

1 **Integration of biochar and chemical fertilizer to enhance quality of soil and**
2 **wheat crop (*Triticum aestivum* L.)**

3 **Running title: Effect of biochar and fertilizer on soil**

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21 Abstract

22 A wide variety of soil amendments like manures, compost, humic acid and bio-sorbents
23 have been used to make nutrients available to crops as well as to protect them from toxic
24 elements. Among soil amendments, biochar has been known to improve soil crumping, soil
25 nutrients' availability to plants and ultimately the yield of crops. A field experiment was
26 conducted by using biochar prepared from *Dalbergia sissoo* Roxb. wood by brick batch process.
27 Two doses of biochar were applied to soil 0 and 12 t ha⁻¹. Fertilizer rates used in the experiments
28 were 25% recommended doses of fertilizers (RDF), 50% RDF, 75% RDF and 100% RDF alone
29 & with biochar applied under two factorial randomized complete block design in natural field
30 conditions (RDF of NPK fertilizer is 120-60-60 kg ha⁻¹). Soil physico-chemical properties viz.,
31 bulk density, particle density, porosity, pH, electrical conductivity, organic matter, soil organic
32 carbon, total nitrogen, available phosphorus, available potassium, soil organic carbon, soil
33 microbial biomass carbon and soil microbial biomass nitrogen were measured from the soil
34 samples collected from 0-30 cm depth. All these parameters varied significantly among the
35 treatments. A combined treatment of biochar and 50% of the recommended dose of NPK was
36 most effective for soil conditioning. Agronomic parameters were also measured by standard
37 methods. Due to chelation of heavy metal ions and availability of nutrients to the soil, yield of
38 the crop may significantly increase due to cumulative treatment of fertilizer and biochar but upto
39 a certain limit.

40 **Key words:** Biochar, Soil organic matter, Wheat, Natural Conditions

41 **Introduction**

42 Heavy metal deposition in plant and soils could be attributed to the municipal wastes,
43 industrial effluents and also wax layer characteristics on the leaf (Khalil et al., 2011; Murtaza et
44 al., 2003). However most of heavy metal toxicity to plants is attributed by soils (Younis et al.,
45 2015). High metal concentrations plant toxicity can result in disturbing metabolism and
46 photosynthesis (Zhao & Bi, 1999)

47 Soil organic matter (SOM) have significant effect on soil physico-chemical health,
48 sequestration of carbon, controlling land erosion and protecting land from degradation (Galantini
49 & Rossel, 2005). Soil microbial biomass carbon (SMBC), microbial activity and mineral
50 transport are significantly affected by SOM (Carter et al., 1991). Organic matter decompositions
51 are certainly rapid in tropic and arid to semiarid regions because of high decomposition rates and
52 mineralization of SOM (Haron et al., 1997).

53 Addition of soil amendments helps to retain nutrients in soil. Biochar is more effective
54 than other organic amendments in retaining and making nutrients available to plants for a long
55 time. Among soil organic amendments, biochar is considered more stable nutrient source than
56 others (Chen et al., 2007). Biochar is the product of thermal decomposition of organic materials
57 under oxygen stress conditions and high temperature. It is applied to soil to achieve
58 environmental benefits, like decreasing CO₂ gas emissions (Lehmann & Joseph, 2009). Its
59 application to soil is an approach to decrease CO₂ emissions and to mitigate global climate
60 change (Woolf et al., 2010). Its surface area and complex pore structure are hospitable to bacteria
61 and fungi that plants need to absorb nutrients from the soil. Moreover, biochar is a more stable
62 nutrient source than compost and manure (Cheng et al., 2006). Properties of biochar depend

63 upon the selection of biomass for biochar production which in turn decides the carbon (C) inputs
64 in soil (Jeffery et al., 2013). Biochar produced at low temperature are more prone to rapid
65 degradation in soil than those that produced at higher temperature and generally biochar
66 produced from grasses are more degradable than that produced from hard wood (Zimmerman et
67 al., 2011). Organic carbon contents in biochar have been reported up to 90%, depending upon its
68 feedstock which enhances carbon sequestration in soil (Yin & Xu, 2009).

