



REVIEW ARTICLE

# Resilient soils for a changing climate: Navigating the future of sustainable agriculture

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## Abstract

Climate change poses a critical threat to global food security and ecosystem sustainability, with soils serving as the backbone of the Earth's ecosystems. This comprehensive review synthesizes the current understanding of how climate change impacts soil health, emphasizing the intricate interactions between soil's physical, chemical, and biological properties. Rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events severely degrade soil structure, reduce fertility, and disrupt biodiversity. These changes accelerate soil erosion, nutrient depletion, and significantly diminish agricultural productivity. This review explores innovative strategies to enhance soil resilience, with a focus on conservation agriculture, cover cropping, and integrated nutrient management. Conservation agriculture practices improve soil structure and enhance water retention, while cover cropping increases soil organic matter and supports critical nutrient cycling processes. Integrated nutrient management ensures a balanced supply of essential nutrients and promotes beneficial microbial activity, further bolstering soil health and resilience. The importance of adopting a holistic, resilience-based approach to soil management to soil management is vital to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, preserve vital ecosystem services, and secure sustainable agricultural productivity for future generations. This review provides critical insights for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, offering practical solutions to safeguard soil health and ensure food security in the face of the challenges posed by a rapidly changing climate.

## Keywords

climate change; deforestation; resilience; soil conservation; soil health

## Introduction

Climate change significantly impacts soil health, influencing soil formation, structure, and composition. These effects manifest as changes in soil texture, porosity, and its physicochemical and biological components (1). Rising atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations, global temperatures, and shifting precipitation patterns adversely affect soil's physical and biological properties, thereby disrupting its functioning and biogeochemical cycling processes (2). Furthermore, climate change alters critical soil characteristics such as acidity, sodicity, and salinity, which negatively affects crop production and overall soil health. These changes in

soil properties also play a crucial role in the spread and management of neglected tropical diseases and vectors. Additionally, microbial interventions have shown potential for enhancing soil resilience and fertility under changing climate scenarios (3).

Climate change impacts soil health by influencing soil water retention, organic carbon content, erodibility, and long-term processes such as pedogenesis. Soil degradation due to these factors results in reduced crop yields, loss of biodiversity, and increased vulnerability to extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts. These effects pose significant challenges to the sustainable utilization of agricultural land. For instance, rising sea levels, higher temperatures, decreased precipitation, and poor irrigation practices contribute to increased soil salinity, which exacerbates soil degradation caused by climate change (4). Reduced soil organic matter, alterations in soil structure, and increased susceptibility to erosion further amplify these challenges, compromising nutrient cycles, plant growth, and crop quality (Fig. 1) (5).

The drivers of climate change are multifaceted, with the primary factor being the rise in greenhouse gas emissions, leading to global warming. Other contributors include variations in solar activity, such as fluctuations in sunlight intensity (6). Changes in Earth’s orbit and volcanic eruptions also influence global climate patterns. Human activities, particularly the release of aerosols, significantly affect the climate system through radiative forcing and interactions with cloud formation. These factors can either amplify or mitigate the Earth’s response to climatic influences, with feedback mechanisms playing a crucial role in shaping the overall impact (7). Thus, climate change is a multifaceted phenomenon arising from a combination of natural and human-induced factors.

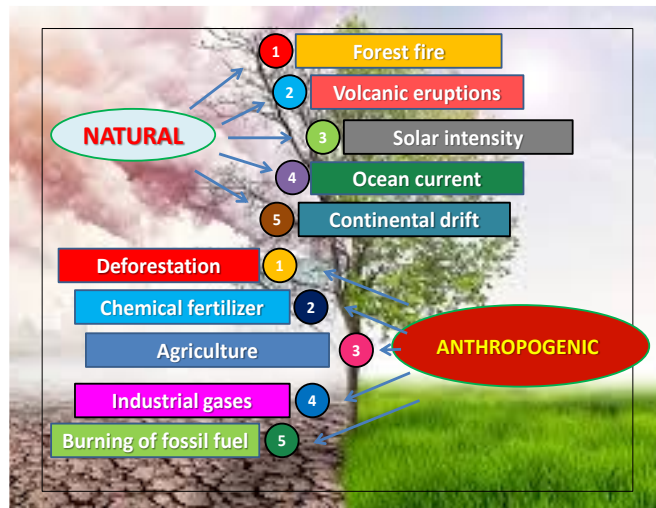
**Impact of climate change on plant health**

Rising global temperatures and increased concentrations of greenhouse gases significantly influence crop growth and the spread of phytopathogenic agents. Changes in temperature and precipitation regimes can alter the growth rate and pathogenicity of infectious agents, as well as the resistance of host plants (8) (Fig 2). Furthermore, climate change impacts disease management practices, including the timing, preference, and efficacy of control measures (9).

Temperature and precipitation variations can affect the performance of chemical control methods by changing the dynamics of fungicide, such as residue levels and product degradation rates (10). Additionally, the efficacy of climate chemical pesticides and the persistence of plant protection agents in the phyllosphere are susceptible to climatic changes (11).

