Probabilistic modelling of the dependence between rainfed crops and drought hazard

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Abstract. Extreme weather events, such as droughts, have been increasingly affecting the agricultural sector causing several socio-economic consequences. The growing economy requires improved assessments of drought-related impacts in agriculture, particularly under a climate that is getting drier and warmer. This work proposes a probabilistic model which

10   intends to contribute to the agricultural drought risk management in rainfed cropping systems. Our methodology is based on a bivariate copula-approach using Elliptical and Archimedean copulas, which application is quite recent in agrometeorological studies. In this work we use copulas to model joint probability distributions describing the amount of dependence between drought conditions and crop yield anomalies. Afterwards, we use the established copula models to simulate pairs of yield anomalies and drought hazard, preserving their dependence structure, to further estimate the probability of crop-loss. In the

15   first step, we analyse the probability of crop-loss without distinguishing the class of drought, and in a second step we compare the probability of crop-loss under drought and non-drought conditions. The results indicate that, in general, Archimedean copulas provide the best statistical fits of the joint probability distributions, suggesting a dependence among extreme values of rainfed cereal yield anomalies and drought indicators. Moreover, the estimated conditional probabilities suggest that when drought conditions are below the moderate thresholds, the risk of crop-loss increases between 32.53% (cluster 1) and 32.6%

20   (cluster 2) in the case of wheat, and between 31.63% (cluster 2) and 55.55% (cluster 2) in the case of barley. From an operational point of view, the results aim to contribute to the decision-making process in agricultural practices.

1 Introduction

Agriculture is one of the activities most directly influenced by climate variability (Lesk et al., 2016; IPCC, 2012) and particularly by extreme weather events (IPCC 2012). The latter are a major source of risk in agricultural systems, often entailing

25   substantial crop yield losses (Bokusheva et al., 2016; Kogan et al., 2015; Saadi et al., 2015). Despite the constrains associated with the application of certain governmental policies in the agricultural systems, the success of mitigating the consequences of climate extremes is largely dependent on the development of appropriate risk management strategies (Paredes et al., 2014; Quiroga et al., 2011). For this purpose, probabilistic information of the agricultural risk associated to certain meteorological conditions is currently a major requirement (Madadgar et al., 2017; Jayanthi et al., 2014; Iglesias and Quiroga, 2007),

particularly under the scope of the projected climate changes (Hernández-Barrera and Rodríguez-Puebla, 2017; Ferrise et al., 2011).

From both researcher's and stakeholder's perspective, the management of agricultural drought risk has been a challenging task for decades, mainly in regions dominated by high precipitation variability and recurrent dry and warm episodes, such as the Mediterranean region and in particular the Iberian Peninsula (IP) (Vicente-Serrano et al., 2014; Sousa et al., 2011; Martin-Vide and Lopez-Bustins, 2006). Recent works have found significant negative trends of drought indexes in the IP based on long-term time-series including the entire 20th century, particularly in southern regions (Páscoa et al., 2017a; Sousa et al., 2011), and the expected declining of crop yields due to future warming conditions is being pointed out (Hernández-Barrera and Rodríguez-Puebla, 2017; Ferrise et al., 2011).

The assessment of yield variability based on crop and meteorological information is crucial for a more stable farmer income and management (Reidsma et al., 2010). The recently developed drought index SPEI (Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (Vicente-Serrano et al., 2010)) is found to be particularly suitable for agricultural drought applications in Mediterranean regions (Zampieri et al., 2017) and shows significant correlations with crop yields in the IP (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Páscoa et al., 2017b). On the other hand, crop models describing the biological processes are one of the existing tools used to assess crop productivity, e.g. CERES (Crop Environment REsource Synthesis) models (Capa-Morocho et al., 2016; Hlavinka et al., 2010) and AquaCrop (Paredes et al., 2016; Vergni et al., 2015). These crop models are important tools in agrometeorological studies being able to compute irrigation requirements and yield simulations, and have been particularly useful for assessing the impacts of climate change on agricultural productions (Leng and Hall, 2019; Hlavinka et al., 2010). However, such models are limited in their ability to quantify the impact of climate variability on crop yields over larger scales (Estes et al., 2013) and the detailed representation of crop's biophysical interactions requires demanding parameterization settings and input data (Giménez et al., 2016; Paredes et al., 2016, 2014). Thus, empirical modelling constitutes an alternative to represent the large-scale impacts of drought conditions in the agricultural sector (Bokusheva et al., 2016; Kogan et al., 2015; Matsumura et al., 2015; Vicente-Serrano et al., 2006) requiring lower computation costs than mechanistic modelling (Estes et al., 2013; Ferrise et al., 2011).

In addition, the use of satellite-based data is increasing for agricultural purposes (Kogan et al., 2015; Rojas et al., 2011), and considerable correlations between remote-sensing of vegetation and crop yield are found in the IP (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Gouveia and Trigo, 2008; Vicente-Serrano et al., 2006). Some studies have considered the use of different remote sensing drought indicators to account for different crop sensitivities to drought, such as to moisture and thermal conditions over the vegetative cycle (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Bokusheva et al., 2016; Zarei et al., 2013; Kogan, 2001). Moreover, the establishment of models for estimating crop yield under drought influence, using the combination of different drought indicators and different time-scales of drought occurrence, have shown an added value in the performance of the crop yield simulations over the IP (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Hernandez-Barrera et al., 2017; Vicente-Serrano et al., 2006).

The statistical modelling of crop yield variability under drought conditions has been previously done to estimate drought-related crop-losses (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Zampieri et al., 2017; Kogan et al., 2015). Some authors have estimated crop yield

probability distribution functions to find crop-specific risk levels and have applied Monte Carlo methods to generate large sample sizes of yield distributions over Mediterranean areas (Resco et al., 2010; Iglesias and Quiroga, 2007). At the country-level in Europe, Naumann et al. (2015) have developed drought damage functions using a single power-law dependence between drought severity and the associated damage. At a regional level in the IP, regression techniques (Ribeiro et al., 2018;

5   Hernandez-Barrera et al., 2017; Hernández-Barrera and Rodríguez-Puebla, 2017) and artificial neural network (ANN) models (Ribeiro et al., 2018) have been used to model the response of rainfed winter cereal yields to drought conditions. A major conclusion in Ribeiro et al. (2018) was that there are stronger relationships between remote sensing indices and cereal yield in the northern sector of the IP, and between SPEI and cereal yield in the southern sector of the IP. This character of the response of crop yields to climate conditions highlights how it varies according to the location, type of crop, moment of the vegetative

10   cycle, drought indicator and temporal scale.

More recently, copula-based models have been applied for agricultural purposes, to model the dependence structures between crop yields and environmental conditions using joint distributions (Ribeiro et al., 2019; Madadgar et al., 2017; Bokusheva et al., 2016; Li et al., 2015). The concept of copulas is quite popular in financial risk modelling, and recently is becoming a valuable tool to model the risks associated to climate hazards, such as droughts (Ganguli and Reddy, 2012; Mirabbasi et al.,

15   2012; Serinaldi et al., 2009). Based on the Sklar's theorem (Sklar, 1959) a copula approach "joins" the probability of drought occurrence and the probability of crop-losses caused by the drought event. A detailed description about the use of copulas is provided by Nelsen (2013).

