Original Research Article

ASSESSMENT OF DIFFERENT LAND PREPARATION FOR *SAWAH* FARMING TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT IN NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AND RICE GRAIN YIELD IMPROVEMENT IN INLAND VALLEYS OF SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

Failures in agricultural development in inland valleys of southeastern Nigeria may have been caused by the inability of the farmers to develop these abundant inland valleys for such crops like rice using appropriate water management systems. In an attempt to replicate the successful Japanese *Satoyama* watershed management model in the African agro-ecosystems, *sawah* rice cultivation technology has been introduced to West Africa in the last two decades. This study was conducted in an inland valley at Akaeze, Ivo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Southeastern Nigeria, in 2012, 2013 and 2014 cropping seasons, to evaluate the effects of four different tillage specifications (tillage environments) and different amendments under *sawah* water management system on soil properties and rice grain yield. Puddling is one of the normal land preparation processes employed in the development of *sawah* fields, which are usually located in lowlands. *Sawah* described as an Indo-Malaysian word for padi, refers to leveled rice field surrounded by bunds with inlets and outlets for irrigation and drainage. A split- plot in a randomized complete block design was used to evaluate these two factors (tillage specifications/environments and soil amendments) as they affect the soil properties of the studied location and the grain yield of rice as a test crop. The four tillage specifications/environments for rice growing served as main plots and are; complete *sawah* tillage- bunded, puddled and leveled rice field (CST); farmers tillage environment- no bunding and leveling rice field (FTE); incomplete *sawah* tillage-bundding with minimum leveling and puddling rice field (ICST) and partial *sawah* tillage- after bunding, no puddling and leveling rice field (PST). The amendments, which constituted the sub-plots, were applied as follows: 10 t ha^{-1} rice husk, 10 t ha^{-1} of rice husk ash, 10 t ha^{-1} of poultry droppings, 400 $kgha^{-1}$ of N.P.K. 20:10:10 and 0 tha^{-1} (control). The study was undertaken in 3 cropping seasons (2012, 2013 and 2014) using the same watershed and treatments. The additive residual effects of the amendments were not studied in the course of this research. A bulk soil sample was collected at 0-20 cm depth in the location before tillage and amendments for initial soil characteristics. At the end of each harvest, another soil sampling was carried out on different treated plots to ascertain the changes that occurred in the soil due to treatments application. Selected soil chemical properties analyzed for included; soil pH, OC, total nitrogen, exchangeable bases (Na^+, Ca^{2+}, Mg^{2+} and K^+) and CEC, while the rice grain yields was also measured at each harvest. The soil amendments were analyzed for N, P, K, Ca, Mg, Na, and organic carbon. Data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using Genstat 3 7.2 Edition. The results showed that the soil pH, organic carbon (OC) and total nitrogen (TN) were significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved by different tillage parameters for the three years of study. The exchangeable bases were equally significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved by the tillage specifications within the periods. CEC was significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved by the tillage environments on the 2nd and 3rd year of studies. The soil amendments significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved the soil pH, OC, TN and all the exchangeable bases within the periods of study. The interaction significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved the soil exchangeable Ca^{2+} and Mg^{2+} on the third year of study. The result showed a significant improvement on the rice grain yield by the tillage environments and amendments within the periods of study. It was also obtained that all the *sawah* adopted tillage environments positively improved both the soil parameters and rice grain yield relatively higher than the farmers' tillage environment. Generally, it was noted the superiority of organic amendments over mineral fertilizer in soil properties and grain yield improvement.

Key words: *sawah,* tillage environment, water management, amendments, rice grain yield, soil properties

INTRODUCTION

Increasing food production both to meet in-country requirements and to help the world overcome food crisis is one major issue facing Nigeria today. Nigeria is relatively blessed with enough rain and high potential inland valleys for cropping. In spite of the potentials of Nigeria inland valleys especially the Southeast for Agricultural use, these areas are yet to be exploited fully.

