



Assessment of Soil Microbial Status under Different Land Use System at Various Depth

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to assessment of soil microbial status under different land use system at various depth of main campus of University at Acharya Narendra, Deva University of Agriculture and Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya (U.P.) during 2018-2019.

The land use systems selected for study were rice-wheat cropping system (RWCS), legume based cropping system (LBCS), and vegetable based cropping system (VBCS). Plantation land (mango, aonla and bael orchard), forest land (shisham, teak and eucalyptus) and barren land (NSP-6 farm). Soil samples were taken with GPS system from four depths viz. 0-15, 15-30, 30-45 and 45-60cm in order to analyze microbial population (bacteria, fungi and actinomycetes). The bacterial population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^5 \text{ g}^{-1}$) under all the four land use viz. crop land, plantation land, forest land and barren land was decreased with increasing soil depth, which ranged from 2.76 to $4.95 \text{ cfu} \times 10^5 \text{ g}^{-1}$ soil. The average bacterial population values were higher in forest land followed by plantation land, crop land and barren land. The fungi population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$) under all the four land use viz. crop land, plantation land, forest land and barren land was, also, decreased with increasing soil depth at all land use system and ranged from 0.85 to $1.77 \text{ cfu} \times 10^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ soil. The average fungi population values were higher in forest land followed by crop land, plantation land and barren land. The actinomycetes population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) under all the four land use viz. crop land, plantation land, forest land and barren land was decreased with increasing soil depth at all land use system. The population varied from 0.57 to $1.02 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$ soil. The average actinomycetes population values were higher in forest land followed by plantation land, crop land and barren land.

Keywords: *Soil depth; land use system; soil microbial population; colony forming unit (CFU); GPS system; cropping system etc.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The soil functions as a reservoir of nutrients and water, so provides supports to the plants. Unless being a physical medium, it may be also act as a living system [1].

It is the natural resource for food production, fodder production, fuel and fiber etc. for human being and others [2].

Soil influences directly and indirectly to the agricultural productivity, quality of water, climate of world by act as a medium for plant growth and development and as regulator of flow of water and nutrient cycling [3].

Soil supports a variety of microbial communities that participate in processes at the ecosystem level, such as the decomposition of organic matter and nutrient cycling. In just a few cubic cm of soil, millions of different kinds of bacteria, actinomycetes, fungi, and algae can be detected. The variety, abundance, and activity of the microbial community can be impacted by the physical and chemical properties of the soil, including pH, moisture, the amount of organic

matter present, and the availability of nutrients [4].

Maintaining and improving soil health is essential to sustaining agricultural output in continuous land use systems, which benefits the farming community by assuring a constant income and preventing the land from deterioration [5].

Land use is characterized by the arrangements, activities and inputs, that people undertake in a certain land cover type to produce change or maintain it [6].

In soil, a wide range of living creatures flourish. It offers sanctuary to a diverse range of species, including mammals like rabbits, rats, and badgers as well as invertebrates like worms and insects. In addition, there are bacteria there. Conditions are constantly changing as a result of the interactions between these living beings and the soil. This facilitates changes to soil fertility and output [7].

In forming microbial communities, soil depth is more important than other edaphic parameters including organic matter content, bulk density,

and length of water saturation in the soil. Additionally, it contributes significantly to the understanding of the diversity in the make-up of soil microbial communities [8].

Microbiological populations are essential to the ecology, plant and animal health, food safety, and crop productivity [9]. The cycling that occurs in organic mixtures is controlled by soil microflora, which are also essential components of other biological processes [10].

Soil is a home to a rich microbial ecology that includes microscopic bacteria and fungi, microfauna (nematodes and protozoans), mesofauna, and macro fauna. Soil micro biomes are the fundamental component of agricultural ecosystems, hosting a variety of biogeochemical activities such as nutrient cycling and organic matter decomposition [8].

