



## Effects Of Rice Husk Biochar On Nutrient Uptake And Yield Of Leafy Vegetables: A Review

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### Abstract

Green leafy vegetables have been used since ancient times as a food source because they contain many nutrients and minerals that help for growth and maintaining human health. The objective of this study is to summarize the effect of rice husk biochar on the selected leafy vegetables. The selected leafy vegetables are spinach (*Spinacia oleracea* L.), cabbage (*Brassica chinensis* L.), lettuce (*Lactuca sativa* L.), Chinese cabbage (*Brassica rapa chinensis*), Amaranth (*Amaranthus viridis* L.). Day by day the demand of leafy vegetables is increasing due to consume by many people. To fulfill this demand, the production of leafy vegetables should be increased. Various organic amendments such as rice husk biochar (RHB) can be used to increase the yield. RHB is one of the soil amendments that contain nutrients which is important for soil health and crop production. Although characteristics of RHB are also related to other factors such as pyrolysis heating rate and residence time, its performance for specific applications (e.g. carbon sequestration, pH amendment) can be manipulated through adjusting the pyrolysis temperature. Recent studies show the success of multi-application of biochar that affect the soil chemical and physical properties, plant growth and yield of vegetables. This review summarizes nutrient uptake and yield of some leafy vegetables which were influenced by rice husk biochar.

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## Introduction

Leafy vegetables hold an important place in well-balanced diets. It provides adequate amounts of many vitamins and minerals for humans (Kamble & Jadhav, 2013). They are rich source of vitamins like beta-carotene, ascorbic acid, riboflavin, folic acid and minerals like calcium, iron, phosphorous (Kumar *et al.* 2020). The lack of knowledge especially on the nutritive value of these green leafy vegetables among the public in general is the main drawback in their lower consumption (Ashok Kumar *et al.* 2013). Green leafy vegetables represent an important proportion of foods with medicinal value (Kumar *et al.* 2013).

Biochar is a biomass that is burned at very high temperature in the absence of oxygen (Asadi Zeidabadi *et al.* 2018). Biochar is simply a fine-grained and porous form of charcoal that is made to improve soil as it can help to boost soil health via its positive benefits towards plant growth and disease resistance alike (Kumari & Rajan 2016). It has been the centre of many research activities recently for its potential to support the reduced use of fertilizer and irrigation yet indirectly increasing yield (Clough *et al.* 2013; Faloye *et al.* 2019). It is thus a valuable soil amendment due to its ability to support the higher-level microbial populations (Bhuvaneshwari *et al.* 2019). Moreover, it is stable in the soil and so is a good investment for long-term fertility (Jyoti *et al.* 2018). Biochar as a soil amendment has potential benefits to improve the chemical characteristics of soils (Mulyati *et al.* 2019).

Rice husk biochar (RHB) application can reduce the bioavailability of herbicides and heavy metals in contaminated soils, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and decrease nutrient leaching from soil (Faloye *et al.* 2019). The dominant mechanism for immobilization of pollutants in the soil by biochar depends on the pollutant type, soil type, RHB type and application rate (Faloye *et al.* 2019). By biochar application, the pollution risk of herbicides is reduced, which is beneficial for environment, but the efficiency of herbicides is also reduced, which is an

economical concern (Asadi *et al.* 2021). Rice husk biochar (RHB) has an important adsorption capacity for ammonium and nitrate and therefore can reduce their leaching when applied to soil (Bashir *et al.* 2018; Asadi *et al.* 2021).

