Canopy temperature as indicator of thermal and nutrient stresses in wheat crop

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ABSTRACT. The field study was conducted at research farm, School of Climate Change and Agricultural Meteorology, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana during subi 2013-14 and 2014-15 to find out effect of different thermal regimes, nitrogen levels and post anthesis strategies on the canopy temperature and its indices for the wheat crop. The treatments comprised of three temperature regimes in main plot (D₁ - October 30, D₂ - November 15 and D₃ - November 30), three nitrogen levels in sub-plot (N₁ - RDF- Recommended dose of N, N₂ - 50% RDF) and four stress management post anthesis strategies (P₁ - Control - No Spray, P₂- Water sprayed, P₃ - Foliar spray of ZnSO₄.7H₂O @ 0.5% P₄ - Foliar spray of Thiourea @ 10 mM) at anthesis and 20 days after anthesis in sub-sub plot as split-split plot design replicated thrice.

Canopy temperature was recorded at different phenological stages. The stress degree days were calculated at maturity. The results showed that crop sown on October 30 experienced lower canopy temperature at later stages as compared to November 15 and November 30 sown crop. With increase in nitrogen application it also lowers down the canopy temperature by 1.0 to 2.0 °C as dense and good crop stand under 150% RDF than others. The spray of crop with water, ZnSO₄.7H₂O and Thiourea also helped to bring the canopy temperature low at anthesis or after that when sprayed at regular intervals because these chemicals helped the crop to avoid the heat stress during this period by lowering the canopy temperature 0.5 to 1.0 °C. Higher the negative SDD values under October 30 as compared to November 15 and November 30 reflect that canopy temperature is cooler which means that crop is healthy and without any stress. Increase in N dose has lowered the SDD, indicating a better canopy thermal environment under higher N application. The significantly linear and negative relationship has obtained with canopy temperature and grain yield as well as SDD and grain yield.

Key words – Wheat, Sowing dates, Nitrogen level, Post anthesis strategies, Canopy temperature, Stress degree days, Grain yield.
1. Introduction

India is the third largest producer of wheat behind the EU and China. Temperature changes from 1980 to 2008 had a bigger impact on national wheat production in India, where over 90% of wheat is irrigated (Singh and Mustard, 2012) than changes in precipitation (Lobell et al., 2011). Growth and development of wheat is adversely affected by environmental stresses like high temperature, soil moisture deficit, nutrient stress, low light intensity, etc. In India, wheat is usually planted in November/December and harvested around March/April with higher temperatures towards the end of the growing season. Temperature affects wheat development, grain fertility, leaf senescence and immediate crop maturity if temperature exceeds a certain threshold for a given number of days. Increased crop growth due to nitrogen fertilization is attributed to increased leaf-area index (LAI) and radiation interception (Caviglia and Sadas, 2001). The nutrient content in grain and straw increased with delay in sowing of wheat whereas, uptake of these nutrients decreased as the sowing of wheat gets delayed (Kumar et al., 1998). There is need to assess these different type of stresses which occurs during crop growing period so that suitable management strategies can be followed to overcome these stresses and their effect on grain yield. For that the remotely sensed infrared canopy temperatures provide an efficient tool for rapid, non-destructive monitoring of whole-plant response to any type of stress (Idso et al., 1981). Canopy temperature plays an important role to sustain physiological basis of grain yield of wheat when exposed to heat or nutrient stress. Cool canopy during grain filling period in wheat is an important physiological principle for heat stress tolerance and the higher N application indicating a better canopy thermal environment. Ehdaie and Shakiba (1996) also reported that high canopy-air temperature difference due to stress conditions reduce grain yield in wheat. The degree of cooling reflects the rate of evaporation on the surface of plant canopy (Amani et al., 1996). The stress degree days (SDD), a canopy temperature based index has been used in grain yield prediction. Thus, the present study aims to characterize the growth and yield of wheat based on canopy temperature whether crop experienced higher canopy temperature than air temperature if so, than which suitable strategic manipulation we can done to avoid the yield losses from these stresses to some extent.

