DETECTION OF FUNGI AND TOTAL AFLATOXINS IN FOOD ADDITIVES AND SOME MEAT PRODUCTS BY SEROLOGICAL AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGICAL METHODS

By
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ABSTRACT

Spices and natural flavors are basic elements that go into food, especially meat and poultry products. In countries with hot and humid climate, contamination of spices and other food additives with moulds especially aflatoxogenic species is commonly encountered. There are great potential risks on human health via consumption of such spices or foods which contain these spices. Hence, creating awareness among consumers regarding aflatoxins is of great importance for food safety. From this point of view, this investigation was designed to evaluate the quality of 14 kinds of spices and 6 meat products. A total of 200 samples of food additives (Black pepper, Cumin, Coriander, Turmeric, Chili powder, Ginger, Garlic powder, Paprika, Curry, Cinnamon, Thyme, Clove, Cardamom and Onion powder) and meat products (Basterma, Beef burger, Frankfurter, Hot dog, Kofta and Luncheon) representing 10 each were collected from local markets at Cairo and Giza Governorates. All samples were analyzed for moulds count, predominant mould genera especially aflatoxins producing species and total aflatoxins level. All examined spices and meat products showed positive result for moulds with highest contamination percentage (100%) in black pepper, cumin, coriander and turmeric, while in meat products kofta and Hot dog showed contamination percentages of 80 & 70%, respectively. The lowest percentage of contamination (40%) was in clove and Luncheon. Moulds load in spices ranged from 2.47 ± 1.09 in clove to 3.61 ± 1.67 in chili powder log_{10} CFU/g, whereas in meat products it was 3.53 ± 2.12 in frankfurter and 3.95 ± 2.63 in beef burger. Aspergillus and Penicillium species were generally the most predominant species recovered from the examined samples, followed by Mucor Cladosporium and Alternaria.
species. Further characterization of Aspergillus species proved that A. niger was the most prevalent followed by A. flavus, A. ochraceus, A. candidus and A. gluacus. Almost fifteen percent (14.9%) of the isolated A. flavus isolates were aflatoxogenic. The total aflatoxin residues were maximum in chili powder (40.94 ± 9.28 ug/kg) for spices and in hot dog (8.23 ± 1.52 ug/kg) for meat products. In consistence with ELISA findings, the molecular study on genomic DNA using PCR technique confirmed presence of Aspergillus species in isolated samples.

Key words:
Spices - aflatoxins - ELISA - Food additives - Meat products - PCR.

