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Abhishek Kumar

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Indian
Agricultural Research Institute,
Pusa, New Delhi, India

Asha Kumari

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Indira
Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya,
Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

Kaushal Kunal

B.Tech. Scholar, Dr. Rajendra
Prasad Central Agricultural
University, Pusa, Bihar, India

Subhash Chandra

Assistant Professor, Dr.
Rajendra Prasad Central
Agricultural University, Pusa,
Bihar, India

Correspondence**Abhishek Kumar**

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Indian
Agricultural Research Institute,
Pusa, New Delhi, India

Performance evaluation and cost economics for the mechanized harvesting of wheat crop using reaper-cum-binder at Sitamarhi district of Bihar

Abhishek Kumar, Asha Kumari, Kaushal Kunal and Subhash Chandra

Abstract

Wheat is one of the most important crop for Bihar, but productivity is lower as compared to other states. Mechanized harvesting of the wheat crop would ensure timeliness in operation, which would enhance crop yield and farmer's economic benefits. The need of evaluating their different facets of economics for ensuring lower losses and higher efficiencies is of utmost importance and need of the hour. Therefore, under this project reaper-cum-binder was evaluated for its economics. In harvesting by the reaper-cum-binder, for the wheat crop, total grain losses were found to be 71.34 kg/ha whereas for manual harvesting it was found to be 52.41 kg/ha. The grain to straw ratio for the wheat crop by the reaper-cum-binder and by manual harvesting were the same as 1:1.2. The break-even hectares and break-even hours of reaper-cum-binder for the wheat crop for as 99.197 hectares and 260.90 hours, respectively. It was found that the labour requirement decreased drastically in case of reaper-cum-binder as compared to manual harvesting. The benefit of custom hiring rate for reaper cum binder was 13.2 per cent. The economics of the machine was compared to the conventional method of harvesting and the profit by using the reaper-cum-binder was found to be 1418.84Rs. /ha.

Keywords: Reaper-cum-binder, custom hiring, field capacity, field efficiency, wheat harvest

1. Introduction

Wheat is one of the most important crop for Bihar, but productivity is lower as compared to other states. Mechanized harvesting of the wheat crop would ensure timeliness in operation, which would enhance crop yield and farmer's economic benefits. The timeliness cost of harvesting is greatly significant. Delays in harvesting may associate considerable or even severe losses due to over maturity or any unforeseen natural adversity. Early harvesting could open up opportunities for extra revenues through farming of short duration vegetable crops in the gap between two major crops. Wheat is the world's leading cereal crop, cultivated near about 216.6 million hectares with a production of 674.88 million tonnes of grain with 3115 kg/ha productivity (2012-13). India (29.90 million ha) ranks first in area coverage followed by China (24.13 million ha), while in production China stands first (120.50 million tonnes) and India ranks second (94.8 million tonnes) (Anonymous 2016) ^[1].

For the high yielding varieties of short duration in case of multiple cropping systems, lesser time was available between the harvesting of one crop and sowing of the next crop. Migration of agricultural labours towards urbanized industries resulted in late harvesting, which caused heavy grain losses (Iqbal, Premalatha and Zahra, 1985) ^[2]. Also high labour demand would increase the labour wages and manual harvesting would also take greater time as compared to mechanized harvesting. There is a need for mechanization in order to complete farm operations on time and also to enhance land productivity to make agriculture sustainable and dependable for the farmers' income.

In India the small land holding is very common and that is the main hindrance in the adoption and use of big & high capacity machines. Under these constraints, the role of small-sized machines is more significant due to the better economy of operation and field efficiency.

The reaper cum binder is not that popular for the farmers of Bihar. It is a costly machine so, every farmer cannot buy it. Sitamarhi district is a flood-prone area and the study was conducted on this machine for assessment of the performance as well as the economics of the operation, particularly in Bihar where wheat cropping system is still dominant.

Therefore, it was planned to conduct an experiment to evaluate the economics of operation of the reaper-cum-binder under local conditions with the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the economic operation of the "reaper-cum-binder" machine vis-a-vis traditional method of manual harvesting of wheat by using a sickle.

