



***SOIL CO₂ EFFLUX UNDER DIFFERENT PLANTATION TYPES AND ITS
ASSOCIATION WITH CHRONOSEQUENCE FACTOR***

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IPTPH 2018 1



UPM
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA
BERILMU BERBAKTI

**SOIL CO₂ EFFLUX UNDER DIFFERENT PLANTATION TYPES AND ITS
ASSOCIATION WITH CHRONOSEQUENCE FACTOR**

By

CINDY USUN SIGAU

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science**

October 2017

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

SOIL CO₂ EFFLUX UNDER DIFFERENT PLANTATION TYPES AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH CHRONOSEQUENCE FACTOR

By

CINDY USUN SIGAU

October 2017

Chairman: Hazandy Abdul Hamid, PhD
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Impacts of land use modifications from anthropogenic activities towards soil CO₂ efflux are still poorly understood and varies between sites. Therefore, soil CO₂ efflux in three mature plots of *Gmelina arborea* and *Swietenia macrophylla* (exotic broad-leaved trees) and *Pinus caribaea* (an exotic conifer) was studied in relation to soil, air temperature and relative humidity on a monthly basis from January to March of 2016. Soil properties including bulk density, pH, total C, total N, and soil organic carbon were also measured at depth of 0–15 and 15–30 cm. Soil CO₂ efflux was recorded to be significantly different between the plots: *gmelina* ($0.76 \pm 0.04 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) > mahogany ($0.49 \pm 0.02 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) > conifer ($0.40 \pm 0.01 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$). Regression analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between soil CO₂ efflux and temperature in the *gmelina* plot. There was no significant correlation noted between soil CO₂ efflux and relative humidity in all the three plots. A significant negative correlation was found between soil CO₂ efflux and temperature in the conifer plot, indicating the influence of other factors on soil CO₂ efflux in the plot. Comparing the broad-leaved *gmelina* and needle-leaved pine, monthly variations in soil relative humidity and soil properties were examined for possible influences on soil CO₂ efflux and temperature sensitivity (Q_{10}) in the plots. Temperature sensitivity of soil CO₂ efflux in the *gmelina* plot ($Q_{10} = 1.19$) was significantly higher than that of mahogany and pine plots ($Q_{10} = 0.79$ and 0.70 respectively). The findings also showed significant result in the chronosequence in oil palm and rubber plantations which influence the soil CO₂ efflux. Twenty-two years old plantation stands ($0.91 \pm 0.17 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) had significantly higher soil CO₂ efflux than 6 years old plantation stands ($0.54 \pm 0.18 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$). These findings suggest the chronosequence factor influenced the variations of soil CO₂ efflux in tropical oil palm and rubber plantations, driven significantly by soil relative humidity. The overall significant difference in soil CO₂ efflux was associated with the changes in land structure leading to the evolution in soil respiration variations, especially in the morphological and the physiological aspects. In addition, major environmental influences on soil CO₂ efflux were soil temperature and soil

relative humidity, which reacted differently in different plantation types and age stands. Thus, emphasizing how land use management can affect soil CO₂ efflux significantly by altering the environmental responses accordingly.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

