***Original Research Article***

# INFLUENCE OF SULPHUR AND ZINC LEVELS ON GROWTH, YIELD AND QUALITY OF SOYBEAN (*Glycine max* L.)


## ABSTRACT

Field experiments were conducted during *kharif* season of 2014 and 2015 to study the influences of sulphur and zinc levels ongrowth, yield and quality of soybean. The experiment comprised five sulphur levels *viz*. ($S_0$- control, $S_1$- 10 kg S $ha^{-1}$, $S_2$- 20 kg S $ha^{-1}$, $S_3$- 30 kg S $ha^{-1}$ and $S_4$ 40 kg S $ha^{-1}$; four zinc levels *viz*. $Zn_0$- control, $Zn_1$- 10 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$, $Zn_2$- 20 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$ and $Zn_3$- 30 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$).Application of sulphur and zinc increased all the growth and yield attributes of soybean but significant increaseup to 40 kg S $ha^{-1}$and 30 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$ were observed in plant height, number of branches $plant^{-1}$ at all stages, seed yield andprotein content in seed of soybean. The zinc level also had significant influence on the number of pods $plant^{-1}$, number of grains $pod^{-1}$, pod length, pod weight $plant^{-1}$, test weight, grain weight $plant^{-1}$. Highest level ($Zn_3$) *i.e.* 30 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$ was found at par with ($Zn_2$) *i.e.* 20 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$ during the investigation.Application up to 40 kg S $ha^{-1}$ and 30 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$ increased the uptake of sulphur and zinc significantly than control. Therefore, it can be concluded that application of 40 kg S $ha^{-1}$ and 30 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$ should be applied for better growth, yield and quality of soybean.



***Keywords*:** Soybean, sulphur, zinc, protein, nutrient uptake


## INTRODUCTION

Soybean [*Glycine max*. (L) Merill] belongs to the family *Fabaceae* (*Leguminosae*). It is an important crop worldwide, because it has a wide range of geographical adaption, unique chemical composition, good nutritional value, functional health benefits and variety of end-uses(food, feed and non-edible). It is extremely resilient and performs even under severe water stress conditions. It fits well in cropping systems/rotations including inter/mixed cropping systems. It improves soil fertility by fixing atmospheric $N_2$ to the extent of 50-300 kg $ha^{-1}$, depending on the agro-climatic conditions, variety, strains *etc*. Keyser and Li (1992) and adds about 1.0-1.5 tons of leaf litter per season $ha^{-1}$. Soybean is the world's first ranking crop as a source of vegetable oil and in India too(Oil world, 2012). It will continue to play a key role in fighting edible oil deficit in the country(Damodaran and Hegde, 2010). Soybean is well known for its nutritional and health benefits. It contains about 40% good quality protein, 20% oil having about 85% unsaturated fatty acids including 55% polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA), 25-30% carbohydrates and almost no starch (useful to diabetic patients), 4-5%