2. Materials and method

A factorial experiment comprised of three thermal regimes in main plot (D1 - October 30, D2 - November 15 and D3 - November 30) three nitrogen levels in sub-plot (N1- RDF (Recommended dose of N), N2- 125% RDF (25% more than recommended N), N3-150% RDF (50% more than recommended N) and four stress management post-anthesis strategies (P1- Control - No Spray, P2- Water sprayed, P3- Foliar spray of ZnSO4,7H2O @ 0.5%, P4- Foliar spray of Thiourea @ 10 mM) at anthesis and 20 days after anthesis in sub-sub plot was laid as split-split plot design at research farm, School of Climate Change and Agricultural Meteorology, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana during Rabi 2013-14 and 2014-15. The crop was sown on using the seed @ 100 kg/ha by ‘Kera’ method keeping the row spacing of 20 cm. Fertilizer were applied with the recommended dose of 150 kg N/ acre as soil texture is loamy sand in nature through urea (46% N) and P2O5/ acre through diammonium phosphate (18% N and 46% P2O5) and 20 kg K2O/ acre through muriate of potash (60% K2O). The entire dose of phosphorous and potassium was applied at the time of sowing and the half dose of the nitrogen was applied at sowing and half dose at first irrigation by top dressing.

The study was conducted to observe the canopy temperature of wheat crop under different treatments and relationship between the grain yield and canopy temperature based indices in winter wheat. The data was recorded at 2.30 p.m. from development of canopy till harvesting at 15 days intervals during the day with clear sky with the help of infrared thermometer (FLUKE 574) by inclining at an angle of 45° holding 1 m above the crop canopy.

2.1. Stress degree days (SDD)

The canopy air temperature difference (Tc-Ta) values were used to determine the accumulated stress degree days. Idso et al. (1977) originally developed stress degree day concept and defined as,

\[ SDD = \sum_{n=1}^{n}(T_c - T_a) \]

where, \( T_c \) is the canopy temperature and \( T_a \) is the air temperature in °C.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Canopy temperature

Canopy temperature is a good indicator of any type of stresses whether temperature, moisture, nutrient in crops. Canopy temperature has a direct bearing on vital physiological processes and morphological characteristics of plant which are the primary determinants of seed yield.
Canopy temperature (°C) at different phenological stages of wheat under thermal regimes, nitrogen levels and post anthesis strategies

| Treatments          | Canopy temperature (°C) | Tillering | Jointing | Booting | Heading | Anthesis | Grain filling |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------|----------|---------|---------|-----------|--------------|
|                     |                         | 2013-14   | 2014-15  | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2013-14  | 2014-15      |
| **Thermal regimes** |                         | 2013-14   | 2014-15  | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2013-14  | 2014-15      |
| October 30          |                         | 20.2      | 18.6     | 17.4    | 15.1    | 14.5      | 15.8         |
| November 15         |                         | 17.7      | 16.7     | 16.5    | 14.2    | 13.4      | 14.7         |
| November 30         |                         | 17.0      | 15.2     | 15.9    | 13.4    | 12.1      | 14.2         |
| **CD (p = 0.05)**   |                         | 0.61      | 0.57     | 0.69    | 0.36    | 0.38      | 0.75         |
| **Nitrogen levels** |                         |           |          |         |         |           |              |
| RDF                 | 19.0                    | 17.4      | 17.1     | 14.6    | 13.7    | 15.6      | 21.4         |
| 125% RDF            | 18.4                    | 16.9      | 16.2     | 14.1    | 13.3    | 14.9      | 20.5         |
| 150% RDF            | 17.7                    | 16.2      | 16.0     | 13.7    | 12.4    | 14.4      | 19.9         |
| **CD (p = 0.05)**   | 0.33                    | 0.42      | 0.38     | 0.31    | 0.36    | 0.49      | 0.75         |
| **Post anthesis strategies** |                 |           |          |         |         |           |              |
| Control             | 18.4                    | 17.0      | 16.9     | 14.4    | 13.6    | 15.2      | 21.6         |
| Water sprayed       | 18.3                    | 16.9      | 16.6     | 14.2    | 13.4    | 15.0      | 20.7         |
| ZnSO₄.7H₂O (0.5%)   | 18.2                    | 16.6      | 16.3     | 14.0    | 13.3    | 14.8      | 20.3         |
| Thiourea (10mM)     | 18.3                    | 16.7      | 16.4     | 14.0    | 13.1    | 14.7      | 20.5         |
| **CD (p = 0.05)**   | NS                      | NS        | NS       | NS      | NS      | NS        | 1.08         |

3.1.1. Plant canopy temperature under varied temperature regime, nitrogen level and post-anthesis strategies.

The data on canopy temperature during afternoon (1430 hrs) for the different phenological stages under different thermal regimes, nitrogen levels and post-anthesis strategies are presented in Table 1.

