

## Original Research Article

### EFFECTS OF POTASSIUM APPLICATION ON YIELD, PROTEIN AND OIL CONTENT OF SELECTED SOYBEAN VARIETIES IN TRANS NZOIA COUNTY, KENYA

#### **Abstract**

There is low soybean production due to poor agronomic techniques, such as sub-optimal application of fertilizer among other factors. There are limited studies on the effects of potassium fertilizer application which is crucial in productivity, quality, and drought resistance. A study was conducted at the Kenya Agricultural Livestock and Research Organization, Kitale demonstration farm to determine the effects of potassium fertilizer application on the yield and quality of soybean varieties. A 3 x 4 factorial experiment was laid down in Randomised Complete Block Design and replicated three times. The study had two factors, that is soybean varieties at three levels (DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24) and sulphate of potash fertilizer (50% K<sub>2</sub>O) applied at four levels (0 [control], 22.5, 45, and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup>), at planting, making a total of 12 treatments. Data was collected from 45 days after sowing (DAS) to physiological maturity. Data collected included number of pods per plant, number of seeds per plant, weight of seed per plant and 1000-seed weight, grain yield, protein and oil content. Data collected was subjected to analysis of variance using Statistical Analysis System version 9.3 and significantly different means separated using Least Significance Difference at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Application of potassium at the rate of 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> resulted to higher number of pods per plant and number of seeds per plant at 78.97 and 243.40, and 44.47 and 141.20 in the varieties DPSB19 and Gazelle, while in SB24 higher recording of 51.23 and 162.40 was observed with 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup>. The higher 1000-seed weight was recorded in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> in DPSB19 and Gazelle varieties, while for SB24 it was recorded in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup>. The highest grain yield recorded was 9156.45 kg per ha, in DPSB19 in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup>, 4517.67.5 kg per ha in Gazelle variety in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> and 6432.78 kg per ha in SB24 variety in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup>. The higher percentage oil content was observed in 45 K<sub>2</sub>O kg ha<sup>-1</sup> in DPSB19 (28.48%) and SB24 (23.38%) varieties, and in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> in Gazelle (19.38%) variety and the higher percentage protein content was recorded in 45 K<sub>2</sub>O kg ha<sup>-1</sup> in DPSB19 (42.99%) and Gazelle (40.56%), and in 45 K<sub>2</sub>O kg ha<sup>-1</sup> in SB24 (48.87%). These findings show that soybean farmers should apply potassium fertilizer for appropriate growth, increased yield, protein and oil content in different soybean varieties. It is recommended that application of potassium at 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> be done for better soybean growth, yield and protein content and application of potassium at 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> is done for high oil content.

**Keywords:** Soybean, Potassium, Seed weight, Yield, Protein content, Oil content

#### **1.Introduction**

Soybean (*Glycine max* L.) is a leguminous crop that is mainly grown for its seeds which are processed for vegetable oil and high protein meal [1]. In response to the growing demand for high-quality protein, both in humans and animal feed products, farmers are increasingly becoming interested in soybean cultivation [2]. Soybean can be grown throughout the year in the tropics and subtropics using simple agronomic practices and it improves the soil by naturally fixing nitrogen into the soil [3]. Soybean are rich in functional nutrients such as protein, essential amino acid,

polyunsaturated fatty acid, minerals, vitamins and dietary fibre and in the industry, it is used for oil extraction and consumption of vegetable protein food [4]. The constraints to soybean cultivation includes use of uncertified seed with low germination percentage; lack of certified seeds during planting season; high soil salt concentration; use of conventional agronomic technique in soybean farming; little information about soybean nutritional value if known by people; low adoption mechanisation especial during planting and post-harvest practices by farmer; poorly established marketing and supply system [5] and tendency to pod shattering [6]. In order to realize higher yields in soybean production farmers are advised to select best soybean genotype based on their own agro-ecological conditions [7]. The major causes of low yield in Africa can be attributed to low genotype stability, limited genetic based of cultivars, damage by insect pest and diseases, nutrient deficiency, poor application of fertilizer, lack of accessibility to certified soybean seed and lack of agronomic skill [8].

Soybean crop yield and yield components such as seed number and size are adversely affected by the fertilization [9], but the extent of the influence differs in genotypes and amount of the fertiliser applied [10]. Potassium is essential for improving quality of produce particularly oilseed crops and its requirement for different crops is varied [11]. Soybean plants grown without potassium have delayed seed maturity affecting the harvesting date [12]. Potassium deficient crops are susceptible to lodging [13], and this can lead to decline in yield by about 22% [14]. It has been reported that application of potassium as foliar fertilizer at flowering stage of the soy crop is a vital practice since it helps evade reduction in yield and also improve the quality of the soybean [15]. Khanam [16] indicated that application of potassium fertilizers increased the number of pods plant per plant, mass of nodule and number of nodules with potassium rate of 120 kg muriate of potash per ha, giving highest number of nodules. Soil deficient in potassium leads to abortion of flowers, pods and seeds in soybean crop which result to reduced yield [17]. Liu [18] reported that the concentration levels of potassium, magnesium and iron in the soybean is positively influenced while, the level of copper concentration is negatively affected by the variety difference of the soybean and also application of the potassium to the soybean.

