**Colonization potential of the selected endophytes**

The isolates were tested for their colonization efficiency according to Chen et al. (1995) with modifications. The isolates were allowed to grow on tryptic soy agar (TSA) supplemented with rifampicin (100 µg/ml). The colonies were transferred five times on the rifampicin containing media. The then developed rifampicin resistant mutants were then used for seed priming. Surface sterilized tomato seeds were soaked in bacterial cell suspension with a final concentration of approximately 108 CFU per seed and were incubated for 24 h at 28 ± 2 °C. They were transferred to paper cups containing sterile soil. Seeds treated with sterile distilled water (SDW) served as control. After 60 days of growth, endophytic bacteria were isolated from roots and stems and according to method described by Hallman et al., 1997 and Sturz et al.,1998 on TSA supplemented with rifampicin. The colonies growing were selected. The whole experiment was repeated thrice.