

1 EVALUATING THE IMPACTS OF LAND DEGRADATION ON THE
2 QUALITY OF SOILS AND THEIR VARIATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT
3 CLUSTERS IN MOSIRO IRRIGATION SCHEME_
4 in Nairobi Mosiro, Narok County, Kenya
5

6 **ABSTRACT**
7

8 The impact of land degradation on soil quality was studied through the analysis of the
9 changes in soil quality indicators between the year 2002 and 2013 in Mosiro Irrigation
10 Scheme. The same indicators were applied to identify and characterize different
11 clusters whose variations were analyzed using ANOVA at 95% confidence level
12 through Genstat Computer Software. The results showed that all the soil quality
13 attributes changed in the range of 21.4 and 79.1%. The greatest change was recorded
14 in potassium which decreased by 79.1%, followed by phosphorous (71.8 60%
decrease)(not in the text or 60%.

15 The increase in sodium by 47% had a negative implication in terms of its increased
16 potential to cause soil structural deterioration, while the increase of soil pH from 6.74
17 to 8.18 implied increased tendency of soil to fix most nutrients rendering them
18 unavailable to plants. The soil organic carbon, nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium
19 decreased by over 20%, which is much higher than the permissible threshold of 5% in
20 ten years.

21 The variations in soil characteristics between the five clusters identified were found to
22 be significant for cation exchange capacity (P=0.002), magnesium (P=0.003) and bulk
23 density (P=0.01). There was no significant difference for calcium (P=0.147). All the
24 textural characteristics of soil vary significantly with the highest being clay content
25 (P=0.001), followed by silt (P=0.0018) and sand (P=0.008). This meant that each cluster
must have different irrigation schedules in terms of water supply quantity, duration and
interval which should form was found to be an

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- 26 important consideration in designing the irrigation scheduling for different clusters.
- 27 For the micro-nutrients, the variation of manganese ($P < 0.001$), zinc ($P = 0.003$), copper

28 (P=0.008) and iron (P=0.031) between different clusters was found to be significant.
29 This had an important implication on the prescription of the quantity of these micro-
30 nutrients for different clusters during implementation of the envisaged management
31 strategies.

32

33 INTRODUCTION

34

35 Delineation of soils into clusters which vary to an extent that they would respond
36 differently to management inputs is a preamble to precision agriculture, aimed at
37 improved soil quality and water use efficiency (Muya et al., 2011). Soil is a key
38 natural resource and its quality is as a result of integrated effects of all soil forming
39 factors and management on soil properties that determine crop productivity and
40 environmental sustainability (Sharma et al., 2004). As a result of human activities on
41 land over time, the capacity of a given soil to produce goods and services is often
42 decreased at much more rate than the formation of topsoil (Rijsberman, 1984 not in the
reference list). A

43 cluster of soils or production systems are said to be biophysically sustainable if the
44 compounded sufficiency of land quality attributes (productivity index) does not
45 deteriorate over a realistic time horizon (Driessen, 1997). Indexing and monitoring
46 soil productivity under crop and soil specific production system is the means to judge
47 whether or not the system is sustainable in biophysical sense (Hurni, 1997).
48 According to Muchangi et al. (2005), agricultural production from most irrigation
49 schemes in Kenya have either reduced significantly over time or are far much below
50 the level expected per unit of water supplied, and with advancement of agriculture
51 under irrigation, soils are being degraded, thereby causing tremendous decline in their
52 quality and productivity. Maintaining soil quality at a desirable level is a complex

