



From Sensors to Decisions: Emerging Technologies for Smart and Sustainable Agriculture

Dos Sensores à Decisão: Tecnologias Emergentes para uma Agricultura Inteligente e Sustentável

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Quick Audience Survey

A quick show of hands to understand who is in the room and how technology fits your daily decisions.



Who are you?

- Producer / farmer
- Technician / advisor
- Researcher / educator
- Policymaker / manager
- Agribusiness / other



Which sector?

- Vineyard
- Olive grove
- Arable / field crops
- Fruit / horticulture
- Other



How do you use technology today?

- Daily decision support
- Occasional use
- Testing / pilot phase
- Not using yet



Where do you see most value?

- Irrigation
- Pests & diseases
- Crop monitoring
- Field operations
- Documentation / traceability



If you are sceptical, why?

- Too expensive
- Not reliable enough
- Too complex / time-consuming
- Not adapted to my reality
- Unclear return on investment



The goal is not to convince everyone today — it is to understand your reality, your needs and your barriers.



Key Message

Smart agriculture creates value when it supports the producer's decisions.

SENSE → INTERPRET → DECIDE

Field Signals



Soil Moisture



Weather



Plant Status



Drone / Satellite
Imagery



The Producer at the Centre



Better Decisions



Irrigation Timing



Targeted Scouting



Input Efficiency



Sustainability /
Resource Efficiency



Smart agriculture is not about replacing the producer.
It is about turning field signals into better, faster and more sustainable decisions.

Why Smart Agriculture, Why Now?

Because agriculture is becoming more complex, more uncertain and more demanding.

Producers are being asked to make better decisions, faster, with fewer resources and under increasing uncertainty.



Climate pressure

Droughts, floods and increasing variability



Water scarcity

More efficient irrigation is no longer optional



Ageing sector

Knowledge must be supported, transferred and scaled



Economic pressure

Higher costs, lower margins and competitiveness gaps



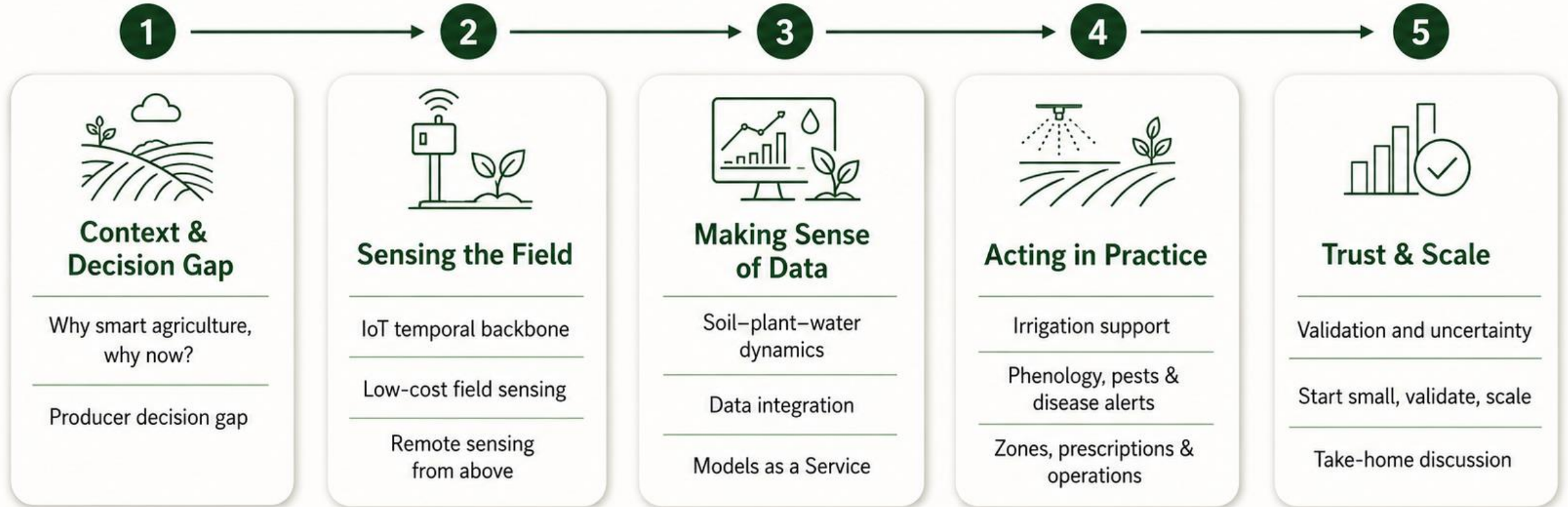
Fragmented decisions

Too much data, too little actionable insight

Smart agriculture starts with the producer's reality — not with the technology.

Content

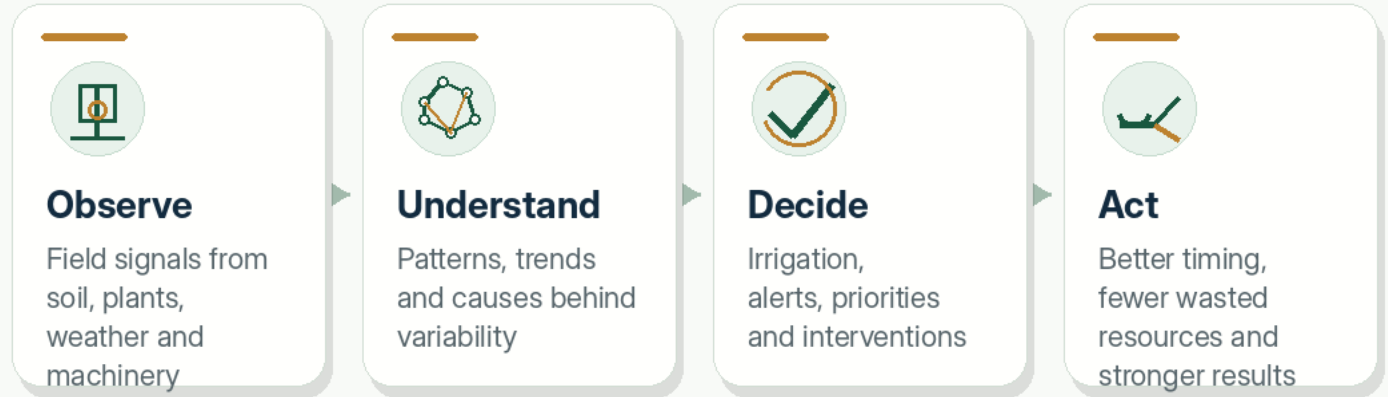
From field signals to trusted producer decisions



A one-hour journey: sense → integrate → interpret → decide → scale.

The Producer's Decision Gap

Data only creates value when it becomes a timely, trusted action.

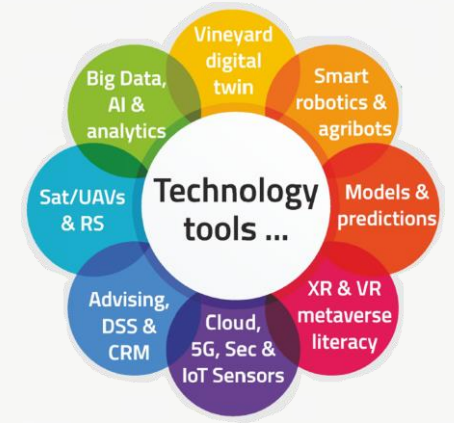


The gap is not lack of data. It is the distance between field signals and confident action.

Smart agriculture closes the gap between observation and action.

The Technology Landscape: From Signals to Decisions

Smart agriculture is not one technology. It is an ecosystem that connects field signals, data intelligence and operational decisions.



The value is not in isolated tools — the value is in connecting them to decisions.

IoT: The Temporal Backbone

Without continuous field data, there is no crop dynamics.

Without dynamics, decisions are late, reactive or uncertain.



What IoT brings

- Continuous monitoring
- Soil–plant–atmosphere signals
- Local climate variability
- Early warnings
- Data streams for decision support



Why it matters

- Makes field behaviour visible over time
- Turns snapshots into trends
- Supports earlier interventions
- Reduces uncertainty
- Strengthens sustainable decisions



IoT gives agriculture a memory — and turns isolated observations into decision-ready trends.

Practical Field Sensing: Low-Cost, Versatile IoT Devices

From individual measurements to dense, affordable sensor networks for precision agriculture.



What can be measured?



Soil water content



Solar radiation



Temperature



Rainfall



Relative humidity



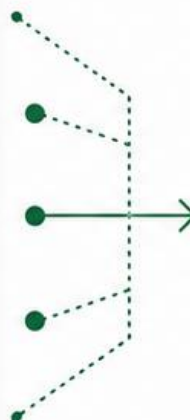
Dendrometers



Leaf wetness



Actuators



Why this matters for producers



Affordable deployment



Flexible sensor combinations



Local field variability captured



Data streams connected to decision support



The goal is not more gadgets — it is reliable field evidence at the right cost and density.

SPWAS: a versatile solution for PV applications



Experimental setup (DATI PRIMA project)



Experimental setup with 4 irrigation zones using a Gateway + 4 SPWAS over IEEE 802.15.5 (868 MHz) to collect VWC data from 8 points. Energy-efficient management including power off the gateway at night

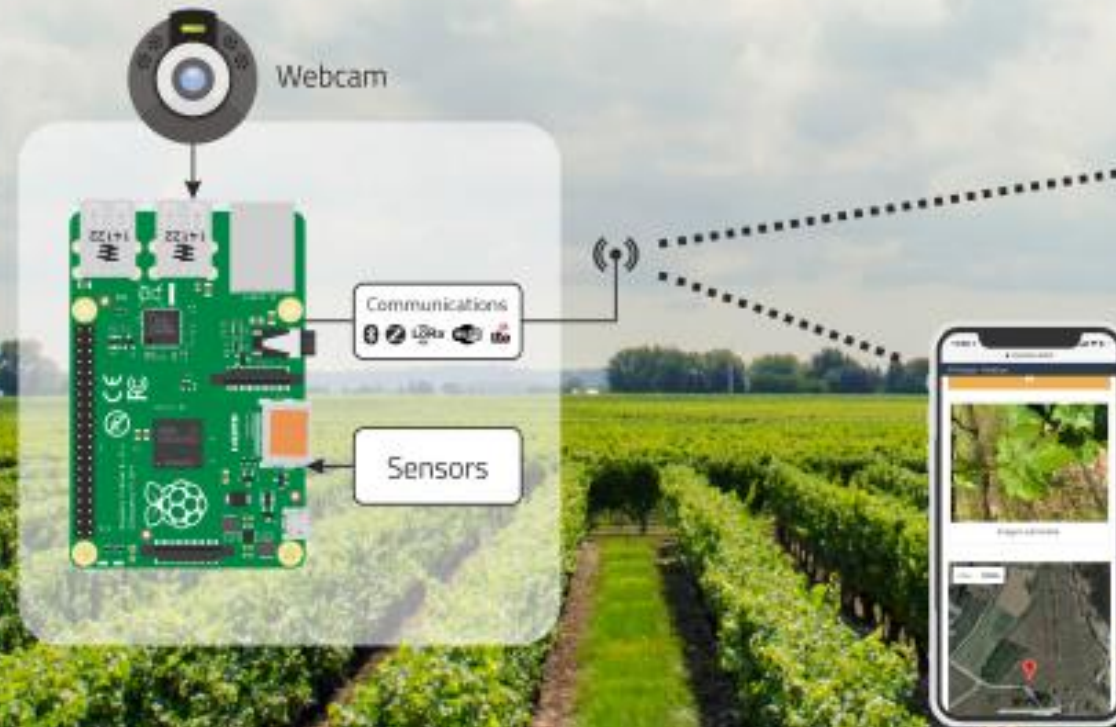
Sensors and the digital transformation in Morocco



Low-cost digital technologies that promote irrigation efficiency in Morocco are highly valued, as there is still a lag in the adoption of such technologies. Training is essential, and the low-cost SPWAS devices were a key output of the DATI project

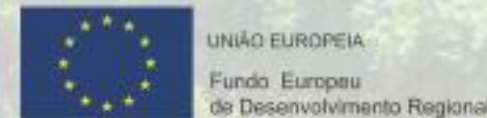
Created at our group

VineInspector: A low-cost system for automated alerts



mySense
environment

Big Data & Analytics
Cloud computing



VineInspector: the first AI-powered biological observer



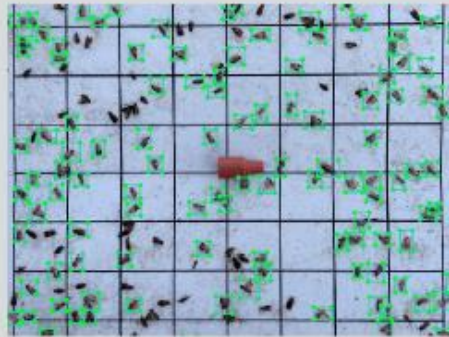
Based on the assumption that it would be a valuable addition to UTAD's innovation portfolio, the VineInspector was developed as the first local automatic observation system featuring multiple cameras and AI-based multiclassifiers. This work began in 2017

The image as a key-element in the observation



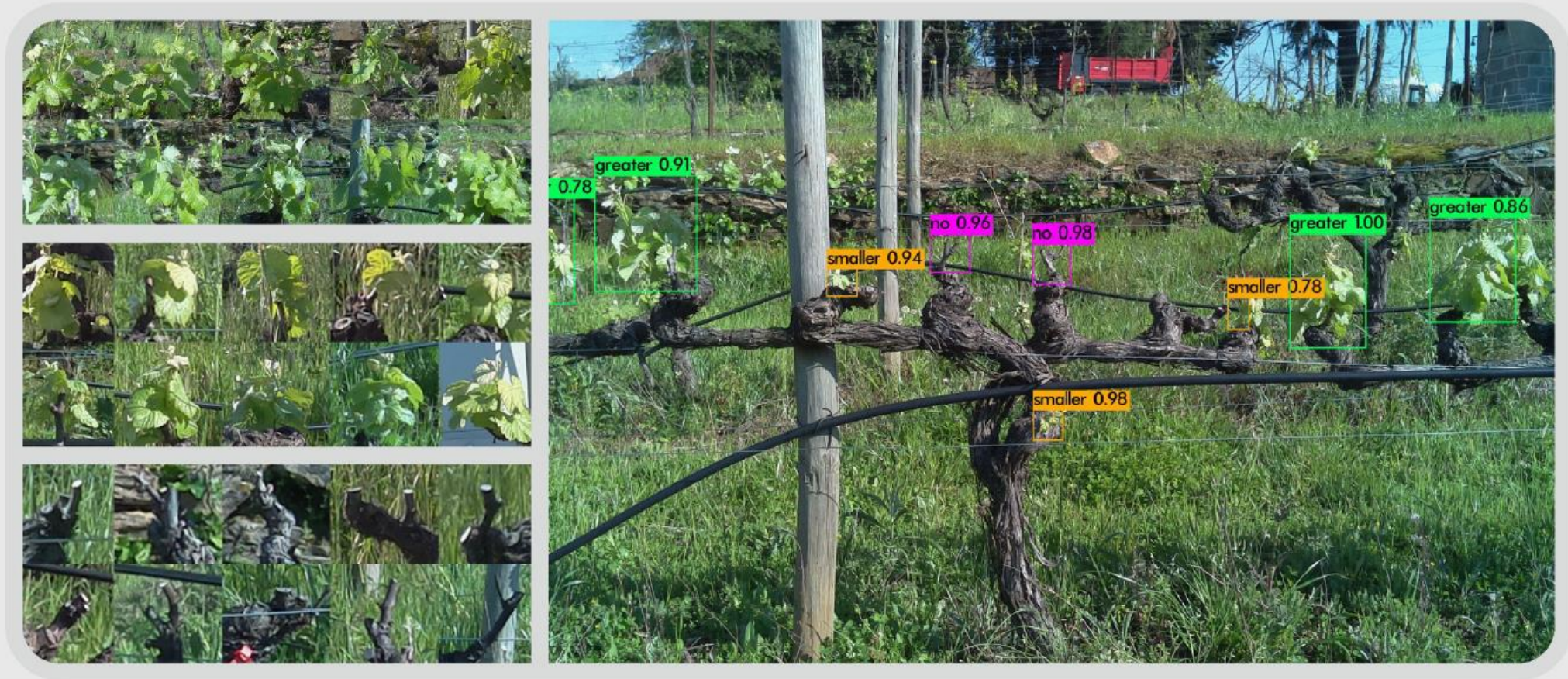
Since a picture is worth a thousand words, visual observation greatly enhances the understanding of vine growth dynamics. When automated with AI, many labor-intensive tasks can be minimized.

