

Evaluation of some Crop Sequences and Nitrogen Levels on Wheat Productivity

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ABSTRACT

Two field experiments were conducted on clay soil in 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons at the Experimental Farm of Sakha Agricultural Research Station, Kafr El-Sheikh, Egypt, to exploit the land in the period from harvesting early rice cultivars to grow wheat in suitable date by planting the temporary fodder crops to increase economic returns. The trials studied the response of wheat cv. Giza 171 to some crop sequences systems and nitrogen rates. Each experiment included three rice cultivars (Sakha 101, Sakha 106 and Giza 179) as a preceding crop, three intermediate crop (maize and berseem fahl as mono-cut forage crops as well as fallow land) and three nitrogen rates (50, 75 and 100 kg N fed.⁻¹) in wheat. The experimental design was Split Split-plot with three replications. Main plots were assigned to preceding crops (rice cultivars), sub plots to intermediate crops and sub-sub plots to nitrogen rates. Rice cultivars as preceding crop had no significant effect on all studied wheat traits, namely plant height, spikes number m⁻², spike length, spike weight and grains number spike⁻¹, 1000-grain weight, grain yield, straw yield and harvest index in both seasons. There was an apparent difference due to intermediate crop in all mentioned traits of wheat, except harvest index in the two seasons. The sequence system of berseem fahl –wheat resulted in a significant increase in plant height, spikes number m⁻², spike length, spike weight and grains number spike⁻¹, grain yield and straw yield of wheat compared with maize–wheat and fallow–wheat sequence systems in the two seasons. However, maize–wheat and fallow–wheat sequence systems substantially increased 1000-grain weight of wheat than the berseem fahl–wheat system. Wheat grown after maize or fallow soil was statistically at par in all mentioned traits in both seasons. Plant height, spikes number m⁻², spike length, grains number spike⁻¹ and straw yield of wheat gradually increased by increasing nitrogen rate from 50 to 100 kg N fed.⁻¹. Spike weight, grain yield and harvest index of wheat was markedly increased by increasing nitrogen rate from 50 to 75 kg N fed.⁻¹, then those decreased at 100 kg N fed.⁻¹. Application of 100 kg N fed.⁻¹ produced the lightest 1000-grain weight of wheat in both seasons, while the heaviest ones were obtained from adding 75 and 50 kg N fed.⁻¹ in the first and second seasons, respectively. Grain yield was significantly affected by the interaction between intermediate crop and nitrogen levels. Wheat grown after berseem and received any nitrogen rate was among those having high grain yield in both seasons. It can be concluded that the sequence system of rice-berseem fahl–wheat received 50 kg N fed.⁻¹ could be recommended for optimum grain yield of wheat at Kafr El-Shiekh Governorate. This result indicated that application of berseem fahl as intermediate crop can be saved 50 kg N fed.⁻¹ without reduce grain yield of wheat, in addition to the producing green forage to use in animal food.

INTRODUCTION

Food shortage in Egypt is one of the most important problems facing us because of the limited land area and the increasing population, which makes it difficult to provide food needs. Agricultural intensification has become an imperative to increase in agricultural production per unit of inputs (Rockström *et al.*, 2017). One of the principle applications is using multiplicity of sequential cropping systems amounting to more than two crops per year through applying innovative crop sequence.

Many studies evaluated new short duration varieties of rice for early cultivated date in late April and harvested from late August until the middle of September (Khalifa *et al.*, 2014; Khalifa, 2009). There is a period of about three months to grow another crop like berseem fahl and maize as fodder before wheat.

Nitrogen fertilizer plays an important role in the growth and production of wheat. In this connection, Gharib *et al.* (2016); Hafez and Gharib (2016) and White *et al.* (2017) found that application of nitrogen fertilizer improved growth, yield attributes and grain yield of wheat.

This study was to investigate the response of wheat to crop sequences (rice– intermediate crop –wheat) and nitrogen rates.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two field experiments were conducted in 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons at the Experimental Farm of Sakha Agricultural Research station, Kafrelsheikh, Egypt. The trials studied the response of wheat cv. Giza171 to some crop sequences system and nitrogen rates. Soil analyses according the methods of Black *et al.* (1965) indicated that the Soil was clay in texture with a pH of 7.9. Chemical

properties of soil were 1.5 % for organic matter, 0.13% for total N, 14.8 mg kg⁻¹ for available P and 230 mg kg⁻¹ for available K.

