__Original Research Article__

Assessment of the sanitary quality of precooked cereal-based foods produced in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Abstract

Small-scale cereal-based food production companies have recently been growing in Ouagadougou. The promoters of these companies do not always apply good hygiene practices (GHP) during their activities, which can lead to the production of food of unsatisfactory quality, which can threaten the health of consumers. In view of this observation, this study was initiated with the aim of assessing the sanitary quality of four pre-cooked cereal-based foods produced in Ouagadougou's city. Thus, 27 samples of these foods (rice and maize couscous, millet and *sorghum dègué*) were collected and sent to the laboratory. Microbiological and physicochemical analyses using standard methods were performed on these samples. The results obtained show that for all the samples of the four foods, the pH varies from 6.20±0.02 to 7.79±0.01 while the water content varies from 4.80±0.72% to 9.19±0.01%. The dry matter content of the samples was between 90.00±0.01% and 95.20±0.07%. The water and oil absorption capacities of the samples vary from 130.26±5.10% to 162.02±4.20% and from 90.09±0.00% to 115.05±7.03% %. The loads of total mesophilic aerobic flora (TAMF) and yeasts and molds (YM) vary, respectively, from $1.33 \pm 0.71 \times 10^{2}$ CFU/g to $1.24 \pm 0.54 \times 10^{4}$ CFU/g and from <10 CFU/g to $2.20 \pm 0.14 \times 10^{3}$ CFU/g. For most samples, total coliforms (TC) and thermotolerant coliforms (TTC) loads were less than 10 CFU/g. *Salmonella* was absent from all samples. Referring to the standards, for all the germs studied, 100% of the rice couscous samples, 83.34% of the millet *dègué* samples, 66.66% of the *sorghum dègué* samples, and 77.78% of the maize couscous samples presented satisfactory microbiological quality.

Comment [a1]: Total Aerobic Mesophilic Flora

Keywords: Precooked foods, cereals, quality, microbiology, physico-chemistry, Ouagadougou

Introduction

Cereals occupy a primordial place in the global agricultural system. They are considered to be the main source of human and animal nutrition [1]. In Africa, cereals (maize, rice, sorghum, millet, fonio) constitute a staple diet for most populations [2]. According to the results of the 2013 agricultural campaign, cereal production in Burkina Faso mainly focused on maize, rice, sorghum, millet, and fonio [3]. The demographic explosion in urban centers and lifestyles changing are creating new demands on city dwellers. They are on the lookout for quality products, but they are also looking for cereals that are easy and quick to prepare [4]. Thus, the proliferation of artisanal structures for the production of precooked cereal-based foods has occurred in urban centers. However, the inability to observe the requirements for their preparation, packaging, and storage subjects them to microbial contamination, which poses a health risk to consumers [5], [6]. Therefore, some of these structures often produce food whose quality is not always satisfactory, exposing consumers to food-borne diseases. Foodborne diseases affect 600 million people each year worldwide, and 420,000 peoples die from them, including 125,000 children under the age of five [7]. In Africa, annually, 91 million people suffer from foodborne diseases and approximately 137000 die from them, representing 1/3 of global mortality due to foodborne diseases [7]. Similarly, according to Tabassum et al. [8], foodborne diseases are an important cause of morbidity and mortality because millions of people fall ill and many die after ingesting food unfit for consumption. In addition, the production of poor quality food results in a loss of competitiveness and money for food production structures and consumer mistrust [9]. In view of these problems linked to unsanitary foods, this study was initiated to assess the sanitary quality of precooked cereal-based foods produced artisanally in Ouagadougou.

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Comment [a3]: Latest year data must be included.

Materials and methods

Sampling

Samples were obtained from production sites located in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Therefore, 27 samples of the four precooked cereal-based foods (rice and maize coucous, sorghum and millet *dèguè*), initially packaged in bags of 500g, were taken during different productions. These samples were then transported and stored in the laboratory for physicochemical and microbiological analyses.

