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PROMOTING GROWTH AND TUBER FORMATION OF POTATO PRODUCTION AT LOWLAND BENGKULU BY APPLYING ANTI-GA (GIBERELIC ACID) AND LOWERING SOIL TEMPERATURES

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ABSTRACT

The overall goal of this experiment was to establish a technology for growing potato at the low elevation. There were three groups of experiment with its own separate objective. The first experiment was to determine the best time (1, 2, 3, and 4 week after emergence) for applying retardant at their effective concentration (4 ppm ANZ, 1200 ppm CCC, 50 ppm COU, and 4000 ppm PBZ) for promoting potato tuber formation. The second experiment was to determine the best combination of time for watering potato crops and time for applying retardant (Coumarin) to promote tuber formation. The third experiment was to find out the best mulch type in reducing soil temperatures. Results showed that each retardant had its own best timing for application, 12:00 WIB was the best time for watering potato crops, irrigation significantly reduce maximum soil temperatures, and silver mulch along with organic mulches were the best mulches for reducing maximum soil temperature.

INTRODUCTION

The centre production for potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) in Indonesian generally take places in highland altitude, such as Pengalengan, Lembang, and Cipanas (West Java), Dieng Highland (Cebtral Java), Batu (East Java), Brastagi (North Sumatera), and South Sulawesi highland (International Potato Center, 2001). This is agronomically well-understood since potato plants will optimally produce its tuber at the temperature of 17-20 °C (Haynes *et al.*, 1988; Stark and Love, 2003; Suharjo, 2006). Several Indonesian researchers, however, have tried to develop technology production of potato in lower altitude in order to increase national production of potato (Sutater *et al.*, 1987; Syarif, 2004; Wicaksana, 2001). Unfortunately, the results were unable to answer whether potato grown in lowland produces tubers as good as highland potato production.

According to Suharjo (2006) the main constraint for potato production in lowland altitudes is related to high temperatures, particularly night temperatures and soil temperatures. At high temperatures, the tuber formation (change from stolon to tuber) is significantly (Stark and Love, 2003), and increases the biosynthesis of gibberellic acid (GA) in leaf buds (Menzel, 1983). It has been well reported that GA inhibited the tuber formation (Vreugdenhil *et al.*, 1998). Many researchers, however, reported that the negative effects of GA can be removed by anti GA applications, such as CCC (Menzel, 1980; Mardalena, 2006), Ancymidol (Escalante and Langille, 1998), Paclobutrazol (Wang and Langille, 2005), or Coumarine (Andrianie, 2006). High temperatures also has been well-known to increase crop respiration, decrease rate of photosynthesis, decrease assimilate partitioning to roots and tubers, decrease sucrose conversion to starch (Reynold *et al.*, 1990; Sarquis *et al.*, 1996). These all significantly inhibit growth and tuber formation of potato plants.

High temperature decreased potato production by inhibiting starch synthesis in the tuber (Krauss and Marcheshner, 1984) or decrease the assimilate partitioning to tuber (Basu and Minhas, 1991), and increase assimilate partitioning the above-ground parts (Gawronska *et al.*, 1992). In addition, high air temperatures (30-35 °C) have bigger negative effects to the tuber formation than high soil temperatures do (Ewing and Struik, 1992). High soil temperatures will not inhibit the signaling for tuber formation, it will



inhibit the development of stolon to become tuber (Jackson, 1999). It is therefore crucially important to decrease temperatures in potato's rizosphere for lowland potato production.

Research conducted by Ewing and Struik (1992); Fernie and Willmitzer (2001); Jackson (1999) indicated that mode of action of tuber formation inhibition by high temperature takes place as a result of increased GA in stolon. This result was confirmed by the applications biosynthesis inhibitor anti-GAs, such as chloroethyltrimethylammonium chloride (CCC) (Jackson, 1999), ancymidol (Jackson and Prat, 1996; Escalante and Langille, 1998). Paclobutrazol and CCC (Kusmawati, 2006), as well as Coumarine (Andriani, 2006) to minimize the negative effects high temperatures.

It is also important to mention, however, that anti-GA may reduced potato growth when it is applied inappropriately. *In vitro* research conducted by Kusmawati, 2006) reported that when CCC is applied at the early stage of potato growth, potato grew well at 0 ppm CCC, decreased at 250 ppm, and completely stopped at 750 ppm, either at 18 °C or 25 °C air temperatures. However, when it is applied on six-week old explants, CCC increased the total tuber number. This increased was getting better at higher concentrations, particularly at high temperatures. Similar results were also reported when coumarine (Andriani, 2006) and the combinations of CCC and cytokinin (Mardalena, 2006) were applied. Those results indicated that the time of anti-GA application is very important to be determined in order to get good tuber formations at high temperature condition. Since GA biosynthesis takes place in leaf buds (Menzel, 1983), the application of anti-GA should be more effective through foliar application would be more efficient than through soil or irrigation. However, which technique is more efficient has not been well documented and need to be further investigated.