The production of soybean is approximately 600 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> which is way lower than its possible yield of 3000 kg per hectare and this is mainly due to poor agronomic management techniques such as use of seed varieties that are not certified during planting, poor plant population due to wrong spacing and in appropriate application of fertilizer including application of potassium fertilizer. Farmers in Trans Nzoia use diammonium phosphate (DAP) to correct nutrient deficit since it supplies both phosphate and nitrogen, unfortunately DAP does not supply potassium and it contributes to increased soil acidity by discharging a proton during process of nitrification [19]. The NPK fertilizers available for use by the farmers during planting have no or they contain very low percentage of potassium. More studies have been done on nitrogen and phosphorous effect on the soybean production and less has been done to specify the rate of potassium to be applied to have optimum percentage oil and protein content, and yield of soybean. Potassium is kept in the ionic form (K<sup>+</sup>) in cell sap of the plant cell and it activates many enzymes present within the plant cell hence it has numerous functions in the plant growth and nutrition that affect both yield and quality of the crop.

Potassium is a vital nutrient to soybean crop as it's involved in numerous cellular activities and reduces susceptibility of soybean to rust disease [20]. Due to its importance in plant growth and development, there is need to undertake more studies on optimisation of K application rates and its effects on growth, grain yield, protein and oil content of selected soybean varieties. The soybean varieties differ in genetic make up, this can lead to difference in percentage seed protein content due to difference in mineral uptake from the soil and their ability to transport these minerals to the sink organ such as seed [7]. When selecting soybean varieties, it critical to select variety that is well adapted to agro-ecological conditions of where it's going to be planted and early maturing variety should be considered in areas that receive little rainfall to enable it escape late-season drought [21]. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of potassium fertilizer application for the optimum yield, protein and oil content of three soybean varieties.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Study Site**

The study was done at Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation, Kitale (KALRO-Kitale). The area is located at 0.9798° N, 35.0167° E in Trans Nzoia County. It's located between Mount Elgon and Cherangani hills at an altitude of 1,900 m above sea level and has mean temperature of 24 °C and receive an average annual rainfall of 1,300 mm. It has two rainy seasons: March to May and September to December. The site is found in Agroecological Zone (AEZ) UM4 [22] and it has humic ferralsols [23]. Agriculture practice is the chief source of employment in Trans Nzoia with the main crops cultivated being cereals particularly maize, grain legumes like dry beans. Soybean is currently gain familiarity in the county.

### **2.2. Experimental Design**

The experiment design of 3 x 4 factorial experiment was setup in Randomised Complete Block Design (RCBD) with three replicates. There were two factors, soybean varieties at three levels DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24, and amount of sulphate of potash (50% K<sub>2</sub>O) applied at four levels (control, 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup>, 45 K<sub>2</sub>O kg ha<sup>-1</sup> and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup>), which was applied to the experimental units before planting. The control treatment comprised of 0 K<sub>2</sub>O kg ha<sup>-1</sup>. The treatment plots measured 2 m by 2 m with alleys measuring 0.5 m separating the plots and a path of 1 m between the blocks, and each treatment was replicated three times making a total of 36 plots. The experiment was carried out in two trials, i.e., trial I and trial II.

### **2.3. Planting Materials, Land Preparation, Planting and Field Maintenance**

The soyabean varieties were sourced from KALRO Njoro while SB24 was obtained from KALRO-Kakamega and the sulphate of potash (50% K<sub>2</sub>O), was sourced from MEA Limited-Nakuru. The vegetation present on the field including grasses and other annual weeds were cleared by slashing and ploughed using a disc plough and then the field was left for 2 weeks for all vegetation to decay then harrowed before planting. In each plot, furrows were made at the spacing of 45 cm between the furrows and with the deep of 5cm, giving plant population of 444, 444 plants ha<sup>-1</sup>. At planting DAP (18-46-0) fertilizer was applied in each plot at the rate of 125 kg per ha to supply 22.5 N kg ha<sup>-1</sup> and 57.5 P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> kg ha<sup>-1</sup>, this was mixed with given rates of K<sub>2</sub>O then covered with thin soil before placing seeds at spacing of 5cm between the seeds within the furrow. Four levels of K<sub>2</sub>O used; 0 K<sub>2</sub>O kg/ha, 22.5 K<sub>2</sub>O kg/ha, 45 K<sub>2</sub>O kg/ha and 67.5 K<sub>2</sub>O kg/ha to supply 0 K kg/ha, 18.68 kg K/ha, 37.35 kg K/ha and

56.03 kg K/ha respectively. Seeds of all the three varieties except control were inoculated with BIOFIX rhizobia inoculant containing *Bradyrhizobium japonicum* at 10 g per kg of seed to ensure full nitrogen fixation potential. The plots were thinned to one plant per 5 cm at 15 DAS, and was kept weed free through hand weeding using hoe, first weed control was done on the 2<sup>nd</sup> week after planting and the second weeding on the 5<sup>th</sup> week after planting. Pest and disease control was done through spraying. All management practices were applied uniformly to avoid difference in data collected due to these practices.

