

EFFECT OF ORGANIC AND INORGANIC SOURCES OF NUTRIENTS ON YIELD ATTRIBUTES AND YIELD OF MAIZE IN AEROBIC RICE- ZERO TILL MAIZE CROPPING SYSTEM UNDER SANDY CLAY LOAM SOILS IN SOUTHERN TELANGANA AGRO-CLIMATIC ZONE

ABSTRACT

A field experiment was carried out to study the residual effect of organic nutrient sources and inorganic fertilizer levels on yield attributes and yield of zero till maize. The experiment was laid out in split plot design with four organic sources of nutrients applied to preceding rice as main plots viz: M₁: Neem leaf manure @ 6 t ha⁻¹; M₂: Vermicompost @ 2 t ha⁻¹; M₃: Goat manure @ 5 t ha⁻¹; M₄: Microbial consortia [seed treatment @ 4 g kg⁻¹ + soil application @ 4 kg ha⁻¹] and four subplots with graded doses of fertilizers viz: S₁: Control; S₂: 50% RDF; S₃: 75% RDF and S₄: 100% RDF (180:60:60). The study revealed that various organic nutrient sources and graded fertilizer doses exerted a remarkable effect on plant height, LAI, dry matter production and Days to 50% silking which resulted in significantly higher grain, stover yield and harvest index of zero till maize.

Key words: zero till maize, organic nutrient sources, fertilizer management

INTRODUCTION

Maize (*Zea mays* L.) belonging to the family Poaceae is one of the important versatile cereal crop with wider adaptability, photo-insensitivity under the different ecological scenarios and rich in starch, proteins, oil and sucrose. It occupies a prominent position in global agriculture after wheat and rice and gained popularity due to its multifaceted applications in food, feed, biofuel etc. In India, maize occupies an area of 9.5 M. ha with an average production of 28.7 M. T and productivity of 3006 kg ha⁻¹, while in Telangana, it is grown in an area of 0.56 M. ha with production of 2.99 M. T and 5347 kg ha⁻¹ of productivity (CMIE, 2020). Rice–maize double cropping is gaining popularity in many Asian countries including India and currently occupies around 3.5 M. ha in Asia (Ali *et al.*, 2008). The recent water shortage conditions for continuous rice cultivation and increased demand for maize in poultry and fish industries prompted studies for an economically viable rice-maize cropping system. The development of short duration rice varieties coupled with high yielding maize hybrids provided an opportunity for increasing the area under rice-maize cropping in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal as an important alternative to bridge productivity gap in rice–wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) cropping system.

Zero Tillage crop establishment practices reduce the fuel required to produce a crop with lower emissions of CO₂, better soil moisture conservation, reduced weeds and provide favourable thermal conditions in the soil. Timsina *et al.* (2010) hypothesized that under improved nutrient management the establishment of maize after rice with reduced or no tillage, and retaining of crop residues, could help to conserve soil organic matter (SOM) and maintain soil fertility.

The fertilizer need of a crop in a system is strongly influenced by the preceding crops and the amount of fertilizers applied to them. Cropping with two nutrient intensive cereals like rice-maize would remove a substantial quantity of plant nutrients from soil during continued agriculture round the year, envisaging the need for adoption of efficient nutrient management practices for sustained soil health and improving system productivity (Surekha *et al.*, 2016). Proper nutrient management of exhaustive systems like R-M should aim to supply fertilizers adequate for the demand of the component crops and apply in ways that minimize loss and maximize the efficiency of use. INM systems seek to maintain or improve soil fertility for sustaining the desired levels of crop production and productivity through optimization of benefits from all possible sources of plant nutrients in an integrated manner (Kundu and Pillai, 1992). It entails the conjunctive use of compost FYM, vermicompost, crop residues, green manures, crop rotation, biofertilizers and chemical fertilizers in a compatible manner to achieve sustainable yields. For efficient nutrient management in rice based cropping systems, a quantitative evaluation of the role of preceding crop and the residual effect of nutrients applied assumes great importance.

