

Original Research Article

Response of Organic and Inorganic Nutrient Sources on Growth, Productivity and Nutrient content of Wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.)

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at college farm of Swami Keshwanand Rajasthan Agricultural University, Bikaner, Rajasthan, India during *rabi* season (November to April) of 2014–15 to 2015–16 to evaluate the influence of integrated application of different nutrient sources on growth, yield and nutrient content of wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.). Experiment was conducted in a randomized block design with three replications. Under different nutrient sources, combined application of organic, inorganic and biofertilizers were done. Findings exhibit that the application of 75% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB in wheat, significantly enhanced all growth (CGR, RGR and others) & yield attributes, yield (4.12 t ha⁻¹) and quality, nutrient (N, P, K) content and protein content of wheat over rest of treatments, but it remained statistically at par with 100% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB. Thus, it is concluded that for better nutrient management, an integration of organic, inorganic and biofertilizers should be done. With application of 75 % RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB, there is 25% saving of nutrients as compared to 100 % RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB.

Keywords: CGR, RGR, Nutrient content, Wheat and Yield

1. INTRODUCTION

Wheat [*Triticum aestivum* (L.) emend. Fiori & Paol.] is the most important staple food crop of the world and emerged as the backbone of India's food security (Prasad, 2006)[1]. Wheat is most important and remunerative *rabi* cereal crop of India not only in terms of acreage, but also in terms of its versatility for adoption under wide range of agro climatic conditions and crop growing situations. Wheat is second most important crop next to rice and it contributes nearly one third of total food grain production. It is good supplement for nutritional requirement of human body. It contains 10-12 % protein and 65-70 % carbohydrates (Sharma and Jain, 2014)[2]. Wheat straw is also used as dry fodder for livestock. India holds second position after China in the world with regard to area and production of wheat. In India, wheat is grown on 31.61 m ha area and produces 109.52 mt with average productivity of 3464 kg ha⁻¹ (GOI, 2021)[3]. In Rajasthan, the area for wheat is 3.93 mha, production 12.21 mt with productivity of 3885 kg ha⁻¹ (GOR, 2021)[4].

Wheat yield is highly variable within different agro-ecologies of India, due to variable climatic conditions, genotypes, seeding time and practices; and other management practices (Kantwa et al., 2015)[5]. Factors responsible for low productivity of wheat in arid region of Rajasthan are low fertility status and poor physical condition of soil, inadequate and imbalance fertilizer use and emergence of multiple nutrient deficiency. Therefore, augmenting nutrient supply assume prime significance to improve its productivity.

Being the exhaustive crop, wheat requires huge amount of nutrients for producing higher yields. Long term studies being carried out at several locations in India indicated that application of all the required nutrients through chemical fertilizers have deteriorating effect on soil health, many environmental problems including soil, air and water pollution and leading to unsustainable yields (Eid et al., 2006; Sharma et al., 2015)[6,7]. Thus, demand for chemical fertilizers can be lowered by supplementing the nutrients through organic manures (Fazily et al., 2020; Singh SP., 2017)[8,9]. Although, organic manure alone can not produce the sufficient food for present population (Sheoran et al., 2017)[10]. Thus,

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integration of chemical, organic and biofertilizer sources and their management have shown promising results not only in sustaining the productivity but have also proved effective in maintaining soil health and enhanced nutrient use efficiency (Chestiet al., 2013; Walia and Patidar, 2021)[11,12]. It has also evidence that biofertilizers like *Azotobacter* and Phosphate solubilizing bacteria (PSB) alone or in combination have great prospect for increasing productivity of wheat. Systematic use of diverse sources for nutrients viz., bio fertilizers, organic manures and inorganic fertilizers has been also known to improve B:C ratio of fertilization, agronomic efficiency in wheat based cropping system (Bhattacharya et al., 2010) [13]. Keeping all these points in view the present experiment was conducted.