A major advantage of copula methods is the generation of joint distributions independently of their marginal distribution functions (Maity, 2018; Nelsen, 2013). Copula functions show a great flexibility in modelling the dependence between

20   individual variables (such as crop yield and drought indicators) with complex relationships without making heavy assumptions. In addition, copula functions are adequate for modelling rare events in multivariate distributions and to generate large samples, allowing to find the probability that individual variables will not exceed a certain extreme (tailed) value (Madadgar et al., 2017). A recent study by Madadgar et al. (2017) have produced probability distributions of rainfed crop yields in Australia under drought impacts based on copula-based techniques, using the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and the

25   Standardized Soil-moisture Index (SSI). For crop insurance purposes at the farm-level in Kazakhstan, Bokusheva et al. (2015) modelled the joint distributions of wheat yields and two satellite-based drought indices (Vegetation Condition Index (VCI) and Temperature Condition Index (TCI)). At the global scale, Leng & Hall (2019) have also used copulas to assess the likelihood of yield loss in response to droughts based on SPI for the a historical period (1961–2016) and future period (2071–2100) under the RCP8.5 emission scenario to investigate future changes in yield loss risk. The authors found that global wheat

30   is more vulnerable to droughts than maize, rice and soybeans, and that global warming is expected to amplify drought-driven yield loss risk.

In this study, a copula-based approach is adopted to model the joint probability density function of crop yield and the drought conditions for probabilistic yield assessment, based on the data and empirical analysis previously considered in Ribeiro et al. (2018). This method allows to estimate the dependence structures between the probability distributions of crop yield and

drought indicators using copula functions. The novelty and interest of this approach relates to the fact that this methodology will allow to estimate the likelihood of crop-loss and compare the expected losses under drought conditions and non-drought conditions in the IP. This key question poses as a current demand with most interest to stakeholders, such as farmers and insurance companies, to mitigate agricultural drought risk over the major agricultural areas in the IP.

5 ## 2 Data and methods

2.1 Study area and data

The exposure analysis performed by Ribeiro et al. (2018) allowed the identification of two clusters of provinces in the IP dominated by rainfed agricultural practices (Fig. 1), located approximately in the regions of Castilla-Léon (cluster 1 - northern region) and Castilla-La Mancha (cluster 2 – southern region). Given the suitability of using these two clusters for an agricultural
10 drought analysis at the regional level, here we have considered the same area selection criteria: provinces with more than 50% of the territory occupied by agricultural areas and more than 50% of rainfed crops according to the CORINE Land Cover (2012) (for more details please see Ribeiro et al. (2018)). Considering previous requirements and for sequential purposes, the crop and drought hazard data used in Ribeiro et al. (2018) have been incorporated in the present study to analyse the distributions of probabilities. Spatial averages of annual yield anomalies (t/ha) of barley and wheat were computed over the
15 two clusters during the period of 1986-2012, based on production (tons, t) and area (ha) information obtained from the Portuguese National Statistics Institute and the Spanish Agriculture, Food and Environment Ministry.

Drought conditions were investigated using the hydro-meteorological drought indicator SPEI and three satellite-based indices obtained from NOAA-AVHRR since 1981, namely the VCI (Kogan 1990), the TCI (Kogan 1995) and the Vegetation Health Index (VHI) (Kogan 1995). The monthly drought index SPEI gridded values, with spatial resolution of 0.5°, were computed
20 based on precipitation and temperature values from the Climate Research Unit TS3.21 database (Harris et al., 2014), using a variety of time scales (1 to 12 months). The weekly global maps of VCI, TCI, and VHI were retrieved at 4km spatial resolution from NOAA's ftp server (ftp://ftp.star.nesdis.noaa.gov/pub/corp/scsb/wguo/data/VHP_4km/geo_TIFF/). While SPEI computation uses climatic water balance anomalies incorporating the role played by the evaporative demand on the occurrence of dry events (Vicente-Serrano et al., 2010), the remote sensing indices characterize the moisture, through the VCI, the
25 temperature induced stress through the TCI and health of vegetation, through the VHI.

Considering the vegetative cycle of wheat and barley, and in accordance with the results obtained by Ribeiro et al. (2018), the data of VCI, TCI, and VHI used in this work covered the period from week 35 (early September) to week 25 (late June), and data of SPEI covered January to June. Spatial averages of all these indicators were computed for each provincial cluster and used for further modelling of the joint probability between the drought hazard and cereal yield anomalies over the period 1986-
30 2012. Stepwise regression models (95% confidence level) were established to select the time scales and months of SPEI, together with the weeks of VCI, TCI, and VHI better related with wheat and barley annual yield (Ribeiro et al. 2018). The selection of the most relevant drought indicator for each cereal and cluster was performed based on the largest absolute value

of the standardized regression coefficients from the models developed in Ribeiro et al. (2018), in order to constitute pairs of cereal yield anomalies and drought indicators. Afterwards, for each cereal time series, the joint probability with drought conditions was estimated using one drought indicator.

2.2 Copula-based method

2.2.1 The concept of copula

Copula functions are powerful tools used to estimate the joint distribution between variables (Madadgar et al., 2017; Bokusheva et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2011). The concept of copula was firstly introduced by Sklar (1959) to decompose a joint cumulative distribution function $F_{XY}(x, y)$ into two parts (Eq. 1): the marginal distribution functions $F_X(x) = u$ and $F_Y(y) = v$, and the copula C describing the dependence part of the joint distribution,

$$F_{XY}(x, y) = C(u, v), \tag{1}$$

where the margins u and v are uniformly distributed on the interval [0,1] (Nelsen, 2013). This study adopts a bivariate modelling approach such that, for each pair (X, Y) of cereal and drought indicator over each cluster we considered bivariate copula functions to estimate the joint probability distributions. Trivariate copulas have been proposed in the analysis of hydrological extremes (Afshar et al., 2016; Bezak and Brilly, 2014; Saghafian and Mehdikhani, 2014), but the development of higher dimensional copulas exhibits very complex structures and further studies and evaluations are required. In comparison to high-dimensional copulas, the two-dimensional copulas involve much less computational cost and allows for more easily interpretable and illustratable relationships between the interval margins. For this reason, in the present study we restricted the analysis to the bivariate case using two-dimensional copulas, simplifying the results interpretation.

There is a range of copula families described in the literature which are able to estimate the dependence between the univariate variables (Nelsen, 2013). The most commonly used copula families focus on the Archimedean and Elliptical classes (Maity, 2018). There are three Archimedean copulas particular popular given their simple functional form and their different patterns of dependence captures – Clayton, Gumbel and Frank – while there are two most popular Elliptical copulas derived from Elliptical distributions – Gaussian and t-copula. These five copula functions are well-documented and have been employed in recent agrometeorological studies with a number of annual observations similar to our study (Madadgar et al., 2017; Zscheischler et al., 2017; Bokusheva et al., 2016). Table 1 summarizes the mathematical expressions of the referred copula functions considered in the present study.

