

Proceedings of the

2<sup>nd</sup>

# International Conference of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology

ICAAT 2022



Theme:

Climate-Smart Agriculture in the Post

COVID Era:

A Gate Way to Food Security in Africa

Held at

Caverton Hall

Federal University of Technology Minna, Nigeria

Published by

School of Agriculture and Agricultural technology

Federal University of Technology

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## Contents

1	SUSTAINABLE CROP PRODUCTION PRACTICES FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY	3
2	ADOPTION INDEX OF MAIZE PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES AND CORRELATION MATRIX IN SMALLHOLDER SYSTEMS	9
3	PROXIMATE AND SENSORY ASSESSMENT OF AADUN PRODUCED FROM MAIZE AND GROUNDNUT PASTE	15
4	RURAL WOMEN AND AGRO – PROCESSING: A CASE STUDY OF RURAL WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN GROUNDNUT PROCESSING IN KATSINA STATE	22
5	PROFITABILITY OF DRIP IRRIGATED MAIZE PRODUCTION FOR IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY IN MAIDUGURI SEMI-ARID REGION OF BORNO STATE, NIGERIA	28
6	PROFITABILITY ANALYSIS OF POULTRY EGG PRODUCTION IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, OYO STATE, NIGERIA	37
7	ADOPTION OF MODERN BEEKEEPING TECHNOLOGIES IN SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA	44
8	ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED COCOYAM PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES AMONG FARMERS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA	53
9	INNOVATIVE APPLICATION IN MANAGEMENT OF PROBLEMATIC SOIL (ACIDIC SOIL) UNDER MAIZE PRODUCTION IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA	62
10	EFFECTS OF RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON	69
11	POVERTY STATUS OF RICE FARMERS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA	69
12	EFFECTS OF FARMER-HERDER’S CONFLICT ON THE FARMERS PRODUCTIVITY IN ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA	75
13	EFFECTS OF ADOPTION OF IMPROVED BEEHIVE TECHNOLOGIES ON INCOME AND WELFARE STATUS OF BEEKEEPERS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA	81
14	ASSESSMENT OF OUT-MIGRATION AMONG ARABLE CROP FARMERS IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA: GENDER DYNAMIC APPROACH	88
15	THE EFFECT OF AGRITECH STARTUPS ON PARTICIPATION AND POVERTY STATUS OF ADOPTERS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA	97
16	OUTCOMES OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES: CORRELATES OF TIME, STRAIN AND JOB SATISFACTION	104
17	MICROBIOLOGICAL QUALITY OF OVEN ROASTED PLANTAIN (MUSA PARASIDIACA)	109

	NIGERIA	214
34	ANALYSIS OF DETERMINANTS OF MARKET PARTICIPATION AMONG LOCAL RICE FARMERS IN SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF NIGER STATE, NIGERIA	219
35	LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGIES AND ITS EFFECTS ON FOOD SECURITY STATUS OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS IN KADUNA AND KANO STATES, NIGERIA: A REVIEW	229
36	NUTRI-CEREALS AS POTENTIAL FUNCTIONAL INGREDIENTS: CHARACTERIZATION AND VALORIZATION	234
37	DETERMINANTS OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION AMONG WOMEN UNDER RURAL FINANCE INSTITUTION BUILDING PROGRAMME IN NORTHERN NIGERIA	235
38	INCOME, SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT PATTERN OF SMALL-SCALE AGRO-BASED ENTREPRENEURS IN KADUNA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA	242
39	IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS' INTEREST IN SALINE QUINOA FARMING ALONG VALUE CHAIN IN MOROCCO	247
40	EFFECT OF DIFFERENT PROCESSING METHODS ON NUTRIENTS AND ANTI-NUTRIENT COMPOSITION OF LEUCAENA ( <i>LEUCAENA LEUCOCEPHALA</i> ) SEEDS	257
41	PERFORMANCE OF ARBOR ACRE BROILER CHICKENS FED DIET ENRICHED WITH VARYING LEVELS OF NANO ZINC SUPPLEMENTATION AT FINISHER PHASE	263
42	DIVERSITY AND COMPOSITION OF UNDERSTORY SPECIES IN <i>CEDRELA ODORATA</i> AND <i>PINUS CARIBAEA</i> PLANTATIONS IN OMO BIOSPHERE RESERVE, AREA J4, OGUN STATE	268
43	ASSESSMENT OF MATING PROFILE OF RED SOKOTO BUCKS ADMINISTERED VARYING DOSAGE OF ETHANOLIC EXTRACT OF TIGER NUT ( <i>CYPERUS ESCULENTUS</i> )	281
44	APPARENT NUTRIENT DIGESTIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE OF GROWER PIGS FED ENERGY AGRO BY-PRODUCTS	286
45	EVALUATION OF SINGLE AND MIXED VIRUS-INOCULATED BAMBARA GROUNDNUT LANDRACES FOR NODULATION AND NITROGEN FIXATION	291
46	FREE RADICAL SCAVENGING ACTIVITY OF SELIM POD ( <i>XYLOPIA AETHIOPICA</i> )	298
47	ASSESSMENT OF DIFFERENT DOSES OF AQUEOUS RED HOT PEPPER EXTRACT ON THE GROWTH PERFORMANCE OF THREE BREEDS OF BROILER CHICKENS	303
48	ANTIOXIDANT ACTIVITY OF SUN-DRIED TROPICAL LEMON ( <i>CITRUS LIMON</i> ) PEEL	308

