

Transfer of natural radionuclides from soil to plants and grass in the western north of West Bank environment- Palestine

Mohannad Mohammed Jazzar, Khalil Mohammed Thabayneh*

Faculty of Science and Technology, Hebron University, Hebron, Palestine

Email address:

mohannadj@hebron.edu (M. Jazzar), khalilt@hebron.edu (K. Thabayneh)

To cite this article:

Mohannad Mohammed Jazzar, Khalil Mohammed Thabayneh. Transfer of Natural Radionuclides from Soil to Plants and Grass in the Western North of West Bank Environment- Palestine. *International Journal of Environmental Monitoring and Analysis*.

Vol. 2, No. 5, 2014, pp. 252-258. doi: 10.11648/j.ijjema.20140205.14

Abstract: The transfer factors of radionuclides (^{226}Ra , ^{238}U , ^{232}Th , ^{40}K and fallout radionuclides ^{137}Cs) from soil to plant and grass collected from the north-west of West Bank environment – Palestine were measured. For soil to plant, the average transfer factor (TF) values were found to be 0.60, 0.50, 0.31, and 1.70 for ^{226}Ra , ^{238}U , ^{232}Th and ^{40}K respectively. For soil to grass the TF values were found to be 1.26, 1.12, 1.15 and 1.20 for ^{226}Ra , ^{238}U , ^{232}Th and ^{40}K respectively. For soil to plant, the average transfer factor values were found to be 0.27 for fallout radionuclides ^{137}Cs . The TF showed wide variation in different species, while a few species of plants indicated preferential uptake of these radionuclides. TF average values from soil to grass were found to be higher than from soil to plant. Results showed that part of the total ^{226}Ra in agricultural soils were from phosphate fertilizers. Because the species of plants were directly involved in the human food chain, information on the concentration level and transfer of radionuclides from soil to plants will provide important data for the environmental risk assessment in such zones. These results have been compared with those of different countries of the world.

Keywords: Activity Concentration, Transfer Factor, Plant, Grass, Caesium-137, Primordial Radionuclides

1. Introduction

There are many sources of radiation and radioactivity in the environment. Gamma radiation emitted from naturally occurring radionuclides, also called as terrestrial background radiation, represent the main external source of irradiation of the human body [1, 2, 3]. Once present in the environment, these radionuclides, whether natural or artificial from fallout i.e. ^{137}Cs , are available for uptake by plants and animals, and also make their way into the food chain [3, 4]. Naturally occurring radioisotopes are the main sources of both external and internal radiation exposure in human beings.

There are two mechanisms for the contamination of vegetation, i.e., by root uptake or directly by aerial deposition of fallout radionuclides on plants. It is necessary to carry out an accurate assessment of these radionuclides in the daily used food materials in order to ascertain the degree of risk and deleterious effects to the public health [5]. Also, the amount of radioactivity in soil is transferred in minute quantities into plants. Plants absorb radionuclides from soil

and enter the human body with food.

In recent years, examination of radioactive isotopes in the environment and their role for living things of our planet has attracted growing attention, increasing radionuclide concentration in the environment and threatening living organisms by entering the food chain from plants to animals and, finally, to man [6]. The uptake of radionuclides by plants from the soil is normally described by the transfer factor (TF) [7]. The plants take in deposited radionuclides from soil commonly expressed as soil-to-plant transfer factor (TF); TF is widely used for calculating radiological human dose via the ingestion pathway. The soil-to-plant TF is regarded as one of the most important parameters in the environmental safety assessment for nuclear facilities. The soil-to-plant transfer of radionuclide depends on soil type, electrical conductivity (EC), pH, solid/liquid distribution coefficient, exchangeable K^+ , organic matter contents and bicarbonate contents of soil. [8].

Many projects were run by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to determine TF mainly for ^{137}Cs [9, 10]. This data has been used extensively in radiological

assessment models. Natural environmental radioactivity arises mainly from primordial radionuclides, such as ^{40}K , and the radionuclides from the ^{232}Th and ^{238}U series, and their decay products are considered to be the main contributor to internal radiation dose. Several studies on the transfer of natural radionuclides from soil to plant have been carried out in different regions in the world [5, 7-8, 11-13]. However, there seems to be no data on the transfer of natural radionuclides from soil to plant in the environment of Palestine.

