Phosphorus Sorption Characteristics and External Phosphorus Requirement of Bulle and Wonago Woreda, Southern Ethiopia

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Abstract

Determination of the P-sorption characteristics of soils is important for economic fertilizer application and to recommend appropriate management strategies   t;es   e ß   e ¡ z   gies   M ueyes
to evaluate P-sorption characteristics of soils occurring in some areas of southern Ethiopia and identify factors contributing to P sorption. Composite surface (0-20 cm) soil samples from 6 sites of two locations were collected. The results revealed that the P-sorption data were fitted well with both Langmuir and Freundlich models with r^2 values of 0.99. But later model was found to better in describing P-sorption data than the former model. The adsorption maxima (Xm) and distribution coefficient (Kf) values of soils ranged from 909-2000 mg PKg^{-1} and 245-487 mg PKg^{-1} based on Langmuir and Freundlich models respectively. The corresponding SPR values ranged between 57-196 mg P kg^{-1} and 71.8-211 mg P kg^{-1} based on Langmuir and Freundlich models respectively. Bonding energy constant (K) of Langmuir model and Freundlich constant (b) ranged from 0.15-1.4 and 0.54-0.66 Lmg^{-1} respectively. The bonding energy constant (K) of Langmuir model was found to be more valuable than Xm in discriminating the study soils as high and low P sorbing soils.   Based on both models soils of Bulle had SPR values >150 mg PKg^{-1} and then were classified as high P-fixing soils while soils of Wonago had SPR values <150 mgPKg^{-1} were classified as low P-fixing. The result of path analysis revealed that exchangeable Al and Clay had direct effect on P-sorption parameters of both models. It is concluded that P-sorption models can effectively be used to discriminate soils based on P-fixation ability. However, validation of both models through real time experiments in greenhouse and field is recommended before the models used for large scale.

Introduction

In tropical and subtropical acidic soils low Phosphorus (P) availability is a major factor that limits plant growth. When soil P levels are too low, phosphorus deficiency in plants represents a major constraint to world agricultural production [1]. According to [2], soil P deficiency may be due to low P containing parent material from which soil was formed or low inherent P content, high weathering incidence and soil reaction, long term anthropogenic mismanagement through imbalance between nutrient inputs, and P losses by erosion and surface runoff.

Furthermore, the limited availability of P in soils may be attributed to severe P fixation or retention. In which Phosphorus retention by soils often involves complex combination of sorption and precipitation reactions. Initially, the phosphate ions undergo sorption onto organic and inorganic particle surface and then slowly precipitate into less available forms [3]. Depending on this the fate and efficiency of native and applied P therefore remains one of the biggest problems in arable crop production in the tropics. One problem is that fertilizer P can largely be fixed by oxides, hydroxides and oxy-hydroxides of Fe and Al and clay minerals in acidic soil, which makes it less available or effectively unavailable to plants [4].

According to Abayneh [5] Ethiopia has diverse soil resources largely because of diverse topography, climatic conditions and geology. Therefore, successful agriculture to meet the increasing demands of food, fiber, fuel and others requires the sustainable use of soil by managing the nutrient supplying capacity of the soil.

However, the morphological, physical and chemical characteristics of soils of Southern Ethiopia in relation to nutrient retention and management alternatives are not well documented with this accurate prediction of nutrient requirements is highly desirable, because the cost of fertilizer is a constraint that limiting fertilizer use by small farmers.

Isotherm equations still are a common approach to study P sorption in soils, since their use allows summarizing results, reducing the sorption data to comparable values. Among isotherm adsorption

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P sorption characteristics and soil factors contributing to P-sorption for Ethiopian soils. Thus, it is essential to determine the P-sorptin isotherm of some soils of southern Ethiopia and model the resulting data for generating valuable recommendation for future use. Therefore, the objectives of this study were: to identify soil with high and low p sorption characteristics, to estimate the soil's standard P requirement based on P- sorption isotherm.

Materials and Methods

Description of study sites

The sites considered in the present study are among the agriculturally important soils in the Gedeo Zone, Southern regions of the country. Only two sites from the Zone (Bulle and Wonago woreda) were selected by stratifying the entire study area based on differences in altitude, crop type, slope gradient and mainly as classied by government for the ease of political management by identifying the potential area and grouping them in to sub kebelles (which called locally "Goxi"). The sampling depth was restricted to the plough layer (0-20 cm) where most of the plant nutrient and the roots of crops are concentrated and actively interact.

