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Effect of foliar application of potassium nitrate on yield and energy of garden pea (*Pisum sativum* L.)

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Abstract

Field experimentation was conducted during *Rabi* season of 2021 at Central Farm, College of Agriculture, Central Agricultural University, Imphal, India to evaluate the “Effect of foliar application of potassium nitrate on growth, yield and economics of Garden pea (*Pisum sativum* L)”. Experiment was laid out in Factorial Randomized Block design (FRBD) with three replications consisting of different times of foliar application (A₁: Flower initiation stage, A₂: Pod development stage and A₃: both stages) and four different levels of KNO₃ foliar application (F₁:0.5 % KNO₃, F₂:1 % KNO₃, F₃:1.5 % KNO₃ and F₄:2 % KNO₃) and one control with a total 13 treatments. The results of the study revealed that, among the various treatment combinations, the treatment (A₃F₄) foliar spray of 2% KNO₃ at both flower initiation and pod development stage recorded significantly highest yield components like number of pods per plant, number of seeds per pod, green pod yield, seed yield and Stover yield but non-significant in pod length and harvest index. It was followed by 1.5% KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage. The assessment of the energy requirement of foliar application of potassium nitrate, the results revealed that the total input energy utilization was highest in 2% KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage (A₃F₄) followed by 1.5 % KNO₃ at both flower initiation and pod development stage (A₃F₃). Maximum output energy (75.726 GJ/ha), net energy output (68.839 GJ/ha), energy productivity (0.3885 kg/MJ) and minimum specific energy (2.57 MJ/kg) were found in same treatment (A₃F₄). But in case of energy use efficiency (11.328 %) was found highest in 2 % KNO₃ application at flower initiation stage (A₁F₄).

Keywords: Garden pea, KNO₃, Foliar application, Input energy utilization, Energy output and Net energy.

Introduction

Pulses are excellent source of protein as well as wide range of vitamins and minerals. They are recognized as an important component of a balanced and healthy diet as evidenced by their use by the World Food Programme and other food aid initiatives. India has made a remarkable progress in enhancing the production of pulses during the past 15 years. During 2005-06, the total production of pulses in India was 13.38 million MT, which had increased to 25.58 million MT during 2020-21 (Pooran Gaur, 2021) ^[16]. Pea is a member of the family Leguminosae. Pea is one of the important pulse crops in India, grown during *Rabi* season. In many parts of the world, Pea is grown as a cold season crop, depending on location, its planting can take place from winter to early summer. It is an annual vine with determinate (bush type) or indeterminate type of climbing habit. Pea seeds are well known for their pivotal nutrients that can be differentiated in mainly soluble and insoluble fibre, protein, complex carbohydrates, vitamin B, calcium, potassium, iron but have a low content of saturated fat, Cholesterol and sodium. It possesses various health benefits by lessening the prevalence of colon cancer, upbrining type-2 diabetes, coronary diseases and LDL-cholesterol (Kour *et al.*, 2020; Roy *et al.*, 2010) ^[11, 18].

India is the second largest producer of green peas after China. The annual global production of green pea and dry pea seeds are approximately 14.5 million tonnes and 22 million tonnes, respectively (Mondor, 2020) ^[12]. Among different countries, India shares 21.04 % of the world's total production of peas. The other major green pea producing countries are the U.S.A., France and Egypt. In India, Pulses occupy an area of 0.76 million hectares and producing 0.67 million tonnes.

Among different pulses in the country, Pea ranked in the seventh position and is commercially grown during *Rabi* season in an area of 568 thousand hectares, producing 5848 thousand metric tonnes with productivity of 9.6 metric tonnes/hectare (Jagdish Singh *et al.* 2021) [9].

Foliar application or foliar feeding is a technique of feeding plants with water soluble fertilizer of suitable concentration directly to plant leaves and absorbed through the plant's stomata. Foliar application of both essential nutrients and micro nutrients also plays a vital role in pulse production by stimulating root development, nodulation, energy transformation, various metabolic processes, translocation activity in plants and increasing pod setting and thereby increasing the yield. Foliar application has been shown to avoid the problem of leaching-out in soil and prompts a quick reaction in the plants. Foliar fertilizer act more quickly and far more effectively, as most of the fertilizer ends up in the plant, rather than in the soil. Foliar application is an effective method for quickly solving nutrient problems appearing in plants.

