

1 **Antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs) in agricultural soils from**
2 **the Yangtze River Delta, China**

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19 **Abstract**

20 As an important reservoir of intrinsic antimicrobial resistance, soil is subjected to
21 increasing anthropogenic activities that creates sustained selection pressure for the
22 prevalence of antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs), thus constituting an important
23 environmental dissemination pathway to human exposure. This study investigated the
24 levels and spatial distributions of three classes of ARGs in relation to a range of co-
25 occurring chemical mixtures and soil properties at a regional scale of the Yangtze River
26 Delta (YRD), China. The selected eight ARGs were all detected in 241 agricultural soil
27 samples with relative abundances ranging from 1.01×10^{-7} to 2.31×10^{-1} normalized to
28 the 16S rRNA gene. The *sulIII* and *tetG* were the dominant ARGs with a mean relative
29 abundance of 6.67×10^{-3} and 5.25×10^{-3} , respectively. The ARGs were mainly present in
30 agricultural soils alongside Taihu Lake and Shanghai municipality, the most
31 agriculturally and economically vibrant area of the YRD region. Antibiotics, rather than
32 other co-occurring pollutants and soil properties, remain to be the dominant correlate
33 to the ARGs, suggesting their co-introduction into the soils via irrigation and manure
34 application or the sustained selection pressure of antibiotics from these sources for the
35 proliferation of ARGs in the soils. While the current dataset provided useful information
36 to assess the ARGs pollution for mitigation, future studies are warranted to reveal the
37 complete picture on the potential transfer of antimicrobial resistance from soil to
38 agricultural produces to human consumption and associated health implications.

39

40 *Keywords:* antibiotics; antibiotic resistance genes; Yangtze River Delta; agricultural

41 soils

42

43 **1. Introduction**

44 The advent of antibiotics in the 20th century revolutionized modern medicine and
45 livestock industry. The sustained selection pressure of antibiotics on bacteria due to
46 their misuse and overuse across the globe, however, has led to the increased prevalence
47 of antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs) in a wide variety of clinical pathogens and
48 commensal bacteria and hence the emergence of antibiotic-resistant pathogens and
49 “superbugs”. Outside the clinical and livestock sectors, the environment, as the
50 remaining pillar of the “One Health” loop, represents a critical reservoir and
51 transmission pathway of antimicrobial resistance (Berendonk et al., 2015). Since the
52 first recognition of antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs) as emerging environmental
53 contaminants (Pruden et al., 2006), ARGs pollution has aroused considerable concerns
54 for both the ecological environment and human health.

55 Soil has the largest and most diverse microflora, and soil microbiota is one of the
56 origins of antibiotic resistance genes (D'Costa et al., 2011; Forsberg et al., 2012).
57 However, the increasing use and misuse of antimicrobials in humans and animals in
58 recent decades has contributed to a rise in both the diversity and prevalence of
59 antimicrobial resistance in soils, particularly in areas affected by human and animal
60 wastes, such as organic manures and reclaimed wastewater. Consequently, the
61 agricultural soil could possibly become an important reservoir of ARGs, which may
62 pose potential health risks to humans (Sun et al., 2017). ARGs in agricultural soil could

63 be transferred to the human body via crop (Zhu et al., 2017) and air particulate matter
64 exposure pathways (McEachran et al., 2015; Xie et al., 2018). The sulfonamide (*sul*)
65 genes found in agricultural soils of China ranged from 10^{-6} to 10^{-2} gene copies/16S
66 rRNA gene copies (Zhou et al., 2017), whereas the tetracycline (*tet*) genes in soils
67 across the world ranged from 10^{-6} to 10^{-2} gene copies/16S rRNA gene copies (Ji et al.,
68 2012; Wang et al., 2015). Given that the *sul* and *tet* resistance genes were often detected
69 in manure or manure-amended soils (Qiao et al., 2018), application of manure fertilizer
70 and wastewater irrigation could be the main anthropogenic sources of ARGs for
71 agricultural soil environment (Wu et al., 2010; Cheng et al., 2016; Zhou et al., 2017).

