Cadmium-induced Stress and Antioxidative Responses in Different *Brassica napus* Cultivars

T. Touiserkani¹, and R. Haddad¹∗

**ABSTRACT**

To estimate plant resistance to Cadmium Chloride (CdCl₂) stress for phytoremediation purposes, the effect of cadmium (Cd) phytotoxicity was assessed on total soluble protein, chlorophyll (Chl) content and antioxidant enzymes in the leaves of three different *Brassica napus* (*B. napus*) cultivars; Mohican, Reg.Cob and Okapi. Plants were exposed to three levels of CdCl₂ (0.75, 1.5 and 2.25 mM) in irrigation water. A reduction in protein and Chl content was noted for all treatments in the three cultivars. Generally, superoxide dismutase (SOD) and ascorbate peroxidase (APX) activities were increased with 0.75 mM CdCl₂ and then decreased at higher concentrations. SOD activity was enhanced up to 1.5 mM CdCl₂ concentration in Mohican cultivar. Moreover, APX activity of Okapi cultivar was increased at a much higher rate of CdCl₂ levels compared to Mohican and Reg.Cob cultivars. Different concentrations of CdCl₂ induced a reduction in the catalase (CAT) activity of Mohican and Reg.Cob. However, this activity was increased with 0.75 mM CdCl₂ in Okapi and then decreased with higher concentrations. These results indicate that *B. napus* cultivars have different tolerances to CdCl₂ stress and in consequence, different phytoremediation efficiencies. Moreover, because Okapi possesses a higher antioxidant enzyme activity than the other two cultivars, it is suggested that it is probably the most tolerant cultivar to CdCl₂ stress.

**Keywords:** Antioxidant enzymes, *B. napus*, Cadmium Chloride, Cultivars, Stress.

**INTRODUCTION**

Heavy metal contamination is responsible for limiting crop productivity in agricultural lands (Smith, 2009). Current remediation methods to lower the impacts of heavy metals are expensive and environmentally invasive. A low cost remediation technique and safe to human health and environment is the use of plants species to remove heavy metals from soil by phytoextraction. Currently, it is believed that there are around 400 plant species from a number of different families such as the Asteraceae, Brassicaceae, Caryophyllaceae, Poaceae, Violaceae and Fabaceae that possess the ability to tolerate very high levels of heavy metals in the soil (Poschenrieder *et al.*, 2006; Matthew *et al.*, 2008). The Brassicaceae is the best represented among these metal-hyperaccumulator families with 87 Brassica species classified as metal hyperaccumulators. First coined by Brooks *et al.* (1977), metal hyperaccumulators are plants that are able to accumulate metals in their above-ground tissues to very high concentrations (approx. 100 times that of a nonaccumulator plant species). Cd is the fourth most toxic element to vascular plants (Qadir *et al.*, 2004). One of the major consequence of such stresses is enhanced production of reactive oxygen species (ROS) which usually damage cell membrane by inducing lipid peroxidation (Ünyayar *et al.*, 2005).

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2006; Gonçalves et al., 2007), various portions of photosynthetic apparatus in plant such as chloroplast ultrastructure, organization of thylakoids and the activity of photosynthetic enzymes, biosynthesis of Chl pigment (Singh and Tewari, 2003) and also various enzymes of carbon metabolism (Amani, 2008). Evidence from different plants shows that heavy metal including Cd may interfere with the activity of enzymes involving in removal of ROS. To repair the damage caused by ROS, plants have evolved complex antioxidant activities (both enzymatic and non-enzymatic) in the tissue cells (Arrora et al., 2002; Farhoosh et al., 2004; Rajaei et al., 2008; Sadeghi et al., 2009). Enzymatic systems such as SOD and CAT are involved in the detoxification of O$_2^-$ and H$_2$O$_2$ respectively. Similar to CAT, APX is another antioxidant component of the ascorbate-glutathion cycle which is responsible for the removal of H$_2$O$_2$ (Mishra et al., 2006). Non-enzymatic scavengers including ascorbate, tocopherol and glutathione remove H$_2$O$_2$ in plants cell, thus reducing the accumulation of the free radicals of oxygen (Prochazkova et al., 2001).

