Endopolygalacturonase from *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici*: Purification, Characterization, and Production During Infection of Tomato Plants

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**ABSTRACT**


Production of extracellular pectinolytic enzymes by *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* on different carbon sources was analyzed by zymograms of isoelectric focusing (IEF) gels. Pectinolytic isoforms with pls ranging from 4.0 to 9.0 were detected. A polygalacturonase (PG; EC 3.2.1.15) was purified by preparative IEF and denatured PG1. The enzyme consisted of one major unglycosylated isoform with pl 7.0 and a molecular weight (MW) of 35,000 and three major N-glycosylated isoforms with pl 6.0, 6.5, and 6.75 and a MW of 37,500. Absence of PG1 from the filtrate after tunicamycin treatment indicated that N-glycosyla-

Plant pathogenic fungi produce an array of extracellular degradative enzymes that may be important in pathogenicity (38). Most attention has focused on enzymes that depolymerize pectin, a major component of the plant cell wall and middle lamella. Polygalacturonases (PGs; poly-α-1,4-galacturonic acid glycanohydrolase, EC 3.2.1.15) and other pectinolytic enzymes have been isolated from a wide variety of bacterial and fungal plant pathogens (10,11). Besides plant cell wall degradation, implication of pectinolytic enzymes in pathogenesis also includes the release of oligogalacturonides that can act as elicitors or suppressors of the plant defense response (15,28) and an interaction with plant proteins capable of modulating PG activity (PG-inhibitor proteins [PGIPs]) (9).

*Fusarium oxysporum* Schlechtend.-Fr. is an economically important soilborne plant pathogen with a worldwide distribution that causes vascular wilt diseases on a wide variety of crops. The mechanisms of pathogenicity and symptom induction by this fungus remain poorly understood despite many ultrastructural, biochemical, and genetic studies (1). Production of pectinolytic enzymes by the tomato pathogen *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* (Sacc.) W.C. Snyder & H.N. Hans. has been reported previously, and their role in pathogenicity has been investigated (12,17,22, 25,29,36). However, conclusive evidence on their role in pathogenicity is still lacking. Moreover, it has not been determined how many pectinolytic isozymes are produced by this pathogen and which of them are secreted during infection of the plant. In the present study, the pattern of pectinolytic isozymes secreted by *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* grown on different carbon sources and during infection of tomato plants was analyzed using zymograms of isoelectric focusing (IEF) gels. An endoPG produced in planta was purified and characterized, and its inhibition by purified PGIP from tomato was determined.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Fungal strain and culture conditions.** *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* strain 42-87 (race 2) was obtained from J. Tello, INIA, Madrid, and stored as a microconidial suspension in 30% glycerol at −80°C. The pathotype of the isolate was periodically confirmed by plant assays in a growth chamber (20). The fungus was grown in a synthetic medium (SM) containing 0.2 g of MgSO₄ · 7 H₂O, 0.4 g of K₂HPO₄, 0.2 g of KCl, 1 g of NH₄NO₃, 0.01 g of FeSO₄, 0.01 g of ZnSO₄, and 0.01 g of MnSO₄ in 1 liter of distilled water. Cultures were supplemented with 1% (wt/vol) of the appropriate carbon source(s) and incubated in Erlenmeyer flasks on a rotary shaker at 150 rpm at 28°C. Polygalacturonase (PGA) and pectin from citrus fruits were from Sigma Chemical Co. (St. Louis). Oat-spelt xylan was from United States Biochemical Corp. (Cleveland, OH).

**Enzyme assays and protein determination.** PG activity was routinely determined by measuring the release of reducing sugars from PGA. The standard reaction mixture (100 μl total volume) con-
tained 1% PGA (wt/vol), 50 mM sodium acetate buffer (pH 4.75), and various amounts of the enzyme preparation. After incubation at 30°C for 15 min, the reducing sugar content was determined by the method of Nelson (30) and Somogyi (34). Appropriate controls without either enzyme or substrate were run simultaneously. The quantity of reducing sugar released was calculated from standards of d-galacturonic acid. Enzyme activity was expressed in nanokatals (nkat), defined as the amount of enzyme that releases 1 nmol of d-galacturonic acid equivalent per second under the above conditions.