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53 issue due to involvement of the interactive actions of the soil forming factors on the
54 parent materials to form soil properties that determine its quality and productivity
55 (Prasad and Biswas, 1999; [Arshad and Gilley, 1999](#)). The results of these interactions
are the vertical, spatial
56 and temporal variations in soil properties or soil quality indicators within and between
57 clusters of soils under different landforms. The assessment and evaluation of soil
58 quality indicators and their variations are required, not only to determine the type and
59 quantity of agricultural inputs to apply, but also soil and water management strategies
60 for sustained ecosystem services under irrigated agriculture. In this regards, there is an
61 urgent need to adopt appropriate soil and plant management practices to reduce land
62 degradation and maintain soil quality at a desirable level, based on the evaluation of
63 homogeneity and heterogeneity of the delineated clusters of soils under different
64 landforms or slopes (Smith and Elliot, 1990). Low irrigation and fertilizer use
65 efficiency as well as declining quality and productivity of soil in most of the schemes
66 are exacerbated by the blanket fertilizer recommendations that ignore natural and
67 biophysical diversity of production systems (Muya et al., 2012). For example,
68 fertilizer recommendations in Kenya by Kenya Agricultural Research Institute were
69 based on trials without detailed characterization and clustering of production systems,
70 based on relevant soil quality indicators (Sanginga and Woomer, 2009). Soil quality
71 assessment, indexing and clustering of production systems under different landforms
72 and slopes is a new paradigm in soil science research that is applied in vertical, spatial
73 and temporal evaluation of land degradation, aggregation and management effects on
74 soil quality and productivity. The degree of land aggregation that caters for soil
75 structural formation and stabilization are influenced by the factors of soil formation
76 including geology (parent material), climate, topography, time and human activities.
77 However, the degree of variations in the resulting soil properties depends on the scale.

78 At farm level, the effects of climate and geology are generally insignificant, hence the
79 effects of topography and human activities on soils under different clusters over
80 specified time becomes an important issue to examine at site specific scale. In this
81 context, the objective of this research was to examine the soil conditions within different
topographical facets

81 — were examined with

82 the objective of to-evaluate ing the homogeneity of soils and the impacts of land
83 degradation on their quality as a basis of formulating the cluster-specific interventions
84 for improved nutrient and water use efficiency in Mosiro Irrigation Scheme. The
85 homogeneity of different clusters of biophysical domains was assessed, based on the
86 physical parameters and chemical characteristics which influence the availability of
87 water and plant nutrients, while the impacts of land degradation on soil productivity
88 was examined by indexing the dynamic and management dependant soil quality
89 indicators. 90

89 — objectives of the research were not given

91 MATERIALS AND METHODS

92

93 Mosiro Irrigation Scheme is situated South-West of Nairobi in Narok County, about
94 12 km South of Mosiro trading centre, and about 82 km from Ntulele Market Centre.

95 The intersection of the grid line 36° 04' E and 1° 28' S marks approximately the
96 centre of the scheme, at an elevation of approximately 1265 m above the sea level.

97 The area lying North of the scheme consists of steep, rolling and undulating
98 landscapes and slopes with high potential for run-off, sediment yields and transport,
99 thereby forming the major source of increased land degradation and siltation of
100 irrigation channels. Therefore, water use efficiency and biophysical sustainability of
101 the scheme depends on the extent to which the excess flows are checked and soil
102 aggregate stabilization is maintained (Muya et al., 2013). The Physiography of the

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scheme comprises two major landforms, namely flat to gently undulating erosion plain and undulating old river alluvial plain. The soils of erosion plain are developed on volcanic tuff while those of river alluvial plain are derived from alluvium and volcanic ash mixtures respectively (Waruru et al., 2002). The study area was divided into five sampling areas, with slopes of 0-0.5%; 0.6-1.5%; 1.6-2.5%; 2.6-4.0% and 4.1-4.5%. Systematic soil investigation and mapping was done on transects across all the sampling areas from the upper erosion plain into the bottomlands of the river alluvial plain in the same area soil survey and mapping were carried in the year 2002. Clustering of the production systems was done, based on the visual assessment of observable soil parameters (soil colour, depth, texture, consistence and structure) across the five sampling areas. In each of the five sampling area, five representative soil profiles were identified for detailed description of vertical and spatial characteristics of soils. For the analysis of the impacts of land degradation on soil quality and productivity, composite soil samples were collected at the depth of 0-20 cm around each of the representative soil profiles. The soil quality indicators selected for this purpose are those whose quantitative relationships with maize yield have been developed by Aune and Lal (1997) with other merits shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Indicators for assessing soil productivity

Soil quality indicators	Merits for selection
Soil pH	Controls several factors that influence soil's functions, toxicity of soil's internal environment and availability of micro-nutrients.
Soil organic carbon	Influences both nutrient availability and soil aggregate formation.
Nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium	They are macronutrients that determine crop growth.

124 For the assessment of homogeneity of different clusters, calcium (Ca), magnesium
125 (Mg), bulk density (BD) and particle size distribution (texture). They were selected
126 because they form an important measure of soil productivity as is explained by the
127 merits indicated in Table

2([Amacher et al. \(2007\)](#)). 128

129 **Table 2: Indicators for evaluating the homogeneity of different clusters**

Soil quality indicators	Merits for selection
Calcium and magnesium	The levels of these elements and their ratios determine the availability of potassium (one of the macro-nutrients).
Bulk density	It has one of the most important soil structure attributes that controls the circulation of air, water and nutrients between the soil media and plants, hence a principle determinant of soil health.
Particle size distribution	Determines the retention and availability of soil moisture to plants.