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INTRODUCTION

Food and microorganisms have long and interesting associations which developed long before the beginning of recorded history. Foods are not only nutritious to consumers, but are also excellent source of nutrients for microbial growth. On the other hand, foods also can act as a reservoir for disease transmission, and thus detection and control of pathogens and spoilage organisms are important areas of food microbiology. During the entire sequence of food handling from the producer to the final consumer, microorganisms can affect food quality and human health. Mould contamination in food is a useful indicator to evaluate the food quality, the degree of deterioration is an essential component for microbiological assurance programs (Taniwaki et al., 2001). Developed countries considered the mould counts as a standard test for hygienic condition due to its economic and public health effects. Fungi are ubiquitous plant pathogens and so are major spoilage agents of foods and feedstuffs. Mould not only cause deterioration of food and feed but also adversely affect the health of humans and animals since they are capable of producing toxic metabolites known as mycotoxins causing food poisoning and liver cancer in human (Brera et al., 1998). The ingestion of such mycotoxin contaminated grains by animals and human beings has enormous public health significance because these toxins are nephrotoxic, immunotoxic, teratogenic and mutagenic which are capable of causing acute and chronic effects in man and animals ranging from disorder of central nervous, cardiovascular and pulmonary systems and intestinal tract to death (Paterson and Lima, 2010; Refai and Hassan, 2013). Of greatest concern is the relevance of these toxins in human hepatoma and oesophageal cancer, increased susceptibility
to diseases especially in children and childhood pre-five mortality and reduced life expectancy (Marasas, 2001). The significant economic and health hazards caused by fungi and mycotoxin especially in developing countries that have poor food storages are of great concern. So, to ensure a healthy food supply thereby minimizing consequences to food security, international trade and animal and human health, there is a need to monitor fungal and mycotoxin contamination periodically so as to meet international and national mycotoxin regulatory standards. Spices have been defined as a natural compound, or a mixture of natural compounds that is extracted from the seeds, fruits, flowers, or trunks (skins, roots, leaves) of several plants that indigenous or exotic origin, aromatic or with strong taste, used in minute quantities, and added to food preparation and processing throughout the world in order to provide colour, taste, smell, or flavor (Skrinjar et al., 2012). They are essentially flavoring agents reported to have both beneficial effect and antimicrobial properties, if properly stored (Atanda et al., 2006). As with many other agricultural products, spices may be exposed to a wide range of microbial contamination during pre- and post-harvest (Hashem and Alamri, 2010). Although spices are present in foods in small amounts, they are recognized as important carriers of microbial contamination mainly because of the conditions in which they were grown, harvested and processed. In addition, because of possible neglects during sanitation or processing, foods containing spices are more likely to deteriorate and also could exert harmful effects, having in mind health risks associated with mycotoxins produced by some fungal genera (Koci-Tanackov et al., 2007). Fungi are the predominant contaminants of spices, but most such microbial populations are probably regarded as commensally residents on the plant that survived drying and storage. Soil and air are the main inoculums source for causing contamination in crude spices in field (Kneifel and Berger, 1994). Such contamination may occur during processing storage, distribution, sale and/or use (McKee, 1995). Meat is considered the main source of animal protein and a high source of iron, zinc and several vitamins, and so meat products are considered a favorable food as it is easy to buy, fast to cook, delicious to eat. Rich nutrient matrix meat and meat products are the first-choice source of animal protein for many people all over the world (Heinz and Hautzinger, 2007). Meat products may be contaminated with one of the most dangerous microbial hazard represented in moulds. Moulds contamination of these meat products may occur at different stages at which the products are prepared. It may occur during animal slaughter under bad hygienic condition by using of contaminated water, equipments and
utensils or during processing through adding of contaminated meat additives with mould spores or during packing, handling, transportation and storage. Contamination of meat products with different mould species is considered a real hazard as it affects the quality of these meat products by increasing the opportunity for their spoilage and deterioration (Comi et al., 2004). The most important aspect about mould spoilage of food is, however, the formation of mycotoxins, more than 400 mycotoxins are known today. The more common and the most dangerous types of mycotoxins are aflatoxins. Aflatoxins are the main toxic secondary metabolites of some Aspergillus species such as A. flavus, A. parasiticus (Alcaide-Molina et al., 2009). More than 18 different types of aflatoxins are identified; AFB1 is the most potent toxic metabolite and is classified as human carcinogen (Talebi et al., 2011).

The potential for spoilage and mycotoxin production primarily depends on genetic factors; however, environmental conditions at the site of mould growth (temperature, water activity, matrix composition, moisture content, pH of the medium, contamination and physical destruction of the substrate, antifungal properties and other factors) are considered highly significant (Škrinjar et al., 2012). Therefore, the present study aimed at assessing the intensity and frequency of moulds contamination in common spices and some meat products in public markets and the potential producers of mycotoxins to highlight their risk assessment, screening the isolated fungi for aflatoxin production as well as determination of aflatoxin residues.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**Sampling:**
Two hundred random samples of food additives (Black pepper, Cumin, Coriander, Turmeric, Chili powder, Ginger, Garlic powder, Paprike, Curry, Cinnamon, Thyme, Clove, Cardamom and Onion powder) and meat products (Basterma, Beef burger, Frankfurter, Hot dog, Kofta and Luncheon) representing 10 each were collected from local markets at Cairo and Giza Governorates. Samples were aseptically transferred into sterile polyethylene bags without undue delay, and transported to the laboratory for mycological examination and aflatoxins detection (Charoenpornsook and Kavisarasai.P 2006).

**Enumeration of total mould count:**
**Preparation of samples (ICMSF, 1978).**
Ten grams of each sample were transferred aseptically into sterile blender jar, to which 90 ml of 1% peptone water were added and homogenized in a sterile warring blender for 2 minutes,
and tenfold serial dilutions of the homogenate were prepared. One milliliter quantities of the previously prepared serial dilutions were inoculated separately into Petri dish plates and mixed with rose Bengal agar medium and incubated at 25°C for 3-5 days. The counts of mould colonies were recorded. Estimation of the Total Mould Count was carried out according to (FDA, 2001) by using dichloran Rose-Bengal chloramphenicol (DRBC) agar medium.

