

Impact of Integrated Nutrient Management on Growth, Yield, Quality and Economics of Grain Amaranth

ABSTRACT

The investigation entitled, “Impact of Integrated Nutrient Management on Growth, Yield, Quality and Economics of Grain Amaranth” was conducted during *rabi* seasons of 2022-23 and 2023-24 at College Farm, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari. Nine treatments consisted of integrated nutrient management treatments were applied to grain amaranth crop in *rabi* season and replicated three times in randomized block design. Almost all the growth attributes, yield attributes and quality were significantly improved due to combination of organic manures and inorganics. Significantly higher grain yield (1371 kg/ha) and stover yield (2916 kg/ha) were recorded under the application of vermicompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₆), however, which remained at par with the application of biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₄) and application of FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RND through inorganic fertilizer (T₂) in pooled analysis of 2022-23 to 2023-24. In case of economics point of view (T₄) biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer gave higher net returns (₹ 65768) and BCR (2.67) among all the treatments.

KEYWORD: Grain amaranth, Growth, Yield attributes, Yield and Quality

INTRODUCTION

Amaranthus or pigweed belongs to the family *Amaranthaceae*. The word *Amaranthus* is basically derived from a Greek word “Anthos” which means ever-lasting or un-wilting. At present time, it is also called as a third millennium crop. Amaranth varies in flower, leaf and stem colour with range of striking pigment from the spectrum of maroon to crimson and can grow longitudinally from 1 to 2.5 meter tall with a cylindrical, succulent, fibrous stem. It is believed to have originated from Central and South America, it is an important part of diet in areas of Latin America, Africa and Asia (Grubben and Von Sloten, 1981). The genus *Amaranthus* consists of up to 70 species (in the form of cosmopolitan weed or cultivated plant) and are widely spread in all tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world and they are cultivated as leafy vegetables, grains or ornamental plants. While, others are weeds (Srivastva, 2011). *Amaranthus cruentus* Linn and *Amaranthus hypochondriacus* Linn, are the best grain producers. Amaranth is C₄ plant that germinates quickly when soil temperature reaches 15°C to 18°C. Seedling rate should be increased to compensate for lower emergence rates when soil temperatures are less than 15°C (Webb *et al.*, 1987). Grain amaranth can be grown several times a year and it tolerates drought, heat stress, high soil acidity and salinity, it has potential for increased production due to low cost of inputs and its adaptation to a wide range of agro-ecological zones.

Amaranth is widely distributed throughout the old and new world. In Asia-Pacific regions covering India, China, Manchuria, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand and Israel, this crop is cultivated as a minor crop. In India, grain amaranth was primarily cultivated in hill regions but of late in 1990s, its cultivation gained momentum in Central and Western Plateau regions. Now-a-days, this crop is being promoted globally as a nutritive food crop or potential crop of the future. Although, this crop is still not in the main stream cultivation practices in India and the world. In some of the Indian languages, it is known as rajgira (king of seeds) in Gujarati, ramdana (seed sent by god) in Bihar, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, chuka in Bengal, kalaghosa, chumera and ganhar in Central India and bathu in Himachal Pradesh *etc.* Presently amaranth is grown in Himachal Pradesh and on hills of Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal for grain and leafy vegetable purpose. While, it is mainly grown for grain in Uttarakhand, Maharashtra and in some parts of Gujarat. Being a profitable crop the area under amaranth is increasing day by day where irrigation facilities exist.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study took place at the Agronomy Instructional Farm, situated at the College Farm, N. M. College of Agriculture, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari during the *rabi* season 2022-23 and 2023-24. The soil of south Gujarat is locally known as “Deep Black Soil”. The soils of Navsari campus are classified under the order, ‘*Inceptisols*’. The soil analysis reveals that soil of experimental plot was clay in texture, low in organic carbon (0.49% and 0.43%) and available nitrogen (206.10 kg/ha and 196.23 kg/ha), medium in available phosphorus (36.30 kg/ha and 40.10 kg/ha) and high in available potassium (290.2 kg/ha and 298.36 kg/ha).

