



1 Measurement of greenhouse gas fluxes in agricultural soils with a flexible, open-design
2 automated system

3 Franco-Luesma, Samuel^{1*}, Alonso-Ayuso, María^{1,2}, Wolf, Benjamin³, Latorre, Borja¹,
4 Álvaro-Fuentes, Jorge¹

5 ¹ Soil and Water Department, Experimental Station of Aula Dei, Spanish National Research Council
6 (CSIC), Zaragoza, Spain

7 ² Agricultural Technological Institute of Castilla y León, Valladolid, Spain.

8 ³ Institute of Meteorology and Climate Research, Atmos. Environ.al Research (IMK-IFU), Karlsruhe
9 Institute of Technology (KIT), Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

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13 *Corresponding author: sfrancoluesma@gmail.com

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17 Keywords:

18 Greenhouse gas emissions; manual chamber system; automated chamber system

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23 Abstract

24 Over the last decades and due to the current climate change situation, the study of the
25 impacts of human activities on climate has reached great importance, being agriculture one
26 of the main sources of soil greenhouse gas. There are different techniques to quantify the
27 soil gas fluxes, such as micrometeorological techniques or chamber techniques, being the
28 last one capable to assess different treatment at the same site. Manual chambers are the
29 most common one. However, due to the low sampling frequency, this approach cannot
30 resolve short-term emission events, like fertilization or rewetting. For this reason,
31 automated chamber systems are an opportunity to improve soil gas flux determination, but
32 their distribution is still scarce due to the cost and challenging technical implementation.
33 The objective of this study was to develop an automated chamber system for agricultural
34 systems under Mediterranean conditions and compare measured GHG flux rates to those
35 derived using manual chambers. A comparison between manual and automated chamber
36 systems was conducted to evaluate the soil gas fluxes obtained by the automated system.
37 Moreover, over a period of one month the soil gas fluxes were determined by both systems
38 to compare their capabilities to capture the temporal variability of soil gas emissions. The
39 automated system reported higher soil GHG fluxes compared to the manual chamber
40 system. Additionally, the higher sampling frequency of the automated chamber system
41 allowed for the capture of daily flux variations, resulting in a more accurate estimation of
42 cumulative soil gas emissions. The study emphasises the importance of chamber dimension
43 and shape, as well as sampling frequency, in the development of chamber systems,
44 especially when using the manual chamber system.



45 **1. Introduction**

46 Agriculture and land-use changes are significant contributors to climate change, accounting
47 for a quarter of total global emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) (IPCC, 2014). Moreover,
48 agricultural emissions are expected to increase along with food demand (Wiebe et al., 2019).
49 Microbial activity is ~~the main~~ responsible of the production and emission of the different soil GHG.
50 Microbial processes are influenced by several abiotic factors such as soil water content, soil
51 temperature or nutrient availability. The different farming practices – i.e. crop rotation,
52 fertilization, irrigation – have a significant impact on these factors, and, therefore, they can have a
53 great influence on soil GHG emissions (Oertel et al., 2016). By accurately measuring soil GHG
54 emissions, it is possible to identify the major sources and understand the impact associated with
55 various farming practices. This valuable information can be provided to policymakers and
56 regulators to develop science-based policies and regulations that incentivize farmers to adopt more
57 sustainable practices. Thus, measuring soil GHG emissions in agriculture is crucial to promote
58 sustainable farming practices, that can mitigate climate change.

59 The use of manual chambers is one of the most widespread methods for studying soil GHG
60 emissions ~~on a small spatial and temporal scale~~ (Collier et al., 2014). ~~These chambers~~ are designed
61 to establish an enclosed environment, facilitating the periodic collection of gases emitted from or
62 consumed in the soil ~~using syringes~~. Subsequently, the ~~gathered~~ gas samples are subjected to
63 laboratory analysis through gas chromatography (Harvey et al., 2020). These analyses determine
64 the concentration of GHG within the chamber headspace and allow the calculation of emission
65 rates based on the change in gas concentration over a given time span. This method is characterized
66 by its simplicity and versatility as ~~they~~ are relatively simple to use and can be employed across
67 diverse ecosystems and soil types (de Klein et al., 2020). Manual chambers are relatively simple
68 to construct and can be tailored to fit specific research requirements. Besides, compared to
69 alternative methods, they entail relatively low cost. However, they have as well some limitations.



70 For instance, their measurement frequency is restricted due to the time-intensive nature of manual
71 sampling and subsequent analysis, making high-frequency sampling impractical. Usually,
72 sampling frequency is not higher than one sampling per day, but it's well established that sampling
73 frequency affects annual GHG estimations (Barton et al., 2015). For this reason, efforts are often
74 concentrated on intense sampling frequencies during short periods (hours to days) when significant
75 emissions peaks are expected, but later, during the rest of the campaign, samplings are carried out
76 every 1 to 4 weeks (or even sometimes not considered). Another aspect to consider involves the
77 notable soil disruption caused when samples need to be collected, such as after an irrigation event.

