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Manuscript submitted to Applied and Environmental Soil Science

1 pesan

Applied and Environmental Soil Science <karlo.lalap@hindawi.com>
22 Oktober 2022 pukul 23.50
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Dear Dr. Nurdin,

Congratulations, the manuscript titled "Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality" has been successfully submitted to Applied and Environmental Soil Science.

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Thank you for submitting your work to Applied and Environmental Soil Science.

MANUSCRIPT DETAILS

Kind regards,
Karlo Lalap

Applied and Environmental Soil Science

Cover Letter

22 October 2022

Dear Editor in Chief of Applied and Environmental Soil Science

We wish to submit an original research article entitled "Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality" for consideration by Applied and Environmental Soil Science.

We confirm that neither the manuscript nor any parts of its content are currently under consideration or published in another journal. All authors have approved the manuscript and agree with its submission to Applied and Environmental Soil Science.

In this paper, we report that land qualities that define the optimum yield of hybrid maize included root conditions, nutrient retention, nutrient availability, erosion hazard, and land preparation. Meanwhile, for land characteristics covered coarse material, effective soil depth, soil organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. Combining PLS SEM and boundary line analysis was a better approach to developing new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize. This is significant because the land suitability criteria for existing maize fields are still general and there are no specific criteria for hybrid maize varieties. In addition, the selection of land quality and characteristics of the land used can use PLS SEM and the determination of range limits can use the boundary line method. Availability of land suitability criteria for specific varieties-based maize plants is urgently needed at this time as a basis for soil management and strategic efforts to increase maize productivity, so that food availability is maintained properly.

We believe that this manuscript is appropriate for publication by Applied and Environmental Soil Science because this manuscript is relevant to the aim and scope of the journal.

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Please address all correspondence concerning this manuscript to me at nurdin@ung.ac.id.

Thank you for your consideration of this manuscript.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nurdin

Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

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Abstract

The significant effect of land quality on maize production has not been fully considered in the existing land suitability criteria. Therefore, this study aims to determine the hybrid maize land suitability criteria based on the optimum yield and land quality. It was carried out in Boalemo Regency, Indonesia, where a total of 67 land units were surveyed to obtain land characteristics data. A partial least square of structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 8.0 was used to select a robust land quality controlling hybrid maize yield, while the boundary line method was used to determine optimum yield and differentiating of land suitability criteria. The result showed that land qualities that define the optimum yield of hybrid maize were root conditions, nutrient retention and availability, erosion hazard, and land preparation. The soil characteristics were coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. Furthermore, the highest optimum yield of 8.35 ton/ha was achieved by the effective depth and organic C content for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest of 5.47 ton/ha was obtained by exchangeable K for class S1. This showed that the combination of PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis was a better approach to developing new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize.

1. Introduction

Food security and farmer prosperity are global concerns, this makes every country increase crop production as well as farmers' income. An important issue for countries with developing economies is ensuring food security, where the agricultural sector plays a strategic role in increasing food availability [1]. Although the global food system has placed maize (*Zea mays* L.) as the leading cereal crop [2], its productivity is being disrupted by land degradation, water scarcity, and climate change [3].

In Indonesia, the wet tropical climate with rainfall and high temperatures tends to reduce the quality of land and agricultural products [4]. This country ranked 8th among the maize-producing nations with a contribution of 2.19% and 2.42% of the world's total harvested area [5]. However, the main problem is the relatively low level of yield in several regions because the achievement of maize production has not been followed by an increase in yield per unit area [6]. This is indicated by the average yield in 2020, which was up to 5.57 ton/ha [5].

According to a previous investigation, maize production in Indonesia can reach between 10-12 ton/ha [7], [8] thereby making the country the 21st leading importer in the world.

Maize is usually grown on land with low yield potential [9] and soil fertility, thereby causing low productivity [10]. Moreover, land productivity is determined by quality and characteristics [11], [12], while land quality has a close relationship with maize yields [13]. The land quality affecting the optimum yield of maize needs to be determined [14] and increased by using hybrid varieties that have high yields. This makes it necessary to evaluate the suitability of the hybrid maize in a region to ensure optimal production. The land suitability criteria for hybrid maize are not yet available because the current criterion is the general suitability of maize plants without distinguishing between hybrids and inbreds. Therefore, there is a need to make land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants.

A previous study has shown that land quality has a significant effect on suitability for certain uses [15]. Meanwhile, land suitability is also important due to the continuous increase in the demand for agricultural land [16]. The land suitability criteria for existing maize fields are still general [17] and there are no specific criteria for hybrid maize varieties. The class assessment outcomes obtained using the existing criteria are relatively many and are not in line with the actual field results [18]. The current criteria consist of 3 components, namely, land quality, characteristics, and ranges of land characteristic values to determine its suitability. Therefore, the problem in developing criteria is choosing land quality, characteristics, and determining the range of land characteristic values associated with suitability classes, namely suitable, somewhat suitable, marginally suitable, and not suitable.

The selection of land quality and characteristics can be carried out through the partial least square of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM), while the range limits is being determined by the boundary line method. Land qualities and characteristics in the current criteria can be used temporarily since structural equation model analysis with partial least squares produces better indicators and models than other multivariate analyses [19]–[23]. This is because the variant-based PLS-SEM has a higher level of flexibility and the size of the sample used is relatively small ranging from 30 to 100 [24]–[27]. The use of PLS-SEM to determine land characteristics and qualities that control maize crop yields is still relatively rare, except for Syaf [28] on older cocoa plants, maize composite [29], and on local varieties [6]. The boundary line method can help determine nutrient adequacy concentrations and the optimum yield range of a plant that affects nutrients, as well as other land characteristics [30], [31]. Currently, the land suitability criteria for maize plants have not been determined using the boundary line method, except by Ridayanti et al. [32], although the investigation was not specific to hybrid maize.

After obtaining the quality and characteristics of land affecting maize yields with PLS-SEM, the boundary line method can be used to determine the optimum yield as well as land suitability criteria simultaneously. This is carried out by drawing the intersection of the boundary line at the yield and projecting with the land characteristics [17]. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize based on the optimum yield and land quality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study area

The study area extends from 0°28'5.6" - 0°57'30.02" N to 122°°8'34.25" - 122°43'10.41"E (Figure 1), which is located in the agricultural land of Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. The maximum air temperature was 28.19°C and the minimum was 26.79°C with an average of 28.01°C. Meanwhile, the maximum rainfall was 1,849 mm and the minimum was 1,246 mm with an average of 1,478 mm. The wet and dry seasons last for 3 months and 5 months respectively. The soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. [33], consists of 35 soil units, where each unit has information on land characteristics, namely effective depth, drainage, texture, pH, cation exchange capacity, base saturation, landform, parent material, relief, and land unit area.

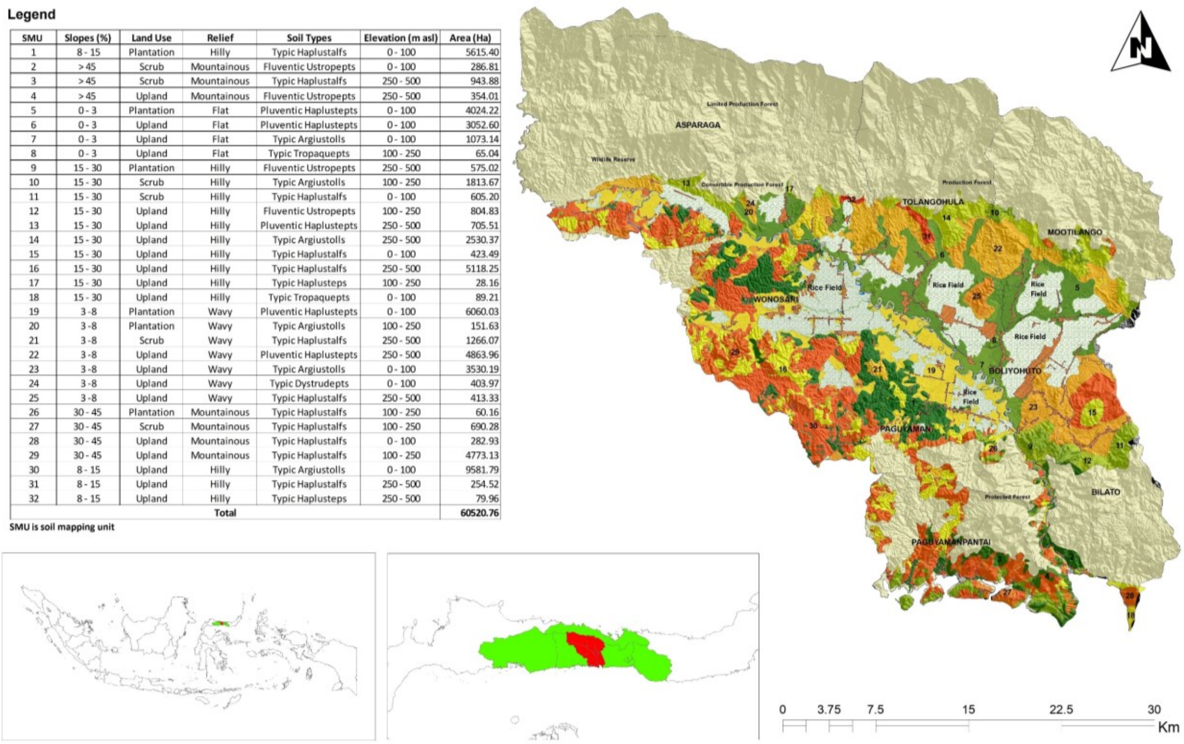

Figure 1: Study area.

2.2 Dataset collection for land quality and land characteristics

The framework of this study is presented in Figure 2. The previous soil map [33] was used as a working map, where information on land characteristics, namely soil, climate, and terrain, was extracted. It was updated by taking 32 pedons, thereby becoming 67 pedons representing soil diversity in each location. For each observation location, the climatic data of land and terrain characteristics were observed and the previous data were updated. The soil samples according to horizon boundaries were taken for analysis in the laboratory.

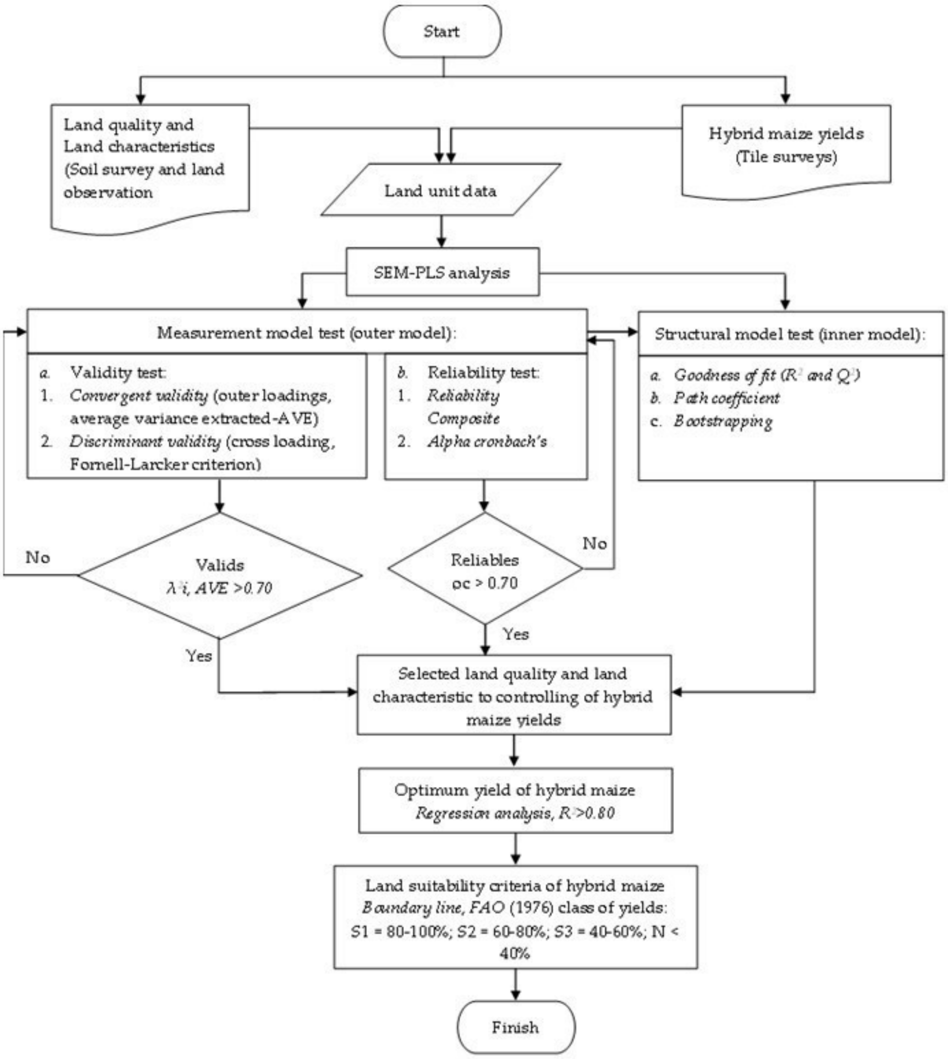

Figure 2: Research framework.

Soil samples were dried for 3 days and sieved through a 2 mesh sieve. The method of laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Eviyati and Sulaeman [34]. The soil pH was determined with a pH meter in a 1:2.5 soil and water solution, while the organic C content was assessed using the Walkley and Black method. The available P content was measured using the Olsen method, while the cation exchange capacity (CEC) was extracted with 1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 (ammonium acetate) on a dry sample of 105°C, and the base saturation was determined by calculation. Subsequently, the data from the chemical analysis were averaged to a depth of 0-30 cm using the weighted averaging technique.

2.3 Dataset collection for hybrid maize yield

The areas currently planted with hybrid maize were identified and blocks with a size of 2.5 m x 2.5 m were made in each map unit. Maize plants in each block passed through standardized management according to farmers' technology. After harvesting, weighting was carried out to obtain hybrid maize yield data from the results of tiles on each land unit. Subsequently, the results were calculated using the formula, as expressed below:

$$Y\ (t) = H\ x\ \frac{A}{6.25\ m^2} \quad (1)$$

Meanwhile, productivity is calculated using the formula below:

$$Y\ (t\ ha^{-1}) = \frac{H\ x\ 1.64\ x\ 56.73}{100} \qquad (2)$$

where Y = hybrid maize yield, H = tile yield (kg), A = maize area 1 per hectare (ha), 1.64 and 56.73 = constant.

2.4 Selection of land quality and land characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in the suitability criteria were used as presented in Tables 1 and 2, which show brief statistics. Generally, most data are relatively homogenous, except for coarse material, available P, slopes, soil erosion, height and inundation, as well as rock outcrops and surface rocks. The selection used the partial least squares of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with tools SmartPLS, where land quality and characteristics were selected as the latent and manifest variables, respectively. The analysis in PLS-SEM has 2 main steps, namely (1) the measurement model (outer model) and (2) the structural model test (inner model).

Table 1: Latent variables and indicators used in this study

Latent variables		**Indicators**	
Notation	**Land quality**	**Notation**	**Land characteristics**
X1	Temperature (t)	X1.1	Temperature
X2	Water availability (wa)	X2.1	Rainfall
		X2.2	Wet month
		X2.3	Dry month
		X2.4	Long growth period (LGP)
X3	Oxygen availability (oa)	X3.1	Drainage
X4	Rooting condition (rc)	X4.1	Texture
		X4.1.1	Sand fraction
		X4.1.2	Silt fraction
		X4.1.3	Clay
		X4.2	Coarse material
		X4.3	Effective depth
X5	Nutrient retention (nr)	X5.1	pH H_2O
		X5.2	pH KCl
		X5.3	Organic C
		X5.4	Cation exchange capacity (CEC)
		X5.5	Base saturation
X6	Nutrient availability (na)	X6.1	Total N
		X6.2	P availability
		X6.3	K exchangeable
X7	Sodicity (xn)	X7.1	Exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP)
X8	Erosion hazard (eh)	X8.1	Slopes
		X8.2	Soil erosion
X9	Flooding hazard (fh)	X9.1	Inundation height
		X9.2	Inundation period
X10	Land preparation (lp)	X10.1	Rock outcrops
		X10.2	Surface rock
Y	Hybrid maize yield	Y.1	Hybrid maize yield

Step 1 consists of validity and reliability tests, wherein the validity test is conducted with convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity is in form of outer loadings (loading factor) and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity is in form of cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Meanwhile, the reliability test uses composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha.

Convergent validity was observed from the magnitude of the outer loading and the AVE value of each indicator on the latent variable. The validity was calculated according to the equation:

$$x_i = \lambda x_i \xi_1 + \delta_i \qquad (3)$$

$$y_i = \lambda y_i \eta_1 + \varepsilon_i \qquad (4)$$

where x and y = exogenous (ξ) and endogenous (η) latent variable indicator, λx and λy = loading factors, δ and ε = residual/measurement errors or noise.

Table 2: Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics.

Latent variables / Indicators	Unit	n	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
X1 (Temperature)							
X1.1 (Temperature)	ºC	67	26.79	27.80	28.01	28.19	0.63
X2 (Water availability)							
X2.1 (Rainfall)	mm	67	1,246.00	1,533.42	1,478.00	1,849.00	232.69
X2.2 (Wet month)	month	67	0.00	1.03	1.00	3.00	0.85
X2.3 (Dry month)	month	67	2.00	3.39	4.00	5.00	1.06
X2.4 (LGP)	day	67	211.00	246.00	214.00	304.00	44.54
X3 (Oxygen availability)							
X3.1 (Drainage)	class	67	0.00	3.76	4.00	6.00	1.82
X4 (Rooting conditions)							
X4.1 (texture)	class	67	1.00	2.21	2.00	5.00	0.99
X4.1.1 (Sand fraction)	%	67	5.00	41.58	43.00	81.33	18.51
X4.1.2 (Silt fraction)	%	67	7.33	27.31	24.50	51.50	11.54
X4.1.3 (Clay)	%	67	11.33	31.90	30.00	56.33	12.72
X4.2 (Coarse material)	%	67	5.00	17.27	10.00	70.00	16.58
X4.3 (Effective depth)	cm	67	10.00	74.55	74.00	160.00	36.40
X5 (Nutrient retention)							
X5.1 (pH H_2O)		67	5.00	5.92	5.90	7.15	0.52
X5.2 (pH KCl)		67	4.35	5.24	5.17	6.60	0.56
X5.3 (Organic C)	%	67	0.41	0.85	0.77	2.35	0.39
X5.4 (CEC)	cmol(+)/kg	67	8.94	24.89	22.43	59.57	11.41
X5.5 (Base saturation)	%	67	45.03	56.22	52.85	81.89	9.76
X6 (Nutrient availability)							
X6.1 (Total N)	%	67	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.27	0.04
X6.2 (P availability)	mg/kg	67	0.73	8.62	3.77	58.67	12.61
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	cmol(+)/kg	67	0.07	0.39	0.24	1.92	0.42
X7 (Sodicity)							
X7.1 (ESP)	%	67	0.76	7.06	6.20	24.17	5.62
X8 (Erosion hazard)							
X8.1 (Slopes)	%	67	1.00	9.58	6.00	25.00	7.29
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	ton/ha/year	67	3.66	334.51	110.27	1772.43	439.08

X9 (Flooding hazard)							
X9.1 (Inundation height)	cm	67	0.00	7.58	0.00	50.00	17.10
X9.2 (Inundation period)	day	67	0.00	0.64	0.00	5.00	1.52
X10 (Land preparation)							
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	%	67	0.00	6.64	0.00	45.00	11.56
X10.2 (Surface rock)	%	67	0.00	6.58	0.00	45.00	11.59
Y (Hybrid maize yield)	ton/ha	67	2.85	4.95	4.68	8.07	1.15

n = the number of the land unit, min = minimum, max is maximum, SD = standard deviations, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

Meanwhile, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was calculated using the equation:

$$\text{AVE} = \frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)} \quad (5)$$

Where λ^2_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

The loading factor of an indicator with the highest value is the strongest or most important measure in reflecting the latent variable. In this study, the loading factor value is > 0.70 for selecting best land characteristics, but values ranging from 0.50-0.60 can still be tolerated with a t-statistic > 1.96 or a small p-value of 0.05 [25], [35]. Meanwhile, the AVE value used was more than 0.50, showing that the convergent validity on the latent variable has been reached.

The discriminant validity test used the cross-loading value and the Fornell-Larker criterion to test discriminantly valid indicators in explaining or reflecting latent variables. When the correlation between the latent variables and the core measurement of each indicator is high, the latent variable can predict the indicator better and is considered valid. The discriminant validity is measured by the square root of the average variance extracted, which will be compared with the correlation value between variables. The value calculated based on the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlation between constructs [36]. The equation is expressed below

$$\text{Square Root of AVE} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)}} \quad (6)$$

where λ^2_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Furthermore, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the reliability value between indicators of the latent variables. They are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70 and has a minimum value of 0.60 [25]. The composite reliability value is calculated using the equation:

$$\rho c = \frac{(\sum \lambda_i)^2}{(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)} \quad (7)$$

where λ_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Meanwhile, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is calculated according to the equation:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{\sum p \neq p'^{\, cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}}{p_{q+\sum p \neq p'}^{\, cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}} \right) \left(\frac{p_q}{p_{q-1}} \right) \quad (8)$$

where P_q = the number of indicators or manifest variables, and q = the indicator block.

For step 2, the structural model testing (inner model) was carried out after the relationship model was built in line with the observed data and the overall suitability, namely goodness of fit. The structural equation (inner model) is as follows:

$$H_j = \gamma_j\xi_1 + \gamma_j\xi_2 + \dots \gamma_j\xi_n + \varsigma_j \quad (9)$$

where η_j = endogenous variable vector (dependent), $\gamma_j\xi_1 + \gamma_j\xi_2 + \dots \gamma_j\xi_n$ = exogenous latent variable vector, and ς_j = residual vector (error).

Meanwhile, the determinant coefficient and goodness of fit (Q^2) were calculated using the equation:

$$Q^2 \textit{ (Predictive relevance)} = 1 - (1 - R_1^2)(1 - R_2^2) \dots (1 - R_p^2) \quad (10)$$

where R_1^2, R_2^2, ... R_p^2 = R square of endogenous variables in the equation model.

The quantity of Q^2 has a value with a range of $0 < Q2 < 1$, the closer the value to 1, the better the model [25]. It is also equivalent to the coefficient of total determination in path analysis. Furthermore, the effect and significance were tested based on the estimated value of the path coefficient and the critical point value (t-statistics or p-value) at = 0.05. The relationship model between variables was measured by testing the direct correlation coefficient between variables. The results of testing the relationship between *X* and *Y* variables were indicated by the correlation coefficient as well as t-statistics, and are also presented in the path diagram.

2.5 Class assignment

To determine the class-required data for optimum results, class limits were calculated from the percentage of optimum results. After knowing the highest and lowest yields, the values were connected with the range of land characteristics values. The land suitability class and yield used referred to FAO [37], namely class S1 (very suitable) when the values reach 80-100%, S2 was moderately suitable 60-80%, S3 marginally suitable 40-60%, and N not suitable <40% of the optimum capacity.

The optimum yield was determined using the boundary line method. This method is carried out by drawing a boundary line on the graph of the relationship between yield and land characteristics to obtain optimum results. In the boundary line method according to Widiatmaka et al. [38], each land characteristic is plotted on the X-axis, while hybrid maize yields are plotted on the Y-axis. Bhat and Sujatha [30] stated that the preparation of the hybrid maize yield boundary line includes the preparation of a scatter diagram between the X and the Y variable, (2) division of the X-axis into several classes of intervals, (3) determination of the highest data points in each class interval, (4) preparation of boundary lines based on the highest data points from each class interval, (5) draw a line parallel to the X-axis according to the percentage of the result class.

Furthermore, with the Microsoft Excel application tools, the boundary between classes S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N were determined by the Data menu → What-if-Analysis → Goal Seek → Set the cell at the location containing the regression equation → to value fill with the result limit values S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N → By changing cell → the location where the value of the characteristics of the land will be sought → Ok. On location "By changing cell", the number being searched will appear, and at the location "set cell" will be equal to the limit value of the result.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Land quality and characteristics controlling hybrid maize yield

3.1.1 Validity test result

Table 3 shows the loading factor of the variables, where most indicators were more than the critical limit of 0.70 with a 95% confidence level ($P > 1.960$). Therefore, these variables are highly recommended and the indicators are considered convergently valid. In the soil texture indicator for the latent variable of root conditions as well as the cation exchange capacity (CEC) and base saturation (BS) indicators for nutrient retention, the loading factor was below the tolerance value of 0.50 at the 95% confidence level ($P < 1.960$), hence, it was not used. This implies that the indicators have not been established or explained properly because the standard value of the loading factor must be greater than or equal to 0.50 [26].

The average variance extracted (AVE) value of almost all variables was greater than 0.50, therefore, it was considered convergently valid [36]. The AVE value of the available nutrient variable was not valid due to the smaller value of the loading factor for the CEC and BS indicators of 0.50, leading to the removal of both indicators. A similar result was discovered in the root condition variable, although the AVE value was greater than 0.50, while the soil texture indicator was not used because the loading factor value is only 0.013.

Table 3: Outer loading (loading factor) and the average variance extracted from study variables.

Indicators (land characteristics)		Latent Variables (land quality)	Loading Factors	t-Stat	Status	AVE
X1.1 (Temperature)	→	X1 (Temperature)	1.000**	11.192	Valid	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall)	→	X2 (Water availability)	0.838	0.085	Valid	0.906
X2.2 (Wet month)	→		0.989	0.999	Valid	
X2.3 (Dry month)	→		0.850	0.428	Valid	
X2.4 (LGP)	→		0.993*	1.431	Valid	
X3.1 (Drainage)	→	X3 (Oxygen availability)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X4.1 (Texture)	→	X4 (Rooting condition)	0.013	0.066	Invalid	0.573
X4.2 (Coarse material)	→		0.921	1.086	Valid	
X4.3 (Effective depth)	→		-0.899	1.047	Valid	
X5.1 (pH H_2O)	→	X5 (Nutrient retention)	0.647	0.857	Valid	0.360 (invalid)
X5.2 (pH KCl)	→		0.570**	1.973	Valid	
X5.3 (Organic C)	→		0.831**	3.135	Valid	
X5.4 (CEC)	→		0.436*	1.381	Invalid	
X5.5 (Base saturation)	→		0.365	0.845	Invalid	
X6.1 (Total N)	→		0.760**	3.226	Valid	0.585

X6.2 (P availability)	→	X6 (Nutrient availability)	0.587*	1.385	Valid	
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	→		0.897**	6.907	Valid	
X7.1 (ESP)	→	X7 (Sodicity)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes)	→	X8 (Erosion hazard)	0.954**	21.438	Valid	0.932
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	→		0.941**	18.308	Valid	
X9.1 (Inundation height)	→	X9 (Flooding hazard)	0.984**	4.213	Valid	0.984
X9.2 (Inundation period)	→		0.985**	3.918	Valid	
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	→	X10 (Land preparation)	0.998**	189.133	Valid	0.995
X10.2 (Surface rock)	→		0.998**	320.273	Valid	

AVE = average variance extracted, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

The measurement of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading was used as the basis for assessing the discriminant validity of the model. The calculation results on the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 4 show that the average of the tested variables has a higher square root of AVE than the correlation value, hence, the latent variable was considered discriminantly valid. The square root value of the AVE must be greater than its correlation value with other constructs to meet the discriminant validity requirements [39]. The average loading factor value for the latent variable indicator was above that of others as shown in Table 5.

3.1.2 Reliability test result

The variables are considered reliable because composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient on average were more than 0.7 as shown in Table 6 [36], [40]. However, certain indicators still had values less than 0.6, namely soil texture but the indicators used are reliable and adequate in forming the latent variables.

The highest composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the variables of temperature, oxygen availability, and toxicity of 1 for the variables to be very reliable. The lowest coefficient was obtained on the root condition variable, therefore, the variable was not reliable. According to Bagozzi and Yi [41] and Hair et al. [40], variables are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70.

The remaining variables are water availability, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, and land preparation variables. The coefficient of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha > 0.6, there, the variable is considered reliable. The minimum value of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.60 [36], [40], [41].

Table 4: Fornell-Larker criterion test

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1	1.000										
X2	0.940	0.952									
X3	0.059	0.149	1.000								
X4	0.082	0.030	-0.162	0.757							
X5	-0.360	-0.239	-0.103	-0.368	0.600						
X6	-0.069	0.021	0.012	-0.518	0.694	0.765					
X7	0.382	0.429	0.084	0.228	-0.030	-0.217	1.000				
X8	0.019	-0.082	-0.501	0.285	-0.317	-0.370	-0.009	0.966			
X9	-0.104	-0.033	0.237	-0.204	0.073	0.090	0.202	-0.250	0.992		
X10	0.198	0.093	-0.223	0.873	-0.303	-0.538	0.362	0.304	-0.126	0.998	
Y	0.018	0.152	0.169	-0.578	0.387	0.456	-0.016	-0.517	0.164	-0.568	1.000

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = maize hybrid yield.

Table 5: Cross-Loading of latent variables to indicators

Indicators	Latent Variables										
	X1	**X2**	**X3**	**X4**	**X5**	**X6**	**X7**	**X8**	**X9**	**X10**	**Y**
X1.1	1	0.8300	0.0312	0.0240	-0.2959	-0.0592	0.3270	0.0195	-0.0837	0.1680	-0.0204
X2.1	0.9783	0.8379	-0.0035	-0.0063	-0.2488	-0.0320	0.3555	-0.0017	-0.0539	0.1552	0.0155
X2.2	0.8534	0.9887	0.1938	-0.0557	-0.1257	0.0988	0.4025	-0.1435	-0.0279	-0.0178	0.1748
X2.3	0.5223	0.8497	0.1523	0.2464	-0.2505	-0.1161	0.4641	-0.1494	0.0144	0.2154	0.0592
X2.4	0.8293	0.9928	0.1721	-0.0334	-0.1524	0.0833	0.4440	-0.1713	-0.0383	-0.0031	0.1331
X3.1	0.0312	0.1785	1	-0.1541	-0.1091	-0.0375	0.0843	-0.4964	0.2530	-0.2229	0.2156
X4.1	-0.0058	-0.0006	-0.1696	0.0126	0.2127	0.1013	0.2173	0.1761	0.0055	-0.0225	0.0050
X4.2	-0.0728	-0.1082	-0.0829	0.9212	-0.2754	-0.5494	0.1845	0.2891	-0.2674	0.7910	-0.5276
X4.3	-0.1289	-0.1240	0.2071	-0.8990	0.2046	0.3209	-0.2633	-0.1587	0.0730	-0.7693	0.4666
X5.1	-0.2975	-0.4140	-0.3824	-0.3027	0.6470	0.3024	-0.1283	0.1730	-0.0342	-0.1190	0.0718
X5.2	-0.2033	-0.2939	-0.4480	-0.2791	0.5701	0.3176	-0.0273	0.1935	0.0801	-0.1829	0.1445
X5.3	-0.2440	-0.0158	0.1276	-0.1134	0.8308	0.5651	0.0728	-0.5076	0.0545	-0.1147	0.3501
X5.4	0.0537	0.1002	0.0033	0.0110	0.4360	0.4081	0.3732	-0.0504	0.1426	-0.0137	0.1395
X5.5	-0.2717	-0.2512	-0.1053	-0.4382	0.3650	0.4343	-0.6008	-0.0619	-0.1498	-0.4876	0.0825
X6.1	-0.0256	0.1778	0.0335	-0.1950	0.7028	0.7604	0.0453	-0.3878	-0.0809	-0.2162	0.2623
X6.2	-0.1201	-0.2238	-0.4256	-0.2590	0.4149	0.5865	-0.2829	-0.0389	-0.0267	-0.2860	0.1025
X6.3	-0.0437	0.0283	0.0310	-0.5607	0.5145	0.8974	-0.3341	-0.2613	0.2133	-0.6520	0.3892
X7.1	0.3270	0.4411	0.0843	0.2420	0.0290	-0.2417	1	-0.0286	0.2142	0.3621	0.0487
X8.1	-0.0226	-0.2234	-0.5132	0.2998	-0.2625	-0.3475	-0.0481	0.9537	-0.3383	0.3031	-0.5274
X8.2	0.0649	-0.0590	-0.4223	0.1646	-0.2942	-0.2950	-0.0035	0.9409	-0.0988	0.2516	-0.4682
X9.1	-0.0996	-0.0225	0.2254	-0.1949	0.1126	0.1483	0.1939	-0.2440	0.9835	-0.1342	0.2278
X9.2	-0.0658	-0.0305	0.2717	-0.1860	0.0271	0.0449	0.2271	-0.2252	0.9849	-0.0901	0.2380
X10.1	0.1848	0.0403	-0.2340	0.8480	-0.2309	-0.5544	0.3760	0.3058	-0.1188	0.9977	-0.5424
X10.2	0.1503	0.0225	-0.2107	0.8629	-0.2274	-0.5592	0.3464	0.2812	-0.1076	0.9976	-0.5365
Y.1	-0.0204	0.1413	0.2156	-0.5479	0.3425	0.3790	0.0487	-0.5271	0.2367	-0.5408	1

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = hybrid maize yield, X1.1 = temperature, X2.1 = rainfall, X2.2 = the wet month, X2.3 = the dry month, X2.3 = long growth period, X3.1 = drainage, X4.1 = texture, X4.2 = coarse material, X4.3 = effective depth, X5.1 = organic C, X5.2 = cation exchanges capacity, X5.3 = base saturation, X6.1 = total N, X6.2 = P availability, X6.3 = K exchangeable, X7.1 = the exchange sodium percentage, X8.1 = slopes, X8.2 = soil erosion, X9.1 = inundation height, X9.2 = inundation period, X10.1 = rock outcrops, X10.2 = surface rock, Y.1 = hybrid maize yield.

Table 6: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha test.

Indicators (land characteristics)	***Cronbach's Alpha***	***Composite Reliability***
X1.1 (Temperature)	1.000	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall) X2.2 (Wet month) X2.3 (Dry month) X2.4 (Long growth periods)	0.975	0.965
X3.1 (Drainage)	1.000	1.000
X4.1 (Texture) X4.2 (Coarse material) X4.3 (Effective depth)	0.002[nor]	-1.055[nor]
X5.1 (pH H_2O) X5.2 (pH KCl) X5.3 (Organic C) X5.4 (Cation exchange capacity) X5.5 (Base saturation)	0.718	0.628
X6.1 (Total N) X6.2 (P availability) X6.3 (K exchangeable)	0.805	0.681
X7.1 (Exchangeable sodium percentage)	1.000	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes) X8.2 (Soil erosion)	0.965	0.928
X9.1 (Inundation height) X9.2 (Inundation period)	0.992	0.984
X10.1 (Rock outcrops) X10.2 (Surface rock)	0.998	0.995

nor = not reliable.

3.1.3 Structural model test (inner models)

Land characteristics that have a significant correlation with hybrid maize yields show a high level of contribution to land quality in influencing hybrid maize yields as indicated in Figure 3. The figure shows a structural model of the relationship between indicator variables, namely 24 land characteristics, rectangular yellow, and latent variables, including 10 land qualities maize yield, and oval blue. It also shows a model for the relationship between latent variables such as land qualities and maize yield as well as loading figures. The factor for each indicator and path coefficient for land qualities has a direct effect on the value of maize yields.

For example, X8 (erosion hazard) significantly determines the hybrid maize yield with a path coefficient of -0.392. The negative sign indicates that the erosion hazard is negatively related to maize yield, where the higher the erosion hazard, the lower the maize yield. Furthermore, nutrient retention (X5) contributes to the diversity of hybrid maize yields with a path coefficient of 0.252. A positive sign indicates that nutrient retention is positively related to maize yield, where the higher the value of nutrient retention were followed by the maize yield.

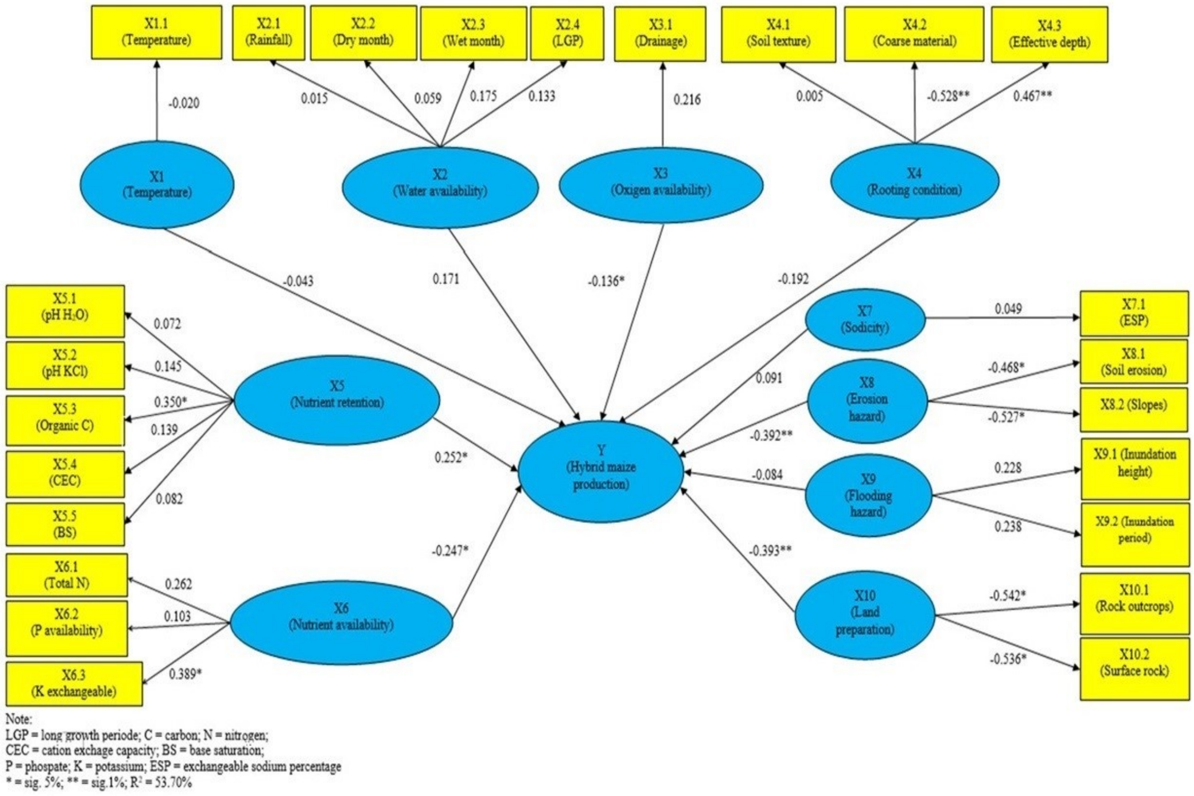

Figure 3: Path Coefficient of land quality on hybrid maize yield.

The results of this path analysis indicated that the land quality that can be a predictor of maize yield diversity were oxygen availability (X3), nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (X6), erosion hazard (X8), and land preparation (X 10). Figure 2 indicates that only 8 of the 24 indicators explain latent variance at the 5% real test level. The 8 indicators were coarse material and effective soil depth as an indicator of rooting condition, organic carbon content as nutrient retention, exchangeable K as nutrient availability, soil erosion and slope as erosion hazard, as well as rock outcrop and surface rock as an indicator of land preparation. It was also indicated that the drainage loading factor was unable to explain the diversity of oxygen availability. Therefore, oxygen availability cannot be used as a land quality because there are no indicators that can represent it. Only the land qualities of nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (x6), erosion hazard (x8), and land preparation (X10) were used next.

The indicators of land characteristics for effective depth, organic C, total N, and exchangeable K have a fairly strong positive relationship and a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, an increase in these parameters by 1%, will be followed by a rise in hybrid maize yields of 39% to 57.7%. According to [4], effective depth affects root growth and development, making plants grow and develop properly. Moreover, the levels of organic C, total N, and CEC are influenced by soil organic matter [42], while potassium plays a role in the growth and development of maize [43].

Indicators of rough soil characteristics, slopes, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrops have a strong negative relationship with a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, a 1% decrease in coarse material, slope, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrop is followed by an increase in hybrid maize yields by 39% to 57.7%.

3.2. Optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Table 7 shows the mathematical equations for each land characteristic and also the optimum hybrid maize yield for the land equation. Figure 4 shows the diagram of the relationship between land characteristics as an independent variable (X) and maize yield as an independent variable Y. Model fitting indicates that the quadratic equation is sufficient to describe the condition of data distribution.

Table 7: The optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Optimum Yield (ton/ha)	Yield Equation	R^2
Rooting condition (rc)			
Coarse material	8.06	$Y = 0.0024800x^2 – 0.2457487x + 10.9082465$	0.95
Effective depth	8.35	$Y = -0.0007242x^2 + 0.1890458x – 1.2946385$	0.96
Nutrient retention (nr)			
Organic carbon	8.35	$Y = -24.3891969x^2 + 46.8464078X – 8.8894056$	0.87
Nutrient availability (na)			
Total N	8.43	$Y = -304.4463543X^2 + 144.7590906X – 2.6328530$	1.00
K Exchangeable	5.74	$Y = -10.5596308X^2 + 17.4129832X + 2.2069179$	0.94
Erosion hazard (eh)			
Slopes	8.43	$Y = 0.0172X^2 – 0.8448X + 13.907$	0.91
Soil erosion	8.06	$y = 0.0000173X^2 – 0.0187536X + 9.0426459$	0.88
Land preparation (lp)			
Rock outcrops	7.30	$Y = 0.0046385X^2 – 0.2934756X + 8.5159674$	0.91
Surface rock	7.30	$Y = 0.0046385X^2 – 0.2934756X + 8.5159674$	0.91

The optimum of hybrid maize yield ranged from 5.74 to 8.43 ton/ha, where the highest yield was obtained from total N and slopes of 8.43 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 100% and 91%. Sutardjo et al (2012) showed that hybrid maize yields ranged from 7.43 to 9.2 ton/ha. This indicated that the optimum yield achieved is still within the range of hybrid maize yields that have been previously reported. Nitrogen is directly involved in the formation of amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymes, nucleoproteins, and alkaloids, which are needed in the plant growth process [44], [45]. An extremely high amount of N causes excessive vegetative growth, thereby making plants fall easily and increasing susceptibility to disease [46]. Meanwhile, the lack of N nutrients can limit cell division, enlargement [47], and the formation of chlorophyll, leading to stunted growth as well as yellowing of leaves [46].

The lowest optimum yield was obtained from exchangeable K, which was only 5.74 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 94%. This was presumably because the K content in the soil is very low, thereby affecting the hybrid maize yield. Potassium (K) is required by plants for physiological functions, including carbohydrate metabolism, enzyme activity, osmotic regulation, efficient

water use, N uptake, protein synthesis, and assimilate translocation [48]–[51]. It also plays a role in improving the quality of crop yields (McKenzie, 2013, Subandi, 2013).

The optimum hybrid maize yield of the remaining is relatively diverse. This includes effective depth and organic carbon, which were both 8.35 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 87%. Furthermore, coarse material and soil erosion were 8.06 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 95% and 88%, while rock outcrops and surface rock were 7.30 ton/ha with an R2 value of 91%. The absence of coarse material > 2 mm in diameter indicated that plant roots can grow freely on the surface or deeper parts of the soil [54], because the deeper the roots of the maize, the greater the maize yield [55], [56]. The addition of organic matter will increase maize yield [57]–[59] and organic C content [60] because soil organic matter is a strong positive predictor of yield [61]. Kane et al. [61] also stated that the addition of more organic matter will improve water retention, thereby reducing maize yield losses due to drought. The slope has a significant effect on soil degradation [62]. According to a previous study, erosion and maize yield are negatively correlated, hence, increased erosion will reduce maize productivity [63]. Soil erosion on flat land is slower surface runoff [64]. It was also reported that surface rocks and outcrops are the limiting factors in the suitability of maize plantations [65]. Therefore, a high percentage of rock outcrops will complicate land cultivation and plant root growth.

3.3. Land suitability criteria for hybrid maize crops

Table 8 shows the yield limit for each class from the calculation of the optimum yield, where the class range for each land characteristic is derived. Based on the optimum yield of the highest hybrid maize, there were 2 indicators, namely the total N content and the slope. The total N indicator with a very suitable class (S1) was achieved when the value in the soil was greater than 0.10%, while in the moderately suitable class (S2), it was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.07-0.09%. In the marginally appropriate class (S3), the total N indicator was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.05-0.06%, while the not suitable class (N) was achieved when the content was less than 0.05%. On the slope indicator with class S1, it was obtained when the slope class ranges from 0-7.69%%, while class S2 was achieved when the slope class ranges from 7.70-11.83%. Furthermore, in classes S3 and N, it was obtained when the slope class ranged from 11.84-18.24% and greater than 18.24%, respectively.

Based on the optimum yield of the lowest hybrid maize, only the exchangeable K was the indicator. In classes S1 and S2, it was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil was greater than 0.24 cmol(+)/kg and ranges from 0.13-0.23 cmol(+)/kg, respectively. Furthermore, class S3 was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil ranges from 0.04-0.12 cmol(+)/kg, while in class N, it was obtained when the exchangeable K content in the soil was less than 0.04 cmol(+)/kg. The remaining variables and indicators were relatively varied according to the optimum yield of hybrid maize and the range of land suitability classes obtained as presented in Table 8.

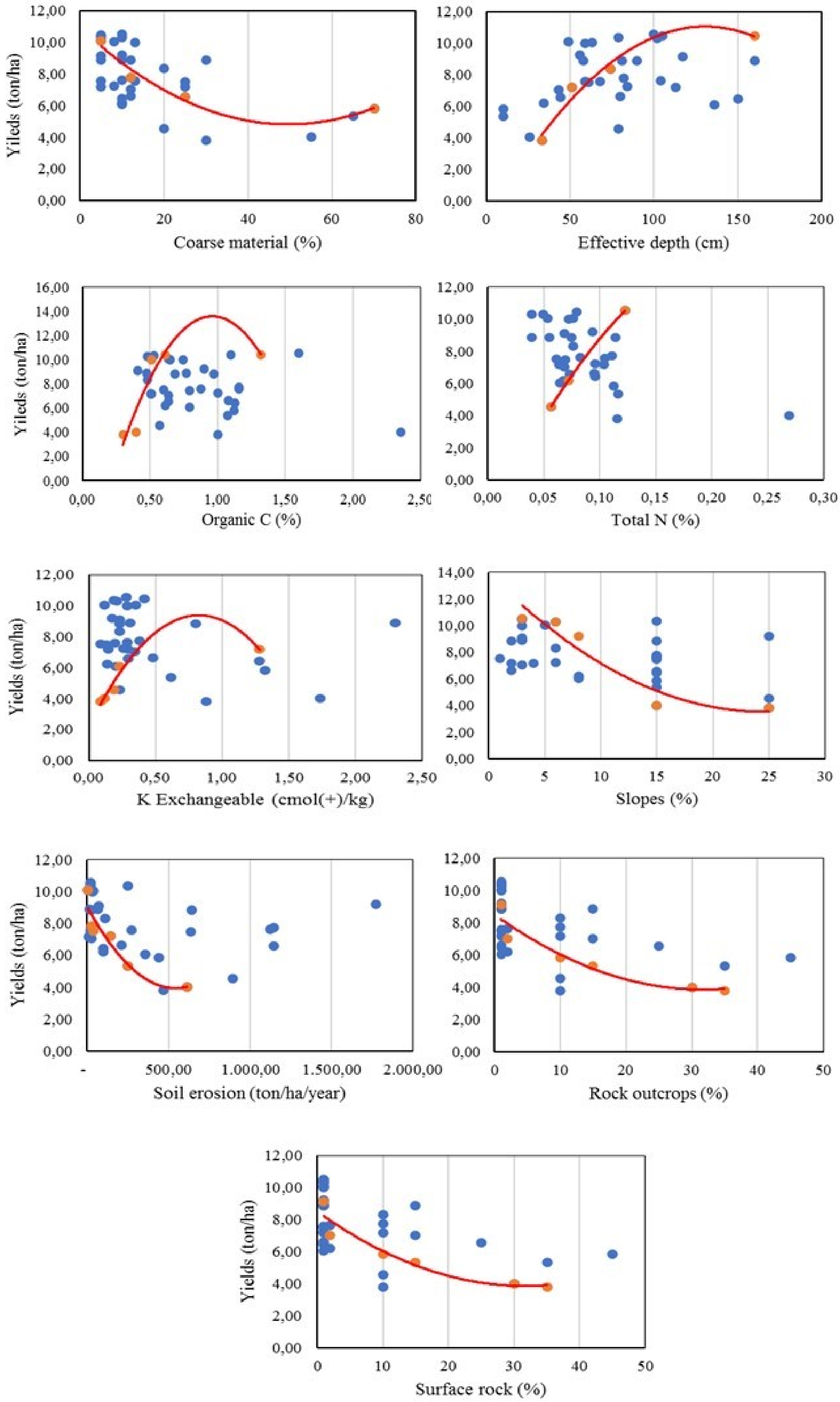

Figure 4: Scatter diagram relationship among maize yield and land characteristics

Table 8: Yield limits of hybrid maize and values obtained in each land suitability class interval by land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Yield Limits (ton/ha)			Value of Land Suitability Criterion Obtained			
	S1 - S2 (80% x Y_{optim})	**S2 – S3 (60% x Y_{optim})**	**S3 – N (40% x Y_{optim})**	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	N
Rooting condition (rc)							
Coarse material (%)	8.06	6.04	4.03	0 – 13.40	13.41 – 27.37	27.38 – 52.39	> 52.39
Effective depth (cm)	8.35	6.26	4.18	≥ 69.55	49.25 – 69.54	33.18 – 49.24	< 33.18
Nutrient retention (nr)							
Organic carbon (%)	8.35	6.26	4.18	≥ 0.50	0.41 – 0.49	0.34 – 0.40	< 0.34
Nutrient availability (na)							
Total N (%)	8.43	6.32	4.22	≥ 0.10	0.07 – 0.09	0.05 – 0.06	< 0.05
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	5.74	4.31	2.87	≥ 0.24	0.13 – 0.23	0.04 – 0.12	< 0.04
Erosion hazard (eh)							
Slopes (%)	8.43	6.32	4.22	0 – 7.69	7.70 – 11.83	11.84 – 18.24	> 18.24
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	8.06	6.04	4.03	≤ 55.21	195.29	605.56	> 605.56
Land preparation (lp)							
Rock outcrops (%)	7.30	5.47	3.85	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78
Surface rock (%)	7.30	5.47	3.85	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, and N = not suitable.

Based on the relationship between the quality and characteristics of the selected land with optimum results, the criteria for hybrid maize land suitability were obtained as shown in Table 8. These criteria described the actual state of achieving optimum, moderate, and minimum yields of hybrid maize in the field with values of 80%, 60%, and 40%, respectively. According to Sukarman et al. [66], the parameters used in the land suitability assessment must describe the actual conditions. This is due to the significant positive correlation between maize yield and land suitability class [67].

The land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are fewer and have referred to the optimum yield. Meanwhile, the land quality and characteristics in this new criterion are less because it only consists of root conditions with characteristics of coarse material and effective depth, nutrient retention with organic C, and nutrient availability with total N and K exchangeable. It also consists of erosion hazards with characteristics of slopes and soil erosion, as well as land preparation with surface rocks and rock outcrops only. The land qualities selected and maize yields consistent with the land potential are the basis for developing suitability criteria. This will reduce the land characteristics and make the evaluation process faster, cheaper, and easier with accurate results [14]. Some characteristics and land quality criteria were not made because they did not significantly affect the yield of hybrid maize. The number and distribution of the data were still limited and the diversity of values was small or not measurable in the field [38].

Compared to Wahyunto et al. [68], the new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants in Table 9 is more realistic in value with the conditions in the field and is based on the achievement of optimum yields. The current land suitability criteria are still general and not

specific to maize yields [14], although the agronomic and yield potential of each maize variety differ, based on the diversity of characteristics and land quality in the field.

Table 9: Comparison of new and general land suitability criteria with land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	**New Land Suitability Criterion of Hybrid Maize**				**Land Suitability Criterion of General Maize** [68]			
	S1	**S2**	**S3**	**N**	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	**N**
Rooting condition (rc)								
Coarse material (%)	0 – 13.40	13.41 – 27.37	27.38 – 52.39	> 52.39	< 15	15 – 35	35 – 55	>55
Effective depth (cm)	≥ 69.55	49.25 – 69.54	33.18 – 49.24	< 33.18	> 60	60 – 40	40 – 25	< 25
Nutrient retention (nr)								
Organic carbon (%)	≥ 0.50	0.41 – 0.49	0.34 – 0.40	< 0.34	> 1.20	0.8 – 1.2	< 0.8	-
Nutrient availability (na)								
Total N (%)	≥ 0.10	0.07 – 0.09	0.05 – 0.06	< 0.05	Mo	Lo	VLo	-
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	≥ 0.24	0.13 – 0.23	0.04 – 0.12	< 0.04	Mo-Hi	Lo	VLo	-
Erosion hazard (eh)								
Slopes (%)	0 – 7.69	7.70 – 11.83	11.84 – 18.24	> 18.24	< 8	8 – 15	15 – 25	> 25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	≤ 55.21	195.29	605.56	> 605.56	-	VLi	Li-Mo	He-VHe
Land preparation (lp)								
Rock outcrops (%)	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40
Surface rock (%)	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, N = not suitable, Hi = high, Mo = moderate, Lo = low, VLo = very low, He = heavy, Li = light, VLi = very light, VHe = very heavy.

Conclusions

Land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are determined by land qualities, namely root conditions, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, as well as land preparation, and land characteristics, including coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. The highest optimum yield of 8.35 ton/ha was achieved by the effective depth and organic C content for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest value of 5.47 ton/ha was attained by exchangeable K for class S1. These results showed that the combination of the PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis can be an alternative approach to establishing new land suitability criteria for crops based on optimum yields and selected land quality.

Data Availability

All data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding Statement

This study was funded by the Directorate of Research, Technology and Community Service, Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, grant number B/105/UN47.D1/PT.01.03/2022.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute Research and Community Service of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo for their financial and administrative support.