Among the thermal regimes, under October 30 sowing, crop experienced low temperature during later stages of growth than November 15 and November 30 sowing during both years. Initially crop sown on October 30 experienced higher temperature than November 15 and November 30 sowing but this temperature favours the growth and development of the crop although the crops sown late sometimes experienced lower temperature during crop germination which ultimately affect the crop stand. Stephens and Lyons (1998) also suggested that the sowing dates in terms of changed temperatures are critical for determining appropriate crop yields. As soon as crop progress towards maturity, the October 30 sown crop did not experienced higher temperature which otherwise effect the grain development and reduced the yield due to appearance of high temperature stress during this stage but delay sown crop suffer from high temperature stress during grain development phases which ultimately shorten the duration of grain filling. Ray and Ahmed (2015) also reported that the cool canopy during grain filling period in early sown wheat is an important physiological principle for heat stress tolerance. Singh et al. (2006) also found that, with the increase in temperature (maximum and minimum) during grain filling period, all the yield components of wheat were reduced in mean values ranging from 5 to 10%.

Among nitrogen levels, average canopy temperature was lower in 150% RDF followed by 125% RDF and RDF due to good crop stand which help to bring down the temperature of the canopy under 150% RDF during both the years as shown in Table 1. Garg et al. (2014) also reported that with the increase in N dose has lowered the canopy temperature, indicating a better canopy thermal environment under higher N application. They suggested that canopy was significantly cooler with
180 kg N ha\(^{-1}\) application than 60 Kg N ha\(^{-1}\) while 120 kg N ha\(^{-1}\) made no significant impact.

Among post anthesis strategies, the data revealed that significantly lower canopy temperature was observed in ZnSO\(_4\).7H\(_2\)O (0.5%) followed by Thiourea (10 mM), water sprayed over Control when crop was sprayed at anthesis and regular intervals after anthesis during both the years. As crop progressed towards maturity after anthesis temperature starts increasing than normal required for proper grain development this leads to temperature stress and increased the canopy temperature. During this conditions, spraying the crop with water or stress alleviating chemicals such as urea, thiourea or ZnSO\(_4\) helps to bring the canopy temperature down than the unsprayed crop and help to reduce yield losses at this stage.

### 3.2. Stress degree days (SDD)

SDD concept is very useful in accounting for the yield variation due to heat and water stress conditions. SDD concept is based on the fact when the plant is fully turgid with internal moisture content, the plant leaves would have lower temperature than the air due to transpirational cooling. Therefore, the cumulative difference between leaf temperature and air temperature will be related stress period of the crop. SDD were calculated by summing the canopy-air-temperature difference over the entire growth period (Idso et al., 1977).

The data pertaining to SDD under different thermal regimes, nitrogen levels and post anthesis strategies for Rabi 2013-14 and 2014-15 have been given in Table 2. The SDD differed significantly with thermal regimes, nitrogen levels and post anthesis strategies. The prevailing negative values of stress degree-days (SDD) in all the treatments indicated no stress evidenced by the crop in both growing seasons (Table 2). The canopy temperature was cooler (-322.8 °C/day) under October 30 sown crop followed by November 15 (-291.7 °C/day) and November 30 (-235.1 °C/day) sown crop at maturity during Rabi season 2013-14. During Rabi 2014-15, canopy temperature was cooler (-349.6 °C/day) under October 30 sown crop followed by November 15 (-316.8 °C/day) and November 30 (-273.7 °C/day) sown crop. Higher the negative SDD values under October 30 as compared to November 15 and November 30 reflect that canopy temperature is cooler which means that crop is healthy and without any stress.