Physico-chemical analyses

pH

The pH was determined according to the AOAC [10] method using a pH meter (HANNA instruments). Thus, 10 g of each sample were taken and introduced into a beaker containing 50 mL of distilled water. The pH meter electrode was then rinsed with distilled water and introduced into the mixture after homogenization. The pH value was read on the pH meter screen after stabilization. For each sample, measurements were made in triplicate.

Dry matter and water content

To quantify the dry matter, 5 g of each sample were introduced into an empty crucible of known mass. The whole mixture was placed in an oven at 105°C for 4 h. Then, each sample was cooled and the crucible mass containing the sample was weighed. For each sample, measurements were made in triplicate. The dry matter content was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{MS (\%)} = \frac{\text{MF} - \text{M0}}{\text{PE}} * 100$$

Legend : MF : Mass of crucible and sample in g ; PE : Test portion in g ; M0 : Mass of empty crucible in g

The water content H (%) was deduced using the following formula:

H (%) = 100 - MS (%)

With: MS (%) : dry matter ; H (%) : water content

Water absorption capacity (WAC)

The water absorption capacity was determined according to the method described by Rodriguez-Ambriz et al. [11].

Oil Absorption Capacity (OAC)

The Oil absorption capacity (OAC) was determined according to the method described by Lin and Zayas [12].

Microbiological analyses

Preparation of culture media

The culture media used in this study were prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions. The obtained preparations were homogenized and sterilized at 121°C for 15 min (except SS medium). These preparations were then poured into Petri dishes.

Preparation of dilutions and Seeding

Under sterile conditions, 10 g of each sample were added to 90 mL of physiological water. The mixture obtained (dilution 10^{-1}) is then diluted in a cascade up to dilution of 10^{-4}.

For each sample, 0.1 mL of the appropriate dilutions was inoculated onto the culture media previously poured into the Petri dishes and spread using a sterile pipette. These Petri dishes were turned over and incubated at the time and temperature indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Microorganisms, culture media and incubation conditions

Microorganism	Standard	Culture medium	Temperature and incubation time
TAMF	ISO4833(2003) [13]	PCA	37 °C for 24 hours
TC	ISO4832(2006) [14]	EMB	37 °C for 24 hours
TTC	ISO4832(2006) [14]	EMB	44 °C for 24 hours

Comment [a4]: Expansion

YM	NF V08-059 (2002) [15]	SCA	30 °C for 120 hours
Salmonella	ISO6579(2002) [16]	SS Agar	37 °C for 120 hours

PCA : Plate count Agar, EMB : Eosin Methylen Blue, SCA : Sabouraud Chloramphenicol Agar, SS : Salmonella Sighella

Comment [a5]: Proper italic font muust be there for all scientific names

The search for salmonella was carried out following the steps below:

- Pre-enrichment: 25 g of each sample were introduced into 225 mL of buffered peptone water and incubated at 37°C for 24 h.

- Enrichment in liquid selective medium: 1 mL of the pre-enriched broth was introduced into 9 mL of Rappapport-Vassiliadis (RV) broth and incubated at 37°C for 24 h.

- Salmonella isolation: A Pasteur pipette dipped in the enrichment medium was used to inoculate *Salmonella–Shigella* agar (SS agar). The plates were then incubated at 37°C for 24 h.

Enumeration

The number of microorganisms in CFU/g of each sample was determined according to standard ISO 4833-2 (2013) [17]:

- For Petri dishes with a number of colonies between 15 and 300, the following formula was used:

$$\mathrm{N}\ (\frac{\mathrm{CFU}}{\mathrm{g}}) = \frac{\sum \mathbf{C}}{\mathbf{V(n1 + 0.1n2)d}}$$

N : number of microorganisms in CFU/g of product

∑C : sum of colonies

V : volume of inoculum placed in each Petri dishes in mL

n1 : number of Petri dishes retained at the first dilution

n2 : number of Petri dishes retained at the second dilution d : lowest dilution rate retained

- For Petri dishes whose colony sum is less than 15, the following formula was used:

$$N = \frac{\sum C}{V * d * n}$$

- For Petri dishes in which no colonies were observed, the number of microorganisms was considered to be less than 1/d (N< 1 / d).

