WATER RETENTION, COMPACTION AND BEAN YIELD IN DIFFERENT SOIL MANAGEMENTS UNDER A CENTER PIVOT SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The southwestern region of the state of São Paulo, Brazil presents significant area of annual cultures basically composed of cereals under central pivot system irrigation. The bean culture is part of crop rotation used by irrigators from this region, who perform no-tillage management as a form of sustainable soil use. The objective of this work was to compare two soil management systems: conventional management and no-tillage management systems in relation to their effects on the soil physical-hydric properties, compaction and production components of bean culture under central pivot system irrigation. The experiment was conducted at the Buriti-Mirim Farm, Km 223.5 of the Raposo Tavares Highway, Angatuba, SP, Brazil, during the second semester of 2003 using an area irrigated through center pivot system divided into two types of soil managements: conventional management and no-tillage management. Although no-tillage management presented higher water retention capacity at the most superficial soil layers as well as lower compaction, the soil managements did not present significant differences in relation to culture productivity. Since conservationist management cycles are short, it was verified that the no-tillage management practice generated indirect benefits; however, time was not enough to promote structural changes in the soil and hence significant alterations in the physical-hydric properties that would lead to higher root development and culture productivity.

Keywords: no-tillage management, productivity, available water, central pivot.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Soil Management

In natural conditions, soil is found in a stable state in relation to the environment; however, inadequate management leads to degradation especially of the organic fraction, thus compromising the sustainability of agricultural systems (Gonçalves & Ceretta, 1999). The structure of an ideal soil allows adequate contact area between roots and soil, a continuous, porous and sufficient space for the movement of water and gases and soil resistance to penetration that would not limit the root growth (Koppi & Douglas, 1991).

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Due to soil management, the soil is passible both of degradation and of improvement of the productive potential. The different management systems cause alterations on the soil density and porosity and hence on the water storage along its profile, directly influencing the development of the root system and culture productivity. The magnitude of these alterations is a function of the management system adoption time, type of soil and climate of the region. The management systems must adapt to edaphoclimatic, social and regional cultural conditions and contribute for the maintenance or improvement of the soil and environment quality as well as for the attainment of adequate productivity along the years (Costa et al., 2003).

Conventional Soil Management

The conventional soil management is a set of operations performed before sowing with the objective of revolving the soil in order to provide the best physical, chemical and biological conditions for the seed to germinate, besides incorporating fertilizers, correctives and remainders of previous cultures; this latter, as a way to control weeds (Folle & Seixas, 1986). However, the use of this practice for successive years, besides causing excessive physical disintegration and superficial soil management (0.12 to 0.15m), it may also lead to the formation of an impermeable layer underneath the soil surface, known as "grid foot or plow foot" (Freitas, 1992; Fornasieri Filho & Fornasieri, 1993).

No tillage soil management

The conventional soil management has been successfully replaced in many agricultural regions worldwide and particularly in Brazil. In the last decades, the quick degradation of soil under agricultural exploitation worldwide, especially in tropical developing countries has arisen the concern on soil quality and sustainability of the agricultural exploitation (Lal & Pirce, 1991). If intensive tillage is responsible for the soil deterioration, its reduction and the accumulation of organic residues at the soil surface could probably change this condition (Silveira neto et al., 2006). The no-tillage technique has been recommended as alternative to avoid the undesirable effects of inadequate and repetitive soil preparation when intensive tillage practices are used (Chan et al., 1992).

The no-tillage system presents as main characteristic the implementation of culture without drastic soil mobilization, in other words, without its preparation or mobilization before sowing, the mobilization occurs only at the sowing line. This type of system also involves the maintenance of vegetal residues from previous cultures at its surface and the diversification of species through culture rotation. According to Seixas et al. (2005), this culture rotation consists of the alternation of vegetal species at the same area and season, where a minimum period of time is observed without the cultivation of the same species.

