

# Impact of Saline Water Irrigation (SWI) on Water Use Efficiency of Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa* Willd.) Under Tunisian Semi-arid Conditions

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## Abstract

This study was carried out in Cherfech Tunisia, at the experimental station of the National Research Institute of Rural Engineering, Water and Forests (INRGREF) during the growing season 2015. The main objectives are quantifying and valuing the Water consumption (WC) and Water Use Efficiency of quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa* Willd.), under saline water irrigation at different concentrations ( $T_0 = 1.2 \text{ dS m}^{-1}$ ,  $T_1 = 9.2 \text{ dS m}^{-1}$  and  $T_2 = 18 \text{ dS m}^{-1}$ ). The TDM decreased from 6.7 to 13.4% due to the increase in the salt concentration of the irrigation water from 9.2 to 18  $\text{dS m}^{-1}$ . A reduction of 9.8 to 12.6% was marked for treatments  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ . Also, the WUE<sub>PR</sub>-anthesis has registered a decrease of 8 and 12.5% respectively for  $T_1$  (WUE<sub>PR</sub> = 10.3  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ) and  $T_2$  (WUE<sub>PR</sub> = 9.8  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ) compared with the control  $T_0$  (WUE<sub>PR</sub> = 11.2  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ). However, irrigation water salinity showed no effect on the WUE post-anthesis  $T_0$  and  $T_1$  (WUE<sub>PS</sub> = 3  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ). Nevertheless, a decrease about 15% was recorded in the  $T_2$  (WUE<sub>PS</sub> = 2.5  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ). At harvest, the highest, WUE<sub>TDM</sub> (5.43  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ) was recorded under  $T_0$ . However, the lowest WUE<sub>TDM</sub> (5  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ) was marked under  $T_2$ ; a decline of 7.9% was marked. Besides, the uppermost WUE<sub>GY</sub> (2.09  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ) was recorded under  $T_0$ . However, the smallest amount of WUE<sub>GY</sub> (1.1  $\text{kg m}^{-3}$ ) was recorded under  $T_2$ . A lessen of 47.4% was manifested on WUE<sub>GY</sub> due to the height reduction on yield in the  $T_2$ .

**Keywords:** irrigation saline water, water use, water use efficiency, quinoa

## 1. Introduction

Quinoa is a pseudo cereal native to the Andian regions of South America (Matiacevich et al., 2006); it can be used in a similar way as wheat and rice (Gómez-Caravaca et al., 2012). Quinoa has been cultivated in many countries like Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, USA, Canada, India, England, Denmark, Greece and Italy (Bhargava et al., 2006; Pulvento et al., 2010) below different climatic situation. It is distinct by a high tolerance to drought and salinity (Gomez-Pando et al., 2010, Razzaghi et al., 2011a, Adolf et al., 2013). Quinoa is able to tolerate high salinity levels as in sea water (Hariadi et al., 2011; Adolf et al., 2013).

Wilson et al., (2002) affirmed that there isn't any effect in plant height, leaf area and fresh weight, till 11  $\text{dSm}^{-1}$ . They observed an increase in leaf area and dry weight grown at 11  $\text{dSm}^{-1}$  compared to those grown at 3  $\text{dSm}^{-1}$ .

Jacobsen et al. (2005) observed that quinoa biomass production, seed yield and harvest index were higher under moderately saline conditions (10-20  $\text{dSm}^{-1}$ ) than that under non-saline conditions.

Numerous researchers have studied the effect of salinity on quinoa germination and plant growth (Koyro & Eisa, 2008; Hariadi et al., 2011; Ruiz-Carrasco et al., 2011), on physiological and morphological characteristics (Cocozza et al., 2012; Pulvento et al., 2012; Adolf et al., 2012). However, there is a few of research in relation to the effect of salinity on water use efficiency before and after quinoa grain filling.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Location

The study was conducted at INRGREF, located in Cherfech, Ariana (Tunisia, 10° Est, 37° N, Alt. 10.5 m), during the growing season 2015. The climate of the region is semi arid.

The annual average rainfall is about 450 mm with unequal distribution.

The highest and least temperatures were  $33\pm 4$  °C and  $20\pm 3$  °C, and the most and lowest percentage of relative humidity were  $44\pm 3\%$  and  $22\pm 1\%$ , respectively. The texture was clay-loam and characterized by a hydraulic conductivity at saturation of  $1 \text{ m d}^{-1}$ .

