

Decreasing maize production-consumption gap by intercropping with upland rice using different planting densities under deficit irrigation

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Received 18/12/2021
Accepted 20/12/2021

Abstract

A two-year field experiment was conducted in 2018 and 2019 at Gemmiza Agricultural Research Station (Lat. 31.03° N, Long. 30.88° E, 8 m a.s.l.), Gharbia Governorate, Egypt. The aim was to use untraditional sowing method to intercrop maize with upland rice using three maize planting densities (25, 37.5 and 50% of its recommended density) and application of two deficit irrigation treatments (irrigation every 9 and 12 days), in addition to irrigation every 6 days (control) and to study its effect on the yield of both intercrops, competitive relationships and farmer's income. The results indicated that the highest value of rice yield and its components were found under irrigation every 6 days and 25% maize planting density intercropped with rice. Whereas, the highest value of maize yield and its components were found under irrigation every 9 days and 50% maize planting density intercropped with rice, which also obtained the highest land and water equivalent ratios, area time equivalent ratio, and land equivalent coefficient. Furthermore, the highest total income and monetary advantage index were obtained under irrigation every 9 days and 50% maize planting density intercropped with rice. Thus, these results implied that intercropping maize with upland rice can solve part of the maize production-consumption gap through increasing its production without using additional lands or water.

Keywords: Land and water equivalent ratios, percentage of land saved, area time equivalent ratio, land equivalent coefficient, monetary advantage index, Rice, Maize, Egypt

INTRODUCTION

Maize is an important crop for both food and feed. It is an important component of global food security due to its genetic and management practice changes that helped in increasing its yield over the last century (Costa *et al.*, 2017). In Egypt, maize is the main cultivated summer crop with large cultivated area, namely 895,065 hectares in 2019, with mean productivity of 7.78 ton/ha and total national production of 6,963,606 ton (Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, 2019). However, there is still a gap between maize production and consumption in Egypt estimated at around 45%. This gap can be diminished by intercropping maize with other crops to increase its cultivated area and its production. Therefore, it is important to assess the effect of different maize intercropping systems with other crops on its productivity and feasibility.

Intercropping is a planting system involving cultivation of two crops (main and secondary) to attain better use intercepted light, it permits root contact with more soil, increase microbial activity, reduce pests and weeds and increase the yield of these crops (Hauggaard-Nielsen *et al.*, 2006). Intercropping is playing a role in altering the microclimate of the intercrops by changing the pattern of dispersal through wind, and rain (Zang *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, successful intercropping system directly depends on proper farm management, namely spatial arrangement of crops and planting density to reduce the competition for resources and increase the efficiency of the system (Porto *et al.*, 2011), and that usually leads to increasing productivity of the intercrops, when compared to monoculture (Batista *et al.*, 2016). It was documented that implementing intercropping systems can attain water saving and increase water use efficiency (Yang *et al.*, 2011; Lithourgidis, 2011; Coll *et al.*, 2012; Hu *et al.*, 2015). Several successful intercropping system with maize have been implemented in Egypt, for example maize intercropped with tomato (Mohamed *et al.*, 2013) and maize intercropped with peanut (Sherif *et al.*, 2005), maize intercropped with soybean (Sherif and Gendy, 2012).

Paddy rice is the main competitor for maize in the Egyptian cropping pattern. Paddy rice is a semi aquatic crop that requires high irrigation amount for proper growth and development and consequently its water use efficiency is low. The cultivated area of paddy rice in Egypt is 543,148 hectares with mean productivity of 8.83 ton/ha with total production of 4,795,997 ton (Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, 2019). Egypt is self-sufficient with respect to paddy rice and have a surplus to export every year. Nevertheless, due to

water shortage in Egypt, there is a remarkable success in breeding new upland rice cultivars requiring less irrigation water amounts than paddy rice cultivars (Gaballah *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, there are large efforts for expanding the cultivation of the upland rice cultivars released in Egypt to replace the paddy rice cultivars and to conserve water. Another way could be used to attain water saving in rice cultivation by either prolonging irrigation intervals without causing high grain yield losses or growing water-stress tolerant cultivars (Mady, 2004). Leng and Hall (2019) reported that the upland rice cultivars are able to grow without standing water in aerobic soils thus make irrigation of upland rice similar to wheat or maize. This feature could allow rice to be a candidate in an intercropping system as a main crop. Intercropping maize with upland rice was recently studied worldwide (Ali *et al.*, 2009; Kombiok *et al.*, 2011; Dewi *et al.*, 2014; Iwuagwu *et al.*, 2019). However, in Egypt, there was only one research paper published on this subject by Abou-Elela (2013). The author studied the effect of three irrigation intervals and planting distribution of maize on the yield of both crops. He concluded that land equivalent ratio was 1.3 averaged over the two growing seasons, which implied the advantage of this intercropping system. However, the effect of deficit irrigation on the maize and rice intercropping system and the efficiency of water utilization by the system was not studied.

In Egypt, the current situation of water shortage encourages the use of deficit irrigation in irrigated crops. Deficit irrigation practice is considered as a key contributor to water saving technology on field level. Deficit irrigation is defined by Chai *et al.*, (2016) as “an irrigation practice characterized by application of irrigation water below the full required amounts for optimal growth and yield, aiming at improving the response of plants to the certain degree of water deficit in a positive manner, and improving crop’s water use efficiency”. Application of deficit irrigation during the whole growing season was found to cause lower yield losses (Sofa *et al.*, 2012). A comparison was made between maize yield from deficit irrigation applied during the vegetative stage and deficit irrigation applied during the whole growing season

revealed that yield loss was increased by 10-20% in the first case, compared to the second case (Domínguez *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, effect of water deficiency on upland rice have been extensively studied worldwide (Bouman *et al.*, 2005 and 2006; Kato *et al.*, 2006a and b; Kato *et al.*, 2007; Akinbile, 2010; Crusciol *et al.*, 2013; Dingkuhn *et al.*, 2015). Yet, there was no research done in Egypt on the response of the yield of upland rice to application of deficit irrigation.

The objective of this investigation is to use untraditional sowing method to intercropped maize with upland rice using three maize planting densities and application of two deficit irrigation treatments, as well as to study its effect on the yield of both crops, competitive relationships and farmer’s income.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A two-year field experiment was conducted during the summer seasons of 2018 and 2019 at Gemmiza Agricultural Research Station (Lat. 31.03° N, Long. 30.88° E, 8 m a.s.l.), Gharbia Governorate, Agricultural Research Center, Egypt. The aim of this investigation was to use untraditional sowing method to intercrop maize with upland rice using three maize planting densities and application of two deficit irrigation treatments and study its effect on maize and rice yield, land and water equivalent ratios and farmer’s return.

