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► To cite this version:

C. Guillemain, C. Margoum, A. Assoumani, Marina Coquery. Comparison of the performances of Stir Bar Sorptive Extraction (SBSE) coupled to GC-MS-MS and UHPLC-MS-MS for the analysis of pesticides in freshwaters. 8th European Conference on Pesticides and Related Organic Micropollutants in the Environment and 14th Symposium on Chemistry and Fate of Modern Pesticides, Sep 2014, Ioannina, Greece. pp.1, 2014. hal-02600211

HAL Id: hal-02600211

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-02600211>

Submitted on 16 May 2020

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Comparison of the performances of Stir Bar Sorptive Extraction (SBSE) coupled to GC-MS-MS and UHPLC-MS-MS for the analysis of pesticides in freshwaters

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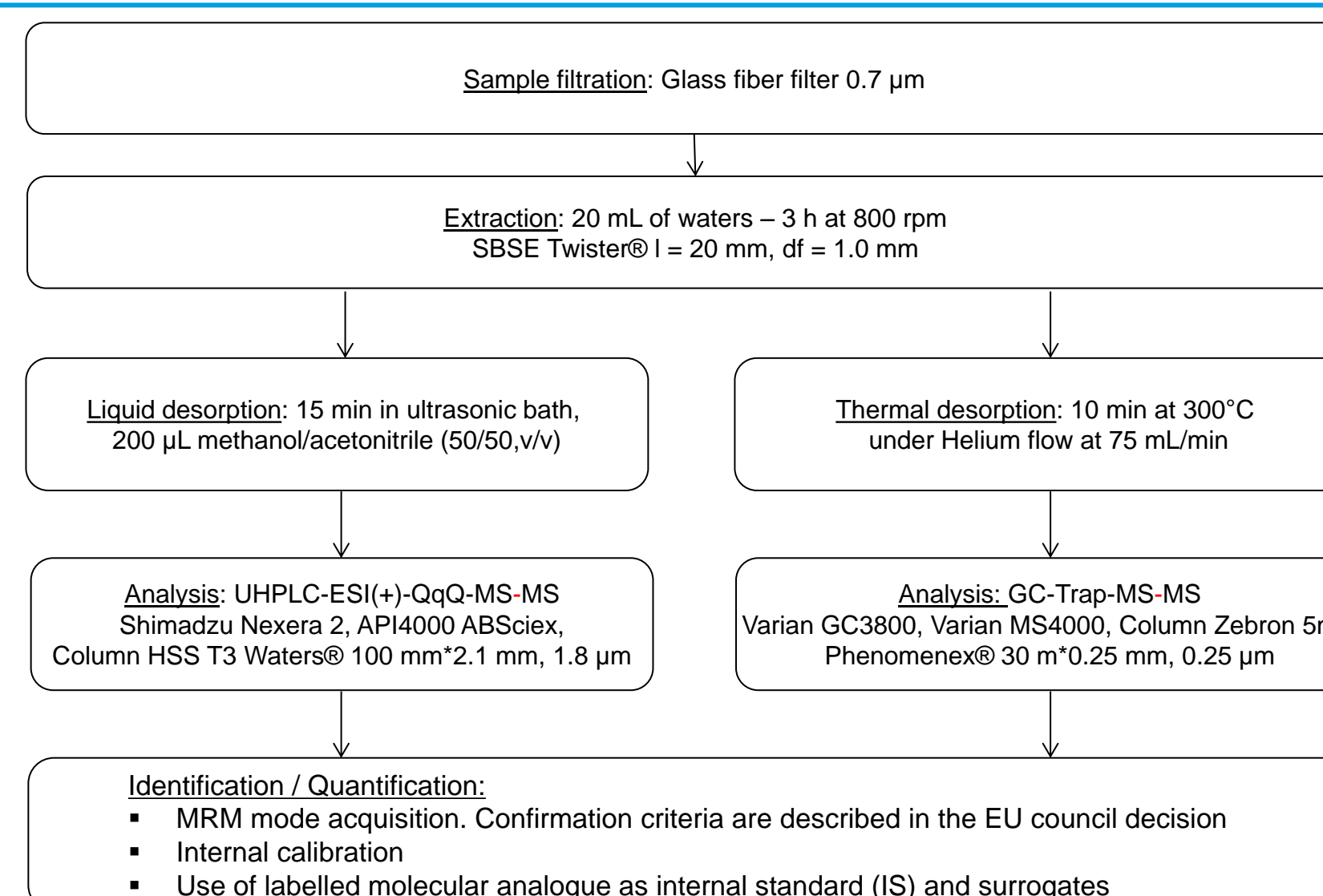
INTRODUCTION

