

## ***Interactive comment on “Multi-cooperation of soil biota in the plough layer is the key for conservation tillage to improve N availability and crop yield” by Shixiu Zhang et al.***

**Elizabeth Bach (Editor)**

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Dear Zhang et al, Thank you for your patience, I have now received two complete peer reviews of your manuscript “Multi-cooperation of soil biota in the plough layer is the key for conservation tillage to improve N availability and crop yield” submitted to SOIL. The reviewers found the work a useful contribution to the scientific literature investigating soil biological contributions to N mineralization in agricultural systems. However, both reviewers raise concerns with how models from the literature were applied to this specific study. Applying models can offer insights and predictions, but it is important to understand and report the uncertainties that arise from inputting field and laboratory

C1

data from one study into a model developed in another. A way to address this would be to conduct a sensitivity test, as suggested by reviewer 1. Additionally, caveats need to be incorporated throughout the results and discussion, especially to the conclusions, which both reviewers felt were overstating the underlying data.

Both reviewers mention ways the text could be improved for clarity. In some cases, there is confusion around methods, which may require some extensive rewriting. It is important to consider where grammatical changes can improve the text and where additional information is truly required. A third reviewer found the writing too confusing to do a full review; however, the thorough review of the other two reviewers provides sufficient feedback to proceed with revision of the manuscript.

Please proceed with responding to the reviewer comments. After those responses are posted, I will proceed with a decision on the manuscript.

Thank you, Elizabeth Bach Topical Editor, SOIL

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C2