#### **2.4. Data Collection**

During the study conducted between May 2019 and December 2020, data on soil initial status, yield, percentage oil and percentage protein content of soybean was collected.

##### **2.4.1. Soil Analysis**

Soil sample was collected from the field before tilling using soil auger from the depth of 0-15cm. The standard laboratory analysis procedure of the samples was done to measure soil organic carbon and total N (flash combustion method) using Thermo Scientific Flash 2000 Elemental Analyzer; the CN Analyzer [24], available N (NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup> and NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>) by automated caDry matterium reduction method using Auto Analyzer, extractable P by the Olsen's method [25] and was determined using visible spectrophotometric method, extractable K by 1M ammonium acetate method at pH 7 (flame photometer) [26], soil pH by potentiometric method at a ratio of 1:2.5 soil: water using pH meter and particle size distribution [27]. The soil samples were air-dried, ground and sieved through a one millimeter mesh before using it for analysis.

##### **2.4.2. Determination of the Effect of Rate of Potassium Application on the Yield of the Soybean**

###### ***Number of Pods per Plant***

The numbers of pods per plant from ten randomly sampled and tagged plants from the treatment plot was counted and the mean calculated to represent the number of pods plant<sup>-1</sup> in that plot during harvesting.

###### ***Number of seeds per plant***

The total number of seeds was counted from the randomly sampled five tagged harvested plants and then mean number plant<sup>-1</sup> was calculated.

###### ***Weight of seeds/plant (g) and 1000-seed weight (g)***

The weight of seeds per plant was obtained from the number of seeds per plant. A sample of 1000-seeds was taken from ten tagged plants; the seeds was weighed to determine 1000-seed weight for each treatment.

###### ***Grain Yield (kg/ha)***

At maturity soybean from different plots was harvested and the grain dry weight without pods, was taken using weigh scale at 13 % moisture content. Seed moisture percentage was measured using moisture meter. The grain yield was later extrapolated to yield in kg per hectare as per Xiang [28].

$$\text{Yield (kg/ha)} = \text{Kg seed yield per sq. metre} \times 10,000$$

### **2.4.3. Determination of the Effect of Rate of Potassium Application on the Quality of the Soybean**

#### ***Protein Content of Soybean***

The oven dried soybean samples of 0.3 g were placed into digestion tubes. The digestion mixture measuring 2.5 ml of was added and digested for 120 minutes. The mixture was then cooled and transferred into 50ml volumetric flask and filled with distilled water to volume. Two 5mls aliquots of each sample were then taken for analysis [29].

#### ***Oil Content***

The percentage oil content of the soybean was analyzed using Soxhlet extraction method where about 2 g of the dried soybean seed sample was weighed ( $w_1$ ) into a clean piece of cotton cloth. The sample was then wrapped securely in the cloth by tightening a thread around it. The wrapped sample was then immersed in the thimble of the Soxhlet extractor, using n-hexane and maintained at a temperature of 60 °C. This set-up was left in this condition for up to 5 hours so that all the fat in the sample was extracted. The oil was concentrated from the oil-solvent mixture by removing the defatted sample from the thimble and distilling off some, but not all of the solvent from the mixture in the flask. This extract was then left throughout the night on the well-ventilated area for a complete evaporation of the remaining solvent. In the morning, the flask with the sample was weighed continuously until a constant weight ( $w_2$ ) was obtained. The flask was then emptied, cleaned thoroughly, and dried in an oven at 100 °C and weighed ( $w_3$ ) The percentage crude fat was determined as in Dutta [30].

$$\% \text{ Crude Fat Content} = \frac{\text{weight of extracted fat}}{\text{weight of sample}} \times 100$$

$$\% \text{ Crude Fat Content} = \frac{w_2 - w_3}{w_1} \times 100$$

### **2.5. Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) version 9.3 for analysis of variance. Least Significant Difference (LSD) was used for comparing significantly different means at probability level of 5%.

## **3. RESULTS**

### **3.1. Soil Analysis**

Soil analysis was conducted at KALRO-Kakamega. It was observed that the pH was 6.06, organic carbon content was 1.18 %, total nitrogen was 0.24 %, while available P and exchangeable K was 96.98 mg/kg and 75.78 mg/kg respectively (Table 1).

### **3.2. Effect of Application of Different Rates of Potassium fertilizer on Soybean Yield and Yield Components**

#### ***3.2.1 Number of Pods per Plant***

There was no significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) difference in number of pods per plant between variety DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24 within and between trial I and II. However, there were significant influence of the different rates of potassium fertilizer within individual variety at ( $p < 0.05$ ) in trial I and II. Increase in number of pods per plant was recorded when compared with control treatment in DPSB19 in trial I and II, it

increased from 52.90 and 30.67 (control treatment) to 72.60 and 34.90 in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 68.93 and 35.97 in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 78.97 and 35.03 in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha both in trial I and trial II (Table 2).

