

The GGCMI Phase II experiment: global crop yield responses to changes in carbon dioxide, temperature, water, and nitrogen levels

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Abstract

Concerns about food security under climate change have motivated efforts to better understand the future changes in yields by using detailed process-based models in agronomic sciences. Results of these models are often used to inform subsequent model-based analyses in agricultural economics and integrated assessment, but the computational requirements of process-based models sometimes hamper the ability to utilize these models in existing impact assessment frameworks at high resolutions globally. Conducting a large simulation set with perturbations in atmospheric CO₂ concentrations, temperature, precipitation, and nitrogen inputs, Phase II of the Global Gridded Crop Model Intercomparison (GGCMI), an activity of the Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project (AgMIP), constitutes an unprecedentedly data-rich basis of projected yield changes across 12 models and five crops (maize, soy, rice, spring wheat, and winter wheat) using global gridded simulations. Results from Phase II of the GGCMI effort, a targeted experiment aimed at understanding the interaction between multiple climate variables (as well as management) are presented first. Then the construction of an “emulator or statistical representation of the simulated 30-year mean climatological output in each location is outlined. The emulated response surfaces capture the details of the process-based models in a lightweight, computationally tractable form that facilitates model comparison as well as potential applications in subsequent modeling efforts such as integrated assessment.

Keywords: climate change, food security, model emulation, AgMIP, crop model

1. Introduction

Projecting crop yield response to a changing climate is of great importance, especially as the global food production system will face pressure from increased demand over the next

century. Climate-related reductions in supply could therefore have severe socioeconomic consequences. Multiple studies with different crop or climate models predict sharp reduction in yields on currently cultivated cropland under business-as-usual climate scenarios, although their yield projections show considerable spread (e.g. Porter et al. (IPCC), 2014, Rosenzweig et al., 2014, Schauberger et al., 2017, and references therein). Model differences are unsurprising because crop responses in models

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13 can be complex, with crop growth a function of complex inter- 70
14 actions between climate inputs and management practices. 71

15 Computational Models have been used to project crop yields 72
16 since the 1950's, beginning with statistical models (Heady, 73
17 1957, Heady & Dillon, 1961) that attempt to capture the rela- 74
18 tionship between input factors and resultant yields. These sta-
19 tistical models were typically developed on a small scale for lo-
20 cations with extensive histories of yield data. The emergence of
21 computers allowed development of numerical models that sim-
22 ulate the process of photosynthesis and the biology and phe-
23 nology of individual crops (first proposed by de Wit (1957),
24 Duncan et al. (1967) and attempted by Duncan (1972)). His-
25 torical mapping of crop model development can be found in
26 the appendix/supplementary of Rosenzweig et al. (2014). A
27 half-century of improvement in both models and computing re-
28 sources means that researchers can now run crop simulation
29 models for many years at high spatial resolution on the global
30 scale.

31 Both types of models continue to be used, and compara-
32 tive studies have concluded that when done carefully, both ap-
33 proaches can provide similar yield estimates (e.g. Lobell &
34 Burke, 2010, Moore et al., 2017, Roberts et al., 2017, Zhao
35 et al., 2017). Models tend to agree broadly in major response
36 patterns, including a reasonable representation of the spatial
37 pattern in historical yields of major crops (e.g. Elliott et al.,
38 2015, Müller et al., 2017) and projections of decreases in yield
39 under future climate scenarios.

40 Process models do continue to struggle with some important
41 details, including reproducing historical year-to-year variabil-
42 ity (e.g. Müller et al., 2017), reproducing historical yields when
43 driven by reanalysis weather (e.g. Glotter et al., 2014), and low
44 sensitivity to extreme events (e.g. Glotter et al., 2015). These
45 issues are driven in part by the diversity of new cultivars and
46 genetic variants, which outstrips the ability of academic mod-
47 eling groups to capture them (e.g. Jones et al., 2017). Mod-
48 els do not simulate many additional factors affecting produc-
49 tion, including pests/diseases/weeds. For these reasons, indi-
50 vidual studies must generally re-calibrate models to ensure that
51 short-term predictions reflect current cultivar mixes, and long-
52 term projections retain considerable uncertainty (Wolf & Oijen,
53 2002, Jagtap & Jones, 2002, Angulo et al., 2013, Asseng et al.,
54 2013, 2015). Inter-model discrepancies can also be high in ar-
55 eas not yet cultivated (e.g. Challinor et al., 2014, White et al.,
56 2011). Finally, process-based models present additional diffi-
57 culties for high-resolution global studies because of their com-
58 plexity and computational requirements. For economic impacts
59 assessments, it is often impossible to integrate a set of process-
60 based crop models directly into an integrated assessment model
61 to estimate the potential cost of climate change to the agricul-
62 tural sector.

63 Nevertheless, process-based models are necessary for under-
64 standing the global future yield impacts of climate change for
65 many reasons. First, cultivation may shift to new areas, where 76
66 no yield data are currently available and therefore statistical 77
67 models cannot apply. Yield data are also often limited in the de-
68 veloping world, where future climate impacts may be the most 78
69 critical. Second, only process-based models can capture the 79

growth response to elevated CO₂, novel conditions that are not
represented in historical data (e.g. Pugh et al., 2016, Roberts
et al., 2017). Similarly, only process-based models can rep-
resent novel changes in management practices (e.g. fertilizer
input) that may ameliorate climate-induced damages.

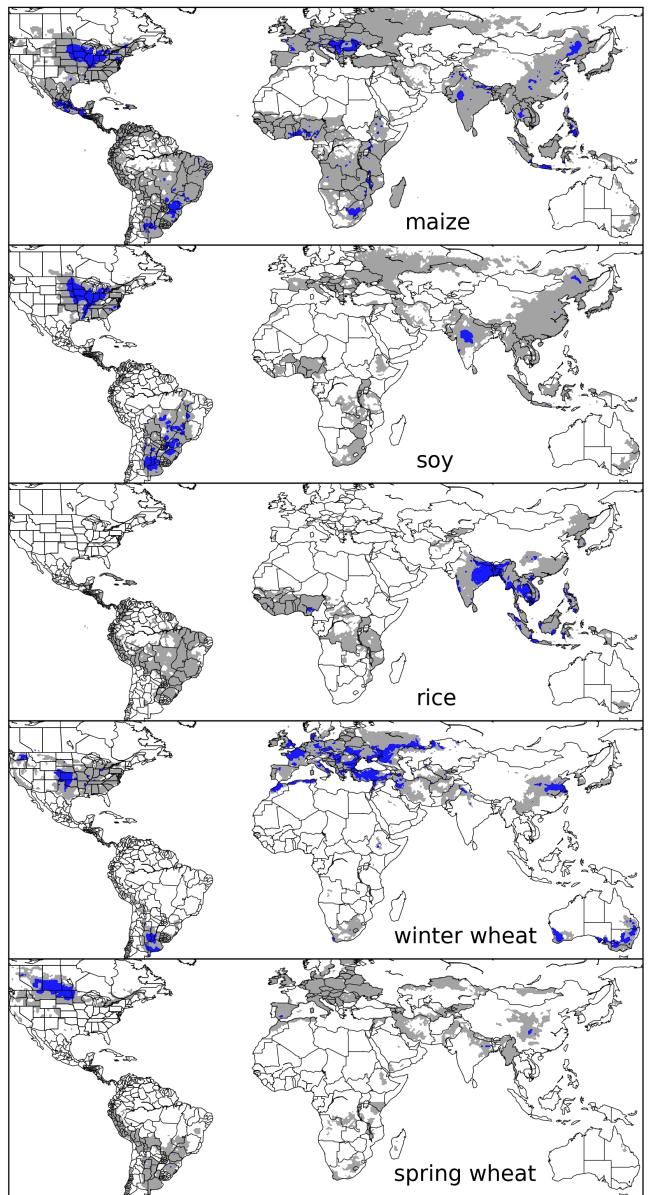


Figure 1: Presently cultivated area for rain-fed crops in the real world. Blue contour area indicates grid cells with more than 20,000 hectares (approx. 10% of the land in a grid cell near the equator for example) of crop cultivated. Gray contour shows area with more than 10 hectares cultivated. Cultivated areas for maize, rice, and soy are taken from the MIRCA2000 ("monthly irrigated and rain-fed crop areas around the year 2000") dataset (Portmann et al., 2010). Areas for winter and spring wheat areas are adapted from MIRCA2000 data and sorted by growing season. For analogous figure of irrigated crops, see Figure ??.