69 Biochar application on soil and crop as well as its effect on the nitrogen (N) cycle also
70 proved helpful (Anderson et al., 2011). Biochar have potential to improve the growth and action
71 of microorganisms which are directly or indirectly involved in soil N cycling. So, due to the
72 activation of microorganisms it can mineralize complex soil organic carbon (SOC), and can
73 enhance the effect of biochar application effect on native SOC (Belay-Tedla et al., 2009).
74 Biochar application could also increase net microbial immobilization of inorganic N because
75 biochar comprise by small labile C fractions with high C:N ratio (Deluca et al., 2009).

76 Wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) is a major cereal crop and staple food in Pakistan. Wheat has
77 the prime importance in all agricultural policies of the government. It contributes around 10.1%
78 value addition in agriculture with 2.2% share in GDP of Pakistan (Economic survey of Pakistan,
79 2015). Based upon the significance of wheat and biochar this experiment was conducted to find
80 out the cumulative effect of biochar along with different rates of fertilizer improves on SOM
81 pools by improving microbial biomass accumulation, its effect on soil physico-chemical
82 properties and yield of wheat crop.

83 **Materials and methods**

84 **Experimental site and climate**

85 A field experiment was conducted to study the influence of biochar and chemical
86 fertilizer on soil physical and chemical parameters. Its effect on growth and yield of wheat crop
87 (*Triticum aestivum* L.) was also studied at the farm of Institute of Soil and Environmental
88 Sciences, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan (31.25° N, 73.09° E). Two factorial
89 randomized complete block design was used for this study. Soil of the experimental area was
90 classified as a well-drained hafizabad loam, mixed, semi-active, iso-hyperthermic typic
91 calciargids having pH value of 7.8.

92 **Field experiment**

93 Field was ploughed and prepared before application of biochar and fertilizer. Soil
94 composite samples were taken at random with auger before sowing and at harvest from (0–30 cm
95 depth) from each experimental unit. The soil samples were air dried, ground, well mixed and
96 passed through a 2 mm sieve and analyzed for different characteristics. All macro-nutrients i.e.
97 nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK) and biochar amendments were applied in respective
98 experimental unit plots at different doses and mixed thoroughly. Recommended dose for
99 nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium is 120 kg/ha, 60 kg/ha and 60 kg/ha, respectively which was
100 referred as F₄. Urea was used as a nitrogen source, while SSP was used as phosphorus and SOP
101 was used as potassium sources. Five different levels viz., 0%, 25%, 50% and 75% of the
102 recommended dose of NPK, and the original recommended dose of NPK were used in the
103 experiment. Different doses applied in each plot were: no NPK at 0% level referred as F₀;
104 nitrogen (30 Kg/ha), phosphorus (15 Kg/ha) and potassium (15 Kg/ha) were used at 25% level of
105 the recommended dose referred as F₁. Similarly nitrogen (60 Kg/ha), phosphorus (30 Kg/ha) and
106 potassium (30 Kg/ha) were used at 50% level of the recommended dose referred as F₂; while
107 nitrogen (90 Kg/ha), phosphorus (45 Kg/ha) and potassium (45 Kg/ha) were used at 75% level of

108 the recommended dose referred as F₃. Recommended dose for nitrogen, phosphorus and
109 potassium was referred as F₄. Recommended rate of biochar was 12 ha⁻¹ so two levels of biochar
110 were used in the experiment which were referred as B₀ (0%) and B₁ (recommended dose). All the
111 possible combinations of fertilizer and biochar gave rise to ten treatments i.e. B₀F₀, B₀F₁, B₀F₂,
112 B₀F₃, B₀F₄, B₁F₀, B₁F₁, B₁F₂, B₁F₃ and B₁F₄. Each treatment was replicated four times. Size of
113 each experimental unit was 3.66×2.44 m². Wheat crop (cultivar “Faisalabad-2008”) was sown
114 using manual hand drill at the rate of 50 kg per acre in each experimental unit. Recommended
115 cultural and plant protection measures were adopted. The crop was grown up to maturity and the
116 following parameters were recorded.

