

Original Research Article

Harvesting Success: Unveiling the Potential of Wheat Varietal Performance through Organic Nutrient Management

ABSTRACT

The Kymore Plateau and Satpura Hills Zone is contributing immensely to the food security of Madhya Pradesh. The soil and climate of the region favour high input intensive farming for producing a maximum yield per unit of land area. Frequent use of agrochemicals, such as fertilizers, pesticides, weedicides etc. and other techniques were extremely taxing, that depletes the physical, chemical, and biological properties of the soil and causing a considerably larger loss of nutrients than its replenishment. Therefore, the standardization of organic manure application is the need of the hour to sustain crop productivity and soil health in the region. Therefore, present focus is on complementing or replacing inorganic fertilizers with low-cost nutrition sources like organic compost and manures. There is a significant degree of confusion exist around the selection of suitable crop variety for high yield under organic farming than in the case of conventional farming. Selection of a variety plays a crucial role under organic farming as it has a direct effect on yield and economics of a crop than conventional farming. Because organic farming places a higher focus on product quality such as taste, color, nutritional content and shelf life. As a result, existing cultivars must be appraised for the specific characteristics needed in organic farming. For achieving this present investigation, was conducted during the Rabi season of the year 2020-21 at Instructional Research Farm, Krishi Nagar, Adhartal, Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya, Jabalpur (M.P.) to study the performance of different wheat varieties under organic nutrient management in Kymore Plateau and Satpura Hills Zone. Treatments consisted of twelve varieties of wheat viz., JW 17, JW 3020, JW 3173, JW 3269, JW 3288, C 306, HI 1500, HI 1531, HI 1418, HD 2987, HW 2004 and HD 4672 were tested in randomized block design with three replications. Performance of the variety JW 17 was found superior concerning growth parameters, yield attributing characters and yield closely followed by varieties C 306 and JW 3269.

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Keywords: Wheat, Organic nutrient management, Varieties, Morpho-physiological and yielding performance

INTRODUCTION

With an area of 29.5 million hectares, wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) is India's second-most important food grain crop after rice. In order to maximize a crop's potential for production, it is crucial that the crop or cropping system receive an optimum nutrient supply (1). Globally, 766.5 million tons of wheat is produced on an area of about 217.02 million hectares (2). India cultivated wheat on area around 31.45 million hectares in 2019-20, with crop produce of 107.59 million tons (3). In Madhya Pradesh, it is the most important crop during the *Rabi* season, occupying 10.02 million hectare area and producing 16.52 million tons with a productivity of 3298 kg ha⁻¹. With the start of the green revolution, wheat production and productivity in India surged significantly. This was mostly because high-yielding varieties were used and chemical fertilizers, pesticides were applied in large quantities, and agricultural mechanization was expanded. All of these factors put an unprecedented strain on our natural resources (4). Frequent use of agrochemicals like fertilizers, pesticides and other techniques were extremely taxing, depleting the physical, chemical, and biological properties of the soil and causing considerably larger loss of nutrients than its replenishment. This has reduced the soil fertility and productivity (5). The persistent nature of pesticide residues in food products has begun to raise concerns for the health of both humans and animals. Moreover, chemical residues destroy flora, fauna, and beneficial soil microbes, which ultimately lower soil fertility (6, 7). Because of this, farming techniques have changed recently, and organic agriculture has become a competitive long-term agricultural choice. The present focus is on complementing or replacing inorganic fertilizers with low-cost nutrition sources like organic compost and manures due to declining factor productivity, global energy crises, and a considerable increase in the price of synthetic fertilizers (8). In 2017, the area under organic cereal in the world was 4.5 million hectares, equivalent to 0.6% of the total cereal area (718 million ha in 2016 (9)).