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Confirmation

1 pesan

Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id> 25 Oktober 2022 pukul 20.35
Kepada: Kevin Villanueva <help@hindawi.com>

Hello editors,

Sorry, I just want to confirm that we have submitted a journal article with the title "Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality".

We hope that this journal article can be accepted for further peer review, so that in the end it can be published.

Regards
Nurdin

3800877: Revision requested

3 pesan

Maman Turjaman <support@hindawi.com>
Balas Ke: Karlo Lalap <karlo.lalap@hindawi.com>
Kepada: "Dr. Nurdin" <nurdin@ung.ac.id>

12 Desember 2022 pukul 18.37

Hindawi

Dear Dr. Nurdin,

In order for your submission "Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality" to Applied and Environmental Soil Science to proceed to the review process, there needs to be a revision.

Reason & Details:

"

Major Revision

For more information about what is required, please click the link below.

MANUSCRIPT DETAILS

Kind regards,
Maman Turjaman

Applied and Environmental Soil Science

Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id> 12 Desember 2022 pukul 21.53
Kepada: Karlo Lalap <karlo.lalap@hindawi.com>

Thank you for the correction... Hopefully in the near future we will fix it according to the revisions from the reviewers

Regards
Nurdin
[Kutipan teks disembunyikan]

Karlo Lalap <phenom.emails@hindawi.com> 13 Desember 2022 pukul 09.25

Balas Ke: Karlo Lalap <phenom.emails@hindawi.com>
Kepada: nurdin@ung.ac.id

Dear Dr. Nurdin,

Thank you for your email.

We look forward to receiving your revised manuscript. ✓

Best regards,

Karlo

Karlo Lalap
Editorial Assistant

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On Mon, 12 Dec at 11:37 AM , Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id> wrote:

Dear Dr. Nurdin,

In order for your submission "Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality" to Applied and Environmental Soil Science to proceed to the review process, there needs to be a revision.
Reason & Details:

“
Major Revision

For more information about what is required, please click the link below.

MANUSCRIPT DETAILS

Kind regards,
Maman Turjaman

Applied and Environmental Soil Science

Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

VIEWING AN OLDER VERSION

ID 3800877

Nurdin, Nurdin SA CA [1], Asda Rauf[1], Yunnita Rahim[1], Echan Adam[1], Nikmah Musa[1], Fitriah Suryani Jamin[1], Rival Rahman[1], Suyono Dude[1], Hidayat Arismunandar Katili[2] + Show Affiliations

Article Type

Research Article

Journal

Applied and Environmental Soil Science

Academic Editor Turjaman Maman

Submitted on 2022-10-22 (2 months ago)

> Abstract

> Author Declaration

> Files 2

Editorial Comments

Recommendation

Maman Turjaman AE 12.12.2022

Major Revision Requested

Message for Author

Major Revision

Reviewer Reports

1 submitted

Report

Reviewer 1 21.11.2022

Summary
The topic presented by the authors is very interesting, relevant to efforts to increase food production in Indonesia, and in accordance with the scope of the journal. However, this manuscript must be corrected to be suitable for subsequent processes, especially in the introduction and method sections. The scope of activities to develop Land Suitability Criteria is only focused on Boalemo Regency, so there should be more background and discussion at that location. Citations are still very minimal, especially in the method section.

Major Issues

Introduction
The author, of course, knows that Indonesia's maize production centres are not only in Gorontalo Province, so hybrid maize does not only grow optimally in the Boalemo region. However, in this study, the authors only limited their area to Boalemo Regency, so the result of land suitability criteria was limited to the Boalemo area and its surroundings. In the introduction section, there should be a justification for why Boalemo was chosen as the research location. How is corn production there, what are the differences between local and hybrid corn production at a glance, and why has the determination of maize hybrid land suitability criteria for the Boalemo Regency become necessary?

Method
- Line 85-87: add citations/references.
- Please write down the scale of the soil map. Line 88 stated that there are 35 soil units, but in the legend of Figure 1, there are 32 SMUs. Is there a connection between the soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. and the map in Figure 1? Why is the soil mapping unit in Figure 1 not explained in paragraph lines 83-91?
- Line 95-110: It is advisable that at the beginning of the paragraph, each component/variable of land characteristics is described in advance. In the next section, each variable is explained on how to obtain the data.
- Line 97-99: Give reasons why it is necessary to update the available land characteristics and justify the determination of 32 additional points. Add sampling points (32 pedons) to a map. Explain the method for taking climatic data and where the equipment/stations are placed.
- Line 112-113: the results of this identification should be displayed on a map and indicate the points where the 2.5 x 2.5m blocks were placed.
- Line 117, 119, 142, 143, etc.: each formula should be equipped with a reference.
- Line 127-145, 175-184: please add citations.
- Line 131: Table 1 should be equipped with a column showing secondary data sources for each land characteristic or data acquisition method in the field (as a summary from updated lines 95-110).
- Line 397-401: It must be conveyed that the results of this study are of limited use for the development of hybrid maize in Boalemo, because the arrangement is based only on the land characteristics and optimum yield in Boalemo Regency (not representing the national scale).

Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

Nurdin,[1] Asda Rauf,[2] Yunnita Rahim,[1] Echan Adam,[2] Nikmah Musa,[1] Fitriah Suryani Jamin,[1] Suyono Dude,[1] Rival Rahman,[1] and Hidayat Arismunandar Katili,[3]

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Abstract

The significant effect of land quality on maize production has not been fully considered in the existing land suitability criteria. Therefore, this study aims to determine the hybrid maize land suitability criteria based on the optimum yield and land quality. It was carried out in Boalemo Regency, Indonesia, where a total of 67 land units were surveyed to obtain land characteristics data. A partial least square of structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 8.0 was used to select a robust land quality controlling hybrid maize yield, while the boundary line method was used to determine optimum yield and differentiating of land suitability criteria. The result showed that land qualities that define the optimum yield of hybrid maize were root conditions, nutrient retention and availability, erosion hazard, and land preparation. The soil characteristics were coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. Furthermore, the highest optimum yield of 8.35 ton/ha was achieved by the effective depth and organic C content for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest of 5.47 ton/ha was obtained by exchangeable K for class S1. This showed that the combination of PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis was a better approach to developing new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize.

1. Introduction

Food security and farmer prosperity are global concerns, this makes every country increase crop production as well as farmers' income. An important issue for countries with developing economies is ensuring food security, where the agricultural sector plays a strategic role in increasing food availability [1]. Although the global food system has placed maize (*Zea mays* L.) as the leading cereal crop [2], its productivity is being disrupted by land degradation, water scarcity, and climate change [3].

In Indonesia, the wet tropical climate with rainfall and high temperatures tends to reduce the quality of land and agricultural products [4]. This country ranked 8th among the maize-producing nations with a contribution of 2.19% and 2.42% of the world's total harvested area [5]. However, the main problem is the relatively low level of yield in several regions because the achievement of maize production has not been followed by an increase in yield per unit area [6]. This is indicated by the average yield in 2020, which was up to 5.57 ton/ha [5].

According to a previous investigation, maize production in Indonesia can reach between 10-12 ton/ha [7], [8] thereby making the country the 21st leading importer in the world.

Maize is usually grown on land with low yield potential [9] and soil fertility, thereby causing low productivity [10]. Moreover, land productivity is determined by quality and characteristics [11], [12], while land quality has a close relationship with maize yields [13]. The land quality affecting the optimum yield of maize needs to be determined [14] and increased by using hybrid varieties that have high yields. This makes it necessary to evaluate the suitability of the hybrid maize in a region to ensure optimal production. The land suitability criteria for hybrid maize are not yet available because the current criterion is the general suitability of maize plants without distinguishing between hybrids and inbreds. Therefore, there is a need to make land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants.

A previous study has shown that land quality has a significant effect on suitability for certain uses [15]. Meanwhile, land suitability is also important due to the continuous increase in the demand for agricultural land [16]. The land suitability criteria for existing maize fields are still general [17] and there are no specific criteria for hybrid maize varieties. The class assessment outcomes obtained using the existing criteria are relatively many and are not in line with the actual field results [18]. The current criteria consist of 3 components, namely, land quality, characteristics, and ranges of land characteristic values to determine its suitability. Therefore, the problem in developing criteria is choosing land quality, characteristics, and determining the range of land characteristic values associated with suitability classes, namely suitable, somewhat suitable, marginally suitable, and not suitable.

The selection of land quality and characteristics can be carried out through the partial least square of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM), while the range limits is being determined by the boundary line method. Land qualities and characteristics in the current criteria can be used temporarily since structural equation model analysis with partial least squares produces better indicators and models than other multivariate analyses [19]–[23]. This is because the variant-based PLS-SEM has a higher level of flexibility and the size of the sample used is relatively small ranging from 30 to 100 [24]–[27]. The use of PLS-SEM to determine land characteristics and qualities that control maize crop yields is still relatively rare, except for Syaf [28] on older cocoa plants, maize composite [29], and on local varieties [6]. The boundary line method can help determine nutrient adequacy concentrations and the optimum yield range of a plant that affects nutrients, as well as other land characteristics [30], [31]. Currently, the land suitability criteria for maize plants have not been determined using the boundary line method, except by Ridayanti et al. [32], although the investigation was not specific to hybrid maize.

After obtaining the quality and characteristics of land affecting maize yields with PLS-SEM, the boundary line method can be used to determine the optimum yield as well as land suitability criteria simultaneously. This is carried out by drawing the intersection of the boundary line at the yield and projecting with the land characteristics [17]. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize based on the optimum yield and land quality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study area

The study area extends from 0°28'5.6" - 0°57'30.02" N to 122°°8'34.25" - 122°43'10.41"E (Figure 1), which is located in the agricultural land of Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. The maximum air temperature was 28.19°C and the minimum was 26.79°C with an average of 28.01°C. Meanwhile, the maximum rainfall was 1,849 mm and the minimum was 1,246 mm with an average of 1,478 mm. The wet and dry seasons last for 3 months and 5 months respectively. The soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. [33], consists of 35 soil units, where each unit has information on land characteristics, namely effective depth, drainage, texture, pH, cation exchange capacity, base saturation, landform, parent material, relief, and land unit area.

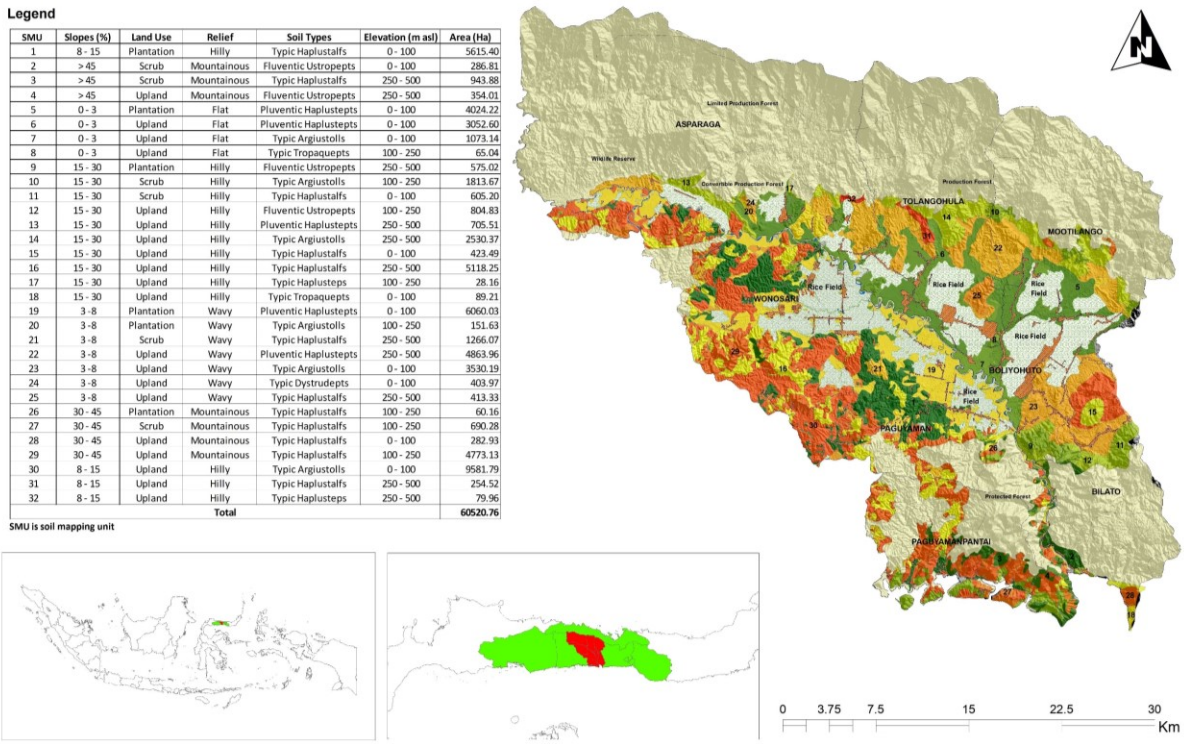

Figure 1: Study area.

2.2 Dataset collection for land quality and land characteristics

The framework of this study is presented in Figure 2. The previous soil map [33] was used as a working map, where information on land characteristics, namely soil, climate, and terrain, was extracted. It was updated by taking 32 pedons, thereby becoming 67 pedons representing soil diversity in each location. For each observation location, the climatic data of land and terrain characteristics were observed and the previous data were updated. The soil samples according to horizon boundaries were taken for analysis in the laboratory.

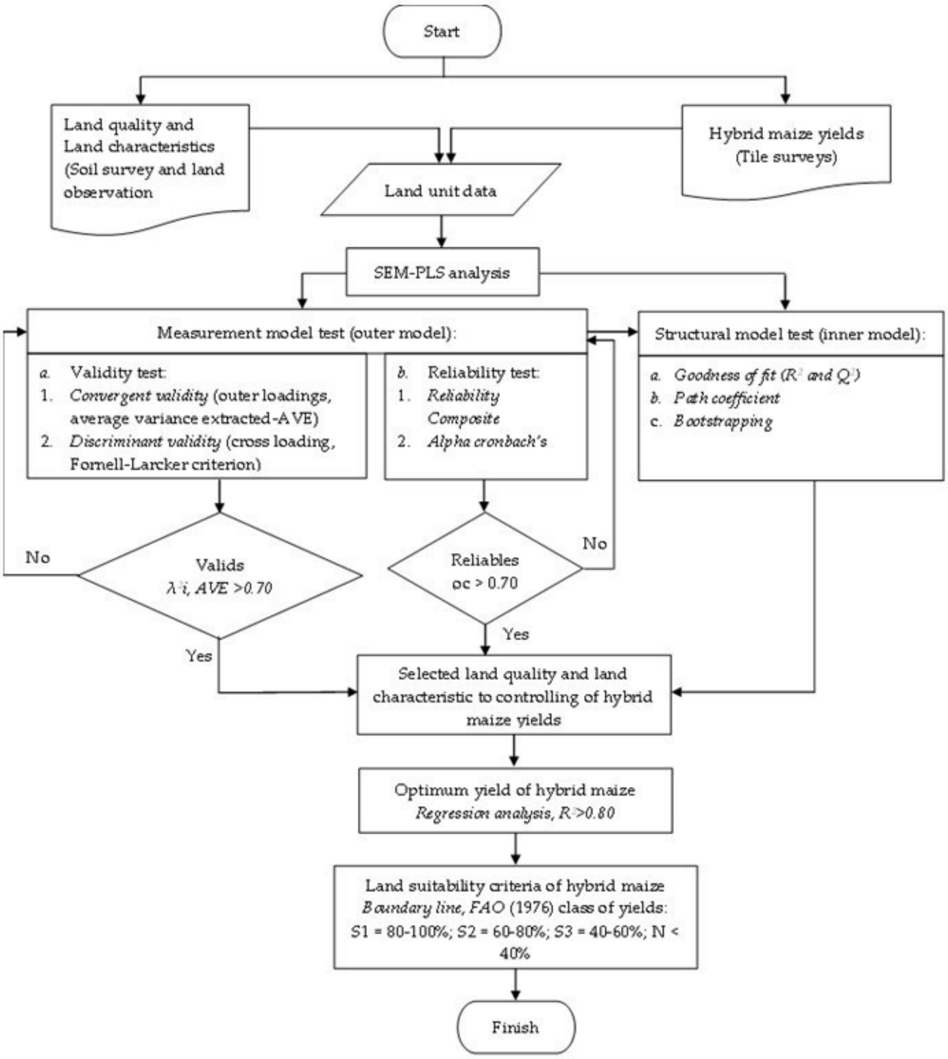

Figure 2: Research framework.

Soil samples were dried for 3 days and sieved through a 2 mesh sieve. The method of laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Eviyati and Sulaeman [34]. The soil pH was determined with a pH meter in a 1:2.5 soil and water solution, while the organic C content was assessed using the Walkley and Black method. The available P content was measured using the Olsen method, while the cation exchange capacity (CEC) was extracted with 1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 (ammonium acetate) on a dry sample of 105°C, and the base saturation was determined by calculation. Subsequently, the data from the chemical analysis were averaged to a depth of 0-30 cm using the weighted averaging technique.

2.3 Dataset collection for hybrid maize yield

The areas currently planted with hybrid maize were identified and blocks with a size of 2.5 m x 2.5 m were made in each map unit. Maize plants in each block passed through standardized management according to farmers' technology. After harvesting, weighting was carried out to obtain hybrid maize yield data from the results of tiles on each land unit. Subsequently, the results were calculated using the formula, as expressed below:

$$Y\ (t) = H\ x\ \frac{A}{6.25\ m^2} \quad (1)$$

Meanwhile, productivity is calculated using the formula below:

$$Y\ (t\ ha^{-1}) = \frac{H\ x\ 1.64\ x\ 56.73}{100} \quad (2)$$

where Y = hybrid maize yield, H = tile yield (kg), A = maize area 1 per hectare (ha), 1.64 and 56.73 = constant.

2.4 Selection of land quality and land characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in the suitability criteria were used as presented in Tables 1 and 2, which show brief statistics. Generally, most data are relatively homogenous, except for coarse material, available P, slopes, soil erosion, height and inundation, as well as rock outcrops and surface rocks. The selection used the partial least squares of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with tools SmartPLS, where land quality and characteristics were selected as the latent and manifest variables, respectively. The analysis in PLS-SEM has 2 main steps, namely (1) the measurement model (outer model) and (2) the structural model test (inner model).

Table 1: Latent variables and indicators used in this study

Latent variables		**Indicators**	
Notation	**Land quality**	**Notation**	**Land characteristics**
X1	Temperature (t)	X1.1	Temperature
X2	Water availability (wa)	X2.1	Rainfall
		X2.2	Wet month
		X2.3	Dry month
		X2.4	Long growth period (LGP)
X3	Oxygen availability (oa)	X3.1	Drainage
X4	Rooting condition (rc)	X4.1	Texture
		X4.1.1	Sand fraction
		X4.1.2	Silt fraction
		X4.1.3	Clay
		X4.2	Coarse material
		X4.3	Effective depth
X5	Nutrient retention (nr)	X5.1	pH H_2O
		X5.2	pH KCl
		X5.3	Organic C
		X5.4	Cation exchange capacity (CEC)
		X5.5	Base saturation
X6	Nutrient availability (na)	X6.1	Total N
		X6.2	P availability
		X6.3	K exchangeable
X7	Sodicity (xn)	X7.1	Exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP)
X8	Erosion hazard (eh)	X8.1	Slopes
		X8.2	Soil erosion
X9	Flooding hazard (fh)	X9.1	Inundation height
		X9.2	Inundation period
X10	Land preparation (lp)	X10.1	Rock outcrops
		X10.2	Surface rock
Y	Hybrid maize yield	Y.1	Hybrid maize yield

Step 1 consists of validity and reliability tests, wherein the validity test is conducted with convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity is in form of outer loadings (loading factor) and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity is in form of cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Meanwhile, the reliability test uses composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha.

Convergent validity was observed from the magnitude of the outer loading and the AVE value of each indicator on the latent variable. The validity was calculated according to the equation:

$$x_i = \lambda x_i \xi_1 + \delta_i \quad (3)$$

$$y_i = \lambda y_i \eta_1 + \varepsilon_i \quad (4)$$

where x and y = exogenous (ξ) and endogenous (η) latent variable indicator, λx and λy = loading factors, δ and ε = residual/measurement errors or noise.

Table 2: Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics.

Latent variables / Indicators	Unit	n	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
X1 (Temperature)							
X1.1 (Temperature)	ºC	67	26.79	27.80	28.01	28.19	0.63
X2 (Water availability)							
X2.1 (Rainfall)	mm	67	1,246.00	1,533.42	1,478.00	1,849.00	232.69
X2.2 (Wet month)	month	67	0.00	1.03	1.00	3.00	0.85
X2.3 (Dry month)	month	67	2.00	3.39	4.00	5.00	1.06
X2.4 (LGP)	day	67	211.00	246.00	214.00	304.00	44.54
X3 (Oxygen availability)							
X3.1 (Drainage)	class	67	0.00	3.76	4.00	6.00	1.82
X4 (Rooting conditions)							
X4.1 (texture)	class	67	1.00	2.21	2.00	5.00	0.99
X4.1.1 (Sand fraction)	%	67	5.00	41.58	43.00	81.33	18.51
X4.1.2 (Silt fraction)	%	67	7.33	27.31	24.50	51.50	11.54
X4.1.3 (Clay)	%	67	11.33	31.90	30.00	56.33	12.72
X4.2 (Coarse material)	%	67	5.00	17.27	10.00	70.00	16.58
X4.3 (Effective depth)	cm	67	10.00	74.55	74.00	160.00	36.40
X5 (Nutrient retention)							
X5.1 (pH H_2O)		67	5.00	5.92	5.90	7.15	0.52
X5.2 (pH KCl)		67	4.35	5.24	5.17	6.60	0.56
X5.3 (Organic C)	%	67	0.41	0.85	0.77	2.35	0.39
X5.4 (CEC)	cmol(+)/kg	67	8.94	24.89	22.43	59.57	11.41
X5.5 (Base saturation)	%	67	45.03	56.22	52.85	81.89	9.76
X6 (Nutrient availability)							
X6.1 (Total N)	%	67	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.27	0.04
X6.2 (P availability)	mg/kg	67	0.73	8.62	3.77	58.67	12.61
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	cmol(+)/kg	67	0.07	0.39	0.24	1.92	0.42
X7 (Sodicity)							
X7.1 (ESP)	%	67	0.76	7.06	6.20	24.17	5.62
X8 (Erosion hazard)							
X8.1 (Slopes)	%	67	1.00	9.58	6.00	25.00	7.29
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	ton/ha/year	67	3.66	334.51	110.27	1772.43	439.08

X9 (Flooding hazard)							
X9.1 (Inundation height)	cm	67	0.00	7.58	0.00	50.00	17.10
X9.2 (Inundation period)	day	67	0.00	0.64	0.00	5.00	1.52
X10 (Land preparation)							
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	%	67	0.00	6.64	0.00	45.00	11.56
X10.2 (Surface rock)	%	67	0.00	6.58	0.00	45.00	11.59
Y (Hybrid maize yield)	ton/ha	67	2.85	4.95	4.68	8.07	1.15

n = the number of the land unit, min = minimum, max is maximum, SD = standard deviations, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

Meanwhile, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was calculated using the equation:

$$\text{AVE} = \frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \; var(\varepsilon_i)} \qquad (5)$$

Where $\lambda^2{}_i$ = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

The loading factor of an indicator with the highest value is the strongest or most important measure in reflecting the latent variable. In this study, the loading factor value is > 0.70 for selecting best land characteristics, but values ranging from 0.50-0.60 can still be tolerated with a t-statistic > 1.96 or a small p-value of 0.05 [25], [35]. Meanwhile, the AVE value used was more than 0.50, showing that the convergent validity on the latent variable has been reached.

The discriminant validity test used the cross-loading value and the Fornell-Larker criterion to test discriminantly valid indicators in explaining or reflecting latent variables. When the correlation between the latent variables and the core measurement of each indicator is high, the latent variable can predict the indicator better and is considered valid. The discriminant validity is measured by the square root of the average variance extracted, which will be compared with the correlation value between variables. The value calculated based on the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlation between constructs [36]. The equation is expressed below

$$\text{Square Root of AVE} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \; var(\varepsilon_i)}} \qquad (6)$$

where $\lambda^2{}_i$ = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Furthermore, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the reliability value between indicators of the latent variables. They are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70 and has a minimum value of 0.60 [25]. The composite reliability value is calculated using the equation:

$$\rho c = \frac{(\sum \lambda_i)^2}{(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + \sum i \; var(\varepsilon_i)} \qquad (7)$$

where λ_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Meanwhile, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is calculated according to the equation:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{\sum p \neq p'^{\,cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}}{p_{q+\sum p \neq p'}{}^{cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}} \right) \left(\frac{p_q}{p_{q-1}} \right) \qquad (8)$$

where P_q = the number of indicators or manifest variables, and q = the indicator block.

For step 2, the structural model testing (inner model) was carried out after the relationship model was built in line with the observed data and the overall suitability, namely goodness of fit. The structural equation (inner model) is as follows:

$$H_j = \gamma_j\xi_1 + \gamma_j\xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j\xi_n + \varsigma_j \quad (9)$$

where η_j = endogenous variable vector (dependent), $\gamma_j\xi_1 + \gamma_j\xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j\xi_n$ = exogenous latent variable vector, and ς_j = residual vector (error).

Meanwhile, the determinant coefficient and goodness of fit (Q^2) were calculated using the equation:

$$Q^2 \textit{ (Predictive relevance)} = 1 - (1 - R_1^2)(1 - R_2^2) \ldots (1 - R_p^2) \quad (10)$$

where R_1^2, R_2^2, ... R_p^2 = R square of endogenous variables in the equation model.

The quantity of Q^2 has a value with a range of 0 < Q2 < 1, the closer the value to 1, the better the model [25]. It is also equivalent to the coefficient of total determination in path analysis. Furthermore, the effect and significance were tested based on the estimated value of the path coefficient and the critical point value (t-statistics or p-value) at = 0.05. The relationship model between variables was measured by testing the direct correlation coefficient between variables. The results of testing the relationship between *X* and *Y* variables were indicated by the correlation coefficient as well as t-statistics, and are also presented in the path diagram.

2.5 Class assignment

To determine the class-required data for optimum results, class limits were calculated from the percentage of optimum results. After knowing the highest and lowest yields, the values were connected with the range of land characteristics values. The land suitability class and yield used referred to FAO [37], namely class S1 (very suitable) when the values reach 80-100%, S2 was moderately suitable 60-80%, S3 marginally suitable 40-60%, and N not suitable <40% of the optimum capacity.

The optimum yield was determined using the boundary line method. This method is carried out by drawing a boundary line on the graph of the relationship between yield and land characteristics to obtain optimum results. In the boundary line method according to Widiatmaka et al. [38], each land characteristic is plotted on the X-axis, while hybrid maize yields are plotted on the Y-axis. Bhat and Sujatha [30] stated that the preparation of the hybrid maize yield boundary line includes the preparation of a scatter diagram between the X and the Y variable, (2) division of the X-axis into several classes of intervals, (3) determination of the highest data points in each class interval, (4) preparation of boundary lines based on the highest data points from each class interval, (5) draw a line parallel to the X-axis according to the percentage of the result class.

Furthermore, with the Microsoft Excel application tools, the boundary between classes S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N were determined by the Data menu → What-if-Analysis → Goal Seek → Set the cell at the location containing the regression equation → to value fill with the result limit values S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N → By changing cell → the location where the value of the characteristics of the land will be sought → Ok. On location "By changing cell", the number being searched will appear, and at the location "set cell" will be equal to the limit value of the result.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Land quality and characteristics controlling hybrid maize yield

3.1.1 Validity test result

Table 3 shows the loading factor of the variables, where most indicators were more than the critical limit of 0.70 with a 95% confidence level (P > 1.960). Therefore, these variables are highly recommended and the indicators are considered convergently valid. In the soil texture indicator for the latent variable of root conditions as well as the cation exchange capacity (CEC) and base saturation (BS) indicators for nutrient retention, the loading factor was below the tolerance value of 0.50 at the 95% confidence level (P < 1.960), hence, it was not used. This implies that the indicators have not been established or explained properly because the standard value of the loading factor must be greater than or equal to 0.50 [26].

The average variance extracted (AVE) value of almost all variables was greater than 0.50, therefore, it was considered convergently valid [36]. The AVE value of the available nutrient variable was not valid due to the smaller value of the loading factor for the CEC and BS indicators of 0.50, leading to the removal of both indicators. A similar result was discovered in the root condition variable, although the AVE value was greater than 0.50, while the soil texture indicator was not used because the loading factor value is only 0.013.

Table 3: Outer loading (loading factor) and the average variance extracted from study variables.

Indicators (land characteristics)		Latent Variables (land quality)	Loading Factors	t-Stat	Status	AVE
X1.1 (Temperature)	→	X1 (Temperature)	1.000**	11.192	Valid	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall)	→	X2 (Water availability)	0.838	0.085	Valid	0.906
X2.2 (Wet month)	→		0.989	0.999	Valid	
X2.3 (Dry month)	→		0.850	0.428	Valid	
X2.4 (LGP)	→		0.993*	1.431	Valid	
X3.1 (Drainage)	→	X3 (Oxygen availability)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X4.1 (Texture)	→	X4 (Rooting condition)	0.013	0.066	Invalid	0.573
X4.2 (Coarse material)	→		0.921	1.086	Valid	
X4.3 (Effective depth)	→		-0.899	1.047	Valid	
X5.1 (pH H_2O)	→	X5 (Nutrient retention)	0.647	0.857	Valid	0.360 (invalid)
X5.2 (pH KCl)	→		0.570**	1.973	Valid	
X5.3 (Organic C)	→		0.831**	3.135	Valid	
X5.4 (CEC)	→		0.436*	1.381	Invalid	
X5.5 (Base saturation)	→		0.365	0.845	Invalid	
X6.1 (Total N)	→		0.760**	3.226	Valid	0.585

X6.2 (P availability)	→	X6 (Nutrient availability)	0.587*	1.385	Valid	
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	→		0.897**	6.907	Valid	
X7.1 (ESP)	→	X7 (Sodicity)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes)	→	X8 (Erosion hazard)	0.954**	21.438	Valid	0.932
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	→		0.941**	18.308	Valid	
X9.1 (Inundation height)	→	X9 (Flooding hazard)	0.984**	4.213	Valid	0.984
X9.2 (Inundation period)	→		0.985**	3.918	Valid	
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	→	X10 (Land preparation)	0.998**	189.133	Valid	0.995
X10.2 (Surface rock)	→		0.998**	320.273	Valid	

AVE = average variance extracted, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

The measurement of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading was used as the basis for assessing the discriminant validity of the model. The calculation results on the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 4 show that the average of the tested variables has a higher square root of AVE than the correlation value, hence, the latent variable was considered discriminantly valid. The square root value of the AVE must be greater than its correlation value with other constructs to meet the discriminant validity requirements [39]. The average loading factor value for the latent variable indicator was above that of others as shown in Table 5.

3.1.2 Reliability test result

The variables are considered reliable because composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient on average were more than 0.7 as shown in Table 6 [36], [40]. However, certain indicators still had values less than 0.6, namely soil texture but the indicators used are reliable and adequate in forming the latent variables.

The highest composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the variables of temperature, oxygen availability, and toxicity of 1 for the variables to be very reliable. The lowest coefficient was obtained on the root condition variable, therefore, the variable was not reliable. According to Bagozzi and Yi [41] and Hair et al. [40], variables are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70.

The remaining variables are water availability, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, and land preparation variables. The coefficient of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha > 0.6, there, the variable is considered reliable. The minimum value of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.60 [36], [40], [41].

Table 4: Fornell-Larker criterion test

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1	1.000										
X2	0.940	0.952									
X3	0.059	0.149	1.000								
X4	0.082	0.030	-0.162	0.757							
X5	-0.360	-0.239	-0.103	-0.368	0.600						
X6	-0.069	0.021	0.012	-0.518	0.694	0.765					
X7	0.382	0.429	0.084	0.228	-0.030	-0.217	1.000				
X8	0.019	-0.082	-0.501	0.285	-0.317	-0.370	-0.009	0.966			
X9	-0.104	-0.033	0.237	-0.204	0.073	0.090	0.202	-0.250	0.992		
X10	0.198	0.093	-0.223	0.873	-0.303	-0.538	0.362	0.304	-0.126	0.998	
Y	0.018	0.152	0.169	-0.578	0.387	0.456	-0.016	-0.517	0.164	-0.568	1.000

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = maize hybrid yield.

Table 5: Cross-Loading of latent variables to indicators

Indicators	Latent Variables										
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1.1	1	0.8300	0.0312	0.0240	-0.2959	-0.0592	0.3270	0.0195	-0.0837	0.1680	-0.0204
X2.1	0.9783	0.8379	-0.0035	-0.0063	-0.2488	-0.0320	0.3555	-0.0017	-0.0539	0.1552	0.0155
X2.2	0.8534	0.9887	0.1938	-0.0557	-0.1257	0.0988	0.4025	-0.1435	-0.0279	-0.0178	0.1748
X2.3	0.5223	0.8497	0.1523	0.2464	-0.2505	-0.1161	0.4641	-0.1494	0.0144	0.2154	0.0592
X2.4	0.8293	0.9928	0.1721	-0.0334	-0.1524	0.0833	0.4440	-0.1713	-0.0383	-0.0031	0.1331
X3.1	0.0312	0.1785	1	-0.1541	-0.1091	-0.0375	0.0843	-0.4964	0.2530	-0.2229	0.2156
X4.1	-0.0058	-0.0006	-0.1696	0.0126	0.2127	0.1013	0.2173	0.1761	0.0055	-0.0225	0.0050
X4.2	-0.0728	-0.1082	-0.0829	0.9212	-0.2754	-0.5494	0.1845	0.2891	-0.2674	0.7910	-0.5276
X4.3	-0.1289	-0.1240	0.2071	-0.8990	0.2046	0.3209	-0.2633	-0.1587	0.0730	-0.7693	0.4666
X5.1	-0.2975	-0.4140	-0.3824	-0.3027	0.6470	0.3024	-0.1283	0.1730	-0.0342	-0.1190	0.0718
X5.2	-0.2033	-0.2939	-0.4480	-0.2791	0.5701	0.3176	-0.0273	0.1935	0.0801	-0.1829	0.1445
X5.3	-0.2440	-0.0158	0.1276	-0.1134	0.8308	0.5651	0.0728	-0.5076	0.0545	-0.1147	0.3501
X5.4	0.0537	0.1002	0.0033	0.0110	0.4360	0.4081	0.3732	-0.0504	0.1426	-0.0137	0.1395
X5.5	-0.2717	-0.2512	-0.1053	-0.4382	0.3650	0.4343	-0.6008	-0.0619	-0.1498	-0.4876	0.0825
X6.1	-0.0256	0.1778	0.0335	-0.1950	0.7028	0.7604	0.0453	-0.3878	-0.0809	-0.2162	0.2623
X6.2	-0.1201	-0.2238	-0.4256	-0.2590	0.4149	0.5865	-0.2829	-0.0389	-0.0267	-0.2860	0.1025
X6.3	-0.0437	0.0283	0.0310	-0.5607	0.5145	0.8974	-0.3341	-0.2613	0.2133	-0.6520	0.3892
X7.1	0.3270	0.4411	0.0843	0.2420	0.0290	-0.2417	1	-0.0286	0.2142	0.3621	0.0487
X8.1	-0.0226	-0.2234	-0.5132	0.2998	-0.2625	-0.3475	-0.0481	0.9537	-0.3383	0.3031	-0.5274
X8.2	0.0649	-0.0590	-0.4223	0.1646	-0.2942	-0.2950	-0.0035	0.9409	-0.0988	0.2516	-0.4682
X9.1	-0.0996	-0.0225	0.2254	-0.1949	0.1126	0.1483	0.1939	-0.2440	0.9835	-0.1342	0.2278
X9.2	-0.0658	-0.0305	0.2717	-0.1860	0.0271	0.0449	0.2271	-0.2252	0.9849	-0.0901	0.2380
X10.1	0.1848	0.0403	-0.2340	0.8480	-0.2309	-0.5544	0.3760	0.3058	-0.1188	0.9977	-0.5424
X10.2	0.1503	0.0225	-0.2107	0.8629	-0.2274	-0.5592	0.3464	0.2812	-0.1076	0.9976	-0.5365
Y.1	-0.0204	0.1413	0.2156	-0.5479	0.3425	0.3790	0.0487	-0.5271	0.2367	-0.5408	1

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = hybrid maize yield, X1.1 = temperature, X2.1 = rainfall, X2.2 = the wet month, X2.3 = the dry month, X2.3 = long growth period, X3.1 = drainage, X4.1 = texture, X4.2 = coarse material, X4.3 = effective depth, X5.1 = organic C, X5.2 = cation exchanges capacity, X5.3 = base saturation, X6.1 = total N, X6.2 = P availability, X6.3 = K exchangeable, X7.1 = the exchange sodium percentage, X8.1 = slopes, X8.2 = soil erosion, X9.1 = inundation height, X9.2 = inundation period, X10.1 = rock outcrops, X10.2 = surface rock, Y.1 = hybrid maize yield.

Table 6: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha test.

Indicators (land characteristics)	***Cronbach's Alpha***	***Composite Reliability***
X1.1 (Temperature)	1.000	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall) X2.2 (Wet month) X2.3 (Dry month) X2.4 (Long growth periods)	0.975	0.965
X3.1 (Drainage)	1.000	1.000
X4.1 (Texture) X4.2 (Coarse material) X4.3 (Effective depth)	0.002[nor]	-1.055[nor]
X5.1 (pH H_2O) X5.2 (pH KCl) X5.3 (Organic C) X5.4 (Cation exchange capacity) X5.5 (Base saturation)	0.718	0.628
X6.1 (Total N) X6.2 (P availability) X6.3 (K exchangeable)	0.805	0.681
X7.1 (Exchangeable sodium percentage)	1.000	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes) X8.2 (Soil erosion)	0.965	0.928
X9.1 (Inundation height) X9.2 (Inundation period)	0.992	0.984
X10.1 (Rock outcrops) X10.2 (Surface rock)	0.998	0.995

nor = not reliable.

3.1.3 Structural model test (inner models)

Land characteristics that have a significant correlation with hybrid maize yields show a high level of contribution to land quality in influencing hybrid maize yields as indicated in Figure 3. The figure shows a structural model of the relationship between indicator variables, namely 24 land characteristics, rectangular yellow, and latent variables, including 10 land qualities maize yield, and oval blue. It also shows a model for the relationship between latent variables such as land qualities and maize yield as well as loading figures. The factor for each indicator and path coefficient for land qualities has a direct effect on the value of maize yields.

For example, X8 (erosion hazard) significantly determines the hybrid maize yield with a path coefficient of -0.392. The negative sign indicates that the erosion hazard is negatively related to maize yield, where the higher the erosion hazard, the lower the maize yield. Furthermore, nutrient retention (X5) contributes to the diversity of hybrid maize yields with a path coefficient of 0.252. A positive sign indicates that nutrient retention is positively related to maize yield, where the higher the value of nutrient retention were followed by the maize yield.

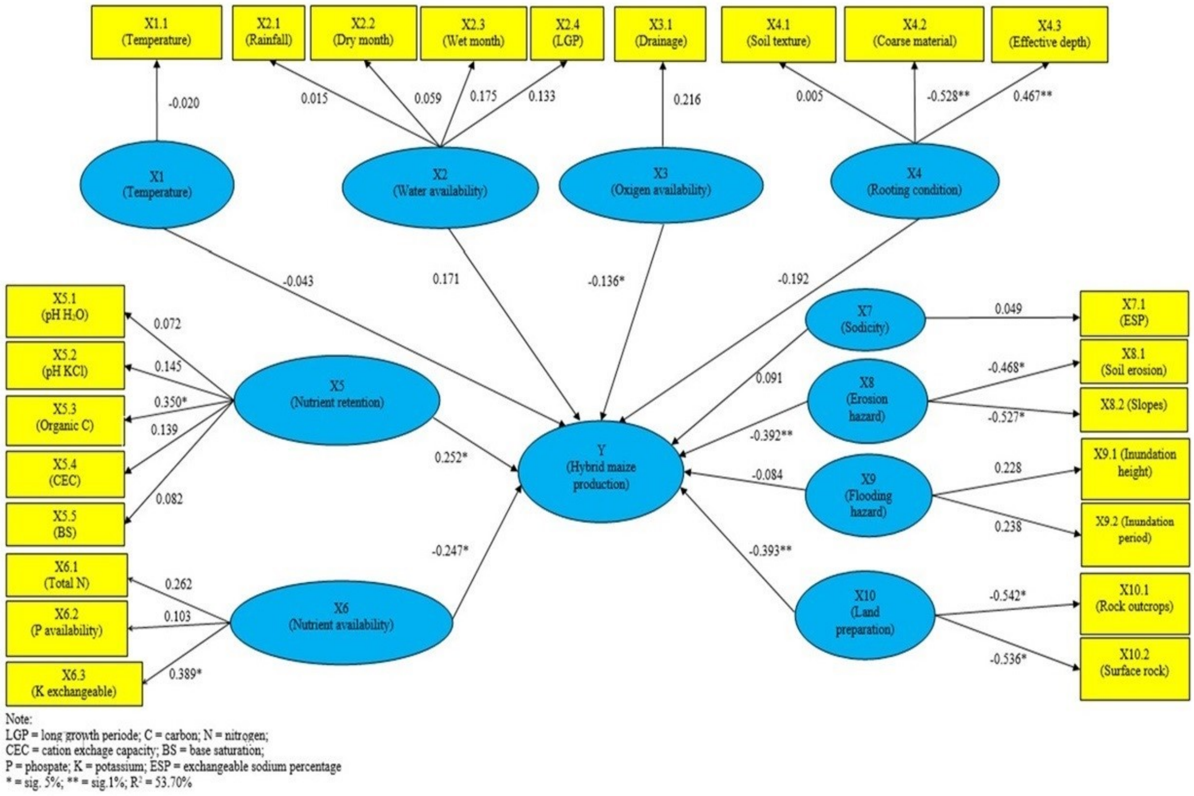

Figure 3: Path Coefficient of land quality on hybrid maize yield.

The results of this path analysis indicated that the land quality that can be a predictor of maize yield diversity were oxygen availability (X3), nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (X6), erosion hazard (X8), and land preparation (X 10). Figure 2 indicates that only 8 of the 24 indicators explain latent variance at the 5% real test level. The 8 indicators were coarse material and effective soil depth as an indicator of rooting condition, organic carbon content as nutrient retention, exchangeable K as nutrient availability, soil erosion and slope as erosion hazard, as well as rock outcrop and surface rock as an indicator of land preparation. It was also indicated that the drainage loading factor was unable to explain the diversity of oxygen availability. Therefore, oxygen availability cannot be used as a land quality because there are no indicators that can represent it. Only the land qualities of nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (x6), erosion hazard (x8), and land preparation (X10) were used next.

The indicators of land characteristics for effective depth, organic C, total N, and exchangeable K have a fairly strong positive relationship and a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, an increase in these parameters by 1%, will be followed by a rise in hybrid maize yields of 39% to 57.7%. According to [4], effective depth affects root growth and development, making plants grow and develop properly. Moreover, the levels of organic C, total N, and CEC are influenced by soil organic matter [42], while potassium plays a role in the growth and development of maize [43].

Indicators of rough soil characteristics, slopes, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrops have a strong negative relationship with a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, a 1% decrease in coarse material, slope, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrop is followed by an increase in hybrid maize yields by 39% to 57.7%.

3.2. Optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Table 7 shows the mathematical equations for each land characteristic and also the optimum hybrid maize yield for the land equation. Figure 4 shows the diagram of the relationship between land characteristics as an independent variable (X) and maize yield as an independent variable Y. Model fitting indicates that the quadratic equation is sufficient to describe the condition of data distribution.

Table 7: The optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	**Optimum Yield (ton/ha)**	**Yield Equation**	**R^2**
Rooting condition (rc)			
Coarse material	8.06	$Y = 0.0024800x^2 – 0.2457487x + 10.9082465$	0.95
Effective depth	8.35	$Y = -0.0007242x^2 + 0.1890458x – 1.2946385$	0.96
Nutrient retention (nr)			
Organic carbon	8.35	$Y = -24.3891969x^2 + 46.8464078X – 8.8894056$	0.87
Nutrient availability (na)			
Total N	8.43	$Y = -304.4463543X^2 + 144.7590906X – 2.6328530$	1.00
K Exchangeable	5.74	$Y = -10.5596308X^2 + 17.4129832X + 2.2069179$	0.94
Erosion hazard (eh)			
Slopes	8.43	$Y = 0.0172X^2 – 0.8448X + 13.907$	0.91
Soil erosion	8.06	$y = 0.0000173X^2 – 0.0187536X + 9.0426459$	0.88
Land preparation (lp)			
Rock outcrops	7.30	$Y = 0.0046385X^2 – 0.2934756X + 8.5159674$	0.91
Surface rock	7.30	$Y = 0.0046385X^2 – 0.2934756X + 8.5159674$	0.91

The optimum of hybrid maize yield ranged from 5.74 to 8.43 ton/ha, where the highest yield was obtained from total N and slopes of 8.43 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 100% and 91%. Sutardjo et al (2012) showed that hybrid maize yields ranged from 7.43 to 9.2 ton/ha. This indicated that the optimum yield achieved is still within the range of hybrid maize yields that have been previously reported. Nitrogen is directly involved in the formation of amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymes, nucleoproteins, and alkaloids, which are needed in the plant growth process [44], [45]. An extremely high amount of N causes excessive vegetative growth, thereby making plants fall easily and increasing susceptibility to disease [46]. Meanwhile, the lack of N nutrients can limit cell division, enlargement [47], and the formation of chlorophyll, leading to stunted growth as well as yellowing of leaves [46].

The lowest optimum yield was obtained from exchangeable K, which was only 5.74 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 94%. This was presumably because the K content in the soil is very low, thereby affecting the hybrid maize yield. Potassium (K) is required by plants for physiological functions, including carbohydrate metabolism, enzyme activity, osmotic regulation, efficient

water use, N uptake, protein synthesis, and assimilate translocation [48]–[51]. It also plays a role in improving the quality of crop yields (McKenzie, 2013, Subandi, 2013).

The optimum hybrid maize yield of the remaining is relatively diverse. This includes effective depth and organic carbon, which were both 8.35 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 87%. Furthermore, coarse material and soil erosion were 8.06 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 95% and 88%, while rock outcrops and surface rock were 7.30 ton/ha with an R2 value of 91%. The absence of coarse material > 2 mm in diameter indicated that plant roots can grow freely on the surface or deeper parts of the soil [54], because the deeper the roots of the maize, the greater the maize yield [55], [56]. The addition of organic matter will increase maize yield [57]–[59] and organic C content [60] because soil organic matter is a strong positive predictor of yield [61]. Kane et al. [61] also stated that the addition of more organic matter will improve water retention, thereby reducing maize yield losses due to drought. The slope has a significant effect on soil degradation [62]. According to a previous study, erosion and maize yield are negatively correlated, hence, increased erosion will reduce maize productivity [63]. Soil erosion on flat land is slower surface runoff [64]. It was also reported that surface rocks and outcrops are the limiting factors in the suitability of maize plantations [65]. Therefore, a high percentage of rock outcrops will complicate land cultivation and plant root growth.

3.3. Land suitability criteria for hybrid maize crops

Table 8 shows the yield limit for each class from the calculation of the optimum yield, where the class range for each land characteristic is derived. Based on the optimum yield of the highest hybrid maize, there were 2 indicators, namely the total N content and the slope. The total N indicator with a very suitable class (S1) was achieved when the value in the soil was greater than 0.10%, while in the moderately suitable class (S2), it was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.07-0.09%. In the marginally appropriate class (S3), the total N indicator was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.05-0.06%, while the not suitable class (N) was achieved when the content was less than 0.05%. On the slope indicator with class S1, it was obtained when the slope class ranges from 0-7.69%%, while class S2 was achieved when the slope class ranges from 7.70-11.83%. Furthermore, in classes S3 and N, it was obtained when the slope class ranged from 11.84-18.24% and greater than 18.24%, respectively.

Based on the optimum yield of the lowest hybrid maize, only the exchangeable K was the indicator. In classes S1 and S2, it was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil was greater than 0.24 cmol(+)/kg and ranges from 0.13-0.23 cmol(+)/kg, respectively. Furthermore, class S3 was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil ranges from 0.04-0.12 cmol(+)/kg, while in class N, it was obtained when the exchangeable K content in the soil was less than 0.04 cmol(+)/kg. The remaining variables and indicators were relatively varied according to the optimum yield of hybrid maize and the range of land suitability classes obtained as presented in Table 8.

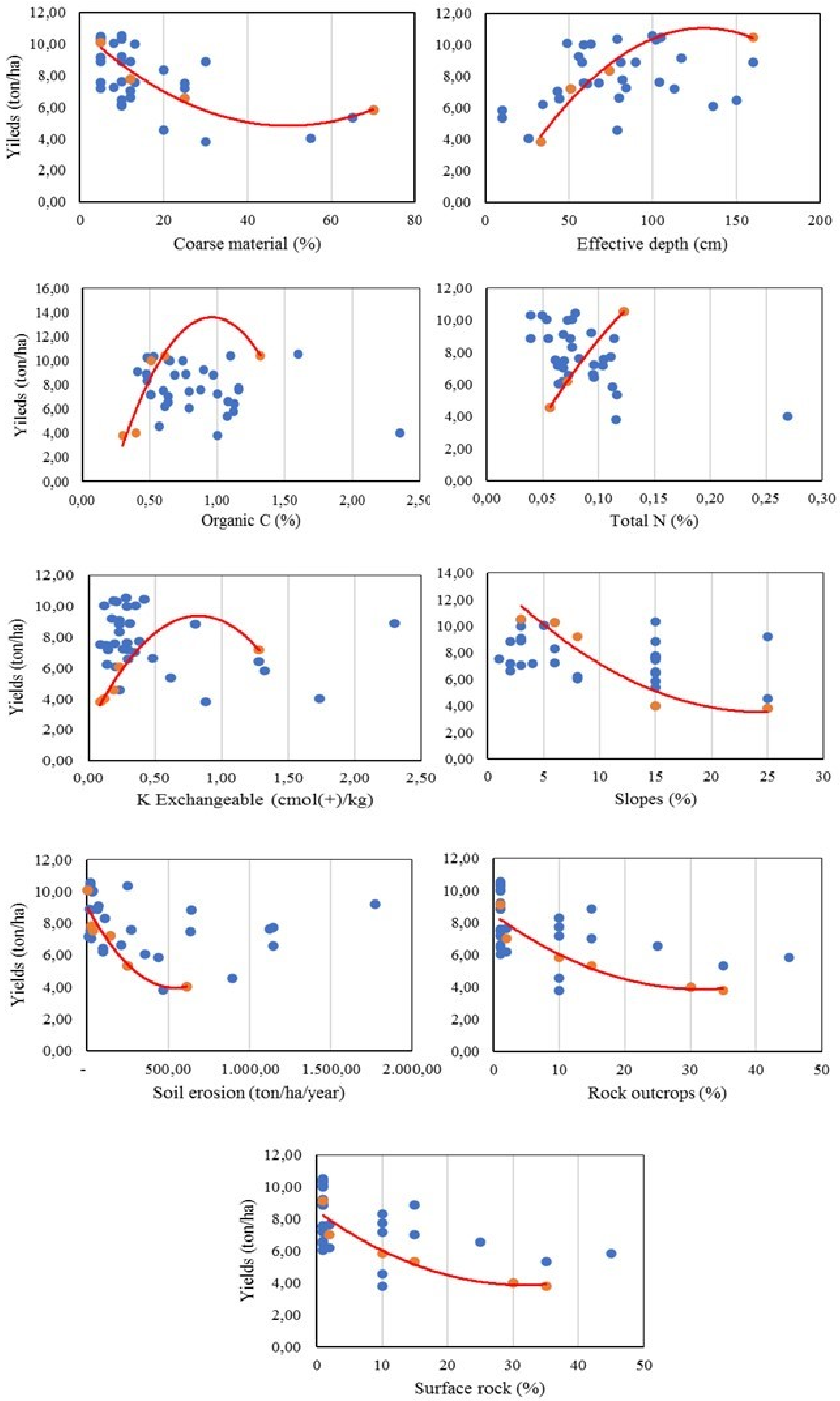

Figure 4: Scatter diagram relationship among maize yield and land characteristics

Table 8: Yield limits of hybrid maize and values obtained in each land suitability class interval by land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Yield Limits (ton/ha)			Value of Land Suitability Criterion Obtained			
	S1 - S2 (80% x Y_{optim})	S2 – S3 (60% x Y_{optim})	S3 – N (40% x Y_{optim})	S1	S2	S3	N
Rooting condition (rc)							
Coarse material (%)	8.06	6.04	4.03	0 – 13.40	13.41 – 27.37	27.38 – 52.39	> 52.39
Effective depth (cm)	8.35	6.26	4.18	≥ 69.55	49.25 – 69.54	33.18 – 49.24	< 33.18
Nutrient retention (nr)							
Organic carbon (%)	8.35	6.26	4.18	≥ 0.50	0.41 – 0.49	0.34 – 0.40	< 0.34
Nutrient availability (na)							
Total N (%)	8.43	6.32	4.22	≥ 0.10	0.07 – 0.09	0.05 – 0.06	< 0.05
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	5.74	4.31	2.87	≥ 0.24	0.13 – 0.23	0.04 – 0.12	< 0.04
Erosion hazard (eh)							
Slopes (%)	8.43	6.32	4.22	0 – 7.69	7.70 – 11.83	11.84 – 18.24	> 18.24
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	8.06	6.04	4.03	≤ 55.21	195.29	605.56	> 605.56
Land preparation (lp)							
Rock outcrops (%)	7.30	5.47	3.85	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78
Surface rock (%)	7.30	5.47	3.85	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, and N = not suitable.