Statistical emulation of crop simulations offers the possibility of combining some advantageous features of both statistical and process-based models. The statistical representation of complicated numerical simulation (e.g. O'Hagan, 2006, Conti et al., 2009), in which simulation output acts as the training data for a

statistical model, has been of increasing interest with the growth¹²⁶ of simulation complexity and volume of output. Such emulators or “surrogate models” have been used in a variety of fields¹²⁷ including hydrology (Razavi et al., 2012), engineering (Storlie¹²⁹ et al., 2009), environmental sciences (Ratto et al., 2012), and¹³⁰ climate (Castruccio et al., 2014). For agricultural impacts studies,¹³¹ emulation of process-based models allows exploring crop¹³² yields in regions outside ranges of current cultivation and with¹³³ input variables outside historical precedents, in a lightweight,¹³⁴ flexible form that is compatible with economic studies.¹³⁵

Crop yield emulators have been proposed and implemented¹³⁶ by many studies (e.g. Howden & Crimp, 2005, Räisänen &¹³⁷ Ruokolainen, 2006, Lobell & Burke, 2010, Iizumi et al., 2010,¹³⁸ Ferrise et al., 2011, Holzkämper et al., 2012, Ruane et al., 2013,¹³⁹ Makowski et al., 2015), and in the last several years multiple¹⁴⁰ studies have developed emulators based on a variety of crop¹⁴¹ simulation model outputs. Several studies have developed an¹⁴² emulator for a single crop model run on a RCP climate scenario¹⁴³ set (e.g. Oyebamiji et al., 2015). Multiple groups (e.g. Blanc &¹⁴⁴ Sultan, 2015, Blanc, 2017, Ostberg et al., 2018), successfully¹⁴⁵ constructed emulators for a 5-crop-model intercomparison ex-¹⁴⁶ ercise performed as part of ISIMIP (Warszawski et al., 2014),¹⁴⁷ the Inter-Sectoral Impacts Model Intercomparison Project and¹⁴⁸ evaluated several different climate scenarios (over multiple¹⁴⁹ climate model runs). Several other studies (e.g. Moore et al.,¹⁴⁹ 2017, Mistry et al., 2017) utilize a hybrid simulation output and¹⁵⁰ real-world data approach to develop and emulator or damage¹⁵¹ function. Additional recent studies have explored an impact re-¹⁵² sponse surface (aka. emulator when using simulated data) over¹⁵² an explicit multivariate input simulation space (as opposed to¹⁵³ specific RCP climate model runs), with a site-based approach¹⁵⁴ (as opposed to a globally gridded model) across temperature,¹⁵⁵ water, and CO₂ sampling (Snyder et al., 2018), or with models¹⁵⁶ for wheat across water and temperature dimensions for different¹⁵⁷ sites in Europe (Fronzek et al., 2018).¹⁵⁸

The Global Gridded Crop Model Intercomparison (GGCMI)¹⁵⁹ Phase II experiment is an attempt to expand upon previous¹⁶⁰ process-based crop modeling studies by running globally grid-¹⁶¹ ded crop models over a set of uniform input dimensions as op-¹⁶² posed to RCP climate scenarios in order to focus on testing the¹⁶³ sensitivity to yield drivers within and across models. GGCMI¹⁶⁴ is a multi-model exercise conducted as part of the Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project (Ag-¹⁶⁵ MIP, (Rosenzweig et al., 2013, 2014)), which brings together¹⁶⁶ major global crop simulation models from different research¹⁶⁷ organizations around the world under a framework similar to¹⁶⁸

the Climate Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP, Taylor et al., 2012, Eyring et al., 2016). The GGCMI analysis framework builds on the AgMIP Coordinated Climate-Crop Modeling Project (C3MP, Ruane et al., 2014, McDermid et al., 2015), and will contribute to the AgMIP Coordinated Global and Regional Assessments (CGRA, Ruane et al., 2018, Rosenzweig et al., 2018).

The GGCMI Phase II project develops global simulations of yields of major crops under scenarios that sample a uniform parameter space. Overall goals include understanding where highest-yield regions may shift under climate change, exploring future adaptive management strategies, understanding how interacting parameters affect crop yields, quantifying uncertainties, and testing strategies for producing lightweight statistical emulations of the more detailed process-based models. In the remainder of this paper, we describe the GGCMI Phase II experiments, present the simulation database output (for public use) and initial overall results. We also present an example climatological-mean yield emulator as a distillation of the dataset and as a potential tool for impact assessments.

We do not present all the final insights to be gained from this model intercomparison project, or the best possible emulation of the year-to-year response to changes the input dimensions.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. GGCMI Phase II: experiment design

GGCMI Phase II is the continuation of a multi-model comparison exercise begun in 2014. The initial Phase I compared harmonized yields of 21 models for 19 crops over a historical (1980-2010) scenario with a primary goal of model evaluation (Elliott et al., 2015, Müller et al., 2017). Phase II compares simulations of 12 models for 5 crops (maize, rice, soybean, spring wheat, and winter wheat) over hundreds of scenarios in which individual climate or management inputs are adjusted from their historical values. The reduced set of crops includes the three major global cereals and the major legume and accounts for over 50% of human calories (in 2016, nearly 3.5 billion tons or 32% of total global crop production by weight (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018).

The major goals of GGCMI Phase II are to:

- Enhance understanding of how models work by characterizing their sensitivity to input climate and nitrogen drivers.
- Study the interactions between climate variables and nitrogen inputs in driving modeled yield impacts.

Input variable	Abbr.	Tested range	Unit
CO ₂	C	360, 510, 660, 810	ppm
Temperature	T	-1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5*, 6	°C
Precipitation	W	-50, -30, -20, -10, 0, 10, 20, 30, (and W _{inf})	%
Applied nitrogen	N	10, 60, 200	kg ha ⁻¹

Table 1: Phase II input variable test levels. Temperature and precipitation values indicate the perturbations from the historical, climatology. * Only simulated by one model. W-percentage does not apply to the irrigated (W_{inf}) simulations.

Model (Key Citations)	Maize	Soy	Rice	Winter Wheat	Spring Wheat	N Dim.	Simulations per Crop
APSIM-UGOE , Keating et al. (2003), Holzworth et al. (2014)	X	X	X	–	X	Yes	37
CARAIB , Dury et al. (2011), Pirttioja et al. (2015)	X	X	X	X	X	No	224
EPIC-IIASA , Balkovi et al. (2014)	X	X	X	X	X	Yes	35
EPIC-TAMU , Izaurrealde et al. (2006)	X	X	X	X	X	Yes	672
JULES* , Osborne et al. (2015), Williams & Falloon (2015), Williams et al. (2017)	X	X	X	–	X	No	224
GEPIC , Liu et al. (2007), Folberth et al. (2012)	X	X	X	X	X	Yes	384
LPJ-GUESS , Lindeskog et al. (2013), Olin et al. (2015)	X	–	–	X	X	Yes	672
LPJmL , von Bloh et al. (2018)	X	X	X	X	X	Yes	672
ORCHIDEE-crop , Valade et al. (2014)	X	–	X	–	X	Yes	33
pDSSAT , Elliott et al. (2014), Jones et al. (2003)	X	X	X	X	X	Yes	672
PEPIC , Liu et al. (2016a,b)	X	X	X	X	X	Yes	130
PROMET*† , Mauser & Bach (2015), Hank et al. (2015), Mauser et al. (2009)	X	X	X	X	X	Yes†	239
Totals	12	10	11	9	12	–	3993 (maize)

Table 2: Models included in the GGCMI Phase II and the number of C, T, W, and N simulations performed for rain-fed crops (“Sims per Crop”), with 672 as the maximum. “N-Dim.” indicates if simulations include varying nitrogen levels; two models omit this dimension. All models provided the same set of simulations across all modeled crops, but some omitted individual crops in some cases. (For example, APSIM did not simulate winter wheat.) Irrigated simulations are provided at the level of the other covariates for each model (for an additional 84 simulations for the fully-sampled models). Geographic extent of simulation varies to some extent within a certain model for different scenarios (672 rain-fed simulations does not necessarily equal 672 climatological yields in all areas). This geographic variance only applies for areas far outside the area of currently cultivated crops. Two models (marked with *) use non-AgMERRA climate inputs. For further details on models, see Elliott et al. (2015). †PROMET provided simulations at only two nitrogen levels so is not emulated across the nitrogen dimension.

- Explore differences in crop response to warming across the Earth’s climate regions.
- Provide a dataset that allows statistical emulation of crop model responses for downstream modelers.
- Illustrate differences in potential adaptation via growing season changes.

precipitation perturbations are applied as fractional changes at the grid cell level, and carbon dioxide and nitrogen levels are specified as discrete values applied uniformly over all grid cells. Note that CO₂ changes are applied independently of changes in climate variables, so that higher CO₂ is not associated with higher temperatures. An additional, identical set of scenarios (at the same C, T, W, and N levels) simulate adaptive agronomy under climate change by varying the growing season for crop production. (These adaptation simulations are not shown or analyzed here.) The resulting GGCMI data set captures a distribution of crop responses over the potential space of future climate conditions.

The 12 models included in GGCMI Phase II are all mechanistic process-based crop models that are widely used in impacts assessments (Table 2). Although some of the models share a common base (e.g. LPJmL and LPJ-GUESS and the EPIC models), they have developed independently from this shared base, for more details on the genealogy of the models see Figure S1 in Rosenzweig et al. (2014). Differences in model structure does mean that several key factors are not standardized across the experiment, including secondary soil nutrients, carry over effects across growing years including residue management and soil moisture, and extent of simulated area for different crops. Growing seasons are identical across models, but vary by crop and by location on the globe. All stresses except factors related to nitrogen, temperature, and water (e.g. Alkalinity, salinity) are disabled. No additional nitrogen inputs, such as atmospheric deposition, are considered, but some models have individual assumptions on soil organic matter that may release additional nitrogen through mineralization. See Rosen-

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The guiding scientific rationale of GGCMI Phase II is to provide a comprehensive, systematic evaluation of the response of process-based crop models to different values for carbon dioxide, temperature, water, and applied nitrogen (collectively known as “CTWN”). Phase II of the GGCMI project consists of a series of simulations, each with one or more of the CTWN dimensions perturbed over the 31-year historical time series (1980-2010) used in Phase I. In most cases, historical daily climate inputs are taken from the 0.5 degree NASA AgMERRA daily gridded re-analysis product specifically designed for agricultural modeling, with satellite-corrected precipitation (Ruane et al., 2015). Two models require sub-daily input data and use alternative sources. See Elliott et al. (2015) for additional details.