In India, wheat is a significant crop which produced organically. However, compared to wheat grown through chemical farming, yield decreases of 20–40% have been observed in organic wheat production. Organic farming may not always be a good fit for trendy high-yielding cultivars that react well to chemical inputs (10, 11). The productivity of wheat is regulated by improved varieties coupled with the appropriate production technologies. The

most important factor in achieving potential output of a variety is how well-suited it is to a particular agro-climate (12). There is a greater degree of confusion exist around the selection of a suitable crop variety for high yield in organic farming than in conventional farming. The selection of a variety plays a crucial role in organic farming as it has a more direct effect on the yield and economics of a crop than conventional farming (13). Organic farmers rely heavily on conventionally developed varieties, but for further organic farming optimization, varieties that are better suited to organic farming systems are needed. Some traits that are associated with conventional varieties are incompatible with the organic farming system. So organic farming requires regionally adapted varieties that are well suited to regional soil, climate, and production systems. Keeping the above facts in mind, this experiment was performed to evaluate the morpho-physiological and yielding performance of different wheat varieties under organic nutrient management in Kymore Plateau and Satpura Hills Zone.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The field experiment was conducted at the Instructional Research Farm in Krishi Nagar, Adhartal, JNKVV, Jabalpur (MP) during the 2020–21 *Rabi* season. Twelve different varieties of wheat were sown in a randomized block design with three replications under organic nutrient management practices (FYM, Vermicompost, and Neem Cake). The varieties included JW 17, JW 3020, JW 3173, JW 3269, JW 3288, C 306, HI 1500, HI 1531, HI 1418, HD 2987, HW 2004 and HD 4672. The recommended dose of NPK @ 120:60:40 kg per ha respectively was applied through FYM, Neem Cake and Vermicompost each $1/3^{\text{rd}}$ on the basis of nitrogen content. The topography of the experimental field area is quite consistent. The soil of the experimental site was sandy loam, neutral in reaction (pH 7.25) with normal EC (0.34 dS m^{-1}), medium in OC contents (0.71%), low in available N (272 kg ha^{-1}), medium in available P (20.72 kg ha^{-1}), and high in available K (345 kg ha^{-1}) contents. The experimental farm had all the necessary resources, including irrigation water, available to conduct the field experiment. Three randomly chosen plants from each treatment and replication were used for the observations, and the data was acquired by averaging the values in order to calculate the value of the morpho-physiological and yield-attributing characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Morphological Traits

The one key factor influencing wheat production, sustainability, and yield is plant height (14). It is also an important objective for agronomic breeding and a critical indicator to represent the status of crop growth and nitrogen absorption in the vegetative state (15). Optimal height under given environmental conditions is vital for the adaptability, productivity, and yield stability of the wheat cultivars (16, 17). It is obvious from the data that (Figure 1) the plant height and tillers per square meter were significantly varied among varieties, and the maximum plant height (93.75 cm) and tillers (501 tillers/m²) were recorded in the variety JW 17, which was found at par with the variety C 306. The genetic characteristics of the various cultivars, as well as their varying climate requirements, may also contribute to the variation in plant height between cultivars (18). Similar to this, variety JW 17 has more tillers, which provides the variety with the extra stalks that are needed for a good yield (19).

Physiological Traits

According to (20, 21, 22), a proper LAI balances the growth of each crop organ and is a key indicator of high crop output by coordinating the link between the crop's source and sink. Moreover, dry matter accumulated in leaves up to a leaf area index of 5; thereafter, further increases in dry matter were trans-located to the stem (23). (24) find that the leaf area index (LAI), as an essential parameter of wheat growth, can provide dynamic information during wheat growth. It is a critical metric for assessing crop growth and is closely related to the aboveground biomass and yield (25). Results revealed that (Figure 1) maximum LAI (3.95) was calculated under the variety JW 17, which was significantly superior to the rest of the varieties used in this research investigation. It might result from better coordination in the crop's source and sink relationships under variety JW 17 (20).