**Identification of isolates:**
The identification of mould species was carried out by careful observation and measurements macroscopically and microscopically according to (Pitt and Hocking, 2009).

**Aflatoxigenicity testing of isolates:**
Seventy-four isolates of *Aspergillus* section *Flavi* obtained from the examined spices and meat products were tested for their capacity to produce aflatoxins on neutral red desiccated coconut agar (NRDCA). The agar medium was prepared as described by Atanda *et al.* (2011). Each of the isolates were inoculated at the center of triplicate NRDCA Petri dishes and incubated at 31°C for 5 days in the dark. On the third day of incubation the plates were checked under UV at 365nm for blue fluorescence characterizing aflatoxin production.

**ELISA test procedure (Sahar *et al.*, 2013):**
The quantitative analysis of total aflatoxins was determined through a competitive direct enzyme linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) method. The method is based on the accurate monitoring of mycotoxins and is suitable for screening large number of samples. The veratox test kits (Neogen Corp., Lansing, MI. USK approved by the AOAC research institute (certificate No 950702) and the USDA-GIPSA (2008 - 011) were used for the analysis. The analysis was done according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Concentration of aflatoxins was calculated by Log/log it Software Awareness Technology Inc. (Anonymous, 2000; Stoloff *et al.*, 1991).

**Calculation:**
 Qualitative result could be derived by visual comparison of the sample color to the standard wells. Samples containing few colors than the standard well had greater concentration of aflatoxin than the standard well. In contrast, the sample containing more color had lower aflatoxin concentration. For quantitative result, plotting the standard curve on the semi logarithmic graph paper, placing the value of standards on x-axis and the corresponding
absorbance value on Y-axis. Read AFB1 concentration in the sample directly from the standard curve in ppb Fig. (1).

**Genomic DNA analysis:**
Fungal genomic DNA was extracted from cultured *Aspergillus flavus* using Quigen genomic DNA extraction kit (QIAamp® DNA Mini Kit).
The purity and concentration of isolated DNA samples were measured using Nanodrop 1000 (Thermoscientific).

**Primers design:**
The forward and reverse primers used to probe the presence of *Aspergillus flavus* species were designed from the previously deposited gene sequence of *Aspergillus flavus* (*Aspergillus flavus* NRRL3357scf_1106286417600, whole genome shotgun sequence with accession number NW_002477238; version NW_002477238.1. Primer3 software was used to design the primers and the primers were designed via by HVD LIFE SCIENCES (Eurofins, Germany) and their specificity was previously tested (Oligo Analyzer program ver. 1.0.3).

Primer pair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence (5'–&gt;3')</th>
<th>Template strand</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Stop</th>
<th>Tm</th>
<th>GC%</th>
<th>Self comp.</th>
<th>Self 3' comp.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forward primer</td>
<td>ATGATTGCGCCGTAAAGTGCGA</td>
<td>Plus</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2484</td>
<td>2503</td>
<td>60.11</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverse primer</td>
<td>GTAGGTTCGATGCGCGAGGAG</td>
<td>Minus</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3129</td>
<td>3110</td>
<td>59.97</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product length</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Range: 2400 - 3200

2.5.2. Polymerase Chain Reaction and Sequencing:
The reaction mixture for PCR was prepared by adding 25.5 μl of nuclease free water, 5 μl of DreamTaq™ DNA polymerase buffer, 5μl (100 μM) dNTPs, 5 μl of each primers (20 μM), 5 μl of DreamTaq™ DNA polymerase (Fermentas) and genomic DNA (50 ng) in each tube. The run was for 30 cycles in a Thermo-cycler (Biometra), with initial denaturation at 95°C for 5 min followed by 1 min denaturation at 95°C; 2 min annealing at 66°; 2 min extension at 72°C. The run was then terminated by a final extension at 73°C for 9 min. The amplification products were separated by electrophoresis in 1.5% agarose gel at 100 volts for 1 hr. and stained with ethidium bromide and photographed using Gel documentation system (Bhatnagar et al. 2006).
RESULTS

![Graph showing a linear relationship with equation and R^2 value.]

Fig. (1): Total aflatoxin standard curve.