In the light of above context, an experiment was planned and investigations were carried out for two consecutive years of *kharif* and *rabi*, 2017-18; *kharif* and *rabi*, 2018-19 to generate more information on contribution of various organic manuring and nutrient management practices for rice and then cumulative effect of both the practices on maize under zero tillage after aerobic rice during *rabi* season.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Present field experiment was conducted during *kharif* – *rabi* consecutive years, 2017-18 and 2018-19 at Research Farm, ICAR-Indian Institute of Rice Research, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad. The farm is geographically situated at an altitude of 542.6 m above mean sea level (MASL) at 17° 19' N latitude and 78° 23' E longitude. The region is categorized under the Southern Telangana Agro-climatic zone under semi-arid tropic region (SAT). The soils were sandy clay loam in texture with pH of 8.14, Electrical conductivity (EC) 0.033 d S/m,

low in organic C (0.41%), available N (208 kg/ha), and high in available P (28 kg/ha) and available K (382 kg/ha). Experiment was laid out in split plot design, undisturbed layout to both crops, with four main treatments as organic sources of nutrients applied to aerobic rice viz: M₁: Neem leaf manure @ 6 t ha⁻¹, M₂: Vermicompost @ 2 t ha⁻¹, M₃: Goat manure @ 5 t ha⁻¹ and M₄: Microbial consortia (seed treatment @ 4 g kg⁻¹ + soil application @ 4 kg ha⁻¹) and four sub treatments as fertility levels S₁: Control, S₂: 50% RDF, S₃: 75% RDF and S₄: 100% RDF which was replicated thrice. Subsequently, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium fertilizer requirement of each of the individual treatment was determined and applied to the maize crop in the form of urea, single super phosphate and muriate of potash, respectively. Nitrogen dosage was applied in three equal splits i.e., 1/3rd as basal 1/3rd at knee high stage and remaining 1/3rd at tasseling stages. Entire dose of P₂O₅ was applied as basal and K₂O was applied in two equal splits 1/2 as basal 1/2 at tasselling stage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Plant Height (cm)

Data presented in table. 1 and fig.1 revealed that plant height of maize increased continuously up to harvest during 2017-18 and 2018-19. Rate of increase in plant height was high up to 60 DAS and thereafter slowed down. Plant height at 30 DAS during both years of study was not influenced by residual nutrient sources and nutrient levels however, these practices had shown significant effect on plant height at 60, 90 DAS and at harvest. The interaction of residual nutrient sources and cumulative nutrient levels in *rabi* maize was found to be non-significant on plant height of maize.

Pooled mean analysis revealed that M₃ treatment *i.e.* goat manuring 5 t ha⁻¹ had resulted in taller plants followed by M₂ *i.e.* vermicompost @ 2 t ha⁻¹ both were on par with each other *fb* M₁ *i.e.* neem leaf manure @ 6 t ha⁻¹. Significantly shorter plants are produced with M₄ *i.e.* microbial consortia @ 4 g/ kg ST 4 kg ha⁻¹ SA at 60, 90 DAS and harvest.

S₄ [100% RDF] produced tallest plants with height of 111.0, 166.8 and 214.4 cm, which were equivalent to S₃ [75% RDF] (105.8, 159.0 and 204.3 cm). At periodic intervals, the lowest plant height of 84.2, 127.2 and 163.6 cm was observed with S₁ [Control].

The improvement in plant height in response to organic manures (M₂ and M₃) over rest of treatments might be due to enhanced availability of both macro and micro

nutrients; in particular nitrogen, besides improvement in soil microbial activity. These results are supported by the findings of Pramanik *et al.* (2004), Sudhakar (2011).

Taller plants may have resulted from higher stem growth due to enhanced meristematic cell activity, cell division and cell elongation of internodes which were facilitated by available nutrients. Similar results were found by Raju *et al.* (1997) and Thakur and Vinod Sharma (1999) and Singh *et al.* (2003), Padmaja (2014), Prasada Rao (2016) and Hillary *et al.* (2020).

