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Application of a laser-based spectrometer for continuous insitu measurements of stable isotopes of soil CO_2 in calcareous and acidic soils

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Abstract

The short-term dynamics of carbon and water fluxes across the soil-plant-atmosphere continuum are still not fully understood. One important constraint is the lack of methodologies that enable simultaneous measurements of soil CO_2 concentration and respective isotopic composition at a high temporal resolution for longer periods of time. $\delta^{13}C$ of soil CO_2 can be used to derive information on the origin and physiological history of carbon and $\delta^{18}O$ in soil CO_2 aids to infer interaction between CO_2 and soil water. We established a real-time method for measuring soil CO_2 concentration, $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values across a soil profile at higher temporal resolutions up to 1Hz using an Off-Axis Integrated Cavity Output Spectrometer (OA-ICOS). We also developed a calibration method correcting for the sensitivity of the device against concentration-dependent shifts in $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values under highly varying CO_2 concentration. The deviations of measured data were modelled, and a mathematical correction model was developed and applied for correcting the shift. By coupling an OA-ICOS with hydrophobic but gas permeable membranes placed at different depths in acidic and calcareous soils, we investigated the contribution of abiotic and biotic components to total soil CO_2 release. We found that in the calcareous Gleysol, CO_2 originating from carbonate dissolution contributed to the total soil CO_2 concentration at detectable degrees probably due to CO_2 evasion from groundwater. Inward diffusion of atmospheric CO_2 was found to be rather pronounced in the topsoil layers at both sites. No specific pattern was identified for $\delta^{18}O$ in soil CO_2 at the calcareous site, $\delta^{18}O$ values reflected fairly well the $\delta^{18}O$ of soil water at the acidic soil site.

Key words: $\delta^{13}C$, $\delta^{18}O$, OA-ICOS, hydrophobic/gas permeable membrane.

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1 Introduction

Global fluxes of CO_2 and H_2O are two major driving forces controlling earth's climatic systems. To understand the prevailing climatic conditions and predict climate change, accurate monitoring and modeling of these fluxes are inevitable (Barthel et al., 2014; Harwood et al., 1999; Schär et al., 2004). Approximately 30 - 35% of the global CO_2 flux is contributed by soil CO_2 efflux, which is, therefore, a significant determinant of the net ecosystem carbon balance (Schlesinger and Andrews, 1999). The long-term dynamics of CO_2 release on a seasonal scale are reasonably well understood (Satakhun et al., 2013), whereas less information on CO_2 dynamics and isotopic composition are available for short-term variations on a diurnal scale (Werner and Gessler, 2011). The lack of proper understanding of the diurnal fluctuations in soil CO_2 release might introduce uncertainty in estimating the soil carbon budget and the CO_2 fluxes to the atmosphere. The isotopic composition of soil CO_2 and its diel fluctuation can be a critical parameter for the partitioning of ecosystem gas exchange into its components (Bowling et al., 2003; Mortazavi et al., 2004) and for disentangling plant and ecosystem processes (Werner and Gessler 2011). By assessing $\delta 1^3C$ of soil CO_2, it is possible to identify the source for CO_2 (Kuzyakov, 2006) and the coupling between photosynthesis and soil respiration when taking into account post-photosynthetic isotope fractionation (Werner et al., 2012; Wingate et al., 2010). $\delta^{13}C$ soil CO_2 reflects, however, not only microbial and root respiration but also abiotic sources from carbonate weathering (Schindlbacher et al., 2015).

Soil water imprints its $\delta^{18}O$ signature on soil CO_2 as a result of isotope exchange between H_2O and CO_2 (aqueous). The oxygen isotopic exchange between CO_2 and soil water is catalyzed by microbial carbonic anhydrase (Sperber et al., 2015; Wingate et al., 2009). Thus, soil CO_2 can give information on the isotopic composition of both soil water resources and Carbon sources. The oxygen isotope composition of plant-derived CO_2 is both, a tracer of photosynthetic and respiratory CO_2 and gives additional quantitative information on the water cycle in terrestrial ecosystems (Francey and Tans, 1987). To better interpret the $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ signals of atmospheric CO_2, the isotopic composition and its variability of the different sources need to be better understood (Werner et al., 2012; Wingate et al., 2010).

The conventional method to estimate $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ of soil CO_2 efflux is by using two end-member mixing models of atmospheric CO_2 and CO_2 produced in the soil (Keeling, 1958). The conventional methods for sampling soil produced CO_2 are chamber based (Bertolini et al., 2006; Torn et al., 2003) and 'mini-tower' (Kayler et al., 2010; Mortazavi et al., 2004) based methods. In all these conventional methods, air sampling is done at specific time intervals, and $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ are analyzed using Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometry (IRMS) (Ohlsson et al., 2005). Such offline methods have several disadvantages like high sampling costs, excessive time consumption for sampling and analysis, increased sampling error and low temporal resolution. Kammer et al. showed how error-prone could the conventional methods be while calculating $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ (up to several per mil when using chamber and mini tower-based methods) (Kammer et al., 2011). In chamber-based systems, non-steady-state conditions may arise within the chamber due to increased CO_2 concentrations which in turn hinders the diffusion of $^{12}CO_2$ more strongly than that of heavier $^{13}CO_2$ (Risk and Kellman, 2008). Moreover, it has been found that

$\delta^{18}O$ of CO_2 inside a chamber is significantly influenced by the $\delta^{18}O$ of the surface soil water as an equilibrium isotopic exchange happens during the upward diffusive movement of soil CO_2 (Mortazavi et al., 2004).

The advent of laser-based isotope spectroscopy has enabled cost-effective, simple, and high precision real-time measurements of $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ in CO_2 (Kammer et al., 2011; Kerstel and Gianfrani, 2008). This technique opened up new possibilities for faster and reliable measurements of stable isotopes, based on the principle of light absorption, using laser beams of distinct wavelengths in the near and mid-infrared range (Bowling et al., 2003).

In 1988, O'Keefe and Decon introduced the Cavity Ring-Down Spectroscopy (CRDS) for measuring the isotopic ratio of different gaseous species based on laser spectrometry (O'Keefe and Deacon, 1988). With the laser-based spectrometry techniques, measuring sensitivities up to parts per trillion (ppt) concentrations are achieved (von Basum et al., 2004; Peltola et al., 2012). In CRDS, the rate of change in the absorbed radiation of laser light that is temporarily "trapped" within a highly reflective optical cavity is determined. This is achieved using resonant coupling of a laser beam to the optical cavity and active locking of laser frequency to cavity length (Parameswaran et al., 2009). Another well-established technique similar to CRDS is Off-Axis Integrated Cavity Output Spectroscopy (OA-ICOS). It is based on directing lasers with narrowband and continuous-wave in an off-axis configuration to the optical cavity (Baer et al., 2002).

Even though OA-ICOS can measure concentration and isotope signature of various gaseous species at high temporal resolution, we found pronounced deviations in $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements from the absolute values when measured under changing CO_2 concentrations. So far to our knowledge, no study has been made available detailing the calibration process of OA-ICOS CO_2 analyzers correcting for fluctuations of $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values under varying CO_2 concentrations. Most of the OA-ICOS CO_2 analyzers are built for working under stable CO_2 concentrations, so that periodical calibration against in-house gas standards at a particular concentration is sufficient. However, as there are pronounced gradients in CO_2 levels in soils (Maier and Schack-Kirchner, 2014), CO_2 concentration depending shifts in measured isotopic values have to be addressed and corrected. Such calibration is, however, also relevant for any other OA-ICOS application with varying levels of CO_2 (e.g., in chamber measurements). Hence the first part of this work comprises the establishment of a calibration method for OA-ICOS. The second part describes a method for online measurement of CO_2 concentrations and stable carbon and oxygen isotope composition of CO_2 in different soil depths by coupling OA-ICOS with gas permeable hydrophobic tubes (Membrane tubes, Accurel®). The use of these tubes for measuring soil CO_2 concentration (Gut et al., 1998) and $\delta^{13}C$ of soil CO_2 (Parent et al., 2013) has already been established, but the coupling to an OA-ICOS system has not been performed, yet.

