

INFLUÊNCIA DE MICRORGANISMOS RESIDENTES DA SEMENTE
NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DE PLÂNTULAS DE MILHO (*Zea mays* L.)

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INFLUÊNCIA DOS MICRORGANISMOS RESIDENTES DA
SEMENTE NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DE PLÂNTULAS DE MILHO
(*Zea mays* L.)

JAQUELINE APARECIDA DE OLIVEIRA

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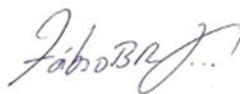
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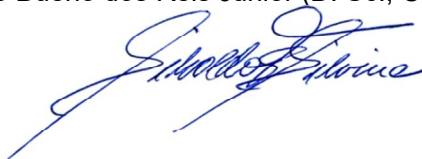
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RESUMO

De OLIVEIRA, Jaqueline Aparecida, M.Sc., Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro. Março de 2021. Influência dos microrganismos residentes da semente no desenvolvimento de plântulas de milho (*Zea mays* L.). Orientador: Prof. Fabio Lopes Olivares.

Recentemente, foi evidenciado que grupos microbianos associados às sementes do milho influenciam na composição do microbioma vegetal. Estes grupos residentes podem ser alterados de acordo com muitos fatores e suas potencialidades ainda não estão totalmente claras. Uma forma de estudar estes microrganismos é removê-los parcialmente das sementes e verificar o fenótipo vegetal. Utilizar de fatores que perturbam a comunidade microbiana residente também é uma estratégia. O objetivo desta dissertação foi verificar os efeitos da exposição da semente de milho ao hipoclorito de sódio e à bactéria *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* sobre a comunidade residente das sementes do milho e desenvolvimento das plântulas. Sementes do milho híbrido SHS 5050 foram desinfestadas em hipoclorito de sódio nos tempos de 0 (controle), 15, 30, 60 e 120 min e inoculadas com *H. seropedicae* HRC54. Parte das sementes foram submetidas ao teste bioquímico de viabilidade e parte transferida para tubetes em casa de vegetação, contendo substrato autoclavado e não autoclavado. Foram quantificadas as populações de bactérias diazotróficas e epifíticas, a dinâmica funcional microbiana, e foram realizadas análises biométricas no 15° dia após o plantio. Isolados obtidos no ensaio da casa de vegetação foram usados como

comunidades microbianas sintéticas na germinação do milho. A desinfestação química não alterou significativamente a viabilidade dos embriões. Sementes expostas a tempos maiores de desinfestação apresentaram uma maior tendência de aumento no número de população bacteriana. A contagem bacteriana evidenciou uma desocupação de nichos nas sementes que resultou na sobrevivência de grupos que habitam os compartimentos mais internos do órgão. A desinfestação química e a bioinoculação de sementes alteraram o desempenho inicial da planta, a atividade e a dinâmica funcional microbiana. Bactérias residentes nas sementes do milho favorecem a germinação das plântulas, e estudos nesta vertente podem ser uma ferramenta promissora para aplicações mais eficazes de produtos microbiológicos na agricultura.

Palavras-chave: Bactérias nativas, desinfestação de sementes, performance vegetal.

ABSTRACT

OLIVEIRA, Jaqueline Aparecida de Oliveira, M.Sc., Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro. Março de 2021. Influence of seed resident microorganisms on the development of maize seedlings (*Zea mays* L.). Orientador: Prof. Fabio Lopes Olivares.

It was recently demonstrated that microbion groups associated with seeds are sources for the plant microbiome's composition. These resident groups can be changed according to many factors, and their potential is not yet clear. One way to study these microorganisms is to partly remove them from the seeds and check the plant phenotype. Using factors that disturb the resident microbial community is also a strategy. This dissertation's objective was to verify the effects of maize seed exposure to sodium hypochlorite and the bacterium *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* on the resident community of maize seeds and seedling development. Maize seeds of the SHS 5050 variety were disinfected in sodium hypochlorite at 0 (control), 15, 30, 60, and 120 min and inoculated with *H. seropedicae* HRC54. Some of the seeds were submitted to a biochemical test, and others were transferred to tubes in the greenhouse, containing autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrates. Diazotrophic and epiphytic bacteria were quantified, microbial functional dynamics and biometric analyzes were verified on the 15th day of planting. Isolates obtained were used as synthetic microbial communities in the germination of maize. Disinfection does not significantly alter embryo viability. Seeds exposed to longer disinfection times had a higher number of bacterial populations. The bacterial count showed an emptying of

niches in the seeds that allowed the survival of groups that inhabit the organ's internal compartments. Disinfection and seed inoculation alter plant performance, microbial activity, and functional dynamics. Bacteria residing in maize seeds favour seedling germination, and studies in this area can be a promising tool for applying microbiological products in agriculture.

Keywords: native bacteria, seeds disinfection, plant performance.

1. INTRODUÇÃO

As plantas possuem numerosas associações com microrganismos, oferecendo condições favoráveis para abrigar estas comunidades. Estes microrganismos podem ser patogênicos, benéficos, ou estabelecerem relações neutras com a planta hospedeira (Kleingesinds e Galdeano, 2013). Por muito tempo considerou-se que a origem dos microrganismos associados ao corpo das plantas era o solo, onde exsudatos liberados pelas raízes atraem determinados grupos microbianos para a zona rizosférica, o que permite seu crescimento e colonização e estabelecimento endofítico nos tecidos radiculares. De fato, este tipo de transferência dos microrganismos às plantas, chamada transferência horizontal, é a principal fonte microbiana relatada nas condições de campo (U'Ren et al., 2009).

Microrganismos também colonizam os tecidos vegetais por transferência vertical. Neste caso, microrganismos que habitam internamente os tecidos vegetais são transferidos para a progênie (Lucero et al., 2011) por meio das sementes ou novos propágulos vegetativos, o que significa que os vegetais apresentam potencial para coevoluir com uma comunidade diversa de microrganismos.

Os microrganismos não patogênicos associados aos tecidos vegetais são capazes de desencadear mecanismos que atuam direta ou indiretamente na planta hospedeira podendo beneficiá-la (Haney et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2018) e, portanto, são considerados microrganismos promotores de crescimento vegetal (MPCV), que incluem principalmente os fungos e bactérias. Dentre os benefícios destas associações mutualísticas com as plantas são descritos: a indução de resistência

sistêmica, produção de fitohormônios, produção de sideróforos, antibiose, indução de tolerância aos metais pesados, fixação biológica de nitrogênio, melhor absorção e uso de nutrientes, dentre outros (Aeron et al., 2019; Omomowo e Babalola, 2019).

As sementes podem abrigar uma grande diversidade de bactérias (Mitter et al., 2017; Nelson, 2018; Santos et al., 2020) e suas funções ainda não são bem conhecidas. As bactérias residentes na semente podem ocupar diferentes nichos. É provável que microrganismos habitantes de compartimentos mais internos do órgão sejam transferidos verticalmente através das gerações, enquanto a região do pericarpo está envolvida na transferência horizontal destas bactérias residentes (Barret et al., 2016).

A função da comunidade microbiana residente das sementes pode ser estudada e compreendida através de sua remoção por métodos de desinfestação química. A desinfestação química atua, também, como um agente perturbador dessa comunidade microbiana residente nas sementes que ao ter sua estrutura alterada pode influenciar o fenótipo da planta em eventos de germinação e crescimento. Um outro agente que pode atuar na mudança de estrutura destas comunidades são os bioinoculantes, muito utilizados na agricultura. É importante que a associação destes inoculantes com a microbiota nativa seja compreendida, uma vez que o uso dos MPCV possibilita incrementos no crescimento e na produtividade das culturas, além de mitigar danos ambientais causados por fertilizantes e agroquímicos (Sammauria et al., 2020).

As sementes de milho (*Zea mays*) podem abrigar microrganismos patogênicos (Henning et al., 2011) ou grupos microbianos que desempenham funções benéficas como, por exemplo, atividade de biocontrole, relatado por Santos et al. (2021) em sementes de milho da variedade DKB 177. Porém, ainda são muitas as lacunas acerca do papel destes microrganismos residentes nas sementes de milho.

O presente trabalho objetivou investigar as alterações na dinâmica de bactérias residentes das sementes de milho (var. SHS 50505) e seus efeitos na germinação e desenvolvimento inicial das plântulas. Neste estudo, a estrutura da comunidade bacteriana cultivável da semente foi modulada por distúrbios químicos (hipoclorito de sódio) e biológicos (bioinoculante).

Primeiramente é apresentada a revisão de literatura com uma visão geral acerca dos microrganismos associados aos organismos vegetais e uma breve

menção das formas de estudá-los. Em seguida, é apresentado o tópico “Trabalhos” contendo um artigo que investiga a influência da desinfestação química na comunidade bacteriana nativa e no crescimento de plântulas de milho. Um *short communication* também é apresentado nesse tópico, que avalia os efeitos da bioinoculação na comunidade microbiana residente e na performance vegetal de sementes desinfestadas.

2. REVIÃO DE LITERATURA

2.1 MICRORGANISMOS ASSOCIADOS AOS TECIDOS VEGETAIS

Os vegetais possuem uma vasta gama de associações com fatores bióticos e estão sujeitos aos fatores abióticos, que interagem complexamente entre si. Eles estão inseridos em ecossistemas que naturalmente proporcionam estas múltiplas associações. Em uma perspectiva menos ampla, a planta também pode ser considerada um ecossistema com inúmeros microsítios que oferecem condições favoráveis para a habitação e interação de microrganismos, sendo estes patogênicos, benéficos ou neutros (Knief et al., 2012; Kleingesinds e Galdeano, 2013). O conjunto de todos os genomas microbianos associados ao tecido vegetal é chamado microbioma (Compat et al., 2019). Os MPCV constituintes deste microbioma, conhecidos como microbiota, apresentam diferentes hábitos e preferências para colonização.

No ambiente rizosférico existe uma grande atividade de microrganismos, compostos secretados e troca de sinais, em decorrência da liberação de exsudados pela raiz (Monteiro et al., 2012). Bactérias com genes de competência rizosférica dominam este nicho e passam a colonizar a planta superficialmente e desencadear diversos mecanismos que beneficiam a planta (Bakker et al., 2015; Hardoim et al., 2008). Há, também, os MPCV que penetram internamente os tecidos vegetais e a definição para este modo de vida é endofítica.

O termo “endofítico” foi introduzido pela primeira vez por Anton de Bary em 1866, que descobriu a presença de microrganismos dentro do sistema das plantas. Muitas definições foram propostas desde então. Wilson (1995) definiu como aqueles microrganismos que colonizam o interior dos tecidos vegetais sem desencadear sintomas de doença.

Por serem agentes biológicos que promovem o crescimento vegetal, o uso destes microrganismos, endofíticos ou rizosféricos, pode ser uma estratégia para melhorar a produtividade de culturas (Haney et al., 2018; Bhat, 2019). Isso resultaria em redução da grande demanda por insumos químicos usados no sistema de cultivo atual (Egamberdieva et al., 2015).

Os microrganismos modulam diversos processos metabólicos na planta hospedeira e melhoram a produtividade e a resiliência de sistemas agrícolas. Pesquisas trabalham com o isolamento destes microrganismos rizosféricos e endofíticos para sua utilização em maior escala, com o intuito de aumentar a produtividade das culturas. Esses microrganismos, isolados ou em consórcios, formulados como bioinoculantes, têm sido crescentemente demandados pelo setor agrícola, representando uma alternativa ao uso de fertilizantes minerais (Sammauria et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2018).

Além de microrganismos potenciais usados como bioinoculantes, existe uma grande fração da comunidade microbiana, associada aos tecidos vegetais, pouco explorada até o momento, já que nem toda a microbiota nativa do organismo vegetal é detectada por métodos tradicionais de cultivo (Hartmann et al., 2017). Estudos dessas comunidades nativas podem permitir a formulação de comunidades sintéticas mais assertivas, para alcance de uma melhor performance vegetal, uma vez que trabalha com microrganismos associados naturalmente ao tecido vegetal e na forma de comunidades.

Nesta direção, é essencial a realização de estudos que buscam compreender como a interação planta-microrganismo acontece, em qual estágio ou fase do desenvolvimento vegetal a inoculação é mais efetiva e qual mecanismo é desencadeado para que o crescimento da planta seja promovido em decorrência da presença de grupos microbianos específicos.

Apesar do uso de bioinoculantes já ser consolidado, sua aplicação depende diretamente do entendimento adequado da associação microrganismo-planta (Piotrowski e Rillig, 2008) e da sua associação com a microbiota nativa da espécie

vegetal de interesse. Trabalhos que identificam a natureza intrínseca de MPCV associados às plantas contribuem para o conhecimento destas interações e uma aplicação agrícola cada vez mais bem-sucedida.

2.2 MICRORGANISMOS ASSOCIADOS À SEMENTE

As complexas interações existentes entre plantas e microrganismos podem ser resultado da diversidade e dinâmica dos micróbios habitantes das sementes, órgão responsável pela dispersão e propagação de espécies vegetais. Compreender estas associações microbianas em sementes nos estágios iniciais de germinação e desenvolvimento abrem possibilidades para pesquisas centradas em novas abordagens na interação planta-microrganismo. Claramente, as comunidades microbianas associadas a este órgão, fração significativa de seu microbioma, impactam o desempenho das plantas ao longo da vida, tanto em termos de saúde dos organismos vegetais quanto de sua produtividade (Nelson, 2018).

Atualmente, apesar dos recorrentes trabalhos com microbiomas vegetais (Berg et al., 2015; Lebeis, 2015; Heijden e Hartmann, 2016), estudos centrados nos microbiomas de sementes são escassos. Para Mitter et al. (2017), os microrganismos associados às sementes influenciam a germinação, o desempenho e a sobrevivência das plantas. Ainda, Santos et al. (2020) demonstraram que eventos envolvidos na germinação de sementes de milho podem modular comunidades microbianas residentes e estas influenciar o crescimento e o desenvolvimento vegetal.

