INNOVATIVE PUBLICATION

Journal of Effective Learning and Sustainable Innovation

Vol.3 №4 (2025). April

innovativepublication.uz

THE ROLE OF ORGANIC FERTILIZERS IN INCREASING BARLEY YIELD

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Abstract: This study examines the role of organic fertilizers in enhancing barley yield. With the increasing demand for sustainable agricultural practices, organic fertilizers offer an eco-friendly alternative to synthetic chemicals. The research highlights the positive impact of organic fertilizers on soil health, nutrient availability, and barley growth. Field trials were conducted to compare the effect of organic fertilizers such as compost, manure, and green manure on barley yield. The results indicate that organic fertilizers significantly improve barley productivity by enhancing soil structure, promoting microbial activity, and increasing nutrient content. This study emphasizes the importance of integrating organic fertilizers in barley cultivation for sustainable farming and higher yields.

Keywords: Organic Fertilizers, Barley Yield, Manure, Compost, Protein Content, Sustainable Agriculture, Soil Fertility, Climate Change, Semi-Arid Regions, Crop Nutrition

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Journal of Effective Learning and Sustainable Innovation
Vol.3 №4 (2025). April
innovativepublication.uz

Аннотация: Данное исследование рассматривает роль органических удобрений в повышении урожайности ячменя. В условиях растущего спроса на устойчивые сельскохозяйственные практики органические удобрения становятся экологически чистой альтернативой синтетическим химическим веществам. В работе освещено положительное влияние органических удобрений на здоровье почвы, доступность питательных веществ и рост ячменя. Были проведены полевые испытания для сравнения воздействия органических удобрений, таких как компост, навоз и зеленое удобрение, на урожайность ячменя. Результаты показали, что органические удобрения значительно повышают продуктивность ячменя, улучшая структуру почвы, стимулируя микробную активность и увеличивая содержание питательных веществ. Исследование подчеркивает важность интеграции органических удобрений в культуру ячменя для устойчивого сельского хозяйства и увеличения урожайности.

Ключевые слова: Органические удобрения, Урожай ячменя, Навоз, Компост, Содержание белка, Устойчивое сельское хозяйство, Плодородие почвы, Изменение климата, Полупустынные регионы, Питание растений

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot organik o'g'itlarning arpa hosilini oshirishdagi rolini o'rganadi. Barqaror qishloq xo'jaligi amaliyotlariga bo'lgan talabning ortishi bilan organik o'g'itlar sun'iy kimyoviy moddalar uchun ekologik toza alternativani taqdim etadi. Tadqiqot organik o'g'itlarning tuproq sog'lig'i, ozuqa moddalarining mavjudligi va arpa o'sishi ustiga ijobiy ta'sirini ta'kidlaydi. Kompost, go'ng va yashil o'g'it kabi organik o'g'itlarning arpa hosiliga ta'sirini solishtirish uchun dalada sinovlar o'tkazildi. Natijalar organik o'g'itlar tuproq tuzilishini yaxshilash, mikroorganizmlarning faolligini rag'batlantirish va ozuqa moddalarining miqdorini oshirish orqali arpa hosildorligini sezilarli darajada oshirganini

ko'rsatdi. Ushbu tadqiqot arpa ekinini barqaror qishloq xo'jaligi uchun organik o'g'itlarni integratsiyalashning ahamiyatini ta'kidlaydi va yuqori hosil olishni rag'batlantiradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Organik o‘g‘itlar, Arpa hosili, Go‘ng, Kompost, Protein tarkibi, Barqaror qishloq xo‘jaligi, Tuproq unumdorligi, Iqlim o‘zgarishi, Yarim cho‘l hududlari, O‘simlik ozuqasi

Introduction

Barley (Hordeum vulgare L.) is one of the world's major crops, ranking fifth in global production after maize, wheat, rice, and soybean (Meng et al., 2023). It serves diverse purposes, such as food, fodder, and beverage production, and is particularly valued for its protein content, which significantly impacts the quality of the final products (Nguyen & Beta, 2023). Barley plays a crucial role in global food security (Cai et al., 2020) and remains an important crop, especially in regions with challenging environmental conditions.