The experimental protocol consists of 9 levels for precipitation perturbations, 7 for temperature, 4 for CO₂, and 3 for applied nitrogen, for a total of 672 simulations for rain-fed agriculture and an additional 84 for irrigated (Table 1). For irrigated simulations, soil water is held at either field capacity or, for those models that include water-log damage, at maximum beneficial level. Temperature perturbations are applied as abolute offsets from the daily mean, minimum, and maximum temperature time series for each grid cell used as inputs. Pre-

228 zweig et al. (2014), Elliott et al. (2015) and Müller et al. (2017)²⁸³
 229 for further details on models and underlying assumptions.²⁸⁴

230 Each model is run at 0.5 degree spatial resolution and covers
 231 all currently cultivated areas and much of the uncultivated land²⁸⁵
 232 area. Coverage extends considerably outside currently culti-
 233 vated areas because cultivation will likely shift under climate
 234 change. See Figure 1 for the present-day cultivated area of
 235 rain-fed crops, and Figure ?? in the supplemental material for
 236 irrigated crops. Some areas such as Greenland, far-northern
 237 Canada, Siberia, Antarctica, the Gobi and Sahara deserts, and
 238 central Australia are not simulated as they are assumed to re-
 239 main non-arable even under an extreme climate change.

240 The participating modeling groups provide simulations at
 241 any of four initially specified levels of participation, so the num-
 242 ber of simulations varies by model, with some sampling only a
 243 part of the experiment variable space. Most modeling groups
 244 simulate all five crops in the protocol, but some omitted one
 245 or more. Table 2 provides details of coverage for each model.
 246 Note that the three models that provide less than 50 simulations
 247 are excluded from the emulator analysis.

248 All models produce as output, crop yields (tons ha^{-1} year $^{-1}$)
 249 for each 0.5 degree grid cell. Because both yields and yield
 250 changes vary substantially across models and across grid cells,
 251 we primarily analyze relative change from a baseline. We take
 252 as the baseline the scenario with historical climatology (i.e. T
 253 and P changes of 0). C of 360 ppm, and applied N at 200 kg
 254 ha^{-1} . We show absolute yields in some cases to illustrate geo-
 255 graphic differences in yields for a single model.

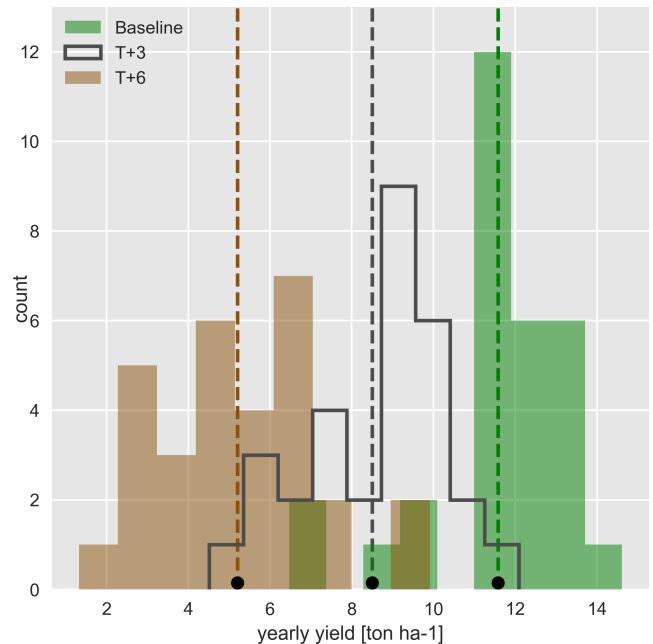
2.2. Simulation model validation approach

256 Simulation model validation for GGCMI phase II builds on
 257 the validation efforts presented in Müller et al. (2017) for the²⁸⁶
 258 first phase. In the case presented here however, the models²⁸⁷
 259 are not run on the best approximation of management levels²⁸⁸
 260 (namely nitrogen application level) by country as with phase I.²⁸⁹
 261 As the goals of this phase of the project are focused on under-²⁹⁰
 262 standing the sensitivity in *change* in yield to changes in input²⁹¹
 263 drivers –and not to simulate historical yields as accurately as²⁹²
 264 possible– no direct comparison to historical yield data can be²⁹³
 265 made. Additionally, even when provided with an appropriate²⁹⁴
 266 local nitrogen level, models simulated *potential* yields that do²⁹⁵
 267 not include reductions from pests, weeds, or diseases. Poten-²⁹⁶
 268 tial yields represent an ideal case that is not realized in many²⁹⁷
 269 less industrialized areas. Finally, some models are not cali-²⁹⁸
 270 brated as they were in phase I of the project.²⁹⁹

271 We evaluate the models here based on the response to year-³⁰⁰
 272 to-year temperature and precipitation variability in the histori-³⁰¹
 273 cal record. If the models can (somewhat) faithfully represent³⁰²
 274 the the historical variability in yields (which, once detrended³⁰³
 275 to account for changing management levels must be driven³⁰⁴
 276 largely by differences in weather), then the models may pro-³⁰⁵
 277 vide some utility in understanding the impact on mean clima-³⁰⁶
 278 logical shifts in temperature and precipitation. Specifically,³⁰⁷
 279 we calculate a Pearson correlation coefficient between the de-³⁰⁸
 280 trended time series of simulations and FAO data for the period³⁰⁹
 281 1981-2009. Validating the response to CO_2 and Nitrogen appli-³¹⁰

cations is more difficult because real world data is not available
 outside of small greenhouse and field level trials.

2.3. Climatological-mean yield emulator design



257 Figure 2: Example showing both climatological mean yields and distribution
 258 of yearly yields for three 30-year scenarios. Figure shows rain-fed maize for a
 259 grid cell in northern Iowa (a representative high-yield region) from the pDSSAT
 260 model, for the baseline climatology (1981-2010) and for scenarios with tem-
 261 perature shifted by (T) +3 and (T) +6 °C, with other variables held at baseline
 262 values. Dashed vertical lines and black dots indicate the climatological mean
 263 yield.

264 We construct our emulator at the 30-year climatological
 265 mean level. Blanc & Sultan (2015) and Blanc (2017) have
 266 shown that a emulator of a global process-based crop simula-
 267 tion model can be successfully developed at the yearly scale.

268 The decision to first construct a climatological-mean yield
 269 emulator is driven by the target application for this analysis
 270 tool. Many impact modelers are not focused on the changes
 271 in the year-to-year variability in yields, but instead on the broad
 272 mean changes over the multi-decadal timescale. Emulation in-
 273 volves fitting individual regression models for each crop, sim-
 274 ulation model, and 0.5 degree geographic pixel from the GGCMI
 275 Phase II data set. The regressors are the applied constant pertur-
 276 bations in temperature, water, nitrogen and CO_2 , we aggregate
 277 the simulation outputs in the time dimension, and regress on the
 278 30-year mean yields. (See Figure 2 for illustration). The regres-
 279 sion therefore omits information about yield responses to year-
 280 to-year climate perturbations, which are more complex. Emul-
 281 ating inter-annual yield variations would likely require con-
 282 sidering statistical details of the historical climate time series,
 283 including changes in marginal distribution and temporal depen-
 284 dencies. (Future work should explore this). The climatological
 285 emulation indirectly includes any yield response to geographi-
 286 cally distributed factors such as soil type, insolation, and the
 287 baseline climate itself, because we construct separate emul-
 288 ators for each grid cell. The emulator parameter matrices are

portable and the yield computations are cheap even at the half-degree grid cell resolution, so we do not aggregate in space at this time.

Blanc & Sultan (2015) and Blanc (2017) have shown that fractional polynomial specification is more effective than a standard polynomial for representing simulations at the yearly level across different soil types geographically (not at the grid cell level). We do not test this specification here, and instead use as a starting point a standard third-order polynomial to represent the climatological-mean response at the grid cell level as it is the simplest effective specification.

We regress climatological-mean yields against a third-order polynomial in C, T, W, and N with interaction terms. The higher-order terms are necessary to capture any nonlinear responses, which are well-documented in observations for temperature and water perturbations (e.g. Schlenker & Roberts (2009) for T and He et al. (2016) for W). We include interaction terms (both linear and higher-order) because past studies have shown them to be significant effects. For example, Lobell & Field (2007) and Tebaldi & Lobell (2008) showed that in real-world yields, the joint distribution in T and W is needed to explain observed yield variance (C and N are fixed in these data). Other observation-based studies have shown the importance of the interaction between water and nitrogen (e.g. Aulakh & Malhi, 2005), and between nitrogen and carbon dioxide (Osaki et al., 1992, Nakamura et al., 1997). We do not focus on comparing different model specifications in this study, and instead stick to a relatively simple parameterized specification that allows for some, albeit limited, coefficient interpretation.

The limited GGCMI variable sample space means that use of the full polynomial expression described above, which has 34 terms for the rain-fed case (12 for irrigated), can be problematic, and can lead to over-fitting and unstable parameter estimations. We therefore reduce the number of terms through a feature selection cross-validation process in which terms in the polynomial are tested for importance. In this procedure higher-order and interaction terms are added successively to the model; we then follow the reduction of the aggregate mean squared error with increasing terms and eliminate those terms that do not contribute significant reductions. See supplemental documents for more details. We select terms by applying the feature selection process to the three models that provided the complete set of 672 rain-fed simulations (pDSSAT, EPIC-TAMU, and LPJmL); the resulting choice of terms is then applied for all emulators.