Hardoim et al. (2015) determinaram que as interações existentes entre os microrganismos e sementes podem ser casuais ou íntimas. Mas independente da forma em que estas associações acontecem, elas influenciam diretamente o microbioma da semente, bem como sua transferência para outros estágios vegetativos da planta ao longo do seu crescimento e evolução. Assim, a microbiota residente da semente pode ser transmitida verticalmente através da planta-mãe, pelo sistema vascular.

Em suma, diversos estudos têm demonstrado que o microbioma transmitido pela semente é essencial para o desempenho inicial das plantas (Mitter et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2021). A partir do contato da planta com o ambiente, outros microrganismos, como os do solo, passam a fazer parte do

microbioma vegetal e a influenciar seus processos (Arruda, 2020). Assim, além da microbiota residente da semente e herdada da planta-mãe, as plantas são colonizadas por microrganismos transferidos de forma horizontal, ou seja, pelo ambiente (Glick, 2020).

Na semente, os microrganismos podem ocupar diferentes compartimentos: tecidos de revestimento, embrião e tecido de armazenamento. De acordo com Barret et al. (2016), é provável que microrganismos habitantes de compartimentos mais internos do órgão sejam transferidos verticalmente, enquanto a região do pericarpo está envolvida na transferência do tipo horizontal.

Além da influência dos microrganismos oriundos da planta-mãe no microbioma das sementes e daqueles presentes no ambiente onde a planta está inserida, há outra via de entrada pela qual podem ocorrer infecção e colonização microbiana. As estruturas reprodutivas como grãos de pólen, o pistilo e o estigma representam porta de acesso efetiva. Isso significa que bactérias transmitidas por insetos através da polinização podem fazer parte do microbioma das sementes e serem transferidas para a próxima geração, como discutido por Prado et al. (2020).

Estudos acerca das associações de microrganismos com as sementes têm muito a contribuir para o entendimento de aspectos evolutivos das plantas e das comunidades microbianas, além de ser mais uma vertente de estudos para compreender a influência da microbiota no desempenho vegetal. A partir de conclusões sólidas, estratégias poderão ser traçadas para favorecer a permanência e crescimento de microrganismos nativos que sejam benéficos para o crescimento das culturas, bem como a formulação de comunidades sintéticas aplicáveis no campo a partir deles.

2.3 INVESTIGANDO A COMUNIDADE MICROBIANA NATIVA

A comunidade microbiana associada ao corpo das plantas pode ser estudada e compreendida de diferentes formas e em diferentes níveis. Com relação aos estudos dos microrganismos associados às sementes, uma maneira de compreender a sua importância e funcionalidade para o vegetal é verificar o fenótipo da planta perante a ausência da microbiota residente na semente. Diferentes métodos de desinfestação têm sido empregados como, por exemplo, a desinfestação química (à base de álcool e hipoclorito de sódio), termoterapia (altas temperaturas), bem como uso de substâncias inativantes bacteriostáticas, tais

como antibióticos e fungicidas. Não obstante, utilizando diferentes protocolos, nenhum destes métodos é capaz de eliminar completamente a microbiota (Zorato et al., 2001; Esposito-Polesi, 2011) sem causar danos irreversíveis ao embrião da semente (Bewley e Black, 1982; Sofiatti et al., 2008; Rubim et al., 2010). Assim, estudos com o objetivo de compreender a estrutura e as funcionalidades da microbiota residente carecem da padronização de métodos para remoção total ou parcial da microbiota das sementes (Damasceno, 2018; Santos et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2021).

Verificar a importância destes microrganismos faz parte de uma gama de possibilidades para compreender as suas associações. Nesse sentido, métodos dependentes e independentes de cultivos microbianos são fundamentais para conhecer a estrutura da comunidade (Hartman et al., 2017). No entanto, compreender de forma total a estrutura e as complexas associações dos microrganismos inseridos em um determinado ambiente de interesse estão além dos métodos baseados no cultivo microbiano.

Analisar a diversidade de microrganismos isoladamente e/ou cultivá-los individualmente em laboratório para analisar seu potencial no campo, por exemplo, pode reduzir a percepção real da ecologia da comunidade microbiana e sua estrutura em determinado ambiente (Garland e Millis, 1991). Outras análises podem ser requeridas para se obter uma ideia mais fidedigna das interações em sementes e seus benefícios para as culturas, conforme discute-se adiante.

2.3.1 Desinfestação química

Os métodos de desinfestação química são amplamente relatados na literatura como uma estratégia para eliminar microrganismos patogênicos (Freitas et al., 2019; Parisi et al., 2019). Sua aplicação na agricultura vai desde os trabalhos com micropropagação à tecnologia de sementes. Um agente sanitizante amplamente utilizado no processo de desinfestação é o hipoclorito de sódio (NaClO), substância química produzida industrialmente pela eletrólise do cloreto de sódio (NaCl). Por apresentar características tóxicas, a concentração e o tempo de exposição do produto ao tecido vegetal vivo devem ser observados e muito bem definidos. Além disso, sua aplicação pode remover boa parte da microbiota superficial dos tecidos e não só apenas os microrganismos patogênicos.

Trabalhar com a desinfestação química de sementes pode validar a importância dos microrganismos associados superficialmente a este órgão para o desempenho vegetal, uma vez que eles são, parcialmente, eliminados durante a exposição da semente ao hipoclorito de sódio. Com a redução do número de táxons, é possível comparar fenótipos da planta com as sementes que não foram submetidas aos processos de desinfestação. A desinfestação também permite o acesso aos compartimentos mais internos da semente, o que possibilita verificar a presença de microrganismos que habitam outros nichos da semente.

Recentemente, demonstrou-se que na concentração de 1,25 % de hipoclorito de sódio (por 30 min), sementes de milho exibiram redução na comunidade microbiana residente e alterações na estrutura da comunidade associada às raízes emergidas, com consequente modulação do crescimento e susceptibilidade às doenças (Santos et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2021).

O hipoclorito de sódio pode ser um dos agentes causadores de distúrbios da microbiota residente de sementes durante os processos iniciais de desenvolvimento vegetal, como demonstrado por Santos et al. (2020) e Santos et al. (2021), ao desinfestar sementes de milho. Esse modelo de perturbação química inicial das sementes pode, portanto, ser uma estratégia para estudos do papel e alterações do microbioma em sementes de milho.

Uma vez utilizado nos estudos de microbioma, é necessário considerar que além da possível toxicidade do hipoclorito de sódio em determinada concentração (o que danifica o embrião e piora a performance vegetal), ele pode ser favorável ao processo germinativo, doando moléculas de oxigênio, o que é vantajoso para as sementes (visto que elas passam por um período de anaerobiose no desenvolvimento inicial do embrião) (Taiz et al., 2017).

O potencial benéfico do hipoclorito poderia explicar melhorias no processo de germinação de sementes desinfetadas, independente da presença de comunidades bacterianas residentes no órgão. Porém, é importante considerar possíveis contribuições do hipoclorito de sódio conjuntamente com o papel desempenhado pela comunidade microbiana residente no desempenho das plântulas. Nesse sentido, variações na estrutura da comunidade microbiana associadas aos eventos de germinação são observadas e não podem ser descartadas. Efeitos de comunidades que colonizam superfície das sementes, das

sobreviventes após protocolos de desinfestação, sua interação com bioinoculantes e influência sobre a performance vegetal precisam ser investigadas.

2.3.2. Métodos cultiváveis e não cultiváveis de microrganismos

A obtenção e a manipulação de micróbios são partes essenciais do processo de estudo dos microbiomas vegetais. Isolar e restituir na planta os microrganismos associados naturalmente a ela pode confirmar suas potencialidades. Métodos cultiváveis de microrganismos são usados para este fim e envolvem a formulação de bioinoculantes e/ou comunidades sintéticas para aplicações em grande escala (John et al., 2016). Porém, uma comunidade microbiana associada a um determinado ambiente pode ser muito mais diversa e não composta apenas pelos microrganismos isolados em placas de Petri.

Métodos não cultiváveis são amplamente utilizados no estudo dos microbiomas, através de diversas técnicas de sequenciamento, e capazes de revelar grande parte da diversidade microbiana da planta (Aguiar-Pulido et al., 2016). Através destes métodos, é possível obter unidades taxonômicas operacionais (OTUs) de diferentes nichos da planta. Neste caso, OTUs são microrganismos intimamente relacionados e agrupados, por similaridade, através do sequenciamento de DNA das amostras de interesse (Chen et al., 2013).

Quando estes métodos independentes de cultivo são aplicados além da diversidade de táxons, é possível detectar a abundância, perfil metabólico e outras características da comunidade (Pylro et al., 2014). Apesar de estas técnicas apresentarem alguns desafios, quando unidas aos métodos convencionais de cultivo e às técnicas de microscopia, por exemplo, podem explicar melhor os microbiomas associados a um determinado ambiente.

2.3.3. Dinâmica funcional microbiana

A análise da dinâmica funcional de uma comunidade microbiana pode ser feita de acordo com os padrões de utilização de diferentes fontes de carbono por seus integrantes, ao longo do tempo, utilizando o *Biolog EcoPlate™* (Biolog, Inc., Hayward, CA), onde as amostras de interesse são incubadas. Esse método de estudo foi criado especificamente para análises de comunidades e estudos ecológicos microbianos, a partir da demanda de ecólogos microbianos (Hayward, CA - *Biolog, Ecoplate*).

As *microplacas Biolog EcoPlate* são placas compostas por 96 poços, contendo 31 fontes de carbono e o poço controle, todos em três réplicas. As 31 fontes de carbono nas quais as amostras são incubadas são divididas em seis grupos: de ácidos carboxílicos, aminas/amidas, aminoácidos, carboidratos, compostos fenólicos e polímeros (Tabela 1). Cada poço das ecoplacas contém o corante redox violeta tetrazólio que produz uma cor lilás quando reduzido, indicando respiração de uma única fonte de carbono oriunda da presença de microrganismos nas amostras inoculados na placa (Garland e Mills, 1991). O consumo das fontes de carbono é obtido pelas leituras da densidade óptica ($OD_{590\text{ nm}}$) de cada poço em leitor de Elisa.

Este método de análise foi descrito pela primeira vez em 1991 por Garland e Mills e tem se mostrado eficaz na distinção de mudanças espaciais e temporais em comunidades microbianas. É possível, através dele, detectar mudanças em decorrência de alguma variável ambiental ou perturbação induzida. O método também permite comparar a dinâmica funcional das comunidades microbianas inteiras, sem passar pela etapa de isolamento do microrganismo (Gavrilescu, 2010; Gryta et al., 2014).

Tabela 1. Fontes de carbono distribuídas em seis categorias de nutrientes, conforme Choi e Dobbs (1999).

Código	Fonte de C
Aminas/ Amidas	
G4	Feniletilamina
H4	Putrescina
Aminoácidos	
A4	L-Arginina
B4	L-Asparagina
C4	L-Fenilalanina
D4	L-Serina
E4	L-Treonina
F4	Ácido Glicil-L-Glutâmico
Carboidratos	
H1	α -D-lactose
A2	β -Metil-D-glicosídeo
G1	D-Cellobiose
D2	D-Manitol
C2	I- Eritritol
G2	Glicose-1-fosfato
A3	Ácido D-Galactônico-Y-lactona
E2	N-Acetil-D-Glucosamina

H2	D,L- α -glicerol fosfato
B2	D-Xylose
Ácido acético carboxílico	
G3	Ácido α -Cetobutírico
B3	D- Ácido Galacturônico
F2	D-Ácido Glucosamínico
E3	Ácido γ -Hidroxi-butírico
H3	D-Ácido Málico
B1	Ácido Pirúvico metil éster
F3	Ácido Itacônico
Polímeros	
Continuação da tabela 1.	
E1	α -Ciclodextrina
F1	Glicogênio
C1	Tween 40
D1	Tween 80
Compostos fenólicos	
C3	2-Hidroxi Ácido benzoico
D3	4-Hidroxi Ácido benzoico

Como forma de validar a importância deste tipo de estudo na ecologia microbiana, basta considerar que nem sempre a presença ou ausência de determinada espécie microbiana vai alterar a funcionalidade de sua comunidade (White e Findlay, 1988). Analisar características relacionadas aos processos importantes do ambiente estudado e correlacionar com outros parâmetros permite uma melhor compreensão dos fatores reguladores da comunidade (Garland e Milis, 1991).

O método de *Biolog EcoPlate* foi aplicado por Cury (2002) em seu estudo de comunidades microbianas residentes em solos de mangue contaminados por petróleo. A utilização deste método baseado no padrão de consumo das fontes de carbono por comunidades microbianas permitiu verificar diminuições das atividades metabólicas das comunidades em função da profundidade do solo coletado. Nesta mesma vertente, Rasmussen e Sorensen (2001) observaram padrões uniformes de utilização das fontes de carbono pelas comunidades bacterianas presentes em solos contaminados por mercúrio.

Este tipo de análise também permitiu afirmar mudanças existentes na estrutura de comunidades bacterianas em decorrência de diferentes sistemas de cultivo sobre o solo (Lupwayi et al., 2001; Chávez et al., 2011). Tavares et al. (2017) demonstraram, por meio do método de *Biolog*, poucas diferenças na estrutura de comunidades bacterianas associadas ao sistema solo-planta de diferentes

linhagens de milho transgênico. No entanto, a aplicação destas análises baseadas no consumo de fontes de carbono pelas comunidades microbianas residentes em sementes de milho nunca foi explorada.

