



Is sunflower intercropped with soybean an efficient solution for increasing natural resources use and yield production?

Hélène Tribouillois, Philippe Cristante, André Estragnat, David Champclou, Grégory Vericel, Nathalie Landé, Laurent Bedoussac, Eric Justes

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Sunflower-soybean intercropping

An efficient solution for increasing natural resources use efficiency and yield production?

H. TRIBOUILLOIS¹, P. CRISTANTE², A. ESTRAGNAT², D. CHAMPCLOU¹,
G. VERICEL¹, N. LANDE², L. BEDOUSSAC³ and E. JUSTES¹

¹INRA, UMR AGIR, 31326 CASTANET TOLOSAN, France
²CETIOM, Avenue Lucien Bretignières, 78850 THIVERVAL GRIGNON, France
³ENFA, UMR AGIR, 31326 CASTANET TOLOSAN, France

Nathalie LANDE
CETIOM
lande@cetiom.fr

Laurent BEDOUSSAC
ENFA, UMR AGIR
laurent.bedoussac@toulouse.inra.fr

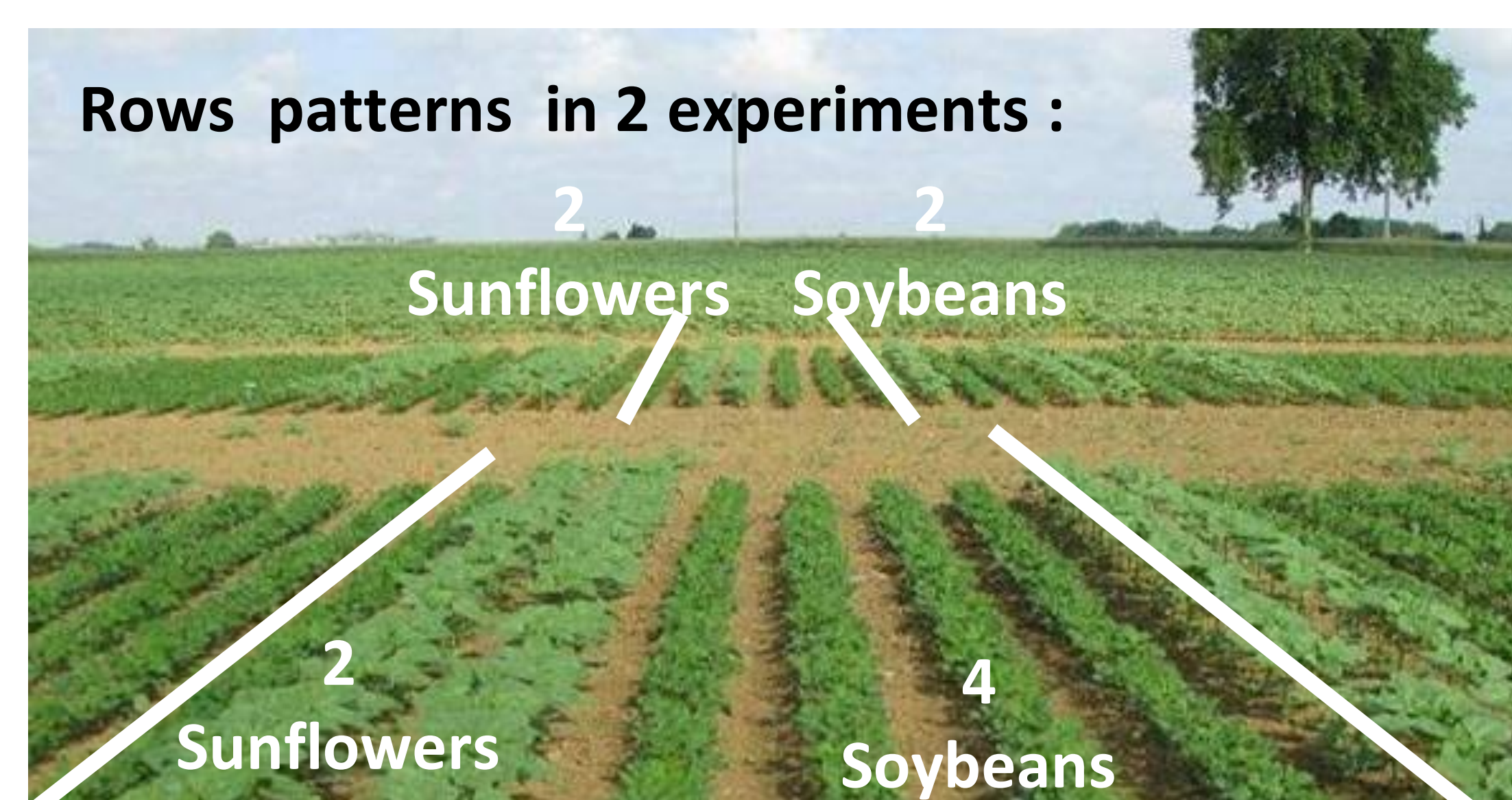


OBJECTIVES

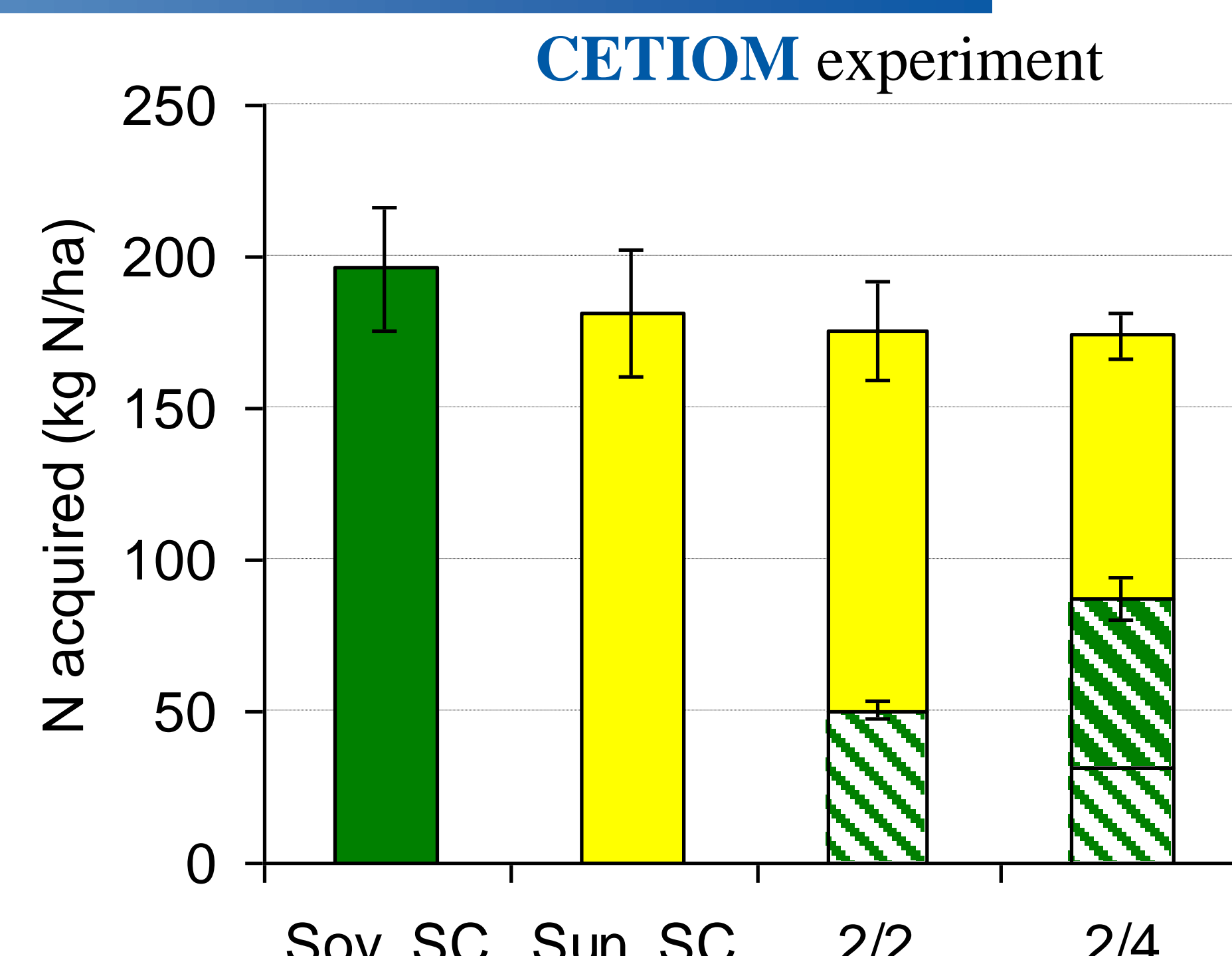
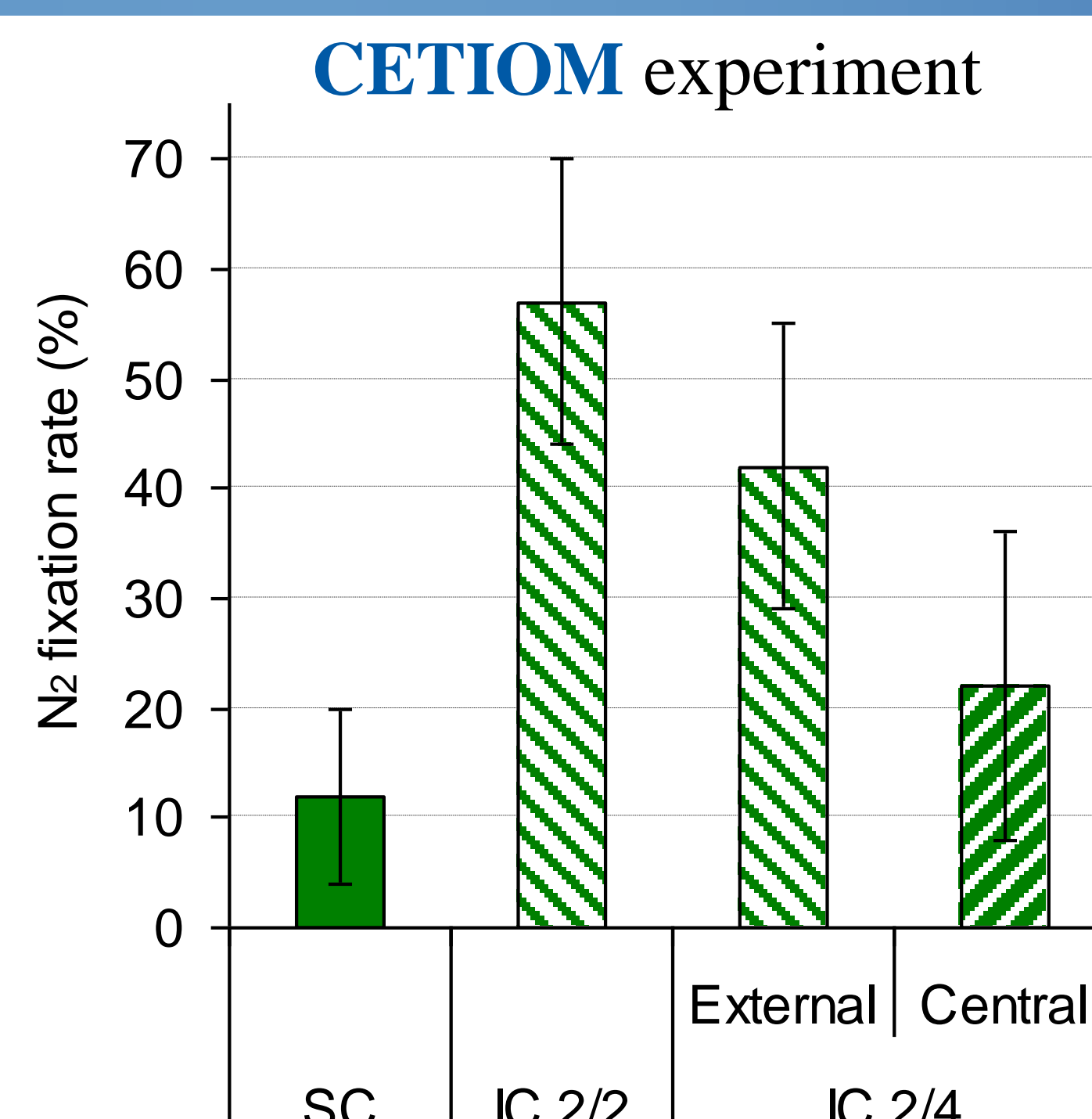
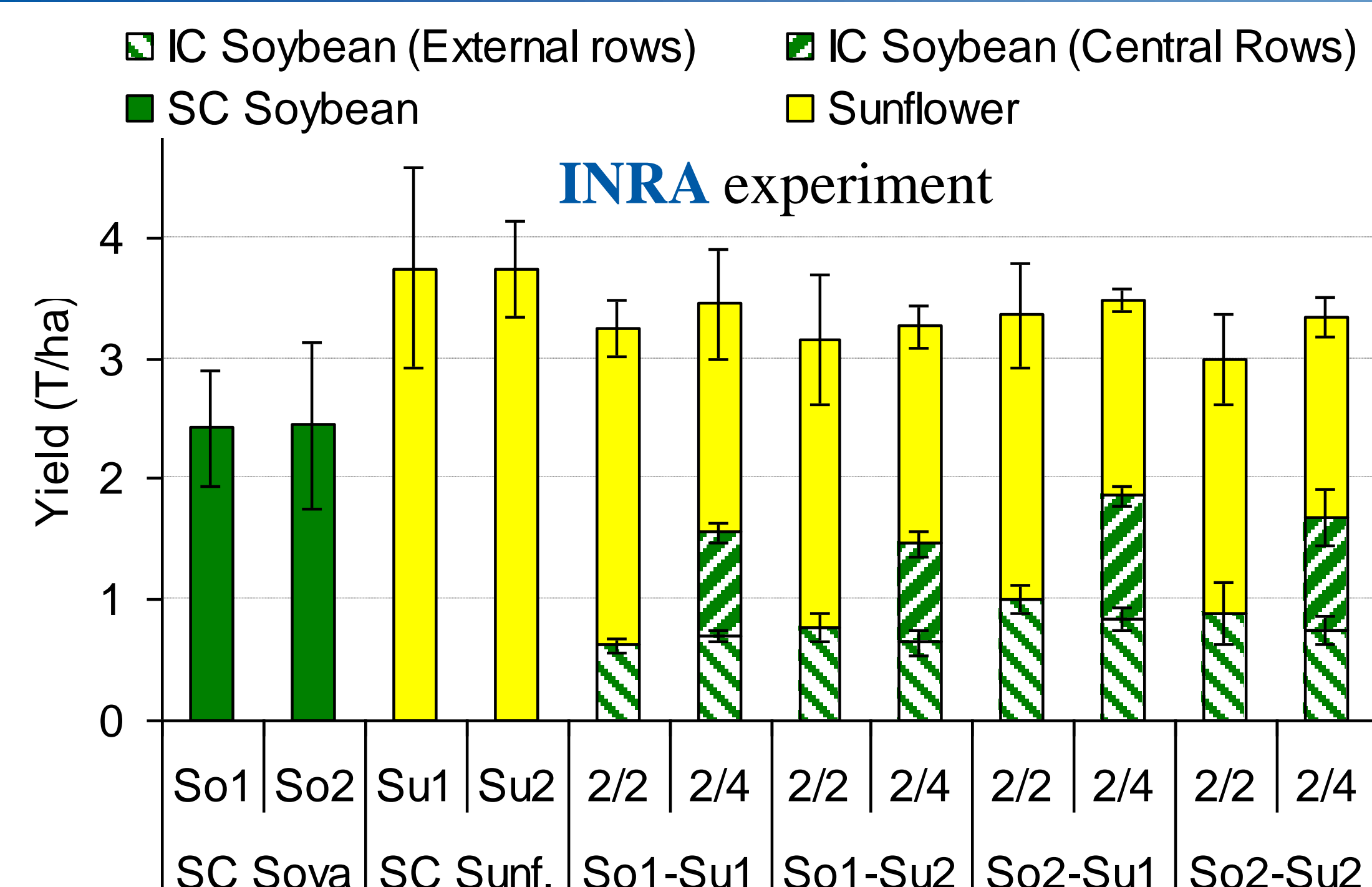
- Intercropping (IC)** - the simultaneous growing of two or more species in the same field for a significant period - **can improve the use of environmental resources** (light, nutrients and water) resulting in yield and quality advantages compared to sole cropping (SC).
- Few papers - mainly coming from Africa and Asia – deals with **sunflower-soybean intercropping**.
- No reference in temperate climates despite these crops are **adapted to Southern Europe conditions**.
- Aim of our study:** **analyze the dynamical functioning of sunflower-soybean intercrops and their performances in order to determine their efficiency and the conditions to maximize resources use.**