130
[Source: Amacher et al. \(2007\)](#)

131

132 Prior to laboratory analysis of the selected soil quality attributes, the soil samples
133 were air dried and sieved through a 2-mm sieve. Soil pH was measured in 1:2.5 soil to
134 water mixture, using the relevant electrodes according to Hinga et al. (1980). Organic
135 carbon was oxidized with concentrated H_2SO_4 and K_2CrO_7 and determined
136 calorimetrically (Anderson and Ingram, 1993). Total N was determined using the
137 method provided by Okaleb et al. (2002). Cation exchange capacity (CEC) and
138 exchangeable cations were extracted using 1N ammonium acetate at pH 7.0, followed
139 by flame photometry for the determination Na, K, Mg and Ca, using flow analyzer
140 (Okaleb, 2002). Soil texture was determined using hydrometer method (Hinga et al.,
141 1980). Indexing of soil productivity was done, using semi-quantitative land evaluation
142 methods (Driessen and Konijn, 1992), where ranges of numerical values of the
143 selected soil quality indicators were rated and assigned fractions in percentage, being
144 guided by the critical limits of the indicators. The critical limit of an indicator is

defined as the numerical value of the soil property where crop yield is 80% of the maximum yield (Aune and Lal, 1997).

Productivity index (PI) was determined using parametric methods of land suitability assessment provided by Driessen and Konijn (1992) that involved assigning ranges of numerical values and percentage fractions to each soil property selected as key soil quality indicators, ranking (Table 3) and combining all the single factor valuations in one mathematical equation that produces a numerical expression of the system performance or a relative index of performance (compounding) as follows:

$$PI = (SQ1/100) \times (SQ2/100) \times (SQ3/100) \times (SQn/100)$$

Where:

PI=Productivity index in % and SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQn are percentage ratings of soil quality indicator number 1, 2, and number n.

Table 3: Ratings of soil quality indicators

Soil quality indicator	Ranges of numerical values	Assigned values in %	Ratings	Remarks
Soil pH	5.6-6.8 or 4.8-5.5 or	100	1	80% of the maximum yield of maize obtained from pH of 5.1 (Aune and Lal, 1997)
	5.6-6.8 4.8-5.5 or	80	2	
	6.9-7.5 4.0-4.7 or	60	3	
	7.6-8.7 3.5-4.5 or	40	4	
	8.7-10.0 <3.5 or	20	5	
Exchangeable sodium percentage	<2.0	100	1	The permissible environmental threshold is 6 where maize yield is 80% (Weeda, 1987) not in the reference
	2.1-10.0	80	2	
	10.1-20.0	60	3	
	20.1-35.0	40	4	
	>35.0	20	5	
Bulk density (g/cc)	<1.2	100	1	According to PIERCE et al (1986), not in the reference bulk density of 1.0-1.4 gave sufficiency of 100%
	1.3-2-1.5	100	2	
	>1.5	75	3	
Potassium (m.e./100g)	>0.5 0-	100	1	80% of the maximum yield obtained by the value 0.7 (Aune and Lal, 1997)
	2-0.5	80	2	
	0.1-0.2	60	3	
	<0.1	40	4	

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Phosphorous (ppm)	>60	100	1	7.6 ppm gave 80% of the maximum yield of maize (Aune and Lal, 1997)
	21-60	90	2	
	10-20	80	3	
	<20	70	4	

164 To assess the homogeneity of the identified clusters the variations in the selected soil
165 quality attributes and PI within and between the clusters were evaluated by subjecting
166 the data obtained from laboratory determinations (in the 2002 and 2013) to analysis of
167 variance (ANOVA) at 95% confidence level where those soil quality indicators with
168 significant levels were separated using Genstat Computer Software. 169