117 **Biochar production**

118 Wood of *Dalbergia sissoo* was selected as feedstock. Feedstock was pyrolyzed using
119 brick batch process (Brown, 2009) with estimated pyrolysis temperature of 500°C and residence
120 time of 6 hours. After that biochar was ground and sieved through 2 mm sieve and stored in
121 plastic bags.

122 **Physicochemical characterization of Biochar**

123 The pH and electrical conductivity (EC) of biochar in distilled water (1:20, w/v) was
124 measured by the use of pH and EC meters. Ash contents were determined according to D-3173
125 method (ASTM, 2006). For this purpose, soil sample (1.0 g) added in the ceramic crucible and
126 spread evenly. The oven was run at the rate of 5 K / min to 106 °C to constant mass. Then
127 temperature was increased with 5 K / min to 550 °C. This temperature was hold for 30 minute till
128 constant mass. The ash content was determined by the formula:

$$\% \text{ Ash} = \frac{\text{Weight}_{\text{crucible + ash}} - \text{Weight}_{\text{crucible}}}{\text{Oven Dry Weight}} \times 100$$

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 133 A Vario Micro Cube Elemental Analyzer was used for carbon, hydrogen and nitrogen
 134 (CHN) analysis. Soil sample (100 mg) of the pre-dried and crushed sample was weighed directly
 135 (relative precision 0.1%) into a tin capsule. After that the capsule was closed and put in the
 136 machine for measurement. The CHN analyzer determines the carbon content, the hydrogen
 137 content and the nitrogen content in mass percent (ASTM, 2006). Phosphorus in the biochar
 138 sample was determined by colorimetric method. Spectrophotometer was used for analysis.
 139 Amount of light absorbed by the solution at wavelength 410 nm was measured and compared
 140 with standard curve (Olsen & Sommers, 1982). Potassium was determined using flame
 141 photometer. For that a series of standards of KCl were prepared and standard curve was drawn.
 142 Flame photometer reading was compared with standard curve graph and potassium was
 143 determined (Richards, 1954). Cation exchange capacity (CEC) was determined by saturating
 144 biochar (4g) with 1 N solution of CH_3COONa (pH 8.2). Afterwards, it was washed thrice with
 145 ethanol and finally extracted with 1 N solution of $\text{CH}_3\text{COONH}_4$ (pH 7.0). Sodium in the extract
 146 was determined with the help of PFP-7 flame photometer using Na^+ filter (Rhoades, 1982;
 147 Richards, 1954). The CEC was calculated from following formula:

$$\text{CEC (cmol}_c \text{ kg}^{-1}) = \frac{\text{Na (mmol}_c \text{ L}^{-1})}{1000} \times \frac{100}{\text{Weight of biochar}} \times 100$$

151 Bulk density of biochar was determined by core sampler's method as described by
 152 (Blake & Hartage, 1986). The core sampler was filled and pressed with sample. Volume of
 153 the sample was determined after 10 times compression by means of falling. Lid of core was

154 closed carefully. Biochar was oven dried at 105°C to a constant weight, cooled and weighed.

155 Biochar volume was then taken equal to inner volume of the core sampler ($\pi r^2 h$).

$$\begin{aligned} 156 & \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{(Mass of oven dried Biochar)} \\ 157 & \qquad \text{Bulk density} = \frac{\qquad \qquad \qquad}{\qquad \qquad \qquad} \\ 158 & \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{(Volume of Biochar including pore spaces)} \end{aligned}$$

159 Biochars particle density was determined by using pycnometer method (Blake, 1965).

160 A known mass of biochar was put into 100 ml volumetric flask which was then placed into

161 the pycnometer. After that we poured the water into the pycnometer up to the mark. Known

162 mass of water (equal to the volume of the water) was poured into the flask. Biochar partial

163 volume was determined by subtracting the volume of the water poured from 100 ml.

$$\begin{aligned} 164 & \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{(Mass of oven dried Biochar)} \\ 165 & \qquad \text{Particle density} = \frac{\qquad \qquad \qquad}{\qquad \qquad \qquad} \\ 166 & \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{(Volume of Biochar excluding pore spaces)} \end{aligned}$$

167 **Soil sampling**

168 A composite soil sample at the depth of 0–30 cm was obtained from 3 sub samples

169 collected using a core sampler from each treatment plot. Soil samples were collected after the

170 harvesting of crop at three points from each treatment plot. Samples for each depth were

171 composited, placed in tagged plastic bags and dried at room temperature. These samples were air

172 dried grinded and sieved through 2 mm sieve in the laboratory for physio-chemical analysis.

