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Study on the efficacy of edible coatings on quality of blueberry fruits during shelf-life

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Study on the efficacy of edible coatings on quality of blueberry fruits during shelf-life

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1 **Study on the efficacy of edible coatings on quality of blueberry fruits during shelf-life**

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## 22 Abstract

23 Edible films or coatings could be used as an alternative way of conservation, because of their ability  
24 to reduce respiration and transpiration rate, maintain firmness and generally delay fruit senescence.

25 The aim of this research was to evaluate the influence of different types of coating: sodium alginate  
26 (Al), pectin (Pe) and sodium alginate plus pectin (Al + Pe), on some blueberries quality  
27 characteristics, cell viability and microbial growth during 14 days of storage at 4°C.

28 Blueberry samples differently coated did not show significant differences in weight loss, pH,  
29 soluble solid and dry matter content. However, the application of Al, Pe and Al + Pe improved the  
30 firmness of blueberry samples as compared to the uncoated one. Changes in the surface reflection  
31 properties in the coated blueberries induced a general lower lightness and a more intense blue hue  
32 colour than the control sample. The microbiological results indicated that the coating of blueberry,  
33 in particular with Al or Pe, significantly reduced the growth kinetics of yeasts and mesophilic  
34 aerobic bacteria.

35

36 **Keywords**

37 Fruit, quality, storage, alginate, pectin

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## 46 **1. Introduction**

47 Blueberries are appreciated for their rich composition in bioactive compounds such as flavonoids,  
48 phenolic acids, tannins and anthocyanins giving them nutraceutical properties. However, fresh fruit  
49 deteriorate rapidly due to loss of water and juice (product of superficial lesions), mould and/or  
50 putrefaction (Yang et al., 2014). The shelf-life of fresh blueberries usually is in the range of 10-40  
51 days depending on different factors such as fruit maturity, cultivar, harvest method and storage  
52 conditions (Abugoch et al., 2016). Various technologies are used to reduce spoilage, extend the  
53 shelf-life and retain the nutritional value of fruit products; among this group particular attention can  
54 be given to refrigeration, UV irradiation, ozonation and modified packaging atmosphere (Duan,  
55 Wu, Strik, & Zhao, 2011). The use of edible films or coatings represents an alternative way of  
56 preservation because of their ability to reduce moisture, solute migration, respiration and  
57 transpiration rate, to maintain firmness and generally delay senescence (Tezotto-Uliana, Fargoni,  
58 Geerdink, & Kluge, 2014). The efficiency and stability of edible coatings or films depend on their  
59 compositions. Edible films and coatings are generally based on biological materials such as  
60 proteins, lipids and polysaccharides, alone or, more often, in combination.

61 Sodium alginate is a natural linear polysaccharide obtained from brown seaweeds and has many  
62 important physical and biological properties, such as moisture retention, gel-forming capability,  
63 good biocompatibility, low price and high availability (Pei, Chen, Li, & Zhou, 2008).

64 Pectin is a complex of acidic polysaccharides that form an interpenetrating network in the plant cell  
65 wall; it is one of the most important citrus by-products that are industrially extracted from apple  
66 pomace and citrus peels. Generally it is used to increase viscosity and gel strength of food products  
67 (Krochta & Mulder-Johnston, 1997).

68 Some studies confirm that the application of edible coatings on fruit surface can increase the shelf-  
69 life of different fruits, for example raspberries (Tezotto-Uliana et al., 2014) and tropical fruits

70 (Cerqueira, Lima, Teixeira, Moreira, & Vicente, 2009). However, there are few works about  
71 coatings effects on blueberries (Duan et al., 2011; Chiabrando & Giacalone, 2015). In both papers,  
72 the authors showed that the use of alginate coating on berries had a positive effect on firmness,  
73 titratable acidity and maintained surface lightness of coated fruit products. However, to the best of  
74 our knowledge there are no papers presented in the literature on the effect of pectin-based coating  
75 on blueberries.

76 Although edible films are not intended to completely replace conventional packages, the efficiency  
77 of food protection can be improved by combining both actions. The objectives of this study were to  
78 investigate the effectiveness of sodium alginate, pectin and both of these polysaccharides based  
79 coatings in improving some qualitative characteristics of blueberry fruits during shelf-life.