The endo- or exomode of action of PG was determined by measuring the decrease in relative viscosity in a Cannon-Fenske viscometer (Atora, Spain) at 30°C. Reaction mixtures contained 13.5 nkat of PG enzyme in 6 ml of 1.5% (wt/vol) PGA solution in 50 mM sodium acetate buffer, pH 4.75. Simultaneously, the percentage of substrate hydrolysis was determined by the reducing group assay, assuming the substrate was 100% PGA with a molecular weight (MW) of 13,900.

Protein was determined according to the method of Bradford (3) using the Bio-Rad protein assay (Bio-Rad Laboratories, Hercules, CA) with bovine serum albumin as a standard.

Polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (PAGE) and IEF. PAGE was performed in a PhastSystem apparatus (Pharmacia LKB Biotechnology Inc., Uppsala, Sweden) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS) (27) and native PAGE were conducted in 20% (wt/vol) discontinuous acrylamide gels (PhastGel, homogeneous 20; Pharmacia LKB Biotechnology Inc.). IEF gels had a pH range of 3 to 9. Gels were stained with AgNO3 following the protocols supplied with the PhastSystem.

MW and IEF markers were from Bio-Rad Laboratories and Pharmacia LKB Biotechnology Inc., respectively. MW and pI of purified proteins were estimated from a regression equation of the standard proteins versus distance migrated. The MW of the native enzyme was estimated by differences in relative mobility in different acrylamide concentrations following the method of Hedrick and Smith (24). Native MW standards were bovine serum albumin (66,000), egg albumin (45,000), and carbonic anhydrase (29,000) from Sigma Chemical Co.

Zymograms. Pectinolytic activity in IEF gels was detected using the substrate overlay technique described by Ried and Collmer (32). Concentrated culture filtrates and different enzyme fractions were applied to polyacrylamide IEF gels (PhastGel, IEF 3 to 9; Pharmacia LKB Biotechnology Inc.) and subjected to IEF under native conditions in a PhastSystem apparatus (Pharmacia LKB Biotechnology Inc.). Polyacrylamide gels were overlaid with ultrathin gels containing 1% (wt/vol) agarose and 0.1% (wt/vol) PGA in 50 mM sodium acetate, pH 4.2, and incubated at 100% humidity and 37°C for 15 to 30 min. Activity bands were visualized by staining the agarose overlay for 10 min in 0.05% (wt/vol) ruthenium red (Sigma Chemical Co.), followed by rinsing with distilled water.

Purification of PG1. All purification steps were carried out at 4°C unless otherwise stated. Cultures of F. oxysporum f. sp. lycopersici grown in SM supplemented with 1% citrus pectin were filtered through Whatman 3MM paper and Millipore membrane filters (pore size 0.22 μm), and the filtrate was transferred to dialysis tubing (10,000 MW cutoff) and concentrated 30-fold by placing the tubing in solid polyethylene glycol (MW of 35,000; Fluka Chemika-Biochemica, Buchs, Switzerland). The concentrated filtrate was dialyzed overnight against distilled water (10 liters per liter of culture filtrate) and subjected to preparative IEF on a Rotofor apparatus (Bio-Rad Laboratories). Preparative IEF was carried out in a total volume of 55 ml containing 2% (wt/vol) carrier ampholytes (Bio-Lyte 3/10; Bio-Rad Laboratories) at 10°C for 6 h at 12 W of constant power. Twenty fractions were collected and analyzed for PG activity. Fractions containing activity were pooled, the total volume was adjusted to 55 ml with distilled water, and the mixture was again subjected to preparative IEF.

Fractions of interest were concentrated by precipitation with 2.5 volumes of acetone, resuspended in 50 mM sodium acetate buffer, pH 4.75, and stored at −20°C.