The assessment of the long-term health of agricultural soils or the identification of unhealthy soils may be influenced by the soil microbial characteristics with regard to changes in soil depth. A better understanding of the impact of land use system on biological properties of soil is essential for evaluation of soil quality and thereby enhancing cropping system sustainability [11]. Therefore, the present study was aimed to assess the soil microbial status under different land use system at various depths at Acharya Narendra Deva, University of Agriculture and Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya as eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, which might also be able to add value to the documentation of the microbial status of the study area and provide future line of work.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Sampling Sites

Geographically, experimental site or sampling site is located at $26^{\circ}47' N$ latitude and $81^{\circ}12' E$ longitude and altitude of about 113 meters above from mean sea level in Indo-gangetic regions of Uttar Pradesh. Four land use system were identified for study at main campus of Acharya Narendra Deva, University of Agriculture and Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya (U.P.), which are crop land, plantation land, forest land and barren land. Cropland system is characterized by addition of chemical fertilizer and farm yard manure (FYM). Soil samples were collected under rice-wheat cropping system (RWCS), legume based cropping system (LBCS), and vegetable based cropping system (VBCS). Plantation land system is characterized by addition of FYM and regular addition of organic matter in the form of falling leaves of mango, aonla and bael orchard, whereas forest land use system is characterized by regular addition of organic matter in the form of falling leaves including those of tree species (shisham, eucalyptus and teak) at forestry farm. On the other hand, Barren land is characterized by some grasses and no tree stands at NSP-6 farm. The details of land use system is given Chart 1.

2.2 Soil Sampling and Analysis

Three spots were selected from selected sites randomly under each land use system. Soil samples were taken with the help of auger from 0-15, 15-30, 30-45 and 45-60 cm depths, respectively in each land use system. In all 120

Chart 1. Details of land used system

No.	Land use system	Location
Crop cultivated land		
1	Rice-Wheat Cropping System	Agronomy Farm, ANDUAT
2	Legume based cropping system	GPB Farm, ANDUAT
3	Vegetable based cropping system	Vegetable Farm, ANDUAT
Plantation land		
4	Mango orchard	Horticulture Farm, ANDUAT
5	Aonla orchard	Horticulture Farm, ANDUAT
6	Bael orchard	Horticulture Farm, ANDUAT
Forest Land		
7	Shisham	Forestry Farm, ANDUAT
8	Eucalyptus	Forestry Farm, ANDUAT
9	Teak	Forestry Farm, ANDUAT
10	Barren land	NSP-6 farm, ANDUAT

Chart 2. GPS location of sampling place

Land use system	Sample number	GPS location	
		Latitude	Longitude
A. Crop land	1	26°32'35"N	81°49'31"E
	2	26°32'30"N	81°49'31"E
	3	26°32'31"N	81°49'32"E
LBCS	1	26°32'5"N	81°50'3"E
	2	26°32'5"N	81°50'4"E
	3	26°32'6"N	81°50'30"E
VBCS	1	26°32'54"N	81°50'29"E
	2	26°32'53"N	81°50'29"E
	3	26°32'53"N	81°50'30"E
B. Plantation land		Latitude	Longitude
Mango	1	26°32'57"N	81°50'32"E
	2	26°32'57"N	81°50'31"E
	3	26°32'58"N	81°50'32"E
Aonla	1	26°32'53"N	81°50'38"E
	2	26°32'53"N	81°50'38"E
	3	26°32'54"N	81°50'37"E
Bael	1	26°32'56"N	81°50'33"E
	2	26°32'55"N	81°50'31"E
	3	26°32'56"N	81°50'32"E
C. Forest land		Latitude	Longitude
Shisham	1	26°33'23"N	81°50'48"E
	2	26°33'23"N	81°50'49"E
	3	26°33'22"N	81°50'48"E
Eucalyptus	1	26°33'21"N	81°50'48"E
	2	26°33'23"N	81°50'49"E
	3	26°33'22"N	81°50'48"E
Teak	1	26°33'57"N	81°50'40"E
	2	26°33'57"N	81°51'40"E
	3	26°34'12"N	81°51'57"E
D. Barren land		Latitude	Longitude
NSP-6 farm	1	26°32'22"N	81°50'39"E
	2	26°32'21"N	81°50'38"E
	3	26°32'21"N	81°50'39"E

samples, 36 from crop land use, 36 from plantation land use, 36 from forest land use and 12 from barren land use system, respectively were taken with GPS system. The details of GPS location of sampling are given Chart 2.

2.2.1 Bacterial count

Bacterial population was estimated by Aneja [12] method using serial dilution technique used Thornton's nutrient agar medium.

2.2.2 Fungal count

Fungal population was estimated by Aneja [12] method using serial dilution technique used martin rose Bengal agar medium.

