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Chemical Characterization of Oils and Fats from Amazonian Fruits by ^1H NMR

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Abstract: Native plants from the Brazilian Amazon Biome are rich in nutrients, oils and fats and, therefore, represent a very important regional food resource. Although there is a global interest in the nutritional potential of tropical fruits, the potential of Amazonian fruits as source of essential fatty acids is still underexploited, since their composition is still understudied. ^1H Magnetic Resonance Nuclear (^1H NMR) is a robust spectroscopic tool to profile fatty acids components in oils. The objectives of this work were to use ^1H NMR to determine the fatty acids profile and the physicochemical properties of crude oils and fats obtained from fruits of Brazilian Amazon: *açaí*, *ata-brava*, *bacaba*, *buriti*, *buritirana*, *murici amarelo*, *murici vermelho*, *piçaba braba*, *tucumanzinho*, *pupunha red* and *yellow varieties*. Oils were obtained by Soxhlet extraction using hexane as a solvent. After solvent removal by rotoevaporation, the resulting oils and fats were analyzed by ^1H NMR spectroscopy. Unsaturated fatty acids oleic ($\omega 9$), linoleic ($\omega 6$) and linolenic ($\omega 3$) acids were quantified in the oils and their physicochemical properties were determined. It was observed that the oils have predominately $\omega 9$ fatty acids, followed by $\omega 6$ and $\omega 3$ representatives. The physicochemical properties confirmed edibility and good quality of oils and fats present in the aforementioned Amazonian fruits.

Keywords: *Euterpe oleracea*; *Astrocaryum acaule*; *Mauritia aculeata*; *Mauritia flexuosa*; PUFA; MUFA

1. Introduction

Mediterranean diet is an icon of health food. This diet focuses on the abundant consumption of some fruits and vegetables along with use of olive oil as the main source of lipids. Exclusive olive oil consumption has been reported to be directly linked to lower risk of coronary artery disease [1]. Plants from Amazonian Region have a diversity of fruits like açai [2], bacaba [3-5], buriti [6-8], pupunha [3, 9, 10] that can be used as source of functional oils due to their high contents of phenolic compounds, as well as liposoluble vitamins and unsaturated fatty acids. Many of these fruits present pulp and seeds rich in oils [1] containing saturated and unsaturated fatty acids with nutritional value that may be comparable to ingredients of Mediterranean diet. However, the potential of Amazonian fruits as source of essential fatty acids is still underexploited.

Analysis of oil composition is traditionally carried out using chromatographic techniques such as gas chromatography (GC). Nevertheless very useful, this methodology requires hydrolysis of the triacylglycerides to release free fatty acids followed by fatty acids derivatization [11]. Complex sample handling and need of expensive derivatization agents are among the disadvantages of using GC for fatty acids analysis. Besides, sample cannot be recovered after the experiment. Fatty acids identification can also be carried out using Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR), a technique that preserves oils integrity and can be used to verify authenticity and quality of oils [12]. This technique speeds up control quality process since is able to analyze the oils without need of derivatization. In addition, sample can be recovered after the experiment and data obtained enable determining physicochemical properties of the oils [13, 14].

The aim of this work was to determine the contents of linolenic, linoleic and oleic acids as well as some physicochemical properties, iodine index (II), acidity (AI) and saponification index (SI) of Amazonian fruit oils and fats through ^1H NMR spectroscopy. Fruits studied were açai, *ata brava*, *bacaba*, *buriti*, *buritirana*, yellow *murici*, red *murici*, yellow and red *pupunha*, *piaçava brava* and *tucumanzinho*, shown in Figure 1.

