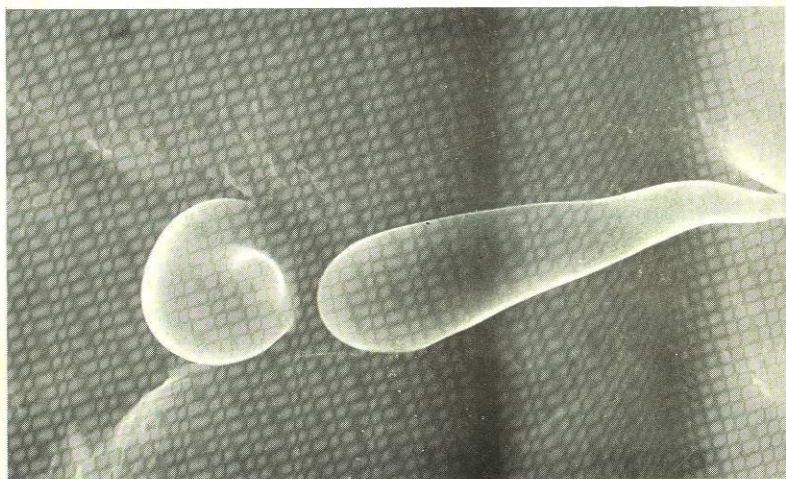


# **MORPHOPHYSIOLOGICAL TRAITS IN CROP IMPROVEMENT: CASE STUDY - SORGHUM**

**RATIKANTA MATTI**



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## CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| FOREWORD .....  | vi  |
| ABOUT THE BOOK .....  | vii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....  | ix  |
| 1. INTRODUCTION .....   |     |
| The sorghum crop .....  | 1   |
| Origins and domestication of sorghum .....                                      | 1   |
| Areas under cultivation .....   | 3   |
| Yield potentials and constraints .....  | 3   |
| Research needs .....  | 5   |
| 2. SEEDS .....  |     |
| Introduction .....  | 7   |
| Seed morphology .....   | 11  |
| Distribution of corneous and floury endosperm .....                             | 14  |
| Development of caryopsis (seeds) .....  | 15  |
| Anatomy of mature kernel or seeds .....   | 19  |
| Relationship of seed maturity with nutritional composition .....                | 23  |
| Physical and physiological characteristics of seeds .....                       | 24  |
| Variability for different morphological and physiological characteristics ..... | 25  |
| Viability for seed wetting and drying .....                                     | 25  |
| Effect of soaking treatment on seed viability and seedling vigor .....          | 26  |
| Associations among different morpho-physiological characteristics .....         | 28  |
| Germinability and some aspects of pre-harvest and post-harvest .....            | 29  |
| General comments .....  | 32  |
| 3. GERMINATION AND SEEDLING ESTABLISHMENT .....                                 |     |
| Introduction .....  | 33  |
| Crop establishment in sorghum .....   | 35  |
| Germination .....   | 36  |
| Dormancy .....  | 37  |
| Water uptake and movement in the sorghum grain .....                            | 38  |
| Seedling establishment .....  | 41  |
| Factors affecting seedling emergence .....                                      | 42  |
| Post-emergence growth (seedling vigor) .....                                    | 54  |
| Endosperm-dependent seedling growth .....                                       | 54  |
| Relationship between protein content and seedling size .....                    | 55  |
| Seedling vigor in laboratory and field tests .....                              | 55  |
| Evaluation of seedling vigor .....  | 55  |
| Factors controlling seedling vigor in sorghum .....                             | 59  |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Drought resistance at the seedling stage .....   | 64  |
| Differential response of glossy and nonglossy lines to drought<br>resistance at the seedling stage .....       | 66  |
| Relationship between resistance at the seedling stage and at<br>advanced growth stages .....                   | 69  |
| Seedling morphology .....  | 70  |
| Types of leaves .....  | 71  |
| General comments .....   | 72  |
| Appendix: Techniques to evaluate different crop<br>establishment traits .....                                  | 73  |
| <b>4. LEAF AND STEM</b>  |     |
| Leaf morphology .....  | 77  |
| Leaf anatomy .....   | 78  |
| Leaf surface .....   | 78  |
| Trichome technique .....   | 78  |
| Scanning electron microscopy of glossy and nonglossy lines .....   | 81  |
| Electron microscopy .....  | 86  |
| Leaf anatomy in crosssection .....   | 86  |
| Factors that determine leaf development .....  | 90  |
| Leaf emergence .....   | 93  |
| Leaf extension .....   | 94  |
| Importance of leaf area development .....  | 96  |
| Water stress effects on leaf growth .....  | 97  |
| Effect of water stress on leaf extension .....   | 99  |
| Culm .....   | 100 |
| Stem anatomy .....   | 100 |
| Stem elongation .....  | 102 |
| Dry matter distribution in different plant organs .....  | 103 |
| Comparative look on stem and head growth in different seasons .....  | 104 |
| General comments .....   | 105 |
| <b>5. PANICLE DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY</b>   |     |
| Introduction .....   | 107 |
| Growth and developmental stages .....  | 109 |
| Environment factors influencing phenology .....  | 112 |
| Determination of the development stages of panicle .....   | 113 |
| Panicle development .....  | 115 |
| Heading, anthesis, pollination and physiological maturity .....  | 122 |
| Comparative studies of panicle development of hybrids<br>and their parents .....                               | 123 |
| Grain growth pattern (general) .....   | 133 |
| Comparative study of panicle development of sorghum<br>genotypes belonging to different taxonomic groups ..... | 135 |
| General comments .....   | 141 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>6. ROOT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT</b>   |     |
| Introduction .....  | 143 |
| Development of root system .....  | 146 |
| Seminal root .....  | 148 |
| Adventitious root .....   | 148 |
| Nodal or crown root .....   | 148 |
| Root anatomy .....  | 149 |
| Seedling root anatomy and <i>Striga</i> parasitization .....                  | 154 |
| Host root anatomy vs field resistance for <i>Striga</i> .....                 | 155 |
| Establishment of root system in the soil in relation<br>to its function ..... | 155 |
| Water and nutrient uptake by root system .....                                | 156 |
| Root system study techniques .....  | 158 |
| Brick chamber techniques .....  | 158 |