72 Numerous studies showed that the ARGs diversity and abundance in agricultural
73 soils were influenced by multiple factors, such as antibiotics, heavy metals, and Class
74 I integron (*intI1*). It was reported that there was a significant and positive correlation
75 between ARGs and antibiotics in soil environment (Huang et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2013;
76 Cheng et al., 2016). The overuse of antibiotics exerts selective pressure on
77 microorganisms and ARGs, which exacerbates the contamination of ARGs (Witte,
78 2000; Luo et al., 2010; Xiong et al., 2015). Furthermore, ARGs pollution in soil
79 environment is on a great scale, with some levels surging by > 15-fold since the 1970s
80 (Knapp et al., 2010). The co-selection of heavy metal and antibiotics on ARGs can also
81 increase the ARGs pollution in soils (Zhang et al., 2015a, b; Lin et al., 2016). As one
82 of the mobile genetic elements (MGEs), the *intI1* exists both in Gram-positive and
83 Gram-negative bacteria (Gillings et al., 2015) and contributed to the transfer of ARGs
84 in soils. Therefore, the environmental behavior of ARGs is highly related to the soil

85 types, climatic environment, and land use. Through a regional field study, the key
86 factors influencing the fate of ARGs in soil could be revealed and evaluated.

87 The Yangtze River Delta (YRD) is the most populated and economically prosperous
88 region in China. The study area of the YRD covers Shanghai municipality, northern
89 Zhejiang and southern Jiangsu provinces. The population of the YRD region has
90 exceeded 110 million, resulting in large agricultural growth in the region. Our previous
91 studies indicated that polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) (Sun et al., 2016a),
92 organochlorine pesticides (OCPs), phthalate esters (PAEs), polybrominated diphenyl
93 ethers (PBDEs) (Sun et al., 2016b), and antibiotics (Sun et al., 2017) in agricultural
94 soils were widely detected. The combined organic pollution may pose ecological risks
95 and have an effect on the profiles of ARGs in agricultural soils. Therefore, it is strictly
96 necessary to investigate the occurrence and spatial distribution of ARGs, and synthesize
97 the data on co-occurring chemical mixtures and soil properties to evaluate the
98 influencing factors on the fate of ARGs to effectively control the ARGs pollution in the
99 YRD region.

100 The study aims 1) to reveal the occurrence and distribution of ARGs in agricultural
101 soils of the YRD region; and 2) to evaluate the major influencing factors on the fate of
102 ARGs in soils. The findings provided a better understanding of ARGs contamination in
103 highly human-impacted regions in the world.

104 **2. Materials and methods**

105 ***2.1. Sample collection***

106 A total of 241 surface agricultural soil samples (0–15 cm) were collected from the

107 Yangtze River Delta in the east of China in June 2014. The sampling region covered a
108 total area of 45,800 square kilometers in eastern Zhejiang, Shanghai, and southern
109 Jiangsu (Figure 1). Detailed information on the sampling sites was presented in our
110 previous study (Sun et al., 2016b). Five subsamples were drawn with a bamboo scoop
111 at each site and mixed into a single sample. The distance of each subsample core was
112 10-20 m and the sampling site had an area of 400 m². The collected soil samples were
113 then sent to the laboratory and stored in brown containers at ultra-low temperature of
114 -80 °C for subsequent analysis.

115 **2.2. DNA extraction of soil samples**

116 The extraction of DNA was conducted with a DNeasy PowerSoil Kit (QIAGEN,
117 German) from three replicates of 0.25 g each soil following the manufacturer's
118 instructions. The concentration of extracted DNA was measured by the Nanodrop
119 (Thermo Fisher, Germany). The quality of DNA was determined by running 1.5%
120 agarose gel electrophoresis. The extracted DNA was kept at -20 °C before analysis.
121 The target genes including eight ARGs, *intI1* and 16S rRNA were purified by
122 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay. The duplicate PCR reactions were carried for
123 each gene; while ultrapure water was used as a control to ensure the accuracy of the
124 PCR results. PCR reaction consists of 2.0 μL 10 × PCR buffer (Mg²⁺ free), 0.8 μL
125 MgCl₂ (25 mM), 2 μL dNTPs (10 mM), 1 μL template DNA (75 ng), 1 μL of each
126 primer (10 μM), 0.3 μL Taq DNA polymerase (5 Unit) and 16.9 μL double-distilled
127 H₂O. The temperature program of PCR was followed: 5 min at 95 °C for initial
128 denaturation, 40 cycles of 15 s at 95 °C, 30 s at the annealing temperature, 30 s at 72 °C

129 for the final step of extension. The annealing temperature and primers of target genes
130 are illustrated in Table S1 of Supporting Information.