The daily meteorological data of the experimental site in 2018 and 2019 were obtained from the following website: <https://power.larc.nasa.gov/data-access-viewer/>. The values of the weather elements were averaged and presented in Table 1. These data were used to calculate monthly reference evapotranspiration (ET_o) values using Penman-Monteith equation, as presented in the United Nations FAO Irrigation and Drainage Paper by Allen *et al.* (1998). This equation is included in Basic Irrigation Scheduling model (BISm, Snyder *et al.*, 2004). Chemical and physical soil analyses of the experimental site before sowing were conducted by the standard method of Page *et al.*, (1982) and Tan (1996) as shown in Table 2 and 3.

Table 1: Monthly averages of meteorological data in the experimental site for the two growing seasons

	SR	TX	TN	DT	WS	ET _o
Month			2019			
May	26.6	35.6	17.4	9.2	3.3	8.5
Jun	26.8	36.7	21.8	15.9	3.3	8.4
Jul	27.8	37.7	22.9	17.0	3.2	8.6
Aug	25.5	37.9	23.1	17.6	2.9	7.9
Sep	22.0	34.7	21.5	16.9	3.0	6.7
			2020			
May	26.7	32.1	16.0	12.8	3.2	7.0
Jun	28.3	35.9	19.4	13.4	3.4	8.6
Jul	27.7	37.7	22.0	16.8	3.2	8.5
Aug	26.0	38.0	22.9	17.9	3.1	8.1
Sep	21.7	37.7	22.7	18.3	2.9	7.2

SR = solar radiation (MJ/m²/day), TX, TN and DT = maximum, minimum and dew point temperature, respectively (°C), WS = wind speed (m/s), ET_o = reference evapotranspiration (mm/day).

Table 2: Soil chemical analysis of the experimental site over two seasons

Properties	First season	Second season
pH (1:2.5)	7.4	7.3
EC (dS/m)	0.8	0.9
CaCO ₃ (%)	2.71	3.0
Available N (ppm)	22.9	24.0
Available P ₂ O ₅ (ppm)	9.0	11.0
Available K ₂ O (ppm)	350.0	360.0
Organic matter (%)	1.0	1.2

Strip plot design with three replicates was used, where irrigation water intervals were randomly assigned to the vertical strips and intercropping systems were allocated to the horizontal strips. Each strip plot area was 44.0 m² (5 m X 8.8 m).

The studied treatments were:

Irrigation treatments

- Irrigation every 6 days (FI, full irrigation of rice)
- Irrigation every 9 days (DF1, deficit irrigation of rice)
- Irrigation every 12 days (DF2, deficit irrigation of rice)

Intercropping systems

- Maize (25% planting density) intercropped with upland rice (80% planting density, Figure 1A)
- Maize (37.5% planting density) intercropped with upland rice (80% planting density, Figure 1B)
- Maize (50% planting density) intercropped with upland rice (80% planting density, Figure 1C)

In addition, sole upland rice and sole maize (100% planting density) were cultivated for comparison purposes and were not included in the statistical analysis.

Land preparation

Untraditional sowing method, different from the farmer method in the surrounding areas, was used in this investigation. Land ploughing was done twice, then the land was divided to plots. The area of each plot was 44.0 m² (5 m x 8.8 m). It was divided into three sunken seed beds (2.0 m width and 5.0 m length) for upland rice cultivation. Each sunken seed bed was separated by ridges (0.7 m width, 5.0 m length, and 0.3 height) for maize cultivation (Figure 1). This method was developed by the first author of this investigation (Sheha sowing method), where irrigation was applied directly to rice and maize take its required water through seepage of the applied water to rice. This method is different than the farmer method, where farmers sow dry rice seeds in the nursery, and after one month rice seedlings transplanted to the field on ridges.

During land preparation, potassium sulfate (48% K₂O) was applied in the rate of 60 kg/ha.

Upland rice cultivation

Intercropped (80% of recommended planting density) and sole (100% of recommended planting density) upland rice cultivar Giza179 was sown in dry soil after soaking in water for 24 hours, in 23rd of May in both growing seasons (25 plant/m²). Calcium=super phosphate (15.5% P₂O₅) was applied at a rate of 480 kg/ha

Table 3: Soil physical properties and moisture constants of the experimental site

Soil depth (cm)	Particle size distribution			Texture Class	Bulk density (g m ⁻³)	Field capacity (%)	Available water (%)	Permanent wilting point (%)
	Sand (%)	Silt (%)	Clay (%)					
0-20	12.3	23.1	65.2	Clayey	1.07	45.2	24.2	21.1
20-40	16.1	24.2	60.2		1.26	40.1	22.1	18.3
40-60	19.0	26.2	56.2		1.45	35.2	18.6	16.2

