

## Regulation of *Eurotium repens* Reproduction and Secondary Metabolite Production

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**E**UROTIUM *repens* (Anamorph *Aspergillus repens*) was isolated from spoiled fruit. It reproduced sexually at different sucrose concentrations up to 50% (w/v); water activity, 0.79. It reproduced asexually at high sucrose concentration 60% (w/v) water activity, 0.75. The concentrations of all detected amino acids were higher in the teleomorph than the anamorph except that of glycine, while  $\alpha$ -amino adipic acid and alanine were detected in teleomorph only. The extracellular secondary metabolites produced by the teleomorph and anamorph stages were variable and different except epoxysuccinic acid and 2-pyruvylamino benzamide which were produced by the two stages. Glycine, arginine and calcium chloride unlike glutamic acid, aspartic acid and alanine, plays an important role in the induction of teleomorph stage formation at high sucrose concentration 60 % (w/v).

**Keywords :** *Aspergillus repens* reproduction in fungi, Amino acids, Sucrose.

*Eurotium* species often dominate the fungal population in stored grain and are responsible for spoilage of jams, dried foods, dried salted fish and sponge cake (Abellana *et al.*, 1999 and Bluham *et al.*, 2005). *Eurotium repens* sexually reproduces as an ascomycete (telomorph) whereas asexual conidial reproduction of the same fungus (Anamorph) is classified as *Aspergillus repens*.

Water activity ( $a_w$ ) measurements estimate the proportion of the available water in a system, *i.e.* the water available for biological (biochemical) and chemical reaction. Water activity can be controlled through water removal or solute addition; solutes that can be used for this purpose are polyols, salts and sugars (Rose, 1983). Xerophilic fungi are characterized as being capable of growing below  $a_w$  of 0.85, and are most commonly associated with intermediate moisture foods, including cereals, nuts species and several dried food stuffs (Hocking, 1988). The majority of xerotolerant fungi belongs to the genera *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium* are perfect forms of *Aspergillus* such as *Eurotium* and *Emericella*. One of the principal factors controlling the growth of these organisms in food is  $a_w$ ; the effective growth range can be as low as 0.61 (Corry, 1987 and Jay, 1992).

Low  $a_w$  significantly reduced spores germination of *Aspergillus* spp. (Nesci *et al.*, 2003 and Ni & Streett, 2005). The spores only germinated on a medium with high  $a_w$  values; 0.982 and 0.937, while the spores did not germinate with  $a_w$  values 0.747 and 0.809.

Fungi reproduce asexually under favorable condition and sexually under stress conditions (Griffin, 1994). Bluhm *et al.* (2005) reported that *Aspergillus nidulans* and *Aspergillus flavus* strains grew only at 0.98  $a_w$ . At 0.86  $a_w$ . No growth of *Aspergillus nidulans* or *Aspergillus flavus* was visible after 8 days. At 0.83  $a_w$ , *Aspergillus nidulans* was not observed, nor were sclerotia produced by *Aspergillus flavus*.

Secondary metabolites are low-molecular-weight natural products generated by filamentous fungi, plants, algae, bacteria, and animals in response to environmental abiotic and biotic stimuli. Secondary metabolites have a strong impact on humankind via their application in health, medicine, agriculture, and industry; they include useful (*e.g.* antibiotics) and detrimental compounds (*e.g.* mycotoxins). These metabolites are frequently associated with asexual and sexual development (Chang *et al.*, 2001 and Wilkinson, *et al.*, 2004). Adams *et al.* (1998) and Pena *et al.* (1998) found a positive correlation between cleistothecial formation and secondary metabolite production in wild type and mutant strains of *Emericella nidulans*.

*Aspergillus* spp. produce an array of secondary metabolites including aflatoxin, cyclopiazonic acid, aflatrem, patulin, penicillin, kojic acid, lovastatin, carotenoids, and spore pigments; novel secondary metabolites have also been discovered that they are synthesized from so called silent gene clusters in *A. nidulans*, such as terrequinone A, monodictyphenone, emodins, and polyketides (Bok *et al.*, 2009).

Some ascomycetes may require exogenous vitamins, minerals, or other natural materials for ascocarp production that are often not duplicated in synthetic media (Moore – Landecker, 1992). *Venturia inaequalis* produced large number of ascocarps with glycine but no ascocarps were produced with ammonium tartrate (Ross & Bremner, 1971). Engelkes *et al.* (1997) found that the tyrosine was one of the better nitrogen sources for production of *Taloromyces flavus* ascospores. Also, fatty acids or related lipids are important for sexual development of filamentous fungi (Nukina *et al.*, 1981 and Goodrich – Tanrikulu *et al.*, 1998).

