



Effect of Organic Mulching on Weed Suppression, Yield and Yield Components of Sesame (*Sesamum indicum* L.)

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Sesame is the second in oil crop produced in Ethiopia next to Niger seed and it is also second foreign currency generator in the country. Weeds are the most significant problem in sesame producing areas. This research was conducted with the aim of reducing weed infestation and boost yield. The experiment was conducted in 2016 cropping season at Humera Agricultural Research Center in RCBD design. Growth performance, yield and yield components of sesame and weed data were collected. Less abundant and dense *Rahynchosia malacophylla* weeds (33) and (132/m²) were recorded at Sudan grass, where the most abundant and dense *Rahynchosia malacophylla* weeds (60.5) and (242/m²) were recorded from no-mulch plot. The highest sesame yield (695 kg ha⁻¹) was recorded from Sudan grass treatment, while the lowest yield (225 kg ha⁻¹) was recorded from no mulch. Farmers need to apply grass mulch to suppress weed growth and boost sesame yield.

Keywords: *Organic mulching; weed suppression; sesame; Sesamum indicum L.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sesame (*Sesamum indicum* L.) is an important oil crop of Ethiopia, which belongs to the Pedaliaceae family. It is a short day plant that is grown mainly for its vital seed, which contains about 50% oil and 25% protein [1]. Sesame is the second in oil crop produced in Ethiopia next to niger seed and it is also a second foreign currency generator in the country. Sesame is a warm season oil crop, which is chiefly adapted to areas with extended growing period and well aerated soils. In addition, sesame performs well in slightly acid to alkaline soils (pH 5-8) with moderate fertility [2].

Weeds are the most significant problem in sesame producing areas of Ethiopia particularly in western zone of Tigray, which can cause a yield loss up to 86.3% [3]. This could be due to lack of option for weed control except hand weeding method which is commonly practiced by investors and small scale farmers. In sesame growing areas of western Tigray, there is a strong interest in developing weed control options, which are organic nature and can keep an international market quality for the crop. So, application of organic mulching can reduce weed growth and used as a method of weed control [4]. Organic mulching is important in crop production as they can suppress weed growth as reported by different scholars [5,6,7,8]. Moreover, organic mulch can enhance soil fertility after decomposition at the field. Sønsteby et al. [9] also noted wood chips mulch fertilize a soil with phosphorus and potassium. Mulch also increases soil moisture by increasing infiltration and reducing evaporation. In this regard, Teame et al. [10] reported high soil moisture conservation through Sudan grass, sesame and sorghum mulches. This is in conformity with Sinkevičienė et al. [11]. Mulches do not only suppress weed growth, they also conserve moisture in the root zone [12] and increase yield. The objectives of the study were:

- To quantify the efficacy of organic mulching on weed infestation
- To determine effect of organic mulching on yield and yield component

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Area Description

The field experiment was carried out in 2016 main growing season in Humera Agricultural

Research Center Western zone of Tigray Ethiopia (Fig. 1). It is positioned between 13°14 to 14°27N and 36°27 to 37°32E and about 600 km from Mekelle capital city of Tigray regional state. The dominant soil type of the area is chromic vertisol black in color, which is characterized with bulk density of 1.4 g cm⁻³, organic matter content of 1%, pH =8.5 and EC =0.2 mmohs/cm from analyzed result of pre sowing soil sampled. According to Köppen climate classification, Humera has a hot semi-arid climate. The annual rainfall of the study area ranges between 400 to 600 mm and most of the rain rains in June up to September. The annual mean temperature is 27.6°C. It is also characterized by hot temperature, erratic rainfall, vast area of plain low lands suitable for large scale and subsistence agriculture including crops and livestock.

2.2 Experimental Design and Treatment

The experimental design used was Randomized Complete Block Design (RCBD). Each treatment was replicated three times and consists of 15 plot number in total. The tested treatments were sesame straw, sorghum straw, rice straw, Sudan grass, and no mulch. The gross plot area was 6 m² and the net plot area was 3.6 m². The distance between the plot and block was 1 and 1.5 m, correspondingly. Sesame seed variety Setit-1 was sown 40 cm and 10 cm between rows and plants, correspondingly. The field was plowed and provided with 100 kg of NPS (19% N +38% P2O5 + 7% S) and 50 kg of urea fertilizer. The urea was applied in split form; 25 kg at sowing and another 25 kg at flower initiation. Webworm pest which cause a potential yield reduction was control with application of dimethoat [13]. In harmony with the methods adopted by Ramakrishna et al. [14] the rate of mulches used was 6 kg per plot, which is equivalent to 10 t/ha and was applied at row whole immediately after germination of sesame and the emerged weed was uprooted using a hoe.

