

2

3 **Path Analysis of Vegetative Characteristics in**

4 **Conilon Coffee Production Consortiated with**

5 **Green Fertilizers in Tropical Climate**

6

7

8

---

9

10

11 **ABSTRACT**

12

The objective of this study was to evaluate the relationship between morphoagronomic characters and coffee productivity and their direct and indirect effects under the influence of different types of green fertilizers. The experiment was carried out in the field followed by the sampling method in a pre-established coffee plantation, installed in soil with a slope of 11% in the Southern Region of the State of Espírito Santo. The intercropping of coffee with green fertilizers studied were pigeon pea, jack bean, velvet bean, and wild Mexican sunflower, as well as a control treatment without green fertilizers. The experimental unit consisted of a coffee plant, clonal variety "Incaper 8142" Conilon Vitoria, with a spacing of 2.30 x 2.60 meters, with a crop age of seven years, using the border of at least one coffee plant between experimental units. Eight morphoagronomic characteristics were measured, having as main dependent variable the productivity (in kg per plant) obtained in the harvest of 2015, and as primary explanatory characteristics: plant height, orthotropic branch diameter, plagiotropic branch diameter, number of leaves, number of nodes, number of orthotropic branches, number of plagiotropic branches and number of productive nodes. To increase productivity, coffee plants with the highest number of orthotropic branches and number of plagiotropic branches should be selected. The characteristics of greater direct contribution were a number of nodes and the number of productive nodes.

13

14 *Keywords: tropical environment; agricultural production; vegetative development; Coffea*

15 *canephora L.*

16

17 **1. INTRODUCTION**

18

19 Brazil's coffee crop in 2017 is expected to reach 43.38 million bags of coffee, of which

20 84.40% are arabica, and 15.60% are conilon. The two species of coffee are grown in 18

21 states of the Union, involving 2000 municipalities, 370 thousand properties, occupying 8

22 million workers, in the cultivation of 6.73 billion plants, in 2.35 million hectares, which

23 characterizes the size economic and social development of coffee [1].

24 In the case of conilon, the technologies developed by researchers, and adopted by the

25 producers, have changed the technological bases of the production system, turning the

26 coffee plantations of capixabas into one of the most competitive in the world [2]. However, in

27 order to meet the demands of the productive chain, coffee cultivation must always be

28 evolving.

29 Productivity is the main characteristic used in the selection of new varieties and/or lineages  
30 of coffee trees [3]. It is important to highlight that in research involving perennial plants such  
31 as coffee, the time required for the unambiguous confirmation of the results is great,  
32 demanding improvement programs, large volumes of physical, financial and human  
33 resources, and it is advantageous to practice the selection of superior genotypes indirectly  
34 and/or anticipated [4].

35 Knowing the association between characters is also of great importance in the works,  
36 especially when it comes to characters with low phenotypic potential [5].

37 In this type of work is important to identify, among the characteristics of high correlation with  
38 the basic variable, those with greater direct effect in a favorable sense to the selection, such  
39 that the correlated response through indirect selection is efficient [6]. Despite the usefulness  
40 of the correlations in the understanding of a complex character as the production, it only  
41 informs on the association between characters [7], not determining the importance of the  
42 direct and indirect effects of the characters that compose it. However, the primary characters  
43 may have low heritability, resulting in the need to know the influence of the secondary  
44 components on the primary components and on grain yield [8].

45 It is also known that the correlations are measures of linear associations between  
46 characters, being between the values -1 and +1. However, genetic correlation coefficients  
47 greater than the absolute value 1 can occur as a consequence of problems related to the  
48 distribution of variables, or even to the model used in the estimation of variances and  
49 covariates, which determine the correlation [5]. To improve the understanding of the  
50 association between characters, [9] proposed a methodology that allows, through the  
51 standardization of variables and regression equations, to deploy genotype correlations in  
52 direct and indirect effects of the explanatory variables on the main characteristic, providing a  
53 measure of the influence of each cause and its effect. This methodology is called path  
54 analysis or track analysis.

55 In a given experimental condition, the decomposition of the correlations depends on the set  
56 of characters studied, which are usually evaluated based on previous knowledge of their  
57 importance and possible interrelations expressed in path diagrams. However, for the  
58 evaluation to have a reliable estimate and generate a biologically appropriate interpretation,  
59 it is fundamental to evaluate the degree of colinearity in the correlation matrix of all the  
60 characteristics to be selected [5].