To address these changes, it is important to develop new tools and strategies for disease control, including cultural methods, biological control methods, and plant breeding techniques. Encouraging the use of indigenous microbial communities can also play a role in maintaining plant health under changing climatic conditions.

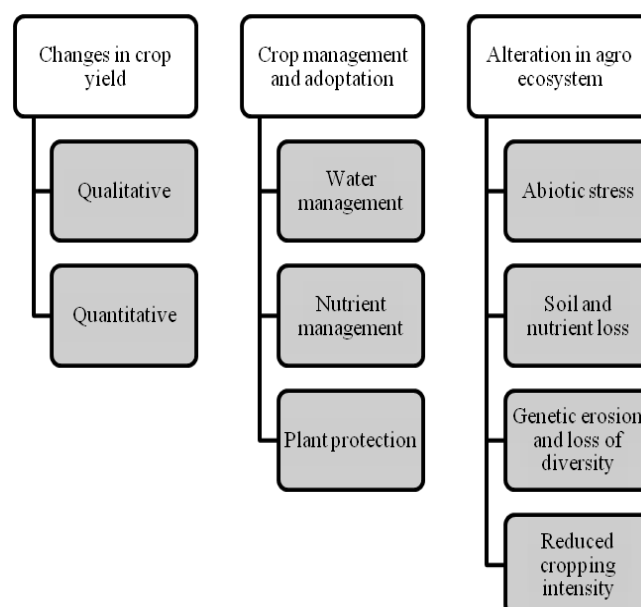
**Crop growth, yield and quality**



**Fig.1.** A schematic representation of the both natural and anthropogenic source affecting soil health (This picture is created)

Rising temperatures, reduced water availability, flooding, and salinity are significant factors that restrict the yields of vegetable crops. Climate change also affects the distribution and ecology of insects, their ability to overwinter, and the emergence of pests and diseases, all of which pose significant challenges to the production of vegetables. Ozone pollution and climate change particularly threaten future crop yield, especially in important agricultural regions, which could result in a substantial loss of wheat yield (12).

Abnormal climatic conditions during harvest and post-harvest stages have the potential to diminish the morphological, physiological, and biochemical quality of seeds, ultimately impacting their field performance and planting value. Extreme weather events such as heat waves, droughts, floods, and irregular precipitation patterns have a profound impact on existing agricultural cropping systems, productivity, and global food security. To mitigate these effects, adaptation measures such as breeding climate-resilient crops and implementing agronomic practices are necessary.



**Fig.2.** A schematic representation that describes how plant health is affected by climate change

Climate change also exerts a substantial influence on quality of plants, thereby impacting a wide range of crops and their cultivation. For horticultural crops, factors such as rising temperatures, atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels, ozone depletion, UV radiation, heavy metal toxicities, extreme weather events, and changes in precipitation patterns have led to significant physiological and biochemical changes (13). Similarly, in vegetable crops, climatic elements such as light, temperature, drought, salinity, and flooding play pivotal roles in determining the quality and nutritional value of crops. Heat stress, for example, poses a severe threat to cole crops namely cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts, as it hinders curd setting and compromises product quality.

The implications of climate change extend to seed quality, where factors like temperature and water availability directly influence seed development and germination. This can result in a decline in both the quantity and quality of seeds produced (13).

Wheat production is particularly vulnerable to climate change, with higher temperatures projected to reduce wheat yields by 6% to 23% by 2050. Altered rainfall patterns further exacerbate water availability issues for wheat cultivation. Similarly, rice farming faces significant challenges as increased temperatures and variability in precipitation negatively affect yields, potentially reducing global rice production by 10% to 15% by 2050 (14).

Corn, another globally important crop, is highly susceptible to rising temperatures and extreme weather events like droughts and heat waves, which could lead to a 22% to 49% decrease in corn yields by 2050. This highlights the urgent need for adaptive measures in agriculture. Soybean production is also at risk, with higher temperatures and altered precipitation patterns expected to result in an estimated 3.1% decrease in global soybean yields by 2050 (15). Understanding these effects is crucial for finding ways to reduce the impact of climate change on soybean farming.

### **Effect of climate change on physiological functions in plants**

Climate change substantially influences the physiological functions of plants, encompassing plant growth rate, productivity, and defense mechanisms (16). These effects are evident across various types of crops, including vegetables. Broadly, the impacts of climate change on plants manifest as alterations in metabolic processes, reductions in nitrogen-based defences, imbalances in organic acid levels, weakening of plant defence systems against pests, and disruptions in critical physiological processes.

Furthermore, climate change has the potential to modify plant-microbe interactions, which are vital for essential functions such as nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration, and plant immunity. Such changes can impair the overall health and resilience of plants, affecting their ability to adapt to environmental stressors.

Overall, climate change poses substantial challenges to the physiological functions of plants, influencing their

growth, productivity, and interactions with the environment. These challenges necessitate further research and innovative solutions to mitigate the adverse effects of a changing climate on plant systems

(17).

