Response of bidi tobacco (Nicotiana tabacum L.) to foliar nutrition with nitrogen and potassium under rainfed conditions

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Abstract

A field experiment was undertaken at Regional Agriculture Research Station, Nandyal, Andhra Pradesh during 2017-18 on vertisols under rainfed condition to study the response of bidi tobacco to supplemental nitrogen (N) and potassium (P) nutrient through foliar application. The treatments consisted of ten treatment combinations from three sources of nutrients (i.e. potassium nitrate (KNO₃), ammonium sulphate + sulphate of potash (SOP) and urea + SOP) and three intervals i.e. foliar spray at 45 days after transplanting (DAT), 60 DAT, 45 and 60 DAT. The experiment was laid out in a randomized block design and replicated thrice. Cured leaf yield of bidi tobacco was significantly higher when foliar application of 2.5% Potassium nitrate (KNO₃) twice at 45 and 60 DAT (1713 kg ha⁻¹) was at par with spraying of 2.5% ammonium sulphate + SOP at 45 & 60 DAT (1606 kg ha⁻¹), 2.5% ammonium sulphate + SOP at 60 DAT (1550 kg ha⁻¹), 2.5% ammonium sulphate + sulphate of potash (SOP) at 45 DAT (1512 kg ha⁻¹), 2.5% Urea + SOP at 45 & 60 DAT (1508 kg ha⁻¹) and 2.5% with KNO₃ at 60 DAT (1503 kg ha⁻¹). Higher leaf length (50.4 cm) and leaf width (20.5 cm) was observed with foliar application of 2.5% KNO₃ twice at 45 and 60 DAT. Higher net returns (Rs 89,265/ha) and BCR (2.87) was recorded with foliar application of 2.5% KNO₃ twice at 45 and 60 DAT.

Keywords: Bidi tobacco, foliar nutrition, cured leaf yield, economics, leaf quality