| General pattern of root development .....                                     | 158 |
| Laboratory study .....  | 159 |
| Studies in pots and wooden tray .....   | 159 |
| Root studies in polyethylene bag .....  | 159 |
| CSH1, 22E, two Indian hybrids and their parents<br>(pot culture) .....        | 159 |
| Brick chamber method .....  | 159 |
| Field study .....   | 160 |
| Effect of soil types on root growth in brick chambers .....                   | 161 |
| General comments .....  | 169 |
| <b>7. ROLE OF CLIMATIC FACTORS IN SORGHUM GROWTH</b>                          |     |
| Introduction .....  | 171 |
| Sorghum growth regions and the development .....                              | 171 |
| Radiation .....   | 173 |
| Temperature .....   | 173 |
| Rainfall .....  | 174 |
| Temperature .....   | 175 |
| Air temperature .....   | 176 |
| Effect of temperature on photosynthesis and respiration .....                 | 176 |
| Effect on phenology .....   | 176 |
| Effect of temperature on yield components .....                               | 177 |
| Leaf temperature .....  | 178 |
| Soil temperature .....  | 178 |
| Solar radiation .....   | 179 |
| Relative humidity .....   | 180 |
| Wind speed .....  | 181 |
| Day-length .....  | 182 |
| Rainfall and soil water .....   | 182 |
| Soil moisture .....   | 183 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Responses of sorghum to soil moisture deficit .....                                   | 184 |
| Selection of genotypes for drought resistance .....                                   | 185 |
| Mechanisms of drought resistance .....  | 188 |
| General comments .....  | 191 |
| <b>8. MINERAL NUTRITION OF SORGHUM R.B. Clark, Univ. Nebraska</b>                     |     |
| Introduction .....  | 193 |
| Mineral element requirements .....  | 193 |
| Nitrogen .....  | 194 |
| Phosphorus .....  | 197 |
| Potassium .....   | 199 |
| Calcium .....   | 200 |
| Magnesium .....   | 201 |
| Sulfur .....  | 202 |
| Manganese .....   | 202 |
| Iron .....  | 203 |
| Boron .....   | 204 |
| Copper .....  | 204 |
| Zinc .....  | 205 |
| Molybdenum .....  | 205 |
| Other elements .....  | 206 |
| Aluminum .....  | 206 |
| Sodium .....  | 206 |
| Chlorine .....  | 207 |
| Silicon .....   | 207 |
| Barium, Cadmium, Chromium, Cobalt, Lead, Mercury,<br>Nickel and Selenium .....        | 207 |
| <b>9. IMPROVEMENT OF CROPS: THE ROLE OF<br/>MORPHOPHYSIOLOGICAL TRAITS</b>            |     |
| Introduction .....  | 209 |
| Seed characteristics and seedling establishment .....                                 | 210 |
| Seed viability following wetting and drying .....                                     | 210 |
| Grain quality, germinability and dormancy .....                                       | 210 |
| Seedling emergence and seedling vigor .....   | 211 |
| Research needs .....  | 211 |
| Panicle development .....   | 213 |
| Root growth and development .....   | 213 |
| Glossy sorghum germplasms .....   | 214 |
| Taxonomic group and geographical distribution .....                                   | 215 |
| Characterisation of glossy trait .....  | 216 |
| Biophysical and biochemical distinction between<br>glossy and nonglossy sorghum ..... | 216 |
| Chlorophyll .....   | 216 |
| Epicuticular wax (EW) structure .....   | 219 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Epicuticular wax content .....  | 224 |
| Differential resonance activity between glossy<br>and nonglossy lines .....                                     | 225 |
| Variability in morphological, anatomical and<br>biochemical characters .....                                    | 225 |
| Epidermal trichomes .....   | 225 |
| Crop age .....  | 231 |
| HCN .....   | 233 |
| Epicuticular wax content .....  | 233 |
| Mechanisms of resistance against biotic and abiotic<br>factors and the glossy trait .....                       | 233 |
| Biotic Factors .....  | 233 |
| Shootfly resistance .....   | 233 |
| Mechanism of resistance to shootfly -<br>Trichome presence and density .....                                    | 235 |
| Glossy trait .....  | 235 |
| Quantitative relationship of morphophysiological<br>traits with shootfly resistance .....                       | 236 |
| Glossy characteristics and its role in genetic<br>improvement in shootfly resistance .....                      | 237 |
| Epicuticular wax (EW) structure (scanning electron<br>microscopy, SEM) in relation to shootfly resistance ..... | 239 |
| Correlation studies between plant height and numbers<br>of days to 50% flowering with shootfly resistance ..... | 240 |
| Other insects and diseases .....  | 242 |
| Abiotic stresses .....  | 242 |
| Seedling drought resistance .....   | 242 |
| Effect of water stress on some physiological and<br>biochemical components .....                                | 244 |
| Variability in intensity of glossiness and waxiness<br>and its relation with water stress resistance .....      | 246 |
| Mechanism of drought resistance in glossy lines .....   | 246 |
| Temperature .....   | 248 |
| Evaluation of glossy sorghum for different stress resistance ..   | 249 |
| Nutrient deficiency .....   | 250 |
| Phosphorus uptake .....   | 250 |
| Uptake of minerals .....  | 250 |
| Determination of antinutritional elements in some glossy<br>sorghum genotypes .....                             | 252 |
| Multiple resistance .....   | 252 |
| Characterisation and potential uses of glossy germplasm accessions<br>in sorghum crop improvement .....         | 252 |
| Agronomic traits .....  | 252 |