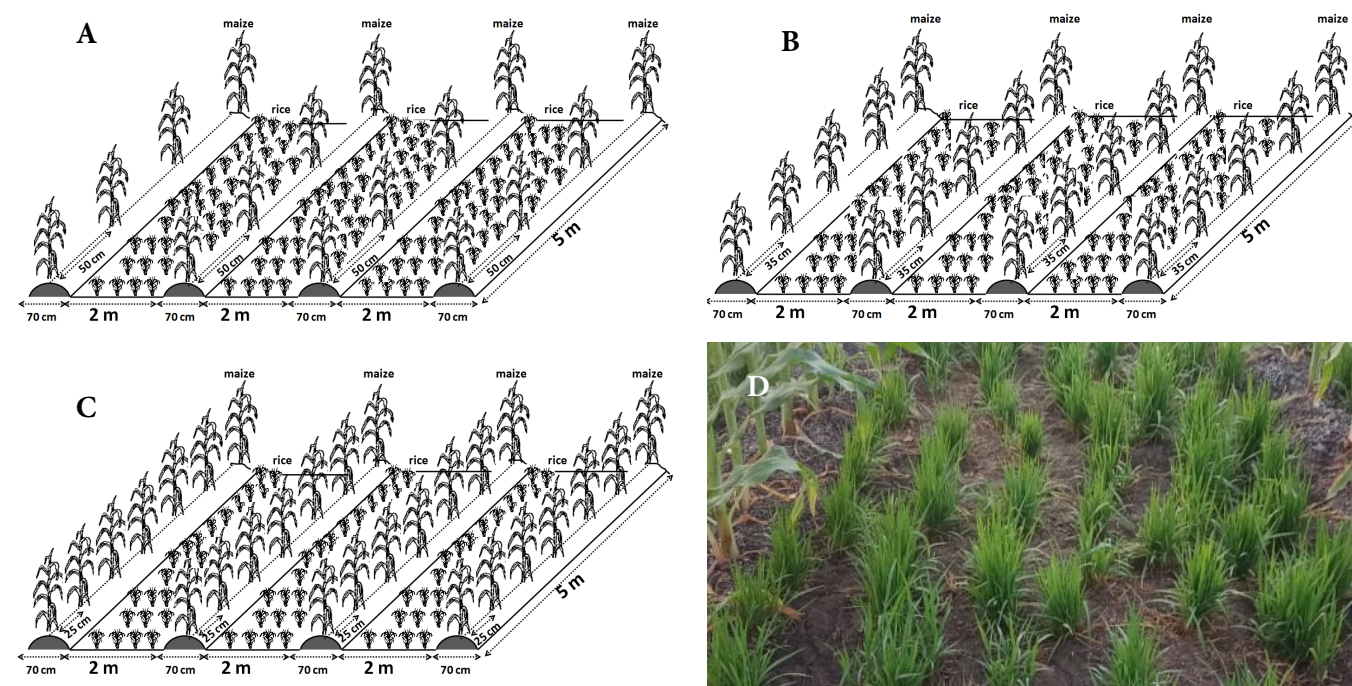


Figure 1: Maize intercropped with rice: A) 25% maize and 80% rice, B) 37.5% maize and 80% rice, and C) 50% maize and 80% rice, D) A photo of maize intercropped with upland rice

during land preparation for either sole or intercropped upland rice. For intercropped rice, nitrogen fertilizer was added in the form of ammonium nitrate (33.5% N), with the rate of 153.6 kg N/ha in three equal doses, added 14, 24 and 45 days after sowing, respectively. For sole rice, 192.0 kg N/ha in three doses was applied in the same dates as in intercropped rice. For both sole and intercropped rice, 60 kg/ha of potassium sulfate (48% K₂O) was applied 60 days after planting.

Harvest was done 29/9/2018 and 30/9/2019 in the first and second season, respectively. Ten individual plants of upland rice were taken from each experimental plot. Plant height (cm), number of panicle per plant, number of grain per panicle, 100-grain weight (g), sterility percentage (%), and grain weight per plant (g), amylose content (%) were measured. The yield of each plot was harvested, weight and added together to measure grain yield (ton/ha).

Maize cultivation

Intercropped and sole maize hybrid TWC 360 (yellow) was sown in the same days as in upland rice in both seasons. For interplanted maize, three planting densities were studied, namely 25% of its recommended planting density, planted on the ridges in hills with 50 cm between them (one plant/hill in both sides), 37.5% of its recommended planting density, planted with 35 cm between them (one plant/hill in both sides) and 50% of its recommended planting density, planted with 25 cm between them (one plant/hill in both sides). For sole maize, it was planted according to the recommended planting density.

For intercropped maize, nitrogen fertilizer was added in the form of ammonium nitrate (33.5% N), with the rate of 72.0, 108 and 144 kg N/ha for 25, 37.5 and 50% maize planting density, respectively in three equal doses added 14, 24 and 45 days after sowing, respectively. For sole maize, 288 kg N/ha in three equal doses was applied in the same dates as in intercropped maize.

Harvest was done in the first of September in both seasons. At harvest, ten individual plants were taken from each experimental plot and the following characters were measured: plant height (cm), ear height (cm), ear leaf are (cm), ear length (cm), number of grains per ear, weight of grain per ear (g), 100-seed weight. The yield of each plot was harvested, weight and added together to measure grain yield (ton/ha).

Competitive relationships

Land equivalent ratio (LER): LER is the ratio of area needed under sole cropping to one of intercropping at the same management level to produce an equivalent yield (Mead and Willey, 1980). LER is calculated for each of the maize intercropped with rice as follows:

$$LER = (Y_{MR}/Y_{MM}) + (Y_{RM}/Y_{RR})$$

Where: Y_{MR} and Y_{RM} = intercropped maize yield and intercropped rice yield, respectively, Y_{MM} , Y_{RR} = Pure stand yield of sole maize and rice, respectively.

Area Time Equivalent Ratio (ATER): ATER provides more realistic comparison of the yield advantage of intercropping over solid cropping than LER in terms of time taken by

component crops in the intercropping systems. ATER was calculated by formula developed by Hiebsch (1980):

$$ATER = [(RY_M \times T_M) + (RY_R \times T_R)]/T$$

Where: RY_M = relative yield of maize crop in mixture, T_M = duration (in days) of maize crop, RY_R = relative yield of rice in mixture, T_R = duration (in days) of rice, T = total duration of the intercropping system in days.

When ATER value is larger than 1.0, it implies yield advantage. If ATER value is equal to 1.0, it implies no effect of intercropping, whereas, if ATER value is lower than 1.0, yield disadvantages exist.

Land equivalent coefficient (LEC): LEC is a measure of interaction concerned with the strength of relationship and was calculated according to Adetiloye *et al.* (1983) as following:

$$LEC = L_M \times L_R$$

Where: L_M = relative yield of maize and L_R = relative yield of rice.

Percentage of land saved (LS, %): It indicates that lands saved from intercropping that could be used for other agricultural purposes. It was calculated according to Willey (1985) as followed:

$$LS (\%) = 100 - (1/LER) \times 100$$

Competitive ratio (CR): CR is an index which gives a more desirable competitive ability for the crops and also is more advantageous (Dhima *et al.*, 2007). The CR is calculated according to the following formula:

$$CR_M = (LER_M / LER_R) (Z_{RM} / Z_{MR})$$

$$CR_R = (LER_R / LER_M) (Z_{MR} / Z_{RM})$$

Where: $LER_M = (Y_{MR}/Y_{MM})$, $LER_R = (Y_{RM}/Y_{RR})$

If $CR_M < 1$, there is negative benefit and the crop can be grown in association. If $CR_M > 1$, there is negative benefit. The reverse is true for CR_R .

