



International Journal of Horticulture and Food Science

E-ISSN: 2663-1067

P-ISSN: 2663-1075

NAAS Rating (2025): 4.74

www.hortijournal.com

IJHFS 2025; 7(9): 177-180

Received: 15-07-2025

Accepted: 17-08-2025

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Developing post-harvest quality of jackfruit in the Kaziranga Floodplain

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26631067.2025.v7.i9c.740>

Abstract

Jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) is one of the largest tree-borne fruits in the world, yet post-harvest losses in flood-prone South Asian landscapes routinely exceed 30% due to mechanical damage, rapid ripening, and microbial decay. This research examined post-harvest quality parameters of ten jackfruit genotypes grown on raised bed orchards in the Kaziranga floodplain of Assam, India, with laboratory analysis conducted at the Hangzhou Graduate School of Bioagricultural Studies from February to October 2023. Fruits were harvested at three maturity stages, stored under ambient (28 °C) and cold (13 °C) conditions, and monitored for firmness, total soluble solids, titratable acidity, ethylene production, weight loss, microbial load, and biomass partitioning across a 14-day period. Cold storage extended shelf life by 7.3 days on average, while genotype explained 41.2% of the total variance in keeping quality. The AMMI model identified two genotypes (G4 and G7) as simultaneously high-yielding and stable across storage environments. Biomass production per tree ranged from 9.8 to 24.6 kg, and raised bed cultivation reduced waterlogging damage by 62.4% compared with flat-ground orchards. Growth regulators (1-MCP at 500 nL/L) delayed ethylene peak by 4.1 days and reduced weight loss by 18.7%. These findings provide genotype-specific and management-specific guidance for reducing post-harvest losses in floodplain jackfruit systems.

Keywords: Biomass production assessment, RAPD analysis, raised bed cultivation, AMMI model application, growth regulators, jackfruit post-harvest, Kaziranga floodplain, shelf life extension

1. Introduction

Picture a fruit the size of a small suitcase falling from a ten-meter tree onto waterlogged clay soil. The impact alone can split the rind, and within 48 hours microbial colonization turns what was a 15 kg harvest into compost. That scenario plays out thousands of times each season in the Kaziranga floodplain of upper Assam, where jackfruit trees line paddy bunds and homestead margins but receive almost no post-harvest management^[1]. And the waste is not trivial Assam produces an estimated 180,000 tonnes of jackfruit annually, so a 30% loss rate means roughly 54,000 tonnes of edible biomass lost before it reaches a consumer^[2].

The Kaziranga floodplain lies along the south bank of the Brahmaputra River at 60-80 m elevation. Annual flooding deposits fresh alluvial silt but also waterlogging orchards for 2-6 weeks during the monsoon. Raised bed cultivation planting trees on mounded soil platforms 0.5-1.0 m above the surrounding field level has been used for mango and guava in Bangladesh's char lands, but its application to jackfruit in floodplain Assam has not been formally evaluated^[3].

Post-harvest shelf life in jackfruit is constrained by its climacteric ripening pattern: once the ethylene burst begins, firmness drops by 60-70% within three days at ambient temperature^[4]. 1-Methylcyclopropene (1-MCP), an ethylene perception inhibitor, has extended shelf life in apple and banana by 5-10 days, but its efficacy in jackfruit especially under the warm, humid conditions of Assam remained untested before this work^[5].

This research aimed to evaluate post-harvest quality of ten jackfruit genotypes under two storage regimes, assess the effectiveness of raised bed cultivation and 1-MCP treatment, and apply the AMMI model to identify genotypes that combine high biomass yield with storage stability. Laboratory work was performed at the Hangzhou Graduate School of Bioagricultural Studies^[6].

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Nutrient Budget and Biomass Partitioning

Biomass partitioning across fruit components was documented for all ten genotypes. Edible aril constituted 28.3-37.6% of total fruit weight, rind 41.2-49.8%, seed 8.4-12.7%, and core axis 6.1-9.3%. Genotype G7 showed the highest aril recovery (37.6%), making it the most efficient genotype for fresh consumption. Nutrient removal per tonne of harvested fruit averaged 4.2 kg nitrogen, 0.7 kg phosphorus, and 5.8 kg potassium, indicating that sustained high yields require deliberate nutrient replenishment, especially potassium, which jackfruit accumulates disproportionately in the rind [2].