### **Nutrient uptake and utilization**

Elevated levels of greenhouse gases, such as CO<sub>2</sub>, nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), have the potential to alter precipitation patterns and disrupt nutrient cycling, thereby affecting nutrient uptake by plants. The combined effects of increased CO<sub>2</sub> concentration and warming of the plant canopy influence the concentrations and movement of nutrients within plants. Excessive CO<sub>2</sub> levels can reduce the availability of essential nutrients, such as iron (Fe), zinc (Zn), and protein, in vegetable crops, thereby impacting their nutritional quality (18). Additionally, elevated temperatures can alter plant-herbivore interactions, potentially affecting plant chemistry and promoting the growth and nutrition of specific herbivorous species (19).

Climate change significantly affects nutrient dynamics in plants, leading to changes in nutrient concentrations and translocation. Elevated CO<sub>2</sub> levels reduce potassium (K) concentrations in plant shoots and roots, while canopy warming increases nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K) levels in shoots but decreases these nutrients in roots. Furthermore, higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels are associated with lower Fe, Zn, and protein levels in vegetable crops, raising concerns about food security (20).

Hydrological and temperature changes induced by climate change also impact nutrient dynamics on global scale. Extreme precipitation events increase nutrient leaching and transport through overland flow, which can adversely affect soil fertility and water quality. Overall, climate change alters nutrient availability, plant nutrient uptake, and nutrient cycling processes, thereby influencing plant growth, crop yields, and ecosystem sustainability.

### **Impact of climate change on soil health**

Climate change significantly affects soil health by altering its physical, chemical, and biological properties, which, in turn, influence essential soil processes and functions. Changes in temperature, precipitation, and atmospheric composition, including increased greenhouse gas concentrations and nitrogen deposition, have direct and indirect impacts on soil health. Soil organic matter (SOM) serves as a critical indicator of soil health, with its maintenance being vital for mitigating rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels (16). Furthermore, climate change influences soil development, structure, texture, water retention capacity, and its ability to sustain crop productivity (Fig. 3). Understanding the interplay between climate change and soil health is crucial for predicting and managing the spread of soil-associated diseases and vectors. Given the fundamental role of soil health in ensuring food security, crop production, and human well-being, the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices that enhance soil health and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change is imperative.

| 1. PHYSICAL   | 2. CHEMICAL   | 3. BIOLOGICAL   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulk density</li> <li>• Soil porosity</li> <li>• Infiltration</li> <li>• Hydraulic conductivity</li> <li>• texture and structure</li> <li>• Plant available water</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PH</li> <li>• EC</li> <li>• CEC</li> <li>• Organic carbon</li> <li>• Organic nitrogen</li> <li>• Macro nutrient</li> <li>• Micro nutrient</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microbial interaction</li> <li>• Microbial respiration</li> <li>• Enzymatic activity</li> <li>• Microbial community composition</li> </ul> |

**Fig.3.** A schematic representation of indicators/properties to assess soil health

### Physical properties

Climate change alters precipitation patterns, including changes in rainfall intensity, frequency, and distribution. These shifts affect the temporal and spatial availability of soil water, impacting soil moisture levels and, consequently, the dynamics of soil processes (21). For instance, studies (22) highlight that intensified heavy rainfall events in certain regions increase risks of soil erosion and nutrient leaching. Changes in precipitation patterns directly affect soil water content and infiltration rates. Extreme precipitation events often lead to rapid surface runoff, reducing water infiltration and increasing the risk of soil erosion. These findings underscore the importance of understanding how precipitation changes influence soil water dynamics and the urgent need for sustainable land management practices to mitigate soil erosion risks.

Precipitation variability also impacts soil structure and stability. Drought conditions caused by reduced precipitation can result in soil compaction, decreased porosity, and increased susceptibility to erosion. Research (23) emphasizes the need of adaptive soil management practices to maintain soil structure and prevent degradation under changing precipitation regimes.

Precipitation changes have cascading effects on plant-soil water relations. These alterations influence plant water uptake, affecting plant growth, nutrient availability, and overall ecosystem productivity (Table 1). A study (24) demonstrated how precipitation changes impact eco-hydrological processes, highlighting the interconnected nature of vegetation dynamics and soil water availability. Climate change also affects plant phenology, growth

patterns, and distribution, subsequently altering the composition of root exudates and plant litter. These changes impact soil microbial communities and nutrient cycling processes. Disruptions in plant-soil interactions can lead to cascading effects on soil biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. A study explored the intricate links between plant-soil interactions, climate change, and soil biodiversity (25).

Unsustainable land management practices and soil degradation exacerbated by climate change can further modify structure of soil, deplete organic carbon, and diminish soil's capacity to retain water and nutrients (Table 2).

### Chemical properties

Climate change significantly influences the chemical properties of soil, altering parameters such as pH, electrical conductivity (EC), and cation exchange capacity (CEC). Rising temperatures, elevated atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and changes in rainfall patterns can modify soil pH, disrupt nutrient uptake, and indicate salinity issues through changes in EC, all of which can adversely impact crop productivity. The CEC, which governs the soil's ability to hold and release essential nutrients, is also affected, influencing plant growth and ecosystem stability (26). These alterations can lead to soil acidification, sodicity, and salinization. Moreover, climate change drivers, including elevated CO<sub>2</sub>, temperature, nitrogen deposition, and altered rainfall, significantly impact soil processes and nutrient availability (27). Altered soil properties can also impact the diversity and composition of soil organisms, potentially leading to the identification of novel species capable of adapting to climate-induced changes. Collectively, these changes highlight the profound impact of climate change on soil chemical properties and the overall health and productivity of soil ecosystems (28).