Phytoremediation is described as the use of plants to remove pollutants from the environment or to render them harmless. Therefore, the present study was initiated to evaluate the effects of several CdCl$_2$ levels on B. napus to analyze tolerance by some of the biochemical indices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research project was carried out at the Agricultural Biotechnology Department of Imam Khomeini International University in IR of Iran during October 2005–May 2006. Seeds of oilseed rape (B. napus var. Mohican, Reg.Cob and Okapi) were used as Cd accumulation plants. As there were no preliminary data on these three oilseed plants for cadmium tolerance, cultivars were selected according to the primary field experiment characters between 15 planted cultivars (Data not shown). Seeds of such cultivars (Table 1) were cultivated in pots approximately 18 cm wide and 21 cm deep (1 seed per each pot) with the soil mixture of 3/8 field soil, 3/8 compost, 1/8 vermiculate, and 1/8 rice bran. The plants were grown in greenhouse under controlled light (14 hour photoperiods) and temperature (25/20°C, day/night). The pots were watered with treated tap water to approximately 60% of their holding capacity every 2 days. The control plants were watered with the same amount of water. Different concentrations of CdCl$_2$ (0.75, 1.5 and 2.25 mM) were prepared by dilution in irrigation water (Baryla et al., 2001; Hayat et al., 2007; Mobin et al., 2007; Qadir et al., 2004). The plants were exposed to CdCl$_2$ 72 hours before sampling in each step including: (1) germination (8 days after cultivation); (2) rosette (88 days after cultivation); (3) budding (132 days after cultivation); (4) flowering (175 days after cultivation); (5)-ripening (202 days after cultivation), and (6) senescence (233 days after cultivation).

Each experiment was set out using a completely randomized design with three replicates per treatment and was analyzed on a factorial experiment. The collected data were subjected to analysis of significant differences using a one way analysis of variance and Duncan’s multiple range test of SPSS 10.0.1 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, USA). Data were presented as means with standard error.

Table 1. Some characters of the cultivars selected for the research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Cultivar name</th>
<th>Yield (Kg/h)</th>
<th>1000 kernel weight (g)</th>
<th>Plant height (cm)</th>
<th>Plant dry weight (g)</th>
<th>Oil percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mohican</td>
<td>2665</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>20.98</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reg.Cob</td>
<td>2436</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>24.92</td>
<td>47.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Okapi</td>
<td>2683</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>29.52</td>
<td>48.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to extract total soluble protein, 1 gr fresh weight (FW) leaf tissue, as experimental sample, was homogenized in 4 ml of extraction buffer including 50 mM phosphate buffer (pH 7.0) and 1 mM sodium metabisulfate containing 100 mg insoluble polyvinyl pyrolidone (PVP). The homogenate was centrifuged at 15,000 rpm for 30 minutes (Beckman Coulter Allegra 64R centrifuge, USA) and the supernatant was used as the source of enzyme assays. All the extraction steps were carried out at 4°C. The enzyme activity was measured spectrophotometrically at lab temperature (25°C). The supernatants were used for the determination of protein by method of Bradford (1976). Bovine serum albumin (BSA, Sigma, USA) was used to draw standard curve.

Leaf Chl was extracted in 80% acetone and the absorbance was read spectrophotometrically at 663 and 645 nm. The values were placed in the following formula proposed by Arnon (1949) to compute Chl content:

\[ \text{Total chlorophyll} = 20.2(A_{645}) + 8.02(A_{663}) \]

CAT (EC 1.11.1.6) activity was determined by measuring hydrogen peroxide consumption at 240 nm for 3 minutes according to Aebi (1987) method by UV-Vis spectrophotometer (UV-Vis double beam PC8 scanning auto cell UVD-3200, USA) and was expressed in enzyme units (mg protein⁻¹) by using the extinction coefficient (ε) of 39.8 mM⁻¹ cm⁻¹. The reaction solution contained 70 mM H₂O₂ (soluble in 100 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.0)), 100 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.0), ddH₂O and 0-60 µl enzyme extract. One unit of enzyme is the amount necessary to decompose 1 µM of substrate per minute at 25°C.

APX (APX EC 1.11.1.11) was assayed following the procedure described by Nakano and Asada (1981) APX (APX EC 1.11.1.11) was assayed following the procedure described by Nakano and Asada (1981). Enzymatic oxidation was performed by reduction in absorption at 290 nm in 3 minutes. APX activity was calculated by using the coefficient (ε) of 2.8 mM⁻¹ cm⁻¹ and expressed in enzyme units (mg protein⁻¹). The reaction solution contained 0.5 mM ascorbate soluble in 100 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH, 7.0), 2 mM H₂O₂ and 0-60 µl enzyme extraction. One unit of enzyme is the amount necessary to decompose 1 µM of substrate per min at 25°C.

SOD (EC 1.15.1.1) activity was measured by its ability to inhibit the photochemical reduction of nitro blue tetrazolium (NBT) as the method described by Beauchamp and Fridovich (1971) and was expressed in unit of the enzyme (mg⁻¹ protein h⁻¹). The reaction mixture contained 50 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.8), 13 mM methionine, 74 mM NBT, 2 mM riboflavin, 0.1 mM EDTA and 0-60 µl enzyme extract and was placed under a 15 W florescent lamp for 10 min. One enzyme unit was considered for almost 50% inhibition reduction of NBT by light.

