

Interactive comment on “Soil fertility along toposequences of the East India Plateau and implications for productivity and sustainability” by Peter S. Cornish et al.

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Thank you for your comment. When soils are as variable as we found here, the challenge is to move away from prescriptive recommendations based on a belief that the soils are infertile, to an approach that attempts to meet the actual requirements of individual fields/crops. In the ideal world, we might use soil tests to tailor a fertiliser mix to each crop type and field, but in Eastern India (and elsewhere in S and SE Asia) this is not practical because reliable and timely soil testing services are unavailable and/or unaffordable, and in in any case, the results can be hard to interpret. We believe that, in the right learning environment, farmers can use simple fertiliser test strips or omis-

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sion trials to effectively explore fertiliser requirements. Whatever approach is taken to extension the message is clear, that most farmers at present achieve yields that are well below the rainfall-determined potential because of nutrient deficiencies, and the cropping systems are unsustainable because of ongoing nutrient depletion.

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