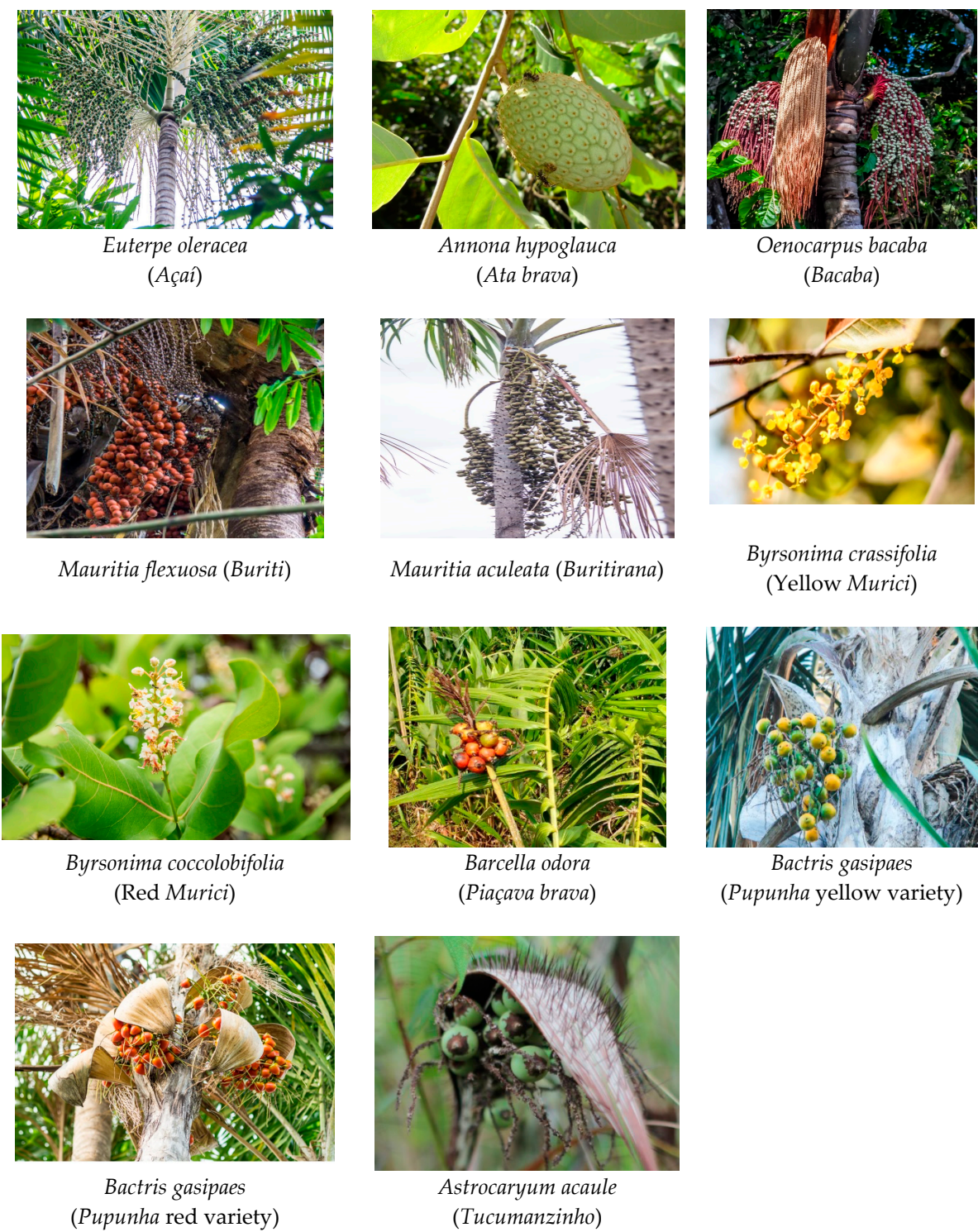


Figure 1. Amazonian fruits in Roraima state, Brazil (Pictures by R.C. Santos).

2. Results

All ^1H NMR spectra obtained for the oils can be found as Supplementary Materials (Figures S1-S10), except the spectrum of *Piaçava brava* oil, shown below (Figure 2).

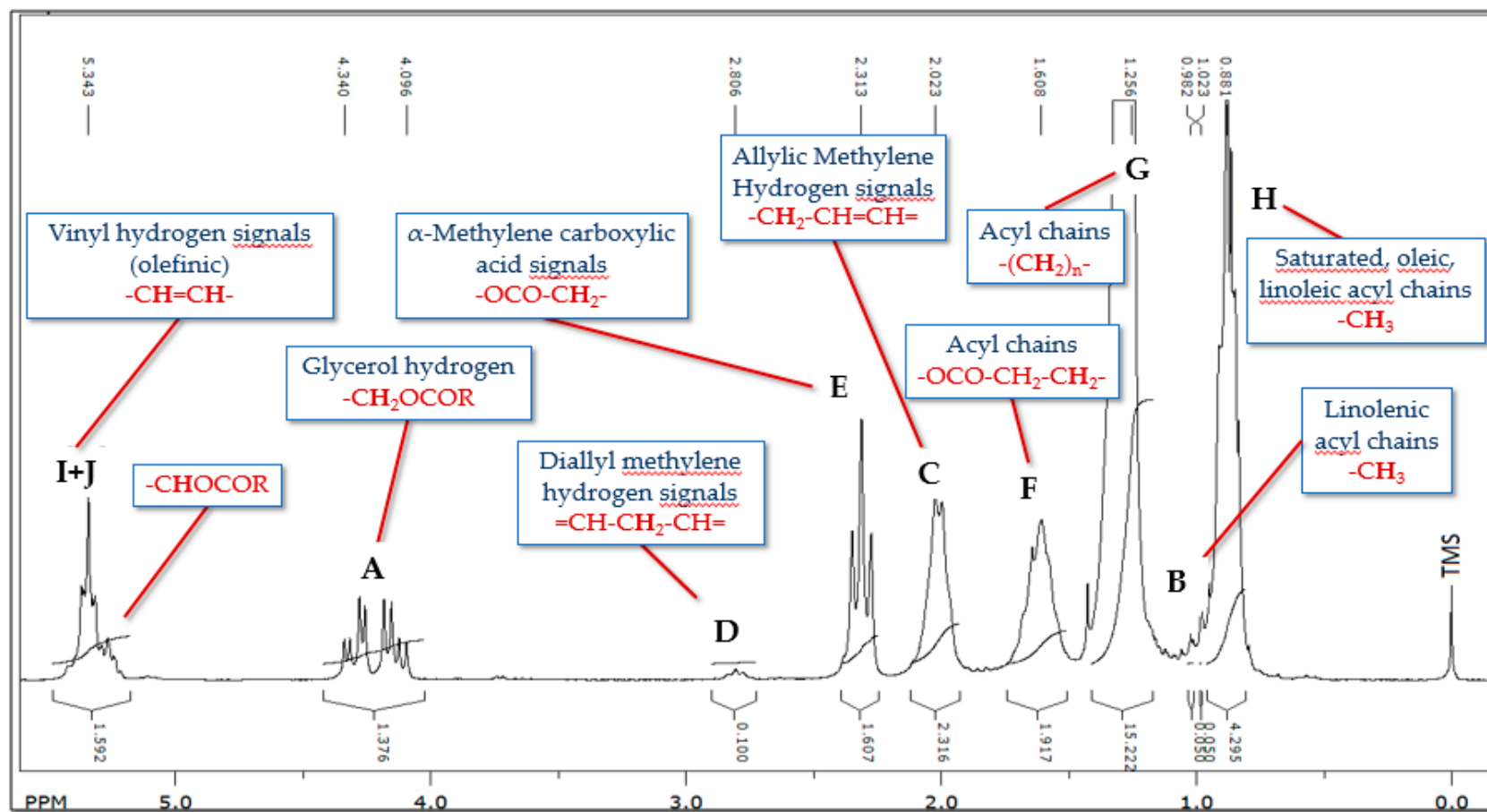


Figure 2. ^1H NMR spectrum from *Piaçava brava* oil in the region of 0-5.5 ppm (200 MHz, CDCl_3).

The major components of the oils present in the respective ^1H NMR spectra were used to quantify the amounts of linolenic, linoleic and oleic acids ($\omega 3$, $\omega 6$ and $\omega 9$, respectively) and to determine some physicochemical properties of such oils. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Linolenic, linoleic and oleic acids contents and physicochemical properties of oils present in Amazonian fruits as determined by ^1H NMR.