61 When a large number of characteristics are considered in the selection process, there is the  
62 possibility that some of the analyzed independent variables present a certain degree of  
63 interrelationship, characterizing the existence of multicollinearity, its harmful effects being  
64 caused not simply by its presence, but by the degree with that it manifests itself [8]. Among  
65 the effects of high multicollinearity, we can mention the unstable estimates of the regression  
66 coefficient and an overestimation of the direct effects of the explanatory variables on the  
67 main one, which can lead to the wrong results [10].

68 Considering the information above, the present work was proposed to evaluate the  
69 relationship between morphoagronomic characters and coffee productivity and the direct  
70 and indirect effects of different types of green fertilizers.

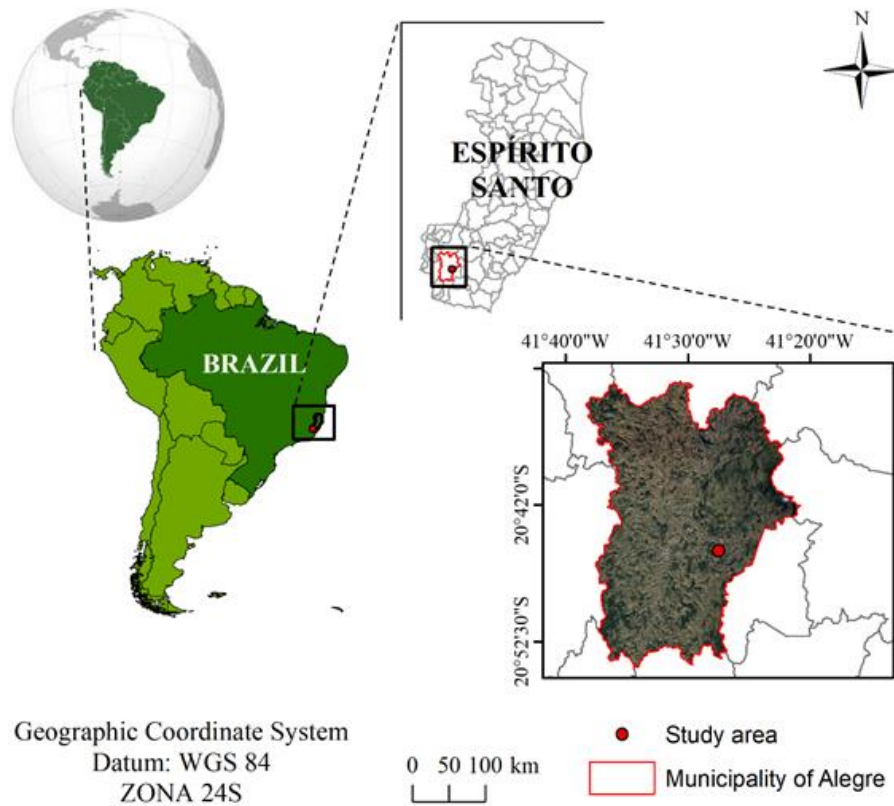
71

## 72 **2. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

73

74 The experiment was carried out in Alegre, Espírito Santo State, at latitude 20°45'44" South,  
75 longitude 41°27'43" West and altitude of approximately 134 m (Fig. 1). According to Köppen

76 classification, the climate of the region is "Aw" type, with dry winter and rainy summer with  
77 an average annual temperature of 23 °C and annual precipitation around 1,200 mm. The  
78 rainy season in the region is concentrated from November to March [11].



79

80 **Fig. 1. Location of the study area.**

81

82 The experiment was carried out in the field followed by the method of sampling in a pre-  
83 established coffee plantation, installed in soil with a slope of 11%, in the South Region of the  
84 State of Espírito Santo. The green fertilizer species, intercropped with the coffee tree were  
85 pigeon pea, jack bean, velvet bean, and wild mexican sunflower plus a control treatment  
86 without green fertilizers. The experimental unit consisted of a coffee plant, clonal variety  
87 "Incaper 8142" Conilon Vitoria, clone 12V (precocious) with a spacing of 2.30 x 2.60 meters,  
88 at the age of seven years, using a hair border least one coffee plant between the  
89 experimental units. Five replicates were used for each treatment.

90 The legumes were sown 50 cm from the stem diameter of the coffee trees in furrows spaced  
91 50 cm apart, totaling two rows of 10 m in length. Seed density and cultural practices followed  
92 the technical recommendations for each legume [12].