173 **Soil analysis**

174 Soil bulk density, particle density and CEC was determined as for measuring biochar

175 bulk density, particle density and CEC analysis. Soil porosity (%) was calculated by using the

176 following formula (Blake & Hartage, 1986).

$$\text{Porosity } (\phi) = \left[1 - \frac{\text{(Bulk density)}}{\text{(Particle density)}} \right] \times 100$$

Soil organic carbon was determined at up to 30 cm depths by titration method following the method described by (Ryan et al., 2001). Soil pH and EC was determined by pH meter and EC (dS m^{-1}) was measured by using Jenway Conductivity meter Model-4070 (Mckeague, 1978; Mclean, 1982). Formula for determination of EC is given below:

$$K = \frac{1.4118 \text{ dSm}^{-1}}{\text{EC of 0.01 NKCl}(\text{dSm}^{-1})}$$

The SMBC and MBN were determined by fumigation-extraction method (Brookes et al., 1985; Vance et al., 1987). Briefly, soil samples were fumigated with chloroform to the extent to kill all microbes present in the soil sample. The fumigated samples were inoculated with 1.0 g of unfumigated same soil sample. Both fumigated and unfumigated soil samples were incubated in the presence of NaOH solution. The amount of CO_2 evolved was measured by titrating the NaOH solution against standard HCl solution. The amount of mineral N was also measured both in fumigated and unfumigated samples. The amount of MBC and MBN were calculated as described by (Shah et al., 2010)

Plant sampling and analysis

Plant height, spike length, number of tillers, number of spikelets, biomass yield, grain weight and harvest index were measured from an area of $1 \times 1 \text{ m}^2$. At maturity, wheat was harvested from an area of $1 \times 1 \text{ m}^2$ per plot. The fresh weight was determined in the field. The samples of grains and straws were kept at 65°C for 48 h, and then their dry weight was obtained.

Statistical analysis

199 Statistical analysis of the data was carried out using two factorial RCBD. Analysis of
200 variance and post ANOVA analysis was carried out on Statistix 8.1. (Analytical software. 2005)

201 **Results**

202 Different parameters of biochar and soil without biochar before starting the experiment
203 are given in table 1 and table 2.

204 **Soil pH**

205 Soil pH was significantly different among soil samples of different treatments. Highest
206 soil pH (8.06 ± 0.01) was found in the experimental unit having B_1F_2 treatment while the lowest
207 was found in B_0F_4 i.e. 7.59 ± 0.02 ($P=0.004$, $F=7.73$, $DF=24$) (Table 3).

208 **Electrical Conductivity**

209 Similarly, soil EC also varied significantly in soil samples obtained from different
210 treatments. Highest EC i.e. 0.52 ± 0.02 dSm^{-1} was found in B_1F_1 and the lowest was in $B_0 F_1$ viz.
211 0.29 ± 0.00 dSm^{-1} ($P=0.00$, $F=47.79$, $DF=24$) (Table 3).

212 **Cation exchange capacity**

213 Regarding cation exchange capacity (CEC), a bell shaped trend was observed i.e.
214 increase in value to optimum and then decline. Highest soil CEC viz. 24.26 ± 0.04 $cmol_c kg^{-1}$ was
215 observed in B_1F_2 and the lowest was in B_0F_3 i.e. 17.27 ± 0.01 $cmol_c kg^{-1}$ ($P=0.04$, $F=1.02$, $DF=24$)
216 (Table 3).

