

## Original Research Article

### **Vegetation indices-based spatial water demand of *rabi* onion crop.**

#### **ABSTRACT**

There are numerous methods of estimation of water requirements of crops. However, FAO Penman Monteith Method has been adopted worldwide but it lacks spatial variability. The accuracy can be improved by adopting VI based method. Therefore, present study was planned to investigate the use of vegetation indices (VIs) as surrogate of crop coefficients in place of tabulated crop coefficients and find best VI in case of onion crop which require amount of water. The study was conducted in 3 districts of Maharashtra i.e. Nashik, Dhule and Jalgaon where onion is a major *rabi* crop grown on a large scale, for two consecutive *rabi* seasons of year 2020-21 and 2021-22. Multitemporal vegetation indices such NDVI, NDWI, SAVI, MSAVI2, and RVI have were estimated using temporal images of Sentinel 2A satellite during the growth period of onion and week-wise values were obtained by using ERDAS Imagine. Linear regression was applied on VI values versus  $K_c$  recommended by MPKV, Rahuri which resulted in linear models. NDWI- $K_c$  model showed strongest relation with high  $R^2$  values. The spatial crop evapotranspiration ( $ET_c$ ) was then calculated by applying this model. For 2020–21 growing season the total crop evapotranspiration for onion in Dhule, Jalgaon and Nashik was calculated to be 486.5 mm, 482.7 mm, and 488.7 mm, respectively. Whereas during 2021–22, it was estimated to be 493.7 mm, 473.9 mm, and 477.2 mm, respectively in these districts. For getting water demand crop evapotranspiration values were multiplied by the acreage estimated by remote sensing. Total water demand for *rabi* onion for the districts Dhule, Jalgaon and Nashik was found to be 70.54  $Mm^3$ , 43.8  $Mm^3$  and 693.2  $Mm^3$ , respectively and 128.1  $Mm^3$ , 33.9  $Mm^3$ , and 825.7  $Mm^3$  respectively for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22, respectively.

**Keywords:** *crop water demand, crop evapotranspiration, vegetation indices, crop coefficients, Sentinel 2A*

#### **Introduction**

Crop water requirement is the amount of water required to compensate for evapotranspiration loss from a planted area which differ substantially amongst crops and also over the growth season of different crops. Accurately estimating crop water requirements is a critical component of agricultural planning. Water use efficiency, which is primarily governed by crop evapotranspiration ( $ET_c$ ), can be improved on a regional scale through proper irrigation planning, scheduling, and decision making based on estimated  $ET_c$ , which in turn is affected by crop coefficient ( $K_c$ ). Though there are various methods for measuring crop evapotranspiration ( $ET_c$ ), the FAO Penman-Monteith methodology (Allen *et al.*, 1998) is the sole accepted method. This method generates location-specific daily reference evapotranspiration ( $ET_o$ ) using meteorological data, which is then multiplied by crop coefficients ( $K_c$ ) to compute crop evapotranspiration ( $ET_c$ ) which can be represented by  $ET_c = K_c \times ET_o$

Precision irrigation is a distinctive sustainable agriculture method that allows water and nutrients to be delivered to plants at the right time and in the right place in small calculated doses to generate optimal growing conditions. Precision irrigation management demands determining  $ET_c$  under a variety of climatic and field conditions. Crop coefficients lack regional variation due to differences in crop variety and growth stage from field to field. As a result, determining a regional water need for a

specific period is difficult task. Identifying geographical and temporal changes in water use is quite complicated with current crop coefficient techniques.

Estimation of water requirement by utilizing remote sensing may prove most precise and time efficient techniques for irrigation water management. Vegetation Indices (VIs), which are measured as differences, ratios or linear combinations of reflected light in the visible (blue, green or red) and near infrared (NIR) bands, have been found to be substantially related to a range of crop growth factors (Moran *et al.*, 1995). Many scientists have observed parallels between the temporal patterns of Kc and VI. As a result, Kc can be calculated using VI and used to estimate crop water requirements. Weekly or biweekly VI extraction can provide more precise Kc, allowing for irrigation scheduling in near real time.

