Impact of water deficit on growth, productivity, and water use efficiency in potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.)

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# Abstract

Drought stress is one of the major causes of damage and subsequent reduction in yield all crops worldwide and the problem is only expected to get worse with water deficits stemming from climate change and population expansion so it is need to be bred plants for water use efficiency by capturing traits that help the plants develop faster and be more efficient using the resorces and improve the yields. Potato is one of most important food crop worldwide and modern cultivars are highly sensitive to soil drought. In this study, we aim to study the physiological responses of potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L) to soil drought at the tuberization phase under controlled condition and find traits that can help understand the relation between them and mechanisms of tolerance in potato, and provide useful information for selection of drought tolerance in potato breeding programs. In order to explore the different responses of potato under drought stress, we evaluated fifteen genotypes under well watered (WD) and water deficit (WD) conditions for a range of agro-physiological traits.

Tolerant genotypes such as CIP397077.16, CIP398190.89, and CIP392797.22 (UNICA) were able to preferentially put limited water toward tuber production rather than biomass. Lower specific leaf area (sla) and relative water content (rwc) under WD, and that potato genotypes with the ability to maintain high harvest index (hi) and tuber water use efficiency (wuet). We also found correlation between hi and wuet was 0.92 with a euclidean distance 0.91 and a negative correlation with spad (-0.7) at 38 days after treatment application.

**Key words:** abiotic stress, harvest index, lisimeter, drought tolerance, SPAD

# Introduction

Water has become a scarce and precious resource and its efficient utilization in the production of food is a key challenge in agriculture worldwide and drought is one of the most uncontrollable and pervasive factors and one of the global problems limiting production (Obidiegwu et al., [2015](#ref-obidiegwu2015Coping)). Tracking the consequences of water deficit in plants is a difficult task, as it depends on the timing, intensity, type of crop, and duration of stress (Blum, [2011](#ref-blum2011Drought)).

Potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) is the fourth most important food crop worldwide with an annual production of around 380 million tons [Birch et al. ([2012](#ref-birch2012Crops)); FAO 2017]. Potato is known to be sensitive to water deficit because of its shallow root system, and its fast-closing leaf stomata that reduce transpiration and photosynthesis, considerably reducing tuber yields (Deblonde & Ledent, [2001](#ref-deblonde2001Effects); Joshi et al., [2016](#ref-joshi2016Potato)) . In potato, tolerance to drought is a very complex trait (Anithakumari et al., [2012](#ref-anithakumari2012Genetic)) and about 2000 differentially expressed genes were revealed in potato in response to water deficit (Watkinson et al., [2006](#ref-watkinson2006Accessions)). Under field conditions, drought caused drastic losses in potato tuber yield and/or quality (Stark et al., [2013](#ref-stark2013Potato); Yang et al., [2016](#ref-yang2016Identification)).

Potato is sensitive to periodic water shortage and tuber initiation is the most critical period of a potato’s life span in terms of water due to its high demand of around 400 to 600 L for 1kg of tuber dry matter (Monneveux et al., [2013](#ref-monneveux2013Drought), and @sprenger2016drought; Stark et al., [2013](#ref-stark2013Potato)) and management of water has a marked influence on plant behavior, tuber production, and quality. The modern potato cultivars are highly sensitive to soil drought and variability in response to soil drought is observed (Monneveux et al., [2013](#ref-monneveux2013Drought); Soltys-Kalina et al., [2016](#ref-soltys-kalina2016effect); Sprenger et al., [2016](#ref-sprenger2016drought)). Therefore, physiological behavior of the plants under this stress could provide information on their capacity to tolerate drought stress. Differences response have been observed in the effects caused by drought stress related to morphological, physiological, biochemical, and molecular changes among species and cultivars (Liu et al., [2005](#ref-liu2005ABA), [2006](#ref-liu2006Effects)). Climate change increases the need to identify potato genotypes that exhibit high tolerance to abiotic stresses (Monneveux et al., [2014](#ref-monneveux2014Drought)).

The present study elucidate the mechanisms for drought tolerance and yield in eleven advanced potato genotypes including two commercial varieties that are likely to arise in water-limited conditions, and explores the interrelationship between traits that help plants to mitigate yield losses under water-limited conditions. Chlorophyll content (spad), relative water content (rwc), osmotic potential (op), specific leaf area (sla), tuber water use efficiency (wuet), harvest index (hi), among other traits, were evaluated to identify convenient indicators of plant water status that helps in the selection of clones with high tolerance to water deficit.

# Materials and Methods

## Plant material

Thirteen potato clones were selected from advanced breeding population collection at International Potato Center (CIP) and two commercial varieties, Table (1). UNICA ( CIP392797.22) has a good response to warm and dry environments (Demirel et al., [2020](#ref-demirel2020Physiological); Gutiérrez-Rosales et al., [2007](#ref-gutierrez-rosales2007UNICA); Rolando et al., [2015](#ref-rolando2015Leaf)); and Achirana INTA (CIP720088) known for their earliness and drought tolerance (Schafleitner et al., [2007](#ref-schafleitner2007Field)).

## Experimental conditions

The experiment was carried out in complete randomize block design where the first factor was the two irrigation treatments: well-watered (WW), treatment where the moisture was maintained at field capacity and water deficit (WD) and the second factor were compound by the fifteen potato genotypes, Table (1). Each treatment consisted of five replicates with one potato plant for each experimental unit.

