



Holistic Production and Utilisation Strategy for Wheat Varieties UP 2338, PBW 343, And HIM 304 Under Manipur Agro-Climatic Conditions

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.13020042>

Received: 13 February 2025; 18 February 2026; Published: 26 February 2026

ABSTRACT

Wheat cultivation in North-East India, particularly Manipur, faces constraints related to climatic variability, soil heterogeneity, and limited agronomic optimisation. This study formulates a holistic production and utilisation strategy for three wheat varieties—UP 2338, PBW 343, and HIM 304—by integrating optimised agronomic practices, sustainable crop management, and evaluation of industrial, nutritional, and medicinal potential. Field trials conducted over two rabi seasons demonstrated that optimised sowing (15–25 November), split nitrogen application (120 kg N ha⁻¹), and critical irrigation at CRI and grain-filling stages increased yield by 18–27% compared to conventional practices. Integrated pest management reduced yield loss by 12%. Quality analysis revealed protein content ranging from 11.8–13.6%, wet gluten 24–30%, and strong suitability for bread and biscuit production. The varieties also showed significant antioxidant capacity (DPPH inhibition 32–41%), supporting potential nutraceutical applications. These findings establish a climate-adaptive, economically viable framework for wheat production and value addition in Manipur.

Keywords: Wheat varieties; Agronomic optimisation; Grain yield and quality; Sustainable crop management; Manipur agro-climate; Nutritional and industrial utilisation; Integrated production systems.

INTRODUCTION

Wheat is emerging as an important rabi crop in Manipur due to diversification needs and food security concerns. However, productivity remains below the national average (2.1–2.5 t ha⁻¹ vs. India's 3.5–3.7 t ha⁻¹) (ICAR-IIWBR, 2023). Optimising agronomy and expanding industrial use are critical for regional sustainability.

Varieties are a) **UP 2338** – High adaptability, moderate protein, b) **PBW 343** – Widely adapted, good baking quality, c) **HIM 304** – Hill-adapted, stress resilient.

Agro-Climatic Context of Manipur is a) Annual rainfall: 1200–1600 mm, b) Winter temperature: 4–25°C, c) Soil: Acidic (pH 5.2–6.5), moderate organic carbon (0.6–0.9%). Late sowing and erratic irrigation reduce yield potential.

Optimisation of Agronomic Practices: Delayed sowing reduced yield by 18–25% due to terminal heat stress

Optimal Sowing Date – Table No. 1

Sowing Window	Mean Yield (t ha ⁻¹)
1–10 Nov	3.28
15–25 Nov	3.64
5–15 Dec	2.71

Irrigation Management: Critical stages are a) Crown Root Initiation (CRI), b) Booting, and c) Grain filling. Two critical irrigations increased yield by 21% compared to the rainfed control.

Fertilisation Strategy: Recommended dose - 120:60:40 kg N: P₂O₅:K₂O ha⁻¹ and Split N application – a) 50% basal, b) 25% at CRI, c) 25% at booting. Yield increase: 23% over farmer practice (80 kg N ha⁻¹).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global and National Importance of Wheat

Global Role of Wheat in Food Security

Wheat is one of the most widely cultivated cereal crops globally and contributes nearly 20% of total caloric intake worldwide (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2021). It plays a central role in ensuring food and nutritional security across temperate and subtropical agro-ecological zones.

Climate change, characterised by rising temperatures and erratic rainfall, poses a serious threat to wheat productivity (FAO, 2022). Terminal heat stress during grain filling reduces yield potential by shortening grain development duration (Reynolds et al., 2012).

Indian and Northeast Context

India is the second-largest wheat producer globally, yet regional productivity disparities persist. According to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (2020), the national average productivity is approximately 3.5–3.7 t ha⁻¹, whereas wheat yield in Manipur remains 2.1–2.5 t ha⁻¹ (Government of Manipur, 2023). This gap highlights the need for region-specific agronomic optimisation strategies.

Agro-Climatic Challenges of Manipur

Manipur falls under the Eastern Himalayan agro-climatic zone, characterised by a) Annual rainfall: 1200–1600 mm, b) Winter temperature: 4–25°C, c) Acidic soils (pH 5.2–6.5), d) Moderate organic carbon (0.6–0.9%). High rainfall and soil acidity create nutrient imbalances and disease susceptibility. Gupta & Yadav (2017) reported that acidic soils reduce phosphorus availability and increase aluminium toxicity, negatively affecting cereal crops in Northeast India. Thus, wheat productivity constraints in Manipur are soil-driven, climate-driven, and management-driven.

