



Releasing Patterns of Potassium and its Relationship with Different Forms of Potassium in Acid Alfisols Soils of Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Asha Kumari Sinha ^a, Madhuri Toppo ^a,
Ajay Kumar Upadhyay ^{b*} and Dharendra Kumar Shahi ^a

^a Department of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi-834006 (Jharkhand), India.

^b Department of Soil Science, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa, Samastipur-848125 (Bihar), India.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted during 2017-2018 at the Experimental Farm of Birsa Agricultural University, Kanke, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India to assess the releasing patterns of potassium and its relationship with different forms of potassium in surface (0-15 cm) and sub-surface (16-30 cm) soils of acid alfisols from the selected 9 treatments under long-term nutrient management practices in maize-wheat cropping system. The releasing power of soil potassium is an index of the availability of the nutrient to the crops over a longer duration and in general, it indicates the sum of water-soluble K, exchangeable K, and a fraction of non-exchangeable K which is not immediately available to the growing plants, but will be slowly available over a longer period. Repeated extraction with boiling

*Corresponding author: E-mail: ajpusasoil.339@gmail.com;

1N HNO₃ has been suggested as one of the methods to assess the potassium-releasing capacity of soils. In this context, cumulative K, constant rate K, and step K as a part of non-exchangeable potassium proposed by Haylock (1956) measure the potassium-releasing capacity of soils more effectively under intensive crop cultivation. The amount of K release in successive extraction with boiling 1N HNO₃ decreased consistently and reached a plateau at the 8th and 9th extraction steps in both depths of soils. Cumulative K is highest in INM (T₆) while constant rate K and step K are highest in Lime, FYM, P₂O₅, and K₂O treated plots (T₈). The lowest contribution of potassium release patterns is generally observed in the control plot (T₁). Also, the K release was found to be maximum in surface soils than in sub-surface soils concerning various selected treatments. Cumulative K, Constant- rate K, and Step K had highly significant and positive correlations with different forms of potassium (Water soluble K, Exchangeable K, Non-Exchangeable K, Total K, and Lattice K) in both depths. The potassium-releasing patterns evaluated through cumulative K, constant rate K, and step K could be meaningful for making fertilizer recommendation programmes, especially in intensively cultivated areas. Hence, the importance of study in terms of the possible contribution to plant available pool of soil K through potassium release patterns in two depths of given soil has been pointed out.

Keywords: K release; cumulative K; total step K; constant rate K.

1. INTRODUCTION

“The complex problem of soil fertility management especially with reference to potassium fertilization can only be studied by long-term field trials as it synchronizes time for crop and cropping systems, manures, and fertilizers to have a measurable effect on soil fertility. A similar research work on long-term soil fertility management in maize-wheat cropping system was initiated in 1956 under Permanent Manurial Trial at the Experimental Farm, of Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, Jharkhand which aimed at concomitant improvement in soil fertility and productivity. The study area represents the assessment of releasing patterns of potassium and its relationship with different forms of potassium in the representative soil sample. Since potassium itself is a quality cation that holds paramount importance in plant growth and development which exists in soils in various forms and combinations and their releasing pattern to plants differs widely” [1]. “The releasing power of soil potassium is an index of the availability of the nutrient to the crops over a longer duration and in general, it indicates the sum of water-soluble K, exchangeable K, and a fraction of non-exchangeable K which is not immediately available to the growing plants, but will be slowly available over a long period” (Nash, 1971). Thus, the K-releasing power refers to the total K available K in soil equivalent to the actual amount absorbed by plants. Several methods have been employed from time to time in devising better methods of potassium releasing *vis-à-vis* potassium supplying power of soils and in comprehending the K release characteristics under varying soil, environmental, and cropping