Poor soil fertility and inefficient weed and water control are the major constraints to proper utilization of these inland valleys for sustainable rice-based cropping [1 – 4].
The soils of Southeastern Nigeria particularly, Ebonyi State is low in fertility. The soils have been noted to be acidic, low in organic matter status, cation exchange capacity and other essential nutrients [5 – 9]. Studies on the interaction of organic and inorganic manure with water management systems to improve soil properties under rice *sawah* management system have not received much attention in Nigeria.
Determining appropriate fertility, weed and water management practices could lead to improved and sustainable crop yields in these areas. An African adaptive *sawah* lowland farming with small scale irrigation scheme for integrated watershed management will be the most promising strategy to tackle these problems and restore the degraded inland valleys in these areas for increased and sustainable food production [10 – 12]. With the introduction of the *sawah* rice production technology to Nigeria in the late 1990s and its high compatibility with our inland valleys, the place of these land resources in our agricultural development in this Southeastern Nigeria and realization of green revolution is increasingly becoming clearer Obalum *et al*. [13]. However, most farmers do not know much about the rudiments or fundamentals of this technology. It is therefore important to note that the rice field environment determines good management of fertility, weed and water. Andriesse, [14] noted that in order to realize and sustain the potential benefits accruable from cultivating the inland valleys of West Africa, much of the research effort in these land resources is geared towards alleviating productivity constraints.
Sawah has been described severally as an *Indo-Malaysian* word for *padi* (Malay word for paddy) or lowland rice management system comprising bunding, puddling, levelling and good water management through irrigation and drainage [15]. *Sawah* system ensures that certain water level (minimum and maximium) is maintained in field plots during the growing period of the plant. It restores/replenishes the lowland with nutrients as it resists erosion. The mechanisms in *sawah* system of nutrient replenishments encourage not only rice growth, but also the breeding of various microbes, which improves biological nitrogen fixation [16].
In southeastern Nigeria, especially Ebonyi State activities aimed at ensuring food security include the cultivation of rice in the numerous inland valleys in the area under the traditional and partial *sawah* tillage systems. The impacts of full adoptions of the complete *sawah* tillage system (in which puddling is a key soil management practice) in terms of soil fertility improvement and crop yield have not been studied.
The study aimed at bridging the gaps in knowledge of appropriate *sawah* tillage methods for the development of suitable *sawah* environment in inland valley rice production and soil fertility maintenance among the rice farmers in Nigeria. It also aimed at assessing different soil amendments using different ploughing (tillage environments) to *sawah* technology for appropriate fertility, rice and water management in inland valleys of Southeastern Nigeria.

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Location of Study

The study was conducted in 2012, 2013 and 2014 on the floodplain of Ivo River in Akaeze, Ebonyi South agro-ecological zone of Ebonyi State.

Akaeze lies at approximately latitude $05^0 56'$ N and longitude $07^0 41'$ E. The annual rainfall for the area is 1,350 mm, spread from April to October with average air temperature of 29^o C [17]. The relief of the study area is low-lying and undulating. The geology of the area comprises sequences of sandy shales, with fine grained micaceous sandstones and mudstones that is Albian in age and belongs to the Asu River Group [18].

The site is within the derived savanna vegetation zone with grassland and tree combinations. The soils are described as Aeric Tropoaquent [19] or Gleyic Cambisol [20]. The soils have moderate soil organic carbon (OC) content on the topsoil, low in pH and low cation exchange capacity (CEC). Soils are mainly used for rain-fed rice cultivation during the rains and vegetable production as the rain recedes.

2.2 Field method

The field location was divided into four different main plots where the four tillage practices were adopted. Bulk (composite) sample was collected at 0- 20 cm soil depth for initial soil characteristics (Table 1). Out of the four main plots, three were demarcated with a 0.6 m raised bunds. In these plots, water was controlled and maintained to an approximate level of between 5 cm to 10 cm from 2 weeks after transplanting to the stage of ripening of the grains, while in other plot without bunds which represent the farmers' tillage field; water was allowed to flow in and out as it comes, as described below:
The four tillage practices which represented the 4 main plots include;

- Main plot I; Complete *sawah* tillage: bunded, puddle and leveled rice field (CST)
- Main plot II; Incomplete *sawah* tillage: bunded and puddle with minimum leveling rice field (ICST)
- Main plot III; Partial *sawah* tillage: bunded, no puddling and leveling rice field (PST)
- Main plot IV; Farmers tillage practice: no bunding, puddling and leveling rice field (FTE)

The complete and incomplete *sawah* tillage practices were tilled with power-tiller according to the specification of the tillage practice; the rest of other tillage practices were manually tilled using the specifications stated above.
This was followed by the demarcation of each of the main plots into five subplots with other raised bunds, which were treated with soil amendments. In each of the sub- plots, the following treatments were arranged as a Split-Plot in a randomized complete block design (RCBD).

