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## Water supply scenarios of agricultural areas: Environmental performance through Territorial Life Cycle Assessment

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13 **Abstract:** This paper aims to assess the conditions under which hydraulic projects can be considered  
14 as an efficient option, from an environmental point of view, to secure water supply of agricultural  
15 areas using the Territorial Life Cycle Assessment (T-LCA) methodology. Firstly, the environmental  
16 performance of three theoretical agricultural land-use planning scenarios are defined: (1) a business-  
17 as-usual case without irrigation, (2) irrigation with an Inter-Basin Water Transfer (IBWT) and (3) with  
18 an Agricultural Reservoir (AR). These are all assessed by computing the territorial eco-efficiency (i.e. a  
19 ratio between the services provided by land planning scenarios and their related environmental  
20 impacts). Secondly, Territorial Life Cycle Assessment methodology was used to assess the water-  
21 energy-infrastructure nexus between the two hydraulic projects. Results indicate that the eco-  
22 efficiencies of the scenarios vary according to the service considered and to the type of land use. For  
23 land management or economic functions, the scenario without irrigation can perform better, while

24 hydraulic projects are more eco-efficient for functions related to biomass production. The analysis of  
25 the water-energy-infrastructure nexus highlights the trade-offs between the two types of project. On  
26 one hand, IBWT allows for the use of a low-stress water resource and less energy, but may require  
27 high material consumption. On the other hand, AR uses less material while relying on a more scarce  
28 water resource. IBWT performs better than AR if the pipe length is less than 100 km, with a water  
29 allocation of 1% (proportion of the infrastructure allocated to the considered agriculture area). This  
30 study underlines the importance of considering the territorial context in the environmental  
31 assessment of land planning projects in order to support decision-making.

32 **Keywords:** Eco-efficiency, Decision making, Life Cycle Assessment, irrigation, Agricultural reservoir,  
33 Water transfer

34

35 **Abbreviations:**

36 IBWT: Inter-Bassin Water Transfer

37 AR: Agricultural Reservoir

38 WSN: Water Supply Network

39 OIT: On-field Irrigation Technology

40 PII: Primary Irrigation Infrastructure

41 SII: Secondary Irrigation Infrastructure

42 TII: Tertiary Irrigation Infrastructure

43 CDO: Controlled Designation of Origin

44 PGI: Protected Geographical Indication

45

## 46 1. Introduction

47 Agriculture is essential for humanity to meet its food requirements and employs more than a quarter  
48 of the world's population (The World Bank, 2021). However, it generates multiple impacts on the  
49 environment. Agricultural practices and soil occupation release between 15% and 24% of global  
50 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Vermeulen et al., 2012). On one hand, agriculture is by far the  
51 primary consumer of water in the world, reaching 70%-80% of the total consumption in the arid and  
52 semi-arid zones (Fererres and Rabanales, 2007), and is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss,  
53 ecosystem destruction and freshwater pollution (Rockström et al., 2020). On the other hand,  
54 agriculture faces challenges posed by worldwide issues such as climate change. This global change is  
55 expected to induce rises in temperature and atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations,  
56 precipitation changes, more frequent occurrences of pests and diseases and of extreme heat and  
57 drought, which in turn should affect crop yields and nutritional quality (Lobell and Gourdjji, 2012).  
58 Hence, due to the global changes induced by human activity and a growing world population, food  
59 security is becoming one of the challenges of the coming century and adaptation solutions must be  
60 found (Vermeulen et al., 2012).

61 Irrigation contributes to increasing agricultural yields in dryland areas and is one of the main  
62 adaptation strategies implemented for agriculture in the face of climate change, as it makes it  
63 possible to secure production yields in the face of increasing drought and temperature (Mbow et al.,  
64 2019). Large-scale planning projects can be implemented to secure the water supply of agricultural  
65 territories such as water transfers (Piao et al., 2010) or reservoirs (Gorguner and Kavvas, 2020).

66 These hydraulic infrastructures have a long lifetime, lasting around 50 years (Raluy et al., 2005b).  
67 Therefore an ex ante environmental assessment is required to support local decision-making as well  
68 as assist territorial planners for the selection of the least impactful alternative for the environment.  
69 Indeed, territorial planners require a help-to-decision tool in order to take decisions without  
70 regretting the construction of long-lasting infrastructures that present high economical costs and

71 environmental impacts. This assessment should take into account multiple categories of  
72 environmental impacts and a lifecycle perspective to avoid pollution transfers within the water-  
73 energy nexus (Sharif et al., 2019). Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is a well-established and recognized  
74 methodology to be applied for quantifying the environmental performance of products and services  
75 (ISO, 2006a, 2006b). It is a multi-criteria environmental impact assessment method used to quantify  
76 the potential impacts of the life cycles of human activities on ecosystems, mineral and fossil  
77 resources as well as on human health.

78 Several studies have used LCA to compare the environmental impact of a variety of hydraulic  
79 structures (Byrne et al., 2017) such as water transfers (Muñoz et al., 2010), reservoirs (Ghimire et al.,  
80 2014), groundwater pumping (Pradeleix et al., 2015), water reuse (Maesele and Roux, 2021) and  
81 desalination plants (Raluy et al., 2005a). However, these studies calculate impacts for a functional  
82 unit of 1 m<sup>3</sup> of water delivered to the end-user. The boundaries stop at the water supply gate.  
83 Therefore, they do not grasp the entire range of services provided by irrigation, such as the territorial  
84 socio-economic benefits resulting from agricultural yield conservation. These limitations are inherent  
85 of the LCA framework which is a product oriented method at a microscale and do not allow for the  
86 full integration of the territorial context, and multifunctionality (Loiseau et al., 2018). The choice of  
87 water source as well as the functional unit for water supply systems have been found to greatly  
88 contribute to the variability of the water supply impacts (Hospido et al., 2012). Moreover, the  
89 impacts of hydraulic infrastructures vary according to certain physical parameters such as lifetimes or  
90 length of the infrastructures, annual quantity of water supplied and energy consumption (Raluy et  
91 al., 2005b). Consequently, it is also paramount to consider the variability in the design of the  
92 hydraulic infrastructure parameters in order to select a specific land planning of water supply.  
93 These limitations can be overcome by using Territorial LCA (T-LCA), an adaptation of the conventional  
94 LCA framework, to assess the performance of a territory at a mesoscale and an associated land  
95 planning scenario while considering its multifunctionality (e.g. economic, social or environmental

96 land use functions) (Loiseau et al., 2013). Compared to a conventional LCA, the starting point of  
97 territorial LCA is no longer the definition of a main function for the studied systems, but the  
98 definition of the boundaries of a territory, and associated planning scenarios. Subsequently, two  
99 types of indicators must be quantified for each of these scenarios, i.e. environmental impacts and a  
100 set of services provided. These indicators are then used to compute eco-efficiency ratios. These have  
101 been defined by (Seppälä et al., 2005) as the ratio between services provided by the territory and its  
102 environmental impacts. These ratios can help compare the environmental performances of different  
103 agricultural scenarios such as in dairy farms (Iribarren et al., 2011) and vineyard irrigation (Canaj et  
104 al., 2021). Eco-efficiency allows for a trade-off to be identified between economy and environment  
105 to achieve a certain level in the environmental performance of a society (Huppés and Ishikawa,  
106 2005).

107 A few studies have presently implemented territorial LCA approaches on agricultural areas to support  
108 decision-making in the design of land planning scenarios for example in the French Brittany region  
109 (Avadí et al., 2016) and Aube department (Borghino et al., 2021) or in the Walloon region of Belgium  
110 (Ding et al., 2020). However, none of them have compared the impacts of planning scenarios that  
111 integrate the hydraulic infrastructures.

112 From an environmental point of view, the main objective of this study is to assess the conditions  
113 under which hydraulic projects can be selected as an efficient option for securing the water supply of  
114 agricultural areas. This can be performed thanks to territorial LCA methodology. Generic conclusions  
115 are drawn from a theoretical case study, located in the South of France. The case study is a  
116 theoretical agricultural perimeter of 700 ha (size of a small municipality), where water resources  
117 ought to become a challenging issue for agriculture within the coming next decades due to climate  
118 change (Giorgi and Lionello, 2008). Three main planning alternatives (described in detail in section  
119 2.1.2) will be compared based on a combination of crops and on the implementation or not of  
120 hydraulic infrastructures. The latter rely on the use of surface water resources, distinguishing two

121 types of sources, and their dedicated infrastructure, i.e. a local resource consisting of storm water  
 122 run-off stored in an Agricultural Reservoir (AR), and an imported resource taken directly from a river  
 123 through an Inter-Basin Water Transfer (IBWT). These water projects have long lifetimes, and local  
 124 planners and decision-makers need to identify the “no regret” scenarios. This study also addresses  
 125 the water-energy-infrastructure nexus, and discusses the design conditions under which hydraulic  
 126 projects can be considered, from an environmental point of view, as viable options for securing  
 127 agricultural territories.

