

## IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON WHEAT–PATHOGEN INTERACTIONS AND CONCERNING ABOUT FOOD SECURITY

Mirela PARASCHIVU<sup>1,3</sup>, Otilia COTUNA<sup>2</sup>, L.OLARU<sup>1</sup>, M. PARASCHIVU<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Craiova, Agronomy Faculty, Craiova, Romania

<sup>2</sup>Banat`s University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine “King Michael I of Romania” Timisoara, Romania

<sup>3</sup>County Agriculture Consulting Office, Craiova, Dolj county, Romania

Corresponding author: [paraschivumirela@yahoo.com](mailto:paraschivumirela@yahoo.com); [otiliacotuna@yahoo.com](mailto:otiliacotuna@yahoo.com); [paraschivum@yahoo.com](mailto:paraschivum@yahoo.com)

**Abstract.** Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of many countries economy worldwide and it is highly dependent on the climate. Along with climate impact a range of regional and global political and economic factors intensify food insecurity and long term vulnerability in certain regions. Despite the findings suggesting that increases in carbon dioxide level (CO<sub>2</sub>) and temperatures can increase plant growth, the changes in global temperatures, frequency and intensity of droughts, extreme rain and snow falls, flooding and heat waves have already started to have significant impact on crop yields and concerning about future food security. The impact of climate change also need to be considered along with other factors that affect crop yields, such as specific biotic constrainers (pathogens) and its impact on the host-pathogen relationship. Moreover extreme temperatures and precipitation have been associated with changes in pathogens life cycles, increased incidence, pathogenicity, genetically recombination and aggressiveness traits, which involves the urge to rethink the integrated management strategies. Although, many previous studies have emphasized the sensitivity of plants to various biotic constrainers, the host-pathogen interactions are poorly understood in the context of climatic change. Therefore, it is a particular interest for those wheat pathogens that might affect yield dramatically with potentially serious implications for food security. The present review is focused on the impact of climate change on wheat diseases and host pathogen interactions taking into consideration case studies in order to understand better how the components of disease cycle are affected and to identify disease risk and prevent potential food security crisis. The response of pathosystems to climate change is of high interest currently in order to estimate disease risk on a large scale and to introduce new understandings in developing management strategies. However, further investigation need to be done in order to highlight how improving plant diseases management can enhance global food security in a changing climate.

**Key words:** climate change, extreme events, food security, host-pathogen interactions, plant disease, wheat

### INTRODUCTION

The global food supply has been facing increasing challenges during the first decades of the 21st century. In the last 20 years we have seen major changes to agricultural systems worldwide that have contributed to, and interacted with, new food systems. Scientists highlighted the transforming role of the interacting driving forces of population increase, income growth, urbanization, and globalization on food production, markets, and consumption.

The intensification of world agriculture has to happen in a time, when climate is becoming less predictable, fossil fuel dependency needs to be cut, and cropland and water resources are deteriorating (ALEXANDRATOS AND BRUINSMA, 2012; POPP ET AL., 2013).

Global climate change is caused by human activities, especially fossil fuel burning, large areas deforestation and changes into the land use. Since the last decade the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) has reached significantly higher levels than previous decades (SIEGENTHALER ET AL., 2005; CANADELL ET AL., 2007; SHAKUN ET AL., 2012) and increasing levels have been noticed for other greenhouse gases (SPAHLI ET AL., 2005, IPCC, 2013).

The planet's average surface temperature has risen about 2.0 degrees Fahrenheit (1.1 degrees Celsius) since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century due to human activities that causing significantly high levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere. According with the National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) and the Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) data, globally-average temperatures in 2016 were 1.78 degrees Fahrenheit (0.99 degrees Celsius) warmer than the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century mean and the tendency on long-term seems to be clear. Also, phenomena such as El Niño causes corresponding variations in global wind and weather patterns, leading to short-term variations in global average temperature (NASA, NOAA report, Jan.2017).

