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## Underground Heterosis for Melons Yield

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20 **Underground Heterosis for Melons Yield**

21 **Highlight**

22 We show that yield heterosis is significant in melon and controlled independently above and  
23 underground. Using common-scion grafting approach, we find that heritable rootstock-mediated  
24 variation in a diallel population is associated with substantial fruit yield heterosis.

25 **Abstract**

26 Heterosis, the superiority of hybrids over their parents, is a major genetic force associated with  
27 plant fitness and crop yield enhancement. Understanding and predicting heterosis is crucial for  
28 evolutionary biology, as well as for plant and animal breeding. We investigated root-mediated yield  
29 heterosis in melons (*Cucumis melo*) by characterizing common variety grafted onto 190 hybrid  
30 rootstocks resulting from crossing 20 diverse inbreds in a diallel-mating scheme. Hybrid rootstocks  
31 improved yield by more than 40% compared to their parents and the best hybrid outperformed the  
32 reference commercial variety by 65% under both optimal and minimal irrigation treatments. To  
33 characterize the genetics of the underground heterosis we conducted whole-genome re-sequencing of  
34 the 20 founder lines, and showed that parental genetic distance was no predictor for the level of  
35 heterosis. Through inference of the 190 hybrids genotypes from their parental genomes, followed by  
36 genome-wide association analysis, we mapped multiple root-mediated yield QTLs. The yield  
37 enhancement of the four best-performing hybrid rootstocks was validated in multiple experiments  
38 with four different scion varieties. While root biology is receiving increased attention, most of the  
39 research is conducted using plants not amenable to grafting and, as a result, it is difficult to separate  
40 root and shoot effects. Here, we use the rich genetic and genomic resources of *Cucumis melo*, where  
41 grafting is a common practice, to dissect a unique phenomenon of root-mediated yield heterosis, by  
42 directly evaluating in the field the contribution of the roots to fruit yield. Our grafting approach is  
43 inverted to the common roots genetics research path that focuses mainly on variation in root system  
44 architecture rather than the ultimate root-mediated whole-plant performance, and is a step towards  
45 discovery of candidate genes involved in root function and yield enhancement.

46

47 **Key words:** *Cucumis melo*, Grafting, GWAS, Half-diallel, Heterosis, Rootstock, Whole-genome  
48 resequencing (WGS), Yield

49

50

51 **Introduction**

52 About 10,000 years has passed since humans have shifted from hunter-gatherer to agricultural  
53 societies (Bellwood *et al.*, 2007). While agricultural productivity has evolved at an exponential scale  
54 since then, human population growth and climate changes form today substantial challenges to global  
55 food security (Godfray *et al.*, 2010; Wheeler and von Braun, 2013; Gerland *et al.*, 2014). Genetic  
56 improvement of crop plant yield is therefore more important than ever for addressing these challenges  
57 in a sustainable manner.

58 The challenge in genetic analysis of yield reflects the biological complexity of this trait, as yield  
59 is an outcome of the cumulative effects of multiple factors over time and across plant organs. From a  
60 genetic point of view, this complexity implies the action of multiple genes that interact with each  
61 other and with the environment and explains the low heritability calculated for yield in genetic  
62 studies. Another complexity associated with the genetic architecture of yield is the prominent non-  
63 additive variance component for this trait. This deviation from additivity — also known as heterosis  
64 or hybrid vigor — is a major driver for yield improvement in crop plants (East, 1908; Shull, 1908).  
65 The impact of heterosis on agriculture is wide, and is estimated to globally cause 15-30% yield  
66 increases (Duvick, 2001). This impact is best demonstrated in corn breeding, in which a continuous  
67 linear yield improvement is ongoing for almost a century following the introduction of hybrid corn  
68 in the 1930s (Duvick, 2001; Troyer, 2006).

69 Empirical data in various species have shown that diverse genetic, molecular and physiological  
70 mechanisms are likely to explain heterosis, but we are still lacking a unifying theory that enables us  
71 to explain and predict heterosis of fitness-related traits, including biomass, growth rate and  
72 reproductive success (Lippman and Zamir, 2007; Chen, 2013; Birchler, 2015; Vasseur *et al.*, 2019).  
73 Several genetic hypotheses have been proposed to explain heterosis: *i*) Dominance: cumulative  
74 genome-wide dominance complementation that masks deleterious effects of non-shared recessive  
75 alleles. *ii*) Overdominance: also known as single-gene heterosis, a synergistic outperformance of  
76 heterozygous alleles at the same locus (Krieger *et al.*, 2010). *iii*) Pseudo-overdominance: a case of  
77 dominance that resembles overdominance because two recessive loci that complement each other are  
78 tightly-linked in repulsion (Li *et al.*, 2015), and *iv*) Epistasis: multi-locus inter-allelic interactions (Yu  
79 *et al.*, 1997; Li *et al.*, 2001).

80 Next-generation sequencing (NGS) technologies and the growing availability of whole-genome  
81 assemblies provide new tools to study heterosis. There is an ongoing effort to further explore and  
82 explain the underlying genetics and molecular basis of heterosis in model and crop plants (Huang *et*  
83 *al.*, 2016; Li *et al.*, 2016; Seymour *et al.*, 2016; Yang *et al.*, 2017*a,b*).

84 In parallel to these genetic studies on heterosis, there is a growing effort to improve plant  
85 productivity and adaptation through partially overlooked factor—plant roots. The influence of root  
86 characteristics on whole-plant performance is shown in model and crop plants and therefore root  
87 research is important for advancing plant biology and for the future of agriculture (Meister *et al.*,  
88 2014; Rogers and Benfey, 2015). The challenge in root research is obvious: roots are underground  
89 and therefore less accessible for phenotypic characterization. A major part of the research is  
90 consequently directed to the development of phenotyping methods for root-system architecture  
91 (RSA) (Zhu *et al.*, 2011; Topp *et al.*, 2013; Rogers *et al.*, 2016). Genetic studies on roots are mostly  
92 focused on RSA variation, followed by testing the link between RSA and whole-plant performance.  
93 QTLs for RSA traits were mapped in tomato (Ron *et al.*, 2013), soybean (Manavalan *et al.*, 2015),  
94 maize (Zurek *et al.*, 2015), rice (Zhao *et al.*, 2018) and other crop plants. In rice, a causative gene,  
95 *DEEPER ROOTING 1 (DRO1)*, affecting root growth angle was cloned and shown to affect yield  
96 under drought stress (Uga *et al.*, 2013). Manifestation of heterosis in root development was also  
97 characterized in several studies on wheat (Wang *et al.*, 2006) and maize (Paschold *et al.*, 2010).  
98 However, while these studies and others are using advanced technologies to phenotype and  
99 genetically characterize RSA traits, the direct functional link to whole-plant performance remains  
100 challenging due to the inability to separate root effects from shoot effects.

101 Grafting is a common practice in fruit trees and several vegetable crops (mainly *Cucurbitaceae*  
102 and *Solanaceae*). The ability to separate and re-combine root and shoot of different genotypes within  
103 or even across plant species has an increasing impact on plant research and agriculture (Gregory *et*  
104 *al.*, 2013; Goldschmidt, 2014; Albacete *et al.*, 2015). Grafting is an efficient tool to deliver tolerance  
105 to soil-borne pathogens or to improve abiotic-stress tolerance (e.g. drought, salinity), through the use  
106 of tolerant rootstocks. It also plays an important role in physiological and developmental studies  
107 focused on signal movement across plant organs (Lifschitz *et al.*, 2006; Omid *et al.*, 2007; Shalit-  
108 Kaneh *et al.*, 2019). However, to date, the advantage of this experimental tool for genetic analyses of  
109 root function and direct effect on whole-plant performance is very limited, as reflected by the few  
110 published studies on QTLs and rootstock traits (Estañ *et al.*, 2009; Gur *et al.*, 2011; Tandonnet *et al.*,  
111 2018; Asins *et al.*, 2020).

112 Melon (*Cucumis melo*) is an economically important species of the *Cucurbitaceae* family. It is  
113 among the most important fleshy fruits for fresh consumption worldwide with 28 million tons  
114 produced globally in 2019 (<http://faostat3.fao.org/>). *Cucumis melo* is extremely diverse for  
115 phenotypic traits and melons are cultivated in nearly all of the warmer regions of the world. Alongside  
116 the rich genetic resources available, the melon genome sequence was completed in 2012 (Garcia-Mas

117 *et al.*, 2012) providing a solid anchor for advanced genomic research including recent whole-genome  
118 resequencing of more than 1,000 diverse melon accessions (Zhao *et al.*, 2019).

119 In the current research we use grafting—which is a common commercial practice in melon and  
120 other cucurbit crops—to separate between roots and shoot effects in order to specifically investigate,  
121 using a diverse diallel population, the mode of inheritance and impact of roots on yield variation and  
122 heterosis in melon.

123

## 124 Materials and Methods

### 125 Plant Material

126 Core melon panel - This research is centered on a core set of 25 diverse melon accessions (**Sup.**  
127 **Table 1**) that were selected based on genotypic and phenotypic characterization of a broader GWAS  
128 panel. The core set includes representatives of the two cultivated sub-species and the different  
129 horticultural groups in melon as well as the broad phenotypic spectrum available for key traits, as  
130 previously described (Gur *et al.*, 2017).

131 Creation of diverse, 25-way, diallel population - A multi-allelic population of 300 F1 hybrids was  
132 built through a half-diallel crossing scheme between the 25 diverse founders (**Figure 1**). Plants of the  
133 25 parents were grown and intercrossed in the greenhouse at Newe-Ya'ar during the fall of 2017. We  
134 defined two subsets within the 25 founders set, where the smaller sets completely overlapped by the  
135 sets above them, and each corresponds with a half-diallel population specifically derived from its  
136 composition: *HDA10* – 10 parental lines and 45 F1 hybrids and *HDA20* – 20 parental lines and 190  
137 F1 hybrids (**Sup. Figure 1, Sup. Table 1**).