Based on the relationship between the quality and characteristics of the selected land with optimum results, the criteria for hybrid maize land suitability were obtained as shown in Table 8. These criteria described the actual state of achieving optimum, moderate, and minimum yields of hybrid maize in the field with values of 80%, 60%, and 40%, respectively. According to Sukarman et al. [66], the parameters used in the land suitability assessment must describe the actual conditions. This is due to the significant positive correlation between maize yield and land suitability class [67].

The land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are fewer and have referred to the optimum yield. Meanwhile, the land quality and characteristics in this new criterion are less because it only consists of root conditions with characteristics of coarse material and effective depth, nutrient retention with organic C, and nutrient availability with total N and K exchangeable. It also consists of erosion hazards with characteristics of slopes and soil erosion, as well as land preparation with surface rocks and rock outcrops only. The land qualities selected and maize yields consistent with the land potential are the basis for developing suitability criteria. This will reduce the land characteristics and make the evaluation process faster, cheaper, and easier with accurate results [14]. Some characteristics and land quality criteria were not made because they did not significantly affect the yield of hybrid maize. The number and distribution of the data were still limited and the diversity of values was small or not measurable in the field [38].

Compared to Wahyunto et al. [68], the new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants in Table 9 is more realistic in value with the conditions in the field and is based on the achievement of optimum yields. The current land suitability criteria are still general and not

specific to maize yields [14], although the agronomic and yield potential of each maize variety differ, based on the diversity of characteristics and land quality in the field.

Table 9: Comparison of new and general land suitability criteria with land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	**New Land Suitability Criterion of Hybrid Maize**				**Land Suitability Criterion of General Maize** [68]			
	S1	**S2**	**S3**	**N**	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	**N**
Rooting condition (rc)								
Coarse material (%)	0 – 13.40	13.41 – 27.37	27.38 – 52.39	> 52.39	< 15	15 – 35	35 – 55	>55
Effective depth (cm)	≥ 69.55	49.25 – 69.54	33.18 – 49.24	< 33.18	> 60	60 – 40	40 – 25	< 25
Nutrient retention (nr)								
Organic carbon (%)	≥ 0.50	0.41 – 0.49	0.34 – 0.40	< 0.34	> 1.20	0.8 – 1.2	< 0.8	-
Nutrient availability (na)								
Total N (%)	≥ 0.10	0.07 – 0.09	0.05 – 0.06	< 0.05	Mo	Lo	VLo	-
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	≥ 0.24	0.13 – 0.23	0.04 – 0.12	< 0.04	Mo-Hi	Lo	VLo	-
Erosion hazard (eh)								
Slopes (%)	0 – 7.69	7.70 – 11.83	11.84 – 18.24	> 18.24	< 8	8 – 15	15 – 25	> 25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	≤ 55.21	195.29	605.56	> 605.56	-	VLi	Li-Mo	He-VHe
Land preparation (lp)								
Rock outcrops (%)	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40
Surface rock (%)	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, N = not suitable, Hi = high, Mo = moderate, Lo = low, VLo = very low, He = heavy, Li = light, VLi = very light, VHe = very heavy.

Conclusions

Land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are determined by land qualities, namely root conditions, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, as well as land preparation, and land characteristics, including coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. The highest optimum yield of 8.35 ton/ha was achieved by the effective depth and organic C content for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest value of 5.47 ton/ha was attained by exchangeable K for class S1. These results showed that the combination of the PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis can be an alternative approach to establishing new land suitability criteria for crops based on optimum yields and selected land quality.

Data Availability

All data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding Statement

This study was funded by the Directorate of Research, Technology and Community Service, Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, grant number B/105/UN47.D1/PT.01.03/2022.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute Research and Community Service of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo for their financial and administrative support.

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Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

UNDER REVIEW

ID 3800877

Nurdin, Nurdin SA CA [1], Asda Rauf[1], Yunnita Rahim[1], Echan Adam[1], Nikmah Musa[1], Fitriah Suryani Jamin[1], Rival Rahman[1], Suyono Dude[1], Hidayat Arismunandar Katili[2] + Show Affiliations

Article Type

Research Article

Journal

Applied and Environmental Soil Science

Academic Editor Turjaman Maman

Submitted on 2022-12-12 (13 days ago)

> Abstract

> Author Declaration

∨ Files 2

Main manuscript

Manuscript_Nurdin_et al.docx 2 MB

Cover letter

Cover Letter by author.pdf 151 kB

— Response to Revision Request

Your Reply

Nurdin, Nurdin 24.12.2022

Dear Academic Editor Thank you in advance for correcting our journal articles, so that the deepening of the contents of our articles is even better. In response to the corrections that have been given, we have tried to improve as much as possible with the following description: In the introductory section, a discussion on maize development in Boalemo Regency (hybrid corn production achievement compared to local maize) has been added, the choice of research locations in this regency and the urgency of determining land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemi Regency by including some of the latest references (lines 43-63 of the revision article). In the methods section: - Lines 85-87 have been added citations/references - Soil map scale has been listed (nominal scale and bar scale). - Line 88 states that there are 35 land units, but in the legend Figure 1 there are 32 SMUs. Is there a relationship between the soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. and the map in Figure 1? Why is the land mapping unit in Figure 1 not explained in paragraphs 83-91? It has been improved again, where the land mapping carried out by Ritung et al. (20016) as many as 35 land units became the initial reference for adding 32 new land units because the map scale changed from a scale of 1: 50,000 to a scale of 1: 40,000, so that the coverage of the land map was more detailed and the number of land units became 67 units. In addition, the land units have been described, both in terms of slope, relief, land use and soil types and their distribution in the study area. - Lines 95-110: It is better to explain each component/variable of soil characteristics at the beginning of the paragraph. In the next section, each variable is explained how to obtain the data. In this line, each component/variable of soil characteristic distance has been explained and continued with how to obtain the data. - Lines 97-99: Give reasons why it is necessary to update the available land characteristics and justification for determining the additional 32 points. Add sampling points (32 pedons) to the map. Explain how to collect climate data and place equipment/stations. In that line it has been corrected according to the correction. - Lines 112-113: these identifications must be shown on the map and indicate the points where the 2.5 x 2.5 m beams are placed. This line has been corrected and included in the map of the research location (sample points and tiled plots). - Lines 117, 119, 142, 143, etc.: each formula must be accompanied by a reference. This line has been fixed. - Lines 127-145, 175-184: please add a quote. This line has been fixed. - Lines 131: Table 1 should be completed with a column indicating secondary data sources for each land characteristic or method of obtaining data in the field (as a summary of updated lines 95-110). This line has been fixed. - Lines 397-401: It should be noted that the results of this study are of limited use for the development of hybrid corn in Boalemo, because the arrangement is only based on the characteristics of the land and optimum yields in Boalemo Regency (not representing the national scale). On the line has been fixed. Thus the improvement of the manuscript from us, hopefully we will get a good response for publication Regards Nurdin

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Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

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Abstract

The significant effect of land quality on maize production has not been fully considered in the existing land suitability criteria. Therefore, this study aims to determine the hybrid maize land suitability criteria based on the optimum yield and land quality. It was carried out in Boalemo Regency, Indonesia, where the land unit of 67 units were surveyed to obtain land characteristics data. A partial least square of structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 8.0 was used to select a robust land quality controlling hybrid maize yield, while the boundary line method was used to determine optimum yield and differentiating of land suitability criteria. The result showed that land qualities that define the optimum yield of hybrid maize were root conditions, nutrient availability, nutrient retentions, land preparation, and erosion hazard. The soil characteristics were effective depth, coarse material, organic C, total N, K exchangeable, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. Furthermore, the highest optimum yield of 8.35 ton/ha was achieved by the effective depth and organic C content for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest of 5.47 ton/ha was obtained by exchangeable K for class S1. This showed that the combination of PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis was a better approach to developing new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize.

1. Introduction

Food security and farmer prosperity are global concerns, this makes every country increase crop production as well as farmers' income. An important issue for countries with developing economies is ensuring food security, where the agricultural sector plays a strategic role in increasing food availability [1]. Although the global food system has placed maize (*Zea mays* L.) as the leading cereal crop [2], its productivity is being disrupted by land degradation, water scarcity, and climate change [3].

In Indonesia, the wet tropical climate with rainfall and high temperatures tends to reduce the quality of land and agricultural products [4]. This country ranked 8th among the maize-producing nations with a contribution of 2.19% and 2.42% of the world's total harvested area [5]. However, the main problem is the relatively low level of yield in several regions because the achievement of maize production has not been followed by an increase in yield per unit area [6]. This is indicated by the average yield in 2020, which was up to 5.57 ton/ha [5].

According to a previous investigation, maize production in Indonesia can reach between 10-12 ton/ha [7], [8] thereby making the country the 21st leading importer in the world.

In Indonesia, Gorontalo Province is one of the centers of maize production, where the hybrid type is the most widely grown species [9]. The maize production in the province reached 1.8 million tons in 2021 [10], with several export advantages and competitiveness [11]. Furthermore, the planting of hybrid, composite, and local maize types has reached more than 98.90%, 0.68%, and 0.41% only, respectively [12] including Boalemo Regency.

Boalemo Regency ranks third as a maize-producing center in Gorontalo Province with a contribution of 18.90% [13]. The maize plant dominates the use of agricultural land in this district by 37.43% [14], therefore, the commodity has competitive and comparative advantages with a PCR value of 0.80 and 0.91 DRC. This is because maize plant is supported by land area, climatic conditions, production facilities, as well as market guarantees, and the basic price of buying corn from the government [15]. In 2021, the average hybrid and local maize yields in the regency reached 5.20 tons/ha [16] and 2.34-3.30 tons/ha, respectively [17]. This indicated that the productivity of hybrid maize is still higher than local maize [18] but with lower achievement compared to the national maize production of 5.57 tons/ha [5] and has not yet reached the target of 5.60 tons/ha in 2021 [19]. The production of hybrid maize in Gorontalo can reach 9.78-13.11 tons/ha [20] because it is often cultivated on land that does not meet the required qualities [6]. Therefore, there is a need to determine land quality-based hybrid maize land suitability criteria for site-specific land use planning in Boalemo District.

Maize is usually grown on land with low yield potential [21] and soil fertility, thereby causing low productivity [22]. Moreover, land productivity is determined by quality and characteristics [23], [24], while land quality has a close relationship with maize yields [25]. The land quality affecting the optimum yield of maize needs to be determined [26] and increased by using hybrid varieties that have high yields. This makes it necessary to evaluate the suitability of the hybrid maize in a region to ensure optimal production. The land suitability criteria for hybrid maize are not yet available because the current criterion is the general suitability of maize plants without distinguishing between hybrids and inbreds. Therefore, there is a need to make land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants.

A previous study has shown that land quality has a significant effect on suitability for certain uses [27]. Meanwhile, land suitability is also important due to the continuous increase in the demand for agricultural land [28]. The land suitability criteria for existing maize fields are still general [29] and there are no specific criteria for hybrid maize varieties. The class assessment outcomes obtained using the existing criteria are relatively many and are not in line with the actual field results [30]. The current criteria consist of 3 components, namely, land quality, characteristics, and ranges of land characteristic values to determine its suitability. Therefore, the problem in developing criteria is choosing land quality, characteristics, and determining the range of land characteristic values associated with suitability classes, namely suitable, somewhat suitable, marginally suitable, and not suitable.

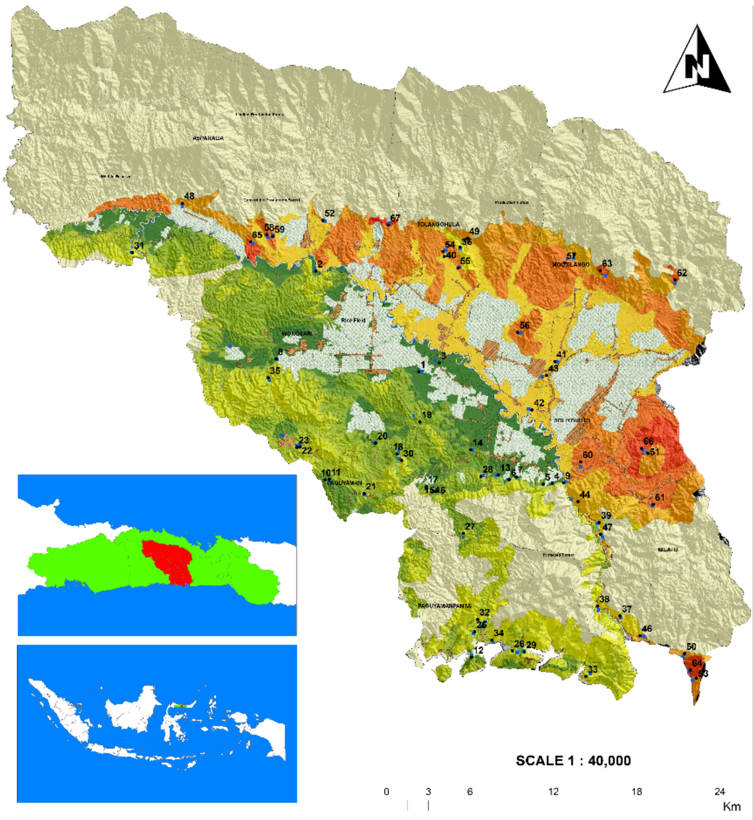
The selection of land quality and characteristics can be carried out through the partial least square of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM), while the range limits is being determined by the boundary line method. Land qualities and characteristics in the current criteria can be used temporarily since structural equation model analysis with partial least squares produces better indicators and models than other multivariate analyses [31]–[35]. This is because the variant-based PLS-SEM has a higher level of flexibility and the size of the sample used is relatively small ranging from 30 to 100 [36]–[39]. The use of PLS-SEM to determine land characteristics and qualities that control maize crop yields is still relatively rare, except for Syaf [40] on older cocoa plants, maize composite [41], and on local varieties [6]. The boundary line method can help determine nutrient adequacy concentrations and the optimum yield range of a plant that affects nutrients, as well as other land characteristics [42], [43]. Currently, the land suitability criteria for maize plants have not been determined using the boundary line method, except by Ridayanti et al. [44], although the investigation was not specific to hybrid maize.

After obtaining the quality and characteristics of land affecting maize yields with PLS-SEM, the boundary line method can be used to determine the optimum yield as well as land suitability criteria simultaneously. This is carried out by drawing the intersection of the boundary line at the yield and projecting with the land characteristics [29]. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize based on the optimum yield and land quality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study area

The study area extends from 0°28'5.6" - 0°57'30.02" N to 122^{o0}8'34.25" - 122°43'10.41"E (Figure 1) on a scale of 1 : 65,000, which is located in the agricultural land of Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. The maximum air temperature was 28.19°C and the minimum was 26.79°C with an average of 28.01°C. Meanwhile, the maximum rainfall was 1,849 mm and the minimum was 1,246 mm with an average of 1,478 mm [45]. The wet and dry seasons last for 3 months and 5 months respectively. The soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. [46] become the initial reference for determining 35 soil units, where each unit has information on land characteristics, namely effective depth, drainage, texture, pH, cation exchange capacity, base saturation, landform, parent material, relief, and land unit area. This unit was detailed by adding 32 soil units to be surveyed and observed, making up to 67 soil units in the area as shown in the legend Figure 1. The detailing was carried out because the soil unit was previously presented at a scale of 1: 50,000, without including several key areas. Meanwhile, the new soil unit is 1: 40,000 in scale and there has been a change in the agricultural land use existing. This indicated that the slope class of 8 – 15% or hilly is more dominant in the study area with a percentage of 29.77% and slopes > 40% or mountainous which is only 2.67%. Furthermore, the dry land is dominant with a value of 59.86% and a little shrub which was only 9.21%, while the dominant Inceptisol soil type was 36.18% and very little Ultisol soil was 8.88%.



SPT	Slopes (%)	Relief	Land Use	Soil Types	Elevation (m asl)	Area (Ha)
1	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Typic Endoaquepts	100 - 250	156.78
2	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Vertic Haplustepts	100 - 250	26.92
3	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	4,756.57
4	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	100 - 250	48.15
5	3 - 8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	91.77
6	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	0 - 100	684.95
7	3 - 8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	249.07
8	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	129.12
9	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3.51
10	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Rhodustalfs	100 - 250	65.54
11	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	471.97
12	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Lithic Haplustolls	0 - 100	302.43
13	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	0 - 100	1,412.81
14	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	0 - 100	1,071.76
15	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	297.87
16	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	254.62
17	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	853.23
18	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Lithic Haplustepts	100 - 250	3,304.32
19	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	793.13
20	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	3,293.28
21	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	250 - 500	364.88
22	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	165.87
23	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	2,038.84
24	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	0 - 100	169.98
25	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	349.74
26	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	749.22
27	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,528.98
28	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	3,748.72
29	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	434.63
30	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Lithic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	3,908.31
31	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Haplustepts	250 - 500	154.35
32	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Lithic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,474.02
33	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	229.51
34	> 45	Mountainous	Upland	Lithic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	853.11
35	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Rhodustalfs	0 - 100	86.40
36	8 - 15	Hilly	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	254.52
37	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Fluventic Ustropepts	0 - 100	286.81
38	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	27.33
39	> 45	Mountainous	Upland	Fluventic Ustropepts	250 - 500	101.55
40	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3,052.35
41	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3,834.11
42	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	1,072.70
43	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Typic Tropaquepts	100 - 250	65.04
44	15 - 30	Hilly	Plantation	Fluventic Ustropepts	250 - 500	1,043.31
45	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Argiustolls	100 - 250	791.23
46	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	53.32
47	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Fluventic Ustropepts	100 - 250	336.36
48	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	250 - 500	705.51
49	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	250 - 500	2,196.41
50	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	104.35
51	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	871.02
52	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplusteps	100 - 250	28.16
53	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Tropaquepts	0 - 100	89.21
54	3 -8	Wavy	Plantation	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	1,442.70
55	3 -8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Argiustolls	100 - 250	1,475.90
56	3 -8	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	413.33
57	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	250 - 500	3,864.27
58	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	151.63
59	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Dystrudepts	0 - 100	63.14
60	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	2,054.29
61	30 - 45	Mountainous	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	52.44
62	30 - 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	63.05
63	30 - 45	Mountainous	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	48.35
64	30 - 45	Mountainous	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	171.54
65	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	136.96
66	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,063.61
67	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplusteps	250 - 500	79.96
			Total			60,518.81

Figure 1: Study area.

2.2 Dataset collection for land quality and land characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in this study refer to Wahyunto et al. [47], consisting of 10 land qualities and 24 characteristics. The set of temperature land quality is determined from the characteristics of the annual average air temperature, while the land quality water availability is determined from the characteristics of annual rainfall, wet months, dry months, and the length of the growth period (LGP). Land quality oxygen availability is determined from soil drainage characteristics, rooting conditions are determined from the soil texture, coarse material, and soil effective depth, nutrient retention is identified from the pH value, C-Organic, cation exchange capacity (CEC), and base saturation. Furthermore, the available nutrient is determined from the characteristics of total N, P, and exchangeable K, the sodicity is obtained from the exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP), while erosion hazard is determined from slopes and soil erosion. The quality of the flood-hazard land is determined by identifying the height and the duration of the inundation, while preparation is carried out from the characteristics of outcrops and surface rocks. The selection of this set of land qualities and characteristics is based on the availability of data and their impact on maize production [26].

Data on average annual air temperature and rainfall for 10 years (2010-2021) were collected from different climate stations, namely the Bandungrejo with 0°41' N - 122°38' E, the elevation 40 m asl, while Harapan has 0°42' N - 122°29' E and an elevation of 37 m asl. It also includes Lakeya Rain Post with 0°42.82' N - 122°32.07' E, 32 m asl, Mohiyolo has 0°46.41' N - 122°26.41' E and an elevation of 39 m asl, Saritani 0°46.45' N - 122°20.40' E, with 26 m asl, Tangkobu 0°37.25' N - 122°36.36' E, 25 m asl, Bubaa 0°31.36' N - 122°33.39' E, 16 m asl, Wonggahu 0°38' N - 122°33' E, 35 m asl, and Sambati Rain Post with 0°31.184' N - 122°27.074'

E and an elevation of 9 m asl managed by BWS II Sulawesi. Furthermore, these data determined wet months (> 200 mm) and dry months (<100 mm), which refers to the Oldeman and Darmiyati criteria [48]. The land water balance was determined using the Thornwhite and LGP methods based on the number of surplus and deficit rainy days [49].

Soil characteristics such as drainage, coarse material, effective soil depth, slope, inundation height and duration, rock outcrops and surface rocks were determined by conducting soil profile descriptions and direct observation on 67 pedons referring to the description guidelines in the field [50]. Meanwhile, soil erosion was determined by the USLE method [51]. Other soil characteristics were further analyzed in the soil laboratory using samples from each pedon.

Soil samples were dried for 3 days and sieved through a 2 mesh sieve. The method of soil physics laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Kurnia et al. [52]. Based on this procedure, soil texture was analyzed in terms of sand, clay, and silt fractions using the pipette method, while soil moisture storage was evaluated using the gravimetric method that can be applied in water balance analysis. The method of soil chemistry laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Eviyati and Sulaeman [53]. The soil pH was determined with a pH meter in a 1:2.5 soil and water solution, while the organic C content was assessed using the Walkley and Black method. The total N was assessed using the Kjeldahl method, while the available P content was measured using the Olsen method. The basic cations and CEC was extracted with 1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 (ammonium acetate) on a dry sample of 105°C. The base saturation was determined by calculating the percentage of basic cations number with CEC, ESP was evaluated using the percentage ratio of sodium to CEC [54] [55]. Subsequently, the data from the chemical analysis were averaged to a depth of 0-30 cm using the weighted averaging technique. The framework of this study is presented in Figure 2.

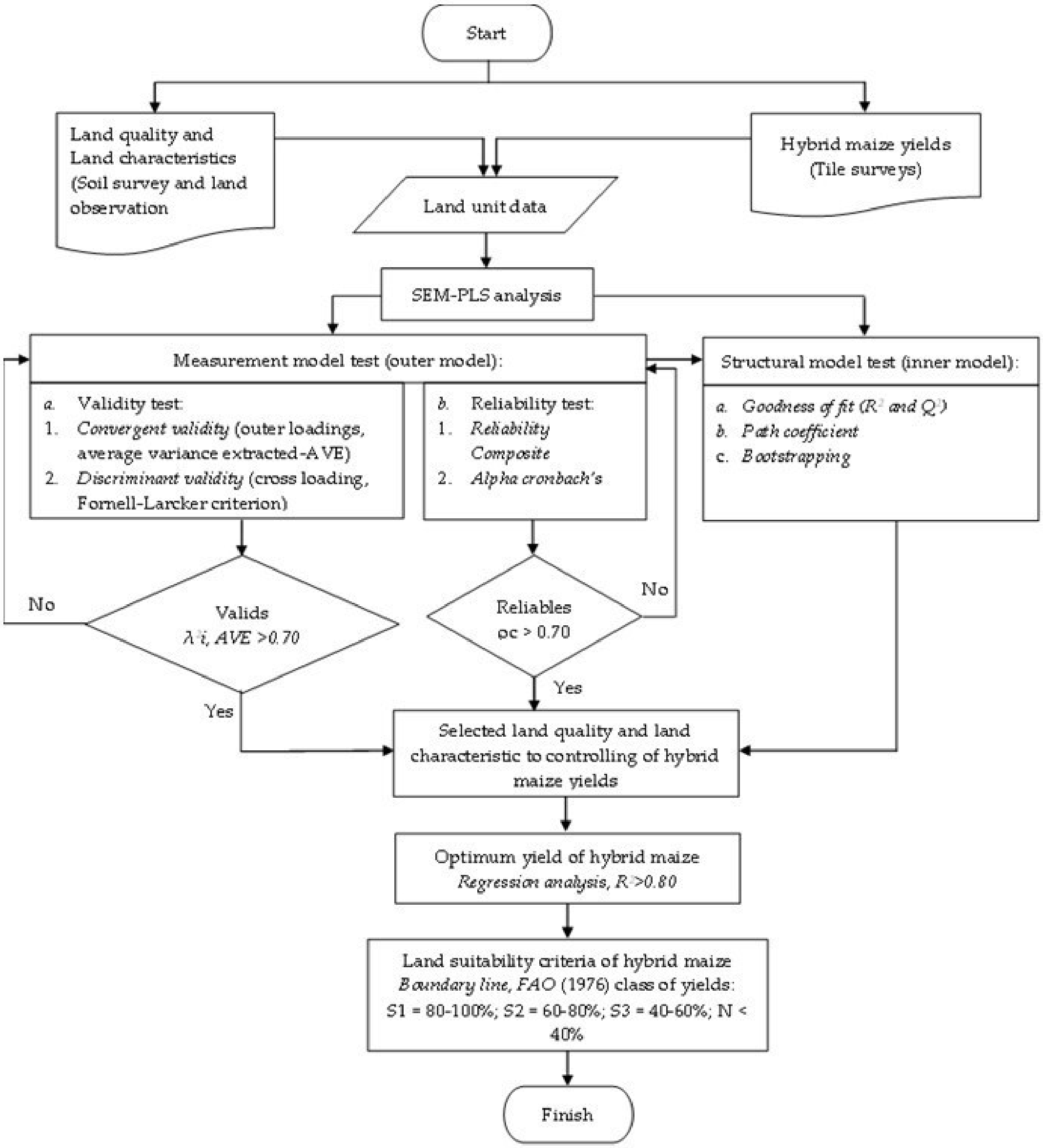


Figure 2: Research framework.

2.3 Dataset collection for hybrid maize yield

The areas currently planted with hybrid maize were identified and blocks with a size of 2.5 m x 2.5 m were made in each map unit (Figure 1). Maize plants in each block passed through standardized management according to farmers' technology. After harvesting, weighting was carried out to obtain hybrid maize yield data from the results of tiles on each land unit. Subsequently, the results were calculated using the formula [56], as expressed below:

$$Y\ (t) = H\ x\ \frac{A}{6.25\ m^2} \qquad (1)$$

Meanwhile, productivity is calculated using the formula [56] below:

$$Y\ (t\ ha^{-1}) = \frac{H\ x\ 1.64\ x\ 56.73}{100} \qquad (2)$$

where Y = hybrid maize yield, H = tile yield (kg), A = maize area 1 per hectare (ha), 1.64 and 56.73 = constant.

2.4 Selection of land quality and land characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in the suitability criteria were used as presented in Tables 1 and 2, which show brief statistics. Generally, most data are relatively homogenous, except for coarse material, available P, slopes, soil erosion, height and inundation, as well as rock outcrops and surface rocks. The selection used the partial least squares of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM) refers to Hair et al. [38] with tools SmartPLS, where land quality and characteristics were selected as the latent and manifest variables, respectively. The analysis in PLS-SEM has 2 main steps, namely (1) the measurement model (outer model) and (2) the structural model test (inner model).

Table 1: Latent variables and indicators used in this study

Latent variables		**Indicators**		**Data Sources**
Notation	**Land quality**	**Notation**	**Land characteristics**	
X1	Temperature (t)	X1.1	Temperature	[45]
X2	Water availability (wa)	X2.1	Rainfall	[45]
		X2.2	Wet month	Rainfall > 200 mm
		X2.3	Dry month	Rainfall < 100 mm
		X2.4	Long growth period (LGP)	Water balance (Thornwhite method), soil moisture storage (Gravimetric method), water surplus and defisit days
X3	Oxygen availability (oa)	X3.1	Drainage	Soil survey and land observation
X4	Rooting condition (rc)	X4.1	Texture	
		X4.1.1	Sand fraction	Pipet method
		X4.1.2	Silt fraction	
		X4.1.3	Clay	
		X4.2	Coarse material	Soil survey and land observation
		X4.3	Effective depth	
X5	Nutrient retention (nr)	X5.1	pH H_2O	pH meter (1 : 2.5)
		X5.2	pH KCl	
		X5.3	Organic C	Walkley and Black method
		X5.4	Cation exchange capacity (CEC)	1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 Extracted
		X5.5	Base saturation	Calculation
X6	Nutrient availability (na)	X6.1	Total N	Kjeldahl method
		X6.2	P availability	Olsen method
		X6.3	K exchangeable	1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 Extracted
X7	Sodicity (xn)	X7.1	Exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP)	Calculation
X8	Erosion hazard (eh)	X8.1	Slopes	Soil survey and land observation
		X8.2	Soil erosion	
X9	Flooding hazard (fh)	X9.1	Inundation height	Soil survey and land observation
		X9.2	Inundation period	
X10	Land preparation (lp)	X10.1	Rock outcrops	Soil survey and land observation
		X10.2	Surface rock	
Y	Hybrid maize yield	Y.1	Hybrid maize yield	Tile box methods

Step 1 consists of validity and reliability tests, wherein the validity test is conducted with convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity is in form of outer loadings (loading factor) and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity is in form of cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Meanwhile, the reliability test uses composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha.

Convergent validity was observed from the magnitude of the outer loading and the AVE value of each indicator on the latent variable. The validity was calculated according to the equation [57][58][59][60]:

$$x_i = \lambda x_i \xi_1 + \delta_i \quad (3)$$

$$y_i = \lambda y_i \eta_1 + \varepsilon_i \quad (4)$$

where x and y = exogenous (ξ) and endogenous (η) latent variable indicator, λx and λy = loading factors, δ and ε = residual/measurement errors or noise.

Table 2: Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics.

Latent variables / Indicators	Unit	n	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
X1 (Temperature)							
X1.1 (Temperature)	°C	67	26.79	27.80	28.01	28.19	0.63
X2 (Water availability)							
X2.1 (Rainfall)	mm	67	1,246.00	1,533.42	1,478.00	1,849.00	232.69
X2.2 (Wet month)	month	67	0.00	1.03	1.00	3.00	0.85
X2.3 (Dry month)	month	67	2.00	3.39	4.00	5.00	1.06
X2.4 (LGP)	day	67	211.00	246.00	214.00	304.00	44.54
X3 (Oxygen availability)							
X3.1 (Drainage)	class	67	0.00	3.76	4.00	6.00	1.82
X4 (Rooting conditions)							
X4.1 (texture)	class	67	1.00	2.21	2.00	5.00	0.99
X4.1.1 (Sand fraction)	%	67	5.00	41.58	43.00	81.33	18.51
X4.1.2 (Silt fraction)	%	67	7.33	27.31	24.50	51.50	11.54
X4.1.3 (Clay)	%	67	11.33	31.90	30.00	56.33	12.72
X4.2 (Coarse material)	%	67	5.00	17.27	10.00	70.00	16.58
X4.3 (Effective depth)	cm	67	10.00	74.55	74.00	160.00	36.40
X5 (Nutrient retention)							
X5.1 (pH H_2O)		67	5.00	5.92	5.90	7.15	0.52
X5.2 (pH KCl)		67	4.35	5.24	5.17	6.60	0.56
X5.3 (Organic C)	%	67	0.41	0.85	0.77	2.35	0.39
X5.4 (CEC)	cmol(+)/kg	67	8.94	24.89	22.43	59.57	11.41
X5.5 (Base saturation)	%	67	45.03	56.22	52.85	81.89	9.76
X6 (Nutrient availability)							
X6.1 (Total N)	%	67	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.27	0.04
X6.2 (P availability)	mg/kg	67	0.73	8.62	3.77	58.67	12.61
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	cmol(+)/kg	67	0.07	0.39	0.24	1.92	0.42
X7 (Sodicity)							
X7.1 (ESP)	%	67	0.76	7.06	6.20	24.17	5.62
X8 (Erosion hazard)							
X8.1 (Slopes)	%	67	1.00	9.58	6.00	25.00	7.29
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	ton/ha/year	67	3.66	334.51	110.27	1772.43	439.08

X9 (Flooding hazard)							
X9.1 (Inundation height)	cm	67	0.00	7.58	0.00	50.00	17.10
X9.2 (Inundation period)	day	67	0.00	0.64	0.00	5.00	1.52
X10 (Land preparation)							
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	%	67	0.00	6.64	0.00	45.00	11.56
X10.2 (Surface rock)	%	67	0.00	6.58	0.00	45.00	11.59
Y (Hybrid maize yield)	ton/ha	67	2.85	4.95	4.68	8.07	1.15

n = the number of the land unit, min = minimum, max is maximum, SD = standard deviations, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

Meanwhile, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was calculated using the equation [61][62][63][64][65]:

$$\text{AVE} = \frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)} \quad (5)$$

Where λ^2_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

The loading factor of an indicator with the highest value is the strongest or most important measure in reflecting the latent variable. In this study, the loading factor value is > 0.70 for selecting best land characteristics, but values ranging from 0.50-0.60 can still be tolerated with a t-statistic > 1.96 or a small p-value of 0.05 [37], [66]. Meanwhile, the AVE value used was more than 0.50, showing that the convergent validity on the latent variable has been reached.

The discriminant validity test used the cross-loading value and the Fornell-Larker criterion to test discriminantly valid indicators in explaining or reflecting latent variables. When the correlation between the latent variables and the core measurement of each indicator is high, the latent variable can predict the indicator better and is considered valid. The discriminant validity is measured by the square root of the average variance extracted, which will be compared with the correlation value between variables. The value calculated based on the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlation between constructs [61]. The equation is expressed below [61][67][63][64][65]:

$$\text{Square Root of AVE} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)}} \quad (6)$$

where λ^2_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Furthermore, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the reliability value between indicators of the latent variables. They are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70 and has a minimum value of 0.60 [37]. The composite reliability value is calculated using the equation [68][62][69][65]:

$$\rho c = \frac{(\sum \lambda_i)^2}{(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)} \quad (7)$$

where λ_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Meanwhile, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is calculated according to the equation [70][65]:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{\sum p \neq p' ^{cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}}{p_{q + \sum p \neq p'} ^{cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}} \right) \left(\frac{p_q}{p_{q-1}} \right) \quad (8)$$

where P_q = the number of indicators or manifest variables, and q = the indicator block.

For step 2, the structural model testing (inner model) was carried out after the relationship model was built in line with the observed data and the overall suitability, namely goodness of fit. The structural equation (inner model) is as follows [62][59][60]:

$$H_j = \gamma_j \xi_1 + \gamma_j \xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j \xi_n + \varsigma_j \quad (9)$$

where η_j = endogenous variable vector (dependent), $\gamma_j \xi_1 + \gamma_j \xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j \xi_n$ = exogenous latent variable vector, and ς_j = residual vector (error).

Meanwhile, the determinant coefficient and goodness of fit (Q^2) were calculated using the equation [62][64][70]:

$$Q^2 \textit{ (Predictive relevance)} = 1 - (1 - R_1^2)(1 - R_2^2) \ldots (1 - R_p^2) \quad (10)$$

where R_1^2, R_2^2, ... R_p^2 = R square of endogenous variables in the equation model [68].

The quantity of Q^2 has a value with a range of 0 < Q2 < 1, the closer the value to 1, the better the model [37]. It is also equivalent to the coefficient of total determination in path analysis. Furthermore, the effect and significance were tested based on the estimated value of the path coefficient and the critical point value (t-statistics or p-value) at = 0.05. The relationship model between variables was measured by testing the direct correlation coefficient between variables. The results of testing the relationship between *X* and *Y* variables were indicated by the correlation coefficient as well as t-statistics, and are also presented in the path diagram.

2.5 Class assignment

To determine the class-required data for optimum results, class limits were calculated from the percentage of optimum results. After knowing the highest and lowest yields, the values were connected with the range of land characteristics values. The land suitability class and yield used referred to FAO [71], namely class S1 (very suitable) when the values reach 80-100%, S2 was moderately suitable 60-80%, S3 marginally suitable 40-60%, and N not suitable <40% of the optimum capacity.

The optimum yield was determined using the boundary line method. This method is carried out by drawing a boundary line on the graph of the relationship between yield and land characteristics to obtain optimum results. In the boundary line method according to Widiatmaka et al. [72], each land characteristic is plotted on the X-axis, while hybrid maize yields are plotted on the Y-axis. Bhat and Sujatha [42] stated that the preparation of the hybrid maize yield boundary line includes the preparation of a scatter diagram between the X and the Y variable, (2) division of the X-axis into several classes of intervals, (3) determination of the highest data points in each class interval, (4) preparation of boundary lines based on the highest data points from each class interval, (5) draw a line parallel to the X-axis according to the percentage of the result class.

Furthermore, with the Microsoft Excel application tools, the boundary between classes S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N were determined by the Data menu → What-if-Analysis → Goal Seek → Set the cell at the location containing the regression equation → to value fill with the result limit values S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N → By changing cell → the location where the value of the characteristics of the land will be sought → Ok. On location "By changing cell", the number being searched will appear, and at the location "set cell" will be equal to the limit value of the result.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Land quality and characteristics controlling hybrid maize yield

3.1.1 Validity test result

Table 3 shows the loading factor of the variables, where most indicators were more than the critical limit of 0.70 with a 95% confidence level (P > 1.960). Therefore, these variables are highly recommended and the indicators are considered convergently valid. In the soil texture indicator for the latent variable of root conditions as well as the cation exchange capacity (CEC) and base saturation (BS) indicators for nutrient retention, the loading factor was below the tolerance value of 0.50 at the 95% confidence level (P < 1.960), hence, it was not used. This implies that the indicators have not been established or explained properly because the standard value of the loading factor must be greater than or equal to 0.50 [37], [38], [66].

The average variance extracted (AVE) value of almost all variables was greater than 0.50, therefore, it was considered convergently valid [61][73]. The AVE value of the available nutrient variable was not valid due to the smaller value of the loading factor for the CEC and BS indicators of 0.50, leading to the removal of both indicators. A similar result was discovered in the root condition variable, although the AVE value was greater than 0.50, while the soil texture indicator was not used because the loading factor value is only 0.013.

Table 3: Outer loading (loading factor) and the average variance extracted from study variables.

Indicators (land characteristics)		Latent Variables (land quality)	Loading Factors	t-Stat	Status	AVE
X1.1 (Temperature)	→	X1 (Temperature)	1.000**	11.192	Valid	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall)	→	X2 (Water availability)	0.838	0.085	Valid	0.906
X2.2 (Wet month)	→		0.989	0.999	Valid	
X2.3 (Dry month)	→		0.850	0.428	Valid	
X2.4 (LGP)	→		0.993*	1.431	Valid	
X3.1 (Drainage)	→	X3 (Oxygen availability)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X4.1 (Texture)	→	X4 (Rooting condition)	0.013	0.066	Invalid	0.573
X4.2 (Coarse material)	→		0.921	1.086	Valid	
X4.3 (Effective depth)	→		-0.899	1.047	Valid	
X5.1 (pH H_2O)	→	X5 (Nutrient retention)	0.647	0.857	Valid	0.360 (invalid)
X5.2 (pH KCl)	→		0.570**	1.973	Valid	
X5.3 (Organic C)	→		0.831**	3.135	Valid	

X5.4 (CEC)	→		0.436*	1.381	Invalid	
X5.5 (Base saturation)	→		0.365	0.845	Invalid	
X6.1 (Total N)	→	X6 (Nutrient availability)	0.760**	3.226	Valid	0.585
X6.2 (P availability)	→		0.587*	1.385	Valid	
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	→		0.897**	6.907	Valid	
X7.1 (ESP)	→	X7 (Sodicity)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes)	→	X8 (Erosion hazard)	0.954**	21.438	Valid	0.932
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	→		0.941**	18.308	Valid	
X9.1 (Inundation height)	→	X9 (Flooding hazard)	0.984**	4.213	Valid	0.984
X9.2 (Inundation period)	→		0.985**	3.918	Valid	
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	→	X10 (Land preparation)	0.998**	189.133	Valid	0.995
X10.2 (Surface rock)	→		0.998**	320.273	Valid	

AVE = average variance extracted, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

The measurement of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading was used as the basis for assessing the discriminant validity of the model. The calculation results on the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 4 show that the average of the tested variables has a higher square root of AVE than the correlation value, hence, the latent variable was considered discriminantly valid. The square root value of the AVE must be greater than its correlation value with other constructs to meet the discriminant validity requirements [69][74]. The average loading factor value for the latent variable indicator was above that of others as shown in Table 5.

3.1.2 Reliability test result

The variables are considered reliable because composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient on average were more than 0.7 [61], [75] as shown in Table 6. However, certain indicators still had values less than 0.6, namely soil texture but the indicators used are reliable and adequate in forming the latent variables.

The highest composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the variables of temperature, oxygen availability, and toxicity of 1 for the variables to be very reliable. The lowest coefficient was obtained on the root condition variable, therefore, the variable was not reliable. According to Bagozzi and Yi [76] and Hair et al. [75], variables are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70.

The remaining variables are water availability, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, and land preparation variables. The coefficient of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha > 0.6, there, the variable is considered reliable. The minimum value of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.60 [61], [75], [76].

Table 4: Fornell-Larker criterion test

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1	1.000										
X2	0.940	0.952									
X3	0.059	0.149	1.000								
X4	0.082	0.030	-0.162	0.757							
X5	-0.360	-0.239	-0.103	-0.368	0.600						
X6	-0.069	0.021	0.012	-0.518	0.694	0.765					
X7	0.382	0.429	0.084	0.228	-0.030	-0.217	1.000				
X8	0.019	-0.082	-0.501	0.285	-0.317	-0.370	-0.009	0.966			
X9	-0.104	-0.033	0.237	-0.204	0.073	0.090	0.202	-0.250	0.992		
X10	0.198	0.093	-0.223	0.873	-0.303	-0.538	0.362	0.304	-0.126	0.998	
Y	0.018	0.152	0.169	-0.578	0.387	0.456	-0.016	-0.517	0.164	-0.568	1.000

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = maize hybrid yield.

Table 5: Cross-Loading of latent variables to indicators

Indicators	Latent Variables										
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1.1	1	0.8300	0.0312	0.0240	-0.2959	-0.0592	0.3270	0.0195	-0.0837	0.1680	-0.0204
X2.1	0.9783	0.8379	-0.0035	-0.0063	-0.2488	-0.0320	0.3555	-0.0017	-0.0539	0.1552	0.0155
X2.2	0.8534	0.9887	0.1938	-0.0557	-0.1257	0.0988	0.4025	-0.1435	-0.0279	-0.0178	0.1748
X2.3	0.5223	0.8497	0.1523	0.2464	-0.2505	-0.1161	0.4641	-0.1494	0.0144	0.2154	0.0592
X2.4	0.8293	0.9928	0.1721	-0.0334	-0.1524	0.0833	0.4440	-0.1713	-0.0383	-0.0031	0.1331
X3.1	0.0312	0.1785	1	-0.1541	-0.1091	-0.0375	0.0843	-0.4964	0.2530	-0.2229	0.2156
X4.1	-0.0058	-0.0006	-0.1696	0.0126	0.2127	0.1013	0.2173	0.1761	0.0055	-0.0225	0.0050
X4.2	-0.0728	-0.1082	-0.0829	0.9212	-0.2754	-0.5494	0.1845	0.2891	-0.2674	0.7910	-0.5276
X4.3	-0.1289	-0.1240	0.2071	-0.8990	0.2046	0.3209	-0.2633	-0.1587	0.0730	-0.7693	0.4666
X5.1	-0.2975	-0.4140	-0.3824	-0.3027	0.6470	0.3024	-0.1283	0.1730	-0.0342	-0.1190	0.0718
X5.2	-0.2033	-0.2939	-0.4480	-0.2791	0.5701	0.3176	-0.0273	0.1935	0.0801	-0.1829	0.1445
X5.3	-0.2440	-0.0158	0.1276	-0.1134	0.8308	0.5651	0.0728	-0.5076	0.0545	-0.1147	0.3501
X5.4	0.0537	0.1002	0.0033	0.0110	0.4360	0.4081	0.3732	-0.0504	0.1426	-0.0137	0.1395
X5.5	-0.2717	-0.2512	-0.1053	-0.4382	0.3650	0.4343	-0.6008	-0.0619	-0.1498	-0.4876	0.0825
X6.1	-0.0256	0.1778	0.0335	-0.1950	0.7028	0.7604	0.0453	-0.3878	-0.0809	-0.2162	0.2623
X6.2	-0.1201	-0.2238	-0.4256	-0.2590	0.4149	0.5865	-0.2829	-0.0389	-0.0267	-0.2860	0.1025
X6.3	-0.0437	0.0283	0.0310	-0.5607	0.5145	0.8974	-0.3341	-0.2613	0.2133	-0.6520	0.3892
X7.1	0.3270	0.4411	0.0843	0.2420	0.0290	-0.2417	1	-0.0286	0.2142	0.3621	0.0487
X8.1	-0.0226	-0.2234	-0.5132	0.2998	-0.2625	-0.3475	-0.0481	0.9537	-0.3383	0.3031	-0.5274
X8.2	0.0649	-0.0590	-0.4223	0.1646	-0.2942	-0.2950	-0.0035	0.9409	-0.0988	0.2516	-0.4682
X9.1	-0.0996	-0.0225	0.2254	-0.1949	0.1126	0.1483	0.1939	-0.2440	0.9835	-0.1342	0.2278
X9.2	-0.0658	-0.0305	0.2717	-0.1860	0.0271	0.0449	0.2271	-0.2252	0.9849	-0.0901	0.2380
X10.1	0.1848	0.0403	-0.2340	0.8480	-0.2309	-0.5544	0.3760	0.3058	-0.1188	0.9977	-0.5424
X10.2	0.1503	0.0225	-0.2107	0.8629	-0.2274	-0.5592	0.3464	0.2812	-0.1076	0.9976	-0.5365
Y.1	-0.0204	0.1413	0.2156	-0.5479	0.3425	0.3790	0.0487	-0.5271	0.2367	-0.5408	1

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = hybrid maize yield, X1.1 = temperature, X2.1 = rainfall, X2.2 = the wet month, X2.3 = the dry month, X2.3 = long growth period, X3.1 = drainage, X4.1 = texture, X4.2 = coarse material, X4.3 = effective depth, X5.1 = organic C, X5.2 = cation exchanges capacity, X5.3 = base saturation, X6.1 = total N, X6.2 = P availability, X6.3 = K exchangeable, X7.1 = the exchange sodium percentage, X8.1 = slopes, X8.2 = soil erosion, X9.1 = inundation height, X9.2 = inundation period, X10.1 = rock outcrops, X10.2 = surface rock, Y.1 = hybrid maize yield.

Table 6: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha test.

Indicators (land characteristics)	***Cronbach's Alpha***	***Composite Reliability***
X1.1 (Temperature)	1.000	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall) X2.2 (Wet month) X2.3 (Dry month) X2.4 (Long growth periods)	0.975	0.965
X3.1 (Drainage)	1.000	1.000
X4.1 (Texture) X4.2 (Coarse material) X4.3 (Effective depth)	0.002[nor]	-1.055[nor]
X5.1 (pH H_2O) X5.2 (pH KCl) X5.3 (Organic C) X5.4 (Cation exchange capacity) X5.5 (Base saturation)	0.718	0.628
X6.1 (Total N) X6.2 (P availability) X6.3 (K exchangeable)	0.805	0.681
X7.1 (Exchangeable sodium percentage)	1.000	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes) X8.2 (Soil erosion)	0.965	0.928
X9.1 (Inundation height) X9.2 (Inundation period)	0.992	0.984
X10.1 (Rock outcrops) X10.2 (Surface rock)	0.998	0.995

nor = not reliable.

3.1.3 Structural model test (inner models)

Land characteristics that have a significant correlation with hybrid maize yields show a high level of contribution to land quality in influencing hybrid maize yields as indicated in Figure 3. The figure shows a structural model of the relationship between indicator variables, namely 24 land characteristics, rectangular yellow, and latent variables, including 10 land qualities maize yield, and oval blue. It also shows a model for the relationship between latent variables such as land qualities and maize yield as well as loading figures. The factor for each indicator and path coefficient for land qualities has a direct effect on the value of maize yields.

For example, X8 (erosion hazard) significantly determines the hybrid maize yield with a path coefficient of -0.392. The negative sign indicates that the erosion hazard is negatively related to maize yield, where the higher the erosion hazard, the lower the maize yield. Furthermore, nutrient retention (X5) contributes to the diversity of hybrid maize yields with a path coefficient of 0.252. A positive sign indicates that nutrient retention is positively related to maize yield, where the higher the value of nutrient retention were followed by the maize yield.

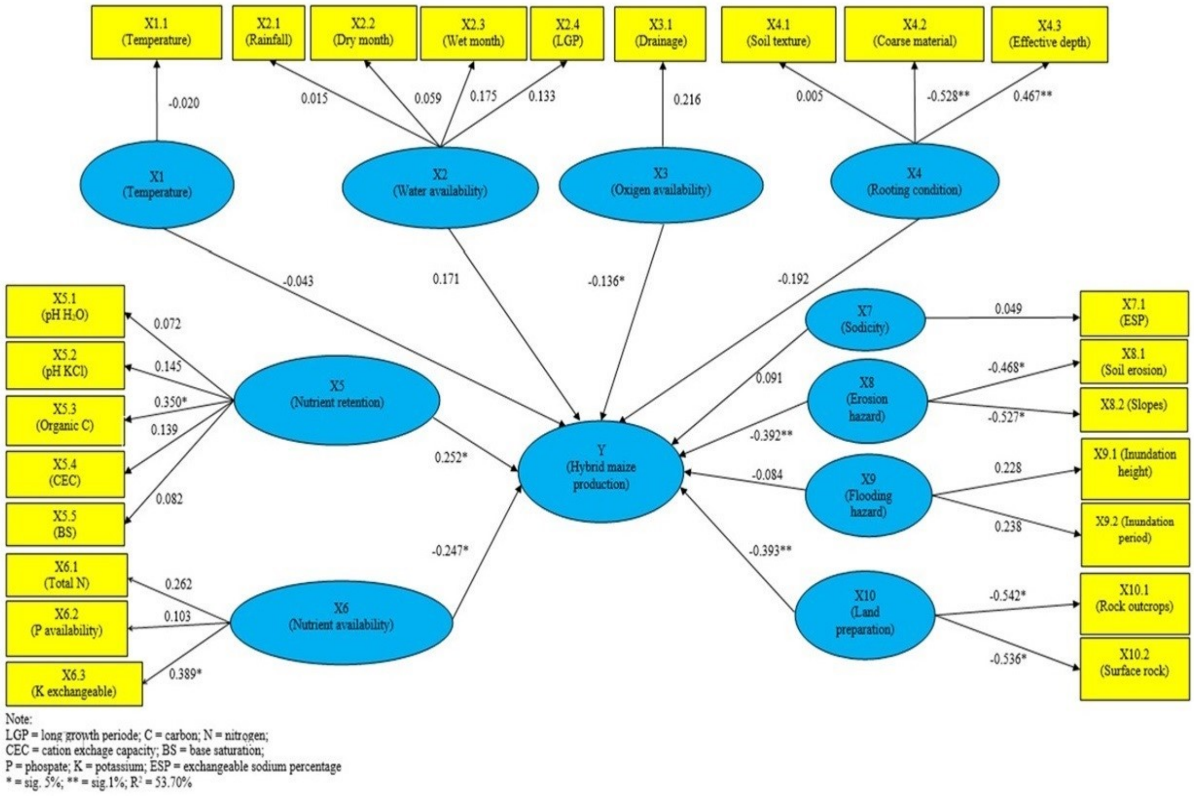


Figure 3: Path Coefficient of land quality on hybrid maize yield.

The results of this path analysis indicated that the land quality that can be a predictor of maize yield diversity were oxygen availability (X3), nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (X6), erosion hazard (X8), and land preparation (X 10). Figure 2 indicates that only 8 of the 24 indicators explain latent variance at the 5% real test level. The 8 indicators were coarse material and effective soil depth as an indicator of rooting condition, organic carbon content as nutrient retention, exchangeable K as nutrient availability, soil erosion and slope as erosion hazard, as well as rock outcrop and surface rock as an indicator of land preparation. It was also indicated that the drainage loading factor was unable to explain the diversity of oxygen availability. Therefore, oxygen availability cannot be used as a land quality because there are no indicators that can represent it. Only the land qualities of nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (x6), erosion hazard (x8), and land preparation (X10) were used next.

The indicators of land characteristics for effective depth, organic C, total N, and exchangeable K have a fairly strong positive relationship and a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, an increase in these parameters by 1%, will be followed by a rise in hybrid maize yields of 39% to 57.7%. According to [4], effective depth affects root growth and development, making plants grow and develop properly. Moreover, the levels of organic C, total N, and CEC are influenced by soil organic matter [77], while potassium plays a role in the growth and development of maize [78].

Indicators of rough soil characteristics, slopes, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrops have a strong negative relationship with a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, a 1% decrease in coarse material, slope, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrop is followed by an increase in hybrid maize yields by 39% to 57.7%.

3.2. Optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Table 7 shows the mathematical equations for each land characteristic and also the optimum hybrid maize yield for the land equation. Figure 4 shows the diagram of the relationship between land characteristics as an independent variable (X) and maize yield as an independent variable Y. Model fitting indicates that the quadratic equation is sufficient to describe the condition of data distribution.

Table 7: The optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Optimum Yield (ton/ha)	Yield Equation	R^2
Rooting condition (rc)			
Coarse material	8.06	$Y = 0.0024800x^2 – 0.2457487x + 10.9082465$	0.95
Effective depth	8.35	$Y = -0.0007242x^2 + 0.1890458x – 1.2946385$	0.96
Nutrient retention (nr)			
Organic carbon	8.35	$Y = -24.3891969x^2 + 46.8464078X – 8.8894056$	0.87
Nutrient availability (na)			
Total N	8.43	$Y = -304.4463543X^2 + 144.7590906X – 2.6328530$	1.00
K Exchangeable	5.74	$Y = -10.5596308X^2 + 17.4129832X + 2.2069179$	0.94
Erosion hazard (eh)			
Slopes	8.43	$Y = 0.0172X^2 – 0.8448X + 13.907$	0.91
Soil erosion	8.06	$y = 0.0000173X^2 – 0.0187536X + 9.0426459$	0.88
Land preparation (lp)			
Rock outcrops	7.30	$Y = 0.0046385X^2 – 0.2934756X + 8.5159674$	0.91
Surface rock	7.30	$Y = 0.0046385X^2 – 0.2934756X + 8.5159674$	0.91

The optimum of hybrid maize yield ranged from 5.74 to 8.43 ton/ha, where the highest yield was obtained from total N and slopes of 8.43 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 100% and 91%. Sutardjo et al (2012) showed that hybrid maize yields ranged from 7.43 to 9.2 ton/ha. This indicated that the optimum yield achieved is still within the range of hybrid maize yields that have been previously reported. Nitrogen is directly involved in the formation of amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymes, nucleoproteins, and alkaloids, which are needed in the plant growth process [79], [80]. An extremely high amount of N causes excessive vegetative growth, thereby making plants fall easily and increasing susceptibility to disease [81]. Meanwhile, the lack of N nutrients can limit cell division, enlargement [82], and the formation of chlorophyll, leading to stunted growth as well as yellowing of leaves [81].