131 **2.3. Real-time PCR of ARGs, *intI1* and 16S rRNA genes**

132 This study analyzed eight ARGs including five *tet* genes (*tetA*, *tetG*, *tetM*, *tetO*,
133 *tetW*), two *sul* genes (*sulI*, *sulII*) and one *qnr* gene (*qnrS*), which are the common and
134 typical ARGs in soil environments with three classes. The quantification of selected
135 genes was conducted under the Step One Plus Real-Time PCR Systems (ABI, USA) in
136 three replicates. The primers of real-time PCR were the same as those in the PCR
137 process. The real-time PCR system was carried out in triplicate with a final volume of
138 15 μ L, which consisted of 7.5 μ L of SYBR Premix Ex Taq™ (TaKaRa), 4.6 μ L of
139 double-distilled H₂O, 0.3 μ L of 50 \times ROX reference dye, 0.3 μ L of forward primer (10
140 mM), 0.3 μ L of reverse primer (10 mM) and 2 μ L of template DNA. We had diluted the
141 DNA template to ensure the DNA concentration was <10 ng/ μ L for the prevention of
142 amplification inhibition. The temperature program of real-time PCR was performed at
143 95 °C for 30 s, followed by 40 cycles of 5 s at 95 °C, 30 s at the annealing temperature,
144 and 30 s at 72 °C (Table S1). The melt curve stage increased from 60 to 95 °C at the
145 rate of 0.5 °C per read to affirm the specificity. The real-time PCR products were
146 excised, purified and linked to plasmids pMD19-T cloned into Escherichia coli DH5 α
147 (Takara) to generate positive controls. According to the BLAST alignment tool
148 (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/blast/>), the positive clones of the ARGs were used as the
149 calibration standards. The real-time PCR standard curves and amplification efficiency
150 are listed in Table S2.

151 **2.4. Data analysis**

152 Data analysis of ARGs was performed with SPSS Version 20.0, Origin8.0 and
153 Microsoft Excel 2000. Spearman correlation analysis was applied to assess the
154 relationships between the abundance of ARGs, *intI1* and environmental factors. The
155 spatial distributions of ARG in agricultural soils from YRD region were simulated by
156 using universal Kriging in ArcGIS 10.2 (ESRI, Redlands, CA, USA). Principal
157 component analysis (PCA) and redundancy analysis (RDA) were carried out with
158 Canoco 4.5 to examine the independent contributions of influence factors on ARG
159 composition. The abundance values of ARGs were expressed on a dry-weight basis and
160 were log-transformed before the statistical analyses. The data of antibiotics and heavy
161 metals in agricultural soils of the YRD region came from our previous study (Sun et al.,
162 2017; Sun et al., 2016a, b).

163 **3. Results and discussion**

164 **3.1. Levels of ARGs in soil of the YRD region**

165 The levels of ARGs were calculated through the absolute abundances of ARGs
166 normalized to that of the 16S rRNA gene in agricultural soils (Figure 2). The relative
167 abundance of three selected classes of ARGs including tetracycline (*tetA*, *tetG*, *tetM*,
168 *tetO* and *tetW*), sulfonamide (*sulI* and *sulII*) and quinolone (*qnrS*) resistance genes is
169 summarized in Table 1. Eight ARGs were all detected in 241 agricultural soils of the
170 YRD region. The abundances of selected ARGs in agricultural soils ranged from
171 1.01×10^{-7} to 2.31×10^{-1} copies/16S rRNA copies (Table 1). The *sul* resistance genes were
172 the most abundant ARGs in agricultural soils which may be caused by the propagation

173 characteristic of *suII* and *suIII* (Radstrom and Swedberg, 1988). In our previous study,
174 the *suI*, *tet* and *qnr* resistance genes were detected in greenhouse and corresponding
175 open-field soils across China, and the level of *suI* resistance genes were relatively
176 higher than other ARGs in both kinds of agricultural soils (Zeng et al., 2019). In this
177 survey, the maximum abundance of ARGs in the YRD region reached 10^{-1} copies/16S
178 rRNA copies, which means that roughly two bacterial cells contain one ARG copy
179 (assuming four copies of the 16S rRNA gene in one bacterial cell). The mean values of
180 ARGs in agricultural soils of the YRD region were as follows: *suIII* (6.67×10^{-3}) > *tetG*
181 (5.25×10^{-3}) > *suII* (2.92×10^{-3}) > *tetM* (6.70×10^{-4}) > *tetW* (6.47×10^{-4}) > *qnrS* (8.95×10^{-5})
182 > *tetA* (4.07×10^{-5}) > *tetO* (2.93×10^{-5}). The main sources of ARGs in agricultural soils
183 were the application of manure fertilizer and the irrigation of wastewater and reclaimed
184 water, especially in the soil close to feedlots and aquafarm. The ARGs in downstream
185 of the Yangtze River were widely detected (Wang et al., 2019), which is possibly one
186 of the sources of ARGs in agricultural soils of the YRD region.