138

### 139 Field Trials

140 Non-grafted yield trials – Yield trials were performed during 2018, 2019 and 2020 spring-summer  
141 seasons, under standard growing conditions. Our main testing site is the open-field at the Newe Ya'ar  
142 Research Center (32°43'05.4"N 35°10'47.7"E). Replicated trials consisted of three plots of five plants  
143 per plot in a randomized complete block design (RCBD). The standard planting density was 0.5 m  
144 between plants in a row and 1.90 m between beds. Selective harvest was performed at maturity of  
145 each genotype by going through the field 3 times a week over 4 weeks (mid-June to mid-July). All  
146 fruits from each ripe plot were harvested. Number of fruits (FN) and total fruit weight (Yield) per  
147 plot were collected at the field. Five representative ripe fruits were sampled from each plot for further  
148 analysis at the lab. Average fruit weight (AFW) was calculated on the sampled fruits as well as by  
149 dividing total yield by FN as measured at the field. Concentrations of total soluble solids (TSS,

150 measured in degrees Bx) were measured on flesh samples from each of the five fruits separately,  
151 using hand-held refractometer (Atago A-10). Seeds were extracted from the sampled fruits, washed  
152 and dried and average seed weight was calculated from a sample of 50 seeds per replication (150  
153 seeds per genotype).

154 Rootstock grafted yield trials - Each genotype (from either the *HDA10*, *HDA20*, parental lines or  
155 controls) was grafted as a rootstock with a common scion. Grafting for these large-scale experiments  
156 was performed in commercial nurseries (Hishtil - Ashkelon and Shorashim – Ein Habsor) under their  
157 standard grafting protocols. Shortly: rootstocks and scions were sown separately; approximately  
158 twenty-one days after sowing, seedlings from both rootstocks and scions were cut and grafted; plastic  
159 clips were used to attach the scion to the rootstock and promote efficient graft union development.  
160 Grafted plants were ready for transplanting in the field 7-10 days after grafting (**Sup. Figure 2**). The  
161 melon variety that was selected as the common scion for most parts of this project is 'Glory', a long  
162 shelf-life, high-yielding 'Galia'-type variety. In addition to the good field-holding capacity of the  
163 mature fruits, this variety is also characterized by uniform fruit setting; both are critical attributes for  
164 this project, in order to allow performance of a single harvest of all yield. Each grafted entry was  
165 planted in five replications with five plants per replication (plot) in RCBD design. The standard  
166 planting density was 0.5 m between plants in a row and 1.90 m between beds. Drought stress treatment  
167 was applied by stopping the irrigation from start of fruit setting throughout the season until the  
168 harvest. Single non-selective harvest was performed when at least ~70% of the fruits were ripe and  
169 95% reached their maximal size. In each plot, all fruits were harvested, counted and weighted for  
170 total yield calculation. Average fruit weight (AFW) was calculated by dividing the total fruit weight  
171 by the total number of fruits (FN) per plot. A sample of three representative ripe fruits was taken from  
172 each plot for total soluble solids (TSS) measurements performed on each fruit separately. Rootstock-  
173 mediated vegetative biomass was measured on grafted plants 56 days after transplanting (at the peak  
174 of female flowering and fruit setting) when most of the measured biomass is vegetative. The whole  
175 canopy of each plant was cut above ground level and fresh weight was measured.

176

#### 177 *DNA preparation and genotyping*

178 DNA was extracted using the GenElute<sup>TM</sup> Plant Genomic Miniprep Kit (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis,  
179 MO). DNA quality and quantification were determined using a Nanodrop spectrophotometer ND-  
180 1000 (Nanodrop Technologies, Wilmington, DE), electrophoresis on agarose gel (1.0%) and Qubit<sup>®</sup>  
181 dsDNA BR Assay Kit (Life Technologies, Eugene, OR).

182 DNA of the 25 core accessions was shipped to the Genomic Diversity Facility at Cornell  
183 University (Ithaca, NY) for whole genome resequencing (WGS). Each sample was sequenced on an

184 Illumina HiSeq 2000/2500 platform as 150 bp paired-end reads that were mapped to the *C. melo*  
185 reference genome DHL92 v4.0 (Ruggieri *et al.*, 2018), available at  
186 <https://www.melonomics.net/melonomics.html#/download>. SNP calling was carried out using the  
187 Broad Institute's genome analysis toolkit (GATK ver. 3.7, McKenna *et al.* 2010), initially creating a  
188 separate genomic variant calling file (gVCF) for each individual detailing its polymorphism versus  
189 the reference genome, and later running a SNP discovery within the population. Initial SNP set was  
190 composed of ~9M SNPs that was filtered using TASSEL v.5.2.43 (Bradbury *et al.* 2007) for the  
191 following criteria: *i*) masking (as missing) scores with less than three reads per site, followed by the  
192 removal of sites with more than fifty percent missing data. *ii*) Minor allele frequency (MAF) >0.1.  
193 The final SNP set consisted of 4M SNPs. The whole-genome sequence alignment and derived  
194 HapMap from the 25 founders are now useful tools for detection of potential causative  
195 polymorphisms within candidate genes (Oren *et al.*, 2019)

196

### 197 *Statistical Analyses*

198 JMP ver. 14.0.0 statistical package (SAS Institute, Cary, NC, USA) was used for statistical  
199 analyses. Mean comparisons were performed using the Fit Y by X function. GWA analysis was  
200 performed in TASSEL v.5.2.43 using the mixed-linear model (MLM) function. Distance matrix and  
201 Relatedness matrix of pairwise kinship (k matrix) were calculated in TASSEL from the filtered SNP  
202 dataset using the Centered\_IBS method (Endelman and Jannink, 2013). Stringent Bonferroni method  
203 was used to control for multiple comparisons in GWA. Best-parent Heterosis (BPH) was calculated  
204 as the deviation of the F1 hybrid from its better parent (F1-best-parent) and was expressed as absolute  
205 trait values or as  $\Delta$  Percentage from best parent.

206

## 207 **Results**

### 208 *Construction of diverse diallel population in melon*

209 A primary resource for our genetic research on melon (*Cucumis melo*) is a diverse collection,  
210 composed of hundreds of accessions, which was built over the last 50 years in the Cucurbits Unit at  
211 Newe Ya'ar (Burger *et al.*, 2009). We recently performed a Genome-Wide Association Study  
212 (GWAS) using 180 representative accessions and through comprehensive phenotyping and whole-  
213 genome GBS-based genotyping, demonstrated the effectiveness of this diversity panel for linkage-  
214 disequilibrium (LD) mapping of Mendelian fruit traits to candidate gene intervals (Gur *et al.*, 2017).  
215 Out of the 180 GWAS accessions, a core subset of 25 representative melon lines was selected based  
216 on integration of phenotypic and genotypic data; the core subset represents the two *Cucumis melo*  
217 subspecies and 11 horticultural groups. (**Sup. Table 1**, Gur *et al.*, 2017). Through structured

218 intercrossing of the 25 lines in all possible combinations, we developed a half-diallel population  
219 (*HDA25*) composed of 300 F1 hybrids (**Figure 1**). This multi-allelic structure is a suitable design to  
220 characterize the mode-of-inheritance of traits, including general and specific combining abilities  
221 (GCA and SCA) patterns, and to perform GWAS on heterotic traits, such as yield.

222

223 *Above and underground yield heterosis in HDA10 population*

224 To characterize yield variation and heterosis patterns, we first used a subset composed of 45 half-  
225 diallel F1 hybrids derived from intercrossing of 10 representative lines from our diverse collection  
226 (*HDA10*, **Sup. Table 1, Sup Figure 1**). These hybrids, placed alongside their parents, were tested in  
227 an open-field replicated yield trial during the summer of 2017. Half-diallel is a balanced design that  
228 reflects the same allelic composition and proportions in the F1 hybrids as in the set of parental lines  
229 and therefore allows informative general comparisons between the hybrids and inbreds sets, in  
230 addition to specific comparisons within hybrid groups (i.e. triads - hybrid and its two parents). In this  
231 experiment, hybrids fruit yield was on average 73% higher compared to their parental lines (**Figure**  
232 **2a**). While variation in mode of inheritance of yield was observed across the 45 hybrid groups (**Figure**  
233 **2b**), the superiority of hybrids over their parents was prevalent, with 13 F1 hybrids that showed  
234 significant best-parent heterosis (BPH). For example, *HDA10\_005* is an F1 hybrid between a *C.  
235 callosus* line (P1, QME) and a *C. melo*, var *inodorous* line (P2, NA) that showed 90% best-parent  
236 yield heterosis (**Figure 2c**).

237 In parallel to the conventional yield trial, we also tested whether yield variation and heterosis in  
238 melon can be derived from root effects *per se* and whether we can identify heritable variation for  
239 root-mediated effects. For this purpose, we took a grafting approach: the same germplasm set (45  
240 *HDA10* hybrids + 10 Parents) were used as rootstocks grafted with a common commercial hybrid  
241 scion ('Glory', a long-shelf-life 'Galia'-type hybrid). Such rootstock-grafting strategy allows us to  
242 eliminate the substantial aboveground variation across our germplasm and perform genetic analyses  
243 focused on the exclusive effect of the underground portion (roots) on yield. 'Glory' grafted on itself  
244 was used as control in this experiment. 'Glory' grafted with hybrid rootstocks yielded on average 28%  
245 more than parallel grafting with inbred rootstocks across the *HDA10* set (**Figure 2d**). Furthermore,  
246 most hybrid rootstocks across this set mediated higher yields as compared to their best-parents and  
247 16 hybrid rootstocks showed significant BPH (**Figure 2e**). Overall, the proportion of yield variation  
248 explained by root-mediated genetic effects (broad-sense heritability) in this experiment was 40%  
249 ( $H^2=0.40$ ), a significant value that indicates a prominent contribution of roots to the yield variation.  
250 Moderate correlation was calculated between the rootstock-mediated yield and yield of the parallel  
251 *HDA10* hybrids and parental lines in the non-grafted experiment ( $r=0.39$ , **Figure 2f**), indicative of

252 the independent aboveground variation components and the expected interactions between roots and  
253 scions.