Aggressivity (A): Aggressivity is another index represents a simple measure of how much the relative yield increase in crop (maize) is greater than that of crop (rice) in an intercropping system. Aggressivity values were determined according to Mc-Gilchrist (1965):

$$A_{MR} = [Y_{MR}/(Y_{MM} \times Z_{MR})] [Y_{RM}/(Y_{RR} \times Z_{RM})]$$

$$A_{RM} = [Y_{RM}/(Y_{RR} \times Z_{RM})] [Y_{MR}/(Y_{MM} \times Z_{MR})]$$

Where: A_{MR} and A_{RM} = aggressivity value for maize and rice, respectively. Z_{MR} = sown proportion of maize (in mixture with rice). Z_{RM} = sown proportion of rice (in mixture with maize).

If $A_{MR} = 0$, both crops are equally competitive, if A_{MR} is positive, maize is dominant, if A_{MR} is negative then is dominated crop.

Relative crowding coefficient (RCC): RCC estimates the relative dominance of one species over the other in the intercropping system (De Wit, 1960). It was calculated as follows:

$$K = K_M \times K_R$$

$$K_M = Y_{MR} \times Z_{RM} / [(Y_{MM} - Y_{MR}) \times Z_{MR}]$$

$$K_R = Y_{RM} \times Z_{MR} / [(Y_{RR} - Y_{RM}) \times Z_{RM}]$$

Where, Y_{MM} = pure stand yield of maize, Y_{RR} = pure stand yield of rice, Y_{MR} = intercrop yield of maize; Y_{RM} =

intercrop yield of rice; Z_{RM} = the respective proportion of maize in the intercropping system; Z_{RM} = the respective proportion of rice in the intercropping system.

Economic evaluation

Total income (TI, USD per ha)

TI is calculated by multiplying the yield with its unit price (USD). The price of each studied maize and rice presented by market price in 2018 and 2019 were used. The prices are as follows: maize and rice are 212.4 and 285.9 USD/ton, respectively.

Monetary advantage index (MAI, USD per ha)

MAI values are based on land equivalent ratio (LER). It provides clear information on the economic advantage of the intercropping system. The MAI was calculated as follows (Ghosh, 2004):

$$MAI = [\text{Value of combined intercrops} \times (LER - 1)] / LER$$

Crop water relation

Surface irrigation was the irrigation system used in this study. Irrigation was applied using cutthroat flume. Evapotranspiration (ET_o) values in the studied growing seasons were calculated using Penman-Montieth equation (Allen et al., 1998) included in BISm model (Snyder et al., 2004).

Applied irrigation water

The amounts of applied irrigation water were calculated according to the equation given by Vermeiren and Joplung (1984) as follows:

$$AIW = \frac{ET_o \times I}{Ea(1 - LR)}$$

Where: AIW = depth of applied irrigation water (mm), ET_o = reference evapotranspiration (mm/day), I = irrigation intervals (days), Ea = irrigation application efficiency of the irrigation system (60%), LR = leaching requirements (equal 1.0).

Water consumptive use (WCU)

Soil samples were collected two days before and after each irrigation treatment from three successive layers (20 cm each) to determine soil moisture content. Water consumptive use was estimated by the method of soil moisture depletion according to Majumdar (2002) as follows:

$$WCU = \sum_{i=1}^{i=4} \frac{\theta_2 - \theta_1}{100} \times Bd \times d$$

Where: WCU = water consumptive use (mm), i = number of soil layer, θ_2 = soil moisture content after irrigation (% by mass), θ_1 = soil moisture content just before irrigation (% by mass), Bd = soil bulk density, (g/cm³), d = depth of soil layer (mm).

Water equivalent ratio (WER)

The water equivalent ratio is used to quantify system level water use efficiency (Mao et al., 2012). The WER is defined by determining the total water use that is needed in sole crops to produce the equivalent of the species

yields on a unit area of intercrop with the associated water use as follows:

$$WER = \frac{\left(\frac{Y_{int,m}}{WU_{int}}\right)}{\left(\frac{Y_{mono,m}}{WU_{mono,m}}\right)} + \frac{\left(\frac{Y_{int,r}}{WU_{int,r}}\right)}{\left(\frac{Y_{mono,r}}{WU_{mono,r}}\right)}$$

Where: $Y_{int,m}$ and $Y_{int,r}$ are the yield of intercropped maize and rice, respectively. WU_{int} is water consumptive use by the intercropped crops. $Y_{mono,m}$ and $Y_{mono,r}$ are the yield of mono maize and rice, respectively. $WU_{mono,m}$ and $WU_{mono,r}$ are water consumptive use by mono maize and rice, respectively. When WER is higher than 1.0, it implies advantage of the intercropping system.

Statistical analysis

The data were statistically treated using the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for randomized complete block design and the least significant difference (LSD) according to Freed (1991) was used for mean separation ($P \leq 0.05$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rice crop

The results in table 4 clearly showed that all upland rice yield components were significantly affected by irrigation intervals ($P \leq 0.05$), intercropping systems between maize and upland rice ($P \leq 0.05$) and the interaction between them ($P \leq 0.05$). Furthermore, the means of rice yield components from irrigation intervals, intercropping systems between maize and upland rice and the interaction between them were significantly different. These results were true in both studied seasons. The highest values of the rice yield components were found for irrigation every 6 days and 25% maize planting densities intercropped with rice. Whereas, the lowest values of the studied rice components were found for irrigation every 12 days and 50% maize planting densities intercropped with rice (Table 4).

Application of irrigation every 12 days to upland rice induced water stress and negatively affected the studied yield attributes (Table 4). In this context, Bassiouni (2018) indicated that increasing irrigation interval from 6 days to 9 days reduce paddy rice plant height by 20%. Furthermore, El-Sayed and Abd El-Monem (2017) stated that 85% soil moisture depletion from the available water reduced number of grains/panicle in paddy rice by 19%, compared to 30% soil moisture depletion from the available water. Darwesh et al. (2016) reported that plant height was reduced by 5% and 1000-grain weight of paddy rice was reduced by 24% when irrigation interval was increased from 6 to 12 days.

Table 5 showed that all upland rice yield and its components were significantly affected by irrigation intervals ($P \leq 0.05$) in both seasons, except amylose content in the first season. Furthermore, rice yield and its components were significantly affected by intercropping systems between maize and upland rice ($P \leq 0.05$) and the interaction between them ($P \leq 0.05$), except amylose content in both season. The means of rice yield and its components resulted from irrigation intervals, intercropping systems

between maize and upland rice and the interaction between them were mostly significantly different, which were true in both seasons.