## Cultivation and management

The experiment was conducted at the International Potato Center (CIP) experimental station in Lima, Peru (12.1◦ S, 77.0◦ W, 244 m.a.s.l.). The plants were grown in an environmentally controlled greenhouse at 28/15°C day/night with 70±5% average relative humidity (HOBO U12 Outdoor/Industrial model, Onset Computer Corporation, Bourne, MA, USA). Single plants were grown in a greenhouse in 5 liters plastic pots and It was sown containing 5 kg of dry commercial Sogemix SM2 (75% Peat Moss, perlite, vermiculite, and limestone). The potato tubers were pre-sprouted for 2 weeks and planted at 5–7 cm depth. Fertilization was done twice with ammonium nitrate; triple super-phosphate and potassium sulphate, one before planting mixed with the substrate and the other applied at the surface at 40 days after planting (dap).

## Transpiration rate and soil water supply

The pots from both well water (WW) and water deficit (WD) treatments were watered to soaking and then allowed to drain overnight. Next day, soil evaporation was minimized by sealed with a plastic bag and all the pots were weighed and it was defined as the initial pot weight. Water deficits were imposed at 45 dap that coincides with the beginning of the development of the stolons.

Transpiration was calculated by weighing the pots every two days in the between 13:00 and 15:00 hours (GMT -05:00). The transpiration of each plant was calculated by the procedure previously described by Bhatnagar-Mathur et al. ([2007](#ref-bhatnagar-mathur2007Stressinducible)) and Ray & Sinclair ([1998](#ref-ray1998effect)). The inter-daily transpiration rates of WD plants were normalized against WW plant rates to reduce the influence of day-to-day variation (). The normalization was achieved by dividing transpiration of each individual plant in the WD regime by the mean transpiration of the WW plants. For compare the transpiration between plants, a second normalization was done so that the normalized transpiration rate (NTR) of each plant was defined in 1.0 when the soil water content in each pot was at field capacity (Sinclair & Ludlow, [1986](#ref-sinclair1986Influence)). The available soil water or the fraction of transpirable soil water (ftsw), for each pot was calculated by dividing the pot weight minus the final pot weight by the transpirable soil water of that pot ().

## Evaluated traits

**Water use efficiency (wue).** is defined as a ratio of biomass accumulation, total crop biomass or crop grain yield, to water consumed, expressed as transpiration, evapo transpiration, or total water input to the system (Sinclair et al., [1984](#ref-sinclair1984WaterUse)). According to this concept we calculated the biomass water use efficiency (wueb) and tuber water use efficiency (wuet). The wue was calculated as the total biomass in dry weight produced divided by the cumulative water transpired (Dalla Costa et al., [1997](#ref-dallacosta1997Yield)) and for wuet was used the dry weight from tuber production divide the total water transpired (trs) during the treatment.

**Relative water content (rwc).** was determined by weighing the third leaflet (FW) from the third leaf from the apical part from the youngest fully expanded leaf of each plant. Each leaflet were placing in a 4x3 inch ziploc bag containing distilled water for 24 hours and after these time it was removed to taking turgid weight (TW) afterwards it was dried in an oven at 90ºC for 24 hours and weighed (DW). The rwc was calculated according to Vasquez-Robinet et al. ([2008](#ref-vasquez-robinet2008Physiological)) by the formula .

**Leaf osmotic potential (lop).** was determined using a dew point microvoltmeter (HR-33T Wescor Inc., Logan, UT, USA) with leaf discs of 5 mm diameter, taken from the third fully extended leaf. The leaf discs were put in 1 ml cryogenic tubes and frozen in liquid nitrogen for further analysis. The frozen leaves were incubated at 22°C for 30 min in a sealed C-52 chamber (Wescor Inc., Logan, UT, USA).

**Chlorophyll concentration (spad).** The chlorophyll content of the plant was evaluated by taking SPAD measurements using a SPAD-502 chlorophyll meter (Konica Minolta Sensing, Inc., Osaka, Japan) to obtain the relative concentration of chlorophyll molecules per unit area of the leaf surface (Ling et al., [2011](#ref-ling2011Use)) in the third youngest fully expanded leaf from three points (upper, middle and lower leaflet of a leaf). Individual readings of leaflets were averaged to represent individual measurement of a leaf. The evaluations were done on light adapted leaves at 29, 59, 76, and 83 day after planting (dap). SPAD values were highly significantly correlated with a + b chlorophyll concentration per unit leaf area (g cm−2) (Lichtenthaler & Wellburn, [1983](#ref-lichtenthaler1983Determinations)).

**Post-harvest traits.** The harvest was at 90 dapand the plants were separated in four components: leaves, stems, roots and tubers. The dry weight (g) components were determined by drying them at 80°C for 3 days in a forced air oven: leaf (ldw), stem (sdw), root (rdw), tuber (tdw). The leaf area (lfa) of the plants was measured in cm2 by taking photographs of all the leaves arranged on a wooden board and analyzing the pictures using ImageJ software (Rueden et al., [2017](#ref-rueden2017ImageJ2); Zárate-Salazar et al., [2018](#ref-zarate-salazar2018Comparacao)).

