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Beta Glucan: A Valuable Functional Ingredient in Foods

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Beta Glucan: A Valuable Functional Ingredient in Foods

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HAQ NAWAZ,3 and SYED MUHAMMAD RAIHAN DILSHAD4

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β-Glucan is a valuable functional ingredient and various extraction techniques are available for its extraction. Choice of an appropriate extraction technique is important as it may affect the quality, structure, rheological properties, molecular weight, and other functional properties of the extracted β-glucan. These properties lead to the use of β-glucan into various food systems and have important implications in human health. This review focuses on the extraction, synthesis, structure, molecular weight, and rheology of β-glucan. Furthermore, health implications and utilization of β-glucan in food products is also discussed.

Keywords β-glucan, dietary fiber, functional foods, extraction methods

INTRODUCTION

Cereal grains produce a one seeded dry fruit called a caryopsis, more commonly called kernel or grain. Nutritionally these grains are a good source of carbohydrates, lipids, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and other minor components (Evers and Millart, 2002). Beta glucan is one type of valuable dietary fiber present in cereal crops, especially in barley, oat, and some mushrooms. An updated definition of dietary fiber was presented by the AACC committee in the year 2001 which reported that dietary fiber is the edible plant parts and analogous carbohydrates that offer some resistance to digestion and absorption in the human small intestine but partial or complete fermentation may occur in the large intestine (DeVries, 2001). The Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) illustrated that the current definition of dietary fiber should include both edible plant and animal material. However, most of the recent literature supported that the dietary fiber originate from plants. It was recommended by this Committee that the definition of dietary fiber should be amended to the current definition. (WHO, 2001). The WHO representative offered a new concept of dietary fiber that introduces the idea of intrinsic and added fiber (WHO, 2003). The National Academy of Science proposed that total fiber is the sum of dietary fiber and functional fiber. Whereas, dietary fiber is a complex of nondigestible carbohydrates and lignin associated with plants, functional fiber is actually the type of nondigestible carbohydrates having beneficial physiological effects in humans. (Tungland and Meyer, 2002)

Most of the definitions of dietary fiber were based on the physiological characteristics of non-digestion and non-absorption in the small intestine, together with some desirable health benefits. A latest and comprehensive definition of dietary fiber was proposed by CCNFSDU and by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC, 2006). This definition declares that dietary fiber are carbohydrate polymers with at least a degree of polymerization of about three, and these are deprived of the ability to digest or be absorbed in the small intestine. According to this definition, naturally occurring edible carbohydrate polymers in food, physically, chemically, and enzymatically altered carbohydrate polymers are included in the group of dietary fiber. Furthermore, synthetic carbohydrate polymers were also covered by this definition (CAC, 2006).

β-glucan is the principal fiber present in barley and oat. Although barley is an excellent source of β-glucan, yet on a worldwide basis, a limited amount of the barley is also used as a source of β-glucan in various foods for human consumption but the major quantities of barley are used for animal feed (FAO,
Owing to its importance the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allowed its use in food products and made it obligatory for labeling requirement to acquire health claim. It was also recommended that a diet high in soluble fiber from whole oats (oat bran, oatmeal, and oat flour) should be used to reduce the risk of heart disease (FDA, 1996). In its proposal FDA evaluated several studies for the consumption of oat products, for example, muffins, breads, shakes, and entrées. On the basis of these studies, a daily dose of at least 3 g of β-glucan from oats was recommended to achieve a clinically relevant decrease in serum total cholesterol (FDA, 1996; 1997). Extraction of β-glucan is a difficult job and requires special attention to produce consistent raw material. Future research should be focused on exploring the possibility of β-glucan incorporation into meat, beverage, dairy, vegetables, salads, cheese, and cereal-based food systems. Specifically, attention must be paid to determine the effect of process parameters on the rheology, viscosity, gel formation, molecular weight profiles of β-glucan, and efficacy study of β-glucan containing products. The outcome of such research will be helpful in extending our knowledge as to how β-glucan can affect the nutritional characteristics of foods by altering their viscosity, rheology, texture, and structure (Brennan and Cleary, 2005). The purpose of this review is to gather information about β-glucan synthesis, its structure, sources, rheological properties, and extraction methods. Furthermore, the role of β-glucan in promoting physiological health and suitability of β-glucan for incorporation into various food systems will also be discussed.