VineInspector for insect counting in traditional traps



With no limitations on the numbers of cameras or other software/hardware resources, VineInspector can be used to count specific insect traps. This enables remote estimation of the economic threshold level (ETL) and the triggering of control actions.

Detection & measurement of vine shoot growth using AI



Keeping an eye on multiple fonts : another VineInspector camera captures images to detect and measure the first shoots, which is essential for preventing diseases like downy mildew. After proper training , VineInspector automatically classifies all the shoots

AI-Based counting of grapevine moth specimens



VineInspector captures multiple images per day of the instrumented trap. Many of these images are used for specimen counting after a training process based on images of grapevine moths (*Lobesia Botrana*). When a threshold is reached, a notification is triggered

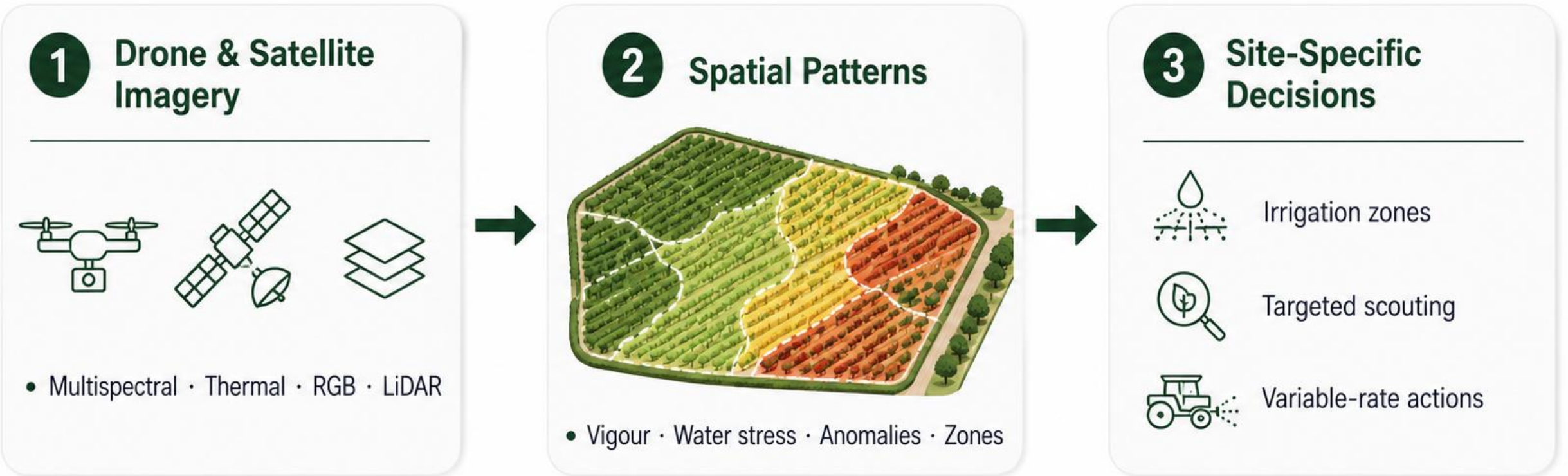
Training AI models to classify insects



For an AI system to automatically classify objects, it must be trained with a large number of diverse cases. Often, data augmentation and other techniques are used to create diversity and richness in images, which are then properly annotated

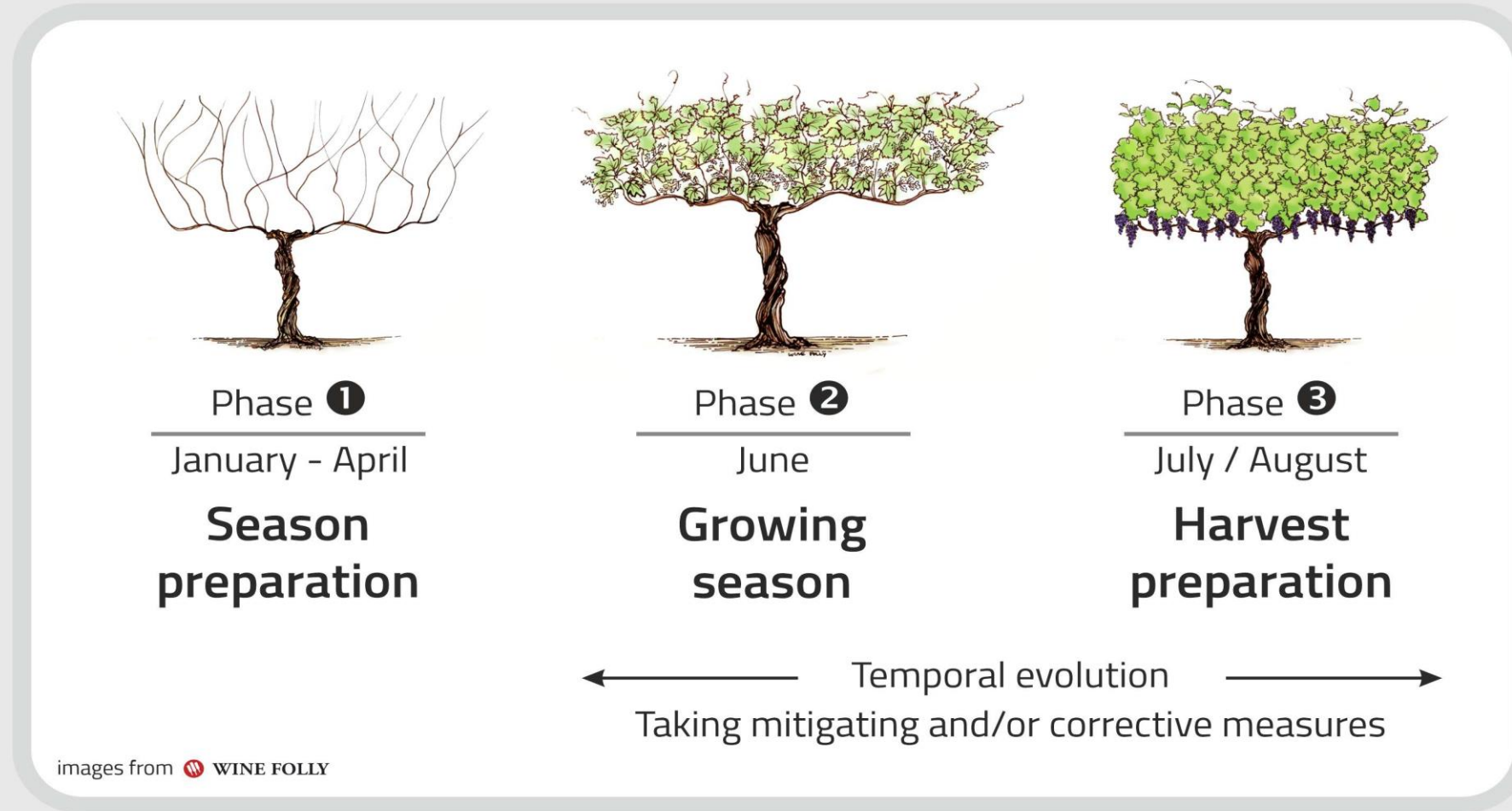
Remote Sensing: Seeing Spatial Variability from Above

Drones and satellites reveal where field conditions change — so decisions can become site-specific.



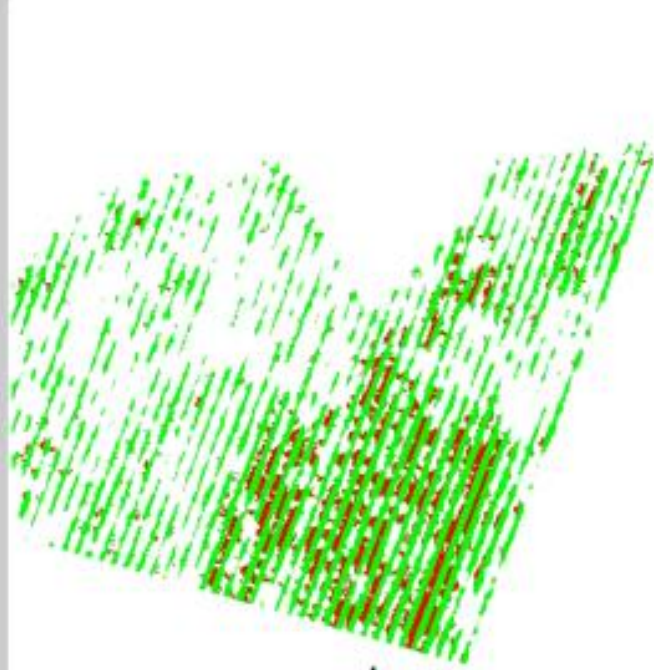
Remote sensing turns scattered field observations into spatial intelligence.

Precision Viticulture Solutions

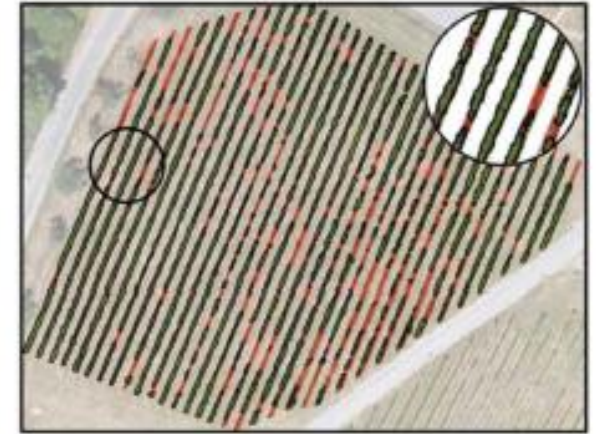
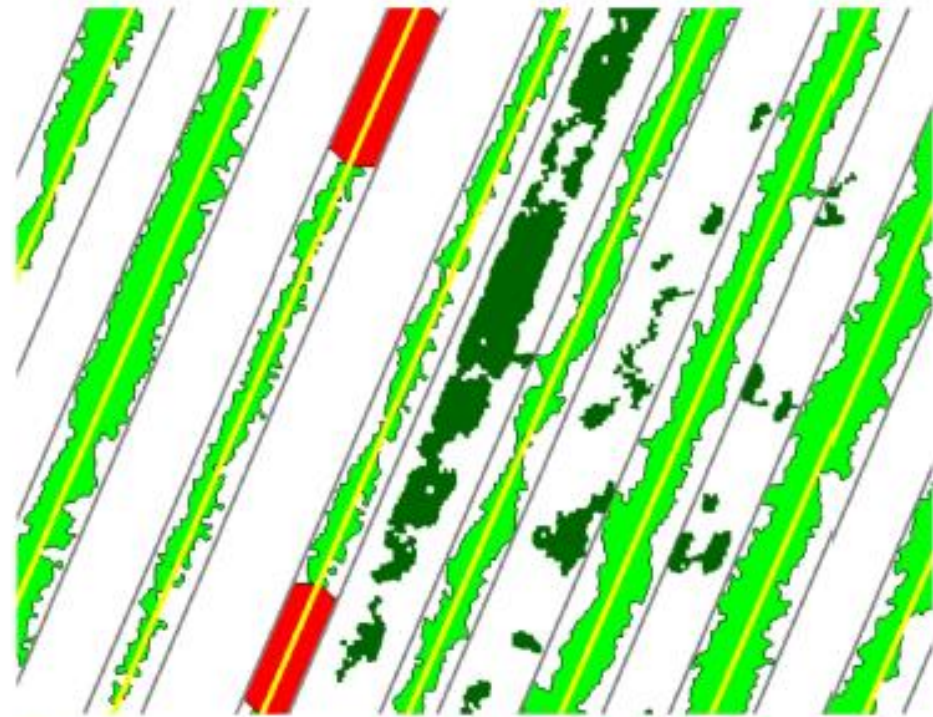


Phases of the grapevine cycle where flying with drones can be a valuable help in targeted vineyard-management practices

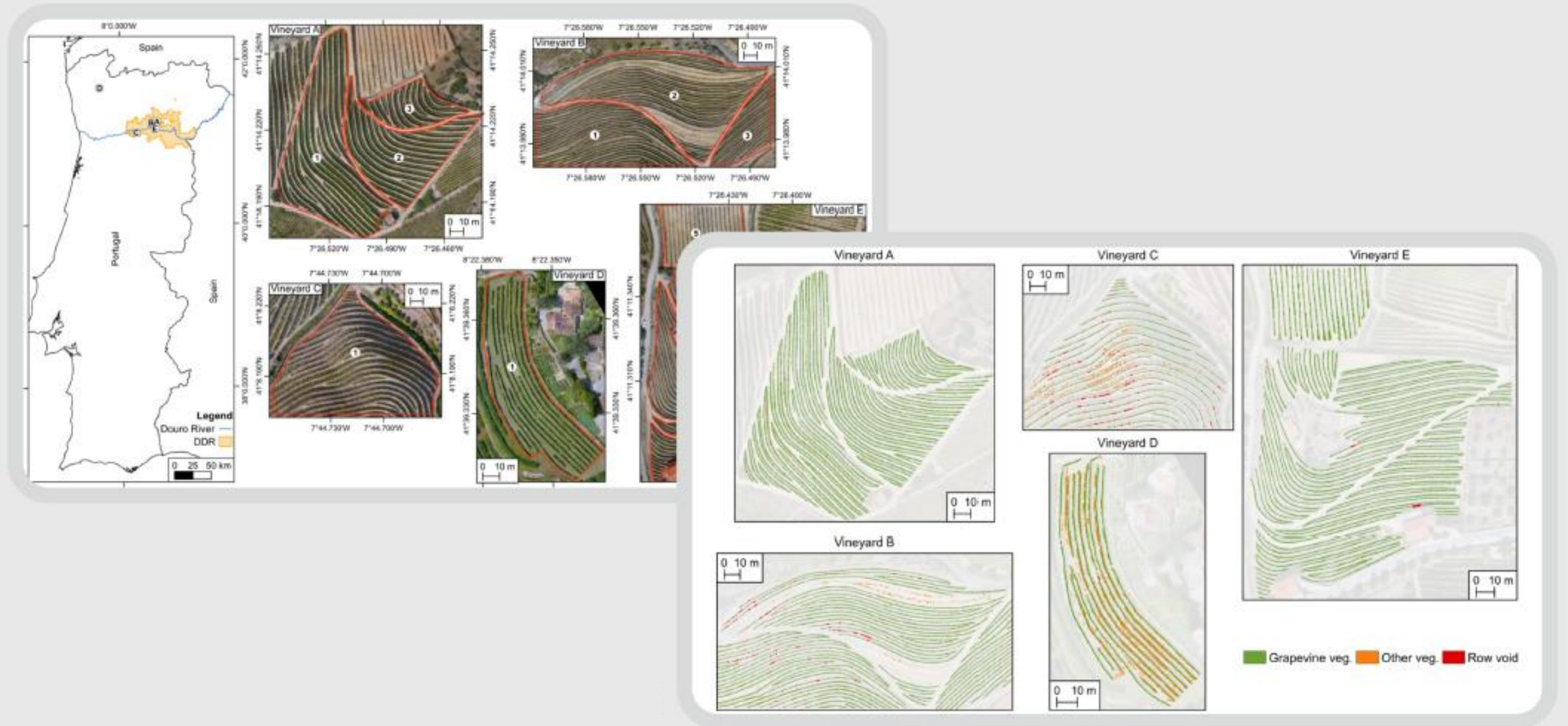
Automatic detection of vineyard vegetation