The objectives of this study were to assess the metabolic regulation through stress conditions on growth, reproduction and secondary metabolites biosynthesis of *Eurotium repens* which cause spoilage of fruits.

## Materials and Methods

### *Fungal strain*

The fungal isolate was isolated from spoiled fruit and identified as *Eurotium repens* according to Rapper & Fennel (1965).

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### *Media*

Dox's agar medium (sucrose, 20 g; NaNO<sub>3</sub>, 2g; KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, 1g; KCl, 0.5 g; MgSO<sub>4</sub> · 7H<sub>2</sub>O, 0.5 g; Fe SO<sub>4</sub> · 7H<sub>2</sub>O, 0.001 g; agar 20 g and distilled water, 1L) and Malt extract agar medium (malt extract, 20 g; peptone, 1 g; dextrose, 20g; agar, 20 g and distilled water, 1L) were used for isolation, cultivation and identification of the fungal isolate.

### *Growth and culture conditions*

Dox's agar medium was supplemented with different sucrose concentrations; 2, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 and 80% (w/v) to adjust the water activity ( $a_w$ ) 0.99 , 0.86, 0.82, 0.79 , 0.75 , 0.72 and 0.70, respectively according to Hefnawy (1993). A plug of inoculum from the leading edge of a colony growing on an agar plate was either inoculated in the center of another plate containing the above medium (for growth and detection of the anamorph and teleomorph stages) or transferred to 500 ml conical flask (s) for detection of amino acids, secondary metabolites, metals and antimicrobial activity.

Dox's agar medium supplemented with different sucrose concentrations and pHs, were inoculated and incubated were adjusted at different temperatures for 8 days to study their effects on anamorph and teleomorph stages formation.

Nitrogen free Dox's agar medium supplemented with different sucrose concentrations was amended with selected amino acids in equivalent weigh to N of NaNO<sub>3</sub> and certain metals; calcium chloride and aluminum chloride, (0.01 mg /100 ml medium) for metabolic regulation of anamorph and teleomorph stages formation. The percentage of teleomorph and anamorph forms, as represented by the presence of cleistothecia and conidial heads, respectively was calculated by using a hemacytometer.

### *Secondary metabolites detection*

Secondary metabolites were determined by the method described by Paterson & Bridge (1994) as follows the fungal mat of *Eurotium repens* was harvested and the fungal growth medium was filtered and extracted with equal volume of chloroform : methanol (2 :1, v/v), left to evaporate till dryness and then dissolved in 1 ml of extraction solvent.

The extraction concentrates were spotted on a pre-coated thin layer chromatography (TLC) plate (20 × 20 cm aluminum sheet silica gel 60, layer thickness 0.2 mm) along with griseofulvin as a standard reference. The metabolites were eluted using toluene: ethyl acetate: 90% formic acid (5:4: 1, v/v/v). The developed secondary metabolites spots were visualized for their colour and R<sub>f</sub> under white, UV (365 nm), UV (254 nm) and back under UV (365 nm) light, respectively. The plate was then sprayed with 0.5 % (w/v)  $\rho$  - anisaldehyde in methanol: acetic acid: concentrated sulphuric acid (17:2:1, v/v/v) and visualized under white light. The plat was heated for 8 min at 105°C and reexamined under white, UV (365 nm) and UV (254 nm) light, respectively.

*Amino acids analysis*

Cell free extracts was prepared by grinding the fresh fungal mycelium (5 gm) in a sterile mortar with 70% ethanol (v/v). The slurry was centrifuged at 600 rpm. for 10 min, and the supernatant was concentrated using a vacuum desiccators. The concentrated cell free extract was analyzed for amino acids qualitatively and quantitatively with a fully automated Amino Acid analyzer: Model LC 3000 (Eppendorf Biotronik, Germany) at the Regional Center for Mycology and Biotechnology Al-Azhar University.

*Metals analysis*

Dry fungal mycelium (0.5 gm) was ground and analyzed for metals with a Fei QUANTA 200 Environmental scanning electron microscope with Edex Unit Micro- analysis.

