

# Trilinear Higgs boson coupling variations for di-Higgs production with full NLO QCD predictions in Powheg

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**Abstract.** The couplings of the Higgs boson to other particles are increasingly well-measured by the ATLAS and CMS experiments. Yet there is still room for improvement in the limits set on the Higgs trilinear self-coupling, mainly due to the low cross-section for Higgs boson pair production. We present inclusive and differential results for the NLO QCD corrections to Higgs pair production with the full top-quark mass dependence, where the Higgs trilinear self-coupling is varied to non-SM values. The calculation of the two-loop virtual contributions has been performed numerically using CPUs and GPUs. The fixed-order calculation is supplemented by parton showering within the *Powheg-B0X-V2* event generator, and both *Pythia8* and *Herwig7* parton-shower algorithms are implemented in a preliminary study of shower effects.

## 1. Introduction

Impressive experimental constraints have been set on the Higgs boson couplings to vector bosons and heavy fermions [1, 2, 3, 4]. The Higgs potential, in contrast, leaves more room for New Physics. In particular, the Higgs boson trilinear self-coupling  $\lambda$  can be experimentally constrained by exclusion limits on Higgs pair production  $pp \rightarrow hh$  [5, 6]. Higher-order corrections to Higgs pair production are routinely calculated in the heavy top-quark mass limit (HTL)  $m_t \rightarrow \infty$ , where the top-quark degrees of freedom are integrated out [7, 8]. The NLO QCD corrections with the full top-quark mass dependence were only computed more recently [9, 10, 11]. They are based on a numerical evaluation of the two-loop contribution to  $gg \rightarrow hh$  performed via sector decomposition. For non-SM values of the Higgs couplings, results were computed at NLO QCD with the full top-quark mass dependence for a class of extensions of the SM in Ref. [12].

In the following, an implementation of the full NLO QCD corrections into the *Powheg-B0X-V2* event generator [13, 14, 15] is presented. In this framework, the Higgs trilinear self-coupling can be varied, as well as the top-Higgs Yukawa coupling. Total cross-sections are computed for  $\sqrt{s} = 13, 14$  and 27 TeV at the (HE-)LHC. Differential results are shown for  $\sqrt{s} = 14$  TeV. The fixed-order calculation is then matched to both *Pythia8* [16] and *Herwig7* [17] parton showers. For a more detailed description, the reader is referred to Ref. [18].

## 2. Description of the calculation

The calculation is based on the setup presented in Ref. [19] for the case of the SM. The leading-order amplitude has been computed analytically. The real-emission contributions were implemented in GOSAM [20, 21] and interfaced to the Powheg-BOX, and the corresponding scalar one-loop amplitudes were evaluated with Ninja [22], golem95C [23, 24] and OneLOop [25] (except for the scalar four-point function, which is taken from VBFNLO [26, 27] for numerical stability reasons). The two-loop amplitude for the full-theory virtual contribution was adapted from Refs. [9, 10], which used an extension of the GOSAM package. There, the integral reduction was performed with REDUZE2 [28], and the integrals were numerically evaluated with SECDEC3 [29]. For a fast convergence, the integration was performed within a Quasi-Monte-Carlo implementation using a rank-1 shifted lattice [30, 31]. The integrals were computed with 16 dual NVIDIA TESLA K20XM GPUs. The top-quark and Higgs masses have been set to  $m_t = 173$  GeV and  $m_h = 125$  GeV. Thus, the integrals depend only on the two Mandelstam invariants  $\hat{s}$  and  $\hat{t}$ .

A grid for the two-loop amplitude was constructed in both variables using 5291 pre-sampled phase-space points. We split the amplitude in two contributions: diagrams containing the trilinear Higgs coupling are called *triangle-like*, and those that do not *box-like* (see Fig. 1 for two leading-order diagrams).



**Figure 1.** Triangle-like (left) and box-like (right) diagrams contribute to the full amplitude. The former contain the Higgs self-coupling, while the latter do not.