|   |    |
|---|----|
| Observations in India .....   | 25 |
| Observation in Mexico .....   | 25 |
| Genetic diversity .....   | 25 |
| Grain and fodder improvement .....  | 25 |
| Growth analysis and productivity of some glossy sorghum<br>genotypes under irrigated and rainfed situation in Mexico .... | 25 |
| Utilization of glossy lines in sorghum crop improvement .....   | 25 |
| Conclusions .....   | 25 |
| Probable plant type concepts in sorghum .....   | 25 |
| General comments .....  | 26 |
| <b>CITED LITERATURE</b> .....   | 26 |
| <b>GENERAL REFERENCES</b> .....   | 28 |

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Understanding the process of a plant development morpho-physiological traits in any crop, depends largely on the knowledge of its individual components, namely seeds, seedlings, stems and reproductive meristem. Total productivity is dependent on expression of these plant components which work in harmony. The behavior of these individual components under a variety of environmental conditions is directly reflected in the total productivity of the crop and can be measured quantitatively.

The role of the plant physiologists is to study the vast array of complex functions operating in plant. It is an essential pre-requisite in a crop improvement research program to understand the growth and development of different organs and their constraints under different environments. These factors are considered to determine the structure and thesis of the present book. Although literature is available regarding the growth and development of sorghum, no one book details all these aspects in a concise manner. The main objective of writing this book is to present information of original research by the author and an extensive review of the literature on the subject in each chapter. I have attempted to make each chapter independent; however, there are some repetitions in several chapters. The book is divided into nine chapters.

