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POTASSIUM STATUS AND EXCHANGE CHARACTERISTICS  
OF SOME LOWLAND SOILS IN LUZON

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## ABSTRACT

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The study was conducted to evaluate the potassium (K) status and exchange characteristics of ten soils representing important lowland areas in Luzon. An inventory of the K content of the soils was made using the following extracting solutions: hydrogen fluoride (HF) for total K, sodium tetraphenylboron (NaTPB) for nonexchangeable K and ammonium acetate ( $\text{NH}_4\text{OAc}$ ) for exchangeable K. Quantity/Intensity (Q/I) parameters derived from the Q/I curves were tested against K availability indices to assess its value in characterizing K status. Q/I data described K status by relating the intensity (I) of K to the amount (Q) of labile K in the soil.

A greenhouse experiment was conducted to determine the influence of K addition and K uptake on the Q/I parameters of selected lowland soils and at the same time assess their K supplying capacity. A high soil to plant ratio was used to exhaust available K supply in a short period.

Eight of the soils studied contained 2:1 expanding type of clay minerals. Bantog and Tarlac were dominated by vermiculite. X-ray diffraction patterns of the sand fractions of all the soils showed the presence of quartz and feldspars. The soils varied in their chemical characteristics which include pH, cation exchange capacity, organic

matter content, exchangeable K, NaTPB-extractable K,  $AR_e^K$ ,  $\Delta K^0$  and  $PBC^K$ .

The exchangeable K contents ( $NH_4OAc$  extractable K) of eight soils were found to be below the satisfactory level of exchangeable K for rice. Only San Manuel I and Bantog had exchangeable K level higher than 0.2 me/100g. Significant correlation were found between exchangeable K and  $AR_e^K$  ( $r = 0.77$ ) and  $\Delta K^0$  ( $r = -0.96$ ). Sodium tetraphenylboron extractions gave higher values for K than  $NH_4OAc$  extractions since it was able to extract even the "difficultly available" K.

Although the soils contained low exchangeable K, most of the soils with the exception of La Paz, Tarlac, and Buenavista, have high buffering capacities ( $PBC^K$ ). Significant correlation between  $PBC^K$  and clay content ( $r = 0.81$ ) and CEC ( $r = 0.87$ ) were recorded.

The Q/I relations of the soils used in the greenhouse experiment (Maligaya I and San Manuel I) redetermined after K addition and after the soils have been depleted of K by crop uptake were transposed vertically on the direction expected.

The Q/I parameters ( $AR_e^K$ ,  $\Delta K^0$ ,  $K_x$  and  $K_L$ ) increased with K additions but decreased with time of incubation. K uptake decreased  $AR_e^K$  and  $\Delta K^0$  with time. Significant correlation between the increase in K uptake and decrease in  $\Delta K^0$  was obtained.

The intensive cropping technique employed caused a rapid decrease in  $AR_e^K$  in a short period and the release of nonexchangeable K to plant.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	4
Potassium Reserves in the Soil	4
Forms of Soil K and their Availability	5
Factors Affecting Soil Solution K Concentration	7
Release of Nonexchangeable K and K Fixation	10
Assessment of K Status	13
Extraction Methods	13
The Quantity/Intensity Relations	15
Stability of Q/I Relations	18
MATERIALS AND METHODS	19
Soil Samples	19
Textural, Mineralogical and Chemical	
Characterization of Soil Samples	19
Determination of the Potassium Status of	
the Soils	21
Extraction Methods	21
Quantity/Intensity Relations	22
Greenhouse Experiment	23
Statistical Analysis	25
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	26
Texture and Some Chemical Properties of	
the Soil Samples	26
Mineralogical Compositions	29
Potassium Status of the Soils	40
Total K Content	40
Exchangeable K Content	42
NaTPB - Extractable K	43
Initial Q/I relations of the Soils	44
Quantity/Intensity Parameters as Influenced	
by K Addition and K Uptake by Rice	57
Plant Growth and K Uptake	61
Release of Soil K to Rice	66
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	71
LITERATURE CITED	75
APPENDICES	80