Soil compaction

The soil compaction consists of the alteration on its structure, generally caused by the traffic of machines and agricultural accessories or by degradation caused by management and tillage operations. The soil compaction is a process in which porosity and permeability are reduced with

impaired structural arrangement, gases diffusion, water infiltration and storage and increased soil resistance to penetration (Taylor & Brar, 1991; Soane & Ouwerkerk, 1994). The soil compaction leads to lower agricultural productivity, once it reduces the soil permeability to air and water and makes root penetration difficult (Lanças et al., 1990; Novak et al., 1992; Freitas, 1994; Pedrotti et al., 1998). In this context, the compacted soil presents lower hydric and nutritional availability, resulting in a thin layer to be explored by the root system.

The conventional soil management, which presents intense mechanization, worsens the soil compaction problems, and this effect is more evident in annual cultures due to the intense soil mobilization during management operations (Silva et al., 1986).

In the no-tillage system, the sowing is performed under remainders of the previous culture, and the surface layers of the soil profile, when compared to the conventional soil management, generally present higher structural stability, higher density and microporosity values and lower macroporosity and total porosity values after three to four years (Vieira, 1981; Vieira & Muzilli, 1984; Corrêa, 1985). This is mainly due to the non-revolving of the soil and to the pressure from the traffic of machines and agricultural accessories, above all when performed in clayish soils with high water contents (Vieira & Muzilli, 1984; Stone & Silveira, 1999). The traffic of heavy machines in the no-tillage system has caused superficial soil compaction (Silva et al., 2000) and reduced culture productivity (Beutler & Centurion, 2003).

One of the indicatives of soil compaction levels is its density (Mantovani, 1987; Reichardt, 1990; Diaz-Zorita, 2000; Queiroz-Voltan et al., 2000). When the system is correctly managed, with good dead coverage and adequate culture rotation, its density may decrease along the years due to the increase on the organic matter content at the superficial layer, also improving the soil structure (Reeves, 1995; Stone & Silveira, 2001), which will promote the fixation of canals that allow adequate air flow and higher water infiltration rates (Seixas et al.,2005).

The soil cone index may be used as an adequate parameter for the characterization of the soil physical-mechanical conditions and estimations of the soil-machine (trafficability, compaction and soil management methods) and soil-root (mechanical hindrance, growth restrictions) interactions, according to Machado et al. (1999). This index is defined as the soil resistance to the penetration of a conical tip and is expressed as the power per area unit of the cone base up to a given depth (Cunha et al., 2002).

Tormena et al. (1998) and Silva et al. (2002) agree that a soil resistance to penetration value of 2000kPa has been associated to unfavorable conditions for the growth of roots and aerial parts of cultures in general. Canarache (1990) and Mertto & Mundstock, (1999) report that values of mechanical resistance to penetration values ranging from 1000 to 3500 kPa may restrict or even hinder the growth and development of roots.

For the bean culture, mechanical resistance to penetration values ranging from 1290 to 2870 kPa do not restrict the grain yield, according to (Carvalho et al. 2006).

Water retention in the soil

Although the soil management under no-tillage increases the soil density and the root penetration resistance, it also increases the volume of stored water available to plants (Klein & Libardi, 1998). The higher water availability in the no-tillage system is associated to the non-revolving of the soil, its lower temperature and larger amount of superficial dead coverage (Vieira, 1984), which reduces evaporation, increases transpiration and hence increases the culture productivity. The maintenance of residues at the soil surface in the no-tillage system, besides the increase on the water retention, also provides higher protection against the direct rain impact (Igue, 1984). The non-revolving of the soil leads to slower and progressive decomposition of the organic matter, thus contributing for the soil and water conservation, also promoting the improvement of its structure that favors aeration and water infiltration, enabling better penetration of the root system (Igue, 1984; Lal, 1986).

A number of works have demonstrated the occurrence of higher water retention under low tensions for soils under no-tillage or minimum tillage (Igue, 1984; Vieira, 1984; Lal, 1986; Salton & Mielniczuk, 1995; Klein & Libardi, 1998; Stone & Silveira, 1999; Stone & Moreira, 2000; Stone & Moreira, 2001). At lower tensions, the pores size distribution is strongly correlated with the water storage. Thus, management systems that cause higher revolving of the soil and therefore higher volume, also store less water at the revolved layer in relation to other identical not revolved layers (Stone & Moreira, 2000).

