

## CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING WHEAT PRODUCTIVITY UNDER SALINE SODIC SOIL CONDITIONS

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### ABSTRACT

The current work represents a trial towards improving wheat productivity grown on a saline sodic soil in El-Tina plain, North Sinai. Fulfilling such an objective was executed through three approaches all of them aim at increasing the plant tolerance for salinity. The first approach involved supplying the plant with its N requirement from different sources i.e. readily available N (urea), slow release N fertilizers i.e. urea formaldehyde and sulfur coated urea each at a rate of 114 kg N ha<sup>-1</sup> beside of a compost of plant residues at a rate of > 119 mg ha<sup>-1</sup>. The second approach involved inoculating the wheat seeds with *Azospirillum brasilense* No. 40 (salt tolerant bacteria) while the third approach involved spraying the grown plants with the growth osmoregulator proline at a rate of 950 L ha<sup>-1</sup> ( 30 mg proline L<sup>-1</sup> ). Results revealed that the studied approached could succeed when applied solely in increasing wheat yield and its attributes, however, the combined treatment of applying compost, inoculation with *Azospirillum* sp and spraying the grown plants with proline was extremely important for maximizing grain yield and increasing uptake of the different nutritive elements i.e. N, P, K, Fe, Mn and Zn.

**Keywords:** chemical, biological approaches, weat, saline sodic soils.

### INTRODUCTION

Wheat is one of the strategic crops (Gad and Kandil, 2011), probably the most important crop in Egypt (McVey *et al.*, 2004). The domestic production of wheat is not sufficient to cover the public needs, consequently the Egyptian government imports around 7.15 million tons annually to insure public food security and at the same time, support land reclamation strategies for increasing the domestic production of wheat on the long run (Shehata and Mohammed, 2010). On the other hand, soil salinity has become one of the main features in the newly reclaimed soils (Sakadevan and Nguyen, 2010) and even in the Nile delta (Kotb *et al.*, 2000). This problem arises mainly from soil aridity and the preset share for the Egyptian government in the Nile water (El-Agha *et al.*, 2011) . Soil salinity lowers the total soil-water potential and limits water mobility and flux by plant roots (Munns, 2010; Sucre and Suárez, 2011), thus induces drought conditions for the grown plants (Ramoliya *et al.*, 2004). This stress could affect negatively plant growth parameters and reduces the yield quality of the outcome product (Barbieri *et al.*, 2011). One of the main approaches for increasing plant tolerance for the saline conditions is inoculating plant seeds with halophytic growth promoting rhizobacterium of *Azospirillum brasilense* which can symbiotically live with the grown plant (Zarea *et al.*, 2012). Also, utilization of growth osmo-regulator proline can

reduce the negative impacts of soil salinity (Abd El-Samad *et al.*, 2010; Manjili *et al.*, 2012 and Sakr *et al.*, 2012).

The current research aimed at studying the effects of *Azospirillum brasilense* as well as the effect of proline under different N sources on wheat plant and increasing its productivity.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Site description

The area of study is located at Sahl-El-Tina Plain, North Sinai between 32°:35' and 32°:45' E and 31°: 00' and 31°: 25' N. A representative surface soil sample (0-30 cm) was collected from the studied area during the winter season of 2011/2012. Analysis of the soil was a saline sodic sandy clay, moderately alkaline ( Table 1 ).

**Table 1: Physical and chemical properties of soil of the study.**

Soil property	Value
C.sand ( % )	14.17
F. sand ( % )	55.83
Silt ( % )	7.36
Clay ( % )	22.64
Texture	Sandy clay
O M ( g kg <sup>-1</sup> )	6.1
CaCO <sub>3</sub> ( g kg <sup>-1</sup> )	103
pH (1:2.5 wv <sup>-1</sup> )	8.10
EC ( dSm <sup>-1</sup> )	7.2
Soluble ions ( mmole L <sup>-1</sup> )	
Ca <sup>++</sup>	10.2
Mg <sup>++</sup>	20.4
Na <sup>+</sup>	93.5
K <sup>+</sup>	0.9
HCO <sup>-</sup>	7.5
Cl <sup>-</sup>	80.0
SO <sub>4</sub> <sup>-</sup>	37.5
CO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup>	0.0
SAR	24
Available nutrients ( mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )	
N	38.0
P	6.9
K	181
Fe	3.1
Mn	1.7
Zn	1.1
Cu	0.01

