



**Università  
degli Studi  
di Ferrara**

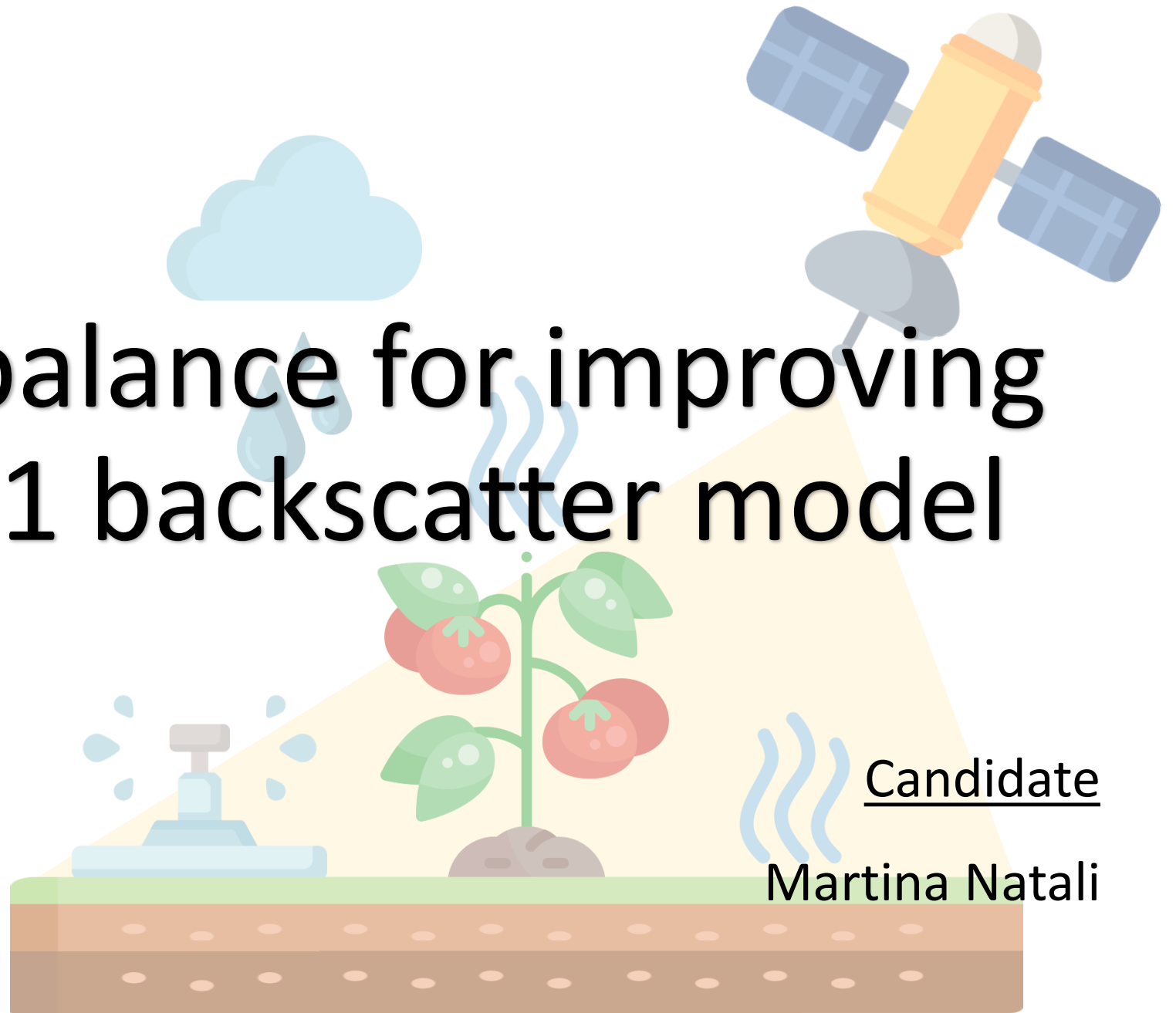
# Soil water balance for improving a Sentinel-1 backscatter model

Supervisor

Prof. Fabio Mantovani

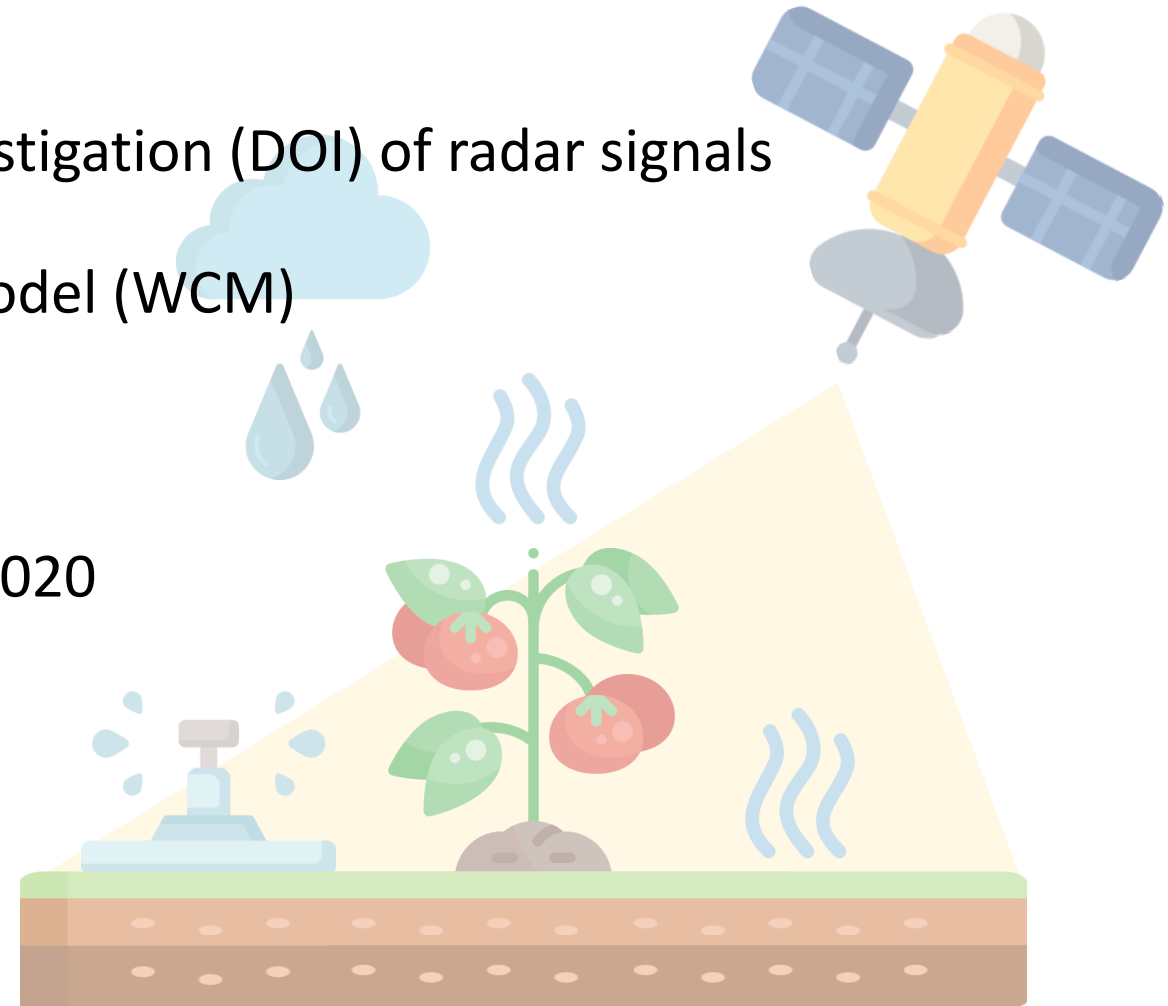
Candidate

Martina Natali



# Summary

- Basic idea and implementation
- Study site and experimental setup
- Field of view of in-situ  $\gamma$  station and depth of investigation (DOI) of radar signals
- Soil water balance (SWB) and the Water Cloud Model (WCM)
- Analysis of simulated backscatter ( $\sigma^0$ )
- Results on 2017 campaign and comparison with 2020
- Conclusions and future perspectives



# The basic idea...

- The **Water Cloud Model (WCM)** is a radiative transfer model which is used to calculate  $\sigma^0$  values over vegetated fields by using inputs of **soil moisture (SM [m<sup>3</sup>m<sup>-3</sup>])** and vegetation descriptors (e.g. **Normalized Differential Vegetation Index, NDVI [-]**)
- $\sigma^0$  [dB] is the backscattering coefficient, which is proportional to the ratio of the power received and transmitted by a radar antenna (e.g. Sentinel-1's antenna at 5.4 GHz), normalized over the area of incidence.

## Limitations of the WCM

SM inputs: in-situ punctual measurements, can't cover large areas

SM inputs: investigate deep soil layer ( ~ 10 cm)

Vegetation description based on grasslands

Site-dependent, period-dependent

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Vegetation description based on grasslands

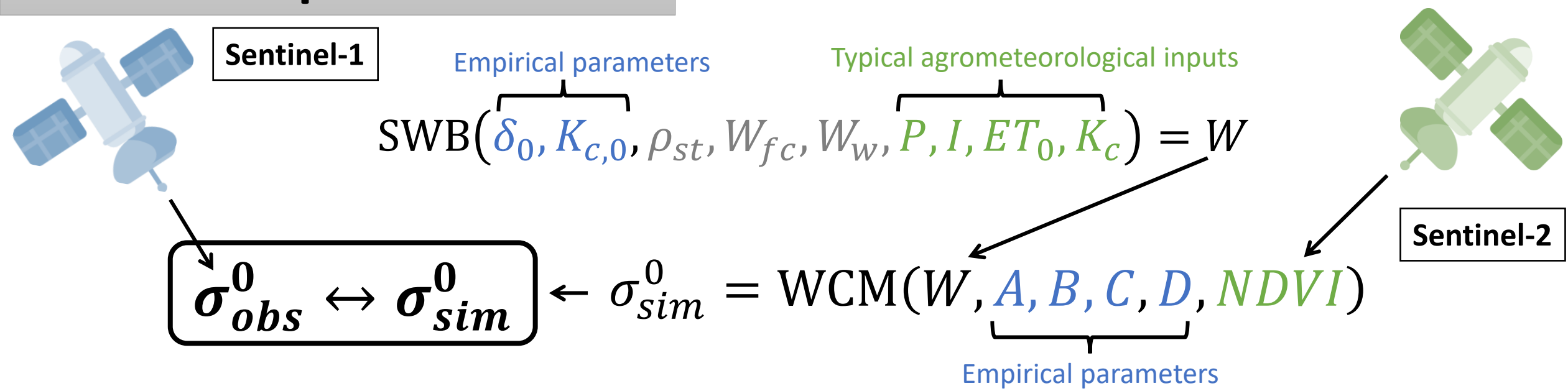
Site-dependent, period-dependent

## Soil Water Balance (SWB) inputs

Arbitrary large area (depend on inputs)

Dynamic depth of soil layer ~ depth of investigation radar signal (~ 3 cm)

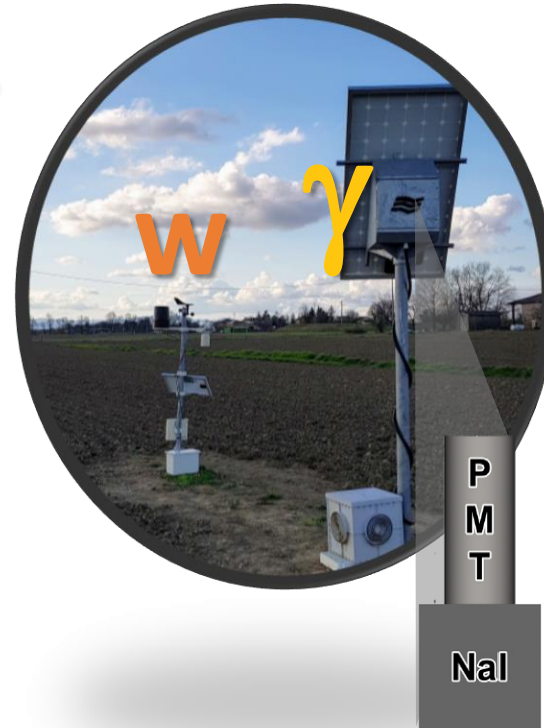
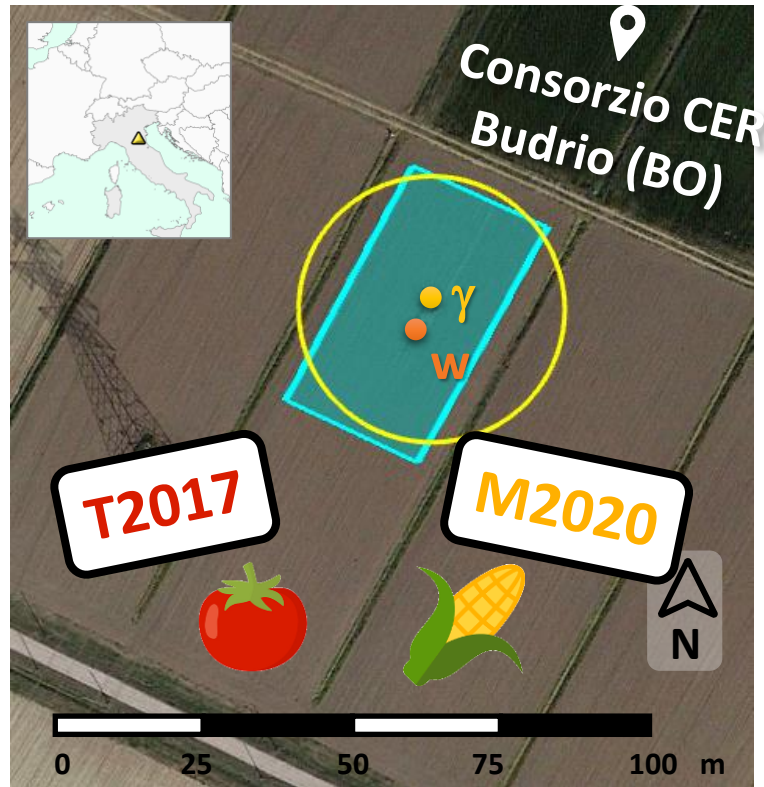
# ...and its implementation



## Physical observables

- $\rho_{st}$  = standard potential depletion fraction [-], i.e. the fraction of soil moisture depleted in 1 hour, depends on weather conditions
- $W_{fc}$  = field capacity [ $m^3m^{-3}$ ], i.e. soil moisture for which plants do not suffer water stress, depends on soil texture
- $W_w$  = wilting point [ $m^3m^{-3}$ ], i.e. soil moisture for which plants suffer the most stress, depends on soil texture

# Study site and field campaigns

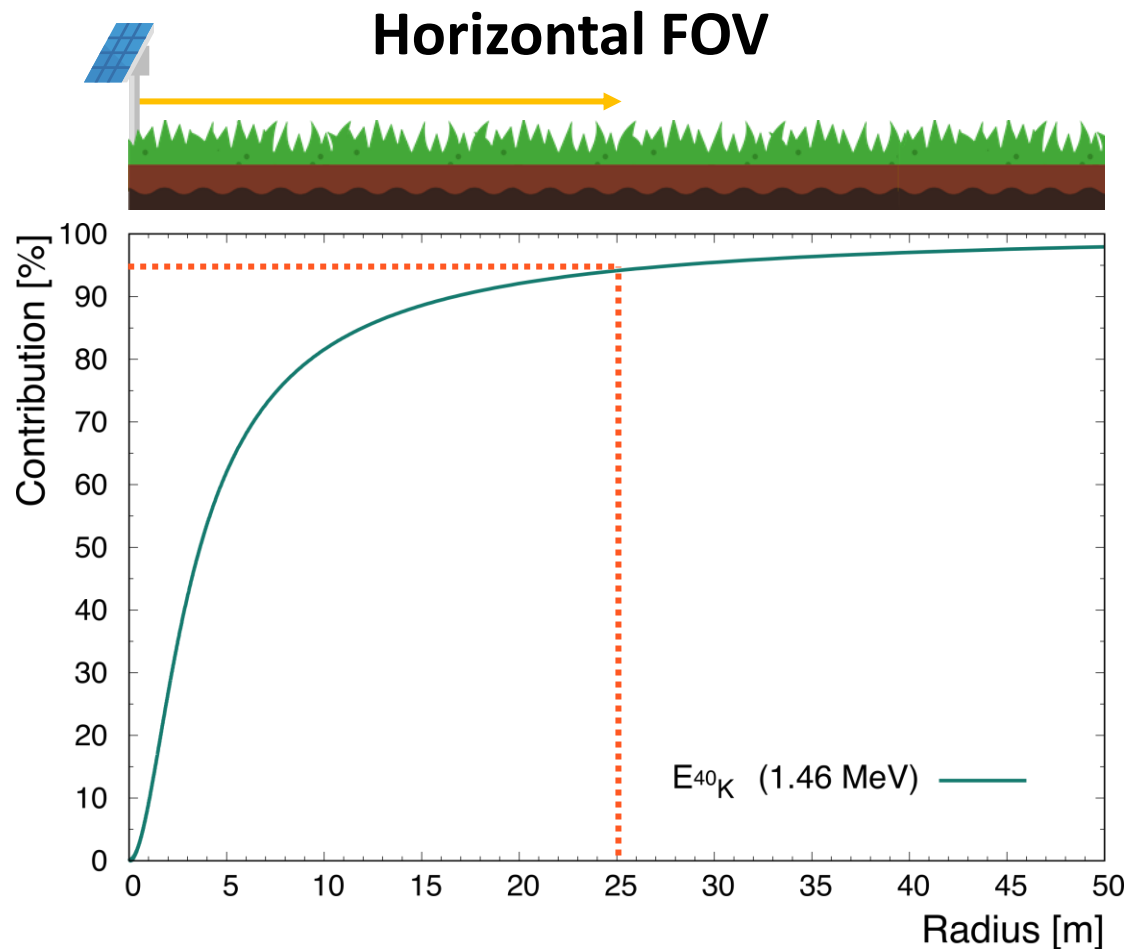


- 2 field campaigns in a test site in Budrio (BO), Italy, cultivated with **tomato in 2017 (T2017)**, **maize in 2020 (M2020)**, which have different  $K_c$
- **meteorological station (w)** which provides hourly precipitation, wind speed, solar radiation, air temperature, dew point and atmospheric pressure measurements, which are used to compute  $ET_0$

