

**Original Research Article**

**Studies on Soil Health Condition as Influenced by Sole and Intercropping System of Maize and Pulses under Rainfed Conditions**

**Abstract**

Field experiments were conducted at Research Farm of division of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, Faculty of Agriculture & Regional Research Station, (FOA & RRS) Wadura, SKUAST-K, to investigate the soil health condition as influenced by Sole and Intercropping System of Maize and Pulses Under Rainfed Conditions with following aim 1, Impact of Intercropping on Soil health condition . 2, Impact of Intercropping on yield and dry matter yield of maize-pulse crop and 3, Impact of Intercropping on nutrient content and uptake of N, P, K, Ca and Zn. Seven treatments laid out in a completely randomized block design with three replicates. The cropping system consisted of sole maize, sole pulse (local bean), maize + pulse in single row at 60cm in row ratio (1:1), maize + pulse in paired row at 60cm in row ratio (1:2), maize + pulse in single row at 75cm in row ratio (1:1), maize + pulse in paired row at 75cm in row ratio (1:2) and maize with pulse as mixed cropping. Maize variety SMC4 (Shalimar Maize Composite 4 and Pulse variety (Local bean, Rajmash) were used. At the end of the vegetative cycle, yield and yield components were measured. Results showed that at harvest, dry matter yield of treatment T4 (maize + pulse in paired row at 60cm in row ratio (1:2) , T6 (maize + pulse in paired row at 75cm in row ratio (1:2) were found to be statistically at par but statistically significant over the other treatments with respect to dry matter yield as compared to the other treatments. Cropping system had a significant effect on maize grain equivalent yield. The maize equivalent yield of treatment T4 (maize + pulse in paired row at 60cm in row ratio (1:2), T6 (maize + pulse in paired row at 75cm in row ratio (1:2) were found to be statistically at par but statistically significant over the other treatments. Effect of cropping system on nutrient content and uptake was found higher in treatment T4 as compared to other treatments. Treatment T4 were found statistically significant at C.D. ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) as compared to other treatments. After harvesting of crop the soil sample (0-15cm) were collected from each plot and analyzed for various soil properties. The highest bulk density ( $1.24 \text{ Mg m}^{-3}$ ) was recorded in treatment T1 (sole maize) and lowest ( $1.19 \text{ Mg m}^{-3}$ ) in treatment T2 (sole pulse). Slightly higher pH was recorded in treatment T1 (sole maize). Highest soil organic carbon (1.49%) was found in treatment T2 (sole pulse) and lowest found in treatment T1 (sole maize). The available N, P, K ( $\text{kg ha}^{-1}$ ) are as follow. Highest N (315.19), P (10.70) and K (212.16) was recorded in treatment T2 (sole pulse) and lowest N (275.79), P (10.54) and K (207.19) was recorded in treatment T1 (sole maize) respectively. Based on these results, it is concluded that

increased intimacy between maize + pulse (local bean) in paired row at 60cm in row ratio 1:2) in an intercrop system increased maize yields, nutrient uptake and improved soil health condition.

**Keywords:** Intercropping, row ratio, Maize, pulse, soil health, yield, nutrient content and uptake.

## Introduction

Diversification of cropping system is necessary to get high yield and returns, to maintain soil health, preserve environment and meet daily food and fodder requirement of humans and animals, respectively (Padhi and Panigrahi, 2006). Growing of two or more crop species simultaneously in the same field during a growing season is defined as intercropping (Ofori and Stern, 1987). Intercropping is an age-old practice in India, especially under rainfed conditions, which aim to increase total productivity per unit area through equitable and judicious use of land resource and farming inputs including labours. This advanced agro technique has been practiced from past decades and achieved the goal of agriculture. Risk may be minimized in intercropping (Woolley and Davis, 1991). The intercropping system besides meeting the various requirements of a farmer, also harnesses the farm resources efficiently. Cereal-legume intercropping has potential to provide nitrogen, depends on densities of crop, light interception, crop species and nutrients. Intercrops have been identified to conserve water largely because of early high leaf area index and higher leaf area. Cereal-legume use water more efficiently than monocropping and might be better control of weeds, pests and diseases, as maize is susceptible to many insects and diseases (Drinwater *et al.*, 2002) and intercropping appears to be a very promising cultural practice for this purpose and has been suggested as a means to help control erosion. Banik and Sharma (2009) reported that cereal-legume intercropping systems were superior to monocropping. Maize-french bean gave high maize equivalent yield over sole maize yield (Hugar and Palled, 2008b) and kernel yield of maize was unaffected in maize-french bean intercropping (Pandita, 2001). Intercropping has not only the technique been shown to increase yields but it is also a useful means of spreading risk: if one crop fails another may still provide sufficient food until the next harvest (Trenbath, 1999). Development of feasible and economically viable intercropping system largely depends on adoption of proper planting geometry, planting time, selection of compatible crops and nutrient management in rainfed conditions. To feed the exponentially growing world population, intercropping is an important agronomic strategy that involves the growing of two or more crops on the same piece of