The co-application of biochar and lime showed a promising effect on nutrient availability and on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emission by increasing soil pH in acidic soils (Mosharrof *et al.* 2021a). At optimum pH (6.5 to 7.5), organic carbon mineralization increased, causing higher CO<sub>2</sub> emission and reducing the Al and Fe toxicity (Mosharrof *et al.* 2021a). Therefore, applying these amendments to agricultural land can be a potential agronomic practice to enhance soil fertility and crop productivity. Biochar with lime treatment increased soil pH, available P, and decreased exchangeable Al. The emission of CO<sub>2</sub> was lower in the rice husk biochar treated soil than oil palm empty fruit bunch (EFB) biochar treated soil, which dictates that the effect of biochar and lime on soil fertility and crop productivity may vary with biochar properties and different pyrolysis temperatures (Mosharrof *et al.* 2021b). Leafy vegetables represent an important part of foods with medicinal and nutritional value. Limited information is available on the properties of nutrient uptake and the yield of leafy vegetables. As a result, there was a need to study leafy vegetables in response to RHB. This review focuses on the role and function of rice husk biochar on soil as well as its effect on yield, and nutrient uptake of some selected leafy vegetables.

## Benefits of leafy vegetables

Spinach is one of the most nutritious foods available, as it is low in calories and high in vitamins; spinach is one of the most nutrient-dense foods in existence. It is packed with vitamins A and C, as well as foliate. Heat reduces the green's oxalate content, freeing up its dietary calcium, cooked spinach gives you more nutrition than raw, but is excellent eaten raw in salads (Trumbo *et al.* 2001). Cabbage is an excellent source of vitamin C and vitamin K, containing more than 20% of the daily value for each of these nutrients per serving. Cabbage is also a good source of dietary fiber,

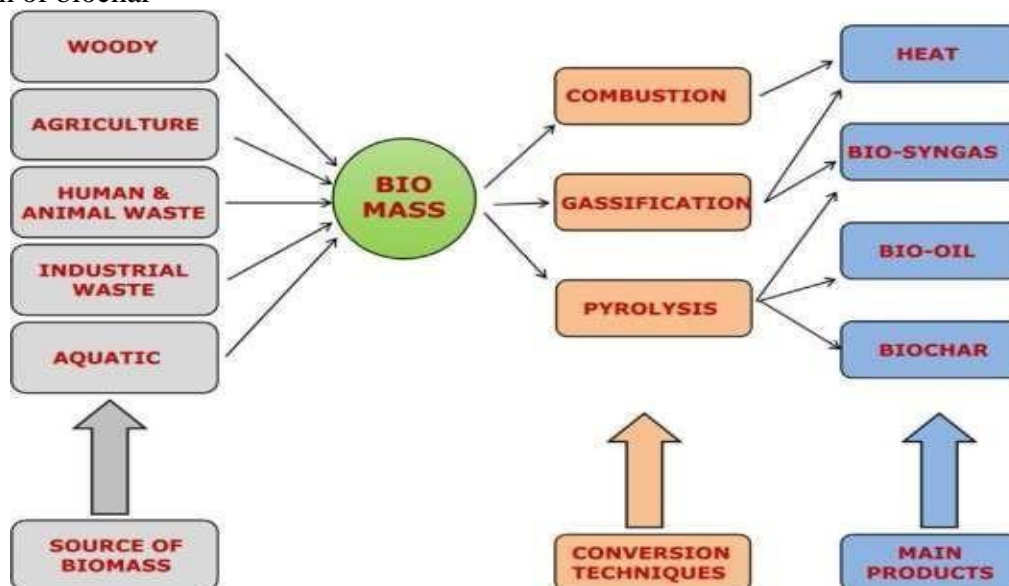
vitamin B6 and folate, with no other nutrients having significant content per 100 gram serving (Colonna *et al.* 2016).

Okra mucilage has medicinal applications when used as a plasma replacement or blood volume expander. The mucilage of okra binds cholesterol and bile acid carrying toxins dumped into it by the liver (Gemedo, 2015; Hafeez *et al.* 2020). Okra seeds are source of oil and protein. Okra seeds have been used on a small scale for oil production (Anwar *et al.* 2010). It can be also used as non-caffeinated substitute for coffee (Singh *et al.* 2014). Okra seeds may be roasted and ground to form a caffeine-free substitute for coffee (Singh *et al.* 2014). The bioactive carbohydrates, proteins, carotenoids, flavonoids, anthocyanins, phenolic acids and minerals are diverse nutrients present in the leaves and roots of sweet potato contain essential minerals of Na, Mg, P, Ca, and K. Leaves of sweet potato hold niacin, vitamins B6, B2, B1, C, E, pantothenic acid,  $\beta$ -carotene, and biotin, having higher contents of vitamins B2, C, E, biotin, and  $\beta$ -carotene than the plant's stems and stalks (Hoang *et al.* 2021).

Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa* L.) is one of the most popular green vegetables worldwide (Kimet *al.*, 2016). Lettuce contains several dietary minerals important for human health such as Phosphorus (P), Magnesium (Mg), Potassium (K), Calcium (Ca), Zinc (Zn), Iron (Fe), and Manganese (Mn), but essentially no protein or fat. In general, leaves contain Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Minerals, water and fiber (Buturi *et al.* 2021). In addition, lettuce also contains lactocin and lactucopicrin that can be improved sleep. Also contain antioxidants, the compounds inhibit the formation of carcinogenic substances in the body (Mulyati *et al.* 2019).

The fresh and tender leaves and stems of amaranth are delicious when cooked like other fresh leafy vegetables (Alegbejo 2014). The leaves and tender stems of the amaranth are rich in protein, minerals, vitamin A and vitamin C (Sarker *et al.* 2020). Dry matter content of amaranths showed positive correlation with crude fiber and phosphorus content at all the stages of harvest (Biel *et al.* 2017).

#### Production of biochar



**Fig. 1.** Conversion techniques of biomass obtained from different sources and their products.

Most commonly, pyrolysis and hydrothermal carbonization are used to make biochar, however partial gasification (thermo-oxidative pyrolysis) and microwave-assisted pyrolysis are also occasionally used (MAP). Slow

pyrolysis, the most used technique, calls for heating rates less than 1 °C per second, moderate temperatures (below 600 °C), lengthy residence durations, and coarse feed particle size distributions (PSD) (Seo *et al.*

2022). In order to get the most energy at the lowest cost while simultaneously keeping environmental concerns in mind, it is crucial to select the right process for converting biomass into energy and various value-added products.

### **Composition of RHB biochar**

The main constituents of RHBs include C, hydrogen (H), oxygen (O), N, P, K and silicon (Si). C content of RHBs usually increases by increasing of pyrolysis temperature (Eduah *et al.* 2019). Additionally, research have shown that the C content of RHB is not dependent on the temperature of pyrolysis. Most importantly, however, is that compared to RH, C is mostly found in more stable forms in RHB (Abrishamkesh *et al.* 2015). Additionally, as the surface area of biochars expands, so does their ash content (Rajapaksha *et al.* 2015). There are also reports that show the independency of C content from pyrolysis temperature in RHB (Abrishamkesh *et al.* 2015). However, most importantly, C in RHB is mainly in more stable forms compared to RH. In addition, the ash content of biochars increases with the increase in their surface area (Enders *et al.* 2012; Rajapaksha *et al.* 2015).

### **Characteristics of biochar**

The Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) analysis showed that the rice husk biochar (RHB) had the best pores development and better-defined pores (Zaitun *et al.* 2022). Coconutshell biochar had larger developed pores and good defined pores (Hao *et al.* 2018). The woodshavings waste biochar had bigger pores than coconut shell biochar and rice husk biochar, less defined and less uniform compared with the pores developed by coconut shell biochar and rice husk biochar (Zaitun *et al.* 2022). Low-temperature pyrolysis produced a higher biochar yield and enriched volatile-matter composition than the high-temperature pyrolysis (Jindo *et al.* 2014). The biochar yields and volatile contents gradually diminished as the pyrolysis temperature increased (Sun *et al.* 2017). Moreover, the type of feedstock also affected the biochar yields and the volatile-matter content (Jindo *et al.* 2014).