In recent studies [3, 14], the concentration of natural radioactivity and associated effective dose levels for ^{226}Ra , ^{238}U , ^{232}Th , ^{40}K and ^{137}Cs radioisotopes were measured for soil and plant samples from Tulkarem district of West Bank Palestine. Moreover, these studies [14] showed that the Excess lifetime cancer risk *ELCR* values of the plant samples were slightly higher than the world average, which may have future health implication on population.

The objective of this investigation is to study the soil-to-plant transfer factor of natural radioactive nuclides to selected plant samples from the Western North of West Bank Environment - Palestine (Tulkarem district), in order to assess the radiation doses to human beings.

2. Materials and Method

2.1. Study Area

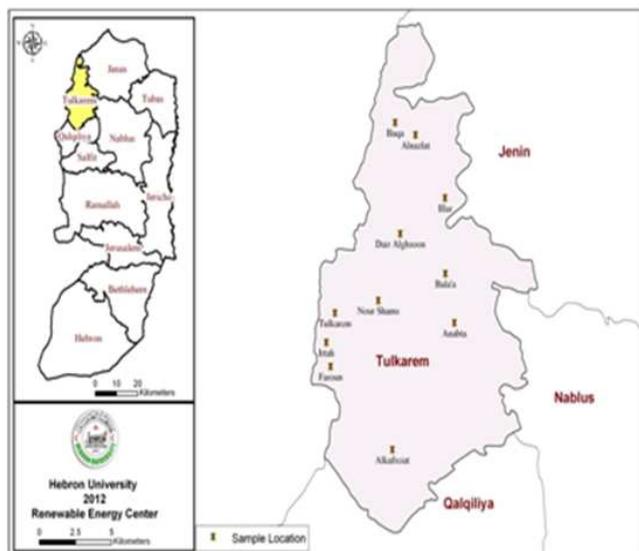


Fig 1. West Bank geographical map and sample location of Tulkarem district, Palestine. (towns of the district can be visible on enlargement)

The study area (Tulkarem governorate) is located in the north-west of West Bank – Palestine. The Tulkarem governorate (Latitude: $21^{\circ} 32' 48''$, Longitude: $39^{\circ} 11' 29''$) is an administrative district and one of the 16 governorates of the Palestinian National Authority. The governorate's land area is 268 square kilometers, with a population of 173,000 inhabitants www.pcbs.gov.ps. The governorate is situated on the western edge of northern West Bank, in the foothills of the Samarian Mountains about 15 kilometers North West of

Nablus and 15 kilometers east of the coastal town of Netanya (Fig. 1). It is bordered by the 1948 cease-fire line, with the Centre and Haifa Districts in the west, and Qalqiliya and Ramallah Districts to the south. Tulkarem arable land allows the city inhabitants to produce citrus fruits, melons, olives, nut, thyme, fig, grapes, almond, tomatoes, potatoes, green beans, guava, and other products. Tulkarem district was among the first districts targeted by the Israeli Segregation Wall plan that started in 2002. So far, about $42 \times 10^6 \text{ m}^2$ of fertile agricultural lands have been destroyed, confiscated or segregated by the construction of the Wall in this district. The targeted land is considered amongst the most fertile in the West Bank where, it has served as the food basket for Palestinians in Tulkarem and elsewhere. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulkarem>.

2.2. Soil and Plant Species Preparation

Almond, Olive, Fig, Grapes, Nut, Citrus, Thyme leaves samples and Grass of 1kg weight were collected from different zones within Tulkarem Governorate and the surface soil samples were also collected (10 cm deep) from different places under the host plants and grass, and about 2kg of each sample was packed in polythene bag. Twelve different locations (Tulkarem city, Nurshams, Deir-al- Ghsoon, Illar, Irtah, Bal'a, Chemical Factory, Baqa, Anabta, Kafreiat, Far'un and Al-Nazlat) in the area under investigation and the area nearby (about 100 square kilometers) were selected randomly for collection of 48 soil, 28 plant leaves and 20 grass samples. The location zones and the code number of these samples are shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 for soils, plants and grasses respectively. The soil samples were ground, crushed to a fine grain of about 100 meshes and sieved and mixed for homogenization, and the large pieces were removed. Samples were then dried at 110°C for 24 h to ensure that moisture is completely removed. Plant samples were dried for 10 - 15 h at 100°C in an electric oven to obtain a constant dry weight. Samples were powdered, charred for homogenization. The samples were packed in 1 l Marenilli beaker and sealed for 4 weeks to reach secular equilibrium between ^{226}Ra (daughter of ^{238}U) and ^{232}Th with their daughter nuclei. This was done in order to allow for radon and its short-lived progenies to reach secular radioactive equilibrium prior to gamma spectroscopy [3].