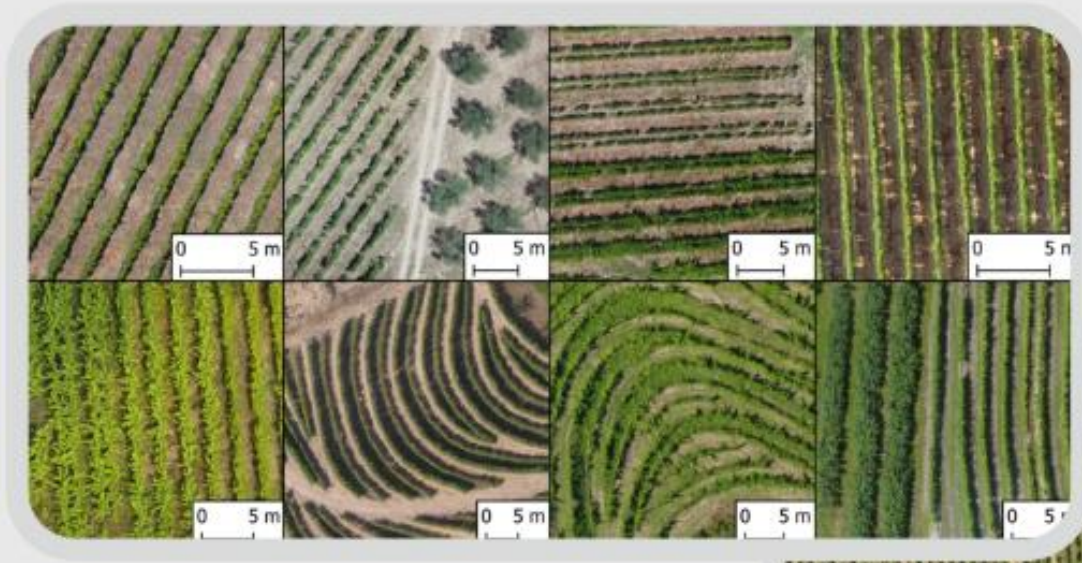
needs
intervention
?



Grapevine row detection in challenging vineyards



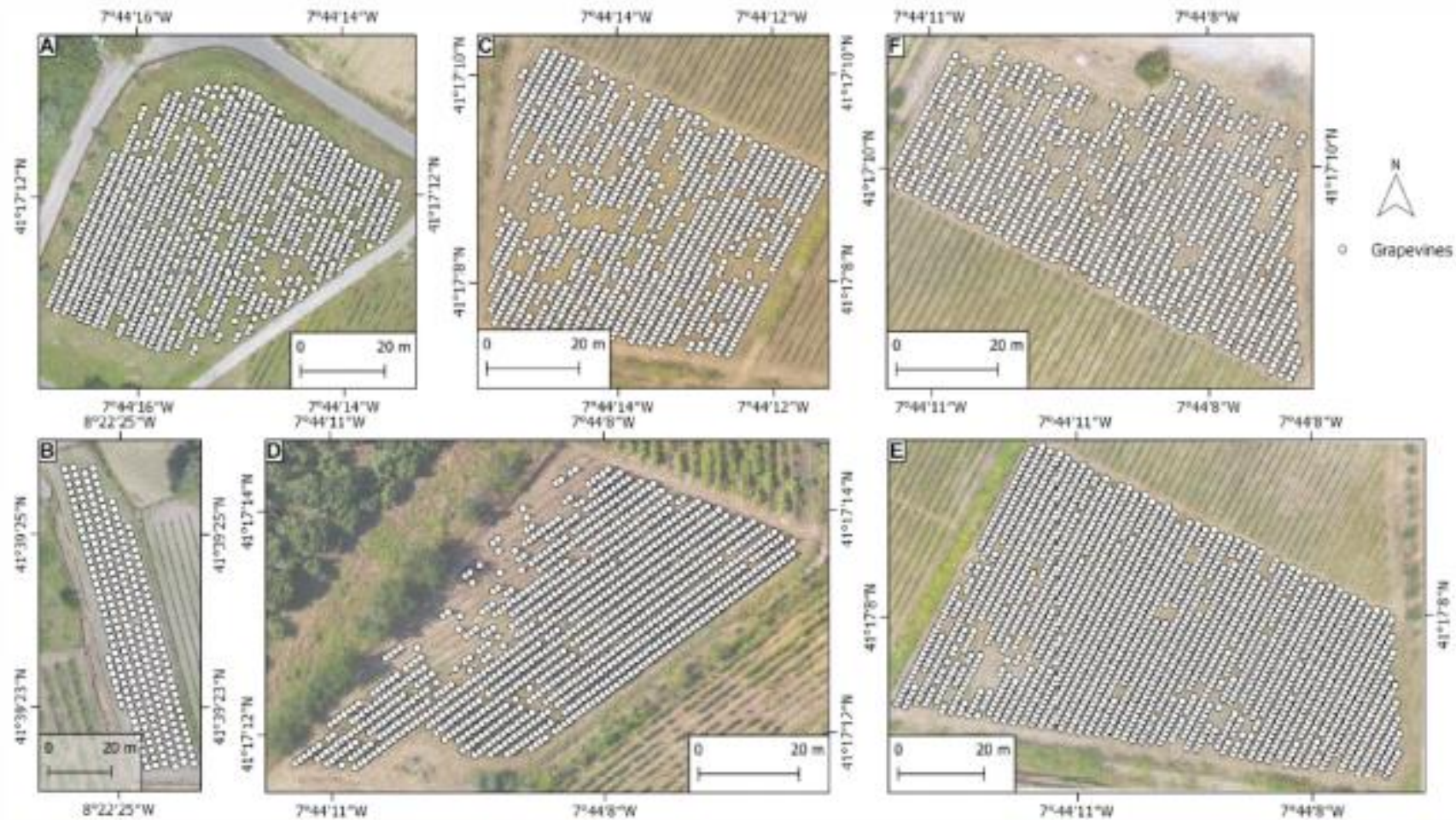
Grapevine row detection in challenging vineyards



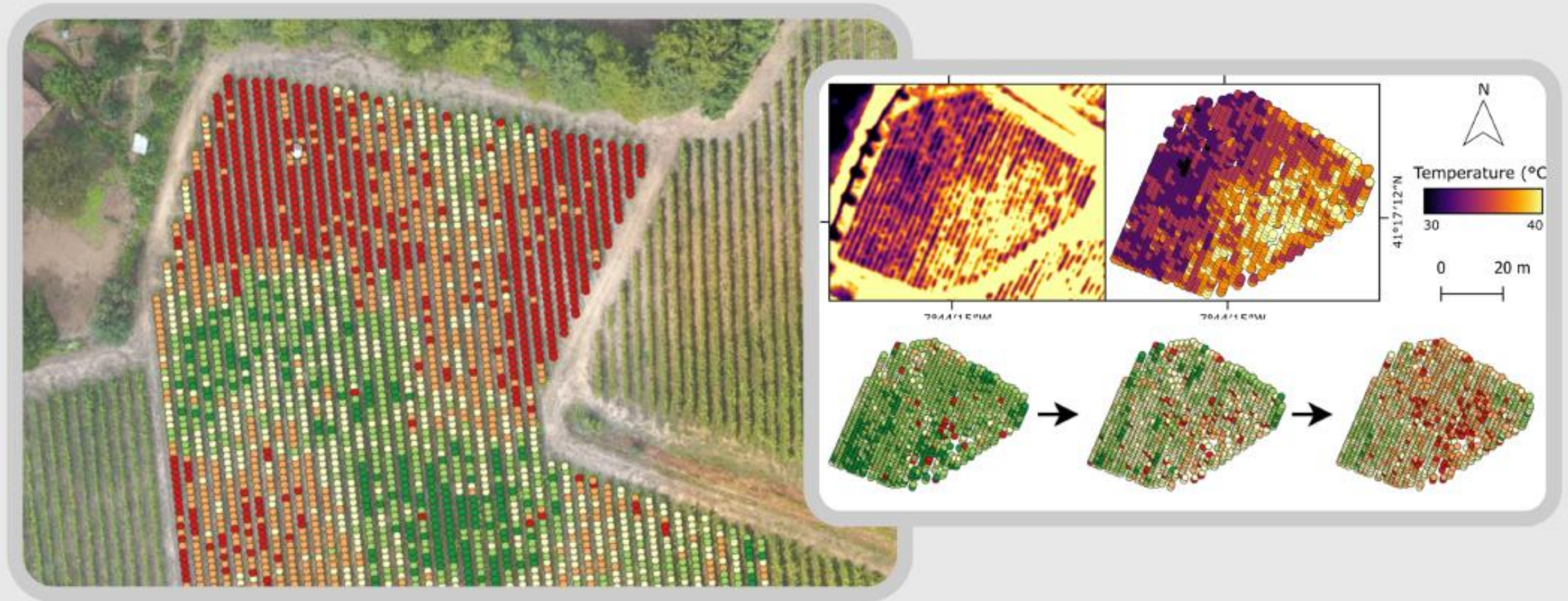
Using AI/deep learning to automatically detect grapevine rows even with shadows or combined with other type of crops.



Marking and counting vine plants

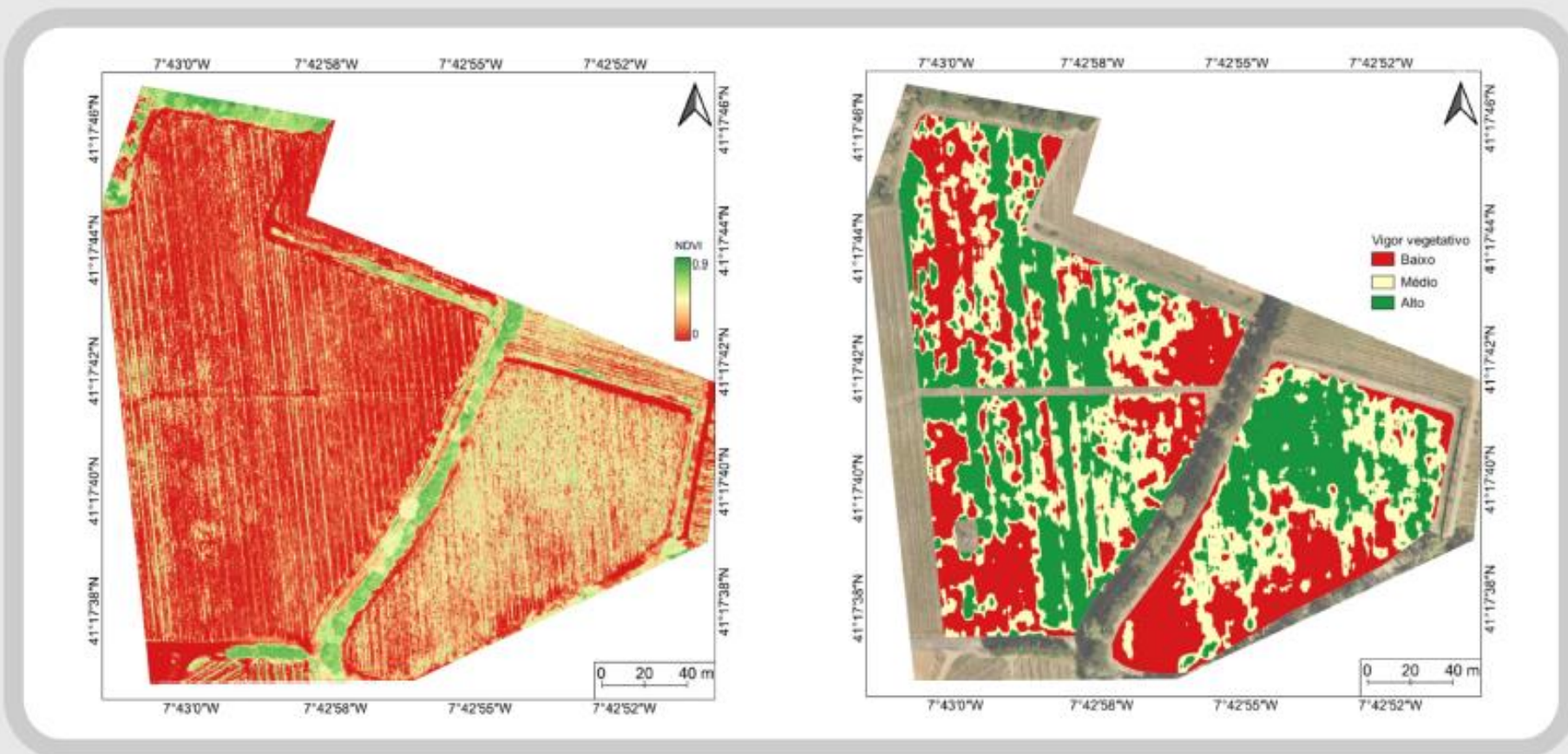


Individual grapevine analysis



Each vine is identified by an algorithm and marked with a circle on the drone image.
Each circled vine is an individual data point for spatial and temporal analysis.
Information (disease, water stress, nutrient deficiency, etc.) can be associated with each vine.

Vineyard heterogeneity mapping



Remote sensing enables detailed mapping of vegetation variability.

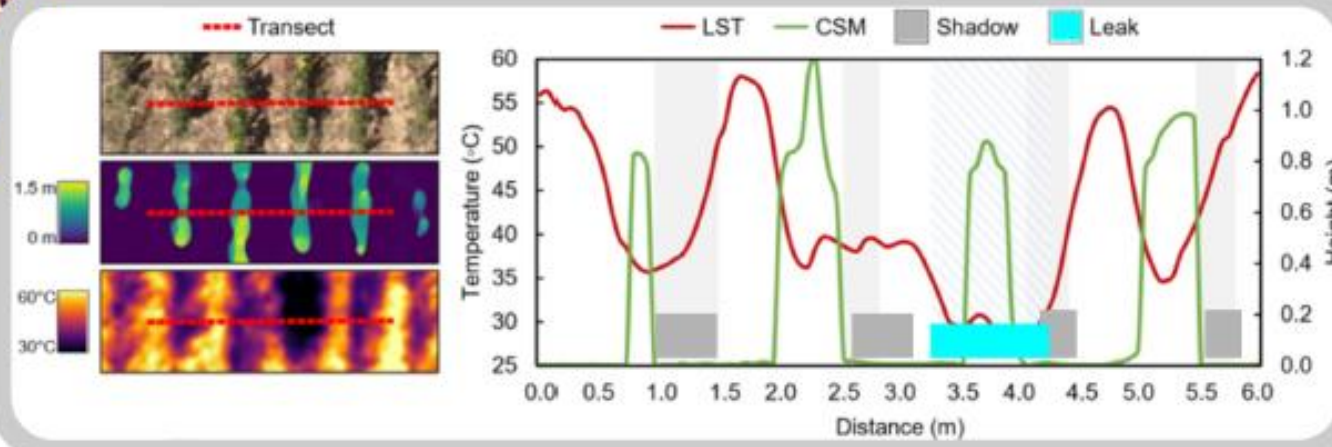
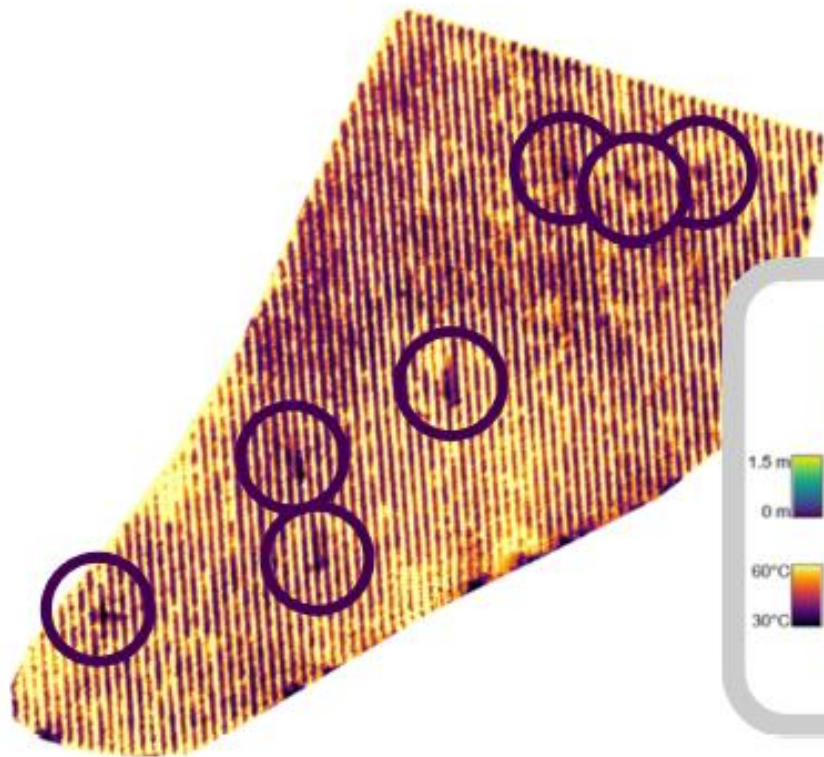
Left: NDVI highlights plant vigor.

