



Organic Waste Amendments and Their Effect on Heavy Metal Retention in Soil and Garlic

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Abstract

A lot of money is spent on chemical fertilizers in South Asia, so organic fertilizers



are being researched. This study was based on the effects of different types of organic wastes such as poultry waste, press soil, and farmyard manure on the mobility of heavy metals in soil and their accumulation in garlic, a commodity consumed by humans, and its health effects. protects Risks From the results, we observed that humus leads to the accumulation of some metals, including Zn, Cu, Fe and Co, while metals such as Mn, Cd, Cr and Pb are reduced. Sludge from the press raised Cd, Cr, Fe and Pb contents in garlic while poultry litter increased Zn and Cu. Farmyard manure affects cobalt, Co and Mn in soil in the following manner. The highest PLI was observed for copper with pressed soil and the highest HRI level for cadmium with pressed soil. Zinc, however, was the highest daily intake when poultry waste was used, and lead was the highest bioaccumulated in garlic grown in press soil. This study demonstrated that garlic grown in soil amended with contaminated organic manure is potentially harmful if eaten.

Keywords: Soil Pollution; Heavy Metal Contamination; Organic Waste Amendments; Garlic; Environmental Health Risk; Sustainable Agriculture

Introduction

Soil contamination by heavy metals is a problem of global concern and affects vegetable production (Aslam et al., 2024), particularly in urban areas (Abbas et al., 2023a; Zaib and Adnan, 2024; Zeeshan et al., 2023; Iftikhar et al., 2023). Due to various forces, both natural and man-made, the nature and quality of soil has degraded and the level of heavy metal pollution is high (Abbas et al., 2023b; Zaib, 2024a). High concentrations are lethal to soil and can be absorbed by vegetable crops and stored in edible parts (Osu et al., 2021; Afzal et al., 2023a; Zaib, 2024b). This addition degrades the nutritional value of vegetables by introducing heavy metals into the food chain (Shaukat and Ali, 2023), which is highly lethal for human consumption (Zeeshan et al. 2024a) and animal consumption (Afzal et al., 2023b). For the purpose of risk comparison, the amount of trace metals offered in vegetables can be equated to the daily vegetable intake of a person (Shrestha et al., 2019; Ali et al., 2023; Zaib et al., 2023r). High levels of toxic metals mean a greater chance of their accumulation in vegetables (Abah et al., 2019; Bayar et al., 2024). However, it is important to note that the highest concentrations of heavy metals can usually be found in the upper layers of contaminated soil, thus making it easier for plants to absorb toxic heavy metals (Zeeshan et al., 2023a), leading to health issues such as cardiovascular diseases (Zaib et al., 2023a; Zubair et al., 2023a; Zeeshan et al 2023b), kidney problems (Zaib et al., 2023b; Zeeshan et al 2024b), nervous system disorders (Zubair et al., 2023b), and bone/joint diseases in consumers (Chang et al., 2013; Ge et al., 2024; Raza et al., 2023; Zeeshan et al 2023c).

Organic materials like animal manure and sewage sludge (Zeeshan et al., 2023d) can improve the physical and chemical health of the soil (Zaib et al., 2023c). However, these materials can also have harmful substances that could affect human health, animals, and plants (Zaib et al., 2023d; Zeeshan et al., 2023e). Even so, using organic materials like farmyard manure (Zaib et al., 2023e; Zeeshan et al., 2024c), poultry waste (Zaib et al., 2024), and press mud (a



byproduct from sugarcane) can help improve the quality and profit of vegetables grown on polluted soils. This also helps reduce the negative effects of chemical fertilizers (Zaib et al., 2023f; Zeeshan et al., 2023f). Organic manures can reduce the movement and buildup of harmful metals in the soil, as well as their absorption by plants (Xi et al., 2016; Zaib et al., 2023g; Zeeshan et al., 2024d).