TRABALHOS

EXPOSURE OF MAIZE SEED TO SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE DISINFECTION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE RESIDENT BACTERIAL COMMUNITY

ABSTRACT

Seed-borne microorganism communities can be altered due to some factors and modulated according to the germination, positively affecting seedling development. It is essential to remove these microorganisms to study their potential to plant growth and health. The work's objective was to investigate the impact of chemical disinfection over seed-borne bacteria population size and diversity and their effect on seedling development. Maize seeds (SHS 5050) were disinfected in sodium hypochlorite at times of 0 (control), 15, 30, 60, and 120 min. Some seeds were submitted to a biochemical test for viability tissue, and others transferred to tubes in the greenhouse, containing autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrates. After the 15th day of planting, the diazotrophic and epiphytic bacteria population size associated with the root and biometric analyses were evaluated. The microbial functional dynamics associated with the roots were verified using the Ecoplates

method. Bacterial isolates obtained in the greenhouse test were used to formulate synthetic communities and analyse their maize germination potential. No significant differences were found in cell viability at different disinfection times. An increase in the bacterial population was observed in the more extended exposure times of the maize seed to sodium hypochlorite. In higher times, there is a reduction in the bacterial population residing in the external compartments of the maize seed resulting in unoccupied niches, which allows the emergence and survival of microbial groups that inhabit the interior of the organ. The disinfection time of 120 min was harmful to the seedlings, and the time of 30 min in non-autoclaved soil affected maize seedlings positively. Disinfection alters the metabolic profile of bacterial communities. Bacteria residents in maize seeds favour seedling germination and can be a promising tool for applying microbiological products in agriculture.

Keywords: seeds disinfection, native bacteria, plant performance.

RESUMO

Comunidades de microrganismos transmitidos por sementes podem ser alteradas devido a alguns fatores e moduladas de acordo com a germinação, afetando positivamente o desenvolvimento das mudas. É importante remover esses microrganismos para estudar seu potencial para o crescimento e a saúde das plantas. O objetivo do trabalho foi investigar o impacto da desinfecção química sobre o tamanho e a diversidade da população bacteriana de sementes e seus efeitos no desenvolvimento de mudas. Sementes de milho (SHS 5050) foram desinfetadas em hipoclorito de sódio nos tempos de 0 (controle), 15, 30, 60 e 120 min. Algumas sementes foram submetidas ao ensaio bioquímico de viabilidade tecidual, e outras transferidas para tubetes em casa de vegetação, contendo substratos autoclavados e não autoclavados. Após o 15º dia de plantio, avaliou-se o tamanho da população de bactérias diazotróficas e epifíticas associadas à raiz e

análises biométricas. A dinâmica funcional microbiana associada às raízes foi verificada pelo método Ecoplates. Isolados bacterianos obtidos no teste de casa de vegetação foram usados para formular comunidades sintéticas e analisar seu potencial na germinação do milho. Nenhuma diferença significativa foi encontrada na viabilidade dos tecidos embrionários em diferentes tempos de desinfestação. Observou-se um aumento da população bacteriana nos tempos mais longos de exposição da semente de milho ao hipoclorito de sódio. Em tempos mais longos, ocorre uma redução da população bacteriana residente nos compartimentos externos da semente de milho resultando em nichos desocupados, o que permitiu o surgimento e sobrevivência de grupos microbianos que habitam o interior do órgão. O tempo de 120 min de desinfestação foi prejudicial às plântulas, e o tempo de 30 min em solo não autoclavado afetou positivamente as mudas de milho. A desinfestação altera o perfil metabólico das comunidades bacterianas. Bactérias residentes em sementes de milho favorecem a germinação de mudas e podem ser uma ferramenta promissora para aplicação de produtos microbiológicos na agricultura.

Palavras-chave: desinfestação de sementes, desempenho vegetal, bactérias nativas.

INTRODUCTION

The genomes of plant colonizing microorganisms are called microbiome (Compat et al., 2019). These microorganisms play essential roles in crops' health and productivity (Berendsen et al., 2012). The search for understanding these plant microbiomes and their application in agriculture, as a way of returning them to ecosystems (Grady et al., 2016), has been the subject of much research since agricultural production tends to be compromised in the way the current cultivation system is conducted (Egamberdieva et al., 2015; Sammauria et al., 2020). The classic methods of isolating and cultivating microorganisms allow access to the cultivable fraction of this microbiome.

The origin of microorganisms inhabiting plant tissues can come from different compartments in the soil-plant-atmosphere system. The native microbiota of soil is attracted by exudates released from the root tissues; once in the rhizospheric zone, microorganisms colonize and infect plant tissues (Bakker et al., 2015). The seed's inhabiting microbiota is inherited from the mother plant and are transferred vertically to the next offsprings (Glick, 2020). Air-borne and insects carried-microbes can assess plant tissues through plant reproductive organs such as pistils, pollen, and stigma (Prado et al., 2020).

Despite advances in plant microbiome studies (Berg et al., 2015; Lebeis, 2015; Heijden and Hartmann, 2016), little attention has been paid to the seed-borne microbiota. Mitter et al. (2017) suggested that microorganisms are associated with seeds, dynamically influence plant germination, performance, and survival. For Nelson (2018), this microbial community can impact the performance of plants throughout their life. However, the contribution of the microorganisms seed-borne to the development of plants still needs to be further elucidated.

One way to study the seed microbiome's role for the plants is to evaluate the plant phenotype through their partial removal by chemical disinfection methods. These methods are cited for eliminating mainly phytopathogenic microorganisms (Freitas et al., 2019; Parisi et al., 2019). Recently, using cultivable and non-cultivable methods to study the bacteriome of maize seeds var DKB 177, the concentration of 1.25% (for 30 min) of sodium hypochlorite had shown remarkable changes in the seed-borne bacterial community. The chlorine ions are believed to alter the community structure associated with the emerged maize roots, with consequent germination and growth rate modulation and altered susceptibility to plant diseases (Santos et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2021). However, how this occurs and its associated mechanisms over the interactions between the plant (seed) physiology and the microbiome seed community is unknown (or lack scientific investigation).

This sanitizing agent can cause disturbances in the seed resident microbiota during the initial plant development processes (Santos et al., 2020). This chemical disturbance caused initially in the seeds can also be a strategy for studying changes in a cultivable fraction of this microbiome in maize seeds and an opportunity to develop new biological agricultural technologies to increase plant growth response to microbes.

The work's objective was to evaluate the effects of the increased chlorine disinfection treatments time of maize seed (*Zea mays* L.) on the seed microbial community and further seedling development.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The summary of all tests carried out in this work, from seed disinfection, is presented in Figure 1.

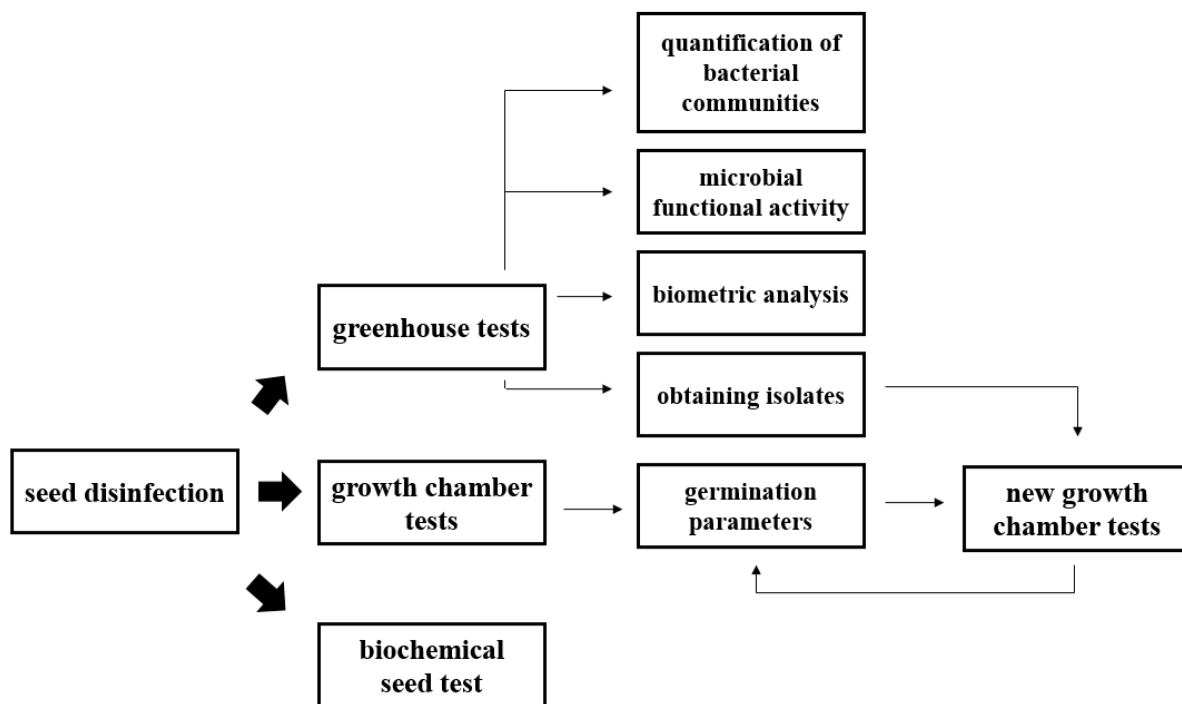


Figure 1. Flowchart of assays performed to investigate the effect of chlorine disinfection treatments time over seeds of maize grown on autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrate for 15 days according to objectives of this study.

Seed disinfection

Seeds of commercial maize (*Zea mays* L.) hybrid SHS 5050 (Santa Helena Sementes, Brazil) were washed 5 times in sterile distilled water, then immersed for 5 h in sterile distilled water. The disinfection stage consisted of five treatments. Non-disinfected seed (control treatment) remains in water simultaneously, followed by transfer to dishes containing an autoclaved filter paper. The other seeds were immersed in 70% ethanol for 5 min and then washed in sterile distilled water and divided into four new groups to receive treatment with sodium hypochlorite (NaClO; Butterfly Ecologia, Audax Company). The disinfectant agent was used at a concentration of 1.25%, according to Santos et al. (2020).

Biochemical seed testing

After the disinfection step, the seeds were subjected to a biochemical test to determine their cells' viability. The test is based on reducing the 2,3,5-triphenyl tetrazolium chloride compound (TTC) and was carried out according to RAIS (Brasil, 2009). When TTC comes into contact with viable H⁺ producing cells, it is reduced to a red, stable, and non-diffusible compound (triphenyl formazan). The test was carried out with four replications and 10 seeds made up each repetition. The coloured embryos were considered viable, and those with poorly defined colour, with essential flaccid structures, were considered not viable. The coloured seeds were photographed in a light stereomicroscope coupled with a digital camera (Zeiss Stemi SV 11).

Experimental setup in greenhouse

The experiment was carried in a greenhouse to verify the effects of disinfection on the native bacterial community and plant performance, in a factorial arrangement (5x2) and completely randomized design, with 8 replicates. Each experimental unit comprised a plastic tube containing 270 g of substrate plant and two seeds from the disinfection treatments. The substrate types based on coconut fibre used in the experiment were autoclaved substrate (AS) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS). The physical and chemical properties of the non-autoclaved substrate used in the experiment are: pH (4,9); N (g/Kg): 5,04; P (g/Kg): 3,77; K (g/Kg): 2,10; Ca (g/Kg): 5,20; Mg (g/Kg): 0,40; C (g/Kg): 249,6; S (g/Kg): 0,54; Fe (mg/Kg): 8855; Cu (mg/Kg): 26; Zn (mg/Kg): 90; Mn (mg/Kg): 182; B (mg/Kg):

104,80; U (%): 30,64. The substrate was autoclaved 3 times in a vertical autoclave at 121 atm by 30 min, with an interval of 12 h between each autoclaving.

Effect of chemical disinfection on the population levels of seed-borne bacterial community

The total heterotrophic and diazotrophic bacteria's population size was estimated with maize root samples obtained in the greenhouse assay on the 14th day after planting. For this, 1 g of root from each treatment was macerated in saline 99 mL of sodium chloride (NaCl, 8.5 g L⁻¹) and subjected to serial dilution up to 10⁻⁷. After that, 100 µL of 10⁻⁴, 10⁻⁵, 10⁻⁶, and 10⁻⁷ dilution was transferred to JNFb semisolid medium (malic acid as C-source and bromothymol blue as a pH indicator). The counting of the diazotrophic bacterial community was performed using the most probable number (MPN) method per g of the fresh root and followed the recommendation by Baldani et al. (2014). Flasks with bacterial growth were separated for the isolation of diazotrophic bacteria. 10⁻⁴, 10⁻⁵, and 10⁻⁶ dilution were also transferred to dishes containing Solid Nutrient Broth (NB) medium to select isolates from each treatment.

Sample preparation for microbial functional diversity analysis

The communities' functional dynamics analysis was made using the Biolog EcoPlate™ (Biolog, Inc., Hayward, CA). The samples incubated in each well for analysis were prepared by collecting 1 g of roots segments from in-house treatments, followed by gentle washing in sterile distilled water. Later on, transferred to a glass tube containing 9 mL sterilized saline solution (NaCl, 8.5 g L⁻¹) vortexed for 2 min. Aliquots of 1 mL were transferred to new saline bottles until the 10⁻³ dilution. The choice of the dilution to be incubated was made from a previous population size estimation associated with the roots of the maize seedlings using colony plate counts (cells n° root g⁻¹). The consumption of carbon sources was obtained by reading each well's optical density (OD590 nm) in a spectrophotometer (Thermo plate). Initially, the consumption of carbon sources was monitored every 4 h for one day, then every 12 h, up to 268 h.

Patterns of carbon sources-use by microbial communities

To perform it, we determined the average well colour development (AWCD), according to Garland and Mills (1991). The AWCD values are obtained by the sum of the absorbance of the 31 carbon sources subtracted from the value of the control well (Equation 1). Negative absorbance values were considered zero.

$$AWCD = \sum \frac{OD\ substrate - OD\ control}{31}$$

Eq. 1

AWCD values were averaged at each time for each treatment separately. The values were plotted on a graph to monitor the rate of colour development and carbon sources' saturation between treatments over time.

The ability or not of the microbiota to use a particular source of C was defined according to Ibekwe and Kennedy (1998), at the time of 100 h of incubation, using the adapted equation (Equation 2):

$$We = \frac{Wa - Wo}{Wo}$$

Eq. 2

In which,

We are the colour development index;

Wa is the absorbance of each well and

Wo is the absorbance of the control cavity.