**β-GLUCAN SYNTHESIS**

The enzymes endo-β-glucosyltransferases help in synthesis of β-glucan molecules through catalyzation of reactions that in turn catalyze the self-condensation of sugar donors for the in vitro synthesis of a regular polysaccharide. The specificity of the enzyme allowed the polymerization of α-laminaribiosyl fluoride via the formation of (1→4)-β-linkages to yield a new linear crystalline (1→3) (1→4)-β-D-glucan with a repeating 4-glucose and 3-glucose units (Magda et al., 2004). However, the mechanism may vary from species to species. Calcium promoted β-glucan synthase activity and promotion was also observed at free calcium concentrations (Paliyath and Poovaiah, 1988). Endo-β- (1→3) (1→4)-glucanase is a thermo-stable enzyme and develops during the germination of barley; this is the major enzyme associated with degradation of the β-glucan molecule after synthesis of β-glucan thereby controlling the length and the molecular weight of β-glucan in cereal crops (Hrmova et al., 1997). While in microorganisms (in vivo) a different situation exists, the structure of β-glucan is engineered under strict control of genes. To understand this structural phenomenon, two genes, KRE6 and SKN1 of Saccharomyces cerevisiae, were characterized. The characterization of these gene products broadens previous knowledge about genetic studies on their role in (1→6)-β-glucan biosynthesis (Roemer and Bussey, 1991). During synthesis of β-glucan from yeast KRE6 encodes a predicted type II membrane protein. SKN1 and KRE6 define a pair of functional homologs encoding putative membrane proteins involved in beta-glucan synthesis. These genes are responsible for encoding of phosphorylation of membrane glycoproteins, and these genes reside in some part of the Golgi apparatus. Their role was more manifested when both of these genes were deleted as a result of disorganization in the cell wall ultrastructure (Roemer et al., 1993). Another gene, PKC1, potentially participates in cell wall assembly by regulating the synthesis of cell wall components, including (1→6)-β-glucan (Levin and Bartlett-Heubusch, 1992).

**Structure of β-Glucan**

β-Glucan is the predominant non-starch polysaccharide of cell walls in cereal grains such as barley and oats (Buckneridge et al., 2004; Wood, 1993; Izydorczyk et al., 2003). Structurally, cereal grains consist of long linear chains of glucose having β-(1→3) and β-(1→4)-linkages but these linkages are not arranged in a random and repeating fashion (Staudte, et al., 1983; Ayhan, 2005). However, β-glucan from baker’s yeast has a different type of linkage; it consists of β-(1→3) as well as (1→6) linkages (Gardiner, 2004). In cereals, β-glucan (1→4)-linkages occur in groups of two to four while (1→3)-linkages occur singly. This leads to a structure that is dominated by β-(1→3)-linked cellotriosyl and cellotetraosyl units (Woodward, et al., 1983; Wood et al., 1994; Wood, 2001). The rest of the structure consists of longer blocks of 4–15 (1→4)-linked β-D-glucopyranosyl units (Wood et al., 1994). The structure of β-glucan resembles that of cellulose, the only difference being that the β-(1→3)-linkages establish a twist in the chain. This twist phenomenon gives stability to β-glucan and lessens its affinity to form aggregates, thus the solubility of β-glucan is greatly affected by such a trend. A lot of investigations are still required to determine the rationale of β-glucan solubility and its interaction with these linkages. However, some previous research predicts that longer sequences of (1→4)-linkages give less soluble β-glucans because of close intermolecular associations (Woodward et al., 1983). However, Izawa et al. (1993) were of the view that β-(1→4)-linkages had an insignificant influence on solubility as compared to that of long blocks of contiguous cellotriosyl residues. More recent data also holds up this assumption about structural regularity and gives an idea about how a high level of β-(1→3) linked cellotriosyl units reduces solubility and increases the tendency to gel (Böhme and Kulicke, 1999; Cui and Wood, 2000). On average, two or three (1→4)-linked units exist and these are separated by a single (1→3)–linkage in a molecule. However, there is still a chance of longer units linked through (1→4)-linkages (Cui, et al., 2000; MacGregor and Rattan, 1993). Like β-glucan, the arabinoxylans also have a backbone of (1→4)-linked β-D-xylpyranosyl units. Some of these may substitute at position 2 and/or 3 with a-L-arabinofuranosyl (Dervilly et al., 2002; Han, 2000). In
barley kernel it may present in the amounts of 3–11% (Han and Schwarz, 1996; Jadhav et al., 1998; Lehtonen and Aikasalo, 1987). The action of lichenase release, the main structural repeating units of β-D-glucans, as 3-O-β-D-cellobiosyl-D-glucose (trisaccharide unit) and 3-O-β-D-cellobiosyl-D-glucose (tetrasaccharide unit). The property of water solubility is attributed to the introduction of (1→3)-linkages in a cellulosic chain (Irakli et al., 2004). The degree of branching is negatively correlated with arabinoxylans (AX) and, similar negative correlation found between β-glucan and arabinoxylan contents; whereas, a strong positive correlation also exists between β-glucan and the amount of soluble non-starch polysaccharides (NSP) and protein contents was reported by Holtekjølen et al. (2006). Higher amounts of β-glucan have also been reported in waxy and the high amylose genotypes as compared to the normal genotypes (Anker-Nilsen et al., 2006).