169 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

170 Clusters identified and their characteristics

171 Five clusters were identified and described as shown in Table 4

173

174 **Table 4: Clusters and their characteristics**

Clusters		Description
Cluster No	Physiographic unit	
C1	Upper level structural plains	Very deep clay, in places, has crusting, causing surface water stagnation, especially, on bare ground, showing high susceptibility to disruptive external forces including animal trapping and raindrop impacts.
C2	Lower level structural plains	Shallow to moderately deep sandy clay loam to clay, in places gravelly, pale yellow to reddish brown clay over murrum.
C3	Old alluvial plain	Moderately structured and deep clay loam to clay with relatively high carbonate concentration, in places shallow and highly calcareous
C4	Highly degraded, gently sloping structural plains	Dominantly shallow sandy loam to loam, on relatively steep soils towards the low-lying area with low water uptake and retention capacity, being extremely calcareous, saline, sodic and highly degraded with relatively low productive capacity.
C5	On alluvial flood plains	Extremely deep stratified sandy clay loam to loam.

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177 The impacts of land degradation on soil quality and productivity

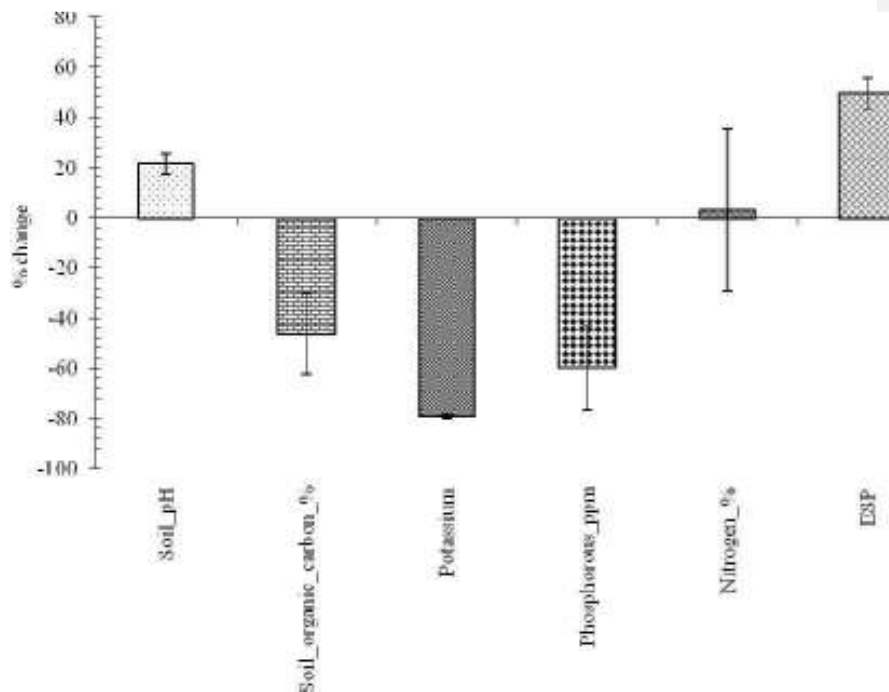
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179 All the soil quality attributes changed in the range of 21.4 and 79.1% between the year
 180 2002 and 2013 (Figure 1). According to Arshad and Martin (2002), changes in the
 181 soil attributes could be used as measure of the impacts of land degradation on soil
 182 quality. The increase in soil pH from 6.74 to 8.18 implied an increased tendency of
 183 soils to fix phosphorous and render it unavailable to plants (Silveria, 2012). At soil pH
 184 above 8.0, the increased alkalinity triggers the release of aluminum, manganese and

185 molybdenum to a toxic level that impairs the root uptake of micro-nutrients such as
186 copper, zinc and iron (Whiting and Reeder, 2009). Soil organic carbon, nitrogen,
187 phosphorous and potassium decreased by over 20% which is much higher than the
188 permissible threshold decrease of 5% in ten years (Amacher et al., 2007; Steer, 1998)
(Amacher et al., 2005) not in the reference. The greatest

189 percentage change was recorded in potassium which decreased by over 79%, followed
190 closely by phosphorous (60% 71.8% decrease 460) %???. The increase in ESP by over
47% had a

191 negative implication in terms of increased deterioration of soil structure by the
192 increased accumulation of sodium (Waruru et al., 2002) and Muya,
(2002) not in the reference. 193



194
195 **Figure 1: The impacts of land degradation on soil quality**
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197
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201

202 **Characteristics and homogeneity of different clusters**

203
204

205 The mean values of soil quality indicators for different clusters are presented in Table 5.

206 The soil characteristics with the highest variation between the clusters is the clay

207 (P<0.003) followed by CEC (P=0.002). Significant variations occur also in other

208 characteristics, except calcium and sodium.

