Transitioning Cereal Systems to Adapt to Climate Change

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Nitrous oxide fluxes from cropping soils in a semiarid region in Australia: A 10-yr prospective

Louise Barton
Senior Research Fellow
University of Western Australia

Transitioning Cereal Systems to Adapt to Climate Change in Semiarid Regions

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Nitrous oxide fluxes from cropping soils in a semiarid region in Australia: A 10 year perspective

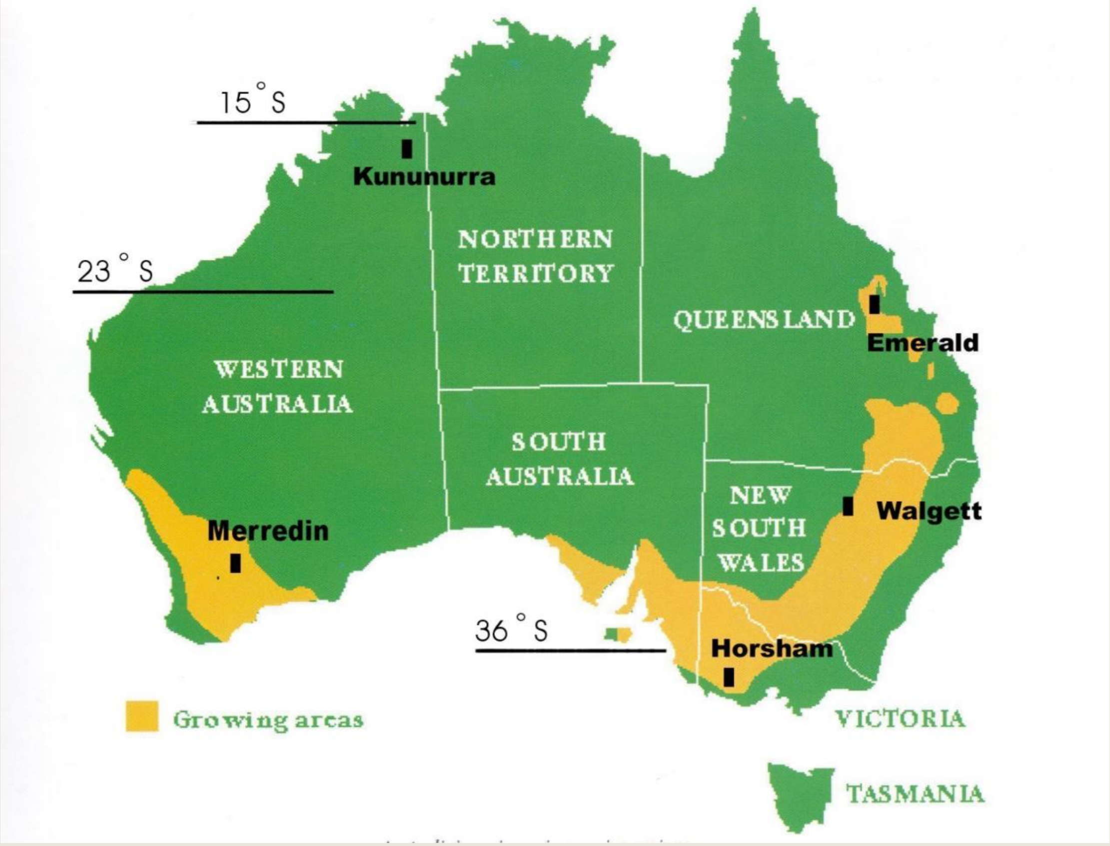
Louise Barton[1], Daniel Murphy[1], K. Butterbach-Bahl[2]

[1]Soil Biology & Molecular Ecology Group, Institute of Agriculture, The University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia

[2]Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Institute of Meteorology and Climate Research Atmospheric Environmental Research (IMK-IFU), Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

Western Australian Grainbelt

- 12 million hectares of arable land
- Produces up to 40% of Australia's grain exports
- A semiarid climate, with winter-dominant rainfall and hot, dry summers
- <325–700 mm per year (<15–28 inches)
- Cropping in winter; soils fallow at other times of the year



