Soil Prokaryotic and Fungal Biome Structures Associated with

Crop Disease Status across the Japan Archipelago

Hiroaki Fujita[1], Shigenobu Yoshida[2], Kenta Suzuki[3] and Hirokazu Toju[1†]

[1]Center for Ecological Research, Kyoto University, Otsu, Shiga 520-2133, Japan

[2]Institute for Plant Protection, National Agriculture and Food Research Organization, Tsukuba,
Ibaraki 305-8666, Japan

[3]Integrated Bioresource Information Division, BioResource Research Center, RIKEN, Tsukuba,
Ibaraki 305-0074, Japan

[†]**Correspondence:** Hirokazu Toju (toju.hirokazu.4c@kyoto-u.ac.jp).

ABSTRACT

Archaea, bacteria, and fungi in the soil are increasingly recognized as determinants of agricultural
productivity and sustainability. A crucial step for exploring soil microbiomes with high
ecosystem functions is to perform statistical analyses on potential relationship between
microbiome structure and functions based on comparisons of hundreds or thousands of
environmental samples collected across broad geographic ranges. In this study, we integrated
agricultural field metadata with microbial community analyses by targeting > 2,000 soil samples
collected along a latitudinal gradient from cool-temperate to subtropical regions in Japan (26.1–
42.8 °N). The data involving 579 archaeal, 26,640 bacterial, and 6,306 fungal amplicon
sequencing variants detected across the fields of 19 crop plant species allowed us to conduct
statistical analyses on relationship among edaphic factors, microbiome compositions, and crop
disease prevalence. We then found that not only compositions of prokaryotic and fungal
communities but also balance between prokaryotic and fungal abundance had statistically
significant impacts on crop disease status. A network analysis suggested that the prokaryotes and
fungi could be classified into several species sets (network modules), which differed substantially
in associations with crop disease prevalence. Within the network of microbe-to-microbe
coexistence, ammonium-oxidizing archaea and nitrite-oxidizing bacteria were inferred to play
some roles in shifts between crop-disease-promotive and crop-disease-suppressive states of soil
microbiomes. The bird's-eye view of soil microbiome structure will provide a basis for designing
agroecosystems with high nutrient-use efficiency and disease-suppressive functions.

IMPORTANCE

Understanding how microbiome structure and functions are organized in soil ecosystems is one of the major challenges in both basic ecology and applied microbiology. Given the ongoing worldwide degradation of agroecosystems, building frameworks for exploring structural diversity and functional profiles of soil microbiomes is an essential task. Our study provides an overview of cropland microbiome states in light of potential crop-disease-suppressive functions. The large dataset allowed us to explore highly functional species sets that may be stably managed in agroecosystems. Furthermore, an analysis of network architecture highlighted species that are potentially used to cause shifts from disease-prevalent states of agroecosystems to disease-suppressive states. By extending the approach of comparative analyses towards broader geographic ranges and diverse agricultural practices, agroecosystem with maximized biological functions will be further explored.

KEYWORDS

alternative stable states, community stability, ecosystem functions, keystone species, meta-analysis, microbial interactions, network hubs, plant pathogens

RUNNING TITLE

Soil microbiome structure and crop disease prevalence

The ongoing global-scale degradation of agroecosystems is threatening food production (1, 2).
Maximizing the functions of microbial communities (microbiomes) is a prerequisite for building
bases of sustainable agriculture (3–7). Archaea, bacteria, and fungi in the soil drive cycles of
carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus within agroecosystems (8–12). Many of those microbes also
work to promote crop plant's tolerance to drought and high temperature stresses as well as
resistance to pests and pathogens (13–18). Importantly, those microbes vary greatly in their
physiological impacts on crop plants (19–21). Therefore, gaining insights into soil microbiome
compositions is an essential starting point for managing resource-use efficient and disease-
tolerant agroecosystems.

Since the emergence of high-throughput DNA sequencing, a number of studies have
revealed taxonomic compositions of prokaryotes and/or fungi in agroecosystem soil (22–24).
Those studies have explored microbial species that potentially support crop plant growth and/or
prevent crop plant disease (9, 16, 25, 26). Meanwhile, each of the previous studies has tended to
focus on specific crop plant species in specific farm fields (27) [but see notable exceptions (15,
22)]. Therefore, generality in relationship between microbiome structure and functions remain to
be examined in broader contexts [cf. global-scale analyses of soil microbiomes in natural
ecosystems (28–31)]. In other words, we still have limited knowledge of general patterns and
features common to soil microbiomes with high crop yield or those with least crop disease risk.
Thus, statistical analyses comparing microbiome structure among diverse crop plants across
broad geographic ranges (15, 22) are expected to deepen our understanding of microbial
functions in agroecosystems. In particular, comparative studies of thousands of soil samples
covering a wide range of latitudes will provide opportunities for finding general properties
common to microbial communities with plant-growth-promoting or crop-disease-suppressive
functions across diverse climatic conditions.

Large datasets of soil microbiomes will also allow us to estimate interspecific interactions
between microbial species (3, 32, 33). Archaea, bacteria, and fungi in soil ecosystems potentially
form entangled webs of facilitative or competitive interactions, collectively determining
ecosystem-level functions such as the efficiency of nutrient cycles and the prevalence of plant
pathogens (34, 35). Although statistical platforms for inferring such microbial interaction
networks have been proposed (32, 36), hundreds or more of microbial community samples are
required to gain reliable inferences on interactions that reproducibly occur in real ecosystems
(37). Thus, datasets consisting of thousands of soil samples collected across a number of local
ecosystems will provide fundamental insights into how soil ecological processes are driven by
cross-kingdom interactions involving archaea, bacteria, and fungi.

