

Original Research Article

GROWTH AND YIELD OF LETTUCE (*Lactuca sativa* L.) IN RESPONSE TO ORGANIC FERTILIZER TYPES IN MAKURDI, NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in 2023 at the nursery of the Teaching and Research farm of the Department of Crop production of Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. The experimental treatments were two (2) varieties of lettuce (Ice berg and Butter head), three (3) organic manure sources (Poultry dropping, Cow dung, goat manure at 10t/ha) and a control, fitted in a randomized complete block design with three replications. Data were collected from the following parameters, plant height, plant diameter, number of leaves, leaf area index (LAI), crop growth rate (CGR), root weight, and fresh weight. All the study parameters of lettuce were significantly different ($P < 0.05$) on both organic manure, and variety. Iceberg variety out-performed butter head on plant height (20.32), number of leaves (23.86), leaf area index (15.19), crop growth rate (3.54), chlorophyll content (23.32), fresh weight (83.86), and root weight (20.23) and yield (3.19) and the difference was statistically significant. Similarly, poultry droppings obtained superior performance on plant height (21.73), number of leaves (23.92), leaf area index (16.75), crop growth rate (3.70), chlorophyll content (25.73), fresh weight (682.02, and root weight (22.13) and yield (3.73) as compared to other organic manure sources such as cow dung, goat manure and the untreated (control). Based on the results obtained, the study recommends that lettuce farmers in the locality should adopt Iceberg variety and applied poultry manure at 10 t/ha for optimum growth and yield of lettuce.

Keywords: Lettuce, Organic manure, variety, growth and yield

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The state of the soil and its health are essential to agricultural productivity. One of the biggest obstacles to the food security and income levels of smallholder farmers in developing nations who are extremely dependent on their land and feel a strong sense of attachment to it is the degraded soils and fertility status of tropical soils [1, 2, 3, 4].

The concern over food intake that has been overly treated with chemicals is growing every day because it is known that certain chemicals, when ingested in excess of reasonable limits, can lead to short- and long-term health problems. Additionally, since vegetable lettuce is consumed in its natural state, consumers' concerns about the farming practices of this crop are also growing [5, 6, 7]. While mineral fertilizers are often used in lettuce cultivation and provide good yields, other factors to take into account include consumer health, production costs, and product quality [6]. A strategy to lessen reliance on chemical fertilizers is to explore for substitute sources, including organic fertilizers, which are affordable, easily accessible, eco-friendly, and highly productive. Worldwide interest has been shown in organic fertilizers since they are a source and repository of certain essential plant nutrients [8].

Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa* L.) is an exotic African vegetable [9, 4] that is prized for its nutritional and therapeutic benefits. It is one of the world's most popular vegetables due to its high fiber content, low calories, fat, and salt. Furthermore, it contains iron, folic acid, vitamin C, and bioactive substances that are beneficial to health [10]. Its cultivation through small-scale irrigation and in home gardens has grown in recent years [11].

As such, there has been an increase in its demand in metropolitan areas recently. In Nigeria, the ideal growing conditions for lettuce are loose, nitrogen-rich soils with a pH of 6.0 to 6.8 [12, 6]. In Nigeria, it is a widely consumed vegetable crop that is utilized in many different recipes. Of all the salad crops,

lettuce is one of the most extensively planted and occupies the largest production space globally [13, 14, 6]. It is mostly eaten fresh and is high in fiber, phenolic compounds, minerals, and vitamins [10, 14]. Thus, this study's goal was to assess how different organic fertilizers applied to lettuce cultivars affected their growth and production in Makurdi, Nigeria,

2.0 MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1 Experimental Location

This study was carried out in 2023 at Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi (JOSTUM), in Benue State, Nigeria, at the nursery sector of the Teaching and Research farm of the Department of Crop Production. Makurdi, a tropical area inside Nigeria's Southern Guinea Savannah Agro-Ecological zone, is situated at Lat. 7.410N and Long 8.280E, 97 meters above sea level.

2.2 Experimental Treatments and Design

The treatments were two (2) varieties of lettuce (Iceberg and Butter-head) and three organic manure types (Poultry dropping, goat manure, Cow dung) and a control was used. The 2 x 4 experimental treatments were fitted in a Randomized complete block design (RCBD) and replicated three times. All the organic manure are collected from animal kept under intensive care and was allowed to undergo partial decomposition for three months following the recommendation of Yusuf and Paul (2018) before it was used for the experiment.

