

Title Occurrence of Ochratoxin A in Brazilian cocoa beans
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Abstract

In the present work studied the occurrence of Ochratoxin A (OTA) in dried beans from southern Bahia (Brazil) harvested in two periods of the year (early crop and harvest seasons) then fermented and dried under the sun. Nearly 92.5% of the cocoa samples presented OTA levels below the limits suggested by the European Community (2 µg/kg). The highest toxin content was found in fine and flavour cocoa beans harvested in the early crop. Ochratoxigenic species of the genera *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium* were isolated from the cocoa beans. Both harvesting time and production model influenced OTA content in cocoa. These results show that, according to the current world standards for Ochratoxin A levels, beans from southern Bahia give a good quality cocoa.