minerals, anti-oxidants, *viz*. ascorbic acid (9-10mg/100g sprouted soybean) and beta-carotene (0.2 mg/100g sprouted soybean) and about 0.3% is flavones(daidzein and genestein). That's why it is also known as a 'wonder crop', 'Miracle crop' and 'Golden bean'. India ranks fifth after USA, Brazil, Argentina and China in the production of soybean (FAOSTAT, 2017). India must increase indigenous production of vegetables oil and protein to meet its critical deficit. This would make one to think that adequate and balanced application to the soybean is must to increase productivity. The prospects of soybean expanding further into a major crop in India are good. Know-how to cultivate or soybean farming in India is already comparatively advanced and industry is becoming increasingly aware of the varied use of soybean. It appears that the importance of soybean is increasing with the availability of pulses, the natives cheapest source of protein is decreasing. The soybean production in India during 2014-15 has been about 10.528 mt in 11.086 mha area with average productivity of 950 kg ha$^{-1}$(Anonymous, 2015). In India, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan are the major soybean producing states, contributing about 95% of the total area and production of soybean in the country, Madhya Pradesh has 54% of the country's area and contributes 59% to the total production of soybean in the country and justifybeing called 'soya state'(Anonymous, 2015).The encouraging results of the new varieties, which take 100-130 days to maturity with the yield potential of 30-45 q ha$^{-1}$ contributes major role in enhancing soybean production in India. Sulphur plays multiple roles in the nutrition of soybean. It involves in the synthesis of amino acids, the building blocks of the proteins.Several studies (Lakshman*et al*., 2017) have reported relatively high requirement of sulphur for soybean which could be attributed to its high protein and oil content. Sulphur also plays a vital role in chlorophyll formation and produces heavier seed and higher oil content. Use of cheap and effective source of sulphur in appropriate dose is necessary for augmenting the productivity as well as quality returns from the soybean cultivation.The favourable effect of zinc on soybean is also being reported now–a-days. Soybean is sensitive to zinc deficiency which is needed for protein metabolism and involved in the chlorophyll formation, growth hormone stimulators, enzymatic activity and reproductive processes.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Field experiments were conducted during the *kharif* season of 2014 and 2015 at the research block of Aroma College Roorkee, Haridwar (U.K.), India. The farm is situated at 29.52˚ N latitude, 78.53˚ E longitude and at altitude of 270 meters above the mean sea level. The soil of theexperimental site was sandy loam and slightly alkaline in reaction (pH 7.7), organic carbon (0.58% and 0.56%), low in available nitrogen (265 and 268 kg N $ha^{-1}$), low in available phosphorus (18.4 and 18.3 kg P $ha^{-1}$) and medium in available potassium (259.4 and 254.6 kg K $ha^{-1}$) in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The initial sulphur status was 22.5 kg $ha^{-1}$ and 23.4 kg $ha^{-1}$ and the available zinc was 0.54 and 0.56 mg $kg^{-1}$ soil, respectively during 2014 and 2015 cropping seasons. The treatments consisted of five sulphur levels *viz.* ($S_0$- control, $S_1$- 10 kg S $ha^{-1}$, $S_2$- 20 kg S $ha^{-1}$, $S_3$- 30 kg S $ha^{-1}$ and $S_4$ 40 kg S $ha^{-1}$; four zinc levels *viz.* $Zn_0$- control, $Zn_1$- 10 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$, $Zn_2$- 20 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$ and $Zn_3$- 30 kg Zn $ha^{-1}$).The experiments were laid out in afactorial randomized block design and replicated thrice. The graded levels of sulphur and zinc were applied through elemental sulphur and zinc sulphate and mixed in soil after layout and before sowing. Healthy seeds of soybean *cv. PK 1042*were used @ 80 kg $ha^{-1}$. The sowing of soybean seed was done using the hand plough at 5 cm depth in last week of June. First thinning was done after full germination and after thinning the first-hand weeding was done at 30 days after sowing to remove the weeds. Five representative plants of soybean from each treatment were selected randomly at 30, 60, 90 DAS and at maturity for recording biometric observations, as well as post-harvest studies on various aspects. The experimental data were statistically analysed by applying “Analysis of variance” technique for factorial randomized block design(Cochran and Cox, 1992). The standard error of mean ($SEM^{\pm}$) and critical difference (CD) at 5% significance level were worked out for each parameter. Protein content in soybean grain was estimated by Kjeldhal method. The protein content in grain was obtained by multiplying the nitrogen content with the standard factor by 6.25 (AOAC, 1960).Oil content in grain of soybean was recorded with Nuclear Magnetic Resonance technique. Protein content in soybeanseed was determined by under noted biurete methodWilliams (1961).Nutrient uptakefrom each sample S and Zn were determined separately as per standard procedures(Jackson, 1965; Tabatabai and Bremner, 1970).

