

Research Article

## Evaluation of polyhalite on growth, yield attributes and yield of blackgram (*Vigna mungo* L.)

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### Abstract

Potassium is involved in a diverse range of processes within plants that are needed for their growth, yield and better quality. The polyhalite as a hydrated evaporate mineral that can be used directly as a source of potassic fertilizer. However, research on polyhalite's appropriateness and effectiveness, the present investigation aimed to evaluate the effect of polyhalite on growth, yield attributes, and yield of blackgram variety ADT 5 at Chinnakandiankuppam village, Vriddhachalam, Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, during 2021. The experiment was laid out in randomized block design consisting of ten treatments viz., T<sub>1</sub> (absolute control), T<sub>2</sub> (-K), T<sub>3</sub> (12.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as muriate of potash (MOP)), T<sub>4</sub> (25 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as MOP), T<sub>5</sub> (37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as MOP), T<sub>6</sub> (50 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as MOP), T<sub>7</sub> (12.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite), T<sub>8</sub> (25 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite), T<sub>9</sub> (37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite), T<sub>10</sub> (50 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite). The experiment revealed that the application of 37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite (T<sub>9</sub>) significantly (5%) enhanced the growth attributes (plant height (38.7 cm), number of branches plant<sup>-1</sup> (12.97), leaf area index (2.13), number of nodules plant<sup>-1</sup> (18.76) and dry matter production (1972 hg ha<sup>-1</sup>), yield attributes (pod length (8.21 cm), number of pods plant<sup>-1</sup> (20.05), number of seeds pod<sup>-1</sup> (7.14) and test weight (3.53 g)) and grain yield (1439 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>), haulm yield (1876 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) of blackgram. Thus the study would be helpful to farmers for yield maximization of blackgram through polyhalite as potassic fertilizer.

**Keywords:** Blackgram, Growth, Muriate of potash, Polyhalite, Yield

### INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world, pulses are edible fruits and seeds of pod-bearing plants from the Leguminosae family. Their protein content ranges from 20 - 40%. Due to their low cost, pulses are often thought of as "poor man's meat". Though pulse crops are very popular in

the developing world, there is a massive gap in productivity. The total world acreage under pulses is about 85.4 million hectares, with a production of 87.4 million tonnes at 1023 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> yield level. In India, pulses are cultivated under an area of 287.83 lakh hectares with a production of 254.63 lakh tonnes and a productivity of 885 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>. The total area under pulses in Tamil Nadu

is 8.03 lakh hectares with a production of 4.72 lakh tonnes and productivity of 588 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> (DES, Ministry of Agriculture & FW (DAC & FW), Govt. of India (2021). The improved cultivars and modern production techniques, pulses productivity can also be doubled (Pankaj and Dewangan, 2017). The blackgram (*Vigna mungo* L.) is known as the king of pulses and is widely grown in tropical and sub-tropical regions. In India, blackgram is also known as "Urd" and "Mash". (Kumar *et al.*, 2018). Globally, blackgram covers 23.48 million hectares with a production level of 653.07 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>. India's average of total area under blackgram is around 41.43 lakh hectares with a production of 22.30 lakh tonnes and productivity of 538 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>. In Tamil Nadu, blackgram is cultivated in 4.02 lakh hectares with a production of 2.25 lakh tonnes and average productivity of 559 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> (DES, Ministry of Agriculture & FW (DAC & FW), Govt. of India (2021). As fertility management plays a vital role in increasing the seed yield in pulse crops, it is among the most important factors that limit crop production on exhausted soils (Chandrasekhar and Bangarusamy, 2003).

In many developing countries, including India, potassium application has been neglected, leading to soil K depletion in agricultural ecosystems and crop yield declines. Plants require potassium for proper development. Polyhalite has been explored in North Yorkshire in the United Kingdom as an alternate potassium source (Kemp *et al.*, 2016). Polyhalite, a sulphur mineral in evaporate deposits (K<sub>2</sub>Ca<sub>2</sub>Mg(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>4</sub> · 2H<sub>2</sub>O), often occurs with anhydrite and halite. The composition of polyhalite is 19.2% sulphate, 14% potassium sulphate, 3.6% magnesium sulphate, and 11.6% calcium sulphate. Due to its low chloride content, it can be used on crops sensitive to chloride. Potassium was the first nutrient identified in polyhalite. The main cation in plant tissue is potassium, one of the most abundant plant nutrients (Nieves-Cordones *et al.*, 2016). Calcium and magnesium are also contained in polyhalite, but are less common. The fourth major nutrient for plant growth is sulphur, an essential but neglected nutrient (Yermiyahu *et al.*, 2017). The blackgram has a demand for potassium for higher growth and yield. To keep the above facts in mind, a present study was designed to investigate the effects of increasing rates of polyhalite on growth parameters, yield parameters and yield of black gram variety ADT 5.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

