



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF COPPER-COATED UREA FOR RICE
PRODUCTION**

TAI KIN LEONG

FP 2002 25

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF COPPER-COATED UREA FOR RICE
PRODUCTION**

By

TAI KIN LEONG

**Thesis Submitted to The School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of The Requirement for
The Degree of Master of Agriculture Science**

March 2002



Dedicated
to
my
family



Abstract of the thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Agriculture Science

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COPPER-COATED UREA FOR RICE PRODUCTION

By

TAI KIN LEONG

March 2002

Chairman : Associate Professor Dr. Mohd Khanif Yusop

Faculty : Agriculture

Urea is the main fertilizer used in the rice production in the world. Like other N fertilizers, the efficiency of urea in rice soils generally low due to high losses through volatilization, denitrification and leaching. Slow release fertilizers can be used to minimize loss of N. The rice yields in some area in Malaysia are low due to Cu deficiency. The objective of this study is to develop Cu-coated urea to increase the rice production. In this study, five types of materials consisting chitosan, poly-vinyl chloride (PVC), palm oil sludge (POS), neem oil (NE) and palm stearin (PS) were used as coating materials and Cu carrier. However, due to some technical problems only POS, NE and PS were used in this study. The source of Cu used was copper sulphate. These Cu-coated urea fertilizers were evaluated their effectiveness as Cu carrier and slow-release capabilities in rice soils conditions under laboratory incubation and greenhouse studies using two types of rice soils:– Kangar sries (Typic Endoaquert) and Kundor series (Typic Tropaquept). The



PS-coated Urea had the most N content (43.87%) followed by NE (42.08%) and POS (41.19%). The POS has the most Cu content ($1320 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) and total coating (11.62%). In a laboratory incubation using Kangar and Kundor soils added with 120 kg N ha^{-1} of Cu-coated urea, showed that the rate of urea release decrease in the order: – PS>POS>NE>uncoated urea (control). In Kangar soils, PS ($544.47 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) had the most $\text{NH}_4^+\text{-N}$ accumulation followed by POS ($400.15 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) and NE ($377.85 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$). In Kundor soils, the highest accumulation of $\text{NH}_4^+\text{-N}$ was recorded in PS ($1474.54 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) followed by POS ($1344.79 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) and NE ($1223.78 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$). In Kangar series, POS ($0.086 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) treatment gave the highest concentration of copper in the soil followed by NE ($0.06 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) and PS ($0.044 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$). In Kundor series, the highest Cu concentration in the soil was observed in POS ($0.104 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) followed by NE ($0.063 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) and PS ($0.058 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$). The greenhouse study showed that Cu-coated urea fertilizers increased the rice yield. In Kangar series, POS, NE and Ps increased the yield by 34% (2.19 kg ha^{-1}), 29% (2.02 kg ha^{-1}) and 23% (1.86 kg ha^{-1}) respectively over the control (urea). In Kundor series, treatments of POS, NE and PS have increased the yield by 8% (5.40 kg ha^{-1}), 5% (5.28 kg ha^{-1}) and 18% (5.89 kg ha^{-1}) respectively over the control. The greater availability of Cu and N throughout crop growth and low N loss had increased the grain yield. The effectiveness of the Cu-coated urea was as follow: – PS>POS>NE>urea. These findings suggest that there is a prospect of using Cu-coated urea to increase rice yield and N agronomic efficiency.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia bagi memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains Pertanian

PENYEDIAAN UREA BERSALUT KUPRUM UNTUK PENGELUARAN PADI

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Urea adalah baja utama untuk pengeluaran padi di dunia. Seperti baja N yang lain, efisiensi urea dalam tanah sawah adalah rendah disebabkan kehilangan melalui proses pemeruapan, denitrifikasi dan larutlesap. Baja bebas perlahan boleh digunakan untuk mengurangkan kehilangan N. Di beberapa kawasan di Malaysia, hasil padi adalah rendah disebabkan oleh kekurangan unsur Cu. Objektif eksperimen ini adalah untuk menghasilkan baja urea bersalut Cu untuk meningkatkan hasil padi. Dalam eksperimen ini, lima jenis bahan penyalut yang terdiri daripada kitosan, poli-(vinilklorida), palm oil sludge (POS), minyak neem (NE) dan palm stearin (PS) telah digunakan untuk menyediakan baja urea bersalut Cu. Oleh kerana masalah teknikal, cuma POS, NE dan PS yang digunakan dalam eksperimen ini. Sumber Cu yang digunakan adalah kuprum sulfat. Keberkesanan urea bersalut Cu dikaji sebagai pembawa Cu dan baja bebas perlahan di dalam makmal dan rumah kaca dengan menggunakan dua jenis tanah sawah iaitu Siri Kangar (Typic Endoaquert) dan Siri Kundor (Typic Tropaquert). Baja urea yang disalut PS (43.87%) mencatatkan kandungan N yang paling tinggi

