

## **Impact of seed priming and seed rate on productivity and economic profitability of wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.)**

### **Abstract**

In order to achieve optimal plant growth, the lifecycle of plants encounters various critical stage such as uneven seed germination, poor and early seedling growth which ultimately results in low crop yield. Keeping in view of the hypothesis of seed priming enhances germination, reduces seedling emergence time, and improves yield and yield contributing characters of plants, a field experiment was conducted during Rabi season to study the effect of seed priming and seed rate on the performance of wheat. The experiment was laid out in factorial randomized block design with three replications. The treatments included four seed priming methods (P1: no seed priming, P2: water seed priming, P3: 1% KNO<sub>3</sub> seed priming, P4: 1% CaCl<sub>2</sub> seed priming) and three seed rates (S1: 100 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>, S2: 125 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>, S3: 150 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) using the wheat variety HD-2967. The result revealed that the yield and yield attributes of wheat were significantly influenced by the priming techniques. Seed priming with 1% CaCl<sub>2</sub> solution increased grain yield (3977 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>), number of ear head (275.61 m<sup>-2</sup>), length of ear head (11.29 cm), number of grains per ear head (46.17) and test weight (41.11 g) and was found to be statistically at par with seed priming with 1% KNO<sub>3</sub>, but significantly superior over seed priming with water and dry seeding. Different seed rate significantly influenced grain and straw yield and yield contributing characters of wheat. The higher grain yield (3959 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>), straw yield (5095 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) and no. of ear head (287.83) was obtained with the seed rate@150 kg/ha followed by 125 and 100 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> of seed rate.

**Key words:** Productivity, Profitability, Seed priming, Seed rate, Wheat

### **Introduction**

Wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) is the most important rabi season cereal grown in India as well as in Bihar. It is an annual, hexaploidy (2n = 6X= 42) crop, belongs to the family Poaceae (Gramineae). It is the most cultivated cereal crop of the world which ranks first (30% of all cereals) followed by rice (27%) and maize (25%). Wheat production of our country is 109.59 million tons from 29.65-million-hectare area with productivity of 3.47 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (Directorate of economics and statistics of India, 2021-22). Globally, India is the second largest producer of

wheat accounting 12% in area and 11.9% in production. In India, U.P ranks first in area and production while Punjab ranks first in productivity. In Bihar, area under wheat cultivation is 2.22 m ha with production 6.34 m ton having average yield of 2855 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> (USDA 2021-22). Agronomic practices, particularly seed rate, play an indispensable role in maintaining optimum plant population and for realizing higher yield. The blanket recommendation of seed rates is not suitable for all varieties and in all agro-ecosystems. Hence, proper seed rate is a must to provide optimum space and proper availability of moisture and nutrients which certainly will help for better growth and development of a crop. If plant density is above the optimum, the plant development might be poor because of competition for nutrients, light and space. On the other hand, if it is below optimum, at that point the nutrients, space and light won't be used to their full degree, subsequently coming about into poor yield. Yield increase to some extent increases linearly with the increase in plant population until the light penetration in crop canopy becomes a limiting factor. Hence, seed rate must be standardized when different seed priming's has been used.

Pre-sowing seed treatments or seed priming offer potential solution to poor seedling establishment and improve vigour by overcoming the germination constraints under normal as well as adverse conditions. But effectiveness of seed priming is more pronounced in adverse conditions like prevailing low temperature in wheat (Farooq et al., 2008). Seed priming technique improves the germination, seedling emergence, growth and yield attributes of crop. Seed priming with KCl or CaCl<sub>2</sub> improved the seedling growth, stand establishment as well yield performance in direct seeded rice (Farooq et al., 2006). Likely, vigorous seedling growth, emergence and yield performance by CaCl<sub>2</sub> priming has also been reported in wheat under late sown conditions (Farooq et al., 2008). Priming of normal or low vigour seeds improved the vigour of seedling in term of radicle length, plumule length and their root: shoot ratio and fresh weight (Kausar et al., 2009). Moosavi et al. (2009) reported that primed seeds significantly improved the germination percentage, speed of germination, root length and seed vigour. When low vigour seeds were primed showed improved germination performance (Bray, 1995). Seed priming with various salts of calcium, potassium and/or priming with growth regulators or hydro priming proved best to enhance vigour of seed and also improved stand establishment (Basra et al., 2003). Number of productive tillers per unit area, biological yield, grain yield and harvest index were maximum in osmo-primed wheat under late condition (Sattar et al., 2010). It is

evident from previous studies that primed crops showed rapid and uniform emergence, good stand establishment and better performance even under stressful environment as compared to non-primed crops. Thus, the current study was undertaken to assess the impact of seed priming and seed rate in relation to enhance nutrient uptake, growth and performance of wheat.