The biochars derived from rice material

showed a high ash content at all temperature ranges, and this may be the cause of the partial change in the composition promoted by a possible interaction between organic and inorganic constituents during the feedstock pyrolysis in the biochars that contain an amount of ash larger than 20% (Tomczyk *et al.* 2020). The characteristics of RHB had very high in organic C, total N, P and K also were very high (VarelaMilla *et al.* 2013). It seems that, this characteristics of biochars would improve the soil characteristics including soil physical, chemical and biological, and should be maintained the sustainable agriculture production (Abujabhah *et al.* 2016). Therefore, there were important implications to improve the soil quality (Mulyati *et al.* 2019). Sarah *et al.* (2013) stated that when incorporated into soil substrate in pot trials, biochar and local organic fertilizers altered the soil physical structure (bulk density) and modified the soil chemical properties (pH, CEC and nutrient supply) and the impact extended over three cropping cycles.

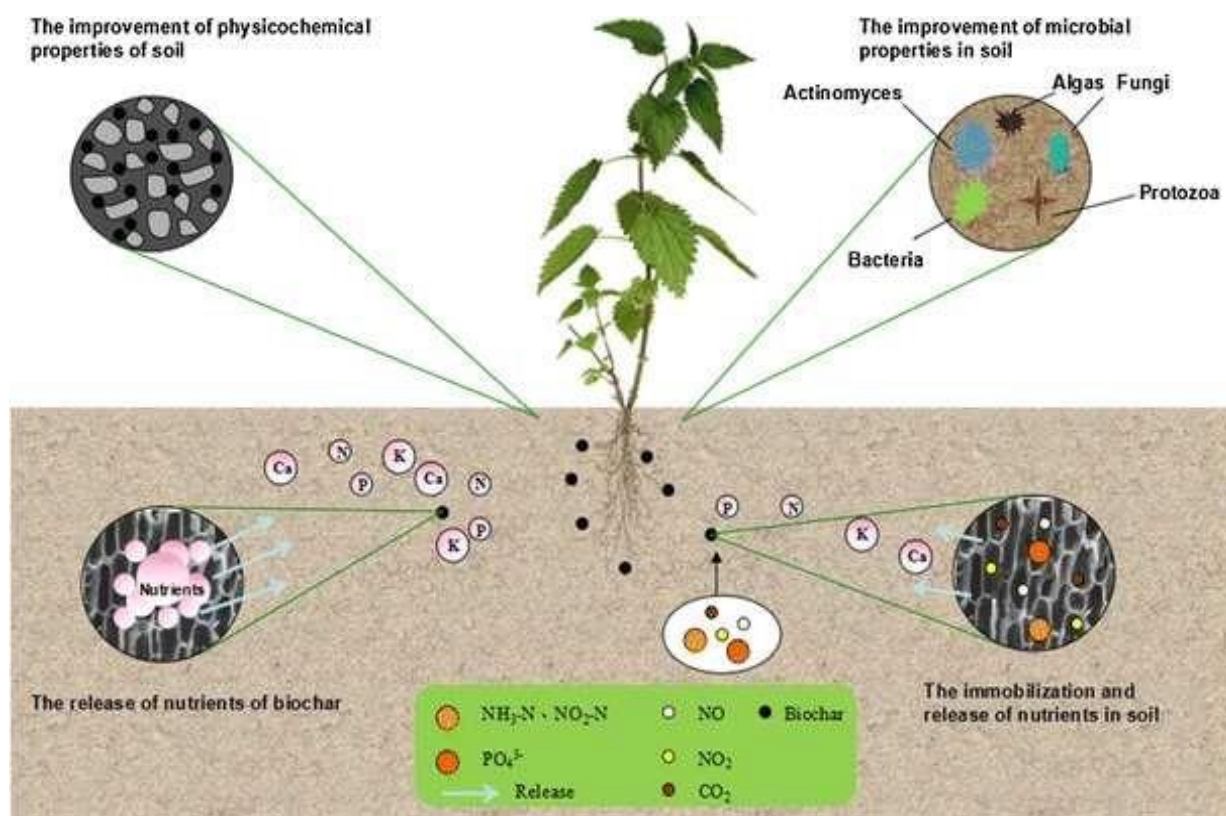
**Table 2.** Effect of different biochar's on soil physical, chemical, and biological performance of different soil.

