

Impact of Different Rates and Split Application of NPK Fertilizer on Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa Willd.*) In Sandy Soil

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Abstract: A Two –year study was carried out at Ismailia Experimental Research Station, Agricultural Research Center (ARC), Ismailia Governorate, Egypt, during 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 seasons. This is to investigate the impact of different rates of NPK fertilizer and splitting on quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa Willd.*) yield and its components. Twelve treatments were the combination of three rates of NPK fertilizer (100:75:100), (150:100:150) and (200:150:200) kg/fed. They were applied in four splitting doses as follows: two equal doses (at 25 and 50 days after sowing [DAS]), three equal doses at 25, 40 and 52 DAS, four equal doses at 25, 40, 52 and 64 DAS, five equal doses at 25, 40, 52, 64 and 76 DAS. in sandy soil, under sprinkler irrigation system. A split plot design, with three replications, was used. Results indicated that the growth of quinoa plants progressively increased with increasing NPK fertilizer. In addition, the superiority of the number of branches per plant, grain yield per plant, grain yield/fed, straw yield and biological yield were achieved when NPK was applied at (150:113:150) rate and splitting in four doses. The maximum plant height was observed at the highest NPK rate in the combination (200:150:200) kg/fed and splitting in four doses. Grain content of N, P, K and protein were higher in the NPK fertilizer rate (150:113:150), recording (1.66, 0.98, 2.16 and 10.39 %), respectively regardless of the number of doses applied. Meanwhile, splitting the rate to four doses application recorded (1.75, 1.14, 2.24 and 10.96), respectively. It can be recommended that applying NPK fertilizer at the rate of (150:113:150) in four equal doses after 25, 40, 52 and 64 DAS, gave the best result of quality and quantity of quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa Willd.*) plants in sandy soil.

Key words: NPK • Fertilizer rates • Split application • Quinoa • Crop • Chemical composition

INTRODUCTION

Cereals play an important role in human nutrition, contributing to the energy and protein intake. Wheat, barley, corn, sorghum and rice are the most important cereals worldwide. Other grains such as quinoa, amaranth and buckwheat are also an excellent source of energy and protein. They are also known for their high nutritional value of minerals [1].

Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa Willd.*), member of *Chenopodiaceae* family, is a seed crop that has been cultivated for thousands of years in the Andean region for its nutritious grains and leaves [2]. It belongs to the group of crops known as pseudo cereal [3, 4] which includes other domesticated chenopods, such as amaranths and buckwheat. It is gluten-free and contains high quality protein. That is why it can play an important

role in the diet of people suffering from celiac [5, 6]. The importance of these proteins is based on their quality, with a balanced composition of essential amino acids similar to the composition of casein (the protein of milk). The Organization of the United Nations for Food and Agriculture [7] has declared the year 2013 as the year of quinoa [8]. Quinoa has been selected by the FAO as one of the crops destined to offer food security in the next century. It can be successfully grown in marginal soils showing its very low nutrient requirements [9].

Fertilizers of N, P and K are very important for the growth of quinoa and for the improvement of its production. According to [10], while quinoa's requirement for nitrogen (N) and calcium (Ca) is high, its need for phosphorous (P) and potassium (K) is moderate and minimal. Moreover, [11] observed that quinoa's response to N is highly notable. Etchevers and Avila, [12] noted

that high levels of phosphorus and potash did not increase the seed yield of quinoa while increasing its vegetative growth. Gandaillas [13] on the other hand, observed that quinoa shows no response to both potassium and phosphorus.