conditions. Repeated extraction with boiling 1N HNO₃ has been suggested as one of the methods to assess the potassium-supplying power of soils. In this context, step K and constant rate K as proposed by Haylock [2] measure the K-releasing capacity of soils more effectively under intensive crop cultivation” [2] and Divya et al., [1]. “Step K is the relatively soluble fraction of soil K and actually estimates the plant utilizable non-exchangeable K. The constant rate K (CR-K) measures the difficult fraction of soil K and gives an idea about the rate of K release from mineral lattice under long-term cropping conditions. The feasibility of these parameters to measure the K-releasing capacity of different soils under intensive crop cultivation was evaluated by several workers” (Patra et al., 2008). At this juncture, an in depth study concerning potassium behaviour under a long-term nutrient management-based cropping system was contemplated for a better understanding of the behaviour of this element and also to elucidate information on potassium supplying power in the surface (0-15 cm) and sub-surface (16-30 cm) soils of maize-wheat cropping system under long term nutrient management practices for formulating more precise potassic fertilizer recommendations.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Experimental Details

The field study was started in 2017-2018 as a part of an ongoing Permanent Manurial Trial (PMT) initiated in 1956 on the maize-wheat cropping system on acidic red loamy soil at the Experimental Farm of Birsa Agricultural

University, Kanke, Ranchi, Jharkhand. The experiment was laid out in Randomized Block Design with 3 replications and 14 treatments in each replication having a plot size of 10 m². Out of 14 treatments, 9 different treatments were considered for the present study with 3 replications. The treatment details are presented in Table 1. The recommended dose of N: P₂O₅: K₂O has been 110, 90, and 70 kg ha⁻¹, respectively, since 1976. Lime is applied as per lime requirement in treatments once in four years. FYM is applied based on N content as per the treatments @ 22 t ha⁻¹ 15 days before the sowing of each crop. Phosphorous and potassium are applied as basal and nitrogen is applied in splits for both the crops. The sources of N, P, and K were urea, single superphosphate (SSP), and muriate of potash (MOP), respectively. The varieties Suwan composite and HD 2967 for maize and wheat were used as a test crop respectively.

2.2 Collection and Analysis of Soils

A total of 54 composite soil samples were collected at two different depths viz. 0-15 cm (surface depth) and 16-30 cm (sub-surface depth) after the harvest of the crop from each plot of the experimental field of the nine selected

treatments replication wise. "The soil samples collected were air-dried in the shade and gently ground using a wooden pestle and mortar to pass through a 2 mm sieve. The sieved samples were preserved in stoppered plastic containers for further analysis. Processed and well-dried soil samples were used to analyze the various forms of potassium by using the standard soil:extractant ratio with standard and specific methods for each" [1].

2.3 Potassium Release Pattern of Soils

The potassium-releasing parameters such as step K, constant rate K, and cumulative release K were derived as per the procedure of Haylock [2] using 1 N boiling HNO₃ as an extractant. "One gram of soil was taken in a centrifuge tube and treated with 10 ml of 1N HNO₃. The contents were heated for 10 min in a hot water bath and centrifuged for 10 minutes at 2000 rpm. The K in the supernatant liquid was determined with the help of a flame photometer. To the same soil, another 10 ml of 1N HNO₃ was added and the same procedure of boiling the sample, centrifugation, and K estimation was followed. The above process was repeated till the amount of K released in successive extractions was constant" [1].

Table 1. Details of the various treatments of the long-term field experiment

Treatment No.	Treatment description	Particulars
T ₁	Control	No fertilizer, manure, or lime
T ₂	100 % N	110 kg N ha ⁻¹ as urea
T ₃	FYM	FYM was applied @ 22 t ha ⁻¹ , 15 days before sowing of Maize-wheat crop
T ₄	100 % NP	110 kg N ha ⁻¹ as Urea + 90 kg P ₂ O ₅ kg ha ⁻¹ as Single Super Phosphate (SSP)
T ₅	100 % NPK	110 kg N ha ⁻¹ as urea + 90 Kg P ₂ O ₅ Kg ha ⁻¹ as SSP+70 Kg K ₂ O as MOP
T ₆	½ (N+FYM) + P _(A-X/2) + K _(B-Y/2) (INM)	50% N substituted through FYM and NPK (55.0 kg N ha ⁻¹ as urea + 55.6 kg P ₂ O ₅ kg ha ⁻¹ as SSP+42.9 kg K ₂ O as MOP
T ₇	100 % NPK + Lime	Lime as per LR (once in four years) + NPK (110 kg N ha ⁻¹ as urea + 90 kg P ₂ O ₅ kg ha ⁻¹ as SSP+70 Kg K ₂ O as MOP)
T ₈	Lime+ FYM+P _(A-X) +K _(B-Y)	Lime as per LR (once in four years) + FYM (22 t ha ⁻¹) + 55.6 kg P ₂ O ₅ kg ha ⁻¹ as SSP+42.9 kg K ₂ O as MOP
T ₉	Lime + N	Lime as per LR (once in four years) + N @110 kg N ha ⁻¹ as Urea