Results and discussion

Physico-chemical characteristics

pH

During this study, very little variation in pH was observed for the three types of food (Table 2). For these foods, the average pH were 6.30±0.01, 6.33±0.06 and 6.25±0.02 respectively for rice couscous, millet dègué and sorghum *dègué*. However, maize couscous has the highest pH, with an average of 7.49±0.17. The relatively high pH of maize couscous can be explained by the frequent use of potash during maize flour production. The pH values obtained during this study are higher than those reported by Angaman et al. [18] and Koné et al. [19], with values of 4.92 and 4.75 in germinated and non-germinated flours, respectively. The pH values obtained during this study are similar to those reported by Sika et al. [20] and Houssou et al. [21], which were respectively 6.75±0.25 and 6.78±0.02 in flour and *yêkè-yêkè* (maize couscous). The pH of the samples studied are generally close to neutral pH, which can be a favorable factor for microbial growth and therefore food spoilage.

Water content

Comment [a6]: Unit must be provided for the obtained values

The rice couscous samples had very low water contents of approximately 5% (Table 2) with an average of 5.05±0.26. The millet and sorghum *deguè* samples had similar water contents with respective averages of 5.87±0.27 and 6.39±0.32. The maize couscous samples presented the highest water content, with an average of 8.57±0.27. This significant variation in water content can be explained by the drying conditions. Other authors have reported water contents similar to those recorded in this study. Thus, after the analysis of three flour samples, a humidity varying from 8.30±0.10 to 8.60±0.17% was reported by Yapi et al. [22]. Similarly, Houssou et al. [21] found a water content of 8.25±0.05 in *yêkè-yêkè*. Water contents lower than those obtained in this study, ranging from 3.33 g/100g to 4.66 g/100g), were also reported by Kone et al. [19] in infant flours composed of dehydrated *attiéké* and cashew nuts. N'Goran et al. [23], obtained results from white flours indicating average water content values of between 21.0±10.16 and 39.7±2.02. Humidity levels below 10% are recommended to preserve the cereal-based product for a reasonable period [24]. Thus, the samples of the foods studied could be easily preserved.

Dry matter

Comment [a7]: Unit must be provided for the obtained values

The dry matter content was very high in rice couscous, millet, and sorghum dègué, with respective averages of 94.94±0.26, 94.12±0.27 and 93.59±0.32. For maize couscous, the dry matter content was relatively lower, with an average of 91.42±0.27. However, these contents are sufficiently high to allow good conservation of this product. Other authors have reported dry matter contents close to those of the present study with values of 91.09±0.99 in germinated corn flour [18] and 92.80±0.57 [20].

Water absorption capacity

The WACs of the samples of the four foods are presented in Table 2. WACs vary little from one sample to another and from one food to another. The WAC values obtained during this study are similar to those reported by Kaur and Singh [25], Ghavidel and Prakash [26]), and Angaman et al. [18], respectively, with 128% in cowpea yam flour, 136% in chickpea flour and 116.766±0.462 in sprouted maize flour. However, Gampoula et al. [27] reported a WAC of 191.58% in yam-based infant flour. Indeed, foods with high water absorption capacity have more hydrophilic constituents such as polysaccharides [18]. According to Nelson-Quartey et al. [28], the presence of lipids in food reduces the binding capacity of water to particular substances, thus limiting WAC.

Oil absorption capacity

The oil absorption capacities of the analyzed couscous samples are presented in Table 2. The OAC values are similar for the two types of couscous and vary from 90.09±00 to 115.05±07.03. The values obtained during this study are similar to those reported by Angaman et al [18] and Gampoula et al. [27], respectively 109.37±9.261% in sprouted maize flour and 93.33% in yam-based infant flour. However, other authors found higher OAC of 167.78±4.61 to 188.62±6.62 in foods [22].