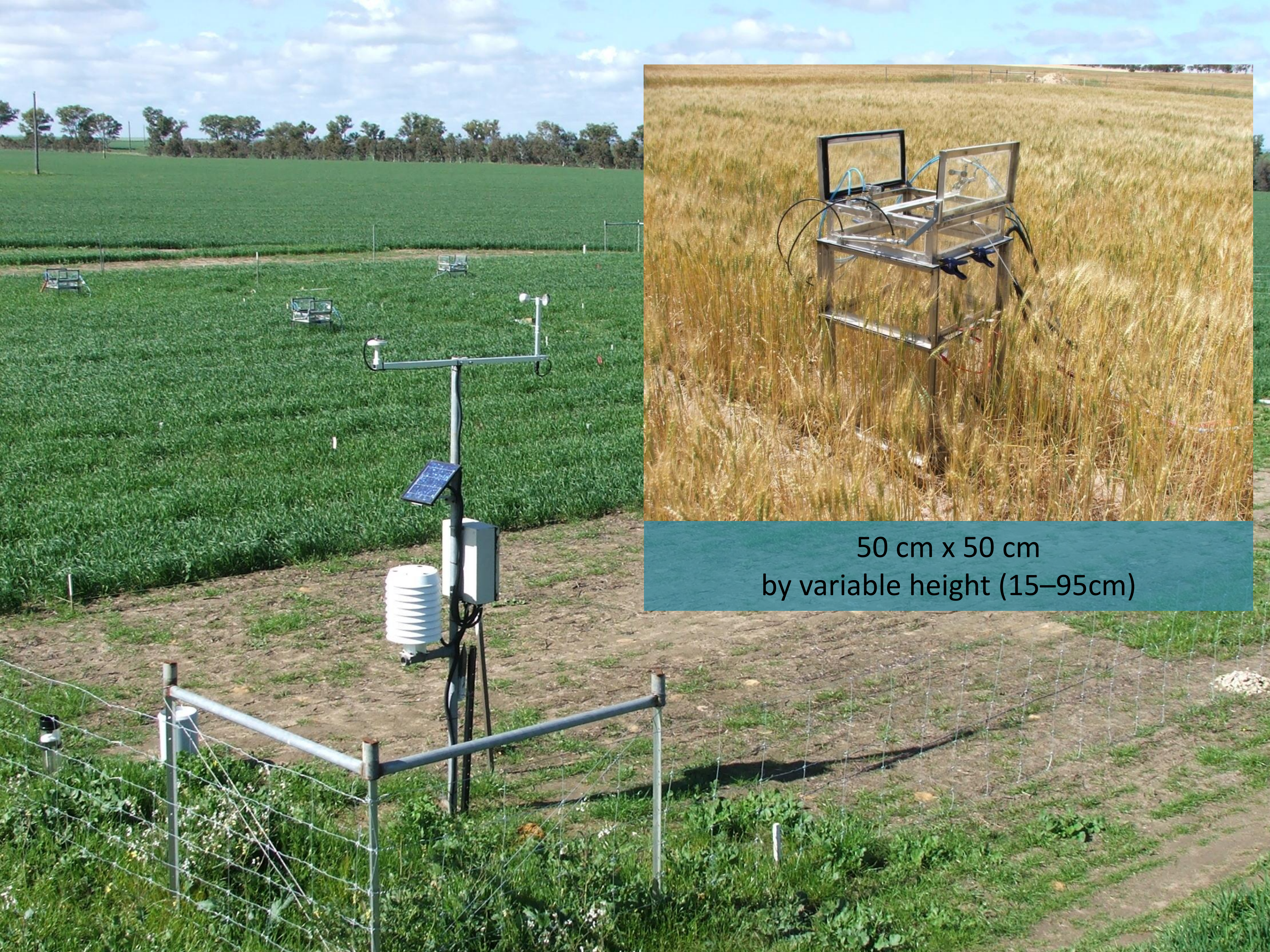
Highly Weathered Soils

Yellow/brown sandy duplex
(Natric Haploxeralf, Typic Natrixeralf)

Surface 120 mm	
pH (0.01 $CaCl_2$)	6.0
C	0.98 %
N	0.08 %
Sand	93 %
Bulk density	1.4 g soil cm^{-3}

Represents 25% of WA grain-belt soils

Nitrous oxide emissions measurement and observations


50 cm x 50 cm
by variable height (15–95cm)

Nitrous oxide emissions are low from coarse-textured soils

Location	Soil	Crop	N Rate (kg N/ha)	Annual Rate (kg N/ha)	EF (%)
Cunderdin	sand over clay	wheat wheat	0 100	0.09 0.11	0.02
Cunderdin	sand over clay	wheat wheat	0 75	0.08 0.09	0.02
Cunderdin	sand over clay	canola canola	0 75	0.08 0.13	0.06
Cunderdin	sand over clay	lupin bare soil	0 0	0.13 0.13	na
Wongan Hills	sand	lupin wheat	0 75	0.04 0.06	na
Wongan Hills	sand	wheat wheat	20 50	0.06 0.07	na
Buntine	sand	canola canola	0 100	0.02 0.01	0.01
Buntine	sand	barley barley	0 100	0.02 0.00	0.02

Source: Barton *et. al.* 2008. *Global Change Biology* 14: 177-192; Barton *et al.* 2010. *Global Change Biology Bioenergy* 2: 1–15; Barton *et. al.* 2011. *Global Change Biology* 17: 1153–1166; Barton *et. al.* 2013. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 167: 23–32

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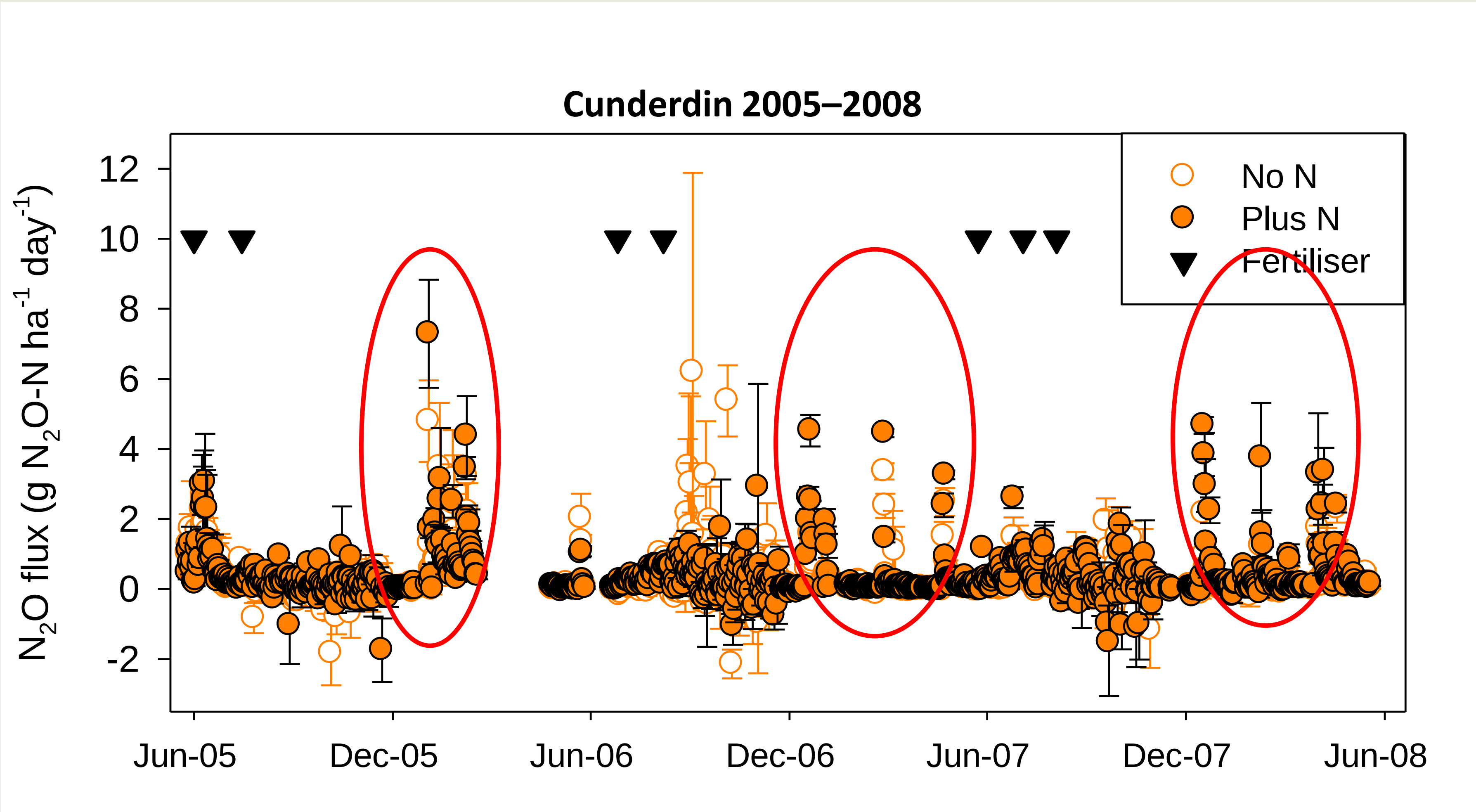
Cunderdin	sand over clay	canola canola	0 75	0.08 0.13	0.06
Cunderdin	sand over clay	lupin bare soil	0 0	0.13 0.13	na
Wongan Hills	sand	lupin wheat	0 75	0.04 0.06	na
Wongan Hills	sand	wheat wheat	20 50	0.06 0.07	na
Buntine	sand	canola canola	0 100	0.02 0.01	0.01
Buntine	sand	barley barley	0 100	0.02 0.00	0.02

