

# I KNEW YOU WERE TROUBLE: EXPANDING LC METHODS TO INCLUDE DIFFICULT GC COMPOUNDS USING A NOVEL IONIZATION TECHNIQUE

Kari Organtini<sup>1</sup>, Susan Leonard<sup>1</sup>, Eimear McCall<sup>2</sup>, Simon Hird<sup>2</sup>, Gareth Cleland<sup>1</sup> and Kenneth Rosnack<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Waters Corporation, 34 Maple St, Milford, MA 01757

<sup>2</sup>Waters Corporation, Stamford Avenue, Altrincham Road, SK9 4AX Wilmslow UK

Waters

THE SCIENCE OF WHAT'S POSSIBLE.®

## INTRODUCTION

Screening food samples for contaminants such as pesticides requires the use of GC-MS and LC-MS techniques. In order to cover a full suite of regulated compounds, several LC and GC methods are usually required that separately incorporate large suites of compounds, single residue methods, and “troublesome” compounds.

Of the troublesome compounds in the GC-MS suite of pesticide residues, the thiophthalimide fungicides, including captan and folpet, are amongst the most difficult to analyze. These compounds rapidly degrade in the GC inlet under normal splitless injection conditions used for multiresidue pesticide analysis methods. Captan and folpet lose the  $-SCCl_2$  group to produce Tetrahydrophthalimide (THPI) and Phthalimide (PI), respectively. This degradation happens within as little as two injections making reproducible analysis nearly impossible. It is generally accepted that captan and folpet are GC compounds, although methods for their degradation products using APCL ionization using an LC-MS method have been reported.<sup>1</sup>

We assessed the possibility of developing an LC-MS/MS method to make the analysis of these compounds more robust and reliable. Electrospray ionization (ESI) and a novel LC-MS ionization technique (UniSpray or USI) were investigated to determine whether captan and folpet could be successfully analyzed with an LC-MS approach without the problems observed using GC analysis. The method evaluation was performed in challenging food matrices.

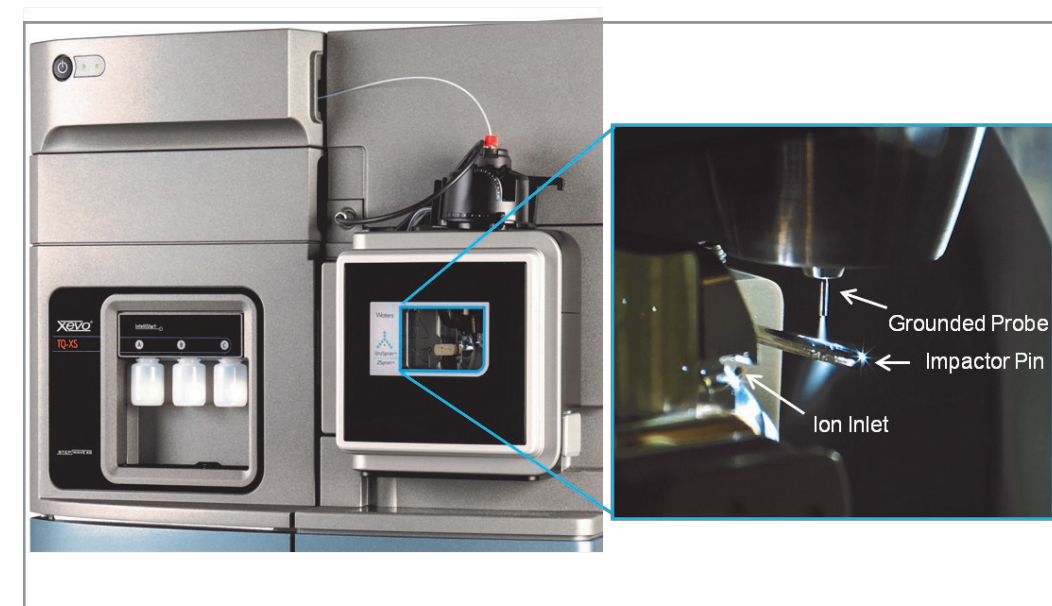


Figure 1. UniSpray source shown on the Xevo TQ-XS. Inset shows the heated, grounded probe directing the nebulized spray onto the impactor pin, on which a voltage is applied. The generated ions then enter the mass spectrometer through the ion inlet, or sample cone.