2.3.1 Step K

The amount of total step K was calculated as, $\text{step K} = \{(\text{The amount of K extracted (cumulative) by boiling 1N HNO}_3 \text{ till constancy in K release is reached}) - (\text{The amount of CR-K} \times \text{Total number of extractions})\}$.

2.3.2 Constant rate K

After several repeated extractions of soil by boiling 1N HNO₃, the potassium extracted reached a constant value.

2.3.3 Cumulative K release

The cumulative K released was calculated by adding all the values of K extracted by successive extractions.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

The data sets were processed for analysis of variance as applicable to randomized block design using the least significant difference as described in Gomez and Gomez (1984). Treatment means were compared at 1% or 5% level of significance. Correlation studies were carried out among the parameters of soil using Microsoft Excel.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The activity of K⁺ ions in the soil solution is a factor for determining the K release from the soil. The potassium release parameters were studied to understand potassium release patterns in maize–wheat cropping systems due to long-term soil fertility or nutrient management practices. The quantity of K released from this form of K usually had a direct relation to the quantity of K applied to the soil and the quantity of K taken by the crops. There is a need to include part of non-exchangeable K in the available portion while assessing K availability to the crops. Subba Rao [3] suggested that “there is a need for the use of methods of analysis that would extract K from the reserve pool in the soil if the long-term K-supplying power of soil is to be assessed”. The method suggested by Haylock [2] simulates “the potassium depletion pattern under an intensive cropping system”. The amounts of soil K released in ninth extractions scheduled with boiling 1N HNO₃ for the representative soils from the selected treatments belonging to soil orders acid alfisols have been presented in Table 2 & Table 3. The results showed that with successive extraction the amount of K release decreased

step wisely in all the soils of different treatments and reached a plateau at the 8th to 9th extractions.

3.1 Step K

The step K represents a more soluble K fraction of boiling 1N HNO₃ the part of non-exchangeable potassium that is available to crop in due course under intensive crop growing conditions. The value of step K ranged from 688.4 to 1197 kg ha⁻¹ at surface soils and 683.5 to 1188.2 kg ha⁻¹ at sub-surface soils was affected by nutrient management practices in selected 9 treatments under long-term trial. Higher value of step K indicated greater K supplying power of soils which was observed in T₈. A similar result was also found by Das *et al.*, [4] and Prasad [5]. Lower values of K in untreated soil T₁ (i.e. in the control plot) were the result of K exhaustion from soil and the release of a comparatively lesser amount of potassium from a secondary mineral Prasad, [5].

3.2 Constant Rate K (CR-K)

“Constant rate K is the amount of potassium in soil having limited solubility during the later extraction designed as constant rate K. Constant rate K provides an estimate of the availability of K from a mineral lattice source. The constant rate K estimated by successive extractions reached to plateau at the 8th and 9th extractions step and the CR-K value varied from 22.3 to 25 kg/ha in surface soils and 19.2 to 24.1 kg/ha in sub-surface soils. By this, it could be understood that irrespective of the various selected 9 treatment combinations studied, the reserve pool of available K was depleted very slowly in soils. This behaviour seems to indicate that the reserve pool of available/non-exchangeable K may contribute considerably to the K nutrition of the crops over a long period. Incidentally, in the case of Treatment T₈ with higher amounts of cumulative K release, the CR-K encountered was also high rather late than in the case of those which had relatively lower amounts of CR-K. Hence, there is every reason to believe that the treatment combinations having both organic and inorganic K supply may meet the K needs of crops for a longer period as compared to those that received no K fertilizer or only inorganic K received plots. This suggests that soil fertility management through INM in the intensive cropping system may meet the long-term needs of the crop as suggested” by Haylock [2] and M. Divya *et al.* [1].

