



**BUSITEMA**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
*Pursuing Excellence*

---

**FACULTY OF ENGINEERING**

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION AND IRRIGATION  
ENGINEERING**

***INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF BIOCHAR ON SOIL MOISTURE RETENTION,  
CROP GROWTH AND YIELD OF KALE***

BY

WAMBOGO EMMANUEL

BU/UP/2016/137

**Email Address:** wambogoemmanuel@gmail.com

SUPERVISOR

MAIN SUPERVISOR Mr. BWIRE DENIS

*Submitted to the Department of Agricultural Mechanization And Irrigation Engineering As A  
Partial Fulfillment Of An Award Of A Bachelor's Degree of Agricultural Mechanization and  
Irrigation Engineering at Busitema University*

*December 2020*

## **ABSTRACT**

Biochar is an amendment that can be used for enhancing soil water storage which may increase crop productivity. The objective of this study was to investigate the effects of biochar on growth, yield and root development of kale under Drip irrigation. From early stage to maturity stages, the plants were subjected to 100g, 150g and 200g biochar and compared with the control. The experiment was conducted for 8 months under completely randomized design with four treatment and two replications in a greenhouse environment. Among the treatments, Biochar with 100g, 200g conserved 15%, 14% respectively under irrigation with 100% water crop requirement. More Sukuma wiki plant growth and yield were observed to be significantly different from the control making Biochar the best soil and water conservation agronomic measure.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I acknowledge with great pleasures the department of AMI and especially M. Bwire Denis for the help in development of the research project. I indeed can't forget to appreciate my colleagues, the Collaborative BSc. Agricultural Mechanization and Irrigation Engineering class of the year 2016, Busitema University, who are often there for me whenever I need any help. I really thank you from the bottom of my heart. May the good lord continue to bless you all

## **DECLARATION**

I Wambogo Emmanuel declare that this final year project report is of my research.

This work has not been presented in this or any other university for the award of a degree.

Name.....

Signature .....

Date.....

## **APPROVAL**

This final year project report has been submitted to the department of Agricultural mechanization and irrigation Engineering of Busitema University with approval of the following University Supervisors

Mr. Bwire Denis

Signature.....

Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

This final year project report is dedicated to my family members and relatives most especially my parents Mr. Wekwanya Wilson and Mrs. Wekwanya Allen for their love, care, guidance, encouragement and financial support rendered to me up to this academic level. May the good lord bless you always

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	ii
DECLARATION .....	iii
APPROVAL.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	3
1.3 MAIN OBJECTIVE.....	3
1.3.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE .....	3
1.4 JUSTIFICATION .....	3
1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....	4
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	4
1.7HYPOTHESIS .....	4
CHAPTER TWO .....	5
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
2.1 Soil and Water Conservation .....	5
2.2.1 Purpose of Soil and water conservation measures.....	5
2.2.2 Biological measures .....	5
2.2.3Agronomic measures .....	5
2.3 Greenhouse Farming.....	6
2.3.1 Advantages of greenhouse farming.....	6
2.4 SUKUMA WIKI PRODUCTION IN UGANDA .....	6
2.4.1 SUKUMA WIKI VARIETIES IN UGANDA.....	7
2.4.2 AGRONOMIC PRACTICES FOR SUKUMA WIKI PRODUCTION .....	7
2.4.2.1 NURSERY ESTABLISHMENT .....	7
2.4.2 The Crop Water Requirement.....	9
2.4.2.1 Crop coefficient (KC) .....	9
2.4.2.2 The irrigation water requirement (IR).....	10
2.4.2.3 The Effective rainfall (Pe) .....	10

2.4.3 Irrigation Methods .....	10
2.4.3.2 Basin irrigation .....	11
2.4.3.3 Sprinkler irrigation .....	11
2.3.3.4 Drip irrigation.....	12
2.3.3.5 Irrigation Scheduling .....	13
2.4.4 Modes of Moisture Loss.....	14
2.4.4.1 Deep Percolation.....	14
2.4.4.2Evaporation.....	14
2.4.4.3 Transpiration.....	14
2.5 BIOCHAR.....	14
2.5.1 Effects of Biochar on soil properties .....	15
2.5.2     Soil physical properties .....	15
2.5.3     Soil chemical properties.....	16
2.5.4     Soil biological properties.....	16
2.5.5     Relevance of biochar in agriculture .....	17
2.5.6     Composition of Biochar.....	18
2.5.7     How biochar works in relation to soil and water conservation .....	19
2.6     Moisture Sensors .....	19
2.6.2     Characteristics of soil moisture sensor .....	19
2.6.2.1     Installing of soil moisture sensors.....	20
2.6.3     Principle of operation .....	20
2.6.4     Advantages of soil moisture sensors .....	20
CHAPTER THREE .....	22
3.0 METHODOLOGY .....	22
3.1 Project description.....	22
3.1.1 The research site .....	22
3.1.2 Materials and equipment to be used in the study.....	22
3.2 Specific objective 1 determining growth of Kale .....	22
3.2.2 Calculation of crop factor for any day within the growing season.....	23
3.2.3 Set up of the experimental garden .....	24
1.    3.3.2 Measurements of growth. ....	25
3.2.5 Plant height .....	25