Feature importance is remarkably consistent across all three models and across all crops (see Figure ?? in the supplemental material). The feature selection process results in a final polynomial in 23 terms, with 11 terms eliminated. We omit the N^3 term, which cannot be fitted because we sample only three nitrogen levels. We eliminate many of the C terms: the cubic, the CT, CTN, and CWN interaction terms, and all higher order interaction terms in C. Finally, we eliminate two 2nd-order interaction terms in T and one in W. Implication of this choice include that nitrogen interactions are complex and important, and that water interaction effects are more nonlinear than those in temperature. The resulting statistical model (Equation 1) is used for all grid cells, models, and crops:

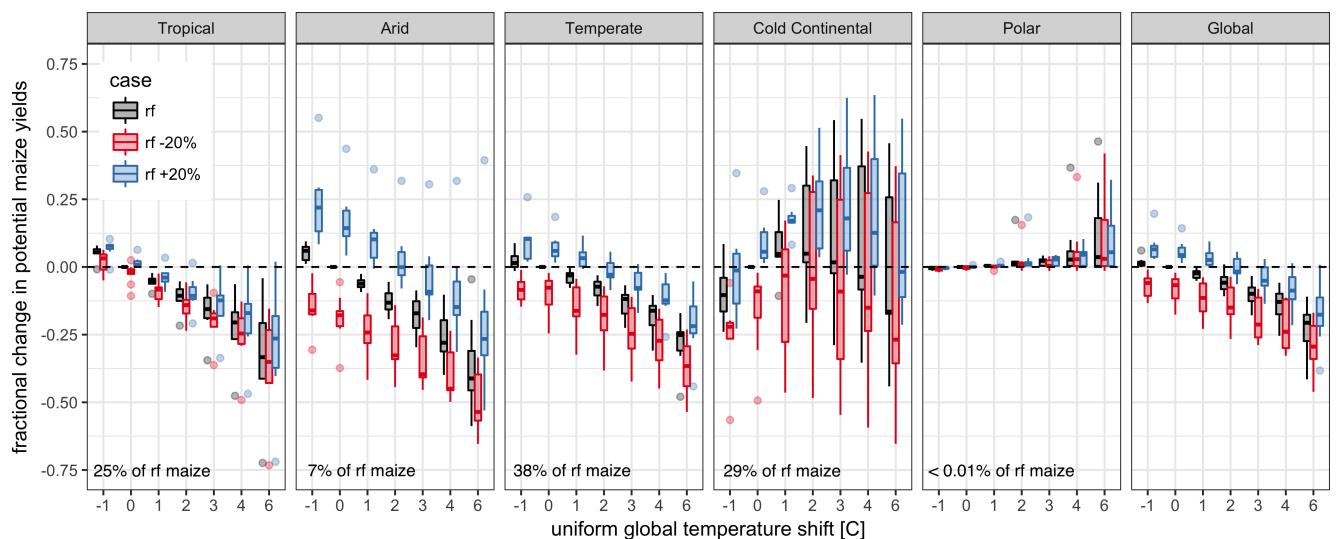


Figure 3: Illustration of the distribution of regional yield changes across the multi-model ensemble, split by Köppen-Geiger climate regions (Rubel & Kottek (2010)). We show responses of a single crop (rain-fed maize) to applied uniform temperature perturbations, for three discrete precipitation perturbation levels (rain-fed (rf) -20%, rain-fed (0), and rain-fed +20%), with CO₂ and nitrogen held constant at baseline values (360 ppm and 200 kg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹). Y-axis is fractional change in the regional average climatological potential yield relative to the baseline. The figure shows all modeled land area; see Figure ?? in the supplemental material for only currently-cultivated land. Panel text gives the percentage of rain-fed maize presently cultivated in each climate zone (Portmann et al., 2010). Box-and-whiskers plots show distribution across models, with median marked. Box edges are first and third quartiles, i.e. box height is the interquartile range (IQR). Whiskers extend to maximum and minimum of simulations but are limited at 1.5-IQR; otherwise the outlier is shown. Models generally agree in most climate regions (other than cold continental), with projected changes larger than inter-model variance. Outliers in the tropics (strong negative impact of temperature increases) are the pDSSAT model; outliers in the high-rainfall case (strong positive impact of precipitation increases) are the JULES model. Inter-model variance increases in the case where precipitation is reduced, suggesting uncertainty in model response to water limitation. The right panel with global changes shows yield responses to an globally uniform temperature shift; note that these results are not directly comparable to simulations of more realistic climate scenarios with the same global mean change.

$$\begin{aligned}
Y &= K_1 \\
&+ K_2 C + K_3 T + K_4 W + K_5 N \\
&+ K_6 C^2 + K_7 T^2 + K_8 W^2 + K_9 N^2 \\
&+ K_{10} C W + K_{11} C N + K_{12} T W + K_{13} T N + K_{14} W N \\
&+ K_{15} T^3 + K_{16} W^3 + K_{17} T W N \\
&+ K_{18} T^2 W + K_{19} W^2 T + K_{20} W^2 N \\
&+ K_{21} N^2 C + K_{22} N^2 T + K_{23} N^2 W
\end{aligned}
\tag{1}$$

To fit the parameters K , we use a Bayesian Ridge probabilistic estimator (MacKay, 1991), which reduces volatility in parameter estimates when the sampling is sparse, by weighting parameter estimates towards zero. The Bayesian Ridge method is necessary to maintain a consistent functional form across all models, and locations as the linear least squares fails to provide a stable result in many cases. In the GGCMI Phase II experiment, the most problematic fits are those for models that provided a limited number of cases or for low-yield geographic regions where some modeling groups did not run all scenarios. Because we do not attempt to emulate models that provided less than 50 simulations, the lowest number of simulations emulated across the full parameter space is 130 (for the PEPIC model). We use the implementation of the Bayesian Ridge estimator from the scikit-learn package in Python (Pedregosa et al., 2011).

The resulting parameter matrices for all crop model emulators are available on request, as are the raw simulation data and a Python application to emulate yields. The yield output for a single GGCMI model that simulates all scenarios and all five crops is ~ 12.5 GB; the emulator is ~ 100 MB, a reduction by over two orders of magnitude.

2.4. Emulator evaluation

Because no general criteria exist for defining an acceptable model emulator, we develop a metric of emulator performance specific to GGCMI. For a multi-model comparison exercise like GGCMI, a reasonable criterion is what we term the “normalized error”, which compares the fidelity of an emulator for a given model and scenario to the inter-model uncertainty. We define the normalized error e for each scenario as the difference between the fractional yield change from the emulator and that in the original simulation, divided by the standard deviation of the multi-model spread (Equations 2 and 3):

$$F_{scn.} = \frac{Y_{scn.} - Y_{baseline}}{Y_{baseline}} \tag{2}$$

$$e_{scn.} = \frac{F_{em, scn.} - F_{sim, scn.}}{\sigma_{sim, scn.}} \tag{3}$$

Here $F_{scn.}$ is the fractional change in a model’s mean emulated or simulated yield from a defined baseline, in some scenario (scn.) in C, T, W, and N space; $Y_{scn.}$ and $Y_{baseline}$ are the absolute emulated or simulated mean yields. The normalized error e is the difference between the emulated fractional change

in yield and that actually simulated, normalized by $\sigma_{sim.}$, the standard deviation in simulated fractional yields $F_{sim, scn.}$ across all models. The emulator is fit across all available simulation outputs, and then the error is calculated across the simulation scenarios provided by all nine models (Figure 8 and Figures ?? and Figures ?? in supplemental documents). Note that the normalized error e for a model depends not only on the fidelity of its emulator in reproducing a given simulation but on the particular suite of models considered in the intercomparison exercise. The rationale for this choice is to relate the fidelity of the emulation to an estimate of true uncertainty, which we take as the multi-model spread.

3. Results

3.1. Simulation results

Crop models in the GGCMI ensemble show a broadly consistent responses to climate and management perturbations in most regions, with a strong negative impact of increased temperature in all but the coldest regions. We illustrate this result for rain-fed maize in Figure 3, which shows yields for the primary Köppen-Geiger climate regions (Rubel & Kottek, 2010). In warming scenarios, models show decreases in maize yield in the temperate, tropical, and arid regions that account for nearly three-quarters of global maize production. These impacts are robust for even moderate climate perturbations. In the temperate zone, even a 1 degree temperature rise with other variables held fixed leads to a median yield reduction that outweighs the variance across models. A 6 degree temperature rise results in median loss of $\sim 25\%$ of yields with a signal to noise of nearly three. A notable exception is the cold continental region, where models disagree strongly, extending even to the sign of impacts. Model simulations of other crops produce similar responses to warming, with robust yield losses in warmer locations and high inter-model variance in the cold continental regions (Figures ??).

The effects of rainfall changes on maize yields are also as expected and are consistent across models. Increased rainfall mitigates the negative effect of higher temperatures, most strongly in arid regions. Decreased rainfall amplifies yield losses and also increases inter-model variance more strongly, suggesting that models have difficulty representing crop response to water stress. We show only rain-fed maize here; see Figure ?? for the irrigated case. As expected, irrigated crops are more resilient to temperature increases in all regions, especially so where water is limiting.