187 The *suI* resistance genes including *suII* and *suIII* in agricultural soils ranged from
188 1.72×10^{-5} to 2.81×10^{-1} copies/16S rRNA copies, which can encode dihydropteroate
189 synthases (DHPS) for resistance. The widespread and severe contamination of *suI*
190 resistance genes in agricultural soils was related to easy combination of *suII* and *suIII*
191 with mobile genetic elements (Stoll et al., 2012). The reason was that the *suII* and *suIII*
192 genes were lightly conferred to class I integrons and small plasmids (Antunes et al.,
193 2005). With reference to many published reports, both genes have been shown to occur
194 with highly similar frequency in the environment (Stoll et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2014;

195 Zhou et al., 2017; Zeng et al., 2019). The high contamination of *sul* resistance genes
196 could also be caused by the extensive use of sulfonamides in human and animals (Kools
197 et al., 2008). Further, the *sulII* and *sulIII* genes were detected in human pathogens in
198 agricultural soils (Forsberg et al., 2012; Fang et al., 2015; Li et al., 2017), which can be
199 a threat to human health.

200 The *tet* resistance genes (*tetA*, *tetG*, *tetM*, *tetO* and *tetW*) ranged from 1.01×10^{-7} to
201 8.77×10^{-2} copies/16S rRNA copies in agricultural soils of the YRD region. Tetracycline
202 resistance genes were one of the most widely distributed and heavily contaminated
203 resistance genes in the world. A total of 45 *tet* resistance genes have been identified
204 (Gao et al., 2012). The *tet* genes in this survey have two resistance mechanisms
205 including efflux pumps (*tetA* and *tetG*) and ribosomal protection proteins (*tetM*, *tetO*,
206 and *tetW*) (Zhu et al., 2013). The *tetG* is the dominant *tet* genes in agricultural soils of
207 the YRD region, and *tetG* has high homology with some pathogenic bacteria (Peng et
208 al., 2015), which may pose risks to human health. The *tetM* has the most extensive host
209 range which results in widespread pollution in agricultural soils. With the findings of
210 our previous study, *tetM* and *tetG* were the heavily contaminated genes in agricultural
211 soils of China (Zeng et al., 2019). The *qnrS* gene, which encodes for *qnr* peptide, ranged
212 from 2.17×10^{-7} to 2.20×10^{-3} copies/16S rRNA copies in agricultural soils of the YRD
213 region. In this survey, *intI1* was detected in agricultural soils, which was an important
214 indicator of ARG mobility and could have significant impact on the fate of ARGs in
215 soils.

216 **3.2. Spatial distribution of ARGs in soils of the YRD region**

217 The spatial distribution of selected ARGs in agricultural soils of the YRD region is
218 presented in Figures 1 and S1. As for *sul* genes, the distinct spatial distribution showed
219 that the abundances of *sulI* and *sulIII* genes were comparatively higher in the YRD
220 region around the Taihu Lake, such as the south of Jiangsu and the northwest of
221 Zhejiang. The ARGs levels in soils were easily affected by proximity to the pollution
222 sources. In aquatic environments, higher concentrations of sulfonamides aggravated *sul*
223 genes contamination (Luo et al., 2011) and *sul*-ARGs were the most prevalent ARGs in
224 the water of China (Zhang et al., 2020). Previous report indicated that the abundances
225 of *sul* (*sulI* and *sulIII*) and *tet* (*tetA*, *tetG*, and *tetM*) genes in Taihu Lake reached 10^{-2}
226 copies/16S rRNA copies (Yang et al., 2017), which could be the sources of *sulI* and
227 *sulIII* genes in agricultural soils with irrigation water of Taihu Lake. The most polluted
228 area for *sulI* is south Jiangsu, and northwest Zhejiang for *sulIII*. Meanwhile, the
229 antibiotic residues of these two provinces were relatively higher in the YRD region
230 (Sun et al., 2017) which may be contributed to the ARGs pollution.