2.3. Transfer Factors (TF)

In soil, each radioactive element follows complex dynamics in which a part of its concentration is transported into the soil solution, while another part gradually becomes strongly bound to the particles of the soil. The portion of these radionuclides, which is in the soil solution, can be incorporated via the root into the plants. In some cases this is facilitated by their chemical similarity with other elements that the plant normally uses for its growth [12].

The soil-to-plant TF, which are the ratios of specific activities in plant parts and soil, can be used as an index for the accumulation of trace elements by plants or the transfer of elements from soil to plant through the roots [11]. All the results of the activity concentrations of different radionuclides in the plant and soil samples were taken from previous

published articles [3, 14].

From observed activity concentrations of the radionuclide (^{226}Ra , ^{238}U , ^{232}Th , ^{40}K and ^{137}Cs) in the plant and in the corresponding soil, the TF values were calculated according to the equation [7, 15]:

$$TF = A_p/A_s \quad (1)$$

Where A_p is the activity of radionuclides in plant (Bqkg^{-1} dryweight) and A_s is the activity of radionuclides in soil (Bqkg^{-1} dry weight). The dry weight was preferred because the amount of radioactivity per kilogram dry weight is much less variable than the amount per unit fresh weight [5].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Transfer Factors from Soil to Plant Leave

Activity concentration of radionuclides in soil and plant leaves and their TF are presented in the Table 1. TF values for ^{226}Ra , ^{238}U , ^{232}Th and ^{40}K were found to have the ranges of 0.19 - 1.12, 0.09 - 1.12, 0.10 - 0.49 and 0.13 - 16.3 with average values of 0.60, 0.50, 0.31 and 1.7, respectively. TF average values for ^{40}K are considerably higher than other

radionuclides, which suggest higher levels of uptake of ^{40}K . It is interesting to note that although all the plant species are grown in soils of similar physical -chemical characteristic and similar concentration of these radionuclides, the TF value are different for different species. This indicated that, some plant species concentrate higher ^{40}K radionuclides than others, and plants may uptake potassium from soil as an essential element of metabolism and other radionuclides may be taken as a homologue of an essential element [12]. The data compiled by IAEA for soil to plant transfer factor of ^{40}K in leaves was in the range of 0.49 to 5.6 with average value of 1.4. In the present study the average value of TF for ^{40}K in plant species was found to be higher than IAEA value [16]. The higher transfer factor of potassium at that time was not at risk streak because that value was not at staid position to harm the body. For ^{226}Ra , IAEA has compiled soil-to-plant TF of ^{226}Ra for leaves with the average value of 0.11 with a range of 0.01 - 1.0 [16]. The observed range values of soil-to-plant TF in the present study are within the range of reported values, and the average value is higher than the reported values. In general, the values of ^{232}Th TF were lower than those values reported in other studies and the default values suggested by IAEA [16].

Table 1. The activity concentrations (AC, in Bqkg^{-1}) of radionuclides and their transfer factors (TF) from soil to plant leaf samples collected from some area in western north of West Bank, Palestine.