At any order in QCD, the squared matrix-element can thus be written as a second-order polynomial in  $\lambda$ :

$$M_\lambda \equiv |\mathcal{M}_\lambda|^2 = \mathcal{M}_B^* \mathcal{M}_B + \lambda (\mathcal{M}_B^* \mathcal{M}_T + \mathcal{M}_T^* \mathcal{M}_B) + \lambda^2 \mathcal{M}_T^* \mathcal{M}_T. \quad (1)$$

The two-loop amplitude for an arbitrary value of  $\lambda$  can be reconstructed from the squared matrix-element computed for three different values of  $\lambda$ . In our case, we chose  $\kappa_\lambda = \lambda_{\text{BSM}}/\lambda_{\text{SM}} \in \{-1, 0, 1\}$  and generate a new grid for the user-defined value of  $\lambda$ , where the amplitude for each pre-sampled phase-space point is calculated as:

$$M_\lambda = M_0 \cdot (1 - \lambda^2) + \frac{M_1}{2} \cdot (\lambda + \lambda^2) + \frac{M_{-1}}{2} \cdot (-\lambda + \lambda^2). \quad (2)$$

The grid produced for the two-loop amplitude is fed to an interpolation framework, which interfaces the result at *any* phase-space point  $M_\lambda(\hat{s}, \hat{t})$  to Powheg.

## 3. Total and differential cross-sections for variations of the trilinear coupling

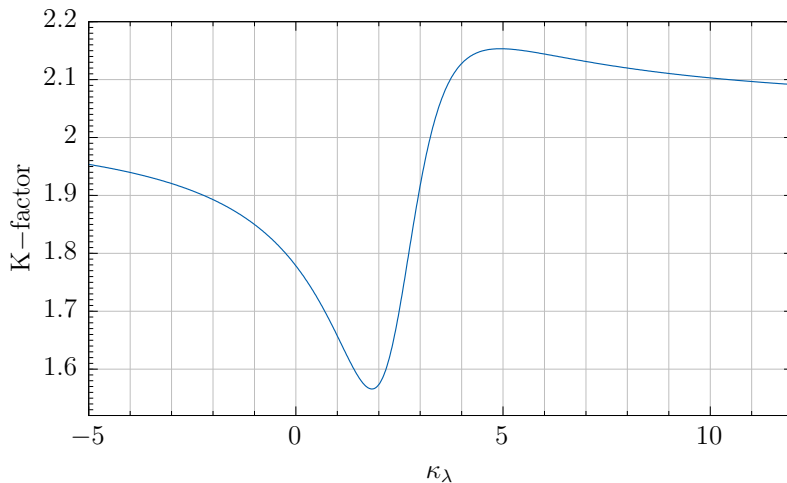
The results given below are produced using the PDF4LHC15\_nlo\_30\_pdfas sets [32, 33, 34, 35] interfaced to Powheg via LHAPDF6 [36], with the corresponding value of  $\alpha_s$ . The top-quark mass is renormalised in the on-shell scheme and is set to  $m_t = 173$  GeV, as in the virtual amplitude. The mass of the Higgs boson is fixed to  $m_h = 125$  GeV, and the top-quark and

Higgs widths are set to zero. Jets are clustered using the anti- $k_T$  algorithm [37] as implemented in **FastJet** [38, 39], with a jet distance parameter of  $R = 0.4$  and a minimum transverse momentum requirement of  $p_T = 20$  GeV. The central renormalisation and factorisation scales are set to  $\mu_R = \mu_F = \mu_0 = m_{hh}/2$ . Scale uncertainties are estimated by 2-point variations  $\mu_R = \mu_F = c \mu_0$ , with  $c \in \{0.5, 2.0\}$ .