In this study, we conducted a comparative analysis of agroecosystem soil microbiomes
based on > 2,000 soil samples collected from subtropical to cool-temperate regions across the
Japan Archipelago. Based on the amplicon sequencing dataset representing farm fields of 19 crop
plant species, we profiled prokaryotic and fungal community compositions in conventional
agricultural fields in Japan. By compiling the metadata of the soil samples, we then examined
biotic and abiotic factors explaining diversity in the prevalence of crop disease. The soil
microbiome dataset was further used to infer the structure of a microbe-to-microbe interaction
network consisting of diverse archaea, bacteria, and fungi. We then identified clusters (modules)

of closely interacting microbial species within the network and examined whether such network
modules differ in their positive/negative impacts on crop plants. We further explored "hub" or
"core" species that were placed at the central positions within the inferred microbial interaction
networks. Overall, this study provides an overview of soil microbial diversity of cropland soil
across a latitudinal gradient, setting a basis for diagnosing soil ecosystem status and exploring
microbial species keys to manage agroecosystem functions.

RESULTS

Diversity of agroecosystem microbiomes

We compiled the field metadata of 2,903 soil samples collected in the research projects of
National Agricultural and Food Research Organization (NARO), Japan. The bulk soil of
farmlands was sampled from subtropical to cool-temperate regions (26.1–42.8 °N) across the
Japan Archipelago from 2006 to 2014, targeting 19 crop plant species (Fig. 1A; Data S1). Most
of the croplands were managed with conventional agricultural practices (characterized by
intensive tillage and chemical fertilizer/pesticide application), while some were experimentally
controlled as organic agricultural fields. The metadata (Data S1) included the information of
chemical [e.g., pH, electrical conductivity, carbon/nitrogen (C/N) ratio, and available
phosphorous concentration], physical (e.g., soil taxonomy), and biological (e.g., crop disease
level) properties, providing a platform for profiling ecosystem states of cropland soil.

To integrate the metadata with the information of microbial community structure, we
performed DNA metabarcoding analyses of both prokaryotes (archaea and bacteria) and fungi.
After a series of quality filtering, prokaryotic and fungal community data were obtained from
2,318 and 2,186 samples, respectively. In total, 579 archaeal amplicon sequence variants (ASVs)
representing 14 genera (11 families), 26,640 bacterial ASVs representing 875 genera (332
families), and 6,306 fungal ASVs representing 573 genera (240 families) were detected (Fig. 1B;
Fig. S1).

The prokaryotic communities did not have dominant taxa at the genus and family levels,
although the archaeal family Nitrososphaeraceae had the highest abundance at some research
sites (Fig. 1B). In contrast, the fungal communities were dominated by fungi in the families
Mortierellaceae, Chetomiaceae, and Nectriaceae (Fig. 1B). A reference database profiling of
fungal functional groups suggested that the fungal communities were dominated by plant
pathogenic and soil saprotrophic fungi (Fig. 1C) as characterized by the dominance of *Fusarium*
and *Mortierella* at the genus level (Fig. S1). Meanwhile, mycoparasitic fungi had exceptionally
high proportions at some research sites, as represented by the dominance of *Trichoderma*
(Hypocreaceae) at those sites (Fig. 1B; Fig. S1).

The prokaryotic and fungal communities differed in basic biodiversity patterns. In terms of
α-diversity at the family level, prokaryotic communities showed higher Shannon's entropy than
fungal communities in all but one of the research sites (Fig. 2A). In contrast, variability of
community structure among samples, i.e., Bray-Curtis β-diversity, was higher in fungi than in
prokaryotes in most study sites (Fig. 2B). Likewise, fungi showed higher levels of community

structural difference between research sites than prokaryotes (Welch's test; $t = -6.6$, df $= 168.9$, P
< 0.0001; Fig. 2C).

Microbiome structure and crop disease prevalence

Compiling the metadata of edaphic factors, we found that variation in the community structure of
prokaryotes and fungi was significantly explained by crop plant identity and soil taxonomy as
well as by soil chemical properties such as pH, electrical conductivity, C/N ratio, and available
phosphorous concentration (Fig. 3A-B; Figs. S2-3; Table 1). Meanwhile, both prokaryotic and
fungal community structure was significantly associated with the severity of crop disease (Fig.
4A; Table 2). Thus, the dataset as a whole offers an opportunity for understanding mechanisms
spanning physical, chemical, and biological processes in agroecosystems.

We then examined potential factors determining the prevalence of crop disease in
agroecosystems. In addition to chemical environmental factors (e.g., soil pH and electrical
conductivity), whose associations with agricultural productivity have been routinely examined
(38, 39), we explored biological factors critical to crop-plant disease level. The α-diversity of
prokaryotes and/or fungi, for example, is an index that can be estimated with DNA-based
profiling of soil biological communities. In further reconstructing biological factors in a high-
throughput manner, we focused on the ratio of prokaryotic abundance to fungal abundance.
Specifically, by applying a calibrated DNA metabarcoding method using artificial standard DNA
sequences with pre-defined concentrations (40), the relative concentrations of prokaryotic 16S
rRNA gene sequences to fungal ITS gene sequences were calculated (Fig. 4B; see Materials and
Methods for details). We then constructed statistical models comparing effects on crop-plant
disease level among various types of chemical/biological factors.

A series of analyses indicated that prokaryote/fungus ratios had strong impacts on crop-
plant disease level. While soil chemistry (soil pH) had marginally significant effects on the
proportion of diseased crop plants, the prokaryote/fungus ratios showed much stronger
associations with crop plant disease level (Model 1 in Table 3). Specifically, crop plant disease
was more likely to occur when prokaryotes were abundant relative to fungi (Fig. 4C). The effects
of prokaryote/fungus ratio on plant disease level were conspicuous even when they were
compared with effects of prokaryotic and fungal α-diversity (Model 2 in Table 3). The threshold
value over which more than 50 % of plants showed disease levels 2–5 was estimated to be around
0.7 in a log-ratio unit (Fig. 4C), although the values potentially vary depending on various factors
such as crop plants, geography, and climatic conditions.

