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Unravelling the Intricacies of Succession and Transformation of Microorganisms

J. Surya Mithra Nair[1], S. Anu Rajan [2], N. Chitra[3], and V.I. Soumya. S[4]
[1] Department of Agronomy, College of Agriculture, Vellayani
[2,3,4] Department of Microbiology, College of Agriculture, Vellayani
*Corresponding Author: mithranair1998@gmail.com

Abstract

Microorganisms are essential for the evolution and development of animals and plants, breaking down complex organic matter and contributing to nutrient cycling. They interact with plants through chemical signals, benefiting host plants. The succession and transformation of microorganisms in ecosystems are crucial for understanding the dynamics and sustainability of our natural world. The hologenome theory of evolution suggests that microorganisms have played a significant role in the evolution and development of animals and plants, and their interactions with plants are of particular interest in microbial ecology. Microbial succession refers to the process of one group of microorganisms replacing another in a particular environment over time, driving changes in the organismic composition of an environment.

Introduction

Microorganisms play a crucial role in the evolution and development of animals and plants. This article explores the importance of microorganisms in the succession and transformation of various ecosystems. Microorganisms are essential to all forms of life as they break down complex organic matter and contribute to nutrient cycling (Gupta *et al.*, 2024). They interact with plants by exchanging chemical signals and can benefit host plants in various ways. These beneficial microorganisms have the potential to provide alternative opportunities for sustainable agriculture practices by reducing the use of agrochemicals and enhancing nutrient uptake and pest and disease management. The succession and transformation of microorganisms in various ecosystems is a topic of great significance in understanding the dynamics and sustainability of our natural world. The hologenome theory of evolution suggests that microorganisms have played a crucial role in the evolution and development of animals and plants, and their interactions with plants are of particular interest in microbial ecology. In addition, as a powerful driver of substance transformation, microorganisms participated in the degradation of organic matters such as reducing sugars, phenols, and protein derivatives, thus playing a vital role in the transformation of substances (Yu *et al.*, 2018).

During succession, there is a predictable sequence of changes in the organismic composition of an environment as a result of alterations produced by the organisms themselves. This process involves the replacement of one microbial community with another as different species or strains become more suitable for the changing environment. These changes can be driven by factors such as nutrient availability, abiotic conditions, interactions with other organisms, and the presence of disturbance events.

Microbial Succession

Microbial succession refers to the process of one group of microorganisms replacing another in a particular environment over time. Picture a relay race, where different teams of microorganisms take turns running the race, each playing a crucial role in shaping the overall ecosystem. The term "microbial succession" in soil organic matter describes the dynamic changes that occur over time in the activity and composition of microbial communities as a result of their interactions with the breakdown of organic compounds in the soil. This process is essential for breaking down complex organic compounds into simpler forms, which in turn helps with soil fertility and nutrient cycling.

Different kinds of microorganisms that have distinct functions to play at different phases of the decomposition of organic matter are usually involved in the succession of microbial communities in soil organic matter. There are various phases to the process:

1. Primary Colonizers: The first microorganisms to settle on newly formed organic matter are usually bacteria and fungi. They decompose substances that are readily broken down, including simple sugars and amino acids.
2. Secondary Colonizers: When the readily broken-down chemicals are consumed, the environment shifts and more specialized microbes known as secondary colonizers take over. More intricate organic substances like cellulose and lignin are frequently involved at this stage. During this stage, fungi, actinomycetes, and various bacteria are prevalent.

3. Intermediate Decomposers: More complicated organic molecules are broken down at this step. Actinomycetes are a form of bacteria that resemble fungi and are frequently involved in the breakdown of difficult materials like cellulose and lignin.
4. Late Decomposers: During the last phases of the microbial succession, humus and simpler organic materials are left behind as bacteria continue to break down the complex organic compounds that remain. This humus aids in water retention, nutrient availability, and soil structure.

Microorganisms Associated with Organic Matter Decomposition

(i) Cellulose Decomposers

Following are the decomposers of cellulose:

Fungi: *Aspergillus, Chaetomium, Coprinus, Fomes, Fusarium, Penicillium, Rhizopus, Trichoderma, Trametes, Verticillium*, etc

Bacteria: *Bacillus, Cellulomonas, Clostridium, Corynebacterium, Cytophaga, Pseudomonas, Vibrio*, etc.

Actinomycetes: *Micromonospora, Nocardia, Streptomyces, Streptosporangium* etc

(ii) Hemicellulose Decomposers

Following is a list of decomposers of hemicelluloses

Fungi: *Alternaria, Aspergillus, Chaetomium, Fusarium, Glomerella, Penicillium, Trichoderma*, etc

Bacteria: *Bacillus, Cytophaga, Erwinia, Pseudomonas*, etc.

Streptomycetes: *Streptomyces*, etc.

(iii) Lignin Decomposers:

Due to the slow growth of microorganisms, many basidiomycetes are capable of decomposing lignin, but the process takes time. Although little research has been done, aerobic bacteria can also degrade lignin to some extent.

Examples of some of the lignin decomposers are given below:

Fungi

Agaricus, Armillaria, Clavaria, Clitocybe, Coprinus, Ganoderma, Phaliota, Pleurotus, Polyporus, Poria, Trametes, Ustulina, etc.

Bacteria

Species of *Arthrobacter, Flavobacterium, Micrococcus, Pseudomonas, Xanthomonas*, etc.

Soil

Organic Matter Dynamics:

When organic matter is present in soil, microbes eventually transform it into a homogeneous, dark-colored, amorphous material known as humus. Together with other microbial species, mostly bacteria and actinomycetes, fungi break down organic materials in soil to release nutrients that have been stored there in complex forms.

The success and transformation of microorganisms play a vital role in shaping the population dynamics and functions of these organisms within ecosystems. The ability of microorganisms to colonize new resources is a crucial aspect of their ecology. Colonization success depends on the ability of microorganisms to arrive at, gain entry into, and establish within a new resource. Once established, microorganisms must also persist within the resource until they can reproduce and disseminate (Boddy and Hiscox 2016). This ability to persist and adapt to different resources is influenced by factors like stress, disturbance, and competition. In the study of microorganisms, succession refers to the predictable sequence of changes in the composition of microbial communities in a given environment. During succession, different species or strains of microorganisms become more suitable for the changing environmental conditions and replace the previous microbial community. The succession and transformation of microorganisms play a crucial role in shaping the population dynamics and functions within ecosystems. The success and transformation of microorganisms in colonizing new resources is essential for their ecology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the succession and transformation of soil microorganisms play a crucial role in the sustainability and productivity of agro-ecosystems. Microorganisms, such as bacteria, fungi, and actinomycetes, are key transformers and pesticide degraders in the soil. Their activities contribute to the decomposition of pesticides and other organic compounds, ensuring environmental quality. Additionally, soil microorganisms are responsible for important functions such as nutrient cycling, organic matter decomposition, and plant growth promotion. The diversity of microbial communities in the soil is vital for crop production, soil sustainability, and environmental quality. Understanding and harnessing the genetic and metabolic diversity of soil microbiota is a promising strategy for designing microbial inoculants that can enhance soil fertility, mitigate the impact of non-sustainable agricultural practices, and ensure global food security

The succession and transformation of microorganisms in ecosystems are important processes that shape population dynamics and roles within these organisms. In this process, one microbial community is swapped over for another when some species or strains prove to be more adaptable to the shifting surroundings. These alterations may be caused by variables like nutrition availability, abiotic environments, interactions with other species, and disturbance events. The ability of microorganisms to flourish and transform is essential for determining population dynamics and ecological activities and resource colonization.

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