2.3 Land preparation, planting and application of fertilizers

Lettuce (Iceberg and Butter-head) were used. Lettuce seeds were sown in nursery trays and were watered twice a day to ensure good germination and establishment, the seeds germinated in 5-8 days after sowing days after sowing (DAS). The seedlings were transplanted in the main field after 20-25 days after sowing (DAS), the nursery establishment is important because directly sowing of seeds may not germinate well. A 4m² plot was laid out with 1m between plots and 1m between blocks. There were 5 plots each within a block which gave the total number of 24 plots for the study, a spacing of 15 x 75cm was adopted for the research, Agronomic practice such as weeding was done manually twice at 2 and 4 weeks after planting to ensure weed free plots. There was no infestation of pest in the experiment and hence, no chemicals were sprayed. All the data were collected within the net plot of 4m² where a total of 5 plants were tagged for data collection within each net plot. Harvesting was done 40 days after transplanting by uprooting the whole plant. The roots were removed with a knife.

2.5 Organic fertilizers sample analysis

Following standard methods, a sample of all the organic manure types of 0.5 kg was examined for Dry matter, OM, Total Nitrogen and available P. The results of the analysis indicated that the poultry manure (85% Dry Matter, Organic Material 42%, Total Nitrogen 6.2%, Total Phosphorus 3.8% and Total Potassium 2.18%), Goat manure (Dry matter 43%, Organic Material 34%, Total Nitrogen 3.1%, Total Phosphorus 1.60% and Total Potassium 2.1%), Cow dung (Dry matter 15%, Organic Material 21%, Total Nitrogen 9.0%, Total Phosphorus 0.3% and Total Potassium 0.7%) respectively.

2.6 Data collection on growth and yield

Data on leaf number, leaf area index and plant height (by measuring leaf height and leaf width using ruler were determined by taking five randomly selected plants for each treatment. Likewise, data on plant diameter (were measured with a vernier calliper), leaf area index (using a formula below), crop growth rate (using a formula below) and root weight, fresh weight as well as yield was then weighted using hanging digital meter.

Formula for Leaf Area Index (LAI) is given below;

$$LAI = \frac{\text{Total Leaf Area}}{\text{Unit Land Area}} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{----} \quad \text{-----} \quad \text{---} \quad (1)$$

Formula for Crop growth rate (CGR) is given as

$$CGR = \frac{W_2 - W_1}{P(t_2 - t_1)} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{----} \quad \text{-----} \quad \text{---} \quad (2)$$

Where;

P = Ground area,

W1 = Dry weight of plant/m² recorded at time t₁,

W2 = Dry weight of plant/m² recorded at time t₂,

t₁ and t₂ were the interval of time, respectively and it is expressed in g/m²/day.

2.7 Statistical Data Analysis

The growth and yield data were tabulated correctly and then subjected to two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using the GENSTAT statistical software. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was performed at $P \leq 0.05$ to compare all significant treatment means.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Vegetative Growth of Lettuce as influenced by variety and different organic fertilizer Application

With an average plant height of 20.32 cm, number of leaves of 23.86, leaf area index of 15.19 cm², and crop growth rate of 3.54 g/m²/day, the Iceberg variety outperformed the Butter-head variety, which recorded significantly lower plant height (18.98 cm), number of leaves (20.87), leaf area index (14.23 cm²), and crop growth rate (2.02 g/m²/day). The results in Table 1 showed that the Iceberg variety was superior in terms of growth metrics. Differences in the genetic, morphological, and biochemical traits that influence the biomass accumulation among various vegetative parts of fruits and vegetables may be the cause of the notable differences between the two varieties in terms of plant height, number of leaves, leaf area index, and crop growth rate. Jilani *et al.*[16], Nyam *et al.*[6], and Iorliam and Ugoo[17] have reported findings similar to this study, focusing on onions, lettuce, and okra, respectively, and citing varietal variations in crop performance.