The lowest optimum yield was obtained from exchangeable K, which was only 5.74 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 94%. This was presumably because the K content in the soil is very low, thereby affecting the hybrid maize yield. Potassium (K) is required by plants for physiological functions, including carbohydrate metabolism, enzyme activity, osmotic regulation, efficient

water use, N uptake, protein synthesis, and assimilate translocation [83]–[86]. It also plays a role in improving the quality of crop yields (McKenzie, 2013, Subandi, 2013).

The optimum hybrid maize yield of the remaining is relatively diverse. This includes effective depth and organic carbon, which were both 8.35 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 87%. Furthermore, coarse material and soil erosion were 8.06 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 95% and 88%, while rock outcrops and surface rock were 7.30 ton/ha with an R2 value of 91%. The absence of coarse material > 2 mm in diameter indicated that plant roots can grow freely on the surface or deeper parts of the soil [89], because the deeper the roots of the maize, the greater the maize yield [90], [91]. The addition of organic matter will increase maize yield [92]–[94] and organic C content [95] because soil organic matter is a strong positive predictor of yield [96]. Kane et al. [96] also stated that the addition of more organic matter will improve water retention, thereby reducing maize yield losses due to drought. The slope has a significant effect on soil degradation [97]. According to a previous study, erosion and maize yield are negatively correlated, hence, increased erosion will reduce maize productivity [98]. Soil erosion on flat land is slower surface runoff [99]. It was also reported that surface rocks and outcrops are the limiting factors in the suitability of maize plantations [100]. Therefore, a high percentage of rock outcrops will complicate land cultivation and plant root growth.

3.3. Land suitability criteria for hybrid maize crops

Table 8 shows the yield limit for each class from the calculation of the optimum yield, where the class range for each land characteristic is derived. Based on the optimum yield of the highest hybrid maize, there were 2 indicators, namely the total N content and the slope. The total N indicator with a very suitable class (S1) was achieved when the value in the soil was greater than 0.10%, while in the moderately suitable class (S2), it was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.07-0.09%. In the marginally appropriate class (S3), the total N indicator was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.05-0.06%, while the not suitable class (N) was achieved when the content was less than 0.05%. On the slope indicator with class S1, it was obtained when the slope class ranges from 0-7.69%%, while class S2 was achieved when the slope class ranges from 7.70-11.83%. Furthermore, in classes S3 and N, it was obtained when the slope class ranged from 11.84-18.24% and greater than 18.24%, respectively.

Based on the optimum yield of the lowest hybrid maize, only the exchangeable K was the indicator. In classes S1 and S2, it was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil was greater than 0.24 cmol(+)/kg and ranges from 0.13-0.23 cmol(+)/kg, respectively. Furthermore, class S3 was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil ranges from 0.04-0.12 cmol(+)/kg, while in class N, it was obtained when the exchangeable K content in the soil was less than 0.04 cmol(+)/kg. The remaining variables and indicators were relatively varied according to the optimum yield of hybrid maize and the range of land suitability classes obtained as presented in Table 8.

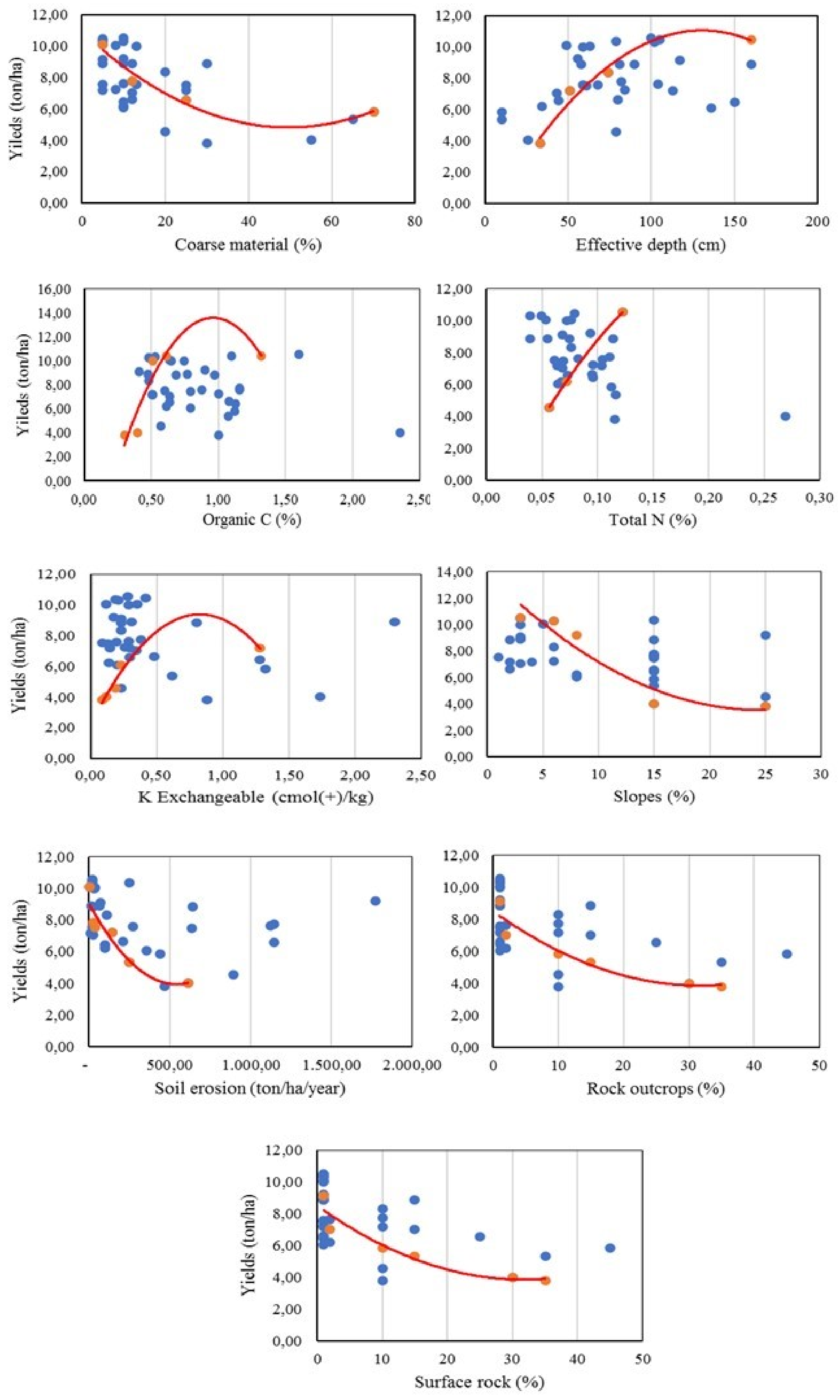


Figure 4: Scatter diagram relationship among maize yield and land characteristics

Table 8: Yield limits of hybrid maize and values obtained in each land suitability class interval by land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Yield Limits (ton/ha)			Value of Land Suitability Criterion Obtained			
	S1 - S2 (80% x Y_{optim})	**S2 – S3 (60% x Y_{optim})**	**S3 – N (40% x Y_{optim})**	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	N
Rooting condition (rc)							
Coarse material (%)	8.06	6.04	4.03	0 – 13.40	13.41 – 27.37	27.38 – 52.39	> 52.39
Effective depth (cm)	8.35	6.26	4.18	≥ 69.55	49.25 – 69.54	33.18 – 49.24	< 33.18
Nutrient retention (nr)							
Organic carbon (%)	8.35	6.26	4.18	≥ 0.50	0.41 – 0.49	0.34 – 0.40	< 0.34
Nutrient availability (na)							
Total N (%)	8.43	6.32	4.22	≥ 0.10	0.07 – 0.09	0.05 – 0.06	< 0.05
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	5.74	4.31	2.87	≥ 0.24	0.13 – 0.23	0.04 – 0.12	< 0.04
Erosion hazard (eh)							
Slopes (%)	8.43	6.32	4.22	0 – 7.69	7.70 – 11.83	11.84 – 18.24	> 18.24
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	8.06	6.04	4.03	≤ 55.21	195.29	605.56	> 605.56
Land preparation (lp)							
Rock outcrops (%)	7.30	5.47	3.85	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78
Surface rock (%)	7.30	5.47	3.85	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, and N = not suitable.

Based on the relationship between the quality and characteristics of the selected land with optimum results, the criteria for hybrid maize land suitability were obtained as shown in Table 8. These criteria described the actual state of achieving optimum, moderate, and minimum yields of hybrid maize in the field with values of 80%, 60%, and 40%, respectively. According to Sukarman et al. [101], the parameters used in the land suitability assessment must describe the actual conditions. This is due to the significant positive correlation between maize yield and land suitability class [102].

The land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are fewer and have referred to the optimum yield. Meanwhile, the land quality and characteristics in this new criterion are less because it only consists of root conditions with characteristics of coarse material and effective depth, nutrient retention with organic C, and nutrient availability with total N and K exchangeable. It also consists of erosion hazards with characteristics of slopes and soil erosion, as well as land preparation with surface rocks and rock outcrops only. The land qualities selected and maize yields consistent with the land potential are the basis for developing suitability criteria. This will reduce the land characteristics and make the evaluation process faster, cheaper, and easier with accurate results [26]. Some characteristics and land quality criteria were not made because they did not significantly affect the yield of hybrid maize. The number and distribution of the data were still limited and the diversity of values was small or not measurable in the field [72].

Compared to Wahyunto et al. [47], the new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants in Table 9 is more realistic in value with the conditions in the field and is based on the achievement of optimum yields. The current land suitability criteria are still general and not

specific to maize yields [26], although the agronomic and yield potential of each maize variety differ, based on the diversity of characteristics and land quality in the field. There are still limitations on the use of these results for the development of hybrid maize in the Boalemo Regency because the setting is only based on land characteristics and optimum yields in this regency. Therefore, further investigation to expand the scope of the research area nationally with more diverse and contrasting land characteristic values is recommended to determine the effect on hybrid maize production.

Table 9: Comparison of new and general land suitability criteria with land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	New Land Suitability Criterion of Hybrid Maize				Land Suitability Criterion of General Maize [47]			
	S1	S2	S3	N	S1	S2	S3	N
Rooting condition (rc)								
Coarse material (%)	0 – 13.40	13.41 – 27.37	27.38 – 52.39	> 52.39	< 15	15 – 35	35 – 55	>55
Effective depth (cm)	≥ 69.55	49.25 – 69.54	33.18 – 49.24	< 33.18	> 60	60 – 40	40 – 25	< 25
Nutrient retention (nr)								
Organic carbon (%)	≥ 0.50	0.41 – 0.49	0.34 – 0.40	< 0.34	> 1.20	0.8 – 1.2	< 0.8	-
Nutrient availability (na)								
Total N (%)	≥ 0.10	0.07 – 0.09	0.05 – 0.06	< 0.05	Mo	Lo	VLo	-
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	≥ 0.24	0.13 – 0.23	0.04 – 0.12	< 0.04	Mo-Hi	Lo	VLo	-
Erosion hazard (eh)								
Slopes (%)	0 – 7.69	7.70 – 11.83	11.84 – 18.24	> 18.24	< 8	8 – 15	15 – 25	> 25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	≤ 55.21	195.29	605.56	> 605.56	-	VLi	Li-Mo	He-VHe
Land preparation (lp)								
Rock outcrops (%)	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40
Surface rock (%)	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, N = not suitable, Hi = high, Mo = moderate, Lo = low, VLo = very low, He = heavy, Li = light, VLi = very light, VHe = very heavy.

Conclusions

Land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are determined by land qualities, namely root conditions, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, as well as land preparation, and land characteristics, including coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. The highest optimum yield of 8.35 ton/ha was achieved by the effective depth and organic C content for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest value of 5.47 ton/ha was attained by exchangeable K for class S1. These results showed that the combination of the PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis can be an alternative approach to establishing new land suitability criteria for crops based on optimum yields and selected land quality.

Data Availability

All data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding Statement

This study was funded by the Directorate of Research, Technology and Community Service, Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, grant number B/105/UN47.D1/PT.01.03/2022.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute Research and Community Service of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo for their financial and administrative support.

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INSTRUKSI REVISI

Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id>

3800877: Revision requested

3 pesan

Maman Turjaman <support@hindawi.com> 29 Desember 2022 pukul 14.59
Balas Ke: Karlo Lalap <karlo.lalap@hindawi.com>
Kepada: "Dr. Nurdin" <nurdin@ung.ac.id>

Dear Dr. Nurdin,

In order for your submission "Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality" to Applied and Environmental Soil Science to proceed to the review process, there needs to be a revision.

Reason & Details:

"

Minor Revision

For more information about what is required, please click the link below.

MANUSCRIPT DETAILS

Kind regards,
Maman Turjaman

Applied and Environmental Soil Science

Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id> 30 Desember 2022 pukul 19.23
Kepada: Karlo Lalap <karlo.lalap@hindawi.com>

Thank you for the corrections to our manuscript improvements... We have tried to improve our journal manuscripts according to the instructions from the reviewers. Hopefully it can be accepted for the next process

Regards
Nurdin
[Kutipan teks disembunyikan]

Karlo Lalap <karlo.lalap@hindawi.com>
Balas Ke: Karlo Lalap <karlo.lalap@hindawi.com>
Kepada: nurdin@ung.ac.id

2 Januari 2023 pukul 16.24

Dear Dr. Nurdin,

Thank you for letting me know.

You will be notified once the decision is finalized.

Best regards,

Karlo

Karlo Lalap
Editorial Assistant

Hindawi.com | Twitter | FaceBook | LinkedIn | YouTube

On Thu, 29 Dec, 2022 at 7:59 AM , Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id> wrote:

Hindawi

Dear Dr. Nurdin,

In order for your submission "Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality" to Applied and Environmental Soil Science to proceed to the review process, there needs to be a revision.
Reason & Details:

“

Minor Revision

For more information about what is required, please click the link below.

MANUSCRIPT DETAILS

Kind regards,
Maman Turjaman

Applied and Environmental Soil Science

Article Type
Research Article

Journal
Applied and Environmental Soil Science

Academic Editor Turjaman Maman Submitted on 2022-12-12 (17 days ago)

> Abstract

> Author Declaration

> Files 2

Editorial Comments

Recommendation Maman Turjaman AE 29.12.2022

Minor Revision Requested

Message for Author

Minor Revision

Response to Revision Request

Your Reply Nurdin, Nurdin 24.12.2022

Dear Academic Editor Thank you in advance for correcting our journal articles, so that the deepening of the contents of our articles is even better. In response to the corrections that have been given, we have tried to improve as much as possible with the following description: In the introductory section, a discussion on maize development in Boalemo Regency (hybrid corn production achievement compared to local maize) has been added, the choice of research locations in this regency and the urgency of determining land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemi Regency by including some of the latest references (lines 43-63 of the revision article). In the methods section: - Lines 85-87 have been added citations/references - Soil map scale has been listed (nominal scale and bar scale). - Line 88 states that there are 35 land units, but in the legend Figure 1 there are 32 SMUs. Is there a relationship between the soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. and the map in Figure 1? Why is the land mapping unit in Figure 1 not explained in paragraphs 83-91? It has been improved again, where the land mapping carried out by Ritung et al. (20016) as many as 35 land units became the initial reference for adding 32 new land units because the map scale changed from a scale of 1: 50,000 to a scale of 1: 40,000, so that the coverage of the land map was more detailed and the number of land units became 67 units. In addition, the land units have been described, both in terms of slope, relief, land use and soil types and their distribution in the study area. - Lines 95-110: It is better to explain each component/variable of soil characteristics at the beginning of the paragraph. In the next section, each variable is explained how to obtain the data. In this line, each component/variable of soil characteristic distance has been explained and continued with how to obtain the data. - Lines 97-99: Give reasons why it is necessary to update the available land characteristics and justification for determining the additional 32 points. Add sampling points (32 pedons) to the map. Explain how to collect climate data and place equipment/stations. In that line it has been corrected according to the correction. - Lines 112-113: these identifications must be shown on the map and indicate the points where the 2.5 x 2.5 m beams are placed. This line has been corrected and included in the map of the research location (sample points and tiled plots). - Lines 117, 119, 142, 143, etc.: each formula must be accompanied by a reference. This line has been fixed. - Lines 127-145, 175-184: please add a quote. This line has been fixed. - Lines 131: Table 1 should be completed with a column indicating secondary data sources for each land characteristic or method of obtaining data in the field (as a summary of updated lines 95-110). This line has been fixed. - Lines 397-401: It should be noted that the results of this study are of limited use for the development of hybrid corn in Boalemo, because the arrangement is only based on the characteristics of the land and optimum yields in Boalemo Regency (not representing the national scale). On the line has been fixed. Thus the improvement of the manuscript from us, hopefully we will get a good response for publication Regards Nurdin

File

Manuscript_Nurdin_Determination_REV_FINAL.docx 1 MB

Reviewer Reports

1 submitted

Report Reviewer 1 28.12.2022

The authors have made improvements according to the reviewer's suggestions. A few things still need to be improved for the perfection of this manuscript:
- In this research, the land suitability criteria are only based on land characteristics and hybrid maize production in the Boalemo District, so the title of the manuscript needs to be adjusted. For example: "Determination of Land Suitability Criteria for Maize Hybrid in Boalemo District Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality." The research objective is to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemo District based on the optimum yield and land quality.
- Lines 110-113: Information in these lines should be moved and combined with lines 147-151.
- Lines 117-118: The soil type classification is different from that listed in the table in Figure 1.

Determination of Maize Hybrid Land Suitability Criteria Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

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Abstract

The significant effect of land quality on maize production has not been fully considered in the existing land suitability criteria. Therefore, this study aims to determine the hybrid maize land suitability criteria based on the optimum yield and land quality. It was carried out in Boalemo Regency, Indonesia, where the land unit of 67 units were surveyed to obtain land characteristics data. A partial least square of structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 8.0 was used to select a robust land quality controlling hybrid maize yield, while the boundary line method was used to determine optimum yield and differentiating of land suitability criteria. The result showed that land qualities that define the optimum yield of hybrid maize were root conditions, nutrient availability, nutrient retentions, land preparation, and erosion hazard. The soil characteristics were effective depth, coarse material, organic C, total N, K exchangeable, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. Furthermore, the highest optimum yield of 8.35 ton/ha was achieved by the effective depth and organic C content for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest of 5.47 ton/ha was obtained by exchangeable K for class S1. This showed that the combination of PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis was a better approach to developing new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize.

1. Introduction

Food security and farmer prosperity are global concerns, this makes every country increase crop production as well as farmers' income. An important issue for countries with developing economies is ensuring food security, where the agricultural sector plays a strategic role in increasing food availability [1]. Although the global food system has placed maize (*Zea mays* L.) as the leading cereal crop [2], its productivity is being disrupted by land degradation, water scarcity, and climate change [3].

In Indonesia, the wet tropical climate with rainfall and high temperatures tends to reduce the quality of land and agricultural products [4]. This country ranked 8th among the maize-producing nations with a contribution of 2.19% and 2.42% of the world's total harvested area [5]. However, the main problem is the relatively low level of yield in several regions because the achievement of maize production has not been followed by an increase in yield per unit area [6]. This is indicated by the average yield in 2020, which was up to 5.57 ton/ha [5].

According to a previous investigation, maize production in Indonesia can reach between 10-12 ton/ha [7], [8] thereby making the country the 21st leading importer in the world.

In Indonesia, Gorontalo Province is one of the centers of maize production, where the hybrid type is the most widely grown species [9]. The maize production in the province reached 1.8 million tons in 2021 [10], with several export advantages and competitiveness [11]. Furthermore, the planting of hybrid, composite, and local maize types has reached more than 98.90%, 0.68%, and 0.41% only, respectively [12] including Boalemo Regency.

Boalemo Regency ranks third as a maize-producing center in Gorontalo Province with a contribution of 18.90% [13]. The maize plant dominates the use of agricultural land in this district by 37.43% [14], therefore, the commodity has competitive and comparative advantages with a PCR value of 0.80 and 0.91 DRC. This is because maize plant is supported by land area, climatic conditions, production facilities, as well as market guarantees, and the basic price of buying corn from the government [15]. In 2021, the average hybrid and local maize yields in the regency reached 5.20 tons/ha [16] and 2.34-3.30 tons/ha, respectively [17]. This indicated that the productivity of hybrid maize is still higher than local maize [18] but with lower achievement compared to the national maize production of 5.57 tons/ha [5] and has not yet reached the target of 5.60 tons/ha in 2021 [19]. The production of hybrid maize in Gorontalo can reach 9.78-13.11 tons/ha [20] because it is often cultivated on land that does not meet the required qualities [6]. Therefore, there is a need to determine land quality-based hybrid maize land suitability criteria for site-specific land use planning in Boalemo District.

Maize is usually grown on land with low yield potential [21] and soil fertility, thereby causing low productivity [22]. Moreover, land productivity is determined by quality and characteristics [23], [24], while land quality has a close relationship with maize yields [25]. The land quality affecting the optimum yield of maize needs to be determined [26] and increased by using hybrid varieties that have high yields. This makes it necessary to evaluate the suitability of the hybrid maize in a region to ensure optimal production. The land suitability criteria for hybrid maize are not yet available because the current criterion is the general suitability of maize plants without distinguishing between hybrids and inbreds. Therefore, there is a need to make land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants.

A previous study has shown that land quality has a significant effect on suitability for certain uses [27]. Meanwhile, land suitability is also important due to the continuous increase in the demand for agricultural land [28]. The land suitability criteria for existing maize fields are still general [29] and there are no specific criteria for hybrid maize varieties. The class assessment outcomes obtained using the existing criteria are relatively many and are not in line with the actual field results [30]. The current criteria consist of 3 components, namely, land quality, characteristics, and ranges of land characteristic values to determine its suitability. Therefore, the problem in developing criteria is choosing land quality, characteristics, and determining the range of land characteristic values associated with suitability classes, namely suitable, somewhat suitable, marginally suitable, and not suitable.

The selection of land quality and characteristics can be carried out through the partial least square of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM), while the range limits is being determined by the boundary line method. Land qualities and characteristics in the current criteria can be used temporarily since structural equation model analysis with partial least squares produces better indicators and models than other multivariate analyses [31]–[35]. This is because the variant-based PLS-SEM has a higher level of flexibility and the size of the sample used is relatively small ranging from 30 to 100 [36]–[39]. The use of PLS-SEM to determine land characteristics and qualities that control maize crop yields is still relatively rare, except for Syaf [40] on older cocoa plants, maize composite [41], and on local varieties [6]. The boundary line method can help determine nutrient adequacy concentrations and the optimum yield range of a plant that affects nutrients, as well as other land characteristics [42], [43]. Currently, the land suitability criteria for maize plants have not been determined using the boundary line method, except by Ridayanti et al. [44], although the investigation was not specific to hybrid maize.

After obtaining the quality and characteristics of land affecting maize yields with PLS-SEM, the boundary line method can be used to determine the optimum yield as well as land suitability criteria simultaneously. This is carried out by drawing the intersection of the boundary line at the yield and projecting with the land characteristics [29]. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize based on the optimum yield and land quality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study area

The study area extends from 0°28'5.6" - 0°57'30.02" N to 122^{o0}8'34.25" - 122°43'10.41"E (Figure 1) on a scale of 1 : 65,000, which is located in the agricultural land of Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. The maximum air temperature was 28.19°C and the minimum was 26.79°C with an average of 28.01°C. Meanwhile, the maximum rainfall was 1,849 mm and the minimum was 1,246 mm with an average of 1,478 mm [45]. The wet and dry seasons last for 3 months and 5 months respectively. The soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. [46] become the initial reference for determining 35 soil units, where each unit has information on land characteristics, namely effective depth, drainage, texture, pH, cation exchange capacity, base saturation, landform, parent material, relief, and land unit area. This unit was detailed by adding 32 soil units to be surveyed and observed, making up to 67 soil units in the area as shown in the legend Figure 1. The detailing was carried out because the soil unit was previously presented at a scale of 1: 50,000, without including several key areas. Meanwhile, the new soil unit is 1: 40,000 in scale and there has been a change in the agricultural land use existing. This indicated that the slope class of 8 – 15% or hilly is more dominant in the study area with a percentage of 29.77% and slopes > 40% or mountainous which is only 2.67%. Furthermore, the dry land is dominant with a value of 59.86% and a little shrub which was only 9.21%, while the dominant Inceptisol soil type was 36.18% and very little Ultisol soil was 8.88%.

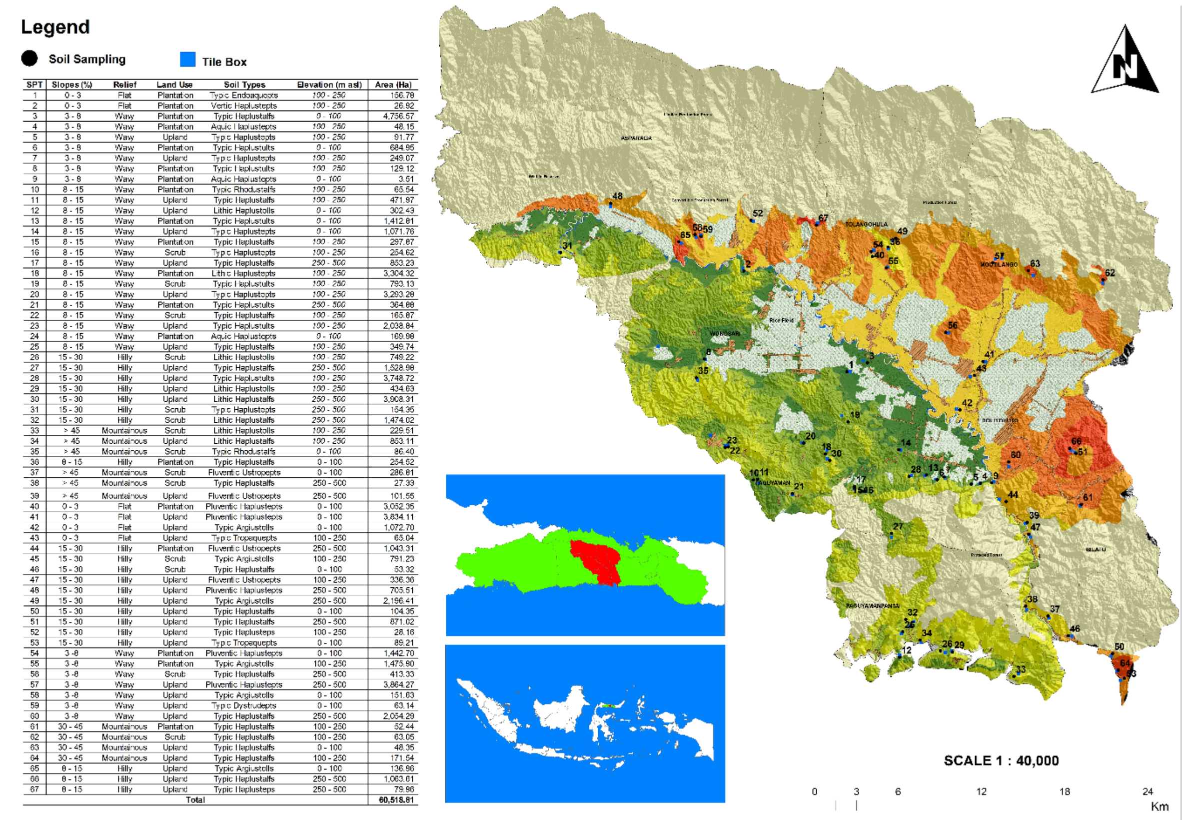

Figure 1: Study area.

2.2 Dataset collection for land quality and land characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in this study refer to Wahyunto et al. [47], consisting of 10 land qualities and 24 characteristics. The set of temperature land quality is determined from the characteristics of the annual average air temperature, while the land quality water availability is determined from the characteristics of annual rainfall, wet months, dry months, and the length of the growth period (LGP). Land quality oxygen availability is determined from soil drainage characteristics, rooting conditions are determined from the soil texture, coarse material, and soil effective depth, nutrient retention is identified from the pH value, C-Organic, cation exchange capacity (CEC), and base saturation. Furthermore, the available nutrient is determined from the characteristics of total N, P, and exchangeable K, the sodicity is obtained from the exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP), while erosion hazard is determined from slopes and soil erosion. The quality of the flood-hazard land is determined by identifying the height and the duration of the inundation, while preparation is carried out from the characteristics of outcrops and surface rocks. The selection of this set of land qualities and characteristics is based on the availability of data and their impact on maize production [26].

Data on average annual air temperature and rainfall for 10 years (2010-2021) were collected from different climate stations, namely the Bandungrejo with 0°41' N - 122°38' E, the elevation 40 m asl, while Harapan has 0°42' N - 122°29' E and an elevation of 37 m asl. It also includes Lakeya Rain Post with 0°42.82' N - 122°32.07' E, 32 m asl, Mohiyolo has 0°46.41' N - 122°26.41' E and an elevation of 39 m asl, Saritani 0°46.45' N - 122°20.40' E, with 26 m asl, Tangkobu 0°37.25' N - 122°36.36' E, 25 m asl, Bubaa 0°31.36' N - 122°33.39' E, 16 m asl, Wonggahu 0°38' N - 122°33' E, 35 m asl, and Sambati Rain Post with 0°31.184' N - 122°27.074'

E and an elevation of 9 m asl managed by BWS II Sulawesi. Furthermore, these data determined wet months (> 200 mm) and dry months (<100 mm), which refers to the Oldeman and Darmiyati criteria [48]. The land water balance was determined using the Thornwhite and LGP methods based on the number of surplus and deficit rainy days [49].

Soil characteristics such as drainage, coarse material, effective soil depth, slope, inundation height and duration, rock outcrops and surface rocks were determined by conducting soil profile descriptions and direct observation on 67 pedons referring to the description guidelines in the field [50]. Meanwhile, soil erosion was determined by the USLE method [51]. Other soil characteristics were further analyzed in the soil laboratory using samples from each pedon.

Soil samples were dried for 3 days and sieved through a 2 mesh sieve. The method of soil physics laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Kurnia et al. [52]. Based on this procedure, soil texture was analyzed in terms of sand, clay, and silt fractions using the pipette method, while soil moisture storage was evaluated using the gravimetric method that can be applied in water balance analysis. The method of soil chemistry laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Eviyati and Sulaeman [53]. The soil pH was determined with a pH meter in a 1:2.5 soil and water solution, while the organic C content was assessed using the Walkley and Black method. The total N was assessed using the Kjeldahl method, while the available P content was measured using the Olsen method. The basic cations and CEC was extracted with 1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 (ammonium acetate) on a dry sample of 105°C. The base saturation was determined by calculating the percentage of basic cations number with CEC, ESP was evaluated using the percentage ratio of sodium to CEC [54] [55]. Subsequently, the data from the chemical analysis were averaged to a depth of 0-30 cm using the weighted averaging technique. The framework of this study is presented in Figure 2.

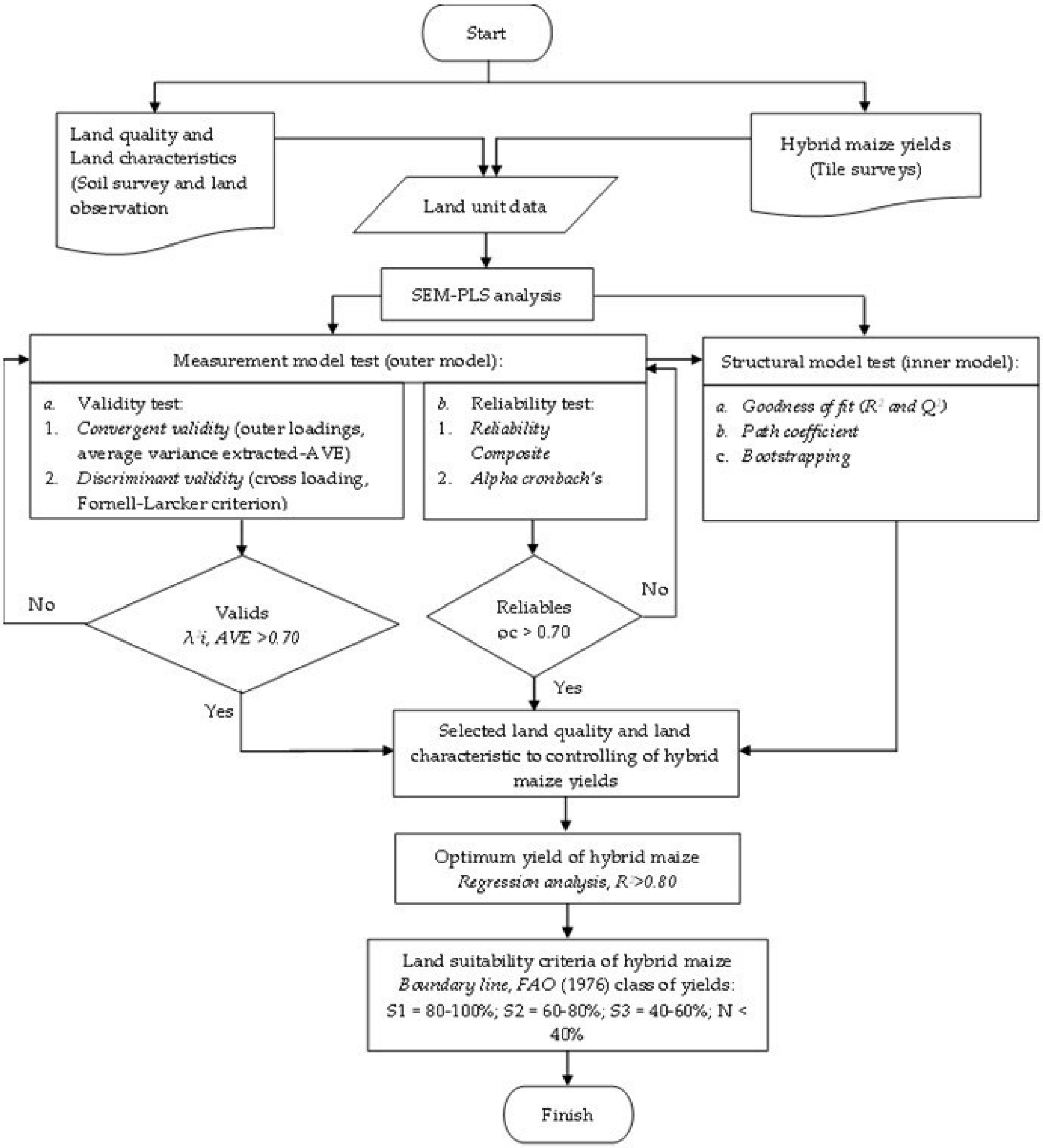

Figure 2: Research framework.

2.3 Dataset collection for hybrid maize yield

The areas currently planted with hybrid maize were identified and blocks with a size of 2.5 m x 2.5 m were made in each map unit (Figure 1). Maize plants in each block passed through standardized management according to farmers' technology. After harvesting, weighting was carried out to obtain hybrid maize yield data from the results of tiles on each land unit. Subsequently, the results were calculated using the formula [56], as expressed below:

$$Y\ (t) = H\ x\ \frac{A}{6.25\ m^2} \quad (1)$$

Meanwhile, productivity is calculated using the formula [56] below:

$$Y\ (t\ ha^{-1}) = \frac{H\ x\ 1.64\ x\ 56.73}{100} \quad (2)$$

where Y = hybrid maize yield, H = tile yield (kg), A = maize area 1 per hectare (ha), 1.64 and 56.73 = constant.

2.4 Selection of land quality and land characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in the suitability criteria were used as presented in Tables 1 and 2, which show brief statistics. Generally, most data are relatively homogenous, except for coarse material, available P, slopes, soil erosion, height and inundation, as well as rock outcrops and surface rocks. The selection used the partial least squares of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM) refers to Hair et al. [38] with tools SmartPLS, where land quality and characteristics were selected as the latent and manifest variables, respectively. The analysis in PLS-SEM has 2 main steps, namely (1) the measurement model (outer model) and (2) the structural model test (inner model).

Table 1: Latent variables and indicators used in this study

Latent variables		**Indicators**		**Data Sources**
Notation	**Land quality**	**Notation**	**Land characteristics**	
X1	Temperature (t)	X1.1	Temperature	[45]
X2	Water availability (wa)	X2.1	Rainfall	[45]
		X2.2	Wet month	Rainfall > 200 mm
		X2.3	Dry month	Rainfall < 100 mm
		X2.4	Long growth period (LGP)	Water balance (Thornwhite method), soil moisture storage (Gravimetric method), water surplus and defisit days
X3	Oxygen availability (oa)	X3.1	Drainage	Soil survey and land observation
X4	Rooting condition (rc)	X4.1	Texture	Pipet method
		X4.1.1	Sand fraction	
		X4.1.2	Silt fraction	
		X4.1.3	Clay	
		X4.2	Coarse material	Soil survey and land observation
		X4.3	Effective depth	
X5	Nutrient retention (nr)	X5.1	pH H_2O	pH meter (1 : 2.5)
		X5.2	pH KCl	
		X5.3	Organic C	Walkley and Black method
		X5.4	Cation exchange capacity (CEC)	1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 Extracted
		X5.5	Base saturation	Calculation
X6	Nutrient availability (na)	X6.1	Total N	Kjeldahl method
		X6.2	P availability	Olsen method
		X6.3	K exchangeable	1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 Extracted
X7	Sodicity (xn)	X7.1	Exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP)	Calculation
X8	Erosion hazard (eh)	X8.1	Slopes	Soil survey and land observation
		X8.2	Soil erosion	
X9	Flooding hazard (fh)	X9.1	Inundation height	Soil survey and land observation
		X9.2	Inundation period	
X10	Land preparation (lp)	X10.1	Rock outcrops	Soil survey and land observation
		X10.2	Surface rock	
Y	Hybrid maize yield	Y.1	Hybrid maize yield	Tile box methods

Step 1 consists of validity and reliability tests, wherein the validity test is conducted with convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity is in form of outer loadings (loading factor) and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity is in form of cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Meanwhile, the reliability test uses composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha.

Convergent validity was observed from the magnitude of the outer loading and the AVE value of each indicator on the latent variable. The validity was calculated according to the equation [57][58][59][60]:

$$x_i = \lambda x_i \xi_1 + \delta_i \quad (3)$$

$$y_i = \lambda y_i \eta_1 + \varepsilon_i \quad (4)$$

where x and y = exogenous (ξ) and endogenous (η) latent variable indicator, λx and λy = loading factors, δ and ε = residual/measurement errors or noise.

Table 2: Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics.

Latent variables / Indicators	Unit	n	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
X1 (Temperature)							
X1.1 (Temperature)	ºC	67	26.79	27.80	28.01	28.19	0.63
X2 (Water availability)							
X2.1 (Rainfall)	mm	67	1,246.00	1,533.42	1,478.00	1,849.00	232.69
X2.2 (Wet month)	month	67	0.00	1.03	1.00	3.00	0.85
X2.3 (Dry month)	month	67	2.00	3.39	4.00	5.00	1.06
X2.4 (LGP)	day	67	211.00	246.00	214.00	304.00	44.54
X3 (Oxygen availability)							
X3.1 (Drainage)	class	67	0.00	3.76	4.00	6.00	1.82
X4 (Rooting conditions)							
X4.1 (texture)	class	67	1.00	2.21	2.00	5.00	0.99
X4.1.1 (Sand fraction)	%	67	5.00	41.58	43.00	81.33	18.51
X4.1.2 (Silt fraction)	%	67	7.33	27.31	24.50	51.50	11.54
X4.1.3 (Clay)	%	67	11.33	31.90	30.00	56.33	12.72
X4.2 (Coarse material)	%	67	5.00	17.27	10.00	70.00	16.58
X4.3 (Effective depth)	cm	67	10.00	74.55	74.00	160.00	36.40
X5 (Nutrient retention)							
X5.1 (pH H_2O)		67	5.00	5.92	5.90	7.15	0.52
X5.2 (pH KCl)		67	4.35	5.24	5.17	6.60	0.56
X5.3 (Organic C)	%	67	0.41	0.85	0.77	2.35	0.39
X5.4 (CEC)	cmol(+)/kg	67	8.94	24.89	22.43	59.57	11.41
X5.5 (Base saturation)	%	67	45.03	56.22	52.85	81.89	9.76
X6 (Nutrient availability)							
X6.1 (Total N)	%	67	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.27	0.04
X6.2 (P availability)	mg/kg	67	0.73	8.62	3.77	58.67	12.61
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	cmol(+)/kg	67	0.07	0.39	0.24	1.92	0.42
X7 (Sodicity)							
X7.1 (ESP)	%	67	0.76	7.06	6.20	24.17	5.62
X8 (Erosion hazard)							
X8.1 (Slopes)	%	67	1.00	9.58	6.00	25.00	7.29
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	ton/ha/year	67	3.66	334.51	110.27	1772.43	439.08

X9 (Flooding hazard)							
X9.1 (Inundation height)	cm	67	0.00	7.58	0.00	50.00	17.10
X9.2 (Inundation period)	day	67	0.00	0.64	0.00	5.00	1.52
X10 (Land preparation)							
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	%	67	0.00	6.64	0.00	45.00	11.56
X10.2 (Surface rock)	%	67	0.00	6.58	0.00	45.00	11.59
Y (Hybrid maize yield)	ton/ha	67	2.85	4.95	4.68	8.07	1.15

n = the number of the land unit, min = minimum, max is maximum, SD = standard deviations, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

Meanwhile, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was calculated using the equation [61][62][63][64][65]:

$$\text{AVE} = \frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i\, var(\varepsilon_i)} \quad (5)$$

Where λ^2_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

The loading factor of an indicator with the highest value is the strongest or most important measure in reflecting the latent variable. In this study, the loading factor value is > 0.70 for selecting best land characteristics, but values ranging from 0.50-0.60 can still be tolerated with a t-statistic > 1.96 or a small p-value of 0.05 [37], [66]. Meanwhile, the AVE value used was more than 0.50, showing that the convergent validity on the latent variable has been reached.

The discriminant validity test used the cross-loading value and the Fornell-Larker criterion to test discriminantly valid indicators in explaining or reflecting latent variables. When the correlation between the latent variables and the core measurement of each indicator is high, the latent variable can predict the indicator better and is considered valid. The discriminant validity is measured by the square root of the average variance extracted, which will be compared with the correlation value between variables. The value calculated based on the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlation between constructs [61]. The equation is expressed below [61][67][63][64][65]:

$$\text{Square Root of AVE} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i\, var(\varepsilon_i)}} \quad (6)$$

where λ^2_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Furthermore, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the reliability value between indicators of the latent variables. They are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70 and has a minimum value of 0.60 [37]. The composite reliability value is calculated using the equation [68][62][69][65]:

$$\rho c = \frac{(\sum \lambda_i)^2}{(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + \sum i\, var(\varepsilon_i)} \quad (7)$$

where λ_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Meanwhile, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is calculated according to the equation [70][65]:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{\sum p \neq p'^{\,cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}}{p_{q+\sum p \neq p'}^{\,cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}} \right) \left(\frac{p_q}{p_{q-1}} \right) \quad (8)$$

where P_q = the number of indicators or manifest variables, and q = the indicator block.

For step 2, the structural model testing (inner model) was carried out after the relationship model was built in line with the observed data and the overall suitability, namely goodness of fit. The structural equation (inner model) is as follows [62][59][60]:

$$H_j = \gamma_j\xi_1 + \gamma_j\xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j\xi_n + \varsigma_j \quad (9)$$

where η_j = endogenous variable vector (dependent), $\gamma_j\xi_1 + \gamma_j\xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j\xi_n$ = exogenous latent variable vector, and ς_j = residual vector (error).

Meanwhile, the determinant coefficient and goodness of fit (Q^2) were calculated using the equation [62][64][70]:

$$Q^2 \textit{ (Predictive relevance)} = 1 - (1 - R_1^2)\,(1 - R_2^2) \ldots (1 - R_p^2) \quad (10)$$

where R_1^2, R_2^2, ... R_p^2 = R square of endogenous variables in the equation model [68].

The quantity of Q^2 has a value with a range of 0 < Q2 < 1, the closer the value to 1, the better the model [37]. It is also equivalent to the coefficient of total determination in path analysis. Furthermore, the effect and significance were tested based on the estimated value of the path coefficient and the critical point value (t-statistics or p-value) at = 0.05. The relationship model between variables was measured by testing the direct correlation coefficient between variables. The results of testing the relationship between *X* and *Y* variables were indicated by the correlation coefficient as well as t-statistics, and are also presented in the path diagram.

2.5 Class assignment

To determine the class-required data for optimum results, class limits were calculated from the percentage of optimum results. After knowing the highest and lowest yields, the values were connected with the range of land characteristics values. The land suitability class and yield used referred to FAO [71], namely class S1 (very suitable) when the values reach 80-100%, S2 was moderately suitable 60-80%, S3 marginally suitable 40-60%, and N not suitable <40% of the optimum capacity.

The optimum yield was determined using the boundary line method. This method is carried out by drawing a boundary line on the graph of the relationship between yield and land characteristics to obtain optimum results. In the boundary line method according to Widiatmaka et al. [72], each land characteristic is plotted on the X-axis, while hybrid maize yields are plotted on the Y-axis. Bhat and Sujatha [42] stated that the preparation of the hybrid maize yield boundary line includes the preparation of a scatter diagram between the X and the Y variable, (2) division of the X-axis into several classes of intervals, (3) determination of the highest data points in each class interval, (4) preparation of boundary lines based on the highest data points from each class interval, (5) draw a line parallel to the X-axis according to the percentage of the result class.

Furthermore, with the Microsoft Excel application tools, the boundary between classes S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N were determined by the Data menu → What-if-Analysis → Goal Seek → Set the cell at the location containing the regression equation → to value fill with the result limit values S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N → By changing cell → the location where the value of the characteristics of the land will be sought → Ok. On location "By changing cell", the number being searched will appear, and at the location "set cell" will be equal to the limit value of the result.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Land quality and characteristics controlling hybrid maize yield

3.1.1 Validity test result

Table 3 shows the loading factor of the variables, where most indicators were more than the critical limit of 0.70 with a 95% confidence level (P > 1.960). Therefore, these variables are highly recommended and the indicators are considered convergently valid. In the soil texture indicator for the latent variable of root conditions as well as the cation exchange capacity (CEC) and base saturation (BS) indicators for nutrient retention, the loading factor was below the tolerance value of 0.50 at the 95% confidence level (P < 1.960), hence, it was not used. This implies that the indicators have not been established or explained properly because the standard value of the loading factor must be greater than or equal to 0.50 [37], [38], [66].

The average variance extracted (AVE) value of almost all variables was greater than 0.50, therefore, it was considered convergently valid [61][73]. The AVE value of the available nutrient variable was not valid due to the smaller value of the loading factor for the CEC and BS indicators of 0.50, leading to the removal of both indicators. A similar result was discovered in the root condition variable, although the AVE value was greater than 0.50, while the soil texture indicator was not used because the loading factor value is only 0.013.

Table 3: Outer loading (loading factor) and the average variance extracted from study variables.

Indicators (land characteristics)		Latent Variables (land quality)	Loading Factors	t-Stat	Status	AVE
X1.1 (Temperature)	→	X1 (Temperature)	1.000**	11.192	Valid	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall)	→	X2 (Water availability)	0.838	0.085	Valid	0.906
X2.2 (Wet month)	→		0.989	0.999	Valid	
X2.3 (Dry month)	→		0.850	0.428	Valid	
X2.4 (LGP)	→		0.993*	1.431	Valid	
X3.1 (Drainage)	→	X3 (Oxygen availability)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X4.1 (Texture)	→	X4 (Rooting condition)	0.013	0.066	Invalid	0.573
X4.2 (Coarse material)	→		0.921	1.086	Valid	
X4.3 (Effective depth)	→		-0.899	1.047	Valid	
X5.1 (pH H_2O)	→	X5 (Nutrient retention)	0.647	0.857	Valid	0.360 (invalid)
X5.2 (pH KCl)	→		0.570**	1.973	Valid	
X5.3 (Organic C)	→		0.831**	3.135	Valid	

X5.4 (CEC)	→		0.436*	1.381	Invalid	
X5.5 (Base saturation)	→		0.365	0.845	Invalid	
X6.1 (Total N)	→	X6 (Nutrient availability)	0.760**	3.226	Valid	0.585
X6.2 (P availability)	→		0.587*	1.385	Valid	
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	→		0.897**	6.907	Valid	
X7.1 (ESP)	→	X7 (Sodicity)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes)	→	X8 (Erosion hazard)	0.954**	21.438	Valid	0.932
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	→		0.941**	18.308	Valid	
X9.1 (Inundation height)	→	X9 (Flooding hazard)	0.984**	4.213	Valid	0.984
X9.2 (Inundation period)	→		0.985**	3.918	Valid	
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	→	X10 (Land preparation)	0.998**	189.133	Valid	0.995
X10.2 (Surface rock)	→		0.998**	320.273	Valid	

AVE = average variance extracted, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

The measurement of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading was used as the basis for assessing the discriminant validity of the model. The calculation results on the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 4 show that the average of the tested variables has a higher square root of AVE than the correlation value, hence, the latent variable was considered discriminantly valid. The square root value of the AVE must be greater than its correlation value with other constructs to meet the discriminant validity requirements [69][74]. The average loading factor value for the latent variable indicator was above that of others as shown in Table 5.

3.1.2 Reliability test result

The variables are considered reliable because composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient on average were more than 0.7 [61], [75] as shown in Table 6. However, certain indicators still had values less than 0.6, namely soil texture but the indicators used are reliable and adequate in forming the latent variables.

The highest composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the variables of temperature, oxygen availability, and toxicity of 1 for the variables to be very reliable. The lowest coefficient was obtained on the root condition variable, therefore, the variable was not reliable. According to Bagozzi and Yi [76] and Hair et al. [75], variables are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70.

The remaining variables are water availability, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, and land preparation variables. The coefficient of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha > 0.6, there, the variable is considered reliable. The minimum value of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.60 [61], [75], [76].

Table 4: Fornell-Larker criterion test

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1	1.000										
X2	0.940	0.952									
X3	0.059	0.149	1.000								
X4	0.082	0.030	-0.162	0.757							
X5	-0.360	-0.239	-0.103	-0.368	0.600						
X6	-0.069	0.021	0.012	-0.518	0.694	0.765					
X7	0.382	0.429	0.084	0.228	-0.030	-0.217	1.000				
X8	0.019	-0.082	-0.501	0.285	-0.317	-0.370	-0.009	0.966			
X9	-0.104	-0.033	0.237	-0.204	0.073	0.090	0.202	-0.250	0.992		
X10	0.198	0.093	-0.223	0.873	-0.303	-0.538	0.362	0.304	-0.126	0.998	
Y	0.018	0.152	0.169	-0.578	0.387	0.456	-0.016	-0.517	0.164	-0.568	1.000

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = maize hybrid yield.

Table 5: Cross-Loading of latent variables to indicators

Indicators	Latent Variables										
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1.1	1	0.8300	0.0312	0.0240	-0.2959	-0.0592	0.3270	0.0195	-0.0837	0.1680	-0.0204
X2.1	0.9783	0.8379	-0.0035	-0.0063	-0.2488	-0.0320	0.3555	-0.0017	-0.0539	0.1552	0.0155
X2.2	0.8534	0.9887	0.1938	-0.0557	-0.1257	0.0988	0.4025	-0.1435	-0.0279	-0.0178	0.1748
X2.3	0.5223	0.8497	0.1523	0.2464	-0.2505	-0.1161	0.4641	-0.1494	0.0144	0.2154	0.0592
X2.4	0.8293	0.9928	0.1721	-0.0334	-0.1524	0.0833	0.4440	-0.1713	-0.0383	-0.0031	0.1331
X3.1	0.0312	0.1785	1	-0.1541	-0.1091	-0.0375	0.0843	-0.4964	0.2530	-0.2229	0.2156
X4.1	-0.0058	-0.0006	-0.1696	0.0126	0.2127	0.1013	0.2173	0.1761	0.0055	-0.0225	0.0050
X4.2	-0.0728	-0.1082	-0.0829	0.9212	-0.2754	-0.5494	0.1845	0.2891	-0.2674	0.7910	-0.5276
X4.3	-0.1289	-0.1240	0.2071	-0.8990	0.2046	0.3209	-0.2633	-0.1587	0.0730	-0.7693	0.4666
X5.1	-0.2975	-0.4140	-0.3824	-0.3027	0.6470	0.3024	-0.1283	0.1730	-0.0342	-0.1190	0.0718
X5.2	-0.2033	-0.2939	-0.4480	-0.2791	0.5701	0.3176	-0.0273	0.1935	0.0801	-0.1829	0.1445
X5.3	-0.2440	-0.0158	0.1276	-0.1134	0.8308	0.5651	0.0728	-0.5076	0.0545	-0.1147	0.3501
X5.4	0.0537	0.1002	0.0033	0.0110	0.4360	0.4081	0.3732	-0.0504	0.1426	-0.0137	0.1395
X5.5	-0.2717	-0.2512	-0.1053	-0.4382	0.3650	0.4343	-0.6008	-0.0619	-0.1498	-0.4876	0.0825
X6.1	-0.0256	0.1778	0.0335	-0.1950	0.7028	0.7604	0.0453	-0.3878	-0.0809	-0.2162	0.2623
X6.2	-0.1201	-0.2238	-0.4256	-0.2590	0.4149	0.5865	-0.2829	-0.0389	-0.0267	-0.2860	0.1025
X6.3	-0.0437	0.0283	0.0310	-0.5607	0.5145	0.8974	-0.3341	-0.2613	0.2133	-0.6520	0.3892
X7.1	0.3270	0.4411	0.0843	0.2420	0.0290	-0.2417	1	-0.0286	0.2142	0.3621	0.0487
X8.1	-0.0226	-0.2234	-0.5132	0.2998	-0.2625	-0.3475	-0.0481	0.9537	-0.3383	0.3031	-0.5274
X8.2	0.0649	-0.0590	-0.4223	0.1646	-0.2942	-0.2950	-0.0035	0.9409	-0.0988	0.2516	-0.4682
X9.1	-0.0996	-0.0225	0.2254	-0.1949	0.1126	0.1483	0.1939	-0.2440	0.9835	-0.1342	0.2278
X9.2	-0.0658	-0.0305	0.2717	-0.1860	0.0271	0.0449	0.2271	-0.2252	0.9849	-0.0901	0.2380
X10.1	0.1848	0.0403	-0.2340	0.8480	-0.2309	-0.5544	0.3760	0.3058	-0.1188	0.9977	-0.5424
X10.2	0.1503	0.0225	-0.2107	0.8629	-0.2274	-0.5592	0.3464	0.2812	-0.1076	0.9976	-0.5365
Y.1	-0.0204	0.1413	0.2156	-0.5479	0.3425	0.3790	0.0487	-0.5271	0.2367	-0.5408	1

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = hybrid maize yield, X1.1 = temperature, X2.1 = rainfall, X2.2 = the wet month, X2.3 = the dry month, X2.3 = long growth period, X3.1 = drainage, X4.1 = texture, X4.2 = coarse material, X4.3 = effective depth, X5.1 = organic C, X5.2 = cation exchanges capacity, X5.3 = base saturation, X6.1 = total N, X6.2 = P availability, X6.3 = K exchangeable, X7.1 = the exchange sodium percentage, X8.1 = slopes, X8.2 = soil erosion, X9.1 = inundation height, X9.2 = inundation period, X10.1 = rock outcrops, X10.2 = surface rock, Y.1 = hybrid maize yield.

