

Poster abstract presented at the

2nd International Conference on Integrated Approaches to Sustain and Improve Plant Production Under Drought Stress, September 24 -28, 2005, Rome, Italy.

**Effect of water deficit during flowering on growth and morpho-physiological responses  
in sesame (*Sesamum indicum* L.)**

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Session 5: Molecular and physiological bases of plant adaptation to drought-2

**Abstract**

Sesame (*Sesamum indicum* L.) is an oil-seed and cash crop with high nutritional and added values. In semi-arid Senegal where drought often occurs during crop development, its cultivation is recent and its promotion is largely recommended by the government for fighting against the poverty considering the high interest for the rural populations. The purpose of this study is to characterize the agro-physiological responses and identify potential screening criteria for selection for drought tolerance. Soil moisture ( $\theta_v$ ), leaf area index (LAI), mid-day leaf water potential ( $\psi_{md}$ ), the difference between canopy and air temperature (Tc-Ta), net photosynthesis (Pn) and maximal yield of photochemistry (ratio of  $F_v$  : variable fluorescence to  $F_m$  : maximum fluorescence =  $\Phi P_0$ ) were measured during flowering-capsule production stage. Water consumption, considering  $RET_{cycle}$  (real evapo-transpiration during the whole cycle), of 249 mm and 184 mm were recorded for well watered and stressed treatments respectively. After the with-holding of the irrigation, the decrease in  $\psi_{md}$  and Tc-Ta was noted earlier (18 Das) than in LAI (24 Das), Pn and  $\Phi P_0$  (28 Das). Low grain yield and number of capsule per plant were also induced by water deficit. Hence,  $\psi_{md}$ , Tc-Ta and chlorophyll a fluorescence considering  $\Phi P_0$  can be used as destructive ( $\psi_{md}$ ) and non-destructive (Tc-Ta,  $\Phi P_0$ ) tools respectively in screening for drought resistance in sesame.

**Keywords :** water deficit, responses, drought tolerance, sesame (*Sesamum indicum* L.), Senegal.