Soil community changes during secondary succession to naturalized grasslands

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Abstract	Succession to a naturalized grassland from former agricultural land and pastures is accompanied by changes in plant biodiversity and in the soil community. These changes are the result of a reduction or elimination of management, fertilizer applications and of grazing by large herbivores. We review soil biology studies on agricultural land that are in various successional stages towards naturalized grasslands, where interactions between plant species composition changes and the soil ecology affect each other. In many chronosequence studies, the soil microbial community tends to shift towards a less bacterial, and more fungal dominated food web energy channel following a reduction in fertilizer inputs and grazing intensity. Whereas changes in microarthropod communities are obscured, nematode trophic functional group (ecological guild) changes respond to both plant and soil community changes. There are opportunities to further study the feedback interactions between roots and soil organisms in grasslands. A better understanding of the molecular feedback mechanisms would be beneficial in long-term grassland management. (C) 2008 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.
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