**Extraction of β-glucan**

A range of extraction and purification techniques are available for extraction of β-glucan. This may include hot water extraction (Smiderle et al., 2006; Ahmad et al., 2009), solvent extraction (Bhatti, 1993), enzymatic extraction (Irakli et al., 2004; Ahmad et al., 2010), and alkali extraction (Wei et al., 2006).

Indigenous enzymes may affect the recovery and properties of the extracted β-glucan. The major indigenous enzyme responsible for hydrolyzing the β-glucan component in cereal is an endo-β-(1→3)(1→4)-glucanase, which develops during the germination of cereal crops (Hrmova et al., 1997). Several other enzymes such as endo-xylanases, arabinofuranosidase, xyloacetylerase, and feruloyl esterase are also involved in the release of β-glucan from various sources. The relatively faster release of glucan was reported by two endo-xylanase preparations, although the most extensive release of glucan was observed by an endo-β-glucanase. The latter released 90% of the glucan above which was extracted by water alone (Kanauchil and Bamforth, 2001). Furthermore, two esterases were capable of extracting glucan to a more limited extent, one of them hydrolyzing acetyl groups associated with xylan, the other breaking ferulic acid ester bonds. The latter are associated more with arabinoxylan rather than β-glucan (Ahluwalia and Fry, 1986). However, this would not confound the argument that hydrolysis of arabinoxylans enables the solubilization of β-glucan. These enzymes can be used alone but better results were observed when these enzymes were used in combination at various levels (Kanauchil and Bamforth, 2001). During the extraction process an appreciable amount of arabinoxylan is also extracted along with β-glucan. The presence of arabinoxylan may contribute hindrances in filtration, extraction, and add haze during the brewing process (Jadhav et al., 1998; MacGregor and Rattan, 1993). These polysaccharides, if not extracted from animal feed, may pose some problems in such feed. The major drawback reported in animal feed is that it reduces the nutritive value of the feed. Other problems associated with these substances are sticky feces in poultry birds (Jadhav et al., 1998; MacGregor and Rattan, 1993; Svilhus et al., 1995). Various extraction and purification techniques used for the extraction of β-glucan from their respective sources and the salient features of the extracted product are reviewed in Table 1.