## 80 **2. Material and methods**

### 81 2.1. Fruit material

82 Organic blueberries were purchased once from local market. Berry fruits were kept at  $0 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$  until  
83 they were used, for no longer than one week, as suggested by Perkins-Veazie, Clark, Collins, &  
84 Magee, 1995 and Jackson, Sanford, Lawrence, McRae, & Stark, 1999. Fresh blueberries with the  
85 same colour and size and no damages were selected for the experiments.

86

### 87 2.2. Preparation of coating solutions

88 Three different coating solutions were prepared, each of them contained 15 g/kg of glycerol ( $\geq$   
89 99.5% Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO USA) and 2 g/kg of Tween® 20 (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis,  
90 MO USA) and solved in distilled water. In a first solution, sodium alginate (Al) (Sigma-Aldrich, St.  
91 Louis, MO USA) was added in the quantity of 20 g/kg. The second one was enriched by 20 g/kg of  
92 pectin (Pe) from citrus peel (Galacturonic acid  $\geq 74.0\%$  Sigma, St. Louis, MO USA), and the third  
93 one was prepared by combination of Sodium Alginate and Pectin (Al + Pe) in equals amounts of 10  
94 g/kg + 10 g/kg. Afterwards, all coating solutions were homogenised at 5000 rpm for 2 min in order  
95 to remove air bubbles.

96

## 97 2.3. Sample preparation

98 Blueberry fruits were sanitized with sodium hypochlorite water solution (0.2 g/kg), rinsed in  
99 distilled water and dried with absorbing paper. Whole fruits were dipped in coating solutions, in  
100 two process steps, each one of 30 sec duration. The berry samples were drained in a ventilated oven  
101 at  $25 \pm 1$  °C for 30 min following the first step dipping, and for 60 min following the second step  
102 dipping. Blueberries dipped in distilled water with the same procedures were used as control.  
103 Coated berry samples were then placed in plastic trays (PET) closed in micro-perforated bags  
104 (PLA) and stored at 4 °C for 14 days. Coated samples and control ones were analysed at 0, 2, 4, 6,  
105 10 and 14 days of storage. Totally 4 samples were obtained: 3 differently coated blueberry samples  
106 (Al, Pe, Al+Pe) and 1 not coated control sample. For each sample 540 blueberries were used. Three  
107 trays for every sampling time were made, containing 30 blueberries each, from which fruits were  
108 taken randomly from the three trays and used for analytical determinations.

109

## 110 2.4. Quality determinations

## 111 2.4.1. Weight loss, Dry matter, pH and Soluble solid content

112 Weight loss (WL) of blueberry samples during storage was measured by weighting fruits in the  
113 trays before storage and at every day of analysis, following the standard method of AOAC (1994).

114 Dry matter content was determined gravimetrically by difference in weight before and after drying  
115 at 70 °C, until a constant weight was reached (AOAC International, 2002).

116 pH was determined at 20 °C with a pH meter CRISON GLP21 (Shinghai Shilu-Instruments, China).

117 Soluble solid content (SSC) analysis were performed at 20 °C by measuring the refractive index of  
118 blueberry juice with digital hand refraktometer mod. DR301-95 (Kruess, Germany).

119 For each treatment-time condition, dry matter was determined in triplicate from 8 blueberries from  
120 each tray; pH and SSC were determined also in triplicate on three different juice samples each  
121 obtained from 10 berries from each tray, after filtering through Whatman #1 filter paper.

122

## 123 2.4.2. Colour and Texture

124 Surface colour of blueberry was measured using spectrophotometer HUNTERLAB  
125 ColorFlex™, mod. A60-1010-615 (Reston, Virginia). For each sample L\*, a\* and b\* parameters  
126 from CIELAB scale were measured and Hue angles (h°) index was calculated.

127 Penetration test was performed with a Texture Analyser mod. TA-HDi500 (Stable Micro Systems,  
128 Godalming, UK) equipped with a 50 N load cell and a 2 mm diameter stainless steel probe.  
129 Penetration test speed was  $0.5 \text{ mm s}^{-1}$ , the test ended when a maximum deformation of 80% was  
130 reached. Results were expressed as average of 12 measurements carried out on 12 blueberries for  
131 each treatment-time condition.