The onion (*Allium cepa* L.), often known as bulb onion, is a popular vegetable. India is the world's second largest producer of onions, trailing only China. Maharashtra is India's biggest onion producer, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Gujarat. Onion requires huge amount of water throughout its growth period. Taking into account all of the advantages of remotely sensed data in precision irrigation management, this study focused on integrating the VI-based Kc within the framework of FAO methodologies for forecasting real-time spatial water usage patterns in order to establish the ideal irrigation plan resulting in saving of water.

## Materials and Methods

### Study Location

The study was carried out in three districts of North Maharashtra i.e. Nashik, Dhule and Jalgaon which are situated between 73° 78' 98" E to 75° 52' 77" E longitude and 19° 99' 75" N to 21° 03' 96" N latitude covering an area of 34542 km<sup>2</sup> as shown in Fig 1.

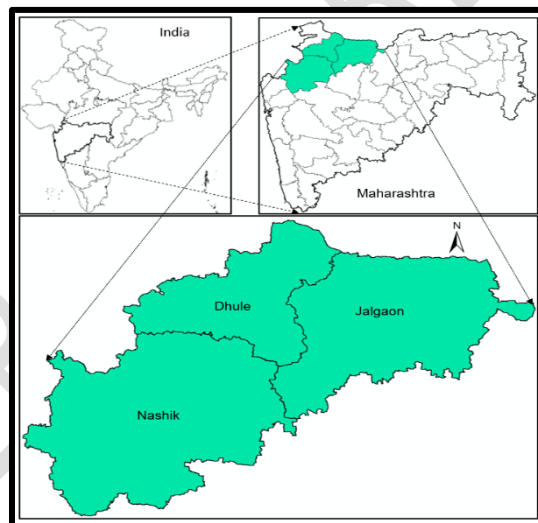


Fig 1. Study area

### Remote Sensing Data

Sentinel 2A satellite images were used for this study. The data is publicly available for download via the Sentinel Scientific Data Hub website. Sentinel 2A satellite produce multi date, multi spectral images which has finer resolutions of 10 m, 20 and 60 m. Ten images of 10 m resolutions study area were downloaded for two *rabi* seasons of years 2020-21 and 2021-22 each approximately of 10 days interval.

### Ground Truth Data Collection

The ground truth data was collected during the field visits organized during the growth period of the crops. Information about crop, its growth, area of crop field, date of planting, number of irrigations applied, etc was taken from the farmers, if available. The ground truth data of 26 and 28 locations were taken during the *rabi* season of 2020-21 and 2021-22, respectively.

## Weather data collection

The weekly meteorological data of study area was collected from the website of NASA Power. The weather data consisted of maximum temperature, minimum temperature, mean relative humidity, solar radiation, wind speed and rainfall.

## Image Processing

Multi date images from sentinel 2A satellite were processed in ERDAS Imagine and ArcGIS 10.2 environment. These were stacked together with option of Layer stack in ERDAS Imagine software. Afterwords these stacked images were subsetting and clipped to get single multispectral image. By using unsupervised classification menu, Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), Normalized Difference Water Index (NDWI), Soil Adjusted Vegetation Index (SAVI), Modified Soil Adjusted Vegetation Index 2 (MSAVI2) and Ratio Vegetation Index (RVI) were generated. 10 images of each vegetation index were stacked together which resulted in total 10 layer stack for each layer.

## Generation of VI-Kc model

Obtained week-wise VIs and crop coefficients recommended by MPKV, Rahuri for onion crop were correlated by using linear regression analysis. VI-Kc models were developed by using statistical analysis which includes Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), Percent Deviation (D) and Willmott Index of agreement.