Similarly, in Gazelle variety no significant increase in pod per plant number was recorded in trial I, the pod number increased from 36.93 in control treatment to 43.30, 43.80 and 44.47 in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, respectively. The significant increase in pod number was recorded in trial II in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha that is from 26.97 to 31.27. Furthermore, in SB24 variety, the number of pods per plant increased in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial I that was from 16.93 in control treatment to 22.97 and 21.30 respectively, while in trial II the 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha recorded highest pod per plant from 41.57 to 51.23 (Table 2).

Table 1: Results of soil analysis of soil obtained from experimental site

| Parameter                               | Units | Value      |
|---|-------|------------|
| pH water                                | –     | 6.06       |
| Organic Carbon                          | %     | 1.18       |
| Total Nitrogen                          | %     | 0.24       |
| Available P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> | mg/kg | 96.98      |
| Exchangeable Ca                         | mg/kg | 398.8      |
| Exchangeable Mg                         | mg/kg | 68.8       |
| Exchangeable K                          | mg/kg | 75.78      |
| Available Zn                            | mg/kg | 1.17       |
| Available Cu                            | mg/kg | 1.4        |
| Available Fe                            | mg/kg | 20.24      |
| Available Mn                            | mg/kg | 16.24      |
| Texture                                 | –     | Loamy sand |

### 3.2.2 Number of Seeds per Plant

There was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) interaction for the two trials on number of pods per plant. The results showed a significant increase in the number of pods per plant in DPSB19 variety with treatment 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial I as compared to control treatment. In DPSB19 variety the number of pods per plant increased from 161.60 and 94.80 to 238.60 and 104.60, 190.33 and 110.40, and 243.40 and 105.80 with 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha respectively both in trial I and trial II (Table 2). In Gazelle variety the number of seeds per plant, showed no significant difference when compared to control treatment. However, increase in number of seeds per plant was observed in all treatments compared to control in trial I and in treatment 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial II (Table 2)

The number of seeds per plant increased from 119.20 and 79.60 to 131.00 and 93.40 in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and, to 141.20 and 99.20 in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha both in trial I and trial II and to 127.60 seeds in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial I. Furthermore, in SB24 variety in trial I no significant difference was observed when 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha were compared to control treatment. However, in trial II, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha showed a significant difference to control experiment. The number of seeds per plant increased from 53.80 seeds in trial I to 66.40 seeds (45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha) and 71.00 (67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha), and from 126.20 in trial II to 162.40

(22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha). The reduction in number was recorded in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial I and in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial II (Table 2).

Table 2: Effect of potassium application on number of pods per plant, seeds per plant, and weight of 1000-seeds of soybean

| Variety                | Trial I                |                          |                           |                          | Trial II                 |                           |                          |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
|                        | Potassium rate (kg/ha) | Number of pods per plant | Number of seeds per plant | One thousand seed weight | Number of pods per plant | Number of seeds per plant | One thousand seed weight |
| DPSB19                 | 0                      | 52.90c*                  | 161.60b <sup>c</sup>      | 113.00bc                 | 30.67de                  | 94.80cdef                 | 115.67d                  |
|                        | 22.5                   | 72.60ab                  | 238.60a                   | 128.50bc                 | 34.90cd                  | 104.60bcd <sup>e</sup>    | 113.33d                  |
|                        | 45                     | 68.93b                   | 190.33b                   | 121.50bc                 | 35.97bc <sup>d</sup>     | 110.40bcd                 | 114.17d                  |
|                        | 67.5                   | 78.97a                   | 243.40a                   | 123.33bc                 | 35.03cd                  | 105.80bcd                 | 115.33d                  |
| Gazelle                | 0                      | 36.93d                   | 119.20c                   | 202.73ab                 | 26.97ef                  | 79.60ef                   | 187.00a                  |
|                        | 22.5                   | 43.30d                   | 127.60c                   | 249.97a                  | 24.60f                   | 73.60f                    | 166.00a <sup>b</sup>     |
|                        | 45                     | 43.80cd                  | 131.00c                   | 227.20a                  | 28.90ef                  | 93.40def                  | 173.17a                  |
|                        | 67.5                   | 44.47cd                  | 141.20c                   | 159.50ab <sup>c</sup>    | 31.27de                  | 99.20cdef                 | 187.33a                  |
| SB24                   | 0                      | 16.93e                   | 53.80d                    | 104.17c                  | 41.57b                   | 126.20b                   | 133.67c <sup>d</sup>     |
|                        | 22.5                   | 15.07e                   | 50.40d                    | 105.00c                  | 51.23a                   | 162.40a                   | 137.00c <sup>d</sup>     |
|                        | 45                     | 22.97e                   | 66.40d                    | 110.00bc                 | 39.73bc                  | 107.27bcd                 | 129.83c <sup>d</sup>     |
|                        | 67.5                   | 21.30e                   | 71.00d                    | 105.67bc                 | 39.67bc                  | 119.60bc                  | 145.47b <sup>c</sup>     |
| CV%                    |                        | 1.967                    | 1.974                     | 2.074                    | 1.967                    | 1.974                     | 2.074                    |
| LSD <sub>(0.005)</sub> |                        | 9.460                    | 42.528                    | 97.486                   | 5.677                    | 25.634                    | 24.626                   |