132

## 133 2.4.3. Cell viability

134 The cell viability test was performed on blueberries slices obtained from 9 different blueberries  
135 using fluorescein diacetate (FDA, Sigma-Aldrich, USA,  $\lambda_{\text{ex}} = 495 \text{ nm}$ ,  $\lambda_{\text{em}} = 518 \text{ nm}$ ), as described  
136 by Tylewicz, Romani, Widell, & Galindo, (2013). Viable cells could be easily identified by a bright  
137 fluorescence. Observations were performed under a fluorescent light in a Nikon upright microscope  
138 (Eclipse Ti-U, Nikon Co, Tokyo, Japan) equipped with a Nikon digital video camera (digital sight  
139 DS-Qi1Mc, Nikon Co, Tokyo, Japan) at a magnification of  $4 \times$ .

140

## 141 2.4.4. Microbial growth

142 The total loads of mesophilic aerobic bacteria, lactic acid bacteria, yeasts, moulds and total  
143 coliforms were evaluated according to the methods reported by Siroli et al., (2015). Briefly, 10 g  
144 portion of each sample were used (around 6 berries), suspended in 90 ml of sterile saline solution (9  
145 g/l NaCl) and homogenized using a Stomacher for 2 min at room temperature; serial dilutions were  
146 made. The microbiological analyses were performed in triplicate immediately after treatments and  
147 during storage.

148

## 149 2.4.5. Data analyses

150 Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the test of mean comparison, according to Fisher's least  
151 significant difference (LSD) were applied on all obtained data. Level of significance was  $p < 0.05$ .

152 The statistical software used was STATISTICA, v 8.0 (StatSoft, Tulsa, Oklahoma).

153

154 **3. Results and discussion**

## 155 3.1 Weight loss, Dry matter, pH and Soluble solid content

156 The fruits weight loss during storage usually is caused by the migration of the water from the fruit  
157 to the surrounding environment. As reported in Table 1, all samples underwent a slight loss of  
158 weight during 14 days of storage. Coated samples did not show any significant differences in  
159 weight loss as compared to the control. These results are probably due to a slight loss of water  
160 undergone by samples. The moisture loss of fresh fruit and vegetables is due to the gradient of  
161 water vapor pressure that occurs from different locations in the cell tissues (Yaman & Bayoindirli,  
162 2002). The cold storage conditions (temperature and relative humidity) could have an effect on the  
163 difference of vapor pressure between blueberries and the environment resulting in non-significant  
164 weight losses. In fact, as reported by Nunes (2015) the weight loss up to 4-5% does not significantly  
165 influence the freshness of the fruit.

166 As reported in Table 2, no significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) on dry matter and pH were detected,  
167 among control and differently coated samples at each considered storage time. Concerning the SSC,  
168 significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ), even if slight, were observed only at 10 days of storage; in  
169 particular Al and Al + Pe presented higher SSC values as compared to the control and Pe coated  
170 blueberry fruits. As a general trend dry matter, pH and SSC tended to increase during storage in  
171 both control and coated fruit samples. pH and SSC showed the same behaviour increasing with  
172 longer storage time, similar results have been provided by Duan et al (2011). The increase of pH

173 and SSC is probably due to metabolic processes and reactions during post-harvest storage, which  
174 continue to converting starch and acids into the sugar.

### 175 3.2 Colour and Texture

176 In Table 3 colour data (lightness -  $L^*$  and Hue angles -  $h^\circ$ ) of blueberry samples during 14 days of  
177 storage at 4 °C are reported. Coating induced a general lower lightness and a more intense blue hue  
178 colour in blueberry samples as compared with the control one ( $p < 0.05$ ), probably due to the glossy  
179 effect of coating. The observed lower luminosity value of coated samples could be caused by the  
180 modifications in the surface reflection properties (Hoagland & Parris, 1996).  $L^*$  values of control  
181 and coated samples tended to increase during the first days of storage, then remained relatively  
182 stable and decreased after the sixth storage day.

183 The visual perception of the intensity of blue colour was always more intense in the coated than in  
184 the control samples, as indicated from their highest hue values. Moreover, the blueberry samples  
185 showed a general decrease in hue values from 0 to 10 days that tended to increase on 14<sup>th</sup> day. The  
186  $h^\circ$  decrease of blueberries during the first period of storage is probably caused by oxidation or  
187 condensation reactions of phenolic compounds resulting in loss of anthocyanins during cold storage  
188 (Reque et al., 2014). Moreover, the increase of hue values at the end of storage might be caused by  
189 a possible anthocyanins synthesis during ripening as also observed by the higher pH and SSC  
190 values (Table 2).