Table (1): Mean total mould count (log$_{10}$ CFU/g), and total aflatoxins level (µg/kg) of examined food additives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food additives</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Total Mould Count</th>
<th>Total Aflatoxin (average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>Mean ± SE*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black pepper</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>3.23 ± 1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumin</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>3.12 ± 1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coriander</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>3.25 ± 1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turmeric</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>3.21 ± 1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chili powder</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>(90)</td>
<td>3.61 ± 1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginger</td>
<td>7/10</td>
<td>(70)</td>
<td>3.38 ± 1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garlic powder</td>
<td>7/10</td>
<td>(70)</td>
<td>3.20 ± 1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paprika</td>
<td>6/10</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>3.04 ± 1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curry</td>
<td>8/10</td>
<td>(80)</td>
<td>3.44 ± 1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinnamon</td>
<td>5/10</td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>3.36 ± 1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyme</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>(90)</td>
<td>3.47 ± 1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clove</td>
<td>4/10</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>2.47 ± 1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardamom</td>
<td>7/10</td>
<td>(70)</td>
<td>3.54 ± 1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onion powder</td>
<td>7/10</td>
<td>(70)</td>
<td>3.45 ± 1.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SE: Standard Error
Table (2): Incidence of isolated mould genera and species from examined food additive samples (n=10 each).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black pepper</th>
<th>Cumin</th>
<th>Coriander</th>
<th>Turmeric</th>
<th>Chili powder</th>
<th>Ginger</th>
<th>Garlic powder</th>
<th>Paprika</th>
<th>Curry</th>
<th>Cinnamon</th>
<th>Thyme</th>
<th>Clove</th>
<th>Cardamom</th>
<th>Onion powder</th>
<th>Total Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspergillus</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. flavus</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. niger</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. candidus</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. glaucus</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. ochraceus</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penicillium</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cladosporium</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternaria</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mucor</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>20.</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (3): Mean total mould count (log₁₀ CFU/g), and total aflatoxins level (µg/kg) of examined meat products containing food additives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meat Products Varity</th>
<th>Positive No.</th>
<th>Total Molds Count Mean ± SE*</th>
<th>Total Aflatoxins average ±SE**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basterma</td>
<td>6/10 (60)</td>
<td>3.62 ± 1.83</td>
<td>4.58 ± 0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef burger</td>
<td>8/10 (80)</td>
<td>3.95 ± 2.63</td>
<td>4.17 ± 0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankfurter</td>
<td>5/10 (50)</td>
<td>3.53 ± 2.12</td>
<td>3.79 ± 0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot dog</td>
<td>7/10 (70)</td>
<td>3.77 ± 1.58</td>
<td>8.23 ± 1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kofta</td>
<td>8/10 (80)</td>
<td>3.67 ± 1.52</td>
<td>6.35 ± 0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luncheon</td>
<td>4/10 (40)</td>
<td>3.67 ± 1.19</td>
<td>5.44 ± 0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SE: Standard Error
Table (4): Incidence of isolated mould genera in examined meat products containing food additives (n=10 each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Basterma</th>
<th>Beef burger</th>
<th>Frankfurter</th>
<th>Hot dog</th>
<th>Kofta</th>
<th>Luncheon</th>
<th>Total Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspergillus</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. flavus</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. niger</td>
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<td>54.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. candidus</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. glaucus</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
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<td>A. ochraceus</td>
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<td>Penicillium</td>
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<td>21.4</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
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<td>7.7</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mucor</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (5): Screening of Aspergillus flavus isolates for aflatoxin production.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total no. of examined samples</th>
<th>No. of tested isolates</th>
<th>Toxigenic A. flavus isolates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Toxigenic isolates No %

11 | 14.9 %

Fig. (2): The expected DNA fragment length with 646 bp were obtained from 6 food samples.
Agarose gel electrophoresis of the resulting amplification of PCR products of *Aspergillus flavus* specific genome sequence: C is a negative control, M is the DNA ladder sequence, and lanes 1 to 6 are the expected specific products length of 646 bp from the genome of toxigenic isolated *Aspergillus flavus* samples.

