

Host Plant Resistance: Host plant resistance forms the foundation of IDM, as it provides a cost-effective, durable, and environmentally benign method for disease management. Resistant cultivars minimize the need for chemical interventions and provide a sustainable defence mechanism against a broad range of pathogens. Resistance can be innate, induced, or genetically engineered through modern biotechnological tools. Conventional breeding programs focus on selecting and hybridizing plants with natural resistance genes, while recent advances such as marker-assisted selection, genomic selection, and CRISPR/Cas9 genome editing have revolutionized the development of disease-resistant varieties. The deployment of resistance genes in a pyramiding manner enhances durability and broad-spectrum resistance. However, the dynamic nature of pathogen populations and the emergence of new virulent strains necessitate continuous surveillance and breeding efforts. Integration of resistant varieties within IDM frameworks not only suppresses disease outbreaks but also reduces the dependency on fungicides, making it an essential component for achieving sustainable plant health management.

Cultural and Agronomic Management: Cultural and agronomic practices constitute a preventive strategy in IDM, designed to manipulate the crop environment and cropping system in a way that suppresses pathogen development and disease incidence. These practices include optimizing planting time, maintaining appropriate crop density, managing soil health, and practicing crop rotation to break pathogen life cycles. Healthy soil enriched with organic matter and beneficial microorganisms naturally resists pathogen establishment. Proper irrigation management prevents conditions favourable to fungal and bacterial proliferation, while sanitation practices, such as removing infected plant debris, reduce inoculum sources. Balanced nutrition enhances plant vigour and tolerance to diseases, whereas the use of cover crops and mulching improves soil microbiota and suppresses harmful organisms. These agronomic adjustments create an environment less conducive to pathogen survival and spread, forming the first line of defence in IDM. Cultural management is particularly valuable because it is low-cost, environmentally safe, and compatible with other IDM components, serving as a foundation upon which biological and chemical methods can be effectively layered.

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INTRODUCTION

Concept and Principles of Integrated Disease Management: Integrated Disease Management is an ecologically based approach that combines multiple compatible disease management practices to minimize the damage caused by pathogens while maintaining environmental balance and economic sustainability. The concept of IDM is rooted in prevention rather than eradication, promoting ecosystem health over short-term suppression. It focuses on understanding the disease triangle: host, pathogen, and environment—and designing strategies that disrupt any of its components. The principles of IDM revolve around maintaining a healthy crop environment, promoting host resistance, conserving beneficial organisms, and using chemical inputs only as a last resort. It is a knowledge-intensive system that requires continuous monitoring, accurate diagnosis, and the integration of local traditional knowledge with modern scientific tools. The emphasis on diversity and compatibility among control measures allows IDM to reduce dependency on chemical pesticides, thereby mitigating problems such as pathogen resistance, environmental contamination, and biodiversity loss. In essence, IDM represents a paradigm shift from reactive to proactive disease management, ensuring sustainable crop protection and ecosystem resilience.



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क्रमांक: COOP/2023/KOTA/201080/25/40

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Integrated Disease Management (IDM) in Crops: Concepts, Strategies and Advances

संकलन

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Biological Control: Biological control in IDM harnesses the power of beneficial microorganisms to suppress plant pathogens through natural ecological interactions. Bioagents such as *Trichoderma*, *Bacillus*, *Pseudomonas*, and *Streptomyces* species are widely used due to their multiple mechanisms of action, including antibiosis, competition for nutrients, parasitism, and induction of systemic resistance in plants. These beneficial microbes not only control pathogens but also enhance plant growth and nutrient uptake, thereby improving crop vigour. Recent research emphasizes the use of microbial consortia and endophytic organisms that colonize plant tissues and offer long-lasting protection. The introduction of advanced formulations such as encapsulated bioagents, biofilms, and nanocarrier-based delivery systems has enhanced the field efficacy and stability of biological control agents. Moreover, integrating biological control with other IDM components, such as resistant varieties or cultural methods, provides synergistic effects, resulting in more reliable disease suppression. Biological control represents a sustainable, eco-friendly alternative to chemicals and plays a critical role in maintaining the ecological balance of agro-ecosystems.

Chemical Control and Rational Use of Fungicides: Chemical control continues to play an important yet complementary role in IDM. While fungicides and bactericides offer rapid disease suppression during epidemic outbreaks, their use must be rational, targeted, and integrated with other management measures to prevent the development of resistance and reduce environmental risks. The modern IDM approach advocates for the judicious use of low-toxicity, selective, and bio-rational chemicals, applied only when disease monitoring indicates threshold levels of infection. The adoption of integrated spray schedules, combining biological agents and chemical protectants, can enhance effectiveness while minimizing residues. Advances in formulation technology, such as nano-fungicides and controlled-release systems, have improved the precision, persistence, and safety of chemical applications.

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The rotation of fungicides with different modes of action is crucial for managing resistance, and decision support systems based on disease forecasting models help optimize application timing. Therefore, chemical control within IDM is no longer a standalone practice but part of a scientifically guided, environmentally responsible management framework.

Technological and Scientific Advances in IDM: The advancement of science and technology has revolutionized IDM, providing new tools for disease detection, prediction, and management. Molecular diagnostics, such as PCR, qPCR, and LAMP assays, allow rapid and accurate identification of pathogens at early stages, enabling timely intervention. The integration of remote sensing, drones, and satellite imaging with artificial intelligence and machine learning facilitates disease surveillance, mapping, and forecasting at large spatial scales. Nanotechnology has emerged as a transformative field, offering nano-fungicides, nano-sensors, and smart delivery systems that enhance the efficacy and precision of disease management. Similarly, genomics and transcriptomics have deepened our understanding of host-pathogen interactions, paving the way for gene-based resistance breeding. Digital agriculture platforms and decision support systems provide real-time data and management recommendations to farmers, aligning IDM practices with precision agriculture principles. These technological innovations enhance the efficiency, predictability, and scalability of IDM strategies, making them more adaptive to emerging challenges such as climate change and evolving pathogen populations.

Future Prospects and Global Significance of IDM: The future of Integrated Disease Management lies in its ability to integrate ecological principles with technological innovations for sustainable crop protection. The growing global emphasis on sustainable intensification and climate-smart agriculture positions IDM as a key pillar of resilient food systems. Future efforts should focus on developing crop-specific IDM models that combine traditional wisdom with modern scientific tools.

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Policy interventions, farmer training, and participatory extension programs are essential to enhance adoption at the grassroots level. There is also a pressing need to strengthen research in areas such as microbial ecology, disease forecasting, and host-pathogen genomics to develop predictive and adaptive management systems. Collaboration among governments, researchers, and the private sector can foster innovation and dissemination of IDM technologies. Ultimately, the success of IDM will depend on its integration into national agricultural strategies as a holistic, knowledge-driven, and environmentally conscious approach to disease management, ensuring both productivity and ecological stability in the face of global challenges.

CONCLUSION

Integrated Disease Management stands as a cornerstone of sustainable agriculture in the 21st century. By harmonizing biological, cultural, physical, and chemical measures, IDM minimizes disease impact while preserving ecological integrity. The integration of genomics, nanotechnology, and precision tools offers new frontiers in enhancing disease resilience and productivity. A shift from reactive pesticide-based control to proactive, knowledge-driven, and ecologically balanced management is essential for global food and environmental security. The true success of IDM lies not only in scientific innovation but also in its adoption, adaptation, and institutionalization across all levels of the agricultural value chain.

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