

## Original Research Article

### **EFFECT OF PEARL MILLET (*Pennisetum glaucum* L.)- PULSES INTERCROPPING SYSTEM WITH NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT ON GROWTH AND YIELD OF PEARL MILLET**

#### **ABSTRACT**

A field experiment was conducted at the College Farm, N. M. College of Agriculture, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari (Gujarat) to study the effect of pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum* L.) - pulses intercropping system and nutrient management on growth and yield of pearl millet during summer season of the years 2021 and 2022. The experiment was laid out in a split plot design consisting 24 treatment combinations replicated thrice. The main plot treatments comprised of four intercropping system viz., sole pearl millet (I<sub>1</sub>), pearl millet + greengram (I<sub>2</sub>), pearl millet + blackgram (I<sub>3</sub>), pearl millet + cowpea (I<sub>4</sub>) and six nutrient management practices in sub plot viz. control (F<sub>1</sub>), 100% RDF to pearl millet through inorganic fertilizer (F<sub>2</sub>), 5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer (F<sub>3</sub>), 5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV (F<sub>4</sub>), 25% RDN through FYM + 75% RDF through inorganic fertilizer (F<sub>5</sub>) and 50% RDN through FYM + 50% RDF through inorganic fertilizer (F<sub>6</sub>). Among main plot effect, significantly higher dry matter accumulation per plant, number of effective tillers per plant, earhead length, earhead weight, grain weight per earhead, grain and straw yields of pearl millet were noted in sole pearl millet (I<sub>1</sub>) during both the years of investigation as well as in pooled analysis. Whereas plant height and pearl millet equivalent yield was significantly higher in pearl millet + greengram (I<sub>2</sub>) intercropping system. In case of sub plot nutrient management practices, significantly higher values of plant height, dry matter accumulation per plant, number of effective tillers per plant, earhead length, earhead weight, grain weight per earhead, grain and straw yields as well as pearl millet equivalent yield were recorded in F<sub>4</sub> (5 t/ha FYM + RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV) which remained statistically at par with treatment F<sub>3</sub> (5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer) treatment.

**Keywords:** Intercropping system, Nutrient management, Pearl millet, Pulses, Growth, Yield

## INTRODUCTION

Indian economy is one of the fastest growing economies and is predominantly agrarian based. As our country races towards becoming one of the largest economies in the world it must ensure that agriculture its primary sector, should achieves its full-fledged growth. In India, rainfed agro-ecosystem the so-called grey patches untouched by green revolution occupies a very important position in the Indian agriculture. Approximately 56% of the total cultivated area in India falls under rainfed agriculture. The importance of the rainfed agriculture can be gauged from the fact that it contributes to 40% of the country's food production; accounts for much of the national area under coarse cereals (85%), pulses (83%), oilseeds (70%) and cotton (65%) as well as supports 60% of the total livestock populations (Venkateswarlu and Prasad 2012). Therefore, the developmental needs of the rainfed regions would be of foremost importance in future too.

Pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum* L.) is commonly known as Bajra, Indian millet and Cattail millet in India. It is the fourth most important food grain crop after rice, wheat, sorghum and among the millets, it comes next to sorghum in area and production. Besides being a staple diet of about 10% population of our country it is an important fodder crop also. The nutritive value of pearl millet is high and have higher amount of fat content as compared to other cereals and imparts substantial energy to the body with good digestibility (Sharma and Burark, 2015).It is one of the most important rainfed crops, being inherent drought-escaping mechanism and adaption to drier and low fertile conditions, it occupies a prime place in dryland agriculture and contributing significantly to country's food security. But typically pearl millet cultivated as a mono crop in arid and semi-arid region of the state that increased chance of low production as well as limited availability of land resources and declining soil fertility has raised concerns about ability of agriculture to sustain the increasing demand of the population. To counter the demand, we have to look for ways which enhance the use of currently available resources than in the past.

Intercropping is one promising practice which is effective to augment the total productivity per unit area of the land per unit time by growing more than one crop in the same field with an objective of better utilization of environmental resources. The basic concept of intercropping involves growing together two or more crops with the assumption that two crops can exploit the environment better than one and ultimately produce higher yield (Reddy and Willy, 1981). Cereal-pulses intercropping has attracted the attention of agronomists, possibly as a result of the established and theoretical advantages of

intercropping systems. Intercropping with pulses is a practice in which N fixed by latter enhances the qualitative and quantitative traits of the former to finally reach food security and sustainability. Pulses such as greengram, blackgram and cowpea are known to fix the atmospheric nitrogen with the help of *rhizobium* bacteria and it supplies the cereal crop with the required nitrogen. Nutrient management is one of the important cost effective factors known to augment the crop production. Hence, inclusion of pulses in any intercropping system has becomes imperative with the overall view of maintaining soil fertility and for economizing fertilizer use. Keeping the foregoing circumstances in mind present study is conducted to evaluate the effect of intercropping pulses *i.e.*, greengram, blackgram and cowpea with pearl millet and different nutrient management practices on the growth and yield of the pearl millet.