**Table (6):** FDA’s Action Levels for aflatoxins present in human food and animal feed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Use</th>
<th>Grain, Grain By-Product, Feed or other Products</th>
<th>Aflatoxin Level [parts per billion (p.p.b.)]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human consumption</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>0.5 p.p.b. (aflatoxin M1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immature animals</td>
<td>Corn, peanut products, and other animal feeds and ingredients, excluding cottonseed meal</td>
<td>20 p.p.b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy animals, animals not listed above, or unknown use</td>
<td>Corn, peanut products, cottonseed, and other animal feeds and ingredients</td>
<td>20 p.p.b.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION**

Since food additives are possible source of contamination of meat products and potential producers of mycotoxins, therefore it is necessary to conduct an adequate and continuous control of food additives on presence of the moulds. Food additives have been reported to be heavily contaminated by a wide array of storage fungi including *Aspergillus, Penicillium, Rhizopus, Eurotium, Cladosporium, Trichoderma, Mucor and Stachybotrys* (Elshafie *et al.*, 2002; Bokhari, 2007; Hashem and Alamri, 2010). In this study, the mycological investigation of the examined food additives showed high contamination in black pepper, cumin, coriander, and turmeric in order of magnitude of 100%. This followed by chili and thyme 90% for each, curry 80%, ginger; garlic powder, cardamom and onion powder 70% for each, paprika 60%, and cinnamon 50% while the lowest contamination was in clove samples 40%, with an average mould contamination level of $2.47 \pm 1.09 - 3.61 \pm 1.67$ (table 1). It was detected that
clove was the least mould-contaminated spices, though clove is well known for its antimicrobial properties with essential oils highly effective against moulds. (Guyenot et al., 2003). Results given in (Table 1) revealed that total aflatoxin residues as deduced from Fig. (1) could be detected from the examined Black pepper, Cumin, coriander, Turmeric, Chili powder, Ginger, Garlic powder, Paprika, Curry, Cinnamon, Thyme, Clove, Cardamom and Onion powder with average value of 21.83±3.39, 30.33±3.88, 12.34±1.09, 27.72±6.62, 40.94±9.28, 8.85±1.26, 7.13±1.71, 28.68±3.99, 29.25±3.92, 29.22±4.46, 19.71±3.44, 7.99±1.20, 3.41±0.73 and 17.65±1.17 µg/kg respectively. These results were found to be higher than those reported by Cho et al., (2008) who investigated 88 spice samples and found aflatoxin contamination in only 13.6% at a concentration below 5 µg/kg and Santos et al. (2010) found aflatoxins in 40% of 35 chili samples, all at concentrations below the maximum allowable limits. The present results are nearly similar to that of Mac Donald and Castle, (1996), who detect aflatoxins (48µg/kg) in chili powder samples, another analysis of spice samples for aflatoxins showed that highest contamination up to 120 µg/kg was found in red chilies while in coriander samples that contamination ranged between 2-75 pg/kg. (Llewellyn et al., 1992), Fufa and Urga (1996) stated that out of 60 samples of ground red pepper, 8 (13.3%) were positive for aflatoxins, the contamination levels ranged from 250-515 ppb. In this study most food additives samples were above the detectable aflatoxin limit (20 µg/kg). This is in contrary with Farid and Nareen (2013), who stated that the quantity of mycotoxins in most of the samples was not detected within the detectable limits. However, in few samples, values of mycotoxins were above the permissible safe limits for human consumption. Mostly, spices are grown in tropical and subtropical regions and harvested in poor sanitary conditions. These improper conditions are convenient for the biosynthesis of aflatoxins. Therefore, growing conditions, harvesting, processing methods, storage conditions and postharvest treatments should be carefully controlled in order to prevent aflatoxins risks due to contaminated spices. In addition, training programs should be presented for producers. The isolated fungi belonged to five genera: Aspergillus, Penicillium, Cladosporium, Alternaria and Mucor. Aspergillus was the most predominant (59.4%) genera in the examined food additive samples followed by Penicillium, Mucor, Alternaria and Cladosporium,(Table2). The trend of fungal predominance which we observed agreed with the reports of Bokhari (2007), Hashem and Alamri (2010), Sumanth et al. (2010), and were less in agreement to this finding by Srivastava and Chandra (1985) who recorded that Aspergillus followed by Fusarium were the most frequent