231 As for *tet* genes, the spatial distribution of five *tet* genes was observed to be higher
232 in Shanghai municipality, such as in the Jiading, Pudong and Baoshan areas. In these
233 areas, the livestock and poultry aquaculture industry are well developed and could be
234 the major sources of ARGs in agricultural soils (Chen et al., 2016; Cheng et al., 2016).
235 Furthermore, the ARGs were detected in coastal areas of China and this can be an
236 important source of ARGs in soil environments (Xu et al., 2019). In soils from the north
237 of Taihu Lake, the *tet* genes also had high abundances which may be heavily irrigated
238 by untreated wastewater with ARGs pollution. The *tetG* was the most contaminated *tet*

239 gene in agricultural soils and mainly distributed in the north Zhejiang, Shanghai, and
240 south Jiangsu. The ARGs can enter the body through crops and have adverse effect on
241 human gut bacteria (Cerqueira et al., 2019). Widespread contamination of soil ARGs
242 poses serious environmental damage and human exposure risks.

243 The anthropogenic activity could be a dominant source of ARGs in agricultural soils
244 such as land application of manure fertilizer, irrigation of wastewater and reclaimed
245 water (Ji et al., 2012; Mu et al., 2015), which could cause the ARGs pollution. It was
246 reported that the abundance of *tet* and *sul* genes ranged from 10^{-3} to 10^{-1} copies/16S
247 rRNA copies in agricultural soils with manure application of Jiangsu province, China
248 (Zhang et al., 2015c). The ARGs were also detected in agricultural soils with cow
249 manure application of Sardinian (Italy) (Chessa et al., 2016). In addition, the high
250 abundances of ARGs in soils with reclaimed water irrigation were also reported (Wang
251 et al., 2014a; Wang et al., 2014b).

252 **3.3. Correlations between ARGs and chemical pollution and soil properties**

253 A correlation matrix (Figure 3) was created for the relative abundance of the studied
254 genes (16S rRNA gene, ARGs, *intl1*), known concentrations of antibiotics and other
255 co-occurring contaminants, and soil physicochemical parameters. The significant
256 correlations were generally concentrated in the antibiotic-*intl1*-ARGs cluster of the
257 correlation matrix. The *sulII* ($r = 0.260, p < 0.05$), *tetM* ($r = 0.204, p < 0.05$), and *tetW*
258 ($r = 0.277, p < 0.05$) were significantly correlated with tetracyclines (TCs) in
259 agricultural soils. The *sulI* ($r = 0.376, p < 0.05$), *sulIII* ($r = 0.201, p < 0.05$), *tetG* ($r =$
260 $0.433, p < 0.01$), *tetO* ($r = 0.278, p < 0.01$), and *qnrS* ($r = 0.204, p < 0.05$) significantly

261 correlated with quinolones (QNs) in agricultural soils. Concerning total antibiotics, *suII*
262 ($r = 0.423, p < 0.01$), *suIII* ($r = 0.302, p < 0.01$), *tetG* ($r = 0.334, p < 0.01$), *tetM* ($r =$
263 $0.267, p < 0.05$), and *tetW* ($r = 0.276, p < 0.05$) were significantly correlated with total
264 antibiotics. These results highlighted that the co-introduced antibiotics from irrigation
265 and manure application exert sustained pressure for the proliferation of ARGs.
266 Moreover, we observed significant correlations between a number of ARGs and the
267 non-corresponding antibiotics, for example, sulfonamides resistance genes and TCs and
268 QNs, and tetracycline resistance genes and QNs. These demonstrated the presence of
269 cross-resistance between antibiotics and ARGs, which warrant future detailed
270 molecular studies for mechanistic elucidation.

271 The MGEs, such as *intI1* widely existed in bacteria and facilitated the horizontal
272 transfer of ARGs in soils that could aggravate the contamination of ARGs in soil
273 environments (Ghosh and LaPara, 2007; Luo et al., 2010; Gillings et al., 2015; Ma et
274 al., 2017). In our study, *suII* ($r = 0.137, p < 0.05$), *suIII* ($r = 0.455, p < 0.01$), *tetG* ($r =$
275 $0.497, p < 0.01$), and *tetW* ($r = 0.364, p < 0.01$) were significantly correlated with *intI1*
276 genes in agricultural soils of YRD region. These genes (*suII*, *suIII*, *tetG*, and *tetW*) were
277 widespread and seriously polluted in the YRD region. These results highlighted that
278 mobile genetic elements, such as *intI1*, are critical genetic compartments for the
279 dissemination of ARGs in the soil environment.