Table 2. Effect of nutrient management practices on step K of surface soil after 62 crop cycles under maize-wheat cropping system

Treatments	Extraction number (0-15 cm)									Step K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Constant rate K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Cumulative K release (kg ha ⁻¹)
	1 st step	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th			
T ₁ Control	710.7	360.2	152.1	75.5	48.1	35.3	27.1	22.3	22.3	688.4	22.3	1453.6
T ₂ 100 % N	794.1	383.7	168.4	79.3	51.2	37.1	26.6	22.7	22.7	771.4	22.7	1585.8
T ₃ FYM	870.73	427.6	177.9	85.7	59.1	38.6	27.5	23.5	23.5	847.23	23.5	1734.13
T ₄ 100 % NP	765.9	372.5	159.9	77.1	49.9	37	26	22.5	22.6	743.3	22.6	1533.4
T ₅ 100 % NPK	945	441.1	183.3	91.1	59.9	37	27.6	23.8	23.8	921.2	23.8	1832.6
T ₆ ½ (N+FYM) + P (A-X/2) + K (B-Y/2) (INM)	1050.7	521.7	197.6	92.3	61.1	38.7	27.9	24.3	24.3	1026.4	24.3	2038.6
T ₇ 100 % NPK + Lime	954.5	446.2	187.7	91.7	59.9	37.9	27.5	23.9	23.9	930.6	23.9	1853.2
T ₈ Lime +FYM+P(A-X)+K(B-Y)	1222	589.7	213.2	93.5	60.6	38.9	27.9	25	25	1197	25	2295.8
T ₉ Lime + N	762.5	369.3	158.1	77	49.1	37	25.8	22.5	22.5	740	22.5	1523.8

Table 3. Effect of nutrient management practices on step K of sub-surface soil after 62 crop cycles under maize-wheat cropping system

Treatments	Extraction number (16-30 cm)									Step K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Constant rate K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Cumulative K release (kg ha ⁻¹)
	1 st step	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th			
T ₁ Control	702.7	349	142.3	69.7	39.8	32.7	21.3	19.2	19.2	683.5	19.2	1395.9
T ₂ 100 % N	785	369.7	154.4	72.9	48.2	35.3	21.7	20.1	20.1	764.9	20.1	1527.4
T ₃ FYM	862.47	411.3	159.8	77.3	51.3	37.4	22.3	20.4	20.4	842.07	20.4	1662.67
T ₄ 100 % NP	756.5	353.9	148.1	70.3	44.5	34.1	21.5	19.7	19.7	736.8	19.7	1468.3
T ₅ 100 % NPK	945.8	439.9	181	90.2	57.7	34.9	27.1	22.6	22.6	923.2	22.6	1821.8
T ₆ ½ (N+FYM) + P (A-X/2) + K (B-Y/2) (INM)	1041	509.3	188.3	89.9	57.9	35.3	24.5	23.1	23.1	1017.9	23.1	1992.4
T ₇ 100 % NPK + Lime	945.9	437.7	169.5	88.8	53.7	33.8	23.9	22.4	22.4	923.5	22.4	1798.1
T ₈ Lime +FYM+P(A-X)+K(B-Y)	1212.3	571.1	201.1	90.9	58.8	34.2	24.9	24.1	24.1	1188.2	24.1	2241.5
T ₉ Lime + N	754.6	351.2	147.9	71.7	42.7	33.3	22.3	19.7	19.7	734.9	19.7	1463.1