217 **Organic matter**

218 Organic matter contents were directly proportional with the amount of biochar while
219 inversely proportional to the amount of fertilizer. Highest organic matter contents ($1.07 \pm 0.02\%$)

220 were calculated from the treatment receiving biochar amendments alone i.e. B₀F₁ and lowest
221 organic matter contents (0.58±0.01%) were found in B₀F₄ (P=0.00, F=155.34, DF=24) (Table 3).

222 **Soil microbial biomass carbon**

223 The SMBC was directly proportional to the amount of fertilizer and biochar. Concluding,
224 highest SMBC (245.20±0.38) was calculated in B₁F₄ and lowest amount of SMBC
225 (136.63±0.82) was found in B₀F₀ (P=0.00, F=113.86, DF=24) (Table 3).

226 **Soil microbial biomass nitrogen**

227 The SMBN was directly proportional to the amount of biochar (only). Highest SMBN
228 calculated was in treatment B₁F₁ i.e. 77.17±0.26 mg/kg and lowest SMBN was in B₀F₀ i.e.
229 44.13±0.42 mg/kg (P=0.00, F=96.19, DF=24) (Table 3).

230 **Plant height**

231 Plant height increased with increase in biochar and fertilizer upto an extent after that they
232 depicted less or even negative effect on plant height. Highest plant height was found in B₁F₂ viz.
233 107.75±1.44 cm m⁻², while lowest plant height was found in B₀F₁ i.e. 99.35±1.65 cm m⁻²
234 (P=0.04, F=2.79, DF=24) (Table 4).

235 **Spike length**

236 Like that of plant height, spike length also increased with increase in biochar and
237 fertilizer upto an extent after that less or even negative effect was observed. Highest spike length
238 was recorded in B₁F₂ i.e. 10.65±0.18 cm m⁻² and lowest spike length viz. 8.10±0.42 cm m⁻² was
239 observed in B₀F₀ (P=0.02, F=3.30, DF=24) (Table 4).

240 **Number of tillers**

241 A fashion similar to plant height and spike length, was observed in case of number of
242 tillers. Highest numbers of tillers i.e. $592.13 \pm 0.45 \text{ m}^{-2}$ were counted from the treatment plot B_1F_2
243 while lowest numbers of tillers viz. $419.95 \pm 0.51 \text{ m}^{-2}$ were found in B_0F_1 ($P=0.00$, $F=14.31$,
244 $DF=24$) (Table 4).

245 **Number of spikelets**

246 Though numbers of spikelets were directly proportional to combined treatment of biochar
247 and fertilizer but upto an extent. Highest number of spikelets $27.07 \pm 0.42 \text{ m}^{-2}$ were recorded in
248 B_1F_3 while the minimum number of spikelets $20.125 \pm 0.43 \text{ m}^{-2}$ were found in B_0F_1 ($P=0.00$,
249 $F=11.64$, $DF=24$) (Table 4).

250 **Biomass yield**

251 A trend similar to plant height was also found in biomass yield i.e. increased to an extent
252 with increase in amount of combined treatment of biochar and fertilizer. Highest biomass yield
253 i.e. $14.65 \pm 0.40 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ was calculated from the experimental plot treated with B_1F_3 and lowest was
254 in B_0F_1 ($9.80 \pm 0.42 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$) ($P=0.00$, $F=789.16$, $DF=24$) (Table 4).

255 **Grain weight**

256 Grain weight, also, increased to an extent with increase in amount of combined treatment
257 of biochar and fertilizer. Grain weight was highest i.e. $3.68 \pm 0.05 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ in plot treated with B_1F_3
258 treatment which gradually decreased to minimum in B_0F_0 ($2.60 \pm 0.04 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$) ($P=0.00$, $F=213.64$,
259 $DF=24$) (Table 4).

260 **Harvest Index**

261 Harvest index firstly increased up to certain limit i.e. B_1F_2 where $0.32 \pm 0.02\%$ was
262 observed which afterwards decreased to minimum i.e. $0.20 \pm 0.03\%$ in plot treated with B_1F_4
263 ($P=0.00$, $F=2051.00$, $DF=24$) (Table 4).

