



# Effect of Different Concentrations of Nano-Fungicides on Mycelial Radial Growth of *Phytophthora infestans*

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## Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/IJPSS/2023/v35i213991

## Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/108309>

Original Research Article

Received: 13/08/2023  
Accepted: 16/10/2023  
Published: 20/10/2023

## ABSTRACT

Potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) popularly known as the "King of Vegetables" is a starchy, tuberous crop, that belongs to the family Solanaceae. Potatoes play an important role in the daily human diet because they are a copious source of minerals, vitamins, antioxidants and micronutrient. The potato is a basically temperate crop, but it grows under a wide range of climatic conditions. Potato crop is generally affected by different types of biotic and abiotic diseases. Among all diseases, Late blight of potato, caused by the *Phytophthora infestans* (Mont) de Barry is one of the most devastating diseases of potato worldwide. In India, the losses caused by the disease are 10-20% in Uttar Pradesh, 10-15% in West Bengal and Punjab, 10-15% in Karnataka and Uttarakhand also have been reported during 2013-14. The management of the disease can be done through cultural, mechanical, use of the resistant variety, biological and chemical, etc. The efficacy of current strategies for the management of disease is limited. Considering the destructive nature of pathogen and lack of efficient control measures, the development of alternative or complementary

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approaches for the management of this disease is highly desirable. However reported use of the same chemicals may raise resistant strain among the pathogens. Therefore, the use of Nano-fungicidal control of spot blotch disease cannot be overstated. However, the disease can be managed with various nanofungicides under in vitro conditions assessed for their efficacy against the disease. The effect of four nanofungicides *i.e.*, Agritec nanofungicide, Silver nanofungicide, Selenium nanofungicide and Nickel nanofungicide against *P. infestans* was evaluated at different concentrations (50, 75 and 100 ppm) by poison food technique. The in vitro experiment revealed a noticeable reduction in the radial mycelial growth of *P. infestans* as the concentration of nanofungicides increased. Specifically, at 7 days after inoculation (DAI), the following nanofungicides at a concentration of 100 ppm exhibited the highest levels of mycelial growth inhibition when compared to the control: Silver nanofungicide (72.45%), Agritec nanofungicide (70.21%), Selenium nanofungicide (68.77%), and Nickel nanofungicide (64.65%).

**Keywords:** Nanofungicide; infestans; potato; *Phytophthora infestans*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) popularly known as the “King of Vegetables” is a starchy, tuberous crop, that belongs to the family Solanaceae. It is the world's fourth-largest food crop following rice, wheat and maize. Potatoes play an important role in the daily human diet because they are a copious source of minerals, vitamins, antioxidants and micronutrients” [1]. “The potato crop produces more edible energy per unit area and time as compared with wheat, rice and maize” [2]. “Potato as vegetable cultivation is an important constituent of Indian agriculture due to its high yield and ability to generate on-farm and in-farm employment” [3]. “The potato crop is grown in almost all states of India, except Kerala, under a wide range of agro-climatic conditions” [4]. “Out of 100 % total area of potatoes, 90 % area is located in subtropical plains, 6 % in the hills and the rest 4 % is located in the plateauregion of peninsular India” [5].

“Potato is the best source of dietary energy and some other beneficial micronutrients, and its protein and mineral content is very high when compared with other root and tuber crops Freshly harvested potato tubers contain around 80 % water and 20 % dry matter” [6]. More than 75 % of the dry matter is starch but they also contain protein, fiber and small amounts of fatty acids. In addition, potatoes contain a lower amount of fat but tubers are a rich source of minerals such as potassium, phosphorus, magnesium and various vitamins like B1, B3 and B6. Among vitamins, the amount of vitamin C is very high in the tuber.

“Potato is considered as fourth most important food crop which is grown in more than 100 potato-growing countries around the world under different climatic conditions such as tropical,

temperate and subtropical. More than one billion people around the world eat potatoes. According to the FAO data, a total of 376 million tonnes of potatoes were produced worldwide, with China (94 million tonnes) and India (54 million tonnes) the largest potato producing countries in 2021. FAO figures indicate that the total area harvested globally in 2021 was 18,132,694 hectares – a world average of about 21 tonnes per hectare, China contributes about shares 26.3 % of total potato production followed by” (U.S. Potato production, 2020). Second Russian Federation in the world.