The water content at field capacity varies from 45.2 to 47.9 % and at the wilting point ranges from 25.7 to 27.1% from the surface to the depth. The total available water was  $188 \text{ mm m}^{-1}$ . The bulk density sited from 1.56 to 1.67.

### 2.2 Plant Material

Plant material consisted of one quinoa variety (*Chenopodium quinoa* Willd.). The planting was carried out on March 2, 2015.

### 2.3 Irrigation Treatment

Three levels of water salinity were applied;  $T_0$ : irrigation with low salt water ( $T_0 = 1.2 \text{ dS m}^{-1}$ );  $T_1$ : treatment with medium salt water ( $T_1 = 9.2 \text{ dS m}^{-1}$ ) and  $T_2$ : irrigation with salt water ( $T_2 = 18 \text{ ds m}^{-1}$ ).

All irrigation treatments ( $T_0$ ;  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ ) received 100% of  $ET_c$ . Salt application was initiated on April 15; 2015. The experimental design adopted was a complete randomized block with three replicates.

Each elementary plot had 2.5 m length and 5 m width (Figure 1). Indeed, each treatment ( $T_0$ ,  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ ) was composed with 6 lines of 2.5 m length (Figure 1). The distance among plants was 0.33 m and 1 m between crop lines.

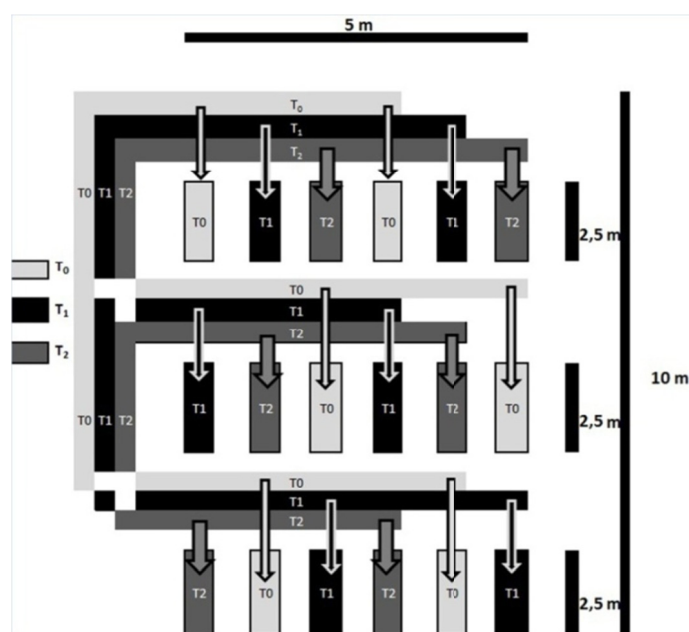


Figure 1. Experimental plot

### 2.4 Field Measurements

#### 2.4.1 Total Dry Biomass (TDM)

For this purpose, twelve samples were taken throughout the quinoa crop cycle. At each sampling, three plants per treatment ( $T_0 = 1.2 \text{ dS m}^{-1}$ ,  $T_1 = 9.2 \text{ dS m}^{-1}$  and  $T_2 = 18 \text{ dS m}^{-1}$ ) were taken from each plot, a total of nine

plants per sample. After separation of the various parts, the quantity of fresh material was determined immediately. The dry biomass was calculated after drying at 80 °C to a constant weight.

## 2.5 Formulations

### 2.5.1 Evapotranspiration Under Greenhouse (ET<sub>0</sub>)

Evapotranspiration greenhouse ET<sub>0G</sub> was considered with the method (Bellouch et al, 2007):

$$ET_{0G} = RG \cdot (0.67 \cdot K_p) / L \quad (1)$$

where, RG: Global Radiation (Joule/cm<sup>2</sup>); 0.67: the active energy for evapotranspiration relative to the total received (about 67%); K<sub>p</sub>: wall transmission coefficient (single wall 70%); L: 251 (Joule/cm<sup>2</sup>) is the latent heat of water vaporization.

