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SEED QUALITY AND STORAGE PERFORMANCE OF
WHEAT (*Triticum aestivum.*) AND
SOYBEAN (*Glycine max* (L) Merrill)

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ABSTRACT

Five seedlots of wheat (*Triticum* spp.) cvs. Norseman, Otane, Karamu and two unknown cultivars, and four seedlots of soybean (*Glycine max* (L) Merrill) cv. Davis, two seedlots of cv. CH187 and one unknown cultivar were assessed for prestorage quality by using different laboratory methods ie purity, thousand seed weight, seed moisture content, germination, accelerated ageing, conductivity and seed health. The results of this study showed quality differences between seedlots of both wheat and soybean. Using seed germination and vigour data, three lots of wheat with high quality, two seedlots of soybean with high quality and one seedlot with low quality were chosen and adjusted to two different seed moisture contents (10% and 14% in wheat ,and 8% and 12% in soybean). Seed samples of both species were stored in open storage (muslin bags) or sealed storage (aluminium foil packets) at 20°C 75%RH or 30°C 50%RH for 8 months. All wheat seedlots and two soybean seedlots were also stored under open storage at 30°C 95%RH. Seed quality was assessed at intervals of 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months.

The seed moisture content of both species in open storage changed to reach equilibrium moisture content (EMC) with the prevailing relative humidity. At 30°C 95%RH moisture content of wheat and soybean seeds increased up to 18.5-20.5% and 22-23%, respectively while at the same temperature but lower RH (50%), SMC fell to 8.2-8.5% and 5.2-5.5%, respectively. Both low and high initial SMC of seed stored at 20°C 75%RH either increased or decreased to reach an EMC of 12.8-13.6% for wheat and 9.8-10.1% for soybean. Under sealed storage at different storage temperatures and relative humidities SMC did not change from initial levels.

At 20°C 75%SMC the type of storage container had no significant effect on germination percentage or conductivity in wheat and soybean after 8 months. At 30°C, however, the germination percentage of wheat and soybean with high initial SMC in sealed storage and in open storage high RH declined more rapidly during storage than the other treatments. Germination percentage correlated reasonably well with conductivity, with conductivity readings increasing as vigour decreased. At 30°C 95%

both open and sealed storage at high initial SMC resulted in seed showing a conductivity value increase with longer storage time, indicating seedlot deterioration.

All field fungi were eliminated from seed open stored at 30°C 95% but storage fungi developed rapidly in all seedlots after two months. The main genus involved was *Aspergillus* spp. but *Penicillium* spp. were also found at low levels in soybean. However, under 30°C 50%RH and 20°C 75%RH storage conditions field fungi levels in wheat and soybean were reduced during storage and seed was either disinfected or remained infected at only low levels after 8 months storage. The main field fungus present in wheat was *Fusarium* spp.. In soybean both *Fusarium* spp. and *Alternaria* spp. survived well along with low levels of *Colletotrichum* spp..

The implications of pre-storage seed quality, seed moisture levels and storage environment and their effects on seed deterioration rate and extent are discussed. The role of field and storage fungi in affecting loss of seed viability in storage and the possibility of exploiting the storage environment to obtain pathogen free seed for planting is also considered.

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CONTENT

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF PLATES	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1 : REVIEW OF LITERATURE	3
A : SEED QUALITY	3
1. Factors that Affect Seed Quality	3
1.1 Genetic Effects	3
1.2 Maturation	3
1.3 Weathering Damage	4
1.4 Mechanical Damage	5
1.4.1 Threshing Damage	5
1.4.2 Drying Damage	6
1.4.3 Cleaning Damage	7
1.5 Fungal Infection	7
1.6 Insect Damage	10
2. Changes Associated with Seed Deterioration	11
3. Seed Testing Methods for Assessing Seed Quality	13
3.1 Purity Seed	13
3.2 Seed Weight	14
3.3 Seed Moisture Content Tests	14
3.4 Germination Test	16
3.5 Seed Vigour Tests	19
3.5.1 Accelerated Ageing Test	21
3.5.2 Conductivity Test	21
3.5.3 Seedling Growth Test	22

	Page
3.6 Ferric Chloride Test	22
3.7 Seed Health Testing	23
B : SEED STORAGE	24
Factors that Affect Storability	24
1. Prestorage Factors	24
2. Storage Conditions	
2.1 Moisture Content	25
2.2 Temperature	27
2.3 Packaging	29
3. Storage Organism and Insects	30
4. Respiration and heating	30
CHAPTER 2 : MATERIALS AND METHODS	32
CHAPTER 3 : RESULTS	40
WHEAT SEED	
Initial Seed Quality	40
The Performance of Different Wheat Seedlots during Storage	42
SOYBEAN SEED	
Initial Seed Quality	53
The Performance of Different Soybean Seedlots during Storage	56
CHAPTER 4 : DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSINO	69
DISCUSSION	
Initial Quality of Seed	69
Effects of Storage Performance on Wheat and Soybean Seed	73
CONCLUSION	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY	81