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter outlining the sorghum crop, its origin and domestication, the areas under cultivation, its yield potentials and constraints, as well as the research needs.

Chapter 2 deals with morpho-physiological characteristics of seeds. The emphasis has been to show seed morphology related to physical characteristics of seeds and ultimately to the development of seedlings. Factors relating to seed viability, grain germinability and grain weathering are also discussed.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the facets of seedling development the evaluation of seedling vigor and stand establishment traits. Problems of seedling emergence through crusted soil and methodology of seedling resistance and traits related to multiple resistance are also discussed.

Chapter 4 deals with morphology, structure, growth and development of leaf and stem. Distribution of dry matter in different plants organs under different environments is also discussed in this chapter.



Chapter 5 deals with panicle growth and development and its limitation under different climatic conditions. The grain growth pattern, the effect of weather on growth stages and relationship among growth stages and panicle components are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6 discusses the morphology and development of root both in the field and under simulated conditions. As the growth and development of crop is largely influenced by climatic conditions, a general account of crop environments and its effect on sorghum growth and development is discussed in Chapter 7. This includes (1) the general aspects of micro-environments (2) plant responses to physical environments; (3) a review of the effects of water stress on plant function and (4) integrating soil-water-crop environments.

Chapter 8 deals with the mineral nutrition of sorghum and it represents a direct contribution by R.B. Clark, from the University of Nebraska.

Chapter 9 draws inferences of screening techniques for several resistance traits discussed in previous chapters, the research imperatives and evaluates multistress resistance for dryland sorghum crop improvement. It outlines a plan for development of multistress-resistance traits and plant type concepts in sorghum.

This book gives special emphasis to look for genetic variability in morphophysiological traits in sorghum and discusses its possible utilization in crop improvement with special reference to unfavorable conditions. Very few attempts are made in this directions on any other crops.

I believe this book will serve as a guide to students, extension workers and also researchers in sorghum crop productivity. I have attempted to use sorghum crop as a basis for synthesis of the growth and development of other cereals crops. The work done of this crop could be used as a guide for the study of other cereal crops.

R.K. Maiti

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE SORGHUM CROP

Sorghum is a major source of food for millions of people in the semiarid tropics. In tropical areas sorghum grain is important as food and as livestock feed. The stem and foliage are used as a green crop, hay silage and pasturage. The stems are also used as fuel and building material. In temperate areas, it is a major source of cattle feed except in China, where it is primarily used for food (House, 1980).

Sorghum is used in the preparation of different types of food, and an unleavened bread is the most common food made from sorghum flour. Sometimes the dough is fermented before the bread is prepared, and the grain is boiled to make a porridge or gruel. It is also used in the preparation of biscuits. Beer is prepared from sorghum grain in many parts of Africa. Besides these products, popped and sweet sorghum which are parched, are also eaten (House, 1980).

The demand for sorghum as a staple food has been growing in recent years. Though sorghum is known for its versatile use, hardness, dependability, stability of yield and adaptability over a wide range of cultures and climates, the adverse edapho-climatic conditions prevailing in the sorghum growing areas of the world limit the crop's production (Swindale, 1980). The crop is often grown on poor soils by farmers who have little resources for control of moisture, the purchase of fertilizers, insecticides and other inputs. Therefore, there is a need for the development of cultivars more adaptable to the adverse climatic conditions of the SAT world (semiarid tropics, Figure 1.1).

### ORIGINS AND DOMESTICATION OF SORGHUM

Nothing is known about when *Sorghum bicolor* was first brought into cultivation, but Murdock (1959) stated that, along with several West African Crops, it was domesticated some 7000 years ago. It might have reached India not earlier than 1500 BC and China by AD 900. Cultivated sorghums were first introduced to the Americas and Australia about 100 years ago (Peacock, 1984). Sorghum is distributed in wild forms in Africa and other countries. Mann *et al.* (1983) reviewed this subject. In sorghum, domestication is initiated by allelic changes at only two loci resulting from different selection pressures following the innovation of harvesting techniques. Wild sorghum disperse their seeds by the breakage of nodes (due to the absence of an abscission zone along the rachis, panicle or at spikelet nodes) with the subsequent scattering of the seeds. The essential step adopted in domestication was the harvest of the whole inflorescence, and the

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