Optimisation of Agronomic Practices

Sowing Time and Climate Alignment: Timely sowing optimises phenological synchronisation with favourable temperature regimes. Reynolds et al. (2012) demonstrated that delayed sowing reduces yield due to terminal heat stress.

Field data from the present study confirms a) Optimum window (15–25 Nov): 3.64 t ha⁻¹, b) Delayed sowing (Dec): yield decline 18–25%. This aligns with climate-smart cereal production strategies (FAO, 2022).

Nitrogen Management: Nitrogen remains the most limiting nutrient in wheat production. Studies by Singh et al. (2019) indicate that split nitrogen application improves nitrogen recovery efficiency and grain protein content under hill ecosystems. Our findings are a) Split application (120 kg N ha⁻¹) increased yield by 23%, b) Protein improved by 0.8%, and c) NUE increased significantly.

This supports precision nutrient management over blanket fertilisation (ICAR-IIWBR, 2022).

Irrigation Scheduling: Critical irrigation at Crown Root Initiation (CRI) and grain filling is essential for maximising yield. ICAR (2020) recommends stage-specific irrigation to enhance root development and grain weight. Two critical irrigations increased yield by 21%, validating physiological water demand synchronisation.

Sustainable Crop Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM): Hill ecosystems face moderate disease pressure, especially yellow rust. Sharma & Duveiller (2007) reported 20–40% yield losses due to rust under conducive conditions.

The present IPM approach has a) reduced disease severity by 65–70%, b) Yield protection: 0.30–0.47 t ha⁻¹, c)



Reduced pesticide use by 30–40%. This confirms that threshold-based monitoring is more efficient than calendar spraying.

Crop Rotation and Soil Health: Continuous rice–wheat systems reduce soil organic carbon (SOC). Research from Singh et al. (2019) and ICAR (2020) indicates that pulse inclusion enhances soil nitrogen balance. Our observations in this study are a) SOC increased by 0.18%, b) Yield increased by 12%, and c) Improved microbial biomass carbon. This supports sustainable intensification through diversification.

Yield Performance and Genotypic Response: Evaluation of three varieties – a) UP 2338, b) PBW 343, c) HIM 304. PBW 343 recorded the highest yield (3.71 t ha⁻¹) and 1000-grain weight (43.8 g). Tiwari et al. (2021) reported similar genotype-dependent yield advantages under hill ecosystems.

Positive correlation between grain weight and yield confirms efficient assimilate remobilisation.

Grain Quality Evaluation

Protein and Gluten Quality: Shewry & Hey (2015) reported that wheat protein >13% qualifies as strong bread wheat. Present study – a) PBW 343: 13.6% protein, b) Wet gluten: 30%, c) Sedimentation: 52 ml. These values confirm superior bread-making quality.

Industrial Suitability is a) PBW 343 → Bread, b) HIM 304 → Biscuit, c) UP 2338 → Pasta/General flour. AACC (2010) standards support classification based on gluten strength and sedimentation values.

Nutritional and Medicinal Potential: Polyphenol range (210–265 mg GAE/100 g) and DPPH inhibition (32–41%) align with functional cereal standards. Shewry & Hey (2015) highlighted wheat's role in reducing oxidative stress and cardiovascular risks. Thus, varieties have a dual role: a) Staple food, b) Functional food ingredient

Economic Sustainability: Adoption likelihood increases when the B: C ratio >2.0. Optimised package – a) B: C = 2.31, b) additional income: ₹21,500 ha⁻¹. This confirms economic viability and farmer adoption potential.

Sustainable Crop Management

Pest and Disease Management under Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

(Hill and high-rainfall wheat ecosystems of Northeast India)

Wheat cultivation in high-rainfall, humid agro-climatic regions such as Manipur and adjoining northeastern states faces moderate pressure from seed-borne pathogens, foliar rusts (particularly yellow rust), aphids, and minor insect pests. An Integrated Pest Management (IPM) framework was implemented to minimise yield losses while reducing chemical dependency. The components and their quantified impacts are discussed below.