Amazonian fruits	Spectrum number	Concentration (%)			Physicochemical properties				
		$\omega 3$	$\omega 6$	$\omega 9$	II (g I ₂ 100 g ⁻¹)	AI (mg KOH g ⁻¹)	SI (mg KOH g ⁻¹)	MM (g mol ⁻¹)	R _{o,a}
<i>Ata brava</i>	S1	0.65	29.45	43.21	89.60	0.14	177.34	937.58	1.18
<i>Açaí</i>	S2	0.8	7.8	65.2	78.55	0.16	175.34	901.21	1.14
<i>Bacaba</i>	S3	0.56	4.33	44.78	63.62	0.19	212.67	787.73	0.84
<i>Buriti</i>	S4	1.00	2.91	67.14	71.85	0.10	206.62	813.42	0.94
<i>Buritirana</i>	S5	1.4	1.8	69.4	81.10	0.15	178.79	858.09	0.89
Yellow <i>Murici</i>	S6	0.31	29.89	38.07	90.27	0.15	207.68	808.89	1.19
Red <i>Murici</i>	S7	0.51	29.51	33.59	85.22	0.10	212.39	788.94	1.12
<i>Piaçaba brava</i>	Figure 2	1.62	1.60	52.88	63.62	0.19	227.76	723.73	0.84
Yellow <i>Pupunha</i>	S8	0.60	4.89	38.37	33.74	0.22	244.99	650.67	0.71
Red <i>Pupunha</i>	S9	2.44	10.66	26.18	70.47	0.12	168.63	974.50	0.91
<i>Tucumanzinho</i>	S10	0.67	2.61	75.38	84.24	0.09	178.24	956.65	1.10

Legend: $\omega 3$: Linolenic acid; $\omega 6$: Linoleic acid; $\omega 9$: Oleic acid; II: Iodine Index; AI: Acidity Index; SI: Saponification Index; MM: Average Molecular Mass; R_{o,a}: Olefinic/aliphatic Ratio. S1-S10: Supplementary materials are figures referring to the spectrum of each sample.

Oleic acid is an unsaturated fatty acid ($\omega 9$) and characteristic signals of its structure observed in the oils ^1H NMR spectra (Supplementary materials: Figures S1-S10) are in accordance with data described in the literature [15]. The contents of this acid, as estimated by the evaluation of corresponding signals in the NMR spectra of the oils analyzed, varied between 26.18% (Red *Pupunha*) to 75.38% (*Tucumazinho*) in samples studied (Table 1). This variation in oleic acid content, observed for oils of Amazonian fruits, was also observed for non-Amazonian fruit oils as reported by Guillén and Ruiz (2003) [15]. Concentration of $\omega 9$ in *tucumazinho* oil is comparable to the average concentration of olives residue oil (76%) and slightly lower than the average concentrations of monounsaturated extra virgin olive (80.8%), olive (79.4%), nut virgin (82.4%) and refined (78.1%) oils.

The benefits of oleic acid are reported to be associated to synergy with other components obtained from the diet when there is frequent consumption of olive oil (rich in oleic acid), fish (rich in linolenic acid) and red wine (or olives) (rich in polyphenols) [16, 17]. In addition, a great highlight is given to the presence of oleic acid in the diet, as it has been associated to beneficial effects on cancer [18], autoimmune [18] and rheumatic diseases [19], anti-inflammatory [20], beneficial effects on diabetes mellitus [21], reduction of coronary heart disease [16], among others. Lipidic macromolecules can be fragmented by the action of bile and pancreatic secretions, entering into the bloodstream [22]

Signals for linoleic acid [15], a polyunsaturated fatty acid ($\omega 6$) were detected in the ^1H NMR spectra obtained for the Amazonian oils (Figure 2 and S1-S10). Regarding to the contents of this component, the Amazonian fruits studied were classified in three groups: the first one, comprising samples with low yields of this fatty acid (*bacaba*, *buriti*, *buritirana*, *piçaba brava*, yellow *pupunha* and *tucumazinho* (values lower than 4.89%). The second class, with two representants, *açaí* (7.8%) and red *pupunha* (10.66%), with intermediate contents, and the third class, with the fruits with the most expressive amounts of linoleic acid: *ata brava* (29.45%), yellow *murici* (29.89%), and red *murici* (29.81).

The main importance of linoleic acid consumption relies in the reduction of cardiovascular risks. According to Poli and Visioli (2015) [23] the bigger consumption of $\omega 6$ fatty acids, the lower are the risks of cardiovascular diseases. Besides, linoleic acid has bioactivity on dermatitis and eczema, rheumatoid arthritis, premenstrual syndrome and prevention of stroke [24].

Regarding to the presence of linolenic acid ($\omega 3$) in the fruits studied, contents varied from 0.31 (yellow *murici*) to 2.44% (red *pupunha*) (Table 1). Low contents of oleic acid is common in several oils of vegetal origin [15], except for canola, soya, nuts and linseed. Simopoulos (2004) [25] cites a series of benefits attributed to $\omega 3$ fatty acids in the treatment of hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, coronary, autoimmune, inflammatory diseases among others.

Linoleic and linolenic acids are essential to human metabolism and must be obtained from the diet, since humans cannot endogenously synthesize them [26]. However, intake must be done in a balanced manner and so that the ingestion of $\omega 6$ is not very high, since excess is associated with cardiovascular and other diseases [27]. For this reason, FAO (2010) [28] recommends ingestion of $\omega 6$ between 2.5-9% and $\omega 3$ between 0.5-2%. Appropriate consumption of those fatty acids helps regulating the inflammatory process, oxidative stress and endothelial function [29].

Contents of unsaturated in the oils were confirmed by determining their iodine index (II), a parameter used to express the degree of unsaturation and the proportion of different acyl groups in the samples (Table 1). Levels of oleic, linoleic and linolenic acids found in the oils studied are in accordance with contents reported for non-Amazonian oils [15], as for linseed (183.1 g I₂ 100 g⁻¹), which is rich in linolenic acid (three unsaturations). For soy oil, the value reported for II is lower (127.6-129.9 g I₂ 100 g⁻¹), which is compatible with its major constituent (linoleic acid, two unsaturations). For olive oil, iodine index is lower (77.4-80.7 g I₂ 100 g⁻¹) since it is richer in the monounsaturated oleic acid.

R_{o,a} values (Table 1) of the Amazonian oils studied varied from 0.71 to 1.19, and are in accordance with data reported for vegetable oils, in which this value should not be inferior to 0.66 [30]. In this way, the values found in this work indicate that the fruits, already consumed in Roraima state (Brazil) are indeed adequate for human consumption. Carneiro, Reda and Carneiro

(2005) [30] report that this property can be used to measure the degree of unsaturation present in oils and fats, in addition to indicating the oxidation state of samples, the latter with more precision than the peroxide index.

Acidity index indicates the good quality in obtaining and handling the oil, as well as oil degradation and adulterated, so the value assigned to the index should be inferior than or equal to 0.8% for olive oils extra virgin. All values found (Table 1) are below this value [31].

In the saponification index, it is observed that the crude oils from the Amazon (Table 1) are in consonance, since the saponification index is inversely proportional to the average molecular weight of the fat (MW). This index is used to observe the size of the fatty acid chain [30].

