Yield in a Haden mango orchard controlled by micro-sprinkler irrigation systems

Federico Hahn-Schlam*
Universidad Autónoma Chapingo, Departamento de Irrigación, km 38.5 carretera México-Texcoco.
C. P. 56230, Chapingo, Texcoco, Estado de México, México.

Abstract

Mexico is the world’s leading exporter of mango and needs to produce high quality fruit. A Haden mango orchard was irrigated using an automatic sprinkler system placed between the rows of trees. Groups of micro-sprinklers were placed at the ends of the tree crown and irrigation was applied every 2 d for 0.5 h periods. This study analyzed the effect of irrigation with only two, three or four micro-sprinklers per tree, providing yield, firmness, soluble solids content, acidity and fruit weight per tree. Since trees did not have the same morphology and biological characteristics, there were changes in yield, ripening and fruit size. Root content helped to determine how many sprinklers to install per tree, the ideal area where fertilizer should be dosed, and the correct place to measure soil moisture. By applying water all around the tree, a delay in production was observed and premature mango drop was avoided.

Keywords: Quality, root content, Haden mango, Micro sprinklers, yield.

Introduction

Mango (Mangifera indica L.) was the sixth most produced fruit worldwide in 2019 (56 million tons per year), being surpassed by bananas, apples and grapes (FAOSTAT, 2021). Mexico, with a production of 8.98 t·ha⁻¹, is doing a good job to increase exports that include Kent, Keitt, Haden and Ataulfo varieties. Organic practices have been implemented in the country with more than 110 000 farmers (FAOSTAT, 2021).

Currently, agriculture consumes 70 % of available freshwater and the challenge is to produce the same amount of fruit using less water. The use of good irrigation and fertigation practices ensures fruits with high quality, good size (> 300 g) and ideal income in a mango orchard (Schulze, K., Spreer, W., Keil, A., Ongprasert, S., & Müller, J., 2013). Deficit irrigation (DI) has been widely used in Spain in several mango orchards, including Gomera-1 variety (Lipan et al., 2021), as well as regulated deficit irrigation (RDI) and partial root zone irrigation (PRI). Spreer, W., Ongprasert, S., Hegele, M., Wünsche, J. N. and Müller, J. (2009) reported that mangoes grown under RDI conditions increased total soluble solids (TSS) after 6 d of ripening. In experiments conducted in Egypt during 2015 and 2016, Aly, M. A. M., Abdel-Nasser, G., Ismaeil, A. A., and Bayoumi, G. F. M. (2018) reported that mangoes grown under RDI conditions increased total soluble solids (TSS) after 6 d of ripening. In experiments conducted in Egypt during 2015 and 2016, Aly, M. A. A. M., Abdel-Nasser, G., Ismaeil, A. A., and Bayoumi, G. F. M. (2018) reported that irrigations corresponding to 100 % ET (evapotranspiration) increased yield, fruit weight, number of fruits per tree, and fruit firmness compared to deficit irrigations of 75 and 50 % ET.

Fruiting period is very sensitive to water stress, being critical during the first six weeks. With good water management, high yields and excellent quality can be achieved. Quality is affected by changes in environmental conditions during ripening and storage, showing variations in total soluble solids (TSS) content, pH, carotenoid content, and sugar to acid ratio (Abu, M., Abbey, L. D., & Amey, N. K., 2021; Galán-
Yield in a Haden mango orchard... Sauco & Lu, 2018). Consumers of exported Haden variety mangoes treated with hot water detected excellent aroma, high fiber content, and bitter taste when the fruit was very firm. As Haden mangoes softened, they developed greater sweetness and juice, but decreased their acidity (Nassur et al., 2015).

In periods with low rainfall, growers have been forced to acquire automated irrigation systems that control the amount of water applied. Micro-spray irrigation reduces water consumption and increases crop yields (Wei, J., Liu, G., Liu, D., & Chen, Y., 2017). This water mist application system is effective, but its distribution is not always uniform, with many variables that affect it (Koumanov, K. S., Hopmans, J. W., & Schwankl, L. W., 2006). This research determined yield, size and weight of mango fruit when using different micro-sprinklers irrigation on the periphery of the tree. An analysis of the root revealed the area to be irrigated.

