**Original Research Article**

**Acid Soil Management for Improvement of Yield and Soil Nutrient in Black gram (*Vigna mungo* L.) Cultivation in Dibrugarh district of Assam, India**

**ABSTRACT**

The Dibrugarh district of Assam is characterized with strongly acidic subtropical soil. Black gram grown under such acidic soil condition effects uptake of essential nutrients leading to reduction of yield. An experiment was conducted during *kharif* season (September - November) of 2024 at farmers field’ in Dibrugarh district of Assam, India to manage soil acidity by application of lime for yield improvement of black gram (*Vigna mungo* L.). The experiment consists of three treatments T1: Lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage + Recommended dose of fertilizer (15: 35: 15 kg ha-1), T2: Recommended dose of fertilizer (15:35:15 kg ha-1) and T3: Farmers’ practice includes imbalance fertilizer application (FYM 10 q ha-1). The On-Farm Trials were conducted in randomized complete block design and replicated at five locations . The results revealed that application of lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage + Recommended dose of fertilizer (15: 35: 15 kg ha-1) recorded significantly higher yield followed by only recommended dose of fertilizer (15:35:15 kg ha-1) and farmers’ practice. The yield increased significantly (13.95 q ha-1) compared to the farmers practice (8.5 q ha-1) with BC ratio of 2.15 and 1.47, respectively. Moreover, with improvement in soil pH, improved and significantly higher soil nutrient status was recorded. Therefore, lime application with recommended doses of fertilizer could enhance the yield of black gram and available nutrient status of soil.

**Keywords**: On farm trial, lime, black gram, yield, soil nutrients

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Black gram, is one of the important grown pulse crops in India. It is the cheapest source of food protein thereby considered as the poor men’s meat. Currently, India represents the largest producer of Black gram accounting for more than 70% of the global production. India produces approximately 2 million tons of black gram with an average yield of 598 kg ha-1 during 2023‒24 (Anonymous, 2023-24). Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are the major producer states of black gram in India during kharif season. North Eastern regions (NER) of India represent less than 5% in pulse production. During 2020-21, Assam produces 0.37 lakh tonnes of black gram from an area of 0.56 lakh ha with a productivity of 651 kg ha-1 (Anonymous, 2021).

Black gram (**(***Vigna mungo*L.) is one of the most potential leguminous field crops for crop diversification and enhancing the productivity of rice-based cropping systems in NER. Pulses are soil-building crops capable of transforming the dominant cereal-based cropping systems to an ideal and sustainable system in time to come (Praharaj et al., 2017). Being a legume and a drought resistant crop, black gram fixes atmospheric nitrogen which enriches the soil and also exhibits great resilient to long period of water scarcity (Jamir et al., 2024). However, black gram is sensitive to soil acidity and liming is only option for increasing yield in such conditions.

Soil acidity is an important abiotic stress that negatively affects crop growth and yield. More than 21 mha of acid soils are found in North Eastern Regions of India, whereas, 4.68 mha area is affected by soil acidity in Assam (Majumdar et al., 2022). Acidity– induced soil fertility problems along with traditionally minimal use of mineral fertilizers are often responsible for low levels of crop productivity in the state (Ao et al., 2021). Severe deficiencies of phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, molybdenum and toxicities of aluminium and iron in the acidic soils limits crop production in this region (Sanjay-Swami and Yadav, 2020). Proper management practices of soil acidity are therefore imperative for improving food security globally and regionally. Lime is the major means of ameliorating soil acidity because of its very strong acid neutralizing capacities, which can effectively remove existing acid, stimulate biological activity and reduce toxicity of heavy metals (Ameyu, 2019). The most efficient crop production on acid soils is the application of both lime and fertilizer, specifically phosphorus. Several studies have reported lime application as a strategy for increasing soil pH and one of the most inexpensive practices for managing soil acidity (Orton et al., 2018). Liming can increase soil pH, availability of essential plant nutrients, crop yields and prevent solubility of manganese and aluminium (Holland et al., 2018; Holland et al., 2019). Many research on liming reports that management or agricultural practices plays a significant role in the effectiveness of liming. Agricultural management practices relevant to liming are sources of lime materials, rate of application, method, and frequency of application (Anderson et al., 2013). However, despite the proven benefit of liming, in terms of raising soil pH and correcting the acidity abiotic constraints in soil, the practice is not very popular among the farming community. In the premise of the above background, an On Farm Trial (OFT) was conducted at the farmers’ field to evaluate the effect of lime application to ameliorate soil acidity for improvement of black gram yield.

