Original Research Article

Effect of biological products on yield, production economics and soil nutrient status of transplanted *kharif*rice (*Oryza sativa* L.)in Gangetic alluvial soil of West Bengal

Abstract

Field experiment was conducted during *kharif*season of 2017 and 2018 at Instructional Farm under Bidhan Chandra KrishiViswavidyalaya, West Bengal in sandy loam soil to study the growth and yield of transplanted *kharif* rice variety Satabdi(cv. IET 4786) as influenced by biological products.The experiment was laid down in randomized complete block design (RCBD) with seven treatment combinations replicated thrice.Results revealed that RDF + soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/haalong with produced plant with higher growth attributes and yield of tested rice cultivar. The same treatment registered significantly higher total N and K uptakein tested cultivar; while the highest P uptake was recorded with RDF + JumpStart2.0 @ 0.83 ml/kgseed. The treatment RDF + soil applied*Azospirillum*@ 2 kg/ha brought about significant positive changes of available N content in post-harvest soil over control situation (only RDF). However, significantly higher available P content was estimated in plots with RDF + soil applied PSB @ 2 kg/ha. Application of bio-products failed to exert any significant influence on residual soil K. The crop receiving RDF + soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha gave highest gross return, net return and B:C ratio. Hence, application of RDF (60-30-30 kg N, P_2O_5 and K_2O/ha) along with Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha or *Azospirillum*@ 2 kg/ha may be recommended to achieve higher grain yield of tested cultivarSatabdi (cv. IET 4786).

Keywords:Biological products, Wet season rice, Nutrient uptake, Yield, Economics

Introduction

Rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) plays a vital role in food and livelihood security for almost every household in West Bengal. Moreover, the demand for rice continues to increase owing to continued population growth. During 2015-16, rice production was to the tune of 159.5 lakh tones from 55.24 lakh hectare areas, with a productivity of 2.89 t/ha (Banerjee *et al.*, 2018).Presently, land is scarce and expansion is unlikely. However, rice yield will have to grow faster because of pressure on paddy fields in the State due to rapid urbanization, climate change and competition from other high value agriculture. Rice yield growth of 1.0-1.2% annually beyond 2020 will be needed to meet the burgeoning demand without further soil degradation and environmentalpollution(Banerjee *et al.*, 2018).

Any improvement in agricultural system that results in higher production should reduce the negative environmental impact of agriculture and enhance the sustainability of the system.One such approach is the use of biological products which can enhance the effectiveness of conventional mineral fertilizers.Biological products contain beneficialnaturally occurring microorganisms or microbial derivatives as active ingredients that contribute to sustainable agriculture by increasing availability and uptake of mineral nutrients in the plant. The present study used different type of biological products namely Jump Start, Bolt GR, Ratchat, *Azospirillum* and PSB. JumpStart developed in Western Canada with a strain of *Penicilliumbilaii*which improves P use efficiency in plants. The bio-stimulantproductBolt GR is a combination of humic acid, cold water extracts, ascorbic acid, amino acid, myo-inositol, thiamine and alpha-tocopherol. Main component of Bolt GR is humic acid and has been shown to stimulate plant growth and consequently yield by acting on mechanisms involved in cell respiration, photosynthesis, protein synthesis, water and nutrient uptake, and enzyme activities. This action of humic acid has been demonstrated to be dose-dependent and particularly effective in a low concentration range. Ratchatis mainly comprised of Lipo-chitooligosaccharides (LCOs) which are the key signal molecules secreted by these microorganisms to initiate plant symbiotic interactions with plants.Theplant growth regulator LCOs exerts significant impact on plant biomass production, shoot and root growth, lateral root branching, cell cycle, embryogenesis, and seed germination (Maillet *et al.*, 2011). *Azospirillum*are free-living bacteria, some of which are known to be plant-growth-promoting bacteria (PGPB), capable of affecting growth and yield of numerous plant species(Phonglosa*et al.*, 2015). Phosphate solubilizing bacteria (PSB) is a bio-fertilizer which has the capacity to solubilize and mineralize the residual or fixed phosphorous, thereby increases the availability of phosphorus in the soil. It also produces growth substances like indole acetic acid, and gibberellins, ultimately increasingtheoverall phosphate use efficiency (Chhonkar and Tilak, 1997).Taking due cognizance of above facts, the present experiment was planned to study theinfluence of biological products onriceproductionsystem during wet season in Gangeticalluvial soil of West Bengal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Field experiment was conductedduringwet season of 2017 and 2018 at Instructional Farm, Bidhan Chandra KrishiViswavidyalaya, Jaguli, Nadia, West Bengal ($22^{0}93^{'}$ N latitude, 88^{0} $53^{'}$ E longitude and at an elevation of 9.75m above MSL) under medium land situation to study thegrowth and yield of transplanted *kharif* rice as influenced bybiological products. The experimental soil was sandy loam in texture (order *Inceptisol*), neutral in reaction (pH 7.1)and medium in total nitrogen(187.5 kg/ha), available phosphorus (38.6 kg/ha)and available potassium(201.8 kg/ha).The experimental site falls under sub-tropical sub-humid climate having average rainfall of 1450 mm, 75% of which is received during June to September. During crop growth period, the average maximum and minimum temperature fluctuated between 28.03^{o}C to 33.67^{o}C and 19.34 to 24.04^{o}C, respectively. The maximum and minimum relative humidity varied from 90 to 97.0% and 51.2 to 85.7%, respectively.