Right: zoned classification supports precision interventions and decision-making.

Vineyard heterogeneity mapping with lower resolution

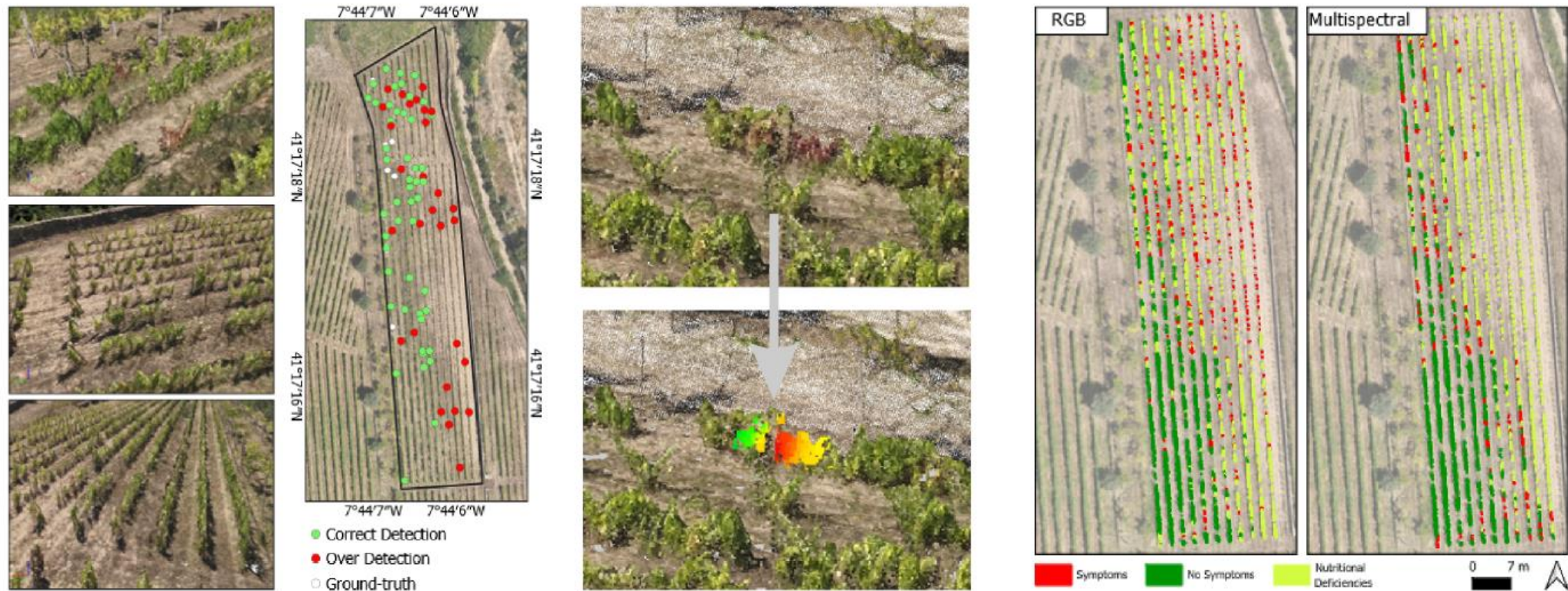


Lower-resolution Sentinel data, despite its coarser scale, remains valuable for broader vigor assessment and monitoring over time. Combining both scales enhances decision-making in precision viticulture



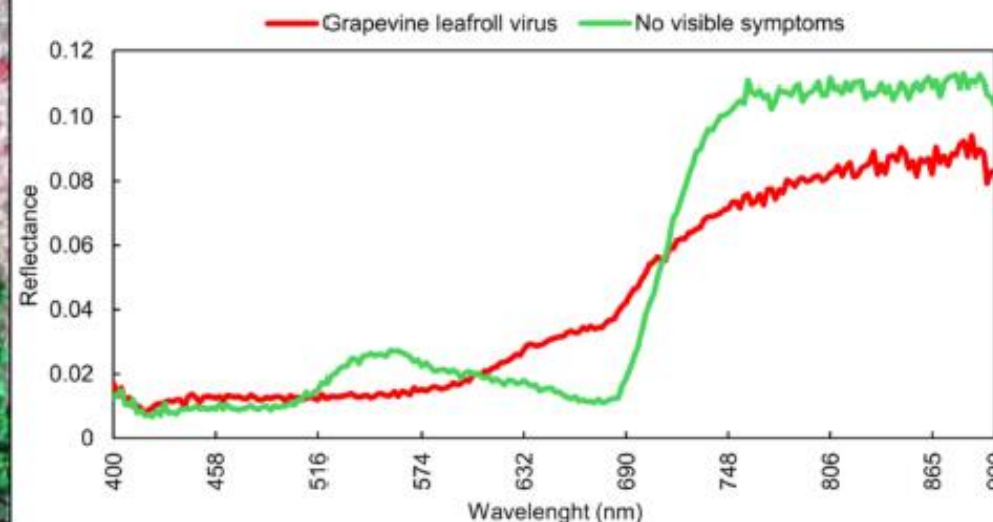
Using thermal imagery and Land Surface Temperature (LST) over the Crop Surface Model (CSM), water leaks in irrigation systems can be detected

Vineyard anomalies detection



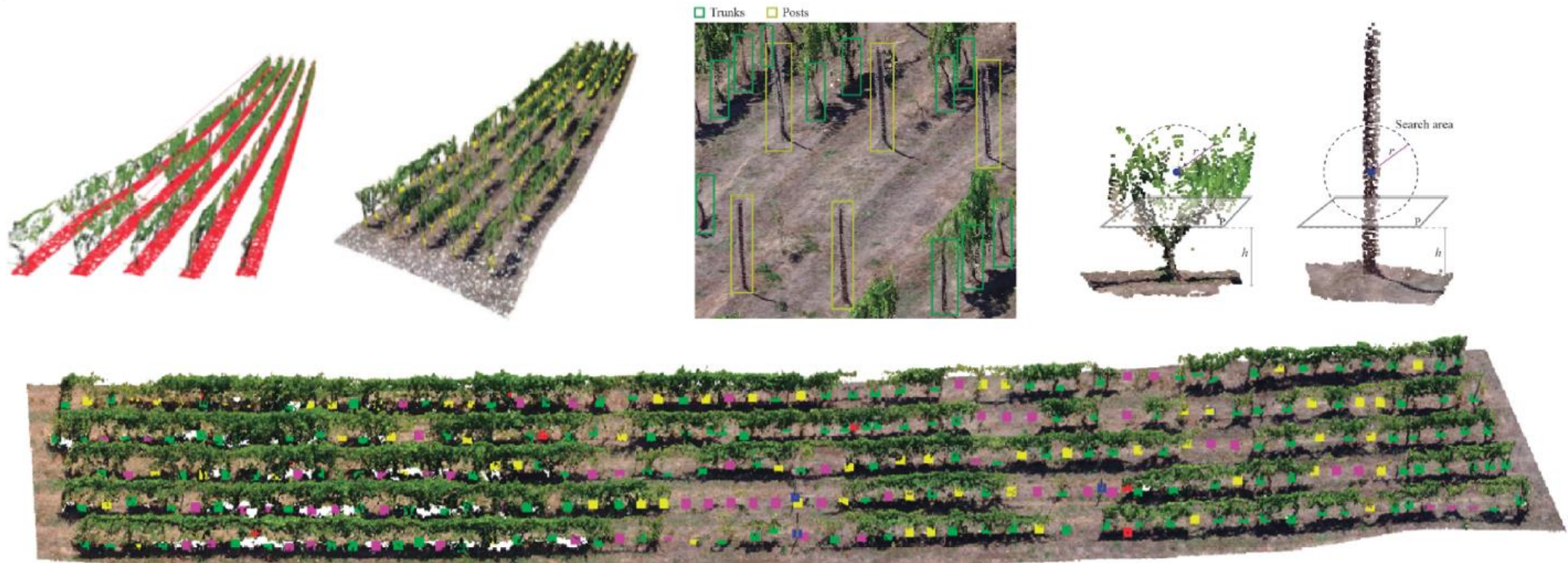
Point clouds are used to locate vines and project health status using RGB and multispectral imagery. Symptoms of viral diseases or nutrient deficiencies are assessed and visualized in 3D. Field validation is shown on the left; algorithms are still under testing

Detection of viral diseases: grapevine leafroll virus



Hyperspectral sensors are being explored for detecting grapevine leafroll virus by capturing subtle spectral differences. This technology also shows promise for identifying water stress, nutrient deficiencies, and other vineyard stresses

Detecting grapevine trunks using UAV point clouds



Point clouds from UAVs are processed with geometric methods to detect grapevine trunks and separate them from poles. Thus, our algorithms will enable detailed vineyard mapping, identifying missing vines, underdeveloped plants, and growth variations

From Maps to Meaning: Soil–Plant–Water Dynamics

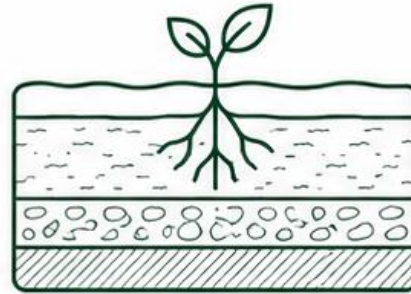
Seeing variability is only the first step — decisions improve when we understand the causes behind the patterns.

1 Visible Pattern



- Vigour differences
- Water stress
- Anomalies

2 Causal Layers



- Soil heterogeneity
- Water availability
- Root-zone constraints

3 Management Action

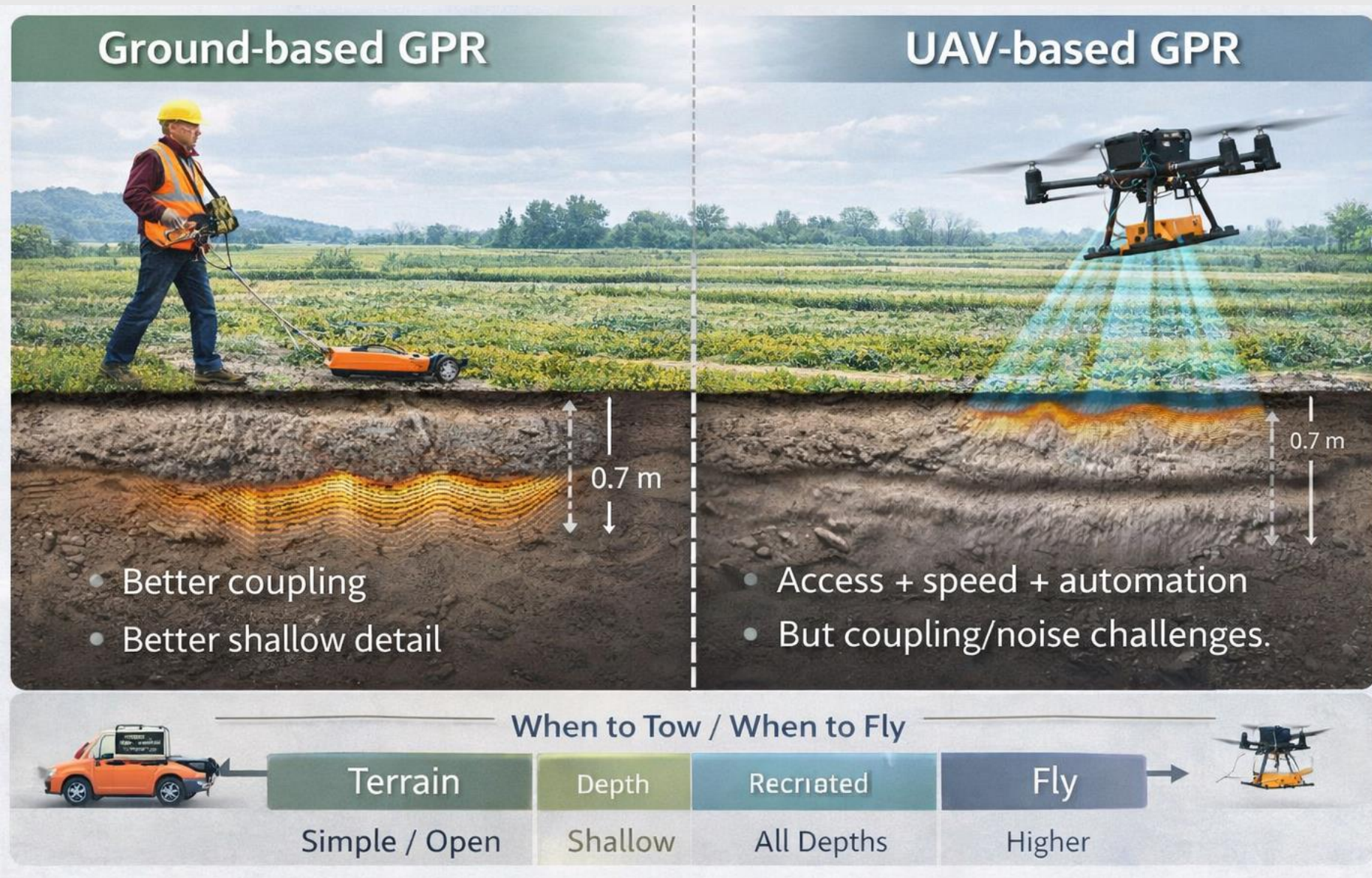


- Irrigation strategy
- Targeted scouting
- Site-specific intervention



The goal is not just to see where crops differ — it is to understand why they differ.