**Indices.** The harvest index (hi) was calculated as the ratio of tdw related to the total dry biomass (tdb) and specific leaf area (sla) was calculated by dividing the leaf area (lfa) with lead dry weight (ldw). The relative chlorophyll content (rcc) were calculated with the relation between spad at 83 (spad\_83) dap and leaf area (lfa) multiplied by 100 for increase the scale.

## Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis and graphs were performed in the statistical software R (R Core Team, [2019](#ref-R-base)). The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to evaluate the differences between the factors and the comparison of the means with the Student-Newman-Keuls test (p<0.05) with agricoale and GerminaR package (de Mendiburu, [2020](#ref-R-agricolae); Lozano-Isla et al., [2019](#ref-lozano-isla2019GerminaR)). A t-student test between well water and water deficit treatment (p<0.05). For the multivariate analysis, correlation and principal components analysis (PCA) were performed with FactoMineR and heatmaply package (Galili et al., [2018](#ref-galili2018heatmaply); Husson et al., [2020](#ref-R-FactoMineR)). For compute the hierarchical clustering between treatments and genotypes were used the euclidean distance (Lê et al., [2008](#ref-le2008FactoMineR)). For reproducible analysis, the code and statistical analysis used in this manuscript are available in the following github repository <https://github.com/flavjack/20130515LM>.

# Result

## Treatment application

The drought treatment were apply at 45 day after planting (dap) and the fraction of transpirable soil water (ftsw) shown differences 4 day since treatment application. Plants in WW were maintained the water availability in the pots more than 70% while the restriction in the water supply for the WD treatment decrease the water availability until the finalization of the experiment when the plant in WD in average had less than 10% of ftsw, Figure 1A. In the case of the transpiration, the plants in WD reduce their transpiration rate 8 days after water restriction, Figure 1B.

## Agro-phisological traits

The chlorophyll concentration (spad) was taken over the course of plant development (29, 59, 76, and 83 dap) showed that at 29 dap all plants were at the same level as no treatment was applied, Table 2. At 59, 76 and 83 the spad shown difference en each evaluation and at the end of the experiment the spad values were lower than at 29 dap and the WD values for all the genotypes were higher than the ones at WW conditions. The genotypes CIP398190.89 and CIP720088 had the lowest differences among treatments for spad at 83 dap (2.06 and 0.30, respectively), while CIP398203.244 and CIP398208.33 had the largest (14.48 and 17.54, respectively), Figure 2F.

Leaf relative water content (rwc) and leaf osmotic potential (lop) significantly (p<0.01) decreased in response to WD in all the genotypes, Table 2. The values ranged between 64.96% and 50.09% for CIP720088 and CIP398201.510, respectively.

The specific leaf area (sla) reduction was 48% under WD compared to WW, Table 2. CIP398190.89 together with CIP398203.5 were among the clones with lowest reduction (24 and 21% respectively), while CIP398208.219, CIP398098.119, and CIP398208.704 were among the clones with highest sla reduction with 53, 65, and 64% respectively, Figure 2B.

Plant high (hgt), leaf dry weight (ldw), stem dry weight (std), leaf area (lfa) decrease significantly (p<0.01) under drought treatment, Table 2. In the case of lfa there was a drastic reduction with 65% in plants under WD compare with WW plants, Table 2, Figure 2B. While the components such as number of tuber (ntub), root dry weight (rdw) and root length (rdl) did not shown differences between the treatments (p>0.5).

## Yield components

Differences existed among genotypes in total dry biomass (g) of well-watered (WW) plants at the end of the experiment, Table 2. Water deficit (WD) treatment had a significant effect (P<0.001) with an average reduction of around 32% in comparison with the well-watered treatment, Table 2.

In terms of productivity, WD decreased tuber yield across genotypes by an average of 40% (P< 0.001). CIP398190.89 had greater tuber dry weight (g) in WD compared to its yield in WW treatment with a 5% increase in biomass, while others genotypes like CIP398203.5 and CIP398203.244 presented up to 56% and 48% reduced tuber production, Figure 2A. The genotypes CIP398203.244, CIP398180.612, and CIP398201.510 were among the most sensitive genotypes at 31.56, 46.75 and 48.88% respectively under WD. For harvest index (hi), differences among genotypes (p<0.001) and treatments (p<0.02) were found, Table 2.

Biomass water use efficiency (wueb) was generally higher in WD than WW plants (p<0.001), Table 2. Under WD treatment, CIP397077.16, CIP398208.620, CIP392797.22 and CIP398190.89 showed the highest wueb with 13.06, 12.03, and 11.59 g.L-1, respectively, Figure 3A. The lowest wueb with 8.50 and 9.24 g.L-1 were presented by CIP398180.612 and CIP398203.5, respectively. For Tuber Water Use efficiency (wuet) there is not difference between treatments (p=0.5), Table 2. The genotypes with better wuet under WD were CIP397077.16, CIP392797.22, CIP720088 and CIP398208.620, Figure 1 and Figure 2D.

## Multivariate analysis

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) the two first dimension explain 64.9% of the variance in the experiment. In the first dimension trs (r=0.90), lfa (r=0.89), tbd (r=0.84), sla (r=0.83), tdw (r=0.77) and rwc (r=0.71) show a high correlation and association with WW treatment, in the other side the spad\_76 (r=-0,77) shown an negatives correlation and association with WD treatment. In the second dimension the rdw (r=0.87), rdl (r=0.86) have a high correlation and associated at WD treatment and negate correlated with hi (-0.89) and wuet (-0.9) and associated to WW treatment, Figure 3A.

