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Iota2 can also do regression !

Mathieu Fauvel

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Iota2 is constantly evolving, as you can check at the gitlab [repository](#). Bugs fix, documentation updates and dependency version upgrade are done regularly. Also, new features are introduced such as the support of Landsat 8 & 9 images, including thermal images, or for what concerns us in this post, the support of *regression models*.

In machine learning, regression algorithms are supervised methods¹ used to estimate a continuous variable from some observations (see more here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regression_analysis). In remote sensing, regression is used to recover biophysical or agronomic variables from satellite images. For instance, it is used in SNAP (<https://step.esa.int/main/download/snap-download/>) to estimate LAI from Sentinel-2 surface reflectance.

At the beginning, iota2 was designed to perform classification (estimation of categorical values) whose framework share a lot with regression but has also some significant differences. To cite the main ones: the loss function as well as how the data are split differ between classification and regression. Some others differences may exist depending on the algorithm. Fortunately, since the end of 2023, iota2 is also able to perform regression with satellite image time series.

In this post, we are going to illustrate the workflow of the regression builder on a simple case: estimate the NDVI value of one Sentinel-2 date having observed others Sentinel-2 dates. Full information can be found in the online documentation:

https://docs.iota2.net/develop/i2_regression_tutorial.html.

1. Iota2 configuration

1.1. Data set

To illustrate iota2 capability, we set-up a data set: One year of Sentinel2 data over the tile T31TCJ, starting on the 2018-02-10 until the 2018-12-10, from which we try to infer the red band of 2018-12-17. Yes, it is not a *real* problem but since Sentinel2 data are free and open-source, we can put online this toy data to let you reproduce the simulation:

The area in pixel size is 909*807, see figure below. We have randomly extractd pixel values from the red band for training and validation and put everything in a shapefile.

¹ Need some ground truth.

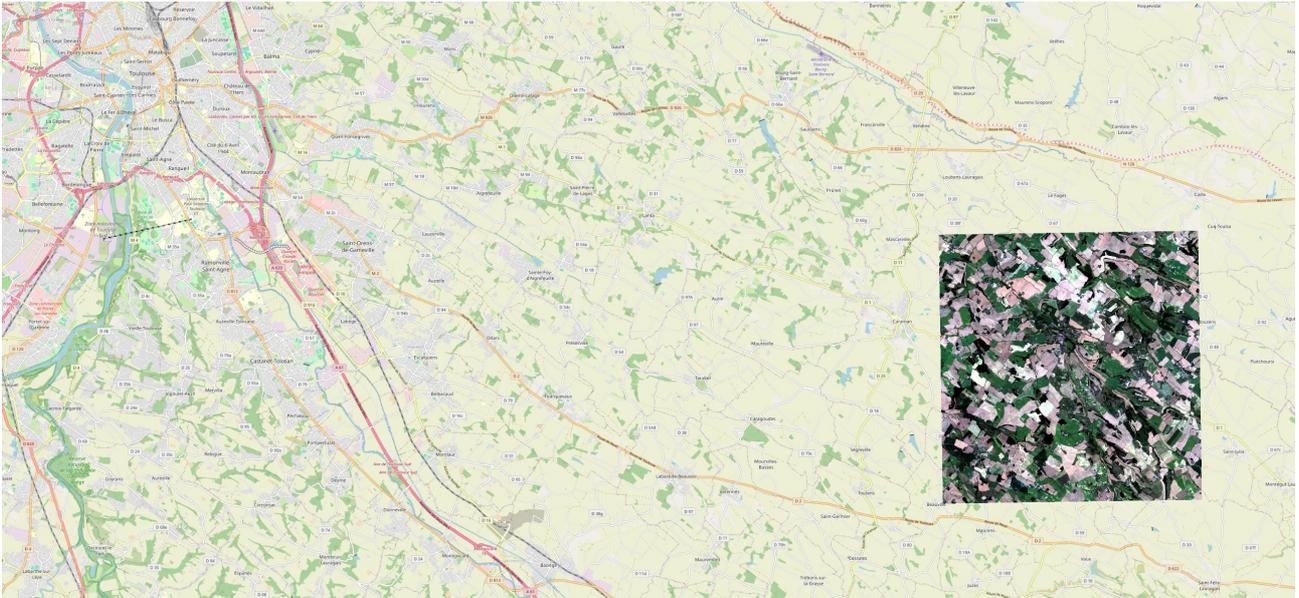


Figure 1.1.1: Area of interest (background image © [OpenStreetMap](#) contributors)