3.3 Cumulative K Release (CPR)

The CPR values estimated by successive extractions with boiling 1N HNO₃ varied between 1453.8 to 2295.8 kg ha⁻¹ in surface soils and 1395.9 to 2241.5 kg ha⁻¹ in sub-surface soils of the various selected 9 treatment combinations as influenced maize-wheat cropping system under long-term trial. Irrespective of the treatments studied much of the total cumulative K was released by the end of the second or third extraction, and the K release became very slow from then onwards. The amount of total or the different forms of K, released a substantial proportion of their cumulative K which probably included the major portion of the so-called non-exchangeable K- relatively easily upon depletion of the exchangeable K from the exchange complex. The reason for the removal of relatively larger quantities of cumulative K from T₈ may be attributed to the higher buffering capacity or K supply power of the plot and also the presence of relatively larger quantities in the clay fractions. This treatment also had relatively higher amounts of non-exchangeable K and more exchange sites and finer clay content. The results are in conformity with the findings of Bansal and Sekhon [6]. On the other hand, relatively lower amounts of cumulative K were noticed in the control plot (T₁). This could be attributed to lower buffering capacity or K supply power due to inadequate K management practices followed over the years. A similar observation was made by Agarwal [7] and Boruah *et al* [8] and M.Divya *et al* [1] who reported lower cumulative K release from soils with poor management practices.

3.4 Relationship Between Different Forms of K and Step K in Surface Soil

The correlation coefficient (r) values worked out among the various soil parameters at the depths of soil (0-15 cm) in the Maize Wheat cropping system. From Table 4, it was evident that the Available K was found to be highly significant and positively correlated with Water soluble K and Exchangeable K (r=0.997**& 0.998**, respectively). It was significant and positively correlated with 1N HNO₃ K, Step K, Constant K, and Cumulative K release (r=0.789*,0.790*,0.722*, 0.783* respectively). Water soluble K was highly significant and positively correlated with available K, and exchangeable K (r=0.997**& 0.997**, respectively). It was significant and positively correlated with 1N HNO₃ K, Step K, Constant K, and Cumulative K release

(r=0.778*,0.779*,0.711*,0.772*, respectively). Exchangeable potassium was highly significant with Available K, and Water soluble K (r=0.998**, 0.997**, respectively). Whereas it was significantly and positively correlated with 1N HNO₃ K, Step K, Constant K, and Cumulative K release (r=0.791*,0.791*,0.723*, 0.784*, respectively). Non-exchangeable K was observed [9] and Keskar *et al.*, [10] to be highly significant and positively correlated with 1 NHNO₃ K, Total K, Step K, Constant rate K, Cumulative K release (r=0.973**, 0.866**, 0.973**, 0.979**, 0.974**, respectively). Kinetic parameters of the first-order equation were related to non-exchangeable forms of K, i.e. 3 N H₂SO₄ K and 1 N boiling HNO₃ K (Table 4). "A highly significant correlation between cumulative K and non-exchangeable K forms shows that a fraction of the total non-exchangeable K in soil was released into these dilute extractants. Release rate constants showed a significant relationship with the non-exchangeable form of K in the soil. However, the r values were higher for 3 N H₂SO₄ K than for boiling 1 N HNO₃ K. Extraction of soil K in boiling nitric acid is considered to be a drastic dissolution of clay structure" (Datta and Sastry, 1993), which results in the extraction of greater amounts of K and lower r values with K released in dilute extractants. Similarly, intercept values showed a significant correlation with non-exchangeable K, as the extrapolated intercept is assumed to be proportional to the initial K content at time. Hence, the higher the intercept value, the greater the initial K content [11,12]. Lattice K was found to be highly significantly and positively correlated with the Total K (r=0.939**). 1N HNO₃ was observed to be highly significant and positively correlated with the Non-exchangeable K, Total K, Step K Constant rate K, Cumulative K (r=0.973**, 0.998**, 0.985**, 0.999**, respectively). It was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the Available K, Water soluble K, Exchangeable K, Total K, Step K, and Cumulative K (r=0.789*, 0.778*& 0.791*,0.777**, respectively). Total K was observed to be highly significant and positively correlated with the Non-exchangeable K, Lattice K, Constant rate K, and Cumulative K (r=0.866**,0.939**,0.857**, respectively). It was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the 1N HNO₃ K, Step K, and Cumulative K (r=0.777*, 0.777*&0.790*, respectively). Step K was observed to be highly significant and positively correlated with the Non-exchangeable K, 1N HNO₃, Total K, Constant rate K, Cumulative K (r=0.973**, 0.998**, 0.777**, 0.985**, 0.999**, respectively). It was

