



Irrigation of olive trees: studies on effects of salt water.

Researchers from “Sant’Anna di Pisa” have studied the response of olive trees irrigated with salt water.

Agriculture contributes to climate change and, in turn, suffers of its effects. In the Mediterranean area, extreme heat waves, spring frosts and reduced rainfall are negatively affecting agricultural productivity and putting farmers in difficult conditions. In the coming years it is expected that agricultural production will be increasingly variable due to extreme weather conditions and other factors such as the spread of pests and virus. In this scenario, research institutes are committed to collaborating with farmers to find new solutions to climate issues and to cope, for example, with the chronic shortage of water whose quality decreases as the hot season continues.

In this regard, researchers at the Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna in Pisa have undertaken a study aimed at investigating the effects that an irrigation with saline water could have on the development of olive trees and on the production and quality of fruits.

Specifically, the researchers examined the behavior of Leccino plants irrigated with saline water (80 mm of sodium chloride), values commonly found in the water of farm wells located along the coast in southern Italy.

The first evidence that researchers recorded after 75 days of irrigation with saline water was a 12% decrease in the length of the shoots, an increase in salinity which gives the fruit a harmonious taste and a change in the composition of the fatty acids, accompanied by a greater speed of saturation and an increase in the number of fruits.

According to Luca Sebastiani, director of the Institute of Life Sciences of the Sant’Anna School of Pisa: "These are alterations can be considered acceptable and open the possibility of using water with a modest level of salinity for the irrigation of olive groves".

The outcome of this research could represent an important response to the dangers of drought to which olive producers in the Mediterranean countries are exposed.

The EU-funded TAICHI project aims to disseminate information and knowledge on the world of olive oil to increase consumers' awareness of mainland China and Taiwan on the consumption of this product. The project, promoted by the two main consortiums of Italian olive growers, Italia Olivicola and UNAPOL, offers consumers all the information needed to understand the benefits of olive oil through its website, various social media platforms and OurOliveOil APP - available in the App Store and Google Play.

Sources: AgroNotizie <https://agronotizie.imaginenetwork.com/agricoltura-economia-politica/2019/09/30/irrigazione-degli-ulivi-studiati-gli-effetti-dell-acqua-salina/64288>



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