

Original Research Article

Impact of crop configuration and slag-based liquid fertilizers on growth and yield of oilseed *Brassica*

ABSTRACT

A field experiment was conducted at the Norman E. Borlaug Crop Research Centre of G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand, which is located at the foothills of the Himalayas to study the effect of crop configuration and slag based liquid fertilizers on growth and yield of oilseed *Brassica*. The experiment was laid out in a split-plot design with three replications. The experiment consisted of one main factor i.e. crop configuration and a subfactor i.e. different types of slag-based liquid fertilizers. Main plot consists of P₁- *Brassica juncea* in 22.5cm apart rows with alternate row extraction 30 DAS, P₂- *Brassica juncea* in 22.5cm apart rows with 50:50 alternate row extraction 20 DAS and 40 DAS, P₃- *Brassica napus* and *Brassica rugosa* in 22.5cm apart rows extracting *Brassica rugosa* 30 DAS, P₄- *Brassica napus* and *Brassica rugosa* in 22.5cm apart rows extracting *Brassica rugosa* 50:50, 20 and 40 DAS. Subplot consists of L₁ (liquid fertilizer 1), L₂ (liquid fertilizer 2), L₃ (liquid fertilizer 3), and C (Control). Crop configuration and slag-based liquid fertilizers significantly influenced growth and yield parameters. Plant height, dry matter production, leaf area index (LAI), no. of siliquae per plant and seed yield were significantly higher in plant configuration involving *Brassica napus* and *Brassica rugosa* in 22.5cm apart rows extracting *Brassica rugosa* 30 DAS and liquid fertilizer 3 in compare to others. Optimal crop configuration like P₃ with tailored fertilizer, L₃ improved the growth and yield of *Brassica* species in comparison to others.

Keywords: [*Brassica*, crop configuration, slag-based fertilizers]

1. INTRODUCTION

Edible oils from plants are vital for human nutrition and are key components in many industrial products. India stands out as one of the top global producers of oilseeds, which are crucial to its economy. Rapeseed-mustard is especially important among these, ranking just behind groundnut and soybean as a primary edible oilseed crop. Despite being the fourth-largest producer of vegetable oil globally, following China, Brazil, and the United States, India still imports a substantial amount of oilseeds to meet domestic demand.

Rapeseed-mustard, part of the Brassicaceae family, is a crucial source of edible oils in India. Ranking fourth globally in both area and production, India follows the European Union, Canada, and China in cultivating this crop. Rapeseed-mustard thrives as a winter crop in cooler temperatures with adequate soil moisture during growth and dry conditions for harvest (Chauhan *et al.*, 2011).

Plant density significantly impacts seed yield and other important agronomic traits. In oilseed rape, row spacing and plant density vary worldwide, depending on the environment, production system, and cultivar. Various nutrients and micronutrients are essential for the growth of oilseed crops, particularly those in the Brassicaceae family. Modern agriculture has relied heavily on fertilizers, boosting grain yields worldwide over the past six decades. However, prolonged use of chemical fertilizers has also resulted in declining crop yields and soil fertility in intensive farming systems. The chemical composition of elements like CaO, SiO₂, and MgO in steel slag is similar to the raw inorganic fertilizer material,

making it a viable option for soil enhancement and fertilizer manufacturing. Slag-based fertilizers, including slag silicate, lime, phosphate, and special iron matter fertilizers have shown promising results in enhancing crop productivity, (**White et al., 2017**). Using renewable sources and inputs is a key concept in sustainable agriculture, aiming for maximum crop productivity with minimal environmental impact. Therefore, achieving higher yields with reduced environmental risks necessitates new cultivation techniques that incorporate organic and liquid fertilizers.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

A field experiment was conducted at the Norman E. Borlaug Crop Research Centre of G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand, which is located at the foothills of the Himalayas during the *Rabi* season of 2022-23 and 2023-24. The experiment was laid out in a split-plot design with three replications. The experiment consisted of one main factor i.e. crop configuration and subfactor i.e. different types of slag-based liquid fertilizers. A total of 16 treatments formed with combinations of four main plots i.e. P₁- *Brassica juncea* in 22.5cm apart rows with alternate row extraction 30 DAS, P₂- *Brassica juncea* in 22.5cm apart rows with 50:50 alternate row extraction 20 DAS and 40 DAS, P₃- *Brassica napus* and *Brassica rugosa* in 22.5cm apart rows extracting *Brassica rugosa* 30 DAS, P₄- *Brassica napus* and *Brassica rugosa* in 22.5cm apart rows extracting *Brassica rugosa* 50:50, 20 and 40 DAS and four sub plot consist of L₁ (liquid fertilizer 1), L₂ (liquid fertilizer 2), L₃ (liquid fertilizer 3), C (Control).