## **MATERIALS AND MATHOD**

The field experiment was carried out during summer season of both the years 2021 and 2022 on plot E-18 at College Farm, N. M. College of Agriculture, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari (Gujarat). Before commencement of experiment pre-planting, composite soil samples were collected from the experimental site at 0-15 cm depth and the composite sample was prepared and analyzed for physical and chemical characteristics. The soil texture of the experimental site was clayey in nature having 13.09% sand, 24.58% silt and 62.33% clay with medium depth (50 cm). The soil was slightly alkaline in nature with pH 8.10 and electrical conductivity of 0.42 dS/m. The initial nutrient status in soil was determined by using the standard procedure and result indicated that the experimental site was low in organic carbon (0.39%) and available nitrogen (196.23 kg/ha) while medium in available phosphorus (38.85 kg/ha) and high in potassium (290.20 kg/ha).

The experimental treatments were consisted of two factors in split plot design. Main plot had four treatments of intercropping system *viz.*, sole pearl millet (I<sub>1</sub>), pearl millet + greengram (I<sub>2</sub>), pearl millet + blackgram (I<sub>3</sub>) and pearl millet + cowpea (I<sub>4</sub>). While sub plot was consisting of six nutrient management practices *viz.*, Control (F<sub>1</sub>), 100% RDF to pearl millet through inorganic fertilizer (F<sub>2</sub>), 5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer (F<sub>3</sub>), 5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV (F<sub>4</sub>), 25% RDN through FYM + 75% RDF through inorganic fertilizer (F<sub>5</sub>) and 50% RDN through FYM + 50% RDF through inorganic fertilizer (F<sub>6</sub>) with three replications. The pearl millet variety GHB 1231, greengram variety GM 6, cowpea variety GC 6 and blackgram variety GU 3 were used as a test varieties. Pearl millet was sown in paired rows at 30 cm keeping 60 cm distance between 2 pairs to adjust 1 row of intercrop. Fertilizer application was done as per treatment to only

pearl millet crops (RDF is 80:40:00 kg NPK/ha) and RDF to pulses crop base on area (RDF is 20:40:00 kg NPK/ha).

Five plants were randomly selected from each net plot area at 30, 60 DAS and at harvest and the following observations were recorded. Plant population was recorded per net plot, Plant height (cm) was recorded from the base to the tip of the main shoot at 30, 60 DAS and at harvest. For dry matter accumulation (g/plant) five randomly selected plants were pulled out from each gross plot. The plants were washed out with water to remove soil adhered to roots. Plants were allowed to sun dry first and finally oven-dried at 65°C for 24 hours up to dry and constant weight and recorded accordingly. An emerging number of effective tillers that could bear earhead were monitored and recorded. Length of earhead and girth of earhead (cm) was measured from the selected earhead from each net plot. Test weight (g) of 1000 grains from the bulk sample for each treatment was worked out. Grain and straw yield of each net plot was measured and converted into kg per hectare. The harvest index was calculated by dividing the economic yield by the biological yield and expressed as percentage (%). This all the numerical observation were done by as the standard analytical procedures. Analysis of variance for split plot design and significance of variance was tested by f-test. Critical difference for examining treatment means for their significance was calculated at 5% significance. Pooled analysis of two years was worked out as per the procedure suggested by Panse and Sukhatme (1967). Bartlett's test was applied to examine the homogeneity of variance due to error. The variance obtained due to season x treatment components were tested against joint 54 estimate of error variance with an objective to find out whether season x treatment interaction exist or otherwise.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A) Effect of Intercropping System**

#### **Plant Population**

Upon examining the data presented in Table 1, it was observed that the initial and final plant population of pearl millet per net plot was not affected significantly by intercropping. This indicates that the variations in the parameter results were solely due to the effects of the treatments. Moreover, it can be inferred that pearl millet plants were able to thrive and survive in the competitive environment created by intercropping with greengram, blackgram and cowpea.

