N° d'ordre : /DSTU/2024

THESIS

Presented

to

ABOU BEKR BELKAID UNIVERSITY - TLEMCEN
FACULTY OF NATURAL AND LIFE SCIENCES AND EARTH AND UNIVERSE SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF EARTH AND UNIVERSE SCIENCES

To obtain

PROFESSIONAL MASTER'S DEGREE

Specialty

Geo-Resources

by

Abdallah BELLARAB

INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND THE AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Defended on 21/11/2024

Board of Examiners

Salamet MAHBOUBI, Associate Professor, Tlemcen University	Chairwoman
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KamarEddine BENSEFIA Associate Professor, Tlemcen University	Examiner
Mohammed Amine DERFOUF, Professor, Maghnia University Center	i2e representative
Lahsen Wahib KEBIR, Principal Engineer, CTS (Arzew, Oran)	Representative of the Socio-economic sector

Acknoledgements

First and foremost, I thank God Almighty for granting me this opportunity and guiding me throughout my journey. I am immensely grateful for all the blessings He has bestowed upon me.

To everyone who has contributed to my academic journey, I stand today on the threshold of a new chapter in my life, filled with immense pride for this achievement. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to everyone who has played a role in shaping my character and intellect.

To my research supervisor Ms. Fatiha HADJI, I extend my sincerest gratitude for all that she has taught me, supported me, and guided me through. Her valuable guidance has been my compass throughout this journey, like a lighthouse illuminating my path in the darkest of times.

I am also deeply grateful to the esteemed Mrs. Salamet Mahboubi for her willingness to chair the jury for this defense. Her leadership and expertise bring invaluable insight to this process.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my examiner, Mr Kamar Eddine BENSEFIA, for accepting to review this thesis. I am deeply appreciative of the time and effort dedicated to evaluating my work, as well as for the insightful comments and constructive criticism that will undoubtedly contribute to refining and enhancing the quality of this research.

My appreciation extends to Pr. Mohammad Amine DERFOUF, from I2e member for his advices and expertise in innovation and entrepreneurship, which provided a solid and inspiring foundation for this project.

I warmly thank Mr. Lahsen Wahib KEBIR from CTS Arzew (Oran), for his practical insights and experience, which helped ground this study in real-world applications and align it with industry standards.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Mrs. Khadidja BENZINE and Lina YAHI from CRD (Boumerdes)**,** Mr. Mostafa GRINE from the ONA of Aïn Témouchent**,** and Mrs. Asmaa MKHISSI from the ADE of Aïn Témouchent for their invaluable guidance and mentorship during my internships. Their expertise, patience, and support have been instrumental in enhancing my knowledge and skills, and I deeply appreciate the time and effort they dedicated to ensuring the success of my learning experience.

To my professors, especially those on the GRP team: you are the role models I strive to emulate. Your invaluable knowledge, patience, and wisdom have profoundly shaped my academic journey, and I am deeply grateful for your guidance and support.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to:

- my professors, especially those on the GRP team: you are the role models I aspire to emulate. Your invaluable knowledge, patience, and wisdom have profoundly shaped my academic journey, and I am deeply grateful for your guidance and support.

- my classmates, I am deeply grateful for their cooperation and encouragement throughout this journey. A special thank goes to my dear sister, Bouchra, for her unwavering support and kindness, which have been a constant source of strength and motivation.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to :

- my mother, who gave birth to me, raised me, and cared for me until I reached this point. I know that no words can ever express my gratitude. I ask God to reward her abundantly for all she has done.

- my father, who named me, raised me, and guided me, I am truly proud to be his child. I pray that God grants him mercy and forgiveness and admits him into His vast paradise. My dear sisters, they are my constant source of support. Their prayers and encouragement have been instrumental in my success. No words can express my appreciation for all that they did.

I also thank my grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and all my extended family, both living and deceased. Their presence in my life has been a true blessing, providing steadfast support and encouragement at every step of this journey. I am deeply grateful for their moral support, which has been a constant source of strength and guidance.

Special thanks go to my uncle, Baroudi, whose kindness and wisdom have been especially meaningful.

Abstract

The quality of water and soil is crucial for the sustainability of agricultural, industrial, and public health systems. This study delves into the present challenges and opportunities associated with the integrated management of these essential resources. Recognizing the importance of addressing these challenges, the research provides a structured approach to develop solutions that meet the growing needs in these sectors.

Building on this foundation, the research initiates with an in-depth analysis of the increasing demand for effective solutions in water and soil quality management, driven by the rising needs in agriculture, industry, and public health sectors. By identifying key obstacles such as pollution, soil degradation, and regulatory constraints, the study underscores the necessity for specialized interventions to tackle these issues. This focus on targeted challenges serves as the basis for exploring more efficient and sustainable management approaches.

Using the data gathered and the theoretical insights, the study then proposes integrated services focused on water and soil quality management.

Key words : Water quality management; Soil quality management; Sustainable agriculture; Pollution control; Soil degradation; Public health impact; Environmental sustainability.

Introduction

Introduction

I. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN VARIOUS SECTORS

Water is a vital element for several key sectors, each having specific requirements for quality and management.

A. Agriculture

Water quality management is crucial in agriculture, where water is a key factor for crop productivity and sustainability (Harrington and Fisher 2014). Inadequate water quality can lead to several issues:

1. Crop health: Contaminated water may contain pathogens, heavy metals, or toxic chemicals that affect plant health, reduce yields, and compromise product quality (Romero 2014).

2. Soil fertility: Poor irrigation practices or the use of polluted water can lead to salt and contaminant buildup in the soil, degrading its fertility and structure (Romero 2014; Ayers and Westcot 1985).

3. Resource management: Effective water management optimizes water usage, enhances irrigation efficiency, and minimizes water waste and loss.

B. Industry

In the industrial sector, water plays a multifunctional role, from production to waste management. Water quality is critical for several reasons:

1. Production processes: Many industrial processes require high-quality water to function properly. Contaminated water can affect product quality, cause equipment malfunctions, and increase production costs.

2. Waste management: Industries often generate wastewater containing various pollutants. Proper water quality management is essential for treating and reducing the environmental impact of industrial effluents (Siddiqui and Brander 2024).

3. Regulatory compliance: Companies must adhere to strict environmental standards regarding water discharge. Efficient water quality management helps avoid penalties and maintain a positive reputation.

C. Public health

Water quality is directly linked to public health, influencing quality of life and disease prevention:

1. Human health: Drinking water must be free from microbiological, chemical, and physical contaminants (Romero 2014; WHO 2016, 2017). Access to clean and safe water is essential for preventing waterborne diseases like gastrointestinal infections, dysentery, and other transmissible diseases.

2. Epidemic prevention: Effective water management helps prevent contamination of water sources and avoids waterborne disease outbreaks by ensuring proper wastewater treatment and strict control over drinking water sources (Romero 2014).

3. Environment and health: Water pollution can indirectly impact public health by affecting aquatic ecosystems and compromising the quality of food products derived from agriculture (Agarwal 2005).

II. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Structure of the thesis

This research is structured around four main chapters, each addressing essential aspects of water and soil quality management.

Chapter 1: Background – This chapter presents the issues related to water and soil quality and justifies the need for specialized services in this area.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework – This chapter explores theoretical concepts and relevant frameworks for integrated water and soil quality management, along with strategies to optimize resource use.

