Pesticides pollution of small streams in Germany

Eduard Szöcs,[*,†] Marvin Brinke,[‡] Bilgin Karaoglan,[¶] and Ralf B. Schäfer[†]

Institute for Environmental Sciences, University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany, German Federal Institute of Hydrology (BfG), Koblenz, Germany, and Federal Environmental Agency (UBA), Dessau-Roßlau, Germany

E-mail: szoecs@uni-landau.de

Abstract

Fehlt noch...

Introduction

More than 50% of the total land area in Germany are used by agriculture[1]. In the year 2014 more the 45000 tonnes of 766 authorized pesticides were sold for application on these areas[2]. The applied pesticides may enter surface waters via spray-drift, edge-off-field run-off or drainage, with run-off being one of the major input routes[3]. Once entered the surface waters pesticides are frequently detected in environmental monitoring[4] and may have adverse effects on biota and ecosystem functioning[5,6].

[*]To whom correspondence should be addressed
[†]Institute for Environmental Sciences
[‡]German Federal Institute of Hydrology
[¶]German Federal Environmental Agency

The aim of this study was (i) to compile monitoring data on a national scale and to answer the questions:

(ii) Is the data a representative description of the pollution situation?

(iii) Are small agricultural waters more polluted compared to bigger streams? Are there thresholds?

(iv) How polluted are small streams and which pesticides are responsible?

Methods

Data compilation

We queried chemical monitoring data of pesticides from sampling sites with catchment size $< 100 km^2$ for the years 2005 to 2015 from all 13 non-city federal states of Germany. Additionally, we compiled data available from previous studies and searched online databases. This yielded to a total of more then 30 datasets of different formats.

We homogenized and unified these datasets into a common database. We implemented a robust and transparent data cleaning work flow[7], though parts of the dataset are proprietary. An overview of the data cleaning process is provided in the supplemental materials. The compiled dataset comprised only a small fraction of standing waters and most of the samples where sampled via grab sampling. Therefore, we report only results for grab sampling from streams. To assess whether grab samples were taken during potential rainfall events we intersected sampling coordinates with daily precipitation data[8] from the sampling date and the day before .

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Characterization of chemical pollution

We characterized chemical pollution using three indicators:

1. National and international Environmental Quality Standards (EQS)[9,10]: We used only

Maximum Annual Concentration EQS (MAC-EQS) for characterization.

2. Regulatory Acceptable Concentrations (RAC)[11]: This is the lowest concentration at which no acceptable biological effects are expected. These are derived during authorization process of pesticides and contain an uncertainty factor. The German Federal Environmental Agency provided RACs for this study. We expressed RAC as Risk Quotient (RQ)

$$RQ = \frac{C}{RAC} \tag{1}$$

Where C is the concentration of a compound in a sample.

3. Maximum Toxic Units (TU_{max})[12]:

$$TU_{max} = max(\frac{C_i}{EC_{50,D.magna,i}}) \tag{2}$$

Where C_i is the concentration of compound i in a sample and $EC_{50,D.magna,i}$ is the concentration of this compound where 50% of the exposed animals showed after 48 hours an effect in a laboratory study. We compiled $EC_{50,D.magna}$ values from literature[4], databases[13,14] or model predictions[15], where experimental data had priority. We used the maximum TU per sample, as it is independent of the number of measured compounds and makes no assumptions on the mode of action. A table of all included compounds can be found in the supplement.

Characterization of catchments

We delineated catchments upstream of the sampling sites using a digital elevation model[16] and a multiple flow direction algorithm[17] as implemented in GRASS GIS 7[18]. Catchment delineation has been manually checked for accuracy. In areas with low relief energy the delineation algorithm did not produce accurate results and we used river catchments provide by federal state authorities in these cases. For each catchment we calculated the relative coverage (%) with agricultural areas based on Official Topographical Cartographic Information System (ATKIS) of the land survey authorities.

Statistical analyses

We used Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) based on jeccard dissimilarity in conjunction with hierarchical clustering to display differences in the spectra of analysed compounds per federal state.

Results

Overview and representativeness of compiled data

We compiled a national scale dataset comprising 42236 samples from 3049 sampling sites (Figure 1 and Supplement). We found big differences in the number of sampling sites between federal states.

The dataset include 484

Are small agricultural waters more polluted compared to bigger streams?

Pesticide pollution of small streams

Discussion

Vergleich mit der Schweiz.....

