

# Effect of integrated nutrient management on soil physical and physico-chemical properties of soil

## ABSTRACT

The research advancements in the manufacturing of inorganic fertilizers and the need to produce more to meet the food demands of the growing population have led to the indiscriminate use of inorganic fertilizers in agriculture. The environmental impact & soil productivity constraints caused by the exaggerated usage of inorganic fertilizers has now become a serious concern. Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) is an effective approach to reducing the excessive reliance on inorganic fertilizers and improving soil properties by substituting a part of inorganic fertilizers dose with organic manures. In this research, the influence of INM on soil physical and physicochemical properties had been evaluated. The field experiment was carried out in India, during the *rabi* season of 2020 in the sandy loam soil of the order *Inceptisols* under maize (*Zea mays* L.) variety *Pioneer - 3396* as the Test crop. Farm Yard Manure (FYM) @ 10 t/ha and Biofertilizers namely *Azospirillum* and *Phosphorus Solubilizing Bacteria (Pseudomonas sp.)* @ 5 kg/ha each were used in conjunction with inorganic fertilizers. The inorganic fertilizers @ 200:60:50 N-P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>-K<sub>2</sub>O kg ha<sup>-1</sup> were applied as recommended dose. Except for the control plot, all treatments are equally provided with P and K fertilizers as per the recommended dose with varying levels of Recommended Dose of Nitrogen (RDN), FYM and biofertilizers. The experiment comprises eight treatments *viz.*, T<sub>1</sub>: Control, T<sub>2</sub>: 100% RDN, T<sub>3</sub>: 125% RDN, T<sub>4</sub>: 75% RDN+ 25% FYM, T<sub>5</sub>: 75% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers, T<sub>6</sub>: 100% RDN+ 25% FYM, T<sub>7</sub>: 100% RDN+ Biofertilizers and T<sub>8</sub>: 100% RDN+ 25% FYM + Biofertilizers. There was observed a slight decrease in bulk density and a slight increase in the porosity, Water Holding Capacity (WHC), Organic Carbon (OC), and Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) of the soil in the plots treated with integrated nutrient sources.

Keywords: *Inorganic fertilizers, Organic manures, Soil physical and physicochemical properties, Maize.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Soil's physical and physicochemical properties play an important role in determining the productivity of soil and these properties are much dependent on the management practices that we adopt for cultivation. Nutrient management is a crucial factor that determines the soil's physicochemical properties as well as soil fertility. The integrated nutrient management is the art of utilizing the benefits of all possible nutrient sources like organic manures, biofertilizers along with inorganic fertilizers. The organic carbon status of the soil is the most important physicochemical property that also affects the other soil properties. In INM we use manures such as farm yard manure, pig manure, sheep manure etc that improve the organic carbon status of the soil which in turn effects soil physical properties such as soil structure, aeration, porosity, infiltration rate and water holding capacity and decrease soil crusting, organic matter in soil improve the physical condition of the soil for better performance of micro-organism and physical status of soil which makes cultivation easier and also holds nutrients from leaching and makes them available to plant roots. Whereas bio-fertilizers play role in the decomposition process and solubilization of nutrients. By adopting the integrated nutrient management approach, many challenges related to sustainable agriculture can be answered by reducing the negative impacts of long-term usage of chemical fertilizers on soil health. Maize being the most versatile crop and rich source of carbohydrates and vitamins, it is a heavy feeder of nutrients from the soil which requires a better nutrient management strategy. This paper presents the effect of this integrated strategy of nutrient management practice in maize and its effect on soil's physical and physicochemical properties.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The field research was conducted during the *rabi* season of the year 2020 at Agricultural College Farm, Bapatla situated at an altitude of 5.49 m above mean sea level, 15°54' North latitude, 80°30' East longitude and about 8 km away from the Bay of Bengal. It is located in the Krishna agro-climatic zone of Andhra Pradesh. The average maximum and minimum temperatures recorded during the crop growth period were 30.78 °C and 19.51 °C, respectively. The weekly mean relative humidity at 8:30 a.m and 17:30 p.m was 84.67, and 55.38 per cent respectively. Total rainfall of 3.33 mm was received with on rainy day during the experimentation period. The soil is sandy loam in texture and belongs to the order Inceptisols. Initial soil characteristics (0-15cm) of the experimental soil were enlisted in table-1.

