

Penicillium polonicum causing a postharvest soft rot of cactus pear fruits

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Abstract

Since 2007, a soft rot associated with a blue mold was observed on fruits of cactus pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) in packinghouses and storage facilities in two major producing areas of the Catania province (eastern Sicily). Isolations from symptomatic fruits yielded consistently a fungal species identified as *Penicillium polonicum* on the basis of both morphological characteristics and sequencing of part of the β -tubulin gene. Symptoms were reproduced by artificially inoculating mature cactus pear fruits with a conidial suspension of a *P. polonicum* isolate obtained from fruits with natural infections. This is the first report of *P. polonicum* as both a resident and a pathogen on cactus pear worldwide.