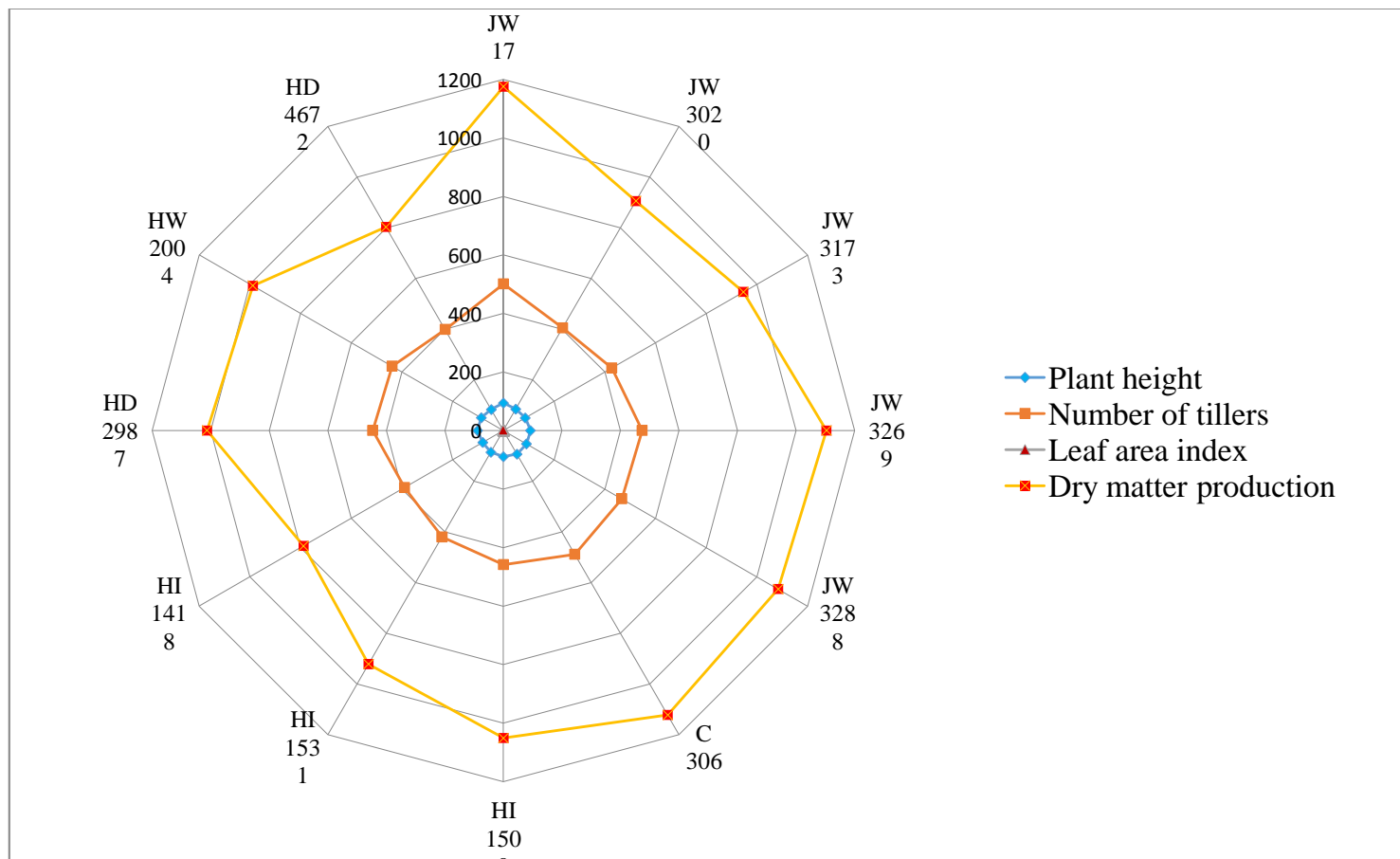


FIGURE 1 – Morpho-physiological traits of different wheat varieties grown under organic nutrient management.

(26) Find that the degree to which stem reserves are mobilized during grain filling and their percentage in the final grain mass are determined by cultivar characteristics, such as the source-sink ratio, and are also greatly impacted by the surrounding environmental factors. Dry matter production is basically a measure of plant photosynthetic efficiency, which is influenced by balanced nutrient availability and environmental factors (23). Analysis of the data revealed that (Figure 1) dry matter accumulation increased progressively with the advancement of crop age up to harvest. Variety JW 17 recorded its distinct superiority over other varieties and achieved the highest value for this trait (1175 g m^{-2}) but failed to express significant variation in dry matter accumulation with varieties C 306, JW 3269, JW 3288, and HI 1500 and found themselves at par among them. These results are explained by the fact that variety JW 17 is capable of performing photosynthesis more efficiently and that the environmental factors of Kymore Plateau and Satpura Hills Zone are in favor of variety JW 17 and enhance its ability to do more photosynthesis.

Yield attributes and yield

The grain yield of a crop depends on the source-sink relationship (27) and the combined function of different growth parameters and yield-attributing characters, viz., effective tillers per meter square, length of ear head, grains per ear head and test weight, which are affected by different crop management practices and various growing conditions. Any factor affecting these growth and yield components will finally affect the economic and biological yield of the crop (28). The data about yield-attributing characters and yield have been presented in (Figure 2).