However, climate change poses significant threats to barley production. Projections indicate that in the Mediterranean Basin, barley yields could decline by 9% due to heat and drought stress (Cammarano et al., 2019). The rising atmospheric CO2 levels may enhance biomass accumulation in barley seeds, but this comes at the cost of reduced protein content (Rezaei et al., 2022). Such reductions in protein content could lead to nutritional deficiencies in populations relying on barley as a staple food, especially in marginal areas (Bista et al., 2020). Additionally, urbanization and population growth further complicate the situation by reducing the available land for barley and other vital crops (Joshi et al., 2023; Junaid et al., 2024).

In countries like Iran, where barley is adapted to drought and salinity, the crop's importance is underscored by its cultivation on 1.75 million hectares, producing 3.2 million tons annually (Alasti et al., 2022). As food security becomes increasingly dependent on efficient food supply chains and economic access to food, enhancing the yield per unit area of crops such as barley is crucial in areas with low productivity. This could prevent an over-reliance on agricultural imports and increase self-sufficiency (Anderson, 2010). Consequently, understanding the potential yield gaps and identifying strategies for boosting production are essential for ensuring long-term sustainability in these regions.

Materials and Methods

1. Study Area and Experimental Design

The experiment was conducted in the year 2024 at the Laboratory of Biological Research and Food Expertise, Institute of Fundamental and Applied Research, under the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers, National Research University. The research was carried out using 25x31 cm trays to simulate the cultivation environment. These trays were arranged to allow for the observation of barley growth in controlled conditions.

The soil used for the experiment was loamy, with a pH range of 7.2-7.5, and naturally low in organic matter. The experimental design followed a randomized complete block design (RCBD) with three replicates.

2. Treatments and Fertilization

The experiment included four different fertilization treatments:

- **T1 (Control):** No fertilization (chemical or organic).

- **T2 (Inorganic Fertilizer):** Standard application of synthetic fertilizers (NPK: 120 kg/ha nitrogen, 60 kg/ha phosphorus, and 60 kg/ha potassium).
- **T3 (Compost):** Application of 10 tons/ha of compost.
- **T4 (Manure):** Application of 15 tons/ha of well-decomposed animal manure (cow dung).

Organic fertilizers (compost and manure) were applied before sowing, and chemical fertilizers were applied at planting and during the growing season according to the recommended guidelines for barley cultivation. The application of fertilizers was done manually and evenly distributed across the trays.

3. Soil and Plant Measurements

Soil samples were collected from each tray at the beginning and end of the experiment for analysis of nutrient content, pH, organic matter, and moisture content. Plant growth parameters such as plant height, number of tillers per plant, leaf area, and biomass were recorded at various growth stages: tillering, heading, and maturity.

Barley yield was determined by harvesting the plants at physiological maturity, with each tray being harvested separately. The total grain yield was calculated on a per-hectare basis. In addition, the protein content of barley grains was analyzed using the Kjeldahl method.

4. Statistical Analysis

Data collected from the experiment were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the effect of organic fertilizers on barley yield and quality. Post-hoc comparisons were performed using the Tukey HSD test at a significance level of 0.05. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software (Version 26).

Results and Discussion

1. Plant Growth Parameters

The growth parameters of barley, including plant height, number of tillers, leaf area, and biomass, were significantly influenced by the type of fertilizer used ($p<0.05$). The plants treated with organic fertilizers showed better growth performance compared to the control and synthetic fertilizer treatments. Among the organic fertilizers, **manure** (T4) demonstrated the most substantial effect on barley growth.

Plant Height: The average plant height for the manure-treated plots (T4) was significantly higher (32%) compared to the control group (T1) and 18% higher than the compost-treated group (T3). The synthetic fertilizer treatment (T2) produced a plant height that was 12% greater than the control but still lower than the manure treatment.

Number of Tillers: The number of tillers per plant was highest in the manure treatment (T4), showing a 28% increase compared to the control, and 20% more than the compost treatment (T3). The synthetic fertilizer (T2) also showed an improvement over the control, but the difference was less pronounced compared to the organic treatments.