Therefore, all of the physicochemical parameters determined by ^1H NMR indicated the quality of the edible oils and fats present in the fruits studied, and can be used to detect adulteration or oxidation. In addition this is a fast, practical and non-destructive technique for oils identification.

4. Materials and Methods

3.1. Samples preparation and oil obtaining

The fruits screened in this work *açaí* (pulp), *ata brava* (seeds), *bacaba* (green fruits pulp), *buriti* (pulp), *buritirana* (pulp), yellow *murici* (seeds), red *murici* (seeds), *piacaba braba* (pulp), *tucumanzinho* (pulp), red (pulp) and yellow *pupunha* (pulp) were obtained in different regions and in the market from Roraima State, Brazil.

The seeds and pulps were dried in an oven with circulating air at 50 °C for 48 h to remove the moisture. Then, the plant materials were milled and sieved (20-40 Mesh), for obtaining a homogenized powder that was extracted from hexane in a Soxhlet Extractor, to obtain the raw oils and fats. Solvent was removed on a rotoevaporador, the extracts were placed in amber bottles under nitrogen atmosphere until further analysis [32].

3.2. ^1H Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Spectroscopy

^1H NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker Avance DPX 200 spectrometer, operating 4.7 Tesla, corresponding to the resonance frequency of 200.13 MHz for the ^1H core, equipped with a direct detection probe head operating at 300 K. The samples were analyzed in 5 mm NMR tubes Wilmad®. NMR samples were prepared by dissolution of 0.5 mL of each oil in 0.6 mL of CDCl_3 . Chemical shifts are presented in ppm, using TMS as internal standard.

3.3. ^1H NMR spectra analyses

^1H NMR spectra of samples were processed in the software SpinWorks 4.2 [33]. Chemical shifts were analyzed according to Guillén and Ruiz (2003) [15] for non-Amazon fruits. The chemical shifts showed signs characteristic of the fatty acids before mentioned, and were used to calculate their physical properties. The following mathematical equations used to determine the amount in % of omegas 3, 6 and 9, as well as the physicochemical properties.

3.3.1 Determination of percent amount of omega 3 ($\omega 3$), 6 ($\omega 6$) and 9 ($\omega 9$)

To quantify the concentration of unsaturated fatty acids oleic, linoleic and linolenic acids according to the equations proposed by Garcia (2006) [34]. Calculi of percent amounts of $\omega 3$ (18:3), $\omega 6$ (18:2) and $\omega 9$ (18:1) of fatty acids, in Amazon fruits oils, were obtained based on characteristic NMR signals found in the ^1H NMR spectra and named A, B, C and D (Figure 2 and Supplementary materials: Figures S1-S10) according to methodology proposed in the literature [34].

Percentage of $\omega 3$ (18:3) (%): $[(B/A)/2.25].100$

where A: Glycerol hydrogen; B: Linolenic acid; 2.25: Maximum theoretical ratio of trilinolenin [34]

Percentage of $\omega 6$ (18:2) (%): $D = D_{18:3} + D_{18:2}RD_{18:3}/A = [(\%18:3)*3]/100$
 $[(D_{18:2}/A)/1.5]*100$

where D: Bis-allyl; 1.5: Maximum theoretical ratio of trilinolein [34]

Percentage of $\omega 9$ (18:1) (%): $C = C_{18:3} + C_{18:2} + C_{18:1}$

$$RD_{18:3}/A = [(\%18:3) \times 3]/100$$

$$D_{18:3} = (RD_{18:3}/A) \times ARC_{18:2}/A = [(\%18:2) \times 3]/100$$

$$C_{18:2} = (RC_{18:2}/A) \times A$$

$$C_{18:3} + C_{18:2} + C_{18:1}$$

$$[(C_{18:1}/A)/3] \times 100$$

Where C: Allylic hydrogen; 3: Maximum theoretical ratio of triolein [34]

3.3.2 Physicochemical Properties

The physicochemical properties according to the equations proposed by Carneiro, Reda and Carneiro (2005) [30] and Garcia (2006) [34], as Iodine Index (II), Saponification Index (SI), Acidity Index (AI) and Proportion of olefinic/aliphatic hydrogen atoms ($R_{o,a}$). In the following equations, A, B, C..., and K correspond to the value of the integral of the corresponding signal in the NMR spectra.

3.3.2.1 Iodine Index (II)

From the data provided in the 1H NMR spectra it was possible to calculate the molecular weight (MW) ($g\ mol^{-1}$) and thus the iodine index. The iodine index parameter indicates the presence of double bonds in oils and fats, and may be expressed in grams of iodine which will react with the double bonds in 100 grams of sample ($g\ I_2\ 100\ g^{-1}$):

$$II = \frac{126.91 \times 100 \times V}{MW} \quad (1)$$

Where the value of 126.91 is related to the atomic mass of iodine; V corresponds to the vinyl protons and can be calculated using equation 2:

$$V = \frac{(Q + K) - Ap}{Ap} \quad (2)$$

Where Ap corresponds to the integral of one hydrogen and is calculated using equation 3:

$$Ap = \frac{(I + H)}{4} \quad (3)$$

3.3.2.2 Saponification Index (SI)

The saponification index represents the number of milligrams of potassium hydroxide per gram of Amazonian oil ($mg\ KOH\ g^{-1}$):

$$SI = [MW \times (-0.2358)] + 398.42 \quad (4)$$

$$MW = 119.7 + (7.036 \times T) + (5.983 \times V) \quad (5)$$

$$T \text{ (Total hydrogen area)} = \frac{(I + D) + A + B + D + E + C + F + G + (H + H)}{Ap} \quad (6)$$

Where the value of 398.42 is relative to the average mass of the fatty acids.

3.3.2.3 Acidity Index (AI)

This parameter is calculated in order to get the acidity index of vegetable oils. This parameter also indicates the degree of unsaturation and oxidative condition of the oil, being more accurate than the peroxide index [30].

$$AI = 3.0597 \times (R_{o,a})^2 - 6.3181 \times (R_{o,a}) + 3.3381 \quad (7)$$

3.3.2.4 Proportion between olefinic and aliphatic hydrogen atoms ($R_{o,a}$)

The $R_{o,a}$ property verifies the ratio of olefinic to aliphatic hydrogen atoms, so it can be used to measure the degree of unsaturation present in oils and fats, in addition to indicating the oxidation of samples:

$$R_{o,a} = \frac{V}{A+B} \quad (8)$$

5. Conclusions

The Amazonian crude oils and fats herein studied presented high concentrations of $\omega 9$ fatty acids, followed by small concentrations of $\omega 3$ and $\omega 6$. *Tucumanzinho* presented $\omega 9$ contents close to that of olive oil, indicating that this oil can offer many benefits to the human health. As for the physical-chemical characterization, all samples are within the allowed values for human consumption.

