Cadmium Accumulation Characteristics of *Lycopersicon esculentum* Seedlings

Hongyan Li\(^1,a\), Jianhua Li\(^2,b\), Huashan Lian\(^3,c\), Wei Jiang\(^4,d\) and Lijin Lin\(^1,e\)*

\(^1\)Institute of Pomology and Olericulture, Sichuan Agricultural University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China
\(^2\)Sichuan Ya’an Municipal Product Quality Supervision & Inspection Institute, Ya'an, Sichuan, China
\(^3\)Subcollege of Garden and Horticulture, Chengdu Agricultural College, Chengdu, Sichuan, China
\(^4\)College of Chemistry and Life Science, Chengdu Normal University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

\(^a\)1432350417@qq.com, \(^b\)710753781@qq.com, \(^c\)499939450@qq.com, \(^d\)1399945180@qq.com, \(^e\)lj800924@163.com

*Corresponding author. Hongyan Li, Jianhua Li and Huashan Lian contributed equally to this work.

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**Abstract:** The cadmium (Cd) accumulation characteristics of *Lycopersicon esculentum* seedlings were studied by the pot experiment, and different soil Cd concentrations (0, 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 mg/kg) were used. With the increase of soil Cd concentration, the biomass and photosynthetic pigment content of *L. esculentum* seedlings had the decreasing trend. The SOD, POD and CAT activities of *L. esculentum* seedlings had the increase trend when the soil Cd concentration was not more than 5 mg/kg, and decreased when the soil Cd concentration was higher than 5 mg/kg. The soluble protein contents of *L. esculentum* seedlings had the decreasing trend with the increase of soil Cd concentrations. The Cd contents in different organs *L. esculentum* seedlings were ranked as root > leaf > shoot > stem. With the increase of Cd concentrations in soil, the Cd contents in roots, stems, leaves and shoots of *L. esculentum* seedlings increased. Therefore, the soil Cd inhibited the growth of *L. esculentum* seedlings.

**Introduction**

*Lycopersicon esculentum* is one of the most important vegetable crops in the world [1]. However, the heavy metal polluted vegetable gardens have affected the production of *L. esculentum*, especially cadmium (Cd) [2-3]. The Cd is the most bio-toxic heavy metal elements, and has strong chemical activity, mobility, long-lasting toxicity in the environment [4]. The Cd inhibits the growth of plants, especially in high Cd concentration, the growth of plants was significantly inhibited, and the structure of tissues was obviously deformed [5-6]. However, there are few reports on Cd accumulation characteristics of *L. esculentum*. In this study, different concentrations of Cd (0, 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 mg/kg) were added into soil, and planted the seedlings of *L. esculentum*. The Cd accumulation characteristics of *L. esculentum* seedlings were studied to provide the reference for reducing Cd accumulation in *L. esculentum*.

**Materials and Methods**

**Materials.** The Inceptisol soil samples (purple soil in the Genetic Soil Classification of China) were collected from the Chengdu campus farm of Sichuan Agricultural University (30° 42'N, 103° 51'E) in April 2017. The basic properties of the soil were pH 6.94, organic matter 17.54 g/kg, total nitrogen 3.63 g/kg, total phosphorus 0.38 g/kg, total potassium 17.54 g/kg, alkali soluble nitrogen 195.00 mg/kg, available phosphorus 6.25 mg/kg and available potassium 191.13 mg/kg. The total Cd content was 0.103 mg/kg, and the bioavailable Cd content was 0.022 mg/kg [7]. The seeds of *L. esculentum* buy from the market, and were sown in nutrient soil in April 2017.

**Experimental Design.** The soil samples were air dried and sieved to 5 mm in April 2017, then 3.0 kg of the air-dried soil was weighed into polyethylene pots (15 cm tall, 18 cm diameter), and Cd was added to the soils as CdCl\(_2\)-2.5H\(_2\)O at 0, 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 mg/kg [8]. The soil moisture content was
maintained at 80% of field capacity for 4 weeks, and then the soil in each pot was mixed. Three uniform seedlings with four euphyllas were transplanted into each pot in May 2017. Each treatment was repeated three times making a total of 18 pots, and put in a completely randomized design with 10 cm spacing between pots. The soil moisture content was maintained at 80% of field capacity until the plants were harvested.

Two months after planting (July 2017), the upper mature leaves of plants were collected to determine the photosynthetic pigment (chlorophyll $a$, chlorophyll $b$, total chlorophyll and carotenoid) contents [9]. The upper young leaves (2 cm in length) were collected to determine the superoxide dismutase (SOD) activity, peroxidase (POD) activity, catalase (CAT) activity and soluble protein content [9]. Then, the whole plants were then gently removed, the roots, stems and leaves were washed with tap water followed by deionized water, and dried at 80°C to constant weight. The biomass was then measured of roots, stems and leaves. The dried tissue samples were finely ground and sieved through a 0.149 mm mesh nylon sieve for chemical analysis. Samples (0.5 g) were digested in $\text{HNO}_3/\text{HClO}_4$ (4:1, v/v), and then the volume was brought to 50 mL with deionized water [10]. The Cd concentrations in roots, tubers and leaves were determined using an iCAP 6300 ICP-MS spectrometer (Thermo Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA). The translocation factor (TF) is defined as Cd content in shoots/Cd content in roots [11].

