



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT
YIELD AT HILLY FARMS OF CAMERON HIGHLANDS, MALAYSIA***

NURADDEEN MUKHTAR NASIDI

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By

NURADDEEN MUKHTAR NASIDI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Philosophy**

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DEDICATION

This PhD thesis is dedicated to my parents Malam Mukhtar Alhaji Nasidi and Maimuna Ahmad Baffa (Late), my wife Hadiza Mustapha Balarabe and my two children Ahmad and Ibrahim for their care, love, prayers, and support. Also, this Thesis is dedicated to my brothers and sisters – Karamat (gwaggo), Abulhameed (Baba karami), Nafisat, Aliyu, Imamu, Surayya, Ahmad and Hafsat.



Abstract of the thesis presented to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT YIELD AT HILLY FARMS OF CAMERON HIGHLANDS, MALAYSIA

By

NURADDEEN MUKHTAR NASIDI

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Chairman : Aimrun Wayayok, PhD
Faculty : Engineering

Soil erosion is one of the major environmental problems worldwide and is becoming serious limiting factor for crop production everywhere. It seriously impacts crop productivity by removing topmost soils and results into devastating almost irreversible damages. In Cameron Highlands, soil erosion has been a major environmental issue causing huge loss of agricultural soil and increasing rates of landslides. Recent studies and field surveys have reported that there is excessive soil erosion in Cameron Highlands with increasing risk of erosion-induced landslides and sedimentation of major water reservoirs. The purpose of this study was to project soil erosion and sediment yields to 2050s (2040-2069) and 2080s (2070-2099) under different climate change impact scenarios. The objective was also, to evaluate effectiveness of erosion control best management practices (BMPs) toward minimizing the potential soil erosion in Cameron Highlands using Global Circulation Models (GCMs) and four Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs). To achieve this, precipitation datasets were obtained from World Data Center for Climate and downscaled using 30 years observed local precipitation data. intensity-frequency-duration (IDF) curves were constructed for current and future 2050s and 2080s scenarios. The rainfall trend was analyzed using Mann-Kendall and Sense' slope tests at 5% significance level. Soil erosion was assessed using Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) model. Moreover, soil erodibility (K-factor) was developed through combination of field survey and existing soil series. Furthermore, crop management (C-factor) was established for current and future scenarios using Land Change Modeler (LCM) embedded in TerrSet software. Landsat 7 and 8 images were analyzed using IDRISI image processing software and simulated future land use scenarios by applying Markov Chain model. Furthermore, field experiments on erosion control BMPs were conducted at Cameron Highlands farm using three varieties of mustard crop (Green Apex 5502, Luckett 9116 and Little Princess 822) sown under both open and sheltered farms.

The study revealed that performance of precipitation model indicated by KGE, NSE, RMSE, SE, MAE, and MBE, are 0.64, 0.27, 1.25, 0.37, 1.63 and 0.15, respectively. The simulated precipitations were found to increase relative to baseline period by 6.8%, 12.9%, 20% and 37% for 2050s; 16.1%, 28.6%, 39.2% and 42.3% for 2080s under RCP2.6, RCP4.5, RCP6.0 and RCP8.5 scenarios, respectively. Projected IDF curves were found greater than the baseline condition under 2, 5, and 20 years return periods. The highest erosivity (R-factor) of $6,039 \text{ MJ mm ha}^{-1} \text{ hr}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ was found at Tanah Rata sub-catchment by 2080s under RCP8.5 scenario, which indicated 83% increase relative to baseline. Moreover, spatial variation of K-factor was found ranged from 0.00113 to 0.01613. The erosion projection showed that severe to extreme forms of soil erosion ($>50 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$) will occupy 12.44% of the study catchment, with highest annual soil loss of $1.71 \times 10^6 \text{ ton}$ by 2080s under RCP8.5 scenario. Similarly, the corresponding severe sediment yields will be $243,061 \text{ t ha}^{-1} \text{ year}^{-1}$ which represents 57.6% of total soil loss by 2080s under RCP8.5 scenario. Sediment Delivery Ratio (SDR) was computed as 0.208 which signifies the fraction of soil loss deposited outside the study watershed. The field experiments revealed highly significant effect of three BMPs (terracing, sediment trap and waste management) on sediment yields generation in both open and sheltered farms. It has been presented that, largest sediment yields of 13.9 ton/ha, 14.2 ton/ha and 14.5 ton/ha are collected from open farm control plots sown with Green Apex 5502, Luckett 9116 and Little Princess 822, respectively. However, the application of the control BMPs achieved high sediment reductions of 53.8%, 54%, and 52.3%, under terracing, sediment trap and waste management, respectively. In the other hand, the sheltered farm BMPs achieved more sediment reductions of 65.4%, 59%, and 53.8% under terracing, sediment trap and waste management, respectively. Additionally, the crop yield performance shows a significant effect of the varieties of mustard, but not with the types of farms, on total sediment yields. It is noted that, nutrients loss in the runoff is a crucial factor of crop cultivation, however, this study did not evaluate it due to complexity of the work. In general, the study simulated the impact of climate change on erosion and sediment yields at Cameron Highlands and revealed the effects of control BMPs under both sheltered and open farms. This information is essential toward reducing large amount of predicted soil loss due to effect of climate change and will support the management and policies makers to design effective soil conservation measures.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN PERUBAHAN IKLIM TERHADAP HAKISAN TANAH DAN HASIL
ENDAPAN DI LADANG TANAH TINGGI CAMERON HIGHLANDS,
MALAYSIA**