78 In contrast to manual chambers, the utilization of automated chambers coupled with an in-
79 situ gas analyzer allows sampling at a higher temporal frequency. Consequently, these automated
80 systems more comprehensively capture temporal variations, enhancing insight into the dynamics
81 of soil GHG emissions on a daily and seasonal basis (Grace et al., 2020). Automation also ensures
82 capturing fluxes linked to unexpected events (such as rainstorms), obtaining data in areas of
83 difficult access, and reducing the impact of soil disturbance on measurements. However, this
84 method requires costly equipment and skilled operators, and implies different infrastructure
85 constraints. Over recent decades, several groups have crafted automated systems (Lognoul et al.,
86 2017, Lawrence and Hall, 2020).

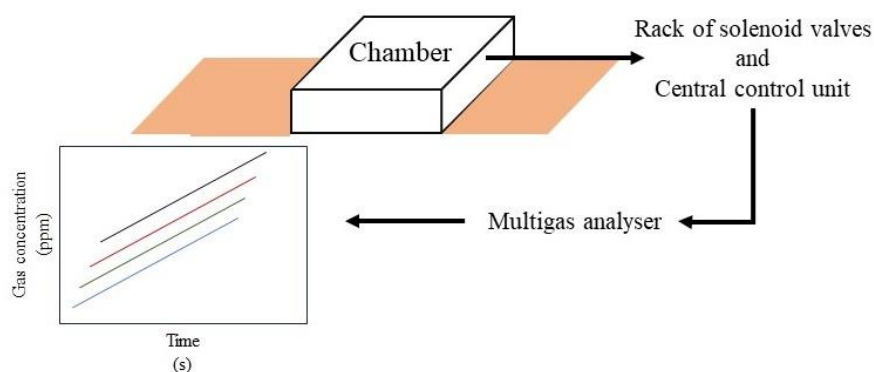
87 To date, the number of experiences using automated chambers coupled with in situ gas
88 analyzer under Mediterranean conditions is scarce (Forte et al., 2017, Ferrara et al., 2021, Isla et
89 al., 2022) and, as far as we have been able to find out, **none of these previous studies used chamber**
90 **systems consisting in a total of 12 individual chambers.** The objective of this paper is to present
91 an innovative non-commercial soil GHG measurement system based on automated chambers
92 linked to an in situ photoacoustic multigas analyzer and describe its operational details. ~~Besides, a~~
93 comparison between this automated system and the manual static chamber methodology is
94 **presented.**



95 **2. Materials and Methods**

96 **2.1. Automated system description**

97 In this section, we present an automated chamber system tailored for monitoring soil gas
98 emissions. By integrating openness, cost-effectiveness, and versatility, this system facilitates
99 precise and dynamic measurements of soil GHG fluxes. Our design principles focused on building
100 an adaptable configuration and real-time functionality, alluding to its potential importance in
101 agricultural and environmental research. The system consists of three main parts: the chambers,
102 the set of solenoid valves controlled by a computer (central control unit) and the multigas analyzer
103 (Figure 1).



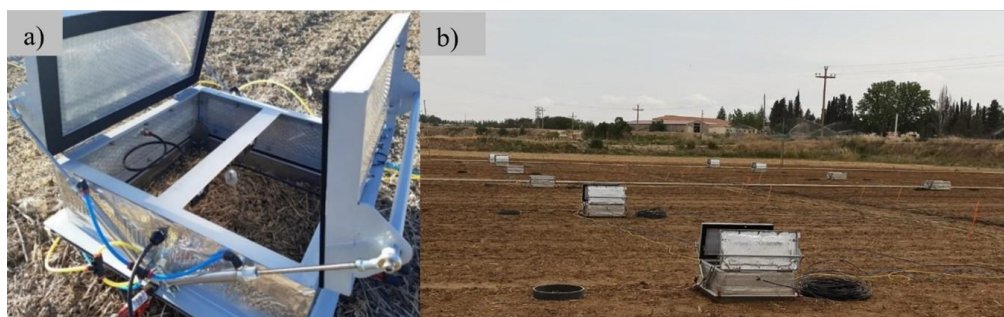
104 Figure 1. General scheme of the automated soil GHG measuring system.
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107 **2.2. Soil chamber design**

108 Soil chambers, ‘Queensland’ design, have been built following a model provided by the
109 Terrestrial Bio-Geo-Chemistry Division (Institute of Meteorology and Climate Research, Atmos.
110 Environ.al Research (IMK-IFU), Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)). Chambers consisted
111 of an aluminum structure of 0.50 x 0.50 m length and width and 0.15 m height closed with
112 methacrylate panels and two lids 0.50 x 0.25 m width and length that are controlled by four
113 pneumatic actuators, two per lid (Figure 2a). Besides, lids open at a 90° angle allowing rainfall or



114 irrigation water supply to reach the soil surface of the area covered by the chambers. All
115 methacrylate panels were coated with an aluminum bubble foil to keep the internal chamber
116 temperature homogeneous during the enclosure time. Moreover, a rubber seal was fixed to the lids
117 and the bottom part of each chamber to ensure a hermetic close and avoid gas leakage during the
118 sampling process.