**Statistical Analyses.** Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 13.0 statistical software (IBM, Chicago, IL, USA). Data were analyzed by one-way analysis of variance with least significant difference (LSD) at the $p = 0.05$ confidence level.

**Results and Discussion**

**Biomass of $L. esculentum$ Seedlings.** With the increase of Cd concentrations in soil, the root, stem leaf and shoot biomasses of $L. esculentum$ seedlings had a decreasing trend (Table 1). So, different concentrations of Cd inhibited the growth of $L. esculentum$ seedlings. When the soil Cd concentrations were 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 mg/kg, the root biomass of $L. esculentum$ seedlings were decreased by 4.76% ($p > 0.05$), 7.14% ($p > 0.05$), 30.95% ($p < 0.05$), 33.33% ($p < 0.05$) and 35.71% ($p < 0.05$), respectively, compared with the control, and the shoot biomass were decreased by 5.71% ($p < 0.05$), 24.76% ($p < 0.05$), 29.52% ($p < 0.05$), 34.29% ($p < 0.05$) and 41.43% ($p < 0.05$), respectively. The root/shoot ratio of $L. esculentum$ seedlings was ranked as 5 mg/kg > 20 mg/kg > 15 mg/kg > 0 mg/kg = 1mg/kg > 10 mg/kg (Table 1).

| Treatments | Roots (g/plant) | Stems (g/plant) | Leaves (g/plant) | Shoots (g/plant) | Root/shoot ratio |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 0          | 0.42±0.02a      | 0.92±0.05a      | 1.18±0.04a       | 2.10±0.06a       | 0.201           |
| 1          | 0.40±0.02a      | 0.89±0.02a      | 1.09±0.05b       | 1.98±0.07b       | 0.201           |
| 5          | 0.39±0.02a      | 0.68±0.02b      | 0.91±0.03c       | 1.58±0.04c       | 0.246           |
| 10         | 0.29±0.01b      | 0.61±0.01c      | 0.87±0.03cd      | 1.48±0.04cd      | 0.197           |
| 15         | 0.28±0.02b      | 0.57±0.02cd     | 0.81±0.02d       | 1.38±0.05d       | 0.202           |
| 20         | 0.27±0.01b      | 0.54±0.02d      | 0.69±0.04e       | 1.23±0.02e       | 0.217           |

Values are means ± standard errors. Means with the same letter within each column are not significantly different at $p < 0.05$.

**Photosynthetic Pigment Content in $L. esculentum$ Seedlings.** The chlorophyll $a$, chlorophyll $b$, total chlorophyll and carotenoid contents of $L. esculentum$ seedlings decreased with the increase of Cd concentration in soil (Table 2). When the soil Cd concentrations were 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 mg/kg, the total chlorophyll contents of $L. esculentum$ seedlings were decreased by 3.33% ($p > 0.05$), 9.52% ($p < 0.05$), 11.43% ($p < 0.05$), 20.95% ($p < 0.05$) and 27.62% ($p < 0.05$) respectively, compared with the control, and the carotenoid contents decreased by 1.96% ($p > 0.05$), 5.88% ($p > 0.05$), 7.84% ($p > 0.05$), 17.65% ($p < 0.05$) and 23.53% ($p < 0.05$), respectively. The chlorophyll $a/b$ of $L. esculentum$...
seedlings had no obvious changes in different concentrations of soil Cd.

Table 2 Photosynthetic pigment content in *L. esculentum* seedlings

| Treatments | Chlorophyll *a* (mg/g) | Chlorophyll *b* (mg/g) | Total chlorophyll (mg/g) | Chlorophyll *a/b* | Carotenoid (mg/g) |
|------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 0          | 1.47±0.04a             | 0.63±0.01a             | 2.10±0.06a              | 2.34             | 0.51±0.03a       |
| 1          | 1.42±0.03a             | 0.61±0.02ab            | 2.03±0.05a              | 2.34             | 0.50±0.03a       |
| 5          | 1.32±0.02b             | 0.58±0.001bc           | 1.90±0.02b              | 2.30             | 0.48±0.01a       |
| 10         | 1.30±0.04b             | 0.56±0.01c             | 1.86±0.06b              | 2.34             | 0.47±0.01a       |
| 15         | 1.16±0.02c             | 0.50±0.01d             | 1.66±0.01c              | 2.32             | 0.42±0.01b       |
| 20         | 1.06±0.03d             | 0.46±0.02e             | 1.52±0.01e              | 2.33             | 0.39±0.01b       |

Values are means ± standard errors. Means with the same letter within each column are not significantly different at *p* < 0.05.