### 2.5.2 Estimation of Crop Evapotranspiration (ET<sub>C</sub>)

The Estimation of water requirements ET<sub>C</sub> was carried out using the following relationship:

$$ET_C = K_C \cdot ET_{0G} \quad (2)$$

For the ET<sub>C</sub> calculation, we used the K<sub>C</sub> values adopted by FAO (Doorenbos & Pruitt, 1986; Allen et al., 1998):

K<sub>C ini</sub> = 0.52 (where vegetation is less than 10%); K<sub>C med</sub> = 1 (where vegetation reaches its maximum development of more than 80%); K<sub>C end</sub> = 0.70 (the stage of maturation where the crop loses its leaves). Where ET<sub>0G</sub> is the potential evapotranspiration under greenhouse.

### 2.5.3 Estimation of Water Consumption (WC)

The soil moisture was monitored on eighteen experimental units and the WC was determined over the entire quinoa cycle. The TDR method was used. We have installed 9 probes at different depths (20; 40 and 60 cm) for the T<sub>0</sub> and 18 salinity-proof probes for the T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>. The initial water stock was measured by the TDR up to 60 cm for the various experimental units.

As well, in each test unit, soil samples were collected every 20 cm to 60 cm deep, and TDR measurements every 20 cm were also carried out to establish the calibration equation.

Water consumption (WC) is estimated with soil water balance equation as follows (Hillel, 1998):

$$WC = P + I + U (+/-) R - D_w - D_s \quad (3)$$

where, P: effective rainfall (mm); I: irrigation (mm); U: the upward capillary flow into the root zone (mm); R: the runoff (mm); D<sub>w</sub>: was the downward drainage out the root zone (mm); D<sub>s</sub>: the change of soil water stored in soil layer of 0-60 cm (mm).

The upward and downward flow was estimated using Darcy's law (Kar et al., 2007; De Medeiros et al., 2005). Results indicated that the two items were insignificant at the experimental site.

Runoff was also insignificant during the growing season. Soil water content was measured each month with gravimetrically method. Soil water content data were collected for every 20 cm interval in soil depth. Some measurements were added before and after irrigation.

### 2.5.4 Estimation of the Water Use Efficiency

WUE of total dry matter (WUE<sub>TDM</sub>) and WUE of grain yields (WUE<sub>GY</sub>) were calculated using the following equations:

$$WUE_{TDM} \text{ (kg m}^{-3}\text{)} = TDM/WC \quad (4)$$

$$WUE_{GY} \text{ (kg m}^{-3}\text{)} = GY/WC \quad (5)$$

where, WUE is the water use efficiency (kg m<sup>-3</sup>), TDM is the total dry biomass (g m<sup>-2</sup>), GY is the grain yields (kg) and WC is the total water consumption over the whole growing season (mm).

## 2.6 Statistical Analysis

The results were subjected to variance analysis of one factor by General Linear Model (GLM). This analysis was performed using SPSS 20.0 software. The ensemble was completed by multiple comparisons of means with Student Newman Keuls test (S-N-K).

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Impact of Salinity on the Total Dry Biomass (TDM)

The impact of treatment (T<sub>0</sub>, T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>) on Total Dry Biomass (TDM) of Quinoa was given in Figure 2.

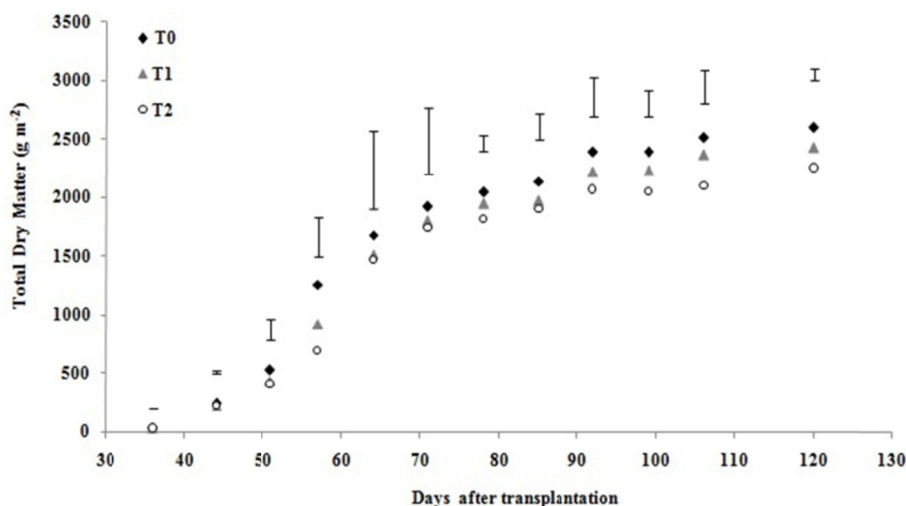


Figure 2. The Total dry biomass (TDM) of quinoa under the three treatments (T<sub>0</sub>, T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>)

