

On the magnitude of positive feedback between future climate change and the carbon cycle

J.-L. Dufresne

IPSL/LMD, Paris, France

P. Friedlingstein, M. Berthelot, L. Bopp, and P. Ciais

IPSL/LSCE, Gif sur Yvette, France

L. Fairhead and H. Le Treut

IPSL/LMD, Paris, France

P. Monfray

IPSL/LSCE, Gif sur Yvette, France

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[1] We use an ocean-atmosphere general circulation model coupled to land and ocean carbon models to simulate the evolution of climate and atmospheric CO₂ from 1860 to 2100. Our model reproduces the observed global mean temperature changes and the growth rate of atmospheric CO₂ for the period 1860–2000. For the future, we simulate that the climate change due to CO₂ increase will reduce the land carbon uptake, leaving a larger fraction of anthropogenic CO₂ in the atmosphere. By 2100, we estimate that atmospheric CO₂ will be 18% higher due to the climate change impact on the carbon cycle. Such a positive feedback has also been found by Cox *et al.* [2000]. However, the amplitude of our feedback is three times smaller than the one they simulated. We show that the partitioning between carbon stored in the living biomass or in the soil, and their respective sensitivity to increased CO₂ and climate change largely explain this discrepancy. **INDEX TERMS:** 1615 Global Change: Biogeochemical processes (4805); 1620 Global Change: Climate dynamics (3309); 0315 Atmospheric Composition and Structure: Biosphere/atmosphere interactions; 0325 Atmospheric Composition and Structure: Evolution of the atmosphere

1. Introduction

[2] Atmospheric CO₂ has increased by 80 ppmv over the last two centuries as a result of fossil fuel burning and land use changes [Schimel *et al.*, 1995]. These anthropogenic emissions are expected to continue in the coming decades. The corresponding atmospheric CO₂ concentration, needed to estimate future climate change, is not straightforward to predict since both the land and the ocean play a role in controlling atmospheric CO₂. Rising atmospheric CO₂ is known to increase plant photosynthesis [DeLucia *et al.*, 1999] and carbon dissolution in seawater [Oeschger *et al.*, 1975]. On the other hand, future climate change is believed to reduce the ocean carbon uptake [Sarmiento *et al.*, 1998; Joos *et al.*, 1999] and the terrestrial carbon uptake [Cramer *et al.*, 2001]. These reductions may constitute a positive feedback which has been estimated in a previous analysis based on off-line simulations [Friedlingstein *et al.*, 2001]. Recently, fully coupled climate-carbon simulations were performed by Cox *et al.* [2000] using the Hadley Center HadCM3 climate model coupled to a carbon cycle model. They

found a very large negative impact of climate change on land carbon cycle with a decline of tropical forest and a widespread climate-driven loss of soil carbon leading to large CO₂ losses to the atmosphere. In this paper we present results obtained with our climate-carbon coupled model and we compare our results with Cox *et al.* [2000], highlighting the main reasons for discrepancies.

2. Models and Runs Description

[3] Our climate model is a coupled ocean-atmosphere general circulation mode, the IPSL-CM2 model [Khodri *et al.*, 2001]. The carbon model is composed of the SLAVE code [Friedlingstein *et al.*, 1995] for the terrestrial part and of the IPSL-OCCM1 code [Aumont *et al.*, 1999] for the ocean part. Simulated monthly mean climate fields and annual mean atmospheric CO₂ concentration drive both carbon models, the annual change in CO₂ concentration being calculated as the balance between prescribed emissions and the land and ocean sinks.

[4] Starting from an initial state where the coupled climate carbon model is near equilibrium, two 240 year-long simulations have been performed without any restoring term or flux correction. The first one is a control simulation without any anthropogenic CO₂ sources. The second is a scenario simulation where CO₂ emissions are prescribed, using historical emissions from fossil and land use change from 1860 to 1990 [Andres *et al.*, 1996], and the IPCC SRES98-A2 emission scenario from 1990 to 2100 [Nakicenovic *et al.*, 2000]. CO₂ sources are the only change between the two runs. The control run results are realistic and display no significant drift in both global mean surface temperature and atmospheric CO₂ (Figure 1).