Potassium nitrate is a water-soluble inorganic salt with chemical formula KNO_3 . Potassium nitrate is an outstanding source of potassium and nitrogen which has been used as a constituent for several different purposes like fertilizer as it contains main macronutrients that are taken up by the plants in comparatively large quantities. Potassium nitrate makes a plant more drought-resistant by regulating the opening and closing of stomata in the plant system and maintaining the turgidity of plant cells during drought conditions. Potassium minimizes plant transpiration and thereby reduces its water requirements. Potassium nitrate is an important nutrient for plant meristematic growth and physiological function, including protein synthesis, enzymes activation, photosynthesis and carbohydrate translocation in plants and it is also important in growth and quality of pea. Potassium nitrate also improves water use efficiency. Foliar fertilization is a widely used crop nutrition strategy of increasing importance in worldwide.

Materials and Methods

Site and Climatic

A Field experiment was conducted during *Rabi* season of 2019 at Research Farm, College of Agriculture, Central Agricultural University, Imphal. The site is located at $24^{\circ} 45' N$ latitude and $93^{\circ} 56' E$ longitudes and at altitude of 790 m above the mean sea level and categorized in sub-tropical condition. The rainy season usually starts from April and it extends up to September and retreats from October onward. During the period of growing season, minimum temperature was found to be $7.3^{\circ} C$ in the month of February and maximum temperature ($29.4^{\circ} C$) in the month of March. The total rainfall received 208.2 mm and relative humidity was 86.9 % during experimental period.

Experimental Details

A Field experiment was conducted during *Rabi* season of 2019 at Research Farm, College of Agriculture, Central Agricultural University, Imphal. The soil of the experimental field was high in organic carbon (1.17 %), medium in available nitrogen (316.68 kg/ha), low in available phosphorus (16.8 kg/ha) and medium in available potassium (267.83 kg/ha) with slightly acidic (pH 5.25) in reaction. Experiment was laid out in Factorial Randomized Block design (FRBD) with three replications consisting of

different times of foliar application (A_1 : Flower initiation stage, A_2 : Pod development stage and A_3 : both stages) and four different levels of KNO_3 foliar application (F_1 :0.5% KNO_3 , F_2 :1 % KNO_3 , F_3 :1.5 % KNO_3 and F_4 :2 % KNO_3) and one control with a total 13 treatments. The crop was sown as line sown with seed rate of 80 kg/ha on 27th November, 2021. A common fertilizer dose of 20, 40 and 30 kg of N, P_2O_5 and K_2O per ha, respectively were applied one day prior to sowing. The crop was harvested on 16th March, 2022. The data obtained from the experiment were subjected to statistical analysis by adopting analysis of variance technique for "Factorial Randomized Block Design". Significance of difference among the treatment effect was tested through "F" test and critical difference (CD) was calculated, wherever, the results were found significant. To elucidate the nature and magnitude of treatment effects, tables along with S.E.M. and C.D. were calculated at 5 % level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Effect of foliar application of potassium nitrate on yield attributes