Seed Treatment with Carbendazim (2 g kg⁻¹ seed)

Scientific Rationale: Carbendazim (a systemic benzimidazole fungicide) is effective against – a) Seed-borne fungi (e.g., *Bipolaris*, *Alternaria*), b) Loose smut (*Ustilago tritici*), c) Early seedling blights. In humid hill conditions, untreated seed can suffer 8–15% poor germination due to fungal infection.

Mode of Action – a) Inhibits fungal mitosis by interfering with β -tubulin synthesis, b) Protects emerging seedlings during early establishment (first 25–30 days).

Observed Field Data – Table No. 2

Parameter	Untreated	Treated
Germination (%)	82–86	93–96
Seedling mortality (%)	12	4
Plant stand (plants m ⁻²)	320	390
Yield (t ha ⁻¹)	3.05	3.38

Impacts are as a) Improved plant population by 15–18%, b) Reduced early disease incidence by 60–70%, c) Yield advantage: 0.25–0.35 t ha⁻¹. Seed treatment is cost-effective (₹250–300 ha⁻¹) with high return on

investment.

Yellow Rust Monitoring

Pathogen: Yellow rust (*Puccinia striiformis f. sp. tritici*) is prevalent under – a) Cool temperatures (8–15°C), b) High relative humidity (>70%), c) Cloudy winter conditions. Hill regions are particularly vulnerable.

Disease Surveillance Protocol – a) Weekly field scouting from tillering stage, b) Monitoring of lower leaves for yellow linear pustules, c) Threshold: 5% leaf area infection triggers control measures.

Disease Progression Data – Table No. 3

Growth Stage	Incidence without Monitoring (%)	With Monitoring & Timely Spray (%)
Tillering	4	3
Booting	18	7
Grain Filling	28	9

Yield Impact: Uncontrolled yellow rust can cause 20–40% yield loss in susceptible varieties. Under IPM – a) Disease severity reduced by 65–70%, b) Yield saved: 0.40–0.55 t ha⁻¹. Timely fungicide spray (propiconazole/tebuconazole) at threshold maintained green leaf area duration (GLAD) and improved grain filling.

Neem-Based Bio-Pesticides: Active Component - Azadirachtin (0.15–1%) derived from neem seed extract.

Target Pests are a) Aphids (*Sitobion avenae*), b) Armyworms, c) Minor defoliators. Mode of Action – a) Antifeedant, b) Repellent, c) Growth regulator, d) Oviposition deterrent

Field Results: Table No.4

Parameter	Chemical Only	Neem-based IPM
Aphid population (no./tiller)	18	9
Natural enemy population	Low	Moderate–High
Yield (t ha ⁻¹)	3.45	3.52

Neem sprays reduced aphid population by 45–55% without harming beneficial insects (ladybird beetles, parasitoids).

Advantages are environmentally safe, no residue accumulation, and compatible with organic transition systems

Integrated Yield Protection (10–14%): When all IPM components were combined – a) Seed treatment, b) Regular monitoring, c) Threshold-based intervention, d) Neem-based biopesticides

Cumulative Impact- Table No. 5

Parameter	Farmer Practice	IPM
Total disease incidence (%)	22	10
Pest infestation (%)	18	9
Grain yield (t ha ⁻¹)	3.05	3.52
Yield protection (%)	—	10–14%

Average yield saved: 0.30–0.47 t ha⁻¹, Economic benefits are as a) Additional income: ₹6,000–9,000 ha⁻¹, b) B: C ratio improved from 1.62 to 1.95

Ecological and Sustainability Implications

IPM is a) Reduced synthetic pesticide use by 30–40%, b) Conserved beneficial arthropods, c) Lowered environmental contamination risk, d) Improved long-term agro-ecosystem resilience. In high rainfall hill ecosystems, proactive disease monitoring is more critical than reactive spraying.

Crop Rotation

Rice–Wheat–Pulse System under Eastern Himalayan Agro-Ecology

Crop diversification through the Rice–Wheat–Pulse rotation has demonstrated measurable improvements in soil health, productivity, and system resilience under high rainfall, subtropical hill conditions such as those in Manipur. The inclusion of a pulse crop (e.g., lentil, pea, or French bean) after wheat introduces biological nitrogen fixation and enhanced residue dynamics that are otherwise absent in continuous rice–wheat systems.

Improvement in Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) by 0.18%

Baseline Condition: Continuous Rice–Wheat systems in humid regions often exhibit as a) Declining organic matter, b) Soil compaction, c) Reduced microbial diversity, d) SOC levels typically ranging between 0.65–0.75%. After 3–5 cropping cycles of Rice–Wheat–Pulse rotation, SOC increased by approximately **0.18 percentage points** (e.g., from 0.72% to 0.90%).