1.2. Configuration file

As usual with `iota2`, the configuration file contains all the necessary information and it is very similar to what is required for classification (see <https://labo.obs-mip.fr/multitemp/iota2-latest-release-deep-learning-at-the-menu> for a more detailed discussion on the configuration file). We use the following one

```
chain:
{
  s2_path: "<<path_dir>>/src/sensor_data"
  output_path: "<<path_dir>>/Iota2Outputs/"
  remove_output_path: True
  list_tile: "T31TCJ"
  ground_truth: "<<path_dir>>/src/vector_data/ref_small.shp"
  data_field: "code"
  spatial_resolution: 10
  proj: "EPSG:2154"
  first_step: "init"
  last_step: "validation"
}

arg_train:
{
  runs: 1
  ratio : 0.75
  sample_selection:
  {
    "sampler": "periodic",
    "strategy": "all",
  }
}

scikit_models_parameters:
{
  model_type: "RandomForestRegressor"
  keyword_arguments:
  {
```

```

        n_estimators : 200
        n_jobs : -1
    }
}
python_data_managing:
{
    number_of_chunks: 10
}
builders:
{
    builders_class_name: ["i2_regression"]
}
sentinel_2:
{
    temporal_resolution:10
}

```

1.3. Results

146,579 pixels were used to train the random forest with 200 trees, and 48,860 pixels were used as test samples to compute the prediction accuracy. Iota2 returns the following accuracy results for the test set (we normalize the data to have reflectance and not digital number):

max_{error}	mean_{absoluteerror}	mean_{squarederror}	median_{absoluteerror}	r_{2score}
0.200	0.005	6.383e-5	0.003	0.894

Well, the results are good :) Given one year of data, it is possible to infer most of the pixel values 7 days later. Congrats iota2 !

If we look to the map, we can see that most of the error are done over areas with light clouds. It would have been the case also for areas with rapid changes since we have done nothing particular to deal with changes in the regression set-up. Figures below show the true red band, the estimated one and the prediction error, computed as the normalized absolute error.