- To calculate the rate of custom hiring of reaper-cum-binder machine for the wheat crop in Sitamarhi district.
- To calculate the expected profit by the use of this machine for the wheat crop.

2. Material and Methods

This chapter deals with the material and the methods adopted for the evaluation of operation for the reaper-cum-binder machine for the wheat crop. The field trials of the machine were conducted at Maa Janaki Krishi Yantra Farm Bank, Muradpur Sitamarhi district during mid of April month in 2012.

2.1 Experimental site

- The experimental site was situated at Maa Janaki Krishi Yantra Farm Bank, Muradpur, Sitamarhi at 26.6° N latitude and 85.5° E longitude, with 56 m altitude above mean sea level (MSL). Sitamarhi district is drained by rivers such as Baghmata, Aghwara, Lakhandei, Manusmara and few other minor streams. The northern portion of Sitamarhi falls on the foothills of the Himalayas. Here elevation increases as one goes from south to north. The ground is not rocky and there are no mountains. The land is suitable for growing crops. There is no water scarcity as groundwater is present.
- The experiment was carried out with Reaper-cum-binder machine and harvesting of the crop was done under strip pattern. The experiment was aimed to evaluate the economics of operation of the machine and the best cutting pattern for maximum returns by reaper-cum-binder machine. There were at least five replications taken for the wheat crop under study.

2.2 Climatic condition

The climatic factors of the experimental plot such as temperature, relative humidity and wind speed were recorded and are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Climatic parameters taken during operation

Date	13 th April 2012	14 th April 2012	15 th April 2012
Max. Temp.(°C)	36.9	36.6	36.2
Min. Temp. (°C)	22.3	22.3	20.0
RH ₁ (%)	72	78	73
RH ₂ (%)	41	38	37
Wind speed (km/hr)	4.3	3.4	4.9

Source: Meteorological Department, RAU Pusa

2.3 Machine description

2.3.1 Description of the reaper-cum-binder

The machine taken under study is based on the principle similar to that of a reaper with an additional arrangement for gathering and binding mechanism. The reaper-cum-binder has 1.22 m cutting width and vertical cut crop binding system. It consists of a cutter bar assembly and two iron forks for gathering the cut crop. There are belt and pulley arrangements along with control levers for power transmission. It cuts the

crop approximately 8 cm from the ground to facilitate safe movement against the undulating surface. The driver's seat is shifted towards the left side so that it may not interfere with the sheaves dropped along the line of propagation. The machine needs special type of twines for binding the bundles. These are manufactured for the purpose and is made to meet the necessary strength required for binding sheaves. Generally, it comes in a bundle of weight 200-500 gm and is available under 100-200 string type. Special precaution is to be taken at the time of starting the engine that the flywheel is to be rotated in the anticlockwise direction to start the engine. It needs lubrication at 22 specified points regularly for better functioning.

2.3.2 Steering mechanism

It is done by turning one of the two brake sleeves, left or right. For quick turns the inside wheel should be braked by pulling the upper brake lever in corresponding steering position. In case driver seat is attached, the corresponding foot pedal of the rear wheel should also be gently pushed, this supports the movement of the machine. The wheel brakes are given in the reverse order so that while turning, they come on the top from the driver's position.

2.3.3 Description of gathering and binding mechanism

The machine binds the sheaves of the cut crops using twines. The crop sheaves are ejected in a straight line. The twines are waxed for smooth working. The claw of the crop gathering unit holds the crops cut with the help of blades. There is a binding-finger fixed between the claws, at the centre of the machine. As the volume of the crop increases, the finger gets pressed and it activates the binding mechanism. As the sheave is bonded, the twines get cut and the sheave is ejected. This process is repeated again. The knots are bound using the same mechanism somewhat similar to the sewing machines.