PENGALIRAN KELUAR CO₂ TANAH DI ANTARA LADANG BERBEZA DAN PERKAITANNYA DENGAN FAKTOR KRONO-TURUTAN

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Kesan penggunaan tanah daripada aktiviti manusia terhadap pengaliran keluar karbon dioksida (CO₂) tanah masih kurang difahami and berbeza di antara setiap lokasi. Oleh itu, pengaliran keluar karbon dioksida (CO₂) tanah pada tiga plot eksperimen yang telah matang iaitu *Gmelina arborea* dan *Swietenia macrophylla* (pokok berdaun lebar eksotik) dan *Pinus caribaea* (konifer eksotik) telah dikaji perkaitannya dengan tanah, suhu udara dan kelembapan relatif pada setiap bulan mulai Januari sehingga Mac 2016. Sifat-sifat tanah termasuk ketumpatan pukal, pH, jumlah C, jumlah N, dan karbon organik tanah juga diukur pada kedalaman 0-15 dan 15-30 cm. Pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah didapati berbeza dengan ketara antara plot iaitu, gmelina ($0.76 \pm 0.04 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) > mahogani ($0.49 \pm 0.02 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) > pain ($0.40 \pm 0.01 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$). Analisis regresi menunjukkan hubung kait positif yang ketara antara CO₂ tanah dengan suhu di plot gmelina. Kajian tidak mendapati hubung kait yang ketara antara pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah dan kelembapan relatif tanah dalam ketiga-tiga plot berkenaan. Hubung kait negatif yang ketara didapati wujud antara pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah dan suhu di plot pain, menunjukkan pengaruh faktor-faktor lain keatas pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah di plot berkenaan. Dalam membandingkan gmelina yang berdaun lebar dan pain yang berdaun bentuk jarum, perubahan bulanan dalam kelembapan relatif tanah dan sifat-sifat lain telah diteliti atas kemungkinan mempengaruhi pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah dan kepekaan suhu (Q_{10}) di plot berkenaan. Kepekaan suhu bagi pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah di plot gmelina ($Q_{10} = 1.19$) adalah lebih tinggi dengan ketara daripada mahogani dan pain (masing-masing $Q_{10} = 0.79$ dan 0.70). Kajian juga mendapati bahawa keputusan krono-urutan di ladang kelapa sawit dan getah mempengaruhi pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah. Ladang yang berumur 22 tahun ($0.91 \pm 0.17 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) mempunyai pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah yang lebih tinggi daripada ladang berusia 6 tahun ($0.54 \pm 0.18 \text{ g CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$). Penemuan ini menunjukkan bahawa faktor krono-urutan telah mempengaruhi variasi pengaliran keluaran CO₂ tanah di ladang-ladang kelapa sawit dan getah, yang didorong dengan ketara oleh kelembapan relatif tanah. Perbezaan ketara pengaliran keluar CO₂

tanah adalah dikaitkan dengan perubahan dalam struktur tanah yang membawa perbezaan dalam pernafasan tanah, terutamanya dalam aspek morfologi dan fisiologi. Selain daripada itu, pengaruh utama alam sekitar keatas pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah adalah suhu dan kelembapan relatif tanah yang bertindak-balas dengan berbeza-beza bergantung kepada jenis dan umur hutan. Justeru, memberi penekanan terhadap kepentingan pengurusan guna tanah terhadap pengaliran keluar CO₂ tanah yang seterusnya mengubah reaksi terhadap alam sekitar.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise the Lord for His blessings and guidance which enable me to come this far. I also would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hazandy bin Abdul Hamid and co-supervisor, Prof. Ahmad Ainuddin bin Nuruddin for their advice and enthusiasm toward the completion of this project. Not to forget Mr. Mohd. Kamil bin Ismail and my fellow friends, Mr. Mohamad Hadzmer bin Sanuddin, and Mr. Raja Abdul Azim bin Raja Azmi for their assistances in the field works. Special thanks to my beloved Mr. Mohamed Daniel bin Mohamed Mokhtar for the love and intellectual reasoning and debates. Of course, to my parents Mr. Louis Sigau Kebing and Mdm. Magdalene Ubong Tebengang who pray and support me all the way, I am really and always appreciative of their understanding and that this thesis would not be possible without them. Last but not least, thanks to the people that I met and worked with during the course of this research. I appreciate the cooperation and help that eased the completion of this thesis. God bless you all.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

asl	Above sea level
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
g cm ⁻³	Gram per cubic centimetre
pg C yr ⁻¹	Petagram of carbon per year
g CO ₂ m ⁻² h ⁻¹	Gram of carbon dioxide per square meter per hour
ha	Hectare
kg ha ⁻¹ yr ⁻¹	Kilogram per hectare per year

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

Land use or terrestrial ecosystem is important in providing critical natural resources and ecosystem services for the sustainability of human societies in the long term (Foley *et al.*, 2005). In addition, land use also plays critical roles in influencing global biogeochemical cycles, soil ecosystem functions, and exacerbates climate change at both local and global scales (Leeuwen *et al.*, 2017). However, land-use is perceived as a local environmental issue caused by human disturbances altering the natural earth ecosystems. Globally, net carbon (C) emissions from land use are approximately $1.0 \pm 0.8 \text{ pg C yr}^{-1}$ (Le Quéré *et al.*, 2015). The C emissions are mostly contributed by soil respiration or soil carbon dioxide efflux where at the slightest alteration can induce considerable change to the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) (Schlesinger and Andrews, 2000; Arevalo *et al.*, 2010).

