

Effect of nano fertilizers on growth and yield of wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.)

ABSTRACT

A field experiment was conducted at Instructional Farm, College of Agriculture, Jodhpur during two consecutive *rabi* seasons of 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 to investigate the “Effect of nano fertilizers on yield of wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.). The field experiment was tested in randomized complete block design (RCBD) with fourteen treatments replicated thrice. Results showed that the application of 100% recommended dose of fertilizer (RDF) + seed treatment (ST) with nano phosphorus and two foliar sprays of nano nitrogen at 35 and 55 days after sowing (DAS) was found the most effective treatment with recorded highest number of tillers (431/m²), length of spike (17.03 cm), number of spikes (414 /m²), number of grains (45.24 /spike), test weight (46.32) and grain yield (4399 kg/ha) on pooled basis. However, this treatment was found statistically at par with treatments of 100 per cent RDF + 2 foliar sprays (FS) of nano nitrogen at 35 and 55 DAS, 100% RDF + FS of nano phosphorus at 35 DAS, 75% RDF + ST with nano phosphorus and 2 foliar spray of nano nitrogen at 35 & 55 DAS but significantly superior over other treatments.

Key words: Foliar spray, Nano fertilizer, Seed treatment, Wheat and Yield

1. INTRODUCTION

Wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) is the most important crop among the cereals. It belongs to family Poaceae and originated from the Middle-East region of Asia. Wheat has a global significance as it is staple food for millions of people and supplies 20 per cent of the food calories for World's population. In India, it is the second staple food crop next to rice contributing about 32 per cent of the total food grain production. It is the cheapest source and supplier of the calories and protein for healthy diet [1]. Wheat straw is also a major source of fodder for the animal population of the country. Wheat grain contains starch (60-90%), protein (11-16.5%), fat (1.5-2%), inorganic ions (1.2-2%), vitamins B complex and E [2]. In India, wheat stands second position in area and production, but first in productivity amongst all the cereals with acreage, production and productivity of 31.23 million hectares, 112.92 million tonnes and 3615 kg/ha, respectively [3]. In Rajasthan, wheat crop covers an area of 27.85 lakh hectares with an annual production of 10.41 million tonnes and an average productivity of 3739 kg/ha which is slightly higher than national average. Rajasthan state is on fifth position in wheat production after Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh [4]. The application of fertilizers in the crop fields is a common practice for increasing the crop production to fulfill the global demand of food [5]. Meanwhile, excess use of mineral fertilizers is unsafe due to increase the pollution issues. However, conventional fertilizers don't provide the required results because most of the nutrients don't reach at the target site due to losses by evaporation, leaching, volatilization, erosion, run off and nutrients photolytic deprivation [6&7]. The cultivation of wheat is increasing, it requires heavy fertilization. Increasing cost of fertilizers is main cause of concern as most of fertilizers are imported in India. Besides, the use of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassic fertilizers are seen with lower nutrient use efficiency (NUE) which ranges from 20 to 50 per cent for nitrogen, 10-25 per cent for phosphorus and 70-80 per cent potassium [8&9] Improvement of NUE is needed for better cropping systems, supporting the sustainable agricultural production systems and increasing soil quality components [10]. Nano-materials differ from conventional materials having specific composition with unique property like small size of particle with

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high surface area, high reactivity and catalytic activity [11]. A small delivery system of nano fertilizer is seen because of its multidisciplinary characters like remotely coordinated, a specific and targeted approach and release nutrient slowly or in controlled way which helps to dodge the biological barriers [12]. Nano-technology has gained popularity in the agricultural sector in recent decades due to the invention of nano fertilizers that enhances nutrient use efficiency and minimizing losses. Many researchers have witnessed that it is a boon for high crop production, so the ~~objective of this present~~ research work is to determine the ~~done on~~ effect of nano fertilizers on growth and yield of wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Experimental site

The experiment was carried out at Instructional Farm, College of Agriculture, Jodhpur during *rabi* seasons of 2021-22 and 2022-23. Geographically, Jodhpur is situated between 26° 15' N to 26° 45' North latitude and 73° 00' E to latitude 73° 29' East longitude at an altitude of 231 meter above mean sea level. The soil was loamy sand in texture, slightly alkaline in reaction (pH 7.8), low in organic carbon (0.14%) and medium in available nitrogen (175 kg/ha), medium in available phosphorus (24.2 kg/ha) and high in availability potash (325.0 kg/ha).

