**MS\_ EEA-2023-0149**

Dear Dr. Chia,  
   
Experts in the field have carefully reviewed your manuscript,  
submitted to Entomologia Experimentalis et Applicata:  
  
Reference Number: EEA-2023-0149  
Title: Effects of frass from larvae of black soldier fly (Hermetia illucens) and yellow mealworm (Tenebrio molitor) on growth and insect resistance in field mustard (Brassica rapa): differences between insect species and frass treatments.  
   
The Reviewers' comments are available to you following the signature, below. As you will see, the reviewers are positive about your manuscript I have therefore decided that your manuscript is acceptable, pending a minor revision.

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We expect to hear from you within 1 month, otherwise we will presume you have withdrawn the manuscript from consideration by Entomologia Experimentalis et Applicata.  
  
  
Yours sincerely,  
  
Dr. Michael J. Stout  
Associate Editor EEA

Reviewer: 1

GENERAL ASPECTS:

**Reviewer comment:**  
- Both the Introduction and the Discussion manifest an excellent domain of the research topic.  
- A very interesting, novel and original document. Congratulations for the great work done.  
**Author response:**

Thank you very much for your kind words and positive feedback. We greatly appreciate your assessment of our work and are committed to addressing any additional suggestions or concerns you may have to further improve the manuscript.

KEYWORDS:

**Reviewer comment:**  
- Reduce the number of keywords by half. Now it is excessive.

**Author response:**

We have reduced the number of keywords as advised.  
  
ABSTRACT:

**Reviewer comment:**  
- Very well explained and complete.

**Author response:**

Thank you

INTRODUCTION:

**Reviewer comment:**  
- L61: why are only bacteria considered and not also fungi?

**Author response:**

We have added information about fungal stimulation through frass application

**Reviewer comment:**

- L64-73: Rewriting information. It's confusing right now.

**Author response:**

We have simplified the text by breaking down complex sentences and providing a clear flow of information. The revised text emphasizes the relationship between frass, soil, beneficial microorganisms, and plant resistance to insect herbivores.

**Reviewer comment:**  
- L74-75: order cites conologically.

**Author response:**

The current format adheres to alphabetical ordering of authors' names, which is consistent with the manuscript's style throughout.

**Reviewer comment:**  
- L94-96: add updated production data according to FAOSTAT.

**Author response:**

We have updated the production data for field mustard in the paragraph, using the latest available information.

**Reviewer comment:**

- L98-99: repeated citation.

**Author response:**

Thank you for your feedback. We have removed the repeated citation on lines 98-99 as suggested.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

**Reviewer comment:**

- L139, 149, 150, 170, 171, 179, 180, 186, 187, 188 y 244: The full scientific name has already been written above. Reduce.

**Author response:**

We have abbreviated the scientific names consistently throughout the manuscript to reduce redundancy and align with best practices in scientific writing.

**Reviewer comment:**

- L142-143: Is the chemical analysis of the soil known? The nutritional one would be very interesting and could be added to the paper as supplementary material.

**Author response:**

We appreciate your observation and suggestion. We have cited a previous study (Wantulla et al., 2022) for the soil's physical and chemical properties in our revised manuscript.  
  
RESULTS:  
**Reviewer comment:**

- L332, 366, 384, 393, 406, 411, 418, 427  and inside the figures: The full scientific name has already been written above. Reduce.

**Author response:**

We have removed the redundancy by omitting the full scientific names in the specified locations, as they were previously mentioned above.

**Reviewer comment:**

- Throughout the section, it is not considered necessary to put so much information from the statistical analysis in the text. However, it is very positive to put information of mean data between different treatments, which help the fluent understanding of the text and the study.

**Author response:**

We have reduced the statistical information in the text, emphasized data visualization through figures. This should help streamline the text and enhance the reader's understanding of the study.

**Reviewer comment:**

- L468-469: spacing problem.

**Author response:**

Thank you for your observation. We have corrected the spacing problem.  
  
DISCUSSION:  
**Reviewer comment:**

- L538-539: The full scientific name has already been written above. Reduce.

**Author response:**

We have abbreviated the full scientific name for conciseness and clarity.

**Reviewer comment:**  
- L526-527: scientific names in italics.

**Author response:**

Done. Revised text (L526-527): *Clostridium perfringens*

Reviewer: 2  
  
**Reviewer comment:**  
Despite the amount of work that has been done already in the case of insect frass, the overall idea is unique and the methodological approach very interesting.

The ms can be accepted for publication, but there are some parts that need to be revised.

**Author response:**

Thank you for your positive feedback and willingness to accept our manuscript. We have carefully reviewed your comments and have made the necessary revisions to address the identified issues. We look forward to your further feedback and guidance to ensure the manuscript meets the journal's standards.

**Reviewer comment:**  
97-8 and elsewhere. Use authorities in full in the first time that a scientific name appears on the ms. **Author response:**

We have now used authorities in full for all scientific names throughout the manuscript.

**Reviewer comment:**  
109. There are additional data gaps that are not addressed by Wantulla et al. (2022), which can be illustrated here.