land (Katayayan, 2005). It is an ancient agronomic practice used in traditional agriculture and still in vogue in most of the developing countries. Intercropping system maximizes the productivity as well as resource utilization per unit of land. Almost all the concerns for agriculture (agriculture technologies, government farm policies, modern crop varieties and research efforts) are focused on the production of sole cropping, while some drawbacks in modern agriculture system force the farmers to take interest in intercropping for the production of fiber and food (Kirschenmann, 2007; Vandermeer, 1989). Intercropping systems provide 15–20% of food supply to the world (Lithourgidis *et al.*, 2011). In fact, intercropping has ecological, biological and socioeconomic advantages over sole cropping (Heet *et al.*, 2012; Waktola *et al.*, 2014).

Legumes fix the atmospheric nitrogen with the help of rhizobium bacteria lives in the root nodules of host plant. Maize plant take the nitrogen from the soil for its growth and development in the opposite rhizobium plant take the food from host plant. Maize plant also give support to pulse for their growth. Keeping the above cited facts into consideration, the present investigation designated “**Studies on Soil Health Condition influenced by Sole and Intercropping System of Maize and Pulse under Rainfed Condition**” has been undertaken.

**AIM:**

- To find out the impact of intercropping on soil health.
- To study the impact of intercropping on yield and dry matter yield of maize-pulse crop.
- To study the impact of intercropping on nutrient content and uptake of N, P and K by maize-pulse crop.

## **Materials and methods**

### **Location and existing soil Nutrient status**

A field experiment entitled “Studies on Soil Health Condition as influenced by Sole and Intercropping System of Maize and Pulse under Rainfed Conditions” was conducted at Research Farm of division of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, Faculty of Agriculture & Regional Research Station, (FoA & RRS) Wadura, SKUAST-K.

## **Experiment Details**

### **Weather condition during the cropping season**

The climate is temperate and continental type characterized by hot summers and severe winters with average annual precipitation is 812 mm (average of past thirty years) and more than 80 per cent of precipitation occurs during December to April in the form of rains and snow received from western disturbances. The monthly mean meteorological data collected

during the crop growing season is presented in Fig.1. It is evident from data that mean maximum and minimum temperatures during 2019 were 33.34°C and 6.81°C respectively. The mean maximum and minimum relative humidity were 87.57% and 44% respectively. The total precipitation amounted to 398.1 mm during crop growth season.