Oleh

NURADDEEN MUKHTAR NASIDI

Disember 2020

Pengerusi : Aimrun Wayayok, PhD
Fakulti : Kejuruteraan

Hakisan tanah adalah salah satu masalah persekitaran utama di seluruh dunia dan menjadi faktor pembatas serius bagi pengeluaran tanaman di mana sahaja. Ini memberi kesan serius terhadap produktiviti tanaman dengan membuang tanah paling atas dan mengakibatkan kerosakan yang hampir tidak dapat dipulihkan. Di Tanah Tinggi Cameron Highlands, hakisan tanah telah menjadi isu utama persekitaran yang menyebabkan kehilangan tanah pertanian yang besar dan peningkatan kadar tanah runtuh. Kajian dan tinjauan lapangan baru-baru ini melaporkan bahawa terdapat hakisan tanah yang berlebihan di Tanah Tinggi Cameron Highlands dengan peningkatan risiko tanah runtuh yang disebabkan oleh hakisan. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk membuat unjuran hakisan tanah dan hasil endapan hingga 2050-an (2040-2069) dan 2080-an (2070-2099) di bawah senario kesan perubahan iklim yang berbeza. Juga, untuk menilai keberkesanan amalan pengurusan terbaik (BMP) bagi pengawalan hakisan ke arah meminimumkan potensi hakisan tanah di Cameron Highlands menggunakan Model Peredaran Global (GCM) dan empat laluan tumpuan perwakilan (RCP). Untuk mencapainya, set data hujan diperoleh dari Pusat Data Iklim Dunia, dan disahkan menggunakan data hujan tempatan yang diperhatikan selama 30 tahun. Kemudian, keluk intensiti-frekuensi-tempoh (IDF) dibina untuk senario 2050s dan 2080s semasa dan akan datang. Trend curah hujan dianalisis menggunakan ujian cerun Mann-Kendall dan Sense pada tahap signifikan 5%. Hakisan tanah dinilai menggunakan model semakan persamaan kehilangan tanah universal (RUSLE). Terutamanya, erodibiliti tanah (faktor K) dikembangkan melalui gabungan tinjauan lapangan dan siri tanah yang sedia ada. Selanjutnya, pengurusan tanaman (C-factor) dibuat untuk senario semasa dan masa depan menggunakan Land Change Modeler (LCM) yang tertanam dalam perisian TerrSet.