3. Recent Historical Period and Future Period

[5] Over the period 1860–2000, we simulate a rise in global mean surface temperature of 0.6°C (Figure 1), consistent with observations [Jones, 1994]. The simulated atmospheric CO₂ concentration matches measurements [Etheridge *et al.*, 1996] within a few ppmv (Figure 1). Over the 1980s, the mean land and ocean uptake amounts to 1.9 and 2.1 GtCy⁻¹ respectively, consistent with recent estimates [Keeling *et al.*, 1996; Battle *et al.*, 2000]. Also, CO₂ interannual variability is realistic in term of amplitude.

[6] In the scenario run we obtain, by 2100, an atmospheric CO₂ increase of 484 ppmv (from 286 to 770 ppmv), a global temperature increase of 3°C (4.4°C over the continents) and a small global mean precipitation increase (4%). The oceanic circulation shows a

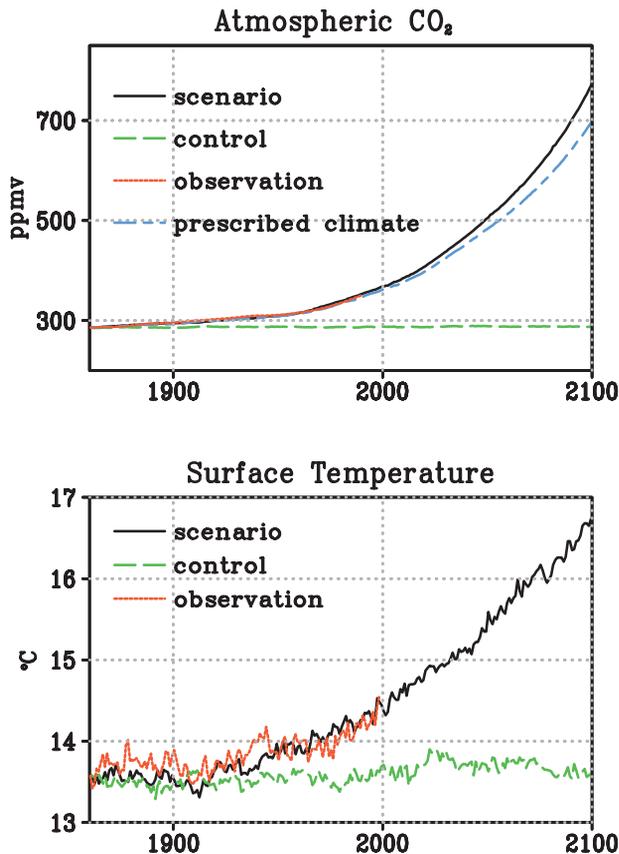


Figure 1. Atmospheric CO₂ and global mean surface temperature time series for the control run for the scenario run and comparison with observation. The atmospheric CO₂ for the prescribed climate run is also represented.

small but significant reduction of the thermohaline circulation and of the deep convection at high latitudes.

4. Carbon Climate Feedbacks

[7] To quantify the climate carbon feedback, we perform an additional carbon cycle simulation called “prescribed climate”, where the CO₂ emissions are the same as in the “scenario” run but where the associated climate change is not considered. The biospheric and oceanic carbon models are therefore driven by the climate of the control run. The prescribed climate simulation shows a lower atmospheric CO₂ increase than does the scenario simulation (Figure 1). By 2100, CO₂ reaches only 695 ppmv. That means that interactions between climate and carbon cycle increase by 18% the accumulation of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

[8] This results confirm the findings of *Cox et al.* [2000] and we both attribute this positive feedback to the terrestrial biosphere. However magnitude of their climate impact is approximately 3 times larger than ours. While we simulate a 75 ppmv additional atmospheric CO₂ increase, [*Cox et al.*, 2000] simulate a 250 ppmv increase because of climate change impact on the biosphere. In our simulations, the cumulated land uptake over the 1860–2100 period amounts to 680 GtC in the prescribed climate run and is reduced to 480 GtC in the scenario run. *Cox et al.* [2000] simulate a 630 GtC uptake in their prescribe climate run (called the offline experiment in their paper) but a 100 GtC source in their scenario run (called the coupled run in their paper).