This study shows that Amazonian biodiversity is able to provide fruits with essential fatty acids. This knowledge may contribute to the popularization of the consumption of exotic fruits, as part of a health diet or as components of novel gastronomic dishes inspired in healthy fruits.

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Conflicts of Interest: These authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Sample Availability: Samples of the compounds are available from the authors.

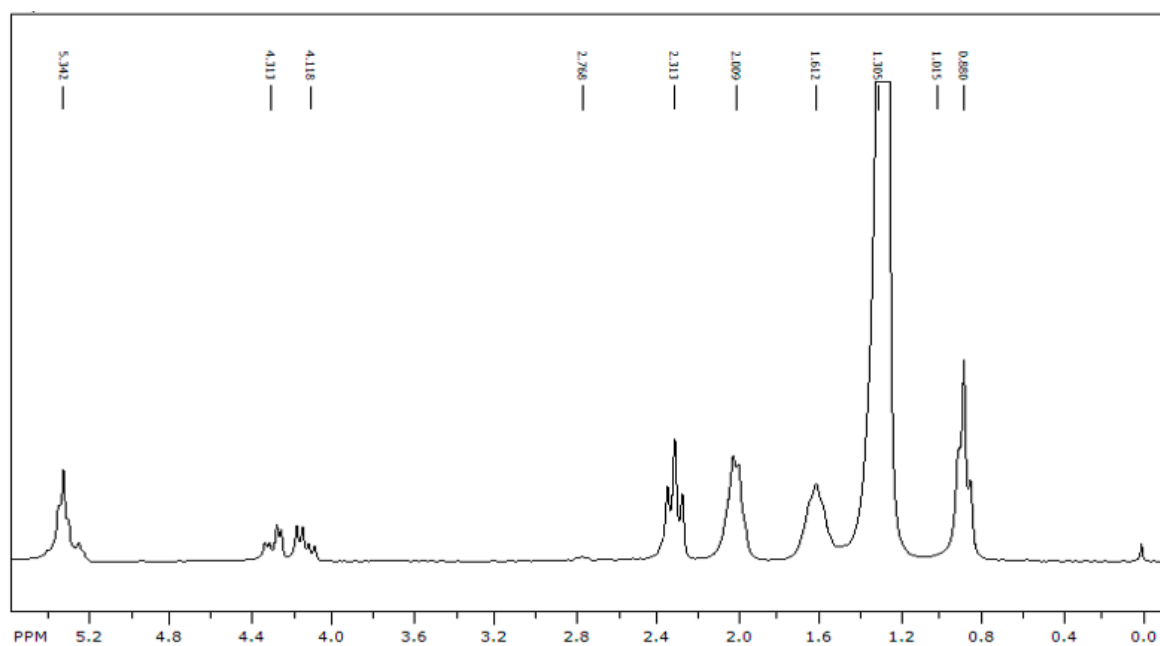
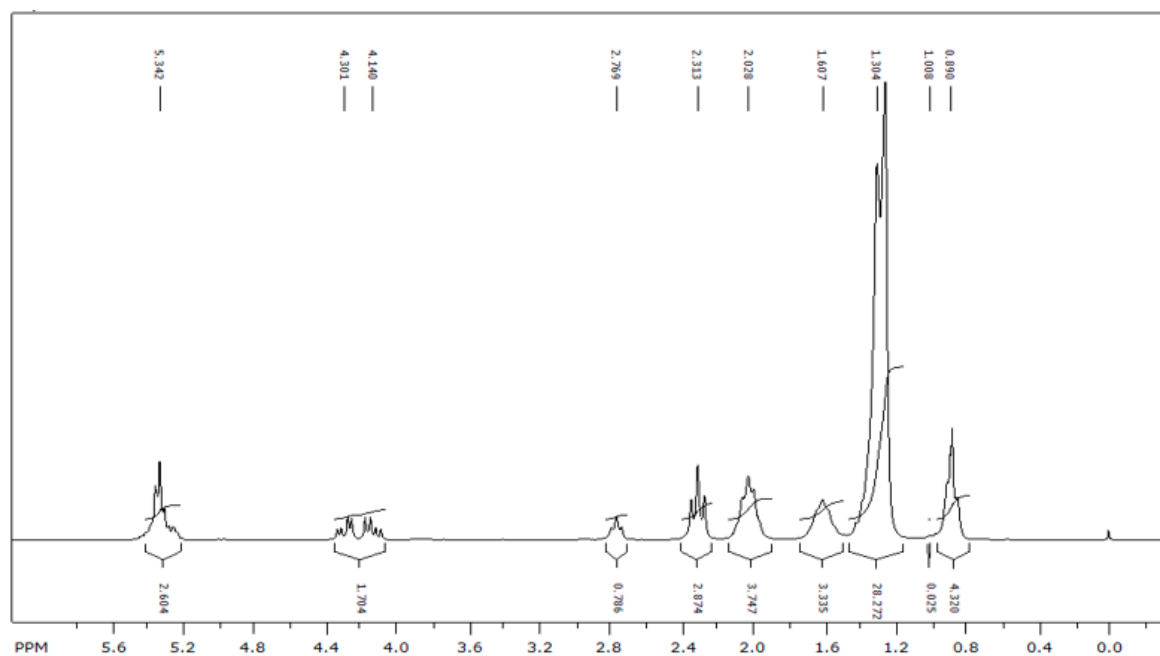
Supplementary Materials – ^1H NMR spectra (200 MHz, CDCl_3) of Amazonian oilsFigure S1. *Açaí* (*Euterpe oleracea*)Figure S2. *Ata Brava* (*Annona hypoglauca*)

Figure S3. *Bacaba* (*Oenocarpus bacaba*)