The experiment was laid down in randomizedcompleteblock design (RCBD) with seven treatment combinations namely T_1,100% RDF (60-30-30 kg N, P_2O_5 and K_2O/ha); T_2, 100% RDF + seed treatment with JumpStart 2.0 @ 0.83ml/kg seed; T_3, 100% RDF + soil application of Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha; T_4, 100%RDF+ foliar application of Ratchet @ 300 ml/ha at 30 and 60 DAT; T_5, 100% RDF + foliar application of Ratchet @ 450 ml/ha at 30 and 60 DAT; T_6, 100% RDF + soil application of *Azospirillum*@ 2 kg/ha andT_7, 100% RDF + soil application of PSB @ 2 kg/ha and replicated thrice. One-fourth (¼th) N along with full P_2O_5 and ¾th K_2O of RDFwere applied as basal (during final land preparation). Remaining ½ N was top-dressedat tillering stage, while ¼theach of N and K_2O was given at panicle initiation stage. All other cultural and plant-protection measures were alsoadopted as recommended for the region. The test crop was rice cv. Satabdi (IET-4786).The individual plot size was 5m × 4m. In the main field, rice seedlings were transplanted@ 3 per hill with a spacing of 20cm × 15cm. The crop was harvested during 3rd week of Octoberwhenthe plant become yellowish to brown and had around 14% grain moisture. Data on different yield components were recorded at harvest. Harvested crops were kept in the field for 2-3 days for sun-drying and then threshing was done plot-wise separately.Grain and straw were then properly sun-dried, weighed and finally converted into t/ha.

Plant samples fromeach treatment were collected, oven-dried, and ground foranalyzing total recoveries of N, P and K at harvestingfollowing standard procedures. Post-harvest soil samples were analyzed for total available N, P and K content following standard procedures. The economic assessmentin terms of gross return, net return and benefit: cost (B:C) ratioofwet season rice was worked out on thebasis of prevailing market prices for inputs and minimum support price (as per Govt. of WB) foroutputs.

Data obtained on measured growth and yield parameters were analyzed following the method of analysis for RCBD as described by Gomez and Gomez (1984). The significance of different sources of variation was tested at probability level of 0.05. The standard error of mean (SEm±) and critical difference (CD)value were considered for comparing treatment mean values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Growth attributes