Despite the fact that quinoa shows strong response to N fertilizer, Oelke *et al.* [14] reported that if the levels of the available nitrogen are high, the yield of quinoa would decrease. This is because of slow maturity and intense lodging as he noted. The same conclusion concerning the side effects of N fertilizer – applied, however, to wheat was reached by [15]. They noticed that despite the importance of nitrogen for increasing wheat yield, it is not really that satisfactory efficient as the nitrogen applied is subjected to different forms of losses (runoff, ammonia, volatilization, leaching and denitrification). They even added that high levels of N fertilizer causes pollution for the environment. In order, however, to reduce such loss in the applied nitrogen and increase its efficiency, many researchers such as, [16-18] noted the importance of splitting and timing of N applications. They explained that the time elapsed between the application of N and crop uptake defines the length of exposure of fertilizer N to loss process.

However, [19, 11] observed that the yield of quinoa does not decrease with the increase of N fertilizer rate. Along similar lines, [20] reported that the application of Nitrogen increases both the seed yield and the seed content of protein.

Jacobsen *et al.* [21] reported that the response of quinoa to the application of nitrogen fertilizer was noted in both the increase of the crop growth and its yield, as well as in the quality of the grain. The yield increased with the increasing nitrogen fertilization rate from 40 to 160 kg N ha⁻¹. He found an increase in yield (with an average of 12%) at 80 to 120 kg N ha⁻¹. Thanapornpoong [22] investigated the impact of different rates of nitrogen fertilization on various aspects of quinoa (as plant height, grain yield per plant, harvest index) and noted a positive effect of high levels of nitrogen on these aspects. Schultze *et al.* [11] observed that with the application of N fertilizer, quinoa achieved yield up to 350 kg ha⁻¹ at 120 kg N ha⁻¹ and grain yield boosted by 94%.

Razzaghi *et al.* [23] noticed that when N fertilizer is applied at 120 kg N ha⁻¹, nitrogen uptake by quinoa is 134 kg N ha⁻¹ in sandy clay loam and 77 kg N ha⁻¹ in sandy soil. This affected quinoa seeds yield of 3300 kg ha⁻¹ and 2300 kg ha⁻¹ respectively. Shams [24] investigated the response of quinoa to five nitrogen

fertilization levels (0, 90, 180, 270 and 360 kg ha⁻¹). He concluded that grain and biological yield progressively increased with increasing nitrogen levels up to the highest level. However, Basr *et al.* [25] found out that the soil application of N at 75 kg N ha⁻¹ achieved maximum economic harvest of quinoa.

There are many other researches on the impact of Nitrogen fertilization on the nutritional content of the seeds of quinoa. It is well-known that quinoa grain has higher contents of P and K mineral rather than wheat, barley or corn [26]. In effect, quinoa is a good source of protein and can be used as a nutritional ingredient in food products [27].

According to [28], N fertilization improved the process of photosynthesis in the leaves and played a great role in protein synthesis, cell structure and carbohydrate production. An increase in the crude protein content with the application of N fertilizer was observed by both [29, 30]. They noted that the application of 150 kg N ha⁻¹ to quinoa raised the quality of crude protein content 16% and achieved maximum seeds yield (2.95 ton ha⁻¹).

Hamid and Sarwar [31] observed that nitrogen application greatly increased protein content in grain wheat. They added that splitting nitrogen into six doses further increased the protein content over single or two split application. Salmina and Makarova [32] also reported that the application of 60 Kg N + 60 Kg P₂O₅ gave highest crude protein in grain [29]. noticed that the application of nitrogen and phosphorus increased crude protein and nutrients content in quinoa seeds.

The same positive relationship between nitrogen levels and nutritional content was observed in oat. Tripathi [33] also observed that the application of 90 Kg N+ 30 Kg P₂O₅ ha⁻¹ gave highest CP. Patel and Rajgopal [34] noted that the crude protein of oat yield was up to 75 Kg N and 60 Kg P₂O₅ ha⁻¹. According to [35] oat yield attributes, yield and quality parameters increased with nitrogen application but significant effect was found up to 120 kg N/ha. He added that inorganic sources (N: P₂O₅ @ 150:60) responded well for maximum crude protein of oat (10.76%). Finally, Jehangir *et al.* [36] observed that the fertility level of 150:70:40 (N: P₂O₅:K₂O kg ha⁻¹) significantly increased crude protein of oat content over 125:60:30 and 100:50:20 (N: P₂O₅:K₂O kg ha⁻¹).