The treatment consisted of integrated nutrient management *viz.*, T₁: 25% N through FYM + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer, T₂: FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer, T₃: 25% N through Biocompost + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer, T₄: Biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer, T₅: 25% N through Vermicompost + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer, T₆: Vermicompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer, T₇: FYM 5 t/ha, T₈: Biocompost 5 t/ha and T₉: Vermicompost 5 t/ha were applied to grain amaranth crop in *rabi* season and replicated three times in randomized block design. For this experiment, the grain amaranth used was Grainamaranth2, and it was sown with a spacing of 45 cm × 10 cm.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effect on growth parameters

According to pooled results of 2 years (Table 1) integrated nitrogen management treatments exhibited significant effect on plant height (except at 30 DAS), stem girth, dry matter per plant and 50% days to flowering. Application of vermicompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₄) recorded significantly higher plant height at 60 DAS and at harvest and dry matter (g/plant) which were remained at par with application of biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₄) and FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₂). Whereas significantly higher stem girth and more number of day to 50% flowering of grain amaranthin pooled study which was found at par with all treatments except application of 25% N through FYM + 75 % RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₁), vermicompost 5 t/ha (T₉), biocompost 5 t/ha (T₈) and FYM 5 t/ha (T₇). Significantly lower plant height, stem girth, dry matter and 50% days to flowering were observed with application of FYM 5 t/ha (T₇).

Significantly higher plant height, stem girth, 50% days to flowering and dry matter were observed by combine application of organic and inorganic sources of nitrogen, it might be due to application of nitrogen and phosphorus through chemical fertilizer which enhanced its availability which resulted in increased photosynthetic activity and translocation of photosynthates from source to sink which help to achieve higher plant height, stem girth, dry matter (g/plant). At the same time, effect of organic sources (vermicompost, biocompost and FYM) as a source of plant nutrient and humus improved the soil physiological conditions by increasing its capacity to absorb and store water, improving aeration and favoring the beneficial microbial activity which helped in improving growth parameters. The increase growth parameters are also a function of cell division and cell enlargement, which depends upon availability of nutrients in balanced form especially N and P. Similar results were reported by Jangir *et al.* (2019), Srujan *et al.* (2021) and Bartwal *et al.* (2022).

Effect on yield parameters

Length of spike, length of spikelet and No. of spikelets/spike were significantly affected by different treatments of integrated nutrient management. Application of vermicompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₆) showed significantly higher spike length and length of spikelet and No. of spikelets/spike of grain amaranth at harvest which was statistically at par with application of biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₄) and application of FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₂) in pooled analysis.

Test weight of grain amaranth (volume basis) was not significantly influenced by different treatments in pooled study. Length of spike, length of spikelets and No. of spikelets/spike were noted significantly lower with the treatment T₇ (FYM 5 t/ha).

It was emphasized that use of inorganic fertilizer and organic source bring about significant improvement in overall growth of the crop by providing needed nutrient from initial stage. Increased supply of macro as well as micro nutrient in more synchronize way in the treatment receiving integrated supply of nutrient from organic manure along with inorganic fertilizer resulting in increased photosynthetic efficiency. Thus, greater availability of photosynthates, metabolites and nutrients to develop reproductive structures seems to have resulted in increased length of spikelet, length of spikelet and No. of spikelets/spike in amaranth crop. The results were in agreement with the findings of Kushare *et al.* (2010), Keraliya *et al.* (2017), Jangir (2019) and Patel *et al.* (2022) in grain amaranth.

Effect on yield

The treatment receiving vermicompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₆) recorded significantly higher grain yield and straw yield (1371 and 2916 kg/ha) remained at par with application of biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₄) (1341 and 2796 kg/ha) and application of FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₂) (1280 and 2728 kg/ha) in pooled analysis. Further, result indicated that the treatment T₅ (25% N through vermicompost + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer), treatment T₃ (25% N through Biocompost + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer), treatment T₁ (25% N through FYM + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer) found at par with one other in pooled analysis.

Significantly lower grain and straw yields were recorded in treatment T₇ (FYM 5 t/ha) (788 and 1893 kg/ha) in pooled results.

An increase in the grain and straw yield with vermicompost, biocompost and FYM served as reserves of macro and micro nutrients which are released during process of mineralization. Among the treatments, conjunctive use of organics with inorganics and inorganic fertilizer recorded higher grain yield compared to treatment which receiving nutrient through organic manures probably because of optimum supply of nutrients at right time of crop requirement and grain amaranth responds well to fertilizer application as a result of more roots growth in sampled area which has resulted in better absorption of moisture and nutrients from soil for effective dry matter production and translocation of photosynthates from leaves to sink for better development of grains in spikelets. The results were in agreement with the findings of Parmar and Patel (2009), Gunjal (2011), Neeraja and

Patel (2015), Keraliya *et al.* (2017) and Jangir *et al.* (2019) and Patel *et al.* (2022) in grain amaranth.

Effect on Quality

Significantly higher protein content and protein yield were noted under the application of vermicompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₆) which was statistically at par with application of biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₄) and application of FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₂) in pooled analysis of the experimental results.

The variation in protein yield was observed because uptake of nitrogen associated with its levels of supply as well as plant potential to absorb and utilize for growth as well as accumulation of protein in grain under adequate N supply through inorganic fertilizers or combination of organics and inorganics might be accounted to continuous availability of nitrogen for protein synthesis. The protein yield is correlated with protein content in grain and grain yield of crop. So this was also due to the higher grain yield under corresponding treatment. These results are in accordance with the findings of Jangir *et al.* (2021) and Patel (2022) in grain amaranth.