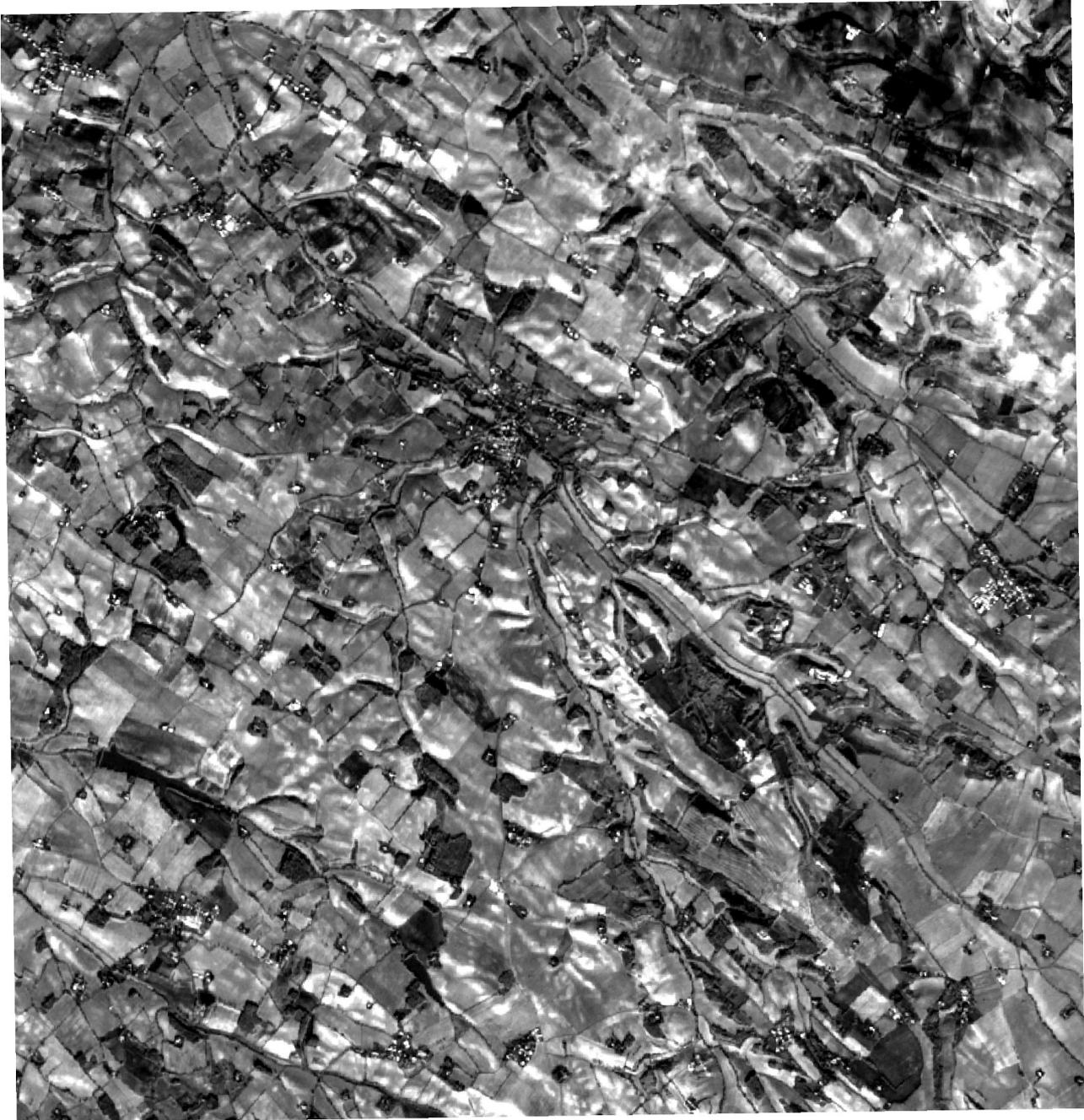


Figure 1.3.1: True Sentinel-2 red band.