Leaf area index (LAI)

Leaf area index (LAI) is a physiological feature that can be used to determine performance of plant canopy in terms of growth and productivity. Results of nutrient and weed management practices significantly influenced leaf area index of zero till maize during *rabi* 2017-18 and 2018-19 at various crop growth intervals displayed in table.2 and fig.2 Leaf area index at different intervals followed a similar trend to number of leaves plant⁻¹.

According to pooled means of nutrient management practices in zero tillage maize, vermicompost @ 2 t ha⁻¹ recorded maximum leaf area index at 30, 60, 90 DAS and harvest which was in congruity with goat manure @ 5 t ha⁻¹, while minimum leaf area index was noticed with microbial consortia @ 4 g/ kg ST 4 kg ha⁻¹ SA {M₄} at different crop growth spells.

S₄ [100% RDF] had registered maximum leaf area index at different intervals which was statistically similar with S₃. The control treatment had shown the lowest leaf area index.

Continuous and slow available nutrients might have increased no. of leaves plant⁻¹ and improved leaf expansion in plants led to increased leaf area index. Similar observations were made by Choudhary and Kumar (2013), Manwar and Mankar (2015) and Mahato *et al.* (2020).

Dry matter production (kg ha⁻¹)

Residual nutrient sources and cumulative nutrient levels significantly influenced dry matter accumulation of maize at different growth intervals as elaborated in the table.3 and fig. 3. During both years, as crop age progressed, dry matter production of zero tillage maize increased. However, the pace of rise was faster up to 90 DAS and thereby it slowed down. In comparison to previous years, dry matter production was higher in 2018-19. The interaction

effect of residual nutrient sources and cumulative nutrient levels on dry matter production was non-significant.

Dry matter production revealed that M₃ [goat manure @ 5 t ha⁻¹] recorded significantly highest crop dry matter 30, 60, 90 DAS and harvest and at par with M₂ [vermicompost @ 2 t ha⁻¹] *fb* M₁ [neem leaf manure 6 t ha⁻¹] However, lowest dry matter was observed with M₄ [microbial consortium 4 g kg seed⁻¹ & 4 kg ha⁻¹ soil application]

Significantly maximum dry matter of was developed by S₄ [100% RDF] *fb* S₃ [75% RDF] at different growth intervals. However, S₁ [Control] registered minimum dry matter as compared to S₂ [50% RDF].

Balanced supply of nutrients might have enabled maize plants to absorb adequate amounts of major nutrients, which increased their growth which in turn put forth more photosynthetic area, thus contributed to more dry matter accumulation. Enhanced dry matter accumulation with increased nutrient availability was reported by Padmaja (2014) and Karan Varma (2018).

Days to 50% silking

A perusal of data presented in table 4 revealed that days to 50% silking was significantly different for residual nutrient sources and nutrient levels during *rabi*, 2017-18 and 2018-19. There was no interaction found between main and sub plots with respect to days to 50% silking.

Perusal of data on nutrient management practices further indicated that lesser no. of days was taken to 50% silking with, M₃ [goat manure 5 t ha⁻¹] or M₂ [vermicompost 2 t ha⁻¹], while application of M₁ treatment *i.e.* neem leaf manure 6 t ha⁻¹ and with M₄ [Microbial consortia seed treatment @ 4 g kg⁻¹ + soil application @ 4 kg ha⁻¹]. Significantly prolonged no. of days to 50% silking was noticed in *rabi*. The outcomes of *rabi* 2017-18 were similar to those of *rabi* 2018-19.

Substitution of nitrogenous fertilizer with organic manures helped in earlier development of reproductive parts in maize due to continuous supply of all essential plant nutrients there by enhanced flowering as stated by Sudhakar (2012), Padmaja (2014), Rao (2016), Bekele *et al.* (2018) and Kumar *et al.* (2018).

Grain yield (Kg ha⁻¹)

During two years of the trial, residual effect of organic nutrient sources and cumulative effect of fertilizer levels resulted in pronounced effect on grain yield. However, statistically there was no significant interaction found between organic nutrient sources and fertilizer levels. In comparison to 2017-18, the yield in 2018-19 was greater. Table.5 and fig.5 contain information on the yield.

