



Role of Soil Microbes in Soil Health and Crop Production- A Review

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ABSTRACT

Soil is a complex mix of minerals, organic matter, water, and a variety of living organisms. Soil was once an uncontaminated material that covered the ground. However, in certain regions, people have unintentionally and purposely spilled toxic items over it. The waste has the potential to harm the land, as well as human, plant, and animal health. Chemical, and physical interactions driven by microorganisms, is crucial to agricultural productivity. Effective microorganisms boost the soil's beneficial microbial population, allowing for long-term crop production. Soil microorganisms such as bacteria, algae, fungi and viruses are all essential component of the soil ecosystem, since they aid in nutrient transformation and cycling, as well as the maintenance of soil ecological functions and health. Plant growth-promoting microorganisms and arbuscular mycorrhizae (AM) are utilized to boost agricultural crop growth and yields under normal and stressful circumstances. Continuous cropping degrades soil physicochemical qualities, resulting in changes in soil microbial abundance and community composition. The microbial community composition was dramatically altered by changes in soil pH, organic matter, and mineral fertilizers. Biotic stress is a major issue for agrarians today since the huge increase in the human population is creating soil degradation and reducing the microbial population, which has a detrimental impact on plant development. By keeping in view, the importance of microbes for soil and plants, the current review discusses the function of soil microbes in crop productivity and soil fertility.

Keywords: Soil Microbes; Microbial community composition; Soil fertility; Agricultural Crop Production.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural land is essential for the production of food, housing, and fiber for

humanity. Agriculture has a vital part in the economic growth of many developing nations, as well as providing self-employment.

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According to Tilman et al. (2011), urbanization and industrialization have diminished arable agricultural land while the global human population continues to grow. The need for food and supply ratio have had a significant impact on these shifts, as the world's population continues to grow, necessitating a significant increase in agricultural production to meet current demand.

Due to the fast growth of the human population, the demand for agricultural land to meet food, fuel, and raw material requirements is increasing. Farmers utilize chemical fertilizers and pesticides to meet the needs, but this destroys soil health and reduces soil biodiversity. Agriculture output demand is expected to increase by up to 70% in the next 30 years. Similarly, people are becoming more aware that sustainable agriculture techniques are critical for meeting the world's future agricultural demands (Carsten & Mathis, 2014).

Soil

Soil is a complex mixture of water, minerals, organic matter and a variety of living organisms. Soil is an uncontaminated material that covered the ground. Many plant physiologists believe that the soil is the primary source of plant nutrients, but soil quality is essential for agricultural productivity, and soil bacteria, fungus, and protists help to enhance soil quality (Bhattacharyya, 2012; & Toor et al., 2020). The microbial biosphere is the world's biggest repository of biodiversity (Gindling & Newhouse, 2012). Microorganisms, in other

words, can be thought of as soil equipment that recycles nutrients (Mus et al., 2016; & Muller et al., 2016). Soil microorganisms in the soil system can increase the quality of the soil and its upkeep.

The majority of soils have three phases and four components. Organic solids, inorganic solids, water and air. Animals and plants provide the organic components while primary and secondary minerals generated from the parent material are inorganic components. A dilute aqueous solution of inorganic and organic chemicals makes up the liquid component. Soil air contains a combination of main (e.g., oxygen and nitrogen) and trace (e.g., methane, carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide) gases (Baker & Ellison, 2008).

Because of its flat and elongated particle morphologies, clay soil has a significant surface area when compared to other soils. Silty materials, on the other hand, might be sensitive to even modest changes in moisture, making stabilization problematic (Pousette et al., 1999; & Habiba, 2017). Peat and organic soils have a highwater content (up to 2000%), high porosity, and a high organic content. Peat soil can range in quality from muddy to fibrous, and while most deposits are superficial, in the worst situations, they can extend several meters below the surface (Sherwood, 1993). Organic soils have a high exchange capacity, which can stymie the hydration process by holding calcium ions released during the hydration of calcium silicate and calcium aluminate in the cement.