\*Means with the same letter along the column for the same variety are not significantly different at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

### 3.2.3 Effect on 1000 Seed Weight

There was no significant difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) in 1000-seed weight between varieties DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24 within and between trial I and II. However, there were increase in 1000-seed weight with integration of rhizobium with potassium fertilizer within DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24 variety in trial I and II. In DPSB19 variety, the weight increased from 113.00 g in control treatment to 128.50 g, 121.50 g and 123.33 g in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha respectively in trial I while in trial II the weight changed from 115.67g (control treatment) to 113.33 g, 114.17 g and 115.33 g in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, respectively (Table 2). Similarly, in Gazelle variety the 1000-seed weight increased from 202.73 g to 249.97 g and 227.20 g with 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha respectively. Reduced weight was observed with 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial I, while in trial II the 1000 seed weight reduced from 187.00 g to 166.00 g and 173.17 g with treatment 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha while in 67.5 kg

K<sub>2</sub>O per ha it increased slightly to 187.33 g. Furthermore, in SB24 the weight of 1000 seeds increased from 104.17 g to 105.00 g, 110.00 g and 105.67 g in trial I with treatment 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, respectively. In trial II it increased from 133.67 g to 137.00 g in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha treatment and 145.47 g treatment in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, reduce in weight of 1000 seed was observed in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha. (Table 2).

### 3.2.4 Effect on Seed Weight per Plant

There was no significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) interaction between trial I and trial II on the seed weight per soybean plant. However, significant increase in seed weight per plant was observed with potassium application when compared to control treatment within DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24 varieties. In DPSB19 it was observed that the seed weight per plant increased, compared to control treatment (0 kg K<sub>2</sub>O/ha) to 30.59 g and 11.95 g in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 24.28 g and 12.61 g in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and, 34.75 g and 11.92 g in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha both in trial I and II (Table 3).

Similarly, it was observed in the Gazelle variety that there is increase in seed weight per plant with increase in potassium application. The weight increased from 17.80 g and 16.50 g in control treatment to 19.95 g and 11.63 g in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 20.70 g and 16.40 g in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and, 22.76 g and 19.77 g in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha both in trial I and II respectively. In SB24 variety the weight increase from 5.63 g and 16.73 g in control treatment to 5.32 g and 22.44 g, 7.29 g and 14.00 g, and 7.39 g and 15.50 g with application of potassium at the rate of 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha both in trial I and trial II (Table 3).

Table 3: Effect of potassium application on seed weight per plant and grain yield per hectare of soybean

| Variety                | Potassium rate (kg/ha) | Trial I                   |                              | Trial II                  |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
|                        |                        | Seed weight per plant (g) | Grain yield per hectare (kg) | Seed weight per plant (g) | Grain yield per hectare (kg) |
| DPSB19                 | 0                      | 18.54c                    | 4324.73cde                   | 11.047f                   | 2431.52c                     |
|                        | 22.5                   | 30.59ab                   | 9156.45a                     | 11.95ef                   | 2745.75c                     |
|                        | 45                     | 24.28bc                   | 7949.34ab                    | 12.61def                  | 3016.81c                     |
|                        | 67.5                   | 34.75a                    | 6395.18abc                   | 11.92ef                   | 3014.00c                     |
| Gazelle                | 0                      | 17.89c                    | 3836.72cdef                  | 16.50bcd                  | 2646.10c                     |
|                        | 22.5                   | 19.95c                    | 4085.25cdef                  | 11.63ef                   | 1816.00c                     |
|                        | 45                     | 20.70c                    | 3867.11cdef                  | 16.40bcd                  | 2671.49c                     |
|                        | 67.5                   | 22.75c                    | 451767bcd                    | 19.77ab                   | 2589.72c                     |
| SB24                   | 0                      | 5.63d                     | 874.24f                      | 16.73bc                   | 4597.37b                     |
|                        | 22.5                   | 5.32d                     | 1002.13ef                    | 22.44a                    | 6432.78a                     |
|                        | 45                     | 7.29d                     | 1283.17def                   | 14.00cdef                 | 4447.26b                     |
|                        | 67.5                   | 7.39d                     | 1446.48def                   | 15.50cde                  | 4751.91b                     |
| CV%                    |                        | 1.974                     | 2.074                        | 1.974                     | 2.074                        |
| LSD <sub>(0.005)</sub> |                        | 7.220                     | 3.43                         | 3.907                     | 1.35                         |

\*Means with the same letter along the column for the same variety are not significantly different at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

### 3.2.5 Effect on Grain Yield

There was significantly interaction ( $p < 0.05$ ) between trial I and trial II on grain yield. The results showed a significant difference in grain yield in DPSB19 variety in trial I as compared to control treatment. The increase in grain yield was observed in both trial I and trial II in DPSB19, the grain yield increased from 4325 kg/ha and 2432 kg/ha in control treatment to 9156 kg/ha and 2746 kg/ha, 7949 kg/ha and 3017 kg/ha, and 6395 kg/ha and 3014 kg/ha for 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha respectively in both trial I and trial II (Table 3).