- I PD Poultry droppings @ 10 ton/ha
- II F NPK fertilizer (20:10:10) @ 400 kg/ha recommended rate for rice in the zones
- III RHA Rice husk ash @ 10 ton/ha obtain within the vicinity
- IV RH Rice husk @ 10ton/ha, also obtained within the vicinity
- V CT Control (no soil amendment)

Table 1: Some properties of the topsoil of the experimental plots (0-20 cm) before tilling and amendment

Soil Property	Value
Clay (%)	10
Silt (%)	21
Total sand (%)	69
Textural class	SL
Organic matter %	2.64
Organic carbon % (OC)	1.61
Total nitrogen % (N)	0.091
pH (H_2O)	3.6
pH (KCl)	3.0
Exchangeable bases ($cmolkg^{-1}$)	
Sodium (Na)	0.15
Potassium (K)	0.04
Calcium (Ca)	1.0
Magnesium (Mg)	0.6
Cation exchange capacity (CEC)	5.6
Exchangeable acidity (EA)	3.2
Available phosphorous (mg/kg)	4.20
Base saturation (BS)	24.70

L = Loamy soil; SL = Sandy-loam soil

Table 2: Nutrient compositions (%) in the amendments

	Amendment		
	Poultry dropping (PD)	Rice husk (RH)	Rice husk ash (RHA)
OC	16.52	33.75	3.89
N	2.10	0.70	0.056
Na	0.34	0.22	0.33
K	0.48	0.11	1.77
Ca	14.4	0.36	1.4
Mg	1.2	0.38	5.0
P	2.55	0.49	11.94
C:N	7.87	48.21	6.71

OC = Organic carbon; N = Nitrogen; Na = Sodium; K = Potassium; Ca = Calcium; Mg = Magnesium; P = Phosphorous; C:N = Carbon: Nitrogen ratio

Each treatment was replicated three times and each sub-plot was 6 m x 6 m. The PD, RHA and RH were incorporated manually into the top 20 cm soil depth of the plots that received them 2 weeks before transplanting. The nutrient contents of these organic amendments were determined (Table 2).

The test crop was high-tillering rice variety *Oryza sativa var. FARO 52 (WITA 4)*. The rice seeds were first raised in the nursery and later transplanted to the main field after 3 weeks in nursery. At maturity, rice grains were harvested, dried and yield computed at 90% dry matter content. At the end of harvest, soil samples were collected from each replicate of every plot from each of the location for chemical analyses to determine the changes occurred in the soil due to the treatments application.

2.3 Laboratory methods

Soil samples were air-dried and sieved with 2 mm sieve. Soil fractions less than 2 mm from individual samples were then analyzed using the following methods; Particle size distribution of less than 2 mm fine earth fractions was measured by the hydrometer method as described by Gee and Bauder [21]. Soil pH was measured in a 1:2.5 soil:0.1 M KCl suspensions. The soil OC was determined by the Walkley and Black method described by Nelson and Sommers [22]. Total nitrogen was determined by semi-micro kjeldahl digestion method using sulphuric acid and $CuSO_4$ and Na_2SO_4 catalyst mixture [23]. Exchangeable cations were determined by the method of Thomas [24]. CEC was determined by the method described by Rhoades [25].

2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was performed using GENSTAT 3 7.2 Edition. Treatment means were separated and compared using Least Significant Difference (LSD) and all inferences were made at 5% Level of probability.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Effects of *sawah* tillage environments and amendments on the soil pH

The results of soil pH (Table 3) revealed that there was significant difference (P<0.05) among the *sawah* tillage environment. The results (Table 3) indicated that among the tillage environments, complete *sawah* tillage environment significantly increased the soil pH in all the 2nd and 3rd year of study. The pH values varied from 3.79 – 4.02, 4.30 – 4.64, 4.47 – 4.83 (farmers' – complete sawah tillage environment) in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of study, respectively. It was noted from the results that farmers tillage environment generally performed statistically ($p < 0.05$) lower relatively to other *sawah* tillage environment for the three years of study. The increased pH values in complete *sawah* tillage environment could be attributed to the geological fertilization with materials from the upland region that are later moved into the rice field, thereby increasing the base saturation of the soil, hence improvement in the pH of the soil. This agreed with Wakatsuki *et al.* [26] and Fashola *et al.* [27] who affirmed that fertile topsoil formed in forest ecosystem and sedimentation of the eroded topsoil in lowland *sawah* is the geological fertilization process. Generally, the significant improvement in pH of the studied soil in all the *sawah* tillage environments where water is ponded could also be linked to the findings of Russel [28], that the pH of a submerged soil usually rises, but where the temperature of the soil, the amount of reducible substances, or the amount of ferric iron is too low to produce sufficient ferrous iron for the buffering to become operatives, the pH may tend to decrease.

Nwite *et al.* [9] remarked that pH increased significantly in *sawah* water – managed system in a two year of study to evaluate *sawah* and non-*sawah* water management systems in a similar location. The soil pH was significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved higher in soils treated with rice husk ash in all the *sawah* tillage including the farmers' tillage environment for the three years of study. The values ranged from 3.57 – 4.30, 3.50 – 4.84 and 3.73 – 5.03, in the 1^{st}, 2^{nd} and 3^{rd} year of study, respectively. The significant improvement made by RHA on pH agrees with the findings of Abyhammer *et al.* [29]; Markikainen, [30] and Nwite *et al.* [12]; who stated that ash amendment could induce a pH increase by as much as 0.6 – 1.0 units in humus soils. Generally, the result showed that soils treated with amendments increased pH significantly higher than untreated for period of study. This result is in conformity with the finding of Opara-Nnadi *et al.* [31] who reported pH increase following the application of organic wastes.