The data revealed that a significantly higher number of effective tillers per m^2 , grains per ear head, grain yield, and harvest index (%) were recorded with the variety JW 17. Effective tillers per meter square were maximum ($477 \text{ tillers m}^{-2}$) under the variety JW 17, which is closely followed by variety C 306 and significantly superior over the rest of the varieties. Better plant growth parameters, i.e., superiority in plant height, tillers per meter square, and LAI (contributed to the maximum photosynthetic area), were noticed in the variety JW 17, which was attributed to producing a significantly greater number of effective tillers per meter square than other varieties.

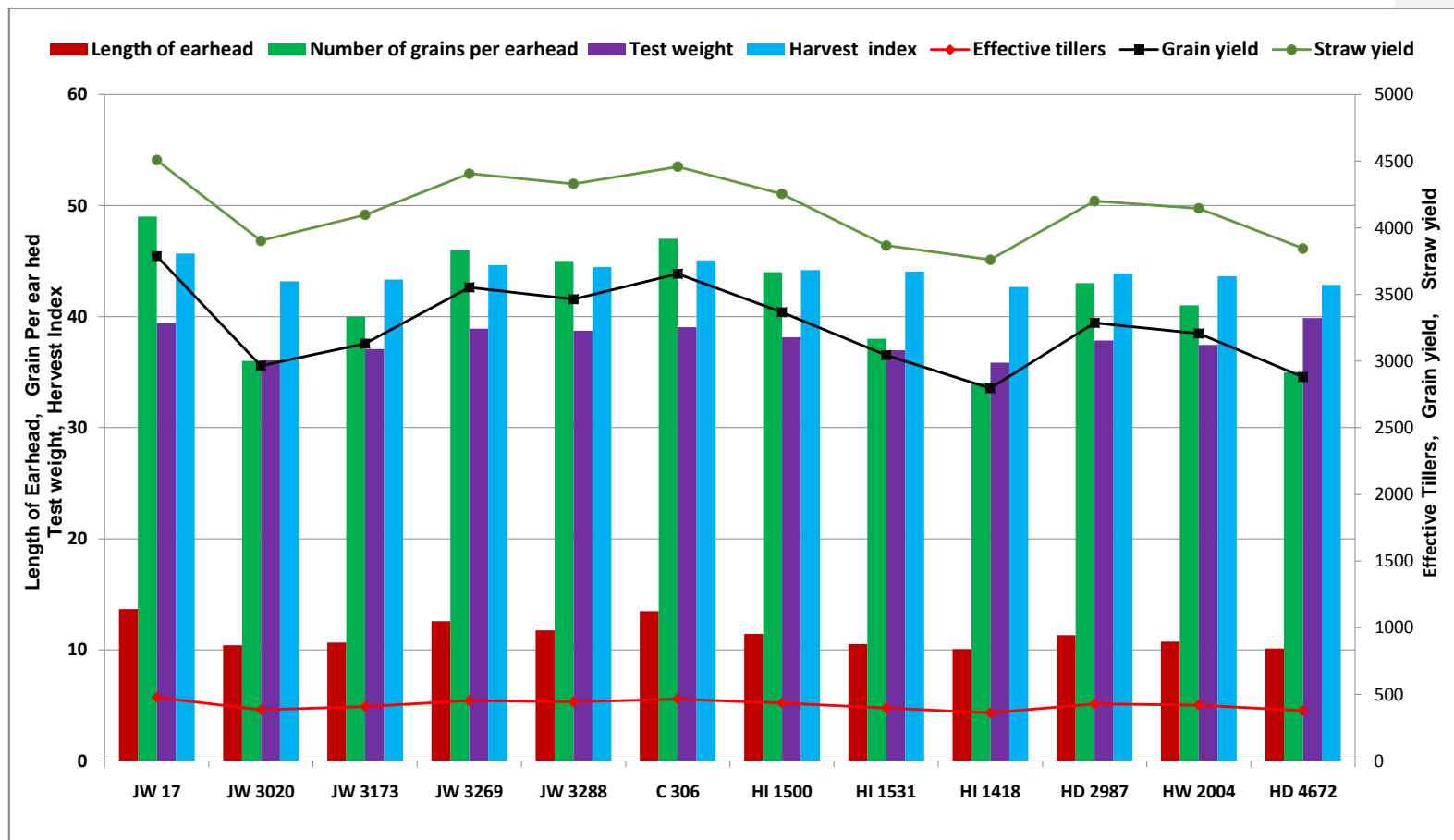


FIGURE 2 – Yield and yield attributing traits of different wheat varieties grown under organic nutrient management.

