Prevalence and Characterization of Extended-Spectrum β-Lactamase- and Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacterales from Tunisian Seafood

Mehdi Sola 1, Yosra Mani 1, Estelle Saras 2, Antoine Drapeau 2, Raoudha Grami 1, Mahjoub Aouni 3, Jean-Yves Madec 2, Marisa Haenni 2,* and Wejdene Mansour 1

Abstract: Aquaculture is a rapidly expanding sector in which it is important to monitor the occurrence of multi-drug resistant (MDR) bacteria. The presence of extended-spectrum β-lactamase (ESBL-) or carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales is a commonly used indicator of the resistance burden in a given sector. In this study, 641 pieces of farmed fish (sea bream and sea bass), as well as 1075 Mediterranean clams, were analyzed. All ESBL- and carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales collected were whole-genome sequenced. The proportion of ESBL-producing Enterobacterales was 1.4% in fish and 1.6% in clams, carried by Escherichia coli in contexts where surveillance data are rare. The presence of extended-spectrum beta-lactamases (ESBLs), and to a lesser extent carbapenemases, has recurrently been reported in food-producing animals and food products [1,2]. As an example, the poultry sector has been under particular scrutiny due to elevated proportions of ESBL-producing Enterobacterales both in chicken and chicken meat [3–5]. On the contrary, the prevalence of MDR Enterobacterales in seafood products has been much less described, although studies in this field show the interest of an increased surveillance [2,6–9].

1. Introduction

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has emerged as one of the leading public health threats of the 21st century. In order to define efficient levers of action to lower this burden, it is of utmost importance to assess all sources of multi-drug resistant (MDR) bacteria, particularly in contexts where surveillance data are rare. The presence of E. coli producing extended-spectrum beta-lactamases (ESBLs), and to a lesser extent carbapenemases, has recurrently been reported in food-producing animals and food products [1,2]. As an example, the poultry sector has been under particular scrutiny due to elevated proportions of ESBL-producing Enterobacterales both in chicken and chicken meat [3–5]. On the contrary, the presence of MDR Enterobacterales in seafood products has been much less described, although studies in this field show the interest of an increased surveillance [2,6–9].
Aquaculture is a rapidly growing field of food production since the demand for fish is increasing worldwide, including in Tunisia where the sectors of fisheries and aquaculture play an important socio-economic role and contribute to about 9% of the value of agriculture [10]. Tunisia occupies a central place in the Mediterranean area and has more than 1300 km of coastline. Both marine and inland species are currently being farmed and the main aquaculture production zone is in the governorate of Sousse. Most of the shellfish production (mussels and oysters) comes from northern Tunisia (governorate of Bizerte) while Mediterranean clams are mostly cultured in the south-east governorate of Gabes. Tunisia’s aquaculture products are sold on the local and international markets, i.e., in Europe and America [10]. Consequently, MDR bacteria no longer have borders and, in addition to the local impact, can be disseminated abroad. Such a dissemination has been demonstrated for ESBL-producing *E. coli* that contaminated Brazilian chicken meat and was imported to Swedish, English, and Japanese markets [11–13].

In this context, the objectives of this study were to estimate the proportion of ESBL- and carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales in seafood in Tunisia and to molecularly characterize the collected isolates.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Seafood Sampling and Isolation of Antimicrobial Resistant Bacteria

Two types of seafood products were sampled in unrelated markets in four different regions in Tunisia.

**Fish sampling.** A total of 641 pieces of farmed fish were purchased in three different markets (R1-R3) in central Tunisia (Sousse, Mahdia, and Monastir) between March 2014 and June 2015. R1 and R3 are open sea farms, while R2 is a farm in closed tanks. The sampling was composed of sea bream (*Sparus aurata*, 485 pieces) and sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*, 156 pieces). Once purchased, all samples were placed on ice and immediately transported to the laboratory. The intestine of each fish was placed in tubes containing 10 mL of peptone salt broth, homogenized, and incubated for 24 to 48 h at 37 °C.

**Clam sampling.** Between March and April 2016, 1075 Mediterranean clams (*Ruditapes decussatus*) were purchased in markets in Gabès, in the southeast of Tunisia. Clam samples were aseptically transported at 4 °C to the laboratory and immediately processed. After removal of shell debris and algae, bivalves were dried, disinfected (70% ethanol), opened using a sterilized scalpel, and incubated in tubes containing peptone salt broth for 24 h at 37 °C. Each tube contained a pool of five pieces (215 pools in total).

After incubation, overnight cultures were inoculated on selective MacConkey agar plates supplemented with either imipenem or cefotaxime (final concentration of 2 mg/L), and one colony per morphology and per plate was picked up. Identification was performed using API20E test strips (bioMérieux, Marcy-l’Étoile, France) and confirmed by MALDI-TOF MS.