Table 3: Effects of Tillage environments and amendments soil pH

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
	Year 1					
Complete	3.6	3.7	4.1	4.2	4.5	**4.02**
Incomplete	3.6	3.9	4.3	3.8	4.4	**4.01**
Partial	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.9	4.3	**3.88**
Farmer	3.5	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.9	**3.79**
Mean	**3.57**	**3.84**	**3.97**	**3.93**	**4.30**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments				NS		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment				0.1789		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments				0.3553		
	Year 2					
Complete	3.7	4.8	4.8	4.7	5.1	**4.64**
Incomplete	3.4	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.9	**4.51**
Partial	3.4	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.7	**4.42**
Farmer	3.4	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.6	**4.30**
Mean	**3.50**	**4.68**	**4.68**	**4.63**	**4.84**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments				0.1182		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment				0.0897		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments				NS		
	Year 3					
Complete	4.0	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.3	**4.83**
Incomplete	3.7	4.8	4.9	4.8	5.0	**4.65**
Partial	3.7	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.0	**4.61**
Farmer	3.5	4.6	4.8	4.7	4.8	**4.47**
Mean	**3.73**	**4.83**	**4.83**	**4.97**	**5.03**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments				0.1952		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment				0.1230		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments				NS		

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash, NS = non-significant.

3.2 Effects of *sawah* tillage environments and amendments on the soil organic carbon (SOC)

It was also obtained that *sawah* tillage environments significantly ($p < 0.05$) affected soil organic carbon (SOC) pool higher compared to farmers' tillage method (Table 4). The results (Table 4) showed that complete *sawah* tillage environment significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved the accumulation of soil organic carbon over other *sawah* tillage environments. 0.92 – 1.34, 1.03 – 1.47, 1.06 – 1.51 range values were obtained in the first, second and third year, farmers' to complete tillage field, respectively. This could be attributed to finer fractions that were formed after the destruction of the soil structure due to puddling in the complete *sawah* tillage environment [13]. This shows the superiority of *sawah* eco-technology if the whole components are fully employed on *sawah* farming operations. It is also significant in harnessing the health conditions of the soil and reduction in global warming. Hirose and Wakatsuki, [10]; Wakatsuki *et al.* [32] submitted that *sawah* fields will contribute to the alleviation of global warming problems through the fixation of carbon in forest and *sawah* soils in ecologically sustainable ways.

This result also affirms the findings of Igwe *et al.* [17] that higher soil organic carbon was recorded in soils with finer fraction (WSA<1.00) brought about by well puddle activity associated with a complete *sawah* technology. This arrangement confirms the submission of Igwe and Nwokocha [33] and Lee *et al.* [34] that more SOC was found in finer aggregates than in the macro-aggregates. Follet [35] showed that sequestering CO_2 from the atmosphere through improved soil management practices can have a positive impact on soil resources, because increasing soil C increases the functional capabilities of soils.
It was also obtained from the results (Table 4) that soil amendments significantly improved the soil organic carbon relatively higher than the control. The result equally indicated a significantly higher SOC concentration on plots amended with rice husk dust than plots amended with other treatments. The result confirms the findings of Lee *et al.* [34] who reported from a long-term paddy study in southeast Korea that continuous application of compost improved SOC concentration and soil physical properties in the plough layer, relative to inorganic fertilizer application. The results also showed that there was significant improvement on the buildup of SOC with the interactions of *sawah* tillage environments and amendments at a long-term management. This agreed with the submission that incorporation of plant residues coupled with appropriate puddling and water management build up organic carbon status of soil [36].

Table 4: Effects of Tillage environments and amendments soil organic carbon

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
	Year 1					
Complete	0.83	1.72	1.21	1.85	1.09	**1.34**
Incomplete	0.76	1.22	1.21	1.28	1.15	**1.13**
Partial	0.90	1.02	1.03	1.47	1.21	**1.13**
Farmer	0.63	1.09	1.09	1.21	0.57	**0.92**
Mean	**0.78**	**1.26**	**1.14**	**1.45**	**1.01**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.2650			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.2579			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
	Year 2					
Complete	0.99	1.81	1.46	1.89	1.20	**1.47**
Incomplete	0.92	1.28	1.49	1.53	1.22	**1.29**
Partial	0.87	1.19	1.42	1.57	1.14	**1.24**
Farmer	0.74	1.11	1.14	1.22	0.96	**1.03**
Mean	**0.88**	**1.35**	**1.38**	**1.55**	**1.13**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.2134			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.1558			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
	Year 3					
Complete	1.07	1.80	1.52	1.91	1.27	**1.51**
Incomplete	0.92	1.21	1.55	1.38	1.24	**1.26**
Partial	0.67	1.27	1.53	1.69	1.13	**1.26**
Farmer	0.83	1.17	1.13	1.20	0.99	**1.06**
Mean	**0.87**	**1.36**	**1.43**	**1.54**	**1.16**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.1897			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.2131			

LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash, NS = non-significant.