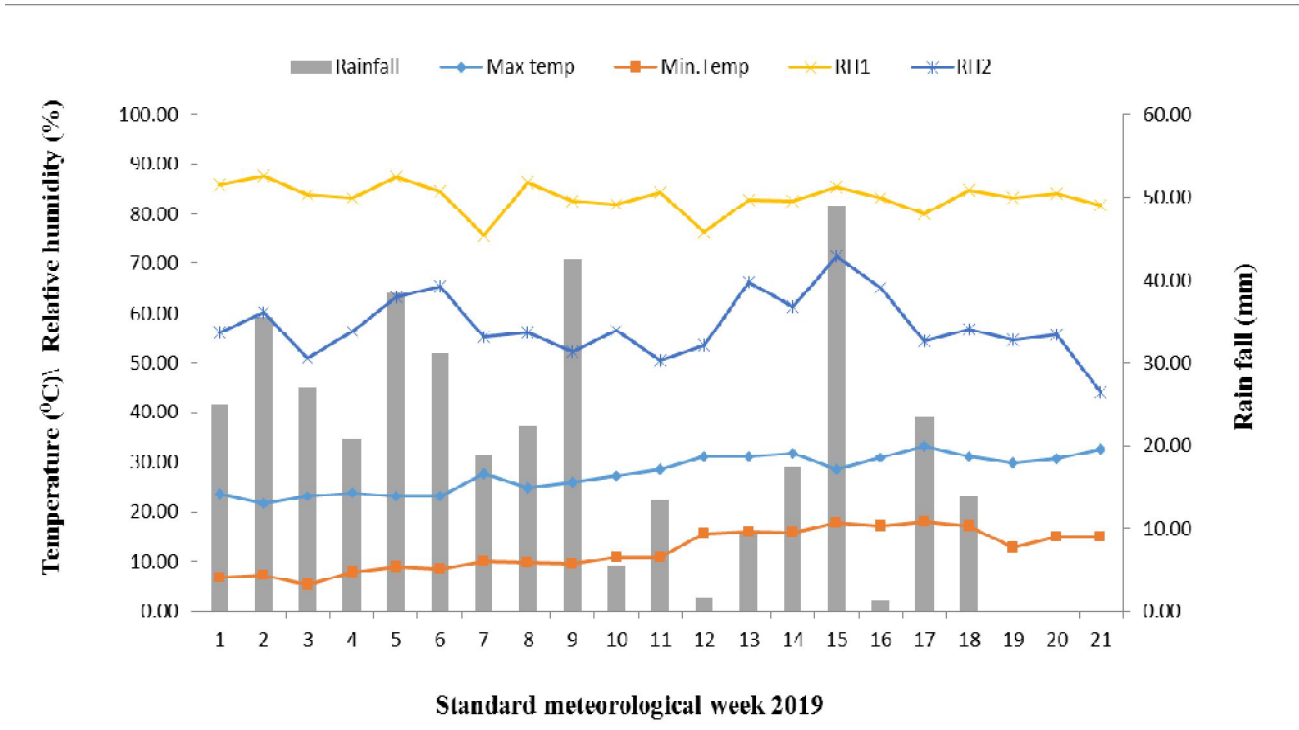


Fig 1 : Weather condition during crop growing period

The experiment was laid out in completely randomized block design (RCBD), comprising of eight treatments and three replications. As Presented in( Table 1).

**Table 1. Experiment details**

**Treatments Combinations**

- i) T<sub>1</sub>=Sole Maize
- ii) T<sub>2</sub>=Sole Pulse
- iii) T<sub>3</sub>=Maize+Pulse in singlerow at 60cm(1:1)
- iv) T<sub>4</sub>=Maize+Pulse in paired row at 60cm(1:2)
- v) T<sub>5</sub>=Maize+Pulse in singlerow at 75cm(1:1)
- vi) T<sub>6</sub>=Maize+Pulse in paired row at 75cm(1:2)
- vii) T<sub>7</sub>=Maize+Pulse as mixed cropping

Vermicompost at the rate 10 t ha<sup>-1</sup> was uniformly applied 10 days before sowing to each plot and well mixed with soil. The fertilizer dose of 120:60:30 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> were applied to the crop. Full dose of phosphorus and potassium through diammonium phosphate and muriate of potash respectively and half dose of nitrogen through urea was applied to each plot before sowing and remaining half dose of nitrogen through urea was top dressed in two equal splits, one at 30-35 days after sowing at knee high stage and 2<sup>nd</sup> 10 to 12 days before retelling stage.

