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### Soil & Tillage Research

DOI:

[10.1016/j.still.2021.105120](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.still.2021.105120)

Published: 01/09/2021

Peer reviewed version

[Cyswllt i'r cyhoeddiad / Link to publication](#)

*Dyfyniad o'r fersiwn a gyhoeddwyd / Citation for published version (APA):*

Ge, Z., Li, S., Bol, R., Zhu, P., Peng, C., An, T., Cheng, N., Liu, X., Li, T., Xu, Z., & Wang, J. (2021). Differential long-term fertilization alters residue-derived labile organic carbon fractions and microbial community during straw residue decomposition. *Soil & Tillage Research*, 213, Article 105120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.still.2021.105120>

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--Manuscript Draft--

<b>Manuscript Number:</b>	STILL-D-20-01275
<b>Article Type:</b>	Research paper
<b>Section/Category:</b>	Soil Management
<b>Keywords:</b>	Labile soil organic carbon; Soil microbial community; Soil microbial network; Key species; High-throughput sequencing; <sup>13</sup> C-labelling technique
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<b>Order of Authors:</b>	Zhuang Ge Shuangyi Li Roland Bol Ping Zhu Chang Peng Tingting An Na Cheng Xu Liu Tingyu Li Zhiqiang Xu Jingkuan Wang
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>Straw residue amendment is a key global management strategy to achieve more sustainable agriculture. Straw residue returns affect the labile soil organic carbon (SOC) fractions and microbial community in soils. We examined temporal changes in dissolved organic carbon (DOC), microbial biomass carbon (MBC), particulate organic carbon (POC) and microbial community structure in relation to the overall straw-derived residue decomposition. The topsoil (0-20 cm) from three fertilizer management strategies (no fertilization control, CK; inorganic fertilizer, IF; inorganic fertilizer plus manure, IFM) was collected from a unique 29-year long-term field experiment (Mollisols) in Northeast China. An in-situ micro-plot incubation experiment with <sup>13</sup>C-labeled maize straw residue (<math>\delta^{13}\text{C} = 246.9\text{‰}</math>) (i.e., no fertilization control + straw, CKS; inorganic fertilizer + straw, IFS; inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw, IFMS) and without straw residue was conducted. We used the <sup>13</sup>C isotope technique to measure the content of residue-derived labile SOC fractions and used high-throughput sequencing-based amplification of bacterial 16S rRNA and fungal internal transcribed spacer (ITS) rRNA to evaluate the dynamic changes of bacterial and fungal community structure and diversity at different times (the 1st day, 60th day and 150th day) under all six treatments. We found that residue-derived POC was significantly increased, but residue-derived DOC was significantly decreased during straw residue decomposition. The residue-derived MBC content was higher in the fertilized (IFS and IFMS) compared to the unfertilized (CKS) treatment. The Linear discriminant analysis Effect Size (LEfSe) revealed changes after adding straw of soil microbes in CK and IF were significantly higher than in IFM soil. Network analysis showed that straw residue addition decreased the bacterial microbial network complexity in all treatments, but increased fungal network complexity in IFS and IFMS. The random forest model predicted that during straw decomposition, Chloroflexi (CKS), Actinobacteria (IFS), Proteobacteria (IFMS) were keystone taxa in the bacterial community, and Ascomycota was the keystone taxon in the fungal community. The straw residue was retained as</p>

	<p>POC in labile SOC fractions and was further enhanced in fertilizer management with manure addition. Less pronounced effects on the microbial community following straw addition were found for the combined inorganic and organic fertilizer treatment compared to those without or with only inorganic fertilizer addition. The observed temporal changes in the microbial community suggested that in these Mollisols, independent of agricultural fertilizer management, straw residue-derived POC and DOC promoted fungal C processing, whereas for bacterial this was facilitated only via residue-derived MBC.</p>
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## Cover Letter

Dear Prof. Noellemeyer,

We would like to submit our manuscript 'Differential long term fertilization changes residue-derived labile organic carbon fractions and microbial community during straw residue decomposition' prepared by Zhuang Ge, Shuangyi Li, Roland Bol, Ping Zhu, Chang Peng, Tingting An, Na Cheng, Xu Liu, Tingyu Li, Zhiqiang Xu, Jingkuan Wang for evaluation as Research Article in the journal *Soil & Tillage Research*.

The work in this paper can be summarized as follows, the topsoil (0-20 cm) from three fertilizer management strategies (no fertilization control, CK; inorganic fertilizer, IF; inorganic fertilizer plus manure, IFM) was collected from a unique 29-year long-term field experiment (Mollisols) in Northeast China. An *in-situ* micro-plot incubation experiment with  $^{13}\text{C}$ -labeled maize straw residue ( $\delta^{13}\text{C} = 246.9\text{‰}$ ) (i.e., no fertilization control + straw, CKS; inorganic fertilizer + straw, IFS; inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw, IFMS) and without straw residue was conducted. We used the  $^{13}\text{C}$  isotope technique to measure the content of residue-derived labile SOC fractions and used high-throughput sequencing-based amplification of bacterial 16S rRNA and fungal internal transcribed spacer (ITS) rRNA to evaluate the dynamic changes of bacterial and fungal community structure and diversity at different times (the 1st day, 60th day and 150th day) under all six treatments. We found that residue-derived POC was significantly increased, but residue-derived DOC was significantly decreased during straw residue decomposition. The residue-derived MBC content was higher in the fertilized (IFS and IFMS) compared to unfertilized (CKS) treatment. The Linear discriminant analysis Effect Size (LEfSe) revealed changes after adding straw of soil microbes in CK and IF were significantly higher than in IFM soil. Network analysis showed that straw residue addition decreased the bacterial microbial network complexity in all treatments, but increased fungal network complexity in IFS and IFMS. The random forest model predicted that during straw decomposition, *Chloroflexi* (CKS), *Actinobacteria* (IFS), *Proteobacteria* (IFMS) were keystone taxa in the bacterial community, and Ascomycota was the keystone taxon in the fungal community. The straw residue was retained as POC in labile SOC fractions and was further enhanced in fertilizer management with manure addition. Less pronounced effects on the microbial community following straw addition were found for the combined inorganic and organic fertilizer treatment compared to those without or with only inorganic fertilizer addition. The observed temporal changes in the microbial community suggested that in these Mollisols, independent of agricultural fertilizer management, straw residue-derived POC and DOC promoted fungal C processing, whereas for bacterial this was facilitated only via residue-derived MBC.

This manuscript has neither been published and or is under consideration for publication elsewhere. We have no conflicts of interest to disclose. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript. Thank you



in advance the consideration of our manuscript, and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

**Shuangyi Li**

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- Straw addition decreased the bacterial network complexity in all treatments
- Straw addition increased fungal network complexity in fertilized soils
- Key species in straw decomposition changed under different fertilizer regimes
- Residue-derived POC and DOC increased fungal carbon processing
- Bacterial carbon processing was facilitated only via residue-derived MBC

1 **Differential long term fertilization changes residue-derived**  
2 **labile organic carbon fractions and microbial community**  
3 **during straw residue decomposition**

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23 **Abstract:**

24 Straw residue amendment is a key global management strategy to achieve more  
25 sustainable agriculture. Straw residue returns affect the labile soil organic carbon (SOC)  
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34 inorganic fertilizer + straw, IFS; inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw, IFMS) and  
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58

59 **Keywords:** Labile soil organic carbon; Soil microbial community; Soil microbial  
60 network; Key species; High-throughput sequencing; <sup>13</sup>C-labelling technique

61

## 62 **1 Introduction**

63 Soil organic carbon (SOC) plays a key role in chemical, physical, and biological  
64 properties and processes in soils, thus it is considered to be a crucial factor to affect soil  
65 quality (Wiesmeier et al., 2019). Fertilization is an important agricultural practice that  
66 aims to improve soil quality and plant nutrition for increasing crop yield (Chen et al.,  
67 2014; Xiang et al., 2020). Application of inorganic fertilizer could temporarily slow  
68 down food shortage but would lead to soil degradation, soil acidification, and SOC  
69 depletion (Stockmann et al., 2013; Zamanian and Kuzyakov, 2019). Organic fertilizer  
70 application promoted SOC accumulation, alleviated soil acidification, increased crop  
71 yield, therefore would be an alternative option to apply inorganic fertilizer (Afreh  
72 et al., 2018; Han et al., 2016). Moreover, SOC is highly heterogeneous, according to  
73 the turnover rates of various SOC fractions, it could be divided into stable and labile  
74 fractions (Bol et al., 2009; Six et al., 2002). Labile SOC fractions generally include  
75 dissolved organic carbon (DOC), microbial biomass carbon (MBC), and particulate  
76 organic carbon (POC) (Franzluebbers et al., 2000; Jardine et al., 1989; Moore et al.,

77 2000). Labile SOC fractions had relatively short turnover time (weeks to months), they  
78 are sensitively responding to agricultural practice (Yan et al., 2007), and are an easily  
79 available and important source of energy for soil microbes (Kaye and Hart, 1997;  
80 McLauchlan and Hobbie, 2004). Labile SOC pools have been considered as early  
81 sensitive indicators of soil quality which affect soil function in special ways due to their  
82 different fractions (Blanco-Moure et al., 2016; Rudrappa et al., 2006). The stable  
83 isotope technique provided a good way to quantitatively investigate the changes of  
84 labile SOC fractions, that results would bring more direct and clear theoretical support  
85 for the management of SOC (Amelung et al., 2008). Different fertilizer management  
86 strategies also affected SOC pools. For example, fertilization strategies which include  
87 organic manure can increase the pool of stable C in the surface soil layer and increase  
88 concentrations and proportions of labile C (Li et al., 2018), but apply the different rates  
89 of inorganic fertilizer would not affect the concentrations of soil labile fractions (Naylor  
90 et al., 2020). Furthermore, previous studies reported that the application of fertilizer  
91 affected the diversity and composition of the soil microbial community (Xiang et al.,  
92 2020; Zhou et al., 2015). Microbial communities play a key role in soil organic matter  
93 (SOM) transformation and nutrient cycling in agricultural soils (Gattinger et al., 2007).  
94 Long-term applied inorganic fertilizer reduced the biodiversity and abundance of

95 bacteria, but manure application increased bacterial abundance and diversity (Cui et al.,  
96 2018; Zhou et al., 2015). Long-term application of inorganic fertilizer plus pig manure  
97 altered fungal community composition by increasing the abundance of *Pezizales*. (Ye  
98 et al., 2020). The number of differential populations in bacterial communities in applied  
99 manure soils was significantly higher than that in applied inorganic fertilizer soils,  
100 whereas those of fungal communities showed the opposite trend, therefore, the  
101 responses of different fertilizers to soil bacterial and fungal communities were various  
102 (Pan et al., 2020).

103 Crop residues were assumed to be the dominant carbon (C) source to the arable soil  
104 and primary control of the accumulation of SOC (Clemmensen et al., 2013). Therefore  
105 crop residue return is believed to be an effective promising approach to improve soil  
106 quality, promote agricultural SOC storage, and mitigate climate change (Dikgwatlhe et  
107 al., 2014; Lal, 2004; Liu et al., 2014). Straw returns also could affect the SOC pool,  
108 especially the labile SOC fractions (Lei et al., 2010; Zhao et al., 2016). Different  
109 fertilizer management strategies would influence the decomposition of residue-derived  
110 C. Our previous studies showed apply nitrogen fertilization increased the content of  
111 residue-derived DOC and decreased the content of residue-derived MBC, apply manure  
112 increased the content of residue-derived MBC, apply manure combined with inorganic



113 fertilizer significantly increased residue-derived POC in Alfisols (Jin et al., 2020; Jin et  
114 al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020). Meanwhile, labile SOC is also an essential source in which  
115 microorganisms can receive nutrients and energy from it, and it affects the life activities  
116 of soil microorganisms. Soil microorganisms simultaneously participate in the  
117 processes of labile SOC fractions formation, transformation, and decomposition  
118 (Chantigny, 2003). Furthermore, the decomposition of crop residues in the soil is a  
119 complex biogeochemical process, and microorganisms are the major drivers of crop  
120 residue decomposition and turnover in soils (Marschner et al., 2011). The straw residue  
121 is metabolized by soil microbes, transformed into microbial biomass, and becomes  
122 stabilized as SOM (Cotrufo et al., 2015). Added crop residue to the soils may greatly  
123 influence soil microbial diversity, abundance, and composition thus altering SOC  
124 dynamics (Goldstein et al., 2020). Soil bacterial and fungal communities play important  
125 roles in the decomposition of SOM and provide available nutrients for plant growth  
126 (Allison et al., 2007). Crop residue decomposition usually proceeds through a series of  
127 well-characterized stages involving a succession of soil bacterial and fungal  
128 communities (Guo et al., 2018). Due to soil bacterial and fungal communities exhibit  
129 different dynamic patterns, the microbial succession would lead to the changes of  
130 specific microbial taxa during the straw residue decomposition process (Gao et al., 2016;

131 Prewitt et al., 2014). Therefore, it is essential to simultaneously detect the dynamic  
132 changes of differential populations in soil bacterial and fungal communities in each  
133 stage in the process of straw residue decomposition under different fertilizer regimes  
134 (Baldrian et al., 2012; Banerjee et al., 2016). In addition, the quantitative relationship  
135 between the different residue-derived labile carbon fractions and soil microbes during  
136 the process of straw decomposition are still unclear.

137 Interactions between microbes are also important aspects in maintaining a diverse  
138 microbial community, at the same time, network analyses provide a very useful tool to  
139 explore the co-occurrence patterns and reflecting the microbial community in  
140 ecosystems (Faust and Raes, 2012; Rottjers and Faust, 2018). Exploring changes in soil  
141 microbial community networks can increase our knowledge of the complexity and  
142 diversity of microbial communities (Mora-Montes et al., 2010). The application of the  
143 organic amendment significantly changed the bacterial and fungal community's  
144 network than inorganic fertilizer and therefore fertilization could influence the  
145 synergistic interactions between species. (Ling et al., 2016; Xue et al., 2017). However,  
146 it remains unclear on exploring the effect of straw residue decomposition to soil  
147 bacterial and fungal co-occurrence networks under different fertilizer regimes. Besides,  
148 the information on the key role of specific microbial species of soil bacterial and fungal

149 in the process of straw residue decomposition is still limited.

150 The North China Plain is one of the most important food production regions in  
151 China (Liu et al., 2019). However, in the past several decades, long-term unreasonable  
152 field management degraded the soil and deteriorated the soil quality (Liu et al., 2010).  
153 Return of straw residue within overall fertilizer management strategies is widely used  
154 to mitigate these problems and enhance the storage of SOC in this region (Qiu et al.,  
155 2016). Most of the studies only reported the effect of long-term fertilizer or straw  
156 incorporation on soil microbial communities (Guo et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2020; Zhao  
157 et al., 2019). The microbial community composition and metabolic activity correspond  
158 to different fertilizer regimes, and soil fertility affected the residue decomposition  
159 process (An et al., 2015b; Zhang et al., 2019). Therefore, deeply revealing the dynamic  
160 response mechanisms of the key role in the microbial community during the process of  
161 straw residue decomposition in integrated fertility management is crucial for enhancing  
162 C sequestration. In this study, we collected arable soils of three fertilizer management  
163 strategies from a 29-year fertilization experiment in the North China Plain. We  
164 conducted an *in-situ* micro-plot incubation experiment with and without maize straw  
165 residue in these soils to investigate the changes of residue-derived labile SOC fractions  
166 content and complex temporal responses of soil microbial communities to straw residue

167 decomposition, as well as their quantitative relationships under various fertilization  
168 regimes. We hypothesized that under the varying fertilizer regimes in Mollisols: (i)  
169 Straw residue-derived content of labile SOC fractions would differ between specific  
170 management strategies, (ii) Temporal shifts in soil bacterial and fungal population  
171 abundances and keystone decomposer species occur during straw decomposition, (iii)  
172 Soil bacterial and fungal network complexity would change following straw  
173 incorporation, (iv) Different residue-derived labile carbon fractions have varying  
174 effects on soil fungal and bacterial population.

## 175 **2 Materials and methods**

### 176 **2.1 Study site description**

177 A long-term field experiment site used in this study was located at Jilin Academy  
178 of Agricultural Sciences at Gongzhuling County, Jilin Province, Northeast China (43°  
179 30'N, 124° 48'E, and 200 m above sea level). The experiment was established in 1990,  
180 has a typical continental monsoon climate with mean annual temperatures of 4-5 °C and  
181 mean annual precipitation of 400-600 mm (Song et al., 2015). The soil is a Mollisol  
182 (classified as a Luvic Phaeozem, FAO) with 39% sand, 30% silt, and 31% clay at the  
183 beginning of the experiment (Xie et al., 2014). The three application were selected in  
184 this study: (1) unfertilized control (CK), (2) balanced inorganic fertilizers at 165 kg N

185 ha<sup>-1</sup>, 82.5 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> ha<sup>-1</sup>, and 82.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> (IF), (3) balanced inorganic fertilizers at  
186 50 kg N ha<sup>-1</sup>, 82.5 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> ha<sup>-1</sup>, and 82.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> plus manure at 115 kg N ha<sup>-1</sup>  
187 (IFM) (Dou et al., 2016). The manure was pig manure and applied in autumn after corn  
188 harvesting in the IFM plots each year (Song et al., 2015). The basic soil properties of  
189 each treatment are provided in Table S1.