The crop was provided with an initial spacing of 22.5cm, with the alternate rows removed as per the treatments with the final spacing becoming 45cm with 6.3 m × 5 m = 31.5 m²/plot size. Slag-based fertilizers were prepared with industrial slag along with organic and inorganic substances. They were applied at the time of sowing as soil drenching while in control plot, only water was applied.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Growth parameters

At harvest, P₃ (*B. napus*; with *B. rugosa* row extraction 30 DAS) showed maximum plant height during both the years being statistically at par with P₄ (*B. napus*; with *B. rugosa* 50:50 row extraction 20 and 40 DAS) while it was significantly higher over that of two configurations involving *B. juncea*. P₁ (*B. juncea*; alternate row extraction 30 DAS) was significantly higher over P₂ (*B. juncea*; 50:50 alternate row extraction 20 and 40 DAS) in terms of height during both the years. Among the slag based liquid fertilizers, L₃ (Liquid fertilizer 3) shown maximum plant height during both the year being significantly superior over that of other liquid fertilizers. Among the other two liquid fertilizers, L₂ (Liquid fertilizer 2) also significantly superior over L₁ (Liquid fertilizer 1) and C (Control) while L₁ (Liquid fertilizer 1) and C (Control) were statistically at par during both the years. This shift indicates that while *B. juncea* configurations are beneficial in the early stages, *B. napus* configurations support better final growth, possibly due to differences in growth dynamics and nutrient requirements between species. Similar observations were made by **Thomas et al. (2022)**, who noted species-specific growth responses in *Brassica* under different agronomic practices.

At harvest, P₃ (*B. napus*; with *B. rugosa* row extraction 30 DAS) exhibited the maximum dry matter accumulation, significantly higher than P₄ and configurations involving *B. juncea* (P₁ and P₂). Among the fertilizers, L₃ maintained the highest accumulation, significantly superior to others. The control group consistently showed the lowest dry matter accumulation across all stages and years. These findings indicate that specific crop configurations and the application of balanced slag-based liquid fertilizers, particularly L₃, significantly enhance dry matter accumulation in *Brassica* species. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of optimized nutrient management and crop configuration in improving *Brassica* growth and productivity. Similar trends were observed by **Kumar et al. (2024)**, who noted the positive effects of strategic nutrient management on dry matter accumulation in *Brassica* species. The same trend was observed in LAI at 90DAS for both years.

The interaction between crop configuration and slag based liquid fertilizers was not found significant.

3.2 Yield parameters

The P₃ configuration (*B. napus* with *B. rugosa* row extraction at 30 DAS) consistently resulted in the highest number of siliquae per plant and more numbers of seeds per siliqua across both years. Among the fertilizers, L₃ (Liquid fertilizer 3) had the highest number of siliquae and more numbers of seeds per siliqua, highlighting the effectiveness of slag-based fertilizers in promoting reproductive growth. Studies have shown that liquid fertilizers can significantly improve the reproductive traits of crops (**El Boukhari et al., 2020**).

P₃ (*B. napus*; with *B. rugosa* row extraction 30 DAS) produced the maximum seed yield being significantly superior over to that of other crop configurations during both the years. P₄ (*B. napus*; with *B. rugosa* 50:50 row extraction 20 and

40 DAS) also produced significantly higher seed yield over that of the two configurations involving *B. juncea*. The higher seed yield in these treatments are the result of a greater number of siliquae per plant and more numbers of seeds per siliqua. The increase in seed yield is largely a function of improvement in the yield attributes. P₁ (*B. juncea*; alternate row extraction 30 DAS) also remains significantly superior over P₂ (*B. juncea*; 50:50 alternate row extraction 20 and 40 DAS) in terms of seed yield during both years. The higher productivity of P₃ and P₄ configurations can be attributed to the complementary growth patterns and nutrient utilization between *B. napus* and *B. rugosa*, enhancing overall productivity and resource use efficiency. These findings align with those of Singh et al. (2019). Among the slag-based liquid fertilizers, L₃ (Liquid fertilizer 3) produced significantly superior seed yield over that of L₁ and L₂. Though L₁ produced higher seed yield over control but it did not differ statistically. In the present study, significantly more grain yield was observed in L₃ (Liquid fertilizer 3) might be due to improved nutrient content in slag-based fertilizers including FeO, MnO, and P₂O₅, which helped in the production of more dry matter, a number of branches and yield attributes (Yi et al., 2012, Das et al., 2019). Harvest index (HI) was non-significant during both years.