International default value: 1.0%; Australian value: 0.20%

“Largest” N_2O emissions occur following summer rainfall

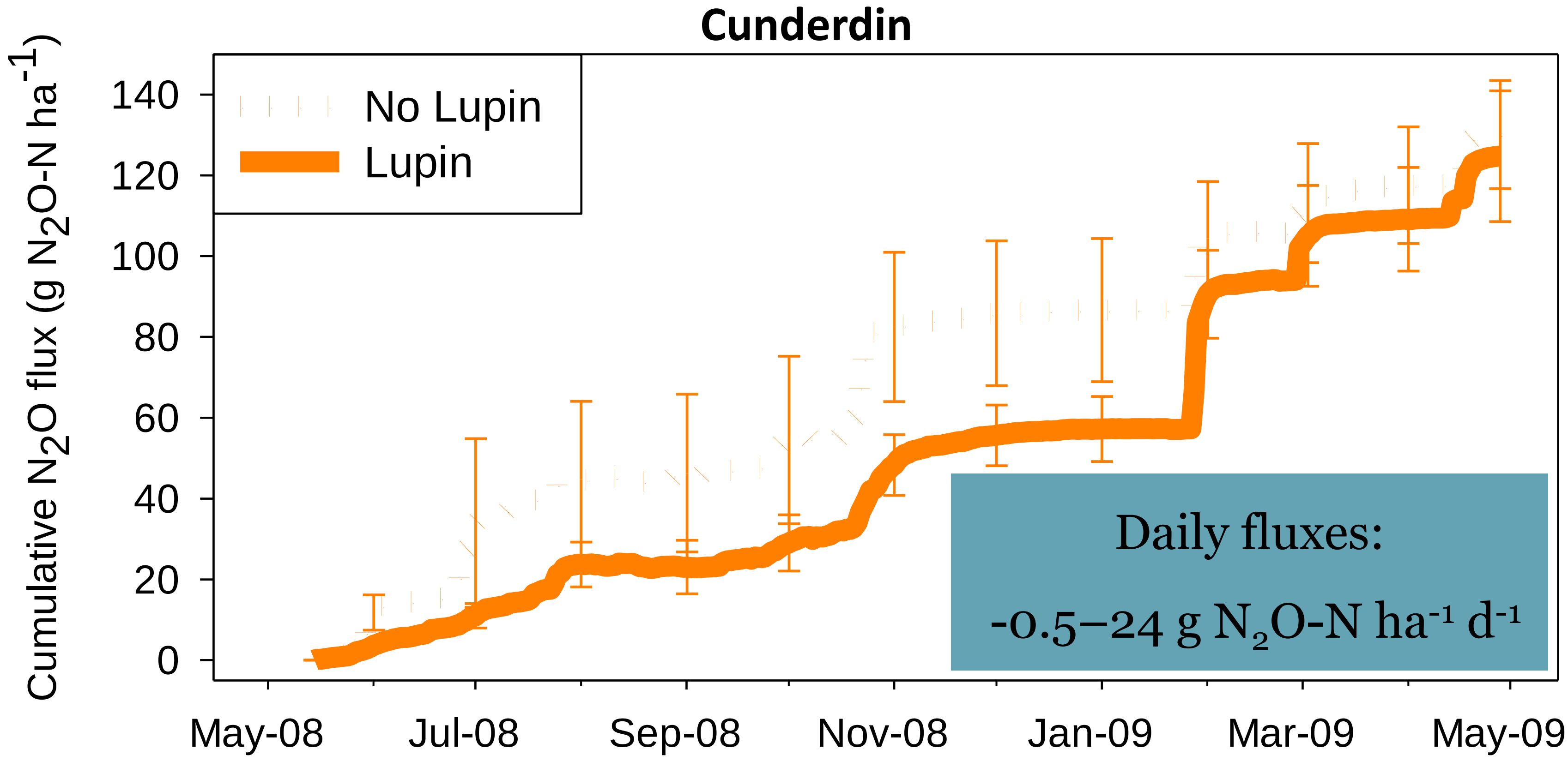


Source: Barton *et. al.* 2008. *Global Change Biology* 14: 177-192; Barton *et al.* 2010. *Global Change Biology Bioenergy* 2: 1–15.

Does including grain legumes in our cropping rotations increase cumulative N_2O emissions?

Photo: Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia, https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/lupins/crop-topping-pulse-crops

Grain legumes do not increase cumulative N_2O emissions



Source: Barton *et. al.* 2011. *Global Change Biology* 17: 1153–1166.

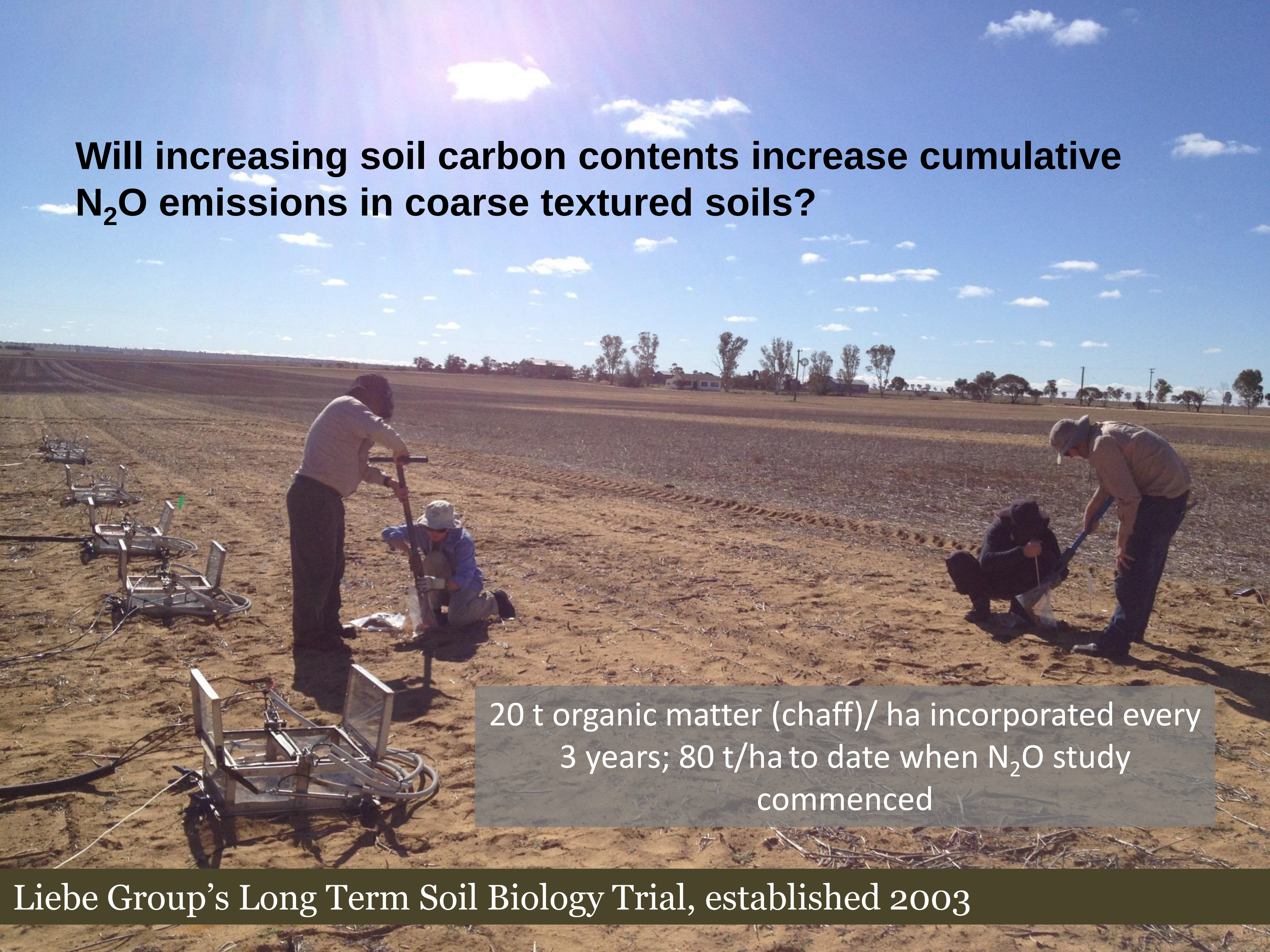
Grain legumes do not increase cumulative N_2O emissions