119 Figure. 2. (a) Open automated chamber deployed in the field trial ('Queensland' design). (b) Set
120 of chambers deployed in the field trial. Dark rings next to chambers are the bases for manual
121 chambers.
122
123

124 The gas sample line (polyethylene coated aluminum tube, Eaton Sinflex. 6/4mm external
125 internal diameter, respectively) entered each chamber via one of the side panels, positioned
126 approximately halfway up. In the central area of the chamber, the tube was bent facing downwards
127 and the tip was protected by a small PVC funnel to prevent water condensation at the tube inlet. A
128 vent (matching the material and diameter of the gas sampling line) was positioned on the opposite
129 side panel to equalize pressure between the chamber's interior and exterior during flux
130 measurements. Moreover, each chamber has two small fans (60x60x25 mm 12V) to promote air
131 mixing inside the chamber.

132 Three chambers were equipped with a threaded cable gland on a lateral methacrylate panel
133 for mounting a thermistor (107, Campbell Scientific Ltd., UK) to monitor internal chamber
134 temperature. Chambers were attached by clamps to stainless steel bases (0.5 x 0,5 x 0.1) with sharp

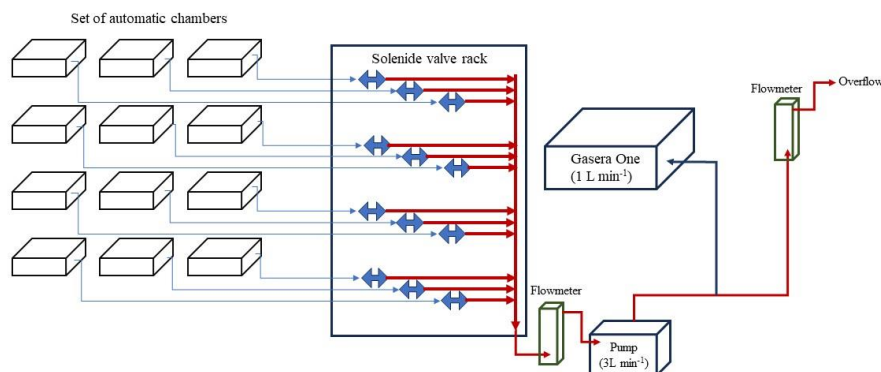


135 edges at the bottom that were inserted 0.10 m into the soil . Plants (crop and weeds) growing inside
136 the chambers were cut since the crop during this experiment was maize (*Zea mays* L.) (Figure 2b).

137

138 **2.3. Automated chamber operation**

139 The chambers opened and closed by means of pneumatic actuators. This setup comprised
140 an air compressor delivering pressure to the pneumatic actuators. Inside a shed located next to the
141 field trial, three solenoid valves installed in a panel, received air from the compressor (6 bar) and
142 directed compressed air to the chambers. Routing of compressed air was facilitated by an external
143 relay controller (8 relay board, 24V 6.5A, YWBL-WH) directly linked to the computer. In the
144 configuration of this study, three sets of four chambers each opened and closed simultaneously.
145 Similarly, each sampling line from each chamber was connected to a two-way solenoid valve that
146 regulated the entry of the gas sample from each of the chambers to the photoacoustic multi-gas
147 analyzer (Gasera One, Gasera Ltd, Finland). The two-way solenoid valves were connected to a
148 relay board (16 relay board, 24V 6.5A, YWBL-WH) that controlled which valve was activated
149 (Figure 3).



150

151 Figure. 3. Description of the automated chamber system.



152 To bring the gas from the chamber to the gas analyzer, an external diaphragm pump (KNF
153 NMP830KNDC 12V, KNF Neuberger, Inc, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany) was coupled to the
154 two-way solenoid valve bank. This pump continuously drew air from the activated sampling line,
155 maintaining a flow rate of 3 L min^{-1} . The gas analyzer (Analysis cell volume 30 mL) drew sample
156 gas from this primary line at a rate of 1 L min^{-1} for a duration of six seconds every one and a half
157 minutes (Figure 3c). Two flowmeters were attached to the main line. The initial one, positioned
158 after the pump and preceding the gas analyzer, regulated the gas flow delivered to the analyzer.
159 The second flowmeter ensured a continuous overflow greater than 1 L min^{-1} , guaranteeing
160 sufficient gas flow from the active sampling line to the gas analyzer (Figure 3). The solenoid valve
161 banks, pneumatic system, chamber sampling lines, and gas analyzer were all managed through a
162 custom script created using R statistical software version 4.2.2 (R Core Team, 2022).

