The effect of manure on plant development and yield of the wild edible species *Cichorium spinosum*, *Scolymus hispanicus* and *Sonchus oleraceus*.

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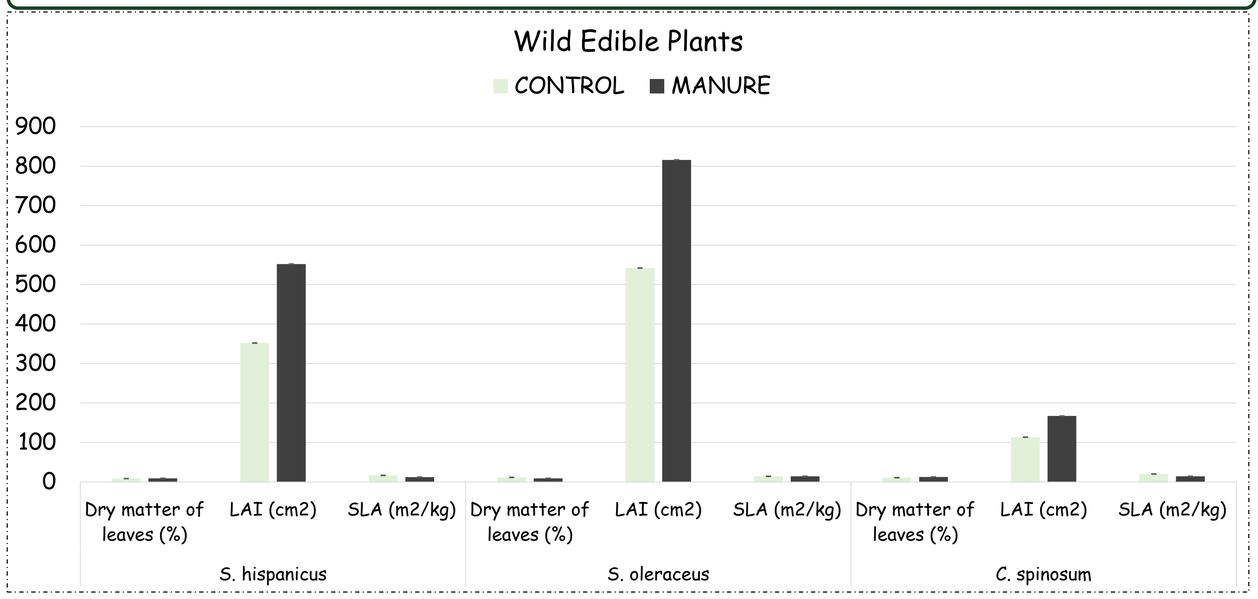
INTRODUCTION

- The Mediterranean basin is an abundant hotspot of native wild edible plants (WEPs) which have gained great interest for their commercial exploitation as alternative crops in terms of sustainability.
- These species present remarkable high adaptability to biotic and abiotic conditions such as salinity, high temperatures and drought conditions but also can be grown in a wide range of soils even in degraded or eroded soils .
- The increased demand by the consumers for high added value products combined with beneficial health effects have created the need to further study the commercial cultivation of these species due to its high nutritional profile and rich content in bioactive compounds.
- In the present study, we evaluated the effect of manure to the growth development and yield of the wild edible plants namely *Cichorium spinosum*, *Scolymus hispanicus* and *S onchus oleraceus*.