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2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Experimental Site

A field experiment was conducted at College of Agriculture, Swami Keshwanand Rajasthan Agricultural university, Bikaner (28.01°N, 73.22°E, 234.7 m above mean sea level) during *rab*season of 2014-15 to 2015-16 (November to April). Bikaner falls under Hot Arid Eco-region. The average annual rainfall of the tract is about 260 mm which is mostly received during the rainy season. Soils are loamy sand with 0.109% organic carbon (Walkley-Black C), alkaline KMNO₄- oxidizable-N 120.4 kg ha⁻¹, 0.5 M NaHCO₃-extractable P 18.68 kg ha⁻¹ and 1 N NH₄OAc-extractable K 214.6 kg ha⁻¹.

2.2 Experimental design and Treatments

Experiment was laid out in a randomized block design with three replications comprising different treatment combinations *i.e.* control, 50%, 75% and 100% RDF, 50% RDF+FYM (5 t ha⁻¹), 75% RDF+FYM (5 t ha⁻¹), 100% RDF+FYM (5 t ha⁻¹), 50% RDF+FYM (5 t ha⁻¹)+*Azotobacter*+PSB, 75% RDF+FYM (5 t ha⁻¹)+*Azotobacter*+PSB and 100% RDF+FYM (5 t ha⁻¹)+*Azotobacter*+PSB, applied in wheat (with gross plot size of 39 m²/plot) comprising total 10 treatment combinations. The recommended dose of fertilizer for wheat was 120 kg ha⁻¹ N, 40 kg ha⁻¹ P₂O₅ and 20 kg ha⁻¹ K₂O. Half dose of nitrogen and full dose of phosphorous and potassium was applied basal at the time of sowing. Remaining nitrogenous fertilizer was applied in 2 equal splits – at first irrigation and second irrigation. FYM was applied before sowing of wheat on the nitrogen-equivalent basis and requirement of crop in respective treatments. Seeds of wheat were treated with *Azotobacter* and PSB in respective treatments at the time of sowing. The wheat 'Raj-3077' was sown at 20 cm row spacing on 20th and 26th November during 2014 and 2015, respectively and harvested on date 1st and 8th April 2015 and 2016, respectively.

2.3 Methods and Formulas

Different growth and yield attributes of wheat were studied *viz.*, The plants from 0.25 m row length were cut from the ground level (excluding the root portion) for the periodical observations of dry matter production. The harvested plant material was air dried first and then in an oven at 60°C to constant weight. Total dry weight of plants were averaged to record dry matter/ m row length (g). The sample taken for dry matter estimation were also used for calculating CGR (Crop Growth Rate) per plant at periodical intervals from 0 to 30, 30 to 60, 60 to 90 and 90 to 120 DAS with the following formula given by Hunt (1978) [14] :

$$\text{CGR (g m}^{-2} \text{ day}^{-1}\text{)} = \frac{W_2 - W_1}{(T_2 - T_1)A}$$

Where W₂ and W₁ were the total dry weight at T₂ and T₁ time of observation and A is area.

The relative growth rate of a plant at an instant time (t) was calculated with the help of following formula and expressed in mg g⁻¹ day⁻¹ (Radford, 1967)[15].

$$\text{RGR (mg g}^{-1} \text{ day}^{-1}) = \frac{(\text{Ln } W_2 - \text{Ln } W_1)}{t_2 - t_1}$$

Where, L_n is the natural log, w_1 and w_2 are crop dry weight at time t_1 and t_2 respectively.

The representative samples of seed and straw drawn were used to analyze nitrogen content and protein content. Yield attributes viz., numbers of total tillers, effective tillers/meter row length, number of grains/spike. A seed sample was taken from the produce of each of the net plot harvested and 1000 seeds were counted and weighed to record as test weight in grams. The representative samples grains as well as straw of wheat crop collected at harvesting were dried in hot air oven at 60 °C for 48 hours. The oven-dried samples were ground to pass through 40 mesh-sieve and analysed for nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium concentration. Nitrogen was estimated by Kjeldahl's method (Snell and Snell, 1949)[16], P concentration by Vanado-molybdo-phosphoric yellow colour method (Jackson, 1967) [17] and K concentration by Flame Photometer method (Jackson, 1967)[17]. The uptake of nutrients was computed by multiplying the concentrations with dry weight of respective plant parts. The grain, straw and biological yields of each net plot (inclusive of tagged plants) were recorded in kg/plot after cleaning the threshed produce were converted into t/ha. Benefit: Cost ratio was calculated by dividing the gross returns from total cost of cultivation. The data obtained from the study of two years were analyzed statistically using the F-test, as per the standard procedure.