#### **Growth Parameters**

It is evident from data (Table 1) that the periodical plant height and dry matter accumulation per plant of pearl millet was significantly influenced by intercropping system at 60 DAS and

at harvest. However, there was no significant effect observed at 30 DAS. Significantly higher plant height of pearl millet at 60 DAS and harvest was observed with the treatment I<sub>2</sub> (pearl millet + greengram) being at par with I<sub>3</sub> (pearl millet + blackgram) and I<sub>4</sub> (pearl millet + cowpea). Although the treatment I<sub>1</sub> (sole pearl millet) resulted in significantly higher values of dry matter accumulation per plant at 60 DAS and at harvest, but it remained at par with treatments I<sub>2</sub> (pearl millet + greengram) and I<sub>3</sub> (pearl millet + blackgram). Higher dry matter accumulation per plant in sole pearl millet compared to intercropping systems can be attributed to reduced population pressure and inter-specific competition of intercrops for space, sunlight and nutrients. This, in turn leads to better and more vegetative growth per plant ultimately increasing the dry matter accumulation per plant of pearl millet (Mukta *et al.*, 2005).

### **Yield attributes**

All the yield contributing characters of pearl millet influenced significantly due to intercropping systems except earhead girth and test weight. Among the intercropping system, sole pearl millet registered statistically higher values of yield contributing characters of pearl millet *viz.*, number of effective tillers per plant, earhead length, earhead weight and grain weight per earhead which were found at par with treatment I<sub>2</sub> (pearl millet + greengram) and I<sub>3</sub> (pearl millet + blackgram). This can be attributed to the complementary interaction between intercrops and pearl millet which provide better environmental condition and nutrient from intercrops (Choudhary, 2009). Whereas, earhead girth and 1000 grain weight of pearl millet was not influenced significantly by intercropping systems. These results indicated that the presence of greengram or blackgram as intercrops with pearl millet did not have a negative impact on the yield attributed of pearl millet.

### **Yield**

Grain and straw yield of pearl millet were significantly influenced by the intercropping system. Sole pearl millet (I<sub>1</sub>) which was statistically at par with pearl millet + greengram (I<sub>2</sub>) and pearl millet + blackgram (I<sub>3</sub>) showed significantly higher grain and straw yield of pearl millet. The higher yield in sole stands of pearl millet over intercrop might be due to limited disturbance of the habitat and interactional competition in the sole cropping environment. It is reasonable to suggest that, two species of contrasting habit with respect to branching, leaf distribution, height, root distribution, mineral uptake or other morphological or physiological characters, will together be able to exploit the total environment more effectively over monoculture and thereby give increased overall yield.

Whereas, it is interesting to note that pearl millet + greengram (I<sub>2</sub>) intercropping system recorded significantly higher pearl millet equivalent yield among the systems which was approximately, 12, 29 and 80 per cent higher over pearl millet + blackgram, pearl millet + cowpea and sole pearl millet, respectively due to better utilization of resources and complimentary interaction between components crops as well as extra yield and high market price of greengram. These findings are in contrast with the results of Baldev *et al.* (2005) and Mukta *et al.* (2005). There is non-significant effect of intercropping system on harvest index of pearl millet.

## **B) Effect of Nutrient Management**

### **Plant population**

An appraisal of the data presented in Table 1 revealed that nutrient management treatments did not have a significant effect on the initial and final plant population of pearl millet. This indicates that the nutrient management treatments had no adverse effects on the plant population of pearl millet.

### **Growth Parameters**

The impact of different treatment of nutrient management practices on growth parameters had significant at 60 DAS and at harvest but not at 30 DAS. Application of 5 t/ha FYM + RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV (F<sub>4</sub>) resulted in significantly higher plant height and dry matter accumulation per plant of pearl millet at 60 DAS and harvest followed by treatment F<sub>3</sub> (5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer). The results might be due to application of chemical fertilizer with FYM based on STV will help to increased nutrient availability on poor soil of experimental field had low availability of nitrogen and medium availability of phosphorus. This might have facilitated early root formation and establishment of the crop leading to an increase in plant height as well as accessibility of nitrogen to plants at different crop growth stages have closely synchronized to the nutrients requirements leading to better absorption, translocation and assimilation of nitrogen by pearl millet plants which intensifies metabolic activity including amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids, enzymes, coenzymes, alkaloids and variety of hormones production leading to significant increase in dry matter yield (Apoorva *et al.*, 2010).

### **Yield attributes**

Significant difference were recorded among nutrient management practices with respect to yield contributing parameters *viz.*, number of effective tillers per plant, earhead girth, earhead length, earhead weight and grain weight per earhead of pearl millet at harvest. While, 1000 grains weight of pearl millet was not remarkably influenced due to nutrient management.