We evaluated our measurement system by assessing and comparing the concentration, $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ of soil CO_2 for a calcareous and an acidic soil system. The primary foci of this study are to (1) introduce OA-ICOS in online soil CO_2 concentration and isotopic measurements; (2) calibrate the OA-ICOS to render it usable for isotopic analysis carried out under varying CO_2 concentrations; and (3) analyze the dynamics of $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ of soil CO_2 at different soil depths in different soil types at a higher temporal resolution.

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2 Materials and Methods

2.1 Instrumentation

The concentration, $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values of CO_2 were measured with an OA-ICOS, as described in detail by Baer et al. and Jost et al. (Baer et al., 2002; Jost et al., 2006). In this study, we used an OA-ICOS, (LGR-CCIA 36-d) manufactured by Los Gatos Research Ltd, San-Francisco, USA. LGR-CCIA 36-d measures CO_2 concentration, and $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values at a frequency up to 1 Hz. The operational CO_2 concentration range was 400 to 25,000 ppm. Operating temperature range was +10 - +35°C, and sample temperature range (Gas temperature) was between -20°C and 50°C. Recommended inlet pressure was < 0.0689 MPa. The multiport inlet unit, an optional design that comes along with LGR-CCIA 36-d, had a manifold of 8 digitally controlled inlet ports and one outlet port. It rendered the user with an option of measuring eight different CO_2 samples at the desired time interval. Three standard gases with distinct $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values were used for calibration in this study (See Table.1). The standard gases used in this study were analyzed for absolute concentration and respective $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values. δ-values are expressed based on Vienna Pee Dee Belemnite (VPDB)-CO_2 scale, and were determined by high precision IRMS analysis.

2.2 Calibration setup and protocol

We developed a two-step calibration procedure to; a) correct for concentration-dependent error in isotopic data measurements, and b) correct for deviations in measured δ-values from absolute values due to offset (other than concentration-dependent error) introduced by the laser spectrometer. Also, we used Allan variance curves for determining the time interval to average the data to achieve the highest precision that can be offered by LGR-CCIA 36-d (Allan et al., 1997).

First part of our calibration methodology was developed to correct for the concentration-dependent error observed in preliminary studies for $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values measured using OA-ICOS. Such a calibration protocol was used in addition to the routine three-point calibration performed with in-house CO_2 gas standards of known $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values. We developed a CO_2 dilution set up (See Figure. 1), with which each of the three CO_2 standard gases was diluted with N_2 gas to different CO_2 concentrations. By applying a dilution series, we identified the deviation of the measured from the absolute $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values depending on CO_2 concentration (See Figure.4). $\delta^{13}C$, and $\delta^{18}O$ of the standard gases across a wide range of CO_2 concentrations are measured. The deviation of the measured $\delta^{13}C$, and $\delta^{18}O$ from absolute values with respect to changing CO_2 concentrations were mathematically modeled and later used for data correction (See Figure.5). A standard three-point calibration is then applied correcting for concentration-dependent error (See Figure.7). The standards used covered a wide range of $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$, including the values observed in the field of application.

Standard gases were released to a mass flow controller (ANALYT-MTC, series 358, MFC1) after passing through a pressure controller valve (See Figure. 1) with safety bypass (TESCOM, D43376-AR-00-X1-S; V5). A 0.5 µm filter with a PTFE membrane, ((Stainless Steel All-Welded In-Line Filter (Swagelok, SS-4FWS-05; F1)) was installed at the inlet of the flow controller (ANALYT-MTC, series 358; MFC1) to prevent moisture from getting

into the device. N_2 gas was released and passed to another flow controller (ANALYT-MTC, series 358; MFC2) through a 0.5 µm PTFE membrane filter (F2 in Figure. 1). CO_2 and N_2 gases leaving the flow controllers (MFC1 and MFC2 respectively) were then mixed and drawn through a ¼" Teflon tube (P8) which is kept in a thermostat-controlled water bath (Kottermann, 3082) to the multiport inlet unit of OA-ICOS. By using the water bath, we were able to adjust the reference gas temperature between -20 - +40°C and test the temperature sensitivity of the $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements. The third CO_2 standard gas was produced by mixing the other two gas standards in equal molar proportions and was mixed in a 10L volume plastic bag with inner aluminum foil coating and welded seams (CO_2 mix: Linde PLASTIGAS®) under 0.03 MPa pressure by diluting to the required concentration using N_2 gas. The mixture was then temperature adjusted and delivered to the multiport inlet unit by using a ¼" Teflon tube (P10). From the multiport inlet unit, calibration gases were delivered into LGR-CCIA 36-d for measurement using a ¼" Teflon tube (P9) at a pressure < 0.0689 MPa, with a flow rate of 500 mL/min. CO_2 gas standards were measured at varying concentration between 400 and 25,000 ppm. Every hour before sampling, N_2 gas was flushed through the system to remove CO_2 to avoid memory effect. The three calibration gases measured in a sequence one after the other four times. During each round of measurement, every calibration gas was diluted to different concentrations of CO_2 (400 - 25,000 ppm) and measured respective isotopic signature and concentration. For each measurement of $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ at a given concentration, the first 50 readings were omitted to avoid possible memory effects of the laser spestrometer and the subsequent readings for the next 256 seconds were taken and averaged to get maximum precision for $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements. When switching between different calibration gases at the multiport inlet unit, N_2 gas was purged through the systems for 30 seconds to avoid cross-contamination.

2.3 Experimental Sites

In situ experiments were conducted to measure $\delta^{13}C$, $\delta^{18}O$ and concentration of soil CO_2 in two different soil types (calcareous and acidic soil). In situ field measurements in a calcareous soil were conducted during June 2014 in cropland cultivated with wheat (Triticum aestivum) in Neuried, a small village in the Upper Rhine Valley in Germany situated at 48°26'55.5"N, 7°47'20.7"E, 150 m a.s.l. The soil type described as calcareous fluvic Gleysol developed on gravel deposits in the upper Rhine valley. Soil depth was medium to deep, with high contents of coarse material (> 2 mm) up to 30 - 50%. Mean soil organic carbon (SOC) content was 1.2 - 2% and, SOC stock was ranging between 50 and 90 t/ha. The average pH was found to be 8.6. The study site receives an annual rainfall of 810 mm and has a mean annual temperature of 12.1°C.

In situ measurements in an acidic soil were conducted by the end of July 2014 in the model ecosystem facility (MODOEK) of the Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL, Birmensdorf, Switzerland (47°21'48" N, 8°27'23" E, 545 m a.s.l.). The MODOEK facility comprises 16 model ecosystems, belowground split into two lysimeters with an area of 3 m^2 and a depth of 150 cm. The lysimeters used for the present study were filled with acidic (haplic

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Alisol) forest soil and planted with young beech trees (Arend et al., 2016). The soil pH was 4.0 and a total SOC content of 0.8% (Kuster et al., 2013).

2.4 Experimental Setup

OA-ICOS was connected to gas permeable, hydrophobic membrane tubes (Accurel® tubings, 8 mm OD) of 2 m length, placed horizontally in the soil at different depths. Tubes were laid in six different depths (4, 8, 12, 17, 35, and 80 cm) for calcareous soil and three (10, 30, and 60 cm) for acidic soil.

