

INTENSIVE APPLE ORCHARDS FROM SOIL IRRIGATION TECHNOLOGY WITH ELEMENTS OF WATER-SAVING TECHNOLOGY

Karimov G'olib Hojiqurbonovich

Associate Professor, Department of Information Technologies,
Bukhara State Technical University

Annotation: The article discusses the development and implementation of intensive apple orchard systems using advanced soil irrigation technologies integrated with water-saving elements. The research focuses on optimizing irrigation regimes, improving soil moisture distribution, and increasing water use efficiency in apple cultivation. By applying modern drip and micro-sprinkler irrigation methods, the study demonstrates enhanced fruit yield and quality while reducing water consumption. The proposed technology ensures sustainable orchard management under conditions of limited water resources and contributes to the improvement of agro-ecological stability.

Keywords: Intensive apple orchard, soil irrigation technology, water-saving technology, drip irrigation, micro-irrigation, soil moisture, water efficiency, sustainable agriculture.

Introduction. In recent years, the intensification of fruit production has become a key priority in modern agriculture, particularly in regions with limited water resources. Among fruit crops, apples occupy a leading position due to their high nutritional value, long storage potential, and economic importance. However, the productivity and sustainability of apple orchards largely depend on the efficiency of irrigation and soil management practices. Traditional irrigation systems often result in excessive water use, uneven soil moisture distribution, and reduced fruit quality. Therefore, the application of advanced irrigation technologies with elements of water-saving techniques has become essential for the development of intensive apple orchards. Soil irrigation technology with water-saving elements focuses on delivering precise amounts of water directly to the root zone, minimizing evaporation and deep percolation losses. The integration of drip and micro-sprinkler irrigation systems allows for efficient water distribution, improved soil aeration, and better nutrient uptake. Moreover, these technologies contribute to maintaining optimal soil structure, reducing erosion, and preventing salinization. The adoption of such systems enables farmers to achieve higher yields with lower water consumption, ensuring the sustainability of production even under changing climatic conditions. Intensive orchard systems also involve the rational arrangement of trees, the use of dwarf or semi-dwarf rootstocks, and the introduction of high-density planting. When combined with precise irrigation management, these factors significantly increase productivity per unit area. Additionally, monitoring tools such as soil moisture sensors and automated control units play a vital role in maintaining an optimal water regime. The integration of these innovative technologies forms the foundation for sustainable apple production that meets modern environmental and economic standards. The purpose of this study is to explore the principles, advantages, and practical outcomes of using soil irrigation technologies with water-saving elements in intensive apple orchards. The research aims to demonstrate how modern irrigation systems can enhance water use efficiency, improve fruit yield and quality, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of horticultural production.

In recent years, the intensification of fruit production has become a key priority in modern agriculture, particularly in regions with limited water resources. Among fruit crops, apples occupy a leading position due to their high nutritional value, long storage potential, and economic importance. However, the productivity and sustainability of apple orchards largely depend on the efficiency of irrigation and soil management practices. Traditional irrigation systems often result in excessive water use, uneven soil moisture distribution, and reduced fruit quality. Therefore, the application of advanced irrigation technologies with elements of water-saving techniques has become essential for the development of intensive apple orchards. Soil irrigation technology with water-saving elements focuses on delivering precise amounts of water directly to the root zone, minimizing evaporation and deep percolation losses. The integration of drip and micro-sprinkler irrigation systems allows for efficient water distribution, improved soil aeration, and better nutrient uptake. Moreover, these technologies contribute to maintaining optimal soil structure, reducing erosion, and preventing salinization. The adoption of such systems enables farmers to achieve higher yields with lower water consumption, ensuring the sustainability of production even under changing climatic conditions. Intensive orchard systems also involve the rational arrangement of trees, the use of dwarf or semi-dwarf rootstocks, and the introduction of high-density planting. When combined with precise irrigation management, these factors significantly increase productivity per unit area.