Microbe-to-microbe network

We then examined the network architecture of potential microbe-to-microbe interactions within
the soil microbiomes. As the number of possible interactions inflates with that of examined
microbes (i.e., X^2 pairs, where X denotes the number of microbial species/ASVs), we targeted
microbial ASVs that appeared in ≥ 10 % of samples in the network statistical analysis. In total,
288 ASVs (17 archaea, 183 bacteria, and 88 fungi) were analyzed based on the algorithm of

sparse inverse covariance estimation for ecological association inference (SPIEC-EASI) with the
Meinshausen-Bühlmann (MB) method (36).

The inferred network of coexistence was subdivided into several "modules", in which
archaeal, bacterial, and fungal ASVs sharing environmental preferences and/or those in positive
interactions were linked with each other (Fig. 5A). We found that the network modules differed
considerably in their associations with crop-plant disease level (Fig. 5B; Fig. S4; Data S2).
Modules 3 and 7, for example, were constituted by microbes with potentially negative impacts on
crop plants, while Modules 1, 2, 4, and 5 were characterized by microbes associated with least
disease level (Fig. 5B).

189 Core species within the microbial network

We next explored microbial ASVs that potentially have great impacts on community- or
ecosystem-scale processes based on an analysis of the microbe-to-microbe network architecture
(Data S2). We found that some ASVs allied to a clade of ammonium-oxidizing archaea (41) [a
Nitrocosmicus ASV (A_0004) and other Nitrososphaeraceae ASVs (A_0002, A_0013, and
A_0016)] were associated with low disease level of plants and they were placed at core (hub)
positions as indicated by the betweenness centrality (42) index (Fig. 6A). Among microbes
associated with severely damaged plants, an *Chaetomium* fungus (F_00022) had the highest
network centrality (Fig. 6A).

When the microbial ASVs were ranked in terms of their topological roles in interlinking
multiple network modules (Fig. 5), potentially ammonium-oxidizing archaea in the family
Nitrososphaeraceae (41) and a nitrite-oxidizing bacterium in the genus *Nitrospira* (B_00048) (43)
were highlighted (Fig. 6B). The analysis also indicated that a *Fusarium* fungus (F_09978) was
placed at a hub position interlinking network modules (Fig. 6B). Although the genus *Fusarium* is
known as a predominantly plant-pathogenic taxon (44, 45), this particular fungal ASV (F_09978)
was strongly associated (correlated) with less-diseased crop plants (Fig. 6A): note that some
Fusarium species/strains are known to work as beneficial plant symbionts (46).

In terms of topological roles within respective modules, a *Chaetomium* fungus associated
with crop plant disease (F_00022) served as a hub within Module 7 (Fig. 6B), which consisted of
microbes associated with crop disease (Fig. 5B). A PLTA13 bacterium in the class
Gammaproteobacteria (B_00179) and a C0119 bacterium in the class Ktedonobacteria (B_00160)
were hubs within Modules 2 and 6, respectively (Fig. 6B), which showed specificity to less-
diseased crop plants (Fig. 5B).

213 DISCUSSION

We here profiled the diversity of agroecosystem microbiome structure across a latitudinal
gradient from cool-temperate to subtropical regions based on the analysis of > 2,000 soil samples.
The integration of the microbiome datasets with agricultural field metadata allowed us to perform
statistical tests of possible factors determining crop disease prevalence/severity. Moreover, an
analysis of microbe-to-microbe interaction networks inferred sets of microbes associated with

crop plant health. The network analysis further highlighted core archaea, bacteria, and fungi that
potentially play key roles in community- or ecosystem-level processes.

The prokaryotic communities of the agroecosystem soil involved diverse archaeal and
bacterial taxa (Fig. 1B). At the family level, an ammonium-oxidizing archaeal taxon,
Nitrososphaeraceae (47), was the most commonly observed, suggesting their ecosystem functions
related to nitrogen cycling from fertilizers (e.g., ammonium sulfate). Meanwhile, the relative
abundance of the archaeal taxon was small (5.5 % on average) as indicated by the lack of
dominant taxa within the prokaryotic communities (Fig. 1A). In contrast, the fungal communities
were constituted predominantly by several taxa such as Mortierellaceae, Chaetomiaceae,
Nectriaceae, Aspergillaceae, and Hypocreaceae (Fig. 1B). Our data also indicated that fungi
exhibited higher β-diversity among sampling positions or local communities than prokaryotes,
suggesting high spatial heterogeneity of their community structure (Fig. 2B-C). Indeed, fungal
communities were dominated by mycoparasitic fungi [e.g., *Trichoderma* (48) in Hypocreaceae]
(Fig. S1A) in some research sites, while they consisted of high proportions of plant pathogenic
taxa [e.g., *Fusarium* (44, 45) in Nectriaceae] (Fig. S1A) in others (Fig. 1C). These results suggest
that agroecosystem soil microbiomes can differ greatly in their crop-disease-suppressive and
crop-disease-promotive properties depending on their fungal community compositions. Indeed, a
statistical analysis indicated significant impacts of soil fungal community structure on crop
disease level, although the effects of community structure on disease prevalence was significant
as well for prokaryotes (Table 2).

We further explored ecological mechanisms determining crop disease prevalence based on
multiple regression models. Among the biotic and abiotic factors examined, balance between
prokaryotic and fungal abundance showed the strongest contributions to variation in crop disease
level (Table 3; Fig. 4A-B). The finding that crop disease is more prevalent under higher ratios of
prokaryotes to fungi (Fig. 4C) is of particular ecological and agricultural interest. Due to the
presence of plant-pathogenic fungi that have devastating impacts on crop production (49, 50),
fungicide chemicals have been used to suppress the entire fungal communities (51, 52).
Nonetheless, a number of studies have shown that the presence of mycoparasitic fungi (e.g.,
Trichoderma) is essential for suppressing plant pathogenic fungi within agroecosystems (48, 53).
Moreover, the presence of nematophagous fungal taxa [e.g., Orbiliales (54)] is the key to prevent
crop damage by cyst and root-knot nematodes (55). Therefore, positive sides of fungus-
dominated microbiome states need to be further investigated in light of taxonomic and functional
profiles of fungal communities.