Technical details of measurement setup were shown in Figure 2. Both ends of the membrane tubes were extended vertically upwards reaching the soil top by connecting them to gas impermeable Synflex® tubings (8 mm OD) using Swagelok tube fitting union (Swagelok: SS-8M0-6, 8 mm Tube OD). One end of the tubing system was connected to a solenoid switching valve (Bibus: MX-758.8E3C3KK) by using a stainless steel reducing union (Swagelok: SS-8M0-6-6M), to the outlet of the LGR CCIA 36-d by using ¼" Teflon tubing. The other end was connected via the multiport inlet unit to the gas inlet of the LGR CCIA 36-d.

This way, a loop was created in which the soil CO_2 drawn into the OA-ICOS was circulated back through the tubes and in and out of the OA-ICOS and measured until a steady state was reached. Each depth was selected and continuously measured for 6 minutes at specified time intervals by switching to defined depths at the multiport inlet unit and also at the solenoid valve.

3 Results and Discussion

The highest level of precision obtained for $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements at the maximum measuring frequency (1Hz) were determined by using Allan deviation curves (see Figure 3). Maximum precision of 0.022‰ for $\delta^{13}C$ was obtained when the data were averaged over 256 seconds, and for $\delta^{18}O$, 0.077‰ for the same averaging interval as for $\delta^{13}C$.

To correct for CO_2 concentration-dependent error in raw $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ data, we analysed data obtained from the OA-ICOS to determine the sensitivity of $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements against changing concentrations of CO_2. We observed a specific pattern of deviance in the measured isotopic data from the absolute values (both for $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$) across CO_2 concentration ranging from 25,000 to 400 ppm (See Figure.4). Uncalibrated $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements showed a standard deviation of 8.1‰ and 4.7‰ respectively, when measured under changing CO_2 concentrations.

The dependency of $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values on the CO_2 concentration was compensated by using a nonlinear model. The deviations ($\Delta\delta$) of the measured delta values (δ_M) from the absolute value of the standard gas (δ_R) at different concentrations of CO_2 were calculated ($\Delta\delta = \delta_M - \delta_R$). Several mathematical models were then fitted on $\Delta\delta$ as a function of changing CO_2 concentration (See figure.5). The mathematical model most fitting to the ($\Delta\delta$) data was selected using Akaike information criterion corrected (AICc) (Glatting et al., 2007; Hurvich and Tsai, 1989; Yamaoka et al., 1978). The non-linear model fits applied for $\Delta\delta^{13}C$, and $\Delta\delta^{18}O$ measurements are given in Tables 2 & 3, respectively. For $\Delta\delta^{13}C$, a three-parameter exponential model fitted best with $r^2 = 0.98$ (see Table 4 for the

values of the parameters), and a two-parameter logarithmic model (see Table 3) with $r^2 = 0.99$ showed the best fit for $\Delta\delta^{18}O$ (see Table 4 for the values of the parameters). The most fitting model was then introduced into the measured isotopic data ($\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$) and were corrected for concentration-dependent error (See figure. 6). After correction, the standard deviation of $\delta^{13}C$ was reduced to 0.98‰ and of $\delta^{18}O$ to 0.73‰ for all measurements across the whole CO_2 concentration range.

After correcting the measured $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values for the CO_2 concentration-dependent deviations, a three-point calibration was made by generating linear regressions with the concentration corrected $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values against absolute $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values (See Figure.7). Three-point calibration improved the accuracy further by reducing the standard deviation to 0.935 ‰ for $\delta^{13}C$ and 0.719 ‰ for $\delta^{18}O$.

During our experiments with the LGR CCIA 36-d, we found that routine calibration (Correction for concentration-dependent error plus three-point calibration) was inevitable for obtaining better accuracy, in particular under fluctuating CO_2 concentrations. The LGR CCIA-36d offers an option for calibration against a single standard, a feature which was already in place in a predecessor model (CCIA DLT-100) (Guillon et al., 2012). This internal calibration is sufficient, when LGR CCIA-36d is operated only under stable CO_2 concentrations. To correct for the concentration dependency, we had introduced mathematical model fits, which corrected for the deviation pattern found for both $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$. We assume that these correction models were instrument specific and a similar procedure needs to be developed for every single device. Experiments conducted to investigate the influence of temperature on $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements did not show any statistically significant influence. The previous version of the Los Gatos CCIA was strongly influenced by temperature fluctuations during sampling (Guillon et al., 2012). The lack of temperature dependency as observed here with the most recent model is mostly due to the heavy insulation provided with the system, which was not found in the older models.

Guillon et al. (2012) found a linear correlation between CO_2 concentration and respective stable isotope signatures with a previous version of Los Gatos CCIA CO_2 stable isotope analyser. In our experiments with LGR CCIA 36-d, best fitting correlation between CO_2 concentration and $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements were exponential and logarithmic relations, respectively. We assume that measurement accuracy is influenced by the number of CO_2 molecules present inside the laser cavity of the particular laser spectrometer as we observed large standard deviation in isotopic measurements at lower CO_2 concentrations. This behavior of an OA-ICOS can be expected as it functions by sweeping the laser along an absorption spectrum, measuring the energy transmitted after passing through the sample. Therefore, energy transmitted is proportional to the gas concentration in the cavity. The laser absorbance is then determined by normalizing against a reference signal, finally calculating the concentration of the sample measured by integrating the whole spectrum of absorbance (O'Keefe et al., 1999).

Figures 8 and 9 show the CO_2 concentration, $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements of soil CO_2 in the calcareous as well as in the acidic soil across the soil profile with sub-daily resolution and as averages for the day, respectively. We observed a linear increase in the CO_2 concentration across the soil depth profile for both, the calcareous and the acidic soil. Moreover, there were rather contrasting $\delta^{13}C$ values across the profile for the two soil types. In the calcareous soil, CO_2 was relatively enriched in ^{13}C in the surface soil (4 cm) as compared to the 8 cm depth. Below 12 cm down to 80 cm depth, we found an increase in $\delta^{13}C$ values. At 80 cm depth, the $\delta^{13}C$ in soil CO_2 ranged

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between -5 and 0‰ (See Figure. 8) with a daily average of -2.63 ± 0.14 ‰ (See Figure. 9) and hence clearly above atmospheric values (≈ -8.0 ‰). No specific pattern was identified for $\delta^{18}O$ values for the calcareous soil across the profile. While there was a tendency for $\delta^{18}O$ to decrease with soil depths down to 35 cm, the highest $\delta^{18}O$ values were observed at 80 cm depth. The patterns observed for the $\delta^{13}C$ values of CO_2 in the calcareous soil with ^{13}C enrichment in deeper soil layers can be explained by a substantial contribution of CO_2 from abiotic origin to total soil CO_2 release as a result of carbonate weathering and subsequent out-gassing from soil water (Schindlbacher et al., 2015). Carbonates have a distinct $\delta^{13}C$ value close to 0‰ vs. VPDB, while CO_2 released during respiratory processes has usually $\delta^{13}C$ values around -24‰ as observed in the acidic soil (Figure 8). Even though the contribution of CO_2 from abiotic sources to soil CO_2 is considered to be low, several studies have reported significant proportions ranging between (10 - 60%) emanating from abiotic sources (Emmerich, 2003; Plestenjak et al., 2012; Ramnarine et al., 2012; Serrano-Ortiz et al., 2010; Stevenson and Verburg, 2006; Tamir et al., 2011). Water content and soil CO_2 concentration are two major factors influencing carbonate weathering, and variations in soil CO_2 partial pressure, moisture, temperature, and pH can cause degassing of CO_2 which contributes to the soil CO_2 efflux (Schindlbacher et al., 2015). We assume that at our study site, the topsoil is de-carbonated due to intensive agriculture for a longer period and thus soil CO_2 there originates primarily from autotrophic and heterotrophic respiratory activity. In contrast to the deeper soil layers, where the carbonate content is high, CO_2 from carbonate weathering is assumed to dominate soil CO_2. Also, outgassing of CO_2 from the large groundwater body underneath the calcareous Gleysol might contribute to the inorganic CO_2 sources in the deeper soil as we found ground water table to be 1-2m below the soil surface. Relative ^{13}C enrichment of the CO_2 in the topsoil (4 cm) compared to 8 cm depth is probably due to the invasive diffusion of atmospheric CO_2 which has a $\delta^{13}C$ value close to -8‰ (e.g., (Levin et al., 1995)). The $\delta^{18}O$ patterns for CO_2 between 4 and 35 cm might reflect the $\delta^{18}O$ of soil water with stronger evaporative enrichment at the top and ^{18}O depletion towards deeper soil layers. In comparison, the strong ^{18}O enrichment of soil CO_2 towards 80 cm in the calcareous Gleysol very likely reflects the ^{18}O values of groundwater lending further support for the high contribution of CO_2 originating from the outgassing of groundwater.

