EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF BIOMEDICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES
http://www.ejbps.com

ISSN 2349-8870
Volume: 2
Issue: 7
438-441
Year: 2015

EFFECTS OF PHOSPHORUS FIXATION IN SOIL

Dr. Bahadur Lal*

Associate Professor, Department of Soil Science, B.B.D. Govt. College Chimanpura, Shahpura, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Bahadur Lal**
Associate Professor, Department of Soil Science, B.B.D. Govt. College Chimanpura, Shahpura, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Article Received on 18/10/2015 **Article Revised on 11/11/2015** **Article Accepted on 01/12/2015**

ABSTRACT
Phosphorus fixation is a natural process that occurs in soils and can also be influenced by human activities. It refers to the immobilization or transformation of phosphorus into forms that are less available for plant uptake and utilization. This fixation process can limit the availability of phosphorus, an essential nutrient for plant growth, and consequently affect crop productivity and ecosystem functioning. Phosphorus fixation can occur through various mechanisms, including chemical, adsorption, and biological processes. Chemical fixation involves the formation of insoluble compounds when phosphorus reacts with soil constituents, such as iron and aluminum ions, resulting in the formation of precipitates that are not easily accessible to plants. Adsorption fixation occurs when phosphorus adheres to soil particles, such as clay minerals and organic matter, and becomes tightly bound, reducing its availability for plants. Biological fixation involves the uptake and storage of phosphorus by certain soil microorganisms, further decreasing its accessibility. Factors such as soil pH, clay content, organic matter content, and the presence of specific microorganisms influence the extent of phosphorus fixation in a given soil system. Acidic soils, high clay content, and excessive use of phosphorus fertilizers can exacerbate fixation processes and reduce phosphorus availability.

KEYWORD: Phosphorus Fixation, Soil, Nutrient, Plant, Soil.

INTRODUCTION
Phosphorus fixation is a natural process that occurs in soils and can also be influenced by human activities. It refers to the immobilization or transformation of phosphorus into forms that are less available for plant uptake and utilization. This fixation process can limit the availability of phosphorus, an essential nutrient for plant growth, and consequently affect crop productivity and ecosystem functioning. Phosphorus fixation can occur through various mechanisms, including chemical, adsorption, and biological processes. Chemical fixation involves the formation of insoluble compounds when phosphorus reacts with soil constituents, such as iron and aluminum ions, resulting in the formation of precipitates that are not easily accessible to plants. Adsorption fixation occurs when phosphorus adheres to soil particles, such as clay minerals and organic matter, and becomes tightly bound, reducing its availability for plants. Biological fixation involves the uptake and storage of phosphorus by certain soil microorganisms, further decreasing its accessibility.

Factors such as soil pH, clay content, organic matter content, and the presence of specific microorganisms influence the extent of phosphorus fixation in a given soil system. Acidic soils, high clay content, and excessive use of phosphorus fertilizers can exacerbate fixation processes and reduce phosphorus availability.

Addressing phosphorus fixation is crucial for sustainable agriculture and ecosystem management. Strategies to mitigate fixation and enhance phosphorus availability include adjusting soil pH through liming, applying phosphorus fertilizers to provide readily available phosphorus to plants, utilizing phosphate-solubilizing microorganisms to enhance phosphorus release, and implementing nutrient management practices to optimize phosphorus use efficiency. Understanding the specific characteristics of soils, considering local environmental conditions, and adopting appropriate management practices are key to effectively managing phosphorus fixation and ensuring an adequate supply of phosphorus for plant growth and productivity. By doing so, sustainable agricultural systems can be developed, minimizing phosphorus losses and their potential negative impacts on water quality and ecosystem health.

Phosphorus And Soil Managment
Phosphorus management in soil is essential for promoting optimal plant growth and productivity while minimizing environmental impacts. Here are some key

considerations and strategies for effective phosphorus and soil management:

1. Soil Testing: Regular soil testing is crucial to assess the phosphorus status of the soil. Soil tests measure the available phosphorus levels and provide valuable information for determining appropriate fertilizer application rates. By understanding the soil's phosphorus content, farmers can make informed decisions about phosphorus supplementation and prevent both deficiencies and excessive application.
2. Balanced Fertilization: Applying phosphorus fertilizers based on soil test recommendations helps maintain balanced nutrient levels in the soil. Fertilizer application rates should be adjusted to match crop nutrient requirements. A balanced fertilization approach considers not only phosphorus but also other essential nutrients to avoid imbalances or nutrient antagonisms that can affect plant health.
3. Nutrient Placement: Proper placement of phosphorus fertilizers improves its availability to plant roots. Placing the fertilizer near the seed or root zone ensures direct contact and reduces the potential for fixation or loss. Placement methods can include banding, side-dressing, or seed placement, depending on the crop and farming system.
4. Precision Agriculture: Precision farming techniques, such as variable rate application and site-specific management, enable farmers to apply phosphorus and other nutrients precisely where they are needed. Utilizing technologies like GPS, remote sensing, and yield mapping helps identify spatial variations in soil nutrient levels, allowing for targeted fertilization and improved nutrient use efficiency.
5. Organic Matter Management: Increasing organic matter content in soil enhances its phosphorus-holding capacity and nutrient cycling. Incorporating organic amendments like compost, crop residues, and cover crops into the soil improves its structure, water-holding capacity, and nutrient availability. Organic matter also supports the growth of beneficial soil microorganisms that aid in phosphorus mineralization and release.
6. Phosphorus Runoff and Erosion Control: Phosphorus can be lost from agricultural fields through runoff and erosion, leading to water pollution. Implementing soil erosion control measures such as contour plowing, terracing, and cover cropping reduces soil erosion, thereby minimizing phosphorus losses. Buffer strips and riparian zones along water bodies can also help trap and filter phosphorus runoff.
7. Phosphorus Recycling and Nutrient Cycling: Efficient nutrient cycling within the farming system can help reduce reliance on external phosphorus inputs. Practices like crop rotation, use of leguminous cover crops, and manure application can contribute to phosphorus recycling. Livestock manure and other organic waste materials can be valuable sources of phosphorus when managed properly.
8. Environmental Stewardship: Adopting environmentally conscious practices such as avoiding over-application of phosphorus fertilizers, following best management practices (BMPs), and adhering to local regulations promotes responsible phosphorus and soil management. This helps protect water quality, minimize nutrient runoff, and preserve ecosystem health.