2.2 Experimental treatments

The field experiment was laid out in randomized complete block design (RCBD) with fourteen treatments replicated thrice. The treatments comprised of T₁-100% RDF + two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₂-100% RDF + foliar spray of nano P at 35 DAS, T₃-100% RDF + ST with nano P at 5 ml/kg seed and two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₄-75% RDF + two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₅-75% RDF + foliar spray of nano P at 35 DAS, T₆-100% RDF + ST with nano P at 5 ml/kg seed and two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₇-50% RDF + two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₈-50% RDF + foliar spray of nano P at 35 DAS, T₉-50% RDF + ST with nano P at 5 ml/kg seed and two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₁₀-Foliar spray of nano P at 35 DAS + two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₁₁-ST with nano P at 5 ml/kg seed + foliar spray of nano P at 35 DAS + two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₁₂- ST with nano P at 5 ml/kg seed + two foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS, T₁₃-100% RDF through conventional fertilizers and T₁₄-Control. In accordance with the treatments, recommended doses of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium fertilizers were given as basal application at the time of sowing through urea, di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) and murate of potash (MOP). Specifically, half of the prescribed nitrogen quantity was applied as a basal application while the remaining amount of nitrogen top dressed within the standing crop through urea at the time of the first irrigation. As per treatments, ST was done with nano DAP at 5 ml/kg of seed with required quantity of water to form thin film on seed surface and then dried in shade. Thereafter, sowing was done in each marked plots. The FS of nano N and P were done as per treatment combination. The foliar sprays of nano urea at 4 ml/L and nano DAP at 2 ml/L water was applied as per scheduled treatments. The first spray of nano urea was applied at 35 DAS and second at 55 DAS. FS of nano DAP was applied at 35 DAS.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data revealed that application of 100% RDF + ST with nano P and 2 foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS recorded highest no. of tillers/m², length of spike, no. of spikes/m², no. of grains/spike, test weight which was statistically at par with 100% RDF + 2 FS of nano N at 35 and 55 DAS, 100% RDF + FS of nano P at 35 DAS, 75% RDF + ST with nano P and 2 foliar spray of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS. These improvements were observed in yield attributes such as tillers/m², number of spikes/m², spike length, number of grains/spike and test weight. The pooled data (Table 1) further confirms that this specific treatment led to a

remarkable increase of 171.1% in the number of tillers compared to the control plots. This notable effect can be attributed to the synergy between conventional fertilizer and nano fertilizer, which enhances nutrient absorption by plant cells, ultimately promoting optimal growth and metabolic processes like photosynthesis. This, in turn, results in higher accumulation and translocation of photosynthates to economically important plant parts, leading to an increased number of reproductive tillers. Another reason for the improved yield attributes could be the increased availability of nutrients, which facilitates faster translocation of photosynthates from leaves to sink sites, such as spikes and grains, through the stem. This results in longer and heavier spikes with more grains per spike. The nano fertilizers stimulated biological and enzymatic reactions while regulating hormone levels, creating favorable conditions for the accumulation of the necessary dry materials for pollination and fertilization. They might have reduced the rate of ovarian abortion, ultimately promoting pollination and fertilization, which results in a higher number of grains per spike. Besides their nutritional role, availability of nano nitrogen might have influenced hormone regulation, particularly auxin at the top of the spike. Cytokinin play a role in preventing the transfer of auxin from older to newer grains, thereby increasing grain set in the spike, which is reflected through increased number of grains per spike. These findings are in line with previous studies conducted by [13,14,15&16]. Results (Table 2) indicated that 100% RDF + ST with nano P and 2 FS of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS produced maximum grain, straw and biological yield which was statistically at par with treatments applied with 100% RDF + 2 FS of nano N at 35 and 55 DAS, 100% RDF + FS of nano P at 35 DAS and 75% RDF + ST with nano P and 2 FS of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS but remained significantly superior over treatments applied with 50% RDF in combination with nano fertilizers. Application of ST with nano P + 2 FS of nano N at 35 and 55 DAS recorded grain yield of 2294 kg/ha and when this treatment was super imposed with 50, 75 and 100% RDF, the grain yield was further improved by 54.4, 72.8 and 91.7%, respectively. The treatment of 50% RDF+ ST with nano P and 2 FS of nano N at 35 & 55 DAS significantly improved the grain yield by 881 and 1940 kg/ha over FS of nano P at 35 DAS + 2 FS of nano N at 35 and 55 DAS and control, respectively. This improvement can be attributed to high efficiency of fertilizer/nutrients utilization when they are applied in nano form combined with RDF. Various factors influence grain yield which are genotypic variations, environmental conditions and agronomic practices such as fertilization. Sahu *et al.* (2023) discovered that the application of foliar sprays of nutrient solutions at distinct growth stages, in conjunction with the judicious application of recommended fertilizer quantities and nano-diammonium phosphate (nano DAP), collectively contributed to a notable enhancement in yield. Nano form of fertilizers may be attributed to the superior absorption, interception and utilization of phosphorus. Nano P exhibited slow-release characteristic throughout the growth period, which consequently elevated chlorophyll synthesis and leads to a substantial accumulation of biomass yield. Liu and Lal's (2014) findings indicated a remarkable growth rate enhancement of 32.6 and 20.4% in seed production compared to the scenarios where no nano fertilizers were applied [17]. Indeed, recent studies by Velmurugan *et al.* (2021) and Sahu *et al.* (2022) have demonstrated that nano fertilizers performed better than commercial urea in different crops [18&19]. These findings are in close conformity with the results reported by [16,20,21,22&23].