163 The current setup consists of 3 blocks of four chambers each block. This configuration responds
164 to the needs of the current experimental design, however, since it is an open system, the
165 configuration is variable and can be individualised for each of the chambers.

166

167 ***2.4. Evaluation of the automated measurement system***

168 Over the last decade, the current research team members have successfully conducted
169 several GHG flux studies using a manual closed chamber system (Álvaro-Fuentes et al., 2016,
170 Franco-Luesma et al., 2019,2020a, 2020b, 2022). Based on that, an evaluation experiment was
171 carried out to compare the soil gas fluxes obtained via the newly developed automated chamber
172 system against the conventional manual chamber system used regularly by the research group.
173 This evaluation experiment was aimed to evaluate the impact of i) the chamber design and ii) the
174 sampling frequency and time on the differences in soil GHG fluxes between a manual and an
175 automated chamber measurement system.



176 Manual chambers consisted of a Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) cylinder of 0.315 m diameter
177 and 0.2 m height coated by white thermal paint to avoid internal air temperature increasing during
178 the deployed time. A rubber septum was affixed atop the chamber to enable gas sampling via a
179 plastic syringe equipped with a needle. Gas samples from each chamber were transferred to a 12
180 mL pre-evacuated glass vial (Exetainer Labco®). The concentrations of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O in the
181 gas samples were determined by gas chromatography Agilent 7890B (Agilent, Santa Clara, CA,
182 United States) equipped with an autosampler (PAL3 autosampler, Zwingen, Switzerland). Soil gas
183 fluxes were determined based on the increase of the gas concentration during the deployment
184 period. Further details of the gas chromatography method and manual chamber design ~~could~~
185 found in Franco-Luesma et al. (2022).

186 The evaluation experiment took place in a maize (*Zea mays* L.) field trial sown on
187 10/05/2023 under irrigation conditions. The soil is a *Typic Xerofluvent* (Soil Survey Staff, 2015)
188 with a silty loam texture, characterized by a basic pH of 8, a calcium carbonate content (CaCO₃)
189 of 48%, a total organic carbon content of 0.6% and a bulk density of 1.33 g cm⁻³ in the first 0.25
190 m soil depth. The area is characterized by a Mediterranean semiarid climate with a mean annual
191 air temperature of 14.1 °C, mean annual precipitation of 298 mm and mean annual reference
192 evapotranspiration (ET_o) of 1,243 mm.

193 The evaluation experiment had two different steps. The first step consisted of simultaneous
194 gas sampling with both manual and automated chamber systems on four different dates (i.e.
195 19/06/2023, 20/06/2023, 21/06/2023 and 28/06/2023). On June 19th and 20th, chambers were
196 sampled once during 06:00 to 07:30 GMT. On June 21st and June 28th, chambers were sampled
197 four times between 06:00 to 12:00 GMT. Consequently, a total of ten samplings were performed,
198 covering four different days and different hours of the day to capture the possible ~~diurnal~~
199 of soil gas emission.

200



201 In this short time experiment, two chambers of each block were selected to compared with
202 the manual chambers. The sampling sequence for the automated system was programmed to
203 sample each chamber every five minutes, with a total enclosure time of 28 minutes. However, due
204 to the sequence configuration, the computable time for determining the soil gas fluxes was 20
205 minutes as described in the sequence diagram (Figure S1). The two manual chambers of each block
206 were closed at the same time as the automated chamber and gas sampling was done at time 0 (first
207 automated chamber sampling), at time 10 minutes and at time 20 minutes (coinciding with the last
208 automated chamber sampling).

209 Finally, in order to complement the results obtained in the first step of the evaluation
210 experiment, a second step ~~consists of compared~~ the soil gas fluxes obtained by each ~~chamber~~
211 ~~system~~ for one month were carried out. For that propose, from 22 of May 2023 to 29 of June 2023,
212 soil CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O fluxes were measured by the manual and automated chamber systems, to
213 assess the impact of the sampling time (i.e. hour of the day) and sampling frequency on the
214 estimation of the soil gas fluxes.

215 During this period, the sampling frequency and configuration of the automated chamber
216 system was the same as it was used during the step one of the evaluation experiment. The twelve
217 chambers were grouped in three set of four chambers each, being sampling every five minutes for
218 28 minutes, resulting in a total of 5 sampling points per chamber (Figure S1). However, the
219 procedure followed in the manual chamber system was different and it consisted of the collection
220 of three gas samples at time 0, 20 and 40 minutes after closing the chamber. The sampling
221 frequency followed a daily frequency over the first five days and, afterwards, weekly
222 measurements till the end of the experiment. For both chamber systems, the measuring ~~instrument~~
223 (i.e. photoacoustic multi-gas analyzer and gas chromatography for automated and manual chamber
224 systems, respectively) were calibrated by using 4 different ultra-high purity gas standards
225 (Carbueros Metálicos, Barcelona, Spain, standard 1, 400 ppm CO₂, 1.5 ppm CH₄, 0.3 ppmN₂O,



226 standard 2, 800 ppm CO₂, 2 ppm CH₄, 1 ppmN₂O, standard 3, 1500 ppm CO₂, 4 ppm CH₄, 3
227 ppmN₂O, standard 4, 3000 ppm CO₂, 6 ppm CH₄, 6 ppmN₂O) in order to standardize the
228 concentration values obtained.