Chapter 3: Methodology – This chapter describes the research methods used to develop and optimize water and soil quality management services, including data collection and analysis techniques.

Chapter 1: Background

Chapter 1: Background

I.INTRODUCTION: PROBLEM STATEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION

A. Basic information on the growing demand for water and soil quality solutions in agriculture and the agri-food industry

Modern agriculture and the agri-food industry are facing increasing challenges in the sustainable management of natural resources, especially water and soil. With the global population expansion and the rising demand for food products, the pressure on agricultural systems is intensifying. This pressure leads to over-exploitation of water and soil resources, compromising long-term quality and productivity.

In the agricultural sector, water plays a crucial role not only in crop irrigation but also in maintaining soil health and optimizing yields (Ayers and Westcot 1985). However, water quality is often compromised by pollutants such as pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and other contaminants from human activities. Moreover, soil degradation through erosion, nutrient loss, and increased salinity is a major issue that affects not only agricultural production but also the global environment (Mirsal 2008; Siddiqui and Brander 2024).

In the agri-food industry, soil and water resource quality is directly tied to food security and the sustainability of production processes. Agri-food companies must ensure that the resources they use meet strict quality standards to guarantee product safety and minimize environmental impacts (Palmer and Bakshi 1992).

The growing need for innovative and sustainable solutions for managing water and soil quality is reflected in the increasing demand for specialized services capable of providing precise diagnostics, tailored management plans, and improvement strategies that consider local conditions and international environmental standards.

Introducing integrated water and soil quality management services, leveraging advanced technologies and sustainable practices, is a necessary response to these challenges. These services provide farmers and agri-food companies with tools to improve resource management while reducing environmental impacts and maximizing productivity.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Theoretical framework on the management of water and soil quality in agriculture and related industries

1. Introduction to water and soil quality management

Managing water and soil quality is essential to ensure the sustainability of agricultural and industrial practices. Challenges related to the management of these resources affect not only agricultural productivity but also the environmental impact of industrial activities. A deep understanding of current practices and ongoing research is crucial for developing effective strategies.

2. Water quality management in agriculture

a. Irrigation management practices

- **Advanced irrigation technologies**: Irrigation technologies such as drip irrigation and precision irrigation have been widely studied for their efficiency in reducing water losses and improving uniform distribution (Dasberg and Or 1999; Ćulibrk et al. 2014; Singh et al. 2015). These methods allow for more targeted and economically viable water management.

- **Runoff water and erosion**: Runoff management practices, such as the construction of retention basins and the establishment of buffer zones, have proven effective in controlling erosion and reducing pollution in waterways (Blaikie 1985). These methods help capture nutrient- and sediment-laden runoff before it reaches water bodies.

b. Impact of nutrients on water quality

- **Eutrophication**: Excess nutrients, particularly nitrates and phosphates from fertilizers, can lead to the eutrophication of surface waters, causing harmful algae blooms and dead zones in water bodies (Ansari et al. 2011). Nutrient management practices, such as applying fertilizers based on crop needs, are essential to mitigate these impacts.

- **Pollutant management**: Wastewater treatment technologies, such as filtration and denitrification, are crucial for reducing the load of chemical pollutants before they are released into the environment. Managing pollutants at the source is also a key strategy.

3. Soil quality management in agriculture

a. Soil conservation practices

- **Conservation techniques**: Practices such as cover cropping, reduced tillage, and crop rotation are recognized for their role in soil conservation and erosion prevention. These methods help maintain soil structure and fertility.

- **Organic amendments**: The use of compost, manure, and other organic amendments improves soil health by increasing organic matter and providing essential nutrients (Meghvansi and Varma 2015). These practices promote better water retention and greater soil biodiversity.

b. Management of soil contaminants

- **Chemical pollution**: Soils can be contaminated by chemicals such as pesticides and heavy metals. Integrated chemical management and the use of eco-friendly agricultural practices help reduce these contaminations (Ravera 1989). Bioremediation and phytoremediation techniques are also used to treat polluted soils (Singh and Ward 2004).

4. Water and soil quality management in related industries

a. Agro-food industries

- **Wastewater treatment**: In agro-food industries, wastewater treatment is crucial to prevent pollution of water resources. Technologies such as membrane filtration and biological treatment systems are commonly used to reduce environmental impacts (Mara et al. 2003; Tchobanoglous et al. 2003).

- **Waste management**: Waste management practices, including recycling and the valorization of by-products, help minimize the environmental impacts of agro-food industries and reduce the burden on soil and water resources (Vaughn et al. 2004; Burton 2010).

b. Mining and extractive industries

- **Waste and discharge management**: Mining industries must manage contaminant discharges and mining waste to prevent soil and groundwater contamination. Tailings management techniques and containment systems are essential to protect local environments.

- **Site rehabilitation**: Rehabilitating mining sites after extraction is an important practice to restore soil and water quality. Rehabilitation methods include reforestation and soil remediation (Bolan et al. 2017).

5. Current trends and challenges

a. Innovation and sustainability

- **Sustainable practices**: Integrated approaches to managing water and soil quality promote sustainability by combining modern techniques with traditional practices to improve efficiency and minimize environmental impacts (Pretty 2008; Tilman et al. 2002).

b. Challenges to overcome: Major challenges include managing the impacts of climate change on water and soil resources, increased resistance to chemicals, and the need for more efficient management technologies.

B. Review of current challenges and trends in sustainable agriculture and environmental management

1. Current challenges in sustainable agriculture (Fig. 2)

a. Climate change: Climate change is one of the main challenges for sustainable agriculture. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods are affecting global agricultural production. This directly impacts crop yields, soil quality, and water resource management. In response, agricultural practices must be adapted to become more resilient.

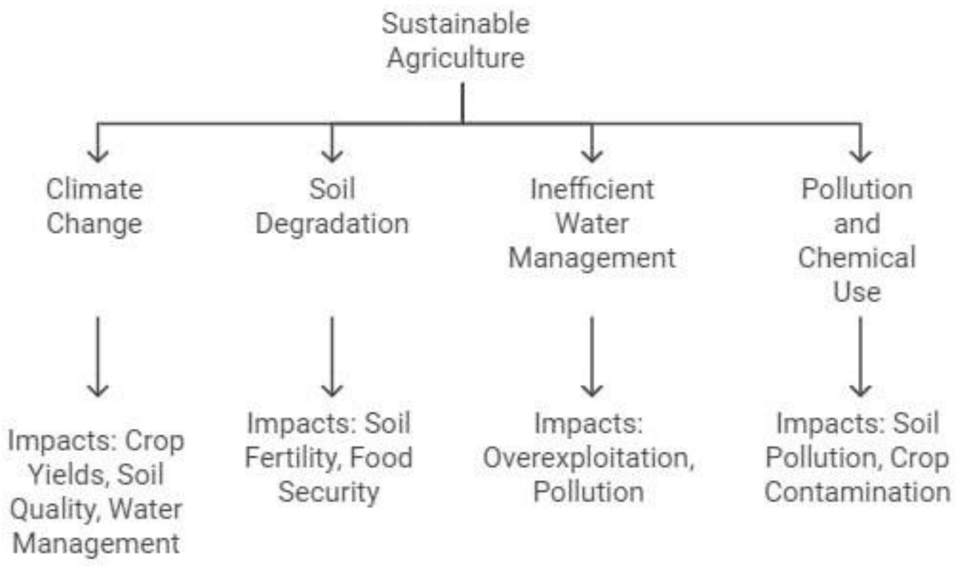

Figure 2 Current challenges in sustainable agriculture and environmental management

b. Soil degradation: Soil degradation, caused by erosion, salinization, compaction, or loss of organic matter, poses a major threat to sustainability. Intensive land use, excessive tillage, and uncontrolled use of chemical fertilizers accelerate these processes, threatening soil fertility and food security. Sustainable management practices, such as conservation agriculture, crop rotation, and the use of natural fertilizers, offer potential solutions.