MATERIAL AND METHODS

- Experiments were carried out in 2010 on **CETIOM** and **INRA** stations (SW France)
- The two species were **sown at the same time** (avril or may) but **harvested separately**
- Three main treatments were compared:**
 - i) **SC Soya:** cv. Isidor (So1) earlier than cv. Ecudor (So2) ;
 - ii) **SC Sunflower:** cv. Fabiola (Su1) earlier than cv. Melody (Su2) ;
 - iii) **Soya-Sunflower IC:** Each specie sown at the SC row density
- Two spatial row structures:** i) **2/2** (2 sunflower rows alternated with 2 soya rows)
ii) **2/4** (2 sunflower rows alternated with 4 soya rows)
- CETIOM** experiment was irrigated (50 mm) with no fertilizer (initial soil N content of 361 kg N/ha)
- INRA** experiment was not irrigated and soybean rows were fertilized in order to compensate the inoculation inefficiency



RESULTS



- Total IC yield > SC Soya but < than SC Sunflower
- Soya yield higher in 2/4 IC than in 2/2 IC
- Sunflower more productive than Soya in IC**
- IC Soya N₂ fixation rate > SC Soya which was very low due to high initial soil N
- Sunflower competition for soil N increase N₂ fixation rate of neighboring soya rows
- N acquired in IC lower than sole crops and IC Soya N acquired highest in 2/4 IC

CONCLUSIONS

- Sunflower-soybean best performances** were obtained with : i) **low inputs conditions** ; ii) **4 soybean – 2 sunflower** rows structure and iii) **the latest soybean cultivar intercropped with the earliest sunflower**.
- Intercropped **sunflower always presented a competitive advantage on the soybean** leading to low legume yields.
- Further genotype-environment interactions researches are needed** for optimizing resources use such as exploring precocity, aerial architecture of genotypes and adapting row structure and management, by favoring complementarities.



INSTITUTIONS



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