**Table: 1 Initial soil characteristics (0-15cm) of the experimental soil**

Particulars	Readings
<b>Physical properties</b>	
I. Mechanical analysis	
1. Sand (%)	72 %
2. Silt (%)	13 %
3. Clay (%)	15 %
Textural class	Sandy loam
Bulk density ( $\text{Mg m}^{-3}$ )	1.44
Water holding capacity (%)	13.92
Porosity (%)	38
<b>Physico- chemical properties</b>	
pH	7.2
EC ( $\text{dS m}^{-1}$ )	0.25
CEC [ $\text{Cmol (p+) kg}^{-1}$ ]	13.73
Organic carbon (%)	0.21

The experiment consisted of eight treatments with three replications. The normal recommend dose of fertilizer is followed as 200:60:50 N-P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>-K<sub>2</sub>O kg ha<sup>-1</sup> applied through Urea, SSP & MOP, respectively. The biofertilizers namely *Azospirillum* + PSB {Phosphorus Solubilizing Bacteria (*Pseudomonas* sp.)} @5 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> each. The control treatment is devoid of any fertilization and all remaining treatments were commonly supplied with inorganic P and K doses at a recommended level whereas the dose of inorganic nitrogen, FYM, and biofertilizers dose is varied among the treatments. The treatments are as follows; T<sub>1</sub>: Absolute Control, T<sub>2</sub>: 100% RDN, T<sub>3</sub>: 125% RDN, T<sub>4</sub>: 75% RD + 25% FYM, T<sub>5</sub>: 75% RDN+ 25% + Biofertilizers, T<sub>6</sub>: 100% RDN+ 25% FYM, T<sub>7</sub>: 100% RDN+ Biofertilizers and T<sub>8</sub>: 100% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers. Regarding the analysis of soil physical properties, the texture analysis was carried out by the bouyoucos hydrometer method given by Bouyoucos (1962). Bulk density ( $\text{Mg m}^{-3}$ ) was estimated by core method as per the procedure given by Dastane (1967). Water holding capacity (%) was estimated by the method described by Sankaram (1966). Porosity(%) was calculated by using the formula described by Black (1965).The Physicochemical

properties of soil namely soil reaction (pH) was measured by using a glass electrode pH meter in 1: 2.5 ratio of soil water suspension (Jackson, 1973). Electrical conductivity (EC) ( $\text{dSm}^{-1}$ ) of soil samples was determined in 1: 2.5 soil water suspension using electrical conductivity bridge (Jackson, 1973). Organic carbon (%) was estimated by Walkley and Black's method as described by Piper (1966). The Cation exchange capacity (CEC) ( $\text{C mol (P}^+) \text{ kg}^{-1}$ ) was measured by the method described by Bower *et al.* (1952).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table: 2 Effect of integrated nutrient management on soil's physical properties at harvest stage of maize crop**

Treatments	B.D ( $\text{Mg m}^{-3}$ )	Porosity (%)	WHC (%)
T <sub>1</sub> : Control	1.43	40.56	13.92
T <sub>2</sub> : 100% RDN	1.44	40.90	14.02
T <sub>3</sub> : 125% RDN	1.44	41.47	14.33
T <sub>4</sub> : 75% RDN + 25% FYM	1.42	42.46	16.71
T <sub>5</sub> : 75% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers	1.41	42.78	17.12
T <sub>6</sub> : 100% RDN + 25% FYM	1.42	42.53	16.76
T <sub>7</sub> : 100% RDN + Biofertilizers	1.42	42.11	14.78
T <sub>8</sub> : 100% RDN + 25% FYM +	1.41	42.91	17.14

Biofertilizers			
SEm ( $\pm$ )	0.01	0.79	1.08
CD (P=0.05)	NS	NS	NS
CV (%)	7.31	7.69	12.53

**Bulk density (B.D), Water Holding Capacity (WHC), Porosity.-**

The data presented in table-2 indicated that the bulk density of soil at harvest of the crop was not significantly influenced by the various treatments. However, there was observed a marginal reduction in B.D and an increase in WHC in the integrated treatments which received FYM as an organic source of fertilization along with 100 and 75 per cent of nitrogen through urea. The treatments 125 % RDN ( $T_3$ ) and 100 % RDN ( $T_2$ ) has recorded a slightly higher (1.44) B.D which also has recorded lower WHC. A comparatively lower BD, highest porosity and highest WHC was recorded in treatment 100% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers ( $T_8$ ) than in all other treatments due to the application of FYM, Biofertilizers (Upadhyay *et al.*, 2016) (Tadesse *et al.*, 2013). The non-significant effect on bulk density of soil even after applying organic manures and inorganic fertilizers was also reported by (Singh *et al.*, 2015) who revealed that reduction in bulk density is due to higher organic carbon, more pore space and good soil aggregation which was a long-term change. Hence the non-significant effect of manures on bulk density, WHC and porosity of the present experiment might be because of the shorter period of study. It has also been well documented by several scientists that a greater quantity of organic material is needed to improve soil structural properties. However an increase in water stable aggregates and soil organic matter with FYM application was reported by (Shahzad *et al.*, 2021) indicating the critical role of O.C in the forming and stability of aggregate which is important for improving soil WHC. Unlike the physicochemical properties of soil, the physical properties of soil are long-term properties that cannot be changed easily. There was noticed no change in the texture of the soil which was found sandy loam by its nature.