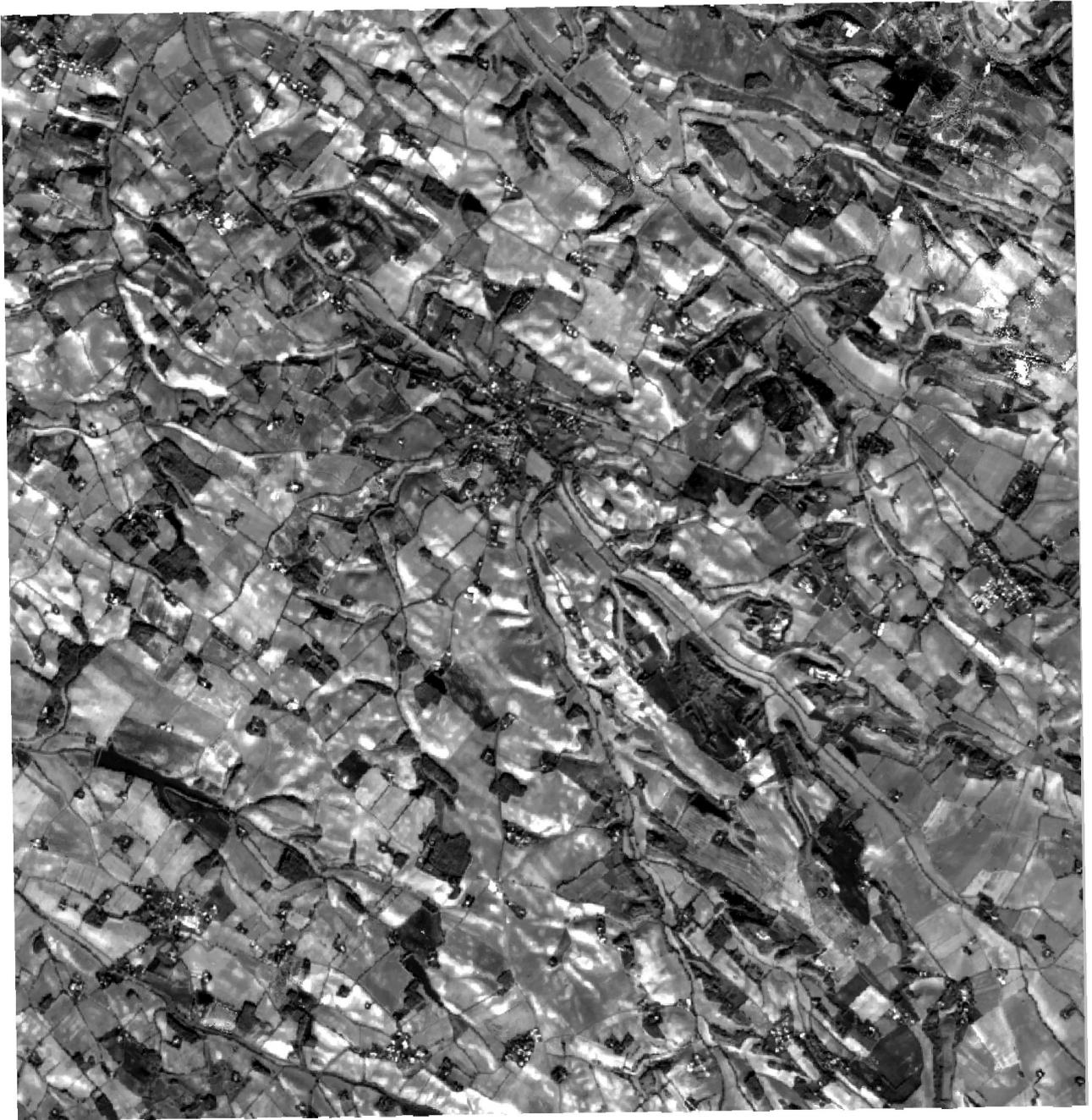


Figure 1.3.2: Predicted Sentinel-2 red band.