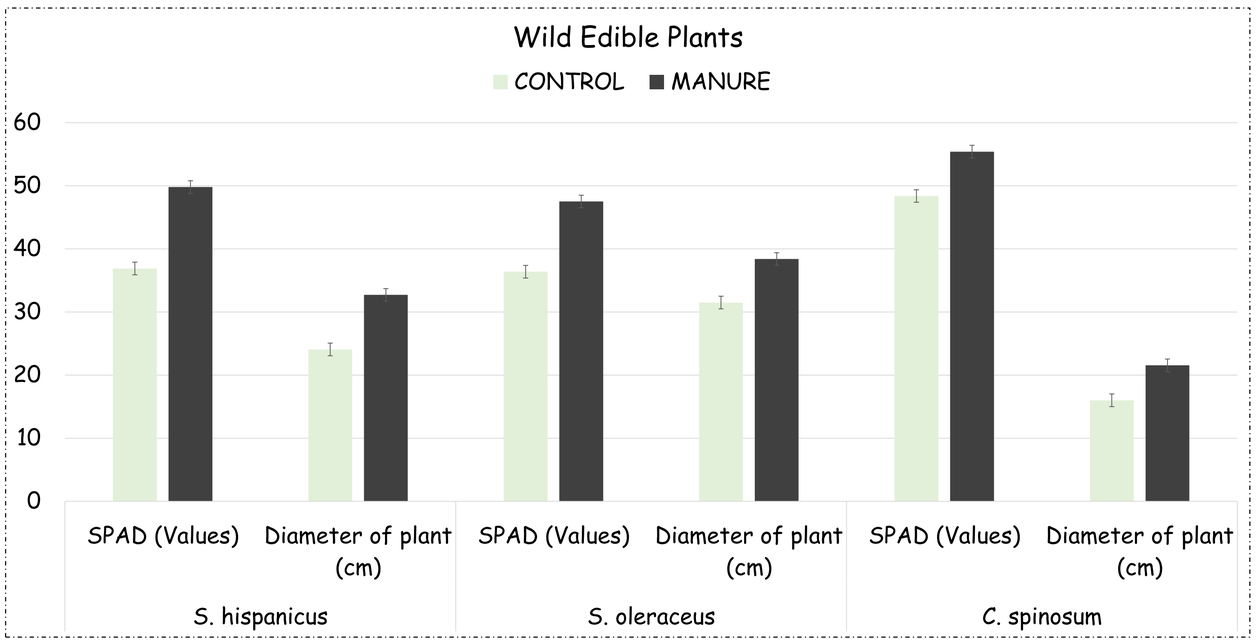
MATERIALS AND METHODS

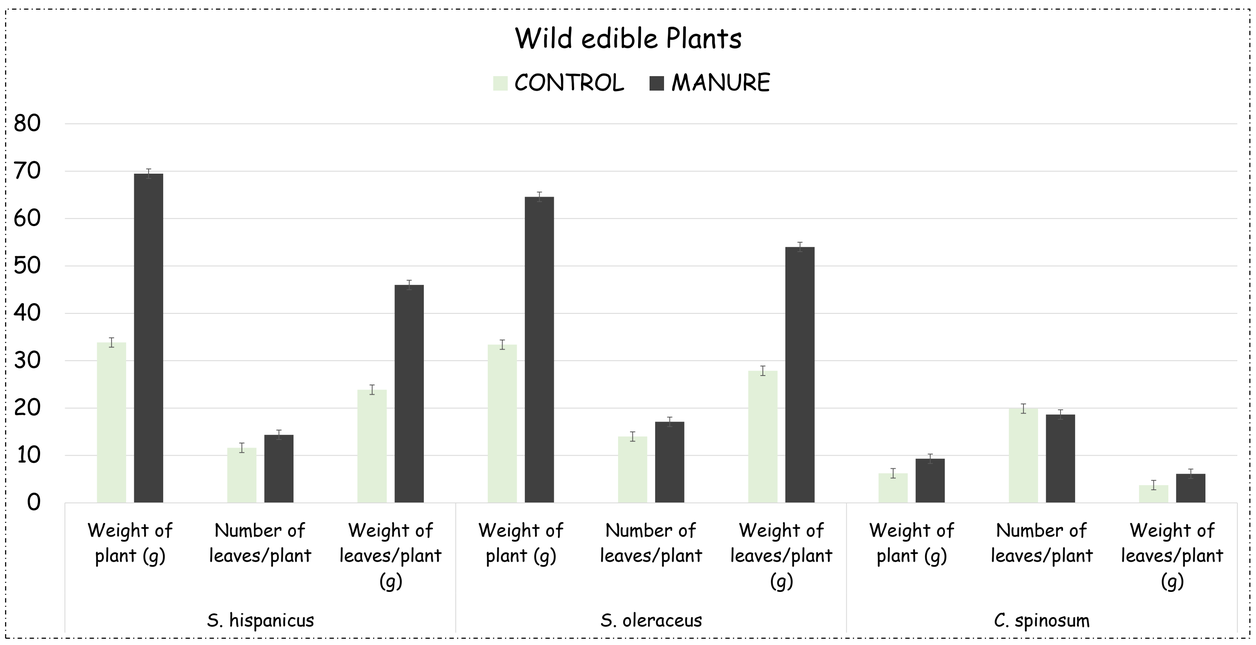
- A field trial was conducted at the experimental farm of University of Thessaly during the period of May 2022 and July 2022 in order to evaluate the effect of manure on the morphological traits and yield of the three WEPs, namely *S. hispanicus*, *S. oleraceus* and *C. spinosum*.
- Seeds were sown in seed trays and the young plants were transplanted to the field at the stage of 3-4 fully developed leaves.
- Two treatments (manure and control) were tested, while each treatment included three plots with a size of 8 m^2 (4 x 2 m, n=3). Twenty plants per species were transplanted in each plot with distances 0,40 cm between the rows and 0,30 cm within each row. For manure treatment, 40 kg/plot of manure were added directly in soil and incorporated with a tiller, whereas in the control treatment no manure was added.
- The chlorophyll content of leaves (SPAD values) and the diameter of plants rosettes were evaluated during the growing period. Plants were harvested when fully developed prior to anthesis and morphological traits were determined namely weight of plant (g), number of leaves/plant, weight of leaves/plant (g), the leaf area index (cm^2), the specific leaf area index (m^2/kg) and dry matter of leaves (%).
- The experiment was carried out according to a Completely Randomized Design with three replications (n=3) per treatment. All data were checked for normal distribution according to Shaphiro-Wilk test and mean values were compared to according to the Tukey's test at p=0,05, whereas the statistical analysis was performed with the software with JMP v. 16.1 (SAS Institute Inc.).

RESULTS



RESULTS





CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- According to the results of this study, manure application on the wild edible plants had a detrimental positive impact on the crop development and to the traits related to the yield characteristics such as weight of plant (g), number of leaves/plant and weight of leaves/plant (g), whereas significant statistical differences were also recorded regarding the chlorophyll content of leaves (SPAD values), diameter of plant (cm), leaf are index (cm^2), specific leaf area index (m^2/kg) and dry matter of leaves (%) for all species.
- The incorporation of manure could be a beneficial cultivation practice to improve total yield but also could be a significant stepping stone for improving the nutritional value and phytochemical properties of the species.
- Further studies are needed to be carried out for the exploitation of the wild edible plants as alternatives crop in order to be implemented by the farmers in a sustainable point of view in case of small-scale farming systems thinking that these farms are the backbone of crop production in the broader Mediterranean area.

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