## **Materials and Methods**

The experiment was carried during *rabi* seasons of 2020 and 2021, to evaluate the effect of seed priming and seed rate on growth and nutrient uptake of wheat (var. HD-2967) crop. The experimental plot had uniform topography. The climatic condition of this place is tropical to subtropical and somewhat semi-arid in nature and is characterized by very dry summer, moderate rainfall and very cold winter. The field experiment was laid out in factorial randomized block design replicated thrice. Altogether, there were 12 treatment combinations consisting of four seed priming; P<sub>1</sub>-no seed priming (dry seed), P<sub>2</sub>- seed priming with water, P<sub>3</sub>- seed priming with 1% KNO<sub>3</sub>, P<sub>4</sub>- seed priming with 1% CaCl<sub>2</sub> and three seed rates S<sub>1</sub>- seed rate @100 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>, S<sub>2</sub>- seed rate @ 125 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> and S<sub>3</sub>- seed rate @ 150 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>. Seed of wheat was primed with 1% KNO<sub>3</sub> and 1% CaCl<sub>2</sub> solutions and also in water for hours. Non-primed seed was included as a control treatment.

## **Yields and Yield attributes:**

The numbers of ear head bearing tillers, length of ear head, Number of grains per ear head were counted at maturity from randomly selected 0.25 m<sup>-2</sup> areas at five locations in net plot area. It was recorded in the same way as the tiller numbers were recorded during progressive growth period. Hence, after threshing and weighing, a random sample of grains was taken from each plot and one-thousand grain were counted at random with the help of mechanical seed counter and the weight (g) was taken as test weight.

Harvested bundles of wheat plants from each net plot were threshed and winnowed separately. After cleaning, the grain as well as the straw were dried plot wise and consequently the samples were taken from each plot to determine the moisture content with the help of moisture meter. Then the weight of both grain as well as straw were recorded separately at 12 per cent moisture before being subjected to its statistical analysis. The net plot yield was then finally converted into kg ha<sup>-1</sup>.

Harvest index was calculated by dividing economic (grain) yield by the total biological (grain + straw) yield and expressed as percentage:

$$\text{H.I.} = \frac{\text{Economic yield (grain yield) kg ha}^{-1}}{\text{Biological yield (grain + straw yield) kg ha}^{-1}} \times 100$$

Economic Analysis: The common cost of cultivation was worked out by considering all the expenses based on the prevailing market prices incurred during the cultivation process. Grain and straw yield were separately compared to its current market price, and the values were summarised to achieve gross returns. Net returns were calculated by subtracting total cost of cultivation from gross return. The return per rupee investment or benefit: cost ratio was calculated by dividing the net return by the total cost of cultivation.

$$\text{Benefit: Cost ratio} = \frac{\text{Net return}}{\text{Total cost of cultivation}}$$

### Result and Discussion

After two years of experimentation, it was observed that Seed priming with 1% CaCl<sub>2</sub> (P<sub>4</sub>) had the highest number of ear head m<sup>-2</sup> (275.61), the longest ear heads (11.29 cm), the highest number of grains per ear heads (46.17) and the highest 1000 grain weight of (41.11 g) however, had no any statistical differentiation with other two seed priming i.e. seed priming with water (P<sub>2</sub>) and seed priming with 1% KNO<sub>3</sub> (P<sub>3</sub>). Although the lowest values were obtained under the unprimed treatment (Table 1). Seed rate did not influence the various yield attributes significantly. Seed rate@150 kg/ha had the highest number of ear heads m<sup>-2</sup> (287.33), however, maximum length of ear heads (10.96 cm) and maximum number of grains per ear heads (44.75) were found under the seed rate@125 kg/ha.