An experiment was conducted at Chinnakandiyankuppam near Vriddhachalam in the Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu. It is located at 11°52' N latitude and 79°33'E longitude, it is 45 meters above mean sea level. It belongs to the northern agroclimatic zone of Tamil

Nadu. At Chinnakandiyankuppam, the average annual rainfall is 1204.1 millimetres. There is a mean maximum temperature fluctuation of 35 to 38°C with a mean temperature of 36.5°C, while the mean minimum temperature fluctuates from 23 to 25°C with a mean temperature of 24°C. There is a mean relative humidity of 67.5% with the highest being 73% during October and the lowest being 62% during September. In this study, three replications and ten treatments were assigned in a randomized block design *viz.*, T<sub>1</sub> (absolute control), T<sub>2</sub> (K-control), T<sub>3</sub> (12.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as muriate of potash (MOP)), T<sub>4</sub> (25 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as MOP), T<sub>5</sub> (37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as MOP), T<sub>6</sub> (50 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as MOP), T<sub>7</sub> (12.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite), T<sub>8</sub> (25 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite), T<sub>9</sub> (37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite), T<sub>10</sub> (50 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite). Recommended doses of nitrogen (25 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) and phosphorus (50 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) were uniformly applied to all the treatments. The soils of Chinnakandiyankuppam village were found to contain soil separates of 77.1, 14.3 and 5.9 % sand, silt and clay, respectively. The soils were classified under the textural class loamy sand (Typic Ustropepts). An initial soil sample had the pH, electrical conductivity (Jackson, 1973), and cation exchange capacity (neutral normal ammonium acetate method by Piper, 1966) of 7.56, 0.24 dS m<sup>-1</sup>, 13.57 C mol (p+) kg<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. Organic carbon content of the soil (Chromic acid wet digestion method by Walkley and Black, 1934) was 0.48 g kg<sup>-1</sup>. Available N (Alkaline permanganate method by Subbiah and Asija, 1956), available P (Ascorbic acid blue method by Watanabe and Olsen, 1965) and available K (Neutral normal ammonium acetate extraction by Stanford and English 1949) of the soil was 196.3 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>, 16.1 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>, 194.1 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. The available sulphur (Turbidimetric method by Chesnin and Yien, 1951) was 13.89 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> and the exchangeable calcium and magnesium (Versenate method by Jackson, 1973) were 5.78 C mol (p+) kg<sup>-1</sup> and 2.49 C mol (p+) kg<sup>-1</sup> respectively.

Black gram variety ADT-5 was selected for sowing. The sowing was done at a spacing 30 × 10 cm. Whenever necessary, gaps were filled in to maintain plant populations. Hand hoes were used for weeding. Two hoeings were done, the first on 15 DAS and the second on 30 DAS. Plant protection measures were taken based on the needs of the plants. For each plot, the entire plants were pulled and bundled separately. Plants were then bundled and dried under the sun. Dry weight was measured at 14 per cent moisture level after the grains were cleaned, dried, and weighed. Grain and haulm yields were measured plot-by-plot and expressed as kg ha<sup>-1</sup>. The data pertaining to growth, yield attributes and yield were analyzed statistically by AGRES software to interpret the results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Growth characters