Monitoring of organic pesticides in freshwaters requires developing robust methods that usually involve an extraction step followed by gas or liquid chromatography. Stir Bar Sorptive Extraction (SBSE) is an innovative solvent free sample preparation technique for moderately hydrophobic to hydrophobic organic compounds in aqueous samples [1]. This fast extraction technique can be followed by two possible desorption modes: liquid desorption (LD) for liquid chromatography or thermal desorption (TD) for gas chromatography. The aim of this work was to validate SBSE-TD-GC-MS-MS and SBSE-LD-UHPLC-MS-MS methods for the determination of several pesticides in surface waters and to compare their performances.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Method synoptic [2], [3]

Molecule	Abbreviation	UHPLC-MS-MS	GC-MS-MS	Use	Log K _{ow}
Azoxystrobin	AZS	X	-	F	2.5
Dimethomorph	DMM	X	-	F	2.7
Procymidone	PCM	X	X	F	3.3
Spiroxamine	SPX	X	-	F	2.9
Tebuconazole	TBZ	X	-	F	3.7
Acetochlor	ATC	X	X	H	3.0
Atrazine	ATZ	X	-	H	2.7
Chlorotoluron	CTU	X	-	H	2.5
Diflufenican	DFD	X	X	H	4.2
Diuron	DIU	X	-	H	2.7
Flumioxazine	FMX	X	-	H	2.6
Isoproturon	IPU	X	-	H	2.9
Metolachlor	MTC	X	X	H	3.1
Norflurazon	NFZ	X	-	H	2.5
Simazine	SMZ	X	-	H	2.3
Dichloroaniline	DCA	X	X	metab H	2.7
3-(3,4-dichlorophenyl)-1-methylurea	DCPMU	X	-	metab H	2.5
Chlorfenvinphos	CFV	X	X	I	3.8
Chlorpyrifos Ethyl	CPE	X	X	I	4.7
Chlorpyrifos Methyl	CPM	X	X	I	4.0
Fenitrothion	FNT	X	-	I	3.3



F: Fungicide, H: Herbicide, I: Insecticide
 Log K_{ow}: Octanol-water partition coefficient

Method performances [4], [5]

Linearity range

Experimental:
 5 calibration regression curves from the extraction of standards at 6 levels.

2 evaluation criteria:

Fisher test with $\alpha = 0.01$.

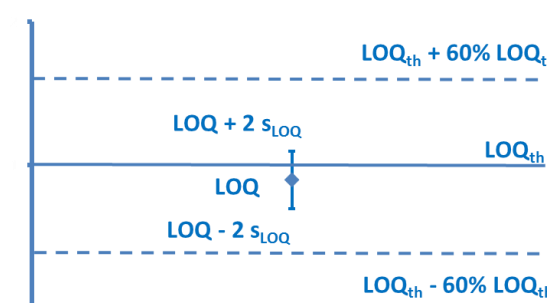
Comparison of the deviations between theoretical and calculated standard concentration values to a maximal acceptable deviation (MAD: from 10% to 60%).

Limits of quantification (LOQ)

Experimental:
 Extraction of 5 duplicates of water spiked at the LOQ_{th} (estimated for S/N = k*10).
 Experimental LOQ and its standard deviation (s_{LOQ}) were determined.

Evaluation criterion:

LOQ - 2 s_{LOQ} > LOQ_{th} - 60% LOQ_{th}
 LOQ + 2 s_{LOQ} < LOQ_{th} + 60% LOQ_{th}

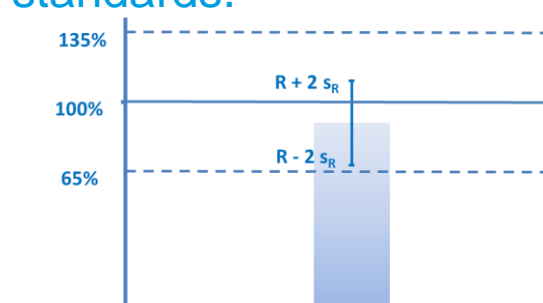


Accuracy and repeatability

Experimental:
 Extraction of 5 duplicates of water spiked at 2 levels: 20% and 80% of the highest concentration level of the calibration range. Recoveries (R) were determined with calibration curve from extracted standards.

Evaluation criterion:

R - 2 s_R > 65%
 R + 2 s_R < 135%



Analytical uncertainties (U)

Experimental:
 Extraction of 10 duplicates of 3 natural waters spiked at 3 levels: LQ, 20% and 80% of the highest concentration level of the calibration range.