Poultry manure produced the highest growth values among the nutrient sources in terms of all parameters, especially with regard to plant height (21.73cm) and crop growth rate (3.70g/m²/day). In contrast, the untreated plots (control) demonstrated a significantly lower crop growth rate, highlighting the significance of nutrient supplementation. This pattern of highest to lowest performance for nutrient sources was seen in the following order: goat manure, chicken manure, cow dung, and untreated (control). This research provides important information for sustainable farming practices by highlighting the potential of organic nutrient sources, especially chicken droppings, to improve lettuce growth in the area. According to a previous study by Nyam *et al.*[6], on lettuce grown in Jos, poultry manure performed better for the majority of the metrics. Other organic sources, such as pig and cow dung, followed in decreasing order of performance, while control came in last. Additionally, Masarirambiet *al.*[18] observed that applying chicken manure, followed by cow dung, and then inorganic fertilizer, increased the yields of the "Veneza Roxa" type of lettuce. Similarly, Ojo *et al.*[4] used compost at a rate of 5 tons per hectare to get the best growth and output of lettuce. Ullah *et al.*[19] came to the conclusion that under the agroclimatic conditions of the Peshawar Valley, lettuce

of the "Chinese cultivar" would grow and yield at its optimum when fed with poultry manure at a rate of 10 tons per hectare. Furthermore, Sanni *et al.*[3] found that combining organic manure with fertilizers high in phosphorus is an effective way to maintain soil fertility while growing lettuce.

Table 1: Effect of organic nutrient sources on the growth parameters of lettuce grown in Makurdi

	Plant Height (cm)	Number of Leaves	Leaf Area Index (LAI)	Crop Growth Rate (CGR)
Varieties				
Ice berg	20.32	23.86	15.19	3.54
Butter head	18.98	20.87	14.23	2.02
LSD (0.05)	1.02	1.18	1.31	0.08
Nutrient source				
Cattle Dung	17.28	19.12	12.00	2.10
Poultry Manure	21.73	23.92	16.75	3.70
Goat Manure	19.00	20.91	13.88	2.90
Control	15.01	15.21	10.75	1.04
LSD (0.05)	1.20	1.10	1.62	0.02

3.2 Yield of Lettuce as influenced by variety and different organic fertilizer Application

According to table 2 or figure 1, the Butterhead variety recorded the lowest chlorophyll concentration (20.98 mg/g), while the Iceberg variety recorded the highest chlorophyll content (23.32 mg/g). This difference was statistically significant. Poultry dung dramatically increased the quantities of chlorophyll on organic nutrient sources, averaging an astonishing 25.73 mg/g; the control group produced the lowest amount, 18.01 mg/g. Other nutrient sources, such as goat dung and calf dung, had moderate chlorophyll contents of 20.28 mg/g and 22.00 mg/g, respectively, and there was a statistically significant difference between them. The comprehension of nitrogen management techniques for enhancing lettuce production in sustainable agriculture systems is enhanced by this discovery. Similar to this study, Chowdhury and Rahman [20] found that whereas local cultivars in the control plot had the lowest chlorophyll content, greater lettuce growth, yield, and nutrient accumulation were attained in the poultry manure treatment.

The Iceberg variety outperformed Butterhead with an average root weight of 20.23g, and the difference between the two types was statistically significant as shown in Table 2 or Figure 2. The addition of poultry manure greatly increased the average root weight, which was an amazing 22.12g. The control group, on the other hand, had the lowest root weight (16.87g). Goat manure and calf dung produced modest root weights of 20.12g and 18.32g, respectively. The study emphasizes the advantageous effects of organic nutrient sources on root growth, especially chicken manure. A like pattern was noted for the fresh weight of lettuce (figure 3). The plants with the highest fresh and root weights were those treated with chicken manure. Uddin *et al.*[21]; Draghici *et al.*[22]; Chowdhury and Rahman, [20] have produced findings that are comparable to these. This could be explained by the fertilizer's nutritional composition. Ghanbarian *et al.*[23] observed that cantaloupe (*Cucumis melo*) plants treated with chicken dung show a somewhat greater profitable yield compared to those receiving no chicken manure. Comparable outcomes were shown with okra [24], broccoli [25], and lettuce [19]. The poultry manure's high levels of readily available potassium and phosphate make it eligible for accreditation. Madina *et al.*[26] in his work attributed high chlorophyll in lettuce to the availability of nutrients particularly nitrogen which is slightly high amount in poultry dropping when compared with other organic sources. Iceberg variety (3.19t/ha) produced more lettuce yield than butter-head variety (2.63t/ha), and the difference was statistically significant (table 2 or figure 4). With