In India the major potato growing states such as Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. About 85 % of potatoes are cultivated in the Indo-Gangetic plains of North India. Uttar Pradesh is the leading state of India in terms of area, production and productivity of potatoes. In India, Uttar Pradesh shares 31.36% of total potato production followed by West Bengal (23.29%), Bihar (13.22 %) and Gujarat (7.43 %).

“Potato crop are generally affected by different types of biotic and abiotic diseases. Biotic diseases are mainly caused by fungi, bacteria and viruses [7], nematodes and mycoplasma which adversely affect potato quality as well as production in almost all over the world” [8], [9]. “Among all diseases, Late blight of potato, caused by the *Phytophthora infestans* (Mont) de Barry is one of the most devastating diseases of potato worldwide and favourable conditions Late blight can cause tuber losses of 100 per cent in susceptible germplasm and crop losses and crop protection costs are substantial” [10,11].

“The disease is distributed all over the world like North & South America, Europe and Asian

continents” [12, 13]. “The annual economic losses caused by the disease worldwide have been about 170 billion US dollars” [14,15]. “In India, the losses caused by the disease are 10-20% in Uttar Pradesh, 10-15% in West Bengal and Punjab, 10-15% in Karnataka and Uttarakhand also have been reported during 2013-14” [16] but the amount of losses depends on the variety and plant protection measures adopted by the potato growers.

“In India, late blight of potato is one of the important fungal diseases that appear every year, in serious form. Disease development is favored by cool, moist weather. Reducing the initial amount of inoculum by using sanitation practices is an effective approach to disease management, but the main emphasis should be to slow down disease progress. Hence management practices are very difficult and should be focused both on preventive as well as curative approaches. Host resistance, inter-cropping, time of planting and judicious use of fungicides are important components in the management package” [17].

“The management of the disease can be done through cultural, mechanical, use of the resistant variety, biological and chemical etc. Cultural control measures such as eliminating cull piles and volunteer potato, soil solarization, crop rotation and using proper harvesting and storage practices, can be used to reduce the pathogen populations by reducing its survival, dispersal and reproduction but cannot control the disease in standing crop” [18]. “The use of resistant variety is another alternative method for management of disease but It had been difficult to develop potato varieties with suitable long-lasting resistance to late blight because although specific genes were known they were overcome rapidly by mutants in local fungus populations” [19]. “At present, there is no tolerant and/or resistant potato cultivar available against late blight pathogens in the world. Biological control by antagonists has attracted much attention because of its being eco-friendly to the environment and human health” [20]. The efficacy of current strategies for the management of disease is limited. Considering the destructive nature of the pathogen and lack of efficient control measures, the development of alternative or complementary approaches for the management of this disease is highly desirable. New fungicides are introduced in the country every year against late blight pathogen but none of them found effective due to the dynamic

changes in the population structures of *P. infestans*.

“Risks associated with pesticide use have received considerable and no single fungicide has consistently and effectively suppressed losses related to *P. infestans* epidemics. In contrast to the conventional application of fungicides and antibiotics, nanoparticles are the most important strategy to manage plant diseases. Nanotechnology is the application of science and technology to control the matter at molecular level. The development of nanotechnology in conjunction with biotechnology has significantly expanded the application domain of nanomaterials in various fields. A variety of carbon-based, metal and metal oxide-based dendrimers (nano-sized polymers) and bio-composite nanomaterials are being developed” [21]. Nanoparticles are synthesized by physical, chemical and biological methods. Physical and chemical methods are energy intensive and cause toxic chemicals whereas, the biogenic technique is eco-friendly, non-toxic and economically viable.

Somalraju *et al.* [22] reported that “treatment of potato seed with different Se rates, and applying different foliar Se rates on potato plants subsequently inoculated with the late blight pathogen in a greenhouse setting, and found that foliar Se application alone or combined with Se seed treatment reduced the severity and incidence of late blight, and activated the production of secondary metabolites in potato leaves and tubers. Further, *in vitro* studies showed that Se directly inhibited the mycelial growth of *P. infestans* and other important plant pathogens, including *Fusarium graminearum* and *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*”. “Various forms of silver ions and nanoparticles were tested to examine the antifungal activity of two plant-pathogenic fungi, *Bipolaris sorokiniana* and *Magnaporthe grisea*. *In vitro* assays indicated that silver ions and nanoparticles had a significant effect on the colony formation of two pathogens at a concentration of 50 ppm” (Jo *et al.*, 2009).

Elamawi *et al.* [23] studied “the effect of silver nanoparticles (20-30 nm) against rice leaf blast caused by *Magnaporthe grisea*”. “Under laboratory conditions, the application of four concentrations viz., 25, 50, 100 and 200 ppm of silver nanoparticles showed significant inhibition of both hyphal growth and number of colonies formed in a dose-dependent manner” (Shantamma, 2016).

Ouda et al., [24] evaluated “the efficacy of AgNPs at 15 ppm against *Alternaria alternate* and *Botrytis cinerea*, and recorded mycelial inhibition of 59.30 and 52.90 per cent, respectively”. “Silver nanoparticle supplemented medium showed 12, 36 and 41 per cent hyphal growth of soil-borne pathogens viz., *Rhizoctonia solani*, *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* and *S. minor* respectively” [25].

Cruz-Luna et al. [26] studied Ag nanoparticles have been the most investigated nanoparticles due to their good antifungal activities, followed by Cu nanoparticles. It was also found that other metal nanoparticles have been investigated as antifungal agents, such as Se, Ni, Mg, Pd, and Fe, showing prominent results. Different synthesis methods have been used to produce these nanoparticles with different shapes and sizes, which have shown outstanding antifungal activities.

Abdelmalek et al. [27] synthesized “Silver nanoparticles with  $10 \pm 5$  nm average diameter size and an *in vitro* assay was carried out on Potato Dextrose Agar (PDA) media treated with 50, 100 and 150ppm of silver nanoparticles in addition to two control traditional fungicides products, namely Iprodione and Difenconazole at @ 150 ppm concentrations. They found that Silver nanoparticle, 150 ppm, showed potent antifungal activity against the isolated fungi that will open the gate to a new generation of less harmful fungicides replacing the cytotoxic dangerous currently used fungicides”.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Experimental site:** All experiments were carried out in the laboratory of the Department of Plant Pathology at C.S.A. University of Agriculture and Technology in Kanpur during the period from 2021 to 2022.

**Isolation and Purification of the Pathogen:** Samples of potato leaves that showed symptoms of blight were collected and kept in clean nylon bags (polyethylene) and transferred to the laboratory of the Plant Pathology Department. It was washed with distilled water to remove dust, a small piece of infected leaf from the border of the sporulating lesion along with some healthy green tissue was cut and dipped in mercuric chloride solution (0.1%) for 30 seconds followed by a rinse in sterilized distilled water thrice and dried off with sterilized filter paper. The small

pieces were then placed on tomato extract based media which was previously poured into sterilized Petri plates. The plates were then incubated at  $18 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ . The Petri plates were observed daily to find out the presence of mycelium around the leaf bits. As soon as the mycelia growth is noticed around the bits, the pathogen was purified by the hyphal tip culture method.

The white mycelial bits of *P. infestans* were removed from the margin of the fungal colony and then transferred to another petri-plate which was previously poured with sterilized tomato extract based medium. After purification, the pure culture of *P. infestans* was transferred on a slant medium and incubated at  $15-18^\circ\text{C}$  in darkness till full growth. The culture was then transferred into the incubator at  $10-12^\circ\text{C}$  for further use. Additionally, the pathogenicity of *P. infestans* was confirmed by conducting Koch's postulates on healthy potato plants.

**Identification of the pathogen:** The isolated pathogen was identified based on its morphological, cultural characteristics and pathogenic behaviour towards the host. The mycelium is characterized by the absence of cross walls, along with both asexual and sexual reproduction occurs. The sporangiophores and sporangia emerge at asexual reproduction phase. The sporangia are lemon shape, measurement of  $21-38\mu\text{m} \times 12-23\mu\text{m}$ . Sporangia develop at the end of these sporangiophores.

**Maintenance of the culture:** After confirmation of isolated pathogen as *P. infestans*, the pure culture was transferred on a media slant and maintain in the BOD at  $10-12^\circ\text{C}$  for further study.

