Effect of Micronutrient Application on Growth and Yield of Kharif Onion (Allium cepa L.)

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ABSTRACT

Onion is one of the most important bulb crop grown all over the world. Onion belongs to family “Amaryllidaceae” and locally known as Pyaj. The experiment was carried out during Kharif season of 2016-2017 at Tirhut College of Agriculture Dholi experimental farm, Dholi (Muzaffarpur), a campus of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa (Samastipur), Bihar. The experiment was laid out in RBD (Randomized Block Design) with ten treatments and three replication. The crop was planted in a plot (size 3m × 2m) at a spacing of 15 cm × 10 cm. The observations recorded on at 30, 45 and 60 DAT of plant height and number of leaves per plant, average weight of bulb per plant, A grade bulb, B grade bulb, marketable bulb yield, marketable bulb percentage, total bulb yield was recorded. In treatment T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50kg/ha). The maximum polar and equatorial diameter was recorded in treatment T₆ (NPKS + soil application of Borax @ 15 kg/ha). The lowest collar thickness at 30, 45 and 60 DAT, neck thickness, doubler bulbs, bolters and C grade bulb was found in treatment T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50kg/ha). Results were found to be significant in most of the growth and yield contributing parameters of Kharif onion.

Keywords
Onion, RDF, ZnSO₄, FeSO₄, Borax, Growth and yield

Accepted: 07 February 2018
Available Online: 10 March 2018

Introduction

Onion (Allium cepa L.) is a versatile food source due to its unique flavour and odour. It adds taste to many dishes in the form of vegetables as well as spice. It’s the unique ingredient of the dishes common among rich to the poor man’s meal. Onion is rich in sulphur containing compounds that are responsible for pungent odour with health promoting effects. It contains anti-inflammatory, anti-cholesterol, anti-cancer and anti-oxidant components, such as quercetin. Onion belongs to family “Amaryllidaceae” and locally known as Pyaj. It is old world crop and it was domesticated in Iran and Pakistan i.e. Central Asia. This crop can be grown in wide range of Agro-climate condition. Irrespective of prices, the demand remain almost constant in the market as it is primarily, used as seasoning for a wide variety of dishes in almost every home, widely consumed as salad as culinary purpose for flavouring as spice in pickles and sauce. The green leaves, immature and mature bulbs are eaten raw or used in vegetable preparations. Nutritive value of onion varies variety to variety, small size onions are more nutritive...
than big size, and its major value is flavour. Onion ranks medium in calories low in protein and very low in Vitamins. Onion accounts for 70 percent of our total foreign exchange earnings from the export of fresh vegetables. Now a day’s government of India has declared Onion as an essential commodity.

Micronutrients are equally important like major nutrients for crop growth. The developments are used in smaller quantities. The micronutrients required by plants are iron (Fe), manganese (Mn), zinc (Zn), copper (Cu), boron (B), molybdenum (Mo), chlorine (Cl) and nickel (Ni). The availability of these nutrients in soil depends on the soil and the environment. For example, cool weather and wet soil conditions reduce the availability of Zn, resulting in a Zn deficiency. Micronutrient availability (except Mo) generally decreases as soil pH increases. Availability of Zn, Mn and Cu declines rapidly as soil pH rises; in sandy soils micronutrient deficiencies are more than clay soils.

Micronutrients also help to increase the efficiency of macronutrients. Unfortunately micronutrients have received less attention in fertilizer management research, development and extension. Growers should carefully follow recommendations for micronutrients to avoid unnecessary costs and possible toxic effects or deleterious interactions with other nutrients. Selection of an effective application method depends on the micronutrient need, local soil conditions, and the stage of crop growth, growing season at which a deficiency is detected. Fertilizers can increase yield and quality of crop produce. Looking at the importance of micronutrient application in onion to increase its yield, an experiment was planned and conducted on “Effect of Micronutrient Application on Growth and Yield of Kharif Onion (Allium Cepa L.) during kharif onion production in calcareous soil of North Bihar”.

Materials and Methods

The experiment was carried out during Kharif season of 2016-2017 at Tirhut College of Agriculture Dholi kothi farm, Dholi (Muzaffarpur), a campus of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa (Samastipur), Bihar. The experiment was laid out in a RBD (Randomized Block Design) with ten treatments and three replication. The crop was planted in a plot (size 3m × 2m) at a spacing of 15 cm × 10 cm. Before fertilizer application, random soil samples were taken from the experimental field and were analysed.