An important concept for studying extreme events is the tail dependence, whose importance is more critical than the overall dependence structure for risk analysis (Bokusheva, 2014). The joint tail behaviour describes the amount of dependence in the corners of upper-right and lower-left quadrants (i.e. joint extreme events), and its representation depends on the type of copula (Nelsen, 2013). The Frank, Gaussian and t-copula describe a joint symmetric structure with a symmetric tail dependence, i.e. the same degree of dependence in both pairs of extremes. The Clayton/Gumbel copulas have an asymmetric tail dependence

with greater dependence in the lower/upper tail suggesting greater probabilities of joint lower/upper extremes (i.e., lower/higher values of yield anomalies given lower/higher values of drought indicators).

2.2.2 Fitting of the copula functions

The estimation of the copula parameters can be performed using different methods based on maximum likelihood, such as Maximum Likelihood Estimate (MLE), Inference Functions for Margins (IFM) or Canonical Maximum Likelihood (CML) (Maity, 2018). With MLE, both individual margins and copula parameters are estimated together, whereas with IFM the marginal parameters are first estimated individually. In this study the statistical inference of the copula functions is performed with the CML method, which stands for a nonparametric estimation of the margins. In this way, the individual variables were first transformed to the unit scale (pseudo-observations) using the kernel density estimator of the Cumulated Distribution Function (CDF), without making assumptions about the marginal distributions (Fig. 2). The drawback of the shorter sample size is surpassed by the nonparametric estimation of the margins, which avoids heavy assumptions about their distributions, even when the available sample is rather small (Fahr, 2017; Corder and Foreman, 2011). The fitting of the bivariate copula functions was then applied to the pseudo-observations and the dependence parameters were estimated by means of maximum likelihood (Fig. 2). Figure 2 summarizes the main steps of the copula-based approach adopted in the present study. For a detailed description on fitting methods please see Maity (2018).

The Akaike's Information Criteria (AIC) is frequently employed as a model selection tool in copula modelling (Li et al., 2015; Mirabbasi et al., 2012). Therefore, the selection of the best copula function for each pair of cereal and drought indicator was made based on the evaluation of AIC values calculated as AIC = –2 × (sum of log-likelihood) + 2 × (number of parameters) (Fig. 2). The copula function minimizing the AIC value was selected for each case. For verification purposes, the leave-one-out cross-validated log-likelihood was also computed during the estimation of the parameters. This step was performed to confirm the reliability of the selected copula models and we found that, in general, the same functions are selected with both the AIC and the cross-validated log-likelihood criteria. For this reason, and given the wide use of the AIC, only the results for model selection based on the AIC will be presented.

2.2.3 Probability of Non-Exceedance and Conditional Probability of Non-Exceedance

After the estimation of the copula parameters, the established models are used to simulate 1000 pairs of uniformly distributed data (Fig 2). In the present study, let $F_{X_{sim}}(x) = u_{sim}$ denote the simulated CDF of yield x and $F_{Y_{sim}}(y) = v_{sim}$ the simulated CDF of drought indicator y. The data generation using the joint relationship preserves the dependence structure between the margins. The simulated data in the range [0, 1] is transformed back to the original scale using the kernel estimations of the inverse CDF, originating X_{sim} and Y_{sim}, respectively.

First the copula simulations were used to estimate the risk of crop-loss in terms of the probability of not exceeding a threshold value of yield, i.e., Probability of Non-Exceedance (PNE) (Fig. 2). In this study we considered the threshold of minus one

standard deviation ($-X_{std}$) of each cereal yield anomalies time-series, as we are focused in real losses of yield and not just values below the mean (Eq. 2).

$$PNE_{-X_{std}} = u_{sim}(-X_{std}) = Pr(X_{sim} \leq -X_{std}) \tag{2}$$

The PNE gives information about how likely the occurrence of a yield value below a certain threshold is. In other words, it
5 gives the expected chance in percentage that the negative yield anomaly will not exceed (i.e. is not higher than) minus one standard deviation (-1 std).

Afterwards we have partitioned the simulated data points of X_{sim} into those corresponding to drought (e.g. SPEI <= -0.84 (Agnew, 2000) and/or VHI <= 40 (Kogan, 2001)) and non-drought conditions (e.g. SPEI > -0.84 and/or VHI > 40) (Fig. 2). The respective CDFs were used to estimate the risk of crop-loss in terms of the Conditional Probability of Non-Exceedance
10 (CPNE) given by Eq. 3 and 4, where Y_{th-dr} is the drought threshold, respectively -0.84 and 40 when the SPEI and VHI/TCI are used.

$$CPNE_{-X_{std}|drought} = Pr(X_{sim} \leq -X_{std}|Y_{sim} \leq Y_{th-dr}) \tag{3}$$

$$CPNE_{-X_{std}|non\_drought} = Pr(X_{sim} \leq -X_{std}|Y_{sim} > Y_{th-dr}) \tag{4}$$

For the purpose of validation and estimation of confidence intervals, the theoretical values of the above CPNE were inferred
15 from the copula functions using the Eq. 5 and Eq. 6 (deduced from the definition of conditional probability),

$$CPNE_{-X_{std}|drought} = \frac{C(u_{-std}, v_{th-dr})}{v_{th-dr}} \tag{5}$$

$$CPNE_{-X_{std}|non\_drought} = \frac{u_{-std} - C(u_{-std}, v_{th-dr})}{1 - v_{th-dr}} \tag{6}$$

where $u_{-std} = F_X(-X_{std})$ and $v_{th-dr} = F_Y(Y_{th-dr})$ are the marginal probabilities of crop-loss and drought occurrence obtained from the kernel-based univariate CDFs. The lower and upper bound of the 95% confidence interval (ci) of the
20 estimated copula dependence parameters were considered using the Eq. 5 and 6 in order to obtain the confidence interval of CPNE coming from the inaccuracy of the copula parameter and to address if the CPNE using simulations (Eq. 3 and Eq. 4) lies within the 95% confidence level.

In sum, first we describe the joint probability of drought hazard and yield anomalies and simulate pairs of data preserving their dependence structure. After that, probability of crop-loss (PNE) and conditional probability of crop-loss (CPNE) are estimated,
25 addressing whether the probability of crop-loss under drought conditions is higher than during non-drought conditions, and if distinguish drought severity is important. The probability distributions (based on a normal kernel function) of the generated yield anomalies are also analysed for graphical visualisation of the area corresponding to crop-loss.

3 Results

3.1 Fitting copula models

The estimates of the dependence between the yield anomalies and drought hazard were performed using the selected drought indicators resumed in Table 2. This selection of drought indicators highlights that the response of crop yields to climate conditions vary according to the location, type of crop, moment of the vegetative cycle and the temporal scale. While annual yield anomalies in cluster 1 are better characterized by short-term responses to the drought conditions based on the weekly values of TCI and VHI, the annual yield anomalies in cluster 2 are better characterized by the monthly response to the dry conditions based on the SPEI. In terms of predictability, the effects of temperature (TCI) and vegetation health (VHI) during late growth stages (weeks 23 and 22 correspond approximately to end of May and beginning of June, respectively for wheat and barley) are the most influential conditions in the northern cluster. On the other hand, the yields in cluster 2 are influenced by drought conditions described by SPEI much earlier, in the beginning of the intermediate growth stages (February and April with 5 and 1 month of time-scale, respectively for wheat and barley). In this way, the importance of including multiple drought response time scales is evidenced for predictability purposes and assessment of drought-related crop-losses.