254

255 *Rootstock-mediated yield heterosis across HDA20 population*

256 Based on the positive results obtained on rootstock-mediated yield heterosis in the *HDA10* set, we  
257 extended the experiment and tested the wider *HDA20* set (190 half-diallel hybrids + 20 parents) as  
258 rootstocks grafted with the same common commercial hybrid, 'Glory', as scion. This set of 210  
259 rootstock entries plus 2 controls ('Glory' grafted on itself and non-grafted 'Glory') was planted in  
260 replicated yield trial under optimal- and minimal-irrigation conditions (referred to as "Irrigated" and  
261 "Dry" herein, respectively). (**Sup. Figure 2a, b**). The Dry field yielded on average 30% less than the  
262 Irrigated and the correlation between the Dry and Irrigated trials was high ( $r=0.71$ , **Sup. Figure 2c,**  
263 **d**), and supported the significant genetic effect calculated for the root-mediated yield variation  
264 ( $H^2=0.48$ ). Further support for the significant genetic basis of the root effects is obtained from the  
265 correlations between the 2017 and 2018 grafted field experiments across the 55 *HDA10* genotypes  
266 (**Sup. Figure 2e, f**). Rootstock-mediated yield heterosis was apparent in both fields across *HDA20*  
267 population, with 38% ( $P=1.1 \times 10^{-8}$ ) and 56% ( $P=1.8 \times 10^{-7}$ ) average yield increase of hybrids compared  
268 to their inbred parents in the Irrigated and Dry fields, respectively (**Figure 3a, b**).

269 The *HDA20* set can be viewed as 190 triads where each triad includes a hybrid and its two inbred  
270 parents; using this setup, we can define the mode of inheritance (additive and dominance components)  
271 within each triad, and draw patterns across the whole set. In this research, we use the stringent genetic  
272 definition of heterosis—the deviation of the hybrid from the high-parent (best-parent heterosis, BPH)  
273—which is also the relevant definition from a breeding standpoint. The root-mediated yield of the  
274 190 *HDA20* hybrids in the Irrigated and Dry experiments was, accordingly, partitioned to best-parent  
275 (BP) and heterotic (BPH) components (**Figure 4a, b**). A prevalent root-mediated yield BPH is  
276 evident, with 130 out of the 190 hybrids in the irrigated field showing a certain level of positive over-  
277 dominance, and 79 out of them displaying significant BPH (at  $P<0.05$ ) and outperform their best-  
278 parent at an average of 55% (**Figure 4a**). The average BPH across all 190 hybrids was 26%  
279 ( $P=4.9 \times 10^{-30}$ ) and 35% ( $P=1.2 \times 10^{-19}$ ) in the Irrigated and Dry experiments, respectively. It is apparent  
280 from these results that (over)dominant deviation, a non-additive genetic component, is the major  
281 contributor to the root-mediated hybrid yield variation.

282 Using the triads design, we could also test the broad relationship between parental and hybrid root-  
283 mediated yield performance across the diallel population. We show that there is no correlation  
284 between best-parents and hybrids root-mediated yield across the 190 hybrid triads in the Irrigated and  
285 Dry experiments ( $r=0.08$  and  $r=0.09$ , respectively **Figure 4c, d**). This absence of correlation is

286 supporting the observation that hybrid rootstock-mediated yield is independent of parental breeding  
287 value.

288

289 *Mode-of-inheritance of root-mediated yield compared to other melon traits*

290 It was previously shown that heterosis is more prevalent in fitness-related, reproductive traits (Lu  
291 *et al.*, 2003; Rocha *et al.*, 2004; Semel *et al.*, 2006; Flint-Garcia *et al.*, 2009). We therefore collected  
292 data on additional traits in a non-grafted replicated experiment of this population (*HDA20*, 210  
293 genotypes) and compared the general mode-of-inheritance between the root-mediated (grafted) yield  
294 and three seed- and fruit-related traits measured on non-grafted plants: average fruit weight (AFW),  
295 average seed weight (ASW) and flesh sweetness (total soluble solids, TSS). The comparison was  
296 performed by calculating the correlations between parental means and F1 hybrids across the 190  
297 *HDA20* triads. While this correlation for root-mediated yield was essentially zero ( $r=0.01$ , **Figure**  
298 **5a**), for AFW, ASW and TSS we found high positive correlations between hybrids and mid-parental  
299 performance ( $r=0.83, 0.92$  and  $0.80$ , respectively, **Figure 5b-d**). We also show that means of hybrids  
300 and mid-parents were not different in AFW, ASW and TSS of non-grafted plants, as compared with  
301 the 40% advantage of hybrids calculated for root-mediated yield (**Red triangles, Figure 5a-d**).  
302 Another visual way to demonstrate that non-additive, specific combining ability (SCA), is the  
303 prominent variation component of root-mediated yield across the *HDA20* population, is through the  
304 comparison of duplicated heat maps of the 20x20 half-diallel matrices of root-mediated yield (**Figure**  
305 **5e**) and AFW (on the non-grafted experiment, **Figure 5f**). In these plots both dimensions are ordered  
306 by the average performance of each line across its hybrids (GCA) and the variation within rows or  
307 columns reflect the SCA. The uniform directional gradient apparent in AFW reflect the strong  
308 additive inheritance of this trait, while the mostly random distribution of high and low-performing  
309 hybrids in the root-mediated yield plot is indicative of non-additive inheritance. These analyses  
310 express the prominent additive component in the inheritance of the morphological and metabolic  
311 traits in melon, and demonstrate the fundamentally different mode of inheritance found for root-  
312 mediated yield.

313

314 *Root-mediated effects on yield components and fruit quality traits in the HDA20 population*

315 To describe further the nature of root-mediated effects across the *HDA20* population, we dissected  
316 the total fruit yield to its components—number of fruits per plot (FN) and average fruit weight  
317 (AFW). 'Glory' FN on a rootstock genotype-mean basis ranged between 11 and 30 fruits per plot and  
318 AFW range was 0.70-1.20 Kg/fruit. Surprisingly, both FN and AFW showed significant positive

319 correlations with yield in the Dry and Irrigated experiments and accordingly were also positively  
320 correlated with each other (**Sup. Figure 3**). This pattern of yield variation and relation between its  
321 components is in contrast to the common negative tradeoff observed between FN and AFW across  
322 natural melon diversity, as we show in our non-grafted *HDA10* population (**Sup. Figure 4**). To assess  
323 the root-mediated effects on 'Glory' fruit quality, we also measured total soluble solids (TSS) on 2,100  
324 fruits (10 fruits per genotype) across the grafted *HDA20* population in the Irrigated experiment. TSS  
325 is highly correlated with sugars content in the fruit flesh, which is a major determinant of melon fruit  
326 quality. The effect of rootstock genotype on TSS variation was not significant ( $H^2=0.07$ ) and  
327 accordingly was not correlated with the wide variation and high heritability of this trait across the  
328 *HDA20* population in non-grafted plants (**Sup. Figure 5**). Taken together, we find that high-yielding  
329 rootstocks are associated with more fruits, which are also larger on average, and these effects on yield  
330 and its components were not associated with any compensatory effect on fruit sugar content.

331

### 332 *Potential Predictors of root-mediated yield heterosis*

333 The significance of heterosis, as shown above, in explaining hybrid root-mediated yield variation  
334 in melon, is providing an incentive to explore the genetic basis and underlying genes for this unique  
335 phenomenon and to develop predictive tools for effective breeding of heterotic yield-promoting  
336 rootstocks.

#### 337 Root-mediated canopy biomass

338 We started by testing a potential simple phenotypic predictor. Using the same common-scion  
339 grafting setup, we measured root-mediated variation in plants canopy biomass across the *HDA20* set,  
340 and tested whether it is correlated with the root-mediated fruit yield variation. The rationale is that  
341 canopy vigor (biomass) is an easy-to-measure trait that can be phenotyped in high-throughput and  
342 cost-effective manner using remote-sensing technologies. While we also found heterosis for root-  
343 mediated plant vegetative biomass (**Figure 6a**), this trait is shown to be a poor predictor and explained  
344 only 3% of the root-mediated yield variation (**Figure 6b**).

#### 345 Parental genetic distance

346 To test potential genetic predictors for root-mediated hybrid yield we conducted whole-genome  
347 re-sequencing of the 25 founder lines and extracted ~4,000,000 informative SNPs that describe the  
348 genetic variation. We show that parental genetic distance, which correspond with level of  
349 heterozygosity at the F1, is also a poor predictor and explained only 8% of the root-mediated yield  
350 variation and 7% of BPH variation across the 190 *HDA20* F1 hybrids (**Figure 6c, d**). Accordingly,  
351 the type of the hybrid (*melo* and *agrestis*, inter or intra sub-specific) was also not predictive for

352 rootstock performance. This lack of correlation between parental genetic distance or taxonomic  
353 classification and root-mediated hybrid yield may suggest that the yield heterosis is not confounded  
354 with relatedness or population structure and that there is a good chance of identifying specific loci  
355 significantly associated with this trait.

356 **Root-mediated yield QTLs**

357 To perform genome-wide association (GWA) analysis, we inferred the complete genotype  
358 (composed of 4,000,000 informative SNPs) for each of the 190 *HDA20* F1 hybrids, from their 20  
359 parental genomes. We then used a filtered subset of 400K uniformly spaced SNPs (at parental minor  
360 allele frequency (MAF)>0.25) for the GWA analyses. The complex genetic nature of root-mediated  
361 yield variation is supported by multiple significant associations that were identified across the genome  
362 (**Figure 7**). On the irrigated experiment, we find significant SNPs on all chromosomes, and seven  
363 QTLs (on six chromosomes) are also common to the Dry experiment (**Figure 7b**). Allelic effects of  
364 two QTLs (q.RMY3.1 and q.RMY6.1) that were common to both environments are shown in **Figures**  
365 **7c, d**. Both display heterotic inheritance, as the heterozygotes are associated with significant yield  
366 increase compared to homozygote genotypes in each SNP. While independently q.RMY3.1 and  
367 q.RMY6.1 explained 23%-25% (Dry, Irrigated) and 22%-28% (Dry, Irrigated) of the genetic  
368 variation, respectively (**Figure 7c, d**), joint haplotype of these SNPs significantly improved the model  
369 and explained 36%-37% of the variation. F1 hybrids that are heterozygotes in both QTLs are  
370 associated with higher root-mediated yield compared to those that are heterozygotes at one locus or  
371 other homozygote combinations (**Figure 7e**). The double heterozygote haplotype is associated with  
372 16% and 14% root-mediated yield increase over the *HDA20* population mean, in the dry and irrigated  
373 fields, respectively. This effect reflects the estimated response to selection of favorable genotypes at  
374 these loci.