Phosphorus fixation Management

1. Soil pH adjustment: Phosphorus fixation is influenced by soil pH. Acidic soils (low pH) are more prone to phosphorus fixation, particularly by iron and aluminum compounds. One method to mitigate fixation is by adjusting soil pH to a more neutral range. This can be achieved by adding lime (calcium carbonate) to raise the pH or using elemental sulfur to lower the pH if it is too alkaline.
2. Phosphorus fertilizers: Direct application of phosphorus fertilizers can bypass fixation mechanisms and provide an accessible source of phosphorus for plants. Different forms of phosphorus fertilizers are available, such as soluble phosphates (e.g., monoammonium phosphate, diammonium phosphate) or slow-release fertilizers. The selection of appropriate fertilizers depends on soil conditions, crop requirements, and environmental considerations.
3. Placement of fertilizers: Proper placement of phosphorus fertilizers can improve their availability to plant roots. Placing the fertilizer near the seed or root zone ensures direct contact between the phosphorus source and the growing roots, minimizing fixation and maximizing uptake.
4. Timing of fertilizer application: Timing plays a role in phosphorus availability. Applying fertilizers closer to the time of planting or during active plant growth increases the likelihood of effective phosphorus uptake before fixation occurs. Split applications, where fertilizers are applied in multiple doses throughout the growing season, can also be beneficial.
5. Phosphate-solubilizing microorganisms: Some soil microorganisms have the ability to solubilize fixed phosphorus, making it more accessible to plants. Adding phosphate-solubilizing bacteria or fungi to the soil can enhance phosphorus availability. These microorganisms produce organic acids and enzymes that break down fixed phosphorus compounds, releasing it for plant uptake.
6. Organic matter addition: Increasing organic matter content in the soil can improve phosphorus availability. Organic matter acts as a source of slowly released phosphorus and enhances the cation exchange capacity of soils, reducing fixation. Adding organic amendments, such as compost or manure, can help improve phosphorus availability over time.
7. Nutrient management planning: Developing a comprehensive nutrient management plan tailored to

specific soil conditions and crop requirements can optimize phosphorus use efficiency and minimize fixation. This includes considering factors such as soil testing, crop rotation, cover cropping, and precision farming techniques to ensure optimal phosphorus application rates and timings.

Mechanisms of Phosphorus Fixation

Phosphorus fixation occurs through various mechanisms in soil, leading to the immobilization or transformation of phosphorus into forms that are less available for plant uptake. The main mechanisms of phosphorus fixation are:

1. Chemical Fixation: Chemical reactions between phosphorus and soil constituents result in the formation of insoluble compounds that reduce phosphorus availability. The primary processes involved in chemical fixation include:
   a. Precipitation: Phosphorus can react with cations like iron (Fe) and aluminum (Al) to form insoluble compounds such as iron phosphate ($FePO_4$) or aluminum phosphate ($AlPO_4$). These precipitates are typically formed in acidic soils where Fe and Al are more soluble.
   b. Adsorption onto Minerals: Phosphorus can adsorb onto soil minerals, particularly clay minerals and metal oxides. The positively charged surfaces of these minerals attract and retain negatively charged phosphate ions (PO_4^{3-}), reducing their mobility and availability for plant uptake.
2. Biological Fixation: Some soil microorganisms can immobilize phosphorus through biological processes. These microorganisms take up phosphorus from the soil solution and store it in their biomass or as polyphosphate granules. This process reduces the availability of phosphorus for plants. Examples of microorganisms involved in biological fixation include certain bacteria, fungi, and algae.
3. Organic Matter Fixation: Organic matter plays a crucial role in phosphorus fixation. Organic compounds in the soil can form complexes with phosphorus, reducing its availability. The fixation occurs when organic matter acts as a sink for phosphorus, effectively tying it up and making it less accessible to plants.

It's important to note that the relative importance of these fixation mechanisms can vary depending on soil properties, pH, organic matter content, and other factors. Additionally, different fixation mechanisms may dominate in different soil types and under specific environmental conditions.

CONCLUSION

Phosphorus fixation can have significant implications for agricultural productivity and ecosystem functioning. It can lead to phosphorus deficiencies in plants, reducing crop yields and overall agricultural productivity. Additionally, fixation can contribute to environmental issues such as nutrient runoff and water pollution when excess phosphorus applied to the soil is immobilized and unavailable for plant uptake.

To manage phosphorus fixation effectively, several strategies can be employed. These include adjusting soil pH to optimize phosphorus availability, using balanced fertilization practices based on soil testing, incorporating organic matter to enhance phosphorus-holding capacity and nutrient cycling, and implementing precision farming techniques to target phosphorus application.

It is important to note that phosphorus fixation mechanisms and management strategies can vary depending on soil characteristics, management practices, and environmental conditions. Thus, understanding the specific soil system and tailoring management approaches accordingly are essential for maximizing phosphorus availability while minimizing fixation-related challenges.

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