The result pertaining to the number of pods, number of seeds per pod and pod length (cm) were furnished in the Table 1, 2 and 3. The maximum number of 17.18 pods per plant was found in 2 % KNO_3 application and it was significantly superior to over 0.5%, 1 % and 1.5 % KNO_3 application. In term of different time of foliar application, maximum number of pods (17.25) was recorded with KNO_3 application at both flower initiation and pod development stage. The significantly highest order of interaction was observed (Table 3) in the treatment combination of 2% KNO_3 application at both flower initiation and pod development stage. The minimum number of pods was observed in control (10.27). The adequate availability of potassium and nitrogen were responsible for increased number of functional leaves, resulting in higher photosynthetic and assimilation rates, which consequently increased yield components like pods per plant. These results are conformity with those of Reddy *et al.* (2004) [17]. The seeds per pod in 2 % KNO_3 application was found 7.84 seeds per pod which significantly highest as compared to 0.5%, 1 % and 1.5 % KNO_3 application (Table 2). The significantly maximum number of seeds per pod (7.30) was recorded with the application of KNO_3 at both flower initiation and pod development stage (Sarrwy *et al.* 2010) [19]. Potassium nitrate might have improved pod filling and phytomass production due to increased photosynthetic activity and effective translocation of assimilates to reproductive parts. This result is in conformity with the earlier findings of Bibek *et al.* (2020) [1]. The significantly highest number of seeds per pod (9.03) was obtained in treatment combination of higher dose of KNO_3 (2%) application at both flower initiation and pod development stage. The lowest number of pods was observed in control (4.97). The remarkably highest pod length (9.53 cm) was observed in 2% KNO_3 application which significantly highest over other treatments (Table 2). The possible reason for enhancement in pod length might be due to higher synthesis of metabolites and enhanced mobilization of food and minerals from other parts of the plants towards developing pod as it is a well-established fact the pod acts as extremely active metabolic sink. Dhanoji (2011) [3] and Yadav *et al.* (2021) [21] also reported similar findings. In

respect of time of application, KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage was recorded highest pod length (9.10 cm). The non-significantly highest order of interaction was observed in the treatment combination of 2 % KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage (10.13 cm). The minimum pod length was observed in control (6.80 cm) (Table 6).

Effect of foliar application of potassium nitrate on yield

The data (Table 3) on green pod yield (kg/ha) and seed yield (kg/ha) of garden pea as influenced by time and level of potassium nitrate foliar application significantly. A close observation of the data (Table 2) indicated that different level of potassium nitrate application had significant effect on green pod yield and seed yield of garden pea. The maximum green pod yield and seed yield per hectare were observed in 2 % potassium nitrate (F₄) foliar application and this was followed by 1.5 % potassium nitrate (F₃) application. The transport of assimilates thereby better balanced supply with cation and anions of potassium, nitrate nitrogen respectively enhance the other nutrient availability at critical stage could have induce more flowering, reducing in flower shedding and increased transportation of photosynthates from source to sink resulting increased green pod and seed yield of garden pea. El-Ashry and El-Kholy (2005) [5] also reported similar findings.

Regarding time of foliar application (Table 1), green pod yield and seed yield were highest in potassium nitrate application at both flower initiation and pod development stage (A₃) and minimum yield were observed in application of potassium nitrate at pod development stage (A₂). It could be due to the supplementation of balanced dose of fertilizer application through KNO₃ which improved vegetative and yield attributing character like plant height, number of branches, plant fresh and dry weight, number of pods, number of seeds, pod length which ultimately contributed to higher grain yield. These findings are also Srinivasarao *et al.* (2003) [20]. Interaction between time and level of potassium nitrate application were found to be significant for green pod yield and seed yield were found in 2 % KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage and minimum yield were recorded in control. The

results are in accordance with earlier finding of Ejaz *et al.* (2011) [4] and Jitendra Marskile *et al.* (2021) [10].

The data in Table 2 showed that different level of potassium nitrate application had significant effect on Stover yield of garden pea. The maximum Stover yield per hectare was observed in 2% potassium nitrate (F₄) application and this was followed by foliar application of 1.5% potassium nitrate (F₃). The minimum mean Stover yield was observed in 0.5% potassium nitrate (F₁) foliar application. Potassium nitrate plays a major role in growth as it is involved in assimilation, transport and storage tissue development and also improvement in crop yield due to chlorophyll synthesis, photosynthesis and in turn of accumulation of dry matter as Stover yield similar findings reported by Jabeen and Ahmad (2011) [8]. There was significant effect of time of potassium nitrate application on biological yield. The maximum Stover yield was observed in potassium nitrate application at both flower initiation and pod development stage (A₃) and the minimum Stover yield was observed in application of potassium nitrate at pod development stage (A₂). Higher Stover production might be due to enhanced vegetative growth of the crop. The results are in conformity with Gowthami *et al.* (2018) [6] and Jitendra Marskile *et al.* (2021) [10]. There was significant interaction effect between time and level of foliar application of potassium nitrate on Stover yield of garden pea. Better performance of Stover yield was observed in the combination of 2% potassium nitrate receiving at both flower initiation and pod development stage (A₃F₄) and the minimum Stover yield was observed in control.