## How Does UniSpray Work?

UniSpray is a novel atmospheric ionization technique that allows for multimode ionization of both polar and non-polar analytes in a single injection.

A simplified diagram of how UniSpray ionization works is shown in Figure 2. The column effluent is nebulized in a grounded, heated probe and directed onto a stainless steel pin which is held under high voltage, creating smaller droplet sizes, which are ionized at impact. The nebulized flow bends around the surface of the impactor pin into the sample cone due to the Coanda Effect. The mechanism allows for increased ionization and sampling efficiency.<sup>2,3</sup>

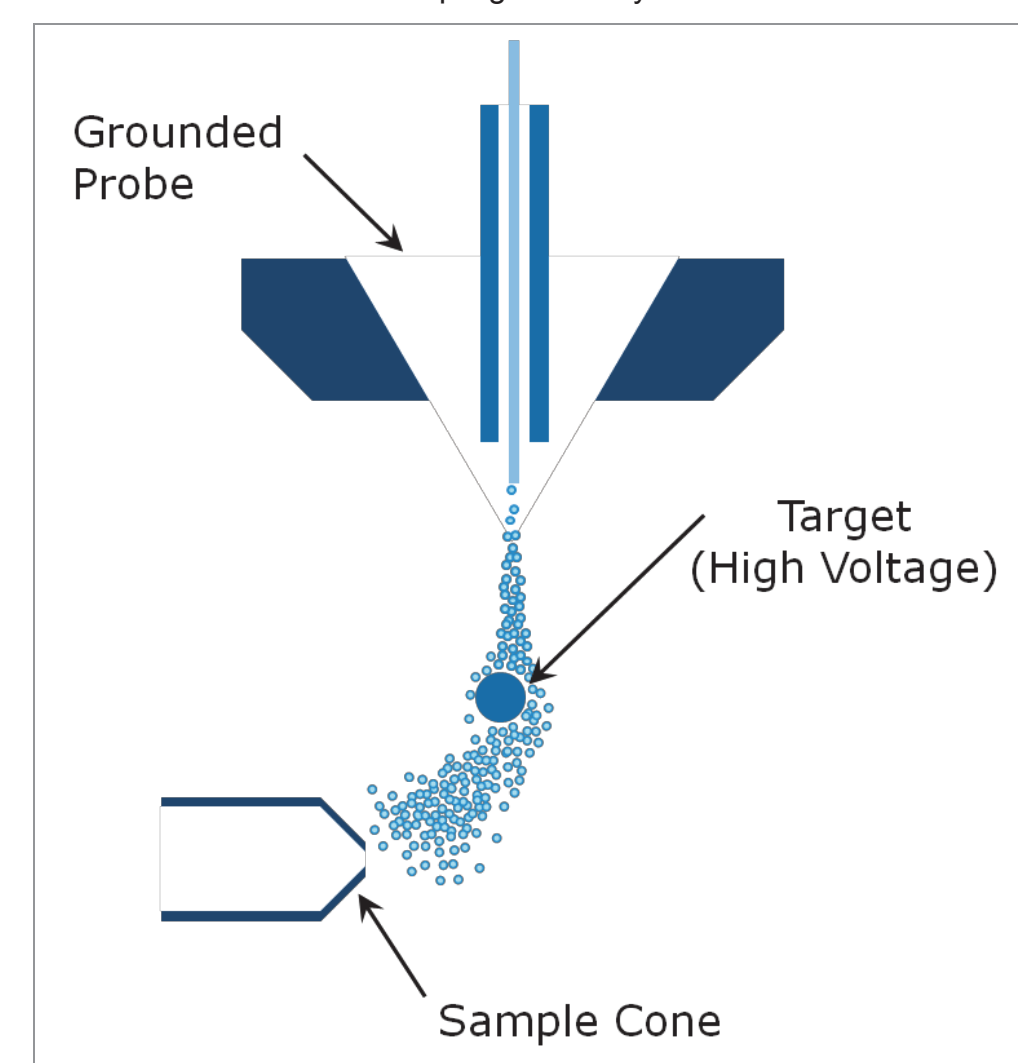


Figure 2. The ionization mechanism of the UniSpray source works by nebulizing flow onto an impactor pin.

