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Methanol contamination in indigenous fermented alcoholic beverages

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Incidence of methanol contamination of traditionally fermented beverages is increasing globally. In 2009, 25 persons died in Indonesia after consuming fermented palm wine containing methanol. In June 2015, 27 persons died after consuming toxic alcohol in India. Between April and June 2015, 89 persons died in Nigeria following the consumption of alcohol beverage produced from palm wine. In the Nigerian case, the beverage was found to contain 16.3% methanol and the blood methanol concentration of victims was found to be 1500-2000 mg/l. While there were speculations that unscrupulous vendors might have deliberately spiked the beverages with methanol but it is more likely that the methanol might have been produced by contaminating microbes during fermentation. Methanol production in traditional fermented beverages can be linked to the activities of pectinase producing yeast, fungi and bacteria. This study assessed some traditional fermented beverages that are prone to methanol contamination. The study concluded by suggesting that contaminated alcoholic beverages be converted for fuel use rather than outrightly banning the age long traditional alcohol fermentation.

Biography

Elijah Ige Ohimain is an Associate Professor of Bioenergy, Agricultural and Environmental Microbiology and formerly the Head of Department of Biological Sciences, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island. He has a PhD degree in Environmental Microbiology from the University of Benin, Nigeria and Post graduate diploma in Sustainable Development from Staffordshire University, UK. His research is focused on bioenergy, veterinary and agricultural microbiology, environmental science and petroleum microbiology. He has authored over 150 publications. He is also an Editorial Board Member for over 10 journals and reviewer for over 100 journal titles.

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