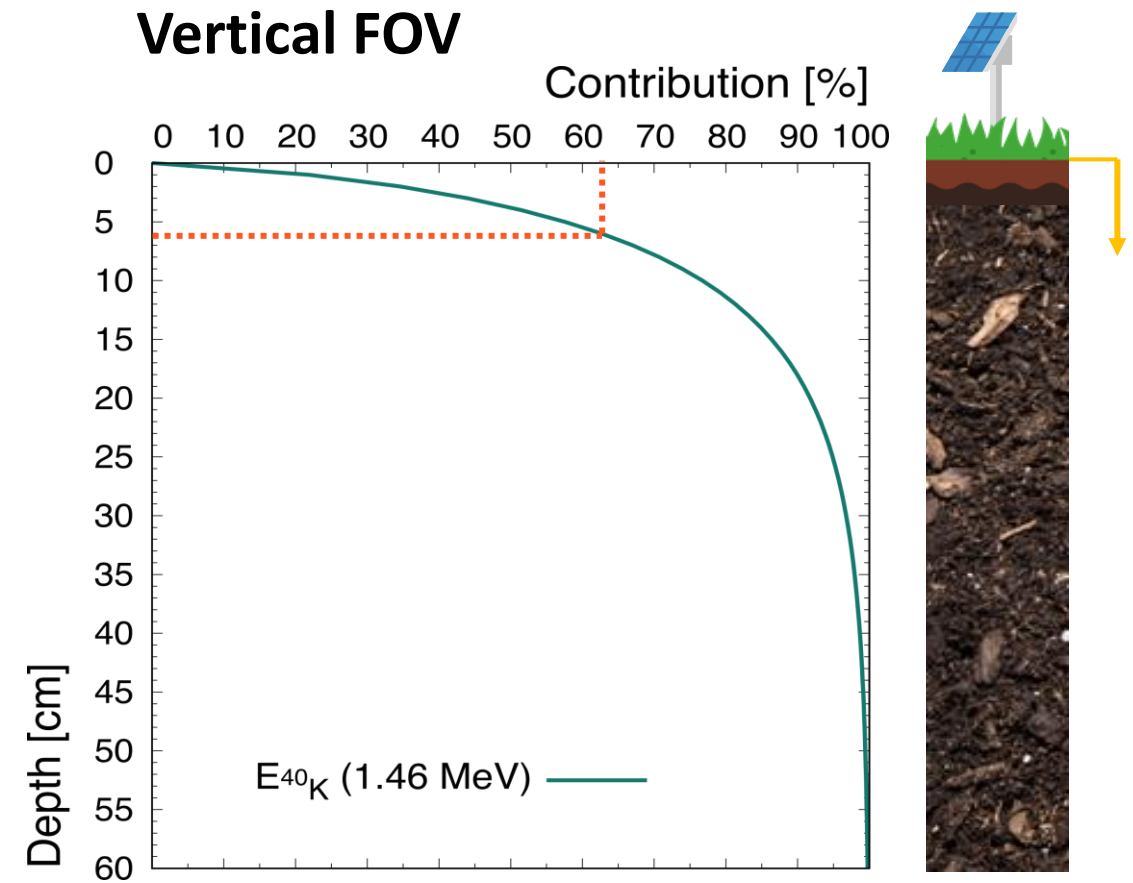
- **γ station (γ)** equipped with a 1L NaI(Tl) scintillator that measures  $^{40}\text{K}$  decay spectra; nuclear measurements are used to calculate **hourly SM** which is used as comparison/benchmark for SM estimates from SWB

Parameter	Value
Sand [%]	45
Silt [%]	40
Clay [%]	15
Soil textural class	Loamy
Wilting point ( $W_w$ ) [ $\text{m}^3/\text{m}^3$ ]	$0.09 \pm 0.01$
Field capacity ( $W_{fc}$ ) [ $\text{m}^3/\text{m}^3$ ]	$0.32 \pm 0.01$
Saturation ( $W_s$ ) [ $\text{m}^3/\text{m}^3$ ]	$0.48 \pm 0.01$

# Field of view (FOV) of the $\gamma$ station

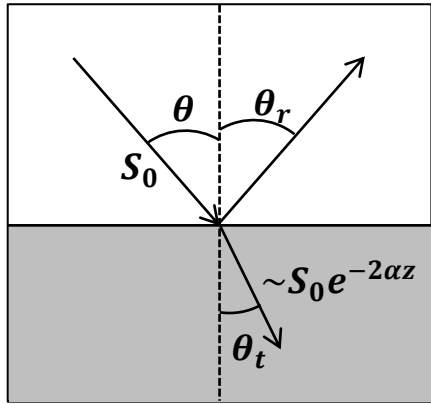


Nearly 95% of ground radioactivity comes from a **~ 25 m** radius area



Nearly 63% of ground radioactivity comes from a **~ 6 cm** soil layer

# Depth of investigation (DoI) of radar signals



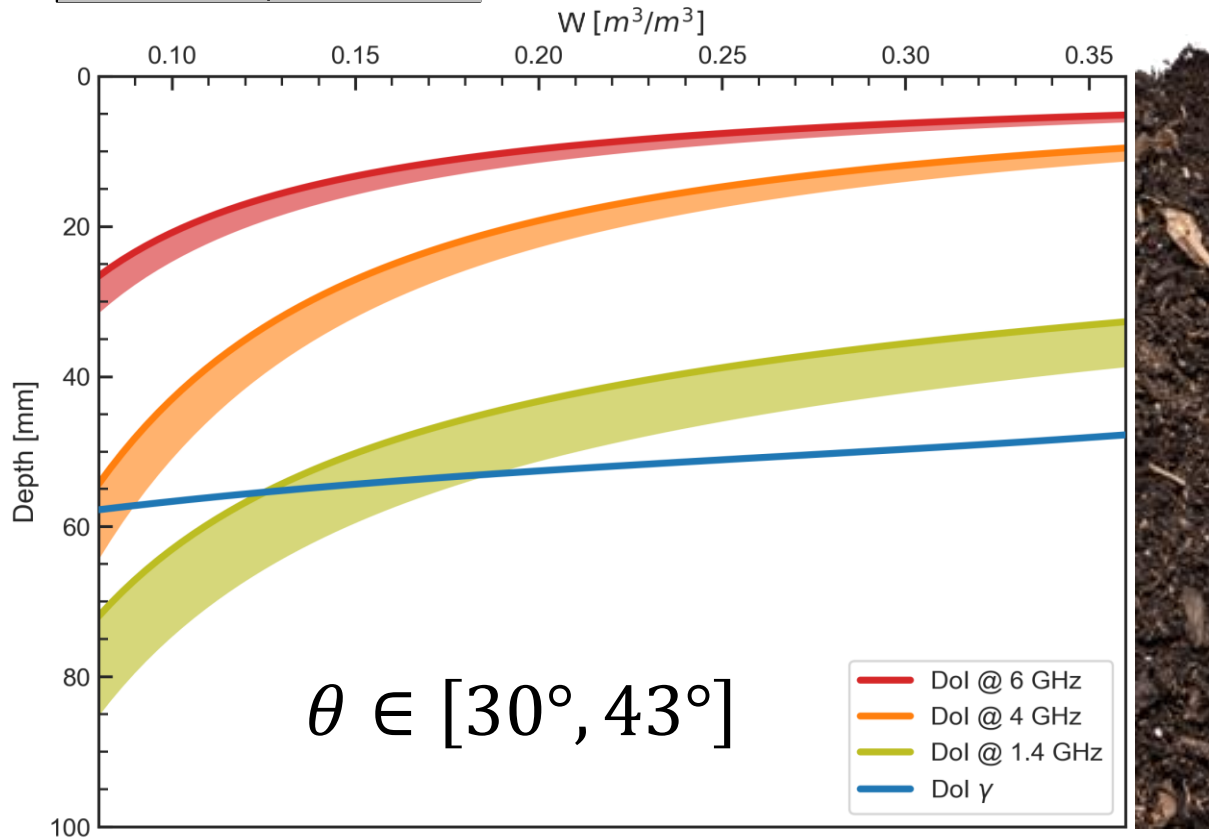
Dielectric constant  
for lossy media:

$$\varepsilon = \varepsilon' + i\varepsilon''$$

- The **attenuation constant**  $\alpha$  [ $m^{-1}$ ] is:  $\alpha \approx \pi\nu\varepsilon''/\sqrt{\varepsilon'}$
- The **depth of investigation**  $\delta$  [ $mm$ ], corrected for the angle of incidence  $\theta$ , is

$$\delta \approx \frac{c}{2\pi\nu} \frac{\sqrt{\varepsilon'}}{\varepsilon''} \cos \theta$$

- $\varepsilon', \varepsilon''$  are calculated by empirical **Hallikainen model** (Hallikainen, Ulaby et al. 1985) which is a function of **SM, frequency and soil texture**



**The depth  $\delta$  of the soil layer in SWB is equal to the depth of investigation of microwave signals**



# SWB to calculate SM

SWB is an integral formula that calculates volumetric soil moisture  $SM [m^3 m^{-3}]$  in a soil layer of depth  $\delta [mm]$  at fixed time intervals  $\Delta t = t_i - t_{i-1} = 1h$

$$SM_i = SM_{i-1} + \frac{1}{\delta * \delta_0} [(P_i + I_i + CR_i) - (DP_i + RO_i + ET_{c,adj,i})]$$

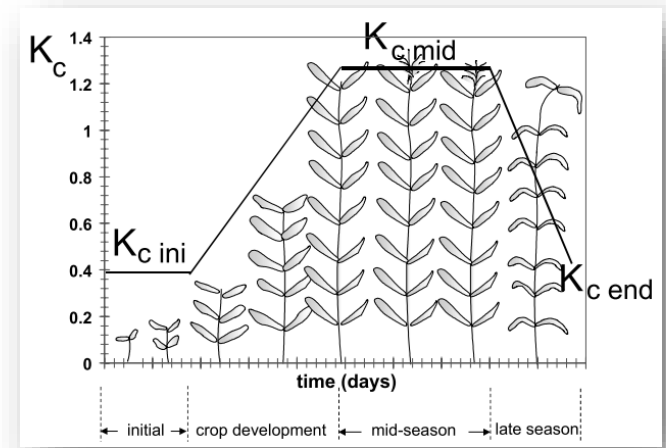
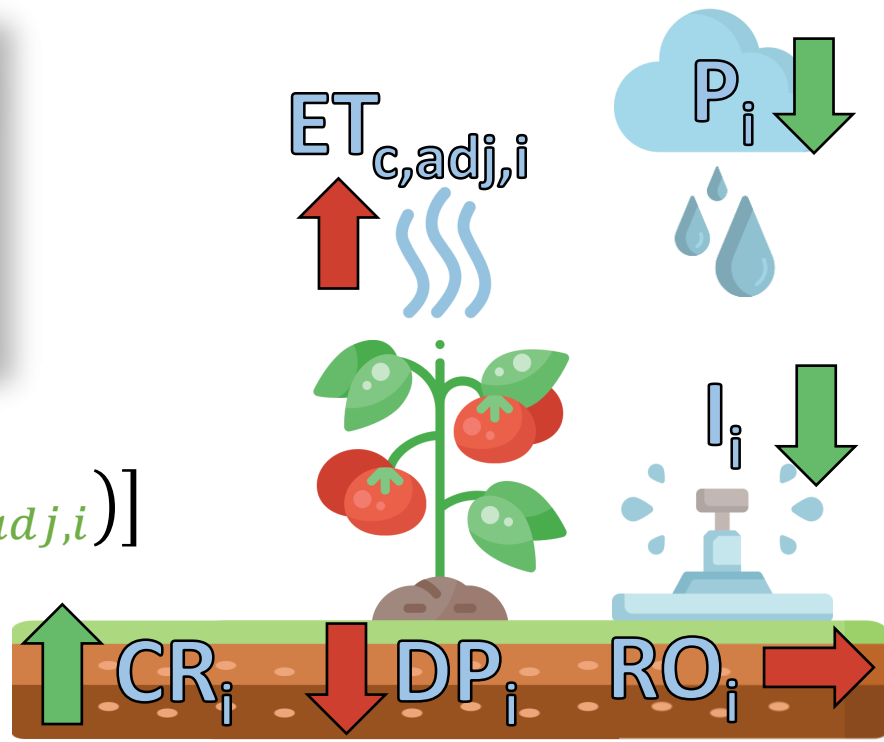
$$ET_{c,adj,i} = ET_{0,i} * K_{c,i} * K_{c,0} * K_{s,i}(\rho_{st}, W_{fc}, W_w)$$

reference ET for hypothetical grass surface

crop coefficient

scaling factor to account for actual field conditions

plant's stress coefficient



$CR_i, RO_i$  are neglected in this study since i)  $CR_i$  is capillary rise from the water table which is far below the soil layer considered; ii)  $RO_i$  is not negligible on steep terrain only, while the study site is in a flat region

# WCM to calculate $\sigma^0$ from soil and vegetation

- In WCM the total  $\sigma^0$  is the incoherent sum of the soil ( $\sigma_{soil}^0$ ) and the vegetation ( $\sigma_{veg}^0$ ) contributions
- In WCM **vegetation is modeled as a water cloud** (Attema, Ulaby, 1978) of identical, uniformly distributed water particles above a soil layer

- $\sigma_{soil}^0$  is a linear function of SM by experimental evidence

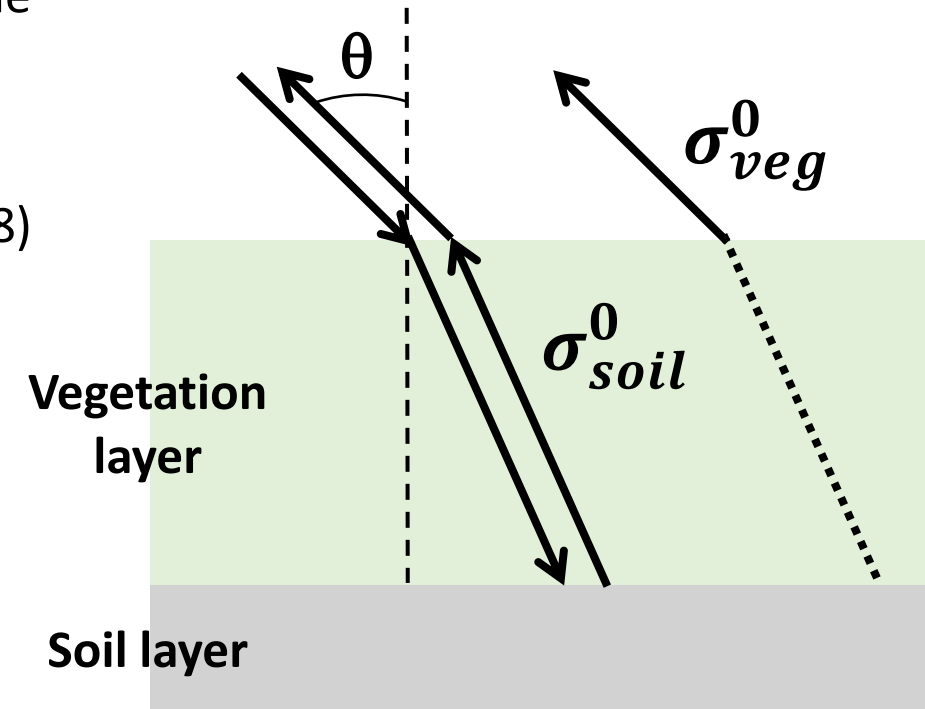
$$\sigma_{soil}^0 = C + D * SM$$

- $\sigma_{soil}^0$  is attenuated by the vegetation layer by a factor  $\gamma^2$

$$\gamma^2 = e^{-\frac{2*B*NDVI}{\cos \theta}}$$

- Vegetation layer provides a contribution  $\sigma_{veg}^0$ :

$$\sigma_{veg}^0 = A * NDVI * \cos \theta (1 - \gamma^2)$$



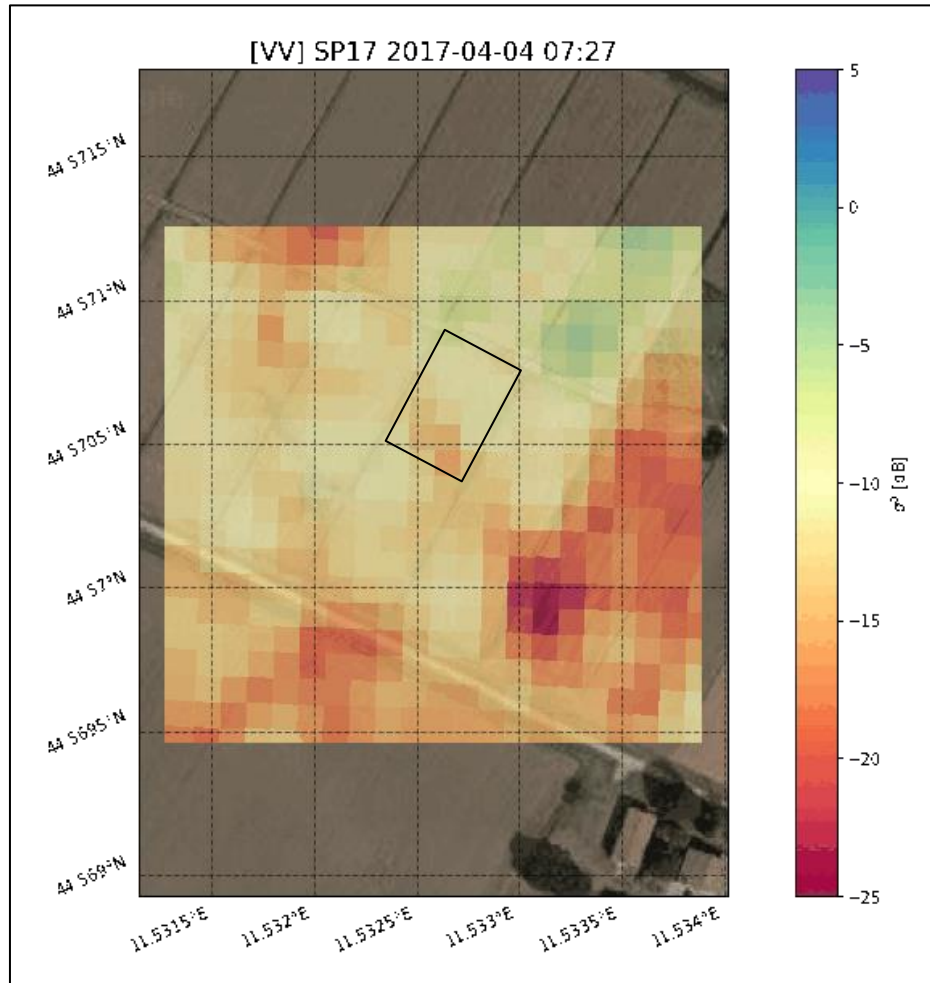
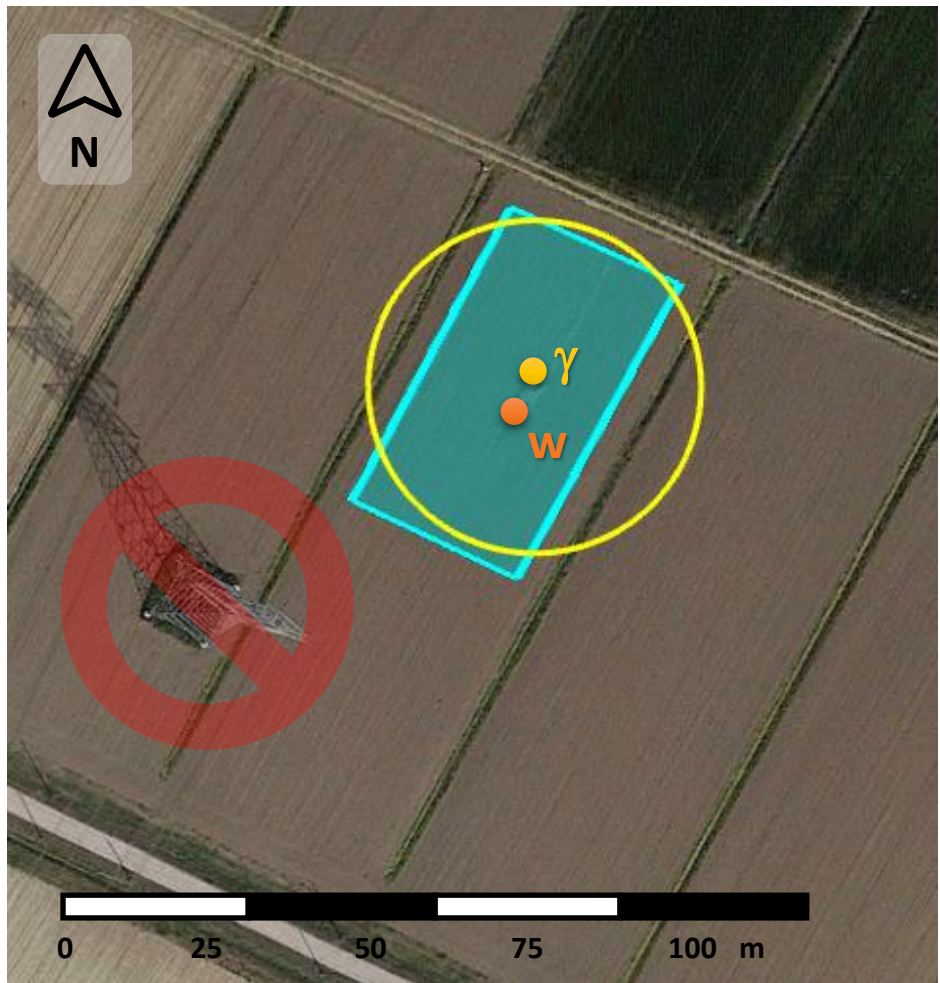
A: scaling factor for vegetation contribution [-]