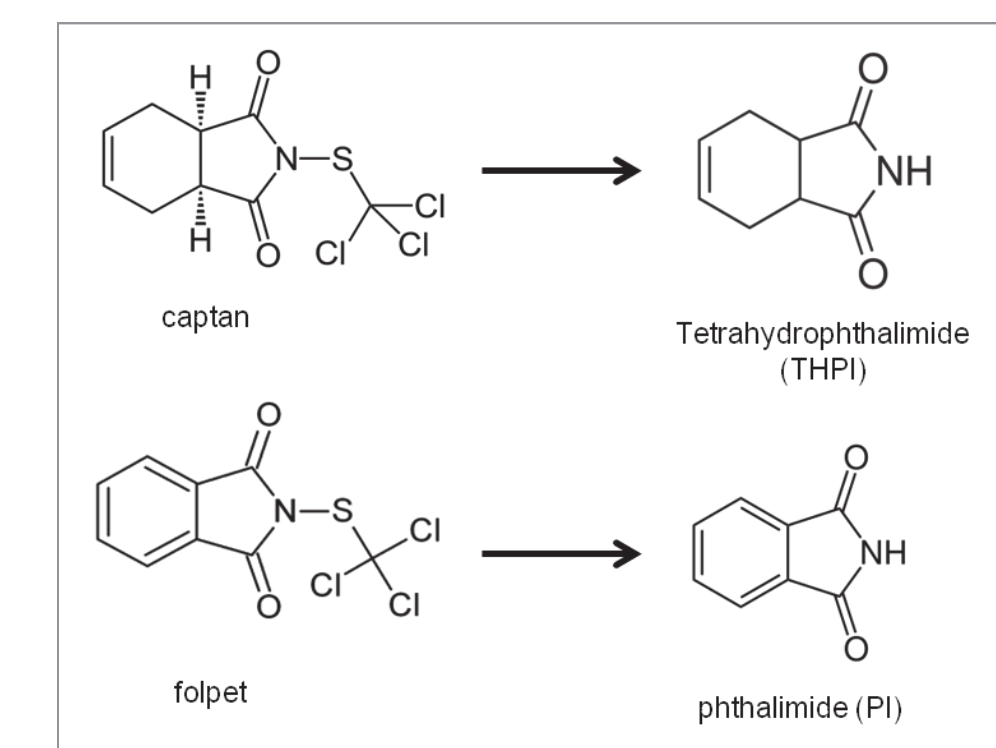


Figure 3. Structures of captan and folpet and their degradation products, THPI and PI.