The experiment included three factors as follows:

- 1- Rice cultivars ((Sakha 101, Sakha 106 and Giza 179) as a preceding crop.
- 2- Mono-cut forage crops (maize and berseem Fahl) and fallow land as intermediate crop.
- 3- Urea fertilizer(46.5% N) as N source for wheat was applied at the rates of 50, 75 and 100 kg N feddan⁻¹

The experimental design was Split split plot with three replications. Main plots were assigned to preceding crops (the three rice varieties), sub plots to intermediate crops and sub-sub plots to three nitrogen rates. The sub-sub plot size was 21 m² (3 × 7 m).

All agronomic practices for transplanting rice crop were followed as recommended. Rice was harvested on 10 and 8 September in 2015 and 2016 seasons.

Berseem (*Trifolium alexandrinum* L.) monocut Fahl and maize (*Zea mays* L.) as fodder was sown separately on 20 and 18 September in 2015 and 2016 seasons after rice crop. Cultural practices were applied according to recommendations of each crop. The cut date of berseem and maize was on 24 and 22 November in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

Sowing of wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) took place after intermediate crops (berseem, maize and fallow) on 3 December in 2015 and 29 November in 2016 season. Seeds of wheat cv. Giza 171 were broadcasting at a rate of 70 kg/fed.. The nitrogen fertilizer was applied into two equal additions before first and second irrigation. The experimental soil was fertilized with 100 kg calcium superphosphate (15.5% P₂O₅) per feddan during the soil

preparation to sown wheat. At harvest, plant height and some yield attributes of wheat were measured. The total weight of both grain and straw yield was determined in each plot from the central area of 8 m² (2 X 4 m) and adjusted to tons per fedan.

Statistical analysis of the data was carried out as described by Gomez *et al.* (1984). Duncan's Multiple Range Test (Duncan, 1955) was used to compare treatment means. All statistical analysis was performed using CoStat software package.

RESULTS

Plant height:

Data in Table 1 showed that heights of wheat plants at harvest as affected by cropping system (preceding and intermediate crops) and nitrogen rates in both seasons. Rice cultivars as preceding crop had no significant effect on plant height of wheat.

Table 1. Plant height and spikes number m⁻² and spike length of wheat as affected by cropping system (preceding and intermediate crop) and nitrogen rate in 2015/16 and 2016/17 seasons.

Factor	Plant height (cm)		Spikes (No m ⁻²)		Spike length (cm)	
	2015 /16	2016 /17	2015 /16	2016 /17	2015 /16	2016 /17
Rice cultivars (R)						
Giza179	99.2	100.2	377	384.9	12.5	12.7
Sakha101	99.9	100.19	379	383	12.5	12.6
Sakha106	99.5	100.19	377	382.8	12.5	12.7
F test	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Intermediate crop (I)						
Maize	98 b	99.33 b	368 b	372 b	12.0 b	12.2 b
Berseem	102.5 a	103.7 a	391 a	398 a	13.5 a	13.6 a
Fallow land	98.1 b	99 b	374 b	381 b	12.0 b	12.2 b
F test	**	**	**	**	**	**
Kg N fed ⁻¹ (N)						
50	93 c	93.96 c	327 c	333 c	11.5 c	11.7 c
75	99.4 b	100.48 b	376 b	379 b	12.5 b	12.7 b
100	106.1 a	107.59 a	430 a	439 a	13.5 a	13.6 a
F test	**	**	**	**	**	**
Interaction						
R x I	*	*	*	*	*	*
R x N	**	**	**	**	*	**
I x N	**	*	*	*	*	*
R x I x N	**	*	**	*	*	*

Intermediate crops exerted a significant effect on plant height of wheat. Wheat plants grown after berseem Fahl as a intermediate crop were taller than those grown after fallow or maize in both seasons. Increment in plant height of wheat by berseem followed wheat may be attributed to the legume fix nitrogen from the atmosphere due to root nodule bacteria and concentrate and activate phosphorus and potassium in soil. Wheat was cultivated after maize gave the shortest plant height because both crops are exhausted to the soil fertility. These promoting effects of legume-wheat sequences were reported by Ouda *et al.* (2017); Singh *et al.* (2008) and Usadadiya *et al.* (2014). Increasing nitrogen rate from 50 to 100 kg/feddan (fed) substantially increased plant height in both seasons. The rate of 100 kg N/fed produced the tallest wheat plants, while the rate of 50 kg N/fed

produced the shortest ones. Such result is in harmony with that obtained by Hussain *et al.* (2006), Noureldin *et al.* (2013) and Mandic *et al.* (2015).