These growth parameters were remarkably poor under the variety HI 1418; thus, it gave the lowest number of effective tillers per meter square. Variability concerning a number of effective tillers among different varieties might be due to their genetic makeup. It was noted that varieties with large-sized ear heads (JW 17 and ear length 13.67 cm) also have a greater number of grains per ear head. The maximum number of grains per ear head (49 grains per ear head) was counted in the variety JW 17, which was found at par with varieties C 306, JW 3269, and JW 3288. However, minimum grains per ear head were recorded under the variety HI 1418 (34 grains per ear head). The grain yields of varieties are the final product for which varieties have evolved. Data showed that the variety JW 17, with a grain yield of 3787 kg ha⁻¹ excelled all of the varieties but was closely followed by varieties C 306 and JW 3269. While HI 1418 was the lowest yielder with a grain yield of (2796 kg ha⁻¹) among all the varieties tested. Economic yield (grain yield) was significantly higher in the variety JW 17 than in the rest of the varieties and its harvest index was also higher (45.68%) than rest of the varieties, followed by varieties C 306 and JW 3269. Whereas the variety HI 1418 produced the minimum grain yield in comparison to the rest of the varieties, so its harvest index was the lowest among all the varieties tested.

CONCLUSION

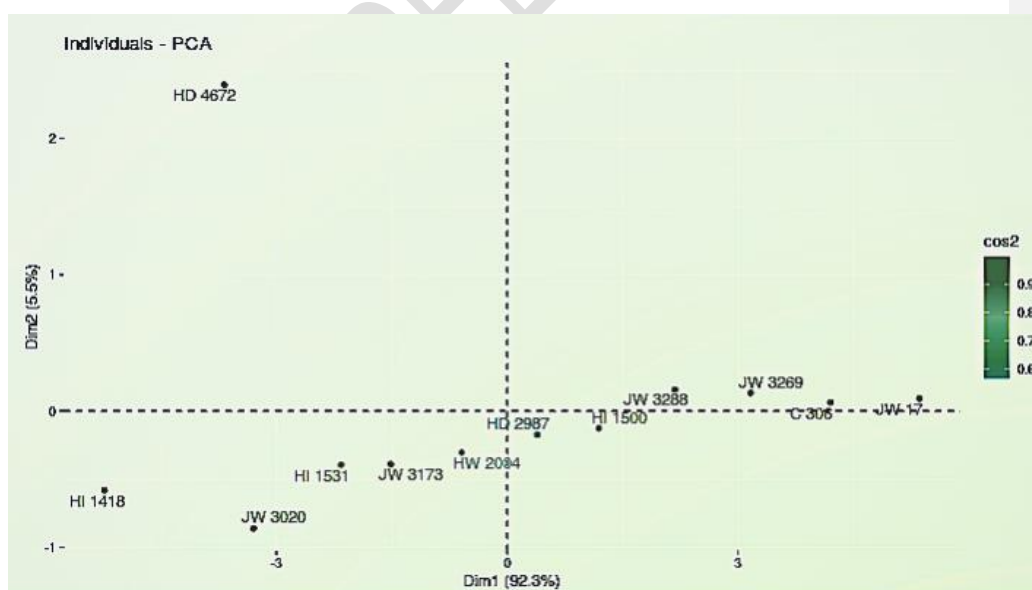


FIGURE 3 - This is a PCA showing the suitability of variety JW 17 along with varieties C 306, JW 3269 and JW 3288 under organic nutrient management in the Kymore Plateau and Satpura Hills zone.

Based on this field experiment and PCA (Figure 3), it might be concluded that with respect to growth parameters, yield attributing characters and grain yield, wheat variety JW 17 along with varieties C 306, JW 3269 and JW 3288 were found superior and suitable for cultivation in Kymore Plateau and Satpura Hills Zone under organic nutrient management practices. Thus, it can be concluded that according to prevailing cropping conditions varieties JW 17, C 306, JW 3269 and JW 3288 can be promoted for organic cultivation in Kymore Plateau and Satpura Hills Zone of Madhya Pradesh.

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