Finding Value in Unsuspected Places

Investigating the effects of growing location on micronutrient content in Native Andean Potatoes

Kaci Ginn, 2108 Borlaug Ruan Intern
International Potato Center (CIP), Lima, Peru

ABSTRACT

Native potatoes are a staple crop in the highlands of Peru where the intake or consumption levels of potatoes can reach up to 2 kg per day in children approximately two years of age and 8 kg in women of fertile age per day (Burgos, 2007). The topic of this study was to evaluate the micronutrient composition of native Andean potatoes as affected by growing location. Evaluating the effects of growing location on the concentration of micronutrients in potatoes will further allow a recommendation of which growing locality is found to be the most beneficial in positively contributing to the nutrient levels in potatoes grown there. Analysis of the vitamin C content, total anthocyanin levels, and iron and zinc mineral levels of 12 different potato varieties grown in three distinct localities were performed. It was demonstrated each growing locality produced potatoes with different elevated micronutrient levels for each independent micronutrient analyzed. However, one locality did not produce elevated micronutrient levels overall.

RESULTS

The experimental design was a randomized complete block design, where 12 varieties were grown in 3 locations with three replications in each location. Data collected included iron, zinc, vitamin C, and total anthocyanin concentration expressed in milligrams per 100 grams of potato in fresh and dry weight. The design allowed the assessment of the variability of Fe, Zn, vitamin C and total anthocyanin concentrations among native varieties and the effect of environmental and the genotype × environment interaction (G × E) considering ‘genotypes’ as fixed and ‘sites’ as random effects (Burgos, G., et al. 2005). The mean concentration of vitamin C in fresh potato tubers in three repetitions of 12 varieties from a human nutrition perspective.

METHOD

It is well known and discussed in literature that in the instance of poor nutrition, poor health often follows (Gwatkin, 2000). For the 40% of the world’s population who are anemic, consumption and proper absorption of the minerals Fe and Zn are crucial to proper body function. Further, vitamin C is essential to the absorption of Fe in the body in addition to protecting against oxidative stress. The presence of anthocyanins in potatoes contributes to the body resisting oxidative stress. The instance of potatoes with low nutrient levels are even more detrimental to the health of those living in the Peruvian highlands where the principal food consumed is potatoes. The discovery that growing locality can have an influence on micronutrient levels of potatoes is be an integral component in improving the overall health of those living in the Peruvian highlands.

DISCUSSION

In conclusion, when comparing recorded micronutrient levels as they correlate to growing location, there is no one locality which produced high levels overall. However, there are correlations between individual micronutrient levels and growing locality. There exists a strong correlation between elevated vitamin C levels as well as total anthocyanin content in the varieties grown in the Quilcas locality. Moreover, the locality which produced the highest overall Zn levels was Castillapata. The highest recorded Fe levels were found in the Pumaranra locality.

CONCLUSIONS

The discovery that growing locality can have an influence on micronutrient levels of potatoes is be an integral component in improving the overall health of those living in the Peruvian highlands. While it was not discovered any one locality was able to produce potatoes with elevated levels of all four micronutrients analyzed, the knowledge discovered will allow farmers to tailor their agricultural practices to provide crops with the most beneficial nutrients for the populations who consume them.

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REFERENCES