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Soil quality — Determination of abundance and activity of soil microflora using respiration curves

Qualité du sol — Détermination de l'abondance et de l'activité de la microflore du sol à l'aide de courbes de respiration

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Contents

Page

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 17155 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 190, *Soil quality*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Biological methods*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 17155:2002), which has been technically revised.

Soil quality — Determination of abundance and activity of soil microflora using respiration curves

1 Scope

This International Standard specifies a test method for determining the activity of active aerobic, heterotrophic microbial biomass in soils. This method is applicable to the monitoring of soil quality and to the evaluation of the ecotoxic potential of soils and soil materials. It is also applicable for soils sampled along contamination gradients in the field and to soils that are contaminated experimentally in the field or in the laboratory.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 10381-6, *Soil quality — Sampling — Part 6: Guidance on the collection, handling and storage of soil under aerobic conditions for the assessment of microbiological processes, biomass and diversity in the laboratory*

ISO 10390, *Soil quality — Determination of pH*

ISO 10694, *Soil quality — Determination of organic and total carbon after dry combustion (elementary analysis)*

ISO 11277, *Soil quality — Determination of particle size distribution in mineral soil material — Method by sieving and sedimentation*

ISO 11465, *Soil quality — Determination of dry matter and water content on a mass basis — Gravimetric method*

ISO 14238, *Soil quality — Biological methods — Determination of nitrogen mineralization and nitrification in soils and the influence of chemicals on these processes*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1
basal respiration rate
R_B
constant mass of CO_2 released or mass of O_2 consumed per unit mass of soil per unit time without substrate addition

NOTE See Figure 1 for a typical basal respiration curve.

3.2
substrate-induced respiration rate
R_S
constant mass of CO_2 released or mass of O_2 consumed per unit mass of soil per unit time shortly after addition of a carbon substrate

NOTE 1 See Figure 1 for a typical substrate-induced respiration curve.

NOTE 2 If glucose is used as a carbon substrate, microbial biomass can be determined from the substrate-induced respiration rate (see ISO 14240-1[1]).

3.3
respiratory activation quotient
Q_R
basal respiration rate divided by substrate-induced respiration rate

$$Q_R = \frac{R_B}{R_S} \quad (1)$$

3.4
specific growth rate
μ
exponent representing respiration rate per unit of time during the exponential phase of growth

NOTE See Equation (3).

3.5
time to the peak maximum
$t_{peakmax}$
time from addition of substrate to the maximum respiration rate

NOTE 1 See Figure 1.

NOTE 2 The time to the peak maximum also reflects the viability of the growing organisms.

3.6
cumulative CO_2 evolution or O_2 consumption
C_R
total area bounded by the line of the soil respiration rate curve to the time axis from time of the addition of substrate to the time of peak maximum ($t_{peakmax}$)

NOTE See Figure 1.

3.7
soil material
material composed of excavated soil, dredged materials, manufactured soils, treated soils or fill materials

4 Principle

The CO_2 production or O_2 consumption (respiration rate) from unamended soils as well as the decomposition of an easily degraded substrate (glucose + ammonium + phosphate) is monitored regularly (e.g. every hour). From the CO_2 production or O_2 consumption data, the different microbial parameters (basal respiration, substrate-induced respiration, respiratory activation quotient, $t_{peakmax}$, C_R) can be calculated.