## METHODS

### Sample Preparation

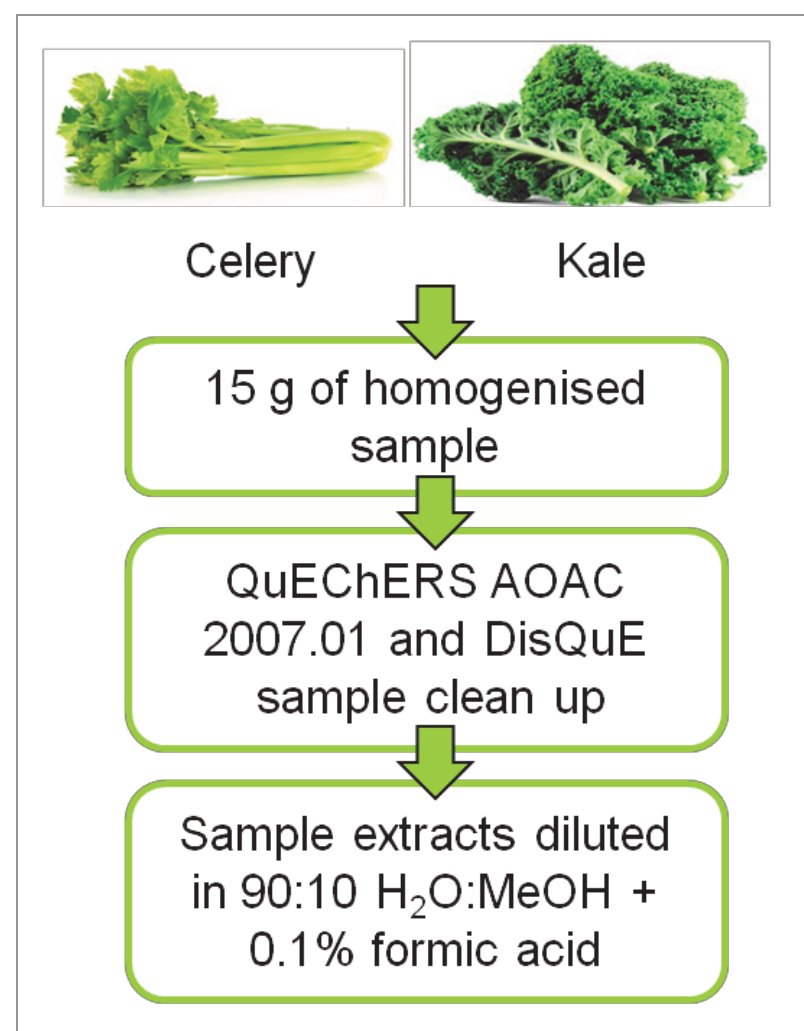


Figure 4. Overview of the sample extraction and clean up procedure used to prepare the sample matrices for analysis.

### LC-MS/MS Conditions

LC System: ACQUITY UPLC I Class

MS System: Xevo TQ-XS

Column: ACQUITY BEH C18 2.1 x 50 mm, 1.7um

Column Temperature: 45° C

Sample Temperature: 4° C

Flow Rate: 0.45 mL/min

Injection Volume: 10 µL

Mobile Phase A: Water + 0.1% formic acid + 0.05% ammonia

Mobile Phase B: Methanol + 0.1% formic acid + 0.05% ammonia

Gradient:

Time (min)	Flow (mL/min)	% A	% B
-	0.45	90	10
5	0.45	0	100
6	0.45	0	100
8	0.45	90	10

#### UniSpray

Impactor Voltage: 3 kV

Desolvation Temp: 300° C

Desolvation Flow: 1000 L/hr

Cone Flow: 600 L/hr

#### Electrospray

Capillary Voltage: 3kV

Desolvation Temp: 200° C

Desolvation Flow: 1000 L/hr

Cone Flow: 600 L/hr

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

GC analysis of pesticides like captan and folpet is often not repeatable as the pesticides degrade in GC splitless injections, as demonstrated in Figure 5a showing three consecutive GC injections of captan in matrix. Analysis using the LC-MS/MS methods developed using Electrospray (Figure 5b) and UniSpray (Figure 5c) was shown to be repeatable (n=25 injections). Linearity in matrix was excellent with  $R^2$  values > 0.995 for all pesticides in each matrix in the range of 0.005 - 0.100 mg/kg. Figure 6 demonstrates the linearity of captan in the kale matrix using both ESI and USI. Limits of detection were well within the required EU maximum residue level (MRL) of 0.030 mg/kg in kale and 0.060 mg/kg in celery (Table 1).<sup>4,5</sup> The methods proved to be robust as RSDs for 25 injections in matrix were < 10%. Figure 7 shows the trend of peak area and associated %RSD for folpet in 25 injections of kale. Although both LC-MS ionization techniques were robust, UniSpray ionization produced greater ionization, resulting in an increase of peak areas for all compounds. Figure 8 illustrates the peak areas for each compound normalized to UniSpray peak area in celery and kale matrix.

