Short communication

Effect of weather factors on the population dynamics of sucking insect pests and their natural enemies in transgenic and non-transgenic cotton

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Cotton (Gossypium spp.) is the principal cash crop cultivated in both temperate and tropical regions of the world. India is the only country where all the four cultivated species of cotton viz. Gossypium arboretum L., G. hirsutum L., G. herbaceum L. and G. barbadense are grown (Sen, 2004). Globally, an area of 33.4 million ha was under cotton cultivation in the year 2017, with India as the leading producer, having area and productivity of 12.3 million ha and 28.5 million bales, respectively (USDA, 2018). During the year 2017, in Punjab, the area under cotton was about 3.85 lakh ha with production of 12.0 lakh bales and cotton lint yield up to 529 kg/ha (AICCIP, 2018). The insect pests are of major concern in the low productivity of cotton. The insect pests in cotton can be divided as sucking pests, foliage feeders and bollworms. Among these categories of insect pests, bollworms have been effectively controlled with the cultivation of dual gene transgenic BG II cottons. But planting of Bt cotton on large area has altered the pest scenario with increased population of sucking insect pests like whitefly, Bemisiatabaci (Gennadius) (Hemiptera: Aleyrodidae), cotton leafhopper, Amrascabiguttula biguttula (Ishida) (Hemiptera: Cicadellidae), thrip, Thripstabaci Lindemann and aphid, Aphis gossypii Glover (Homoptera: Aphididae) (Vennila, 2008). During the year 2015-16, severe incidence of whitefly occurred on the cotton crop in the entire cotton growing belt of North India, which led to biggest drop in area from 5.27 lakh ha to 2.56 lakh ha under cotton cultivation of the past six decades in Punjab (AICCIP, 2016). Nymphs and adults of both whitefly and leaf hopper suck sap from the plants and cause reduction in growth and vigor of the plants by transmitting plant viruses including cotton leaf curl virus and shedding of leaves and young bolls (Ratanoara et al., 1994). Similarly, Cotton thrips and aphids also damage the leaf tissue either by lacerating or sucking the sap, respectively and cause direct damage by reducing yield of the plant and indirect damage by aphid through lint contamination (Patel and Patel, 2014). Various meteorological parameters like temperature, relative humidity and rainfall have influence on the population dynamics of these insect pests. Moreover, these meteorological parameters play an important role in

developing weather based pest forecasting system (Fand *et al.*, 2018). In addition to this, knowledge of the population dynamics of the insect pest population will help in framing integrated pest management techniques effectively (Fakhri and Jamal, 2012; Fand *et al.*, 2014). Apart from this, as the area under transgenic BG II cotton have increased to more than 95 per cent, very few studies on population dynamics of sucking insect pest communities in BG II cotton have been conducted under Punjab conditions. Keeping these points in view, the present study on population dynamics of insect pests and their correlation with weather parameters was carried out.

A field experiment was conducted during the kharif seasons of 2015 and 2016 at the Entomological Research Farm with Bt and non-Bt cultivars. The Bt-transgenic cotton hybrids, Ankur 3028 (BGII) expressing Cry1Ac & Cry2Ab gene and the non-Bt counterpart were sown at a row spacing of 67.5 cm and with plant to plant spacing of 75 cm for both Bt and non-Bt cotton on May 12 during year 2015 and on May 7, during 2016. The crop was raised as per PAU recommendations (Anonymous, 2018). The experiment was carried out in a randomized block design with four treatments comprising of non-transgenic cotton with no insecticide treatment (Non-Bt +UP), non-transgenic cotton with insecticide treatment (non-Bt +P), transgenic cotton with no insecticide treatment (Bt + UP) and transgenic cotton with insecticide treatment (Bt +P). Each treatment was replicated five times in plots measuring 500 m². Each plot was having 75 rows of 10 m each and a plant density of 13 plants/row in case of both Bt and non-Bt cotton. A five m gap was left between the plots to avoid influence of treatments on arthropods in neighboring plots. Insecticides were sprayed in the respective treatments of both Bt and non-Bt cotton whenever economic threshold (ETL) for any pest was exceeded as per PAU recommendations (Anonymous, 2018). The unsprayed treatments were not protected against sucking insect pests. During 2015, three sprays were done for whitefly and during 2016, two sprays against whitefly and two sprays against jassid were given. The population of non-target pests of cotton viz. whitefly, jassid and thrips were recorded from three fully formed leaves in the upper canopy of the plants. Whereas, the

Table 1: Partial regression coefficient (b value) of different insect pests on weather parameters

