Can no-till farming help mitigate heat waves?

Edouard Davin¹, Philippe Ciais², Albert Olioso³, Sonia Seneviratne¹

¹ ETH Zurich, Switzerland
² IPSL–LSCE, Gif-sur-Yvette, France
³ INRA, Avignon, France
No-till farming

- Planting system in which tillage is suppressed or reduced and in which a large fraction of the soil remains covered by crop residues
- Reduces erosion, water losses and limits weed growth
- Carbon sequestration potential (Smith et al., IPCC WGIII, 2007)

Source: www.notill.org
Motivations

- Biogeophysical impacts (e.g., albedo) of no-till agriculture largely overlooked (Lobell et al., 2006)

- Large potential for expansion of no-till agriculture in Europe
Model experiments

- COSMO-CLM RCM coupled to Community Land Model (CLM3.5)
- **CTL**: control run; **NOTILL**: 100% no-till scenario, with empirically prescribed albedo increase ($\sim +0.1$) over croplands.
Observational constraints

- ~0.1 increase in albedo under no-till conditions
- Comparable to the 50% (relative) increase of soil albedo assumed by Lobell et al., (2006)
Summer mean change (NOTILL – CTL)

Albedo change

2-meter temperature change
Change in temperature distribution

- Asymmetric effect: larger impact on warm extremes
TOA shortwave radiation change (NOTILL – CTL)

- Radiative perturbation more pronounced for warm days associated with clear sky conditions
Mitigation potential

Eastern Europe, crop > 60%

- Cooling effect ~3-times larger during a heat wave day compared to a normal summer day
Summer 2003

France, crop > 60%
Conclusions

- No-till farming may have a cooling influence owing to albedo increase.
- Mitigation potential is larger for warm events, because clear sky conditions exacerbate the radiative perturbation.
- Up to 3-4 K temperature reduction during extremes like 2003 summer in France.
Caveats and future directions

- Albedo effect of no-till is poorly constrained → synthesis from multiple sites over Europe is in preparation

- Albedo is not the only biogeophysical impact → incorporate effect on soil evaporation