Tested biological products exerted significant impact on measured growth attributes namely plant heightand DMA at 90 DAT while LAI at 60 DAT (Table 1). RDF along with soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/haalong with produced plants with maximum height (102.7 cm), greater LAI (4.28) and DMA (852.2 g/m^2); being statistically at par with soil application of *Azospirillum*@ 2 kg/ha. The biological products provided plant growth promoting substances like hormones, organic acids, polysaccharides, amino acid, protein and thereby accelerated soil biological activities. They also enhanced the inherent plant capacity to express its full potential. Higher plant vigour, as observed with RDF + Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha, might be attributed to the development of numerous root branching as well as root hairs and thereby increased nutrient uptake capacity. This effect on rice root system was enormous probably due to secretion of growth hormones and nitrogen fixation by bacteria. In addition, the humic acid being a component of Bolt GR is responsible for increasing the fresh and dry weight of the leaves, shoots, roots as well as number and plinth area of leaves (Vijoyakumari*et al.*, 2012). In the present study, the observed greater LAI with the application of biological products was might due to better soil physico-chemical properties *vis-à-vis* better soil environment and increased crop growth. Previous studies also reported that *Azospirillum*inoculationresulted in crop growth enhancement in terms of height, number of leaf/plant, size of leaf and overall aerial biomass (Kannan and Ponmurugan, 2010).One of the principal mechanisms proposed for *Azospirillum* sp. to explain plant growth promotion of inoculated plants, has been related to its ability to produce and metabolize several phytohormones and other plant growth regulating molecules (Salamone*et al.*, 2010).

The crop growth rate of tested cultivar varied significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) with different treatments and showed a declining trend towards maturity. Similarly, biological products had a significant influence on length and dry weight of roots. The plants receiving RDF + Ratchet @ 450 ml/haexhibited the maximum CGRduring 30-60 DAT and it was statistically at par withplants receiving RDF + soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha. The plants receiving RDF + JumpStart 2.0 @ 0.83ml/kg seedexhibited thehighest root length (28.6cm) and dry weight (5.65g) at 60 DAT; being statistically at par with plants receiving RDF + soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha and *Azospirillum*@ 2 kg/ha. In contrary, the lowest CGR,root length and dry weight was recorded in plants grown with RDF only. The strain *Penicilliumbilaii*, main constituent of JumpStart 2.0, hasbeenknown to augment root length and root hairabundance,besides P solubilization (Tripathy*et al.*, 2009). It also supplies excess nutrients by allowing greater exploration of soil and moisture that crops need to maintain optimal growth.

Panicle length, yield and harvest index

Measured panicle length varied significantly with the application of different bio-products in wet season (Table 2). The highest value of the parameter was recorded in plants fertilized with RDF + soil applied Bolt GR @ 10kg/ha, while the next best treatment was RDF + soil applied Jump Start @ 0.83ml/kg seed. This result might be due to better utilization of growth resources in the plots receiving growth hormones, micronutrients, enzymes, proteins, vitamins etc. The loss of nitrogen is expected to be less in presence of humicacid, a component of Bolt GR, and thereby helped in better reproductive growth with greater panicle length and better grain filling (Dhanasekaran and Govindasamy, 2002).

The grain and straw yield of wet season rice was significantly improved on receiving different biological products (Table 2). The highest grain (4.22 t/ha) and straw yield (5.83 t/ha) was recorded in plots fertilized with RDF + soil application of Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha; being statistically at par with grain yield obtained with RDF + soil applied *Azospirillum* @ 2 kg/ha.Application of biological products might have coincided with the critical physiological growth stages which favoured the rice crop to put forth better growth characteristics as well as increased yield components which in turn resulted highergrainyield.The results are in agreement with findings of Osman *et al.*(2013) who also opined that foliar spraying of humic and or fulvic acids, components of Bolt GR, influences grain yield and quality of rice cultivars. The inoculation of plants with *Azospirillum*hasalso been found to cause significant increases in growth and yield which is equivalent to that obtained with the application of 15-20 kg N/ha (Rodrigues *et al.*,2008).Full NPK along with *Azospirillum*might have created the most convenient situation for better soil nutrient availability and higher nutrient accumulation (Phonglosa*et al.*, 2015), and hence the response in our study.Similarly, Govindan and Bagyaraj (1995) observed that inoculation of *Azospirillum*sp. to wetland rice under acidic condition improved shoot growth, straw yield and N uptake.In the present study, bio-product application exerted significant influence on harvest index (HI), which ranged from 40.9 to 42.3%. However, the crop receiving RDF along with *Azospirillum*gave highest value of HI, which indicated greater translocation of photosynthates from source to sink and also better portioning towards reproductive growth(Phonglosa*et al.,* 2015).In the present study, the lowest HI was recorded in plants fertilized with RDF only.

