



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**INDOLE-3 ACETIC ACID PRODUCING RHIZOBACTERIA AND ITS
POTENTIAL TO ENHANCE GROWTH OF SWEETPOTATO
(IPOMOEA BATATAS L.)**

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FP 2000 11

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(*IPOMOEA BATATAS* L.)**

By

LUSI MAIRA

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Agricultural Science in the Faculty of Agriculture
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

December 2000



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated
to
my Late Father, Nazir St. Mudo
whose commitment to scientific studies was my inspiration
to
my mother Reno Gadis
and to
my husband Indra Jaya Malik, our daughter Rezkya

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Agricultural Science

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Chairman : Dr. Radziah Othman

Faculty : Agriculture

The problem in sweetpotato cultivation is yield reduction with continuous planting, which can be attributed to several factors such as soil degradation, pathogenic effects, and allelopathic effects. One of the approaches to alleviate this problem is by inoculating plants with indole-3-acetic acid (IAA) producing rhizobacteria to enhance growth of sweetpotato.

The study consisted of four experiments. Experiment I was the isolation of rhizobacterial strains from sweetpotato rhizosphere and their performance in sweetpotato root exudate culture. Experiment II was the selection of IAA producing rhizobacteria and their effects on sweetpotato growth. Experiment III was the determination of the effect of pH and carbon sources on growth of rhizobacteria isolated from sweetpotato rhizosphere. Experiment IV was the determination of the effects of L-tryptophan (TRP) on performance of IAA producing rhizobacteria on growth of sweetpotato.



From the isolation procedures, 115 rhizobacterial isolates were collected from different varieties of sweetpotato grown on different soils. They were grouped into 6 types according to colour of the colonies which consist of purple, milky white, translucent, orange, yellow and brown. The study showed that 48 isolates (41.74 %) were able to grow on medium containing sweetpotato root exudate of which, 18 isolates (37.5%) were able to produce IAA in culture medium which ranged between 4 to 8 $\mu\text{g/mL}$.

The first pot experiment showed that 6 isolates (SPR 66, SPR 83, SPR 85, SPR 88, SPR 100 and 90-166) were able to stimulate the initial growth of sweetpotato vines. Three of the isolates namely SPR 66, SPR 83 and SPR 100 showed positive responses on media with wide range of pH and different carbon sources. The optimum pH of medium for rhizobacterial growth was 6.75, and the most favourable carbon source was malic acid.

The second pot experiment showed that isolate SPR 66 increased the shoot dry weight, chlorophyll content and total leaf area of shoots, while isolate SPR 100 increased the dry weight and volume of roots, the storage root formation, nutrient concentration in shoots and soil nutrient contents. The addition of L-TRP to all selected rhizobacterial isolates enhanced growth and yield of sweetpotato. It related to the improved of soil chemical properties and microbial activity.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains Pertanian.

**BAKTERIA RIZOSFERA PENGHASIL INDOLE-3 ACETIC ACID DAN
KEUPAYAANNYA DALAM MENINGKATKAN PERTUMBUHAN KELEDEK
(*IPOMOEA BATATAS* L)**

Oleh

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Masalah bagi penanaman pokok keledek ialah berlakunya pengurangan hasil apabila ditanam secara berterusan, yang berpunca daripada beberapa faktor seperti degradasi tanah, kesan patogen dan kesan allelopati. Salah satu pendekatan yang digunakan untuk meningkatkan tumbesaran pokok keledek ialah dengan menginokulasikan bakteria rizosfera penghasil indole-3-acetic acid (IAA).

Empat kajian telah dijalankan untuk melihat kesan bakteria ini. Kajian I ialah pengasingan rhizobakteria daripada rizosfera keledek dan keupayaannya untuk tumbuh pada media yang mengandungi eksudat akar keledek. Kajian ke II ialah pemilihan rhizobakteria yang menghasilkan IAA dan mengkaji kesan rhizobakteria pada pokok keledek. Kajian ke III ialah kesan pH dan sumber karbon pada pertumbuhan rhizobakteria dan kajian ke IV ialah kesan L-tryptophan (TRP) pada rhizobakteria untuk tumbesaran pokok keledek.