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### EFFECT OF SULPHUR ON SOYBEAN GROWTH AND YIELD ATTRIBUTES

The finding showed that the application of sulphur increased all the growth and yield attributes of soybean. Significant increase up to 40 kg $ha^{-1}$ was observed in plant height, number of branches $plant^{-1}$, dry weight $plant^{-1}$, leaf area index (Table-1), no of pods $plant^{-1}$, no of grains $pod^{-1}$, pod wright $plant^{-1}$, test weight(Table-2).The highest yield components were found with the application of 40 kg S $ha^{-1}$ and control treatment produced lowest values. This could be function of various external and internal factors, nutrient supply being one of the factor.It might be due to the improvement of sulphur in synthesis of amino acids. Soybean has been reported to be much responsive to sulphur in promoting growth characters as already reported by Sharma *et al*. (1991), Jayapaul and Ganeshareja (1990) and Dabhi *et al*. (2008), Ravikumar *et al.* (2016).

**EFFECT OF SULPHUR ONSOYBEAN QUALITY**

This study found that increasing the sulphur levels increased the soybean seed protein content(Table-3) but different researchers have reported varied results on the effect of sulphur on soybean seed oil content(Ravikumar *et al.*, 2016, Legha and Gajendra Giri, 1999). Soybean seed contain Glycine protein, which is relatively rich in sulphur containing amino acid and makes up approximately 50 % seed protein (Coates *et al.*,1985).Increasing in sulphur levels increased theproteinand oil content in soybean seed has been reported by Gill and Sharma(2017), Singh and Thenua (2016), Kesare *et al.* (2015).

Besides oil and protein content, sulphur plays an important role in plant metabolism by virtue of being on essential constituent of diverse types of metabolically active compounds amino acids, proteins and nucleic acids. The biological role of chlorophyll in harvesting solar energy, phosphorylated compounds in energy transformation, nucleic acid in the transfer of genetic information and the relation of cellular metabolism and protein as structural units and biological catalyst is well known.

**EFFECT OF SULPHUR ON SOYBEAN SEED YIELD**

Significant variation on sees yield were observed with the application of different sulphur levels (Table-2). Increasing the sulphur levels increased the grain yield of soybean significantly up to 40 kg ha$^{-1}$ numerically superior to 30 kg ha$^{-1}$.Similar results were observed in the biological yield. These results were supported by significant increase in the number of pods plant$^{-1}$ up to 40 kg ha$^{-1}$, number of grain plant$^{-1}$, grain weight plant$^{-1}$ and 1000-grain weight while no significant influences were observed between 30 & 40 kg S ha$^{-1}$ in the number of grains pod$^{-1}$ (Table-2). Since, there was differential response to sulphur on the basis of yield attributes and also in the grain yield and straw yield. In the earlier work, also a dose of 30 kg S ha$^{-1}$ or above has been recommended by Sharma *et al*. (1991) and Sonune *et al*. (2001), Longkumar *et al.* (2017), Kumar *et al.* (2017).

**EFFECT OF ZINC ON SOYBEAN GROWTH AND YIELD ATTRIBUTES**

Application of zinc also have a significant effect on growth and yield attributes. Zinc significantly increased the plant height, number of branches plant$^{-1}$, dry matter accumulation plant$^{-1}$, leaf area index (Table-1), no of pods plant$^{-1}$, pod length, no of grains pod$^{-1}$, pod wright plant$^{-1}$, test weight,(Table-2). Similar effect of zinc, particularly up to 10 kg dose was recorded on the yield and yield attributes. The optimum dose 20 kg which is supported by Tripathi *et al*. (1999) and Huger and Kurdikeri (2000), Jyothi *et al.* (2013).

**EFFECT OF ZINC ONSOYBEAN QUALITY**

Zinc also increased the oil and protein content of soybean. The result indicated that the application of 30 kg Zn ha$^{-1}$was recorded significantly higher seed oil (43.91%) and protein content (21.39%) in soybean.The increase in seed oil and protein content on addition of zinc has also been reported by Pable *et al.* (2010) and Husain and Kumar (2006), Chauhan *et al.* (2013).