## 128 2. Material and methods

129 The general methodology adopted in this study follows the territorial LCA approach, and is described  
 130 according to the four main LCA stages, i.e. (i) goal and scope definition, (ii) life cycle inventory (LCI),  
 131 (iii) impact assessment, and (iv) results interpretation.

### 132 2.1. Goal and scope of the T-LCA study

#### 133 2.1.1. Sub-objectives of the study

134 To support the main aim of this research work presented above, the study has been divided into  
 135 three sub-objectives as described in Table 1.

136 Table 1 Synthesis of the study’s sub-objective and the proposed approach to achieve them

Study’s sub-objectives for land-use planning at the territorial scale		Proposed approaches and metrics
<b>Sub-objective 1</b>	Comparing the environmental performance of three agricultural land-use planning scenarios.	Comparison of the <b>eco-efficiency</b> between the three scenarios, using aggregated LCA <b>endpoint indicators</b> : $\text{Eco-efficiency}_{i,j,k} = \frac{\text{Territorial } FU_{i,j}}{\text{Impact}_{j,k}} \quad (1)$ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <math>i = \text{Functional Unit}</math></li> <li>• <math>j = \text{LCA endpoint impacts}</math></li> <li>• <math>k = \text{scenario}</math></li> </ul>

<b>Sub-objective 2</b>	Diagnosis of scenarios: Identifying trade-offs in the water-energy-infrastructure nexus between the irrigation by IBWT and by AR.	Contribution analysis using LCA <b>midpoint indicators</b>
<b>Sub-objective 3</b>	Determining the design parameters for which irrigation by IBWT would be more environmentally performant than for AR	Drawing the tipping lines where a given scenario performs better than another, using aggregated LCA <b>endpoint indicators</b> for a given set of design parameters

137 (1) FU: "Functional Unit"

138 2.1.2. System boundaries

139 Figure 1 illustrates the studied systems that provide services to society. It comprises the territorial  
140 foreground system and the territorial background system (Loiseau et al., 2013). The first includes all  
141 the agricultural activities located within the studied area. According to Nitschelm et al. (2016), a  
142 cradle-to-gate perspective is adopted and the impacts induced by the agricultural products once they  
143 leave the territorial boundaries are not considered. Nevertheless, all the impacts induced by the use  
144 of inputs to produce crops are included. They can be divided into two categories: inputs related to  
145 water irrigation and others such as energy, fertilizers or pesticides. The latter are part of the  
146 territorial background system since they are all assumed to be imported.

147 Concerning water inputs, dedicated hydraulic projects comprise three sections, i.e., the Primary  
148 Irrigation Infrastructure (PII), the Secondary Irrigation Infrastructure (SII) and the Tertiary Irrigation  
149 Infrastructure (TII). PII is the infrastructure implemented for water withdrawal. For the IBWT, the PII  
150 has a water pumping station that withdraws surface water and an entirely buried water pipeline  
151 whose length depends on the location of the water scarce territory requiring a water supply (IEA,  
152 2016). For the AR, the PII has a water reservoir that can store a given volume of storm-water run-off  
153 during the winter (Gorguner and Kavvas, 2020) and a pumping station to supply water to the  
154 agricultural perimeter. The Water Supply Network (WSN) represents the SII. The WSN is made of  
155 water pipelines that are connected to the PII, i.e. on the AR pumping station or on the IBWT water

156 pipeline. Its goal is to transport water from the PII to the TII, which is located on the agricultural field.

157 The TII represents the On-field Irrigation Technology (OIT). The OIT is either a drip-to-drip or a

158 sprinkler irrigation technology depending on the type of crops growing in the agricultural field.

159 Indeed a drip-to-drip irrigation is applied to perennial crops like grapevines whereas sprinkler

160 irrigation is better adapted to annual crops like wheat or corn.

161 For the AR, the entire infrastructure is in the territorial foreground system since it is dedicated to the

162 studied agricultural area, whereas all the material and energy used for the construction, operation

163 and maintenance phases are in the territorial background system. IBWT is designed to supply water

164 to an entire region, hence sharing with other agricultural areas, cities or industries (Muñoz et al.,

165 2010).It is therefore part of the background system.

166 The rehabilitation of the hydraulic infrastructure sites when end-of-life is reached is not considered

167 because their impacts are assumed to be insignificant (Risch et al., 2021).

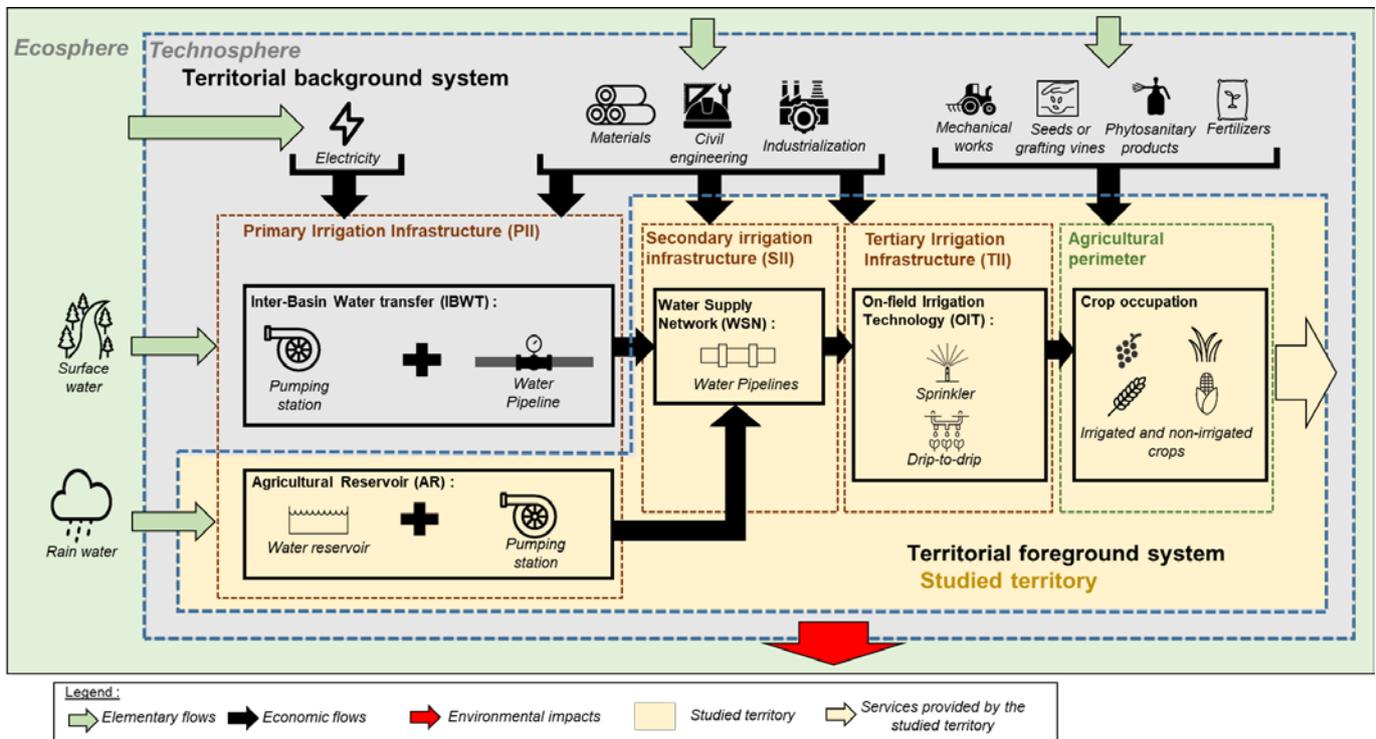


Figure 1 System boundaries of the territorial LCA approach carried out to assess the environmental performance of different agricultural land planning scenarios with or without irrigation infrastructures.

171 2.1.3. System functions

172 Territories are multifunctional systems (Loiseau et al., 2013). In general, three main functions can be  
173 selected for agricultural systems, i.e. i) economic profit, ii) food production, and iii) land management  
174 and occupation (Tendall and Gaillard, 2015). According to Borghino et al. (2021), the total quantity of  
175 agricultural products produced annually (Mass of Agricultural Products, MAP in kg), and the total  
176 agricultural area harvested annually (Land Occupation – LO in ha of agricultural land) can be  
177 employed as proxies to quantify the latter two territorial functions. Finally, the Agricultural Turnover  
178 (AT), defined as the sum of annual sales of crop production (in €), is used as a proxy to evaluate the  
179 economic profit of the studied territory.