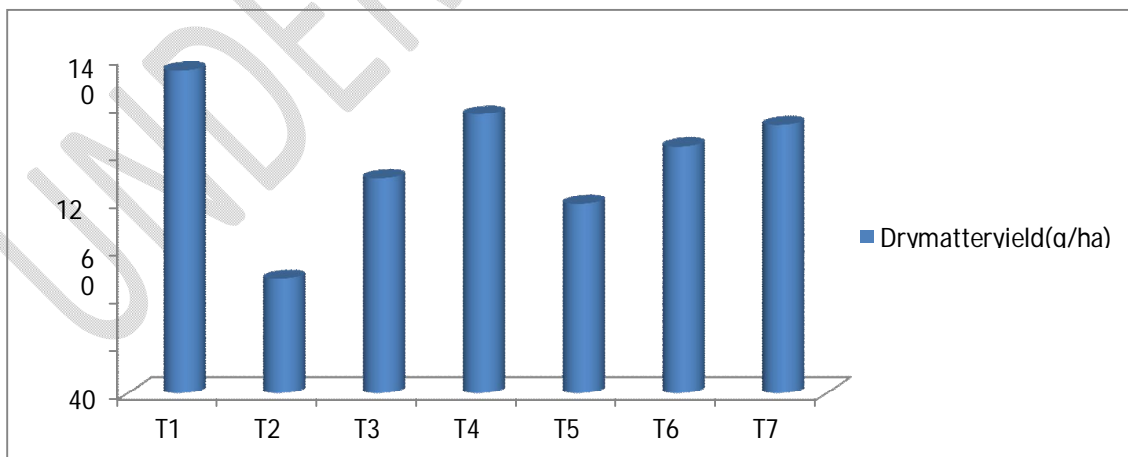
## Results & discussion

### Effect of cropping system on Dry matter accumulation (q ha<sup>-1</sup>)

The treatment effects on dry matter accumulation at harvest have been presented in (Table 2) and the same has been represented graphically in (Fig 2). At harvest the dry matter production recorded under sole maize T1 was significantly higher than other treatments but was at par with T4, T6 and T7. Amongst the intercrop treatments, T4 recorded significantly high dry matter accumulation over various other treatments. The study also revealed that significantly lowest periodic dry matter accumulation was observed under sole pulse (local bean).

**Table-2: Effect of cropping system on dry matter yield (q ha<sup>-1</sup>) of maize-pulse crop.**

Treatment	Dry Matter Yield (q ha <sup>-1</sup> )
T1	136.90
T2	47.90
T3	87.90
T4	118.60
T5	79.20
T6	101.30
T7	113.10
Mean	97.84
SE(m)	1.09
C.D. (P≤0.05)	3.41



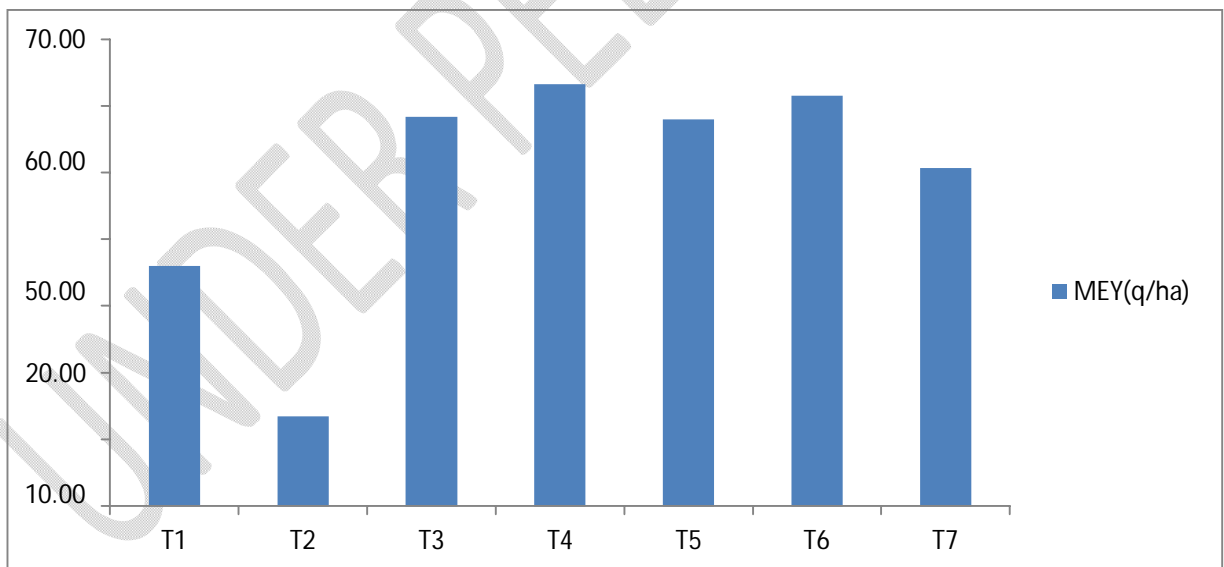
**Fig-2: Effect of cropping system on dry matter yield (q ha<sup>-1</sup>) of maize-pulse crop.**

