

**ABUNDANCE AND DIVERSITY OF TOMATO RHIZOSPHERE
MICROBES AND THEIR EFFECT ON BACTERIAL WILT DISEASE**

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DECLARATION

I **Nampamya Doreen** declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for any other degree award to any university or institution before.

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Approval

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family and the many friends who have supported me throughout the study process.

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For God and my country!

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 Problem statement.....	9
1.3 Objectives	9
1.4 Hypotheses.....	10
1.5 Significance of the study.....	10
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
2.1 Soil rhizosphere microbiome	12
2.2 Factors affecting rhizosphere microbiome diversity.....	13
2.3 Bacterial wilt disease and its control	15
2.4 Microorganisms used as biological control agents of soil borne pathogens.....	17
2.5 Effect of land use on biocontrol efficacy of soil borne pathogens	19
2.6 Characteristics of biocontrols for bacterial wilt disease used in current study.....	20
CHAPTER THREE :MICROBIOME DIVERSITY IN THE TOMATO RHIZOSPHERE OF SOILS FROM DIFFERENT LAND USES	23
3.1 Introduction.....	23
3.2 Materials and Methods.....	24
3.4 Results.....	27
3.5 Discussion.....	32
3.6 Conclusion	34
CHAPTER FOUR: EFFECT OF LAND USE TYPES ON BIOLOGICAL CONTROL EFFICACY OF TOMATO BACTERIAL WILT	36
4.1 Introduction.....	36
4.2 Materials and Methods.....	36
4.3 Results.....	40
4.4 Discussion.....	47
4.5 Conclusion	49

CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	51
5.1 General Discussion.....	51
5.2 Conclusion	53
5.3 Recommendation.....	54
References.....	55

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Soil chemical and physical properties, and <i>Ralstonia</i> population	25
Table 2: Rhizosphere microbiome composition of 20 major classes in soils of different land use types	31
Table 3: Differences in the rhizosphere microbiome composition of twenty major genera of plants raised in soils collected from different land use types	32

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Tomato rhizosphere microbial diversity under different land uses.....	28
Figure 2: Tomato rhizosphere microbial abundance in soils from cultivated, fallow and forest land use types.....	29
Figure 3: Tomato rhizosphere major phyla microbiome composition of plants raised in soils from different land uses.....	30
Figure 4a: Biocontrol efficacy of bacterial wilt disease incidence under cultivated soil.....	41
Figure 4b: Effect of biocontrols on bacterial wilt disease incidence under cultivated land use under pathogen inoculated conditions.	42
Figure 5a: Tomato plant growth following inoculation with biocontrols in soils from different Land use types.....	44
Figure 5b: Increase in tomato plant height challenged with <i>R. solanacearum</i> in soils from different Land use types under pathogen inoculated conditions.....	45
Figure 6a: Tomato plant biomass following inoculation with biocontrols grown in soils from different Land use types.....	46
Figure 6b: Tomato plant biomass following inoculation with biocontrols and challenged with <i>R. solanacearum</i> in soils from different Land use types.....	47

ABSTRACT

The use of land for agricultural production is always accompanied with changes in microbial diversity and emergence of new pathogens. Microbial imbalances and unevenness have enhanced multiplication of pathogens and proliferation of many soil borne diseases, which are tedious to control. Biocontrols are promising and environmentally friendly agents against such diseases. However, microbiome composition and land use management have been mentioned as core factors in effectiveness of biocontrols. These factors are shaped by management and land use types. The focus of this research was to determine the diversity and abundance of microbes in the tomato rhizosphere and its effect on severity and control of bacterial wilt disease. Tomatoes were grown in a screen house at Namulonge using unsterilized soils from cultivated, fallow and forest land use types. Four biocontrols were used namely; *Bacillus subtilis*, *Bacillus amyloliquefaciens*, *Paenibacillus polymyxa* and *Stenotrophomonas rhizophila*. A negative control and a positive control were included. Data were collected on plant growth and yield parameters, and bacterial wilt disease incidence. Rhizosphere microbiome data were obtained using amplicon sequencing. Results showed that *B. subtilis* and *P. polymyxa* increased plant height in all land use types. Biocontrols *B. amyloliquefaciens* and *S. rhizophila* produced most dry biomass in cultivated land use, *B. amyloliquefaciens* and *P. polymyxa* in fallow and *P. polymyxa* and *B. subtilis* in forest land use type. In cultivated land use, biocontrols *B. amyloliquefaciens*, *B. subtilis* and *S. rhizophila* reduced bacterial wilt incidence by 31 % and *P. polymyxa* by 28 %. Fallow land use type had the highest microbial diversity and forest land use had the highest microbial abundance. The major phyla were *Proteobacteria*, *Actinobacteria* and *Acidobacteria* in Forest, Fallow and cultivated land uses respectively. *Bacillus* and *Paenibacillus* bacteria were more abundant in cultivated while *Stenotrophomonas* bacteria were more abundant in forest land use type.