2.3 Measurements and Measurements Method

Weed population was determined by counting number of weed plants in 0.5 m x 0.5 m quadrant which is dropped randomly three times in a plot. Data was collected in four weeks after sowing. Based on weed count, weed abundance (eq.1), weed dominance (eq. 2) and density (eq. 3) were determined.

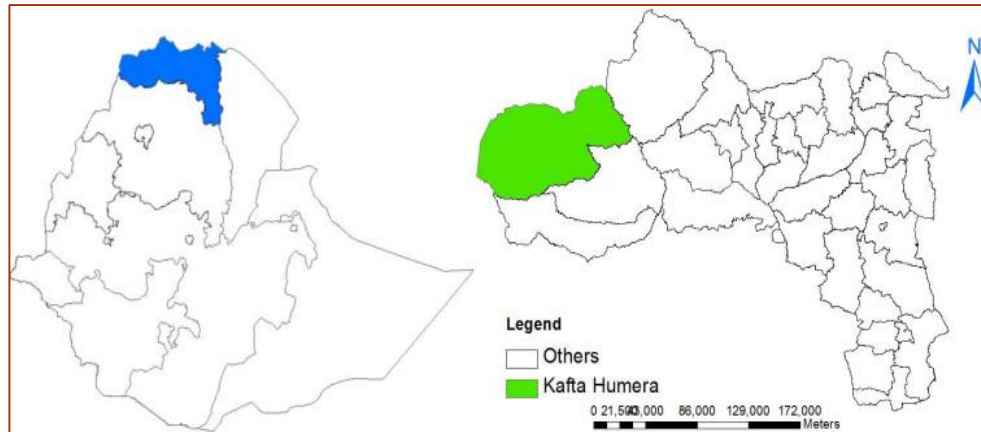


Fig. 1. Site map of the study area

Weed abundance: It is the population of a species expressed as the number of individuals of weed per unit area. It was calculated as follows:

$$A = \frac{\sum w}{N} \quad (1)$$

Where,

W = number of individuals of a species/sample
N = number of sample

Weed dominance: Abundance of individual of species in relation to total abundance. It is calculated as:

$$\text{Dominance} = \frac{A \cdot 100}{\sum A} \quad (2)$$

$$\text{Density} = \frac{\text{No. of weed of a given species}}{\text{area}} \quad (3)$$

2.4 Agronomic Traits of Sesame

Number of capsules per plant and number of seeds per capsule were counted from five randomly selected plants per plot. Plant height is one of the growth parameter that was measured from five plants per plot. To determine the number of seeds per capsule, the seeds of three capsules (lower, medium, and uppermost position on the plant) from each of five plants were counted. Seed yield of each plot was weighed in grams and converted to area basis to determine the yield in kg/ha.

2.5 Weed Growth

The different grassy and broad leaved weeds observed in association with sesame crop in the study area were *Sudan grass (Topas)*,

Rahynochosia malacophylla (Teken), *Ipomea spp. (Dereya)*, *Indigofera spp. (Demayto)*, *Commelina foecunda (Wuhankur)* and *Xanthium abyssinicum (Begdzemed)*. Among the two categories of weeds, broad leaved weeds showed more variation in species composition.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Influence of Organic Mulch on Broad Leaved Weed in Abundance and Density

All broad leaved weeds such as *Rahynochosia malacophylla*, *Ipomea spp.*, *Commelina foecunda*, *Indigofera spp.* and *Xanthium abyssinicum* in sesame field showed highly significant difference at ($p < 0.01$) in abundance and density. Abundant and dense weeds of *Rahynochosia malacophylla* and *Ipomea spp.* were noted at no mulch though statistically insignificant with rice straw. In other hand, less abundant and dense weeds of *Rahynochosia malacophylla* and *Ipomea spp.* were noted at sesame and Sudan grass mulch respectively (Table 1). *Commelina foecunda* and *Indigofera spp.* weeds were easily influenced by all organic mulches in abundance and density (Table 1). *Xanthium abyssinicum* weed was influenced by all mulch material compared to bare plot though there was insignificant difference among organic mulches except for sesame straw. This influence of organic mulch on weeds could be due to the nature of mulch material suppress weed growth through direct sunlight prevention to growing weed seedling and suffocation. This result in line with Stiegler et al. [15] who reported dry grass reduced weed infestation significantly. In addition, a layer of mulching material prevents weed growth by inhabiting light penetration [16].