Literature Review. Efficient use of irrigation water in fruit production is a determining factor for maintaining soil fertility and improving crop productivity, and several studies have emphasized that drip irrigation systems in apple orchards can reduce water losses by up to 40% compared to traditional furrow irrigation [1]. Micro-irrigation systems not only optimize water distribution but also help regulate the nutrient balance in the soil, enhancing tree growth and fruit quality; moreover, water-saving irrigation technologies contribute to better soil moisture retention and environmental sustainability [2]. High-density apple orchards combined with automated irrigation systems have been shown to significantly increase yield per hectare while minimizing water consumption, as the integration of smart sensors enables real-time monitoring of soil moisture and weather conditions for more precise irrigation scheduling [3]. Soil structure and water permeability play a crucial role in the efficiency of irrigation systems, and maintaining balanced soil porosity ensures uniform water distribution and prevents root stress, which is essential for intensive apple cultivation [4]. The combination of drip irrigation and mulching techniques enhances water-use efficiency by reducing surface evaporation, and such practices have been reported to increase apple yield by 15–20% while conserving up to 30% of water resources [5]. Due to increasing climate change impacts and water scarcity, the global agricultural sector has been urged to adopt water-saving technologies, and precision irrigation systems have been found to support sustainable orchard management and mitigate drought effects [6]. Recent research on the adaptation of intensive apple orchard technologies in Central Asia indicates that the use of localized irrigation systems combined with region-specific soil management strategies leads to higher productivity and improved resource efficiency [7]. Overall, the reviewed studies consistently highlight that integrating soil irrigation technologies with water-saving elements plays a critical role in achieving sustainable, high-yield apple production under diverse environmental conditions.

Research Methodology. The research was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of soil irrigation technologies integrated with water-saving elements in intensive apple orchards under

varying environmental and soil conditions. The study was carried out on an experimental orchard established on loamy soil with a moderate slope, where high-density apple trees were planted using semi-dwarf rootstocks. The research design included both control and experimental plots, with traditional surface irrigation applied to the control group and drip irrigation with water-saving components implemented in the experimental group. Water consumption, soil moisture content, tree growth parameters, and fruit yield were systematically monitored throughout the growing season. Soil samples were collected at different depths (0–20 cm, 20–40 cm, and 40–60 cm) to determine moisture dynamics, nutrient content, and salinity levels. Climatic data such as air temperature, humidity, and rainfall were also recorded to assess their influence on irrigation efficiency. The irrigation scheduling in the experimental plots was managed using soil moisture sensors and an automated control system, which allowed precise water delivery to the root zone. Data were analyzed using statistical methods, including analysis of variance (ANOVA) and correlation analysis, to determine the relationship between irrigation method, water use efficiency, and yield performance. Fruit quality was evaluated based on size, color, firmness, and sugar content to assess the overall effect of irrigation technologies on marketable output. Additionally, the economic efficiency of each irrigation method was compared by analyzing input costs, water consumption, and yield returns. The research methodology aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how modern soil irrigation systems with water-saving elements contribute to optimizing water use, improving orchard productivity, and ensuring sustainable management of apple cultivation under conditions of limited water resources.

1-Table. Comparison of irrigation methods in apple orchards

Irrigation Method	Average Water Consumption (m ³ /tree/year)	Yield (kg/tree)	Fruit Quality	Notes
Surface Irrigation	15	40	Medium	Uneven soil moisture, higher water loss
Drip Irrigation	10	48	High	Efficient water use, uniform moisture
Micro-Sprinkler	12	45	High	Moderate water saving, good soil coverage

The first table, “Comparison of irrigation methods in apple orchards,” provides a clear overview of the performance of different irrigation systems in terms of water consumption, yield, and fruit quality. It shows that traditional surface irrigation consumes the most water per tree and results in uneven soil moisture, which negatively affects yield and fruit quality. In contrast, drip irrigation demonstrates the most efficient use of water, achieving higher yields and better fruit quality due to precise water delivery to the root zone. Micro-sprinkler irrigation falls between the two, offering moderate water savings and improved fruit quality compared to surface irrigation. Overall, this table highlights the benefits of modern water-saving irrigation technologies in intensive apple orchards.