The experimental field soil is sandy loam with alkaline pH 8.40, low in soil organic carbon (0.46%), electrical conductivity (0.36 ds m⁻¹), available nitrogen (226 kg/ha), available phosphorus (16.09 kg/ha), potash (115.60 kg/ha), available boron (0.26 ppm) and zinc (0.84 ppm) and iron (9.06 ppm). The soil is deficient in available boron. Hence the soil application and foliar application of micronutrient at 30 and 45 DAT as zinc sulphate for zinc, borax for boron and ferrous sulphate for iron was used as experimental material.

The treatments includes T₁(NPKS), T₂ (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 25 kg/ha), T₃ (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha), T₄ (NPKS+ foliar application of ZnSO₄ @ 0.5% at 30 and 45 DAT), T₅ (NPKS+ soil application of Borax @ 10 kg/ha), T₆ (NPKS+ soil application of Borax @ 15 kg/ha), T₇ (NPKS+ foliar application of Borax @ 0.25 % at 30 and 45 DAT), T₈ (NPKS+ soil application of FeSO₄ @ 25 kg/ha), T₉ (NPKS+ soil application of FeSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha), T₁₀ (NPKS+ foliar application of FeSO₄ @ 1% at 30 and 45 DAT) replicated thrice in a RBD. Five plants were selected from each plot randomly as a unit for observation on growth aspect and yield attributes.
**Results and Discussion**

Growth parameters include plant height (cm), number of leaves/plant and collar thickness (cm) is observations recorded at 30, 45 and 60 DAT.

**Plant height**

The application of micronutrient on plant height of onion was recorded significant effect at 30 and 45 DAT over control. No significant differences were detected on plant height at 60 DAT. The highest plant height 39.60 cm, 48.20 cm and 52.60 cm were recorded with T3 (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4 @ 50 kg/ha) at all the three stages of data recorded and minimum plant height 27.00 cm, 32.47 cm and 1.80 cm with T1 (control). These finding are in agreement with the finding of Manna and Maity (2016) and Aske et al., (2017) in Onion crop. Zinc as an essential catalyst in the synthesis of auxin from tryptophan would have encouraged auxin biosynthesis in the active sinks which would have led to higher transport and accumulation of photosynthates in foliage (Table 1).

**Number of leaves per plant**

There was significant effect of micronutrient application on number of leaves/plant which varied from 3.23 to 5.13, 3.87 to 5.80 and 5.50 to 7.60 at 30, 45 and 60 DAT, respectively. The highest number of leaves/plant (5.13) was recorded in treatment T3 (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4 @ 50 kg/ha) at 30 DAT followed by treatment T2 (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4 @ 25 kg/ha) whereas lowest no. of leaves/plant 3.23 at 30 DAT was noted in treatment T1 (control). At 45 DAT the highest number of leaves/plant (5.80) was recorded in treatment T3 (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4 @ 50 kg/ha) followed by treatment T2 (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4 @ 25 kg/ha) while lowest number of leaves/plant (3.87) at 45 DAT was recorded in treatment T1 (control). The maximum number of leaves/plant (7.60) was found in treatment T3 (NPKS+ Soil application of ZnSO4 @ 50 kg/ha) at 60 DAT followed by treatment T2 (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4 @ 25 kg/ha) whereas minimum number of leaves/plant (5.50) at 60 DAT was noted in treatment T1 (control). Similar result was reported by Paul et al., (2007), Shukla et al., (2015) and Acharya et al., (2015) in Onion crop. This may be because of better growth and development of foliage under higher balanced nutritive environment.

**Collar thickness (cm)**

The significant effects of micronutrient application on collar thickness were measured. Collar thickness ranges from 0.20 to 0.44 cm, 0.37 to 0.78 cm and 1.03 to 1.72 cm at 30, 45 and 60 DAT, respectively. The minimum collar thickness at 30, 45 and 60 days after transplanting were recorded with T3(NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4 @ 50 kg/ha) and maximum collar thickness 0.44 cm, 0.78 cm and 1.72 cm with control respectively.

Yield parameter includes neck thickness (cm), polar diameter (cm), equatorial diameter (cm), A grade bulb (%), B grade bulb (%), average bulb weight C grade bulb (%), Bolters (%), Doubles (%), marketable bulb (%), marketable bulb yield (t/ha) and total bulb yield (%) were also recorded.