209 **Table 5: Physical and chemical characteristics of different clusters**

Clusters	Physical and chemical characteristics of soils					
Bulk density (g/cc)	Textural characteristics			Ca	Mg	CEC
	% Sand	% Silt	% Clay	Me%	Me%	Me%
	17.3c	19.3c	63.3a	52.7	4.1a	23.6a
1.34b	42.0ab	28.7bc	29.3bc	52.8	2.7b	22.1a
1.27c	36.0b	28.0bc	36.0b	63.2	3.1ab	24.5a
1.28c	54.0a	31.3ab	14.7d	33.5	0.7c	26.8a
1.56a	36.0b	41.3a	22.7cd	36.0	2.4b	13.1b
1.18d	0.008	0.018	0.001	0.147	0.003	0.002
<0.01						

210

C1 C2

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C3

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C4

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C5

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P

214 **Key: g/cc=grams/cubic centimeters; Ca=Calcium, Mg=Magnesium; CEC=Cation**

215 **exchange capacity; me=Miliequivalent**

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218 **Variations in soil textural characteristics and their management implications**

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220 As is indicated in Figure 2, the textural characteristics of soils, namely sand, silt and

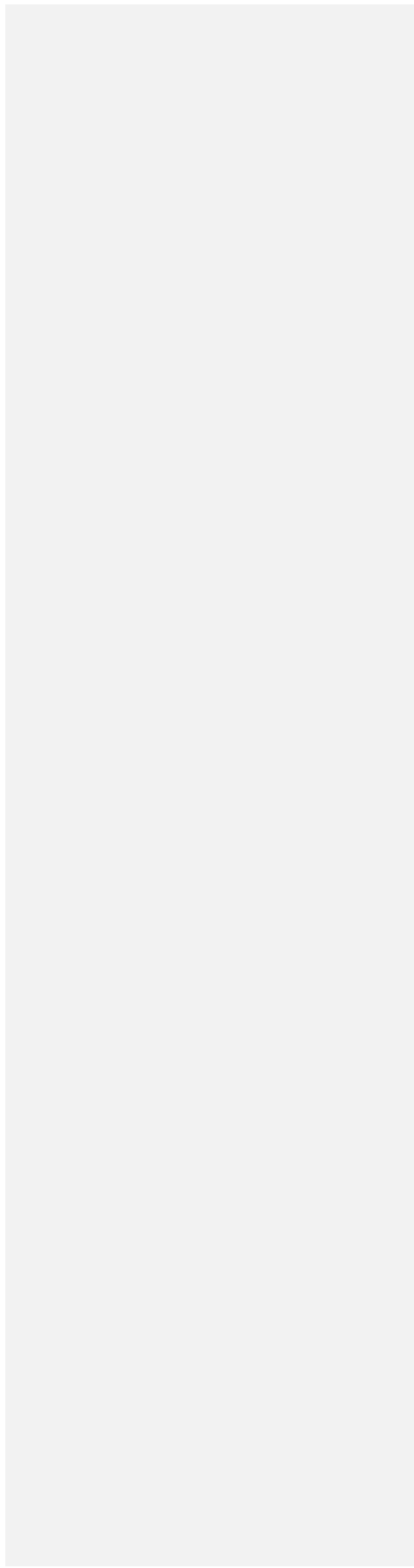
221 clay content vary significantly between different clusters, and this has an important

222 implication in irrigation water management. Muya (1996) showed significant

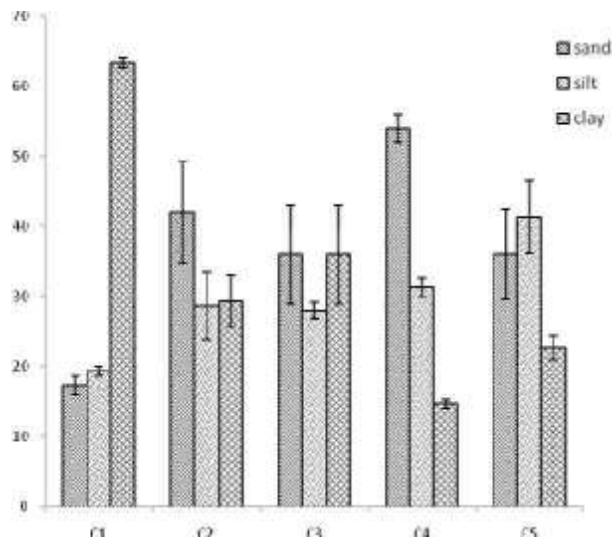
relationships between these attributes and available soil moisture holding capacity,

which may be applied in designing the irrigation water scheduling for different clusters.