Table 1: Soil phases, components and composition

Sr. No.	Phases	Components	Composition
1	Liquid	Soil solution	Ca, Na, Mg, K, Cl, PO ₄ , SO ₄ , NO ₃
2	Solid	Inorganic and organic	Remaining parts of animals and plants and silicates, feldspar, quartz, magnetite, hornblende, secondary minerals, garnet
3	Gas	Soil air	O ₂ , CO ₂ , C ₂ H ₆ , H ₂ S, CH ₄ , NO, N ₂ , N ₂ O

Baker and Ellison (2008)

Role of microbes in soil and plant or crop production

The human population is growing every day, necessitating the expansion of existing agricultural production methods. Agricultural productivity is high due to the widespread use of synthetic agrochemicals, however these management practices result in environmental degradation and unsustainable systems (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). When applied as manure or spray to field crops, ecologically friendly effective microorganisms (EM) provide a wide range of advantages (Alluri et al., 2007).

The microscopic organisms such as viruses, bacteria, fungi, algae, protozoa and actinomycetes play key role in the fertility of soil (Christos et al., 2014). These creatures also play a critical role in decomposition of organic materials especially in nutrient Cycling. The most important nutrients are nitrogen, carbon, phosphorus and potassium (Falkowski et al., 2008; & Andreote et al., 2014), which increase the quality and quantity of many crops or plants. The agricultural productivity can enhance by the vital role of microorganisms (Schulz et al., 2013; & Christos et al., 2014).

Furthermore, through the production of hormones and the breakdown of organic materials, microorganisms suppress some soil-borne illnesses and encourage plant development, boosting soil fertility and productivity (Hoorman, 2010; & Lupwayi et al., 2012). Agricultural management strategies such as tillage, fertilizer application, manuring, residue assimilation, microbial inoculation, and environmental conditions such as destructive effects of intermittent rains followed by dry spells might alter microbial activity, population, and survival (Blanco-Canqui et al., 2011).

The identification and quality of microorganisms in the agro environment influence the nutritional condition of the soil (Ibekwe et al., 2010). This aids agriculturists in maintaining these nutrients in the soil in order to increase crop output. The number of microorganism species is directly proportional

to the physical and chemical properties of the soil (Strickland & Rousk, 2010). The organization of microbial communities is affected by environmental conditions and soil chemical characteristics, according to many research (Daryanto et al., 2018). Land and soil management have an impact on soil nutrients, resulting in processes including erosion, oxidation, leaching, and mineralization. The activity of soil microorganisms may increase or decrease as a result of these activities, altering soil fertility (Liu et al., 2010; & Mortimer & Valentine, 2008). Bacteria and fungi in combination with organic matter have been shown to improve soil fertility and productivity (Caesar-Tonthat et al., 2014).

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, mycorrhizal fungi and bacteria found in nodulated legumes have been identified as root symbionts (Morton, 1981). Crop seeds were covered with bacterial cultures (*Azotobacter chroococcum* or *Bacillus megaterium*) to boost growth and yield as early as the 1950s (Brown, 1974). Many distinct bacterial strains have been documented as having plant growth stimulating activities by the 1980s, mostly *Pseudomonas* and also *Azospirillum*. Microorganisms, according to Cho and Koyama (1997), are too small units of life that occur everywhere in nature, plays a key part in the upkeep of the ecological equilibrium. Microorganisms That Work are mixed cultures of naturally occurring beneficial organisms that may be used as to boost microbial diversity, inoculants are used the ecology of the soil.

Earthworms will consume a diverse range of microorganisms, increasing the number of micropores. This improves soil health, resulting in better plant development, less insect pressure, and the ability to cultivate high-quality harvests. Because it is derived from natural and organic substances, this category of bacteria is fully safe for humans, plants, animals, and soil (Brown et al., 2000; & Postma-Blaauw et al., 2006). Planting, fertilizing, composting, and sanitation are just a few of the tasks in which it is used in

agriculture. Effective microorganisms' many types of organisms complement one another and have a mutually beneficial connection with plant roots in the soil environment. Plants would consequently thrive in soils populated and controlled by these beneficial microbes (Sun et al., 2014). Effective microbes improve soil fertility and help crops grow, blossom, produce fruit, and mature. It has the potential to boost agricultural yield (Cortez et al., 2000).