## Estimation of Water Demand

FAO Penman Monteith equation was used to estimate reference evapotranspiration ( $ET_o$ ) with the help of weekly meteorological data obtained from NASA Power system. With the help of best VI-Kc model, week-wise crop coefficients were calculated. The week-wise water requirements ( $ET_c$ ) were obtained by product of reference evapotranspiration and VI based crop coefficient. Finally, total water demand of study area was estimated by product of onion acreage obtained by remote sensing technique and crop evapotranspiration ( $ET_c$ ).

## Results and Discussion

For *rabi* season of 2020-21 and 2021-22, Multispectral images were downloaded and processed in ERDAS Imagine environment and estimated different vegetation indices which showed strong correlation. From the stack layer images of vegetation indices viz. NDVI, NDWI, SAVI, MSAVI2 and RVI the values corresponding to different stages of the crop were distributed after regression analysis of VI with 5 models of crop coefficients were obtained. Out of these vegetation indices NDWI-Kc model showed strongest relationship with crop coefficients for both years 2020-21 and 2021-22. Multi date and temporal vegetation indices were extracted and tabulated week-wise as given in Table 1 and 2. The reference evapotranspiration ( $ET_o$ ) was calculated with the help of Penman Monteith method by using meteorological data for both the year 2020-21 and 2021-22 as shown in Table 3 and 4 respectively. NDWI-Kc was then multiplied with reference evapotranspiration to obtained the crop evapotranspiration ( $ET_c$ ) as given in Table 5 and 6 for both years 2020-21 and 2021-22, respectively. Finally, water demand was estimated by multiplying crop evapotranspiration with onion crop acreage obtained by remote sensing method for year 2020-21 and 2021-22 as depicted in table 7 and 8.

Weeks past sowing	NDVI	NDWI	SAVI	MSAVI2	RVI
1	0.126	0.017	0.188	0.221	1.291
2	0.161	0.026	0.242	0.271	1.409
3	0.165	0.032	0.247	0.279	1.405
4	0.195	0.039	0.297	0.321	1.539
5	0.231	0.041	0.348	0.364	1.662
6	0.247	0.121	0.370	0.392	1.669
7	0.313	0.149	0.471	0.471	1.960

8	0.320	0.162	0.460	0.466	1.971
9	0.387	0.221	0.580	0.554	2.309
10	0.405	0.227	0.608	0.575	2.440
11	0.398	0.220	0.594	0.556	2.397
12	0.369	0.206	0.549	0.526	2.240
13	0.391	0.229	0.575	0.561	2.303
14	0.332	0.159	0.444	0.487	2.083
15	0.294	0.044	0.305	0.365	1.612
16	0.220	0.033	0.348	0.392	1.839

**Table 1. Average weekly values of VIs of onion for *rabi* season of 2020-21**

WPS	NDVI	NDWI	SAVI	MSAVI2	RVI
1	0.136	0.011	0.214	0.243	1.413
2	0.162	0.024	0.221	0.254	1.433
3	0.170	0.027	0.237	0.261	1.437
4	0.160	0.047	0.244	0.271	1.475
5	0.189	0.053	0.294	0.324	1.523
6	0.199	0.063	0.298	0.331	1.549
7	0.202	0.076	0.291	0.334	1.526
8	0.208	0.113	0.308	0.337	1.528
9	0.242	0.141	0.362	0.387	1.639
10	0.270	0.157	0.402	0.422	1.712
11	0.252	0.152	0.354	0.379	1.647
12	0.253	0.145	0.398	0.409	1.689
13	0.238	0.124	0.364	0.388	1.659
14	0.235	0.113	0.336	0.384	1.641
15	0.204	0.080	0.293	0.339	1.536
16	0.181	0.048	0.251	0.294	1.494