[9] Regarding the ocean uptake, both studies agree that despite a stratification and a warming of its surface, the ocean uptake slightly increase under the climate change. In our study, cumulated

ocean uptake amounts to 670 GtC in the prescribed climate run, to be compared to 700 in the scenario run (Hadley corresponding numbers being 370 and 490 respectively). This seems to be in contradiction with previous ocean only model studies [*Sarmiento et al.*, 1998; *Joos et al.*, 1999; *Bopp et al.*, 2001] which all simulated that climate change reduces ocean carbon uptake. Additional simulations show that the climate-induced reduction of biospheric uptake induces a larger atmospheric CO₂ rise, leading to a larger geochemical air-sea exchange. That latter compensates the reduction of ocean carbon uptake due to climate change alone. In other words, the reduced land uptake, through enhanced atmospheric CO₂ leads to a increased ocean uptake, a feedback obviously missed in ocean only studies. Note that the IPSL ocean uptake, despite a lower atmospheric CO₂, is much larger than the Hadley ocean uptake.

5. Discussion

[10] On the continents, a combination of several mechanisms explain the large difference between the Hadley Center and the IPSL results. One obvious difference between our study and the one from the Hadley Center is that this latter uses a terrestrial model that accounts for vegetation dynamics, a process we did not include in our simulations. However, the following analysis clearly shows that this can not be the only reason.

[11] Figure 2 shows the allocation of carbon to vegetation and soil for the runs of both Hadley and IPSL. The major difference between the two study lies in the CO₂ and climate relative impacts on vegetation and soil carbon.

[12] First, we predict that increased CO₂ alone induces a larger increase of carbon in vegetation (400 GtC) than in soil (200 GtC), whereas the *Cox et al.* [2000] study shows the partitioning tendency to be in the opposite sense (200 GtC increase in vegetation and 400 GtC increase in soils) (Figure 2). We compared these results to the ones from *Cramer et al.* [2001], who inter-compares 6 different dynamic global vegetation models (DGVMs) under CO₂ and climate change scenario. Out of these 6 DGVMs, 3 simulate a larger storage in vegetation than in soil as we do, 2 simulate similar storage in vegetation and soil, while only one (the model of *Cox et al.* [2000]) simulates the opposite, a larger storage in the soil than in the vegetation (Table 1).

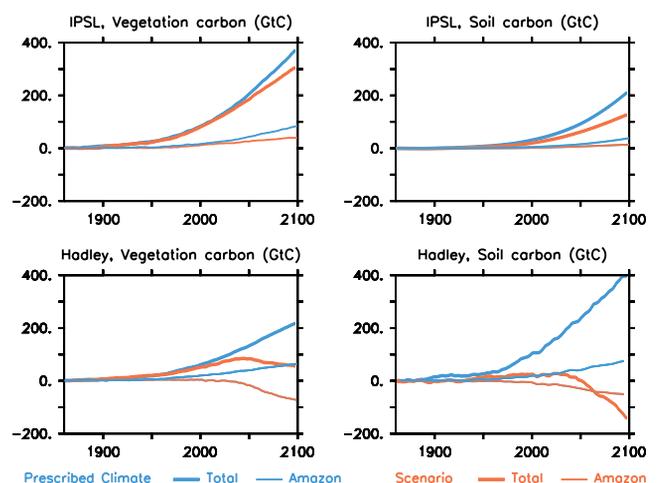


Figure 2. Partitioning of terrestrial carbon pools changes between living vegetation (top left) and soil (top right). Blue line shows the carbon changes in the prescribed climate run for total lands (thick line) and Amazon region only (thin line), red lines are for the scenario run. The bottom two panels show the same quantities from the *Cox et al.* [2000] study.

Table 1. Carbon Allocated to Vegetation (Δ Veg), Carbon Allocated to Soil (Δ Soil) and Allocation Ratio for the Models from the [Cramer *et al.*, 2001] DGVM Intercomparison Study, the [Cox *et al.*, 2000] Coupled Simulation and this Present Work

	Δ Veg (GtC)	Δ Soil (GtC)	Δ Veg/ Δ Soil
HYBRID	410	75	5.47
IBIS	460	180	2.55
SDGVM	260	120	2.17
VECODE	180	160	1.13
LPJ	250	270	0.93
TRIFFID	400	520	0.77
Cox <i>et al.</i>	220	410	0.54
This study	380	220	1.73

All numbers are taken for the simulation with CO₂ increase alone, at the time where atmospheric CO₂ reaches 700 ppmv.