Mechanisms Responsible:

- a) **Residue Contribution** - Pulse crops produce high-quality biomass with a low C: N ratio (20–25:1), enhancing decomposition and humus formation.
- b) **Biological Nitrogen Fixation** - Pulses fix 35–80 kg N ha⁻¹ through symbiotic *Rhizobium*, improving soil nitrogen balance and stimulating microbial activity.
- c) **Enhanced Root Biomass** - Pulse root systems contribute labile carbon fractions, increasing particulate organic matter.
- d) **Reduced Oxidative Losses** - Diversified cropping reduces continuous puddling effects seen in rice monoculture, preserving soil structure.

Impact on Soil Properties – Table No. 6

Parameter	Continuous Rice–Wheat	Rice–Wheat–Pulse
SOC (%)	0.72	0.90
Available N (kg ha ⁻¹)	265	310
Microbial biomass C (mg kg ⁻¹)	210	295
Bulk density (g cm ⁻³)	1.48	1.36

The 0.18% SOC increase is agronomically significant. A 0.1% increase in SOC can store approximately 2–3 t carbon ha⁻¹ in the top 15 cm soil layer, enhancing water retention and nutrient buffering.

Yield Increase by 12%

System Productivity Comparison – Table No. 7

Cropping System	Wheat Yield (t ha ⁻¹)	System Productivity (Rice Equivalent Yield t ha ⁻¹)
Rice–Wheat	3.10	7.25
Rice–Wheat–Pulse	3.48	8.12

Average increase in wheat yield: **10–15%**, Overall system productivity increase: **~12%**

Factors Contributing to Yield Enhancement

- a) **Nitrogen Carryover Effect** - Residual nitrogen from pulse crop reduces N deficiency during early wheat growth.
- b) **Improved Soil Structure** - Lower bulk density enhances root penetration and nutrient uptake.
- c) **Enhanced Moisture Retention** - Higher SOC improves available water capacity—critical under erratic winter rainfall.
- d) **Reduced Pest & Disease Carryover** - Breaking monocropping cycles reduces soil-borne pathogens and weed pressure.

Long-Term Sustainability Benefits: Economic Advantage – a) Reduced nitrogen fertiliser requirement by



20–25 kg N ha⁻¹, b) Additional income from pulse crop, c) Higher benefit–cost ratio (increase from 1.65 to 2.05)

Climate Resilience are a) Higher SOC improves drought buffering capacity, b) Increased carbon sequestration, c) Reduced greenhouse gas intensity per unit yield

Yield Performance

Yield Performance of Wheat Varieties under Optimised Management (Manipur Agro-Climatic Conditions)

Field evaluation under recommended nutrient management, timely sowing, IPM-based protection, and proper irrigation scheduling revealed clear varietal differences in productivity and grain traits.

Performance Data – Table No. 8

Variety	Grain Yield (t ha ⁻¹)	1000-Grain Weight (g)
UP 2338	3.52	41.2
PBW 343	3.71	43.8
HIM 304	3.38	40.5

PBW 343 – Superior Performer: PBW 343 recorded the highest grain yield (3.71 t ha⁻¹) and the maximum 1000-grain weight (43.8 g).

Reasons for Superior Performance

- a) **Higher Grain Sink Capacity** - The greater 1000-grain weight indicates enhanced assimilate translocation and efficient grain filling.
- b) **Better Biomass Partitioning** - Optimised management (balanced NPK, timely weed control, IPM) allowed PBW 343 to maintain a higher harvest index.
- c) **Adaptability** - PBW 343 showed better response to nutrient application and mild winter stress typical of hill valley ecosystems.
- d) **Yield Advantage** -1. +0.19 t ha⁻¹ over UP 2338, 2. +0.33 t ha⁻¹ over HIM 304, 3. Approximately 5–10% higher productivity

UP 2338 – Stable Mid-Performer - Yield: 3.52 t ha⁻¹, 1000-grain weight: 41.2 g

UP 2338 demonstrated as a) Good stability under moderate fertility conditions, b) Acceptable grain boldness, c) Consistent performance in slightly acidic soils. However, slightly lower grain weight suggests moderate grain filling efficiency compared to PBW 343.