Lower values of rice yield and its components were found in table 5 as a results of increasing irrigation intervals from 6 days to 12 days. Similar results were obtained by Darwesh *et al.* (2016), where they stated that sterility percentage was increased by 264% in paddy rice and its grain yield was reduced by 29% under irrigation every 12 days, compared to irrigation every 6 days. Bassiouni

(2018) indicated that increasing irrigation interval from 6 days to 9 days reduce the yield of paddy rice by 55%. Furthermore, El-Sayed and Abd El-Monem (2017) stated that 85% soil moisture depletion from the available water reduced paddy rice yield by 64%, compared to 30% soil moisture depletion from the available water.

The highest values of rice yield and its components were found for irrigation every 6 days and 25% maize planting density intercropped with rice, namely 10.6 and 10.0 ton/ha where rice yield was higher by 113 and 71% in the first

Table 4: Effect of the interaction between irrigation intervals and intercropping systems on upland rice yield components in 2018 and 2019 growing seasons

Treatments		Plant height (cm)		Number of panicle/plant		Number of grains/panicle		100-grain weight (g)	
IR	IS	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
6 days	IS _{25%}	78.7	81.3	28.7	31.3	96.7	98.7	2.83	2.93
	IS _{37.5%}	74.0	78.3	26.3	28.7	93.3	94.3	2.57	2.70
	IS _{50%}	69.7	76.3	24.3	27.3	90.3	91.3	2.37	2.47
Mean		74.1	78.7	26.4	29.1	93.4	94.8	2.59	2.70
9 days	IS _{25%}	72.7	77.7	25.3	27.7	87.3	88.7	2.43	2.47
	IS _{37.5%}	75.7	74.7	23.0	25.7	85.7	86.3	2.27	2.37
	IS _{50%}	70.0	73.7	21.3	21.7	82.3	83.3	2.10	2.27
Mean		72.8	75.3	23.2	25.0	85.1	86.1	2.27	2.37
12 days	IS _{25%}	70.0	72.3	27.3	25.3	78.7	77.0	2.17	2.20
	IS _{37.5%}	74.3	70.3	24.3	22.7	76.3	78.0	2.20	2.13
	IS _{50%}	70.7	68.3	22.3	21.3	74.7	75.7	1.97	2.00
Mean		71.7	70.3	24.7	23.1	76.6	76.9	2.11	2.11
Mean	IS _{25%}	73.8	77.1	27.1	28.1	87.6	88.1	2.49	2.53
	IS _{37.5%}	74.7	74.4	24.6	25.7	85.1	86.2	2.34	2.40
	IS _{50%}	70.1	72.8	22.7	23.4	82.4	83.4	2.14	2.24
LSD _{0.05} IR		0.67	0.76	0.62	1.14	1.00	1.26	0.08	0.12
LSD _{0.05} IS		0.61	0.64	0.50	0.78	0.68	0.77	0.08	0.08
LSD _{0.05} IR x IS		1.06	1.11	0.87	1.21	1.19	1.33	0.14	0.15

IR= irrigation treatments, IS= intercropping systems.

Table 5: Effect of the interaction between irrigation intervals and intercropping systems on upland rice yield and its attributes in 2018 and 2019 growing seasons

Treatments		Sterility percentage (%)		Grain weight/plant (g)		Amylose content (%)		Rice yield (ton/ha)	
IR	IS	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
6 days	IS _{25%}	13.0	12.0	66.7	85.0	20.0	21.7	10.4	10.0
	IS _{37.5%}	14.3	14.0	66.0	73.3	18.0	20.0	8.66	8.81
	IS _{50%}	14.7	14.7	58.7	67.7	19.3	21.3	7.62	7.74
Mean		14.0	13.6	63.8	75.3	19.1	21.0	8.97	8.78
9 days	IS _{25%}	15.7	15.3	61.0	72.0	19.0	20.7	7.98	8.49
	IS _{37.5%}	15.0	15.0	47.0	69.7	19.7	20.7	7.80	7.69
	IS _{50%}	16.3	16.3	59.7	62.3	18.7	19.0	7.42	7.40
Mean		15.7	15.6	55.9	68.0	19.1	20.1	7.73	7.86
12 days	IS _{25%}	19.0	19.0	56.0	63.3	20.0	16.3	5.98	6.41
	IS _{37.5%}	19.0	19.0	56.0	60.0	17.3	18.3	5.62	5.88
	IS _{50%}	22.3	19.3	40.0	49.0	18.7	17.0	5.00	5.34
Mean		20.1	19.1	50.7	57.4	19.0	17.2	5.53	5.88
Mean	IS _{25%}	15.9	15.4	61.2	73.4	19.7	19.6	8.20	8.29
	IS _{37.5%}	16.1	16.0	56.3	67.7	18.3	19.7	7.36	7.38
	IS _{50%}	17.8	16.8	52.7	59.7	19.2	19.1	6.83	6.83
LSD _{0.05} IR		0.50	0.67	4.01	1.97	--	1.83	0.60	0.91
LSD _{0.05} IS		0.71	0.48	2.93	1.41	--	--	0.71	0.13
LSD _{0.05} IR x IS		1.23	0.84	5.07	2.43	--	--	1.17	0.49
Solid rice yield								10.8	10.3

IR= irrigation treatments, IS= intercropping systems.

and second seasons, respectively, compared to the values obtained under irrigation every 12 days and 50% maize planting density intercropped with rice. The lowest values of rice yield and its components were found for irrigation every 12 days and 50% maize planting density intercropped with rice, where rice yield was reduced by 34 and 31% in the first and second seasons, respectively, compared to the yield obtained under irrigation every 6 days and 25% maize planting density intercropped with rice (Table 5).

It is worth noting that rice planting density under intercropping was 80% of its recommended density, whereas the planting density of sole rice was 100% and its yield was 10.8 and 10.3 ton/ha in the first and second season, respectively. Thus, the highest value of intercropped rice yield was lower by 2 and 3% than its value under solid cultivation (Table 5).

The high yield of rice under its intercropping system with maize is attributed to several factors. The superiority of rice yield under intercropping with maize over the solid cultivated rice yield can be attributed to reduction in disease severity index under intercropping as stated by Iwuagwu *et al.* (2019). Furthermore, Riyanto *et al.* (2021) indicated that intercropping maize with upland rice resulted in an increase in soil organic carbon content, available P, and available K, compared to sole rice or maize cultivation. The increase in soil organic carbon can be attributed to crops residues or roots in soil after harvest, which indirectly increase soil organic matter content (Huang, 2003). Both P and K affect the growth and development of rice through different physiological and metabolic processes. P participates in the formation of cellular membranes and in various metabolic processes, and promotes rice growth and physiological metabolism (Plaxton and Tran, 2011). Bi *et al.* (2014) indicated that application of P fertilizer not only increased the rice yield,

but also improved yield stability. Furthermore, Fageria *et al.* (2003) reported that P is responsible for the development of root, early flowering and tolerance to specific biotic and abiotic stresses in rice, whereas its deficiency delays maturity and increase vulnerability to diseases.