Materials and Methods

The experiment was conducted during 2020 in a mango orchard located in Loma Bonita, Guerrero (17° 25' 47" N, -101° 11' 19" W, 17 masl). The orchard soil had a clay loam composition and 40 35-year-old trees from the variety Haden arranged in four rows were selected. Tree management included conventional pruning, irrigation and fertilization practices. The automatic system considered for the experiment was one using micro-sprinklers, because it requires less energy and, operates with low pressure ranges (1-3 kg cm⁻²) and a discharge of 120 L·h⁻¹. Micro-sprinklers are highly desirable because fewer sprinkler heads are required to cover a large area.

The experiment consisted of four groups with different irrigation each; three of them used micro-sprinklers and the control used a hose to wet superficially all the soil under the periphery of the tree. Micro-sprinklers are emitters that spread water through the air. These sprinklers are attached by tubing to side pipes located on the periphery of the tree crowns (Figure 1a). Each sprinkler was mounted on a support stake at a height of 25-30 cm (Figure 1c), for the water mist to move and cover the maximum irrigation area (1.5 m radius). Each micro-sprinkler treatment consisted of 10 trees each and differed in the number of sprinklers per tree and their positioning. Trees of the first experiment EXP1 had four 120 L·h⁻¹ sprinklers on their periphery (Figure 1a and Figure 3). Three and two sprinklers, respectively, were placed on the outline of trees of experiments 2 and 3 (EXP2 and EXP3) (Figure 1a). The micro-sprinklers showed the same flow rate than those in EXP1 (Figure 2a). In experiments EXP1, EXP2, and EXP3, water was applied for half an hour every 2 d, with each tree receiving 200, 150, and 100 L, respectively. The control was irrigated with a hose (Figure 2b) and supplied 300 L every 2 d to each of the 10 trees.

Each experiment counted the number of days after fruit set (DAFS), which corresponds to the period between fruit emergence (pin size) after flowering until harvest. The number of fruit set per tree was counted on July 1 and 15, 2020. When fruit were cut, length and weight of each fruit were measured to calculate yield per tree. Fruit firmness was measured one day after cutting on 20 randomly selected fruits per treatment and the maximum force (N) required to break the fruit peel corresponded to firmness of the peel. Measurement was performed using a texture analyzer (model TA + HDi, Stable Micro Systems, UK) equipped with a 50 kg load cell and a 2 mm diameter stainless steel probe (Jha, S. N., et al., 2010). Total soluble solids (TSS) content, expressed in °Brix, was measured after placing a drop of mango pulp juice in the window of the device. Titratable acidity was determined by the AOAC method 942.15 (AOAC, 2000) and pH by the AOAC method 981.12/90 (AOAC, 2000) using a digital potentiometer (mod HI96801, Hanna Instruments, USA). Measurement was made after placing an open-source software to introduce new algorithms for biological image analysis to ImageJ (Schindelin et al., 2012).

Results and Discussion

A tree irrigated with a hose (Figure 2b) had a greater number and larger mangoes (Table 1) than those harvested from a tree irrigated with four micro-sprinklers (Figure 2a). The increase in fruit yield with irrigation is due to less fruit drop (Spreer, et al., 2009). The average area flooded by the hose under the canopy was 62 m² (π*4.5 m²), while the area irrigated by the four micro-sprinklers covered 28.2 m² (4*π*1.5 m²), which corresponded to a deficit irrigation of 45%. The latter irrigation is not uniform because there are areas which are not wetted. In the study on Kent mango fruits, soil moisture was measured with sensors and branch contraction-expansion with dendrometers (Hahn, 2021). Branches above the sprayed (wet) areas showed a good fruit yield and had contraction-expansion of 0.12 mm·d⁻¹. Daily branch growth above the area without soil moisture was half and the trunk provided carbohydrates and water.

