PATHOGENICITY OF *ASPERGILLUS TERREUS* ON THE SCLEROTIA OF *SCLEROTINIA SCLEROTIORUM*

Melo, I.S.1; Fall, J.L.2; Nascimento, R.S.1; Costa, F.G.1,3; Sereda, L. A.1

1 Embrapa Meio Ambiente - Jaguariúna -SP
2 Birkbeck College -London University -Malet Street WC1E&HX, London, UK
3 USP - Universidade de São Paulo -Biotecnologia
e-mail: fgcosta@cnpma.embrapa.br

In Brazil, sclerotinia wilt is a serious disease of many important crops, including tomato, common beans, soybeans, sunflower, letucce and many others, caused by infection of roots by hyphae from myceliogenic germination of sclerotia of *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*. Therefore, a study was conducted to investigate, using scanning electron microscopy, the mode of hyperparasitism of *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* by *Aspergillus terreus*. One *A. terreus* strain (EQ), isolated by a sclerotial bait technique, showed *in vitro* antagonistic activity against the soilborne plant pathogen *S. sclerotiorum* (Lib.) de Bary. The interaction between *A. terreus* and sclerotia of the pathogen, studied by scanning electron microscopy (SEM), revealed that hyphae of the mycoparasite grew and sporulated abundantely on the sclerotial surface. Cell breakdown due to host cell wall disruption was observed in inner rind cells. This *A. terreus* strain (EQ) was found to affect sclerotial viability when sclerotia were treated with conidia of the mycoparasite. This study indicates that *A. terreus* (EQ) is a destructive hyperparasite of *S. Sclerotiorum.* Thus, this fungus may have potential for the control of sclerotinia wilt of many important crops. Additional studies to assess the potential role of enzymatic hydrolysis in the antagonistic process are in course.