

Legume Based Cropping and Soil Biodiversity Dynamics

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Date: 2011

Abstract

The soil is home to an enormous diversity of organisms, many of which are beneficial, while a small and equally diverse proportion contains harmful organisms. Legume cropping and husbandry practices impact negatively or positively on diversity. These changes in biodiversity may be quantitative and/or qualitative. Sustainable management of diversity in soils involves an ecosystem approach which encourages the establishment of equilibria between the organisms in the soil. It is evident that the diversity of beneficial organisms in the soil can be harnessed to improve and sustain crop productivity with minimal external inputs. Legumes will continue to play a central role in the supply of plant nutrients and in the establishment of a self-regulating ecosystem which is based on a diverse range of organisms.