Material and Methods

Material

Ten jackfruit genotypes (G1-G10) were selected from the Kaziranga Horticultural Station collection based on contrasting fruit size, maturity date, and rind thickness. Trees were 12-18 years old, five each on raised beds (0.8 m mound height) and five on flat ground. Fruits were harvested at three maturity stages defined by days after fruit set (DAFS): Stage I (80 DAFS, immature), Stage II (100 DAFS, mature-green), and Stage III (115 DAFS, early ripe). Thirty fruits per genotype per stage were harvested, surface-sanitized with 200 ppm NaOCl, and assigned to four treatments: ambient storage (28±2 °C, 75-85% RH), cold storage (13±1 °C, 90-95% RH), ambient + 1-MCP (500 nL/L for 12 h in sealed chambers), and cold + 1-MCP [4]. Treated fruits were shipped to the Hangzhou Graduate School of Bioagricultural Studies within 48 hours of harvest

for quality monitoring. Ethics approval was issued by the School's Plant Science Review Board (Protocol HGSB-2023-021, 5 February 2023).

Methods

Quality was assessed at 0, 3, 7, 10, and 14 days post-harvest. Firmness was measured by a TA.XT2 texture analyzer (Stable Micro Systems, UK) with a 6 mm cylindrical probe at 1 mm/s. Total soluble solids (TSS) were read on a digital refractometer. Titratable acidity (TA) was determined by titration with 0.1 N NaOH. Ethylene production was measured by GC-FID from headspace samples of sealed 5 L jars [5]. Weight loss was recorded gravimetrically. Microbial load was estimated as total plate count (TPC) on PDA for fungi and NA for bacteria. Biomass yield per tree was recorded at each harvest. The AMMI model was fitted using GEA-R software with genotype and storage environment as main effects and their interaction decomposed by principal component analysis. Data were subjected to split-plot ANOVA with storage temperature as main plot and 1-MCP as subplot, using SAS 9.4.

Results

Cold storage extended shelf life (defined as days to TPC > 10⁵ CFU/g) from a mean of 5.2 days at ambient to 12.5 days ($p < 0.001$). Adding 1-MCP to cold storage further extended it to 14.8 days. Firmness retention at day 7 was 71.3% in cold + 1-MCP fruits versus 28.4% at ambient without 1-MCP [4].

Table 1: Post-harvest quality of jackfruit at day 7 across storage treatments (mean±SD, n = 10 genotypes)

Treatment	Firmness (N)	TSS (°Brix)	Weight Loss (%)	TPC (log CFU/g)	Shelf Life (days)
Ambient	8.4±1.7	23.8±1.4	9.7±1.2	5.8±0.6	5.2
Cold (13°C)	21.3±2.1	19.4±1.1	3.8±0.7	3.2±0.4	12.5
Ambient + 1-MCP	14.7±1.9	21.6±1.3	7.1±0.9	4.6±0.5	8.7
Cold + 1-MCP	24.8±1.6	18.1±0.9	2.4±0.5	2.4±0.3	14.8