## 190 **2.2 *In-situ* field experiment design**

191 The micro-plot experiment was not undertaken at the main long-term field-site  
192 itself, but in a nearby field to avoid any presence of straw influencing future soil. Two  
193 soil pits of the following dimensions (length × width × height = 1.0 m × 0.6 m × 0.3 m)  
194 were therefore dug in a nearby field for the micro-plot experiment. Two polyvinyl  
195 chloride (PVC) material boxes (length × width × height = 1.0 m × 0.6 m × 0.6 m) of  
196 similar dimensions to the pit were then inserted vertically into field pits on May 5, 2018,  
197 i.e., the boxes were 0.3 m above the ground level to avoid any impacts by other soil in  
198 the field. The boxes were not closed at the bottom to allow for drainage. Each box  
199 consisted of 9 equal sections, allowing 3 random replicates of the 3 treatments under  
200 consideration (CK, IF and IFM). The topsoil layer (0-20 cm) was taken from each  
201 fertilization treatment of the long-term field experiment and individually passed in the  
202 field through a 7 mm sieve to remove crop roots and rocks. More details of soil

203 properties can be found in Table S1. The  $^{13}\text{C}$ -labelled maize straw was mature maize  
204 plants pulse-labeled using  $^{13}\text{CO}_2$  four times over a growing season according to the  
205 procedure (An et al., 2015a). The maize straw residue was cut in the size of 0.5-1.0 cm.  
206 The method of straw incorporation was based on the concept of full straw incorporation,  
207 i.e., where all straw residue after harvest is plowed back into the soil. We added 36 g  
208 straw to 15.84 kg of soil per section (equivalent to 2.3 g straw  $\text{kg}^{-1}$  soil). No plants were  
209 grown in all the boxes during the experimental period. Before completely filling the  
210 sections, we first added only soil from three treatments to the bottom 10 cm (20-30 cm  
211 depth) in each section box. Subsequently, the upper 20 cm was filled with soil, part of  
212 the soils from the three treatments were mixed homogenously with  $^{13}\text{C}$ -labelled straw.  
213 In one box all 9 compartments consisted of the soil mixed with straw (CKS, IFS, IFMS),  
214 the other box only contained soil (CK, IF, IFM). Soil samples were collected at the  
215 depth of 0-20cm three times: on May 6, 2018 (the 1<sup>st</sup> day), July 4, 2018 (the 60<sup>th</sup> day),  
216 and October 2, 2018 (the 150<sup>th</sup> day). Soil samples were sealed in plastic bags, then  
217 stored in the 4°C incubator and transported to the laboratory, then the samples were  
218 kept at -80 °C for microbial analysis.

### 219 **2.3 Measurements of dissolved organic carbon (DOC) and microbial biomass** 220 **carbon (MBC)**

221 MBC was determined by the chloroform-fumigation extraction method (Vance et

222 al., 1987). Fresh soil equivalent to 10 g of oven-dried soil was fumigated for 24 h at  
223 25 °C and subsequently extracted with 100 ml of 0.5 mol L<sup>-1</sup> K<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. The same amount  
224 of un-fumigated soil was extracted with 100 ml of 0.5 mol L<sup>-1</sup> K<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. The non-  
225 fumigated extract was used to determine DOC. The contents of organic C of soil  
226 extracts were determined by the Total Organic Carbon Analyzer (Multi N/C 3100 TOC,  
227 Germany). MBC was calculated as the difference in organic C content between  
228 fumigated and un-fumigated soil extracts with a correction factor ( $k_{EC}$ ) of 0.45 (Wu et  
229 al., 1990). All K<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> extracts were freeze-dried before further analysis of <sup>13</sup>C  
230 abundance. Soil and K<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> extracts samples were analyzed for total C and δ<sup>13</sup>C values  
231 with an elemental analyzer (Elementar Vario PYRO cube, Germany) coupled to an  
232 isotope ratio mass spectrometer (IsoPrime 100 Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometer,  
233 Germany).

#### 234 **2.4 Measurements of particle organic carbon (POC)**

235 POC was isolated from bulk soil using the procedure (Cambardella and Elliott,  
236 1992). A 10 g subsample of bulk soil was passed through a 2 mm sieve, dispersed into  
237 30 ml of 5 g L<sup>-1</sup> sodium hexametaphosphate, and shaken for 5 h. Next, the suspension  
238 was filtered through a 53 µm sieve. The material remaining on the sieve (POC) was  
239 rinsed thoroughly with deionized water, dried at 50 °C for 24 h weighed, and stored

240 before measurement. Organic C and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  in POC were determined using the EA-IRMS.

## 241 **2.5 Isotopic C analysis and calculations**

242 The Content of MBC was calculated with the following equation (Vance et al.,  
243 1987):

$$244 \quad C_{\text{MBC}} = (C_f - C_{\text{nf}}) / k_{\text{EC}} \quad (1)$$

245 where  $C_f$  and  $C_{\text{nf}}$  refer to the amount of dissolved organic C ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$  soil) from the  
246 fumigated and the nonfumigated  $\text{K}_2\text{SO}_4$  extracts, respectively. The  $k_{\text{EC}}$  value was used  
247 to convert measured data into biomass C, in this study we used it as 0.45 (Joergensen,  
248 1996).

249 The  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of MBC (‰) was calculated with the following equation (Engelking et  
250 al., 2008):

$$251 \quad \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{MBC}} = (\delta^{13}\text{C}_f \times C_f - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{nf}} \times C_{\text{nf}}) / (C_f - C_{\text{nf}}) \quad (2)$$

252 where  $C_f$  and  $C_{\text{nf}}$  refer to the amount of dissolved organic C ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$  soil) from the  
253 fumigated and the nonfumigated  $\text{K}_2\text{SO}_4$  extracts, respectively, and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_f$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{nf}}$  refer  
254 to the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values (‰) of the fumigated and the nonfumigated  $\text{K}_2\text{SO}_4$  extracts,  
255 respectively.

256 The proportion of MBC derived from maize straw C in total MBC ( $f_{\text{MBC}}$ ) was



257 calculated according to the following equation (De Troyer et al., 2011):

$$258 \quad f_{\text{MBC}} = (\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{MBC}} - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{MBC-WS}}) / (\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{straw}} - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{MBC-WS}}) \quad (3)$$

259 where  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{MBC}}$ ,  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{MBC-WS}}$ , and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{straw}}$  are the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values of MBC from whole soil  
260 samples with straw, MBC from whole soil samples without straw (WS), and  $^{13}\text{C}$ -  
261 labelled maize straw itself, respectively.

262 The content of straw-derived MBC ( $^{13}\text{C}_{\text{MBC}}$ ) was calculated with the following equation  
263 (Blaud et al., 2012):

$$264 \quad ^{13}\text{C}_{\text{MBC}} = \text{C}_{\text{MBC}} \times f_{\text{MBC}} \quad (4)$$

265 where  $\text{C}_{\text{MBC}}$  denotes the content of MBC, and  $f_{\text{MBC}}$  denotes the proportion of MBC  
266 derived from maize straw C in total MBC.

267 The proportion of DOC derived from maize straw C in total DOC ( $f_{\text{DOC}}$ ) was  
268 calculated according to the following equation (De Troyer et al., 2011):

$$269 \quad f_{\text{DOC}} = (\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DOC}} - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DOC-WS}}) / (\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{straw}} - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DOC-WS}}) \quad (4)$$

270 Where  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DOC}}$ ,  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DOC-WS}}$ , and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{straw}}$  are the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values of DOC from soil samples  
271 with straw, DOC from soil samples without straw (WS), and  $^{13}\text{C}$ -labelled maize straw  
272 itself, respectively.

273 The content of straw-derived DOC ( $C_{\text{DOC}}$ ) was calculated using the following  
274 equation (Blaud et al., 2012):

$$275 \quad {}^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DOC}} = C_{\text{DOC}} \times f_{\text{DOC}} \quad (5)$$

276 where  $C_{\text{DOC}}$  denotes the content of DOC, and  $f_{\text{DOC}}$  denotes the proportion of DOC  
277 derived from maize straw C in total DOC.

278 The proportion of POC derived from maize straw C in total POC ( $f_{\text{POC}}$ ) was  
279 calculated according to the following equation (De Troyer et al., 2011):

$$280 \quad f_{\text{POC}} = (\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{POC}} - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{POC-WS}}) / (\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{straw}} - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{POC-WS}}) \quad (6)$$

281 Where  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{POC}}$ ,  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{POC-WS}}$ , and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{straw}}$  are the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values of POC from soil samples  
282 with straw, POC from soil samples without straw (WS), and  $^{13}\text{C}$ -labelled maize straw  
283 itself, respectively.

284 The content of straw-derived POC ( $C_{\text{POC}}$ ) was calculated using the following  
285 equation (Blaud et al., 2012)

$$286 \quad {}^{13}\text{C}_{\text{POC}} = C_{\text{POC}} \times f_{\text{POC}} \quad (7)$$

287 where  $C_{\text{POC}}$  denotes the content of POC, and  $f_{\text{POC}}$  denotes the proportion of POC  
288 derived from maize straw C in total POC.

289 All results are shown as the mean of the three plot replicates with standard error.  
290 Significant differences between treatments ( $P < 0.05$ ) were calculated by one-way  
291 analysis of variance (ANOVA) in combination with Duncan's test using SPSS 19.0 and  
292 OriginPro 2019.

## 293 **2.6 High-throughput sequencing**

294 Soil total DNA was extracted from 0.5 g of soil using the MP FastDNA SPIN Kit  
295 for Soil (MP Biomedicals) according to the manufacturer's instructions. The final DNA  
296 concentration and purification were quantified by NanoDrop 2000 UV-vis  
297 spectrophotometer (Thermo Scientific, Wilmington, USA), and DNA quality was  
298 checked by 1% agarose gel electrophoresis. We performed Polymerase chain reaction  
299 (PCR) amplification of the prokaryotic 16S rRNA V3-V4 hypervariable region with  
300 primers set 338F/806R (338F, 5'-ACTCCTACGGGAGGCAGCAG-3' and 806R, 5'-  
301 GGACTACHVGGGTWTCTAAT-3') (Lee et al., 2012) and fungal ITS1 region with  
302 primers set ITS1F/ITS2R (ITS1F, 5'-CTTGGTCATTTAGAGGAAGTAA-3', ITS2R,  
303 5'-GCTGCGTTCTTCATCGATGC-3') (Adams et al., 2013) primer pairs. The PCR  
304 reactions were conducted using the following program: 3 min at 95°C; 27 cycles of 30  
305 s at 95°C, 30 s at 55°C, and 45 s at 72°C; and 72°C for 10 min. The bacterial PCR  
306 amplification was performed in triplicate 20- $\mu$ L mixtures containing 4  $\mu$ L of 5  $\times$  FastPfu

307 Buffer, 2  $\mu$ L of 2.5 mM dNTPs, 0.8  $\mu$ L of each primer (5 $\mu$ M), 0.4  $\mu$ L of FastPfu  
308 polymerase, 0.2  $\mu$ L of BSA, and 10 ng of template DNA. The fungal PCR amplification  
309 was performed in triplicate 20- $\mu$ L mixtures containing 2  $\mu$ L of 10  $\times$  Buffer, 2  $\mu$ L of 2.5  
310 mM dNTPs, 0.8  $\mu$ L of each primer (5 $\mu$ M), 0.2  $\mu$ L of rTaq Polymerase, 0.2  $\mu$ L of BSA,  
311 and 10 ng of template DNA. The products were extracted from 2% agarose gels,  
312 purified using the AxyPrep DNA Gel Extraction Kit (Axygen Biosciences, Union City,  
313 CA, USA), and quantified using QuantiFluor<sup>TM</sup>-ST (Promega, Madison, WI, USA)  
314 according to the manufacturer's protocol. Purified amplicons were pooled in equimolar  
315 concentration and paired-end sequenced (2  $\times$  300) on an Illumina platform (Illumina,  
316 San Diego, CA, USA) according to the standard protocols by Majorbio Bio-Pharm  
317 Technology Co. Ltd. (Shanghai, China). Sequences were deposited in the Sequence  
318 Read Archive (SRA) of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI;  
319 Bethesda, MD, USA) under studies PRJNA644514 and PRJNA644592 for the 16S  
320 rRNA and ITS rRNA genes, respectively.

## 321 **2.7 Bioinformatics and statistics analysis**

322 The sequences were processed using USEARCH v.10.0 (Edgar, 2010) and  
323 VSEARCH v.2.7.1 (Rognes et al., 2016). The paired-end Illumina reads processed in  
324 the following steps by VSEARCH: joining of paired-end reads and relabeling of

325 sequencing names; removal of barcodes and primers; filtering of low-quality reads;  
326 finding non-redundancy reads. Unique reads were clustered into operational taxonomic  
327 units (OTUs) with 97% similarity. The representative sequences were picked by  
328 UPARSE (Edgar, 2013). The OTU table was generated by USEARCH. We used the  
329 RDP database (Wang et al., 2007) for the taxonomic identity of each bacteria and the  
330 UNITE database (Nilsson et al., 2018) for the taxonomic identity of fungi by  
331 USEARCH. A total of 2,516,669 16S rRNA and 3,211,166 ITS paired-end high-quality  
332 sequences were obtained from all of the 54 soil samples, respectively. The  $\alpha$ -diversity  
333 index of Shannon and Chao 1 was calculated by USEARCH software. Each sample had  
334 a different number of reads, to even the varying read numbers, all the samples were  
335 randomly re-sampled to the lowest read number. Therefore, 17229 and 33746 randomly  
336 selected 16S rRNA and ITS sequences were used to calculate bacterial and fungal  $\alpha$ -  
337 diversity.

338 Statistical tests and graphical representations were carried out in the R  
339 environment (version 3.6.1; <https://www.r-project.org/>). Differences in the microbial  $\alpha$ -  
340 diversity were compared using analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Tukey's  
341 HSD test.  $P < 0.05$  was considered to reflect a statistically significant difference. The  
342 linear discriminant analysis effect size (LEfSe) method was conducted to identify

343 different abundance values (at all taxonomic levels) that reflected the different  
344 fertilization treatments in each incubation time. Only taxa meeting an LDA significance  
345 threshold of 2 for bacterial and fungal communities are shown.

346 Co-occurrence network analysis (based on class level) was performed to examine  
347 the connections within bacterial and fungal taxa. Relative abundances of bacterial and  
348 fungal genera were used to construct networks for bacterial and fungal classes in  
349 different treatments during the whole process of straw residue decomposition. Average  
350 relative abundances of the class level higher than 0.1% were selected for Spearman's  
351 correlation analysis. Network analysis was then performed using the “igraph” package  
352 in R v. 3.6.1 (Rottjers and Faust, 2018).

353 To obtain the best discriminant performance of the taxa across the whole  
354 incubation time of straw residue decomposition in different fertilizer managements, we  
355 regressed the relative abundances of the bacterial and fungal taxa at the order level  
356 against the incubation time of straw residue decomposition in the field using the  
357 randomForest package (version 4.6-14) in R using default parameters (ntree = 1000,  
358 mtry is  $p/3$ , where  $p$  is the number of taxa in the class) (Liaw and Wiener, 2002). Lists  
359 of taxa ranked by Random Forests in order of feature importance were decided more  
360 than 100 iterations. The 10-fold cross-validation was performed by using the rfcv ()

361 function in the randomForest package for selecting appropriate features with five  
362 repeats.

363 The structural equation model (SEM) was obtained using Amos 17.0 software  
364 (Chicago, IL: Amos Development Corporation) to quantify the significant effects of  
365 residue-derived labile SOC fractions on the changes of soil bacterial and fungal  
366 community structure in response to different fertilizer management strategies and  
367 incubation time. Three fertilizer treatments (CKS, IFS, IFMS) were categorical  
368 variables with three levels: 0 (CKS), 1 (IFS), and 2 (IFMS). We used the robust  
369 maximum likelihood estimation to fit the covariance matrix to the model (Wang et al.,  
370 2016). The theoretical model was adjusted according to the principle of the low Chi-  
371 square ( $\chi^2$ ;  $0 \leq \chi^2 \leq 2$ ), nonsignificant probability ( $P$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ), high goodness-of-fit-  
372 index (GFI;  $GFI > 0.90$ ) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA;  
373  $RMSEA < 0.05$ ) to ensure that the final model was adequately fitted (Grace and Keeley,  
374 2006).