93 Weed management was performed with semi-mechanized manual trimmer when necessary.  
94 The cutting of the green fertilizer was carried out in the phase prior to full flowering. The  
95 species under study were grazed with the aid of the portable brushcutters and remained on  
96 the soil surface. The pruning of the legumes, or thinning, depending on the cycle the  
97 leguminous plants were in, were carried out with the intention of not letting the species

98 compete, due to the luminosity-water-nutrients, with the coffee tree. Only the pigeon pea and  
99 the wild mexican sunflower were pruned maintaining the size of 0,60 cm of height of the soil,  
100 whereas the other species used as green fertilizers velvet bean and jack bean after the cycle  
101 were chopped and planted again, with new seeds.

102 The morphoagronomic characteristics evaluated in the coffee plants were:

103 1. Plant height (H), obtained by the distance between the insertions of the two new branches  
104 with the old and its apical meristems (cm);

105 2. Orthotropic branch diameter (OBD), with standardized measurement in the central region  
106 of the second training of each branch (mm);

107 3. Plagiotropic branch diameter (PBD) measured in the second node from the center of the  
108 plant to the tip of the selected branch;

109 4. Number of leaves (NL) thrown in the plagiotropic branches, obtained by the monthly and  
110 cumulative count, in the branches;

111 5. Number of nodes (NN) of the plagiotropic branches, obtained by direct counting in the  
112 selected branches;

113 6. Number of orthotropic branches (NOB), counted from the marked plants;

114 7. Number of plagiotropic branches (NPB), obtained by direct counting in each orthotropic  
115 branch in two branches per plant;

116 8. Number of productive nodes (NPN) of the plagiotropic branches, obtained by direct  
117 counting of the nodes in the selected branches;

118 9. Kilograms of cherry coffee produced per plant (kg) by weighing the coffee after harvest  
119 using a digital scale.

120 The measurements were performed with a digital caliper and manual scale, being used in  
121 the evaluations throughout the experiment.

122 With the help of the GENES computational application [13], the correlation matrix between  
123 the morphoagronomic characteristics evaluated was constructed. In view of the presence of  
124 collinearity between characteristics (high degree of interrelation), a multicollinearity analysis  
125 was performed, with correlation matrix eigenvalues analysis, in order to identify the nature of  
126 the linear dependence between the characters and to detect which ones contributed to the  
127 emergence of multicollinearity. When necessary, some of the characteristics were  
128 discarded, choosing among those considered redundant, by maintaining the one that offered  
129 the greatest contribution to explaining productivity.

130 In the sequence, a path analysis was performed, having as main dependent variable, the  
131 productivity obtained in the harvest of 2015 (kg), as primary explanatory the characteristics  
132 were: plant height (H), orthotropic branch diameter (OBD), diameter of (NPP), number of  
133 nodes (NN), number of orthotropic branches (NOB), number of plagiotropic branches (NPB),  
134 number of productive nodes (NPN). The unfolding of the correlations between the primary  
135 and secondary explanatory characteristics, in direct and indirect effects on the productivity  
136 character, were used to explain the results obtained.  
137

138 **3. RESULTS**

139

140

141

142

143

144

145

146

147

In the evaluation of the determination coefficients (R<sup>2</sup>) positive effects were observed for the tested fertilizers, being 0.99 for jack bean, 0.41 for pigeon pea, 0.96 for velvet bean, 0.96 for wild mexican sunflower and 0.99 for conventional mineral fertilization, showing that almost all of the basic variable (production) is explained by the primary components, except when the coffee tree was fertilized with pigeon pea (Table 1).

**Table 1. Estimates of the direct and indirect effects of the measured morphoagronomic variables on the basic coffee productivity variable (kg plant<sup>-1</sup>).**