229

230 **2.5. Data analysis**

231 Soil gas flux (mg of gas m² day⁻¹) of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, i.e., f_{CO_2} , f_{CH_4} and f_{N_2O} was
232 calculated using the following equation (Eq. 1)

$$233 \quad f_{gas} = \frac{Fit * MW * p * h}{R * T} * fT * fU \quad (Eq. 1)$$

234 where *Fit* represents the increase of gas concentration in the chamber over the enclosure
235 time, *MW* is the molar weight of the atom in the gas molecule (i.e. 12 g mol⁻¹ for CO₂ and CH₄
236 and 28 g mol⁻¹ for N₂O), *p* is the atmospheric pressure in Pa, *h* is the chamber height in m, *R* is the
237 ideal gas constant in J K⁻¹ mol⁻¹, *T* is the chamber air temperature in K, *fT* is the correction factor
238 of time units, 1440 minutes day⁻¹ and *fU* is the unit correction factor, 10³. Cumulative soil CO₂,
239 CH₄ and N₂O emissions were calculated using the trapezoid rule (Levy et al., 2017). Comparison
240 between systems was done by linear fitting considering only soil gas fluxes that presented a R²
241 higher than 0.8. All analyses were done using the R **statistical software**.

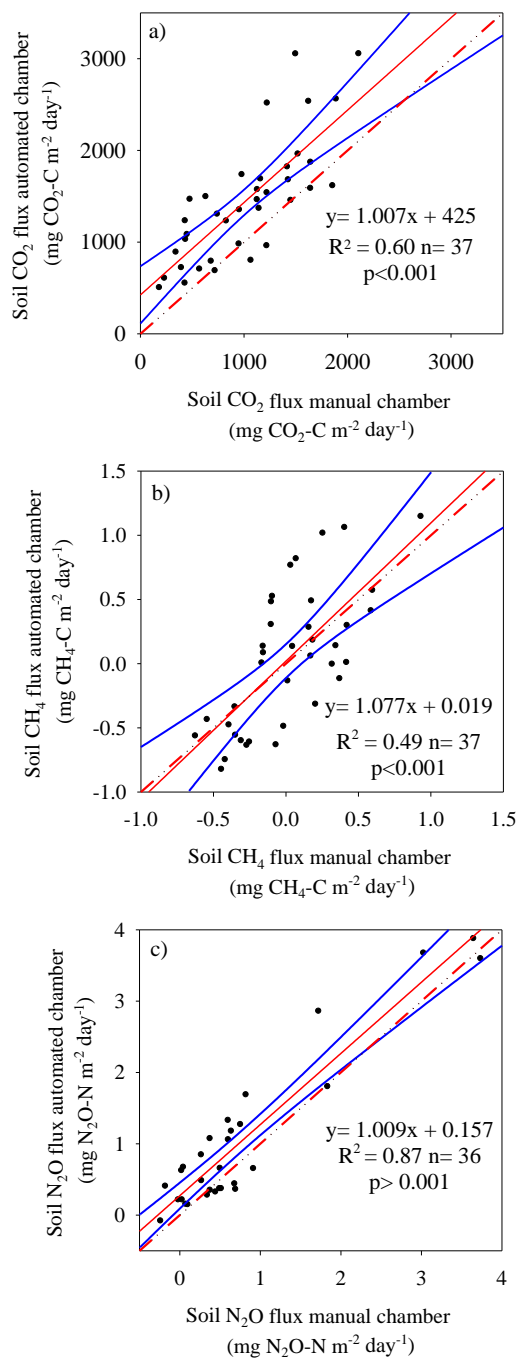
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243 **3. Results and Discussion**

244 **3.1. Automated system comparison**

245 The comparison between the automated and manual measurement systems showed a linear
246 response for the three gases compared. In the case of soil CO₂, the automated system presented an
247 average flux 58% greater compared to the manual system with a minimal flux difference of 425
248 mg CO₂-C m² day¹ (Figure 4a). Data exhibited moderate dispersion ($R^2=0.60$) revealing increased
249 accuracy when manual fluxes were ~~greater than~~ 500 mg CO₂-C m² day¹ (Figure 4a). Regarding
250 CH₄ fluxes, the automated chamber system showed values greater than the fluxes obtained in the
251 manual chamber system, showing a better fitting when fluxes were positive (Figure 4b). However,
252 the lowest data dispersion between both measurement systems was obtained for soil N₂O fluxes
253 ($R^2 > 0.87$) but as observed for the other two gases, the automated chamber system reported fluxes
254 values 40% greater than the manual chamber system (Figure 4c).