GPR acquisition modes: Ground-based vs UAV-based

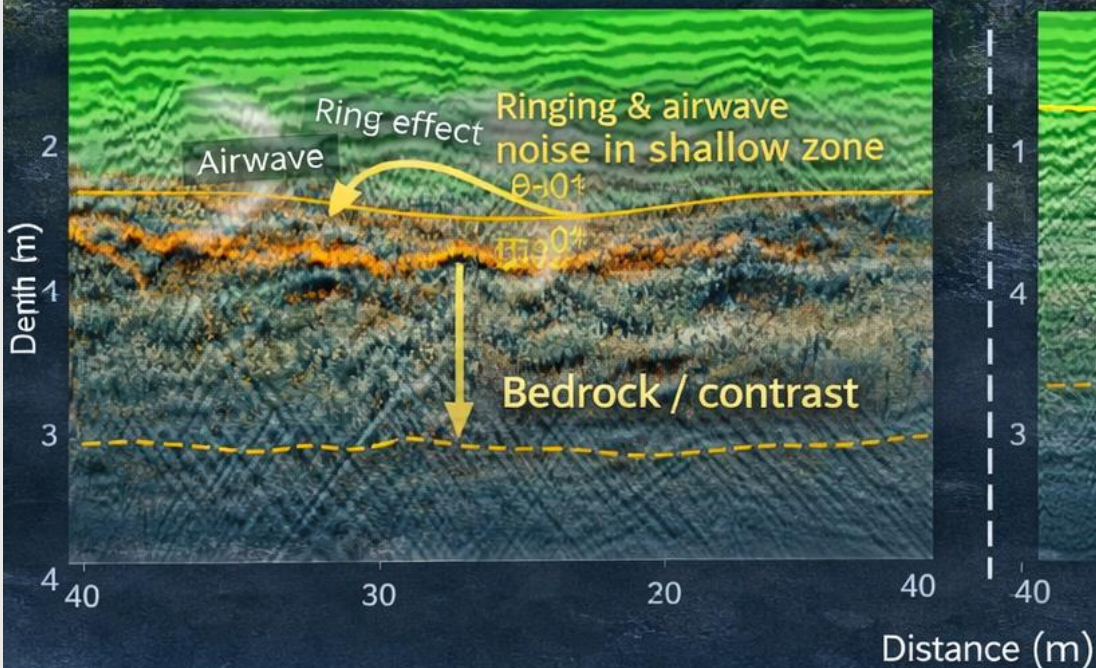


Altitude Effect in UAV-GPR (500 MHz): 1.0 m vs 0.5 m AGL

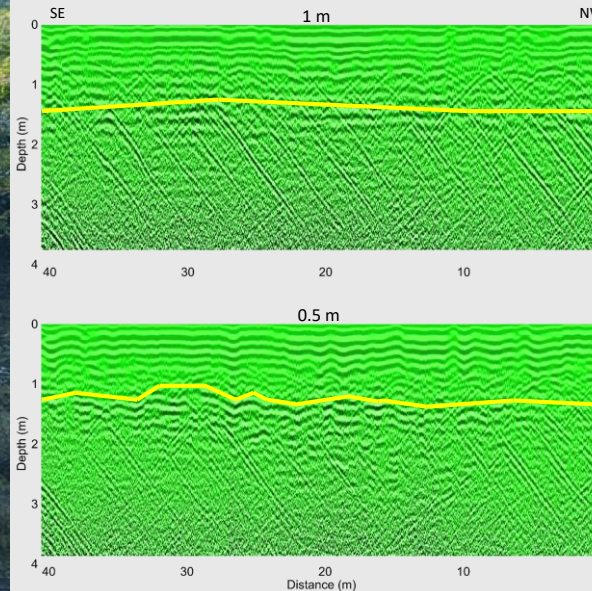
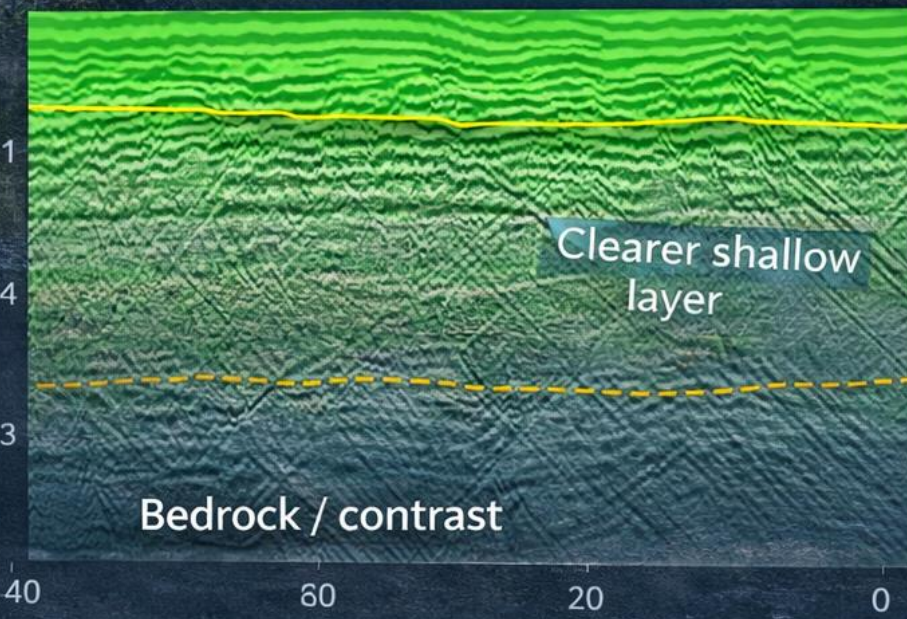
Case study: Vineyard surveys — what UAV-GPR reveals, and what it struggles with



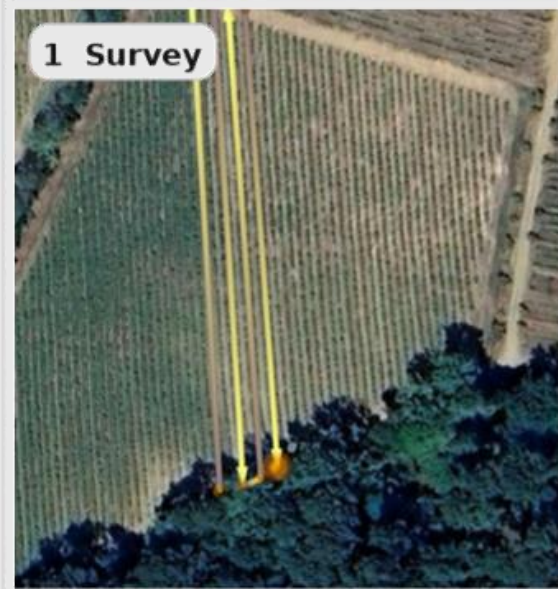
Flight altitude: 1.0 m



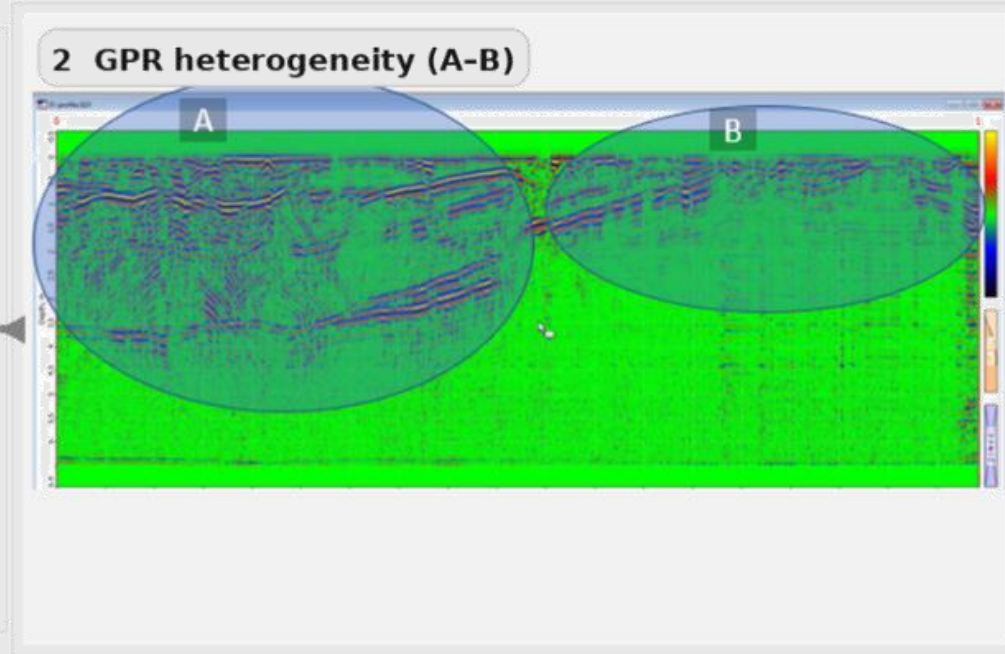
Flight altitude: 0.5 m



From Subsurface Heterogeneity to Crop Vigor Patterns

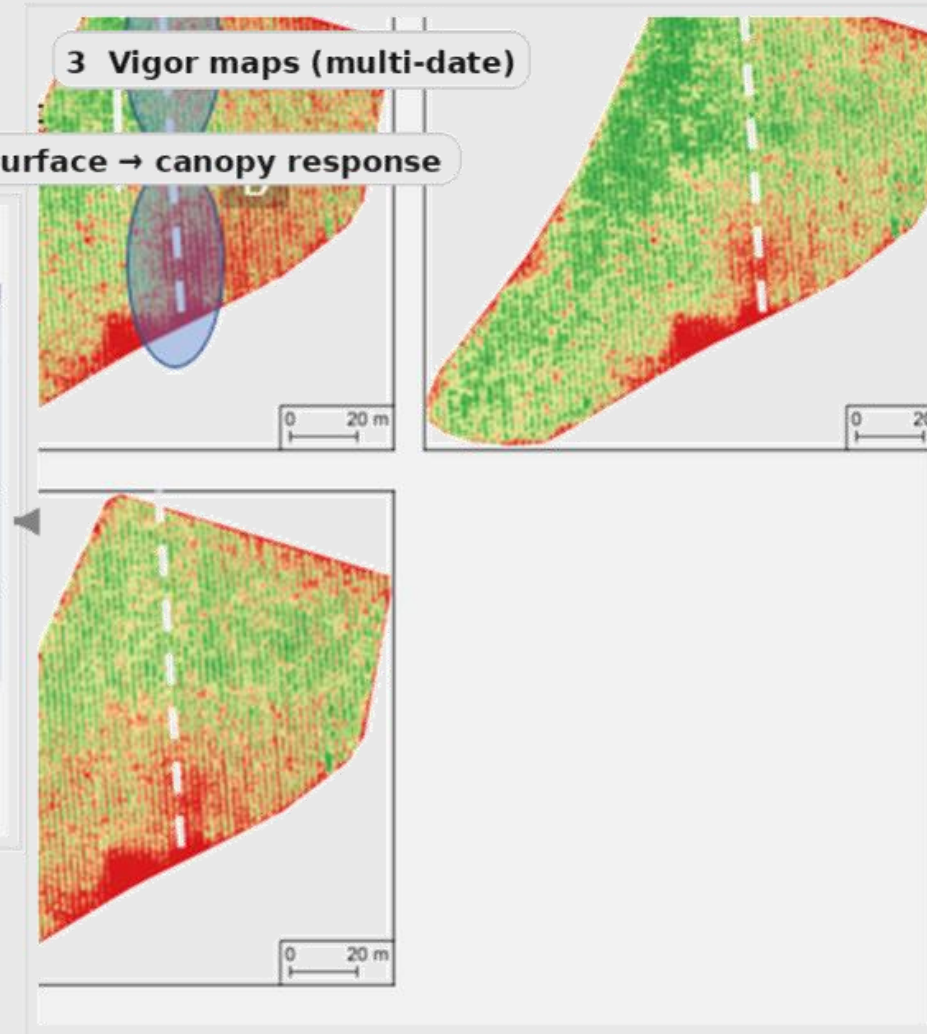


UAV flight lines define GPR profiles



A/B: contrasting reflector patterns (radar facies)

Constraints in the subsurface → canopy response



Low-vigor patches persist across dates in matching zones

Fragebogen

1 Sur

UAV flight

s (radar fa

ing zones

tial Analysis 2026©

Spatial Variability Is Not Noise — It Is Structure

Evidence from precision viticulture research



Since 2000, investigations have focused on main parameters in vine

- Production parameters (yield, vigour)
- Harvest quality parameters (sugar, acidity, etc.)
- Decision information (nitrogen, water status, etc.)



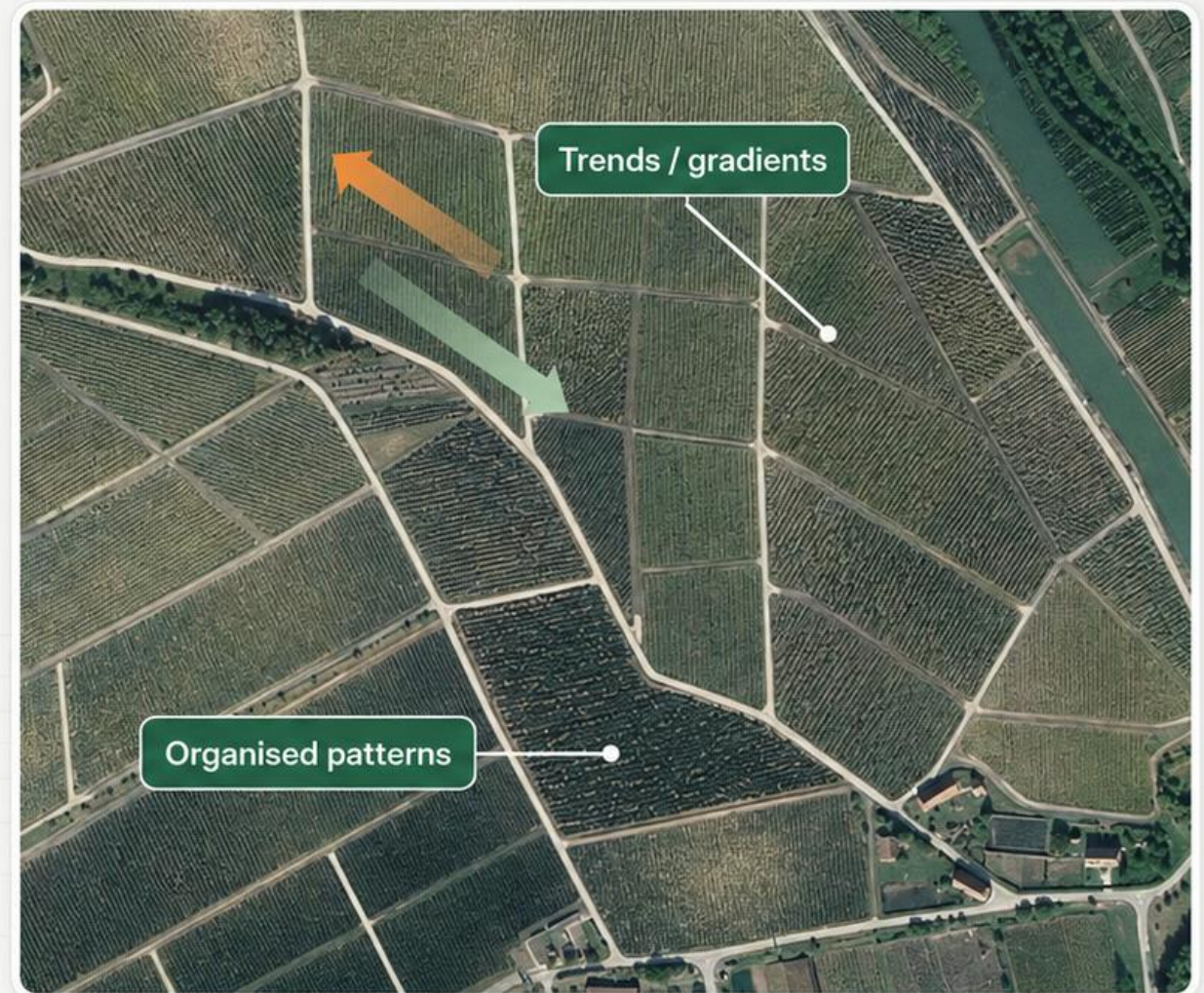
Evidence reported in Australia, Spain, France, Chile, California and New Zealand.



