

Improving Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) Growth and Productivity Using Cobalt Application

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Abstract

A pot experiment was conducted for two successive seasons to evaluate the effect of cobalt on sunflower growth, yield and essential oil percent. Experiment was conducted at a cage house , National Research Centre , Dokki ,Giza .Egypt. Plastic pots 50 cm diameter of ten kg soil capacity were used. Sunflower seeds were sown at 7th and 9th March of during 2018 and 2019. Seedlings (at the third true leaf) were irrigated with cobalt, sulphate once, with different cobalt doses (7.5 , 10.0 , 12.5 , 15.0 , 17.5 , and 20.0 mgL⁻¹). All cobalt levels has a significant enhancing effect on plant growth, yield and essential oil contents. Cobalt at rate of 12.5 mgL⁻¹ resulted the greatest effect. As cobalt level in plant media increased more than 12.5 mgL⁻¹, the promotive effect was reduced. All levels of cobalt increased contents of (N, P and K) as well as (Mn, Zn and Cu) in seeds. As cobalt increased in plant media, cobalt content in sunflower seeds increased ,wherease Fe content was decreased.

Key words: Cobalt, Sunflower, Yield, Oil production.

Introduction

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus L.*) is one of the important oil crops worldwide (Aly *et al.*, 2021). It is ranked the 3rd in oil production after soybean and peanut (Thavaprakash *et al.*, 2003). Seeds of sunflower contains 39 to 46% oil (The Arab league for Nutrition Industries; 2007). This oil is rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, which makes it of cardiovascular and of heart health benefits (Aly *et al.*, 2021). In Egypt, this crop can be cultivated successfully in the newly reclaimed soils (Hamza and Safina, 2015) to lessen the gap of edible oil consumption, which accounted only for 5% of total oil demand (Bulletin of Statistical, Cost Production and Net Return, 2019). One of the important approaches to increase its productivity is via supplying plants with cobalt, which catalyzes the formation of oil in plant seeds from glucose (Watanabe, 2006; and Gad, 2010).

Cobalt (Co) is a beneficial element for higher plants (Young , 1983), and has a positive effect in plant metabolism (Akeel and Jahan, 2020). For example, its application enhanced chlorophyll synthesis and photosynthesis rate in peanuts (Angelove *et al.*, 1993), sugar beet growth and the sugar yield (Baureto and kagawa, 2001). It also increases plant height, root dry weights, leaf area index, dry matter accumulation in shoot pats (Waston *et al.*, 2001), stimulates tomato and cucumber growth and enhances their fruit yields (Lisnik and Toma, 2003). Co improves maize growth and its content of pigments (Jaleel *et al.*, 2008). It is essential for the synthesis of vitamin B₁₂ which is needed for human and animal nutrition (Tekin *et al.*, 2019 and Osman *et al.*, 2021). Enriching plants with Co may have dual benefits i.e.

increase crop yield and improve human health (Linhares *et al.*, 2019) the level of its application should be precise to avoid the negative impacts of high doses of Co on plant growth (Mahey *et al.*, 2020) and human health (Banerjee *et al.*, 2021). According to Gad (2010) spraying canola plants with 12.5 mg Co L⁻¹ was enough to attain the highest increase in canola growth, seed yield, oil yield and quality. Aziz *et al.*, (2013) found that the highest growth of sweet basil was recorded when spraying plants with 15 mg Co L⁻¹. In other plants, comparable concentrations of cobalt enhanced plant growth and productivity. In this concern, the highest increases in growth of rosemary, its herb yield, nutritional status and chemical constituents was observed when spraying plants with 10mg Co L⁻¹ (Gad *et al.*, 2014). tomato yield (Holah *et al.*, 2019) and potato (Gad and Ali, 2020).), The objective of this study is to evaluate the effect of different cobalt doses on sunflower productivity between edible oil production and consumption.

