The need for process optimization of African fermented foods and beverages


Many papers have been published on various aspects of African fermented foods and beverages. The emphasis has been on the microorganisms used, and the nutritional status of the products after fermentation. The preparation of these products is still a traditional family art and the fermentation process is by uncontrolled inoculation. This has led to variations in the quality and stability of products. Research efforts in this field are still based on old recipes transmitted from generation to generation due to the fact that the consumers are not easily influenced by innovations, and the apparent lack of biotechnological background.

This paper gives a brief account of the fermentation process of some of the fermented products to show the varied pattern of the microbiology. The unpredictability of the complex microflora implicated in the fermentation, and the lack of adequate knowledge of the associated microbes are discussed.

The paper suggests a member of steps to be taken to optimize the fermentation process as a means of maintaining the peculiar characteristics of each product and establishment of small-scale industrial production.