members of the mycobiota of Coriander, Cumin, Fennel and Fenugreek. Unfortunately, due to the lack of proper post-harvest preservation techniques, large portion of annual yield gets damaged by fungal action according to Abou Donia (2008) and the variation in frequency of mycopopulation of spices cultivated is most probably related to the strain type within one species. Environmental factors also have significant effect and can induce the growth of mycopopulation at lower a_w values (optimal temperature and type of nutritive components in the medium). The incidence of identified Aspergillus species declared that A. niger had the highest incidence rate 45.1, followed by A. flavus 38.7 A. ochraceus 8.5 A. candidus 7.0 and A. glaucus 0.7. These findings are nearly similar to those obtained by Hussien (2008) and El-diasty et al. (2013). Moulds fall into two ecological categories, e.g., field and storage moulds. Field moulds were observed to invade developing or mature seeds while they are on the plant, the major field moulds genera being Alternaria, Fusarium and Cladosporium. On the other hand, storage moulds are those encountered on plants in conditions of moisture commonly found in stored products. These moulds principally belong to species Aspergillus and Penicillium (Abou Donia, 2008) A. flavus and A. niger were the most frequently encountered and widely distributed in spices and herbal drugs (Abdulkadir et al., 2003). From Aspergillus 7 species and one variety (A. ochraceus, A. fumigatus, A. flavus var. columnaris, A. nidulans, A. terreus, A. versicolor, A. sydowii and A. tamarisi) were isolated in moderate or low frequency of occurrence. These species were previously isolated from different kind of spices by several researchers (Abdulkadir et al., 2003). On the overall, moulds could be detected in Basterma, Beef Burger, Frankfurter, Hot Dog, Kofta and Luncheon with 60%, 80%, 50%, 70%, 80% and 40% with mean values of 3.62± 1.83, 3.95± 2.63, 3.53± 2.12, 3.77± 1.58, 3.67 ± 1.52 and 3.67± 1.19 respectively (Table 3). Our surveyed investigation showed lesser degree of contamination than those previously reported (Freire and Offord, 2002, Bokhari 2007 and Salari, R. 2012). Nearly such finding substantiates what has been reported by Lamada and Nassif (2008), Javadi et al., (2011), Eman and Sherifa (2012), El-diasty et al. (2013) and Alaa-Eldin (2015). Such variations may be attributed to unsanitary measures and hygienic differences in which the meat products were prepared and /or using of unsterilized spices (untreated food additives) which usually carry mould spores used in manufacture of these meat products especially Beef Burger as these fresh products are usually manufactured under absence of hygienic conditions in addition to using of inferior quality raw materials. The heat treatment used in luncheon processing which affects the
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fungal spore, results in decrease of the mould contamination in this product, while the lower incidence of moulds in Basterma and Frankfurter samples may be attributed to the lower water activity (a_w) in these products and presence of garlic, garlic essential oils showed strong inhibitory effects against A. niger (Benkebia, 2004). The results presented in (Table 3) revealed that, the total aflatoxin residues could be detected from the examined Basterma, Beef Burger, Frankfurter, Hot Dog, Kofta and Luncheon samples with mean values of 4.58±0.55, 4.17±0.66, 3.79±0.41, 8.23±1.52, 6.35±0.87 and 5.44±0.39 ppb, respectively. These different mean values of aflatoxins residues may be related to the amount of additives used in the processing, level of additives contamination with aflatoxin and the amount of aflatoxin residues which may be present in animal muscles. Aflatoxins are the most documented mycotoxins. Several studies indicated that dry cured meats can be contaminated with toxigenic A. flavus strains, especially when products are processed in countries with hot climate (FAO 2004). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the processing conditions during ageing of meat products may allow aflatoxin synthesis. Therefore; it is of public health importance to evaluate the possible production of aflatoxin during meat processing and ageing. Higher values were found by Refai et al., (2003) and El-diasty (2013). Our results are higher than those reported by Alaa-Eldin (2015), however the level of aflatoxin residues detected in the examined samples was lower than the permissible limit (20ppb) recommended by FAO (2004) but this low amount of toxins may result in the carcinogenic, mutagenic and immuno - suppressive effect on human health in the long term exposure. Few studies were carried out but they all demonstrated that, the frequency of contamination of processed meat with aflatoxin is low and that, the level of toxin within meat is usually below 10 ng /kg. However, it is not clear whether aflatoxin was produced during meat processing or was present before at the residual level in muscles. Indeed, it seems that there is no relationship between the presence of toxigenic strains of A. flavus and aflatoxin contamination of meat samples. The frequent contamination of spices and additives used in such meat processing may also represent a source of mycotoxins. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the use of food additives contaminated with toxigenic mould strains as ingredient in meat products making may lead to a secondary contamination of the final product with aflatoxins (Francis et al., 2009). The results of mould identification (Table 4) declared that the most predominant mould genera in meat products samples were; Aspergillus and Penicillium species 48.4% and 24.2% respectively, followed by Mucor 23.1%, Cladosporium 3.3% and Alternaria 1.1%.
