Establishing the Capability of a 1D SVAT Modelling Scheme in Predicting Key Biophysical Vegetation Characterisation Parameters

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Sensitivity analysis (SA) consists of an integral and important validatory check of a computer simulation model before it is used to perform any kind of analysis.

In the present work, we present the results from a SA performed on the SimSphere Soil Vegetation Atmosphere Transfer (SVAT) model utilising a cutting edge and robust Global Sensitivity Analysis (GSA) approach, based on the use of the Gaussian Emulation Machine for Sensitivity Analysis (GEM-SA) tool. The sensitivity of the following model outputs was evaluated: the ambient CO$_2$ concentration and the rate of CO$_2$ uptake by the plant, the ambient O$_3$ concentration, the flux of O$_3$ from the air to the plant/soil boundary, and the flux of O$_3$ taken up by the plant alone.

The most sensitive model inputs for the majority of model outputs were related to the structural properties of vegetation, namely, the Leaf Area Index, Fractional Vegetation Cover, Cuticle Resistance and Vegetation Height. External CO$_2$ in the leaf and the O$_3$ concentration in the air input parameters also exhibited significant influence on model outputs. This work presents a very important step towards an all-inclusive evaluation of SimSphere. Indeed, results from this study contribute decisively towards establishing its capability as a useful teaching and research tool in modelling Earth’s land surface interactions. This is of considerable importance in the light of the rapidly expanding use of this model worldwide, which also includes research conducted by various Space Agencies examining its synergistic use with Earth Observation data towards the development of operational products at a global scale.

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