Soil sampling and sample preparation

Visual observations of the area were rst taken to have a general view of the variations in the study area and representative elds were selected. Following the site selection, 40 subsamples were taken from each site to make one composite sample for each from the depth of 0-20 cm in a Zigzag sampling scheme using an auger. For labeling conventions the soil samples from the Wonago site were (Wo1, Wo2 and Wo3) while sample from, Bulle (Be1, Be2 and Be3). The soil samples were mixed well, air-dried and passed through a 2 mm sieve for the analysis of selected soil physical and chemical properties.

Analysis of selected soil physico-chemical properties

Soil analysis was done following standard procedures adopted by National Soil Testing Center for determining selected soil chemical and physical properties at Hawssa University, College of Agriculture Soil Laboratory and Southern Region Agricultural Bureau soil laboratory.

Soil particle size distribution was determined by the Bouyoucos hydrometer method [10] after destroying OM using hydrogen peroxide and dispersing the soils with sodium hexametaphosphate.

The pH of the soils was measured in water suspension in a 1:2.5 (soil: liquid ratio) potentiometrically using a glass-calomel combined electrode [10]. The Walkley and Black wet digestion method was used to determine soil carbon content and percent soil OM was obtained by multiplying percent soil OC by a factor of 1.724 following the assumption that OM contains 58% carbon [11]. Even though the Olsen method is the most widely used for P extraction under wide range of pH both in Ethiopia and elsewhere in the world [12,13] available soil P was analyzed according to the standard procedure of Bray- .

Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) of soil was determined by neutral sodium-acetate saturation and neutral NH_4^-acetate displacement. Exchangeable basic cations (Ca, Mg, K, and Na) of the soil were determined in the leachate using 1N neutral ammonium acetate adjusted to a pH of 7. Finally, exchangeable Ca^{++} and Mg^{++} were determined in the extract using AAS, whereas K^+ and Na^+ were determined by ame photometer. Exchangeable Al was determined by saturating the soil samples with potassium chloride solution and titrating with sodium hydroxide as described by McLean. Available micronutrients (Fe, Cu, Zn and Mn) were extracted by DTPA and all these micronutrients were measured on AAS, as described by Lindsay and Norvell [14].

P-Sorption study

Phosphorus sorption characteristics were determined by batch equilibrium methods in which soil samples were agitated with P solutions of known concentrations [15]. Subsamples of soils collected from seven sites (Hagereselam, Damot Gale, and Hawassa zuria, Wonago, Chencha, Bulle and Halaba) that were previously used for soil physico -chemical analysis were used in P-sorption study. All samples were air dried at ambient temperature (Preferably between 20-25°C) crushed and sieved through a 2 mm sieve.

Phosphorus as (KH_2PO_4) was dissolved in a 0.01M solution of Calcium chloride in distilled water. The $CaCl_2$ solution is used as the aqueous solvent phase to improve centrifugation and minimize Cation exchange [16].

According to the methods of Fernandes MLV and Coutinho J to study the sorption of P by soils, 2 g air-dried samples of each soil were placed in 100 ml plastic bottle in order to leave free space for with 25

Citation:

Location	P sorption indices[LE]				P sorption indices [FI]			
	X_m	K	$SPR_{(0.2)}$	R^2	b	Kf	$SPR_{(0.2)}$	R^2
	$Mg.kg^{-1}$	$L.mg.kg^{-1}$	$Mg.kg^{-1}$		$L.kg^{-1}$	$Mg.kg^{-1}$	$Mg.kg^{-1}$	
Wonago								
Wo1	2000	0.15	57	0.99	0.81	245	71.8	0.990.99

the bonding energy of the soil to retain P, ranged from 0.15 to 1.4 (l mg⁻¹) and was smaller for all soils of Wonago compared to the soils of Bulle (Table 2).

The amount of P required for maintaining a soil solution concentration of 0.2 mg P kg⁻¹(P$_{0.2}$) ranged from 57 to 196 mg P kg⁻¹ soil (Table 2).

Soils within a site were classified under the same group, but they differed substantially in the extent to which they fixed P, which shows soils with the same group will not necessarily fix P to the same extent or have similar P fertilizer requirements. This is because soils in nature have variable characteristics, which make them, very complex. This finding is in agreement with Büuhmann et al. who observed similar sorption trends for soils of South Africa and suggested that for optimum P recommendations soil P fertilization assessments done at field scale level [28].

In addition, the amounts of added P required maintaining a concentration of 0.2 mg P L⁻¹ (P$_{0.2}$) in solution, which is Standard P requirement in this study (Table 2), were generally higher than the range reported in other studies.