Table 6: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha test.

Indicators (land characteristics)	***Cronbach's Alpha***	***Composite Reliability***
X1.1 (Temperature)	1.000	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall) X2.2 (Wet month) X2.3 (Dry month) X2.4 (Long growth periods)	0.975	0.965
X3.1 (Drainage)	1.000	1.000
X4.1 (Texture) X4.2 (Coarse material) X4.3 (Effective depth)	0.002^{nor}	-1.055^{nor}
X5.1 (pH H_2O) X5.2 (pH KCl) X5.3 (Organic C) X5.4 (Cation exchange capacity) X5.5 (Base saturation)	0.718	0.628
X6.1 (Total N) X6.2 (P availability) X6.3 (K exchangeable)	0.805	0.681
X7.1 (Exchangeable sodium percentage)	1.000	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes) X8.2 (Soil erosion)	0.965	0.928
X9.1 (Inundation height) X9.2 (Inundation period)	0.992	0.984
X10.1 (Rock outcrops) X10.2 (Surface rock)	0.998	0.995

nor = not reliable.

3.1.3 Structural model test (inner models)

Land characteristics that have a significant correlation with hybrid maize yields show a high level of contribution to land quality in influencing hybrid maize yields as indicated in Figure 3. The figure shows a structural model of the relationship between indicator variables, namely 24 land characteristics, rectangular yellow, and latent variables, including 10 land qualities maize yield, and oval blue. It also shows a model for the relationship between latent variables such as land qualities and maize yield as well as loading figures. The factor for each indicator and path coefficient for land qualities has a direct effect on the value of maize yields.

For example, X8 (erosion hazard) significantly determines the hybrid maize yield with a path coefficient of -0.392. The negative sign indicates that the erosion hazard is negatively related to maize yield, where the higher the erosion hazard, the lower the maize yield. Furthermore, nutrient retention (X5) contributes to the diversity of hybrid maize yields with a path coefficient of 0.252. A positive sign indicates that nutrient retention is positively related to maize yield, where the higher the value of nutrient retention were followed by the maize yield.

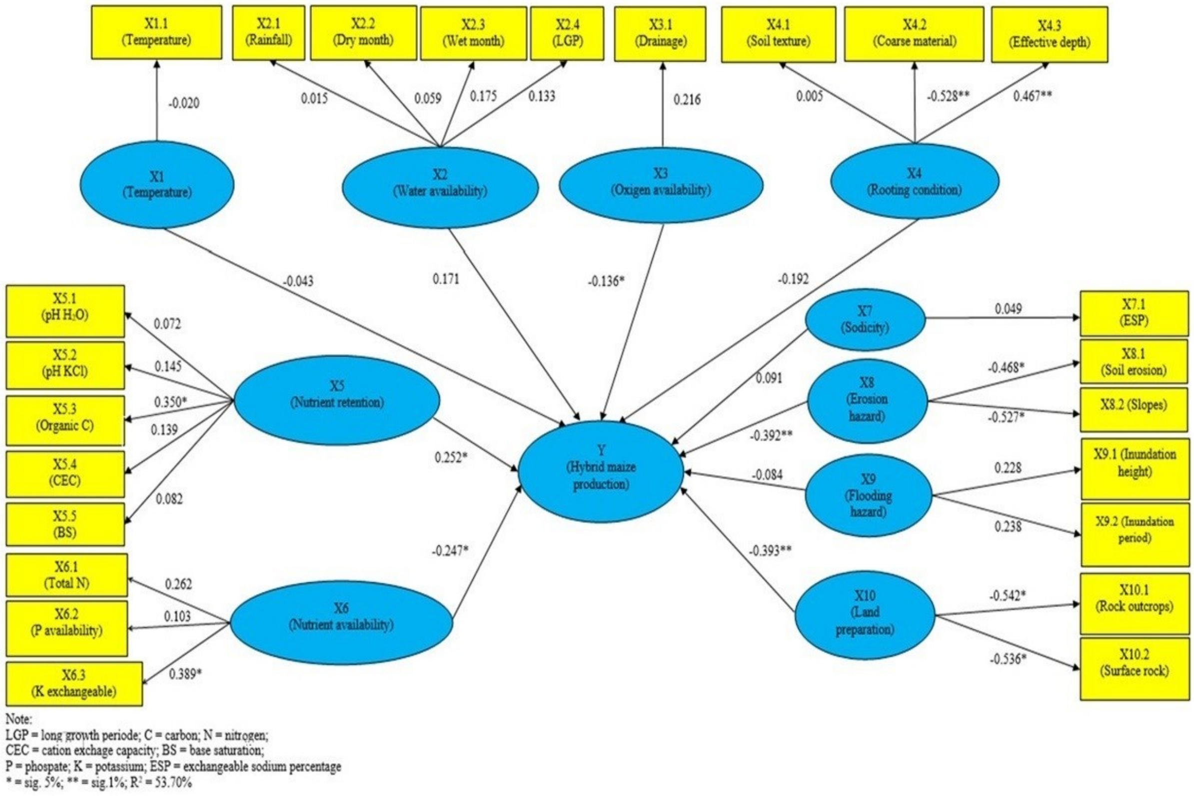

Figure 3: Path Coefficient of land quality on hybrid maize yield.

The results of this path analysis indicated that the land quality that can be a predictor of maize yield diversity were oxygen availability (X3), nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (X6), erosion hazard (X8), and land preparation (X 10). Figure 2 indicates that only 8 of the 24 indicators explain latent variance at the 5% real test level. The 8 indicators were coarse material and effective soil depth as an indicator of rooting condition, organic carbon content as nutrient retention, exchangeable K as nutrient availability, soil erosion and slope as erosion hazard, as well as rock outcrop and surface rock as an indicator of land preparation. It was also indicated that the drainage loading factor was unable to explain the diversity of oxygen availability. Therefore, oxygen availability cannot be used as a land quality because there are no indicators that can represent it. Only the land qualities of nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (x6), erosion hazard (x8), and land preparation (X10) were used next.

The indicators of land characteristics for effective depth, organic C, total N, and exchangeable K have a fairly strong positive relationship and a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, an increase in these parameters by 1%, will be followed by a rise in hybrid maize yields of 39% to 57.7%. According to [4], effective depth affects root growth and development, making plants grow and develop properly. Moreover, the levels of organic C, total N, and CEC are influenced by soil organic matter [77], while potassium plays a role in the growth and development of maize [78].

Indicators of rough soil characteristics, slopes, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrops have a strong negative relationship with a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, a 1% decrease in coarse material, slope, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrop is followed by an increase in hybrid maize yields by 39% to 57.7%.

3.2. Optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Table 7 shows the mathematical equations for each land characteristic and also the optimum hybrid maize yield for the land equation. Figure 4 shows the diagram of the relationship between land characteristics as an independent variable (X) and maize yield as an independent variable Y. Model fitting indicates that the quadratic equation is sufficient to describe the condition of data distribution.

Table 7: The optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Optimum Yield (ton/ha)	Yield Equation	R^2
Rooting condition (rc)			
Coarse material	8.06	$Y = 0.0024800x^2 – 0.2457487x + 10.9082465$	0.95
Effective depth	8.35	$Y = -0.0007242x^2 + 0.1890458x – 1.2946385$	0.96
Nutrient retention (nr)			
Organic carbon	8.35	$Y = -24.3891969x^2 + 46.8464078X – 8.8894056$	0.87
Nutrient availability (na)			
Total N	8.43	$Y = -304.4463543X^2 + 144.7590906X – 2.6328530$	1.00
K Exchangeable	5.74	$Y = -10.5596308X^2 + 17.4129832X + 2.2069179$	0.94
Erosion hazard (eh)			
Slopes	8.43	$Y = 0.0172X^2 – 0.8448X + 13.907$	0.91
Soil erosion	8.06	$y = 0.0000173X^2 – 0.0187536X + 9.0426459$	0.88
Land preparation (lp)			
Rock outcrops	7.30	$Y = 0.0046385X^2 – 0.2934756X + 8.5159674$	0.91
Surface rock	7.30	$Y = 0.0046385X^2 – 0.2934756X + 8.5159674$	0.91

The optimum of hybrid maize yield ranged from 5.74 to 8.43 ton/ha, where the highest yield was obtained from total N and slopes of 8.43 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 100% and 91%. Sutardjo et al (2012) showed that hybrid maize yields ranged from 7.43 to 9.2 ton/ha. This indicated that the optimum yield achieved is still within the range of hybrid maize yields that have been previously reported. Nitrogen is directly involved in the formation of amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymes, nucleoproteins, and alkaloids, which are needed in the plant growth process [79], [80]. An extremely high amount of N causes excessive vegetative growth, thereby making plants fall easily and increasing susceptibility to disease [81]. Meanwhile, the lack of N nutrients can limit cell division, enlargement [82], and the formation of chlorophyll, leading to stunted growth as well as yellowing of leaves [81].

The lowest optimum yield was obtained from exchangeable K, which was only 5.74 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 94%. This was presumably because the K content in the soil is very low, thereby affecting the hybrid maize yield. Potassium (K) is required by plants for physiological functions, including carbohydrate metabolism, enzyme activity, osmotic regulation, efficient

water use, N uptake, protein synthesis, and assimilate translocation [83]–[86]. It also plays a role in improving the quality of crop yields (McKenzie, 2013, Subandi, 2013).

The optimum hybrid maize yield of the remaining is relatively diverse. This includes effective depth and organic carbon, which were both 8.35 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 87%. Furthermore, coarse material and soil erosion were 8.06 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 95% and 88%, while rock outcrops and surface rock were 7.30 ton/ha with an R2 value of 91%. The absence of coarse material > 2 mm in diameter indicated that plant roots can grow freely on the surface or deeper parts of the soil [89], because the deeper the roots of the maize, the greater the maize yield [90], [91]. The addition of organic matter will increase maize yield [92]–[94] and organic C content [95] because soil organic matter is a strong positive predictor of yield [96]. Kane et al. [96] also stated that the addition of more organic matter will improve water retention, thereby reducing maize yield losses due to drought. The slope has a significant effect on soil degradation [97]. According to a previous study, erosion and maize yield are negatively correlated, hence, increased erosion will reduce maize productivity [98]. Soil erosion on flat land is slower surface runoff [99]. It was also reported that surface rocks and outcrops are the limiting factors in the suitability of maize plantations [100]. Therefore, a high percentage of rock outcrops will complicate land cultivation and plant root growth.

3.3. Land suitability criteria for hybrid maize crops

Table 8 shows the yield limit for each class from the calculation of the optimum yield, where the class range for each land characteristic is derived. Based on the optimum yield of the highest hybrid maize, there were 2 indicators, namely the total N content and the slope. The total N indicator with a very suitable class (S1) was achieved when the value in the soil was greater than 0.10%, while in the moderately suitable class (S2), it was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.07-0.09%. In the marginally appropriate class (S3), the total N indicator was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.05-0.06%, while the not suitable class (N) was achieved when the content was less than 0.05%. On the slope indicator with class S1, it was obtained when the slope class ranges from 0-7.69%%, while class S2 was achieved when the slope class ranges from 7.70-11.83%. Furthermore, in classes S3 and N, it was obtained when the slope class ranged from 11.84-18.24% and greater than 18.24%, respectively.

Based on the optimum yield of the lowest hybrid maize, only the exchangeable K was the indicator. In classes S1 and S2, it was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil was greater than 0.24 cmol(+)/kg and ranges from 0.13-0.23 cmol(+)/kg, respectively. Furthermore, class S3 was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil ranges from 0.04-0.12 cmol(+)/kg, while in class N, it was obtained when the exchangeable K content in the soil was less than 0.04 cmol(+)/kg. The remaining variables and indicators were relatively varied according to the optimum yield of hybrid maize and the range of land suitability classes obtained as presented in Table 8.

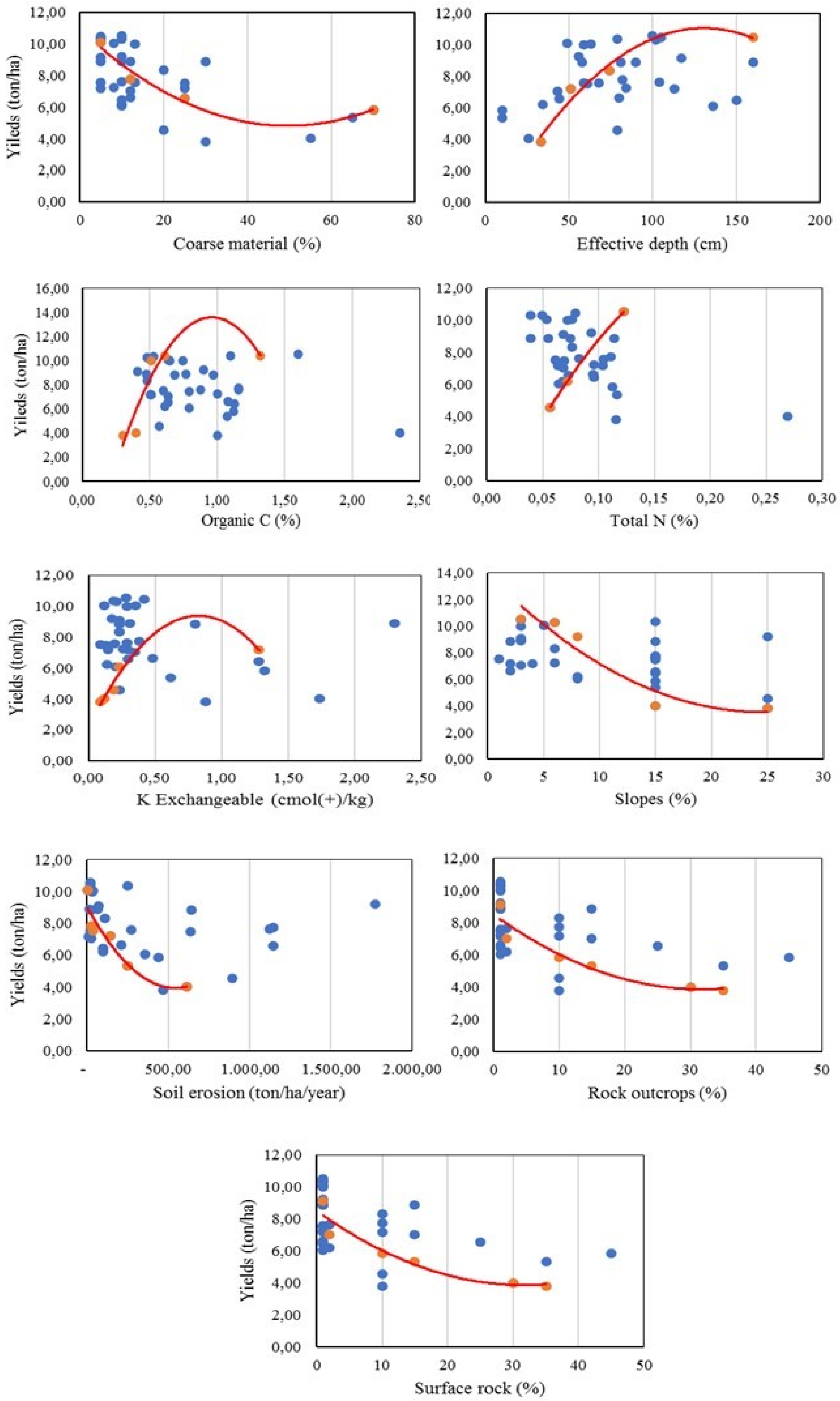

Figure 4: Scatter diagram relationship among maize yield and land characteristics

Table 8: Yield limits of hybrid maize and values obtained in each land suitability class interval by land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Yield Limits (ton/ha)			Value of Land Suitability Criterion Obtained			
	S1 - S2 (80% x Y_{optim})	S2 – S3 (60% x Y_{optim})	S3 – N (40% x Y_{optim})	S1	S2	S3	N
Rooting condition (rc)							
Coarse material (%)	8.06	6.04	4.03	0 – 13.40	13.41 – 27.37	27.38 – 52.39	> 52.39
Effective depth (cm)	8.35	6.26	4.18	≥ 69.55	49.25 – 69.54	33.18 – 49.24	< 33.18
Nutrient retention (nr)							
Organic carbon (%)	8.35	6.26	4.18	≥ 0.50	0.41 – 0.49	0.34 – 0.40	< 0.34
Nutrient availability (na)							
Total N (%)	8.43	6.32	4.22	≥ 0.10	0.07 – 0.09	0.05 – 0.06	< 0.05
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	5.74	4.31	2.87	≥ 0.24	0.13 – 0.23	0.04 – 0.12	< 0.04
Erosion hazard (eh)							
Slopes (%)	8.43	6.32	4.22	0 – 7.69	7.70 – 11.83	11.84 – 18.24	> 18.24
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	8.06	6.04	4.03	≤ 55.21	195.29	605.56	> 605.56
Land preparation (lp)							
Rock outcrops (%)	7.30	5.47	3.85	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78
Surface rock (%)	7.30	5.47	3.85	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, and N = not suitable.

Based on the relationship between the quality and characteristics of the selected land with optimum results, the criteria for hybrid maize land suitability were obtained as shown in Table 8. These criteria described the actual state of achieving optimum, moderate, and minimum yields of hybrid maize in the field with values of 80%, 60%, and 40%, respectively. According to Sukarman et al. [101], the parameters used in the land suitability assessment must describe the actual conditions. This is due to the significant positive correlation between maize yield and land suitability class [102].

The land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are fewer and have referred to the optimum yield. Meanwhile, the land quality and characteristics in this new criterion are less because it only consists of root conditions with characteristics of coarse material and effective depth, nutrient retention with organic C, and nutrient availability with total N and K exchangeable. It also consists of erosion hazards with characteristics of slopes and soil erosion, as well as land preparation with surface rocks and rock outcrops only. The land qualities selected and maize yields consistent with the land potential are the basis for developing suitability criteria. This will reduce the land characteristics and make the evaluation process faster, cheaper, and easier with accurate results [26]. Some characteristics and land quality criteria were not made because they did not significantly affect the yield of hybrid maize. The number and distribution of the data were still limited and the diversity of values was small or not measurable in the field [72].

Compared to Wahyunto et al. [47], the new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants in Table 9 is more realistic in value with the conditions in the field and is based on the achievement of optimum yields. The current land suitability criteria are still general and not

specific to maize yields [26], although the agronomic and yield potential of each maize variety differ, based on the diversity of characteristics and land quality in the field. There are still limitations on the use of these results for the development of hybrid maize in the Boalemo Regency because the setting is only based on land characteristics and optimum yields in this regency. Therefore, further investigation to expand the scope of the research area nationally with more diverse and contrasting land characteristic values is recommended to determine the effect on hybrid maize production.

Table 9: Comparison of new and general land suitability criteria with land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	New Land Suitability Criterion of Hybrid Maize				Land Suitability Criterion of General Maize [47]			
	S1	S2	S3	N	S1	S2	S3	N
Rooting condition (rc)								
Coarse material (%)	0 – 13.40	13.41 – 27.37	27.38 – 52.39	> 52.39	< 15	15 – 35	35 – 55	>55
Effective depth (cm)	≥ 69.55	49.25 – 69.54	33.18 – 49.24	< 33.18	> 60	60 – 40	40 – 25	< 25
Nutrient retention (nr)								
Organic carbon (%)	≥ 0.50	0.41 – 0.49	0.34 – 0.40	< 0.34	> 1.20	0.8 – 1.2	< 0.8	-
Nutrient availability (na)								
Total N (%)	≥ 0.10	0.07 – 0.09	0.05 – 0.06	< 0.05	Mo	Lo	VLo	-
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	≥ 0.24	0.13 – 0.23	0.04 – 0.12	< 0.04	Mo-Hi	Lo	VLo	-
Erosion hazard (eh)								
Slopes (%)	0 – 7.69	7.70 – 11.83	11.84 – 18.24	> 18.24	< 8	8 – 15	15 – 25	> 25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	≤ 55.21	195.29	605.56	> 605.56	-	VLi	Li-Mo	He-VHe
Land preparation (lp)								
Rock outcrops (%)	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40
Surface rock (%)	0 – 4.45	4.46 – 13.09	13.10 – 31.78	> 31.78	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, N = not suitable, Hi = high, Mo = moderate, Lo = low, VLo = very low, He = heavy, Li = light, VLi = very light, VHe = very heavy.

Conclusions

Land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are determined by land qualities, namely root conditions, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, as well as land preparation, and land characteristics, including coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. The highest optimum yield of 8.35 ton/ha was achieved by the effective depth and organic C content for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest value of 5.47 ton/ha was attained by exchangeable K for class S1. These results showed that the combination of the PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis can be an alternative approach to establishing new land suitability criteria for crops based on optimum yields and selected land quality.

Data Availability

All data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding Statement

This study was funded by the Directorate of Research, Technology and Community Service, Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, grant number B/105/UN47.D1/PT.01.03/2022.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute Research and Community Service of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo for their financial and administrative support.

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Determination of Land Suitability Criteria for Maize Hybrid in Boalemo Regency Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

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Abstract

The significant effect of land quality on maize production has not been fully considered in the existing land suitability criteria. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemo Regency based on the optimum yield and land quality. It was carried out in Boalemo Regency, Indonesia, where the land unit of 67 units were surveyed to obtain land characteristics data. A partial least square of structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 8.0 was used to select a robust land quality controlling hybrid maize yield, while the boundary line method was used to determine optimum yield and differentiating of land suitability criteria. The result showed that land qualities that define the optimum yield of hybrid maize were root conditions, nutrient availability, nutrient retentions, land preparation, and erosion hazard. The soil characteristics were effective depth, coarse material, organic C, total N, K exchangeable, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. Furthermore, the highest optimum yield of 8.54 ton/ha was achieved by the total N and slopes for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest of 5.58 ton/ha was obtained by exchangeable K for class S1. This showed that the combination of PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis was a better approach to developing new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize.

1. Introduction

Food security and farmer prosperity are global concerns, this makes every country increase crop production as well as farmers' income. An important issue for countries with developing economies is ensuring food security, where the agricultural sector plays a strategic role in increasing food availability [1]. Although the global food system has placed maize (*Zea mays* L.) as the leading cereal crop [2], its productivity is being disrupted by land degradation, water scarcity, and climate change [3].

In Indonesia, the wet tropical climate with rainfall and high temperatures tends to reduce the quality of land and agricultural products [4]. This country ranked 8th among the maize-producing nations with a contribution of 2.19% and 2.42% of the world's total harvested area [5]. However, the main problem is the relatively low level of yield in several regions because the achievement of maize production has not been followed by an increase in yield per unit area [6]. This is indicated by the average yield in 2020, which was up to 5.57 ton/ha [5]. According to a previous investigation, maize production in Indonesia can reach between 10-12 ton/ha [7], [8] thereby making the country the 21st leading importer in the world.

In Indonesia, Gorontalo Province is one of the centers of maize production, where the hybrid type is the most widely grown species [9]. The maize production in the province reached 1.8 million tons in 2021 [10], with several export advantages and competitiveness [11]. Furthermore, the planting of hybrid, composite, and local maize types has reached more than 98.90%, 0.68%, and 0.41% only, respectively [12] including Boalemo Regency.

Boalemo Regency ranks third as a maize-producing center in Gorontalo Province with a contribution of 18.90% [13]. The maize plant dominates the use of agricultural land in this district by 37.43% [14], therefore, the commodity has competitive and comparative advantages with a PCR value of 0.80 and 0.91 DRC. This is because maize plant is supported by land area, climatic conditions, production facilities, as well as market guarantees, and the basic price of buying corn from the government [15]. In 2021, the average hybrid and local maize yields in the regency reached 5.20 tons/ha [16] and 2.34-3.30 tons/ha, respectively [17]. This indicated that the productivity of hybrid maize is still higher than local maize [18] but with lower achievement compared to the national maize production of 5.57 tons/ha [5] and has not yet reached the target of 5.60 tons/ha in 2021 [19]. The production of hybrid maize in Gorontalo can reach 9.78-13.11 tons/ha [20] because it is often cultivated on land that does not meet the required qualities [6]. Therefore, there is a need to determine land quality-based hybrid maize land suitability criteria for site-specific land use planning in Boalemo District.

Maize is usually grown on land with low yield potential [21] and soil fertility, thereby causing low productivity [22]. Moreover, land productivity is determined by quality and characteristics [23], [24], while land quality has a close relationship with maize yields [25]. The land quality affecting the optimum yield of maize needs to be determined [26] and increased by using hybrid varieties that have high yields. This makes it necessary to evaluate the suitability of the hybrid maize in a region to ensure optimal production. The land suitability criteria for hybrid maize are not yet available because the current criterion is the general suitability of maize plants without distinguishing between hybrids and inbreds. Therefore, there is a need to make land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants.

A previous study has shown that land quality has a significant effect on suitability for certain uses [27]. Meanwhile, land suitability is also important due to the continuous increase in the demand for agricultural land [28]. The land suitability criteria for existing maize fields are still general [29] and there are no specific criteria for hybrid maize varieties. The class assessment outcomes obtained using the existing criteria are relatively many and are not in line with the actual field results [30]. The current criteria consist of 3 components, namely, land quality, characteristics, and ranges of land characteristic values to determine its suitability. Therefore, the problem in developing criteria is choosing land quality, characteristics, and determining the range of land characteristic values associated with suitability classes, namely suitable, somewhat suitable, marginally suitable, and not suitable.

The selection of land quality and characteristics can be carried out through the partial least square of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM), while the range limits is being determined by the boundary line method. Land qualities and characteristics in the current criteria can be used temporarily since structural equation model analysis with partial least squares produces better indicators and models than other multivariate analyses [31]–[35]. This is because the variant-based PLS-SEM has a higher level of flexibility and the size of the sample used is relatively small ranging from 30 to 100 [36]–[39]. The use of PLS-SEM to determine land characteristics and qualities that control maize crop yields is still relatively rare, except for Syaf [40] on older cocoa plants, maize composite [41], and on local varieties [6]. The boundary line method can help determine nutrient adequacy concentrations and the optimum yield range of a plant that affects nutrients, as well as other land characteristics [42], [43]. Currently, the land suitability criteria for maize plants have not been determined using the boundary line method, except by Ridayanti et al. [44], although the investigation was not specific to hybrid maize.

After obtaining the quality and characteristics of land affecting maize yields with PLS-SEM, the boundary line method can be used to determine the optimum yield as well as land suitability criteria simultaneously. This is carried out by drawing the intersection of the boundary line at the yield and projecting with the land characteristics [29]. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemo Regency based on the optimum yield and land quality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study area

The study area extends from 0°28'5.6" - 0°57'30.02" N to 122^{o0}8'34.25" - 122°43'10.41"E (Figure 1) on a scale of 1 : 40,000, which is located in the agricultural land of Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. The maximum air temperature was 28.19°C and the minimum was 26.79°C with an average of 28.01°C. Meanwhile, the maximum rainfall was 1,849 mm and the minimum was 1,246 mm with an average of 1,478 mm [45]. The wet and dry seasons last for 3 months and 5 months respectively. The soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. [46] at a scale of 1 : 50,000 become the initial reference for determining 35 soil units, where each unit has information on land characteristics, namely effective depth, drainage, texture, pH, cation exchange capacity, base saturation, landform, parent material, relief, and land unit area. Meanwhile, the new soil unit is 1 : 40,000 in scale and there has been a change in the agricultural land use existing. This indicated that the slope class of 8 – 15% or hilly is more dominant in the study area with a percentage of 29.77% and slopes > 40% or mountainous which is only 2.67%. Furthermore, the dry land is dominant with a value of 59.86% and a little shrub which was only 9.21%, while the dominant Typic Haplustalfs of soil sub group classification was 22.47%, then the Fluventic Haplustepts was 21.31% and very little Vertic Haplustepts of soil sub group classification was 0.04% only (Figure 1).

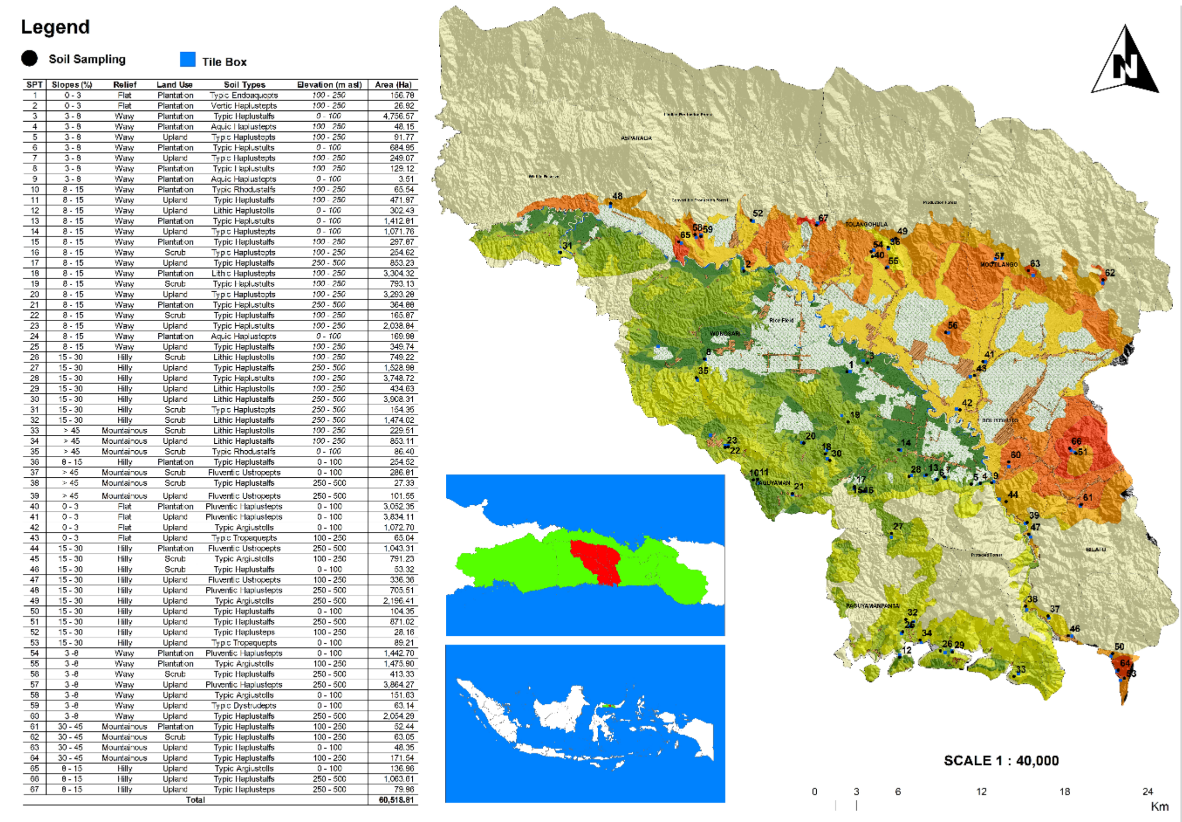

Figure 1: Study area.

2.2 Dataset collection for land quality and land characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in this study refer to Wahyunto et al. [47], consisting of 10 land qualities and 24 characteristics. The set of temperature land quality is determined from the characteristics of the annual average air temperature, while the land quality water availability is determined from the characteristics of annual rainfall, wet months, dry months, and the length of the growth period (LGP). Land quality oxygen availability is determined from soil drainage characteristics, rooting conditions are determined from the soil texture, coarse material, and soil effective depth, nutrient retention is identified from the pH value, C-Organic, cation exchange capacity (CEC), and base saturation. Furthermore, the available nutrient is determined from the characteristics of total N, P, and exchangeable K, the sodicity is obtained from the exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP), while erosion hazard is determined from slopes and soil erosion. The quality of the flood-hazard land is determined by identifying the height and the duration of the inundation, while preparation is carried out from the characteristics of outcrops and surface rocks. The selection of this set of land qualities and characteristics is based on the availability of data and their impact on maize production [26].

Data on average annual air temperature and rainfall for 10 years (2010-2021) were collected from different climate stations, namely the Bandungrejo with 0°41' N - 122°38' E, the elevation 40 m asl, while Harapan has 0°42' N - 122°29' E and an elevation of 37 m asl. It also includes Lakeya Rain Post with 0°42.82' N - 122°32.07' E, 32 m asl, Mohiyolo has 0°46.41' N - 122°26.41' E and an elevation of 39 m asl, Saritani 0°46.45' N - 122°20.40' E, with 26 m asl, Tangkobu 0°37.25' N - 122°36.36' E, 25 m asl, Bubaa 0°31.36' N - 122°33.39' E, 16 m asl, Wonggahu 0°38' N - 122°33' E, 35 m asl, and Sambati Rain Post with 0°31.184' N - 122°27.074'

E and an elevation of 9 m asl managed by BWS II Sulawesi. Furthermore, these data determined wet months (> 200 mm) and dry months (<100 mm), which refers to the Oldeman and Darmiyati criteria [48]. The land water balance was determined using the Thornwhite and LGP methods based on the number of surplus and deficit rainy days [49].

Based on the previous soil unit [46], then these soil unit was detailed again by adding 32 of soil units to be surveyed and observed, making up to 67 soil units in the area as shown in the legend Figure 1. Soil characteristics such as drainage, coarse material, effective soil depth, slope, inundation height and duration, rock outcrops and surface rocks were determined by conducting soil profile descriptions and direct observation on 67 pedons referring to the description guidelines in the field [50]. Meanwhile, soil erosion was determined by the USLE method [51]. Other soil characteristics were further analyzed in the soil laboratory using samples from each pedon.

Soil samples were dried for 3 days and sieved through a 2 mesh sieve. The method of soil physics laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Kurnia et al. [52]. Based on this procedure, soil texture was analyzed in terms of sand, clay, and silt fractions using the pipette method, while soil moisture storage was evaluated using the gravimetric method that can be applied in water balance analysis. The method of soil chemistry laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Eviyati and Sulaeman [53]. The soil pH was determined with a pH meter in a 1:2.5 soil and water solution, while the organic C content was assessed using the Walkley and Black method. The total N was assessed using the Kjeldahl method, while the available P content was measured using the Olsen method. The basic cations and CEC was extracted with 1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 (ammonium acetate) on a dry sample of 105°C. The base saturation was determined by calculating the percentage of basic cations number with CEC, ESP was evaluated using the percentage ratio of sodium to CEC [54] [55]. Subsequently, the data from the chemical analysis were averaged to a depth of 0-30 cm using the weighted averaging technique. The framework of this study is presented in Figure 2.

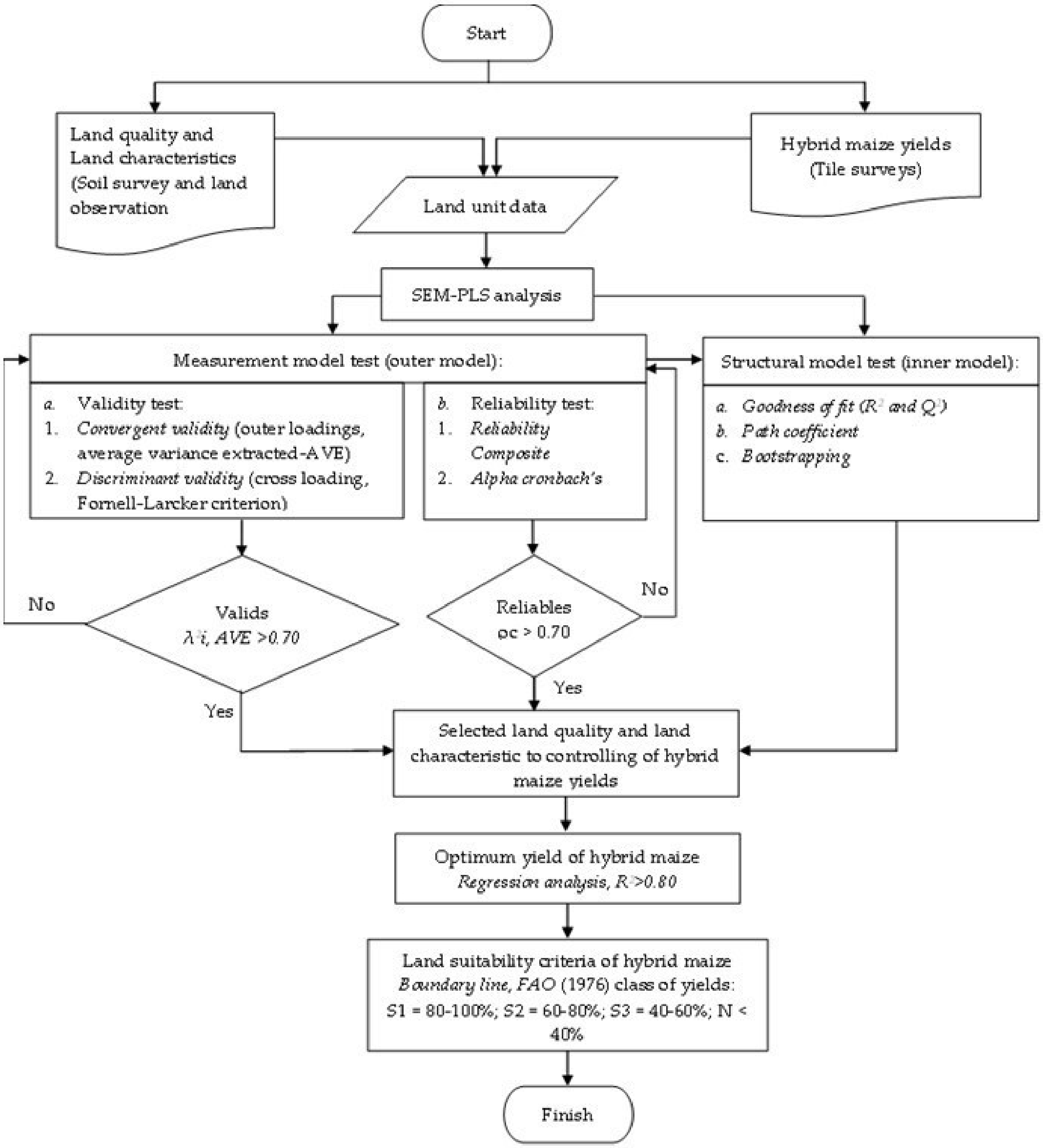

Figure 2: Research framework.

2.3 Dataset collection for hybrid maize yield

The areas currently planted with hybrid maize were identified and blocks with a size of 2.5 m x 2.5 m were made in each map unit (Figure 1). Maize plants in each block passed through standardized management according to farmers' technology. After harvesting, weighting was carried out to obtain hybrid maize yield data from the results of tiles on each land unit. Subsequently, the results were calculated using the formula [56], as expressed below:

$$Y\ (t) = H\ x\ \frac{A}{6.25\ m^2} \tag{1}$$

Meanwhile, productivity is calculated using the formula [56] below:

$$Y\ (t\ ha^{-1}) = \frac{H\ x\ 1.64\ x\ 56.73}{100} \tag{2}$$

where Y = hybrid maize yield, H = tile yield (kg), A = maize area 1 per hectare (ha), 1.64 and 56.73 = constant.

2.4 Selection of land quality and land characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in the suitability criteria were used as presented in Tables 1 and 2, which show brief statistics. Generally, most data are relatively homogenous, except for coarse material, available P, slopes, soil erosion, height and inundation, as well as rock outcrops and surface rocks. The selection used the partial least squares of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM) refers to Hair et al. [38] with tools SmartPLS, where land quality and characteristics were selected as the latent and manifest variables, respectively. The analysis in PLS-SEM has 2 main steps, namely (1) the measurement model (outer model) and (2) the structural model test (inner model).

Table 1: Latent variables and indicators used in this study

Latent variables		**Indicators**		**Data Sources**
Notation	**Land quality**	**Notation**	**Land characteristics**	
X1	Temperature (t)	X1.1	Temperature	[45]
X2	Water availability (wa)	X2.1	Rainfall	[45]
		X2.2	Wet month	Rainfall > 200 mm
		X2.3	Dry month	Rainfall < 100 mm
		X2.4	Long growth period (LGP)	Water balance (Thornwhite method), soil moisture storage (Gravimetric method), water surplus and defisit days
X3	Oxygen availability (oa)	X3.1	Drainage	Soil survey and land observation
X4	Rooting condition (rc)	X4.1	Texture	Pipet method
		X4.1.1	Sand fraction	
		X4.1.2	Silt fraction	
		X4.1.3	Clay	
		X4.2	Coarse material	Soil survey and land observation
		X4.3	Effective depth	
X5	Nutrient retention (nr)	X5.1	pH H_2O	pH meter (1 : 2.5)
		X5.2	pH KCl	
		X5.3	Organic C	Walkley and Black method
		X5.4	Cation exchange capacity (CEC)	1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 Extracted
		X5.5	Base saturation	Calculation
X6	Nutrient availability (na)	X6.1	Total N	Kjeldahl method
		X6.2	P availability	Olsen method
		X6.3	K exchangeable	1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 Extracted
X7	Sodicity (xn)	X7.1	Exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP)	Calculation
X8	Erosion hazard (eh)	X8.1	Slopes	Soil survey and land observation
		X8.2	Soil erosion	
X9	Flooding hazard (fh)	X9.1	Inundation height	Soil survey and land observation
		X9.2	Inundation period	
X10	Land preparation (lp)	X10.1	Rock outcrops	Soil survey and land observation
		X10.2	Surface rock	
Y	Hybrid maize yield	Y.1	Hybrid maize yield	Tile box methods

Step 1 consists of validity and reliability tests, wherein the validity test is conducted with convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity is in form of outer loadings (loading factor) and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity is in form of cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Meanwhile, the reliability test uses composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha.

Convergent validity was observed from the magnitude of the outer loading and the AVE value of each indicator on the latent variable. The validity was calculated according to the equation [57][58][59][60]:

$$x_i = \lambda x_i \xi_1 + \delta_i \tag{3}$$

$$y_i = \lambda y_i \eta_1 + \varepsilon_i \tag{4}$$

where x and y = exogenous (ξ) and endogenous (η) latent variable indicator, λx and λy = loading factors, δ and ε = residual/measurement errors or noise.

Table 2: Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics.

Latent variables / Indicators	Unit	n	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
X1 (Temperature)							
X1.1 (Temperature)	ºC	67	26.79	27.80	28.01	28.19	0.63
X2 (Water availability)							
X2.1 (Rainfall)	mm	67	1,246.00	1,533.42	1,478.00	1,849.00	232.69
X2.2 (Wet month)	month	67	0.00	1.03	1.00	3.00	0.85
X2.3 (Dry month)	month	67	2.00	3.39	4.00	5.00	1.06
X2.4 (LGP)	day	67	211.00	246.00	214.00	304.00	44.54
X3 (Oxygen availability)							
X3.1 (Drainage)	class	67	0.00	3.76	4.00	6.00	1.82
X4 (Rooting conditions)							
X4.1 (texture)	class	67	1.00	2.21	2.00	5.00	0.99
X4.1.1 (Sand fraction)	%	67	5.00	41.58	43.00	81.33	18.51
X4.1.2 (Silt fraction)	%	67	7.33	27.31	24.50	51.50	11.54
X4.1.3 (Clay)	%	67	11.33	31.90	30.00	56.33	12.72
X4.2 (Coarse material)	%	67	5.00	17.27	10.00	70.00	16.58
X4.3 (Effective depth)	cm	67	10.00	74.55	74.00	160.00	36.40
X5 (Nutrient retention)							
X5.1 (pH H_2O)		67	5.00	5.92	5.90	7.15	0.52
X5.2 (pH KCl)		67	4.35	5.24	5.17	6.60	0.56
X5.3 (Organic C)	%	67	0.41	0.85	0.77	2.35	0.39
X5.4 (CEC)	cmol(+)/kg	67	8.94	24.89	22.43	59.57	11.41
X5.5 (Base saturation)	%	67	45.03	56.22	52.85	81.89	9.76
X6 (Nutrient availability)							
X6.1 (Total N)	%	67	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.27	0.04
X6.2 (P availability)	mg/kg	67	0.73	8.62	3.77	58.67	12.61
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	cmol(+)/kg	67	0.07	0.39	0.24	1.92	0.42
X7 (Sodicity)							
X7.1 (ESP)	%	67	0.76	7.06	6.20	24.17	5.62
X8 (Erosion hazard)							
X8.1 (Slopes)	%	67	1.00	9.58	6.00	25.00	7.29
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	ton/ha/year	67	3.66	334.51	110.27	1772.43	439.08

X9 (Flooding hazard)							
X9.1 (Inundation height)	cm	67	0.00	7.58	0.00	50.00	17.10
X9.2 (Inundation period)	day	67	0.00	0.64	0.00	5.00	1.52
X10 (Land preparation)							
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	%	67	0.00	6.64	0.00	45.00	11.56
X10.2 (Surface rock)	%	67	0.00	6.58	0.00	45.00	11.59
Y (Hybrid maize yield)	ton/ha	67	2.85	4.95	4.68	8.07	1.15

n = the number of the land unit, min = minimum, max is maximum, SD = standard deviations, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

Meanwhile, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was calculated using the equation [61][62][63][64][65]:

$$\text{AVE} = \frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)} \quad (5)$$

Where λ^2_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

The loading factor of an indicator with the highest value is the strongest or most important measure in reflecting the latent variable. In this study, the loading factor value is > 0.70 for selecting best land characteristics, but values ranging from 0.50-0.60 can still be tolerated with a t-statistic > 1.96 or a small p-value of 0.05 [37], [66]. Meanwhile, the AVE value used was more than 0.50, showing that the convergent validity on the latent variable has been reached.

The discriminant validity test used the cross-loading value and the Fornell-Larker criterion to test discriminantly valid indicators in explaining or reflecting latent variables. When the correlation between the latent variables and the core measurement of each indicator is high, the latent variable can predict the indicator better and is considered valid. The discriminant validity is measured by the square root of the average variance extracted, which will be compared with the correlation value between variables. The value calculated based on the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlation between constructs [61]. The equation is expressed below [61][67][63][64][65]:

$$\text{Square Root of AVE} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)}} \quad (6)$$

where λ^2_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Furthermore, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the reliability value between indicators of the latent variables. They are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70 and has a minimum value of 0.60 [37]. The composite reliability value is calculated using the equation [68][62][69][65]:

$$\rho c = \frac{(\sum \lambda_i)^2}{(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + \sum i \, var(\varepsilon_i)} \quad (7)$$

where λ_i = the loading factor, var = the variance, and ε_i = the error variance.

Meanwhile, the value of Cronbach’s Alpha is calculated according to the equation [70][65]:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{\sum p \neq p'^{\,cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}}{p_{q+\sum p \neq p'}{}^{cor(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q})}} \right) \left(\frac{p_q}{p_{q-1}} \right) \quad (8)$$

where P_q = the number of indicators or manifest variables, and q = the indicator block.

For step 2, the structural model testing (inner model) was carried out after the relationship model was built in line with the observed data and the overall suitability, namely goodness of fit. The structural equation (inner model) is as follows [62][59][60]:

$$H_j = \gamma_j\xi_1 + \gamma_j\xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j\xi_n + \varsigma_j \quad (9)$$

where η_j = endogenous variable vector (dependent), $\gamma_j\xi_1 + \gamma_j\xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j\xi_n$ = exogenous latent variable vector, and ς_j = residual vector (error).

Meanwhile, the determinant coefficient and goodness of fit (Q^2) were calculated using the equation [62][64][70]:

$$Q^2 \textit{ (Predictive relevance)} = 1 - (1 - R_1^2)\,(1 - R_2^2) \ldots (1- R_p^2) \quad (10)$$

where R_1^2, R_2^2, ... R_p^2 = R square of endogenous variables in the equation model [68].

The quantity of Q^2 has a value with a range of 0 < Q2 < 1, the closer the value to 1, the better the model [37]. It is also equivalent to the coefficient of total determination in path analysis. Furthermore, the effect and significance were tested based on the estimated value of the path coefficient and the critical point value (t-statistics or p-value) at = 0.05. The relationship model between variables was measured by testing the direct correlation coefficient between variables. The results of testing the relationship between *X* and *Y* variables were indicated by the correlation coefficient as well as t-statistics, and are also presented in the path diagram.

2.5 Class assignment

To determine the class-required data for optimum results, class limits were calculated from the percentage of optimum results. After knowing the highest and lowest yields, the values were connected with the range of land characteristics values. The land suitability class and yield used referred to FAO [71], namely class S1 (very suitable) when the values reach 80-100%, S2 was moderately suitable 60-80%, S3 marginally suitable 40-60%, and N not suitable <40% of the optimum capacity.

The optimum yield was determined using the boundary line method. This method is carried out by drawing a boundary line on the graph of the relationship between yield and land characteristics to obtain optimum results. In the boundary line method according to Widiatmaka et al. [72], each land characteristic is plotted on the X-axis, while hybrid maize yields are plotted on the Y-axis. Bhat and Sujatha [42] stated that the preparation of the hybrid maize yield boundary line includes the preparation of a scatter diagram between the X and the Y variable, (2) division of the X-axis into several classes of intervals, (3) determination of the highest data points in each class interval, (4) preparation of boundary lines based on the highest data points from each class interval, (5) draw a line parallel to the X-axis according to the percentage of the result class.

Furthermore, with the Microsoft Excel application tools, the boundary between classes S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N were determined by the Data menu → What-if-Analysis → Goal Seek → Set the cell at the location containing the regression equation → to value fill with the result limit values S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N → By changing cell → the location where the value of the characteristics of the land will be sought → Ok. On location "By changing cell", the number being searched will appear, and at the location "set cell" will be equal to the limit value of the result.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Land quality and characteristics controlling hybrid maize yield

3.1.1 Validity test result

Table 3 shows the loading factor of the variables, where most indicators were more than the critical limit of 0.70 with a 95% confidence level (P > 1.960). Therefore, these variables are highly recommended and the indicators are considered convergently valid. In the soil texture indicator for the latent variable of root conditions as well as the cation exchange capacity (CEC) and base saturation (BS) indicators for nutrient retention, the loading factor was below the tolerance value of 0.50 at the 95% confidence level (P < 1.960), hence, it was not used. This implies that the indicators have not been established or explained properly because the standard value of the loading factor must be greater than or equal to 0.50 [37], [38], [66].

The average variance extracted (AVE) value of almost all variables was greater than 0.50, therefore, it was considered convergently valid [61][73]. The AVE value of the available nutrient variable was not valid due to the smaller value of the loading factor for the CEC and BS indicators of 0.50, leading to the removal of both indicators. A similar result was discovered in the root condition variable, although the AVE value was greater than 0.50, while the soil texture indicator was not used because the loading factor value is only 0.013.

Table 3: Outer loading (loading factor) and the average variance extracted from study variables.

Indicators (land characteristics)		Latent Variables (land quality)	Loading Factors	t-Stat	Status	AVE
X1.1 (Temperature)	→	X1 (Temperature)	1.000**	11.192	Valid	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall)	→	X2 (Water availability)	0.838	0.085	Valid	0.906
X2.2 (Wet month)	→		0.989	0.999	Valid	
X2.3 (Dry month)	→		0.850	0.428	Valid	
X2.4 (LGP)	→		0.993*	1.431	Valid	
X3.1 (Drainage)	→	X3 (Oxygen availability)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X4.1 (Texture)	→	X4 (Rooting condition)	0.013	0.066	Invalid	0.573
X4.2 (Coarse material)	→		0.921	1.086	Valid	
X4.3 (Effective depth)	→		-0.899	1.047	Valid	
X5.1 (pH H_2O)	→	X5 (Nutrient retention)	0.647	0.857	Valid	0.360 (invalid)
X5.2 (pH KCl)	→		0.570**	1.973	Valid	
X5.3 (Organic C)	→		0.831**	3.135	Valid	

X5.4 (CEC)	→		0.436*	1.381	Invalid	
X5.5 (Base saturation)	→		0.365	0.845	Invalid	
X6.1 (Total N)	→	X6 (Nutrient availability)	0.760**	3.226	Valid	0.585
X6.2 (P availability)	→		0.587*	1.385	Valid	
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	→		0.897**	6.907	Valid	
X7.1 (ESP)	→	X7 (Sodicity)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes)	→	X8 (Erosion hazard)	0.954**	21.438	Valid	0.932
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	→		0.941**	18.308	Valid	
X9.1 (Inundation height)	→	X9 (Flooding hazard)	0.984**	4.213	Valid	0.984
X9.2 (Inundation period)	→		0.985**	3.918	Valid	
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	→	X10 (Land preparation)	0.998**	189.133	Valid	0.995
X10.2 (Surface rock)	→		0.998**	320.273	Valid	

AVE = average variance extracted, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

The measurement of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading was used as the basis for assessing the discriminant validity of the model. The calculation results on the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 4 show that the average of the tested variables has a higher square root of AVE than the correlation value, hence, the latent variable was considered discriminantly valid. The square root value of the AVE must be greater than its correlation value with other constructs to meet the discriminant validity requirements [69][74]. The average loading factor value for the latent variable indicator was above that of others as shown in Table 5.