Wongan Hills

Rotation	Year 1	Year 2	Total
		kg N_2O-N ha^{-1}	
Lupin-wheat (20 kg N ha^{-1})	0.04	0.06	0.10[a]
Wheat-wheat (125 kg N ha^{-1})	0.06	0.07	0.13[b]

Source: Barton *et. al*. 2013. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 167: 23–32

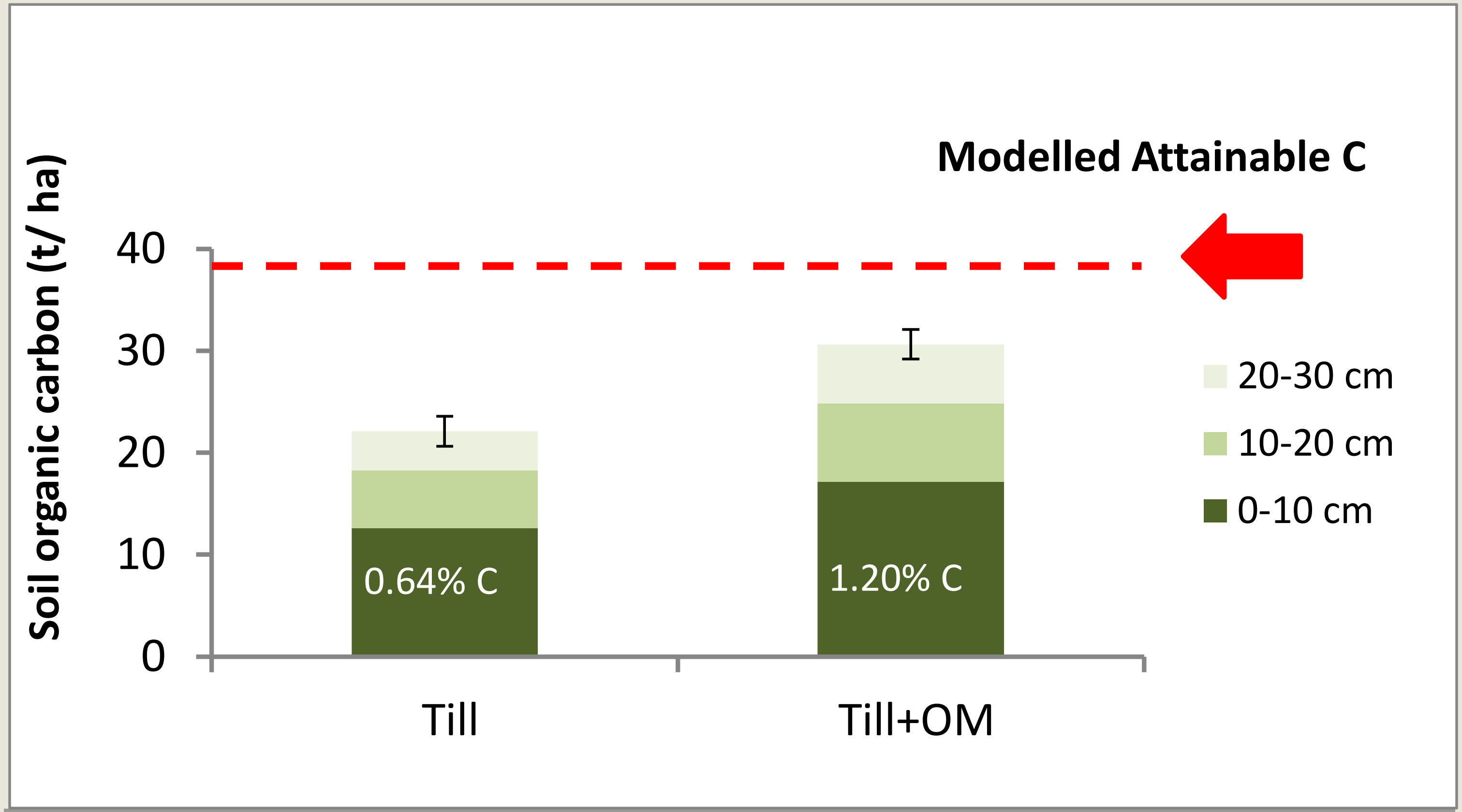
Will increasing soil carbon contents increase cumulative N_2O emissions in coarse textured soils?



20 t organic matter (chaff)/ ha incorporated every 3 years; 80 t/ha to date when N_2O study commenced