Statistically higher number of effective tillers per plant as well as higher value of earhead girth, earhead length, earhead weight and grain weight per earhead of pearl millet was observed with application of 5 t/ha FYM + RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV (F<sub>4</sub>) to pearl millet which was at par with treatment F<sub>3</sub> (5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer). Application of inorganic fertilizer with FYM increased availability of major plant nutrients to plants initially through inorganic fertilizer and subsequent mineralization of FYM. This yield attribute seems to have been brought about by adequate nutrient supply promotes photosynthetic activity and increases the production of assimilates such as sugars, which are transported to the developing earhead. This increased biomass accumulation provides the necessary energy and resources for the growth and elongation of the earhead contributing to its increased length, weight and girth. The similar results were obtained by Salim and Aljawhara (2017).

### **Yield**

As regards to the performance of pearl millet in terms of grain and straw yield as well as equivalent yield under different nutrient management treatments, a significant response to nutrient application was noticed from no application of fertilizer to 100% RDF. It was interesting to note that significantly higher grain and straw yield as well as equivalent yield of pearl millet was obtained under treatment F<sub>4</sub> (5 t/ha FYM + RDF through inorganic fertilizer based on STV) which remained statistically at par with treatment F<sub>3</sub> (5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer) over other treatments. Whereas, harvest index of pearl millet was not influenced significantly by nutrient management treatments. The significant increase in yield of pearl millet with these treatment (F<sub>4</sub> & F<sub>3</sub>) may be due to adequate supply of essential elements which facilitated better growth and development of pearl millet *via.*, increase in plant height, dry matter accumulation and possibly a result of higher uptake of nutrients, efficient partitioning of photosynthates into reproductive parts and also due to significantly higher values of yield attributes ultimately resulted in higher yield of pearl millet. Similarly, Apoorva *et al.* (2010) and Kumar *et al.* (2014) observed that increasing nutrient supply to pearl millet will help to increased grain yield of pearl millet.

### **C) Interaction Effect**

The interaction effect of intercropping system and nutrient management showed significant difference in dry matter accumulation per plant at 60 DAS and harvest, earhead weight, grain weight per earhead as well as grain and straw yield of pearl millet. Treatment combination I<sub>1</sub>F<sub>4</sub> (sole pearl millet along with 5 t/ha FYM + RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV) resulted in significantly higher dry matter accumulation per plant at 60 DAS and

harvest, earhead weight, grain weight per earhead, grain and straw yield but it remained statistically at par with treatment combinations I<sub>1</sub>F<sub>3</sub>, I<sub>2</sub>F<sub>4</sub>, I<sub>2</sub>F<sub>3</sub>, I<sub>3</sub>F<sub>4</sub>, I<sub>3</sub>F<sub>3</sub>, I<sub>4</sub>F<sub>4</sub> and I<sub>4</sub>F<sub>3</sub>. While pearl millet equivalent yield was recorded significantly higher under treatment combination I<sub>2</sub>F<sub>4</sub> (pearl millet + greengram intercropping system along with application of 5 t/ha FYM + RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV) and it was found at par with I<sub>2</sub>F<sub>3</sub> (pearl millet + greengram intercropping system along with application of 5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer). The findings are in accordance with the work of Gaina *et al.* (2014) and Patel (2021).

## CONCLUSION

From the result of two year study, it can be concluded that for obtaining proper growth and profitable yield, pearl millet + greengram (2:1 row ratio) intercropping system along with application of 5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer (80:40:00 NPK kg/ha) to pearl millet and 100% RDF to greengram (area based) should be followed during summer season under south Gujarat condition

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**Table: 2 Effect of intercropping system and nutrient management treatments on yield attributes of pearl millet crop (pooled data)**