The results showed that the TDM was higher in (T<sub>0</sub>) than that in (T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>) treatments. In detail, the maximum amount of TDM was observed in the treatment T<sub>0</sub> (2598.47 g m<sup>-2</sup>) and in the T<sub>1</sub> (2423.06 g m<sup>-2</sup>). Conversely, the minimum TDM accumulation was registered in T<sub>2</sub> (2251.25 g m<sup>-2</sup>). At maximum growth, T<sub>0</sub> increased respectively the TDM by (6.75 and 13.4%) compared to T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>. Similarly, the variance analysis showed a significant effect ( $P < 0.05$ ) of irrigation with saline waters on the TDM and the S-N-K test showed that the three treatments (T<sub>0</sub>, T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>) were statistically heterogeneous. These results are in agreement with those of Morales et al. (2011), El Youssfi (2013), Hirich et al. (2014a), and Algosaiibi et al. (2015), these authors found that salt stress decreases the quinoa total dry matter accumulation.

### 3.2 Impact of Salinity on the Water Consumption

Figure 3 illustrates the daily monitoring of quinoa water consumption and water requirements for the three treatments T<sub>0</sub> (a), T<sub>1</sub> (b) and T<sub>2</sub> (c). It was observed that the quinoa daily water consumption for the three treatments (T<sub>0</sub>, T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>) were low at the growth stage and then increased during the mid-season stage and decreased at the end of the cycle but remained higher compared to the beginning of the transplant cycle. The increased water consumption at the flowering and ripening stages was necessary for the grain filling. Similar to cereals, maximum water requirements were registered during flowering and maturing stages (Mariscal, 1992). Similarly, figure (3.a) shows that for the treatment (T<sub>0</sub>) at the beginning of quinoa development cycle, the daily water consumption (ETR) and the water needs (ET<sub>C</sub>) follow the same pace. However, from 79 days after transplantation (DAT) the ETR became slightly lower than the ET<sub>C</sub>. Consequently, all through the growth cycle the quinoa has consumed 478.1 mm with respect to an ET<sub>C</sub> equal to 508.8 mm, *i.e.*, a reduction of the order of 6%. Likewise, for the treatment T<sub>1</sub> (Figure 3b), the ETR and the ET<sub>C</sub> appeared to be identical until the 79<sup>th</sup> DAT, from this date, the quinoa daily water consumption becomes less than the water requirement of the crop. Thus, the overall water consumption was about 459.1 mm against ET<sub>C</sub> equivalent to 508.8 mm; a reduction of 9.8% was noticed. Besides, the daily water consumption (ETR) and the water requirements of the quinoa (ET<sub>C</sub>) at the T<sub>2</sub> treatment (Figure 3c) showed that the two curves appear to be similar only during the early phases of quinoa development, but from 79 DAT, the daily quinoa ETR decreased compared to the ET<sub>C</sub>. The cumulative water consumption was about 444.9 mm; a decrease of 12.6% was recorded.