Determination of uncertainties:

For each concentration level, the average concentration of the samples x and the reproducibility errors s_{repro} were determined. Then U was calculated as follows, with k = 2:

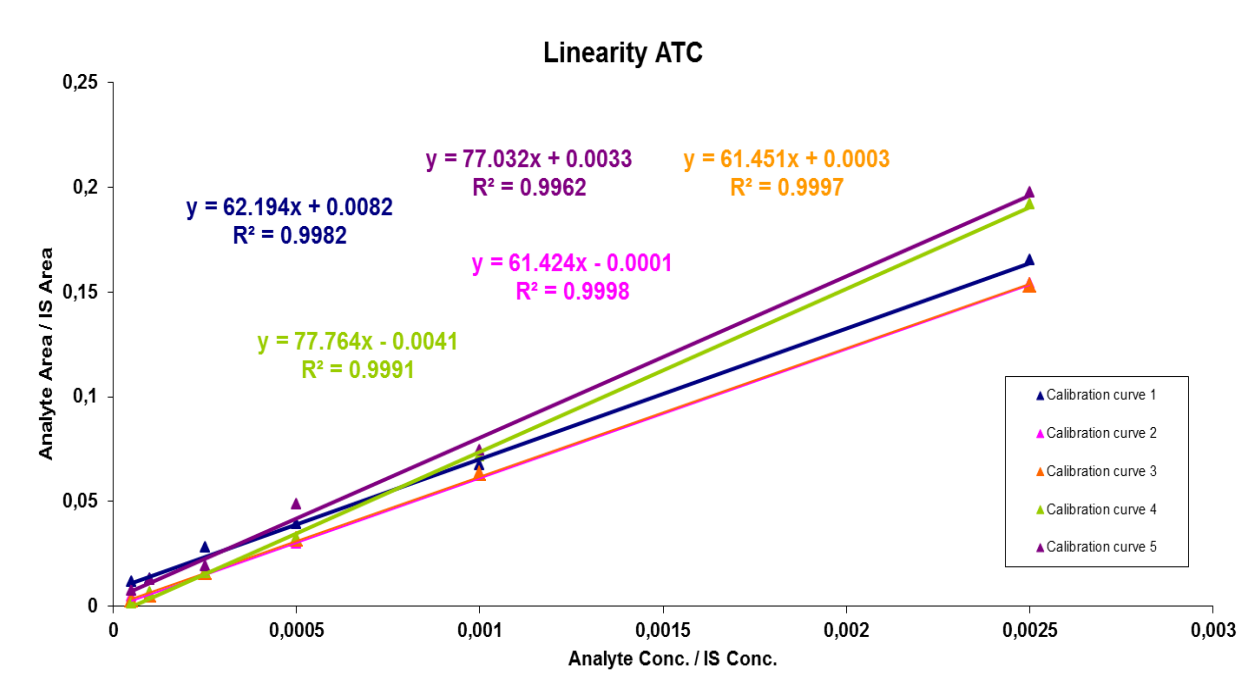
$$U (\%) = (k \times s_{repro} \times 100) / x$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linearity range

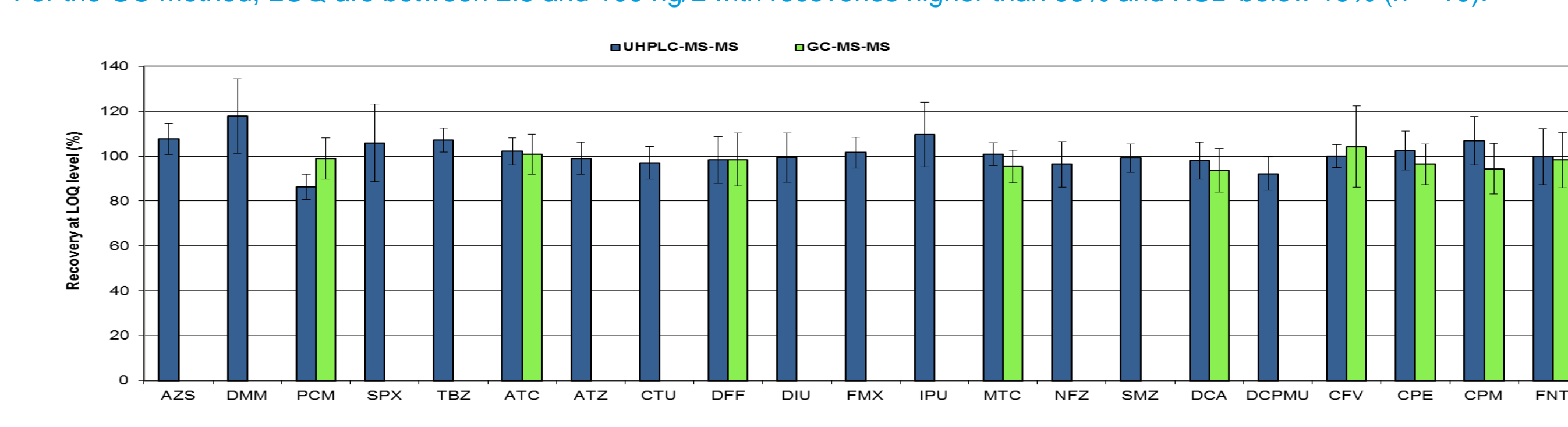
For all compounds, the linearity was validated with a Fisher test or MAD. The ranges for GC method are forty times larger: LOQ to 2000LOQ for GC method and LOQ to 50LOQ for UHPLC method.