## 375 **3 Results**

### 376 **3.1 Incorporation of residue-derived labile SOC fractions under different fertilizer** 377 **treatments**

378 The content of straw derived active SOC in three treatments occurred various trends  
379 (Fig. 1). The content of straw-derived DOC was significantly decreased by 43% (CKS),  
380 50% (IFS) and 77% (IFMS) from the 1<sup>st</sup> day to the 60<sup>th</sup> day, respectively (Fig. 1a). On  
381 the 150<sup>th</sup> day, that content in IFMS treatment was 0.49 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>, significantly lower than  
382 in CKS (2.82 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) and IFS (4.30 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) treatment. The changes in the content of  
383 straw-derived MBC over time were different in three treatments (Fig. 1b). The contents  
384 of straw-derived MBC in IFS treatment are 59 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> (the 1<sup>st</sup> day), 60 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> (the 60<sup>th</sup>  
385 day) and 41 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> (the 150<sup>th</sup> day), which were the highest in three treatments during  
386 the whole incubation time. At the end of incubation time, the order of the content of  
387 straw-derived MBC in three treatments is IFS > IFMS > CKS. The content of straw-  
388 derived POC was significantly increased during the incubation time in three treatments  
389 (Fig. 1c). On the 150<sup>th</sup> day, straw-derived POC in IFMS treatment was 198 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>,  
390 which was twice more than in CKS and 42% more than in IFS treatment.

### 391 **3.2 Soil bacterial and fungal community diversity and structure**

392 Different fertilizer management significantly changed the  $\alpha$ -diversity of the  
393 bacterial community. During straw residue decomposition,  $\alpha$ -diversity indices (Chao1  
394 and Shannon) in IFM was the highest, the  $\alpha$ -diversity in IF was the lowest in the  
395 bacterial community (Fig. S1). However, there was no significant difference in the  $\alpha$ -



396 diversity indices (Chao1 and Shannon) of the fungal community among three fertilizer  
397 management during straw residue decomposition (Fig. S2).

398 The most abundant bacterial and fungal phyla in all soil samples were shown in  
399 Fig. S3a and Fig. 2a. During the incubation time, *Actinobacteria*, *Acidobacteria*, and  
400 *Proteobacteria* were the dominant phyla in all soil samples. There was no significant  
401 difference in the relative abundance of bacterial phylum level in each treatment after  
402 adding straw residue (Fig. S3a). With regards to the fungal communities, the relative  
403 abundance of *Ascomycota* was significantly decreased from 45.0% (CK) to 25.4%  
404 (CKS), but *Basidiomycota* was significantly increased from 3.4% (CK) to 9.4% (CKS)  
405 on the 60<sup>th</sup> day of the incubation. The relative abundance of *Basidiomycota* was  
406 significantly increased from 1.9% (IF) to 5.7% (IFS) on the 1<sup>st</sup> day, *Zygomycota* was  
407 significantly decreased from 7.0% (IF) to 3.7% (IFS) on the 150<sup>th</sup> day of the incubation.  
408 The relative abundance of *Basidiomycota* was significantly increased from 0.7% (IFM)  
409 to 8.3% (IFMS) on the 150<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 2a) of the incubation.

410 The top bacterial and fungal classes were detailed in Fig. S3b and Fig. 2b. The  
411 relative abundances of *Acidobacteria\_Gp6* and *Acidobacteria\_Gp4* were significantly  
412 increased from 6.2% (IF) and 4.1% (IF) to 10.5% (IFS) and 6.4% (IFS) on the 60<sup>th</sup> day  
413 of the incubation in the bacterial community, respectively (Fig. S3b). Regarding the

414 fungal classes, compared to CK treatment, the relative abundance of *Sordariomycetes*  
415 was significantly decreased on the 1<sup>st</sup> day in CKS treatment. The relative abundance of  
416 *Agaricomycetes* was significantly increased during the incubation time, and  
417 *Pezizomycetes* was significantly increased on the 1<sup>st</sup> day in IFS than in IF treatment.  
418 The relative abundance of *Agaricomycetes* was increased more than double in IFMS  
419 than in IFM treatment on the 1<sup>st</sup> day (Fig. 2b). Furthermore, the relative abundance of  
420 *Dothideomycetes* in IF, IFS, IFM, IFM treatments was higher than in CK and CKS  
421 treatments, the relative abundance of *Sordariomycetes* had the opposite trend.

### 422 **3.3 Taxonomic biomarkers of soil microbial communities**

423 The LEfSe analysis from phylum to genus levels was performed to identify high-  
424 dimensional biomarker taxa with different abundances among three fertilization  
425 regimes after adding straw residues in each incubation time (Fig. 3, 4, and 5). From an  
426 overall perspective, after adding straw residue, more significantly different taxa  
427 occurred between CK and CKS treatment, IF and IFS treatment than IFM and IFMS  
428 treatment during the incubation time (Fig. 3, 4, and 5).

429 For the bacterial communities, in CKS treatment, the *Nitrospirae* was the most  
430 abundant biomarkers on the 1<sup>st</sup> day (Fig. 3a); the *Actinomycetales* and *Cytophagaceae*  
431 were especially enriched on the 60<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 3b); the *Gammaproteobacteria* was

432 enriched on the 150<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 3c). In IFS treatment, the *Actinobacteria* was enriched  
433 on the 1<sup>st</sup> day (Fig. 4a); the *Nitrospirae* and *Deltaproteobacteria* were significantly  
434 enriched on the 60<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 4b); the *Actinobacteria* and *Burkholderiaceae* were the  
435 significantly different abundance on the 150<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 4c). In IFMS treatment, the  
436 *Chloroflexi* was the most differentially abundant phyla on the 60<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 5b).

437       Regarding the fungal communities, in CKS treatment, the *Eurotiomycetes*,  
438 *Dothideomycetes*, *Chytridiomycota* were significantly changed on the 1<sup>st</sup> day (Fig. 3d);  
439 the *Eurotiales* was significantly different on the 60<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 3e); the *Eurotiales*,  
440 *Wallemiomycetes*, and *Lasio-sphaeriaceae* were enriched on the 150<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 3f). In  
441 IFS treatment, the *Hypocreales\_fam\_Incertae\_sedis* showed the highest abundance on  
442 the 1<sup>st</sup> day (Fig. 4d); the *Sordariomycetes* and *Basidiomycota* were significantly  
443 enriched on the 60<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 4e); the *Sordariales* was the most abundant biomarker on  
444 the 150<sup>th</sup> day (Fig. 4f). In IFMS treatment, the *Basidiomycota* was the most  
445 differentially abundant phylum on the 1<sup>st</sup> day (Fig. 5d).

#### 446 **3.4 Co-occurrence network in soil bacterial and fungal community**

447       To determine the effects of fertilizer treatments on the soil microbial community  
448 after adding straw residue, networks were constructed for three fertilization treatments  
449 with and without added straw residue (Fig. 6 and 7). Long-term different fertilizer

450 management changed bacterial and fungal co-occurrence patterns, the application of IF  
451 and IFM fertilizer increased the complexity of the bacterial community but decreased  
452 the complexity of the fungal community (Fig. 6a, b, and c; Fig. 7a, b, and c). After  
453 adding straw residue, the num edges and average degree of bacterial communities were  
454 decreased in all treatments, the most decreased in IFMS treatment particularly. In fungal  
455 communities, the num edges and average degree in CKS treatment were also decreased  
456 than in CK treatment but in IFS and IFMS treatments were increased than in IF and  
457 IFM treatments (Table 1 and 2). These results indicated that during the process of straw  
458 residue decomposition the complexity of microbial network in bacterial communities  
459 was decreased, the IFMS treatment was more affected than CKS and IFS treatment. In  
460 fungal communities, the complexity of microbial networks in IFS and IFMS treatment  
461 were increased than in IF and IFM treatment, but in CKS treatment was decreased than  
462 in CK treatment (Fig. 6 and 7).

### 463 **3.5 Keystone taxa of straw microbiota during straw residue decomposition**

464 To examine the bacterial and fungal keystone taxa of the whole process of straw  
465 residue decomposition in various fertilizer regimes, we regressed the relative  
466 abundances of bacteria and fungi at the order level using a random forest regression.  
467 We performed 10-fold cross-validation with five repeats to determine the importance

468 of bacterial and fungal classes. We showed the 11 most important bacterial and fungal  
469 orders as keystone taxa. We defined these taxa as keystone taxa in the model in order  
470 of discriminatory importance as shown in Fig. 8. We found bacterial and fungal  
471 keystone taxa during the straw residue decomposition in different fertilizer regimes  
472 were various. During the whole incubation time, in the bacterial community, the  
473 *Anaerolineales* order of the *Chloroflexi* phylum was the most important taxa in CKS  
474 treatment; *Actinomycetales* and *Solirubrobacterales* orders of *Actinobacteria* phylum  
475 were the taxa in IFS treatment; *Myxococcales*, *Rhodocyclales*, and *Rhodobacterales*  
476 orders of *Proteobacteria* phylum were the taxa in IFMS treatment. In the fungal  
477 community, the *Saccharomycetales* order of *Ascomycota* phylum was the vital taxon in  
478 CKS and IFS treatment; the *Hypocreales* order was the essential taxon in IFMS  
479 treatment during the whole straw decomposition process.

### 480 **3.6 SEM analysis on the significant effects of residue-derived labile SOC fractions** 481 **on soil microbes**

482 To assess the significant effects of residue-derived labile SOC fractions on the changes  
483 of soil bacterial and fungal community structure in response to different fertilizer  
484 management strategies and incubation time, a SEM model was conducted (Fig. 9).

485 Fertilization had positive direct impacts on both the bacterial (+0.49) and the fungal

486 community (+ 0.46), but incubation time only had a positive direct impact on the  
487 bacterial community (+ 0.98). All the content of residue-derived labile SOC fractions  
488 had positive impacts on the fungal community, the content of residue-derived POC  
489 contributed the greatest impact (+ 0.76). The bacterial community was only affected by  
490 the content of residue-derived MBC (+ 0.54).

## 491 **4 Discussion**

### 492 **4.1 Straw residue-derived labile SOC fractions as affected by fertilizer** 493 **management strategies and incubation time**

494 DOC was produced from the decomposition of SOM which is primarily driven by  
495 soil microorganisms (Marschner and Bredow, 2002). The content of residue-derived  
496 DOC decreased quickly, this result is consistent with our previous study in Alfisol (Jin  
497 et al., 2020), which indicated residue-derived DOC would be primarily utilized by  
498 microorganisms after added straw residue (Kalbitz et al., 2000). Application of organic  
499 fertilizers would maintain a steady flow of nutrients into the soil, but they released  
500 nutrients more slowly (Baghdadi et al., 2018), which may be the reason that the content  
501 of residue-derived DOC in IFMS treatment is lower than CKS and IFS treatment.

502 MBC is the living microbial component of SOC and is considered a sensitive

503 indicator of microbial activity (Broos et al., 2007; Paul, 1984). In this study, the content  
504 of residue-derived MBC in IFS and CKS treatment was higher than the IFMS treatment  
505 at the beginning of the incubation time. That because microbial biomass from CKS and  
506 IFS treatment responded rapidly (i.e., within 1 day) to the residue returning by  
507 accumulating residue-derived C, this result indicated compared with IFM treatment,  
508 CK and IF treatment lacked sufficient nutrients. After adding straw, microbes would  
509 quickly participate in the decomposition of residue-derived C in a starved state (Bastida  
510 et al., 2013). At the end of the incubation time, the content of residue-derived MBC in  
511 IFS and IFMS treatment were higher than CKS treatment, which indicated with the  
512 organic fertilizer released nutrient, the treatment included fertilizer would promote the  
513 fixation of residue-derived MBC by soil microorganisms (Luan et al., 2020).

514 In this study, there was an inverse trend between the content of residue-derived  
515 DOC and residue-derived POC in each treatment during the incubation time. That  
516 because POC is composed of decomposing plant and microbial residues, and it is served  
517 as essential sources of plant nutrients and decomposed by microbes (Feller and Beare,  
518 1997; Plaza et al., 2018; Xiao et al., 2017). Thus, with the process of straw residue  
519 decomposition, the content of residue-derived POC increased. At the end of incubation  
520 time, IFMS treatment retained the largest content of residue-derived POC. The reason

521 is that application of manure improves the soil structure, promotes the formation of soil  
522 aggregates, and allows part of the free SOC to be protected by the soil aggregates,  
523 thereby promoting the increase in the content of straw residue-derived POC (Mi et al.,  
524 2016; Verma and Sharma, 2007).

#### 525 **4.2 Microbial community structure responses to straw residue decomposition**

526 Straw residue returned to the soil affected the soil fungal communities more  
527 strongly than the soil bacterial communities on phylum and class levels (Fig. 2), which  
528 was consistent with the previous study (Maarastawi et al., 2018). Straw is beneficial to  
529 enhance microbial processing in CK and IF treatment and has no negative effect on  
530 IFM treatment (Fig. 3, 4, and 5). It is known that saprotrophic fungi contribute to the  
531 decomposition of residue-derived C and thus boost C mineralization in soil (Dini-  
532 Andreote et al., 2016). *Dothideomycetes* have been implicated in assimilating C derived  
533 from plants (Freedman et al., 2015). In CKS treatment, the *Dothideomycetes* quickly  
534 responded on the 1<sup>st</sup> day. After adding straw residue, the relative abundance of  
535 *Basidiomycota* significantly changed but these varieties initiated at different incubation  
536 stages under various fertilizer regimes (Fig. 2a). *Basidiomycota* played particularly  
537 important roles in degrading plant litter with high lignin contents in soils (Entwistle et  
538 al., 2018). The response of *Basidiomycota* to add straw residue in IFS and IFMS



539 treatment was much quicker than in CKS treatment. The IF and IFM treatment had  
540 more nutrients than in CK treatment, which could be the driver for this, and is in line  
541 with previous studies that *Basidiomycota* is better adapted to high nutrient levels  
542 (Hannula et al., 2012). From the 60<sup>th</sup> day to the 150<sup>th</sup> day during the incubation time,  
543 the relative abundance of *Sordariomycetes* significantly increased in IFS and IFMS  
544 treatments (Fig. 4e, 4f, 5e, and 5f). A similar result was found in another study (Ma et  
545 al., 2018), probably due to IF and IFM treatment had abundant nutrients and can  
546 promote the growth of microbial groups due to their diverse metabolic capacity so that  
547 *Sordariomycetes* can play the role of straw degradation effectively (Ding et al., 2017;  
548 Koranda et al., 2014). *Sordariomycetes* class is one of the largest classes in the phylum  
549 *Ascomycota* and is also known to play a role in the degradation of crop residue (Qin et  
550 al., 2014; Tardy et al., 2015). Fungi link the allocation of C and sequestration of  
551 nutrients from organic substrates, and it is important in decomposing plant-derived  
552 substrates (Hobara et al., 2014; Quirk et al., 2012). Different fertilization regimes affect  
553 soil fungal community composition in various ways. The organic application directly  
554 increased the amount of SOC and intensively affected soil fungal community  
555 composition (Sun et al., 2016). Inorganic fertilization regulated the quality and quantity  
556 of plant-derived C inputs to indirectly affect the soil fungal community (Weber et al.,

557 2013).

### 558 **4.3 Straw residue decomposition and fertilization changed the co-occurrence** 559 **patterns of microbial community**

560 In the network for the whole process of straw residue decomposition, we found the  
561 bacterial and fungal communities exhibit different co-occurrence patterns (Fig. 6 and  
562 7). The further addition of straw residues results in a beneficial increase of the overall  
563 microbial abundance together with an enhancement of the complexity of the fungi  
564 community in applying fertilizer field, but as observed in our study for all fertilizer  
565 strategies lead to a reduction in the bacterial complexity. These results indicated that  
566 straw addition is always detrimental to bacterial complexity independent of fertilizer  
567 management. It showed strong competitive interactions between bacterial species for  
568 composing straw residue impeded species coexistence and decreased bacterial  
569 communities' stability (Ratzke et al., 2020). Although bacterial complexity was  
570 decreased, that did not affect the role of soil microbes on straw residue decomposition,  
571 because of redundancy of functions within the microbial community, i.e., the other  
572 microbes would also do the function of residue decomposition (Wagg et al., 2019).  
573 Regarding fungal communities, the changes in the complexity of the network in IFS  
574 and IFMS treatment were different to those found within CKS treatment during the

575 whole process of residue decomposition (Fig. 7). That results suggested added organic  
576 materials to the soil of a high fertility level would provide a good habitat for the growth  
577 of the fungi, lead to better stability and provide stronger resistance to the disturbance  
578 of the fungal community (Scheffer et al., 2012). Therefore, straw addition is beneficial  
579 to increase fungal complexity in the applied fertilizer field, independent if inorganic  
580 fertilizer or mixed inorganic fertilizer and manure. Fungal species however would have  
581 competition for experienced the resource due to lack of nutrients in CKS treatment so  
582 that here we observed a decreased stability of the network (Fuhrman, 2009). Moreover,  
583 added straw residue decreased the percentage of positive links in the bacterial  
584 community among three treatments, which suggested that straw residue positively  
585 affected bacterial species competition and niche separation (Deng et al., 2016; Yu et al.,  
586 2018). In the fungal community, the percentage of positive links also decreased in CKS  
587 and IF treatment (Fig. 7). This result indicated IFMS treatment had more diverse  
588 organic compounds and increased fungal community cooperation and niche overlap  
589 during straw residue decomposition (Kong et al., 2020).