375

376 ***Validation of selected hybrid rootstocks with multiple scions***

377 Based on the large-scale analysis of rootstocks performance under two environments, we were  
378 able to select four high-yielding hybrid rootstocks for further testing. Scion x rootstock interactions  
379 are common in grafted plants and therefore, we grafted the selected rootstocks with four scions that  
380 represent different melon variety types: 'Glory' – reticulatus, long shelf-life Galia type; 'Noy-Amid' –  
381 inodorous, yellow canary type; 'Hudson' – reticulatus, 'Ananas' type and 'HDA005' – an experimental  
382 small-fruited (300 g) inter sub-specific hybrid. The four scion varieties were used as non-grafted  
383 controls in addition to two other control rootstocks: 'Dulce' – a *reticulatus* inbred line and one of the  
384 parents in the *HDA20* set, and 'Tatscabuto', an inter-specific *Cucurbita* hybrid rootstock used

385 commercially in melon and watermelon fields. **Figure 8a** is summarizing the results of the 28 scion  
386 x rootstock combinations from multiple field experiments representing different locations, planting  
387 densities and irrigation regimes. Yield performance of the different combinations is presented as  
388 percentage difference from the corresponding non-grafted scion variety; in a unified analysis of this  
389 experiment, the selected hybrid rootstocks significantly increased yield compared to the control  
390 varieties by 11% to 19% (**Figure 8a**, unified mean). While interactions between rootstock and scion  
391 and between genotype and environment existed across the different combinations, we find a  
392 significant overall yield advantage mediated by our selected experimental hybrid rootstocks over the  
393 commercial *Cucurbita* rootstock and the corresponding non-grafted scion varieties. We further tested  
394 two selected hybrid rootstocks the next year under two scions ('Glory' and 'Noy-Amid') and in two  
395 irrigation regimes and two planting densities (**Figure 8b**). The advantage of our experimental hybrids  
396 over the control rootstocks and self-grafted varieties was consistent in both scions and more  
397 prominent under standard planting density compared to wide spacing. These results that are based on  
398 yield analysis of more than 4,500 grafted plants over the different experiments conducted with the  
399 selected rootstocks in both years, provide an important proof-of-concept for the potential of hybrid  
400 rootstocks as a possible alternative channel for yield improvement in melon.

401

## 402 Discussion

### 403 *Fruit yield heterosis in melon is prevalent and controlled independently above and underground*

404 Charles Darwin noted already in 1876 that cross-pollinated F1 hybrids are more vigorous and  
405 productive than their parents (Darwin, 1876). Hybrid vigor, later termed heterosis to discriminate it  
406 from heterozygosity (Shull, 1948), is still intriguing geneticists and is commonly utilized for crop  
407 improvement (Duvick, 2001; Hochholdinger and Baldauf, 2018). While yield heterosis was  
408 extensively described in multiple plant species, so far it was investigated in a limited number of  
409 studies in melon, with variable conclusions regarding its magnitude and breeding impact (Katherine  
410 *et al.*, 2011; Pouyesh *et al.*, 2017; Napolitano *et al.*, 2020). In the current study, we initially show that  
411 as in other self and cross-pollinated crop plants, there is substantial yield heterosis also in melon. The  
412 average yield of the 45 diallel hybrids from our *HDA10* population was 73% higher compared to the  
413 average of their parents and almost 1/3 of these hybrids displayed significant BPH (**Figure 2a, b**).  
414 The yield heterosis was explained by combined effects on fruit number, average fruit weight and the  
415 tradeoff between them. An inherent drawback of studying yield heterosis across such diverse multi-  
416 parental melon population lay in the fact that the yield variation is potentially confounded by  
417 substantial variation in other morphological and developmental traits across the diversity. For

418 example, variation in female sex expression type (monoecious or andromonoecious, (Gur *et al.*,  
419 2017), 50-fold fruit weight variation (60-3500 g, **Figure 5b**) or substantial variation in earliness (85-  
420 120 days to maturity) were characterized across our population. These effects expand the overall  
421 phenotypic variation for multiplicative trait such as yield, and complicate the interpretation of genetic  
422 analyses. To dissect yield heterosis more effectively, we therefore took advantage of the fact that  
423 melon is amenable for grafting and allows physical separation and re-assembly of roots and shoot  
424 combinations. We focused our yield analysis on root-mediated effects by performing a common-scion  
425 rootstock experiments. While, as expected, the overall coefficient of variation (CV) of yield in the  
426 common-scion grafted experiment was less than a third of yield CV in the parallel non-grafted  
427 experiment (0.29 and 1.02, respectively), the broad sense heritability was very similar ( $H^2 \sim 0.40$ ),  
428 confirming the effectiveness of this approach and the significant heritable contribution of roots to  
429 yield variation. We detected prominent yield heterosis both above (non-grafted) and underground  
430 (root-mediated), but the correlation between these setups was low (**Figure 2f**), which makes sense  
431 considering the substantial morphological and physiological aboveground variation that is only partly  
432 dependent on roots function, and the probable cross talk between root and shoot. The significant root-  
433 mediated effects that we describe here for yield variation and heterosis emphasize the essential,  
434 underestimated, contribution of roots to whole plant phenotype. It is important to note, however, that  
435 root-mediated effects were not common to all traits. For example, rind netting or internal and external  
436 color of 'Glory' fruits did not display notable visual differences across the 210 different rootstocks  
437 (data not shown). Another quantitative example for that is fruit TSS, for which we find substantial  
438 heritable variation across the 210 *HDA20* genotypes in non-grafted plants (3%-16% Brix) but minor,  
439 non-significant, root-mediated effects in the common scion experiments (**Sup. Figure 5**). This  
440 indicates that fruit TSS is determined largely by above-ground (canopy) properties, including  
441 genetically controlled fruit metabolism (Burger and Schaffer, 2007).

442

443 *Root-mediated yield variation is positively correlated with variation in both Fruit Number (FN) and*  
444 *Average Fruit Weight (AFW)*

445 Analysis of yield components across more than 7,300 common-scion grafted rootstocks in the  
446 multi-allelic *HDA20* population revealed 3-fold range for FN and 1.7 fold for AFW (**Sup. Figure 3a-**  
447 **d**) with significant positive correlations of both traits with yield, and accordingly also positive  
448 correlation between these two components (**Sup. Figure 3e, f**). This pattern is in complete contrast  
449 to the significant negative tradeoff observed between AFW and FN across our non-grafted melon  
450 diversity, where increase in AFW is strongly associated with decrease in FN ( $R^2=0.75$ , **Sup. Figure**

451 4). Tradeoff between yield components is a common pattern in plants (Nesbitt *et al.*, 2001; Golan *et*  
452 *al.*, 2019; Gadri *et al.*, 2020) and may reflect evolution of developmental plasticity that promote  
453 reproductive fitness stability. More generally, trade-off between size and number is common across  
454 biological systems and can be explained simply as a result of limited resources (Garland, 2014). The  
455 absence of negative tradeoff between AFW and FN in our rootstock experiments, expressed as  
456 parallel increase in both FN and AFW in high-yielding rootstocks, suggest that the rootstocks  
457 variation is associated with modifications in resources availability or in alterations of sink-source  
458 relations in a way that is not interfering with the developmental program of the scion genotype.  
459

460 *Mode of inheritance of reproductive vs. morphological or metabolic traits in melon*

461 We show here that 'Underground' yield heterosis is a prominent attribute in melon (**Figures 2d, e**  
462 **Figure 3**) and that most of the root-mediated yield variation across 190 diverse *HDA20* hybrids can  
463 be explained by non-additive genetic components (**Figure 4**). Comparisons to the mode of inheritance  
464 of AFW, ASW and TSS, measured on non-grafted plants across the same *HDA20* population (**Figure**  
465 **5**), indicates that heterosis in melon is more prevalent in reproductive traits compared to non-  
466 reproductive (morphological or metabolic) traits. This observation confirms the similar phenomena  
467 previously described in maize (Flint-Garcia *et al.*, 2009), tomato (Semel *et al.*, 2006) and mice (Rocha  
468 *et al.*, 2004). This fundamental difference in mode-of-inheritance between trait categories, that is  
469 consistent across diverse taxonomic groups, indicates a possible evolutionary role of this pattern. Our  
470 results expand the perspective on this, as we show here that even the exclusive effect of roots variation  
471 on whole-plant performance, maintain the prominent heterotic mode-of inheritance of total fruit yield  
472 and canopy biomass across natural melon diversity.  
473

474 *Prediction of root-mediated yield heterosis*

475 Heterosis, the positive deviation of hybrid from its parental mean is at the same time desired and  
476 challenging genetic property for plant breeders. Predicting and maximizing heterotic response in F1  
477 hybrids is a challenge, as parental performance *per se* are not necessarily informative. The  
478 development of prediction tools or breeding strategies to maximize the chances for producing  
479 successful crosses is therefore a key objective in hybrid breeding (Bernardo, 1994; Zhao *et al.*, 2015).  
480 We show here that root-mediated yield of melon hybrids is superior, but independent of their parental  
481 *per se* performance (**Figure 4**, **Figure 5a**), and therefore implementation of high-throughput indirect  
482 selection or prediction methods is important for efficient rootstock breeding. Root-mediated early-  
483 stage vegetative canopy biomass was not predictive as a potential indirect selection trait. Parental

484 genetic distance was also poorly correlated with root-mediated hybrids yield. However, our GWA  
485 results (**Figure 7**) indicate that QTL or genomic selection strategies can be effective for accelerating  
486 rootstock breeding. Haplotype of two QTLs that were consistent across Irrigated and Dry  
487 experiments, explained 36% of the root-mediated yield variation and the favorable haplotype  
488 (heterozygote at both loci) was associated with average yield increase of 15% compared to the *HDA20*  
489 population mean.