Insect -pes	ts/Treatments	Max. temp. (X_1)	Min. temp (X_2)	Rainfall (X ₃)	Mean $RH(X_4)$	\mathbb{R}^2	F value
Whitefly							
	Non-Bt+ UP	-1.455	1.153	0.349	-0.252	0.629	7.62 *
	Non-Bt + P	-0.254	0.520	0.188	-0.061	0.532	5.11*
	Bt+UP	-1.955	1.715	0.498	-0.381	0.603	6.79
	Bt+P	-1.711	1.338	0.402	-0.340	0.648	8.23*
Jassid							
	Non-Bt+ UP	-0.202	0.431	0.006	0.133	0.797	17.63
	Non-Bt + P	-0.120	0.321	0.009	0.101	0.803	18.35
	Bt+UP	-0.033	0.257	0.007	0.114	0.768	14.88
	Bt+P	-0.114	0.284	0.006	0.084	0.785	16.38
Thrips							
	Non-Bt+ UP	0.512	-0.202	0.122	0.073	0.437	3.49
	Non-Bt + P	0.364	-0.120	0.076	0.046	0.297	1.9
	Bt+UP	0.538	-0.223	0.115	0.086	0.434	3.45
	Bt+P	0.563	-0.250	0.103	0.082	0.411	3.14
Aphids							
	Non-Bt+ UP	-0.716	-0.696	-0.003	-0.124	0.883	33.88
	Non-Bt + P	-0.621	-0.654	-0.003	-0.107	0.895	38.35
	Bt+UP	0.084	-0.114	-0.006	0.032	0.552	5.55
	Bt+P	0.074	-0.084	-0.004	0.027	0.473	4.04
Chrysoper	la eggs						
	Non-Bt+ UP	-0.132	0.084	0.001	0.011	0.720	4.83
	Non-Bt + P	-0.110	0.068	0.001	0.011	0.760	6.16
	Bt+UP	-0.152	0.099	0.001	0.012	0.762	5.02
	Bt+P	-0.125	0.084	0.000	0.010	0.722	4.89
Coccinellic	ds						
	Non-Bt+ UP	0.473	-0.235	-0.010	0.150	0.433	1.0
	Non-Bt + P	0.103	-0.049	0.002	0.031	0.458	1.19
	Bt+UP	0.277	-0.130	-0.003	0.085	0.404	0.8
	Bt+P	0.155	0.075	0.001	0.047	0.409	0.90

^{*} Significant at p= 0.05

population count of nymphs and adults of aphids was taken from the three leaves in the upper and middle canopy of plant. All these observations were recorded at weekly interval from 100 randomly selected plants from each replication during six growth phases of the crop: vegetative at 15 days after planting (DAP), beginning of reproductive phase (30 DAP), flowering (60 DAP), fruiting (80 and 100 DAP), boll development phase

In jassid population, maximum temperature had a non-significant negative effect on population in all the four treatments. Whereas, the other three weather parameters were having positive effect on population (Table 1). These weather parameters explain variations up to the extent of 79.7%, 80.3%, 76.8% and 78.5% in all the four treatments, respectively. The step down regression analysis revealed that

Table 2: Multiple regression equation of insect pest population by step wise analysis

Insect-pests	Treatments	Regression equation	R^2
Whitefly	Non-Bt+ UP	Y=1.732+0.394X ₃	0.597
	Non-Bt + P	Y=1.159+0.213X ₃	0.500
	Bt+UP	$Y=2.543+0.562X_3$	0.568
	Bt+P	$Y=1.351+0.448X_3$	0.614
Jassid	Non-Bt+ UP	Y=-16.920+0.365 X ₂ +0.179X ₄	0.787
	Non-B $t + P$	Y=-13.094+0.297 X ₂ +0.134X ₄	0.788
	Bt+UP	Y=-11.992+0.262 X ₂ +0.127X ₄	0.761
	Bt+P	$Y=-11.285+0.253 X_2+0.113X_4$	0.774
Thrips	Non-Bt+ UP	$Y=-0.413+0.117X_3$	0.422
	Non-Bt + P	$Y=-0.113+0.073X_3$	0.281
	Bt+UP	$Y=-0.416+0.110X_3$	0.417
	Bt+P	$Y=-0.419+0.096X_3$	0.386
Aphids	Non-Bt+ UP	Y=26.952-0.988X ₂	0.847
	Non-B $t + P$	$Y=24.757-0.908 X_2$	0.862
	Bt+UP	Y=2.699-0.092 X ₂	0.429
	Bt+P	Y=1.858-0.062 X ₂	0.339
Chrysoperla eggs	Non-Bt+ UP	$Y = -0.999 + 0.019X_4$	0.496
	Non-B $t + P$	$Y=-0.730+0.014X_4$	0.500
	Bt+UP	$Y=-1.178+0.023X_4$	0.502
	Bt+P	$Y=-0.875+0.017X_4$	0.487

