

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BIOFERTILIZERS AND BIOINOCULANTS ON YIELD PARAMETERS, NUTRIENT STATUS AND SOIL MICROORGANISMS OF MANGO CV. MALLIKA IN MIDDLE GUJARAT CONDITION

ABSTRACT

Nutrient status of leaf and soil microorganisms have directly influence on the nutrient-absorption rate and translocation in the tree system which ultimately increases the production of fruit crops. Therefore, The effects of different biofertilizer and bioinoculant treatments on yield, leaf nutrient status, and soil microorganisms were evaluated post-harvest. A two year field experiment was conducted at Horticultural Research Farm, Department of Horticulture, B.A.C.A, AAU, Anand, Gujarat, India during year 2019-20 and 2020-21 on mango cv. Mallika. The experiment was laid out in factorial CRD with four biofertilizers viz., D₁: Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree), D₂: VAM (10 g/tree), D₃: Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree) + VAM (10 g/tree) and D₄: No biofertilizers which were given as a soil drenching at pea stage i.e., March and four bioinoculants viz., S₁: Seaweed extract (0.2 %), S₂: Novel organic liquid nutrient (2 %), S₃: Jeevamrut (10 %) and S₄: No bioinoculants which were sprayed in two frequencies at 2nd week of April and 1st week of May. Among biofertilizers, D₃ showed higher fruit weight, diameter, number of fruits per tree, yield as well as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium content in leaf. Among bioinoculants, S₂ showed higher fruit weight in pooled result, fruit diameter, number of fruits per tree, yield, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium content in leaf. D₃S₂ resulted maximum yield and potassium content in leaf in pooled whereas, nitrogen and phosphorus content in leaf during both the years and pooled data. Similarly, D₃S₂ also recorded maximum soil microorganisms.

Key words: Biofertilizers, soil drenching, bioinoculants, nutrient status, soil microorganisms

1. INTRODUCTION

Mango (*Mangifera indica* L.) is one of the major fruit crops of the family *Anacardiaceae*. Mango is the national fruit of India. Mango is originated in the Indo-Burma or South-East Asian region. It is referred to as the "King of Fruits" due to its exquisite flavor, excellent palatability, sweet scent, appealing color and nutritious value. Mango fruit contains unique nutritional and medicinal properties. Every 100 g mango pulp contains 0.8 g protein, 15 g carbohydrates, 0.4 g fat and 1.6 g dietary fiber. It is also good source of vitamin A and C. It is highly laxative, invigorative and diuretic (Bal, 2006). A single fruit can provide up to 40% dietary fiber (Sing *et al.*, 2005). In India, the major mango growing states are Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and West Bengal. Among the various states, Uttar Pradesh has the largest area followed by Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In Gujarat, mango is cultivated in Valsad, Navsari, Junagadh, Surat, Bharuch, Kutch and Jamnagar districts because of favourable agro-climatic conditions.

Non-selective use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides in horticultural crops affected the fertility, biodiversity, ground water pollution and health of human. Now, it has become a challenge for the orchardists, registered growers and exporters of our country to produce quality fruits having the international standards for export. The rising demand for chemical-free mangoes has incentivized farmers to adopt Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) practices, enabling them to meet export standards and achieve higher market prices. According to Yawalkar *et al.* (1996), biofertilizers are live microorganisms that enrich, preserve, and release plant nutrients into the soil. Farmers choose these organic sources of microbial inoculants (Kumar *et al.*, 2009);

Srivastava et al., 2009), and biofertilizer based on renewable energy sources is an affordable addition to chemical fertilizers (Motsara et al., 1995). Among different biofertilizers, *Azotobacter* and *Azospirillum* have ability to fix good nitrogen. Bio NPK consortium provide nutrients to the soil and Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhiza (VAM) helps to absorb and mobilize primary phosphorus (Aal et al., 2020; Kour et al., 2019; Bhadauria & Tripathi., 2023).