Materials and Methods:

Soil analysis:

Physical and chemical properties of surface soil samples (10-20cm) collected from Nubaria, Behaira, Governorate, Egypt as well as particle size distributions and soil moisture were determined as described by Klute(1986)and page *et al* (1982). Soil P^H, EC, cations and anions, organic matter, CaCO₃,total nitrogen and available P, K, Fe, Mn, Cu were run according to Black *et al.* (1982).Determinations of soluble, available and total cobalt were determined according to method described by Cottenie *et al.* (1982). The obtained data are shown in Table1

Table 1. Physical and chemical properties of soil of the experiment.

property	Value	property	Value
Soil pH*	8.5	Total-N, mg kg ⁻¹	151.0
EC, dS m ^{-1**}	1.7	Avail-P, mg kg ⁻¹	133.0
CaCO ₃ content, g kg ⁻¹	34.0	Avail-K, mg kg ⁻¹	44.9
Organic matter content, g kg ⁻¹	2.0	Avail-Fe, mg kg ⁻¹	4.5
Saturation percentage	32	Avail-Mn, mg kg ⁻¹	2.7
Particle size distribution		Avail-Zn, mg kg ⁻¹	4.5
Sand	70.8	Avail-Cu, mg kg ⁻¹	5.2
Silt	25.6	Total-Co, mg kg ⁻¹	9.9
Clay	3.6	Avail-Co, mg kg ⁻¹	4.9
Textural class	Sandy loam	Soluble-Co, mg kg ⁻¹	0.35

Soil pH* was determined in 1:2.5 soil:water suspension while the EC** was determined in soil paste extract

The experimental design :-

A pot experiment was conducted in a cage house at the National Research Centre , Dokki , Giza , Egypt during two successive summer seasons of 2018 and 2019 to study the effect of cobalt application on sunflower growth and productivity of sunflower yield (*Helianthus annuus*). In this experiment, acid washed plastic pots with 50 cm in both diameter and depth were filled with soil (approximately 10 kg per pot) and were planted with sunflower seeds (*helianthus annoys*), on 7th and 9th of March at a rate of 6 seeds per pot and two transplants were retained in each pot. All pots were irrigated using tap water at moisture content of soil field capacity (based on the weight) and repeated every two days.

N,P,K were applied : 330 mg N kg⁻¹ (as ammonium sulphate 205g N kg⁻¹) + 620mg P kg⁻¹ (as calcium superphosphate 55 g P kg⁻¹) + 318 mg K kg⁻¹ (as k-sulphate 480 g K kg⁻¹).

The experimental design was a randomized complete block .Treatments were seven as follows of

0.0 ,7.5 ,10.0, 12.5, 15.0 and 20 mg Co L⁻¹, respectively.

Statistical analysis:-

All data were subject to statistical analysis (Snedecor and Cochran 1982) .

Results and Discussions:-

Nutritional status

Nutrient contents in seeds were taken as indicators for the nutritional effect on plants. Application of Co increased its content in plant .Increases progressed with increasing applied Co as follows CO₂₀>CO_{17.5}>CO₁₅>CO_{12.5}>CO₁₀>CO_{7.5} Contents of NPK as well as Mn and Zn followed a progressive increase as follows CO₂₀>CO_{17.5}>CO₁₅>CO_{12.5}>CO₁₀>CO_{7.5}. There was no effect on Fe content . High levels of applied cobalt may have induced formation of lateral roots which supply plants with water and nutrients besides being supports for the grown plants (Hsu et al., 2013). Thus Co application smust have enhanced the transport of nutrients from soil (Sahay et al., 2013; Jayakumar et al., 2008; Banerjee and Roychoudhury, 2021).