490

491 *Breeding implications*

492 World population growth and global climate change are forming major challenges to our  
493 civilization (Godfray *et al.*, 2010; Wheeler and von Braun, 2013). Agriculture, among other  
494 disciplines, plays a key role in dealing with these challenges (Garnett *et al.*, 2013) and one of the  
495 important channels of action for improving yields of crop plants in a sustainable manner is through  
496 genetic research and breeding. Heterosis is a well-established genetic mechanism for yield  
497 enhancement in crop plants. While parental genetic distance *per se* is not necessarily a robust  
498 predictor for level of heterosis in F1 hybrids—as shown here and by others (Huang *et al.*, 2015; Yang  
499 *et al.*, 2017b; Kaushik *et al.*, 2018)—it is a consensus that stronger heterotic effects are expected in  
500 hybrids by crossing diverse rather than closely related parents. Commercial melon breeding is  
501 commonly performed within market-segment defined narrow germplasm pools, which on one hand  
502 ensures strict maintenance of fruit-related varietal characteristics, but on the other hand inhibits the  
503 ability to perform wide crosses and explore the full potential of heterosis for productivity traits. By  
504 focusing our yield enhancement research effort on rootstocks, we essentially bypass this barrier as  
505 the above and underground genetic actions are performed independently. We show here that melon  
506 hybrid rootstocks significantly outperform inbreds and that selected melon hybrids, used as rootstocks  
507 grafted with commercial melon variety, increase yield across scions and environments without any  
508 visible negative effect on fruit quality. The ability to implement focused and autonomous breeding  
509 for rootstocks to efficiently introduce beneficial genetic properties to roots in species amenable for  
510 grafting, is a powerful, currently underutilized approach to improve crop performance under optimal  
511 as well as stress conditions. Mapping root-mediated heterotic yield QTLs in a multi-allelic population  
512 is a first step towards focused QTL analysis in bi-parental populations and development of marker-  
513 assisted selection protocols. Using hybrid-breeding methodologies, rootstock breeding can be an  
514 effective alternative channel for development of stress-tolerant and high-yielding varieties in crop  
515 species that are suitable for grafting, such as *Cucurbitaceae* and *Solanaceae*.

516

517 *Inverted scheme in root genetics*

518 Root biology is receiving increased attention in recent years as a potential channel to improve plant  
519 productivity under optimal and stress conditions. However, most of the genetic research in model and  
520 crop plants is taking an inherent approach with initial focus on analysis of root development and  
521 variation in root system architecture (Bray and Topp, 2018; Zhao *et al.*, 2018; Jia *et al.*, 2019;  
522 Wachsman *et al.*, 2020), rather than direct analysis of roots functional variation. Here, we propose an  
523 inverted scheme; using grafting, we directly characterize variation in root function and effect on  
524 whole-plant performance in the field to study the genetics of root-mediated yield variation. The  
525 combination of a crop plant amenable for grafting, with rich genetic and genomic resources, such as  
526 melon, is a powerful platform for applied root genomics and for exploring the interactions between  
527 root and shoot. We, therefore, believe that such 'forward genetics' approach is a first step towards  
528 discovery of candidate genes involved in root function, that show proven effect on yield. The current  
529 research expands the view on genetic properties of heterosis in plants by highlighting the contribution  
530 of roots to yield heterosis.

531

532 **Supplementary data**

533 **Supplementary Table 1:** List of 25 Founder lines that compose the melon core subset.

534 **Supplementary Figure 1:** Structure of the Half-Diallel (HDA) sets.

535 **Supplementary Figure 2:** *HDA20* rootstock yield trials in summer 2018 (Irrigated and Dry). a)  
536 Grafted plants in the nursery just before transplanting. Plastic clips are the graft union positions. b)  
537 Our field at Newe Ya'ar during yield harvest. Melon piles are the yield of plots of five plants. c) Yield  
538 heatmap projected on the 1,462 field plots (7,310 plants) of the Dry and Irrigated experiments. d)  
539 Correlation between Dry and Irrigated trials. Each dot represents an entry mean in the Dry and  
540 Irrigated fields. e and f) Correlations between root-mediated yield in 2017 and 2018 (irrigated and  
541 Dry) across 55 *HDA10* genotypes. The common scion, 'Glory', grafted on itself (Gr) and non-grafted  
542 (NG) are highlighted.

543 **Supplementary Figure 3:** Correlations between root-mediated yield and its components – Number  
544 of Fruits per plant (FN) and Average Fruit Weight (AFW), in the *HDA20* population in the Irrigated  
545 and Dry fields.

546 **Supplementary Figure 4:** Correlation between Average Fruit Weight (AFW) and Fruit Number (FN)  
547 across 45 *HDA10* F1 hybrids and their 10 parents. a) Normal scale. b) Log transformed values

548 **Supplementary Figure 5:** Correlation for TSS between the rootstock-mediated ‘Glory’ and non-  
549 grafted experiments across the *HDA20* population. Each point represent the entry mean TSS of 15  
550 fruits in the grafted (rootstock-mediated, x-axis) and non-grafted (y-axis) experiments.

551

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558

559 **Author contributions**

560 AG conceived the research plan. AG and AD designed the experiments. AD, JB, and AG developed  
561 plant genetic materials. AD, IH, EO, GT, AM, TI and AG performed the experiments and collected  
562 the data. AG and AD analyzed the results. AAS, YT and ESB provided genomic support. AG wrote  
563 the manuscript. All authors discussed the results and approved the manuscript.

564

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## Figure legends

**Figure 1:** The path for development of the *HDA25* population. *Melo180* is a diverse collection (Gur *et al.*, 2017). *HDA25* is half-diallel population developed from the 25 core founders. On the right are representative mature fruits from the *HDA25* population.

**Figure 2:** Yield heterosis across *HDA10* population (45 F1 hybrids and their 10 parental lines). **a**) Yield comparison between inbreds and F1s. **b**) Analysis of yield across 45 hybrid groups ordered in ascending manner by F1 yield. **c**) Example of heterotic hybrid (middle) alongside its parents. **d**) Root-mediated yield comparison between inbreds and F1s. **e**) Analysis of root-mediated yield across 45 hybrid groups ordered in ascending manner by F1 yield. **f**) Correlation between root-mediated yield (grafted) and yield of parallel genotypes in the non-grafted experiment, across the *HDA10* population.

**Figure 3:** Root-mediated yield comparison between F1 hybrids and parental inbreds in the *HDA20* grafted rootstock yield trial. (a) Irrigated field. (b) Dry field.

**Figure 4:** Partition of hybrids' yield to parental and heterotic components. **a** and **b**) Yield of the 190 *HDA20* hybrids in the Irrigated and Dry fields, presented by its components: blue bars are the best-parent (BP) yield for each hybrid group, and orange bars represent the deviation of hybrid from best-parent (best-parent heterosis; BPH). Hybrids are ordered in an ascending manner by their yield. Negative orange bars reflect hybrids that are lower than their best-parent. **c** and **d**) correlations between root-mediated yield of best-parent and F1 hybrids across 190 *HDA20* triads. Dashed diagonal is  $x=y$  (BP=F1). Horizontal dashed blue lines are the yield of self-grafted 'Glory', the common scion variety.

**Figure 5:** Correlations between mid-parent and F1 hybrid across 190 hybrid groups (*HDA20*). **a**) root-mediated yield (grafted). **b**) Average fruit weight (AFW, non-grafted) **c**) Average seed weight (ASW, non-grafted). **d**) Total soluble solids (TSS, non-grafted). Red triangles represent the averages of mid-parent and F1s. **e**) and **f**) present duplicated heat maps of the 20x20 half-diallel matrices for root-mediated yield (e) and for AFW (f). Both axes are ordered by parental GCA. Diagonals are the parents *per se* performance.

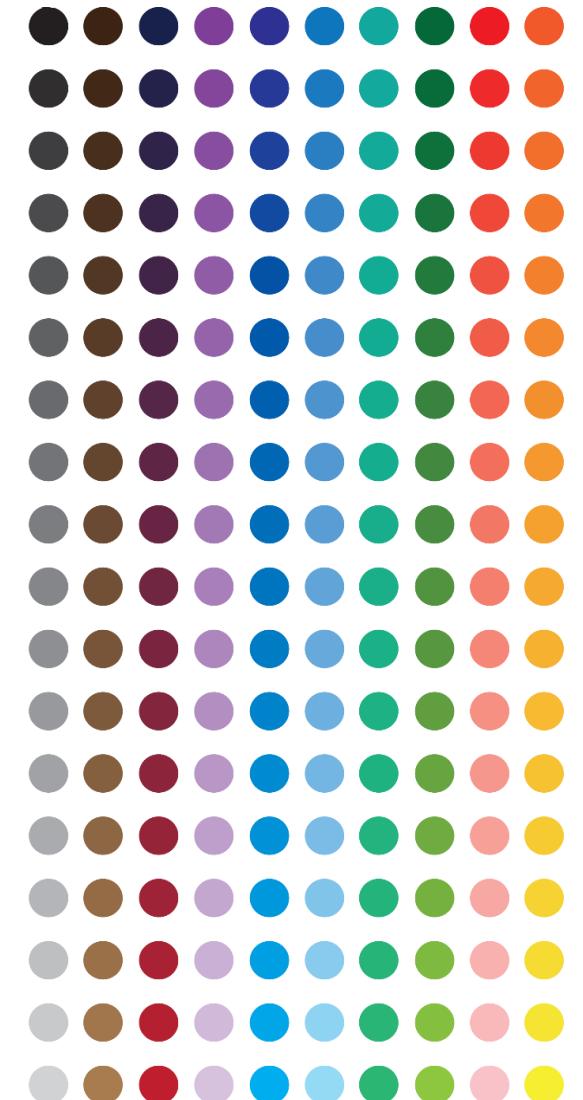
**Figure 6:** Potential predictors of hybrid root-mediated yield. **a**) Comparison of root-mediated young-plant vegetative biomass between *HDA20* hybrids and their inbred parents **b**) Correlation between root-mediated 'Glory' plant biomass and root-mediated 'Glory' fruit yield, across 156 hybrids + 13 inbred parents. **c**) Correlation between parental genetic distance and root-mediated yield, across 190 *HDA20* hybrids. **d**) Correlation between parental genetic distance and root-mediated yield BPH, across 190 *HDA20* hybrids.

**Figure 7:** GWAS of root-mediated yield across 190 *HDA20* hybrids. a) Manhattan plot, Irrigated field. b) Manhattan plot, Dry field. Arrows indicate significant SNPs that are common to the Irrigated and Dry experiments. c) ANOVA for allelic effect of QTL on chromosome 3 (qRMY3.1). d) ANOVA for allelic effect of QTL on chromosome 6 (qRMY6.1). e) ANOVA for allelic effect of the combined haplotype of qRMY3.1 and qRMY6.1.