A network analysis then suggested that diverse soil microbes could be classified into
several groups differing in associations with crop disease prevalence (Fig. 5). Such information
of microbial network modules helps us find optimal sets of microbes that should be inspected to
maintain crop-disease-suppressive soil microbiomes. Because interspecific interactions
(involving inter-kingdom interactions) are key drivers of microbial community dynamics (3, 33),
insights into stably coexisting species sets provide valuable platforms for managing
agroecosystem microbiome functions.

The analysis of network architecture further allowed us to explore core species within the
microbial network (Fig. 6). Because the microbes highlighted with the examined network indices

occupy key positions interconnecting many other microbes (56), their increase/decrease is expected to have profound impacts on whole community processes (3, 32, 33). In particular, control or manipulation of microbes located at the central positions interlinking different network modules (37) (i.e., microbes with high among-module connectivity; Fig. 6B) may trigger drastic shifts in microbial community structure between disease-promotive and disease-suppressive states (3). Interestingly, the candidate list of such core species involved ammonium-oxidizing archaea (Nitrosospharaeraceae) (41, 47) and a nitrite-oxidizing bacterium (*Nitrospira*) (43), which potentially play crucial roles in soil nitrogen cycling (10, 11) (Fig. 6B). These microbes are prioritized targets of research because they can be used not only to manage crop disease but also to optimize the pace of nitrate supply to crop plants.

Although the dataset across a latitudinal gradient provided an opportunity for gaining bird's-eye insights into the structure and potential functions of soil microbiomes, the results should be interpreted carefully with the recognition of potential methodological shortcomings and pitfalls. First, the approach of geographic comparison *per se* does not give a firm basis for deciphering microbial community dynamics. To gain fundamental insights into microbiome dynamics, we need to perform time-series monitoring (40, 57, 58) of soil prokaryotic and fungal community compositions. Second, information of microbial communities alone does not provide comprehensive insights into agroecosystem soil states. Given that soil ecosystem processes are driven not only by microbes but also by nematodes, arthropods, earthworms, and protists (59–62), simultaneous analyses of all prokaryotic and eukaryotic taxa (63, 64) will help us infer whole webs of biological processes. Third, amplicon sequencing approaches provide only indirect inference of biological functions. With the current capacity of sequencing and bioinformatic technologies, it is hard to assemble tens of thousands of microbial genomes based on the analysis of thousands of environmental samples. Furthermore, due to the paucity of the information of fungal ecology and physiology, it remains difficult to annotate high proportions of genes within fungal genomic data. Nonetheless, with the accumulation of methodological breakthroughs, shotgun sequencing of soil microbiomes will deepen our understanding of agroecosystem processes (65–67). Fourth, in this study, full sets of metadata were not available for all the sequenced samples, inevitably decreasing the number of samples examined in some statistical modeling. Although substantial efforts had been made to profile cropland soils in the national projects in which the soil samples were collected, continuous efforts are required to gain further comprehensive insights into agroecosystem structure and functions.

The approach of the comparative microbiome analysis can be extended to some directions. For example, comparison with soil agroecosystems in lower-latitudinal or higher-latitudinal regions or meta-analyses covering multiple continents will provide further comprehensive knowledge of the diversity of microbiome structure. In addition to extensions towards broader geographic ranges, those towards diverse agroecosystem management are of particular importance. Given that our samples were collected mainly from croplands managed with conventional agricultural practices, involvement of soil samples from regenerative or conservation agricultural fields (68–71) will reorganize our understanding of relationship between microbiome compositions and functions. Further data-driven research will uncover fundamental mechanisms driving soil ecosystems, providing novel strategies for designing sustainable agriculture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Soil samples and metadata

Over research projects of National Agricultural and Food Research Organization (NARO), which were carried out through five national research programs funded by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2,903 rhizosphere/bulk soil samples were collected from conventional agricultural fields across the Japan Archipelago from January 23, 2006, to July 28, 2014 (Data S1). When the latitude and longitude of the sampling positions were round to one decimal place, 42 research sites were distinguished. Across the metadata of the 2,903 samples, the information of 19 crop plants, 34 former crop plants (including "no crop"), 13 soil taxonomic groups (e.g., "Andosol"), 60 experimental/research purposes (e.g., "soil comparison between organic and conventional management") was described. Likewise, the metadata included the information of dry soil pH, electrical conductivity, carbon/nitrogen (C/N) ratio, and available phosphorous concentration from, 2,830, 2,610, 2,346, and 2,249 samples, respectively. In addition, the information of the severity of crop plant disease was available for 1,472 samples (tomato, 637 samples; Chinese cabbage, 336 samples; eggplant, 202 samples; celery, 97 samples; Broccoli, 96 samples, etc.). The values of the proportion of diseased plants or disease severity index (72) was normalized within the ranges from 0 to 100, and they were then categorized into five levels (level 1, 0-20; level 2, 20-40; level3; 40-60; level 4, 60-80; level 5, 80-100). The plant pathogens examined in the disease-level evaluation were *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides* on the strawberry, *Fusarium oxysporum* on the celery, the lettuce, the strawberry, and the tomato, *Phytophthora sojae* on the soybean, *Plasmodiophora brassicae* on Cruciferae plants, *Pyrenochaeta lycopersici* on the tomato, *Pythium myriotylum* on the ginger, *Ralstonia solanacearum* on the eggplant and the tomato, and *Verticillium* spp. on Chinese cabbage. For continuous variables within the metadata, emergent outliers (mean + 5 SD) were converted into "NA" in the data matrix used in the following statistical analyses as potential measurement/recording errors. Unrealistic electrical conductivity records (> 20) were converted into "NA" as well.

At each sampling position, five soil sub-samples collected from the upper layer (0-10 cm in depth) at five points (ca. 100 g each) were mixed. The mixed soil sample (ca. 500 g) was then sieved with 2-mm mesh in the field. The samples were stored at -20 °C until DNA extraction. In laboratory conditions, 0.4 g of soil (fresh weight) was subjected to DNA extraction with FastDNA SPIN Kit for Soil (Q-BioGene).