2.3.4 Power transmission systems in Reaper-cum-binder

The power from the engine is transmitted to the wheels using a chain sprocket mechanism using a crown gear. The crown gear of chain is fastened on the hub of the wheel. The prime mover drive unit is set on the reaper-cum-binder frame and fitted with connecting pins, which is fastened with four spring pins. The eccentric alignment of the drive for the fork moves it in a circular fashion, which leads to the gathering and binding movement. The machine simultaneously cuts the crop owing to the reciprocating movement and also binds the bundles. The cutting mechanism is very much similar to that of a reaper. The cutter bar assembly consists of the standard shoe guards with case-hardened edges and a reciprocating knife bar, with standard knife section, driven by the pitman results in the cutting process. The knife section is made up of high carbon steel riveted, which reciprocates in the slots of the stationary guards to cut the crop. Technical specifications of the reaper cum binder are presented in Table 2 given below.

Table 2: Technical specifications of the reaper cum binder

Engine	Air cooled-single cylinder-diesel engine
Power	10.2 hp
CC Capacity	454 cm ³
Injection pressure	200 kgf/cm ²
Bore	85 cm
Stroke	80 cm
RPM	Low ideal-115, High ideal-3000

Alternator	10 amps (magneto type)	
Air cleaner	Oil bath type	
Wheels	Pneumatic tyres	
Inflation pressure	Front:25 psi Rear:30 psi	
Clutch	Hand operated-dry type-single plate-dia.180mm	
Brakes	Hand operated through cable transmission, special inner ring in oil bath	
Gear	Constant mesh gears with 4 forward and 1 reverse	
Speeds	1st	4.5 km/hr
	2nd	6 km/hr
	3rd	8 km/hr
	4th	10.8 km/hr
	Reverse	4.6 km/hr
PTO shaft	Conical shaft 1125 rpm anticlockwise	

The cutting and binding specifications for the reaper cum binder is given in table 3.

Table 3: Cutting and Binding specification

Particulars	Values
Binder height	48 cm
Cutter bar width	122 cm
No. of blades	17
No. of fingers	16
Blade holder	6
Maximum length	360 cm
Maximum width	185 cm
Weight	400 kg
v-belt	B-154
wheel driven chain	5/8" × 1/4"

2.4 Crop details

The formulas, terminologies and other details used for the evaluation procedure are presented below. The crop parameters are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: Crop parameters

Crop	Wheat
Variety	RAJ-3765
Moisture content (%)	13
Plant height (cm)	85

2.4.1 Moisture content

The crop from the field was brought into the lab and the plant was chopped to five samples. Each of these samples was dried in an oven. Their weight was again taken and the moisture content of the crop was calculated (Carneiro *et al.* 2018) [3].

$$\text{Moisture content (dry basis)} = \frac{\text{Weight of sample} - \text{Weight of dried sample}}{\text{Weight of dried sample}} \times 100$$

2.4.2 Grain/panicle

The plants from the field were brought to the lab and the grains from the panicle were extracted and counted. Ten such replications were taken and the average was recorded. The data was used for the calculation of grain loss from the field.

2.4.3 Weight /1000 grains (gm)

There were five samples of 1000 grains, taken from the harvested crop and weighed. Their average was taken and recorded (Deivasigamani and Swaminathan, 2018) [4]. These values were used in the estimation of the weight of each grain and were taken to calculate grain loss in terms of the weight of grain lost per unit area.

2.4.4 Plant population

A M.S. (Mild Steel) rod frame of 1 m² in square shape was used for determining the plant population. Before starting the experiment, the sampler was thrown randomly in the field and the number of plants within the sampler was counted. Five such observations were taken for each replication and their average value was calculated.

2.4.5 Number of effective panicles /m²

All the plants may not contribute to the effective yield. Hence the effective number of tillers were counted. The samples were taken using the A M.S. (Mild Steel) rod frame of 1 m² made up of iron. The frame was thrown randomly in the field and data was recorded. Five such readings were recorded for each replication and their average was taken.

2.4.6 Number of bundles / m²

There were five samples of bundles taken and their average area (length × width) were recorded for the determination of actual number of bundles/ ha.

