

Interactive comment on “The use of semi-structured interviews for the characterisation of farmer irrigation practices” by J. O’Keeffe et al.

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Dear Kerry,

Thank you for taking the time to go through the paper in detail.

The approach used in this paper is presented as a way of collecting useful information on water use in regions where data is scarce and the resources for investigation are limited. To get a realistic impression of the behaviours of water users, a mixture of information describing the reasons behind the practices, as well as their numerical values is required. Our methodology is designed to collect this data in tandem, thereby producing a data set containing both qualitative and quantitative data. I agree that this is not a textbook qualitative or quantitative study, but as a significant volume of

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qualitative data was collected, it was felt appropriate to highlight this. We describe a method for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, not as exclusively either or. Indeed according to Creswell (2005) “..the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” which is the view we took when designing this methodology.

The sampling approach described was adopted due to a lack of detailed information on the region under investigation. Purposive sampling was used to focus on regions most likely to provide the richest data, with random sampling carried out within these regions to reduce bias. Whilst we are aware that the sampling approach for semi-structured interviews tends not to aim to achieve a representative sample; in our study we opted to use semi-structured interviews as a tool for obtaining data in the field. Indeed one of the main points of this paper is to demonstrate that methodologies and sampling procedures can be adapted to the needs of the environment. In our case study we chose to acquire information verbally through the use of translators; with limited time and budget. Therefore this methodology was deemed fitting and appropriate for exploratory study. Statistical analyses were carried out on the quantitative data extracted from the semi-structured interviews (in conjunction with thematic analyses of the qualitative data).

Our understanding of a semi-structured interview is a series of open-ended questions which allow the interviewee to expand on the issues of most importance to them in their own words. All interviews undertaken as part of the case study followed this approach and while the sampling procedure and data analyses may differ from the standard protocol to which you make reference, we feel it appropriate to refer to the interviews as semi-structured.

Overall, we do not try to present this work as qualitative or quantitative, but instead as a mixed-methods approach which could be useful to hydrologists collecting preliminary field information in data scarce regions. In any future iterations of the paper, the methodology section will contain a more clearly defined explanation of our references

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to qualitative and quantitative. We hope this will satisfy any social scientists who read the work.

Thank you again for highlighting these points, we have found your comments very useful.

References: Creswell, J. W. 2005. Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Sage, London, UK.

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