*Antimicrobial activity*

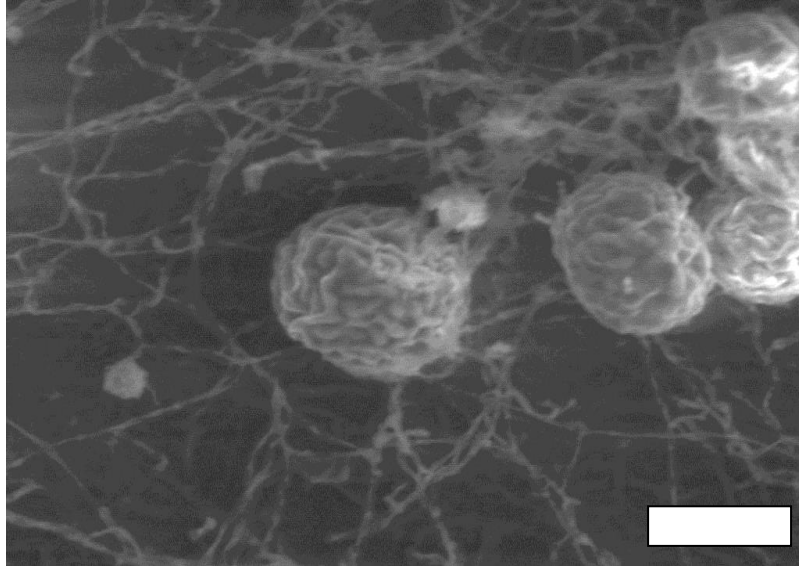
The antimicrobial activities of extra-and intracellular secondary metabolites were determined by the filter paper disc method (Nester *et al.*, 1983). The filter paper discs, 6 mm in diameter were separately soaked in the extracts and transferred onto the surface of the growth medium seeded with the test organism. After the incubation period, the diameter of the inhibited growth area around the disc (s) was measured.

## Results

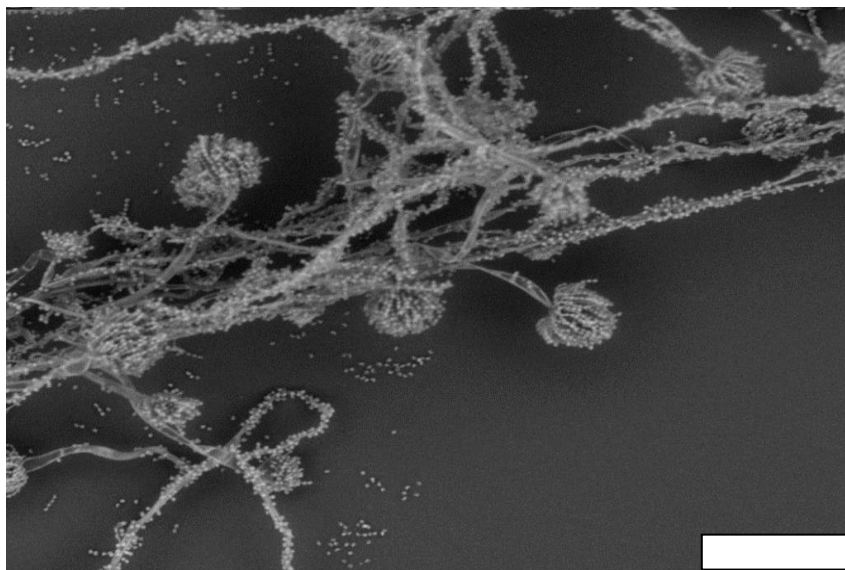
As shown in Table 1, growth of *Eurotium repens* increased with increasing sucrose concentration up to 40% reflect a decreasing water activity ( $a_w$ , 0.82), but then decreased slightly, and failed to grow at 80% sucrose concentration ( $a_w$  0.70). The percentage of teleomorph and anamorph stages formation, detected as shown in Fig. 1, decreased and increased respectively, with increasing sucrose concentration up to 50%. At 60 and 70% sucrose concentration, the fungus failed to reproduce sexually (Table 1).

**TABLE 1. Teleomorph and anamorph stages formation at different sucrose concentrations.**

Sucrose concentration % (w/v)	Colony radius (cm)	Percentage (%) of the formation of	
		Teleomorph	Anamorph
2	3.2	95	5
30	3.5	90	10
40	4.3	87	13
50	3.9	80	20
60	2.5	0.0	100
70	1.6	0.0	100
80	0.0	0.0	0.0



**Fig. 1 a.** Teleomorph stage represented by cleistothecia.



**Fig. 1 b.** Anamorph stage represented by conidial heads.

The percentage of teleomorph and anamorph stages formation at stress temperatures (20 & 40°C) and pHs (4 & 8) was relatively similar to those of control (30°C & pH6) and the same sucrose concentrations (Tables 2 and 3) but

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among the conditions compared, the optimum-growth temperature and pH were 30°C and pH 6.