The significantly highest harvest index (47.42%) was recorded (Table 2) in the 2% KNO₃ application and the lowest (43.41%) was recorded at 0.5% KNO₃ application. The harvest index highest with KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage was observed (Table 4). It may be due to higher dry matter partitioning of photosynthates between grain and Stover of plant. The results are in conformity with Pal and Keorah (2012) [13]. The treatment receiving 2% KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage non-significantly highest (49.73 %) was observed. The lowest harvest index was found in control (38.76 %).

Table 1: Effect of time of foliar application of potassium nitrate on yield and yield components of garden pea

| Treatments | Number of pods per plant | Number of seeds per pod | Pod length (cm) | Green pod yield (kg/ka) | Seed yield (kg/ha) | Stover yield (kg/ha) | Harvest Index (%) |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Flower initiation stage (A ₁) | 15.58 | 6.21 | 8.17 | 1080 | 829 | 2256 | 45.73 |
| Pod development stage (A ₂) | 13.11 | 6.45 | 8.60 | 979 | 605 | 2101 | 42.86 |
| Flower initiation and Pod development stage (A ₃) | 17.25 | 7.30 | 9.10 | 1210 | 1034 | 2454 | 47.61 |
| S.E.M (±) | 0.18 | 0.10 | 0.15 | 17.63 | 10.78 | 30.71 | 0.39 |
| C.D (P=0.05) | 0.51 | 0.30 | 0.43 | 51.36 | 31.41 | 89.46 | 1.12 |

Table 2: Effect of different level of potassium nitrate foliar application on yield and yield components of garden pea

| Treatments | Number of pods per plant | Number of seeds per pod | Pod length (cm) | Green pod yield (kg/ka) | Seed yield (kg/ha) | Stover yield (kg/ha) | Harvest Index (%) |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 0.5% KNO ₃ (F ₁) | 13.51 | 5.74 | 7.56 | 938 | 674 | 2088 | 43.41 |
| 1.0% KNO ₃ (F ₂) | 14.52 | 6.12 | 8.39 | 1017 | 787 | 2198 | 44.89 |
| 1.5% KNO ₃ (F ₃) | 16.04 | 6.90 | 9.01 | 1125 | 862 | 2329 | 45.90 |
| 2.0% KNO ₃ (F ₄) | 17.18 | 7.84 | 9.53 | 1278 | 966 | 2467 | 47.42 |
| S.E.M (±) | 0.20 | 0.12 | 0.17 | 20.36 | 12.45 | 35.46 | 0.45 |
| C.D (P=0.05) | 0.59 | 0.34 | 0.50 | 59.31 | 36.27 | 103.30 | 1.30 |

Table 3: Effect of time and different level of potassium nitrate foliar application on yield and yield components of garden pea

| Treatments | Number of pods per plant | Number of seeds per pod | Pod length (cm) | Green pod yield (kg/ka) | Seed yield (kg/ha) | Stover yield (kg/ha) | Harvest Index (%) |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| A1F1 | 14.07 | 5.47 | 7.17 | 956 | 658 | 2066 | 43.85 |
| A1F2 | 15.00 | 5.87 | 8.06 | 1039 | 767 | 2187 | 45.28 |
| A1F3 | 16.00 | 6.47 | 8.43 | 1105 | 882 | 2297 | 46.44 |
| A1F4 | 17.27 | 7.03 | 9.00 | 1220 | 1008 | 2473 | 47.36 |
| A2F1 | 11.77 | 5.73 | 7.50 | 853 | 507 | 1973 | 40.80 |
| A2F2 | 12.47 | 6.00 | 8.40 | 906 | 579 | 2043 | 42.09 |
| A2F3 | 13.80 | 6.60 | 9.03 | 1037 | 625 | 2168 | 43.40 |
| A2F4 | 14.40 | 7.47 | 9.47 | 1120 | 711 | 2222 | 45.16 |
| A3F1 | 14.70 | 6.03 | 8.01 | 1006 | 858 | 2226 | 45.57 |
| A3F2 | 16.10 | 6.50 | 8.70 | 1106 | 1017 | 2366 | 47.28 |
| A3F3 | 18.33 | 7.63 | 9.57 | 1233 | 1080 | 2521 | 47.85 |
| A3F4 | 19.87 | 9.03 | 10.13 | 1496 | 1180 | 2705 | 49.73 |
| Control | 10.27 | 4.97 | 6.80 | 706 | 432 | 1800 | 38.76 |
| S.E.M (\pm) | 0.35 | 0.20 | 0.30 | 35.26 | 21.56 | 61.41 | 0.77 |
| C.D (combination) | 1.02 | 0.59 | NS | 102.72 | 62.82 | 178.92 | NS |
| C.D (Interaction) | 1.02 | 0.59 | NS | 102.72 | 62.82 | 178.92 | NS |