variables retained were only minimum temperature and mean RH that explained a considerable amount of total variations explained by all the four weather parameters (Table 2). So from the multiple R² values of 78.7%, 78.8%, 76.1% and 77.4%, it can be concluded that the two weather parameters viz. minimum temperature and RH explain a considerable amount of variations explained out of the four weather parameters in four treatments, respectively. Hussain *et al.* (2014) have also observed negative relation between leafhopper population and maximum temperature and significant positive effect of minimum temperature and relative humidity on jassid population. Whereas, Kumar *et al.* (2012) have observed positive association of jassid population with maximum temperature, minimum temperature and relative humidity.

Similarly, in case of thrip population except minimum temperature all the other three weather parameters viz.

maximum temperature, rainfall and mean RH were having positive effect on population (Table 1). These weather parameters collectively explained variations of 43.7%, 29.7%, 43.4% and 41.1% in four treatments of Non-Bt+UP, Non-Bt+P, Bt+UP and Bt+P, respectively. Further, the step down regression analysis showed that variable retained was only rainfall that explained a considerable amount of total variations explained by all the four weather parameters (Table 2). So the multiple R² values of 42.2%, 28.1%, 41.7% and 38.6% explained the extent of variation contributed by single weather parameter of rainfall in four treatments of Non-Bt + UP, Non-Bt+P, Bt+UP and Bt+ P, respectively. Panwar *et al.* (2015) also reported positive influence of the maximum temperature, rainfall and relative humidity on thrip population in both Bt and non-Bt cotton.

In aphid population, in Non-Bt cotton under both unprotected and protected treatments all the four weather parameters had negative influence on population with

variations of 88.3% and 89.5%, respectively (Table 1). And the step down regression analysis revealed that variable retained was only minimum temperature that significantly affected the population with multiple R² being 84.7% and 86.2 % in both the treatments respectively (Table 2). Whereas, in Bt cotton both under unprotected and protected conditions, only maximum temperature and mean RH showed positive effect on population and rest of the two parameters of minimum temperature and rainfall showed negative effect on population with variations of 55.2 % and 47.3 %, respectively. Again the step down regression analysis revealed that variable retained was only minimum temperature that significantly affected the population with multiple R² being 42.9% and 33.9 % respectively in both the treatments indicating that out of four weather parameters only minimum temperature had explained a considerable amount of total variation explained by all the four weather parameters. Laxman et al. (2014) have also found the negative effect of minimum temperature and rainfall on aphid population. Similarly, Muchhadiya et al. (2014) have observed negative relation between aphid population and minimum temperature, relative humidity and rainfall in Bt cotton.

In case of Chrysoperla population except maximum temperature all the other three weather parameters i.e. minimum temperature, rainfall and mean R.H. were having positive effect on population (Table 1). These weather parameters collectively explained variations of 72.0%, 76.0%, 76.2% and 72.2% in four treatments of Non-Bt+UP, Non-Bt+P, Bt+UP and Bt+P, respectively. Further, the step down regression analysis showed that variable retained was only mean R.H that explained a considerable amount of total variations explained by all the four weather parameters (Table 2). So the multiple R² values of 49.6%, 50.0%, 50.2% and 48.7% explained the extent of variation contributed by single weather parameter of rainfall in four treatments of Non-Bt + UP, Non-Bt+P, Bt+UP and Bt+P respectively. However, Boda and Ilyas (2017) have reported contrasting results with negative effect of minimum temperature, rainfall and relative humidity on Chrysoperla population in BG-II cotton.

In case of coccinellids, except minimum temperature all the three weather parameters of maximum temperature, mean R.H and mean RF was having positive influence on the population in all the three treatments of non-Bt+UP, non-Bt+P, Bt+UP (Table 1). However, in Bt+P treatment, all the four parameters were having positive effect on the population. The multiple R^2 values of 43.3%, 45.8%, 40.4% and 40.9% explained the extent of variation contributed by all the weather parameters in the four treatments. In coccinellids population

none of the weather parameter showed significant effect on the population. Gurung *et al.* (2018) also observed that weather parameters like maximum temperature, minimum temperature and rainfall have non-significant effect on coccinellid population in brinjal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to gratefully acknowledge the help rendered by the Head, Department of Entomology, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab (India) for providing the necessary facilities during the period of study.

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