

Contents

Chapter	Title	Page
Chapter 1	Introduction	1
Chapter 2	Review of Literature	5
2.1	Direct Mechanisms	5
2.1.1	Production of phytohormones	5
2.1.2	Other useful compounds	6
2.1.2.1	Nod factor or lipo-chito-oligosaccharides (LCOs)	6
2.1.2.2	Lumichrome	8
2.1.2.3	Riboflavin	8
2.1.3	Synthesis of enzymes	8
2.1.4	Production of siderophore	10
2.1.5	Solubilization and uptake of nutrients	11
2.1.6	Stress resistance	12
2.2	Indirect mechanisms	13
2.2.1	Biocontrol	13
2.2.2	Change in host plant susceptibility	14
2.2.3	Interaction with other beneficial microorganisms	15
2.2.4	Increasing root adhering soil	16
2.3	Deleterious effects	17
2.3.1	Over-production of compounds	17
2.3.2	Miscellaneous	17
2.4	Rhizobial application in non-legumes	17
2.4.1	Rice	18
2.4.2	Wheat	20
2.4.3	Maize	22
2.4.4	Other crops	24
Chapter 3	Materials and Methods	28
3.1	Isolation of rhizobial strains	28
3.2	Screening rhizobial strains for growth promoting potential (Jar	30

	experiments)	
3.3	Effect of rhizobial inoculation on growth and yield of maize and wheat in pots and fields under natural conditions	30
3.3.1	Preparation of inoculum and seed inoculation	31
3.3.2	Pot experiments	31
3.3.3	Field experiments	32
3.4	Soil analyses	32
3.4.1	Particle size analysis	32
3.4.2	Saturation percentage (SP)	34
3.4.3	Electrical conductivity (ECe)	34
3.4.4	pH of saturated soil paste (pHs)	34
3.4.5	Organic matter	34
3.4.6	Total nitrogen	34
3.4.7	Available phosphorus	35
3.4.8	Extractable potassium	35
3.5	Plant analyses	35
3.5.1	Digestion	35
3.5.2	Nitrogen determination	36
3.5.3	Phosphorus determination	36
3.5.3.1	Barton reagent	36
3.5.3.1.1	Solution A	36
3.5.3.1.2	Solution B	36
3.5.4	Potassium determination	36
3.6	Characterization of the selected isolates	37
3.6.1	Root colonization assay	37
3.6.2	Indole-3-acetic acid (IAA) assay	37
3.6.3	Phosphate solubilization assay	38
3.6.4	Siderophore production assay	38
3.6.5	Exopolysaccharide (EPS) production assay	38
3.6.6	Chitinase activity assay	38
3.7	Statistical analyses	39

Chapter 4	Results	40
4.1	Screening rhizobial isolates for growth promoting activity (Jar experiments)	40
4.1.1	Screening rhizobial isolates for growth promoting activity in maize	40
4.1.1.1	<i>Rhizobium phaseoli</i>	40
4.1.1.2	<i>Mesorhizobium ciceri</i>	46
4.1.1.3	<i>Rhizobium leguminosarum</i>	50
4.1.2	Screening rhizobial isolates for growth promoting activity in wheat	50
4.1.2.1	<i>Rhizobium phaseoli</i>	50
4.1.2.2	<i>Mesorhizobium ciceri</i>	59
4.1.2.3	<i>Rhizobium leguminosarum</i>	62
4.2	Pot trials	69
4.2.1	Maize	69
4.2.1.1	Plant height (cm)	69
4.2.1.2	Fresh shoot weight (g)	69
4.2.1.3	Dry shoot weight (g)	72
4.2.1.4	Fresh Cob yield (g)	72
4.2.1.5	Air dried cob yield (g)	72
4.2.1.6	Cob length (cm)	75
4.2.1.7	Grain yield (g pot ⁻¹)	75
4.2.1.8	1000 grain weight (g)	79
4.2.1.9	Root length (cm)	79
4.2.1.10	%K in grains	79
4.2.1.11	%K in straw	83
4.2.1.12	%N in grains	83
4.2.1.13	%N in straw	86
4.2.1.14	%P in grains	86
4.2.1.15	%P in straw	86
4.2.2	Wheat	90
4.2.2.1	Plant height (cm)	90
4.2.2.2	Number of tillers per plant	90

4.2.2.3	Spike length (cm)	90
4.2.2.4	Grain yield pot ⁻¹ (g)	94
4.2.2.5	Straw yield pot ⁻¹ (g)	94
4.2.2.6.	1000 grain weight (g)	97
4.2.2.7	Root length (cm)	97
4.2.2.8	%K in grains	97
4.2.2.9	%K in straw	101
4.2.2.10	%N in grains	101
4.2.2.11	%N in straw	104
4.2.2.12	%P in grains	104
4.2.2.13	%P in straw	104
4.3	Field experiments	108
4.3.1	Maize	108
4.3.1.1	Plant height (cm)	108
4.3.1.2	Fresh biomass (t ha ⁻¹)	108
4.3.1.3	Straw yield (t ha ⁻¹)	110
4.3.1.4	Cob yield (t ha ⁻¹)	110
4.3.1.5	Grain yield (t ha ⁻¹)	114
4.3.1.6	1000 grain weight (g)	114
4.3.1.7	%K in grains	117
4.3.1.8	%K in straw	117
4.3.1.9	%N in grains	120
4.3.1.10	%N in straw	120
4.3.1.11	%P in grains	120
4.3.1.12	%P in straw	124
4.3.2	Wheat	124
4.3.2.1	Plant height (cm)	124
4.3.2.2.	Number of tillers per plant	127
4.3.2.3	Spike length (cm)	127
4.3.2.4	Grain yield (t ha ⁻¹)	130
4.3.2.5	1000 grain weight (g)	130

4.3.2.6	Straw yield (t ha ⁻¹)	133
4.3.2.7	%K in grains	133
4.3.2.8	%K in straw	133
4.3.2.9	%N in grains	137
4.3.2.10	%N in straw	137
4.3.2.11	%P in grains	137
4.3.2.12	%P in straw	141
4.4	Characterization of selected isolates	141
4.4.1	Maize isolates	141
4.4.2	Wheat isolates	144
Chapter 5	Discussion	146
5.1	Rhizobium isolates screening on behalf of escalating maize and wheat seedlings growth under axenic conditions	146
5.2	Pot and field experiments carried out under natural environments	150
Chapter 6	Summary	155
	References	158
	Appendices	182