**Effect of different nano-fungicides on radial mycelia growth of *Phytophthora infestans*:** The four nano-fungicides viz. Agritec, Silver, Selenium and Nickel at various concentrations (50, 75, and 100 ppm) were screened against the pathogen under laboratory conditions to find out their relative efficacy in inhibiting the growth of the pathogen with the help of the poisoned food technique (Schmitz, 1930). First of all, a stock solution of 1000 ppm of each nano-fungicide was made. The desired concentrations were obtained by adding the appropriate amount of stock solution of nano fungicides to tomato dextrose agar (TDA) medium in a separate flask and thoroughly mixing them by shaking them before

pouring into sterilized Petri plates. The medium was allowed to solidify and then 5 mm bits of fungal culture from seven days old culture of *P. infestans* were placed at the centre of Petri plates. The fungal disc was reversed so that the pathogen could come in direct contact with the medium. Three replications were kept for each treatment. The inoculated Petri plates were sealed with paraffin wax strips and incubated at  $18\pm 2^\circ\text{C}$  in a B.O.D. incubator. One set of control was maintained in which the medium was not mixed with any fungicide but simply inoculated with the pathogen. The data on radial growth of the fungal colony was measured in mm after seven days. The percent inhibition over control was calculated by the following formula:

$$I = \frac{C - T}{C} \times 100$$

Where:

I = Percentage inhibition of mycelium  
C = Colony diameter (mm) in the control  
T = Colony diameter (mm) in the treatment

**Treatments details:** T1-Agritec nano-fungicide @ 50 ppm; T2-Agritec nano-fungicide @ 75 ppm; T3-Agritec nano-fungicide @ 100 ppm; T4-Selenium nano-fungicide @ 50 ppm; T5-Selenium nano-fungicide @ 75 ppm; T6- Selenium nano-fungicide @ 100 ppm; T7- Silver nano-fungicide @ 50 ppm; T8- Silver nano-fungicide @ 75 ppm; T9- Silver nano-fungicide @ 100 ppm; T10- Nickel nano-fungicide @ 50 ppm; T11- Nickel nano-fungicide @ 75 ppm; T12- Nickel nano-fungicide @ 100 ppm; T13- Control.

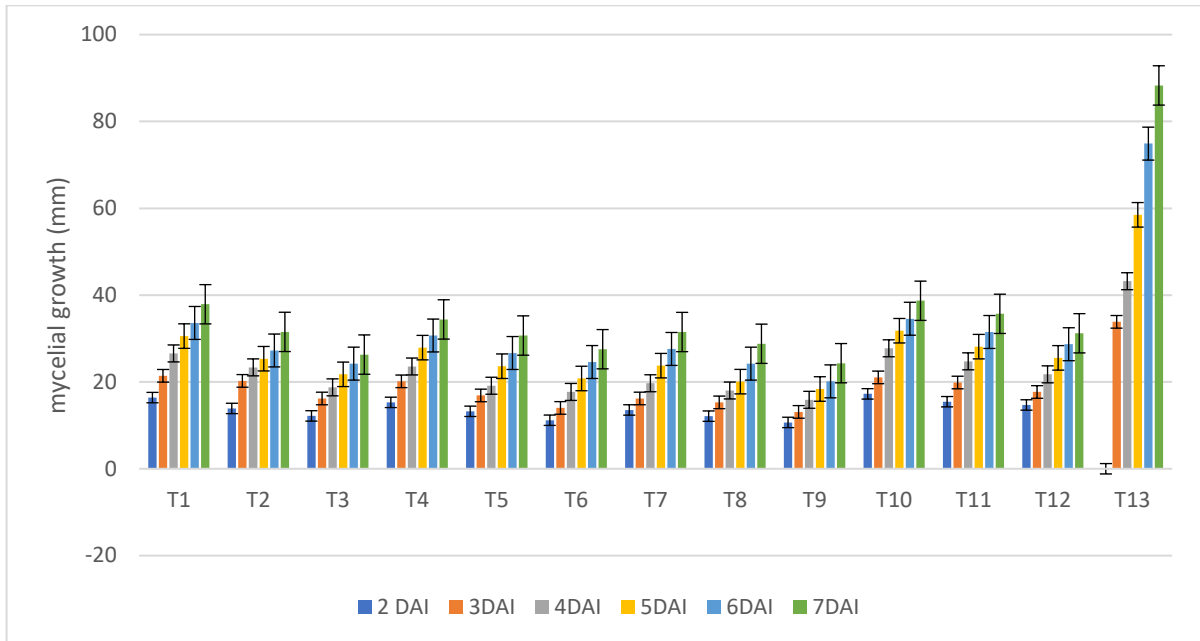
### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The activity of different nano fungicides likes Agritec nano-fungicides, Silver nano-fungicides, Selenium nano-fungicides and Nickel nano-fungicides at different concentrations (50,75 and 100ppm) against *P. infestans* was determined *in vitro* through Poison Food Technique. The data presented in Table 1 and Fig. 1 showed that among all the nano-fungicides, Silver nano fungicide at 100 ppm was significantly superior