Pre-harvest application of bioinoculants has also become an alternative approach to minimize the use of chemical fertilizers (Sathyanarayana et al., 2018). A number of growth-regulating bioinoculants, such as jeevamrut, seaweed extract and novel organic liquid nutrients, have the potential to boost fruit crop development and growth. "Seaweed extract" had higher amounts of macro nutrients, trace elements, organic substances like amino acids, antioxidant, organic acid and plant growth regulators such as auxin, cytokinin and gibberellins are applied to improved nutritional status, vegetative growth, fruit quality and yield in plants (Crouch et al., 1992). "Novel organic liquid nutrient" is a good source of plant nutrient along with growth promoting substances like cytokinin, GA₃, etc. A fermented liquid product called "jeevamrut" is made by combining cow dung, urine, jaggery, legume flour and a handful of live soil (Palekar, 2006). It increases the amount of nutrients available to crops and encourages a great deal of biological activity in the soil (Gore and Sreenivasa, 2011). Keeping in the view the A comparative study of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on yield parameters, nutrient status and soil microorganisms of mango cv. Mallika in Middle Gujarat condition was determined.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present investigation was carried out at Horticultural Research Farm, Department of Horticulture, B. A. College of Agriculture, Anand Agricultural University, Anand, Gujarat, India during the year 2019-20 and 2020-21. Anand is situated in the Western Indian state of Gujarat and geographically at 22°35' North latitude and 72°56' East longitude with an altitude of about 45.1 m above the mean sea level. The climate of middle Gujarat zone is semi-arid and subtropical type. October to May is sunny months generally receiving an average of eight hours sunshine per day. Temperature during hot weather commences by end of February and ends by about middle of June. Winter sets in the middle of October and continues till the end of February. Monsoon is generally starts from second fortnight of June and retreats by middle of September with an annual rainfall of 860 mm. The soil of the experimental site was loamy sand, locally known as "Goradu" with pH 7.14 and consisted of 0.23 dS.m⁻¹ electrical conductivity (EC). The available N, P and K of the field soil were 320.00, 34.35 and 442.10 kg ha⁻¹, respectively with 0.46 % organic C.

The experimental design was Completely Randomized Design (CRD) with factorial concept with three repetitions. The recommended dose of Farm yard manure 100 kg/tree and fertilizers [N (as Urea), P₂O₅ (as SSP) and K₂O (as MOP) @ 750:160:750 kg ha⁻¹] were applied. Full dose of FYM, phosphorus, potash and half dose of nitrogen were given after harvest of the crop *i.e.*, June. Remaining half dose of nitrogen was given at pea stage *i.e.*, March. Uniform size with same age *i.e.*, 21 years trees of mango cv. Mallika was selected as an experimental material which were planted at 8 × 8 m spacing. One tree was selected per treatment and total sixteen treatment combinations were carried out.

Treatment details are as under:

Factor A. Drenching of biofertilizers (D)

D₁: Bio NPK Consortium @ 10 ml/tree

D₂: VAM @ 10 g/tree

D₃: Bio NPK Consortium @ 10 ml/tree + VAM @ 10 g/tree

D₄: No biofertilizers

Factor B. Spraying of bioinoculants (S)

S₁: Seaweed extract @ 0.2 %

S₂: Novel organic liquid nutrient @ 2 %

S₃: Jeevamrut @ 10 %

S₄: No bioinoculants

Anubhav Bio NPK Consortium contains strains of *Azotobacter chroococcum* (ABA-1), *Azospirillum lipoferum* (ASA-1), *Bacillus coagulans* and two *Bacillus spp.* was collected from the Department of Agricultural Microbiology, Anand Agricultural University, Anand. Sardar Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhiza (VAM) was collected from Gujarat State Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited, Vadodara.

Drenching with biofertilizers (D₁ and D₂) were given in the ring 1.5 m apart from the tree trunk by soil drenching by incorporation with well decomposed FYM after the week of half nitrogen given before pea stage *i.e.*, 1st week of March. For D₃ [Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree) + VAM (10 g/tree)], First Bio NPK Consortium was given and after that immediately VAM was applied. Bioinoculant, seaweed extract was collected from Fisheries Research Station, Port Okha- Junagadh Agricultural University. Novel organic liquid fertilizer was collected from soil and water management research unit, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari. Jeevamrut was prepared by procedures given by Palekar (2006). Spraying of bioinoculants was applied to the trees as a preharvest spray in two frequencies in the month of 2nd week of April and 1st week of May as per treatments on trees by foot sprayer.

2.1 Yield parameters observation

The five mature fruits per treatment were randomly selected and fruit weight and fruit diameter were observed. The number of fruits were counted treatment wise at harvest and expressed as number of fruits per tree. Fruit yield per hectare was calculated with number of trees per hectare by multiplying the average yield of trees and expressed in tonne.