**Figure 8:** Yield advantage of selected rootstocks across scions and growing conditions (a) 2019 yield trials. Values in each cell are the average of 5 plots with 10 plants per plot and are presented as  $\Delta\%$  from the corresponding non-grafted variety. Significant values at  $P<0.05$  are bolded and underlined. Exp.1: Maoz-Haim, Irrigated, 1.66 pl./m.; Exp.2: Newe-Ya'ar, Dry, 2 pl./m.; Exp.3: Newe-Ya'ar, Irrigated, 2 pl./m.; Exp.4: Newe-Ya'ar, Irrigated, 1 pl./m. (b) 2020 yield trials. \* indicate significantly different (at  $P<0.05$ ) from the self-grafted controls.

Figure 1

*Melo180*



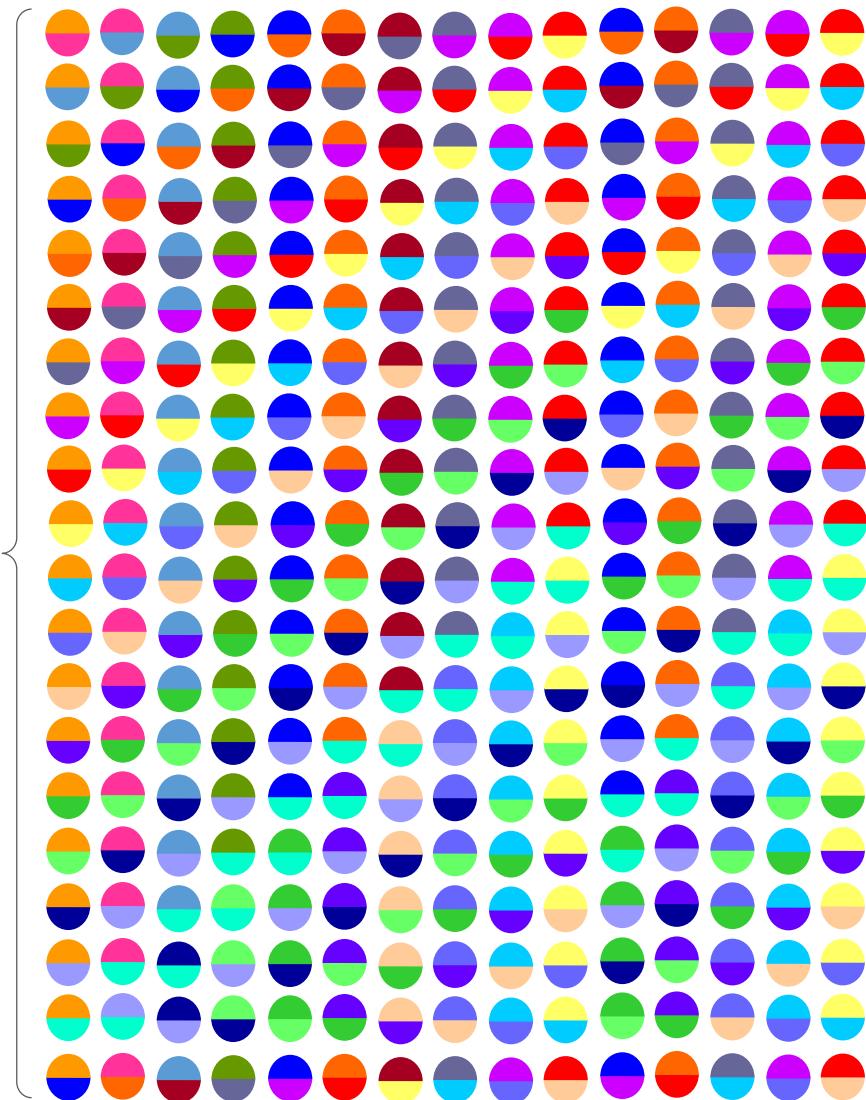
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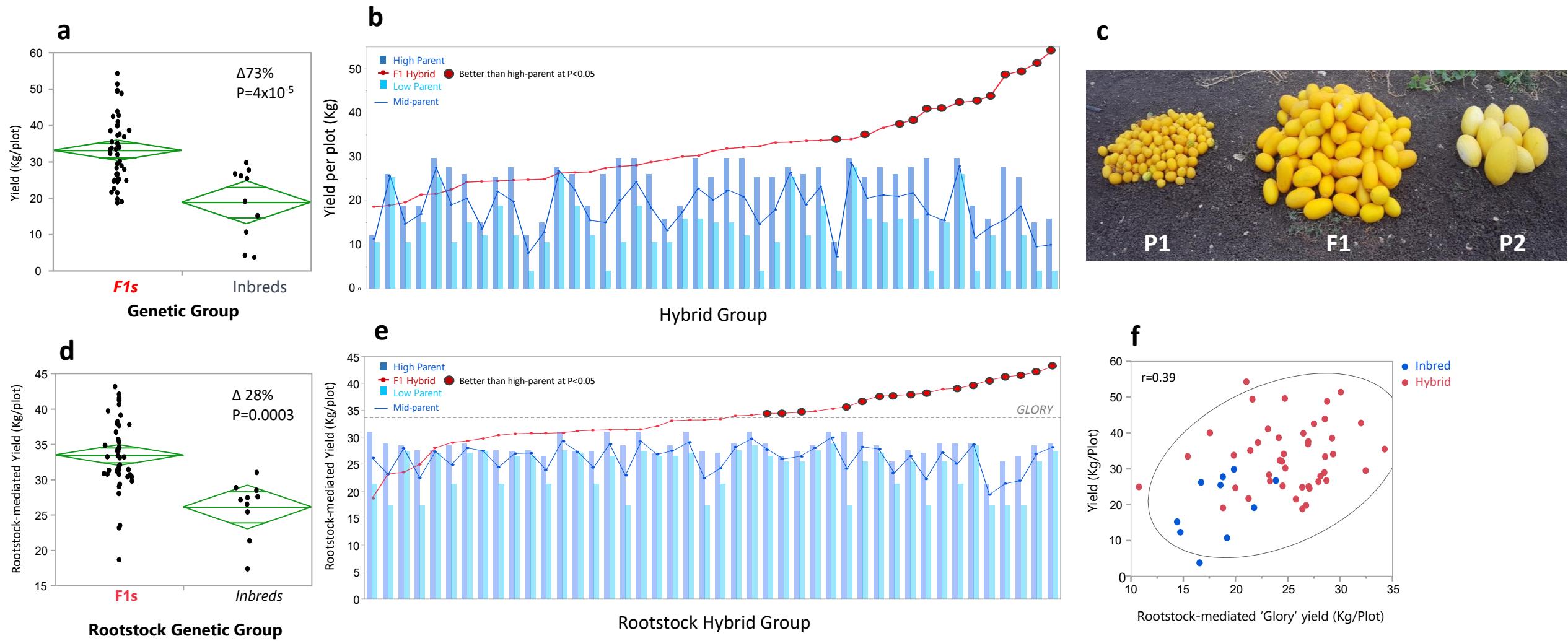


