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# Fine-scale ecological and economic assessment of climate change on olive in the Mediterranean Basin reveals winners and losers

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**The Mediterranean Basin is a climate and biodiversity hot spot, and climate change threatens agro-ecosystems such as olive, an ancient drought-tolerant crop of considerable ecological and socio-economic importance. Climate change will impact the interactions of olive and the obligate olive fruit fly (*Bactrocera oleae*), and alter the economics of olive culture across the Basin. We estimate the effects of climate change on the dynamics and interaction of olive and the fly using physiologically based demographic models in a geographic information system context as driven by daily climate change scenario weather. A regional climate model that includes fine-scale representation of the effects of topography and the influence of the Mediterranean Sea on regional climate was used to scale the global climate data. The system model for olive/olive fly was used as the production function in our economic analysis, replacing the commonly used production-damage control function. Climate warming will affect olive yield and fly infestation levels across the Basin, resulting in economic winners and losers at the local and regional scales. At the local scale, profitability of small olive farms in many marginal areas of Europe and elsewhere in the Basin will decrease, leading to increased abandonment. These marginal farms are critical to conserving soil, maintaining biodiversity, and reducing fire risk in these areas. Our fine-scale bioeconomic approach provides a realistic prototype for assessing climate change impacts in other Mediterranean agro-ecosystems facing extant and new invasive pests.**

ecological impacts | economic impacts | species interactions | *Olea europaea* | desertification

The Mediterranean Basin is a climate change (1) and biodiversity (2) hot spot where substantial warming is predicted in the next few decades (3). A 2 °C increase in average temperature is a widely used metric for assessing risks associated with global warming and as a policy reference, and this level of warming will likely occur in the Basin between 2030 and 2060 (4) with unknown biological and economic impact on major crop systems. Small differences in average climate warming are predicted for the Basin by A1B and higher greenhouse-gases (GHG) forcing scenarios within the 2050 time horizon (5).

A major agro-ecosystem in the Basin is olive (*Olea europaea* L.), an ancient ubiquitous crop of considerable socioeconomic importance (6). A detailed review of methods used to assess the impact of weather and of climate change on the olive system is given in *SI Appendix*. Most of the crop is used to produce olive oil, with Basin countries producing 97% of the world supply (International Olive Council, [www.internationaloliveoil.org](http://www.internationaloliveoil.org)). Olive is a long-lived drought-tolerant species limited by frost and high temperatures, and to a lesser extent by low soil fertility and soil water (7). Temperatures <−8.3 °C damage olive and limit its northward distribution, whereas annual rainfall <350 mm y<sup>−1</sup> limits its distribution in arid regions. Commercial olive production occurs in areas with >500 mm rainfall y<sup>−1</sup> (*SI Appendix*, Fig. S1). Climate models predict increased temperatures for the Mediterranean Basin in response to increasing [GHG], but only

a weak negative trend in precipitation and no trend in evaporation are predicted (8). Growth rates in some plants will increase with [CO<sub>2</sub>] within their thermal and moisture limits (7, 9), but the response for olive is unknown.

Mainstream assessments of climate change impact on agricultural and other ecosystems have omitted trophic interactions (10). Here we include the effects of climate change on olive phenology, growth, and yield, and on the dynamics and impact of its obligate major pest, the olive fruit fly [*Bactrocera oleae* (Rossi)]. The thermal limits of olive and the fly differ and affect the trophic interactions (11) crucial to estimating the bioeconomic impact of climate change in olive across the Basin.

Previous assessments of climate change on heterothermic species have used ecological niche modeling (ENM) approaches that characterize climatically a species' geographic range based on observed aggregate weather data in areas of its recorded distribution (for olive, see, e.g., ref. 12). ENMs are often used to predict the distribution of the species in response to climate change (13) despite serious deficiencies including the inability to include trophic interactions (14). Moreover, the implicit mathematical and ecological assumptions of ENMs hinder biological interpretation of the results (15).