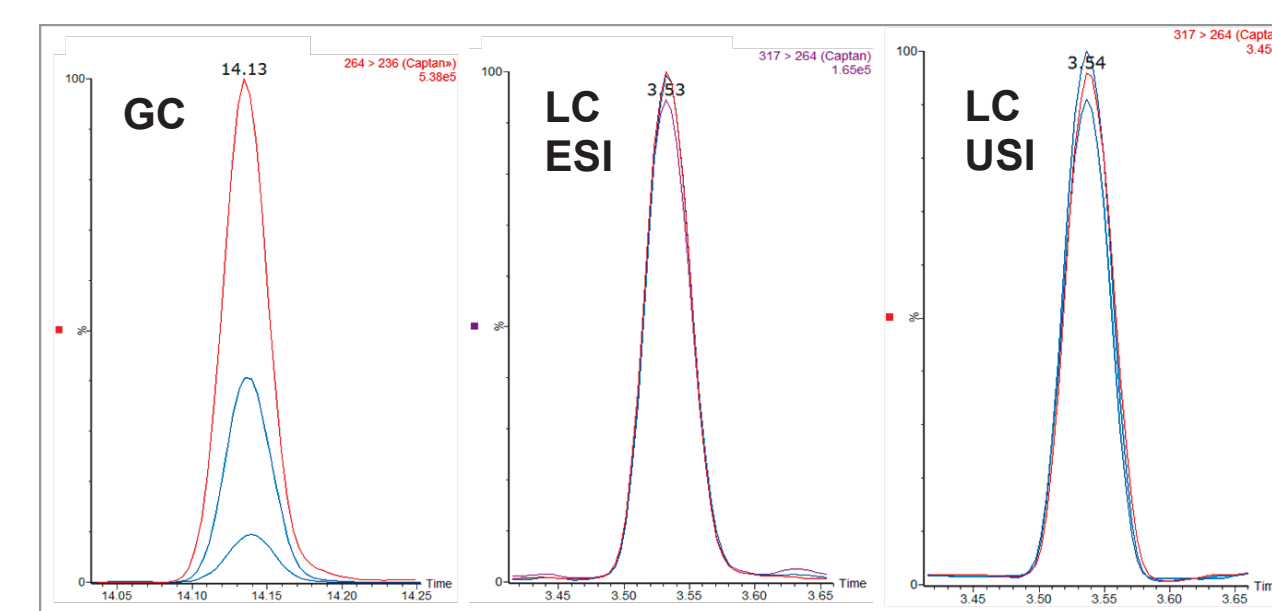


Figure 5. Three consecutive injections of captan in matrix on GC, Electrospray (LC ESI), and UniSpray (LC USI).

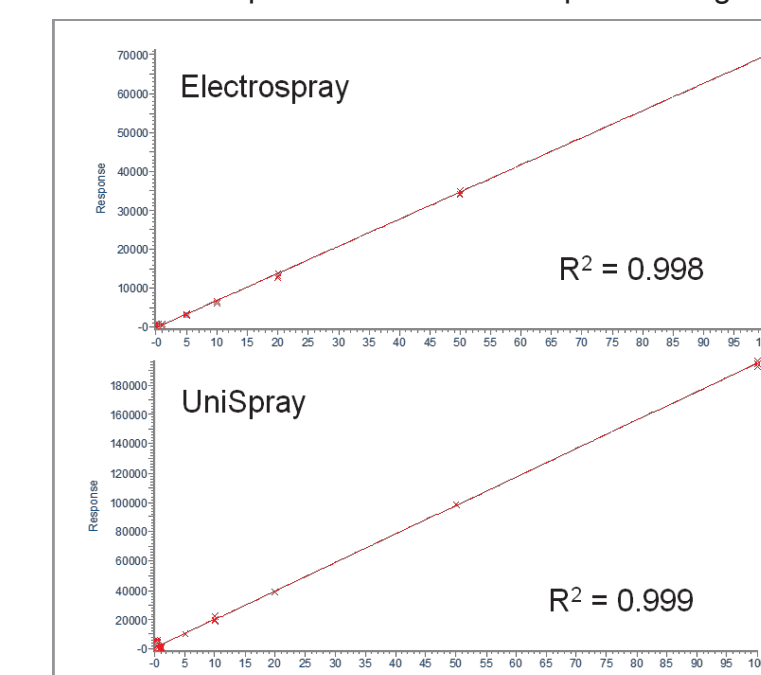


Figure 6. Kale matrix spiked calibration curves for ESI (top) and USI (bottom) ionization techniques.