#### 590 **4.4 Temporal responses of keystone taxa dynamics during straw residue** 591 **decomposition**

592 A dominant species often affects ecosystem functioning or a specific process  
593 exclusively by its sheer abundance, but keystone taxa can also, more subtly, utilize their

594 influence on microbial system function irrespective of abundance (Banerjee et al., 2018;  
595 Fierer, 2017). We further identified 11 bacterial and fungal orders as keystone taxa of  
596 microbial community dynamics during the process of straw residue decomposition by  
597 random forest model (Fig. 8). These results may be useful for identifying the most  
598 closely related bacterial and fungal taxa during the process. We found the keystone taxa  
599 in the phylum level in the bacterial community were different in various fertilizer  
600 regimes, but the keystone taxon in the fungal community was the same, i.e.,  
601 *Ascomycota*. *Chloroflexi* was considered as the keystone taxon in CKS treatment (Fig.  
602 8a). *Chloroflexi* was the oligotrophic bacteria phylum and it can grow under low  
603 substrate concentrations (Pepe-Ranney et al., 2016). In this study, the relative  
604 abundance of *Chloroflexi* was significantly changed at the early stage of straw residue  
605 decomposition in CKS treatment (Fig. 3a), which indicated that CKS treatment had a  
606 lower nutrient and limited growth of copiotrophic decomposers, when added straw  
607 residue to CK treatment, *Chloroflexi* would actively participate in assimilating straw  
608 residue (Tardy et al., 2015). *Actinobacteria* was considered as keystone taxon in IFS  
609 treatment (Fig. 8b). *Actinobacteria* was the copiotrophic phylum and more sensitive to  
610 carbon sources in the soil and maybe abundant after adding labile SOC (Goldfarb et al.,  
611 2011). They are vital saprophytes capable of degrading complex plant debris (Barka et

612 al., 2015). *Proteobacteria* acted as keystone taxon in IFMS treatment (Fig. 8c).  
613 *Proteobacteria* was a copiotrophic phylum and showed saprophytic lifestyles, the  
614 nutrient supply in IFMS treatment was sufficient, thus *Proteobacteria* fit in this  
615 situation and grow fast during the process of straw residue decomposition (Zhan et al.,  
616 2018). *Ascomycota* was the keystone taxon in the fungal community among the three  
617 fertilizer regimes regardless of whether the nutrients are sufficient (Fig. 8d, e, and, f).  
618 That because *Ascomycota* is known as the largest and most diverse fungal phylum as  
619 well as the key decomposers in the decomposition of the organic materials, it harbored  
620 a wide scale of substrate utilization and is essential in breaking down the recalcitrant  
621 organic compounds (Schoch et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021).

#### 622 **4.5 Relationship of residue-derived labile SOC fractions and soil microbes in** 623 **response to fertilizer management and straw residue returned**

624 The SEM model showed different residue-derived labile SOC fractions had various  
625 impacts on the bacterial and fungal communities. The residue-derived DOC, POC, and  
626 MBC significantly affected the fungal community while the bacterial community was  
627 only significantly affected by residue-derived MBC, that indicated the fungal  
628 community was more sensitive bacterial community to the residue-derived labile SOC,  
629 and thus played key roles in the process of straw residue decomposition, which was

630 consistent with other studies (Kong et al., 2020; Zhong et al., 2020). The residue-  
631 derived MBC significantly affected both bacterial and fungal communities, which  
632 indicated MBC is an important indicator of soil microbes and would affect microbial  
633 community construction. The residue-derived POC contributed the greatest impact on  
634 the fungal community, the reason might be more residue-derived C accumulated and  
635 formed POC during the whole process of straw residue decomposition and then  
636 significantly affect the fungal community (Goldstein et al., 2020). The influence level  
637 of the fungal community from residue-derived DOC was similar to POC, the difference  
638 between these two fractions is that residue-derived DOC brought impacts on the initial  
639 stage, whereas residue-derived DOC worked at the end of the straw residue  
640 decomposition process. This result also verified the changes in the content of residue-  
641 derived DOC and POC in our present study.

## 642 **5 Conclusions**

643 Straw residue addition decreased the bacterial microbial network complexity in all  
644 treatments, but increased fungal network complexity in IFS and IFMS. *Chloroflexi*  
645 (CKS), *Actinobacteria* (IFS), *Proteobacteria* (IFMS) were keystone taxa in the  
646 bacterial community, and *Ascomycota* was the keystone taxon in the fungal community.  
647 The straw residue was retained as POC in labile SOC fractions and was further

648 enhanced in fertilizer management with manure addition. Residue-derived MBC was  
649 higher under fertilized conditions. Less pronounced effects on the microbial community  
650 following straw addition were found for the combined inorganic and organic fertilizer  
651 treatment compared to those without or with only inorganic fertilizer addition. The  
652 observed temporal changes in the microbial community suggested that in these  
653 Mollisols, independent of agricultural fertilizer management, straw residue-derived  
654 POC and DOC promoted fungal C processing, whereas for bacterial this was facilitated  
655 only via residue-derived MBC.

## 656 **Acknowledgments**

657 We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the National Natural Science  
658 Foundation of China (41771328), the National Key Research and Development  
659 Program of China (2016YFD0200304). Zhuang Ge would like to thank China  
660 Scholarship Council for the financial support from the visiting scholar program. We  
661 also thank anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments that significantly improved  
662 the manuscript.

## 663 **Conflict of Interest:**

664 The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

665

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1057

1058 **Tables**

1059 **Table 1** Topological properties of the co-occurrence network in the bacterial community under various  
 1060 fertilizer regimes during the process of straw residue decomposition

	CK	CKS	IF	IFS	IFM	IFMS
Num.edges	55	46	211	99	139	38
pos.edges (percentage)	55 (100)	43 (93)	209 (99)	91 (92)	134 (96)	36 (94)
neg.edges (percentage)	0 (0)	3 (7)	2 (1)	8 (8)	5(4)	2 (6)
num.vertices	67	67	116	87	117	55
connectance	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.03
average.degree	1.64	1.37	3.64	2.28	2.38	1.38
average.path.length	2.43	1.51	4.36	3.47	3.24	1.65
diameter	7	4	11	7	8	4
clustering.coefficient	0.53	0.29	0.52	0.41	0.50	0.24
no.clusters	22	24	11	20	24	19
centralization.degree	0.05	0.02	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.03
centralization.betweenness	0.01	0.00	0.11	0.08	0.02	0.01

1061 Note: CK, IF, IFM, CKS, IFS, and IFMS denote control, inorganic fertilizer, inorganic fertilizer plus  
 1062 manure, control + straw, inorganic fertilizer + straw, and inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw  
 1063 treatment, respectively.

1064 **Table 2** Topological properties of the co-occurrence network in the fungal community under various  
 1065 fertilizer regimes during the process of straw residue decomposition

	CK	CKS	IF	IFS	IFM	IFMS
Num.edges	63	27	16	42	8	33
pos.edges (percentage)	62 (98)	19 (70)	15 (93)	38 (90)	6 (75)	30 (90)
neg.edges (percentage)	1 (2)	8 (30)	1 (7)	4 (10)	2 (25)	3 (10)
num.vertices	45	38	22	43	13	39
connectance	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.05	0.10	0.04
average.degree	2.80	1.42	1.45	1.95	1.23	1.69
average.path.length	2.91	1.44	1.35	1.34	1.00	1.96
diameter	6	4	3	3	1	5
clustering.coefficient	0.45	0.60	0.67	0.82	1.00	0.33
no.clusters	8	14	9	14	6	11
centralization.degree	0.10	0.04	0.12	0.07	0.06	0.06
centralization.betweenness	0.13	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.02

1066 Note: CK, IF, IFM, CKS, IFS, and IFMS denote control, inorganic fertilizer, inorganic fertilizer plus  
 1067 manure, control + straw, inorganic fertilizer + straw, and inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw  
 1068 treatment, respectively.

1069 **Figures Captions**

1070 **Figure 1** Content of residue-derived dissolved organic carbon (DOC) (a), residue-  
1071 derived microbial biomass carbon (MBC) (b), and residue-derived particle organic  
1072 carbon (POC) (c). Different capital letters indicated significant differences ( $P < 0.05$ )  
1073 among different incubation time under the same fertilization treatment. Different  
1074 lowercase letters indicated significant differences ( $P < 0.05$ ). The values presented in  
1075 the figures are given as mean  $\pm$  standard errors. CKS denotes control + straw, IFS  
1076 denotes inorganic fertilizer + straw, and IFMS denotes inorganic fertilizer plus manure  
1077 + straw, respectively.

1078 **Figure 2** Relative abundance of the taxonomic composition of soil fungal community  
1079 at the phylum level (a) and class level (b), respectively. Treatments including CK  
1080 (control), CKS (control + straw), IF (inorganic fertilizer), IFS (inorganic fertilizer +  
1081 straw), IFM (inorganic fertilizer plus manure), IFMS (inorganic fertilizer plus manure  
1082 + straw). Soil samplings were conducted in 1 day, 60 days, and 150 days after added  
1083 straw residue. Phylum and class names were color-coded on the right listed above.

1084 **Figure 3** Cladogram plotted from LEfSe analysis revealed the bacterial taxonomic  
1085 levels with different abundance values in 1 day (a), 60 days (b), and 150 days (c), and  
1086 fungal taxonomic levels with different abundance values in 1 day (d), 60 days (e), and  
1087 150 days (f) between CK (control) and CKS (control + straw) treatment. The circular  
1088 ring from inside to outside represents phylum, class, order, family, and genus,  
1089 respectively.

1090 **Figure 4** Cladogram plotted from LEfSe analysis revealed the bacterial taxonomic  
1091 levels with different abundance values in 1 day (a), 60 days (b), and 150 days (c), and  
1092 fungal taxonomic levels with different abundance values in 1 day (d), 60 days (e), and  
1093 150 days (f) between IF (inorganic fertilizer) and IFS (inorganic fertilizer + straw)  
1094 treatment. The circular ring from inside to outside represents phylum, class, order,  
1095 family, and genus, respectively.

1096 **Figure 5** Cladogram plotted from LEfSe analysis revealed the bacterial taxonomic  
1097 levels with different abundance values in 1 day (a), 60 days (b), and 150 days (c), and  
1098 fungal taxonomic levels with different abundance values in 1 day (d), 60 days (e), and  
1099 150 days (f) in IFM (inorganic fertilizer plus manure) and IFMS (inorganic fertilizer

1100 plus manure + straw) treatment. The circular ring from inside to outside represents  
1101 phylum, class, order, family, and genus, respectively.

1102 **Figure 6** The network analysis showed the co-occurrence patterns of bacterial taxa at  
1103 class level in different treatments including CK (control) (a), IF (inorganic fertilizer)  
1104 (b), IFM (inorganic fertilizer plus manure) (c), CKS (control + straw) (d), IFS  
1105 (inorganic fertilizer + straw) (e), IFMS (inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw) (f)  
1106 during the whole process of straw residue decomposition. Red lines represent  
1107 significant positive ( $P < 0.05$ ) linear relationships and blue lines represent negative  
1108 ( $P < 0.05$ ) linear relationships.

1109 **Figure 7** The network analysis showed the co-occurrence patterns of fungal taxa at  
1110 class level in different treatments including CK (control) (a), IF (inorganic fertilizer)  
1111 (b), IFM (inorganic fertilizer plus manure) (c), CKS (control + straw) (d), IFS  
1112 (inorganic fertilizer + straw) (e), IFMS (inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw) (f)  
1113 during the whole process of straw residue decomposition. Red lines represent  
1114 significant positive ( $P < 0.05$ ) linear relationships and blue lines represent negative  
1115 ( $P < 0.05$ ) linear relationships.

1116 **Figure 8** Random-forest model detects bacterial and fungal taxa that predict bacterial  
1117 keystone taxa in CKS (control + straw) (a), IFS (inorganic fertilizer + straw) (b), IFMS  
1118 (inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw) (c) and fungal keystone taxa in CKS (control  
1119 + straw) (d), IFS (inorganic fertilizer + straw) (e) and IFMS (inorganic fertilizer plus  
1120 manure + straw) (f) during the whole process of straw residue decomposition. The top  
1121 11 bacterial and fungal orders were identified by applying a random forest regression  
1122 of their relative abundances in the straw residue decomposition against the incubation  
1123 time of different fertilizer managements. Keystone taxa are ranked in descending order  
1124 of importance to the accuracy of the model.

1125 **Figure 9** A structural equation model (SEM) assesses the significant effects of residue-  
1126 derived labile SOC fractions on the changes of soil bacterial and fungal community  
1127 structure in response to different fertilizer management strategies and incubation time.  
1128 Numbers adjacent to arrows represent path coefficients. The width of arrows indicates  
1129 the strength of the standardized path coefficient. The blue lines indicate positive path  
1130 coefficients, red lines indicate negative path coefficients, and grey lines indicate non-  
1131 coefficients, respectively. Significance levels are denoted with  $*P < 0.05$ ,  $**P < 0.01$ ,

1132 \*\*\* $P < 0.001$ . Chi-square ( $\chi^2 = 0.320$ ), probability level ( $P = 0.811$ ), goodness-of-fit  
1133 index (GFI = 0.990), and root-mean-square errors of approximation (RMSEA = 0.000)  
1134 indicate that our data matches the hypothetical model.

## Supplementary Materials

**Table S1**

Soil basic properties of different fertilizer management strategies in 2018.

Treatment	SOC (g kg <sup>-1</sup> )	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (‰)	TN (g kg <sup>-1</sup> )	C/N ratio	AP (mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )	AK(mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )
CK	15.0±0.1 b	-18.8±0.0 a	1.4±0.1 c	10.6±0.4 a	15.32±0.75 c	65.04±3.18 c
IF	15.0±0.1 b	-19.4±0.0 c	1.5±0.0 b	9.7±0.0 b	20.90±0.70 b	81.42±1.40 b
IFM	25.2±0.2 a	-19.1±0.1 b	2.6±0.0 a	9.7±0.0 b	80.66±2.56 a	137.37±3.87 a

Note: The CK denotes no fertilization control treatment, IF inorganic fertilizer treatment, IFM inorganic fertilizer plus manure treatment. SOC denotes soil organic carbon, TN denotes total nitrogen, AP denotes available phosphorous, AK denotes available potassium. Different lowercase letters mean significant differences ( $P<0.05$ ) in various fertilizer management strategies.