found to be positively and significantly correlated with the Available K, Water soluble K, and Exchangeable K ($r=0.790^*$, 0.779^* & 0.791^* , respectively). The Constant rate K was observed to be highly significant and positively correlated with the Non-exchangeable K, 1N HNO_3 K, Total K, Step K, Cumulative K ($r=0.979^{**}$, 0.985^{**} , 0.857^{**} , 0.985^{**} , 0.999^{**} , respectively). It was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the Available K, Water soluble K, and Exchangeable K ($r=0.722^*$, 0.711^* & 0.732^* , respectively). These results are supported by the findings of Kumar [13] working with red loam soils of Ranchi also observed a significant positive relationship of soil potassium supply with step K and constant rate K. A Similar result was also found by Kumar [13] in red soil of Ranchi. Constant rate K and cumulative K release showed a highly significant positive correlation with different forms of K. Similar observations were earlier recorded by Roy *et al.* [14] and Surekha *et al.*, [15,16]. Cumulative K release (kg ha^{-1}) was found to be highly significant and positively correlated with the non-exchangeable K, 1N HNO_3 K, Total K, Step K, Constant rate K ($r=0.974^{**}$, 0.999^{**} , 0.999^{**} , 0.988^{**} , respectively). It was significantly and positively correlated with available K, water-soluble K, exchangeable K, and total K ($r=0.783^*$, 0.772^* , 0.784^* , 0.790^* , respectively).

3.5 Relationship Between Different Forms of K and Step K in Sub-Surface Soil

The correlation coefficient (r) values worked out among the various soil parameters at the depth of soil (16-30 cm) in the Maize Wheat cropping system. From Table 5, it was evident that the Available K was found to be highly significant and positively correlated with Water soluble K and Exchangeable K ($r=0.999^{**}$ & 0.998^{**} , respectively). It was significant and positively correlated with 1N HNO_3 K, Step K, Constant K, Cumulative K release ($r=0.790^*$, 0.791^* , 0.688^* , 0.783^* , respectively). Water soluble K was highly significant and positively correlated with available K, exchangeable K, Lattice K, 1N HNO_3 -K, Total K, Step K, Constant rate-K, Cumulative K ($r=0.999^{**}$, 0.999^{**} , 0.999^{**} , 0.999^{**} , 0.999^{**} , 0.999^{**} , 0.999^{**} , 0.999^{**} & 0.999^{**} , respectively). It was significant and positively correlated with 1N HNO_3 K, Step K, Constant K, and Cumulative K release ($r=0.778^*$, 0.779^* , 0.711^* , 0.772^* , respectively). Exchangeable potassium was highly significant with Available K, and Water soluble K ($r=0.998^{**}$, 0.999^{**} , respectively). Whereas it was significantly and positively