**TABLE 2. Effect of temperature on growth, teleomorph and anamorph stages formation of *Eurotium repens* at different sucrose concentrations % (w/v).**

Sucrose % (w/v)	Temperature (°C)														
	10			20			30			40			45		
	Cr (cm)	T (%)	A (%)	Cr (cm)	T (%)	A (%)	Cr (cm)	T (%)	A (%)	Cr (cm)	T (%)	A (%)	Cr (cm)	T (%)	A (%)
2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	95	5	3.1	96	4	1.1	96	4	0.0	0.0	0.0
30	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.8	88	12	3.5	90	10	2.4	87	13	0.0	0.0	0.0
40	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	84	16	4.2	85	15	2.6	82	18	0.0	0.0	0.0
50	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.7	81	19	1.1	81	19	0.0	0.0	0.0
60	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
70	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
80	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Cr, colony radius; T, teleomorph stage; A, anamorph stage.

**TABLE 3. Effect of pH on growth, teleomorph and anamorph stages formation of *Eurotium repens* at different sucrose concentrations % (w/v) .**

Sucrose concentration % (w/v)	pH														
	4			5			6			7			8		
	Cr <sub>(cm)</sub>	T (%)	A (%)	Cr <sub>(cm)</sub>	T (%)	A (%)	Cr <sub>(cm)</sub>	T (%)	A (%)	Cr <sub>(cm)</sub>	T (%)	A (%)	Cr <sub>(cm)</sub>	T (%)	A (%)
2	2.1	90	10	2.3	93	7	2.9	94	6	2	88	12	0.9	89	11
30	2.5	88	12	2.9	88	12	3.2	89	11	2.2	90	10	2.1	92	8
40	2.6	85	15	2.8	84	16	4.0	86	14	2.6	83	17	2.4	90	10
50	2.0	79	21	3	80	20	3.5	80	20	3.1	79	21	1.9	80	20
60	1.6	0.0	10.0	1.7	0.0	100	2.1	0.0	100	1.9	0.0	100	1.5	0.0	100
70	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	10	0.9	0.0	10	0.0	0.0	0.0
80	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Cr, colony radius; T, teleomorph stage; A, anamorph stage.

### Secondary metabolites

The extracellular secondary metabolites produced by teleomorph and anamorph stages of *Eurotium repens* were different except for two metabolites; epoxy succinic acid and 2-pyruovylaminobenzamid, which produced by the two stages (Table 4). The number of extracellular secondary metabolites produced by teleomorph stage was more than that produced by anamorph stage.

**TABLE 4. Extracellular secondary metabolites production by teleomorph and anamorph stages.**

Secondary metabolites produced by	
Teleomorph	Anamorph
* Epoxysuccinic acid * 2-pyruovylaminobenzamide * Lapiosin * Wartmannin * Gentsyl alcohol * (-) Flavoskyrin * Compactin * Unknown (1)	* Epoxysuccinic acid * 2-pyruovyl aminobenzamide * Kojic acid * 2-carboxy-3,5,dihydroxyphenyl acetyl-carbinol * Unknown (2) * Unknown (3)

*Antimicrobial activity*

The intra- and extracellular secondary metabolites of the teleomorph stage exhibited antimicrobial activity against *Bacillus subtilis*, *Escherichia coli* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, while the intracellular secondary metabolites of the anamorph stage exhibited antimicrobial activity against *E. coli* and *B. subtilis* (Table 5a).

**TABLE 5a. Antimicrobial activity of *Eurotium repens*.**

Test organism	Intracellular secondary metabolites inhibition zone (mm)		Extracellular secondary metabolites inhibition zone (mm)	
	Anamorph	Teleomorph	Anamorph	Teleomorph
<i>Fusarium oxysporium</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Aspergillus terreus</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Candida albicans</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Cunninghamella sp.</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	2.2	22	0	24
<i>Bacillus subtilis</i>	27	23	18	25
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	0	17	0	20
<i>Salmonella typhi</i>	0	0	0	0

0, Inhibition zone not detected.