Soil CO₂ efflux refers to the instantaneous CO₂ transports via soil ground surface into the atmosphere and *vice versa* that includes rhizosphere, microbes, and soil fauna respiration (Raich and Schlesinger, 1992; Maher *et al.*, 2010), contributing up to 30% of the total ecosystem respiration (Bond-Lamberty and Thomson, 2000). Therefore, soil CO₂ efflux is one of the most fundamental elements of the global C balance (Bernhardt *et al.*, 2006). Besides that, soil CO₂ efflux varies significantly among plant biomes indicating environmental changes in vegetation via land use conversion potentially alters the soil CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere and *vice versa* (Raich and Tufekcioglu, 2000). Moreover, climate change also affects the capacity and efficiency of land use to absorb the atmospheric CO₂ (Friedlingstein *et al.*, 2001). It is common in scientific studies where soil CO₂ efflux always constituted with climatic factors, but site-specific elements across landscape play a major role in the variations of soil CO₂ efflux as well (Maher *et al.*, 2010). A comprehensive understanding of individual species influencing the ecosystem-level C dynamics and mechanisms help to provide further insights on our awareness on anthropogenic impacts towards the biosphere (Russell *et al.*, 2010).

Hence, one of the objectives of this study emphasises on comparing soil CO₂ efflux between three different types of land use (adjacent exotic forest plantations) which are *Gmelina arborea* (gmelina), *Swietenia macrophylla* (mahogany), and *Pinus caribaea* (pine) plantations. Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of soil CO₂ efflux in the global C cycle, the effect of chronosequence factor on soil CO₂ efflux among different types of species is still poorly documented (Maher *et al.*, 2010; Wang *et al.*, 2017). There

is less to no information available on comparison of soil CO₂ efflux at different forest ages between forest types in tropical ecosystem leading to alteration of *in-situ* environmental factors (Saleska *et al.* 2003), especially in Malaysia. Therefore, this study also aims to investigate soil CO₂ efflux of two forest plantation types (oil palm and rubber plantation) with its association with chronosequence factor.

It is crucial to quantify and improve CO₂ emissions from soils (Jensen *et al.*, 2014) and establishes an explicit need to understand which factors governs soil CO₂ efflux in the environmental aspects (Almagro *et al.*, 2009). Environmental factors controlling soil CO₂ efflux and its consequences on production rates are essential to assess the prospective impacts of environmental alterations (Raich and Tufekcioglu, 2000). Besides that, the understanding of soil CO₂ efflux is also considerably beneficial on gaining further insights on the terrestrial C cycling through a variety of studies both temporally and spatially.

1.2 Problem Statement and Justification

Land use in Malaysia has been actively growing especially for agriculture, shifting conversion, and timber harvesting purposes to sustain the industrial demand and supply needs. The role of land use or terrestrial ecosystems is critical in the global C cycle as it releases CO₂ into the atmosphere accounting for 90% of the total ecosystem respiration that is predominantly facilitated by soil CO₂ efflux (Hanson *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, the slightest alteration of the terrestrial ecosystems may lead to a considerable change of the atmospheric CO₂ concentration. The impacts from anthropogenic activities towards soil CO₂ efflux from land use modifications are still poorly documented and differ among sites (Raich and Schlesinger, 1992; Veldkamp *et al.*, 2008; Nazaries *et al.*, 2015).

Several studies on soil CO₂ efflux have been conducted worldwide at various biomes with different hypotheses and manipulations since soil CO₂ efflux is an essential element in the global C cycle. Soil CO₂ efflux respond differently at a variety of time scales indicating chronosequence aspects also significantly attributing to the soil respiration changes, especially under tropical climates. The changes are fundamental as tropical forests store 40% of global terrestrial carbon stocks and will influence the atmospheric CO₂ concentration (Pan *et al.*, 2011). However, very few studies were carried out on soil CO₂ efflux at site-specific ecosystems specifically in Malaysia. Studies regarding soil CO₂ efflux in Malaysia had been conducted and quantified to improve the understanding of soil CO₂ efflux at various levels. Nonetheless, the studies focused on tropical forests (Mande *et al.*, 2014a; Mande *et al.*, 2014b), peat soils (Lim Kim Choo and Ahmed, 2014), and single plantation species (Firdaus and Husni, 2011; Lim Kim Choo and Ahmed, 2014). In addition, soil CO₂ efflux studies in Malaysia are also generally exploring single ecosystem age (Mande *et al.*, 2014a).

