

This study evaluated a direct multiplex PCR to detect food contamination with enterotoxigenic *Bacillus cereus* (*B. cereus*) in comparison with culture and multiplex gene detection using colonies. Detection of *B. cereus* enterotoxin genes was done on artificially contaminated and ready-to-eat market foods including cooked rice, pasteurized milk and cheese. Of the 108 food samples analysed, 51(47.2 %) were found to be contaminated with enterotoxigenic *B. cereus* by culture and enterotoxin detection by multiplex PCR, but only 14(12.9%) of them were found to be contaminated with enterotoxigenic *B. cereus* by direct multiplex PCR. *B. cereus* enterotoxin genes were detected only in artificially contaminated and ready-to-eat market foods with bacterial counts of equal or more than 4000 ( $4 \times 10^3$ ) cfu/ml for both pasteurized milk and cheese and equal or more than 40,000 ( $4 \times 10^4$ ) cfu/g for cooked rice. Since high contamination of food with *B. cereus*( $10^6$  cfu/g) has been associated with food poisoning, this technique can be used to identify foods suspected to cause food poisoning without culture and identification of *B. cereus*. Detection of any of the enterotoxin genes will indicate contamination of foods with enterotoxigenic *B. cereus* group.