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**ABSTRACT**

*The peels of lemon (Citrus limon) are the major by-products obtained during the processing of lemon and are most of the time discarded as food waste. Lemon peels have been reported to possess many bioactive substances with beneficial properties. These properties may probably have potential applications for use in agriculture, industry, aquaculture, medicine and food processing. This research was conducted to determine the antioxidant activity of lemon peels. The free radical used was 2, 2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH), while ascorbic acid was used as the standard antioxidant for the analysis. The DPPH free radical scavenging activity of the lemon peel extracts increased from 6.29 to 53.32% with a corresponding increase in the concentrations of the peel extract from 0.2 to 1.0 mg/ml. The lemon peel extracts, therefore, exhibited DPPH free radical scavenging activity in a dose-dependent manner. The inhibition of ascorbic acid at the concentration of 1mg/ml was 98.65% while for the lemon peel at the same concentration the inhibition obtained was 53.32%. Lemon peels which are considered a waste product have been shown to possess some level of antioxidant activity. The half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC<sub>50</sub>) is the value of the test sample that can scavenge 50% of DPPH free radical. The IC<sub>50</sub> value recorded for the lemon peel was 0.93mg/ml as against the IC<sub>50</sub> value of 0.41mg/ml of ascorbic acid. Lemon peels are by-products that may be used as a potential low-cost natural antioxidant source for human food and animal feed.*

**KEYWORDS:** lemon peel; scavenging activity; antioxidant; free radical; sun-drying**INTRODUCTION**

Lemon (*Citrus limon*) is a typical citrus fruit. The plant is a potent source of vitamin C. The peels of lemon (*Citrus limon*) are the main by-products obtained during the processing of lemon fruit and are most of the time discarded as food waste. Lemon peel forms around 40–50% of the total fruit mass which is mostly considered a waste (Singh *et al.*, 2020). The peel of a lemon is made up of two distinct layers, the outer layer is called the flavedo (epicarp) while the inner layer of the

peel (the white spongy part) is called the albedo (mesocarp). Nevertheless, lemon peels have been reported to demonstrate several bioactivities that are beneficial (Liu *et al.*, 2022). Lemon peels also contain pectin and fibre and can be useful as prebiotics (Jiang *et al.*, 2022).

Plants with free radical scavenging properties and antioxidant capacity are valuable for pharmaceutical, agricultural, and industrial applications and as food and feed additives. Research authors have employed many methods in processing lemon peel like; oven drying freeze drying, air drying/shade drying and microwave drying.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, literature is scarce on research work done on the antioxidant potential of sun-dried lemon peels. In the tropics, the sun-drying method may be advantageous, low-cost and a better option for processing lemon peels.