Plant height of wheat was markedly influenced by the interactions among all studied factors.

Yield attributes:

Data in Tables 1 and 2 show that rice cultivars as preceding crop had no significant effect on spikes number m⁻², spike length, spike weight and grains number spike⁻¹, 1000-grain weight, grain yield, straw yield and harvest index of wheat in both seasons.

All the mentioned traits of wheat were substantially affected by intermediate crops. Wheat plants that followed berseem exceeded those followed fallow or maize as preceding crop in spikes number m⁻², spike length, spike weight, grains number spike⁻¹. Increment in yield attributes of wheat by berseem followed wheat treatment may be attributed to the legume fix nitrogen from the atmosphere due to root nodule bacteria and concentrate and activate phosphorus and potassium in soil. Data in Table 2 show that 1000-grain weight was the lowest value on berseem-wheat sequence. The reduction in 1000-grain weight at berseem-wheat sequence may be due to the legume fix nitrogen, which increased nitrogen content in plant, which may be resulted in a shortage of carbohydrate supplied per grain and in turn it is directly caused by an excessive number of grains. Hamd-Alla *et al.* (2015) found that maize-wheat sequence produced low productivity of wheat. Sharma and Behera (2009) indicated that wheat crop showed better growth in terms of produced more tillers and spikes m⁻² following summer legumes than fallow. Previous research (Ouda *et al.*, 2017; Singh *et al.*, 2003) stated that legume crop rotation improved wheat yield.

Table 2. Spike weight, grains (no/spike) and 1000-grain weight(g) of wheat at harvest as affected by cropping system (preceding and intermediate crop) and nitrogen rate in 2015/16 and 2016/17 seasons.

Factor	Spike weight (g)		Grains (no/spike)		1000-grain weight(g)	
	2015 /16	2016 /17	2015 /16	2016 /17	2015 /16	2016 /17
Rice cultivars (R)						
Giza179	3.02	3.1	57.9	59.0	51.96	54.44
Sakha101	3.04	3.1	58.3	57.7	52.56	54.44
Sakha106	2.98	3.1	58.3	59.5	51.59	54.44
F test	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	ns
Intermediate crop (I)						
Maize	2.91 b	3 b	54.0 b	55.5 b	54.22 a	54.52 a
Berseem	3.21 a	3.3 a	66.0 a	64.8 a	48 b	49.67 b
Fallow land	2.91 b	3 b	54.5 b	56.0 b	53.89 a	55.11 a
F test	**	**	**	**	**	**
Kg N fed ⁻¹ (N)						
50	2.83 b	3 b	48.7 c	48.5 c	52.04 b	54.63 a
75	3.43 a	3.5 a	57.3 b	56.6 b	53.59 a	52.49 b
100	2.78 b	2.9 b	68.4 a	69.1 a	50.48 c	52.18 b
F test	**	**	**	**	**	*
Interaction						
R x I	*	*	**	*	*	*
R x N	*	*	*	*	*	*
I x N	*	*	*	*	*	*
R x I x N	*	*	**	*	*	*

Spikes number m⁻², spike length and grains number spike⁻¹ were significantly increased when wheat plants received 100 kg N/fed compared with those received 50 or 75 kg N/fed (Table 1 and 2). However, wheat plants received 75 kg N fed⁻¹ significantly exceeded those received low or high N rates in spike weight, grain yield and harvest index. Application of the high nitrogen rate (100 kg N fed⁻¹) resulted in a decrease in 1000-grain weight of wheat compared with the other two nitrogen rates. The effect of 50 and 75 kg N fed⁻¹ on 1000-grain weight was inconsistent in both seasons. The heaviest 1000-grain weight was obtained from application of 75 and 50 kg N fed⁻¹ in the first and second seasons, respectively. The reduction in 1000-grain weight at high N rate may be due to increase nitrogen content in plant, which may be resulted in a shortage of carbohydrate supplied per grain and in turn it is directly caused by an excessive number of grains produced by high N fertilization.