Conclusion

On the basis of two years experimentation, it can be concluded that wheat crop can be fertilized with 100% RDF (90 kg N/ha, 40 kg P₂O₅ and 20 kg K₂O/ha) along with seed treatment with nano P @ 5 ml/kg of seed and two foliar spray of nano N @ 4 ml/L of water at 35 & 55 DAS for higher production.

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UNDER PEER REVIEW

Table 1 Effect of nano fertilizers and RDF levels on yield attributes of wheat crop (two year pooled)

Treatments	No. of tillers/m ²	Length of spike (cm)	No. of spikes/m ²	No. of grains/spike	Test weight (g)
T ₁ 100% RDF + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	411	16.58	401	44.35	46.18
T ₂ 100% RDF + FS nano P 35 DAS	399	16.48	389	43.98	45.74
T ₃ 100% RDF + ST nano P & 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	431	17.03	414	45.24	46.32
T ₄ 75% RDF + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	384	15.29	371	40.51	45.20
T ₅ 75% RDF + FS of nano P at 35 DAS	366	14.71	359	39.62	45.14
T ₆ 75% RDF + ST nano P & 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	396	15.88	382	41.94	45.40
T ₇ 50% RDF + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	339	13.78	334	37.04	44.76
T ₈ 50% RDF + FS nano P 35 DAS	320	13.19	311	35.35	44.64
T ₉ 50% RDF + ST nano P & 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	348	14.24	339	37.66	44.81
T ₁₀ FS nano P 35 DAS + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	263	10.68	252	29.83	43.13
T ₁₁ ST nano P + FS nano P 35 DAS & 2 FS nano N	277	11.09	273	31.58	43.20
T ₁₂ ST nano P + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	226	9.23	220	25.58	42.83
T ₁₃ 100% RDF conventional fertilizers	390	15.33	374	40.67	45.22
T ₁₄ Control	159	7.29	154	17.77	40.70
SEm±	12.1	0.58	11.6	1.52	0.40
CD (P=0.05)	35.1	1.69	33.7	4.42	1.16

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Table 2 Effect of nano fertilizers and RDF levels on grain, straw, biological yield and harvest index of wheat crop (two year pooled)

Treatments		Grain yield (kg/ha)			Straw yield (kg/ha)			Biological yield (kg/ha)		
		2021-22	2022-23	Pooled	2021-22	2022-23	Pooled	2021-22	2022-23	Pooled
T₁	100% RDF + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	4099	4307	4203	5228	5502	5365	9327	9809	9568
T₂	100% RDF + FS nano P 35 DAS	4027	4280	4154	5149	5473	5311	9177	9753	9465
T₃	100% RDF + ST nano P & 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	4284	4513	4399	5351	5698	5525	9635	10212	9923
T₄	75% RDF + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	3793	4000	3896	4887	5206	5047	8680	9206	8943
T₅	75% RDF + FS of nano P at 35 DAS	3645	3827	3736	4696	4983	4840	8341	8810	8575
T₆	75% RDF + ST nano P & 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	3864	4066	3965	4949	5238	5094	8813	9305	9059
T₇	50% RDF + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	3400	3570	3485	4390	4714	4552	7790	8284	8037
T₈	50% RDF + FS nano P 35 DAS	3229	3421	3325	4177	4452	4314	7405	7873	7639
T₉	50% RDF + ST nano P & 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	3445	3640	3543	4432	4762	4597	7877	8402	8140
T₁₀	FS nano P 35 DAS + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	2470	2854	2662	3227	3779	3503	5697	6633	6165
T₁₁	ST nano P + FS nano P 35 DAS & 2 FS nano N	2700	3045	2872	3530	3985	3757	6230	7029	6630
T₁₂	ST nano P + 2 FS nano N 35 & 55 DAS	2148	2440	2294	2838	3217	3027	4985	5657	5321
T₁₃	100% RDF conventional fertilizers	3844	4030	3937	4941	5221	5081	8785	9250	9018
T₁₄	Control	1487	1720	1603	1980	2306	2143	3467	4026	3746
SEm±		171.2	200.3	154.7	244.0	256.1	197.5	403.8	430.0	341.7
CD (P=0.05)		497.8	582.2	449.7	709.2	744.4	574.1	1173.7	1249.9	993.4

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