This research work aimed to evaluate the antioxidant activity of sun-dried lemon peels and to identify their potential for possible use as a food and feed additive.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Processing of Test Sample

The lemon fruits were hand peeled and the peels were collected and cut into small pieces and sun-dried for 3 days. They were then grounded and packed in airtight polythene bags. The ground samples of the peels were taken for laboratory analysis for the determination of antioxidant activity.

### Preparation of Sample Extract

The sample extract was prepared by weighing 1g of the dried sample into a conical flask. Then 100ml of ethanol was added to the weighed sample. The extraction of the sample was carried out by using a digital 4 holes water bath (Model: E-Track England) at 70 degrees for 40 minutes. This was then cooled at room temperature and transferred into a 100ml volumetric flask. Extracts were filtered using a Whatman filter paper (No. 1).

### Free Radical Scavenging Assay

To determine the antioxidant activity of the extract, 2, 2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) was

used as a free radical according to the method outlined by Mukherjee *et al.* (2011) with minor modifications. The concentration of 100  $\mu$ M of DPPH was dissolved in methanol to a final concentration of 0.03mM. Serial dilutions were made to check the IC50. In 96-well microplate total volume was 100  $\mu$ l which was consisting of 90  $\mu$ l of DPPH solution and 10  $\mu$ l of the test solution. Different concentrations (0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8 and 1.0 mg/ml) of the extracts and ascorbic acid (the standard antioxidant) were used. The contents were mixed and incubated for 30 minutes at 37°C. To determine the absorbance at 517 nm, an ultraviolet (UV) spectrophotometer was used. The decrease in absorbance indicated increased radical scavenging activity which was determined by the following formula for DPPH:

$$\text{DPPH Scavenging activity (\%)} = \frac{AC - AS}{AC} \times 100$$

AC= Absorbance of control

AS = Absorbance of sample

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the DPPH free radical scavenging activity of the lemon peel extracts ranged from 6.29 to 53.32%. The antioxidant activity increased with the increasing concentrations of the peel extract from 0.2 to 1.0 mg/ml (Figure 1). The lemon peel extracts showed DPPH free radical scavenging activity in a dose-dependent manner.

The inhibition of ascorbic acid (the standard antioxidant used) at the concentration of 1mg/ml was 98.65% while for the lemon peel at the same concentration, the inhibition obtained was 53.32% (Figure 1). Abd El-ghfar *et al.* (2016) reported 52.64% free radical scavenging activity for dried lemon peel this value is close to the value obtained in this study.

In contrast to the value recorded in this study, Olyad *et al.* (2020) reported a much higher value of approximately 68% at the same concentration (1mg/ml). The differences in these results may be due to variations in cultivar, processing method and environmental factors. Other possible factors that may be responsible for variability in results generally are as follows; 1) different test models or assays used. 2) The composition of the lemon peel analysed, may be affected by the way the lemon is peeled, whether it was hand-peeled or knife peeled. This would affect the proportion of epicarp and mesocarp in the test sample. 3) Whether the lemon was ripe or not ripe before peeling.

4) The method of drying used. 5) The handling and storage conditions. 6) Growing conditions and soil fertility.

The IC<sub>50</sub> which is the half-maximal inhibitory concentration that is the value of the test sample that can scavenge 50% of DPPH free radical. The value of IC<sub>50</sub> is inversely proportional to the antioxidant activity of the sample that is, the lower the IC<sub>50</sub> value the higher the scavenging activity.

The IC<sub>50</sub> value recorded for the lemon peel was 0.93mg/ml against the IC<sub>50</sub> value of 0.41mg/ml of ascorbic acid. These values are the concentration required to attain a 50% radical-scavenging effect.

According to Abd El-ghfar *et al.* (2016), the presence of natural flavonoids, phenolics, ascorbic acid and carotenoids is responsible for the antioxidant activity of lemon peels. As a result of the level of antioxidant activity exhibited by lemon peels, is it recommended for consideration as potential natural additives in food products and feeds to enhance the antioxidant activity and improve shelf-life.

Pieracci *et al.* (2022) in their experiment obtained 0.70mg/ml as the IC<sub>50</sub> of lemon pulp waste while that of orange pulp waste was 0.81mg/ml. These values are lower than the values obtained for lemon peels in this study, probably because it was a pulp waste and not a peel waste, as there might be some difference in their composition although both are considered by-products of citrus fruits.