191 As shown in Fig. 1 blueberry coated samples presented a significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) higher firmness  
192 compared to control sample until the first 10 days of storage. After this period, texture of  
193 blueberries coated samples decreased, reaching the same value of control one (1.75N). The higher  
194 firmness values of coated samples are probably due to the presence of coating that provide a  
195 structural rigidity to the surface of fruit (Duan et al., 2011). Pe and Pe + Al showed the same  
196 behaviour of the Al based coating. This result of Al coating was in agreement with Rojas-Graü,  
197 Tapia, & Martín-Belloso, (2008) on fresh-cut apple and Fan et al., (2009) on strawberry fruits.

198 Moreover, the retention of firmness could be explained by the delay of pectin and proto-pectin  
199 degradation, involved in maintaining the structural integrity of the fruits (Thompson, 1996).

200

### 201 3.3 Cell viability

202 Figure 2 shows the micrographs resulted from microscopic observations of control (a) and Al + Pe  
203 coated blueberry samples (b) after 14 days of storage. The pictures demonstrate that cell viability in  
204 all tissues is preserved until 14 days of storage both in case of control and coated samples. The  
205 results provide evidence that cell viability (viable cells could be identified by a bright fluorescence  
206 on the Figure) can be preserved in blueberries also after the application of coating. If the protoplasts  
207 of the cells did not retain the FDA, this means disruption of the plasma membrane (cell lysis) or  
208 loss of membrane semi permeability (Halperin & Koster, 2006). These results provide versatile tool  
209 to conduct study of the metabolism of blueberry tissues that was maintained despite storage and the  
210 application of different types of coatings.

211

### 212 3.4 Microbial growth

213 As reported in Table 4, yeasts were detected only in control sample after 2 and 4 days of storage  
214 while in all the coated samples the yeast cell loads were below the detection limit. In samples  
215 coated with Al or Pe yeasts were detected only after 10 days of storage. However, at the end of  
216 storage the yeast loads of coated samples were 1.09-1.38 logarithmic cycles lower than control  
217 samples.

218 Significant differences were also evidenced in the total aerobic mesophilic cell loads among the  
219 samples during the storage period (Table 5). In fact, in this case only the control sample showed  
220 mesophilic cell loads above the detection limit after 2 days of storage. Samples coated with Al or Pe  
221 showed mesophilic cell loads from the sixth days of storage, significantly lower than the controls  
222 and samples coated with Al + Pe. Finally, no significant differences were found for lactic acid

223 bacteria and total coliform cell loads in relation to the coating adopted, whose loads resulted below  
224 2.0 log CFU/g, during the whole period of storage. The microbiological results indicate that the  
225 coating of blueberry, in particular with Al or Pe, significantly reduce the growth kinetics of yeasts  
226 and mesophilic aerobic bacteria that play a dominant role in the spoilage of minimally processed  
227 fruits (Siroli et al., 2014) .

228

#### 229 **4. Conclusions**

230 The use of coating showed a positive effect mainly on firmness and microbial growth of treated  
231 blueberries samples. The firmness was maintained until 10 storage days also for the Pe and Al + Pe  
232 coated blueberries. Furthermore, the application of coatings reduced the growth kinetics of yeasts  
233 and mesophilic aerobic bacteria, in particular with the application of Al and Pe based coatings.  
234 Results from this study indicate the possibility of using edible coatings to develop ready-to-eat fresh  
235 blueberries with no reduction in their shelf-life. Further researches will focus on the effect of these  
236 edible coatings on blueberry bioactive compounds and sensorial properties.

237

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### 300 **Figure captions**

301 **Fig. 1** Firmness (N) of control (Control ○) and differently coated blueberry samples (sodium  
302 alginate - Al ◇; pectin - Pe □; sodium alginate plus pectin – Al + Pe Δ) during 14 days of storage at  
303 4°C.

304 **Fig. 2** Cell viability for (a) control (Control) and sodium alginate (Al), pectin (Pe) and sodium  
305 alginate plus pectin (Al + Pe), coated blueberry samples (b) at 14 days of storage after treatment  
306 using fluorescein diacetate (FDA) marker. Bar = 100 μm

307

1 **Table 1.** Weight loss (%) of control (Control) and sodium alginate (Al), pectin (Pe) and sodium  
 2 alginate plus pectin (Al + Pe) coated blueberry samples during 14 days of storage at 4°C.