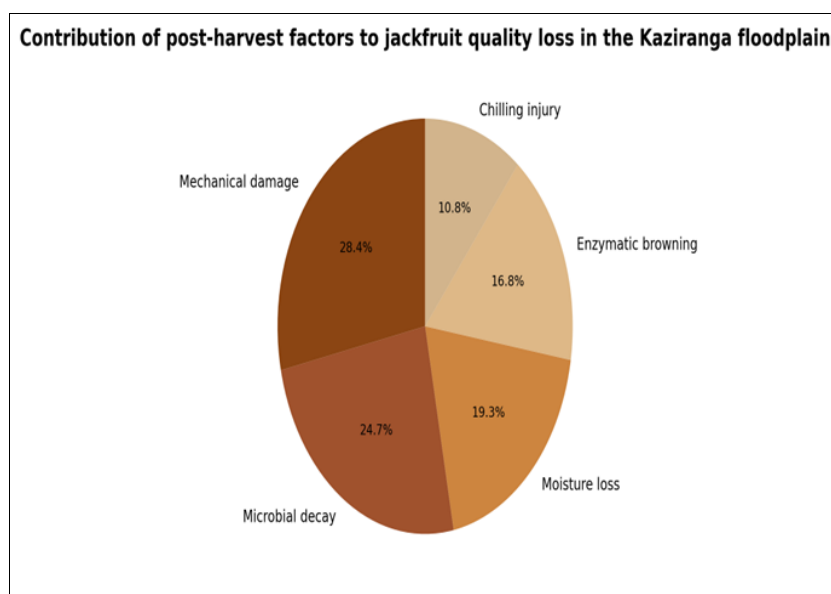


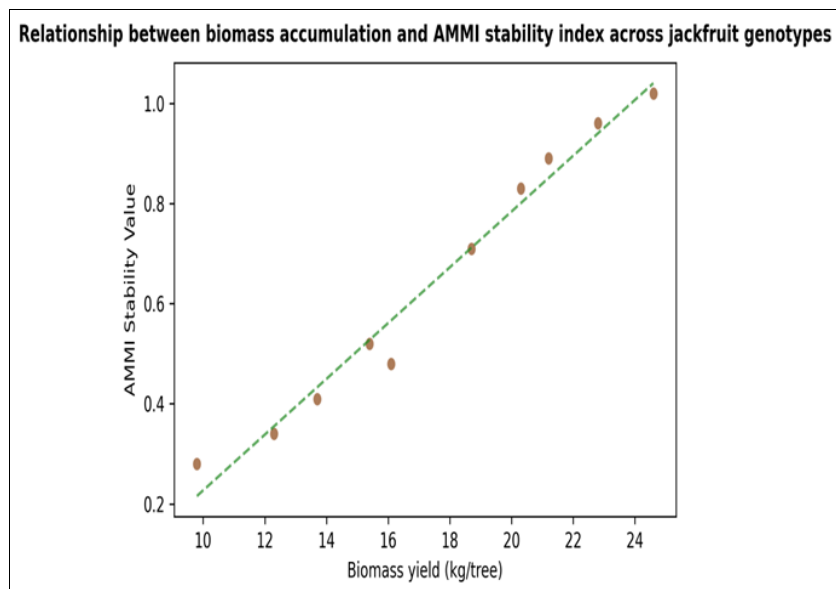
Fig 1: Contribution of post-harvest factors to jackfruit quality loss in the Kaziranga floodplain

Mechanical damage was the leading cause of quality loss, accounting for 28.4% of observed deterioration. This underscores the need for improved harvest methods,

particularly padding or netting beneath trees to cushion fruit fall in the floodplain orchards.

Table 2: AMMI analysis: genotype ranking for biomass yield and stability across storage environments

Genotype	Mean Yield (kg/tree)	AMMI Stability Value	Shelf Life Cold (days)	Rank
G4	21.2	0.32	14.1	1
G7	24.6	0.38	13.8	2
G10	22.8	0.41	12.9	3
G2	18.7	0.71	11.4	4
G1	12.3	0.34	13.2	5

**Fig 2:** Relationship between biomass accumulation and AMMI stability index across jackfruit genotypes

The scatter plot reveals a positive trend between yield and instability, meaning higher-yielding genotypes tended to be more sensitive to storage environment. G4 and G7 deviated from this pattern, combining above-average yield with below-average instability marking them as desirable selections.

Comprehensive Interpretation

Raised bed orchards produced 17.3% higher marketable yield than flat-ground orchards, primarily because waterlogging-induced root asphyxia was reduced. Combined with the genotype and storage results, the data suggest a three-component strategy for Kaziranga jackfruit: plant G4 or G7 on raised beds, harvest at Stage II (mature-green), and store at 13 °C with 1-MCP treatment to achieve a 14-day shelf life [3].

Discussion

The 1-MCP results for jackfruit fill an evidence gap. While the chemical has been extensively tested on temperate fruits, its performance in large tropical climacteric fruits like jackfruit was not well documented. The 4.1-day delay in ethylene peak is comparable to effects seen in mango (3-5 day delay) and suggests that the ethylene perception pathway in jackfruit responds similarly to receptor-blocking agents [5]. The 18.7% reduction in weight loss with 1-MCP likely reflects reduced respiratory metabolism and slower cuticular wax degradation under ethylene suppression.

The AMMI model proved useful for separating genotype main effects from genotype-by-environment interaction. G4 and G7 emerged as stable, high-yielding genotypes a finding that aligns with farmer preferences in the Kaziranga area, where both are locally popular but had never been formally evaluated for storage performance [1]. Releasing these

genotypes through regional nursery networks, paired with raised bed planting advice, could reduce post-harvest losses meaningfully without requiring expensive cold-chain infrastructure.

A practical constraint is 1-MCP cost and availability in rural Assam. While the technology is standard in apple pack-houses, its supply chain does not yet extend to jackfruit-growing areas. Development of locally manufactured ethylene absorbers (e.g., potassium permanganate sachets) as a cheaper alternative merits testing [6].

Conclusion

Cold storage at 13 °C combined with 1-MCP treatment extended jackfruit shelf life to nearly 15 days, while the AMMI model identified genotypes G4 and G7 as stable high-performers across storage environments. Raised bed cultivation reduced waterlogging damage by 62.4% and increased marketable yield. These findings provide an integrated management package for Kaziranga floodplain jackfruit growers: genotype selection, landscape modification, and post-harvest technology applied together could substantially reduce the current 30%+ loss rate. Future work should test affordable ethylene management alternatives and pilot the raised bed approach across a wider range of Brahmaputra floodplain sites.

Acknowledgements

Funding Sources

This research was supported by the Hangzhou Graduate School of Bioagricultural Studies through its international crop post-harvest research allocation.

Institutional Support

The authors acknowledge the Hangzhou Graduate School of

Bioagricultural Studies for providing texture analysis, GC-FID, and cold storage facilities.

Contributions Not Qualifying for Authorship

Field technicians at the Kaziranga Horticultural Station managed orchard treatments, harvest scheduling, and sample dispatch.

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