2.2.3 Actinomycetes count

Actinomycetes population was estimated by Aneja [12] method using serial dilution technique used Ken-Knight's medium.

2.3 Total Microbial Count (Bacteria, Fungi and Actinomycetes Count in Soil)

The microbial count (bacteria, actinomycetes and fungi) was carried out by serial dilution and plating techniques suggested by Rao [13]. Media were prepared for desired micro flora. One gram of sieved (2 mm) soil was added to 9 ml sterile water blank and shaked for 15-20 minutes. Serial dilutions of 10^{-2} , 10^{-3} , 10^{-4} , 10^{-5} , 10^{-6} and 10^{-7} were prepared and 0.1 ml of aliquots of various dilutions were poured in autoclaved Patri-plate. The autoclaved and cooled (45°C) medium was

poured into sterile plates. The plates were rotated for uniform distribution of bacterial cells and fungal spores in the aliquot under the media and allowed to solidify. After the media solidified the plates were inverted and incubated at $28 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ for 3-4 days. The appearances of colonies on the surface of medium in the plates were observed. The Population count of bacteria, fungi and actinomycetes were noted using dilution plate technique by employing nutrient agar (NA), martin rose Bengal agar medium and ken knight's agar medium respectively. The microbial counts were expressed as colony forming unit per gram of soil (CFU g⁻¹ soil). The composition of different media for soil microbial count is given in Table 1.

2.4 Effect of Different Land Use Systems on Bacterial Population, (g⁻¹ soil) at Various Soil Depths

Bacteria Population (cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹): The bacterial population (cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹) of soil is given in Table 2 and illustrated by Fig. 1. The bacterial population of soil relatively differed under different land use with their depths and ranged from 2.76 to 4.95 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹ soil.

At 0-15 cm depth of soil, bacterial population was recorded highest under shisham forest land (4.95 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹) followed by teak forest land (4.81 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹), while the lowest population was recorded under NSP-6 farm (3.21 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹). The larger pore space and organic material provided to the soil by leaf litter, which acts as a source of energy for the microbial population, may be the cause of the higher bacterial density in forest land. Similar results were also observed by Wani et al. [14].

At 15-30cm soil depth, maximum bacterial population was recorded in shisham forest land (4.91 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹) followed by teak forest land (4.73cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹) then mango orchard (4.71 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹). Meanwhile, the minimum population was recorded under NSP-6 farm (3.29 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹). At 30-45cm soil depth the highest bacterial population was recorded under shisham forest land (4.82 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹) followed by LBCS (4.8cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹) then teak forest land (4.67 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹). Meanwhile, the lowest population was recorded in NSP-6 farm (2.97 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹). At 45-60cm soil depth, the minimum bacteria population was observed in NSP-6 farm (2.76 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹). Whereas, the maximum microbial

population was recorded under shisham forest land (4.75 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹) followed by mango orchard (4.58 cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹) then teak forest land (4.57cfux $\times 10^5$ g⁻¹). Microorganisms activity in the soil is reflected by microbial respiration. Increased microbial activity is caused by the presence of more organic material in grasslands and forests with healthy vegetation cover. Due to plant roots, plant leavings, and an increase in organic matter, grassland and forests have more active microorganisms [15].

2.5 Effect of Different Land Use Systems on Fungi Population, (g⁻¹ soil) at Various Soil Depths

Fungi Population (cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹): The effect of different land use at various depth of soil on fungi population has been given in Table 3 and illustrated by Fig. 2. The perusal of the table indicates that the fungi Population has been considerably affected by different land use at various soil depth and ranged from 0.85 to 1.77 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹.

At 0-15 cm depth of soil, fungi population was recorded highest under shisham forest land (1.77 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) followed by teak forest land (1.73 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) then eucalyptus forest land (1.65 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) . Higher fungal count in the forest land soils may be due to low pH and higher organic matter content, accumulation possibly due to root biomass incorporation and huge amount of leaf litter [16]. Similar finding was also observed by Qin [17]. Whereas , the lowest population was under NSP-6 farm (1.08 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹). At 15-30cm soil depth, maximum fungi population was recorded in shisham forest land (1.72 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) followed by teak forest land (1.65cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) then eucalyptus forest land (1.61 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) . While, minimum recorded was under NSP-6 farm (1.01 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹). At 30-45 cm soil depth, the highest fungi population was recorded under shisham forest land (1.64 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) followed by teak forest land (1.61cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) then eucalyptus forest land (1.53 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹). Whereas, the lowest population was recorded in NSP-6 farm (0.94 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹). At 45-60cm soil depth, the minimum fungal population was observed in NSP-6 farm (0.85 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) and the maximum was recorded under shisham forest land (1.58 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) followed by teak forest land (1.52cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹) then eucalyptus forest land (1.47 cfux $\times 10^3$ g⁻¹).