Molecule	Linearity range (µg/L)		R ²
	UHPLC-MS-MS	GC-MS-MS	
AZS	0.02 - 1	0.9995	-
DMM	0.1 - 5	0.9996	-
PCM	0.2 - 10	0.9993	0.005 - 10
SPX	0.02 - 1	0.9985	-
TBZ	0.1 - 5	0.9995	-
ATC	0.05 - 2.5	0.9993	0.005 - 10
ATZ	0.005 - 0.25	0.9993	-
CTU	0.05 - 2.5	0.9994	-
DFD	0.2 - 10	0.9991	0.05 - 100
DIU	1 - 50	0.9992	-
FMX	0.2 - 10	0.9991	-
IPU	0.1 - 5	0.9994	-
MTC	0.005 - 0.25	0.9992	0.005 - 10
NFZ	0.2 - 10	0.9991	-
SMZ	0.05 - 2.5	0.9995	-
DCA	0.05 - 2.5	0.9984	0.1 - 200
DCPMU	1 - 50	0.9992	-
CFV	0.1 - 5	0.9993	0.025 - 50
CPE	0.05 - 2.5	0.9993	0.025 - 50
CPM	0.05 - 2.5	0.9992	0.0025 - 5
FNT	0.5 - 25	0.9991	0.005 - 10



Limits of quantification (LOQ)

For the UHPLC method, LOQ are between 5 and 1000 ng/L with recoveries higher than 83% and relative standard deviation (RSD) below 18% (n = 10).
 For the GC method, LOQ are between 2.5 and 100 ng/L with recoveries higher than 93% and RSD below 19% (n = 10).



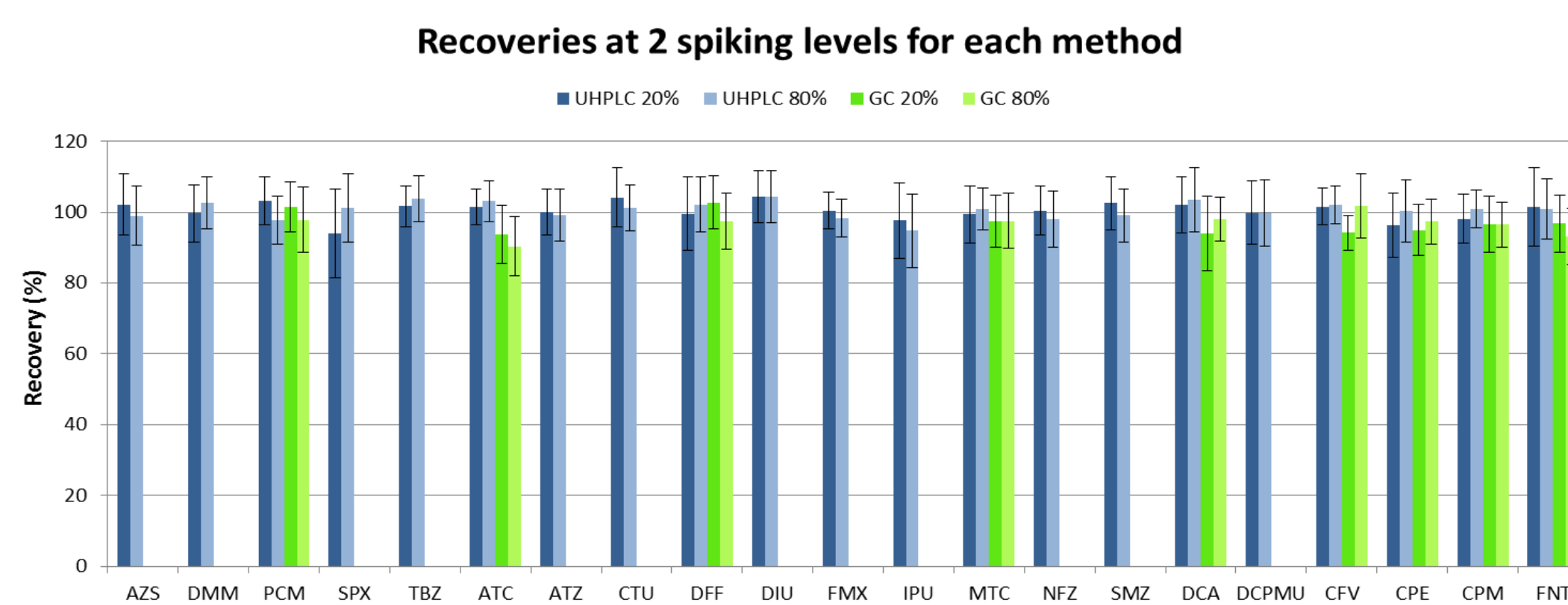
Molecule	LOQ (ng/L)	
	UHPLC-MS-MS	GC-MS-MS
AZS	20	-
DMM	100	-
PCM	200	5
SPX	20	-
TBZ	100	-
ATC	50	5
ATZ	5	-
CTU	50	-
DFD	200	50
DIU	1000	-
FMX	200	-
IPU	100	-
MTC	5	5
NFZ	200	-
SMZ	50	-
DCA	100	100
DCPMU	1000	-
CFV	100	2.5
CPE	50	25
CPM	50	2.5
FNT	500	5