According to pooled average data, grain yield of zero till maize gained higher with M₃ [goat manure 5 t ha⁻¹] which has statistical resemblance to M₂ [vermicompost 2 t ha⁻¹] and lowest grain yield of was yielded with M₄.

S₄ [100% RDF] accrued maximum grain yield followed by S₃ [75% RDF] and both of them were statistically comparable with each other. Grain yield of S₂ [50% RDF] was superior over S₁ [Control] which had registered lowest grain yield.

Organic manures releases plant nutrients slowly to crops over time. Higher growth, greater absorption and better translocation of assimilates from source to sink could have resulted in increased yield as and when the nutrients were available at more frequent intervals from organic and inorganic sources. These findings are similar to those of Lakshmi *et al.* (2010), Pasha *et al.* (2012), Rao (2016), Ghosh *et al.* (2020) and Sigaye *et al.* (2020).

Stover yield (kg ha⁻¹)

The amount of maize stover and grain production are inextricably related. Stover is related in proportion to amount of grain produced. Amount of stover produced depends on genetic makeup of crop, weather, soil nutrient status and management strategies. Stover yield is used in the estimation of harvest index.

During *rabi* 2017-18 and 2018-19, nutrient management practices had a substantial impact on stover yield of zero till maize. However, their interaction was not significant, as seen in table 5 and fig.5.

Maximum stover output was achieved with M₃ *i.e.* goat manure @ 5 t ha⁻¹ and was similitude to M₂ [vermicompost @ 2t ha⁻¹] but significantly different from M₁ and M₄. While M₁ *i.e.* 100% RDF had minimum stover output.

The straw yield was significantly influenced by nutrient levels. 100% RDF (S₄) had significantly higher stover yield, which was statistically superior to the rest of the nutrient levels followed by S₃ [75% RDF] and S₂ [50% RDF] and S₁ [Control] produced minimum stover yield.

Increased stover output might be attributed to improved nutrient availability, which led to faster cell elongation as well as greater leaf area and photosynthate synthesis which resulted in increased dry matter. Reddy *et al.* (2012), Kumari and Sudheer (2016), Abid (2020) and Ghosh *et al.* (2020) reported similar findings.

Harvest index

Residual effect of organic nutrient sources and cumulative effect of fertilizer levels had considerable impact on maize harvest index, but their interaction was not significant. However, as indicated in table 5 and fig. 5, the maximum harvest index in 2018-19 was greater than in 2017-18.

Nutrient sources had considerable residual impact on harvest index, according to two-year pooled mean data. Consistently M₃ [goat manure @ 5 t ha⁻¹] had higher harvest index which was statistically matching with M₂ [vermicompost @ 2 t ha⁻¹] followed by M₁ *i.e.* neem leaf manure @ 6 t ha⁻¹. On the other hand, M₄ [Microbial consortia seed treatment @ 4 g kg⁻¹ + soil application @ 4 kg ha⁻¹] had the lowest harvest index.

Nutrient levels exerted major influence on harvest index. S₄ [100% RDF] had highest harvest index, followed by S₃ [75% RDF] and S₂ [50% RDF]. However, S₄ and S₃ were at par. When compared to other treatments, the S₁ treatment *i.e.* control, had the lowest harvest index.

The availability of nutrients may have resulted in enhanced nutrient uptake by maize crop and improved assimilate translocation from source to sink, resulting in rise in harvest index. The findings of various researchers, including Kumar *et al.* (2018) and Abid *et al.* (2020).

Conclusion:

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the integrated nutrient management through application of goat manure 5 t ha⁻¹ or vermicompost 2 t ha⁻¹ to preceding aerobic rice and recommended dose ha⁻¹ to zero till maize produced similar growth *viz.*: plant height, LAI, dry matter production and Days to 50% flowering resulted in significantly higher grain and stover yield and harvest index as compared to the application of neem leaf manure 6 t ha⁻¹ or microbial consortium 4 g kg seed⁻¹ & 4 kg ha⁻¹ soil application or control. Hence it is evident that application of organic manures *viz.*, goat manure 5 t ha⁻¹ or vermicompost 2 t ha⁻¹ to preceding aerobic rice has positive residual effect on maize crop yield.