DNA amplification and sequencing

Profiling of soil microbial biodiversity was performed by targeting archaea, bacteria, and fungi. For the amplification of the 16S rRNA V4 region of archaea and bacteria (prokaryotes), the set of the forward primer 515f and the reverse primer 806rB were used as described elsewhere (40). The primers were fused with 3–6-mer Ns for improved Illumina sequencing quality and Illumina sequencing primers. PCR was performed using KOD ONE PCR Master Mix (TOYOBO, Osaka) with the temperature profile of 35 cycles at 98 °C for 10 seconds (denaturation), 55 °C for 5 seconds (annealing of primers), and 68 °C for 30 seconds (extension), and a final extension at 68

°C for 2 minutes. The ramp rate through the thermal cycles was set to 1 °C/sec to prevent the
generation of chimeric sequences. In the PCR, we added five artificial DNA sequence variants
with different concentrations (i.e., standard DNA gradients; 1.0×10^{-4}, 5.0×10^{-5}, 2.0×10^{-5}, 1.0
$\times 10^{-5}$, and 5.0×10^{-6} nM; Table S1) to the PCR master mix solution as detailed elsewhere (40). By
comparing the number of sequencing reads between the artificial standard DNA and real
prokaryotic DNA, the concentration of prokaryotic 16S rRNA genes in template DNA samples
were calibrated (40).

In addition to the prokaryotic 16S rRNA region, the internal transcribed spacer 1 (ITS1)
region of fungi was amplified using the set of the forward primer ITS1F_KYO1 and the reverse
primer ITS2_KYO2 (73). PCR was performed using the Illumina-sequencing fusion primer
design mentioned above with the temperature profile of 35 cycles at 98 °C for 10 seconds, 53 °C
for 5 s seconds, and 68 °C for 5 seconds, and a final extension at 68 °C for 2 minutes (ramp rate =
1 °C/sec). Newly designed artificial sequence variants (1.0×10^{-5}, 7.0×10^{-6}, 5.0×10^{-6}, 2.0×10^{-6},
and 1.0×10^{-6} nM; Table S1) were added to the PCR master mix as standard DNA gradients for
the calibration of the ITS sequence concentrations in the template DNA samples.

The PCR products of the prokaryotic 16S rRNA and fungal ITS1 regions were respectively
subjected to the additional PCR step for linking Illumina sequencing adaptors and 8-mer sample
identifier indexes with the amplicons. The temperature profile in the PCR was 8 cycles at 98 °C
for 10 seconds, 55 °C for 5 seconds, and 68 °C for 5 seconds, and a final extension at 68 °C for 2
minutes. The PCR products were then pooled for each of the 16S rRNA and fungal ITS1 regions
after a purification/equalization process with the AMPureXP Kit (Beckman Coulter, Inc., Brea).
Primer dimers, which were shorter than 200 bp, were removed from the pooled library by
supplemental purification with AMpureXP: the ratio of AMPureXP reagent to the pooled library
was set to 0.8 (v/v) in this process. The sequencing libraries of the two regions were processed in
an Illumina MiSeq sequencer (10% PhiX spike-in). Because the quality of forward sequences is
generally higher than that of reverse sequences in Illumina sequencing, we optimized the MiSeq
run setting in order to use only forward sequences. Specifically, the run length was set 271
forward (R1) and 31 reverse (R4) cycles to enhance forward sequencing data: the reverse
sequences were used only for discriminating between prokaryotic 16S and fungal ITS1 sequences
in the following bioinformatic pipeline.

Bioinformatics

In total, 23,573,405 sequencing reads were obtained in the Illumina sequencing (16S rRNA,
11,647,166 sequencing reads; ITS, 11,926,239 sequencing reads). The raw sequencing data were
converted into FASTQ files using the program bcl2fastq 1.8.4 distributed by Illumina. For each
of the 16S rRNA and fungal ITS1 regions, the output FASTQ files were demultiplexed using
Claident v0.9.2022.01.26 (74). The sequencing data were deposited to DNA Data Bank of Japan
(DDBJ) (Bioproject accession no.: PSUB018361). The removal of low-quality sequences and
ASV inferences were done using DADA2 (75) v1.17.5 of R v3.6.3. The mean number of filtered
sequencing reads obtained per sample was 3,949 and 4,075 for the prokaryotic and fungal
datasets, respectively. Taxonomic annotation of prokaryotes was conducted based on the SILVA

138 SSU (76) the assignTaxonomy function of DADA2. For the taxonomic annotation of fungi,
the QCauto method (74) was applied to the NCBI nucleotide sequence database bundled with
Claident v0.9.2022.01.26. ASVs that were not assigned to the domain Archaea/Bacteria and the
kingdom Fungi were removed from the 16S rRNA and ITS1 datasets, respectively. For each
target organismal group (prokaryotes and fungi), we then obtained a sample × ASV matrix, in
which a cell entry depicted the number of sequencing reads of an ASV in a sample. The samples
with less than 1,000 reads were discarded from the matrices. The matrix was rarefied to 1,000
reads per sample for the downstream statistical pipeline. The number of reads was insufficient for
comprehensively profiling rare microbial species, which are often targets of soil microbiome
studies. However, because data matrices including numerous rare ASVs or OTUs could not be
subjected to the computationally intensive ecological analyses detailed below even if we used
supercomputers, we focused on major components of soil prokaryotic and fungal biomes. In other
words, our purpose here was to extract major components of agroecosystem soil microbiomes
across the Japan Archipelago, thereby finding core microbiome properties associated with
disease-suppressive and disease-susceptible agroecosystems.

In total, prokaryotic and fungal community data were obtained for 2,318 and 2,186
samples, respectively. The number of ASVs included in the rarefied matrices were 27,219 and
6,306 for prokaryotes and fungi, respectively. For fungal ASVs, putative functional groups (e.g.,
"plant pathogen") were inferred using the program FungalTraits (77). The estimation of DNA
concentrations of the prokaryotic 16S rRNA and fungal ITS regions was performed, respectively,
based on the calibration with the standard DNA gradients (artificial DNA variants introduced to
the PCR master mix solutions) using the bioinformatic pipeline detailed elsewhere (40).

