



## Impact of Organic and Inorganic Sources of Nutrients on Root Architecture, Soil Microbial Biomass and Yield on Low Land Rice Ecosystem

V. R. Senthamizhkumaran <sup>a\*#</sup>, P. Santhy <sup>a†</sup>, D. Selvi <sup>a†</sup>, T. Kalaiselvi <sup>b†</sup>  
and K. G. Sabarinathan <sup>c‡</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Soil Science & Agricultural Chemistry, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore - 641003, (Tamil Nadu), India.

<sup>b</sup> Department of Agricultural Microbiology, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore - 641003 (Tamil Nadu), India.

<sup>c</sup> Department of Plant Pathology, Agricultural Microbiology, AC & RI, Killikulam, Vallanadu - 628252 (Tamil Nadu), India.

### 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

To study the impact of vermicompost, arbuscular mycorrhizae and FYM application on the rice ecosystem at low land, a field experiment was conducted with rice CO(R) 51 at the Department of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in Coimbatore during the winter of 2020. The experiment was framed in Randomized Block Design comprising of 8 treatments viz., Recommended Dose of Fertilizer Soil Test Crop Response approach (T<sub>1</sub>), RDF 75 % + Farm Yard Manure @ 12.5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (T<sub>2</sub>), T<sub>2</sub> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi (T<sub>3</sub>), RDF 75 % + Vermicompost @ 5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (T<sub>4</sub>), T<sub>4</sub> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi (T<sub>5</sub>), FYM

# PhD Student,

† Professor,

‡ Assistant Professor,

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: sakthikumaransoil@gmail.com;

@ 12.5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi (T<sub>6</sub>), Vermicompost @ 5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi (T<sub>7</sub>) and Absolute control (T<sub>8</sub>) and replicated thrice. The maximum microbial population were registered in the plots that received integrated nutrient application of RDF 75 % STCR approach + Vermicompost 5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi. Rice root architecture has changed significantly as a result of mycorrhizal inoculation. Mycorrhizal rice plants have more root volume, length, and spread than plants without mycorrhizae. Nutrient retention and availability influenced the presence of microbial-mediated metabolic activities and nutrient transformations during crop growth. Bacteria, fungus, and actinomycetes became less abundant as the crop reached harvest. The population density of mycorrhizospheres that utilize both organic and inorganic fertilizers is higher. The treatments that received Vermicompost or FYM with Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhizae and Nitrogen, Phosphorous & Potassium fertilizers obtained the highest yields of rice grain and straw (6740 and 7840 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) respectively, and it was clear that the combination of Vermicompost or FYM, VAM and along with NPK fertilizers produced significantly higher yields than their individual applications and absolute control.

**Keywords:** *Arbuscular mycorrhizae; FYM; Microbial population; root architecture; vermicompost.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rice is grown over 193 million hectares worldwide [1] but production and consumption are focused in Asia, where more than 90% of all rice is consumed. From 42.77 million hectares, India produced 117.5 million tonnes in 2019-20 [2], with a 2.9 t ha<sup>-1</sup> average production [3]. If the country is to remain self-sufficient by 2025, rice yields must be increased by 25 to 30 percent from existing pace. Tamil Nadu produces 7.65 million tonnes of rice on to an area of 1.87 million hectares, accounting for 8% of national rice output [1]. Instead, rice production has lost significant amounts of soil nutrients. Thus, India's future food and nutritional security is dependent on continual increase in soil and crop productivity on a long-term basis through sufficient and balanced input management without depleting natural resources, for which the outcomes of integrated nutrient management would be essential.

Microorganisms influence the soil activities such as mineralization and humification, and they play an important role in nutrient availability [4]. As a result, a better insight into the mechanisms that influence its size, activity, and structure is essential [5]. Soils with higher microbial diversity are indicative of an improved soil plant relationship, hence research on the long-term effects of nutrient absence or presence on the microbial community is important for the regulation of rice ecosystem. Additionally, even though continuous application of fertilizers alter the physical, chemical, and biological properties of soil, they can change the soil microbial population directly or indirectly [6].