c. Inefficient water resource management: Water is a critical resource for agriculture. However, limited access to potable water and the unsustainable use of water resources, particularly through inefficient irrigation, have placed increasing pressure on supply systems. Overexploitation of aquifers, water pollution, and poor infrastructure management are recurring problems. Integrated water resource management is necessary to reduce losses and improve efficiency (Meghvansi and Varma 2015).

d. Pollution and chemical use: Excessive use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers pollutes soils and groundwater, negatively affecting biodiversity and human health (Smith 2000). The accumulation of chemical residues in soils depletes land quality and leads to crop contamination. Alternatives such as organic farming and reducing chemical inputs through integrated crop management are increasingly recommended.

2. Trends in sustainable agriculture (Fig. 3)

a. Green technologies and precision agriculture: The rise of digital technologies and innovative tools in agriculture, such as drones, sensors, and smart irrigation systems, has enabled more precise resource management (Meghvansi and Varma 2015). Precision agriculture, which relies on data to monitor specific crop needs, optimizes the use of water, nutrients, and inputs while minimizing environmental impacts. This approach enhances the efficiency of agricultural practices while reducing costs for producers (Dasberg and Or 1999; Ćulibrk et al. 2014).

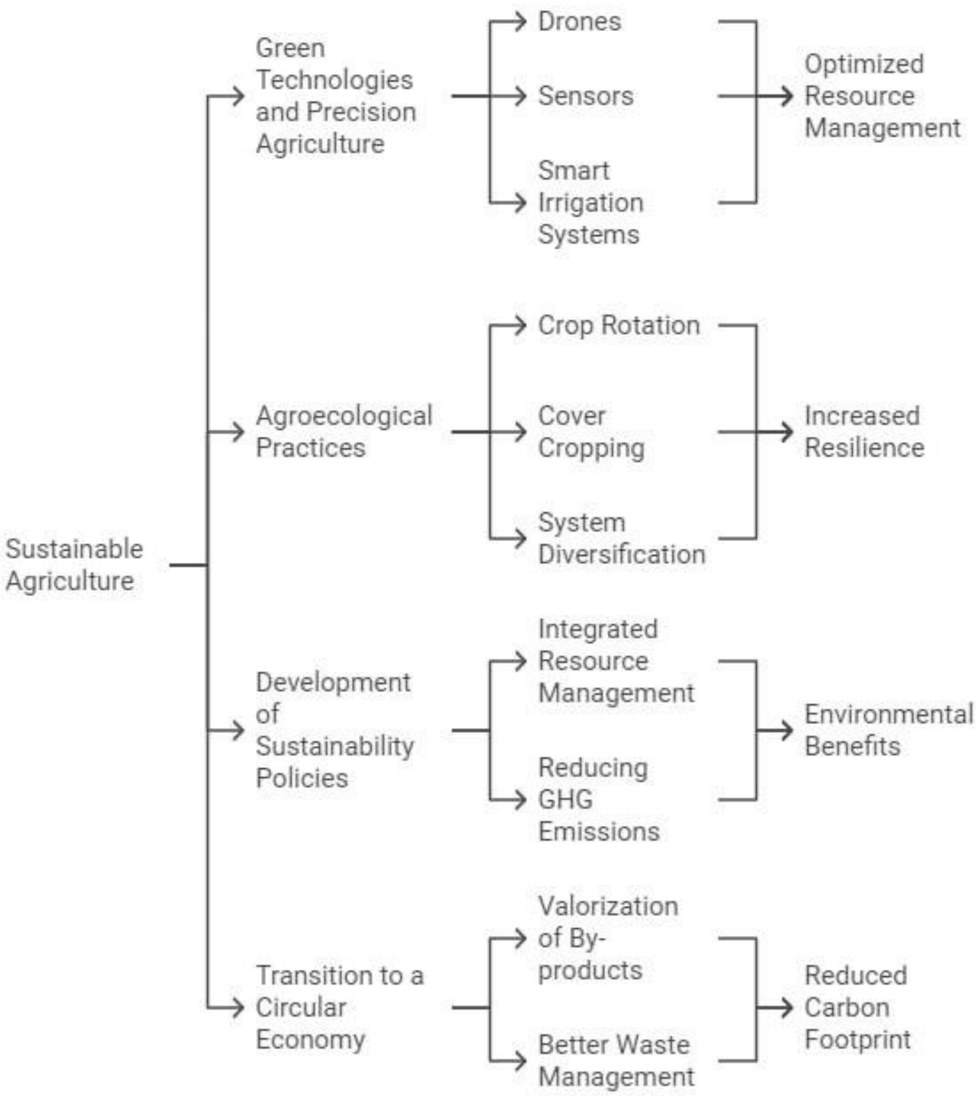

Figure 3 Current trends in sustainable agriculture and environmental management

b. Agroecological practices: Agroecology is increasingly seen as an alternative to conventional agricultural models. By integrating ecological principles into the management of agricultural systems, this approach emphasizes biodiversity, soil health, and natural interactions to increase the resilience of agricultural ecosystems. Agroecological practices include crop rotation, cover cropping, and the diversification of agricultural systems (Bergez et al. 2019).

c. Development of sustainability policies: Governments, international organizations, and companies in the agricultural sector are increasingly adopting sustainability policies. These initiatives aim to promote environmentally friendly agricultural practices, such as integrated natural resource management, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and the protection of fragile ecosystems.

d. Transition to a circular economy: The concept of a circular economy, which aims to minimize waste by maximizing the reuse of resources, is gaining traction in the agricultural sector. This approach encourages the valorization of agricultural by-products, such as crop residues, and the reuse of treated wastewater for irrigation. It also promotes better agricultural waste management, thereby reducing the sector's carbon footprint (Palgrave 2018).

C. Analysis of previous research on the impact of water and soil quality

1. Impact of water and soil quality on agricultural productivity

Water and soil quality are determining factors in agricultural productivity (Schjonning et al. 2003). Numerous studies have shown that soil contamination by pollutants such as heavy metals, pesticides, and excessive salts can significantly reduce crop yields. For example, research on saline and sodic soils reveals that sensitive crops, such as wheat and maize, experience decreased growth and production when exposed to such environments (Metternicht and Zinck 2008).

Irrigation systems using poor-quality water (polluted or salt-laden water) exacerbate this problem. The accumulation of salts in irrigated soils, often referred to as soil salinization, is one of the main causes of yield declines in many agricultural regions, especially in arid and semi-arid areas (Ayers and Westcot 1985). Research has highlighted solutions such as improving irrigation systems to more efficiently use high-quality water or introducing salt-tolerant crops (Ayers and Westcot 1985).