**Neck thickness (cm)**

The effect of micronutrient on neck thickness also had significant effect and significantly low neck thickness was (1.43 cm) recorded with T3 (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4@ 50 kg/ha) followed by T2 (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO4 @ 25 kg/ha).The highest neck thickness (1.95 cm) was recorded in treatment T1 (control) (Table 2).
### Table 1: Effect of micronutrient application on plant height, no. of leaves and collar thickness of *Kharif* onion

| Treat. Symb. | Plant height (cm) | No. of leaves per plant | Collar thickness (cm) |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
|              | 30DAT | 45DAT | 60DAT | 30DAT | 45DAT | 60DAT | 30DAT | 45DAT | 60DAT |
| T<sub>1</sub> | 27.00 | 32.47 | 41.80 | 3.23 | 3.87 | 5.50 | 0.44 | 0.78 | 1.72 |
| T<sub>2</sub> | 36.40 | 46.73 | 51.33 | 4.93 | 5.67 | 7.20 | 0.26 | 0.55 | 1.05 |
| T<sub>3</sub> | 39.60 | 48.20 | 52.60 | 5.13 | 5.80 | 7.60 | 0.20 | 0.37 | 1.03 |
| T<sub>4</sub> | 32.20 | 39.07 | 48.47 | 4.00 | 5.03 | 6.20 | 0.41 | 0.71 | 1.38 |
| T<sub>5</sub> | 34.87 | 43.67 | 50.33 | 4.53 | 5.53 | 6.67 | 0.32 | 0.58 | 1.08 |
| T<sub>6</sub> | 35.80 | 45.87 | 51.07 | 4.73 | 5.60 | 7.07 | 0.27 | 0.57 | 1.07 |
| T<sub>7</sub> | 31.27 | 38.87 | 48.27 | 3.97 | 4.87 | 6.00 | 0.41 | 0.76 | 1.43 |
| T<sub>8</sub> | 33.73 | 41.73 | 49.13 | 4.33 | 5.20 | 6.37 | 0.36 | 0.61 | 1.37 |
| T<sub>9</sub> | 33.87 | 42.77 | 51.07 | 4.47 | 5.33 | 7.40 | 0.43 | 0.60 | 1.36 |
| T<sub>10</sub> | 30.20 | 36.77 | 47.60 | 3.87 | 4.60 | 5.93 | 0.42 | 0.77 | 1.53 |
| S.Em± | 1.74 | 1.93 | 2.29 | 0.22 | 0.24 | 0.39 | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.06 |
| C.D. (P=0.05) | 5.21 | 5.77 | NS | 0.66 | 0.72 | 1.16 | 0.06 | 0.09 | 0.19 |

### Table 2: Effect of micronutrient on yield attribute of *Kharif* onion

| Treat. Symb. | Neck thickness (cm) | Polar diameter of bulb (cm) | Equatorial diameter of bulb (cm) | Bolters (%) | Doubles bulb (%) | Average weight of bulb (g) |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| T<sub>1</sub> | 1.95 | 2.40 | 2.24 | 3.67 | 2.67 | 148.11 |
| T<sub>2</sub> | 1.63 | 3.95 | 3.66 | 2.73 | 1.43 | 217.66 |
| T<sub>3</sub> | 1.43 | 3.99 | 3.74 | 2.17 | 1.02 | 233.33 |
| T<sub>4</sub> | 1.90 | 3.58 | 3.32 | 3.33 | 1.58 | 172.22 |
| T<sub>5</sub> | 1.70 | 4.04 | 3.76 | 2.91 | 1.45 | 181.11 |
| T<sub>6</sub> | 1.68 | 4.30 | 4.05 | 2.87 | 1.43 | 193.33 |
| T<sub>7</sub> | 1.92 | 3.66 | 3.38 | 3.37 | 2.25 | 170.55 |
| T<sub>8</sub> | 1.83 | 3.76 | 3.46 | 3.17 | 1.48 | 176.11 |
| T<sub>9</sub> | 1.72 | 3.83 | 3.55 | 3.00 | 1.47 | 179.22 |
| T<sub>10</sub> | 1.93 | 3.51 | 3.23 | 3.42 | 2.63 | 167.22 |
| S.Em± | 0.08 | 0.20 | 0.25 | 0.15 | 0.08 | 8.64 |
| C.D. (P=0.05) | 0.25 | 0.60 | 0.75 | 0.44 | 0.24 | 25.86 |
Table 3 Effect of micronutrient on marketable bulb yield of Kharif onion