To enhance crop yields, organic manures must be used in association with inorganic fertilizers to develop a soil rich in organic matter in the form of readily available nutrients [7]. This study investigated the soil microbial community (bacteria, fungi, and actinomycetes) as influenced by organic, inorganic, and integrated nutrient management (INM) on rice crop yield and AM resulted in an increase in microbial biomass and a change in the root architecture in the rhizosphere region of lowland rice fields.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The experiment was conducted in the Wetland, Central Farm of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore and Tamil Nadu. The experimental site is geographically located at 11°00' N latitude and 76.92' E longitude at an elevation of 426.72 m above mean sea level. The soil of the experimental site was clay loam with pH of 8.15, EC of 0.63 dSm<sup>-1</sup> and medium in organic carbon (0.62 %), medium in available nitrogen (268 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>), high in available phosphorus (22.5 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) and high in available potassium (780 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) (Table 2).

Fertilizers were recommended based on soil test value. Following three STCR equations developed for rice crop with a targeted yield. FN = 4.39 T – 0.59 SN – 0.80 ON, FP<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> = 2.22 T – 3.63 SP - 0.98 OP, FK<sub>2</sub>O = 2.44 T – 0.39 SK – 0.72 OK. The required fertilizer nitrogen (FN), fertilizer phosphorus (FP) and fertilizer potassium (FK) for rice were calculated by substituting the initial soil values of N, P, K and target yield in STCR equation of rice. Average yield of CO 51 is 7 t ha<sup>-1</sup> [22]. The experiment

was laid out in randomized block design having 8 treatments viz, RDF STCR approach (T<sub>1</sub>), RDF 75 % + FYM @ 12.5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (T<sub>2</sub>), RDF 75 % + FYM @ 12.5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi (T<sub>3</sub>), RDF 75 % + Vermicompost @ 5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (T<sub>4</sub>), RDF 75 % + Vermicompost @ 5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi (T<sub>5</sub>), FYM @ 12.5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi (T<sub>6</sub>), Vermicompost @ 5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi (T<sub>7</sub>) and Absolute control (T<sub>8</sub>) and replicated thrice (Table 1). Fertilizer was applied in soil as per STCR recommendation of 108, 37.35, and 25 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> of N, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, and K<sub>2</sub>O respectively as per recommendation were applied through Urea, DAP and muriate of potash as per treatments. Half dose of nitrogen and full dose of phosphorus and potassium were applied basally. Remaining half N dose was applied in two equal splits once at tillering and rest panicle initiation stages. However, vermicompost was applied three days before transplanting and soil application of vesicular arbuscular mycorrhiza at the time of transplanting (Table 3). Seedlings of 25 days were transplanted, 2 to 3 seedling/hill at 20 x 10 cm spacing in a plot size of 20 sq.m (5 x 4 m) under puddled conditions and other agronomic practices were followed as per Crop Production Guide (CPG), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University [23].

Five plots were selected randomly and root length was measured from the base of the root to the tip of the primary root at the time of active tillering, panicle initiation and flowering expressed in cm. For measuring root volume, water was poured into a clean measuring

cylinder (nearly three fourth of its volume) and the level of water was noted. To avoid parallel error, reading was taken at the lowest level of the meniscus or curved surface of the liquid. A string was attached to the root and lowered into water and the new level of water was noted. The difference in the above readings was calculated and expressed as root volume in cc hill<sup>-1</sup>.

## 2.1 Soil Sampling

Soil samples were collected and stored at a temperature of 4°C until they were taken for the study. Preplanting and post harvest soil samples were collected at 0-15 cm depth and analysed for various properties as per the standard procedures prescribed in Jackson, 1973 [12].

## 2.2 Soil Analysis

Soil chemical properties viz pH, EC, organic carbon, available nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium were determined by standard procedures given by [12-17], respectively. Microbiological analysis were determined by the procedures given by [18-20], respectively.

## 2.3 Statistical Analysis

All data were analysed by one-way ANOVA and the differences in mean were compared by the least significant difference test at P = 0.05 [11]. Yield responses to individual soil properties were modelled with correlation index at 1% probability. The data on various characters studied during the course of the investigation were statistically analyzed as suggested by Gomez and Gomez [24]. The post-harvest data on grain yield, straw yield and harvest index were recorded and statistically analyzed using AGRES.