Nutrientsuptake

The nutrient uptake (N, P and K) by rice was significantly influenced by biological products (Table 3).The treatment RDF + soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha registered significantly higher total N (82.9 kg/ha) and K (191.7 kg/ha) uptakeintested cultivar; being statistically at par with the treatment RDF + soil applied *Azospirillum* @ 2 kg/ha. Sivakumar*et al.* (2007) also found that application of humic acid up to 20 kg/ha along with RDF resulted in highest total uptake of N, P and K in rice.Muchearlier,Kannan and Ponmurugan (2010) recorded significant increase in different plant parameters such as height, tiller number, dry matter yield and N uptake of rice plants with *Azospirillum*inoculation.Phonglosa*et al.* (2015) also found highest recoveries of NPK on supplementation of chemical NPK with *Azospirillum*.In the present study, application of RDF + JumpStart2.0 @ 0.83 ml/kg seed registered significantly highest P uptake in tested cultivar (Table 3), closely followed by those obtained with the treatment RDF + soil applied PSB @ 2 kg/ha. Results also indicated that PSB had a significant influence on grain yield, biological yield and total P uptake. Stimulation of plant growth by *P. bilaii*inoculation without a concurrent increase in the P content in plants had earlier been found in the study of Tripathy*etal.*(2009). In the present study, the total N, P and K uptake by plant were recorded lowestin control plot (RDF only).As expected, the relationship between nutrient uptake was linear and the grain yield of *kharif* rice was significantly correlated ($R^2 = 0.801$) in case of N, ($R^2 = 0.336$) in case of P and in case of K, ($R^2 = 0.895$) to the amount nutrient uptake (Fig. 1a, 1b and 1c).

Nutrient status of post-harvest soil

The treatmentRDF + soil applied*Azospirillum*@ 2 kg/ha brought about greater positive changes of available N content in post-harvest soil over control situation (RDF only). However, it was statistically at par with RDF + soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha.Significantly higher available P content was estimated in plots with RDF + soil applied PSB @ 2 kg /ha: being statistically at par with the treatment RDF + seed treatment JumpStart 2.0 @ 0.83ml/kg.Phosphate solubilizing bacteria (PSB) acts a bio-fertilizer and has the capacity to solubilize and mineralize the residual or fixed phosphorous, thereby increases the availability of phosphorus in the soil. It produces growth substances like indole acetic acid, and gibberellins and thus, increases the overall phosphate use efficiency (Chhonkar and Tilak, 1997).In the present study, application of bio-products failed to exert any significant influence on residual soil K. The overall status of N, P and K was marginally higher over initial values where only RDF was applied. This might be due to the less uptake of NPK leading to a substantial amount of left-over nutrients in post-harvest soil.

Economic analysis

Combined application of RDF and biological products proved their superiority over sole RDF application (Table 3). In most cases, the observed yield gain were not huge (only 0.16 to 0.80 t/ha) but provided substantial income gains given the relatively low costs for alltestedbiological products. The crop receiving RDF + soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/hagave highest gross return, net return and B:C ratio. This might be due to the highest productivity realized at this application rate.In contrary, the lowest economic benefit was realized with control treatment (onlyRDF) due to poor grain yield.

CONCLUSION

Thus, RDF (60-30-30 kg N, P_2O_5 and K_2O/ha) along with soil applied Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha or *Azospirillum*@ 2 kg/ha may be recommended to achieve higher grain yield of *kharif* season rice (cv. IET 4786) in Gangetic alluvial soilof West Bengal.