Gambar satelit Landsat 7 dan 8 dianalisis menggunakan perisian pemprosesan gambar IDRISI dan mensimulasikan senario penggunaan tanah masa depan dengan menggunakan model Markov Chain. Selanjutnya, eksperimen lapangan BMP untuk kawalan hakisan dilakukan di Cameron Highlands menggunakan tiga jenis tanaman sawi (Green Apex 5502, Luckett 9116 dan Little Princess 822) yang disemai di ladang terbuka dan terlindung. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa, prestasi model ensemble hujan menggunakan KGE, NSE, RMSE, SE, MBE, dan MAE masing-masing adalah 0.64, 0.27, 1.25, 0.37, 1.63, dan 0.15. Penetapan simulasi didapati meningkat berbanding tempoh awal sebanyak 6.8%, 12.9%, 20% dan 37% untuk 2050-an dan 16.1%, 28.6%, 39.2% dan 42.3% untuk 2080s di bawah senario RCP2.6, RCP4.5, RCP6.0 dan RCP8.5 masing-masing. Lekuk IDF yang diunjurkan didapati lebih besar daripada keadaan asas di bawah 2, 5, dan 20 tahun tempoh ulangan. Erosiviti hujan tertinggi (faktor R) adalah $6,039 \text{ MJ mm ha}^{-1} \text{ jam}^{-1} \text{ tahun}^{-1}$ dijumpai di tadahan Tanah Rata pada tahun 2080s di bawah senario RCP8.5 yang menunjukkan peningkatan 83% berbanding dengan garis dasar. Variasi spasial faktor K didapati antara 0.00113 hingga 0.01613. Unjuran menunjukkan hakisan tanah yang teruk hingga melampau ($>50 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$) akan meliputi 12.44% kawasan tadahan kajian ini dengan kehilangan tanah tahunan yang tinggi sebanyak $1.71 \times 10^6 \text{ tan}$ menjelang tahun 2080-an di bawah senario RCP8.5. Begitu juga, hasil endapan yang teruk akan menjadi $243,061 \text{ t ha}^{-1} \text{ year}^{-1}$ yang meliputi 57.6% daripada jumlah kehilangan tanah pada tahun 2080-an di bawah senario RCP8.5. Nisbah penghantaran endapan (SDR) yang dikira adalah 0.208 yang menandakan pecahan kehilangan tanah yang disimpan di luar kawasan kajian. Eksperimen lapangan menunjukkan kesan yang sangat signifikan dari tiga BMP (teras, perangkap endapan dan pengurusan sisa) terhadap penghasilan hasil endapan di ladang terbuka dan terlindung. Seperti maklumat diatas, hasil endapan terbesar ialah 13.9, 14.2 dan 14.5 tan/ha dikumpulkan dari plot kawalan ladang terbuka yang ditaburkan masing-masing dengan Green Apex 5502, Luckett 9116 dan Little Princess 822. Walau bagaimanapun, penerapan BMP kawalan mencapai penurunan endapan tertinggi masing-masing sebanyak 53.8%, 54%, dan 52.3%, di bawah teras, perangkap sedimen dan pengurusan sisa. Sebaliknya, BMP ladang terlindung memperoleh pengurangan lebih banyak endapan sebanyak 61.8%, 55.4%, dan 46.5% di bawah teras, perangkap endapan dan pengurusan sisa. Selain itu, prestasi hasil tanaman menunjukkan kesan yang signifikan dari jenis mustard, tetapi tidak dengan jenis ladang, terhadap jumlah hasil endapan. Secara umum, kajian ini mensimulasikan kesan perubahan iklim terhadap hakisan dan hasil endapan di Cammeron Highlands dan mendedahkan kesan kawalan BMP di ladang terlindung dan terbuka. Maklumat ini penting untuk mengurangkan sejumlah besar kehilangan tanah yang diramalkan kerana kesan perubahan iklim dan akan membantu pihak pengurusan dan pembuat dasar untuk merancang langkah-langkah pemuliharaan tanah yang berkesan.

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Aimrun Wayayok, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Engineering
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairperson)

Ahmad Fikri Abdullah, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Engineering
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Muhamad Saufi Mohd Kassim, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Engineering
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ZALILAH MOHD SHARIFF, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 11 March 2021

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANN	Artificial Neural Network
AR5	Fifth Assessment Report
ASAE	American Society of Agricultural Engineers
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CDF	Cumulative Distribution Function
CMIP5	Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 5
DEM	Digital Elevation Model
DID	Department of Irrigation and Drainage
ESCP	Erosion and Sediment Control Planning
ESDAC	European Soil Erosion Data Center
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GCM	Global Circulation Model
GEV	Generalized Extreme Values
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GIS	Geographic Information System
IDF	Intensity-Duration-Frequency
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change
LCM	Land Change Modeler
LS	Slope Length and Steepness
LULC	Land Use and Land Cover
MAE	Mean Absolute Error
MBE	Mean Bias Error
NSE	Nash-Sutcliffe Efficiency
OM	Organic Matter
Pg	Petagram (=10 ⁹ ton)
KGE	Kling-Gupta Efficiency
RCM	Regional Climate Model
RCP	Representative Concentration Pathway
RF	Radiative Forcing
RMSE	Root Mean Square Error

ROC	Relative Operating Characteristics
RUSLE	Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation
SDR	Sediment Delivery Ratio
SE	Standard Error
SEDD	Sediment Delivery Distributed
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRES	Special Report on Emission Scenarios
SWAT	Soil and Water Assessment Tools
SY	Sediment Yield
TSL	Tolerable Soil Loss
UNEP	United Nation Environment Program
USGS	United State Geological Survey
USLE	Universal Soil Loss Equation
WDCC	World Data Center for Climate
WEPP	Watershed Erosion Prediction Project
WMO	World Metrological Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Approximately one third of global agricultural land (i.e. about 2 billion hectares of land) has been affected by soil degradation, in which water and wind erosion account for 56% and 28% damages, respectively (Oldeman et al., 1995). Whereas nearly 80% of the world's agricultural land is affected by moderate to extreme erosion, with only 10% estimated to be at a mild erosion rate (Lal, 1994). It is also reported that 10 million hectares of cropland globally have been lost every year due to soil erosion (Pimentel, 2006). In conjunction with increasing human population size, this figure is expected to be much higher at present (Lal, 1994; Pimentel, 2006). Across Africa, Asia and Latin America, where the majority of the population is dependent on agriculture, soil erosion could be serious threat for food production (Amundson et al., 2015; González-Morales et al., 2018; Oldeman et al., 1995; Hongfen Teng et al., 2018; L. Xu et al., 2012). This problem will continue to persist throughout 21st century (Hurni et al., 2005). Figure 1.1 presents global soil erosion map developed by Joint Research Centre of European Commission under European Soil Erosion Data Center (ESDAC) in 2012.