	Weight loss (%)				
	T2	T4	T6	T10	T14
Control	$-1.1 \pm 0.1^a$	$-1.2 \pm 0.3^a$	$-2.3 \pm 0.3^a$	$-3.9 \pm 0.2^a$	$-5.9 \pm 0.8^a$
Al	$-1.05 \pm 0.05^a$	$-1.8 \pm 0.4^a$	$-2.34 \pm 0.05^a$	$-4.2 \pm 0.2^a$	$-6 \pm 1^a$
Pe	$-0.83 \pm 0.07^a$	$-1.5 \pm 0.2^a$	$-2.2 \pm 0.3^a$	$-4.0 \pm 0.5^a$	$-5.5 \pm 0.2^a$
Al+Pe	$-2 \pm 1^a$	$-2.2 \pm 0.1^a$	$-2.3 \pm 0.5^a$	$-4.1 \pm 0.6^a$	$-5.6 \pm 0.3^a$

3 Data are reported as average values and standard deviations obtained from three replicates for each  
 4 treatment-time conditions.

5 Values with different letter within the column are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2.** Dry matter (g/kg) pH and soluble solid content (°Bx) of control (Control) and sodium alginate (Al), pectin (Pe) and sodium alginate plus pectin (Al+Pe) coated blueberry samples during 14 days of storage at 4°C.

Dry Matter (g/kg)						
	T0	T2	T4	T6	T10	T14
Control	178.2 ± 0.4 <sup>a</sup>	193.0 ± 0.6 <sup>a</sup>	183 ± 2 <sup>a</sup>	204.5 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>	199 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>	198 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>
Al	177.8 ± 0.8 <sup>a</sup>	180 ± 2 <sup>a</sup>	194.8 ± 0.7 <sup>a</sup>	194.30 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	183.0 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>	202 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>
Pe	185.8 ± 0.6 <sup>a</sup>	179.9 ± 0.7 <sup>a</sup>	195.9 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	204.9 ± 0.4 <sup>a</sup>	196.2 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	194.3 ± 0.6 <sup>a</sup>
Al+Pe	185.4 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	186.5 ± 0.8 <sup>a</sup>	190.7 ± 0.5 <sup>a</sup>	184.32 ± 0.06 <sup>a</sup>	193.5 ± 0.4 <sup>a</sup>	188.0 ± 0.6 <sup>a</sup>
pH						
	T0	T2	T4	T6	T10	T14
Control	3.49 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	4.09 ± 0.03 <sup>a</sup>	3.5 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	3.7 ± 0.5 <sup>a</sup>	3.7 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	4.1 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>
Al	3.47 ± 0.07 <sup>a</sup>	3.9 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	3.8 ± 0.8 <sup>a</sup>	3.35 ± 0.08 <sup>a</sup>	3.4 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	4.03 ± 0.05 <sup>a</sup>
Pe	3.28 ± 0.04 <sup>a</sup>	3.8 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>	3.4 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	3.52 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	3.38 ± 0.07 <sup>a</sup>	4.0 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>
Al+Pe	3.55 ± 0.04 <sup>a</sup>	3.8 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	3.5 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	3.31 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	3.6 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.58 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>
SSC						
	T0	T2	T4	T6	T10	T14
Control	13.4 ± 0.7 <sup>a</sup>	13 ± 2 <sup>a</sup>	15.0 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	15.2 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	12.7 ± 0.9 <sup>b</sup>	15 ± 2 <sup>a</sup>
Al	12.6 ± 0.7 <sup>a</sup>	15 ± 2 <sup>a</sup>	15 ± 3 <sup>a</sup>	14.6 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>	15.1 ± 0.9 <sup>a</sup>	15 ± 2 <sup>a</sup>
Pe	13 ± 2 <sup>a</sup>	15 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>	13 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>	13.1 ± 0.5 <sup>a</sup>	11.6 ± 0.4 <sup>b</sup>	18 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>
Al+Pe	13 ± 2 <sup>a</sup>	14 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>	14 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>	15.6 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	15.0 ± 0.4 <sup>a</sup>	17 ± 1 <sup>a</sup>

Data are reported as average values and standard deviations obtained from three replicates for each treatment-time conditions.