280 The result of laboratory experiments proved that non-antibiotic chemicals may co-
281 select ARGs via co-resistance and cross-resistance (Berg et al., 2010; Ye et al., 2017;
282 Zhang et al., 2015a, b). Heavy metals (zinc, copper and mercury) with critical levels in

283 the environment would induce co-selection of ARGs in bacteria (Imran et al., 2019).
284 Most of the studied chemicals (e.g., PCBs, PBDEs, OCPs, PAEs, and Cu), however, did
285 not correlate with *int11* or ARGs, except for an occasional statistical significance for Zn
286 and *int11*. The findings of this analysis reflected that the role of these co-occurring
287 chemicals may not be vital as expected in co-selecting ARGs. The field relevance of
288 the co-selection by sub-inhibitory concentrations of non-antibiotic agents observed in
289 the laboratory experiments need to be fully examined.

290 Most of the soil physicochemical parameters tested appeared not to be associated
291 with the bacterial abundance and tested MGEs and ARGs, except for a weak correlation
292 between pH and the bacterial abundance indicated by 16S rRNA gene. That being said,
293 the influence of soil properties on the bacterial assembly warrant future studies.

294

295 **4. Conclusions**

296 This study established a baseline of the occurrence, abundance and distribution of
297 sulfonamide, tetracycline and quinolone resistance genes in agricultural soils on a
298 regional scale of the YRD, and provided basic data of ARGs contamination in China.
299 The hotspots of agriculture soil ARGs were concentrated in the area alongside Taihu
300 Lake and Shanghai municipality, the most agriculturally and economically vibrant of
301 the YRD region. Among the co-occurring chemical contaminants and soil
302 physicochemical conditions, antibiotics remain to be the dominant factor for the ARGs,
303 suggesting their co-introduction into the soils via irrigation and manure application or
304 the sustained selection pressure of antibiotics from these sources for the proliferation

305 of ARGs in the soils. Future studies are warranted to understand the potential transfer
306 of antimicrobial resistance from soil to crop produces to human consumption and
307 associated health implications. This study provides useful information on the levels and
308 regional characteristics of ARGs pollution in China, which can play its part in
309 prevention and regulation of ARGs in the world.

310

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316

317 **Appendix A. Supplementary data**

318 Supplementary data to this article can be found online.

319

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520

521 **Figure and Tables:**

522 **Figure 1.** Spatial distributions of selected ARGs in agricultural soils of the YRD region.

523 (A) *sulI*, (B) *sulIII*, (C) *tetG*, (D) *qnrS*.

524

525 **Figure 2.** The concentrations of selected ARGs in agricultural soils of the YRD region.

526

527 **Figure 3.** Heatmap showing the spearman correlation between the relative abundance

528 of selected genes and concentrations of antibiotic and non-antibiotic chemicals, soil

529 physicochemical parameters and population density (* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$).