Soil erosion become one of the major environmental issues worldwide which seriously reduces potentials for crop production everywhere (Correa et al., 2016; Douglas, 1987; Gholami et al., 2018; González-Morales et al., 2018; Mondal et al., 2016; Nicu & Asăndulesei, 2018; D. P. Shrestha & Jetten, 2018; Smetanová et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2019). Soil erosion phenomenon constitutes three main processes: the detachment of individual particle from soil mass, transportation of the detached particles by erosive agents such as wind or water and deposition of those particles as sediments when the erosive agent lost energy to sustain the movement (Royston Morgan & Philip, 2009). Thus, soil erosion affects ecology negatively and result into reduced available lands and other natural resources. This include: crop productivity reduction, water pollution, lower effective capacity of water reservoirs, increases the risk of flooding, landslides and habitat destruction (Prasannakumar et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2016; Xu, et al., 2012). Therefore, erosion is a natural geological phenomenon which occur as a resulting of removal of soil particles by water or wind, transporting them elsewhere.

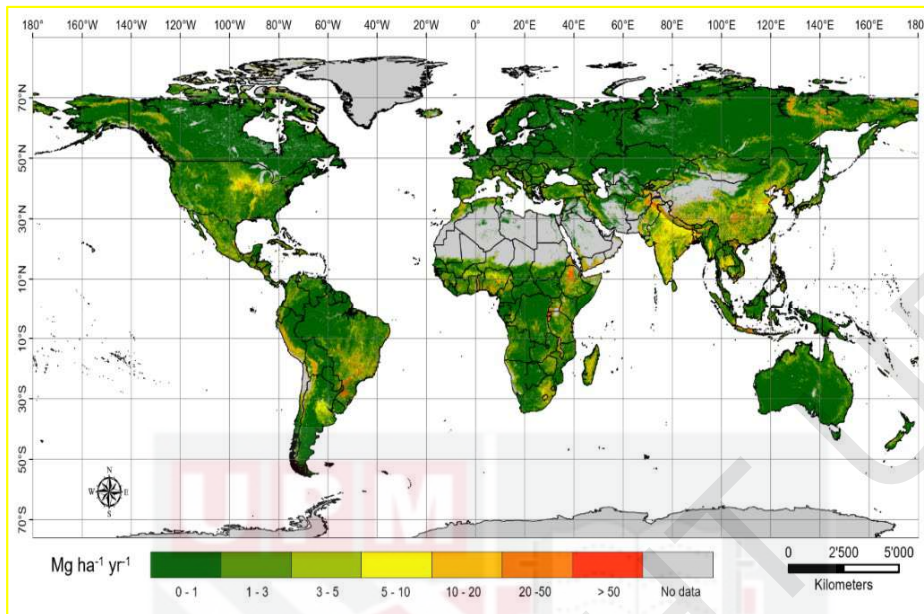


Figure 1.1 : Global Soil Erosion (ESDAC, 2012)

Human activities, on the other hand, such as agricultural practice, deforestation, and conversion of forest to agriculture exacerbate the process of erosion, particularly on steep slopes with minimum or no control measures in place (Fan et al., 2019; Williams et al., 1984). Erosion can equally be triggered or accelerated by climate change, tectonic activities, and other natural disasters (Abdullah et al., 2019; Azim et al., 2016; Várallyay, 2010). Soil erosion has become more severe in recent years especially in areas where there has been intensive land use for agricultural activities and developments for urbanization (Abdullah et al., 2019; Bosco et al., 2015; Panagos et al., 2017). Similarly, soil erosion affects quality of streams water, aquatic life, water conveyance systems and reservoirs (Mispan et al., 2015; Rickson, 2014). The chemical influx from pesticides, fungicide and fertilizers applications due to agricultural activities could be carried along with eroded soil and deposited downstream (Razali et al., 2018; Rickson, 2014). This will alter the chemical concentration such as sodium, potassium nitrogen, phosphorus, and heavy metals contents in the water available for irrigation, thus affect the crop physiological process (Mispan et al., 2015).

