

EFFECTS OF SOIL MOISTURE REGIMES, PLANTING DENSITY AND
INTERCROPPING ON GROWTH AND YIELD OF SELECTED SOYBEAN
CULTIVARS IN KENYA



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ABSTRACT

Soybean [*Glycine max* (L) Merrill] yields in Kenya range from 445-1200 kg ha⁻¹ against potential yields of 3500 kg ha⁻¹. The low yields are attributed to soil moisture stress and use of poor agronomic practices. The objectives of the study were to determine effect of soil moisture regimes on CO₂ assimilation, growth and yield of selected soybean cultivars; to determine effect of planting density on yield and yield components of soybean and to determine effect of soybean and maize intercropping on stomata conductance, shoot characteristics and yield of soybean. A greenhouse moisture stress study was laid out in a randomized complete block design (RCBD) in a 6 by 4 factorial treatment arrangement and was replicated three times. Soil moisture regimes (80, 60, 40 and 20% of field capacity) and cultivars (Gazelle, Nyala, EAI 3600, DPSB 8, Hill and DPSB 19) were first and second factors, respectively. Field moisture stress study used RCBD in a split plot arrangement with three replicates. Moisture regimes (100, 75, 50 and 25% of soybean crop water requirement) and cultivars (as in experiment 1) were main plot and sub plot factors, respectively. The third experiment evaluated effects of planting density on yield and yield components of soybean using a 5 by 2 factorial arrangement in RCBD. Planting densities (10, 12, 20, 40 and 80 plants per m²) and cultivars (EAI 3600 and DPSB 19) were first and second factors respectively. The fourth experiment determined effect of soybean and maize intercropping on stomata conductance, shoot characteristics and yield of soybean. The experiment was conducted using RCBD with 3 replicates. Soil moisture stress significantly ($p < 0.001$) reduced soybean shoot and root growth of all tested cultivars. Leaf relative water content, stomata conductance, photosynthetic rate and sub-stomatal CO₂ levels significantly ($p < 0.001$) declined with increasing soil moisture stress. Cultivar DPSB 19 had higher stomata conductance but reduced transpiration rate at lower soil moisture levels. Highest number of nodules per plant were attained at 10 plants m⁻² which was 34.76% more than number of nodules obtained at 80 plants m⁻². Soil moisture depletion at 80 plants m⁻² was 15.22% higher than at the lowest plant population of 10 plants m⁻². Intercropping maize and soybean significantly ($p < 0.01$) reduced soybean leaf area, IPAR, stomatal conductance and photosynthetic rate. Intercropping reduced soybean yield by 80.72% though 1M:1S row pattern gave relatively higher soybean yields than other intercropping patterns. Soybean cultivar DPSB 19 is recommended for production under soil moisture stress conditions while planting soybean at 20 plants m⁻² is recommended for optimum soybean yields. Planting maize and soybean in 1M:1S row pattern should be used when intercropping the two crops.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION	ii
COPYRIGHT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF PLATES	xxii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xxiii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background information	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	2
1.3 Objectives.....	3
1.3.1 Main objective	3
1.3.2 Specific objectives	3
1.4 Hypotheses	4
1.5 Justification of the study	4
1.6 Scope and limitation of the study	5
References	6
CHAPTER TWO	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 General description of soybean.....	9
2.2 Nature of resource competition in soybean.....	9
2.3 Water use and effects of soil moisture stress on soybean	10
2.4 Physiological and morphological responses of soybean under moisture stress	11
2.5 Planting density and crop production.....	11
2.6 Intercropping and agricultural production: principles and systems	12
2.7 Effects of soil moisture, planting density and intercropping on biological nitrogen fixation	13

2.8 Assessment of intercropping productivity	13
2.9 Benefits and limitations of intercropping.....	14
REFERENCES	16
CHAPTER THREE.....	21
EFFECT OF SOIL MOISTURE REGIMES ON CARBON DIOXIDE ASSIMILATION, GROWTH AND YIELD OF SELECTED SOYBEAN CULTIVARS UNDER GREENHOUSE CONDITIONS	21
Abstract	21
3.1 Introduction	22
3.1.1 Effect of soil moisture stress on shoot and root growth attributes	23
3.1.2 Effect of soil moisture stress on leaf area, leaf expansion rate and specific leaf mass	24
3.1.3 Effect of soil moisture stress on leaf relative water content.....	25
3.1.4 Effect of soil moisture stress on leaf chlorophyll content	25
3.1.5 Effect of soil moisture stress on leaf gas exchange	26
3.1.6 Effect of soil moisture stress on yield components, yield and grain quality	27
3.2 <u>Materials and methods</u>	28
3.2.1 Site description	28
3.2.2 Determination of water at field capacity	29
3.2.3 Experimental design and treatments.....	29
3.2.4 Planting and crop management.....	30
3.2.5 Data collection.....	30
3.3 Statistical model and data analysis.....	35
3.4 Results	36
3.4.1 Effect of soil moisture regimes and soybean cultivars on shoot growth	36
3.4.2 Effect of soil moisture regimes and soybean cultivars on plant water status	51
3.4.3 Effect of soil moisture regimes and soybean cultivars on chlorophyll content and leaf gas exchange.....	52
3.4.4 Effect of soil moisture regimes and soybean cultivars on root growth of soybean.....	63
3.4.5. Effect of soil moisture regimes and soybean cultivars on dry matter partitioning.....	71
3.4.6 Effect of soil moisture regimes on reproductive growth	73