Daripada prosedur pemencilan sejumlah 115 rhizobakteria telah diasingkan daripada keledak pelbagai varieti yang ditanam pada jenis dan lokasi tanah yang berlainan. Bakteria berkenaan dikelaskan kepada 6 jenis berdasarkan warna koloni yang terdiri dari warna ungu, putih, lut cahaya, jingga, kuning dan coklat. Kajian menunjukkan 48 isolat (41.74 %) mampu tumbuh pada media yang mengandungi eksudat keledak, 18 isolat (37.5 %) berkebolehan menghasilkan IAA di dalam media kultur dengan julat antara 4-8 $\mu\text{g/mL}$.

Kajian berpasu yang pertama menunjukkan 6 isolat (SPR 66, SPR 83, SPR 85, SPR 88, SPR 100 and 90-166) dapat merangsang tumbesaran pokok keledak. Tiga daripada isolat ini SPR 66, SPR 83, dan SPR 100 menunjukkan tindak balas yang positif terhadap media dengan pelbagai pH dan sumber karbon. pH media optimum yang paling sesuai untuk tumbesaran rhizobakteria ialah 6.75, manakala asid malik merupakan sumber karbon yang paling digemari.

Pada kajian berpasu kedua diperolehi isolat SPR 66 berkebolehan meningkatkan berat kering bahagian atas, kandungan klorofil dan jumlah keluasan daun, manakala isolat SPR 100 memberi kesan kepada berat kering dan isipadu akar, pembentukan ubi, kepekatan nutrien pada bahagian atas dan kandungan nutrien tanah. Manakala pemberian L-TRP kepada semua isolat terpilih berkesan meningkatkan tumbesaran dan hasil pada pokok keledak. Peningkatan tumbesaran yang berlaku berkaitan dengan peningkatan keadaan kimia tanah dan aktiviti mikroorganisma dalam tanah.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge generous individuals whose valuable support made this study a success and the completion of this thesis possible. I am immensely indebted to them and my only means of repaying them is to express a heartfelt gratitude and a sincere appreciation.

Foremost is to my supervisor, Dr. Radziah Othman, Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee, who provided me scholarly insights, professional guidance and knowledge, moral support and understanding when I needed them the most. To Associate Professor Dr. Radzali Muse, member of the Supervisory Committee, not only for his valuable comments on the bio-chemistry aspects of the study but also for those precious words of encouragement which help me going when the going becomes tough. Sincere appreciation also goes to Dr. Anuar Abd. Rahim, member of the Supervisory Committee, for his help, comments and guidance on the statistical analysis of the data. My sincere thanks.

Special thanks go to all lecturers, and laboratory staffs in the Department of Land Management and especially to En. Zulkifli Duaji and Pn. Zarina, two kind individuals in the soil Microbiology laboratory, for their invaluable help in the analyses of my samples. They will always be remembered with gratitude.



To my colleagues, Mr. Amir Hamzah, Mr. Baset, and other post graduate students in the Microbiological laboratory, for their generosity and countless invaluable help which made my work in the laboratory bearable and pleasant.

I also wish to thank my friends, Ibu Endang, Ibu Nunik, Kak Aishah, Mahrita, Rini, Enita and their families, and Renato for their help, cooperation, support, and encouragement in my difficult and depressing moment in finishing this work. To other Indonesian students, I wish to express my thanks for sharing the happiness, harmony, and solidarity during my longing and yearning time as a foreign student in Malaysia.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my beloved husband Indra Jaya, daughter RezkyA Amanda, mother, sisters, brothers, and the rest of the family members, for their patience and endurance and for standing by me through those difficult times. To them, I dedicate this work.