2.2 Leaf nutrient analysis

Leaf nutrient status was recorded at initial and after harvesting of crop. At initial and after harvest of the crop, the mature leaves were collected and dried it and these samples were analyzed for N, P and K content by Kjeldahl's digestion, Vanadomolybdo phosphoric acid yellow colour method and flame photometric methods of analysis (Jackson, 1973), respectively. Soil samples were collected before and after conducting experiment for microbial count. Rhizospheric microorganisms were isolated from each sample by serial dilution and spread plate method.

2.3 Statistical analysis

Data for individual years were analyzed and in order to study the average effect of different treatments over the years, the pooled analysis was also carried out as suggested by Gomez and Gomez (1976).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Influence of biofertilizers on yield parameters of mango

Mango yield measurements were strongly impacted by the drenching of biofertilizers (Table 1). When Bio NPK Consortium 10 ml/tree + VAM 10 g/tree was applied, the yield parameters were recorded maximum fruit weight (353, 337 and 345 g), fruit diameter (8.33, 8.11 and 8.22 cm), number of fruits per tree (212, 198, and 205) and fruit yield (13.7, 13.0 and 13.4 t/ha) in 2019–20, 2020–21, and pooled data. This increase in yield parameters was caused by the combination of biofertilizers (Bio NPK Consortium + VAM), which may provide the correct amount of growth hormones and plant nutrients throughout the fruit's growth period. In the end, a higher rate of

photosynthesis led to a greater accumulation of dry matter, which increased the fruit's weight and diameter. The maximum number of fruits per tree may be attributed to the adequate nutrient supply throughout the experimental period, which improved fruit retention by providing photosynthates at critical stages, ultimately increasing fruit yield. These observations are in agreement with the Madhavi *et al.* (2008) in mango, Ram *et al.* (2012) and Sutariya *et al.* (2018) in phalsa, Thakkar (2015) in guava, Patel *et al.* (2017) and Baviskar *et al.* (2011) in sapota and Nurbhanej *et al.* (2016) in acid lime.

3.2 Influence of bioinoculants on yield parameters of mango

The yield characteristics of mango cv. Mallika were considerably impacted by the application of bioinoculants (Table 1). With spraying of Novel organic liquid nutrient 2 percent, the greatest fruit weight (336 g) was recorded in the pooled data, as well as the maximum fruit diameter (8.00, 7.82, and 7.90 cm), number of fruits per tree (205, 192, and 199), and fruit yield (13.3, 12.5, and 12.9 t/ha) in both years and the pooled mean. Novel organic liquid nutrients enable plants to accumulate more carbohydrates early in their growth, which improves the nutrition supply and increases the size of the fruit, as well as its diameter and weight (Patel *et al.*, 2018). Novel organic liquid nutrient contains a good amount of essential nutrients and growth boosters and these constituents are known to have positive effect on fruiting parameters of the crops (Rathod *et al.*, 2017). Similar type of results was also reported by Anon. (2012) in mango, Anon. (2011 and 2014) in banana.

3.3 Interaction effect of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on yield parameters of mango

Interaction effect of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on yield of mango (Fig. 1) showed significant result. Maximum fruit yield (14.9 t/ha) in pooled result was observed with combined application *i.e.*, drenching with biofertilizers like Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree) + VAM (10 g/tree) and spraying with bioinoculants *viz.*, Novel organic liquid nutrient (2 %). The combination of drenching with biofertilizers (Bio NPK Consortium + VAM) at the pea stage and spraying with a bioinoculant (novel organic liquid nutrient) that supplies essential macronutrients (N, P, and K) in sufficient amounts may enhance the uptake of phosphorus and other micronutrients (Zn, Cu, Mn, and Fe). Additionally, spraying with a novel organic liquid nutrient acts as a growth stimulant, which has a regulatory role in more fruit retention until harvest. This finding is supported by Yadav *et al.* (2011) in mango, Rathod *et al.* (2017) in pomegranate, Ram *et al.* (2012) and Sutariya *et al.* (2018) in phalsa and Musmade *et al.* (2010) in acid lime.