Table 1. Composition of different media for the soil microbial count

Composition of nutrient agar medium	
Ingredient	Quantity
Peptone	5 g
Beef extract	3 g
Agar	15 g
pH	6.8-7.2
Distilled water	1000 ml
NaCl	8 g
Composition of Martin's rose Bengal medium	
Ingredient	Quantity
Glucose	10 g
Peptone	5 g
KH ₂ PO ₄	1 g
MgSO ₄ .7H ₂ O	0.05 g
Streptomycin	30 mg
Agar	15
Rose Bengal	0.035 g
Distilled water	1000 ml
Composition of Ken-knight's agar medium	
Ingredient	Quantity
Dextrose	1 g
NaNO ₃	0.10 g
KH ₂ PO ₄	0.10 g
MgSO ₄ .7H ₂ O	0.10 g
KCl	0.10 g
Agar	15 g
Distilled water	1000 ml

2.6 Effect of Different Land Use System on Actinomycetes Population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$) at Various Soil Depths

Actinomycetes Population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$): The data regarding the effect of different land use at various depths of soil on actinomycetes population has been given in Table 4 and Fig. 3. The perusal of the Table indicates that the actinomycetes population has been relatively affected by different land use at various soil depths. The population was varied from 0.57 to $1.05 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$ soil.

At 0-15cm depth of soil, actinomycetes population was recorded highest under shisham forest land ($1.02 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) followed by teak forest land ($0.97 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) then eucalyptus forest land ($0.96 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$). The presence of trees in the forestland may have reduced the impact of heavy rainfall and other climatic variables thus, favoring abundant growth of fungi in the forest land [18]. Whereas, lowest under NSP-6 farm ($0.8 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) the less microbial count in cultivated land is due to low organic matter and use of fertilizers and more tillage

practices. The results corroborate with the finding of Okonkwo [19]. At 15-30cm soil depth, maximum actinomycetes population was recorded in shisham forest land ($1.05 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) followed by teak forest land ($0.99 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) then eucalyptus forest land ($0.95 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$). The more activity of microorganisms in grassland and forests is, also, due to presence of more plant roots [14]. While, the minimum population was recorded under NSP-6 farm ($0.69 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$). At 30-45cm soil depth, the highest actinomycetes population was recorded under shisham forest land ($0.98 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) followed by teak forest land ($0.94 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) then eucalyptus forest land ($0.92 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$). The lowest population was recorded in NSP-6 farm ($0.61 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$). At 45-60cm soil depth, the minimum actinomycetes population was observed in NSP-6 farm ($0.57 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) and the maximum was recorded under shisham forest land ($0.91 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) followed by teak forest land ($0.86 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) then eucalyptus forest land ($0.83 \text{ cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$). Actinomycetes population was significantly affected by different land use system and conditions [20].

Table 2. Effect of different land use system on bacteria population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^5 \text{ g}^{-1}$) at various soil depths

Soil depth	Crop land			Plantation land			Forest land			Barren land NSP-6 farm
	RWCS	LBCS	VBCS	Mango	Aonla	Bael	Shisham	Eucalyptus	Teak	
0-15	4.17	4.52	4.34	4.75	4.47	4.62	4.95	4.67	4.81	3.21
15-30	4.11	4.44	4.25	4.71	4.42	4.57	4.91	4.62	4.73	3.29
30-45	4.01	4.8	4.19	4.63	4.36	4.53	4.82	4.54	4.67	2.97
45-60	3.85	4.25	4.15	4.58	4.3	4.47	4.75	4.45	4.57	2.76
MD	4.06	4.48	4.22	4.67	4.39	4.55	4.86	4.58	4.7	3.09
SD	0.139	0.228	0.082	0.076	0.073	0.063	0.089	0.096	0.101	0.241
CV	0.01	0.05	0.006	0.005	0.005	0.004	0.008	0.009	0.01	0.05