180 2.1.4. Studied scenarios

181 Table 2 describes each of the three studied scenarios, which are based on the same size of cultivated  
182 area. Since Scenario 0 does not have any irrigation infrastructure, the crops are rain fed. Three types  
183 of crops have been selected to be consistent with Mediterranean agriculture and to reflect a  
184 diversity of production both in terms of type of plants (perennial or not, cultivated or not), and in  
185 terms of valorization (food security or added value creation). The other two land planning scenarios  
186 have access to a water supply with IBWT as PII in Scenario 1 whereas Scenario 2 relies on AR. The AR  
187 surface of 9.1 ha covers a negligible share of the cultivated area surface, i.e. 1.3%. Therefore, both  
188 scenarios have the same SII, TII and agricultural perimeter occupation. Due to irrigation, land  
189 occupation in Scenarios 1 and 2 is different from that of Scenario 0. Indeed, non-irrigated crops still  
190 occupy the cultivated area while irrigated crops occupy the remaining surface. With access to  
191 irrigation, it is assumed that yields could be increased and vines would no longer be registered as  
192 Controlled Designation of Origin (CDO) (yield limits) but would rather be classified within Protected  
193 Geographical Indications (PGI).

194 *Table 2 Description of the different scenarios of territorial land-use planning*

Scenario description	Acronym	Scenario 0	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
		Baseline	IBWT	AR

	Type of scenario	No irrigation infrastructure	Inter-Basin Water Transfer	Agricultural Reservoir
Infrastructures	Primary Irrigation Infrastructure	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pumping station</li> <li>• Water pipeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pumping station</li> <li>• Water reservoir</li> </ul>
	Secondary Irrigation Infrastructure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WSN : Water pipelines</li> </ul>	
	Tertiary Irrigation Infrastructure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OIT : Sprinkler &amp; drip-to-drip</li> </ul>	
Agricultural land occupation (ha)	Surface of cultured area		700 ha	
	Non-irrigated crops	CDO <sup>(1)</sup> grapevine	50%	40%
		Fallow	10%	10%
		Wheat	40%	
	Irrigated crops	PGI <sup>(2)</sup> grapevine		10%
		Wheat		30%
Corn			10%	

195 (1) CDO : "Controlled Designation of Origin"

196 (2) PGI : "Protected Geographical Indication"

197 As mentioned in section 2.1.2, it is noteworthy that, unlike the AR, the IBWT allows for the irrigation  
198 of a large area, for which the studied territory only represents a small share. Therefore, only part of  
199 the IBWT impact is allocated to Scenario 1. This allocation is calculated by performing the ratio  
200 between the annual quantity of water for irrigation needed by the crops and the annual quantity of  
201 water circulating in the water pipeline.

## 202 2.2. Life Cycle Inventory (LCI)

203 There are three stages in the inventory phase. Firstly, the different agricultural LCI processes involved  
204 in the studied scenarios are collected. Secondly, the hydraulic infrastructures are sized according to  
205 an area of 700 ha and their LCI data are gathered. Thirdly, particular attention is paid to water  
206 balance and energy consumption calculations for hydraulic infrastructures, based on the crop water  
207 needs. This LCA phase is based both on existing LCA databases and studies. Moreover, the co-authors  
208 of the paper who are working for French water management companies, i.e. *Société du Canal de*

209 *Provence et d'Aménagement de la Région Provençale* and *BRL Ingénierie*, provided detailed design  
210 studies of similar hydraulic infrastructures and expert knowledge.

### 211 2.2.1. Crop LCI data

212 Table S. 1 of the Supplementary Information (S.I.) presents the data used for the LCI of the crops  
213 considered in this study, i.e. the sources of the inventories and their adaptations for this study as well  
214 as the crop yields.

215 The French agricultural LCA data for corn and wheat were chosen, using the Agribalyse database  
216 V3.0. (Koch and Salou, 2020) for the first and World Food LCA DataBase WFLDB 3.5 (Nemecek et al.,  
217 2019) for the latter. The use of these two databases limits the risk of inconsistency, since all  
218 background processes originate from the Ecoinvent V3 database (Wernet et al., 2016) (e.g. pesticide  
219 or fertilizer manufacturing). As no datasets were available with or without irrigation for PGI and CDO  
220 grapevines in these two databases, inventories were created using data from French agricultural  
221 statistics (Agreste, 2016) and are provided in the S.I.. The quantity of water necessary for the  
222 irrigated grapevines originates from a study based in the South of France (IFV and Chambres  
223 d'agriculture Languedoc-Roussillon, 2013). The AGECLCI (AGricultural Emissions Calculator – LCI)  
224 VBA tool was used to calculate the amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and metals emitted to water,  
225 soil and air related to the application of mineral and organic fertilizers as well as on metal-based  
226 fungicides (e.g. copper) inputs. Estimation are provided for a variety of annual crops (i.e. sugar beet,  
227 durum wheat, soft wheat carrots, rapeseed, alfalfa, maize, barley, peas, potatoes, sunflower, triticale)  
228 and for one perennial (i.e. grapevine), as well as for temporary grassland and permanent meadow  
229 (Santeros et al., 2020). These calculations are based on the assumptions and equations used in the  
230 databases providing agricultural LCIs i.e. WFLDB, Ecoinvent and Agribalyse, and are adapted to the  
231 French pedoclimatic context. In this study, AGECLCI was used for the construction of PGI and CDO  
232 grapevines LCIs. In order to be consistent with other Ecoinvent processes all pesticides are assumed  
233 to be absorbed by the agricultural ground (Wernet et al., 2016).

234 2.2.2. Water supply LCI

235 Figure 2 describes the main design parameters, based on expert knowledge, to be considered for  
 236 hydraulic infrastructures in Scenarios 1 and 2.

	Scenario 1 IBWT	Scenario 2 AR
Irrigation infrastructure	 DN1000 cast iron pipeline - $L_{IBWT} = 100$ km $\%allocation_{IBWT} = 5\%$	 $S_{AR} = 91\ 000\ m^2$ $V_{AR} = 700\ 000\ m^3$
Secondary irrigation infrastructure (SII)	 $P_{SII} = 10$ barg Diameters of WSN's cast iron water pipes : DN 100, DN 150, DN 400: $L = 3.735$ km DN 250 : $L = 3.000$ km DN 500 : $L = 5.250$ km	
Tertiary irrigation Infrastructure (TII)	 Drip to drip for permanent crops $P_{TII\ dd} = 2$ barg $H_{perimeter} = 0$ m	$OIT : Drip-to-drip$
	 Sprinkler for non-permanent crops $P_{TII\ sp} = 8$ barg $H_{perimeter} = 0$ m	$OIT : Hose-reel$

237  
 238 *Figure 2 Main design parameters for the hydraulic infrastructures*  
 239  $L_{IBWT}$  (km), the length of IBWT's buried water pipeline;  $\%allocation_{IBWT}$ , the share of IBWT impacts which is allocated to  
 240 the Scenario 1;  $S_{AR}$  ( $m^2$ ), AR's surface;  $V_{AR}$  ( $m^3$ ), AR's volume;  $P_{TII\ sp}$  (barg), the pressure of the sprinkler OIT;  $P_{TII\ dd}$  (barg),  
 241 the pressure of the drip-to-drip OIT;  $P_{SII}$  (barg), the pressure inside the WSN; and  $H_{perimeter}$  (m), the altitude of the  
 242 agricultural perimeter with respect to IBWT pumping station.

243 The hydraulic infrastructure LCIs were subdivided into two separate stages, i.e. i) the construction  
 244 and ii) the operation phase. Inventories are based on the Ecoinvent V3 cut-off database.

245 2.2.2.1. Water infrastructure construction

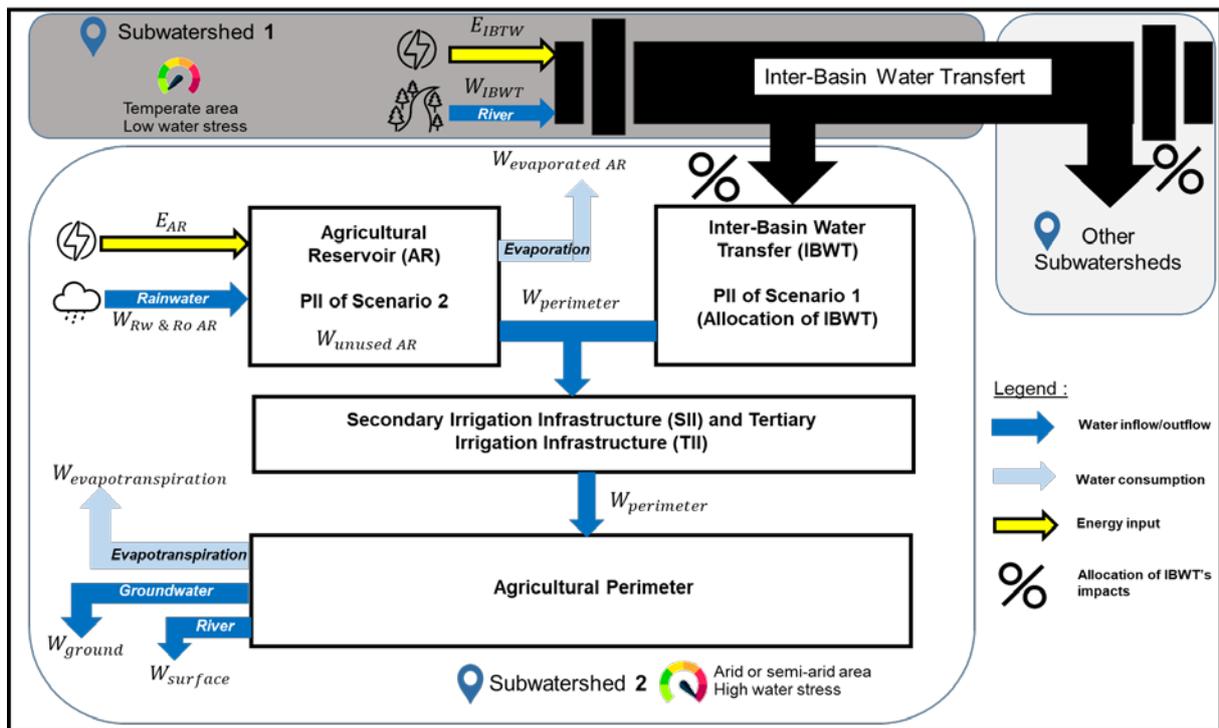
246 Lifetime is an important parameter in the environmental assessment of an infrastructure (Risch et al.,  
 247 2021). In this study, AR, IBWT and the WSN lifetimes are presumed to last 50 years. All the data  
 248 concerning the lifetimes of the different parts of the hydraulic infrastructures are provided in Table S.  
 249 4 of the S.I..