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Growth attributes of wheat

Different nutrient treatments in wheat involving 75 and 100% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB significantly enhanced various growth parameters over control and other treatments. Among the different tested nutrient sources, application of 75% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB resulted in significantly higher growth attributes i.e., chlorophyll content, dry matter accumulation, crop growth rate (CGR), relative growth rate (RGR), number of total tillers and other attributes of wheat and found at par with 100% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB (Table 1 & Table 2). Under this study, the greater availability of nutrients in soil due to increase in fertilizer application that might have enhanced meristematic activity (multiplication and elongation of cells), which leads to increased plant height and dry matter accumulation as supported by Manjhi et al., (2016)[18]. Under integrated application of fertilizers and FYM with biofertilizers seems to be on account of increase in chlorophyll content, which is considered main determinants of dry matter production (Sharma et al., 2012) [19]. Due to application of FYM, soil pH is reduced. This reduced soil pH has considerable influence on availability of most of the essential plant nutrients (Singh et al., 2006) [20]. Thus increased availability of macro and micro nutrients which in turn improved the growth of the crop. Application of biofertilizers causes considerable increase in plant height and tillering, increase in tiller production ultimately enhanced the dry matter production. (Singh and Prasad, 2011; Kandil et al., 2011) [21,22].

3.2 Yield of wheat

With integrated use of nutrients, significantly higher yield attributes obtained, which finally led to higher yield of crop. Wheat grain, straw and biological yields were significantly higher with the application of different nutrient sources than the control (Table 2 and Figure 1). Incorporation of 75% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB resulted in significantly higher grain yield (4.06 t ha⁻¹) of wheat as compared to other treatments, but it was at par with 100% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB (4.15 t ha⁻¹) (Chauhan et al., 2022; Bangre et al., 2020)[23,24]. The positive impact of availability of individual plant nutrients and humic substances from organic fertilizers and balanced supplement of nitrogen through inorganic fertilizers might have induced cell division, expansion of cell wall, meristematic activity, photosynthetic efficiency and regulation of water intake into the cells, resulting in the enhancement of yield parameters, (Chopra et al., 2016) [25]. The presence of plant growth-promoting substances such as plant

growth hormones and humic acids in FYM has been suggested as a possible factor contributed to increased yield (Taleshi et al. 2011)[26]. Bahadur et al., (2013) [27] reported that PSB solubilize the unavailable phosphate in available form and *Azotobacter* fixed the free environmental nitrogen in soil, which increased the grain yield of wheat (Singh et al., 2019)[28]. Significant increase in straw yield (Table 2) due to integrated nutrients of FYM, fertilizer and biofertilizers application might be due to its direct influence on dry matter production of each vegetative part and indirectly through increased morphological parameters of growth like plant height and tillers. In Figure 1, pooled mean data of two years of grain, straw and biological yield is shown.

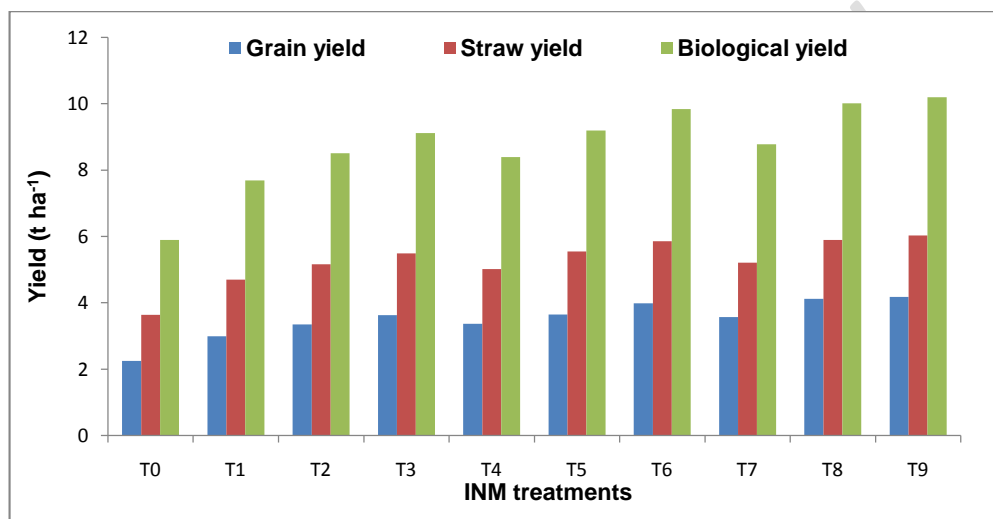


Fig 1 : Effect of integrated nutrient management on grain, straw and biological yield of wheat (t ha⁻¹)