**Table S2**

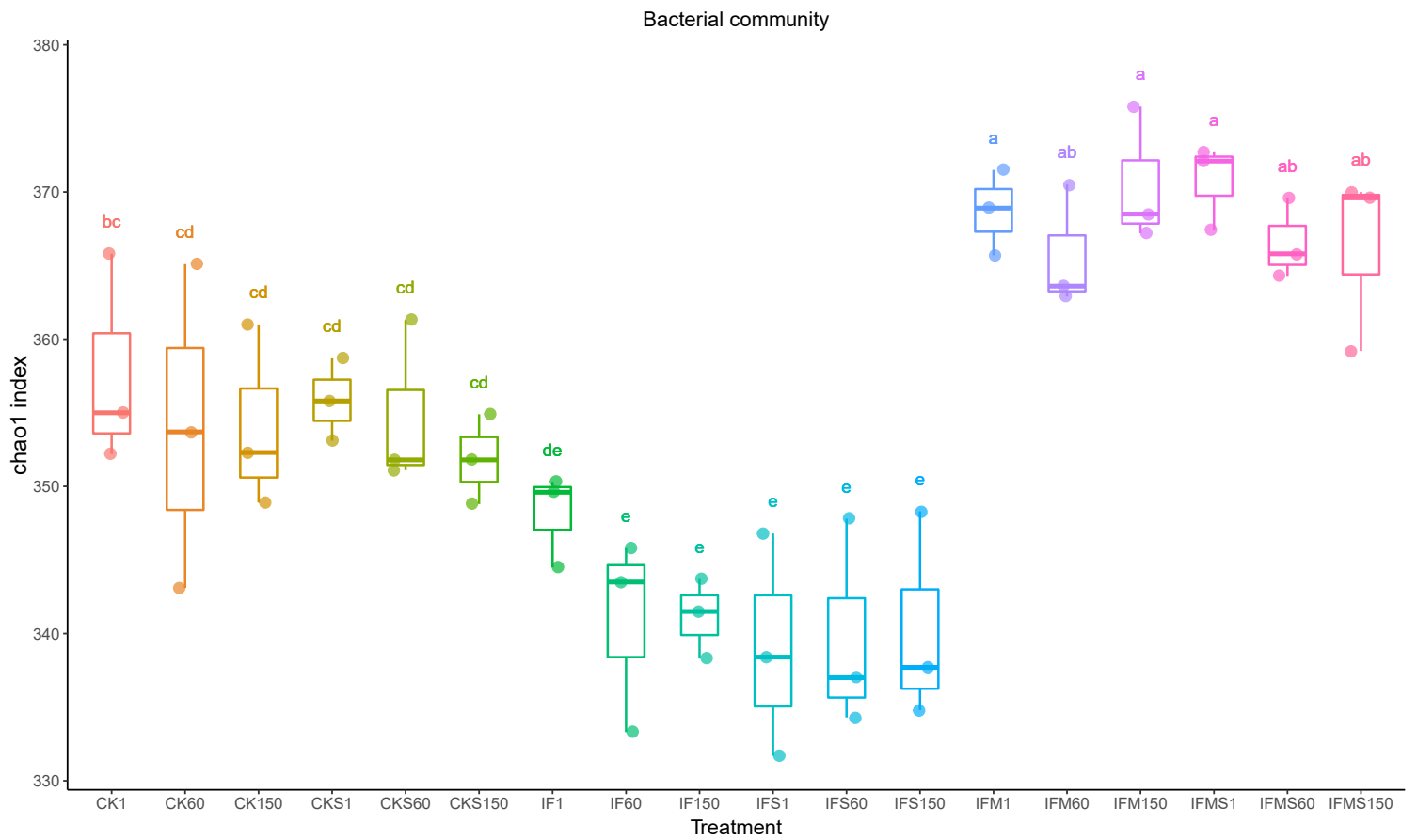
Content of soil dissolved organic carbon (DOC), microbial biomass carbon (MBC), and particle organic carbon (POC) with and without straw residue under different fertilizer management strategies during the incubation time.

Treatment	Incubation time (day)	DOC (mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )	MBC (mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )	POC (g kg <sup>-1</sup> )
CK	1	828 ± 26	843 ± 33	3.79 ± 0.64
	60	371 ± 32	106 ± 38	2.94 ± 0.18
	150	329 ± 52	157 ± 1.7	3.39 ± 0.18
IF	1	930 ± 1.8	904 ± 25	3.61 ± 0.44
	60	332 ± 32	89 ± 6.5	2.85 ± 0.02
	150	308 ± 2.3	111 ± 47	3.32 ± 0.05
IFM	1	925 ± 11	904 ± 4.8	9.68 ± 0.35
	60	412 ± 8.3	247 ± 31	8.44 ± 0.36
	150	268 ± 43	420 ± 12	9.07 ± 0.46
CKS	1	946 ± 59	857 ± 16	3.46 ± 0.1
	60	408 ± 28	145 ± 24	3.83 ± 0.26
	150	369 ± 32	251 ± 81	4.04 ± 0.25
IFS	1	930 ± 31	846 ± 64	3.61 ± 0.08
	60	334 ± 8.6	232 ± 28	3.25 ± 0.29
	150	312 ± 8.1	267 ± 5.3	3.37 ± 0.37
IFMS	1	933 ± 16	881 ± 5.2	10.37 ± 1.02
	60	424 ± 15	236 ± 32	9.04 ± 0.98
	150	326 ± 30	435 ± 24	9.33 ± 0.55

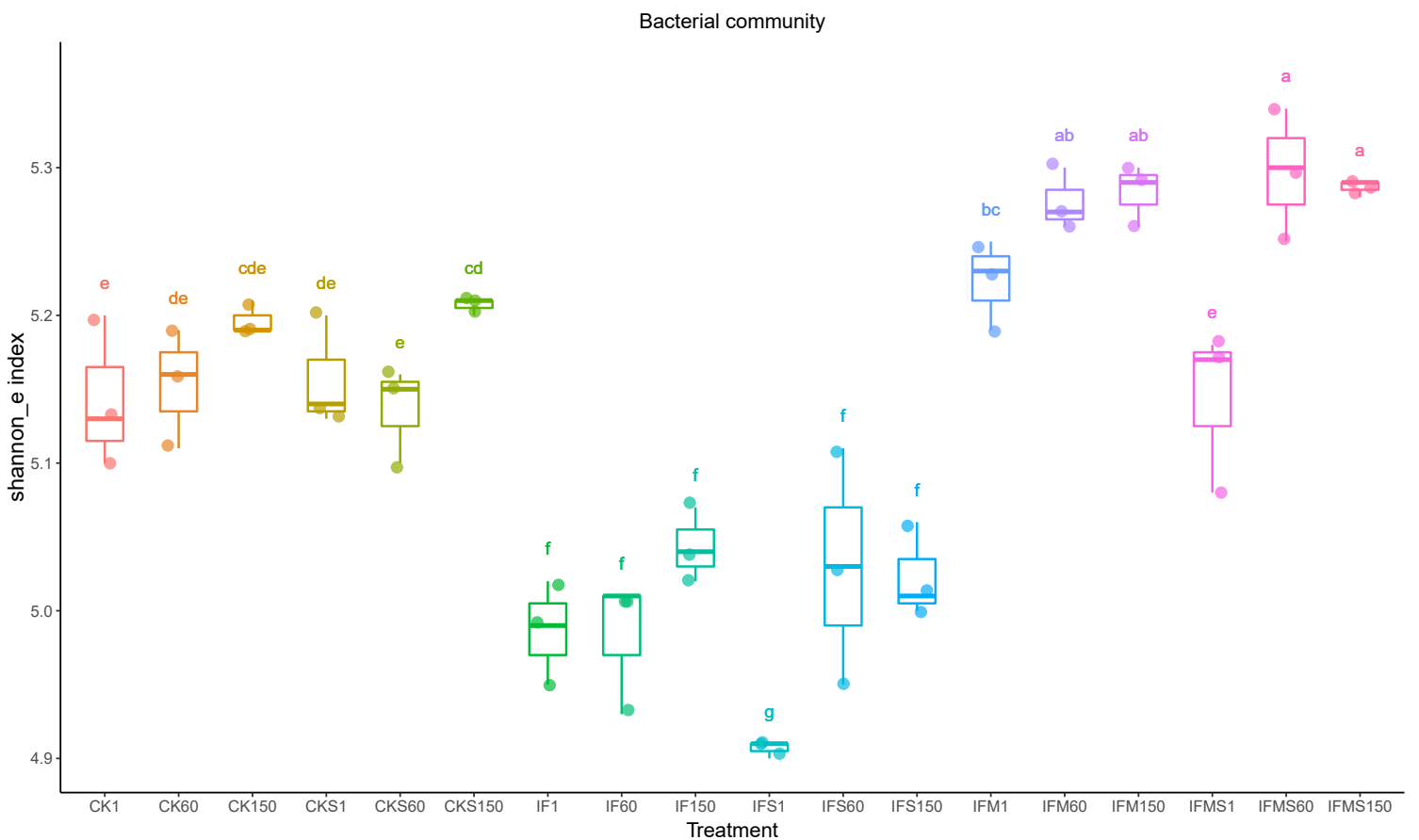
Note: CK denotes control, CKS denotes control + straw, IF denotes inorganic fertilizer, IFS denotes inorganic fertilizer + straw, IFM denotes inorganic fertilizer plus manure, IFMS denotes inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw.



(a)

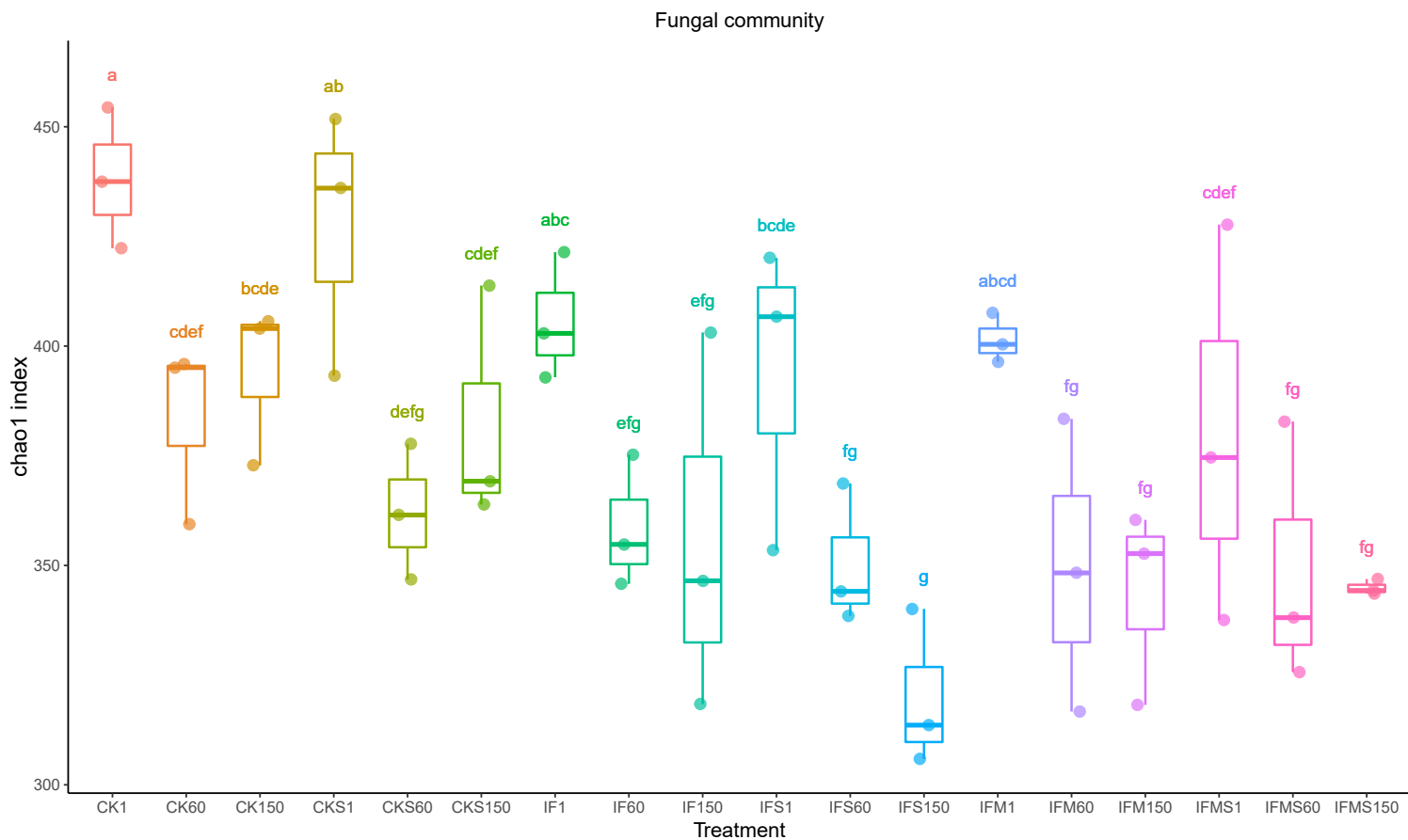


(b)

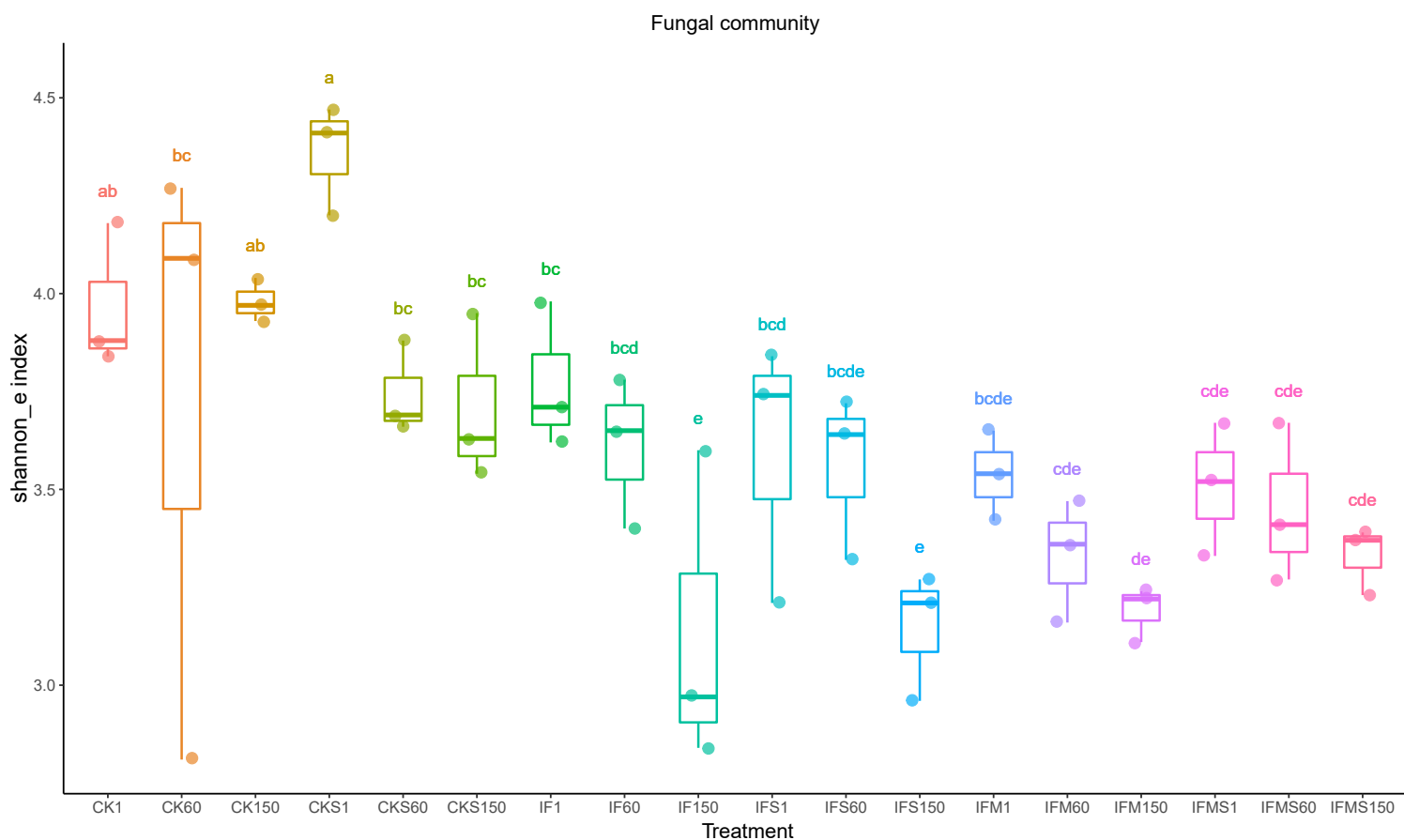


**Figure S1** Box plots of Chao 1 (a) and Shannon (b) diversity indices of soil bacterial community in CK (control), IF (inorganic fertilizer), IFM (inorganic fertilizer plus manure), CKS (control + straw), IFS (inorganic fertilizer + straw), and IFMS (inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw) after adding straw residue in 1 day, 60 days and 150 days.