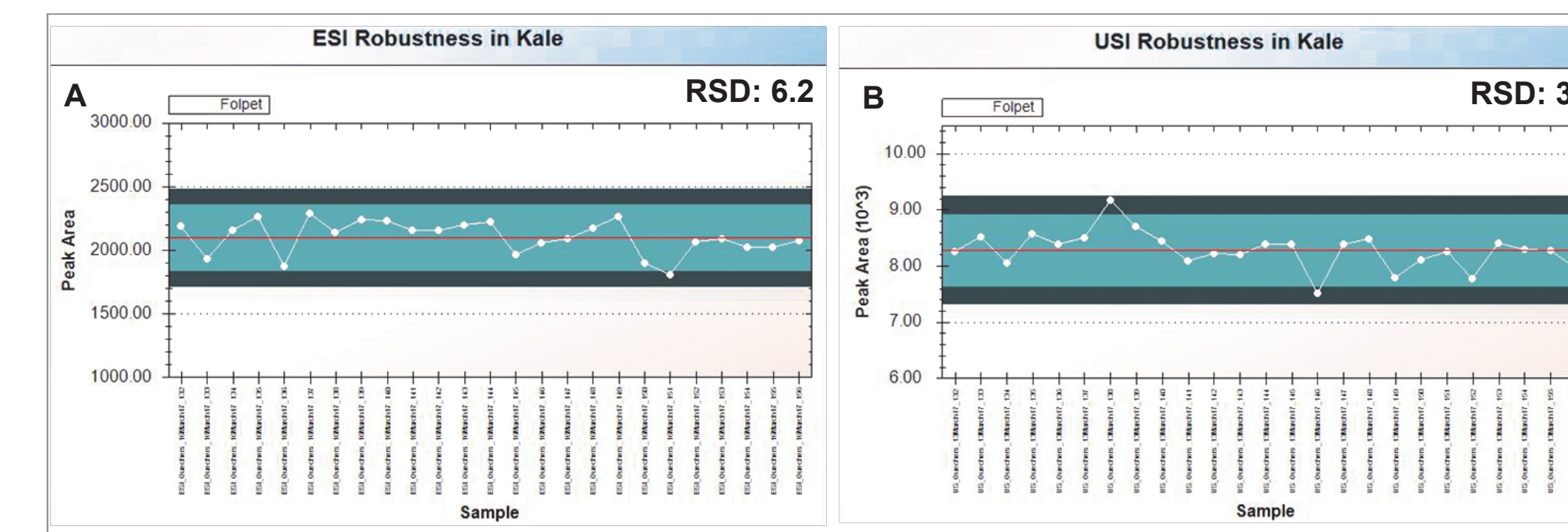


Figure 7. 25 injections of kale spiked with 0.010 mg/kg of folpet on (a) Electrospray and (b) UniSpray ionization techniques with associated RSD values. Red line indicates the mean, light blue shaded area represents +/- 2 standard deviations, dark blue shaded area represents +/- 3 standard deviations.