The interaction between crop configuration and slag-based liquid fertilizers was not found significant.

Table 1. Effect of crop configuration and slag-based liquid fertilizers on growth parameters of oilseed Brassica

Treatments	Plant height (cm)		Dry matter accumulation (g)		LAI	
	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24
Crop configuration (P)						
P ₁ (<i>B. juncea</i> ; alternate row extraction 30 DAS)	181.3	192.5	49.53	50.61	3.19	3.28
P ₂ (<i>B. juncea</i> ; 50:50 alternate row extraction 20 and 40 DAS)	172.6	181.2	45.78	46.56	3.03	3.10
P ₃ (<i>B. napus</i> ; with <i>B. rugosa</i> row extraction 30 DAS)	205.8	216.3	54.12	56.17	4.39	4.39
P ₄ (<i>B. napus</i> ; with <i>B. rugosa</i> 50:50 row extraction 20 and 40 DAS)	201.8	210.4	50.28	52.28	4.22	4.21
SEm±	2.4	3.9	0.57	0.85	0.05	0.06
CD (P=0.05)	8.4	11.4	1.99	2.94	0.14	0.17
Slag-based liquid fertilizer (L)						
L ₁ (Liquid fertilizer 1)	186.8	195.8	49.07	50.18	3.72	3.73
L ₂ (Liquid fertilizer 2)	193.3	203.1	50.52	52.26	3.75	3.77
L ₃ (Liquid fertilizer 3)	201.1	211.3	52.78	54.46	3.89	3.92
C (Control)	179.9	190.1	47.21	48.52	3.64	3.61
SEm±	2.4	2.5	0.66	0.82	0.04	0.05
CD (P=0.05)	7.0	7.4	1.93	2.34	0.11	0.13
Interaction (PXL)	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

Table 2. Effect of crop configuration and slag based liquid fertilizers on yield parameters of oilseed Brassica

Treatments	Number of siliquae per plant		Seeds per siliquae		Seed yield (kg/ha)		HI	
	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24
Crop configuration (P)								
P ₁ (<i>B. juncea</i> ; alternate row extraction 30 DAS)	181.3	192.5	15.27	15.29	1719	1820	22.2	22.4
P ₂ (<i>B. juncea</i> ; 50:50 alternate row extraction 20 and 40 DAS)	172.6	181.2	14.95	14.98	1552	1651	22.3	22.5
P ₃ (<i>B. napus</i> ; with <i>B. rugosa</i> row extraction 30 DAS)	205.8	216.3	18.92	20.71	2129	2257	22.9	23.3
P ₄ (<i>B. napus</i> ; with <i>B. rugosa</i> 50:50 row extraction 20 and 40 DAS)	201.8	210.4	18.56	19.46	1981	2108	22.7	22.9

SEm±	2.4	3.9	0.27	0.32	40	37	0.5	0.2
CD (P=0.05)	8.4	11.4	0.95	0.96	137	126	NS	NS
Slag-based liquid fertilizer (L)								
L₁ (Liquid fertilizer 1)	186.8	195.8	16.61	17.25	1764	1871	22.4	22.6
L₂ (Liquid fertilizer 2)	193.3	203.1	17.17	17.83	1891	2008	22.7	22.8
L₃ (Liquid fertilizer 3)	201.1	211.3	17.82	18.42	2048	2180	22.8	23.1
C (Control)	179.9	190.1	16.12	16.71	1678	1778	22.0	22.2
SEm±	2.4	2.5	0.29	0.27	36	35	0.3	0.4
CD (P=0.05)	7.0	7.4	0.86	0.81	104	104	NS	NS
Interaction (PXL)	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

4. CONCLUSION

With altered plant configuration, *B. napus*; with *B. rugosa* row extraction 30 DAS along with the tailored source of nutrients i.e. liquid fertilizer 3 made of using non-conventional materials can improve the growth and yield of *Brassica* species which can pave the way for sustainable agriculture with improved fertilization and even can be acted as a new source of fertilizer.

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ABBREVIATIONS

LAI- LEAF AREA INDEX

HI – HARVEST INDEX