The process of soil erosion is influenced by biophysical factors of environment comprising of soil characteristics, climate, topography, soil cover and interactive effect between two or more (Douglas, 1987; Q. J. Liu et al., 2015; Rodrigo Comino et al., 2016). Terrain characteristics are particularly crucial factors affecting the mechanism and processes of soil erosion. This includes slope, length, aspect, and shape which play vital roles in runoff generation and transportation. There is a direct relationship between slope and runoff generation as such, the high the slope more the runoff and thus, the less infiltration (Ganasri & Ramesh, 2016). Climate factor is considered as one of the main

influencing factors on rates and extent of erosion processes by both water and wind. Rainfall is one of the major factors influencing the river sediment yields (Basher et al., 2012). Therefore, any variation in climate characteristics has a consequential impact on soil erosion. However, erosion by water is the only category of erosion manifesting in Cameron Highlands and Malaysia which is profoundly become serious in last few decades (Abdullah et al., 2019; Barrow et al., 2005; Pradhan et al., 2012; Teh, 2011). The intensity of erosion is largely depend on rainfall erosivity, and crop cover which are often influenced by climate change (Gregersen et al., 2003; Mondal et al., 2016; Pheerawat & Udmale, 2017). Also, land use in relation to crop type, degree of soil disturbance and surface manipulations affect erosion rates (Mondal et al., 2016; Ouyang et al., 2018). To bring erosion down to a tolerable limit, control BMPs are necessary particularly during development or agricultural operations (Siong, 2013).

1.2 Global Land Use/Cover and Soil Erosion Conversions

The Joint Research Centre of European Commission has studied the dynamics of the world land use from 2001 through 2012 which revealed a decline in the forests by approximately 1.65 million km² (Borrelli et al., 2017). However, an expansion of the semi-natural vegetation (grassland, scrublands, savannah, transition forest) and cropland was reported as approximately 1.43 million km² and 0.22 million km², respectively. Over the study period, a total of 2.26 million km² of forests are projected to be lost, largely be replaced by semi-natural vegetation (2.17 million km²) and to a lesser degree by cropland with 0.1 million km². The transitioning from forest to other land uses caused soil erosion to increase by 0.61 Pg year⁻¹ (ESDAC, 2012; Borrelli et al., 2017). Moreover, replacing forests with cropland (4.1% of the forest lost) is responsible for the increased soil loss of about 52%. At the same time, there was a gain for the forest area of about 0.61 million km² during the study period, which resulted into a net loss of forest to approximately 1.65 million km². The region that had experienced a conversion during the study period was approximately 3.3% of the study area (≈4 million km²), of which 2.9 million km² showed a growth in soil erosion estimates of 1.74 Pg year⁻¹. Under this land use transition, the remaining 1.1 million km² (0.9%) reported a decrease in soil erosion of 0.88 Pg year⁻¹. This results in an average total soil erosion increase of approximately 0.86 Pg year⁻¹ for areas with a land use transition (Figure 1.2) in which, a Petagram, Pg = 10⁹ ton; a, b, and c represent the net conversions of forest, vegetation, and croplands, respectively.

Furthermore, conservation of agriculture occupies about 15.3% of the estimated cropland (1.6 of 10.3 million km²), resulting in an estimated decrease of about 7% overall soil erosion relative (from 10.93 to 10.15 Pg year⁻¹). The largest increase in soil erosion based on continental level are estimated in South America (16%), Oceania (15.4%), North America (12.5%), and in Europe (1.5%), Asia (1.2%) and to a lesser degree Africa (1.1%). In general, there is increase in soil erosion rates globally due to the conversions from one land use state to another.

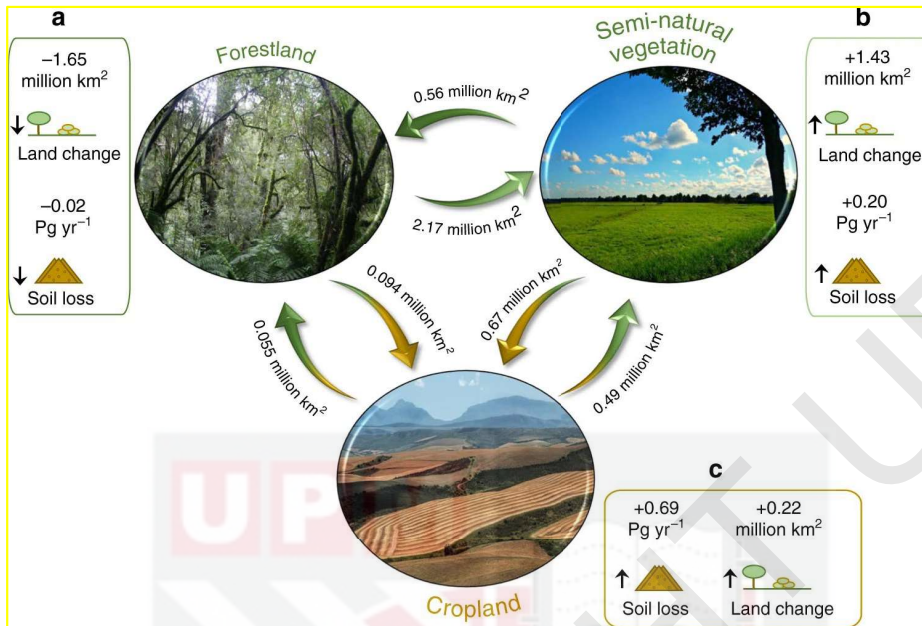


Figure 1.2 : Global erosion and land use conversions (Borrelli et al., 2017)

