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GROWTH AND COMPETITION STUDIES WITH SNAP BEANS

(Phaseolus vulgaris, L.)

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for a Masterate
in Horticultural Science at
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vii
Abstract	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: Review of the Literature	
1. Snap bean physiology	3
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Seed Aspects	4
1.3 Fertilizer use	5
1.4 Harvesting	5
1.5 Quality	6
1.6 Flowering	10
1.7 Photosynthesis	12
2. Plant Spacing	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Plant density	15
2.3 Plant arrangement	16
2.4 Competition	17
2.5 Effects of density on the plant	18
2.6 Plant density and competition models	20
3. Growth Analysis	21
CHAPTER TWO: Materials and Methods	
2.1 Experiment One	28
2.2 Experiment Two	31

CHAPTER THREE: Experiment 1

3.1	Results	33
3.1.1	Growth Analysis	33
3.1.2	Morphology	34
3.1.3	Yield	36
3.2	Discussion	37
3.2.1	Yield-density relationships	39

CHAPTER FOUR: Experiment 2

4.1	Results	43
4.1.1	Growth Analysis	43
4.1.2	Morphology	49
4.1.3	Yield	54
4.2	Discussion	57
4.2.1	Yield-density relationships	60

CONCLUSIONS	65
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FUTURE WORK	67
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BIBLIOGRAPHY	68
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LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1.1 Sieve size gradings	8
1.2 Seed length, sieve sizes, %seed weight and seed indices for various size grades	9
2.1 Plant density and spacing of the four treatments	29
2.2 Sample size and plot size of each density	29
2.3 The fertilizer level of each density	31
3.1 Time trends of \overline{RGR} , \overline{NAR} , \overline{LAR} , \overline{SLA} , \overline{LWR} , and \overline{LAI}	33
3.2 Effects of density on \overline{RGR} , \overline{NAR} , \overline{LAR} , \overline{SLA} , \overline{LWR} , and \overline{LAI}	34
3.3 Effects of density on the morphology of plants	35
3.4 Mature bean data at harvest 10	35
3.5 Effects of density on the morphological components of yield/unit area	36
3.6 Total bean yield/plant (gm) and per ha (tonnes) at harvest 9 and 10	36
3.7 Mature bean yield/plant (gm) and per ha (tonnes) at harvest 10	37
3.8 B and $\log \frac{1}{B}$ at harvest 4 to 10	41
3.9 A and $\log \frac{1}{A}$ at harvests 4 to 10	41
3.10 A and B parameters for bean dry weights at harvests 9 and 10	42
4.1 \overline{RGR} at each harvest for each density	43
4.2 \overline{NAR} ($\times 10^{-7}$) at each harvest for each density	44
4.3 \overline{LAR} at each harvest for each density	45
4.4 \overline{SLA} at each harvest for each density	46
4.5 \overline{LWR} at each harvest for each density	46

4.6	$\overline{\text{LAI}}$ at each harvest for each density	47
4.7	$\overline{\text{LWR}}$ for each level of fertilizer at each density	48
4.8	$\overline{\text{LAR}}$ for each level of fertilizer at each density	48
4.9	Effect of fertilizer level on $\overline{\text{SIA}}$ and $\overline{\text{LAI}}$	49
4.10	Effect of density on the morphology of the plant	50
4.11	Mean mature bean data from harvests 7 to 10	50
4.12	Effect of density on the morphological components per m^2	51
4.13	Effect of fertilizer on the number of beans per plant	51
4.14	Flowers/plant at each harvest date for each Fertilizer level	51
4.15	Flowers/plant at each density for each harvest date	52
4.16	Beans/plant for each density at each harvest	53
4.17	Mean total bean weight (g) for each density at each harvest	53
4.18	Number of mature beans/plant at each harvest for each density	54
4.19	Weeks to maturity from first harvest for each density	55
4.20	Components of yield at optimum maturity for each density	56
4.21	Yield of mature and total beans (tonnes/ha) at optimum maturity	57
4.22	A and $\log \frac{1}{A}$ at harvests 3 to 10	62
4.23	B and $\log \frac{1}{B}$ at harvests 3 to 10	63
4.24	A, $\log \frac{1}{A}$, B and $\log \frac{1}{B}$ for bean dry weight data	64

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Between pp
1.1 Morphology of a plant grown at a wide spacing (20cm x 20cm)	10-11
1.2 Morphology of a plant grown at a close spacing (5cm x 5cm)	19-20
4.1 Seed length vs time for 400 plants/m ²	54-55
4.2 Seed length vs time for 100 plants/m ²	54-55
4.3 Seed length vs time for 44.44 plants/m ²	54-55
4.4 Seed length vs time for 25 plants/m ²	54-55

ABSTRACT

Overseas work suggests that substantial yield increases can occur when the density is increased and the rectangularity is changed to unity. Two trials were carried out to examine some effects of growing snap beans at four densities.