**Table: 3 Effect of Integrated nutrient management on soil physicochemical properties**

Treatments	pH	EC (dSm <sup>-1</sup> )	OC (%)	CEC (C mol (p <sup>+</sup> ) kg <sup>-1</sup> )
T <sub>1</sub> : Control	7.20	0.23	0.21	13.75
T <sub>2</sub> : 100% RDN	7.10	0.24	0.22	14.33
T <sub>3</sub> : 125% RDN	7.08	0.24	0.22	14.69
T <sub>4</sub> : 75% RDN + 25% FYM	6.98	0.26	0.23	16.07
T <sub>5</sub> : 75% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers	6.97	0.27	0.24	16.47
T <sub>6</sub> : 100% RDN + 25% FYM	6.98	0.26	0.23	15.39
T <sub>7</sub> : 100% RDN + Biofertilizers	7.09	0.25	0.22	15.03
T <sub>8</sub> : 100% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers	6.96	0.27	0.25	17.13
SEm (±)	0.09	0.03	0.01	1.13
<b>CD (P=0.05)</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>NS</b>
CV (%)	7.09	7.23	7.24	8.26

#### Soil Reaction (pH):-

The data presented in table-3 revealed that there was no significant effect on soil reaction and electrical conductivity by the imposed treatments. the highest (7.2) and the lowest (6.96) of pH were observed in control treatment 100% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers (T<sub>8</sub>), respectively. The decrease in pH of INM plots was also confirmed by the findings of (Bhatt *et al.*, 2019; Kumar and Thomas, 2017; Masood *et al.*, 2014; Pandey and Awasthi, 2014). However, the pH decreased in all treatments as compared to the initial pH of experimental soil and the decline was more pronounced in the treatments which received organic and inorganic doses of nutrients in combination. The addition of organic manure results in organic matter oxidation and release of carbon dioxide in the soil. The release of organic acids during the decomposition of manure will in turn causes a slight decline in pH. However, the effect was not significant because of the short duration of the present study.

### Electrical Conductivity (EC) :-

The non-significant effect of sole inorganic nitrogen fertilizers or in combination with FYM on the electrical conductivity of soil might be due to the balanced fertilization, which might not have allowed significant changes in salt concentration. However, a numerically higher EC was recorded in the treatment 100% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers ( $T_8$ ) and lower in control treatment. This was in line with the research findings of (Abhimanyu *et al.*, 2017, and Singh *et al.*, 2015) who also reported no significant change and a slight increase in electrical conductivity of soil under INM. The total salt concentration is not highly altered also due to the fact that the doses of fertilizers added in different treatments were quite small and salts added through fertilizers might have been leached down due to the good number of irrigations received during the crop growth period.

### Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC):-

The CEC of soils was not significantly influenced by different treatments and it ranged from 13.75 to 17.13 Cmol ( $p^+$ )  $kg^{-1}$ . The highest CEC was observed in treatment 100% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers ( $T_8$ ) which was followed by treatment 75% RDN + 25% FYM + Biofertilizers ( $T_5$ ) *i.e* 16.47 Cmol ( $p^+$ )  $kg^{-1}$ . The lowest was observed in the control treatment. It was inferred that the CEC of the soil was increased at harvest as compared to that of initial soil and the increase was higher in treatment which received higher levels of organic manure through FYM. A similar influence of integrated nutrient supply systems on CEC was earlier reported by (Pandey and Avasthi, 2014; Pareek and Yadav, 2011). Applied organic manures decompose in soils to form humus and humic substances, which play a dominant role along with clay micelle in the complex soil reactions that enhance the CEC of soils (Adeniyani *et al.*, 2011).

### Organic Carbon (OC):-

The organic carbon content was found significantly influenced by different treatments imposed and it ranged from 0.21 to 0.25 %. There was a significant difference in organic carbon content with an increase in inorganic nitrogen levels from control *i.e* zero to 100 % either by a sole or integrated approach. The slight increase in organic carbon content in all the treatments with integrated use of nutrient sources as compared to control might be due to the direct incorporation of organic matter through farmyard manure into the soil and also due to enhancement of root growth which leads to the accumulation of organic residues. These findings are in agreement with that of (Saha *et al.*, 2010) who also reported an improvement in organic carbon status to increased biomass production (Tiwari *et al.*, 2017; Mustafa *et al.*, 2021).

## 4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the improvement of soil physical and physicochemical properties can be effectively noticed in a long-term practice of INM but due to the short period of study the effect was found insignificant regarding most of the soil properties studied. There was found no influence on the texture of soil, and a significant influence was noticed regarding soil organic carbon content. When compared with sole inorganic and un fertilizer control treatments, the integrated treatments were found beneficial in improving soil physical and physicochemical properties and among all the treatments imposed the integrated treatment  $T_8$ : 100% RDF +

25% FYM + Biofertilizers, and T<sub>5</sub>: 75% RDN+ 25% FYM + Biofertilizers are the best-performed treatments. To sum up, conjunctive use of all different sources of nutrients namely organic manures, biofertilizers along with inorganic fertilizers is a viable option that contributes to better soil health.

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