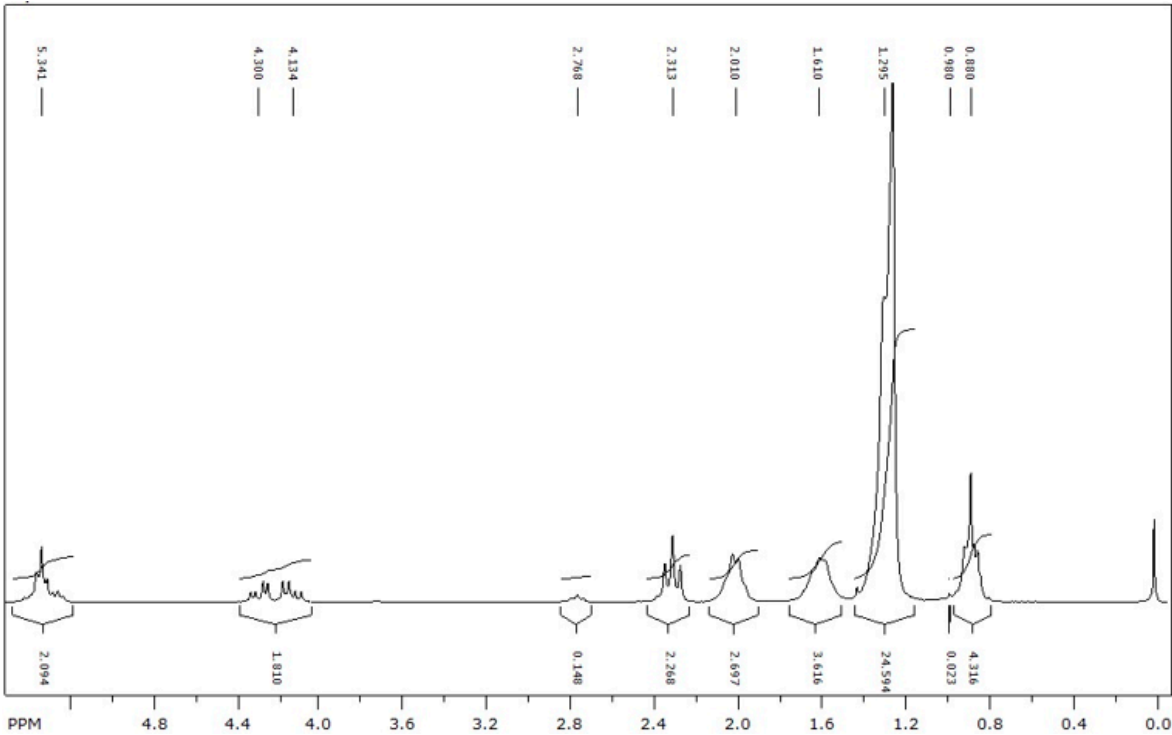


Figure S4. *Buriti* (*Mauritia flexuosa*)

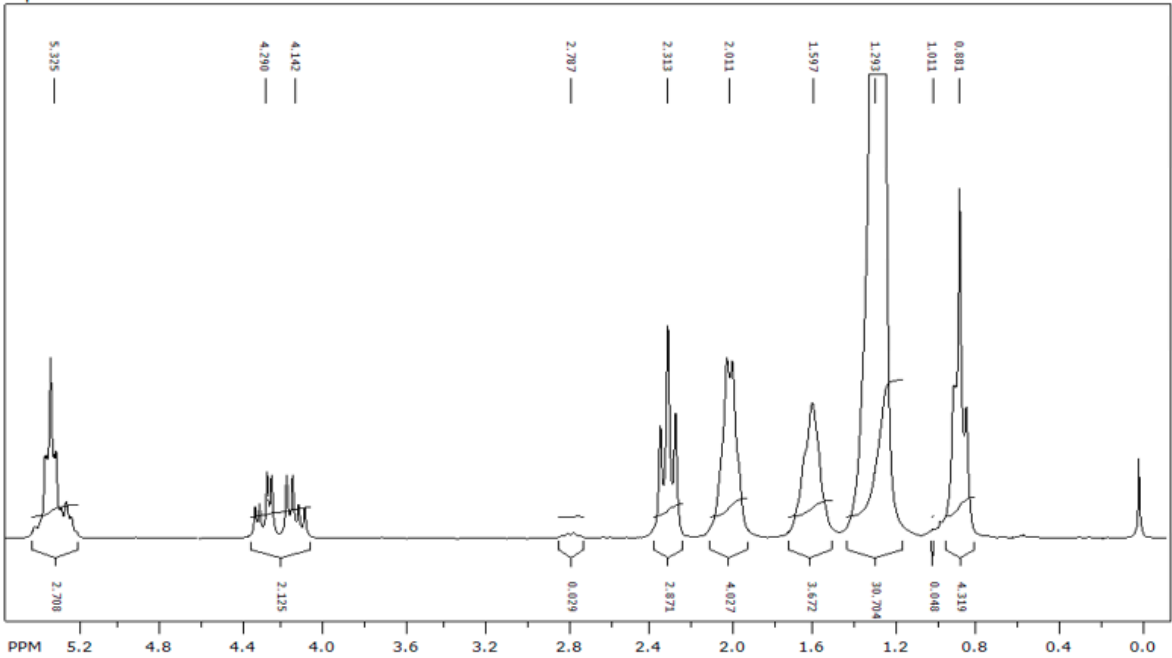


Figure S5. *Buritirana* (*Mauritia aculeata*)