Biochemical characterization of PG1. PG1 activity as a function of pH was assayed using a 100 mM citric acid and K2HPO4 buffer mixture at pH values between 3.0 and 8.5 at 30°C. The effect of temperature on PG1 activity was determined in 50 mM sodium acetate buffer, pH 4.75, at 15 to 70°C.

For analysis of hydrolysis products, 100 μl of reaction mixture containing 1% (wt/vol) PGA in 50 mM sodium acetate buffer, pH 4.75, and 2.7 nkat of PG1 was incubated at 30°C. Aliquots of 10 μl were removed after 0, 10, 20, 30 min, 1, 2, 4, 8, and 24 h, boiled 5 min, and analyzed by ascending paper chromatography (Whatman 3MM paper) using n-butanol/acetic acid/water (2:1:2, vol/vol) as solvents and 0.04% bromophenol blue in 95% ethanol as detection reagent.

Removal of N-linked and both N- and O-linked carbohydrates was carried out, respectively, using N-glycosidase F or a combination of the former with O-glycosidase, neuraminidase, and N-acetyl-β-D-glucosaminidase (all from Boehringer GmbH, Mannheim, Germany). Deglycosylation protocols followed the instructions of the manufacturer.

The effect of tunicamycin on PG1 synthesis and secretion was studied by the addition of the antibiotic to cultures grown for 4 days in 0.1% glucose and induced by the addition of 0.5% (wt/vol) pectin. Tunicamycin (Sigma Chemical Co.) from a stock solution (10 mg ml−1) in ethanol was added to each culture to a final concentration of 75 μg ml−1 with the simultaneous addition of pectin. Occurrence of PG1 in the culture filtrate was monitored by IEF, followed by silver staining and activity assay of concentrated samples removed at the indicated intervals after pectin addition.

N-terminal sequencing of purified PG1 was performed by automated Edman degradation at the protein sequencing facility of the Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona on a Beckman P-3000 Sequencer (System Gold; Beckman Instruments, Inc., Palo Alto, CA).

Detection of PG isozymes in infected tomato roots. Ten-day-old tomato seedlings (cv. Moneymaker) were inoculated with F. oxysporum f. sp. lycopersici strain 42-87 by dipping the roots for 30 min in a suspension containing 5 × 104 microconidia ml−1 water (20). Control plants were immersed in water. Seedlings were planted in minipots containing vermiculite and maintained in a growth chamber at 25°C with 14-h light and 10-h dark. Disease symptoms in aerial plant parts including epinasty and chlorosis of leaves, as well as wilting, were recorded periodically. At different time intervals postinoculation, 20 plants from each treatment were collected, washed carefully under running tap water to remove adhering vermiculite particles, and evaluated for root browning. Plantlets were then cut with a sterile scalpel to separate roots and the lower part of the stems that were then frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at −80°C. Enzymes were extracted by grinding 0.1 g of tissue in a mortar under liquid nitrogen and transferring the frozen powder to 1 ml of 1 M NaCl. After mixing, samples were incubated 20 min on ice and centrifuged in an Eppendorf centrifuge 5 min at 16,000 × g. Supernatants were precipitated with 2.5 volumes of acetone and resuspended in 10 μl of distilled water. Zymograms of samples were performed as described above.