Diversity of microbiome structure

For each sample, Shannon's α-diversity estimates of prokaryotes and fungi were respectively
calculated. Because biological entities of ASVs or operational taxonomic units (OTUs) differ
considerably between prokaryotes and fungi, we compared α-diversity between the two
organismal groups at the family level. Likewise, mean Bray-Curtis dissimilarity (β-diversity) in
family-level compositions within each of the 42 research sites was calculated as a measure of
within-site variability of prokaryotic/fungal community structure. In addition, the degree of
among-site community differentiation was evaluated for prokaryotes and fungi. Specifically, after
calculating mean family-level compositions at each research site, Bray-Curtis β-diversity was
calculated in all pairs of research sites. The α-diversity, within-site β-diversity, and among-site β-
diversity estimates were respectively compared between prokaryotes and fungi.

For each of the prokaryotic and fungal datasets, permutational analyses of variance
(PERMANOVA) (78) were performed to examine associations between family-level community
compositions and variables in the metadata. Two types of PERMANOVA models were
constructed based on Bray-Curtis β-diversity (10,000 iterations). Specifically, one is constituted
by categorical explanatory variables (crop plant, former crop plant, soil taxonomy, research site,
and sampling month), while the other included continuous explanatory variables (soil pH,

electrical conductivity, C/N ratio, and available phosphorous concentration, latitude, and
longitude).

To reduce the dimensions of the community compositional data, a principal coordinate
analysis (PCoA) was performed based on the Bray-Curtis β-diversity calculated with the rarefied
sample × ASV matrix of prokaryotes or fungi. For each PCoA axis (axes 1 to 5) in each of the
prokaryotic and fungal analyses, Pearson's correlation with each chemical environmental factor
(soil pH, electrical conductivity, C/N ratio, and available phosphorous concentration) was
calculated.

Crop disease and microbiome structure

We then evaluated how community structure of prokaryotes and fungi were associated with crop
disease. For each of the prokaryotic and fungal datasets, a generalized linear mixed model
(GLMM) of crop-disease level was constructed by including the PCoA axes 1 to 5 as fixed
effects. Sampling month and experimental/research purposes in the metadata were set as random
effects. A logit-link function and binomial error was assumed in the GLMM after converting the
response variable into a binary format [disease level 1 (= 1) vs. disease levels 2–5 (= 0)].

We also examined how balance between prokaryotic and fungal abundance could be
associated with crop disease levels. Based on the estimated concentrations of prokaryotic 16S
rRNA and fungal ITS sequences in template DNA solutions, we calculated the ratio of
prokaryotic DNA concentrations to fungal DNA concentrations in respective samples
(prokaryote/fungus ratio) as follows:

447
$$\log \left(\frac{\text{prokaryotic 16S rRNA gene concentration(DNA copies/\mu L)}}{\text{fungal ITS gene concentration (DNA copies/\mu L)}} \right).$$

Although potential variation in DNA extraction skills of researchers might affect absolute DNA
concentrations in the template DNA solutions, balance between prokaryotic and fungal DNA in
each template DNA sample could be used as a reliable measure. The DNA-metabarcoding-based
approach of estimating prokaryote/fungus ratio has methodological advantage over quantitative-
PCR-based approaches. Specifically, the former approach allows us to eliminate effects of
nonspecific PCR amplification based on DNA sequencing data, while the latter is affected by
"contamination" of nontarget amplicons (e.g., plastid DNA in 16S rRNA sequencing and plant
DNA in ITS sequencing).

Potential effects of the prokaryote/fungus ratio on crop-disease level were examined in a
GLMM with a logit-link function and binomial errors. In the GLMM, soil pH and electrical
conductivity were included as fixed effects in addition to the prokaryote/fungus ratio. In the
GLMM, C/N ratio and available phosphorous concentration were not included due to the small
number of samples with both crop-disease information and the chemical variables. Sampling
month and experimental/research purpose information in the metadata were included as random
effects in the GLMM. To examine the effects of other aspects of biological factors, we
constructed another GLMM including the ASV-level Shannon diversity of prokaryotes, that of
fungi, and the prokaryote/fungus ratio. All the explanatory variables were z-standardized (zero-
mean and unit-variance) before the GLMM analysis. To visualize how the proportion of least-

diseased (disease-level 1) samples varied along the axis of the prokaryote/fungus ratio, we
performed a supplementary analysis with generalized linear models (GLMs). Specifically, for the
five experimental/research purpose categories from which 10 or more disease-level 1 (least-
diseased) samples and 10 or more disease-level 2–5 (severely diseased) samples were obtained, a
GLM of disease level was constructed by including the prokaryote/fungus ratio as an explanatory
variable.

Microbiome network modules

To infer potential interactions between microbial ASVs, the algorithm of sparse inverse
covariance estimation for ecological association inference (SPIEC-EASI) was applied based on
the Meinshausen-Bühlmann (MB) method as implemented in the SpiecEasi package (36) of R. In
total, 2,117 soil samples from which both prokaryotic and fungal community data were available
were subjected to the analysis. The network inference based on co-occurrence patterns allowed us
to detect pairs of microbial ASVs that potentially interact with each other in facilitative ways
and/or those that might share ecological niches (e.g., preference for edaphic factors). Because
estimation of co-occurrence patterns was not feasible for rare nodes, the prokaryotic and fungal
ASVs that appeared in more than 10 % of the sequenced samples were included in the input
matrix of the network analysis. Network modules, within which closely associated ASVs were
interlinked with each other, were identified with the algorithm based on edge betweenness (79)
using the igraph package (80) or R.