| Treat. Symb. | A grade bulb (%) Diameter (<5.0 cm) | B grade bulb (%) Diameter (3.0 cm – 5.0 cm) | C grade bulb (%) Diameter (>3.0 cm) | Total bulb yield (t/ha) | Marketable Bulb yield (t/ha) | Marketable Bulb (%) |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| T1           | 25.17                               | 12.67                                       | 24.00                             | 17.17                  | 16.44                         | 51.92               |
| T2           | 52.33                               | 20.33                                       | 12.33                             | 23.94                  | 23.23                         | 80.08               |
| T3           | 53.75                               | 20.92                                       | 11.08                             | 24.61                  | 24.10                         | 89.67               |
| T4           | 37.67                               | 14.75                                       | 18.08                             | 18.83                  | 17.94                         | 63.92               |
| T5           | 43.27                               | 19.25                                       | 12.75                             | 18.94                  | 18.22                         | 71.35               |
| T6           | 47.00                               | 19.83                                       | 12.50                             | 20.11                  | 19.99                         | 72.12               |
| T7           | 37.53                               | 14.50                                       | 18.25                             | 18.00                  | 17.06                         | 56.75               |
| T8           | 37.83                               | 17.50                                       | 14.75                             | 18.61                  | 18.08                         | 64.08               |
| T9           | 38.00                               | 18.00                                       | 13.02                             | 18.83                  | 18.05                         | 68.17               |
| T10          | 35.75                               | 14.42                                       | 23.50                             | 17.83                  | 17.00                         | 52.58               |
| S.Em±        | 1.89                                | 1.06                                        | 1.22                              | 1.54                   | 1.47                          | 4.70                |
| C.D (P=0.05) | 5.67                                | 3.18                                        | 3.66                              | 4.60                   | 4.40                          | 14.07               |

In rapport of this result the following workers have also reported the same trend in respective onion crops Mukesh Kumar et al., (1998), Shrinath (2004) on onion. The application of zinc might have reduced the moisture content and reduced the bulb neck thickness.

Polar and equatorial diameter (cm)

The application of micronutrient shows significant effect on the bulb polar diameter and equatorial diameter in kharif onion. Polar diameter of bulb ranging from 2.40 cm to 4.30 cm and maximum with T6 (NPKS+ soil application of Borax @ 15 kg/ha) and minimum with T1 (Control). The same trend has recorded in case of equatorial diameter of bulb also. The range was 2.24 cm to 4.05 cm. minimum was with T1 (Control) and maximum with T6 (NPKS+ soil application of Borax @ 15 kg/ha). Similar results were also reported by Smiriti et al., (2002), Tohamy et al., (2009), Alam et al., (2010), Shukla et al., (2015), Aske et al., (2017) in onion. This may be due to the micronutrient application especially boron which enhances the enzyme activity which in turn trigger the physiological processes like protein and carbohydrate metabolism in plants.

Bolter bulbs (per cent)

Significant differences were also recorded for bolter bulbs and lowest percentage of bolter bulbs (2.17 per cent) was recorded with treatment T3 (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha and maximum bolter bulb (3.67 per cent) recorded in treatment T1 (Control). However, all the treatments of micronutrients were found superior over control except T4, T7 and T10. Shrinath, B.M (2004) also has reported the similar results.

Doubler bulbs (per cent)

Significantly low percentage of doubler bulbs were recorded in all treatments except T₁₀ as
compared to control T₁. Minimum doubler bulb (1.02 per cent) was recorded in treatment T₃ (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha) and maximum doubler bulb (2.67 per cent) was found in treatment T₁ (Control). Shrinath (2004) have also reported in onion crop.

Average weight of bulb (g)

Application of micronutrients had positive significant effect on average bulb weight as compared to T₁ (control). The maximum bulb weight (233.33 g) was recorded with T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha) which was statistically at par with T₂ (NPKS+ soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 25 kg/ha), while minimum bulb weight (148.11 g) was recorded in treatment T₁ (control). However, all the treatments of micronutrients were found superior over control, except T₄, T₇ and T₁₀. The present results corroborate with Paul et al., (2007), Abedin et al., (2012), Trivedi and Dhumal (2013), Manna et al., (2014), Karthik (2015) and Manna and Maity (2016) in onion crop. They have reported that zinc rapidly increases the photosynthetic activity and translocation of photosynthates for growing onion bulbs and it influenced the bulb weight positively.