It is true that many researchers have tackled the influence of nitrogen on quinoa, yet, the crop's requirement of N fertilizer is still studied. This may be due

to the diversity of environmental conditions in which quinoa is grown. Therefore, this investigation was performed to study the effect of NPK fertilizer rates, timing and splitting on the growth yield, yield components and some chemical composition of quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa Willd.*) plants under Ismailia Governorate environmental conditions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A field experiment was conducted in Ismailia Governorate for two successive seasons (2016/2017 and 2017/2018) at Agriculture Research Station in sandy soil.

The experiment was arranged in split plot design using three replicates. Each main plots included three fertilizer rates A₁(100: 75: 100), A₂(150:113:150) and A₃ (200:150:200) kg/fed. The sub plots were four splitting doses of each NPK rate (1st splitting was divided to two equal doses 50 and 50% at 25 and 55 days after sowing (DAS) B₁, 2nd splitting was divided to three equal doses at 25, 40 and 52 DAS) B₂, 3rd was divided to four equal doses at 25, 40, 52 and 64 days after sowing (DAS) B₃ and 4th splitting was divided to five equal doses at 25, 40, 52, 64 and 76 days after sowing (DAS) B₄. Nitrogen fertilizer was applied in the form of ammonium nitrate (33.5%), phosphorous fertilizer was applied in the form of Calcium super phosphate (15.5% P₂O₅) and Potassium fertilizer was applied in the form of Potassium sulphate (48% K₂O). Quinoa seeds variety Q26 was sown on 21st and 27th of November in first and second seasons, respectively. Experiment unit plot area was 12 m²square meter of 4 length and 3 width. the preceding crop was peanut in both seasons. Quinoa seeds were sown at a distance of 25 cm between plants spacing in rows of 60 cm apart at 3 cm depth and covered with sands. Then immediately irrigated using sprinkler irrigation system using 5- days irrigation

intervals during the first 45 DAP (days after planting). Then extend to 10-15 days interval till the end of seasons and before harvest. Quinoa plants were harvested on the 10th and 20th of April in the first and second seasons respectively.

Data Recorded

Grain Yield and its Components: Samples of ten plants were taken from each two inner rows of each sub plots and taken immediately to the laboratory to determine:

- Plants height (cm).
- Number of branches/plant.
- Grain Yield /plant (g).
- Grain yield (kg/fed).
- Straw yield (kg/fed).
- Biological yield (kg/fed.).

Chemical Analysis of Quinoa Grains

Determination of Nitrogen Contents: Total protein content was calculated from the nitrogen content using a conversion factor of 6.25 was used [37].

Determination of Phosphorus Contents: Phosphorus was determined using spectro photometer in an acid digest according to the method described by [38].

Determination of Potassium Contents: Potassium was flame metrically determined in the acid digest, where the method of [39] was followed.

Statistical Analysis: The estimated variables were statistically analyzed using ANOVA MSTATC Statistical Packing [40]. Using the Least Significant Differences (LSD) at 5% level [41].

Table 1: Mechanical and chemical analysis of the experimental soil

Clay %	Slit%			Sand%	Soil texture		
8.64	0			91.36	Sandy		
Macro nutrient							
PH	EC (dS/m)	OM%	CaC3 (%)	N (mg/Kg)	P (mg/Kg)	K (mg/Kg)	
8.45	0.20	0.15	0.64	10	18	84	
Soluble Cations (meq/L)				Soluble Anions (meq/L)			
K+	Na+	Mg++	Ca++	So4-	Cl-	HCO3-	CO3-
0.09	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.37	0.78	0.45	-

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Plant Height (cm): Data in Table (2) indicated that plant height increased by increasing (NPK) rates. At harvest time, it showed significant variation for different fertilizer doses. The result showed that the highest plant height (98.1-99.68 cm) was obtained from (200 -150 -200 NPK kg/ fed), in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively while the lowest plant height (91.93 - 95.85 cm) was recorded by the treatment (100 -75 -100 NPK kg fed⁻¹) in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively. The plant height increased linearly with each successive increase in NPK, which was attributed to the Nitrogen mainly. These results are in agreement with [42-44]. The highest plant height (98.17-103.37cm) was obtained in four split doses in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively, while the lowest value was obtained in two split application doses (89.57 – 92.36 cm) in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively.