kg/plant		Jack bean	Pigeon pea	Velvet bean	Wild Mexican sunflower	Conventional
Direct effect H	Via	0.3797951	-0.0667986	-0.3344779	<b>-1.0000000</b>	0.1473389
Indirect effect H	OBD	-0.4526606	-0.0694719	0.2259135	-0.3424713	-0.0887094
Indirect effect H	PBD	<b>-0.8599545</b>	-0.0497825	-0.0134634	<b>0.9488719</b>	0.4289038
Indirect effect H	NL	-0.3260438	0.2140486	0.0470916	<b>1.1824141</b>	0.0110086
Indirect effect H	NN	<b>1.0000000</b>	0.1991964	-0.1640081	-0.1589544	<b>-0.6521535</b>
Indirect effect H	NOB	0.2952332	-0.0362022	0.0914075	<b>0.7035183</b>	-0.0780771
Indirect effect H	NPB	0.2216671	0.0120106	0.0105732	<b>1.0000000</b>	0.1423407
Indirect effect H	NPN	-0.0078867	0.0332501	-0.2373236	-0.6472743	0.1323805
Total – Dir. and Indir. effect		-0.3283727	0.2362504	-0.3742871	0.3133799	0.0414036
Direct effect OBD	Via	-0.5460018	-0.1638316	<b>-1.1335188</b>	<b>1.5901909</b>	-0.1654968
Indirect effect OBD	H	-0.3148676	-0.0283256	0.0666624	<b>0.7965874</b>	0.0789764
Indirect effect OBD	PBD	<b>-0.8350603</b>	-0.0144393	-0.0065310	-0.0520391	0.0109534
Indirect effect OBD	NL	-0.3211612	0.2722416	<b>1.5133340</b>	-0.4636207	-0.0391427
Indirect effect OBD	NN	<b>1.1813293</b>	0.0668105	0.4992327	-0.0253701	0.0668892
Indirect effect OBD	NOB	0.3916156	-0.0054637	-0.0719767	<b>-0.9626072</b>	-0.1746725
Indirect effect OBD	NPB	0.1783420	0.0463674	-0.5916483	<b>-1.1642132</b>	0.1776261
Indirect effect OBD	NPN	0.0409970	0.0108805	-0.2764873	0.3334804	-0.2115877
Total – Dir. and Indir. effect		-0.2248070	0.1842399	-0.0009329	0.0524085	0.0931837
Direct effect PBD	via	<b>1.2331865</b>	0.0909418	0.0465673	<b>-2.0444039</b>	-0.6147461
Indirect effect PBD	H	0.2648476	0.0365663	0.0967036	<b>1.7167198</b>	-0.1027972
Indirect effect PBD	OBD	0.3697287	0.0260124	0.1589747	0.0404774	0.0029488
Indirect effect PBD	NL	0.2213203	-0.0759583	<b>-1.0725441</b>	-0.3797650	-0.0702246
Indirect effect PBD	NN	<b>-1.4831252</b>	0.0028676	-0.1390560	0.0826978	0.3156462
Indirect effect PBD	NOB	-0.2352309	0.0369354	-0.0707388	-0.0042619	0.2322309
Indirect effect PBD	NPB	-0.2025974	-0.1148148	<b>0.7162218</b>	-0.0915689	0.1833462
Indirect effect PBD	NPN	0.0715904	-0.0171103	0.0046496	0.1516964	-0.0105558
Total – Dir. and Indir. effect		0.2397200	-0.0145600	-0.2592219	-0.5284083	-0.0610556
Direct effect NL	via	-0.5869551	0.4748077	<b>-2.2568620</b>	<b>-1.4333219</b>	-0.1298828
Indirect effect NL	H	-0.2109699	-0.0301136	0.0069792	<b>3.0512966</b>	-0.0124881
Indirect effect NL	OBD	-0.2987529	-0.0939365	<b>0.7600786</b>	0.5143614	-0.0498756
Indirect effect NL	PBD	-0.4649916	-0.0145486	0.0221305	-0.5416739	-0.3323787
Indirect effect NL	NN	<b>0.8509697</b>	0.1356520	-0.4995919	0.0875731	<b>-0.6557647</b>
Indirect effect NL	NOB	0.2485850	-0.0225857	-0.0109861	<b>-0.7638209</b>	0.0885747
Indirect effect NL	NPB	0.0413783	0.0798211	<b>1.0690365</b>	<b>-1.8626638</b>	0.2099223
Indirect effect NL	NPN	0.1318692	0.0280049	0.4159668	0.5514345	0.1220207
Total – Dir. and Indir. effect		-0.2888672	0.5571011	-0.4932485	-0.3968149	-0.7581610
Direct effect NN	via	<b>-1.6899839</b>	0.3084154	-0.5750567	0.6073563	<b>1.2968750</b>
Indirect effect NN	H	0.2654249	-0.0431433	-0.0953942	<b>0.9680274</b>	-0.0740916
Indirect effect NN	OBD	0.3816651	-0.0354900	<b>0.9840589</b>	-0.0664244	-0.0085359
Indirect effect NN	PBD	<b>1.0822410</b>	0.0008456	0.0112606	-0.2783665	-0.1496229
Indirect effect NN	NL	0.2955537	0.2088371	<b>-1.9606938</b>	-0.2066669	0.0656752
Indirect effect NN	NOB	-0.1927173	-0.0028589	0.0284789	-0.1178148	0.1552644
Indirect effect NN	NPB	-0.2125224	-0.0936466	<b>0.8879332</b>	<b>-0.9687714</b>	-0.1769120
Indirect effect NN	NPN	-0.0236264	0.0127284	0.4033121	0.0745935	-0.4277850
Total – Dir. and Indir. effect		-0.0939653	0.3556877	-0.3161010	0.0119333	0.6813320
Direct effect NOB	via	<b>0.6815290</b>	0.0741319	0.2403166	<b>1.4949020</b>	-0.3168945
Indirect effect NOB	H	-0.1645244	0.0326210	-0.1272230	<b>-1.7406891</b>	0.0363016
Indirect effect NOB	OBD	-0.3137399	0.0120747	0.3394976	<b>-1.0239663</b>	0.0912220
Indirect effect NOB	PBD	-0.4256364	0.0453107	-0.0137074	0.0058285	0.4505064
Indirect effect NOB	NL	-0.2140896	-0.1446593	0.1031725	<b>0.7323564</b>	0.0363033
Indirect effect NOB	NN	0.4778802	-0.0118938	-0.0681476	-0.0478664	-0.6354116

