

Original Research Article

Impact and assessment of **frontline demonstration (FLD)** management of **weeds** in pineapple by plastic mulch

Abstract

Twenty-five numbers of **frontline demonstrations** were conducted on management of weed in pineapple by plastic mulch 2014-2016 & 2016-2018 subsequently with an ultimate aim to suppressed growth of weeds and boost farmer income because weeding accounts approximate 30–40% of the overall cost of crop. Pineapple cultivation with 50 micron black polythene sheet mulching with double row spacing i.e. 90 x 60 x 30cm not only suppresses the weed growth but conserves the soil moisture, which leads to early flowering, better vegetative growth & higher yield over control (Farmer practice). The demonstrated recorded an average yield ranging from 43.18 to 45.90 t/ha with a mean of 44.54 t/ha. The per cent increase yield in demonstration 49.77% during 2014-16 and 66.67% during 2016-18 respectively, over the farmer practice. The average ranges of extension gap (14.35- 18.36 t/ha), technology gap (9.10- 11.82 t/ha) and technology index (21.49-16.55%) were during the period under study. The demonstrated field gave higher mean gross return (Rs. 267240 /ha) and mean net returns (Rs. 191740/ha) with average benefit: cost ratio (3.54) compared to the local checks (1.71). Present results clearly show that the yield and economics of pineapple can be boost up by adoption of recommended technology.

Key words: Pineapple, Mulching, Weed growth, Net return Technology gap, Extension gap, yield

Introduction:

“Pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) belongs to the family of **Bromeliaceae**; is a tropical fruit with edible multiple fruit consisting of coalesced berries, native to the American tropics” (Bartholomew *et al.*, 2002). “It is a hardy tropical fruit cultivated in all tropical and subtropical countries and grows well in frost-free areas between 25⁰ north and south of the equator” (Samson, 1986).

India is the fifth largest producer of pineapple with an annual production of 1706 thousand MT from 103 thousand hectare area in 2017- 18 (NHB data, 2017-18). In Mizoram pineapple cultivated is in area of 5030 ha with a production of 27640MT, with the average productivity of 5.49Mt/ha. Pineapple is consumed mainly as a fresh fruit and a wide range of processed products are also prepared out of it.

Mamit district enjoys a warm humid sub-tropical climate in most of the summer months with short cold & dry winter months. This is suitable for pineapple cultivation. The temperature ranges from 9⁰C to 24⁰C and from 24⁰C to 36⁰C during winter and summer respectively. The district receives abundant rainfall with an average of 2506 mm in a year from second fortnight of March to first fortnight of October. Heavy weed infestation is one of major problem of pineapple

cultivation. Weeds compete with crops for nutrition and space and reduce yield of crop drastically. Lots of money expend in weeding that increases cost of cultivation. Samson (1986) reported that “pineapple heavily suffers from weed competition and the use of paper or plastic mulch and timely application of herbicides are the best means of preventing weed competition for high yield”. According to Chadha *et al.* (1997), “pineapple because of its inherent slow growth and the wider space between the rows is prone to continual weed germination and growth leading to severe competition and as a result, yield reduction could reach as high as complete crop failure at worst conditions”. Similarly, Bose and Mitra (1990) reported that “weeds pose a serious problem in the cultivation of pineapple especially during the rainy season and manual weeding accounts to 40 per cent of the total production”.

Frontline demonstration was a concept evolved by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) with the introduction of the Technology Mission on Oilseeds in the middle of the 1980s (FLD). In order to boost productivity and returns with the objectives as stated, FLD aims to demonstrate the performance of novel varieties as well as suggested production technologies sectors namely; National Agricultural Research System (NARS) on farmers' fields in real farm settings. To generate data on factors contributing towards productivity and production enhancement under various farming situations. These demonstrations should be used to instruct farmers and extension personal and to solicit feedback.

In this context the present frontline demonstration was taken up by Krishi Vigyan Kendra Mamit at farmers filed Mamit District, Mizoram state, India to show effectiveness of plastic mulching in management weeds problem pineapple with good agricultural practices to convincing farmers and also extension functionaries together for further wide scale diffusion.