255
256 Figure 4. Comparison of soil gas flux between automated and manual chamber systems for carbon
257 dioxide (CO₂) fluxes (a), methane (CH₄) fluxes (b) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) fluxes (c). Blue solid
258 lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Red dotted lines represent 1:1 line.
259



260 These differences between both measurement systems in flux magnitude and for the three
261 studied gases may probably be a consequence of the different chamber shapes and dimensions ~~that~~
262 ~~presented both systems~~. Hoffmann et al. (2018) found that the shape and dimension of the chamber
263 have a significant effect on CO₂ fluxes, observing that small and cylindrical chambers tend to
264 result in higher underestimation of CO₂ fluxes compared with large and squared chambers. In line
265 with the previous authors, Pihlatie et al. (2013) also found a significant effect of the chamber shape
266 and dimension on soil CH₄ flux determination. Similarly, Rochette and Eriksen-Hamel (2008) also
267 concluded that chamber shape and dimensions are critical factors in the estimation of GHG fluxes.

268 All previous studies agreed that the area/perimeter ratio is a key factor in soil gas flux
269 estimation and, hence, they recommended a ratio greater than 0.10 m (Clough et al., 2020). In our
270 work, the two types of chambers compared presented different area/perimeter ratios with values
271 of 0.125 and 0.089 m for the automated and the manual chamber systems, respectively. This
272 difference in the area/perimeter ratio could explain the greater CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O fluxes measured
273 by the automated chamber system compared with the manual system. Moreover, the use of fans to
274 mix the internal air of the automated chambers might have also explained the higher fluxes
275 measured in this system compared with the manual system. Air-mixing by fans is ~~highly~~
276 recommended to homogenize the internal air of the chamber, ensuring that the air sample aliquot
277 is representative of the chamber headspace air (Clough et al., 2020).

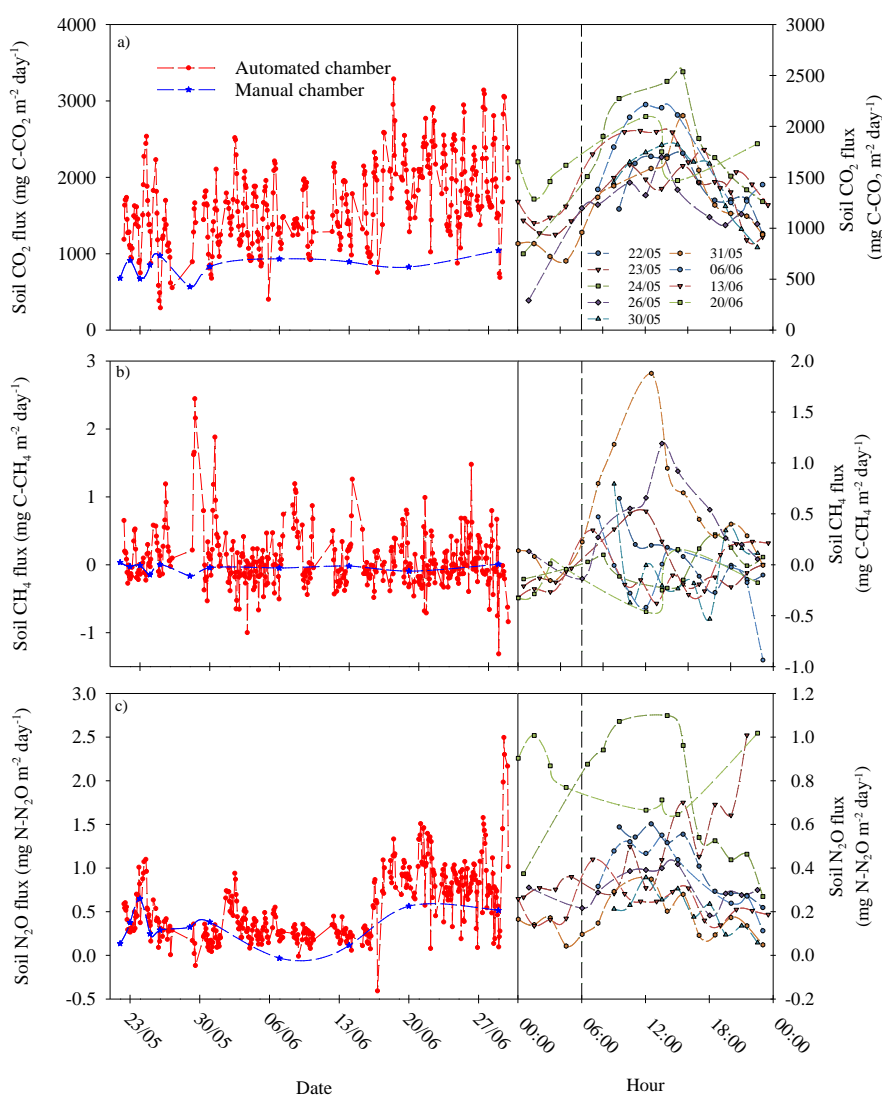
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279 ***3.2. Sampling time and frequency comparison***