**Table 2. Average weekly values of VIs of onion for *rabi* season of 2021-22**

Met. Week	Reference evapotranspiration (ET <sub>o</sub> ) (mm)		
	Dhule	Jalgaon	Nashik
45	3.56	3.29	3.51
46	3.47	3.25	3.16
47	3.31	3.16	3.07
48	3.48	3.31	3.22
49	3.86	3.64	3.65
50	2.49	2.42	2.27
51	3.46	3.31	3.42
52	3.59	3.44	3.37
1	3.21	3.25	2.57
2	3.64	3.49	3.21
3	4.08	4.30	3.90
4	4.21	4.33	4.54
5	4.91	5.12	4.76
6	4.95	5.00	5.42
7	4.82	4.77	4.72
8	5.34	5.24	5.44
9	6.45	6.22	6.28

10	5.72	5.49	6.32
11	5.87	5.82	6.46
12	5.82	5.92	6.23

**Table 3. Reference evapotranspiration (ET<sub>o</sub>) of different districts of study area in *rabi* season of 2020-21**

Met Weeks	Reference evapotranspiration (ET <sub>o</sub> ) (mm)		
	Dhule	Jalgaon	Nashik
45	3.53	3.17	3.11
46	3.31	2.92	2.95
47	3.08	2.84	2.75
48	3.00	2.73	2.71
49	2.74	2.53	2.49
50	3.04	2.85	2.61
51	3.18	2.95	2.97
52	3.17	2.82	3.06
1	3.37	3.06	2.90
2	3.55	3.07	2.81
3	4.13	3.67	3.61
4	4.20	3.84	3.77
5	4.77	4.50	4.44
6	4.73	4.67	4.81
7	4.79	4.82	4.94
8	5.51	5.35	5.75
9	5.50	5.55	6.08
10	5.39	5.64	5.46
11	7.39	7.27	7.44
12	7.94	7.45	7.03

**Table 4. Reference evapotranspiration (ET<sub>o</sub>) of different districts of study area in *rabi* season of 2021-22**

Weeks past Transplanting	Crop evapotranspiration (ET <sub>c</sub> ), mm		
	Dhule	Jalgaon	Nashik
1	18.24	17.18	17.25
2	12.16	11.80	11.07
3	17.24	16.50	17.05
4	18.38	17.57	17.25
5	16.53	16.76	13.23
6	23.87	22.83	21.05
7	28.79	30.30	27.52
8	30.58	31.48	33.00
9	40.74	42.52	39.49
10	41.63	42.11	45.58
11	39.93	39.51	39.09
12	42.95	42.12	43.75
13	54.44	52.47	53.01
14	41.30	39.67	45.60
15	30.58	30.33	33.65

16	29.16	29.63	31.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>486.52</b>	<b>482.77</b>	<b>488.79</b>

**Table 5. Crop evapotranspiration (ET<sub>c</sub>) for *rabi* onion of 2020-21**

Weeks past Transplanting	Crop evapotranspiration (ET <sub>c</sub> ) (mm)		
	Dhule	Jalgaon	Nashik
1	11.91	11.00	10.84
2	14.36	13.47	12.31
3	15.29	14.17	14.28
4	17.11	15.24	16.53
5	18.78	17.00	16.13
6	20.82	18.05	16.47
7	25.86	23.00	22.65
8	30.89	28.31	27.77
9	39.03	36.81	36.35
10	40.89	40.39	41.63
11	40.78	41.03	42.04
12	45.68	44.38	47.64
13	42.19	42.52	46.61
14	39.75	41.55	40.26
15	47.18	46.44	47.51
16	43.22	40.54	38.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>493.74</b>	<b>473.91</b>	<b>477.29</b>

**Table 6. Crop evapotranspiration (ET<sub>c</sub>) for *rabi* onion of 2021-22**

Weeks past Transplanting	Water demand of onion (m <sup>3</sup> ) (2020-21)		
	Dhule	Jalgaon	Nashik
1	3014882.4	1779829.9	28211358
2	2010196.2	1222217.3	18108133
3	2849983.5	1708739.5	27873060
4	3037614.7	1820579.4	28201625
5	2732098	1736344.5	21636874
6	3945120.3	2364782.2	34424159
7	4758918.3	3138436.4	44996873
8	5053924.3	3260841.9	53965072
9	6734525.6	4404245.7	64568869
10	6881813.7	4361983.7	74532106
11	6599444	4092883	63912959
12	7098548.6	4363206.1	71544267
13	8998751.4	5435520.3	86682316
14	6826123.8	4109664.7	74570387
15	-	-	-