**Table 1. Treatment schedule for field experiment at Western zone of Tamil Nadu**

T <sub>1</sub>	RDF STCR approach
T <sub>2</sub>	RDF 75 % + FYM @ 12.5 t ha <sup>-1</sup>
T <sub>3</sub>	RDF 75 % + FYM @ 12.5 t ha <sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi
T <sub>4</sub>	RDF 75 % + Vermicompost @ 5 t ha <sup>-1</sup>
T <sub>5</sub>	RDF 75 % + Vermicompost @ 5 t ha <sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi
T <sub>6</sub>	FYM @ 12.5 t ha <sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi
T <sub>7</sub>	Vermicompost @ 5 t ha <sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi
T <sub>8</sub>	Absolute control

**Table 2. Soil Physicochemical and biological parameters of the experimental site at Western zone of Tamil Nadu**

Sl. No	Particulars	Values	Method / Formula	Reference
<b>I. Physical Properties</b>				
1.	Sand (%)	42.3	International Pipette method	[8]
2.	Silt (%)	21.5		
3.	Clay (%)	45.9		
4.	Textural class	Clay loam		
5.	Bulk density ( $\text{Mg m}^{-3}$ )	1.32	Clod method	[10]
6.	Particle density ( $\text{Mg m}^{-3}$ )	2.16	Pycnometer method	[11]
7.	Total porosity (%)	38.8	Cylindrical method	[12]
<b>II. Physico-chemical properties</b>				
8.	pH	8.15	Using glass electrode in the "ELICO" pH meter	[13]
9.	EC ( $\text{dSm}^{-1}$ )	0.63	Using "ELICO" conductivity bridge	[14]
10.	Organic carbon (%)	0.62	Chromic acid wet digestion method	[15]
<b>III. Chemical properties</b>				
11.	Available nitrogen ( $\text{kg ha}^{-1}$ )	268	Alkaline permanganate method	[16]
12.	Available phosphorous ( $\text{kg ha}^{-1}$ )	22.5	Olsen method using colorimeter	[17]
13.	Available potassium ( $\text{kg ha}^{-1}$ )	780	Flame photometric method	[18]
<b>IV. Biological properties</b>				
14.	Total bacteria ( $\text{cfu} \times 10^6 \text{ g}^{-1}$ of dry soil)	19	Serial dilution method using Nutrient glucose Agar medium	[19]
15.	Total fungi ( $\text{cfu} \times 10^4 \text{ g}^{-1}$ of soil)	6	Serial dilution method using Martin's Rose Bengal Agar medium	[20]
16.	Total actinomycetes ( $\text{cfu} \times 10^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ of soil)	5	Serial dilution method using Kenknight's Agar medium	[21]

**Table 3. Nutrient composition and quantity of organics used in the experimental site at western zone of Tamil Nadu**

Crop	Organics	Nutrient composition (%)			Quantity applied ( $\text{t ha}^{-1}$ )
		N	P	K	
Rice	Vermicompost	3.0	1.0	1.5	5
	FYM	0.5	0.2	0.5	12.5
	Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhizae	100g/ 10,000 spores			1

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Root Parameters (Root Length (cm) and Root Volume ( $\text{cc hill}^{-1}$ ))

The impact of Vermicompost, Farm yard manure, and Arbuscular mycorrhiza application on low land rice ecosystems was explored in this study. Rice root architecture has been considerably altered by mycorrhizal inoculation. Mycorrhizal plants have greater root volume, length, and spread than non-mycorrhizal plants. At diverse phenophases of rice, root length, which shows the temporal trend of growth, was

measured. As a result of vermicompost application, root volume and length were also increased. Canellas et al. [25] reported that the humic substances extracted from earthworm compost were capable of inducing lateral root growth in maize plants by stimulation of the plasma membrane  $\text{H}^+$ -ATPase activity, thus producing similar effects such as the exogenous application of IAA.

Besides, the positive influences of humic acids on plant growth and productivity, which give the impression to be concentration specific, could be mainly due to hormone like activities of humic

acids through their involvement in cell respiration, photosynthesis, oxidative phosphorylation, protein synthesis and various enzymatic reactions [26].