Table 4: Days to 50 % silking (days) of maize as influenced by nutrient sources and levels during *rabi*, 2017-18 & 2018-19

Treatment	2017-18	2018-19	Pooled mean
Residual organic nutrient sources (M)			
M ₁ : Neem leaf manure 6 t ha ⁻¹	64.72	66.67	65.69
M ₂ : Vermicompost 2 t ha ⁻¹	62.88	64.77	63.82
M ₃ : Goat manure 5 t ha ⁻¹	62.51	64.47	63.53
M ₄ : Microbial consortia 4 g kg seed ⁻¹ & 4 kg ha ⁻¹ soil application	65.94	67.24	66.59
SEm±	0.83	0.85	0.84
CD (<i>P</i> =0.05)	2.86	2.93	2.89
Fertilizer levels (S)			
S ₁ : 0% RDF	66.18	67.99	67.08
S ₂ : 50% RDF	64.49	66.25	65.37
S ₃ : 75% RDF	63.49	65.23	64.36
S ₄ : 100% RDF	61.98	63.67	62.82
SEm±	0.35	0.36	0.35
CD (<i>P</i> =0.05)	1.01	1.04	1.03
Interaction	NS	NS	NS

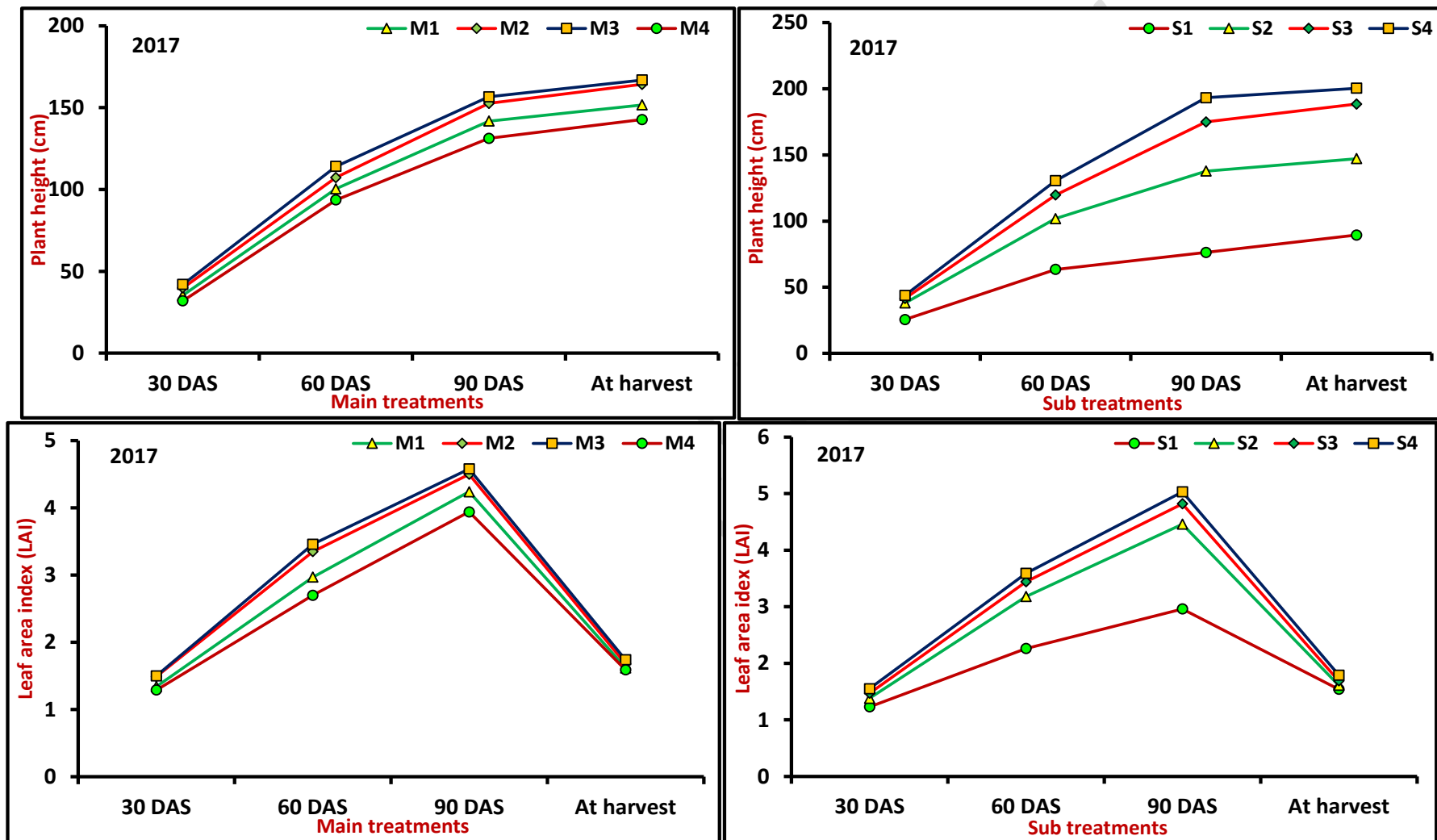


Fig.1: Plant height of zero till maize as influenced by treatments

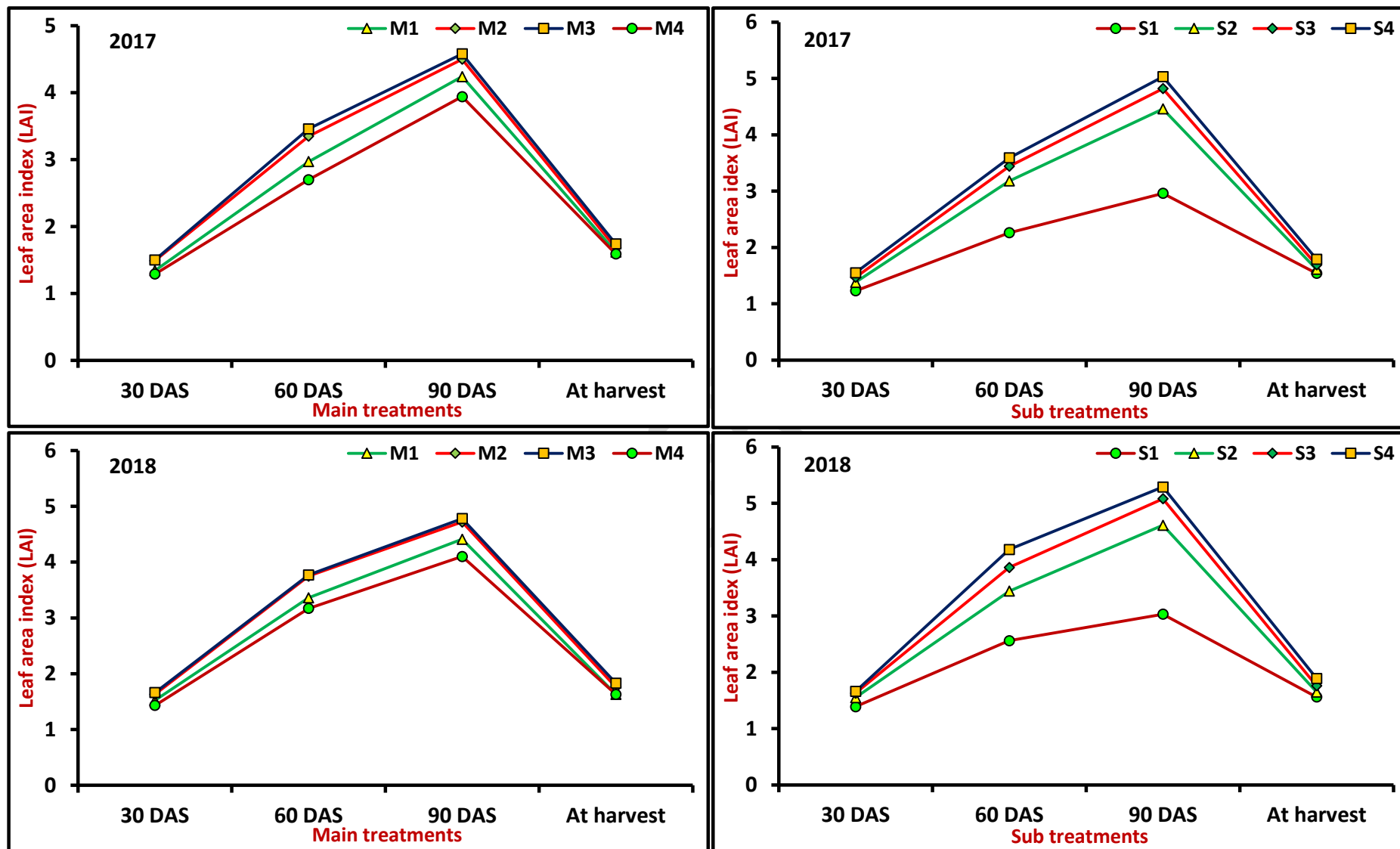


Fig.2: LAI of zero till maize as influenced by treatments

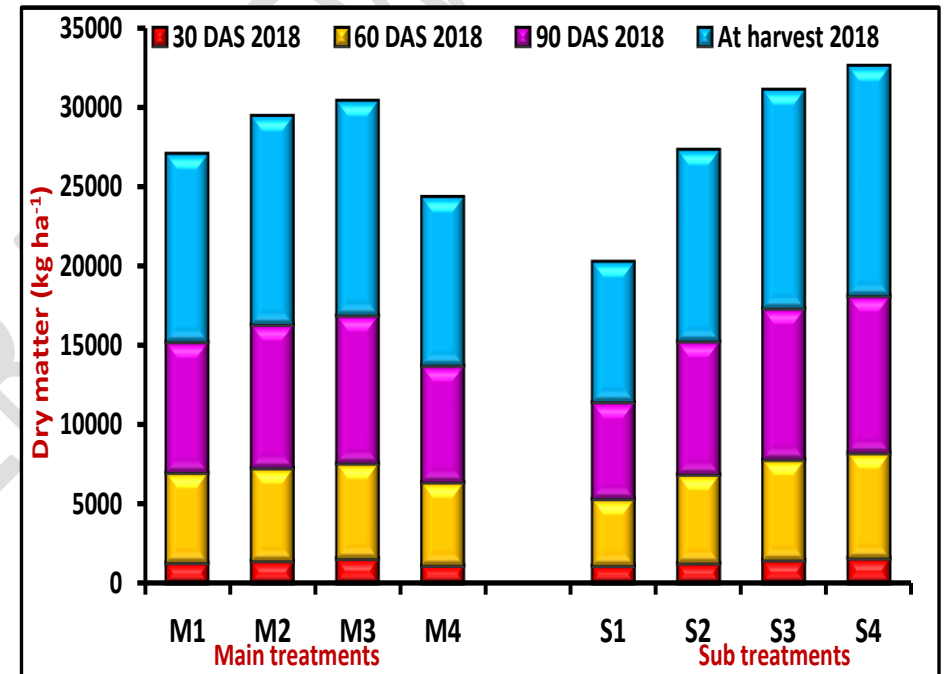
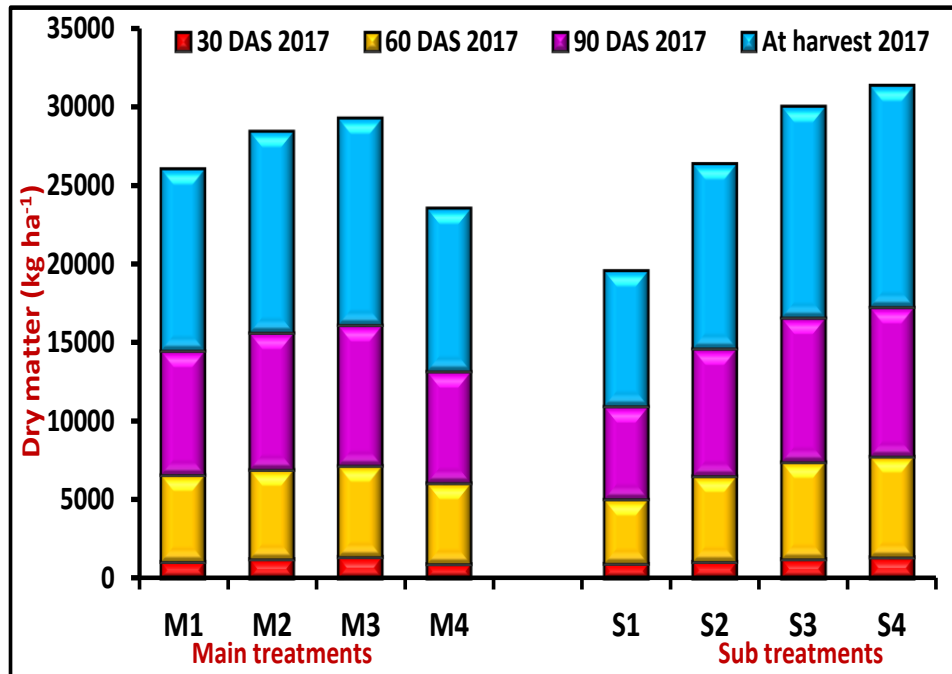