\* pH was determined in soil: water suspension 1:2.5, EC was determined in soil paste extract

This area is irrigated with El-Salam Canal water (Nile water mixed with agricultural drainage water at a ratio of 1:1). The chemical characteristics of the irrigation water during October 2011 to May 2012 are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Chemical characteristics of El-Salam canal irrigation water during summer and winter of 2011/ 2012.**

Property	Month				
	Oct.	Dec.	Feb.	Apr.	May
pH	8.14	8.17	8.21	8.10	8.22
EC (dS m <sup>-1</sup> )	1.03	1.18	1.25	1.20	1.27
SAR	4.22	4.31	4.41	4.29	4.56
NO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> N (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	7.25	7.44	8.20	8.41	9.41
NH <sub>4</sub> <sup>+</sup> N (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	12.78	13.28	13.45	13.41	14.16
P (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	3.69	4.55	5.71	5.60	4.93
K (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	6.21	6.35	6.51	6.46	7.19
Fe (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	1.96	2.33	2.47	2.31	3.16
Mn (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	1.16	1.46	1.52	1.27	1.68
Zn (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	0.90	0.96	0.98	1.03	1.23

**Materials of study**

- 1-An inoculum of the salt tolerant “*Azospirillum braislense* No.40” bacteria in a water suspension (supplied by the Microbiology Department, Soil. Water and Environment Research Institute, of the Agricultura Reseach Center " ARC ", Giza, Egypt ).
- 2- The growth osmo-regulator proline at a concentration of 30 mgL<sup>-1</sup>
- 3- Compost of plant residues the chemical properties of which are shown in Table 3.
- 4- The Nitrogen fertilizer sourcec of urea (460 g N kg<sup>-1</sup>), urea formaldehyde (400 g N kg<sup>-1</sup>) sulfur coated urea (400 g N and 170 g S kg<sup>-1</sup>) ;
- 5- Seeds of wheat (*Triticum aestivum* c.v Sakha 93) supplied by the Field Crops Research Institute ARC.

**Table 3: Chemical properties of the compost under study.**

Parameter	Vaue
EC	4.21 dSm <sup>-1</sup>
pH	7.2
Moisture content %	25 %
Nutrentes	kg <sup>-1</sup>
O M	448.7 g kg <sup>-1</sup>
C/N ratio	9.1
O C	260
N	28.6 ( g kg <sup>-1</sup> )
P	8.0 ( g kg <sup>-1</sup> )
K	1.57 ( g kg <sup>-1</sup> )
Fe	230 ( mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )
Mn	80 ( mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )
Zn	115 ( mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )
Cu	44 ( mg kg <sup>-1</sup> )

pH and EC were determined in compost suspension 1:2.5.

### The field study

A field experiment was conducted during the winter season of 2011/2012. The experimental design was a randomized complete block with three factors:

- (1) N- sources no N application "N<sub>0</sub>" The factors and their treatments were as follows: urea "N<sub>1</sub>", urea formaldehyde "N<sub>2</sub>", sulfur coated urea "N<sub>3</sub>" and compost "N<sub>4</sub>". The rate of N was 114 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>.
- (2) Biofertilization : no biofertilization "B<sub>0</sub>" and biofertilization by inoculation with "*Azospirillum braisense* No.40" "B<sub>1</sub>" ( 1 mL contain 3x10<sup>9</sup> bacterial cell ) which was used for inoculation of wheat seeds at a rate of 2.4 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> and then sprayed on the soil beside the plant roots at 30 and 60 days after seeding at a rate of 12 L ha<sup>-1</sup>.
- (3) Proline spray : no spray "P<sub>0</sub>" and foliar spray with proline "P<sub>1</sub>" The rate of spray was 950 Lha<sup>-1</sup>.
- (4) Compost was added at a rate of 11.9 Mgha<sup>-1</sup> 25 days before seeding, half the amount of compost was incorporated into the soil before ploughing and the other half was applied after ploughing followed by thorough harrowing to be mixed thoroughly with the 5-cm soil surface . The preparation of compost was done using a quantity of 5000 kg of an air-dry mixture of shredded plant residues of wheat straw, rice straw, faba bean straw and maize stover. About 300 kg of well decomposed farmyard manure was thoroughly mixed with the mixture to enhance microbial activity, then made into heaps each of about 8 layers . The heaps were moistened with sufficient water. Every 21 days, they were turned over and thoroughly mixed (3 turns) until the obtained compost was well decomposed. Detailed operations on composting are given by Shaban (2005). Total number of plots of the experiment was 60 ( 2 "biofertilization" X 2 "N treatments" X 2 "proline treatments" X 3 replicates ).
- (5) The plot area was 6m<sup>2</sup>. On the 15th of October 2011 seeds of wheat ( *Triticum aestivum*, c.v. Sakha 93) were sown at a rate of 144 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>. The soil of the experiment received calcium super-phosphate ( 67.7 g P kg<sup>-1</sup>) at a rate of 16 kg P ha<sup>-1</sup> during soil preparation ,while potassium sulphate (400 g K kg<sup>-1</sup> ) at a rate of 236 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> was added in 3 equal splits 21, 42 and 62 days of planting. Wheat was harvested on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 (when moisture of grains was about 12%). Grain samples were taken determining NPK contents.

#### Laboratory :

#### Analyses:

Particle size distribution, CaCO<sub>3</sub> content, organic matter content ,pH, EC and soluble ions and available nutrients were determined in soil. Plant compost and water samples were also determined. Extractions of available nutrients were by 0.5 M KCl ( for N ), ammonium bicarbonate "AB-DTPA" ( for P, K, Fe, Mn, Zn and Cu ). Methods of analyses were according to those cited by Klute (1986), Page *et al.* (1982) and Soltanpour (1985).

#### Plant analyses:

Dried plant sample was wet digested using.

## RESULTS

### Effect of N-source, bio-fertilization and proline on wheat grain yield and NPK uptake.

#### Effects on wheat grain yield

Table 4 shows that proline and the bio-fertilizer increased wheat grain yield significantly. Both of them, the combined treatment caused more increases in wheat grain yield than did the single treatments. Sulfur-coated urea and compost recorded the highest increases caused by N-source, whereas urea recorded the lowest increase.

**Table 4: Wheat grain yield (Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) as affected by N-fertilizer, compost, bio-fertilizer and proline spray .**

Proline	Bio fertilizer	N - Source					Mean
		N <sub>0</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	N <sub>3</sub>	N <sub>4</sub>	
P <sub>0</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	2.67	2.87	2.99	3.88	4.45	3.37
	B <sub>1</sub>	3.05	3.55	4.29	4.44	4.59	3.98
	mean	2.86	3.21	3.64	4.16	4.52	3.67
P <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	3.19	3.39	3.76	3.91	5.79	4.00
	B <sub>1</sub>	3.79	4.09	5.55	5.76	5.92	5.02
	mean	3.49	3.74	4.65	4.83	5.85	4.51
Grand mean		3.17	3.47	4.15	4.49	5.18	
Means of Bio fertilizer ( B )							Mean
B <sub>0</sub>		2.93	3.13	3.37	3.89	5.12	3.68
B <sub>1</sub>		3.42	3.82	4.92	5.11	5.25	4.50

LSD :0.05:- N=0.0069, B= 0.0043, P=0.0043, NB=0.0097, NP=0.0097, BP=0.0060 , NBP=0.0137

N sources : N<sub>0</sub> : no N, N<sub>1</sub> :Urea, N<sub>2</sub>: Urea formaldehyde, N<sub>3</sub>: Sulfur Coated Urea and N<sub>4</sub> :compost ;biofertilization with moculation seeds with azosirillum braiseleuse.