Economics

Maximum net monetary return of ₹ 65768 and BCR of 2.67 was recorded by the treatment of biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic (T₄) followed by treatment of 25% N through biocompost + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer (T₃) with net monetary return of ₹ 51323 and BCR of 2.42 and T₂ (FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer) with ₹ 48815/ha and BCR 1.94. Whereas, the lowest net monetary return of ₹ 1922 with BCR of 1.03 was recorded with the treatment T₉ (Vermicompost 5t/ha).

The highest net monetary return under treatment T₄ (Biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer) might be due to low cost of biocompost as compared to other organic manure used under study which resulted in low cost of cultivation coupled with higher grain yield turned in higher net monetary return and BCR. Similar results were also reported by Keraliya *et al.* (2017), Salmankhan *et al.* (2023), Bartwal (2022) and Patel (2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on two years of experimentation, it can be concluded that the application of biocompost 5 t/ha combined with 100% recommended dose of nitrogen (60: 40 kg N:

P₂O₅/ha) from inorganic fertilizers enhances the growth parameters, yield attributes, yield, quality, net returns and BCR of grain amaranth.

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Table 1. Effect of integrated nutrient management on plant height, stem girth, 50% days to flowering and dry matter of grain amaranth

Treatments		Plant height (cm)			Stem girth (cm)	50% days to flowering	Dry matter (g/plant)	
		At 30 DAS	At 60 DAS	At harvest			At 60 DAS	At harvest
T ₁ : 25% N through FYM + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer		19.19	95.88	122.20	3.57	51.83	33.06	40.75
T ₂ : FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer		20.12	113.50	142.17	3.80	54.17	39.67	47.91
T ₃ : 25% N through Biocompost + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer		19.28	98.87	125.59	3.68	53.17	35.05	42.39
T ₄ : Biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer		20.69	118.67	151.88	3.86	55.00	42.55	51.30
T ₅ : 25% N through Vermicompost + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer		19.54	104.04	127.23	3.77	53.50	37.93	43.61
T ₆ : Vermicompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer		21.19	120.25	153.01	4.03	56.50	43.93	52.87
T ₇ : FYM 5 t/ha		17.89	81.18	100.38	2.93	44.67	27.15	33.28
T ₈ : Biocompost 5 t/ha		18.39	81.82	101.17	3.08	49.17	28.88	35.32
T ₉ : Vermicompost 5 t/ha		18.69	83.87	102.70	3.28	50.17	30.51	37.19
SEm ±		0.79	3.94	4.97	0.14	1.51	1.48	1.73
CD (P=0.05)		NS	11.34	14.31	0.41	4.35	4.25	4.98
CV (%)		10.01	9.66	9.72	9.74	7.11	10.21	9.90
Y	SEm ±	0.375	1.856	2.341	0.067	0.712	0.696	0.814
	CD (P=0.05)	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Y × T	SEm ±	1.124	5.567	7.024	0.200	2.136	2.088	2.443
	CD (P=0.05)	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

Table 3: Economics of grain amaranth as influenced by different treatments of integrated nutrient management (Average of 2022-23 and 2023-24)

Treatments	Yield (kg/ha)		Cost of cultivation (₹ /ha)			Gross returns (₹ /ha)	Net returns (₹ /ha)	BCR
	grain	Straw	Fixed Cost	Treatment Cost	Total			
T₁ : 25 % N through FYM + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer	1078	2333	31160	17099	48259	84849	36590	1.76
T₂ : FYM 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer	1280	2728	31160	20635	51795	100610	48815	1.94
T₃ : 25 % N through Biocompost +75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer	1106	2468	31160	4927	36087	87410	51323	2.42
T₄ : Biocompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer	1341	2796	31160	8135	39295	105064	65768	2.67
T₅ : 25 % N through Vermicompost + 75% RDN through inorganic fertilizer	1146	2488	31160	16071	47231	90276	43045	1.91
T₆ : Vermicompost 5 t/ha + 100% RDN through inorganic fertilizer	1371	2916	31160	43135	74295	107667	33372	1.45
T₇ : FYM 5 t/ha	788	1893	31160	17500	48660	62853	14193	1.29
T₈ : Bio compost 5 t/ha	830	1972	31160	5000	36160	66164	30004	1.83
T₉ : Vermi compost 5 t/ha	924	2073	31160	40000	71160	73082	1922	1.03

Note: Selling price of grain (₹ 68 and ₹ 70 /kg) and straw (₹ 4.5 /kg) in 2022-23 and 2023-24, respectively.

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