264 **Discussion**

265 Biochar addition may cause significant decrease in bulk density (Laird et al., 2010; Jones
266 et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2011). This decreased bulk density may improve porosity and soil water
267 holding capacity (Briggs et al., 2005). Biochar application can significantly enhance the soil
268 meso-porosity at the expense of macro porosity in soil (Jones et al., 2010).

269 Many researchers had reported increase in soil pH due to biochar introduction (Laird et
270 al., 2010; Peng et al., 2011). Increase in pH increase not only improve soil health but also
271 improve plant growth due to higher availability of nutrients (Brady & Weil, 2008).

272 It was observed that with the aging of biochar soil EC improves and it decreases with
273 time. Application of biochar with high ash content increase soil EC (Renner, 2007).

274 Increase in soil meso-porosity or increased weathering at the expense of macro porosity
275 strongly influences CEC of soil (Cheng et al., 2006; Yamato et al., 2006), but it is not a fact in all
276 types of soil or conditions (Novak et al., 2009).

277 Inorganic fertilization is necessary to obtain higher yields but it has very little positive
278 impact on organic matter. It may increase mineralization rate which cause decline in soil organic
279 matter (Lal, 2003). It may also favor positive response to improve microbial populations and
280 organic matter mineralization (Balesdent et al., 1998). However, biochar addition to soil is
281 important for the C sequestration and soil fertility, and having residence time up to millennial in
282 soil (Kumar et al., 2013).

283 Biochar has a habitable pore area therefore biochar is considered favorable for microbial
284 habitation (Strong et al., 1998). Accumulation of organic substances (biochar) at surface soil
285 provides a substrate for microorganism that result in higher rates of SMBC (Balota et al., 2004).

286 A cumulative application of biochar and inorganic fertilizer is more effective for
287 beneficial microbes in soil (Wardle et al., 2008; Brunn et al., 2011).

288 Plant height may increase due to more phosphorus availability, enhanced root growth and
289 increased nutrient adsorption (Hussain et al., 2006). It can also be attributed to improved
290 phosphorus availability (Asai et al., 2009; Abdullah et al., 2008). Biochar can increase crop
291 growth and productivity (Spokas et al., 2010). Spike length, plant height and tillers also increase
292 with increase of chemical fertilizers but upto a limit (Hussain et al., 2006; Asai et al., 2009).
293 Biochar also can significantly increase crop growth and productivity (Spokas et al., 2010).
294 Biochar addition may also increase biomass of crops (Van Zwieten et al., 2007). Nitrogen
295 fertilizer and biochar together can increase the wheat biomass and grain yield (Ayub et al., 2002;
296 Blackwell et al., 2010; Solaiman et al., 2010).

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448 **Table 1.** Analysis of different parameters of biochar
 449

Biochar parameter	UNIT	VALUE
pH	-	8.85
EC	dS m ⁻¹	0.738
CEC	cmol _c kg ⁻¹	132.8
Bulk density (ρ_b)	Mg m ⁻³	0.38
Particle density (ρ_p)	Mg m ⁻³	1.58
Porosity	%	75.95
Ash contents	%	27.2
Total carbon	%	49.71
Total hydrogen	%	8.05
Total nitrogen	g kg ⁻¹	1.03
Total phosphorus	g kg ⁻¹	2.06
Total potassium	g kg ⁻¹	9.21

459 **Table 2.** Pre soil analysis of different soil parameters

Soil parameter	UNIT	VALUE
Texture class	-	Loam
Bulk density (ρ_b)	Mg m ⁻³	1.42
Particle density (ρ_p)	Mg m ⁻³	2.61
Porosity	%	45.59
pH	-	7.83
EC	dS m ⁻¹	0.41
CEC	cmol _c kg ⁻¹	17.30
Organic matter	%	0.69
Soil Microbial Biomass carbon	mg kg ⁻¹	136.6
Soil Microbial Biomass nitrogen	mg kg ⁻¹	44.13

460 **Table 3.** Soil chemical parameters recorded at different combined applications of chemical fertilizers and biochar