Zone symbol	Sample code	Type of sample	^{226}Ra	AC ^{238}U	^{232}Th	^{40}K	^{226}Ra	TF ^{238}U	^{232}Th	^{40}K
Z ₁	SS.1	Soil	127.8	83.5	44.8	404.0	0.49	0.30	0.10	0.35
	LS.2	Leaves	62.8	24.8	3.6	140.0				
	SS.2	Soil	95.7	60.4	43.5	309.0	0.63			
	LS.2	Leaves	60.1	27.0	9.8	153.0				
Z ₂	SS.3	Soil	41.2	24.6	21.4	124.4	0.39	0.33	0.16	0.84
	LS.3	Leaves	15.6	8.1	3.5	104.0				
	SS.4	Soil	73.0	34.1	19.7	112.9	1.12			
	LS.4	Leaves	81.4	38.1	6.6	15.0				
Z ₃	SS.5	Soil	43.2	25.6	5.3	34.3	0.65	0.57	0.75	0.79
	LS.5	Leaves	28.1	14.7	4.0	61.0				
	SS.6	Soil	79.1	36.1	23.3	87.4	0.37			
	LS.6	Leaves	29.2	13.0	5.3	139.0				
Z ₄	SS.7	Soil	8.8	12.2	14.8	89.0	0.85	0.64	0.49	0.70
	LS.7	Leaves	7.5	7.8	7.2	61.4				
	SS.8	Soil	91.5	47.4	31.8	75.6	0.96			
	LS.8	Leaves	87.7	34.3	3.6	51.0				
Z ₅	SS.9	Soil	95.9	47.7	29.3	92.6	0.31	0.32	0.21	0.15
	LS.9	Leaves	30.1	15.1	6.2	14.3				
	SS.10	Soil	70.2	37.3	28.9	117.1	0.80			
	LS.10	Leaves	55.6	24.2	9.0	1622				
Z ₆	SS.11	Soil	90.6	49.7	23.8	141.0	0.20	0.23	0.32	0.55
	LS.11	Leaves	18.2	11.3	7.7	77.6				
	SS.12	Soil	59.1	30.1	9.6	53.0	0.21			
	LS.12	Leaves	12.6	7.5	4.2	15.0				
Z ₇	SS.13	Soil	88.3	42.3	26.6	86.8	0.96	0.98	0.35	16.3
	LS.13	Leaves	85.2	41.4	9.3	1413				
Z ₈	SS.14	Soil	106.6	54.7	20.2	90.6	0.19	0.09	0.30	0.34
	LS.14	Leaves	21.0	4.7	5.9	31.0				
	SS.15	Soil	92.8	47.8	4.4	111.7	0.68			
	LS.15	Leaves	63.5	26.3	1.8	1376	0.55	0.41	12.3	
	Total	Av.	-----	-----	-----	-----	0.60	0.50	0.31	1.70

Differences between radionuclides TF values for various plant species are due to the different characteristics of the plants. By comparing TF values corresponding to uranium, and radium, we concluded that the uranium ^{238}U was statistically indistinguishable, whereas the uptake for radium was higher than for the other elements. Because uranium is an actinide element, this may explain its more analogous chemical behavior, whereas, this argument cannot be extended to radium which is an alkaline-earth.

To evaluate the dependence of TF values on the age of the leaves, samples of olives and citrus (evergreen) were collected in several zones, and analyzed for the radionuclides concentrations. These results suggested that TF values of ^{232}Th and ^{40}K for leaves depend on the age of the leaves. It is concluded that, if the age increases the TF values are decrease.

In general, the comparative uptake of ^{226}Ra , ^{238}U , and ^{232}Th by different plants is affected by numerous physical, chemical and biological conditions of the soil. The combined effects of these conditions, as well as the individual chemical properties of the nuclides, tend to affect its uptake by plants. For example, retention of radionuclides onto the soil particles will affect their availability for plant uptake. Martinez et al., reported that ^{232}Th exhibited a much lower mobility than ^{238}U , which is consistent with our observations that ^{232}Th has smaller TF values [17]. The magnitude and range of TFs of ^{226}Ra , ^{238}U and ^{232}Th found in this study appeared to be generally similar to values obtained in other studies, where root uptake was the primary mechanism of accumulation.

3.2. Transfer Factors from Soil to Grass

Values of TF have been calculated from activity concentration of radionuclides in soil and grass; values of TF are presented in Table 2. Results have been obtained for ^{226}Ra in grass with a TF average value of 1.26, and a range between 0.27- 2.12. Results showed that, the TF average values in grass corresponding to the ^{238}U were 1.12, with a range of 0.36- 1.62, the TF average values for ^{232}Th were 1.15 and a range of 0.1- 4.97, and the TF average values for ^{40}K were 1.20 and a range of 0.36- 2.90. The TF values show a very wide variability for ^{232}Th and the average TFs of ^{226}Ra had the highest values compared to other radionuclides, which must be explained by the higher absorption of radium. It was observed that radionuclides TF values from soil to grass were higher than from soil to plant leaves. The high average values of TF (TF >1) for all radionuclides is attributed to the abundance of the organic matter in the zone soils.