Objectives

The objective of this work was to evaluate how two different soil management systems, conventional and no-tillage managements, influence the soil water retention, compaction and yield of bean irrigated through central pivot system.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted at the farm of an irrigating producer in the largest irrigated region of the state of São Paulo, Brazil, during the second semester of 2003. The culture selected was bean cultivar Rubi, which sowing occurred at August 02 and harvest at November 25, summing up 116 days of culture cycle.

The experimental design was fully randomized with two treatments and 13 repetitions.

The experimental parcels were placed under an 18 ha central pivot and divided into two soil management types: conventional management (14.4 ha) and no-tillage management (3.6 ha). The conventional management was performed by means of the use of plow and grid, while the no-tillage management was characterized by sowing performed under remainders of the previous culture with no soil revolving. The denomination no-tillage management was used because the parcel with no soil revolving does not characterize a continuous no-tillage system, once operations such as soil preparation aimed at eliminating the cotton stump and sobsoiling for the

elimination of compacted soil layers and redistribution of nutrients along the soil profile are periodically performed (Table 1).

2001		200)2	2003		
1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	
Cotton/ oat	Corn	Bean/ oat	Cotton	Oat	Bean	

Table 1. Culture rotation according to the management program

Before the experiment was installed, soil non-deformed samples were collected with the aid of volumetric rings at layers of 0-5cm, 5-10cm, 10-20cm and 20-40cm in both soil management conditions for the attainment of water retention characteristic curves. In order to adjust the pairs of data in relation to soil water tension and the corresponding volumetric humidity, the non-linear equation proposed by Van Genuchten (1980) was used, which parameters were obtained using the Soil Water Retention Curve – SWRC software (Dourado Neto et al., 1990).

Irrigation was monitored by means of three tensiometer batteries in each soil management treatment: conventional management and no-tillage management. Each battery was composed of two tensiometers installed at 15 and 30 cm of depth, where the first one defined the irrigation moment and the second one was used to control the amount of water applied (Saad & Libardi, 1992). The irrigations were performed whenever the average value read in tensiometer placed at 15 cm of depth reached 35 kPa (Silveira & Stone, 1994; Moreira et al., 1999). For the determination of the soil cone index (soil mechanical resistance to penetration), a hydraulic-electronic penetrometer according to Lanças & Santos (1998) was used. The hydraulic-electronic penetrometer, assembled on a cart for haulage and application in tractors with hydraulic system, presents a cone with base area of 320 mm², solid angle of 30° and soil penetration constant velocity of 30 mm s⁻¹ according to ASAE S313.2 (1991). The electronic system presents a data acquisition system (Microlloger 23X, Campbell), power sensor (load cell of 10000 N) and depth sensor (rotational potentiometer). The depths used for the determination of the soil cone index were 0-5; 5-10; 10-20 and 20-40cm in both soil management conditions.

On the occasion of the bean culture harvest, 10 sequential plants in pre-determined site in the useful area of each parcel were collected. These plants were led to the laboratory for the determination of the number of pod/plant, number of grains/plant, average number of grains/pod and mass of 100 grains, determined through random collection and weighting of two samples of 100 grains per parcel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 presents precipitations and irrigations that occurred during the bean plant cycle, 333.5 mm and 188.3 mm, respectively. According to Doorenbos & Kassam (1979), the hydric demand of the bean culture with cycle from 60 to 120 days ranges from 300 to 500 mm to reach high productivity.

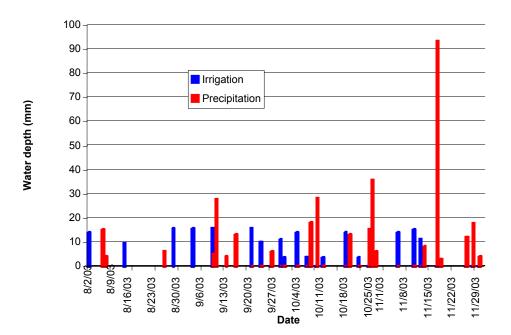


Figure 1. Amount of water x date (irrigation/precipitation). Occurrence of precipitation and irrigation during the bean plant cycle.

In at least two days, 09/09 and 10/20/03, rain precipitation with amount of water equal to or above that applied by irrigation was verified. This evidences the importance of climatic monitoring services that provide information on the probability of rain precipitations, once a slight anticipation on the irrigation or even its suspension could represent water and energy economy and avoid favorable conditions for the development of diseases.