Purification and assay of tomato PGIP. PGIP was purified from 5-week-old tomato plants (cv. Vemar; Sluis & Groot Semilllas, El Eijo, Spain) grown in pots containing vermiculite and maintained in a growth chamber at the conditions described above. Initial purification steps followed the protocol of Cervone et al. (7). All steps were carried out at 4°C. Briefly, 1,000 g of tissue from whole plants was homogenized in 1 liter of 1 M NaCl and centrifuged 20 min at 8,000 × g. The supernatant was filtered through Whatman 3MM paper, precipitated overnight with 75% (wt/vol) ammonium sulfate, and centrifuged 20 min at 8,000 × g. The pellet was thoroughly dissolved in 150 ml of 1 M NaCl and dialyzed twice against 5 liters of 20 mM sodium acetate, pH 4.75, and stored at −20°C.
The dialyzed extract was then centrifuged 20 min at 8,000 x g, and the supernatant was subjected to preparative IEF in the pH range of 3 to 10 as described above. Inhibitory activity of the fractions against Aspergillus niger endoPG was assayed as described below. Fractions 14 to 20 from the first run showing a peak in PGIP activity were pooled and again focused by IEF. Fractions 16 to 20 from the second run containing most of the inhibitory activity were precipitated with 2.5 volumes of acetone, resuspended in 500 µl of sodium acetate buffer, pH 4.75, and stored at -20°C. Purity of PGIP was checked by SDS-PAGE.

Inhibitory activity of purified tomato PGIP against different pectinolytic enzymes was assayed at 30°C by determining the release of reducing groups after 30 min in reaction mixtures (100 µl total volume) containing 0.1 nkat of pectinolytic enzyme, 1% PGA in 100 mM sodium acetate, pH 4.75, and different quantities of tomato PGIP. Purified endoPGs from F. moniliforme and A. niger (6,18) were obtained from F. Cervone, Università “La Sapienza,” Rome, Italy.

**TABLE 1.** Polygalacturonase (PG) activity in culture filtrates of Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. lycopersici grown on synthetic medium supplemented with different carbon sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbon source</th>
<th>PG activity (nkat ml⁻¹ culture filtrate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glucose</td>
<td>0.8 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucrose</td>
<td>0.6 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectin</td>
<td>7.16 ± 5.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectin + glucose</td>
<td>7.8 ± 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectin + sucrose</td>
<td>7.1 ± 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygalacturonic acid (PGA)</td>
<td>12.3 ± 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGA + glucose</td>
<td>2.7 ± 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGA + sucrose</td>
<td>2.2 ± 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xylan</td>
<td>0.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xylan + glucose</td>
<td>0.7 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xylan + sucrose</td>
<td>0.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data represent the mean values and standard deviations of results from two independent experiments.*

**RESULTS**

Production of pectinolytic isozymes on different carbon sources. Culture filtrates of *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* grown on SM supplemented with different carbon sources were analyzed for pectinolytic activity using the reducing sugar assay and IEF, followed by a substrate overlay. Total PG activity was at low constitutive levels in filtrates from *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* grown on glucose, sucrose, and xylan as the sole carbon source (Table 1). Total activity was about 100-fold and 20-fold induced on pectin and PGA, respectively, and catalolite repression by glucose or sucrose was approximately 90 and 80% on pectin and PGA, respectively. Zipograms of cultures grown on pectin as the sole carbon source showed a number of pectinolytic isozyme bands (Fig. 1). One isoform with pI 7.0 was the predominant isozyme produced on pectin (Fig. 1). Although the overall PG activity was reduced in filtrates from pectin + glucose and pectin + sucrose, isozyme patterns did not vary significantly, except for the activity bands between pIs 5.2 and 5.8 that were completely catalolite repressed (Fig. 1). In the filtrate of the fungus grown on sucrose or sucrose alone or on oat-spelt xylan, only a faint activity band of the dominant isozyme was visible even in highly concentrated samples. It remains unclear whether other pectinolytic isoforms were present at concentrations below the detection limit of the assay. On PGA as the sole carbon source, total PG activity in the filtrate after 4 days of growth was about six times lower than on pectin. The isozyme pattern showed a much stronger relative induction of the acidic (pIs 4.3 to 6.0) versus the neutral isozymes in PGA compared with pectin (Fig. 1). An additional activity band with pI 8.7 was observed on PGA. The latter activity band was completely repressed by glucose, whereas the other isozymes produced on PGA exhibited only partial catalolite repression (data not shown).