The objectives of this experiment are (a) to determine the proper time of application of growth retardants with effective concentration b) to determine the type mulch that effective to decrease the rizosphere temperatures, and c) to determine the effective time for growth retardant application and time of watering to promote tuber formation and development.

METHODS

Serial experiments were conducted in the screen-house and experimental site of Agronomy laboratory, faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Bengkulu from February to October 2008. The experiments were arranged in bi-factorial Randomized Completely Design. This experiment used recommended concentrations of growth retardant from the previous *in vitro* experiments at 30/25 °C, i.e., 4 ppm Ancymidol, 4000 ppm Paclobutrazol, 1200 ppm CCC, and 50 ppm Coumarin. Data were analyzed with Analysis of Variance and DMRT at 5%.

(1) Evaluation of time of growth retardant's application. Four types of growth retardant with its respective effective concentration were applied to potato plants grown in polybag at 1, 2, 3, and 4 weeks after emergence.

(2). Evaluation of growth retardant application and time of watering. Four types of growth retardant with its respective effective concentration were applied to potato plants grown in polybag at 1, 2, 3, and 4 weeks after emergence in combinations with time of plant watering.

(3). Evaluation of mulch application. Plastic mulches (red plastic mulch, transparent plastic mulch, black plastic mulch, and black-silvered plastic mulch), and organic mulches (rice straw and hulk) were used to reduce rizosphere temperatures of potato plants grown in polybags at 10 m altitude.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Time of Growth Retardant Application

Results indicated that four weeks after plant emergence could be considered as the ideal time for application the applications of growth retardant to promote tuber growth and formation (Table 1), except for Ancymidol (4 ppm) can be applied at anytime. Four-weeks old of potato plants generally have 6-8 leaves where foliar application of retardant could effectively absorbed by plants.

Table 1. Effects of growth retardant and time of retardant applications on tuber formation (tuber number)

Type of Growth Retardant	Time of application (weeks after emergence)			
	1	2	3	4
Ancymidol	7.1 c	8.3 d	8.4 d	8.7 d
Paclobutrazol	3.7 a	4.1 a	3.9 a	5.7 b
CCC	5.3 b	7.6 c	7.9 cd	7.2 c
Coumarin	5.9 bc	5.0 ab	5.6 b	5.7 b
Average	5.4	6.3	6.5	6.8

Mean treatments followed by the same letter in the same column are not significantly different according to DMRT at 5 %

Table 2. Effects of growth retardant and time of retardant applications on total tuber weight (g)

Type of Growth Retardant	Time of application (weeks after emergence)			
	1	2	3	4
Ancymidol	4.64 a	4.22 a	2.21 b	2.41 b
Paclobutrazol	3.72 a	4.13 a	0.00 b	0.00 b
CCC	5.12 a	3.81 ab	2.61 b	3.13 ab
Coumarin	4.34 a	3.12 b	0.00 b	0.00 c
Average	4.43	5.3	2.41	2.77

Mean treatments followed by the same letter in the same column are not significantly different according to DMRT at 5 %

Table 3. Effects of growth retardant and time of applications on tuber diameter (cm)

Type of Growth Retardant	Time of application (weeks after emergence)			
	1	2	3	4
Ancymidol	1.21 a	1.16 a	0.53 b	0.65 b
Paclobutrazol	1.00 a	0.88 a	0.00 c	0.00 b
CCC	0.34 b	0.29 b	0.67 a	0.23 b
Coumarin	0.72 a	1.15 b	0.00 b	0.00 c
Average	0.82		0.23	0.22

Mean treatments followed by the same letter in the same column are not significantly different according to DMRT at 5 %

Combination between Time of Growth Retardant Application and Watering

Watering significantly decreased the maximum rizosphere temperatures, but not the minimum temperatures (Table 4). Although the minimum temperatures did not decrease, time of watering significantly affected the number and the quality of tubers (Table 5 and Figure 1).



We recommend that retardants be applied at four weeks after plant emergence, e combined with day time irrigation, as well as by using the organic mulch or black-silvered plastic mulch.

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