Biochar	Soil Type	Chemical	Physical	Biological	References
Biochar	Loamy soil/Sandy clay loam	Net CO <sub>2</sub> flux; NH <sub>4</sub> <sup>+</sup> -N and NO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> -N	Soil aggregate size classes	Enzymatic activity	(Awad et al., 2018; Solaiman et al., 2010)
Corn straw derived Biochar	Cultivated brown soil Field	SOC; TN;TP; K;	-	-	(Gao et al.,2018)
		SAN; SAK, and SAP			
Rice husk derived Biochar	Loamy soil/ Sandy clay loam	Soil pH, base cations	Soil loss rate	-	(Ahmadi et al., 2020; Mosharr of et al., 2021)
Rice husk derived Biochar	Silt clay	Soil pH; TC; TN	-	Microbial diversity/ Biological nitrogen fixation	(Rafiq et al., 2020; Mia et al., 2014)
Rice straw derived Biochar	Paddy soil/Loamy sand	Soil pH; SOC; TN; C/N ratio	Soil porosity; Soil air permeability coefficient	Enzymatic activity; microbial biomass carbon; and nitrogen	(Zheng et al., 2019; Blackwell et al., 2015)
Oil palm Empty fruit bunch biochar	Sandy clay loam	Soil pH; SOC; TN; C/N ratio, base cations	-	-	(Rabileh et al., 2015; Mosharr of et al., 2021)

### Function of biochar

Biochar effects on soil depend on feedstock type, heating temperature, and residence time (Ronsse *et al.* 2013). Biochar can enhance plant growth, retain nutrients, provide habitat for microorganisms (Siddiqui *et al.* 2016), improve soil water holding capacity (Kammann *et al.* 2012), soil water availability (Baronti *et al.* 2014) and hydraulic conductivity (Buss *et al.* 2012). Biochars can reduce net Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from agricultural soil through mechanisms that are still not clear (Mukherjee

& Lal 2013). Biochar is found to be apotential input to agriculture (Barrow 2012). Its effectis mostly observed in low fertile, acidic and degraded soil. The decrease in soil bulk density, large surface area in soil, presence of exchangeable cations and nutrient elements, increase in availability of nutrients and preventionof nutrients leaching are some of the major benefits of biochar contributing towards increasein crop productivity through improvements in soil properties (Kandel *et al.* 2021).



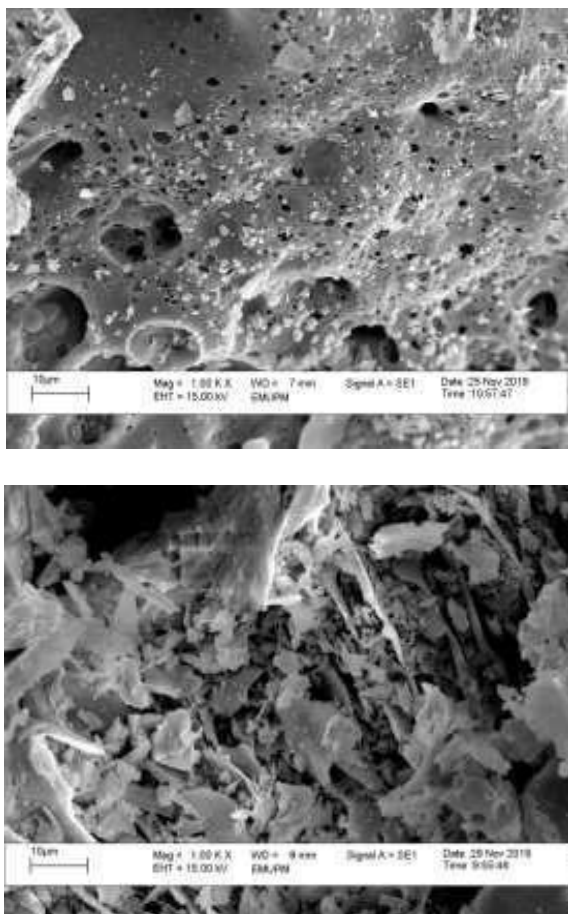
**Figure 1.** The function of biochar on soil