2.2. Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing and ESBL Screening

Antimicrobial susceptibility was determined by the disk diffusion method on Mueller-Hinton agar plates. Sixteen β-lactam and 14 non-β-lactam antibiotics (Table S1) were tested (Mast Diagnostics, Amiens, France) and the results were interpreted according to the guidelines of the Antibiogram Committee of the French Society for Microbiology (CA-SFM) [14]. *E. coli* ATCC 25922 was used as a quality control strain. ESBL-producing Enterobacterales were detected using the Double Disc Synergy Test (DDST) [15]. Carbapenem resistance was detected using an ertapenem 10 µg disk and was respectively confirmed using the ROSCO KPC/MBL and OXA-48 Confirm Kit (ROSCO Diagnostica, Taastrup, Denmark).

2.3. Phylogeny and Clonality

The major *E. coli* phylogenetic groups (A, B1, B2, or D) were identified according to Doumith et al. [16]. PFGE was performed using the restriction enzyme XbaI. Electrophoresis was conducted in a CHEF Mapper XP system using 6 V/cm at 14 °C for 24 h, with pulse
times ramping from 10 to 60 s using an angle of 120 °C. PFGE results were interpreted according to international recommendations.

2.4. Genome Extraction, Sequencing and Assembly

DNA was extracted using a NucleoSpin Microbial DNA extraction kit (Macherey-Nagel, Hoerdt, France), according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Library preparation was performed using Nextera XT technology and sequencing was performed on a NovaSeq 6000 instrument (Illumina, San Diego, CA, USA). After sequencing, reads were quality trimmed and de novo assembled using Shovill v1.0.4 and the quality of assemblies was assessed using QUAST v5.0.2. Quality control statistics of all sequenced isolates are provided in Supplemental Table S2. All genomic sequences were deposited in DDBJ/EMBL/GenBank under the BioProject accession number PRJNA841857. Sequence types (STs) and resistance genes were determined using the CGE online tools (http://www.genomicepidemiology.org/, last accessed on 21 June 2022).

2.5. Molecular Characterization of Plasmids

The replicon content and plasmid formula were identified from the WGS data using PlasmidFinder 2.0.1 and pMLST 2.0 (http://www.genomicepidemiology.org/, last accessed on 21 June 2022). When in silico data showed no co-occurrence of resistance and replicon markers on the same contig, plasmids carrying the ESBL and carbapenemase genes were detected using Southern blot (using adequate probes tagging the genes and plasmids of interest) on PFGE-S1 gels (6 V/cm for 20 h with an angle of 120° at 14 °C with pulse times ranging from 1 to 30 s) [17]. When plasmidic location could not be evidenced, the chromosomal location was looked for by PFGE on I-Ceu1-digested DNA, followed by Southern blot hybridization using a 16S rDNA probe and probes corresponding to the ESBL and carbapenemase genes. Detection was performed using a DIG DNA Labeling and Detection Kit (Roche Diagnostics, Meylan, France) according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

3. Results

3.1. Proportion of ESBL- and Carbapenemase-Producing Isolates

Only E. coli and K. pneumoniae were retrieved from selective plates.

From farmed fish, nine ESBL-producing strains (9/641, 1.4%) were isolated, which were identified as E. coli (n = 6) and K. pneumoniae (n = 3) (Table 1). Only one isolate (#40598) was collected from sea bass (1/156, 0.6%), while the eight remaining isolates were from sea bream (8/485, 1.6%). Two K. pneumoniae belonged to ST983 and the third one belonged to ST13. Among E. coli (n = 6), three different STs were identified: ST617, ST10, and ST8149. ST10 (n = 2; isolated from the same retail market at different time points) and ST617 (n = 3; originating from three different markets) were clonal as determined by PFGE. All E. coli belonged to phylogroup A, considered normally non-pathogenic [18].

Among the 215 pools of 5 clams analyzed, 18 ESBL-producing isolates were identified, including 14 E. coli and 4 K. pneumoniae (Table 2). Each isolate was identified from one individual pool of clams so that the total proportion of ESBL-producing Enterobacterales can be approximated at around 1.6% (18/1075). K. pneumoniae isolates belonged to the ST17 (n = 1), ST307 (n = 1) and ST147 (n = 2). The ST17 and one ST147 isolate were also resistant to carbapenems (2/1075, 0.2%). E. coli isolates belonged to nine different STs, among which ST617, ST38, ST131, and ST2253 were found at least at two time points.
Table 1. Characteristics of isolates collected from fish.