The $\overline{R.G.R.}$ fell with time until pod swell where it showed a slight increase and then fell again. The $\overline{N.A.R.}$ followed a similar pattern whereas the $\overline{L.A.R.}$ increased and then fell earlier than either the $\overline{N.A.R.}$ or the $\overline{R.G.R.}$, indicating the dependence of the $\overline{R.G.R.}$ on the $\overline{N.A.R.}$. The $\overline{L.A.R.}$ appears to be dependent on the $\overline{L.W.R.}$ component rather than the $\overline{S.L.A.}$ component.

Fertilizer had no effect on the $\overline{R.G.R.}$ or the $\overline{N.A.R.}$. As the level of fertilizer increases, the $\overline{S.L.A.}$ decreases and the $\overline{L.W.R.}$ increases, indicating that more leaves are produced and the leaves are 'thicker'. Both the $\overline{L.W.R.}$ and the $\overline{L.A.R.}$ are maintained at a higher level with increasing amounts of fertilizer.

As density increases, the $\overline{R.G.R.}$, $\overline{L.A.R.}$ and $\overline{L.W.R.}$ fall whereas the $\overline{L.A.R.}$, $\overline{S.L.A.}$ and $\overline{L.A.I.}$ all increase. This shows that at the higher densities, more leaves are produced but they are less efficient at producing and/or utilizing assimilates.

As density increases, the maturity of the beans tend to be delayed, yield/plant at high density is decreased through fewer flowers/plant, higher flower and pod abortion rate and a lower bean weight, all probably due to the lower $\overline{N.A.R.}$. There is also a

negative correlation between the number of pods and pod size.

The reciprocal yield density relationships showed fertilizer to have no effect on the A and B parameters for either total plant dry matter or bean dry matter. The allometric log plant weight to log bean weight showed the ratio of beans to total plant weight decreases with increasing density.

Fertilizer had no effect on the yield of beans. Density was also shown to have no effect on the yield of beans when the yields were compared at the same seed length. When yields were compared at the same chronological time, density did have an effect. The mean mature bean yield was 13.95 tonnes/ha but the mean harvestable yield was 18.6 tonnes/ha.

INTRODUCTION

1518 ha of snap beans (Phaseolus vulgaris L.) were grown in New Zealand in 1978. 1416 ha of these were grown for processing; 67 % for quick freezing and 33% for canning. The average yield of snap beans in 1978 was 7.98 t/ha. 21% of the frozen snap beans were exported to 22 countries with Australia importing 50% of the exported beans. The area of beans grown for processing has almost doubled between 1971 and 1977 as has the gross yield, but the yield per ha has shown little change over this period. (Anon, 1978).

Horticulture has moved towards systems of high yield and intensive production. The rapid increases in the cost of production must be met by more efficient production and higher yields. The scarcity of good land close to processing factories, with an abundant supply of water, tends to put a premium on high productivity per unit area. According to Bleasdale (1969), this is one incentive for having a comprehensive knowledge of the yield-density relationships of vegetable crops and to use the knowledge to devise highly productive cultural systems.

Overseas work has suggested that yields may be increased significantly by reducing the rectangularity and increasing the plant population (Jones, 1967, Mack and Hatch, 1968). A parabolic relationship between pod yield and density is apparent. The density at which maximum yield occurs will vary with the environment, cultural practices and cultivar. The time taken for the crop to mature, which varies with density, irrigation practices, and other factors, must be taken into consideration when comparing yield differences.

Often there is an interactive effect between density and fertilizer, and between fertilizer and other cultural and environmental factors; for example, as plant density increases, a greater amount of fertilizer is required to produce the maximum yield (Lang, Pendleton and Duncan, 1956). This factor, combined with the effect of soil type on fertilizer response, has made the interpretation of fertilizer trial results difficult.

Growth analysis is a technique that may be used to gain an insight into the physiological basis for yield differences using relative growth rates, net assimilation rates, leaf area ratios, specific leaf areas and leaf weight ratios. Yield differences may also be analysed morphologically using the number of pods m^2 and the mean weight per bean.

The aim of the project was to attempt to relate yield differences due to density and fertilizer to physiological and morphological changes.