Materials and Methods

The frontline demonstrations were conducted by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Mamit in different locations of Mamit District during during 2014-16 and 2016-2018 Total 25 farmers were selected for front line demonstrations on management of weed in pineapple by plastic mulch. The critical inputs were supplied to farmers and applied as per recommended package of practices for cultivation of pineapple developed by AAU, Jorhat, Assam, Demonstrations at farmer's fields were regularly monitored by Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs) of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Mamit from the time of planting to harvesting and marketing. Basic data of all 25 farmers were collected before and after frontline demonstration by personal interview with the help of well-structured interview scheduled. “The interview schedule was developed through discussion with experts, scientists and extension officers of Horticulture department in the district. Before initiating the demonstration, the beneficiary farmers were given skill training on various technological aspect of pineapple cultivation including use of plastic mulch for weed management”. Kumar *et. al* (2018)

The details of technology demonstrated are as below (Table.1)

Table.1: Details of technological interventions followed under farmer's practices and demonstration

Frontline Demonstration (Demonstrated Package)	Farmers Practice (Local Check)
<p>Mulching -Black plastic, 50 micron The plastic film will be laid on the well prepared bed prior to planting. The suckers/slips should be planted at recommended spacing by making suitable hole.</p> <p>Variety : Kew Spacing: 30X 60 X 90 cm. Nutrient Management : A dose of N, P₂O₅ and K₂O at 12,4 and 12 g./plant/year</p>	<p>Manual weeding, no mulching Variety : Kew Spacing: 30X 60 X 90 cm. Nutrient Management : A dose of N, P₂O₅ and K₂O at 12,4 and 12 g./plant/year</p>

The production and economic performance of frontline demonstrations, data on output were gathered from FLDs as well as local plots (cultivation without mulching), and ultimately yield, cost of cultivation, net returns with the benefit cost ratio were calculated. Data on demonstrated plot yield was obtained using data from frontline demonstrations conducted in the farmer's field under the close supervision of scientists from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Mamit in various locations throughout the district. Furthermore, data on actual yield obtained by farmers on their farms using their own management practises was gathered. The collected data were processed, tabulated, classified, and analysed in terms of mean percent score and rank in view of the study's objectives. Using these data, the distinctions between potential yield and demonstration plot yield (Yield gap-I), variation between demonstration plot yield and actual yield or yield under existing practise (Yield gap-II), and distinction between potential yield and actual yield (Total yield gap) were calculated. The extension gap, technology gap, and technology index were determined using the formula proposed by Samui et al (2000).

Technological gap (yield gap-I) = Potential yield - Demonstration plot yield

Extension gap (yield gap- II) = Demonstration - Actual yield (Farmers plot yield practice)

Total yield gap = Potential yield - Actual yield.

Technology index (%) = Technology gap/Potential yield x 100

Results and discussion:

The results obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following head:

Growth attributes and yield

A comparison of growth attributes and yield performance between demonstrated practices and local checks is shown in Table-2. Results indicated that, the demonstration of management of weed in pineapple by plastic mulch recorded higher plant height (96.5cm), Fruit weight (1.28kg.), yield (44.54mt/ha) and lower weed intensity (2.6/sq. m.) when compared to

farmers practices which were plant height (84.6cm), Fruit weight (0.81kg.), yield (28.19.54mt/ha) and weed intensity (16.7/sq. m.) recorded in farmers practice (Alwis, A. J. and Herath, H. ,2012) & Duseka et al., 2010.

Table 2: pooled data (2014-16& 2016-18) of FLD on growth attributes and yield of Pineapple

Sl. No.	Parameter	Demonstration	Farmers Practices
1.	Plant height (cm.)	96.5	84.6
2.	Fruit weight (kg.)	1.28	0.81
3.	Weed intensity (per sq. m)	2.6/sq. m.	16.7/sq. m.
4.	Yield (MT/ha)	44.54 t/ha	28.19t/ha

Yield gap:

The yield gaps are presented in Table 3. The potential yield of pineapple was found to be 55.00 mt/ha and the demonstration plot yield was sustainable higher than that in the local check in all the years of the study (2014-16 and 2016-18) which was recorded 43.18mt/ha & 45.90 mt/ha by frontline demonstrations during 2014-16 and 2016-18 respectively. Whereas the actual yield obtained by the farmers on their farm with their own management practices was obtained 28.83 mt/ha & 27.54 mt/ha during 2014-16 and 2016-18 respectively. It performed better in demonstration plots due to better weed management and retention moisture by plastic mulching. Thus the FLD might have a positive impact on farming community in the district by enhancing yield to a tune of 49.77% during 2014-16 and 66.67% during 2016-18 respectively, over the local check. Kumar et. al (2018) The findings demonstrate that the front line demonstrations had a positive impact on the Mamit district farming community, as they were motivated by the plastic mulching and good agricultural practises used in the FLD plots. This finding is in corroboration with the findings of Dhaka et al., 2015; Lal et al., 2016; Meena et al., 2016 and Verma et al., 2016, Singh et al., 2017 & Ouattara Genefol et al., 2017.