Figure 3 shows the non-parametric estimations of the CDF of the individual variables from Table 2, here used to transform the variables to the unit scale (pseudo-observations) for the copula modelling. A good agreement with the ECDF is suggested (Fig. 3) and the crop-loss and drought thresholds used in this study ($-X_{std}$ and Y_{th-dr} respectively) are illustrated. A straightforward way of visualization of the association between the cereal yields and drought conditions was first carried out based on the scattering of the uniform pseudo-observations of the margins (Fig. 3 – bottom). Most of the transformed data points are concentrated along the diagonal line (Fig. 3 – bottom), mainly due to the correlations between the yield and selected drought indicators (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Most of the works based on copulas have estimates of the marginal distribution functions (Afshar et al., 2016; Bokusheva et al., 2016; Mirabbasi et al., 2012), whereas this procedure has no requirement for prior knowledge of the marginal distributions, entailing therefore less heavy assumptions.

The estimates of the dependence between the yield anomalies and drought indicators were performed using the copula functions from Table 1 (Gaussian, t-copula, Clayton, Frank and Gumbel). Table 3 indicates each copula dependence parameter estimates (ρ, df or θ) and respective AIC values. Based on the values of AIC, a Gaussian copula, a Clayton copula and two Gumbel copulas were eligible to perform the best fits (Table 3). In general, the Archimedean copulas are better suited to estimate the joint distributions between crop yield and drought indicators in most of the cases (Table 3), with the exception of barley in cluster 1, which is better fitted by a Gaussian copula. Given that AIC penalizes the number of estimated parameters (Wilks, 2006), t-copulas are not expected to be chosen, since they have two parameters that control the tail dependence.

The selected copula functions (Table 3) suggest that, in general, the relationship between yield and drought conditions is described by an asymmetric dependence in the tails of the joint distributions, except in the case of barley in cluster 1. This feature is illustrated in Fig. 4, showing the different shapes and contours of the selected copula densities. While wheat in cluster 1 and 2 shows a stronger dependence in the upper tail of the joint distributions based on Gumbel copulas (suggesting higher

probability of observing a higher value of yield anomalies given a high value of the drought indicators), barley in cluster 2 shows stronger dependence in the lower-left tail based on a Clayton copula, suggesting higher probability of finding a lower value of yield anomalies given a low value of the drought indicators. The randomly generated yield and drought data was transformed back to the original scales (Fig. 4 bottom panel) and the respective scatter plots indicate that more extreme values

5 are generated using the joint distribution relationships. In general, the modelling of the joint distributions leads to results close to the real observations (Fig. 4 bottom panel).

3.2 Probability of Non-Exceedance and Conditional Probability of Non-Exceedance using copula simulations

After estimating the joint distribution functions and simulating pairs of data preserving the modelled dependence structures, we evaluate and compare the Probability of Non-Exceedance (PNE) and Conditional Probability of Non-Exceedance (CPNE)

10 as a function of the crop-loss threshold. In this way, we evaluate if distinguishing drought severity leads to different risk values of crop-loss in comparison to disregarding a drought threshold (using only simulations of yield) and compare the probability of crop-loss under drought and non-drought conditions (by means of both simulations of yield and respective drought indicator). One of the key advantages of estimating the values of PNE and CPNE by means of the copula simulations is the use of larger samples which entail more joint extreme values based on the joint behaviour of crop yields and drought hazard.

15 Figure 5 shows the PNE curves and the distributions of the simulations of yield anomalies with the respective crop-loss area correspondent to the probability (%) of the yield anomaly not exceeding -1std. The PNE curves indicate more than 19% chance of having crop losses in all cases. According to Fig. 5, wheat at cluster 1 is the cereal with the highest risk level (22%) followed by barley in cluster 1 (19.8%), wheat in cluster 2 (19.4%) and barley in cluster 2 (19.2%) (Fig. 5). As mentioned before, the wheat's left tail area (negative yield anomalies) is slightly higher in cluster 1, suggesting a higher risk of wheat loss in the

20 northern sector of the IP.

The following target was to compare the likelihood of crop-loss under drought and non-drought conditions. Figure 6 shows the simulated crop yield anomalies during drought (orange left-sided boxplots) and non-drought (blue right-sided boxplots) events. As expected, the boxplots show lower (and negative in average) values of yield anomalies during drought events in comparison with non-drought episodes. Although the number of samples simulated under drought conditions is smaller than

25 under non-drought conditions (Fig 6), the use of copula simulations enhances the amount of simulated joint low extremes (i.e. co-occurrence of crop-loss and drought events).

The differences in terms of crop-losses between cereals and regions is much evident when differentiating the climatic conditions (Fig. 7), particularly during drought conditions. Figure 7 shows that the values of CPNE under drought (non-drought) conditions are above (below) the values of PNE illustrated in Fig. 5. In comparison with the distributions of yield

30 simulations without conditioning to specific thresholds of the drought indicators shown in Fig. 5, in Fig. 7 the distributions of the yield simulations during drought events show a shift to the left towards negative values of yield anomalies, while the distributions of yield simulations during non-drought events show a shift to the right towards positive values of yield anomalies (Fig. 7). The case of barley in cluster 1 is quite distinct exhibiting a drought-related barley-loss almost 3 times higher than the

value illustrated in Fig. 5 (19.8%), supporting the importance of conditional probabilities for agricultural drought risk purposes. The conditional probability of wheat-loss (Fig. 7), is also higher when focusing on drought conditions, although it is less than two times the values shown in Fig. 5.

Regarding the drought-related barley-loss, the distribution of barley in cluster 1 is more shifted to negative yield anomalies, stressing that the drought risk of barley-loss is higher on cluster 1 (59.2%) than on cluster 2 (39.4%), while it is quite similar on both clusters in Fig. 5. While barley suggests higher conditional probabilities of crop-loss under drought conditions in cluster 1, wheat suggests higher conditional probabilities of crop-loss under drought conditions in cluster 2 (46.7%) in comparison to cluster 1 (36.5%). Among all the cases, the highest level of drought-related crop-loss is 59.2% observed in the case of barley in cluster 1, followed by wheat in cluster 2 with 46.7% chances of crop-loss under dry conditions.