The use of a C source by the microbiota was considered positive when the colour development index (We) in the time of 100 hs was higher than 1. The graphic matrix was produced to allow the visualization of each C substrate's intensity of use by the microbial communities associated with the roots of the seedlings.

Then, the We values of the 31 sources of C were grouped into six groups according to the type of compound (amines/amides, amino acids, carbohydrates, acetic carboxylic acid, polymers and phenolic compounds) and used to evaluate differences in the consumption of sources of C by the microbial communities of the different treatments.

The principal component analysis (PCA) was performed with the substrate utilization values obtained in 100 h of incubation and with the C sources already grouped.

Effect of the time of chlorine seed disinfection on seedling development (greenhouse assay)

Seeds of maize hybrid SHS 5050 treated with increasing NaOCl disinfection time were grown in a greenhouse for 15 days. Seedling emergency data were collected daily, and at the end of the experiments, plant samples were collected and subjected to biometric analysis. The plant growth parameters determined were: Stem diameter (SD), Shoot length (SL), Root length (RL), Shoot fresh mass (SFM), Shoot dry mass (SDM), Root fresh mass (RFM), and Root dry mass (RDM).

Effect of the time of chemical disinfection on seed germination (laboratory assay)

A gnotobiotic system was carried out to evaluate the increased time of disinfection with NaOCl to complement the greenhouse data. Analyses were made of maize seeds' germination under *in vitro* conditions from the exact 5 disinfection times mentioned above. The seeds were placed in plates containing agar-water medium (0.5%) and incubated in a growth chamber for 7 days at 30 °C, with a 12/12 h (light/dark) photoperiod. The treatment was conducted in DIC. The sample number was 12 seeds per plate and four repetitions per treatment. The number of seeds germinated daily was recorded. The parameters: percentage of germination (%), average germination time (AGT), average germination speed (AGS), and germination speed index (GSI) were calculated according to Magure (1962).

Inoculation of the synthetic community (syncom) on maize seed germination

To verify possible beneficial effects of the bacteria isolated from the roots of the seedlings grown in the greenhouse, a new experiment was carried out (under the same conditions mentioned above) to verify the germination of seeds in response to the addition of a synthetic bacterial community. Eight bacteria were selected to compose the synthetic community. The choice of isolates was based on the morphological difference, purity, and origin of the bacteria colonies from different treatments. These bacteria inoculums were transferred to glass tubes containing Dygs medium and stirred at 180 rpm for 72 h at 32 °C. After growth, 1 mL of each bacterial solution was centrifuged, separately, at 5,000 rpm for 10 min to obtain pellets. To standardize the cell density among the eight isolates selected, different amounts of sterile distilled water were added to each tube of the pellets according

to each bacteria's OD, and these solutions were resuspended. An aliquot of 20 μL of each isolate was transferred to a single tube and vortexed. The aliquot of 1 mL of the mixture was serially distributed in 9 mL tubes containing sterile distilled water until the 10^{-6} dilution. Immediately after disinfection, the seeds were immersed in this final solution of bacterial inoculum (synthetic community - syncom) for 10 min. Then, the seeds were transferred to the plates and incubated in a growth chamber for 7 days. The number of seeds germinated daily was recorded. The parameters: percentage of germination (%), average germination time (AGT), average germination speed (AGS), and germination speed index (GSI) were calculated according to Magure (1962).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biochemical seed testing

There was an increase in non-viable cells as the time of exposure of the seeds to sodium hypochlorite increased (Figure 2). However, such difference was not detected statistically at the level of 0.05% of significance, and all treatments had coloured (viable) seeds after tetrazolium assay (Figure 3).

The red colour in all treatments shows the permanence of their living tissues. The H^+ released during cellular respiration is transferred by a group of enzymes, particularly malic acid dehydrogenase, allowing TTC interaction (Brasil, 2009). As the compound resulting from the interaction does not diffuse, a clear separation of the living and coloured tissues is metabolic active (Figure 3).

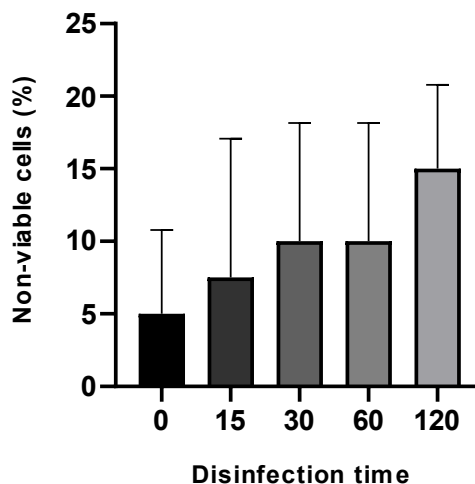


Figure 2. Influence of chlorine disinfection of maize seeds on the viability of embryonic cells as a function of immersion (or treatment) time. There was no significant difference between seed disinfection treatments according to the Tukey test ($p \leq 0.05$).

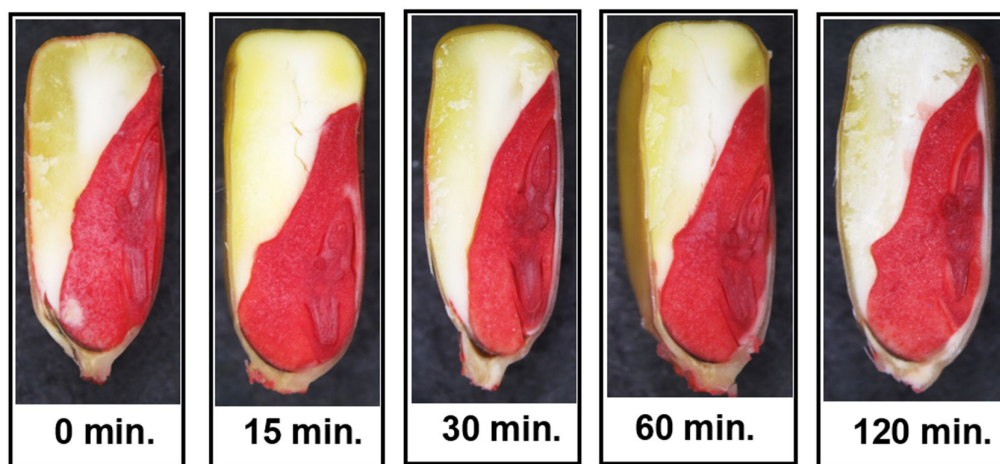


Figure 3. Half-cut seeds of corn seeds hybrid SHS 5050 treated by immersion during 0, 15, 30, 60 and 120 min in a NaOCl solution (2500 mg.L^{-1} of active chlorine) showing tetrazolium positive (red coloured) reaction (dehydrogenase activity) showing equal embryonic cells' viability.

Estimation of the bacterial community levels associated with maize roots

The results of the total epiphytic bacterial quantifications in solid NB medium and the total diazotrophic bacteria in JNFb medium are presented below, in tables 4 and 5, respectively. The disinfection of maize seeds with sodium hypochlorite alters the bacterial counts associated with emerged roots in both treatments (Tables 1 and 2). These data reinforce the role of sodium hypochlorite as a disruptive agent

over the resident bacterial community, reflecting differences in the microbiota's establishment throughout the maize's germination and growth processes. In general, the number of total epiphytic bacteria (Table 1) in the autoclaved substrate showed an increasing trend along with the disinfection time (except for 30 min).

Table 1. Influence of seed disinfection time and plant substrate autoclaving on the count of total epiphytic bacteria associated with maize seedling roots recovered in NB culture medium.

Immersion time (min)	Treatments	
	AS (CFU.mL ⁻¹)	NAS (CFU.mL ⁻¹)
0	0.07 x 10 ⁷	1.83 x 10 ⁷
15	3.95 x 10 ⁷	1.73 x 10 ⁷
30	3.90 x 10 ⁷	1.10 x 10 ⁸
60	6.12 x 10 ⁷	1.60 x 10 ⁸
120	6.89 x 10 ⁷	3.43 x 10 ⁷

Time disinfection: immersion in sodium hypochlorite at 1.25% for 0, 15, 30, 60, and 120 min.
Substrate types: an autoclaved substrate (AS) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS).

Table 2. Influence of seed disinfection time and substrate autoclaving on the count of diazotrophic bacteria associated with maize seedling roots recovered in JNFb culture medium.

Immersion time (min)	Treatments	
	AS (cells.g ⁻¹)	NAS (cells.g ⁻¹)
0	4.5 x 10 ⁷	2.4 x 10 ⁶
15	3.5 x 10 ⁷	1.4 x 10 ⁸
30	1.4 x 10 ⁸	7.8 x 10 ⁷
60	1.4 x 10 ⁸	1.1 x 10 ⁸
120	1.4 x 10 ⁸	1.4 x 10 ⁸

Time disinfection: immersion in sodium hypochlorite at 1.25% for 0, 15, 30, 60, and 120 min.
Substrate types: an autoclaved substrate (AS) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS). Positive growth in JNFb (malic acid as C-source) semi-solid N-free media means forming a white sub-superficial white pellicle.

When the seeds are exposed to increased sodium hypochlorite times, an apparent effect on the seed surface-associated microbiota is expected, with an increased seed epiphytes reduction. Interestingly, longer disinfection time results in higher bacteria population numbers associated with emerged roots. We could hypothesize that eliminating the surface and outmost seed layer microbial community reduced the competition, allowing better colonization from microbial communities derived from the substrate and the inner seed tissue. From an

ecological perspective, a vacancy of niches and a decrease in competition to occupy them allow occupation by other bacterial groups on the seed surface (Hardoim, 2019). This occupation may have been due to the seed organ's innermost microbiota or too resistant microorganisms inhabiting its surface in our study. These findings confirm microorganisms' presence in different seed compartments (Shade et al., 2017) since the bacterial population increased in treatments with the autoclaved substrate.

The diazotrophic bacteria population also increased with the seed's longer exposure time to chlorine - except for 15 min (Table 2). It is likely that bacteria with diazotrophic potential that inhabit maize seeds are part of the total epiphytic bacterial community and behave similarly concerning niche vacancy. It may also have occurred some oxidative effect on protective proteins or what the chlorine may be disruptive to membrane proteins, causing nutrient release, which can support bacterial growth.

When we observe the disinfection treatments for non-autoclaved substrate, the variation between treatments is also high. However, the bacterial colony count does not occur rapidly (Table 1) as in autoclaved substrate. The highest number of total bacteria found in some disinfection times (30 and 60 min) for roots collected in non-autoclaved substrate demonstrates the influence of the soil microbiome throughout the process of establishing the native microbiota (Arruda, 2020). This same logic can explain the presence and establishment of total diazotrophic bacteria isolated from the root (Table 2).

The total epiphytic bacteria counts (Table 1) were higher for some treatments with disinfected seeds in autoclaved substrate than the non-autoclaved substrate. These results suggest that part of the seed-borne microorganisms that inhabit maize seeds manage to establish themselves in more significant numbers in the absence of microorganisms that inhabit the substrate in 15 and 120 min.

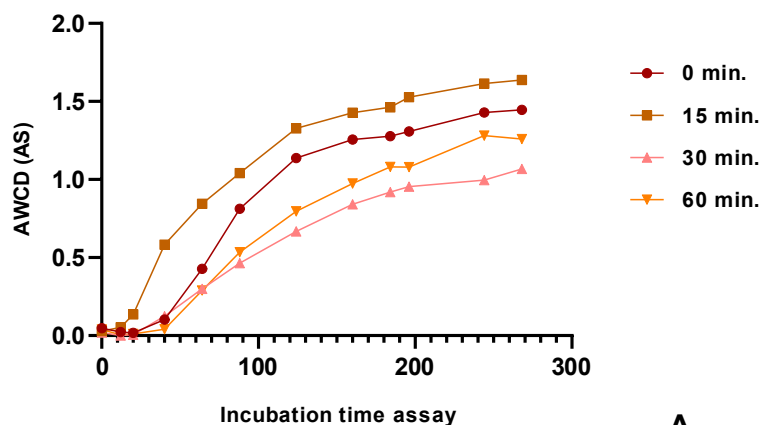
The number of total epiphytic bacteria in the non-disinfected seeds (0 min) is higher in the non-autoclaved substrate. This data indicates that the microorganisms inhabiting the seed surface may not establish efficiently in the absence of substrate microorganisms since, probably, the highest total values of bacteria found in the non-autoclaved substrate treatment - 0 min refers to substrate microbiota (Table 1). The opposite is observed for the count of total endophytic diazotrophic bacteria. We suggest that the presence of these diazotrophic bacteria may be associated with the

superficial niches of the seeds without disinfection and, during germination and establishment of the seedling, transfer to the internal compartments of the root occurs (undetectable in the epiphytic count.)

The presence of diazotrophic bacteria in the roots demonstrates positive traits of plant growth-promoting traits of part of the microbiome for plants. The high presence of these N_2 -fixing bacteria in the seed tissues' internal compartments (evidenced by the high-count values in the longer disinfection times in Table 2) indicates a particular advantage over the external tissue diazotrophic bacteria. According to Reinhold-Hurek and Hurek (2011), bacteria find better niches for establishing and assimilating nitrogen and exchange nutrients and metabolites with the plant host once living in plant tissues.

Microbial functional dynamics

Over time, maize seeds' disinfection changed the pattern of consumption of carbon sources in microbial communities (Figure 4A and 4B). According to the analysis of substrate consumption via Biolog EcoPlates, the AWCD of treatments showed the same growth pattern with the incubation time, pointing that for autoclaved substrate (AS) or non-autoclaved substrate (NAS), the values of the maximum carbon sources consumption by microorganisms, even variable, were close over time (200 h).