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Table 1. Effect of biological products on growth attributes of transplanted rice during wet season (mean data of 2 years)

Treatments	Plant height (cm) at 90 DAT	LAI at 60 DAT	DMA (g/m^2) at 90 DAT	CGR (g/m^2/day) 30-60 DAT	Root length (cm) at 60 DAT	Root dry weight (g/hill) at 60 DAT
T_1, RDF	93.9	3.83	773.8	11.72	19.3	3.98
T_2,RDF + JumpStart @ 0.83ml/kg seed	97.3	3.98	836.7	11.84	28.6	5.65
T_3, RDF + Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha	102.7	4.28	852.2	12.51	27.9	5.42
T_4, RDF + Ratchet @ 300 ml/ha	95.2	4.05	786.9	12.11	22.4	4.27
T_5, RDF + Ratchet @ 450 ml/ha	96.2	4.12	798.3	12.72	23.8	4.53
T_6, RDF + *Azospirillum* @ 2 kg/ha	100.8	4.23	847.8	12.34	27.4	5.03
T_7, RDF+ PSB @ 2 kg/ha	99.8	4.14	822.1	12.11	28.2	5.52
S.Em (±)	0.65	0.05	3.52	0.08	1.48	0.24
CD (P=0.05)	1.98	0.16	10.8	0.27	4.61	0.78

RDF: Recommended $N:P_2O_5:K_2O$ dose of 60:30:30 kg/ha

LAI, Leaf area index; DMA, Dry matter accumulation; CGR, Crop growth rate; DAT, Days after transplanting

Table 2. Effect of biological products on panicle length, grain yield, straw yield and harvest index of transplanted rice during wet season (mean data of 2 years)

Treatments	Panicle length (cm)	Grain yield (t/ha)	Straw yield (t/ha)	Harvest Index (%)
T_1, RDF	22.2	3.42	4.68	40.9
T_2,RDF + JumpStart @ 0.83ml/kg seed	24.3	3.70	5.26	41.2
T_3, RDF + Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha	25.1	4.22	5.83	41.9
T_4, RDF + Ratchet @ 300 ml/ha	22.6	3.58	4.98	41.8
T_5, RDF + Ratchet @ 450 ml/ha	23.6	3.67	5.12	41.7
T_6, RDF + *Azospirillum* @ 2 kg/ha	24.2	4.13	5.64	42.3
T_7, RDF+ PSB @ 2 kg/ha	23.5	3.78	5.25	41.8
S.Em (±)	0.42	0.08	0.21	-
CD (P=0.05)	1.31	0.26	0.67	-

RDF: Recommended $N:P_2O_5:K_2O$ dose of 60:30:30 kg/ha

NS, Non-significant

Table 3. Effect of biological products on total plant nutrient uptake,soilnutrient status and economics of transplanted rice during wet season (mean data of 2 years)

Treatments	Total nutrient uptake (kg/ha)			Residual soil nutrient status (kg/ha)			Gross return (Rs/ha)	Net return (Rs/ha)	B:C ratio
	N	P	K	Available N	Available P	Available K			
T_1, RDF	65.5	6.3	161.7	189.3	40.1	202.2	61,555	18,993	1.45
T_2,RDF + JumpStart @ 0.83ml/kg seed	79.2	12.2	178.1	193.1	45.9	209.3	72,110	29,240	1.68
T_3, RDF + Bolt GR @ 10 kg/ha	82.9	10.3	191.7	198.8	42.7	208.3	79,680	35,618	1.81
T_4, RDF + Ratchet @ 300 ml/ha	69.3	7.5	160.7	195.8	40.2	203.5	67,630	23,874	1.55
T_5, RDF + Ratchet @ 450 ml/ha	69.6	8.1	169.0	196.4	41.8	204.8	69,345	24,975	1.56
T_6, RDF + *Azospirillum* @ 2 kg/ha	82.0	10.8	187.6	203.1	44.1	210.3	77,915	34,703	1.80
T_7, RDF+ PSB @ 2 kg/ha	77.2	11.8	177.3	195.4	46.2	209.5	71,400	28,578	1.67
S.Em (±)	1.42	0.54	3.24	1.78	0.62	3.02	-	-	-
CD (P=0.05)	3.67	1.81	9.76	5.64	1.86	NS	-	-	-