According to Assielou et al. [29], a high oil absorption capacity is due to the presence of non-polar amino acids in flours. Oil absorption capacity is important in food design because fat acts as a flavor preserver, increases the palatability of foods, and enhances mouthfeel [30], [31]. In addition, OAC is an important property in food preservation because it prevents the development of oxidative rancidity [32].

Comment [a8]: Unit must be provided for the values

Comment [a9]: Unit must be provided for the values

Table 2. Physico-chemical characteristics of precooked foods

Food	Sample	TE (%)	TMS (%)	WAC (%)	OAC (%)	pH
	E1	4.80±0.72a	95.20±0.72a	157.02±5.00a	105.01±10.00abc	6.29±0.00c
	E2	5.53±0.61a	94.47±0.61a	154.04±4.02ab	110.02±08.01ab	6.29±0.01c
	E3	5.13±0.61a	94.87±0.61a	138.02±5.00c	95.01±11.00c	6.33±0.01a
Rice couscous	**E4**	4.87±0.50a	95.13±0.50a	136.05±7.03c	112.03±09.02ab	6.31±0.01b
	E5	4.93±0.61a	95.07±0.61a	162.02±4.20a	102.01±00.00bc	6.32±0.01ab
	E6	5.07±0.70a	94.93±0.70a	145.08±6.06bc	115.05±07.03a	6.31±0.01b
	E1	8.37±0.04[a]	91.63±0.04[a]	145.29±4.01[de]	110.11±10.01[b]	7.79±0.01[f]
	E2	8.32±0.02[a]	91.68±0.02[a]	150.30±6.01[e]	100.10±00.00[b]	7.50±0.01[d]
	E3	8.45±0.02[a]	91.55±0.02[a]	135.27±5.01[ab]	110.15±10.04[b]	7.41±0.01[c]
Maize couscous	**E4**	8.46±0.16[a]	91.54±0.16[a]	140.28±0.00[cd]	110.31±11.01[b]	7.37±0.01[b]
	E5	8.40±0.03[a]	91.60±0.03[a]	130.26±5.01[a]	100.10±00.00[b]	7.38±0.01[b]
	E6	8.60±0.00[b]	91.40±0.00[b]	135.27±5.01[ab]	90.09±00.00[a]	7.36±0.01[b]
	E7	8.65±0.12[bc]	91.35±0.12[bc]	135.27±5.01[bc]	100.10±09.01[b]	7.38±0.01[b]
	E8	9.19±0.01[d]	90.00±0,01[d]	130.26±0.00[a]	90.09±00.00[a]	7.26±0.02[a]
	E9	8.76±0.01[c]	80.24±0.01[c]	140.28±5.01[bc]	101.10±00.00[b]	7.72±0.02[e]
	E1	5.66±0.47a	94.33± 0.47a	150.03±0.00	ND	6.36±0.04a
	E2	6.06±0.60a	93/93±0.60a	150.03±0.00	ND	6.20±0.02a
	E3	5.87±0.30a	94.13±0.30a	150.03±0.00	ND	6.37±0.02a
Millet *dègué*	**E4**	6.33±0.50a	93.67±0.50a	150.03±0.00	ND	6.39±0.01a
	E5	5.73±0.37a	94.27±0.37a	150.03±0.00	ND	6.32±0.004a
	E6	5.60±0.560a	94.40±0.56a	150.03±0.00	ND	6.34±0.02a
	E1	6.53±0.71a	93.46±0.71a	160.32±6.53a	ND	6.23±0.02c
	E2	6.27±0.88a	93.73±0.88a	145.29±11.23a	ND	6.29±0.01a
	E3	6.33±0.71a	93.67±0.71a	148.32±2.51a	ND	6.23±0.01c
Sorghum dègué	**E4**	6.93±0.71a	93.07±0.71a	150.30±12.24a	ND	6.27±0.01ab
	E5	6.40±0.66a	93.60±0.66a	160.15±3.16a	ND	6.23±0.004c
	E6	5.93±0.71a	94.06±0.71a	150.12±5.23a	ND	6.25±0.004bc