I praise the Al-mighty Allah, for enabling me to accomplish the task that was assigned to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| DEDICATION | ii |
| ABSTRACT | iii |
| ABSTRAK | v |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | vii |
| APPROVAL SHEETS | ix |
| DECLARATION FORM | xi |
| LIST OF TABLES | xv |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xvii |
| LIST OF APPENDICES | xix |
| CHAPTER | |
| I INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| II LITERATURE REVIEW | 5 |
| Sweetpotato Production | 5 |
| Sweetpotato in General | 5 |
| Sweetpotato in Malaysia | 7 |
| Root Morphology, Function and Storage Root Formation | 9 |
| Plant Rhizosphere | 9 |
| Problem in Sweetpotato Cultivation | 13 |
| Soil Fertility | 13 |
| Disease and Pest | 13 |
| Allelopathy | 14 |
| Plant Growth Promoting Bacteria (PGPR) | 15 |
| Crop Inoculation with PGPR | 15 |
| Mechanisms of Pant Growth Promotion | 16 |
| Factors Affecting Growth and Colonization of PGPR | 20 |
| Plant Hormones | 22 |
| Auxins | 23 |
| Physiology of Auxins in Plants | 24 |
| Microbial Biosynthesis of Auxin in Soil | 25 |
| Factor Influencing the Biosynthesis of IAA | 26 |
| Precursor of IAA Production (L-Tryptophan) in Soil | 26 |
| Pathways of IAA Biosynthesis by Microorganisms | 27 |
| Metabolism of IAA by Microorganisms | 30 |
| III ISOLATION OF RHIZOBACTERIAL STRAINS FROM SWEETPOTATO RHIZOSPHERE AND THEIR PERFORMANCE IN ROOT EXUDATE CULTURE | 32 |
| Introduction | 32 |
| Objectives | 33 |
| Materials and Methods | 33 |
| Sweetpotato Root Samples | 33 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Population Determination and Isolation of Rhizobacteria | 35 |
| Growth Determination of Different Rhizobacterial Isolates | 35 |
| Preparation of Sweetpotato Root Exudate | 36 |
| Determination of Bacterial Growth in Root Exudate | 36 |
| Results | 37 |
| Isolation of Rhizobacterial Isolates | 37 |
| Growth Response of Different Rhizobacterial Strains in Culture Medium | 40 |
| Rhizobacterial Growth on Sweetpotato Root Exudate | 43 |
| Discussion | 45 |
| Rhizobacterial Population | 45 |
| Rhizobacterial Growth in Sweetpotato Root Exudate | 47 |
| IV SELECTION OF IAA PRODUCING RHIZOBACTERIA AND THEIR EFFECTS ON GROWTH OF SWEETPOTATO | 49 |
| Introduction | 49 |
| Objectives | 50 |
| Materials and Methods | 50 |
| Screening for IAA Producing Rhizobacterial Isolate | 50 |
| Inoculation of Sweetpotato | 51 |
| Preparation of Rhizobacterial Culture and Planting of Sweetpotato | 52 |
| Plant and Tissue Analysis | 53 |
| Results | 53 |
| IAA Producing Rhizobacteria | 53 |
| Effect of Bacterial Inoculation on Growth of Sweetpotato | 55 |
| Nutrient Content of Sweetpotato | 60 |
| Correlation Between Growth and Nutrient Content | 62 |
| Discussion | 64 |
| IAA Producing Rhizobacteria | 64 |
| Effect of Inoculation on Growth of Sweetpotato | 65 |
| V EFFECT OF pH AND CARBON SOURCES ON GROWTH OF RHIZOBACTERIA ISOLATED FROM SWEETPOTATO RHIZOSPHERE | 68 |
| Introduction | 68 |
| Objectives | 69 |
| Materials and Methods | 70 |
| Growth of Isolate in Culture with Different pH | 70 |
| Preparation of culture medium | 70 |
| Inoculation of rhizobacterial isolates | 71 |
| Growth of Isolate in Different Carbon Sources | 73 |
| Results | 72 |
| Growth of Rhizobacterial Isolate at Different pH | 72 |
| Effect of pH on IAA Production | 74 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Growth of Rhizobacterial Isolates on Different Carbon Source | 75 |
| Discussion | 77 |
| Effect of pH on Rhizobacterial Growth and IAA Production | 77 |
| Effect of Carbon Sources on Growth of Rhizobacterial Isolates | 79 |
| VI EFFECT OF L-TRYPTOPHAN ON PERFORMANCE OF IAA PRODUCING RHIZOBACTERIA ON GROWTH OF SWEETPOTATO | 82 |
| Introduction | 82 |
| Objectives | 83 |
| Materials and Methods | 83 |
| Preparation of Rhizobacterial Inoculant | 83 |
| Soil Preparation and Treatment | 84 |
| Plant and Soil Analysis | 85 |
| Soil Microbial Population | 86 |
| Results | 86 |
| Plant Growth | 86 |
| Storage Root Formation | 88 |
| Chlorophyll Content and Total Leaf Area | 90 |
| The Nutrient Concentration in Tissue | 91 |
| Population of Microorganisms in Soil | 92 |
| The Soil Nutrient Content | 93 |
| Correlation between Growth, Chemical and Biological Properties | 98 |
| Discussion | 101 |
| Effect of Rhizobacterial Inoculation and L-TRP Addition on Sweetpotato Growth | 101 |
