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Alexandria University
Faculty of Agric. (Saba-Basha)
Plant Production Dept.

NITROGEN USE EFFICIENCY OF POTATO CROP IN THE NEWLY RECLAIMED CALCAREOUS SOIL

A THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Division
Faculty of Agriculture
(Saba-Basha)
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For the Degree of

MASTER OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES
(HORTICULTURE)

BY

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CONTENTS

	rage No.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
1. INTRODUCTION	l
 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	3
2.1. Effect of N fertilization on potato plant growth	3
2.2. Effect of N levels on potato tuber yield	5
2.3. Effect of splitting of N doses on potato tuber yield	6
2.4. Effect of N on potato plant and tuber quality	7
2.5. Nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) in potato crop	
production	10
3. MATERIALS AND METHODS	12
3.1. Experimental site	12
3.2. Potato seeds	12
3.3. Fertilizer	12
3.4. Experimental design	. 14
3.5. Recorded data	14
3.5.1. Plant measurements	. 14
3.5.2. Leaf characteristics	15
3.5.3. Tuber physical and chemical properties	17
3.6. Soil analysis	18
3.7. Nitrogen-use efficiency	19
3.8. Statistical analysis of data	19
3.9. Mathematical analysis of data	19
3.10. Economical analysis of data	. 20
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	21
4.1. Potato plant foliage character	. 21

	4.2. Potato leaf characteristics	24		
	4.3. Potato leaf elemental composition			
	4.4. Potato tuber characteristics	32		
	4.5. Potato tuber elemental composition	37		
	4.6. Potato tuber grading index	39		
	4.7. Potato tuber yield	43		
	4.8. Nitrogen use efficiency	47		
	4.9. Soil chemical analysis at harvesting time	47		
	4.10. Mathematical analysis of potato yield response to N			
	fertilization	54		
	4.10.1. Potato response to fertilization	54		
	4.10.2. The maximum rate of N fertilizer	55		
	4.10.3. The maximum yield	57		
	4.10.4. Contribution of soil N	57		
	4.10.5. Efficiency of applied N fertilizer	59		
	4.10.6. Contribution of N fertilizer to the yield	60		
	4.11. Economical analysis of potato yield response to N			
	fertilization	65		
5	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	.74		
6	. REFERENCES	80		
A	ARABIC SUMMARY			

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INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

Potato (Solanum tuberosum, L.) is an annual, herbaceous and dicotyledonous plant with fleshy tubers that arise to underground stems which are erect stages of development but later became spread and prostrate or semi-prostrate. Tubers have buds or eyes, from which sprouts arise under certain conditions and are harvested for human consumption or animal feed or for producing the new seeds. It is an important crop in the human diet and not only the most important vegetable, crop in terms of quantities produced and consumed world wide, but also the fourth major food crop after wheat, rice and corn. It is considered to be one of the most important vegetable crops in Egypt. The total area cultivated with potatoes increased from 53700 feddans in 1978 to 190000 feddans in 1995, the production was 733.000 and 2.000.000 tons, respectively (Ministry of Agric. and Reclamation, Egypt (1995), Economic Bulletin).

In Egypt, potatoes are cultivated in three seasons, summer, fall and winter (Mehayara). The crop of winter season is mainly produced for export to the European countries.

Many major projects are going on to grow winter potatoes in the newly reclaimed areas depending upon the available knowledge of growing potatoes in the Nile Valley. It is well-known that nitrogen has a major role in the production and maintenance of an optimum plant canopy for continued tuber growth through long growing season. Knowledge of plant response to N fertilizer and optimum nitrogen level is essential for high potato production. Also, potato are known to uptake plant nutrient requirements heavily, in order to produce high yield. Most researchers agreed that N is the key element in fertilizing potatoes.

A knowledge of the residual soil N, rate amount of fertilizer and time of application and the individual crop needs, are all required to optimize N fertilization recommendations. Recommendations based on these factors have the potential for improving N fertilizer efficiency, as well as increasing production with indeterminate potato varieties. Both efficiency and production may be optimized by N fertilization practices (rate and time of application) that maximize plant and tuber growth rates early and during the growing season.

Exaggeration of amounts of N being applied to the crop which mostly applied at 2 doses only are strongly believed to be of great value in these areas. Nevertheless, the soil in such areas contains considerable percentage of sand, which reduces its water holding capacity, and consequently results in significant losses of N fertilizer, especially in case of adding the whole quantity into two doses. Such conditions are thought to reduce N use efficiency and consequently affecting tuber yield and quality.

This investigation was carried out to ameliorate N-use efficiency in such areas and finding out the optimum N quantity applied to the crop and the number of N doses to improve potato yield and quality.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE