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Comparative studies on antagonistic effects between invasive and native fungal pathogens and ectomycorrhizal fungi

Original Citation:	
Availability: This version is available http://hdl.handle.net/2318/1551812	since 2016-06-24T17:28:24Z
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(Article begins on next page)



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This is an author version of the contribution:

Questa è la versione dell'autore dell'opera: [Giordano L., Lione G., Zampieri E., Gonthier P., 2015. Journal of Plant Pathology, 97, \$17]

The definitive version is available at:

La versione definitiva è disponibile alla URL: [http://sipav.org/main/jpp/index.php/jpp]

COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON ANTAGONISTIC EFFECTS BETWEEN INVASIVE AND NATIVE FUNGAL

PATHOGENS AND ECTOMYCORRHIZAL FUNGI. L. Giordano,

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48 XXI Convegno Nazionale SIPaV (2015), 35-66

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The North American pine-associated root rot agent *Heterobasidion* irregulare was introduced in central Italy during World War II and is currently distributed in forest stands along 103 km of coastline west of Rome. Although many papers dealing with the ecological impacts associated with the invasion have been published, little is known on the consequences that this non-native pathogen may have on host plant symbionts such as ectomycorrhizal (ECM) fungi. Here we tested, through dual culture technique, whether H. irregulare and the native Eurasian species H. annosum differ in their antagonistic effects against the ECM fungus Suillus luteus. Morphological observations and measurements were performed during the experiments and, for each genotype in dual culture, the Inhibition Growth Rate (IGR in %) of average mycelium surface relative to the control was calculated. Results showed that S. luteus was considerably and significantly inhibited by native and non-native species of Heterobasidion spp. (S. luteus IGR>70%; P<0.05) indicating that the pathogens can modulate the growth of the symbiont. Nevertheless, it was not possible to distinguish the effects of the non-native pathogen from that of the native one on the ECM fungus, suggesting that the IGRs observed depend on the genotypes rather than on the species of Heterobasidion.