Furthermore, K is an activator of various enzymes and involves in the intracellular osmotic regulation and membrane protein transport. Consequently, it plays an important role in carbohydrate transport in rice and is beneficial for the plant metabolism and stress resistance (Nieves-Cordones *et al.*, 2019). Rice plants absorb K in larger quantities than nitrogen for proper function of various activities (Sharma *et al.*, 2013).

Maize crop

The results in table 6 indicated that all the studied maize yield components were significantly affected by irrigation intervals ($P \leq 0.05$), except plant height in the second season. Furthermore, both intercropping systems between maize and upland rice ($P \leq 0.05$) and the interaction between them significantly ($P \leq 0.05$) affected the studied maize yield components. Additionally, the means of maize yield components resulted from irrigation intervals, intercropping systems between maize and upland rice and the interaction between them were significantly different. These results were true in both studied seasons.

The applied irrigation amount every 6 days to maize intercropped with upland rice was relatively high to negatively affect the studied maize yield attributes. Irrigating maize every 6 days increased available soil moisture in the rhizosphere in a way to cause waterlogging. Tian *et al.* (2019) indicated that this condition resulted in decrease of stomatal conductance and intercellular CO₂ concentration, which caused a decrease in photosynthesis and

Table 6: Effect of the interaction between irrigation intervals and intercropping systems on maize yield components in 2018 and 2019 growing seasons

Treatments		Plant height (cm)		Ear height (cm)		Ear leaf area (cm)		Ear length (cm)	
IR	IS	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
6 days	IS _{25%}	219.1	252.0	110.3	124.0	7.46	7.05	21.3	24.3
	IS _{37.5%}	222.3	284.0	112.8	138.0	7.79	7.18	25.4	26.2
	IS _{50%}	226.5	278.0	115.0	140.3	7.94	7.37	24.3	26.8
Mean		222.6	271.3	112.7	134.1	7.73	7.20	23.6	25.8
9 days	IS _{25%}	237.0	274.3	116.1	135.0	7.54	8.60	25.3	26.91
	IS _{37.5%}	243.0	279.0	116.4	143.3	8.62	9.66	25.6	27.8
	IS _{50%}	247.3	285.7	118.9	154.0	9.42	10.88	26.5	28.8
Mean		242.4	279.7	117.2	144.1	8.53	9.72	25.8	27.8
12 days	IS _{25%}	236.3	266.0	115.0	133.2	8.63	7.81	24.3	26.6
	IS _{37.5%}	236.0	276.0	119.0	136.0	9.52	8.15	26.2	27.2
	IS _{50%}	240.0	284.0	122.3	140.0	10.48	8.40	27.4	27.7
Mean		237.5	275.3	118.8	136.4	9.54	8.12	26.0	27.2
Mean	IS _{25%}	230.8	264.1	113.8	130.7	7.88	7.82	23.7	25.9
	IS _{37.5%}	233.8	279.7	116.1	139.1	8.64	8.33	25.7	27.1
	IS _{50%}	237.9	282.6	118.8	144.8	9.28	8.88	26.1	27.8
LSD _{0.05} IR		0.90	--	2.13	3.77	0.34	0.09	0.69	0.35
LSD _{0.05} IS		1.53	5.31	0.71	1.80	0.23	0.11	0.55	0.21
LSD _{0.05} IR x IS		2.65	9.02	1.22	3.12	0.41	0.19	0.95	0.36

IR= irrigation treatments, IS= intercropping systems.

dry matter accumulation in the plants and consequently yield. Furthermore, waterlogging causes oxygen deficiency in the soil, which inhibits root respiration, that also negatively affected the rate of photosynthesis and CO₂ assimilation (Arbona *et al.*, 2008).

Whereas, the highest values of the studied maize attributes under its intercropping system with upland rice were found when irrigation was applied every 9 days (Table 6), which implied that maize is relatively responsive to application of higher irrigation amounts than every 6 days. This assumption was supported with the findings of Meleha (2006) and Megyes *et al.* (2005) where they indicated that maize is considered one of the most efficient field crops in producing higher dry matter per unit of applied irrigation water, without causing waterlogging. El-Sobky and Desoky (2017) reported that maize growth was increased by the application of adequate water irrigation every 10 days, compared to irrigation every 16 days. Furthermore, these high values of maize yield components could be attributed to increasing the availability and the uptake of N, P and K under higher soil moisture content. Ibrahim and Kandil (2007) indicated that maize growth was increased as a result of increasing solubility and mobility of these elements. Similar results were obtained by Rekaby *et al.* (2017) and Hammad and Ali (2014), who reported that application of the required irrigation to maize increased plant height by 5% than its value under application of deficit irrigation. Abu-Grab *et al.* (2019) indicated that increasing available soil moisture content increased plant height, ear height and ear length by 2, 6 and 2%, compared to its value under lower soil moisture content.

Moreover, the results in Table 7 indicated that all the studied maize yield and its components were significantly

affected by irrigation intervals ($P \leq 0.05$), except grain weight per ear in the second season. Furthermore, maize intercropped with upland rice systems, as well as interaction between irrigation intervals and maize intercropping systems with upland rice significantly affected all the studied maize yield and its components ($P \leq 0.05$).

The lowest values of maize yield and its components were found under irrigation every 6 days. Tian *et al.* (2019) indicated that increasing soil moisture in the rhizosphere causes waterlogging and that resulted in high yield reduction in maize. The highest maize yield components were obtained under irrigation every 9 days and 50% of maize planting density intercropped with upland rice, namely 8.07 and 7.78 ton/ha in the first and second season, respectively, which was lower than maize solid yield (100% planting density) by 16 and 19% in the first and second season, respectively as a result of 50% planting density of maize under its intercropping system with upland rice (Table 7).

Abu-Grab *et al.* (2019) indicated that increasing available soil moisture content increased number of grain per ear, 100-grain weight and maize yield by 10, 15 and 29%, respectively, compared to application of deficit irrigation. Ali and Abdelaal (2020) reported that number of maize grain per ear, grain weight per ear, 100-grain weight and maize yield was reduced by 22, 26, 11, 29%, respectively when irrigation intervals was increased from 12 days to 22 days. Abo El-Ezz and Hafez (2019) indicated that the productivity of maize was increased by the application of adequate water irrigation every 10 days.