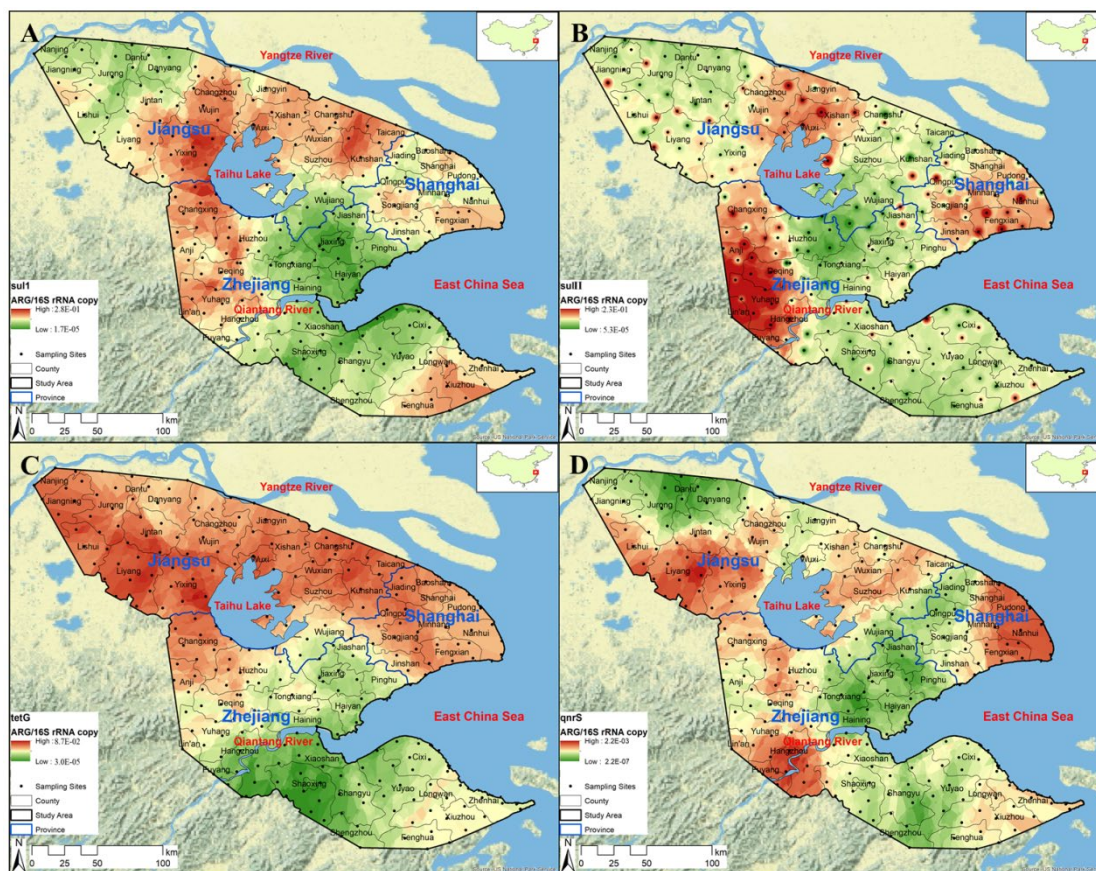
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531 **Table 1**

