TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

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CEN ISO/TS 29843-2

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English Version

Soil quality - Determination of soil microbial diversity - Part 2: Method by phospholipid fatty acid analysis (PLFA) using the simple PLFA extraction method (ISO/TS 29843-2:2011, Corrected version 2012-02-01)

Qualité du sol - Détermination de la diversité microbienne du sol - Partie 2 : Méthode par analyse des acides gras phospholipidiques (PLFA) en utilisant la méthode simple d'extraction des PLFA (ISO/TS 29843-2:2011)

Bodenbeschaffenheit - Bestimmung der Diversität von Bodenmikroorganismen - Teil 2: Verfahren mittels Phospholipidfettsäure(PLFA)-Analyse unter Verwendung des einfachen PLFA-Extraktionsverfahrens (ISO/TS 29843-2:2011)

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Foreword

The text of ISO/TS 29843-2:2011, Corrected version 2012-02-01 has been prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 190 “Soil quality” of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and has been taken over as CEN ISO/TS 29843-2:2014 by Technical Committee CEN/TC 345 “Characterization of soils” the secretariat of which is held by NEN.

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Endorsement notice

The text of ISO/TS 29843-2:2011, Corrected version 2012-02-01 has been approved by CEN as CEN ISO/TS 29843-2:2014 without any modification.

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Introduction

Phospholipids are essential components of membranes of all living cells. Extracted from soil samples in fatty acid form (PLFA: phospholipid fatty acids) or ether-linked isoprenoid side chains (PLEL: phospholipid ether lipid), they provide quantitative and qualitative insights into the soil's viable/active microbial biomass. Cellular enzymes hydrolyse and release the phosphate group within minutes to hours following cell death (Reference [1]). The determination of total PLFA and PLEL provides a quantitative measure of the viable biomass of soil, i.e. microorganisms from all three domains of the biosphere (bacteria, fungi and archaebacteria). PLFA and PLEL can also allow for taxonomic differentiation within complex microbial communities (References [2] and [3]). This approach is now well established in soil ecology and serves as a phenotypic, and thus complementary, tool to genotypic (molecular genetic) approaches for determining microbial diversity. Apart from taxonomic descriptions, the PLFA technique enables the determination of physiological changes within microbial consortia. For instance, the monoenic PLFA 16:1ω7c and 18:1ω7c are increasingly converted to the cyclopropyl fatty acids cy17:0 and cy19:0 in *Gram-negative* bacteria in response to environmental stress (Reference [4]).

Different methodologies are available for the determination of soil fatty acids. These methodologies present different levels of complexity when applied and provide different levels of resolution in the description of soil microbial communities. ISO/TS 29843-1 deals with the generally called "extended PLFA extraction method" while this part of ISO/TS 29843 deals with the generally called "simple PLFA extraction method" (References [5] and[6]).

This part of ISO/TS 29843, which deals with the simple PLFA extraction method, is accessible to most research and analytical laboratories involved in soil sciences. This methodology can be used for a wide range of soils. It provides a broad diversity measurement of a soil microbial community at the phenotypic level. It can be applied to biomass estimation and can be used to differentiate microbial communities among different soil samples (with the aid of an adapted statistical method). This method is especially adapted for detecting rapid changes in the soil microbial community structure. It can also be used to give a rough description of microbial groups present in soil samples (e.g. *Gram-positive* bacteria, actinomycetes, fungi). Table 1 (adapted from Table 1 in Reference [5]), presents a comparison of the sensitivity of the "extended PLFA" versus "simple PLFA" techniques.

Table 1 — Comparison of the sensitivity of the "simple" and "extended" PLFA techniques in characterizing shifts in the composition of microbial communities

Property	PLFA (simple)	PLFA (extended)
Ability to differentiate between two communities (with the aid of multivariate statistical methods)	Yes	Yes
Applicability for biomass estimation	Yes	Yes
Ability to register all single components of an entire community structure ("fingerprint")	No	Yes
Ability to register FAs other than EL-FAs	No	Yes
Estimation of number of FAs in soil samples	<50	200 to 400
Capacity to determine the linkage of the FAs to lipids in the molecule	Yes, EL	Yes, EL, NEL
Capacity to detect defined FAs in lower concentrations in the soil extract	No	Yes
Capacity to detect unusual FAs in the soil extract	No	Yes
Number of available signatures of FAs for defined organisms	Few	High numbers
Relationships of FAs widespread in the profile	High	Natura
Ability to identify the organisms causing the shift in microbial community	No	Basically yes

This method has been derived from the one first proposed in Reference [7] and later modified in Reference [1]. This revised method has been widely used (Reference [8]) and has also been discussed and compared to the extended PLFA extraction method in peer-reviewed articles (References [5] and [6]).

Soil quality — Determination of soil microbial diversity —

Part 2:
Method by phospholipid fatty acid analysis (PLFA) using the simple PLFA extraction method

1 Scope

This part of ISO/TS 29843 specifies a simple method for the extraction of only phospholipid fatty acids (PLFA) from soils.

ISO/TS 29843-1 specifies an extended method for the extraction and determination of both PLFA and PLEL from soils.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 10381-6, *Soil quality — Sampling — Part 6: Guidance on the collection, handling and storage of soil under aerobic conditions for the assessment of microbiological processes, biomass and diversity in the laboratory*

ISO/TS 29843-1, *Soil quality — Determination of soil microbial diversity — Part 1: Method by phospholipid fatty acid analysis (PLFA) and phospholipid ether lipids (PLEL) analysis*

3 Symbols and abbreviated terms (except chemical products and reagents)

FAs: fatty acids

EL-FAs: ester-linked FAs

NEL-FAs: non-ester-linked FAs

FAME: fatty acid methyl ester(s)

w_W: mass fraction of water in the soil, in grams of water per gram of dry soil (g/g)

GC: gas chromatography

FID: flame ionization detector

HPLC: high-performance liquid chromatography

4 Principle

Lipids are extracted using the extraction procedure in Reference [7]. Lipid extracts are fractionated on neutral lipids, glycolipids and phospholipids by liquid chromatography using an SI column. Phospholipids are transformed into fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) by mild alkaline hydrolysis. The different FAMEs are measured using gas chromatography (GC). A schematic overview of the procedures is given in Figure 1.