RESULTS

A reduction in protein content was observed in all cultivars treated with different CdCl₂ concentration over controls (Figure 1). The changes in total soluble protein were statistically significant among the three cultivars.

Cd addition suppressed Chl content in all cultivars (Figure 2). The changes in Chl content were statistically significant between cultivars. Moreover, the greatest Chl concentration was observed in Mohican.

APX activities were increased significantly in all cultivars with 0.75 mM CdCl₂ treatment as compared to the control and then decreased at higher CdCl₂ levels (Figure 3). On average, the APX activity of cultivar Okapi was enhanced at a much higher rate than the other two cultivars at the same CdCl₂ concentration. The changes in APX activity were also statistically significant among the three cultivars.

SOD is a key enzyme in protecting cells against oxidative stress. In the present work, SOD activities in Reg.Cob and Okapi were increased up to 0.75 mM CdCl₂, while such activity was declined at higher
concentrations of CdCl$_2$ (Figure 4). Mohican cultivar showed increased SOD activity up to 1.5 mM CdCl$_2$. Furthermore, the changes in SOD activity were statistically significant among all cultivars.

CAT activity in Mohican and Reg.Cob was declined at all CdCl$_2$ treatments compared with the controls (Figure 5). In contrast, Okapi showed an increase in CAT activity in the plants exposed to 0.75 mM CdCl$_2$ which was then declined with increasing CdCl$_2$ concentration. CAT may be an important enzyme responsible for Okapi tolerance to CdCl$_2$ stress. This means that the changes in CAT activity were significantly different between these cultivars.

**DISCUSSION**

The reduction in total soluble protein under CdCl$_2$ stress could be due to protein reaction with oxygen free radicals resulting in a change in specific amino acid, polypeptide splitting and increased
susceptibility of protein to proteolysis. The functionality of protein can also be affected by ROS either by oxidation of amino acid side chains or by secondary reaction with aldehydes products of lipid peroxidation (Romero-Puertas et al., 2002; Ayoughi et al., 2011). Similar observations based on protein decline have been reported in Brassica juncea (Mobin and Khan, 2007).

Cd appears to reduce Chl levels in various manners. Cd seems to inhibit Chl biosynthesis through a reaction with protochlorophyllide reductase and synthesis of 5-aminolevulinic acid (Guillermo et al., 2007). Moreover, this element interacts with the thiol-containing enzymes such as 5-aminolevulinic acid dehydratase and porphobilinogen deaminase (Walley, 2005). Cd causes a degradation of Chl and carotenoid as well as inhibition of their biosynthesis (Otero et al., 2006) which can disturb the electron transport rates of PSI and PSII, leading to the generation of oxygen free radicals. Zengin and Munzuroglu (2005) found a decrease in Chl content under lead, copper, mercury and Cd stress in bean (Phaseolus vulgaris L.) seedlings which is consistent with the present study.

Increased activity of the APX under CdCl₂ stress suggests its role in the detoxification of H₂O₂ (Weckx and Clijsters, 1996). H₂O₂ plays a role as the signal for the regulation of enzymes (Noctor and Foyer, 1998). Accumulation of H₂O₂ has also been observed in plants exposed to high temperature (Zhao et al., 2011), heat (Gao et al., 2010), pathogens (Jia et al., 2010) and chilling (Liu et al., 2011). Also, H₂O₂ is a systemic signal for the induction of APX (Morita et al., 1999; Nakano and Asada 1981). In mustard (Ahmad et al., 2011) and B. juncea (Qadir et al., 2004) Cd treatment resulted in a significant increase in APX activity.

SOD activity was higher in Mohican and Reg.Cob than Okapi cultivar. SOD activity has been enhanced under a variety of stress conditions including Cu, Al, Mn, Fe and Zn toxicities (Prasad et al., 1999). Cd may induce an oxidative burst (Piqueras et al., 1999). Reactive oxygen species of O₂⁻ and H₂O₂ have been considered as the central components of signal transduction which triggers the defense genes responsible for antioxidant enzymes, such as SOD (Arrora et al., 2002; Liu et al., 2011). Conversely, the increased enzyme activity contributes to the removal of O₂⁻ (Alvarez and Lamb, 1997; Liu et al., 2011). The increase in SOD activity may be the consequence of de novo synthesis of enzymatic proteins (Slooten et al., 1995; Allen et al., 1997) or the changes in gene expression (Qadir et al., 2004). Enhancement of SOD activity has also been reported in mustard (Ahmad et al., 2011) and B. juncea (Qadir et al., 2004), while such activity has been reduced in rice (Huang et al., 2008). In the leaves of rice, SOD activity was declined for Cd treated plants from the tillering to the jointing stages. In the similar results of Chen et al. (2010), barley plants exhibited different changes for SOD activity under Cd stress. Leaf SOD illustrated lower activity in some barley genotypes than other genotypes. Moreover, this enzyme exhibited various levels of activity in different barley tissues and also days after Cd treatment. In the present research project, the decreased activities of SOD in leaves under Cd stress were probably due to the harmful effect of overproduction of ROS or its poisonous ROS derivatives or could itself be attributed to Cd-induced inhibition of protein synthesis (Chen et al., 2010).