Garlic (*Allium sativum* L.) is a vegetable crop that contains many useful compounds. However, it is at risk of contamination by heavy metals due to human activities (Zaib et al., 2023h). In Pakistan's Sargodha region, which is a key farming area, organic materials like poultry waste, press mud, and farmyard manure are commonly used to improve soil fertility (Zaib et al., 2023i; Zeeshan et al., 2023g). Despite their widespread use, little research has been done to understand how these practices affect heavy metal levels in the soil (Chang et al., 2013; Abah et al., 2019; Zaib et al., 2023j).

Therefore, this study aims to: (a) evaluate the effects of poultry waste, press mud (Zaib et al., 2023k), and farmyard manure application on garlic growth (Zaib et al., 2023l), pollution load (Zaib et al., 2023m), and heavy metal accumulation in soil and the vegetable; (b) assess the human health risks from soil exposure and food consumption (Zaib et al., 2023n); (c) determine the risks posed by heavy metals from the organic manures (Zaib et al., 2023o); and (d) estimate the soil/vegetable contamination risk to public health from organic fertilizer applications (Zaib et al., 2023p). This will help bridge the gap in understanding the impacts of waste-derived organic amendments on heavy metal accumulation and associated health risks (Zaib et al., 2023q; Zeeshan et al 2024e).

Materials and Methods

Study Area

A pot experiment was set up to study how garlic grows in soil polluted with heavy metals. Different organic manures, such as farmyard manure, poultry waste, and sugarcane press mud, were used to improve the soil quality. Ten garlic seeds were planted in each pot filled with a mix of clay and loamy soil, and different treatments were applied. These treatments included: control (C), poultry waste (PW), farmyard manure (FYM), and press mud (PM). The pots were watered with tap water until the first compound leaf appeared. The experiment was done under conditions with an average daytime temperature of 25°C, nighttime temperature of 20°C, and 55–60% relative humidity. The organic manures were collected from the Sargodha region of Pakistan. Each treatment was repeated three times, making a total of 12 pots arranged in a completely randomized design (CRD). The soil in each pot was a mix of 50% organic manure and 50% loamy clay garden soil. Garlic plants were harvested twice during the experiment: the first harvest was 45 days after the seedlings appeared, and the second harvest, for bulbs, was done around 90 days later.

Sample Collection

- *Soil and Plant Sampling*

Soil samples were collected randomly from the treated pots. These samples were dried, crushed, and passed through a 2 mm sieve. Then,



they were sealed in plastic bags and kept in a freezer at -80°C for later analysis. Garlic samples were collected and cleaned by washing first with distilled water and then with diluted hydrochloric acid to remove dust and dirt. The plant samples were also washed with deionized water to remove any soil particles. After washing, the samples were crushed using a grinder and stored at -80°C for future testing. Before analysis, the samples were air-dried for four days and kept in sealed paper bags. They were then fully dried in an oven at 80°C for three days.

- **Wet Digestion and Metal Testing**
The wet digestion method was used for soil and plant samples. About 1 gram of air-dried soil or plant material was placed in a digestion flask. A mixture of concentrated acids (5 mL of HNO_3 , HClO_4 , and H_2SO_4 in a 5:1:1 ratio) was added. The mixture was left for 24 hours to ensure proper digestion. After cooling, the digested material was filtered using Whatman #42 filter paper.
- The concentration of metals in soil and garlic leaf samples was determined using an Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (AAS). The metals tested included cadmium (Cd), chromium (Cr), copper (Cu), cobalt (Co), iron (Fe), manganese (Mn), lead (Pb), and zinc (Zn). Standard European Commission methods were followed, and the detection limits were calculated using approved techniques.
- **Quality Control**
 - **Equipment Calibration:** Instruments were calibrated using standard reference values.
 - **Deionized Water:** Used throughout to prevent contamination.
 - **Certified Reference Materials:** SRM-2711 for soil and SRM NIST-1577b for garlic were used to ensure accurate results.
- Average recovery rates for soil and garlic are shown below:

Table 1: Recovery Rates

Metal	Soil Recovery (%)	Garlic Recovery (%)
Mn	92	109
Cr	98	97
Co	93	94
Cd	95	92
Pb	104	95
Cu	96	91
Zn	90	88