In the same column, for each type of food, the values which have the same superscript letter are not significantly different at the threshold of p=0.05

Comment [a10]: TE - not mentioned in abstract and methodology

Comment [a11]: TMS – not mentioned in abstract and methodology

Principal component analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the correlation of the variability of physicochemical and technological parameters depending on the different samples of precooked foods used in this study. Principal component analysis shows that the parameters taken into account in our study can be represented on two axes depending on the different samples considered. The two axes summarize 90.34% of the information in Figure 1. The F1 axis represents 62.54% of the observed variability and the F2 axis, 20.68%.

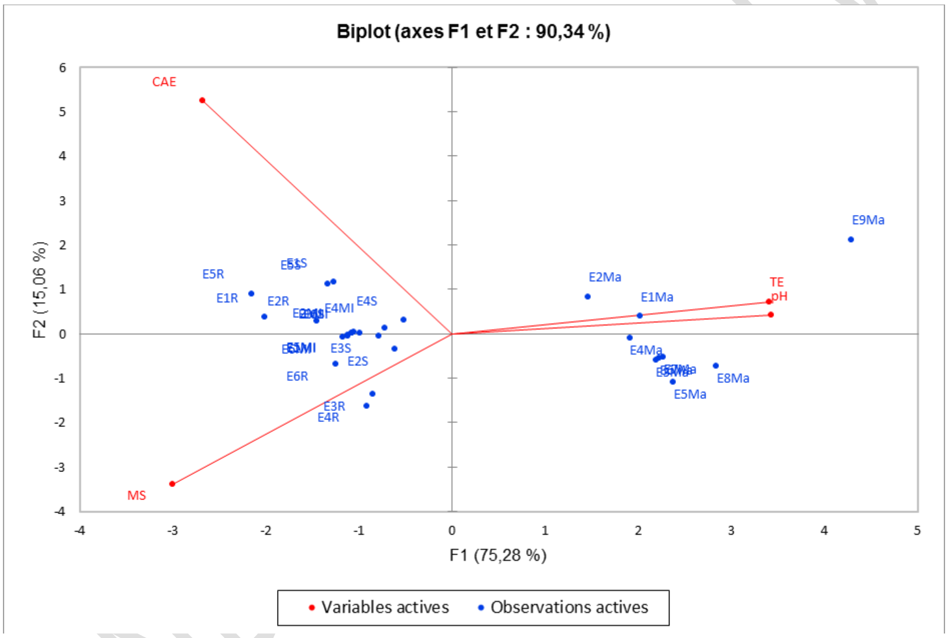

Figure 1: Result of principal component analysis of physicochemical and technological parameters of precooked foods

Microbiological characteristics

TAMF

The results showed that the TAMF loads of samples from different foods were relatively similar (Table 3). TAMF loads of rice couscous, millet and sorghum *dèguè* samples varied from $1.33\pm0.71\times10^2$ to $8.00\pm5.55\times10^2$, $1.40\pm0.28\text{x}10^3$ to $2.57\pm0.12\text{x}10^3$ and $1.00\pm0.90\text{x}10^3$ to $6.15\pm5.85\text{x}10^3$ respectively. Maize couscous samples showed relatively higher loadings than the other three foods. This could be explained by the fact that maize couscous samples had higher water contents than other foods. Other authors have found TAMF loadings similar to those recorded in this study. Thus, loads of aerobic mesophilic germs varying from $2.09\text{x}10^2$ to $2.54\text{x}10^2$ CFU/g were found in flours [20]. Similarly, Houssou et al. [21] obtained TAMF loads of around $4.2\text{x}10^4$ CFU/g. However, other authors have reported particularly high TAMF loads of $1.8\text{x}10^9$ CFU/g in flours [23]. The Codex Stan 74 [33] set a limit of 10^5 CFU/g in infant flour. Thus, referring to this limit, all the food samples studied were of satisfactory quality.