Soil CO_2 concentration in the acidic soil showed a positive relationship with soil depth as CO_2 concentration increased along with increasing soil depth (Figs. 8 & 9). CO_2 concentrations were distinctly higher than in the calcareous soil, very likely due to the finer texture than in the gravel-rich calcareous soil. $\delta^{13}C$ values increased slightly with soil depths and amounted to approx. – 24‰ in 30 and 80 cm depth indicating the biotic origin from (autotrophic and heterotrophic) soil respiration (Schönwitz et al., 1986). In the topsoil, $\delta^{13}C$ values did not strongly increase, pointing towards a less pronounced inward diffusion of CO_2 in the acidic soil site, most likely due to more extensive outward diffusion of soil CO_2 as indicated by the still very high CO_2 concentration at 10 cm creating a sharp gradient between soil and atmosphere. Moreover, the acidic soil was rather dense and contained no stones, strongly suggesting that gas diffusivity was rather small. $\delta^{18}O$ depths patterns of soil CO_2 in the acidic soil were most likely reflecting $\delta^{18}O$ values of soil water as CO_2 became increasingly ^{18}O depleted from top to bottom. $\delta^{18}O$ of deeper soil layers CO_2 (30 - 60 cm) was close to the values expected when full oxygen exchange between soil water and CO_2 occurred. Irrigation water $\delta^{18}O$ amounted to ≈ -10 ± 2‰ against the VSMOW scale and assuming an ^{18}O fractionation of 41‰ between CO_2 and water (Brenninkmeijer et al., 1983) this would result in expected

value for CO_2 of ≈ -10 ± 2‰ vs. VPDB-CO_2. Corresponding results had been shown for $\delta^{18}O$ of soil CO_2 using similar hydrophobic gas permeable membrane tubes used when measuring $\delta^{18}O$ of soil CO_2 and soil water *in situ* (Gangi et al., 2015).

4 Conclusions

During our preliminary tests with OA-ICOS, we found that the equipment is highly sensitive to changes in CO_2 concentrations. Therefore, we developed a calibration strategy for correcting errors introduced in $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements due to the sensitivity of the device against changing CO_2 concentrations. Also, we developed a three-point calibration method for correcting aberrations in $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ measurements observed in addition to concentration sensitivity. Thus, we introduced a calibration method for OA-ICOS (LGR CCIA 36-d) to measure $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ under varying concentrations of CO_2. We found that OA-ICOS measure stable isotopes of CO_2 gas samples with a precision comparable to conventional IRMS. The method described in this work for measuring CO_2 concentration, $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values in soil air profiles using OA-ICOS and hydrophobic gas permeable tubes are promising and can be applied for soil CO_2 flux studies. As this set up is capable of measuring continuously for longer time periods at higher temporal resolution (1 Hz), it offers greater potential to investigate the isotopic identity of CO_2 and the interrelation between soil CO_2 and soil water. By using our measurement setup, we could identify abiotic as well as biotic contributions to the soil CO_2 at the calcareous soil. We infer that that degassing of CO_2 from carbonates due to weathering and evasion of CO_2 from groundwater may leave the soil CO_2 with a specific and distinct $\delta^{13}C$ signature especially when the biotic activity is rather low. This was the case in the calcareous Gleysol studied here as indicated by the much lower CO_2 concentrations as compared to the acidic soil.

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Table.1 The $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ values of the calibration standards used measured against VPDB.

CO_2 standard	$\delta^{13}C$	$\delta^{18}O$
Heavy standard	-3.99 ± 0.03‰	-13.08 ± 0.06‰
Medium standard	-21.06 ± 0.03‰	-21.14 ± 0.024‰
Heavy standard	-38.12 ± 0.04‰	-29.2 ± 0.035‰

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Table 2. Correction factor models are fitted for $\Delta\delta^{13}C$, DF (Degrees of Freedom), AIC_C (Akaike information criterion) and $[CO_2]$ CO_2 concentration in ppm.

Model Fit	Equation	R^2	AIC_C	DF
Exponential	$\boldsymbol{\Delta\delta 13C = a * (b - \exp(-c * [CO2]))}$	0.99	3.79	8
Rational	$\boldsymbol{\Delta\delta 13C = (a + b * [CO2])/(1 + c * [CO2] + d * [CO2]\text{^}2)}$	0.98	7.79	7
Dose - Response	$\boldsymbol{\Delta\delta 13C = \alpha + \theta * [CO2]\text{^}\eta/(\kappa\text{^}\eta + [CO2]\text{^}\eta)}$	0.98	8.7	7
Sigmoidal	$\boldsymbol{\Delta\delta 13C = (a * b + c * [CO2]\ \text{^}d)/(b + [CO2]\text{^}d)}$	0.98	8.703	7
Logarithmic	$\boldsymbol{\Delta\delta 13C = a + b * ln([CO2])}$	0.92	19.22	9
Lowess	------	0.85	28.89	8

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9 Table 3. Correction factor models are fitted for $\Delta\delta^{18}O$, DF (Degrees of Freedom), AIC_C (Akaike information criterion) and $[CO_2]$ CO_2 concentration in ppm.

Model Fit	Equation	R^2	AIC_C	DF
Logarithmic	$\Delta\delta 18O = a + b * ln([CO2])$	**0.98**	**-9.035**	**9**
Rational	$\Delta\delta 18O = (a + b * x)/(1 + c * [CO2] + d * [CO2]\ \hat{}\ 2)$	**0.97**	**2.75**	**7**
Exponential	$\Delta\delta 18O = a * (b - \exp(-c * [CO2]))$	**0.95**	**4.58**	**8**
Lowess	-------	**0.90**	**12.22**	**8**

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Table 4. Parameter values for correction factor model fit for $\Delta\delta^{13}C$ & $\Delta\delta^{18}O$.

Parameter	Value	Std Error	95% Confidence
$a^{13}C$	23.8	1.2	21.08 - 26.68
$b^{13}C$	0.161	0.02	0.10 - 0.21
$c^{13}C$	0.000403	0.000053	0.000281 - 0.000525
$a^{18}O$	-29.4	1.25	-32.26 - -26.60
$b^{18}O$	3.26	0.14	2.93 - 3.60