Indirect effect NOB	NPB	0.0296641	-0.0745825	-0.3938004	<b>1.1895804</b>	-0.2347003
Indirect effect NOB	NPN	0.0096873	-0.0215395	0.0000000	-0.3977984	0.1909926
Total – Dir. and Indir. effect		0.0807704	-0.0885367	0.0801084	0.2123471	-0.3842341
Direct effect NPB	via	-0.2938234	0.2795102	<b>1.1769642</b>	<b>-3.1172151</b>	0.4453125
Indirect effect NPB	H	0.2865261	-0.0028703	-0.0030048	<b>2.7600179</b>	0.0470957
Indirect effect NPB	OBD	0.3314067	-0.0271777	0.5698087	0.5939023	-0.0660133
Indirect effect NPB	PBD	<b>0.8503076</b>	-0.0373563	0.0283377	-0.0600548	-0.2531062
Indirect effect NPB	NL	0.0826592	0.1355931	<b>-2.0499076</b>	<b>-0.8564686</b>	-0.0612273
Indirect effect NPB	NN	<b>-1.2223645</b>	-0.1033309	-0.4338381	0.1887548	-0.5152174
Indirect effect NPB	NOB	-0.0688064	-0.0197808	-0.0804075	-0.5704791	0.1670181
Indirect effect NPB	NPN	0.0815423	0.0242226	0.2865389	<b>0.8951343</b>	0.2876056
Total – Dir. and Indir. effect		0.0474475	0.2488098	-0.5055085	-0.1664084	0.0535031
Direct effect NPN	via	-0.2695668	-0.0594494	<b>0.7594355</b>	<b>-1.0320759</b>	-0.5346680
Indirect effect NPN	H	-0.0111117	0.0373605	0.1045243	<b>-2.3197184</b>	-0.0364802
Indirect effect NPN	OBD	0.0830384	0.0299847	0.4126796	-0.5138164	-0.0654932
Indirect effect NPN	PBD	-0.3275042	0.0261743	0.0002851	0.3004903	-0.0121368
Indirect effect NPN	NL	0.2871322	-0.2236679	<b>-1.2361544</b>	<b>0.7658188</b>	0.0296416
Indirect effect NPN	NN	-0.1481202	-0.0660330	-0.3053943	-0.0438968	<b>1.0376228</b>
Indirect effect NPN	NOP	-0.0244918	0.0268592	0.0000000	0.5761879	0.1132002
Indirect effect NPN	NPB	0.0888798	-0.1138862	0.4440745	<b>2.7036055</b>	-0.2395400
Total – Dir. and Indir. effect		-0.3217442	-0.3426578	0.1794504	0.4365949	0.2917608
Residual effect		0.0141	0.7679	0,1740	0,1843	0,0141
Determination coefficient (R <sup>2</sup> )		0.9992685	0.4102781	0.9697136	0.9660771	0.9998790

148 *Plant height (H), orthotropic branch diameter (OBD), plagiotropic branch diameter (PBD),*  
149 *number of leaves (NL), number of nodes (NN), number of orthotropic branches (NOB),*  
150 *number of plagiotropic branches (NPB), number of productive nodes (NPN).*

151

#### 152 4. DISCUSSION

153

154 These results (Table 1) corroborate with those of [14], who obtained coefficient of  
155 determination equal to 1.00 by means of trail analysis in conilon coffee genotypes. The  
156 coefficients of determinations R<sup>2</sup>, considered high, showed that the variations occurred in the  
157 basic variable were explained by the variables measured.