HIM 304 – Adapted but Lower Yielding - Yield: 3.38 t ha⁻¹, 1000-grain weight: 40.5 g

HIM 304, being suited to hill conditions, showed – a) Reasonable adaptation, b) Tolerance to mild moisture stress. However, relatively lower grain weight and yield indicate comparatively reduced assimilate accumulation under optimised nutrient regimes.

Correlation between Grain Weight and Yield

A positive association was observed between 1000-grain weight and grain yield. PBW 343's higher grain mass directly contributed to superior final productivity, suggesting that grain filling duration and carbohydrate remobilisation efficiency were key determinants.

Grain Quality Analysis

Grain Quality Analysis of Wheat Varieties under Manipur Agro-Climatic Conditions

Grain quality parameters such as protein content, wet gluten percentage, and sedimentation value are critical determinants of bread-making suitability. These traits reflect both genetic potential and nutrient management



efficiency.

Quality Performance Data – Table No. 9

Parameter	UP 2338	PBW 343	HIM 304
Protein (%)	12.4	13.6	11.8
Wet Gluten (%)	27	30	24
Sedimentation Value (ml)	45	52	40

Protein Content (%): Protein concentration directly influences dough strength and baking performance – a)

PBW 343: 13.6%, b) UP 2338: 12.4%, c) HIM 304: 11.8%. PBW 343 recorded the highest protein content, exceeding UP 2338 by 1.2 percentage points and HIM 304 by 1.8 points.

Scientific Significance – a) Wheat with >13% protein is generally classified as strong bread wheat, b) Higher protein enhances gluten network formation, c) Indicates better nitrogen uptake and assimilation efficiency.

Wet Gluten Percentage (%): Wet gluten represents the viscoelastic protein fraction responsible for dough elasticity and gas retention – a) **PBW 343:** 30%, b) UP 2338: 27%, c) HIM 304: 24%. Values above 28% are considered desirable for bread-making.

Interpretation – a) PBW 343 exhibited stronger gluten strength and dough stability, b) HIM 304's lower gluten suggests suitability more toward chapati or soft wheat products.

Sedimentation Value (ml): Sedimentation value (Zeleny test) indicates gluten quality and dough strength – a)

PBW 343: 52 ml, b) UP 2338: 45 ml, c) HIM 304: 40 ml, d) Values >50 ml are associated with strong gluten and superior loaf volume.

Implications – a) PBW 343 qualifies as strong gluten wheat, b) UP 2338 shows medium strength, c) HIM 304 falls in the moderate category.

Integrated Quality Assessment: PBW 343 consistently outperformed the other varieties across all parameters – a) Highest protein content, b) Highest wet gluten, c) Highest sedimentation value. These traits collectively confirm its superior bread-making quality.

Relationship Between Yield and Quality: Interestingly, PBW 343 also demonstrated the highest grain yield in field trials, indicating a) Efficient nitrogen partitioning to grain protein, b) No adverse yield–protein trade-off under optimised management, c) Strong genetic potential for dual advantage (yield + quality).

Nutritional and Medicinal Potential

Antioxidant Activity and Functional Significance: The antioxidant potential of wheat varieties UP 2338, PBW 343, and HIM 304 was assessed through DPPH radical scavenging activity and total polyphenol content, both of which serve as reliable indicators of functional food value.

DPPH Radical Scavenging Activity – Table No.10

Variety	Inhibition (%)
PBW 343	41
UP 2338	36
HIM 304	32

The DPPH assay measures the capacity of grain extracts to neutralize free radicals, reflecting the presence of bioactive antioxidant compounds – a) **PBW 343 (41%)** exhibited the highest radical scavenging activity, suggesting a stronger antioxidant defense profile. This may be attributed to higher phenolic concentration and better accumulation of secondary metabolites in the bran fraction, b) **UP 2338 (36%)** showed moderate antioxidant capacity, indicating its suitability for functional flour blends, c) **HIM 304 (32%)** demonstrated comparatively lower activity but still falls within the functional cereal range.



From a biochemical standpoint, higher DPPH inhibition suggests improved ability to counter oxidative stress, which is associated with chronic diseases.

Total Polyphenol Content (210–265 mg GAE/100 g) : Polyphenols are major contributors to antioxidant capacity in wheat, predominantly concentrated in the bran and aleurone layers – a) Varieties with values closer to **265 mg GAE/100 g** indicate superior nutraceutical potential, b) These phenolic compounds include ferulic acid, vanillic acid, and other hydroxycinnamic acids.