2.4.7 Grain loss

Grain loss of various types in the field was determined by using the square sampler of 1 m² size. After the completion of harvesting, the sampler was thrown randomly over the harvested area and grains present within the sample was collected. A minimum of five observations was taken for evaluation of grain loss over an experimental area for each replication. Weight of shattered grains collected from the space occupied by the sampler divided by the sampler area enclosed. This gave the grain losses per unit area. The weight of the grain lost was calculated for 1 hectare using the formulae:

$$\text{Grain loss by weight /ha} = \frac{\frac{\text{grain lost}}{\text{m}^2} \times 1000 \times \text{wt. of 1000 grains in grams}}{10^6}$$

2.5 Evaluation procedure

Using the collected data and processing them, the value of field efficiency and field capacities were calculated. Further, it was used to study machine economics and its performance. The harvesting of wheat by the reaper-cum-binder and by the manual harvesting process is shown in figure 1 and figure 2, respectively.

2.5.1 Calculation of field capacity and efficiency

Field efficiency of a machine is the percentage of the Actual field capacity of the machine with respect to the theoretical

field capacity (Omran, Shiekhdavoodi, and Shomeili, 2013)^[5]. It was calculated using the following formulae:

$$\text{Effective field capacity (ha/hr)} = \frac{\text{Actual area covered (ha)}}{\text{Actual time taken (hr)}}$$

Theoretical field capacity is the rate of field coverage for operation by a machine based on its rated speed and its width of operation. It was calculated as:

$$\text{Theoretical field capacity (ha/hr)} = \frac{\text{Width (m)} \times \text{Speed (m/hr)}}{10000}$$

The inputs needed to determine the field efficiency of the reaper-cum-binder were recorded and put in the formulae below to calculate its field efficiency:

$$\text{Field efficiency} = \frac{\text{Effective field capacity (ha/hr)}}{\text{Theoretical field capacity (ha/hr)}} \times 100\%$$

2.6 Financial feasibility analysis

Financial feasibility analysis was carried out to evaluate the feasibility of investment on reaper-cum-binder. The discounted and non-discounted cash flow techniques were employed as useful tools in evaluating the long-term financial feasibility analysis. Hence, for evaluating the investment and to find out the financial and economic viability of the investment on reaper-cum-binder, a few measures of feasibility evaluation techniques were employed (Alam *et. al.*, 2018)^[6].

The following financial feasibility techniques were used in the study to evaluate the feasibility of investment for the reaper-cum-binder.

- Pay Back Period (PBP)
- Break-Even Point (BEP)
- Cost of use of machine
- Rate of custom hiring of machine

2.6.1 Pay back period (PBP)

It indicates the time required to recover the initial investment or the length of time required to repay the original investment made on the machine. In this study, the payback period was calculated by successively deducting the initial investment from the net return until the initial investment was fully recovered. Shorter the payback period, better would be the feasibility of investment on the reaper-cum-binder. The payback period formula used in the study is as follows,

$$\text{Payback period} = \frac{\text{Initial investment}}{\text{Average annual net benefit}}$$

$$\text{Minimum annual payback (Rs.)} = \frac{\text{Cost of purchase of machine (Rs.)}}{\text{Life of machine (yrs)}}$$

2.6.2 The break-even point (BEP)

The break-even point is the annual use level at which the machine must be operated to make the investment profitable. The break-even point formula used in the study is as follows,

$$B(x) = \text{Fixed cost} + \text{Variable cost}$$

Where,

x = Break-even point (in tonnes per year)

B = Benefits (or the custom fee)

Using the break-even point measure for investment appraisal, the investment made on reaper-cum-binder can only be profitable, if the annual use level of the machine is at or above the break-even point.

2.6.3 Cost of use of machine

This is the cost initially incurred during the operation. For the determination of cost of the use of the machine, the following concepts are used:

$$\text{Depreciation cost (Rs./hr)} = \frac{C-S}{L \times H}$$

$$\text{Interest (I) Rs./hr} = \frac{C+S}{2} \times \frac{i}{H}$$

Where,

- C = Capital investment (Rs.)
- S = Salvage value, 10% of capital
- H = No. of working hours /year
- L = Life of machine in years.
- I = Interest rate /year (%)

2.6.4 Rate of custom hiring of a machine

The rate of custom hiring of a machine is calculated by the following methods:

(For Reaper-cum-binder machine)

Annual fixed cost (A)