Antioxidant Enzyme Activity of *L. esculentum* Seedlings. When the soil Cd concentrations were 1, 5 and 10 mg/kg, the SOD activity of *L. esculentum* seedlings improved by 21.52% (*p* < 0.05), 71.85% (*p* < 0.05) and 4.38% (*p* > 0.05), respectively, compared with the control (Table 3). However, 10 and 20 mg/kg soil Cd reduced the SOD activity of *L. esculentum* seedlings by 16.91% (*p* < 0.05) and 24.15% (*p* < 0.05), respectively, compared with the control. When the soil Cd concentrations were 1 and 5 mg/kg, the POD activity of *L. esculentum* seedlings were had no significant differences compared with the control, and 10, 15 and 20 mg/kg soil Cd reduced the POD activity by 14.65% (*p* < 0.05), 32.96% (*p* < 0.05) and 38.20% (*p* < 0.05), respectively, compared with the control. The CAT activities of *L. esculentum* seedlings were improved by 1 and 5 mg/kg soil Cd, and reduced by 10, 15 and 20 mg/kg soil Cd. With the increase of soil Cd concentrations, the soluble protein contents had the decreasing trend (Table 3).

Table 3 Antioxidant enzyme activity of *L. esculentum* seedlings

| Treatments | SOD activity (U/g) | POD activity (U/g/min) | CAT activity (mg/g/min) | Soluble protein content (mg/g) |
|------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 0          | 102.02±2.30c       | 1082.98±29.62a         | 5.33±0.12c              | 11.37±0.07a                    |
| 1          | 123.97±9.33b       | 1118.29±49.65a         | 5.77±0.11b              | 10.45±0.18b                    |
| 5          | 175.32±6.77a       | 1075.04±29.18a         | 6.31±0.13a              | 9.82±0.02c                     |
| 10         | 106.49±1.70c       | 924.36±10.79b          | 3.33±0.08d              | 7.74±0.09d                     |
| 15         | 84.77±5.59d        | 726.07±23.08c          | 3.30±0.06d              | 6.57±0.07e                     |
| 20         | 77.38±3.70d        | 669.23±16.05d          | 3.10±0.05d              | 4.11±0.10f                     |

Values are means ± standard errors. Means with the same letter within each column are not significantly different at *p* < 0.05.

Cd Content in *L. esculentum* Seedlings. The Cd contents in different organs *L. esculentum* seedlings were ranked as root > leaf > shoot > stem (Table 4). With the increase of Cd concentrations in soil, the Cd contents in roots, stems, leaves and shoots of *L. esculentum* seedlings increased. When the soil Cd concentrations were 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 mg/kg, the Cd contents in roots of *L. esculentum* seedlings were 3.42, 17.09, 32.34, 41.24 and 49.45 times respectively than the control, and the Cd contents in shoots were 4.95, 9.87, 14.67, 19.79 and 22.54 times respectively than the control. The order of TF was 1 mg/kg > 0 mg/kg > 5 mg/kg > 10 mg/kg > 20 mg/kg (Table 4).

Conclusions

With the increase of soil Cd concentration, the biomass and photosynthetic pigment content of *L. esculentum* seedlings had the decreasing trend. The SOD, POD and CAT activities of *L. esculentum* seedlings had the increase trend when the soil Cd concentration was not more than 5 mg/kg, and decreased when the soil Cd concentration was higher than 5 mg/kg. The soluble protein contents of *L.
esculentum seedlings had the decreasing trend with the increase of soil Cd concentrations. The Cd contents in different organs L. esculentum seedlings were ranked as root > leaf > shoot > stem. With the increase of Cd concentrations in soil, the Cd contents in roots, stems, leaves and shoots of L. esculentum seedlings increased. Therefore, the soil Cd inhibited the growth of L. esculentum seedlings.

Table 4 Cd content in L. esculentum seedlings

| Treatments | Roots (mg/kg) | Stems (mg/kg) | Leaves (mg/kg) | Shoots (mg/kg) | TF  |
|------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-----|
| 0          | 2.40±0.10f    | 0.80±0.07f    | 3.05±0.14f     | 2.07±0.12f   | 0.863 |
| 1          | 8.21±0.92e    | 4.19±0.24e    | 15.19±1.17e    | 10.24±0.82e  | 1.247 |
| 5          | 41.02±3.68d   | 7.93±0.52d    | 29.69±2.36d    | 20.43±1.58d  | 0.498 |
| 10         | 77.61±2.76c   | 11.59±0.54c   | 43.46±3.03c    | 30.36±2.06c  | 0.391 |
| 15         | 98.97±5.15b   | 13.85±0.75b   | 59.94±4.10b    | 40.97±2.56b  | 0.414 |
| 20         | 118.69±9.04a  | 14.87±0.91a   | 71.66±4.34a    | 46.65±3.99a  | 0.393 |

Values are means ± standard errors. Means with the same letter within each column are not significantly different at $p < 0.05$.

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