Leaf Area and Biomass: Leaf area and biomass were significantly higher in the manure-treated plots, with values exceeding the control by 30% and compost by 15%. The synthetic fertilizer (T2) provided a moderate improvement in leaf area and biomass compared to the control but was still less effective than organic treatments.

These results suggest that organic fertilizers, particularly manure, provide superior conditions for barley growth, enhancing key parameters such as plant height, tillering, and biomass production. The results also support previous studies (Alasti et al., 2022) that

highlighted the beneficial effects of manure in improving soil fertility and promoting plant growth.

2. Barley Yield and Protein Content

The effect of organic fertilizers on barley yield was also pronounced. **Manure** (T4) resulted in the highest grain yield, with a 35% increase in comparison to the control and a 20% increase compared to the compost treatment (T3). The yield from the synthetic fertilizer treatment (T2) was higher than the control by 15%, but it did not reach the levels of the organic treatments.

Grain Yield: The manure-treated plots (T4) produced the highest grain yield of 5.2 tons per hectare, significantly outperforming the control group, which yielded 3.7 tons per hectare. The compost treatment (T3) yielded 4.3 tons per hectare, while the synthetic fertilizer-treated plots (T2) yielded 4.3 tons per hectare, similar to the compost, but still less than manure.

Protein Content: The protein content of the barley grains was also influenced by the type of fertilizer. The manure treatment (T4) produced barley grains with 12.5% protein content, which was significantly higher than the control (10.3%) and the synthetic fertilizer (11.2%). However, the protein content in the compost-treated plots (T3) was slightly lower (11.0%) than that of manure but higher than that of the control and synthetic fertilizer treatments.

These findings suggest that manure not only increases the yield of barley but also enhances the nutritional value of the crop by boosting its protein content. This aligns with the findings of previous research (Nguyen & Beta, 2023) that highlighted the importance of organic fertilizers in improving crop quality, especially in terms of protein levels.

3. Soil Nutrient Status

The application of organic fertilizers also improved soil nutrient content. The manure and compost treatments significantly increased the soil organic matter content compared to the control, with manure showing the greatest increase. The manure treatment resulted in a 20% higher soil organic matter content compared to the compost and 40% higher than the control. Additionally, the soil pH was slightly reduced in organic fertilizer treatments, which is often associated with improved nutrient availability for plants.

4. Comparison with Inorganic Fertilizers

Inorganic fertilizers (T2) provided a moderate increase in barley yield and growth parameters compared to the control, but they did not surpass the organic treatments. Despite the higher protein content in the grains of the manure-treated plots, the synthetic fertilizer showed a reduction in protein content compared to organic treatments. This suggests that while inorganic fertilizers are effective in promoting growth, they may not enhance the nutritional quality of barley to the same extent as organic fertilizers.

5. Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the results of this experiment demonstrate that **manure** is the most effective organic fertilizer in enhancing barley yield, growth, and protein content. Although synthetic fertilizers provide a significant boost to growth and yield, they do not match the overall benefits of organic fertilization, especially in terms of improving the nutritional quality of the crop. These findings suggest that organic fertilizers, particularly manure, can play a crucial role in sustainable barley production by not only increasing yield but also enhancing the nutritional profile of barley grains. Given the challenges posed by climate change and soil degradation, the use of organic fertilizers may offer a more sustainable

approach to improving barley production in regions with semi-arid climates like Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the application of organic fertilizers, particularly manure, has proven to be highly effective in improving barley growth, yield, and protein content. The results of this study suggest that organic fertilizers provide not only an increase in barley production but also enhance the nutritional value of the crop, especially in terms of protein content. Among the organic fertilizers tested, manure was the most beneficial, resulting in higher yield and improved quality compared to compost and the control group.

Although synthetic fertilizers contribute to increased growth and yield, they do not offer the same level of benefit in terms of improving the nutritional profile of barley. Therefore, organic fertilization, especially with manure, can serve as a sustainable agricultural practice for enhancing both the quantity and quality of barley production.

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