vegetative growth, largest fruit size and higher chlorophyll content (Chl_{SPAD}) and normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) and best performance under good water availability. *Chali* had consistently lower yield and WUE, mainly attributed to the fewer number of fruits, smaller fruit size, low fruit growth rate and fruit growth duration and showed little adaptability to water stress due to its inability to regulate stomatal aperture accordingly. Since physiological attributes reflected the differences in WUE between cultivars, it is suggested to use stomatal conductance, Chl_{SPAD} , and NDVI as surrogates for screening a large number of genotypes to optimize irrigation water use in a water-limited environment.

The results of the present study also confirm that deficit irrigation strategies have enhanced some fruit qualities related to taste properties such as total soluble solids (TSS) and titratable acidity (TA) and TSS to TA ratio as well as stability for post-harvest handling (pericarp thickness) without causing a reduction of productivity in the semi-arid region of Ethiopia. However, the overall variations in fruit quality parameters were better explained by irrigation treatments than cultivar differences. The study also demonstrated that deficit irrigation could be an efficient strategy for improving the sustainability of water resource use and the health-promoting compounds in tomato fruits by increasing the contents of vitamin C, lycopene, and β -carotene as well as an antioxidant activity. However, the enhancement of these bioactive compounds under deficit irrigation was found to be cultivar-dependent. Vitamin C and lycopene content in *Matina* increased significantly while the content decreased in *Cochoro* under both PRD and RDI. Total phenolic and β -carotene content increased in both cultivars, but a greater

increase of the total phenolic content (+88.1% fw basis.) was recorded in *Cochoro*. Overall, *Cochoro* exhibited the highest total phenolic, vitamin C and lycopene contents and antioxidant activity but had a lower β -carotene than *Matina*.

In conclusion, with AFI strategy, it is possible to save close to 30% of irrigation water relative to full irrigation and improve the nutritional quality of tomato without a yield reduction. Therefore, the study confirms that AFI is a suitable deficit irrigation practice in areas with low water availability. However, AFI requires suitable cultivars in order to exploit its water saving potential.

Zusammenfassung

Die Landwirtschaft in den ariden und semi-ariden Regionen Äthiopiens ist mit Wasserknappheit und wiederkehrenden Dürren konfrontiert, was die nationalen Bemühungen zur Ernährungssicherung erschwert. Die Landwirtschaft verbraucht das meiste Wasser in Äthiopien und dieses höchst ineffizient. Bevölkerungswachstum und Klimawandel limitieren das zur Nahrungsmittelproduktion nötige Wasser immer mehr und bedrohen die Ernährungssicherung und die ökologische Nachhaltigkeit. Der Konkurrenzkampf um die limitierten Frischwasserressourcen zwischen privaten Haushalten und der Industrie wird immer intensiver. Deshalb muss der Wassereinsatz in der Landwirtschaft wirtschaftlicher gestaltet werden. „Regulated Deficit Irrigation“ (RDI) und „Partial Root Zone DryingIrrigation“ (PRD), welche auch als „AlternateFurrow Irrigation“ (AFI) praktiziert wird, sind einige der neuen, vielversprechenden Oberflächenbewässerungsstrategien, um erhebliche Mengen an Wasser zu sparen und gleichzeitig die Wassernutzungseffizienz zu verbessern (WUE). Allerdings ist der Einfluss von AFI und RDI auf den Ertrag von Tomaten bei gleicher Wassergabe noch nicht geklärt.