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
1	Soils and place of collection	20
2	Particle size distribution and texture of the soils	27
3	Some chemical properties of the soils	28
4	Mineral composition of the clay fractions of the soils	30
5	Total, extractable and nonextractable K contents of the soils	41
6	Initial Quantity/Intensity parameters of the soils	45
7	Effect of K additon and time of incubation on the Q/I parameters of Maligaya I	59
8	Effect of K addition and time of incubation on the Q/I parameters of San Manuel	60
9	Effect of K addition and K uptake by rice on the Q/I parameters of Maligaya I determined at different depletion stages	62
10	Effect of K addition and K uptake by rice on the Q/I parameters of San Manuel I determined at different depletion stages	63
11	Mean dry matter yield (g/pot) as affected by soil, K application and growth period	64
12	Mean K content ( % ) as affected by soil, K application and growth period	65
13	Mean K uptake (me k/pot) as affected by soil, K application and growth period	67
14	Potassium released to lowland rice as affected by K addition and depletion stages	68

# LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
1	X-ray diffraction patterns of Maligaya I and Maligaya II clay fractions	31
2	X-ray diffraction patterns of San Manuel I and San Manuel II clay fractions	32
3	X-ray diffraction patterns of Bantog and Tarlac clay fractions	33
4	X-ray diffraction patterns of Quingua I and Quingua II clay fractions	34
5	X-ray diffraction patterns of Buenavista and La Paz clay fractions	35
6	X-ray diffraction patterns of the sand fractions of Maligaya I and Maligaya II	36
7	X-ray diffraction patterns of the sand fractions of San Manuel I, San Manuel II, Quingua I and Quingua II	37
8	X-ray diffraction patterns of the sand fractions of Buenavista, Bantog, Tarlac and La Paz	38
9	Initial Q/I relations of Maligaya I	46
10	Initial Q/I relations of Maligaya II	47
11	Initial Q/I relations of San Manuel I	48
12	Initial Q/I relations of San Manuel II	49
13	Initial Q/I relations of Bantog	50
14	Initial Q/I relations of Quingua I	51
15	Initial Q/I relations of Quingua II	52
16	Initial Q/I relations of Buenavista	53
17	Initial Q/I relations of Tarlac	54
18	Initial Q/I relations of La Paz	55

## LIST OF APPENDIX TABLES

<u>APPENDIX TABLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1      Analysis of variance for dry matter yield as affected by soil, K level and growth period (greenhouse experiment)	80
2      Analysis of variance for dry matter yield as affected by K level for a particular soil and growth period (greenhouse experiment)	81
3      Analysis of variance for K content as affected by soil, K level and growth period (greenhouse experiment)	82
4      Analysis of variance for K content as affected by K level for a particular soil and growth period (greenhouse experiment)	83
5      Analysis of variance for K uptake as affected by soil, K level and growth period (greenhouse experiment)	84
6      Analysis of variance for K uptake as affected by K level for a particular soil and growth period (greenhouse experiment)	85



## INTRODUCTION

Potassium (K) is one of the major nutrients required by plants but unlike nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P), the available information on its management in rice soils is meager. Soils used in earlier studies often contain adequate potassium reserves and so the lack of crop response to K fertilizers has led to the general view that K fertilizers are not important. Low responses of lowland rice to K application have also been observed. It has been reported that most rice soils in Asia do not need K as much as nitrogen and that only a small and variable increase in rice yield is obtained with K fertilizers (De Datta, 1981).

Most rice growing soils in the Philippines are geologically young and release considerable K from weathering of primary minerals (De Datta, 1985). While K deficiency is not at present a serious problem in the country, intensive cropping and continuous use of modern rice varieties could drain the K reserves. Depletion is also aggravated by heavy N application so that in few years' time, soils which so far have been considered well supplied with the nutrient would require K application a necessity in establishing high yields. Recent studies in many tropical countries have demonstrated this effect. Large responses to K fertilizers have been observed and depletion of available K have been confirmed by laboratory analyses.

Determining the correct rates of K application is a difficult aspect of K management. In agricultural practice, it is important to know for any given location whether K application can significantly