*Amino acids*

The free amino acids in teleomorph and anamorph stages were varied (Table 5b). Although, the level of all detected free amino acids except glycine was higher in teleomorph than anamorph stage. Alanine and the secondary amino acid  $\alpha$ -amino adipic acid were detected only in the teleomorph stage. The

concentration of glutamic acid, alanine, phosphoethanol amine and aspartic acid were considerable higher in teleomorph stage (253.93, 61.88, 61.79 and 40.50  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ , respectively) than other detected amino acids in the same stage. On the other hand, glutamic acid and glycine concentrations (82.79 and 31.97  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ , respectively) were higher than other detected amino acids in anamorph stage.

**TABLE 5b. Amino acids pool analysis of teleomorph and anamorph stages.**

Amino acids	Concentration ( $\mu\text{g/ml}$ ) of amino acids in	
	Teleomorph	Anamorph
Phosphoserine	23.42	5.22
Taurine	14.50	7.72
Phosphoethanol amine	61.79	20.72
Aspartic acid	40.50	15.21
Threonine	14.60	6.83
Serine	30.32	18.09
Glutamic acid	253.93	82.79
$\alpha$ -Aminoadipic acid	14.54	0.0
Glycine	9.76	31.97
Alanine	61.88	0.0
$\alpha$ -Aminobutyric acid	10.25	7.56
Methionine	8.69	5.58
Isoleucine	9.80	8.04
Leucine	6.72	3.20
Tyrosine	11.39	7.43
Phenylalanine	7.53	2.01
3-Methylhistidine	6.64	5.38
Carnosine	29.48	27.75
Ornithine	7.36	4.84
Lysine	34.99	11.19
Arginine	18.91	1.89

0.0, Amino acid not detected.

#### *Metals analysis*

There was considerable variation among the teleomorph and anamorph stages in their elemental analysis (Table 6). Most of the detected elements in anamorph stage were present in higher concentration than teleomorph stage except for potassium. Silicon and copper were not detected in teleomorph stage. On the other hand, iron and calcium were not detected in anamorph stage.



**TABLE 6. Metals analysis of teleomorph and anamorph.**

Metal	Metal weight (%) of	
	Teleomorph	Anamorph
Sodium	4.11	7.49
Magnesium	2.69	4.70
Aluminium	8.08	16.81
Silicon	0.0	4.43
Phosphorus	19.88	20.99
Sulfur	7.80	10.70
Chloride	1.54	11.34
Potassium	24.91	17.63
Calcium	2.44	0.0
Copper	0.0	5.92
Iron	28.53	0.0

0.0, metal not detected.

#### *Regulation of reproduction by amino acids and metals*

Alanine and arginine unlike aspartic acid, glutamic acid and glycine, exhibited stimulatory effect on growth of *Eurotium repens* at low sucrose concentration ( 2 % w/v ), while glycine and arginine exhibited stimulatory effect on growth and teleomorph stage formation at high sucrose concentrations (Table 7). At high sucrose concentration (70 % w/v), the fungus failed to grow on medium amended with alanine and aluminum chloride.

**TABLE 7. Effect of certain amino acids and metals on growth, teleomorph and anamorph stage formation, at different sucrose concentrations.**

Amino acids of elements	Sucrose concentration % (w/v)								
	2			60			70		
	Cr <sub>(cm)</sub>	T (%)	A (%)	Cr <sub>(cm)</sub>	T (%)	A (%)	Cr <sub>(cm)</sub>	T (%)	A (%)
Control	3.1	92	8	2.5	0	100	1.5	0.0	100
Glycine	3.0	80	20	2.9	40	60	1.9	35	65
Alanine	3.3	95	5	1.9	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0
Aspartic acid	2.9	90	10	2	0.0	100	1.2	0.0	100
Glutamic acid	3.0	91	9	1.8	0.0	100	1.4	0.0	100
Arginine	3.5	83	17	2.3	45	55	0.0	0.0	0.0
Aluminum	2.1	90	10	1.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0
Calcium	2.7	88	12	1.5	48	52	1.2	0.0	100

Cr, Colony radius; T, Teleomorph; A, Anamorph.

### Discussion

In this study the high sucrose concentration 80% (w/v), ( $a_w$  0.70) inhibit the growth of *Eurotium repens*. Pitt (1975) showed that the lower  $a_w$  limit for growth of *Eurotium* species is approximately 0.70. Fungi reproduce asexually under favorable condition and sexually under stress condition (Griffin, 1994). However *Eurotium repens* did not reproduce sexually under stress of low water activity 0.75 and 0.72 adjusted by sucrose concentration 60% (w/v) and 70% (w/v), respectively. Recently, Bluhm *et al.* (2005) found that the conidial heads of *Eurotium rubrum* were visible after 6 days at 0.98  $a_w$ . Cleistothecia were produced only at 0.98  $a_w$ , however mature ascospores were not detected until 10 days.