A

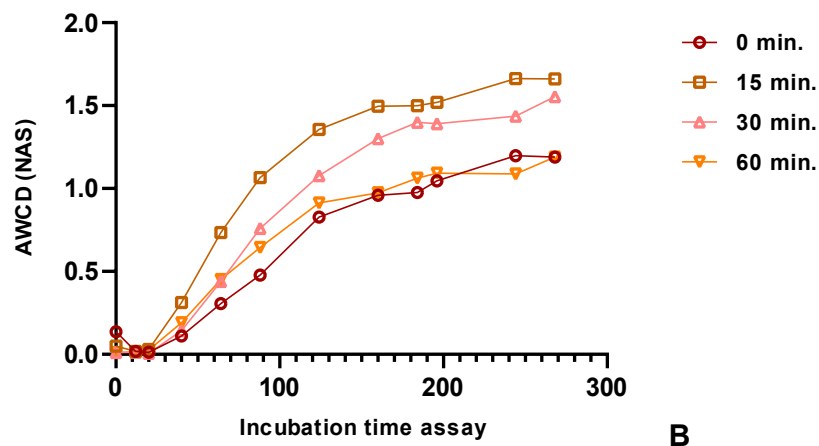


Figure 4. Average well colour development (AWCD) of substrates metabolised in Biolog EcoPlates based on 268 h of incubation. Root samples of maize seedlings from disinfected seeds at 0, 15, 30, and 60 min, grown in an autoclaved substrate (SA) (A) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS) (B).

Over time, maize seeds' disinfection changed the pattern of consumption of carbon sources in microbial communities. According to the analysis of substrate consumption via Biolog EcoPlates, the AWCD of treatments showed the same growth pattern with the incubation time, pointing that for autoclaved substrate (AS) or non-autoclaved substrate (NAS), despite being variable, the values of the maximum carbon sources consumption by microorganisms were close over time (200 h).

The increasing order of AWCD values in samples from disinfected seeds grown in the autoclaved substrate was 30, 60, 0, and 15 min (Figure 4A). For samples of the non-autoclaved substrate, treatments from seeds exposed to 0 and 60 min were very close over time, followed by 15 and 30 min, except for some variations (Figure 4B). The differences observed in the C-sources consumption pattern indicate that seed treated with NaOCl changes the microbial community's structure and activity associated with the maize root surface.

The AWCD reflects the oxidative capacity of microorganisms developed in Biolog, allowing this data to indicate microbial activity (Gryta et al., 2014). The 15 min treatment was among the treatments with the highest AWCD values over time, indicating a high microbial activity for these disinfection times. In substrate without initial microbiota (AS), the 30 and 60 min times' microbial communities showed a more significant activity reduction, which decreased the community's metabolic

functions (Gomes et al. 2006). In substrate with the microbial community present (NAS), these lower values are 0 and 60 min.

The comparison between microbial functional activity and population counts data (at 15 min in the non-autoclaved substrate) revealed a relationship between the high values of total diazotrophic bacteria (Table 2) with high values of AWCD (Figure 4). Diazotrophic microorganisms can present this high metabolic activity in niches close to the root tissues (Silva et al., 2020), which allows their survival for later colonization of inner plant tissues. Pearson's relationship between total diazotrophic bacteria values and AWCD averages over time was calculated. A 0.206 coefficient was found, indicating quite a poor positive correlation between all treatments.

The seeds' exposure to sodium hypochlorite for 60 min allowed the emergence of microbial groups that interacting, or not with the substrate microbiota, have low functional activity. The same is observed for seed exposure for 30 min in autoclaved substrate: low metabolic activity concerning other times.

The disinfectant used in the seeds changes the associated microbial functional activity when grown in the field, regardless of the soil microbiome. These changes may affect the ecosystem functions and, consequently, the plant performance (see next item).

Studies that have already investigated the patterns of use of carbon sources through Biolog also found variations in AWCD values between treatments (Lima, 2011; Gryta, 2014; Gałazka et al., 2018; Teurlincx et al., 2018). These works report environmental changes that modify the activity of microbial communities. In this study, the changes were the result of a chemical disturbance induced in maize seeds. The chlorine may have affected the seed physiology, the action of defence protein of the seeds, the exudates or nutrient release by the seed tissues, and the pH of the spermosphere, resulting in environmental changes that influenced the consumption pattern of C sources by microbial communities.

Use of substrates by microbial communities associated with seedling roots

In general, there was a considerable difference in the profiles of use of C substrates between the microbial groups associated with the roots of maize seedlings (Figure 5).

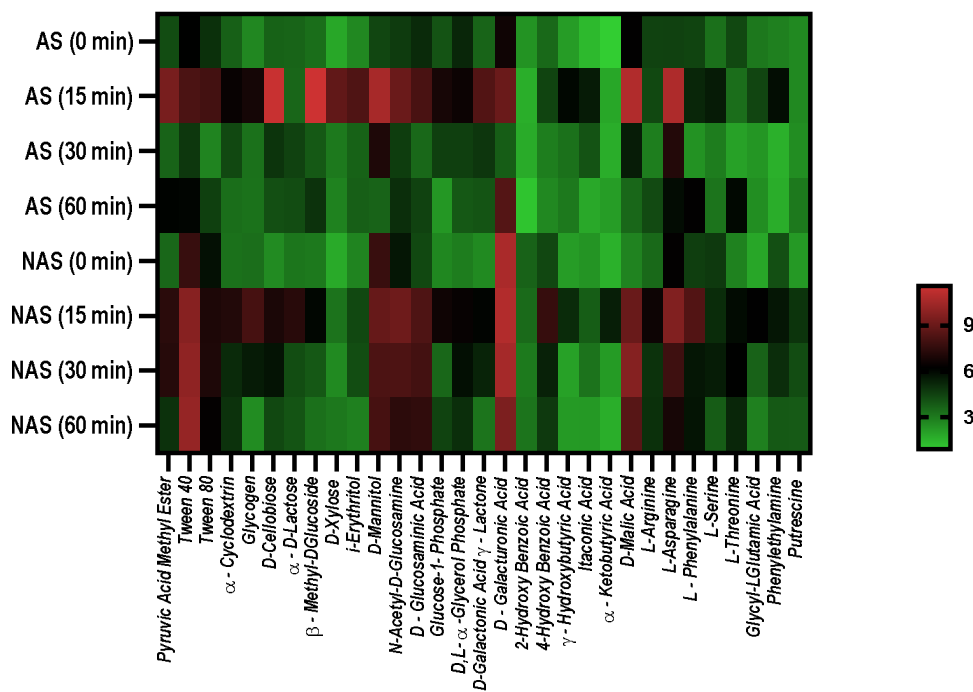


Figure 5. Graphical matrix of the profiles of use of different sources of C by the microbiota associated with the roots of the seedlings in 100 hours of incubation, where the intensity of use of the specific C source is represented by a colour scale varying from green (non-use) in red (maximum use) ($n = 3$).

It is observed that, both in the treatment of autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrates, both within 15 min, there was greater use of different carbon compounds. The 15 min disinfection caused this change since other treatments showed more minor C sources use (Figure 5). In Figure 4 (A and B), higher AWCD values were observed in these treatments, indicating a higher consumption of total C sources over the incubation time than other treatments.

The use of the substrate α - ketobutyric acid (acetic carboxylic acid group) in the treatment of AS - 0 min was the only one considered negative (Figure 5). For most treatments, the compound D - Galacturonic Acid (carboxylic acetic acid group) was the most used, and only at 0 min and 30 min in AS, its use was less intense (Figure 5).

In general, the microbial communities had a different consumption of sources of C. The treatments AS - 15 min, AS - 30 min, NAS - 0 min and NAS - 15 min are geometrically distant in analysing the principal components (Figure 6). This may be indicating that the communities of the different treatments do not use the same sources of C, the more distant they are. The pairs AS - 0 min, AS - 60 min and NAS

- 30 min and NAS - 60 min are close points. Possibly, the microbial communities of these pairs use similar C sources for their growth. Differences in the structure of microbial communities due to some change in the niches where the microorganisms reside are found through the Biolog Ecoplates method (Lupwayi et al., 2001; Chávez et al., 2011; Tavares et al., 2017).

In the central part of the PCA, there are six groups of consumed C sources, most of which are close, suggesting that all microbial communities associated with the roots of the seedlings consume all sources of C, with differences in intensity only for some groups. The most representative and distant groups are phenolic compounds and carbohydrates, indicating that the microbial communities associated with the roots of seedlings that consume carbohydrates do not use phenolic compounds at the same intensity (Figure 6).

The microbial communities associated with the treatment with AS - 15 min seem to use compounds from the carbohydrate group with greater intensity and less consumption in Amines / Amides and Phenolic Compounds (Figure 6 and supplementary figure 1). Consumption between C sources for each of the other microbial communities did not differ statistically when analyzed individually (Supplementary Figure 1).

There were no differences in the use of C from microbial communities associated with disinfected and non-disinfected seed treatments in Amines / Amides, Amino Acids, Polymers and Phenolic Compounds. In the Carbohydrate group, the highest performance was observed in AS - 15 min, followed by NAS - 15 min. In the acetic carboxylic acid group, the highest average carbon use treatments were AS - 15 min and NAS - 15 min, respectively (Supplementary Figure 1).

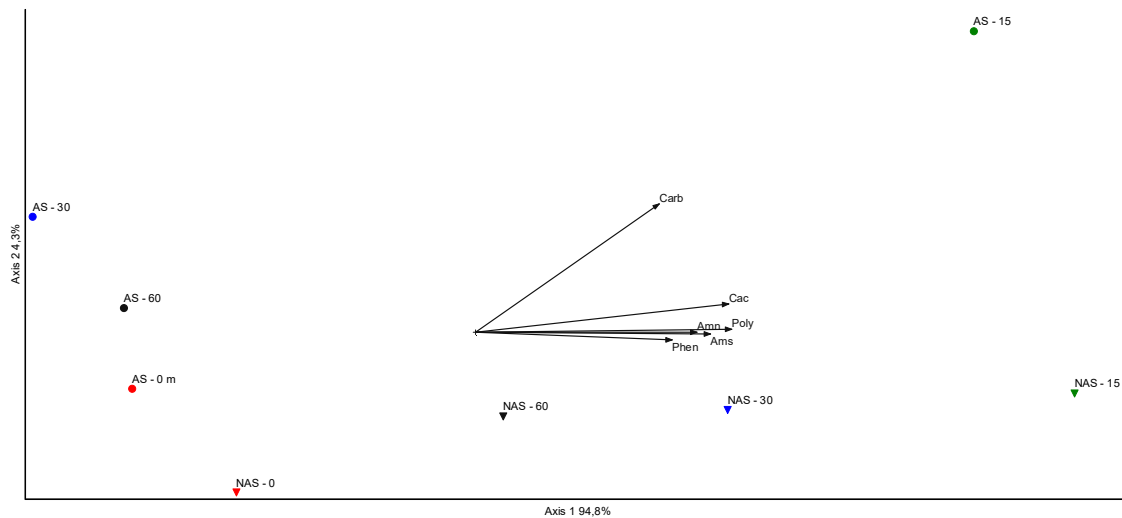


Figure 6. Principal component analysis (PCA) representing the consumption of different types of C sources in Ecolog-Biolog microplates by microbial communities associated with the roots of maize seedlings. SHS 5050, which underwent different disinfection times with NaOCl, sown in an autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrate. Variables shown in the graph correspond to those with r^2 above 0.7. Ams Amines/amides; Amn Amino acids; Carb Carbohydrates; Cac Carboxylic acetic acid; Poly Polymers; Phen Phenolic compounds.

According to Cury (2002), data like the ones presented here are part of a set of metabolic indicators of changes in response to stresses. In this study, these changes were in response to chemical disturbance induced in maize seeds and their resident microorganisms. According to the use of substrate by microbial communities, it is possible to state that chemical disinfection in maize seeds and the substrate microbiome alters the consumption patterns of C sources of microorganisms associated with the roots of maize seedlings.

Plant performance from disinfected seeds

The emergence of seedlings illustrates the establishment of the plant stand in the field, directly related to its productivity and environmental factors favouring germination (Júnior et al., 2020). In general, the longer exposure times of maize seeds to sodium hypochlorite reduced the number of seedlings that emerged (Figure 7).

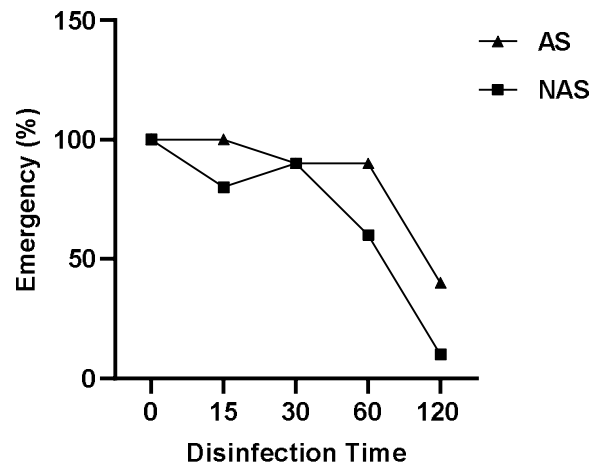


Figure 7. The emergence of maize seedlings exposed to different disinfection times of sodium hypochlorite, grown in an autoclaved substrate (SA) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS).

The population size of diazotrophic bacteria was higher for most autoclaved substrate treatments (Table 2), indicating a possible relationship between these microorganisms and the higher emergence rate observed for the autoclaved substrate. The seeds exudate composts used by microorganisms as an energy source, modulating the bacterial community around the seed (spermosphere) and stimulating seedlings' emergence (Frank et al., 2017).

There is increasing evidence pointing that microorganisms inhabiting the seeds are involved in the germination and seedling emergence processes (Hardoim et al., 2015; Mitter et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2020). Presumably, the shortest seed-disinfection times affect less the seed-inhabited community, and in the autoclaved substrate, the microbial competition was attenuated, allowing the seed microbiota to increase, resulting in the highest emergence rate.