Table 3. Effect of different land use system on fungi population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$) at various soil depths

Soil depth	Crop land			Plantation land			Forest land			Barren land NSP-6 farm
	RWCS	LBCS	VBCS	Mango	Aonla	Bael	Shisham	Eucalyptus	Teak	
0-15	1.22	1.42	1.34	1.41	1.27	1.32	1.77	1.65	1.73	1.08
15-30	1.18	1.37	1.27	1.35	1.21	1.24	1.72	1.61	1.65	1.01
30-45	1.09	1.32	1.24	1.29	1.13	1.16	1.64	1.53	1.61	0.94
45-60	1.01	1.25	1.18	1.23	1.08	1.11	1.58	1.47	1.52	0.85
MD	1.13	1.34	1.25	1.32	1.17	1.2	1.68	1.57	1.63	0.97
SD	0.093	0.072	0.066	0.077	0.084	0.092	0.084	0.081	0.087	0.098
CV	0.008	0.005	0.004	0.006	0.007	0.008	0.007	0.006	0.007	0.009

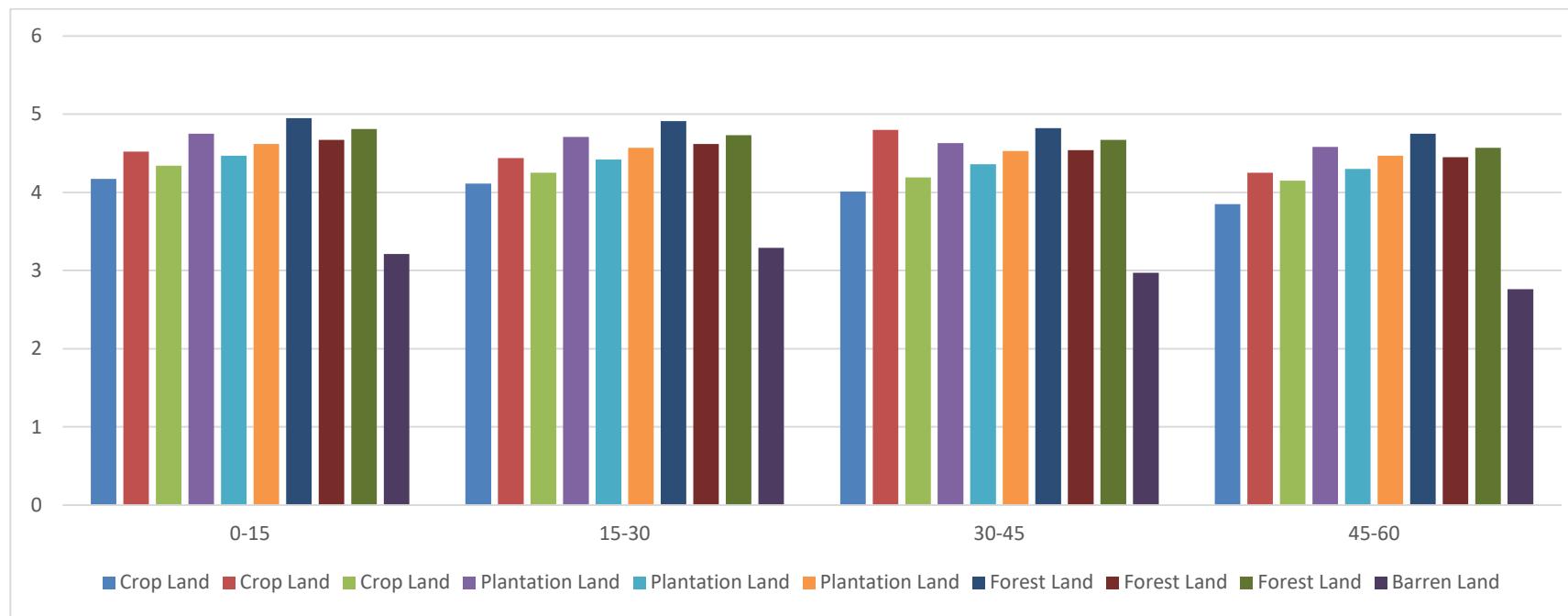


Fig. 1. Effect of different land use system on bacteria population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^5 \text{ g}^{-1}$) at various soil depths