Mapping the distribution of baseline yields and yield changes shows the geographic dependencies that underlie these results. Figure 4 shows baseline and changes in the T+4 scenario for rain-fed maize, soy, and rice in the multi-model ensemble mean, with locations of model agreement marked. Absolute yield potentials are have strong spatial variation, with much of the Earth’s surface area unsuitable for any given crop. In general, models agree most on yield response in regions where yield potentials are currently high and therefore where crops are currently grown. Models show robust decreases in yields at low

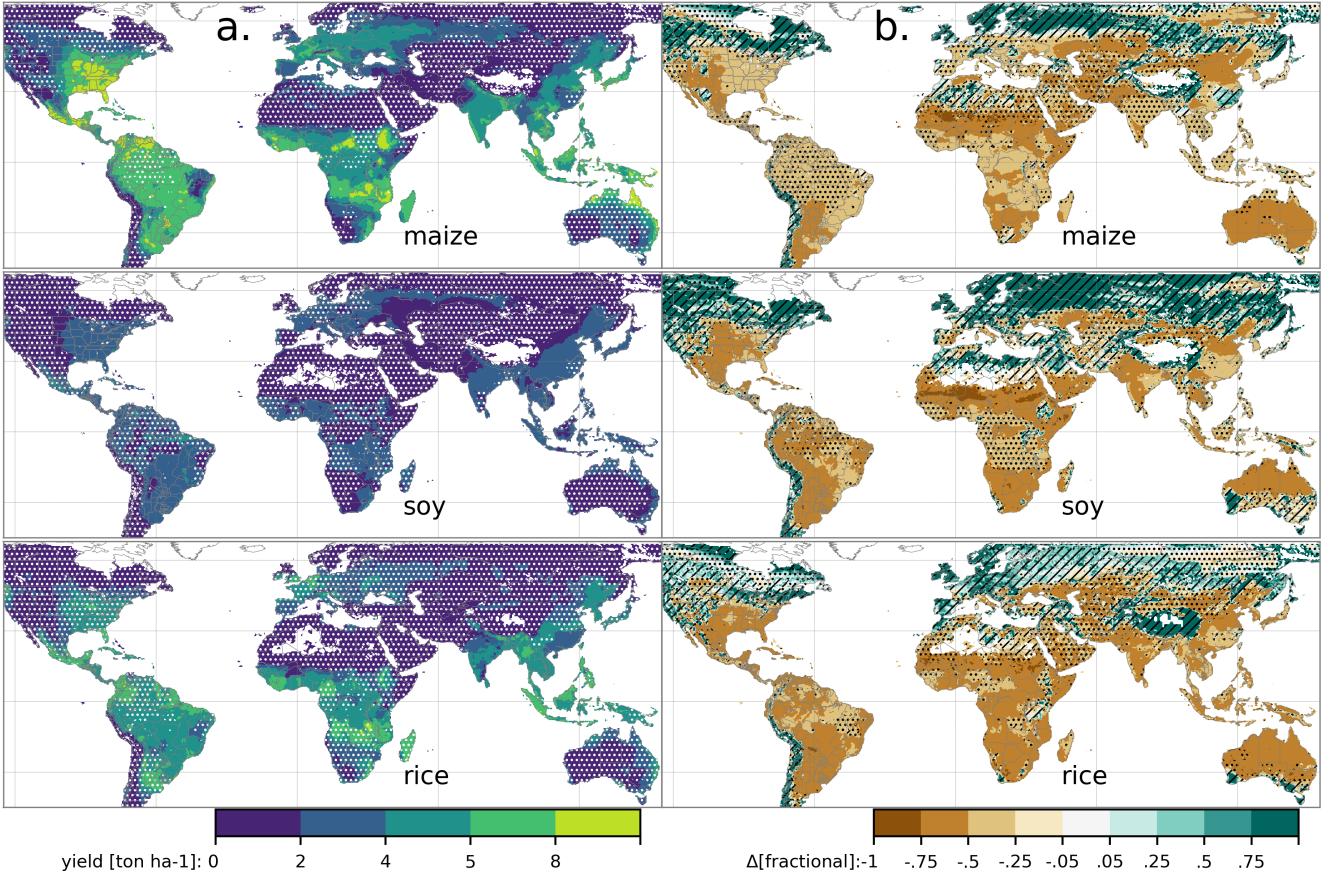


Figure 4: Illustration of the spatial pattern of potential yields and potential yield changes in the GGCMI Phase II ensemble, for three major crops. Left column (a) shows multi-model mean climatological yields for the baseline scenario for (top-bottom) rain-fed maize, soy, and rice. (For wheat see Figure ?? in the supplemental material.) White stippling indicates areas where these crops are not currently cultivated. Absence of cultivation aligns well with the lowest yield contour (0.2 ton ha^{-1}). Right column (b) shows the multi-model mean fractional yield change in the extreme $T + 4^\circ\text{C}$ scenario (with other inputs at baseline values). Areas without hatching or stippling are those where confidence in projections is high: the multi-model mean fractional change exceeds two standard deviations of the ensemble. ($\Delta > 2\sigma$). Hatching indicates areas of low confidence ($\Delta < 1\sigma$), and stippling areas of medium confidence ($1\sigma < \Delta < 2\sigma$). Crop model results in cold areas, where yield impacts are on average positive, also have the highest uncertainty.

latitudes, and highly uncertain median increases at most high latitudes. For wheat crops see Figure ??; wheat projections are both more uncertain and show fewer areas of increased yield in the inter-model mean.

3.2. Simulation model validation results

Figure 5 shows the time series correlation between the simulation model yield and FAO yield data. The results are mixed, with many regions for rice and wheat being difficult to model. No single model is dominant, with each model providing near best-in-class performance in at least one location-crop combination. The presence of no vertical dark green color bars clearly illustrates the power of a multi-model intercomparison project like the one presented here. The ensemble mean yield is calculated across all ‘high’ nitrogen application level model simulations and correlated with the FAO data (not the mean of the correlations). The ensemble mean does not beat the best model in each case, but shows positive correlation in over 75% of the cases presented here.

Soy is qualitatively the easiest crop to represent (except in Argentina), which is likely due to the invariance of the re-

sponse to nitrogen application (soy fixes atmospheric nitrogen very efficiently). Comparison to the FAO data is therefore easier than the other crops because the nitrogen application levels do not matter. US maize has the best performance across models, with nearly every model representing the historical variability to some extent. Especially good example years for US maize are 1983, 1988, and 2004 (top left panel), where every model gets the direction of the anomaly compared to surrounding years correct. 1983 and 1988 are famously bad years for US maize along with 2012 (not shown). US maize is possibly both the most uniformly industrialized (in terms of management practices) crop and the one with the best data collection in the historical period of all the cases presented here.

FAO data is at least one level of abstraction from ground truth in many cases, especially in developing countries. The failure of models to represent the year-to-year variability in rice in some countries in southeast Asia is likely partly due to model failure and partly due to lack of data. Partitioning of these contributions is impossible at this stage. Additionally, there is less year-to-year variability in rice yields (partially due to the fraction of irrigated cultivation). Since the Pearson r metric is scale

