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Managing Heavy Metal Accumulation in Soil and Cultivation Using Treated Industrial Wastewater

Sulaiman Al-Hashmi*

Department of Environmental Chemistry, Wales University, UK

Abstract

Industrial wastewater pollution poses a significant threat to our environment. This study focuses on the potential use of treated industrial wastewater for agricultural purposes, specifically the cultivation of okra plants. By comparing the growth and heavy metal accumulation of okra plants irrigated with fresh water, industrial wastewater, and treated industrial wastewater, the study aims to assess the feasibility and impact of using treated wastewater for crop cultivation.

Introduction

Industrial processes generate wastewater that contains various chemical pollutants, including heavy metals, organic compounds, and toxic chemicals. Improper management or disposal of this wastewater can lead to its infiltration into the soil, resulting in soil contamination [1]. The presence of chemical pollutants in the soil can have detrimental effects on soil health, plant growth, and the overall ecosystem.

Cultivation and growth results: In the study, three plots of 10 × 10 feet were sown with a total of 96 okra seeds. After three months, the highest plant height of 180 cm was observed in the okra plants grown using treated industrial wastewater, while the lowest height of 17 cm was recorded in the plants irrigated with industrial wastewater. These findings suggest that treated industrial wastewater has a positive and substantial effect on plant growth compared to fresh water and untreated wastewater [2].

Impacts on soil quality**:** Industrial chemical pollutants can have severe consequences for soil quality. Heavy metals present in wastewater can accumulate in the soil over time, leading to soil degradation and reduced fertility. These metals can also leach into groundwater, further compromising water quality. Toxic chemicals and organic compounds in industrial wastewater can disrupt the soil's natural composition, affecting microbial activity, nutrient availability, and overall soil health.

Heavy Metal Analysis**:** The study also analyzed the presence of heavy metals, including zinc, iron, chromium, and copper, in both the okra plants and the surrounding soil. The levels of these metals in the okra samples were within acceptable limits, except for chromium, which exceeded the threshold in okra vegetables from one of the plots. The concentrations of zinc, iron, chromium, and copper were also detected in the soil, stem, and leaves of the okra plants [3]. These results indicate that heavy metal accumulation can occur in plants cultivated in polluted soils and highlight the need for further research on the nutritional and toxicological aspects of edible vegetables.

The importance of treated industrial wastewater**:** Considering the global decline in freshwater resources, with an estimated per capita reduction of annual freshwater to 600-800 m3 by 2025, the utilization of treated industrial wastewater emerges as a promising solution to meet food production requirements. Vegetables, such as okra, play a crucial role in fulfilling the human body's nutritional needs. Moreover, many countries, including Saudi Arabia and Jordan in the Gulf region, have successfully implemented the use of treated wastewater for agriculture, resulting in increased food production and reduced pressure on freshwater sources.

Physicochemical analysis and global trends: Various physicochemical parameters, including pH, dissolved oxygen, total dissolved solids, electrical conductivity, and heavy metal concentrations, were analyzed in soil, plants, freshwater, industrial wastewater, and treated industrial wastewater [4]. Developed countries like the United States and Australia have already embraced treated wastewater for agricultural purposes, effectively increasing food production. However, it is essential to address public health concerns related to heavy metal contamination in treated wastewater before widespread implementation.

Challenges and recommendations: Heavy metal accumulation in soil and its potential effects on human health and ecosystems pose challenges to the utilization of treated industrial wastewater for irrigation. To mitigate these risks, comprehensive monitoring programs should be established, including regular analysis of soil samples, wastewater quality, and plant uptake of heavy metals. Implementing proper irrigation management techniques and exploring alternative water sources can further minimize heavy metal accumulation. Ongoing research, collaboration among industries, regulatory bodies, and scientific communities are vital for improving wastewater treatment technologies and developing best practices to ensure sustainable and safe wastewater utilization.

Regulatory measures and industry responsibility: To prevent and mitigate industrial chemical wastewater soil contamination, strict regulatory measures should be in place. Industries must adhere to environmental guidelines, monitor and control their wastewater discharge, and implement responsible waste management practices. Collaborative efforts between industries, regulatory bodies, and environmental organizations are essential to ensure sustainable industrial practices and protect soil quality [5].

***Corresponding author:** Sulaiman Al-Hashmi, Department of Environmental Chemistry, Wales University, UK, E-mail: Sinha.UK@gmail.com

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Conclusion

Industrial chemical wastewater contaminating soil poses significant threats to human and environmental health. Industries must prioritize environmentally responsible wastewater management and implement efficient treatment technologies. In addition, enforcing regulatory measures and implementing soil remediation strategies can assist in reducing the negative effects of industrial chemical wastewater on soil quality and fostering a healthier and more sustainable environment. The agricultural application of treated industrial wastewater presents both opportunities and difficulties. This study emphasizes the significance of managing heavy metal accumulation in soil while demonstrating the beneficial effect of treated wastewater on plant growth. It is possible to maximize the benefits of using wastewater for crop cultivation while protecting the environment and human health by adhering to regulatory guidelines, implementing monitoring programs, and encouraging collaboration.

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