Table 2. Minerals composition in Sunflower seeds as affected by cobalt under different application levels (Means of two seasons)

Application level of Co mgL ⁻¹	Macronutrients (%)			Micronutrients (mg L ⁻¹)				Cobalt (mg L ⁻¹)
	N	P	K	Mn	Zn	Cu	Fe	
control	1.17 d	0.66 f	1.72 e	30.27 c	31.8 a	57.67 a	140 a	0.89 g
7.5	1.22 cd	0.690 e	1.76 d	31.33 dc	32.4 cd	24.27 a	138 a	3.18 f
10	1.25 bc	0.72 d	1.93 c	32.23 b	33.4 bc	17.95 a	134 a	5.42 e
12.5	1.33 a	0.77 a	2.23 a	34.30 a	34.9 a	25.60 a	130 a	7.64 d
15	1.32 a	0.76 a	2.19 b	33.77 a	34.2 a	26.60 a	128 ab	9.24 c
17.5	1.30 ab	0.74 b	2.17 b	32.13 b	33.7 bc	29.17 a	126 ab	11.46 b
20	1.25 bc	0.72 d	1.95 c	31.43 d	32.7 cd	21.50 a	123 b	14.37 a

Similar letters indicate no significant difference among treatments

Application of Co up to 12.5 mg L⁻¹, stimulated nutrient uptakes must have contributed to the increase in plant growth and productivity. Such increases were more noticeable with increasing the

3.2. Vegetative growth parameters:-

Data presented in Fig. 1 show that the application of Co increased growth parameters such as plant height , leaves number per plant as well as

concentration of Co. Oil productivity increased by 1.33 folds owing to applying the 12.5 mg Co L⁻¹ . As applied cobalt increased, iron decreased, indicating an antagonistic relationship. fresh and dry weight of both shoots and roots plant . Cobalt at a rate of 12.5 mgL⁻¹ , resulted the highest effect. Application above 12.5 mg L⁻¹ caused no positive effect.