CAT activity in Mohican and Reg.Cob was reduced with all CdCl₂ applications compared to the controls. Luna et al. (1994) and Mazhoudi et al. (1997) reported that Cu²⁺ may replace Fe²⁺ in the enzyme resulting in enzyme reduction. It is possible that CAT in Mohican and Reg.Cob is more sensitive to excess Cd²⁺ than Okapi. Similar observations have been reported in Phaseolus aureus (Shaw, 1995), Helianthus annuus (Gallego et al., 1996), and Phaseolus vulgaris (Chaoui et al., 1997). Enzymatic antioxidants demonstrated different responses based on cultivars and Cd addition.
stress. CAT activity was reduced in *B. juncea* (Qadir et al., 2004) and rice (Huang et al., 2008), but it was increased in mustard (Ahmad et al., 2011) under Cd stress. In the present paper, CAT activity in Okapi increased with 0.75 mM CdCl₂. Plants exposed to heavy metals have also exhibited similar responses (Hayat et al., 2007; Zawoznik et al., 2007).

In conclusion, the data reported in the present study suggests that Cd at the levels used in the present study may adversely affect metabolism, although treated plants did not exhibit acute toxic symptoms. Moreover, the metal activates the cell system (Zengin and Munzuroglu, 2005), which in turn may improve the resistance capacity of plant to the stress (Poschenrieder et al., 2006), and therefore different plant species show different tolerances to Cd stress. One can also conclude that *B. napus* genotypes differ in the relative tolerance to Cd stress. Participation of CAT activity in Okapi seems to be one of the candidates in this study, over the other two cultivars. SOD removes superoxide anion free radicals accompanying the formation of H₂O₂, which are then detoxified by CAT and APX (Sudhakar et al., 2001; Arrora et al., 2002). Recently, similar to our result, this cultivar has also been introduced as one of the salinity resistant plants (Bybordi, 2010). The molecular details regarding the exact cause of changes response to the Cd toxicity are merits to be studied in details.

**REFERENCES**


تشن ایجاد شد نتیجه کاهشی و واکنش‌های ضد اکسایش در ارقام مختلف کلزا (Brassica napus) میدان ط. تویر کانی، و. حداد
نکته
برای تخمین میزان مقاومت گیاه به کادمیوم جهت پاکسازی محیط زیست، اثر سمیت کادمیوم بر میزان پروتئین محلول کل، کلروفیل و فعالیت آنزیم‌های ضد اکسایش در برگ‌های سه رقم مختلف کلزا شامل (Okapi و Reg.Cob، Mohican) مورد ارزیابی قرار گرفت. گیاهان از طریق آب‌بری در معرض مقادیر مختلف کادمیوم (0/1 و 0/25 میلی مولار) قرار گرفتند. بر اثر تیمارهای اعمال شده میزان کلروفیل و پروتئین محلول کل در گروه کاهش‌یافته به طور کلی، میزان فعالیت آنزیم‌های آسکوربیات پراکسیداز و سورپراکسید دیسموتاز در تمام ارقام در غلظت 75 میلی مولار تیمار نسبت به شاهد افزایش و سپس کاهش پیدا کرد. در رقم فعالیت آنزیم سورپراکسید دیسموتاز Mohican تا غلظت 1/5 میلی مولار کادمیوم افزایش یافت. علاوه بر آن آنزیم آسکوربیات پراکسیداز در رقم فعالیت بیشتری نسبت به ارقام Reg.Cob و Mohican Okapi داد. میزان فعالیت آنزیم کاتالاز در ارقام کادمیوم کاهش داشت. با این وجود، در رقم فعالیت تا غلظت 75 میلی مولار کادمیوم افزایش و سپس کاهش پیدا کرد. نتایج به‌دست‌آمده نشان می‌دهد که ارقام مختلف کلزا در میزان مقاومت نسبت به کادمیوم در نتیجه توانمندی پاکسازی محیط زیست متفاوت‌تر هستند. علاوه بر آن، از آن‌جای فعالیت ضد اکسایش بیشتری نسبت به دو رقم دیگر نشان داد، این رقم نسبت به نشکادمیوم مقاومتر می‌باشد.