diikuti oleh NE (42.05%) dan POS (41.19%). Manakala, baja POS mencatatkan jumlah Cu ($1320 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) dan jumlah penyalutan (11.62%) yang paling tinggi. Di dalam kajian pemeraman menggunakan tanah siri Kangar dan Kundor dengan kadar pembajaan adalah 120 kg N ha^{-1} , didapati bahawa kadar pembebasan urea berkurang dalam turutan berikut:- PS>POS>NE>urea (kawalan). Di dalam tanah siri Kangar, PS ($544.47 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) mencatatkan pengumpulan NH_4^+-N yang paling tinggi diikuti oleh POS ($400.15 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) dan NE ($377.85 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$). Dalam tanah siri Kundor pula, PS ($1474.54 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) mencatatkan pengumpulan NH_4^+-N yang paling tinggi diikuti oleh POS ($1344.79 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) dan NE ($1223.78 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$). Dalam tanah siri Kangar, POS ($0.086 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) mencatatkan kepekatan Cu yang paling tinggi diikuti oleh NE ($0.06 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) dan PS ($0.044 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$). Manakala di dalam tanah siri Kundor, POS ($0.104 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) juga mencatatkan kepekatan Cu yang paling tinggi diikuti oleh NE ($0.063 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$) dan PS ($0.058 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$). Dalam kajian rumah kaca, kesemua baja urea bersalut Cu telah meningkatkan hasil padi. Dalam tanah siri Kangar, rawatan POS, NE dan PS telah meningkatkan hasil padi sebanyak 34% (2.19 kg ha^{-1}), 29% (2.02 kg ha^{-1}) dan 23% (1.86 kg ha^{-1}) masing-masing berbanding kawalan. Dalam siri Kundor pula, rawatan POS, NE dan PS telah mencatatkan peningkatan sebanyak 5% (5.40 kg ha^{-1}), 8% (5.28 kg ha^{-1}) dan 18% (5.89 kg ha^{-1}) masing-masing. Kehadiran sumber Cu dan N yang tinggi serta kehilangan N yang minima telah meningkatkan hasil padi. Efisiensi urea bersalut sebagai baja bebas N perlahan dan sebagai pembawa Cu adalah seperti berikut:- POS>PS >NE>urea Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa urea bersalut Cu dapat meningkatkan hasil padi serta keberkesanan N secara agronomik.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my profound gratitude, sincere appreciation and indebtedness to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohd Khanif Yusop, Chairman of the Supervisory Committee, for his unstinted advice, constant guidance, healthy criticism, constant encouragement and persistent inspiration throughout the course of this study;

I owe my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Anuar Abd. Rahim, member of the Supervisory Committee, for his invaluable comments, constructive suggestions and endless encouragement during the course of my thesis work and also providing necessary help in conducting research work;

I express my sincere thanks to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mansor Ahmad, member of the Supervisory Committee, for his counsel and guidance in all phases of my study;

I am thankful to Mrs. Umi Kalthum Asmaon, Mr. Aziz, Mrs. Faridah Aman, Mrs. Faridah Zainuddin, Mrs. Rusnah, Mr. Shukri, Mr. Abdul Rahim and Mrs. Zabedah, Laboratory Assistants, DLM, UPM for helping me during chemical analyses of soil and plant samples. I am grateful to Mr. Alias Tahar, Field Assistant, DLM, UPM for helping me in soil sample collection from different locations of Kedah and Perlis;



I would like to acknowledge the help of Encik Razi, Laboratory Assistant, UKM for providing the facilities for coating urea with chitosan at UKM;

I am also grateful to Mr. Omar Darus and Mr. Yap for providing soils for the laboratory and greenhouse studies;

I am grateful to Mr. Abdul Rahman Bah, UPM, for his tireless and continuous flow of advice, encouragements and knowledge;

I would like to thank Ms. Winnie Yap for helping me in the laboratory of UKM;

I am grateful to National Council for Scientific Research and Development of Malaysia for providing financial support to conduct the research work under the project of Intensification of Research in Priority Areas (IRPA);

Finally my sincere thanks are due to my family, Julie, Rosazlin, Susilawati, Nordiana, Geok Hoon, Sock Kun, Neo, Chng and others for their encouragement, moral and financial support in conducting the research.