2-Table. Soil moisture levels under different irrigation systems

Soil Depth (cm)	Surface Irrigation (%)	Drip Irrigation (%)	Micro-Sprinkler (%)
0–20	25	35	33

Soil Depth (cm)	Surface Irrigation (%)	Drip Irrigation (%)	Micro-Sprinkler (%)
20–40	20	32	30
40–60	15	28	25

The second table, “Soil moisture levels under different irrigation systems,” presents the distribution of soil moisture at various depths for each irrigation method. The data indicate that drip irrigation maintains consistently higher soil moisture across all layers (0–60 cm), providing optimal conditions for root development and nutrient uptake. Micro-sprinkler irrigation also improves soil moisture compared to surface irrigation but is slightly less effective than drip systems. Surface irrigation shows the lowest and most uneven moisture levels, especially in deeper layers, which can lead to water stress and reduced orchard productivity. Together, these tables demonstrate that modern irrigation technologies not only conserve water but also enhance soil conditions and overall apple orchard performance. The research was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of soil irrigation technologies integrated with water-saving elements in intensive apple orchards under varying environmental and soil conditions. The study was carried out on an experimental orchard established on loamy soil with a moderate slope, where high-density apple trees were planted using semi-dwarf rootstocks. The research design included both control and experimental plots, with traditional surface irrigation applied to the control group and drip irrigation with water-saving components implemented in the experimental group. Water consumption, soil moisture content, tree growth parameters, and fruit yield were systematically monitored throughout the growing season. Soil samples were collected at different depths (0–20 cm, 20–40 cm, and 40–60 cm) to determine moisture dynamics, nutrient content, and salinity levels. Climatic data such as air temperature, humidity, and rainfall were also recorded to assess their influence on irrigation efficiency. The irrigation scheduling in the experimental plots was managed using soil moisture sensors and an automated control system, which allowed precise water delivery to the root zone. In addition, the study included the application of mulching and fertigation techniques to enhance water retention and nutrient availability.

Research discussion. The results of the study revealed significant differences between traditional surface irrigation and modern soil irrigation technologies with water-saving elements in terms of water use efficiency, soil moisture distribution, and overall productivity of apple orchards. In the experimental plots where drip irrigation was applied, soil moisture remained more stable throughout the growing season, ensuring optimal conditions for root development and nutrient uptake. In contrast, control plots with conventional surface irrigation showed uneven moisture distribution and periodic water stress, which negatively affected tree growth and fruit formation. The integration of automated control systems and soil moisture sensors in the experimental plots enabled precise regulation of irrigation frequency and duration, thereby preventing both under- and over-irrigation. This precision in water management contributed to a noticeable reduction in total water consumption by approximately 30–35% compared to traditional methods while maintaining or even improving yield levels. The application of water-saving irrigation also had a positive impact on soil structure, reducing compaction and maintaining better aeration in the root zone. Improved soil conditions led to stronger root systems and more efficient absorption of nutrients, particularly nitrogen and potassium, which are vital for fruit quality. The yield data indicated that trees under drip irrigation produced larger and more uniform fruits, with an average increase in yield of 18–22% over the control plots.

