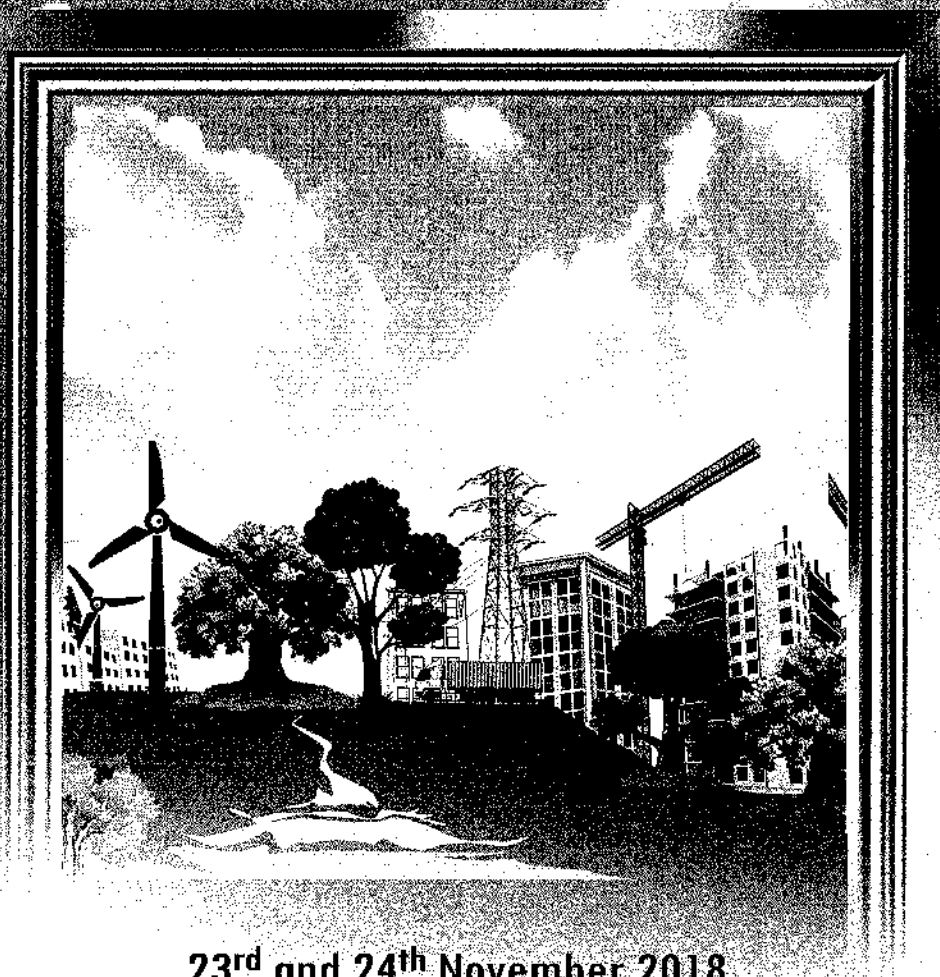


TWENTYTHIRD  
INTERNATIONAL  
FORESTRY AND  
ENVIRONMENT  
**Symposium**  
2018



23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
Citrus Waskaduwa, Sri Lanka



DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA, SRI LANKA.

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## Can Biofilm-Enriched Eppawala Rock Phosphate Replace the Use of Triple Super Phosphate in Rice Cultivation?

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### Abstract

Eppawala Rock Phosphates (ERP) has a greater potential to be used as an alternate for Triple Super Phosphate (TSP) if phosphorous (P) biosolubility is increased. A certain biofilm (BF3) has been identified as the most efficient P biosolubiliser for ERP. Thus, this study was designed to test the potential of replacing TSP from biofilm-enriched ERP in rice cultivation. Two experiments were conducted; soil leaching tube and pot experiments under controlled conditions. A modified chemical fertiliser (CF<sub>M</sub>) mixture was developed by replacing TSP from ERP, in the existing chemical fertiliser (CF<sub>E</sub>) mixture for rice recommended by the Department of Agriculture (DOA). Eleven treatments were used with all possible combinations of CF<sub>E</sub> and CF<sub>M</sub> at rates of 50% or 100% alone or together with the BF3. Soil alone was used as the control. Treatment of 50% CF<sub>M</sub>+BF3 was denoted as biofilm-enriched ERP. The experiments were conducted in a completely randomized design (CRD) with three replicates. Data were statistically analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by mean separation using Turkey's HSD test. Solubilised P was recovered by leaching in every two weeks for three months. Available soil P, total plant P and grain yields were evaluated at the end of the pot experiment. Biofilm enriched ERP showed no added advantage over the CF<sub>E</sub>, with lower cumulative solubilized P in leachates. At the end of the pot experiment; biofilm-enriched ERP showed significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) higher P retention in soil and significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) lower grain yield comparison to the CF<sub>E</sub>. However, biofilm-enriched ERP showed no any significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) difference in total plant P. The overall results conclude that the biofilm-enriched ERP performed poorly in comparison to the DOA recommended TSP dosages. Thus, further studies are required to enhance the performance of biofilm-enriched ERP to use as an alternate for TSP in rice cultivation.

**Keywords:** Biofilm, Eppawala Rock phosphate, Rice cultivation, Triple super phosphate