In the present study, the treatment T<sub>5</sub> had registered higher root volume (28.5 cc hill<sup>-1</sup>), which was statistically on par with T<sub>3</sub> (26.3 cc hill<sup>-1</sup>) and the lowest value was recorded under T<sub>8</sub> (20.1 cc hill<sup>-1</sup>) on Active tillering stage. A similar trend of results was also observed in panicle initiation and flowering stage. (Fig 1). Parmesh et al. [27] reported that application of chemical fertilizer with vermicompost could lead to a massive root system, with roots encroaching onto large soil surfaces and absorbing more moisture and nutrients supplied from both organic and inorganic sources. Yadav et al. [28] reported that in *Oryza sativa* L, the application of vermicompost recorded a favourable effect on soil structure, texture and tilth and thus facilitates quick and greater availability of plant nutrients and offers a more favourable environment for root evolution, resulting in a larger site of absorption for nutrient uptake.

### 3.2 Microbial Population of Bacteria (CFU 10<sup>6</sup>/g of dry soil), Fungi (CFU 10<sup>4</sup>/g of Dry Soil) and Actinomycetes (CFU 10<sup>3</sup>/g of dry soil)

Soil biological activity is a key element in agricultural and ecological production, and the amount of organic matter present has a greater impact on soil biological activity than any other factor. As indicated by this study, microbial activity contributes to the recycling of energy and

nutrients, which are influenced by the application of organic manures and inorganic fertilizers. The microbial community (bacteria, fungus, and actinomycetes) was profoundly changed by the manure-fertilizer treatments throughout the experimentation period.

The microbial population viz., bacteria, fungi and actinomycetes significantly were affected with application of different organic and inorganic sources as compared to control. The application of application of RDF 75 % + Vermicompost @ 5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi T<sub>5</sub> resulted in maximum microbial population of bacteria (28.3, 41.5 and 39.6 cfu10<sup>6</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> soil), fungi (15.7, 21.0 and 15 cfu10<sup>4</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> soil) and actinomycetes (14.7, 16.3 and 15.6 cfu10<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> soil) at active tillering, flowering and harvest stage respectively (Table 4) and it was closely followed by the application of RDF 75 % + FYM @ 12.5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi T<sub>3</sub> resulted in microbial population of bacteria (28.3, 41.5 and 39.6 cfu10<sup>6</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> soil), fungi (15.7, 21.0 and 15 cfu10<sup>4</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> soil) and actinomycetes (14.7, 16.3 and 15.6 cfu10<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> soil). The lowest microbial population was recorded under control (T<sub>8</sub>). The addition of organic inputs enhanced the microbial counts in soil, which might be due to carbon addition and changes in physico-chemical properties of soil. Microbial populations were more numerous in the application of either through vermicompost (T<sub>5</sub>) or FYM (T<sub>3</sub>) probably due to the bioavailability of growth-promoting substances. (Tables.4, 5 & 6)

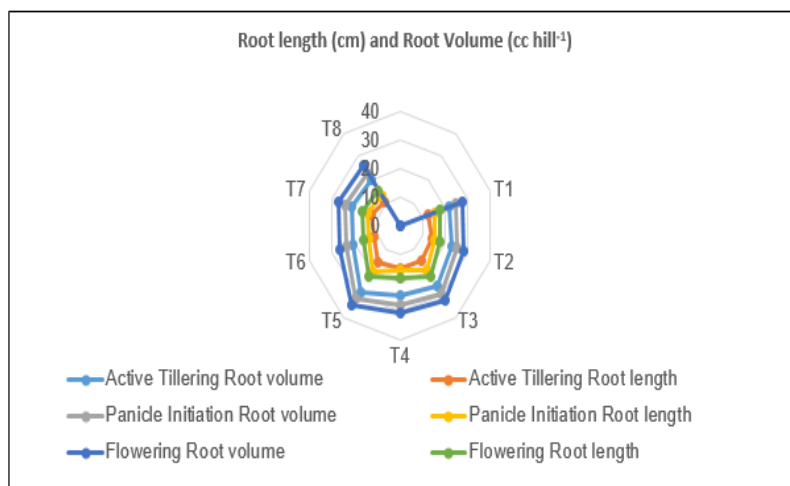


Fig. 1. Effect of organic and inorganic nutrients on root length (cm) and root volume (cc hill<sup>-1</sup>) of rice in western zone of Tamil Nadu