*Core25*

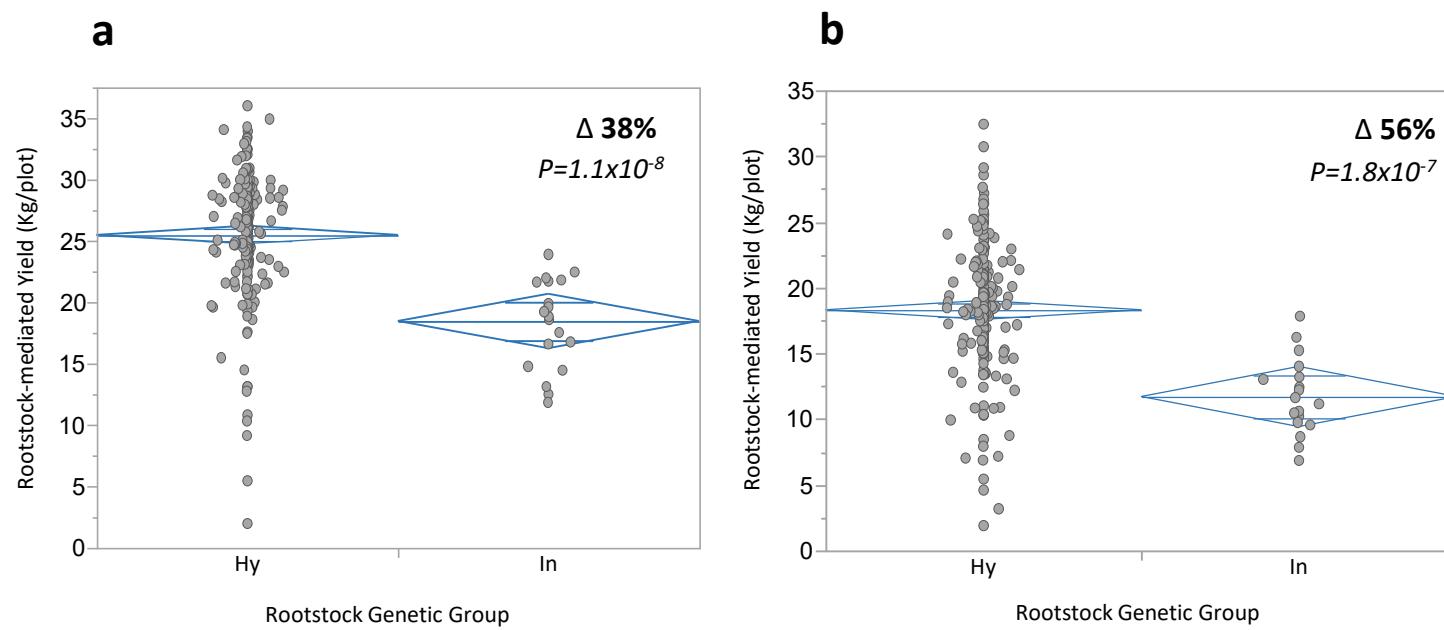


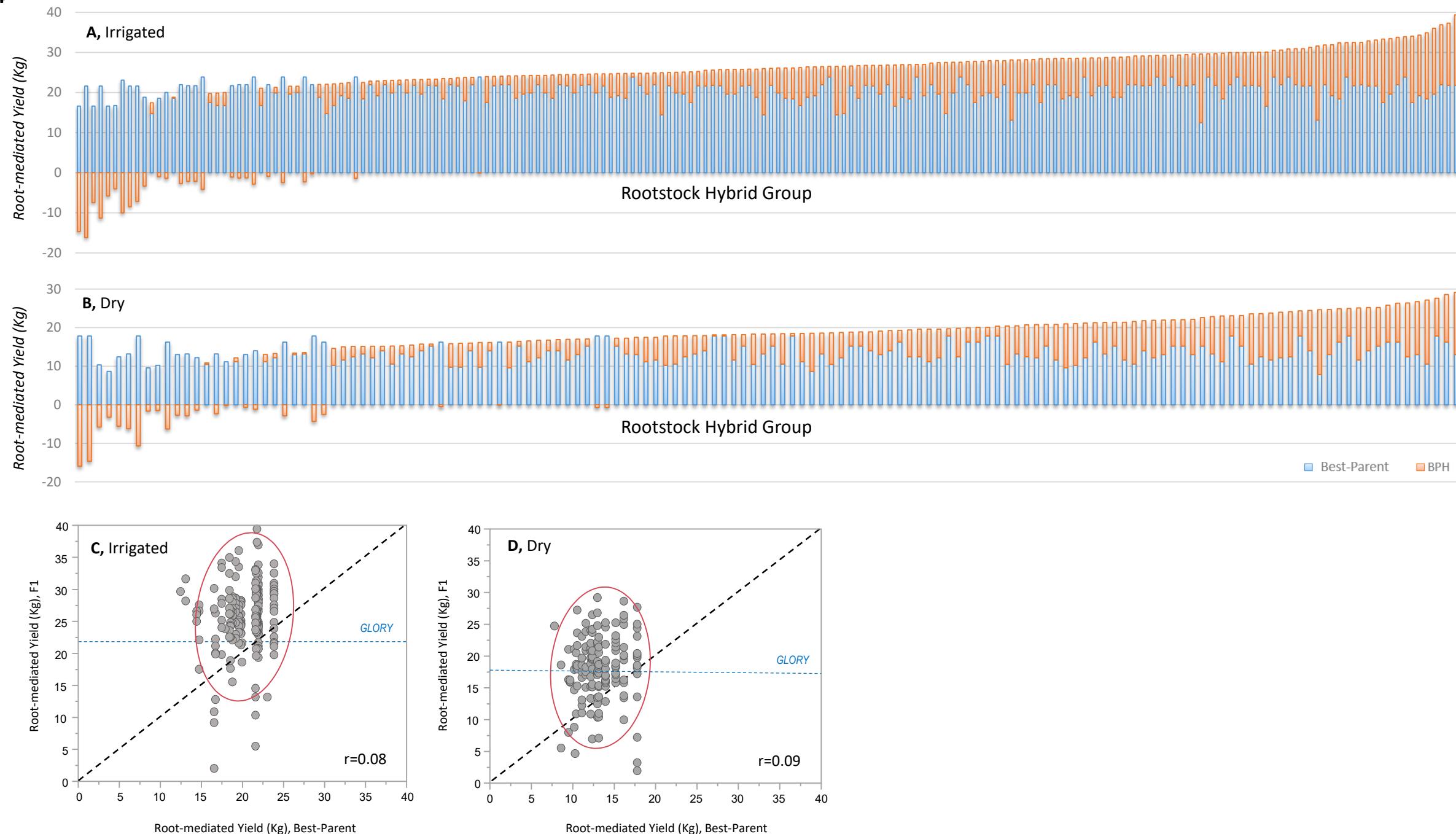
*HDA25: 300 F1 hybrids*



**Figure 2**

**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**

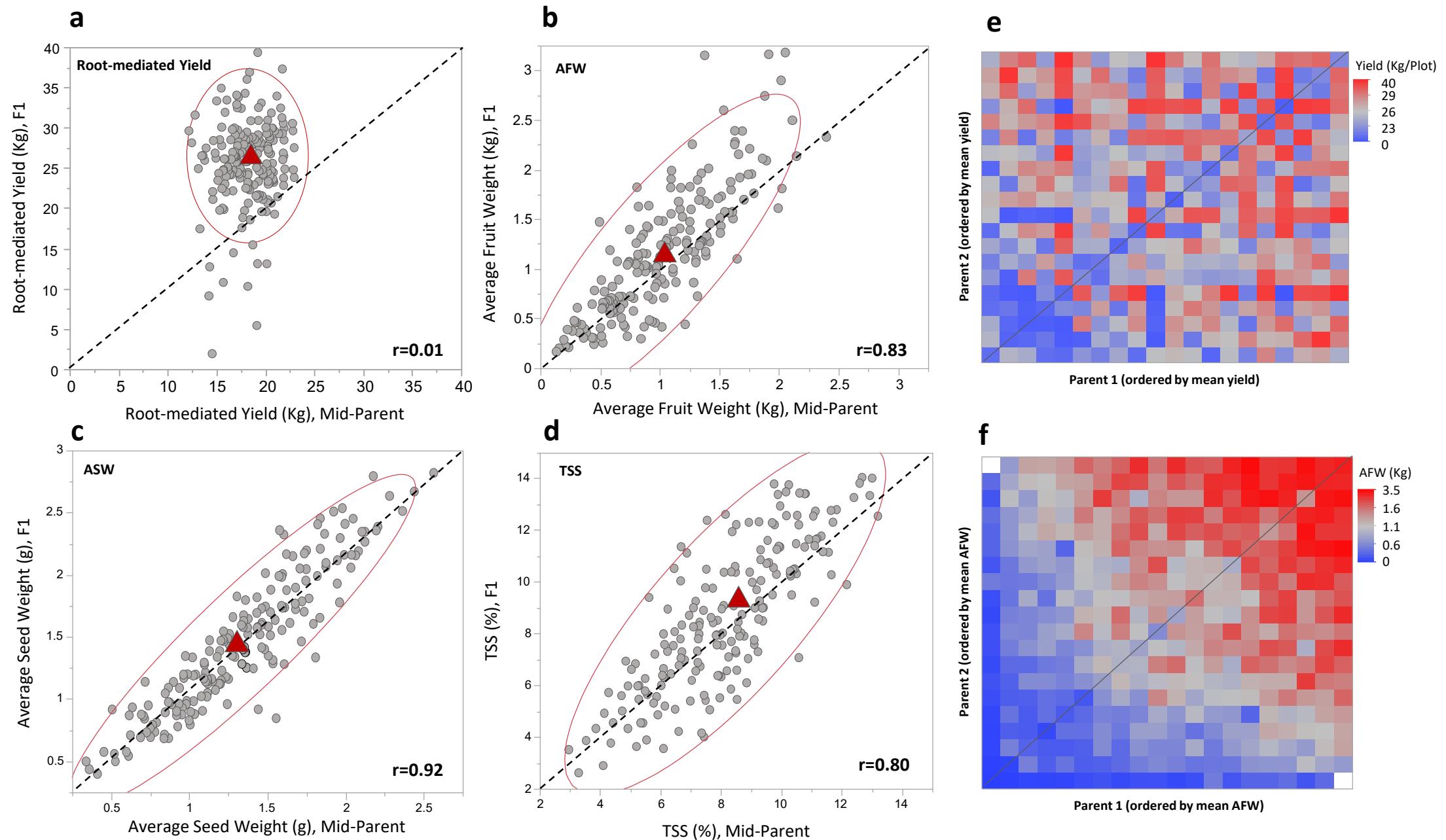
