International Research Journal of Plant Science (ISSN: 2141-5447) Vol.16(33) pp. 01-02,Oct ,2025
DOI: http:/dx.doi.org/10.14303//irjps.2025.33
Available online @ https://www.interesjournals.org/plant-science.html

Short Communication

Seed Germination: Physiological, Biochemical, and Environmental Regulation

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Received: 03-OCT-2025, Manuscript No. IRJPS-25-177168; **Editor assigned:** 8-OCT-2025, PreQC No. IRJPS-25-177168(PQ); **Reviewed:** 22-OCT-2025, QCNo.IRJPS-25-177168; **Revised:** 24-OCT-2025, Manuscript No. IRJPS-25-177168 (R); **Published:** 29-OCT-2025

ABSTRACT

Seed germination is a critical phase in the plant life cycle that marks the transition from a dormant embryo to an actively growing seedling. This process involves a series of tightly regulated physiological, biochemical, and molecular events initiated by water uptake and influenced by environmental conditions such as temperature, oxygen availability, and light. During germination, stored food reserves are mobilized to support embryonic growth until the seedling becomes autotrophic. Hormonal balance, particularly between gibberellins and abscisic acid, plays a central role in regulating germination and dormancy. Environmental stresses and soil conditions can significantly affect germination success, influencing plant establishment and crop yield. Advances in seed biology have improved our understanding of germination mechanisms, enabling the development of improved seed treatments and management practices for agriculture and ecosystem restoration.

Keywords: Seed Germination, Dormancy, Imbibition, Gibberellins, Abscisic Acid, Reserve Mobilization, Environmental Factors, Seedling Establishment.

INTRODUCTION

Seed germination represents one of the most crucial developmental stages in the plant life cycle. It begins with the uptake of water by the dry seed and ends with the emergence of the radicle, which establishes the seedling’s root system. Successful germination determines plant establishment and population success in both natural and agricultural environments.The process of germination starts with imbibition, during which the seed rapidly absorbs water. This hydration activates metabolic processes that were suspended during seed dormancy (Miransari & Smith, 2014). Enzymes become functional, cellular membranes are repaired, and respiration resumes, providing energy for subsequent growth.

Seed dormancy is an adaptive trait that prevents germination under unfavorable environmental conditions. Dormancy may be imposed by physical barriers, such as hard seed coats, or by physiological factors involving hormonal regulation. Overcoming dormancy ensures that germination occurs only when environmental conditions are suitable for seedling survival.

Citation: Meenal Bhargav (2025). Seed Germination: Physiological, Biochemical, and Environmental Regulation .IRJPS. 16: 33.

Hormonal regulation is central to seed germination. Gibberellins promote germination by stimulating the synthesis of hydrolytic enzymes that mobilize stored reserves. In contrast, abscisic acid maintains dormancy and inhibits germination. The balance between these hormones determines the timing of germination (Bewley, 1997). Mobilization of stored food reserves is essential for early seedling growth. Seeds contain carbohydrates, proteins, and lipids that are broken down into simpler molecules during germination. These nutrients provide energy and structural components until the seedling can perform photosynthesis independently. Environmental factors strongly influence seed germination. Temperature affects enzyme activity and metabolic rates, while oxygen is required for respiration. Light sensitivity varies among species, with some seeds requiring light to germinate and others germinating best in darkness. Soil moisture and aeration also play critical roles (Rajjou et al., 2012).

The structure of the seed influences germination behavior. The seed coat regulates water uptake and gas exchange, while the endosperm or cotyledons supply nutrients. Differences in seed anatomy account for variation in germination rates and requirements among species (Han & Yang, 2015).

Stress conditions such as salinity, drought, and extreme temperatures can inhibit germination by disrupting water uptake and metabolic processes. Seeds may exhibit stress tolerance mechanisms, such as protective proteins and antioxidants, that enhance survival under adverse conditions. Seed germination is tightly linked to ecological strategies. Germination timing affects competition, resource availability, and exposure to predators or pathogens. Many species synchronize germination with seasonal cues to maximize survival and reproductive success (Osuna et al., 2015).

Understanding seed germination has important practical applications. In agriculture, uniform and rapid germination ensures optimal crop establishment and yield. In conservation and restoration ecology, knowledge of germination requirements aids in the propagation of native and endangered plant species.

CONCLUSION

Seed germination is a highly coordinated process involving water uptake, metabolic activation, hormonal regulation, and environmental sensing. Successful germination enables the establishment of healthy seedlings and determines plant survival and productivity. Advances in seed biology have enhanced our understanding of germination mechanisms, supporting improved agricultural practices and conservation efforts. Continued research into seed germination will contribute to crop improvement, stress tolerance, and sustainable plant production under changing environmental conditions.

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Citation: Meenal Bhargav (2025). Seed Germination: Physiological, Biochemical, and Environmental Regulation .IRJPS. 16: 33.