The theoretical CPNE based on Eq. 5 and 6 (Table 4) agrees quite well with the estimates of the CPNE in Fig. 7, thus corroborating the representativeness of the copula experiment using 1000 simulations. Nevertheless, the use of simulations allows to increase the sample size and to generate more joint extreme values based on the dependence structures characterized by the selected copulas. In addition, the effect of the copula parameters (ρ or θ) inaccuracy due to the finiteness of available sample is considered in Table 4 in terms of the 95% confidence level interval of CPNE based on the confidence interval of the copula parameters taken from Table 3. Table 4 shows that the theoretical CPNE under drought conditions still remain well above the CPNE under non-drought, with their difference taking the smallest value at the lower bound of the copula parameter confidence interval. In most cases, those differences are positive, as expected from the effect of drought on crop yield, despite the relative finiteness of the sample to fit the copula models.

The results show that CPNE based on simulations (Fig. 7) and theoretical equations (Table 4) indicate that the probabilities of crop-loss increase when drought conditions occur, even considering the two-sided confidence bound values of the copula parameters. Moreover, the results indicate that the CPNE using the simulations (Fig. 7) lies within the estimates of CPNE using the two-sided confidence bound values of the copula parameter at the 95% level of confidence (Table 4). The only exception is the case of barley in cluster 2 considering the lower bound of θ, which gives greater probabilities of crop-loss during non-drought conditions rather than during drought conditions, suggesting that other factor than water stress is the cause of crop-failure. This result has to do with the negative value of the copula parameter in the lower confidence bound ($\theta = -0.38$), thus suggesting a weak dependence between crop-loss and drought conditions in this case. However, at the 80% confidence level ($\theta \in [0.03, 1.55]$) the values of the copula parameter confidence bounds are both positive and give higher CPNE under drought conditions. This lack of accuracy of the CPNE at the 95% in the case of barley in cluster 2 may be the reason why the CPNE under drought conditions are not the highest of all cases, as would be expected from a Clayton copula (which is known for capturing lower tail dependence).

4 Discussion

This study investigated the usefulness of copula methods in estimating the likelihood of drought risk in wheat and barley cropping systems, when applied to two regions in the IP. Here we proposed to model the joint probability of yield and drought hazard using copulas, based on a prior analysis of the association between drought and crop-loss (Ribeiro et al., 2018). The advantage of using a probabilistic approach is to meet the ambitious challenge of helping farmers and stakeholders in managing their operations, by identifying the probability of crop-loss under specific drought conditions. Hernández-Barrera and Rodríguez-Puebla (2017) and Ferrise et al. (2011) have shown that projected warmer and drier climate will lead to wheat yield shortfall over the IP and Mediterranean, respectively, highlighting the importance of establishing novel statistical approaches for agricultural drought risk analysis. Other crops rather than rainfed cereals are also expecting significant losses during the next century in the IP (Saadi et al., 2015; Resco et al., 2010; Quiroga and Iglesias, 2009), and the here proposed crop-specific approach could be applied to other agricultural systems under drought conditions for different regions around the world.

The novelty of the presented models, in comparison to other works addressing climate risk in the IP (*e.g.* Ribeiro et al., 2018; Resco et al., 2010; Iglesias and Quiroga, 2007), is the focus on the impacts associated with droughts and on the joint probability of rainfed yield anomalies and drought hazard. Previous works using copulas in hydro-climatology studies have tended to focus on the joint distribution of different characteristics of the hazardous events, such as frequency, intensity, severity, duration, among others (Li et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2013; Mirabbasi et al., 2012). Moreover, the restriction to the bivariate case allowed for a simpler interpretation of the results, in contrast to higher dimension copulas (Afshar et al., 2016; Ganguli and Reddy, 2013), for instance by adding as copula variables, other factors influencing crop yield beyond drought.

More recently, copulas have been applied to estimate the joint behaviour of drought conditions and the associated impacts in agricultural systems (Leng and Hall, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2019; Madadgar et al., 2017; Bokusheva et al., 2016), instead of using drought information only. We have adopted a similar approach to reproduce time-, regional-, and crop-specific dependence of drought conditions, and the probability distribution of crop yield anomalies under drought conditions was estimated for risk analysis. In addition, the use of different drought indicators in this study represents an advantage since crops react differently to several factors at distinct moments and locations, highlighting the importance of quantifying the contributions of different drought indices on a regional scale (Peña-Gallardo et al., 2019; Zarei et al., 2013). A recent study by Peña-Gallardo et al. (2019) focused on the responses of wheat and barley cropping systems to different drought indices over Spain, have shown the different efficacies of several drought indices, stressing the importance of the multiscalar character of droughts, in particular of the SPEI. Similarly, and in accordance to previous work by the authors (Ribeiro et al., 2018), the present study shows the adequacy of SPEI for the assessment of the agricultural risks associated to droughts in the IP, and advances the added value of using the remote sensing of vegetation.

Overall, the results of the estimated copula functions have shown that Archimedean copulas are suitable to model the joint behaviour of yield anomalies and droughts , suggesting a dependence between extreme values of rainfed cereal yield anomalies and drought indicators, and the subsequent simulated distributions of crop yield anomalies are quite consistent with the

observations. The results highlighted that the use of copulas for probabilistic assessment allow the estimation of the dependence in the tails of the distribution and were able to give the likelihood of crop-loss under drought conditions. This feature is of the most interest in risk analysis given that it models the joint probability of occurrence of crop-loss and drier events. Moreover, this study suggests the relevance of impact-centric approaches (also referred in literature as 'bottom-up' approaches

5 (Zscheischler et al., 2018) to identify and characterize the hazards which lead to the larger impacts.

Moreover, it is important to stress that crop anomalies decline much more when drought conditions are below the mild or moderate threshold, suggesting a high agricultural drought risk level of wheat and barley in both clusters. While values of PNE the crop-loss threshold were low and similar for wheat in cluster 1 and barley in cluster 2, the values of CPNE the crop-loss threshold during drought years are considerably larger. The higher probability of crop-loss obtained when analysing only

10 drought conditions agrees with Páscoa et al. (2017b), which have shown a very high agreement between low wheat yield anomalies and drought conditions in the IP, even on provinces where the linear correlation is no-significant.

Although there is a greater risk of crop-loss during drought conditions, some losses can still be expected during non-drought events, particularly in cluster 2 (14.1% and 7.77% in the case of wheat and barley, respectively). In the northern sector (cluster 1) the probabilities of crop-loss under non-drought conditions have the lower values, displaying 3.97% in the case of wheat

15 and 3.65% in the case of barley. Some studies point to crop damages attributable to excessive wet soils (Zampieri et al., 2017; Rosenzweig et al., 2002) due to delayed planting or later harvest, nutrients runoff, development of pests and diseases, among others, highlighting the complexity of quantifying agricultural risk levels for management purposes, and the non-linear relation between crop yield and climate conditions. The lower values of CPNE under non-drought conditions in cluster 1 support the fact the slightly high values of PNE in cluster 1 are mainly dominated by drought conditions.

20 With the present study is not possible to establish sharp conclusions about the adequacy of the copula models to a specific type of drought indicator (remote sensing or hydro-meteorological), since only one type of drought indicator was considered for each cereal. In contrast, Bokusheva et al. (2016) have found that Gumbel copulas provided better fits representing the joint distribution of VCI and wheat, while Frank copulas described better the dependence between TCI and wheat yields, in Kazakhstan. Madadgar (2017) modelled the conditional probability density functions of crop yields under wet and dry

25 conditions using SPI and SSI and found that a Clayton copula was the best function to model the dependence structures. Similarly, Leng and Hall (2019) have also used the same copula families and found that from 10 countries 5 of them featured Clayton copulas to fit the joint distribution between wheat production and SPI. However, the referred studies were somehow more restrictive as they do not take advantage from using both remote sensing and hydro-meteorological drought indicators, and do not select the most important one *a priori*.