Table 1 shows yield and average fruit size for each irrigation option (hose and DI-sprinkler). Trees with less sprinklers (EXP3) produced 80% less mangoes. When marketing mangoes to Europe, fruit weight should not be
less than 200 g (Kader, 2008). Mangoes should be classified according to their weight in three categories: A (200-350 g); B (351-550 g) and C from 551 to 800 g. A mango can never exceed 925 g (Kader, 2008). Domestic fruit traders consider top quality fruit to be above 450 g and regular fruit to be between 350 and 450 g. First quality fruit was only obtained from irrigation with a hose, and mangoes harvested from EXP2 and EXP3 were not within the limits considered for marketing. The number of mangoes in experiments 2 and 3 was similar, although fruit size was 13.7 % larger for the three sprinklers (Table 1).

A negative correlation between number of fruits on the tree and average fruit weight was found (Table 1). The relationship between fruit length and fruit diameter was similar for the different treatments during fruit development (Lipan et al., 2021). Drought induces fruit drop at the late stage and reduced fruit mass due to a decrease in fruit size and cell number (Singh, 2005).

It is almost impossible to put all pipes according to the particular topology of each tree in an automated irrigation system. Yield according to the position of the tree in rela-
Yield in a Haden mango orchard...

Table 1. Tree yield, average length and weight per fruit and quantity harvested on July 1 and 15, 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yield (kg·tree⁻¹)</th>
<th>Length (cm)</th>
<th>Weight (g)</th>
<th>Quantity July 1, 2020</th>
<th>Quantity July 15, 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXP 1</td>
<td>25.9±3.2⁺</td>
<td>8±1.5⁺</td>
<td>370±11.8⁺</td>
<td>20±5⁺</td>
<td>45±5⁺</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP 2</td>
<td>16.5±3.2⁺</td>
<td>7.5±1.1⁺</td>
<td>323±7.8⁺</td>
<td>18±4⁺</td>
<td>33±9⁺</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP 3</td>
<td>11.2±3.2⁺</td>
<td>7.2±0.7²</td>
<td>282±8.8²</td>
<td>8±3²</td>
<td>34±8²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL</td>
<td>57.1±10.2²</td>
<td>12.4±0.7⁺</td>
<td>580±14.2⁺</td>
<td>5±3²</td>
<td>90±8⁺</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values with the same letter, within the same column, are statistically equal, according to the Tukey test (P≤0.05).

After viewing the root content image, it was concluded that a single side pipe cannot be used to irrigate two columns of trees (Figure 1 a). Side pipes should pass 2.5 m from the trunk and have three sprinklers in each half of the canopy. This ensures that the entire area with root content is wet. The introduction of micro-irrigation has a payback time of less than five years, and the use of partial root zone irrigation (PRI) is the most economical system (Satienperakul, K., Manochai, P., Ongprasert, S., Spreer, W., & Müller, J., 2009). For the future, it will be necessary to analyze electrical resistivity patterns in the root.
zone resulting from different irrigation strategies. Italy tested this system with oranges irrigated by RDI, showing variations in the order of 10 Ω*m in electrical resistivity, depending on the presence of water (Mary, B., Vanella, D., Consoli, S., & Cassiani, G., 2019).

Conclusions

The best yield and quality were reached with 100 % ET irrigation and homogeneously under the area delimited under the canopy. When using deficit irrigation and without covering the entire area with sprinklers, low size and lower quality mangos were produced. Deficit irrigation applications with micro-sprinklers had different yields according to the topology of the tree. Moreover, the number of sprinklers per tree has an effect on size, quantity and ripening time. Trees irrigated with less micro-sprinklers produced small mangos, with high TSS, acidity and pH. Since the highest root content is 2.5 m from the trunk, it is necessary to center the side pipe, the micro-sprinkler and apply fertilizers in that region.

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References