**Author response:**

We acknowledge the presence of additional knowledge gaps beyond the scope of Wantulla et al. (2022) that we have identified and addressed in our study. These gaps are further elucidated in the manuscript.

**Reviewer comment:**  
133. Expand this general scope with more text.

**Author response:**

We appreciate the suggestion for expansion, but we would like to request clarification regarding the specific section or content the reviewer is referring to. Please provide additional details so that we can address this comment effectively.

**Reviewer comment:**  
Not clear how many replicates and subreplicates were used, clarify.

**Author response:**

Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your feedback. Could you please specify the section of the manuscript you are referring to so we can address your comment effectively? In general, we used ten plants per treatment and control to assess the effect of raw-frass-exposed plants on the performance of *Plutella xylostella* larvae.

**Reviewer comment:**

524. This is the standard procedure of the authorization of frass, regardless of the overall effects of the thermal treatments. This can be further clarified.

**Author response:**

Our samples underwent extended oven drying, potentially impacting the population of beneficial microbes, which differs from the standard procedure for authorizing frass. However, we did not test this potential effect.

**Reviewer comment:**  
531-3. Why- perhaps due to their increased conductance?

**Author response:**

We appreciate the reviewer's question. We have expanded the discussion to address the potential reasons behind the negative effects observed in *B. rapa* when exposed to raw BSFF or MWF. These effects are likely due to a combination of factors, including the salinity of the frass, which we have discussed in the revised manuscript.

**Reviewer comment:**

552. Merge with the next paragraph.

**Author response:**

Thank you for your feedback. We have merged sections 552-554 with the following paragraph as suggested.

**Reviewer comment:**

607. No need to have a separate conclusion section, use this text as the closing paragraph in the discussion.

**Author response:**

Thank you for your suggestion. We have eliminated the heading 'Conclusion' and integrated the text as the closing paragraph in the discussion section, as recommended.

Editor

**Reviewer comment:**

I will add a few comments to those of the reviewers:

**Author response:**

Thank you for your additional comments on our manuscript. We appreciate your feedback and have addressed these new comments along with the ones provided by the initial reviewers in our revised manuscript.

**Reviewer comment:**

Line 44, use of the word “protective” here creates ambiguity Protective might imply to some readers that plants were protected from herbivores under this treatment, which was not the case.

**Author response:**

We appreciate the your observation. We have addressed this concern by revising the sentence to ensure that readers do not misinterpret the intended meaning of our statement. Specifically, we have eliminated the word "protective" to accurately convey that the herbivores exhibited enhanced performance under this treatment.

**Reviewer comment:**

Line 65, move the definition of PGPR to line 61, after first mention?  I think this would make the paragraph flow better.

**Author response:**

Thank you for your suggestion. We have moved the definition of PGPR to enhance the flow of the paragraph.

**Reviewer comment:**

Line 122, delete comma.

**Author response:**

Thank you for your suggestion. We have deleted the comma as suggested.

**Reviewer comment:**

Lines 142-143, it would be extremely helpful to know something about the soil (e.g., pH, organic content, N, P, K levels, soil type) used in the experiments.

**Author response:**

We appreciate your observation and suggestion. We have cited a previous study (Wantulla et al., 2022) for the soil's physical and chemical properties in our revised manuscript.

**Reviewer comment:**

Line 202, :”after” instead of “since”; insert “and” after the comma.

**Author response:**

We have replaced the word “since” with “after”, inserted “and” as suggested.

**Reviewer comment:**

Line 211, delete comma.

**Author response:**

We have deleted the comma as suggested. Thank you.

**Reviewer comment:**

Figure 2, in the third and fourth panels, the letters designating the Tukey results appear to be in error – shouldn’t BSFF be accompanied by a “b” and both “NoFrass” and “MWF” have “a”’s?.

**Author response:**

You are correct. We have rectified this error, ensuring that BSFF is now accompanied by a "b," while both "NoFrass" and "MWF" have "a"s. Thank you for pointing this out. The conclusion remains unchanged in the current format.

**Reviewer comment:**

Line 382, were patterns similar in second experiment.

**Author response:**

Yes, patterns were similar. We have clarified in the revised sentence that there were no significant differences among treatments.

**Reviewer comment:**

Line 416, were patterns similar in the two experiments?

**Author response:**

Yes, patterns were similar. We have clarified in the revised sentence that there were no significant differences among treatments.

**Reviewer comment:**

Lines 514-515 – again, any information about the base soil used in the experiments would be helpful – also, 2 g frass per kg of soil does not seem to be an inordinate amount to me – how feasible is it that the frass led to soil compaction or waterlogging?

**Author response:**

We acknowledge that 2 g frass per kg of soil may not seem excessive. While we agree it's unlikely to cause soil compaction or waterlogging, we cannot rule out these possibilities, as they are mentioned in the literature, although we didn't measure them specifically in our study.

**Reviewer comment:**  
Line 525, when what was “introduced to the frass”? Unclear.

**Author response:**

We apologize for the confusion. In the revised manuscript, we have clarified the paragraph to specify heat treatment eliminated detectable amounts of pathogens in frass.

**Reviewer comment:**

Line 533, italicize species name.

**Author response:**

We have italicize the species name as suggested. Thank you.