Interactive comment on “Policy support, economic incentives and the adoption of irrigation technology in China” by R. Cremades et al.

Anonymous Referee #3

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1 General comments

This is an interesting and well elaborated manuscript. I like particularly the extensive size of the collected data set and the background information on irrigation practices and policy in China. However, I cannot help but find the conclusions quite generic and going little beyond the rather obvious. It is of course very useful to prove that policy measures have a positive impact, but I wonder whether, say, a policy maker reading the manuscript would really learn something useful to improve local irrigation policies. Rather than focusing on the part of the model that is explained by the support mechanisms, I would suggest that the paper focuses on that part that is not explained. I.e. why are subsidies and training not always effective? What type of farmers are left out? What determines whether these measures are effective? In fact, the model includes various other factors such as distance from field to plot and salinity, which seem to be significant (Table 5). I think that the authors can get much more out of the data then the manuscript reflects at this moment.

Part of this issue may be related to the structure of the manuscript, which I think is sub-optimal. I consider the econometric methods as part of the methodology, and suggest that this is put much earlier in the manuscript. It can then be used as a starting point for subsequent presentation of results and discussion. This would allow to use the classic structure (as already highlighted by reviewer Aleksandrova) of introduction - materials and methods - results - discussion - conclusions. It would also logically lead to a more thorough discussion of the factors included in the statistical analysis.

Lastly, as a minor point, the manuscript refers to “policy support” as the support provided by policy-makers to farmers. It would seem to be more common to me that policy support refers to mechanisms and tools to support policy making (e.g., policy support systems, simulations, etc). I think it is important to make this clearer to avoid confusion for the less attentive reader. Essentially, these support mechanisms are implemented by government, so it may be better to refer to the mechanisms as “government support”, which has the added benefit that more details can be given as to what government (local, regional, national) provides this support.

2 Specific comments

- 1548/23: “whether adopted any kind...” -> “whether any kind of irrigation technology was adopted in each plot”

-1550/1-3: I am not sure how these practices relate to the actual irrigation. Do you mean that some/all are used in combination with irrigation, as a way to make the irrigation more efficient?
Interactive comment on Earth Syst. Dynam. Discuss., 5, 1543, 2014.