First report of necrotic leaf spot on *Ceratonia siliqua* caused by *Pestalotiopsis biciliata*

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Ceratonia siliqua L. (St. John's bread) is a very common species in the northern part of Algeria (Boublenza et al. 2019). Since spring 2018, severe leaf drop and black leaf spots were observed on St. John's bread in center (Algiers) and eastern (Bejaïa) regions and it classified as an emerging disease in Algeria, where about 70% of the leaves are affected per tree, and the disease incidence is estimated at 63%. Small pieces (3–4 mm²) of symptomatic tissues were sampled from the edges of the black leaf spots, surface disinfected for 2 min in 0.1% (v/v) with sodium hypochlorite solution, and plated on potato dextrose agar (PDA) medium at 22 °C ± 2 °C for 7 days. White mycelium with small black globose pycnidial fruiting bodies with a diameter up to 350 µm were observed on several isolates. Microscopic observations showed fusiform conidia 4-septate (28–35 × 7–10 µm) with 3 brown median cells and 2 end cells hyaline. Three apical tubular appendages, ranging from 7 to 18 µm in length; and two basal hyaline appendages were characterized by their small size (4 to 9 µm). Based on morphological characters, the fungus was identified as *Pestalotiopsis biciliata* Maharachch., K.D. Hyde & Crous (Maharachchikumbura et al. 2014). The total DNA of the reference isolate P01 was extracted from mycelia using QIAGEN DNeasy Plant Mini Kit (50). Internal transcribed spacer (ITS rDNA), translation elongation factor 1-alpha (tef1-α) and Beta-tubulin (TUB) regions were amplified and sequenced. BLAST analysis of sequences of ITS rDNA, tef1-α and TUB (GenBank accession Nos. MT579589, MT587275 and MW272555) showed that the isolate is closely related with *Pestalotiopsis biciliata* strain

CBS 124,463, with 99.4, 99.25 and 100% of similarity, respectively. To confirm pathogenicity, *C. siliqua* detached leaves were inoculated with conidial suspension (1 × 10⁶ conidia/ml). Sterile distilled water was used for controls. Leaves were incubated under moist conditions at 22 °C ± 2 °C. After 15 days, small black leaf spots were observed while control leaves were symptomless (Carrieri et al. 2013). The pathogen was re-isolated from symptomatic tissues and it was morphologically similar to initial isolates. To our knowledge, this is the first report of *P. biciliata* on *C. siliqua* in Algeria and worldwide (Farr and Rossman 2021).

Declarations

Ethical approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Conflict of interest Authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

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