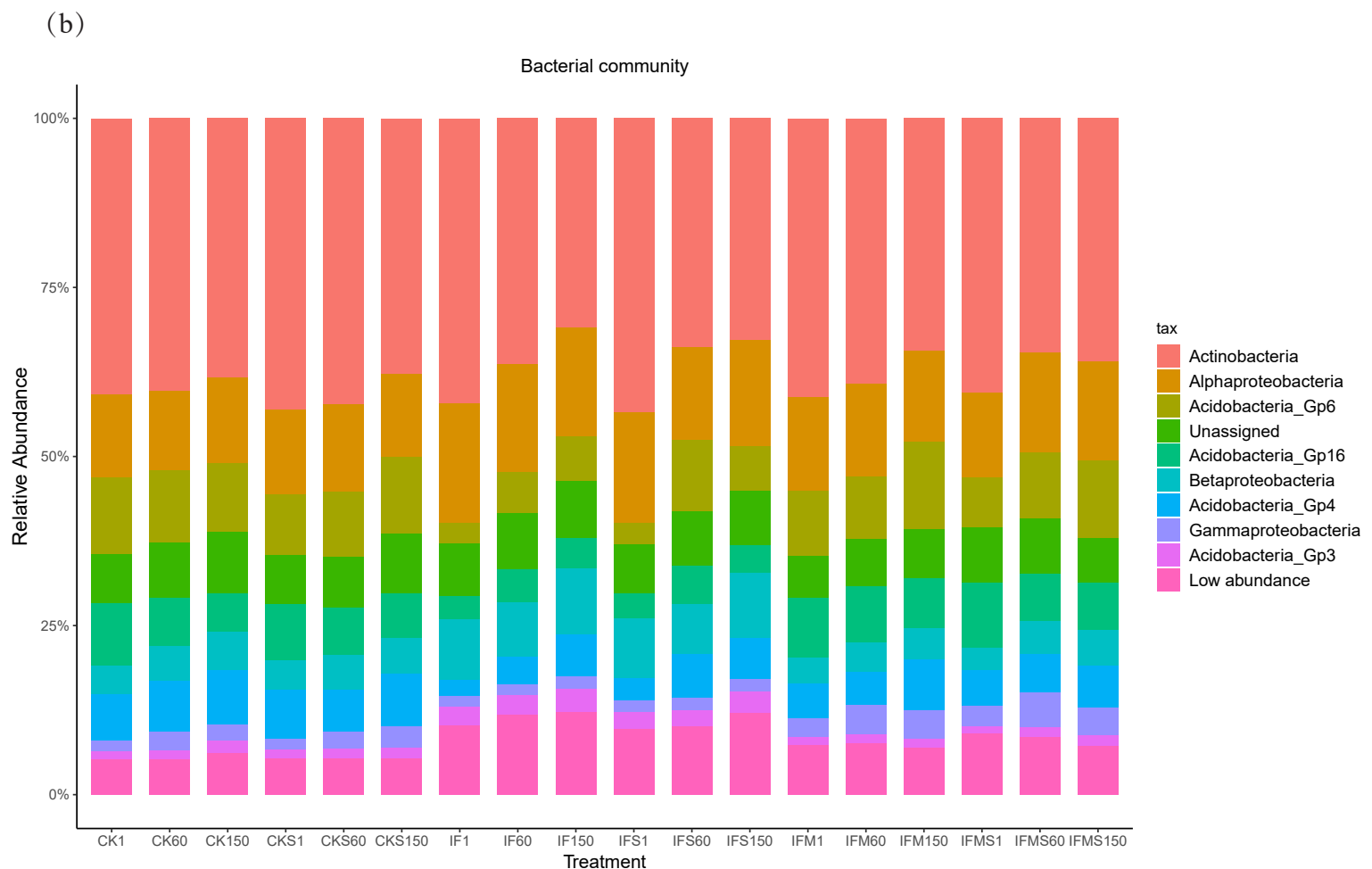
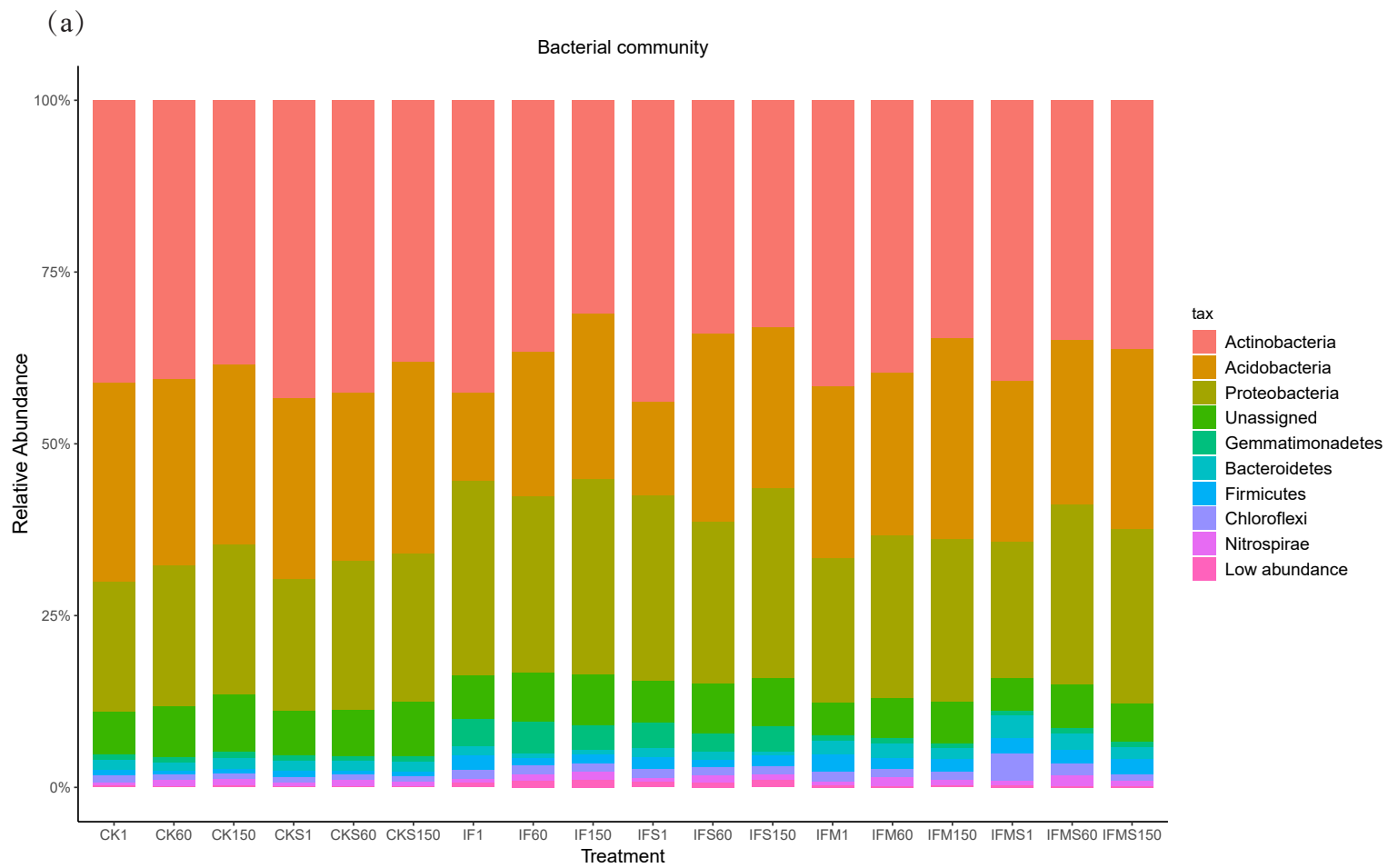
(a)



(b)



**Figure S2** Box plots of Chao 1 (a) and Shannon (b) diversity indices of soil fungal community in CK (control), IF (inorganic fertilizer), IFM (inorganic fertilizer plus manure), CKS (control + straw), IFS (inorganic fertilizer + straw), and IFMS (inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw) after adding straw residue in 1 day, 60 days and 150 days.



**Figure S3** Relative abundance of taxonomic composition of soil bacterial community at phylum level (a) and class level (b), respectively. Treatments including CK (control), CKS (control + straw), IF (inorganic fertilizer), IFS (inorganic fertilizer + straw), IFM (inorganic fertilizer plus manure), IFMS (inorganic fertilizer plus manure + straw). Soil samplings were conducted in 1 day, 60 days and 150 days after added straw residue. Phylum and class names were color-code on the right listed above.

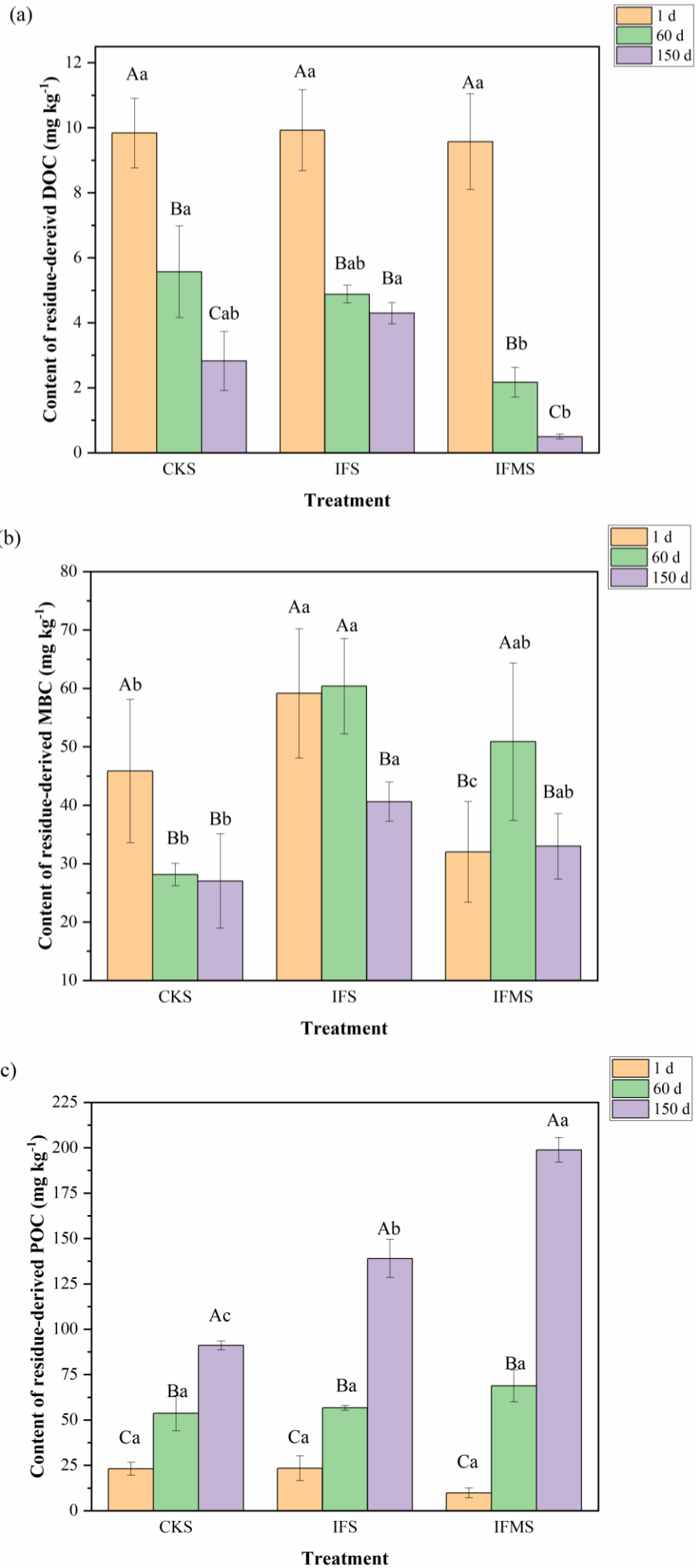
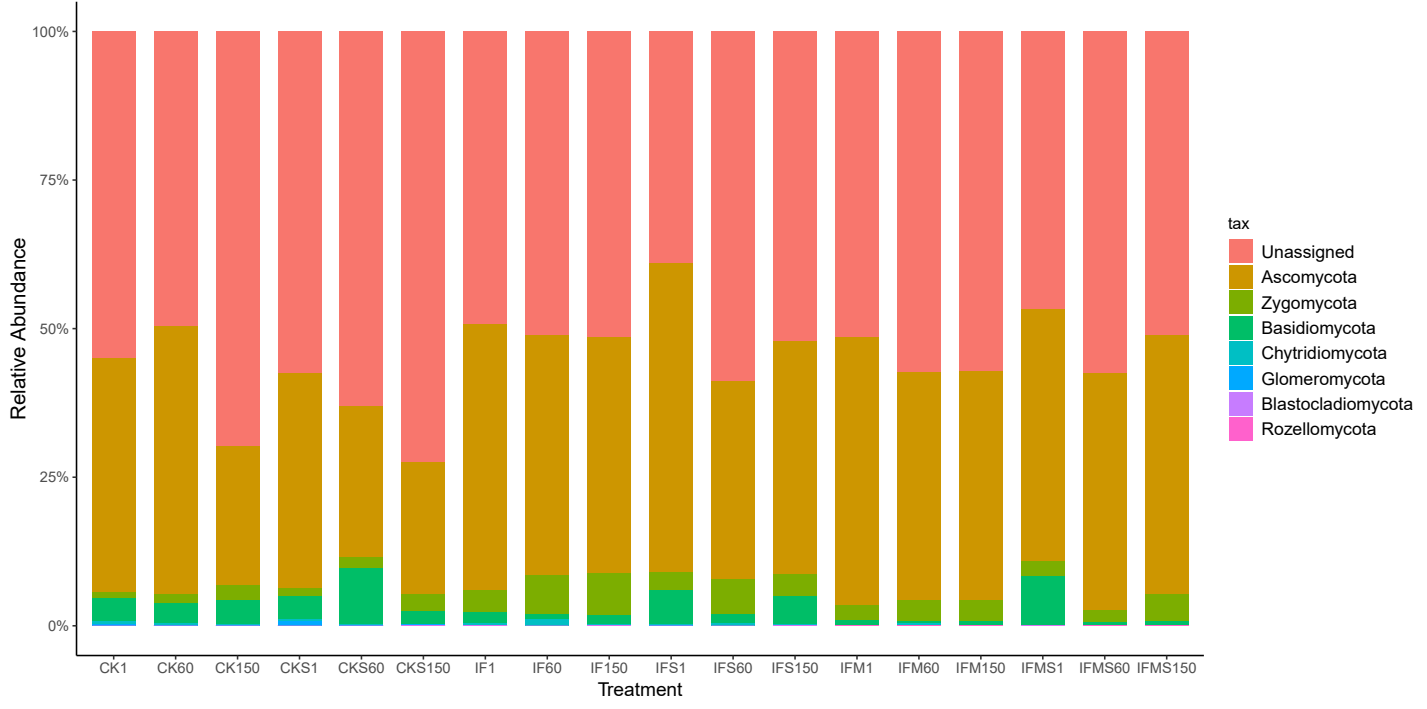


Figure 1

(a)

Fungal community



(b)