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Figure 1

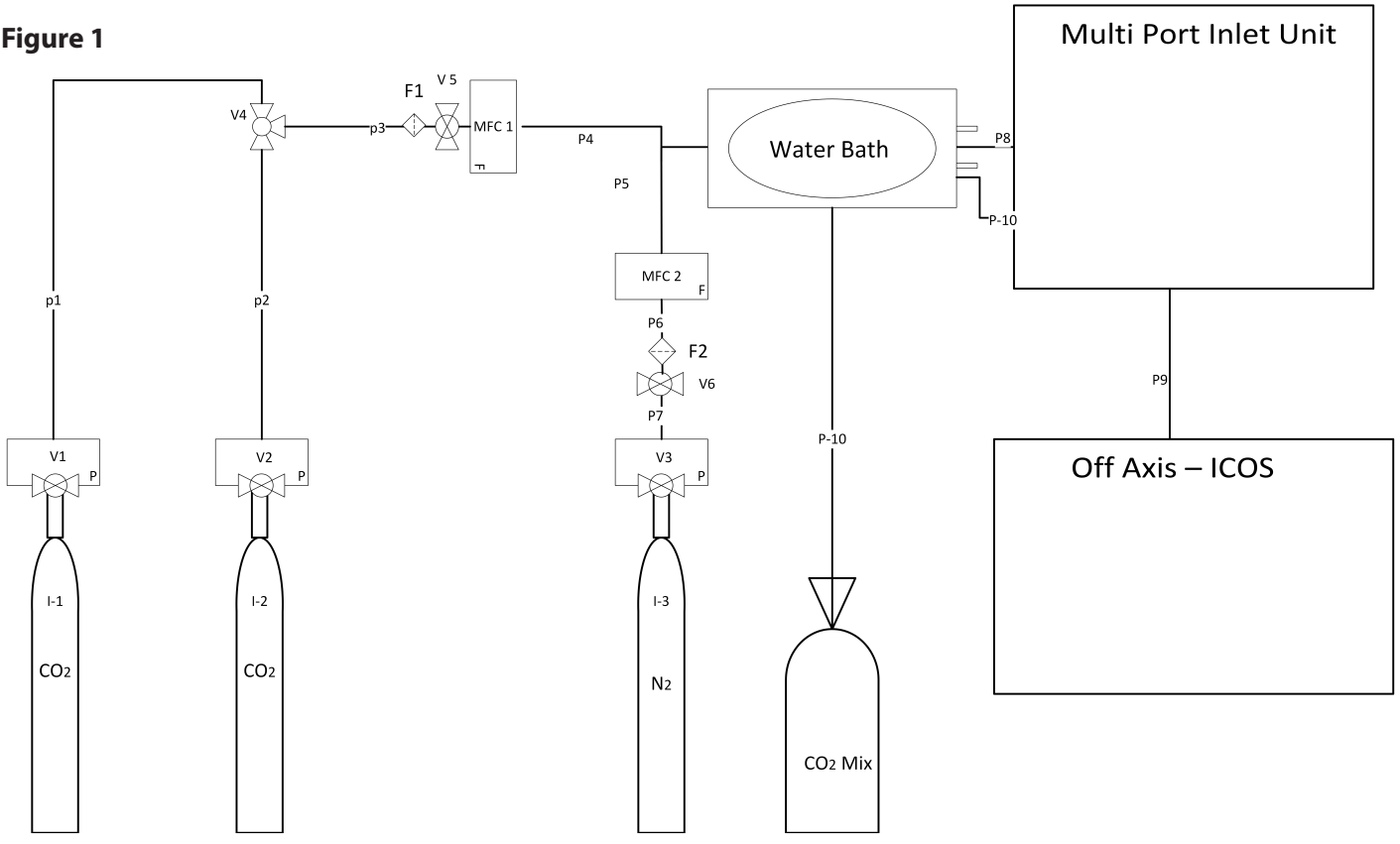

Figure 1: Setup made for calibration of Off Axis ICOS (LGR-CCIA 36-d). I(1,2): CO_2 standards, CO_2 Mix: Gas standards mixed in equal molar proportion, I3: N_2 gas, MFC(1, 2): Mass Flow Controller, F(1, 2): PTFE filter, V(1, 2, 3): Pressure reducing Valves, V4: Three way ball valve, V(5,6): pressure controller valve with safety bypass , P (1-7): Steel pipes, P(8,9,10): ¼" Teflon tubings.

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Figure 2

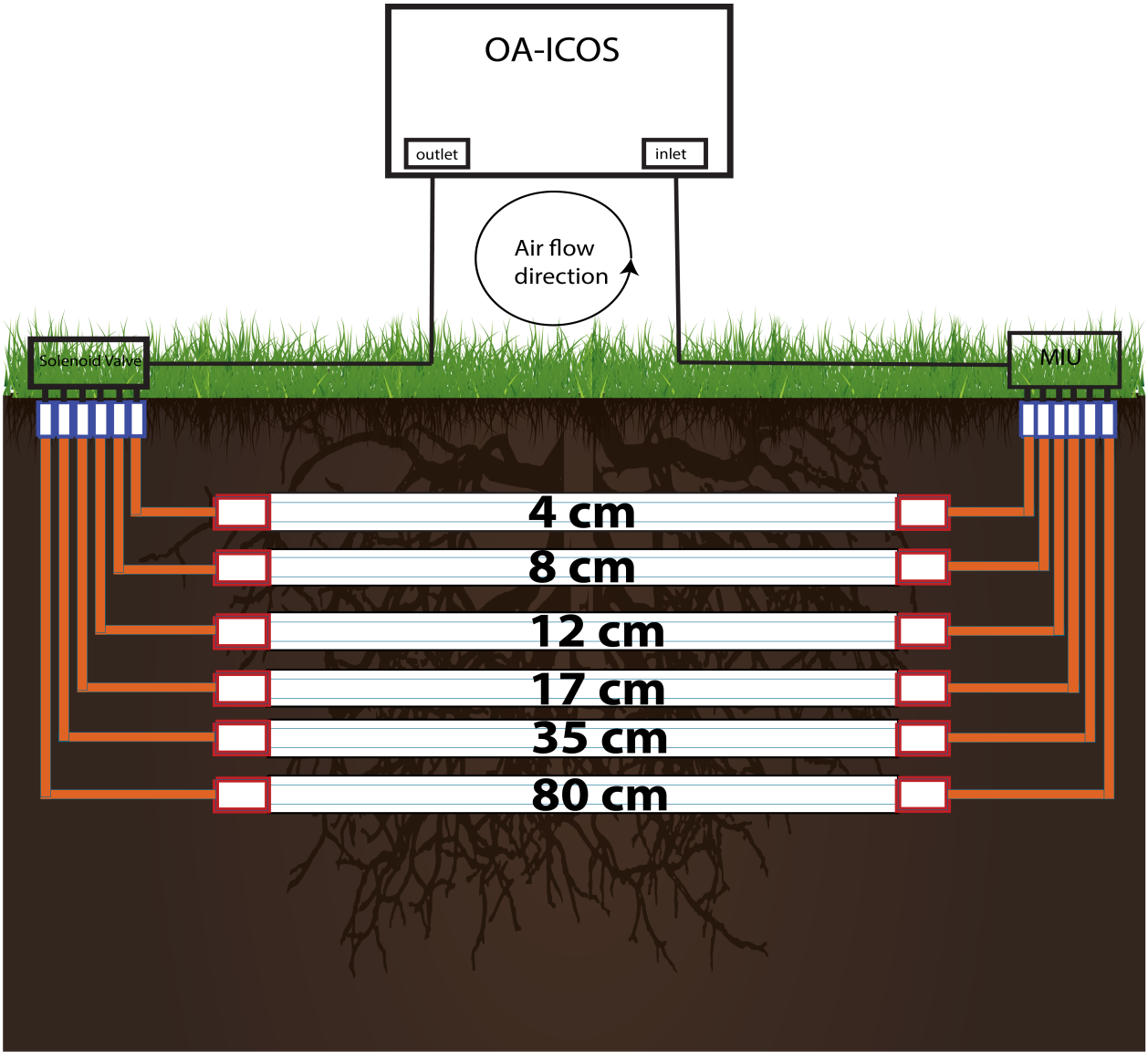

Figure 2: Installation made for soil air CO2 , δ13C and δ18O measurements. MIU represents the multi-port inlet unit. Hydrophobic membrane tubings installed horizontally in soil at different depths.

