American Journal Of Agriculture And Horticulture Innovations
(ISSN – 2771-2559)
VOLUME 03 ISSUE 08 Pages: 10-14
SJIF IMPACT FACTOR (2021: 5. 705) (2022: 5. 705) (2023: 7. 471)
OCLC – 1290679216
Publisher: Oscar Publishing Services

Research Article

UNVEILING THE ROLE OF ARBUSCULAR MYCORRHIZAL FUNGI: EXPLORING DIVERSITY AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN ENHANCING PLANT GROWTH

Journal Website: https://theusajournals.com/index.php/ajahi

Submission Date: Aug 02, 2023, Accepted Date: Aug 07, 2023,
Published Date: Aug 12, 2023
Crossref doi: https://doi.org/10.37547/ajahi/Volume03Issue08-03

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ABSTRACT

Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) form mutualistic symbiotic associations with the roots of the majority of land plants, playing a crucial role in enhancing plant growth and nutrient uptake. The diversity of AMF species and their interactions with various plant hosts have been subjects of extensive research in recent years. This review aims to provide an overview of the significance of AMF diversity and its importance in promoting plant growth. The symbiotic relationship between AMF and plant roots involves the exchange of nutrients, including phosphorus, nitrogen, and micronutrients, resulting in improved plant nutrient acquisition. Furthermore, AMF contribute to enhanced plant resistance to abiotic stresses, such as drought and salinity, and biotic stresses, including pathogen attack. The exploration of AMF diversity and their interactions with different plant species sheds light on the potential for harnessing these beneficial associations in sustainable agricultural practices and ecosystem restoration. This review discusses the key findings from various studies on AMF diversity and its positive impact on plant growth promotion, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intricate interactions between these fungi and their plant partners.

KEYWORDS

Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi, AMF diversity, plant growth promotion, nutrient uptake, symbiotic relationship, abiotic stress, biotic stress, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem restoration.

INTRODUCTION

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Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) form a fascinating symbiotic relationship with the roots of the vast majority of land plants, representing one of the most widespread and ancient mutualistic associations in the plant kingdom. This remarkable association has been recognized for its pivotal role in enhancing plant growth and nutrient acquisition, making it a subject of considerable interest in modern agricultural and ecological research.

AMF are a diverse group of fungi belonging to the Glomeromycota phylum, and they colonize the root systems of plants, forming intricate structures called arbuscules and vesicles. These structures facilitate the exchange of nutrients between the fungus and the host plant, primarily involving the transfer of phosphorus, nitrogen, and various micronutrients from the soil to the plant, while the fungus receives carbon compounds in return. This mutualistic nutrient exchange is of utmost significance in nutrient-poor soils, where plants often struggle to access essential elements required for their growth and development.

Over the years, scientists have recognized the existence of a vast diversity of AMF species, each exhibiting unique interactions with different plant hosts. Understanding this diversity and unraveling the complexities of these interactions is a critical aspect of exploring the potential benefits of AMF in promoting plant growth and enhancing agricultural productivity. By tapping into the ecological diversity of AMF and their compatibility with various plant species, we may unlock novel strategies to address challenges related to food security and sustainable agriculture.

This review aims to shed light on the significance of AMF diversity and its importance in enhancing plant growth promotion. We will delve into the mechanisms behind the symbiotic relationship between AMF and their plant partners, exploring how nutrient exchange and other interactions contribute to improved plant health and productivity. Moreover, we will examine the impact of AMF in mitigating abiotic stresses, such as drought and salinity, and their role in enhancing plant resistance against biotic stresses, including pathogen attacks.

As the world faces mounting challenges related to global food security, environmental degradation, and climate change, harnessing the potential of AMF in sustainable agriculture and ecosystem restoration becomes increasingly pertinent. By gaining insights into the intricate dynamics of AMF diversity and their interactions with plants, we can identify opportunities to optimize their use in agriculture, reduce the reliance on chemical fertilizers, and foster more resilient and productive plant systems.

This review will consolidate findings from various studies and research endeavors that have contributed to our current understanding of AMF diversity and their significance in promoting plant growth. Ultimately, this exploration of the role of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi will contribute to the growing body of knowledge aimed at addressing the challenges facing modern agriculture and paving the way for a more sustainable and ecologically balanced future.

METHODOLOGY

Literature Search:

The research methodology involved an extensive and systematic literature search to identify relevant scientific articles, research papers, reviews, and book chapters related to the role of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) in enhancing plant growth and the diversity of these fungi. Databases such as PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar were utilized to access peer-reviewed publications.

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Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

Articles were included in the review if they focused on AMF diversity, their interactions with various plant species, and their impact on plant growth promotion. Studies that provided insights into AMF-mediated nutrient uptake, abiotic stress tolerance, and biotic stress resistance in plants were given priority. Publications in languages other than English or those with insufficient scientific rigor were excluded from the review.

Data Extraction and Analysis:

Data from the selected articles were extracted systematically, including details on AMF species, plant species, experimental setups, growth parameters, nutrient uptake, stress tolerance responses, and other relevant findings. The collected data were analyzed and synthesized to identify common trends and significant observations.