2. Impact on environmental sustainability

Water and soil quality play a crucial role in maintaining environmental sustainability. Groundwater contamination by nitrates from nitrogen fertilizers and pesticides used in intensive agriculture has been the subject of numerous studies (Helmer and Hespanhol 1997, Misral 2008). These contaminants not only affect aquatic ecosystems but also contribute to biodiversity degradation, eutrophication of rivers and lakes, and the destabilization of natural food chains.

Previous research shows that reducing the use of agrochemicals, combined with the promotion of more environmentally friendly farming practices such as organic farming and integrated nutrient management, can limit the negative impact on water and soil resources.

3. Impact on public health

Research has also established a clear link between water, soil quality, and public health. Rural populations, often exposed to water contaminated by agricultural chemicals or industrial waste, are particularly vulnerable (Frazier-Williams 2024). Waterborne diseases, such as diarrhea, as well as the long-term effects of exposure to pollutants, including cancers due to pesticides, have been widely documented.

Studies conducted on the health impacts of soil pollution have focused on toxic metals such as arsenic and lead, which are harmful when consumed via contaminated crops (Sarma et al. 2022). Recommendations from this research stress the need for stricter water and soil quality regulations, as well as more comprehensive water monitoring systems (Helmer and Hespanhol 1997).

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

I. EXPLORATION OF THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND FRAMEWORKS RELEVANT TO INTEGRATED WATER AND SOIL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Integrated water and soil quality management is based on several theoretical concepts and reference frameworks that help analyze and optimize the sustainable use of these essential resources. This section explores the main concepts and theoretical approaches applied to integrated water and soil quality management, focusing on sustainability, ecosystems, resource efficiency, and regulatory and normative frameworks.

A. Concept of sustainability

The concept of sustainability is central to natural resource management (Jones 2010), especially concerning water and soil. It involves meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. In this context, soil and water resource sustainability relies on balanced resource management, maintaining soil fertility, preventing land degradation, and preserving water quality for various uses (agriculture, industry, human consumption) (Jones 2010).

Integrated resource management is a crucial theoretical framework that promotes a holistic approach to interactions between different environmental components (water, soil, air, biodiversity) and human activities. This approach considers interactions on various scales (local, regional, global) and promotes coordinated resource use to achieve economic, social, and environmental objectives.

B. Ecosystem services framework

Ecosystem services, a fundamental theoretical concept in environmental management, are the benefits humans derive from ecosystems. In managing water and soil quality, several ecosystem services are particularly relevant (Woodhard and Bohan 2015), such as:

1. Regulation services: Ecosystems naturally regulate water and soil quality, for example, by filtering pollutants, stabilizing soils, or recharging groundwater (Bouma and van Beukering 2015).

2. Provisioning services: Ecosystems provide essential resources such as water for irrigation and soil nutrients for crops.

3. Supporting services: These include fundamental processes like soil formation and nutrient cycling, which are crucial for sustainable agricultural production (Everard 2021). This framework helps to understand how ecosystem disturbances (pollution, land-use change) can affect soil and water quality, as well as agricultural productivity and public health.

C. Concept of diffuse and point source pollution

The distinction between diffuse and point sources of pollution is key to understanding and managing water and soil quality. Point sources are easily identifiable, such as effluent from a factory or a sewage treatment plant, while diffuse sources are more complex to manage because they come from multiple points, such as agricultural runoff or the application of chemicals (Helmer and Hespanhol 1997).

In integrated management, identifying and controlling these different sources of pollution is essential for developing effective prevention and rehabilitation strategies.

D. Resource efficiency theory

Resource efficiency refers to the rational and optimized use of natural resources, particularly water and soil, to maximize yields while minimizing negative environmental impacts. This theoretical framework emphasizes reducing water and nutrient losses in agricultural systems, efficient irrigation management, and improving soil (Schjonning 2003) health through sustainable methods (composting, crop rotation, etc.).

Approaches like precision agriculture or integrated nutrient management fall within this theory. They use advanced technologies to monitor and precisely adjust the application of water, fertilizers, and pesticides according to the specific needs of each land parcel.

E. Regulatory and normative approaches

The international and national regulatory framework plays a central role in water and soil quality management. Theories and practices of environmental regulation are based on standards aimed at limiting pollutant concentrations, preserving biodiversity, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. These frameworks include policies to reduce the use of pesticides and harmful chemicals, encourage water conservation, and protect aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems (Viinikainen 2023).

Environmental risk assessment is another important theoretical framework that helps identify potential hazards and evaluate the impacts of human activities on soil and water quality. This allows prioritizing management and regulatory actions (Saha et al. 2017).

II. IDENTIFICATION OF INFLUENCING WATER AND SOIL QUALITY

Evaluating and managing water and soil quality requires a deep understanding of the various factors influencing these resources. Several aspects must be considered to ensure effective and sustainable management, including contamination sources, pollutant transmission pathways, pollution prevention strategies, soil health preservation, and regulatory standards (Fig. 4).

A. Contamination sources

The main sources of water and soil contamination can be natural or anthropogenic. Natural sources include soil erosion, sediment deposits, and the leaching of minerals present in soils. These processes can cause imbalances in the chemical composition of water and soil (McMillan 2018).