[13] Second, the climate impact on the terrestrial reservoirs is also quite different in the two model runs. Spatially, our carbon decrease is mainly located in the tropics, and affects equally the vegetation and the soil, whereas in Cox *et al.* [2000], vegetation carbon decrease is primarily tropical, but soil carbon release, which is responsible for their large positive feedback, is essentially occurring in the extra-tropics (Figure 2). The contribution of the Amazon forest dieback to the positive feedback is secondary.

[14] When focusing on the processes responsible for the reduced land uptake in both studies, we also see different responses. In the IPSL scenario run, the warming is associated to a soil drying in the tropics. The drying leads to a severe reduction of net primary production (NPP) (−25% in the Amazon basin), as well as a reduction of soil respiration rate (SRR). The warming tends to increase SRR, especially for the litter pool which has the fast turnover time. The Hadley run also simulates an NPP reduction in the Amazon basin, but simulates a very large increase of SRR because of higher temperature. We note that both models parameterize the soil respiration response to temperature with a Q₁₀ formulation, the value of the Q₁₀ parameter being set to 2 in the two models. However, [Cox *et al.*, 2000] simulate a much larger negative climate impact on soil carbon (−550 GtC) than we do (−100 GtC) (Figure 2). This is in part due to the large soil single pool they build through fertilization, but also due to the worldwide SRR increase consequent to the warming simulated by their climate model.

[15] Finally, we are also aware that we do not account for the actual change of land cover due to deforestation. Therefore, our simulation with a fixed land cover is likely to overestimate CO₂ fertilization in regions where deforestation may occur in the future. In order to evaluate this bias, we performed an additional offline simulation with an imposed 1%/yr conversion of tropical forest area to savannas. This reduces the biospheric and enhances the positive feedback by an other 50 ppmv by 2100. The Hadley simulation does not account for direct land cover changes either. However, they simulate the climate impact on land cover with the dieback of the Amazon forest starting around 2050. Although this may seem realistic, it introduces an inconsistency insofar as their input emission scenario already accounts for tropical deforestation, and they thus account twice for the associated CO₂ fluxes.

6. Conclusion

[16] In summary, our results confirm the Cox *et al.* [2000] study that there is a positive feedback between climate and carbon cycle, due to the climate impact on the terrestrial biosphere. However, the effects of climate change on atmospheric CO₂ and on the carbon cycle is subtle and still poorly constrained by manipulative experiments. Better representation of future carbon cycle and its control on the climate system requires a clear understanding at the regional scale of the relative sensitivities of the land and ocean carbon cycle to atmospheric CO₂ and climate change. As highlighted by the comparison with the study of Cox *et al.* [2000], the question of

whether the additional storage of carbon occurs in the vegetation or in the soil seems to be crucial, as these two compartments have drastically different sensitivities to climate change. Also, the response of soil respiration to warming and drying needs to be better constrained in terrestrial models. Finally, a clear methodology needs to be pursued in order to account for both the direct (through deforestation) and indirect (through climate change) impacts of human on the vegetation in vegetation models avoiding model inconsistencies.

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- J.-L. Dufresne, L. Fairhead, and H. Le Treut, LMD/IPSL, Université Paris 6, boîte 99, F-75252, Paris cedex 05, France. (dufresne@lmd.jussieu.fr; fairhead@lmd.jussieu.fr; letreut@lmd.jussieu.fr)
- M. Berthelot, L. Bopp, P. Ciais, P. Friedlingstein, and P. Monfray, LSCE/IPSL, Bat. 709, CE L'Orme des Merisiers, F-91191, Gif sur Yvette, France. (mberthe@lsce.saclay.cea.fr; bopp@lsce.saclay.cea.fr; ciais@lsce.saclay.cea.fr; pierre@lsce.saclay.cea.fr; monfray@lsce.saclay.cea.fr)