We then characterized the inferred network modules based on their potential impacts on
crop-plant disease level. For each microbial ASV constituting the modules, we evaluated
specificity of occurrences in samples differing in crop disease levels based on a randomization
analysis. For the calculation, the rarefied matrices of prokaryotes and fungi were combined.
Within the combined sample × ASV matrix, samples were categorized into the five disease
levels. Mean read counts across samples displaying each of the five disease levels were then
calculated for each ASV. Meanwhile, mean read counts for respective disease levels were
calculated as well for randomized matrices, in which disease labels of the samples were shuffled
(10,000 permutations). For i-th ASV, standardized specificity to disease level j (s_{ij}) was obtained
as follows:

$$s_{ij} = \frac{O_{ij} - Mean(R_{ij})}{SD(R_{ij})},$$

where O_{ij} and R_{ij} is the mean read counts of i-th ASV across disease-level-j samples in the
observed and randomized matrices, respectively, and $Mean(R_{ij})$ and $SD(R_{ij})$ indicate mean and
standard deviation across the randomized matrices. An s_{ij} value higher than 4 or that lower than
– 4 indicates statistically strong specificity of the i-th ASV to the disease level j (Fig. S4). For
each module in the inferred co-occurrence network, we then calculated mean standardized
specificity to disease level 1 across constituent ASVs.

Network hubs

To explore potential keystone microbes within the network, we scored respective ASVs on the basis of their topological positions. Among the indices used for evaluating ASVs, betweenness centrality (42), which measures the extent to which a given nodes (ASV) is located within the shortest paths connecting pairs of other nodes in a network, is commonly used to find hubs mediating flow of effects in a network. The network centrality scores were normalized as implemented in the igraph packages of R. In addition, by focusing on the above-mentioned network modules, we ranked ASVs based on their within-module degree and among-module connectivity (81). The former index is obtained as the number of nodes linked with a target node within a target network module, suggesting the topological importance of a node within the module it belongs to. The latter index represents the extent to which a node is linked with other nodes belonging to different network modules. Within-module degree was z-standardized (i.e., zero-mean and unit-variance) within each module, while among-module connectivity was defined to vary between 0 to 1. In addition to those indices for evaluating topological roles within a network, eigenvector centrality (82) was calculated for respective nodes.

Data availability

The 16S rRNA and ITS sequencing data are available from the DNA Data Bank of Japan (DDBJ: Bioproject: PSUB018361). The microbial community data are deposited at our GitHub repository (https://github.com/hiro-toju/Soil_Microbiome_NARO3000).

Code availability

All the R scripts used to analyze the data are available at the GitHub repository (https://github.com/hiro-toju/Soil_Microbiome_NARO3000).

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Table 1 | Effects of environmental variables on prokaryotic/fungal community structure. For each
set of categorical/continuous environmental variables, a PERMANOVA was performed for
prokaryotic or fungal community dataset. The numbers of samples for which both community
and environmental variable data were obtained are shown parentheses. The number of samples
from which both sample metadata and DNA metabarcoding data were obtained is shown in a
parenthesis in each model.
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Model	Dataset	Variable	df	R^2	F	P
Categorical variables	Prokaryotes	Research site	33	0.0818	12.03	< 0.0001
		Month	11	0.0203	8.96	< 0.0001
		Crop	16	0.0064	1.94	< 0.0001
		Former crop	22	0.0382	8.42	< 0.0001
		Soil category	9	0.0060	3.22	< 0.0001
		Residual	2169	0.4473		
		Total	2267	1.0000		
	Fungi	Research site	33	0.0733	8.80	< 0.0001
		Month	11	0.0279	10.06	< 0.0001
		Crop	15	0.0071	1.87	< 0.0001
		Former crop	20	0.0372	7.38	< 0.0001
		Soil category	10	0.0060	2.37	< 0.0001
		Residual	2034	0.5132		
		Total	2131	1.0000		
Continuous variables	Prokaryotes	pH	1	0.0182	32.43	< 0.0001
		Electrical conductivity	1	0.0205	36.66	< 0.0001
		Available P	1	0.0125	22.25	< 0.0001
		C/N ratio	1	0.0078	13.93	< 0.0001
		Latitude	1	0.0144	25.75	< 0.0001
		Longitude	1	0.0163	29.09	< 0.0001
		Residual	1600	0.8957		
		Total	1606	1.0000		
	Fungi					
		pH	1	0.0117	19.98	< 0.0001
		Electrical conductivity	1	0.0221	37.68	0.0184
		Available P	1	0.0172	29.30	0.0098
		C/N ratio	1	0.0101	17.17	0.0038

Latitude	1	0.0171	29.14	< 0.0001
Longitude	1	0.0150	25.59	< 0.0001
Residual	1507	0.8833		
Total	1513	1.0000		

793 **Table 2 |** Relationship between prokaryotic/fungal community structure on the disease level of
794 crop plants. A GLMM of crop plants' disease level (disease level 1 vs. disease levels 2-5) with a
795 logit-link function and binomial errors was constructed by setting principal coordinates of
796 prokaryotic/fungal community structure (Fig. 2) as explanatory variables (fixed effects). The
797 identity of research projects and sampling month were included as random effects in the GLMM.

Dataset	Variable	Estimate	z	P
Prokaryotes	PCoA 1	-11.26	-5.01	< 0.0001
($N = 1,280$)	PCoA 2	8.53	7.19	< 0.0001
	PCoA 3	-8.09	-3.38	0.0007
	PCoA 4	-4.29	-1.73	0.0842
	PCoA 5	-7.27	-3.45	0.0006
Fungi	PCoA 1	-1.71	-1.37	0.1696
($N = 1,197$)	PCoA 2	-5.24	-4.99	< 0.0001
	PCoA 3	-3.68	-3.04	0.0024
	PCoA 4	4.20	2.72	0.0065
	PCoA 5	1.00	0.72	0.4699

Table 3 | Factors associated with the disease level of crop plants. In each GLMM with a logit-
link function and binomial errors, crop plants disease level [least-diseased (disease level 1) = 1,
severely-diseased (disease level 2-5) = 0] was included as response variable. In addition to
bacterium/fungal abundance ratio, soil environmental variables (pH and electrical conductivity;
Model 1) and α-diversity estimates of prokaryotes and fungi (Model 2) were included as
explanatory variables (fixed effects). The identity of research projects and sampling month were
included as random effects in the GLMM. A negative estimate indicates that the proportion of
least-diseased plants decreased with increasing values of a target explanatory variable.