#### Effect on 1000- wheat grain weight

Table 5 illustrates that proline increased the 1000 grain weight and such increases were more pronounced with inoculation. On the other hand, N-source in the form of sulfur-coated urea and compost recorded the highest increases in the 1000-wheat grain yield.

The aforementioned results reveal that application of compost as a source for N increases grain yield as well as the 1000- wheat grain weight. This finding is probably due to its amending effect on soil properties decomposition of the organic compost beside CO<sub>2</sub> formed and dissolved forming H<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> which would decrease soil pH and makes plant nutrients elements more available . Also, compost as an organic amendment may acts as a cementing agent for the soil particles and hence encourages formation of soil aggregates.

**Table 5: 1000- wheat grain weight as affected by N-source , bio-fertilizer and proline.**

Proline	Bio fertilizer	N - Source					Mean
		N <sub>0</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	N <sub>3</sub>	N <sub>4</sub>	
P <sub>0</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	22.33	27.00	32.00	36.67	38.67	31.33
	B <sub>1</sub>	29.33	37.67	41.00	48.00	51.00	37.60
	mean	25.83	32.33	36.50	42.33	44.83	36.37
P <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	26.33	30.00	36.67	45.67	49.33	41.40
	B <sub>1</sub>	33.33	39.67	44.00	49.67	53.00	43.93
	mean	29.83	34.83	40.33	47.67	51.17	40.77
Grand mean		27.83	33.58	38.42	45.00	48.00	
Means of Bio fertilizer ( B )							Mean
B <sub>0</sub>		24.33	28.50	34.33	41.17	44.00	34.47
B <sub>1</sub>		31.33	38.67	42.50	48.83	52.00	42.67

LSD :0.05:- N=1.09 , B=0.69 , P=0.69 , NB= n.s , NP=n.s , BP=0.98 , NBP=2.19  
 N sources : N<sub>0</sub> : no N, N<sub>1</sub> :Urea, N<sub>2</sub>: Urea formaldehyde, N<sub>3</sub>: Sulfur Coated Urea and N<sub>4</sub> :compost ;biofertilization with moculation seeds with azosirillum braiseuse.

**Effect on NPK uptake by wheat grains**

**Effect on N-uptake**

The results presented in Table 6 show that N-uptake by grains were significantly affected by spraying wheat with the osmo-regulator -proline and also with inoculation. Also, the source of N increased N-uptake, especially the compost source followed by the sulfur coated urea.

**Table 6: N uptake ( kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) by wheat grains as affected by N-source , bio-fertilizers and proline spray.**

Proline	Bio fertilizer	N - Source					Mean
		N <sub>0</sub>	<sub>1</sub> N	<sub>2</sub> N	<sub>3</sub> N	<sub>4</sub> N	
P <sub>0</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	49.60	56.53	61.35	79.22	94.69	68.28
	B <sub>1</sub>	58.36	72.44	88.28	94.58	99.89	82.71
	mean	53.98	64.49	74.82	86.90	97.29	75.49
P <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	60.43	67.49	76.23	82.75	123.89	82.16
	B <sub>1</sub>	73.54	85.48	116.12	123.84	130.73	105.94
	mean	66.99	76.49	96.18	103.29	127.31	94.05
Grand mean		60.48	70.49	85.495	95.11	112.31	
Means of Bio fertilizer ( B )							Mean
B <sub>0</sub>		55.02	62.01	68.79	80.98	109.29	75.22
B <sub>1</sub>		65.95	78.96	102.20	109.21	115.31	94.33

LSD :0.05:- N=0.645 , B=0.462 , P= 0.462 , NB=n.s, NP= n.s , BP=n.s , NBP= n.s  
 N sources : N<sub>0</sub> : no N, N<sub>1</sub> :Urea, N<sub>2</sub>: Urea formaldehyde, N<sub>3</sub>: Sulfur Coated Urea and N<sub>4</sub> :compost ;biofertilization with moculation seeds with . azosirillum braiseuse