1.3 An Overview of Cameron Highlands

Malaysia is located in between Thailand from north and Indonesia from south, which is separated into two parts by the Southern China Sea. The two regions are referred to Peninsular Malaysia from the west and Malaysian Borneo in the east. The Cameron Highlands is situated in the Pahang State of Peninsular Malaysia which is considered as an important resort for the country (Gasim et al., 2012). The main towns of Cameron Highlands are Ringlet, Tanah Rata, Brinchang and Kampung Raja. The average elevation of the catchment is approximately 1,180 m while the highest peak is Mountain Brinchang at 2,032 m above means sea level (Tenaga Nasional Berhad Research, 2009). Cameron Highlands is regarded as the “Green Bowl” for its potentials of growing wide variety of vegetables, flowers and other ornamental plants and supplying them to major cities in Malaysia, Singapore, and other neighboring countries.

Agriculture is an important sector in Malaysia and this sector has become the backbone of the county’s economy for decades owing to high production of agricultural produce for domestic consumption and international exports (Amanina et al., 2018; Bivi et al., 2010; Paramanathan, 2015; Paterson, 2007; Robert et al., 2009). Cameron Highlands provides opportunity for agricultural activities and many tourist attractions such as tea plantations, tea factories, rose gardens, strawberry farms, natural waterfalls, golf courses and aging colonial-style homes offering a glimpse of the past (Kaffashi et al., 2015). According to Malaysian Department of Statistics, the agricultural sector contributes RM 94.1 billion to the country’s GDP in 2015. Palm oil being the major contributor at 46.9%,

followed by agriculture (17.7%), livestock (10.7%), fishing (10.7%), rubber (7.2%) as well as forestry and logging (6.9%).

In other hand, sedimentation of channels and storage reservoirs is another serious problem affecting the Cameron highlands (DID, 2012; Tenaga National Berhad Research, 2005). Sedimentation is a natural phenomenon which slows down the stream flow and thus causes sediment deposition in the impoundment thereby reduces carrying capacity (G. Zhao, Mu, et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the maximum effort is required to decelerate the process otherwise it will continue to further degrade the environment. According to report by erosion and sediment control guidelines (ESCP, 2018) in Cameron Highlands, largest proportion of sediments is related to unguided agricultural activities from hilly farms.

Similarly, Teh (2011) reported that the annual sediment yields from Cameron Highlands watershed in 1997 and 2006 were 282,465.5 m³ year⁻¹ and 334,853.49 m³ year⁻¹, respectively. This increment of 18.6% sediment rate was just within 9 years interval which certainly can pose a great danger in environmental sustainability. It will further affect agricultural lands and hydropower generation in near future except appropriate control measures are deployed. Moreover, land transformation had a great influence on susceptibility to soil erosion in the sense that forest area has less effect compared to developed areas (Suif et al., 2018).

Thus, land use developments in Cameron Highlands from forests to tea cultivation, estates and orchards up to market gardens and residential centers have had greater impacts on the soil surface, resulting in increasing rates of soil erosion (Mohd-Arifin et al., 2014). The eroded sediments have been, and continue to be deposited along river channels and in diversion tunnels such as Ringlet reservoir (Raj, 2002). Moreover, since the early 1970's there have been changes in land use due to influx of tourism and an intensification of agricultural activities (Mansor et al., 2015). For example, large hotels, holiday homes and other recreational facilities has been greatly expanded in numbers and sizes. The development of agriculture to produce temperate type of vegetables and flowers has also been on increase since 1982, with many of the new farms situated on steep slopes (DID, 2012; Mansor et al., 2015; Teh, 2011; Tenaga National Berhad Research, 2009).

The history of agricultural development in Cameron highlands can be traced back to pre-independence era (Douglas, 1987). That was when British Colonist established a large-scale plantation and introduced different varieties of crops such as palm oil, rubber, and cocoa for the purpose of commercial production (Douglas, 1987; Mansor et al., 2015). Also, Malaysian government in earliest days of the post-independence era (1957 – 1970s) cleared large forest for extensive production of palm oil and rubber plantations which serves as a focus for economic growth in order to attract international markets. During those periods, domestic and commercial farmers dedicated their efforts toward producing more food and cash crops. Thereafter, the country experienced a rapid development and modernization of agricultural production throughout the year. The suitable lowlands for agricultural activities became scarce and left with no option than to cultivate the hilly

areas (Douglas, 1987). Thus, farmers those that were mostly producing at commercial quantities began shifting their operations to hillside lands as a potential alternative. These activities had exacerbated soil erosion processes in Cameron highlands which is now facing serious challenges of soil erosion, sedimentation, floods and landslide incidences (Abdullah et al., 2019).