Treatments	Effective tillers per plant	Earhead			Grain weight per earhead (g)	Test weight (g)
		Girth (cm)	Length (cm)	Weight (g)		
<b>I) Main plot treatment (Intercropping system)</b>						
<b>I<sub>1</sub></b> : Sole pearl millet	2.26	8.51	25.03	23.79	10.25	6.99
<b>I<sub>2</sub></b> : Pearl millet + greengram	2.18	8.37	24.46	23.23	10.01	6.93
<b>I<sub>3</sub></b> : Pearl millet + blackgram	2.15	8.27	23.92	22.85	9.83	6.90
<b>I<sub>4</sub></b> : Pearl millet + cowpea	1.99	8.13	21.82	20.96	9.03	6.79
<b>SEm ±</b>	0.03	0.13	0.42	0.37	0.16	0.08
<b>CD (P ≤ 0.05)</b>	0.11	NS	1.29	1.16	0.51	NS
<b>CV (%)</b>	10.09	9.34	10.61	9.96	10.19	7.47
<b>F) Sub plot treatment (Nutrient management)</b>						
<b>F<sub>1</sub></b> : Control (No fertilizer)	1.98	7.70	17.94	17.16	7.36	6.71
<b>F<sub>2</sub></b> : 100% RDF to pearl millet through inorganic fertilizer	2.10	8.21	24.24	22.27	9.54	6.83
<b>F<sub>3</sub></b> : 5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer	2.30	8.78	25.86	25.48	11.04	7.04
<b>F<sub>4</sub></b> : 5 t/ha FYM + RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV	2.32	8.87	26.13	25.57	11.11	7.03
<b>F<sub>5</sub></b> : 25% RDN through FYM + 75% RDF through inorganic fertilizer	2.10	8.28	24.91	23.55	10.10	6.94
<b>F<sub>6</sub></b> : 50% RDN through FYM + 50% RDF through inorganic fertilizer	2.06	8.09	23.78	22.23	9.54	6.87
<b>SEm ±</b>	0.04	0.13	0.43	0.32	0.14	0.09
<b>CD (P ≤ 0.05)</b>	0.11	0.37	1.22	0.91	0.39	NS
<b>CV (%)</b>	9.34	7.79	8.95	7.04	7.04	6.90
<b>Interaction effect (I × F)</b>						
<b>SEm ±</b>	0.08	0.26	0.87	0.65	0.28	0.19
<b>CD (P ≤ 0.05)</b>	NS	NS	NS	1.83	0.79	NS
<b>Significant interaction with years</b>	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

**Table: 3 Effect of intercropping system and nutrient management treatments on yield and harvest index of both crop as well pearl millet equivalent yield (pooled data)**

Treatments	Pearl millet yield			Intercrop yield			Pearl millet equivalent yield (kg/ha)
	Yield (kg/ha)		Harvest index	Yield (kg/ha)		Harvest index	
	Grain	Straw		Grain	Haulm		
<b>I) Main plot treatment (Intercropping system)</b>							
<b>I<sub>1</sub></b> : Sole pearl millet	2562	5551	0.32	-	-	-	2562
<b>I<sub>2</sub></b> : Pearl millet + greengram	2502	5485	0.31	532	819	0.39	4603
<b>I<sub>3</sub></b> : Pearl millet + blackgram	2461	5391	0.32	438	743	0.36	4076
<b>I<sub>4</sub></b> : Pearl millet + cowpea	2258	4878	0.32	396	796	0.32	3510
<b>SEm ±</b>	36.09	83.98	0.004	-	-	-	56.48
<b>CD (P ≤ 0.05)</b>	111.0	259	<b>NS</b>	-	-	-	174
<b>CV (%)</b>	8.85	9.46	7.44	-	-	-	9.19
<b>F) Sub plot treatment (Nutrient management)</b>							
<b>F<sub>1</sub></b> : Control (No fertilizer)	1839	3933	0.32	194	469	0.29	2374
<b>F<sub>2</sub></b> : 100% RDF to pearl millet through inorganic fertilizer	2387	5110	0.32	407	698	0.37	3498
<b>F<sub>3</sub></b> : 5 t/ha FYM + 100% RDF through inorganic fertilizer	2767	6196	0.31	622	975	0.39	4458
<b>F<sub>4</sub></b> : 5 t/ha FYM + RDF through inorganic fertilizer on base of STV	2776	6232	0.31	629	994	0.39	4486
<b>F<sub>5</sub></b> : 25% RDN through FYM + 75% RDF through inorganic fertilizer	2524	5393	0.32	450	826	0.35	3752
<b>F<sub>6</sub></b> : 50% RDN through FYM + 50% RDF through inorganic fertilizer	2382	5093	0.32	430	755	0.36	3558
<b>SEm ±</b>	35.16	77.67	0.004	-	-	-	48.75
<b>CD (P ≤ 0.05)</b>	99.00	219	<b>NS</b>	-	-	-	137.0
<b>CV (%)</b>	7.04	7.14	5.72	-	-	-	6.48
<b>Interaction effect (I × F)</b>							
<b>SEm ±</b>	70.32	155.3	0.007	-	-	-	97.50
<b>CD (P ≤ 0.05)</b>	198.0	437.0	<b>NS</b>	-	-	-	274.0

<b>Significant interaction with years</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>NS</b>
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