**Molecular Weight of β-Glucan**

Size exclusion chromatography presents a better way to determine the molecular weight and size (radius of gyration) of β-glucan and like polysaccharides (Lazaridou et al., 2003). This technique is used in combination with various detectors such as refractive index detection (HPSEC-RI), multi-angle laser light scattering (MALLS), or with right angle light scattering combined with or without a viscosity (HPSEC-RI-RALLS-Visc) detector (Wei et al., 2006; Irakli et al., 2004). These detectors may be used alone or in combination with each other. Researchers had also used light scattering techniques to determine molecular weights and mean square radius without employing reference standards (Wyatt, 1993). Some researchers have preferred the use of refractive index detector to determine the molecular weight (Jackson and Barth, 1995). Light scattering from multiple angles (MALLS) is another option that can be used to determine the average molecular weight. RI-Visc measures the intrinsic viscosity, and this is used in situations where the concentration of the test material is low (White, 1999). On the other hand, SEC-RI-MALLS use is confined for the average molecular weight. In size exclusion chromatography, it is assumed that each slice of a chromatogram contains molecules of a very narrow molecular weight distribution (Irakli et al., 2004). Polysaccharides in cell walls consist of varying chain length and molecular weight. In such molecules the polydispersity can be calculated from the ratio of average molecular size to number average molecular weight. The average molecular weight is influenced by the presence of size of the larger molecules, while the number of the average molecular weight is strongly influenced by the presence of small molecules. For a monodisperse polymer, the average molecular weight equals number average molecular weight giving a polydispersity of 1, all molecules thus having identical molecular weights. (Cui and Wood, 2000; Wei et al., 2006). The calcoflour method is another procedure used to determine molecular weight of β-glucan. This process works on specific binding of Calcoflour to polysaccharide thus forming a glucan-Calcofluor complex that results in increased fluorescence intensity and can be detected by a fluorescence detector (Trogh et al., 2004; Wood, 1980). Such binding results in an increase in fluorescence intensity that is proportional to the concentration of β-glucan in solutions. This technique was initially employed to quantify β-glucan (Wood and Weisz, 1984; Mekis et al., 1987; Jørgensen, 1988) but today this technique along with size-exclusion chromatography (SEC) is used for molecular weight determination of β-glucan. Table 2 illustrates a brief review of various techniques used for molecular weight determination of β-glucan and like polysaccharides (Lazaridou et al., 2003). 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<td>Candida bohidinii</td>
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<td>Barley</td>
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<td>Storsley et al., 2003</td>
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</table>

(Continued on next page)
determination of β-glucan. Furthermore, molecular weights of various β-glucan products from their respective sources are also presented.

**Glucan-Binding Protein**

The glucan-binding proteins (GBP) are a heterogeneous group of proteins with variations in size, glucan-binding domain, glucan-binding affinity, distribution and most importantly, function. These proteins are grouped together on the basis of their glucan-binding properties (Banas and Vickerman, 2003). These are surface proteins and bind with the surface receptor after pattern recognition (Pauchet et al., 2009) and the molecular weight for this β-glucan-receptor protein complex is approximately 240 kDa and it contains another important 75 kDa protein species for making strong complex (Mithofer et al., 1996; Frey et al., 1993). This 75-kDa protein was isolated and characterized as a high-affinity binding protein (Umamoto et al., 1997; Mithofer et al., 1996). Some of the enzymes are also associated with glucan-binding proteins. These enzymes catalyze the synthesis of the glucans. Furthermore, these enzymes also hydrolyze the glucans molecules along with starch and cellulose, which ultimately act as substrates for microbial growth (Warren, 1996). Some of the β-glucan-binding protein (GBP) has a capacity to hydrolyze β- (1→3) linkages in β-glucan (Fliegmann et al., 2004). These glucan-binding proteins play a major role during various processes such as dextranase inhibition, dextran-dependent aggregation, plaque cohesion (Banas and Vickerman, 2003), pathogen defense, metabolism, polysaccharide biosynthesis, and virulence (Guillén et al., 2010). Recent studies indicated evidence that glucan-binding proteins ameliorate virulence and sometime play a protective role by acting as immunogens in animal models (Banas and Vickerman, 2003). The β-glucan-binding protein (GBP) extracted from soybean (*Glycine max* L.) perform two major roles. First, it acts as a receptor complex within the plasma membrane upon the binding and acts as microbial cell wall elicitor and triggers the cascade of reaction that resulted in activation of defense responses. The second important function of these GBP is to hydrolyze β - (1→3) -glucans that are present in the cell walls of pathogens (Fliegmann et al., 2005).