correlated with 1N HNO_3 K, Step K, Constant K, and Cumulative K release ($r=0.790^*$, 0.791^* , 0.687^* , 0.782^* , respectively). Non-exchangeable K was observed Sharma [9] and Keskar *et al.*, [10] to be highly significant and positively correlated with 1N HNO_3 , Total K, Step K, Constant rate K, Cumulative K release ($r=0.973^{**}$, 0.866^{**} , 0.973^{**} , 0.972^{**} , 0.974^{**} , respectively). Kinetic parameters of the first-order equation were related to non-exchangeable forms of K, i.e. $3\text{N H}_2\text{SO}_4$ K and 1N boiling HNO_3 K (Table 5). A highly significant correlation between cumulative K and non-exchangeable K forms shows that a fraction of the total non-exchangeable K in soil was released into these dilute extractants. Release rate constants showed a significant relationship with the non-exchangeable form of K in the soil. However, the r values were higher for $3\text{N H}_2\text{SO}_4$ K than for boiling 1N HNO_3 K. Extraction of soil K in boiling nitric acid is considered to be a drastic dissolution of clay structure (Datta and Sastry, 1993), Lattice K was found to be highly significantly and positively correlated with the Total K ($r=0.938^{**}$) which results in extraction of greater amounts of K and lower r values with K released in dilute extractants. Similarly, intercept values showed a significant correlation with non-exchangeable K, as the extrapolated intercept is assumed to be proportional to initial K content at time. Hence, the higher the intercept value, the greater the initial K content [11,12]. 1N HNO_3 was observed to be highly significant and positively correlated with the Non-exchangeable K, Step K Constant Rate K, and Cumulative K ($r=0.973^{**}$, 0.998^{**} , 0.968^{**} , 0.999^{**} , respectively). It was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the Available K, Water soluble K, Exchangeable K, and Total K ($r=0.790^*$, 0.796^* & 0.790^* , 0.775^{**} , respectively). Total K was observed to be highly significant and positively correlated with the Non-exchangeable K, Lattice K, Constant rate K, and Cumulative K ($r=0.866^{**}$, 0.938^{**} , 0.855^{**} , respectively). It was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the 1N HNO_3 K, Step K, and Cumulative K ($r=0.775^*$, 0.774^* & 0.797^* , respectively). Step K was observed to be highly significant and positively correlated with the non-exchangeable K, 1N HNO_3 , Constant rate K, and Cumulative K ($r=0.973^{**}$, 0.998^{**} , 0.967^{**} & 0.999^{**} , respectively). It was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the Available K, Water soluble K, Exchangeable K, and Total K ($r=0.791^*$, 0.779^* & 0.791^* & 0.774^* , respectively). The Constant rate K was observed

Table 4. Correlation coefficient of forms of K and Step K in surface soil

	Available K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Water soluble K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Exchangeable K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Non - exch. K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Lattice K (kg h ⁻¹)	1NHNO ₃ K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Total K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Step K (kg ha ¹)	Constant rate-K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Cumulative K release (kg ha ⁻¹)
Available K(kg ha ⁻¹)	1									
Water soluble K(kg ha ⁻¹)	0.997**	1								
Exch. K(kg ha ⁻¹)	0.998**	0.997**	1							
Non-exch. K(kg ha ⁻¹)	0.627	0.614	0.628	1						
Lattice K(kg ha ⁻¹)	0.006	0.016	0.005	0.649	1					
1NHNO ₃ K(kg ha ⁻¹)	0.789*	0.778*	0.791*	0.973**	0.513	1				
Total K(kg ha ⁻¹)	0.321	0.324	0.321	0.866**	0.939**	0.777*	1			
Step K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.790*	0.779*	0.791*	0.973**	0.512	0.998**	0.777*	1		
Constant rate-K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.722*	0.711*	0.723*	0.979**	0.629	0.985**	0.857**	0.985**	1	
Cumulative K release (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.783*	0.772*	0.784*	0.974**	0.531	0.999**	0.790*	0.999**	0.988**	1

**Significant at 1%level of significance

*Significant at 5% level of significance

Table 5. Correlation coefficient of forms of K and Step K in sub-surface soil

	Available K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Water soluble K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Exch. K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Non-exch. K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Lattice K (kg ha ⁻¹)	1NHNO ₃ K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Total K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Step K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Constant rate-K (kg ha ⁻¹)	Cumulative K release (kg ha ⁻¹)
Available K (kg ha ⁻¹)	1									
Water soluble K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.999**	1								
Exch. K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.998**	0.999**	1							
Non-exch. K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.629	0.636	0.628	1						
Lattice K (kg ha ⁻¹)	-0.002	0.001	-0.002	0.647	1					
1NHNO ₃ K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.790*	0.796*	0.790*	0.973**	0.509	1				
Total K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.316	0.321	0.316	0.866**	0.938**	0.775*	1			
Step K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.791*	0.797*	0.791*	0.973**	0.508	0.998**	0.774*	1		
Constant rate-K (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.688*	0.693*	0.687*	0.972**	0.635	0.968**	0.855**	0.967**	1	
Cumulative K release (kg ha ⁻¹)	0.783*	0.788*	0.782*	0.974**	0.539	0.999**	0.797*	0.999**	0.974**	1