Comment [a12]: Units must be provided

Yeasts and molds

Yeast and mold loadings were generally similar in the samples of the four food types (Table 3). These loads are generally around 10^2 CFU/g. A few rare samples have loads lower than 10 CFU/g. The loads obtained during this study are similar to those reported in other studies. Thus, Sika et al. [20] reported fungal loads that varied between $3.4\text{x}10^1$ and $3.8\text{x}10^1$ CFU/g. Similarly, Houssou et al. [21] reported a yeast and mold load of $5.0\text{x}10^1$ CFU/g in infant flour. However, other authors have obtained much higher yeast and mold loads during their studies. Therefore, according to Yao et al. [34], the mold load in the three samples obtained just after grinding of the grains varied from $4.6\text{x}10^5$ to $5.6\text{x}10^5$ CFU/g. During a study examining the microbiological quality of flours, yeast and mold loads of $5.6\text{x}10^6$ and $1.9\text{x}10^8$

CFU/g, respectively, were reported by N'Goran et al. [23]. According to Codex Stan 74 [33], which sets the limit of 10^3 CFU/g of yeasts and molds in infant flours, 1 sample of maize couscous, 2 samples of millet dègué, and 2 samples of sorghum dègué are of unsatisfactory quality.

Total and thermotolerant coliforms

For all samples of the four foods, the total and thermotolerant coliform loads were less than 10 CFU/g. Only three samples of maize couscous showed higher loads for these two types of bacteria (Table 3). The presence of coliforms in certain samples demonstrates non-compliance with hygiene rules in the production of the foods studied. N'Goran et al. [23] reported much higher total and fecal coliform loads than those of the three maize samples in this study. These loads were $1.3x10^6$ and 7.0 $x10^5$ CFU/g for total and thermotolerant coliforms, respectively. However, during a study on infant flour samples, fecal coliforms were not detected according to Sika et al. [20]. Similarly, total coliform loads <1 were reported in a study by Houssou et al. [21]. Referring to which sets a limit of 10^3 CFU/g for total and fecal coliforms in infant flour, only two samples of maize couscous are of unsatisfactory quality.

Salmonella

During this study, Salmonella was not found in any of the samples (Table 3). Thus, all samples of the four foods were of satisfactory quality for salmonella. These results are similar to those reported by Sika et al. [20] and Angaman et al. [18]. However, during a study on the evaluation of the sanitary quality of flours, N'Goran et al. [23] demonstrated the presence of Salmonella in 2 maize flour samples.