The clustering analysis show 5 groups and it could be associated in 2 different ways. The first association could by classified by the treatment applied, the cluster 4 and 5 are the well water treatments (WW) and the cluster 2 and 3 associated at the water deficit treatment (WD); and the second association in the cluster 1, 3 and 5 with tolerate to water stress, in addiction they shown a correlation with wuet, hi and tdw, traits that are important in the yield component, Figure 3.

The association between the cluster an the variables shown that the genotypes in the cluster 1 are positive correlated with the spad, rdl and rdw and negative correlated to hi, tdw, wuet, sla. The genoytpes in the cluster 2 are positive associated with the hi and negative associated with ldw, tdb, sdw. In the cluster 3 the genotypes are positive correlated at wueb, wuet and negative correlated for rwc, lop and sla. The cluster 4 positive association with rdw, ldw, lfa, sdw, trs and negative correlated with wueb and wuet. And the cluster 5 is associated with sla, tdw, rwc, lfa and negative associated with spad and rdw, Figure 3.

The values of tdb and trs were strongly and positively correlated with 0.93 (P<0.05) with Euclidean distance of 0.91, Figure 4. The spad value shown stronger correlation when the time it was taken is longer with 0.83 positive correlation between 76 and 83 dap with a euclidean distance 0.53. A negative correlation (r= -0.73) among rdw and hi was found with a euclidean distance of 4.21, Figure 4.

For correlation between hi and wuet was strong (r=0.92) with an euclidean distance of 0.68, shown not only a good correlation but also a good association between these two variables, Figure 4. While tuber dry weight (tdw) shown better correlation with hi (r=0.61) and wuet (r=0.55) than wueb (r=0.05) with a euclidean distance of the traits 4.17, shown low association with tdw, Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Interesting association since the application of the drought treatment (Table 2) is between spad with tdw that have negative correlation (r=~0.60) and an euclidean distance of 4.21 shown no association between them. Apparently spad measure is sensitive to the detect the drought stress and it is related with the tuber production, Figure 3 and Figure 4.

# Dicussion

Under well water conditions, soil can supply water at a steady rate to meet the transpiration demand. However, as the soil becomes dry, water flux from soil to root surface decreases and cannot satisfy the demand of transpiration. In the present work give an overview of the behavior of different potato genotypes under drought stress and the penalty for the yield causes for the water shortage. Water stress triggered a range of morphological and physiological mechanisms in the tested potato genotypes. Most characteristics measure showed differences between treatments, pointing to their value in evaluating the impact of drought.

Plant biomass accumulation and yield was shown to be inextricably linked to transpiration (Sinclair et al., [1984](#ref-sinclair1984WaterUse)). The tolerance to drought in potato is a combination of mechanism and the response change amount the different groups of genotypes with difference morpho-physiological adaptation. All the genotypes under stress have a reduction in their transpiration rate based in the reduction of the leaf area and increasing the chlorophyll content under water deficit condition that not necessary means that increase the photosynthetic activity and possible this adaptation is related at the leaves senescence acceleration and production of reactive oxygen complex. A mechanism to drought resistance is the reduction of transpiration achieved by the reduction of leaf area with thick leaves often have greater photosynthetic capacity than thin leaves, due to their higher chlorophyll per leaf area counts *(Songsri et al. 2009)*. For these reason the genotypes that shown less difference in the chlorophyll content between drought and well water treatment are associated with better water use efficiency and mitigate the yield reduction.

The harvest index without show large difference between treatments have a high correlation with the water use efficiency for tuber production. *Evans (1980)* suggested that one of the main variables for yield increases seen to date has been increases in harvest index. Harvest index has been found to be relatively stable for a particular cultivar over wide range of conditions *(Donald and Hamblin 1976)*. *Passioura (1977) and Fischer (1979)* have argued that obtaining high harvest indexes underwater-limited conditions is especially important obtaining high water-use efficiencies even if many crops it appears that further substantial improvements in harvest index are unlikely *[Evans (1980)]*. The result shown there are a correlation between tdw with wuet and hi than wueb, indicating a direct association between them; and at the same time, reflected the conservative relationship between biomass production and wueb through a range of limited soil water availability. Potato genotypes with the ability to maintain low spad and high sla under WD conditions, can maintain higher wuet and hi and reduce the losses in the tuber production. Minimal yield losses in some genotypes like CIP398190.89 under WD could be related to its ability to increase its wuet, by absorbing the limited water and nutrients available in the soil without changing have a high reduction in the final yield, Figure 3.

Sensitive genotypes such as CIP398203.244 and CIP398201.510 preferred to produce leaves and more roots instead of tubers. A lower specific leaf area under WD, principally explained by decreases in new leaf production, number of leaves, and leaf size. This decrease might have had allowed a reduction in leaf transpiration, saving water for tuber bulking as suggested by *Lahlou, et al. (2003)*. In this genotype, the long roots seem to contribute to vegetative growth rather than yield components in contradistinction to *Songsri et al. 2009)* that mention enhanced extraction of water and nutrients from the soil due to large root system and long roots is a drought resistance mechanism in potato. However, a deeper and more extensive rooting system may have drawbacks. A greater root biomass would almost surely result in lowered harvest index.