Climate change particularly affects soil pH, temperature, CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and rainfall patterns can change soil pH. Higher temperature and acidic rainfall contributing to soil acidification, while other climate may cause alkalization. Shifts in pH directly impact soil health, productivity and key soil processes (29). Variations in temperature and precipitation influence organic matter formation, soil water regimes, and mineral composition, which, in turn, affect pH levels. Changes in soil pH significantly influence

**Table 1.** Effect of climate change on soil physical parameters

| Soil Physical Parameter | Effect of Climate Change  | Reference |
|-------------------------|---|-----------|
| Bulk density            | Increases due to loss of soil organic matter                                | (71)      |
| Porosity                | Decreases due to compaction from heavy rainfall                             | (72)      |
| Aggregate stability     | Declines due to disruption of soil aggregates from extreme weather events   | (73)      |
| Infiltration rate       | Reduces because of surface sealing and soil crusting                        | (17)      |
| Water holding capacity  | Decreases owing to loss of organic matter and structural stability          | (74)      |
| Hydraulic conductivity  | Diminishes due to compaction and poor structure                             | (75)      |
| Aeration                | Lessens due to flooding and water logging                                   | (76)      |
| Texture                 | Coarser texture over time in some regions because of wind and water erosion | (77)      |
| Depth of topsoil        | Shallower due to accelerated erosion processes                              | (78)      |
| Organic matter content  | Declines because of increased mineralization rates and loss through erosion | (79)      |

**Table 2.** Effect of soil physical parameters with high and low levels of climatic variations

| Factor           | High Level                           | Reference | Low Level                            | Reference |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Temperature      | Above 2°C over pre-industrial levels | (80)      | Below 1°C over pre-industrial levels | (81)      |
| Precipitation    | 20% above baseline/average           | (82)      | 20% below baseline/average           | (83)      |
| Moisture Content | >30% relative humidity               | (84)      | <15% relative humidity               | (85)      |
| Sea Level        | > 3 mm/year rise                     | (86)      | < 1 mm/year rise or fall             | (87)      |
| UV Radiation     | >295 m W/m <sup>2</sup>              | (88)      | <285 m W/m <sup>2</sup>              | (89)      |
| Greenhouse Gases | >450 ppm CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent  | (90)      | <350 ppm CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent  | (91)      |

microbial activity and the cycling rates of carbon and nitrogen, as these processes depend on net primary production and substrate availability. Additionally, climate change exacerbates metal toxicity in polluted soils, particularly in drier regions. Metal toxicity, however, varies among soil types depending on pH and metal concentrations. Changes in climate also affect metal availability and accumulation in soils, influencing plant and soil health (30). Climate change has notable effects on soil electrical conductivity (EC). Altered temperature and precipitation patterns can modify soil organic matter content, which directly impacts EC. Rising temperatures may increase EC, though compost application has been found to mitigate the effects of temperature changes on soil properties (31). Similarly, climate change impacts soil chemical properties such as cation exchange capacity (CEC) and organic matter content, both of which are crucial for maintaining the productivity and environmental quality of cultivated land (32). Increased organic carbon (OC) and higher cation exchange capacity (CEC) levels have been shown to reduce the availability and solubility of heavy metals, such as Pb, in contaminated soils. Climate change has also resulted in the loss of soil organic carbon (SOC) in agricultural topsoils worldwide. The implementation of agro-ecological practices such as conservation agriculture, organic agriculture, and the utilization of organic waste materials holds great potential to enhance SOC stocks and mitigate climate change impacts (33). The response of SOC mineralization to rising temperatures, reduced soil moisture, and drying rewetting cycles emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of SOC dynamics in the context of climate change (34) (Fig.4).

Changes in climate patterns, including surface greening observed in China, have altered SOC dynamics in top soils, where carbon input from vegetation plays a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of climate change on SOC. Additionally, climate warming influences the soil carbon pool by increasing SOC content and affecting components of labile organic carbon.

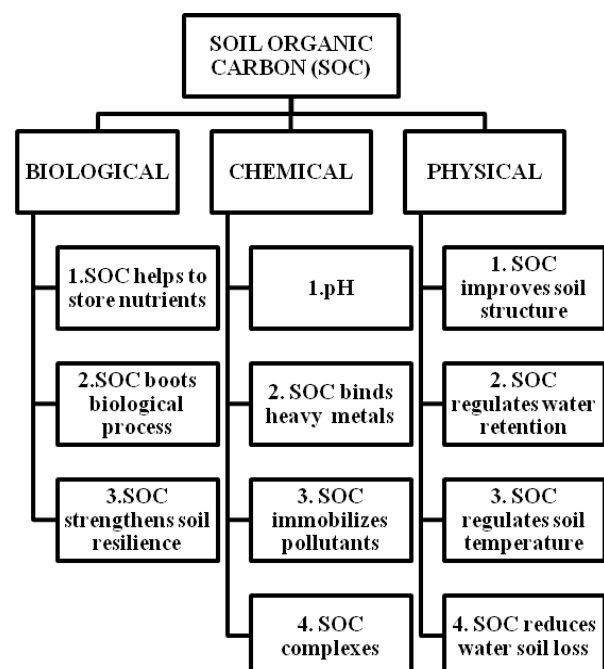
Heavy rainfall accelerates nutrient leaching, decreases soil pH, and reduces organic matter content, thereby impacting nutrient availability. Soil microorganisms play a vital role in transforming nutrients into forms readily accessible to plants. For instance, microorganisms can convert insoluble forms of phosphorus into soluble forms that plants can absorb. Since nutrient cycles are interdependent, imbalances in one nutrient can affect the