‘A’ grade bulb (per cent)

‘A’ grade bulb differed significantly due to different treatments. The highest ‘A’ grade bulb (53.75 per cent) was recorded in treatment T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha) which was statistically at par with T₂ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 25 kg/ha) and T₆ (NPKS + soil application of Borax @ 15 kg/ha) whereas lowest A grade bulb (25.17 per cent) found in treatment T₁ (Control). However, all the treatments were found significantly superior over control. Lal et al., (2002), Trivedi and Dhumal (2013), Manna (2013) and Karthik (2015) also has reported the similar results. This might be due to the influence of zinc on the photosynthesis, which might induce more starch and sugar production.

‘B’ grade bulb (per cent)

Treatments have significant effect on ‘B’ grade bulb. The highest B grade bulb (20.58 per cent) was recorded in treatment T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha) followed by T₂ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 25 kg/ha) while lowest B grade bulb (12.67 per cent) were recorded in treatment T₁ (Control). However, all the treatments of micronutrients were found superior over control except T₄, T₇ and T₁₀. Similar results have been reported by Lal et al., (2002), Trivedi and Dhumal (2013), Manna (2013) and Karthik (2015). This might be due to the influence of zinc on the photosynthesis, which might induce more starch and sugar production under balanced fertilizer application.

‘C’ grade bulb (per cent)

In case of ‘C’ grade bulb significant differences were recorded due to different treatment. The lowest C grade bulb (9.08 per cent) was recorded in treatment T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha) whereas highest C grade bulb (24.0 per cent) was recorded in treatment T₁ (Control). Similar result was reported by Shrinath (2004) and Manna (2013).

Marketable bulb (per cent)

The treatment T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha) recorded maximum marketable bulb (89.67 per cent) and recorded at par with treatment T₂ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 25 kg/ha). The lowest marketable bulb (51.92 per cent) was recorded in T₁ (Control).
Marketable bulb yield (t/ha)

Marketable bulb yield varied from 16.44 to 24.10 t/ha. T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha) gave maximum marketable bulb yield (24.10 t/ha) which was at par to T₂ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 25 kg/ha) and T₆ (NPKS + soil application of Borax @ 15 kg/ha) and these were significantly superior over control (16.44 t/ha). The result related to marketable yield with the finding of Mukesh et al., (2000), Khan et al., (2007), Dake et al., (2011), Manna et al., (2014), Manna and Maity (2016) and Aske et al., (2017) in onion (Table 3).

Total bulb yield (t/ha)

Maximum total bulb yield (24.61 t/ha) recorded with T₃ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50 kg/ha) which is statistically at par with treatment T₂ (NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 25 kg/ha) and T₆ (NPKS + soil application of Borax @ 15 kg/ha) while lowest bulb yield (15.83 t/ha) was recorded with T₁ (control). These finding are in agreement with the finding of Gamelli (2000), El-Shafie and El-Gamaily (2002), Alam et al., (2010), Ballabh and Rana (2012), Manna et al., (2014) and Manna and Maity (2016) in onion. They reported that zinc rapidly increases the photosynthetic activity and translocation of photosynthates to growing onion bulbs, so that it influenced the bulb weight positively.

Analysis of variance revealed highly significant difference among the treatments for all the characters studied except plant height at 60 DAT.

Maximum plant height, number of leaves per plant, average weight of bulb/plant, A grade bulb, B grade bulb, total bulb yield, marketable bulb yield, marketable bulb was recorded in NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50kg/ha. Minimum collar thickness, neck thickness, bolters, doubler bulb and C grade bulb was recorded in NPKS + soil application of ZnSO₄ @ 50kg/ha. Maximum polar and equatorial diameter was observed in NPKS + soil application of Borax @ 15 kg/ha.

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How to cite this article:

Pankaj Kumar Maurya, Lal Mani Yadav, Ghanshyam Thakur and Pushpam Patel. 2018. Effect of Micronutrient Application on Growth and Yield of Kharif Onion (Allium cepa L.). Int.J.Curr.Microbiol.App.Sci. 7(03): 601-608. doi: https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcmas.2018.703.071