The variation observed in TFs for the grass samples is due to various factors such as age of the grass, and the environment in which the grass is grown. In the present study the average values of TF for all radionuclides except ^{40}K were found to be higher than IAEA values [16]. This was possibly due to low concentrations of radioactive elements in the soil that the grass grown on it.

It is worthy to note that if TF >1, this will lead to a transfer of radionuclides from plants to livestock and finally to humans through the food chain, this may lead to many radiation hazards to the human population.

Table 2. The activity concentrations (AC, in Bqkg^{-1}) of radionuclides and their transfer factors (TF) from soil to grass samples collected from some area in western north of West Bank, Palestine.

Zone symbol	Sample code	Type of sample	^{226}Ra	AC ^{238}U	^{232}Th	^{40}K	^{226}Ra	TF ^{238}U	^{232}Th	^{40}K
Z ₉	SS.16	Soil	33.4	17.0	9.4	104.8	0.54	1.17	2.22	1.34
	GS.16	Grass	18.0	19.8	20.9	140.3				
	SS.17	Soil	66.7	30.0	3.3	99.9				
	GS.17	Grass	19.2	18.8	16.4	60.6				
Z ₁₀	SS.18	Soil	72.3	36.9	34.8	171.6	2.15	1.62	0.10	0.36
	GS.18	Grass	155.4	59.6	3.5	61.0				
	SS.19	Soil	92.1	47.1	34.2	147.2				
	GS.19	Grass	25.0	17.1	12.0	87.0				
Z ₁₁	SS.20	Soil	83.7	39.4	27.7	112.0	0.66	0.65	0.21	0.96
	GS.20	Grass	55.6	25.5	5.9	111.5				
	SS.21	Soil	71.2	41.6	33.9	126.4				
	GS.21	Grass	157.6	66.1	31.6	244.0				
Z ₁₂	SS.22	Soil	69.0	35.4	27.9	109.5	1.87	1.33	0.14	0.77
	GS.22	Grass	129.0	47.3	3.8	84.0				
	SS.23	Soil	73.5	36.2	24.8	124.9				
	GS.23	Grass	133.0	50.2	4.2	82.2				
Z ₅	SS.24	Soil	59.4	27.9	28.4	106.7	0.82	1.39	1.71	2.90
	GS.24	Grass	48.6	38.8	48.5	309.0				
Z ₇	SS.25	Soil	6.2	13.8	12.6	49.9	2.10	1.03	0.67	1.88
	GS.25	Grass	13.0	14.2	8.4	93.6				
	Total	Avg.	-----	-----	-----	-----	1.26	1.12	1.15	1.20

3.3. TF of ¹³⁷Cs for Different Plant Species

Table 3. Average activity concentrations of ¹³⁷Cs and their transfer factors (TF) from soil to plant samples collected from some area in western north of West Bank, Palestine.

Zone symbol	¹³⁷ Cs (soil)(Bqkg ⁻¹)	¹³⁷ Cs (plant)(Bqkg ⁻¹)	TF
Z ₁	12.6	0.1	0.01
Z ₂	7.3	1.2	0.16
Z ₃	4.9	2.0	0.41
Z ₄	10.2	1.2	0.12
Z ₅	4.3	3.3	0.77
Z ₆	8.9	1.0	0.11
Z ₇	9.4	3.1	0.33
Z ₈	5.9	0.4	0.07
Z ₉	1.6	0.9	0.56
Z ₁₀	15.3	4.3	0.28
Z ₁₁	7.0	2.5	0.36
Z ₁₂	16.5	1.3	0.08
Total Av.	8.7	1.8	0.27

The main indicator of the contamination of the environment is the presence of ¹³⁷Cs isotope. ¹³⁷Cs, which has appeared because of power plant failures and nuclear detonations, is a very important and dangerous isotope. The contamination of samples by this isotope is relatively low, with higher values observed for soils than for plants for all examined sites. This proves the durability of cesium adsorption in the soil particles [6]. Analyzing obtained data concerning the transfer of ¹³⁷Cs from the soil to green parts of plants, it should be noticed that all samples reveal the transportation of this isotope. The high availability of ¹³⁷Cs in some samples is probably due to its sandy texture containing little clay to fix ¹³⁷Cs in the soil.