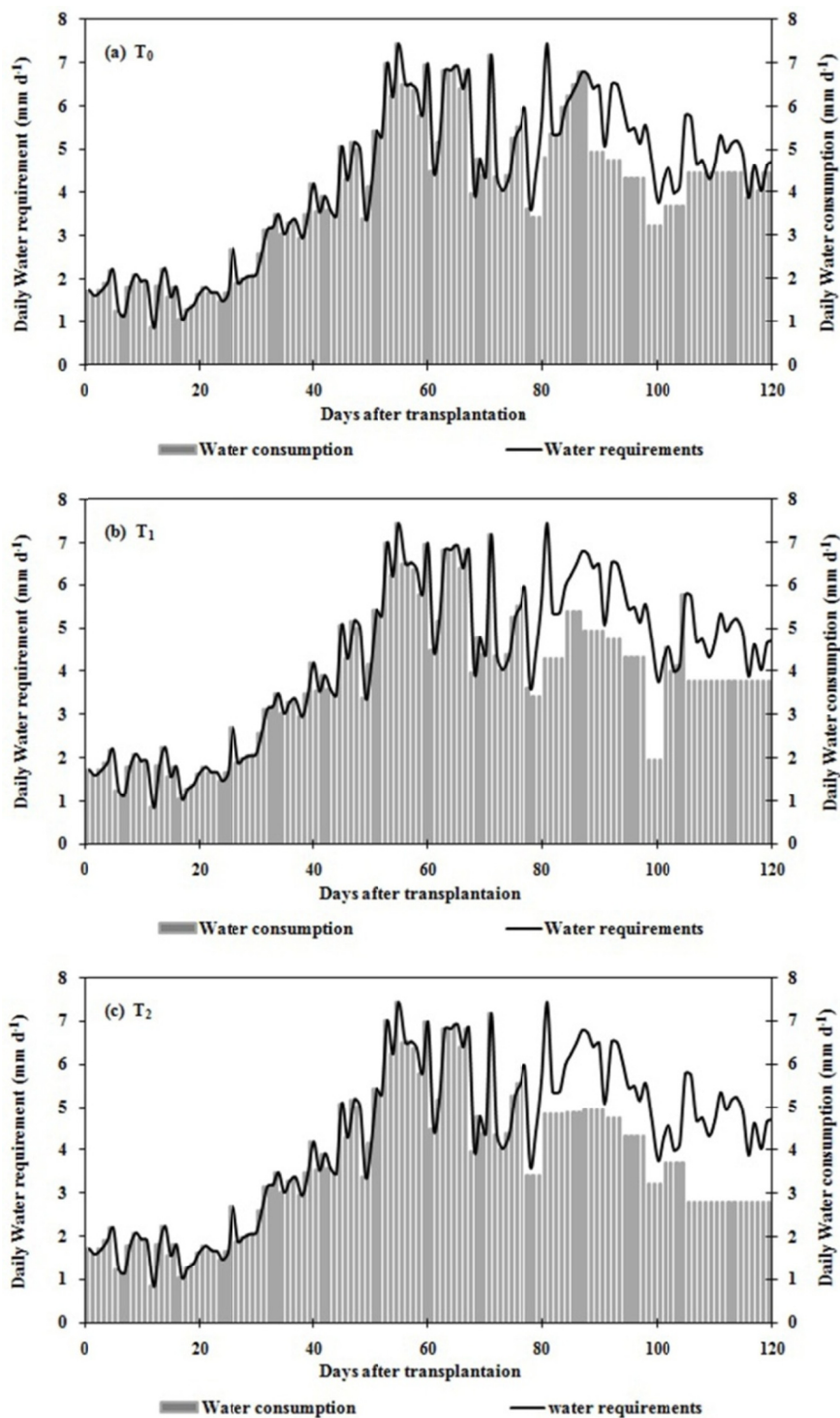


Figure 3. The Daily water requirement (WR) and consumption (WC) of Quinoa under the three treatments T<sub>0</sub> (a), T<sub>1</sub> (b) and T<sub>2</sub> (c)

### 3.4 Impact of Salinity on the Water Use Efficiency

The Water Use Efficiency pre-anthesis and post-anthesis (WUE<sub>PR</sub> and WUE<sub>PS</sub>) of quinoa under the three treatments (T<sub>0</sub>, T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>) are shown in Figure 4.