B: scaling factor in attenuation [-]

C:  $\sigma^0$  from dry soil, minimum value [dB]

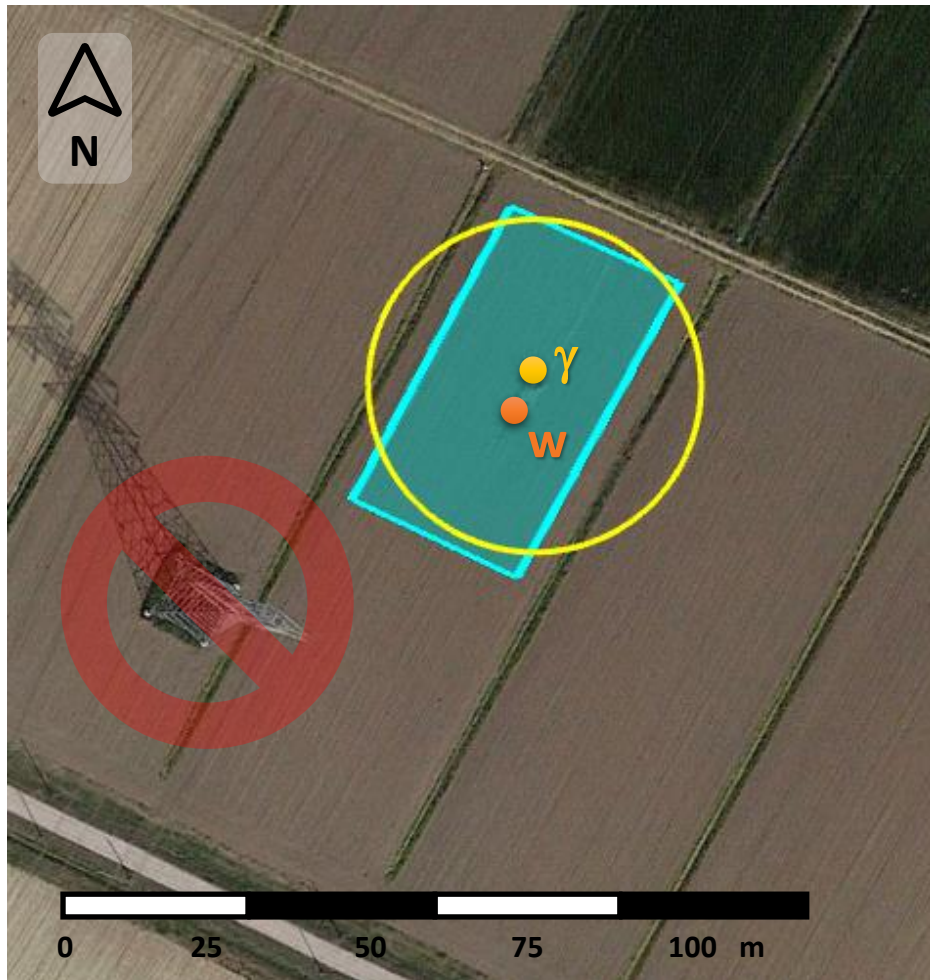
D:  $\sigma^0$  sensitivity to SM [dB m<sup>-3</sup>m<sup>3</sup>]

# Area of Interest (Aoi) and satellite products processing

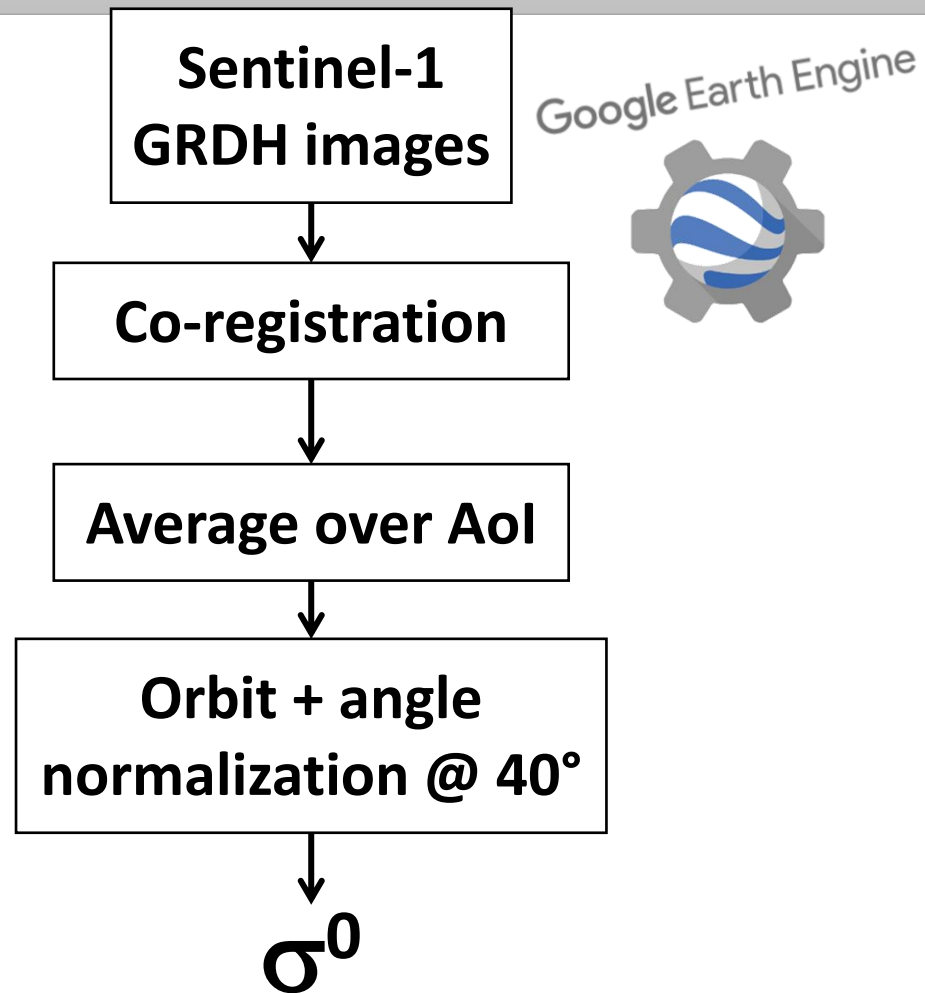


Aoi of 30 m x 50 m ( $\sim 0.2$  ha), field is halved to exclude saturated pixels from electromagnetic shadow due to metal structure

# Area of Interest (Aoi) and satellite products processing

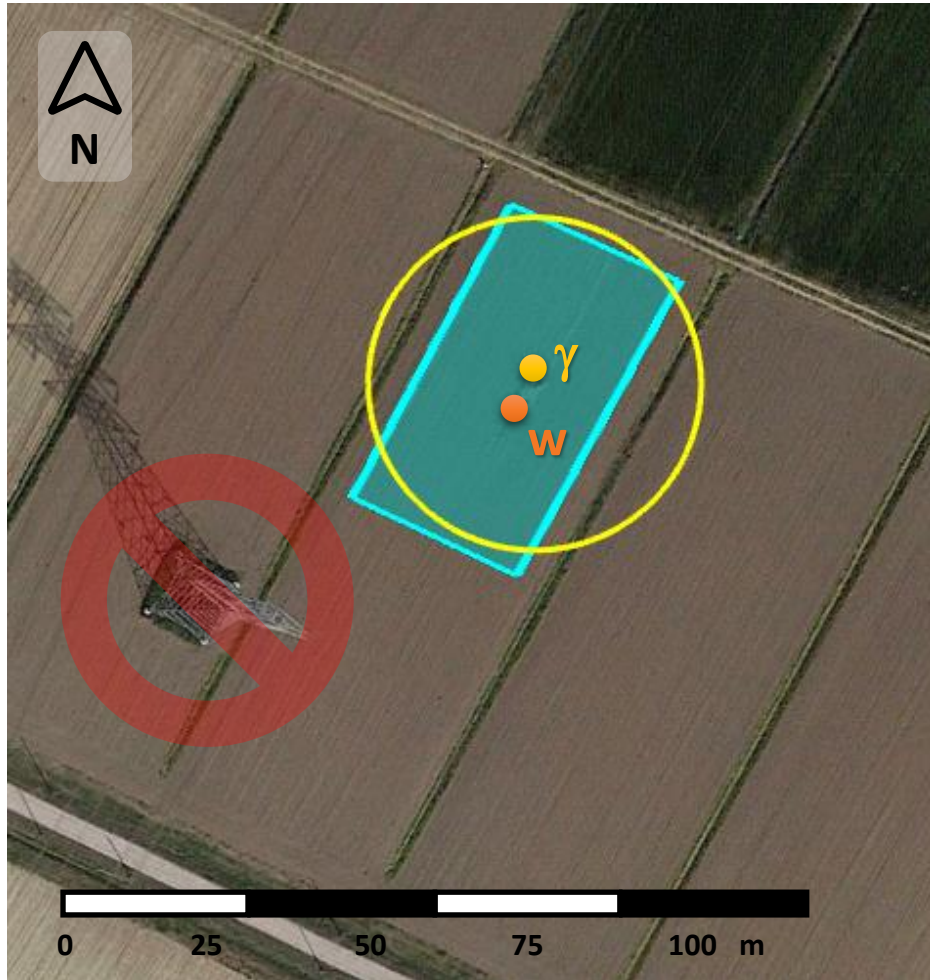


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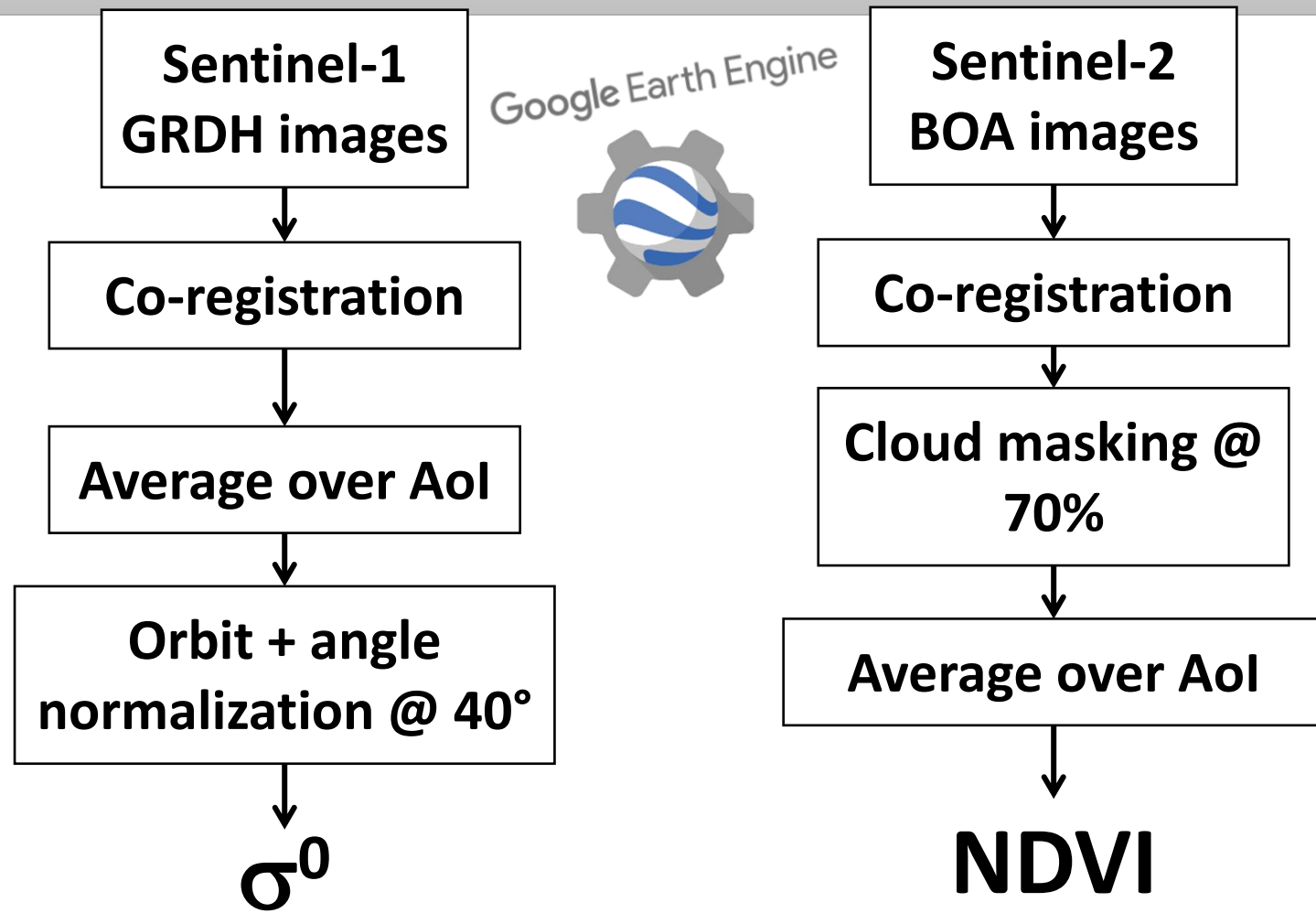


Relative orbit	Acquisition time	Direction	Mean incidence angle [°]
168	7 a.m.	descending	31.6
95	7 a.m.	descending	41.6
117	7 p.m.	ascending	37.6

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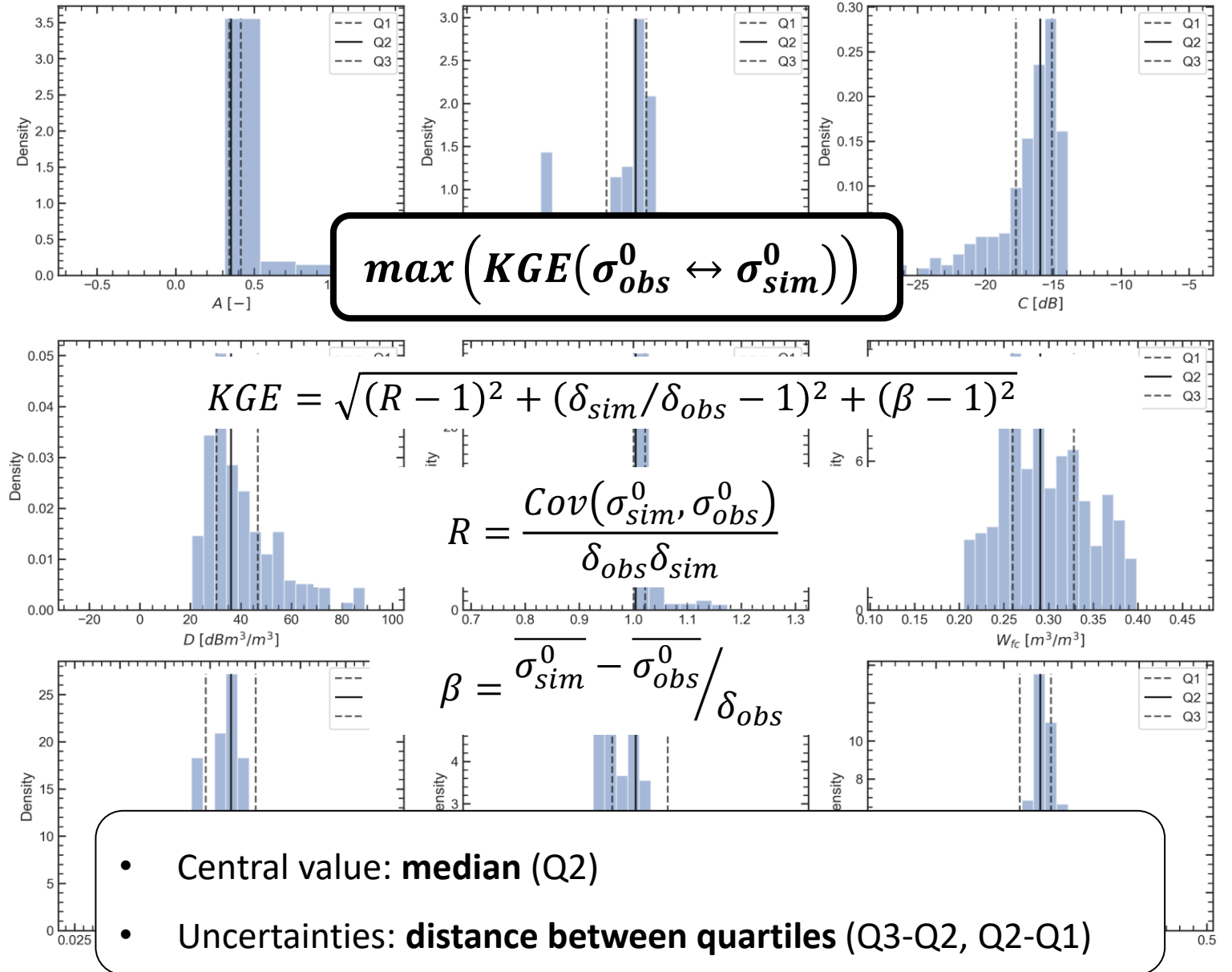


Period	From - to	Days	S-1 images	S-2 images
T2017	4/4 - 2/11/2017	213	107	27
M2020	3/3 - 31/8/2020	180	80	70

# Free bounds (FB) calibration scheme

Free bounds (FB) scheme employs values built upon literary references or physical considerations. All PDFs are supposed uniform.

