

The authors did a good job incorporating the suggested edits. I think the manuscript is now much clearer, the research background and aims are well described. The number of replicates used to measure soil respiration was a bit low, but the authors addressed this by considering spatial variability between study sites, which IMO suffices to make this study more robust. And given the fact that working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is challenging due to multiple reasons (material import, sample export, safety, site accessibility, etc.), I think they did the best job they could given the circumstances. Furthermore, the authors have revised the discussion to make it less speculative and have pointed out points that need further research, and they have re-written the conclusions, which are now better and pointing forward.

Overall, I am satisfied and recommend this manuscript for publication.