250 According to expert knowledge, all the civil engineering operations were supposed to take place on  
251 soft grounds for IBWT and WSN. For AR, these operations were considered to take place on 5% (v/v)  
252 rocky grounds. Table S. 2 of the S.I. indicate the different civil engineering operations as well as the  
253 type of material needed for the construction of the hydraulic infrastructures. An aggregated dataset  
254 for the LCI of hydraulic infrastructure construction i.e. the amount of material and repair rates as well  
255 as the names of the LCI processes of materials and of their manufacturing processes in the Ecoinvent  
256 database, is available in Table S. 4 of the S.I.. For each of the civil engineering operations, working  
257 crews were formed including all the machines and their respective energy consumption for one hour  
258 of work (Table S. 3 of the S.I.).

259 All the material was considered to be provided by the globalized market except for the cast-iron  
260 pipes that are manufactured in France, and for which specific transportation distances were chosen.  
261 Adequate manufacturing processes as well as scenarios dedicated to the end-of-life of materials  
262 (disposal in a landfill, recycling or incineration) were selected for these materials, as described in  
263 (Risch et al., 2015).

#### 264 *2.2.2.2. Water balance and energy consumption*

265 The operation phases of water infrastructure are characterized by water and energy consumption.  
266 Figure 3 shows the annual flows that need to be taken into account to achieve a water balance in TII  
267 and PII. No water loss is assumed to occur in the SII as well as in the IBWT water pipeline. Only the PII  
268 consumes energy, which is sourced from the French medium voltage electricity mix. This  
269 consumption depends on the hydraulic design defined in Figure 2.



270

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Figure 3 Water balance and energy calculation framework

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$W_{evapotranspiration}$  ( $m^3/yr$ ), the flow of water that is evapotranspired over the agricultural perimeter;  $W_{surface}$  and  $W_{ground}$  ( $m^3/yr$ ), the water losses of the agricultural perimeter due to the efficiency of irrigation; and  $W_{perimeter}$  ( $m^3/yr$ ), the total quantity of water that needs to be supplied to the agricultural perimeter for irrigation;  $W_{Ro \& Rw}$  ( $m^3/yr$ ), the quantity of rainwater and run-off water filling the AR;  $W_{evaporated \ AR}$  ( $m^3/yr$ ), the share of water that is evaporated from the AR open-surface;  $W_{unused \ AR}$  ( $m^3/yr$ ), the water of the AR that is not consumed and stored for the next year;  $W_{IBWT}$  ( $m^3/yr$ ), the total quantity of water that is circulating in the IBWT infrastructure;  $E_{AR}$  ( $Wh/yr$ ), the annual energy used at AR pumping station; and  $E_{IBWT}$  ( $Wh/yr$ ), the annual energy consumption at the IBWT pumping station.

279

At TII, water is either consumed directly by the crops through evapotranspiration or lost through run-

280

off to the surface and groundwater compartments. Evapotranspiration data are already included in

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the Agribalyse 3 (Koch and Salou, 2020) and WFLDB databases (Nemecek et al., 2019). An irrigation

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efficiency factor is applied to account for water losses. According to (Nemecek et al., 2019), this

283

factor varies between 0.75 for sprinkler irrigation and 0.9 for the drip-to-drip irrigation. The water

284

losses include run off to rivers (80%) and to groundwater compartments (20%).

285

The water balance and energy consumption related calculations are in the S.I..

286

### 2.3. Performance indicators and LCIA impacts methods

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As previously mentioned, one of the main adaptations of the LCA methodological framework for

288

assessing territorial systems is to quantify eco-efficiency ratios. The following section describes their

289 necessary indicators, i.e. the three main functions of the studied territory and their resulting  
290 environmental impacts.

291 For biomass production, data on crop yields are used. These are directly obtained from the  
292 information given in Table S. 1 of the S.I.. For the economic function, the agricultural turnover was  
293 assessed using market price data for the studied crops, sourced from the French agricultural  
294 statistics, which are provided in Table 3. Finally, the land planning function is estimated through the  
295 total agricultural perimeter area, i.e. 700 ha in all scenarios.

296 *Table 3 Market price of crops*

Type of crop	Market price (€/kg)	Year	Source
Corn	0,17	2019	(Agreste, 2019)
Wheat	0,16	2019	(Agreste, 2019)
“Pays d’Oc” PGI grapevine	0,70	2019	(DRAAF Occitanie, 2020)
“Languedoc” CDO grapevine	1,22	2019	(DRAAF Occitanie, 2020)

297  
298 Concerning environmental impacts, both midpoint and endpoint indicators are quantified with the  
299 IMPACT World+ method (Bulle et al., 2019) to address the different sub-objectives described in Table  
300 1. IMPACT World+ was chosen over the ReCiPe 2016 LCIA methods (Huijbregts et al., 2017) because  
301 it includes the latest development in terms of impact assessment (Bulle et al., 2019), such as the  
302 AWARE model (Boulay et al., 2018) and the USEtox model (Rosenbaum et al., 2008), which are the  
303 present consensual way of assessing water scarcity as well as ecotoxicity and human toxicity impacts  
304 (European Commission - Joint Research Centre, 2012). Endpoint indicators facilitate the comparison  
305 of alternatives because they reflect the differences between causes of stress further down the cause-  
306 effect chains that directly affect a society (i.e. human health, ecosystem quality and resources). Then,  
307 midpoint indicators allow for the identification of issues related to the water-energy-infrastructure  
308 nexus. The IMPACT World+ v.1.46 actually available for download on SimaPro software does not  
309 include an endpoint indicator for the resource area of protection. Hence, the “Fossil and Nuclear  
310 Energy Use” and “Mineral Resource Use” midpoint indicators were employed as proxies. The AWARE

311 characterization factors (CF) for the French Mediterranean area are sourced from a GIS (Geographic  
 312 Information System) map (WULCA, 2021), i.e. 46.6 for the arid sub-watershed and 1 for the  
 313 temperate watershed. Penoxsulam (CAS No. 219714-96-2) a herbicide used in the CDO and PGI  
 314 grapevines was not characterized in the IMPACT World+ method, thus not quantified in this study. It  
 315 should not significantly affect the impact assessment because it only represents less than 0.02% in  
 316 weight of the total amount of phytosanitary products used in both CDO and PGI grapevine  
 317 cultivation.

### 318 3. Results

319 In this section, the results of the study are presented according to the three main objectives defined  
 320 in *Table 1*.

#### 321 3.1. Sub-objective 1: Eco-efficiency comparison

322 The eco-efficiency ratios are calculated according to the different services provided by the land  
 323 planning scenarios in Table 4. The higher the eco-efficiency of one scenario, the better it is from an  
 324 environmental point of view.

325 Figure 4 compares the eco-efficiencies of the three scenarios in relative terms (i.e. normalized by the  
 326 best scenario).