30 To further the research, the application of SPEI methodology to climate projections of precipitation and temperature holds an added-value to estimate drought risk levels for the next century. Likewise, the use of seasonal drought forecasts is also quite plausible in the approach presented in this study. Nevertheless, the presented results indicated the likelihood of crop-loss based on drought conditions observed much earlier than the harvest time, particularly in cluster 2 using SPEI (February and April with 5 and 1 month of time-scale). Hence, given the uncertainty associated to the seasonal forecasts for regional drought

predictability in the IP, the use of past information for predictability studies is still successfully used (Pires and Ribeiro, 2016) and continues to be a source of information from an operational point of view. Other potential usefulness of this methodology for future research is the evaluation of its suitability at the province level and the assessment of whether other hazards (such as heat waves) are amplifying the impact of droughts on crop's harvest.

5 Conclusions

The agricultural drought risk levels estimated in the present work aimed to improve the effectiveness of the agricultural management of rainfed cereals in the major agricultural areas of the IP. The main findings of this study are summarized below:

- The dependence structure between crop yield anomalies and drought conditions is mainly asymmetrical, suggesting the existence of dependence among extreme values of yield anomalies and drought indicators.
- The differences between the unconditional and the conditional probability suggest that the risk of wheat-loss and barley-loss can be underestimated without conditioning the probabilities of non-exceedance crop thresholds to specific drought levels.
- The conditional probabilities of non-exceedance suggest that the risk of wheat-loss and barley-loss increases when drought events aggravate from normal or wet to moderate or severest conditions.
- The values of conditional probabilities of crop-loss under dry conditions suggest that the risk of drought-related barley-loss is more likely to occur in the northern sector, while the risk of drought-related wheat-loss is more likely in the southern sector, suggesting that sowing in cluster 1 (cluster 2) could be more focused on wheat (barley).
- The overall results show the importance of the concept of conditional probability to distinguish different meteorological settings associated to crop-losses and the applicability of the Copula Theory. The use of copula simulations for the analysis of the co-occurrence of dry and low-yield extreme events have shown the additional value of this methodology for the estimation of drought-related crop-failure.
- Nevertheless, minor wheat- and barley-losses can still be expected during normal or wet conditions, stressing the complexity of the interactions between the agricultural systems and the climate. Particularly, under the current climate change context, further high-impact-centric analysis are required, involving the cascading effects of different climate hazards.