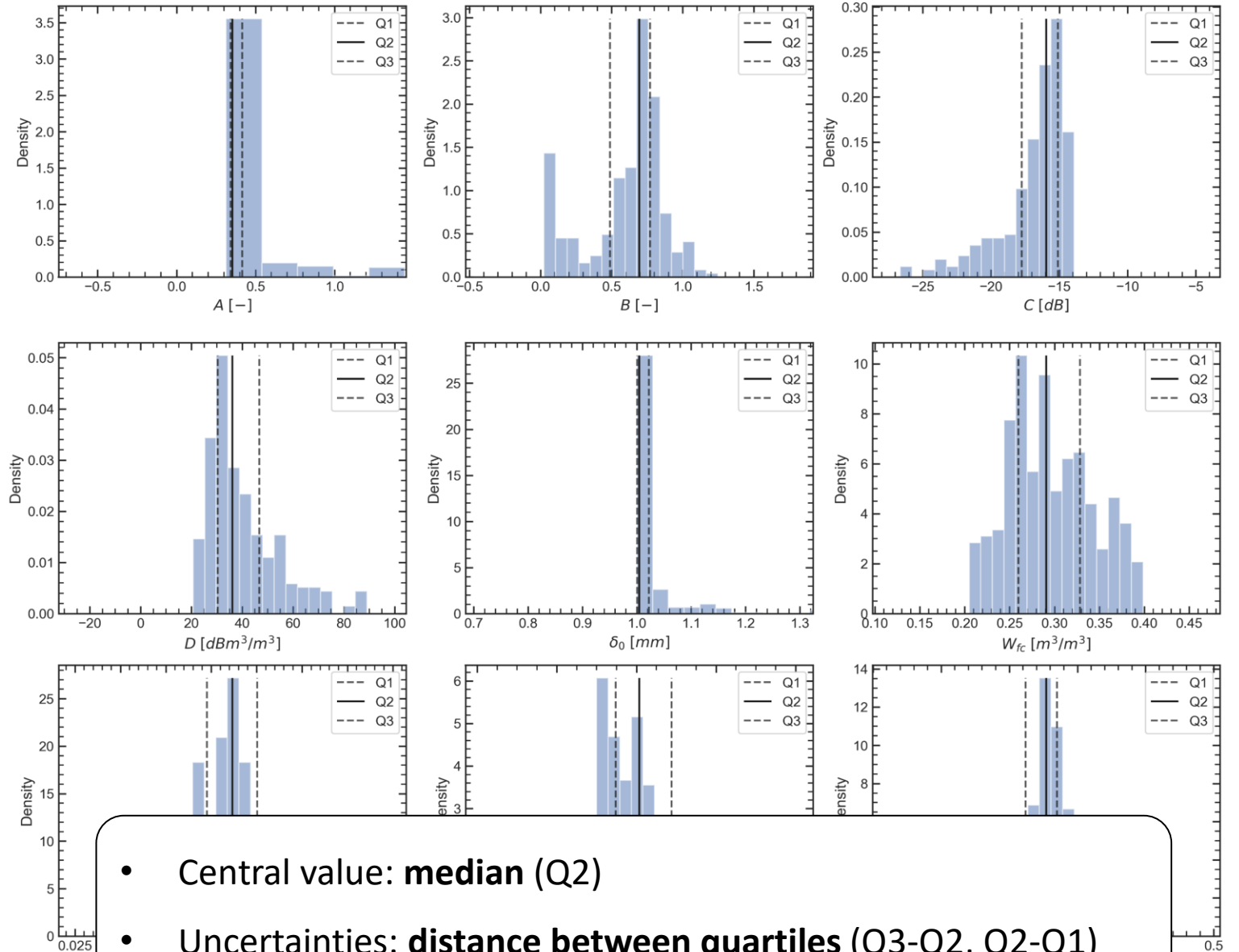
Quantity	Range	Model
$A$ [-]	[0, 5]	WCM
$B$ [-]	[0, 3]	
$C$ [dB]	[-20, -5]	
$D$ [dB m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]	[10, 100]	
$K_{c,0}$ [-]	[0, 2]	
$\rho_{st}$ [mm day <sup>-1</sup> ]	[0.1, 0.8]	SWB
$\delta_0$ [-]	[1, 2]	
$W_{fc}$ [m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]	[0.2, 0.4]	
$W_w$ [m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]	[0.07, 0.17]	



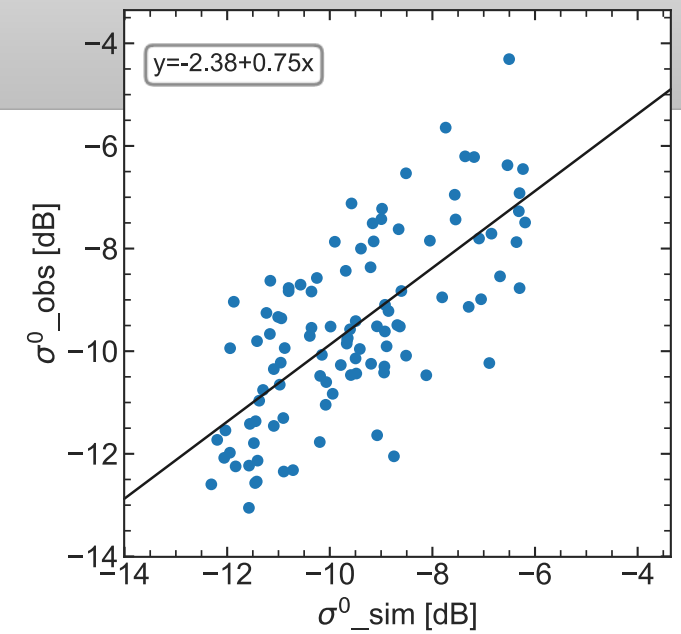
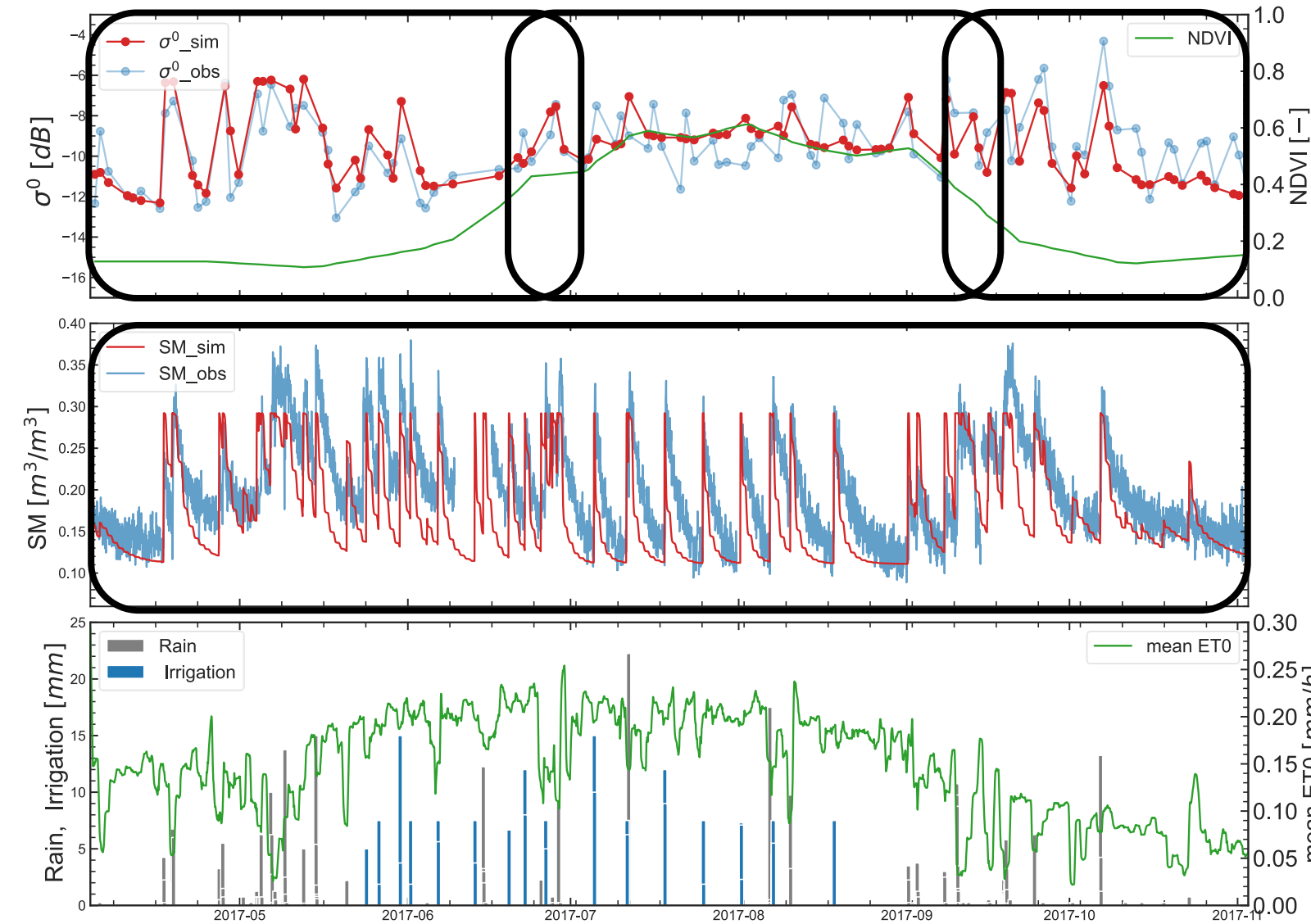
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# FB T2017 – Results

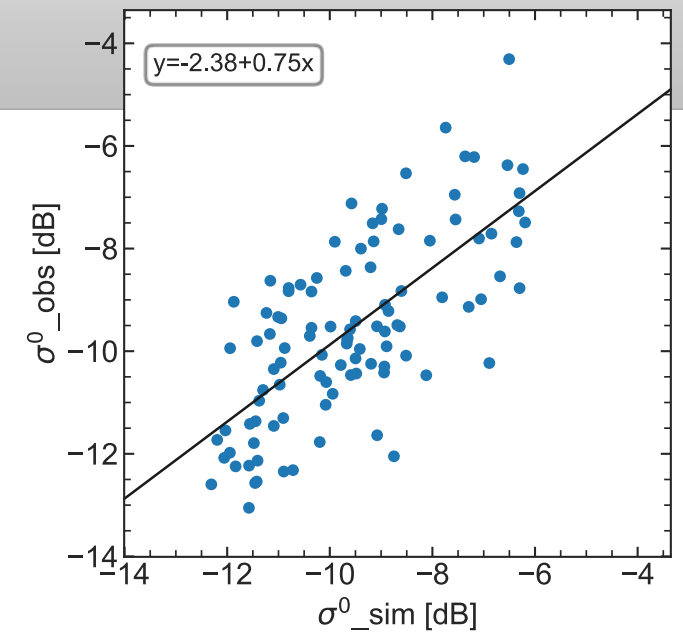
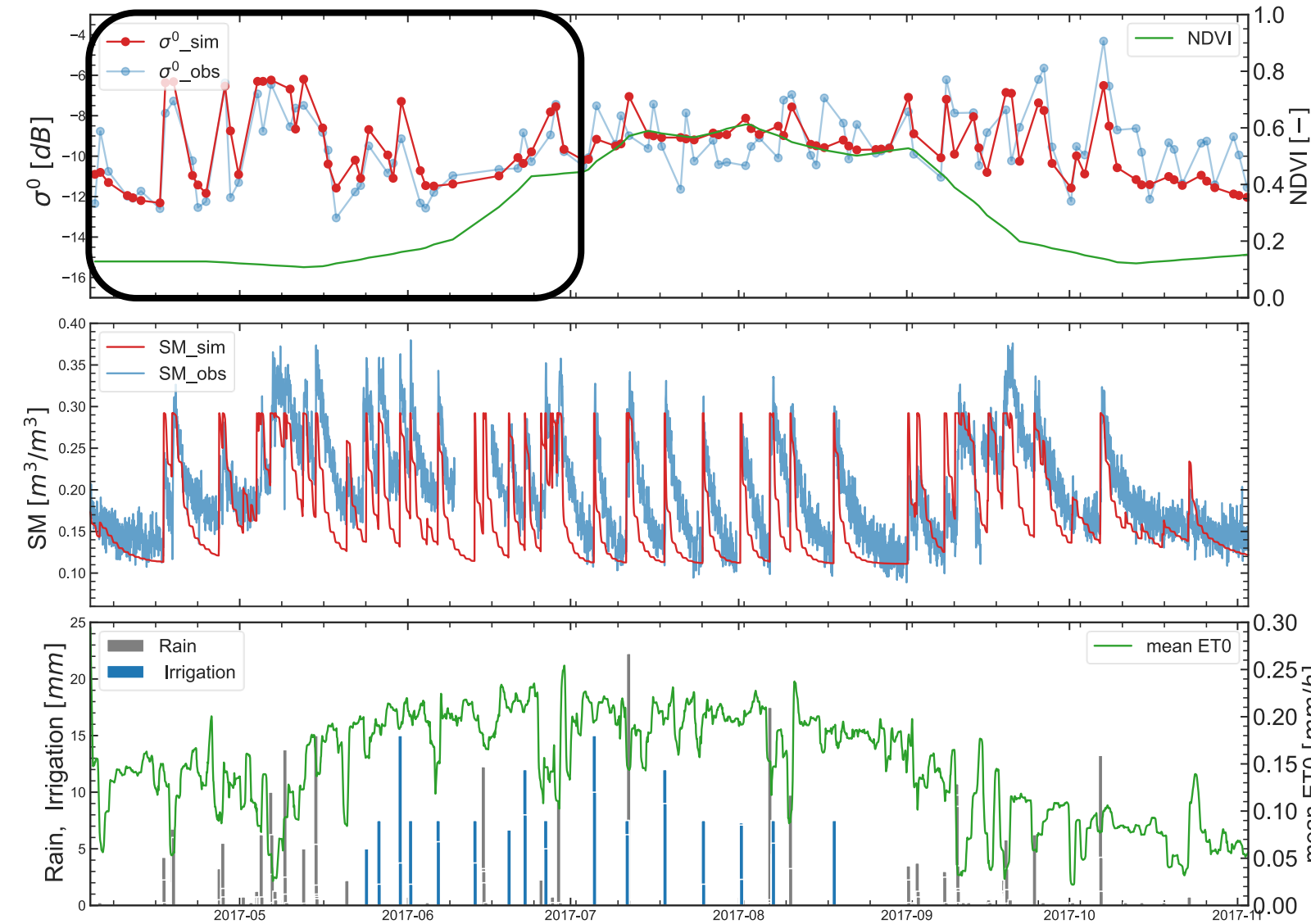


	KGE	R	R <sup>2</sup>	bias
$\sigma^0$ [dB]	0.70	0.70	0.49	-0.01
SM [ $m^3m^{-3}$ ]	0.68	0.72	0.52	-0.03

- SM overall well modeled
- calculated SM dries out faster than observations due to thinner soil layer



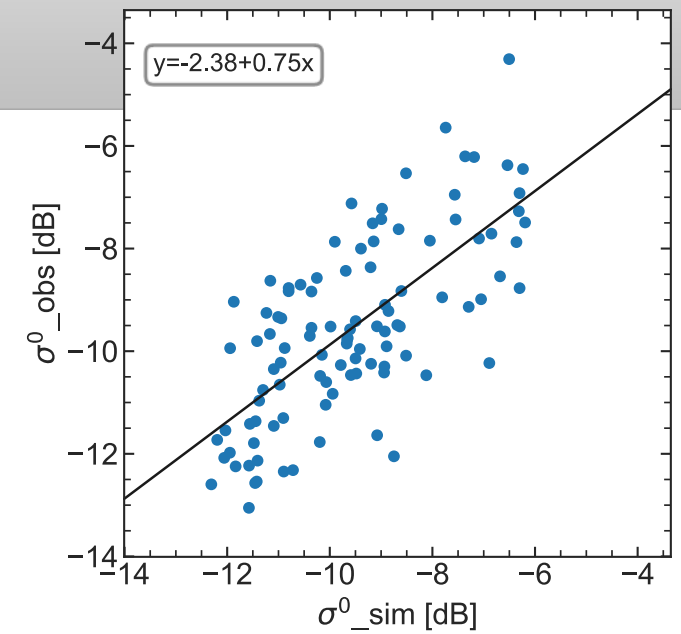
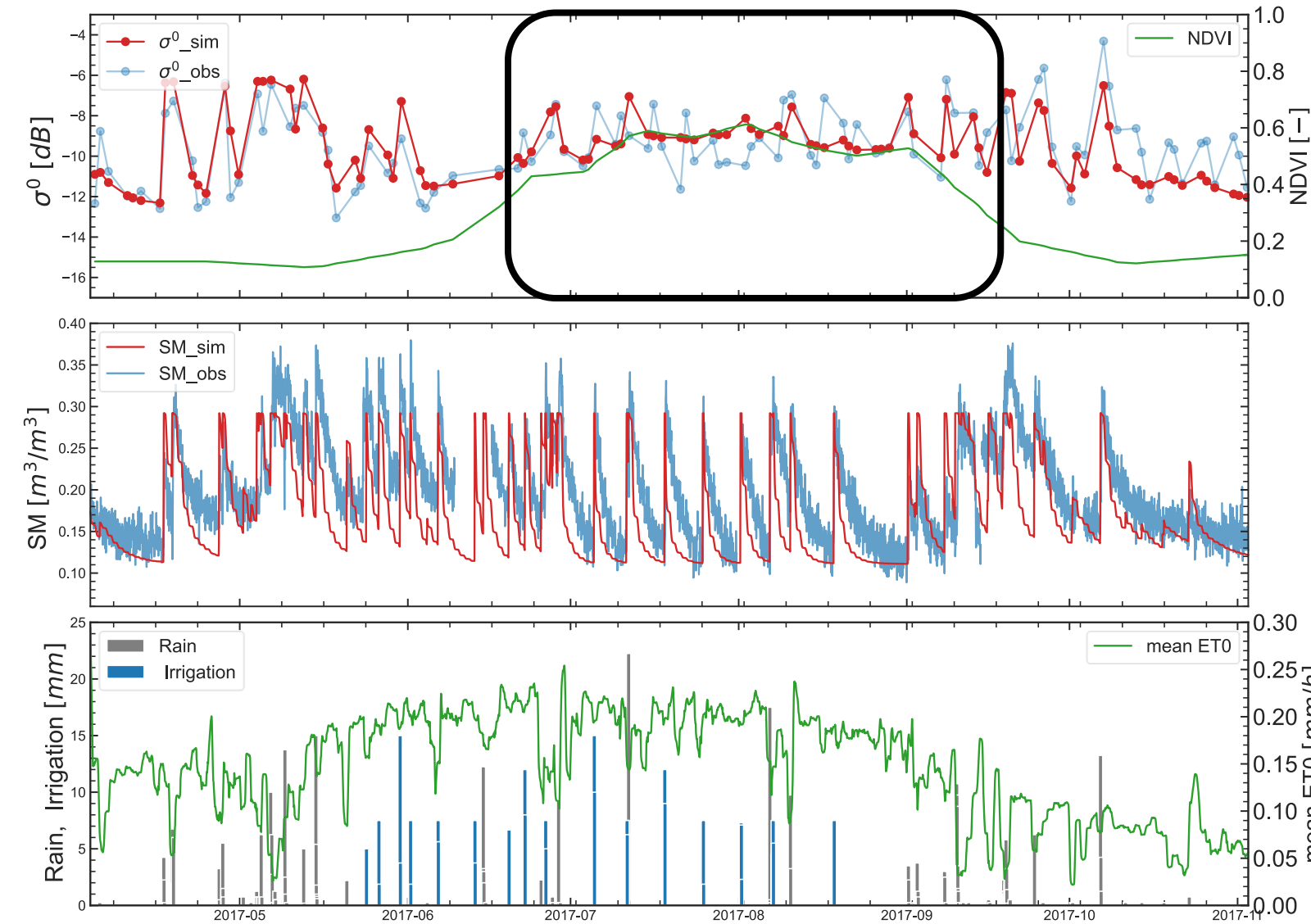
# FB T2017 – Results