Soil-to- plant TF of ¹³⁷Cs for different plant species was calculated by using ¹³⁷Cs activity concentration in plant samples, and the average value of ¹³⁷Cs activity in soil. As shown in Table 3, TF value for ¹³⁷Cs is in the range of 0.01–0.77 with an average value of 0.27. TF factor for ¹³⁷Cs is found to be less than that of all other radionuclides in all plant species. This indicates that ¹³⁷Cs is less efficiently transported from soil to plants than ²²⁶Ra, ²³⁸U, ²³²Th and ⁴⁰K. It was reported that soil-to-plant TF depends on soil properties such as nutrient standard, exchangeable K content, pH and moisture content [15]. In the present study, the average values of TF of ¹³⁷Cs in plant parts were found to be in close agreement with IAEA range value for plants which was in the range of 0.02-3.2 [16].

Also the higher concentration of fallout radionuclides in some plant samples and soil particles must be due to the accumulation of atmospheric fallout over a long period of time through dry weight deposition and due to strong adsorption of those nuclides to soil particles. The deposition fallout radionuclides on the upper layer of the earth crust may

get washed out by heavy rains. This leads to the movement of fallout nuclides along with surface soil, whereas root dust keeps on accumulating without any movement [18].

3.4. Estimated ²²⁶Ra from the Fertilizers

The results implied that the activity concentrations of ²²⁶Ra are greater than for ²³⁸U in the soil samples; however, we must consider the effect of excess ²²⁶Ra which could come from phosphate fertilizers. Uchida and Tagami, estimated that about 50% of total ²³⁸U in upland field soils came from the fertilizers [19]. It is known that ²²⁶Ra is included in the fertilizers [20] and their use in agricultural fields must have a small contribution as external radiation to the population. Thus, using the previously data approach [13], we estimated ²²⁶Ra from the fertilizers contents in soil (*Ra_{Fz}*) as follows:

$$Ra_{Fz} \text{ (Bqkg}^{-1}\text{)} = Ra_s - Th_s \times [U/Th_N] \times A \quad (2)$$

where *Ra_s* is the total ²²⁶Ra radioactivity concentration in a soil samples, *Th_s* is ²³²Th concentration in the soil, [U/Th_N] is the average value of naturally observed [U]/[Th] concentration ratio (0.23), and *A* is a conversion factor from ²³⁸U concentration to ²²⁶Ra radioactivity since 1 mg kg⁻¹ ²³⁸U is equal to 12.3 Bqkg⁻¹ of ²²⁶Ra when two isotopes will reach equilibrium.

As shown in Table 4, the *Ra_{Fz}* values were 2.4 to 50.0 Bqkg⁻¹ with an average value of 22.6 Bqkg⁻¹ in the area under investigation. Concerning the contributing percentages of *Ra_{Fz}* to total ²²⁶Ra in soil samples, we obtained 2 to 65.7 % with an average value of 26.7%. The results implied that quarter of the total ²²⁶Ra in agricultural soils was from phosphate fertilizers.

Table 4. The estimated activity concentrations of radium in fertilizers (*Ra_{Fz}*, Bqkg⁻¹) in some soil samples in western north of West Bank, Palestine.

Zonesymbol	Sample code	²²⁶ Ra	AC ²³⁸ U	²³² Th	<i>Ra_{Fz}</i>	%
Z ₁	SS.1	127.8	83.5	44.8	2.4	2.0
Z ₂	SS.4	73.0	34.1	19.7	17.8	24.4
Z ₃	SS.5	43.2	25.6	5.3	28.4	65.7
Z ₄	SS.9	95.9	47.7	29.3	13.9	14.5
Z ₆	SS.12	59.1	30.1	9.6	32.2	54.5
Z ₇	SS.13	88.3	42.3	26.6	13.8	15.6
Z ₈	SS.14	106.6	54.7	20.2	50.0	47.0
Total	Average	84.8	45.4	22.2	22.6	26.7

Finally, Table 5, compares the reported values of transfer factors (TF) from soil to plant samples, obtained in other countries, with those determined in the present study. It is found that, the average values of TF for ²²⁶Ra, ²³⁸U, ²³²Th and ⁴⁰K were within or higher than those of the other countries [5, 7, 8, 12, 19, 21-23].

Table 5. Comparison of transfer factors (TF) from soil to plant samples at different locations in the area under investigation with those in other countries.

