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To cite this version:
hal-02167654

HAL Id: hal-02167654
https://cstb.hal.science/hal-02167654
Submitted on 28 Jun 2019

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Study of colonization mechanisms of construction products by micromycetes applied to the development of a preventive treatment

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CONTEXT

In nature, saprotrophic fungi have an essential ecological role in decomposition of organic matter. In soils, they break down material like leaves, wood, dead bodies, etc. Fungal colonization in natural environments requires advanced functional relationships, including various antagonisms and synergisms, between the different components of the biotope. Colonization of natural substrates has been described at different scales (macroscopic and molecular) and modeled.

In indoor environments, fungi find niches favorable to their development. They are able to induce pathologies to the occupants (allergies, poisoning and infections) and can also cause irreversible damages to the materials they infest.

Colonization of man-made substrates (construction and decoration products) by mold is insufficiently described to develop colonization models. A better knowledge of the dynamic of fungal colonization would be helpful to imagine preventive strategy to limit fungal growth.

OBJECTIVES

This research aims to describe and understand fungal colonization mechanisms in enclosed environments in order to propose preventive alternatives to limit fungal growth on building materials instead of using traditional biocides.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- **Building materials**
  Wallpaper, glass fiber wall covering, plasterboard and bio-based insulation material

- **Fungal species most frequently identified**
  Aspergillus versicolor, Penicillium chrysogenum and Cladosporium sphaerospermum

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Towards a better understanding of building material colonization dynamic

**T0**

Before their implementation, building materials are variably contaminated by micromycetes in quantity and quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fungal contamination characteristics</th>
<th>Wallpaper</th>
<th>Glass fiber</th>
<th>Plaster board</th>
<th>Bio-based product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similar to aerobiosis</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fungal flora link to raw material</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21-28 days

Without water restriction, fungal development mainly consists of species belonging to genera Penicillium, Aspergillus and Cladosporium, ubiquitous airborne mycoflora.

**After 28 days**

New invasive species such as Stachybotrys and Alternaria, known for their antagonist interactions, appear.

Biotic interactions between micro-organisms

*Antagonistic behavior in culture*

- Bacillus are able to produce cyclic lipopeptides belonging to three families (Iturins, Fengycins & Surfactins) with antifungal properties.

*Chemical ecology of species inoculated individually or in combination (PCA)*

- Specific VOCs were identified and appear to be specific for each biotic interaction.

CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

- Fungal colonization of building materials involves same biotic relationships than those observed in natural environments → a succession of species with functional relationships like antagonism.
- Interaction mechanisms between microorganisms are mediated by diffusible substances in substrates (*Bacillus sp*). These antagonist active substances, whose safety must be verified, could be exploited to develop a dedicated eco-compatible treatment to limit fungal growth.
- Study of the involvement of MVOC in biotic interactions will be prosecuted.