| Isolation Date | Isolate | Origin | Species | PG 4,ST | ESBL | ESBL Localization | Additional Resistances |
|----------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 31 August 2014  |         | R1     | E. coli |         | A-8149 | CTX-M-15           | IncF/F:A-B3            |
|                | 40557   |        |         |         |       |                   |                        |
| 1 September 2014 | 40558  | R1     | K. pneumonia | 983 |        | CTX-M-15 NT plasmid | blac, blaTEM-10, sul2, tetA, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, apic(3')-Ib, apic(4)-Id, catB3 |
| 16 October 2014 | 40560  | R2     | K. pneumonia | 983 |        | CTX-M-15 NT plasmid | blac, blaTEM-10, sul2, tetA, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, apic(3')-Ib, apic(4)-Id, catB3 |
| 2 November 2014 | 40561  | R1     | E. coli | A-10    |        | CTX-M-15 Chromosome | sul2, tetA, dfrA1, dfrA17, apic(3')-Ib, apic(4)-Id, mfdA |
| 4 November 2014 | 40563  | R1     | E. coli | A-10    |        | CTX-M-15 Chromosome | sul2, tetA, dfrA1, dfrA17, apic(3')-Ib, apic(4)-Id, mfdA |
| 14 November 2014 | 40564  | R3     | E. coli | A-617   |        | CTX-M-15 IncF/F31:A4/B1 | blaA-14, aac(6')-Ib-cr, aac(3)-Ila, catB3, mfdA, mfdC |
| 27 March 2015  | 40601  | R2     | E. coli | A-617   |        | CTX-M-15 IncF/F31:A4/B1 | blaA-14, aac(6')-Ib-cr, aac(3)-Ila, catB3, mfdA, mfdC |
| 15 May 2015    | 40598  | R2     | K. pneumonia | 13 |        | CTX-M-15 NT plasmid | blac, blacTEM-10, sul1, sul2, tetA, dfrA12, aac(3)-Ila, apic(3')-Ib, apic(4)-Id, catB3, mfdA |

a Bold underlined isolates were whole-genome sequenced; 40564, 40601, and 40595 were clonal as determined by PFGE. Only 40564 was sequenced. Likewise, 40561 and 40563 were clonal so only 40561 was sequenced. b R1, R2, and R3 correspond to three different retail markets. c NT: non-tybable (CTX-M with a plasmidic localization as determined by Southern blot, but on a band that did not match with a plasmid probe). d PG: phylogroup (only for E. coli isolates).

Table 2. Characteristics of isolates collected from clams.

| Date of Isolation | No. of Clams (No. of Pool) | Isolate | PG 4,ST | ESBL | ESBL Localization | Additional Resistances |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------|---------|------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 10 March 2016     | 220 (44)                  | Ec-43697 | B2-131  | CTX-M-27 | IncF/F1:A2:B20 | sul1, sul2, tetA, dfrA17, aac(3')-Ib, apic(3)-Ib, mfdA, mfdC |
|                   |                           | Ec-43699 | B3-38   | CTX-M-14 | IncF/F1:A-B23 | dfrA1, dfrA17, mfdA |
| 22 March 2016     | 160 (32)                  | Ec-43700 | A-617   | CTX-M-14 | IncI2            | blacTEM-10, sul1, sul2, tetA, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, apic(3')-Ib, mfdA |
|                   |                           | Ec-43704 | B1-1196 | CTX-M-1  | IncI2            | blacTEM-10, mfdA |
|                   |                           | Ec-43707 | A-48    | CTX-M-1  | IncI2            | blacTEM-10, sul1, tetA, dfrA1, mfdA |
|                   |                           | Ec-43710 | A-2253  | CTX-M-1  | IncI1:ST3       | sul1, sul2, tetA, dfrA14, mfdA |
|                   |                           | Ec-43711 | A-8059  | CTX-M-15 | IncI1:ST3       | sul1, sul2, tetA, dfrA12, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, mfdA, mfdC |
|                   |                           | Ec-43712 | A-9512  | CTX-M-15 | IncI1:ST3       | blacTEM-10, tetA, aac(3)-Ila, mfdA |
|                   |                           | Ec-43713 | B2-131  | CTX-M-15 | IncF/F31:A4/B1 | blacTEM-10, sul1, tetA, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, apic(3')-Ib, mfdA |
|                   |                           | Ec-43714 | A-617   | CTX-M-14 | IncI1:ST3       | blacTEM-10, sul1, sul2, sul3, tetA, dfrA1, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, mfdA, mfdC |
|                   |                           | Ec-43715 | D-38    | CTX-M-14 | IncF/F1:A-B23 | dfrA1, dfrA17, mfdA |
| 28 March 2016     | 270 (54)                  | Kp-43710 | 17      | CTX-M-15/ NDM-1 | IncH1B/IncF | blacTEM-10, sul1, tetA, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, catB3, ereB |
|                   |                           | Kp-43711 | 147     | CTX-M-15/ OXA-48, NDM-1 | IncR/IncI, IncF | blacTEM-10, tetA, sul1, dfrA1, aac(3)-Ila, apic(3')-Ib, catB3, ereB |
| 4 April 2016      | 120 (24)                  | Kp-43712 | 147     | CTX-M-15 | IncF/F1:A2:B23 | blacTEM-10, sul1, tetA, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, apic(3')-Ib, mfdA |
|                   |                           | Kp-43713 | 147     | CTX-M-15 | IncF/F1:A2:B23 | blacTEM-10, sul1, tetA, dfrA17, aac(3)-Ila, apic(3')-Ib, mfdA |
| 22 April 2016     | 305 (61)                  | Ec-43720 | A-2253  | CTX-M-1  | IncI1:ST3       | sul2, tetA, dfrA14, mfdA |

a Ec: E. coli; Kp: K. pneumoniae. Bold underlined isolates were WG sequenced; 43698, 43702, and 43715 were clonal as determined by PFGE. Only 43698 was sequenced. b PG: phylogroup (only for E. coli isolates).
3.2. Characterisation of ESBL and Carbapenemase Genes

In fish, the ESBL phenotype was due to the presence of the \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-15}} gene in all nine isolates (Table 1). No carbapenemase gene was identified, as expected by the susceptible phenotype observed for ertapenem. The \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-15}} gene was carried on the chromosome in the two clonal ST10 isolates, while it was located on plasmids in the seven other isolates, belonging either to the IncF type or being untypable.