availability and absorption of others. Balanced fertilization, influenced by soil pH, organic matter content, microbial activity, and CEC, is essential to ensure optimal nutrient availability and maintain soil health.

### Biological properties

Climate change significantly impacts the diversity of soil organisms, potentially revealing new characteristics or species that are capable of adapting to these changes. The diversity and distribution of soil microorganisms play a critical role in regulating the biological properties and processes of soil (35). Variations in climate, such as heightened temperatures and increased greenhouse gas concentrations, can affect the microbial communities residing in the soil (36). Additionally, soil moisture content influences the habitats of microorganisms, particularly fungal communities. By incorporating the dynamics of soil structure into models, more comprehensive predictions can be made regarding the impacts of climate change on the hydrological and biogeochemical cycles of soil.

An increase in soil temperatures directly influences microbial metabolism. Optimal soil temperatures (around 20-30°C) enhance microbial processes such as respiration and nutrient mineralization, while extreme temperatures (above 35°C or below 10°C) can inhibit microbial activity, impacting microbial diversity, nutrient cycling, decomposition, and ultimately soil fertility and plant



**Fig.4.** A flowchart representation of soil organic carbon and its significance in agriculture

growth(37). This increased metabolic activity can impact carbon and nitrogen cycling within the soil. Studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between temperature and microbial respiration rates, indicating a heightened release of carbon dioxide as a by-product of microbial activity. The carbon content of microbial biomass in various soil types ranged between 3 and 349 mg/kg of soil (38). Climate change thus modifies the composition and activity of soil microbes.

Temperature, moisture, and carbon dioxide levels significantly affect microbial diversity, abundance, and essential functions such as nutrient cycling and organic matter decomposition. Rising temperatures accelerate microbial metabolism, enhancing these processes, but exceeding optimal temperature ranges may harm beneficial microbes, reducing soil fertility. Changes in precipitation patterns impact soil moisture, with excess rainfall favoring anaerobic microbes and drought limiting microbial diversity and nutrient cycling. Increased CO<sub>2</sub> enhanced plant photosynthesis and microbial activity but may dilute nutrients and alter soil chemistry.

Microbial diversity is essential for ecosystem resilience and functions like nutrient cycling and disease suppression. Climate change poses a threat to this diversity, jeopardizing soil health and ecosystem services, which calls for careful management. Soil microbes are highly sensitive to climate change, leading to shifts in microbial communities with implications for soil functions. Heat-tolerant microbes may become dominant with rising temperatures, altering nutrient cycling and organic matter decomposition. Changes in precipitation and temperature also affect fungal communities, which are essential for nutrient cycling and plant interactions. Climate change thus impacts both fungal communities and overall soil biodiversity (39). Soil fauna, including earthworms and arthropods, are also affected by climate change, influencing nutrient cycling and soil structure. Furthermore, climate change alters biogeochemical processes in soil, such as nutrient availability and greenhouse gas emissions (40). These changes in environmental conditions create feedback loops that amplify the effects of climate change. Soil biodiversity plays a crucial role in soil biogeochemistry and climate

change.

### Impact on soil organic matter decomposition

The decomposition of soil organic matter is a critical process for nutrient cycling and carbon sequestration. Elevated temperatures can influence the rates of organic matter decomposition, with potential consequences for soil fertility (41) (Fig.5). Studies by (42) have observed an acceleration in the decomposition of soil organic matter under elevated temperature conditions, suggesting the potential release of stored carbon into the atmosphere. Soil microorganisms play a crucial role in regulating soil moisture dynamics, and changes in precipitation patterns significantly influence microbial activity, which in turn affects nutrient cycling and organic matter decomposition. Specific microorganisms, such as *Pseudomonas* and *Bacillus* bacteria, as well as *Aspergillus* and *Trichoderma* fungi, are particularly sensitive to variations in temperature and moisture. *Pseudomonas* bacteria enhance nutrient cycling by breaking down complex organic compounds, while *Bacillus* bacteria solubilize nutrients like phosphorus, making them available for plant uptake. Fungi like *Aspergillus* decompose lignocellulosic materials in wet conditions, facilitating nutrient release, and *Trichoderma* promotes plant growth by enhancing organic matter decomposition(43). It is important to emphasize the significance of understanding microbial responses to changing moisture conditions for predicting soil carbon dynamics and nutrient cycling in a changing climate.