Sarafaz et al. for example reported values ranging from 50 to 201 mg P kg⁻¹ for surface samples from non-cultivated and non-fertilized areas in Ethiopia in which only one sample having a SPR of 123 mg P kg⁻¹ fell within this range while others had very low SPR values indicating possible early P saturation of these soils following repeated applications of P fertilizers [29]. This could lead to elevated P levels in the soil solution, which in time could contribute to the eutrophication of freshwater bodies. However, the present study ranges strongly highly acidic to (Table 1) and had high range of SPR, which indicate that acidic soil, have high need of SPR.

The Freundlich parameter, *i.e.*, sorption capacity (logkf) and P sorption energy (b); and correlation coefficient values computed from the data plotted according to logX against logC in equilibration solution were explained. The goodness of fit of the model was ascertained by looking at the R² values. All the plots were highly correlated with R² values 0.96 indicating apparent high conformity of the adsorption data to the Freundlich model.

Generally, the Freundlich model seemed fit at all equilibrium concentrations (Table 2). For all the soils of the study area the values of sorption capacity and P sorption energy ranged from 245 to 487 mgkg⁻¹ and 0.52 to 0.81 Lkg⁻¹, respectively (Table 2). Since the Freundlich adsorption equation was derived empirically, its parameters (logkf) and (b) have been considered. Despite this, it was proposed that logkf could be considered as capacity factor Sarafaz et al. implying having a larger logkf value has a larger adsorbing capacity than the one having a smaller logkf value [29]. For practical purpose, the logkf may be used to differentiate soils having different P adsorption capacities. Thus, in this study, all the soils of Bulle had the higher sorption capacity relative to the others. The Freundlich parameter logkf was found to be practically useful parameter in summarizing the adsorption properties of soil over a wide range of equilibrium concentrations. The sorption energy (logkf, Freundlich model) is the value which an indication of the adsorption capacity of the adsorbent and the slope (b) show the effect of concentration on the adsorption capacity and represents adsorption intensity. Therefore, sorption capacity in Freundlich is determines whether the soil is high sorber or not relative to each other and was found to be strong for the high P-sorbing soils.

Figure 1a and 1b and c show the P sorption curves that were obtained by plotting the quantity of P sorbed on the surfaces of against the solution P concentration. According to Sanchez and Goro, soils that adsorb less than 150 mg Pkg⁻¹ soil to meet the SPR value of 0.2 mgl⁻¹ in soil solution are considered to be low sorbing soil and those adsorbing greater than this value are high P sorbing ones [30]. Accordingly, all soils of Bulle were high P fixers while the soils of Wonago were low P fixers (Table 2). Since the six composite samples used in the study were from two different locations in the Gedeo Zone, there is need for a broader study involving soils from other agro-ecologies in the region in order to confirm the proportions.

Nevertheless, the results suggest that P availability could be compromised in the soils of Bulle with high P-sorption capacity and that measures to mitigate the adverse effects of P-sorption may be necessary to ensure that P is not a limiting factor to crop production where such soils are found.

Figure 1a and 1b. Phosphorus sorption isotherm curves for the high P sorbing soils; vertical arrows indicate SPR of the soils (on the y-axis) at a standard solution P concentration 0.2 mg Pl⁻¹.

The rest soils were grouped as low P- sorbing soils (Figure 1a and 1b). The curve followed a smooth plateau pattern. It is evident from the curves that the rate of P sorption increased with an increase of P concentration, but at a certain point of higher concentration, the level of P became almost constant having no more sorption capacity, it was evident from the observations that during sample collection where the soil color of low sorbing soils did not have the same appearance as that of other soils grouped under high P-sorbing ones. The relative amount of P sorbed was dramatically higher at a low concentration than at a higher concentration as also reported by Tsado [31]. This suggests that the reaction between phosphate and the soil was rapid on initial contact; this perhaps could have been due to a low available P content
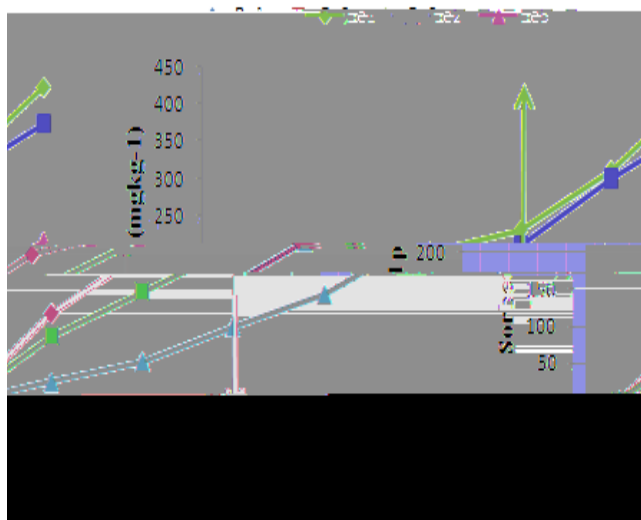
Figure 1a: P-sorbtion curves.