In clams, the ESBL phenotype was also uniquely due to CTX-M genes (Table 2). However, the diversity was larger since \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-1}} (n = 6), \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-15}} (n = 6), \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-14}} (n = 5) and \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-27}} (n = 1) were identified. The ESBL gene was mostly located on plasmids (IncF, IncI1), while it was identified on the chromosome in only one isolate. The IncF plasmids presented diverse formulas; on the contrary, all IncI1 plasmids carrying the \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-1}} gene belonged to the pST3 type, while the only IncI1 plasmid carrying the \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-15}} gene belonged to the pST37 type. Two out of the four \textit{K. pneumoniae} carried carbapenemase genes in addition to the \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-15}} gene: #43716 displayed a \textit{bla}_{\text{NDM-1}} gene on an IncF plasmid, while #43717 presented both \textit{bla}_{\text{NDM-1}} and \textit{bla}_{\text{OXA-48}} genes, respectively, located on an untypeable and on an IncI plasmid.

3.3. Resistance Genes to Non-Beta-Lactam Antimicrobial Agents

All isolates were considered MDR according to the definition by Magiorakos et al. since they presented resistance to at least two antibiotic families in addition to beta-lactams (Table S3). All nine isolates from fish were also resistant to tetracyclines (\textit{tetA} or \textit{tetB} genes) and trimethoprim (genes belonging to the \textit{dfr} family), whereas most of them were also resistant to aminoglycosides and sulfonamides. The most frequently identified family genes were \textit{dfrA} and \textit{aadA} conferring resistances to trimethoprim and aminoglycosides.

4. Discussion

Our study revealed that 1.4% of fish and 1.6% of clams bought from retail markets in Tunisia were contaminated with ESBL-producing Enterobacterales. Two previous Tunisian studies reported much higher proportions of ESBL-producing Enterobacterales in seafood: the first study identified ESBL-producing bacteria in 65% (52/80) of the tested pools of mussels, 8.3% (3/36) of oysters, and 14.4% (26/181) of clams [8], while the second one reported 46.8% of ESBL-producing Enterobacterales in fish from the Bizerte lagoon [19]. The proportions found in this study were lower than what was reported from fish in India (70% of \textit{E. coli} and 25% of \textit{K. pneumoniae}) [20] and from imported fish in Saudi Arabia (27.2%, 110/405) [21], similar to what was observed from farmed fish in China (1.5%, 3/218) [22], and higher than what was reported from seafood in Norway (2/549, 0.4%) [6] and from \textit{Klebsiella} spp. recovered from freshwater fish in Hong Kong (1/476, 0.2%) [23]. However, comparison of proportions is difficult due to the diversity of protocols used, in terms of the origin of the samples (different species of fish, shellfish, . . . ), methodology (with or without selection on antibiotic-containing media), and isolated bacteria (focus on specific species or large identification of all bacterial species present in the sample). To circumvent these limitations in comparison, it would be of high interest for both authorities and consumers to set up a monitoring program in this sector, which would provide resistance trends over the years.

Two out of the four \textit{K. pneumoniae} identified here also displayed carbapenemase genes, which is a much scarcer feature than ESBL-producing Enterobacterales in seafood products. A KPC-3 ST167 \textit{E. coli} was reported from mussels in Tunisia [24], and carbapenem-resistant isolates were sporadically identified in Germany (VIM-1 from a clam harvested in Italy) [25], in Myanmar (NDM-1 from one prawn and one clam sample, and IMI-1 from one fish) [26], or in Canada (one NDM-1- and three IMI-producing \textit{Enterobacter cloacae} in shrimps and clams imported from Vietnam) [7].

The \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-1}} gene, which is usually related to an animal origin [27,28], was identified in six \textit{E. coli} isolates belonging to different STs. Interestingly, four out of the six \textit{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-1}} genes identified here were carried by an IncI1/pST3 plasmid, possibly suggesting transfers.
of this plasmid between different *E. coli* isolates. This plasmid, which has often been associated with the occurrence of the \( \text{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-1}} \) gene in animals including in Tunisia [28–30], was the only one recurrently identified in this study. The \( \text{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-1}} \)-carrying isolates might come either from farms discharging effluents in the nearby rivers or from seabirds’ droppings. Even though we acknowledge that it is very difficult to trace the origin of a strain, such sources of contamination were hypothesized in other contexts [31,32].