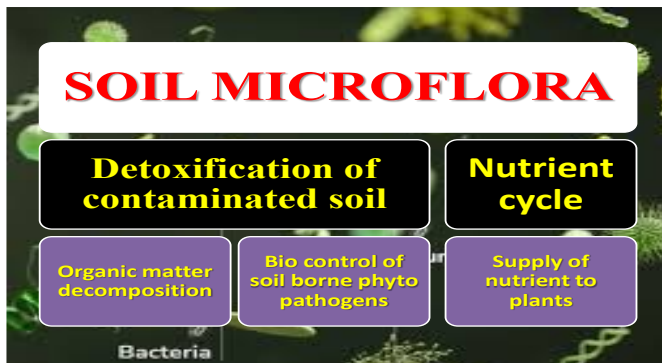
### Soil Resilience

Soil resilience plays a crucial role in addressing the effects of climate change on agriculture. Studies have demonstrated that high quality soils can mitigate the sensitivity of crop yield to climate variability, resulting in increased average crop yields and greater yield stability (44) (Table 3). Climate change impacts, such as soil erosion and alterations to environmental conditions, further complicate these challenges. Therefore, developing innovative and feasible solutions is imperative for fostering resilient landscapes amidst climate change (45).

Microbial interventions have shown promise in enhancing soil resilience and promoting crop growth under changing

**Table 3.** The impact of soil health and its resilience by parameters of climate change

| Parameters                         | Impact on soil health   | Building resilience  | Reference |
|------------------------------------|---|--|-----------|
| Higher temperatures                | Loss of organic matter, altered biology   | Increase carbon inputs to soils, promote soil biological buffering of temperature increase | (92)      |
| Changing precipitation             | Increased erosion, nutrient leaching, runoff  | Improve water infiltration, storage and cover crops  | (93)      |
| Rising CO <sub>2</sub> levels      | Some positive impacts on C storage, but unbalanced nutrients, toxins may accumulate | Nutrient management plans, controlled drainage   | (94)      |
| Increase in extreme weather events | Reduced soil structure, stability, loss of topsoil                                  | Cover crops, no/low till, soil organic matter management                                   | (95)      |
| Differential drying & wetting      | Disruption of soil aggregates, flow paths   | Controlled drainage, frequent organic matter additions                                     | (96)      |
| Salinization in some regions       | Lower water infiltration, retention and nutrient imbalance                          | Improved irrigation management, gypsum, organic amendments                                 | (97)      |
| Acidification in some areas        | Aluminium toxicity, nutrient deficiencies   | Liming, reduced acid rain deposits   | (98)      |
| Land use changes                   | Massive soil disruption, loss of C stocks   | Retention of natural areas, integrate buffer zones and field borders                       | (99)      |

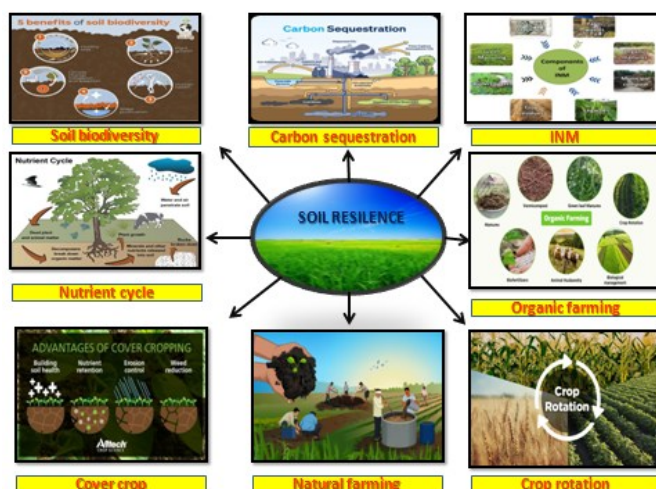


**Fig.5.** A schematic representation of soil micro flora as a biological indicator

climate scenarios. For example, biofertilizers containing *Rhizobium* and *Azospirillum* improved nitrogen fixation, resulting in a 15-20% yield increase in wheat during drought conditions in India. Mycorrhizal fungi like *Glomus* enhanced drought tolerance, boosting crop growth by 30% in arid Australia, while plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) led to a 25% yield increase in soybeans under climatic stress in Brazil. These cases highlight the potential of microbial interventions to improve soil health and agricultural productivity amidst climate change(46).

Soil quality is of utmost importance in agriculture under the influence of climate change, and enhancing soil quality can serve as a buffer against the adverse effects of climate change on crop yields (Fig.6).

### Carbon sequestration



**Fig.6.** A schematic representation of soil resilience strategies to reduce the effects of climate change on soil health

Carbon sequestration is essential for enhancing soil's ability to withstand the impacts of climate change. It supports the preservation and augmentation of SOC stocks, which are indispensable for soil health and productivity. The effects of afforestation and reforestation on SOC stocks may vary depending on the soil type and tree species (47). Practices such as conservation tillage, agroforestry, residue management, and crop rotation also contribute to soil carbon sequestration. Biochar, a stable carbon source, can be administered to the soil to enhance long-term carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (48). Increasing soil carbon content through carbon sequestration ameliorates soil structure, fertility,

and nutrient availability, thus making the soil more resilient to climatic extremes and disturbances (49). These practices hold the potential to mitigate global warming, enhance environmental sustainability, and strengthen the overall resilience of agricultural systems in the face of climate change (50).