3.1.2 Reliability test result

The variables are considered reliable because composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient on average were more than 0.7 [61], [75] as shown in Table 6. However, certain indicators still had values less than 0.6, namely soil texture but the indicators used are reliable and adequate in forming the latent variables.

The highest composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the variables of temperature, oxygen availability, and toxicity of 1 for the variables to be very reliable. The lowest coefficient was obtained on the root condition variable, therefore, the variable was not reliable. According to Bagozzi and Yi [76] and Hair et al. [75], variables are considered good and accepted when the value is > 0.70.

The remaining variables are water availability, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, and land preparation variables. The coefficient of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha > 0.6, there, the variable is considered reliable. The minimum value of composite reliability and cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.60 [61], [75], [76].

Table 4: Fornell-Larker criterion test

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1	1.000										
X2	0.940	0.952									
X3	0.059	0.149	1.000								
X4	0.082	0.030	-0.162	0.757							
X5	-0.360	-0.239	-0.103	-0.368	0.600						
X6	-0.069	0.021	0.012	-0.518	0.694	0.765					
X7	0.382	0.429	0.084	0.228	-0.030	-0.217	1.000				
X8	0.019	-0.082	-0.501	0.285	-0.317	-0.370	-0.009	0.966			
X9	-0.104	-0.033	0.237	-0.204	0.073	0.090	0.202	-0.250	0.992		
X10	0.198	0.093	-0.223	0.873	-0.303	-0.538	0.362	0.304	-0.126	0.998	
Y	0.018	0.152	0.169	-0.578	0.387	0.456	-0.016	-0.517	0.164	-0.568	1.000

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = maize hybrid yield.

Table 5: Cross-Loading of latent variables to indicators

Indicators	Latent Variables										
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1.1	1	0.8300	0.0312	0.0240	-0.2959	-0.0592	0.3270	0.0195	-0.0837	0.1680	-0.0204
X2.1	0.9783	0.8379	-0.0035	-0.0063	-0.2488	-0.0320	0.3555	-0.0017	-0.0539	0.1552	0.0155
X2.2	0.8534	0.9887	0.1938	-0.0557	-0.1257	0.0988	0.4025	-0.1435	-0.0279	-0.0178	0.1748
X2.3	0.5223	0.8497	0.1523	0.2464	-0.2505	-0.1161	0.4641	-0.1494	0.0144	0.2154	0.0592
X2.4	0.8293	0.9928	0.1721	-0.0334	-0.1524	0.0833	0.4440	-0.1713	-0.0383	-0.0031	0.1331
X3.1	0.0312	0.1785	1	-0.1541	-0.1091	-0.0375	0.0843	-0.4964	0.2530	-0.2229	0.2156
X4.1	-0.0058	-0.0006	-0.1696	0.0126	0.2127	0.1013	0.2173	0.1761	0.0055	-0.0225	0.0050
X4.2	-0.0728	-0.1082	-0.0829	0.9212	-0.2754	-0.5494	0.1845	0.2891	-0.2674	0.7910	-0.5276
X4.3	-0.1289	-0.1240	0.2071	-0.8990	0.2046	0.3209	-0.2633	-0.1587	0.0730	-0.7693	0.4666
X5.1	-0.2975	-0.4140	-0.3824	-0.3027	0.6470	0.3024	-0.1283	0.1730	-0.0342	-0.1190	0.0718
X5.2	-0.2033	-0.2939	-0.4480	-0.2791	0.5701	0.3176	-0.0273	0.1935	0.0801	-0.1829	0.1445
X5.3	-0.2440	-0.0158	0.1276	-0.1134	0.8308	0.5651	0.0728	-0.5076	0.0545	-0.1147	0.3501
X5.4	0.0537	0.1002	0.0033	0.0110	0.4360	0.4081	0.3732	-0.0504	0.1426	-0.0137	0.1395
X5.5	-0.2717	-0.2512	-0.1053	-0.4382	0.3650	0.4343	-0.6008	-0.0619	-0.1498	-0.4876	0.0825
X6.1	-0.0256	0.1778	0.0335	-0.1950	0.7028	0.7604	0.0453	-0.3878	-0.0809	-0.2162	0.2623
X6.2	-0.1201	-0.2238	-0.4256	-0.2590	0.4149	0.5865	-0.2829	-0.0389	-0.0267	-0.2860	0.1025
X6.3	-0.0437	0.0283	0.0310	-0.5607	0.5145	0.8974	-0.3341	-0.2613	0.2133	-0.6520	0.3892
X7.1	0.3270	0.4411	0.0843	0.2420	0.0290	-0.2417	1	-0.0286	0.2142	0.3621	0.0487
X8.1	-0.0226	-0.2234	-0.5132	0.2998	-0.2625	-0.3475	-0.0481	0.9537	-0.3383	0.3031	-0.5274
X8.2	0.0649	-0.0590	-0.4223	0.1646	-0.2942	-0.2950	-0.0035	0.9409	-0.0988	0.2516	-0.4682
X9.1	-0.0996	-0.0225	0.2254	-0.1949	0.1126	0.1483	0.1939	-0.2440	0.9835	-0.1342	0.2278
X9.2	-0.0658	-0.0305	0.2717	-0.1860	0.0271	0.0449	0.2271	-0.2252	0.9849	-0.0901	0.2380
X10.1	0.1848	0.0403	-0.2340	0.8480	-0.2309	-0.5544	0.3760	0.3058	-0.1188	0.9977	-0.5424
X10.2	0.1503	0.0225	-0.2107	0.8629	-0.2274	-0.5592	0.3464	0.2812	-0.1076	0.9976	-0.5365
Y.1	-0.0204	0.1413	0.2156	-0.5479	0.3425	0.3790	0.0487	-0.5271	0.2367	-0.5408	1

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = hybrid maize yield, X1.1 = temperature, X2.1 = rainfall, X2.2 = the wet month, X2.3 = the dry month, X2.3 = long growth period, X3.1 = drainage, X4.1 = texture, X4.2 = coarse material, X4.3 = effective depth, X5.1 = organic C, X5.2 = cation exchanges capacity, X5.3 = base saturation, X6.1 = total N, X6.2 = P availability, X6.3 = K exchangeable, X7.1 = the exchange sodium percentage, X8.1 = slopes, X8.2 = soil erosion, X9.1 = inundation height, X9.2 = inundation period, X10.1 = rock outcrops, X10.2 = surface rock, Y.1 = hybrid maize yield.

Table 6: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha test.

Indicators (land characteristics)	***Cronbach's Alpha***	***Composite Reliability***
X1.1 (Temperature)	1.000	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall) X2.2 (Wet month) X2.3 (Dry month) X2.4 (Long growth periods)	0.975	0.965
X3.1 (Drainage)	1.000	1.000
X4.1 (Texture) X4.2 (Coarse material) X4.3 (Effective depth)	0.002[nor]	-1.055[nor]
X5.1 (pH H_2O) X5.2 (pH KCl) X5.3 (Organic C) X5.4 (Cation exchange capacity) X5.5 (Base saturation)	0.718	0.628
X6.1 (Total N) X6.2 (P availability) X6.3 (K exchangeable)	0.805	0.681
X7.1 (Exchangeable sodium percentage)	1.000	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes) X8.2 (Soil erosion)	0.965	0.928
X9.1 (Inundation height) X9.2 (Inundation period)	0.992	0.984
X10.1 (Rock outcrops) X10.2 (Surface rock)	0.998	0.995

nor = not reliable.

3.1.3 Structural model test (inner models)

Land characteristics that have a significant correlation with hybrid maize yields show a high level of contribution to land quality in influencing hybrid maize yields as indicated in Figure 3. The figure shows a structural model of the relationship between indicator variables, namely 24 land characteristics, rectangular yellow, and latent variables, including 10 land qualities maize yield, and oval blue. It also shows a model for the relationship between latent variables such as land qualities and maize yield as well as loading figures. The factor for each indicator and path coefficient for land qualities has a direct effect on the value of maize yields.

For example, X8 (erosion hazard) significantly determines the hybrid maize yield with a path coefficient of -0.392. The negative sign indicates that the erosion hazard is negatively related to maize yield, where the higher the erosion hazard, the lower the maize yield. Furthermore, nutrient retention (X5) contributes to the diversity of hybrid maize yields with a path coefficient of 0.252. A positive sign indicates that nutrient retention is positively related to maize yield, where the higher the value of nutrient retention were followed by the maize yield.

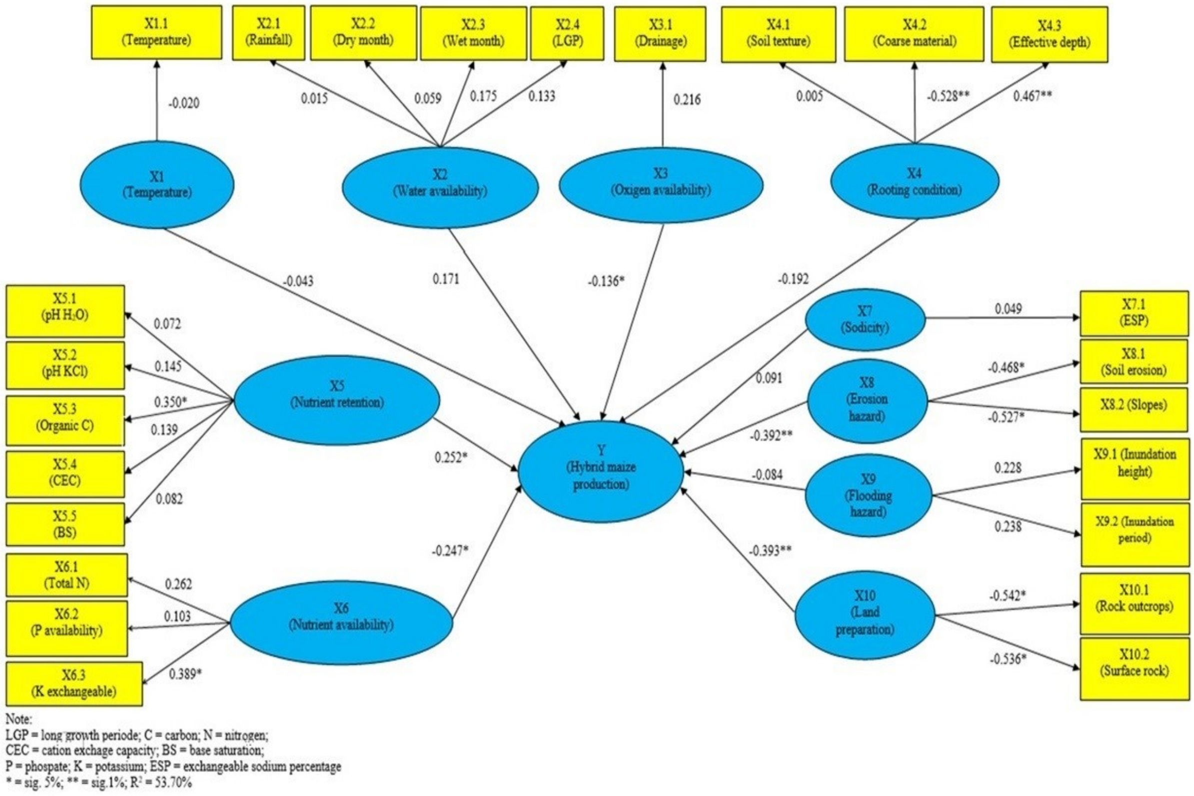

Figure 3: Path Coefficient of land quality on hybrid maize yield.

The results of this path analysis indicated that the land quality that can be a predictor of maize yield diversity were oxygen availability (X3), nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (X6), erosion hazard (X8), and land preparation (X 10). Figure 2 indicates that only 8 of the 24 indicators explain latent variance at the 5% real test level. The 8 indicators were coarse material and effective soil depth as an indicator of rooting condition, organic carbon content as nutrient retention, exchangeable K as nutrient availability, soil erosion and slope as erosion hazard, as well as rock outcrop and surface rock as an indicator of land preparation. It was also indicated that the drainage loading factor was unable to explain the diversity of oxygen availability. Therefore, oxygen availability cannot be used as a land quality because there are no indicators that can represent it. Only the land qualities of nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (x6), erosion hazard (x8), and land preparation (X10) were used next.

The indicators of land characteristics for effective depth, organic C, total N, and exchangeable K have a fairly strong positive relationship and a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, an increase in these parameters by 1%, will be followed by a rise in hybrid maize yields of 39% to 57.7%. According to Wirosoedarmo et al. [4], effective depth affects root growth and development, making plants grow and develop properly. Moreover, the levels of organic C, total N, and CEC are influenced by soil organic matter [77], while potassium plays a role in the growth and development of maize [78].

Indicators of rough soil characteristics, slopes, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrops have a strong negative relationship with a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, a 1% decrease in coarse material, slope, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrop is followed by an increase in hybrid maize yields by 39% to 57.7%.

3.2. Optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Table 7 shows the mathematical equations for each land characteristic and also the optimum hybrid maize yield for the land equation. Figure 4 shows the diagram of the relationship between land characteristics as an independent variable (X) and maize yield as an independent variable Y. Model fitting indicates that the quadratic equation is sufficient to describe the condition of data distribution.

Table 7: The optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Optimum Yield (ton/ha)	Yield Equation	R^2
Rooting condition (rc)			
Coarse material	8.17	$Y = 0.0025900x^2 – 0.2568578x + 11.9093576$	0.96
Effective depth	8.46	$Y = -0.0008354x^2 + 0.29100569x – 1.3957496$	0.97
Nutrient retention (nr)			
Organic carbon	8.46	$Y = -25.492979x^2 + 47.9575089X – 8.9895067$	0.97
Nutrient availability (na)			
Total N	8.54	$Y = -305.5574654X^2 + 155.8690907X – 2.7439640$	1.00
K Exchangeable	5.58	$Y = -10.6697409X^2 + 18.5239943X + 2.3179289$	0.95
Erosion hazard (eh)			
Slopes	8.54	$Y = 0.0183X^2 – 0.9559X + 14.806$	0.92
Soil erosion	8.17	$y = 0.0000184X^2 – 0.0198647X + 9.0537569$	0.89
Land preparation (lp)			
Rock outcrops	7.41	$Y = 0.0057496X^2 – 0.3845867X + 8.6269785$	0.92
Surface rock	7.41	$Y = 0.0057496X^2 – 0.3945867X + 8.6269785$	0.92

The optimum of hybrid maize yield ranged from 5.58 to 8.54 ton/ha, where the highest yield was obtained from total N and slopes of 8.54 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 100% and 92%. Sutardjo et al (2012) showed that hybrid maize yields ranged from 7.43 to 9.2 ton/ha. This indicated that the optimum yield achieved is still within the range of hybrid maize yields that have been previously reported. Nitrogen is directly involved in the formation of amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymes, nucleoproteins, and alkaloids, which are needed in the plant growth process [79], [80]. An extremely high amount of N causes excessive vegetative growth, thereby making plants fall easily and increasing susceptibility to disease [81]. Meanwhile, the lack of N nutrients can limit cell division, enlargement [82], and the formation of chlorophyll, leading to stunted growth as well as yellowing of leaves [81].

The lowest optimum yield was obtained from exchangeable K, which was only 5.58 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 95%. This was presumably because the K content in the soil is very low, thereby affecting the hybrid maize yield. Potassium (K) is required by plants for physiological functions, including carbohydrate metabolism, enzyme activity, osmotic regulation, efficient

water use, N uptake, protein synthesis, and assimilate translocation [83]–[86]. It also plays a role in improving the quality of crop yields (McKenzie, 2013, Subandi, 2013).

The optimum hybrid maize yield of the remaining is relatively diverse. This includes effective depth and organic carbon, which were both 8.46 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 97%. Furthermore, coarse material and soil erosion were 8.17 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 96% and 89%, while rock outcrops and surface rock were 7.41 ton/ha with an R2 value of 92%. The absence of coarse material > 2 mm in diameter indicated that plant roots can grow freely on the surface or deeper parts of the soil [89], because the deeper the roots of the maize, the greater the maize yield [90], [91]. The addition of organic matter will increase maize yield [92]–[94] and organic C content [95] because soil organic matter is a strong positive predictor of yield [96]. Kane et al. [96] also stated that the addition of more organic matter will improve water retention, thereby reducing maize yield losses due to drought. The slope has a significant effect on soil degradation [97]. According to a previous study, erosion and maize yield are negatively correlated, hence, increased erosion will reduce maize productivity [98]. Soil erosion on flat land is slower surface runoff [99]. It was also reported that surface rocks and outcrops are the limiting factors in the suitability of maize plantations [100]. Therefore, a high percentage of rock outcrops will complicate land cultivation and plant root growth.

3.3. Land suitability criteria for hybrid maize crops

Table 8 shows the yield limit for each class from the calculation of the optimum yield, where the class range for each land characteristic is derived. Based on the optimum yield of the highest hybrid maize, there were 2 indicators, namely the total N content and the slope. The total N indicator with a very suitable class (S1) was achieved when the value in the soil was greater than 0.11%, while in the moderately suitable class (S2), it was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.08-0.10%. In the marginally appropriate class (S3), the total N indicator was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.06-0.07%, while the not suitable class (N) was achieved when the content was less than 0.06%. On the slope indicator with class S1, it was obtained when the slope class ranges from 0-7.70%%, while class S2 was achieved when the slope class ranges from 7.71-11.84%. Furthermore, in classes S3 and N, it was obtained when the slope class ranged from 11.85-18.25% and greater than 18.25%, respectively.

Based on the optimum yield of the lowest hybrid maize, only the exchangeable K was the indicator. In classes S1 and S2, it was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil was greater than 0.25 cmol(+)/kg and ranges from 0.14-0.24 cmol(+)/kg, respectively. Furthermore, class S3 was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil ranges from 0.05-0.13 cmol(+)/kg, while in class N, it was obtained when the exchangeable K content in the soil was less than 0.05 cmol(+)/kg. The remaining variables and indicators were relatively varied according to the optimum yield of hybrid maize and the range of land suitability classes obtained as presented in Table 8.

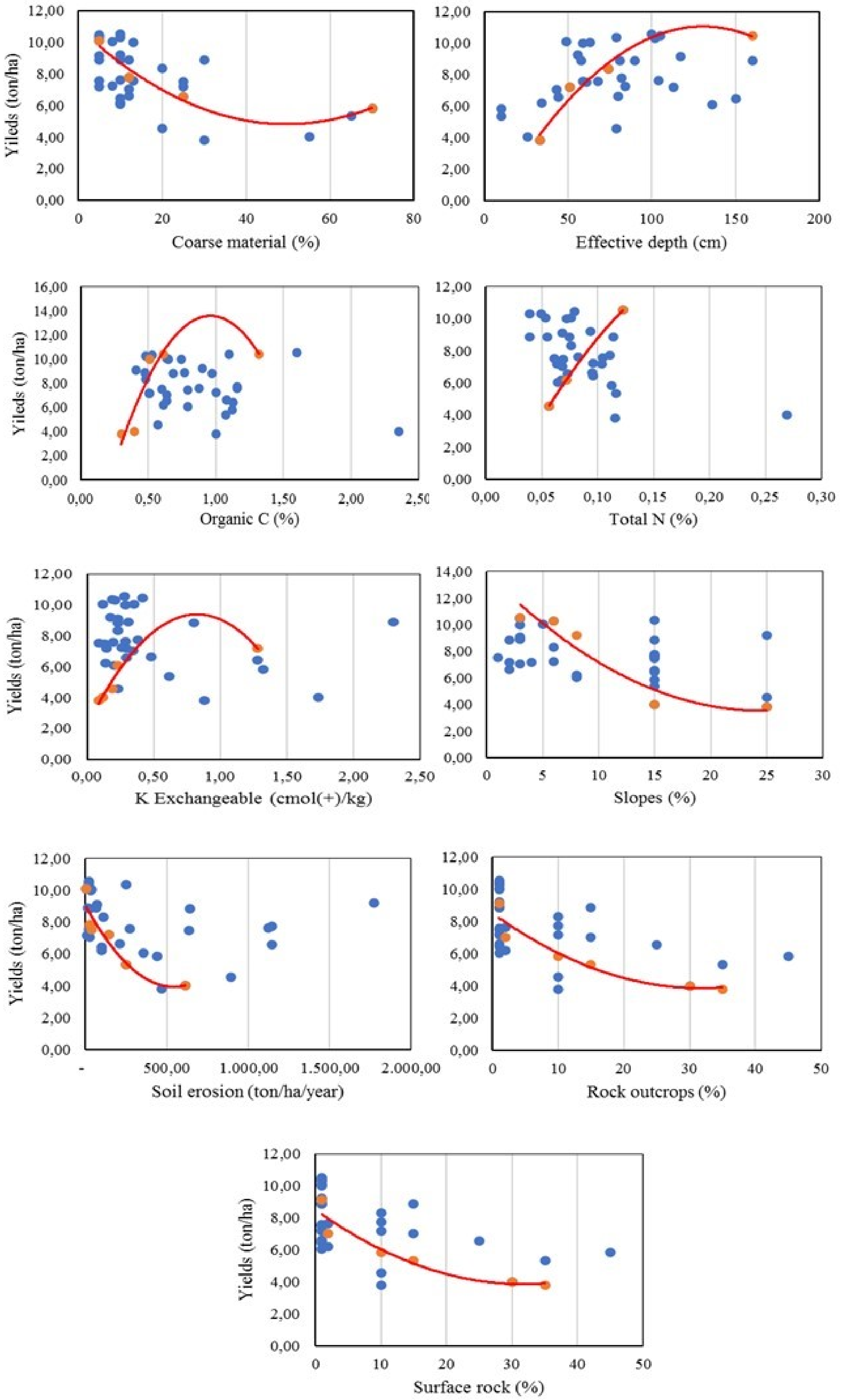

Figure 4: Scatter diagram relationship among maize yield and land characteristics

Table 8: Yield limits of hybrid maize and values obtained in each land suitability class interval by land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	Yield Limits (ton/ha)			Value of Land Suitability Criterion Obtained			
	S1 - S2 (80% x Y_{optim})	S2 – S3 (60% x Y_{optim})	S3 – N (40% x Y_{optim})	S1	S2	S3	N
Rooting condition (rc)							
Coarse material (%)	8.17	6.05	4.04	0 – 13.51	13.51 – 27.48	27.48 – 52.41	> 52.41
Effective depth (cm)	8.46	6.37	4.29	≥ 69.66	49.36 – 69.65	33.29 – 49.35	< 33.29
Nutrient retention (nr)							
Organic carbon (%)	8.46	6.37	4.29	≥ 0.61	0.52 – 0.60	0.34 – 0.51	< 0.34
Nutrient availability (na)							
Total N (%)	8.54	6.43	4.33	≥ 0.11	0.08 – 0.10	0.06 – 0.07	< 0.06
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	5.58	4.42	2.98	≥ 0.25	0.14 – 0.24	0.05 – 0.13	< 0.05
Erosion hazard (eh)							
Slopes (%)	8.54	6.43	4.33	0 – 7.70	7.71 – 11.84	11.85 – 18.25	> 18.25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	8.17	6.05	4.04	≤ 55.32	55.32 – 195.29	195.30 – 605.57	> 605.57
Land preparation (lp)							
Rock outcrops (%)	7.41	5.69	3.97	0 – 4.46	4.47 – 13.10	13.11 – 31.89	> 31.89
Surface rock (%)	7.41	5.69	3.97	0 – 4.46	4.47 – 13.10	13.11 – 31.89	> 31.89

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, and N = not suitable.

Based on the relationship between the quality and characteristics of the selected land with optimum results, the criteria for hybrid maize land suitability were obtained as shown in Table 8. These criteria described the actual state of achieving optimum, moderate, and minimum yields of hybrid maize in the field with values of 80%, 60%, and 40%, respectively. According to Sukarman et al. [101], the parameters used in the land suitability assessment must describe the actual conditions. This is due to the significant positive correlation between maize yield and land suitability class [102].

The land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are fewer and have referred to the optimum yield. Meanwhile, the land quality and characteristics in this new criterion are less because it only consists of root conditions with characteristics of coarse material and effective depth, nutrient retention with organic C, and nutrient availability with total N and K exchangeable. It also consists of erosion hazards with characteristics of slopes and soil erosion, as well as land preparation with surface rocks and rock outcrops only. The land qualities selected and maize yields consistent with the land potential are the basis for developing suitability criteria. This will reduce the land characteristics and make the evaluation process faster, cheaper, and easier with accurate results [26]. Some characteristics and land quality criteria were not made because they did not significantly affect the yield of hybrid maize. The number and distribution of the data were still limited and the diversity of values was small or not measurable in the field [72].

Compared to Wahyunto et al. [47], the new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants in Table 9 is more realistic in value with the conditions in the field and is based on the achievement of optimum yields. The current land suitability criteria are still general and not

specific to maize yields [26], although the agronomic and yield potential of each maize variety differ, based on the diversity of characteristics and land quality in the field. There are still limitations on the use of these results for the development of hybrid maize in the Boalemo Regency because the setting is only based on land characteristics and optimum yields in this regency. Therefore, further investigation to expand the scope of the research area nationally with more diverse and contrasting land characteristic values is recommended to determine the effect on hybrid maize production.

Table 9: Comparison of new and general land suitability criteria with land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	**New Land Suitability Criterion of Hybrid Maize**				**Land Suitability Criterion of General Maize** [47]			
	S1	**S2**	**S3**	**N**	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	**N**
Rooting condition (rc)								
Coarse material (%)	0 – 13.51	13.51 – 27.48	27.48 – 52.41	> 52.41	< 15	15 – 35	35 – 55	>55
Effective depth (cm)	≥ 69.66	49.36 – 69.65	33.29 – 49.35	< 33.29	> 60	60 – 40	40 – 25	< 25
Nutrient retention (nr)								
Organic carbon (%)	≥ 0.61	0.52 – 0.60	0.34 – 0.51	< 0.34	> 1.20	0.8 – 1.2	< 0.8	-
Nutrient availability (na)								
Total N (%)	≥ 0.11	0.08 – 0.10	0.06 – 0.07	< 0.06	Mo	Lo	VLo	-
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	≥ 0.25	0.14 – 0.24	0.05 – 0.13	< 0.05	Mo-Hi	Lo	VLo	-
Erosion hazard (eh)								
Slopes (%)	0 – 7.70	7.71 – 11.84	11.85 – 18.25	> 18.25	< 8	8 – 15	15 – 25	> 25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	≤ 55.32	55.32 – 195.29	195.30 – 605.57	> 605.57	-	VLi	Li-Mo	He-VHe
Land preparation (lp)								
Rock outcrops (%)	0 – 4.46	4.47 – 13.10	13.11 – 31.89	> 31.89	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40
Surface rock (%)	0 – 4.46	4.47 – 13.10	13.11 – 31.89	> 31.89	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, N = not suitable, Hi = high, Mo = moderate, Lo = low, VLo = very low, He = heavy, Li = light, VLi = very light, VHe = very heavy.

Conclusions

Land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are determined by land qualities, namely root conditions, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, as well as land preparation, and land characteristics, including coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. The highest optimum yield of 8.54 ton/ha was achieved by the total N and slopes for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest value of 5.58 ton/ha was attained by exchangeable K for class S1. These results showed that the combination of the PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis can be an alternative approach to establishing new land suitability criteria for crops based on optimum yields and selected land quality.

Data Availability

All data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding Statement

This study was funded by the Directorate of Research, Technology and Community Service, Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, grant number B/105/UN47.D1/PT.01.03/2022.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute Research and Community Service of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo for their financial and administrative support.

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ID 3800877

Nurdin, Nurdin SA CA [1], Asda Rauf[1], Yunnita Rahim[1], Echan Adam[1], Nikmah Musa[1], Fitriah Suryani Jamin[1], Rival Rahman[1], Suyono Dude[1], Hidayat Arismunandar Katili[2] + Show Affiliations

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Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id>

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Kepada: nurdin@ung.ac.id

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Determination of Land Suitability Criteria for Maize Hybrid in Boalemo Regency Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

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ID 3800877

Nurdin, Nurdin SA CA [1], Asda Rauf[1], Yunnita Rahim[1], Echan Adam[1], Nikmah Musa[1], Fitriah Suryani Jamin[1], Rival Rahman[1], Suyono Dude[1], Hidayat Arismunandar Katili[2] + Show Affiliations

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Supplemental files

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Table 2. Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics..docx	18 kB
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Table 4. Fornell-Larker Criterion Test.docx	14 kB
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Table 7. The Optimum Hybrid Maize Yield by Land Quality and Land Characteristics.docx	14 kB
Table 8. Yield Limits of Hybrid Maize and Values Obtained in Each Land Suitability Class.docx	15 kB
Table 9. Comparison of New and General Land Suitability Criteria with Land Quality and Characteristics.docx	17 kB

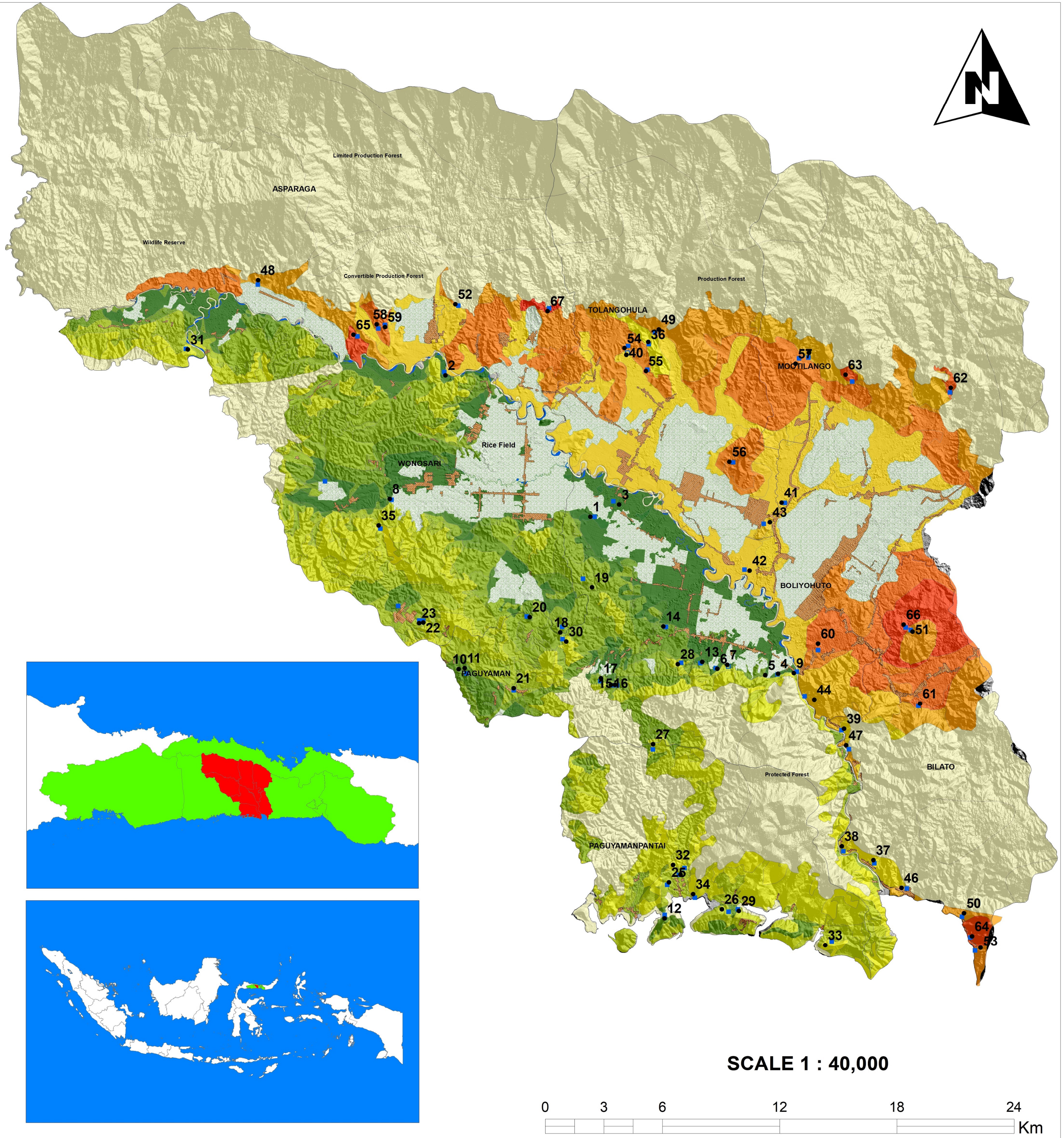
Figure files

Figures.rar	6 MB

Legend

● Soil Sampling ■ Tile Box

SPT	Slopes (%)	Relief	Land Use	Soil Types	Elevation (m asl)	Area (Ha)
1	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Typic Endoaquepts	100 - 250	156.78
2	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Vertic Haplustepts	100 - 250	26.92
3	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	4,756.57
4	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	100 - 250	48.15
5	3 - 8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	91.77
6	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	0 - 100	684.95
7	3 - 8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	249.07
8	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	129.12
9	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3.51
10	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Rhodustalfs	100 - 250	65.54
11	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	471.97
12	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Lithic Haplustolls	0 - 100	302.43
13	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	0 - 100	1,412.81
14	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustults	0 - 100	1,071.76
15	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	297.87
16	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	254.62
17	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	853.23
18	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Lithic Haplustults	100 - 250	3,304.32
19	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	793.13
20	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	3,293.28
21	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	250 - 500	364.88
22	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	165.87
23	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	2,038.84
24	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	0 - 100	169.98
25	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	349.74
26	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	749.22
27	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,528.98
28	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	3,748.72
29	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	434.63
30	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Lithic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	3,908.31
31	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Haplustepts	250 - 500	154.35
32	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Lithic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,474.02
33	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	229.51
34	> 45	Mountainous	Upland	Lithic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	853.11
35	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Rhodustalfs	0 - 100	86.40
36	8 - 15	Hilly	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	254.52
37	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Fluventic Ustropepts	0 - 100	286.81
38	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	27.33
39	> 45	Mountainous	Upland	Fluventic Ustropepts	250 - 500	101.55
40	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3,052.35
41	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3,834.11
42	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	1,072.70
43	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Typic Tropaquepts	100 - 250	65.04
44	15 - 30	Hilly	Plantation	Fluventic Ustropepts	250 - 500	1,043.31
45	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Argiustolls	100 - 250	791.23
46	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	53.32
47	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Fluventic Ustropepts	100 - 250	336.36
48	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	250 - 500	705.51
49	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	250 - 500	2,196.41
50	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	104.35
51	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	871.02
52	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplusteps	100 - 250	28.16
53	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Tropaquepts	0 - 100	89.21
54	3 -8	Wavy	Plantation	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	1,442.70
55	3 -8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Argiustolls	100 - 250	1,475.90
56	3 -8	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	413.33
57	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	250 - 500	3,864.27
58	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	151.63
59	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Dystrudepts	0 - 100	63.14
60	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	2,054.29
61	30 - 45	Mountainous	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	52.44
62	30 - 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	63.05
63	30 - 45	Mountainous	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	48.35
64	30 - 45	Mountainous	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	171.54
65	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	136.96
66	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,063.61
67	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplusteps	250 - 500	79.96
			Total			60,518.81



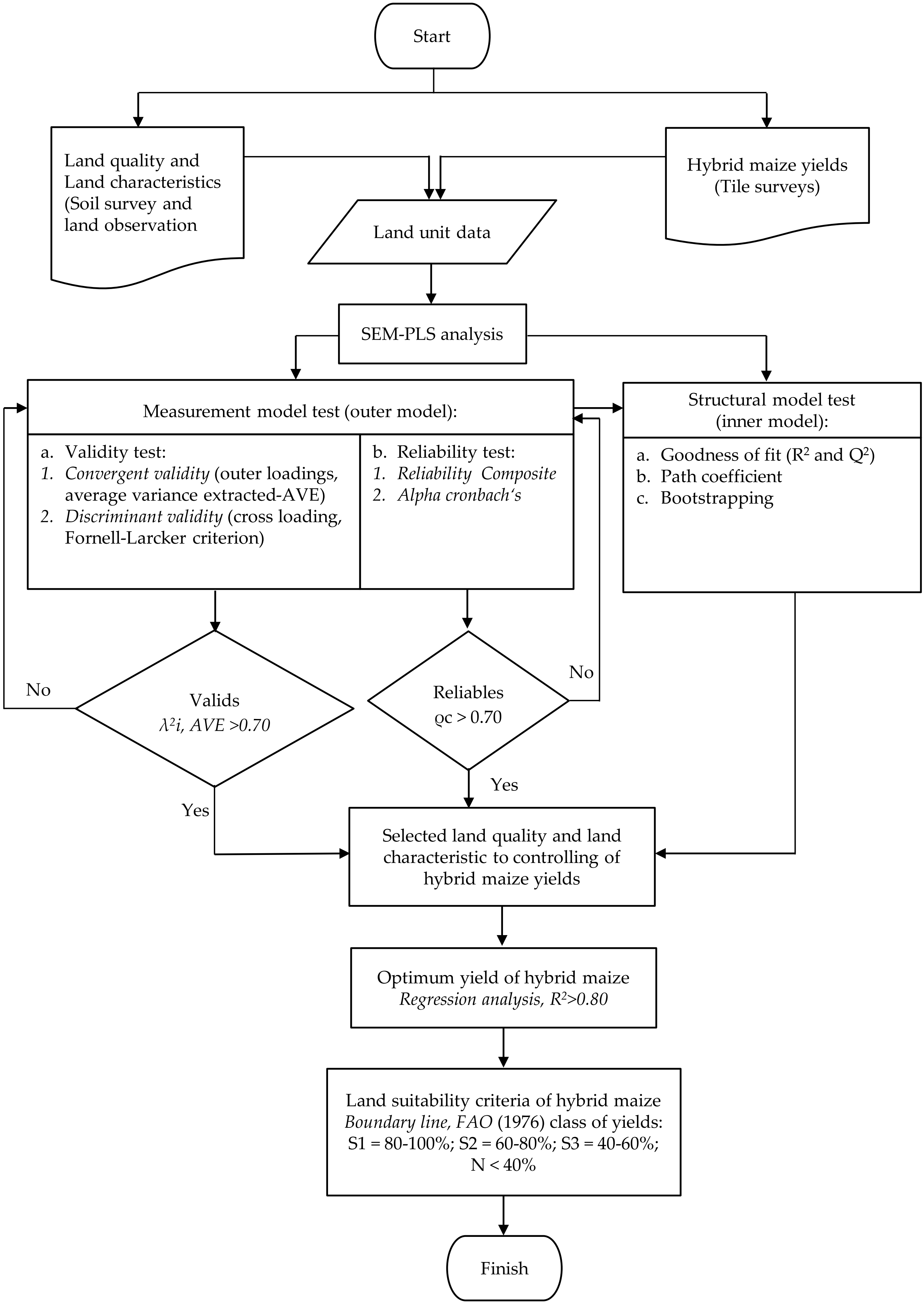
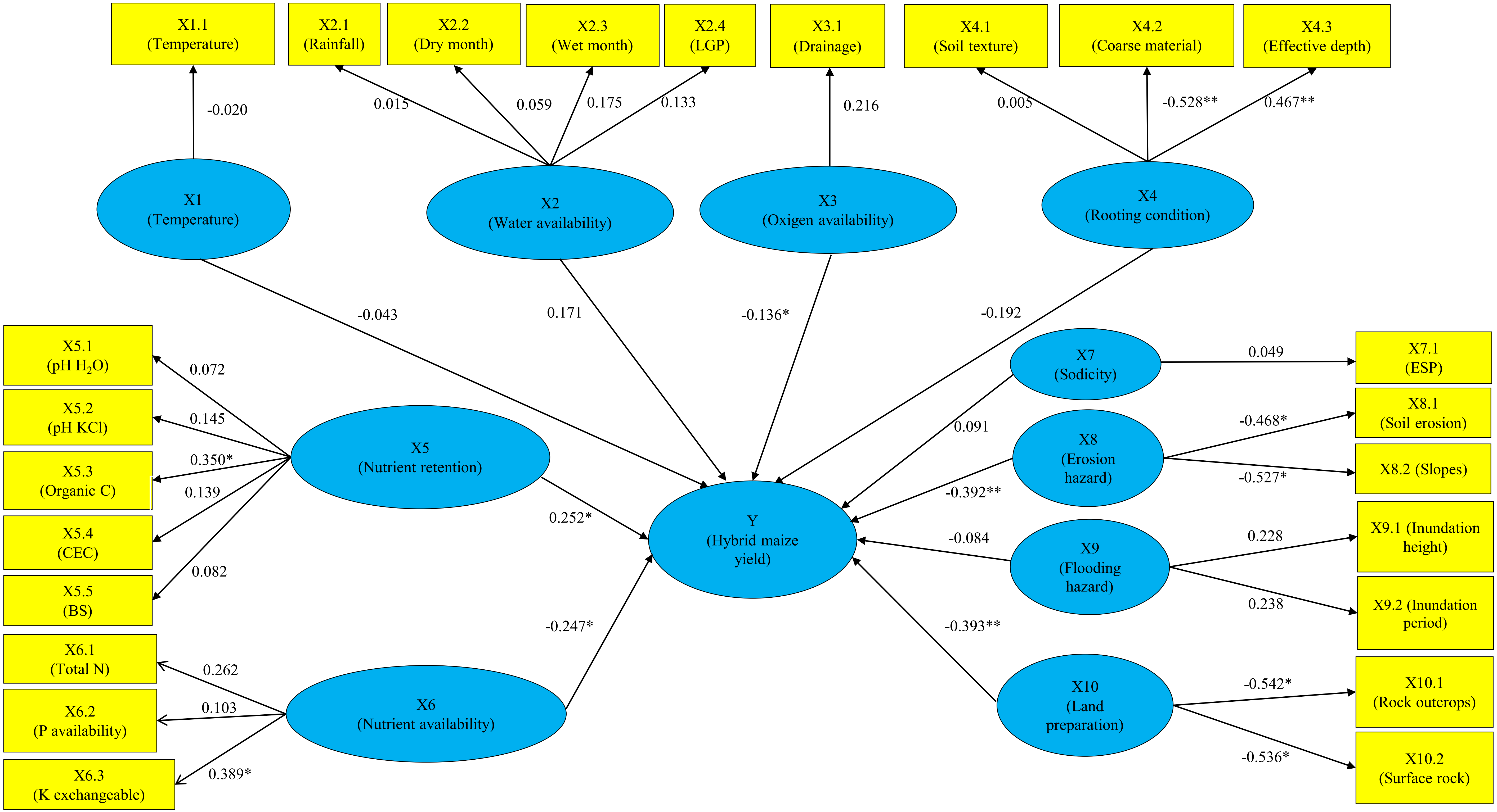


Figure 2: Research framework



Note:
LGP = long growth periode; C = carbon; N = nitrigen;
CEC = cation exchage capacity; BS = base saturation;
P = phospate; K = potassium; ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage
* = sig. 5%; ** = sig.1%; R^2 = 53.70%

Figure 3: Path Coefficient of land quality on hybrid maize yield.

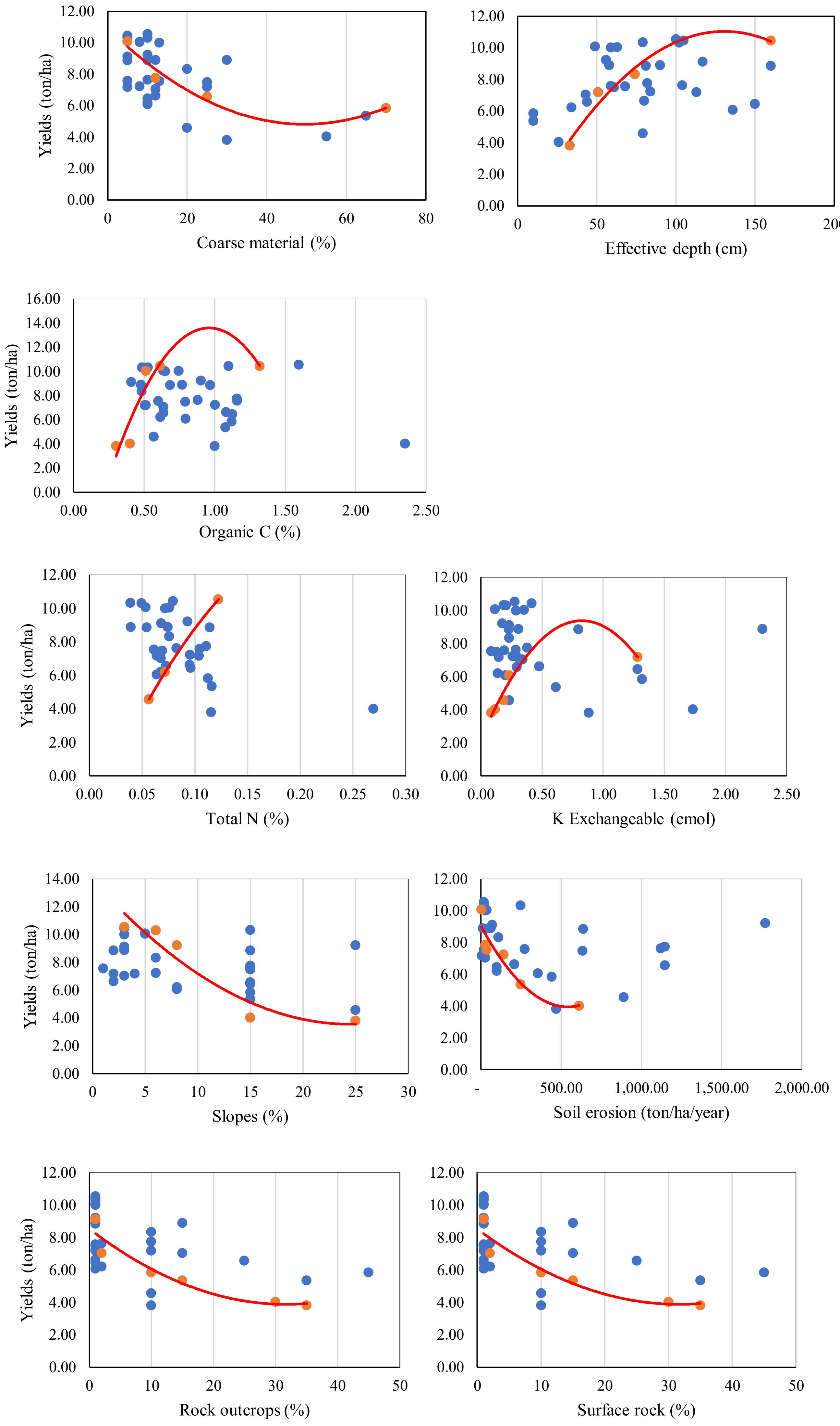


Figure 4: Scatter diagram relationship among maize yield and land characteristics

Table 1: Latent variables and indicators used in this study

Latent variables		Indicators		Data Sources
Notation	Land quality	Notation	Land characteristics	
X1	Temperature (t)	X1.1	Temperature	[45]
X2	Water availability (wa)	X2.1	Rainfall	[45]
		X2.2	Wet month	Rainfall > 200 mm
		X2.3	Dry month	Rainfall < 100 mm
		X2.4	Long growth period (LGP)	Water balance (Thornwhite method), soil moisture storage (Gravimetric method), water surplus and defisit days
X3	Oxygen availability (oa)	X3.1	Drainage	Soil survey and land observation
X4	Rooting condition (rc)	X4.1	Texture	Pipet method
		X4.1.1	Sand fraction	
		X4.1.2	Silt fraction	
		X4.1.3	Clay	
		X4.2	Coarse material	Soil survey and land observation
		X4.3	Effective depth	
X5	Nutrient retention (nr)	X5.1	pH H_2O	pH meter (1 : 2.5)
		X5.2	pH KCl	
		X5.3	Organic C	Walkley and Black method
		X5.4	Cation exchange capacity (CEC)	1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 Extracted
		X5.5	Base saturation	Calculation
X6	Nutrient availability (na)	X6.1	Total N	Kjeldahl method
		X6.2	P availability	Olsen method
		X6.3	K exchangeable	1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 Extracted
X7	Sodicity (xn)	X7.1	Exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP)	Calculation
X8	Erosion hazard (eh)	X8.1	Slopes	Soil survey and land observation
		X8.2	Soil erosion	
X9	Flooding hazard (fh)	X9.1	Inundation height	Soil survey and land observation
		X9.2	Inundation period	
X10	Land preparation (lp)	X10.1	Rock outcrops	Soil survey and land observation
		X10.2	Surface rock	
Y	Hybrid maize yield	Y.1	Hybrid maize yield	Tile box methods

Table 2: Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics.

Latent variables / Indicators	Unit	n	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
X1 (Temperature)							
X1.1 (Temperature)	ºC	67	26.79	27.80	28.01	28.19	0.63
X2 (Water availability)							
X2.1 (Rainfall)	mm	67	1,246.00	1,533.42	1,478.00	1,849.00	232.69
X2.2 (Wet month)	month	67	0.00	1.03	1.00	3.00	0.85
X2.3 (Dry month)	month	67	2.00	3.39	4.00	5.00	1.06
X2.4 (LGP)	day	67	211.00	246.00	214.00	304.00	44.54
X3 (Oxygen availability)							
X3.1 (Drainage)	class	67	0.00	3.76	4.00	6.00	1.82
X4 (Rooting conditions)							
X4.1 (texture)	class	67	1.00	2.21	2.00	5.00	0.99
X4.1.1 (Sand fraction)	%	67	5.00	41.58	43.00	81.33	18.51
X4.1.2 (Silt fraction)	%	67	7.33	27.31	24.50	51.50	11.54
X4.1.3 (Clay)	%	67	11.33	31.90	30.00	56.33	12.72
X4.2 (Coarse material)	%	67	5.00	17.27	10.00	70.00	16.58
X4.3 (Effective depth)	cm	67	10.00	74.55	74.00	160.00	36.40
X5 (Nutrient retention)							
X5.1 (pH H_2O)		67	5.00	5.92	5.90	7.15	0.52
X5.2 (pH KCl)		67	4.35	5.24	5.17	6.60	0.56
X5.3 (Organic C)	%	67	0.41	0.85	0.77	2.35	0.39
X5.4 (CEC)	cmol(+)/kg	67	8.94	24.89	22.43	59.57	11.41
X5.5 (Base saturation)	%	67	45.03	56.22	52.85	81.89	9.76
X6 (Nutrient availability)							
X6.1 (Total N)	%	67	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.27	0.04
X6.2 (P availability)	mg/kg	67	0.73	8.62	3.77	58.67	12.61
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	cmol(+)/kg	67	0.07	0.39	0.24	1.92	0.42
X7 (Sodicity)							
X7.1 (ESP)	%	67	0.76	7.06	6.20	24.17	5.62
X8 (Erosion hazard)							
X8.1 (Slopes)	%	67	1.00	9.58	6.00	25.00	7.29
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	ton/ha/year	67	3.66	334.51	110.27	1772.43	439.08
X9 (Flooding hazard)							
X9.1 (Inundation height)	cm	67	0.00	7.58	0.00	50.00	17.10
X9.2 (Inundation period)	day	67	0.00	0.64	0.00	5.00	1.52
X10 (Land preparation)							
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	%	67	0.00	6.64	0.00	45.00	11.56
X10.2 (Surface rock)	%	67	0.00	6.58	0.00	45.00	11.59
Y (Hybrid maize yield)	ton/ha	67	2.85	4.95	4.68	8.07	1.15

n = the number of the land unit, min = minimum, max is maximum, SD = standard deviations, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

Table 3: Outer loading (loading factor) and the average variance extracted from study variables.

Indicators (land characteristics)		Latent Variables (land quality)	Loading Factors	t-Stat	Status	AVE
X1.1 (Temperature)	→	X1 (Temperature)	1.000**	11.192	Valid	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall)	→	X2 (Water availability)	0.838	0.085	Valid	0.906
X2.2 (Wet month)	→		0.989	0.999	Valid	
X2.3 (Dry month)	→		0.850	0.428	Valid	
X2.4 (LGP)	→		0.993*	1.431	Valid	
X3.1 (Drainage)	→	X3 (Oxygen availability)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X4.1 (Texture)	→	X4 (Rooting condition)	0.013	0.066	Invalid	0.573
X4.2 (Coarse material)	→		0.921	1.086	Valid	
X4.3 (Effective depth)	→		-0.899	1.047	Valid	
X5.1 (pH H_2O)	→	X5 (Nutrient retention)	0.647	0.857	Valid	0.360 (invalid)
X5.2 (pH KCl)	→		0.570**	1.973	Valid	
X5.3 (Organic C)	→		0.831**	3.135	Valid	
X5.4 (CEC)	→		0.436*	1.381	Invalid	
X5.5 (Base saturation)	→		0.365	0.845	Invalid	
X6.1 (Total N)	→	X6 (Nutrient availability)	0.760**	3.226	Valid	0.585
X6.2 (P availability)	→		0.587*	1.385	Valid	
X6.3 (K exchangeable)	→		0.897**	6.907	Valid	
X7.1 (ESP)	→	X7 (Sodicity)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes)	→	X8 (Erosion hazard)	0.954**	21.438	Valid	0.932
X8.2 (Soil erosion)	→		0.941**	18.308	Valid	
X9.1 (Inundation height)	→	X9 (Flooding hazard)	0.984**	4.213	Valid	0.984
X9.2 (Inundation period)	→		0.985**	3.918	Valid	
X10.1 (Rock outcrops)	→	X10 (Land preparation)	0.998**	189.133	Valid	0.995
X10.2 (Surface rock)	→		0.998**	320.273	Valid	

AVE = average variance extracted, LGP = long growth periods, CEC = cation exchange capacity, and ESP = exchangeable sodium percentage.