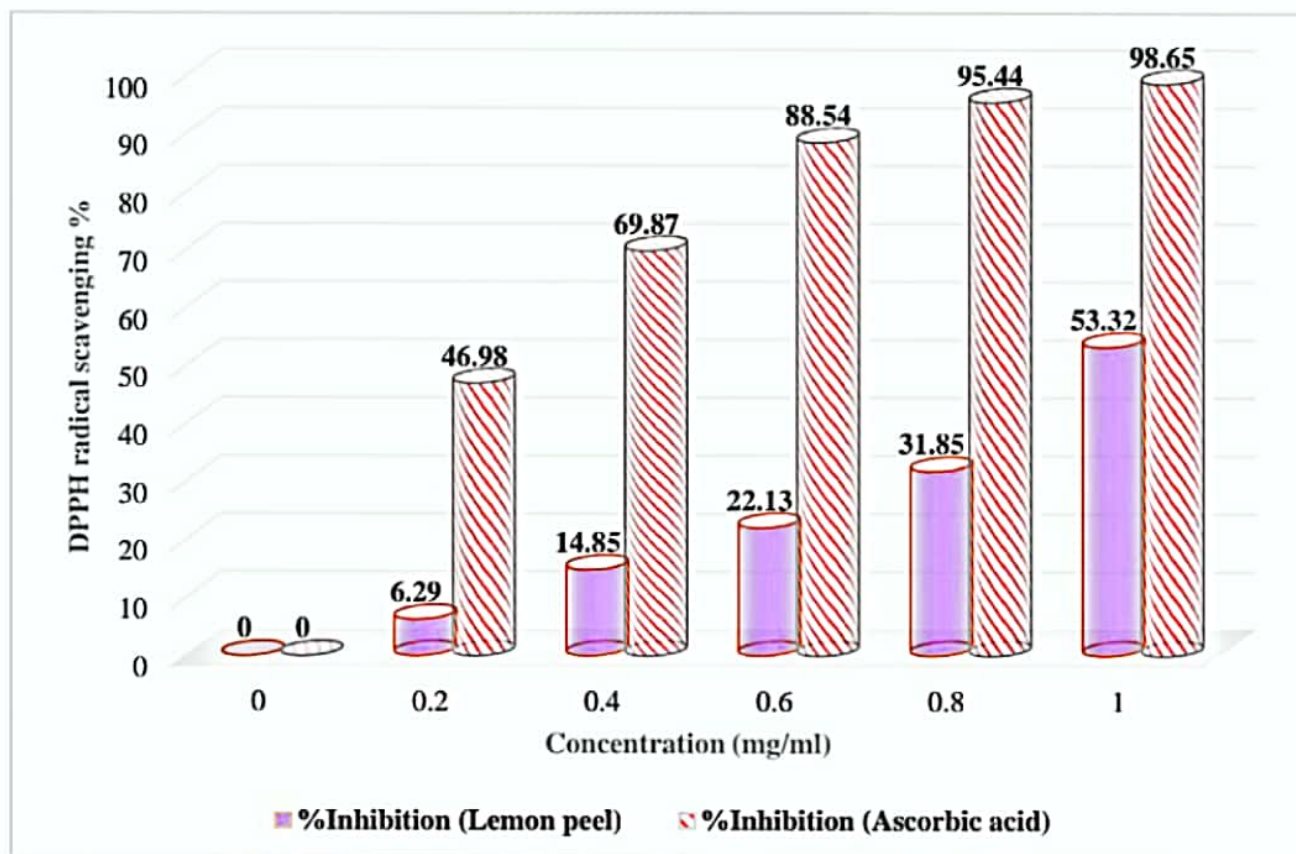


Figure 5: Free radical scavenging activity of sun-dried lemon peel



## CONCLUSION

The sun-dried lemon peels used in this experiment are a cheap source of natural bioactive compounds with good antioxidant activities. This citrus by-product is not only cheap but considered safe and with health-promoting benefits, capable of protecting the cell against free radical damage. Also, the peels are natural by-products that can act as a good source of antioxidant for possible application in foods, drugs and feeds and may replace synthetic antioxidant derivatives.

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