327 *Table 4 Services provided by the three land planning scenarios*

Territorial functions	S0 (no irrigation)	S1 (IBWT) <sup>(1)</sup>	S2 (AR) <sup>(2)</sup>
Area harvested (ha)	700	700	700
Mass of agricultural products (kTons)	3,34	4,56	4,56
Agricultural turnover (M€)	2,14	2,40	2,40

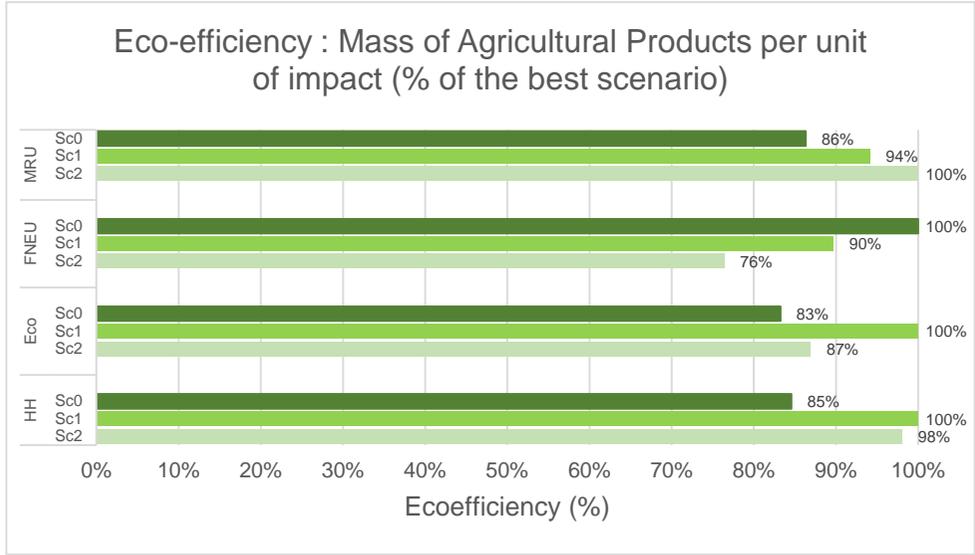
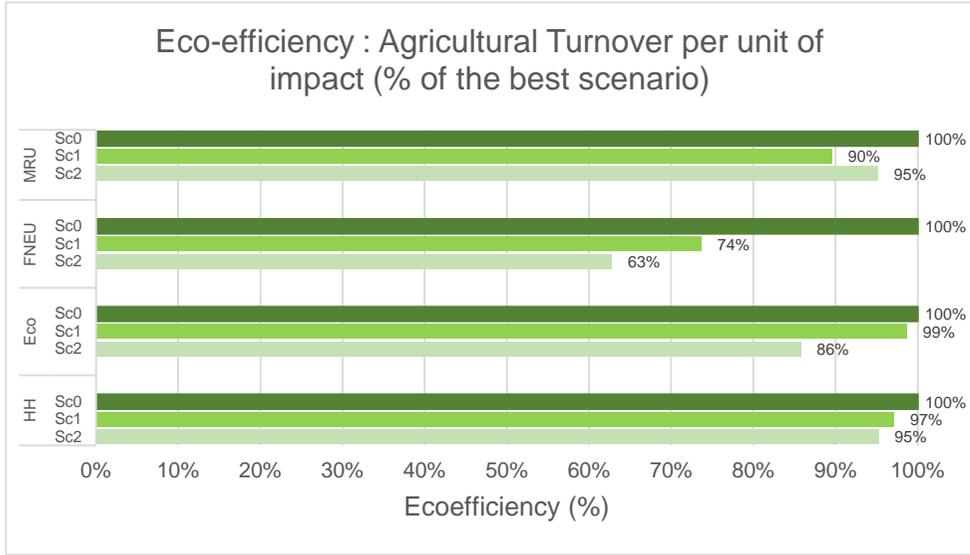
328 (1) IBWT : "Inter-Basin Water Transfer"

329 (2) AR : "Agricultural Reservoir"

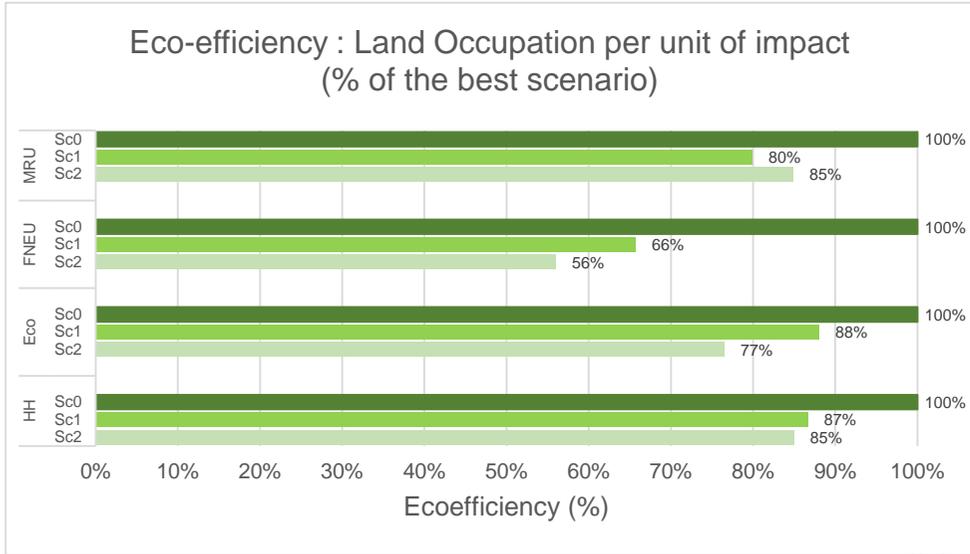
330 The results for the environmental performance of a scenario depend on the investigated territorial  
 331 function. For the Land Occupation (LO) function, Scenario 0 is better than the irrigated scenarios for

332 all environmental impacts considered. After Scenario 0, Scenario 1 presents best performance,  
333 except for impacts on mineral resources. This is due to the different impacts induced by the hydraulic  
334 infrastructures. The same conclusion arises for the economic function, where the Scenario 0  
335 turnover is similar to scenarios 1 and 2, mitigating the differences in biomass production between  
336 scenarios. Indeed, a greater part of the agricultural perimeter is occupied by CDO grapevine, which is  
337 rather focused on quality than on quantity in the non-irrigated scenarios than in the irrigated ones.  
338 Moreover, the market price of CDO grapes is about 7 fold higher than for corn and wheat and around  
339 1.75 times higher than for PGI grapevines.

340 On the contrary, for biomass production, the calculated eco-efficiency is higher for both irrigated  
341 scenarios than for the non-irrigated when considering the Ecosystems (Eco), Human Health (HH) and  
342 Mineral Resource Use (MRU) indicators. The reason is that the higher quantity of MAP of the  
343 irrigated scenarios counteracts their higher environmental impacts in comparison with the non-  
344 irrigated scenario. They therefore have higher eco-efficiencies. Considering the environmental  
345 impacts for the Fossil and Nuclear Energy Use (FNEU) indicator, the fact that Scenario 0 does not use  
346 energy for pumping water counteracts its low amount of provided service, therefore its eco-  
347 efficiency is higher than for the irrigated scenarios.



348



352

**Legend:**

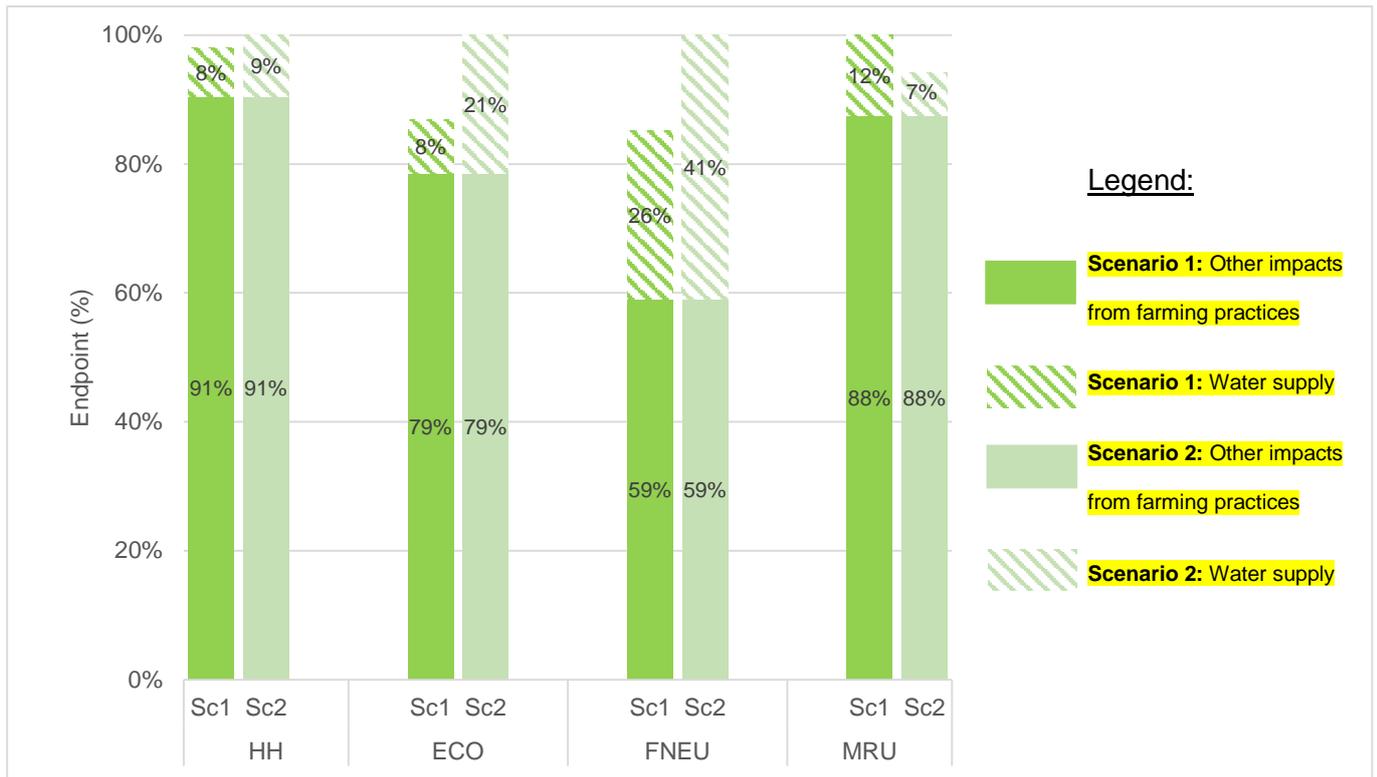
- Scenario 0: no irrigation**
- Scenario 1: irrigation with an Inter-Bassin Water Transfer (IBWT)**
- Scenario 2: irrigation with an Agricultural Reservoir (AR)**