As an alternative we use mechanistic physiologically based demographic models (PBDMs) that explicitly capture the weather-driven biology of interacting species (e.g., ref. 16) and predict the geographic distribution and relative abundance of species across time and space independent of species distribution records using extant and climate change weather scenarios as drivers for the system. The explicit assumptions in PBDMs have heuristic

## Significance

**Inability to determine reliably the direction and magnitude of change in natural and agro-ecosystems due to climate change poses considerable challenge to their management. Olive is an ancient ubiquitous crop having considerable ecological and socioeconomic importance in the Mediterranean Basin. We assess the ecological and economic impact of projected 1.8 °C climate warming on olive and its obligate pest, the olive fly. This level of climate warming will have varying impact on olive yield and fly infestation levels across the Mediterranean Basin, and result in economic winners and losers. The analysis predicts areas of decreased profitability that will increase the risk of abandonment of small farms in marginal areas critical to soil and biodiversity conservation and to fire risk reduction.**

Author contributions: L.P. and A.P.G. designed research; L.P. and A.P.G. performed research; L.P. and A.P.G. analyzed data; L.P. performed GIS analysis; A.P.G. did modeling work; P.M.R. and A.D. provided climate data; and L.P., A.P.G., P.M.R., and A.D. wrote the paper.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

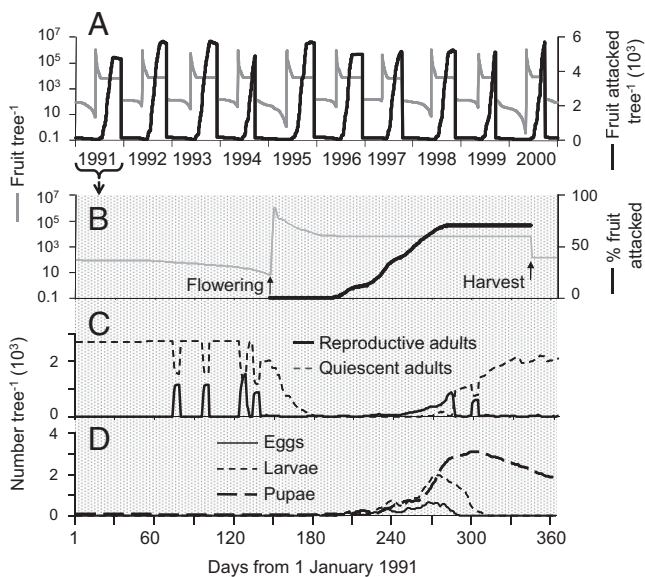
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**Fig. 3.** Example of the simulated phenology of olive and olive fly at each grid point. (A) Olive fruiting and olive fly infestation for the period 1991–2000 in a typical olive-growing area near Villacidro in the southern part of Sardinia, Italy (latitude: 39.428°N; longitude: 8.881°E). The fruit and fly dynamics for 1991 are expanded in the stippled area (B–D). Plotted data were extracted from a larger simulation for the period 1958–2000 based on daily weather from the ERA40 (reanalysis of meteorological observations from September 1957 to August 2002 produced by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts) climate data downscaled for the Mediterranean region using the Protheus regional climate model (38).

**Olive fly.** Fly populations are influenced by fruit phenology and abundance, and temperature. Using  $w_0$ , highest fly abundance is predicted in the mild coastal areas of southern Europe and North Africa. The lowest populations are predicted at higher elevations and areas with cold winter weather (e.g., parts of Europe), and in areas where summer temperatures are close to or exceed the fly’s upper thermal limits (e.g., the Middle East; see mean and SD in *SI Appendix*, Figs. S6, S7).

With  $w_{+1.8}$  weather, fly abundance is predicted to increase inland and at higher elevations in Europe that become more favorable for both the plant and fly. Fly populations are predicted to decrease in hotter areas of the Basin as temperatures approach or exceed the upper thermal limits (*SI Appendix*, Fig. S6). The net changes in fly populations in response to climate warming across the Basin are shown in Fig. 4B.