**Table 4. Effect of organic and inorganic sources of nutrients on total bacterial population of the soil**

Treatments	Total bacterial population (10 <sup>6</sup> CFU/g of dry soil)												Grand mean
	Active tillering				Flowering				Harvest				
	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	
T <sub>1</sub>	23.4	23.7	24.6	23.9 <sup>c</sup>	31.2	31.5	32.8	31.8 <sup>d</sup>	29.4	29.7	30.9	30.0 <sup>d</sup>	28.6
T <sub>2</sub>	25.8	26.0	27.1	26.3 <sup>b</sup>	36.4	36.7	38.2	37.1 <sup>c</sup>	33.9	34.3	35.6	34.6 <sup>c</sup>	32.7
T <sub>3</sub>	25.8	28.3	29.1	27.7 <sup>a</sup>	36.6	40.2	41.4	39.4 <sup>b</sup>	34.8	38.1	39.3	37.4 <sup>b</sup>	34.8
T <sub>4</sub>	25.3	26.9	27.7	26.6 <sup>b</sup>	36.1	38.4	39.5	38.0 <sup>bc</sup>	33.4	35.6	36.6	35.2 <sup>c</sup>	33.3
T <sub>5</sub>	27.7	28.6	28.6	28.3 <sup>a</sup>	40.7	41.9	41.9	41.5 <sup>a</sup>	38.8	40.0	40.0	39.6 <sup>a</sup>	36.5
T <sub>6</sub>	22.3	23.5	23.2	23.0 <sup>cd</sup>	28.4	29.9	29.6	29.3 <sup>ef</sup>	25.8	27.1	26.9	26.6 <sup>ef</sup>	26.3
T <sub>7</sub>	22.2	23.2	24.8	23.4 <sup>cd</sup>	29.0	30.2	32.3	30.5 <sup>de</sup>	25.9	27.0	28.9	27.3 <sup>e</sup>	27.1
T <sub>8</sub>	21.6	23.2	22.7	22.5 <sup>d</sup>	27.6	29.6	29.0	28.7 <sup>f</sup>	24.5	26.3	25.8	25.5 <sup>f</sup>	25.6
Mean				25.2				34.6				32.0	-
LSD(P=0.05)				0.99				1.40				1.29	-

**Table 5. Effect of organic and inorganic sources of nutrients on total fungal population of the soil**

Treatments	Total fungal population (10 <sup>4</sup> CFU/g of dry soil)												Grand mean
	Active tillering				Flowering				Harvest				
	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	
T <sub>1</sub>	12.1	12.2	12.7	12.3 <sup>d</sup>	15.0	15.1	15.8	15.3 <sup>d</sup>	11.4	11.5	11.9	11.6 <sup>c</sup>	13.1
T <sub>2</sub>	12.7	12.9	13.4	13.0 <sup>c</sup>	15.4	15.5	16.2	15.7 <sup>d</sup>	11.7	11.8	12.3	11.9 <sup>c</sup>	13.5
T <sub>3</sub>	13.0	14.3	14.7	14.0 <sup>b</sup>	17.7	19.4	20.0	19.0 <sup>b</sup>	13.7	15.0	15.4	14.7 <sup>a</sup>	15.9
T <sub>4</sub>	13.2	14.0	14.5	13.9 <sup>b</sup>	16.2	17.2	17.7	17.0 <sup>c</sup>	12.7	13.5	13.9	13.4 <sup>b</sup>	14.8
T <sub>5</sub>	15.4	15.9	15.9	15.7 <sup>a</sup>	20.6	21.2	21.2	21.0 <sup>a</sup>	14.7	15.2	15.2	15.0 <sup>a</sup>	17.2
T <sub>6</sub>	10.4	10.9	10.8	10.7 <sup>e</sup>	13.3	14.0	13.8	13.7 <sup>e</sup>	9.7	10.2	10.1	10.0 <sup>d</sup>	11.5
T <sub>7</sub>	10.6	11.1	11.9	11.2 <sup>e</sup>	13.3	13.9	14.8	14.0 <sup>e</sup>	9.9	10.3	11.0	10.4 <sup>d</sup>	11.9
T <sub>8</sub>	8.4	9.0	8.8	8.7 <sup>f</sup>	12.0	12.9	12.6	12.5 <sup>f</sup>	8.4	9.1	8.9	8.8 <sup>e</sup>	10.0
Mean				12.4				16.0				12.0	-
LSD(P=0.05)				0.51				0.67				0.53	-

