

Can “rescue” water buffer forage shortages?

Three-year effects on herbage yield and quality
Gran Paradiso National Park, NW Italian Alps

S. Ravetto Enri¹, M. Pittarello², A. Mainetti³, G. Nota¹, G. Lombardi¹, M. Lonati¹

¹ University of Torino, DISAFA • ² University of Torino, DSV • ³ Gran Paradiso National Park

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Presenting author: simone.ravettoenri@unito.it



A paired field test at 2400 m a.s.l.

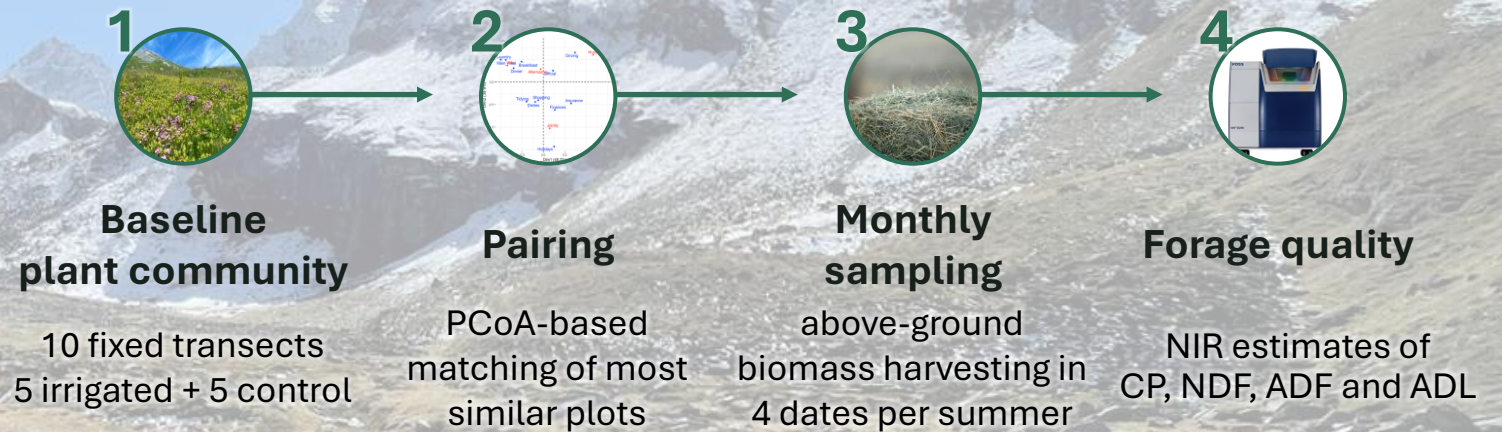
The practical question

Does emergency irrigation provide a useful short-term buffer for forage supply and quality?

Not a complete agronomic intervention, but a drought-period “rescue” measure.