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Lower seed moisture content limits for common storage fungi in a variety of species	9
2	Minimum relative humidity and approximate minimum optimum and maximum temperatures for the growth of common storage fungi	10
3	Equilibrium moisture contents of a range of wheat and soybean at various relative humidities and approximately 25°C	26
4	Initial quality of wheat seedlots	40
5	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on germination of wheat seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	43
6	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on moisture content of wheat seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	43
7	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on field fungi of wheat seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	47
8	The percentage of wheat seed infected by <i>Fusarium</i> spp. and <i>Alternaria</i> spp. after 1 and 8 months storage	49
9	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on storage fungi of wheat seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	47
10	The percentage of storage fungal infection on wheat seed under different storage conditions after 2, 4, and 8 months	51
11	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on electroconductivity of wheat seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	52
12	Initial quality of soybean	53
13	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on germination of soybean seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	57
14	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on moisture content of soybean seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	57

Table		Page
15	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on field fungi of soybean seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	63
16	The percentage of soybean seed infected by <i>Fusarium</i> spp., <i>Alternaria</i> spp. and <i>Colletotrichum</i> spp. after 1 and 8 months storage	64
17	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on storage fungi of soybean seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	63
18	The percentage of storage fungi infection on soybean seed under different storage conditions after 1 and 8 months storage	65
19	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on electroconductivity of soybean seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	68

LIST OF PLATES

Plate		Page
1	Differences in germination of 3 lots of wheat with high initial SMC (14 - 14.5%) in sealed packaging after 1 and 8 months storage at 30°C 50%RH	44
2	Comparison of the germination of 3 wheat seedlots with high initial SMC (14 - 14.5%) in open and sealed packaging after 8 months storage at 30°C 50%RH	45
3	Response of initial soybean seed samples to 20% ferric chloride soaked for 5 - 15 minutes.	55
4	Differences in germination of 3 lots of soybean seedlots with high initial SMC (11.2 - 11.5%) in sealed packaging after 1 and 6 months storage at 30°C 50%RH	58
5	Comparison of the germination of 3 soybean seedlots with high initial SMC (11.2 - 11.9%) in open and sealed packaging after 6 months storage at 30°C 50%RH	59
6	Seedlings showing bruised cotyledon deterioration of soybean seed with high initial SMC (11.2 - 11.9%) in sealed packaging after 8 months	60
7	Types of abnormal seedlings found in soybean seed with high initial SMC (11.2-11.9%) in sealed packaging after 8 months at 20°C 75%RH	60
8	Storage fungi on wheat and soybean seed	66

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix		Page
1	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on abnormal seedlings of wheat seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	93
2	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on dead seeds of wheat seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	93
3	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on abnormal seedlings of soybean seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	94
4	Effect of seedlot, SMC, packaging, temperature and relative humidity on dead seeds of soybean seed after 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 months storage	94

INTRODUCTION

Seeds are normally stored for some time prior to sale or planting. It is therefore very desirable that they are of guaranteed high quality when they reach the growers. It is impossible to improve seed quality by storage as seed deterioration occurs naturally and continuously after reaching its highest potential usually attained at physiological maturity (Delouche, et al. 1973). However, the rate of deterioration loss can be minimised. Obviously it is no use storing worthless seed. Testing is therefore important to determine whether a seedlot should be distributed or discarded or whether it should be sold first based on its storability relative to other seedlots. Test results can be used to predict which seedlots are most suitable for short term or long term storage and also to detect cause of poor quality. Seed testing and prediction helps the seedsman manage and control storage to reduce seed quality loss.

Wheat (*Triticum* spp.) is one of the main cereal crops in terms of volume and weight in the worldwide trade of foods and feeds. Nowadays there is an increasing interest in domestic production of wheat in tropical countries such as Thailand. Wheat is grown in the dry winter season and seeds must be stored until the next winter's planting approximately 5 - 8 months. However seeds still deteriorate continuously. Therefore, storage condition is important. If the storage condition is unsuitable, deterioration accelerates rapidly. Unfortunately, in Thailand seed storage facilities are often poor. In addition, the hot and humid tropical climate is also a problem, since both temperature and relative humidity are often too high for seed viability maintenance.

According to Bewley and Black (1985), wheat contains approximately 10% protein, nearly 2% of fat and 70% starch. Although fat and protein content in wheat are lower than those of soybean (37% protein, 17% fat and 26% starch), it is also a species which is tolerant to adverse storage conditions.

Soybean (*Glycine max* (L.) Merrill) is one of the world's most important legume crops, and Thailand is currently encouraging farmer production. It is normally planted after the rice harvest and hence the seed must be stored before being sown in the next planting season (approximately 9 months). Soybean's high oil content often

results in it deteriorating rapidly (Burris,1980) especially under the hot and humid tropical storage conditions. When soybean seed is stored at high temperature or high seed moisture level, germination declines more rapidly than if it is stored under cooler, drier conditions (Toole and Toole,1946; Burris,1980). The provision of such storage conditions in the tropics may be expensive and difficult to control but the ability to control seed moisture content and storage temperature, possibly by the use of sealed packaging, has the potential to provide successful seed storage with the maintenance of both high germination and vigour for an extended period. Also, accurate quality testing at frequent intervals and prediction of likely deterioration can both help to avoid the loss of inventory.

The objectives of this study were to determine:

1. the usefulness of different laboratory methods in assessing prestorage history in soybean and wheat seedlots.
2. the effects of different storage conditions on seed deterioration rate.
3. the differential rates of deterioration between soybean and wheat.