**Table. 6. Effect of organic and inorganic sources of nutrients on total actinomycetes population of the soil**

Treatments	Total Actinomycetes population (10 <sup>3</sup> CFU/g of dry soil)												
	Active tillering				Flowering				Harvest				Grand mean
	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>3</sub>	Mean	
T <sub>1</sub>	10.9	11.0	11.4	11.1 <sup>d</sup>	11.9	12.0	12.5	12.1 <sup>d</sup>	10.6	10.7	11.1	10.8 <sup>d</sup>	11.3
T <sub>2</sub>	11.3	11.4	11.8	11.5 <sup>d</sup>	13.7	13.9	14.4	14.0 <sup>c</sup>	12.3	12.4	12.9	12.5 <sup>c</sup>	12.7
T <sub>3</sub>	13.0	14.3	14.7	14.0 <sup>b</sup>	14.0	15.4	15.9	15.1 <sup>b</sup>	12.5	13.7	14.1	13.4 <sup>b</sup>	14.1
T <sub>4</sub>	11.7	12.4	12.8	12.3 <sup>c</sup>	13.5	14.3	14.8	14.2 <sup>c</sup>	12.4	13.1	13.5	13.0 <sup>b</sup>	13.1
T <sub>5</sub>	14.4	14.8	14.8	14.7 <sup>a</sup>	16.0	16.5	16.5	16.3 <sup>a</sup>	15.3	15.8	15.8	15.6 <sup>a</sup>	15.5
T <sub>6</sub>	7.7	8.1	8.0	7.9 <sup>f</sup>	9.5	10.0	9.9	9.8 <sup>e</sup>	8.9	9.4	9.3	9.2 <sup>e</sup>	9.0
T <sub>7</sub>	9.1	9.5	10.2	9.6 <sup>e</sup>	9.5	9.9	10.6	10.0 <sup>e</sup>	8.8	9.2	9.9	9.3 <sup>e</sup>	9.6
T <sub>8</sub>	4.6	4.9	4.8	4.8 <sup>g</sup>	7.1	7.6	7.5	7.4 <sup>f</sup>	6.3	6.8	6.7	6.6 <sup>f</sup>	6.2
Mean				10.7				12.4				11.3	-
LSD(P=0.05)				0.50				0.54				0.45	-

The increase in microbial population following the application of organic manure might be attributed to the stimulation of soil microorganism growth and activity [29]. The crop plant's roots released a variety of organic acids, which are a readily available source of food for soil microorganisms [30]. The composition and density of microbial populations in soil organic matter is an essential indicator of the soil's capacity to retain and recycle nutrients and energy.

### 3.3 Crop Yield (kg ha<sup>-1</sup>)

The yield of grain and straw were influenced significantly due to application of Vermicompost, FYM, Arbuscular mycorrhizae and along with NPK fertilizers (Fig. 2).

Among the various organic and inorganic nutrients tested, application of RDF 75 % + Vermicompost @ 5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi T<sub>5</sub> (6740 and 7840 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) significantly recorded the higher grain and straw yield along with harvest index (46.2 %). The increase in grain and straw yield over control were 12 and 13.5 %, respectively and it was closely followed by the application of RDF 75 % + FYM @ 12.5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> + Seed treatment with Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria + Soil application of AM fungi T<sub>3</sub> (6625 and 7725 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) respectively. A combination of inorganic fertilizers and vermicompost application was

found to be increased in grain production, possibly by regulating the release of nutrients in the soil through mineralization [17]. Similar results were also reported by Thakur et al. [28,31].