Energy Analysis

Energy input (GJ/ha)

Total energy used in different production processes for producing garden pea is shown in Table 4. Among the different treatment combination, the highest input energy (6.887 GJ/ha) was recorded treatment A₃F₄ which received in 2 % potassium nitrate application at both flower initiation and pod development stage followed by 1.5 % KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage A₃F₃ (6.318 GJ/ha). The lowest energy input (4.613 GJ/ha) was recorded in control. The highest energy of chemical fertilizer (KNO₃) was used as compared to other treatments. These results are similar confirm with Hamedani *et al.* (2011) [7].

Energy output (GJ/ha)

Data prevailing that (Table 5) among the different treatment combination, the highest output energy (75.726 GJ/ha) was recorded treatment A₃F₄ which received in 2 % potassium nitrate application at both flower initiation and pod development stage. This was followed by 1.5 % KNO₃ application at flower initiation and pod development stage A₃F₃ (67.189 GJ/ha). This was due to use of appropriate amount of energy input used to produce more amount of energy output. Such variations in energy among different treatment were also reported by Pelesaraei *et al.* (2013) [15]. The lowest output energy (38.309 GJ/ha) was recorded in control.

Net energy output (GJ/ha)

The highest net energy output (68.839 GJ/ha) was recorded (as presented in the Table 4) treatment A₃F₄ which received 2 % potassium nitrate application at both flower initiation and pod development stage. This was followed by 1.5 % KNO₃ application at flower initiation and pod development stage A₃F₃ (60.870 GJ/ha). The lowest net energy output (33.696 GJ/ha) was recorded in control.

Energy use efficiency (%)

Among the different treatment the highest energy use efficiency (11.328 %) was recorded treatment A₁F₄ which received in 2 % potassium nitrate application at flower initiation stage followed by 2% KNO₃ application at flower initiation and pod development stage A₃F₄ (10.995 %). The lowest energy use efficiency (8.304 %) was recorded in

control. It could be due to using low input energy in A₁F₄ treatment combination. Therefore our results indicate that the energy was used most efficiently in A₁F₄. Such variations in energy among different treatment were also reported by Pelesaraei *et al.* (2013) [15].

Energy productivity (kg/MJ)

Energy input and output, energy use efficiency, specific energy, energy productivity and net energy output are summarized in Table 5. Among the different treatment the highest energy productivity (0.3885 kg/MJ) was recorded treatment A₃F₄ which received in 2% potassium nitrate application at both flower initiation and pod development stage followed by 2 % KNO₃ application at flower initiation stage A₁F₄ (0.3875 kg/MJ). The lowest energy productivity (0.2467 kg/MJ) was recorded in control. This means that 0.3885 kg outputs were obtained per unit energy in garden pea cultivation. This observation was supported by Chaudhary *et al.* (2006) [2].

Specific energy (MJ/kg)

Among the different treatment the lowest specific energy (2.57 MJ/kg) was recorded treatment A₃F₄ which received in 2 % potassium nitrate application at both flower initiation and pod development stage followed by 2 % KNO₃ application at flower initiation stage A₁F₄ (2.58 MJ/kg). The highest specific energy (4.05 MJ/kg) was recorded in control. This observation was supported by Patil *et al.* (2013) [14].