On the other hand, the \( \text{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-15}} \) gene, which is commonly of human origin, was identified in all fish and one-third (6/18) of clam isolates, mostly carried by IncF plasmids. It was carried in only one case by an IncI1/pST37 plasmid, a pMLST type associated with the human host [33], contrary to the pST3 which is mainly found in animals. Likewise, several STs identified here were strongly associated with the human host. This is especially the case for *E. coli* ST131, which is a worldwide disseminated clone notably responsible for urinary infections [34]. In our study, two clams presented an *E. coli* ST131, displaying either the \( \text{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-27}} \) or \( \text{bla}_{\text{CTX-M-15}} \) ESBL genes. ST617 is also recurrently associated with human infections, notably blood and urinary tract infections, including in Tunisia [35,36]. Here, this ST was detected both in fish and clams. In fish, an identical ST617 clone was recovered from three different retail markets, which all had different suppliers. Nevertheless, the hypothesis of a common source is the most likely one.

The four *K. pneumoniae* belonged to multi-resistant clones circulating in humans: ST17 is known to carry ESBL determinants [37], while ST307 and ST147 are high-risk clones that emerged in the mid-1990s and became worldwide vectors of carbapenemases [38,39]. In Tunisia, ST147 has been recurrently reported in hospital settings since at least 10 years, mostly carrying the \( \text{bla}_{\text{NDM-1}} \) but also the \( \text{bla}_{\text{OXA-48}} \) gene [40,41], and ST307 was more recently reported as a cause of a \( \text{bla}_{\text{NDM-1}} \)-producing outbreak [42].

Our results suggest that seafood can be a reservoir of multi-drug resistant bacteria, possibly of human origin. Our hypothesis is that sewage effluents, of human and animal origin, are discharged in rivers near the sea and that the bacterial load is high enough to contaminate fish and shellfish that are nearby. Such transmission of resistant bacteria to fish through contaminated wastewater has been proven notably in Tanzania and Vietnam [43,44]. In our study, fish from farms R1 and R3 were raised in the open sea, fish from farm R2 were raised in closed tanks filled with seawater, and clams were not cultivated but harvested in the open sea. We know that all four sampling sites were close to discharge points of treated wastewater from sewage treatment plants that, among others, are treating wastewater from large capacity hospitals. The hypothesis of a contamination through water is thus plausible and reinforced by a publication showing that sewage effluents of Tunisia are a potential source of carbapenemase genes, the most abundant ones being \( \text{bla}_{\text{OXA-48}} \) and \( \text{bla}_{\text{NDM-1}} \) [45]. Another study performed in Sfax, Tunisia, showed that antibiotic residues can be found in effluents, and that fluoroquinolones and macrolides are those that threaten the environment the most [46]. Fish and shellfish can thus be either directly contaminated by resistant bacteria, or by non-pathogenic Enterobacterales that acquired resistance genes. Moreover, multi-resistant bacteria might be concentrated in seafood, and especially in filter-feeding organisms such as mussels or clams [6].

In conclusion, our study reported relatively low proportions of ESBL-producing Enterobacterales in fish (1.4%) and clams (1.6%), thus suggesting a low risk for the consumer. Nevertheless, we raised the issue first of the environmental contamination by all effluents that can bring resistant bacteria to the sea, and second the risk of creating a reservoir of resistant bacteria in seafood products that are intended for human consumption. Consequently, measures should be taken to prevent bacterial contamination of rivers in general, and the occurrence of multi-drug resistant bacteria in seafood should be monitored in the same way as in livestock products.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: [https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/microorganisms10071364/s1](https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/microorganisms10071364/s1), Table S1: Antibiotic discs and disc concentrations used for antimicrobial susceptibility testing; Table S2: Quality controls of WGS data; Table S3: Phenotypic and genotypic characteristics of all isolates.
Author Contributions: W.M., M.A., M.H. and J.-Y.M. conceived and designed the study; M.S., E.S., Y.M. and R.G. carried out the experiments; M.S., M.H., W.M. and J.-Y.M. drafted the manuscript; E.S., A.D. and M.H. analyzed the data. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This work was funded by the “PHC Utique” program of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research under the CMCU project number 21G0807. This work was also supported by internal funding from the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES).

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Kurittu, P.; Khakipoor, B.; Aarnio, M.; Nykäsenoja, S.; Brouwer, M.; Myllyniemi, A.L.; Vatunen, E.; Heikinheimo, A. Plasmid-borne and chromosomal ESBL/AmpC genes in Escherichia coli and Klebsiella pneumoniae in global food products. *Front. Microbiol.* 2021, 12, 592291. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

2. Morrison, B.J.; Rubin, J.E. Carbapenemase producing bacteria in the food supply escaping detection. *PLoS ONE* 2015, 10, e0126717. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

3. Al-Mir, H.; Osman, M.; Drapeau, A.; Hamze, M.; Madec, J.-Y.; Haenni, M. WGS analysis of clonal and plasmidic epidemiology of colistin-resistance mediated by mcr genes in the poultry sector in Lebanon. *Front. Microbiol.* 2021, 12, 624194. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