158 In the coffee plants fertilized with wild mexican sunflower, a direct effect with a negative  
159 magnitude of height over productivity was observed. In addition, there were indirect effects  
160 with high magnitude by height, on productivity, plagiotropic branch diameter (PBD), number  
161 of leaves (NL), number of orthotropic branches (NOB) and number of plagiotropic branches  
162 (NPB), indicating that these important characters for coffee productivity, and should be  
163 considered in the case of indirect selection of characters. For the coffee plants fertilized with  
164 jack bean, there was an indirect effect with high negative magnitude, of PRD via H and  
165 indirect effect with high positive magnitude of the number of nodes (NN) via height over  
166 production. However, in plants fertilized with conventional mineral fertilization, the NN  
167 influenced indirectly with negative magnitude, via coffee height, on productivity (kg).

168 According to [15], in the interpretation of correlations, three aspects should be considered:  
169 magnitude, direction and significance. Estimation of positive correlation coefficient indicates  
170 the tendency of one variable to increase when the other also increases, and negative  
171 correlations indicate a tendency for one variable to increase while the other one decreases.

172 The coffee plants fertilized with velvet bean had direct effect of very high negative magnitude  
173 of OBD on productivity. However, there was an indirect effect with a high positive magnitude  
174 of NL via OBD on productivity (Table 1). However, for coffee plants fertilized with wild  
175 mexican sunflower, there was a direct effect of high positive magnitude of OBD and positive  
176 indirect effect of height (H) of the orthotropic branch and negative via NOB and highly

177 negative of NPB. For coffee plants fertilized with jack bean, a negative indirect effect of PBD  
178 and high positive magnitude of NN was obtained (Table 1).

179 According to [14], the greatest associations with coffee productivity occurred via indirect  
180 effects of OBD, which indicates that the direct intensified selection pressure on this  
181 characteristic may not provide satisfactory gains in productivity, since the high values were  
182 consequences, mainly of these indirect effects.

183 The coffee plants fertilized with jack bean had a positive direct PBD effect on productivity. In  
184 addition, there was a negative indirect effect of NN via PBD. For coffee plants fertilized with  
185 wild mexican sunflower, a highly negative direct effect of PBD and highly positive indirect  
186 ELT via PBD was obtained (Table 1). For coffee plants fertilized with velvet bean, a highly  
187 negative indirect effect of NL via PBD and positive NPB via PBD was obtained.

188 [16] observed the opposite effect of the fertilization with jack bean in the fertilizations in  
189 coffee trees in which the effects were negative to increase the diameter of the plagiotropic  
190 branch. According to the same authors, this factor is related to the low nitrogen supply  
191 provided by the green fertilizer, which was below the nutritional demand of the coffee tree.

192 The coffee plants fertilized with velvet bean had highly negative direct effects of NL on  
193 PROD and indirect positive effect of OBD and highly positive NPB via NL (Table 1). In the  
194 plants fertilized with wild Mexican sunflower, we observed a highly negative direct effect of  
195 NL on PROD and highly positive indirect of H via NL and negative of NOB and highly  
196 negative of NPB (Table 1). For the coffee plants fertilized with jack bean, a positive indirect  
197 effect of NN via NL on PROD was obtained. However, the plants fertilized with conventional  
198 fertilization obtained the negative indirect effect of NN via NL on PROD.

199 Certainly, the direct negative effects are associated with the nutritional effects of coffee  
200 plants, due to the competition for water and light in the period of vegetative growth of the  
201 green fertilizers, causing competition.

202 According to [17], characters that present a direct effect contrary to the correlation with the  
203 main variable indicate the absence of cause and effect, suggesting that the auxiliary  
204 character is not the main determinant of the changes in the basic variable, and others may  
205 provide greater selection gain.

206 However, the effect of green fertilizer may modify the microclimate in which the coffee tree is  
207 present and, depending on the intensity and duration of the consortium, causes  
208 physiological, anatomical and reproductive changes in the coffee plants and may adversely  
209 affect the production. The productivity of a crop, in addition to its genetic expression and  
210 other conditions such as nutritional status, water supply, sanitation, weed control, and soil  
211 characteristics, is also a result of the efficient use of photosynthetic radiation [14] [15] [13].