1.4 Research Problem

Climate change is undoubtedly a global issue which receives attention from national and international organizations. It has been predicted that, the trends in climate variables includes more hot-days heat waves, fewer cold-days, and cold waves. These changes could lead to increasing global precipitations, larger number of extremes events (flood and drought), and overall devastating ecosystem (Stocker et al., 2013, 2014). Moreover, global climate is already changing and that further changes are inevitable. For instance, during the last century from 1906 to 2005 the average global temperature rose by about 0.74°C (IPCC, 2018). Similarly, several studies conducted at Cameron Highlands have reported considerable increase in both temperature and precipitation. Tan & Nying (2017) evaluated precipitation rates in Cameron Highlands under influence of changing climate and discovered that, about 30% higher precipitation will occur in the next 30 years. It has been correlated that high amount of precipitation lead to high tendency of soil erosion by splash and high transport capacity of sediments (Nearing et al., 1989; Nearing et al., 2015). In the future, the average rainfall under all RCP scenarios is expected to be higher than that from the historical period. The rainfall erosivity (R) and crop cover (C) factors will be changing too, thereby affecting the soil erosion rate and sediment yield. This issue has been ignored in the Camron Highlands despite its adverse effect on the environmental sustainability.

Similarly, soil erosion has been reported as a widespread environmental problem which directly affect of human lives and properties (Nigam et al., 2017; Hongfen Teng et al., 2018; Vergari, 2015). It reduces crop productivity potentials by adversely affecting soil quality parameters, physical characteristics, and resultant devastating environmental conditions. The problem of erosion is more pronounced at hilly areas with low vegetation cover due to rain splash and high energy of runoff (Alder et al., 2015; Les Basher et al., 2018; Douglas, 1987). This phenomenon leads to other forms of environmental disasters like landslides, floods and sedimentation of river networks and dams at downstream which often cause loss of lives and properties. Cameron Highlands have been facing severe soil erosion and sedimentation problems which seriously affect socio-economic activities of people and degrade environment (Mohd-Arifin et al., 2014; Oliver et al., 2017; Pradhan et al., 2012; Sholagberu et al., 2016). This includes loss of agricultural lands, siltation of rivers and water reservoirs as well as frequent occurrences of floods and landslides (Gasim et al., 2012). Previous studies have shown the contribution of land use and land cover changes toward an accelarated soil erosion in Cameron highlands (Ganasri & Ramesh, 2016; Singh & Panda, 2017). For instance, the findings of earlier investigation by Douglas (1987) which attributed the source of soil erosion in Cameron highlands to human activities such as deforestation, tillage and other forms of soil disturbances.

According to ESCP guideline developed by Department of Agriculture (DOA, 2018), Cameron highlands has undergone rapid changes in temperature, precipitation, and water quality of rivers over the last few decades. These changes could equally influence soil erosion rates in the area by altering the magnitude of rainfall erosivity and intensity-duration-frequency relationship. Similar claims were reported by several studies in Cameron highlands. For example, Mohd-Arifin et al., 2014 and Teh (2011) have reported huge sediment yields inflow from the watershed. This unexpected sediment load has reduced carrying capacity of major rivers and Sultan Abu Bakar Dam with consequences of drop in hydroelectric power generation. To maintain the power supply, Malaysian government has initiated a continuous daily sediment dredging operation which has a huge economic implication (Figure 1.3). In addition, the recent reports by Pradhan et al. (2012) and Teh (2012) indicated high soil erosion and huge sediment yields originating from agricultural farms where soil operations have been taking place with no proper control measures. Despite the incidence of soil erosion and sedimentation problems in the area, no research is conducted so far in the study watershed with respect to assessing climate change impacts on soil erosion, sediment yields and crop yield performance under control BMPs. Consequently, this research was meant to filling these study gaps.



Figure 1.3 : Ringlet River in Cameron Highlands (Captured on 5th August 2018)

1.5 Research Hypothesis

Assessing the climate change impact on environment is very crucial particularly where the changes caused could be permanent and irreversible. Soil erosion and sedimentation are among the phenomena that significantly affected by the impact of climate change. The

highlands regions are characterised with high slopes which lead to high energy of runoff which eventually cause significant soil erosion with slightest change in rainfall characteristics. This study hypothesizes that:

- Multi-model ensemble of global circulation models (GCMs) will project future rainfall characteristics with considerable degree of accuracy.
- Future Intensity-Duration-Frequency curves will be higher than that of baseline condition which indicate higher tendencies of rainfall to cause more soil particles detachments.
- There will be more soil erosion and sedimentation incidences at Cameron Highlands by the 2050s and 2080s periods compared to the present scenario.
- Application of erosion control best management practices can profoundly reduce the magnitude of soil loss that might be caused by climate change in future.
- There will be a significant variation in projected soil loss scenarios between sheltered and open farming style.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Soil erosion has been an environmental degradation process that transforms the state of agricultural soil into non-productive or reduced productive potentials. Cameron Highlands is one of such areas that suffers soil degradation with many cases of erosion induced landslide incidences (Abdullah et al., 2019). The assessment of climate impact will help in knowing the extent of environmental input to the accelerating soil erosion and sedimentation in the study area. Also, prediction future incidents through projection of climate scenarios will help the policy and decision making more effective and to timely suggest environmental control measures. Furthermore, this will also help to address the possibility of reoccurrences of the problems and its consequential devastating effects of soil erosion and landslides.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This research was aimed to conduct climate change impact assessment on soil erosion and sediment yields at Cameron Highlands watershed. It comprises the use of 20 ensemble GCMs, four emission scenarios and two projection periods only. The soil erosion assessment was conducted using revised universal soil loss equation (RUSLE) model. Rainfall erosivity (R), soil erodibility (K) and land use/cover (LULC) changes are the main focal points for making the erosion modelling. The current and future C-factor was based on literature and simulated future LULC states. Analysis of the LULC was achieved by using three past Landsat images while the projection was made by Land

Change Modeler in TerrSet software. Nevertheless, support management factor (P) has been assigned value of unity to inaccessible regions as suggested in the literature when it is difficult to distinguish the current practices due to illegal farming activities. Since the LS factor is not expected to change throughout the projection periods and therefore, the same value was maintained for all the projection scenarios. Three varieties of Mustard (Green Apex 5502, Lucket 9116 and Little Princess 822) were planted in both sheltered and open farms to study the effects of erosion control BMPs at Cameron Highlands (*Komplex Pertanian*), Department of Agriculture (DOA).

However, the study did not cover the crop evapotranspiration, and soil nutrients loss was not evaluated while quantifying the sediment loss, which is a vital component too. The Landsat images with 20 years records only were used in the analysis of land used changes and projections. Also, the K-factor did not cover all Cameron Highlands due to inaccessibility of remote forestlands, thus, existing soil series were used as compliment.

1.8 Research Objectives

1.8.1 Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to simulate the impact of climate change on soil erosion and sedimentation in future with application of Best Management Practices (BMPs) toward minimizing the projected effects at Cameron Highlands using Global Circulation Models.

1.8.2 Specific Objectives

1. To study the climate change effect on rainfall characteristics at Cameron Highlands using 20 multi-model ensemble GCMs and two projection periods.
2. To determine the rainfall erosivity factor (R) under four RCP scenarios and crop management factor (R) for the Cameron Highlands watershed.
3. To determine the magnitude of soil erosion and sediment yields based on the four RCPs emission scenarios.
4. To suggest the suitable control BMPs by cultivating mustard crop at hilly farm of Cameron Highlands.

1.9 Thesis Structure and Outline

This thesis comprises of four main chapters – (1) Introduction (Background of the study, Introduction to Cameron Highlands, Research problem, Significance of the study, Scope, limitations and Objectives of the study), (2) Literature Review (Climate system, Introduction to climate change, Climate change drivers, Studies related to climate change

in Malaysia, Hydrological processes, Soil erosion, Intensity-duration-frequency curves, Control BMPs, Description of models used, Downscaling, and Summary of the literature), (3) Material and Methods (Study location, Data source and types used, Land use prediction, Rainfall trend analysis, Runoff estimation, Development of IDF curves, Precipitation model validation, Soil erosion factors, Application of control BMPs, Experimental design, and Statistical analysis).

Lastly, chapter (4) Results and Discussion (Analysis of rainfall series, Temporal variability and precipitation concentration index, Spatial variability of precipitation, IDF curves projection, Peak runoff analysis, Current and future soil erosions, Analysis of land used and cover changes, Impact of climate change on projected soil erosion, Impact of climate change on sediment yields, Mustard crop yields performance, Analysis of sediment yields in opens and sheltered farms); and Summary and Conclusion (Research summary, Conclusion, Contribution of the current study, and Recommendation for future research).

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BIODATA OF STUDENT

Nuraddeen Mukhtar Nasidi is currently a staff of Bayero University Kano, Department of Agricultural and Environmental Engineering. He was born at Hausawa Quarters, Gwale Local Government Area, Kano State of Nigeria. He received his secondary school education from Rumfa College Kano in July 2000. He proceeds to Bayero University Kano to study bachelor's degree at the department of Agricultural and Environmental Engineering, where he graduated with B. Eng. Agricultural Engineering degree in February 2008. He continued to pursue his Master' degree at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria and graduated with M.Sc. Soil and Water Engineering degree in June 2015. Then, He enrolled into PhD program in field of Soil and Water Engineering in February 2018 at the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, University Putra Malaysia.

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