The positive association between polyphenol content and DPPH inhibition supports the biochemical basis of antioxidant performance.

Health and Functional Food Implications : According to (Shewry & Hey 2015), wheat bran antioxidants contribute to a) Reduction of oxidative stress, b) Lower cardiovascular disease risk, c) Anti-inflammatory effects, d) Improved gut health. Dietary intake of whole wheat products rich in phenolic antioxidants is linked to reduced incidence of metabolic and cardiovascular disorders.

Functional Food Applications

1. Bread Making: PBW 343 – Superior Loaf Volume

PBW 343 demonstrates superior performance in bread production primarily due to its higher protein content (≈13–14%) and stronger gluten network formation. Strong gluten (gliadin + glutenin fractions) provides elasticity and gas-holding capacity during fermentation. This results in a) Higher loaf volume, b) Better crumb structure, c) Improved dough stability

Rheological assessments (e.g., farinograph stability and sedimentation value) typically show elevated values for PBW 343, indicating strong dough tolerance. The enhanced gluten matrix traps CO₂ efficiently during yeast fermentation, leading to uniform alveolar structure and desirable textural softness. Therefore, PBW 343 is particularly suited for commercial bakery applications requiring high loaf expansion and structural integrity.

2. Biscuit Production: HIM 304 – Moderate Gluten Advantage

HIM 304, with moderate protein (≈11–12%) and relatively lower gluten strength, is well-suited for biscuit manufacturing. Unlike bread, biscuits require – a) Limited gluten development, b) Dough extensibility rather than elasticity, c) Crisp and tender texture

Excessive gluten strength can result in hard, less spreadable biscuits. HIM 304's moderate gluten allows proper dough spread during baking, contributing to improved diameter, surface texture, and crispness. Additionally, its lower water absorption enhances handling during sheet formation and cutting. Hence, HIM 304 aligns well with confectionery and biscuit industries.

3. Pasta Production: UP 2338 – Acceptable Firmness

Although durum wheat is traditionally preferred for pasta, UP 2338 exhibits acceptable firmness due to balanced protein levels (≈12–13%) and moderate gluten quality. During cooking, a) Adequate protein matrix limits starch leaching, b) Maintains structural firmness, c) Reduces cooking loss

UP 2338 forms a reasonably cohesive protein–starch network, contributing to acceptable texture and chewiness. While not equivalent to durum semolina, it provides a viable alternative in regions where durum cultivation is limited. This makes UP 2338 suitable for localised pasta and noodle production.

Economic Analysis

A comparative economic assessment clearly demonstrates the financial advantage of adopting the optimised agronomic package over conventional farming practices.

Benefit–Cost (B: C) Ratio Analysis – **Table No.11**

Practice	B:C Ratio
Farmer Practice	1.68
Optimized Package	2.31



The B: C ratio increased from **1.68 to 2.31**, representing a **37.5% improvement in economic efficiency**. This indicates that for every ₹1 invested, a) Farmer practice returns ₹1.68, b) Optimised package returns ₹2.31

The higher B: C ratio reflects improved yield realisation, better grain quality, and efficient input utilisation under the integrated production strategy.

Net Income Enhancement: Adoption of the optimised package resulted in an additional **₹21,500 per hectare** compared to conventional practice. This increase can be attributed to – a) Higher grain yield ($\approx 15\text{--}20\%$ increase), b) Quality-linked price premium, c) Reduced avoidable losses through integrated pest and nutrient management, d) Improved resource-use efficiency

DISCUSSION

Optimised agronomy improved yield by 18–27%, consistent with findings by Reynolds et al. (2012) and FAO (2022). Quality enhancement aligns with industrial standards (AACC, 2010). The nutraceutical potential supports diversification into functional food markets.

This integrated framework strengthens:

1. Productivity Enhancement: The framework enhances productivity through precise agronomic optimisation, including climate-aligned sowing windows, balanced nutrient management, and stage-specific irrigation scheduling. By aligning varietal phenology with regional temperature patterns, terminal heat stress is minimised, improving grain filling duration and assimilate partitioning. Integrated pest and disease management further reduces biotic yield losses. Collectively, these interventions increase resource-use efficiency (water, nutrients, light interception) and stabilise yield performance across seasons. Productivity gains are not merely quantitative but also physiological, ensuring improved biomass accumulation and harvest index.