an enhanced production of 3.75t/ha, poultry manure regularly surpassed other nutrient sources, while the untreated plots (control) yielded the least amount of 1.75t/ha. Additionally, a respectable moderate output of 2.00t/ha and 2.50t/ha, respectively, were obtained by goat dung and cattle dung. This highlights how important organic nutrients are for increasing lettuce output, especially chicken manure. Earlier researchers like Uddin *et al.*[21], Draghici *et al.* [22], and Chowdhury and Rahman [20] have reported comparable study findings indicating that plants fed with poultry manure exhibited the highest growth metrics and marketable yield. This might be explained by the fertilizer's nutritional composition. According to Ojo *et al.*[4], using 5 t/ha of compost was ideal for lettuce growth and productivity. Ullah *et al.*[19] also discovered that lettuce grown on poultry manure grows to its full potential and yields more leaves. Furthermore, Meskeluet *al.*[11] and Madina *et al.*[27] have confirmed that the use of organic manure (bio-slurry) either by itself or in conjunction with chemical fertilizers has the potential to boost lettuce and tomato output and save farmers money on the purchase of chemical fertilizers and to reduce the cost of production.

Table 2: Effect of organic nutrient sources on the yield parameters of lettuce grown in Makurdi

	Chlorophyll content	Fresh weight (g)	Root Weight (g)	Yield (t/ha)
Varieties				
Ice berg	23.32	83.86	20.23	3.19
Butter head	20.98	70.87	18.65	2.63
LSD (0.05)	2.02	5.18	1.02	1.31
Nutrient source				
Cattle Dung	20.28	68.12	18.32	2.00
Poultry Manure	25.73	82.02	22.12	3.75
Goat Manure	22.00	79.91	20.12	2.50
Control	18.01	55.21	16.87	1.75
LSD (0.05)	1.20	3.10	1.54	1.22

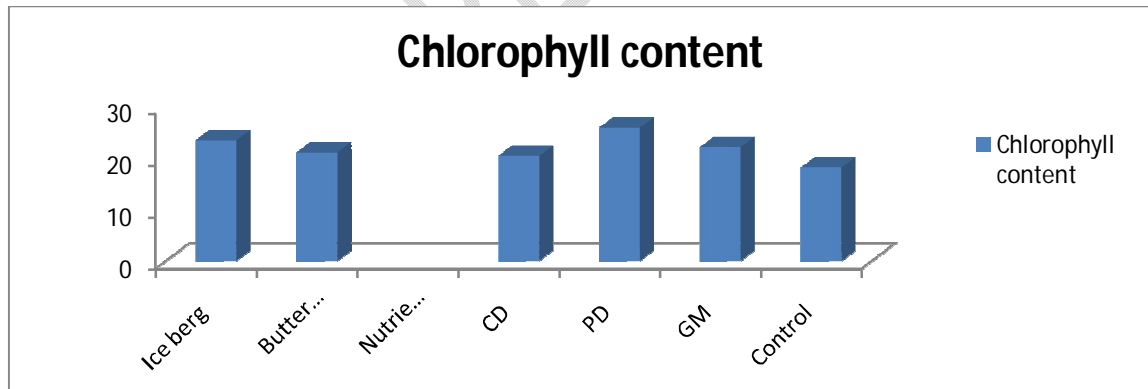


Figure 1: Effect of variety x nutrient sources on the chlorophyll content of lettuce grown in Makurdi

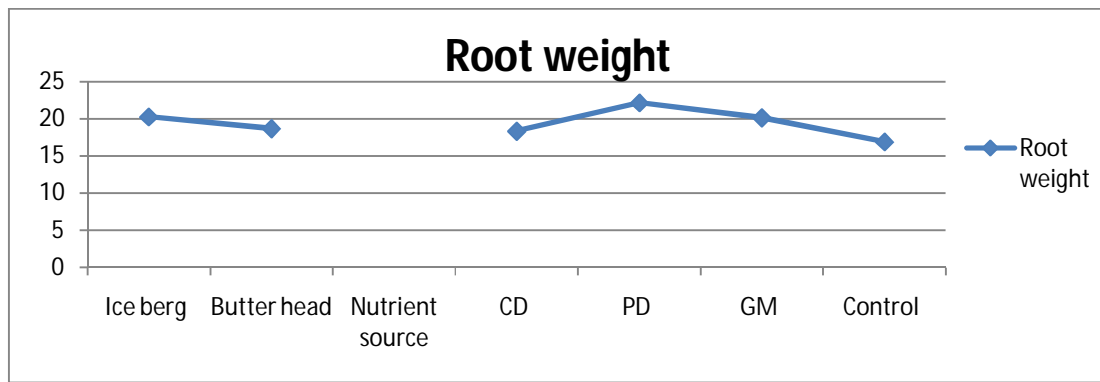


Figure 2: Effect of variety x nutrient sources on the root weight of lettuce grown in Makurdi