From the current study there is indirect relationship between the low  $a_w$  and reproduction in *Eurotium repens* where at low  $a_w$  certain amino acids were produced while others not produced. Generally the free amino acids are known to play an important role in the regulation of synthesis of some enzymes, on secondary metabolites production and osmoregulation. The unusual amino acid  $\alpha$  amino adipic acid and alanine were not detected when the *Eurotium repens* reproduce asexually (anamorph). On the other hand, glycine was only detected in higher concentration in teleomorph than in anamorph. These amino acids may be involved in the regulation of *Eurotium repens* reproduction. Mc Alpin & Wicklow (2005) stated that high nitrate (0.3% - 0.6%  $\text{NaNO}_3$ ) and high sucrose (10 – 20 %) concentrations were optimal for stromata development. No stromata were produced by *Petromyces alliaceus* (Anamorph *Aspergillus alliaceus*) on media in which cystine or ammonium sulphate represented the only source of nitrogen, while the percentage of stromata containing ascocarps was the greatest with ammonium tartrate, glutamic acid, glycine or serine substituted for  $\text{NaNO}_3$ .

There is a direct relationship between the osmotic stress and polyols, phospholipids and lipid composition in filamentous fungi (Hefnawy, 1993). The growth of *Eurotium repens* at low water activity (high osmotic stress) may induce synthesis of compounds which may then regulate their reproduction. This information is consistent with previous studies, where fatty acids or related lipids (Nukina *et al.*, 1981 and Goodrich-Tanrikulu *et al.*, 1998) and polyols (Feofilova *et al.*, 2000) affected sexual development in filamentous fungi.

The secondary metabolites detected in teleomorph and anamorph stages of *Eurotium repens* were generally different; this may be due to differentiation or may be related to other physiological changes. Many previous studies revealed that the production of fungal secondary metabolites is associated with differentiation (sexual and asexual development) and environmental stress (Cotty *et al.*, 1994; Trail *et al.*, 1995; Adams & Yu, 1998; Pena *et al.*, 1998; Chang *et al.*, 2001 and Michael *et al.*, 2001).

From the elemental analysis, calcium was detected only in teleomorph stage, and therefore, when added to the growth medium it stimulates the sexual reproduction at 60% (w/v) sucrose concentration in *Eurotium repens*. Changes in microcellular  $\text{Ca}^{+2}$  concentration are known to play an important role in the regulation of all physiological processes occurring in the cell such as growth, division, secretion and development of microbial resting forms (Jackson & Heath, 1993 and Berridge *et al.*, 2000). On the other hand, aluminum suppresses the growth and sexual reproduction in the *Eurotium repens*, the reduction of spore germination by aluminum was documented by Dursun *et al.* (2002).

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( Received 29/3/2011;  
accepted 19/6/2011)

## تنظيم التكاثر والنواتج الأيضية الثانوية لفطيرة *أروشيم ريبنس*

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تم عزل فطر و تعريفه على أنه فطر *أروشيم ريبنس* وتم تنميته على بيئة مزودة بتركيزات مختلفة من السكروز فوجد أنه يتكاثر جنسياً حتى تركيز ٥٠٪ (وزن/حجم) بينما عند التركيز العالى ٦٠٪ (وزن/حجم) يتكاثر لاجنسياً فقط. وتحليل الأحماض الأمينية فى الطور الكامل والغير كامل لنفس الفطر وجد أن الأحماض الأمينية موجودة بتركيزات عالية فى الطور الكامل بالمقارنة بالطور الغير كامل ما عدا الحمض الأمينى جليسين بالإضافة إلى وجود حمضى ألفا أمينو أدبيك وألانين فى الطور الكامل فقط. ووجد أن نواتج التمثيل الغذائية الثانوية المنتجة بالفطر فى الطور الكامل والغير كامل كانت متنوعة ومختلفة وعند إضافة بعض الأحماض الأمينية على الوسط الغذائى النامى عليه الفطر كان لهم دوراً مهماً لاستحثاث تكوين الطور الكامل عند التركيز العالى من السكروز ٦٠٪ (وزن/حجم) .