Country	Type of sample	²²⁶ Ra		TF ²³⁸ U		Values ²³² Th		⁴⁰ K		Reference
		Range	Avg.	Range	Avg.	Range	Avg.	Range	Avg.	
Japan	Crops	0.001-0.06	0.0064	----		----		----		[19]
Romania	Plants	0.07 – 9.34	4.71	0.05 – 0.66	0.36	----		----		[21]
Egypt	Plants	0.19 – 0.73	0.43	-----		0.09 – 0.88	0.31	0.31–2.95	1.06	[7]
Malaysia	Rice	-----		0.04 – 0.20		0.02 – 0.15		0.09 – 4.12		[22]
Saudi Arabia	Plants	0.06 – 0.19	0.12	-----		-----		0.08–0.23	0.16	[5]
India	Plants	----		BDL – 0.31		0.22 – 0.34		0.13 – 0.95		[12]
Bangladesh	Grass		0.06	-----			0.09		0.28	[8]
	Plants		0.06	-----			0.10		0.27	
IAEA	Plants	0.01 – 1.00	0.11	-----		-----		0.49–5.60	1.40	[23]
Palestine	Plant	0.19 – 1.12	0.60	0.09- 1.12	0.50	0.10- 0.49	0.31	0.13- 16.3	1.70	present study
	Grass	0.27- 2.12	1.26	0.36-1.62	1.12	0.10- 4.97	1.15	0.36- 2.90	1.20	

4. Conclusions

A radiological study was performed to obtain transfer factors of ²²⁶Ra, ²³⁸U, ²³²Th, ⁴⁰K and ¹³⁷Cs in 48 plant leaves and grass samples on soil contaminated in 12 zones from the western north of West bank environment- Palestine. The main conclusions that are derived from the present work can be summarized as follows:

1. Results predicted that for all transformation from soil to plant leaves, potassium has highest average TF. This was due to the fact that potassium is an important element to plant fertility, even though potassium is a radioactive element, but it does not harm the environmental system.
2. From plant fraction analysis, the younger leaves have the highest average TF values.
3. The average values of TF from soil to plant leaves for ⁴⁰K was found to be higher than IAEA value, while in another radionuclides, the average values of TF are within the IAEA range.
4. In grass, the average TF values varies in the order of ²²⁶Ra > ⁴⁰K > ²³²Th > ²³⁸U and was found to be higher than IAEA value except ⁴⁰K radionuclide.
5. TF factor for ¹³⁷Cs in present study was found to be less than that of all other radionuclides in all plant species and was found to be in close agreement with IAEA range value for plants.
6. Results showed the quarter of the total ²²⁶Ra in agricultural soils was from phosphate fertilizers.
7. The results of this study were compared well with other studies carried out in other countries and with the worldwide average TF.

The information on the concentration level and transfer of radionuclides from soil to plants will provide important data for the environmental risk assessment at such zones.

Authors Contribution

Two authors were involved in the conception, designing, drafting, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

References

- [1] Alaamer A. S., 2008. Assessment of human exposures tonatural sources of radiation in soil of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Turkish J. Eng. Env. Sci. 32, 229 – 234.
- [2] UNSCEAR, 1993. Sources Effects and Risks of Ionizing Radiation. United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. UNSCEAR,1993, Report to the General Assembly on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, United Nations, New York, USA.
- [3] Thabayneh, K. M. and Jazzar, M. A. 2012. Natural radio activity levels and estimation of radiation exposure in environmental soil samples from Tulkarem Province – Palestine. Open J. of Soil Science, 2, 7-16.
- [4] Kabir K.A., Islam S.M, Rahman M., 2009. Distribution of radionuclides in surface soil and bottom sediment in the district of Jessori, Bangladesh and evaluation of radiation hazard. Journal of Bangladesh Academy of Sciences, 33(1), 117-130.
- [5] Alharbi A. and El-Taher A., 2013. A study on transfer factors of radionuclides from soil to plant. Life Science Journal (2). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>
- [6] Chibowski S. and Gładysz A. 1999. Examination of radioactive contamination in the soil-plant system and their transfer to selected animal tissues. Polish Journal of Environmental Studies Vol. 8, No. 1, 19-23.
- [7] Harb S., El-Kamel A. H., Abd El-Mageed A. I., Abbady A. and Rashed W. 2014. Radioactivity levels and soil-to-plant transfer factor of natural radionuclides from Protectorate Area in Aswan, Egypt .World J. of Nuclear Science and Technology, 4, 7-15. Published Online January 2014. <http://www.scirp.org/journal/wjnst>.
- [8] Shyamal R. C., Rezaul A., Rahman A. R. and Sarker R. 2013. Radioactivity concentrations in soil and transfer factors of radionuclides from soil to grass and plants in the Chittagong City of Bangladesh. Journal of Physical Science, 24(1), 95–113.
- [9] Kuhn, W., Handl, J and Schuller, P., 1984. The influence of soil parameters on ¹³⁷Cs uptake by plants from long-term fallout on forest clearings and grassland. Health Phys. 46 (5), 1083-1093.