16	-	-	-
<b>Total (m<sup>3</sup>)</b>	70541945	43799275	693228061
<b>Mm<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>70.54</b>	<b>43.80</b>	<b>693.23</b>

\*Mm<sup>3</sup>- Million Cubic Meters

Since water is needed only up to physiological maturity, water demand calculations are done only up to 14<sup>th</sup> week

**Table 7. Crop Water demand (m<sup>3</sup>) in various districts of study area for *rabi* onion of 2020-21**

Weeks past Transplanting	Water demand of onion (m <sup>3</sup> ) (2021-22)		
	Dhule	Jalgaon	Nashik
1	3786014.0	964960.5	22857521.7
2	4561503.9	1181384.1	25973750.3
3	4857527.0	1242784.9	30116790.8
4	5438260.1	1336978.1	34868709.1
5	5966885.5	1491508.5	34010584.4
6	6614590.9	1583054.9	34745700.0
7	8215855.2	2017740.3	47768252.4
8	9816610.2	2483111.2	58573464.0
9	12403539.1	3228903.8	76663438.0
10	12994190.2	3542181.7	87811588.3
11	12958838.5	3598855.9	88662033.9
12	14515027.5	3892437.4	100485721.7
13	13405884.7	3729532.7	98312514.9
14	12629369.6	3644173.1	84912390.9
15	-	-	-
16	-	-	-
<b>Total (m<sup>3</sup>)</b>	128164096.5	33937607.16	825762460.3
<b>Mm<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>128.16</b>	<b>33.94</b>	<b>825.76</b>

**Table 8. Crop Water demand (m<sup>3</sup>) in various districts of study area for *rabi* onion of 2021-22**

NDWI-K<sub>c</sub> model showed highest R<sup>2</sup> and D values 0.91 and 0.98 for year 2020-21, 0.87 and 0.97 for year 2021-22 followed by SAVI-K<sub>c</sub> which have R<sup>2</sup> and D values 0.85 and 0.96 for 2020-21, 0.84 and 0.96 for 2021-22. NDWI-K<sub>c</sub> model showed lower values of SE, RMSE and PD of 0.069, 0.065 and 0.85 (2020-21), 0.083, 0.077 and 1.14 (2021-22)

The total crop evapotranspiration (ET<sub>c</sub>) of onion for Dhule, Jalgaon and Nashik for year 2020-21 was found as 486.5 mm, 482.7 mm and 488.7 mm respectively. For year 2021-22, Total crop evapotranspiration of Dhule, Jalgaon and Nashik was found as 493.7 mm, 473.9 mm and 477.2 mm respectively. The difference in ET<sub>c</sub> of onion crop for both year at different places is because of variation in reference evapotranspiration which depends on condition of weather and physiology of the area.

Water demand of *rabi* onion for Dhule, Jalgaon and Nashik for year 2020-21 was estimated as 70.54 Mm<sup>3</sup>, 43.80 Mm<sup>3</sup> and 693.23 Mm<sup>3</sup> respectively and for year 2021-22, water demand was found

as 128.16 Mm<sup>3</sup>, 33.94 Mm<sup>3</sup> and 825.76 Mm<sup>3</sup> respectively. Highest water demand for *rabi* onion was found in Nashik district due to highest acreage of onion cultivation.

## Conclusion

An integrated strategy utilising remote sensing and GIS may be used to provide the precise amount of irrigation water at various places in accordance with the actual crop water demand resulting in effective irrigation water management. This technique may also be applied in cases of water shortage to provide the ideal irrigation water as a lifesaving irrigation to avoid crop failure. An expert system for precise irrigation scheduling may be created using real-time, high-resolution data from distant sensors and automated weather stations.

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