5 Reagents

5.1 Glucose, $C_6H_{12}O_6$.

5.2 Potassium dihydrogenphosphate, KH_2PO_4.

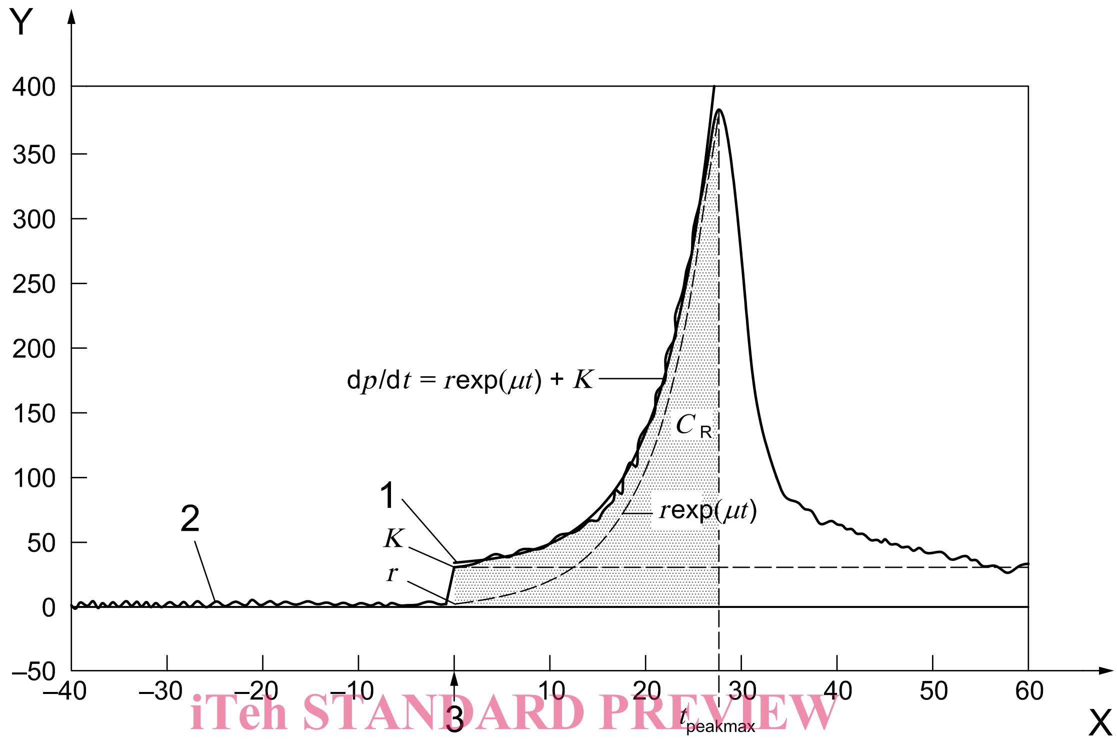
5.3 Diammonium sulfate, $(NH_4)_2SO_4$.

5.4 Substrate, consisting of a mixture of 80 g of glucose (5.1), 13 g of diammonium sulfate (5.3), and 2 g of KH_2PO_4 (5.2), which is thoroughly ground and mixed in a mortar.

6 Apparatus

Ordinary laboratory equipment and 6.1.

6.1 Respirometer for continuous measurement of CO_2 evolution or O_2 consumption, maintained at a constant temperature (preferably 20 °C). Suitable examples of equipment are given in ISO 16072.[2]



Key

X	t	h	time
Y	R	μg $g^{-1}{}_{dm}$ h^{-1}	CO_2 or O_2 respiration rates
	C_R		cumulative CO_2 evolution or O_2 consumption
	dp/dt		rate of product formation after substrate addition
	K		respiration rate of K-strategist at the time of substrate addition
	r		respiration rate of r-strategist at the time of substrate addition
	$t_{peakmax}$		time to the peak maximum
	μ		specific growth rate
1	R_S		substrate-induced respiration $R_S = K + r$ (at $t = 0$)
2	R_B		basal respiration
3			substrate addition

Figure 1 — Soil respiration rate before and after addition of an easily degraded substrate

7 Sampling

7.1 Sample quantities

Choose the size of the soil samples taking into account the apparatus (6.1) used, the organic matter content of the samples (7.3) and the soil needed for sample characterization (7.3). It is recommended that at least three replicates per sample be measured.

7.2 Sampling and storage

The recommendations in ISO 10381-6 for collection, handling and storage of soil samples shall be followed.

7.3 Soil sample characteristics

Soil samples generating soil respiration curves can be obtained from mineral, organic, polluted, and unpolluted soils. Determine the following characteristics for each soil sample:

— particle size distribution in accordance with ISO 11277;

— water content in accordance with ISO 11465;

— water-holding capacity in accordance with Annex A of ISO 14238:2012;

— pH in accordance with ISO 10390;

— organic matter content in accordance with ISO 10694.