280 The effect of sampling time and frequency on cumulative soil gas emissions was compared
281 between the automated and the manual measuring systems. This analysis was performed during
282 one month in which the automated chamber system ran continuously over the entire month, while
283 in the manual chamber system sampling was only performed on nine different dates.



284 As expected, the automated chamber system was able to capture daily flux fluctuations, a
 285 fact that was not possible for the manual chamber system, because only one gas sampling was
 286 done for each of the selected dates (Figure 5). However, when fluxes temporal dynamics for each
 287 gas were evaluated, it had been observed differences for each gas.



288 Figure 5. Comparison of soil gas flux and cumulative soil gas emissions between the automated
 289 (blue line and bar) and the manual (red line and bar) chamber system for carbon dioxide (CO₂)
 290 fluxes (a), methane (CH₄) fluxes (b) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) fluxes (c) (left panel), and daily soil
 291 flux of the automated chamber systems on nine different dates. Vertical dotted line indicates
 292 manual sampling hour (i.e., 6 am) (right panel).
 293



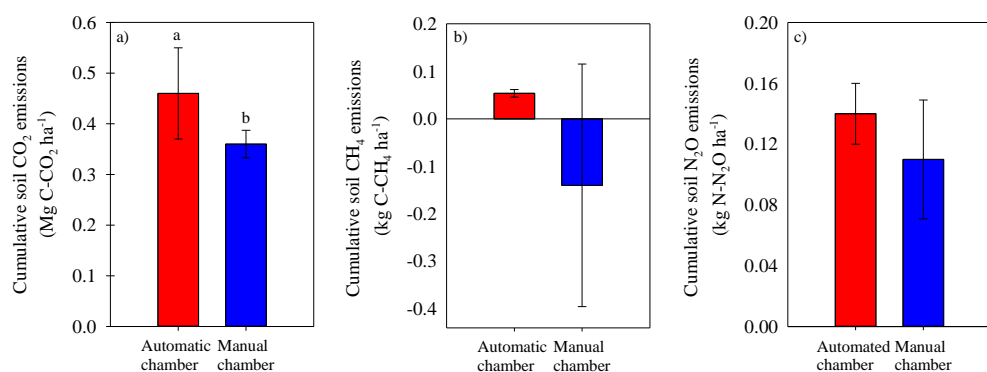
294 Soil CO₂ and CH₄ fluxes determined by the manual chamber system showed similar
295 behaviour, presenting a low variation in the fluxes magnitude over the evaluated period, being
296 more pronounced for soil CH₄ fluxes (Figure 5a, 5b). For example, this was clearly observed in
297 the CH₄ in which the automated system captured flux peaks **greater than** 2 mg CH₄-C m⁻² day⁻¹
298 while the manual fluxes ~~kept~~ close to 0 mg CH₄-C m⁻² day⁻¹ over the entire measuring period
299 (Figure 5b). Interestingly, the manual system was able to capture the temporal emission trend
300 shown by the automated system for soil N₂O fluxes, the gas that showed the greatest temporal
301 variability over the period studied (Figure 5c).

302 Moreover, when the daily emission pattern of the automated chamber was evaluated for
303 the manual sampling dates, it was observed that soil CO₂ fluxes presented the maximum fluxes
304 rate between 12:00 and 16:00 GMT, a daily pattern similar to the results reported by Pumpanen et
305 al. (2003) and Yu et al. (2013). The maximum soil CO₂ fluxes of one day were a factor of three
306 higher than the minimum fluxes measured (Figure 5a). Differences between the maximum and the
307 minimum CH₄ fluxes were lower since soil CH₄ fluxes only ranged between -0.5 to 0.5 mg CH₄-
308 C m⁻² day⁻¹ for most of the nine selected dates, expected for May 26th and 31st when soil CH₄
309 fluxes above 1 mg CH₄-C m⁻² day⁻¹ were observed at midday (Figure 5b).

310 Soil N₂O fluxes also presented a daily emission pattern characterized by reaching the
311 maximum soil N₂O from 08:00 to 16:00 GMT and the minimum during nighttime, but not being
312 as clear as emission pattern observed for soil CO₂ fluxes (Figure 5c). This daily emission pattern
313 was also observed by Wu et al. (2021) in a metanalysis which evaluated global daily N₂O emission
314 patterns. A possible explanation to the daily pattern observed in all three gases would be the
315 temperature dependence of the biological process that governs the production and emission of soil
316 GHG (Lloyd and Taylor, 1994, Smith and Dobbie, 2001, Davidson and Janssens, 2006.). This
317 dependence would explain the higher emissions observed during daytime compared to nighttime
318 (Fig. 5c).