Figure 4 Eco-efficiencies of the studied scenarios

HH: "Human Health"; Eco: "Ecosystems"; FNEU: "Fossil and Nuclear Energy Use"; MRU: "Mineral Resource Use"

353

354 Figure 5 illustrates the contribution of the hydraulic infrastructures to the total impact of Scenarios 1  
355 and 2, for the LO function. The share of the total scenario impacts relative to the hydraulic  
356 infrastructure is quite low for all environmental indicators except for the FNEU, because of energy  
357 use at the PII pumping stations.



358

359 *Figure 5 Contribution analysis of scenarios 1 and 2*

### 360 3.2. Sub-objective 2: assessing the water-energy-infrastructure nexus

361 A contribution analysis is carried out to identify the main impacting stages in infrastructure projects.

362 Figure 6 compares the environmental impacts of Scenarios 1 and 2 for the Land Occupation  
363 functional unit at midpoint level. The difference between their impacts resides in their respective  
364 water-energy-infrastructure nexus.

365 For the water part of the nexus, unlike the AR, the IBWT supplies water from a low water stress area  
366 with a low AWARE CF. Thus, for Water Scarcity (WS), this leads to an avoided impact for the Scenario  
367 1 "Irrigation water".

368 For the energy part of the nexus, the impacts on the AR (ie. “Energy – PII”) are about 2 fold higher  
369 than on the IBWT for each midpoint indicator, because the allocated energy use of the IBWT is  
370 approximately half that of the AR.

371 Both scenarios have the same SII and TII, hence the environmental performances of their  
372 infrastructure reside in their respective PII, whose impact assessment results are more mixed.

373 Indeed, for Climate Change, short term (CC, st), Climate Change, long term (CC, lt), Fossil and Nuclear  
374 Energy Use (FNEU), Ozone Layer Depletion (OLD), Water Scarcity (WS), Freshwater Acidification (FA),  
375 Terrestrial Acidification (TA) and Ionizing Radiation (IR) both scenario PIIs have almost the same  
376 impacts. For some of the midpoint indicators (Mineral Resource Use (MRU), Photochemical Oxidant  
377 Formation (POF), Human Toxicity cancer (HTc), Human Toxicity non cancer (HTnc), Marine  
378 Eutrophication (ME) and Particulate Matter Formation (PMF)), the IBWT performs worse than the AR  
379 because of the high amount of cast-iron necessary in its infrastructure. On Freshwater Ecotoxicity  
380 (FEco) and Freshwater Eutrophication (FE), AR performs worse than IBWT because the amount of  
381 bronze and copper necessary for equipping the AR pumping station is fully allocated to the studied  
382 territory. The same applies to Land Transformation, biodiversity (LT, bio) and Land Occupation,  
383 biodiversity (LO, bio) because of the high amount of land occupied by AR, unlike the IBWT, which  
384 involves a buried pipeline.

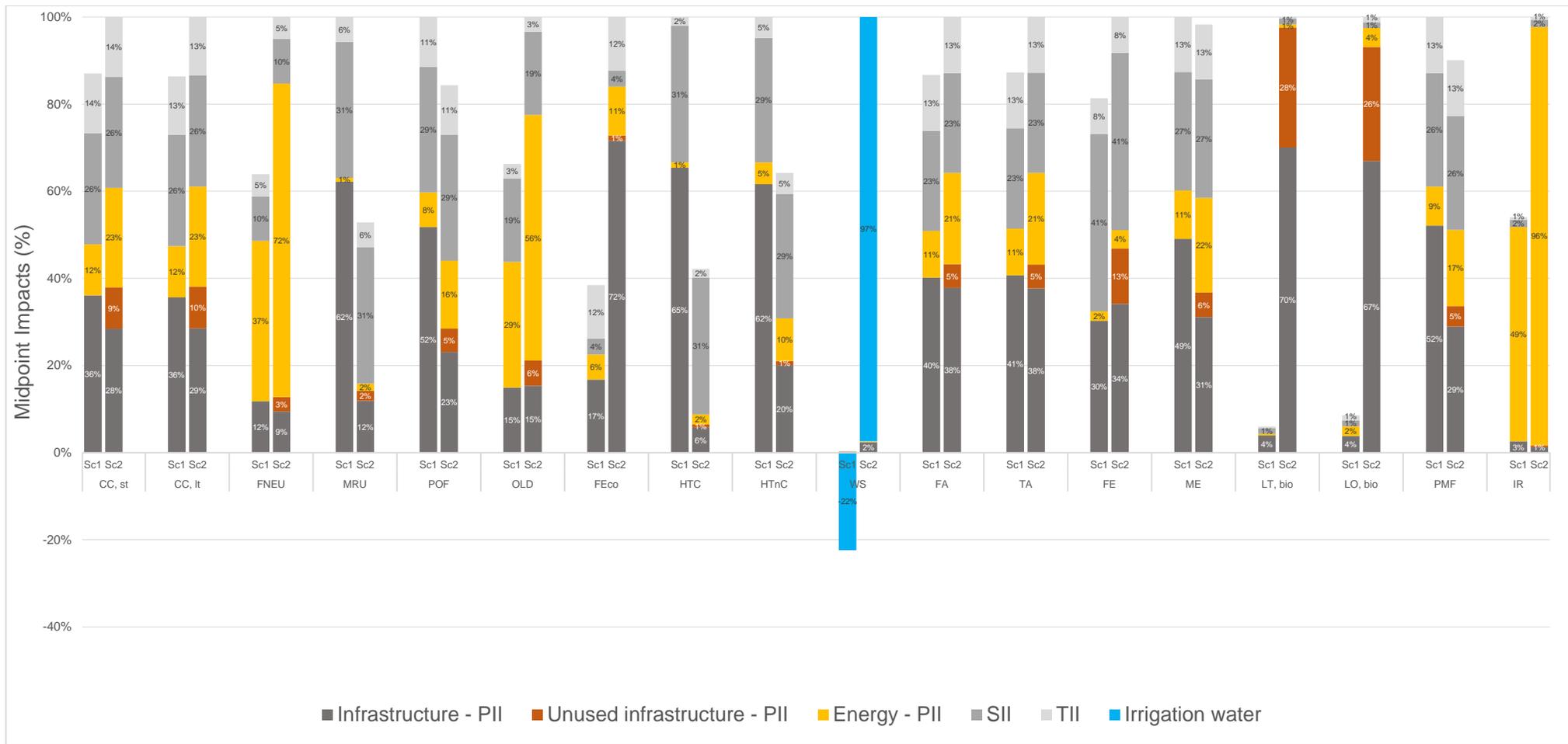


Figure 6 Environmental impacts at midpoint for Scenario 1 and 2 water supplies

CC, st: "Climate Change, short term"; CC, lt: "Climate Change, long term"; POF: "Photochemical Oxidant Formation"; OLD: "Ozone Layer Depletion"; FEco: "Freshwater Ecotoxicity"; HTC: "Human Toxicity cancer"; HTnc: "Human Toxicity non cancer"; WS: "Water scarcity"; FA: "Freshwater Acidification"; TA: "Terrestrial Acidification"; FE: "Freshwater Eutrophication"; ME: "Marine Eutrophication"; LT, bio: "Land Transformation, biodiversity"; LO, bio: "Land Occupation, biodiversity"; PMF: "Particular Matter Formation"; IR: "Ionizing Radiation"; PII: "Primary Irrigation Infrastructure"; SII: "Secondary Irrigation Infrastructure"; TII: "Tertiary Irrigation Infrastructure"