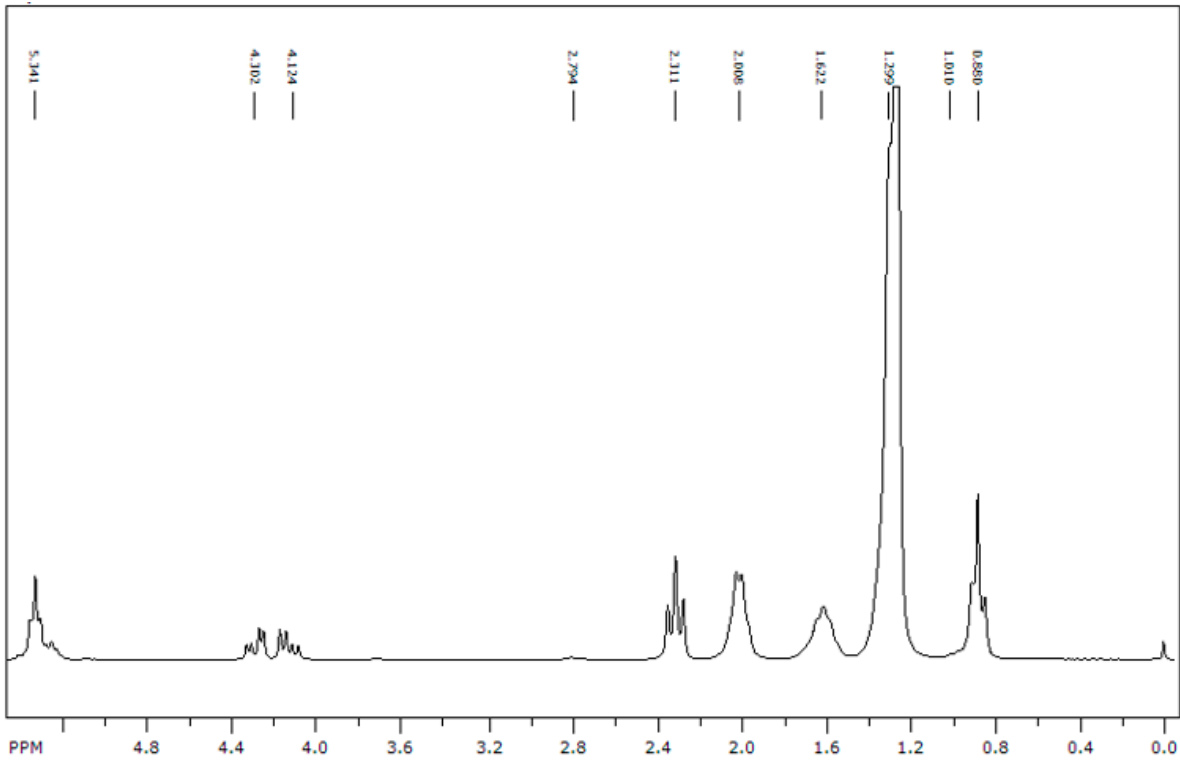


Figure S6. Yellow *Murici* (*Byrsonima crassifolia*)

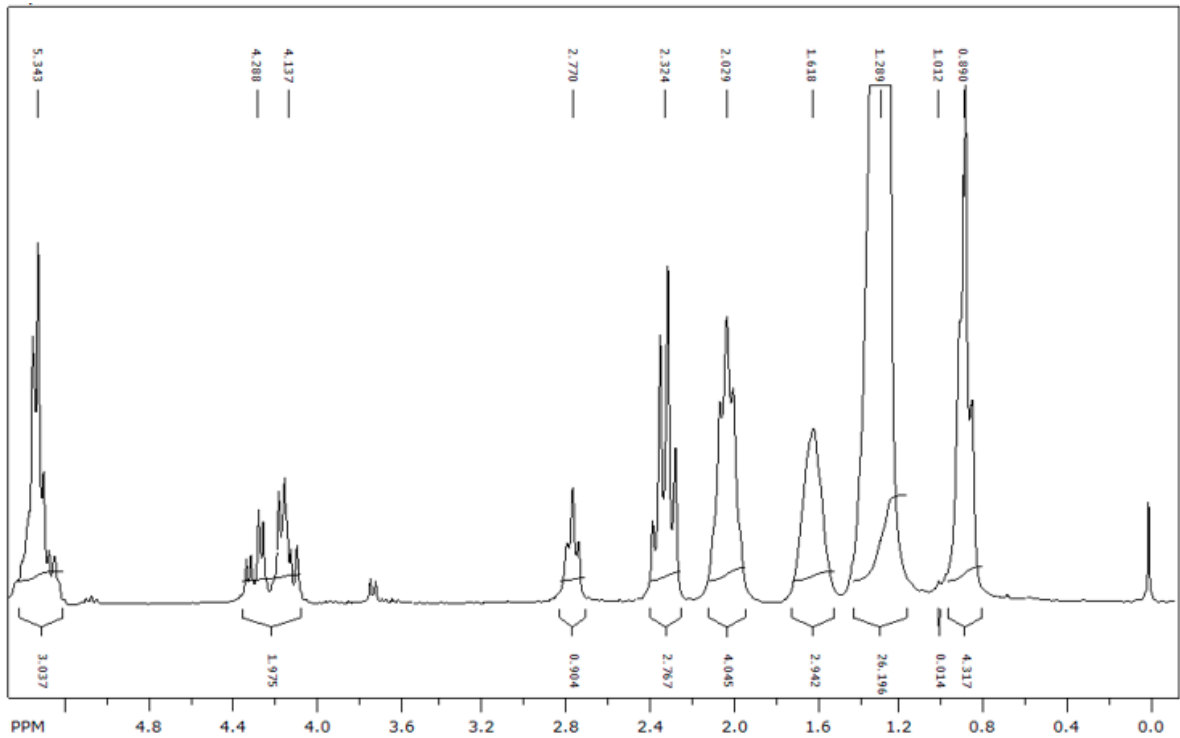


Figure S7. Red Murici (*Byrsonima coccolobifolia*)