**Purification of PG1 consisting of differentially glycosylated isoforms.** A summary of the purification procedure is presented in Table 2. Concentrated and dialyzed culture filtrate of *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* grown on SM with pectin was subjected to two consecutive runs of preparative IEF at a pH range of 3 to 9. Fractions from the second run showing a peak in PG activity were concentrated by acetone precipitation and analyzed by analytical IEF, followed by silver staining or activity overlay (Fig. 2A and B). Comparison of activity zyograms and silver stained gels of fractions showed that most of the major protein bands detected in the filtrate possessed pectinolytic activity. At least six major isoyme bands were discriminated, with estimated pIs values of 5.4, 5.8, 6.0, 6.5, 6.75, and 7.0. Rotofor fractions 9 to 11, 14, 15, and 19 (Fig. 2, lanes 4, 5, and 6) containing mainly the four isoforms with pIs 6.0 to 7.0 were subjected to SDS-PAGE; only two major protein bands with a MW of 35,000 and 37,500 + 2,000 were visible (Fig. 3A). To determine whether the two bands were differentially glycosylated isoforms of the same protein, fraction 19 (Fig. 2, lane 6) was treated either with N-glycosidase F or a combination of the former with O-glycosidase, neuraminidase.

**TABLE 2.** Purification of endopolygalacturonase PG1 from culture filtrates of Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. lycopersici grown on synthetic medium supplemented with 1% (w/v) citrus pectin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Total protein (mg)</th>
<th>Total activity (nkat)</th>
<th>Specific activity (nkat/mg)</th>
<th>Purification fold</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture filtrate</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialyze</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>112.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotofor 1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotofor 2*</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data reflect one representative purification run.

* The increase in total activity compared with the crude culture filtrate may reflect removal of inhibitory substances by dialysis.

* Fraction 19 (described in text).
and N-acetyl-β-D-glucosaminidase. Both treatments produced a single protein band with a MW of 35,000, indicating that the fraction contained pure enzyme, denominated PG1, and that the 37,500-MW band was an N-glycosylated isoform of the 35,000-MW protein (Fig. 3B). Comparison of banding intensities in different fractions of the IEF and SDS gels suggested that the non-glycosylated isoform (Fig. 3A, main band in lane 3) corresponded to the major activity band with pI 7.0, while the glycosylated form corresponded to the three activity bands with pI values of 6.0, 6.5, and 6.75. The MW of the native protein was estimated to be 35,000 ± 5,000, indicating that the enzyme was active as a monomer.

**Effect of tunicamycin.** Activity bands corresponding to PG1 isoforms were detected in the filtrate of *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* 8 h after the addition of pectin, but not in cultures treated with 75 µg ml⁻¹ tunicamycin (Fig. 4). The same was true after 24 h, whereas at 48 h, all PG1 isoforms were present in both culture filtrates, most likely because of the inactivation of tunicamycin. The absence of PG1 protein from the filtrates was confirmed by silver staining (data not shown), indicating that the lack of PG1 activity was not because of the presence of an inactive form of the enzyme. Tunicamycin at the applied concentration did not have any detectable effect on mycelial growth of *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici*.

**Biochemical characterization of PG1.** Kₘ of purified PG1 on PGA was 0.3 mg ml⁻¹ and Vₘₐₓ was 12.5 nkat µg⁻¹. The end products of enzymatic hydrolysis of PGA were analyzed using ascending paper chromatography. Galacturonic acid was the first degradation product detected after 10 min, but intermediate products appeared later during hydrolysis. The final degradation products were mono- and digalacturonic acid. These results suggest an exo mode of action of PG1. However, measurement of the decrease in relative viscosity of a PGA solution showed only 3% hydrolysis at 50% viscosity reduction, values typical of an endo-acting enzyme. It, therefore, appears from our results that PG1 displays both endo- and exoPG activity.

PG1 exhibited 75 to 100% of its maximum activity in the pH range of 3.5 to 5.0, with an optimum at pH 4.0. Activity decreased sharply above pH 5.5. The temperature optimum for PG1 activity was 37°C, with 80 to 100% of maximum activity between 30 and 43°C, about 25% at 15°C, and a sharp drop in activity above 60°C.