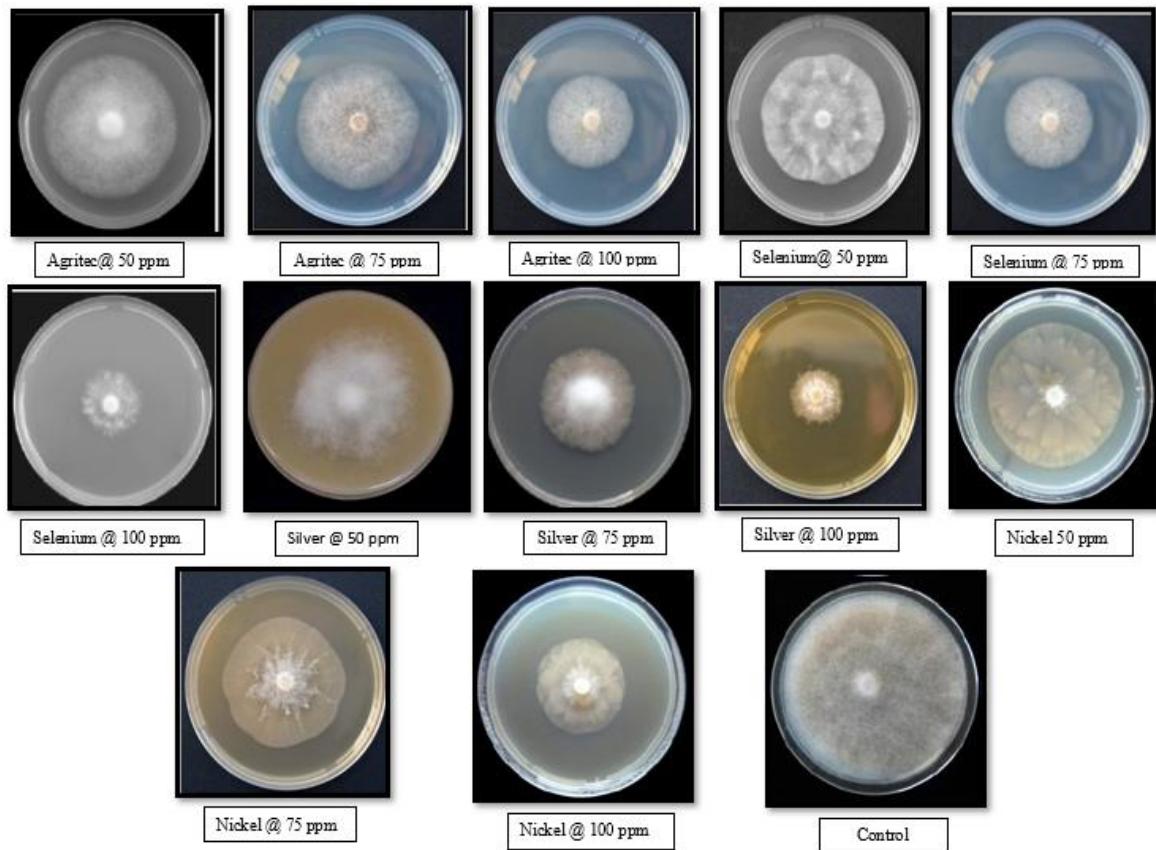
over others in inhibiting mycelial growth of *P. infestans* representing the value 10.68, 13.10, 15.89, 18.38, 20.13 and 24.32 mm at 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 days after inoculation, respectively against 21.89, 33.85, 43.20, 58.50, 74.90 and 88.30 mm in case of control which was 72.45 percent inhibition over control. The Selenium nano fungicide at 100 ppm showed 11.19, 14.02, 17.70, 20.80, 4.59 and 27.54mm radial growth of mycelium at 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 days after inoculation, respectively, representing second minimum radial mycelial growth among all the treatments. The maximum radial growth of mycelium was recorded in the case of Nickel Nano fungicide at 50 ppm which is 56.17 per cent inhibition over control. From the table, it is clear that all the tested nano fungicides were statistically significant in reducing the mycelial growth of the pathogen as compared with control up to 7 days. A similar observation was reported previously by several workers (Abdel-Hafez et al., 2016) Lamsal et al., [28] (Thirumurugan et al., 2011; Mohamed, 2015) found that silver nano fungicide effective against plant disease-causing pathogens i.e., *Alternaria solan*, pepper anthracnose, *Rhizoctonia solani* and *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*. Park et al. (2006) also studied the effective concentration of nanosized silica-silver on suppression of the growth of many fungi and found that, *Pythium ultimum*, *Magnaporthe grisea*, *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides*, *Botrytis cinererea* and, *Rhizoctonia solani*, showed 100% growth inhibition at 10 ppm of the nanosized silica-silver. Silver nanoparticles with  $10 \pm 5$  nm average diameter and *in vitro* assay were carried out with 50, 100 and 150 ppm of silver nanoparticles. Results revealed that Silver nanoparticle, 150 ppm, showed potent antifungal activity against the *Alternaria alternate*, *Alternaria citri* [27]. Kim et al. (2012) conducted an experiment to quantify the antifungal effects of silver nanoparticles (AgNPs) against various plant pathogenic fungi. They used 10, 25, 50, and 100 ppm concentrations of AgNPs. Eighteen different plant pathogenic fungi were treated with these AgNPs on potato dextrose agar (PDA), malt extract agar, and corn meal agar plates. The results indicated that AgNPs possess antifungal properties against these plant pathogens at various levels.