| Population of Soil Microorganisms | 103 |
| Effect of Inoculation and L-TRP on Soil Chemical Properties | 105 |
| VII GENERAL DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS | 108 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 113 |
| APPENDICES | 128 |
| BIODATA OF THE AUTHOR | 147 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Page |
|--|------|
| 1. Sweetpotato planting area in Peninsular Malaysia in 1981-1996 | 7 |
| 2. The organic compound detected as root exudate | 12 |
| 3. The phytohormones produced of bacteria | 18 |
| 4. The physiological effect of auxin on plants | 24 |
| 5. The location and varieties of sweetpotato used in the study | 34 |
| 6. Type of rhizobacterial colony from different sweetpotato varieties grown on different soils | 38 |
| 7. The growth (OD value) of rhizobacterial isolates and pH of growth culture with root exudate at 48 hours | 44 |
| 8. The effects of rhizobacterial isolates inoculation on nutrient content in sweetpotato shoot | 61 |
| 9. Pearson correlation between growth and nutrient content of sweetpotato plants | 63 |
| 10. Combination of buffers and pH values used in the study | 70 |
| 11. IAA production by rhizobacterial isolates at different culture pH | 75 |
| 12. Effect of rhizobacterial inoculation and L-TRP addition to storage root formation of sweetpotato plant | 88 |
| 13. Effect of rhizobacterial inoculation and L-TRP on nutrient concentration of sweetpotato shoots | 91 |
| 14. Effect of rhizobacterial inoculation and L-TRP addition on concentration of N,P,K,Ca and Mg in soil | 96 |
| 15. Correlation between plant growth responses with soil chemical properties and microbial population | 99 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 16. The bacterial population converted into relative population (Experiment I) | 129 |
| 17. The growth and pH of all rhizobacterial isolates at 48 hours inoculation on sweetpotato root exudate | 130 |
| 18. Growth of rhizobacterial isolate on root exudate converted into relative growth (%) | 132 |
| 19. Data of S/R transformed into $\sqrt{S/R}$ | 133 |
| 20. The conversion of chlorophyll content of sweetpotato leaf | 134 |
| 21. The Hoagland's solution | 138 |
| 22. The dose of fertilizer that used on second pot experiment | 139 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure: | Page |
|---|------|
| 1. Different Parts of Sweetpotato Plants | 10 |
| 2. Structural Formula for The Naturally Occurring Auxins | 23 |
| 3. Structural Formula for Tryptophan | 27 |
| 4. A Schematic Diagram of The Indole-3-acetic acid (IAA) biosynthetic Pathway | 29 |
| 5. Growth of Different Coloured Rhizobacterial Strains Based on OD reading on King's B Broth Media. | 41 |
| 6. Growth (OD reading) and Population Count of Rhizobacterial Strains Based on Different Colour of Colony | 42 |
| 7. Production of IAA by Rhizobacterial Isolates in Growth Medium | 54 |
| 8. The pH Change of Rhizobacterial Isolates in Growth Medium | 56 |
| 9. Effect of Rhizobacterial Isolates on Dry Weight of Sweetpotato Shoot | 57 |
| 10. Effect of Rhizobacterial Isolates on Dry Weight of Sweetpotato Root | 58 |
| 11. Effect of Rhizobacterial Isolates on Shoot/ Root Ratio of Sweetpotato plant | 59 |
| 12. Growth of Different Rhizobacterial Isolate in Culture with Different pH | 73 |
| 13. Growth of Rhizobacterial Isolate on Different Carbon Sources | 76 |
| 14. Effects of Rhizobacterial Inoculation and L-TRP on Shoot and Root Dry Weight and Root Volume of Sweetpotato | 87 |
| 15. Effects of Rhizobacterial Inoculation and L-TRP Addition on Chlorophyll Content and Total Leaf Area of Sweetpotato Tissue | 90 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 16. Effect of Rhizobacterial Inoculation and L-TRP Addition on Population of Bacteria and Fungi in Soil | 93 |
| 17. Effect of Rhizobacterial Inoculation and L-TRP Addition on Concentration of IAA in Soil and Soil pH | 94 |
| 18. Effect of Rhizobacterial Isolates and L-TRP Addition on Soil Carbon Organic and Ratio C and N | 97 |
| 19. The Standard Curve for Total Leaf Chlorophyll Content | 134 |
| 20. The IAA Standard Curve | 136 |
| 21. First Procedure on Determination of Root Exudate | 145 |
| 22. Photography of IAA Producing Rhizobacteria in Growth Medium | 145 |
| 23. Inoculation Rhizobacterial Isolate on Sweetpotato Rhizosphere | 146 |
| 24. The storage Root Formation on Sweetpotato Plant | 146 |

