1. Introduction

Foodborne diseases are a widespread and growing public health problem in developed and developing countries [1]. Amongst those, yersiniosis due to infection with the bacterium *Yersinia enterocolitica* is the frequently reported zoonotic gastrointestinal disease after campylobacteriosis and salmonellosis in many developed countries, especially in temperate zones [2]. Within developed countries, incidences of yersiniosis and foodborne outbreaks are appeared to be lower in the United States than many European countries [3–5]. In European countries, numbers of reported cases of human in England and Wales are lower than those in other European countries where fewer than 0.1 cases of yersiniosis per 100,000 individuals were reported in the United Kingdom in 2005, in contrast to 12.2 in Finland and 6.8 in Germany [6]. On the other hand, the high prevalence of gastrointestinal illness including fatal cases due to yersiniosis is also observed in many developing countries like Bangladesh [7], Iraq [8], Iran [9], and Nigeria [10], which indicates major underlying food safety problems in low- and middle-income countries. Worldwide, infection with *Y. enterocolitica* occurs most often in infants and young children with common symptoms like fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, which is often bloody. Older children and young adults are not out of risk. The predominant symptoms within these age groups are right-sided abdominal pain and fever, sometimes confused with appendicitis. Occasionally, the *Y. enterocolitica* associated complications such as skin rash, joint pains, or spread of bacteria to the bloodstream can also occur.

Although *Y. enterocolitica* is a ubiquitous microorganism, the majority of isolates recovered from asymptomatic carriers, infected animals, contaminated food, untreated water, and contaminated environmental samples are non-pathogenic having no clinical importance [11]. At the same time, the epidemiology of *Y. enterocolitica* infections is complex and remains poorly understood because most sporadically occurred cases of yersiniosis are reported without an apparent source [3, 12–14]. However, most pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* strains associated with human yersiniosis belong to bioserotypes 1B/O:8, 2/O:5,27, 2/O:9, 3/O:3, and 4/O:3. Within these reported strains, fully pathogenic strains carry an approximately 70 kb plasmid termed pYV (plasmid...
for *Yersinia* virulence) [15] that encodes various virulence genes (*tccC, yadA, virF, ysa*) with traditional chromosomal virulence genes (*inv, ail, yst*) whereas other pathogenic strains, having no pYV plasmid, produce a thermostable enterotoxin (*ystA*) [16–18]. These virulence genes located in chromosome or plasmid of pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* has been widely used to identify pathogenic strains in epidemiological studies for example, chromosomal *ail* gene [19, 20].

2. Epidemiological Studies and Outbreaks

Many factors related to the epidemiology of *Y. enterocolitica*, such as human and nonhuman sources, and contamination routes in foods remain obscure in developing countries and tropical regions of developed countries. Additionally, epidemiological data on the prevalence of pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* in animals in developed countries are missing as the reporting of this pathogen in animals is not mandatory in most European countries [26].

2.1. Animal Reservoirs Involved in Zoonosis. Animals have long been suspected of being significant reservoirs for *Y. enterocolitica* and, therefore, sources of human infections [3]. Numerous studies have been carried out to isolate *Y. enterocolitica* strains from a variety of animals (Figure 1) [56]. Interestingly, most of the strains isolated from the animal kingdom carry unique serotypes of *Y. enterocolitica* compared to the strains isolated from humans with yersiniosis.

Pigs have been shown to be a major reservoir of pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* involved in human infections, particularly for strains of bioserotype 4/O:3 which has been almost exclusively isolated in European countries like Denmark, Italy, Belgium, Spain, and Sweden [24, 64]. The rate of isolation of *Y. enterocolitica* including bioserotype 4/O:3 from tonsils and tongues of pigs is generally greater than the rate of isolation from cecal or fecal materials [20].

Occasionally, pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* strains, mostly of bioserotype 4/O:3, have also been isolated from dogs and cats [82]. Although pigs are the primary source of human infection with *Y. enterocolitica* throughout world, these pets may also be a potential source of human infection with pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* because of their intimate contact with people, especially young children [28].