Role of Microbes in crop Nutrition/production

Nitrogen (N) is a vital ingredient for the survival of all living things. Amino acids and proteins, as well as a variety of other chemical molecules, are generated from the nitrogen fixation process. Biological nitrogen fixation is a critical component of microbial activities. Only prokaryotes, which can be symbiotic or free-living in nature, are capable of biological nitrogen fixing. It is generally known that biological nitrogen fixation, which is mediated by nitrogenase enzymes, is a crucial mechanism for soil biological activity. Microorganisms that are effective will boost nutrient availability in the soil for plants, reducing the requirement for continual fertilization and the expense of cultivation (Daniel et al., 1992). The phyllosphere is colonized by a significant number of helpful microorganisms after foliar application of effective microorganisms. When farmyard manures are administered at the blossoming and maturity stages, effective microorganisms improve the plant's nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium nutrition.

Plant growth boosters have frequently been identified as nitrogen-fixing free-living microbes. Plants benefit directly from nitrogen-fixing organisms like *Azospirillum*, which improve shoot and root growth and increase the rate of water and mineral uptake by roots. Bacteria of the genus *Azospirillum* are well-known associative nitrogen fixers that may be found in tropical, subtropical, and temperate soils. These bacteria form intimate bonds with the roots of a wide range of wild and cultivated plants (Gonzalez et al., 2005).

Rhizobia, *Gluconacetobacter Diazotrophicus*, *Cyanobacteria* and *Azolla* Spp are also bacteria which enhance the soil fertility and plant growth and development which ultimately increase the grain and seed production of various crops especially leguminous crops (Silva et al., 2016). The root and shoot length can increase by these microbes. *Bacillus* are aerobic spore-forming species. Plants like as peas, lupine, and alfalfa benefit from *Bacillus*' assistance in the metabolism of nitrogen, phosphorus, and manganese compounds. Rhizobium species abound in the rhizosphere as well. *Pseudomonas* Spp. are aerobic and reside in the active rhizosphere. They make Nitrogen, Potassium, Phosphorus, and Manganese accessible to plants by metabolizing organic and inorganic elements. The microbes release plant growth promoting substances are given in table 2.

Table 2: Plant growth promoting substances of microbes and their role in plant growth

Plant growth promoting microbes	Function	References
<i>Pseudomonas putida</i> H-2-3	Increase leaf length, improve plant growth under saline and drought condition, increase chlorophyll content,	Kang et al. (2014); Praveen et al. (2014)
<i>Penicillium aculeatum</i> , <i>Burkholderia gladioli</i>	Convert insoluble form of phosphorous to an available form of peat soil	Istina et al. (2015)
<i>Azospirillum brasilense</i> NO 40, <i>Bacillus amyloliquefaciens</i> 5113, <i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> AZP2	Decrease volatile emissions and increase photosynthesis, increase enzyme activity in wheat plant	Kasim et al. (2013); Timmusk et al. (2014)
<i>Mesorhizobium</i> spp.	Enhance and uptake of nutrient yield, increase nodulation	Verma et al. (2013)
<i>Pseudomonas</i> sp. Ps14, <i>Trichoderma harzianum</i> Tr6	Induced systemic resistance	Alizadeh et al. (2013)

Role of Soil Microbes in Disease Control

Soil microflora aid in the absorption of nutrients from the soil, resulting in increased yield and the decrease or suppression of disease. There are several options. instances of disease-fighting soil rhizobacteria suppression. *Bacillus subtilis* has the potential to be useful in a variety of situations; a decrease in illness, and more than twenty antibiotics. They are the ones who produce. *Bacillus* spp. efficacy has been proven. Tomato, chilli, brinjal, and other vegetables for example, has been found in a variety of agricultural plants, used to combat diseases like as *Colletotrichum acutatum*, *Colletotrichum capsici*, *C. acutatum*, *C. acutatum*, *C. gloeosporioides*, *Pythium aphanidermatum*, and *R. solani* (Abdul et al., 2007). According to Vidhyasekaran et al. (2001), in vitro and field circumstances, *seudomonas* spp. have antifungal activity against *Pyricularia oryzae*, *R. solani*, *Xanthomonas oryzae* pv. *oryzae*, and *F. oxysporum* f.sp. *udum*. Several soil-borne antagonists, including *Trichoderma* spp., have been found to inhibit *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* wilt of tomato (Singh et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

The effective microbes are composed of naturally-derived microorganisms, which are very safe and ecofriendly. It is not necessary to put on goggles, masks and protective clothing when spraying effective microorganisms. Similarly, effective microorganisms never pollute water systems. The effective microorganism is manufactured from naturally-derived material. Effective microorganism products help plants grow well which leads to yield increases, longer cultivation periods, and high-quality crops. Together these improvements lead to richer harvests.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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