LIST OF APPENDICES

| Appendix: | Page |
|--|------|
| A. THE CONVERSION OF DATA | 129 |
| B. DETERMINATION OF INDOLE-3 ACETIC ACID | 135 |
| C. THE NUTRIENT SOLUTION AND FERTILIZER SUPPLIED FOR SWEETPOTATO PLANT | 138 |
| D. SUMMARIZE OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE PROCEDURE (ANOVA) | 140 |
| E. PHOTOGRAPHY | 145 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sweetpotato (*Ipomoea batatas* L.) is an important food crop grown mainly for its starch storage root and a wide range of protein contents that ranged from 0.5 to 9.1 % dry weight (Yeoh and Truong, 1996). The starchy, tuberous roots are the major source of food and the leaves and also useful source of green vegetable in some countries. The boiled sweetpotato roots has similar energy as boiled rice and beans, high vitamins and minerals (Paul and Southgate, 1979; Woolfe, 1992), and can be used as chicken feed (Agwunobi, 1995; Ravindran and Sivakanesan, 1996).

In the normal practice, sweetpotato is being cultivated in a mono-cultured system. However, it has been observed that continuous cropping for many years on the same area has caused reduction in yield. In Perak Malaysia, which is the main area of sweetpotato cultivation, it was observed that yield of sweetpotato decreased after four seasons of cropping (Saad, Personal comm., 1997). Similar observation was recorded in several other countries. Yield of sweetpotato in Louisiana State, USA was observed to reduce when grown continuously for more than four years (Miller *et al.*, 1961). Growers in Texas reported excessive sweetpotato root cracking which led to low yield in fields that has been successively planted with sweetpotato (Peterson and Speights, 1964).