3.3 Quality of wheat

Quality of wheat as nutrient content of N, P and K both in grain and straw and protein content in grain of wheat crop increased significantly with the application of 75% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB and found at par with 100% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB and 100% RDF+5t FYM during both years and in pooled analysis(Table 3). But uptake of nutrients was at par with 100% RDF+5 t FYM ha⁻¹+*Azotobacter*+PSB only(Chauhan et al., 2022)[23]. This might be because of improved nutritional environment in the rhizosphere as well as in the plant system, leading to enhanced translocation of N, P and K in plant parts. Goyal (2002) [29] reported that recommended dose of fertilizer enhanced efficiency of nutrients, thus maintained synergistic interaction. Further, it might be the synergetic effect of organic manure and biofertilizers on nutrient availability and soil health for root development and absorption of nutrients. The contribution of organic manure and biofertilizers improves soil physical properties, which impart better environment for root growth, thereby creates more absorptive surface for uptake of nutrients as reported by Verma et al., (2016) [30]. Increased grain and straw yield coupled with higher nutrient content (Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) in plant seemed to have the increased uptake of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium by the crop due to different treatments. The uptake of nutrients is a function of biomass production and nutrient concentration (Devi et al., 2011)[31]. Thus, increase in concentration and biomass increase the uptake of nutrients. These results are in the

line with the findings of Meena et al., (2013), Garai et al., (2014) and Sharma et al., (2020) [32,33,34] who also reported improved nutrient content by application of organic manure.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the two years of study it is recommended that 75% RDF+5t FYM+Azotobacter+PSB in wheat should be applied throughout the *rabi* season, for better nutrient management and for obtaining higher yields and nutrient content of crop.

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UNDER PEER REVIEW

Table 1. Effect of integrated nutrient treatments on dry matter accumulation, CGR and RGR of wheat (Pooled mean of two years)

| Treatments | DMA | | | | CGR | | | | RGR | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|------------|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| | 30 DAS | 60 DAS | 90 DAS | At harvest | 0-30 DAS | 30-60 DAS | 60-90 DAS | 90-At harvest | 30-60 DAS | 60-90 DAS | 90 DAS-harvest |
| INM in wheat | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Control | 23.15 | 44.41 | 79.17 | 100.1 | 0.77 | 0.71 | 1.16 | 0.70 | 1.60 | 1.84 | 1.94 |
| 50% RDF | 23.11 | 47.68 | 83.52 | 104.6 | 0.77 | 0.82 | 1.19 | 0.70 | 1.63 | 1.87 | 1.96 |
| 75% RDF | 24.11 | 49.19 | 87.78 | 114.0 | 0.80 | 0.84 | 1.29 | 0.88 | 1.65 | 1.89 | 1.99 |
| 100% RDF | 25.43 | 50.60 | 91.85 | 121.4 | 0.85 | 0.84 | 1.38 | 0.98 | 1.66 | 1.91 | 2.02 |
| 50% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha | 24.04 | 49.15 | 89.26 | 117.0 | 0.80 | 0.84 | 1.34 | 0.93 | 1.65 | 1.89 | 2.00 |
| 75% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha | 25.39 | 50.86 | 95.31 | 126.0 | 0.85 | 0.85 | 1.48 | 1.02 | 1.66 | 1.92 | 2.03 |
| 100% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha | 26.34 | 51.57 | 100.89 | 130.0 | 0.88 | 0.84 | 1.64 | 0.97 | 1.66 | 1.95 | 2.05 |
| 50% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha+Azotobacter+PSB | 24.73 | 49.54 | 93.78 | 118.3 | 0.82 | 0.83 | 1.47 | 0.82 | 1.65 | 1.92 | 2.01 |
| 75% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha+Azotobacter+PSB | 25.89 | 51.92 | 101.61 | 132.9 | 0.86 | 0.87 | 1.66 | 1.04 | 1.67 | 1.95 | 2.06 |
| 100% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha+Azotobacter +PSB | 26.52 | 53.09 | 104.12 | 134.3 | 0.88 | 0.89 | 1.70 | 1.01 | 1.68 | 1.96 | 2.06 |
| SEm± | 1.21 | 0.56 | 1.16 | 1.54 | 0.04 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.06 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| CD (P=0.05) | NS | 1.61 | 3.33 | 4.42 | 0.12 | 0.14 | 0.13 | 0.18 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.02 |