However, the FYM treatment recording higher root growth and yield parameters was mainly due to balanced and continuous supply of macro and micro-nutrients from FYM throughout the growing period [3]. Singh et al. [31] reported that application of 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizers being on par with 50% RDF as inorganic fertilizers + 50% RDN as farm yard manure but produced significantly higher straw yield (2.23 t ha<sup>-1</sup>) over rest of the fertility treatments. Farmyard manure might have supplied the essential minerals and worked as a catalyst for efficient use of applied nutrients in increasing the yield attributes. The research findings were supported by Kumar et al. [32].

### 3.4 Relationship of Soil Properties with Crop Yield

Grain and straw yield was positively and significantly correlated with all the chemical and microbiological soil properties (Table 8). The values of coefficient of correlation of grain and straw yield with organic carbon were 0.98 and 0.99, respectively. highest correlation followed by microbial biomass carbon (0.76 and 0.92, respectively).

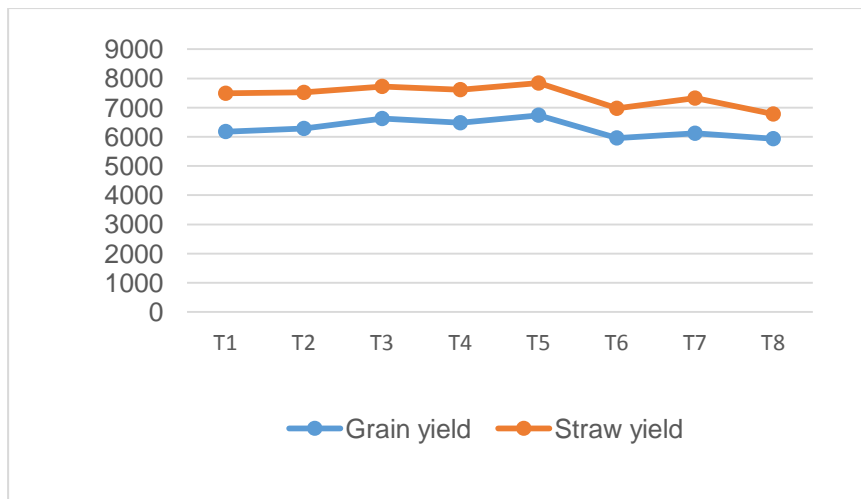


Fig. 2. Effect of organic and inorganic sources of nutrients on grain and straw yield of rice in western zone of Tamil Nadu



**Table 7. Effect of organic and inorganic sources of nutrients on soil pH, EC, Organic carbon and Microbial biomass carbon at harvest stage of rice**

Treatments	Harvest stage			
	pH	EC (dS m <sup>-1</sup> )	Organic carbon (g/kg)	Microbial biomass carbon (mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )
T <sub>1</sub>	8.10	0.64	6.4	222.9
T <sub>2</sub>	8.13	0.65	6.6	226.9
T <sub>3</sub>	8.20	0.67	7.3	230.6
T <sub>4</sub>	8.18	0.66	6.9	229.9
T <sub>5</sub>	8.23	0.68	7.9	236.8
T <sub>6</sub>	8.07	0.62	5.9	200.0
T <sub>7</sub>	8.08	0.63	6.2	218.9
T <sub>8</sub>	8.05	0.60	5.5	156.4
LSD (p=0.05)	NS	0.0346	0.36	11.92

**Table 8. Correlation coefficients (r) of different soil properties with grain and straw yield of rice**

Soil Properties	Grain yield	Straw yield
Organic carbon (g/kg)	0.98*	0.93*
Microbial biomass carbon (mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )	0.76*	0.92*

\*Significant at 1% level significance

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Integrated use of organic and inorganic fertilizers improved the microbial population of bacteria, fungi and actinomycetes population in soil. From this study it can be concluded that FYM and vermicompost application have on par effect with respect to soil biological properties. Decomposition of organic matter and recycling of carbon have substantial effect on the activity of soil enzymes evolved during the mineralization of crop plant nutrients, which would have improved the soil health and microbial population in soil. Higher rice grain yield and harvest index (6740 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> and 46.2 % respectively) were significantly associated with RDF 75% (STCR approach) + Vermicompost @ 5t ha<sup>-1</sup> along with Arbuscular mycorrhizae, a best sustainable nutrient management practice for lowland rice environment for getting sustainable yield and higher returns.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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