The emergence time data (Figure 8) demonstrated that the average seedling emergence time (AET) is shorter for most treatments, increasing the emergence rate.

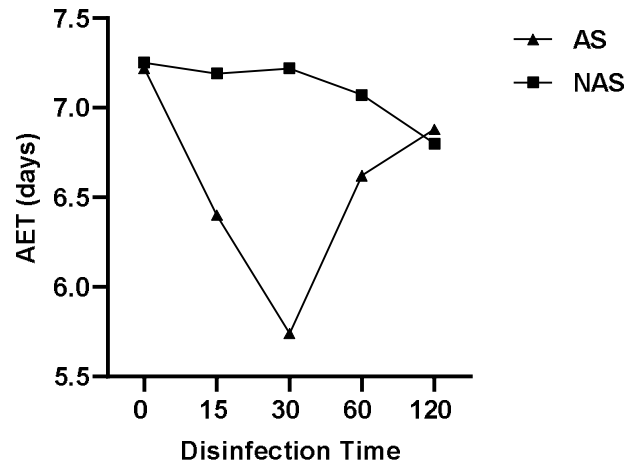


Figure 8. The average time of maize seedlings exposed to different sodium hypochlorite times is grown in an autoclaved substrate (SA) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS).

Only at 30 min disinfection time did the percentage of emergence equal between the substrate types (Figure 7). Regarding AET (days), the non-autoclaved substrate showed higher values in 30 min, while the autoclaved substrate showed a shorter number of days to emerge all seedlings.

In general, maize plantlets' stem diameter values were not affected by the type of substrate but by the time of disinfection. The longer the disinfection time, the smaller the diameter values. With 30 min of immersion of the seeds in sodium hypochlorite, the shoot length (SL) differed between substrate types, was higher in the non-autoclaved substrate. Again, the longer the disinfection time, the lower the SL (Figure 9A).

In the autoclaved substrate, the root length (RL) was reduced with the disinfection (except at 60 min). There were no significant differences between times in the non-autoclaved substrate for this same parameter. We only observed differences for the control (time 0 min) among the substrate, with a higher RL value in the substrate autoclaved (Figure 9B).

Fresh and dry mass values of the aerial part and the root were lower with the disinfection. In 30 min, significant differences were observed for the substrate factor. The greater mass values were associated with the non-autoclaved substrate (Figure 9C, 9D, 9E and, 9F).

The high metabolic activity of microbial communities (represented in this work by the AWCD values) in the non-autoclaved substrate and low for microbial

communities in the autoclaved substrate in 30 min (Figure 4) may be related to the plant biomass data mentioned here. These microbial communities associated with maize seedlings' root tissues can play critical roles in the plant's performance (verified for non-autoclaved substrate treatment - 30 min: Figure 9C, 9D, 9E, 9F, and Figure 10). According to Figure 5, the microbial communities associated with the NAS - 30 min treatment consume C compounds in different intensities, demonstrating that the best performance of the plants in this treatment can be related to microbial groups that metabolize some substrates in greater intensity and lower intensity others (considering the 31 sources of C used in this study).

The native superficial microbiota of maize seeds is essential for seedling performance. When we observe the parameters SD, SL, RL, SFM, RFN, and RDM in the autoclaved substrate, there is a statistically significant decrease in their values between the longer disinfection times and the control time of 0 min (Figures 9A, 9B, 9D, 9E, and 9F). The same happens in the non-autoclaved substrate for the parameters: SD, SL, SDM, and RDM (Figures 9A, 9D, and 9F). This study reinforces the microbiome's contribution to crops' health and productivity (Berendsen et al., 2012).

We emphasize that more in-depth analyzes of the toxic effect of sodium hypochlorite on embryonic tissues, in addition to the aforementioned tetrazolium test, are important for increasingly solid statements regarding the contributions of the maize seed microbiome to seedling development.

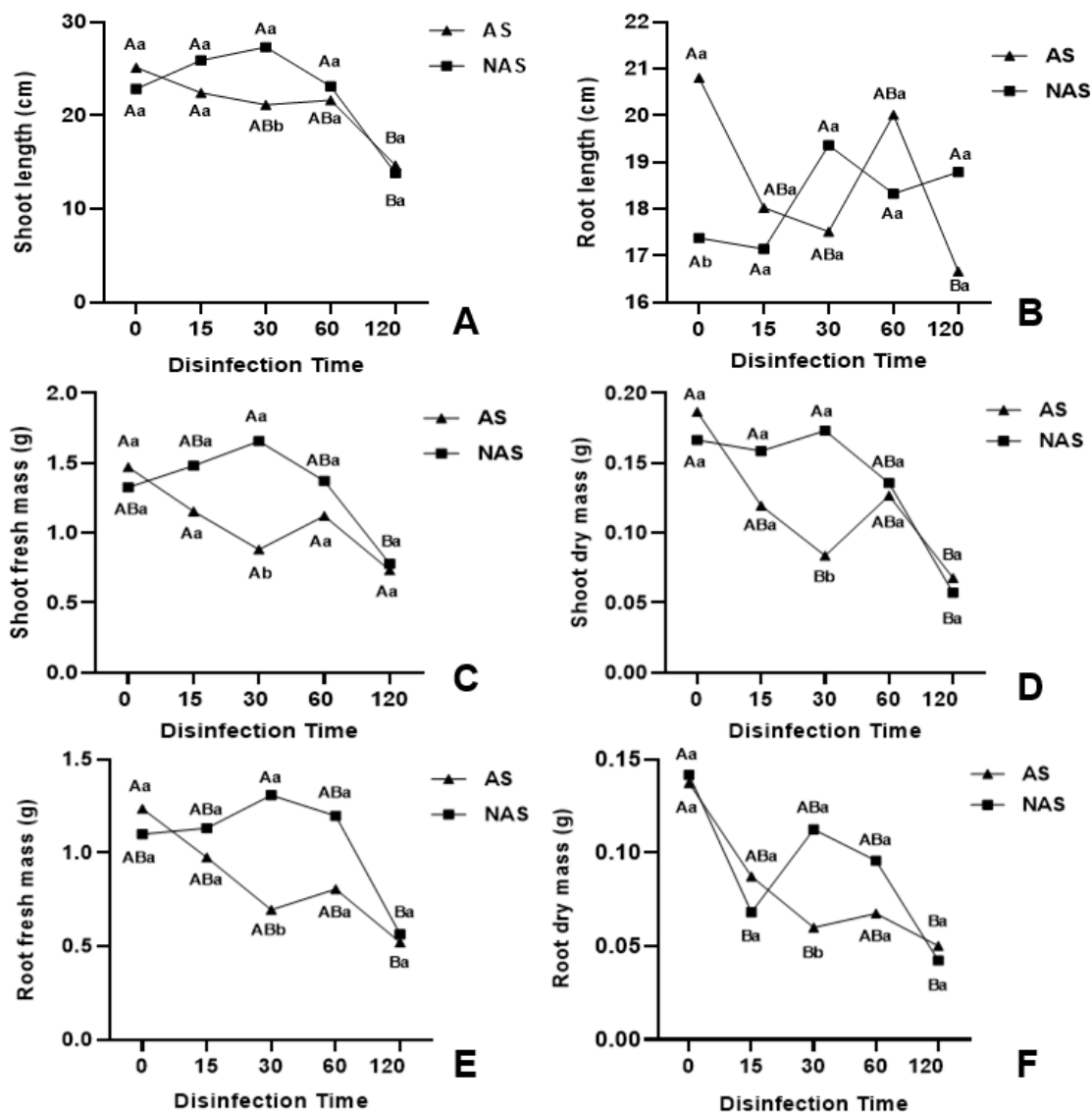


Figure 9. A) Shoot length (SL); B) Root length (RL); C) Shoot fresh mass (SFM); D) Shoot dry mass (SDM); E) Root fresh mass (RFM); F) Root dry mass (RDM). Different capital letters indicate significant differences for the disinfection time factor (0, 15, 30, 60, and 120 min), lower case letters indicate significant differences for the substrate factor (SA and SNA) according to the Tukey test ($p \leq 0, 05$).

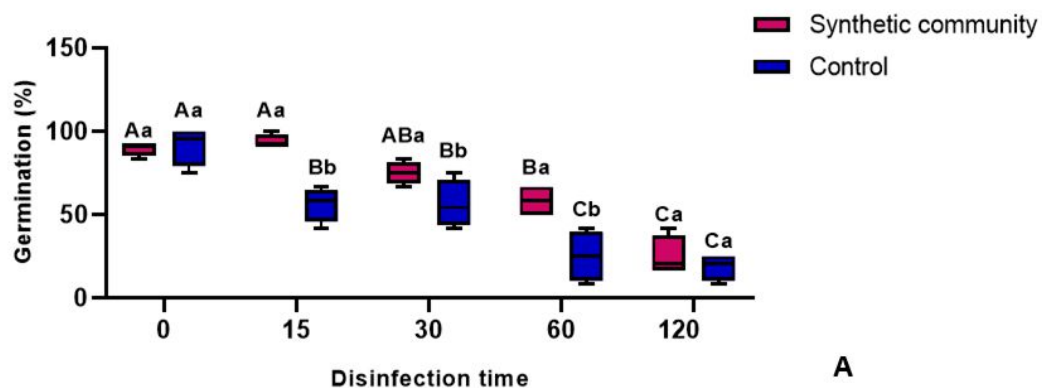


Figure 10. Maize seedlings on the 15th day of planting. A) 30 min - autoclaved substrate; B) 30 min - substrate non-autoclaved.

Chemical disinfection and inoculation of the synthetic community in seed germination

The data from the germination tests of maize seeds disinfected in a growth chamber were statistically compared with the germination parameters of the seeds inoculated with the synthetic community (isolates obtained in this study under greenhouse assays).

In the control treatments, a reduction in the germination rate was observed with the increase in the disinfection time. When the bacterial community was partially recovered, this rate tends to be recovered, especially in 15, 30, and 60 min (Figure 11A). The same happened to the germination speed index (IVG) (Figure 11B).



A

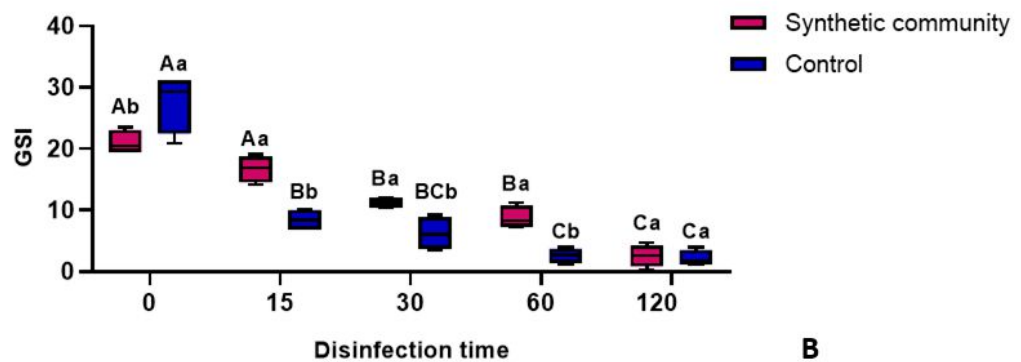


Figure 11. Germination percentage (A) and germination speed index (B) of maize seeds exposed to different sodium hypochlorite immersion time (treatments) with and without inoculation with a mixture of bacteria isolated from maize seeds. Different capital letters indicate significant differences for the disinfection time factor (0, 15, 30, 60, and 120 min) and lower-case letters indicate significant differences for the inoculation factor (Control and Synthetic Community) according to the Tukey test ($p \leq 0.05$).

Higher germination rates were observed in seeds inoculated (Figure 12). One hypothesis is that the synthetic community is involved in the hormonal balance of abscisic acid: gibberellin, a reason that determines the germination events of the plant (Taiz et al., 2017). Mechanisms not yet understood, triggered by the presence of microorganisms in the seed, may contribute to the determination of the amount of hormones in plant tissues and the responsiveness of tissues.

Several studies have already revealed that many microorganisms associated with plants can have relevant effects on seed germination, plant growth, development, nutrition, and protection against pathogens (Mendes et al., 2013). Also, several plant growth-promoting bacteria already have been described as producing and modulating phytohormones (Verma et al., 2019; Sammauria et al., 2020).

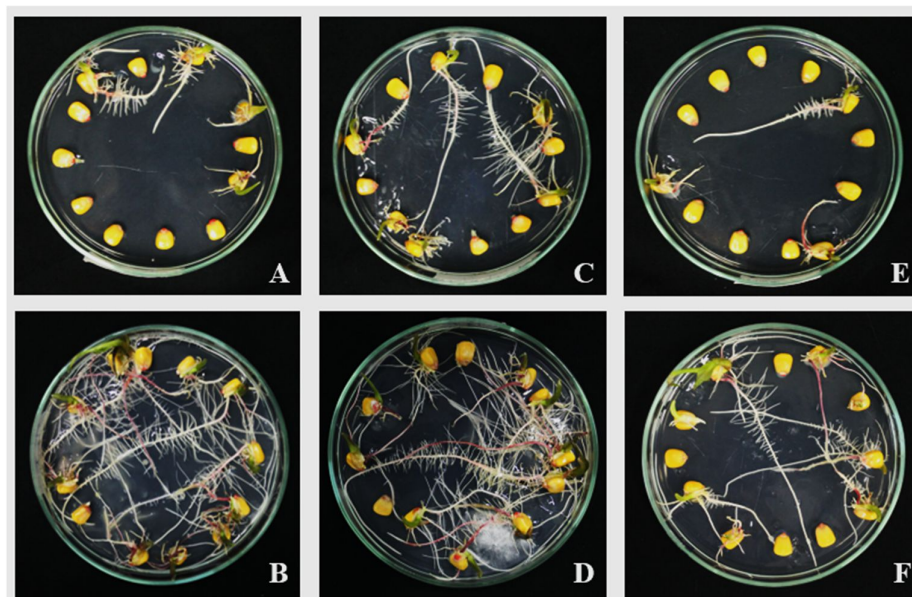


Figure 12. Germination of maize seeds disinfected in sodium hypochlorite. A) 15 min - control; B) 15 min - synthetic community; C) 30 min — control; D) 30 min - synthetic community; E) 60 min - control; F) 60 min - synthetic community.

