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Symposium: Prospects of Mushroom Cultivation in Latin America for the XXI Century

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT OF MUSHROOM BIOTECHNOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

There is a paucity of information about the commercial production of edible mushrooms in Latin America. During the period 1995-2001, estimated production increased 32% in this region, from 49,975 to 65,951 tonnes/year. Its total economic value reached more than 167 million dollars per year, and about 34 thousand people work for this activity. Leading countries are Mexico (58.6%), Chile (17.6%), and Brazil (10.6%) accounting for 86.8% of total mushroom production. The mushroom consumption *per capita* in Latin America is low (*ca.* 125 g/year). The rural household system model (RHS) has been developed for assessing the significance and fundamental trends of rural mushroom cultivation. Despite the remarkable development in recent years and the Latin American mega-biodiversity, the recovery and conservation of native germplasm from edible mushrooms have only been undertaken by several research collections. Future challenges of research and development are outlined considering the main mushroom activities being carried out in the region. Those countries, in which mushroom cultivation is not yet well established, will find difficulty to cope with the new competitive circumstances generated by globalisation.

Key words: Mushroom biotechnology, commercial production, culture collections, *Agaricus*, *Pleurotus*, *Lentinula*, Latin America.