**2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The experiment was conducted during *kharif* season (September- November) of 2024 at five farmers’ field covering 0.6 ha of land at Dibrugarh District of Assam, India. The area under each trial was 0.2 ha. The climate of Dibrugarh is Subtropical, with pleasantly warm, dry winters from November to February and a long, hot and rainy period from April to mid-October. The average Temperature of Dibrugarh is around 23°C although it varies from around 17°C during Winter (January) to 28°C during the Monsoon (August). Precipitation amounts to 2610 mm, with a maximum rainfall of 525 mm recorded in July, with a relative humidity of 75%. The soil type of the district is sandy to clayey loam. The treatments of the trial were T1: Lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage + Recommended dose of fertilizer (15: 35: 15 kg ha-1 NPK), T2: Recommended dose of fertilizer (15:35:15 kg ha-1) and T3: Farmers’ practice includes imbalance fertilizer application (FYM 10 q ha-1). The black gram variety taken was SBC 40. The crop was sown on 9th to 10th September, 2024. Spacing of 30x10 cm2 was followed with a seed rate of 22.5 kg ha-1 for sowing of black gram. Harvesting was done at 75–85 days after sowing when 75% of the pods mature. The seed yield was expressed at 14% moisture content.

The physical and chemical properties of lime used in the investigation are presented in Table 1. All the participating farmers were trained on all aspects of black gram cultivation and soil fertility management before implementing the OFTs at their field. The available soil nutrient status was estimated by soil analysis of composite soil sample from each plot before transplanting and after harvesting of crop. Data were analyzed using the standard statistical packages and some descriptive statistics for interpretation. The comparison between results achieved from treated plot (Demo.) and farmers practice (Check) for yield and soil characteristics was tested using student’s t test with the help of SPSS software.

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| **Table 1: Physical and Chemical properties of lime used in the investigation** | |
| Properties | Value |
| Water absorption | 0.62% |
| Specific gravity (G) | 2.68 |
| Lime (CaO) | 38-42% |
| Silica (SiO) | 15-18% |
| Alumina (Al2O3) | 3-5% |
| MgO | 0.5-3% |
| FeO+Fe2O3 | 1-1.5% |
| Alkalies | 1-1.5% |

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Seed yield**

The application of Lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage + Recommended dose of NPK @15: 35: 15 kg ha-1 had given significantly higher yield i.e. 13.95 q ha-1 followed by recommended dose of fertilizer (15:35:15 kg ha-1) (11.75 q ha-1) (Table 2). This may be due to improvement of soil pH and other soil nutrients requirement by the crop. This is also similarly reported by Sanjay-Swami and Singh (2020). It appears that liming increased soil pH and availability of nutrients which increased the yield components of black gram and finally higher yields of black gram. Oliver et al. (2021) reported that the strongest factor that influences yield under acidic soil conditions is the liming rate.

The percentage increase in average yield recorded as 50 and 26.34 in the treated plots over the farmer’s practice (Table 2). Kumar et al. (2015) also found the increased yield of black gram by 34.1 to 81.6% over farmer practice by the use of improved variety and balanced application of fertilizers. Similar result was also reported by Bordoloi (2022). The yield advantage of 36.9 to 192.0 per cent has also been reported in earlier studies (Kumar et al., 2007 and Choudhary et al., 2006). Satya and Sanjay-Swami (2021) also reported improvement in yield of black gram with soil fertility management in acid Inceptisol of Meghalaya. Similarly liming had positive effects on the yield as reported by Lalljee and Facknath (2001).

**3.2. Economics**

The Net Return and Benefit Cost ratio were calculated by taking the prevailed cost of commodities during the year of demonstration. The net return is highest in the application of application of Lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage + recommended dose of NPK @15: 35: 15 kg ha-1, viz. Rs. 25,554 /- (Table 2). This is also recorded that the application of treatment had given significantly higher B.C ratio of 2.15 followed by recommended dose of fertilizer (15:35:15 kg ha-1) (B: C ratio 1.83) farmers practice (B.C ratio 1.44). This may be due to higher yields obtained under recommended practices compared to farmers’ practice. Similar results of improved benefit-cost ratio were observed by Kumaret al. (2007) by the application of improved soil fertility management in black gram crop.