### Cover cropping

Planting cover crops between main crops is sustainable agronomic practice that contributes to enhancing soil resilience in the face of climate change. During unproductive periods, such as fallow periods, farmers can cultivate cover crops to provide ecosystem services that aid in climate change mitigation and improve soil health (51). Cover crops can increase soil organic carbon levels, which plays a role in mitigating climate change by sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Moreover, cover crops can enhance soil fertility, nutrient cycling, and water regulation all of which are crucial for the maintenance of soil health and productivity (52). Another benefit of cover crops is their ability to improve soil porosity and permeability, resulting in increased water infiltration and decreased runoff during periods of rainfall. This, in turn can help reduce the risk of flooding and improve water management in agricultural systems. Cover cropping is an essential practice that supports sustainable cropping systems, enhances soil resilience and contributes to global food security.

### Organic farming

Organic farming is an effective strategy for enhancing soil resilience in the face of climate change. It helps conserve soil fertility and health, improves crop yield and quality, and reduces carbon concentrations in the atmosphere. Organic farming practices, such as the use of organic manures and amendments, crop rotations, mulching, non-synthetic fertilizers, zero tillage, and integrated nutrient and pest management, contribute to the development of resilient soils. These practices enhance soil organic matter, which is crucial for improving soil fertility and crop productivity (53). SOC plays a key role in soil quality and resilience against climate change (54). Additionally, organic farming also promotes the activity of soil microorganisms, which are vital for nutrient cycling and other ecological processes in the soil. By adopting organic farming practices, farmers can build and maintain soil organic carbon stocks, leading to more resilient agricultural systems in the face of climate changes. Traditional farming practices, such as biodiversity management, soil management, and water harvesting, can increase resilience and economic benefits in small-scale agriculture, while mitigating global warming. A farm transitioning to organic practices achieved improved food security and resilience while maintaining greenhouse gas intensity similar to regional averages, demonstrating global responsibility as biosphere stewards (55).

### Integrated Nutrient Management (INM)

INM involves the utilization of a combination of all available sources of nutrients for plants in a holistic package for crop nutrition (56). Research has shown that

INM significantly improves soil health and crop yields while reducing greenhouse gases emissions. It has been found that the application of INM significantly improves the overall health of the soil, as evidenced by decreased bulk density, increased porosity, and enhanced water-holding capacity. INM can improve soil aggregates and microbiota by integrating organic manure and retaining residue, which further increase soil resilience (57). Soils play a prominent role in driving global change, and the establishment of a global program for soil resilience is necessary to safeguard soil fertility and ecosystem services while acknowledging their pivotal role in supporting ecosystems and sustainable development (58). Integrated systems for managing plant nutrients that involve beneficial microorganisms enhance crop productivity, increase fertilizer efficiency, and improve resilience to environmental constraints.

### **Nutrient cycle**

Climate change factors such as rising temperature, altered precipitation patterns, and intense rainfall events can significantly impact soil nutrient cycling processes. These changes also affect microbial communities, including soil bacteria and arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) fungi, which play a significant role in nutrient cycling. Research has demonstrated that warming of soils during the winter seasons can accelerate nutrient cycling, resulting in greater nutrient availability and leaching (59). Moreover, climate change drivers can influence soil microbial communities, which, in turn, can affect nutrient storage, soil properties, and other ecosystem processes. It has been found that AM fungi reduce nutrient losses through leaching, improving soils' capacity to absorb nutrients and lessening the detrimental effects of increased precipitation on nutrient losses (60). While global change factors do impact soil biodiversity and nitrogen cycling in terrestrial ecosystems, there is limited evidence linking species richness to nutrient cycling efficiency (61). Advanced techniques, such as stable isotopes and tree ring analysis, enhance our understanding of carbon and nutrient cycling in forest ecosystems, addressing the long-term impacts of climate change.

### **Biodiversity**

Soil biodiversity is vital for maintaining ecosystem services such as organic matter breakdown and nutrient cycling. The various microbial populations present in soil, including bacteria, fungi, and viruses, are impacted by attributes such as pH, temperature, and organic carbon. Key soil bacteria like *Pseudomonas* aid plant growth and nutrient cycling, *Bacillus* enhances soil fertility and suppresses pathogens, and *Rhizobium* is known for nitrogen fixation in legumes. Fungi such as *Aspergillus* decompose organic matter, while *Trichoderma* promotes plant growth and suppresses soil-borne pathogens. Mycorrhizal fungi like *Glomus* improve nutrient and water uptake through symbiosis with plants, and viruses, such as bacteriophages, regulate bacterial populations and influence nutrient cycling (62). Changes in soil biodiversity can impact how plant communities respond to disturbances brought about by climate change. A decline

in soil biodiversity can hinder the recovery of legumes and reduce plant diversity (63). Soil microorganisms, including biota, respond to changes in soil conditions and vegetation caused by climate change. Maintaining soil biodiversity is critical to mitigating climate change's impact on plant diversity and ecosystem function, especially in grasslands. Soil biodiversity, particularly through the involvement of mycorrhizal soil mutualism, is critical for the persistence of legumes and the maintenance of plant diversity in grasslands during environmental changes. Climate change has a significant impact on soil biodiversity and the services it provides, with the potential for intensified seasonal disturbances and an increase in extreme events.