3.3 Effects of *sawah* tillage environments and amendments on the soil total nitrogen

The results (Table 5) also indicated that there was significant difference among the *sawah* tillage environments in the second and third year of study in the site. It was equally obtained that among the four tillage environments, complete *sawah* tillage environment statistically ($p < 0.05$) improved soil total nitrogen higher than other tillage adopted environments. This affirms the submissions made by some researchers that, soil submergence also promotes biological nitrogen fixation (BNF) [37], and submerged soils can sustain an indigenous N supply for rice as evidenced by long-term stable yields in minus-N plots in long term experiments. Buresh *et al.* [37] stated that uncontrolled water in lowland rice field results in alternate wetting and drying which leads to greater sequential nitrogen-denitrification than with continuous submergence.

The results (Table 5) equally pointed highly significant (Table 5) differences on the soil total nitrogen with application of amendments in all the three years of the study. It was obtained that NPK amended plots did improve the element higher within the period of study. Consequently, there was an increased trend in the soil total nitrogen as the year progresses.
The interaction of the two factors only improved the soil total nitrogen significantly in the second year of study.

Table 5: Effects of Tillage environments and amendments soil total nitrogen

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
Year 1						
Complete	0.059	0.117	0.098	0.079	0.084	**0.088**
Incomplete	0.049	0.098	0.084	0.065	0.075	**0.074**
Partial	0.051	0.089	0.093	0.088	0.112	**0.087**
Farmer	0.050	0.089	0.079	0.084	0.061	**0.073**
Mean	**0.053**	**0.098**	**0.089**	**0.079**	**0.087**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			NS			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.02060			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
Year 2						
Complete	0.060	0.117	0.103	0.103	0.095	**0.095**
Incomplete	0.045	0.110	0.095	0.089	0.081	**0.084**
Partial	0.041	0.095	0.099	0.092	0.099	**0.085**
Farmer	0.043	0.079	0.075	0.072	0.069	**0.068**
Mean	**0.047**	**0.100**	**0.093**	**0.089**	**0.086**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.00679			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.00684			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			0.01340			
Year 3						
Complete	0.065	0.117	0.116	0.107	0.089	**0.099**
Incomplete	0.047	0.114	0.098	0.095	0.085	**0.088**
Partial	0.041	0.102	0.107	0.098	0.094	**0.089**
Farmer	0.047	0.083	0.079	0.080	0.075	**0.073**
Mean	**0.050**	**0.104**	**0.100**	**0.095**	**0.086**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.01268			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.00876			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash, NS = non-significant.

3.4 Effects of *sawah* tillage environments and amendments on the exchangeable bases

The results (Tables 6, 7, 8 and 9) indicated that different *sawah* tillage environments significantly improved the exchangeable bases with complete *sawah* tillage environment giving a higher significant ($p < 0.05$) increase in the exchangeable bases in the three years of study than others. Generally, all the *sawah* tillage environments with *sawah* technology component(s) statistically ($p < 0.05$) improved the exchangeable bases relatively higher than the farmers'/traditional adopted tillage environment. Eswaran *et al*., [38]; Abe *et al*., [39] reported that these natural soil fertility replenishment mechanisms observed in *sawah* adopted plots are essential for enhancing the sustainability and productivity of lowland rice farming systems in inherently unfertile soils in West Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. Nwite *et al.,* [9] affirms that essential plant nutrients such as K^{+}, Ca^{2+} and Mg^{2+} including fertility index like the CEC were improved upon in *sawah* managed plots than non-*sawah* managed plots within the studied period in an experiment conducted in one of the same location. The results (Tables 6, 7, 8 and 9) also showed that the soil amendments equally improved ($P<0.05$) the exchangeable bases in the studied location. Generally, the result confirmed that rice husk ash performed significantly higher in the improvement of the exchangeable bases than other treatments. This result confirms the submission of Nwite *et al.* [12] that amending the lowland soils of Southeastern Nigeria with plant residue ash under *sawah* management system of rice production improved the organic carbon and total nitrogen, exchangeable K^{+}, Ca^{2+} and Mg^{2+} of the soil.