**3.3. Available soil nutrient status**

Soil samples were collected before the implementation of the technology and at the time of harvesting. The available nutrient status was significantly increased with the application of Lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage + recommended dose of NPK @15: 35: 15 kg ha-1 from initial to final stage of the crop (Table 3). The finding reveals that the soil was acidic in nature with high organic carbon content. The organic carbon, available nitrogen, available phosphorus and available potassium status of soil after harvest of the crop increased due to application of the treatment. Higher lime rates resulted in the highest increase in soil pH and higher yield. Oliver et al. (2021) reported that the important factor that influences yield and pH changes under acidic soil conditions is the rate of liming and it was inferred that a higher liming rate will solve issues relating to subsoil acidity. However, the magnitude of the increase in soil pH might differ depending on management practice (Enesi et al., 2023).

Liming increases the beneficial microbial activity of the soil with increase in pH of acidic soil thus enhancing the net mineralization of organic N which in turn led to enhance the soil nitrogen availability (Edmeades and Ridley, 2003). Lime application increased the soil pH which helped the release of fixed P from the oxides and hydroxides of Fe and Al thus increased the P availability in soils (Table 3). The ultimate effects of reasonable application of lime are generally considered to promote soil K availability as well as the efficiency of K fertilizer on acid soils.

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| **Table 2: Effect of Lime on Yield and Economics of Black Gram** | | | | | | |
| Technology Details | Avg. yield (q ha-1) | % increase/ change in average yield over local | Gross Cost (Rs ha-1)/ (Rs. unit-1) | Gross Return (Rs ha-1)/ (Rs. unit-1) | Net Return (Rs ha-1)/ (Rs. unit-1) | B:C Ratio (GR/GC) |
| Lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage+RDF (15: 35: 15 kg ha-1) | 13.95 | 50 | 22,225 | 47,778 | 25,554 | 2.15 |
| RDF (15:35:15 kg ha-1) | 11.75 | 26.34 | 21,900 | 40,243 | 18,343 | 1.83 |
| Check: Farmers Practice (FYM 10 q ha-1) | 8.5 | - | 19,700 | 29,112 | 9,412 | 1.47 |
| CD (*p*=0.05) | 0.034 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Significant at 0.05 level (*p*<0.05) | | | | | | |

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| **Table 3: Effect of Lime on Available Soil Nutrient Status** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Treatments | pH | | Organic C (%) | | Available N  (kg ha-1) | | Available P  (kg ha-1) | | Available K  (kg ha-1) | |
| Before | After | Before | After | Before | After | Before | After | Before | After |
| Lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage+RDF (15: 35: 15 kg ha-1) | 5.5 | 6.05 | 0.95 | 0.98 | 347.76 | 387.18 | 31.90 | 35.70 | 268.80 | 315.70 |
| RDF (15:35:15 kg ha-1) | 5.5 | 5.6 | 0.92 | 0.94 | 345.78 | 378.32 | 31.50 | 34.56 | 268.55 | 310.23 |
| Check: Farmers Practice (FYM 10 q ha-1) | 5.47 | 5.52 | 0.92 | 0.93 | 342.57 | 370.83 | 30.55 | 32.45 | 265.40 | 295.68 |
| CD (*p*=0.05) |  | 0.04 |  | 0.021 |  | 0.015 |  | 0.010 |  | 0.038 |
| Significant at 0.05 level (p<0.05) | | | | | | | | | | |

**4. CONCLUSION**

Soil acidity decreases the availability of most of the plant nutrients and also affects the yield of black gram. From the study, it can be concluded that application of Lime 489 kg ha-1+2% urea spray at pod initiation stage + recommended dose of NPK @15: 35: 15 kg ha-1 was found effective for getting the highest yield of black gram and for maintaining the sustainability in Agriculture. There is a need to popularize the technology among farmers for better management of soil acidity.

**DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript**.**

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