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$\sigma^0$ [dB]	0.70	0.70	0.49	-0.01
SM [ $m^3m^{-3}$ ]	0.68	0.72	0.52	-0.03

- Spring: well modeled with wide dynamics due to SM
- low NDVI  $\rightarrow \sigma_{soil}^0$  dominates

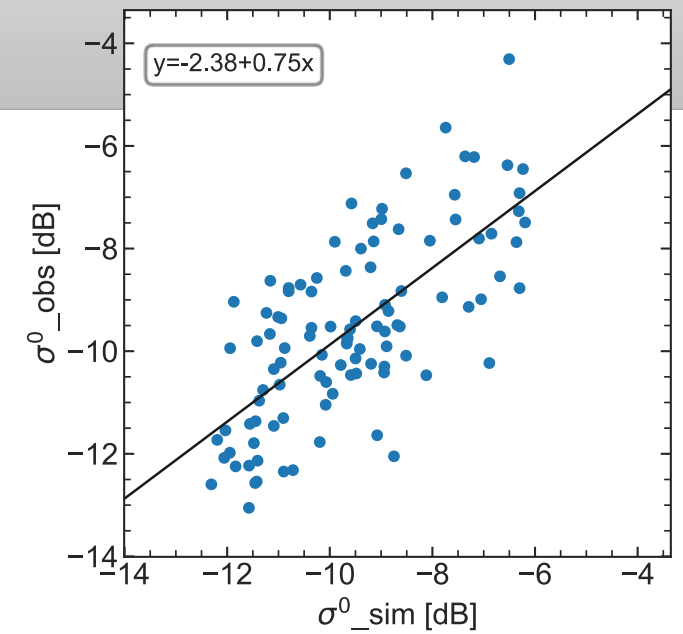
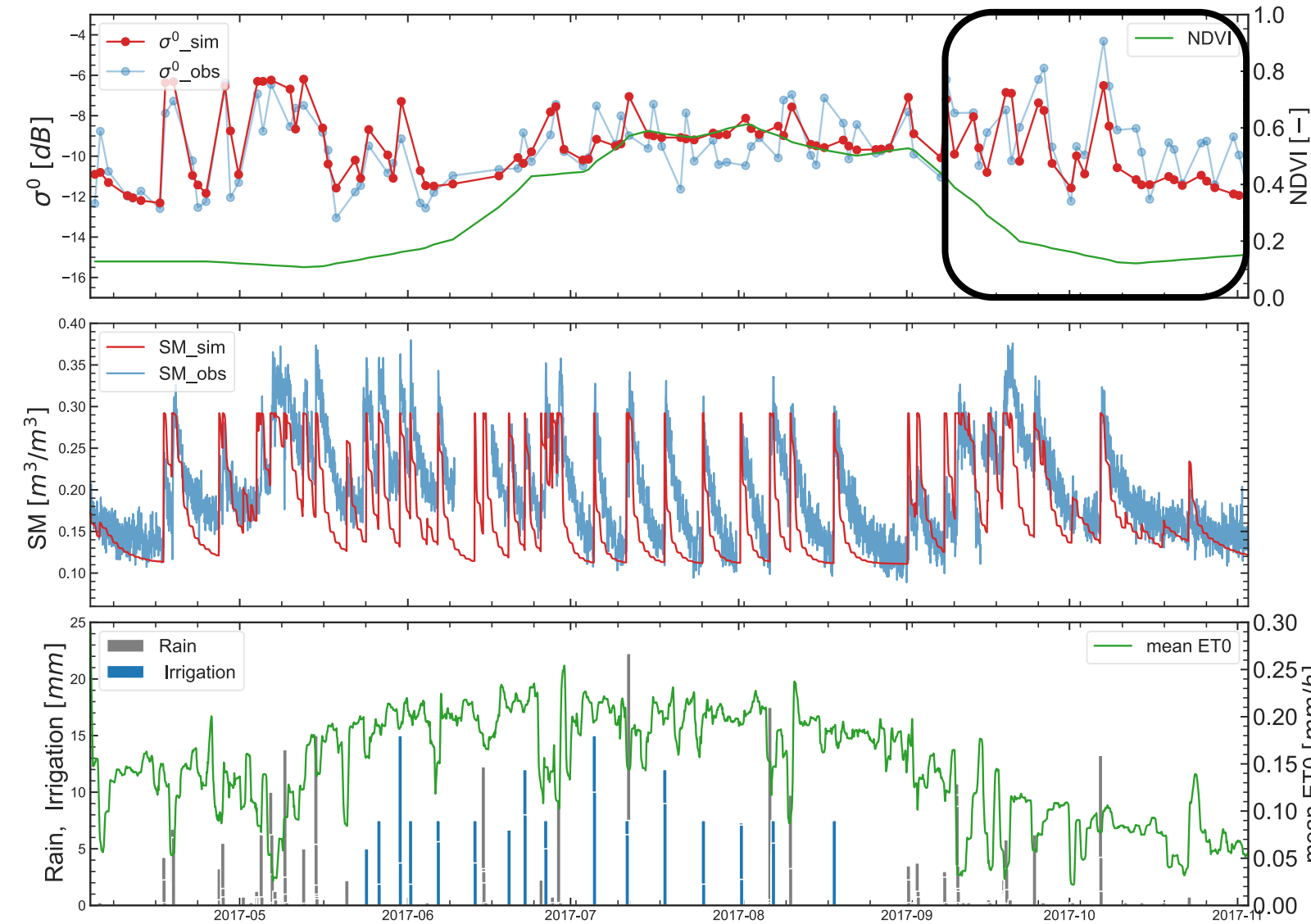
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SM [ $m^3m^{-3}$ ]	0.68	0.72	0.52	-0.03

- Summer: dumped dynamics due to high NDVI
- high NDVI  $\rightarrow \sigma_{veg}^0$  dominates

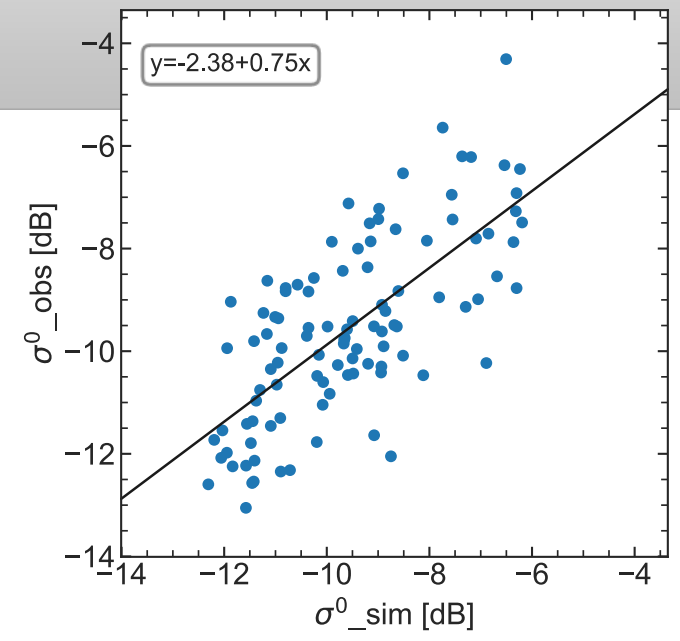
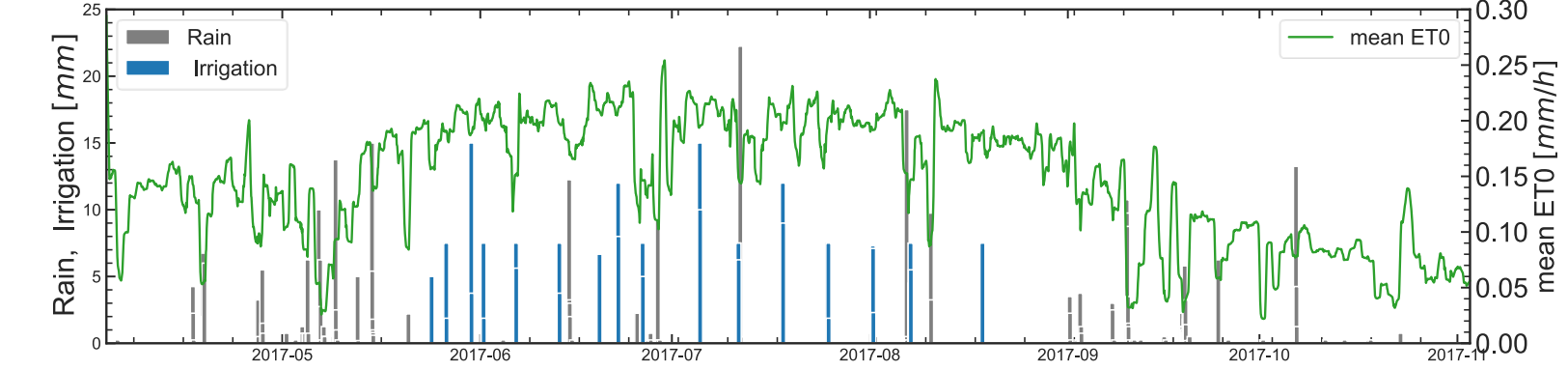
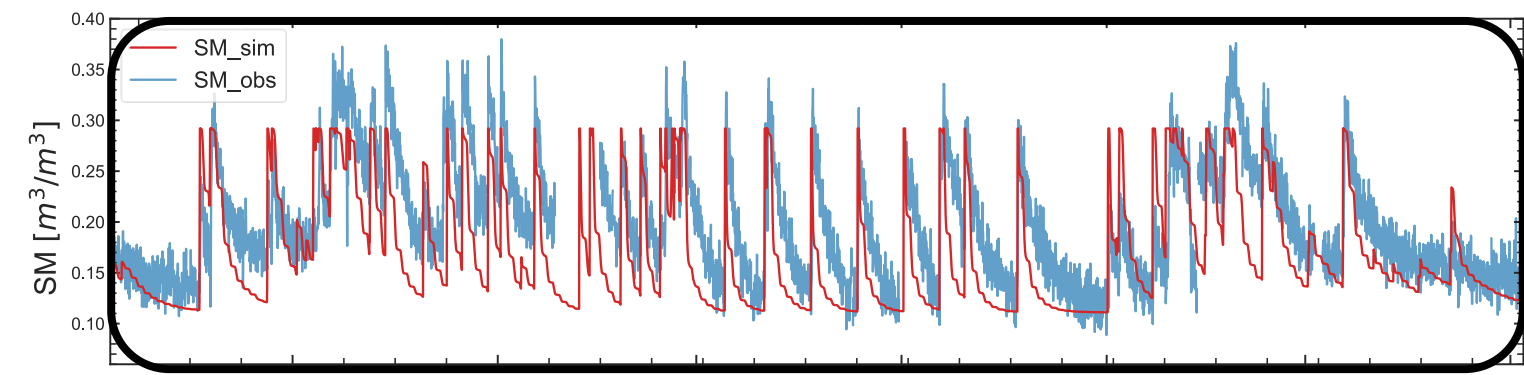
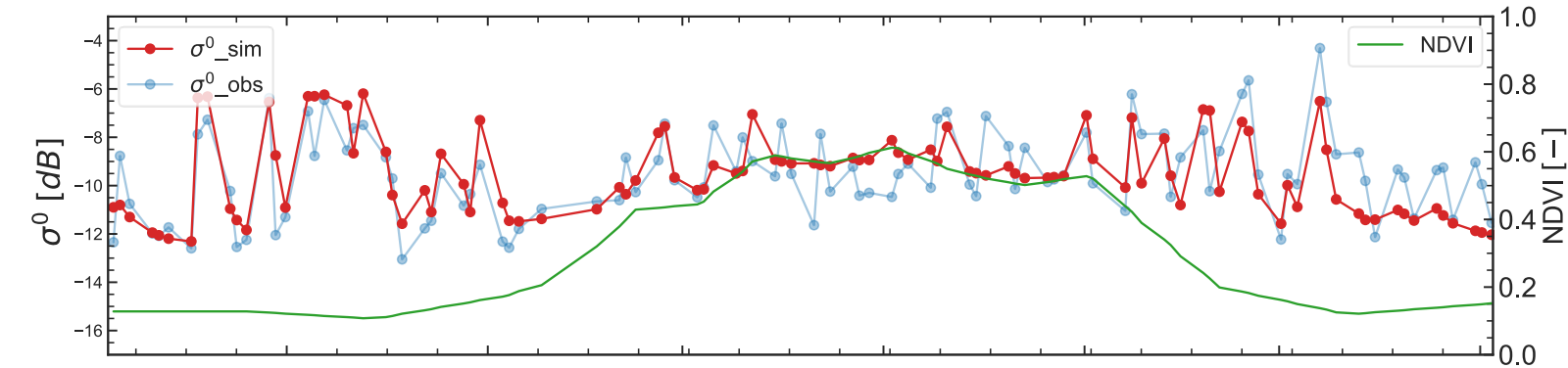
# FB T2017 – Results



	KGE	R	R <sup>2</sup>	bias
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SM [m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]	0.68	0.72	0.52	-0.03

- Fall: some discrepancies probably due to changes in soil roughness
- small NDVI  $\rightarrow \sigma_{soil}^0$  dominates

# FB T2017 – Results



	KGE	R	R <sup>2</sup>	bias
$\sigma^0$ [dB]	0.70	0.70	0.49	-0.01
SM [m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]	0.68	0.72	0.52	-0.03

- SM overall well modeled
- calculated SM dries out faster than observations due to thinner soil layer

# FB T2017 – Discussion

	$A [-]$	$B [-]$	$C [dB]$	$D [dBm^3/m^3]$	$\delta_0 [mm]$	$W_{fc} [m^3/m^3]$	$W_w [m^3/m^3]$	$\rho_{st} [mm/h]$	$K_{c0} [-]$
Cal/fix	cal	cal	cal	cal	cal	cal	cal	cal	cal
Bounds	[0.0, 5.0]	[0.0, 3.0]	[-30.0, -5.0]	[10.0, 100.0]	[1.0, 2.0]	[0.2, 0.4]	[0.07, 0.17]	[0.1, 0.8]	[0.0, 2.0]
Median	0.35	0.7	-16.0	36.1	1.004	0.29	0.11	0.21	0.25
Err	[0.01, 0.05]	[0.2, 0.1]	[1.8, 0.9]	[5.7, 10.6]	[0.003, 0.018]	[0.03, 0.04]	[0.01, 0.02]	[0.06, 0.07]	[0.03, 0.01]

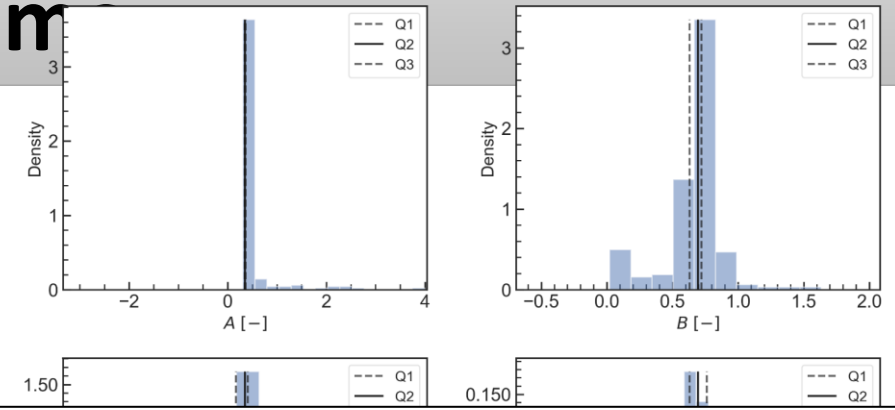
	<b>KGE</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>bias</b>
$\sigma^0 [dB]$	0.70	0.70	0.49	-0.01
<b>SM [m<sup>3</sup>m<sup>-3</sup>]</b>	0.68	0.72	0.52	-0.03

- Good results are obtained on KGE for both  $\sigma^0$  and SM (KGE > 0.6) with very low bias
- Parameters have high uncertainties (up to ~ 30%)
- Parameter  $\delta_0$  will be fixed to  $\delta_0 = 1$  (curve at 6 GHz in DoI plot)
- Parameter  $\rho_{st}$  has high uncertainty and saturates near its lower boundary: can be fixed to its reference value from the literature

# Physical bounds (PB) calibration scheme

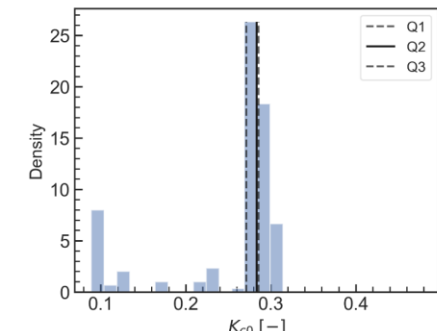
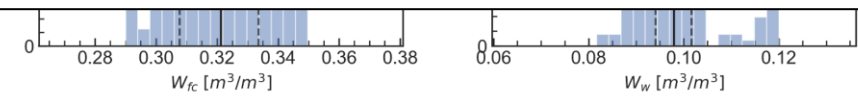
**Physical bounds (PB)** scheme employs bounds that are narrower than in the FB calibration and are based on in-situ data.