Similarly, in Gazelle variety increase in grain yield was recorded when compared to control treatment. The grain yield increased by 248 kg/ha and reduced by 830 kg/ha in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha; increased by 31 kg/ha and 25 kg/ha in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and increased by 57 kg/ha in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial I and II, respectively. The results in SB24 variety showed and increased in grain yield, from 874 kg/ha (control treatment) to 1002 kg/ha (22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha), 1283 kg/ha (45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha) and 1446.46 Kg/ha in trial I while in trial II it increased from 4597 Kg/ha in control treatment to 6432 kg/ha, 4447 kg/ha and 4751 kg/ha in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha respectively (Table 3).

### **3.3. Effect of Application of Different Rates of Potassium fertilizer on Percentage Oil and Protein Content of Soybean**

#### **3.3.1 Oil Content**

There was no significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) difference in percentage oil content of soybean between trial I and trial II. However, significant response was recorded with application of different rates of potassium in the oil content of soybean within DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24 varieties at ( $p < 0.05$ ) in both trial I and trial II. For example, within DPSB19 variety, the oil content increased from 26.25 % and 23.75% in the control treatment to 27.83% and 26.33% in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 28.48% and 26.48% in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, significant reduction in oil content to 25.43% (67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha) was observed in trial I when compared with 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 23.93% was observed with 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in trial II (Table 4).

In gazelle variety no significant influence was observed in percentage of oil content with increase in potassium application in trial I but increase in oil content with increase in potassium application was recorded from 16.58 % in 0 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha (control treatment) to 19.38 %, 17.467% and 18.10% in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha respectively, in trial II increase of potassium application from 0 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha to 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha significantly increased the percentage oil content from 14.58% to 18.05 %, no difference in significance was observed in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha (15.80%) and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha (16.27%) when compared with control treatment. Furthermore, in SB24 variety, no significant influence was observed with varied rate of K application when compared to control treatment. The percentage oil content increased from 22.18% and 19.68% (control treatment) to 22.38% and 20.22% (22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha), 23.38% and 21.72% (45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha), and 22.77% and 20.77% (67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha) both in trial I and trial II (Table 4).

Table 4: Effect of Potassium application on percentage oil and protein Content of Soybean on Trial I and II

| Variety                | Potassium rate (kg/ha) | Trial I  |           | Trial II |           |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
|                        |                        | % Oil    | % Protein | % Oil    | % Protein |
| DPSB19                 | 0                      | 26.25ab* | 32.12cde  | 23.75abc | 39.78cde  |
|                        | 22.5                   | 27.83ab  | 34.52bcd  | 26.33a   | 42.18bcd  |
|                        | 45                     | 28.48a   | 35.02bcd  | 26.48a   | 42.68bcd  |
|                        | 67.5                   | 25.43bc  | 35.34bc   | 23.93ab  | 42.99bc   |
| Gazelle                | 0                      | 16.58f   | 26.62f    | 14.58g   | 34.28f    |
|                        | 22.5                   | 19.38ef  | 29.57ef   | 18.05ef  | 37.22ef   |
|                        | 45                     | 17.47f   | 30.69def  | 15.80fg  | 38.35def  |
|                        | 67.5                   | 18.10f   | 32.90bcde | 16.27fg  | 40.56bcde |
| SB24                   | 0                      | 22.18de  | 36.92ab   | 19.68de  | 44.58ab   |
|                        | 22.5                   | 22.38d   | 40.47a    | 20.22de  | 48.13a    |
|                        | 45                     | 23.38cd  | 41.21a    | 21.72bcd | 48.87a    |
|                        | 67.5                   | 22.77cd  | 40.42a    | 20.77cde | 48.08a    |
| CV%                    |                        | 2.07387  | 2.07387   | 2.07387  | 2.07387   |
| LSD <sub>(0.005)</sub> |                        | 2.8095   | 4.3368    | 3.0919   | 4.3368    |

\*Means with the same letter along the column for the same variety are not significantly different at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

### 3.3.2 Protein Content

There was no significant difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) in percentage protein content of soybean between variety DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24 within and between trial I and II. However, there were significant influence of the different rates of potassium fertilizer within individual variety at ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) in trial I and II. In DPSB19 increase in percentage protein content was observed both in trial I and trial II when compared to control treatment, increase from 32.12% and 39.78 % in control treatment to 34.52% and 42.18 %, 35.02 % and 42.68 %, and 35.34 % and 43.00 % were observed in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, respectively for trial I and II (Table 4). More so, in Gazelle variety, increase in percentage protein content were recorded compared to control treatment. It was observed that the percentage protein content increased from 26.62% and 34.28% in control treatment to 29.57% and 37.22% (22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha), 30.69% and 38.35% (45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha) and a significant difference was recorded with treatment 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha (32.90% and 40.56%) in both trial I and trial II. Furthermore, in SB24, increase in protein percentage was observed with different K application compared with control treatment, higher protein percentage was recorded with 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha (41.21% and 48.87%) from 36.92% and 44.58% in control experiment in trial I and trial II, while 40.47% and 48.13%, and 40.42% and 48.08% were recorded in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha both in trial I and trial II (Table 4).