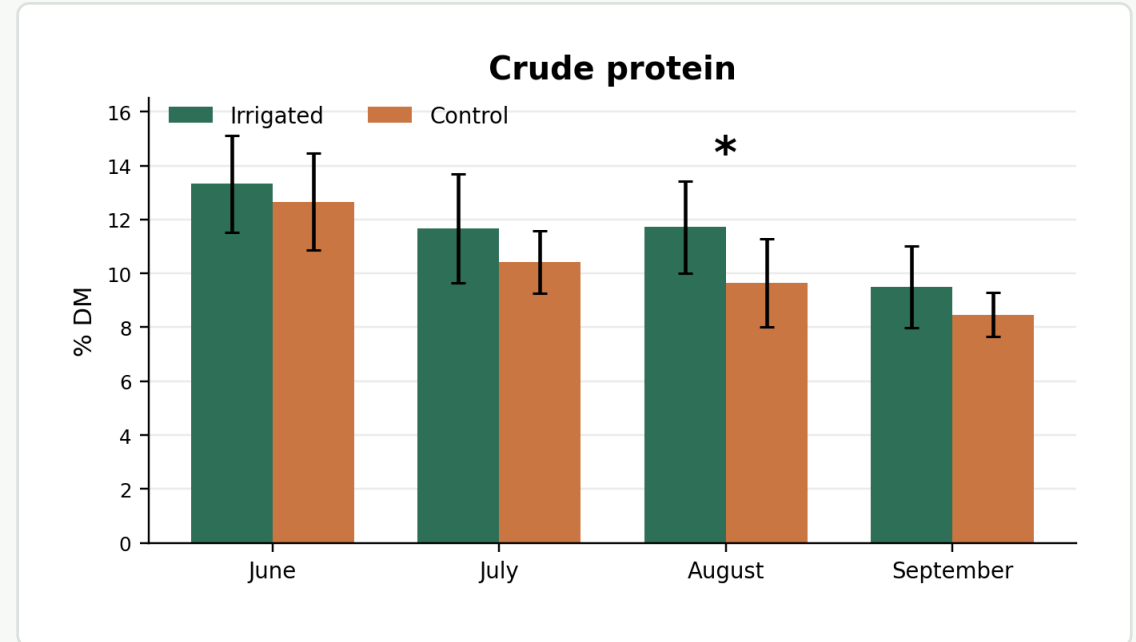
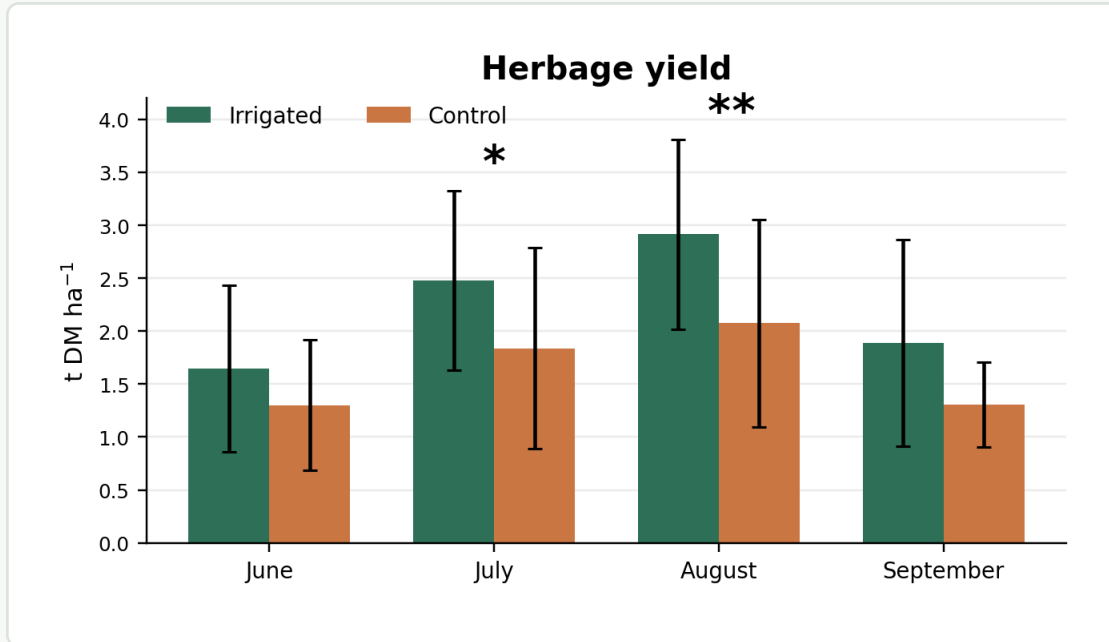
IRR vs CTRL

2023–24-25



Nutrient-poor dry pasture dominated by *Sesleria varia*, *Festuca ovina* aggr. and *Plantago alpina*.

Irrigation helped when summer stress peaked



Take-home message

Supplementary irrigation acted as a **short-term mid-summer buffer**, not a persistent driver of forage change. It increased herbage yield in July–August and improved crude protein in August, while fibre response remained limited. Its value for Alpine grazing systems should be weighed against water availability, field logistics and long-term sward responses.

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