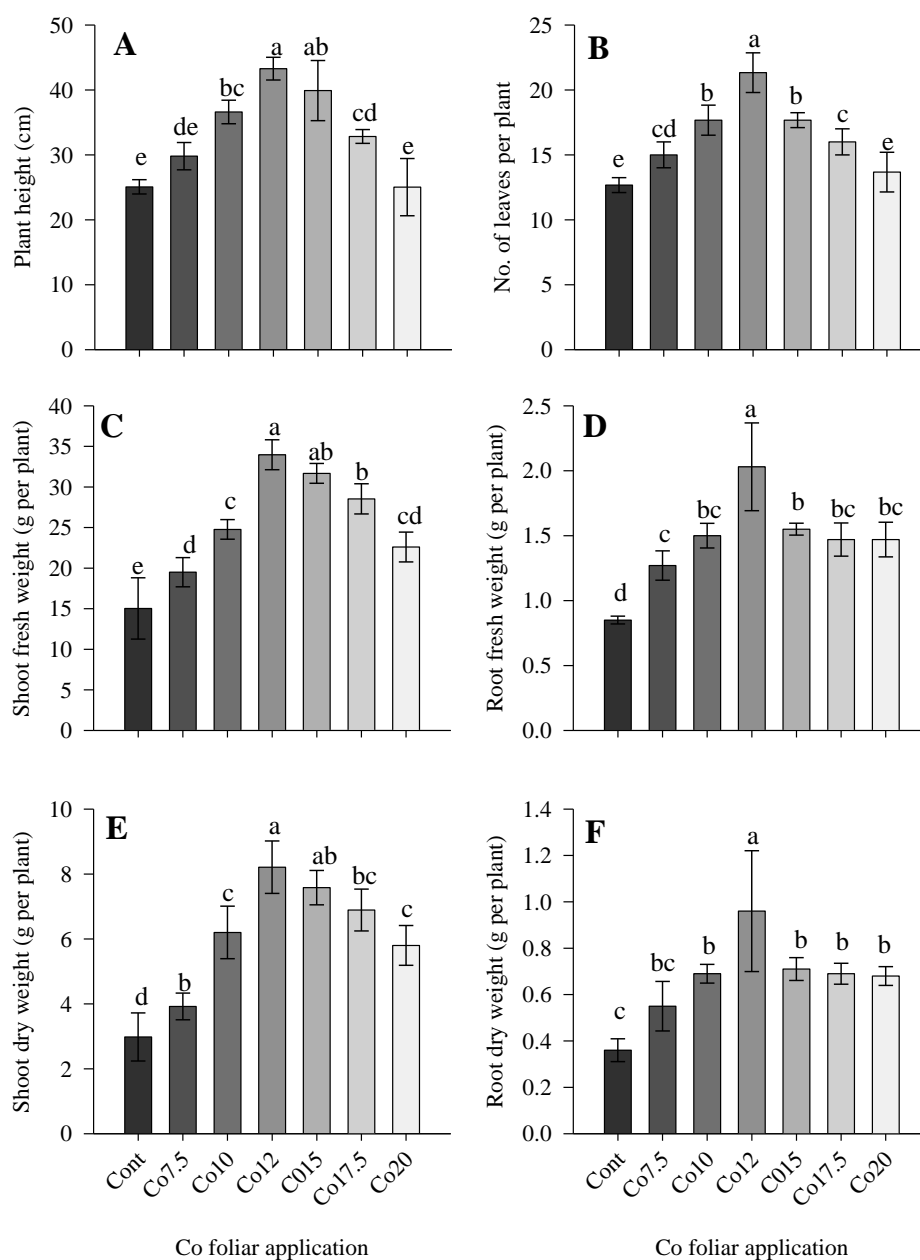


Fig. 1. Vegetative growth parameters of sunflower plants as affected by application of cobalt. (means of two seasons).

3.3. Yield characteristics :-

Data in Fig. 2 reveal that cobalt increased seed yield per plant and improved the quality traits of this yield (head diameter, head weight, 100-seed weight and the oil percentage in seeds). Cobalt at a rate of 12.5 mg/L^{-1} resulted the greatest values. Co simulative effect was noticed on soybean

(Jayakumar et al., 2009), chickpea (Rod et al., 2019), sugarcane (Silva et al., 2022) and cucumber (Brenji et al., 2022). This may be due to mediating polyamine metabolism (Javed and Anis., 2015). Helmy and Gad (2002) found that parsley plants with cobalt at a rate of 12.5 mg L^{-1} recorded the highest increase of essential oil.