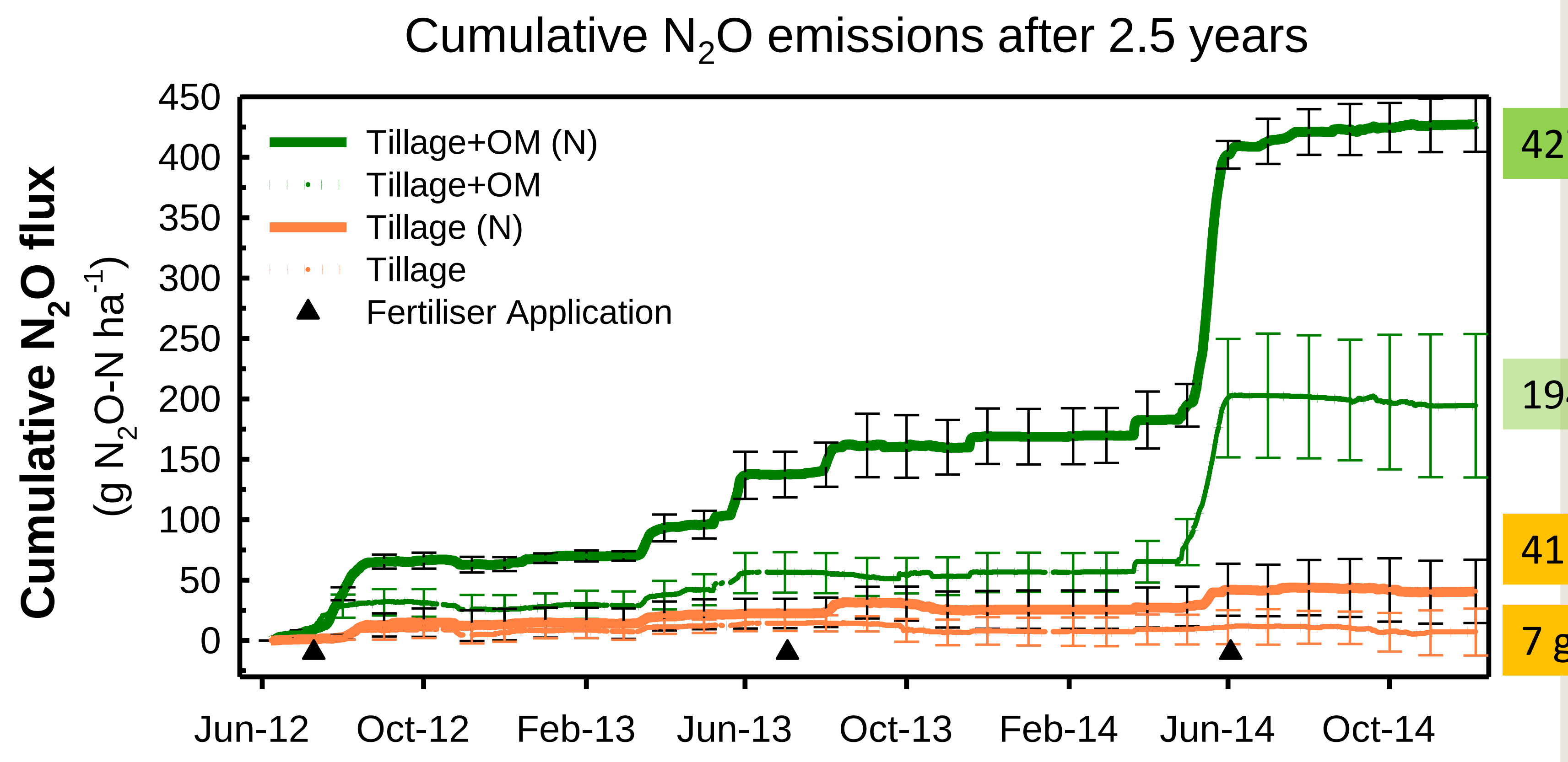
Liebe Group's Long Term Soil Biology Trial, established 2003

Liebe long-term soil biology trial: Soil carbon stocks



RothC Model Assumptions:
60% water-use efficiency, 80% stubble retention, Current rotation maintained

Increasing SOC increased N_2O emissions …



427 g N/ha

194 g N/ha

41 g N/ha

7 g N/ha

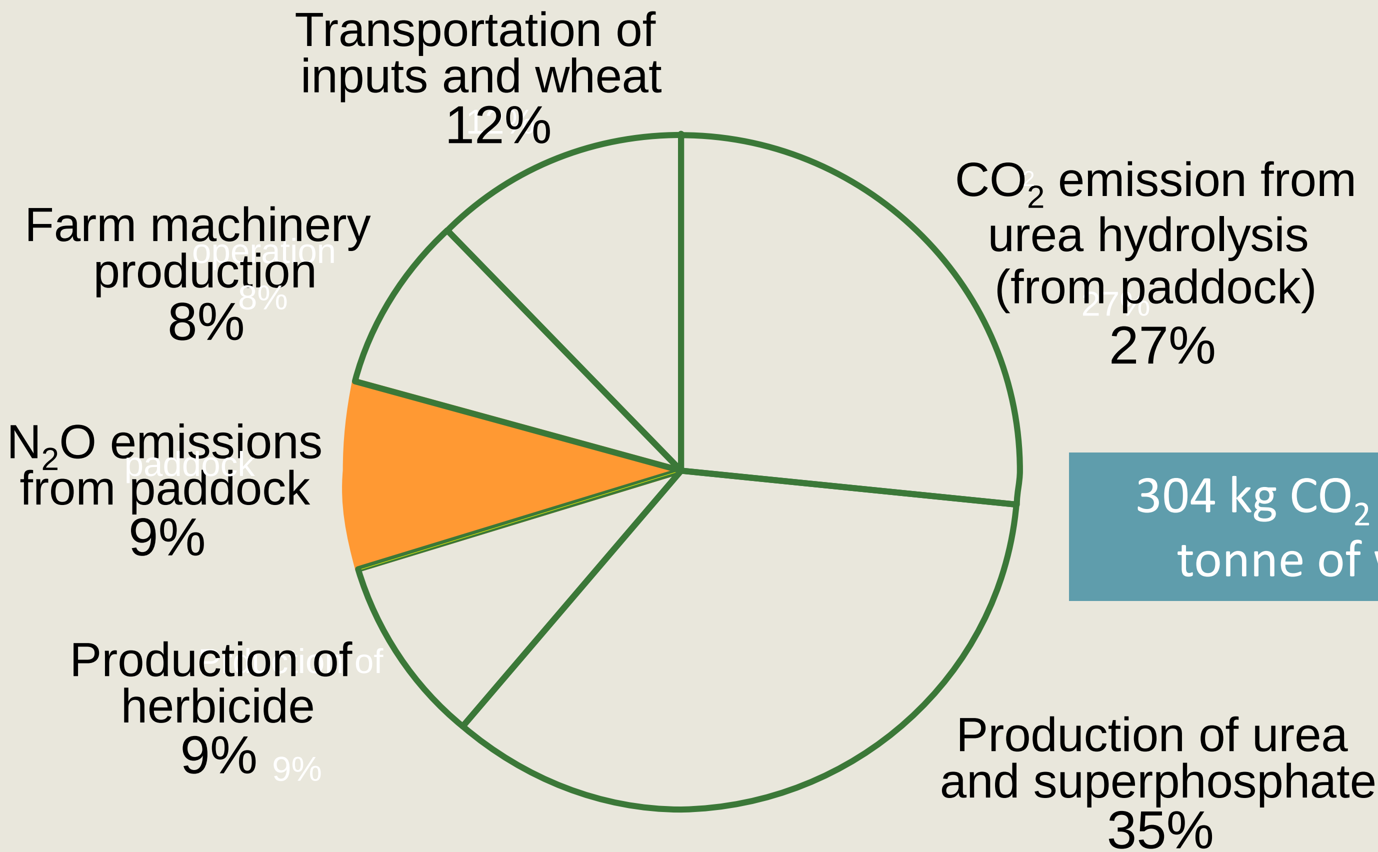
…. But losses are still relatively small.