For bean culture, irrigation is recommended when the water tension in soil reaches 35 kPa (Silveira & Stone, 1994; Moreira et al., 1999). In relation to the monitoring of the water tension, Figures 2 and 3 showed a quite similar trend between conventional and no-tillage management conditions. Since the blue line represents the tension equivalent to soil at the field capacity, in other words, 10 kPa and the green line represents the tension of 35 kPa, which indicates the irrigation moment, one observes that in some periods, the tension exceeded these two limits. The periods in which tension was close to 0, in other words, close to saturation, are those corresponding to the occurrence of intense rainfalls (09/10 to 09/16/03).

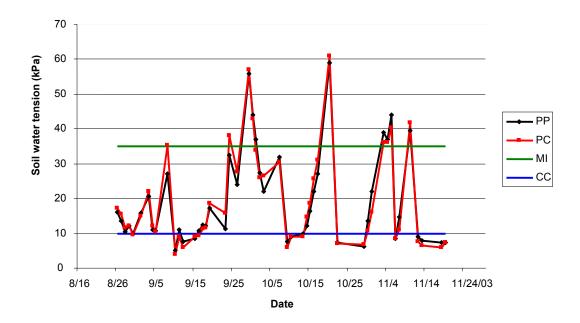


Figure 2. Soil water tension x date. Soil water tension (kPa) at 15cm depth for no-tillage management (DM) and conventional management (CM) conditions, irrigation moment (IM) and field capacity (FC) along the culture cycle.

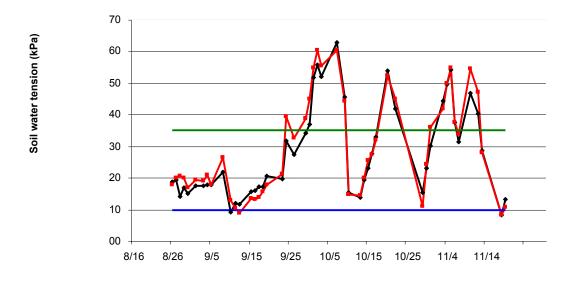


Figure 3. Soil water tension x date. Soil water tension (kPa) at 30cm depth for no-tillage management (DM) and conventional management (CM) conditions, irrigation moment (IM) and field capacity (FC) along the culture cycle.

In some periods, the soil water tension exceeded the limit of 35 kPa, leaving the soil drier with the objective of aiding the control of diseases with high damage potential that diffuse in humid environments such as the white mould.

In identical irrigation and precipitation conditions, no-tillage soil management presented higher amount of water available at the most superficial layers (0 to 5cm and 5 to 10cm), identical values at layer from 10 to 20 cm and lower amount of water at the deepest layer (20 to 40 cm), as shown in Table 2. Higher water availability in no-tillage management at the soil layer from 0 to 10 cm was observed by Urchei (1996), who also observed that in soil layers from 10 to 20 cm and from 20 to 30 cm, both types of soil management conditions presented approximately the same water storage. Considering the effective depth of the bean plant root system ranging from 20 to 30 cm (Moreira, 1993; Stone, 2002), the no-tillage management condition seemed to be more effective for water retention up to this depth and hence there may be more water available to plants and lower variation on its content, once the dead coverage in this condition reduces the water losses due to evaporation (Stone & Silveira, 1999; Stone & Moreira (2000, 2001). Other works (Castro et al., 1987; Salton & Mielniczuk, 1995; Klein & Libardi, 1998) have verified that in no-tillage systems or systems with minimum management in which soil is little revolved or not revolved at all, a higher water retention is observed. According to Vieira (1984), the higher water availability in no-tillage system is associated to the soil non-revolving, lower temperature and larger amounts of superficial dead coverage, which increased the surface rugosity and favored higher infiltration rates.

Thus, plants belonging to no-tillage management presented potential conditions of higher root development and hence higher vegetative growth, higher number of flowers and higher grain yield.