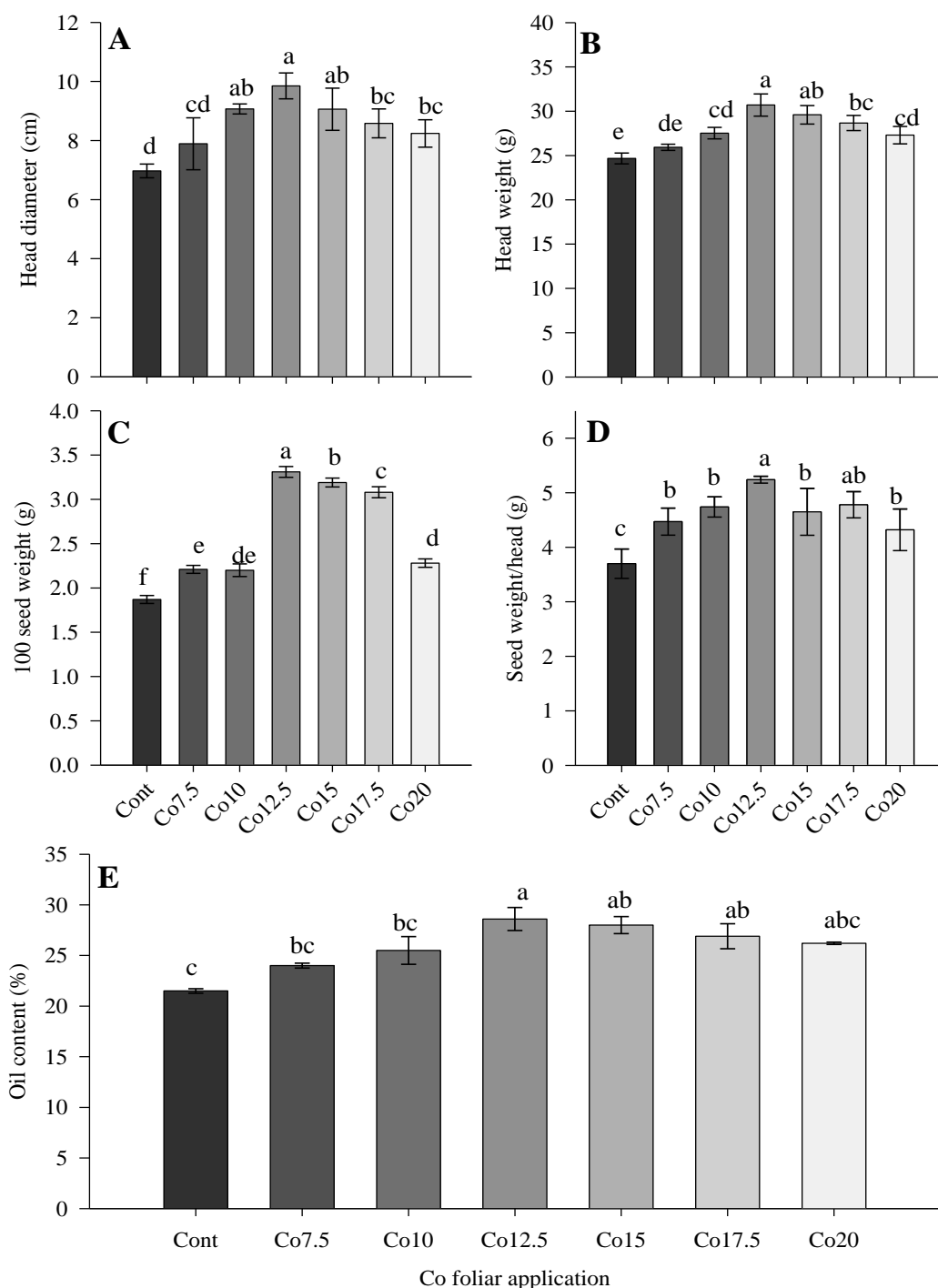


Fig. 2. Sunflower yield parameters as affected by application of cobalt. (Means of two seasons).

3.4. Pearson correlations

Results obtained in Table 3 indicate that all the investigated growth parameters (plant height, number of leaves per plant, the fresh and dry weights of both roots and shoots) and yield components (head diameter, its weight, 100 seed weight, seed weight per head and the oil percentage in seeds) were significantly correlated with the status of N, P, K,

Mn, Zn. Correlations between with either Co or Fe and the above mentioned growth parameters and yield components were not significant. Yield components of sunflower were correlated significantly with the plant growth parameters. Increasing cobalt level more than 12.5 mgL⁻¹, the beneficial effect was decreased.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between different growth parameters of sunflower plants, yield components and seed nutritional status as affected by Cobalt applications (Means of two seasons).