**Regional Economic Impact of Climate Warming.** The net changes in yields, infestation levels, and profit across the Basin are illustrated in Fig. 5, with corresponding changes in their variability illustrated in *SI Appendix*, Fig. S8. Predicted mean yield, infestation level, and profit under  $w_0$  and  $w_{+1.8}$  including average change in variability are summarized by Basin subregion (*SI Appendix*, Fig. S9) in Table 1.

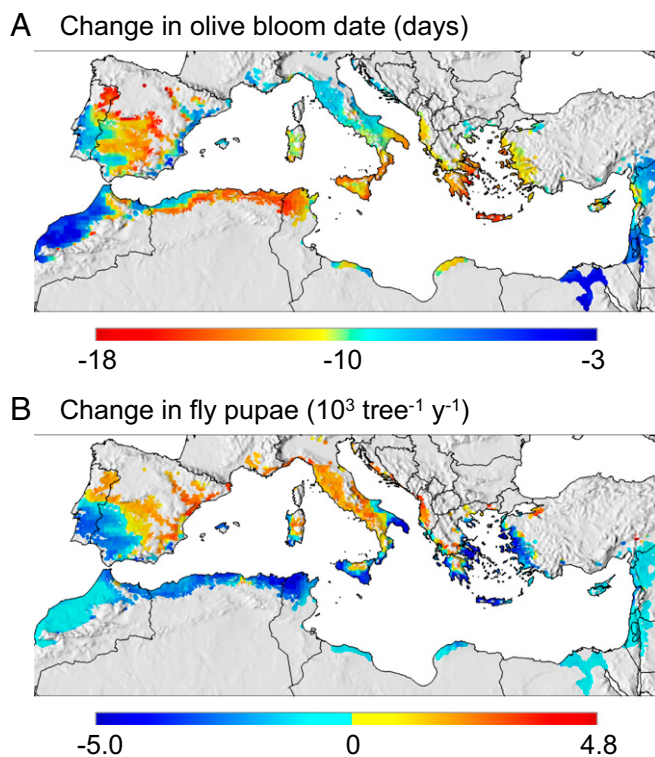
The yield order by Basin subregion is not predicted to change with climate warming: Middle East > Greece, Turkey, and the Balkans > France and Italy > Iberian Peninsula > North Africa with yields in most regions except the Middle East increasing (Table 1, Fig. 5A). Across the Basin there is a 4.1% increase in total yield and a decrease in yield variability. The predicted yields in North Africa remain low with small increase in variability, whereas in the Middle East yields decline 9.5% and variability increases (*SI Appendix*, Fig. S8).

An average reduction of 8.0% in fly infestation and a small decrease in variability are predicted across the Basin. A 5.9% increase in infestation with reduced variability is predicted in Italy and France, no significant change is predicted for the

Iberian Peninsula, but large declines are predicted in hotter regions of the Middle East and North Africa (Table 1) and Greece, Turkey, and the Balkans (Fig. 5B). Largest decreases in variability of infestation are predicted in Turkey and Europe excluding Iberia (*SI Appendix*, Fig. S8).

Changes in profit ( $\Delta\Pi$ ) at each location are largely driven by the differing effects of temperature on olive and the fly (*Materials and Methods*). Regional changes in  $\Delta\Pi$  (*Materials and Methods*) are summarized in Table 1 with the net changes on a finer scale depicted in Fig. 5C. The order of average change in net profit by Basin subregion is Greece, Turkey, and the Balkans > France and Italy > Iberian Peninsula > North Africa, with  $\Delta\Pi$  being negative in the Middle East (Table 1). In Egypt and most of Israel–Palestine,  $\Delta\Pi$  is negative (Fig. 5C) due to decreased yields (Fig. 5A) that are not offset by lower infestation levels (Fig. 5B), improved oil quality, and reduced control costs (Fig. 5B). In contrast, positive  $\Delta\Pi$  accrues in areas of Spain and Italy due to increased yields that offset increased infestation levels, higher control costs, and lower oil quality.  $\Delta\Pi$ s decline in northern Portugal and central Spain because of higher infestations levels despite increases in yield. In areas of North Africa, net profits increase despite small reductions in yield because of large reductions in infestation levels, lower control costs, and improved oil quality. As a percentage, the average change in net profit across the Basin is 9.6%, in North Africa it is 41.1%, with only the Middle East showing an average decline of –7.2%.