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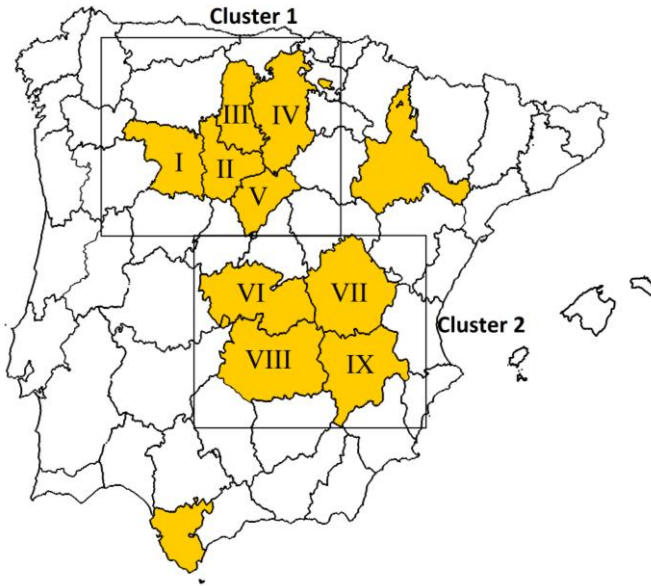
Figure 1: Provinces with more than 50% of the territory occupied by agricultural areas and more than 50% of rainfed crops (yellow) according to CLC2012, and selected clusters of provinces. Cluster 1 provinces: Zamora (I), Valladolid (II), Palencia (III), Burgos (IV) and Segovia (V). Cluster 2 provinces: Toledo (VI), Cuenca (VII), Ciudad Real (VIII) and Albacete (IX).
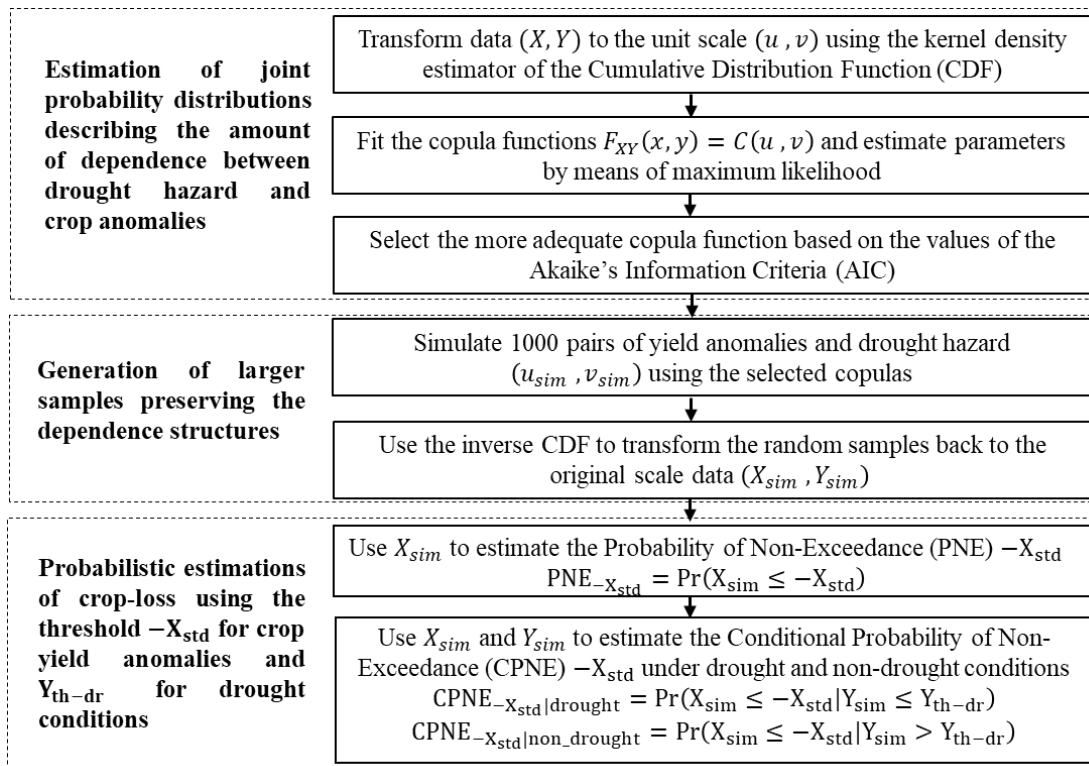
Figure 2 – Scheme of the copula-based approach adopted in the present study.
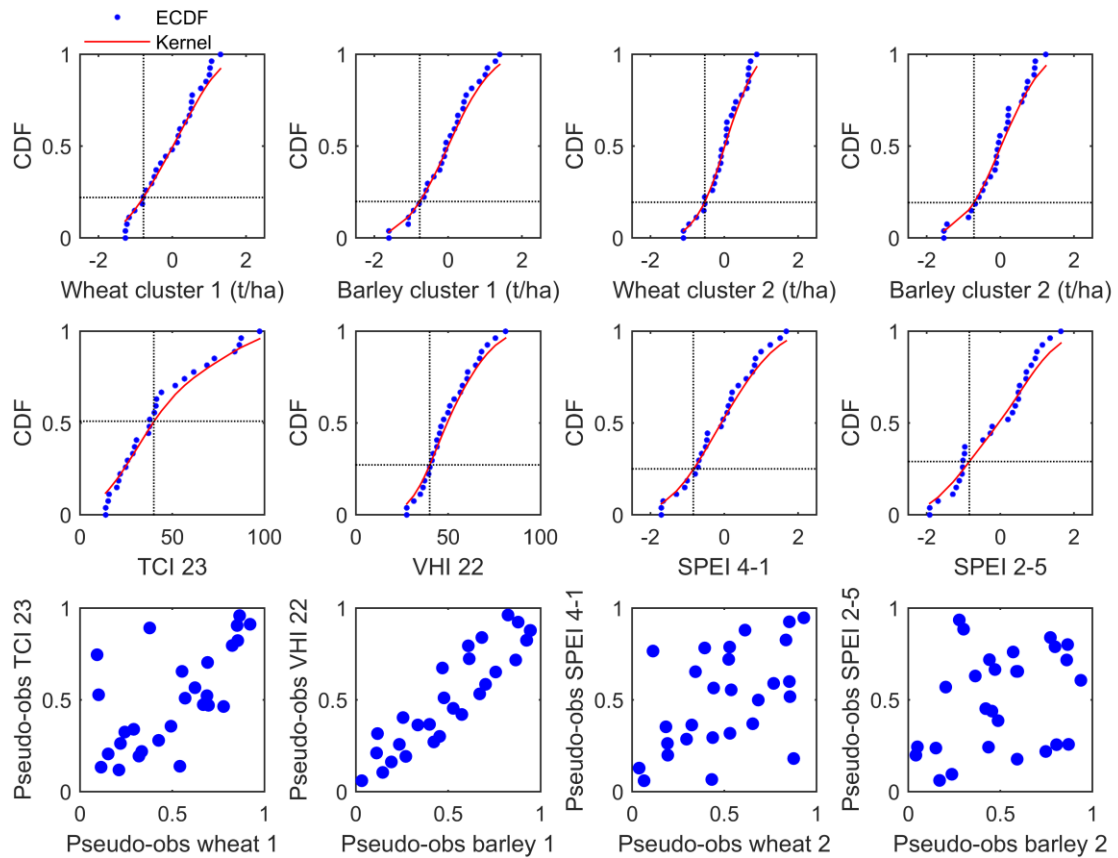
Figure 3 – Empirical cumulative distribution functions (ECDF, blue points), kernel density estimation of the CDF (red line), crop-loss and drought thresholds (dotted black vertical line), respective marginal probabilities of crop-loss and drought occurrence (dotted black horizontal line) and pseudo-observations (scatter) of the margins on the interval [0,1].
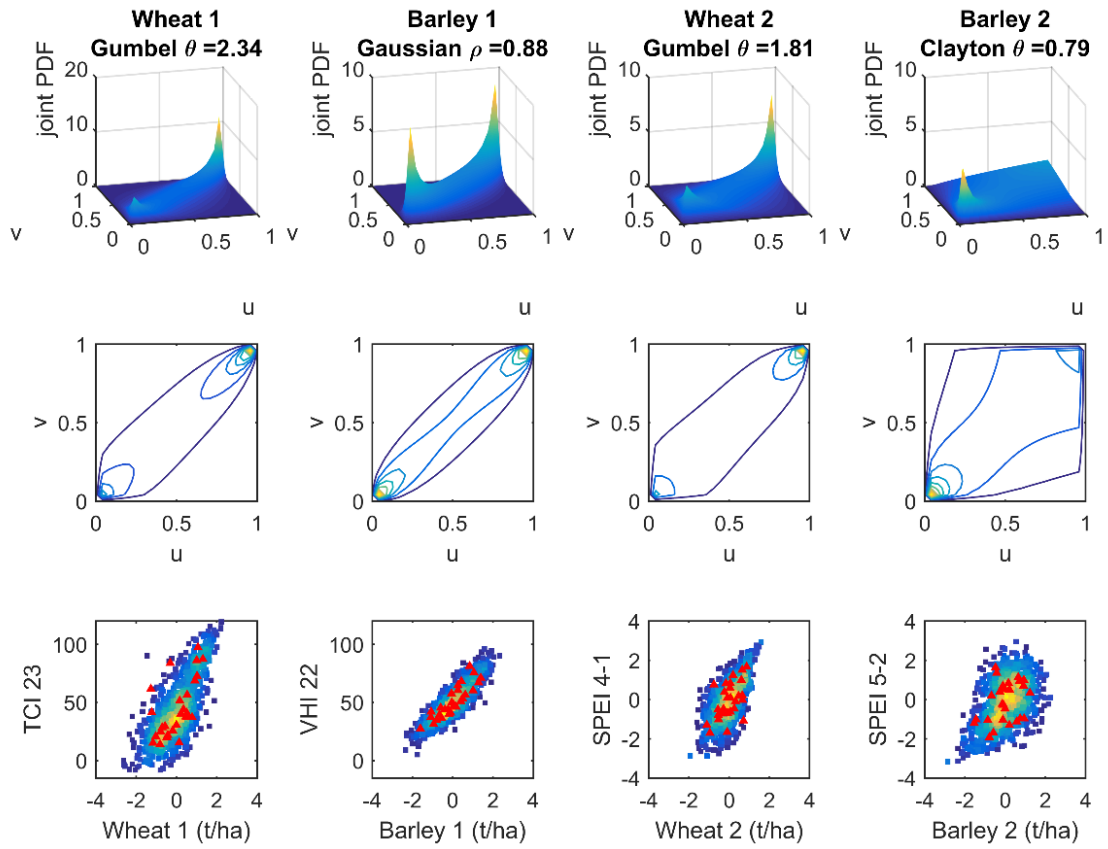
Figure 4 – Selected joint Probability Distribution Functions (PDF) where *u* and *v* are scalar values on the interval [0,1] (top), contours showing the two-dimensional view of PDFs (middle) and observed (red triangles) and copula-based simulations (density squares) scatter plots of crop yields and drought indicators (bottom).