In addition with mostly isolated bioserotype 4/O:3, *Y. enterocolitica* strains of biotypes 2 and 3 and serotypes O:5,27, O:8, and O:9 have also been isolated from slaughter pigs, cows, sheep, and goats; however, the reservoir of these bioserotypes is not clearly established [81, 83–85]. In above cases, contamination of pluck sets (tongue, tonsils, and trachea hanging together with thoracic organs such as lungs, liver, and heart) and carcasses with enteropathogenic *Yersinia* from tonsils and feces may occur during the slaughtering stage [5, 82, 86–88]. On the other hand, strains of very rare bioserotypes, such as bioserotype 5/O:2,3, have been isolated from sheep, hares, and goats and bioserotype 3/O:1,2a,3 from chinchillas (small rodent). Thus, the patterns of the pathogenic strains isolated from humans with yersiniosis compared to those from the animals suggest that the human infection due to *Y. enterocolitica* originated from the animals.

2.2. Contaminated Food Involved in Infections. Food has been proposed to be the main source of intestinal yersiniosis although pathogenic isolates have seldom been recovered from food samples [105]. The low recovery rates of pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* in food samples may be due to limited sensitivity of culture methods [11]. However, *Y. enterocolitica* has been isolated from milk and milk products, egg products, raw meats (beef, pork, and lamb) and poultry, vegetables, and miscellaneous prepared food products. The occurrence of pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* in natural sample
including foods has been estimated by both culture- and molecular-based methods (Table 1, Figures 2 and 3).

2.2.1. Contaminated Meat and Poultry Products Correlated with yersiniosis. Indirect evidence considering food, particularly pork and pork products, indicates that there is an important link between consumption of raw, undercooked, or improperly handled pork product and human Y. enterocolitica infections [20]. This positive correlation between the consumption of raw or undercooked pork and the prevalence of yersiniosis has been demonstrated in case-control studies [32, 64, 106–109]. Using molecular techniques, ail-positive Y. enterocolitica strains were detected in raw pork samples (loin, fillet, chop, ham, and minced meat) and in ready-to-eat pork products [31]. However, the isolation rates of pathogenic bioserotypes of Y. enterocolitica have been low in raw pork, except for in edible pig offal, with the most common type isolated being bioserotype 4/O:3 (Table 2). In