319 The cumulative soil gas emissions of the three gases tended to be greater for the automated
 320 than the manual measuring system (Fig. 6). For example, cumulative soil CO₂ emissions presented
 321 significant differences between both sampling systems. The automated chamber system showed
 322 average values 16% more than the manual chamber system (Fig 6a). Indeed, this difference was
 323 even greater in CH₄ (more than 3-fold greater cumulative emissions in the automated than in the
 324 manual measuring system, Fig. 6b). Cumulative CH₄ emissions showed positive values for the
 325 automated chamber system while the average value for the manual chamber system was negative.
 326 However, the variability observed for the manual chamber system was 10 times greater rather than
 327 for the automated chamber system, a fact that resulted in the absence of significant differences
 328 between both sampling systems. Cumulative soil N₂O emissions did not show significant
 329 differences between sampling systems despite that the average cumulative N₂O emissions were
 330 20% greater for the automated chamber system (Fig. 6c). As occurred with cumulative CH₄
 331 emissions, the manual chamber system showed a greater variability than the automatic chamber
 332 system, reason that could explain the absence of significant differences between sampling systems.



333
 334 Figure 6. Comparison of soil cumulative soil gas emissions between the automated (blue bar) and
 335 the manual (red bar) chamber system for carbon dioxide (CO₂) (a), methane (CH₄) (b) and nitrous
 336 oxide (N₂O) (c). Error bars represent standard error. Different letters indicate significant
 337 differences at $p < 0.05$.
 338



339 Differences in the different cumulative emissions found between measuring systems might
340 have been explained by the next three points: (i) construction differences, (ii) the sampling time in
341 the manual system, and (iii) the height/enclosure time ratio (Clough et al., 2020). The automated
342 chamber presented higher area/perimeter ratios and air-mixing by fans which could contribute to
343 the greater fluxes found in this system compared with the manual system. Regarding the sampling
344 time, this was especially critical for CO₂ and CH₄. For both gases, manual sampling was performed
345 at 06:00 GMT, resulting in an underestimation of the average daily emission (Pumpanen et al.,
346 2003, Yu et al., 2013). In contrast, for N₂O, underestimation was lower since 06:00 GMT is
347 considered a sampling time close to the optimal time for this gas (Wu et al., 2021). Finally,
348 height/enclosure time ratio is also an important factor that affect the sensibility of the flux
349 determination. As a recommendation, height/enclosure time ratio greater than 0.40 m hour⁻¹ is
350 suggested to increase the minimum detectable flux and to reduce the impacts on air humidity,
351 temperature and the gas diffusion process, variables that govern the soil gas fluxes between soil
352 and atmosphere (Clough et al., 2020). In our study, the automated system resulted in
353 height/enclosure ratios of 0.60 m hour⁻¹, while in the manual system the ratios dropped to 0.30 m
354 hour⁻¹, explaining the lower cumulative emissions reported by the manual system.

355



356 **4. Conclusion**

357 The presented system features an open design, cost-effective components, and adaptable
358 configuration, offering benefits in flexibility, compatibility, and affordability, which in the end
359 resulted in a more precise monitoring of the time flux variability. Moreover, it has been highlighted
360 that the shape, dimension, and configuration of the chamber system are critical factors that must
361 be considered in the design of the chambers, being critical in setting area/perimeter and
362 height/enclosure time ratios greater than 0.10m and 0.40m h⁻¹, respectively. Likewise, in case there
363 is not option to implement an automated system, the sampling time of the manual measuring
364 system is critical resulting in significant over or underestimation. Our results showed that
365 06:00GMT was an optimal sampling time for soil N₂O emissions but resulted in an
366 underestimation of soil CO₂ and CH₄ emissions. Therefore, based on the results presented in this
367 work, automated chamber systems are a powerful tool for quantifying GHG fluxes from the soil,
368 allowing to capture the large temporal variability that characterizes them. Moreover, open
369 configuration systems, such as the one presented in this study, are more suitable for use in
370 agricultural systems, allowing the number of chambers to be easily modified to cover as much
371 variability as possible.

372



373 **Data availability**

374 All raw data can be provided by the corresponding authors upon request.

375

376 **Author contributions**

377 SF-L: Conceptualization, formal analysis, software, data acquisition, writing—original draft, data
378 curation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation. MA-A: Conceptualization, methodology,
379 writing—review; editing. BW: Writing—review. BL: Conceptualization ,methodology, software,
380 writing—review, funding acquisition. JA-F: Conceptualization ,methodology, writing—review;
381 editing, supervision, project administration, resources, funding acquisition

382

383 **Competing interests**

384 The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

385

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