3.4.7 Effect of soil moisture regimes and soybean cultivars on yield components and yield	75
3.4.8. Effect of soil moisture regimes on grain quality	86
3.5 Discussion	87
REFERENCES	94
CHAPTER FOUR.....	100
EFFECT OF SOIL MOISTURE REGIMES ON CARBON DIOXIDE ASSIMILATION, GROWTH AND YIELD OF SELECTED SOYBEAN CULTIVARS UNDER FIELD CONDITIONS	100
Abstract	100
4.1 Introduction	100
4.1.1 Effect of soil moisture stress on shoot growth	102
4.1.2 Effect of soil moisture stress on reproductive growth	102
4.1.3 Effect of soil moisture stress on leaf gaseous exchange	102
4.1.4 Effect of soil moisture stress on yield and yield components	103
4.2 Materials and methods	104
4.2.1 Site description	104
4.2.2 Experimental design and treatments	104
4.2.3 Planting and crop management.....	105
4.2.4 Determination of crop water requirement and irrigation frequency	105
4.2.5 Data collection.....	106
4.3 Statistical analysis.....	107
4.4 Results	109
4.4.1 Effect of soil moisture regimes, cultivars and seasons on shoot growth.....	109
4.4.2 Effect of soil moisture regimes, cultivars and seasons on physiological characteristics	118
4.4.3. Effect of soil moisture regimes and cultivars on reproductive growth.....	130
4.4.4. Effect of soil moisture regimes, cultivars and seasons on yield, yield components and grain quality	131
4.5 Discussion	139
REFERENCES	144
CHAPTER FIVE	151

EFFECT OF PLANTING DENSITY ON YIELD AND YIELD COMPONENTS OF SOYBEAN	151
Abstract	151
5.1 Introduction	151
5.1.1 Effect of planting density on shoot growth and root nodulation	152
5.1.2 Effect of planting density on chlorophyll content and leaf gas exchange	153
5.1.3 Effect of plant density on soil moisture status.....	154
5.1.4 Effect of planting density on reproductive growth.....	154
5.1.5 Effect of planting density on yield components and yield	155
5.2 Materials and methods	156
5.2.1 Site description	156
5.2.2 Experimental design and treatments.....	156
5.2.3 Planting and crop management.....	157
5.2.4 Data collection.....	157
5.3 Statistical model and data analysis	158
5.4. Results	159
5.4.1. Effect of plant density on shoot growth.....	159
5.4.2 Effect of plant density on leaf chlorophyll content and leaf gas exchange	165
5.4.3 Effect of plant density on soil moisture content	171
5.4.4 Effect of plant density on root nodulation	172
5.4.5. Effect of plant density on reproductive growth	173
5.4.6 Effect of plant density on soybean lodging	174
5.5 Discussion	179
REFERENCES	184
CHAPTER SIX	189
EFFECT OF SOYBEAN AND MAIZE INTERCROPPING ON STOMATA CONDUCTANCE, SHOOT CHARACTERISTICS AND YIELD OF SOYBEAN.....	189
Abstract	189
6.1 Introduction	189
6.1.1 Effect of intercropping on shoot growth and root nodulation	191
6.1.2 Effect of intercropping on leaf gas exchange and chlorophyll content	192
6.1.3 Effect of intercropping on soil moisture status.....	193

6.1.4 Effect of intercropping on reproductive development, grain yield and intercropping productivity.....	193
6.2 Materials and methods	194
6.2.1 Site description	194
6.2.2 Experimental design and treatments.....	195
6.2.3 Planting and crop management.....	195
6.2.4 Data collection.....	196
6.3 Statistical model and data analysis	198
6.4 Results	200
6.4.1 Effect of maize-soybean intercropping on shoot growth.....	200
6.4.2 Effect of maize-soybean intercropping on intercepted photosynthetically active radiation (IPAR)	210
6.4.3 Effect of maize-soybean intercropping on soybean gas exchange	211
6.4.4 Effect of maize-soybean intercropping on soybean reproductive growth.....	215
6.4.6 Effect of maize-soybean intercropping on soybean root nodulation.....	217
6.4.7. Effect of maize and soybean intercropping on soil moisture content.....	218
6.4.8 Effect of maize-soybean intercropping on soybean lodging	219
6.4.9 Effect of maize-soybean intercropping on soybean yield and grain quality	220
6.4.10 Effect of maize and soybean intercropping on intercropping productivity	227
6.5 Discussion	228
REFERENCES	235
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	241
GENERAL DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	241