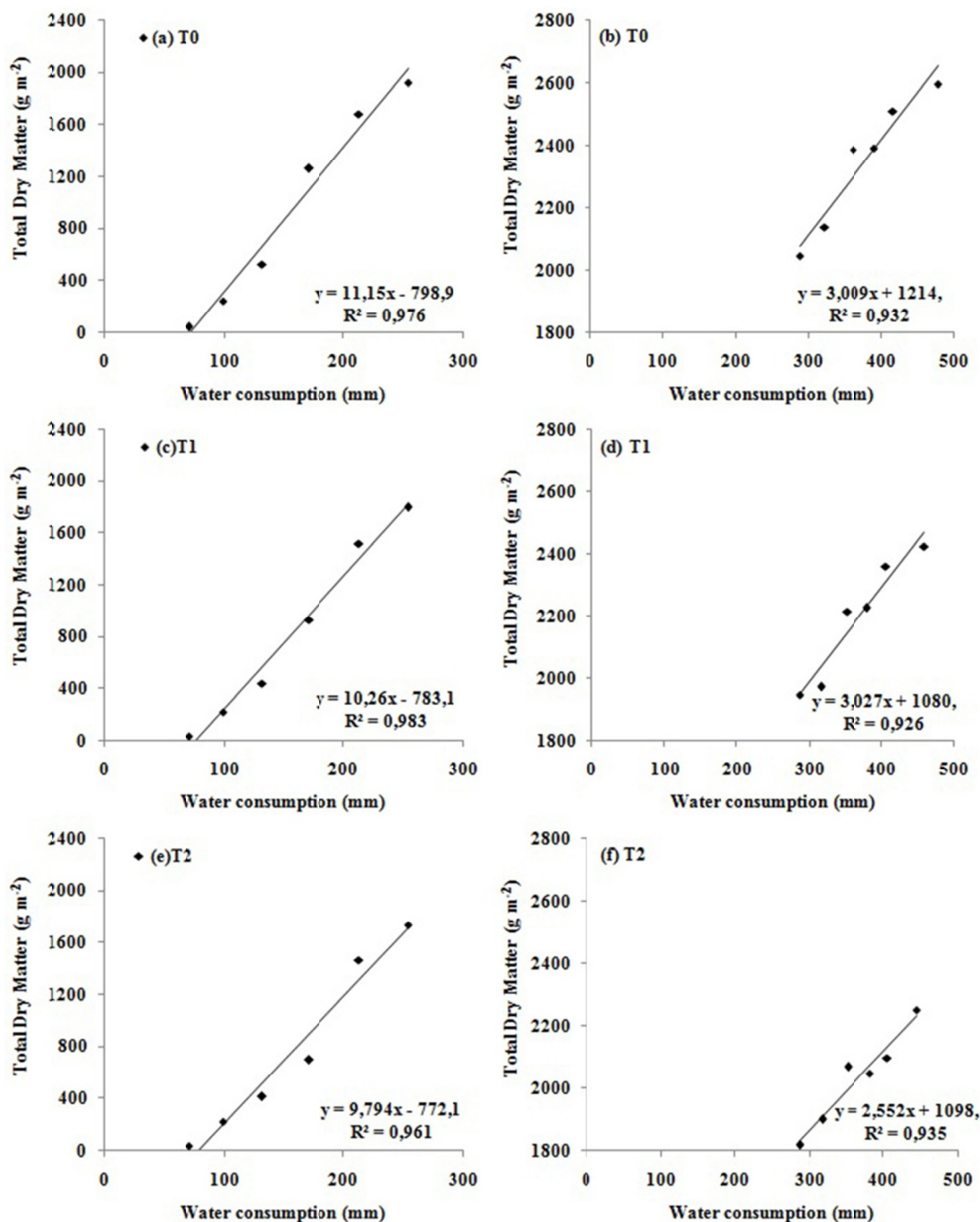


Figure 4. The Water Use Efficiency pre-anthesis and post-anthesis ( $WUE_{PR}$  and  $WUE_{PS}$ ) of Quinoa under the three treatments T<sub>0</sub> (a and b), T<sub>1</sub> (c and d) and T<sub>2</sub> (e and f)

Data analysis shows that the throughout quinoa growing cycle, the relation between water consumption and total dry biomass (*i.e.*, water use efficiency) aren't a linear relation. Moreover, we observed that it has an inflection point at the anthesis stage and divides the curve into two separate lines, one is pre-anthesis and the other one is post-anthesis. The slope of each line expresses the water use efficiency for the total dry biomass before and after anthesis.

In fact, the  $WUE_{PR}$  varied from 11.2 kg m<sup>-3</sup> in the control treatment T<sub>0</sub> (Figure 4a) to 10.3 kg m<sup>-3</sup> for the treatment T<sub>1</sub> (Figure 4c). For T<sub>2</sub>, it was equal to 9.8 kg m<sup>-3</sup> (Figure 4e).

As for the  $WUE_{PS}$ , it was equal to 3 kg m<sup>-3</sup> for the two treatments T<sub>0</sub> (Figure 4b) and T<sub>1</sub> (Figure 4d). However, for the treatment T<sub>2</sub> it has been reduced to 2.6 kg m<sup>-3</sup> (Figure 4f).