The chlorophyll content is an indicator of the photosynthetic active and light transmittance of the leaf, which is dependent on the unit amount of chlorophyll per unit leaf area. The spad measurment have been correlated with chlorophyll and carotenoid content in potato and other crops *(Ramírez et al. 2014: Marenco et al. 2009)* and are used in selecting genotypes tolerant to drought in breeding programs. The multivariate analysis shown that genotypes under drougth stress increase their spad content for offset the reduction in the leaf area with thicker leaves but it does not mean a better photosynthetic activity in the genotypes, because the impose of drought decrease severely the leaf area in all genotypes. Genotypes

In the present worh we apply gradually reduction of the water supply and evaluate the process in the genotype response, but it is known that in field condition the abiotic stress is a combination of several factor and not only the drought or heat of both at the same time so is necessary that the tolerance of some genotypes to be been associated with rapid recuperation after rehydration (Hu et al., 2010; Zegada-Lizarazu and Monti, 2013). Uni-variate variable analysis is not too much helpful to understands the response of the potato to drought stress. Variables such as the chlorophyll content, harvest index and root dry weight to be good indicators for tuber water use efficient that could be useful traits for direct and indirect selection fot tolerant genotypes to drought stress using fast, easy and inexpensive evaluations for first stage of breeding programs were is required to plant high number of accessions.

# Conclusions

The genotypes with high hi, low spad content and root dry weight present mechanisms for drought avoiding and be good indicators for tuber water use efficient. Tolerant genotypes like CIP398208.620, CIP398098.119. CIP397077.16 and CIP392797.22 (UNICA) preferentially use available water for tuber production rather than above ground biomass represented by their high wuet. Traits like spad and harvest index are associated to tuber yield under drought stress and could be useful as selection criteria for first stage breeding programs because are easy and chip to measure in large populations.

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Table 1: Potatos (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) genotypes used for water deficit experiment with 13 lines from advanced breeding population at International Potato Center (CIP) and two comercial varieties.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number | Genotypes | Adaptability | Growning period | Heat tolerance | Dry matter (%) |
| G01 | CIP720088 (Achirana-INTA) |  | early |  | 19 |
| G02 | CIP392797.22 (UNICA) | Lowland and highland Tropics | Medium |  | 21 |
| G03 | CIP397077.16 | Lowland tropics | Medium |  | 20 |
| G04 | CIP398192.213 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 22 |
| G05 | CIP398180.612 |  | Medium |  |  |
| G06 | CIP398208.704 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 24 |
| G07 | CIP398098.119 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 26 |
| G08 | CIP398190.89 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 21 |
| G09 | CIP398192.592 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 21 |
| G10 | CIP398201.510 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 20 |
| G11 | CIP398203.244 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 20 |
| G12 | CIP398203.5 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 13 |
| G13 | CIP398208.219 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 22 |
| G14 | CIP398208.33 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 21 |
| G15 | CIP398208.620 | Mid elevation tropics | Medium | Tolerant | 21 |

Table 2: Treatment comparison for seventeen variables between Well-Watered (WW) and Water Deficit (WD) in 15 potato genotypes. Where: Chlorophyll Concentration (spad), Plant height (hgt; cm), Relative water content (rwc; %), Leaf osmotic potential (lop; MPa), Leaf dry weight (ldw; g), Stem dry weight (sdw; g), Root dry weight (rdw; g), Tuber dry weight (tdw; g), Tuber number (ntub; N°), Total transpiration (trs; ml), Leaf area (lfa; cm2), Root length (rdl; cm), Total dry biomass (tdb; g), Harvest Index (hi), Specific Leaf Area (sla; cm2g-1), Relative Chlorophyll Content (rcc), Biomass water use efficiency (wueb; gl-1), Tuber Water Use Efficiency (wuet; gl-1). The vales are represented by the mean ± standard deviation with the significance under T-test with their respective p-values.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **WD**, N = 75 | **WW**, N = 75 | **p-value** |
| **spad\_29** | 56.1 ± 4.9 | 56.7 ± 5.0 | 0.4 |
| **spad\_59** | 47.9 ± 4.4 | 45.8 ± 3.7 | 0.002 |
| **spad\_76** | 46.0 ± 5.4 | 41.7 ± 3.6 | <0.001 |
| **spad\_83** | 44.1 ± 5.9 | 39.7 ± 4.5 | <0.001 |
| **hgt** | 132 ± 15 | 150 ± 16 | <0.001 |
| **rwc** | 58 ± 6 | 69 ± 5 | <0.001 |
| **lop** | -2.84 ± 0.30 | -2.25 ± 0.29 | <0.001 |
| **ldw** | 12.0 ± 3.7 | 17.3 ± 5.5 | <0.001 |
| **sdw** | 11.6 ± 9.1 | 14.5 ± 6.1 | <0.001 |
| **rdw** | 3.67 ± 1.94 | 3.50 ± 1.96 | 0.6 |
| **tdw** | 24 ± 11 | 40 ± 19 | <0.001 |
| **ntub** | 12.0 ± 6.2 | 12.0 ± 4.9 | 0.8 |
| **trs** | 4.52 ± 1.22 | 7.85 ± 2.20 | <0.001 |
| **lfa** | 2488 ± 797 | 7100 ± 2380 | <0.001 |
| **rdl** | 33.1 ± 6.5 | 32.5 ± 5.8 | 0.4 |
| **tdb** | 51 ± 16 | 75 ± 24 | <0.001 |
| **hi** | 0.47 ± 0.16 | 0.53 ± 0.14 | 0.020 |
| **sla** | 218 ± 62 | 415 ± 82 | <0.001 |
| **rcc** | 2.13 ± 1.52 | 0.75 ± 0.73 | <0.001 |
| **wueb** | 11.32 ± 2.15 | 9.53 ± 1.26 | <0.001 |
| **wuet** | 5.31 ± 2.03 | 5.09 ± 1.75 | 0.5 |