8 Procedure

8.1 Test

Pre-incubate moist soil samples (preferably 40 % to 60 % of maximum water holding capacity or 0,01 MPa to 0,03 MPa suction pressure) at 20 °C for 3 d to 4 d before the beginning of the measurement. Measure the basal respiration of the sub-samples first. Measure the respiration rates until constant rates are obtained.

After measuring the basal respiration, add 10 mg of the substrate (5.4) per gram soil (dry mass) and mix homogeneously with a spatula into the soil samples. If the organic matter content is >5 %, add 0,2 g of the substrate per gram humus (see References [4][5]).

8.2 Toxicity testing

In principle, testing the influence of chemicals should also be possible with the method. Up to the time of publication, there is only scarce experience available in the literature.

To determine the influence of chemicals on the abundance and activity of soil microorganisms, a soil with low content of organic carbon (mass fraction between 0,5 % and 1,5 %). Particles of size <20 µm should not exceed 20 % mass fraction in order to provide a high degree of bioavailablity.

The effect of chemicals on the soil microbial activity can be determined as follows. Using a range-finding test, determine the concentration range in which chemicals would be likely to have an effect on this activity. Test a single, microbiologically active soil at five concentrations in a logarithmic series, including a blank control, in triplicate (e.g. 0, 1, 3,2, 10, 32, and 100 times the lowest concentration). Use the test procedure specified in 8.1. Using this simple test design, dose–response relationships can be established

Before the start of the test, the test chemical may be added to the soil in one of the following ways:

— in aqueous solution (depending on the solubility in water);

— in an organic solution using a water-miscible solvent (depending on the solubility in the solvent);

— mixed with a solid, e.g. coated on quartz sand (prior to mixing with the soil).

If the test chemical is added in the form of an organic solution, keep the amount of the solvent to the minimum (<1 %) necessary for the application of the compound. Furthermore, take into account the possible toxicity (e.g. by including a further control for testing the toxicity of the solvent) and biodegradability of the solvent used.

NOTE Long-term effects of chemicals can be detected by using different incubation times (weeks or months). A comparison of C_R (see 3.6) of the unamended control and the chemical-treated soil samples has been shown to be very sensitive to chemical influences.

9 Calculation

9.1 Microbial parameters

9.1.1 Basal respiration

Calculate the basal respiration, R_B, as the average of the hourly respiration rates during a stable period.

9.1.2 Substrate-induced respiration

Calculate the substrate-induced respiration, R_S, as the average of the values shortly after the substrate addition when the respiration is fairly constant. A minimum of three hourly measurements should be used to calculate the average.

Alternatively, R_S can be calculated according to Equation (2):

$$R_S = r + K \tag{2}$$

where

R_S is the substrate-induced respiration;

r is the respiration rate of r-strategist;

K is the respiration rate of K-strategist immediately after substrate addition.

As proposed in Reference [14] (see Figure 1), the respiration of the non-growing microorganisms, K, and the growing microorganisms, r, is derived by curve fitting using Equation (3):

$$\frac{dp}{dt} = r\exp(\mu t) + K \tag{3}$$

where

$\frac{dp}{dt}$ is the rate of product formation after substrate addition;

p is the accumulated amount of CO_2 evolved or O_2 consumed in a dry mass of soil, in micrograms per gram per hour;

t is the time after addition of substrate, in hours;

μ is the specific growth rate.

NOTE Substrate-induced respiration, R_S, can be used for the estimation of microbial biomass in soils. According to Equation (4), R_S can be converted into C_{mic}(SIR).

$$C_{mic}(\text{SIR}) = 20{,}6R_S + 0{,}37 \tag{4}$$

where

R_S is the substrate-induced CO_2 respiration in micrograms per gram per hour;

C_{mic}(SIR) is the microbial biomass in micrograms per gram.

Close correlations ($R^2_{xy} = 0{,}84$ to 0,97) exist between C_{mic}(SIR) estimated according to this International Standard and C_{mic} estimated according ISO 14240-1[1] (see Annex B). The correlation variables depend on soil texture and substrate concentrations used.