### Rice Husk Biochar (RHB)

The RHB generation from paddy rice husk and its application with beneficial microbial inoculants may be a sustainable crop residue waste management option to enhance the nutrient status, microbial community and paddy productivity of nutrient poor agriculture soils. Rice husk biochar, having large surface area, pore size and nutrient elements provide favourable soil conditions for the growth and multiplication of microbial communities and consequently higher soil microbial biomass (SMB) levels, in nutrient deprived paddy agriculture soil (Singh *et al.* 2018). Rice Husk Biochar has the potential to enhance plant nutrient uptake while providing pest resistance, making it a gateway to achieve agriculture sustainability, especially in rice paddies (Singh Karam *et al.* 2022). Due to its large surface area, high silicon content, enhanced water holding capacity, improvement to soil physical structure and various other positive attributes, RHB can be used to improve soil fertility (Singh Karam *et al.* 2022). Besides, RHB is a carbon-rich, porous substance with multiple-functional groups that has the potential to increase nutrient retention, which improves the

effectiveness of fertilizers (Vendra *et al.* 2020; Singh Karam *et al.* 2022).

In general, RHB application increases the contents of soil organic carbon (SOC), soil pH, CEC, bulk density and microbial activity, available P, available K and total N (Asadi *et al.* 2021; Rahman *et al.* 2021). However, there are some inconsistencies in effects of RHB application due to the diverse properties of different soils and RHBs produced under different pyrolysis conditions (Asadi *et al.* 2021). Mosharraf *et al.* (2022) conclude that in tropical acidic soil, amending with the combined application of different rates of RHB, dolomitic limestone, and chemical P fertilizer can enhance nutrients availability to the plant by increasing soil pH, available P, base cations, and reducing exchangeable acidity while reducing the toxicity of Al and Fe. Compared to control and NPK treatments, combined application of lime and RHB increased P bioavailability with the largest increase in the greater P application rate.



**Figure 2.** Micrograph of RHB used in the study by scanning electron microscopy at 1000 × magnification (Haque, 2021)

### Characteristics of RHB

Higher pyrolysis temperatures result in RHBs with a lower hydrogen/carbon ratio, which means more aromatic carbon molecules are present. The manufacturing of RHBs has a larger ash content, a lower yield, and a higher surface area as a result of the rise in pyrolysis temperature. Comparatively to biochars made from other feedstocks under the same pyrolysis conditions, RHB often contains more silicon, ash, and carbon. Although it depends on the kind of soil, RHB treatment can increase the soil's bulk density, microbial activity, accessible K concentration, cation exchange capacity, and organic carbon content (Asadi *et al.* 2021).

### Effects of rice husk biochar (RHB) on yield of leafy vegetables

#### Effects of RHB on Spinach yield

The rice husk biochar (RHB) rates giving the tallest plants were 20 g pot<sup>-1</sup> for 0 week of incubation (WOI), 10 g pot<sup>-1</sup> for 4 and 8 WOI,

and 20 g pot<sup>-1</sup> for 12 WOI (Ebido *et al.* 2021). Thus, in terms of spinach height, the optimum rates of RHB were 10 and 5 g pot<sup>-1</sup> for soil-biochar incubation lengths of 4 and 8 WOI (Ebido *et al.* 2021). The shorter plants in the control compared to the rest only for the 8 WOI. Despite the fact that, averaged across RH rates, this 8 WOI apparently gave the tallest plants among the four incubation lengths (Ebido *et al.* 2021). Variance only prevailed for 8 and 12 WOI where 10 and 20 g pot<sup>-1</sup> showed number of leaves per plant different from the rest (Ebido *et al.* 2021). For 12 WOI where the number of leaves was higher in 10 and 20 g pot<sup>-1</sup> than the rest of the treatments. Statistically that for 8 WOI, as with 12 WOI, the number of leaves was equally higher in 10 and 20 g pot<sup>-1</sup> than the rest (Ebido *et al.* 2021). Rice husk biochar (RHB) application at the rates of 3.0 - 4.0 kg/m<sup>3</sup> increased the stem size and leaf length of water spinach (Varela Milla *et al.* 2013).