Although both maize and rice are cereal crops, which are soil exhausting crops contributes in depleting soil nutrients, our results showed high values of both crops relative to its population density. This result could be attributed to the fact

Table 7: Effect of the interaction between irrigation intervals and intercropping systems on maize yield and its components in 2018 and 2019 growing seasons

Treatments		Number of grain/ear		Weight of grain/ear (g)		100-grain weight (g)		Maize yield (ton/ha)	
IR	IS	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
6 days	IS _{25%}	316.7	340.0	231.7	242.3	36.0	38.7	3.99	3.81
	IS _{37.5%}	342.7	362.0	241.7	252.7	40.3	43.3	5.17	4.99
	IS _{50%}	362.7	383.3	252.3	272.7	39.0	41.7	7.42	6.81
Mean		340.7	361.8	241.9	255.9	38.4	41.2	5.53	5.21
9 days	IS _{25%}	354.0	365.0	281.7	305.0	42.0	45.3	4.42	4.22
	IS _{37.5%}	417.3	423.0	294.3	316.7	43.0	47.7	6.01	5.72
	IS _{50%}	452.0	473.3	305.0	325.0	44.0	49.7	8.07	7.78
Mean		407.8	420.4	293.7	315.6	43.0	47.6	6.17	5.91
12 days	IS _{25%}	312.0	381.0	261.0	311.7	39.8	41.7	4.58	4.28
	IS _{37.5%}	382.0	434.3	268.3	321.3	41.3	43.3	5.57	5.13
	IS _{50%}	392.7	422.7	276.7	333.3	42.3	45.0	6.54	6.68
Mean		362.2	412.7	268.7	322.1	41.2	43.3	5.56	5.36
Mean	IS _{25%}	327.6	362.0	258.1	286.3	39.3	41.9	4.33	4.11
	IS _{37.5%}	380.7	406.4	268.1	296.9	41.6	44.8	5.58	5.28
	IS _{50%}	402.4	426.4	278.0	310.3	41.8	45.4	7.34	7.09
LSD _{0.05} IR		11.48	13.87	2.32	--	0.54	0.59	0.14	0.09
LSD _{0.05} IS		9.06	10.72	1.99	2.34	0.73	0.61	0.05	0.14
LSD _{0.05} IR x IS		15.7	18.56	3.45	4.04	1.25	1.06	0.27	0.08
Solid maize yield								9.59	9.66

IR= irrigation treatments, IS= intercropping systems.

that intercropping a C_3 crop (rice) with a C_4 crop (maize) can attain several advantages. Collins *et al.* (2017) reported that in an intercropping system, sometimes, the total plant population exceeds the population of the base crop in the pure stand, which facilitate more plants exploit the available resources. Thus, it allows more biomass to be produced due to more assimilated production by the intercrops together. Additionally, intercropping a C_3 crop with a C_4 crop will have different type of CO_2 acquisition and fixation. Li *et al.* (2012) indicated that C_4 have more efficient use of solar energy, cause an increase in its biomass with higher light intensity. Furthermore, the increase of both biomass and CO_2 fixation with higher CO_2 concentration in C_4 are faster than that in C_3 , which reflect more efficient use of CO_2 in C_4 plants (Wang *et al.*, 2012). Thus, in this way, more quantity of greenhouse gas (CO_2) is used in photosynthesis and biomass production under intercropping of C_3 and C_4 plants could increase. In addition, Wu *et al.* (2012) stated that the taller species in an intercropping system, such as maize, could change the light and heat environment of a shorter shade-tolerant species. Wang *et al.* (2015) stated that rice plants are characterize by having high shading tolerance ability related to high light using efficiency reflected by high grain filling rate during grain filling period.

The high yield of both maize and upland rice under intercropping system could be also a result of uncompetitive underground relationship, where the average rooting depth of maize can reach 1.58 m, whereas for the average rooting depth of upland rice can reach 1.15 m (Araki *et al.*, 2000). Machado (2009) indicated that deeper roots can penetrate far into the soil and use moisture and nutrients from deeper soil layers. Lynch (2011) stated that maize plants have shallow root growth angles of axial roots, which enhance topsoil foraging and thereby P acquisition. Grant *et al.* (2001) reported that early-season P nutrition in maize results in increasing dry matter partitioning to the grain at later development stages. Additionally, the increase in both yields of maize and rice may be also a result of increase in the content of iron (Fe) in the rhizosphere by maize plants as it was reported by Xiong *et al.* (2013) in peanut–maize intercropping system, where Fe enhanced the carbon and nitrogen metabolism and photosynthetic efficiency of the peanut crop as well as the resistance of both crops against various environmental stresses.

Competitive relations

The results in table 8 indicated that the highest land equivalent ratio (LER), area time equivalent ratio (ATER) and land equivalent coefficient (LEC) were obtained under 9 days irrigation interval and 50% of maize planting density intercropped with upland rice, namely 1.52, 1.32 and 0.58 for LER, ATER and LEC, respectively averaged over the two growing seasons. This result can be attributed to the highest value of maize yield under this system. Similar results were obtained by Abou-Elela (2013) who stated that irrigation every 10 days and 75% maize population intercropped with upland rice gave the highest LER value.

Furthermore, percentage of saved land as a result of the studied intercropping systems was the highest under 9 days irrigation interval and 50% of maize planting density intercropped with upland rice, namely 34% averaged over the two seasons.

The results in table 9 indicated that the highest value of competitive ratio (CR) was found for maize under 9 days irrigation interval and 50% of maize planting density intercropped with upland rice. The results also showed that maize have higher aggressivity (A) than upland rice under its intercropping systems, where it had a positive values. Furthermore, the highest value of relative crowding coefficient (RCC) was found under 6 days irrigation interval and 25% of maize planting density intercropped with rice. Similar results were obtained by Abou-Elela (2013) under irrigation every 6 days and 75% maize population intercropped with upland rice.

Economic evaluation

The results in table 10 indicated that the highest value of total income (TI) was obtained when irrigation was done every 6 days and 25% of maize population intercropped with upland rice, namely 3835 USD/ha averaged over the two growing seasons. Furthermore, the highest values of monetary advantage index (MAI) were found under 9 days irrigation interval and 50% of maize planting density intercropped with rice, namely 1320 averaged over the two growing seasons. Similar results were obtained by Abou-Elela (2013) for maize intercropped with rice.