Table 1. Effect of different concentrations of nano-fungicides on radial mycelial growth (mm) of *Phytophthora infestans*

Treatment	Concentration (ppm)	Radial mycelial growth (mm)						Percent Inhibition over control
		2 DAI	3DAI	4DAI	5DAI	6DAI	7DAI	
Agritecnano-fungicide	50	16.40	21.42	26.56	30.56	33.59	37.89	57.12
	75	13.90	20.25	23.35	25.35	27.25	31.53	64.29
	100	12.18	16.19	18.75	21.76	24.23	26.30	70.21
Selenium nano-fungicide	50	15.30	20.15	23.56	27.90	30.70	34.40	61.04
	75	13.24	16.89	19.13	23.62	26.67	30.69	65.24
	100	11.19	14.02	17.70	20.80	24.59	27.54	68.77
Silver nano-fungicide	50	13.55	16.20	19.70	23.75	27.60	31.50	64.32
	75	12.12	15.30	18.03	20.07	24.22	28.80	67.38
	100	10.68	13.10	15.89	18.38	20.13	24.32	72.45
Nickel Nano-fungicide	50	17.26	21.05	27.75	31.80	34.56	38.70	56.17
	75	15.45	19.87	24.75	28.13	31.51	35.69	59.58
	100	14.70	17.69	21.75	25.55	28.69	31.21	64.65
Control		21.89	33.85	43.20	58.50	74.90	88.30	-
CD		2.30	2.64	3.29	4.44	4.65	4.97	
SE (m)±		0.78	0.90	1.12	1.51	1.72	1.86	



**Fig. 1. Effect of different concentrations of nano-fungicides on radial mycelial growth (mm) of *Phytophthora infestans***



**Plate 1. Effect of different concentrations of nano fungicides on radial mycelial growth (mm) of *Phytophthora infestans***

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The antifungal activity of different nano fungicides was evaluated *in vitro* through the poison food technique. The experimental finding showed that radial growth of mycelium of *P. infestans* was inhibited by nano fungicides over control. At 100 ppm, the minimum radial growth of mycelium was found in Silver nano-fungicides treatment as 10.68, 13.10, 15.89, 18.38, 20.13 and 24.32 mm over control against 21.89, 33.85 43.20, 58.50, 74.90 and 88.30 mm at 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 days after inoculation respectively. Similarly, 50, 75 and 100 ppm the minimum radial growth of mycelium was found in Silver nano-fungicides treatment. Among the different concentrations 100 ppm was found to be more effective than 50 and 75 ppm.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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