Table 4: Fornell-Larker criterion test

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1	1.000										
X2	0.940	0.952									
X3	0.059	0.149	1.000								
X4	0.082	0.030	-0.162	0.757							
X5	-0.360	-0.239	-0.103	-0.368	0.600						
X6	-0.069	0.021	0.012	-0.518	0.694	0.765					
X7	0.382	0.429	0.084	0.228	-0.030	-0.217	1.000				
X8	0.019	-0.082	-0.501	0.285	-0.317	-0.370	-0.009	0.966			
X9	-0.104	-0.033	0.237	-0.204	0.073	0.090	0.202	-0.250	0.992		
X10	0.198	0.093	-0.223	0.873	-0.303	-0.538	0.362	0.304	-0.126	0.998	
Y	0.018	0.152	0.169	-0.578	0.387	0.456	-0.016	-0.517	0.164	-0.568	1.000

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = maize hybrid yield.

Table 5: Cross-Loading of latent variables to indicators

Indicators	Latent Variables										
	X1	**X2**	**X3**	**X4**	**X5**	**X6**	**X7**	**X8**	**X9**	**X10**	**Y**
X1.1	1	0.8300	0.0312	0.0240	-0.2959	-0.0592	0.3270	0.0195	-0.0837	0.1680	-0.0204
X2.1	0.9783	0.8379	-0.0035	-0.0063	-0.2488	-0.0320	0.3555	-0.0017	-0.0539	0.1552	0.0155
X2.2	0.8534	0.9887	0.1938	-0.0557	-0.1257	0.0988	0.4025	-0.1435	-0.0279	-0.0178	0.1748
X2.3	0.5223	0.8497	0.1523	0.2464	-0.2505	-0.1161	0.4641	-0.1494	0.0144	0.2154	0.0592
X2.4	0.8293	0.9928	0.1721	-0.0334	-0.1524	0.0833	0.4440	-0.1713	-0.0383	-0.0031	0.1331
X3.1	0.0312	0.1785	1	-0.1541	-0.1091	-0.0375	0.0843	-0.4964	0.2530	-0.2229	0.2156
X4.1	-0.0058	-0.0006	-0.1696	0.0126	0.2127	0.1013	0.2173	0.1761	0.0055	-0.0225	0.0050
X4.2	-0.0728	-0.1082	-0.0829	0.9212	-0.2754	-0.5494	0.1845	0.2891	-0.2674	0.7910	-0.5276
X4.3	-0.1289	-0.1240	0.2071	-0.8990	0.2046	0.3209	-0.2633	-0.1587	0.0730	-0.7693	0.4666
X5.1	-0.2975	-0.4140	-0.3824	-0.3027	0.6470	0.3024	-0.1283	0.1730	-0.0342	-0.1190	0.0718
X5.2	-0.2033	-0.2939	-0.4480	-0.2791	0.5701	0.3176	-0.0273	0.1935	0.0801	-0.1829	0.1445
X5.3	-0.2440	-0.0158	0.1276	-0.1134	0.8308	0.5651	0.0728	-0.5076	0.0545	-0.1147	0.3501
X5.4	0.0537	0.1002	0.0033	0.0110	0.4360	0.4081	0.3732	-0.0504	0.1426	-0.0137	0.1395
X5.5	-0.2717	-0.2512	-0.1053	-0.4382	0.3650	0.4343	-0.6008	-0.0619	-0.1498	-0.4876	0.0825
X6.1	-0.0256	0.1778	0.0335	-0.1950	0.7028	0.7604	0.0453	-0.3878	-0.0809	-0.2162	0.2623
X6.2	-0.1201	-0.2238	-0.4256	-0.2590	0.4149	0.5865	-0.2829	-0.0389	-0.0267	-0.2860	0.1025
X6.3	-0.0437	0.0283	0.0310	-0.5607	0.5145	0.8974	-0.3341	-0.2613	0.2133	-0.6520	0.3892
X7.1	0.3270	0.4411	0.0843	0.2420	0.0290	-0.2417	1	-0.0286	0.2142	0.3621	0.0487
X8.1	-0.0226	-0.2234	-0.5132	0.2998	-0.2625	-0.3475	-0.0481	0.9537	-0.3383	0.3031	-0.5274
X8.2	0.0649	-0.0590	-0.4223	0.1646	-0.2942	-0.2950	-0.0035	0.9409	-0.0988	0.2516	-0.4682
X9.1	-0.0996	-0.0225	0.2254	-0.1949	0.1126	0.1483	0.1939	-0.2440	0.9835	-0.1342	0.2278
X9.2	-0.0658	-0.0305	0.2717	-0.1860	0.0271	0.0449	0.2271	-0.2252	0.9849	-0.0901	0.2380
X10.1	0.1848	0.0403	-0.2340	0.8480	-0.2309	-0.5544	0.3760	0.3058	-0.1188	0.9977	-0.5424
X10.2	0.1503	0.0225	-0.2107	0.8629	-0.2274	-0.5592	0.3464	0.2812	-0.1076	0.9976	-0.5365
Y.1	-0.0204	0.1413	0.2156	-0.5479	0.3425	0.3790	0.0487	-0.5271	0.2367	-0.5408	1

X1 = temperature, X2 = water availability, X3 = oxygen availability, X4 = rooting condition, X5 = nutrient retention, X6 = nutrient availability, X7 = sodicity, X8 = erosion hazard, X9 = flooding hazard, X10 = land preparation, Y = hybrid maize yield, X1.1 = temperature, X2.1 = rainfall, X2.2 = the wet month, X2.3 = the dry month, X2.3 = long growth period, X3.1 = drainage, X4.1 = texture, X4.2 = coarse material, X4.3 = effective depth, X5.1 = organic C, X5.2 = cation exchanges capacity, X5.3 = base saturation, X6.1 = total N, X6.2 = P availability, X6.3 = K exchangeable, X7.1 = the exchange sodium percentage, X8.1 = slopes, X8.2 = soil erosion, X9.1 = inundation height, X9.2 = inundation period, X10.1 = rock outcrops, X10.2 = surface rock, Y.1 = hybrid maize yield.

Table 6: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha test.

Indicators (land characteristics)	***Cronbach's Alpha***	***Composite Reliability***
X1.1 (Temperature)	1.000	1.000
X2.1 (Rainfall) X2.2 (Wet month) X2.3 (Dry month) X2.4 (Long growth periods)	0.975	0.965
X3.1 (Drainage)	1.000	1.000
X4.1 (Texture) X4.2 (Coarse material) X4.3 (Effective depth)	0.002[nor]	-1.055[nor]
X5.1 (pH H_2O) X5.2 (pH KCl) X5.3 (Organic C) X5.4 (Cation exchange capacity) X5.5 (Base saturation)	0.718	0.628
X6.1 (Total N) X6.2 (P availability) X6.3 (K exchangeable)	0.805	0.681
X7.1 (Exchangeable sodium percentage)	1.000	1.000
X8.1 (Slopes) X8.2 (Soil erosion)	0.965	0.928
X9.1 (Inundation height) X9.2 (Inundation period)	0.992	0.984
X10.1 (Rock outcrops) X10.2 (Surface rock)	0.998	0.995

nor = not reliable.

Table 7: The optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	**Optimum Yield (ton/ha)**	**Yield Equation**	**R^2**
Rooting condition (rc)			
Coarse material	8.17	$Y = 0.0025900x^2 – 0.2568578x + 11.9093576$	0.96
Effective depth	8.46	$Y = -0.0008354x^2 + 0.29100569x – 1.3957496$	0.97
Nutrient retention (nr)			
Organic carbon	8.46	$Y = -25.492979x^2 + 47.9575089X – 8.9895067$	0.97
Nutrient availability (na)			
Total N	8.54	$Y = -305.5574654X^2 + 155.8690907X – 2.7439640$	1.00
K Exchangeable	5.58	$Y = -10.6697409X^2 + 18.5239943X + 2.3179289$	0.95
Erosion hazard (eh)			
Slopes	8.54	$Y = 0.0183X^2 – 0.9559X + 14.806$	0.92
Soil erosion	8.17	$y = 0.0000184X^2 – 0.0198647X + 9.0537569$	0.89
Land preparation (lp)			
Rock outcrops	7.41	$Y = 0.0057496X^2 – 0.3845867X + 8.6269785$	0.92
Surface rock	7.41	$Y = 0.0057496X^2 – 0.3945867X + 8.6269785$	0.92

Table 8: Yield limits of hybrid maize and values obtained in each land suitability class interval by land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	**Yield Limits (ton/ha)**			**Value of Land Suitability Criterion Obtained**			
	S1 - S2 (80% x Y_{optim})	**S2 – S3 (60% x Y_{optim})**	**S3 – N (40% x Y_{optim})**	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	N
Rooting condition (rc)							
Coarse material (%)	8.17	6.05	4.04	0 – 13.51	13.51 – 27.48	27.48 – 52.41	> 52.41
Effective depth (cm)	8.46	6.37	4.29	≥ 69.66	49.36 – 69.65	33.29 – 49.35	< 33.29
Nutrient retention (nr)							
Organic carbon (%)	8.46	6.37	4.29	≥ 0.61	0.52 – 0.60	0.34 – 0.51	< 0.34
Nutrient availability (na)							
Total N (%)	8.54	6.43	4.33	≥ 0.11	0.08 – 0.10	0.06 – 0.07	< 0.06
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	5.58	4.42	2.98	≥ 0.25	0.14 – 0.24	0.05 – 0.13	< 0.05
Erosion hazard (eh)							
Slopes (%)	8.54	6.43	4.33	0 – 7.70	7.71 – 11.84	11.85 – 18.25	> 18.25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	8.17	6.05	4.04	≤ 55.32	55.32 – 195.29	195.30 – 605.57	> 605.57
Land preparation (lp)							
Rock outcrops (%)	7.41	5.69	3.97	0 – 4.46	4.47 – 13.10	13.11 – 31.89	> 31.89
Surface rock (%)	7.41	5.69	3.97	0 – 4.46	4.47 – 13.10	13.11 – 31.89	> 31.89

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, and N = not suitable.

Table 9: Comparison of new and general land suitability criteria with land quality and characteristics.

Land Quality/Land Characteristics	New Land Suitability Criterion of Hybrid Maize				Land Suitability Criterion of General Maize [47]			
	S1	S2	S3	N	S1	S2	S3	N
Rooting condition (rc)								
Coarse material (%)	0 – 13.51	13.51 – 27.48	27.48 – 52.41	> 52.41	< 15	15 – 35	35 – 55	>55
Effective depth (cm)	≥ 69.66	49.36 – 69.65	33.29 – 49.35	< 33.29	> 60	60 – 40	40 – 25	< 25
Nutrient retention (nr)								
Organic carbon (%)	≥ 0.61	0.52 – 0.60	0.34 – 0.51	< 0.34	> 1.20	0.8 – 1.2	< 0.8	-
Nutrient availability (na)								
Total N (%)	≥ 0.11	0.08 – 0.10	0.06 – 0.07	< 0.06	Mo	Lo	VLo	-
K Exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	≥ 0.25	0.14 – 0.24	0.05 – 0.13	< 0.05	Mo-Hi	Lo	VLo	-
Erosion hazard (eh)								
Slopes (%)	0 – 7.70	7.71 – 11.84	11.85 – 18.25	> 18.25	< 8	8 – 15	15 – 25	> 25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	≤ 55.32	55.32 – 195.29	195.30 – 605.57	> 605.57	-	VLi	Li-Mo	He-VHe
Land preparation (lp)								
Rock outcrops (%)	0 – 4.46	4.47 – 13.10	13.11 – 31.89	> 31.89	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40
Surface rock (%)	0 – 4.46	4.47 – 13.10	13.11 – 31.89	> 31.89	< 5	5 – 15	15 – 40	> 40

S1 = very suitable, S2 = moderately suitable, S3 = marginally suitable, N = not suitable, Hi = high, Mo = moderate, Lo = low, VLo = very low, He = heavy, Li = light, VLi = very light, VHe = very heavy.

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Production B <production.b@hindawi.com> 17 Januari 2023 pukul 21.45
Kepada: Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id>

Dear Dr. Nurdin,

Thanks for reaching us.

Your query has been forwarded to the respective department; they'll reach you back as soon as possible.

Thanks,
Arun

From: Nurdin <nurdin@ung.ac.id>
Sent: Sunday, January 15, 2023 7:34 PM
To: Production B <production.b@hindawi.com>
Subject: Re: 3800877: Galley Proofs

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Santhiya Shanmugasundaram <santhiya.shanmugasundaram@hindawi.com> 18 Januari 2023 pukul 08.45
Balas Ke: Santhiya Shanmugasundaram <santhiya.shanmugasundaram@hindawi.com>
Kepada: nurdin@ung.ac.id

Dear Dr. Nurdin,

Thank you for your email regarding the publication of your article "Determination of Land Suitability Criteria for Maize Hybrid in Boalemo Regency Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality".

Unfortunately, I am not able to provide a specific publication date at this stage. However, I have checked your article's status on our system and your article is in the final stage of production prior to publication.

Once your article is approved for publication you/the corresponding author will receive a notification email.If you have any further questions please let me know.

Best regards,
Santhiya

Santhiya Shanmugasundaram
Production Editor

Hindawi

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> On Wed, 18 Jan at 1:16 AM , Santhiya Shanmugasundaram <santhiya.shanmugasundaram@hindawi.com> wrote:
> Hi Team,
>
> Thanks for bringing this to my attention.
>
> This is noted.

Best regards,
Santhiya

Santhiya Shanmugasundaram
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On Tue, 17 Jan at 4:45 PM , Production B <production.b@hindawi.com> wrote:
Hi Santhiya,

Kindly look into the below email and do the needful.

Thanks,
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Dear editors
We are pleased to report that the writing team through me as the author correspondent has carried out the final fix about 4 days ago. Therefore, on behalf of the writing team, I would like to ask when our articles will appear online on the page: https://www.hindawi.com/journals/aess/contents/year/2023/
Considering that some of the writing team needed this article to evaluate lecturer performance and institutional performance. Those are our questions, we hope to get answers as soon as possible.

Regards
Nurdin

Pada tanggal Sel, 10 Jan 2023 pukul 23.10 Applied and Environmental Soil Science <production.b@hindawi.com> menulis:
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Hindawi

Composition comments 10

Author corrections 7

Attachments 1

Track changes

Applied and Environmental Soil Science
Article ID 3800877

Research Article

Determination of Land Suitability Criteria for Maize Hybrid in Boalemo Regency Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

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Received 22 October 2022; Revised 29 December 2022; Accepted 3 January 2023

Academic Editor: Maman Turjaman

Abstract

The significant effect of land quality on maize production has not been fully considered in the existing land suitability criteria. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemo Regency based on the optimum yield and land quality. It was carried out in Boalemo Regency, Indonesia, where the land unit of 67 units was surveyed to obtain land characteristics data. A partial least square of structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 8.0 was used to select a robust land quality controlling hybrid maize yield, while the boundary line method was used to determine optimum yield and differentiating of land suitability criteria. The result showed that land qualities that define the optimum yield of hybrid maize were root conditions, nutrient availability, nutrient retentions, land preparation, and erosion hazard. The soil characteristics were effective depth, coarse material, organic C, total N, K exchangeable, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. Furthermore, the highest optimum yield of 8.54 ton/ha was achieved by the total N and slopes for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest of 5.58 ton/ha was obtained by exchangeable K for class S1. This showed that the combination of PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis was a better approach to developing new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize.

1. Introduction

Food security and farmer prosperity are global concerns; this makes every country increase crop production as well as farmers' income. An important issue for countries with developing economies is ensuring food security, where the agricultural sector plays a strategic role in increasing food availability [1]. Although the global food system has placed maize (*Zea mays* L.) as the leading cereal crop [2], its productivity is being disrupted by land degradation, water scarcity, and climate change [3].

In Indonesia, the wet tropical climate with rainfall and high temperatures tends to reduce the quality of land and agricultural products [4]. This country ranked 8th among the maize-producing nations with a contribution of 2.19% and 2.42% of the world's total harvested area [5]. However, the main problem is the relatively low level of yield in several regions because the achievement of maize production has not been followed by an increase in yield per unit area [6]. This is indicated by the average yield in 2020, which was up to 5.57 ton/ha [5]. According to a previous investigation, maize production in Indonesia can reach between 10 and 12 ton/ha [7, 8], thereby making the country the 21st leading importer in the world.

In Indonesia, Gorontalo Province is one of the centers of maize production, where the hybrid type is the most widely grown species [9]. The maize production in the province reached 1.8 million tons in 2021 [10], with several export advantages and competitiveness [11]. Furthermore, the planting of hybrid, composite, and local maize types has reached more than 98.90%, 0.68%, and 0.41% only, respectively [12], including Boalemo Regency.

Boalemo Regency ranks third as a maize-producing center in Gorontalo Province with a contribution of 18.90% [13]. The maize plant dominates the use of agricultural land in this district by 37.43% [14]; therefore, the commodity has competitive and comparative advantages with a PCR value of 0.80 and 0.91 DRC. This is because maize plant is supported by land area, climatic conditions, production facilities, as well as market guarantees, and the basic price of buying corn from the government [15]. In 2021, the average hybrid and local maize yields in the regency reached 5.20 tons/ha [16] and 2.34–3.30 tons/ha, respectively [17]. This indicated

10 Composition comments 7 Author corrections 1 Attachments Track changes

cultivated on land that does not meet the required qualities [6]. Therefore, there is a need to determine land quality-based hybrid maize land suitability criteria for site-specific land use planning in Boalemo District.

Maize is usually grown on land with low yield potential [21] and soil fertility, thereby causing low productivity [22]. Moreover, land productivity is determined by quality and characteristics [23, 24], while land quality has a close relationship with maize yields [25]. The land quality affecting the optimum yield of maize needs to be determined [26] and increased by using hybrid varieties that have high yields. This makes it necessary to evaluate the suitability of the hybrid maize in a region to ensure optimal production. The land suitability criteria for hybrid maize are not yet available because the current criterion is the general suitability of maize plants without distinguishing between hybrids and inbreds. Therefore, there is a need to make land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants.

A previous study has shown that land quality has a significant effect on suitability for certain uses [27]. Meanwhile, land suitability is also important due to the continuous increase in the demand for agricultural land [28]. The land suitability criteria for existing maize fields are still general [29], and there are no specific criteria for hybrid maize varieties. The class assessment outcomes obtained using the existing criteria are relatively many and are not in line with the actual field results [30]. The current criteria consist of 3 components, namely, land quality, characteristics, and ranges of land characteristic values to determine its suitability. Therefore, the problem in developing criteria is choosing land quality, characteristics, and determining the range of land characteristic values associated with suitability classes, namely, suitable, somewhat suitable, marginally suitable, and not suitable.

The selection of land quality and characteristics can be carried out through the partial least square of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM), while the range limits are being determined by the boundary line method. Land qualities and characteristics in the current criteria can be used temporarily since structural equation model analysis with partial least squares produces better indicators and models than other multivariate analyses [31–35]. This is because the variant-based PLS-SEM has a higher level of flexibility and the size of the sample used is relatively small ranging from 30 to 100 [36–39]. The use of PLS-SEM to determine land characteristics and qualities that control maize crop yields is still relatively rare, except for Syaf [40] on older cocoa plants, maize composite [41], and on local varieties [6]. The boundary line method can help determine nutrient adequacy concentrations and the optimum yield range of a plant that affects nutrients, as well as other land characteristics [42, 43]. Currently, the land suitability criteria for maize plants have not been determined using the boundary line method, except by Ridayanti et al. [44], although the investigation was not specific to hybrid maize.

After obtaining the quality and characteristics of land affecting maize yields with PLS-SEM, the boundary line method can be used to determine the optimum yield as well as land suitability criteria simultaneously. This is carried out by drawing the intersection of the boundary line at the yield and projecting with the land characteristics [29]. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemo Regency based on the optimum yield and land quality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area

The study area extends from 0°28′5.6″–0″57′30.02″ N to 122°8′34.25″–122°43′10.41″E (Figure 1) on a scale of 1 : 40,000, which is located in the agricultural land of Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. The maximum air temperature was 28.19°C and the minimum was 26.79°C with an average of 28.01°C. Meanwhile, the maximum rainfall was 1,849 mm and the minimum was 1,246 mm with an average of 1,478 mm [45]. The wet and dry seasons last for 3 months and 5 months, respectively. The soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. [46] at a scale of 1 : 50,000 become the initial reference for determining 35 soil units, where each unit has information on land characteristics, namely, effective depth, drainage, texture, pH, cation exchange capacity, base saturation, landform, parent material, relief, and land unit area. Meanwhile, the new soil unit is 1 : 40,000 in scale, and there has been a change in the agricultural land use existing. This indicated that the slope class of 8–15% or hilly is more dominant in the study area with a percentage of 29.77% and slopes >40% or mountainous which is only 2.67%. Furthermore, the dry land is dominant with a value of 59.86% and a little shrub which was only 9.21%, while the dominant Typic Haplustalfs of soil subgroup classification was 22.47%; then, the Fluventic Haplustepts was 21.31% and very little Vertic Haplustepts of soil subgroup classification was 0.04% only (Figure 1).

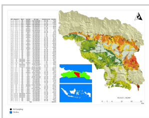

Figure 1: Study area.

2.2. Dataset Collection for Land Quality and Land Characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in this study refer to Wahyunto et al. [47], consisting of 10 land qualities and 24 characteristics. The set of temperature land quality is determined from the characteristics of the annual average air temperature, while the land quality water availability is determined from the characteristics of annual rainfall, wet months, dry months, and the length of the growth period (LGP). Land determined from the characteristics of total N, P, and exchangeable K, the sodicity is obtained from the exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP), while erosion hazard is determined from slopes and soil erosion. The quality of the flood-hazard land is determined by identifying the height and the duration of the inundation, while preparation is carried out from the characteristics of outcrops and surface rocks. The selection of this set of land qualities and characteristics is based on the availability of data and their impact on maize production [26].

Data on average annual air temperature and rainfall for 10 years (2010–2021) were collected from different climate stations, namely, the Bandungrejo with 0°41′ N–122°38′ E, the elevation 40 m asl, while Harapan has 0°42′ N–122°29′ E and an elevation of 37 m asl. It also includes Lakeya Rain Post with 0°42.82′ N–122°32.07′ E, 32 m asl, Mohiyolo has 0°46.41′ N–122°26.41′ E and an elevation of 39 m asl, Saritani 0°46.45′ N–122°20.40′ E, with 26 m asl, Tangkobu 0°37.25′ N–122°36.36′ E, 25 m asl, Bubaa 0°31.36′ N–122°33.39′ E, 16 m asl, Wonggahu 0°38′ N–122°33′ E, 35 m asl, and Sambati Rain Post with 0°31.184′ N–122°27.074′ E, and an elevation of 9 m asl managed by BWS II Sulawesi. Furthermore, these data determined wet months (>200 mm) and dry months (<100 mm), which refers to the Oldeman and Darmiyati criteria [48]. The land water balance was determined using the Thornwaite and LGP methods based on the number of surplus and deficit rainy days [49].

Based on the previous soil unit [46], then these soil units were detailed again by adding 32 of soil units to be surveyed and observed, making up to 67 soil units in the area as shown in the legend Figure 1. Soil characteristics such as drainage, coarse material, effective soil depth, slope, inundation height and duration, rock outcrops, and surface rocks were determined by conducting soil profile descriptions and direct observation on 67 pedons referring to the description guidelines in the field [50]. Meanwhile, soil erosion was determined by the USLE method [51]. Other soil characteristics were further analyzed in the soil laboratory using samples from each pedon.

Soil samples were dried for 3 days and sieved through a 2-mesh sieve. The method of soil physics laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Kurnia et al. [52]. Based on this procedure, soil texture was analyzed in terms of sand, clay, and silt fractions using the pipette method, while soil moisture storage was evaluated using the gravimetric method that can be applied in water balance analysis. The method of soil chemistry laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Eviyati and Sulaiman [53]. The soil pH was determined with a pH meter in a 1 : 2.5 soil and water solution, while the organic C content was assessed using the Walkley and Black method. The total N was assessed using the Kjeldahl method, while the available P content was measured using the Olsen method. The basic cations and CEC were extracted with 1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 (ammonium acetate) on a dry sample of 105°C. The base saturation was determined by calculating the percentage of basic cations number with CEC, and ESP was evaluated using the percentage ratio of sodium to CEC [54, 55]. Subsequently, the data from the chemical analysis were averaged to a depth of 0–30 cm using the weighted averaging technique. The framework of this study is presented in Figure 2.

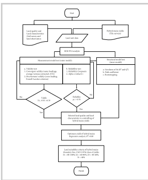

Figure 2: Research framework.

2.3. Dataset Collection for Hybrid Maize Yield

The areas currently planted with hybrid maize were identified and blocks with a size of 2.5 m × 2.5 m were made in each map unit (Figure 1). Maize plants in each block passed through standardized management according to farmers' technology. After harvesting, weighting was carried out to obtain hybrid maize yield data from the results of tiles on each land unit. Subsequently, the results were calculated using the following formula [56]:

$$Y\,(t) = H\,x \frac{A}{6.25\,m^2}. \tag{1}$$

Meanwhile, productivity is calculated using the following formula [56]:

$$Y\left(tha^{-1}\right) = \frac{H\,x\,1.64\,x\,56.73}{100}, \tag{2}$$

where Y is the hybrid maize yield, H is the tile yield (kg), A is the maize area 1 per hectare (ha), and 1.64 and 56.73 are the constants.

2.4. Selection of Land Quality and Land Characteristics

The quality and characteristics of the land in the suitability criteria are used as presented in Tables 1 and 2, which show brief statistics. Generally, most data are relatively homogenous, except for coarse material, available P, slopes, soil erosion, height and inundation, as well as rock outcrops and surface rocks. The selection used the partial least squares of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM) refers to Hair et al. [38] with tools SmartPLS, where land quality and characteristics were selected as the latent and manifest variables, respectively. The analysis in PLS-SEM has 2 main steps, namely, the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model test (inner model).

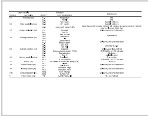

Table 1: Latent variables and indicators used in this study.

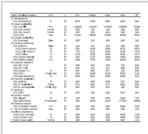

Table 2: Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics.

Step 1 consists of validity and reliability tests, wherein the validity test is conducted with convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity is in form of outer loadings (loading factor) and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity is in form of cross-loading and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Meanwhile, the reliability test uses composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha.

Convergent validity was observed from the magnitude of the outer loading and the AVE value of each indicator on the latent variable. The validity was calculated according to the following equation [57–60]:

$$x_i = \lambda x_i \xi_1 + \delta_i, \quad y_i = \lambda y_i \eta_1 + \varepsilon_i, \tag{3}$$

where x and y are the exogenous (ξ) and endogenous (η) latent variable indicators, λ_x and λ_y are the loading factors, δ and ε are the residual/measurement errors or noise.

Meanwhile, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was calculated using the following equation [61–65]:

$$\text{AVE} = \frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \text{var}(\varepsilon_i)}, \tag{4}$$

where λ_i^2 is the loading factor, var is the variance, and ε_i is the error variance.

The loading factor of an indicator with the highest value is the strongest or most important measure in reflecting the latent variable. In this study, the loading factor value is >0.70 for selecting best land characteristics, but values ranging from 0.50 to 0.60 can still be tolerated with a t-statistic >1.96 or a small p value of 0.05 [37, 66]. Meanwhile, the AVE value used was more than 0.50, showing that the convergent validity on the latent variable has been reached.

The discriminant validity test used the cross-loading value and the Fornell–Larker criterion to test discriminantly valid indicators in explaining or reflecting latent variables. When the correlation between the latent variables and the core measurement of each indicator is high, the latent variable can predict the indicator better and is considered valid. The discriminant validity is measured by the square root of the average variance extracted, which will be compared with the correlation value between variables. The value calculated based on the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlation between constructs [61]. The equation is expressed as follows [61, 63–65, 67]:

$$\text{Square root of AVE} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \,\text{var}(\varepsilon_i)}}, \tag{5}$$

where λ_i^2 is the loading factor, var is the variance, and ε_i is the error variance.

Furthermore, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the reliability value between indicators of the latent variables. They are considered good and accepted when the value is >0.70 and has a minimum value of 0.60 [37]. The composite reliability value is calculated using the following equation [62, 65, 68, 69]:

$$\rho c = \frac{\left(\sum \lambda_i\right)^2}{\left(\sum \lambda_i\right)^2 + \sum i \,\text{var}(\varepsilon_i)}, \tag{6}$$

where λ_i is the loading factor, var is the variance, and ε_i is the error variance.

Meanwhile, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is calculated according to the following equation [65, 70]:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{\sum p \neq p'^{\text{cor}(X_{pq}.X_{p'q})}}{p_q + \sum p \neq p'^{\text{cor}(X_{pq}.X_{p'q})}} \right) \left(\frac{p_q}{p_{q-1}} \right), \tag{7}$$

where P_q is the number of indicators or manifest variables and q is the indicator block.

For step 2, the structural model testing (inner model) was carried out after the relationship model was built in line with the observed data and the overall suitability, namely, goodness of fit. The structural equation (inner model) is as follows [59, 60, 62]:

$$\text{H}_i = \gamma_i \xi_1 + \gamma_i \xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_i \xi_n + \varsigma_i, \tag{8}$$

vector, and ς_j is the residual vector (error).

Meanwhile, the determinant coefficient and goodness of fit (Q^2) were calculated using the following equation [62, 64, 70]:

$$Q^2\,(\text{Predictive relevance}) = 1-\left(1-R_1^2\right)\left(1-R_2^2\right)\ldots\left(1-R_p^2\right), \tag{9}$$

where $R_1^2, R_2^2, \ldots\ R_p^2 = R$ square of endogenous variables in the equation model [68].

The quantity of Q^2 has a value with a range of $0 < Q^2 < 1$, the closer the value to 1, the better the model [37]. It is also equivalent to the coefficient of total determination in path analysis. Furthermore, the effect and significance were tested based on the estimated value of the path coefficient and the critical point value (*t*-statistics or *p* value) at = 0.05. The relationship model between variables was measured by testing the direct correlation coefficient between variables. The results of testing the relationship between *X* and *Y* variables were indicated by the correlation coefficient, as well as t-statistics, and are also presented in the path diagram.

2.5. Class Assignment

To determine the class-required data for optimum results, class limits were calculated from the percentage of optimum results. After knowing the highest and lowest yields, the values were connected with the range of land characteristics values. The land suitability class and yield used referred to FAO [71], namely, class S1 (very suitable) when the values reach 80–100%, S2 was moderately suitable 60–80%, S3 marginally suitable 40–60%, and *N* not suitable <40% of the optimum capacity.

The optimum yield was determined using the boundary line method. This method is carried out by drawing a boundary line on the graph of the relationship between yield and land characteristics to obtain optimum results. In the boundary line method according to Widiatmaka et al. [72], each land characteristic is plotted on the *X*-axis, while hybrid maize yields are plotted on the *Y*-axis. Bhat and Sujatha [42] stated that the preparation of the hybrid maize yield boundary line includes the preparation of a scatter diagram between the *X* and the *Y* variable, division of the *X*-axis into several classes of intervals, determination of the highest data points in each class interval, preparation of boundary lines based on the highest data points from each class interval, and drawing a line parallel to the *X*-axis according to the percentage of the result class.

Furthermore, with the Microsoft Excel application tools, the boundary between classes S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to *N* were determined by the Data menu ⟶ What-if-Analysis ⟶ Goal Seek ⟶ Set the cell at the location containing the regression equation ⟶ to value fill with the result limit values S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to *N* ⟶ By changing cell ⟶ the location where the value of the characteristics of the land will be sought ⟶ Ok. On location "By changing cell," the number being searched will appear, and at the location, "set cell" will be equal to the limit value of the result.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Land Quality and Characteristics Controlling Hybrid Maize Yield

3.1.1. Validity Test Result

Table 3 shows the loading factor of the variables, where most indicators were more than the critical limit of 0.70 with a 95% confidence level ($P > 1.960$). Therefore, these variables are highly recommended and the indicators are considered convergently valid. In the soil texture indicator for the latent variable of root conditions as well as the cation exchange capacity (CEC) and base saturation (BS) indicators for nutrient retention, the loading factor was below the tolerance value of 0.50 at the 95% confidence level ($P < 1.960$); hence, it was not used. This implies that the indicators have not been established or explained properly because the standard value of the loading factor must be greater than or equal to 0.50 [37, 38, 66].

Table 3: Outer loading (loading factor) and the average variance extracted from study variables.

The average variance extracted (AVE) value of almost all variables was greater than 0.50; therefore, it was considered convergently valid [61, 62]. The AVE value of the available nutrient variable was not valid due to the smaller value of the loading factor for the CEC and BS indicators of 0.50, leading to the removal of both indicators. A similar result was discovered in the root condition variable, although the AVE value was greater than 0.50, while the soil texture indicator was not used because the loading factor value is only 0.013.

The measurement of the Fornell–Larcker criterion and cross-loading was used as the basis for assessing the discriminant validity of the model. The calculation results on the Fornell–Larcker criterion in Table 4 show that the average of the tested variables has a higher square root of AVE than the correlation value; hence, the latent variable was considered discriminantly valid. The square root value of the AVE must be greater than its correlation value with other constructs to meet the discriminant validity requirements [69, 73]. The average loading factor value for the latent variable indicator was above that of others as shown in Table 5.

Table 4: Fornell–Larker criterion test.

Table 5: Cross-loading of latent variables to indicators.

3.1.2. Reliability Test Result

The variables are considered reliable because composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient on average were more than 0.7 [61, 74], as shown in Table 6. However, certain indicators still had values less than 0.6, namely, soil texture, but the indicators used are reliable and adequate in forming the latent variables.

Table 6: Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha test.

The highest composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the variables of temperature, oxygen availability, and toxicity of 1 for the variables to be very reliable. The lowest coefficient was obtained on the root condition variable; therefore, the variable was not reliable. According to Bagozzi and Yi [75] and Hair et al. [74], variables are considered good and accepted when the value is >0.70.

The remaining variables are water availability, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, and land preparation variables. The coefficient of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha >0.6; therefore, the variable is considered reliable. The minimum value of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.60 [61, 74, 75].

3.1.3. Structural Model Test (Inner Models)

Land characteristics that have a significant correlation with hybrid maize yields show a high level of contribution to land quality in influencing hybrid maize yields as indicated in Figure 3. The figure shows a structural model of the relationship between indicator variables, namely, 24 land characteristics, rectangular yellow, and latent variables, including 10 land qualities maize yield and oval blue. It also shows a model for the relationship between latent variables such as land qualities and maize yield, as well as loading figures. The factor for each indicator and path coefficient for land qualities has a direct effect on the value of maize yields.

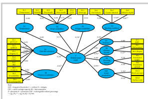

Figure 3: Path coefficient of land quality on hybrid maize yield.

For example, X8 (erosion hazard) significantly determines the hybrid maize yield with a path coefficient of −0.392. The negative sign indicates that the erosion hazard is negatively related to maize yield, where the higher the erosion hazard, the lower the maize yield. Furthermore, nutrient retention (X5) contributes to the diversity of hybrid maize yields with a path coefficient of 0.252. A positive sign indicates that nutrient retention is positively related to maize yield, where the higher the value of nutrient retention, followed by the maize yield.

The results of this path analysis indicated that the land quality that can be a predictor of maize yield diversity were oxygen availability (X3), nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (X6), erosion hazard (X8), and land preparation (X 10). Figure 2 indicates that only 8 of the 24 indicators explain latent variance at the 5% real test level. The 8 indicators were coarse material and effective soil depth as an indicator of rooting condition, organic carbon content as nutrient retention, exchangeable K as nutrient availability, soil erosion and slope as erosion hazard, as well as rock outcrop and surface rock as an indicator of land preparation. It was also indicated that the drainage loading factor was unable to explain the diversity of oxygen availability. Therefore, oxygen availability cannot be used as a land quality because there are no indicators that can represent it. Only the land qualities of nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (x6), erosion hazard (x8), and land preparation (X10) were used next.

The indicators of land characteristics for effective depth, organic C, total *N*, and exchangeable *K* have a fairly strong positive relationship and a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, an increase in these parameters by 1% will be followed by a rise in hybrid maize yields of 39% to 57.7%. According to Wirosoedarmo et al. [4], effective depth affects root growth and development, making plants grow and develop properly. Moreover, the levels of organic C, total *N*, and CEC are influenced by soil organic matter [76], while potassium plays a role in the growth and development of maize [77].

Indicators of rough soil characteristics, slopes, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrops, have a strong negative relationship with a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, 1% decrease in coarse material, slope, soil erosion, as well as surface, and rock outcrop is followed by an increase in hybrid

3.2. Optimum Hybrid Maize Yield by the Land Quality and Land Characteristics

Table 7 shows the mathematical equations for each land characteristic and also the optimum hybrid maize yield for the land equation. Figure 4 shows the diagram of the relationship between land characteristics as an independent variable (X) and maize yield as an independent variable Y. Model fitting indicates that the quadratic equation is sufficient to describe the condition of data distribution.

Table 7: The optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics.

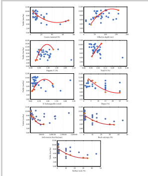

Figure 4: Scatter diagram relationship among maize yield and land characteristics.

The optimum of hybrid maize yield ranged from 5.58 to 8.54 ton/ha, where the highest yield was obtained from total N and slopes of 8.54 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 100% and 92%. Sutardjo et al. (2012)showed that hybrid maize yields ranged from 7.43 to 9.2 ton/ha. This indicated that the optimum yield achieved is still within the range of hybrid maize yields that have been previously reported. Nitrogen is directly involved in the formation of amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymes, nucleoproteins, and alkaloids, which are needed in the plant growth process [78, 79]. An extremely high amount of N causes excessive vegetative growth, thereby making plants fall easily and increasing susceptibility to disease [80]. Meanwhile, the lack of N nutrients can limit cell division, enlargement [81], and the formation of chlorophyll, leading to stunted growth as well as yellowing of leaves [80].

The lowest optimum yield was obtained from exchangeable K, which was only 5.58 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 95%. This was presumably because the K content in the soil is very low, thereby affecting the hybrid maize yield. Potassium (K) is required by plants for physiological functions, including carbohydrate metabolism, enzyme activity, osmotic regulation, efficient water use, N uptake, protein synthesis, and assimilate translocation [82–85]. It also plays a role in improving the quality of crop yields [82, 86].

The optimum hybrid maize yield of the remaining is relatively diverse. This includes effective depth and organic carbon, which were both 8.46 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 97%. Furthermore, coarse material and soil erosion were 8.17 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 96% and 89%, while rock outcrops and surface rock were 7.41 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 92%. The absence of coarse material >2 mm in diameter indicated that plant roots can grow freely on the surface or deeper parts of the soil [88] because the deeper the roots of the maize, the greater the maize yield [89, 90]. The addition of organic matter will increase maize yield [91–93] and organic C content [94] because soil organic matter is a strong positive predictor of yield [95]. Kane et al. [95] also stated that the addition of more organic matter will improve water retention, thereby reducing maize yield losses due to drought. The slope has a significant effect on soil degradation [96]. According to a previous study, erosion and maize yield are negatively correlated; hence, increased erosion will reduce maize productivity [97]. Soil erosion on flat land is slower surface runoff [98]. It was also reported that surface rocks and outcrops are the limiting factors in the suitability of maize plantations [99]. Therefore, a high percentage of rock outcrops will complicate land cultivation and plant root growth.

3.3. Land Suitability Criteria for Hybrid Maize Crops

Table 8 shows the yield limit for each class from the calculation of the optimum yield, where the class range for each land characteristic is derived. Based on the optimum yield of the highest hybrid maize, there were 2 indicators, namely, the total N content and the slope. The total N indicator with a very suitable class (S1) was achieved when the value in the soil was greater than 0.11%, while in the moderately suitable class (S2), it was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.08 to 0.10%. In the marginally appropriate class (S3), the total N indicator was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.06 to 0.07%, while the not suitable class (N) was achieved when the content was less than 0.06%. On the slope indicator with class S1, it was obtained when the slope class ranges from 0 to 7.70%%, while class S2 was achieved when the slope class ranges from 7.71 to 11.84%. Furthermore, in classes S3 and N, it was obtained when the slope class ranged from 11.85 to 18.25% and greater than 18.25%, respectively.

Table 8: Yield limits of hybrid maize and values obtained in each land suitability class interval by land quality and characteristics.

Based on the optimum yield of the lowest hybrid maize, only the exchangeable K was the indicator. In classes S1 and S2, it was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil was greater than 0.25 cmol(+)/kg and ranges from 0.14 to 0.24 cmol(+)/kg, respectively. Furthermore, class S3 was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil ranges from 0.05 to 0.13 cmol(+)/kg, while in class N, it was obtained when the exchangeable K content in the soil was less than 0.05 cmol(+)/kg. The remaining variables and indicators were relatively varied according to the optimum yield of hybrid maize and the range of land suitability classes obtained as presented in Table 8.

state of achieving optimum, moderate, and minimum yields of hybrid maize in the field with values of 80%, 60%, and 40%, respectively. According to Sukarman et al. [100], the parameters used in the land suitability assessment must describe the actual conditions. This is due to the significant positive correlation between maize yield and land suitability class [101].

The land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are fewer and have referred to the optimum yield. Meanwhile, the land quality and characteristics in this new criterion are less because it only consists of root conditions with characteristics of coarse material and effective depth, nutrient retention with organic C, and nutrient availability with total *N* and *K* exchangeable. It also consists of erosion hazards with characteristics of slopes and soil erosion, as well as land preparation with surface rocks and rock outcrops only. The land qualities selected and maize yields consistent with the land potential are the basis for developing suitability criteria. This will reduce the land characteristics and make the evaluation process faster, cheaper, and easier with accurate results [26]. Some characteristics and land quality criteria were not made because they did not significantly affect the yield of hybrid maize. The number and distribution of the data were still limited, and the diversity of values was small or not measurable in the field [72].

Compared to Wahyunto et al. [47], the new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants in Table 9 are more realistic in value with the conditions in the field and is based on the achievement of optimum yields. The current land suitability criteria are still general and not specific to maize yields [26], although the agronomic and yield potential of each maize variety differ, based on the diversity of characteristics and land quality in the field. There are still limitations on the use of these results for the development of hybrid maize in the Boalemo Regency because the setting is only based on land characteristics and optimum yields in this regency. Therefore, further investigation to expand the scope of the research area nationally with more diverse and contrasting land characteristic values is recommended to determine the effect on hybrid maize production.

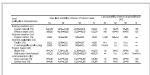

Table 9: Comparison of new and general land suitability criteria with land quality and characteristics.

4. Conclusions

Land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are determined by land qualities, namely, root conditions, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, as well as land preparation, and land characteristics, including coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total *N*, exchangeable *K*, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. The highest optimum yield of 8.54 ton/ha was achieved by the total *N* and slopes for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest value of 5.58 ton/ha was attained by exchangeable *K* for class S1. These results showed that the combination of the PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis can be an alternative approach to establishing new land suitability criteria for crops based on optimum yields and selected land quality.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute Research and Community Service of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo for their financial and administrative support. This study was funded by the Directorate of Research, Technology and Community Service, Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, grant number B/105/UN47.D1/PT.01.03/2022.

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Authors	Hidayat Arismunandar Katili, Suyono Dude, Rival Rahman, Fitriah Suryani Jamin, Nikmah Musa, Echan Adam, Yunnita Rahim, Asda Rauf, and Nurdin, and Nurdin
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Applied and Environmental Soil Science
Volume 2023, Article ID 3800877, 18 pages
https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/3800877

Research Article

Determination of Land Suitability Criteria for Maize Hybrid in Boalemo Regency Based on Optimum Yield and Selected Land Quality

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Received 22 October 2022; Revised 29 December 2022; Accepted 3 January 2023; Published 18 January 2023

Academic Editor: Maman Turjaman

The significant effect of land quality on maize production has not been fully considered in the existing land suitability criteria. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemo Regency based on the optimum yield and land quality. It was carried out in Boalemo Regency, Indonesia, where the land unit of 67 units was surveyed to obtain land characteristics data. A partial least square of structural equation model (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 8.0 was used to select a robust land quality controlling hybrid maize yield, while the boundary line method was used to determine optimum yield and differentiating of land suitability criteria. The result showed that land qualities that define the optimum yield of hybrid maize were root conditions, nutrient availability, nutrient retentions, land preparation, and erosion hazard. The soil characteristics were effective depth, coarse material, organic C, total N, K exchangeable, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. Furthermore, the highest optimum yield of 8.54 ton/ha was achieved by the total N and slopes for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest of 5.58 ton/ha was obtained by exchangeable K for class S1. This showed that the combination of PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis was a better approach to developing new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize.

1. Introduction

Food security and farmer prosperity are global concerns; this makes every country increase crop production as well as farmers' income. An important issue for countries with developing economies is ensuring food security, where the agricultural sector plays a strategic role in increasing food availability [1]. Although the global food system has placed maize (*Zea mays* L.) as the leading cereal crop [2], its productivity is being disrupted by land degradation, water scarcity, and climate change [3].

In Indonesia, the wet tropical climate with rainfall and high temperatures tends to reduce the quality of land and agricultural products [4]. This country ranked 8th among the maize-producing nations with a contribution of 2.19% and 2.42% of the world's total harvested area [5]. However, the main problem is the relatively low level of yield in several regions because the achievement of maize production has not been followed by an increase in yield per unit area [6]. This is indicated by the average yield in 2020, which was up to 5.57 ton/ha [5]. According to a previous investigation, maize production in Indonesia can reach between 10 and 12 ton/ha [7, 8], thereby making the country the 21st leading importer in the world.

In Indonesia, Gorontalo Province is one of the centers of maize production, where the hybrid type is the most widely grown species [9]. The maize production in the province reached 1.8 million tons in 2021 [10], with several export advantages and competitiveness [11]. Furthermore, the planting of hybrid, composite, and local maize types has reached more than 98.90%, 0.68%, and 0.41% only, respectively [12], including Boalemo Regency.

Boalemo Regency ranks third as a maize-producing center in Gorontalo Province with a contribution of 18.90% [13]. The maize plant dominates the use of agricultural land in this district by 37.43% [14]; therefore, the commodity has competitive and comparative advantages with a PCR value of 0.80 and 0.91 DRC. This is because maize plant is supported by land area, climatic conditions, production facilities, as well as market guarantees, and the basic price of buying corn from the government [15]. In 2021, the average hybrid and local maize yields in the regency reached 5.20 tons/ha [16] and 2.34–3.30 tons/ha, respectively [17]. This indicated that the productivity of hybrid maize is still higher than local maize [18], but with lower achievement compared to the national maize production of 5.57 tons/ha [5], and has not yet reached the target of 5.60 tons/ha in 2021 [19]. The production of hybrid maize in Gorontalo can reach 9.78–13.11 tons/ha [20] because it is often cultivated on land that does not meet the required qualities [6]. Therefore, there is a need to determine land quality-based hybrid maize land suitability criteria for site-specific land use planning in Boalemo District.

Maize is usually grown on land with low yield potential [21] and soil fertility, thereby causing low productivity [22]. Moreover, land productivity is determined by quality and characteristics [23, 24], while land quality has a close relationship with maize yields [25]. The land quality affecting the optimum yield of maize needs to be determined [26] and increased by using hybrid varieties that have high yields. This makes it necessary to evaluate the suitability of the hybrid maize in a region to ensure optimal production. The land suitability criteria for hybrid maize are not yet available because the current criterion is the general suitability of maize plants without distinguishing between hybrids and inbreds. Therefore, there is a need to make land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants.

A previous study has shown that land quality has a significant effect on suitability for certain uses [27]. Meanwhile, land suitability is also important due to the continuous increase in the demand for agricultural land [28]. The land suitability criteria for existing maize fields are still general [29], and there are no specific criteria for hybrid maize varieties. The class assessment outcomes obtained using the existing criteria are relatively many and are not in line with the actual field results [30]. The current criteria consist of 3 components, namely, land quality, characteristics, and ranges of land characteristic values to determine its suitability. Therefore, the problem in developing criteria is choosing land quality, characteristics, and determining the range of land characteristic values associated with suitability classes, namely, suitable, somewhat suitable, marginally suitable, and not suitable.

The selection of land quality and characteristics can be carried out through the partial least square of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM), while the range limits are being determined by the boundary line method. Land qualities and characteristics in the current criteria can be used temporarily since structural equation model analysis with partial least squares produces better indicators and models than other multivariate analyses [31–35]. This is because the variant-based PLS-SEM has a higher level of flexibility and the size of the sample used is relatively small ranging from 30 to 100 [36–39]. The use of PLS-SEM to determine land characteristics and qualities that control maize crop yields is still relatively rare, except for Syaf [40] on older cocoa plants, maize composite [41], and on local varieties [6]. The boundary line method can help determine nutrient adequacy concentrations and the optimum yield range of a plant that affects nutrients, as well as other land characteristics [42, 43]. Currently, the land suitability criteria for maize plants have not been determined using the boundary line method, except by Ridayanti et al. [44], although the investigation was not specific to hybrid maize.

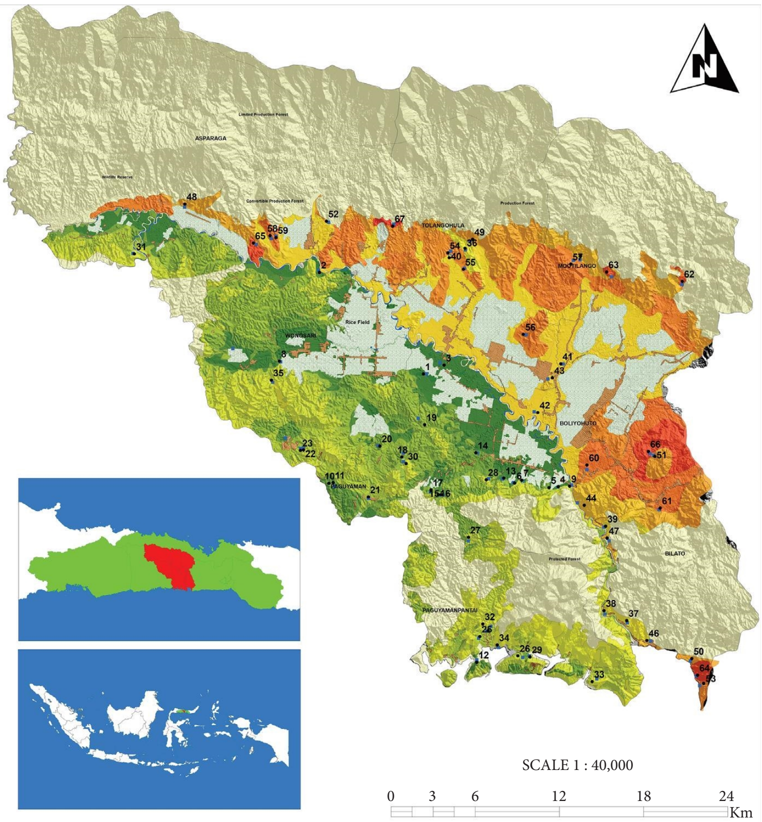
After obtaining the quality and characteristics of land affecting maize yields with PLS-SEM, the boundary line method can be used to determine the optimum yield as well as land suitability criteria simultaneously. This is carried out by drawing the intersection of the boundary line at the yield and projecting with the land characteristics [29]. Therefore, this study aims to determine land suitability criteria for hybrid maize in Boalemo Regency based on the optimum yield and land quality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area. The study area extends from 0°28′5.6″–0″57′30.02″ N to 122°8′34.25″–122°43′10.41″E (Figure 1) on a scale of 1 : 40,000, which is located in the agricultural land of Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. The maximum air temperature was 28.19°C and the minimum was 26.79°C with an average of 28.01°C. Meanwhile, the maximum rainfall was 1,849 mm and the minimum was 1,246 mm with an average of 1,478 mm [45]. The wet and dry seasons last for 3 months and 5 months, respectively. The soil mapping carried out by Ritung et al. [46] at a scale of 1 : 50,000 become the initial reference for determining 35 soil units, where each unit has information on land characteristics, namely, effective depth, drainage, texture, pH, cation exchange capacity, base saturation, landform, parent material, relief, and land unit area. Meanwhile, the new soil unit is 1 : 40,000 in scale, and there has been a change in the agricultural land use existing. This indicated that the slope class of 8–15% or hilly is more dominant in the study area with a percentage of 29.77% and slopes >40% or mountainous which is only 2.67%. Furthermore, the dry land is dominant with a value of 59.86% and a little shrub which was only 9.21%, while the dominant Typic Haplustalfs of soil subgroup classification was 22.47%; then, the Fluventic Haplustepts was 21.31% and very little Vertic Haplustepts of soil subgroup classification was 0.04% only (Figure 1).