Accuracy and repeatability

Accuracy and repeatability were validated for both methods.

UHPLC method obtains recoveries higher than 94% with RSD below 13% (n = 10 for each level).

GC method reaches recoveries higher than 90% with RSD below 11% (n = 10 for each level).



Analytical uncertainties

Expanded uncertainties for the UHPLC method varied from 9% to 28% depending on the compound and the concentration level, except for SPX at LOQ level.

Similarly, the expanded uncertainties for the GC method varied from 9% to 25% depending on the compound and the concentration level.

Molecule	Uncertainties %				
	UHPLC LOQ	UHPLC 20%	UHPLC 80%	GC LOQ	GC 20%
AZS	16.1	17.1	17.4	-	-
DMM	18.7	16.5	14.6	-	-
PCM	16.8	13.4	14.2	18.6	12.9
SPX	38.7	26.9	19.4	-	-
TBZ	14.6	11.4	12.7	-	-
ATC	12.5	9.9	11.3	16.9	16.7
ATZ	13.1	12.9	15.1	-	-
CTU	12.8	16.4	12.9	-	-
DFD	25.0	21.5	15.5	25.0	14.3
DIU	23.1	14.3	14.4	-	-
FMX	14.8	10.6	10.8	-	-
IPU	21.0	22.2	22.2	-	-
MTC	11.7	16.2	12.1	14.7	14.0
NFZ	20.7	14.0	16.4	-	-
SMZ	11.3	14.7	15.1	-	-
DCA	16.5	15.6	17.8	18.8	20.2
DCPMU	19.3	18.3	19.0	-	-
CFV	9.0	10.3	11.6	20.3	12.8
CPE	16.7	18.8	17.9	18.7	15.5
CPM	22.4	14.5	10.8	20.8	14.5
FNT	28.1	21.9	17.1	23.0	14.4

METHODS COMPARISON

SBSE-LD-LC-MS-MS method:

- ☺ 21 molecules analyzed
- ☺ Larger polarity range
- ☺ > 80% recoveries
- ☹ Less sensitive method
- ☹ Non automated method

SBSE-TD-GC-MS-MS method:

- ☺ More sensitive method
- ☺ Larger linearity range
- ☺ > 90% recoveries
- ☺ Easy and automated method
- ☹ 9 molecules analyzed

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CONCLUSIONS

Both methods were validated for the accurate and robust determination of ultra traces of pesticides in freshwaters. SBSE-LD-UHPLC-MS/MS targets a larger number of pesticides whereas SBSE-TD-GC-MS/MS reaches lower LOQ. Additionally, the automated online thermal desorption system allows faster and easier sample treatment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors thank the French National Research Agency (ANR) through the PoToMAC project (ANR 2011 CESA 022 02) and the French National Agency for Water and Aquatic Environments (ONEMA) for financial support and M. Peyrat for analytical support.