Table 1. Effect of organic mulching on weed abundance and density in sesame fields

Treatment	Rm		Ips		Xa		Cf		Ins		Sg	
	A	De(m ⁻²)	A	De(m ⁻²)	A	De(m ⁻²)	A	De(m ⁻²)	A	De(m ⁻²)	A	De(m ⁻²)
No mulch	60.5 ^a	242.0 ^a	20.5 ^a	82.0 ^a	18.0 ^a	72.0 ^a	26.0 ^a	104.0 ^a	17.5 ^a	70.0 ^a	18.0 ^a	72 ^a
Rice straw	56.0 ^a	224.0 ^a	17.5 ^a	70.0 ^a	11.0 ^b	44.0 ^b	14.0 ^b	56.0 ^b	7.5 ^b	30.0 ^b	9.0 ^b	36 ^b
Sesame straw	27.5 ^b	110.0 ^b	9.0 ^b	36.0 ^b	3.3 ^c	13.2 ^c	9.0 ^b	36.0 ^b	3.5 ^b	14.0 ^b	3.0 ^c	12 ^c
Sorghum straw	33.0 ^b	132.0 ^b	17.5 ^a	70.0 ^a	6.5 ^{bc}	26.0 ^{bc}	10.5 ^b	42.0 ^b	5.0 ^b	20.0 ^b	3.5 ^c	14 ^c
Sudan grass	33.0 ^b	132.0 ^b	10.2 ^b	40.7 ^b	6.8 ^{bc}	27.0 ^{bc}	11.5 ^b	46.0 ^b	6.5 ^b	26.0 ^b	7.5 ^{bc}	30 ^{bc}
CV	32.5	32.4	20	20.0	41.8	41.8	37.6	37.0	40.7	40.7	48.6	48.6
LSD	16.3	65.1	3.6	14.24	4.6	18.2	6.4	25.5	3.9	15.6	4.8	19.0

Rm=Rahynochosia malacophylla Xa=Xanthium abyssinicum Ins= Indigofera spp. Cf= Commelina foecunda Ips= Ipomoea spp. Sg= Sudan grass
A=abundance De=Density

Organic mulching had high significant difference at ($p < 0.01$) on *Sudan grass* weed in terms of abundance and density. The highest *Sudan grass* weed abundance and density was recorded at bare plot while the lowest at sesame straw mulch (Table 1).

3.2 Influence of Organic Mulching on Weed Frequency and Dominance

The analysis of variance revealed that organic mulch have significant difference ($p < 0.05$) on

weed frequency in all weeds except *Rahynchosia malacophylla*. All weeds were frequently occurred on the bare and rice mulched plots, while less frequent weed occurred on organic mulching except in the case *Rahynchosia malacophylla* which occurred frequently on all treatment (Fig. 2).

The analysis of variance also shown that organic mulching have insignificant difference ($p > 0.05$) on weed dominance in the case of all weed except on *Sudan grass* (Fig. 3).

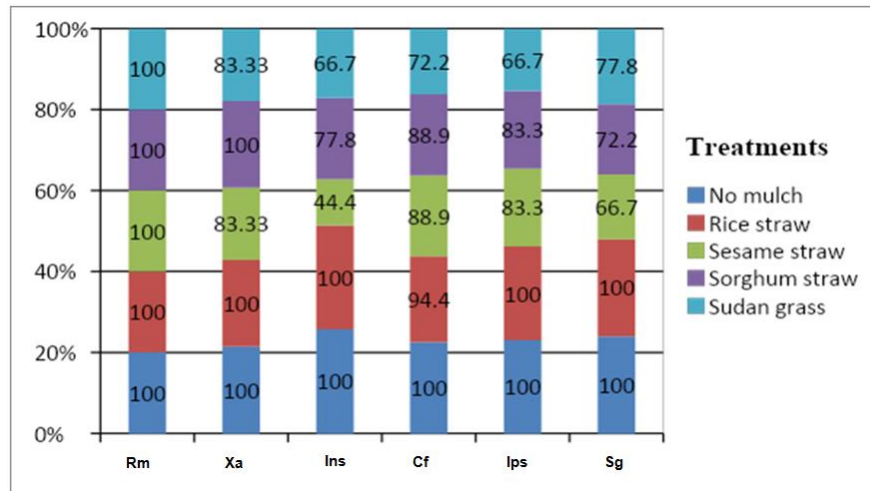


Fig. 2. Weed frequency

Rm=*Rahynchosia malacophylla* Xa=*Xanthium abyssinicum* Ins= *Indigofera* spp. Cf= *Commelina foecunda* Ips= *Ipomoea* spp. Sg= *Sudan grass*