### Table 1: Detection of pathogenic Y. enterocolitica in natural samples with PCR and culture methods.

| Sample          | No. of samples | No. of culture\(^{+ve}\) samples\(\,\) (%) | No. of PCR\(^{+ve}\) samples (%) | References                     |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| **Animal**      |                |                                          |                                   |                                |
| Pig tonsils     | 185            | 48 (26)                                  | 58 (31)                           | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [21] |
| 252             | 0              | 90 (36)                                  |                                   | Boyapalle et al. [22]          |
| 24              | 15 (63)        | 18 (75)                                  |                                   | Neshbakken et al. [23]         |
| 829             | 411 (50)       | 0                                        |                                   | Martinez et al. [24]           |
| 630             | 278 (44)       | 0                                        |                                   | Martinez et al. [25]           |
| 212             | 72 (34)        | 186 (88)                                 |                                   | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [26] |
| Pig faeces      | 255            | 0                                        | 80 (31)                           | Boyapalle et al. [22]          |
| 24              | 3 (13)         | 3 (13)                                   |                                   | Nesbakken et al. [23]          |
| 2793            | 114 (4)        | 345 (12)                                 |                                   | Bhaduri et al. [27]            |
| 150             | 3 (2)          | 0                                        |                                   | Okwori et al. [10]             |
| Mesenteric l. n.| 257            | 0                                        | 103 (40)                          | Boyapalle et al. [22]          |
| 24              | 1 (4)          | 3 (8)                                    |                                   | Nesbakken et al. [23]          |
| Submaxillary l. n.| 24          | 1 (4)                                    | 3 (13)                            | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [20] |
| Sheep feces     | 200            | 2 (1)                                    | 0                                 | Okwori et al. [10]             |
| Dog feces       | 448            | 0                                        | 6 (1)                             | Wang et al. [28]               |
| **Food**        |                |                                          |                                   |                                |
| Pig tongues     | 15             | 7 (47)                                   | 10 (67)                           | Vishnubhatla et al. [29]       |
| 99              | 79 (80)        | 82 (83)                                  |                                   | Fredriksson-Ahomaa and Korkeala [11] |
| Pig offal\(^{c}\) | 110           | 38 (35)                                  | 77 (70)                           | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [20] |
| Chitterlings    | 350            | 8 (2)                                    | 278 (79)                          | Boyapalle et al. [22]          |
| Ground pork     | 350            | 0                                        | 133 (38)                          | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [20] |
| 100             | 32 (32)        | 47 (47)                                  |                                   | Vishnubhatla et al. [29]       |
| Ground beef     | 100            | 23 (23)                                  | 31 (31)                           | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [20] |
| Minced pork     | 255            | 4 (2)                                    | 63 (25)                           | Fredriksson-Ahomaa and Korkeala [11] |
| Pork\(^{d}\)    | 300            | 6 (2)                                    | 50 (17)                           | Johansson et al. [30]          |
| 91              | 6 (7)          | 9 (10)                                   |                                   | Lambertz & Danielsson-Tham [31]|
| 62              | 0              | 20 (32)                                  |                                   | Grahak-Ogden et al. [32]       |
| Chicken         | 43             | 0                                        | 0                                 | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [11] |
| Fish            | 150            | 0                                        | 0                                 | Okwori et al. [10]             |
| Heated soup     | 100            | 3 (3)                                    |                                   | Okwori et al. [10]             |
| Cow milk        | 250            | 3 (1)                                    |                                   | Okwori et al. [10]             |
| Lettuce         | 250            | 0                                        | 3 (3)                             | Okwori et al. [10]             |
| Tofu            | 50             | 0                                        | 6 (12)                            | Vishnubhatla et al. [29]       |
| Vegetables      | 27             | 1 (4)                                    | 4 (15)                            | Cocolin & Comi [33]            |
| Salad           | 42             | 16 (38)                                  | 16 (38)                           | Sakai et al. [34]              |
| **Environment** |                |                                          |                                   |                                |
| Water           | 105            | 1 (1)                                    | 11 (10)                           | Sandery et al. [35]            |
| Slaughterhouse/ Farm | 89          | 5 (6)                                    | 12 (13)                           | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [36] |
| 46              | 44 (96)        | 0                                        |                                   | Martinez et al. [24]           |
| 45              | 31 (61)        | 0                                        |                                   | Martinez et al. [25]           |

\(^{a}\)Pathogenicity of isolates confirmed, \(^{b}\)all meat samples are raw, \(^{c}\)liver, heart, kidney, \(^{d}\)except pig offal & tongues, and \(^{+ve}\)positive.
Table 2: Detection of pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* in pork products by culture methods (partially adapted from Fredriksson-and Korkeala [11]).