### Effect of cropping system on Maize Equivalent Yield.

The results (Table 3) and the same has been represented graphically in (Fig 3) showed significant variation with regard to the maize equivalent yield of various treatments. The treatment T4 at par with T6 recorded significantly highest maize equivalent yield (63.33) over rest of the treatment. Significantly, lowest maize equivalent yield was recorded with treatment T2 (13.50) which was followed by T7 (52.72), T5 (58.05), T3 (58.42) and T6 (61.54) respectively.

**Table 3: Effect of cropping system on maize equivalent yield (q/ha) of maize-pulse crop.**

Treatment	MEY (q/ha)
T1	36.00
T2	13.50
T3	58.42
T4	63.33
T5	58.05
T6	61.54
T7	52.72
Mean	49.08
SE(m)	1.32
C.D. (P ≤ 0.05)	4.13



**Fig 3: Effect of cropping system on maize equivalent yield (q/ha) of maize-pulse crop.**

## **Effect of cropping system on nutrient content and nutrient uptake (N, P and K) by maize-pulse crop**

### **Nitrogen content (%)**

The data on nitrogen content as affected by different treatments is presented in (Table 4) and graphically presented in (Figure 4). From the perusal of the data is evident that the treatment T2 (sole pulse) recorded significantly higher nitrogen content over T1, T7 and T5. T2 was the next treatment which showed significantly higher nitrogen content over T1, however it was at par with rest of the treatments. Significantly lowest nitrogen content was recorded under the treatment T1.

### **Nitrogen uptake (kg ha<sup>-1</sup>)**

The data presented in (Table 4) and graphically presented in (Figure 4) indicate wide variation amongst treatments with regard to nitrogen uptake by different treatments at harvest. The results infer that treatment T4 (198.06) being at par with T1 (169.75) and T7 (168.51) recorded highest N uptake over other treatments. Significantly lowest nitrogen uptake of (128.30) was recorded by T5 treatment which was followed by T2, T3 and T6.

### **Phosphorus content (%)**

Table 4 and graphically presented in (Figure 4) record the data pertaining to phosphorus content at harvest as influenced by different treatments. The data indicated that treatments T1 and T4 being at par with all the treatments except T2 and T5 recorded significantly highest phosphorus content of (0.45 Phosphorus uptake (kg ha<sup>-1</sup>))

The data of phosphorus uptake (Table 4) and graphically presented in (Figure 4) indicated wide variation amongst the treatments during the period of experimentation. From the perusal of the data it is evident that treatment T1 recorded phosphorus uptake of (61.60) which was statistically higher than all other treatments tested. The next treatment recording highest phosphorus uptake was T4 (53.37) which was significantly superior to other treatments. Significantly lowest phosphorus uptake was observed with T2 treatment (18.00) during period of investigation.