4. Cardozo, M.V.; Liakopoulos, A.; Brouwer, M.; Kant, A.; Pizaurto, L.J.L.; Borzi, M.M.; Mevius, D.; de Ávila, F.A. Occurrence and molecular characteristics of extended-spectrum beta-lactamase-producing Enterobacteriales recovered from chicken, chicken meat, and human infections in São Paulo State, Brazil. *Front. Microbiol.* 2021, 12, 628738. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

5. Casella, T.; Nogueira, M.C.L.; Saras, E.; Haenni, M.; Madec, J.Y. High prevalence of ESBLs in retail chicken meat despite reduced use of antimicrobials in chicken production, France. *Int. J. Food Microbiol.* 2017, 257, 271–275. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

6. Grevskott, D.H.; Svanevik, C.S.; Sunde, M.; Wester, A.L.; Lunestad, B.T. Marine bivalve mollusks as possible indicators of carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae and other species of the Enterobacteriaceae family. *Front. Microbiol.* 2017, 8, 24. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

7. Janecko, N.; Martz, S.L.; Avery, B.P.; Daignault, D.; Desruisseau, A.; Boyd, D.; Irwin, R.J.; Mulvey, M.R.; Reid-Smith, R.J. Carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacter* spp. in retail seafood imported from Southeast Asia to Canada. *Emerg. Infect. Dis.* 2016, 22, 1675–1677. [CrossRef]

8. Mani, Y.; Mansour, W.; Lupo, A.; Saras, E.; Bouallegue, O.; Madec, J.Y.; Haenni, M. Spread of blaCTX-M-15 producing Enterobacteriaceae and OXA-23-producing *Acinetobacter baumannii* ST2 in Tunisian seafood. *Antimicrob. Agents Chemother.* 2018, 62, e00727-18. [CrossRef]

9. Singh, A.S.; Nayak, B.B.; Kumar, S.H. High prevalence of multiple antibiotic-resistant, extended-spectrum β-lactamase (ESBL)-producing *Escherichia coli* in fresh seafood sold in retail markets of Mumbai, India. *Vet. Sci.* 2020, 7, 46. [CrossRef]

10. FAO. Fisheries and Aquaculture—National Aquaculture Sector Overview—Tunisia. 2022. Available online: https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/countrysector/tn/en (accessed on 23 April 2022).

11. Dhanji, H.; Murphy, N.M.; Doumith, M.; Durmus, S.; Lee, S.S.; Hope, R.; Woodford, N.; Livermore, D.M. Cephalosporin resistance mechanisms in *Escherichia coli* isolated from raw chicken imported into the UK. *J. Antimicrob. Chemother.* 2010, 65, 2534–2537. [CrossRef]

12. Egervarm, M.; Borjesson, S.; Byfors, S.; Finn, M.; Kaire, C.; Englund, S.; Lindblad, M. *Escherichia coli* with extended-spectrum beta-lactamases or transferable AmpC beta-lactamas and *Salmonella* on meat imported into Sweden. *Int. J. Food Microbiol.* 2014, 171, 8–14. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

13. Nahar, A.; Awasthi, S.P.; Hatanaka, N.; Okuno, K.; Hoang, P.H.; Hassan, J.; Hinenoya, A.; Yamazaki, S. Prevalence and characteristics of extended-spectrum beta-lactamase-producing *Escherichia coli* in domestic and imported chicken meats in Japan. *J. Vet. Med. Sci.* 2018, 80, 510–517. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

14. CA-SFM. Comité de L’antibiogramme de La Société Française de Microbiologie: Recommandations Vétérinaires. Available online: https://www.sfm-microbiologie.org/2021/12/10/casfm-veterinaire-2021/ (accessed on 20 May 2022).

15. Jarlier, V.; Nicolas, M.H.; Fournier, G.; Philippin, A. Extended broad-spectrum beta-lactamas conferring transferable resistance to newer beta-lactam agents in *Enterobacteriaceae*: Hospital prevalence and susceptibility patterns. *Rev. Infect. Dis.* 1988, 10, 867–878. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

16. Doumith, M.; Day, M.J.; Hope, R.; Wain, J.; Woodford, N. Improved multiplex PCR strategy for rapid assignment of the four major *Escherichia coli* phylogenetic groups. *J. Clin. Microbiol.* 2012, 50, 3108–3110. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
17. Saidani, M.; Messadi, L.; Chaouechi, A.; Tabib, I.; Saras, E.; Soudani, A.; Daaloul-Jedidi, M.; Mamlouk, A.; Ben Chehida, F.; Chakroun, C.; et al. High genetic diversity of Enterobacteriaceae clones and plasmids disseminating resistance to extended-spectrum cephalosporins and colistin in healthy chicken in Tunisia. Microb. Pathog. 2019, 25, 1507–1513. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

18. Clermont, O.; Bonacorsi, S.; Bingen, E. Rapid and simple determination of the Escherichia coli phylogenetic group. Appl. Environ. Microbiol. 2000, 66, 4555–4558. [CrossRef]

