

Agro-Rhizoremediation: Rhizoremediation With Agro-Transformed *Oryza sativa* to Facilitate Arsenic Degradation in situ (Year III)

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Arsenic accumulation in rice is becoming increasingly problematic, threatening the health of over 150 million people globally. This project aims to use rhizoremediation with rice plants transformed with arsenic-resistant genes to facilitate the self-detoxification of arsenic. Raw sequences of 16s rRNA from 82 soil samples obtained from the National Center for Biotechnology Information were processed through Qiime2 to examine bacterial taxonomy in arsenic-contaminated and uncontaminated soil rhizospheres. *Pseudomonas* and *Burkholderia* genera constituted over 63% of the microbial community in contaminated rhizospheres. Rice cotyledons infected with transformed (*acr3* and *arsC* arsenic-resistance genes) *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* were cultivated in plant tissue culture media to develop transgenic rice plants. The transformed rice plants were then grown in soil inoculated with *P. putida* contaminated with 25 ppm arsenic. Arsenic content in the soil, stems, and leaves were measured at various stages of plant growth. After four weeks, there was a 60% decline in soil arsenic from baseline. Arsenic content in transgenic stems was less than one ppm, compared to six ppm in non-transgenic plants, and was undetectable in the leaves in transgenic plants. Statistical significance was confirmed using three T-Tests. Spectrophotometric chlorophyll content analysis demonstrated that genetic transformation and arsenic decontamination did not negatively affect plant health. Results supported that genetically-modified rice plants were effective in arsenic self-detoxification. Therefore, Rhizoremediation using agro-transformed rice plants is a promising method for decontaminating polluted soil and lowering arsenic accumulation in rice grains.

Awards Won:

U.S. Agency for International Development: USAID Science for Development First Award - Agriculture and Food Security
Second Award of \$2,000