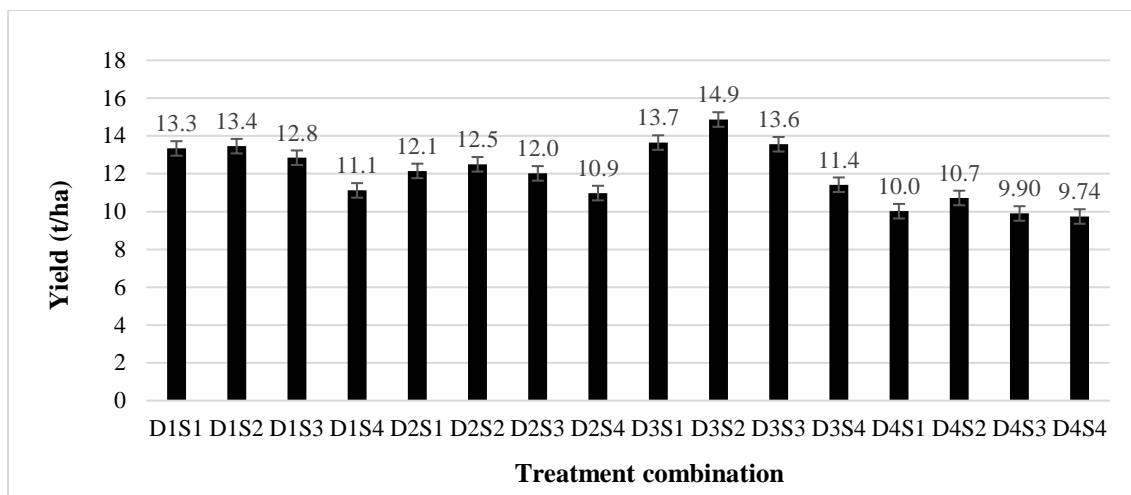


Fig. 1. Interaction effect of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on yield (t/ha) of mango (pooled result).

3.4 Influence of biofertilizers on nutrient status of mango leaf

Drenching of biofertilizers on nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium content in mango leaf (Table 2) showed significant result for individual year as well as pooled mean.

3.4.1 Nitrogen content of leaf (%)

Maximum nitrogen content (1.34, 1.48 and 1.41 %) in leaf was also noted in D₃ (Bio NPK Consortium 10 ml/tree + VAM 10 g/tree) during year 2019-20, 2020-21 and pooled mean, respectively. Increase in nitrogen status observed was partially attributed to the stimulating influence of biofertilizers, which in turn, increases nutrient-absorption rate and translocation in the tree system and ability of VAM fungi in supplying the host plants with nutrient requirements. It could also be due to increased dry-matter production, and nitrogen-fixation or nitrogen assimilation by *Azotobacter* and *Azospirillum* (Singh *et al.*, 2004). These results are in agreement with Sharma *et al.* (2013) in guava, Ennab (2016) in lemon, Kour *et al.* (2019) in aonla and Dutta and Kundu (2012) in mango.

3.4.2 Phosphorus content of leaf (%)

Maximum phosphorus content (0.345, 0.370 and 0.358 %) in leaf was also noted in D₃ (Bio NPK Consortium 10 ml/tree + VAM 10 g/tree) during both the years and pooled mean, respectively. This was perhaps due to production of enzyme complexes by the biofertilizers applied, which may have solubilized the unavailable form of phosphorus and made it available to the plant (Singh *et al.*, 2003). VAM fungi improve plant growth in the low phosphate soils by exploiting large areas of soil and actively transporting the phosphate up to the plants. Similar findings were reported by Sharma *et al.* (2011) in guava, Ennab (2016) in lemon, Kour *et al.* (2019) in aonla and Jain *et al.* (2012) in mandarin.

3.4.3 Potassium content of leaf (%)

Similarly, maximum potassium content (0.824, 0.879 and 0.852 %) in leaf was noted in D₃ (Bio NPK Consortium 10 ml/tree + VAM 10 g/tree) during both the years and pooled mean, respectively. This increase in potassium content in leaf of mango was probably due to the use of biofertilizers which may have contributed to improving soil physical-properties. Which results in better rooting, and therefore, better uptake of potassium from native sources. Increase in potassium content of leaves in the present study is also in conformity with findings of Ahmad *et al.* (2004) in mango, Sharaf *et al.* (2011) in Washington navel orange and El-Sheikh (2014) in lemon trees.