212 The coffee plants fertilized with jack bean had a highly negative direct effect via NN on  
213 PROD. In addition, a highly positive indirect effect was observed via NN on PROD (Table 1).  
214 In plants fertilized with conventional fertilization, a highly positive direct effect of NN on  
215 PROD was observed (Table 1). In the plants fertilized with velvet bean, there was a positive  
216 indirect effect of OBD and NPB via NN over PROD and negative of NL via NN (Table 1). For  
217 the coffee plants fertilized with wild Mexican sunflower, the positive indirect effect of H via  
218 NN and negative of NPB via NN over PROD was obtained (Table 1).

219 Certainly the negative direct effect with the number of nodes (NN), observed in the plants  
220 fertilized with jack bean, is associated to the period of consortium and management times,  
221 and the jack bean is usually used as the rotation of culture.

222 [17] observed that the jack beans' significantly reduced the crown diameter, number of  
223 leaves, and number of nodes of the coffee trees according to the consortium time. Both  
224 results are similar to those obtained in this work for the variable number of nodes (NN)  
225 demonstrating competition of this crop in a consortium with the coffee tree, being these  
226 vegetative characteristics sensitive to competition.

227 The coffee plants, fertilized with jack bean, had a direct effect of NOB on PROD (Table 1).  
228 For the plants fertilized with wild Mexican sunflower, a highly positive direct effect of NOB on  
229 the PROD (Table 1) was observed. There was a highly negative indirect effect of H, OBD,  
230 and NL positive and highly positive NPB via NOB on the PROD (Table 1).

231 Species with a tall bearing, such as wild Mexican sunflower, can shade the coffee tree and,  
232 consequently, resulting in height increase, which would not be expected in work with low  
233 legumes. However, [18], working with pigeon pea, reported that treatments influenced  
234 negatively not only the height but also the stem diameter of *Coffea arabica*.

235 In coffee plants fertilized with velvet bean, there was a direct positive effect of NPB on the  
236 PROD. However, there was a highly negative indirect effect of NL via NPB on the PROD. In  
237 the plants fertilized with wild Mexican sunflower showed a highly negative direct effect of  
238 NPB and a positive indirect effect via H and NPN and negative of NL via NPB on PROD  
239 (Table 1). The coffee plants fertilized with jack bean presented positive indirect effect via  
240 PBD and highly negative via NN (Table 1).

241 According to [19], the positive effects are related to the nutritional demand of the coffee  
242 plants, where the macro and micronutrient values are in equilibrium in the plant reducing the  
243 mortality rate of the plagiotropic branches, called potato drought.

244 In the coffee plants fertilized with velvet bean presented the positive direct effect of NPN and  
245 indirect effect highly negative via NN on the PROD (Table 1). In the plants fertilized with wild  
246 mexican sunflower, there was a highly negative direct effect of NPN on PROD and highly  
247 negative indirect effect of H via NPN on PROD and indirect positive effect of NL and highly  
248 positive NPB (Table 1). The plants fertilized with conventional fertilizer showed a highly  
249 positive indirect effect of NN on the PROD.

250 [18] also found a negative correlation between the accumulation of dry legume matter and  
251 coffee yield. According to the same authors, pigeon pea was the one that accumulated more  
252 dry matter. However, the productivities in their treatments were smaller, with reduction of up  
253 to 67%, when compared to the control.

## 254 255 **5. CONCLUSION**

256  
257 The path analysis was efficient in identifying the characteristics that exerted the greatest  
258 influence on the productivity of *Coffea canephora* in consortium with green fertilizers.

259 The characteristics that exerted the greatest influence on the productivity of *Coffea*  
260 *canephora* intercropped with green fertilizers were the number of orthotropic branches  
261 (NOB) and number of plagiotropic branches (NPB).



262 The characteristics of greater direct contribution were number of nodes (NN) and number of  
263 productive nodes (NPN). The green fertilizer wild mexican sunflower was the one that  
264 provided a highly negative direct effect on the main variables related to the production, due  
265 to its greater competition.

266

## 267 **COMPETING INTERESTS**

268

269 Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

270

271

## 272 **REFERENCES**

273

274 1. CONAB. National Supply Company, Follow-up of the Brazilian Crop (Coffee), Harvest,  
275 2017. first estimate. 117pp.