A graded dose of potassium was applied through either muriate of potash or polyhalite and showed significant benefits over K- control and absolute control for blackgram growth. Blackgram exhibited increased growth characteristics when potassium was applied through in the form of MOP (T<sub>3</sub>, T<sub>4</sub>, T<sub>5</sub> and T<sub>6</sub>) and polyhalite (T<sub>7</sub>, T<sub>8</sub>, T<sub>9</sub> and T<sub>10</sub>) (Table 1). As compared with other treatments, polyhalite (T<sub>9</sub>) with 37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> coupled with recommended doses of N and P significantly (5%) increased blackgram plant height (38.7 cm), leaf area index (2.13), number of branches plant<sup>-1</sup> (12.97), number of nodules plant<sup>-1</sup> (18.76) and dry matter production (1972 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) among various growth characteristics. A higher potassium application increased the chlorophyll content of the blackgram. As the result of applying 50 kg of K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite (T<sub>10</sub>) recorded highest chlorophyll content (47.27 SPAD reading at 45 DAS) and it was on par with muriate of potash application (T<sub>6</sub>). The lowest growth characteristics were found in absolute control (T<sub>1</sub>). A significant increase in growth characteristics was observed when potassium as polyhalite was applied instead of muriate of potash. It showed higher growth characteristics when fertilized with polyhalite. Blackgram developed much faster when treated with polyhalite fertilizers, and calcium, magnesium, and sulphur were supplied to enhance its growth and development. Zhao *et al.* (2020) stated that the application of polyhalite fertilizers, polysulphate at budding and MegaPoly at fruit enlargement, demonstrated remarkable potential to enhance kiwi fruit yield. The potassium treatment through polyhalite enhanced yield and quality of kiwi fruit over all other treatments. According to

Navitha *et al.* (2019), the application of potassium as polyhalite significantly increased plant height, number of branches, stem girth, clusters and fruits, number of flowers, fruit weight and yield of tomato as compared to muriate of potash and control. Among the treatments, application of 125 per cent soil test-based potassium through polyhalite surpassed all the other treatments in terms of growth and yield parameters.

### Yield attributes

Application of potassium through muriate of potash or polyhalite resulted in a significant increase in yield attributes of black gram over (-K) control and absolute control (Table 2). The highest values for yield attributes like pod length (8.21 cm), number of pods plant<sup>-1</sup> (20.05), number of seeds pod<sup>-1</sup> (7.14) and test weight (3.53 g) were recorded with the application of 37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite (T<sub>9</sub>). However, the application of potassium either through muriate of potash or polyhalite at 37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> was significantly superior to application of potassium at 12.5, 25 and 50 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> applied either through muriate of potash or polyhalite. Absolute control (T<sub>1</sub>) recorded the lowest yield attributes. A potassium application in favourable physiological soil conditions has resulted in accelerated rooting, higher LAI, and increased pre- and postflowering photosynthesis and yield attributes. By fertilizing with polyhalite, yields are increased, grain characteristics were improved, yield parameters are improved, and plants grow taller and healthier. In addition, Rosa *et al.* (2020) reported that a single application of potashplus, a granular blend of polyhalite supplies all potassium and sulphur requirements and muriate of potash supply potassium on soybean crop, it is significantly faster than single superphosphate and therefore increases the pro-

**Table 1.** Effect of different levels of muriate of potash and polyhalite on growth characters of blackgram

Treatments	Plant height (cm)	Number of branches plant <sup>-1</sup>	Leaf Area Index (LAI)	Chlorophyll content (SPAD reading)	No. of nodules plant <sup>-1</sup>	DMP (kg ha <sup>-1</sup> ) at 45 DAS
T <sub>1</sub> - Absolute control	24.4	7.91	1.59	30.77	9.42	1132
T <sub>2</sub> * - Control (-K)	26.7	8.45	1.65	32.82	10.49	1392
T <sub>3</sub> * - 12.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	28.1	9.01	1.71	34.74	11.61	1484
T <sub>4</sub> * - 25 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	30.5	10.12	1.83	38.66	13.77	1642
T <sub>5</sub> * - 37.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	37.3	12.37	2.07	42.52	17.64	1912
T <sub>6</sub> * - 50 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	33.2	11.25	1.95	46.36	15.76	1792
T <sub>7</sub> * - 12.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	29.3	9.55	1.77	36.71	12.69	1569
T <sub>8</sub> * - 25 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	31.7	10.68	1.89	40.59	14.89	1714
T <sub>9</sub> * - 37.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	38.7	12.97	2.13	43.45	18.76	1972
T <sub>10</sub> * - 50 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	35.9	11.82	2.01	47.27	16.68	1852
S.E <sub>d</sub>	0.50	0.22	0.03	0.69	0.20	28.5
C.D (0.05)	1.06	0.47	0.06	1.46	0.43	59.6

