The first report about *Fusarium falciforme* that causes root rot in cassava cv Rosinha, in Alagoas state, Brazil

O primeiro relato de *Fusarium falciforme* que causa podridão radicular em mandioca cv Rosinha, Alagoas, Brasil

El primer reporte de *Fusarium falciforme* causando pudrición de raíz en yuca cv Rosinha, Alagoas, Brasil

Received: 08/21/2022 | Reviewed: 09/03/2022 | Accept: 09/04/2022 | Published: 09/12/2022

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Abstract  
The aim of this study was identifying the root rot causal agents in cassava, cv Rosinha, in Alagoas state, Brazil. Pathogen species were studied, which are responsible for root rot in cassava, through isolation, morphological characterization and pathogenicity confirmation. *Fusarium* sp was emphasized among other isolated genera, which is pathogenic to cassava roots and plants. The phylogenetic study was based on the ITS region of the constructed DNA, using the “maximum Likelihood Tree” method, with a base of 1000 “bootstrap” replicas, what showed 100% of genetic similarity to *Fusarium falciforme*.

Keywords: *Manihot* sp.; Biological control; Molecular biology; Fungus.

Resumo  
O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar os agentes causais da podridão radicular na mandioca, cv Rosinha, no estado de Alagoas, Brasil. Foram estudadas espécies de patógenos responsáveis pela podridão radicular na mandioca, através do isolamento, caracterização morfológica e confirmação de patogenicidade. *Fusarium* sp., foi destacado entre outros gêneros isolados, patogênico às raízes e plantas da mandioca. O estudo filogenético foi baseado na região ITS do DNA construído, usando o método da ‘Árvore de máxima verossimilhança’, com uma base de 1000 réplicas de ‘bootstrap’, o que mostrou 100% de semelhança genética com *Fusarium falciforme*.

Palavras-chave: *Manihot* sp.; Controle biológico; Biologia molecular; Fungo.

Resumen  
El objetivo de este estudio fue identificar los agentes causales de la pudrición de la raíz en la yuca, cv Rosinha, en el estado de Alagoas, Brasil. Se estudiaron las especies de patógenos responsables de la podredumbre de la raíz de la
géneros aislados, se destacó *Fusarium* sp., patógeno de las raíces y plantas de yuca. El estudio filogenético se basó en la región ITS de la construcción de ADN, utilizando el método de "Árbol de Máxima Verosimilitud", con una base de 1000 réplicas bootstrap, que mostró un 100% de similitud genética con *Fusarium falciforme*.

**Palabras clave:** Manihot sp.; Control biológico; Biología molecular; Hongo.

1. **Introduction**

Root rot (Manihot esculenta Crantz) is the disease that most limits cassava production (Azevedo et al., 2021) in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil, notably in Alagoas state, where losses reach 70% approximately. The cassava is mainly used in human and animal feeding, as material for the biofuel, biodegradable plastic, meat processing, pasta production, textile and modified starch industries (Oliveira et al., 2011; Silva, et al., 2020). The losses caused by the root rot are limiting factors in the North and Northeast in the country (Machado et al., 2014; Nascimento Junior, 2015; Paiva et al., 2022). However, records about the main plant pathogens that cause root rot are incipient, even though their importance as a tool to make decisions about the best management strategy to be implemented (Baayen et al., 2000; Nalim et al., 2011; O’Donnell et al., 2008; Oliveira et al., 2011). The aim of this study is identifying the root rot causal agents in cassava, cv Rosinha, in Alagoas state, Brazil.