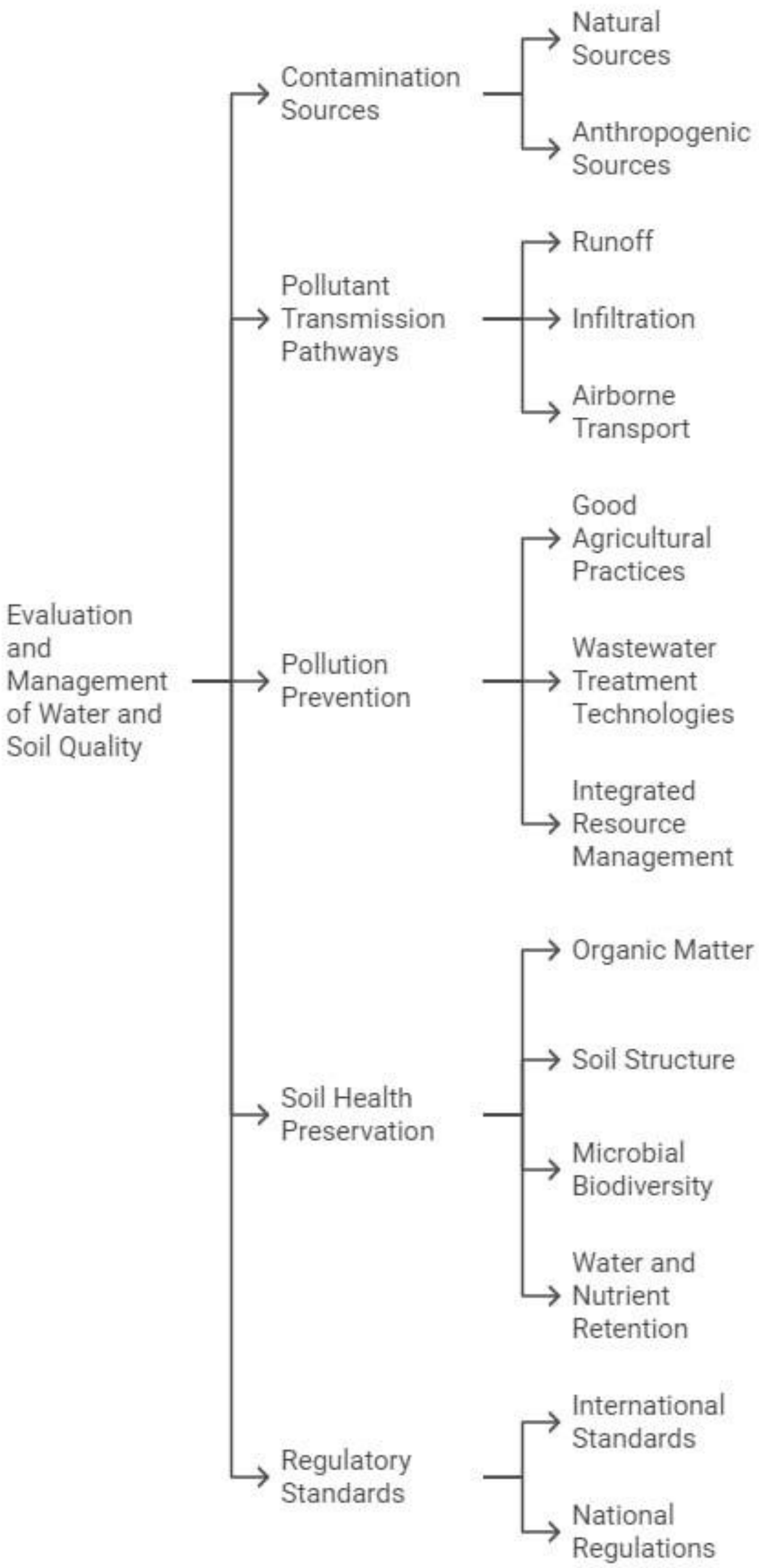

Figure 4 Key factors influencing water and soil quality

On the anthropogenic side, human activities such as intensive agriculture, industry, and urbanization are the largest contributors to pollution. Agricultural practices using significant amounts of pesticides and chemical fertilizers often lead to nutrient overload (e.g., nitrates and phosphates) in water, causing problems such as water body eutrophication (McMillan 2018). In industry, heavy metal discharges, toxic chemicals, and untreated waste can pollute groundwater and contaminate soils (Pathak 2013).

B. Pollutant transmission pathways

Pollutants can spread through various pathways, affecting both water and soil quality. Transmission mainly occurs through surface runoff, soil infiltration, and airborne transport of particles (Mohamed et al. 2020; Calabrese et al. 2024).

1. Runoff: During heavy rainfall or excessive irrigation, surface water can carry chemicals, sediments, and nutrients from the soil into rivers, lakes, and underground reservoirs.

2. Infiltration: Pollutants on the soil surface can infiltrate into lower soil layers, reaching groundwater. This is particularly concerning in areas where toxic substances are spilled or applied in excess.

3. Airborne transport: Certain pollutants, such as dust particles, volatile chemicals, and toxic gases, can be carried by the wind and deposited in distant areas, affecting air, water, and soil quality there.

C. Pollution prevention

Pollution prevention is a major challenge in managing water and soil quality. Several approaches can be implemented to minimize the impact of human activities (Haynes 2022).

1. Good agricultural practices: This includes responsible management of fertilizers and pesticides, conservation agriculture, crop rotation, and agroforestry. These practices limit nutrient runoff and soil degradation while improving soil structure and fertility.

2. Wastewater treatment technologies: Treatment plants and advanced filtration techniques can significantly reduce the pollutant load before water is returned to natural environments.

3. Integrated resource management: Managing watersheds and aquifers in a coordinated way can prevent pollutant accumulation and maintain ecosystem balance.

D. Soil health preservation

Preserving soil health is crucial to maintaining agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability. Soil health depends on factors such as organic matter content, soil structure, microbial biodiversity, and the soil's ability to retain water and nutrients (Gregorich and Carter 1997; Pankhurst et al. 1997).

Soil conservation practices, such as reduced tillage and the use of cover crops, help prevent erosion, improve water retention, and boost biological activity in the soil (Meghvansi and Varma 2015). Additionally, restoring degraded soils through methods like organic amendment or reforestation contributes to the long-term sustainability of agricultural lands and reduces environmental degradation.

E. Regulatory standards

Standards and regulations play a fundamental role in protecting water and soil resources. Internationally, organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) define guidelines for soil and water management. These standards include thresholds for contaminant levels in water intended for irrigation or consumption, as well as limits for pollutant concentrations in agricultural soils (Mandal 2022).

At the national level, each country establishes its own regulations based on its environmental and economic priorities. These regulations typically cover the use of chemicals in agriculture, industrial waste management, and procedures for monitoring and assessing groundwater and soil quality.

III. DISCUSSION OF TO OPTIMIZE WATER AND SOIL USE EFFICIENCY

Optimizing water and soil use efficiency is a key goal to ensure the sustainability of natural resources in the agricultural and industrial sectors. However, these optimizations must minimize negative environmental impacts such as soil degradation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss. This section examines several innovative strategies to achieve this balance (Fig. 5).

A. Efficient irrigation management

One of the main sources of water waste in agriculture is the inefficiency of irrigation systems. Modern technologies offer several solutions to improve irrigation efficiency, including (Azhar et al. 2011; Eisenhauer et al. 2021):

1. Drip irrigation: This irrigation system delivers water precisely to plant roots, minimizing waste through evaporation or excessive infiltration.

2. Soil moisture sensors: These sensors monitor real-time soil moisture levels, helping farmers adjust irrigation based on specific crop needs.

3. Automated irrigation systems: These systems use algorithms based on weather data and soil characteristics to automatically schedule irrigation cycles, reducing the risk of over-irrigation or under-irrigation.

B. Soil fertility conservation

The efficiency of land use is directly linked to the ability to preserve its fertility. Sustainable agricultural practices such as crop rotation, conservation agriculture, and cover crop integration are essential to prevent soil depletion (Akinrinde 2007).

1. Crop rotation: Alternating different crops from season to season improves soil structure, prevents nutrient depletion, and reduces the spread of diseases and pests.

2. Conservation Agriculture: This practice limits tillage, thereby preserving soil structure, reducing erosion, and increasing soil water retention capacity.

3. Cover crops: The planting of specific crops during fallow periods helps retain nutrients in the soil and protects against erosion.