**EFFECT OF ZINC ON SOYBEAN SEED YIELD**

The zinc levels also increased the biological yield with their highest level with 30 kg Zn ha$^{-1}$ ($Zn_3$).Likewise, application of zinc @ 30 kg Zn ha$^{-1}$ ($Zn_3$) recorded the highest harvest index as compared to their lower levels *viz*. Control ($Zn_0$), 10 kg Zn ha$^{-1}$ ($Zn_1$) and 20 kg Zn ha$^{-1}$ ($Zn_2$) but the differences were found non-significant (Table-2). Same findings also reported by Huger and Kurdikeri (2000), Dabhi *et al.* (2008), Jyothi *et al.* (2013) Chauhan *et al.* (2013).

**UPTAKE OF SULPHUR AND ZINC BY SOYBEAN**

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Increase in the uptake of sulphur and zinc significantly up to 40 kg S ha$^{-1}$ and 30 kg Zn ha$^{-1}$ was observed (Table-3). It is well known that uptake of nutrients by a crop is associated with the crop vigour and productivity. Sulphur particularly at the desirable level of 40 kg S ha$^{-1}$ improved the growth characters accompanied by yield attributes and yield. Therefore, finally increasing the uptake of not only sulphur but also zinc, effect of sulphur on increased uptake of sulphur by pulses and oilseed crops has been reported by Tomer *et al*. (2000), Sonune *et al.* (2001), Jyothi *et al.* (2013), Singh and Thenua (2016), Ravikumar *et al.* (2016).

**CONCLUSION**

Based on our two years of study, it may be concluded that the application of sulphur 40 kg ha$^{-1}$and zinc 30 kg ha$^{-1}$ increased the growth, yield attributes, yield, quality and uptake of sulphur and zinc in soybean compared with the other levels. Application of sulphur 40 kg

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ha$^{-1}$and zinc 20-30 kg ha$^{-1}$ is sufficient to sustain the productivity of soybean in Indo-gangatic plains.

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**Table 1: Growth attributes of soybean as influenced by different levels of sulphur and zinc**

| Treatments | Plant height (cm) | No. of branches plant$^{-1}$ | No. of nodules | Dry wt. plant$^{-1}$ | LAI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sulphur level (kg ha$^{-1}$)** | | | | | |
| **$S_0$** | 72.9 | 5.84 | 27.2 | 70.71 | 3.074 |
| **$S_1$** | 75.2 | 6.19 | 31.4 | 73.11 | 3.179 |
| **$S_2$** | 78.4 | 6.49 | 33.6 | 75.61 | 3.342 |
| **$S_3$** | 79.8 | 6.85 | 35.2 | 78.35 | 3.416 |
| **$S_4$** | 80.7 | 7.42 | 36.1 | 79.90 | 3.434 |
| **SEm ±** | 1.84 | 0.39 | 2.08 | 2.02 | 0.046 |
| **CD at 5%** | 5.74 | 1.29 | 6.49 | 6.30 | 0.152 |
| **Zinc level (kg ha$^{-1}$)** | | | | | |
| **$Zn_0$** | 73.3 | 5.81 | 26.2 | 70.24 | 3.105 |
| **$Zn_1$** | 75.6 | 6.22 | 32.9 | 74.59 | 3.211 |
| **$Zn_2$** | 78.9 | 6.67 | 35.7 | 76.65 | 3.309 |
| **$Zn_3$** | 81.7 | 7.48 | 36.2 | 79.41 | 3.411 |
| **SEm±** | 1.68 | 0.39 | 1.43 | 1.95 | 0.041 |
| **CD at 5%** | 4.28 | 0.99 | 3.66 | 4.97 | 0.107 |

