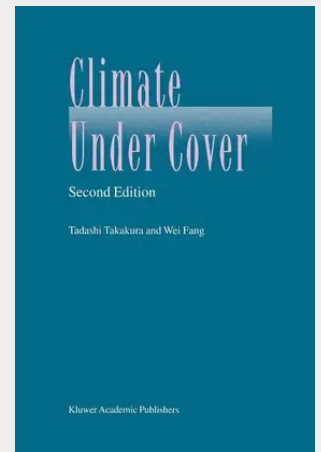


Climate Under Cover

1.1. INTRODUCTION Plastic covering, either framed or floating, is now used worldwide to protect crops from unfavorable growing conditions, such as severe weather and insects and birds. Protected cultivation in the broad sense, including mulching, has been widely spread by the innovation of plastic films. Paper, straw, and glass were the main materials used before the era of plastics. Utilization of plastics in agriculture started in the developed countries and is now spreading to the developing countries. Early utilization of plastic was in cold regions, and plastic was mainly used for protection from the cold. Now plastic is used also for protection from wind, insects and diseases. The use of covering techniques started with a simple system such as mulching, then row covers and small tunnels were developed, and finally plastic houses. Floating mulch was an exception to this sequence: it was introduced rather recently, although it is a simple structure. New development of functional and inexpensive films triggered widespread use of floating mulch. Table 1.1. The use of plastic mulch in the world (after Jouet, 2001).

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