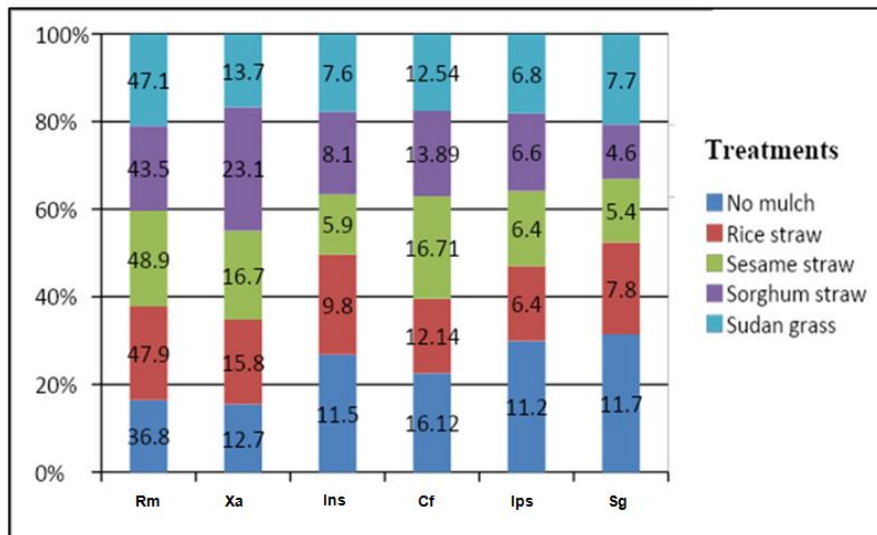


Fig. 3. Weed dominancy

Rm=*Rahynchosia malacophylla* Xa=*Xanthium abyssinicum* Ins= *Indigofera* spp. Cf= *Commelina foecunda* Ips= *Ipomoea* spp. Sg= *Sudan grass*

Table 2. Influence of mulching on yield and yield component of sesame

Treatment	PH (cm)	NCP	NSPC	Yield (kg/ha)
No mulch	56.0 ^d	27.1 ^c	35.0 ^c	225.0 ^d
Rice mulch	77.9 ^c	29.7 ^c	39.8 ^b	496.0 ^c
Sesame mulch	86.0 ^{ab}	37.7 ^{ab}	43.5 ^a	587.9 ^b
Sorghum mulch	82.6 ^b	31.8 ^{bc}	43.0 ^a	550.2 ^b
Sudan grass mulch	87.1 ^a	39.7 ^a	44.3 ^a	695.0 ^a
CV (%)	4.5	15	3.7	7.2
LSD	4.2	6.1	1.9	44.7

PH= plant height NCP= number of capsule per plant NSPC=number of seed per capsule

3.3 Plant Height

The analysis of variance showed that organic mulching have highly significant difference ($P < 0.01$) on plant height. The tallest plant height (87.1 cm) was recorded at Sudan grass, while the shortest plant height (56 cm) was recorded at bare plots (Table 2). The mulch treatment reduced weed infestation as a result the overall performance of the plant compared to bare treatment which is weedy. This result in line with Ajibola et al. [16], reported elephant grass produce highest plant compared to no mulch via weed suppression. This highest plant height in mulch plot could be due to less competition to resource for sesame via controlling undesirable weed.

3.4 Number of Capsules per Plant

The analysis of variance revealed that number of capsules per plant showed highly significant difference ($p < 0.01$) among treatments. The highest numbers of capsules per plant (39.7 & 37.7) were noted at Sudan grass and sesame mulch material, while the lowest was (27.1) recorded at bare plots (Table 2). This could be due to the benefit of mulching material in weed suppression. Sudan grass and sesame straw were effective in weed suppression due to their less decomposed nature. Elephant grass mulching produce comparable result with other weed control options such as hand weeding and herbicide [16]. The lowest number of capsules in no mulch plot could be due to sever competition for resource such as water, nutrient and light and this sever competition prevent from conversion of all produced flower to capsule.

3.5 Number of Seeds per Capsule

The analysis of variance shown that organic mulching has highly significant difference ($p < 0.01$) on number of seeds per capsule compared to bare treatment. All mulching

materials didn't show significant difference in between except rice straw. The highest number of seeds per capsule was noted in Sudan grass, sesame and sorghum mulching material, while the lowest was noted bare treatment (Table 2). The less weed competition in mulch covered plots favors better number of seeds per capsule due to adequate availability of resource for grain filling in the mulch treated plots.

3.6 Yield (kg/ha)

The analysis of variance revealed that organic mulching have highly significant difference ($p < 0.001$) on yield compared to bare treatment. All mulching materials have significant difference among them except sorghum and sesame insignificant difference in between. The highest yield (695 kg/ha) was recorded at Sudan grass, while the lowest (225 kg/ha) was recorded at bare plots (Table 2). Mulch treatment as means of weed control increased 67.6% yield compared to bare plots. This might be due to the mulching material had significant effect on important agronomic parameter such as plant height, number of capsule and number of seeds per capsule.

4. CONCLUSION

Organic mulches have a direct effect on weed suppression and sesame productivity. The results of the current investigation also revealed that organic mulching had great influence on weed abundance, frequency, dominance and density in sesame production especially Sudan grass, Sorghum straw and Sesame straw showed great influence on reducing weed infestation that grow in sesame farming. As the result, those treatment produce highest yield compare to control.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data used to support this finding will be available up on request.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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