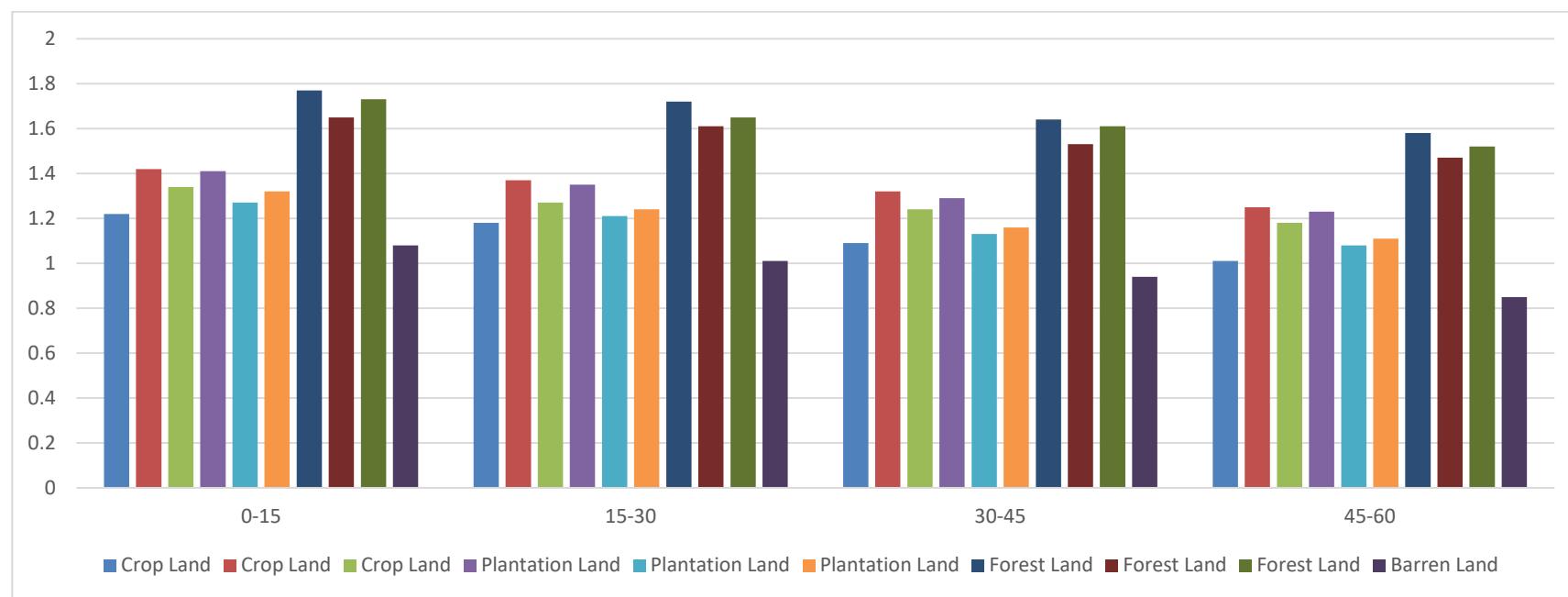


Fig. 2. Effect of different land use system on fungi population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^5 \text{ g}^{-1}$) at various soil depths

Table 4. Effect of different land use system on Actinomycetes population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$) at various soil depths

Soil depth	Crop land			Plantation land			Forest land			Barren land NSP-6 farm
	RWCS	LBCS	VBCS	Mango	Aonla	Bael	Shisham	Eucalyptus	Teak	
0-15	0.83	0.88	0.86	0.91	0.88	0.9	1.02	0.96	0.97	0.8
15-30	0.79	0.83	0.82	0.92	0.85	0.91	1.05	0.95	0.99	0.69
30-45	0.72	0.77	0.74	0.88	0.81	0.85	0.98	0.92	0.94	0.61
45-60	0.67	0.71	0.68	0.81	0.73	0.77	0.91	0.83	0.86	0.57
MD	0.75	0.8	0.78	0.89	0.83	0.87	0.99	0.93	0.95	0.65
SD	0.071	0.073	0.081	0.049	0.065	0.063	0.061	0.059	0.057	0.101
CV	0.005	0.005	0.006	0.002	0.004	0.004	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.01