Quantity	Central value	Range
$A$ [—]		[0, 5]
$B$ [—]		[0, 3]
$C$ [dB]		[-20, -5]
$D$ [dB m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]		[10, 100]
$K_{c,0}$ [—]		[0, 2]
$\rho_{st}$ [mm day <sup>-1</sup> ]	Crop-dependent	/
$\delta_0$ [—]	1	/
$W_{fc}$ [m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]	$0.32 \pm 0.01$	[0.29, 0.35]
$W_w$ [m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]	$0.09 \pm 0.01$	[0.06, 0.12]

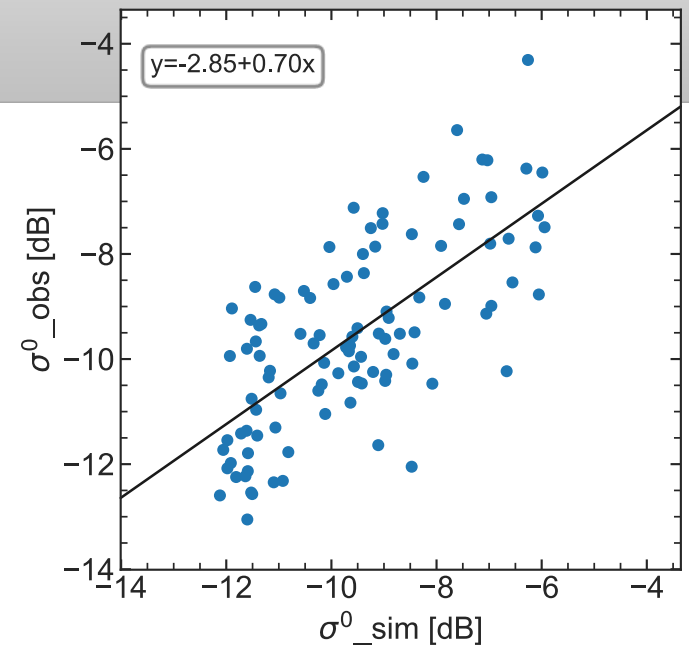
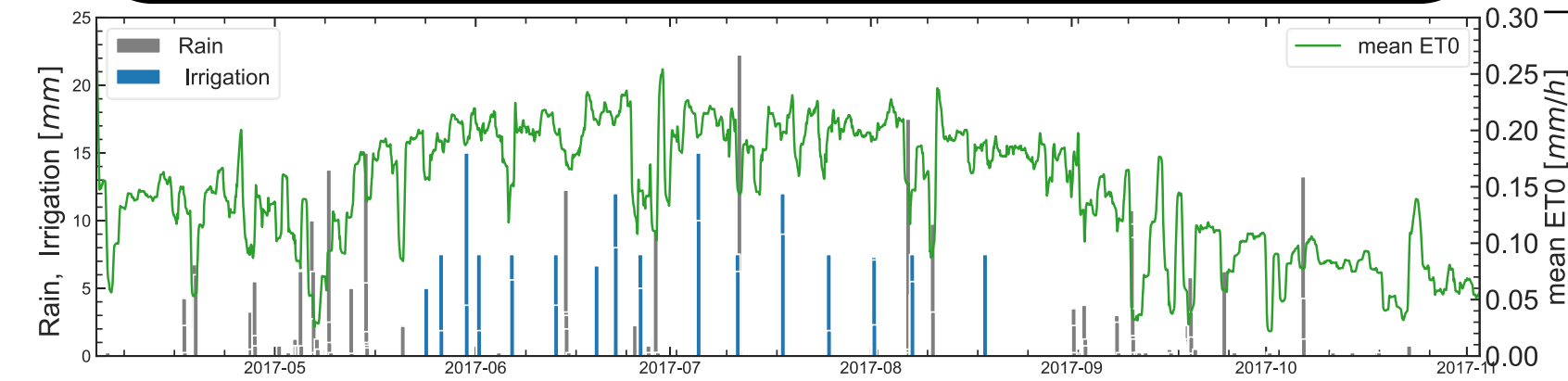
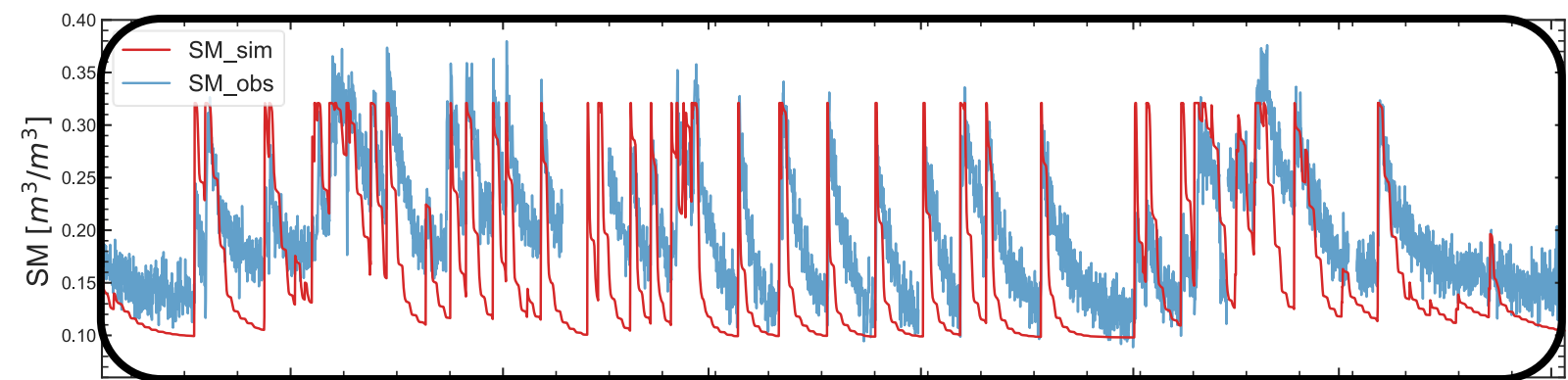
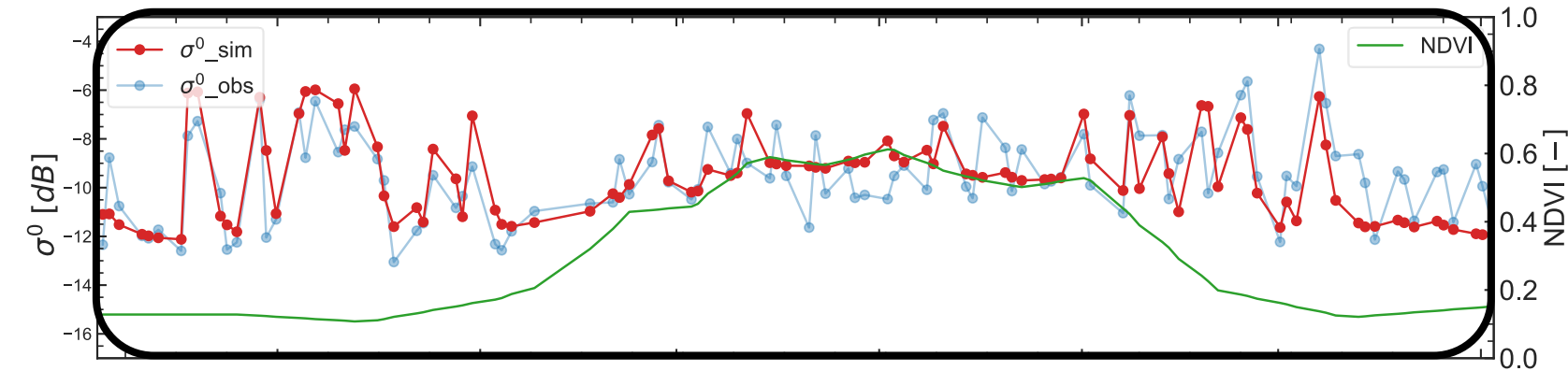


- $A, B, C, D, K_{c,0}$ : same bounds from FB scheme
- $\rho_{st}$ : fixed value from literature, crop-dependent
- $\delta_0$ : fixed value after results on FB scheme
- $W_{fc}, W_w$ : narrower bounds based on in-situ data, taken from mean value  $\bar{x}$  and its uncertainty at  $1\sigma$

$$[\bar{x} - 3\sigma, \bar{x} + 3\sigma]$$



# PB T2017 – Results



	KGE	R	R <sup>2</sup>	bias
$\sigma^0$ [dB]	0.69	0.69	0.48	-0.03
SM [m <sup>3</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> ]	0.58	0.72	0.52	-0.04

- Same behavior as for FB
- Slight lower performance for KGE on SM due to higher bias and faster drying curves

# PB T2017 – Discussion

	A [–]	B [–]	C [dB]	D [dBm <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>3</sup> ]	$\delta_0$ [mm]	$W_{fc}$ [m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>3</sup> ]	$W_w$ [m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>3</sup> ]	$\rho_{st}$ [mm/h]	$K_{c0}$ [–]
Cal/fix	cal	cal	cal	cal	fix	cal	cal	fix	cal
Bounds	[0.0, 5.0]	[0.0, 3.0]	[-30.0, -5.0]	[10.0, 100.0]	['/', '/']	[0.29, 0.35]	[0.06, 0.12]	['/', '/']	[0.0, 2.0]
Median	0.347	0.69	-14.5	29.2	1	0.32	0.098	0.4	0.28
Err	[0.004, 0.012]	[0.07, 0.03]	[0.2, 0.1]	[1.5, 1.6]	/	[0.01, 0.01]	[0.004, 0.004]	/	[0.01, 0.0]

M2020

	A [–]	B [–]	C [dB]	D [dBm <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>3</sup> ]	$\delta_0$ [mm]	$W_{fc}$ [m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>3</sup> ]	$W_w$ [m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>3</sup> ]	$\rho_{st}$ [mm/h]	$K_{c0}$ [–]
Cal/fix	cal	cal	cal	cal	fix	cal	cal	fix	cal
Bounds	[0.0, 5.0]	[0.0, 3.0]	[-30.0, -5.0]	[10.0, 100.0]	['/', '/']	[0.29, 0.35]	[0.06, 0.12]	['/', '/']	[0.0, 2.0]
Median	0.22	0.6	-17.4	33.0	1	0.31	0.10	0.5	0.9
Err	[0.04, 0.19]	[0.4, 0.7]	[0.5, 0.3]	[4.4, 3.6]	/	[0.01, 0.01]	[0.01, 0.01]	/	[0.3, 0.0]

- Good results are obtained on KGE for both  $\sigma^0$  and SM (KGE > 0.6) with very low bias
- Results are similar with those obtained by FB scheme, but **parameters have smaller % uncertainties**
- 5 ( $A, B, D, W_{fc}, W_w$ ) out of 7 parameters are **compatible** (in the limits of uncertainties) in the two years
- A, B depend on the vegetation descriptor used (NDVI) and not on the crop type, nor field or period
- $C, K_{c,0}$  must be calibrated each year/period
  - C is the dry soil  $\sigma^0$  and depends on soil roughness which changes after plowing practices for different crops
  - $K_{c,0}$  is the crop coefficient and depends crop type and frequency of wetting events



# Conclusions

- For the **first time SWB has been used to provide SM inputs in the WCM**, leading to a new parametrization of the WCM that doesn't require in-situ SM measurements, but only simple weather data and soil texture
- **Depth of the soil layer under study is a function of SM** and scales as the depth of investigation of radar signals
- Best performance (KGE = 0.69) are obtained with the "**physical bounds**" calibration scheme on a tomato field in 2017
- Out of 9 parameters, **only 2 ( $C, K_{c,0}$ )** (empirical) need year-by-year calibration for the same field
- Parameters which are fixed for the same test site:  $A, B, D$  (empirical),  $\delta_0$  (empirical) depends on signal frequency and is fixed = 1,  $W_{fc}, W_w$  (physical observables) depend on site, are calibrated and are constrained by their in-situ measurement,  $\rho_{st}$  (physical observable) depends on crop and is fixed to its reference value from the literature
- Future perspectives...
  - use a vegetation index which is a better proxy for water content in the vegetation than the NDVI
  - implement time-dependent percolation contribution in SWB
  - test on grasslands, since WCM was developed to describe grass
  - study the impact of soil roughness

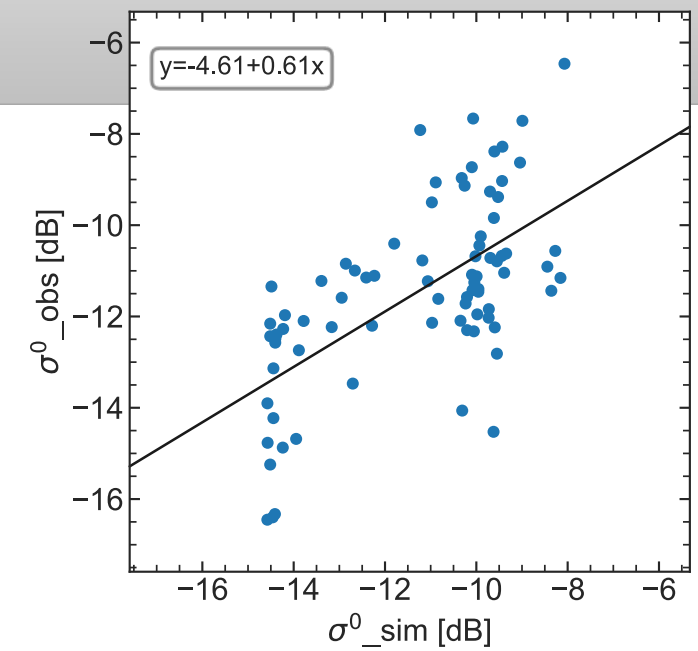
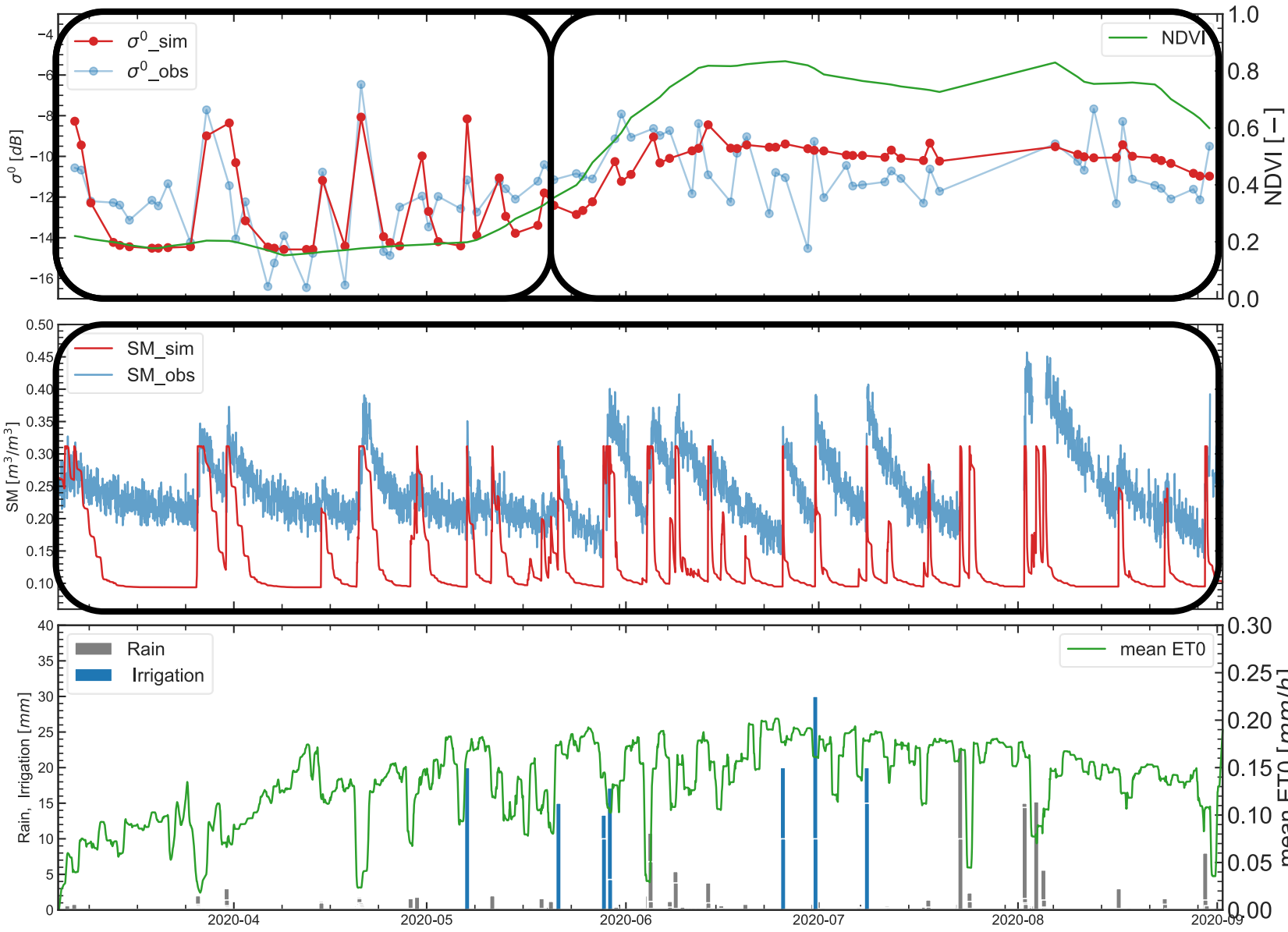


Thank you for your attention!