Fungal community

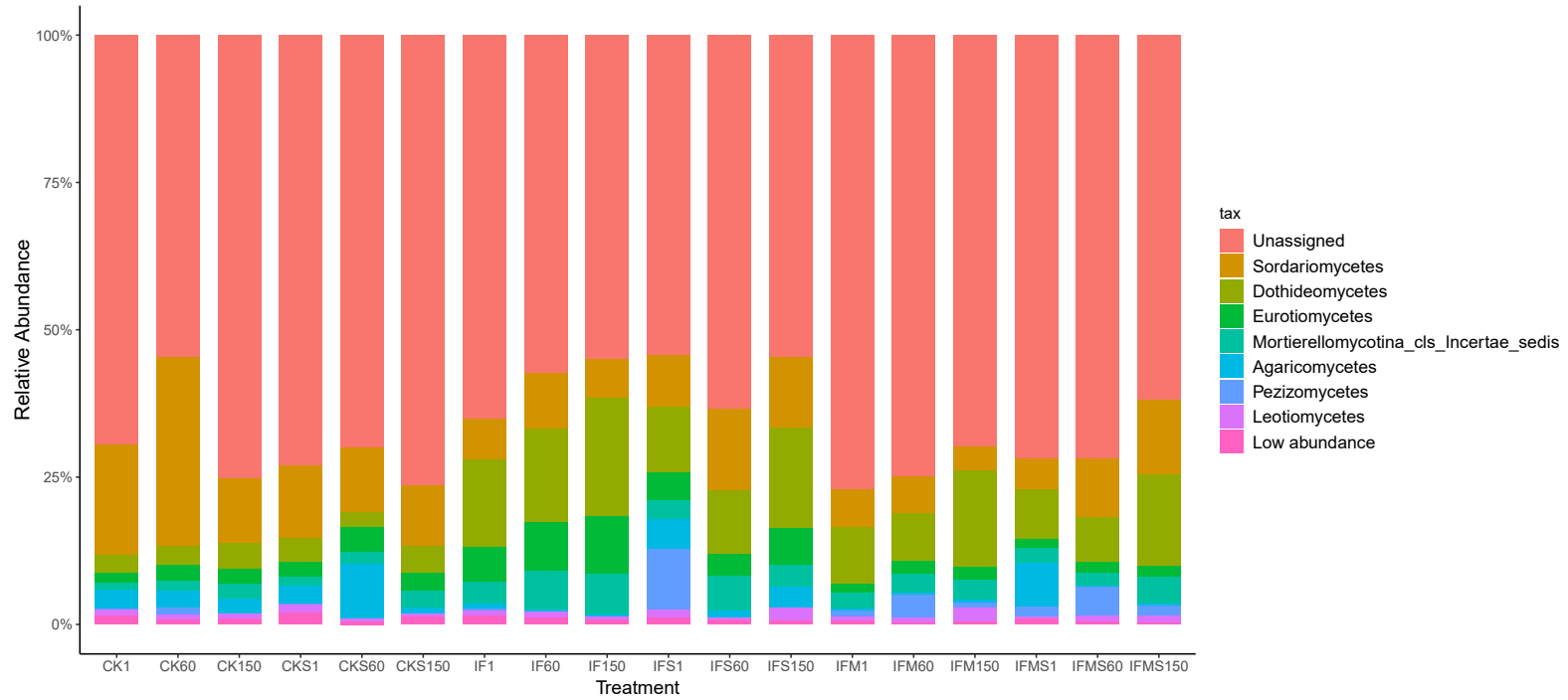


Figure 2

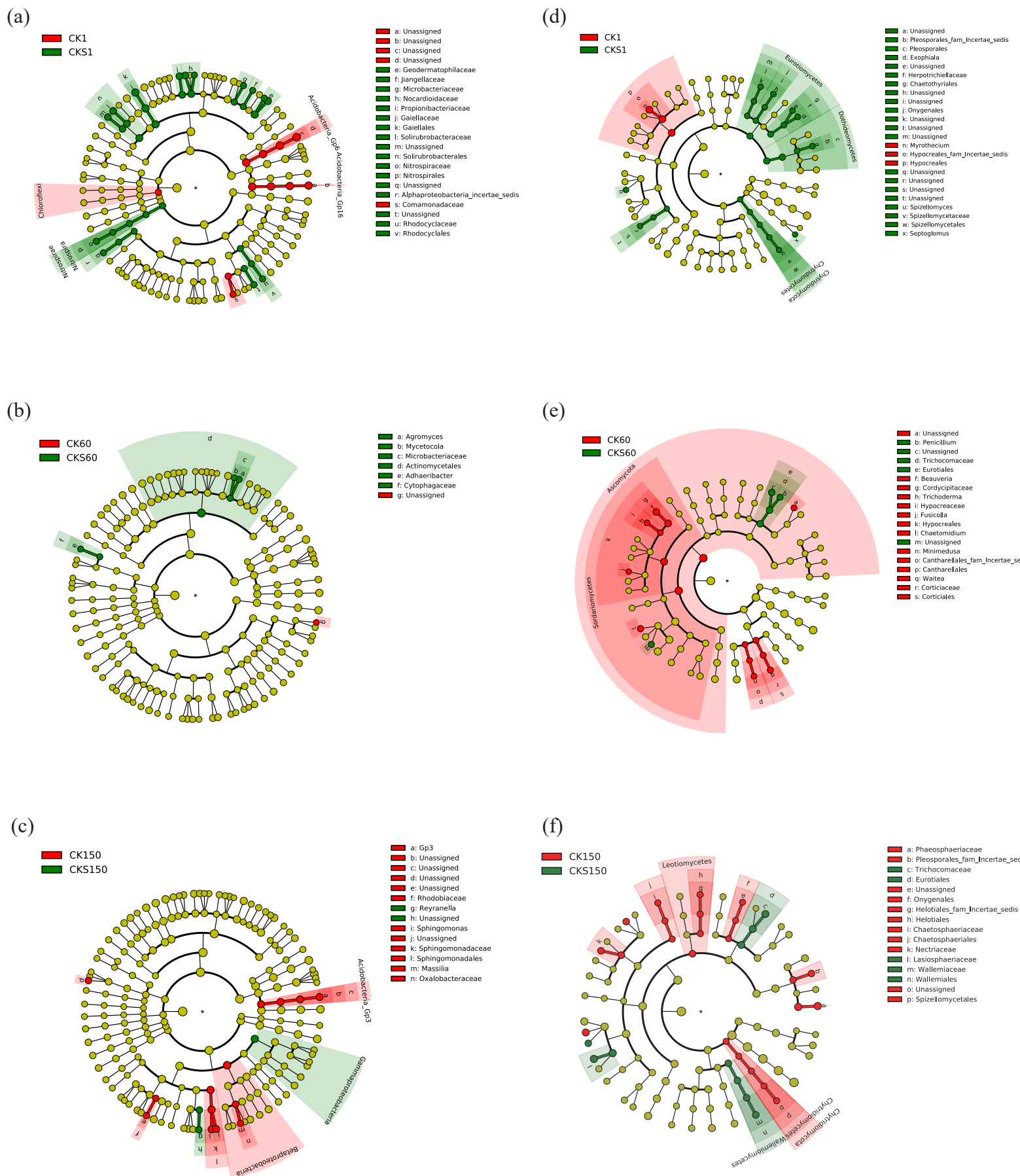


Figure 3

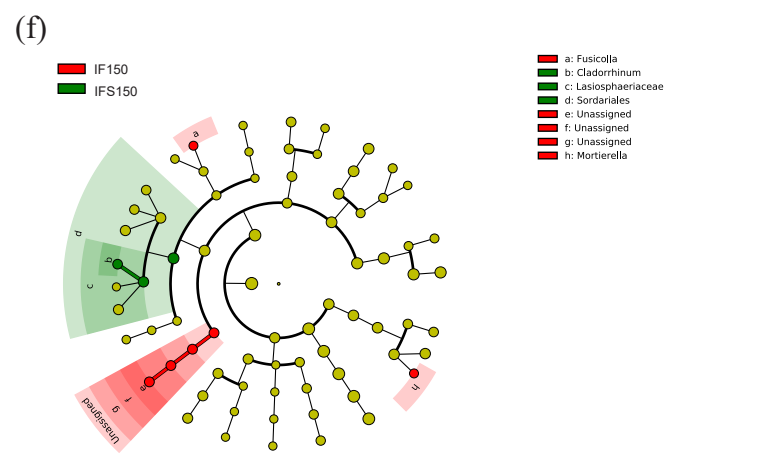
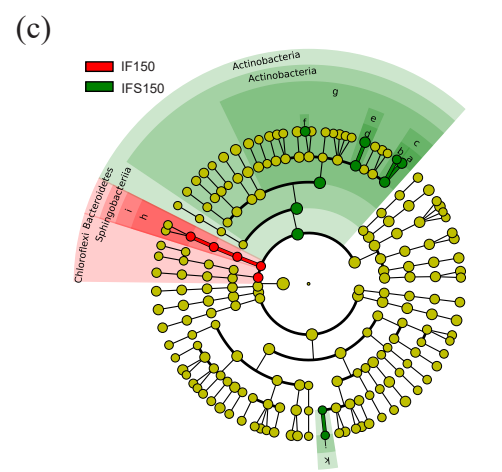
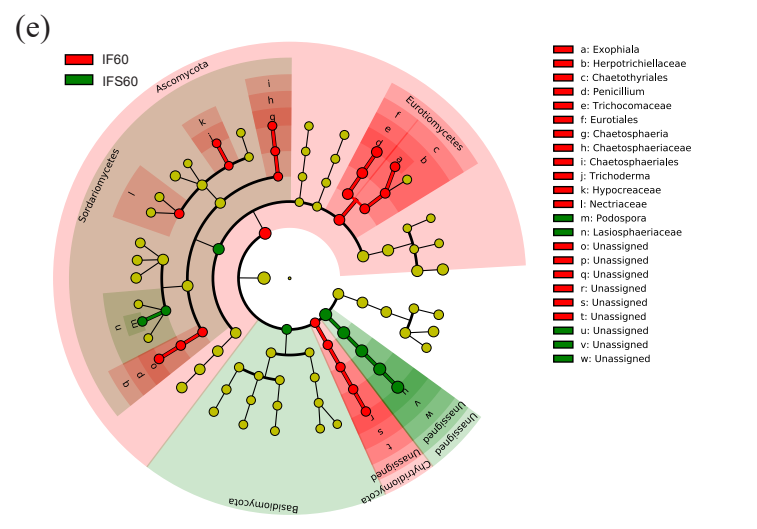
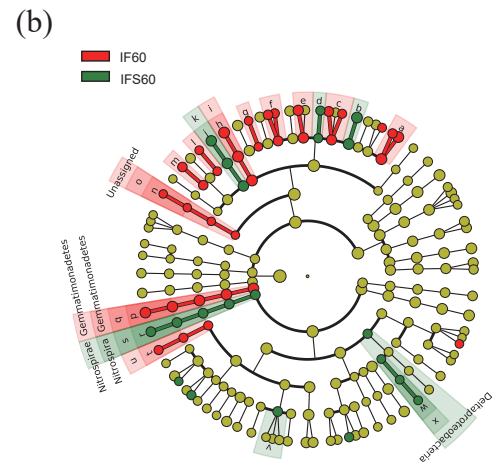
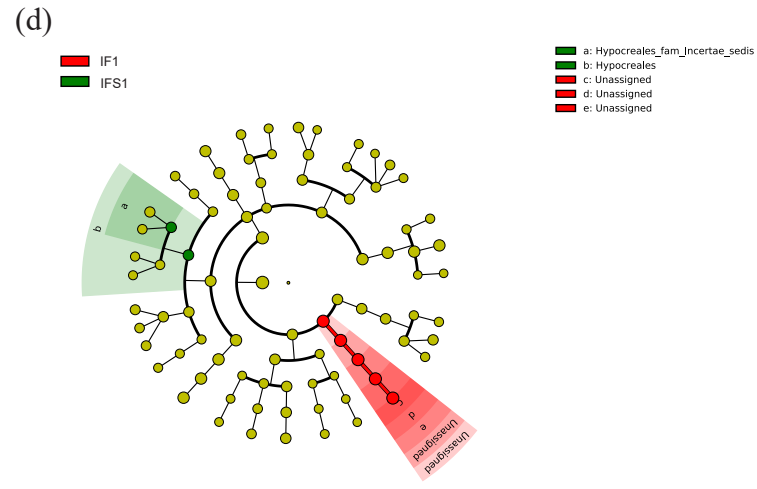
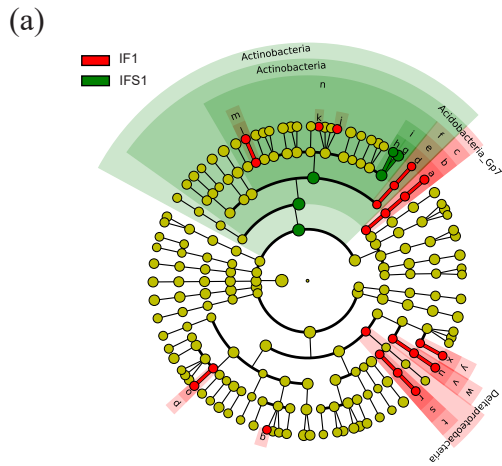
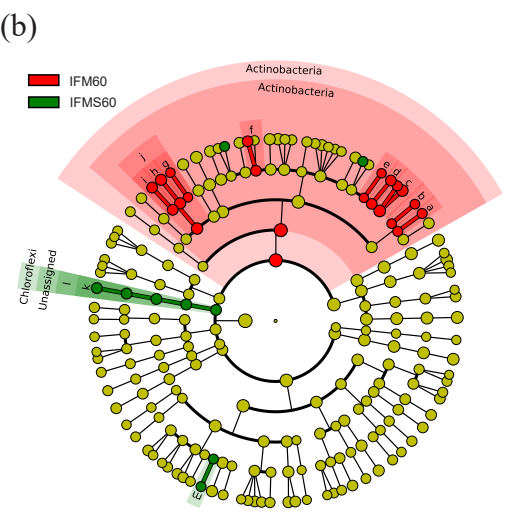
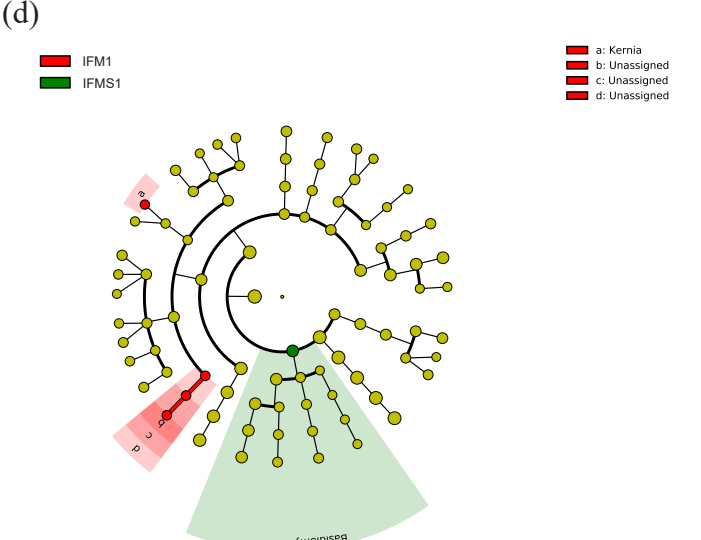
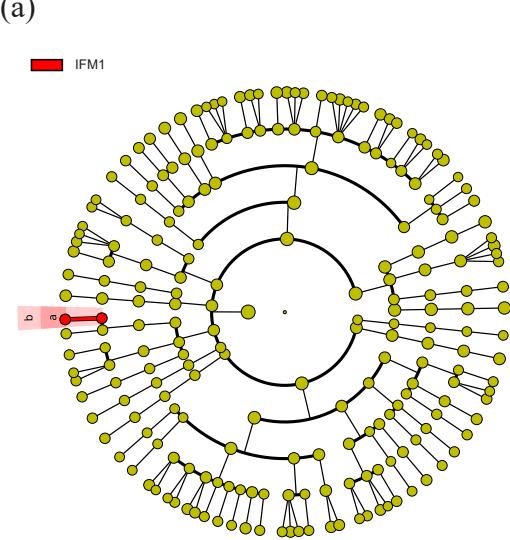
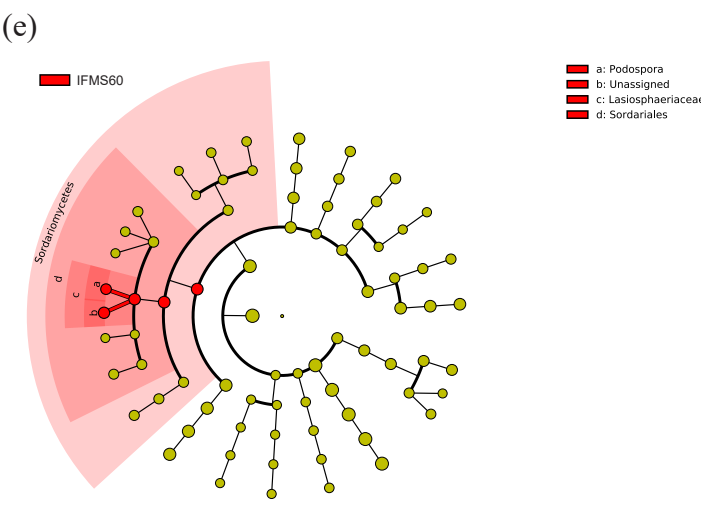


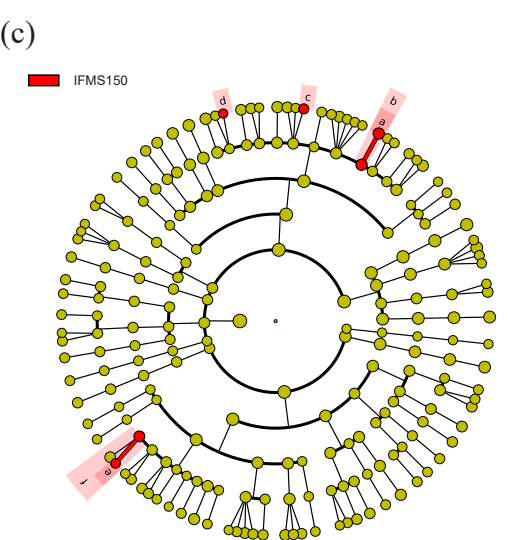
Figure 4



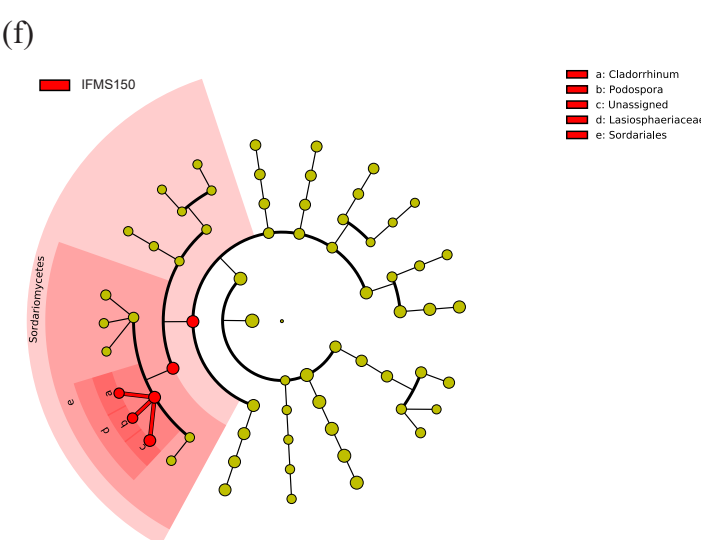
- a: Iamiaceae
- b: Unassigned
- c: Geodermatophilaceae
- d: Intraspangliaceae
- e: Jiangellaceae
- f: Pseudonocardiaceae
- g: Conexibacteraceae
- h: Solirubrobacteraceae
- i: Unassigned
- j: Solirubrobacterales
- k: Unassigned
- l: Unassigned
- m: Rhodobiaceae