Exploration of AMF Diversity:

A dedicated section of the review focused on exploring AMF diversity. Studies reporting on the taxonomic identification and morphological or molecular characterization of AMF species were reviewed. This section aimed to provide an overview of the distribution and diversity of AMF in different ecosystems and their associations with various plant hosts.

Mechanisms of Plant Growth Promotion:

The review investigated the mechanisms through which AMF enhance plant growth and nutrient acquisition. Emphasis was placed on understanding the nutrient exchange process between AMF and plants, with a particular focus on the uptake of phosphorus, nitrogen, and micronutrients. Studies exploring the impact of AMF on root architecture and mycorrhizal colonization patterns were also considered.

Impact of AMF on Abiotic Stress Tolerance:

The review examined studies investigating the role of AMF in enhancing plant tolerance to abiotic stresses, such as drought, salinity, heavy metals, and nutrient deficiencies. Data on changes in plant physiological and biochemical responses, as well as growth parameters, were analyzed to understand the mechanisms underlying AMF-mediated stress tolerance.

Impact of AMF on Biotic Stress Resistance:

Another aspect of the review was to assess the role of AMF in enhancing plant resistance to biotic stresses, including pathogens and herbivores. Studies reporting on changes in plant defense-related enzymes, secondary metabolites, and disease incidence were analyzed to understand the mechanisms of AMF-mediated biotic stress resistance.

Critical Analysis and Discussion:

Throughout the review, critical analysis and discussion of the findings were conducted. The strengths, limitations, and implications of the reviewed studies were evaluated, and areas for further research were identified. The synthesis of the data facilitated the identification of knowledge gaps and avenues for future investigation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the literature, the review concludes with a summary of the main findings, highlighting the significance of AMF diversity in enhancing plant growth and promoting sustainable agriculture. The conclusion also provides insights into

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the potential applications of AMF-based strategies in addressing global challenges related to food security and environmental sustainability.

Overall, the methodology employed in this review ensured a rigorous and systematic exploration of the role of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in promoting plant growth and the importance of understanding their diversity for harnessing their benefits in agriculture and ecological contexts. The synthesis of findings from diverse sources provides a comprehensive overview of the intricate interactions between AMF and plants, contributing to the understanding of these mutualistic associations and their potential implications for sustainable agriculture and ecosystem restoration.

RESULTS

The review of the literature on the role of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) in enhancing plant growth revealed a wealth of evidence supporting their significance in promoting plant growth and nutrient acquisition. The studies consistently demonstrated that AMF form mutualistic symbiotic associations with the roots of plants, facilitating the exchange of nutrients and water between the fungus and the host plant. The diversity of AMF species was found to be extensive, with different fungal species interacting with various plant hosts, leading to diverse outcomes in terms of plant growth and response to environmental stresses.

DISCUSSION

The results highlight the importance of AMF diversity in enhancing plant growth and nutrient acquisition. Different AMF species exhibit varying efficiencies in nutrient uptake and transfer, leading to differences in plant growth promotion. The diversity of AMF in different ecosystems and soil types underscores their adaptability and ecological significance. Understanding the mechanisms underlying AMF-mediated nutrient uptake and transfer is essential for harnessing their potential in sustainable agriculture and ecosystem restoration.

AMF play a vital role in enhancing plant tolerance to abiotic stresses, such as drought and salinity. The formation of extensive hyphal networks improves water and nutrient uptake, allowing plants to better withstand challenging environmental conditions. Additionally, AMF colonization induces changes in plant physiology and gene expression, contributing to improved stress tolerance.

In the context of biotic stresses, AMF colonization enhances plant resistance to pathogens and herbivores. Studies have shown that AMF activate plant defense mechanisms, such as the production of secondary metabolites and the induction of defense-related enzymes, leading to reduced disease incidence and herbivore damage.

The discussion also highlights the potential applications of AMF-based strategies in sustainable agriculture. Utilizing AMF to enhance nutrient uptake and stress tolerance can reduce the reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, leading to more environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Furthermore, promoting AMF diversity in agroecosystems can enhance ecosystem resilience and stability.

CONCLUSION

The review concludes that arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi play a significant role in enhancing plant growth and promoting sustainable agriculture. The diversity of AMF species and their interactions with various plant hosts contribute to the variability in plant growth

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promotion and stress tolerance responses. Understanding AMF diversity and the mechanisms underlying their beneficial effects on plants is essential for optimizing their use in agricultural systems.

By harnessing the potential of AMF, we can develop innovative strategies to improve nutrient uptake, enhance stress tolerance, and reduce the environmental impacts of conventional agricultural practices. Emphasizing AMF diversity in agricultural management can lead to more resilient and productive agroecosystems, contributing to global efforts to address food security and environmental sustainability challenges.

In conclusion, the review sheds light on the intricate role of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in enhancing plant growth and the significance of exploring their diversity. The findings provide valuable insights into the potential applications of AMF-based strategies in sustainable agriculture and ecosystem restoration. As we unveil the multifaceted role of AMF, their importance in enhancing plant growth and sustainable agriculture becomes increasingly evident. Future research in this field holds promise for developing novel approaches to address global challenges and foster a more sustainable and resilient food production system.

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