DAS=Days after sowing, RDF=Recommended dose of fertilizer, FYM=Farm yard manure and PSB= Phosphate Solubilizing Bacteria, 100% RDF for wheat; 120 N: 40 P₂O₅: 20 K₂O, CGR= Crop Growth Rate, RGR= Relative Growth Rate, DMA= Dry Matter Accumulation

Table 2. Effect of integrated nutrient treatments on growth (chlorophyll content, total tillers) & yield attributes (Effective tillers, test weight) and yield of wheat (Pooled mean of two years data)

| Treatments | Chl a (mg g ⁻¹ of fresh leaves) | Chl b (mg g ⁻¹ of fresh leaves) | Total Chl (mg g ⁻¹ of fresh leaves) | Total tillers at harvest m ⁻¹ row length (no.) | Effective tillers m ⁻¹ row length (no.) | Test Weight (g) | Grain yield (t ha ⁻¹) | Straw yield (t ha ⁻¹) |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| INM in wheat | | | | | | | | |
| Control | 0.85 | 0.62 | 1.46 | 78.36 | 69.08 | 35.25 | 2.25 | 3.64 |
| 50% RDF | 0.99 | 0.71 | 1.70 | 90.23 | 81.03 | 35.66 | 2.99 | 4.70 |
| 75% RDF | 1.04 | 0.75 | 1.79 | 97.57 | 89.32 | 35.83 | 3.35 | 5.16 |
| 100% RDF | 1.08 | 0.79 | 1.87 | 102.72 | 92.42 | 36.15 | 3.63 | 5.49 |
| 50% RDF + FYM 5 t/ha | 1.05 | 0.74 | 1.78 | 94.01 | 84.85 | 36.45 | 3.37 | 5.02 |
| 75% RDF + FYM 5 t/ha | 1.03 | 0.77 | 1.80 | 99.47 | 91.96 | 37.22 | 3.65 | 5.55 |
| 100% RDF + FYM 5 t/ha | 1.13 | 0.81 | 1.94 | 103.47 | 95.94 | 37.57 | 3.98 | 5.86 |
| 50% RDF + FYM 5 t/ha + <i>Azotobacter</i> + PSB | 1.07 | 0.75 | 1.82 | 95.32 | 86.94 | 37.05 | 3.57 | 5.21 |
| 75% RDF + FYM 5 t/ha + <i>Azotobacter</i> + PSB | 1.15 | 0.85 | 2.01 | 104.00 | 96.38 | 37.45 | 4.12 | 5.89 |
| 100% RDF + FYM 5 t/ha + <i>Azotobacter</i> + PSB | 1.18 | 0.88 | 2.06 | 104.92 | 98.52 | 38.01 | 4.18 | 6.03 |
| SEm± | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.96 | 0.93 | 1.16 | 0.10 | 0.08 |
| CD (P=0.05) | 0.07 | 0.05 | 0.08 | 2.76 | 2.66 | NS | 0.29 | 0.22 |

DAS=Days after sowing, RDF=Recommended dose of fertilizer, FYM=Farm yard manure and PSB= Phosphate Solubilizing Bacteria, 100% RDF for wheat; 120 N: 40 P₂O₅: 20 K₂O