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Figure 3

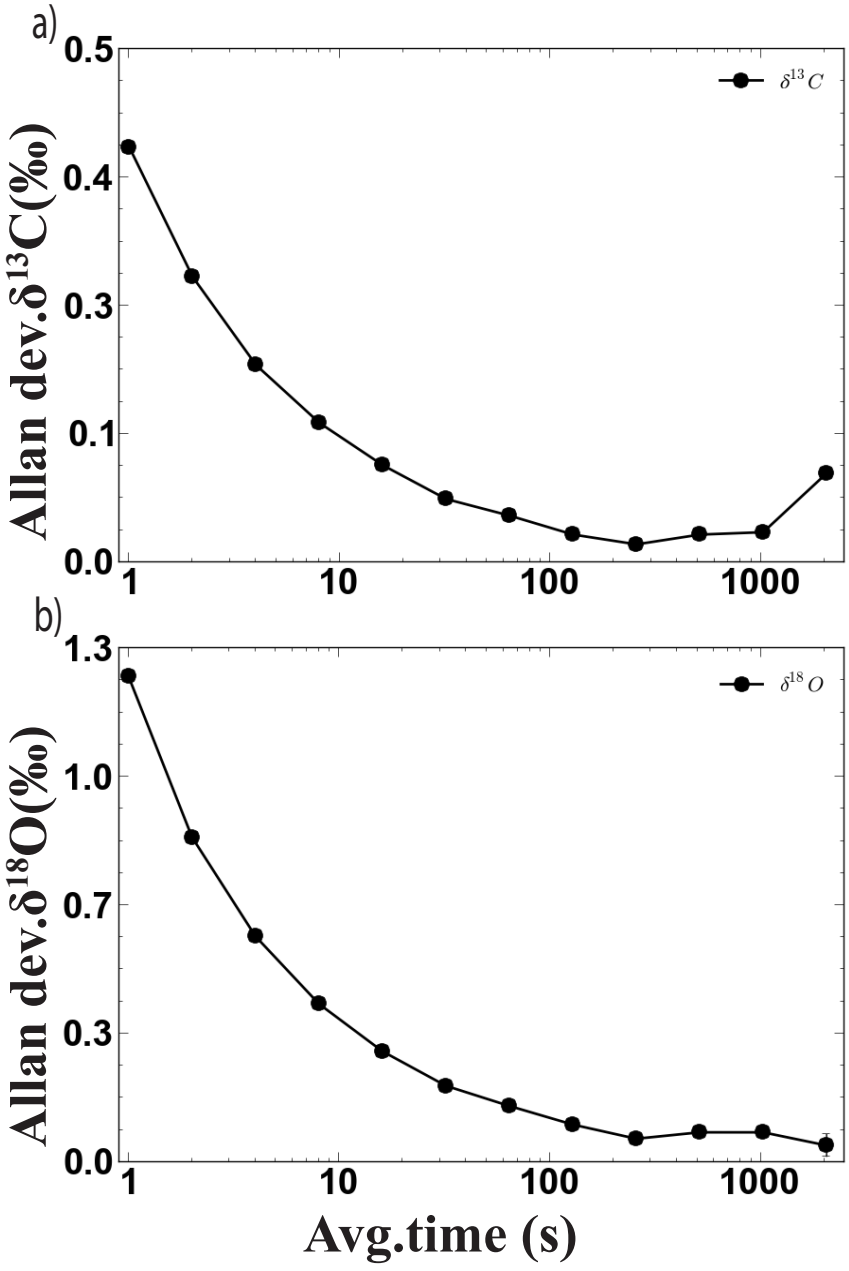

Figure 3: Allan deviation curve for $\delta^{13}C$ (a) and $\delta^{18}O$ (b) measurements by Los Gatos CO2 Carbon isotope analyzer CCIA-36d.

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Figure 4

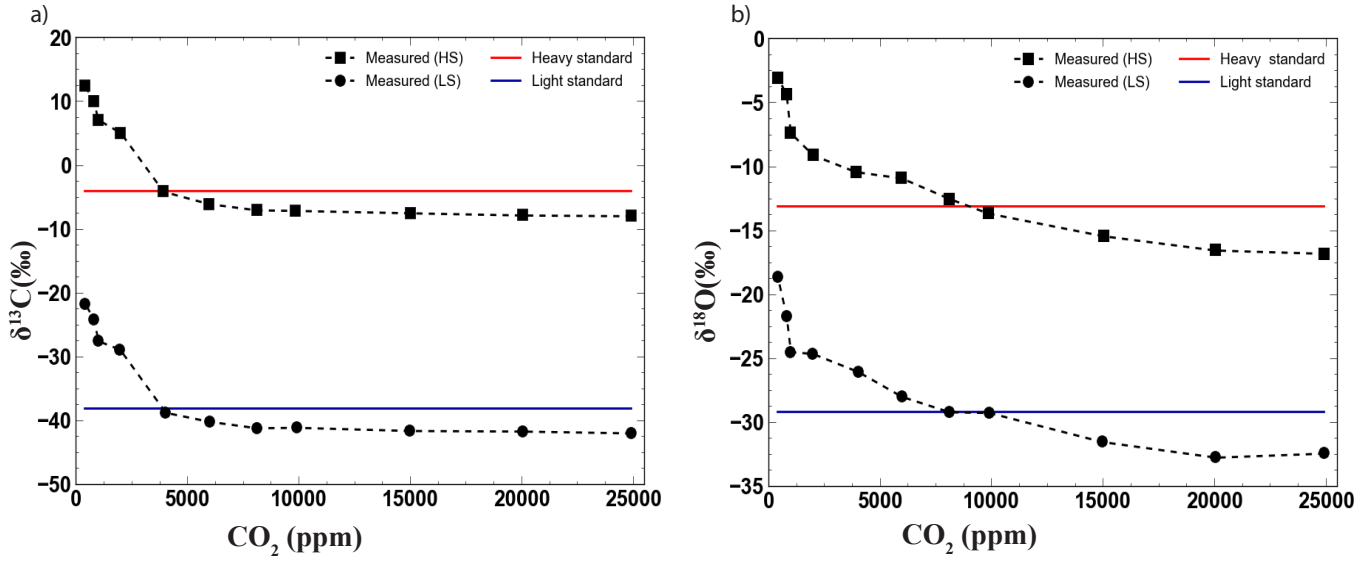

Figure 4: Variability observed in $\delta^{13}C$ (a) and $\delta^{18}O$ (b) measurements without calibration. Where measured δ values for Heavy Standard and Light Standard are shown as Measured (HS) and Measured (LS) respectively. Actual δ value for heavy standard and light standard are shown as red and blue line respectively.