### Effects of RHB on Chinese cabbage yield

The biochar was added to the soil at 0, 1, 3, and 5% by weight, which represent about 0, 18, 54, and 90 t ha<sup>-1</sup>, respectively (Oh *et al.* 2017). The treatments were arranged in a randomized complete block design with 3 replications. The Chinese cabbage was grown for 49 days in a glasshouse in pots filled with sandy loam soil. Experimental results showed that the residual-wood biochar used for the experiment was slightly alkaline (pH 7.5). The fresh weights of Chinese cabbage were 86.22 g, 84.1 g, 63.23 g and 70.87 g, respectively, for biochar applications at 0, 18, 54, and 90 t ha<sup>-1</sup>. Compared with the control (No biochar), biochar application increased soil pH and electrical conductivity (EC). Addition of biochar (54 and 90 t ha<sup>-1</sup>) to sandy loam soil had no effect on growth of Chinese cabbage. This might be due to excessive increase of soil pH from the biochar application, leading to reduced availability of plant nutrients. Based on these results, an excessive addition of biochar may have negative effects on the healthy growth of Chinese cabbage (Taek Keun *et al.* 2017).

### Effects of RHB on Cabbage yield

Biochar addition to non-fertilized soils (0)

significantly increased all the plant growth indicators for both lettuce trials, except for below ground biomass for the second lettuce crop (Carter *et al.* 2013). In fertilized soils (CS), CS + B50 and CS + B150 showed increases for one or both of the lettuce crops for all plant growth indicators (Figure 2). With the addition of 25 g kg<sup>-1</sup> biochar to the same soil (CS), no significant increases were seen in the lettuce crop growth indicators (Sarah *et al.* 2013).

### Effects of RHB on Lettuce yield

For all three cycles of lettuce and cabbage production, above ground biomass increased with biochar addition (Carter *et al.* 2013; Kyei *et al.* 2019). The greatest increase relative to the control was 90.3%, with the addition of 150 g kg<sup>-1</sup> biochar to non-fertilized soil (Carter *et al.* 2013). In each cycle the lowest above ground biomass was from the non-fertilized and non-biochar amended soil and the highest above ground biomass was in the treatment with fertilizer addition and highest level of biochar application (Carter *et al.* 2013).

### Effects of RHB on Amaranth yield

Biochar application generally increased plant growth compared to that with no application (Bioenergy *et al.* 2017). The plant height generally increased as the biochar application rate increased (Bioenergy *et al.* 2017). Biochar amended amaranth plants generally have larger stem diameter compared to those with no application (Sun *et al.* 2016). The highest mean plant height, number of leaves, fresh weight and dry weight reflects the better uptake of nutrients (Eyheraguibel *et al.* 2008). Also, higher shoot and root dry weights were found in the biochar amended plants compared to the control (Brennan *et al.* 2014).

### Effects of RHB on nutrient uptake Effects of RHB on N nutrient uptake

There was no significant polynomial trend detected for the effect of biochar rate on total N concentration of the soil. However, polynomial contrast analysis indicated that the existence of a biochar rate × fertilizer interaction was mainly due to a significant difference in the linear part of total N responses to biochar rate at different fertilizer

rates. Application of biochar without fertilizer addition increased total N concentration of the soil, but significant differences over controls (mean<sub>bt</sub> = 0.17 g kg<sup>-1</sup>) were only detected at the highest application rate of 15 g kg<sup>-1</sup> (mean<sub>bt</sub> = 0.398 g kg<sup>-1</sup>). However, the total N concentration in fertilized soil showed a decreasing trend with the lowest value recorded in soil treated with the highest application rate at 15 g kg<sup>-1</sup> biochar (mean<sub>bt</sub> = 0.215 g kg<sup>-1</sup>) (Shuhada 2016).