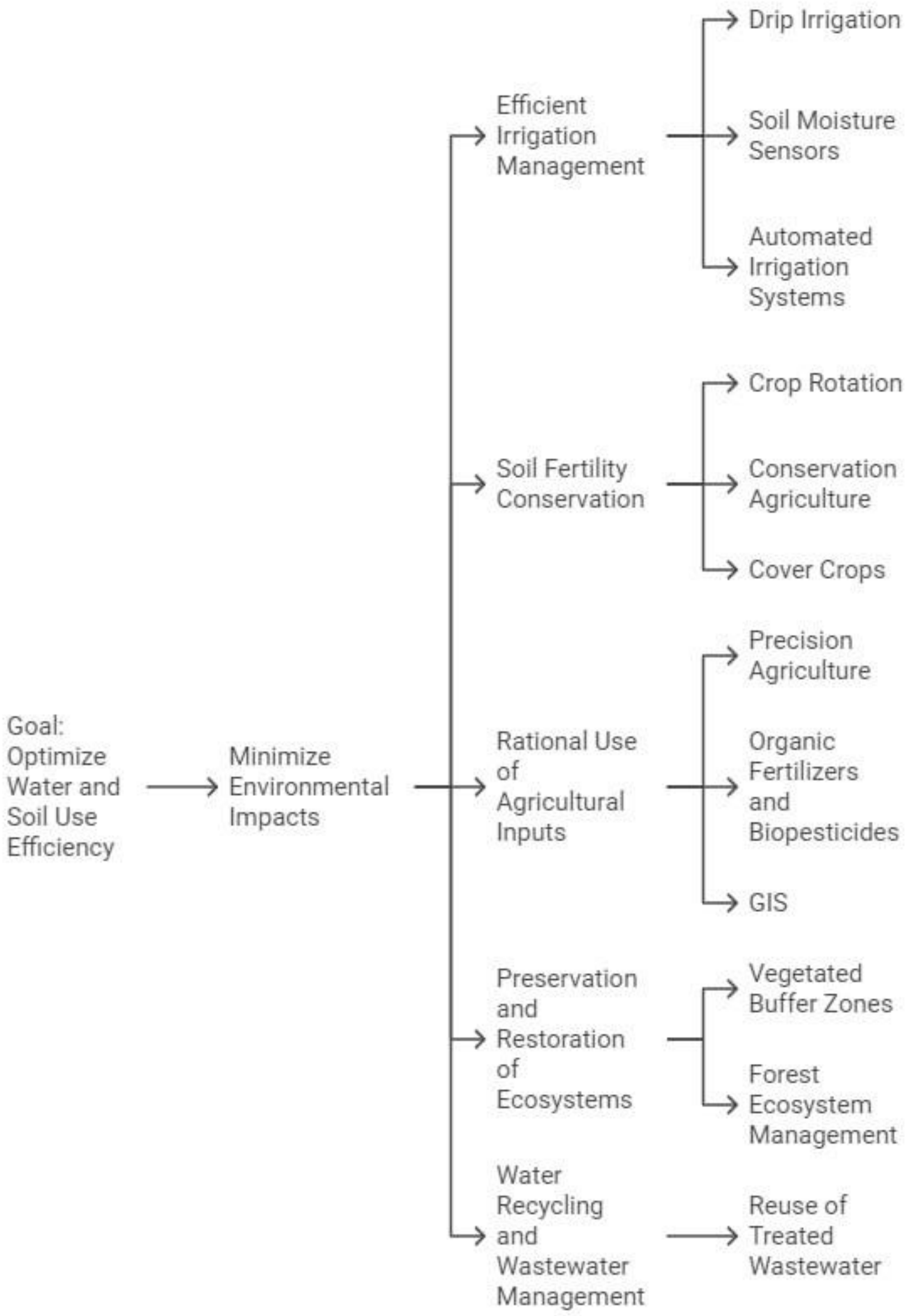

Figure 5 Strategies to optimize water and soil use efficiency

These practices not only improve long-term soil productivity but also contribute to reducing the use of chemical inputs (fertilizers, pesticides) which have significant environmental impacts.

C. Rational use of agricultural inputs

The overuse of fertilizers and pesticides is one of the primary causes of soil and water quality degradation (Schjønning et al. 2003). To optimize their use while minimizing environmental impacts, several strategies can be adopted (Palaniappan 2020):

1. Precision agriculture: Through the use of GPS, drones, and smart sensors, precision agriculture enables targeted input application according to the specific needs of each plot.

2. Organic fertilizers and biopesticides: The adoption of biological inputs, such as organic fertilizers or biopesticides, reduces reliance on synthetic chemicals and limits soil and water contamination.

3. Geographic information systems (GIS): These tools allow soil analysis and mapping of nutrient needs across specific areas to better plan fertilizer application and reduce excess.
These approaches help maintain a balance between agricultural productivity and the reduction of environmental pollutants, particularly groundwater pollution by nitrates.

D. Wetland and natural ecosystem preservation and restoration

Wetlands and other natural ecosystems play a crucial role in water filtration and soil quality maintenance. Preserving and restoring these ecosystems are essential strategies for minimizing the negative environmental impacts associated with intensive land use (Herrera 2013).

1. Vegetated buffer zones: Installing vegetation strips along waterways can filter sediments, nutrients, and chemicals before they reach aquatic ecosystems.

2. Forest ecosystem management: Forests play an essential role in the water cycle and soil protection. Their preservation helps reduce erosion risks and stabilizes soils in the long term.

E. Water recycling and wastewater management

Another strategy for optimizing water use in the agricultural and industrial sectors is the reuse of treated wastewater. This process involves treating wastewater for non-consumable activities such as irrigation or specific industrial steps.

Water recycling reduces pressure on potable water resources and limits wastewater discharge into ecosystems, thus contributing to reducing soil and water pollution.

Chapter III: Methodology

Chapter III: Methodology

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY (Fig. 6)

A. Data collection methods

1. Quantitative data collection

a. **Structured surveys**: Structured questionnaires will be distributed to stakeholders, including water managers, farmers, and industry representatives. The questions are designed to obtain precise data on water and soil quality parameters, as well as current management practices.

b. **Laboratory measurements**: Water and soil samples will be collected from the field and analyzed in the lab to measure parameters such as pH, turbidity, nutrient levels, contaminants, and organic matter (Pansu and Gatheyrou 2006; Rodier et al. 2016).

2. Qualitative data collection

a. **Semi-structured interviews**: In-depth interviews will be conducted with experts, local authorities, and users to gather perspectives on challenges and proposed solutions. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify recurring themes.

b. **Focus groups**: Focus group sessions will be organized with stakeholder groups to explore collective opinions and discuss issues related to water and soil quality management.

c. **Direct observations**: Field observations will be conducted to understand current practices and identify potential issues not captured by surveys and interviews.

B. Sampling procedures

1. Water sampling

a. **Site selection**: Sampling sites will be chosen based on their representation of different environmental conditions and uses, including agricultural, industrial, and urban areas.

b. **Sampling methods**: Water samples will be collected following safety protocols and standardized methods to prevent contamination. The samples will be stored under appropriate conditions until laboratory analysis (Rodier et al. 2016).

2. Soil sampling

a. **Site selection**: Sampling sites will be selected to represent various soil types and uses. Samples will be collected at different depths to gain a complete understanding of soil characteristics (Pansu and Gatheyrou 2006).

b. **Sampling methods**: Soil samples will be taken using soil corers or shovels, following standardized methods to ensure data accuracy. Samples will be properly stored to avoid alterations (Pansu and Gatheyrou 2006).

C. Analytical techniques for quality parameter evaluation

1. Water quality analysis

a. **Physicochemical tests**: Parameters such as pH, turbidity, and conductivity will be measured using regularly calibrated devices. Contaminants and nutrients will be analyzed with specialized laboratory equipment, including spectrometers and chromatographs (Rodier et al. 2016).

b. **Microbiological analysis**: Microbiological tests, including the search for coliforms and E. coli, will be conducted according to standardized protocols using culture media and counting techniques (Rodier et al. 2016).

2. Soil quality analysis

a. **Physicochemical tests**: Soil texture, pH, and organic matter will be evaluated through established laboratory methods, including sieving, soil-specific pH meters, and loss-on-ignition methods.

b. **Nutrient and contaminant analysis**: Nutrient and contaminant levels in the soil will be measured using techniques such as spectroscopy or chromatography, allowing detailed analysis of the elements present (Rodier et al. 2016).