International database on within-field yield variability over 142 fields in France, Spain and Australia ([Taylor et al., 2005](#)).



There is a significant spatial variability in viticulture and it is organised spatially (spatial patterns).

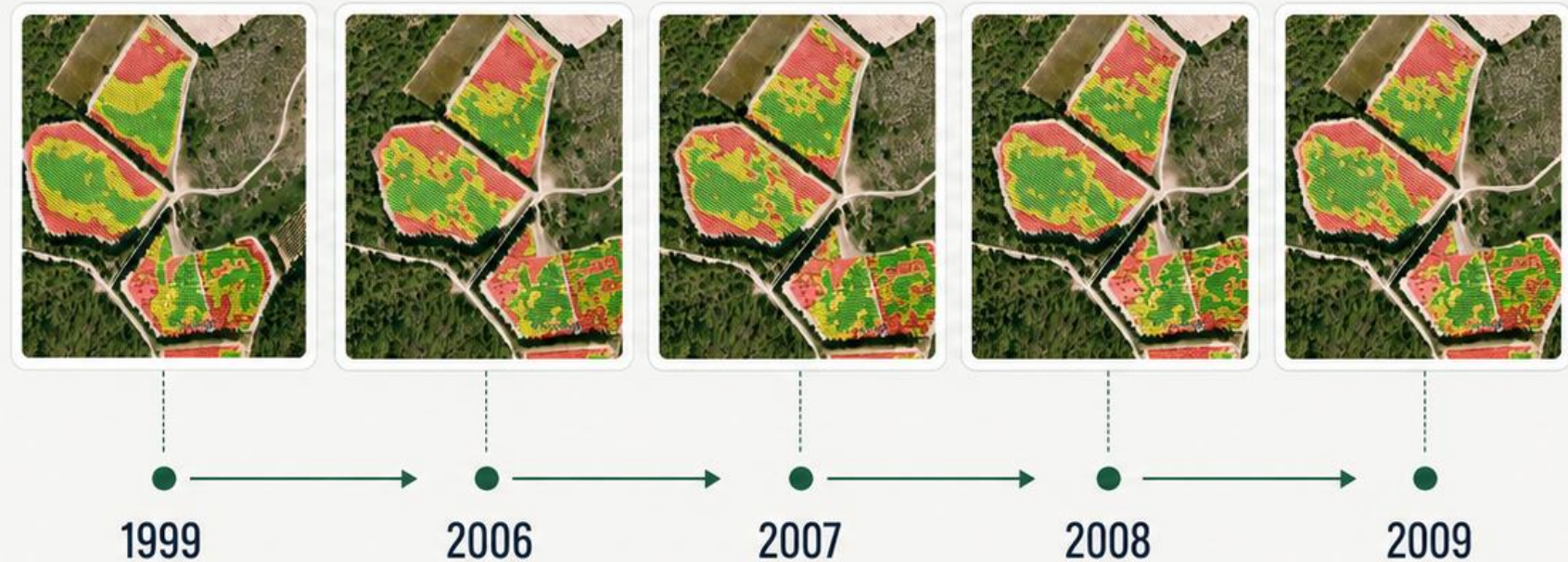


When Spatial Patterns Persist Over Time

Temporal stability turns maps into memory.

-  Some spatial patterns are temporally stable
-  Persistent zones reveal structural field behaviour
-  Stability supports long-term management zones
-  Stable variability can guide investment, monitoring and intervention

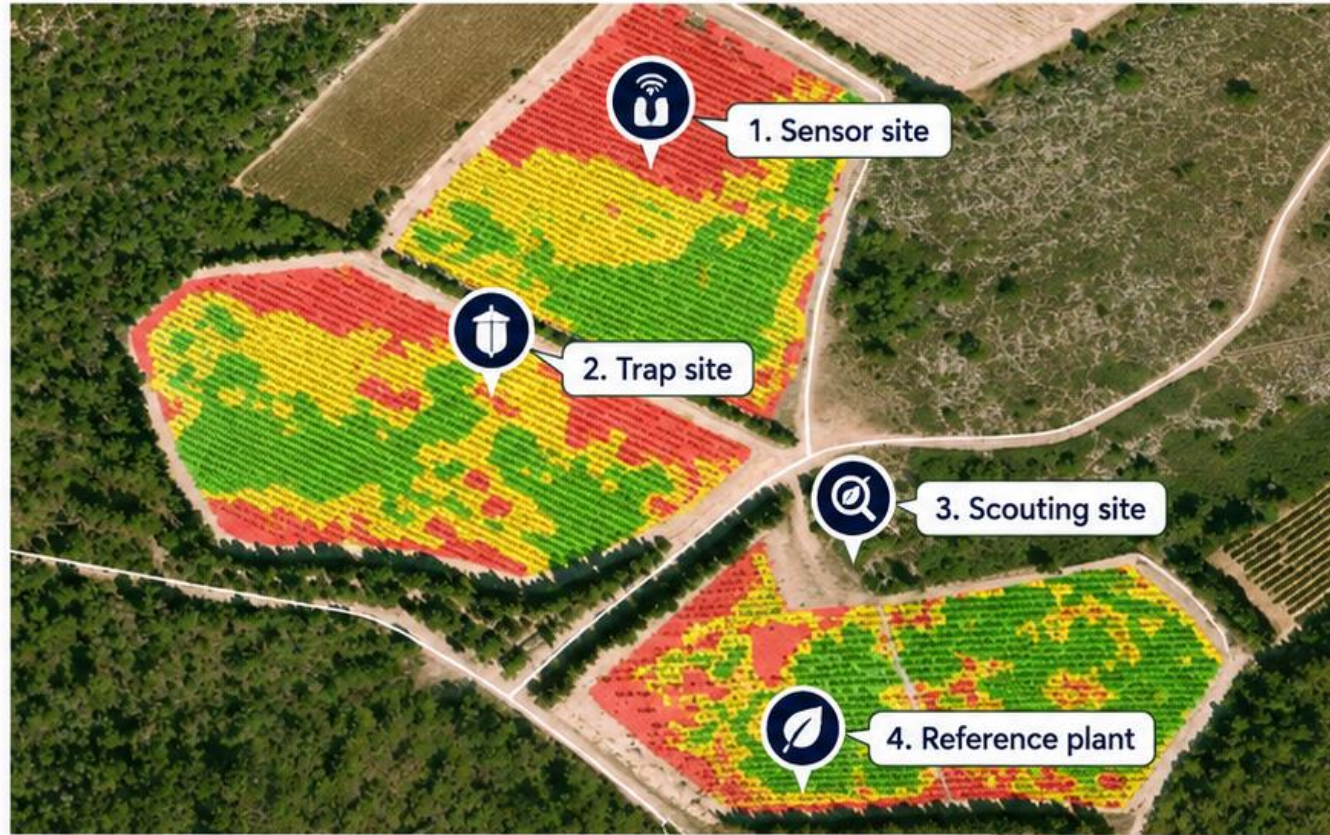
 From yearly maps to strategic knowledge



Stable spatial variability helps transform observations into long-term management knowledge.

From Maps to Representative Monitoring Sites

Do not place sensors randomly — place them where the field tells you to look.



Low vegetative expression Medium vegetative expression High vegetative expression



Select representative zones



Monitor contrasting behaviours



Reduce unnecessary sensor density



Support water status, pest control and crop monitoring



Combine spatial maps with temporal sensors

Sap flow sensor



Dendrometer



Stable maps help identify where to observe, measure and monitor.

Shared Data, Shared Learning

From Individual Farms to Collective Intelligence

 Data sharing helps farms learn faster, reduce costs and improve models.

1 Farm Data



-  Local evidence
-  Sensors
-  Field observations
-  Maps

2 Producer Network



-  Comparable patterns
-  Benchmarking
-  Shared learning
-  Lower adoption costs

3 Shared Decision Service



-  Improved models
-  Alerts
-  Reusable services
-  Collective intelligence

 One farm provides local evidence

 Many farms provide comparable patterns

 Shared platforms support benchmarking

 Cooperatives and producer organisations can reduce adoption costs

 Collective datasets improve models and alerts

 Data becomes more valuable when it can be compared, validated and reused.

Two Worlds Must Meet

Producers, Technicians and Digital Profiles



Adoption depends not only on technology, but on collaboration across generations, skills and working cultures.



Field Experience



Producers bring field experience



Seasonal knowledge



Practical constraints



Memory of the field



Producers bring field experience



Technicians bring agronomic interpretation



Digital profiles bring data, models and platforms



Shared Decisions

Co-design

Trust

Interpretation

Action



Digital Capabilities



Data science and models



Platforms and services



Sensors and monitoring



Automation tools



Younger generations may accelerate adoption



Older generations bring memory of the field



Trust requires co-design, not technology imposition



Smart agriculture is not a replacement of experience — it is a meeting point between experience and data.

Data Integration: From Many Signals to One Decision Space

Platforms turn heterogeneous field data into trusted, operational decision support.

1 Multi-Source Data

-  IoT sensors
-  Weather stations
-  Drone imagery
-  Satellite data
-  Field observations



2 Integration Platform



- Storage
- QA/QC
- Time alignment
- Spatial alignment
- Provenance



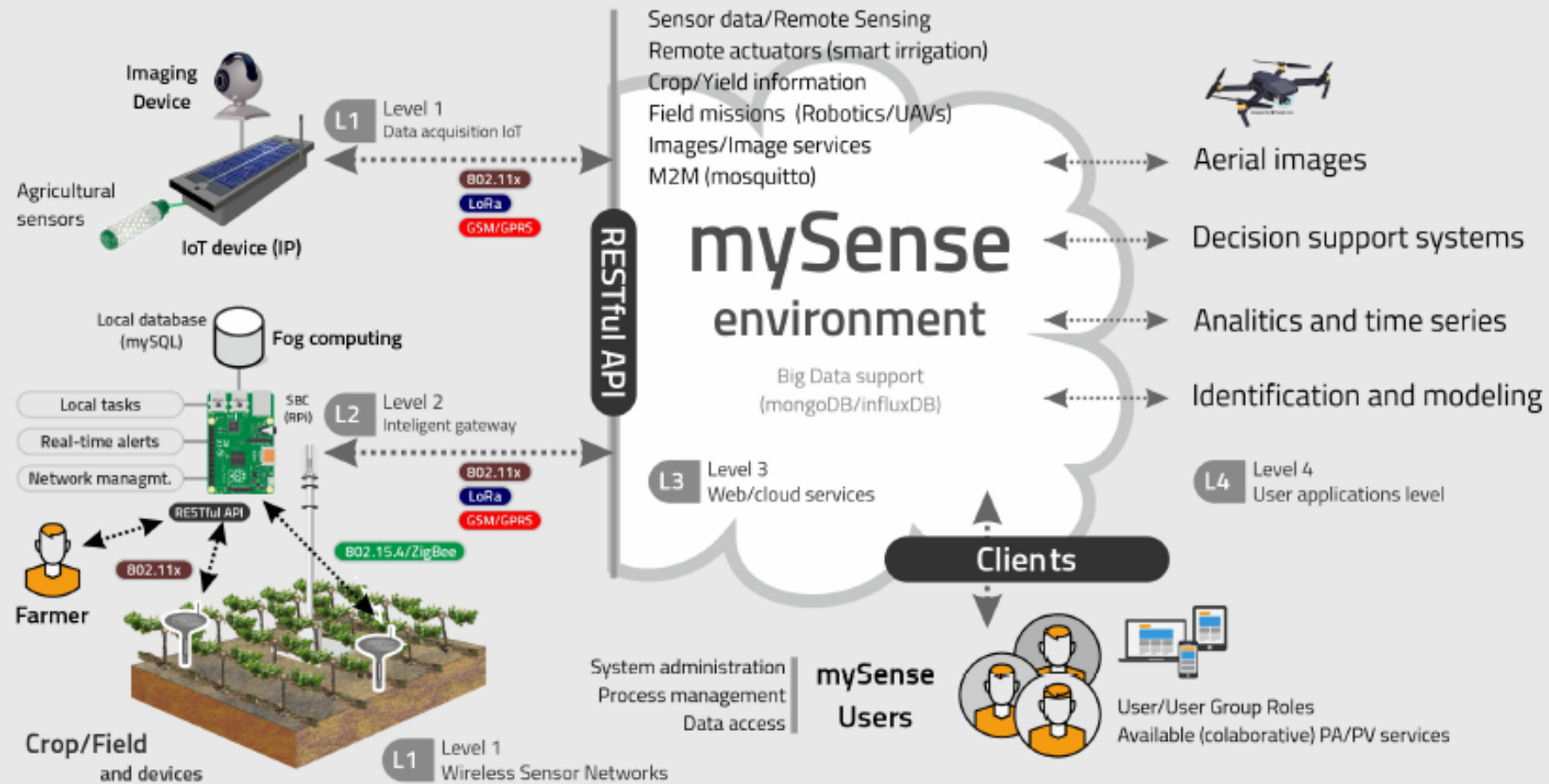
3 Decision Support

-  Alerts
-  Forecasts
-  Irrigation support
-  Risk indicators
-  Management zones



Integration is where data becomes useful — connecting measurements, models and producer decisions.

The mySense IoT platform and data integration



mySense is a cloud-based platform for data integration, storage and visualization in agroforestry, offering smart solutions to common PA/PV challenges.

<https://mysense.utad.pt>

The mySense IoT platform and data integration

← → ↻ [mysenseapi.utad.pt](#) ☆ ABP

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IoT
Dados em tempo real

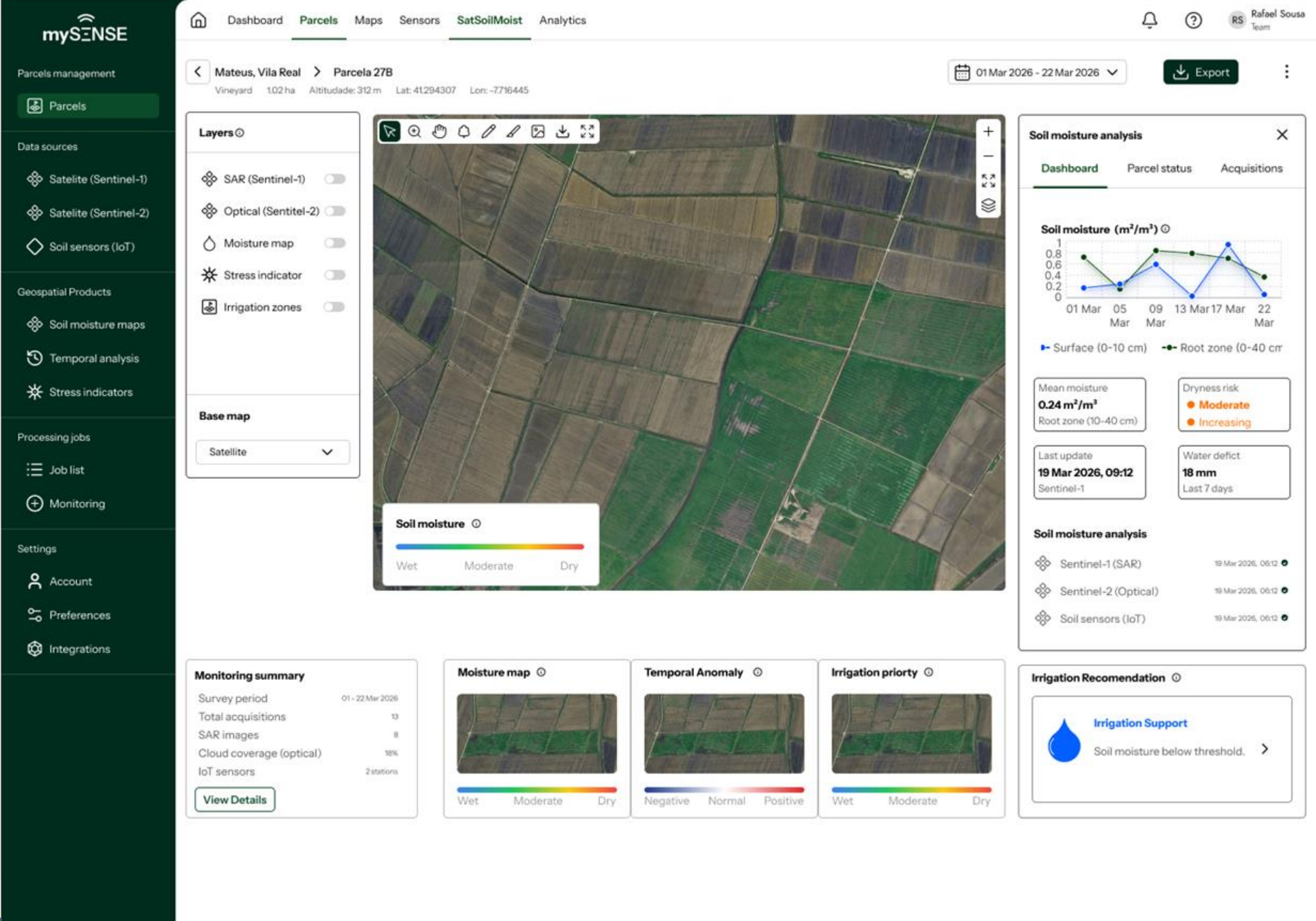

506
Dispositivos


4280
Sensores


240
Utilizadores


15
Serviços

User Module: Parcels



SOIL MOISTURE PREDICTION IN VINEYARDS USING SENTINEL-1 SAR DATA AND ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORKS

A case study in the Vilarica Valley, Northeastern Portugal



MAIN OBJECTIVE

To estimate soil moisture in vineyards using Artificial Neural Network (ANN) models trained with Sentinel-1 SAR data and in situ measurements collected in the Vilarica Valley.