1. Depreciation = (purchase price - trade-in value) ÷ life of the machine in years
2. Interest* = (purchase price + trade-in) × annual interest rate ÷ 2
3. Insurance & housing = purchase price x 2%

Annual operating cost (B)

1. Fuel & lubricants = (fuel consumption in L/hr x annual usage of machine in hr/yr x fuel cost/L x 1.15)
2. Repairs & Maintenance

Annual machinery costs (C) = (A + B)

1. Profit margin (return to management, admin. costs) (suggest 15% of machinery costs (C x 0.15) (D))
2. Operator labour (self or hired) - (suggest 15% over machine hr for travel, downtime) of machinery hr x 1.15 x wage/hr (E)

Total costs (F) = (C+D+E)

(G) per hectare per hour = Custom rate F ÷ Total annual hectares or F ÷ Total annual hours

* Interest - Interest calculation is the average annual interest cost of the investment



Fig 1: View of harvesting of wheat crop by Reaper-cum-binder



Fig 2: View of manually harvesting of wheat crop by Sickle

3. Results and Discussion

This section deals with the results obtained during the field experiments of the reaper-cum-binder for the wheat crop in Sitamarhi district, Bihar. The performance parameters like field capacity, field efficiency with different types of losses were calculated and compared. Further, the economics of the

Table 5: Field performance of reaper-cum-binder for wheat crop

Machine	Theoretical Field capacity(ha/hr)	Actual Field Capacity(ha/hr)	Field Efficiency (%)
Reaper-cum-binder	0.54	0.3802	70.44

The trials were conducted for the wheat crop and data were processed for five replications. It was found that the actual field capacity of reaper-cum-binder was 0.3802 ha/hr. The theoretical field capacity of reaper-cum-binder was 0.54 ha/hr. The field efficiency was calculated for the reaper-cum-binder under study, which was found to be 70.44 %. The difference is due to the rated speed at which the machine can be operated. However, reaper-cum-binder has a speed of 4.5 km/hr on the 1st gear. The machine is provided with a driver's seat, which makes the operation possible even at a higher speed. Also, the presence of the driver's seat facilitates a better quality of work and reduces drudgery.

3.2 Measurement for wheat crop

All the findings obtained from various replications carried out for the machine under wheat crop was processed and the following results were obtained.

3.3 Comparison of the reaper-cum-binder with the manual method

Table 7: Economics of reaper-cum-binder and that of manual harvesting for wheat crop

Particulars	Machine Harvesting	Manual Harvesting	
		Farmer	Labour
Grain: Straw	1:1.2	1:1.2	1:1.2
Grain Yield (q/ha)	18.45	18.57	2.58
Straw yield (q/ha)	21.98	22.11	3.09
Operational cost (Rs./ha)	3000	4646	
Cost of lost grain (Rs./ha)	856.08	628.92	
Total cost (Rs./ha)	3856.08	5274.92	
Benefits over manual (Rs./ha)	1418.84	-	

The trials were conducted for the wheat crop and data were processed for five replications and is shown in table 7. It was found that grain to straw ratio for both the methods was the same as 1:1.2. The grain yield by the machine was found to be 18.45 q/ha, corresponding for the farmers and the labours were 18.57 q/ha and 2.58 q/ha respectively. Calculated values for straw yield for the machine, farmer and labour was as

machine was also estimated and compared for better returns and performance.

3.1 Field performance evaluation

The field trials of the machine were conducted at Maa Janki Krishi Yantra farm bank, Muradpur (Sitamarhi), Bihar. The machine was well prepared and checked before it was taken to the field. All the necessary arrangements were made to ensure smooth functioning of the harvesting process. The labourers were made available according to the requirements, for the respective machine to ensure a better economic study of the machine under actual field conditions.

The crop was mature and the headland was manually cut around the field for the reaper-cum-binder trials. The machines started harvesting from the left side of the field and went anticlockwise along the sides of the field. The reaper-cum-binder was operated at 4.5 km/hr on 1st gear.

All the findings obtained from various replications carried out for the machine under wheat crop was processed and the results obtained are presented in table 5.