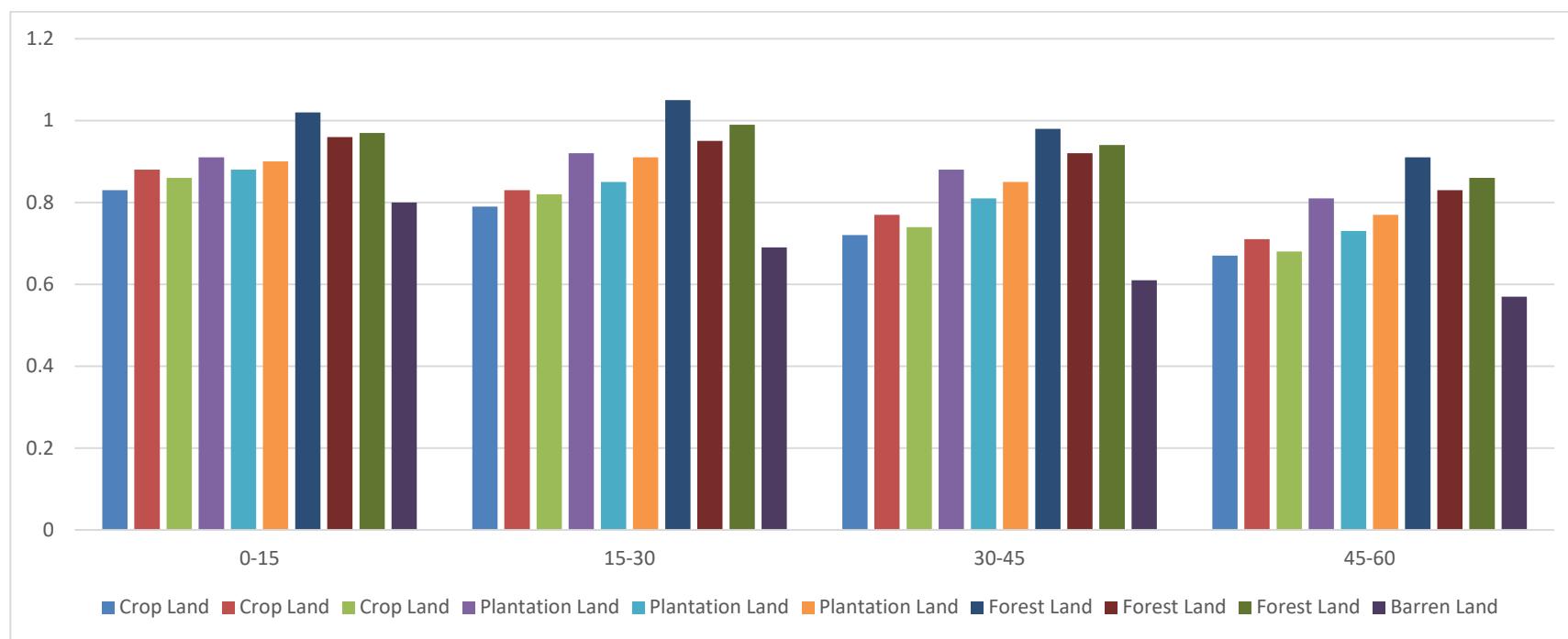


Fig. 3. Effect of different land use system on Actinomycetes population ($\text{cfu} \times 10^5 \text{ g}^{-1}$) at various soil depths

3. CONCLUSION

It is possible to draw the conclusion that the soil depth and various land used systems had an impact on the soil micro biome. It can, also, be concluded that while crop land use (RWCS, LBCS, and VBCS) requires the addition of organic matter, FYM, and some chemical fertilizers to maintain soil productivity, fertility, and health, plantation land (mango, aonla, and bael), forest land (shisham, Eucalyptus, and teak), and are good for sustainable fertility and soil health. For better productivity, fertility, and soil health, bare land (NSP-6 farm) needs to be reclaimed with gypsum in accordance with the GR values for gypsum requirements. Following reclaiming, paddy crops with salt-tolerant varieties should be grown with green manure, addition of FYM, and chemical fertilizers as necessary.

This study will help for further used for planners and for better use and management of the soils of the main campus of university.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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