The  $WUE_{TDM}$  and the  $WUE_{GY}$  for the three treatments ( $T_1$ ,  $T_2$  and  $T_3$ ) were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The  $WUE_{TDM}$  and the  $WUE_{GY}$  under the three treatments ( $T_1$ ,  $T_2$  and  $T_3$ ) at harvest

Treatments	WC	TDM	GY	$WUE_{TDM}$ (kg m <sup>-3</sup> )	$WUE_{GY}$ (kg m <sup>-3</sup> )
<b>T0</b>	478.1	2598.5 a	999.7 a	5.43 a	2.09 a
<b>T1</b>	459.1	2423.1 b	703.7 b	5.27 ab	1.53 b
<b>T2</b>	449.9	2251.3 c	498.2 c	5 b	1.11 c
<b>LSD (5%)</b>		107.3	98	0.27	0.3

Note. WC: Water consumption, TDM: Total dry biomass, GY: Grain yield, LSD: Least Significant Difference (5%).

Statistical analysis (Table 1) shows that at the grain filling, the  $WUE_{TDM}$  and  $WUE_{GY}$  were significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) affected by the irrigation water salinity ( $T_0 = 1.2$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>,  $T_1 = 9.2$  dS m<sup>-1</sup> and  $T_2 = 18$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>). However, no significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) was observed between  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  with respect to  $WUE_{TDM}$ .

In consequence, the highest  $WUE_{TDM}$  were recorded under the two treatments  $T_0$  and  $T_1$  (5.43 kg m<sup>-3</sup> and 5.27 kg m<sup>-3</sup>), respectively. Nevertheless, the lowest was marked beneath  $T_2$  (5 kg m<sup>-3</sup>).

However, for  $WUE_{GY}$  ANOVA analysis showed significant difference at 5% between the three treatments ( $T_0$ ,  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ ). The maximum  $WUE_{GY}$  was noted in  $T_0$  (2.09 kg m<sup>-3</sup>) followed by the  $T_1$  (1.53 kg m<sup>-3</sup>) and the minimum  $WUE_{GY}$  (1.11 kg m<sup>-3</sup>) was observed in  $T_2$  (18 dS m<sup>-1</sup>) with high salinity.

#### 4. Discussion

The impact of salinity ( $T_0 = 1.2$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>,  $T_1 = 9.2$  dS m<sup>-1</sup> and  $T_2 = 18$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>) on the daily WC, the TDM, the correlation connecting water use and total dry biomass before and after anthesis were investigated.

The Figure 2 showed that the saline water had a negative influence on the quinoa total dry biomass, a decrease was recorded compared to the  $T_0$  (control) in the order of 6.8 and 13.4% respectively for  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ . In fact, El Youssfi (2013) studied the performance of three varieties of quinoa in irrigation with three concentrations of NaCl ( $S_1 = 0.92$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>,  $S_2 = 3$  dS m<sup>-1</sup> and  $S_3 = 6$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>) and found that the two treatments ( $S_2$  and  $S_3$ ) influence the production of dry biomass. Similarly, Hirich et al. (2014b) showed that the total dry biomass of quinoa decreased significantly with higher salinity and that the maximum amount of total dry biomass were found at control level (1 dS m<sup>-1</sup>).

Algoasibi et al. (2015) studied the effect of salt on quinoa development. These authors found that the dry biomass decreased slightly with increased salinity. Also, Morales et al. (2011) found that irrigation with a salinity of more than 15 dS m<sup>-1</sup> of NaCl leads to a reduction of the total fresh matter of quinoa from 100% to 25% and even to 5%. Similarly, Talebnejad and Sepaskhah (2015a) observed a decrease in dry weight of the above ground part of the plant (198.7, 153.3, 135.1 and 117.7 g column<sup>-1</sup>) respectively for concentrations of NaCl (10; 20; 30 and 40 dS m<sup>-1</sup>), similar, the dry weight of the roots marked a remarkable decrease from 20 dS m<sup>-1</sup>. Definitely, our results are in agreement with numerous researchers. These authors found that the salt stress decreased the accumulation of total dry biomass accumulation.

Also, the saline water causes a reduction in the assimilates flow to meristematic tissues, leading to a decrease in fresh and dry leaf and stem and root matter (Hernandez et al., 2000). Salinity reduces crop growth by modifying the water and ion balance of tissues (Greenway & Munns, 1980; Ouerghi et al., 1998) and by limiting the nutrient uptake necessary for growth (Yeo, 1983; Zhu, 2002).