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Figure 5

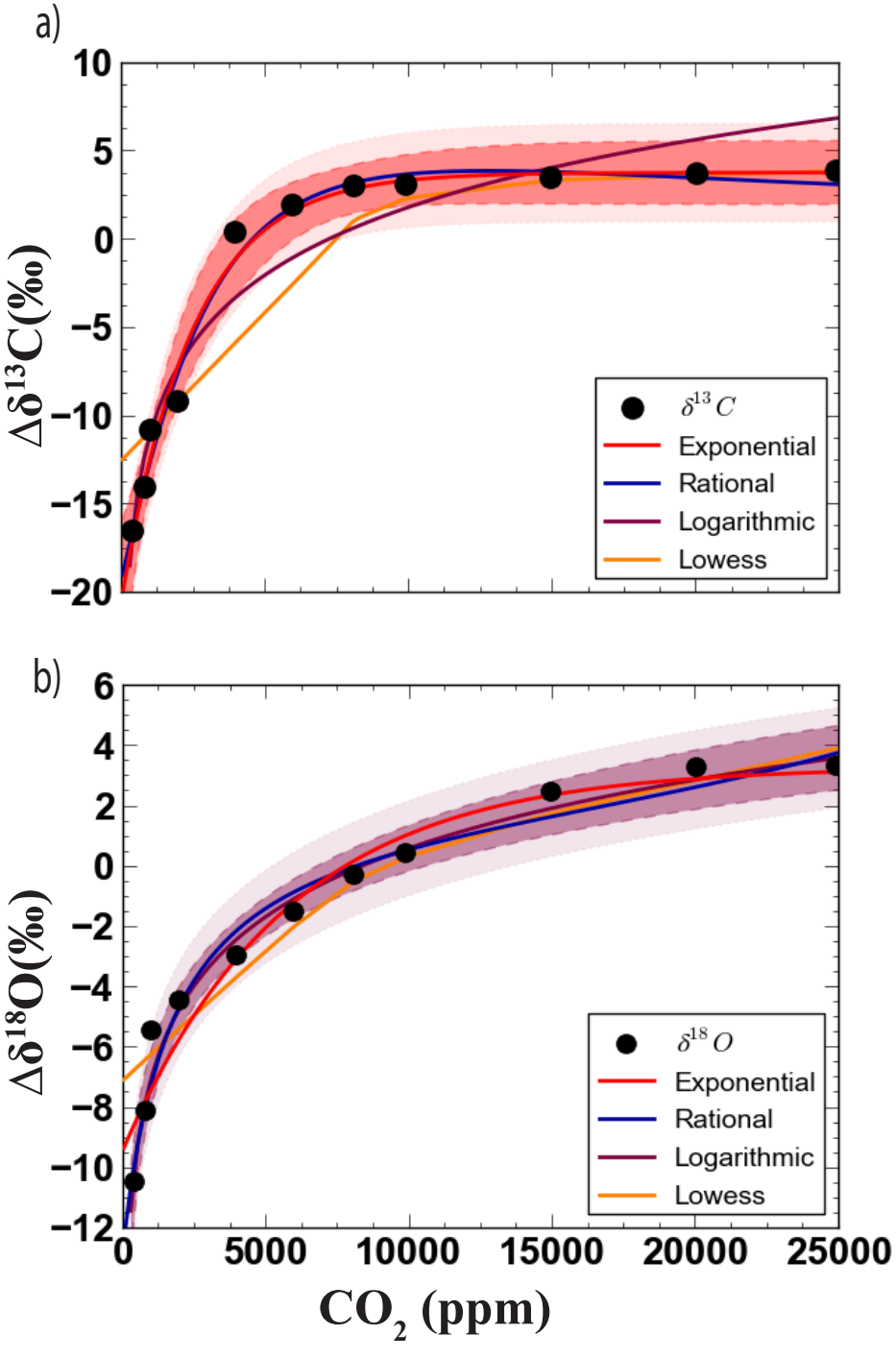

Figure 5: Correction factor model fit for the $\Delta\delta^{13}C$ (a) & $\Delta\delta^{18}O$ (b) for Los Gatos CO2 Carbon isotope analyzer CCIA-36d with 95% confidence interval and a 95% prediction band.

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Figure 6

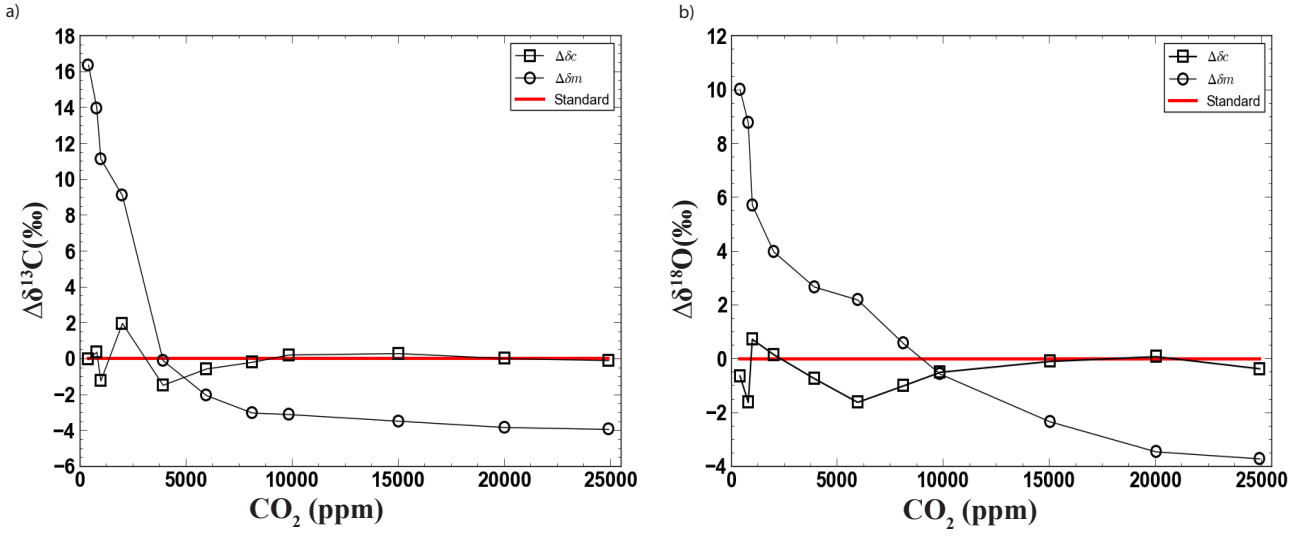

Figure 6: Concentration corrected $\delta^{13}C$ (a) & $\delta^{18}O$ (b) measurements by Los Gatos CO_2 Carbon isotope analyzer CCIA-36d.Deviation in measured data (Δδm), deviation in corrected data using model fit (Δδc), Real value (standard).

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Figure 7

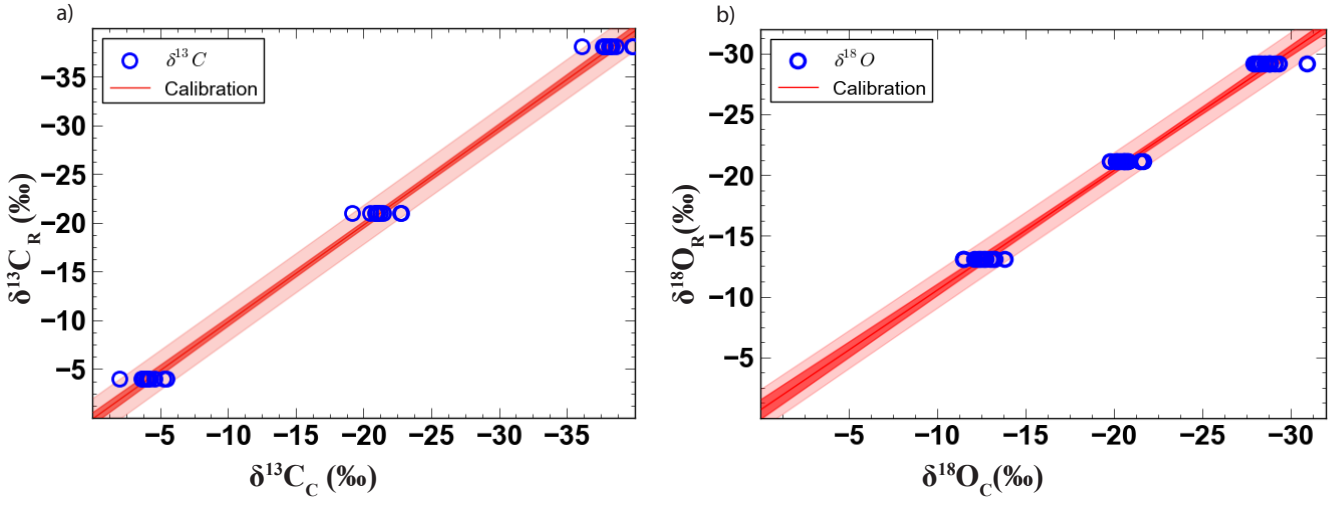

Figure 7: Calibration lines for $\delta^{13}C$ (a) & $\delta^{18}O$ (b) by Los Gatos CO_2 Carbon isotope analyzer CCIA-36d with 95% confidence interval and a 95% prediction band, where $\delta^{13}C_R$ and $\delta^{18}O_R$ deontes actual δ values of gas standard and $\delta^{13}C_C$ and $\delta^{18}O_C$ stands for δ values corrected for concentration dependency.