| Sample | No. of samples | No. of samples positive for | Country of origin of sample | Reference |
|--------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
|        | No. of samples | O:3 O:5,27 O:8 O:9         |                            |           |
| Tongue | 302            | 165 3                       | Belgium                     | Wauters [37] |
|        | 37             | 11                           | Canada                      | Schiemann [38] |
|        | 31             | 2 6                          | USA                         | Doyle et al. [39] |
|        | 47             | 26                           | Norway                      | Nesbakken [40] |
|        | 50             | 20                           | Japan                       | Shiozawa et al. [41] |
|        | 125            | 8                            | Spain                       | Ferrer et al. [42] |
|        | 29             | 28                           | Belgium                     | Wauters et al. [43] |
|        | 40             | 6 2                          | The Netherlands             | de Boer and Nouws [44] |
|        | 55             | 14                           | Germany                     | Karib and Seeger [45] |
|        | 86             | 2                            | Italy                       | de Guisti et al. [46] |
|        | 99             | 79                           | Finland                     | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [47] |
|        | 20             | 15                           | Germany                     | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [48] |
| Tonsil | 89             | 81 8                         | Belgium                     | Martínez et al. [24] |
|        | 137            | 136 1                        | Italy                       | Martínez et al. [24] |
|        | 185            | 185                          | Spain                       | Martínez et al. [24] |
|        | 212            | 69 6 1                       | Switzerland                 | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [26] |
| Offal  | 34             | 17                           | Finland                     | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [36] |
|        | 16             | 5                            | Finland                     | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [47] |
|        | 100            | 46                           | Germany                     | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [48] |
| Pork   | 91             | 1 1                          | Canada                      | Schiemann [38] |
|        | 127            | 1                            | Norway                      | Nesbakken et al. [49] |
|        | 70             | 22 3                         | Japan                       | Shiozawa et al. [41] |
|        | 267            | 6                            | Denmark                     | Christensen [50] |
|        | 50             | 12                           | Belgium                     | Wauters et al. [43] |
|        | 400            | 3 1                          | The Netherlands             | de Boer and Nouws [44] |
|        | 45             | 8                            | Norway                      | Nesbakken et al. [51] |
|        | 67             | 1 8c 3                       | China                       | Tsai and Chen [52] |
|        | 48             | 1                            | Germany                     | Karib and Seeger [45] |
|        | 40             | 2 4 1                        | Ireland                     | Logue et al. [53] |
|        | 1278           | 64 14                        | Japan                       | Fukushima et al. [54] |
|        | 255            | 4                            | Finland                     | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [55] |
|        | 300            | 6                            | Norway                      | Johannessen et al. [30] |
|        | 120            | 14                           | Germany                     | Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. [36] |
|        | 60             | 20                           | Norway                      | Grahek-Ogden et al. [32] |

*O*ffal, excluding tongue, *b*other pork products, excluding offal, *c*isolates belonging to serotype O:5 and showing autoagglutination activity and calcium-dependent growth.

Other studies, pathogenic *yst*-positive *Y. enterocolitica* strains have been isolated from ground beef [29] but not detected in chicken food samples [110].

2.2.2.2. Contaminated Milk and Milk Products Associated with Human Disease. *Y. enterocolitica* has been isolated from raw milk in many countries, like Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, and USA. There were also a few reports on the isolation of this pathogenic strain associated with human disease from pasteurized milk [4, 111]. It may be due to the malfunction in the pasteurization process leading to inadequate treatment or postprocess contamination, or it may be due to the contamination with heat-resistant strains of *Y. enterocolitica*. So, the presence of this pathogen in pasteurized milk should be a cause for concern. However, heat-resistant strains of *Y. enterocolitica* have not been still reported in milk samples.

2.2.2.3. Other Contaminated Foods Involved in Outbreaks. Strains of *Y. enterocolitica* have been isolated from oysters, mussels, shrimp, blue crab, fish, salad, stewed mushrooms, cabbage, celery, and carrots [112]. In Korea, Lee et al. [113] isolated *ail*-positive *Y. enterocolitica* strain of bioserotype
3/O:3 from ready-to-eat vegetables, which indicate that vegetables can be a source of human infection. Furthermore, Sakai et al. [34] reported an outbreak of food poisoning by *Y. enterocolitica* serotype O:8 in Japan where salad was proposed the cause of infection. Recently, *Y. enterocolitica* 2/O:9 has been isolated from chicken eggshell surfaces in Argentina [114]. Contamination of the egg surface might have occurred from contact with other *Y. enterocolitica*-contaminated animal products, such as pork product, during collection on farms or during transportation or handling in retail shops.