Amino acid sequence analysis of the N-terminus of the PG1 isoforms in fraction 19 gave a single, 11-residue sequence, D-P-C-S-V-T-D-Y-S-G-L, thereby confirming that they consisted of the...
The production of pectinolytic enzymes has been investigated in a wide range of plant pathogens (10,11). Because of its peculiar infection mechanism, the vascular wilt fungus *F. oxysporum* has been subject to particularly intense studies (3). Since the first report on the production of pectinases by *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* and their possible role in pathogenesis (33), numerous authors have contributed to the increasing knowledge on pectinolytic enzymes from this pathogen. However, in spite of these considerable research efforts, it is still unclear how many pectinolytic isozymes are produced and which of them are secreted during plant infection (1). It also remains unknown whether different isozymes correspond to different proteins or if they are because of variations in the carbohydrate moieties of the same enzyme (36).

In the present study, a complex pattern of >10 pectinolytic activity bands was detected in culture filtrates of *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* grown on different carbon sources. This complexity was unexpected from previous reports, in which, at most, two PG isoforms were described for this pathogen (36). The high number of isozymes observed was probably because of the superior resolving capacity and sensitivity of the activity staining technique that allowed clear detection even of closely spaced bands. Similarly complex results have been obtained with this technique for bacterial pectinolytic enzymes (32). To allow detection of the complete range of pectinolytic isozymes secreted, the assay conditions in our study did not strictly discriminate between PG and PL activity. Although the buffer pH (4.2) was optimal for PGs, no EDTA was added to prevent activity of calcium-dependent PLs (32). In fact, the activity band with pl 8.7 specifically induced on PGA, corresponded to a PL (19). All pectinolytic activities were subject to substrate inducibility and catabolite repression. Differential induction of pectinolytic enzymes depending on substrates, as well as catabolite repression, have been described previously in vascular wilt pathogenes (13). In the present study, the relative amounts of each isozyme varied greatly when the fungus was grown on citrus pectin or on PGA, and the extent of catabolite repression differed considerably between distinct isozymes. This indicates that secretion of different pectinolytic enzymes in *F. oxysporum* is regulated independently.

Although isolation of individual pectinolytic isoforms was extremely difficult because of their closely spaced pl values, preparative IEF allowed separation into major isozyme groups. At least four major and a number of minor isozyme bands corresponding to differentially glycosylated isoforms of a single endoPG, denominated PG1, that was purified to homogeneity. The enzyme consisted of an apparently unglycosylated form with a MW of 35,000, and three differentially glycosylated forms with a MW of 37,500. Four differentially glycosylated PG isoforms encoded by a single gene have also been reported in the fungal plant pathogen *F. moniliforme* (4), although, in that case, the isoforms differed in MW rather than in pl and no unglycosylated isoform was detected. Treatment with tunicamycin, a specific inhibitor of glycosylation, completely prevented PG1 activity in the culture filtrate, indicating that glycosylation of this enzyme is essential for its secretion. This confirms a previous report on a glycosylated xylanase from *Trichoderma viride* (16) and on a PL in the same pathogen, *F. oxysporum* (19), and provides further evidence for the importance of N-linked glycans in the secretory pathway (23). Our results suggest that PG1 was secreted into the medium in a glycosylated form and that the major, apparently unglycosylated isoform was probably a product of postsecretarial deglycosylation, although this hypothesis has to be confirmed by further studies. The biological function of the modifications in the glycosidic part of the protein and their possible role in enzyme-plant interactions remain to be investigated.