2. **Methodology**

Soil and roots were collected in the cities Arapiraca, Campo Alegre, Penedo, São Miguel dos Campos and São Sebastião in Alagoas state, Brazil in 2015, where cassava, cv Rosinha, was produced and presented root rot problems. In order to isolate the microorganisms, the serial dilution technique was used and in accordance to Tuite, (1969) methodology, 1.0 mL of the suspension was transferred to the petri dishes with BDA culture medium. Mycelial discs of isolated *Fusarium* sp. were used for DNA extraction, using CTAB protocol according to Doyle and Doyle, (1987). PCR reactions were prepared subsequently, and after that, the product was sent to purification and sequencing with the same primers that were used in the amplification to Macrogen Inc. (Seoul, South Korea). Multiple alignments of nucleotide sequence were prepared (Ronquist et al., 2012), using MUSCLE algorithm (Edgar, 2004) and manually adjusted in MEGA6 package (Tamura et al., 2013). Os isolados obtidos foram amplificados com o gene que codifica para a região ITS- rDNA (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Description of the initiator used to identify fungal genera.

| Gene | Primer | Sequence (5’-3’) | Reference |
|------|--------|------------------|-----------|
| ITS  | ITS1   | TCCGTAGGTGAACCTGCGG | White et al., 1990 |
| ITS  | ITS4   | TCCTCCGCTTATTGATATGC | Source: Authors (2022). |

3. **Results and Discussion**

The structures that were produced by the pathogen were observed in the BDA medium, showing macroconidia with 3-7 septa and the size varying from 27-60 µm x 3-5 µm and microconidia with and without septa, measuring 8-16 µm x 2-4 µm, from cylindrical to oval and chlamydospore with an average diameter of 4.7-9.4 µm (Figure 1).
Figure 1. Appearance of the dry rot lesion of the cassava root (A1); Aspect of the phytopathogen colony (A2); Conidiophore and microconidium (A3); Conidiophore and macroconidium (A4); Macroconidium (A5); Macroconidium, terminal chlamydospores and interspersed with hyphae (A6; A8; A9; A10); Chlamydospores in chain (A7) Double chlamydospores (A9).

Obtained after 21 days of growth in BDA in the dark at room temperature (28 ± 2 °C). The images were captured by a digital camera (Olympus IX2-SLP) coupled to an optical microscope with a magnification of 100 to 200x, projected on a computer monitor, using the Cellsenses Standard software (SAMSUNG SDC-415®). 50 measurements were made of each type of structure produced. Source: Authors (2022).

Chehri et al., (2011); O’Donnell and Gray, (1995) and Silva, (2016), state that using only the morphological characters, host pathogenicity and formae speciales, may not conclusively reflect the diversity of species and populations in a complex. In this way, the genetic variability and the true phylogenetic relationships, biological species, host range and geographic distribution of these pathogens can be omitted or not defined, leading to misidentification. Thus, the sequencing of genomic regions and molecular studies are strong allies in the identification of phytopathogens.

PCR amplification product with ITS1 and ITS4 primers resulted in a fragment of approximately 550 pairs of bases (pb). The phylogenetic analysis based on the genic sequences of the ITS (Chehri et al., 2011; Chhetri et al., 2015; Hyde et al., 2014; O’Donnell et al., 2013) region of the DNA of the isolated material, using the “maximum Likelihood Tree” method with base on 1000 “bootstrap” replicas, showed 100% reliability that the isolated material belongs to the genus Fusarium and 99% similar to the Fusarium falciforme sequence that was deposited at GenBank (CBS128812). The confirmation is possible from the studied genomic region and the formed phylogenetic tree (Figure 2).
Figure 2. Phylogenetic tree based on the ITS region of *Fusarium* sp. DNA, built using the “maximum Likelihood Tree” method. *Fusarium redolens 6VVBY3* isolate was used as an “outgroup”. The scale bar represents a change of 0.04 and bootstrap support values of 1000 repetitions are shown in the branches.

Thus, it is possible to affirm that from the studied genomic region and the formed phylogenetic tree, the isolated FUS is *F. falciforme* and not *F. solani* as the causal agent of cassava root rot (Alves et al., 2020; Paiva et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2020a, 2020b; Silva et al., 2020). So, this is the first report about this specie as the causer of root rot in cassava.

4. Conclusion

Based on the genomic region (ITS) studied, we can conclude that *Fusarium falciforme* is another species of phytopathogen that causes root rot in cassava.

The morphophysiological characteristics of a phytopathogen together with the molecular tools make the identification more assertive and the decision making in the control of the disease faster.

Other work needs to be carried out to assess the epidemiology and severity of the disease in our state.

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