The increase in yield attributes by increasing nitrogen rate reflects the important role of nitrogen as an essential constituent of all proteins and it is concerned in the production of new living stuff and thus in all growth and reproduction. A positive association between nitrogen fertilization and wheat yield attributes has been reported by (Gharib *et al.*, 2016; Hafez and Gharib, 2016; Mandic *et al.*, 2015; Satyanarayana *et al.*, 2017). All interactions had a significant effect on yield attributes of wheat in the two seasons are presented in Table 1 and 2.

Grain and straw yields:

Data in Table 3 illustrated that grain and straw yields as well as harvest index of wheat did not influence by rice cultivars as preceding crop in both seasons.

Table 3. Grain yield, straw yield and harvest index of wheat as affected by cropping system (preceding and intermediate crop) and nitrogen rate in 2015/16 and 2016/17 seasons.

Factor	Grain yield (t/fed.)		Straw yield (t/fed.)		Harvest index	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
	/16	/17	/16	/17	/16	/17
Rice cultivars (R):						
Giza179	3.03	2.76	3.37	3.36	0.48	0.48
Sakha101	3.05	2.80	3.36	3.35	0.48	0.48
Sakha106	3.02	2.89	3.36	3.46	0.48	0.47
F test	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Intermediate crop (I)						
Maize	2.89 b	2.66 b	3.32 b	3.31 b	0.48	0.48
Berseem	3.20 a	2.99 a	3.46 a	3.55 a	0.47	0.47
Fallow land	3.00 b	2.79 b	3.31 b	3.3 b	0.48	0.48
F test	*	*	**	**	NS	NS
Kg N fed ⁻¹ (N)						
50	2.7 c	2.44 c	3.05 c	3.14 b	0.46 b	0.46 b
75	3.37a	3.12 a	3.21 b	3.21 b	0.54 a	0.54 a
100	3.01 b	2.88 b	3.83 a	3.82 a	0.43 c	0.43 c
F test	**	**	**	**	**	**
Interaction						
R x I	NS	NS	*	NS	NS	NS
R x N	NS	NS	*	*	*	*
I x N	*	*	*	*	*	*
R x I x N	NS	NS	*	*	*	**

Intermediate crop significantly influenced grain and straw yield of wheat in the both seasons. Wheat sown after

berseem outyielded those sown after maize or fallow in grain and straw yields in the two seasons. There were no significant difference in grain and straw yields of wheat at fallow or maize as a intermediate crops.

The berseem-wheat gave the highest grain and straw yield. The maize-wheat did not differ from fallow-wheat in these respects. More grain yield by the berseem as intermediate crop is attributed to more fertile tillers (spikes) per m², grains number spike⁻¹ and spike length. These results are in accordance with those reported by Singh *et al.* (2003), Singh *et al.* (2008), Usadadiya *et al.* (2014) and Ouda *et al.* (2017).

Straw yield of wheat was significantly increased by each increment of applied nitrogen. Adding 75 N/fed resulted in a substantial increase in grain yield and harvest index of wheat compared with adding 50 or 100 kg N/fed. This may be due to the luxurious vegetative growth because of immediate nitrogen availability and its quick uptake in root zone of more nutrients in the soil. These results are supported by the previous findings of Hafez and Gharib (2016); Mandic *et al.* (2015); Satyanarayana *et al.* (2017) and White *et al.* (2017).

The interaction (intermediate crop X nitrogen levels) effect was significant on grain yield. At berseem – wheat sequence system, the grain yield/fed was recorded the highest mean value at the rate of 75 and 100 kg N/fed did not differ from that at 50 kg N/fed (Table 4).

