Retention of antibiotics in soils: influence of biosolid aging

GHINWA MORTADA 1 , PROF. EMMANUEL GUILLON 1 AND STÉPHANIE SAYEN 2

Presenting Author: ghinwa.mortada@univ-reims.fr

The world population growing leads to the increasing production of biosolids worldwide which

require their disposal. As they are rich in nutrients and organic matter, biosolids are commonly used

as soil amendment to improve soil properties and reduce the need for fertilizer application. However,

they may also pose environmental risks by introducing, into amended soils, various organic pollutants

including pharmaceuticals and metallic trace elements. Once in soils, depending on their mobility,

these contaminants can be transferred to the water bodies and taken up by crop plants. Among these

contaminants, fluoroquinolone antibiotics are frequently detected worldwide and recognized at high

contamination risk in amended-soils1,2

. Therefore, a better knowledge of these contaminants

behaviour in amended-soils is needed for a better assessment of their mobility and release.

In this context, this study aims at investigating the adsorption on soils of ciprofloxacin and

enrofloxacin, two fluoroquinolone antibiotics, widely used in human and veterinary medicine,

respectively. We investigated the influence of (i) soil physicochemical properties/composition, (ii)

biosolid application, and (iii) biosolid aging, on the adsorbed amounts and thus on their mobility in

soils. As these pharmaceuticals are known to form complexes with metals3 present both in soils and

biosolids, likely to modify their mobility, we compared the antibiotic adsorbed amounts in absence

and in presence of three selected metallic trace elements, Ni(II), Cu(II) and Zn(II).

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¹Reims Champagne-Ardenne University

²Reims Champagne-Ardenne University ICMR UMR CNRS 7312