391 3.3. Sub-objective 3: Design parameters to define conditions under which a given  
392 hydraulic project performs better

393 Section 3.2 results suggest that PII dominates the impacts of both hydraulic projects due to the high  
394 consumption of material and energy. However, these impacts are highly dependent on design  
395 parameters that can differ from one territory to another, especially for the IBWT, such as  $W_{IBWT}$ , and  
396  $L_{IBWT}$ . The Equation 1, achieved through the use of equations S.11-S.15 of the S.I., was used to  
397 determine the sets of  $W_{IBWT}$  (or the corresponding  $\%allocation_{IBWT}$ ) and  $L_{IBWT}$  for which the  
398 IBWT alternative is better than the AR.

$$399 \quad L_{IBWT} = \frac{\left( \frac{1}{\%allocation_{IBWT}} * (A - B - E * (F + H_{perimeter})) - C \right)}{D + \frac{G}{\%allocation_{IBWT}}} \quad (1)$$

400 Where  $A, B, C, D, E, F$  and  $G$  are groups of parameters described in equations S.16-S.23 in the S.I..  $A$   
401 contains the impact of the AR infrastructure;  $B$  contains the impact of water that is withdrawn by  
402 the IBWT pumping station ;  $C$  contains the impact of the IBWT pumping station's infrastructure ;  $D$   
403 contains the impact of the civil engineering as well as the materials necessary for the IBWT water  
404 pipeline ; and  $E, F, G$  contain the impact of the French medium voltage electricity mix used to power  
405 the IBWT pumping station.

406 Figure 7 illustrates the environmental break-even area between both infrastructures, when  
407  $H_{perimeter} = 0 m$ . Each of the break-even areas is bordered by tipping curves comprising tipping  
408 points. These points correspond to the length of IBWT water pipeline, for a given  $\%allocation_{IBTW}$ ,  
409 where the endpoint indicators of the water supplied by the IBWT and by the AR are equal.

410 The Ecosystems break-even area can only be achieved with unrealistic values of  
411  $(\%allocation_{IBWT}, L_{IBWT})$ , so it was not included in the following analysis. Hence, IBWT always  
412 performs better than AR on Ecosystems damages. As mentioned in section 3.2, IBWT always  
413 performs better than AR on WS, therefore it was also not included in the following analysis. The four

414 break-even areas presented in Figure 7 can be subdivided in two types of information that can help  
 415 support decision making, i.e. i) *Certain areas*, where a hydraulic infrastructure is better than the  
 416 others for all 4 indicators, ii) *Uncertain areas*, where a decision cannot be made about the best  
 417 environmental performance of a hydraulic infrastructure, because one water supply is not better  
 418 than the others for all 4 indicators. *Certain areas* are within break-even area 5 where the IBWT water  
 419 supply is better than AR. Therefore, considering realistic design parameters, IBWT can present better  
 420 environmental performances than AR. *Uncertain areas* are within break-even areas 1, 2, 3 and 4. The  
 421 set of parameters, for which the results in section 3.1 and 3.2 were computed, is located in area 4  
 422 (symbol +). This justifies why IBWT is only better than AR for indicators HH, FNEU and Eco and not for  
 423 MRU.

424 Results in section S.1.2 of the S.I. indicates that  $H_{perimeter}$  only affects the energy required at the  
 425 IBWT pumping station when the altitude of the irrigated perimeter increases.

426

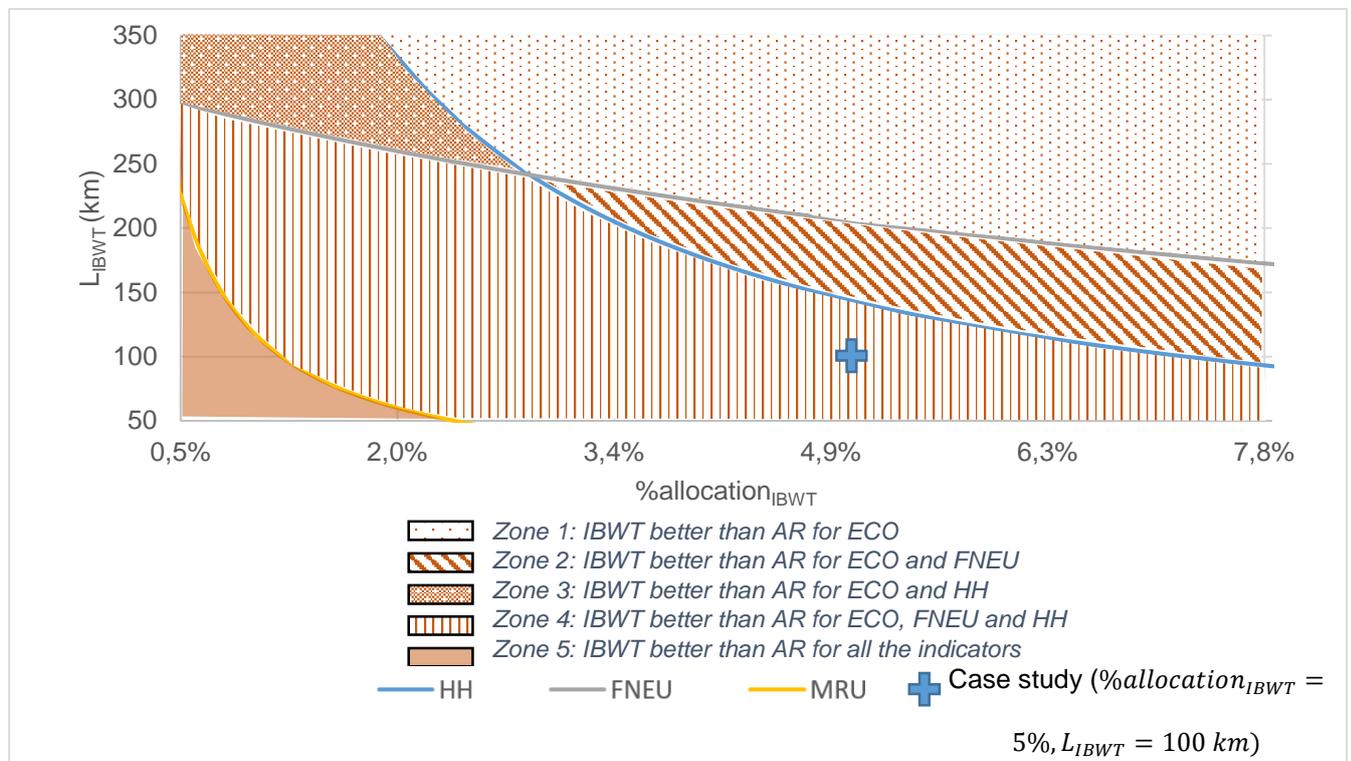


Figure 7 Environmental break-even area for which IBWT water supply is better than AR for  $H_{field} = 0 m$   
 The delineation of this graph is explained in the section 1.2 of the S.I.

## 430 4. Discussion

### 431 4.1. Supporting decision making

432 This paper proposes a novel approach for defining the conditions under which the environmental  
433 performances of a hydraulic project varies higher or lower than another type of project, while taking  
434 into account biophysical constraints. The tipping lines that were computed according to the main  
435 parameters of the designed inter-basin transfer illustrate that the impacts of this type of project  
436 can vary both higher or lower than the impacts of a project based on a local water resource such as  
437 an agricultural reservoir. Such studies are necessary for planners to identify the best options within a  
438 given context, while other parameters related to agricultural practices or land use patterns could be  
439 taken into account in future studies.

440 One main objective of the T-LCA framework is to compare the environmental performance of land  
441 planning scenarios. For this purpose, eco-efficiency is a metric for quantifying both the services  
442 provided by different scenarios and the resulting environmental impacts (Loiseau et al., 2018). In this  
443 study, there is no scenario in which the eco-efficiency remains maximal for the three considered  
444 territorial functions. These functions have been defined according to the scientific literature, and  
445 other functions could be identified from real case studies in consultation with stakeholders.

446 This study also highlighted that T-LCA can be used by territorial planners to identify trade-offs in the  
447 water-energy-infrastructure nexus. Section 3.2 inferred that an environmental analysis should not  
448 focus on only one aspect of the water-energy-infrastructure nexus before a decision is taken  
449 concerning the construction of a specific type of hydraulic infrastructure. Indeed, unlike the energy  
450 and water components of the nexus, the analysis cannot be as straightforward for the infrastructure  
451 component because IBWT does not perform better than AR at all the midpoint indicators.