The interaction between NPK rates and split application had a significant influence on plant height in both seasons. The highest plant height (105.46 -102.16) was obtained from (200 -150 -200) NPK kg/ fed with split doses in the 1st and 2nd seasons, respectively. The lowest plant height (85.33 -90.70) was obtained from (100 -75 -100) NPK kg/fed⁻¹ with two doses in the 1st and 2nd seasons.

Number of Branches per Plant: Number of branches plant⁻¹ at harvest are presented in Table 2. The data showed significant differences among different fertilizer doses and the highest branch number (13.67-18.59) was obtained from (150 -113 -150) NPK kg fed⁻¹. The lowest branch number (12.88 -17.93) was obtained from (200 -150 -200 NPK kg fed⁻¹) in the 1st and 2nd seasons. Splitting NPK fertilizer to four-split doses was not significant in the 1st and 2nd seasons.

The interaction between NPK rates and split application was significant. The highest branch number (14.94-19.36) was obtained from (150 -113 -150) NPK kg/ fed with split four doses in the 1st and 2nd seasons, respectively. The lowest branch number (11.90 -17.33) was obtained from (200 -150 -200) NPK kg/fed⁻¹ with split five doses in the 1st and 2nd seasons.

Grain Yield per Plant: Results in Table (2) show that the effect of NPK fertilizer rates on grain per plant was significant in both seasons. NPK rate (150-113-150) gave the highest grain yield per plant (30.0 – 38.79) in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively. The effect of NPK four doses split application recorded (30.23 - 40.86 g) in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively and it was highly significant than other treatments. The interaction between

NPK rates and split application had a significant influence in both seasons. The highest value of grain per plant (32.60 - 44.53) was obtained in NPK rates (150-113-150) with splitting NPK fertilizer to 4 doses in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively, compared with other treatments.

Grain Yield/Fed: Grain yield was significantly influenced by the treatment in both seasons as shown in Table (3). The greater significant grain yield (1065.38-1426.21 kg/fed) was recorded in treatment (150-113-150 kg/NPK) in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively. Higher grain yield (1085.65-1530.58 kg/fed) was obtained in four split doses in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively, compared with other treatments. The lowest value was obtained in two split application doses (929.16-1141.76). All interactions showed significant effect in both seasons for (150-113-150 kg/NPK) giving the highest grain yield (1180.84- 1628.90 kgfed⁻¹) in four split doses compared with other treatments. These results are supported by those obtained by [45, 18, 21].

Straw Yield: Results presented in Table (3) show that the effect of NPK fertilizer rates on straw yield was significant. NPK rate (150-113-150) gave the highest straw yield (178.53– 246.93) in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively. The effect of NPK four doses split application recorded (177.7- 272.0) in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively. The interaction between NPK rates and split application had a significant influence in this respect in both seasons. Similar results were obtained by [46, 47, 18].

Biological Yield: Data in Table (3) show that the maximum biological yield (1243.91-1673.13) was recorded by treatment NPK rate (150-113-150), while the treatment (100-75-100) gave the minimum biological yield (1137.34-1386.47) in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively. Higher grain yield (1263.39 -1762.1kg/fed) was obtained in four split doses in the 1st and 2nd seasons respectively, compared with other treatments. The interaction between NPK rates and split application had a significant influence in this respect in both seasons.

Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium and Protein Contents of Quinoa Grain: Data presented in Table (4) indicated that N concentration in the quinoa grain increased with increasing nitrogen fertilizer. The percentage of N, P and K significantly increased with increasing NPK fertilizer at (150: 113 :150) NPK kg /fed. The percentage was 1.66, 0.98 and 2.16 % respectively. It decreased, however, at (200: 150: 200) NPK kg /fed. The percentage was (1.55, 0.85 and 1.94%) respectively. Such reduction in grain quality

Table 2 Effect of different rates of NPK fertilizer and splitting doses on vegetative growth of quinoa plant during 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 seasons

Rates of NPK (A)			Fertilizer splitting (B)	Plant height (cm)		Number of branches/plant		Yield of grains/ plant (g)	
				1 st	2 nd	1 st	2 nd	1 st	2 nd
N	P	K							
A1 (100: 75: 100)			2	85.33	90.70	12.85	18.23	26.63	24.66
			3	93.26	96.70	14.38	18.46	28.56	37.93
			4	93.60	98.96	14.57	19.10	28.61	40.30
			5	95.53	97.03	12.75	18.50	26.93	26.66
Mean				91.93	95.85	13.64	18.57	27.7	32.39
A2 (150: 113: 150)			2	90.96	92.76	12.66	18.26	27.16	31.76
			3	93.16	93.76	13.42	18.23	31.35	43.73
			4	95.46	109.0	14.94	19.36	32.60	44.53
			5	92.86	99.13	13.56	18.50	28.96	35.16
Mean				93.11	98.66	13.67	18.59	30.0	38.79
A3 (200: 150: 200)			2	92.43	93.63	12.80	17.83	26.14	31.92
			3	94.50	99.60	13.09	18.63	28.66	36.76
			4	105.46	102.16	13.75	17.93	29.48	37.76
			5	99.93	101.23	11.90	17.33	27.73	33.30
Mean				98.10	99.68	12.88	17.93	28.00	34.94
Average of Fertilizer splitting (B)			(B1) 2	89.57	92.36	12.77	18.11	26.64	29.46
			(B2) 3	93.64	96.68	13.63	18.44	29.52	39.47
			(B3) 4	98.17	103.37	14.42	18.79	30.23	40.86
			(B4) 5	96.10	99.13	12.73	18.11	27.87	31.70
L.S.D. at 0.05			A	1.59	1.95	0.50	0.44	1.71	1.13
			B	1.76	1.86	N.S	N.S	0.98	1.91
			AB	3.1	3.22	2.0	1.81	1.71	3.24

Table 3: Effect of different rates of NPK fertilizer and splitting doses on quinoa yield, Straw yield and Biological yield during 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 seasons

Rates of NPK (A)			Fertilizer splitting (B)	Grain yield Kg/fed		Straw yield Kg/fed		Biological yield Kg/fed	
				1 ^s	2 nd	1 ^s	2 nd	1 ^s	2 nd
N	P	K							
A1 (100: 75: 100)			2	922.83	1059.10	155.66	165.8	1078.49	1224.9
			3	1019.82	1140.16	164.33	191.1	1184.15	1331.26
			4	1020.49	1387.0	167.06	272.7	1187.55	1659.7
			5	941.02	1064.23	158.16	265.8	1099.18	1330.03
Mean				976.04	1162.62	161.30	223.85	1137.34	1386.47
A2 (150: 113: 150)			2	944.23	1183.56	160.0	216.0	1104.23	1399.56
			3	1109.93	1575.83	187.33	267.9	1297.26	1843.73
			4	1180.84	1628.90	191.23	274.0	1372.07	1902.9
			5	1026.53	1316.53	175.56	229.8	1202.09	1546.33
Mean				1065.38	1426.21	178.53	246.93	1243.91	1673.13
A3 (200: 150: 200)			2	920.44	1182.63	153.03	205	1073.47	1387.63
			3	1028.36	1341.86	166.1	267.2	1194.46	1609.03
			4	1055.63	1498.66	174.94	269.3	1230.57	1767.96
			5	974.91	1195.86	163.5	185.2	1138.41	1381.06
Mean				994.83	1304.75	164.39	231.67	1159.22	1536.42
Average of Fertilizer splitting (B)			(B1) 2	929.16	1141.76	156.23	195.6	1085.39	1337.36
			(B2) 3	1052.70	1192.21	172.58	242.1	1225.29	1594.67
			(B3) 4	1085.65	1530.58	177.7	272.0	1263.39	1762.12
			(B4) 5	980.82	1326.89	165.74	226.9	1146.56	1433.87
L.S.D. at 0.05			A	68.28	57.47	9.89	10.9	77.77	87.40
			B	45.48	43.61	5.79	31.37	50.37	121.0
			AB	78.78	87.22	10.04	54.35	87.24	209.59