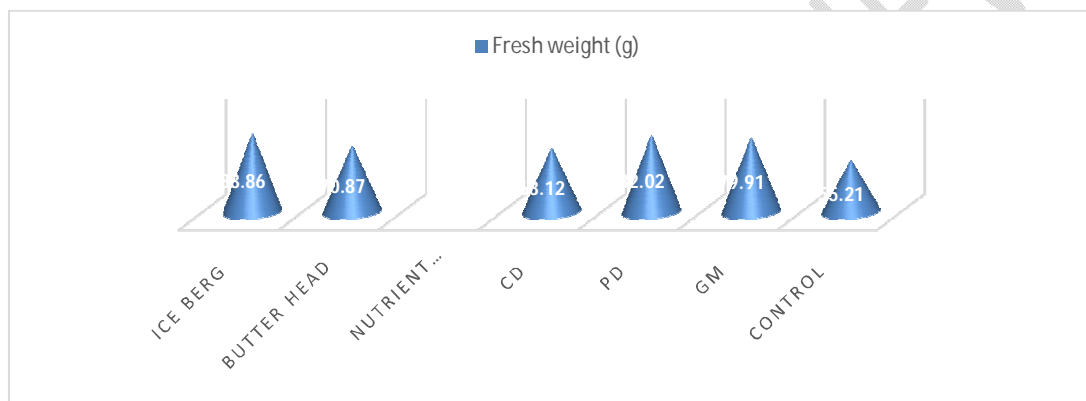


Figure 3: Effect of variety x nutrient sources on the fresh weight of lettuce grown in Makurdi

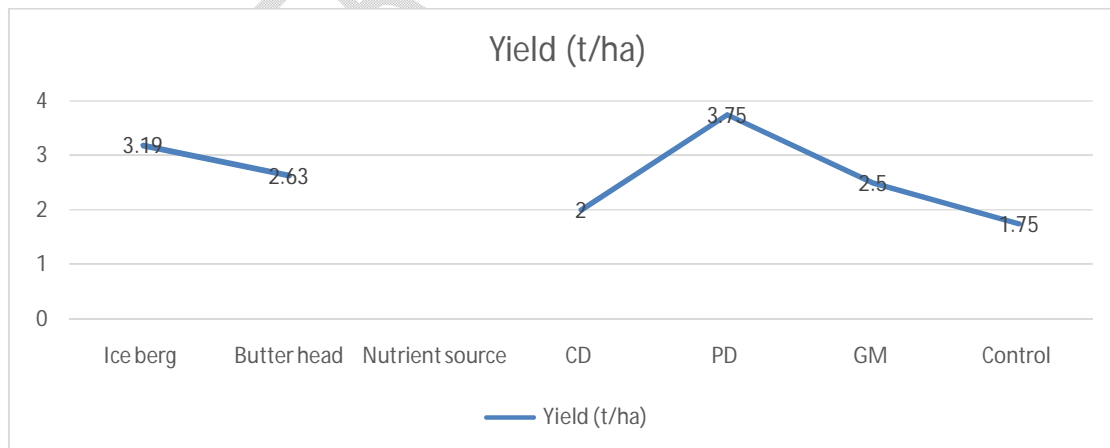


Figure 4: Effect of variety x nutrient sources on the yield of lettuce grown in Makurdi

4.0 CONCLUSION

All growth and yield characteristics studied showed that the iceberg variety of lettuce outperformed the butterhead variety. Compared to the other nutrient sources and the control, poultry manure considerably improved lettuce growth and yield characteristics, with a significant difference from cattle dung or goat manure. The control plots had the lowest growth and yield characteristics among the lettuce cultivars tested in this study. Furthermore, the use of cow dung and goat manure improved lettuce growth and production. In conclusion, it may be suggested that poultry manure be applied to iceberg variety at 10t/ha to obtain optimum growth and yield of lettuce in Makurdi. However, in the absence of poultry manure, lettuce farmers can utilize cattle dung or goat manure for enhanced yield in Makurdi.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

It is contained within the manuscript in the form of Tables and Figures.

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