Copper accumulation in vineyards soils of Lombardy and its transfer to surface and ground water - A survey in Oltrepò pavese.


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Introduction
Copper (Cu) contained in pesticides causes in Italian vineyards soils concentrations from 400 to 600 ppm, much higher than those allowed in soils intended for residential or parks and gardens use (120 ppm). The soil layer affected by Cu accumulation is about 50 cm thick, the maximum of concentration lies in the top and decreases with depth. In the hilly soils erosion can lead to the transport into streams of residual Cu distributed to grapes with pesticides. The average of Cu concentration observed in the ground water (3-5 ppb) is largely below the limit established by OMS and the Italian law on drinking water (ppm: 0.472/0.99). These values are not dangerous for human health but they can however have impact on the environment, for that reason Cu is classified as a primary pollutant.

The project RAMET provided a wide soil survey in the Valle Versa, a historic vine-growing area in the Oltrepò region, in order to study the environmental fate of copper (rate of soil accumulation, migration through the soil profile and to the surface and ground water).

The survey
Description and sampling of five representative soil profiles (labeled as P001, P002, CP1, CP2 and CP3).

- Determination of Pseudo total concentrations of metals by aqua regia digestion (Atomic Absorption Spectrofotometry).
- Speciation of Cu conducted by selective and sequential extractions on some samples.
- Data on solid transport (st) in the surface water and on ground water quality collected in earlier studies of the Dipartimento di Scienze della Terra, Università di Pavia (Vercesi, 2003; Sauer, 2004; Goldaglioni, 2004) and of Provincia di Pavia (Sacchi et al., 2006).
- Water of the Versa river sampled and analyzed during some flood events in order to quantify the solid transport. Mineralogical and chemical analysis have been carried out on st.

Cu in soils
Heavy metals analysis show a Cu enrichment in the top layer, always in combination with Zn and Mn, and occasionally with Cd and Pb. This is shown in all soil profiles except for P002.

- In CP2 an enriched carbonatic horizon at 60 cm depth interferes with metal migration towards the deeper layers (particularly for Cu and Zn).
- In CP3 a secondary enrichment of Zn and Pb in the top layer; as well as an undifferentiated concentration of Fe along the profile (a probable natural origin) is shown.
- In P001 a strong enrichment of Cu, Zn and Pb occurs in the top layer; Cu migrated below the topsoil (even if the highest concentration is at 10 cm); anthropogenic contribution visible up to Bw horizon; other metals (Cd, Mn, Ni, Pb, Zn) retained within the A horizon.
- In P002 an enrichment of Cd and Mn in the layer 0-10 cm is shown; P002 is the only profile without retention of Cu or Zn in the upper levels. Cu absence and Cd and Mn presence are unexplained.

Cu in surface water
Samples of solid transport (st) collected from the Versa river in autumn and spring have shown that the grain size of st, depending on flooding intensity, impacts on the mineralogical composition. Mineralogical phases are:

- Carbonates (about 30%)
- Smectite (about 22%)
- Other clay phases (about 30% in total)
- Feldspars (11%)
- Quartz (about 7%)

Mineralogical composition of st corresponds to that of medium and lower valley soils but highlights a mineralogical variability which supports fine particles (clays and carbonates) depending on the erosive strength of surface water, or rather on flooding intensity.

Cu in ground water
- Cu concentrations in ground water (Vercesi, 2003) have values from 25 to 70 ppb (expected values in uncontaminated ground water: 3-5 ppb; Flemming and Trevors, 1989).
- Concentrations over 10 ppb in ground water are often observed along Apennine margin between Casteggio and Stradella (Provincia di Pavia, Sacchi et al., 2006).
- Presence of Cu in ground water confirms that the migration into streams could be a transfer mechanism of Cu to the water system (the primary recharge area of the Oltrepò pavese aquifer in correspondence of the alluvial fan in the Apennine margin).

Conclusion
- In Lombardy the vine-growing area of Oltrepò is those where the long-lasting use of Cu-based pesticides causes the highest amount of Cu in soils, in association with Zn and occasionally with Cd and Mn.
- In the vineyards soils of the plain, Cu migrates vertically only, whereas in the hilly vineyards soils Cu mainly migrates laterally by run-off.
- Agricultural practices related to viticulture emphasize the soil natural predisposition to erosion and run-off, leading to a consistent solid transport of streams during flood events.
- In Cu is strongly fixed and poorly bioavailable, but its bioavailability increases in the process of erosion and transport because there is a selection for grain size and mineralogy towards Cu higher content and weakly bound fractions.
- A higher concentration of copper has been observed in ground water both in the hills and in the plain alongside vine growing areas.

The results of this study are published in a report (Regione Lombardia, 2007). The report is available for download on the website www.ersaf.lombardia.it

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