For
exampl
e,
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five has
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223 lighter and more frequent irrigation, while cluster one has the highest clay content,
 224 meaning more and less frequent water application than any other clusters. 225



226
 227 **Figure 2: Variations in % sand, silt and clay contents between** ~~Textural variations between~~
 different clusters Titles are not given. Units ????. label the axis

228 229 Variations in soil micro-nutrients and their management implications

230
 231 The variations of the micro-nutrients between different clusters were found to be
 232 significant for all the micro-nutrients except sodium (Table 6). The variation of
 233 manganese ($P < 0.001$), zinc ($P = 0.003$), copper ($P = 0.008$) and iron ($P = 0.031$) between
 234 different clusters was found to be significant. This had an important implication on
 235 the prescription of the quantity of these micro-nutrients for different clusters during
 236 implementation of the envisaged management strategies. According to White and

Zasoski (1999), precision agriculture, aimed at improved nutrient use efficiency should be based on the understanding of the variations in the levels of micro-nutrients as a basis of prescribing the soil and site specific types and quantity of micro-nutrients required as is normally done for macro-nutrients.

Table 6: Variations in Micro-nutrients between different clusters

<u>Clusters</u>	<u>Micro-nutrients</u> <u>Mn me%</u>	<u>Cu</u>	<u>Fe</u>	<u>Zn</u>	<u>Na</u> <u>me%</u>
C1 4.0a		-	<u>ppm</u>	<u>ppm</u>	
C2	0.9b	<u>Ppm</u> jbc	<u>Ppm</u> 8b	<u>Ppm</u> b	0.7
C3	0.8b				
	0.8ab	30.7b	6.6b	0.5	
C4	0.1d	0.5c	11.8b	0.4c	0.7
C5	0.4c	0.9a	39.9ab	4.7a	0.8
P	<0.001	0.008	0.031	0.003	0.155

Key: Mn=Manganese; Cu=copper; Zn=zinc; Na=Sodium; me=Miliequivalent; ppm=parts per million

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CONCLUSIONS

The study demonstrated the impacts of land degradation on soil quality in terms of the change in soil quality attributes between the year 2002 and 2013. The change in all the soil quality attributes examined was found to be in the range of 21.4 to 79.1%. The increase in soil pH from 6.74 to 8.18 implied an increased tendency of soil colloids to fix nutrients and render them unavailable to plants, which could explain the decreased availability of nutrients. The decrease in phosphorous, potassium, nitrogen and soil organic carbon by over 20% was found to be much higher than 5%, which is the value permissible (threshold) within 10 years.

The five clusters identified (C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5) were described as: very deep clay with crusts that caused water stagnation on the surface (C1); shallow to moderately deep sandy clay loam to clay in places gravelly over murrum (C2);

261 moderately structured and deep clay loam to clay with high carbonate concentration
262 (C3); Shallow and highly degraded sandy loam to loam (C4) and extremely deep,
263 stratified sandy clay loam to clay loam (C5). The variations in soil characteristics
264 between the five clusters were found to be significant for cation exchange capacity
265 (P=0.002), magnesium (P=0.003) and bulk density (P=0.01). There was no significant
266 difference for calcium (P=0.147). All the textural characteristics of soil vary
267 significantly with the highest being clay content (P=0.001), followed by silt
268 (P=0.0018) and sand (P=0.008). This meant that irrigation scheduling should be
designed for different clusters, based on their textural differences, which have important bearing
on the soil water uptake and retention capacities.~~was found to be an important consideration in~~
~~designing the irrigation scheduling for different clusters.~~ 270

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271 The variation of manganese (P<0.001), zinc (P=0.003), copper (P=0.008) and iron
272 (P=0.031) was found to be significant, meaning that the quantity of the fertilizers
applied to supply these nutrients should be different for different clusters as opposed to blanket
application of the same quantities for all the soil units.
272 ~~This had an important implication on the~~
273 ~~prescription of the quantity of these micro nutrients for different clusters during~~
~~implementation of the envisaged management strategies.~~ 275

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