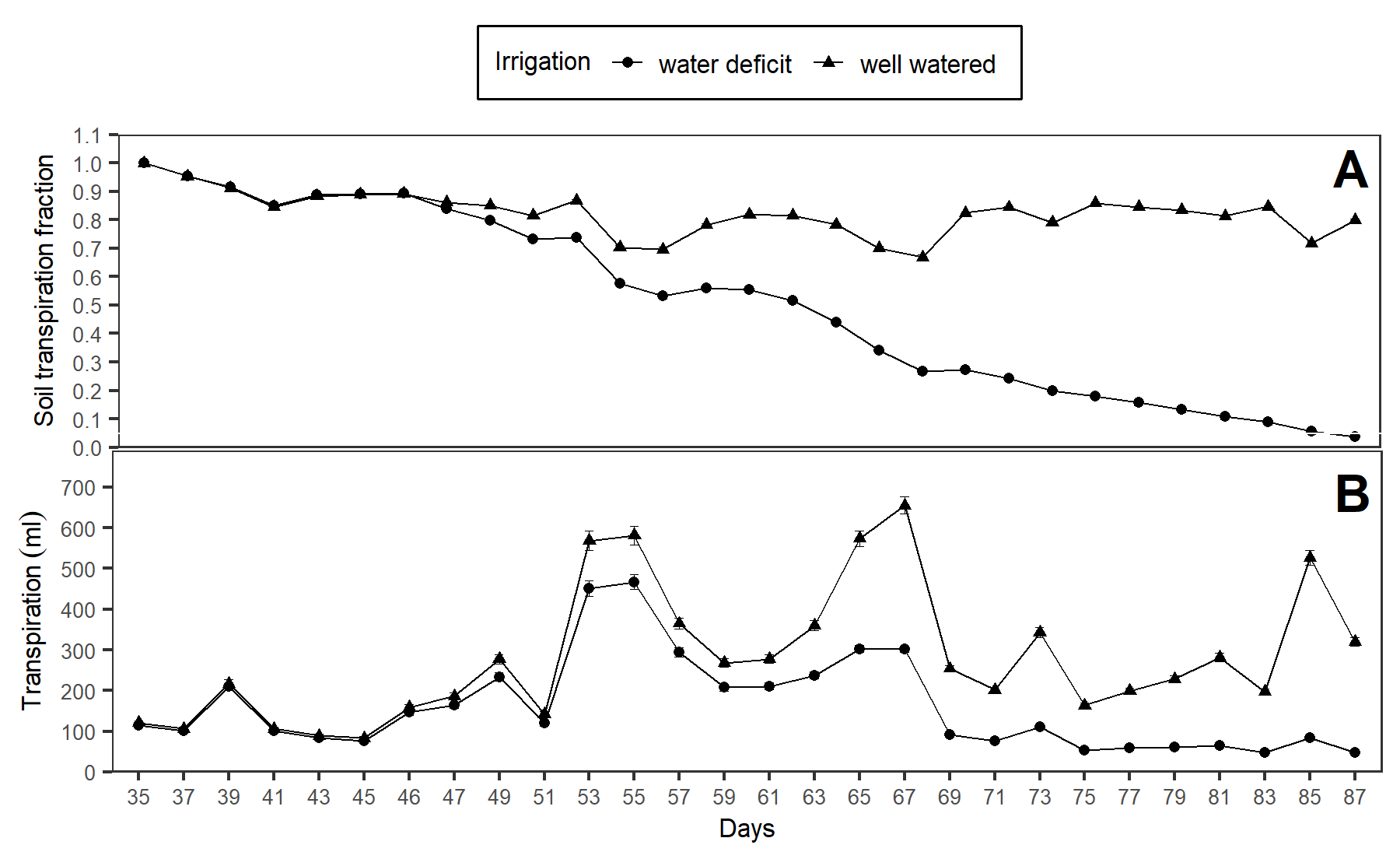


Figure 1: (A) Soil transpiration fraction (ftsw; %) and (B) Daily transpiration in 15 potato genotypes under well-watered (WW) and water deficit (WD) experiment.