Significantly the highest grain yield (3977 kg/ha) was recorded in P<sub>4</sub> treatment i.e., seed priming with 1% CaCl<sub>2</sub> which was statistically at par with value (3935 kg/ha) realized under P<sub>3</sub> i.e., seed priming with 1% KNO<sub>3</sub>. However, it was statistically superior with P<sub>1</sub> and P<sub>2</sub> i.e., unprimed (3627 kg/ha) and seed priming with water (3688 kg/ha), respectively. Likewise, the highest straw yield (5334 kg/ha) was recorded in P<sub>4</sub> treatment i.e., seed priming with 1% CaCl<sub>2</sub> which was statistically at par with value (5262 kg/ha) realized under P<sub>3</sub> i.e., seed priming with 1% KNO<sub>3</sub>. However, it was statistically superior with P<sub>1</sub> and P<sub>2</sub> i.e., unprimed (4897 kg/ha) and seed priming with water (4980 kg/ha), respectively. So far as seed rate is concerned, significantly the highest grain yield of 3959 kg/ha as well as straw yield of 5317 kg/ha was obtained from seed rate@150 kg/ha which was statistically at par with value (grain yield 3885 kg/ha and straw

yield 5229 kg/ha) realized under  $S_2$  i.e., seed rate@125 kg/ha (Table 2). However, it was statistically superior with  $S_1$  i.e., seed rate@100 kg/ha. However, their interaction (P X S) did not reach the level of significance. Significantly the highest biological yield (9311 kg/ha) was recorded in  $P_4$  treatment i.e., seed priming with 1%  $CaCl_2$  which was statistically at par with value (9198 kg/ha) realized under  $P_3$  i.e., seed priming with 1%  $KNO_3$ . However, it was statistically superior with  $P_1$  and  $P_2$  i.e., unprimed (8525 kg/ha) and seed priming with water (8668 kg/ha), respectively. Similarly, the highest biological yield of 9276 kg/ha was obtained from seed rate@150 kg/ha which was statistically at par with value (9115 kg/ha) realized under  $S_2$  i.e., seed rate@125 kg/ha. However, it was statistically superior with  $S_1$  i.e., seed rate@100 kg/ha. A perusal of ANOVA table revealed that the differences due to seed priming and seed rate did not significantly influence the harvest index. Even their interaction effects did not create any significant difference in this regard. However maximum numerical value of harvest index 42.80 was recorded in  $P_3$  i.e., seed priming with 1%  $KNO_3$  and lowest value of harvest index 42.54 was obtained at  $P_1$  i.e., unprimed. Moreover, numerically the highest harvest index of 42.68 was recorded in case of seed rate@150 kg/ha. It was followed by seed rate@100 kg/ha (42.66) and the lowest numerical value of harvest index (42.63) was noted in seed rate@125 kg/ha.

Significantly the highest net return of 64735 Rs. /ha was recorded under application of seed priming with 1%  $CaCl_2$ , which was statistically at par with the value realized under  $P_2$  (59956 Rs. / ha) and  $P_3$  (61567 Rs. / ha) i.e., seed priming with water and seed priming with 1%  $KNO_3$ , respectively. However, it was statistically superior with the value obtained under  $P_1$  (59431 Rs. / ha) i.e., unprimed (Table 3). Similar trend was observed under benefit cost ratio, where, the highest benefit cost ratio (1.87) was recorded under  $P_4$  i.e., seed priming with 1%  $CaCl_2$  which was statistically at par with  $P_1$  (1.83) and  $P_2$  (1.84) i.e., unprimed and seed priming with water, respectively. However, it was statistically superior with the value realized under  $P_3$  (1.28) i.e., seed priming with 1%  $KNO_3$ . Among all the seed rate, maximum net return of 64244 Rs. /ha was recorded from seed rate@150 kg/ha which was statistically at par with the seed rate@125 kg/ha 63289 (Rs. /ha) The lowest net returns of 56733 Rs/ha was recorded from seed rate@100 kg/ha.