19. Hassan, B.; Jouini, A.; Elbour, M.; Hamrouni, S.; Maaroufi, A. Detection of extended-spectrum β-lactamases (ESBL) producing Enterobacteriaceae from fish trapped in the lagoon area of bizerte, Tunisia. BioMed Res. Int. 2020, 2020, 7132812. [CrossRef]

20. Sivaraman, G.K.; Sudha, S.; Muneeb, K.H.; Shome, B.; Holmes, M.; Cole, J. Molecular assessment of antimicrobial resistance and virulence in multi drug resistant ESBL-producing Escherichia coli and Klebsiella pneumoniae from food fishes, Assam, India. Microb. Pathog. 2020, 149, 104581. [CrossRef]

21. Elhadi, N. Prevalence of extended-spectrum-β-lactamase-producing Escherichia coli in imported frozen freshwater fish in eastern province of Saudi Arabia. Saudi J. Med. Med. Sci. 2016, 4, 19–25. [CrossRef]

22. Jiang, H.-X.; Tang, D.; Liu, Y.-H.; Zhang, X.-H.; Zeng, Z.-L.; Xu, L.; Hawkey, P.M. Prevalence and characteristics of β-lactamase and plasmid-mediated quinolone resistance genes in Escherichia coli isolated from farmed fish in China. J. Antimicrob. Chemother. 2012, 67, 2350–2353. [CrossRef]

23. Hákonsholm, F.; Hetland, M.A.K.; Sundsfjord, A.; Lunestad, B.T.; Marathe, N.P. Antibiotic sensitivity screening of Klebsiella spp. and Raoultella spp. isolated from marine bivalve molluscs reveal presence of CTX-M-producing K. pneumoniae. Microorganisms 2020, 8, 1909. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

24. Mani, Y.; Mansour, W.; Mammeri, H.; Denamur, E.; Saras, E.; Boujaafar, N.; Bouallegue, O.; Madec, J.Y.; Haenni, M. KPC-3-producing ST167 Escherichia coli from mussels bought at a retail market in Tunisia. J. Antimicrob. Chemother. 2017, 72, 2403–2404. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

25. Roschanski, N.; Guenther, S.; Vu, T.T.; Fischer, J.; Semmler, T.; Huehn, S.; Alter, T.; Roesler, U. VIM-1 carbapenemase-producing Escherichia coli isolated from retail seafood, Germany 2016. Euro Surveill. 2017, 22, 17-00032. [CrossRef]

26. Sugawara, Y.; Hagiya, H.; Akeda, Y.; Aye, M.M.; Myo Win, H.P.; Sakamoto, N.; Shanmugakani, R.K.; Takeuchi, D.; Nishi, I.; Ueda, A.; et al. Dissemination of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae harbouring blaNDM or blabIM in local market foods of Yangon, Myanmar. Sci. Rep. 2019, 9, 14455. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

27. Madec, J.Y.; Haenni, M.; Metayer, V.; Saras, E.; Nicolas-Chanoine, M.H. High prevalence of the animal-associated blaCTX-M-1 Incl/ST3 plasmid in human Escherichia coli isolates. Antimicrob. Agents Chemother. 2015, 59, 5860. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

28. Irrgang, A.; Hammerl, J.A.; Falgenhauer, L.; Guiral, E.; Schmoger, S.; Imirzalioglu, C.; Fischer, J.; Guerra, B.; Chakraborty, T.; Kasbohrer, A. Diversity of CTX-M-1-producing E. coli from German food samples and genetic diversity of the blaCTX-M-1 region on Incl ST3 plasmids. Vet. Microbiol. 2018, 221, 98–104. [CrossRef]

29. Dahmen, S.; Haenni, M.; Madec, J.Y. IncI1/ST3 plasmids contribute to the dissemination of the blaCTX-M-1 gene in Escherichia coli from several animal species in France. J. Antimicrob. Chemother. 2012, 67, 3011–3012. [CrossRef]

30. Grami, R.; Mansour, W.; Dahmen, S.; Mehri, W.; Haenni, M.; Aouni, M.; Madec, J.Y. The blaCTX-M-1 Incl/ST3 plasmid is dominant in chickens and pets in Tunisia. J. Antimicrob. Chemother. 2013, 68, 2950–2952. [CrossRef]

31. Skarzyńska, M.; Żajac, M.; Bomba, A.; Bocian, Ł.; Koźdruń, W.; Polański, M.; Wiacek, J.; Wasyl, D. Antimicrobial resistance profiles in the sky—free-living birds as a reservoir of resistant Escherichia coli with zoonotic potential. Front. Microbiol. 2021, 12, 656223. [CrossRef]

32. Prendergast, D.M.; O’Doherty, Á.; Burgess, C.M.; Howe, N.; McMahon, F.; Murphy, D.; Leonard, F.; Morris, D.; Harrington, C.; Carty, A.; et al. Critically important antimicrobial resistant Enterobacteriaceae in Irish farm effluent and their removal in integrated constructed wetlands. Sci. Total Environ. 2022, 806, 151269. [CrossRef]