3.5 Influence of bioinoculants on nutrient status of mango leaf

Maximum nitrogen content (1.27, 1.39 and 1.33 %), phosphorus content (0.319, 0.340 and 0.330 %) and potassium content (0.784, 0.844 and 0.814 %) in leaf was noted in S₂ (Novel organic liquid nutrient 2 %) in both the years and pooled mean, respectively (Table 2). Spraying with Novel organic liquid nutrient significantly increased nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium content of leaf, which could be attributed to the rapid absorption of these elements by the plant surface and their translocation in the leaf. Similar finding was obtained by Sathyanarayana *et al.* (2018) in gladiolus.

Table 2. Influence of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on nutrient status (N, P and K) of mango leaf

Treatments	Nitrogen content (%)			Phosphorus content (%)			Potassium content (%)		
	2019-20	2020-21	Pooled mean	2019-20	2020-21	Pooled mean	2019-20	2020-21	Pooled mean
Initial content (%)	0.960			0.140			0.590		
Biofertilizers as drenching (D)									
D ₁	1.26	1.39	1.32	0.321	0.340	0.331	0.787	0.848	0.817
D ₂	1.18	1.30	1.24	0.285	0.310	0.298	0.743	0.804	0.773
D ₃	1.34	1.48	1.41	0.345	0.370	0.358	0.824	0.879	0.852
D ₄	0.925	1.03	0.975	0.188	0.208	0.198	0.622	0.683	0.652
S.Em.±	0.010	0.009	0.007	0.003	0.002	0.002	0.007	0.006	0.005
CD at 5 %	0.028	0.026	0.019	0.008	0.007	0.005	0.020	0.018	0.013
Bioinoculants as spraying (S)									
S ₁	1.21	1.33	1.27	0.302	0.324	0.313	0.765	0.821	0.793
S ₂	1.27	1.39	1.33	0.319	0.340	0.330	0.784	0.844	0.814
S ₃	1.19	1.32	1.26	0.289	0.313	0.301	0.752	0.810	0.781
S ₄	1.03	1.15	1.09	0.231	0.251	0.241	0.675	0.738	0.706
S.Em.±	0.010	0.009	0.007	0.003	0.002	0.002	0.007	0.006	0.005
CD at 5 %	0.028	0.026	0.019	0.008	0.007	0.005	0.020	0.018	0.013
Interaction (D x S)									
S.Em.±	0.019	0.018	0.013	0.006	0.005	0.004	0.014	0.013	0.009
CD at 5 %	0.056	0.051	0.037	0.016	0.014	0.010	NS	NS	0.026

3.6 Interaction effect of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on nutrient status of mango leaf

Maximum nitrogen content (1.45, 1.60 and 1.53 %) and phosphorus content (0.391, 0.412 and 0.402 %) was recorded with D₃S₂ *i.e.*, Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree) + VAM (10 g/tree) with Novel organic liquid nutrient (2 %) in the years 2019-20, 2020-21 and pooled mean, respectively (Table 3). Whereas, maximum potassium content (0.91 %) in leaf was also recorded with D₃S₂ *i.e.*, Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree) + VAM (10 g/tree) with Novel organic liquid nutrient (2 %) in pooled mean (Table 4).

The combined application of bio-fertilizers (Bio NPK Consortium + VAM) and bioinoculant (Novel organic liquid fertilizer) significantly increased nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium content in leaf as bio-fertilizers increases nutrient-absorption rate and translocation in the tree system by increases nitrogen-fixation and bioinoculant which could be attributed to the rapid absorption of these elements by the plant surface and their translocation in the leaf. These results are in agreement with Sharma *et al.* (2013) in guava and Sathyanarayana *et al.* (2018) in gladiolus.

Table 3. Interaction effect of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on N and P content (%) of mango leaf

