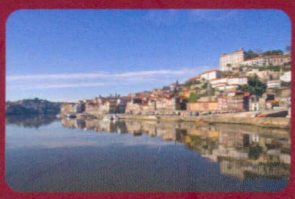
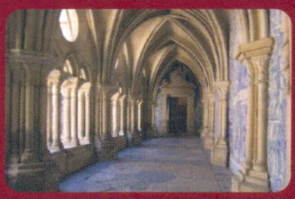
2010

ISOPOL XVII

International Symposium on Problems of Listeriosis

Book of Abstracts

May 5 – 8th, 2010
Alfândega Congress Centre in Porto, Portugal

www.esb.ucp.pt/isopol2010

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Escola Superior de Biotecnologia

REFERENCE
D/P
166

Occurrence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in food products collected in Portugal from retail establishments and food plants

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Listeriosis is an infection caused by the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. The ingestion of contaminated food with this microorganism may cause serious health problems for consumers. During two years (2007 and 2008) the presence of *L monocytogenes* was evaluated in a total of 1476 food samples, collected from retail and food plants. The detection of the microorganism was performed using the automated VIDAS system and the positive results were confirmed following the ISO 11290 standard. *L. monocytogenes* was detected in 134 (9.1%) of the analyzed samples. Most of positive samples were from foods normally submitted to heat treatment before consumption such as pré-cooked foods (30.0%, 12/40; pizza, pasta, *rissois*, etc) and fermented meat products (20.6%, 33/160; *farinheira, alheira, morcela*, bacon), from raw products (16.0%, 58/362; raw meat, vegetables and fish), and from "ready-to-eat" foods: fermented meat products (8.8%, 10/114), vegetables salads (1.1%, 2/174), ready cooked meals (4.5%, 6/134), cheeses (4.6%, 12/262) and fresh cheese (1.3%, 1/80). The occurrence of the microorganism in ready-to-eat foods is of more concern. *L. monocytogenes* grows at refrigeration temperatures and could achieve levels of contamination that can cause disease. Also, foods that will have a heat treatment at consumer's home could represent a hazard if cross contamination of food items that will be consumed without any further step of destruction occurs.