Likewise, the results obtained (Figure 3), illustrated that the quinoa water consumption decreased by 4 and 7% respectively for  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  refer to the control  $T_0$ . Talebnejad and Sepaskhah (2015) reported that the application of salt stress affected evapotranspiration. In fact, ETR declined with increasing NaCl concentrations.

Our results are in conformity with those of Razzaghi et al. (2011b); Ince Kaya et al. (2015); Talebnejad and Sepaskhah (2015). They affirmed that the soil salinity reduced the quinoa water consumption.

As shown by our results (Figure 4), the treatment effect (salt water irrigation) resulted in a reduction in the  $WUE$  pre-anthesis (from transplanting to anthesis) of 8 and 12.5% respectively for  $T_1$  ( $WUE_{PR} = 10.3$  kg m<sup>-3</sup>) and  $T_2$  ( $WUE_{PR} = 9.8$  kg m<sup>-3</sup>) compared with the control  $T_0$  ( $WUE_{PR} = 11.2$  kg m<sup>-3</sup>). However, irrigation water quality (salinity level) showed no effect on the  $WUE$  post-anthesis (from anthesis to harvest) of the two treatments  $T_0$  and  $T_1$  ( $WUE_{PS} = 3$  kg m<sup>-3</sup>). Nevertheless, a decrease about 15% was recorded in the  $T_2$  treatment ( $WUE_{PS} = 2.5$

kg m<sup>-3</sup>). The obtained results in Table 1 proved that WUE<sub>TDM</sub> was significantly affected ( $P < 0.05$ ) by irrigation water salinity ( $T_0$ ,  $T_1$ , and  $T_2$ ). However, no significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) was observed between  $T_0$ , and  $T_1$ . The WUE<sub>TDM</sub> gradually decreased when salinity increased. The highest, WUE<sub>TDM</sub> (5.43 kg m<sup>-3</sup>) was recorded under control treatment ( $T_0$ ). However, the lowest WUE<sub>TDM</sub> (5 kg m<sup>-3</sup>) was obtained under  $T_2$  treatment ( $S = 18$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>). A decline of 7.9% was marked on WUE<sub>TDM</sub> due to the reduction on TDM and on cumulative water consumption from  $T_0$  ( $S = 1.2$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>) to  $T_2$  ( $S = 18$  dS m<sup>-1</sup>). Also, The WUE<sub>GY</sub> decline when salinity amplified. The uppermost WUE<sub>GY</sub> (2.09 kg m<sup>-3</sup>) was recorded under control treatment ( $T_0$ ). However, the lowest WUE<sub>TDM</sub> (1.1 kg m<sup>-3</sup>) was obtained under  $T_2$  treatment. A decrease of 47.4% was marked on WUE<sub>GY</sub> due to the height reduction on yield in the  $T_2$  treatment. Talebnejad and Sepaskhah (2015a) found a decrease in the WUE (0.38, 0.31, 0.27 and 0.15 kg m<sup>-3</sup>) respectively for high concentrations of NaCl (10; 20; 30 and 40 dS m<sup>-1</sup>). Gowing et al. (2009) showed that the WUE of wheat reduced with height salinity. However, Razzaghi et al. (2012) showed that salt stress significantly improved water productivity (2.66, 2.70, 3.12, 3.46 and 3.46 g l<sup>-1</sup>), respectively for NaCl concentrations of (0; 10; 20; 30; and 40 dS m<sup>-1</sup>). Ince Kaya et al. (2015) for the same concentrations of NaCl, declared that there was a small enhance in the water use efficiency of quinoa.

## 5. Conclusions

The results indicated that the salinity reduced significantly the water use, total dry biomass, grain yield and WUE. However, this distress was irregular between the treatments. The cumulative water consumption decreased gradually, with increasing salt concentrations of water as of 9.2 to 18 ds m<sup>-1</sup>. Also, the WUE pre-anthesis has decreased respectively for  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  related to  $T_0$ . However, irrigation water salinity showed no effect on the WUE at post-anthesis for the two treatments  $T_0$  and  $T_1$ . Nevertheless, a decrease was recorded in the  $T_2$ . At harvest, the highest WUE<sub>TDM</sub> was recorded under  $T_0$ . However, the lowest WUE<sub>TDM</sub> was obtained under  $T_2$ . As well, the upper most WUE<sub>GY</sub> was recorded under  $T_0$ . Though, the lowest WUE<sub>GY</sub> was obtained under  $T_2$ .

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