Values with different letter within the column are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3.** Lightness- $L^*$  and Hue angles-  $h^\circ$  of control (Control) and sodium alginate (Al), pectin (Pe) and sodium alginate plus pectin (Al + Pe) coated blueberry samples during 14 days of storage at 4°C.

$L^*$						
	T0	T2	T4	T6	T10	T14
Control	$21 \pm 1^a$	$28.4 \pm 0.1^a$	$31.5 \pm 0.8^a$	$30.5 \pm 0.5^a$	$28.5 \pm 0.6^a$	$29 \pm 1^a$
Al	$19.33 \pm 0.07^a$	$18.9 \pm 0.1^b$	$22.74 \pm 0.05^c$	$22.2 \pm 0.6^c$	$19.4 \pm 0.6^b$	$16.48 \pm 0.00^c$
Pe	$14 \pm 2^b$	$19.5 \pm 0.5^b$	$23.2 \pm 0.4^{bc}$	$26.0 \pm 0.2^b$	$19.3 \pm 0.2^b$	$19.59 \pm 0.02^b$
Al+Pe	$15.3 \pm 0.6^b$	$15.9 \pm 0.8^c$	$24.9 \pm 0.2^b$	$25.6 \pm 0.5^b$	$17.6 \pm 1.4^b$	$19.9 \pm 0.4^b$
$h^\circ$						
	T0	T2	T4	T6	T10	T14
Control	$100 \pm 11^b$	$90 \pm 3^c$	$97 \pm 5^c$	$93 \pm 4^b$	$72 \pm 6^c$	$89 \pm 6^c$
Al	$140 \pm 11^a$	$126 \pm 10^{ab}$	$117 \pm 7^b$	$102 \pm 9^b$	$75 \pm 6^b$	$145 \pm 11^b$
Pe	$145 \pm 11^a$	$139 \pm 7^a$	$128 \pm 5^a$	$134 \pm 6^a$	$87 \pm 6^a$	$151 \pm 11^b$
Al+Pe	$154 \pm 11^a$	$123 \pm 9^b$	$111 \pm 7^b$	$126 \pm 5^a$	$85 \pm 5^{ab}$	$179 \pm 11^a$

Data are reported as average values and standard deviations obtained from twelve replicates for each treatment-time conditions.

Values with different letter within the column are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 4.** Yeast count of control (Control) and sodium alginate (Al), pectin (Pe) and sodium alginate plus pectin (Al + Pe) coated blueberry samples.

	T0	T2	T4	T6	T10	T14
Control	nd*	2.2 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.2 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	3.5 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.6 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.3 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>
Al	nd*	nd*	nd*	nd*	2.1 ± 0.2 <sup>b</sup>	2.0 ± 0.2 <sup>b</sup>
Pe	nd*	nd*	nd*	nd*	1.8 ± 0.3 <sup>b</sup>	1.9 ± 0.2 <sup>b</sup>
Al+Pe	nd*	nd*	nd*	2.2 ± 0.2 <sup>b</sup>	2.2 ± 0.2 <sup>b</sup>	2.2 ± 0.2 <sup>b</sup>

Counts are expressed in log<sub>10</sub> cfu/g ( $\pm$  standard deviation). Means followed by different letters are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) and are obtained from three replicates for each treatment-time conditions.

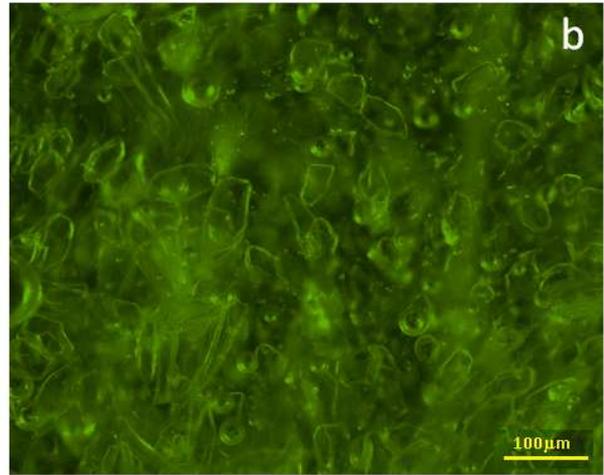
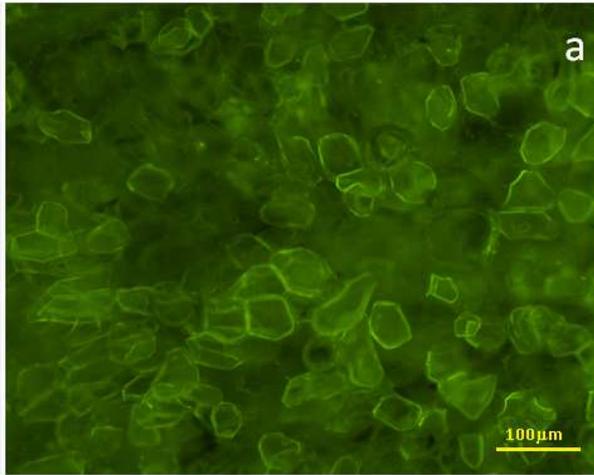
\* under the detection limit (1 log<sub>10</sub> cfu/g)