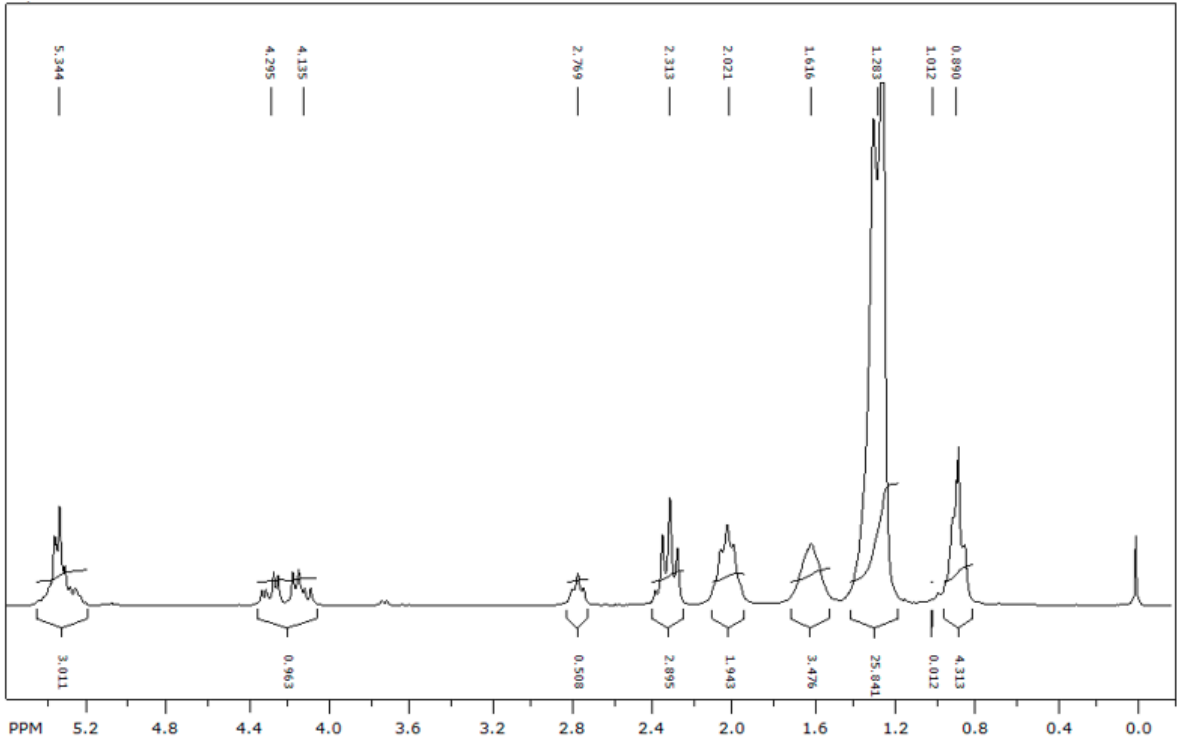


Figure S8. Red Pupunha (*Bactris gasipaes*)

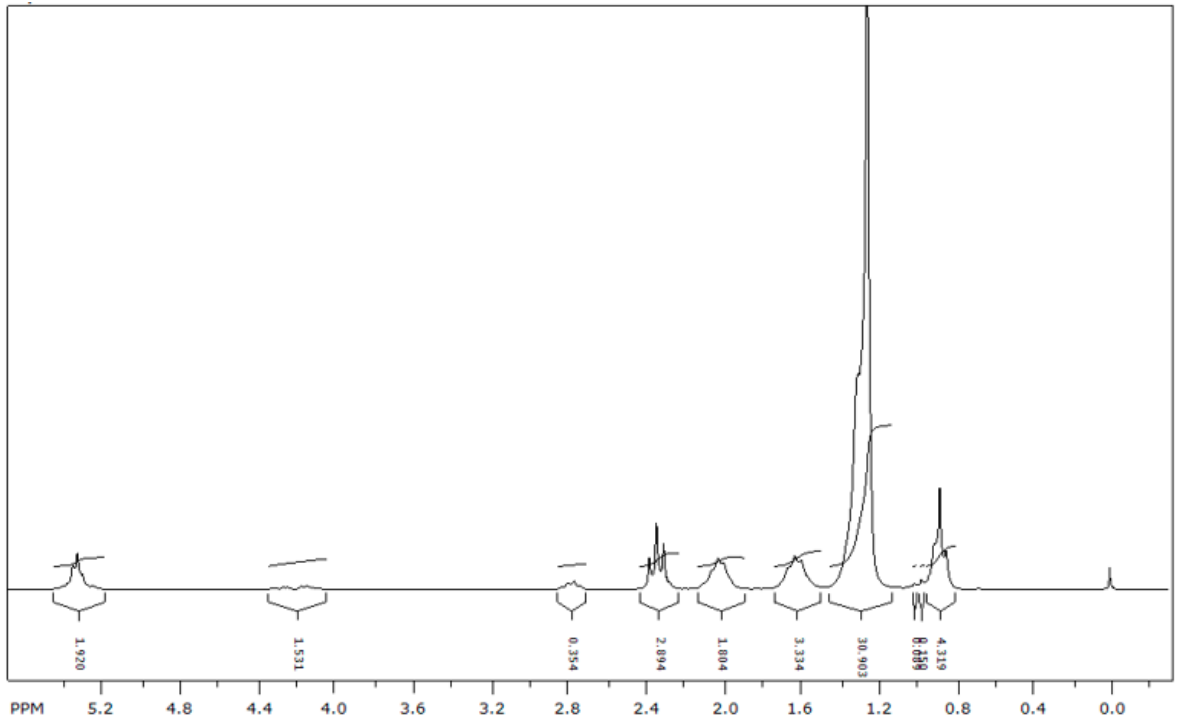


Figure S9. Yellow *Pupunha* (*Bactris gasipaes*)

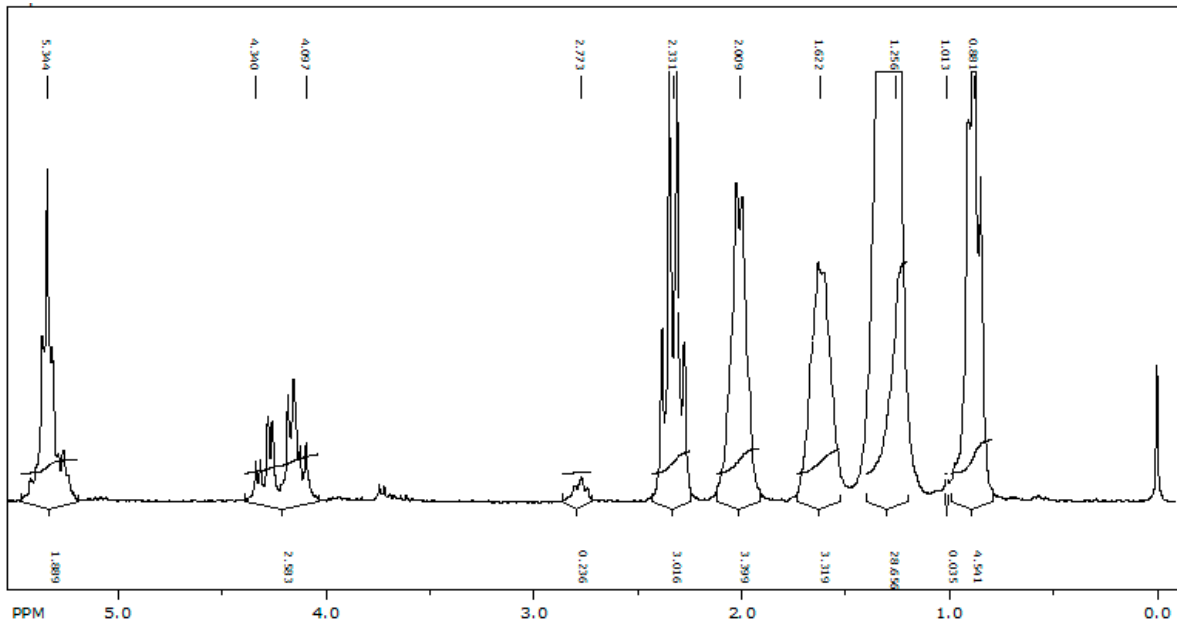


Figure S10. *Tucumanzinho* (*Astrocaryum acaule*)