Defizitbewässerungsstrategien sollten die kritischen phänologischen Perioden, unterschiedlichen Genotypen, Bodenarten und die für die Kulturen zur Verfügung stehende Wassermenge berücksichtigen. Im Allgemeinen sind die genotypischen Unterschiede in den meisten Defizitbewässerungsstudien noch nicht ausreichend untersucht worden und die bislang durchgeführten Studien haben sich vorwiegend auf den Ertrag nur einer Sorte der entsprechenden Kultur konzentriert. Hinzu kommt, dass das Wissen über den Einfluss der Defizitbewässerung auf den Nährstoffgehalt und die wichtigsten Antioxidantien, wie Carotinoide (Lycopin, β -Carotin) und Phenole sehr begrenzt ist. Deshalb wurden Untersuchungen über zwei aufeinander folgende Vegetationsperioden (2013 und 2014) in einer semi-ariden Region Äthiopiens durchgeführt, um die agronomische Leistung hinsichtlich Gesamtertrag, marktfähigerFruchtertragund Wassernutzungseffizienz sowie der physiologischen Reaktionen und der Fruchtqualität von vier Tomatensorten zu bestimmen. Die Früchte wurden mit folgenden Strategien bewässert: „Full Irrigation“ (FI), bei der das gesamte Wasser auf beiden Seiten des Damms bis zu Erreichen einer Feldkapazität von 100%zugeführt wurde. Regulated Deficit Irrigation“ (RDI), bei der nur 50% der Wassermenge der FI-Behandlung auf beiden Seiten des Damms zugeführt wurde und „Alternate Furrow Irrigation“ (AFI), bei der 50% der Wassermenge der FI-Behandlung abwechselnd auf jeweils einer Seite des Damms gegeben wird, wobei die bewässerte Seite wöchentlich gewechselt wird. Zusätzlich wurde ein

Gewächshausexperiment an der Universität Hohenheim durchgeführt, um die Auswirkungen von AFI und RDI auf Lycopin, β -Carotin, Vitamin C und den Gesamtphenolgehalt bei zwei Tomatensorten zu untersuchen.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie belegen, dass der marktfähige Ertrag, die Anzahl der Früchte pro Pflanze und die durchschnittliche Fruchtgröße nicht wesentlich durch AFI und RDI beeinflusst wurden. WUE erhöhte sich um 36,7% und 26,1% bei den beiden Bewässerungsstrategien, wobei fast 30% des Wassers im Vergleich zu FI eingespart werden konnte. Die höhere WUE belegt das Wassereinsparungspotential bei AFI im Vergleich zu RDI. Die Reaktionen verschiedener Sorten auf Defizitbewässerung zeigten die Notwendigkeit eines sortenspezifischen Managements in der Praxis. Die Abweichungen lagen nicht nur in der unterschiedlichen Anzahl von Früchten pro Pflanze und den Fruchtgrößen begründet, sondern auch in der unterschiedlichen physiologischen Reaktion beider Sorten. Die höchste WUE unter Defizitbewässerung wurde bei der Sorte *Cochoroerzi* erzielt. Dies zeigte sich durch die größere Anzahl an Früchten pro Pflanze, größere Früchte, längere Grünphase während des Reifestadiums, höhere Wachstumsrate der Früchte und einer geringeren stomatären Leitfähigkeit (g_s). Deshalb erzielte diese Sorte eine höhere Produktivität, verbunden mit der verbesserten WUE und ist aufgrund ihrer Dürre-resistenzmechanismen im gleichen Maße geeignet für Produzenten und Züchter in Gebieten mit limitierten Wasserressourcen. Ähnliches wurde bei der Sorte *Fetan* beobachtet, welche mit einer markanten Schließung der Stomata reagierte und das höchste relative Fruchtwachstum und die größten Früchte unter Wasserstress hervorbrachte. Dies erklärt die relativ bessere Leistung unter Defizitbewässerung. Abgesehen von den gesteigerten Erträgen, zeigte die Sorte *ARP Tomato d2* ein besseres vegetatives Wachstum, die größten Früchte und den höchsten Chlorophyllgehalt (Chl_{SPAD}) sowie den höchsten NDVI. Die Sorte *Chali* hatte einen gleichbleibend niedrigeren Ertrag und WUE, was sich durch die geringere Anzahl an Früchten, kleineren Früchten, einer niedrigeren Wachstumsrate der Früchte und deren Wachstumsdauer zeigte und bewies wenig Anpassungsfähigkeit auf Wasserstress, da die Pflanze die Stomata nicht entsprechend regulieren kann. Die physiologischen Eigenschaften spiegeln die Unterschiede in WUE bei den verschiedenen Sorten am besten wider. Deshalb wird vorgeschlagen, Stomataleitfähigkeit, Chl_{SPAD} , und NDVI für das Screening einer größeren Anzahl von Genotypen einzusetzen, um die Nutzung des Bewässerungswassers in wasserarmen Regionen zu optimieren.