Table 4: Energy equivalent of inputs and outputs in garden pea cultivation

| S. No. | Particulars | Units | Equivalent Energy (MJ) |
|---------------|-------------------|-------|------------------------|
| Input energy | | | |
| 1 | Machine | h | 64.8 |
| 2 | Human labour | h | 1.96 |
| 3 | Diesel | liter | 56.31 |
| 4 | N fertilizer | Kg | 60.6 |
| 5 | P fertilizer | Kg | 11.1 |
| 6 | K fertilizer | Kg | 6.7 |
| 7 | Potassium nitrate | Kg | 68.2 |
| 8 | Seeds | Kg | 18.8 |
| Output Energy | | | |
| 1 | Seeds | Kg | 18.8 |
| 2 | Stover | Kg | 9.4 |

Table 5: Energy of garden pea cultivation as influenced by foliar application of potassium nitrate (KNO₃)

| Treatments | Total energy for Input (GJ/ ha) | Energy for Output (GJ/ ha) | Net energy output (GJ/ ha) | Energy Use Efficiency (%) | Energy Productivity (Kg/MJ) | Specific Energy (MJ/ kg) |
|------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| A1F1 | 4.902 | 49.755 | 44.853 | 10.151 | 0.3292 | 3.04 |
| A1F2 | 5.181 | 54.499 | 49.318 | 10.518 | 0.3485 | 2.87 |
| A1F3 | 5.466 | 58.945 | 53.479 | 10.784 | 0.3635 | 2.75 |
| A1F4 | 5.750 | 65.137 | 59.386 | 11.328 | 0.3875 | 2.58 |
| A2F1 | 4.902 | 44.110 | 39.208 | 8.999 | 0.2775 | 3.60 |
| A2F2 | 5.181 | 47.109 | 41.927 | 9.092 | 0.2865 | 3.49 |
| A2F3 | 5.466 | 51.629 | 46.163 | 9.446 | 0.3041 | 3.29 |
| A2F4 | 5.750 | 55.301 | 49.551 | 9.617 | 0.3184 | 3.14 |
| A3F1 | 5.190 | 55.950 | 50.760 | 10.780 | 0.3590 | 2.79 |
| A3F2 | 5.749 | 62.134 | 56.384 | 10.807 | 0.3691 | 2.71 |
| A3F3 | 6.318 | 67.189 | 60.870 | 10.634 | 0.3661 | 2.73 |
| A3F4 | 6.887 | 75.726 | 68.839 | 10.995 | 0.3885 | 2.57 |
| Control | 4.613 | 38.309 | 33.696 | 8.304 | 0.2467 | 4.05 |

*T₁ - 0.5 % KNO₃ at flower initiation stage; T₂ - 1 % KNO₃ at flower initiation stage; T₃ - 1.5 % KNO₃ at flower initiation stage
 T₄ - 2 % KNO₃ at flower initiation stage; T₅ - 0.5 % KNO₃ at pod development stage; T₆ - 1 % KNO₃ at pod development stage
 T₇ - 1.5 % KNO₃ at pod development stage; T₈ - 2 % KNO₃ at pod development stage;
 T₉ - 0.5 % KNO₃ at Flower Initiation + Pod Development stage; T₁₀ - 1 % KNO₃ at Flower Initiation + Pod Development stage; T₁₁ - 1.5 % KNO₃ at Flower Initiation + Pod Development stage; T₁₂ - 10.5 % KNO₃ at Flower Initiation + Pod Development stage; T₁₃ - Control

Conclusion

On the basis of the results obtained from the present investigation it could be concluded that 2% KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage (A₃F₄) achieved higher values with regards to yield and yield attributes (number of pods/plant, number of seeds per pod, green pod yield, seed yield, Stover yield). The maximum energy input, energy output, net energy output, energy productivity and minimum specific energy were observed in treatment combination which receiving 2% KNO₃ application at both flower initiation and pod development stage (A₃F₄). The maximum energy use efficiency was observed in 2% KNO₃ application at flower initiation alone (A₁F₄). The minimum energy input, energy output, net energy output, energy productivity and maximum specific energy were found in control.

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