Nearly similar results were obtained by Mizakova et al., (2002). The presence of such moulds may cause spoilage of meat products by breaking down their components and liberating different acids and gas with subsequent change of their odor and flavor. Moreover, mould growth on meat products causes economic losses from discoloration, poor appearance and off flavors. In addition, some moulds are capable of producing toxic metabolites known as mycotoxins such as aflatoxins which are known carcinogens (Pitt and Hoching, 2009). From the public health point of view, Aspergillus species were incriminated in pulmonary aspergillosis, pulmonary allergy, skin infections, sinusitis and otitis for meat handlers. It has been stated that some species of Penicillium were found to be associated with pulmonary and urinary tract infections as well as yellow "rice disease" causing several deaths in man. Mucor and Rhizopus species may cause lesions in lungs, gastrointestinal infection, skin infections, intraocular infections, external otomycosis, and cellulitis and deep wound infections (Banwart, 1980). Cladosporium species may induce chromomycosis and brain abscesses (Edris, 1986). The isolated fungi are extremely considered as a major factor in the spoilage of food, leading to great economic losses and constitute a public health hazards by production of wide variety of mycotoxins causing, food poisoning and have carcinogenic effects in human (Foster et al., 1983). These findings indicate that processing may increase the contamination rate of meat especially when additives of low quality as flavorings, especially, spices were used or manufactured under lack of proper handling and sanitary practices during processing and storage (Refai et al., 1990 and Yassein et al., 1991). Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 2000) established regulatory working guidelines on the acceptable levels of aflatoxins in human foods set at 20 ppb for total aflatoxins. Large number of mould species including mycotoxigenic fungi contaminated several sources of foods rendering them unpalatable and unsafe for human consumption, (Munimbazi and Bullerman 1996), the incidence of identified Aspergillus species declared that A. niger had the highest incidence rate 21 (47.7%) followed by A. flavus with incidence rate 19 (43.2), A. ochraceus 3 (6.8), A. glaucus 1 (2.3) and A. candidus 0 (0). These findings are nearly similar to those obtained by Hussien (2008) and El-diaasty et al. (2013). When the capacity of each toxigenic strain was tested for aflatoxin production on neutral red desiccated coconut agar NRDCA, we found that only 11 (14.9%) out of 74 Aspergillus section Flavi isolates had the ability to produce aflatoxins (Table 5). This was in lower extent compared with some authors as Elshafie et al., (2002) who found 45% of their 20 A. flavus isolates to be aflatoxigenic, Ostry, (2001), who reported
that 50 out of 78 species of moulds reported to be toxicogenic have already been isolated from meat and various meat products, and in contrary with Rajab (2011), who showed that all the fungi cultures were negative for mycotoxin production on DRBC media. Black pepper alongside other spices has been reported to inhibit aflatoxin biosynthesis but not the growth of the toxigenic fungi (Madhyastha and Bhat, 1984; Bokhari, 2007). It is also important to note that spices may support fungal growth (e.g. Aspergillus flavus) but inhibit the production of aflatoxins than in cereals (MacDonald and Castle, 1996). Therefore, not all A. flavus strains are aflatoxigenic (Elshafie et al., 2002). Although toxins present as a natural contaminant of spices are of minor concentrations, the health risk is increased because some of spices such as Anise and Cumin are used as carminative, as expectorant, treatment colic and flatulence for children. Moulds are capable of producing mycotoxins under suitable conditions. According to (Ostry, 2001), the production of mycotoxins in meat and meat products can be fostered by the presence of oxygen, temperatures between 4 and 40°C, pH values between 2.5 and 8.0, a minimum Aw of 0.80, and a maximum salt concentration of 14%. The molecular characterization of Aspergillus Flavus strains Fig. (2) was carried out by isolation of genomic DNA from previously inoculated Aspergillus mould that was isolated from contaminated samples. The PCR was performed on these genomic DNA using specific primers and the results agreed with the obtained data by ELISA detection. As aflatoxins pose more serious risks for public health, certain limits of total aflatoxins in food and feed were determined according to FDA (2000) as shown in (Table 6).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study warrants the global public health hazards of consumption of mould-contaminated meat products. This requires a strict control against possible meat products contaminations with mould and total aflatoxins. It is also extremely important to maintain a safety low mode level of aflatoxin B1 in the feeds of meat producing and dairy animals. The internationally-compatible continuous training and surveillance programs uprising among correspondent personnel are at most important to cope against possible contamination. More importantly, storage conditions of feeds must be widely available and be subjected to regular and serious investigation.