**Table 1: Effect of seed priming and seed rate on yield attributes of wheat**

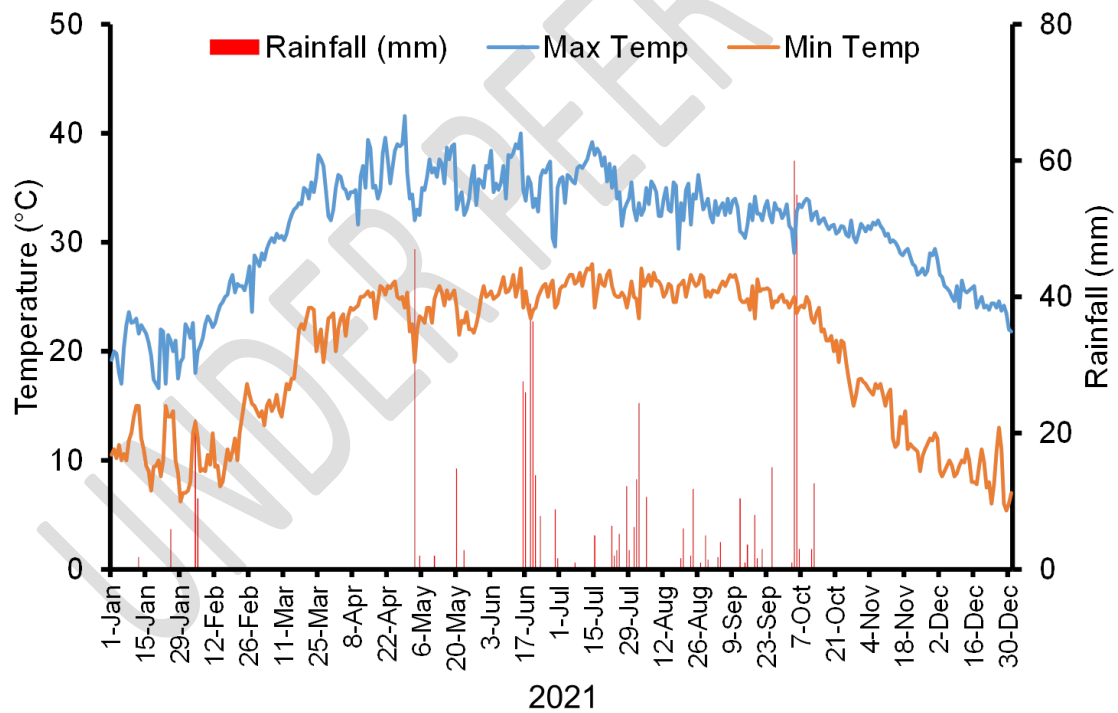
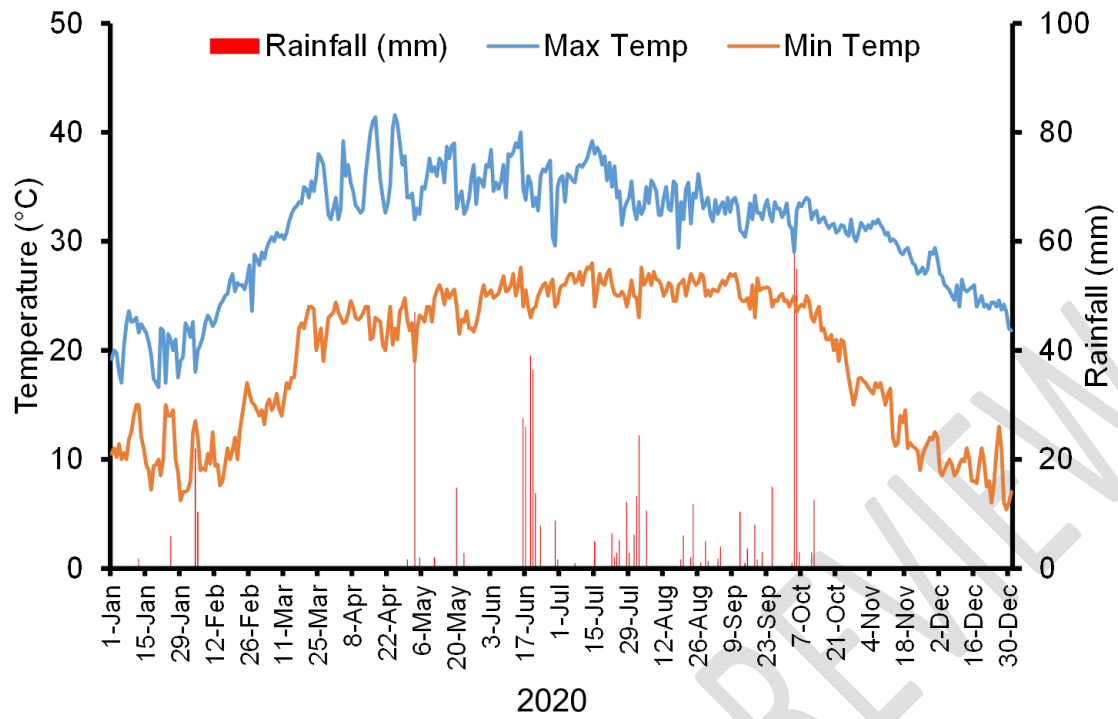
Treatments		Yield attributing characters			
		No. of ear head/m <sup>2</sup>	Length of ear head (cm)	No. of grains/ ear head	1000 grain weight (g)
P <sub>1</sub>	Unprimed	261.94	10.11	42.11	37.22
P <sub>2</sub>	Seed priming with water	270.06	10.22	42.56	38.11
P <sub>3</sub>	Seed priming with 1% KNO <sub>3</sub>	274.61	10.94	45.22	40.89
P <sub>4</sub>	Seed priming with 1% CaCl <sub>2</sub>	275.61	11.29	46.17	41.11
<b>SEm±</b>		3.09	0.30	1.05	1.08
<b>CD (P=0.05)</b>		9.08	0.89	3.08	3.17
<b>Treatments</b>					
S <sub>1</sub>	Seed rate@100 kg/ha	248.25	10.30	43.33	40.08
S <sub>2</sub>	Seed rate@125 kg/ha	275.58	10.96	44.75	39.25
S <sub>3</sub>	Seed rate@150 kg/ha	287.83	10.67	43.96	38.67
<b>SEm±</b>		2.68	0.26	0.91	0.93
<b>CD (P=0.05)</b>		7.86	NS	NS	NS
<b>P X V</b>		NS	NS	NS	NS