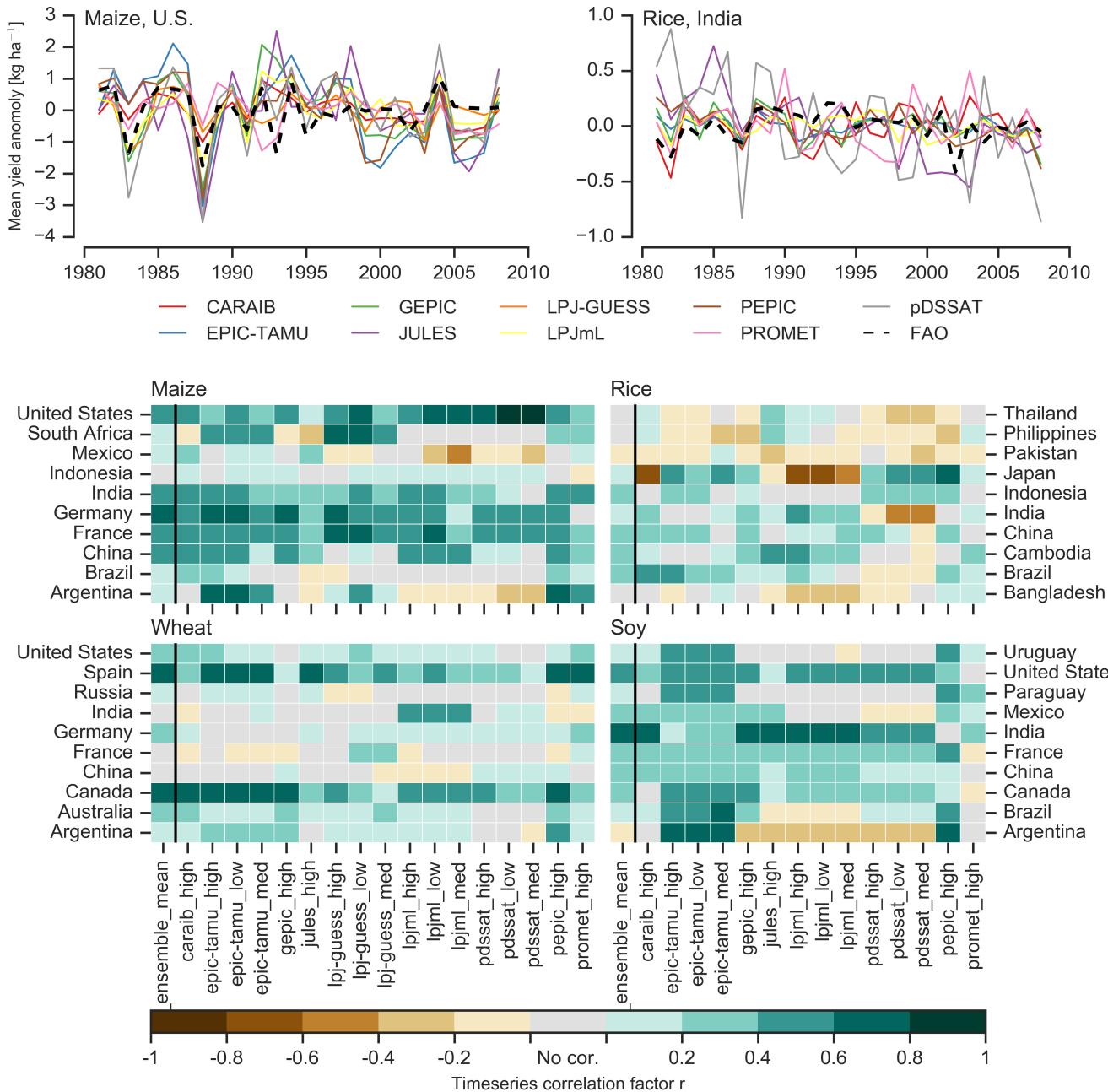


Figure 5: Time series correlation coefficients between simulated crop yield and FAO data at the country level. The top panels indicate two example cases: US maize (a good case), and rice in India (mixed case), both for the high nitrogen application case. The heatmaps illustrate the Pearson r correlation between the detrended simulation mean yield at the country level compared to the detrended FAO yield data for the top producing countries for each crop with continuous FAO data over the 1980-2010 period. Models that provided different nitrogen application levels are shown with low, med, and high label (models that did not simulate different nitrogen levels are analogous to a high nitrogen application level). The ensemble mean yield is also correlated with the FAO data.

invariant, it will tend to score the rice models more poorly than maize and soy. The pDSSAT model shows very poor performance for rice in India (top right panel).

One may speculate that the difference in performance between Pakistan (no successful models) and India (many successful models) for rice may lie in the FAO data and not the models themselves. What would be so different about rice production across these two countries that could explain this difference??

3.3. Emulator performance

Emulation provides not only a computational tool but a means of understanding and interpreting crop yield response across the parameter space. Emulation is only possible, however, when crop yield responses are sufficiently smooth and continuous to allow fitting with a relatively simple functional form. In the GGCMI simulations, this condition largely but not always holds. Responses are quite diverse across locations, crops, and models, but in most cases local responses are regular enough to permit emulation. Figure 6 illustrates the ge-

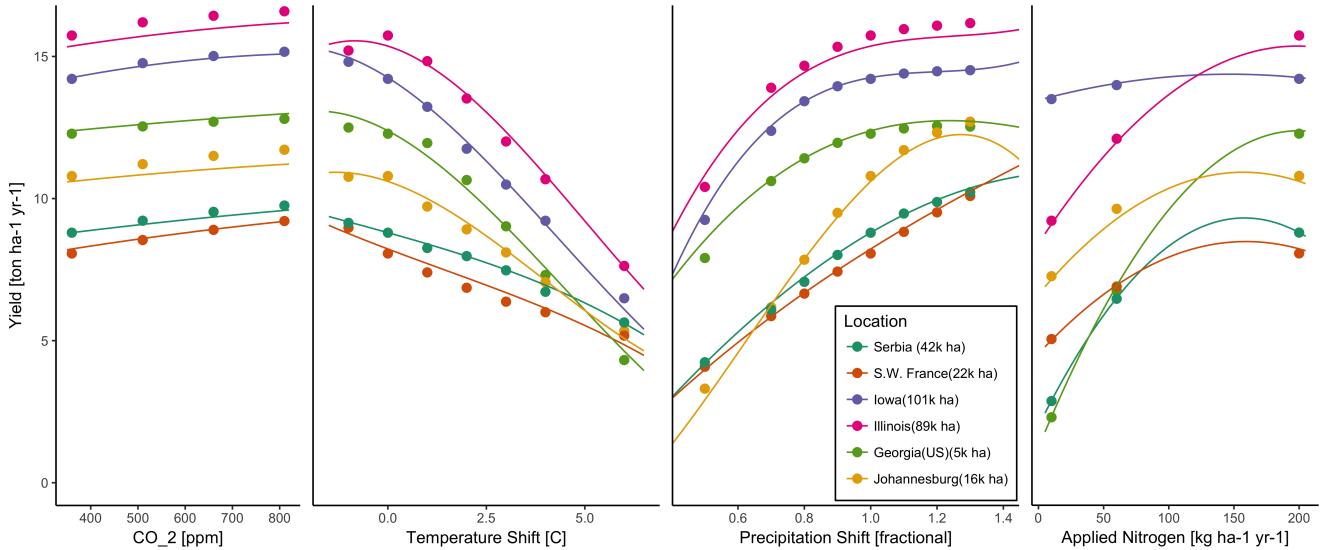


Figure 6: Example illustrating spatial variations in yield response and emulation ability. We show rain-fed maize in the pDSSAT model in six example locations selected to represent high-cultivation areas around the globe. Legend includes hectares cultivated in each selected grid cell. Each panel shows variation along a single variable, with others held at baseline values. Dots show climatological mean yield, solid lines a simple polynomial fit across this 1D variation, and dashed lines the results of the full emulator of Equation 1. The climatological response is sufficiently smooth to be represented by a simple polynomial. Because precipitation changes are imposed as multiplicative factors rather than additive offsets, locations with higher baseline precipitation have a larger absolute spread in inputs sampled than do drier locations (not visible here).

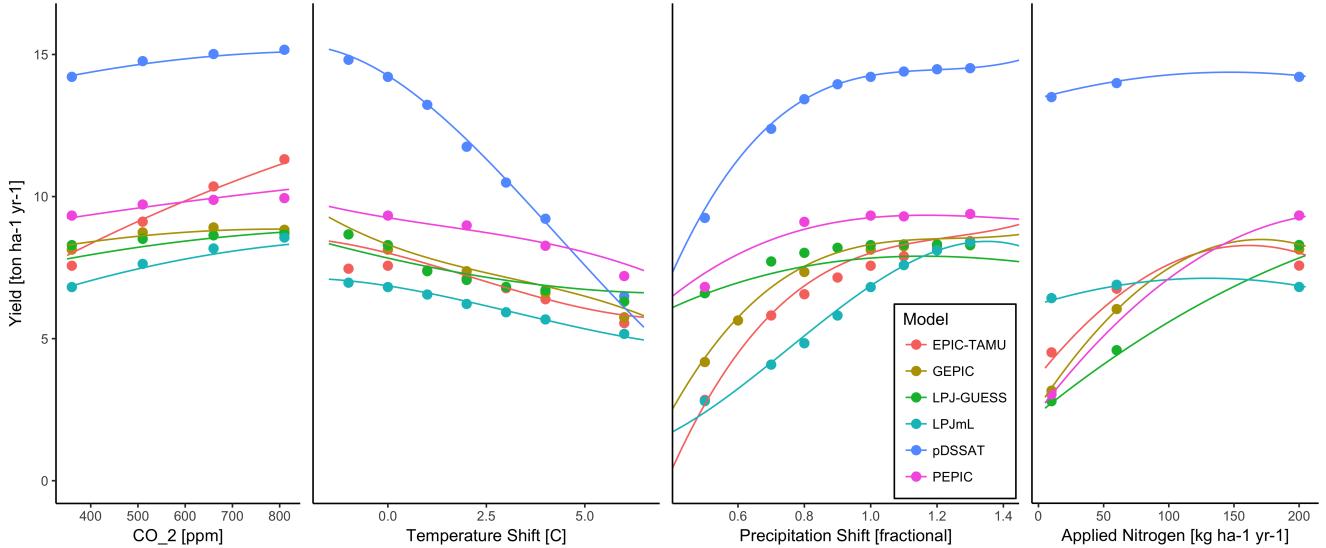


Figure 7: Example illustrating across-model variations in yield response. We show simulations and emulations from six models for rain-fed maize in the same Iowa location shown in Figure 6, with the same plot conventions. Models that did not simulate the nitrogen dimension are omitted for clarity. The inter-model standard deviation is larger for the perturbations in CO₂ and nitrogen than for those in temperature or precipitation illustrating that the sensitivity to weather is better constrained than to management at elevated CO₂. While most model responses can readily be emulated with a simple polynomial, some response surfaces are more complicated and lead to emulation error.

ographic diversity of responses even in high-yield areas for a₅₃₀ single crop and model (rain-fed maize in pDSSAT for various₅₃₁ high-cultivation areas). This heterogeneity validates the choice₅₃₂ of emulating at the grid cell level.₅₃₃

Each panel in Figure 6 shows model yield output from sce-₅₃₄ narios varying only along a single dimension (CO₂, tempera-₅₃₅ ture, precipitation, or nitrogen addition), with other inputs held₅₃₆ fixed at baseline levels; in all cases yields evolve smoothly₅₃₇ across the space sampled. For reference we show the results₅₃₈

of the full emulation fitted across the parameter space. The polynomial fit readily captures the climatological response to perturbations.