3.2.6 Leaf expansion: .....	25
3.2.7 Number of leaves harvested.....	25
3.4 Determining the yield and root development of Sukuma wiki.....	25
3.4.1 Yield component .....	25
3.4.2 Root development .....	26
3.4 Specific objective 3 to assess the effect of biochar on soil moisture content.....	26
4 CHAPTER FOUR .....	27
4.2 Plant Height with biochar .....	27
4.3 AVERAGE LEAF EXPANSION .....	31
4.4 The number of leaves .....	36
4.5 Number of leaves harvested.....	40
4.6 weight of leaves harvested .....	42
4.7 Moisture content .....	45
4.8 Root Frequency Impact. (RFI). .....	45
5 CHAPTER IVE: .....	49
5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS; CONCLUSIONS AND CHALLENGES.....	49
5.1.1 <i>Challenges</i> .....	49
5.1.2 Conclusions .....	49
5.1.3 Recommendations.....	49
6 APPENDICES .....	50
6.1 Reference evapotranspiration .....	50
6.2 Crop water requirement .....	54
6.2 Emitter Discharge.....	56
6.3 Weekly plant height.....	57
6.4 Weekly leaf expansion .....	58
6.4 Number of leaves .....	58
6.5 Number of leaves harvested.....	58
6.6 Weight of leaves harvested .....	59
6.7 Moisture content .....	59
6.8 Soil testing results .....	62
6.9 REFERENCES.....	65

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 showing furrow irrigation .....	11
Figure 2 showing basin irrigation .....	11
Figure 3 showing sprinkler irrigation .....	12
Figure 4 showing drip irrigation .....	12
Figure 5 showing biochar samples.....	15
Figure 6 showing moisture sensors.....	19
Figure 7 showing a data logger.....	20
Figure 8 showing lay out of the field.....	25
Figure 11 showing plant height.....	31
Figure 12 showing average weekly leaf expansion .....	35
Figure 13 showing number of leaves .....	39
Figure 14 showing number of leaves harvested.....	42
Figure 15 showing weight of leaves harvested .....	44
Figure 16 showing the moisture content retained by different grams of biochar .....	45
Figure 17 showing root frequency .....	47
Figure 18 showing installation of moisture sensors and data logger.....	64
Figure 19 showing kale plants in the green house .....	64
Figure 20 showing the carrying out of RFI.....	65
Figure 21 showing the electronic weighing scale for weighing biochar .....	65

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1 showing Kc value for sukuma wiki .....	10
Table 2 showing description of treatments .....	24
Table 6 showing fisher's least significant test of plant height .....	28
Table 7 showing plant heights picked from treatments and replications on 29/02/20.....	29
Table 8 showing LSD test carried on heights of 29/2/2020 .....	30
Table 9 showing LSD carried out on average expansion .....	33
Table 10 showing values of leaf expansion picked from treatments and replications on 29/02/20 .....	33
Table 11 showing average number of leaves.....	36
Table 12 LSD carried out on number of leaves .....	37
Table 13 showing number of leaves picked from treatment and replications on 29/2/2020 .....	37
Table 14 showing LSD carried out on number of leaves.....	38
Table 15 LSD carried out on number of leaves harvested.....	41
Table 16 showing weekly weight of leaves harvested.....	42
Table 17 showing LSD carried out on weight of leaves harvested.....	43
Table 18 showing root frequency impact (RFI).....	45
Table 19 showing ETO .....	50
Table 20 showing emitter discharge .....	56
Table 21 showing weekly plant height .....	57
Table 22 showing weekly leaf expansion .....	58
Table 23 showing weekly number of leaves.....	58
Table 24 showing number of leaves harvested .....	58
Table 25 showing weight of leaves harvested .....	59