### 2.3. Contaminated Environment Reported as Source of Infection

Most of the *Y. enterocolitica* isolates recovered from environmental samples, including the slaughterhouse, fodder, soil, and water, have been nonpathogenic [89, 115–119]. Occasionally, strains of bioserotype 4/O:3 have been isolated from the slaughterhouse [120, 121] and sewage water [50]. Within the environmental sampling sites, drinking water has been relatively widely investigated and revealed to be a significant reservoir for nonpathogenic *Y. enterocolitica*. However, Sandery et al. [35] detected pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* in environmental water by molecular studies. In a case-control study, untreated drinking water has been reported to be a risk factor for sporadic *Y. enterocolitica* infections in Norway [107]. Recently, Falcão et al. [122] tested 67 *Y. enterocolitica* strains isolated in Brazil from untreated water for the presence of virulence genes. They found that all 38 strains of serotype O:5,27 possessed inv, ail, and yst genes, suggesting that untreated water may be responsible for the human infection with *Y. enterocolitica*. In another study, *Y. enterocolitica* O:8 strains have been isolated from stream water in Japan, which indicate that stream water may be a possible infection source for human *Y. enterocolitica* O:8 infections [84, 123].

### 3. Conclusion

Epidemiological studies of human infection with *Y. enterocolitica* (Table 3) constitute an important element in
Table 3: Epidemiological studies of human infection with *Y. enterocolitica*.

| Year      | Country | Outcome of the study                                                                                                                                                                                                 | References          |
|-----------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1981–1990 | Georgia | Report of 84 clinical isolates of *Y. enterocolitica*, the most frequently reported serotypes were O:5; O:10,46; O:6,30                                                                                                                                               | Sulakvelidze et al. [89] |
|           |         | Analysis of clinical information from 261 Dutch patients with gastrointestinal infections caused by *Y. enterocolitica* serotypes O:3 and O:9                                                                                                                                 | Stolk-Engelaar and Hoogkamp-Korstanje [90] |
| 1982–1991 | The Netherlands | Outbreak of gastroenteritis among hospitalized patients associated with *Y. enterocolitica* serotype O:5; Examination of 125 isolates of *Y. enterocolitica*, serotypes O:7,8; O:5; O:6,30, were frequently obtained from symptomatic patients | Ratnam et al. [91] |
| 1983      | Canada  | Report of 46 fecal isolates of *Y. enterocolitica*, including two serotypes O:7; O:6, associated with occurrence                                                                                                                                                      | Skurnik et al. [60] |
| 1984      | Bangladesh | Case report of a fatal diarrheal illness associated with serotypes O:7; O:8                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Butler et al. [7] |
| 1984      | Hong Kong | Report of *Y. enterocolitica*-associated septicemia in four patients regarding serotypes O:17                                                                                                                                                                                       | Seto and Lau [93] |
| 1984–1985 | UK      | Report of two nosocomial outbreaks of *Y. enterocolitica* serotypes O:10; O:6 infections in hospitalized children                                                                                                                                                         | Greenwood and Hooper [94] |
| 1986      | UK      | Case report of nosocomial transmission of serotypes O:6,30 associated with gastroenteritis                                                                                                                                                                                       | McIntyre and Nnochiri [95] |
| 1986–1992 | Canada  | Report of 79 symptomatic children with culture-proven infection, including serotypes O:5; O:6,30; O:7,8                                                                                                                                                                    | Cimolai et al. [96] |
| 1987      | UK      | Report of 77 *Y. enterocolitica* strains from patients, including serotypes O:6,30; O:7                                                                                                                                                                                       | Greenwood and Hooper [97] |
| 1987–1988 | Australia | Report of 11 cases of *Y. enterocolitica* enteritis, including most frequently serotypes O:6,30                                                                                                                                                                                      | Butt et al. [98] |
| 1987–1989 | Chile   | A prospective case-control study of infants with diarrhoea in Chile, showing a significantly reported serotypes O:6; O:7,8; O:10                                                                                                                                               | Morris et al. [99] |
| 1988–1991 | Nigeria | Of nine strains of *Y. enterocolitica* obtained from stool samples of children with diarrhoea                                                                                                                                                                                     | Onyemelukwe [100] |
| 1988–1993 | New Zealand | Of 918 isolates of *Y. enterocolitica* from symptomatic patients Of 106 strains (selected from the collection of the Yersinia Reference Laboratory in Brazil), 71 were bioserotype 4/O:3, isolated from human and animal clinical material, and 35 were of biotype 1A or 2, isolated from food | Fenwick and McCarthy [101] |
| 1968–2000 | Brazil  | Report of 8 cases of *Y. enterocolitica* infection out of 300 children with acute diarrhoea aged 0–12 years who were attending a pediatric hospital in Tehran                                                                                                                                 | Soltan-Dallal and Moezardalan [9] |
| 2002      | Iran    | Detection of *Y. enterocolitica* belonging to bioserotype 2/O:9 in investigating 500 human samples                                                                                                                                                                          | Okwori et al. [10] |
| 2002–2004 | Nigeria | Report of 16 cases food poisoning due to *Y. enterocolitica* serotype O:8                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Sakai et al. [34] |
| 2004      | Japan   | Investigation of an outbreak involving 11 persons infected with *Yersinia enterocolitica* O:9                                                                                                                                                                                  | Grahek-Ogden et al. [32] |
| 2005–2006 | Norway  | Almost 90% of *Y. enterocolitica* strains were diagnosed as serotype O:3                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Rosner et al. [103] |
| 2001–2008 | Germany | Identification of three children with diarrhoea caused by *Y. enterocolitica* infection                                                                                                                                                                                         | Kanan and Abdulla [8] |
| 2009      | Iraq    | Report of 1 outbreak with 3 cases due to consumption of roast pork contaminated with *Y. enterocolitica*                                                                                                                                                                      | OzFoodNet sites [104] |
| 2009      | Australia |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                      |