Total cross-sections for Higgs pair production at the (HE-)LHC are shown in Table 1, for centre-of-mass energies of  $\sqrt{s} = 13, 14$  and 27 TeV and different values of the Higgs self-coupling  $\kappa_\lambda = \lambda_{\text{BSM}}/\lambda_{\text{SM}}$ . They are accompanied by their relative scale uncertainties, which are of the order  $\mathcal{O}(10-20\%)$ . Notably, the  $K$ -factors at 14 TeV show a sizeable dependence on the trilinear coupling  $\kappa_\lambda$ . In the HTL at NLO QCD, Ref. [40] suggested a variation of the  $K$ -factors with  $\kappa_\lambda$  of the order  $\mathcal{O}(2-3\%)$ . In the full theory, the  $K$ -factors are found between 1.56 and 2.15 for variations of the trilinear coupling  $-5 \leq \kappa_\lambda \leq 12$ , see Fig. 2.

$\lambda_{\text{BSM}}/\lambda_{\text{SM}}$	$\sigma_{\text{NLO}}@13\text{TeV}$ [fb]	$\sigma_{\text{NLO}}@14\text{TeV}$ [fb]	$\sigma_{\text{NLO}}@27\text{TeV}$ [fb]	K-factor@14TeV
-1	$116.71^{+16.4\%}_{-14.3\%}$	$136.91^{+16.4\%}_{-13.9\%}$	$504.9^{+14.1\%}_{-11.8\%}$	1.86
0	$62.51^{+15.8\%}_{-13.7\%}$	$73.64^{+15.4\%}_{-13.4\%}$	$275.29^{+13.2\%}_{-11.3\%}$	1.79
1	$27.84^{+11.6\%}_{-12.9\%}$	$32.88^{+13.5\%}_{-12.5\%}$	$127.7^{+11.5\%}_{-10.4\%}$	1.66
2	$12.42^{+13.1\%}_{-12.0\%}$	$14.75^{+12.0\%}_{-11.8\%}$	$59.10^{+10.2\%}_{-9.7\%}$	1.56
2.4	$11.65^{+13.9\%}_{-12.7\%}$	$13.79^{+13.5\%}_{-12.5\%}$	$53.67^{+11.4\%}_{-10.3\%}$	1.65
3	$16.28^{+16.2\%}_{-15.3\%}$	$19.07^{+17.1\%}_{-14.1\%}$	$69.84^{+14.6\%}_{-12.1\%}$	1.90
5	$81.74^{+20.0\%}_{-15.6\%}$	$95.22^{+19.7\%}_{-11.5\%}$	$330.61^{+17.4\%}_{-13.6\%}$	2.14

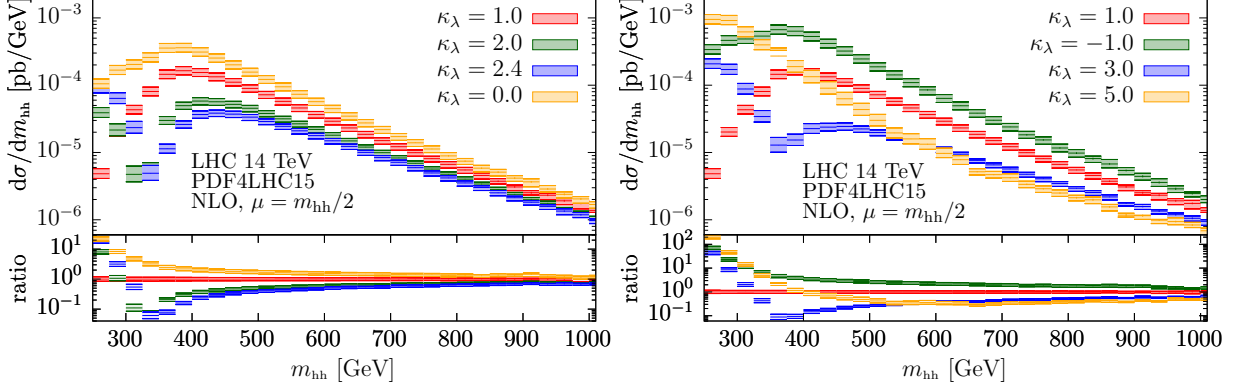
**Table 1.** Total cross-sections are given for Higgs pair production at NLO QCD at (HE-)LHC for centre-of-mass energies of  $\sqrt{s} = 13, 14$  and 27 TeV. The scale uncertainties are given in percent.