Location	Crop	N Rate (kg N/ha)	Annual Rate (kg N/ha)	EF (%)
Buntine (+OM)	Canola	0 100	0.06 0.14	0.09
Buntine (+OM)	Barley	0 100	0.15 0.27	0.12
Cunderdin	Wheat	0 100	0.09 0.11	0.02
Cunderdin	Wheat	0 75	0.07 0.09	0.02
Cunderdin	Canola	0 75	0.08 0.13	0.06
Cunderdin	Lupin	0	0.13	na
Wongan Hills	Lupin Wheat	0 75	0.04 0.06	na
Wongan Hills	Wheat Wheat	20 50	0.06 0.07	na

Nitrous oxide emissions mitigation

N_2O emissions need to be correctly accounted for when calculating the GHG emissions from agricultural products

"Local" N_2O emission value



304 kg CO_2 equ per tonne of wheat

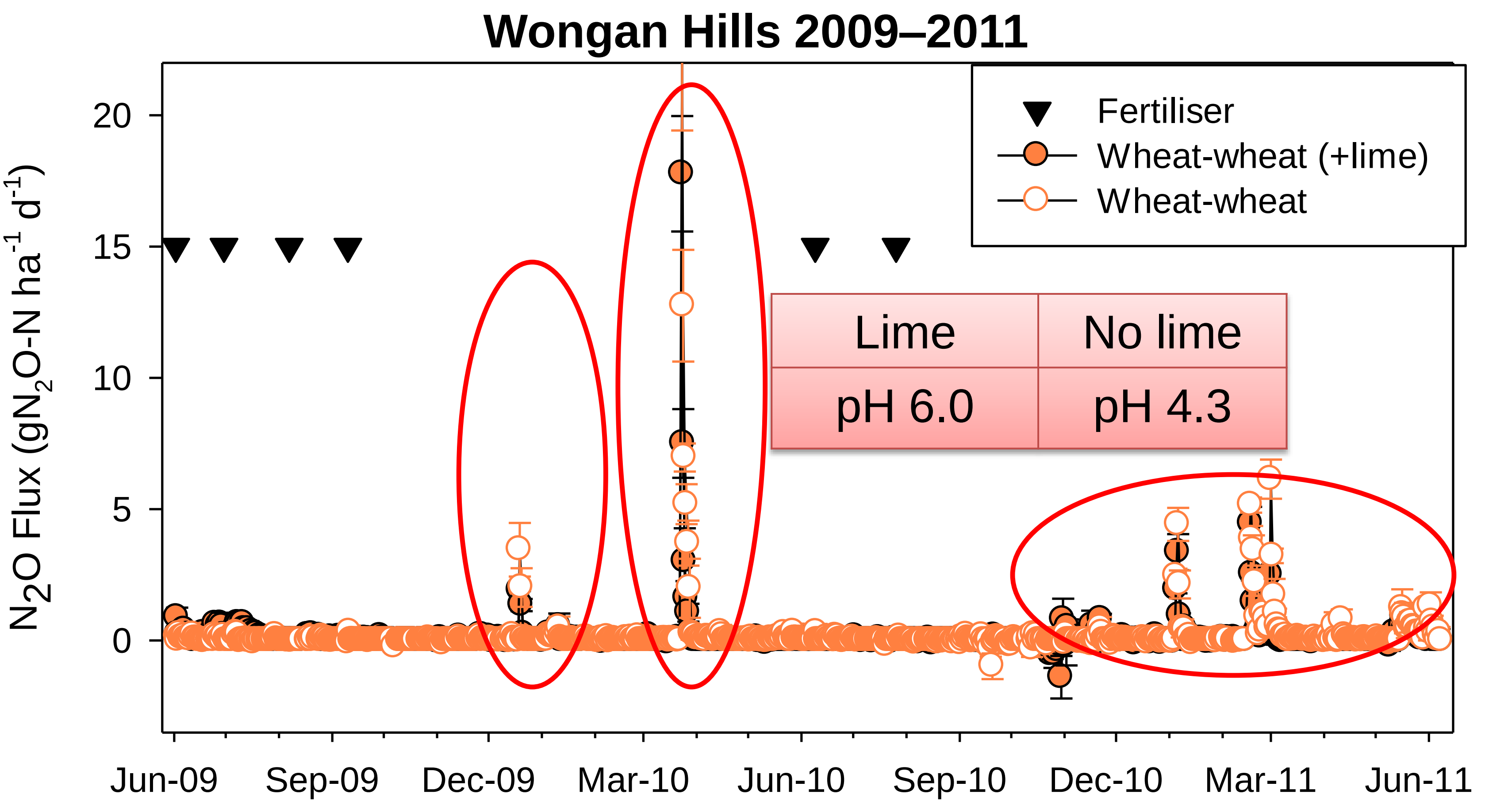
Mitigation strategies

Approaches to decreasing N_2O emissions following summer rainfall events:

- ✓ Decrease N_2O emissions from nitrification
- ✓ Increase soil nitrogen immobilisation
- ✓ Increase plant nitrogen uptake during summer and autumn