1 DATA SOURCES



Sentinel-1 SAR

C-band SAR data
(VV and VH polarizations)
Asc. and Desc. orbits
Jul 2020 – Dec 2021

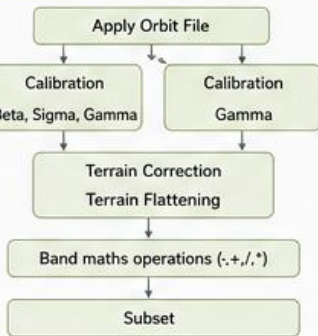


In situ soil moisture

Soil moisture measured
at 10 cm depth using
two sensors.



2 DATA PROCESSING

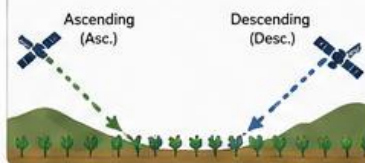


Each sample included 25 features:
24 extracted from SAR data and
1 in situ soil moisture measurement.

3 DATASETS

Two datasets were created to evaluate
the impact of SAR orbit geometry
on model performance:

- D1** 301 samples from
ascending orbits only
- D2** 458 samples from both
ascending and descending orbits



4 APPROACH

Artificial Neural Network (ANN)

Input
(25 features)



Output
(Soil Moisture)

- 6 hidden layers
- ReLU activation function
- Adam optimizer
- Mean Squared Error (MSE) loss
- K-fold cross-validation

KEY FINDINGS



The model trained with ascending
orbits only (D1) outperformed the
mixed-orbit model (D2) due to
reduced variability in acquisition
geometry.



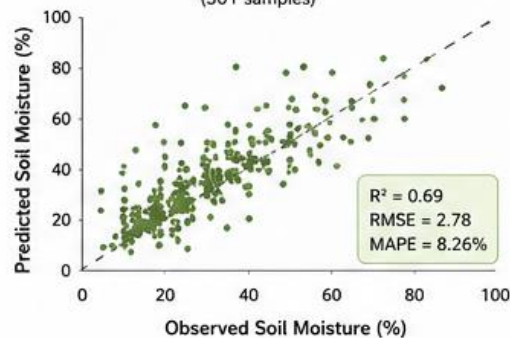
Strong agreement with in situ
measurements, especially for
soil moisture levels above 20%.



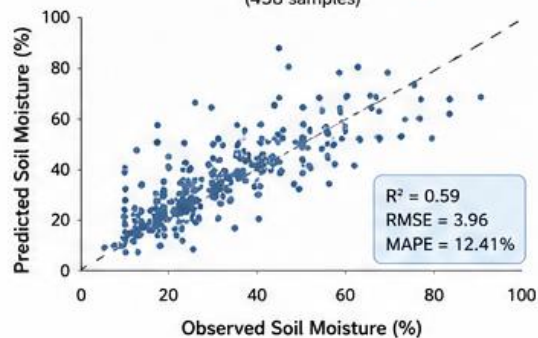
Predictions below 20% were less
accurate, as these cases represented
fewer than 4% of all samples.

5 RESULTS

D1 – Ascending orbits only
(301 samples)



D2 – Ascending + Descending orbits
(458 samples)



Performance comparison
(ANN models)

Dataset	RMSE (% vol.)	R ² (-)	MAPE (%)
D1 (Ascending)	2.78	0.69	8.26
D2 (Mixed orbits)	3.96	0.59	12.41

RMSE: Root Mean Square Error
R²: Coefficient of Determination
MAPE: Mean Absolute Percentage Error

IMPACT FOR VITICULTURE



Optimized
irrigation



Water
savings



Sustainable
production



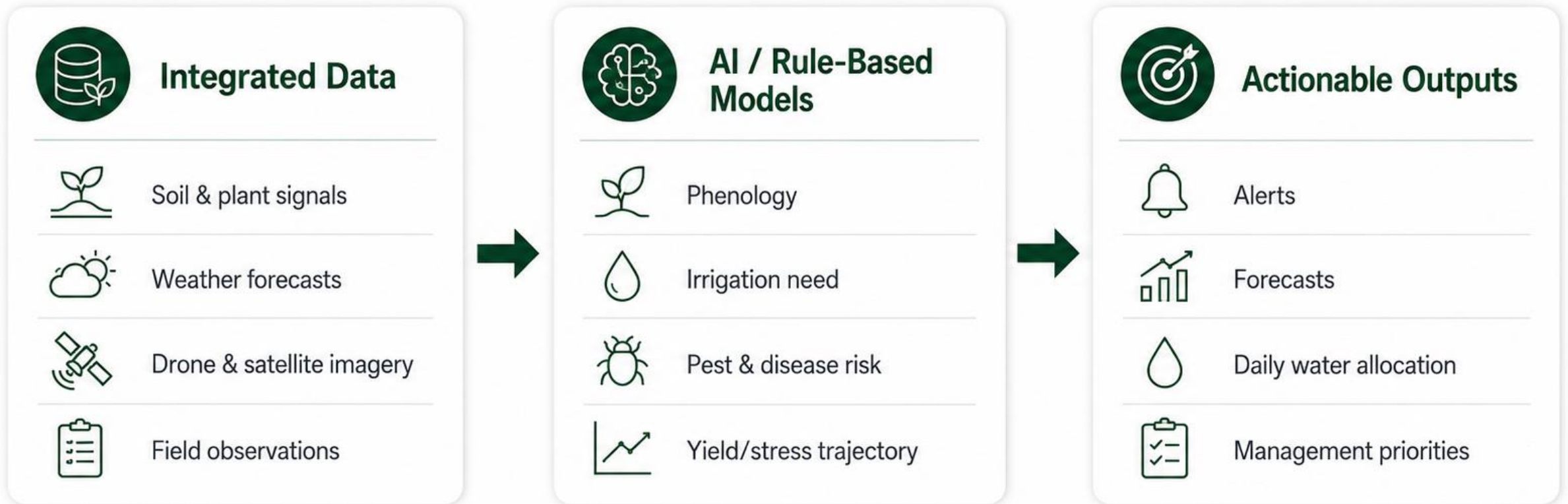
Data-driven
decisions

FUTURE WORK

- Extend the methodology to other regions and varieties
- Incorporate topographic and additional variables
- Expand the dataset with more diverse samples
- Improve model performance under low soil moisture conditions

Decision Services: Models as a Service

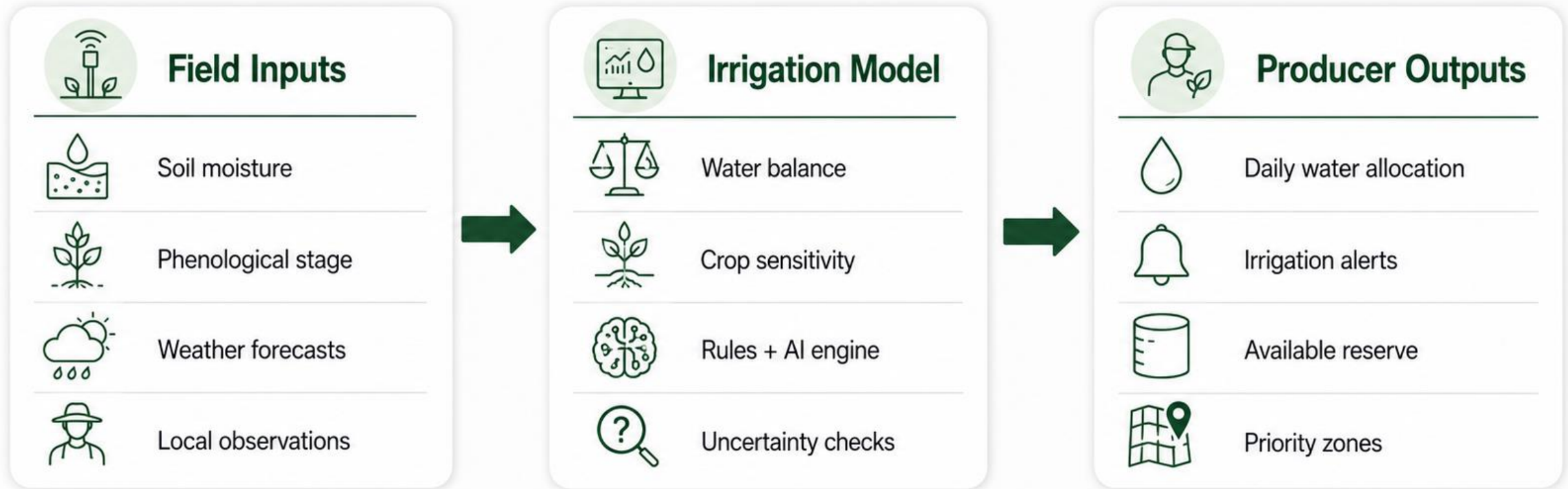
Once data is integrated, models can translate field signals into operational recommendations.



Models become valuable when they support timely, trusted and practical decisions.

Irrigation Decision Support: From Signals to Water Allocation

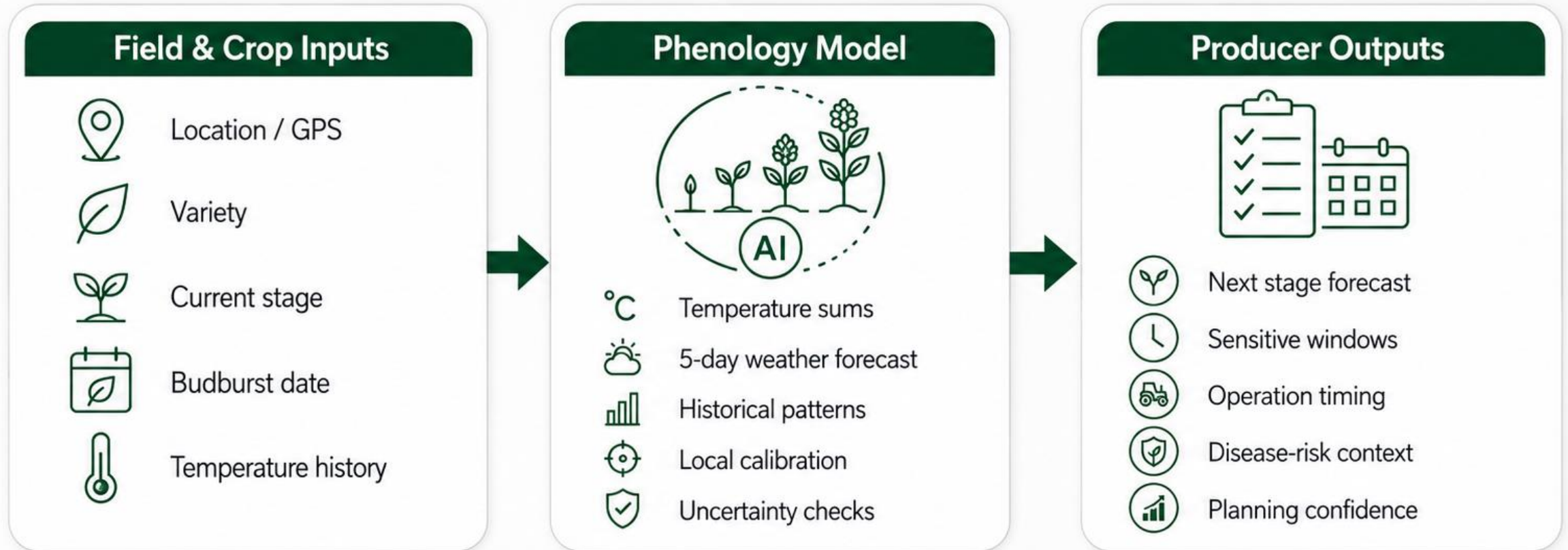
Combining soil, plant and weather information to support timely and efficient irrigation decisions.



The decision is not simply whether to irrigate — it is when, where and how much.

Phenological Prediction: Timing Crop Development

Forecasting crop stages helps producers time irrigation, protection and field operations.



Phenology turns time into a management advantage.

AI in Practice: Crop Monitoring and Early Warnings

Images and sensors can help detect crop development, stress and risk before problems escalate.

Automated Observation



- Field images
- Shoot growth
- Trap monitoring
- Local sensor data

AI Interpretation



- Object detection
- Growth measurement
- Risk classification
- Pattern recognition

Early Warnings



- Disease-risk windows
- Pest thresholds
- Targeted scouting
- Timely intervention



AI becomes useful when it turns observation into earlier, more targeted action.

Pest and Disease Alerts: From Observation to Thresholds

Automated monitoring helps connect field evidence with timely protection decisions.

