Accepted Manuscript

Contribution of old wheat varieties to climate change mitigation under contrasting managements and rainfed Mediterranean conditions

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PII: S0959-6526(18)31534-8

DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.05.188

Reference: JCLP 13045

To appear in: Journal of Cleaner Production

Received Date: 27 November 2017

Revised Date: 25 April 2018

Accepted Date: 22 May 2018

Please cite this article as: Carranza-Gallego G, Guzmán GI, García-Ruíz R, González de Molina M, Aguilera E, Contribution of old wheat varieties to climate change mitigation under contrasting managements and rainfed Mediterranean conditions, *Journal of Cleaner Production* (2018), doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.05.188.

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

1 9588 words

2 Contribution of old wheat varieties to climate change mitigation under contrasting

- 3 managements and rainfed Mediterranean conditions
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11 Abstract

12 Agriculture represents about 11% of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (GHGe). Many climate change mitigation strategies have been evaluated in Mediterranean 13 agroecosystems, including their soil organic carbon sequestration potential. High residue 14 yielding old varieties could constitute a useful alternative, especially for organic farming, 15 16 which lacks specific genetic material. In this study, old and modern wheat varieties were 17 evaluated under organic (ORG) and conventional (CON) management during a 3-year field experiment under rainfed Mediterranean conditions. Field measurements of biomass 18 components, literature emission factors, and soil organic carbon modeling were combined in 19 20 an attributional Life Cycle Assessment, in order to estimate GHGe from "cradle to farm gate". The resulting yield-based carbon footprints of old wheat varieties were significantly lower 21 than those of modern varieties both under CON management, decreasing from 263 to 144 g 22 CO₂e kg⁻¹, and under ORG management, decreasing from 29 to -43 g CO₂e kg⁻¹. Our results 23 indicate that climate change mitigation strategies in Mediterranean rainfed cereal cropping 24 25 systems should focus on diminishing GHGe from machinery and fertilizer use, and promoting carbon sequestration. The combination of organic management and old cereal varieties can 26 27 constitute a promising climate change mitigation strategy in these systems, as low area-

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