Fig.3: Dry matter production of zero till maize as influenced by treatments

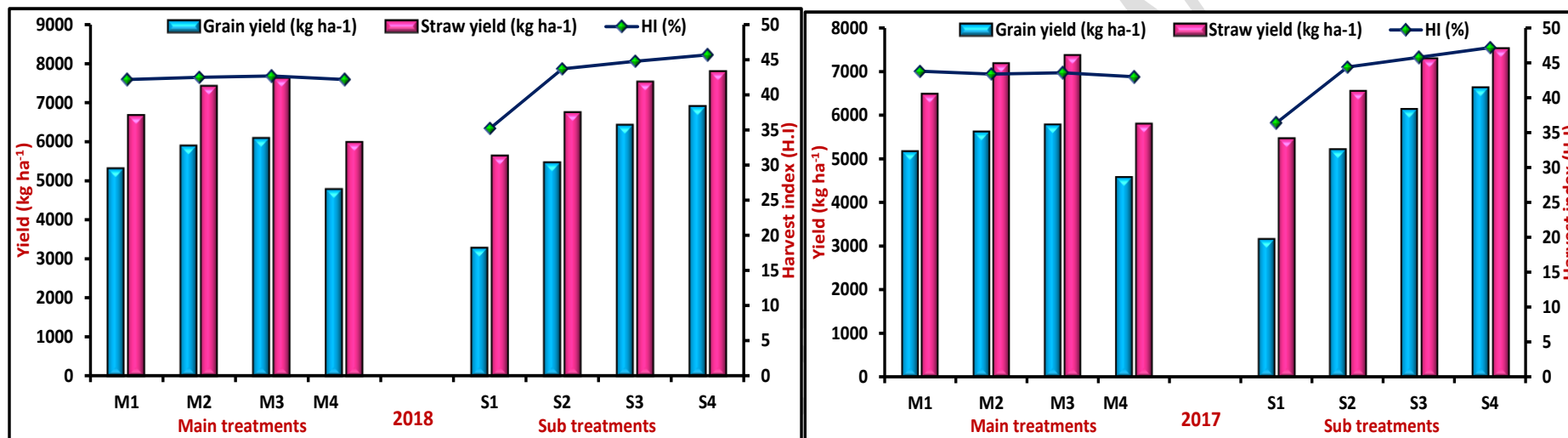


Fig.4: Grain, straw yield kg ha⁻¹ and HI% of zero till maize as influenced by treatments

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