



Biological Processes and Soil Fertility

By -

Springer. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 436 pages. Dimensions: 9.2in. x 6.1in. x 1.0in. The success of shifting cultivation systems developed by subsistence farmers testifies to the resilience of the natural soil-plant ecosystems to recover from the offtake of nutrients in crops and loss of soil structure. By contrast, the development of intensive cropping systems requires large inputs especially of nitrogen, together with phosphorus, sulphur and other essential elements in order to maintain the nutrient levels needed for abundant crop yields. As Dr. Cooke ably pointed out in his introductory lecture, the discoveries and experiments of the 19th century encouraged farmers in temperate zones to rely greatly on chemical fertilizers supplements. However, the work of Charles Darwin on soil mixing by earthworms and the discovery by Hellriegel and Wilfarth in 1886 that the nodules on legume roots contain colonies of symbiotic bacteria able to capture atmospheric nitrogen molecules to the benefit of the host plant heralded a growing realization of the importance of soil biota in fertility studies. Biological fixation of nitrogen has been the theme of many meetings and publications hitherto but at this Conference, convened on the delightful campus of Reading University, attention was mainly focussed on...

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