Among the nitrogen level, canopy temperature was cooler (-325.1 °C/day) in 150% RDF treatment followed by 125% RDF (-277.9 °C/day) and RDF treatment

| TABLE 2                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Accumulated stress degree days (SDD) under different thermal regimes, nitrogen levels and post anthesis strategies in wheat |
| **Treatment**      | **Stress degree days (°C/day)** | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------|---------|
| **Temperature regimes**                           |                                 |         |         |
| October 30         | -322.8                          | -349.6  |         |
| November 15        | -291.7                          | -316.8  |         |
| November 30        | -235.1                          | -273.7  |         |
| CD (p = 0.05)      | 29.3                            | 20.7    |         |
| **Nitrogen levels**                         |                                 |         |         |
| RDF                | -246.5                          | -275.3  |         |
| 125% RDF           | -277.9                          | -319.4  |         |
| 150% RDF           | -325.1                          | -353.3  |         |
| CD (p = 0.05)      | 17.2                            | 17.1    |         |
| **Post- anthesis strategies**                     |                                 |         |         |
| Control            | -233.0                          | -272.7  |         |
| Water sprayed      | -281.5                          | -311.1  |         |
| ZnSO\(_4\).7H\(_2\)O (0.5%) | -312.3                      | -347.3  |         |
| Thiourea (10 mM)   | -290.0                          | -319.5  |         |
| CD (p = 0.05)      | 17.8                            | 15.9    |         |

Among the post-anthesis strategies, the significant difference in canopy temperature (-312.3 °C/day) was recorded under ZnSO\(_4\).7H\(_2\)O (0.5%) followed by Thiourea (10 mM) (-290.0 °C/day), water sprayed (-281.5 °C/day) over control (-233.0 °C/day) during Rabi season 2013-14. During Rabi season 2014-15, the significant difference in canopy temperature (-347.3 °C/day) was recorded under ZnSO\(_4\).7H\(_2\)O (0.5%) followed by Thiourea (10 mM) (-319.5 °C/day), water sprayed (-311.1 °C/day) over control (-272.7 °C/day) treatment. Canopy temperature gets lower by spraying the crop with water or any stress alleviating chemicals such as urea, thiourea or ZnSO\(_4\) etc. Canopy temperature was cooler under ZnSO\(_4\).7H\(_2\)O (0.5%) treatment followed by thiourea (10 mM), water sprayed over control treatment.
3.3. Relationship of canopy temperature based indices with the grain yield

3.3.1. Relationship of canopy temperature with the grain yield

A significantly negative linear regression relationship has been observed between the grain yield and canopy temperature under different thermal regimes, nitrogen levels and post anthesis strategies during Rabi 2013-14 and 2014-15 [Figs. 1(a&b)]. The regression relationship indicated 1.5 and 1.7 q/ha decrease in wheat yield with 1 °C increase in canopy temperature during 2013-14 and 2014-15 respectively. The coefficient of determination explained 56.5% variability in the grain yield due to canopy temperature during 2013-14 and 62.9% in 2014-15. The higher canopy temperature means that stress was experienced by the crop which declined the yield. Similar negative and significant relationships of grain yield with canopy temperature were also reported by Smith et al. 1985 and Singh et al. (1991) and reported that with increase in the canopy temperature, grain yield decreased.

3.3.2. Relationship of stress degree days with the grain yield

The index based on canopy temperature taken throughout the growing season of the crop, stress degree days (SDD) were calculated which described the relationship of stress period on the grain yield. More negative the value of SDD that indicated the crop is without stress. Grain yield and SDD also have good relation which explains around 61.3% yield variability during Rabi season 2013-14 and 65.3% variability in grain yield due to SDD during Rabi season 2014-15 as shown in Figs. 2(a&b).

4. Conclusions

Canopy temperature detection can be considered as an effective tool for stress management in wheat because higher canopy temperature than air temperature was observed when crop undergone the period of stress. Canopy temperature was lower under early sown crop as compared to late sown because crop undergoes high temperature stress during late sown conditions. Increase the dose of nitrogenous fertilizers provides the better canopy thermal environment than others. After detecting the heat stress in crop during anthesis, spraying the crop simply with water or any of the stress alleviating chemical as ZnSO$_4$·7H$_2$O or Thiourea, serve as adaptive strategy to this stress period and save the yield loss of crop to some extent. The relationship analysis also showed that grain yield was significantly, negatively and linearly related with canopy temperature as well as stress degree days (SDD).
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