RDF: Recommended $N:P_2O_5:K_2O$ dose of 60:30:30 kg/ha
NS, Non-significant

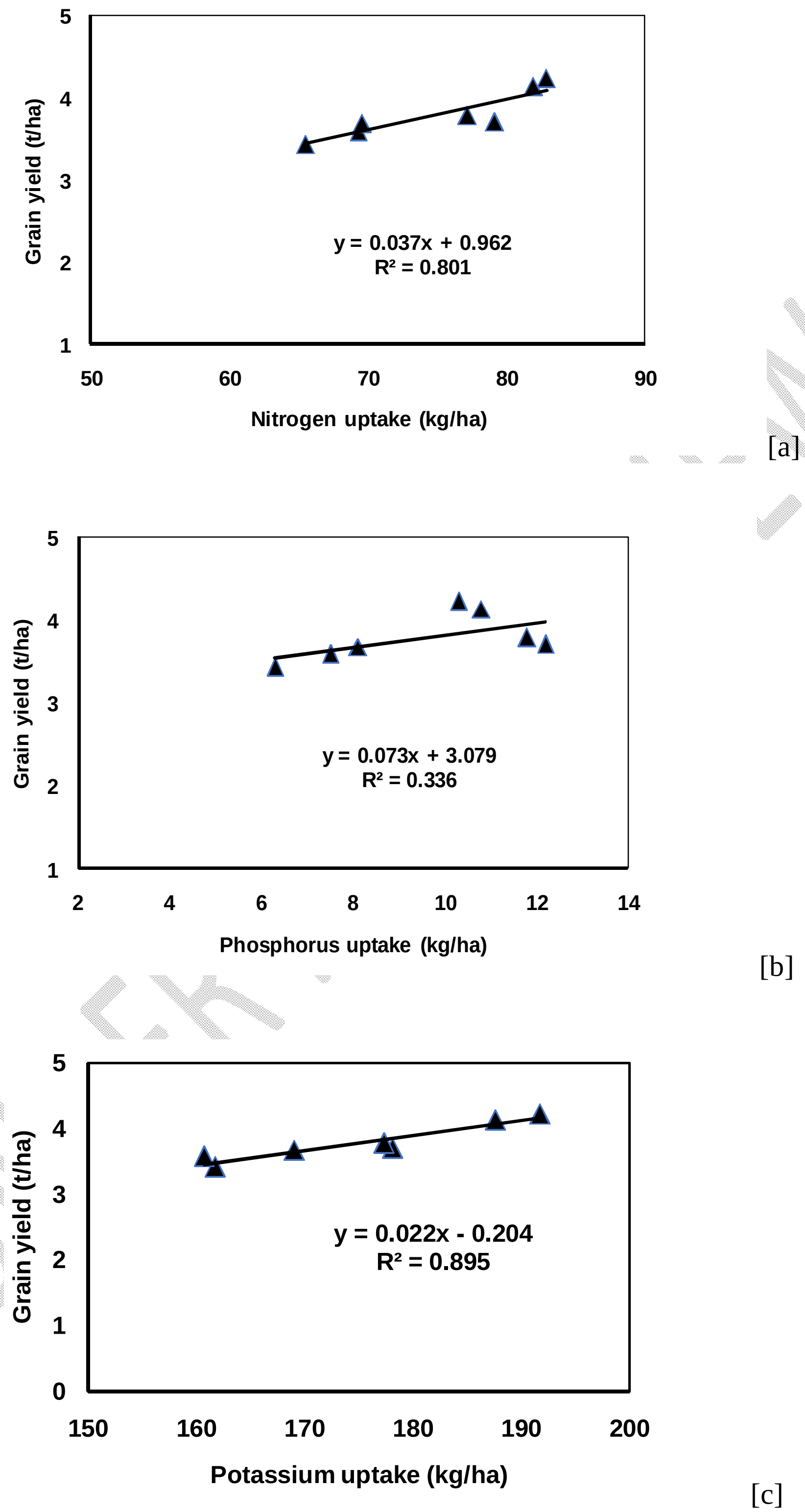

Figure 1. Correlation between grain yield and N uptake [a], grain yield and P uptake [b] and grain yield and K uptake [c]