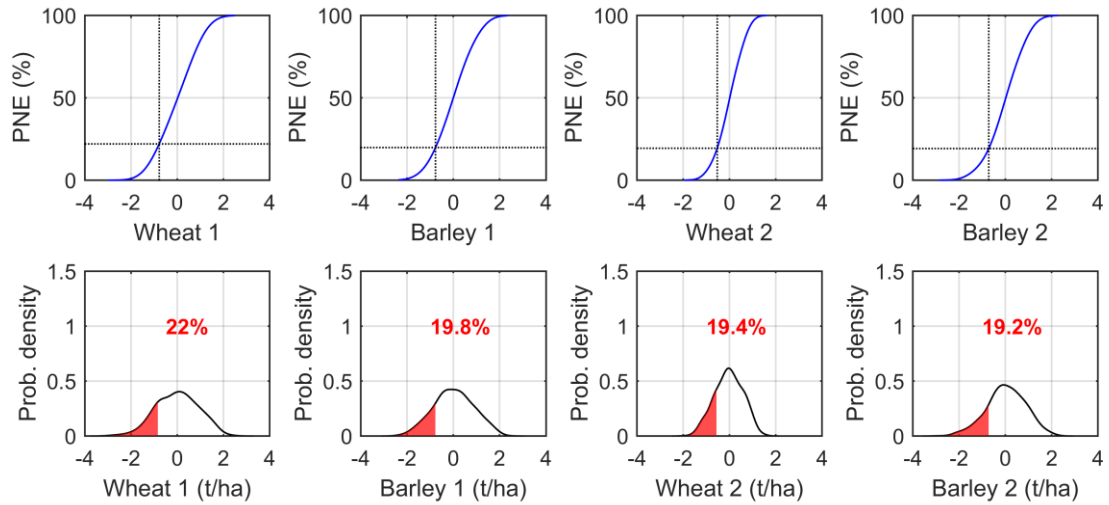
Figure 5 – Probability of non-exceedance (PNE) function (%) of yield anomalies (top) in both clusters based on the derived simulations from the estimated copulas and respective probability density estimates (bottom). On the bottom panels, the red values indicate the probability of crop-loss which is also indicated in the top panels by the intersected dashed lines indicating the threshold of crop-loss and respective PNE value.
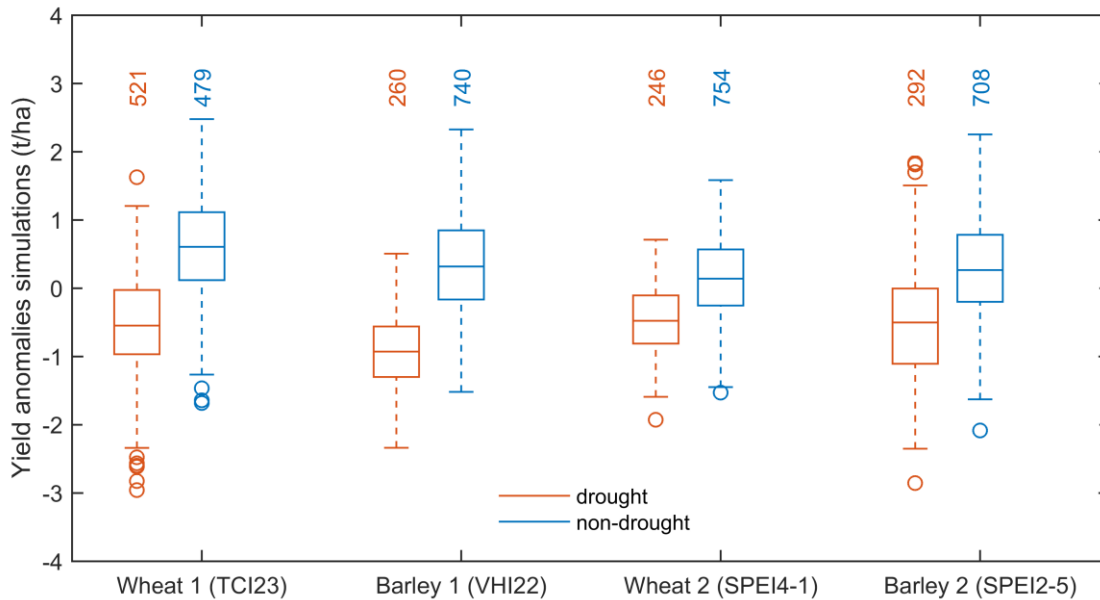
Figure 6 - Wheat and barley yield simulations differentiating drought (orange) and non-drought conditions (blue) according to the respective drought indicator denoted in parenthesis in the x-tick label. The numbers on top of the boxplots denote the sample size of the simulations under the different climatic conditions.
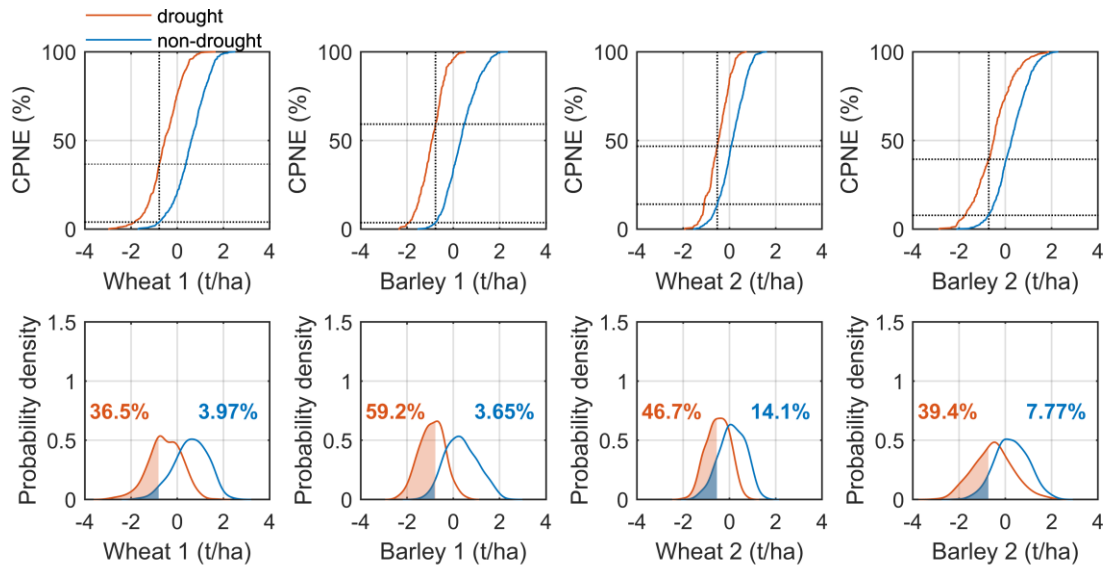
Figure 7 – Conditional probability of non-exceedance (CPNE) function (%) based on the derived copula simulations (top) and respective probability density estimates (bottom) under drought (orange) and non-drought conditions (blue). On the bottom panels, the orange and blue values indicate the probability of crop-loss under the different climatic conditions, which is also indicated in the top panels by the intersected dashed lines indicating the threshold of crop-loss and respective CPNE value.