UNDER PEER REVIEW

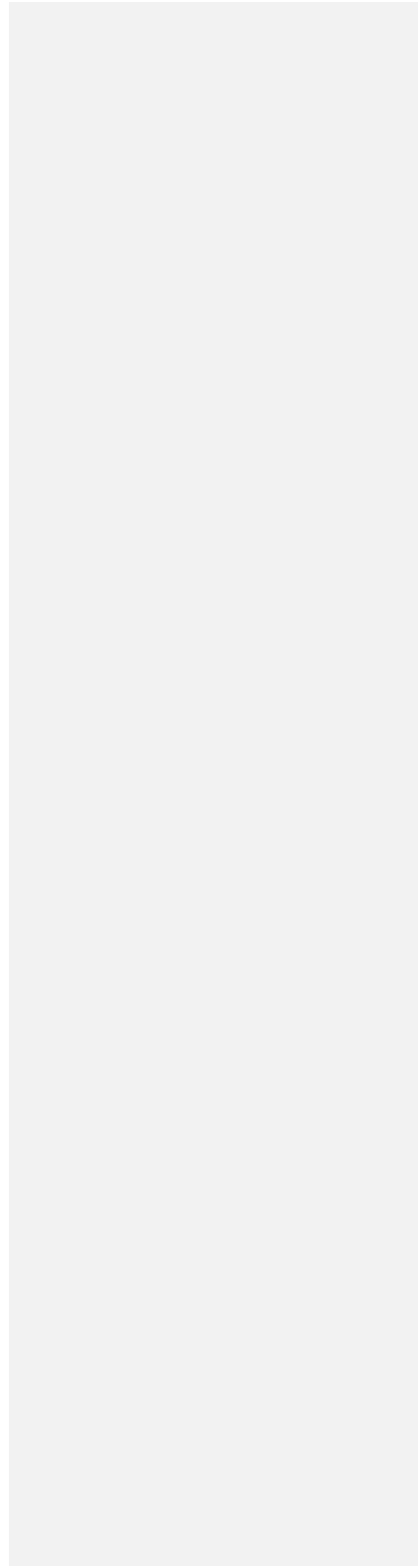


Table 3. Effect of integrated nutrient treatments on N, P, K content and protein content of wheat (Pooled mean of two years)

| Treatments | Nitrogen content (%) | | Phosphorous content (%) | | Potassium content (%) | | Protein content (%) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|---------------------|
| | Grain | Straw | Grain | Straw | Grain | Straw | Grain |
| INM in wheat | | | | | | | |
| Control | 1.49 | 0.57 | 0.416 | 0.204 | 0.47 | 1.17 | 9.33 |
| 50% RDF | 1.55 | 0.62 | 0.450 | 0.208 | 0.49 | 1.17 | 9.66 |
| 75% RDF | 1.61 | 0.65 | 0.477 | 0.214 | 0.49 | 1.19 | 10.04 |
| 100% RDF | 1.70 | 0.69 | 0.507 | 0.221 | 0.50 | 1.20 | 10.63 |
| 50% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha | 1.59 | 0.63 | 0.469 | 0.209 | 0.49 | 1.20 | 9.92 |
| 75% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha | 1.69 | 0.68 | 0.510 | 0.222 | 0.50 | 1.23 | 10.54 |
| 100% RDF+FYM 5t/ha | 1.77 | 0.74 | 0.523 | 0.230 | 0.51 | 1.27 | 11.06 |
| 50% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha+Azotobacter+PSB | 1.60 | 0.65 | 0.481 | 0.211 | 0.50 | 1.23 | 10.02 |
| 75% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha+Azotobacter+PSB | 1.78 | 0.74 | 0.526 | 0.231 | 0.51 | 1.28 | 11.14 |
| 100% RDF+FYM 5 t/ha+Azotobacter+PSB | 1.81 | 0.76 | 0.534 | 0.238 | 0.52 | 1.29 | 11.29 |
| SEm± | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.005 | 0.003 | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.11 |
| CD (P=0.05) | 0.05 | 0.03 | 0.014 | 0.009 | NS | NS | 0.32 |

DAS=Days after sowing, RDF=Recommended dose of fertilizer, FYM=Farm yard manure and PSB= Phosphate Solubilizing Bacteria, 100% RDF for wheat; 120 N: 40 P₂O₅: 20 K₂O

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