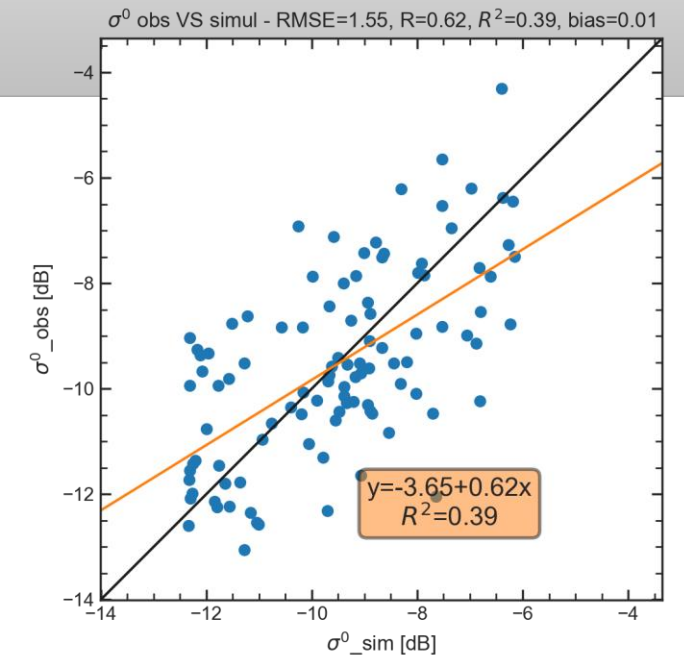
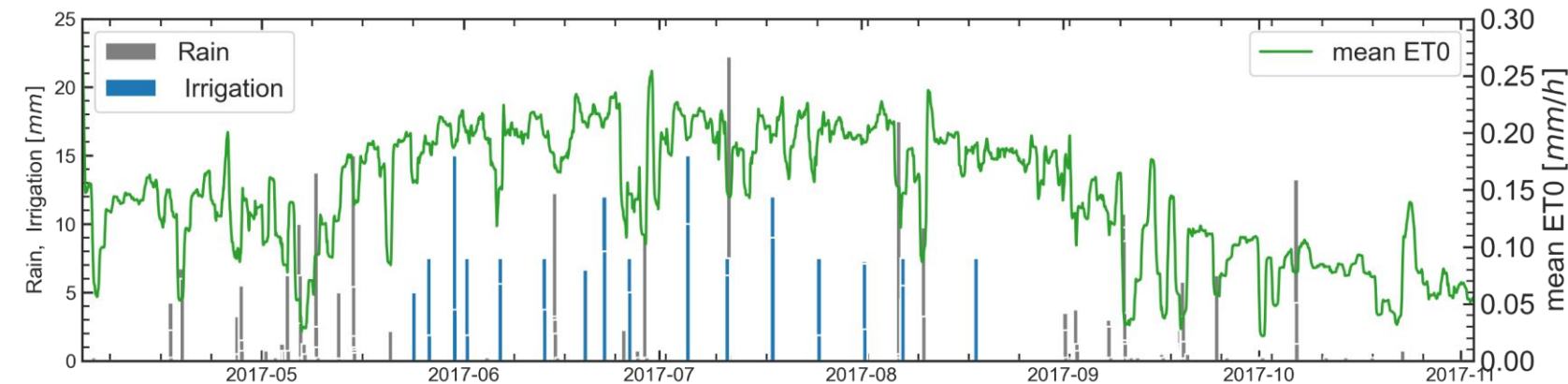
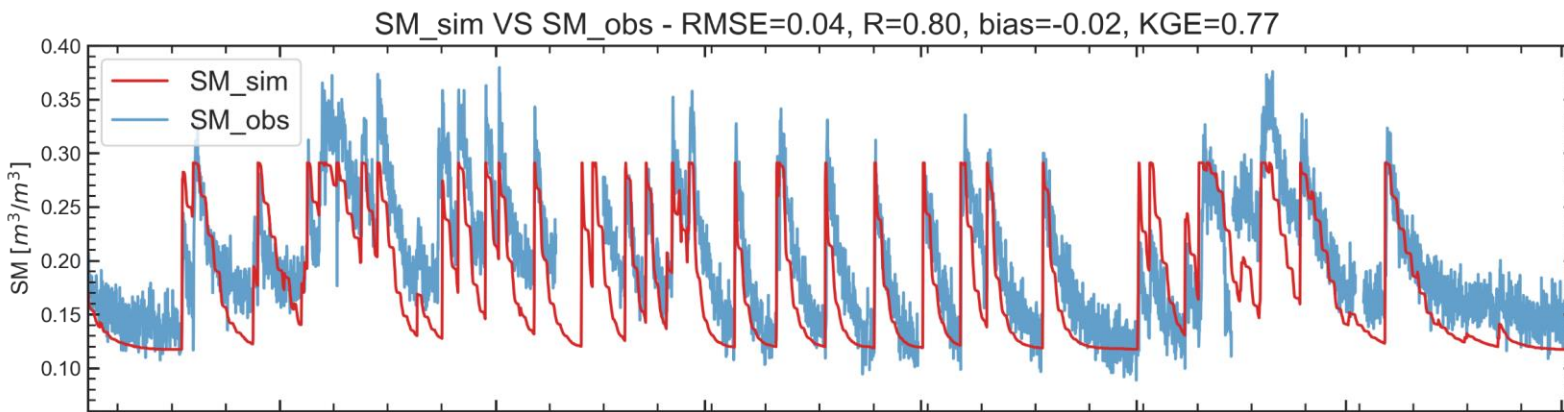
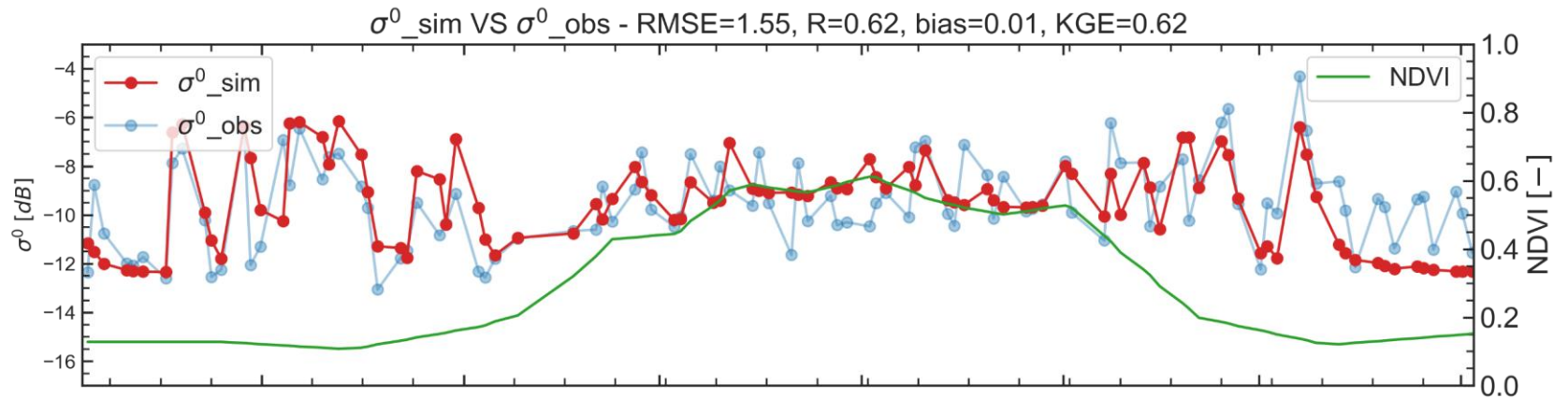
# PB M2020 – Results



	<b>KGE</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>bias</b>
<b><math>\sigma^0</math> [dB]</b>	0.62	0.63	0.40	0.16
<b>SM [<math>m^3m^{-3}</math>]</b>	0.24	0.42	0.18	-0.11

- SM poorly modeled
- wilting point not compatible with observations
- calculated SM reduces too fast

# PB T2017 @ 1.4 GHz – Results

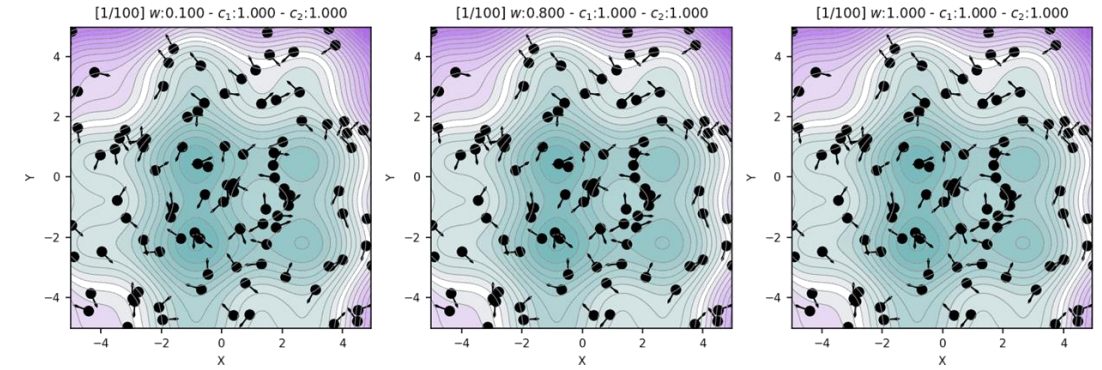


- Performance on  $\sigma^0$  is good
- Performance on SM is much better and drying curves are much similar (due to similar soil layer investigated? ← this is my guess and hypothesis (SEE DOI PLOT slide 7))

# Optimizer (PSO) and cost function (KGE)

## OPTIMIZER: Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO)

- Social optimization algorithm based on a swarm of interacting particles.
- Implementation by library `pyswarms`, using a routine depending on hyperparameters  $w$  (inertia),  $c_1$  (cognitive parameter),  $c_2$  (social parameter)



Hyperparameter	$w$	$c_1$	$c_2$
Initial value	0.6	2.05	2.05
Variational strategy	exponential decay	linear variation	linear variation

## COST FUNCTION: Kling-Gupta Efficiency (KGE)

- $R$  = Pearson's correlation coefficient of simulated ( $x_{sim}$ ) and observed ( $x_{obs}$ ) values
- $\varepsilon$  = relative variability
- $\beta$  = bias = difference between the means normalized by the standard deviation of the observed data,

$$KGE = 1 - \sqrt{(R - 1)^2 + (\varepsilon - 1)^2 + (\beta - 1)^2}$$

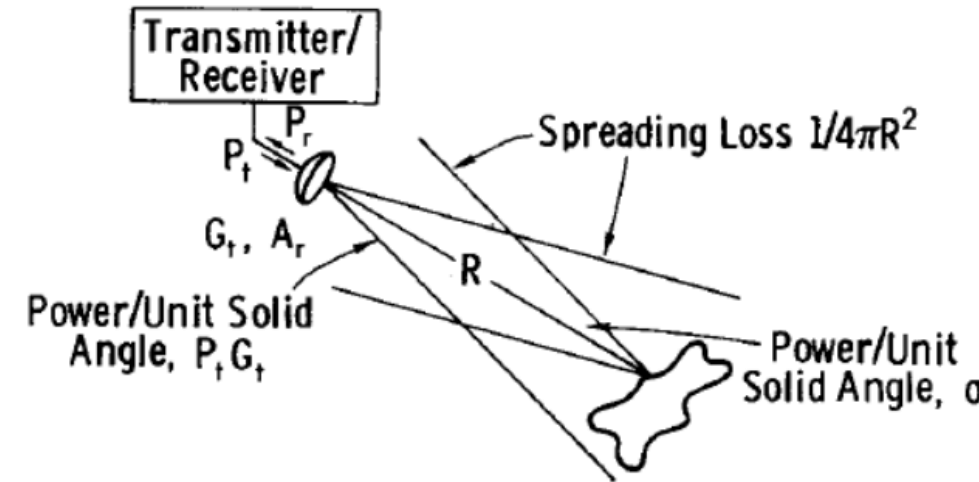
$$R = \frac{Cov(x_{sim}, x_{obs})}{\sigma_{obs}\sigma_{sim}}$$

$$\varepsilon = \sigma_{sim}/\sigma_{obs}$$

$$\beta = (\overline{x_{sim}} - \overline{x_{obs}})/\sigma_{obs}$$

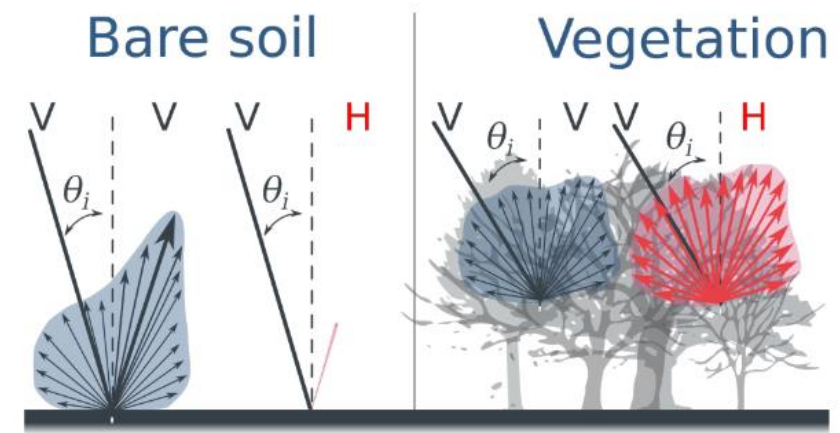
# Backscattering ( $\sigma^0$ ) and scattering mechanisms

- Radar backscattering coefficient  $\sigma^0$  [dB] is the radar cross section  $\sigma$  [m<sup>2</sup>] (RCS) normalized onto the ground range surface of incidence and can be calculated by the radar equation or as a function of the scattered  $L_s$  and incident  $L_i$  radiance ( $L$  [erg s<sup>-1</sup> cm<sup>-2</sup> sr<sup>-1</sup>])
- The scattered radiance is given by the **sum** of the contribution of surface scattering from bare soil, volume scattering from vegetation and interactions between the two,  $\sigma^0 = \sigma_{soil}^0 + \sigma_{veg}^0 + \sigma_{inter}^0$
- $\sigma^0$  from bare soil is affected by both soil moisture (through soil reflectivity), texture and roughness;  $\sigma^0$  from vegetation is affected by the vegetation water content and vegetation structure;  $\sigma^0$  contributions change for different polarizations (VV or VH)



$$P_r = \frac{P_t G_t A_r}{(4\pi)^2 R^4} (\sigma^0 A^*)$$

$$\sigma^0 \propto \frac{L_s}{L_i}$$



# $\sigma^0$ from vegetation

- $\sigma^0$  can be calculated from radiance derived from radiated transfer

theory: 
$$\sigma^0(\theta_i, \phi_i) = 4\pi \frac{L_s(\theta_i, \phi_i + \pi)}{L_i(\pi - \theta_i, \phi_i)} \cos \theta$$

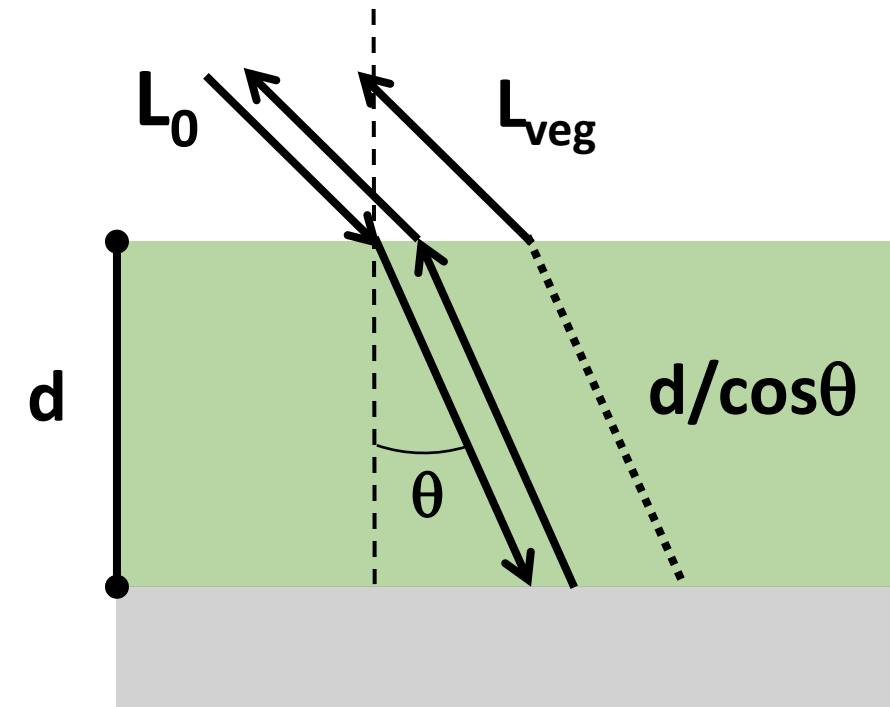
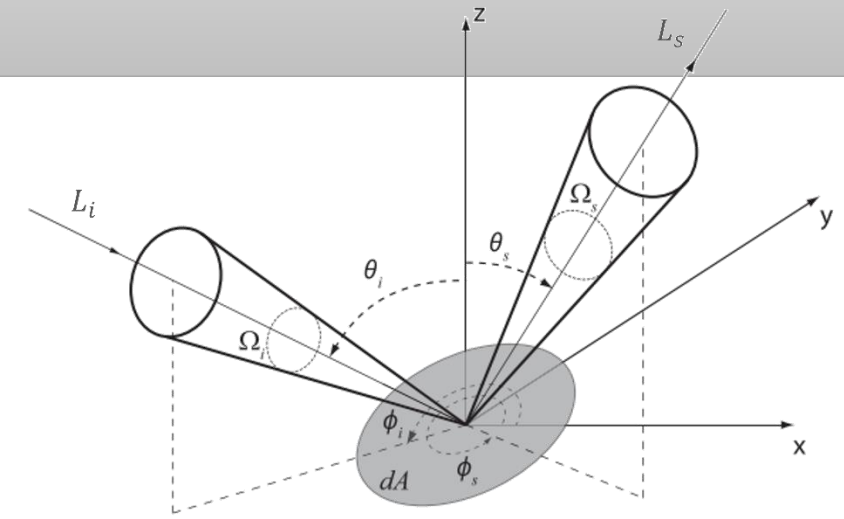
- $$L_{veg}(0) = \int_0^{d/\cos \theta} \kappa_s L_0 e^{-2\kappa_e z} dz = \frac{\kappa_s}{2\kappa_e} L_0 \cos \theta (1 - \gamma^2) =$$

$$\frac{\omega}{2} L_0 (1 - \gamma^2) \cos \theta$$

- where  $\gamma^2 = e^{-\frac{2\tau}{\cos \theta}}$  and  $\tau$  is vegetation optical depth  $\tau = \kappa_e d$

- $$P(\theta, \phi, \theta', \phi') = P_{Ray}(\Theta) = \frac{3}{4} (1 + \cos^2 \Theta) \xrightarrow{\Theta=\pi} \frac{3}{2}$$

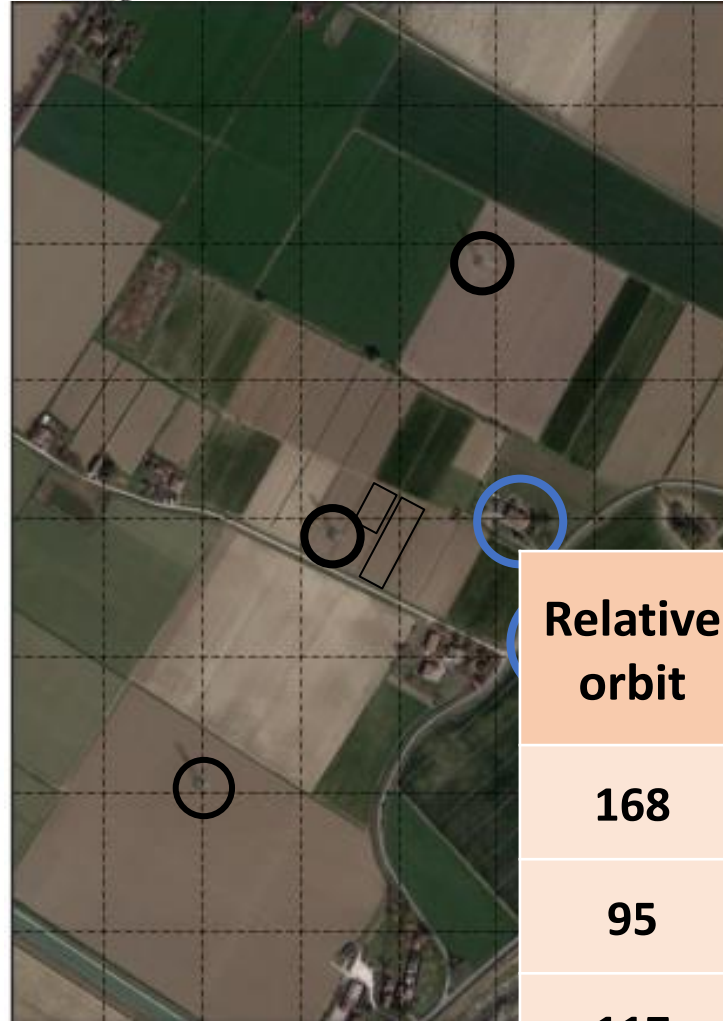
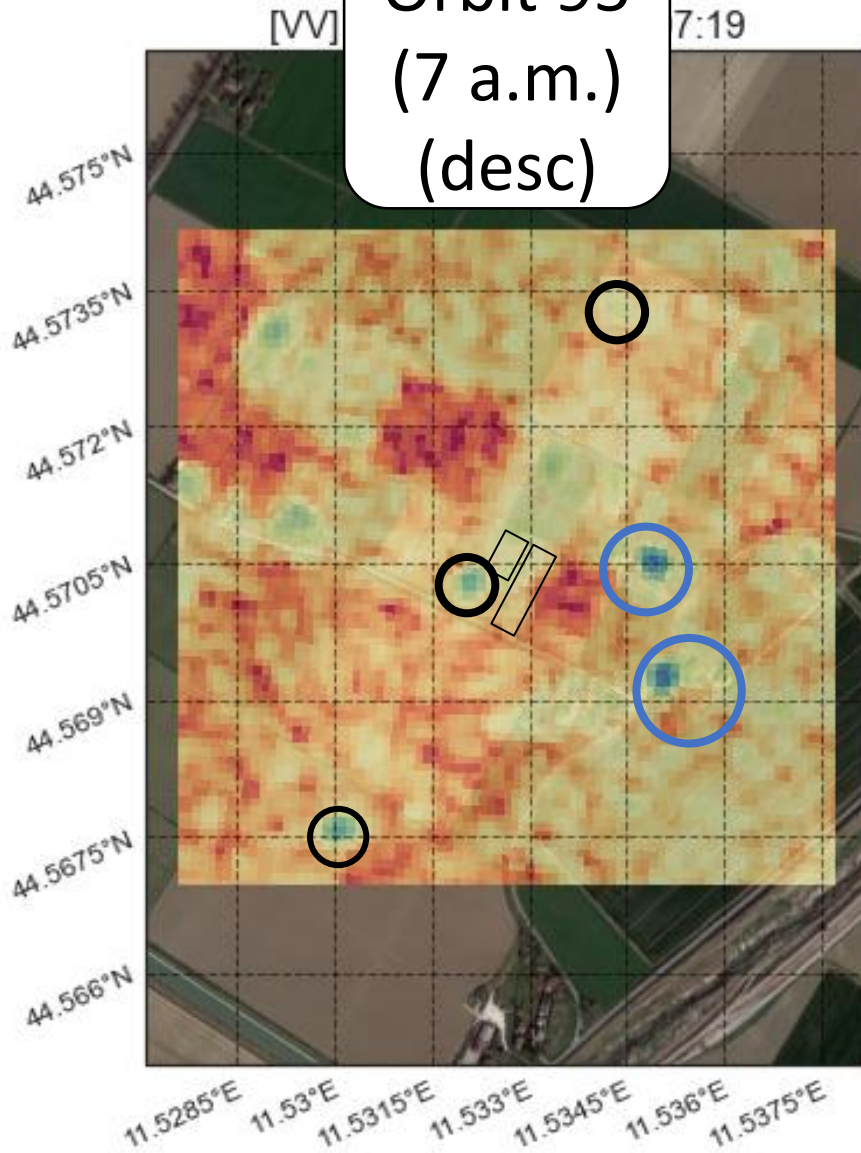
- $$\sigma_{veg}^0 \propto \frac{L_s}{L_0} = \frac{L_{veg}}{L_0} = \frac{3\omega}{4} \cos \theta (1 - \gamma^2)$$