Food	Sample	TMAF (CFU/mL)	TC (CFU/g)	CTT (CFU/g)	YM (CFU/g)	SS (in 25 g)	Global appreciation
Rice couscous	E1	$1.90\pm1.30\times10^{2ab}$	<10	<10	$1.20\pm0.25\times10^{2ab}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E2	$4.20\pm2.40\times10^{2ab}$	<10	<10	$3.86\pm2.10\times10^{2a}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E3	$8.00\pm5.55\times10^{2a}$	<10	<10	$2.00\pm0.41\times10^{2ab}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E4	$7.20\pm5.95\times10^{2ab}$	<10	<10	$3.50\pm2.86\times10^{2ab}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E5	$3.71\pm1.07\times10^{2ab}$	<10	<10	$2.00\pm0.57\times10^{2ab}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E6	$1.33\pm0.71\times10^{2b}$	<10	<10	$1.07\pm0.23\times10^{2b}$	Absent	Satisfactory
Maize couscous	E1	$1.24\pm0.54x10^{4}c$	$7.33\pm4.10x10^{3a}$	$5.15\pm2.27x10^{3a}$	$1.82\pm0.80x10^{3b}$	Absent	Non-satisfactory
	E2	$4.60\pm2.37x10^{3ab}$	$3.33\pm1.44x10^{2b}$	$1.33\pm0.58x10^{2b}$	$2.67\pm1.15x10^{2a}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E3	$4.67\pm2.62x10^{3ab}$	<10	<10	$4.67\pm2.52x10^{2a}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E4	$3.21\pm1.40x10^{3ab}$	<10	<10	$2.67\pm1.15x10^{2a}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E5	$1.81\pm1.07x10^{3ab}$	<10	<10	$4.00\pm1.73x10^{2a}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E6	$9.69\pm5.55x10^{2ab}$	<10	<10	<10	Absent	Satisfactory
	E7	$7.51\pm3.77x10^{3b}$	$3.57\pm2.56x10^{3b}$	$2.67\pm1.15x10^{2b}$	$2,67\pm1.53x10^{2a}$	Absent	Non-satisfactory
	E8	$4.67\pm2.02x10^{2a}$	<10	<10	$2,67\pm1.53x10^{2a}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E9	$1.33\pm0.57x10^{2a}$	<10	<10	<10	Absent	Satisfactory
Millet *dègué*	E1	$1.40 \pm0.28x10^{3c}$	< 10	< 10	$4.50\pm1.06x10^{2d}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E2	$1.60 \pm 0.35x10^{3bc}$	< 10	< 10	$8.00 \pm 2.1x10^{2cd}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E3	$2.57\pm0.12x10^{3a}$	< 10	< 10	$1.00\pm 0.28x10^{3bc}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E4	$2.50\pm0.38x10^{3a}$	< 10	< 10	$1.50 \pm 0.14x10^{2a}$	Absent	Non-satisfactory
	E5	$2.20\pm0.24x10^{3ab}$	< 10	< 10	$7.00\pm0.14x10^{2cd}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E6	$2.10\pm0.80x10^{3abc}$	< 10	< 10	$1.40 \pm0.38x10^{2ab}$	Absent	Non-satisfactory
Sorghum couscous	E1	$2.35\pm0.50x10^{3ab}$	< 10	< 10	$1.60\pm0.15x10^{3b}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E2	$2.20\pm0.40x10^{3ab}$	< 10	< 10	$2.200\pm0.2x10^{3a}$	Absent	Non-Satisfactory
	E3	$1.00\pm0.90x10^{3b}$	< 10	< 10	$8.0\pm1.5x10^{2d}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E4	$2.25\pm0.75x10^{3ab}$	< 10	< 10	$2.00\pm0.1x10^{3a}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E5	$6.15\pm5.85x10^{3a}$	< 10	< 10	$4.00 \pm1.0x10^{2e}$	Absent	Satisfactory
	E6	$2.55\pm0.85x10^{3ab}$	< 10	< 10	$1.10\pm0.1x10^{3c}$	Absent	Non-Satisfactory

Table 3. Microbiological characteristics of precooked foods

In the same column, for each type of food, the values which have the same superscript letter are not significantly different at the threshold of p=0.05

Overall appreciation of the microbiological quality of samples

Taking into account all the microorganisms studied during this work, 22.22% (2/9) of the maize couscous samples, 16.66% (1/6) of the millet *dègué* samples, and 33.33 % (2/6) of the sorghum *dègué* samples were of unsatisfactory quality. All rice couscous samples were of satisfactory quality. For the samples of the four foods studied, 18.51% (6/27) were of unsatisfactory quality (Table 3). Thus, 81.41% of the samples used in this study had satisfactory microbiological quality. This high level of quality is linked to the low loads of microorganisms generally observed in the samples. These low loads could be explained by the very low humidity level in the different food samples studied [20]. Likewise, according to other authors such as Tarhouni et al. [20], cooking/drying coupling during food production would allow a significant reduction in the load of aerobic mesophilic germs and fungi. This could also explain the low microbial loads in the studied foods.

Conclusion

This study showed that precooked foods such as rice and maize couscous and millet and sorghum *dègué* have similar physicochemical and technological characteristics, which are generally acceptable. It also shows that these foods have satisfactory microbiological quality in general, especially in the case of rice couscous. However, some samples had unsatisfactory quality for yeasts, molds, and coliforms. This means that we must raise awareness and train producers of these foods to further increase the quality of precooked foods produced in Ouagadougou.

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