D. Service effectiveness evaluation

1. Impact measurement

a. **Before/After analysis**: The effectiveness of services will be evaluated by comparing water and soil quality data before and after interventions, helping to quantify improvements.

b. Performance indicators: Specific indicators will be used to measure service effectiveness, including reductions in contaminant levels and improvements in water and soil quality parameters.

2. User feedback evaluation

a. **Feedback and satisfaction**: User feedback on the provided services will be collected to assess satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. Results will be analyzed to adjust services according to user needs.

E. Integration and synthesis of results

1. Integrated analysis

a. **Data merging**: Quantitative and qualitative data will be combined to gain a comprehensive view of water and soil quality conditions and the effectiveness of the services.

b. **Results Synthesis**: A synthesis of the results will help formulate practical recommendations for improving water and soil quality management services, taking into account the analyses and user feedback.

Chapter IV: Development of Integrated Services

Chapter IV: Development of Integrated Services

II. ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF INTEGRATED WATER AND SOIL QUALITY MANAGEMENT SERVICES (Fig. 8)

A. Reduction of production costs

1. Resource optimization

a. **Effective irrigation management**: Integrated services allow for more precise irrigation management, thus reducing costs associated with excessive water use. By optimizing crop water needs, farmers can decrease electricity expenses for irrigation systems and distribution equipment.

b. **Streamlined fertilizer use**: By assessing soil quality and adjusting fertilization practices according to the specific needs of crops, farmers can reduce fertilizer expenses and avoid waste.

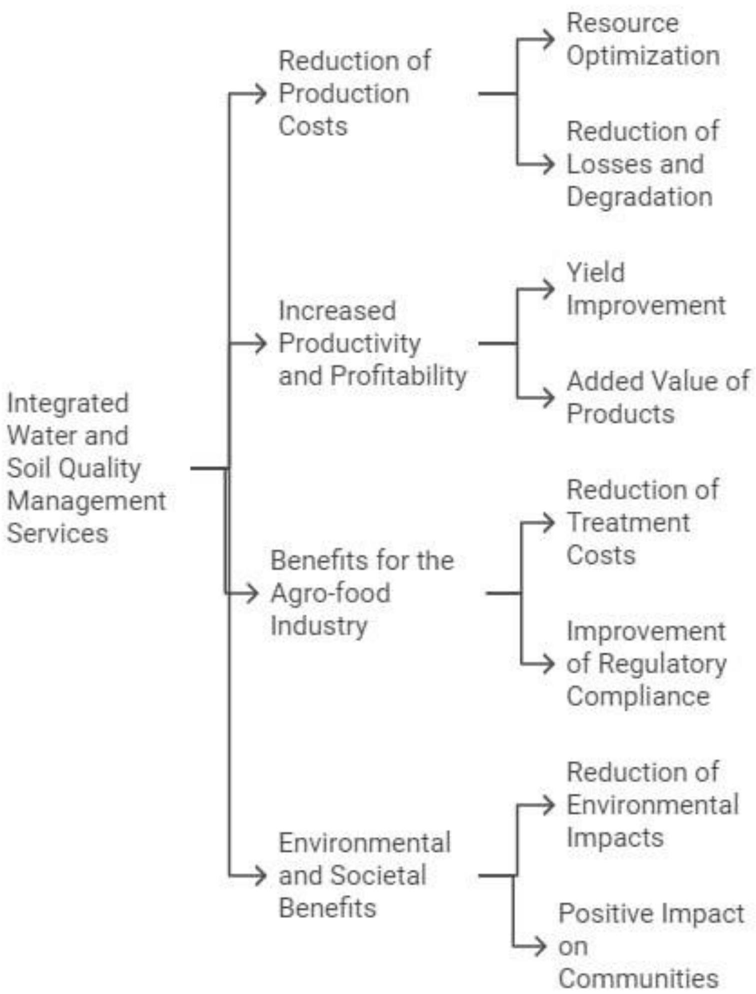

Figure 8 Economic benefits of integrated water and soil quality management services

2. Reduction of losses and degradation

a. **Prevention of contamination**: Proactive management of water and soil quality helps prevent contamination that could lead to crop losses and high cleanup costs. By identifying and controlling pollution sources, farmers can avoid unexpected expenses related to decontamination.

b. **Improvement of soil health**: By maintaining good soil quality, farmers reduce the need for amendments and corrective treatments, saving on these maintenance costs.

B. Increased productivity and profitability

1. Yield improvement

a. **Optimization of crop growth**: Integrated management of water and soil quality improves crop growth conditions, potentially leading to higher yields. Well-managed soils and effective irrigation contribute to better plant health and more abundant harvests.

b. Reduction of climate risks: Effective water management helps mitigate the impacts of climate variability on crops, thereby reducing losses due to extreme conditions such as drought or flooding.

2. Added value of products

a. **Improved product quality**: Integrated management practices can enhance the quality of agricultural products, thereby increasing their market value. Higher-quality products can command higher prices and sell more easily, boosting profitability for farmers.

b. **Certification and specific markets**: Compliance with water and soil quality standards can enable producers to access specialized markets and certifications (such as organic labels), which offer premium pricing opportunities.

C. Benefits for the agro-food industry

1. Reduction of treatment costs

a. **Minimization of water treatment costs:** By integrating efficient water quality management practices, agro-food businesses can reduce costs related to the treatment and purification of water needed for food production.

b. **Reduction of decontamination expenses:** Effective management of soil and water reduces the risks of food product contamination, lowering costs associated with decontamination procedures and product recalls.

2. Improvement of regulatory compliance

a. **Compliance with regulations**: Integrated quality management helps agri-food companies comply with environmental and health regulations, thus avoiding fines and sanctions. This also contributes to maintaining a good reputation and strengthening consumer trust.

D. Environmental and societal benefits

1. Reduction of environmental impacts

a. **Preservation of natural resources**: Effective water and soil management helps preserve natural resources and reduce negative environmental impacts, such as watercourse pollution and soil degradation.

b. **Promotion of sustainability**: By adopting sustainable practices, farmers and actors in the agri-food industry contribute to ecosystem protection and responsible resource management, thereby reinforcing their commitment to sustainability.

2. Positive impact on communities

a. **Job Creation**: The development and implementation of integrated water and soil quality management services can create jobs in research, technology, and consulting, thus contributing to the local economy.

b. **Improvement of quality of life**: Improved water and soil quality management directly benefits communities by providing clean water.

III. ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS (Fig. 9)

A. Reduction of water pollution

1. Decrease in agricultural pollutants

a. **Reduction of excess nutrients**: Integrating water quality management practices allows for the reduction of excess nutrients, such as nitrates and phosphates, which often result from excessive fertilizer use. Fewer nutrients in surface waters and aquifers decrease the risk of eutrophication, a phenomenon that can lead to harmful algal blooms and degradation of aquatic ecosystems.

b. **Control of chemical pollutants**: Integrated management helps identify and control sources of chemical pollution, such as pesticides and herbicides, by adjusting agricultural practices and water treatments. This contributes to reducing contamination of surface waters and aquifers.

2. Prevention of contaminations

a. **Filtration and treatment systems**: Implementing filtration and treatment technologies in irrigation and drainage systems helps remove contaminants before they reach natural water sources. These systems reduce the risk of pollution of rivers, lakes, and reservoirs.

b. **Wastewater management**: Effective management of wastewater generated by agricultural and industrial activities allows for the treatment and recycling of these waters before they are discharged into the environment, minimizing their impact on water quality.