These observations indicated that the problems of sweetpotato yield reduction were not only related to soil fertility. It has been suggested that it could also be due to increased pathogenic activity. However, such problems of pest and diseases could be controlled in a well-managed farm indicating that there could be other problems. Production of allelo-compounds by plants and its residue in continuous cropping could be another important factor inhibiting plant growth and yield (Einhellig ,1985).

Many methods have been suggested to overcome the yield reduction, such as addition of fertilizer, crop rotation, mixed or inter-cropping and addition of organic matter. One of the methods used to increase plant growth is plant inoculation with beneficial microorganisms. Several species of bacteria, fungi and actinomycetes have been known to be beneficial to plant growth. The most studied microorganisms are the plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR), a group of rhizosphere bacteria that aggressively colonize the roots (Schroth and Hancock, 1982; Kennedy, 1998).

Microorganisms are considered the primary sources of biologically active substances in soil. They are able to synthesize a diverse group of substances that stimulate plant growth by direct or indirect modes of action(Frankenberger and Arshad, 1995). The metabolites produced by soil microorganisms may influence the growth and development of plants through plant growth regulators, vitamins and inhibitors (Strzelczyk and Burdziej, 1984; O'Gara *et al.*, 1994 and Astrom *et al.*, 1993). The plant hormones



(phytohormones) are produced endogenously by plants and influence physiological processes of plants at very low concentrations. One of the phytohormones that can be synthesized by microorganisms is indole-3 acetic acid (IAA).

Some of the well known PGPR are *Azotobacter*, *Azospirillum*, *Pseudomonas* and *Serratia* (Kloepper, 1993 and Okon, 1985). Although PGPR has been shown to benefit various plants, there is limited information on the presence and activity of other PGPR on sweetpotato. Yassin *et al.* (1994) have found that application of *Azospirillum* on sweetpotato resulted in positive plant responses and higher yield. *Azospirillum* and other bacteria were found to be a potential bio-fertilizer for sweetpotato as it increased yield through the N₂ fixing process and other beneficial mechanisms (Saad *et al.*, 1996).

This study hypothesized that rhizobacteria from sweetpotato rhizosphere could influence the growth and yield of sweetpotato by producing the phytohormone indole-3 acetic acid. Laboratory and glasshouse experiments were conducted with the following objectives:

- i) To isolate IAA producing rhizobacterial strains from sweetpotato rhizosphere.
- ii) To determine the effects of pH and carbon sources on growth of the bacterial isolates.

- iii) To determine the effects of IAA producing rhizobacteria on growth of sweetpotato.
- iv) To determine the effects of L-tryptophan on the performance of IAA producing rhizobacteria on growth of sweetpotato and soil chemical properties.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sweetpotato Production

Sweetpotato in General

Sweetpotato is a tropical and subtropical crop originated from Central America or North-western South America. It also grows in the warmer areas of the temperate regions. It is a warm weather crop, grows best at temperatures above 24 °C and is seriously retarded when temperature fall below 10 °C (Bouwkamp, 1985). Currently, sweetpotato is being produced in large scale, contributing 85 % of the world tuber yield (CIP, 1994). Although sweetpotato is a perennial plant, it is normally grown as an annual. The plant is usually propagated from vine cutting and its growth and yield are influenced by several factors.

Sweetpotato may be successfully produced in a wide range of soil type. However, the storage root shape and appearance are best when sweetpotato is grown in light, sandy or sandy loam, and does poorly on clay soils (Bouwkamp, 1985). Good drainage systems include irrigation are essential since the crop cannot withstand water logging and drought. Under water stress condition the leaf number, leaf area and stem length have been