Table 4: Effect of NPK fertilizer different rates and splitting doses on chemical composition of quinoa grains (g/100g dry matter) average two seasons.

Rates of NPK (A)	Fertilizer splitting (B)	N%	Protein %	P%	K%
A1 (100: 75: 100)	2	1.69	10.56	1.23	1.77
	3	1.71	10.71	0.87	1.74
	4	1.73	10.79	0.90	2.24
	5	1.47	9.19	0.75	1.06
Mean		1.65	10.31	0.94	1.70
A2 (150: 113: 150)	2	1.70	10.63	0.79	2.06
	3	1.22	7.62	0.84	1.99
	4	1.88	11.76	0.87	2.5
	5	1.83	11.54	1.42	2.09
Mean		1.66	10.39	0.98	2.16
A3 (200: 150: 200)	2	1.39	8.88	1.05	2.08
	3	1.79	11.20	0.11	2.06
	4	1.65	10.33	1.66	1.99
	5	1.39	8.69	0.57	1.65
Mean		1.55	9.77	0.85	1.94
Average of Fertilizer splitting (B)	(B1) 2	1.59	10.02	1.02	1.97
	(B2) 3	1.57	9.84	0.61	1.93
	(B3) 4	1.75	10.96	1.14	2.24
	(B4) 5	1.56	9.80	0.91	1.60
L.S.D. at 0.05	A	0.006	0.08	1.49	0.34
	B	0.019	0.23	0.22	0.38
	AB	0.033	0.40	1.25	0.66

could be attributed to the fact that there is a negative relationship between the rate of nitrogen in the soil and its utilization by the grain. The higher the rate of nitrogen in the soil is, the lower its utilization is. This is in agreement with [48, 49]. In addition, the highest percentage of N, P and K was obtained at split 4 doses. It was as follows: N (1.75%), P (1.14%) and K (2.24%). These results were in agreement with [50]. Moreover, increasing the rate of nitrogen fertilizer added another advantage to its nutritive value as it enhances the concentration of P and K in the grain tissues of quinoa.

As for the content of crude protein in grain, the highest level was (10.39%). It was obtained at (150: 113: 150) NPK kg/fed. There was no significant difference between this treatment and the (100: 75: 100) NPK kg/fed treatment. The level obtained at this treatment was (10.31%). However, there was a significant difference between the (150: 113: 150) NPK kg/fed treatment and that of (200 : 150: 200) kg/fed.

In general, the grain content of N, P, K and protein was higher in four doses split application. It recorded (1.75, 1.14, 2.24 and 10.96%) respectively. The interaction between NPK rates and split application had a significant influence on macronutrients concentration in seeds in both seasons. These results were in agreement with several investigators [29-35] and [51-55].

CONCLUSION

Based on our two –year study to investigation the impact of different rates of NPK fertilizer and splitting on

quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa* Willd.) yield, its components and chemical composition, it can be concluded that applying NPK fertilizer at the rate of (150:113:150) in four equal doses after 25, 40, 52 and 64 DAS, gave the best result of quality and quantity of quinoa plants in sandy soil.

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