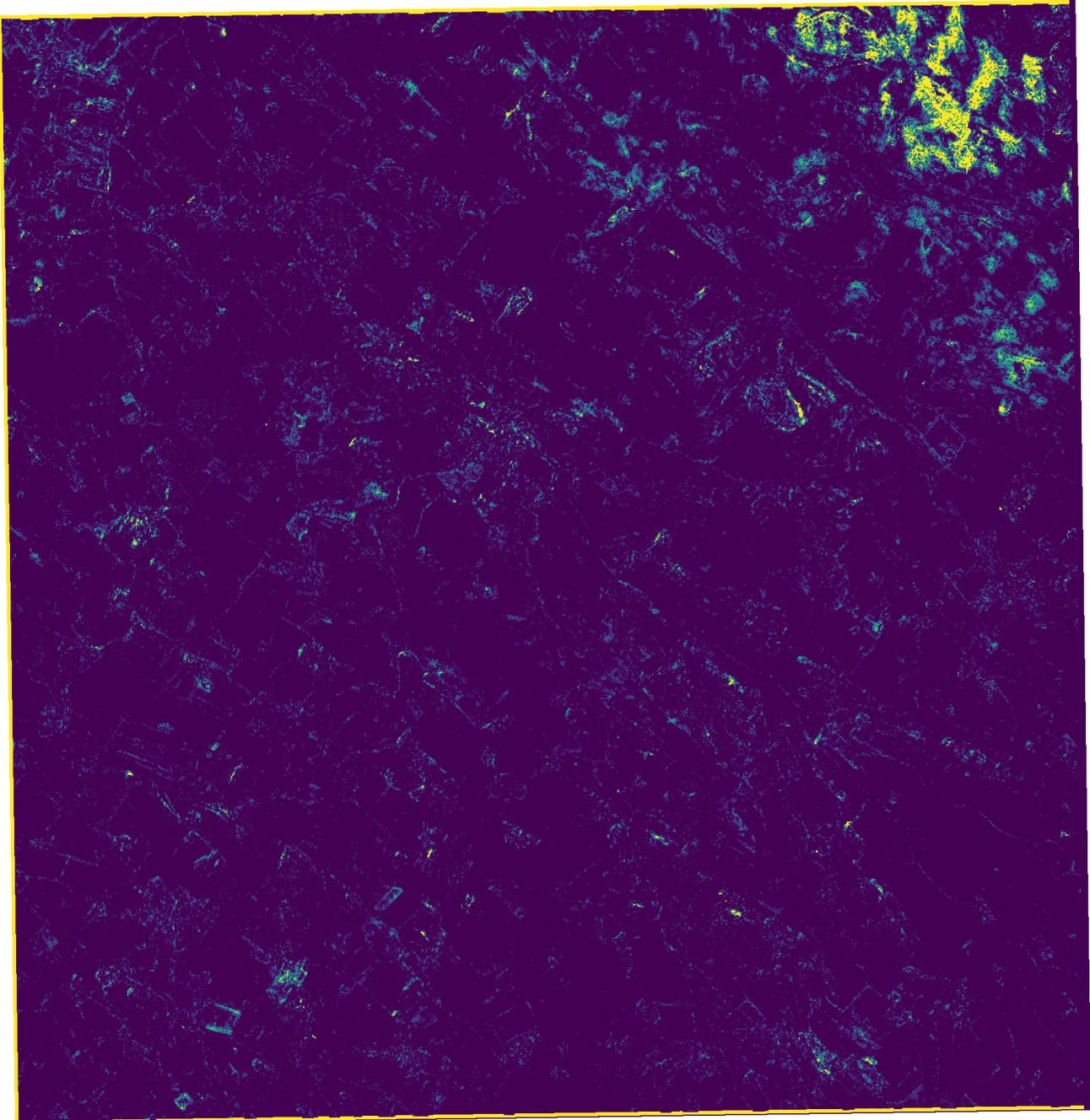


Figure 1.3.3: Prediction error in percentage; $\frac{|true-pred|}{true}$.

2. Discussion

Iota2 offers many more possibilities, as for the classification framework: multi-run, data augmentation or spatial stratification for instance. The online documentation (https://docs.iota2.net/develop/i2_regression_tutorial.html) provides all the relevant information: please check it if needed.

In this short post, we have used random forest, but other methods are available, in particular deep learning based methods. For now, it is possible to regress only one parameter at a time. A possible extension would be to regress several variables simultaneously.

This new feature has been used to map moving date of permanent grasslands at the national scale for year 2022. This work is in progress, but you can see current results on zenodo (draft map: <https://zenodo.org/records/10118125>). Iota2 has simplified greatly the production of such large scale map.

3. Acknowledgement

Iota2 development team is composed of Arthur Vincent and Benjamin Tardy, from CS Group. Hugo Trentesaux spend 10 months (October 2021 – July 2022) in the team and starts the development of the regression. Then, H el ene Touchais continues the IT developments since November 2022 and has concluded this work at the end of 2023.

Developments are coordinated by Jordi Inglada, CNES & CESBIO-lab. Promotion and training are ensured by Mathieu Fauvel, INRAe & CESBIO-lab and Vincent Thierion, INRAe & CESBIO-lab.

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We thank the Theia Data Center for making the Sentinel-2 time series available and ready to use.