2.2. Dataset Collection for Land Quality and Land Characteristics. The quality and characteristics of the land in this study refer to Wahyunto et al. [47], consisting of 10 land qualities and 24 characteristics. The set of temperature land

SPT	Slopes (%)	Relief	Land Use	Soil Types	Elevation (m asl)	Area (Ha)
1	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Typic Endoaquepts	100 - 250	156.78
2	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Vertic Haplustepts	100 - 250	26.92
3	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	4,756.57
4	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	100 - 250	48.15
5	3 - 8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	91.77
6	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	0 - 100	684.95
7	3 - 8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	249.07
8	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	129.12
9	3 - 8	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3.51
10	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Rhodustalfs	100 - 250	65.54
11	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	471.97
12	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Lithic Haplustolls	0 - 100	302.43
13	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	0 - 100	1,412.81
14	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	0 - 100	1,071.76
15	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	297.87
16	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	254.62
17	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	853.23
18	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Lithic Haplustepts	100 - 250	3,304.32
19	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	793.13
20	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustepts	100 - 250	3,293.28
21	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Haplustults	250 - 500	364.88
22	8 - 15	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	165.87
23	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	2,038.84
24	8 - 15	Wavy	Plantation	Aquic Haplustepts	0 - 100	169.98
25	8 - 15	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	349.74
26	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	749.22
27	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,528.98
28	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustults	100 - 250	3,748.72
29	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	434.63
30	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Lithic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	3,908.31
31	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Haplustepts	250 - 500	154.35
32	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Lithic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,474.02
33	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Lithic Haplustolls	100 - 250	229.51
34	> 45	Mountainous	Upland	Lithic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	853.11
35	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Rhodustalfs	0 - 100	86.40
36	8 - 15	Hilly	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	254.52
37	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Fluventic Ustropepts	0 - 100	286.81
38	> 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	27.33
39	> 45	Mountainous	Upland	Fluventic Ustropepts	250 - 500	101.55
40	0 - 3	Flat	Plantation	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3,052.35
41	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	3,834.11
42	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	1,072.70
43	0 - 3	Flat	Upland	Typic Tropaquepts	100 - 250	65.04
44	15 - 30	Hilly	Plantation	Fluventic Ustropepts	250 - 500	1,043.31
45	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Argiustolls	100 - 250	791.23
46	15 - 30	Hilly	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	53.32
47	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Fluventic Ustropepts	100 - 250	336.36
48	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	250 - 500	705.51
49	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	250 - 500	2,196.41
50	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	104.35
51	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	871.02
52	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplusteps	100 - 250	28.16
53	15 - 30	Hilly	Upland	Typic Tropaquepts	0 - 100	89.21
54	3 -8	Wavy	Plantation	Pluventic Haplustepts	0 - 100	1,442.70
55	3 -8	Wavy	Plantation	Typic Argiustolls	100 - 250	1,475.90
56	3 -8	Wavy	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	413.33
57	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Pluventic Haplustepts	250 - 500	3,864.27
58	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	151.63
59	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Dystrudepts	0 - 100	63.14
60	3 -8	Wavy	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	2,054.29
61	30 - 45	Mountainous	Plantation	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	52.44
62	30 - 45	Mountainous	Scrub	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	63.05
63	30 - 45	Mountainous	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	0 - 100	48.35
64	30 - 45	Mountainous	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	100 - 250	171.54
65	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Argiustolls	0 - 100	136.96
66	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplustalfs	250 - 500	1,063.61
67	8 - 15	Hilly	Upland	Typic Haplusteps	250 - 500	79.96
			Total			60,518.81



Soil Sampling

Tile Box

Figure 1: Study area.

quality is determined from the characteristics of the annual average air temperature, while the land quality water availability is determined from the characteristics of annual rainfall, wet months, dry months, and the length of the growth period (LGP). Land quality oxygen availability is determined from soil drainage characteristics, rooting conditions are determined from the soil texture, coarse material, and soil effective depth, and nutrient retention is identified from the pH value, C-organic, cation exchange capacity (CEC), and base saturation. Furthermore, the available nutrient is determined from the characteristics of total N, P, and exchangeable K, the sodicity is obtained from the exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP), while erosion hazard is determined from slopes and soil erosion. The quality of the flood-hazard land is determined by identifying the height and the duration of the inundation, while preparation is carried out from the characteristics of outcrops and surface rocks. The selection of this set of land qualities and characteristics is based on the availability of data and their impact on maize production [26].

Data on average annual air temperature and rainfall for 10 years (2010–2021) were collected from different climate stations, namely, the Bandungrejo with 0°41′ N–122°38′ E, the elevation 40 m asl, while Harapan has 0°42′ N–122°29′ E and an elevation of 37 m asl. It also includes Lakeya Rain Post with 0°42.82′ N–122°32.07′ E, 32 m asl, Mohiyolo has 0°46.41′ N–122°26.41′ E and an elevation of 39 m asl, Saritani 0°46.45′ N–122°20.40′ E, with 26 m asl, Tangkobu 0°37.25′ N–122°36.36′ E, 25 m asl, Bubaa 0°31.36′ N–122°33.39′ E, 16 m asl, Wonggahu 0°38′ N–122°33′ E, 35 m asl, and Sambati Rain Post with 0°31.184′ N–122°27.074′ E, and an elevation of 9 m asl managed by BWS II Sulawesi. Furthermore, these data determined wet months (>200 mm) and dry months (<100 mm), which refers to the Oldeman and Darmiyati criteria [48]. The land water balance was determined using the Thornwaite and LGP methods based on the number of surplus and deficit rainy days [49].

Based on the previous soil unit [46], then these soil units were detailed again by adding 32 of soil units to be surveyed and observed, making up to 67 soil units in the area as shown in the legend Figure 1. Soil characteristics such as drainage, coarse material, effective soil depth, slope, inundation height and duration, rock outcrops, and surface rocks were determined by conducting soil profile descriptions and direct observation on 67 pedons referring to the description guidelines in the field [50]. Meanwhile, soil erosion was determined by the USLE method [51]. Other soil characteristics were further analyzed in the soil laboratory using samples from each pedon.

Soil samples were dried for 3 days and sieved through a 2-mesh sieve. The method of soil physics laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by

Kurnia et al. [52]. Based on this procedure, soil texture was analyzed in terms of sand, clay, and silt fractions using the pipette method, while soil moisture storage was evaluated using the gravimetric method that can be applied in water balance analysis. The method of soil chemistry laboratory analysis was carried out according to the procedures by Eviyati and Sulaiman [53]. The soil pH was determined with a pH meter in a 1 : 2.5 soil and water solution, while the organic C content was assessed using the Walkley and Black method. The total N was assessed using the Kjeldahl method, while the available P content was measured using the Olsen method. The basic cations and CEC were extracted with 1N NH_4OAc pH 7.0 (ammonium acetate) on a dry sample of 105°C. The base saturation was determined by calculating the percentage of basic cations number with CEC, and ESP was evaluated using the percentage ratio of sodium to CEC [54, 55]. Subsequently, the data from the chemical analysis were averaged to a depth of 0–30 cm using the weighted averaging technique. The framework of this study is presented in Figure 2.

2.3. Dataset Collection for Hybrid Maize Yield. The areas currently planted with hybrid maize were identified and blocks with a size of 2.5 m × 2.5 m were made in each map unit (Figure 1). Maize plants in each block passed through standardized management according to farmers' technology. After harvesting, weighting was carried out to obtain hybrid maize yield data from the results of tiles on each land unit. Subsequently, the results were calculated using the following formula [56]:

$$Y(t) = H\,x\,\frac{A}{6.25\,m^2}. \tag{1}$$

Meanwhile, productivity is calculated using the following formula [56]:

$$Y\left(tha^{-1}\right) = \frac{H\ x\ 1.64\ x\ 56.73}{100}, \tag{2}$$

where Y is the hybrid maize yield, H is the tile yield (kg), A is the maize area 1 per hectare (ha), and 1.64 and 56.73 are the constants.

2.4. Selection of Land Quality and Land Characteristics. The quality and characteristics of the land in the suitability criteria are used as presented in Tables 1 and 2, which show brief statistics. Generally, most data are relatively homogenous, except for coarse material, available P, slopes, soil erosion, height and inundation, as well as rock outcrops and surface rocks. The selection used the partial least squares of the structural equation model (PLS-SEM) refers to Hair et al. [38] with tools SmartPLS, where land quality and characteristics were selected as the latent and manifest variables, respectively. The analysis in PLS-SEM has 2 main steps, namely, the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model test (inner model).

Step 1 consists of validity and reliability tests, wherein the validity test is conducted with convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity is in form of outer loadings (loading factor) and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity is in form of cross-loading and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Meanwhile, the reliability test uses composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha.

Convergent validity was observed from the magnitude of the outer loading and the AVE value of each indicator on the latent variable. The validity was calculated according to the following equation [57–60]:

$$\begin{aligned} x_i &= \lambda x_i \xi_1 + \delta_i, \\ y_i &= \lambda y_i \eta_1 + \varepsilon_i, \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where x and y are the exogenous (ξ) and endogenous (η) latent variable indicators, λ_x and λ_y are the loading factors, δ and ε are the residual/measurement errors or noise.

Meanwhile, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was calculated using the following equation [61–65]:

$$\text{AVE} = \frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \operatorname{var}(\varepsilon_i)}, \tag{4}$$

where λ_i^2 is the loading factor, var is the variance, and ε_i is the error variance.

The loading factor of an indicator with the highest value is the strongest or most important measure in reflecting the latent variable. In this study, the loading factor value is >0.70 for selecting best land characteristics, but values ranging from 0.50 to 0.60 can still be tolerated with a t-statistic >1.96 or a small p value of 0.05 [37, 66]. Meanwhile, the AVE value used was more than 0.50, showing that the convergent validity on the latent variable has been reached.

The discriminant validity test used the cross-loading value and the Fornell–Larker criterion to test discriminantly valid indicators in explaining or reflecting latent variables. When the correlation between the latent variables and the core measurement of each indicator is high, the latent variable can predict the indicator better and is considered valid. The discriminant validity is measured by the square root of the average variance extracted, which will be compared with the correlation value between variables. The value calculated based on the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlation between constructs [61]. The equation is expressed as follows [61, 63–65, 67]:

$$\text{Square root of AVE} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum \lambda^2 i}{\sum \lambda^2 i + \sum i \operatorname{var}(\varepsilon_i)}}, \tag{5}$$

where λ_i^2 is the loading factor, var is the variance, and ε_i is the error variance.

Furthermore, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the reliability value between indicators of the latent variables. They are considered good and accepted when the value is >0.70 and has a minimum value of 0.60 [37]. The composite reliability value is calculated using the following equation [62, 65, 68, 69]:

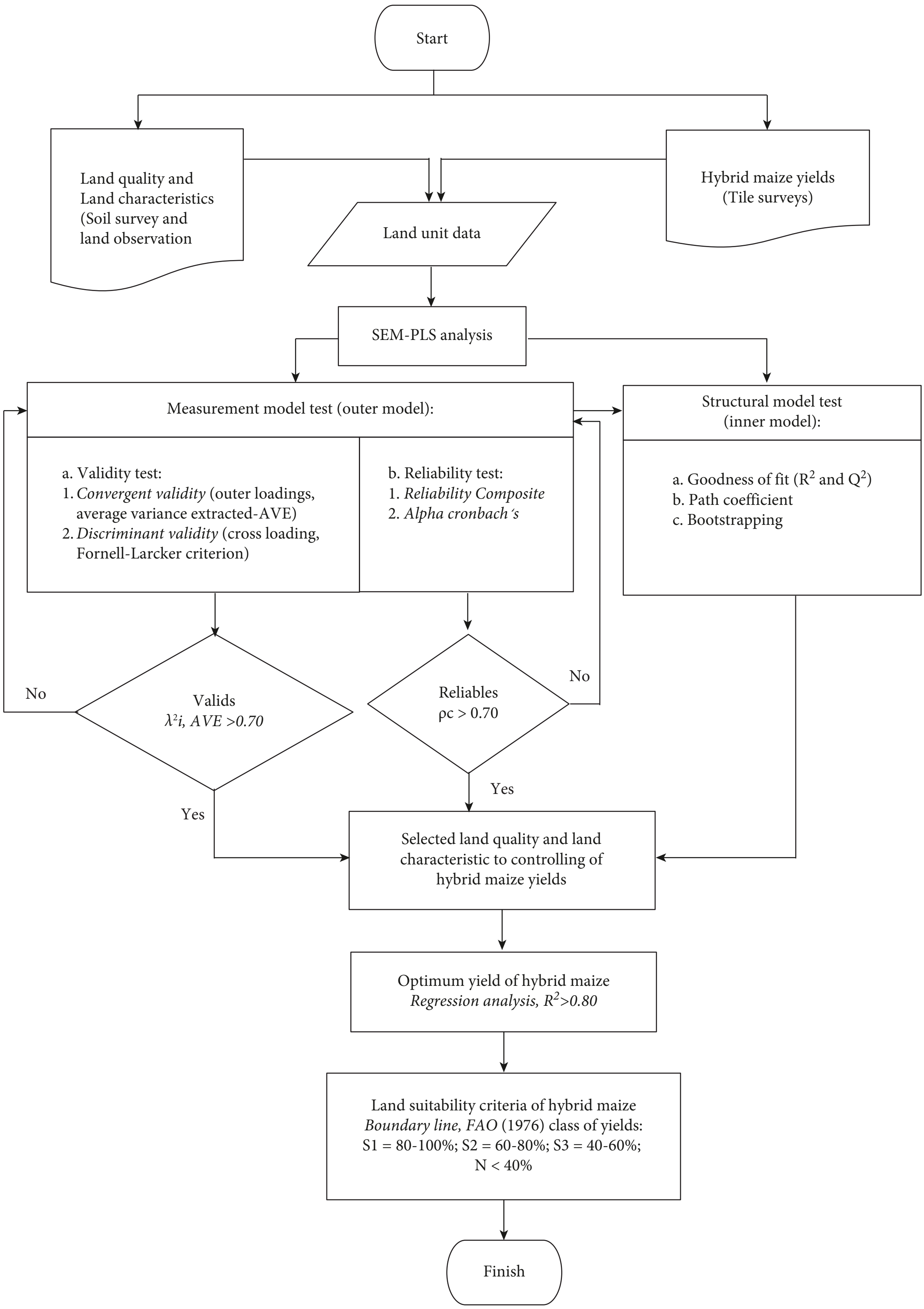


Figure 2: Research framework.

Table 1: Latent variables and indicators used in this study.

Latent variables		Indicators		Data sources
Notation	Land quality	Notation	Land characteristics	
X1	Temperature (t)	X1.1	Temperature	[45]
X2	Water availability (wa)	X2.1	Rainfall	[45]
		X2.2	Wet month	Rainfall >200 mm
		X2.3	Dry month	Rainfall <100 mm
		X2.4	Long growth period (LGP)	Water balance (Thornwaite method), soil moisture storage (gravimetric method), water surplus, and deficit days
X3	Oxygen availability (oa)	X3.1	Drainage	Soil survey and land observation
X4	Rooting condition (rc)	X4.1	Texture	Pipet method
		X4.1.1	Sand fraction	
		X4.1.2	Silt fraction	
		X4.1.3	Clay	
		X4.2	Coarse material	Soil survey and land observation
		X4.3	Effective depth	
X5	Nutrient retention (nr)	X5.1	pH, H_2O	pH meter (1 : 2.5)
		X5.2	pH, KCl	
		X5.3	Organic C	Walkley and Black method
		X5.4	Cation exchange capacity (CEC)	1N NH_4OAc, pH 7.0, extracted
		X5.5	Base saturation	Calculation
X6	Nutrient availability (na)	X6.1	Total *N*	Kjeldahl method
		X6.2	*P* availability	Olsen method
		X6.3	*K* exchangeable	1N NH_4OAc, pH 7.0, extracted
X7	Sodicity (xn)	X7.1	Exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP)	Calculation
X8	Erosion hazard (eh)	X8.1	Slopes	Soil survey and land observation
		X8.2	Soil erosion	
X9	Flooding hazard (fh)	X9.1	Inundation height	Soil survey and land observation
		X9.2	Inundation period	
X10	Land preparation (lp)	X10.1	Rock outcrops	Soil survey and land observation
		X10.2	Surface rock	
Y	Hybrid maize yield	Y.1	Hybrid maize yield	Tile box methods

Table 2: Brief statistics of land quality and characteristics.

Latent variables/indicators	Unit	n	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
X1 (temperature)							
X1.1 (temperature)	°C	67	26.79	27.80	28.01	28.19	0.63
X2 (water availability)							
X2.1 (rainfall)	Mm	67	1,246.00	1,533.42	1,478.00	1,849.00	232.69
X2.2 (wet month)	Month	67	0.00	1.03	1.00	3.00	0.85
X2.3 (dry month)	Month	67	2.00	3.39	4.00	5.00	1.06
X2.4 (LGP)	Day	67	211.00	246.00	214.00	304.00	44.54
X3 (oxygen availability)							
X3.1 (drainage)	Class	67	0.00	3.76	4.00	6.00	1.82
X4 (rooting conditions)							
X4.1 (texture)	Class	67	1.00	2.21	2.00	5.00	0.99
X4.1.1 (sand fraction)	%	67	5.00	41.58	43.00	81.33	18.51
X4.1.2 (silt fraction)	%	67	7.33	27.31	24.50	51.50	11.54
X4.1.3 (clay)	%	67	11.33	31.90	30.00	56.33	12.72
X4.2 (coarse material)	%	67	5.00	17.27	10.00	70.00	16.58
X4.3 (effective depth)	Cm	67	10.00	74.55	74.00	160.00	36.40
X5 (nutrient retention)							
X5.1 (pH, H_2O)		67	5.00	5.92	5.90	7.15	0.52
X5.2 (pH, KCl)		67	4.35	5.24	5.17	6.60	0.56
X5.3 (organic C)	%	67	0.41	0.85	0.77	2.35	0.39
X5.4 (CEC)	Cmol(+)/kg	67	8.94	24.89	22.43	59.57	11.41
X5.5 (base saturation)	%	67	45.03	56.22	52.85	81.89	9.76
X6 (nutrient availability)							
X6.1 (total *N*)	%	67	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.27	0.04
X6.2 (*P* availability)	Mg/kg	67	0.73	8.62	3.77	58.67	12.61
X6.3 (*K* exchangeable)	Cmol(+)/kg	67	0.07	0.39	0.24	1.92	0.42
X7 (sodicity)							
X7.1 (ESP)	%	67	0.76	7.06	6.20	24.17	5.62
X8 (erosion hazard)							
X8.1 (slopes)	%	67	1.00	9.58	6.00	25.00	7.29
X8.2 (soil erosion)	Tons/ha/year	67	3.66	334.51	110.27	1772.43	439.08
X9 (flooding hazard)							
X9.1 (inundation height)	Cm	67	0.00	7.58	0.00	50.00	17.10
X 9.2 (inundation period)	Day	67	0.00	0.64	0.00	5.00	1.52
X10 (land preparation)							
X10.1 (rock outcrops)	%	67	0.00	6.64	0.00	45.00	11.56
X10.2 (surface rock)	%	67	0.00	6.58	0.00	45.00	11.59
Y (hybrid maize yield)	Ton/ha	67	2.85	4.95	4.68	8.07	1.15

n, the number of the land unit; min, minimum; max, maximum; SD, standard deviation; LGP, long growth period; CEC, cation exchange capacity; ESP, exchangeable sodium percentage.

$$\rho c = \frac{\left(\sum \lambda_i\right)^2}{\left(\sum \lambda_i\right)^2 + \sum i \operatorname{var}\left(\varepsilon_i\right)}, \quad (6)$$

where λ_i is the loading factor, var is the variance, and ε_i is the error variance.

Meanwhile, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is calculated according to the following equation [65, 70]:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{\sum p \neq p'^{\operatorname{cor}\left(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q}\right)}}{p_q + \sum p \neq p'^{\operatorname{cor}\left(X_{pq} \cdot X_{p'q}\right)}}\right)\left(\frac{p_q}{p_{q-1}}\right), \quad (7)$$

where P_q is the number of indicators or manifest variables and q is the indicator block.

For step 2, the structural model testing (inner model) was carried out after the relationship model was built in line with the observed data and the overall suitability, namely, goodness of fit. The structural equation (inner model) is as follows [59, 60, 62]:

$$\mathrm{H}_j = \gamma_j \xi_1 + \gamma_j \xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j \xi_n + \varsigma_j, \quad (8)$$

where η_j is the endogenous variable vector (dependent), $\gamma_j \xi_1 + \gamma_j \xi_2 + \ldots \gamma_j \xi_n$ is the exogenous latent variable vector, and ς_j is the residual vector (error).

Meanwhile, the determinant coefficient and goodness of fit (Q^2) were calculated using the following equation [62, 64, 70]:

$$Q^2 \,(\text{Predictive relevance}) = 1 - \left(1 - \mathrm{R}_1^2\right)\left(1 - \mathrm{R}_2^2\right) \ldots \left(1 - \mathrm{R}_\mathrm{p}^2\right), \quad (9)$$

where $R_1^2, R_2^2, \ldots R_p^2 = R$ square of endogenous variables in the equation model [68].

The quantity of Q^2 has a value with a range of $0 < Q^2 < 1$, the closer the value to 1, the better the model [37]. It is also equivalent to the coefficient of total determination in path analysis. Furthermore, the effect and significance were tested based on the estimated value of the path coefficient and the critical point value (t-statistics or p value) at = 0.05. The relationship model between variables was measured by testing the direct correlation coefficient between variables. The results of testing the relationship between X and Y variables were indicated by the correlation coefficient, as well as t-statistics, and are also presented in the path diagram.

2.5. Class Assignment. To determine the class-required data for optimum results, class limits were calculated from the percentage of optimum results. After knowing the highest and lowest yields, the values were connected with the range of land characteristics values. The land suitability class and yield used referred to FAO [71], namely, class S1 (very suitable) when the values reach 80–100%, S2 was moderately suitable 60–80%, S3 marginally suitable 40–60%, and N not suitable <40% of the optimum capacity.

The optimum yield was determined using the boundary line method. This method is carried out by drawing a boundary line on the graph of the relationship between yield and land characteristics to obtain optimum results. In the boundary line method according to Widiatmaka et al. [72], each land characteristic is plotted on the X-axis, while hybrid maize yields are plotted on the Y-axis. Bhat and Sujatha [42] stated that the preparation of the hybrid maize yield boundary line includes the preparation of a scatter diagram between the X and the Y variable, division of the X-axis into several classes of intervals, determination of the highest data points in each class interval, preparation of boundary lines based on the highest data points from each class interval, and drawing a line parallel to the X-axis according to the percentage of the result class.

Furthermore, with the Microsoft Excel application tools, the boundary between classes S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N were determined by the Data menu ⟶ What-if-Analysis ⟶ Goal Seek ⟶ Set the cell at the location containing the regression equation ⟶ to value fill with the result limit values S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to N ⟶ By changing cell ⟶ the location where the value of the characteristics of the land will be sought ⟶ Ok. On location "By changing cell," the number being searched will appear, and at the location, "set cell" will be equal to the limit value of the result.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Land Quality and Characteristics Controlling Hybrid Maize Yield

3.1.1. Validity Test Result. Table 3 shows the loading factor of the variables, where most indicators were more than the critical limit of 0.70 with a 95% confidence level ($P > 1.960$). Therefore, these variables are highly recommended and the indicators are considered convergently valid. In the soil texture indicator for the latent variable of root conditions as well as the cation exchange capacity (CEC) and base saturation (BS) indicators for nutrient retention, the loading factor was below the tolerance value of 0.50 at the 95% confidence level ($P < 1.960$); hence, it was not used. This implies that the indicators have not been established or explained properly because the standard value of the loading factor must be greater than or equal to 0.50 [37, 38, 66].

The average variance extracted (AVE) value of almost all variables was greater than 0.50; therefore, it was considered convergently valid [61, 62]. The AVE value of the available nutrient variable was not valid due to the smaller value of the loading factor for the CEC and BS indicators of 0.50, leading to the removal of both indicators. A similar result was discovered in the root condition variable, although the AVE value was greater than 0.50, while the soil texture indicator was not used because the loading factor value is only 0.013.

The measurement of the Fornell–Larcker criterion and cross-loading was used as the basis for assessing the discriminant validity of the model. The calculation results on the Fornell–Larcker criterion in Table 4 show that the average of the tested variables has a higher square root of AVE than the correlation value; hence, the latent variable was considered discriminantly valid. The square root value of the AVE must be greater than its correlation value with other constructs to meet the discriminant validity requirements [69, 73]. The average loading factor value for the latent variable indicator was above that of others as shown in Table 5.

3.1.2. Reliability Test Result. The variables are considered reliable because composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient on average were more than 0.7 [61, 74], as shown in Table 6. However, certain indicators still had values less than 0.6, namely, soil texture, but the indicators used are reliable and adequate in forming the latent variables.

The highest composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for the variables of temperature, oxygen availability, and toxicity of 1 for the variables to be very reliable. The lowest coefficient was obtained on the root condition variable; therefore, the variable was not reliable. According to Bagozzi and Yi [75] and Hair et al. [74], variables are considered good and accepted when the value is >0.70.

The remaining variables are water availability, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, and land preparation variables. The coefficient of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha >0.6; therefore, the variable is considered reliable. The minimum value of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients was 0.60 [61, 74, 75].

3.1.3. Structural Model Test (Inner Models). Land characteristics that have a significant correlation with hybrid maize yields show a high level of contribution to land quality in influencing hybrid maize yields as indicated in Figure 3. The figure shows a structural model of the relationship between indicator variables, namely, 24 land characteristics, rectangular yellow, and latent variables, including 10 land qualities maize yield and oval blue. It also shows a model for

Table 3: Outer loading (loading factor) and the average variance extracted from study variables.

Indicators (land characteristics)		Latent variables (land quality)	Loading factors	t stat	Status	AVE
X1.1 (temperature)	⟶	X1 (temperature)	1.000**	11.192	Valid	1.000
X2.1 (rainfall)	⟶	X2 (water availability)	0.838	0.085	Valid	0.906
X2.2 (wet month)	⟶		0.989	0.999	Valid	
X2.3 (dry month)	⟶		0.850	0.428	Valid	
X2.4 (LGP)	⟶		0.993*	1.431	Valid	
X3.1 (drainage)	⟶	X3 (oxygen availability)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X4.1 (texture)	⟶	X4 (rooting condition)	0.013	0.066	Invalid	0.573
X4.2 (coarse material)	⟶		0.921	1.086	Valid	
X4.3 (effective depth)	⟶		−0.899	1.047	Valid	
X5.1 (pH, H_2O)	⟶	X5 (nutrient retention)	0.647	0.857	Valid	0.360 (invalid)
X5.2 (pH, KCl)	⟶		0.570**	1.973	Valid	
X5.3 (organic C)	⟶		0.831**	3.135	Valid	
X5.4 (CEC)	⟶		0.436*	1.381	Invalid	
X5.5 (base saturation)	⟶		0.365	0.845	Invalid	
X6.1 (total *N*)	⟶	X6 (nutrient availability)	0.760**	3.226	Valid	0.585
X6.2 (*P* availability)	⟶		0.587*	1.385	Valid	
X6.3 (*K* exchangeable)	⟶		0.897**	6.907	Valid	
X7.1 (ESP)	⟶	X7 (sodicity)	1.000	0.000	Valid	1.000
X8.1 (slopes)	⟶	X8 (erosion hazard)	0.954**	21.438	Valid	0.932
X8.2 (soil erosion)	⟶		0.941**	18.308	Valid	
X9.1 (inundation height)	⟶	X9 (flooding hazard)	0.984**	4.213	Valid	0.984
X9.2 (inundation period)	⟶		0.985**	3.918	Valid	
X10.1 (rock outcrops)	⟶	X10 (land preparation)	0.998**	189.133	Valid	0.995
X10.2 (surface rock)	⟶		0.998**	320.273	Valid	

AVE, average variance extracted; LGP, long growth period; CEC, cation exchange capacity; ESP, exchangeable sodium percentage.

Table 4: Fornell–Larker criterion test.

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1	1.000										
X2	0.940	0.952									
X3	0.059	0.149	1.000								
X4	0.082	0.030	−0.162	0.757							
X5	−0.360	−0.239	−0.103	−0.368	0.600						
X6	−0.069	0.021	0.012	−0.518	0.694	0.765					
X7	0.382	0.429	0.084	0.228	−0.030	−0.217	1.000				
X8	0.019	−0.082	−0.501	0.285	−0.317	−0.370	−0.009	0.966			
X9	−0.104	−0.033	0.237	−0.204	0.073	0.090	0.202	−0.250	0.992		
X10	0.198	0.093	−0.223	0.873	−0.303	−0.538	0.362	0.304	−0.126	0.998	
Y	0.018	0.152	0.169	−0.578	0.387	0.456	−0.016	−0.517	0.164	−0.568	1.000

X1, temperature; X2, water availability; X3, oxygen availability; X4, rooting condition; X5, nutrient retention; X6, nutrient availability; X7, sodicity; X8, erosion hazard; X9, flooding hazard; X10, land preparation; *Y*, maize hybrid yield.

the relationship between latent variables such as land qualities and maize yield, as well as loading figures. The factor for each indicator and path coefficient for land qualities has a direct effect on the value of maize yields.

For example, X8 (erosion hazard) significantly determines the hybrid maize yield with a path coefficient of −0.392. The negative sign indicates that the erosion hazard is negatively related to maize yield, where the higher the erosion hazard, the lower the maize yield. Furthermore, nutrient retention (X5) contributes to the diversity of hybrid maize yields with a path coefficient of 0.252. A positive sign indicates that nutrient retention is positively related to maize yield, where the higher the value of nutrient retention, followed by the maize yield.

The results of this path analysis indicated that the land quality that can be a predictor of maize yield diversity were oxygen availability (X3), nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (X6), erosion hazard (X8), and land preparation (X 10). Figure 2 indicates that only 8 of the 24 indicators explain latent variance at the 5% real test level. The 8 indicators were coarse material and effective soil depth as an indicator of rooting condition, organic carbon content as nutrient retention, exchangeable K as nutrient availability, soil erosion and slope as erosion hazard, as well as rock outcrop and surface rock as an indicator of land preparation. It was also indicated that the drainage loading factor was unable to explain the diversity of oxygen availability. Therefore, oxygen availability cannot be used as a land

Table 5: Cross-loading of latent variables to indicators.

Indicators	Latent Variables										
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	Y
X1.1	1	0.8300	0.0312	0.0240	−0.2959	−0.0592	0.3270	0.0195	−0.0837	0.1680	−0.0204
X2.1	0.9783	0.8379	−0.0035	−0.0063	−0.2488	−0.0320	0.3555	−0.0017	−0.0539	0.1552	0.0155
X2.2	0.8534	0.9887	0.1938	−0.0557	−0.1257	0.0988	0.4025	−0.1435	−0.0279	−0.0178	0.1748
X2.3	0.5223	0.8497	0.1523	0.2464	−0.2505	−0.1161	0.4641	−0.1494	0.0144	0.2154	0.0592
X2.4	0.8293	0.9928	0.1721	−0.0334	−0.1524	0.0833	0.4440	−0.1713	−0.0383	−0.0031	0.1331
X3.1	0.0312	0.1785	1	−0.1541	−0.1091	−0.0375	0.0843	−0.4964	0.2530	−0.2229	0.2156
X4.1	−0.0058	−0.0006	−0.1696	0.0126	0.2127	0.1013	0.2173	0.1761	0.0055	−0.0225	0.0050
X4.2	−0.0728	−0.1082	−0.0829	0.9212	−0.2754	−0.5494	0.1845	0.2891	−0.2674	0.7910	−0.5276
X4.3	−0.1289	−0.1240	0.2071	−0.8990	0.2046	0.3209	−0.2633	−0.1587	0.0730	−0.7693	0.4666
X5.1	−0.2975	−0.4140	−0.3824	−0.3027	0.6470	0.3024	−0.1283	0.1730	−0.0342	−0.1190	0.0718
X5.2	−0.2033	−0.2939	−0.4480	−0.2791	0.5701	0.3176	−0.0273	0.1935	0.0801	−0.1829	0.1445
X5.3	−0.2440	−0.0158	0.1276	−0.1134	0.8308	0.5651	0.0728	−0.5076	0.0545	−0.1147	0.3501
X5.4	0.0537	0.1002	0.0033	0.0110	0.4360	0.4081	0.3732	−0.0504	0.1426	−0.0137	0.1395
X5.5	−0.2717	−0.2512	−0.1053	−0.4382	0.3650	0.4343	−0.6008	−0.0619	−0.1498	−0.4876	0.0825
X6.1	−0.0256	0.1778	0.0335	−0.1950	0.7028	0.7604	0.0453	−0.3878	−0.0809	−0.2162	0.2623
X6.2	−0.1201	−0.2238	−0.4256	−0.2590	0.4149	0.5865	−0.2829	−0.0389	−0.0267	−0.2860	0.1025
X6.3	−0.0437	0.0283	0.0310	−0.5607	0.5145	0.8974	−0.3341	−0.2613	0.2133	−0.6520	0.3892
X7.1	0.3270	0.4411	0.0843	0.2420	0.0290	−0.2417	1	−0.0286	0.2142	0.3621	0.0487
X8.1	−0.0226	−0.2234	−0.5132	0.2998	−0.2625	−0.3475	−0.0481	0.9537	−0.3383	0.3031	−0.5274
X8.2	0.0649	−0.0590	−0.4223	0.1646	−0.2942	−0.2950	−0.0035	0.9409	−0.0988	0.2516	−0.4682
X9.1	−0.0996	−0.0225	0.2254	−0.1949	0.1126	0.1483	0.1939	−0.2440	0.9835	−0.1342	0.2278
X9.2	−0.0658	−0.0305	0.2717	−0.1860	0.0271	0.0449	0.2271	−0.2252	0.9849	−0.0901	0.2380
X10.1	0.1848	0.0403	−0.2340	0.8480	−0.2309	−0.5544	0.3760	0.3058	−0.1188	0.9977	−0.5424
X10.2	0.1503	0.0225	−0.2107	0.8629	−0.2274	−0.5592	0.3464	0.2812	−0.1076	0.9976	−0.5365
Y.1	−0.0204	0.1413	0.2156	−0.5479	0.3425	0.3790	0.0487	−0.5271	0.2367	−0.5408	1

X1, temperature; X2, water availability; X3, oxygen availability; X4, rooting condition; X5, nutrient retention; X6, nutrient availability; X7, sodicity; X8, erosion hazard; X9, flooding hazard; X10, land preparation; Y, hybrid maize yield; X1.1, temperature; X2.1, rainfall; X2.2, the wet month; X2.3, the dry month; X2.3, long growth period; X3.1, drainage; X4.1, texture; X4.2, coarse material; X4.3, effective depth; X5.1, organic C; X5.2, cation exchanges capacity; X5.3, base saturation; X6.1, total *N*; X6.2, *P* availability; X6.3, *K* exchangeable; X7.1, the exchange sodium percentage; X8.1, slopes; X8.2, soil erosion; X9.1, inundation height; X9.2, inundation period; X10.1, rock outcrops; X10.2, surface rock; Y.1, hybrid maize yield. The yellow color shows the loading factor value for the indicators of the latent variables above the loading factor values for other latent variable indicators (>0.5), while the red color indicates the opposite (<0.5).

Table 6: Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha test.

Indicators (land characteristics)	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
X1.1 (temperature)	1.000	1.000
X2.1 (rainfall)		
X2.2 (wet month)		
X2.3 (dry month)	0.975	0.965
X2.4 (long growth periods)		
X3.1 (drainage)	1.000	1.000
X4.1 (texture)		
X4.2 (coarse material)	0.002[nor]	−1.055[nor]
X4.3 (effective depth)		
X5.1 (pH, H_2O)		
X5.2 (pH, KCl)		
X5.3 (organic C)	0.718	0.628
X5.4 (cation exchange capacity)		
X5.5 (base saturation)		
X6.1 (total *N*)		
X6.2 (*P* availability)	0.805	0.681
X6.3 (*K* exchangeable)		
X7.1 (exchangeable sodium percentage)	1.000	1.000
X8.1 (slopes)	0.965	0.928
X8.2 (soil erosion)		
X9.1 (inundation height)	0.992	0.984
X9.2 (inundation period)		
X10.1 (rock outcrops)	0.998	0.995
X10.2 (surface rock)		

nor, not reliable.

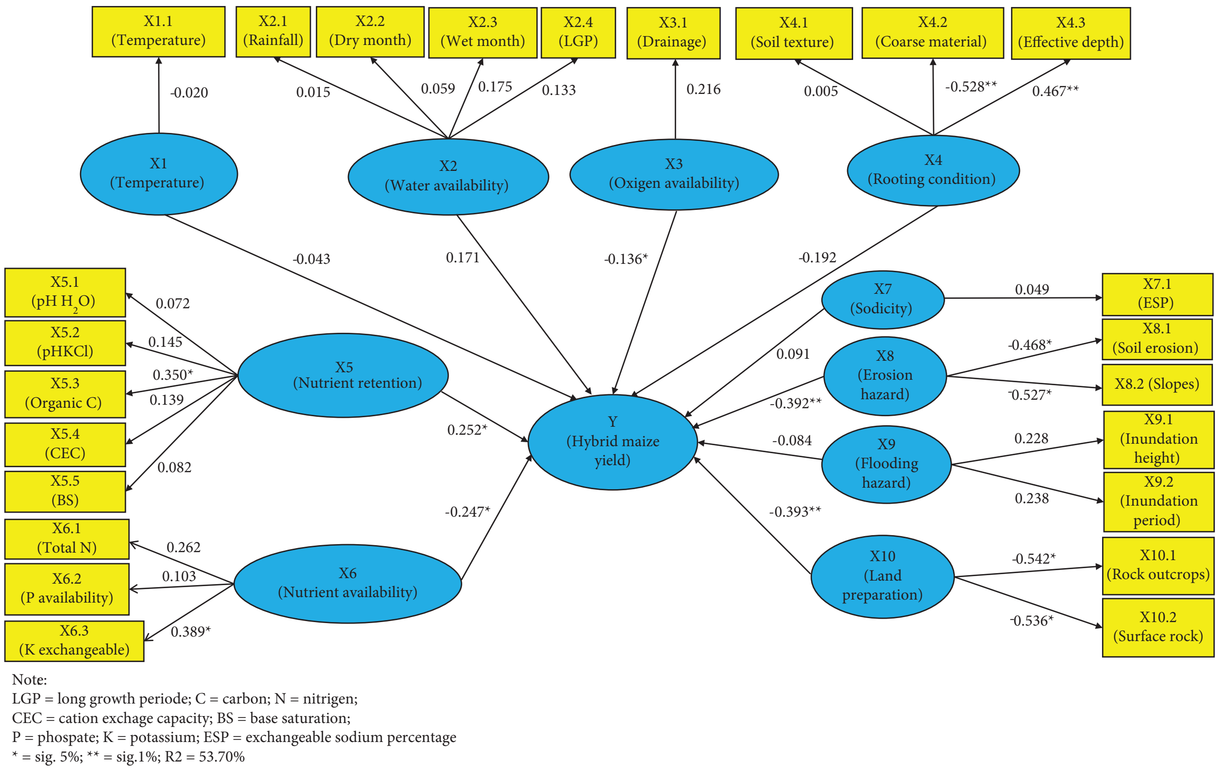


Figure 3: Path coefficient of land quality on hybrid maize yield.

quality because there are no indicators that can represent it. Only the land qualities of nutrient retention (X5), nutrient availability (x6), erosion hazard (x8), and land preparation (X10) were used next.

The indicators of land characteristics for effective depth, organic C, total *N*, and exchangeable *K* have a fairly strong positive relationship and a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, an increase in these parameters by 1% will be followed by a rise in hybrid maize yields of 39% to 57.7%. According to Wirosoedarmo et al. [4], effective depth affects root growth and development, making plants grow and develop properly. Moreover, the levels of organic C, total *N*, and CEC are influenced by soil organic matter [76], while potassium plays a role in the growth and development of maize [77].

Indicators of rough soil characteristics, slopes, soil erosion, as well as surface and rock outcrops, have a strong negative relationship with a very significant effect on hybrid maize yields. In this relationship, 1% decrease in coarse material, slope, soil erosion, as well as surface, and rock outcrop is followed by an increase in hybrid maize yields by 39–57.7%.

3.2. Optimum Hybrid Maize Yield by the Land Quality and Land Characteristics. Table 7 shows the mathematical equations for each land characteristic and also the optimum hybrid maize yield for the land equation. Figure 4 shows the diagram of the relationship between land characteristics as an independent variable (*X*) and maize yield as an independent variable *Y*. Model fitting indicates that the quadratic equation is sufficient to describe the condition of data distribution.

The optimum of hybrid maize yield ranged from 5.58 to 8.54 ton/ha, where the highest yield was obtained from total *N* and slopes of 8.54 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 100% and 92%. Sutardjo et al. [78] showed that hybrid maize yields ranged from 7.43 to 9.2 ton/ha. This indicated that the optimum yield achieved is still within the range of hybrid maize yields that have been previously reported. Nitrogen is directly involved in the formation of amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymes, nucleoproteins, and alkaloids, which are needed in the plant growth process [79, 80]. An extremely high amount of *N* causes excessive vegetative growth, thereby making plants fall easily and increasing susceptibility to disease [81]. Meanwhile, the lack of *N* nutrients can limit cell division, enlargement [82], and the formation of chlorophyll, leading to stunted growth as well as yellowing of leaves [81].

The lowest optimum yield was obtained from exchangeable *K*, which was only 5.58 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 95%. This was presumably because the *K* content in the soil is very low, thereby affecting the hybrid maize yield. Potassium (K) is required by plants for physiological functions, including carbohydrate metabolism, enzyme activity, osmotic regulation, efficient water use, *N* uptake, protein synthesis, and assimilate translocation [83–86]. It also plays a role in improving the quality of crop yields [87, 83, 88].

The optimum hybrid maize yield of the remaining is relatively diverse. This includes effective depth and organic carbon, which were both 8.46 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 97%. Furthermore, coarse material and soil erosion were

Table 7: The optimum hybrid maize yield by the land quality and land characteristics.

Land quality/land characteristics	Optimum yield (ton/ha)	Yield equation	R^2
Rooting condition (rc)			
Coarse material	8.17	$Y = 0.0025900x^2 - 0.2568578x + 11.9093576$	0.96
Effective depth	8.46	$Y = -0.0008354x^2 + 0.29100569x - 1.3957496$	0.97
Nutrient retention (nr)			
Organic carbon	8.46	$Y = -25.492979x^2 + 47.9575089X - 8.9895067$	0.97
Nutrient availability (na)			
Total N	8.54	$Y = -305.5574654X^2 + 155.8690907X - 2.7439640$	1.00
K exchangeable	5.58	$Y = -10.6697409X^2 + 18.5239943X + 2.3179289$	0.95
Erosion hazard (eh)			
Slopes	8.54	$Y = 0.0183X^2 - 0.9559X + 14.806$	0.92
Soil erosion	8.17	$y = 0.0000184X^2 - 0.0198647X + 9.0537569$	0.89
Land preparation (lp)			
Rock outcrops	7.41	$Y = 0.0057496X^2 - 0.3845867X + 8.6269785$	0.92
Surface rock	7.41	$Y = 0.0057496X^2 - 0.3945867X + 8.6269785$	0.92

8.17 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 96% and 89%, while rock outcrops and surface rock were 7.41 ton/ha with an R^2 value of 92%. The absence of coarse material >2 mm in diameter indicated that plant roots can grow freely on the surface or deeper parts of the soil [89] because the deeper the roots of the maize, the greater the maize yield [90, 91]. The addition of organic matter will increase maize yield [92–94] and organic C content [95] because soil organic matter is a strong positive predictor of yield [96]. Kane et al. [96] also stated that the addition of more organic matter will improve water retention, thereby reducing maize yield losses due to drought. The slope has a significant effect on soil degradation [97]. According to a previous study, erosion and maize yield are negatively correlated; hence, increased erosion will reduce maize productivity [98]. Soil erosion on flat land is slower surface runoff [99]. It was also reported that surface rocks and outcrops are the limiting factors in the suitability of maize plantations [100]. Therefore, a high percentage of rock outcrops will complicate land cultivation and plant root growth.

3.3. Land Suitability Criteria for Hybrid Maize Crops. Table 8 shows the yield limit for each class from the calculation of the optimum yield, where the class range for each land characteristic is derived. Based on the optimum yield of the highest hybrid maize, there were 2 indicators, namely, the total N content and the slope. The total N indicator with a very suitable class (S1) was achieved when the value in the soil was greater than 0.11%, while in the moderately suitable class (S2), it was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.08 to 0.10%. In the marginally appropriate class (S3), the total N indicator was achieved when the total N in the soil ranges from 0.06 to 0.07%, while the not suitable class (N) was achieved when the content was less than 0.06%. On the slope indicator with class S1, it was obtained when the slope class ranges from 0 to 7.70%%, while class S2 was achieved when the slope class ranges from 7.71 to 11.84%. Furthermore, in classes S3 and N, it was obtained when the slope class ranged from 11.85 to 18.25% and greater than 18.25%, respectively.

Based on the optimum yield of the lowest hybrid maize, only the exchangeable K was the indicator. In classes S1 and S2, it was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil was greater than 0.25 cmol(+)/kg and ranges from 0.14 to 0.24 cmol(+)/kg, respectively. Furthermore, class S3 was achieved when the exchangeable K content in the soil ranges from 0.05 to 0.13 cmol(+)/kg, while in class N, it was obtained when the exchangeable K content in the soil was less than 0.05 cmol(+)/kg. The remaining variables and indicators were relatively varied according to the optimum yield of hybrid maize and the range of land suitability classes obtained as presented in Table 8.

Based on the relationship between the quality and characteristics of the selected land with optimum results, the criteria for hybrid maize land suitability were obtained as shown in Table 8. These criteria described the actual state of achieving optimum, moderate, and minimum yields of hybrid maize in the field with values of 80%, 60%, and 40%, respectively. According to Sukarman et al. [101], the parameters used in the land suitability assessment must describe the actual conditions. This is due to the significant positive correlation between maize yield and land suitability class [102].

The land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are fewer and have referred to the optimum yield. Meanwhile, the land quality and characteristics in this new criterion are less because it only consists of root conditions with characteristics of coarse material and effective depth, nutrient retention with organic C, and nutrient availability with total N and K exchangeable. It also consists of erosion hazards with characteristics of slopes and soil erosion, as well as land preparation with surface rocks and rock outcrops only. The land qualities selected and maize yields consistent with the land potential are the basis for developing suitability criteria. This will reduce the land characteristics and make the evaluation process faster, cheaper, and easier with accurate results [26]. Some characteristics and land quality criteria were not made because they did not significantly affect the yield of hybrid maize. The number and distribution of the data were still limited, and the diversity of values was small or not measurable in the field [72].

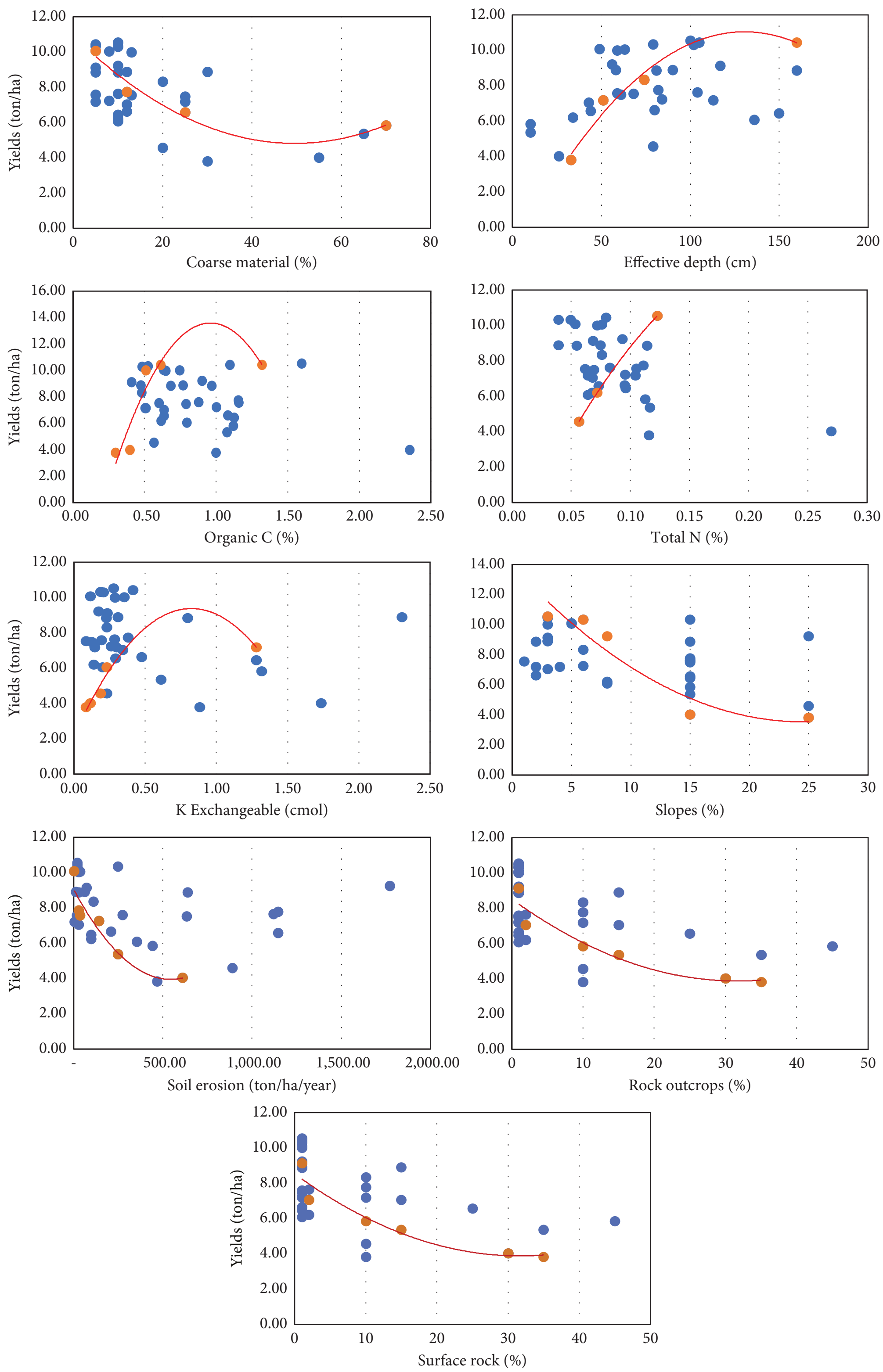


Figure 4: Scatter diagram relationship among maize yield and land characteristics.

Compared to Wahyunto et al. [47], the new land suitability criteria for hybrid maize plants in Table 9 are more realistic in value with the conditions in the field and is based on the achievement of optimum yields. The current land suitability criteria are still general and not specific to maize yields [26], although the agronomic and yield potential of each maize variety differ, based on the diversity of characteristics and land quality in the field. There are still

Table 8: Yield limits of hybrid maize and values obtained in each land suitability class interval by land quality and characteristics.

Land quality/land characteristics	Yield limits (ton/ha)			Value of land suitability criterion obtained			
	S1 – S2 ($80\% \times Y_{optim}$)	S2 – S3 ($60\% \times Y_{optim}$)	S3 – N ($40\% \times Y_{optim}$)	S1	S2	S3	N
Rooting condition (rc)							
Coarse material (%)	8.17	6.05	4.04	0–13.51	13.51–27.48	27.48–52.41	>52.41
Effective depth (cm)	8.46	6.37	4.29	≥69.66	49.36–69.65	33.29–49.35	<33.29
Nutrient retention (nr)							
Organic carbon (%)	8.46	6.37	4.29	≥0.61	0.52–0.60	0.34–0.51	<0.34
Nutrient availability (na)							
Total N (%)	8.54	6.43	4.33	≥0.11	0.08–0.10	0.06–0.07	<0.06
K exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	5.58	4.42	2.98	≥0.25	0.14–0.24	0.05–0.13	<0.05
Erosion hazard (eh)							
Slopes (%)	8.54	6.43	4.33	0–7.70	7.71–11.84	11.85–18.25	>18.25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	8.17	6.05	4.04	≤55.32	55.32–195.29	195.30–605.57	>605.57
Land preparation (lp)							
Rock outcrops (%)	7.41	5.69	3.97	0–4.46	4.47–13.10	13.11–31.89	>31.89
Surface rock (%)	7.41	5.69	3.97	0–4.46	4.47–13.10	13.11–31.89	>31.89

S1, very suitable; S2, moderately suitable; S3, marginally suitable; N, not suitable.

Table 9: Comparison of new and general land suitability criteria with land quality and characteristics.

Land quality/land characteristics	New land suitability criterion of hybrid maize				Land suitability criterion of general maize [47]			
	S1	S2	S3	N	S1	S2	S3	N
Rooting condition (rc)								
Coarse material (%)	0–13.51	13.51–27.48	27.48–52.41	>52.41	<15	15–35	35–55	>55
Effective depth (cm)	≥69.66	49.36–69.65	33.29–49.35	<33.29	>60	60–40	40–25	<25
Nutrient retention (nr)								
Organic carbon (%)	≥0.61	0.52–0.60	0.34–0.51	<0.34	>1.20	0.8–1.2	<0.8	—
Nutrient availability (na)								
Total N (%)	≥0.11	0.08–0.10	0.06–0.07	<0.06	Mo	Lo	VLo	—
K exchangeable (cmol(+)/kg)	≥0.25	0.14–0.24	0.05–0.13	<0.05	Mo-Hi	Lo	VLo	—
Erosion hazard (eh)								
Slopes (%)	0–7.70	7.71–11.84	11.85–18.25	>18.25	<8	8–15	15–25	>25
Soil erosion (ton/ha/year)	≤55.32	55.32–195.29	195.30–605.57	>605.57	—	VLi	Li-Mo	He-VHe
Land preparation (lp)								
Rock outcrops (%)	0–4.46	4.47–13.10	13.11–31.89	>31.89	<5	5–15	15–40	>40
Surface rock (%)	0–4.46	4.47–13.10	13.11–31.89	>31.89	<5	5–15	15–40	>40

S1, very suitable; S2, moderately suitable; S3, marginally suitable; N, not suitable; Hi, high; M, moderate; Lo, low; VLo, very low; He, heavy; Li, light; VLi, very light; VHe, very heavy.

limitations on the use of these results for the development of hybrid maize in the Boalemo Regency because the setting is only based on land characteristics and optimum yields in this regency. Therefore, further investigation to expand the scope of the research area nationally with more diverse and contrasting land characteristic values is recommended to determine the effect on hybrid maize production.

4. Conclusions

Land suitability criteria for the new hybrid maize are determined by land qualities, namely, root conditions, nutrient retention, available nutrients, erosion hazard, as well as land preparation, and land characteristics, including coarse material, effective depth, organic C, total N, exchangeable K, slopes, soil erosion, rock outcrops, and surface rocks. The highest optimum yield of 8.54 ton/ha was achieved by the total N and slopes for a very suitable class (S1), while the lowest value of 5.58 ton/ha was attained by exchangeable K for class S1. These results showed that the combination of the PLS-SEM and boundary line analysis can be an alternative approach to establishing new land suitability criteria for crops based on optimum yields and selected land quality.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute Research and Community Service of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo for their financial and administrative support. This study was funded by the Directorate of Research, Technology and Community Service, Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, grant number B/105/UN47.D1/PT.01.03/2022.

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