Sr. No. Treatments		Soil chemical parameters					
		Organic matter (%)	Soil microbial biomass carbon mg/kg	Soil microbial biomass nitrogen mg/kg	CEC cmol _c kg ⁻¹	pH	EC dSm ⁻¹
1	B ₀ F ₁	0.65±0.03fg	138.85±0.61h	58.13±0.43e	17.35±0.01c	7.70±0.02c	0.29±0.00f
2	B ₀ F ₂	0.64±0.02gh	157.15±0.86g	63.12±0.44d	17.34±0.00c	7.67±0.02bc	0.37±0.01d
3	B ₀ F ₃	0.62±0.03h	167.75±0.91f	49.14±0.40h	17.27±0.01c	7.61±0.02b	0.34±0.02e
4	B ₀ F ₄	0.58±0.01h	170.88±0.82e	51.12±0.46g	19.03±0.01b	7.59±0.02bc	0.38±0.01b
5	B ₁ F ₀	1.07±0.02a	230.20±0.82d	53.75±0.32f	24.20±0.01a	7.89±0.01bc	0.48±0.02b
6	B ₁ F ₁	0.98±0.01b	235.20±0.77c	77.17±0.26a	24.02±0.01a	7.99±0.02ab	0.52±0.01d
7	B ₁ F ₂	0.88±0.01c	238.93±0.69b	75.05±0.21b	24.26±0.04a	8.06±0.01a	0.38±0.02d
8	B ₁ F ₃	0.76±0.02d	240.80±0.66b	68.07±0.22c	24.05±0.04a	7.97±0.02ab	0.37±0.03d
9	B ₁ F ₄	0.72±0.03e	245.20±0.38a	64.08±0.22d	24.08±0.03a	7.93±0.11b	0.39±0.02a
10	B ₀ F ₀	0.69±0.01f	136.63±0.82i	44.13±0.42i	17.30±0.04c	7.87±0.04bc	0.41±0.00c

461 * Mean values followed by the different letter in the same column are statistically different (P ≤ 0.05)

462

463 **Table 4.** Different agronomic parameters recorded at different combined applications of chemical fertilizers and biochar
 464 * Mean values followed by the different letter in the same column are statistically different ($P \leq 0.05$)

Sr. No.	Treatments	Agronomic parameters						
		Plant Height cm	Spike Length	No of Tillers	Spikelets (S)	Biomass Yield	Grain Weight	Harvest Index
1	B ₀ F ₁	99.35±1.65c*	8.12±0.42d	419.95±0.51h	20.125±0.43g	9.80±0.42h	2.66±0.12gh	0.27±0.01b
2	B ₀ F ₂	101.18±1.06bc	9.22±0.41c	458.58±0.93g	21.45±0.41f	10.65±0.41g	2.85±0.04f	0.27±0.02b
3	B ₀ F ₃	105.63±1.02am	9.01±0.41c	484.38±0.84f	23.10±0.42de	11.37±0.39f	3.05±0.04e	0.26±0.03c
4	B ₀ F ₄	99.63±2.02c	9.03±0.41c	512.23±0.45d	24.45±0.41c	13.27±0.40c	3.29±0.04d	0.25±0.02e
5	B ₁ F ₀	101.73±0.73bc	8.35±0.45bc	512.13±0.44d	26.05±0.39ab	13.72±0.41b	3.52±0.04c	0.26±0.02d
6	B ₁ F ₁	104.65±1.34ab	10.17±0.42b	496.50±0.45e	22.02±0.40ef	12.15±0.41e	3.28±0.04d	0.27±0.03bc
7	B ₁ F ₂	107.75±1.44a	10.65±0.18a	592.13±0.45a	24.05±0.45cd	13.13±0.41c	3.58±0.04b	0.32±0.02a
8	B ₁ F ₃	107.65±1.79a	10.5±0.45a	540.13±0.45c	27.07±0.42a	14.65±0.40a	3.68±0.05a	0.32±0.04a
9	B ₁ F ₄	105.10±0.72ab	8.47±0.12d	516.23±0.45d	25.07±0.47bc	12.72±0.42d	2.77±0.04h	0.20±0.03g
10	B ₀ F ₀	100.68±1.26c	8.10±0.42d	550.13±0.46b	25.07±0.81bc	13.05±0.41c	2.60±0.04fg	0.21±0.04f

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