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Soil Analysis**

The soil from the study field had near neutral reaction with pH of 6.06, this is ideal for the availability of most plant nutrients required in soybean bean production. Available Zinc, copper and cations calcium and magnesium were adequate. According to Dugje [31] soybean production does well in the soil of pH 4.5-8, hence the soil pH of the field of study could not constrain production since it's within the recommended range. The texture of the soil in the field of study is loamy sand this is attributed to low level of potassium which is enhanced through application of potash fertilizer.

### **4.2. Effect of Application of Different Rates of Potassium fertilizer on Soybean Yield parameters**

The number of pods per plant, sampled from treatment plots showed no significant difference between trial I and trial II. However, there was significant influence of potassium application on the number of pods and also the number of pods varied between different varieties used in this study. The influence of different levels of potassium on the number of pods per plant may be due to efficient transportation of photosynthates from the leaves to the pods which are sink organs. Greater quantity of photosynthates may have prompted the initiation and maintenance of more pods per soybean plant. According to Cakmak [32], the optimal supply of potassium establishes osmotic potential in the phloem and this helps to translocate photosynthates from leaves to sink organs. The finding of this study are also in harmony with those of Gerardeaux [33] who observed that translocation of photosynthates in the phloem to the roots of potassium deficient plants is significantly reduced. The variation in the number of pods per plant among the varieties may be brought about by differences in uptake, utilization, and the resulting growth habit such as increasing the formation of more pods per plant. Variety DPSB19 recorded highest number of pods with 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha since it is an early maturing variety and probably the high pod numbers were as a result of its genetic makeup. This conforms to findings of Baijukya [34] and Mahasi [35] who observed that different varieties of soybean vary in terms of pod number.

From this study it was observed that increased number of branches influenced the number of pods per plant which later on influenced the number of seeds per plant. The increased application of potassium increased the number of seeds per plant this is probably by making quantity and transportation of photosynthates efficient which resulted from increased leaf number and leaf area index which promotes efficient absorption of light energy for photosynthesis. This facilitate efficient synthesis of photosynthates and effective translocation of this photosynthates to sink organ through phloem. The findings of this study are similar to those of Xiang [28] and Kolar [36] who reported high leaf area with application of potassium as compared to control treatment of potassium. The high seed number per plant can also be attributed to increased pod fill and maintenance ratio or capacity of the plant due to application of potassium. This observation agreed with finding of Xiang [28] who observed that the filled pod ratio increased with potassium application while unfilled pod ratio increase with potassium deficiency. The unfilled pod ratio of soybean was also recorded to decline with increased potassium application by Sale [37]. Rathore [38], Hemeid [39] and Bhadiyatar [40] observed increased pod number in legume plant with application of potassium and this was associated to importance of potassium to

quality parameter to this oil seed crop and its help in balancing nutrition of crops, transport sugar and water hence its favorable effects on pod formation.

In this study it was observed that application of potassium to soybean plant increased 1000-seed weight, seed weight per soybean plant and grain yield of soybean. These attributes can be related to the number of seed per plant, pod filled and maintenance ratio and the weight of the resultant seed. Application of potassium increases these yield component probably due to improved soil fertility through application of sulphate of potash fertilizer which improved the availability of other nutrients and their absorption by soybean plant. The increase 1000-seed weight, seed weight per soybean plant and grain yield of soybean can also be attributed to increase in transportation of assimilates to the seed leading to better maintenance than abortion and increased seed weight. The effective synthesis of photosynthates after application of the potassium fertilizer can also be associated to increased number of leaves and leaf area index that are critical towards increase of 1000-seed weight, seed weight per soybean plant and grain yield of soybean. This agreed with findings of Amanullah [41] who found that spraying potassium at rate of 3%  $K_2O$  on the crop significantly increased leaf area index. Rengel [42] observed that higher growth rate in crops may due to increased efficiency of photosynthesis in leaves resulting from the effective potassium uptake by roots which activates enzymes and is also involved in adenosine triphosphate synthesis resulting to proper filling of the pods which results to higher yields. The results of this study further stand in harmony with the findings of Akram [43], Aown [44] and Khanam [16] who stated that potassium enhanced the net assimilation rate (NAR).

Apart from leaf area index and transportation of photosynthates, potassium also influences photosynthetic pigments that includes the level of chlorophyll a, b and carotenoids. These pigments determine how soybean crop can harness the sunlight energy for use in the photosynthetic process. This conforms to the finding of Farhad [45] who observed that photosynthetic pigments increased significantly when plants were treated with potassium as compared with untreated plants in legume crops. The variation in 1000-seed weight and seed weight could probably, be attributed to application of potassium which provided adequate plant nutrients that subsequently, enhanced grain yield of soybean. Habibzadeh [46] recorded highest 1000-seed weight with potassium treatment at the rate of 225 kg K/ha. In study potassium application probably played a role in utilization of nitrate and other plant nutrient by soybean plant which were absorbed and translocate to the seed and played a key role in seed filling and maintenance of the resultant seed that consequently increased the seed weight plant, thousand seed weight and grain yield per hectare.