33. Smith, H.; Bossers, A.; Harders, F.; Wu, G.; Woodford, N.; Schwarz, S.; Guerra, B.; Rodriguez, I.; van Essen-Zandbergen, A.; Brouwer, M.; et al. Characterization of epidemic IncI-I-gamma plasmids harboring ambler class A and C genes in Escherichia coli and Salmonella enterica from animals and humans. Antimicrob. Agents Chemother. 2015, 59, 5357–5365. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

34. Nicolas-Chanoine, M.H.; Blanco, J.; Leflon-Guibout, V.; Demarty, V.; Alonso, M.P.; Canica, M.M.; Park, Y.J.; Lavigne, J.P.; Pitout, J.; Johnson, J.R. Intercontinental emergence of Escherichia coli clone O25:H4-ST131 producing CTX-M-15. J. Antimicrob. Chemother. 2008, 61, 273–281. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

35. Aibinu, I.; Odugbemi, T.; Koenig, W.; Ghebremedhin, B. Sequence Type ST131 and ST10 Complex (ST617) predominant among CTX-M-15-producing Escherichia coli isolates from Nigeria. Clin. Microbiol. Infect. 2012, 18, E49–E51. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

36. Dziri, O.; Dziri, R.; Ali El Salabi, A.; Chouchani, C. Carbapenemase producing gram-negative bacteria in Tunisia: History of thirteen years of challenge. Infect. Drug Resist. 2020, 13, 4177–4191. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

37. Navon-Venezia, S.; Kondratyeva, K.; Carattoli, A. Klebsiella pneumoniae: A major worldwide source and shuttle for antibiotic resistance. FEMS Microbiol. Rev. 2017, 41, 252–275. [CrossRef]

38. Peirano, G.; Chen, L.; Kreiswirth, B.N.; Pitout, J.D.D. Emerging antimicrobial-resistant high-risk Klebsiella pneumoniae clones ST307 and ST147. Antimicrob. Agents Chemother. 2020, 64, e01184-20. [CrossRef]

39. Wyres, K.L.; Hawkey, J.; Hetland, M.A.K.; Fostervold, A.; Wick, R.R.; Judd, L.M.; Hamidian, M.; Howden, B.P.; Lohr, I.H.; Holt, K.E. Emergence and rapid global dissemination of CTX-M-15-associated Klebsiella pneumoniae strain ST307. J. Antimicrob. Chemother. 2019, 74, 577–581. [CrossRef]
40. Messaoudi, A.; Haenni, M.; Bouallègue, O.; Saras, E.; Chatre, P.; Chaouch, C.; Boujiafar, N.; Mansour, W.; Madec, J.-Y. Dynamics and molecular features of OXA-48-like-producing *Klebsiella pneumoniae* lineages in a Tunisian hospital. *J. Glob. Antimicrob. Resist.* 2020, 20, 87–93. [CrossRef]

41. Messaoudi, A.; Haenni, M.; Mansour, W.; Saras, E.; Bel Haj Khalifa, A.; Chaouch, C.; Naija, W.; Boujiafar, N.; Bouallègue, O.; Madec, J.Y. ST147 NDM-1-producing *Klebsiella pneumoniae* spread in two Tunisian hospitals. *J. Antimicrob. Chemother.* 2017, 72, 315–316. [CrossRef]

42. Hamzaoui, Z.; Ocampo-Sosa, A.; Maamar, E.; Fernandez Martinez, M.; Ferjani, S.; Hammami, S.; Harbaoui, S.; Genel, N.; Arlet, G.; Saidani, M.; et al. An outbreak of NDM-1-producing *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, associated with OmpK35 and OmpK36 porin loss in Tunisia. *Microb. Drug Resist.* 2018, 24, 1137–1147. [CrossRef]

43. Moreni, N.; Manda, E.V.; Falgenhauer, L.; Ghosh, H.; Imirzalioglu, C.; Matee, M.; Chakraborty, T.; Mshana, S.E. Predominance of CTX-M-15 among ESBL producers from environment and fish gut from the shores of Lake Victoria in Mwanza, Tanzania. *Front. Microbiol.* 2016, 7, 1862. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

44. Hoa, T.T.T.; Nakayama, T.; Huyen, H.M.; Harada, K.; Hinenoya, A.; Phuong, N.T.; Yamamoto, Y. Extended-spectrum beta-lactamase-producing *Escherichia coli* harbouring sul and mcr-1 genes isolates from fish gut contents in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. *Lett. Appl. Microbiol.* 2020, 71, 78–85. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

45. Nasri, E.; Subirats, J.; Sánchez-Melsió, A.; Mansour, H.B.; Borrego, C.M.; Balcázar, J.L. Abundance of carbapenemase genes (*bla*KPC, *bla*NDM and *bla*OXA-48) in wastewater effluents from Tunisian hospitals. *Environ. Pollut.* 2017, 229, 371–374. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

46. Harrabi, M.; Varela Della Giusta, S.; Aloulou, F.; Rodriguez-Mozaz, S.; Barceló, D.; Elleuch, B. Analysis of multiclass antibiotic residues in urban wastewater in Tunisia. *Environ. Nanotechnol. Monit. Manag.* 2018, 10, 163–170. [CrossRef]