It was also recorded that the interactions of the four tillage environments and amendments significantly improved the exchangeable magnesium and calcium in the second and third year of study.
This result agrees with Buri *et al.* [40] who report that increased nutrient use efficiency is basically associated with improved water management. The "*sawah*" system leads to not only significant improvements in nutrient use but also in water use as well.

Table 6: Effects of Tillage environments and amendments soil exchangeable sodium

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
Year 1						
Complete	0.107	0.153	0.177	0.197	0.150	**0.157**
Incomplete	0.107	0.173	0.183	0.197	0.120	**0.156**
Partial	0.143	0.247	0.197	0.187	0.140	**0.183**
Farmer	0.100	0.157	0.153	0.127	0.137	**0.135**
Mean	**0.114**	**0.183**	**0.178**	**0.177**	**0.137**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			NS			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.02772			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
Year 2						
Complete	0.163	0.250	0.243	0.240	0.267	**0.233**
Incomplete	0.140	0.223	0.227	0.217	0.240	**0.209**
Partial	0.153	0.220	0.223	0.220	0.233	**0.210**
Farmer	0.130	0.203	0.193	0.187	0.203	**0.183**
Mean	**0.147**	**0.224**	**0.222**	**0.216**	**0.236**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.01844			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.01748			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
Year 3						
Complete	0.183	0.260	0.263	0.250	0.290	**0.249**
Incomplete	0.173	0.233	0.237	0.230	0.250	**0.225**
Partial	0.173	0.240	0.233	0.230	0.260	**0.227**
Farmer	0.153	0.223	0.203	0.193	0.213	**0.197**

Mean	**0.171**	**0.239**	**0.234**	**0.226**	**0.227**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.02638			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.02475			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash, NS = non-significant.

Table 7: Effects of Tillage environments and amendments soil exchangeable potassium

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
Year 1						
Complete	0.017	0.057	0.097	0.053	0.070	**0.059**
Incomplete	0.013	0.050	0.060	0.040	0.057	**0.044**
Partial	0.013	0.036	0.050	0.030	0.047	**0.035**
Farmer	0.013	0.023	0.023	0.016	0.040	**0.023**
Mean	**0.014**	**0.042**	**0.058**	**0.035**	**0.053**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.01713			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.01484			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
Year 2						
Complete	0.027	0.070	0.090	0.073	0.093	**0.071**
Incomplete	0.013	0.067	0.110	0.063	0.087	**0.068**
Partial	0.023	0.067	0.080	0.067	0.063	**0.060**
Farmer	0.013	0.053	0.070	0.053	0.060	**0.050**
Mean	**0.019**	**0.064**	**0.088**	**0.064**	**0.076**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.01032			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.01031			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
Year 3						
Complete	0.040	0.073	0.097	0.077	0.103	**0.078**
Incomplete	0.040	0.077	0.123	0.073	0.090	**0.081**
Partial	0.033	0.073	0.087	0.077	0.087	**0.071**
Farmer	0.023	0.067	0.087	0.070	0.067	**0.063**
Mean	**0.034**	**0.073**	**0.098**	**0.074**	**0.087**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			NS			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.01873			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash, NS = non-significant.

Table 8: Effects of Tillage environments and amendments soil exchangeable calcium

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
Year 1						
Complete	1.13	1.67	1.80	1.47	1.87	**1.59**
Incomplete	1.07	1.57	1.53	1.50	1.83	**1.50**
Partial	1.00	1.53	1.47	1.47	1.47	**1.39**
Farmer	1.00	1.43	1.33	1.53	1.40	**1.34**
Mean	**1.05**	**1.55**	**1.53**	**1.49**	**1.64**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.0751			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.1625			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			

	Year 2					
Complete	1.13	2.07	1.97	1.93	2.67	**1.95**
Incomplete	1.00	1.77	2.00	1.77	2.20	**1.75**
Partial	1.00	1.80	1.80	1.77	2.00	**1.67**
Farmer	1.00	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.70	**1.50**
Mean	**1.03**	**1.81**	**1.84**	**1.77**	**2.14**	
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments			0.1017			
LSD (0.05) Amendment			0.1266			
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments x Amendments			0.2403			
	Year 3					
Complete	1.27	2.13	2.13	2.00	2.93	**2.09**
Incomplete	1.07	1.87	2.13	1.80	2.43	**1.86**
Partial	1.03	1.97	1.93	1.93	2.20	**1.81**
Farmer	1.00	1.70	1.77	1.70	1.77	**1.59**
Mean	**1.09**	**1.92**	**1.99**	**1.86**	**2.33**	
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments			0.1485			
LSD (0.05) Amendment			0.1606			
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments x Amendments			0.3108			

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash.