**Effect on P uptake**

Table 7 demonstrates that P uptake increased in plants due to spraying plants with the osmo-regulator proline, bio-treatment or amending soil with a N-source. The organo-treatment seemed to be the most efficient N-source followed by sulfur coated urea, then urea formaldehyde. The different

treatments of the different combinations among these three factors were mostly of positive effect on P uptake. The treatments which combine seed inoculation + proline + N addition may be recommended for maximum P-uptake

**Table 7: P uptake ( kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) by grains as affected by N-source , bio-fertilizer and proline to wheat on a saline sandy clay soil**

Proline	Bio fertilizer	Source-N					Mean
		N <sub>0</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	N <sub>3</sub>	N <sub>4</sub>	
P <sub>0</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	9.690	10.903	12.170	17.317	20.153	14.047
	B <sub>1</sub>	11.997	15.743	19.717	22.943	24.020	18.884
	mean	10.843	13.323	15.943	20.130	22.087	16.465
P <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	12.003	14.220	15.770	18.347	28.753	17.819
	B <sub>1</sub>	15.410	19.360	28.660	30.630	33.717	25.555
	mean	13.707	16.790	22.215	24.488	31.235	21.687
Grand mean		12.275	15.057	19.079	22.309	26.661	
Means of Bio fertilizer ( B )							Mean
B <sub>0</sub>		10.847	12.562	13.970	17.832	24.453	15.933
B <sub>1</sub>		13.703	17.552	24.188	26.787	28.868	22.220

LSD :0.05:- N=0.525, B=0.332, P=0.332 , NB= 0.742 , NP=0.742 , BP=0.469 , NBP=1.050

N sources : N<sub>0</sub> : no N, N<sub>1</sub> :Urea, N<sub>2</sub>: Urea formaldehyde, N<sub>3</sub>: Sulfur Coated Urea and N<sub>4</sub> :compost ;biofertilization with inoculation seeds with azosirillum braiseuse

### Effect on K uptake

Table 8 demonstrates that K uptake by wheat grains was significantly increased owing to the treatments biofertilizer inoculation, spraying plants with proline and amending soil with N. The results recommend that the combination of N as fertilizer or compost, applied biofertilizer inoculant and spraying with proline could increase K uptake values by the grains of wheat plants grown on a saline sodic soil.

**Table 8: K uptake (kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) by grains as affected by N-source , bio-fertilizer and proline .**

Proline	Bio fertilizer	N- source					Mean
		<sub>0</sub> N	<sub>1</sub> N	<sub>2</sub> N	<sub>3</sub> N	<sub>4</sub> N	
P <sub>0</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	61.33	67.34	70.62	92.79	107.57	79.93
	B <sub>1</sub>	71.57	84.28	103.86	109.38	114.89	96.79
	mean	66.45	75.81	87.24	101.09	111.23	88.36
P <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>0</sub>	74.13	79.68	90.37	94.97	143.57	96.55
	B <sub>1</sub>	89.58	98.70	135.53	143.36	149.26	123.29
	mean	81.86	89.19	112.95	119.17	146.42	109.92
Grand mean		74.15	82.51	100.11	110.13	128.82	
Means of Bio fertilizer ( B )							Mean
B <sub>0</sub>		67.73	73.51	80.51	93.88	125.57	88.24
B <sub>1</sub>		80.58	91.49	119.69	126.37	132.08	110.04

LSD :0.05:- N=0.681, B=0.430, P=0.430 , NB=0.962 , NP=0.962 , BP=0.609 , NBP=1.361

N sources : N<sub>0</sub> : no N, N<sub>1</sub> :Urea, N<sub>2</sub>: Urea formaldehyde, N<sub>3</sub>: Sulfur Coated Urea and N<sub>4</sub> :compost ;biofertilization with inoculation seeds with azosirillum braiseuse