Introduction

Tobacco (Nicotiana tabacum L.) is the most important non-food crop cultivated in more than 100 countries. It is one of the most important commercial crops of India, valued for its leaf containing nicotine. It is grown over an area of 0.46 million ha with production of 0.84 million tones with productivity of 1842 kg ha⁻¹ (Agriculture statistics at a glance 2016 at www.agricoop.nic.in & http://eands.dacnet.nic.in) [1]. The role of potassium (K) and nitrogen (N) nutrients is important in crop production. A deficiency of either one or both of these nutrients causes yield loss. They play a key role in controlling important quality parameters such as leaf colour, texture, hygroscopic properties, combustibility, sugar and alkaloid contents. Balanced N-K fertilization enhances tobacco growth and improves the uptake of both nutrients, which in turn reduces the nitrate losses during and after the cropping season. In Andhra Pradesh, bidi tobacco is commercially cultivated under rainfed black soils in late rainy season i.e, September (2nd fortnight) month. Usually, farmers apply recommended fertilizer dose in two split doses i.e one at basal and one as top dressing at 30 days after transplanting (DAT). Several studies were conducted on nutrient management to improve the cured leaf yields and found less response. However, in present day agriculture, foliar fertilization is very frequently applied in agriculture and also recommended in an integrated plant production component because it is environmental friendly and helps to achieve high productivity with good quality. For nutrients which are phloem mobile, the efficiency of this measure is particularly successful. According to Doring and Gericke (1986) [2] and Tukey and Marczyński (1984) [3], a combined soil and foliar fertilization should be recommended in crop production to increase both crop productivity and yield quality. Foliar fertilization should be done under conditions of decreased nutrient availability in soil, dry topsoil and decreased root activity during the reproductive stage (Wójcik, 2004) [4]. However, the efficiency of foliar fertilization depends on nutrient mobility within a plant. However, crop physiologists have recently developed the technique of foliar application to the agricultural crops (Smolén and Sady, 2009) [5]. Foliar application of potassium is more suitable, target oriented and economical technique for increasing the fertilizer use efficiency and grain yield over soil application (Farooqi et al., 2012) [6]. Hence, the present study was conducted to study the response of bidi tobacco to foliar nutrition of nitrogen and potassium and also to find out the effective source and time of application.
Material and methods
A field experiment was conducted at Regional Agricultural Research Station, Nandyal under rainfall conditions during kharif 2017-18. The soil of experimental site was medium deep black, moderately alkaline (pH-8.2), non saline (EC- 0.1 ds/m), low in nitrogen (15.84 kg ha⁻¹), medium in available P₂O₅ (31.1 kg ha⁻¹) and high in available K₂O (354.7 kg ha⁻¹). Experiment comprised of ten treatments, viz., (T1) Control (No foliar nutrition), (T2) 2.5% Potassium nitrate (KNO₃) at 45 DAT, (T3) 2.5% KNO₃ at 60 DAT, (T4) 2.5% KNO₃ at 45 and 60 DAT, (T5) 2.5% ammonium sulphate ( A.S) + Sulphate of potash (SOP) at 45 DAT, (T6) 2.5% A.S +SOP at 60 DAT, (T7) 2.5% A.S +SOP at 45 and 60 DAT, (T8) 2.5% Urea +SOP at 45 DAT, (T9) 2.5% Urea +SOP at 60 DAT and (T10) 2.5% Urea +SOP at 45 and 60 DAT. The experiment was carried out in randomized block design (RBD) with three replications. The row-to-row and plant to spacing was 75 cm. Crop management practices like land preparation, N, P and K fertilizer application, weed control, intercultivation, need based plant protection, de suckering and sun curing were followed as recommended for local area. The nursery was raised during 26-07-17 and healthy seedlings were transplanted on 09-09-17. For foliar nutrition,2.5% potassium nitrate, 2.5% ammonium sulphate + sulphate of potash, 2.5% urea + sulphate of potash was prepared at spraying time using hand ope ration of 2.36 was observed with control (no foliar nutrition). These results are similar to the finding of research results of Damodar Reddy (2015) [10]. Significantly lower cured leaf yield (1263 kg ha⁻¹) was recorded with control. However, two times foliar nutrition with KNO₃ or ammonium sulphate + sulphate of potash was found significantly superior to one time spray. For foliar nutrition, potassium nitrate and ammonium sulphate are superior which might be due to low salt index (Steve Curley, 1994) [11]. The results confirmed that increased N and K concentration in the foliar spray solution up to six percent affects and increases N and K concentration in the leaves, which in turn increase yields. Moreover, leaf parameters also contributed for increase in cured leaf yield. The similar results were reported by Marchand (2010) [12] where foliar nutrition of SOP increased the concentration of leaf K content and increased tobacco leaf yield. The foliar application of nitrogen alone was more effective than NPK in producing higher number of seeds per pod in lentil (Humayun et al., 2011) [13]. Experimental results on foliar nutrition on FCV tobacco by All India Net work project on Tobacco (AINPT) indicated that the foliar application of N and K at 45 and 55 DAT @ 2.5% concentration increased the cured leaf productivity by 13-14% and there is no difference between the two sources potassium nitrate or ammonium sulphate + SOP (Damodar Reddy 2015) [14]. Foliar spray of potassium 3% concentration was more efficient for increasing growth and yield of maize crop as compared to soil application and fertilization of potassium fertilizer (Abid ali, 2016) [15].

Results and discussion

Foliar nutrition significantly influenced the plant height, leaf length and leaf width. Significantly higher plant height was recorded with foliar nutrition of 2.5% KNO₃ at 60 DAT (65.8 cm) which was at par with all foliar nutrition treatments except control (45.6 cm). Significantly higher leaf length (50.4 cm) and leaf width (20.5 cm) was observed with foliar nutrition with 2.5% KNO₃ at 45 and 60 DAT. Leaf area is an important factor determining the dry matter production of a crop and subsequently the yield. Govindan and Thirumurugan (2000) [8] reported that the growth parameters viz., LAI in green gram were significantly higher with the foliar spray of KNO₃ (%) or KCl (1%) and their combinations. Similar results were reported by ICAR-CTRI Rajahmundry (Damodar Reddy, 2014) [9] which revealed that the application of N and K through foliar sprays improved the leaf area in FCV tobacco. Foliar application of NAA 20 ppm + KNO₃ 0.5 percent significantly increased the dry matter production in red gram (Jayarani Reddy et al. 2004) [10].