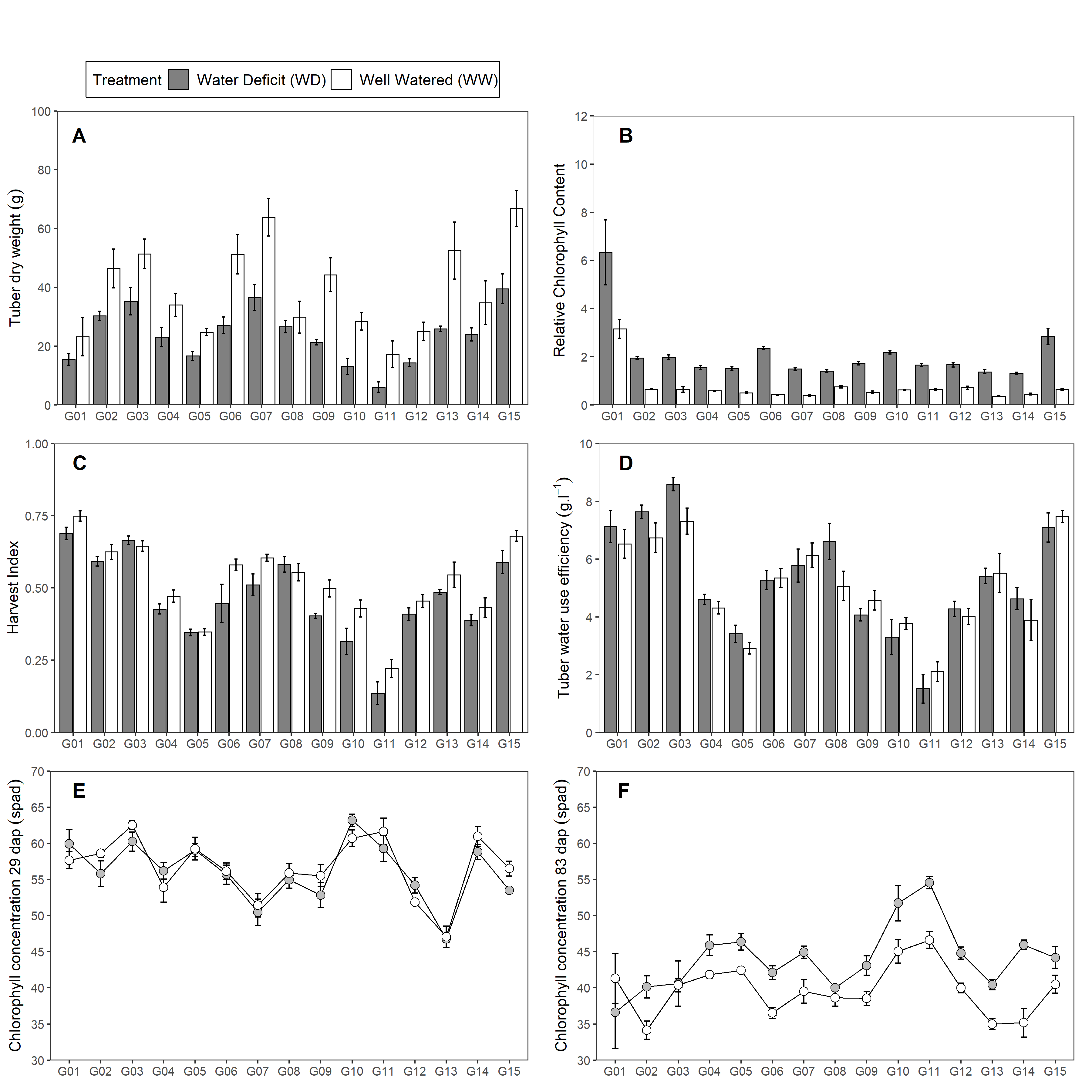


Figure 2: Variables measured in 15 potato genotypes under well-watered (WW) and water deficit (WD) treatment. (A) Tuber dry weight (tdw; g). (B) Relative Chlorophyll Content (rcc). (C) Harvest Index (hi). (D) Tuber Water Use Efficiency (wuet; gl-1). D-E Chlorophyll Concentration (spad). Error bars indicate standard error (n = 5). dap is days after planting.