According to Xu [47] application of potassium affects carbon assimilation and distribution by regulating carbon metabolizing enzymes which promotes growth and root development improving its ability to absorb nitrate. This better absorption of nitrate may have contributed to better seed weight and grain yield. According to the findings of Yadav [48] and Read [49] potassium application played a key role in increasing the crop yield by promoting tolerance to all plants biotic and abiotic stress. Further, Abdi [50] established that spraying of a plant with potassium increased 1000 grain weight by increasing the enzyme activation and subsequently easing nutrient translocation from photosynthetic areas to the grain. This could explain the reason

why there was increased seed weight per plant, thousand seed weight and grain yield after application of potassium fertilizer in this study.

#### **4.3. Effect of Application of Different Rates of Potassium fertilizer on protein and oil content of Soybean**

The percentage protein and oil content of soybean have been reported as the most important parameters of soybean seed quality [51]. In the present study it was observed that there was insignificant variation in percentage oil content of soybean with application of varied rate of potassium fertilizer. Among varied rates of potassium application, the highest oil content (28.48 %) was observed in DPSB19 variety with application of potassium at rate of 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per hectare while, the lowest percentage oil content (14.58 %) was recorded with treatment K<sub>0</sub> (0 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha) in Gazelle variety. This shows that application of potassium fertilizer affects the oil and protein content differently among the soybean varieties. This observation is in harmony with findings of Farhad [45], Haq [52] and Seguin [53] who recorded insignificant influence of application of potassium to percentage oil content.

Yin [54] recorded an increase in seed oil content while seed protein content of soybean decreased with application of potassium. According to Bhadiyatar [40] potassium promotes peg formation, nodulation, synthesis of sugar and starch and help in pod growth and development in oil seed crops. In the present study the percentage protein content of soybean was observed to increase with increase in the rate of potassium. The highest percentage protein content (48.87%) was recorded with SB24 variety with treatment of potassium at rate of 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per hectare and the lowest percentage protein (26.62%) was recorded with Gazelle variety with potassium treatment at rate of 0 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per hectare (control treatment). This increase in percentage protein content with increase in potassium application could, be probably be associated with role played by potassium in transportation of photosynthates which are transported to seeds and used in synthesis of protein.

Potassium plays important role in increasing leaf area index which increases the photosynthates related to protein synthesis. This observation is in harmony with report of Wang [55] who reported that potassium deficient crop has a reduced rate of photosynthesis, lower rate of transpiration and poor opening and closing of stomatal which is then followed by a decline in RUBISCO activity. RUBISCO activity is key in protein synthesis and content in plants. The necrosis of leaf and turning brown in colour is one of the potassium deficiency symptom observed in the soybean leaf with severe deficiency while yellowing of leaflet margin is common in mild deficiency of potassium which lowers the photosynthetic area of the leaf. This lowers the accumulation rate of photosynthates and consequently reducing the amount of protein stored in the soybean seeds [56]. According to finding of Alpaslan [57] the recorded percentage oil and protein content of soybean ranges between 19.0-23.5% and 34.9-39.6%, respectively.

Farhad [45] recorded a significant increase in protein content of soybean with application of potassium where the highest percentage protein content of 42.23% was observed with potassium treatment at rate of 70 kg K/ha and the lowest percentage of 38.70 with control treatment (0 kg K<sub>2</sub>O/ha). The variation in percentage oil and protein of soybean between trial I and trial II can be attributed to mid-season drought that was experienced during trial II. The drought could have lowered the percentage

oil content and increased protein content. This is in harmony with findings of Dornbos [58] who reported an increase in protein content by 4.4% points and decline in oil content by 2.6% point when soybean was exposed to drought conditions.

## CONCLUSION

There was a significant effect of application of different rate of potassium to the yield of soybean. The highest grain yield recorded was 9156.452 kg per ha, in DPSB19 in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha, 4517.667 kg per ha in Gazelle variety in 67.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha and 6432.781 kg per ha in SB24 variety in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha. Lastly, there was significant response of application of different rate of potassium to the protein content and oil content of the soybean varieties. The higher percentage oil content was observed in 45 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in DPSB19 and SB24 varieties, and in 22.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O per ha in Gazelle variety. The study recommends that for the farmer to realize higher grain yield of soybean, in the adoption of DPSB19, Gazelle and SB24 varieties, application of K<sub>2</sub>O at 67.5 kg/ha is recommended during planting. To achieve high percentage of oil content in soybean grain where the farmer adopts DPSB19, SB24 and Gazelle varieties application of K<sub>2</sub>O at 45 kg/ha is recommended. To achieve high percentage of protein content in soybean grain where the farmer adopts DPSB19, SB24 and Gazelle varieties application of K<sub>2</sub>O at 67.5 kg/ha is recommended.

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