

Abstract submission

Username

Joseph Penlap

Email

joseph.penlap@inria.fr

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Name of presenting author

Joseph Penlap

Affiliation of presenting author

Inria Center at Université Côte d'Azur

Contribution title

Coupling plant physiology and pest demography to understand plant-nematode interactions

Other authors

S. Touzeau, F. Grogard, V. Baldazzi

Your abstract

Root-knot nematodes (RKN) of the genus *Meloidogyne* spp. cause considerable yield losses in numerous crops worldwide. The dynamics and outcomes of crop--pest interactions depend on the ecological conditions, including the phenotypes of the interacting species, their physiology and the abiotic environment.

In theoretical ecology, most mathematical models that describe these interactions either focus on plant physiology and do not consider pest dynamics, or conversely are based on the pest life cycle but neglect plant physiology and defense response. We are particularly interested in understanding the complex interplay between plant and nematodes.

To do this, we built a mechanistic model of plant-RKN interactions that explicitly couples plant physiology and pest demography, including both the known effect of pests on crop and crop on pests. Based on a mechanistic description of resource acquisition and transport, the plant model represents both vegetative and reproductive phase.

The RKN model includes the free-living larval stage and the nematode development stages within the plant root. The model was calibrated on two plant species, tomato and pepper, with or without nematode inoculation. Model calibration is a challenge, as it relies on heterogeneous and fairly scarce data. Indeed, plant experiments focusing on roots are necessarily destructive, hence the scarcity of data and the need to incorporate data from different experimental sources. The model was then used to analyse the complex interplay between plant physiological traits, phenology and nematode biology that affects system dynamics.

Eventually, the model will help to identify the plant traits that characterize susceptible and

tolerant plants, opening new perspectives for varietal selection.

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