Table 6: Evaluation of particular characteristics related to harvesting of the wheat crop

Particulars	Average
No. of grains/panicle	36
Weight of 1000 grains	36 gm
Length of panicle	12 cm
No. of plants/m ²	365
Weight/bundle (Machine)	1.819
Weight/bundle (left for farmer)	13.43 kg
Weight/bundle (taken by labourers)	29.88 kg

The data presented in Table 6 given above was recorded for the evaluation of economics and losses of wheat crop harvesting by the machine and by the manual method. The trials of ten replications for each of the observations were taken for both, i.e. operation by the machine and by the manual labours. The average number of grains/panicles was 36 and the average weight of 1000 grains was found to be 36 gm.

21.98 q/ha, 22.11 q/ha and 3.09 q/ha respectively. The total cost of use of the machine was calculated 3856.08 Rs/ha and corresponding for manual harvesting was found to be 5274.92 Rs/ha. The benefit over manual harvesting was found to be Rs. 1418.84/ha. Hence, the reaper-cum-binder was superior over manual harvesting.

3.4 Measurement of custom hiring rate of reaper-cum-binder for wheat crop

Table 8: Custom hiring rate of reaper-cum-binder

Particulars	Cost (Rs. /ha)
Total cost of use	1351.36
Profit margin	162.50
Twine cost	1136.2
Total	2650.06

The custom hiring rate for the reaper-cum-binder was calculated as Rs. 2650.06/ha for the wheat crop. Thus, the above data recorded in table 8 for the actual custom hiring rate were benefited over the farm machine bank as Rs. 349.94/ha. Therefore, the farm bank profit/ha was 13.2 %.

Table 9: Break-even point values for the reaper-cum-binder

Method of harvesting	Cost of use (Rs/ha)	Cost of manual harvesting (Rs/ha)	Profit (Rs/ha)	Break-even (hectares)	Break-even (hours)
Manual harvesting	-	4646	-	-	-
Reaper-cum-binder	1369.7	-	3276.30	99.17	260.90

As per data are shown in Table 9 given above, for the 1st year reaper-cum-binder should be operated in 99.17 ha for wheat crop and break-even time was calculated as 260.90 hrs for the wheat crop.

The perusal of recorded data for benefit-cost ratio although shows a marginal increase in benefit-cost ratio in case of reaper-cum-binder but the overall profitability of the machine during its commercial use would be very high. The reaper cum binder machine may be used up to 12 hours a day with 2 workers. It was provided with the driver's seat to ensure less fatigue and lights for working even at night. The results envisaged that reaper-cum-binder was more profitable on the basis of fixed cost per year and returns from use with respect to break-even hours and break-even hectares of land.

4. Conclusions

Under this project, reaper-cum-binder was evaluated for its economics. In harvesting by the reaper-cum-binder, for the wheat crop, total grain losses were found to be 71.34 kg/ha whereas for manual harvesting it was found to be 52.41 kg/ha. The grain to straw ratio for the wheat crop by the reaper-cum-binder and by manual harvesting were the same as 1:1.2. The break-even hectares and break-even hours of reaper-cum-binder for the wheat crop were calculated as 99.197 hectares and 260.90 hours, respectively. It was found that the labour requirement decreased drastically in case of reaper-cum-binder as compared to manual harvesting. The benefit of custom hiring rate for reaper cum binder was 13.2 per cent. The economics of the machine was compared to the conventional method of harvesting and the profit by using the reaper-cum-binder was found to be 1418.84Rs. /ha. Hope, these findings will be very useful and pertinent to the farmers and users of reaper-cum-binder.

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3.5 Measurement of break-even point

Break-even point has a great significance when it comes to calculate the profitable working span of the machine. The calculation of the break-even point enables us to find the hours of use as well as the numbers of hectares of land to be harvested after which the machine would start gaining profit.

3.5.1 Comparison between the economics of manual harvesting and reaper-cum-binder with respect to their break-even point for wheat crop under study

The calculation of economics has been done on the basis of break-even hours and break-even hectares of land as shown in table 9. The cost of use of the machine includes the fixed costs, variable costs, and the average cost of grains lost during the operations. The profit was calculated with respect to the cost of manual harvesting with a sickle.

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