I certify that an Examination Committee met on 20th March 2002 to conduct the final examination of Tai Kin Leong on his Master of Agriculture Science thesis entitled "The Development of Copper-coated Urea for Rice Production" in the accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulation 1981. The committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



TAI KIN LEONG

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
APPROVAL SHEETS	ix
DECLARATION FORM	xi
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xix
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
II LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Importance of Nitrogen in Rice Production	6
Urea	7
Urea Hydrolysis in Lowland Rice Soils	8
Loss of Nitrogen	10
Ammonia volatilization	10
Leaching	11
Runoff	12
Denitrification	13
Nitrification	14
Nitrogen Status of Malaysian Soils	15
Importance of Micronutrients in Agriculture	15
Importance of Copper in Agriculture	16
Transformation of Copper under Submerging Conditions	18
Response of Rice To Copper	19
Copper Status in Malaysian Soils	19
Slow Release Fertilizer	20
Palm Oil Sludge	21
Neem Oil	22
Palm Stearin	24
Summary of Literature Review	26
III MATERIALS AND METHODS	27
The Preparation of Copper-coated Urea	27
Preparation of Copper-coated Urea	27
Evaluation of Selected Physical Properties of Copper-coated urea	28
Total Coating (Insolubles)	28
Nitrogen Content	29
Copper Content	29
Statistical Analyses	29
Evaluation of Cu-Coated Fertilizer in Soil	31
Soil Collection and Analyses	31
Incubation Procedure	32
Statistical Analyses	34



Kinetics of Urea Hydrolysis	34
Effect of Copper-coated Urea on Yield of Rice under Greenhouse Conditions	36
Soil Collection and Analyses	36
Experimental Design	36
Application of Fertilizers	37
Sowing Rice Seeds	37
Yield and Agronomic Components	38
Chemical Analyses of Soil and Plant Tissue	39
Statistical Analyses	39
IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	40
Preparation and Evaluation of Copper-coated Urea	40
Evaluation of Copper-coated Urea In Soil	44
Kinetics of Urea–N Release	44
Release of Urea–N in the Soil	46
Accumulation of Ammonium	51
Availability of Copper	54
Evaluation of Copper–coated Urea on Yield and Nutrient Uptake of Rice under Greenhouse Conditions	57
Yield Components	57
Grain and Straw Yields	62
Nitrogen Concentration in Plant	66
Nitrogen Concentration in Straw	67
Nitrogen Concentration in Grains	70
Total N Uptake by Plant	71
Total N Uptake by Straw	72
Total N Uptake by Grains	72
Copper Concentration in Plant	74
Copper Concentration in Straw	76
Copper Concentration in Grain	77
Copper Uptake by Plant	79
Copper Uptake by Straw	79
Copper Uptake by Grain	79
Total N Concentration of Soils	81
Copper Concentration in Soils	81
V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	84
Recommendations for Further Studies	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY	88
APPENDICES	101
A. Additional Data	101
B. Procedure Nitrogen Analyses	106
VITA	110



LIST OF TABLES

Tables		Page
1	Selected Chemical Properties of Palm Oil Sludge.	22
2	Selected Physical and Chemical Properties of Neem Oil.	23
3	Selected Physical and Chemical Properties of Palm Stearin.	25
4	Soils Used for Incubation and Greenhouse Studies.	32
5	Physical and Chemical Properties of the Soils Used in Incubation and Greenhouse Studies.	33
6	Pearson Correlation Coefficients (r), $N = 19$.	42
7	Rate Constants of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea Hydrolysis in Flooded Soils.	45
8	Half-life of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea Hydrolysis Under Flooded Soils.	45
9	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Tiller Numbers.	59
10	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Total N Uptake by Plant (Straw + Grain).	72
11	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Total N Uptake by Straw.	73
12	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Total N Uptake by Grain.	73
13	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Total Cu Uptake by Plant.	80
14	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Total Cu Uptake by Straw.	80
15	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Total Cu Uptake by Grain.	81
16	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Soil N Concentration.	82



17	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on the Release of Urea-N in Kangar series During Incubation.	100
18	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on the Release of Urea-N in Kundor series During Incubation.	100
19	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on the Availability of Soil Copper in Kangar series During Incubation.	101
20	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on the Availability of Soil Copper in Kundor series During Incubation.	101
21	Summary of ANOVA Interaction for Factorial Analysis (Soil x Treatment).	102
22	Summary of ANOVA Interaction for Factorial Analysis (Soil x Treatment).	102
23	Summary of ANOVA Interaction for Factorial Analysis (Soil x Treatment).	103