Overall, the largest average net gains and decreases in variability of yield and profit are predicted in Europe where warming conditions become more favorable for olive, whereas the smallest net gains in profit accrue in North Africa (Fig. 5). However, climate changes will have greater impact on some areas within these regions creating winner and losers (*Discussion*). In the absence of irrigation, olive production in the hottest areas may be further compromised by expected small increases in aridity (8), but this factor was not included in the analysis.



**Fig. 4.** Impact of climate warming on olive phenology and olive fly abundance in the Mediterranean Basin. (A) Change in olive bloom date (days) and (B) in olive fly abundance (cumulative pupae  $\times 10^3 \text{ tree}^{-1} \text{ y}^{-1}$ ) under the A1B scenario of 1.8 °C climate warming.







$$\Delta Y = Y_{obs} \cdot Y_{index} \quad [2]$$

Furthermore, because most of the olive harvest is used for oil production,  $\Delta Y$  is converted to liters of oil by multiplying by a country-specific factor (8) based on FAO data for the year 2000 (<http://faostat.fao.org/>).

To compute the net change in profit ( $\Delta\Pi$ ) (Eq. 3), we must include both the change in quality and price with changes in % infestation levels ( $I$ ), and control costs.

$$\Delta\Pi = \theta \cdot \Delta Y \cdot \hat{p}_0(I) - \Delta n \cdot p_x \quad [3]$$

The price of oil ( $p_0$ ) declines with  $I$  [i.e.,  $\hat{p}_0(I) = p_0 e^{-\alpha I}$ ], where  $\alpha = 0.5$  decreases the price to 40% at  $I = 100\%$  (42). The cost of pest control is  $\Delta n \cdot p_x$ , where  $p_x$  (50€ ha<sup>-1</sup>) is the cost per application of insecticide (43), and  $\Delta n$  is the change in the number of applications with  $I$ . The number of applications at a location increases linearly from an infestation threshold of  $I_{th} = 4\%$  (44) to a maximum  $n = 7$  at  $I_{max} = 85\%$  (45). The net change in the number of applications ( $\Delta n$ ) (Eq. 4) is computed as a function of the net change in infestation level with climate warming (i.e.,  $\Delta I = I_{+1.8} - I_0$ ) (e.g., ref. 43).

$$\Delta n = 7 \cdot \left( \frac{\Delta I}{I_{max} - I_{th}} \right) \quad [4]$$

Note that if  $\Delta I$  is positive,  $\Delta n \cdot p_x$  increases and  $\hat{p}_0(I)$  decreases, and if negative the reverse occurs. Furthermore, key to understanding the results of

the analysis is that olive has a higher range of tolerance to temperature than olive fly (see figure 1 in ref. 11), and the price penalty on infested olives used for oil production is relatively low.

The model ignores changes in market-induced prices that may occur as a result of climate-driven spatial and temporal shifts in olive production. Currently, supply effects mostly occur at the country level, whereas the quality of oil remains an important determinant of oil price across the Basin (see [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/olive-oil/economic-analysis\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/olive-oil/economic-analysis_en.pdf) and *SI Appendix, SI Discussion*). Agricultural policy has influenced olive oil production and price across the Basin, and especially via substantial subsidies in the EU briefly outlined in *SI Appendix, SI Discussion*.

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