**Figure 2.** The dependence of the  $K$ -factor on the trilinear Higgs self-couplings  $\kappa_\lambda$  is given at  $\sqrt{s} = 14$  TeV in the full theory.

In Fig. 3, distributions of the invariant mass of the Higgs pair system  $m_{hh}$  are displayed for different values of  $\kappa_\lambda$ . They exhibit a characteristic dip around  $m_{hh} \sim 350$  GeV for values of

the trilinear coupling around  $\kappa_\lambda = 2.4$ , which is not present in the SM case. This value of the trilinear self-coupling corresponds to a maximally destructive interference between triangle-like and box-like diagrams.

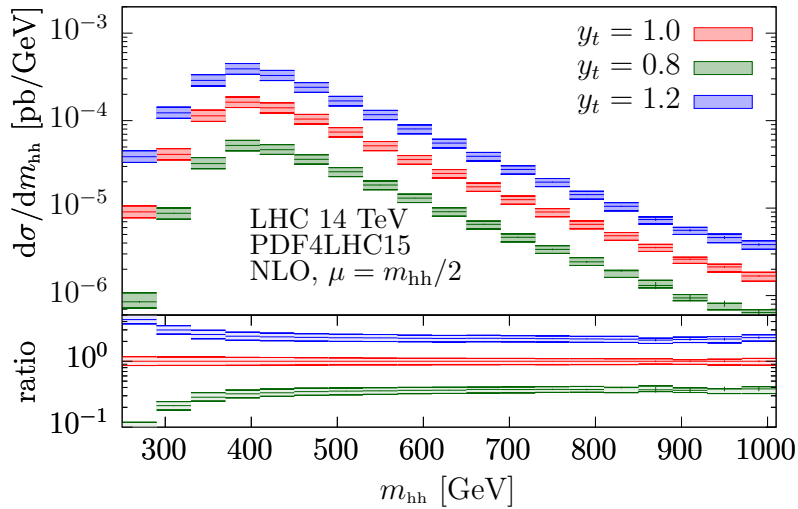


**Figure 3.** Distributions of the Higgs boson pair invariant mass  $m_{hh}$  for various values of  $\kappa_\lambda$  at  $\sqrt{s} = 14$  TeV. The uncertainty bands are from scale variations as described in the text.

Note that since the contributions can be separated in triangle- and box-like diagrams, the top-Higgs Yukawa coupling  $y_t$  can easily be varied within the same code. A non-SM value of  $y_t$  yields in Eq. (1):

$$|\mathcal{M}_\lambda|^2 = y_t^4 \left[ \mathcal{M}_B^* \mathcal{M}_B + \frac{\kappa_\lambda}{y_t} (\mathcal{M}_B^* \mathcal{M}_T + \mathcal{M}_T^* \mathcal{M}_B) + \left( \frac{\kappa_\lambda}{y_t} \right)^2 \mathcal{M}_T^* \mathcal{M}_T \right]. \quad (3)$$

The cross-section can be computed by setting the corresponding value of the ratio  $\kappa_\lambda/y_t$  in the MC generator, and multiplying by an overall factor. For example,  $\sigma(y_t = 1.2, \kappa_\lambda = 1) = (1.2)^4 \sigma(y_t = 1, \kappa_\lambda = 1/1.2)$ . Fig. 4 shows the distribution of  $m_{hh}$  for extreme values of the top-Higgs Yukawa coupling that are still not experimentally excluded [4].