\* RDF (N and P) common for all treatments

**Table 2.** Effect of different levels of muriate of potash and polyhalite on yield attributes of blackgram

Treatments	Pod length (cm)	No. of pods plant <sup>-1</sup>	No. of seeds pod <sup>-1</sup>	Test weight (g)
T <sub>1</sub> - Absolute control	6.49	15.58	5.39	2.78
T <sub>2</sub> * - Control (-K)	6.67	16.10	5.60	3.10
T <sub>3</sub> * - 12.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	6.86	16.50	5.79	3.25
T <sub>4</sub> * - 25 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	7.24	17.54	6.18	3.33
T <sub>5</sub> * - 37.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	8.01	19.44	6.94	3.49
T <sub>6</sub> * - 50 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	7.63	18.54	6.56	3.41
T <sub>7</sub> * - 12.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	7.05	17.02	5.99	3.29
T <sub>8</sub> * - 25 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	7.44	18.09	6.36	3.37
T <sub>9</sub> * - 37.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	8.21	20.05	7.14	3.53
T <sub>10</sub> * - 50 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	7.82	19.04	6.75	3.45
S.E <sub>d</sub>	0.08	0.15	0.08	0.02
C.D (0.05)	0.17	0.31	0.17	0.04

\* RDF (N and P) common for all treatments

portion of areas sown on time, leading to higher yield potential compared with other fertilizers tried. Yi *et al.* (2021) found that applying potassium through polyhalite along with nitrogen and phosphorus enhanced fruit yield and showed better quality in pepper.. The potassium application through polyhalite significantly enhanced the yield attributes of blackgram than application of muriate of potash.

#### Grain yield and haulm yield (kg ha<sup>-1</sup>)

The yield of blackgram was significantly enhanced by application of graded doses of potassium applied through muriate of potash and polyhalite over control (K) and absolute control (Table 3). Using 37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O

ha<sup>-1</sup> through polyhalite (T<sub>9</sub>) produced maximum grain yields of 1439 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> and haulm yields of 1876 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>. Regardless, potassium applied through either muriate of potash or polyhalite at 37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> was significantly superior to potassium applied through either muriate of potash or polyhalite at 12.5, 25 and 50 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup>. Grain yield and haulm yield were lowest in absolute control (T<sub>1</sub>). Through more balanced mineral nutrition of blackgram, application of potassium as polyhalite responded with significant increases in grain yield. It is because plants have an increasing need for potassium in their biochemistry and physiology, and that in at least 60 enzyme systems within them, potassium is essential for processes like photosynthesis, water relationships,

**Table 3.** Effect of different levels of muriate of potash and polyhalite on yield (kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) of blackgram

Treatments	Grain yield (kg ha <sup>-1</sup> )	Haulm yield (kg ha <sup>-1</sup> )
T <sub>1</sub> - Absolute control	775	1205
T <sub>2</sub> * - Control (-K)	923	1303
T <sub>3</sub> * - 12.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	1010	1376
T <sub>4</sub> * - 25 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	1150	1532
T <sub>5</sub> * - 37.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	1381	1817
T <sub>6</sub> * - 50 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as MOP	1265	1695
T <sub>7</sub> * - 12.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	1086	1453
T <sub>8</sub> * - 25 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	1210	1611
T <sub>9</sub> * - 37.5 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	1439	1876
T <sub>10</sub> * - 50 kg of K <sub>2</sub> O ha <sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite	1325	1755
S.E <sub>d</sub>	20.96	27.78
C.D (0.05)	44.37	58.8

\* RDF (N and P) common for all treatments

protein synthesis, and photosynthesis. Increasing potassium doses up to 60 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> significantly increased the grain yield and stover yield of pigeon pea and mustard crop reported by Tiwari *et al.* (2012). Garnett (2021) reported that replacing muriate of potash with polyhalite was a clear increase of tuber yield under high polyhalite rates and potential of polyhalite fertilizers to enhance crop performance and quality through more balanced mineral nutrition. In addition, Tien *et al.* (2021) found that application of polyhalite, in combination with muriate of potash, polyhalite significantly enhances crop performance and consequently leads to a substantial increase in total and marketable yields from 33 to 47 per cent and also indicates the advantage of polyhalite as a supplemental fertilizer contributing potassium as well as other essential macronutrients. In this way, the polyhalite performed significantly than muriate of potash and increased the yield of blackgram.

## Conclusion

In the present study, the application of 37.5 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> as polyhalite along with recommended doses of N and P resulted in significant increases in plant height, number of branches per plant, dry matter yield, leaf area index, pod length, pod number, 100 seed weight, seed yield, and haulm yield among various treatments. The present study indicated that compared to the usual fertilizer practices of local farmers, polyhalite treatments increased growth attributes, yield attributes, and yield of black gram in loamy sand soil. Thus, the potassium as polyhalite was beneficial in enhancing and sustaining blackgram growth and its yield.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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