**Significant at 1%level of significance

*Significant at 5%levelofsignificance

to be highly significant and positively correlated with the Non-exchangeable K, 1N HNO₃ K, Total K, Step K, Cumulative K ($r=0.972^{**}$, 0.968^{**} , 0.855^{**} , 0.967^{**} , 0.974^{**} , respectively). It was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the Available K, Water soluble K, and Exchangeable K ($r=0.688^*$, 0.693^* & 0.687^* , respectively). These results are supported by the findings of Kumar (2008) working with red loam soils of Ranchi also observed a significant positive relationship of soil potassium supply with step K and constant rate K. A Similar result was also found by Kumar (2008) in red soil of Ranchi. Constant rate K and cumulative K release showed a highly significant positive correlation with different forms of K. Similar observations were earlier recorded by Roy *et al.*, (1991) and Surekha *et al.*, (2006,2009). Cumulative K release (kg ha^{-1}) was found to be highly significant and positively correlated with the non-exchangeable K, 1NHNO₃ K, Total K, Step K, Constant rate K ($r=0.974^{**}$, 0.999^{**} , 0.999^{**} , 0.974^{**} , respectively). It was significantly and positively correlated with Available K, Water soluble K, Exchangeable K, and Total K ($r=0.783^*$, 0.788^* , 0.782^* , 0.797^* , respectively).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the experimentation, the major portion of cumulative K from almost all the treatment combinations was released by the fourth extraction with the reagent *viz.*, 1N HNO₃. The total amount of cumulative K release varied from 1453.8 to 2295.8 kg ha^{-1} in surface soils and 1395.9 to 2241.5 kg ha^{-1} in sub-surface soils while step K ranged from 688.4 to 1197 kg ha^{-1} at surface soils and 683.5 to 1188.2 kg ha^{-1} at sub-surface soils due to the imposition of different treatments. Step K of soils was found to have a similar pattern as observed in the case of cumulative release K. The treatments involving the incorporation of Lime, FYM, P₂O₅, and K₂O released a relatively higher amount of K than the control and other treated plots. In most of the treatments, a constant rate K was encountered by the 8th or 9th extraction indicating K releasing power of soils for a long period. The Constant rate-K values were higher in treatment T₈ followed by T₆ and lower for T₁ (control) followed by T₉ and T₂ (treatment having less K nourished and lower organic matter content). The K release was found to be higher in surface soils than in sub-surface soils concerning various selected treatments. Cumulative K, Constant- rate K, and Step K had highly significant and positive correlations with different forms of potassium

(Water soluble K, Exchangeable K, Non-Exchangeable K, Total K, and Lattice K) in both depths. Even though many long-term fertilizer experiments are going in on different cropping systems in various parts of the country seem to be possessing good K supplying and K releasing power. Especially with reference to maize – wheat cropping system under acid alfisols neither organic sources alone nor mineral fertilizers can achieve sustainability for maintaining the K supplying power of these soils, regular and judicious but conjoint application of K through K fertilizers, organic manures, and lime is a necessity because of poor soil management.

Thus, from the above results and conclusion of an experiment, the importance of long-term fertilizer experiments was felt in aspects of sustainable maintenance of soil fertility per unit area per unit time per unit input without detrimental effects on the soil environment and soil health in an intensive cropping system. There is a necessity for continuous monitoring of changes in nutrient dynamics. So, long-term fertilizer experiment provides a resource of soil and plant material to further scientific research into soil and plant processes that control soil fertility, and plant productivity.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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