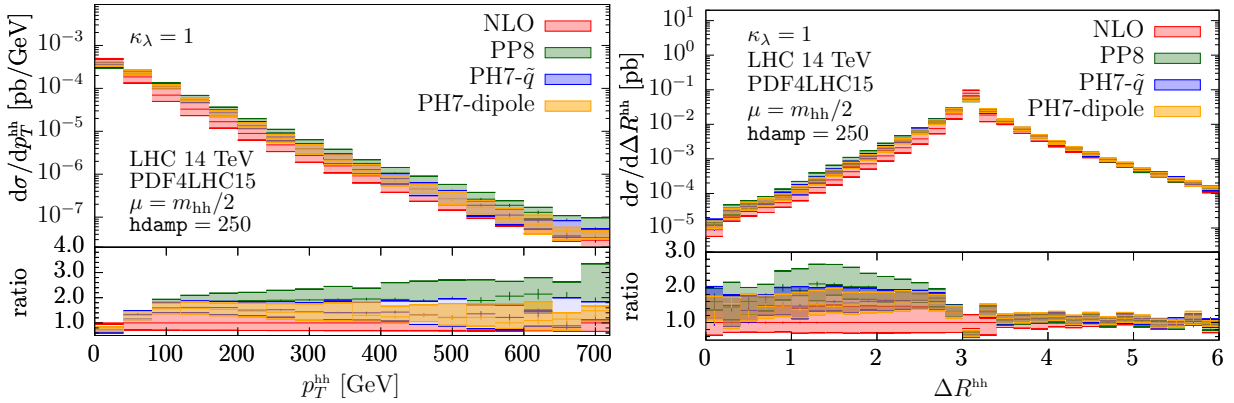


**Figure 4.** The distribution of the Higgs pair invariant mass  $m_{hh}$  for values of the top-Higgs Yukawa coupling  $y_t \in \{0.8, 1, 1.2\}$ .

#### 4. Parton-shower matched results

We now consider NLO distributions matched to a parton shower. The Les Houches Events (LHE) [41] files produced by `Powheg` are used as input to the `Pythia8.235` and `Herwig7.1.4` parton showers. In the case of `Herwig7`, both the default angular-ordered  $\tilde{q}$  and the dipole showers are compared. The radiation-regulating `hdamp` parameter in `Powheg` is set to `hdamp = 250` GeV. Multiple-parton interactions and hadronisation are switched off. The default tunes are used for both parton showers.

Fig. 5 displays the transverse momentum of the Higgs boson pair  $p_T^{hh}$  and the separation between the two Higgs bosons  $\Delta R^{hh} = \sqrt{(\eta_1 - \eta_2)^2 + (\phi_1 - \phi_2)^2}$ . Considering first the distribution of  $p_T^{hh}$ , both `Herwig7` parton showers (PH7- $\tilde{q}$  and PH7-dipole) generate similar results and reproduce the fixed-order NLO prediction in the far- $p_T^{hh}$  range. In contrast, `Pythia8` agrees with `Herwig7` only for small transverse momenta, while it produces much harder radiation in the tail of the distribution. The same comments apply to the  $\Delta R^{hh}$  observable in the region  $0 < \Delta R^{hh} < \pi$  where shower contributions are important. Large parton-shower matching uncertainties in Higgs pair production have already been emphasized in Ref. [42].



**Figure 5.** The transverse momentum  $p_T^{hh}$  of one (any) Higgs boson and the separation between the two Higgs bosons  $\Delta R^{hh}$  are shown for the fixed-order NLO calculation and three parton showers, in the  $\kappa_\lambda = 1$  case.

#### 5. Conclusion

We have presented a new package for Higgs boson pair production at NLO QCD with full top-quark mass dependence. In this package, the trilinear Higgs self-coupling can be varied explicitly. Within the same code, simultaneous variations of the top-Higgs Yukawa coupling can also be produced. The public code for the `Powheg-BOX-V2` event generator can be found at the website <http://powhegbox.mib.infn.it> in the `User-Processes-V2/ggHH` subdirectory. As a side note, approximations related to the HTL can be enabled for comparison purposes. We have emphasized that the full  $m_t$ -dependent NLO QCD corrections are accompanied by large  $K$ -factors. Moreover, they induce a sizeable dependence of the  $K$ -factors on the trilinear Higgs self-coupling  $\kappa_\lambda$ , which is not present in the HTL. We have compared fixed-order predictions at NLO QCD to parton-shower matched results. Both the `Pythia8` and `Herwig7` ( $\tilde{q}$  and dipole) parton showers can be matched directly to LHE files produced by `Powheg`. Full particle-level events can be produced with our framework, including Higgs boson decays and hadronisation.

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