Die Resultate dieser Studie belegen auch, dass Defizitbewässerung geschmackbeeinflussende Fruchteigenschaften, wie den Gehalt an löslichen Feststoffen (TSS), titrierbare Säure (TA) und das Verhältnis zwischen TSS und TA sowie die

Festigkeit der Früchte in den semi-ariden Gebieten von Äthiopien erhöht und zwar ohne eine Minderung der Erträge in Kauf nehmen zu müssen. Die Unterschiede in der Fruchtqualität konnten dabei eher durch die Bewässerungsbehandlungen als durch die Sortenunterschiede erklärt werden. Die Studie zeigte ebenfalls, dass Defizitbewässerung eine effiziente Strategie zur Verbesserung der Nachhaltigkeit von Wasserressourcen darstellt und dadurch die gesundheitsfördernden Wirkungen von Tomaten durch einen erhöhten Gehalt an Vitamin C, Lycopin, β -Carotin und Antioxidantien unterstützt. Allerdings wurde festgestellt, dass die Verbesserung dieser bioaktiven Stoffe unter Defizitbewässerung sortenabhängig war. Der Gehalt an Vitamin C und Lycopin bei der Sorte *Matina* erhöhte sich signifikant, wobei sich dieser Gehalt bei der Sorte *Cochoro* bei Defizitbewässerung verringerte. Gesamtphenol- und β -Carotin-Gehalt erhöhten sich in beiden Sorten, wobei sich der Gesamtphenolgehalt bei der Sorte *Cochoro* mehr erhöhte. Insgesamt erreichte die Sorte *Cochoro* den höchsten Gehalt an Gesamtphenolen, Vitamin C und Lycopin und zeigte die höchste antioxidative Aktivität. Der β -Carotin Gehalt war allerdings geringer als bei der Sorte *Matina*.

Abschließend kann festgestellt werden, dass es mit der AFI Strategie möglich ist, annähernd 30% des Bewässerungswassers im Vergleich zur vollen Bewässerung einzusparen und gleichzeitig den ernährungsphysiologischen Wert von Tomaten zu steigern ohne Ernteverluste in Kauf nehmen zu müssen.

Overview of publications

In order to comply with regulations for a cumulative Ph.D. thesis at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, three publications have been included in this work.

Chapter 2

Ashinie Bogale, Wolfram Spreer, Setegn Gebeyehu, Miguel Aguila and Joachim Müller (2016). Alternate furrow irrigation of four fresh-market tomato cultivars under semi-arid condition of Ethiopia – Part I: Effect on fruit yield and quality. *Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Tropics and Subtropics*, 117 (2): 255-268.

Chapter 3

Ashinie Bogale, Wolfram Spreer, Setegn Gebeyehu, Miguel Aguila and Joachim Müller (2016). Alternate furrow irrigation of four fresh-market tomato cultivars under semi-arid condition of Ethiopia – Part II: Physiological response. *Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Tropics and Subtropics*, 117 (2): 269-282.

Chapter 4

Ashinie Bogale, Marcus Nagle, Sajid Latif, Miguel Aguila and Joachim Müller (2016). Regulated deficit irrigation and partial root-zone drying irrigation impact bioactive compounds and antioxidant activity in two select tomato cultivars. *Scientia Horticulturae* 213, 115–124.

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