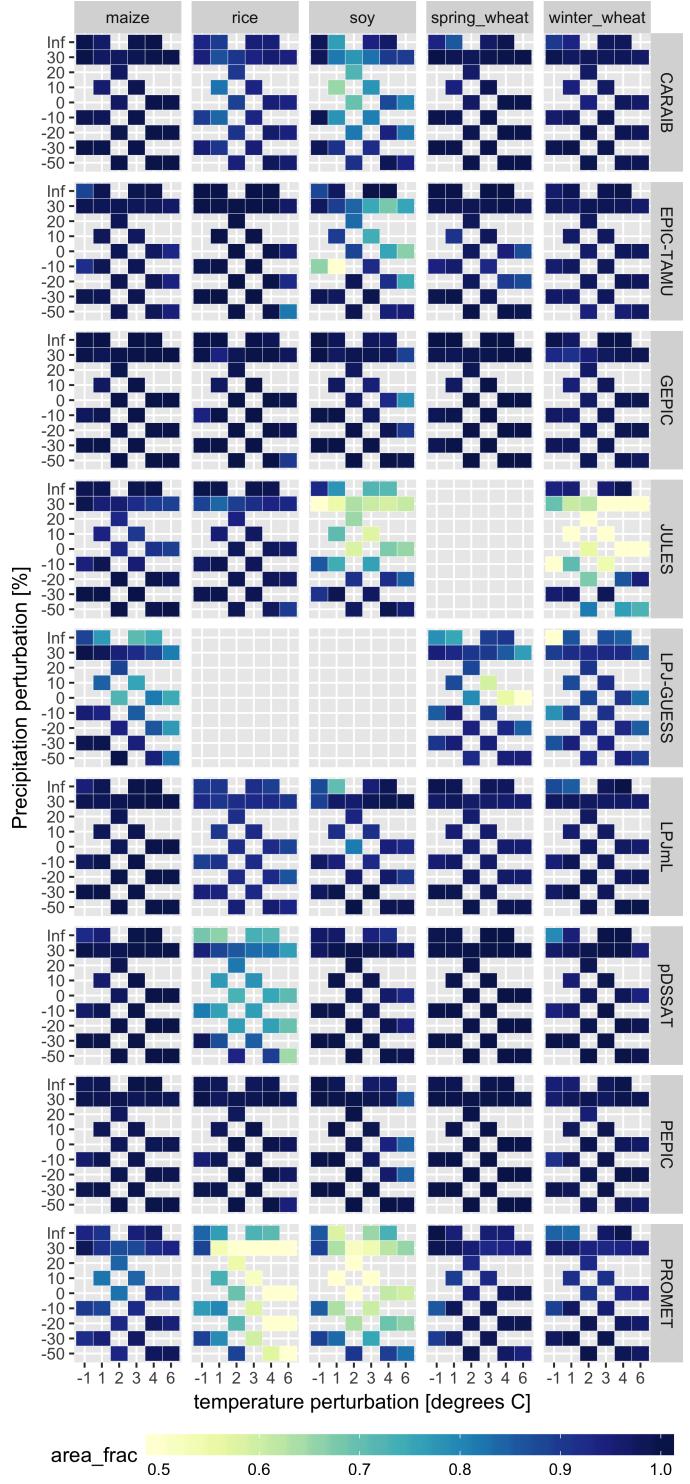
Crop yield responses generally follow similar functional forms across models, though with a spread in magnitude. Figure 7 illustrates the inter-model diversity of yield responses to the same perturbations, even for a single crop and location (rain-fed maize in northern Iowa, the same location shown in the Figure 6). The differences make it important to construct

539 emulators separately for each individual model, and the fidelity
 540 of emulation can also differ across models. This figure illustrates
 541 a common phenomenon, that models differ more in response to perturbations in CO₂ and nitrogen perturbations than
 542 to those in temperature or precipitation. (Compare also Figures
 543 3 and ??.) For this location and crop, CO₂ fertilization effects
 544 can range from ~5–50%, and nitrogen responses from nearly
 545 flat to a 60% drop in the lowest-application simulation.

546 While the nitrogen dimension is important and uncertain, it is
 547 also the most problematic to emulate in this work because of its limited sampling. The GGCMI protocol specified only
 548 three nitrogen levels (10, 60 and 200 kg N y⁻¹ ha⁻¹), so a third-order fit would be over-determined but a second-order fit can
 549 result in potentially unphysical results. Steep and nonlinear de-
 550 clines in yield with lower nitrogen levels means that some re-
 551 gressions imply a peak in yield between the 100 and 200 kg N
 552 y⁻¹ ha⁻¹ levels. While there may be some reason to believe
 553 over-application of nitrogen at the wrong time in the growing
 554 season could lead to reduced yields, these features are almost
 555 certainly an artifact of under sampling. In addition, the poly-
 556 nomial fit cannot capture the well-documented saturation effect
 557 of nitrogen application (e.g. Ingestad, 1977) as accurately as
 558 would be possible with a non-parametric model.

559 To assess the ability of the polynomial emulation to capture
 560 the behavior of complex process-based models, we evaluate the
 561 normalized emulator error. That is, for each grid cell, model,
 562 and scenario we evaluate the difference between the model yield
 563 and its emulation, normalized by the inter-model standard de-
 564 viation in yield projections. This metric implies that emulation
 565 is generally satisfactory, with several distinct exceptions. Al-
 566 most all model-crop combination emulators have normalized
 567 errors less than one over nearly all currently cultivated hectares
 568 (Figure 8), but some individual model-crop combinations are
 569 problematic (e.g. PROMET for rice and soy, JULES for soy
 570 and winter wheat, Figures ??–??). Normalized errors for soy
 571 are somewhat higher across all models not because emulator fi-
 572 delity is worse but because models agree more closely on yield
 573 changes for soy than for other crops (see Figure ??, lowering
 574 the denominator). Emulator performance often degrades in geo-
 575 graphic locations where crops are not currently cultivated. Fig-
 576 ure 9 shows a CARAIB case as an example, where emulator
 577 performance is satisfactory over cultivated areas for all crops
 578 other than soy, but uncultivated regions show some problematic
 579 areas.

580 It should be noted that this assessment metric is relatively
 581 forgiving. First, each emulation is evaluated against the sim-
 582 ulation actually used to train the emulator. Had we used a spline
 583 interpolation the error would necessarily be zero. Second, the
 584 performance metric scales emulator fidelity not by the mag-
 585 nitude of yield changes but by the inter-model spread in those
 586 changes. Where models differ more widely, the standard for
 587 emulators becomes less stringent. Because models disagree on
 588 the magnitude of CO₂ fertilization, this effect is readily seen
 589 when comparing assessments of emulator performance in sim-
 590 ulations at baseline CO₂ (Figure 8) with those at higher CO₂
 591 levels (Figure ??). Widening the inter-model spread leads to an
 592 apparent increase in emulator skill.



593 Figure 8: Assessment of emulator performance over currently cultivated areas
 594 based on normalized error (Equations 3, 2). We show performance of all 9
 595 models emulated, over all crops and all sampled T and P inputs, but with CO₂
 596 and nitrogen held fixed at baseline values. Large columns are crops and large
 597 rows models; squares within are T,P scenario pairs. Colors denote the fraction
 598 of currently cultivated hectares with $e < 1$. Of the 756 scenarios with these CO₂
 599 and N values, we consider only those for which all 9 models submitted data.
 600 JULES did not simulate spring wheat and LPJ-GUESS did not simulate rice
 601 and soy. Emulator performance is generally satisfactory, with some exceptions.
 602 Emulator failures (significant areas of poor performance) occur for individual
 603 crop-model combinations, with performance generally degrading for hotter and
 604 wetter scenarios.

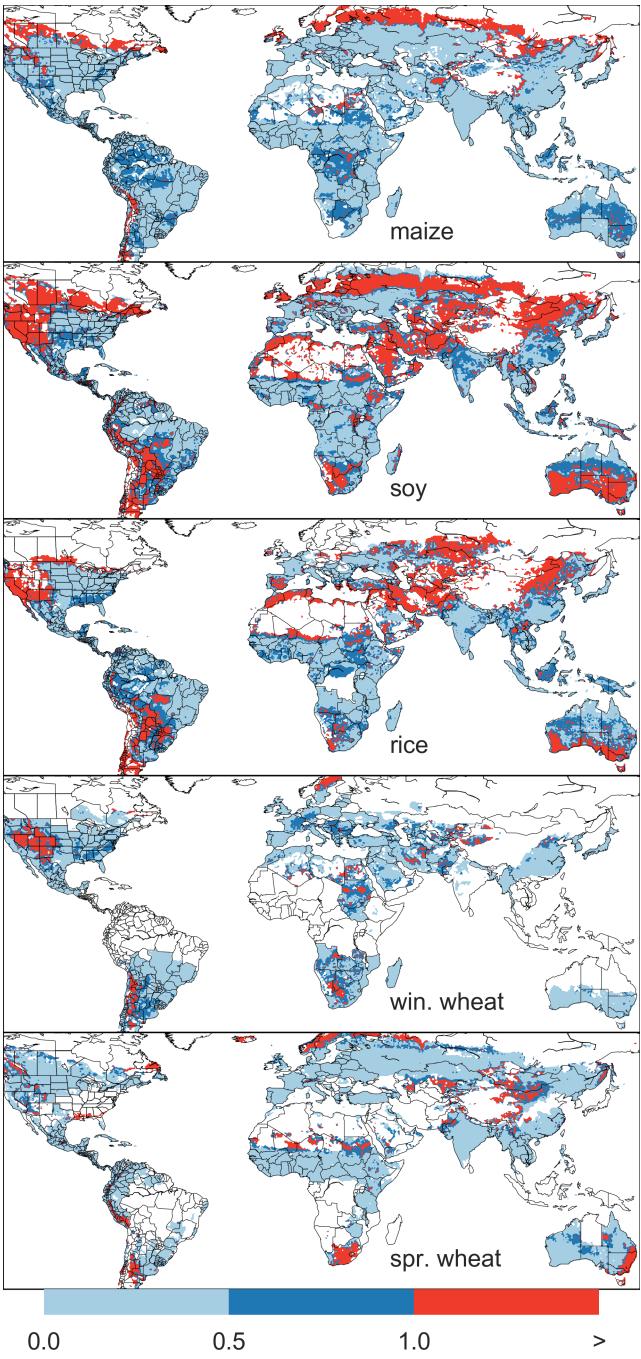


Figure 9: Illustration of our test of emulator performance, applied to the CARAIB model for the T+4 scenario for rain-fed crops. Contour colors indicate the normalized emulator error e , where $e > 1$ means that emulator error exceeds the multi-model standard deviation. White areas are those where crops are not simulated by this model. Models differ in their areas omitted, meaning the number of samples used to calculate the multi-model standard deviation is not spatially consistent in all locations. Emulator performance is generally good relative to model spread in areas where crops are currently cultivated (compare to Figure 1) and in temperate zones in general; emulation issues occur primarily in marginal areas with low yield potentials. For CARAIB, emulation of soy is more problematic, as was also shown in Figure 8.