Code	Nitrogen content (%)			Phosphorus content (%)		
	2019-20	2020-21	Pooled Mean	2019-20	2020-21	Pooled mean
D ₁ S ₁	1.30	1.44	1.37	0.342	0.362	0.352
D ₁ S ₂	1.34	1.47	1.40	0.351	0.366	0.358
D ₁ S ₃	1.28	1.44	1.36	0.334	0.356	0.345
D ₁ S ₄	1.10	1.22	1.16	0.258	0.275	0.267
D ₂ S ₁	1.21	1.33	1.27	0.309	0.328	0.318
D ₂ S ₂	1.26	1.38	1.32	0.313	0.342	0.328
D ₂ S ₃	1.20	1.32	1.26	0.287	0.311	0.299
D ₂ S ₄	1.05	1.17	1.11	0.236	0.259	0.247
D ₃ S ₁	1.38	1.52	1.45	0.363	0.393	0.378
D ₃ S ₂	1.45	1.60	1.53	0.391	0.412	0.402
D ₃ S ₃	1.37	1.51	1.44	0.351	0.380	0.366
D ₃ S ₄	1.15	1.28	1.21	0.276	0.295	0.286
D ₄ S ₁	0.941	1.04	0.990	0.193	0.212	0.202
D ₄ S ₂	1.01	1.12	1.06	0.220	0.240	0.230
D ₄ S ₃	0.914	1.01	0.964	0.184	0.204	0.194
D ₄ S ₄	0.840	0.930	0.885	0.154	0.174	0.164
S.Em.±	0.019	0.018	0.013	0.006	0.005	0.004
CD at 5 %	0.056	0.051	0.037	0.016	0.014	0.010

Table 4. Interaction effect of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on K content (%) of mango leaf

Treatments	Pooled mean			
	S ₁	S ₂	S ₃	S ₄
D₁	0.846	0.853	0.835	0.737
D₂	0.793	0.806	0.779	0.715
D₃	0.875	0.904	0.865	0.762
D₄	0.658	0.693	0.647	0.611
S.Em.±	0.009			
CD at 5 %	0.026			

3.7 Influence of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on soil microorganism

Treatment D₃S₂ [Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree) + VAM (10 g/tree) with spraying of Novel organic liquid nutrient (2 %)] recorded maximum soil microorganism 6.6×10^9 and 7.9×10^9 cfu/g during 2019-20 and 2020-21, respectively in soil (Table 5).

The soil microorganism population varied with different treatments of biofertilizers and bioinoculants. Higher soil bacteria were observed from the soil treated with biofertilizers and bioinoculants. Biofertilizers and bioinoculants were increased the nitrogen fixing bacteria and biological activities, promotes mycorrhiza symbiosis that sequentially improved the beneficial microorganism. These results are supported by Dutta *et al.* (2010) in papaya, Dutta *et al.* (2016) in mango and Kour *et al.* (2019) in aonla.

Table 5. Influence of biofertilizers and bioinoculants on soil microorganism of mango

Treatment combinations	Soil microorganism (cfu/g)	
	2019-20	2020-21
Initial count = 4.2×10^7 cfu/g		
D ₁ S ₁	6.2×10^9	7.4×10^9
D ₁ S ₂	6.3×10^9	7.5×10^9
D ₁ S ₃	6.1×10^9	7.1×10^9
D ₁ S ₄	5.4×10^8	6.4×10^8
D ₂ S ₁	5.7×10^9	6.9×10^9
D ₂ S ₂	6.0×10^9	7.0×10^9
D ₂ S ₃	5.6×10^8	6.7×10^8
D ₂ S ₄	5.3×10^8	6.3×10^8
D ₃ S ₁	6.4×10^9	7.7×10^9
D ₃ S ₂	6.6×10^9	7.9×10^9
D ₃ S ₃	6.3×10^9	7.6×10^9
D ₃ S ₄	5.4×10^8	6.6×10^8
D ₄ S ₁	4.5×10^8	6.0×10^8
D ₄ S ₂	5.4×10^8	6.1×10^8
D ₄ S ₃	4.4×10^8	5.9×10^8
D ₄ S ₄	4.3×10^7	5.8×10^8

4. CONCLUSION

From the study, it can concluded that application of drenching with biofertilizers i. e., Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree) + VAM (10 g/tree) at pea stage of mango, increased yield, nutrient status of leaf and microorganism of soil. On the same hand, spraying of Novel organic liquid nutrient (2 %) per tree twice during 2nd week of April and 1st week of May enhanced yield, nutrient status of leaf and microbial count of mango. Similarly, combined effect of biofertilizers like Bio NPK Consortium (10 ml/tree) + VAM (10 g/tree) at pea stage and spraying of Novel organic liquid nutrient (2 %) per tree twice during 2nd week of April and 1st week of May increased yield, nutrient status of leaf (N, P and K) as well as soil microorganism.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

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

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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