Pollution Load Index (PLI)

The Pollution Load Index (PLI) measures the level of contamination in soil. The formula used is:

$$\text{PLI} = \frac{\text{Metal in soil sample}}{\text{Metal in reference sample}}$$

Bioconcentration Factor (BCF)



The Bioconcentration Factor (BCF) shows how plants absorb metals from soil. The formula is:

$$\text{BCF} = \frac{\text{Metal in plant tissues (mg/kg)}}{\text{Metal in soil (mg/kg)}}$$

Daily Intake of Metals (DIM)

The Daily Intake of Metals (DIM) helps assess health risks to consumers. It is calculated as:

$$\text{DIM} = \frac{C_{\text{metal}} \times D_{\text{food intake}}}{\text{Baverage weight}}$$

Where:

- C_{metal} = Metal concentration in grains
- $D_{\text{food intake}}$ = Daily vegetable intake (0.345 kg/person/day)
- Baverage weight = Average body weight

Health Risk Index (HRI)

The Health Risk Index (HRI) estimates risks from metals in food. It is calculated as:

$$\text{HRI} = \frac{\text{DIM}}{\text{RfD}}$$

Where:

- RfD = Oral reference dose
- An HRI > 1 indicates a high health risk.

Statistical Analysis

The data was studied using SPSS software (version 20.0) to run ANOVA tests. Average values and standard errors were calculated in Microsoft Excel. For Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Cluster Analysis, OriginPro 2021 software was used.

Results and Discussion

Metal Levels in Soil

Table 1 shows the levels of metals found in the soil. Different organic manures, like poultry waste, press mud, and farmyard manure, affected these metal levels in various ways. Metals like zinc (Zn), copper (Cu), iron (Fe), and cobalt (Co) increased, while manganese (Mn), cadmium (Cd), chromium (Cr), and lead (Pb) decreased.

Table 2: Heavy Metal Concentrations in Soil and Garlic (mg/kg)

Metal	Control	Poultry Waste	Press Mud	FYM	Permissible Limit
Cd	0.448	0.332	0.457	0.394	0.5
Co	0.537	0.455	0.562	0.488	1
Cr	0.135	0.146	0.779	0.189	50
Cu	1.222	1.310	1.251	1.254	20
Fe	0.179	0.126	0.108	0.141	10
Mn	1.868	5.682	5.682	0.720	1000



Pb	0.537	0.023	0.082	0.053	30
Zn	4.535	17.633	12.69	10.71	50

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (p-values)

Metal	Soil (p-value)	Plant (p-value)
Cd	0.005	0.003
Co	0.163	0.005
Cr	0.114	0.046
Cu	0.372	0.004
Pb	0.984	0.831
Fe	0.111	0.918
Mn	0.724	0.262
Zn	0.514	0.171

Key Insights

- Organic fertilizers improved soil quality and reduced heavy metal mobility.
- Higher soil pH immobilized metals, reducing their bioavailability.
- All treated pots showed metal levels below permissible limits, indicating safe soil quality.

Conclusion

This study found that using different organic wastes like poultry waste, press mud, and farmyard manure can increase pollution in the soil and garlic. Organic materials caused more metals like zinc (Zn), copper (Cu), iron (Fe), and cobalt (Co) to build up, while manganese (Mn), cadmium (Cd), chromium (Cr), and lead (Pb) were found in smaller amounts in the soil. Adding press mud (PM) to the soil increased the levels of Cd, Cr, Fe, and Pb, while Cu and Zn built up in garlic. Farmyard manure (FYM) led to the appearance of cobalt (Co) and manganese (Mn). The metal levels in the soil were within safe limits, and the metal levels in garlic were also below the allowed limits. However, the health risk index for Cd and Pb was above 1, which means there could be health risks. This suggests that eating garlic grown in contaminated soil could be harmful. Future studies should look into the environmental effects of organic fertilizers, changes in soil health, and ways to improve soil quality.

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