- [10] Chih-Jung Wang, Jeng-Jong Wang, Chih-Yu Chiu, Shu-Ying Lai, Yu-Ming Lin. 2000. Transfer factors of ^{90}Sr and ^{137}Cs from soil to the sweet potato collected in Taiwan. *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity* 47, 15-27.
- [11] Chen S. B., Zhu Y. G. and Hu Q.H.2005. Soil to plant transfer of ^{238}U , ^{226}Ra and ^{232}Th on a uranium mining-impacted soil from southeastern China. *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity*, 82, 223-236. www.elsevier.com/locate/jenvrad.
- [12] Manigandan P.K. and Manikandan N.M. 2009. Migration of radionuclide in soil and plants in the Western Ghats environment. *Iran. J. Radiat. Res.*, 2008; 6 (1): 7-12. *Journal of Physical Science*, Vol. 24(1), 95–113.
- [13] Gogoasa I., Bragea M. and Gergen I. 2012. Soil to plants transfer factor for ^{226}Ra and ^{235}U in Caras Severin area. *Journal of Agro alimentary Processes and Technologies*, 18 (1), 35-37. Available online at: <http://journal-of-agroalimentary.ro>.
- [14] Thabayneh K. M. and Jazzar M. M. 2013. Radioactivity levels in some plant samples in the North Western of West - Bank, Palestine and evaluation of the radiation hazard, *Radiation Protection Dosimetry*, 153(4), pp. 467–474.
- [15] Chakraborty S. R., Azim R., Rahman A. R. and Sarker R.2013. Radioactivity concentrations in soil and transfer factors of radionuclides from soil to grass and plants in the Chittagong City of Bangladesh. *Journal of Physical Science*, Vol. 24(1), 95–113.
- [16] IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency. 2010. Handbook of parameter values for the prediction of radionuclide transfer in terrestrial and freshwater environments. Technical reports series no. 472. Vienna: IAEA.
- [17] Martinez-Aguirre, A., Garcia-Leon, M., Ivanovich, M., 1995. U and Th speciation in river sediments. *The Science of the Total Environment* 173, 203e209.
- [18] Manigandan P. K. 2009. Activity concentration of radionuclides in plants in the environment of western Ghats, India. *African Journal of Plant Science*, 3 (9), pp. 205-209. <http://www.academicjournals.org>
- [19] Uchida S. and Tagami K.2007. Soil-to-crop transfer factors of radium in Japanese Agricultural Fields. *J. of Nuclear and Radiochemical Sciences*, 8(2), 137-142.
- [20] Hamamo H, Landsberger S, Harbottle G, Panno S 1995. Studies of radioactivity and heavy metals in phosphate fertilizer. *J Radioanal Nuclear Chem*, 194 (2): 331-336.
- [21] Bragea M., Aldave L., Cristache C., Carlos R., Toro L., 2010, Experimental study of the radionuclides transport in soil and plants from waste dump. *Proceedings of Third European IRPA Congress*, 14–18, Helsinki, Finland.
- [22] Saeed M., Yusof S., Hossain I., Ahmed R., Abdullah H., Shahid M., Ramli A. 2012, Soil to rice transfer factor of the natural radionuclides in Malaysia. *Rom. Journ. Phys.*, Vol. 57, Nos. 9–10, P. 1417–1424, Bucharest.
- [23] IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency, 1994, “Handbook of Parameter Values for the Prediction Of Radionuclide Transfer in Temperate Environments”, A Guide Book Technical Report Series No.364, Vienna. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulkarm> www.pcbs.gov.ps.