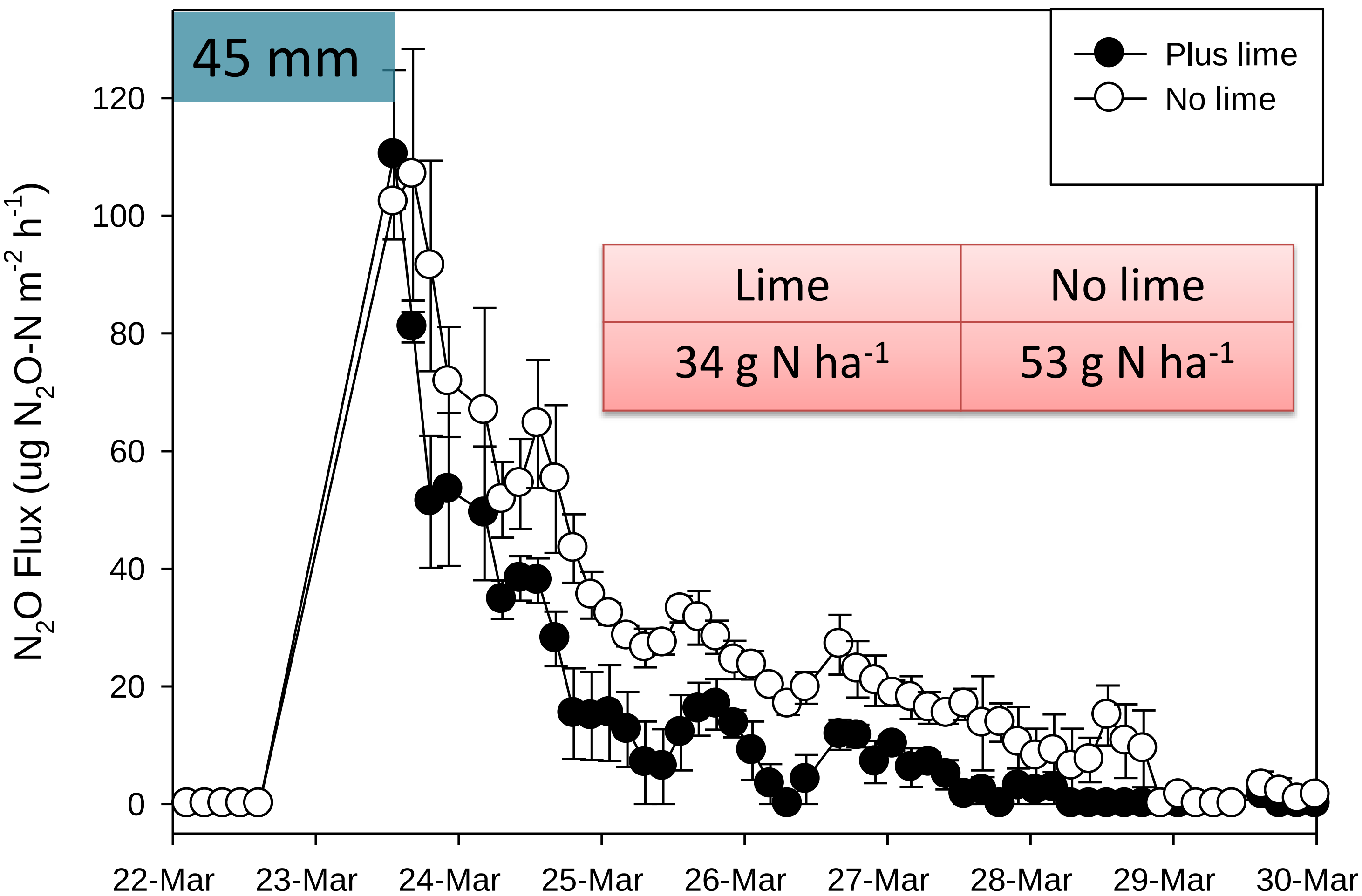
Mitigating summer N_2O emissions

Liming



Source: Barton *et. al*. 2013. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 167: 23–32

Hourly N_2O emissions following summer rain



Lime	No lime
34 g N ha^{-1}	53 g N ha^{-1}

Increasing soil pH decreased soil N_2O emissions

- Five summer-autumn rainfall = 79% of total N_2O emissions

Rotation	**N_2O from summer rain $g\ N_2O\text{-}N\ ha^{-1}$**	
	Plus lime	No lime
Wheat-wheat (125 kg N ha^{-1} over 2 years)	0.09^{b}	0.13^{a}
Lupin-wheat (20 kg N ha^{-1} over 2 years)	0.11^{ab}	0.10^{ab}

Liming decreased total N_2O emissions from wheat-wheat rotation by 30%.

Source: Barton *et. al.* 2013. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 167: 23–32

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Is liming soil a strategy for mitigating nitrous oxide emissions from semi-arid soils?

L. Barton [a,*], D.B. Gleeson [a], L.D. Maccarone [a], L.P. Zúñiga [b], D.V. Murphy [a]

[a] Soil Biology and Molecular Ecology Group, School of Earth & Environment (M087), UWA Institute of Agriculture, Faculty of Natural & Agricultural Sciences, The University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009, Australia

[b] Department of Biotechnology and Bioengineering, Cinvestav, Av. Instituto Politécnico Nacional 2508, C.P. 07360 México, D.F., Mexico

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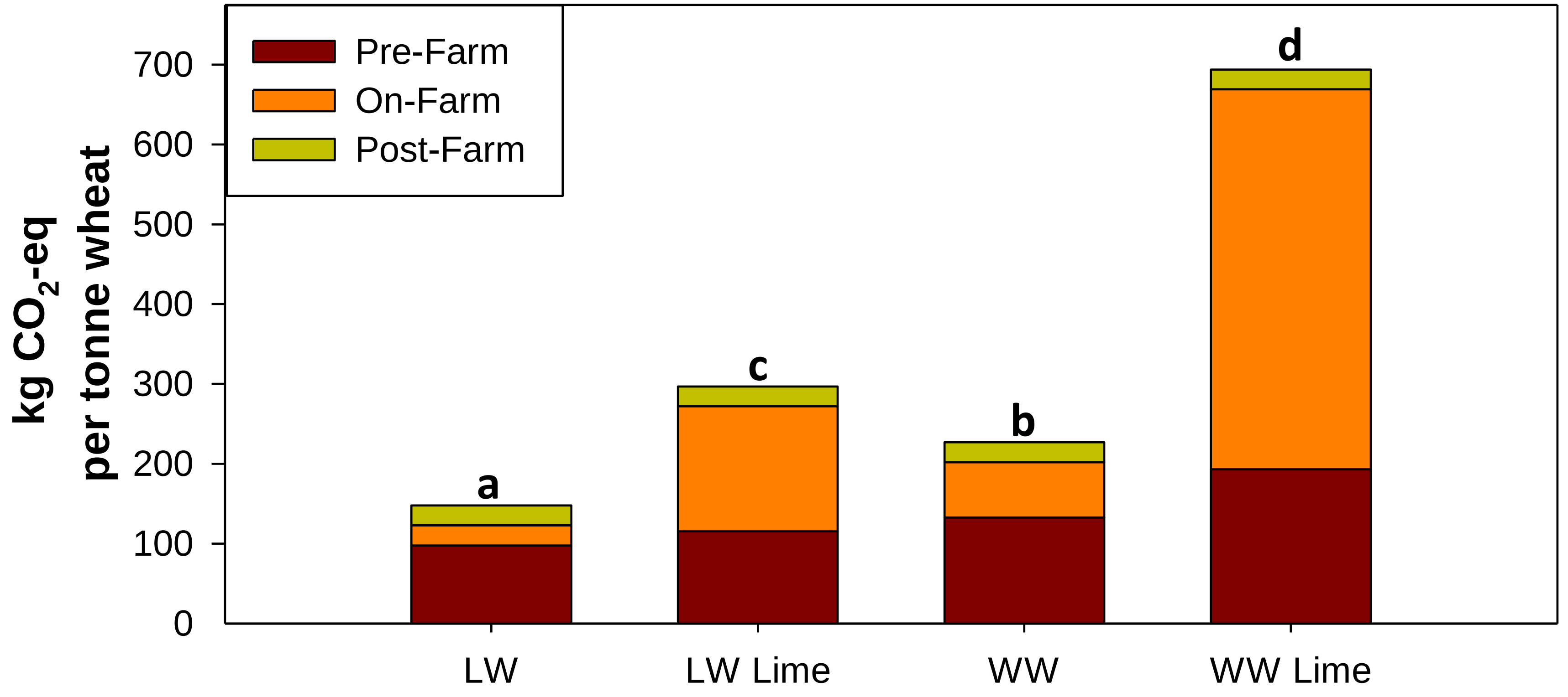
ABSTRACT

Nitrous oxide (N_2O) emissions in semi-arid regions are often greater following summer rainfall events when the soil is fallow, than in response to N fertiliser applications during crop growth. Nitrogen fertiliser management strategies are therefore likely to be ineffective at mitigating N_2O emissions from these cropped agricultural soils. Here we examined the influence of raising soil pH on N_2O emissions, nitrification rates, and both nitrifier and denitrifier populations following simulated summer rainfall events. The soil pH was raised by applying lime to a field site 12 months before conducting the laboratory experiment, resulting in soil of contrasting pH (4.21 or 6.34). Nitrous oxide emissions ranged from 0 when the soil was dry to 0.065 μg N_2O–N g dry soil^{-1} h^{-1} following soil wetting; which was attributed to both denitrification and nitrification. Increasing soil pH only decreased N_2O emissions when losses were associated with nitrification, and increased *amoA* gene copy numbers. We propose increasing soil pH as a strategy for decreasing soil N_2O emissions from acidic soils following summer rainfall in semi-arid regions when emissions result from nitrification.