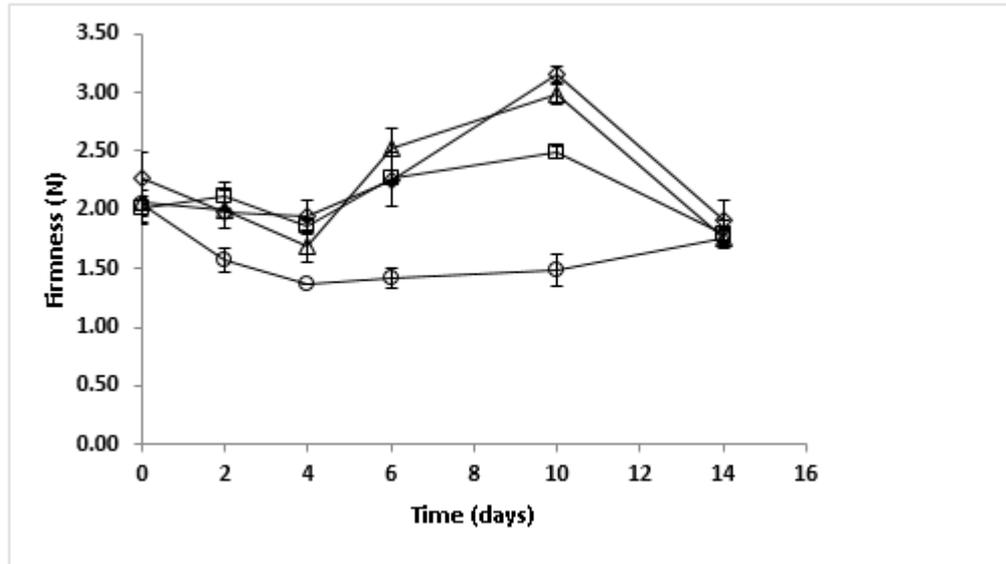
**Table 5.** Mesophylic aerobic bacteria of control (Control) and sodium alginate (Al), pectin (Pe) and sodium alginate plus pectin (Al + Pe) coated blueberry samples.

	T0	T2	T4	T6	T10	T14
Control	nd*	$2.3 \pm 0.3^a$	$2.9 \pm 0.3^a$	$3.1 \pm 0.3^a$	$4.1 \pm 0.3^a$	$4.5 \pm 0.3^a$
Al	nd*	nd*	$1.5 \pm 0.3^b$	$1.9 \pm 0.3^b$	$2.0 \pm 0.2^b$	$2.6 \pm 0.3^b$
Pe	nd*	nd*	nd*	$2.1 \pm 0.3^b$	$2.2 \pm 0.3^b$	$2.7 \pm 0.2^b$
Al+Pe	nd*	nd*	$1.5 \pm 0.3^b$	$3.0 \pm 0.3^a$	$3.6 \pm 0.4^a$	$4.2 \pm 0.4^a$

Counts are expressed in log<sub>10</sub> cfu/g ( $\pm$  standard deviation). Means followed by different letters are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) and are obtained from three replicates for each treatment-time conditions.

\* under the detection limit (1 log<sub>10</sub> cfu/g)





Coating induced a decrease of lightness and an increase of blue colour in berries.

Firmness of blueberries was improved by application of coating.

Alginate/pectin coating reduced the growth of yeasts and mesophilic aerobic bacteria.