Climate change is expected to have variable effects in different areas of the world impacting agriculture differently (ENGLER ET AL., 2011; HEYDER ET AL., 2011; TEIXEIRA ET AL., 2012). The current awareness of climate change in the agriculture land use (e.g. land sparing – save some natural ecosystems from conversion into cropland), crop production and future food security appears to be high, especially due to high uncertainties about future food production (DÖÖS AND SHAW, 1999) and estimations about population increase to 10 billion in 2050. However, changes in current farming systems need to be linked to the short-term adjustments and long term adaptations to the effects of climate change in agriculture, to the farm level decision makers, to policy decisions made at local, regional or large scales, to research sector and also with “unknown aspects”, that to their complexity and long term observation have not yet been studied in detail (e.g. pests, diseases, changes in frequency of isolated and extreme weather events) (REILLY AND SCHIMMELPFENNING, 2000; SCHERM, 2004). The possible increases in extreme weather events might cause higher yield variability, lower harvestable yields, reductions/extensions in land use in some areas, introduction of new crop species, changes in soil organic matter levels, in nitrate leaching risk, in soil erosion and salinization, in new crop protection challenges (LEIRLÓS ET AL., 1999, REILLY, 1994, 1999; REILLY AND SCHIMMELPFENNING, 1999; YEO, 1999; OLSEN AND BINDI, 2002; HEGERL ET AL. 2011; PERKINS ET AL., 2011; COTUNA ET AL., 2013a, b). The responses depend on the particularities of the agricultural systems and on the changes in the crop management. There are scenarios that climatic change will lead to a higher incidence of crop diseases (especially plant host and susceptibility, pathogen reproduction – shorter incubation - dispersal, survival and activity, host-pathogen relationship) and to a potentially larger use of pesticides (NEWTON ET AL., 2011; SUTHERST ET AL., 2011). The predicted impact of climate change on pathogens and host-pathogen relationship suggests that can be positive, negative or neutral depending on geographical and temporal distribution of inoculum amount and cultivars susceptibility (NEWTON ET AL., 2011; SUTHERST ET AL., 2011). Thus, new pathogens may occur in certain regions, while other pathogens may decrease to be economically important, following geographical distribution of the host and cropping technology (COAKLEY ET AL., 1999; GHINI ET AL., 2008; GHINI AND HAMADA, 2008;). General tendency is that pathogens are likely to remain limited to their host distribution and not become disconnected from them. There is serious concern that climate zones will move faster than it is possible for plant populations to

track them, which is expected to determine disproportionate extinction of local endemic species (LOARIE ET AL., 2009). However, advanced knowledge about the impact of climate change on plant diseases is essential for adoption of integrated disease management measures, in order to avoid yield losses.

This review aims to discuss the impact of climate change on ones of the most important wheat pathogens (leaf rust – *Puccinia triticina*, stem rust – *P.graminis* f.sp. *graminis*, stripe rust – *P. striiformis* f.sp. *tritici*, Septoria tritici blotch (STB) - *Zymoseptoria tritici* and Fusarium Head Blight (FHB) - *Fusarium graminearum*) and host – pathogen relationship, especially temperatures and greenhouse gasses associated with.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS ON WHEAT-PATHOGEN RELATIONSHIP**

### **Temperature**

Higher temperatures are expected to occur in northern areas which will expand the cropping area for cereals by 2050; further more increased diseases severity and Area Under the Diseased Curve are expected too (GHINI ET AL., 2008).

HARVELL ET AL (2002) argue three hypotheses how pathogens will be influenced by climate change. He suggested that that rising temperatures will (i) increase pathogen development transmission, and generation number; (ii) increase overwinter survival and reduce growth restrictions during this period and (iii) alter host susceptibility.

Warmer climates are more favourable for virus-vectors proliferation, because they can complete a greater number of reproductive cycles and additional insect generations which suggests higher incidence of virus diseases in wheat (CAMEL AND KNIGHT, 1992; NEILSON AND BOAG, 1996, HARRINGTON, 2002; NEWMAN, 2004; HARRINGTON ET AL., 2007; DOBSON, 2009). NEWMAN (2004) pointed out the simultaneous effect of higher temperatures and elevated CO<sub>2</sub> concentration lead to 10% earlier timing of cereal aphids peaks (as much as a month earlier) and to 10% increase in winged forms, which results in greater spread and incidence of Barley yellow dwarf virus for which the aphid is the vector.