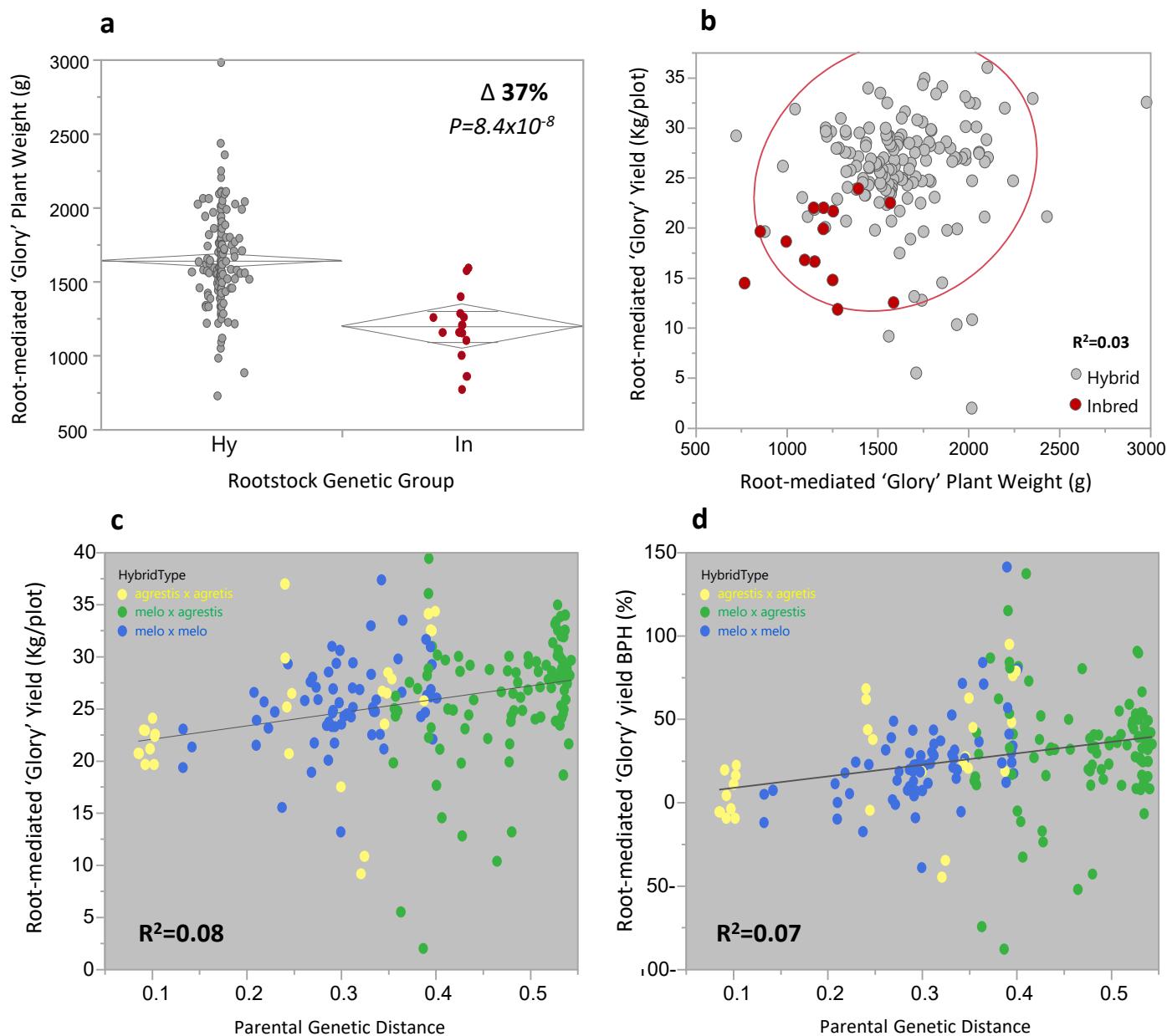
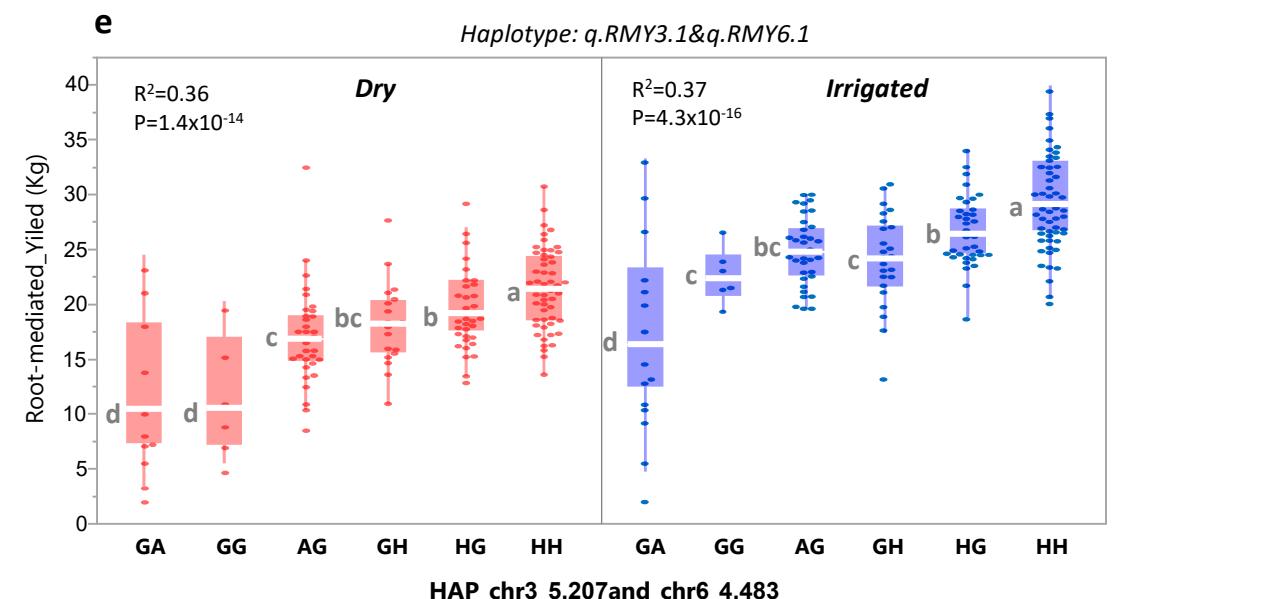
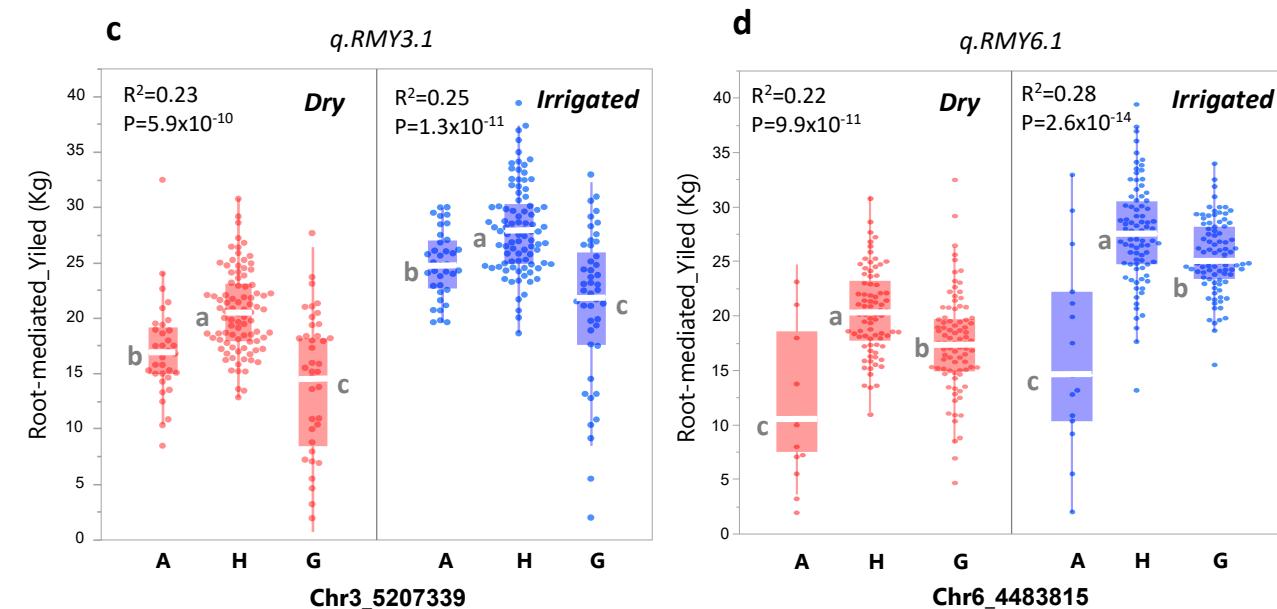
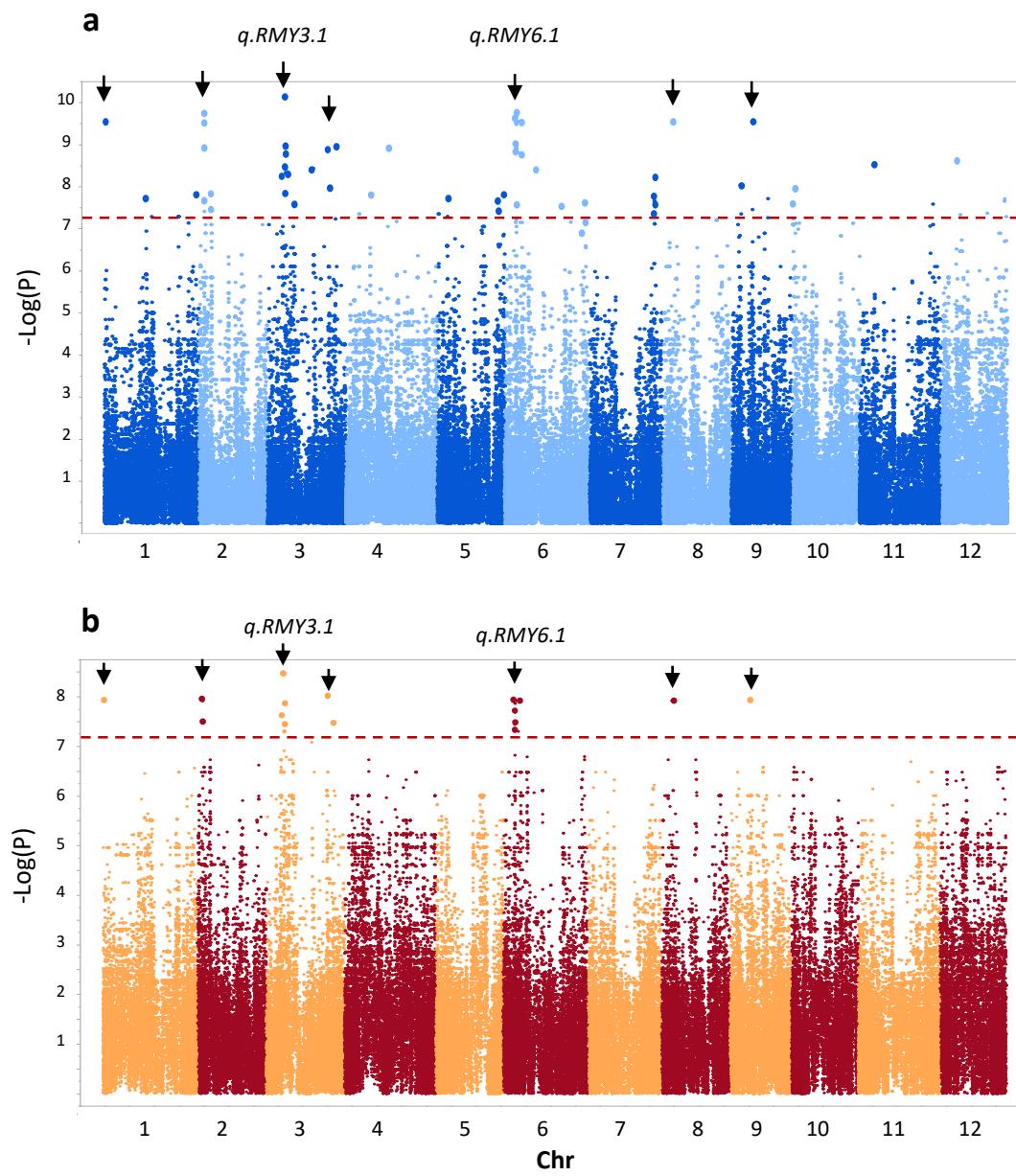
**Figure 5**

Figure 6



**Figure 7**

**Figure 8**

