

The perennial constraints of food shortages and lack of a balanced diet due to poverty, significantly threaten human survival and overall development in sub-Saharan Africa. Within the East African region and especially Kenya, low and unreliable rainfall distribution and infertile soils largely account for low and unsustainable agricultural productivity. This is reflected in low seasonal crop yields at smallholder level, where the maize (staple) yields are frequently below 1 t/ha/season, a result of lack of adequate nutrients and related inputs. The low yields can be compared against the potential 5 t/ha/season when using inputs in Western Kenya. Research done in other parts of the world shows that charcoal addition to soil sustainably increases soil fertility and that charcoal amended soils maintain high inherent fertility for a long time. The aim of this study was to determine the ability of charcoal from Acacia tree and an inorganic fertilizer to increase microbial populations and enhance other soil characteristics and hence improving soil fertility that would result in increased yields of maize. The results of the study showed that: charcoal had an effect on soil fertility.

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