Table 9: Effects of Tillage environments and amendments soil exchangeable magnesium

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
	Year 1					
Complete	0.37	1.27	1.20	1.07	1.93	**1.17**
Incomplete	0.47	1.00	1.20	1.13	1.27	**1.01**
Partial	0.53	1.13	0.93	1.00	1.53	**1.03**
Farmer	0.40	0.93	1.07	.080	1.27	**0.89**
Mean	**0.44**	**1.08**	**1.10**	**1.00**	**1.50**	
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments			NS			
LSD (0.05) Amendment			0.2636			
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
	Year 2					
Complete	0.60	1.73	1.97	1.73	2.73	**1.75**
Incomplete	0.60	1.60	1.73	1.43	2.00	**1.47**
Partial	0.63	1.30	1.40	1.13	1.80	**1.25**
Farmer	0.43	1.00	1.07	1.00	1.27	**0.95**
Mean	**0.57**	**1.41**	**1.54**	**1.33**	**1.95**	
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments			0.1182			
LSD (0.05) Amendment			0.1413			
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments x Amendments			0.2696			
	Year 3					
Complete	0.93	1.93	2.07	1.93	2.93	**1.96**
Incomplete	0.70	1.80	1.87	1.60	2.27	**1.65**
Partial	0.70	1.40	1.40	1.23	2.00	**1.35**
Farmer	0.50	1.10	1.17	1.07	1.37	**1.04**
Mean	**0.71**	**1.56**	**1.63**	**1.46**	**2.14**	
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments			0.1479			
LSD (0.05) Amendment			0.1409			
LSD (0.05) Tillage environments x Amendments			0.2789			

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash.

3.5 Effects of *sawah* tillage environments and amendments on the soil cation exchange capacity (CEC)

The values of CEC (Table 10) in the whole soils in the first year was not positively influenced by different tillage environments, but the use of different *sawah* tillage environments significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved the CEC in the 2nd and 3rd year of study. It was generally observed that all *sawah* tillage environments significantly ($p < 0.05$) highly influenced the CEC relative to the farmers' environment, with complete tillage environment improving it best. The CEC values varied from 5.87 – 6.75 cmolkg^{-1}, 5.59 – 10.31 cmolkg^{-1} and 5.83 – 11.31 cmolkg^{-1}, in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year, respectively. This result implies that there was geological fertilization process and cycling of nutrients in the inland valley soils. It also implies that soil erosion which tries to erode most topsoil nutrient of most inland valleys are eliminated or reduced when all the components of *sawah* technology is employed during lowland rice field operations. These assertion agrees with [41, 42, 10, 43, 44] that the soils formed and nutrients released during rock-weathering and soil formation processes in upland areas arrive and accumulate in lowland areas through geological fertilization processes, such as soil erosion and sedimentation, as well as surface and ground water movements or colluviums formation processes. Ideal land use patterns and landscape management practices will optimize the geological fertilization processes through the optimum control of hydrology in a given watershed [38, 39].
The results (Table 10) also indicated a significant improvement on the soil CEC due to amendments within the period of study. Generally, there was a long-term improvement on the CEC of the locations with the application of different amendments. Poultry dropping amended plots generally improved the soil CEC higher than other amendments within the periods of study. The values ranged from 4.55 – 7.35 cmolkg^{-1}, 4.33 – 9.47 and 4.35 – 10.60 cmolkg^{-1}, in the first, second and third year of study.

Table 10: Effects of Tillage environments and amendments soil cation exchange capacity (cmolkg^{-1})

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
Year 1						
Complete	4.53	6.27	8.67	6.53	7.73	**6.75**
Incomplete	4.67	5.20	7.47	6.40	7.33	**6.21**
Partial	5.33	5.20	6.73	6.07	7.40	**6.15**
Farmer	3.67	5.80	5.67	7.27	6.93	**5.87**
Mean	**4.55**	**5.62**	**7.13**	**6.57**	**7.35**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			NS			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			1.035			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
Year 2						
Complete	4.60	10.33	12.07	13.07	11.47	**10.31**
Incomplete	4.47	8.20	10.67	7.07	8.20	**7.72**
Partial	4.60	9.47	8.40	7.20	8.27	**7.59**
Farmer	3.63	5.77	6.73	5.07	6.73	**5.59**
Mean	**4.33**	**8.44**	**9.47**	**8.10**	**8.67**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			2.021			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			1.348			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			
Year 3						
Complete	5.20	10.60	14.07	13.80	13.20	**11.37**
Incomplete	3.87	8.80	12.73	11.47	8.73	**9.12**
Partial	4.67	10.47	8.73	7.67	9.07	**8.12**
Farmer	3.67	5.87	6.87	5.93	6.80	**5.83**
Mean	**4.35**	**8.93**	**10.60**	**9.72**	**9.45**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			1.381			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			1.703			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			NS			

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash, NS = non-significant.