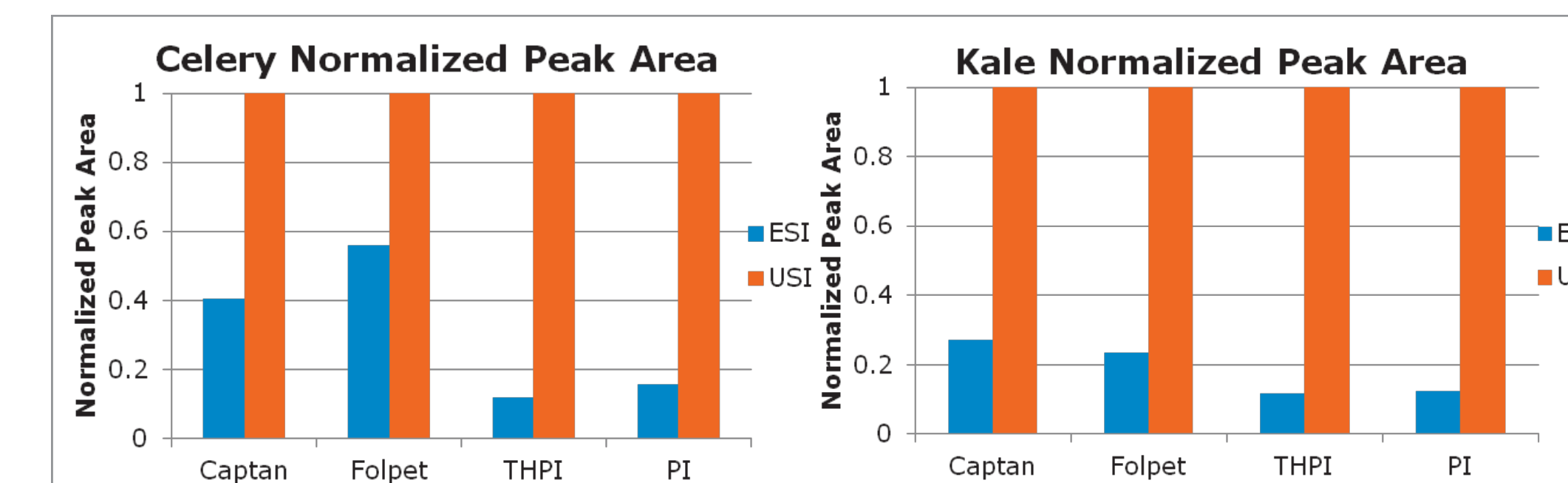


Figure 8. Comparison of the normalized peak areas of the pesticides in celery and kale matrices using Electrospray and UniSpray ionization.

	ESI LOD (ppb)		
	Solvent	Celery	Kale
Captan	0.5	0.5	1.0
Folpet	0.5	0.5	5.0
THPI	0.5	0.5	0.5
PI	5.0	5.0	5.0

	USI LOD (ppb)		
	Solvent	Celery	Kale
Captan	0.5	0.5	5.0
Folpet	0.5	5.0	0.5
THPI	0.1	0.5	0.5
PI	1.0	1.0	5.0

Table 1. Limit of Detections (LODs) of each pesticide in each matrix using both Electrospray and UniSpray ionization.

## CONCLUSIONS

- An LC-MS/MS method was developed for the analysis of thiophthalimide fungicides captan and folpet as well as their degradation products THPI and PI.
- The LC-MS/MS analysis of captan and folpet was repeatable using both Electrospray and UniSpray ionization techniques. Compound degradation did not occur during sample analysis as compared to GC-MS analysis of the same compounds.
- Electrospray and UniSpray ionization produced very robust options for analysis methods of captan and folpet with RSDs < 10% in all matrices analyzed.
- The novel UniSpray ionization source provided enhanced ionization of all compounds studied when compared to Electrospray ionization.
- Limit of detection for captan and folpet in matrix were well below the regulated limits.
- The methods developed provide a viable alternative for analysis of thiophthalimide fungicides using LC-MS that is much more robust than GC-MS analysis.

### References

1. A. Berthet, M. Bouchard, P. Schupfer, D. Vernez, B. Danuser, C.K. Huynh, 2011. Liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (LC/APCI-MS/MS) method for the quantification of captan and folpet phthalimide metabolites in human plasma and urine. *Anal Bioanal Chem*, 399.
2. A. Lubin, S. Bajic, D. Cabooter, P. Augustijns, F. Cuyckens, 2016. Atmospheric pressure ionization using a high voltage target compared to electrospray ionization. *J. Am. Soc. Mass Spectrom*, 28.
3. A. Lubin, R. De Vries, D. Cabooter, P. Augustijns, F. Cuyckens, 2017. Atmospheric pressure ionization source using a high voltage target compared to Electrospray ionization for the LC/MS analysis of pharmaceutical compounds. *J. Pharm. Biomed. Anal.*, 142.
4. European Union. Commission Regulation (EU) 2016/156. Amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards maximum residue levels for boscalid, clothianidin, thiamethoxam, folpet and tolfenox-methyl in or on certain products. 2016.
5. European Union. Commission Regulation (EU) 2016/452. Amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards maximum residue levels for captan, propiconazole and spiroxamine in or on certain products. 2016.