It is necessary, however, to apply an ideal recommended limit of possible aflatoxins contamination in meat products. Application of Good Agricultural Practices and Good Veterinary Practices by agriculture and also the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
(HACCP) system as a draft code of practice for pre-harvest and postharvest control of dairy cow’s feed and in spices and meat products processing is effective.

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الكشف عن الفطريات و سموم الفيتوكلوكسين الكلية في أضفاضات الأغذية و بعض منتجات اللحوم

بالطرق البيولوجية والبيولوجية الجزيئية

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الملخص العربي

تعتبر التوابل والملحات الطبيعية مكون أساسي في الغذاء كما تعتبر المناطق الحارة وسط مناسب للنمو الفطري و على
صدمة التلوث بسموم الفيتوكلوكسين الكلية مما يؤثر على الصحة العامة للإنسان بعدها من هذه الآلية و إذا وجب
التنبؤ للصحة العامة و أخذ بسباب تقليل مثل هذا التلوث وقد أجريت هذه الدراسة على 14 نوع من أضفاضات اللحوم
(التوابل) متمثلة في الحلقات الادسون والكمون والكركم و الكزبرة و الليمون و الليمون الحام و الزنجبيل و بودرة الثوم و البابريكا و
الكاهو و القرفة و الزعتر و الفلفل الأسود و الهيل و بودرة البصل و كذا 6 أنواع من منتجات اللحوم المختلفة مثل من
البسطرما و البصل و الفلفل الأسود و الفلفل الأسود و النباتات التي تحتوي على مثل هذه الأضفاضات من الأسواق
المختلفة في مدينتي القاهرة و الجيزة و قد تم تطور جمع العينات و تصنيف الفطريات و تقييم كمية سموم
الفيتوكلوكسين الكلية باستخدام جهاز الاسترلاز التنافسي المباشر لبعض تحليلات الشريك المجهز لموجات اختبار تكوينها
مختصر جسمه على الصحة العامة و قد تم اختبار سمية عينات الأسيبريلس بالطرق الكيميائية والبيولوجية الجزيئية و
قد استمرت نتائج الفحص أن جميع العينات كانت ملبوسة بالفطريات و إن Registry (100%) كان في عينات الفلفل
الأسود والكمون والكركم و الزعتر أما بالنسبة لعينات اللحوم و هوت دوج كانت نسبة التلوث 80 %، 70 % على
التوالي بينما كانت أقل نسبة تلوث ( 40 %) في كل من الفلفل و البصل. و كان متوسط عدد الفطري من
2.47 ± 2.09 إلى 3.61 ± 1.67 إلى 2.12 ± 3.95 إلى 2.63 ± 3.53 ± في أضفاضات اللحوم بينما كان من
نتجات اللحم. و لذل النتائج أن أكثر العينات تواجد في الأسيبريلس و البسترمايوم المعزول من العينات مح دراسة كما
أثبت النتائج أن حوالي 15% من عينات الأسيبريلس كانت مفيدة للسموم و قد انتهت مع دراسات بالطرق البيولوجية
الجزيئية. و قد اتضح ان أعلى تقييم كمية الفيتوكلوكسين الكلية 40.94 ± 9.28 ميكروجرام لكل كيلو جرام كما كانت
عينات الفلفل الحام و كذا 8.23 ± 1.52 ميكروجرام لكل كيلو جرام في عينات الهوت دوج. وقد مناقشة أهمية تواجد
الفطريات و كذلك سموم الفيتوكلوكسين من الناحية الصحية لمستهلك و كذلك التوجه بإعداد الممارسات الصحية السلامة
للحفاظ على صحة المستهلك بتقدم منتجات لحوم مأمونة خالية من مسببات الإمارض.