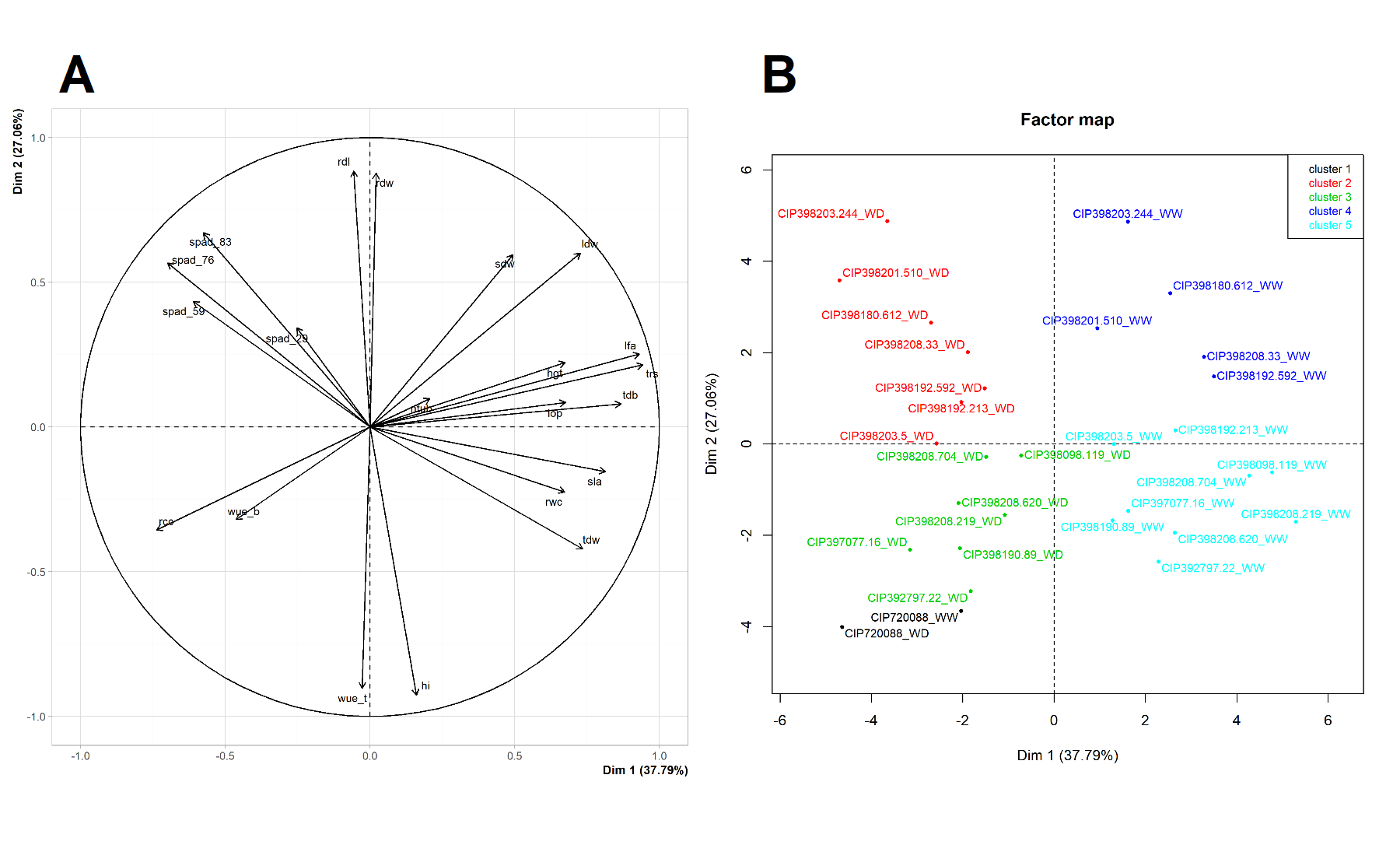


Figure 3: Principal Component Analysis (PCA) from variables measured in 15 potato genotypes under well-watered (WW) and water deficit (WD) treatment. (A) PCA for the variables. (B) PCA for the genotypes under WW and WD. Where: Chlorophyll Concentration (spad), Plant height (hgt; cm), Relative water content (rwc; %), Leaf osmotic potential (lop; MPa), Leaf dry weight (ldw; g), Stem dry weight (sdw; g), Root dry weight (rdw; g), Tuber dry weight (tdw; g), Tuber number (ntub; N°), Total transpiration (trs; ml), Leaf area (lfa; cm2), Root length (rdl; cm), Total dry biomass (tdb; g), Harvest Index (hi), Specific Leaf Area (sla; cm2g-1), Relative Chlorophyll Content (rcc), Biomass water use efficiency (wueb; gl-1), Tuber Water Use Efficiency (wuet; gl-1).

# Supplementary information

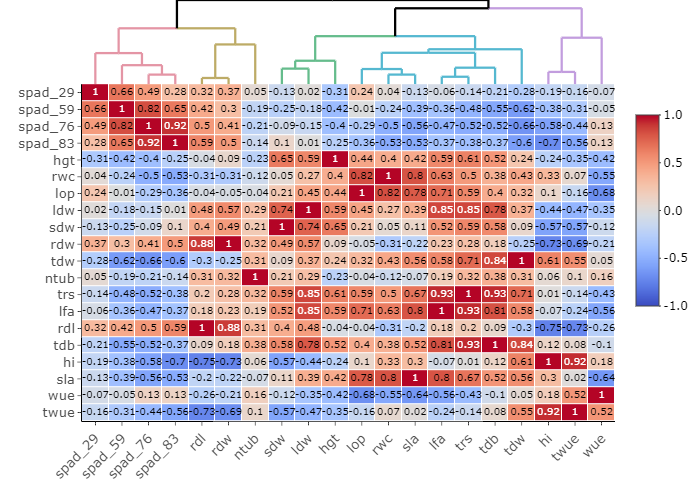


Figure 4: Correlation and cluster analysis from variables measured in 15 potato genotypes under well-watered (WW) and water deficit (WD) treatment. Where: Chlorophyll Concentration (spad), Plant height (hgt; cm), Relative water content (rwc; %), Leaf osmotic potential (lop; MPa), Leaf dry weight (ldw; g), Stem dry weight (sdw; g), Root dry weight (rdw; g), Tuber dry weight (tdw; g), Tuber number (ntub; N°), Total transpiration (trs; ml), Leaf area (lfa; cm2), Root length (rdl; cm), Total dry biomass (tdb; g), Harvest Index (hi), Specific Leaf Area (sla; cm2g-1), Relative Chlorophyll Content (rcc), Biomass water use efficiency (wueb; gl-1), Tuber Water Use Efficiency (wuet; gl-1).