### Effects of RHB on P nutrient uptake

Biochar also has the potential of improving P fertilizer effectiveness especially in acidic soils (Schneider & Haderlein 2016; Filho *et al.* 2019). Effects of RHB and that of P are independent of one another. Soil pH increased with an increase in the rate of RHB without combining with phosphorus. RHB form insoluble complex with high available phosphorus present in the soil causing fixation and not leaving enough calcium to counter H<sup>+</sup> and Al<sup>3+</sup> concentrations and hence reduction in the pH (Okon *et al.* 2005). Application of biochar and chicken manure in soil could potentially improve P availability and affect P uptake by ryegrass and maize plants. (Yuan *et al.* 2011). Seripong (1988) concluded that P and RHB improved nodulation, yields, the soil pH, organic matter content, and cation exchange capacity (CEC) of the Thailand acid soils.

### Effect of RHB on soil fertility

In general, RHB application increases the contents of soil organic C (SOC), soil pH, CEC, available P, available K and effects of RHB application due to the diverse properties of different soils and RHBs produced under different pyrolysis conditions. Biochars are generally enriched in nutrients and usually increase soil fertility when applied to soil (Feng *et al.* 2017). Masulili *et al.* (2010) examined the effect of RHB on the properties of acid sulfate soil, and observed increases in SOC, CEC, soil P, K and Ca contents, and decreases in soil exchangeable Al and soluble Fe. However, Mg and Na contents are remained unaffected by RHB amendment. Singh *et al.* (2018) reported significant increases in water holding capacity, total C, N and P contents, as



well as soil moisture content following RHB application. Ghorbani and Amirahmadi (2018) also reported that RHB significantly increases the N content and bioavailable K in the amended soils. However, the reported results are contradictory for P. Abrishamkesh *et al* (2015) reported that P content of the soils amended with 0.4%, 0.8% and 3.3% RHB is significantly lower than that of the unamended control soil. Ghorbani and Amirahmadi (2018) also observed a decrease in P content by RHB application. Significant improvement in soil bioavailable P content as a result of charcoal application has long been reported in sandy and loamy soils (Tryon 1948).

### Effect of RHB on nutrients bioavailability

The growth of different crops is also enhanced by application of RHB. RHB addition to soil can immobilize heavy metals and herbicides and reduce their bioavailability. RHB application shows a significant capacity in reduction of nitrate leaching, although its magnitude depends on the biochar application rate and soil biogeochemical characteristics. Use of RHB, especially in paddy fields, shows a promising mitigation effect on greenhouse gas (CH<sub>4</sub>, CO<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O) emissions. Although RHB characteristics are also related to other factors such as pyrolysis heating rate and residence time, its performance for specific applications (e.g. carbon sequestration, pH amendment) can be manipulated by adjusting the pyrolysis temperature (Asadi *et al.* 2021).

### Conclusion

Leafy vegetables grown using rice husk biochar showed positive results. We can observe that nutrient absorption can be increased and produce nutrient-rich vegetables due to the biochar use. It can increase the size of the leaves, fruit and root produced is larger than that of vegetables not grown using rice husk biochar. In addition, rice husk biochar helps green vegetables absorb nutrients better. The high content of nutrient such as silica, N, P and K in biochar have helped a lot to improve the soil condition. The soil structure, water availability, CEC also increases in the soil for using biochar. Thus, the production of the crop increases with a good quality. Although, the use of rice husk

biochar has showed positive result, there still more research can be done to prove the effectiveness, because there is more space to do research on other aspect. There is suggestion to research on soil aggregation to determine the exact optimum rate of RHB alongside the minimum time interval between addition and sowing in the production on leafy vegetables. So that the effectiveness and the function of biochar can be increased which can help to improve soil property. Further studies are needed to understand its actual mechanisms for those variations before recommending it to large-scale level as a soil amendment.

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