## Discussion

Wheat growth and grain yield are negatively affected under saline conditions (Grewal, 2010). Thus increasing crop tolerance for salinity is an important approach for maximizing the crop yield and (Rana Munns *et al.*, 2006). Minimizing the uptake of nutrients by wheat can improve its growth under the saline conditions (Munns *et al.*, 2012). Three approaches were examined in this study to increase the plant tolerance for soil salinity by inoculation with *Azospirillum brasiliense*, spraying plants with proline and N application by mineral and organic sources fulfilled plant needs for nutrients. Proline was found in high concentrations in many plant species as compatible solute under stress conditions (Ashraf *et al.*, 2012; Khan *et al.*, 2009; Lehmann *et al.*, 2010; Szabados and Saviouré, 2010). Thus it can be deduced that spraying plants with proline under stress conditions might be effective for increasing plant tolerance for salinity. Results by others indicate that spraying wheat with proline increased the yield and yield components (EL-Mancy, 1994). Inoculating wheat plants with *Azospirillum brasilense* was found to be effective for improving the growth performance under soil saline conditions (Nabti *et al.* (2010). Mechanisms for increasing plant tolerance for salinity is not well understood. It probably improved nutrient and water uptake, growth promotion and stimulation of plant metabolism (Dodd and Pérez-Alfocea, 2012). *Azospirillum brasilense* is able to fix nitrogen (Fibach-Paldi *et al.*, 2012) and improve the N uptake, total biomass and grain yield of wheat plants (Panwar and Singh, 2000). The urea fertilizer seemed to be of relatively less efficiency on growth performance of wheat. Urea is rapidly hydrolyzed in soil into  $\text{NH}_4^+$  (Latifah *et al.*, 2011), thus increasing to some extent the soil salinity. and also suffering of plant from salinity. Results by others indicate that nitrate and ammonium amendments were of little effect on wheat growth under saline conditions (Lewis *et al.*, 1989), thus the use of sulfur coated urea can successfully retard urea hydrolysis in soil (Patra *et al.*, 2009), The current results confirm the importance of amending soil with compost to increase plant tolerance to salinity and improve wheat performance. Hussain *et al.* (2001) found that the compost applied to a sodic soil increased wheat yield.

## CONCLUSION

Inoculation of wheat seeds + N application " as mineral or organic + inoculation proline spray had more significant positive effects on grain yield and NPK uptake. Their effects in increasing plant tolerance seemed cumulative. *Azospirillum* bacteria accumulated compatible solutes as a mechanism to increase plant tolerance for salinity (Tripathi *et al.*, 1998).

Amending the saline soils with compost is important to increase yield of wheat.

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## توجهات كيمياويه و حيويه لتحسين انتاجيه القمح تحت ظروف الارض الملحيه الصوديه

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يمثل هذا البحث محاوله نحو تحسين انتاجيه القمح النامى على ارض ملحيه - صوديه فى منطقه سهل الطينه بشمال سينا .  
و قد اتبعت 3 سبل لتحقيق ذلك . كل من هذه السبل يهدف الى زياده مقاومه النبات للموحه .  
وقد تضمنت اولى السبل امداد النبات باحتياجاته من النتروجين من مصادر مختلفه و هى النتروجين الجاهز للاستفاده ( اليوريا ) & النتروجين بطىء الانطلاق ( اليوريا فورمالدهيد & اليوريا المغطاء بالكبريت ) بجانب سماد الكموره ( الكميوست ) لبقايا النباتات اما ثانى السبل فقد تضمن تلقيح حبوب القمح ببكتريا Azospirillum brasilense رقم 40 ( وهى بكتريا مقاومه للموحه ) .  
بينما ثالث السبل فقد تضمن رش النباتات بالبرولين .  
و قد اوضحت النتائج ان جميع السبل التى اتبعت قد نجحت عند استخدام اى منها منفردا فى زياده انتاجيه القمح ومع ذلك فان المعامله المكونه من الكميوست + التلقيح بالبكتريا سالفه الذكر + رش النباتات بالبرولين كانت فائقه الاهميه فى تعظيم انتاجيه الحبوب و زياده الممتص من العناصر المغذيه ( النتروجين & الفوسفور & البوتاسيوم & الحديد & المنجنيز & الزنك ) .

قام بتحكيم البحث

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