Table 4. Grain yield of wheat as affected by the interaction between nitrogen levels and intermediate crop in 2015/16 and 2016/17 seasons

Kg N fed ⁻¹	Intermediate crop		
	Maize	Berseem	Fallow land
2015-16 season			
50	2.47 d	3.03 abc	2.61 cd
75	3.29 b	3.47 a	3.36 ab
100	2.91 bcd	3.10 ab	3.02 abc
2016-17 season			
50	2.19 b	2.81 a	3.32 b
75	3.04 a	3.18 a	3.14 a
100	2.76 a	2.98 a	2.89 a

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تقييم بعض التعاقبات المحصولية و معدلات السماد النتروجيني على إنتاجية القمح

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أجريت تجربتان حقليتان في أرض طينية بالمزرعة البحثية لمحطة البحوث الزراعية بسخا – كفر الشيخ، في موسمي 2015-2016 و 2016-2017 ، بهدف إستغلال الفترة ما بين حصاد الأرز المبكر والميعاد المناسب لزراعة القمح بزراعة محصول ببني لزيادة العائد الإقتصادي. وتمت دراسة إستجابة نمو محصول صنف القمح جيزة 171 للتعاقبات المحصولية ومستويات السماد النتروجيني. وشملت كل تجربة ثلاثة أصناف من الأرز (سحا 101 و سحا 106 و سحا والجيزه 179) كمحصول سابق والمحاصيل البينية بعد حصاد الأرز وقبل زراعة القمح وهي محاصيل علف وحيدة الحشة (برسيم فحل وذرة شامية) الى جانب أرض خالية بدون زراعة، وتسميد القمح بثلاثة معدلات من السماد النتروجيني (50، 75 و 100 كجم نيتروجين للفدان). وأستخدم في تنفيذ التجارب تصميم القطع المنشقة مرتين ذو ثلاث مكررات. حيث وزعت اصناف الأرز كمحصول سابق في القطع الرئيسية والمحاصيل البينية (برسيم فحل- الذرة الشامية – بور) في القطع الشقية الأولى و معدلات النتروجين في القطع الشقية الثانية. لم تؤثر أصناف الأرز كمحصول سابق معنويا على إرتفاع النبات و عدد السنابل/م² ، طول السنبل ، وزن السنبل ، و عدد الحبوب/السنبل، ووزن 1000 حبة، ومحصول الحبوب ، ومحصول القش، ودليل الحصاد للقمح في كلا الموسمين. أثر المحصول البيني معنويا على جميع صفات القمح السابق ذكرها فيما عدا دليل الحصاد . تفوقت نباتات القمح المنزرعة بعد برسيم فحل في إرتفاع النبات، عدد سنابل/م² ، طول السنبل ، وزن السنبل و عدد الحبوب بالسنبل ومحصول الحبوب ، ومحصول القش بالمقارنة المنزرعة بعد ذرة شامية. وكان العكس صحيح في وزن 1000 حبة. لم يختلف التعاقب المحصولي ذرة شامية- قمح أو بور-قمح معنويا في محصول الحبوب و القش للقمح. أدت زيادة معدل السماد النتروجيني من 50 الى 100 كجم نيتروجين للفدان الى زيادة تدريجية في إرتفاع النبات، و عدد سنابل/م² ، وطول السنبل ، و عدد الحبوب بالسنبل ، و محصول القش في القمح في كلا الموسمين. أدت اضافة السماد النتروجيني بالمعدل العالى 100كجم ن/فدان الى إنخفاض وزن 1000 حبة بالمقارنة بالمستويين المنخفضين. أدى إستخدام معدل النيتروجين الموصى به (75 كجم نيتروجين للفدان) في القمح الى الحصول على أعلى وزن للسنبل ، و محصول الحبوب ، و محصول القش، ودليل الحصاد بالمقارنة بالمعدلين الأخرين. أثر التفاعل بين المحصول البيني السابقة لمحصول القمح (برسيم فحل- الذرة الشامية – بور) ومعدل النيتروجين معنويا على محصول الحبوب للقمح. سجلت اعلى قيمة لمحصول حبوب القمح بعد التعاقب المحصولي برسيم- قمح و معدل التسميد 75 او 100 كجم ن/فدان مع عدم وجود اختلاف معنوي مع معدل تسميد 50 كجم ن/فدان . ويستنتج من النتائج أنه عند زراعة القمح بعد أرز يمكن زراعة البرسيم الفحل كمحصول ببني قبل زراعة القمح مع تسميد بمعدل 50 كجم نيتروجين/فدان لتعظيم انتاجية محصول القمح بمحافظة كفر الشيخ. وبذلك يمكن توفير 50 كجم ن للفدان باستخدام البرسيم الفحل كمحصول ببني بدون نقص في المحصول بالإضافة الى الحصول على علف أخضر يستخدم كغذاء للحيوانات مما يزيد من الثروة الحيوانية.