## 452 4.2. Considering spatio-temporal variability

### 453 4.2.1. In LCI

454 LCIs are adapted to the French context, particularly for agricultural production and the electricity  
455 mix. The relatively low impacts of the water supply in comparison with farming practices are partly  
456 due to the use of the French electricity mix, which comprises 70% nuclear-based electricity (ADEME,  
457 2018), a low-carbon form of energy. Therefore, by choosing a more carbon-intensive electricity mix,  
458 as found in China for example, the impacts of the water supply could increase, thus modifying the  
459 results of this study (Leão et al., 2019a). For agricultural production, more detailed modelling would  
460 allow for local specificities to be better accounted for, such as the pedo-climatic conditions of the  
461 studied territory, or the agricultural practices implemented by the stakeholders. To enhance spatial  
462 representativeness, regionalized LCI could be developed based on interviews of local stakeholders as  
463 in Borghino et al. (2021) or spatial databases (Nitschelm et al., 2016).

464 In addition, the inter-annual variation of crop yields has not been considered in this study. Indeed,  
465 yield data for grapevines were sourced from 2013 data (Agreste, 2016). Wheat and corn yields were  
466 also based on data over an average of 4 years: 2005-2009 for corn (Koch and Salou, 2020) and 2014-  
467 2019 for wheat (Nemecek et al., 2019). The required amount of water fluctuates between April and  
468 August depending on the irrigation periods of the different crops, with increasing needs from June to  
469 August. Yet, the water requirement of the cultivated area was overestimated, hence so was  $E_{AR}$ .  
470 Moreover, more water circulates through the IBWT during the irrigation period than during the rest  
471 of the year, when agricultural needs are lower. The annual quantity of water circulating through the  
472 IBWT was therefore also overestimated.

### 473 4.2.2. In LCIA

474 Spatial variability was only considered for quantifying the midpoint impact on water resources with  
475 the AWARE model, at the sub-watershed scale. This significantly improves the calculation of the  
476 impact, since there are strong regional discrepancies in terms of water resource availability.

477 However, temporal variability was not taken into account in this study as annual characterization  
478 factors (CF) were chosen for each of the sub-watersheds. Selecting monthly CFs has a significant  
479 impact on the Water Scarcity (WS) indicator, as indicated in Table S. 9 of the S.I., where WS  
480 calculated with annual or monthly CF are compared. Indeed, for Scenario 2, the consideration of a  
481 winter CF for the water filling of the AR can lead to an avoided impact. Yet, these results are  
482 preliminary and a better assessment of the local hydrology would be necessary. Indeed, the global  
483 impacts of small reservoirs on hydrology are estimated to represent 5% of the mean discharge and  
484 44% of the low flow (Habets et al., 2018), and should be fully addressed in AWARE calculations.  
485 Spatialized CFs for site-dependent impacts such as eutrophication or acidification could also have  
486 been employed for better territorial representativeness (Nitschelm et al., 2016). This could be done  
487 by applying new regionalized LCIA methods such as IMPACT World + (Bulle et al., 2019) or LC-IMPACT  
488 (Verones et al., 2020), when their full development will be achieved.

#### 489 4.3. Water resource in LCIA methods

490 The impact induced by water resource consumption is crucial for the comparison between  
491 performances of the studied scenarios. In the IMPACT World+ method, the terrestrial ecosystems are  
492 only affected by water use if it is extracted from the ground because it affects the moisture of soils,  
493 which in turn impacts the growth of given plant species (Zelm et al., 2011). Therefore, the impacts on  
494 terrestrial ecosystems remain negligible in this study because the irrigation water originates from  
495 surface water. In ReCiPe 2016, impacts of water consumption on terrestrial ecosystems are based on  
496 the Net Primary Production (NPP) of vascular plants limited by water, and encompass all water  
497 bodies (Pfister et al., 2009). For aquatic ecosystems, both endpoint LCIA methods are based on the  
498 works of (Hanafiah et al., 2011) where the effects of changes in river discharge on freshwater fish  
499 species are considered. Since lotic habitats are most vulnerable to consumptive water use  
500 (Vörösmarty et al., 2010), it would also be worthwhile, in the long run, to use the HCP (Habitat  
501 Change Potential) midpoint impact category in the study. This comprises the effects of water  
502 consumption on instream species (Damiani et al., 2021). In LC-IMPACT, only the impacts of both

503 surface water and groundwater consumption on wetlands are considered (Verones et al., 2020).  
504 Recent investigations propose to consider the impacts on terrestrial ecosystems that entail the  
505 conversion of a terrestrial habitat into an aquatic habitat (Dorber et al., 2020). Applied to AR, these  
506 new spatialized CFs would increase the impacts of AR on terrestrial ecosystems while having a  
507 beneficial effect on aquatic ecosystems. .

#### 508 4.4. Taking into account the effects of global changes

509 Within the next decades, global changes such as climate change are expected to intensify the  
510 variations in meteorological parameters (Mbow et al., 2019), which, in turn, could lead to a rise in  
511 inter-annual variations of the scenario eco-efficiencies. Therefore, prospective T-LCA of land planning  
512 scenarios with long-lasting infrastructures would result in the use of more robust data and in the  
513 consideration of potential environmental feedbacks. The effects of the different types of stress  
514 induced by the evolution of meteorological conditions on crop development should be taken into  
515 account. Prospective crop yields could be sourced from real-life experiments, for example from a  
516 phytotron (Niero et al., 2015) or from crop growth models such as Aquacrop (El Chami and Daccache,  
517 2015) and CropSyst (Tendall and Gaillard, 2015). Due to the spatio-temporal dynamics of water  
518 resources, inter-annual variations of water availability should also be taken into account. A projection  
519 of future availability could be sourced from databases as has been done by (Leão et al., 2019b) with  
520 the Prospective Water-Supply Mix (P-WSmix). A modification in the future water availability would  
521 lead to a difference between the values of present and future AWARE CF.

## 522 5. Conclusion

523 This study aimed to assess, from an environmental point of view, the conditions under which  
524 hydraulic projects can be considered as an efficient option in order to secure the water supply of  
525 agricultural areas. However, as the different scenarios do not provide the same range of services, it is  
526 impossible to perform conventional LCA for comparison purposes on the basis of the same functional  
527 unit. The present paper demonstrates the feasibility and relevance of the territorial LCA approach as

528 well as the associated eco-efficiency concept for comparing such scenarios. This was achieved by  
529 comparing three different theoretical land-planning scenarios, i.e. without irrigation (scenario 0),  
530 irrigated by an IBWT (scenario 1) or by an AR (scenario 2). The major highlights and main  
531 recommendations and challenges to conduct territorial LCA approaches are listed in the following:

- 532 • T-LCA provides eco-efficiency metrics that provide exhaustive information about the  
533 environmental performance of land-planning scenarios for three territorial functions in this  
534 paper, “agricultural turnover”, “mass of agricultural products” and “land occupation”.  
535 Depending on the selected function, the environmental performance of the three scenarios  
536 vary. For functions “agricultural turnover” and “land occupation”, scenario 0 has a better  
537 eco-efficiency over all the endpoints indicators. For function “mass of agricultural products”,  
538 the results are more contrasted : scenario 0 is better on Fossil and Nuclear Energy Use,  
539 scenario 1 is better for Human Health and Ecosystems, and scenario 2 is better on Mineral  
540 Resource Use. These outputs allow the identification of trade-offs between different  
541 functions and environmental impacts, and can support local planners and stakeholders to  
542 select scenarios that maximize the main function of their project while limiting the effects on  
543 other functions.
- 544 • The T-LCA framework identifies trade-offs in the water-energy-infrastructure nexus. Overall,  
545 the water for irrigation supplied from IBWT performs better than from AR regarding most of  
546 the end-point indicators (Ecosystem, Human Health and Fossil & Nuclear Energy Use),  
547 because only a part of its total impact is allocated to the studied territory. Results are less  
548 advantageous for the Mineral Resource Use, due to the high amount of cast-iron necessary  
549 in IBWT infrastructure.
- 550 • Moreover, T-LCA could also apply to the eco-design of large-scale hydraulic infrastructures.  
551 Indeed this framework can provide flexible environmental impact assessments (i.e. tipping  
552 lines) that take into account several design parameters, thus contributing to the choice of an  
553 infrastructure design.

554 • The main limitation of this study is that the LCIs are built according to static environmental  
555 conditions. Therefore the LCIs do not account for the effects of environmental dynamics (i.e.  
556 climate, hydrology and soil) nor do they include the possibility of changes in the ecosphere  
557 (e.g. climate change or water resource depletion), which are expected to further intensify  
558 during the long lifetime of the hydraulic infrastructures. For this reason, it is necessary to  
559 involve direct and indirect environmental feedback into the T-LCA framework for the choice,  
560 without risk of regret, of a specific type of long-lasting hydraulic infrastructure.

## 561 6. Associated contents:

562 The S.I. contains the LCI data set for PGI and CDO grapevines as well as all the crops yields,  
563 information about the different civil engineering operations necessary for the construction of the  
564 hydraulic infrastructure as well as a condensed LCI dataset for them. The S.I. also contains the water  
565 balance and energy consumption related calculations as well as the equations and curves supporting  
566 section 3.3.

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