Uncertainties of certain age stand between ecosystems on soil CO₂ efflux remains unclear. A comprehensive understanding of soil CO₂ efflux particularly on its impact on environmental factors from types of land use or forest management is important as it will enhance our knowledge of the fundamental ecological processes controlling soil CO₂ efflux (Fan *et al.*, 2015; Liu *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the present study also focuses on chronosequence factors that provide a contribution to knowledge acquisition regarding soil CO₂ efflux in Malaysia. The research is essential on soil CO₂ efflux in different land use types (exotic forest plantations) and chronosequence association of the main commodity crops (oil palm and rubber).

Therefore, one of the present studies undertaken assesses soil CO₂ efflux differences at three different types of land use or ecosystem (exotic forest plantations) specifically *Gmelina arborea* (gmelina), *Swietenia macrophylla* (mahogany), and *Pinus caribaea* (pine) plantations. As for the chronosequence factor element, present study explores the association of oil palm and rubber plantations at different ecosystem age stands influence on soil CO₂ efflux.

1.3 Objectives

General objective of the study is to investigate the differences of soil CO₂ efflux under different types of plantation. Meanwhile, the specific objectives are as follows:

1. To quantify and compare soil CO₂ efflux between different exotic forest plantation types (yemane, mahogany, and pine) (Study 1);
2. To quantify and establish the chronosequence association with soil CO₂ efflux under different plantation types (oil palm and rubber) (Study 2); and
3. To determine factors controlling soil CO₂ efflux (Study 1 and 2).

1.4 Significance of Study

The present study proposes to improve our understanding of CO₂ emissions which reveal the effectiveness in selecting the most desirable plantation species and management strategies suitable for plantation along with the country's strategy to double plantation areas while benefitting in reducing C emissions into the atmosphere due to land conversion or forest fragmentation. The efforts aids in maintaining a sustainable biodiversity and environment through improved estimation of both spatial and temporal soil CO₂ efflux rates.

Besides, present study acts as a pioneer in soil CO₂ efflux investigation within the chronosequence association aspects and newly studied plantation species of comparing soil CO₂ efflux in Malaysia. Hence, the study provides beneficial information regarding soil CO₂ efflux and ecosystem types which could attract potential other studies in wider or specific directions of terrestrial-atmosphere C exchanges. Therefore, the identification of potential risks of species selection for plantation can prevent the exposure to faster soil CO₂ emissions that could amplify greenhouse gas emissions. Hence, reliable mitigations can be initiated efficiently from the report findings to protect and monitor environmental changes.

The study proposes basic guidelines or references to gain further insights regarding soil CO₂ efflux vital in controlling global C cycle and ultimately climate change as well as anthropogenic efforts in land use managements in Malaysia. Future generations are well informed on the current soil CO₂ efflux status among different ecosystems and which is useful in the implementation of maintaining and conserving a much more environmentally friendly ecosystem types and services.

1.5 Scope of Study

The present study focuses on the determination of soil CO₂ efflux at site-specific vegetation types (land use) and explores its association with chronosequence factors between different kinds of the terrestrial ecosystem. Three different exotic forest plantations located at the Universiti Putra Malaysia were utilised to compare the soil CO₂ efflux. Meanwhile, oil palm and rubber plantations were selected to investigate the chronosequence association with soil CO₂ efflux. The primary data used in the study centralised within different vegetation types at areas located adjacently from each other for six months. Existing soils are from the same parent materials based on the assumption of similar previous land management histories within the sites. The main equipment employed in the study was an LI-COR 8100A Automated Soil Respiration Flux System (LI-COR 8100A, LI-COR Inc., Lincoln, NE, USA) for soil CO₂ efflux measurements. Other aspects taken into considerations were the environmental factors and soil characteristics as the additional covariates describing the sites. The results of the soil CO₂ efflux between different forest types and chronosequence

association were used as an environmental indicator and for guidelines on anthropogenic impacts in land use managements to the ecosystem.

1.6 Thesis Structure

There are five chapters in the thesis as follows:

Chapter 1: Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the study. It portrays the general background, problem statement and justification, objectives, and significance of the research.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2 provides a more detailed literature review regarding the research which further describes the effects land use on soil CO₂ efflux and also its association with chronosequence factor.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the studies used in the studies and are divided into two main headings: (a) comparison of soil CO₂ efflux between different exotic forest plantations and (b) investigation of soil CO₂ efflux under different forest types with its association with chronosequence factor.

Chapter 4: Chapter 4 elucidates results and discussion of the studies with two main headings as described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5: Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter of the thesis with recommendations for future research based on the output gained from the studies.

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