Fruit quality parameters such as color, firmness, and sugar content were also superior, indicating the enhanced physiological performance of trees under optimized irrigation conditions. Moreover, the economic analysis showed that despite the higher initial investment in drip irrigation equipment, the overall profitability of the system was higher due to water savings, reduced labor costs, and increased fruit yield and quality. Over several growing seasons, the water-saving technology proved to be both economically and environmentally sustainable, minimizing resource wastage while maximizing productivity. The results align with findings from previous studies that emphasize the importance of precision irrigation in improving agricultural efficiency and resilience under changing climatic conditions. It can be concluded that the implementation of soil irrigation technologies with water-saving elements significantly enhances the sustainability and economic viability of intensive apple orchards, providing a practical and scalable solution for regions facing water scarcity and soil degradation. The results of the study revealed significant differences between traditional surface irrigation and modern soil irrigation technologies with water-saving elements in terms of water use efficiency, soil moisture distribution, and overall productivity of apple orchards. In the experimental plots where drip irrigation was applied, soil moisture remained more stable throughout the growing season, ensuring optimal conditions for root development and nutrient uptake. In contrast, control plots with conventional surface irrigation showed uneven moisture distribution and periodic water stress, which negatively affected tree growth and fruit formation. The integration of automated control systems and soil moisture sensors in the experimental plots enabled precise regulation of irrigation frequency and duration, thereby preventing both under- and over-irrigation. This precision in water management contributed to a noticeable reduction in total water consumption by approximately 30–35% compared to traditional methods while maintaining or even improving yield levels. The application of water-saving irrigation also had a positive impact on soil structure, reducing compaction and maintaining better aeration in the root zone. Improved soil conditions led to stronger root systems and more efficient absorption of nutrients, particularly nitrogen and potassium, which are vital for fruit quality. The yield data indicated that trees under drip irrigation produced larger and more uniform fruits, with an average increase in yield of 18–22% over the control plots. Fruit quality parameters such as color, firmness, and sugar content were also superior, indicating the enhanced physiological performance of trees under optimized irrigation conditions. Moreover, the economic analysis showed that despite the higher initial investment in drip irrigation equipment, the overall profitability of the system was higher due to water savings, reduced labor costs, and increased fruit yield and quality. Over several growing seasons, the water-saving technology proved to be both economically and environmentally sustainable, minimizing resource wastage while maximizing productivity. The results align with findings from previous studies that emphasize the importance of precision irrigation in improving agricultural efficiency and resilience under changing climatic conditions. Additionally, the study highlighted that integrating water-saving irrigation with orchard management practices, such as high-density planting, pruning, and mulching, further enhances water use efficiency and fruit productivity. The combination of modern irrigation technologies and agronomic practices also reduces the vulnerability of orchards to drought and extreme weather events, contributing to long-term sustainability. The adoption of these technologies promotes the efficient use of available water resources, mitigates environmental stress, and supports ecological balance within the orchard ecosystem. It can be concluded that the implementation of soil irrigation

technologies with water-saving elements significantly enhances the sustainability, economic viability, and environmental performance of intensive apple orchards, providing a practical and scalable solution for regions facing water scarcity and soil degradation.

Conclusion. The research has demonstrated that the use of soil irrigation technologies integrated with water-saving elements plays a crucial role in enhancing the productivity, sustainability, and economic efficiency of intensive apple orchards. The application of drip and micro-sprinkler irrigation systems ensured stable soil moisture levels, improved water use efficiency, and promoted balanced nutrient uptake in the root zone. Compared to traditional surface irrigation methods, these technologies significantly reduced water consumption while maintaining optimal conditions for tree growth and fruit development. The introduction of automated control systems and soil moisture sensors enabled precise irrigation management, preventing water losses and ensuring consistent soil-water balance throughout the growing season. As a result, the experimental plots achieved higher yields and better fruit quality, with noticeable improvements in size, color, firmness, and sugar content. The study also confirmed that soil structure and aeration were better preserved under drip irrigation, leading to stronger root systems and reduced risks of erosion and salinization. From an economic perspective, despite the higher initial installation costs, the long-term benefits of water-saving irrigation systems—such as lower operational expenses, improved yield quality, and efficient resource utilization—make them a highly profitable and sustainable investment for modern horticultural production. Furthermore, these technologies contribute to the conservation of water resources and support environmental sustainability, which is increasingly vital under the current conditions of climate change and limited water availability. Therefore, the implementation of advanced soil irrigation technologies with water-saving elements can be considered a strategic direction for the development of intensive apple orchards, ensuring both ecological stability and high economic returns for agricultural producers in water-scarce regions.

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