### **Potassium content (%)**

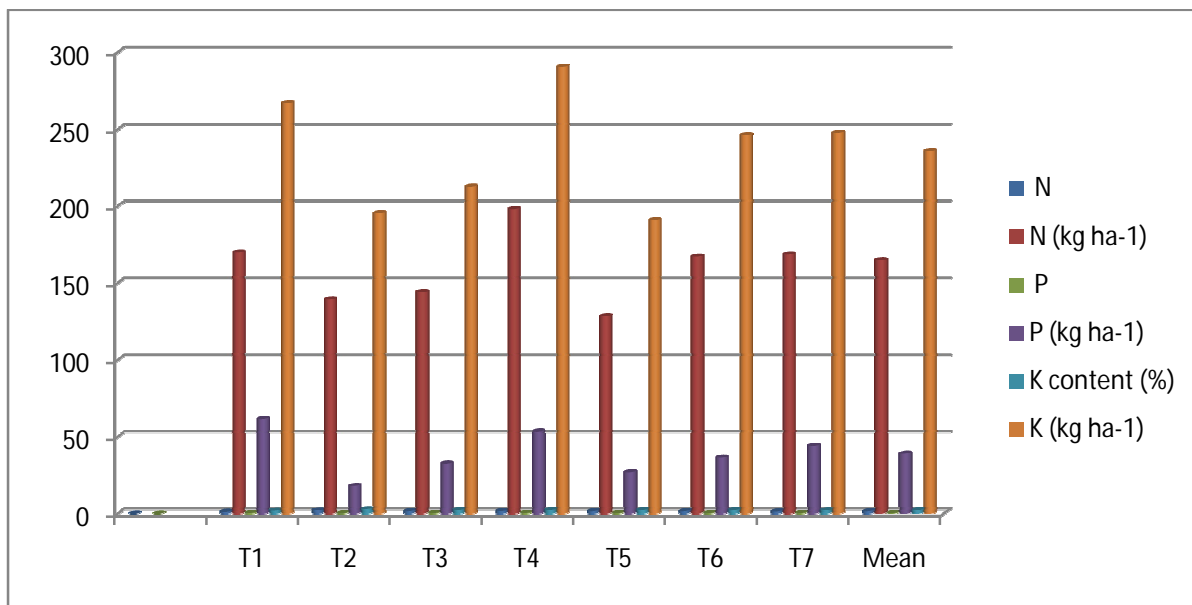
The potassium content varied markedly due to influence of various treatments during experimentation (Table 4) and graphically presented in (Figure 4). The data revealed that treatment T2 at par with T4, T6, T3, T5 and T7 recorded potassium contents of 2.93, 2.45, 2.43, 2.42, 2.41 and 2.19 percent, respectively, which was significantly higher than rest of the treatments tested. Significantly lowest potassium contents of 1.95 were noticed under treatment T1.

#### **Potassium uptake (kg ha<sup>-1</sup>)**

The data presented in (Table 4) and graphically presented in (Figure 4) shows the effect of different treatments on potassium uptake of during the course of experimentation. From the perusal of data, it is evident that the treatment T4 at par with T1, T7, T6 and T3 recorded the potassium uptake of 290.57, 266.96, 247.68, 246.16 and 212.72 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> which was significantly higher than remaining treatments. Treatment T5 recorded statistically lowest potassium uptake of 190.87 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> during the course of investigation.

**Table 4 : Effect of cropping system on nutrient content and nutrient uptake N, P and K of maize-pulse crop**

Treatments	N Content (%)	N (kg ha <sup>-1</sup> )	P Content (%)	P (kg ha <sup>-1</sup> )	K Content (%)	K (kg ha <sup>-1</sup> )
T1	1.250	169.75	0.450	61.60	1.950	266.96
T2	2.090	139.40	0.270	18.00	2.930	195.43
T3	1.640	144.16	0.370	32.52	2.420	212.72
T4	1.670	198.06	0.450	53.37	2.450	290.57
T5	1.620	128.30	0.340	26.92	2.410	190.87
T6	1.650	167.14	0.360	36.46	2.430	246.16
T7	1.490	168.51	0.390	44.10	2.190	247.68
Mean	1.641	164.90	0.375	38.99	2.397	235.77
SE(m)	0.006	0.62	0.006	0.61	0.003	0.62
C.D.(P≤0.05)	0.019	1.93	0.019	1.92	0.010	1.93



**Fig 4 :Effectof cropping system on nutrient content and nutrient uptake N,P,K, Ca and Zn of maize-pulse crop.**

### Conclusion

Based on results of one year experimentation, it seems logical to conclude that Maize + pulse (local bean) in paired row at 60 cm in row ratio (1:2) was found to be the most compatible intercropping system as this system produced higher yield and dry matter accumulation at par with the sole crop besides additional yield from legume component. When maize is grown in association with leguminous crop, it provides a greater scope for minimizing the adverse impact of moisture and nutrient stress in addition to improving system productivity and soil health (chemical, biological, and physical environment of the soil).

### Implications

It is recommended that for better soil health condition maize + pulse (local bean) in paired row at 60 cm in row ratio (1:2) for rainfed soil of Kashmir valley.

**Data Availability:** All the data pertaining to this research is included within the text

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