	Plant growth parameters					Yield and its components					Nutritional status in seeds							
	Plant height (Cm)	No of leaves per plant	Shoot fresh weight (g)	Shoot dry weight (g/plant)	Root fresh weight	Root dry weight (g)	Head diameter (Cm)	Head weight (g)	100 seed weight (g)	Seed weight per head (g)	Oil content (%)	N (%)	P (%)	K (%)	Mn Mg/L	Zn Mg/L	Cu Mg/L	Fe
Plant growth parameters																		
Plant height																		
No of leaves per plant	0.881**																	
Shoot fresh weight	0.849**	0.829**																
Shoot dry weight	0.794**	0.784**	0.970**															
Root fresh weight	0.757**	0.816**	0.856**	0.874**														
Root dry weight	0.708**	0.796**	0.837**	0.850**	0.966**													
Yield and its components																		
Head diameter	0.853**	0.819**	0.875**	0.882**	0.897**	0.851**												
Head weight	0.839**	0.785**	0.958**	0.956**	0.912**	0.881**	0.900**											
100 seed weight	0.761**	0.714**	0.920**	0.873**	0.748**	0.719**	0.722**	0.904**										
Seed weight per head	0.668**	0.832**	0.710**	0.692**	0.698**	0.634**	0.641**	0.656**	0.672**									
Oil content in seeds	0.541*	0.503*	0.623**	0.623**	.446*	0.495*	0.543*	0.603**	0.593**	0.638**								
Nutritional status in seeds																		
N	0.799**	0.734**	0.942**	0.919**	.849**	0.834**	0.898**	0.961**	0.875**	0.638**	0.572**							
P	0.805**	0.775**	0.962**	0.957**	.840**	0.800**	0.843**	0.945**	0.931**	0.616**	0.744**	0.903**						
K	0.729**	0.714**	0.944**	0.934**	.780**	0.765**	0.766**	0.926**	0.965**	0.645**	0.685**	0.892**	0.971**					
Mn	0.913**	0.876**	0.937**	0.903**	.848**	0.841**	0.884**	0.925**	0.846**	0.559**	0.667**	0.898**	0.895**	0.848**				
Zn	0.838**	0.779**	0.896**	0.856**	.785**	0.812**	0.831**	0.884**	0.804**	0.749**	0.576**	0.883**	0.842**	0.819**	0.898**			
Cu	0.233	-0.244	-0.392	-0.391	-.385	-0.357	-0.348	-0.325	-0.286	-0.185	-0.268	-0.369	-0.361	-0.312	-0.310	-	-	-
Fe	0.119	0.114	-0.027	-0.058	-.063	-0.112	0.036	-0.029	-0.012	0.129	-0.056	-0.012	-0.108	-0.122	-0.016	-	0.261	0.126
																		0.002

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Conclusion

Application of cobalt is promising in the newly reclaimed soils .It had a beneficial effect on sunflower growth, seed yield as well as oil content in seeds.

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تحسين نمو وانتاجية عباد الشمس باستخدام الكوبلت

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أجريت تجربتان أصص لتقييم تأثير الكوبلت على نمو محصول عباد الشمس والنسبة المئوية للزيوت الطيارة في بذرة عباد الشمس . تم زراعة بذور عباد الشمس في يوم 7 ، 9 مارس من الموسمين 2018 ، 2019 . وتم رى الشتلات ذات الثلاثة أوراق حقيقية بالكوبلت مرة واحدة بالتركيزات : صفر (كنترول) ، 7.5 ، 10.0 ، 12.5 ، 15.0 ، 17.5 و 20.0 ملجم/لتر .
والنتائج المتحصل عليها أوضحت الآتي :-

- كل تركيزات الكوبلت تحت الدراسة أدت إلى زيادة معنوية في نمو محصول البذور والنسبة المئوية للزيوت بالمقارنة بالكنترول .
 - الكوبلت بالتركيز 12.5 ملليجيم/لتر أعطى أفضل النتائج .
 - زيادة تركيز الكوبلت في بيئة نمو النباتات عن 12.5 ملجم/لتر أدى إلى نقص التأثير المقيد للكوبلت.. لكنها ظلت أقوى من النباتات.
 - كل تركيزات الكوبلت أدت إلى زيادة المحتوى المعدني لكل من العناصر الكبرى (N, P, k) والعناصر الصغرى (Mn , Zn , Cu) بالمقارنة بالكنترول .
 - كلما زاد تركيز الكوبلت في بيئة نمو النباتات يقل امتصاص الحديد لوجود علاقة تنافسية بينهما .
- الكلمات الدالة : الكوبت – عباد الشمس – المحصول – البذور والزيوت – العناصر الغذائية (N, P, K, Fe, Cu, Mn, Zn)