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Chemical Structures of Neem's Main Ingredients.	24
2	The Total Coating of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea.	41
3	The Cu Content of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea.	42
4	The N Content of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea.	43
5	Hydrolysis of Applied POS, NE and PS-coated Urea Versus Time in Kangar series Fitted to First-Order Kinetic Models.	47
6	Hydrolysis of Applied POS, NE and PS-coated Urea Versus Time in Kundor series Fitted to First-Order Kinetic Models.	48
7	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Release of Urea-N in Kangar series.	49
8	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Release of Urea-N in Kundor series.	50
9	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Ammonium-N Accumulation in Kangar series.	53
10	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Ammonium-N Accumulation in Kundor series.	53
11	The Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on the Availability of Soil Copper in Kangar series.	56
12	The Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on the Availability of Soil Copper in Kundor series.	56
13	The Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Plant Height in Kangar series.	58
14	The Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Plant Height in Kundor series.	58
15	The Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Filled Grain Per Panicle (Kangar series).	60
16	The Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Filled Grain Per Panicle (Kundor series).	60



17	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on 1000-Grain Weight (Kangar series).	61
18	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on 1000-Grain Weight (Kundor series).	62
19	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Grain Yield (Kangar series).	63
20	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Grain Yield (Kundor series).	63
21	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Straw Yield Grown on Kangar series.	64
22	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Straw Yield Grown on Kundor series.	65
23	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Plant (Straw+Grain) Total N (Kangar series).	68
24	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Plant (Straw+Grain) Total N (Kundor series).	68
25	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Straw N Concentration (Kangar series).	69
26	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Straw N Concentration (Kundor series).	69
27	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Grains N Concentration (Kangar series).	70
28	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Grains N Concentration (Kundor series).	71
29	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Copper Concentration of Plant (Straw + Grain) (Kangar series).	75
30	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Copper Concentration of Plant (Straw + Grain) (Kundor series).	75
31	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Copper Concentration of Straw (Kangar series).	76
32	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Copper Concentration of Straw (Kundor series).	77



33	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Copper Concentration of Grain (Kangar series).	78
34	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Copper Concentration of Straw (Kundor series).	78
35	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Soil Extractable Copper (Kangar series).	82
36	Effects of POS, NE and PS-coated Urea on Soil Extractable Copper (Kundor series).	83



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEC	=	Cation Exchange Capacity
DLM	=	Department of Land Management
DMRT	=	Duncan's Multiple Range Test
FAO	=	Food and Agriculture Organization
IRPA	=	Intensification of Research in Priority Areas
IRRI	=	International Rice Research Institute
MARDI	=	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
MOA	=	Ministry of Agriculture
MOP	=	Muriate of Potash
NE	=	Neem Oil
POS	=	Palm Oil Sludge
PS	=	Palm Stearin
TSP	=	Triple Superphosphate
UKM	=	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UPM	=	Universiti Putra Malaysia



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many centuries, rice has been the staple food for more than half the world population especially in Asia. However, the yield of rice is the lowest among other grains. The average yield of rice in Malaysia is 3.20 ton ha⁻¹ (FAO, 2000). Since 1996, the average production of rice yield in Malaysia has become stagnant. Malaysia is currently 70% self-sufficient in rice production and has to import rice from the neighboring countries especially Thailand and Vietnam to meet the demand. The value of the rice imports is at RM 500 million per year (Ariffin, 1998). By year 2020, the Asian countries except Thailand and Myanmar, will face severe rice shortage due to scarcity of land for rice production (Ariffin, 1998). To meet the demand for rice, the world's annual rice production must increase to 758 million tons by 2020 (IRRI, 1989). This increase in rice production is only possible if soil, water, nutrients and other production inputs are used more efficiently in the future.

Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE) is a measure of the extent to which a crop transforms available N to economic yield. Rice is a poor user of N with the NUE not exceeding 50% (Mahapatra *et al.*, 1985). Most of the N applied is lost through many processes like ammonia volatilization, denitrification, leaching and immobilization. In order to improve the NUE of rice, many methods have been developed. One of the methods is the slow release N

fertilizers. These fertilizers can regulate the N supply in consonance with the demand of the crop at various stages of growth (Amy and Ware, 1964). In 1998, the world fertilizer consumption was at 137 million metric ton with N fertilizers' consumption at 82 million metric ton (FAO, 2000).