Leaf quality parameters and economics
Leaf nicotine and reducing sugars were also recorded at harvest. The mean values of all the quantitative parameters were subjected to statistical analysis by adopting Fisher’s method of analysis of variance as outlined by Gomez and Gomez (1984) [7]. The level of significance used in ‘F’ test was at 5 percent.

Leaf nicotine and reducing sugars did not differed with control i.e. no foliar nutrition. These results are similar to the finding of research results of Damodar Reddy (2015) [14]. The economic evaluation of the study revealed that the higher net profit of Rs 89,265/ ha and benefit cost ration of 2.87 was observed with foliar nutrition of 2.5% KNO₃ at 45 and 60 DAT. Lower net profit of Rs 58,265/ ha and benefit cost ration of 2.36 was observed with control (no foliar nutrition).
Table 1: Growth, cured leaf yield, economics and leaf quality as influenced by foliar nutrition of nitrogen and potassium in bidi tobacco

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatments</th>
<th>Plant height (cm)</th>
<th>Leaf length (cm)</th>
<th>Leaf width (cm)</th>
<th>Cured leaf yield (kg/ha)</th>
<th>Gross returns (Rs/ha)</th>
<th>Net returns (Rs/ha)</th>
<th>Benefit cost ratio (BCR)</th>
<th>Nicotine (%)</th>
<th>Reducing sugars (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control (No foliar nutrition)</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>1263</td>
<td>101040</td>
<td>42775</td>
<td>58265</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5% KNO₃ at 45 DAT</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>1465</td>
<td>117200</td>
<td>45275</td>
<td>71925</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5% KNO₃ at 60 DAT</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>1503</td>
<td>120240</td>
<td>45275</td>
<td>74965</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5% KNO₃ at 45 and 60 DAT</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>1713</td>
<td>137040</td>
<td>47775</td>
<td>89265</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5% AS + SOP at 45 DAT</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>1512</td>
<td>120960</td>
<td>44575</td>
<td>76385</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>5.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5% AS + SOP at 60 DAT</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>1550</td>
<td>124000</td>
<td>44575</td>
<td>79425</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>4.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5% AS + SOP at 45 and 60 DAT</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>1606</td>
<td>128480</td>
<td>46375</td>
<td>82105</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>4.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5% Urea + SOP at 45 DAT</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>1447</td>
<td>115760</td>
<td>44475</td>
<td>71285</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>5.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5% Urea + SOP at 60 DAT</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>117600</td>
<td>44475</td>
<td>73125</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>5.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5% Urea + SOP at 45 and 60 DAT</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>1508</td>
<td>120640</td>
<td>46175</td>
<td>74465</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>6.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AS- Ammonium sulphate; SOP- Sulphate of potash; DAT- Days after transplanting

Conclusion

Foliar application of 2.5% KNO₃ or 2.5% AS + SOP twice at 45 and 60 DAT to bidi tobacco is optimum for cured leaf yield and net returns. Leaf quality parameters like nicotine and reducing sugars were slightly altered by foliar nutrition and observed within the acceptable range. Foliar spray can serve a useful purpose in bypassing the soil to ensure optimal supply of nutrients to plants under conditions where nutrients supply to plants became a limiting factor.

Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful to All India Network Project on Tobacco (AINPT), ICAR-C.D.(P=0.05), CTRI, Rajahmundry and Regional Agricultural Research Station, Nandyal, ANGRAU, Andhra Pradesh for providing the facilities for smooth conduct of the experiment.

References