### **Crop rotation**

Crop rotation enhances soil durability by diversifying crops and reducing the depletion of soil nutrients. Conventional farming systems that heavily depend on excessive amounts of fertilizers and pesticides have a negative impact on the environment. Conversely, diversified crop rotations have been shown to increase system resilience, enhance carbon storage, strengthen resistance against pests and diseases, improve the efficiency of water and fertilizer use, and optimize the health of the soil (64). The incorporation of pastures and crops, along with other ecologically-based practices, significantly enhances the content of organic carbon and nitrogen in the soil, leading to improved soil quality and environmental sustainability (65). The excessive use of mineral fertilizers and pesticides in modern agriculture has deteriorated the health and sustainability of soils, highlighting the need to provide fresh energy sources for soil biota to reduce reliance on mineral fertilizers. Sustainable and resilient management of organic matter in the soil is indispensable for viable agricultural development (66).

### **Natural farming**

Soil resilience is a critically important aspect of sustainable agriculture within the framework of natural farming. The primary objective of natural farming practices is to preserve and enhance soil health, which is of utmost importance for the growth of plants and the stability of ecosystems. The conservation of soil and water resources, as well as the promotion of biodiversity, are fundamental components of natural farming (67). It is important to note that the health and nutrient cycling of soil are heavily dependent on the presence of healthy soil microbial communities, whose functional diversity is influenced by the management practices employed on farms (68). To achieve agricultural sustainability, it is crucial to adopt an integrative approach to the management of soil and water resources. Nature-based solutions can serve as effective means of improving soil resilience and mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. Soil resilience, in the context of natural farming, offers farmers valuable guidance for implementing practices that enhance the long-term productivity and sustainability of their agricultural systems.

### **Future perspective**



Land degradation, as highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), ranks among the most urgent issues faced by humanity (69). Rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels are expected to reduce crop yields and degrade the nutritional quality of food. Addressing climate change requires not only a shift away from fossil fuels but also a focus on carbon sequestration. SOC, which consists of carbon-based substances such as leaves, roots, and living organisms, plays a crucial role in this regard. Unfortunately, modern agricultural practices have led to soil degradation and a loss of organic carbon content. Globally, cropland soils have lost 20-60% of their original organic carbon content, with North American farmland losing approximately half of its natural soil carbon. This degradation is primarily driven by tillage and heavy fertilizer use, both of which release more carbon into the atmosphere. Investing in soil regeneration offers multiple benefits.

Firstly, healthy soils sequester carbon, and by improving soil organic matter, their capacity to hold water is enhanced, allowing more rainfall to penetrate the ground. This facilitates crop sustenance, especially during drought-stressed years, and reduces downstream flooding (70). Secondly, conventionally tilled soils erode over 100 times faster than they form, but restoring soil health through practices like cover cropping can significantly reduce erosion. For instance, farmers in the Midwest United States who implemented cover crops such as clover and rye reduced soil erosion by up to 50% compared to conventional tillage. These cover crops improve soil structure, enhance organic matter content, and increase biodiversity, contributing to better soil health and lower erosion rates.

Thirdly, changes in forestry and agriculture can contribute significantly to climate solutions by reducing global emissions by 5% to 20%, thereby aiding in climate mitigation. Lastly, healthy soils improve resilience to extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts. Additionally, improved soil health supports biodiversity by providing a thriving habitat for various microorganisms, plants, and animals, contributing to ecosystem stability and resilience in the face of environmental stressors.

While it is important to note that soil restoration alone will not solve the entire climate crises, it is a significant step towards addressing climate change. It is crucial to recognize that soil health is not only an agricultural concern but also a climate imperative.

## Conclusion

As climate challenges intensify, resilient soils are vital for sustainable agriculture and ecological stability. Healthy soils not only support food systems but also play a crucial role in combating climate change, as soil degradation leads to declining crop yields and biodiversity loss. The intricate connections between soil health, nutrient dynamics, and microbial communities highlight the need for proactive soil management. Practices such as

integrated nutrient management, organic farming, and cover cropping can revitalize soils, increase organic carbon content, and improve nutrient availability, thereby boosting agricultural productivity and ecological health. Continued research is essential to identify innovative soil management practices that can adapt to changing climate conditions, helping to understand the best techniques for restoring soil health and improving resilience. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of various restoration practices will provide valuable insights into enhancing soil biodiversity and overall functionality. Prioritizing soil health today ensures resilient ecosystems and secures food systems for future generations.

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## Authors' Contributions

RMR carried out the works such as collection of literature, structuring the manuscript, preparation and drafting of the manuscript. GM contributed to the manuscript through his guidance, preparation of the framework, correction and revision of the manuscript. RR participated in visualization, re-drafting and editing of the draft. SM, KM, and MS participated in correcting the final version of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest:** Authors do not have any conflict of interest to declare.

**Ethical issues:** None

## Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the authors used Chat GPT, Quillbot in order to improve language quality. After using this service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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