Urea is the main N fertilizer used worldwide especially in rice production (Harre and Bridges, 1988). Urea is widely used because: (i) the cost of production is competitive, (ii) low salt content which prevents injury to plants, (iii) urea can be applied in many forms like solid and liquid (Nayan, 1982) and (iv) it has high N content, 46% N. Malaysia is one of the urea producers, where 1.4 million ton of urea fertilizers is produced annually to cater the local and foreign requirements.

In order to increase the NUE, slow release fertilizers are developed to minimize the loss of N by releasing N over a longer period of time. The sulphur coated urea (SCU) is perhaps the best-known slow release fertilizer. Throughout the years, many types of fertilizers, such as urea rubber matrices, lac-coated urea, urea supergranule (USG), neem-coated urea and others have been developed. These modified forms of urea (Patil *et al.*, 1987) and USG (Pal *et al.*, 1984) were capable of increasing the yield of rice.

Besides increasing the NUE, slow release fertilizers are able to reduce adverse effects on the environment by reducing the leaching of nitrate and by reducing the emissions of nitrous oxide and volatilization losses of ammonia. Even a small increase of 1% in NUE is estimated to save more than

US\$234,000,000 in fertilizer costs worldwide (Raun and Johnson, 1999). However, the commercial availability of the (well-performing) slow release fertilizers remains very limited. Due to high cost, slow release fertilizers are usually reserved for use in high-value production systems, such as turf and horticultural crops (Hauck, 1985).

High input of N does not promise a much higher rice yield. The micronutrient deficiency in soil can reduce the rice yields. Micronutrient, which also referred to as trace elements or minor elements, comprise seven of the 16 elements essential to plant growth (Harmsen and Vlek, 1985). Although required in small amount, these elements play major roles in plant growth and development. Moreover, a micronutrient is important when biological activity occurs only with the complexed ligand. Micronutrients can be applied in many ways including foliar application, seed treatment, root dipping of transplanted seedlings and application with pesticides (Mortvedt, 1985).

The largest irrigation scheme in Malaysia is the Muda Irrigation Scheme, which is located in Kedah. The area of the scheme is about 96,558 ha and is the largest irrigation scheme in Malaysia. The production of rice in this scheme is 4.129-ton ha⁻¹ in 1999 (DOA, 2000). Over the years, micronutrient has been over-mined by intensive farming. Most of the sites investigated in the irrigation scheme are deficient in copper (Cu) and magnesium (Mg), which resulted in the declined of rice yield (Samy *et al.*, 1992a). The deficiency of copper is attributed to low soil Cu content.



Farmers are applying a single dose of NPK (80 kg N ha⁻¹, 30 kg P₂O₅ ha⁻¹ and 20 kg K₂O ha⁻¹) in rice fields throughout the irrigation scheme. Investigations showed that there was a significant response to Cu with 16% increase in yield (Samy *et al.*, 1992a).

The prices of fertilizers have increased very drastically especially in the developing nations due to higher foreign exchange. Some of the small-scale rice cultivators of these countries have been forced out from the business, as they are unable to cope with the rising cost of production. The rising costs of production have encouraged the research on development of cheaper, easily available, environment-friendly fertilizers and with the ability to correct micronutrient deficiency.

With the increasing demand for micronutrients, many questions have been raised as to how small amounts of such materials can be added to fertilizers satisfactorily. Addition to fertilizers is of interest because it is much more practical to apply micronutrients together with fertilizers than in separate application. The most popular method is to apply the micronutrients in admixture with the primary nutrient fertilizer that farmers regularly use. The first reason for this popularity is convenience; the farmer does not have to devote extra labor to micronutrient application if the micronutrient carrier is a fertilizer that he is using. A second reason is that uniformity of application is much easier when the micronutrient material is mixed with much larger volume of fertilizer. However, very limited research has been conducted on slow release of N fertilizers containing micronutrient. Therefore, this study

plan to develop a new micronutrient coated N fertilizer to increase the rice production.

Objectives

The present study is focused on the development of micronutrient-coated urea for rice production. The objectives of this study are: -

- i) To prepare and evaluate selected physical properties of copper-coated urea using low cost and easily available materials,
- ii) To study the degradation rate of the coated urea under rice field conditions
- iii) To assess the effectiveness of the coating materials as copper carrier, and
- iv) To evaluate the effectiveness of copper- coated urea in increasing rice production under greenhouse condition.