# Maps of region 800 m x 800 m: who sees the pylon?

Orbit 95  
(7 a.m.)  
(desc)

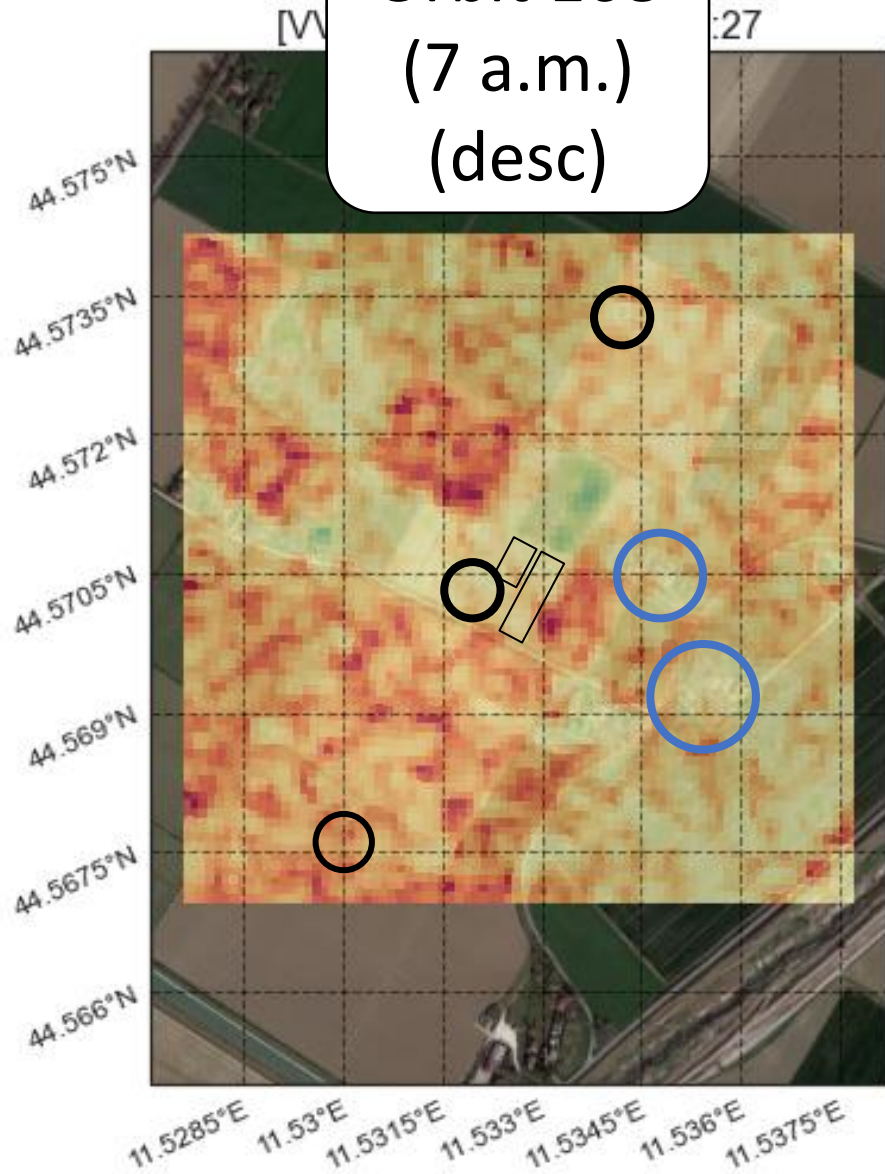


- Electricity pylons, houses and buildings are seen in images of orbit 95.
- Pylons and buildings are not clearly seen in images of other orbits.

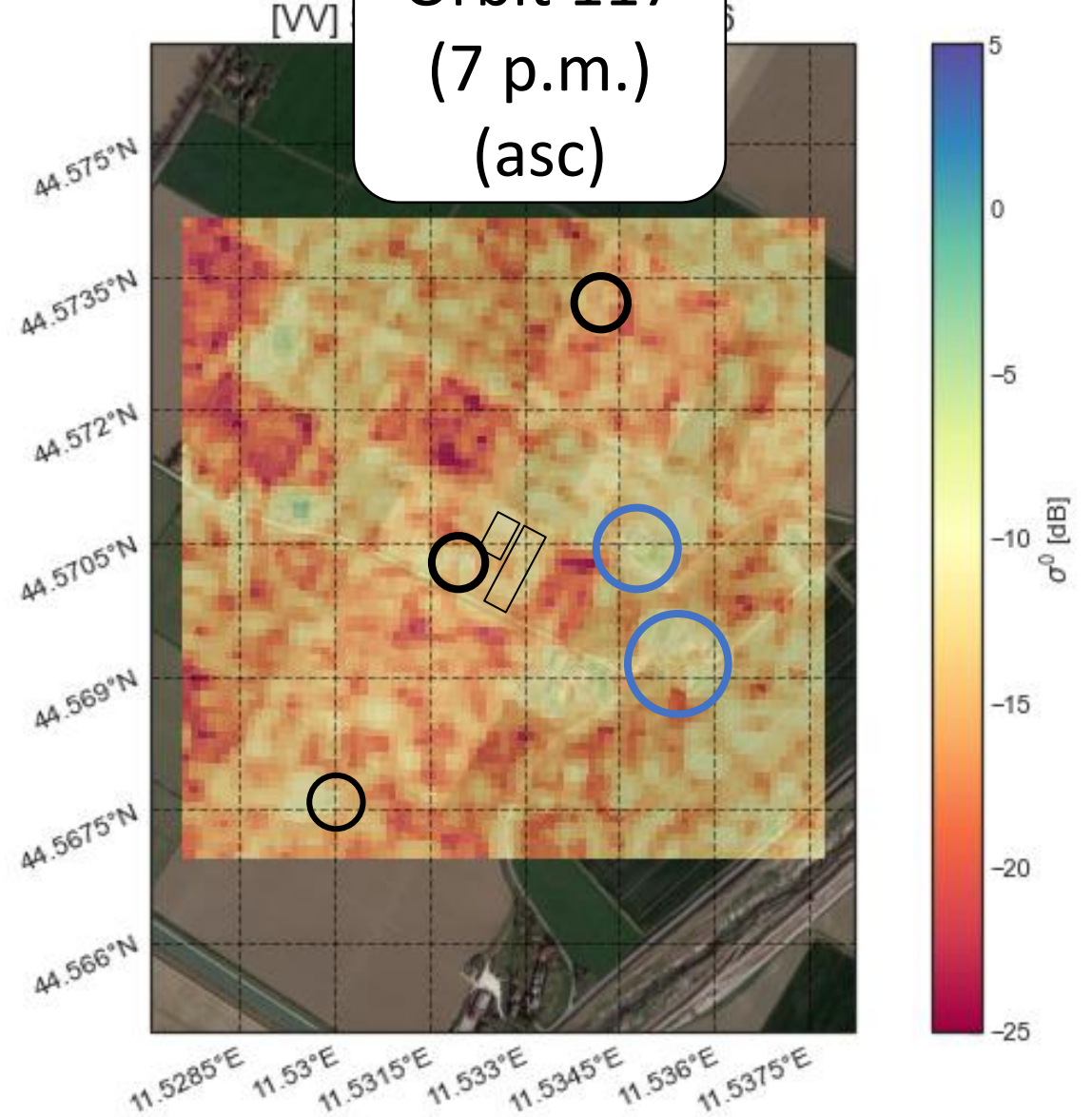
Relative orbit	Acquisition time	Direction	Mean incidence angle [°]
168	7 a.m.	descending	31.6
95	7 a.m.	descending	41.6
117	7 p.m.	ascending	37.6

# Maps of region 800 m x 800 m: who doesn't see the pylon?

Orbit 168  
(7 a.m.)  
(desc)

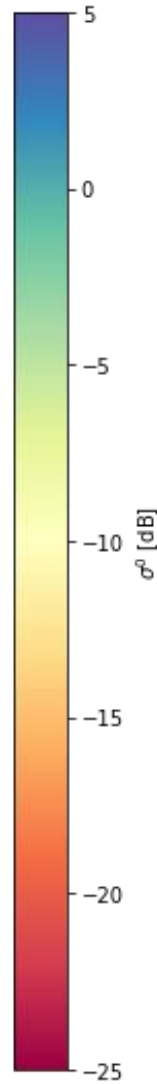
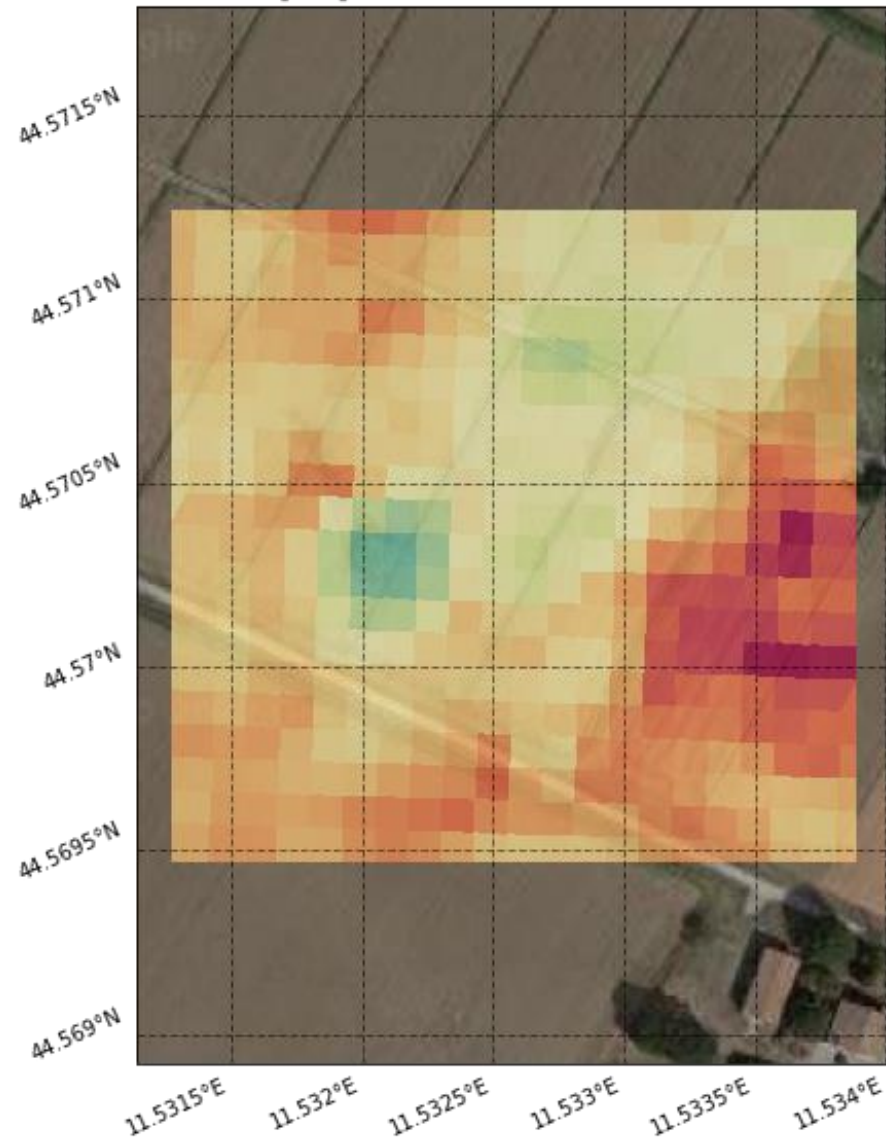


Orbit 117  
(7 p.m.)  
(asc)

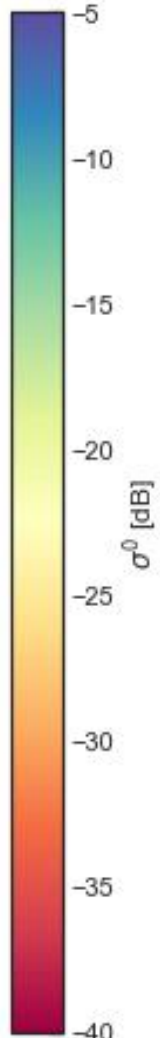
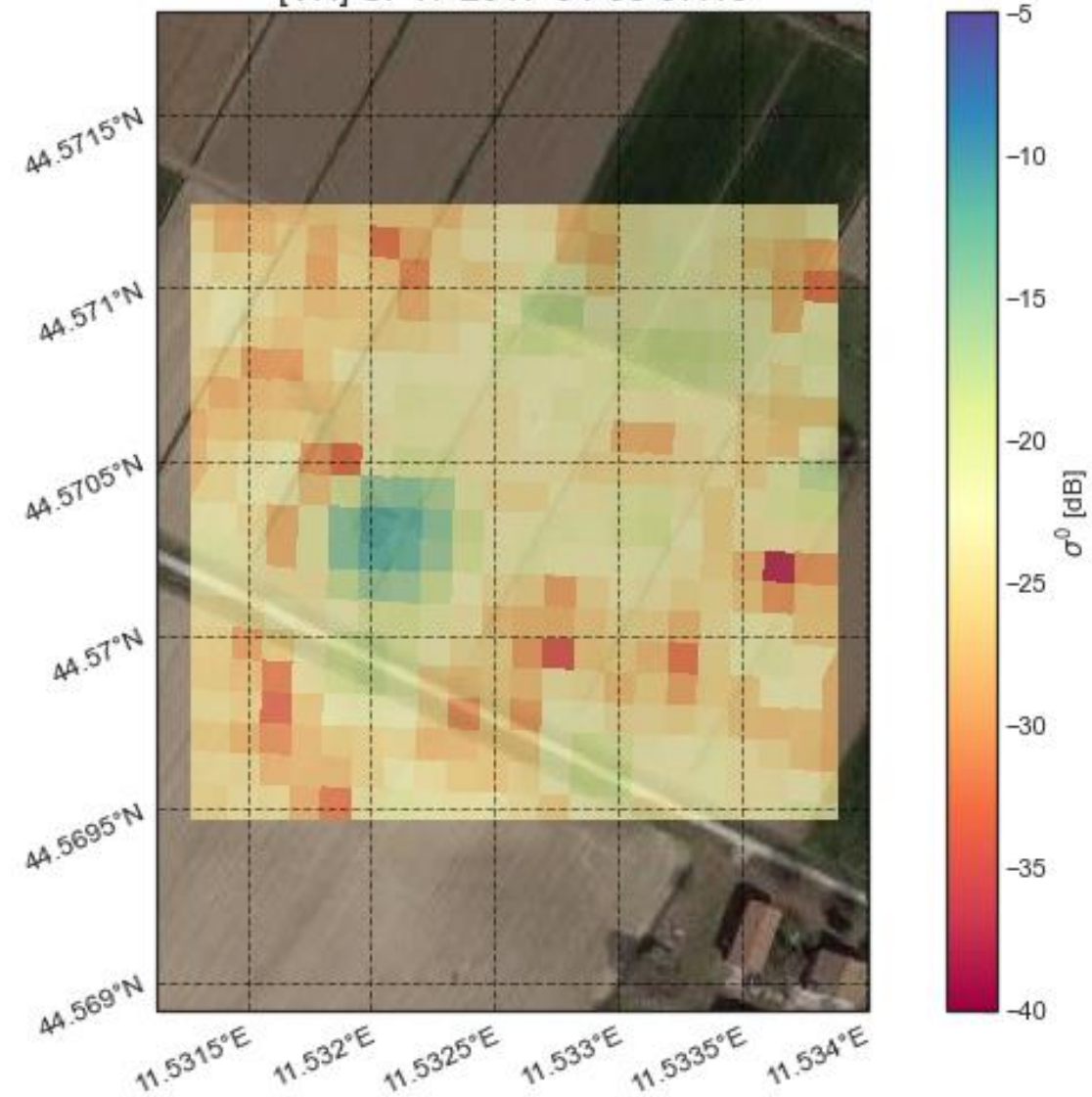


# Electricity pylon in both VV, VH polarization, orbit 95

[VV] SP17 2017-04-05 07:19



[VH] SP17 2017-04-05 07:19



# SWB overview

$$S_i = S_{i-1} + P_i + I_i - \frac{ET_{0,i} * K_{c,i} * (S_{i-1} - W_w * W_{max})}{1 - \rho_{st} - 0.04(5 - ET_{0,i} * K_{c,i})}$$

INPUTS

PARAMETERS

$$I_i = W_{fc} * W_{max} - S_{i-1} \text{ if } S_{i-1} < (1 - \rho_{st} + 0.04(5 - ET_{0,i} * K_{c,i})) * W_{fc} * W_{max}$$

$$PS_i = S_i - W_{fc} * W_{max} \text{ if } S_i > W_{fc} * W_{max}$$

- $S_i$  = soil moisture [mm]
- $P_i$  = precipitation [mm]
- $I_i$  = irrigation [mm]
- $ET_{0,i}$  = potential evapotranspiration [-]
- $K_{c,i}$  = crop coefficient [-]
- $W_w$  = wilting point [ $m^3m^{-3}$ ]
- $W_{fc}$  = field capacity [ $m^3m^{-3}$ ]
- $W_{max}$  = soil layer depth [mm]
- $\rho_{st}$  = standard potential depletion fraction [-]