Variable	Estimate	z	P
Model 1 ($N = 1,069$)			
pH	-0.268	-1.94	0.0524
Electrical conductivity	-0.181	-0.88	0.3765
Prokaryote/fungus ratio	-0.520	-4.46	< 0.0001
Model 2 ($N = 1,111$)			
Prokaryote diversity	-0.162	-1.23	0.2189
Fungal diversity	-0.331	-2.10	0.0355
Prokaryote/fungus ratio	-0.500	-4.19	< 0.0001

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Fig. 1 | Comparison of soil microbiome structure across the Japan Archipelago. (A) Map of research sites across the Japan Archipelago. The 2,903 soil samples were grouped into 42 research sits were when their latitude and longitude profiles were round to one decimal place. (B) Taxonomic compositions of prokaryotes (archaea and bacteria; top) and fungi (bottom) at the family level. See Fig. S1 for results at the genus, order, and class levels. (C) Compositions of functional groups of fungi.

824   **Fig. 2 |** Diversity indices of agroecosystem microbiomes. (A) Comparison of α-diversity between
825   prokaryotes and fungi. Mean Shannon diversity at the family level was shown for each research
826   site. Bars represent standard deviations. (B) Mean community dissimilarity (β-diversity) between
827   pairs of samples within each research site. (C) Community dissimilarity (β-diversity) in mean
828   community compositions between pairs of research sites.
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Fig. 3 | Dimensions of soil microbiome structure. (A) Prokaryote and fungal community
structure. Principal co-ordinate analyses (PCoA) were performed based on ASV-level
compositional matrices respectively for the prokaryotic and fungal communities. The identify of
crop plants is shown by colors. See Figures S2-3 for relationship between community structure
and environmental factors. (B) Correlation between PCoA scores and soil environmental factors.

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Fig. 4 | Crop disease and soil microbiome properties. (A) Crop disease level and microbial
community structure. On the PCoA surface defined in Figure 3, crop disease level (see Materials
and Methods) is indicated. (B) Balance between prokaryotic and fungal abundance. The ratio of
prokaryotic abundance to fungal abundance was evaluated based on estimated DNA

concentrations [$\log \left(\frac{\text{prokaryotic 16S rRNA gene concentration(DNA copies/}\mu\text{L)}}{\text{fungal ITS gene concentration (DNA copies/}\mu\text{L)}} \right)$]. The prokaryote/fungus

ratio is shown for each sample on the PCoA surfaces of prokaryotic and fungal community

compositions. (C) Representative relationship between prokaryote/fungus ratio on crop disease.

For each of the five research projects with enough number of disease-level-1 and disease-level-2-

5 samples, a GLM was constructed. For the two research projects with significant effects of

prokaryote/fungus ratio on crop disease level, the prokaryote/fungus ratios at which 50 % of

samples display disease-level-1 symptoms are shown.

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Fig. 5 | Architecture of microbe-to-microbe network. (A) Co-occurrence networks of archaea, bacteria, and fungi. Specificity of occurrences to disease-level-1 (the lowest disease level) samples (Fig. S4) is shown for each ASV within the network. The specificity is shown as node size separately for negative (left) and positive (right) associations with least-diseased states of crop plants. Colors indicate network modules, in which microbial ASVs in commensalistic/mutualistic interactions and/or those sharing environmental preferences are densely linked with each other. See Figure S5 for taxonomy (archaea, bacteria, or fungi) of respective nodes. (B) Characteristics of network modules. Mean specificity to disease-level-1 samples is shown for each network module.

Fig. 6 | Network cores (hubs) within the microbial network. (A) Betweenness centrality of ASVs.
For each ASV, betweenness centrality within the co-occurrence network is shown along the
horizontal axis. Specificity to disease-level-1 samples is shown along the vertical axis. (B)
Topological roles of ASVs within and across network modules. For each ASV, within-module
degree represents the number of the ASVs linked with the target ASV within a module (*z*-
standardized). Among-module connectivity represents the extent to which an ASV interlinks
ASVs belonging to different network modules.

878 **Fig. S1 |** Microbial taxonomic compositions at the genus, order, and class levels. (A) Genus-level
879 taxonomic compositions of prokaryotes and fungi. See Figure 1a for the map of the research sites. (B)
880 Order-level taxonomic compositions. (C) Class-level taxonomic compositions.
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Fig. S2 | Community structure and metadata properties of the samples. (A) Prokaryote/fungal community structure and research-site profiles. Research sites are indicated by colors on the PCoA surface of prokaryotic/fungal community structure. (B) Soil taxonomy profile. c, Former crop plant.

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890   **Fig. S3 |** Community structure and soil chemical properties. (A) Prokaryote/fungal community structure
891   and soil pH of the samples. (B) Electrical conductivity. (C) Available phosphorous concentration. (D)
892   Carbon to nitrogen ratio.
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Fig. S4 | Each ASV's specificity to disease levels. (A) Standardized specificity to disease level

896   (s_{ij}). Based on a randomization approach, each ASV's specificity to samples differing in crop

897   disease levels was evaluated. A higher value of the specificity index indicates that a microbial
898   ASV displayed higher abundance in samples of the target disease level than that expected by
899   chance. (B) Specificity scores and statistical significance. An s_{ij} value higher than 4 or that lower
900   than -4 indicates statistically strong specificity of an ASV to a target disease level.
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904 **Fig. S5 |** Network centrality scores. (A) Distribution of archaea, bacteria, and fungi within the co-
905 occurrence network. (B) Each ASV's betweenness centrality score within the network. The node
906 size represents relative betweenness centrality scores. (C) Each ASV's eigenvector centrality
907 score within the network. The node size represents relative eigenvector centrality scores.
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