Warmer winter temperatures may also allow wheat pathogens to overwinter in areas where they are limited now by cold, increasing the primary inoculum amount and causing greater and earlier infections during the following crop season. Also, warmer temperatures associated with cropping practices appear to have been associated with shifts in plant hosts for some pathogens, particularly when talking on long-term view (MADGWICK ET AL., 2011; WEST ET AL., 2012). Thus, Fusarium Head Blight (FHB) is expected to enhance higher levels of inoculum for subsequent wheat and barley crops in warmer northern latitudes due to introduction of forage maize in crop rotation (MAIORANO ET AL., 2008). For example, disease incidence of Fusarium head blight in the United Kingdom and Germany might increase middle of this century, whereas disease severity of Septoria tritici blotch might decrease in France end of this century (JUROSEK AND VON TIEDEMANN, 2013). Also, it is expected that wheat flowering will be around 2 weeks earlier by the 2050s (4 weeks earlier if we switch to using ‘Mediterranean-type’ cultivars) and harvest will be 3 weeks earlier (or 5 weeks). Consideration of these altered growth stages is important because without it we would conclude that the incidence of fusarium ear blight will reduce substantially due to a decrease in occurrence of suitable wet conditions for infection occurring in early flowering stage (date) (JUROSEK, P., VON TIEDEMANN, A., 2013). In the case of *F. graminearum*, warmer spring weather will increase spore production and additional spore release from maize debris is likely to lead to an

overall increase in fusarium ear blight on wheat. This is an example of an indirect effect of climate change on a crop disease. Climate change also has an impact on food safety, particularly on the incidence and prevalence of Mycotoxins. The main consequence of FHB is that trichothecene mycotoxins, such as deoxynivalenol (DON), accumulate in the grain, presenting a food safety risk and health hazard to humans and animals (GOSWAMI AND KISTLER, 2004).

Temperature can also affect disease resistance in plants, thus affecting the incidence and severity of the diseases. Ambient temperature perception in plants is well recognised and plants have been shown to be able to detect temperature changes as little as 1°C (ARGYRIS ET AL., 2005).

The efficacy of current resistance genes may be compromised under more extreme and variable climatic conditions. Thus, previous findings emphasized that under drought stress, resistance expression can be reduced or lost temporary, as well as reduced disease symptoms (BITA AND GERATS, 2013). Also, some organisms enhance their ability to generate variants as an adaptive response to climate change (because pathogens exert very intensive selection over few generations), changes which can later become fixed through conventional mutation and recombination (HOVMØLLER ET AL., 2016). For example, there is an increased range of stem rust a possible explanation is that enhanced levels of free radicals were found under drought-stressed conditions. The same breakdown problem occurred in response to cold stress, but not salt stress (STEWART, 2002).

#### **Atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases**

Also increases in CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations is expected to enhance crop yields and resource use efficiencies. (COAKLEY ET AL. 1999; PANGGA ET AL., 2013)

Changes in CO<sub>2</sub> concentration increase plant photosynthesis, transpiration rate per unit leaf area and resources use efficiency for water and nitrogen, enhancing wheat canopy, which impact both yield (increases in crop yield are 10-20% for C3 crops and 0-10% for C4 crops according with AINSWORTH AND LONG, 2005) and wheat-pathogen relationship (THOMSON ET AL., 1993; THOMPSON AND DRAKE, 1994; PRITCHARD ET AL., 1999; DOWNING ET AL., 2000, JONES AND CURTIS, 2000; LOLADZE, 2002; LI ET AL. 2003). Thus, some types of resistance can be more affected in some diseases in wheat (e.g. reduced expression of induced resistance (PLESSL ET AL., 2005), due to changes in host physiology and in pathogen cycles (e.g. higher spore production) leading to epidemics (CHAKRABORTY ET AL., 2003; GHINI ET AL., 2008). Analysing the effects of the increased CO<sub>2</sub> concentration on wheat pathogens, Manning and TIEDEMANN (1995) emphasised that wheat rusts and powdery mildew incidence increase due to the effect of carbohydrate contents which stimulates sugar-dependent pathogens. TIEDEMANN AND FIRSCHING (2000) analysed the combined effect of increased CO<sub>2</sub> and O<sub>3</sub> in wheat leaf rust (*Puccinia recondita* f.sp. *tritici*) and observed that wheat leaf rust was strongly inhibited by O<sub>3</sub>, but unaffected by high CO<sub>2</sub> concentration. High level of SO<sub>2</sub> emissions seems to be correlated with incidence of *Phaeosphaeria nodorum* and *Mycosphaerella graminicola* in wheat (BEARCHELL ET AL., 2005; FITT ET AL., 2011). SHOW ET AL. (2008) reported that fluctuations in amounts of *P. nodorum* in grain were related to changes in spring rainfall, summer temperature and national SO<sub>2</sub> emission. Also, in leaves, annual variation in spring rainfall affected both pathogens similarly, but SO<sub>2</sub> had opposite effects.