CONCLUSIONS

The maize seed exposure to sodium hypochlorite affects the associated native bacterial community.

Chlorine disinfection alters maize seed microbial communities' metabolism based on the consumption of carbon sources over time. Microbial communities from 15 min disinfection times are among those with a higher metabolism, regardless of substrate type.

Plant performance is also affected by disinfection and substrate microorganisms. The time of 120 min is very damaging to plant performance, and the time of 30 min in the non-autoclaved substrate positively affected maize seedlings development. Non-disinfected seeds showed good plant performance,

indicating that part of the maize seed surface microbiota may be necessary for the development of the plant.

The increasing times of exposure of the maize seed to sodium hypochlorite negatively affect its germination. However, it tends to be recovered with the inoculation of synthetic communities formulated from a small cultivable fraction of the microbiome from the seedlings' roots. The formulation of these types of communities can be a promising tool for applying microbiological products in agriculture.

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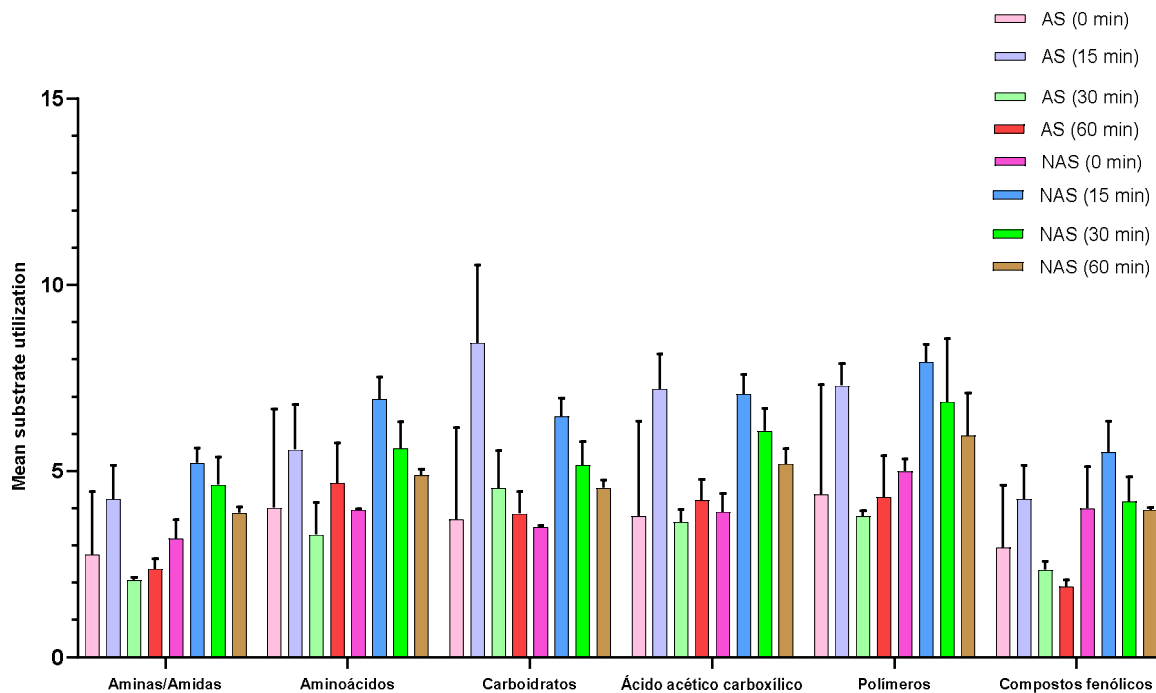
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Supplementary Figure 1. Substrates' mean use by the different treatments' microbial communities associated with seedling roots, with the C-sources grouped based on 100 h incubation (n = 3).

BIOINOCULANT AND SEED-BORNE INTERACTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAIZE SEEDLINGS

ABSTRACT

Chemical disinfection of seeds can act as a disturbance that alters the structure of seed-borne. Bioinoculation can also be a factor that structurally affects microbial groups. So far, only the direct effects of inoculants are considered. Here, we disinfect maize seeds at different times of exposure to sodium hypochlorite and inoculate with *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* HRC54 to verify the inoculant's influence on the seed-borne and the effect of this interaction on seedling development. The seeds were grown in an autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrate. The bacterial quantification showed that *H. seropedicae* can be successfully established in the roots of emerged seedlings and affects the resident bacterial community of maize seeds. Seedlings from inoculated and disinfected seeds in 15 min had better plant performance. The microbial activity was quantified, and its response to chemical disturbance can happen in different ways, depending on the presence of the bioinoculant, the time of exposure of maize seeds to sodium hypochlorite, and the stage of seedling development. The disinfection of seeds with subsequent

inoculation can be a promising strategy in the technology of seeds and the successful microbiological applications of agriculture.

RESUMO

A desinfestação química de sementes pode atuar como uma perturbação que altera a estrutura da sua comunidade microbiana. A bioinoculação também pode ser um fator que afeta, estruturalmente, os grupos microbianos. Até o momento são considerados apenas os efeitos diretos dos bioinoculantes sobre a estrutura da comunidade. Neste estudo, sementes de milho foram desinfestadas em diferentes tempos de exposição ao hipoclorito de sódio e inoculadas com *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* HRC54, a fim de verificar a influência do inoculante na comunidade residente e o efeito dessa interação no desenvolvimento das plântulas. As sementes foram cultivadas em substrato autoclavado e não autoclavado. A quantificação bacteriana demonstrou que *H. seropedicae* pode se estabelecer com sucesso na raiz das plântulas emergidas e afetar a comunidade bacteriana residente na semente de milho. As plântulas provenientes de sementes inoculadas e desinfestadas no tempo de 15 min tiveram melhor desempenho vegetal. Foi quantificada a atividade microbiana e sua resposta à perturbação química, que pode acontecer de diferentes formas, a depender da presença do bioinoculante, do tempo de exposição das sementes de milho ao hipoclorito de sódio o do estágio de desenvolvimento das plântulas. A desinfestação de sementes com posterior inoculação pode ser uma estratégia promissora na tecnologia de sementes e nas aplicações microbiológicas bem-sucedidas da agricultura.

INTRODUCTION

Although plant microbiomes' diversity is vast, their response to biotic and abiotic factors (such as plant genotype, environmental conditions, the interaction of microbial communities, and agricultural practices) can be similar (Santos and Olivares, 2021). When disturbed by some external factor, communities residing in plant organs are strongly selected, changing their structure (Andreote et al., 2014). Santos et al. (2020) reported structural changes in maize seed-borne in response to chemical disinfection. Chemical disinfection methods are widely reported in the literature as a strategy to eliminate pathogenic microorganisms (Freitas et al., 2019; Parisi et al., 2019). Sodium hypochlorite is widely used during disinfection, but its application can remove a good part of the tissues' superficial microbiota and not only the pathogenic microorganisms. Bioinoculants, highly required by sustainable agricultural systems, can also cause disturbances that are still unknown in plants' native microbial community. The association of this inoculant with the seed resident microorganisms can be direct, indirect, or neutral (Santos and Olivares, 2021). For many years, microbial inoculants' effect on plants has been considered only direct, excluding possible indirect effects in the plant by modulating its microbial community (Santos and Olivares, 2021). Santos et al. (2021) verified changes in the bacterial communities residing in disinfected maize seeds in response to the inoculation of *Herbaspirillum seropedicae*, obtaining positive data for the growth of maize seedlings under axenic conditions.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

To investigate the effect that these chemical and biological disorders have on the microorganisms resident in maize seeds and on seedling development, seeds of commercial maize (*Zea mays* L.) hybrid SHS 5050 (Santa Helena

Sementes, Brazil) were disinfected in five immersion times in 1.25% sodium hypochlorite (Butterfly Ecologia, Audax Company): 0 (non-disinfected seed), 15, 30, 60 and 120 min and inoculated with plant growth-promoting bacteria (BPCV) *H. seropedicae* HRC54 (a group of inoculated and non-inoculated seeds). Seeds were exposed for 10 min to the bacterial solution (1×10^8 CFU.g⁻¹), and 1 mL of this solution was added to each plastic tube containing 270 g of the substrate in the greenhouse. The seeds were grown under autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrate based on coconut fibre. The bacterial quantification was performed through serial dilution in a solid Nutrient Broth (NB) medium from the emerging seedlings' roots. Biometric analyzes of stem diameter (SD), shoot length (SL), root length (RL), shoot fresh mass (SFM), shoot dry mass (SDM), root fresh mass (RFM), and root dry mass (RDM), were performed to verify the performance of seedlings inoculated at different disinfection times, grown in autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrate after 15 days of planting. Each treatment consisted of 6 repetitions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presence of *H. seropedicae* HRC54 was confirmed through observation of colony and morphology. Its bacterial quantification demonstrated that *H. seropedicae* HRC 54 affects maize seeds' resident bacterial community (Table 1). In the presence of the bioinoculant, the seeds that were disinfected in 30, 60, and 120 min in the autoclaved substrate and seeds disinfected in 60 and 120 min on the non-autoclaved substrate, showed suppressed cultivable bacterial fraction. With the initially large population size, the bioinoculant can compete for the same resources as native microbial groups and have advantages in survival (Yang et al., 2017). Chemical disinfection contributes to eliminating microorganisms that inhabit more superficial niches of maize seeds, allowing the microbiota to inhabit internal compartments of the plant organ. However, the seed-borne community have been reduced in the bioinoculant presence due to the competition for resources and survival, according to Table 1. The bacterial quantification in roots of the seedlings

that emerged on the autoclaved substrate and with seeds that are not disinfected or that emerged from seeds that were disinfected in the shortest exposure times to sodium hypochlorite indicates that the cultivable fraction of bacteria residing on the surface of maize seeds may be altered as a result of inoculation, but not wholly extinct in these disinfection times (Table 1). Soil-resident microorganisms may be more successful in competing for niches during seedling emergence events when interacting with *H. seropedicae* and microbes that inhabit the seed surface, evidenced by the quantification of times 0 and 15 min disinfection of the NAS - *H. seropedicae* treatment (Table 1). *H. seropedicae* ability to colonize the surface of root tissues and infect the plant through cracks that appear as a result of the emission of lateral roots (Matteoli et al., 2020) explains the success in colonizing the tissues of maize seedlings, regardless of the type of substrate (Table 1).

Table 1. Influence of disinfection and bio-inoculation on the count of *H. seropedicae* and total bacteria in roots of maize seedlings grown in an autoclaved substrate (AS) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS) and recovered in NB culture medium.

Treatments				
Total bacteria (CFU.mL ⁻¹)				
Immersion time (min)	AS Control	AS <i>H. seropedicae</i>	NAS Control	NAS <i>H. seropedicae</i>
0	0.56 x 10 ⁷	0.06 x 10 ⁷	4.71 x 10 ⁷	9.16 x 10 ⁷
15	1.09 x 10 ⁷	29.88 x 10 ⁷	13.04 x 10 ⁷	8.61 x 10 ⁷
30	5.81 x 10 ⁷	n/d	10.14 x 10 ⁷	14.53 x 10 ⁷
60	4.01 x 10 ⁷	n/d	19.30 x 10 ⁷	n/d
120	9.58 x 10 ⁷	n/d	29.92 x 10 ⁷	n/d

Treatments				
<i>H. seropedicae</i> (CFU.mL ⁻¹)				
Immersion time (min)	AS Control	AS <i>H. seropedicae</i>	NAS Control	NAS <i>H. seropedicae</i>
0	n/d	0.25 x 10 ⁷	n/d	2.82 x 10 ⁷
15	n/d	139.84 x 10 ⁷	n/d	6.47 x 10 ⁷
30	n/d	41.40 x 10 ⁷	n/d	29.48 x 10 ⁷
60	n/d	61.84 x 10 ⁷	n/d	31.8 x 10 ⁷
120	n/d	41.11 x 10 ⁷	n/d	136.66 x 10 ⁷

Time disinfection: immersion in sodium hypochlorite at 1.25% for 0, 15, 30, 60, and 120 min. Substrate types: an autoclaved substrate (AS) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS). Seeds inoculated with *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* HRC54 and seeds control (non-inoculated). Bacterial counting performed on solid medium NB.

In 15 min of disinfection of the inoculated seeds and cultivated in a non-autoclaved substrate, better performance of the corn seedlings was observed for the SD parameters, and in 60 min, higher values for SL and RL (Table 2). Such observations suggest that the microorganisms residing in the seeds that were not eliminated in 15 and 60 min of disinfection and those associated with the soil

microbiome and *H. seropedicae* interact positively for the development of the plant organism. Although the nature of the microbial groups associated with these treatments (15 and 60 min - NAS - inoculated) is not clear, it is possible to observe the presence of *H. seropedicae* (Table 1), as well as bacterial communities residing within 15 min (Table 1). Seedlings grown in the autoclaved substrate, when non-inoculated and not disinfected (0 min - AS - Control), showed lower values for the parameters fresh and dry root mass (Table 2), suggesting that the presence of the bioinoculant and microorganisms of the soil are important for the growth of root tissues, as already evidenced in many studies (Aeron et al., 2019; Sammauria et al., 2020). Another hypothesis is that the chemical disturbance induced by sodium hypochlorite is important for the emergence of new microbial groups residing in internal compartments of the seeds that may have the potential to promote plant growth. The count of total bacterial communities was lower for non-disinfected seeds than other disinfection times when they were non-inoculated and cultivated in an autoclaved substrate (Table 1). In general, the disinfection time of 120 min was the most unfavourable for seedlings, and the presence of the bioinoculant does not contribute positively to the development of seedlings in this very high time of exposure of the seed to sodium hypochlorite (Table 2). Although in the time of 120 min, the presence of *H. seropedicae* was shown to be high (Table 1), it may have repressed important microbial groups inhabiting the seeds or interacted negatively with them, resulting in lower values for plant parameters (Table 2). The growth parameters obtained were important to verify the influence of the interaction of bioinoculant and resident microbiota on the productivity of the cultures since it provides data on the function of microbes in the plant in response to the interaction.