“Yield of the front line demonstration trials and potential yield of the crop was compared to estimate the yield gaps which were further categorized into technology and extension gaps” (Hiremath and Nagaraju, 2009).

Table 3: Yield and yield difference of pineapple under front line demonstrations

Year	No. of FLDs	Yield (MT/ha)		Additional yield over local check (MT/ha)	Per cent increase yield over local check
		FLD	Local Check		
2014-16	25	43.18	28.83	14.35	49.77
2016-18	25	45.90	27.54	18.36	66.67
Mean	25	44.54	28.19	16.36	58.03

Technology gap

“The technology gap is the difference or gap between the demonstration yield and potential yield and it was 11.82 and 9.10, 2014-16 and 2016-18 respectively (Table 4). The technological gap may be attributed to the dissimilarity in the soil fertility status, acidity to erratic rainfall and other vagaries of weather conditions” (Mukharjee, 2003) (Table 4)

Extension gap

“The extension gap is the difference or gap between demonstration yield and farmers practices (control). Extension gap ranged from 14.35 – 18.36 mt/ha during the period under study (Table 4). This extension gap should be assigned to adoption of improved transfer technology in demonstrations practices resulted in higher head yield than traditional farmer practices. This emphasized the need to educate the farmers through various means for more adoption of improved high yielding varieties and newly improved agricultural technologies to bridge the wide extension gap”. Kumar *et. al* (2018) Farmers' increased use of new high-yielding varieties will help to reverse the alarming trend of a widening extension gap. Farmers will eventually ignore old varieties in favour of new technologies as a result of the new technologies. This finding is consistent with Hiremath and Nagaraju's findings (2010).

Table 4: Yield gap and technology index in front line demonstrations

Year	No. of FLDs	Technology gap (t/ha)	Extension Gap (t/ha)	Technology Index (%)
2014-16	25	11.82	14.35	21.49
2016-18	25	9.10	18.36	16.55
Mean	25	10.46	16.36	19.02

Technology Index

The technology index indicates the feasibility of various and evolving technologies in farmer's fields, with a lower value indicating greater feasibility. The technology index was reduced from 21.49 to 16.55 per cent during 2014-16 to 2016-18 (Table 4) which shows the higher feasibility of the demonstrated technology. This finding corroborates results of Lal *et al.*, 2016; Meena *et al.*, 2016 and Poonia *et al.*, 2017.

Economics of front line demonstration

Economic assessment of yield performance demonstrated that during the research period, participating farmers in FLDs not only obtained higher output but also higher prices for their food compared to those in local markets. Table 5 depicts the economics of pineapple production under front-line demonstrations. The results of economic analysis of pineapple production revealed that mean cost of cultivation increased in demonstration practice (Rs 77500/ha) as compared to Farmers practice plot check (Rs 57200 /ha) and it was recorded higher mean gross return (Rs. 267240 /ha) and mean net returns (Rs. 191740/ha) whereas in farmers practice the mean gross returns (Rs 98130 /ha) and mean net returns (Rs 134490 /ha). And with the average benefit: cost ratio of demonstration plot (3.54) compared to the farmers practice (1.71) over the study period. These results are in line with finding of Kumari and Jat, 2021; Meena *et al.*, 2016; Verma *et al.*, 2016 and Poonia *et al.*, 2017. Eshetu Tadesse *et al.*, 2017.

Table 5: Economics of front line demonstration.

Year	Cost of cultivation (Rs/ha)		Gross Return (Rs/ha)		Net Return (Rs/ha)		B: C Ratio	
	FLD	Local Check	FLD	Local Check	FLD	Local Check	FLD	Local Check
2014-16	74000	56000	259080	86100	185080	129080	3.50	1.54
2016-18	77000	58500	275400	110160	198400	139900	3.58	1.88
Mean	75500	57250	267240	98130	191740	134490	3.54	1.71

Conclusion:

The study **concluded that** the results of the present study clearly demonstrated that weeds seriously competed with pineapple leading to an enormous yield loss. Plastic mulches can prove as a **boost** to enhance productivity. Yield of pineapple increased 50-60% by using plastic mulch (50 micron). This could be due to enhanced soil moisture retention, **suppressed** weed growth. The FLD programme is an effective tool for increasing the production and productivity of pineapple and changing the knowledge, attitude and skill of the farmers. **To quickly and widely disseminate the advised techniques to other farmers as well as to other crops, the concept of frontline demonstration can be used to all farmer categories, including progressive farmers.**

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