3.6 Effects of *sawah* tillage environments and amendments on the rice grain yield

The results (Table 11) indicated a significant difference in the grain yield with the different *sawah* tillage environments in all the planting years. It did record that the highest significant values in the grain yield were obtained in complete *sawah* adopted tillage environment relative to other tillage environments including the farmers' tillage environment. The mean values varied from 2.84 – 4.75 t/ha, 3.28 – 4.72 t/ha and 6.06 – 6.96 t/ha in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of planting, respectively (Table 11). The result agrees with the submissions of Becker and Johnson, [45]; Ofori *et al*, [43]; Touré *et al*, [46] that improved performance of field water management can sustainably increase rice yields. On the other hand, the higher grain yield of 6.06 t/ha recorded in the farmers' field could be attributed to higher level of nutrients management involved and improved variety used in the study. This agrees with the findings of Buri *et al.,* [40] who maintained that lowlands constitute one of the largest and appropriate environments suitable for rice cultivation. They further stated that, within these environments, crop is traditionally grown without any structures to control water, minimal use of fertilizers and most often than not local varieties are used. Paddy yields are therefore normally low under the traditional system and vary sharply due to yearly variation in total rainfall and its distribution.

Generally, all the *sawah* tillage environments significantly increased the grain yield higher than the farmers' growing environment within the three years of study.
The results indicated very great significant ($p < 0.05$) improvements in the yield of rice in the amended plots over the non-amended (control) plots for the three years of planting. The results showed the range mean values of the rice as; 1.91 to 4.23 t/ha in the first year, 1.62 to 4.77 t/ha in the second year and 3.76 to 7.47 t/ha in the third year of planting.
Achieving high yield in most West African ecology is difficult without soil amendment, as the soils are highly leached, porous and low in essential plant nutrient [6, 47].

The results equally indicated a significant increase in the grain yield of rice due to the interaction of sawah tillage environment and the amendments within the periods of study.
This result confirms the submissions of Becker and Johnson, [45]; Sakurai, [48]; and Toure *et al.* [46], that *sawah* system development can improve rice productivity in the lowlands to a great extent when applied in combination with improved varieties and fertilizers, and a certain amount of improvement can even be expected by bund construction which is one of the *sawah* system components.

Table 11: Effects of *Sawah* Tillage environments and amendments on the Rice Grain Yield (ton/ha)

***Sawah* Tillage environments**	**Amendments**					
	CT	**NPK**	**PD**	**RH**	**RHA**	**Mean**
Year 1						
Complete	2.03	5.37	5.73	5.37	5.23	**4.75**
Incomplete	1.97	3.70	4.17	3.10	3.83	**3.35**
Partial	1.87	3.37	3.77	3.07	4.10	**3.23**
Farmer	1.77	3.47	3.27	3.37	2.33	**2.84**
Mean	**1.91**	**3.98**	**4.23**	**3.73**	**3.88**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments				0.7956		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment				0.5520		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments				1.1885		
Year 2						
Complete	1.97	5.77	5.77	5.30	4.80	**4.72**
Incomplete	2.00	4.90	4.90	4.73	4.60	**4.23**
Partial	1.43	4.27	4.37	4.80	4.67	**3.91**
Farmer	1.07	3.40	4.03	4.17	3.73	**3.28**
Mean	**1.62**	**4.58**	**4.77**	**4.75**	**4.45**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments				0.5494		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment				0.5894		
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments				1.1422		

	Year 3					
Complete	4.21	7.30	8.27	7.22	7.78	**6.96**
Incomplete	3.86	7.15	6.80	6.94	6.52	**6.25**
Partial	3.51	6.38	7.64	7.50	7.29	**6.46**
Farmer	3.44	5.82	7.15	7.43	6.45	**6.06**
Mean	**3.76**	**6.66**	**7.47**	**7.27**	**7.01**	
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments			0.550			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Amendment			0.685			
LSD $_{(0.05)}$ Tillage environments x Amendments			1.30			

CT = control, NPK = nitrogen. phosphorous. potassium, PD = poultry dropping, RH = rice husk, RHA = rice husk ash.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The study revealed the better performance of complete *sawah* tillage environment in ensuring the optimum restoration of degraded inland valley soils with optimum grain yield. It was noted the superiority of organic amendments over mineral fertilizer on a short-term bases in soil properties and grain yield improvement. The combination of good *sawah* management and amendment practices would improve the soil properties and rice grain yield. Therefore, s*awah* ecotechnology is possibly the most promising rice production method because the *sawah* system is already a highly productive and sustainable rice production system. These natural soil fertility replenishment mechanisms are essential for enhancing the sustainability and productivity of lowland rice farming systems in inherently unfertile soils in Southeastern Nigeria.

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