Table 2. Biometric analysis of maize seedlings grown in autoclaved and non-autoclaved substrate, from seeds disinfected at different times of sodium hypochlorite (0, 15, 30, 60, and 120 min) and inoculated or not.

Variable	Inoculated					Non-inoculated				
	0	15	30	60	120	0	15	30	60	120
	min	Min	Min	Min	Min	min	min	min	min	min
	Autoclaved									
SD (cm)	3.9	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.3	3.73	3.9	3.4	3.2	3.41
	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa
SL (cm)	37.6	43.2	38.3	42.4	36.4	44.5	41.3	37.7	37.4	36.1
	Ba	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aab	Aab	Aab	Ab
RL (cm)	23.9	21.9	21.5	23.1	21.5	22.3	22.5	21.9	22.1	21.7
	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa
SFM (g)	4.19	3.97	3.22	3.90	3.01	4.13	3.47	3.84	3.45	3.10
	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa
RFM (g)	2.13	1.51	1.40	1.73	1.34	1.63	1.39	1.42	1.24	1.30
	Aa	Aab	Ab	Aab	Ab	Ba	Ba	Aa	Ba	Aa
SDM (g)	0.31	0.30	0.23	0.28	0.21	0.29	0.24	0.26	0.34	0.22
	Aa	Aa	Aab	Aab	Ab	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa
RDM (g)	0.15	0.12	0.10	0.12	0.09	0.11	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.09
	Aa	Aab	Ab	Aab	Ab	Ba	Ba	Aa	Aa	Aa
	Inoculated					Non-inoculated				
Variable	0	15	30	60	120	0	15	30	60	120
	min	Min	Min	min	Min	min	min	Min	min	min
	Non-autoclaved									
SD (cm)	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.43	3.4	3.8	4.0	3.3	3.7	3.1
	Aa	Aa	Aa	Ba	Aa	Aab	Aa	Aab	Aab	Ab
SL (cm)	40.5	44.5	41.8	40.0	35.4	45.2	42.1	40.1	48.8	34.4
	Aab	Aa	Aab	Aab	Ab	Aa	Aa	Aab	Aab	Ab
RL (cm)	23	26.7	22.6	23.6	22.8	24.9	21.5	22.6	24.9	23.8
	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aa	Ba	Aa	Aa	Aa
SFM (g)	3.83	4.56	3.45	3.69	3.06	4.20	3.81	3.48	3.76	2.79
	Aab	Aa	Aab	Aab	Ab	Aa	Aab	Aab	Aab	Ab
RFM (g)	1.76	1.94	1.21	1.04	1.19	2.08	1.49	1.11	1.56	1.21
	Aab	Aa	Abc	Bc	Abc	Aa	Aab	Ab	Aab	Ab
SDM (g)	0.26	0.32	0.25	0.26	0.22	0.30	0.26	0.26	0.27	0.20
	Aab	Aa	Aab	Aab	Ab	Aa	Bab	Aab	Aab	Ab
RDM (g)	0.11	0.13	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.14	0.10	0.09	0.11	0.08
	Bab	Aa	Aab	Aab	Ab	Aa	Bab	Ab	Aab	Ab

Stem diameter (DP), shoot length (SL), root length (RL), shoot fresh mass (SFM), root fresh mass (RFM), shoot dry mass (SDM), and root dry mass (RDM). Different capital letters indicate significant differences for the inoculation factor (Control x *H. seropedicae*), and lowercase letters indicate

significant differences for the disinfection factor (0, 15, 30, 60, and 120 min) according to the Tukey test ($p \leq 0.05$).

The fluorescein compound quantification was performed based on the degradation of fluorescein diacetate (FDA) by microorganisms present in the rhizospheric substrate of all treatments. This data was used to verify microbial activity 15 and 30 days after planting the seeds (Supplementary Figure 1). There was a tendency to decrease microbial activity over the days in treatments without the inoculant presence. In treating *H. seropedicae* grown in the autoclaved substrate, the microbial activity increased significantly over the days for time 60 min and decreased in time 15 min. One of the possible mechanisms proposed by Mawarda et al. (2020) is that there may be synergism between inoculants and microbiomes; that is, the presence of inoculant can produce specific metabolites that stimulate the growth of the native microbiota. The data on microbial activity in the autoclaved substrate suggests that the effect of the inoculant on the rhizosphere's microbial activity can be very variable and depends on the microbial groups residing in the seed since in the treatment of an autoclaved substrate, the soil microorganisms were eliminated in the autoclaving and the response of microbial activity in the rhizosphere varied according to the time of disinfection. Microbial groups residing in the seeds may be more or less favoured by clearing niches (Hardoim, 2019) due to chemical disinfection. The times of 0 and 120 min significantly decreased their microbial activity over the days in the inoculated treatments of the non-autoclaved substrate. These data show a possible suppressive effect of *H. seropedicae* on other microbial groups. The soil's microbial activity remained statistically equal over the days, in the periods of 15, 30, and 60 min of the non-autoclaved and inoculated substrate treatments. This low variation suggests a neutral effect of the bioinoculant associated with the microorganisms residing in the seeds and the soil in these disinfection times. Analyzes of the inoculation of *H. seropedicae* under microbial activity over the days demonstrated that the effects of this biological factor on the resident community of seeds and, consequently, of rhizospheric soils could vary widely. The microbial activity in response to chemical disturbance can happen differently, depending on the inoculant presence, exposure time of maize seeds to sodium hypochlorite, and seedling development in the field.

This work initially demonstrated different effects of bio-inoculation on disinfected seeds on the development of maize seedlings grown under the soil for

the first time in the literature. Finding the point that sodium hypochlorite can eliminate pathogenic microorganisms from the seed and that the inoculant associated with the seed-borne microbiota effectively promotes plant growth can be a promising strategy in seed technology for successful microbiological applications in agriculture.

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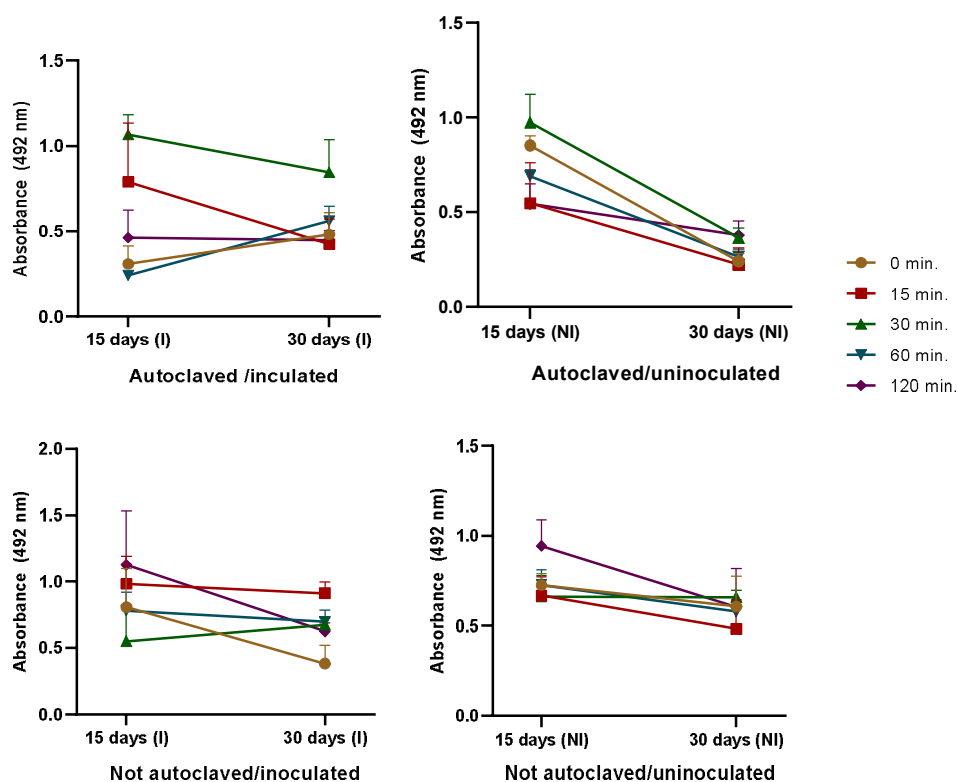
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Supplementary figure:



Supplementary figure 1: Quantification of fluorescein obtained from the degradation of fluorescein diacetate (FDA) by microorganisms present in rhizospheric soil. Root samples of maize seedlings from disinfected seeds at 0, 15, 30, 60, and 120 min, and inoculates (I) or not (U) with *H. seropedicae* HRC54, grown in an autoclaved substrate (SA) and non-autoclaved substrate (NAS) with 3 replicates.

3. RESUMO E CONCLUSÕES

Os agentes químico e bionoculante, utilizados neste trabalho, demonstraram alterar a comunidade microbiana residente na semente do milho. A microbiota pode, portanto, responder de diferentes formas a depender do fator de perturbação.

Através da desinfestação química foi possível verificar a presença de colônias bacterianas que habitam os compartimentos mais internos das sementes de milho e o efeito positivo que os grupos microbianos associados à superfície da semente têm sobre a performance vegetal.

O uso de *H. seropedicae* associado à desinfestação química permitiu verificar, inicialmente, a existência de interações entre microbiota residente de sementes com bioinoculantes, o que afeta o desenvolvimento das plântulas de milho.

Compreender as associações dos grupos microbianos residentes de sementes e seus efeitos no desenvolvimento vegetal é fundamental para aplicações microbiológicas eficazes nos sistemas agrícolas.

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APÊNDICES

APÊNDICE A

Meio de cultura JNFb

(Meio de cultura semissólido utilizado para contagem de bactérias diazotróficas endofíticas)

- Ácido málico - 5,0 g/L
- K_2HPO_4 (10 %) - 6 mL
- KH_2PO_4 (10 %) - 18 mL
- $MgSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$ (10%) - 2 mL
- NaCl (10%) - 1 mL
- $CaCl_2 \cdot 2H_2O$ (1 %) - 2 mL
- FeEDTA (1,64 %) - 4 mL
- Azul de bromotimol (0,5 % em 0,2 KOH) - 2 mL
- KOH - 4,5 g/L
- Solução de vitaminas - 1 mL
- Solução de micronutriente - 2 mL

Adicione água destilada até 1.000 mL. Ajuste o pH para 5,8 com KOH. Para o meio semissólido adicione 1,7 de ágar (g/L).

APÊNDICE B

Meio de cultura Dygs

(Meio líquido utilizado para o cultivo de *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* e de alguns isolados durante a formulação da comunidade sintética)

Glicose - 2,0 g/L

Ácido málico - 2.0 g/L

Peptona bacteriológica - 1,5 g/L

Extrato de levedura - 2,0 g/L

K₂HPO₄ - 0,5 g/L

MgSO₄ .7H₂O - 0,5 g/L

Ácido glutâmico - 1,5 g/L

Complete com água destilada até 1.000 mL. O pH ótimo é 6,0 para *Herbaspirillum* spp.

APÊNDICE C

Desinfestação das sementes

(Etapas do processo de desinfestação das sementes de milho)

- Sementes retiradas do lote:
 - Lavar 5x em água destilada estéril (usando luvas);
 - Deixá-las imersas em água destilada estéril por 5 h.
- Em ambiente estéril (fluxo laminar):
 - Separar o grupo controle (não desinfestado, em placas de petri contendo papel filtro autoclavado);
 - Submergir as outras sementes por 5 min em álcool 70 %;
 - Lavar as sementes uma vez em água destilada estéril;
 - Separar as sementes de acordo com o número de tratamentos de desinfestação em hipoclorito de sódio;
 - Submergir as sementes em hipoclorito de sódio a 1,25% de acordo com os tempos desejados;
 - Lavar as sementes 5 vezes em água destilada estéril.
- Nos ensaios da casa de vegetação:
 - Transferir as sementes (em grupos separados, de acordo com o tratamento de desinfestação) para placas contendo papel filtro autoclavado;
 - Transportar as placas vedadas para o local de plantio;
 - Com o auxílio de uma pinça autoclavada realizar o plantio sob o solo.

APÊNDICE D

Teste bioquímico das sementes

(Teste realizado para verificar a viabilidade das células em resposta à imersão em hipoclorito de sódio)

- Sementes retiradas do lote:
 - Lavar 5x em água destilada estéril (usando luvas);
 - Deixá-las imersas em água destilada estéril por 18 h a 20°C (pré-umedecimento).
 - Realizar o processo de desinfestação normalmente.
 - Ainda em ambiente estéril (fluxo laminar):
 - Cortar as sementes: bissecação longitudinal ao longo do embrião, com o auxílio de bisturi e/ou giletes e pinças estéreis;
 - Submergir as sementes, separadamente (em grupos separados, de acordo com o tratamento de desinfestação) em solução de Cloreto 2,3,5 - trifenil tetrazólio (TTC) por 2 h;
 - A solução de TTC deve ser descartada, as sementes lavadas em água corrente;
 - Avaliação dos tecidos (observar as superfícies cortadas):
 - Utilizar iluminação e lupa para avaliação, expondo o embrião e todas as estruturas essenciais;
 - Área máxima permitida de tecido não colorido, flácida ou necrosa: raiz primária e $\frac{1}{4}$ das extremidades do esqueleto.

As sementes devem ser mantidas submersas em água até o final da avaliação e se não forem avaliadas de imediato, as mesmas podem ser mantidas em refrigerador (5-10°C) por um período máximo de 24 h.

Para milho com pré-umedecimento em água, a concentração de TTC deve ser 1% (1 g de TTC diluído em 100 mL de Tampão TPO4 a 0,05M).