

TO LIFT OR NOT TO LIFT SWEET POTATO VINES? – A POSSIBLE ANSWER TO A FREQUENT QUESTION

Tamás Monostori, Bence Bagdi, Viktor Vojnich, Ádám Bordé, Adrienn Szarvas

University of Szeged Faculty of Agriculture, Hódmezővásárhely, Hungary

Sweet potato is a vigorously growing crop developing roots - even storage roots - from vine nodes touching the soil. Water and nutrients supplied to these roots are considered to be wasted, resulting in a reduced yield of marketable roots. We examined the effect of lifting vines on the yield and marketability of sweet potato in farm-size experiments (ca. 520 plants in 13 rows per treatment, shared between two repetitions) in Sarkad, East-Hungary, in two years. In 2019, the average yield per plant was 570 grams if vines were lifted and 520 grams if not. In contrast, in 2020, lower yield (730 grams) was achieved with lifting and higher (750 grams) without. The differences were not significant. In 2019, the qualification resulted in minor differences between the proportion of 1st-2nd class tubers from the ‘lifted’ (81%) and the ‘non-lifted’ (80%) treatments. In 2020, the difference was 77% and 87%, respectively. Our results give a possible answer to the question: to lift or not to lift the sweet potato vines. As it is statistically revealed, the efficiency of vine lifting is not unequivocal. The difference between the yields achieved with or without vine lifting is not significant and even extrapolated to hectare level, the difference is not more than 1.5 tons Ha⁻¹. This little difference makes the - even not always - beneficial effect and thus the necessity of vine lifting questionable, especially if considering how labor-intensive this activity is.

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