Competitive adsorption of glyphosate and organic compounds at aluminum oxide

MINGSHUAI WANG, PHILIPP RAFAEL MARTIN, DANIEL BUCHNER AND STEFAN BERNHARD HADERLEIN
University of Tuebingen
Presenting Author: mingshuai.wang@student.uni-tuebingen.de

Glyphosate is a commonly used herbicide that has received widespread attention due to its potential impact on the environment. After agricultural application, its fate is significantly determined by sorption to soil components, especially aluminum and iron (hydr-)oxides. However, various organic compounds present in natural systems can also affect sorption of glyphosate at minerals and thus its mobility in soils.

Glyphosate is a small organic compound carrying several functional groups, namely carboxyl (−COOH), amino (−NH₂) and phosphonate (−PO₃H₂) that give rise to charge but also can serve as ligands for complex formation. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that glyphosate primarily adsorbs to soil by a similar mechanism as phosphate, i.e., through ligand exchange of its phosphonic acid moiety. As a result, glyphosate and phosphate potentially compete for same adsorption sites at minerals. Notably, it remains unknown whether the −COOH of glyphosate also interacts with the mineral surface and how the adsorption of glyphosate would change in the presence of organic compounds.

In this study, we investigated the competitive effect of various organic compounds on glyphosate adsorption at aluminum oxide (Al₂O₃). To elucidate the effects of different structural features on adsorption and surface complexation, (aminomethyl)phosphonic acid (AMPA), aminotris(methylene phosphonic acid) (ATMP), phthalic acid (PA), glucose-6-phosphate (GP) and glycerophosphate disodium (GD) were selected as target competing compounds. We applied a combination of batch ad- and desorption experiments, liquid-phase analyses, speciation modeling and infrared spectroscopy to systematically evaluate the extent and mechanisms of competitive adsorption.

In general, we propose that both −COOH and −PO₃H₂ interact with Al₂O₃. Organic compounds with −COOH as only functional group did not affect glyphosate adsorption. Consequently, the saturation of surface functional groups that interact with −PO₃H₂ did not prevent further adsorption via surface sites interacting with −COOH moieties. The strength of competitive adsorption of organic phosphonates was related to their number of −PO₃H₂ functional groups. For a given number of P-containing functional groups, the adsorption of organophosphates, however, was stronger than that of organic phosphonates. Furthermore, desorption experiments revealed some hysteresis effects in that desorption from occupied surface sites was retarded or inhibited.