Higher canopy growth will promote higher residue amount which favours necrotrophic pathogens development, while increased roots biomass will favour soil-born

diseases occurrence. However, there is less knowledge about potential impact of climate change on soil-borne pathogens compared to foliar pathogens (EASTBURN ET AL., 2011).

Previous studies emphasized that the exposure to high CO<sub>2</sub> concentration affects the defensive response in plants against pathogens (BRAGA ET AL., 2006), altering cultivar resistance. Wheat pathogens and wheat-pathogen relationship are affected by CO<sub>2</sub> changes, which also interfere with uptake of systemic fungicides, with both positive and negative effects on efficacy (COAKLEY ET AL., 1999; GHINI ET AL., 2008).

Studying the impact of increased atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration plant viruses, MALMSTRÖM AND FIELD (1997) observed that CO<sub>2</sub> enrichment may increase the size of plants affected by barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV) attenuating the dwarfing symptom due to the increase in root biomass and to the water-use efficiency by diseased plants, positively impacting the disease severity.

Also, changes in plant growth and physiology resulting from higher atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration associated with changes in temperature and precipitation conditions, can affect the efficacy of systemic fungicides altering their penetration, translocation and mode of action into the plants. Changes in cultivar susceptibility can determine a new fungicide application calendar (CHAKRABORTY AND PANGGA, 2004; PRITCHARD AND AMTHOR, 2005).

MADGWICK ET AL. (2010) predicted that by the 2050s the risk of FHB epidemics and the number of crops where mycotoxin levels would exceed the limit set by the EU will increase across the whole of the UK.

Váry et al. 2015 investigated the effects of elevated CO<sub>2</sub> on Septoria tritici blotch (STB), which infects leaves and Fusarium head blight (FHB), which infects flowers. The results showed that elevated CO<sub>2</sub> increased the severity of both diseases and the acclimation of the pathogens and the plant worsened disease development. Thus, for FHB, the highest disease levels were found for plants that had been acclimated under elevated CO<sub>2</sub> infected by pathogens that had also been acclimated at elevated levels affecting yield and reducing the number of grains by 76% and the weight of grain by 59%. In case of a resistant wheat variety it was observed that elevated CO<sub>2</sub> led to 27% lower number of grains produced was also and 20% lower weight of grain due to FHB. Also, increasing crop biomass by an average 17% by elevated CO<sub>2</sub> (AINSWORTH AND LONG, 2005) will further increase the amount of pathogen inoculum in stubble and crop residues.

However, further new studies are needed to be done about the effect of CO<sub>2</sub> and other green gases concentrations on plant diseases in both controlled and field trials under cumulated action of other abiotic constraints.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results regarding the impact of climate change on wheat pathogens and host-pathogen relationship are very important demonstrating that wheat pathogens can adapt to new environment, despite the fact that currently we are not able to predict accurately the trajectory of each pathosystem under climate change.

Under climate change estimates of future crops response to different biotic and abiotic constraints, food production and demand are associated with yield reduction and threaten to food security. Also, efficacy of pesticides under climate change can be altered by modifying fungicide residue dynamics in the foliage and the degradation of products. Wheat pathogens can be kept low by the adoption on larger scale of integrated pest management systems that will have to be adapted to this new reality. Including plant health considerations

into agri-environment schemes is the key to future solution to respond to increased food demand in the context of climate change.

Also, new studies on the impact of climate changes on plants health, especially on key crops, are required to make good predictions in order to design solutions to new problems challenges or to old problems becoming more severe. Thus, improved models of plant diseases development under climate change are required for diversify adaptative management strategies, improving the sustainability and security of food production and to make biodiversity conservation more sustainable. A better understanding of the interactions among climatic factors, pathogens biology and spatial distribution of susceptible/resistant cultivars are keys to managing wheat diseases accross different geographical areas. Also, the adaptative management to climate challanges will be foscused on a mix of different approaches adapted to different situations (e.g. including genetic diversity patterns in models predicting climate change impact on plant health). On this terms it is necessary to recognize the importance of soil health, both in terms of its function as habitat for soil-borne plant pathogens and in relation of soil microbes in promoting plant health and sustainable productivity.

New models of crop and pest and pathogens interactions linked with more performant climate forecasting monitoring systems, breeding for durable resistance in wheat and improving modelling of the many interacting processes, would be an essential investment for future food security.

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