*Year of publication.*
Methods used for epidemiological studies of *Yersinia enterocolitica* (used for clinical, food, and environmental samples)

**DNA colony hybridization assays** used to detect pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* strains by using gene probe targeting the virulence plasmid (Miliotis et al. 1989; Jagow and Hill, 1986) or virulence-related DNA sequences in the chromosome (Durisin et al. 1997; Goverde et al. 1993).

- Targeting the virulence plasmid genes
  - Probes targeting *virF* and *yadA* genes
    (Kaperud et al. 1993; Nesbakken et al. 1991; Weagant et al. 1999)

- Targeting the chromosomal genes
  - Probes targeting *ail*, *yst*, and *inv* genes
    (Goverde et al. 1993; Durisin et al. 1997)

**PCR-based detection methods** designed for detection of pathogenic *Y. enterocolitica* strains from natural samples

1. Restriction analysis of both plasmids (Nesbakken et al. 1987; Kapperund et al. 1990) and chromosomes (Blumberg et al. 1991)
2. Randomly amplified polymorphic DNA analysis (Rasmussen et al. 1994)
3. Ribotyping (Andersen and Saunders, 1990; Lobato et al. 1998)
4. PFGE (Najdenski et al. 1994; Saken et al. 1994; Itelman et al. 1996; Fredriksson-Ahomaa et al. 2004)
5. The enterobacterial repetitive intergenic consensus-PCR (ERIC-PCR) (Sachdeva and Virdi, 2004; Wojciech et al. 2004)
6. Multiplex PCR, nested PCR, seminested PCR (Fredriksson-Ahomaa and Korkeala, 2003)

**Figure 3:** Methods used for epidemiological studies of *Y. enterocolitica*. 2. DNA colony hybridization assays [51, 65–70]; PCR based detection methods [11, 71–81]. (*inv*: gene for invasin, an outer membrane protein that is required for efficient translocation of bacteria across the intestinal epithelium; *ail*: gene for adhesin, an outer membrane protein that may contribute to adhesion, invasion and resistance to complement-mediated lysis; *yst*: gene for heat-stable enterotoxin that may contribute to the pathogenesis of diarrhea associated with acute yersiniosis; *virF*: gene for transcriptional activator; *yadA*: gene for *Yersinia* adhesin A; PFGE: pulsed field gel electrophoresis).

the exploitation of apparent sources and contamination routes of human yersiniosis and in the development and implementation of effective control strategies to prevent future outbreaks. Efficient laboratory methods used for epidemiological study are also a vital requirement in *Y. enterocolitica’s* monitoring and control purposes. Molecular methods should be needed with conventional culture methods to provide a better estimation of epidemiology of *Y. enterocolitica* particularly pathogenic strains in natural samples.

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