Table 8: Effect of irrigation treatments and intercropping systems of maize and rice on land equivalent ratio, area time equivalent ratio and land equivalent coefficient

Treatments		Land equivalent ratio		Area time equivalent ratio		Land equivalent coefficient		Saved land (%)	
IR	IS	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
6 days	IS _{25%}	1.40	1.37	1.30	1.27	0.41	0.38	29	27
	IS _{37.5%}	1.34	1.37	1.21	1.24	0.43	0.44	25	27
	IS _{50%}	1.48	1.45	1.29	1.28	0.55	0.53	32	31
9 days	IS _{25%}	1.20	1.26	1.08	1.15	0.34	0.36	17	21
	IS _{37.5%}	1.35	1.34	1.19	1.19	0.45	0.44	26	25
	IS _{50%}	1.53	1.52	1.32	1.32	0.58	0.58	35	34
12 days	IS _{25%}	1.03	1.06	0.91	0.95	0.26	0.28	3	6
	IS _{37.5%}	1.10	1.10	0.96	0.97	0.30	0.3	9	9
	IS _{50%}	1.15	1.21	0.97	1.04	0.32	0.36	13	17

IR= irrigation treatments, IS= intercropping systems.

Water equivalent ratio (WER)

The highest values of WER_{total} were obtained under irrigation every 9 days for 50% maize intercropped with rice, namely 1.53 and 1.49 in the first and second season, respectively. These results showed that the water utilization of this intercropping system was higher than the value of the other studied intercropping systems. In this case, the values of WER_{total} were increased by 53 and 49% in the first and second growing seasons, respectively. Similar results were obtained by Zohry and Ouda (2019) when onion was intercropped with sugar beet and by El-Mehy *et al.* (2020) when faba bean was intercropped with sugar beet.

CONCLUSION

The above results proved that intercropping 50% maize planting density with 80% planting density of upland rice and irrigation every 9 days contributed in producing maize yield lower than the sole maize yield (100% planting density) by an average of 18% only. Furthermore, this system also obtained the highest land and water equivalent ratios, area time equivalent ratio, and land equivalent coefficient. In addition, 35% of lands can be saved under this system. Furthermore, there are savings in the applied water to upland rice through saving the applied water to the nursery, increasing irrigation interval from 6 to 9 days, and producing two crops (maize

Table 9: Effect of irrigation treatments and intercropping systems of maize and rice on competitive ratio, aggressivity and relative crowding coefficient

Treatments		Competitive ratio				Aggressivity				Relative crowding coefficient	
		2018		2019		2018		2019			
IR	IS	Maize	Rice	Maize	Rice	Maize	Rice	Maize	Rice	2018	2019
6 days	IS _{25%}	0.42	2.37	0.41	0.25	0.022	-0.022	0.020	-0.020	46.16	23.68
	IS _{37.5%}	0.67	1.49	0.61	0.17	0.011	-0.011	0.009	-0.009	4.75	6.24
	IS _{50%}	1.10	0.91	0.94	0.11	0.009	-0.009	0.007	-0.007	8.24	7.16
9 days	IS _{25%}	0.62	1.60	0.53	0.19	0.028	-0.028	0.026	-0.026	2.42	3.61
	IS _{37.5%}	0.87	1.15	0.79	0.13	0.015	-0.015	0.014	-0.014	4.36	4.23
	IS _{50%}	1.22	0.82	1.12	0.09	0.011	-0.011	0.010	-0.010	11.68	10.52
12 days	IS _{25%}	0.86	1.16	0.71	0.14	0.032	-0.032	0.028	-0.028	1.13	1.31
	IS _{37.5%}	1.12	0.90	0.93	0.11	0.016	-0.016	0.012	-0.012	1.50	1.29
	IS _{50%}	1.47	0.68	1.34	0.07	0.011	-0.011	0.010	-0.010	1.85	2.41

IR= irrigation treatments, IS= intercropping systems.

Table 10: Effect of irrigation treatments and intercropping systems of maize and rice on total income and monetary advantage index

Treatments		Total income (USD/ha)		Monetary advantage index (MAI)	
		2018	2019	2018	2019
6 days	IS _{25%}	3821	3680	1092	1032
	IS _{37.5%}	3574	3579	907	965
	IS _{50%}	3754	3659	1218	1165
9 days	IS _{25%}	3220	3324	537	664
	IS _{37.5%}	3506	3413	909	890
	IS _{50%}	3835	3768	1329	1312
12 days	IS _{25%}	2682	2742	78	152
	IS _{37.5%}	2790	2771	254	254
	IS _{50%}	2818	2945	368	489

IR= irrigation treatments, IS= intercropping systems.

Table 11: Effect of irrigation treatments and intercropping systems of maize and rice on water equivalent ratio in both seasons

Treatments		2018			2019		
		WER_{maize}	WER_{rice}	WER_{total}	WER_{maize}	WER_{rice}	WER_{total}
6 days	IS _{25%}	0.40	0.98	1.38	0.37	0.93	1.30
	IS _{37.5%}	0.52	0.80	1.32	0.49	0.82	1.31
	IS _{50%}	0.74	0.71	1.45	0.67	0.72	1.38
9 days	IS _{25%}	0.45	0.76	1.21	0.43	0.81	1.23
	IS _{37.5%}	0.62	0.74	1.36	0.58	0.73	1.30
	IS _{50%}	0.83	0.70	1.53	0.78	0.70	1.49
12 days	IS _{25%}	0.48	0.58	1.05	0.44	0.62	1.06
	IS _{37.5%}	0.58	0.54	1.12	0.53	0.57	1.09
	IS _{50%}	0.68	0.48	1.16	0.68	0.51	1.20

IR= irrigation treatments, IS= intercropping systems.

and upland rice) with the amount of water applied to upland rice. The results also showed that this system is profitable to the farmers. These results implied that intercropping maize with upland rice can solve part of the maize production-consumption gap through increasing its production without using additional lands or water, thus attained both yield and water advantages.

Thus, it is recommended to intercrop 50% maize planting density with 80% upland rice of its planting density, where upland rice is cultivated in sunken seed beds (2.0 m width and 5.0 m length). Each seed bed was separated by ridges (0.7 m width, 5.0 m length and 0.3 m height) for maize cultivation, with 25 cm distance between hills (one plant/hill in both sides) (Sheha sowing method) under irrigation application every 9 days.

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