B. Reduction of soil pollution

1. Preservation of soil quality

a. **Reduction of erosion**: Soil management practices, such as soil conservation techniques and cover crops, help prevent soil erosion. Reducing erosion limits the loss of fertile soils and decreases water pollution from sediments.

b. **Management of residues and waste**: Proper management of crop residues and agricultural waste helps reduce soil pollution from chemicals and decomposing organic matter. Using compost and recycling practices reduces contamination risks and improves soil fertility.

2. Rehabilitation of degraded soils

a. **Remediation techniques**: The application of remediation techniques, such as soil decontamination and bioremediation, helps restore polluted or degraded soils. These techniques aid in removing contaminants and improving soil quality, making these lands fertile and productive again.

b. **Crop planning**: Adequate crop planning and crop rotation contribute to maintaining soil health by avoiding nutrient depletion and reducing the accumulation of contaminants.

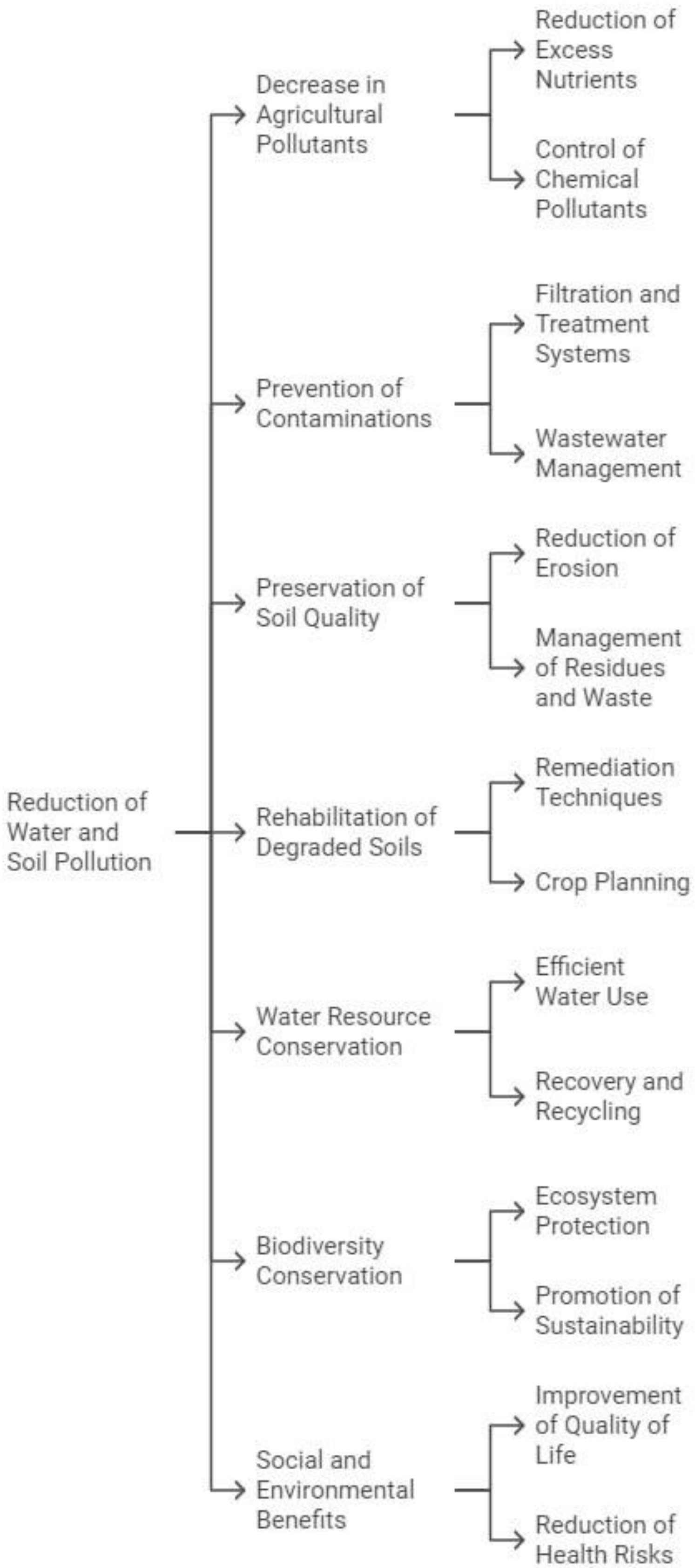

Figure 9 Environmental benefits

C. Preservation of natural resources

1. Water resource conservation

a. Efficient water use: Integrated services allow for more precise water management, thus reducing waste and depletion of water resources. Optimizing irrigation and managing water reserves contribute to more sustainable use of this precious resource.

b. **Recovery and recycling**: Implementing systems for recovering and recycling wastewater and rainwater reduces dependence on external water sources and preserves available water resources.

2. Biodiversity conservation

a. **Ecosystem protection**: Effective water and soil quality management contributes to protecting natural habitats and biodiversity by limiting the negative impacts of agriculture on local ecosystems. Preserving wetlands and ecological corridors supports local flora and fauna.

b. **Promotion of sustainability**: By adopting sustainable practices, farmers and agri-food businesses play an active role in conserving natural resources and protecting the environment. This contributes to the long-term sustainability of agricultural and environmental systems.

D. Social and environmental benefits

1. Improvement of quality of life

a. **Reduction of health risks**: Less water and soil pollution reduces the risks of diseases related to exposure to contaminants, thus improving the health of local communities.

b. **Support for sustainable agriculture**: Integrated management practices promote more environmentally friendly agriculture, contributing to the resilience of food systems and long-term food security.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The objective of this work was to conduct an in-depth analysis of water and soil quality management, which has become a central issue in the struggle for sustainable use of natural resources, particularly in the sectors of agriculture, industry, and public health. Practical solutions were proposed to improve the integrated management of these vital resources. By relying on theoretical analyses, case studies, and innovative methodological approaches, strategies were identified to assess, manage, and optimize water and soil quality in various contexts.

This work also explored several key areas, such as agriculture, industry, and public health, each facing specific challenges related to water and soil quality. The intention was to develop solutions that address contemporary challenges related to environmental sustainability while ensuring effective and economical management of water and soil resources.

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Type of Master's Degree: Professional
Field: Earth and Universe Sciences
Program: Geology
Specialty: Geo-Resources

Title of the thesis: INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND THE AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Author: Abdallah BELLARAB

The quality of water and soil is crucial for the sustainability of agricultural, industrial, and public health systems. This study delves into the present challenges and opportunities associated with the integrated management of these essential resources. Recognizing the importance of addressing these challenges, the research provides a structured approach to develop solutions that meet the growing needs in these sectors.

Building on this foundation, the research initiates with an in-depth analysis of the increasing demand for effective solutions in water and soil quality management, driven by the rising needs in agriculture, industry, and public health sectors. By identifying key obstacles such as pollution, soil degradation, and regulatory constraints, the study underscores the necessity for specialized interventions to tackle these issues. This focus on targeted challenges serves as the basis for exploring more efficient and sustainable management approaches.

Using the data gathered and the theoretical insights, the study then proposes integrated services focused on water and soil quality management.

Key words : Water quality management; Soil quality management; Sustainable agriculture; Pollution control; Soil degradation; Public health impact; Environmental sustainability.