**Table 2: Effect of seed priming and seed rate on grain yield, straw yield, biological yield and harvest index of wheat**

Treatments		Grain yield (kg/ha)	Straw yield (kg/ha)	Biological yield (kg/ha)	Harvest index (%)
P <sub>1</sub>	Unprimed	3627	4897	8525	42.54
P <sub>2</sub>	Seed priming with water	3688	4980	8668	42.55
P <sub>3</sub>	Seed priming with 1% KNO <sub>3</sub>	3935	5262	9198	42.80
P <sub>4</sub>	Seed priming with 1% CaCl <sub>2</sub>	3977	5334	9311	42.72
<b>SEm±</b>		79	108	187	0.07
<b>CD (P=0.05)</b>		233	316	548	NS
<b>Treatments</b>					
S <sub>1</sub>	Seed rate@100 kg/ha	3577	4808	8385	42.66
S <sub>2</sub>	Seed rate@125 kg/ha	3885	5229	9115	42.63
S <sub>3</sub>	Seed rate@150 kg/ha	3959	5317	9276	42.68
<b>SEm±</b>		68	93	162	0.06
<b>CD (P=0.05)</b>		201	274	475	NS
<b>P X V</b>		NS	NS	NS	NS

**Table 3: Effect of seed priming and seed rate on economics of wheat.**

Treatments		Cost of cultivation (Rs. ha <sup>-1</sup> )	Gross return (Rs. ha <sup>-1</sup> )	Net return (Rs. ha <sup>-1</sup> )	B:C ratio
P <sub>1</sub>	Unprimed	32405	91836	59431	1.83
P <sub>2</sub>	Seed priming with water	32680	92636	59956	1.84
P <sub>3</sub>	Seed priming with 1% KNO <sub>3</sub>	36645	98212	61567	1.68
P <sub>4</sub>	Seed priming with 1% CaCl <sub>2</sub>	34655	99390	64735	1.87
<b>SEm±</b>		-	1631	1631	0.03
<b>CD (P = 0.05)</b>		-	4784	4784	0.11
<b>Treatments</b>					
S <sub>1</sub>	Seed rate@100 kg/ha	33096	89830	56733	1.72
S <sub>2</sub>	Seed rate@125 kg/ha	34096	97386	63289	1.86
S <sub>3</sub>	Seed rate@150 kg/ha	35096	99340	64244	1.84
<b>SEm±</b>		-	1412	1412	0.03
<b>CD (P=0.05)</b>		-	4143	4143	0.09
<b>P X V</b>		NS	NS	NS	NS



**Figure 1.** Meteorological data during Experimental Years 2020-2021

**Conclusions:**

We experienced from the experimental results that the priming technique as pre-germinative enhancement technique significantly improved the productivity as well as profitability of wheat. Seed priming with 1% CaCl<sub>2</sub> resulted in better seedling emergence, uniform stand establishment, earlier flowering and, ultimately, better crop yields with good economic returns. Besides, the indiscriminate use of seeding rates not only increases production costs but usually decrease wheat grain yield. Therefore, the priming methods along with proper seed rate have the large potential for further enhancement in wheat production. The priming methods adopted should be simple and affordable for its easy spread and adaptability to the farmers.

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