

Environmental Air Quality

Environmental air quality may be a critical control point, especially in packaging areas. Foods such as dairy products, baked goods, and/or Ready-to-Eat products are examples of foods that are highly sensitive to airborne contaminants.

Microorganisms may be present in the air during all of our daily activities. Microbial aerosols generated from the environment are primarily bacterial spores, yeast, and molds. Vegetative bacteria generated from humans are microorganisms associated with the respiratory tract, hair, or skin. Such bacteria are *streptococci*, *staphylococci*, or *micrococci*.

Pathogens such as *Listeria* may be present in the air as well. However, this air sampling method is inappropriate for *Listeria* testing. *Listeria spp* are fastidious microorganisms that need a cocktail of supplements and nutrients in order to grow.

Air-sampling methods:

There are many quantitative air-sampling methods available.

The most frequently used, easy, and inexpensive is the Exposure of Agar. The Agar Plates are suitable for general total bacteria count (TBC) such as gram-negative bacteria, and/or any other microorganisms that do not require special nutrients/supplements.

The guidelines established for each plant in the air sampling program can be used to make decisions related to possible sources of contamination.

By Elena Connors- Impact Microbiology Services Ltd

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