532 The abundances of ARGs in agricultural soils of the YRD region.

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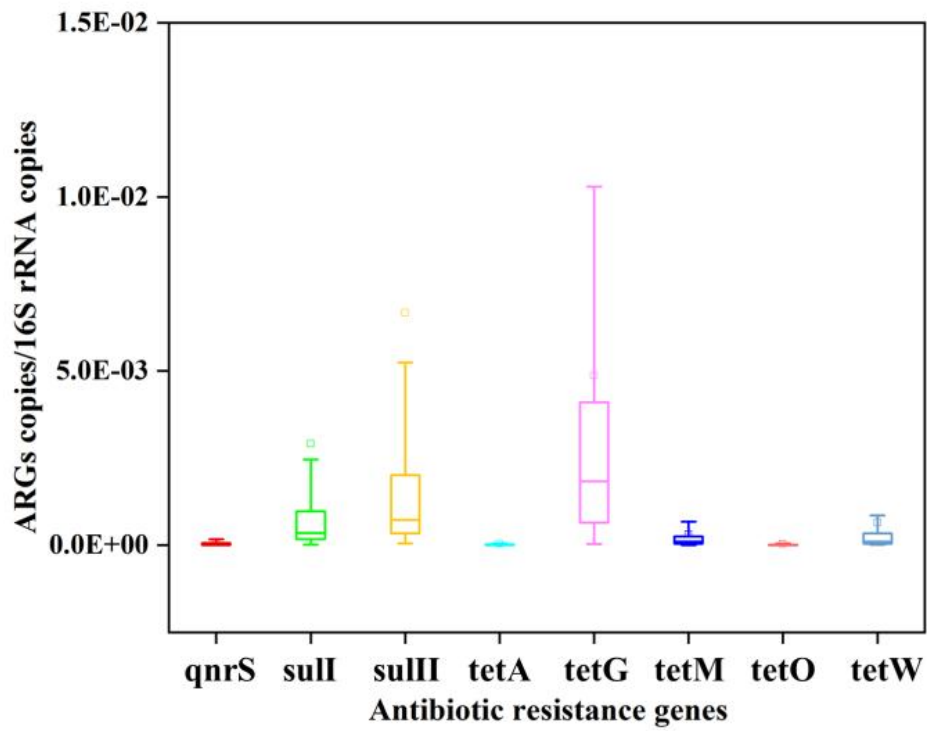
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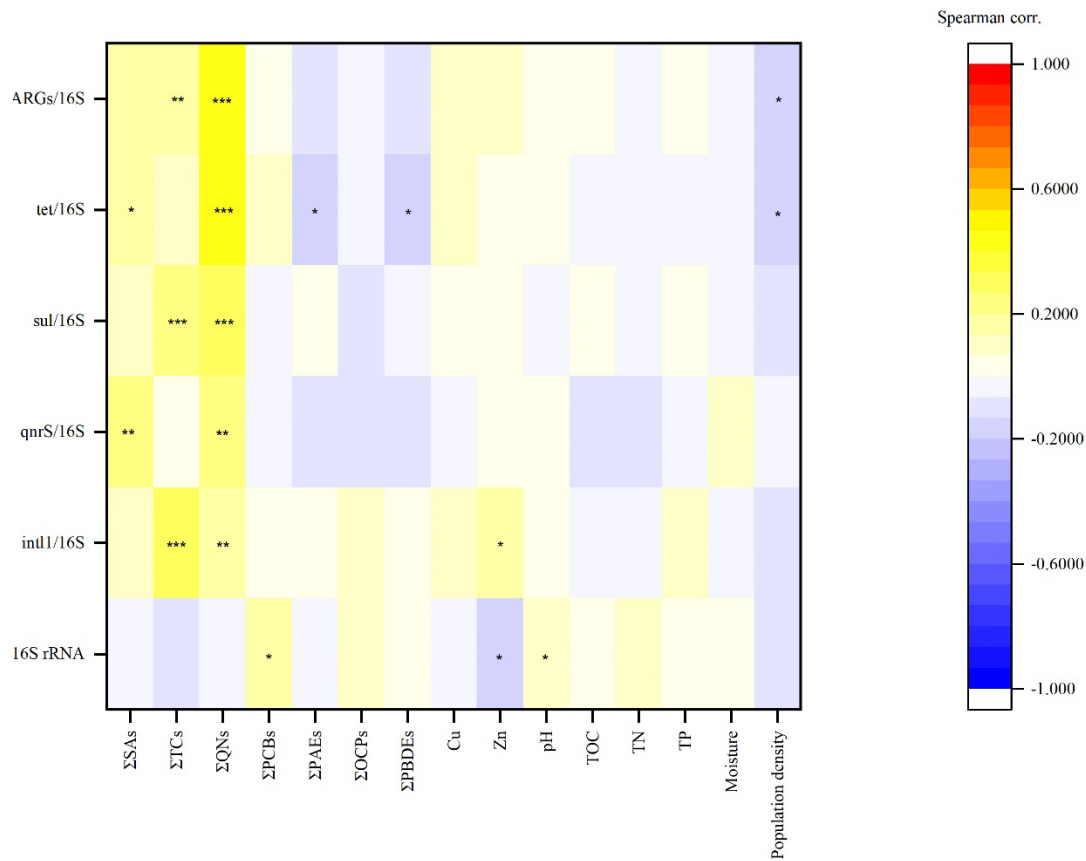
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 546 of selected genes and concentrations of antibiotic and non-antibiotic chemicals, soil
 547 physicochemical parameters and population density (* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$).

548

Table 1

The abundances of ARGs in agricultural soils of the YRD region.

ARGs	Mean	Median	Min	Max
<i>sulI</i>	2.92×10^{-3}	3.51×10^{-4}	1.72×10^{-5}	2.81×10^{-1}
<i>sulII</i>	6.67×10^{-3}	7.21×10^{-4}	5.25×10^{-5}	2.31×10^{-1}
<i>tetA</i>	4.07×10^{-5}	1.15×10^{-5}	1.01×10^{-6}	2.03×10^{-3}
<i>tetG</i>	5.25×10^{-3}	1.84×10^{-3}	3.01×10^{-5}	8.77×10^{-2}
<i>tetM</i>	6.70×10^{-4}	1.02×10^{-4}	3.03×10^{-6}	9.56×10^{-3}
<i>tetO</i>	2.93×10^{-5}	6.49×10^{-6}	1.01×10^{-7}	9.22×10^{-4}
<i>tetW</i>	6.47×10^{-4}	1.01×10^{-4}	1.01×10^{-6}	2.35×10^{-2}
<i>qnrS</i>	8.95×10^{-5}	2.11×10^{-5}	2.17×10^{-7}	2.20×10^{-3}
<i>intI1</i>	1.10×10^{-4}	3.42×10^{-5}	5.48×10^{-7}	1.56×10^{-3}

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550