Soil management	Layer (cm)	$\frac{FC}{(cm^3 cm^{-3})}$	$\frac{PWP}{(cm^3 cm^{-3})}$	AW (mm cm ⁻¹)	Ds (g cm ⁻³)	Texture
	0-5	0.3215	0.2764	0.5	1.48	clay
CM	5-10	0.3172	0.2584	0.6	1.41	clay
CM	10-20	0.3248	0.2697	0.6	1.41	clay
	20-40	0.3071	0.2418	0.7	1.26	clay
	0-5	0.3387	0.2653	0.7	1.23	clay
DM	5-10	0.3645	0.2934	0.7	1.37	clay
DM	10-20	0.3885	0.3302	0.6	1.41	clay
	20-40	0.3672	0.3152	0.5	1.36	clay

Table 2. Field capacity (FC) in cm ³ cm ⁻³ , permanent wilting point (PWP) in cm ³ cm ⁻³ , available
water (AW) in mm cm ⁻¹ , density (Ds) in g cm ⁻³ and texture at different soil layers for
conventional (CM) and no-tillage (DM) management systems.

Since intense mechanization was observed in the conventional management condition, in other words, more traffic of machines, the more superficial soil layers (0 to 5 cm and 5 to 10cm) presented higher density values, according to results presented by Silva et al., 1986; Campos et al., 1995. Since the soil density is the most common form to quantify its compaction (Mantovani, 1987; Reichardt, 1990), one may conclude that up to depth of 10 cm, the no-tillage management

was found less compacted. The soil non-revolving and the lower movement of machines and agricultural accessories, in addition to the effect of the dead coverage that increased the organic matter content, provided an improvement on the soil structure at this depth, thus increasing its aggregates and decreasing its density, what contributes for a higher water storage at this condition, according to results found by Stone & Moreira (2000, 2001). Similarly for the available water, at layer of 10 - 20 cm, both soil managements presented the same density, and the deepest layer (20-40 cm) was the conventional management condition that presented the lowest soil density.

The soil cone index is an indirect measurement of soil resistance to root penetration, which presented increase trend up to depth of 20 cm with maximum values of 3254 kPa and 3310 kPa at layers of 10 and 20 cm for no-tillage and conventional management conditions, respectively (Table 3). Comparatively, the conventional management presented higher soil cone index values for layers of 5-10, 10-20 and 20-40cm, and only at layer of 0-5 cm, this value was below that found for no-tillage management.

Table 3. Soil cone index (kPa) for no-tillage management (DM) and conventional management
(CM) conditions at the different soil layers.

Soil management	0-5cm	5-10cm	10-20cm	20-40cm
DM	1104	2736	3254	2335
СМ	1095	3161	3310	2702

Layers of 5-10 cm and 10-20 cm in conventional soil management present values quite close to each other, 3161 kPa and 3310 kPa, respectively, what may be due to adjustment problems of the agricultural accessories work effective depth, thus evidencing alterations at the depth of the compacted sub-superficial layer.

Physical-hydric alterations at the most superficial layers in the no-tillage management were not sufficient to influence the bean plant production and productivity components favorably, and do not present difference statistically significant at 5% of probability in relation to the conventional management (Table 4). Even though in the no-tillage management condition, plants have produced a higher number of grains, their mass was lower, what resulted in close productivities.

	plant productivity for both son managements.						
	Number of	Number of	Number of	Mass of 100	Bean		
Soil	grains per	pods per	grains per	grains (g)	Yield		
management	plant	plant	pod		$(Kg ha^{-1})$		
No-tillage							
management	83.48a	15.22a	5.14a	18.02a	3360a		
Conventional							
management	78.41a	16.22a	5.16a	19.47a	3330a		

Table 4. Number of grains per plant, number of grains per pod, mass of 100 grains and bean plant productivity for both soil managements.

Mullins et al. (1980) and Zaffaroni et al. (1991) also reported differences in bean plant yield between no-tillage and conventional soil management. According to Lopes et al. (2004), in the first years of no-tillage and conventional management, it was not possible verifying significant productivity differences between both management systems. However, Stone (2002) concluded that the bean plant yield under no-tillage system increases with the adoption time of this system.

CONCLUSIONS

Up to the depth of 10 cm, the no-tillage system presented lower soil density value, lower compaction and higher water storage capacity in relation to the conventional management. However, these soil management systems presented no significant differences for bean plant yield and for the other production components evaluated.

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