2. Sustainability Strengthening: Sustainability is reinforced through soil health management, crop rotation (e.g., rice–wheat–pulse systems), and integrated nutrient management strategies that reduce dependency on excessive chemical inputs. Conservation-oriented practices maintain soil organic carbon, enhance microbial activity, and improve long-term fertility. By incorporating integrated pest management and reducing chemical residues, environmental footprints decline. The framework therefore promotes ecological balance, resilience to climatic variability, and long-term agro-system stability—key pillars of sustainable intensification.

3. Value Addition and Quality Differentiation: Beyond primary production, the framework emphasises grain quality characterisation (protein content, gluten strength, antioxidant potential) to align varieties with specific industrial applications such as bread, biscuits, and nutraceutical products. This enables market segmentation and premium pricing. By linking production with processing industries, the system shifts from subsistence-oriented output to quality-driven commercialisation. Nutritional and functional attributes further expand opportunities in health-conscious and functional food markets.

4. Farmer Income Improvement: Improved productivity combined with quality-based market linkage directly enhances farm profitability. Optimised input use reduces unnecessary expenditure, while higher yield and premium grain quality increase gross returns. Diversification into value-added channels—such as flour processing, bakery supply chains, or bran-based health products—creates additional revenue streams. The integration of agronomic precision with industrial demand strengthens price realisation and reduces income volatility, thereby improving livelihood security for wheat growers in Manipur.

CONCLUSION

The present investigation, entitled “Holistic Production and Utilisation Strategy for Wheat Varieties UP 2338, PBW 343, and HIM 304 under Manipur Agro-Climatic Conditions”, provides a comprehensive scientific framework integrating varietal evaluation, stress physiology, agronomic optimisation, grain quality assessment, and utilisation strategies tailored to the unique valley and hill ecosystems of Manipur.

The study clearly demonstrates that varietal performance under Manipur conditions is significantly influenced by terminal heat stress, soil variability, and micro-climatic gradients. Among the tested genotypes, UP 2338, PBW 343, and HIM 304 exhibited differential adaptive responses across physiological, biochemical, and yield parameters.



Physiological assessments revealed that tolerant varieties maintained higher chlorophyll retention, better canopy temperature regulation, superior relative water content, and stable photosynthetic efficiency (F_v/F_m ratio) under delayed sowing conditions. Biochemical profiling confirmed that enhanced antioxidant enzyme activity (SOD, CAT, POD), reduced lipid peroxidation (MDA), and increased Osmo protectant accumulation (proline and soluble sugars) were closely associated with stress resilience. These parameters collectively contributed to membrane stability and sustained grain filling under hyperthermal exposure.

From an agronomic perspective, optimised sowing windows, balanced nutrient management (particularly nitrogen scheduling), and moisture conservation practices significantly improved yield stability. Valley agro-climatic zones favoured relatively higher biomass accumulation and grain yield, while hill zones demanded stress-adaptive management strategies. Yield attributes such as thousand-grain weight, harvest index, and grain filling duration were sensitive indicators of varietal performance under heat stress.

Quality analysis further indicated varietal differences in protein content and wet gluten percentage, influencing end-use suitability. PBW 343 demonstrated acceptable grain quality for general consumption and processing, whereas UP 2338 showed balanced yield-quality attributes. HIM 304 displayed comparatively better adaptability under relatively cooler hill environments, indicating niche suitability.

The holistic production strategy derived from this study recommends: Variety-Zone Matching: a) UP 2338 and PBW 343 for valley regions under timely sowing, b) HIM 304 for hill agro-climatic conditions. 2. Adaptive Sowing Schedule: Avoidance of late sowing to minimise terminal heat stress impact. 3. Integrated Nutrient and Water Management: Precision nitrogen application and soil moisture conservation. 4. Physiological Screening Indicators: Adoption of chlorophyll retention, canopy temperature depression, and antioxidant profiling for varietal screening. 5. Utilisation Optimisation: Alignment of grain quality traits with local consumption and processing requirements.

The findings establish that varietal resilience under Manipur conditions is a function of integrated physiological stability, biochemical defence capacity, and agronomic adaptability. The proposed holistic production and utilisation model serves as a region-specific blueprint for enhancing wheat productivity, ensuring grain quality, and strengthening food security under changing climatic scenarios.

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