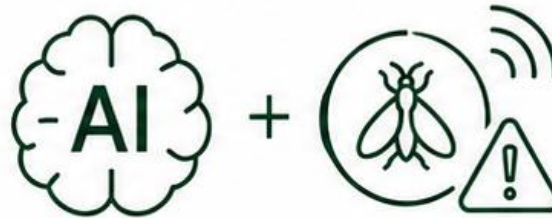
1 Automated Monitoring



- Trap images
- Leaf wetness
- Temperature & humidity
- Field observations



2 AI + Risk Models



- Insect counting
- Disease-risk windows
- Threshold detection
- Trend analysis



3 Producer Actions



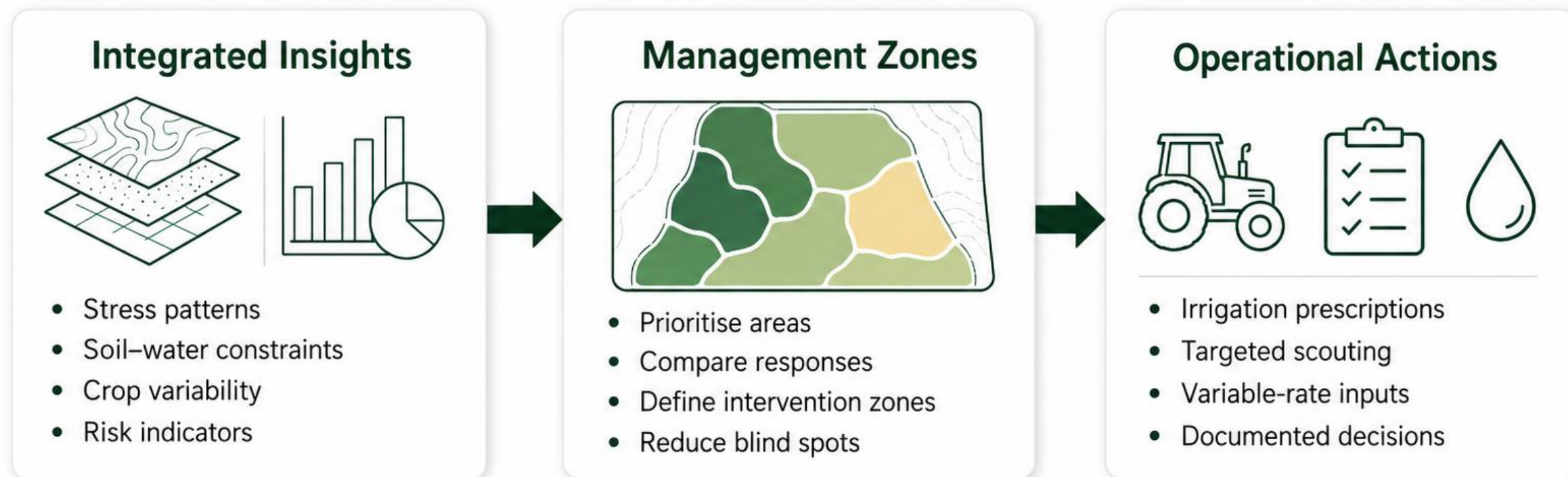
- Targeted scouting
- Treatment timing
- Avoid unnecessary sprays
- Documented decisions



The goal is not to spray more — it is to intervene only when evidence and risk justify action.

From Insight to Action: Management Zones and Prescriptions

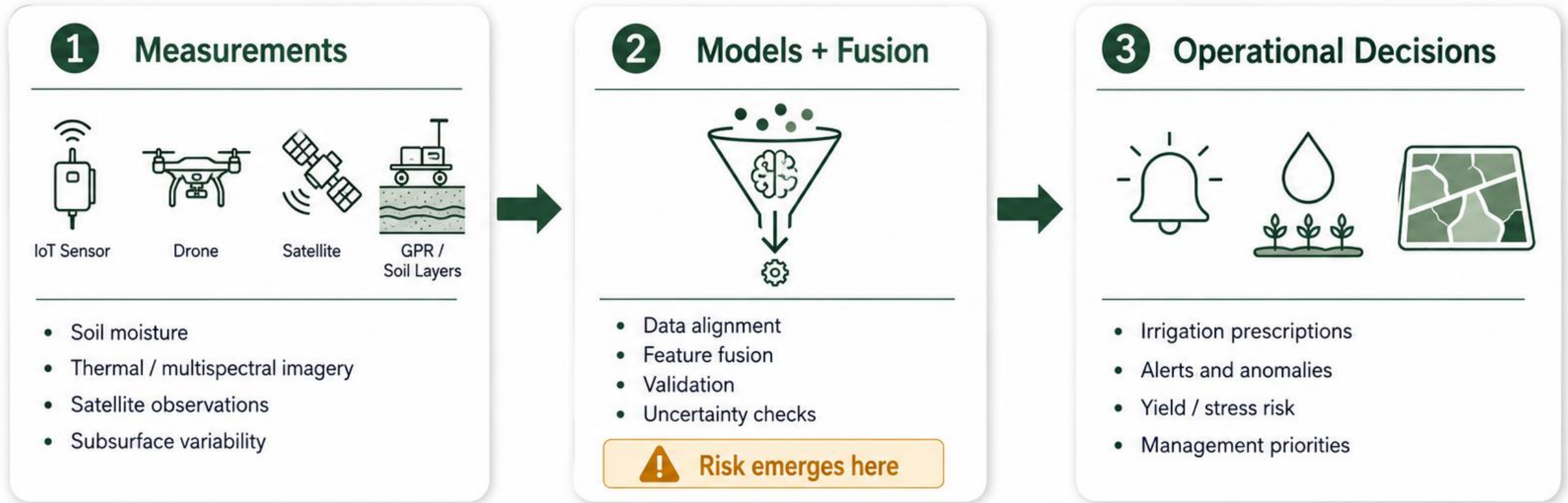
Spatial intelligence becomes valuable when it changes field operations.



The value of intelligence is measured by the quality of the action it supports.

Trust, Uncertainty and Adoption: What Can Go Wrong?

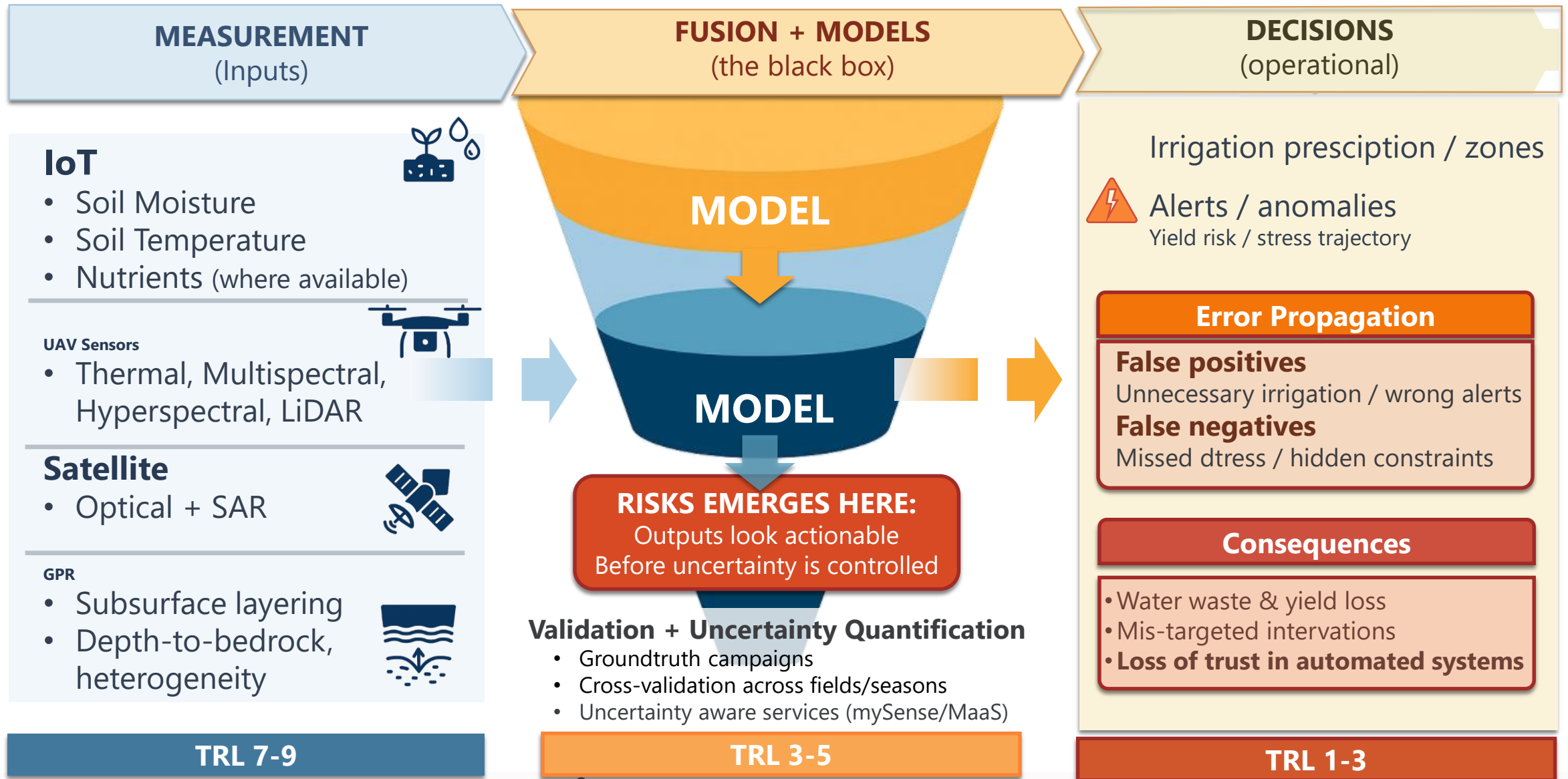
Actionable-looking outputs can be misleading if uncertainty is not controlled.



Trust is built when decisions include validation, uncertainty and field evidence.

TRL & Risk Checkpoint:

From multi-sensor agrogeophysics to operational decisions



Validation Before Automation: Ground Truth and Uncertainty

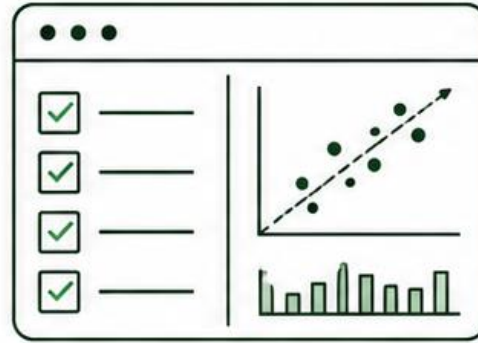
Before decisions are automated, models must be tested against field evidence.

Ground Truth



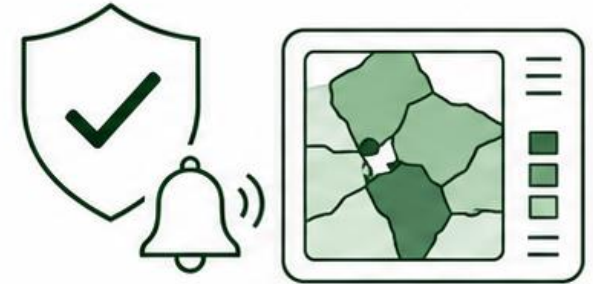
- Field campaigns
- Sensor calibration
- Local observations
- Reference measurements

Model Validation



- Cross-validation
- Across fields and seasons
- Error detection
- Performance limits

Uncertainty-Aware Decisions



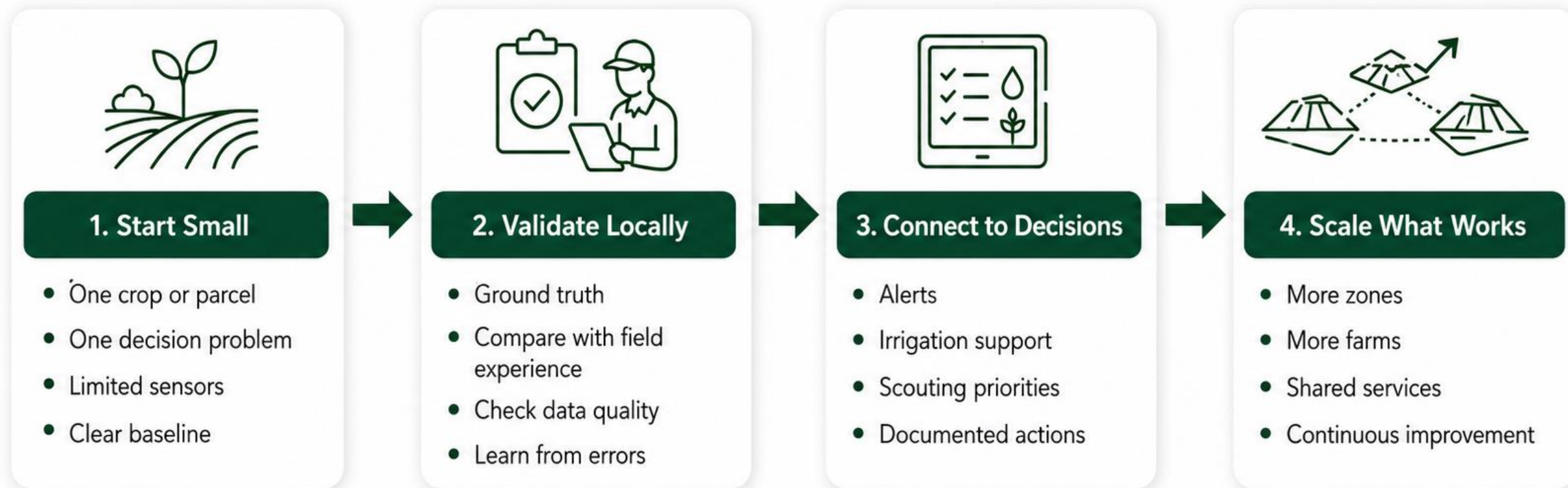
- Confidence levels
- Explainable alerts
- Safer prescriptions
- Better adoption



Automation should come after validation — not before it.

Implementation Roadmap for Producers: Start Small, Validate, Scale

Adoption works best when technology is introduced as a learning process, not as a one-time purchase.



Smart agriculture scales when producers trust the evidence, see the benefit and remain in control.

Scaling Smart Agriculture: From Farm Tools to Shared Services

The long-term opportunity is not only better tools on one farm, but connected services that can support many producers.



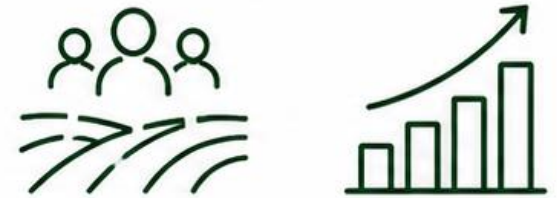
1. Farm-Level Solutions

- Sensors and local data
- Parcel-level decisions
- Crop-specific support
- Producer learning loop



2. Shared Digital Services

- Data platforms
- Models as a Service
- Common decision workflows
- Regional knowledge integration



3. Regional and Network Value

- More producers supported
- Lower adoption cost
- Faster knowledge transfer
- Continuous service improvement



The greatest impact comes when farm intelligence becomes a scalable, trusted service ecosystem.

Take-Home Messages: Turning Signals into Decisions

Smart agriculture creates value when it helps producers decide with confidence.

1. Start with decisions



- Define the problem first
- Choose data that supports action
- Avoid technology for its own sake

2. Connect the layers



- Sensors give time
- Remote sensing gives space
- Models turn patterns into meaning

3. Build trust before scale



- Validate locally
- Show uncertainty
- Keep producers in control



The future is not autonomous agriculture replacing producers – it is informed agriculture empowering them.

Discussion: From Your Fields to Your Decisions

How can these technologies support your crops, constraints and priorities?



Where is the pressure?

- Water
- Pests & diseases
- Labour
- Costs
- Climate variability



Which decision matters most?

- When to irrigate
- Where to scout
- When to treat
- How to prioritise
- What to document



What would make it useful?

- Simple outputs
- Local validation
- Clear uncertainty
- Affordable deployment
- Producer control



The best smart agriculture systems are built with producers, not just for producers.

Ficha Técnica

Designação do Projeto | AgroNet Forward – Digitalizar o agroalimentar do Douro Tâmega

Nº do projeto | 25447

Promotores |

ADCEIDT – Associação de Desenvolvimento, Criatividade, Empreendedorismo e Inovação do Douro Tâmega

UTAD - Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro

Aviso | COMPETE2030-2025-4

Designação do aviso | Ações Coletivas – Digitalização

Tipologia de Ação | Transição Digital das Empresas

Objetivos | Aproveitar as vantagens da digitalização para os cidadãos, as empresas, os organismos de investigação e as autoridades públicas (FEDER)

Edição e Conteúdos |



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From Sensors to Decisions: Emerging Technologies for Smart and Sustainable Agriculture

Dos Sensores à Decisão: Tecnologias Emergentes para uma Agricultura Inteligente e Sustentável

Joaquim João Sousa

18 junho 2026