276 Available: <https://www.conab.gov.br/info-agro/safras/cafes/boletim-da-safra-de-caffe>.

277 Accessed 23 April, 2017.

278

279 2. Ferrão MAG, Ferrão RG, Fornazier MJ, Prezotti LC, Fonseca AFA, Alexandre FT, Ferrão  
280 LFV, 2013. Advances in genetic improvement of conilon coffee. Seminar for the  
281 Sustainability of Coffee Growers. Alegre, ES: UFES, Center of Agrarian Sciences, cap.7.  
282 110.

283

284 3. Carvalho AM, Mendes ANG, Carvalho GR, Botelho CE, Gonçalves FMA, Ferreira AD.  
285 Correlation between growth and productivity of coffee cultivars in different regions of Minas  
286 Gerais, Brazil, *Brazilian Agricultural Research*. 2010; 45: 269–275. Portuguese.

287

288 4. Bonomo P, Cruz CD, Viana JMS, Pereira AA, Oliveira VR, Carneiro PCS. Early selection  
289 of progenies of coffee timor X catuaí yellow e catuaí red. *Acta Scientiarum Agronomy*. 2004;  
290 26: 91–96.

291

292 5. Cruz CD, Regazzi AJ, Carneiro PCS. Track analysis. Viçosa, Minas Gerais: UFV, 2004.

293

294 6. Severino LS, Sakiyama NS, Pereira AA, Vieira G, Zambolim L, Barros V.  
295 Productivity associations with other agronomic characteristics of coffee (*Coffea arabica* L.  
296 “Catimor”). *Acta Scientiarum*. 2002; 24: 1467–1471.

297

298 7. Sobreira FM, Fialho GS, Sánchez CFB, Matta FP. Post-harvest track analysis of salted  
299 tomato. *Research National Faculty of Agronomy*. 2012; 62: 4983–4988. Spanish.

300

301 8. Vieira EA, Carvalho FIF, Oliveira AC, Martins LF, Benin G, Silva JAG, Coimbra J, Martins  
302 AF, Carvalho MF, Ribeiro G. Track analysis between the primary and secondary  
303 components of grain yield in wheat. *Brasilian Agro-science Research*. 2003; 13: 169–174.

304

305 9. Wright, S. Correlation and causation. *Journal of Agricultural Research*. 1921; 20: 557–  
306 585.

307

308 10. Gondim TCDO, Rocha VS, Sedyama CS, Miranda GV. Track analysis for yield  
309 components and agronomic traits of wheat under defoliation. *Brazilian Agricultural  
310 Research*. 2008; 43: 487–493. Portuguese.

311

- 312 11. Alegre. Prefeitura Municipal de Alegre. 2017. Geographical Features.  
313 Available:<<http://alegre.es.gov.br/site/index.php/acidade/historia/caracteristicasgeograficas>>  
314 . Accessed 23 April, 2017.  
315
- 316 12. Marcolan AL, Ramalho AR, Mendes AM, Teixeira CAD, Fernandes CF, Costa JNM, et  
317 al. Cultivation of conilon and robusta coffee trees for Rondônia. Ed.3, 2009.  
318
- 319 13. Cruz CD. Genes - a software package for analysis in experimental statistics and  
320 quantitative genetics. *Acta Scientiarum Agronomy*. 2013; 35: 271–276.  
321
- 322 14. Dalcolmo JM. Biometry of conilon coffee growth after scheduled cycle pruning. Doctoral  
323 thesis. State University of North Fluminense, Campos dos Goytacazes, Brazil, 2012.  
324
- 325 15. Nogueira APO, Sedyama LB, Sousa OT, Hamawaki AF, Cruz CD, Pereira DG, Matsuo  
326 É. Track analysis and correlations between characters in soybean cultivated in two sowing  
327 seasons. *Bioscience Journal*. 2012; 28: 877–888.  
328
- 329 16. Chaves Filho JT. New paradigms for coffee cultivation. 2007.  
330
- 331 17. Cruz CD, Carneiro PCS. Biometric models applied to genetic improvement. Viçosa,  
332 Minas Gerais: Federal University Viçosa (UFV). 2013.  
333
- 334 18. Ferrão RG, Cruz CD, Ferreira A, Cecon PR, Ferrão MAG, Fonseca AFA, Silva MF.  
335 Genetic parameters in Conilon coffee. *Brazilian Agricultural Research*. 2008; 43: 61–69.  
336 Portuguese.  
337
- 338 19. Chaves Filho JT, Oliveira RF. Seasonal variation of starch stored in plagiotropic  
339 branches of coffee. *Research*. 2008; 35: 85–102.  
340  
341  
342