Temperature and pH optima of PG1 and its activity as a monomer were similar to other fungal endoPGs (18,31,36,39). The prop-
erties of PG1, such as pl, MW, and modes of action, closely resembled those of two endoPG isozymes from *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* described by Strand et al. (36). However, these authors stated that their isozymes were indistinguishable by pl and MW, whereas we could clearly discriminate at least four charge and two size isofoms of PG1. Strand et al. (36) suggested that differences in covalently linked carbohydrates might be responsible for electrophoretic mobilities of the isomers, a fact that was confirmed by our studies. Their observation that the PG isomers seemed to act simultaneously in an endo- and an exomannose is also corroborated by our work. Although analysis of degradation products by paper chromatography resolves smaller products (mono, di, and trimer) better than oligomers with a higher degree of polymerization, the early appearance of the monomer as the first visible degradation product strongly suggests an additional exoactivity of PG1. Because of the apparent purity of the PG1 enzyme preparation upon SDS-PAGE, it seems unlikely that our sample was contaminated with exoPG. A combined exo- and endoactivity of purified PGs has also been described in other fungal plant pathogens (21,37).

The dual mode of action of PG1 might provide a possible explanation for its increased resistance observed against inhibition by tomato PGIP compared with PGs from the cereal pathogen *F. moniliforme* and the saprophyte *A. niger*, which both exhibit typical endomodes of action (6,18), since it has been shown previously that exoactive PGs are not inhibited by PGIP (8). However, in the latter study, no difference was found between inhibitory activity of bean PGIP against endoPGs from different fungi (*A. niger, A. japonicum*, *Colletotrichum lindemuthianum*, and *F. moniliforme*). Therefore, the increased resistance of *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* endoPG as compared with the *F. moniliforme* enzyme was somewhat surprising considering that both pathogens belong to the same genus, and particularly taking into account the strong homology of N-termini displayed by the two enzymes. In spite of this homology, the divergent modes of action and differential sensitivities to PGIP suggest the presence of crucial structural and functional differences between the endoPGs from the dicot and the monocot pathogen.

In the present study, we detected production of PG1 on commercial substrates including citrus pectin, PGA, glucose, sucrose, and xylan. Before proceeding to further studies on PG1 such as gene isolation and disruption, its production in plants or at least in cultures supplemented with plant extracts should be confirmed, since specific pectinolytic isozymes may be produced exclusively during growth on SM or in planta (26). Recently, secretion of PG1, together with a PL, was detected during growth of *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* in liquid medium supplemented with tomato vascular tissue as the sole carbon source (19). In the present work, both enzymes were found to be secreted in tomato plants infected with the pathogen. Although PG activity in plants infected with *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* has been described previously (2,17,22), this is the first report in which pectinolytic activity in planta could be assigned to specific isozymes of a vascular wilt pathogen. PL activity was detected only in roots during early stages of infection, even before any macroscopic disease symptoms were visible (4 to 10 days postinoculation), whereas PG1 activity only became apparent in stems at 14 days postinoculation, coinciding with the onset of the characteristic wilt symptoms. It is, therefore, tempting to speculate that PL mainly plays a role in penetration of the roots and entry into the vascular elements, whereas PG1 is involved primarily in the phase of colonization of the vascular system and expression of wilt symptoms. The presence of PG1 in stems at later stages of infection (14 days) coincides with an earlier report in which an increase in PG activity was detected in infected tomato stems at 15 days after inoculation with *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici* (17). In the vascular pathogen *Verticillium albo-atrum*, peaks of endoPL and endoPG activities in infected tomato plants were detected at 3 and 6 days, respectively, confirming the sequence of appearance of enzyme activities observed in the present study (14). It has to be taken into account that in the zymogram technique used in the present study, the detection limit for a PG activity band is considerably higher than in the enzyme assays used to measure endoPG activity in the above reports. Moreover, partial inactivation by plant compounds such as phenolics or PGIPs may account for a reduction of PG activity detected in the extracts. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that PG1 might be secreted in planta at low concentrations during earlier stages of infection or that additional pectinolytic isozymes are produced at concentrations below the detection level. The fact, however, that PG1 and PL are secreted during plant infection makes these enzymes interesting candidates for further studies on their role in pathogenicity of *F. oxysporum*.

**LITERATURE CITED**

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