…. But liming increased the ‘carbon footprint’ of wheat production

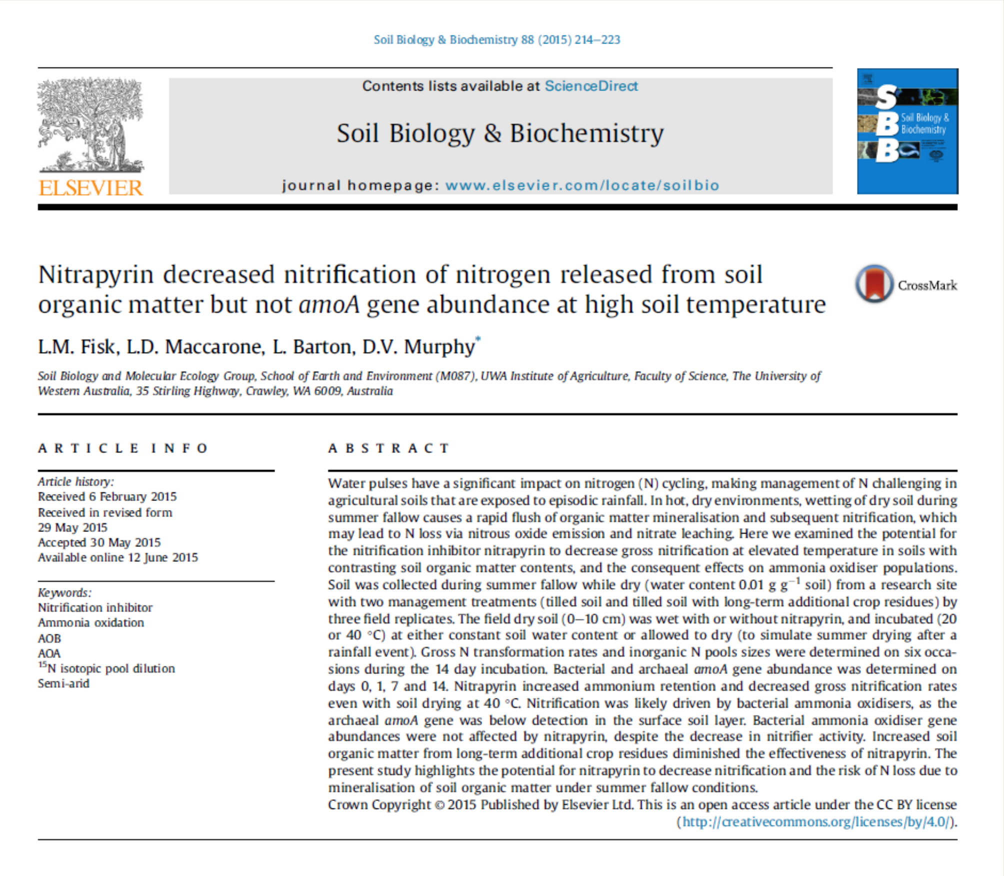


Source: Barton *et. al*. 2014. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 83: 194–203

Mitigating summer N_2O emissions

Nitrification Inhibitors

- ✓ “Nitrapyrin increased ammonium retention and decreased gross nitrification rates at 40 °C”
- ✓ “Increasing soil organic matter from long-term additional crop residues diminished the effectiveness of the nitrapyrin”



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Nitrapyrin decreased nitrification of nitrogen released from soil organic matter but not *amoA* gene abundance at high soil temperature

L.M. Fisk, L.D. Maccarone, L. Barton, D.V. Murphy*

Soil Biology and Molecular Ecology Group, School of Earth and Environment (M087), UWA Institute of Agriculture, Faculty of Science, The University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009, Australia

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ABSTRACT

Water pulses have a significant impact on nitrogen (N) cycling, making management of N challenging in agricultural soils that are exposed to episodic rainfall. In hot, dry environments, wetting of dry soil during summer fallow causes a rapid flush of organic matter mineralisation and subsequent nitrification, which may lead to N loss via nitrous oxide emission and nitrate leaching. Here we examined the potential for the nitrification inhibitor nitrapyrin to decrease gross nitrification at elevated temperature in soils with contrasting soil organic matter contents, and the consequent effects on ammonia oxidiser populations. Soil was collected during summer fallow while dry (water content 0.01 g g^{-1} soil) from a research site with two management treatments (tilled soil and tilled soil with long-term additional crop residues) by three field replicates. The field dry soil (0–10 cm) was wet with or without nitrapyrin, and incubated (20 or 40 °C) at either constant soil water content or allowed to dry (to simulate summer drying after a rainfall event). Gross N transformation rates and inorganic N pools sizes were determined on six occasions during the 14 day incubation. Bacterial and archaeal *amoA* gene abundance was determined on days 0, 1, 7 and 14. Nitrapyrin increased ammonium retention and decreased gross nitrification rates even with soil drying at 40 °C. Nitrification was likely driven by bacterial ammonia oxidisers, as the archaeal *amoA* gene was below detection in the surface soil layer. Bacterial ammonia oxidiser gene abundances were not affected by nitrapyrin, despite the decrease in nitrifier activity. Increased soil organic matter from long-term additional crop residues diminished the effectiveness of nitrapyrin. The present study highlights the potential for nitrapyrin to decrease nitrification and the risk of N loss due to mineralisation of soil organic matter under summer fallow conditions.

Reference: Fisk et al. 2015. Soil Biology & Biochemistry 88: 214–223.

Concluding statements and questions

- ✓ **Nitrous oxide emissions are (relatively) low from semiarid cropping soils in Western Australia. But how well have they been characterised in other semiarid regions? Good estimates ensure**
  - Agriculture is accurately represented in National Greenhouse Gas Inventories
  - 'Carbon footprints' of agricultural products from semiarid regions are correctly estimated.
- ✓ **Does including grain legumes in cropping rotations enhance N_2O emissions in other semiarid regions?**
- ✓ **We cannot measure N_2O emissions everywhere and for all scenarios. But how well do we currently model N_2O emissions from semiarid regions?** Particularly, highly episodic events.
- ✓ **The regulation of N_2O emissions following summer rain is not fully understood in our region, and warrants further attention.** Time to return to the laboratory?

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N_2O Network

Australian Government

GRDC Grains Research & Development Corporation
Your GRDC working with you

Thank you!

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