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Figure 8

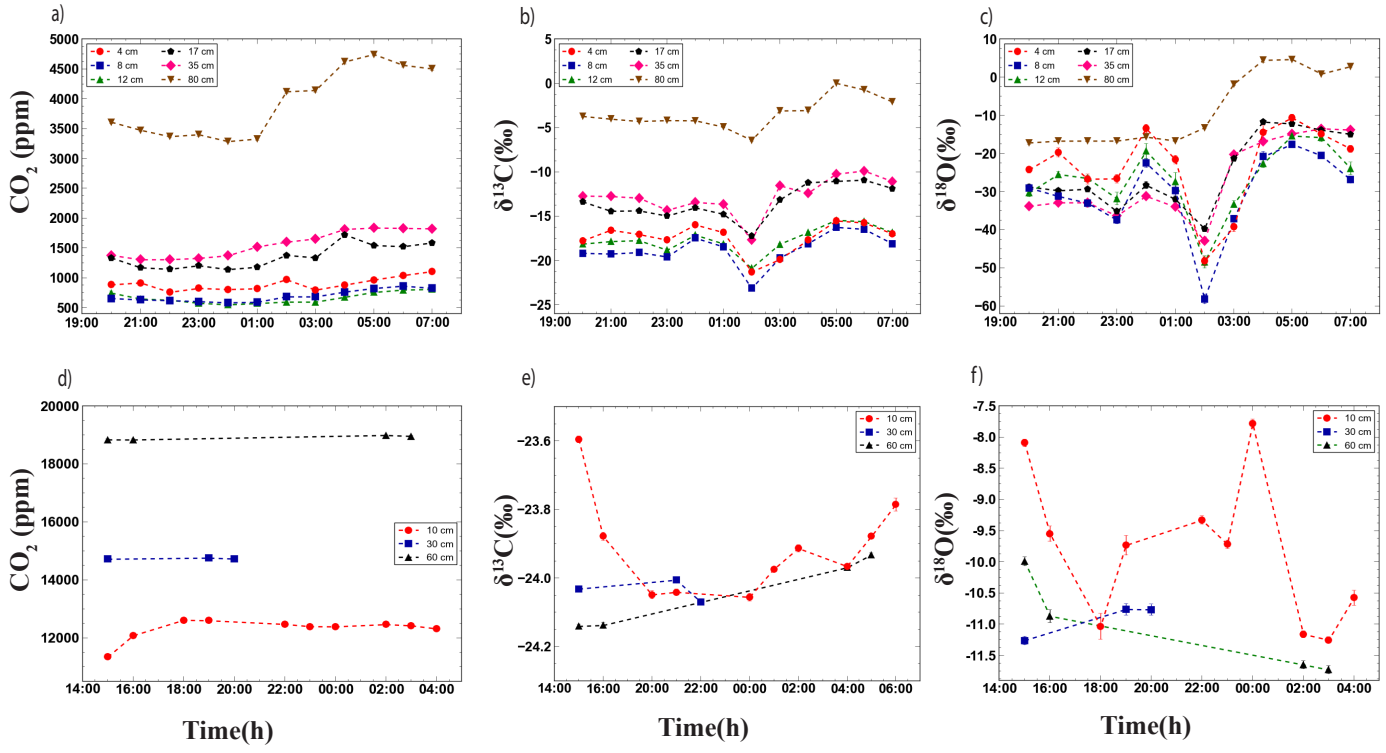

Figure 8: Evolution of soil CO_2 (ppm), $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{18}O$ in calcareous (a-c) and acidic(d-f) soils.

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Figure 9

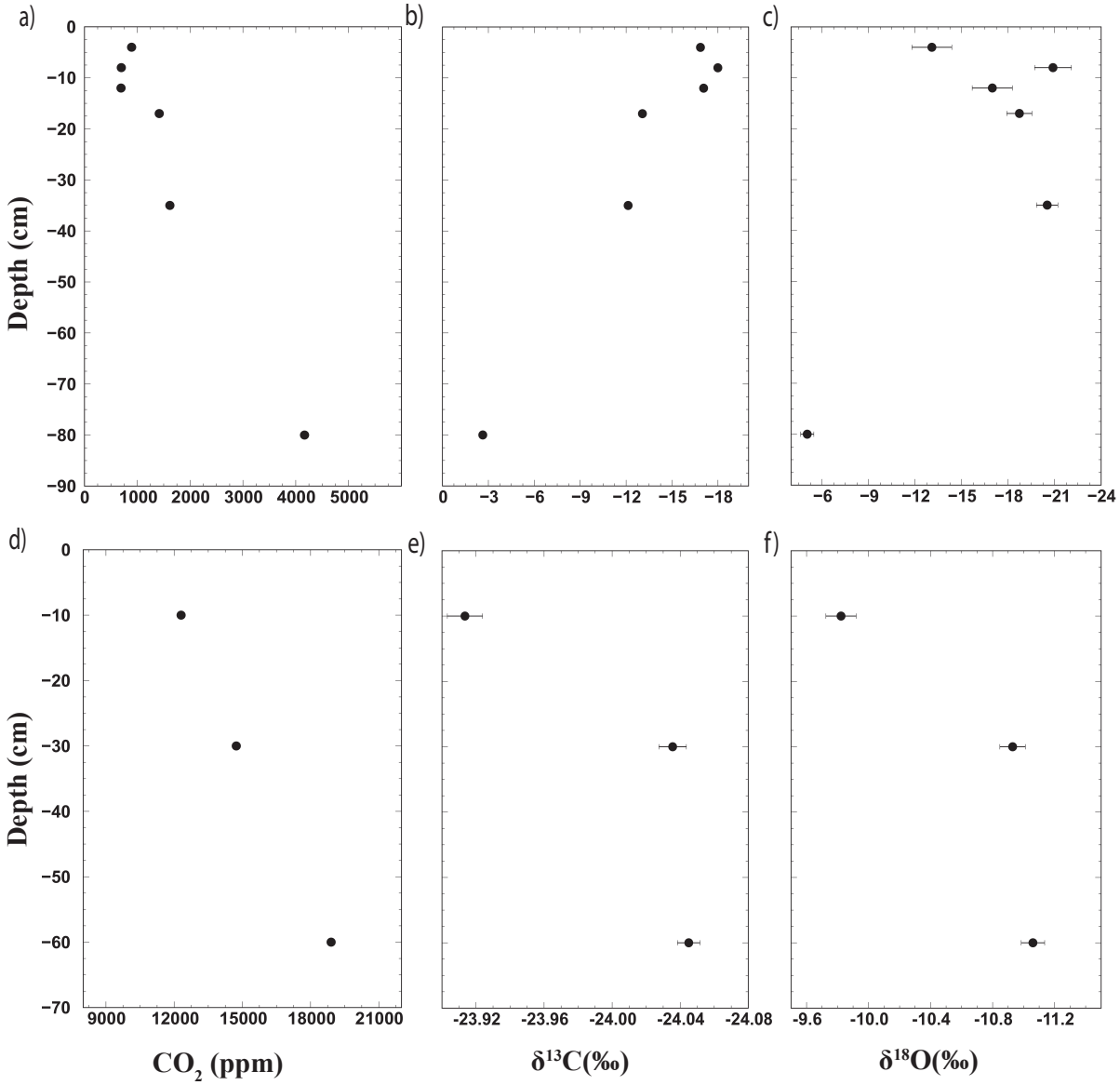

Figure 9: Depth profile of soil air CO2 , δ13C and δ18O. Figures (a-c), shows soil depth profile in calcareous soil and figures (d-f) elucidates soil depth profile in acidic soil.