3.4. Emulator applications

Because the emulator or “surrogate model” transforms the discrete simulation sample space into a continuous response surface at any geographic scale, it can be used for a variety of applications. Emulators provide an easy way to compare a ensembles of climate or impacts projections. They also provide a means for generating continuous damage functions. As an example, we show a damage function constructed from 4D emulations for aggregated yield at the global scale, for maize on currently cultivated land, with simulated values shown for comparison. (Figure 10; see Figures ??- ?? in the supplemental material for other crops and dimensions.) The emulated values closely match simulations even at this aggregation level. Note that these functions are presented only as examples and do not represent true global projections, because they are developed from simulation data with a uniform temperature shift while increases in global mean temperature should manifest non-uniformly. The global coverage of the GGCMI simulations allows impacts modelers to apply arbitrary geographically-varying climate projections, as well as arbitrary aggregation mask, to develop damage functions for any climate scenario and any geopolitical or geographic level.

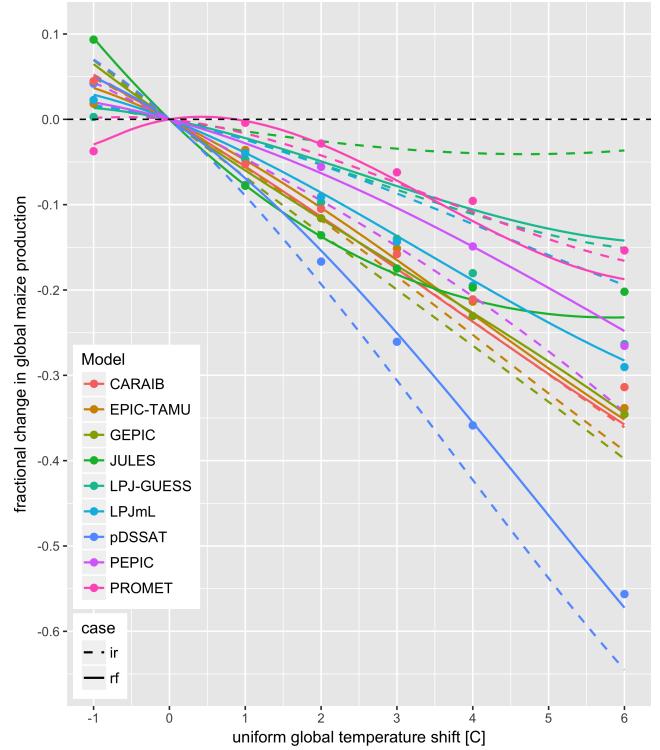


Figure 10: Global emulated damages for maize on currently cultivated lands for the GGCMI models emulated, for uniform temperature shifts with other inputs held at baseline. (The damage function is created from aggregating up emulated values at the grid cell level, not from a regression of global mean yields.) Lines are emulations for rain-fed (solid) and irrigated (dashed) crops; for comparison, dots are the simulated values for the rain-fed case. For most models, irrigated crops show a sharper reduction than do rain-fed because of the locations of cultivated areas: irrigated crops tend to be grown in warmer areas where impacts are more severe for a given temperature shift. (The exceptions are PROMET, JULES, and LPJmL.) For other crops and scenarios see Figures ??- ?? in the supplemental material.

618 4. Conclusions and discussion

619 The GGCMI Phase II experiment assess sensitivities of
620 process-based crop yield models to changing climate and man-
621 agement inputs, and was designed to allow not only comparison
622 across models but evaluation of complex interactions between
623 driving factors (CO_2 , temperature, precipitation, and applied
624 nitrogen) and identification of geographic shifts in high yield
625 potential locations. While the richness of the dataset invites
626 further analysis, we show only a selection of insights derived
627 from the simulations. Across the major crops, inter-model un-
628 certainty is greatest for wheat and least for soy. Across factors
629 impacting yields, inter-model-uncertainty is largest for CO_2 fer-
630 tilization and nitrogen response effects. Across geographic re-
631 gions, inter-model uncertainty is largest in the high latitudes
632 where yields may increase, and model projections are most ro-
633 bust in low latitudes where yield impacts are largest.

634 Model performance when compared to historical data is
635 mixed, with models performing better for maize and soy than
636 for rice and wheat. The value of utilizing multiple models is
637 illustrated by the distribution in performance skill across differ-
638 ent countries and crops. An end-user of the simulation outputs
639 or emulator tool may pick and choose models based on histori-
640 cal skill to provide the most faithful temperature and precipita-
641 tion response depending on their application. The nitrogen and
642 CO_2 responses were not validated in this work.

643 One counterintuitive result is that irrigated maize shows
644 steeper yield reductions under warming than does rain-fed
645 maize when considered only over currently cultivated land. The
646 effect is the result of geographic differences in cultivated area.
647 In any given location, irrigation increases crop resiliency to
648 temperature increase, but irrigated maize is grown in warmer lo-
649 cations where the impacts of warming are more severe (Figures
650 ??-??). The same behavior holds for rice and winter wheat,
651 but not for soy or spring wheat (Figures ??-??). Irrigated wheat
652 and maize are also more sensitive to nitrogen fertilization lev-
653 els, presumably because growth in rain-fed crops is also water-
654 limited (Figure ??). (Soy as a nitrogen-fixer is relatively in-
655 sensitive to nitrogen, and rice is not generally grown in water-
656 limited conditions.)

657 We show that emulation of the output of these complex re-
658 sponds is possible even with a relatively simple reduced-form
659 statistical model and a limited library of simulations. Emula-
660 tion therefore offers the opportunity of producing rapid assess-
661 ments of agricultural impacts for arbitrary climate scenarios in
662 a computationally non-intensive way. The resulting tool should
663 aid in impacts assessment, economic studies, and uncertainty
664 analyses. Emulator parameter values also provide a useful way
665 to compare sensitivities across models to different climate and
666 management inputs, and the terms in the polynomial fits offer
667 the possibility of physical interpretation of these dependencies
668 to some degree.

669 We provide this simulation output dataset for further analysis
670 by the community as we have only scratched the surface with
671 this work. Each simulation run includes year to year variabil-
672 ity in yields under different climate and management regimes.
673 Some of the precipitation and temperature space has been lost

674 due to the aggregation in the time dimension for the emula-
675 tor presented here (i.e. the + 6 C simulation in the hottest year
676 of the historical period compared to the coldest historical year,
677 or precipitation perturbations in the driest historical year etc).
678 Development of a year-to-year emulator or an emulator at dif-
679 ferent spatial scales may provide useful for some IAM appli-
680 cations. More exhaustive analysis of different statistical model
681 specification for emulation will likely provide additional pre-
682 dictive skill over the specification provided here. The poten-
683 tially richest area for further analysis is the interactions be-
684 tween input variable especially the Nitrogen and CO_2 interac-
685 tions with weather and with each other. More robust quantifica-
686 tion of the sensitivity to the input drivers (and there differences
687 across models), as well as quantification in differences in un-
688 certainty across input drivers. Adaptation via growing season
689 changes were also simulated and are available in the database,
690 though this dimension was not presented or analyzed here.

691 The emulation approach presented here has some limitations.
692 Because the GGCMI simulations apply uniform perturbations
693 to historical climate inputs, they do not sample changes in
694 higher order moments. The emulation therefore does not ad-
695 dress the crop yield impacts of potential changes in climate
696 variability. While some information could be extracted from
697 consideration of year-over-year variability, more detailed sim-
698 ulations and analysis are likely necessary to diagnose the im-
699 pact of changes in variance and sub-growing-season tempo-
700 ral effects. Additionally, the emulator is intended to provide
701 the change in yield from a historical mean baseline value and
702 should be used in conjunction with historical data (or data prod-
703 ucts) or a historical mean emulator (not presented here).

704 The future of food security is one of the larger challenges
705 facing humanity at present. The development (and emulation)
706 of multi-model ensembles such as GGCMI Phase II provides
707 a way to begin to quantify uncertainties in crop responses to
708 a range of potential climate inputs and explore the potential
709 benefits of adaptive responses. Emulation also allow making
710 state-of-the-art simulation results available to a wide research
711 community as simple, computationally tractable tools that can
712 be used by downstream modelers to understand the socioeco-
713 nomic impacts of crop response to climate change.

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