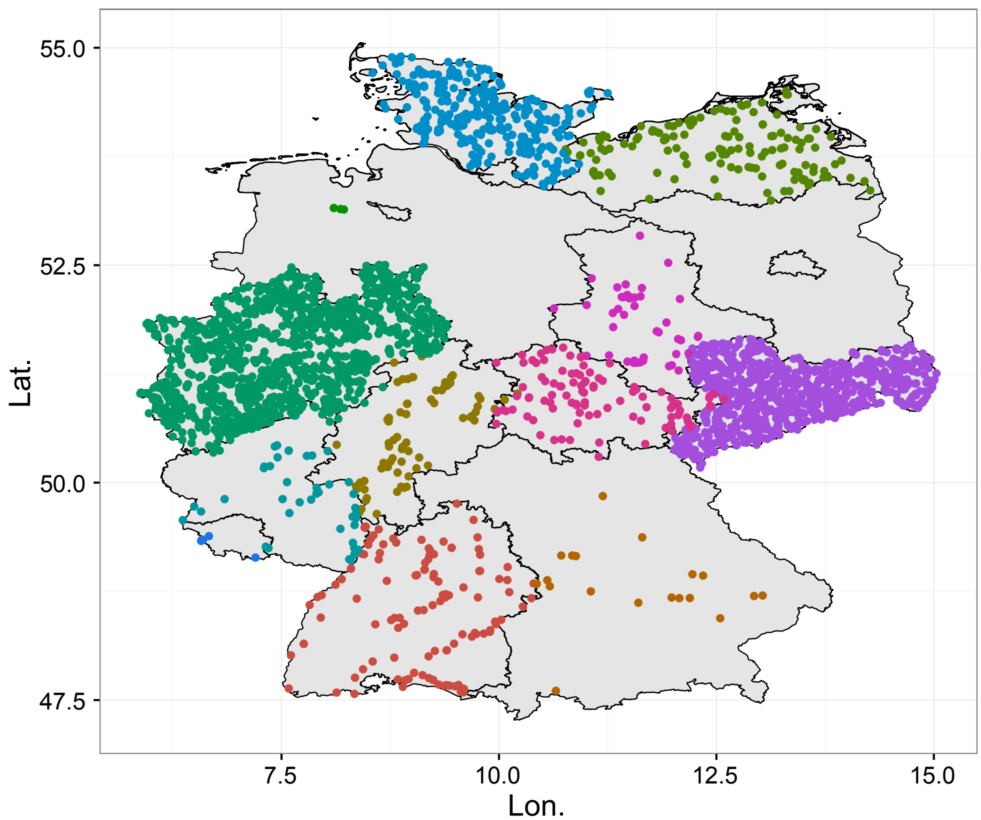

Figure 1: Spatial distribution of the 3109 sampling sites. Colour codes different federal states.

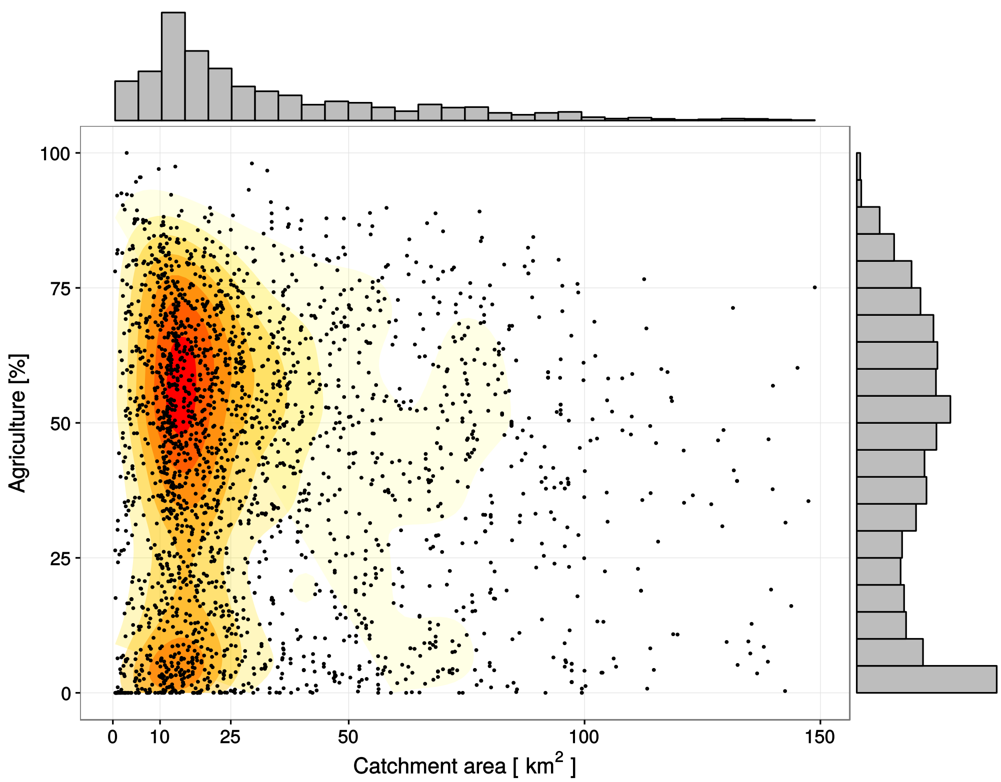

Figure 2: Distribution of catchment area and agriculture within the catchment area across the sampling sites. Only sampling sites with catchment area < 150 km^2 are displayed. Colour codes the 2-dimensional density of points.

Subsection

Acknowledgement

The authors thank the authorities for providing chemical monitoring data and the German Federal Environmental Protection Agency (UBA) for funding this project.

Supporting Information Available

The following files are available free of charge.

- Supplemental_Materials.pdf : Supplemental Materials

This material is available free of charge via the Internet at `http://pubs.acs.org/`.

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