(Table 2) resulting in high adsorption potential at the surface. Similar observations have been reported by Bala [32].

Correlation between P-sorption indices and soil properties

The sorption maximum in the soils of study area was found to correlate negatively with SOM and pH (p 0.05). Soil OM may also be able to complex Al, stabilizing the compound and possibly enhancing its ability to sorb P which is in agreement with Darke and Walbridge [33]. Organic matter can also inhibit recrystalization of both Fe and Al oxides, thus indirectly assisting P sorption. In these soils, SOM was positively correlated with both Fe and Al. The effect of SOM is often attributed to complexation with Al or both Al and Fe [33]. Organic matter has the potential to impede or enhance P sorption. If of appropriate size it may occlude sorption sites, either by filling them or by physically blocking them.

Soil texture was also significantly correlated with P sorption. Fine textured soils, such as clays, have higher surface area and thus greater

reactivity. They also tend to have higher concentrations of Fe and Al-oxides than coarser soils. Studies in the southeastern US on acidic soil condition which is similar to the present study have found that ne-texture soils were able to sorb more P than coarser substrates [33]. Soils with higher clay and silt contents had higher Xm.

Soil pH was negatively correlated with Xm, indicating that P sorption increases with decreasing pH. In acidic soils (pH<5.5), more sites on the soil matrix are protonated and Al is liberated, thus enhancing P sorption. According to Birru, pH is a significant predictor of P sorption in soils. As pH is a master variable, controlling many biological and chemical processes, it can also enhance P sorption at high values, the negative correlation with pH was probably observable in the soils of the study area, because the pH ranged from 5.19 to 5.5 (Table 1) [34].

Sorption isotherms indices showed that Xm was negatively correlated with sorption energy of Langmuir (k) (Table 2) which shows that the soils may have high sorption sites. But it may have low sorption energy to hold P on the surface since it is determinant factor showing the soil have high sorption capacity of soil (Table 2). Sorption energy was related with the standard P requirement of soil which is positively correlated (p 0.01). Xm is negatively correlated with $SPR_{0.2}$, meaning that the soil having high Xm may have low SPR (Table 2).

Freundlich sorption parameter logkf and b were negatively correlated with SPR of soil which shows that this sorption isotherm didn't determine $SPR_{0.2}$ of the soil, rather show the tness of the model. It shows the advantage of Langmuir equation over the Freundlich equation in the determination of $SPR_{(0.2)}$. Generally, the Freundlich model seemed t at all equilibrium concentrations (Table 2) for all the soils. Since the Freundlich equation was derived empirically, its parameters have been considered physically, but for present study it best explains the high and low sorbing soil. Besides, to this, it was proposed that logkf could be considered as capacity factor which is related to sorption capacity of the soil. This is in agreement with the nding Taylor et al. conducted in both acidic and calcareous soil [6].

Path analysis of P sorption

Concerning the correlation and causation between the isotherm parameter (Xm and logkf) and the soil variable (pH, OM, CEC, Exch. Al and Clay), analysis was made and adequate result was found. Additionally an uncorrelated residue (U) was calculated for both models using the equation ($U = \sqrt{1 - R}$ ²). Soil pH, Exch.Al and OM were positively correlated (p 0.01) with the Xm (Table 3). However, not with the specic isotherm parameters, there are reports that indicate sorption of P increased with decreasing soil pH (acidic soil reaction) and with increasing content of Exchangeable Al [35].

Result of path coecient analysis, showed that Xm was significantly (p 0.01) inuenced by the direct effect of soil pH with negligible indirect effect from other soil variable (Table 3). At low pH, the adsorbed P is said to be held tightly because at this pH situation, the physically adsorbed p will slowly convert to the mineral apatite by precipitating and crystallizing into iron and Aluminum P forms [36].

The positive and significant direct effect (p 0.01) on the P sorption maximum (Xm) occurred from exchangeable Al (Table 2). The direct effect of Exch.Al and clay on the sorption maximum (0.69, 0.58; p 0.01) is an indication of the specic role of Al and clay plays in the processes of P sorption.

Apparently, as concentration of exchangeable Al in the soil

the maize rhizosphere by citric acid and potassium citrate. Soil Biology and Biochemistry 38: 683-692.

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