**Table 2: Yield attributes & Yield of soybean as influenced by different levels of sulphur and zinc.**

| Treatments | No. of pods plant$^{-1}$ | Pod length (cm) | No. of grains pod$^{-1}$ | Pods wt. Plant$^{-1}$ | Test wt. (g) | Grain wt. Plant$^{-1}$ | Grain yield (kg ha$^{-1}$) | Biological yield (kg ha$^{-1}$) | Harvest index (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sulphur level (kg ha$^{-1}$)** | | | | | | | | | |
| **$S_0$** | 112.50 | 11.10 | 2.24 | 47.29 | 93.72 | 23.14 | 1782 | 3680 | 0.332 |
| **$S_1$** | 117.74 | 11.50 | 2.27 | 52.11 | 94.98 | 25.49 | 1842 | 3889 | 0.330 |
| **$S_2$** | 122.79 | 11.82 | 2.34 | 55.04 | 97.78 | 27.32 | 1917 | 3943 | 0.334 |
| **$S_3$** | 126.90 | 12.02 | 2.39 | 56.29 | 98.41 | 29.31 | 1952 | 3974 | 0.333 |
| **$S_4$** | 131.31 | 12.25 | 2.42 | 57.15 | 99.58 | 29.49 | 1983 | 4031 | 0.349 |
| **SEm $^{\pm}$** | 3.17 | 0.42 | 0.04 | 1.79 | 1.59 | 0.89 | 23.01 | 29.80 | 0.051 |
| **CD at 5%** | 9.89 | NS | 0.12 | 5.58 | 4.96 | 2.70 | 71.76 | 92.98 | NS |
| **Zinc level (kg ha$^{-1}$)** | | | | | | | | | |
| **$Zn_0$** | 109.6 | 10.82 | 2.26 | 48.25 | 93.12 | 23.92 | 1834 | 3678 | 0.331 |
| **$Zn_1$** | 119.1 | 11.72 | 2.26 | 51.31 | 95.37 | 25.71 | 1868 | 3880 | 0.333 |
| **$Zn_2$** | 127.7 | 12.08 | 2.39 | 55.78 | 98.84 | 28.44 | 1918 | 3972 | 0.336 |
| **$Zn_3$** | 132.4 | 12.26 | 2.41 | 57.59 | 99.91 | 29.88 | 1958 | 4075 | 0.339 |
| **SEm$^{\pm}$** | 5.62 | 0.32 | 0.02 | 2.02 | 1.47 | 0.91 | 11.74 | 19.49 | 0.014 |
| **CD at 5%** | 14.33 | 0.82 | 0.05 | 5.17 | 3.76 | 2.32 | 30.05 | 49.89 | NS |

**Table3:Quality and uptake of nutrients by soybean as influenced by different levels of sulphur and zinc.**

| Treatments | Quality | | Uptake | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Protein content (%)** | **Oil content (%)** | **S-uptake (kg ha$^{-1}$)** | **Zn-uptake (kg ha$^{-1}$)** |
| **Sulphur level (kg ha$^{-1}$)** | | | | |
| **$S_0$** | 39.77 | 20.46 | 9.44 | 0.637 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **$S_1$** | 41.61 | 20.84 | 9.92 | 0.793 |
| **$S_2$** | 42.74 | 21.48 | 10.56 | 0.807 |
| **$S_3$** | 43.19 | 21.80 | 11.09 | 0.847 |
| **$S_4$** | 43.76 | 22.06 | 11.51 | 0.868 |
| **SEm ±** | 0.42 | 0.31 | 0.26 | 0.033 |
| **CD at 5%** | 1.31 | 0.96 | 0.81 | 0.103 |
| **Zinc level (kg $ha^{-1}$)** | | | | |
| **$Zn_0$** | 40.92 | 20.51 | 9.54 | 0.698 |
| **$Zn_1$** | 41.24 | 21.84 | 9.83 | 0.773 |
| **$Zn_2$** | 42.82 | 21.51 | 10.84 | 0.836 |
| **$Zn_3$** | 43.91 | 21.39 | 11.84 | 0.867 |
| **SEm±** | 0.19 | 0.23 | 0.21 | 0.035 |
| **CD at 5%** | 0.49 | 0.59 | 0.53 | 0.093 |