- a: Podospora
- b: Unassigned
- c: Lasiosphaeriaceae
- d: Sordariales



- a: Arthrobaacter
- b: Micrococcaceae
- c: Kribbella
- d: Nonomuraea
- e: Unassigned
- f: Bradyrhizobiaceae

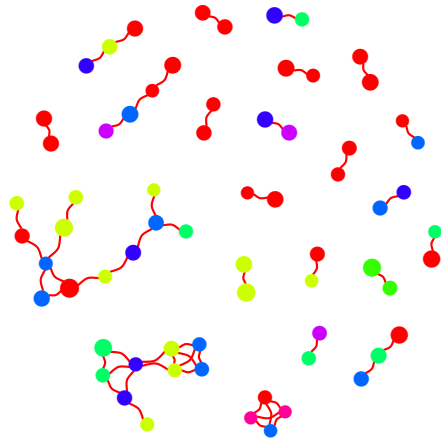


- a: Cladorrhinum
- b: Podospora
- c: Unassigned
- d: Lasiosphaeriaceae
- e: Sordariales

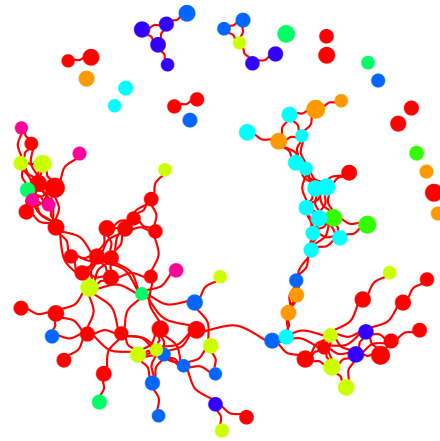
Figure 5



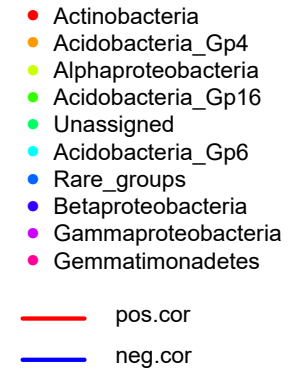
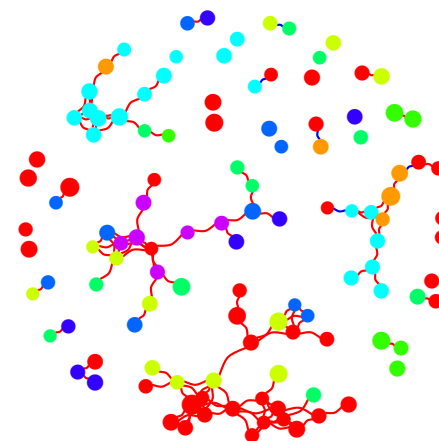
(a) **CK co-occurrence network**



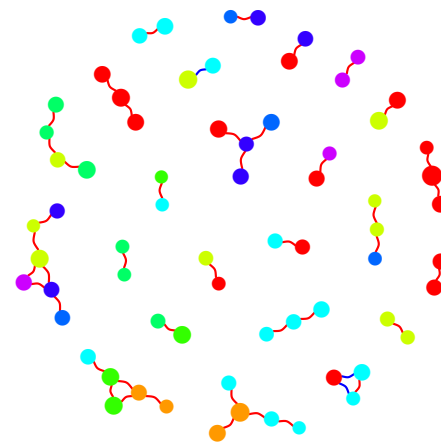
(b) **IF co-occurrence network**



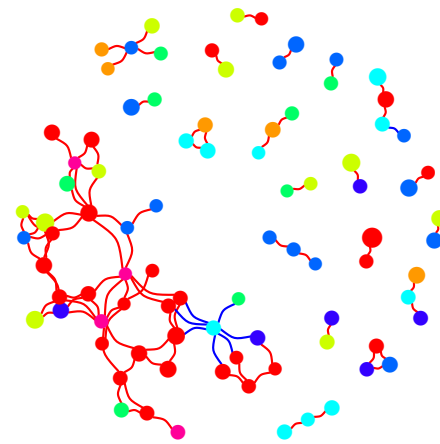
(c) **IFM co-occurrence network**



(d) **CKS co-occurrence network**



(e) **IFS co-occurrence network**



(f) **IFMS co-occurrence network**

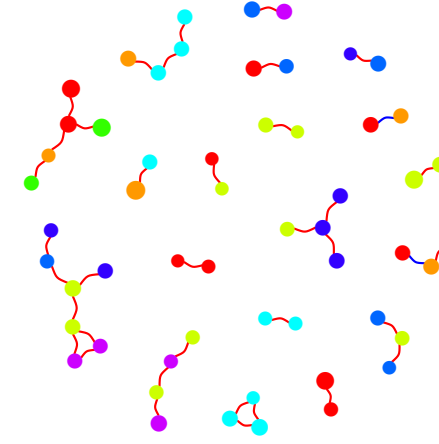
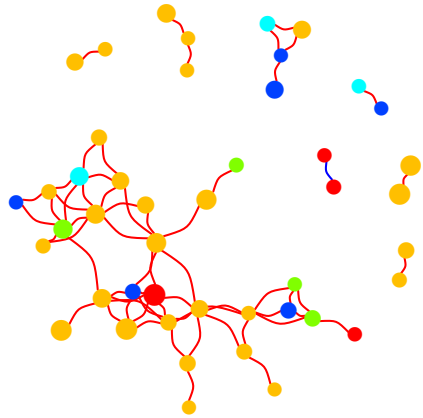
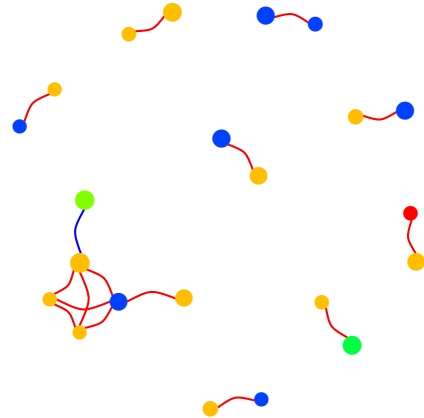


Figure 6

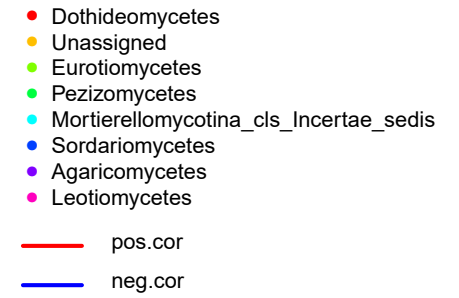
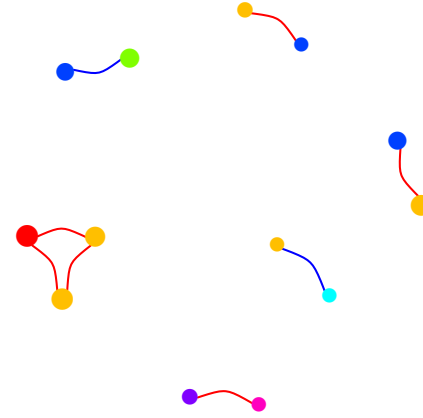
(a) **CK co-occurrence network**



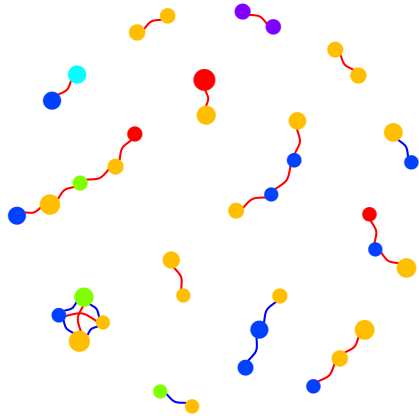
(b) **IF co-occurrence network**



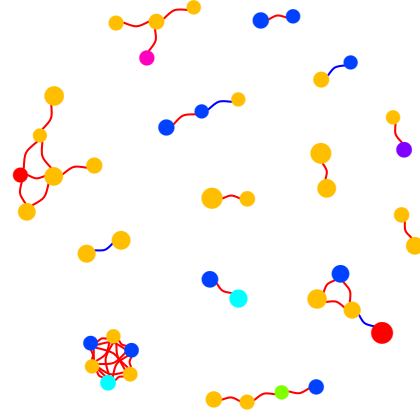
(c) **IFM co-occurrence network**



(d) **CKS co-occurrence network**



(e) **IFS co-occurrence network**



(f) **IFMS co-occurrence network**

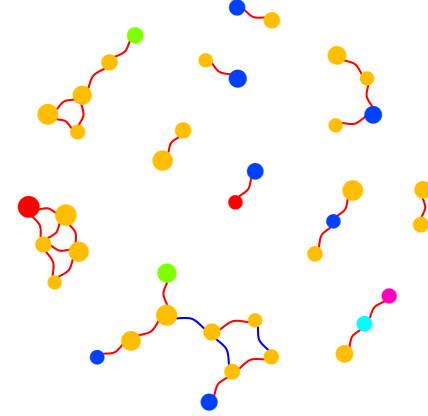


Figure 7

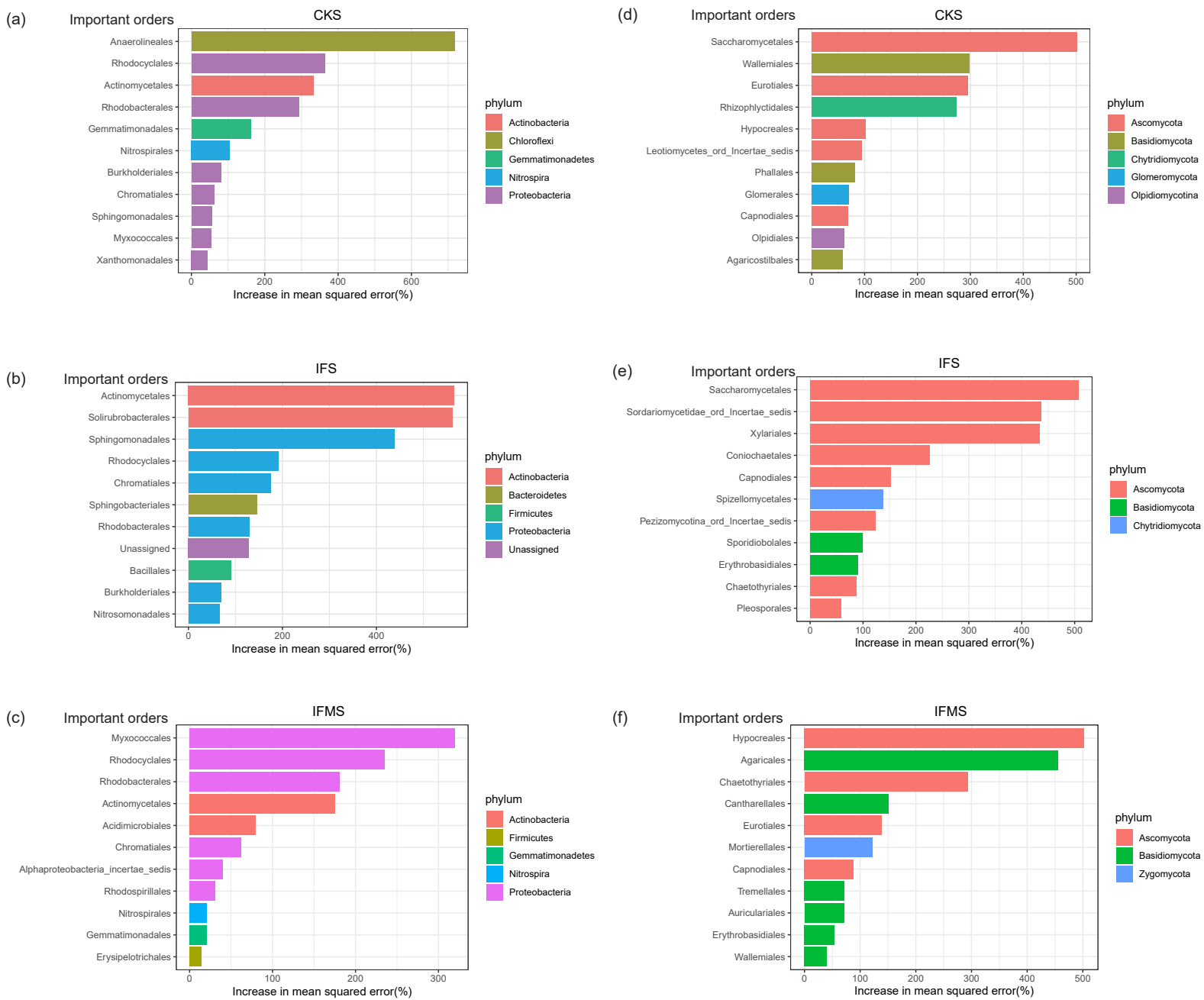


Figure 8

\*\*\*  $P < 0.001$

\*\*  $P < 0.01$

\*  $P < 0.05$

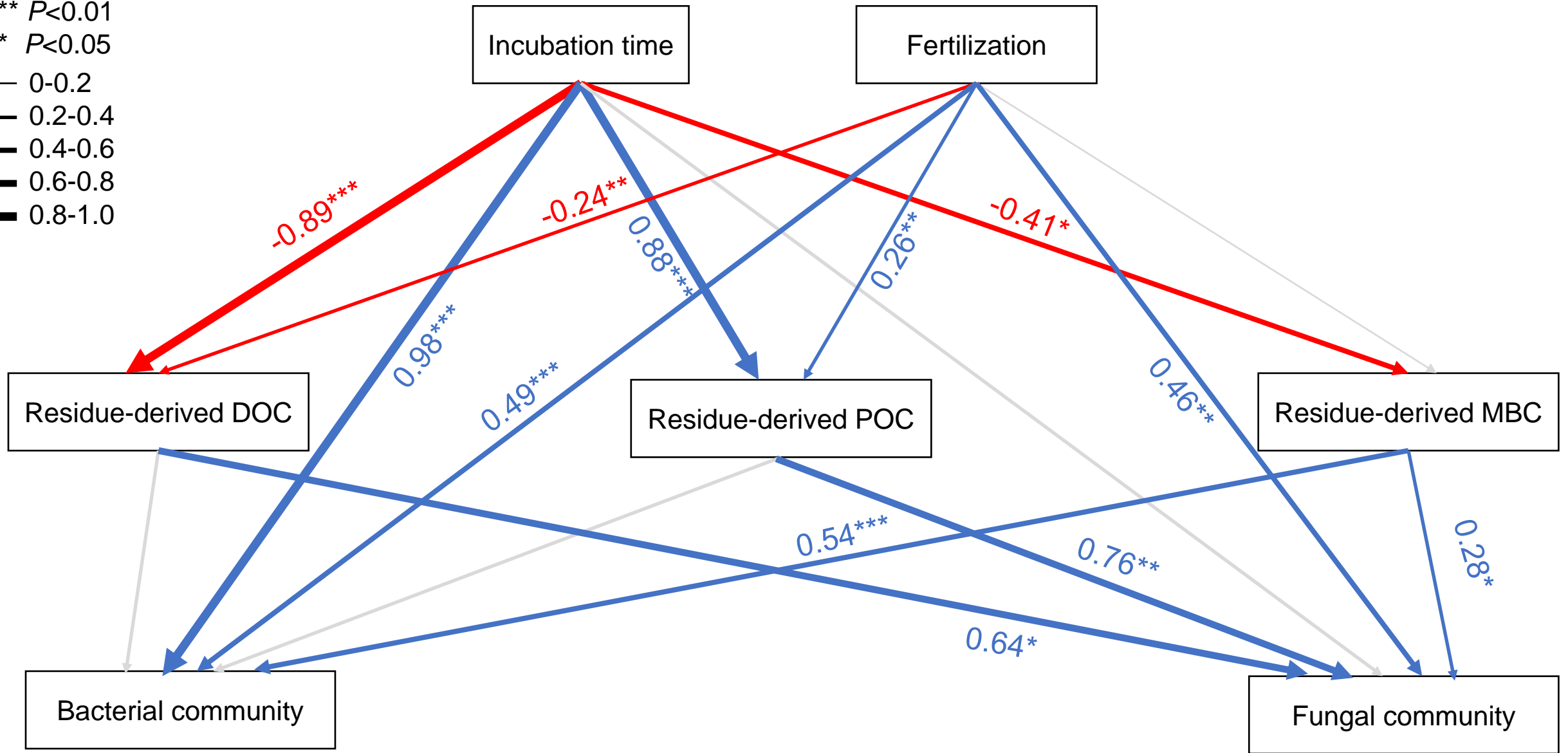
— 0-0.2

— 0.2-0.4

— 0.4-0.6

— 0.6-0.8

— 0.8-1.0



$\chi^2 = 0.32, P = 0.811, GFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0$

Figure 9

**Declaration of interests**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

None
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