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Lithium as an emerging environmental contaminant: mobility in the soil-plant system

Brett H. Robinson, Rohith Yalamanchali, René Reiser, Nicholas M. Dickinson

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4 Brett H. Robinson^{1*}, Rohith Yalamanchali², René Reiser³, Nicholas M. Dickinson²

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6 ¹School of Physical and Chemical Sciences, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

⁷ ²Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Lincoln University, New Zealand

8 ³Agroscope Reckenholz-Tänikon ART, Switzerland

9 *corresponding author: brett.robinson@canterbury.ac.nz

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11 Abstract

12 Contamination of soil with lithium (Li) is likely to increase due to its wider dispersal in 13 the environment, associated in particular, with the disposal of the now ubiquitous Liion batteries. There is, however, a paucity of information on the behaviour of Li in the 14 15 soil-plant system. We measured the sorption of added Li to soil, and uptake of Li by 16 food and fodder species. Around New Zealand, soil concentrations were shown to 17 range from 0.08 mg/kg to 92 mg/kg, and to be positively correlated with clay content. Most geogenic Li in soil is insoluble and hence unavailable to plants but, when Li⁺ is 18 19 added to soil, there is only limited sorption of Li. We found that Li sorption increased with increasing soil pH, and decreased proportionately with increasing Li 20 21 concentrations. Compared to other cations in soil, Li is mobile and may leach into receiving waters, be taken up by plants, or have other biological impacts. In a soil spiked 22 23 with just 5 mg/kg, plants took up several hundred mg/kg Li into leaves with no 24 reduction in biomass. Lithium appears to be a phloem immobile element, with the 25 highest concentrations occurring in the older leaves and the lowest concentrations Download English Version:

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