**RHEOLOGICAL PROPERTIES OF β-GLUCAN**

The viscosity properties of β-glucan and other polysaccharides depends upon concentration of dietary fiber, their solubility, and molecular weight (MW) (AACC, 2001; Wood et al., 1991; 2000). There are numerous factors that affect viscosities in products with added β-glucan. According to Aastrup (1979) changes in viscosity of barley flour slurries originate due to the presence of endogenous enzymes. Two endogenous β-(1→3) (1→4)-D-glucan 4-gluconohydrolase isoenzymes are responsible for the degradation of barley β-glucans (Woodward et al., 1983). The major enzyme involved in hydrolyzing the β-glucan component of barley is an endo- β - (1→4) -glucanase, which develops during the germination of barley (Hrmova et al., 1997). β-glucanases in cereals became inactivated by a combination of heat (90°C) and ethanol treatments for two hours and this had a pronounced stabilizing effect on the viscosity. A previous study has shown that heat treatment also has a capability of stabilizing the viscosity profile of flour slurries (Izydorczyk et al., 2000). According to Wei et al. (2006) the melting temperature of wheat β-D-glucan gels increased with the increase of molecular weight. Initially, viscosities of the β-glucan containing solutions tend to increase due to initial solubilization of the β-glucans, but no detectable decline has been observed thereafter. Addition of low purity β-glucan to the medium molecular weight starch significantly increases the viscosity of solution when determined at low shear rates (Faraj et al., 2006). Fluid dynamic parameters also influence the flow, diffusion, or transport behavior of

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**Table 1 Extraction and purification techniques of β-glucan from various sources (Continued)**

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Alkali extraction 0.5 M Acetic acid and Zymolyase</td>
<td>Yeast Schisosaccharomyces pombe</td>
<td>Alpha and beta glucan extracted</td>
<td>Sugawara et al., 2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alkaline extraction with 1.0 N NaOH</td>
<td>Alkaline purification at 90°C</td>
<td>Spent brewers yeast</td>
<td>β-glucan with phenoloxidase (PO) activity</td>
<td>Suphantharika et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steam explosion at 225°C for 5 min</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Mycelia of Sparassis crispa</td>
<td>Shortened the extraction time</td>
<td>Akhiro et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enzymatic purification with repeated centrifugation</td>
<td>Wheat bran powder</td>
<td>Highly pure (91.58%) beta glucan was achieved</td>
<td>Wei et al., 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot water and 0.04 M NaOH Alkali Extraction</td>
<td>Ion Exchange</td>
<td>Chinese herb Solanum lyrum Thumb</td>
<td>D-glucan was linear and contained both (1→3)- and (1→4)-linkages.</td>
<td>Yalin et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enzymes and controlled temperature extraction</td>
<td>Ammonium sulphate Various conditions</td>
<td>Wheat bran Oat Bran</td>
<td>High Purity achieved High purity (76%) with high molecular weight</td>
<td>Wei et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Immerstrand et al., 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
β-glucan during digestion in the small intestine, but the influence of the viscous behavior is limited.

The rheological behavior of β-glucan was studied in the past by using oscillatory and rheological measurement. The predominant viscous behavior was explained on the basis of storage and loss moduli G’ and G” of β-glucan preparations from extruded meal and bran that tends to increase continuously with increasing frequency (Dongowski et al., 2005). In freshly prepared barley β-glucan solutions, attraction forces between molecules are less strong but after an induction period some β-glucan solutions/ dispersions may begin to adopt gel-like behavior (Böhme and Kulicke, 1999). Shear thinning behavior of cereal β-glucans was also exhibited at low concentration, but at higher concentration they tend to form gels and their gelling properties are influenced by molecular weights and molecular structure (Cui, 2001; Lazaridou et al., 2003; 2004; Lazaridou and Billaderis, 2004). Higher molecular weight (2.39 \times 10^5) β-glucan gel did not show any tendency to gel even after 200 hours storage. On the other hand, short chain molecules with low molecular weight show higher mobility and these short chains with low molecular weight β-glucan structures diffuse more readily, and hence have a greater possibility of forming junctions with neighboring chains (Doublier and Wood, 1995). This evidence indicates that there is an inverse relationship between gelation time and molecular weight of the polysaccharide (Lazaridou et al., 2003; Vaikousi et al., 2004). Viscosity properties are also influenced by tri/tetra ratios, cellulose-like fragments, molecular weight distribution, and molecular size of cereal β-glucan.

### Table 2 Molecular weight of β-glucan from various sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Name</th>
<th>Molecular weight</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Technique used</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OGL-35</td>
<td>35 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>High performance size exclusion chromatography (HPSEC) with Refractive index (RI) detector</td>
<td>Lazaridou et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGL-65</td>
<td>65 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>HPSEC with Refractive index (RI) detector</td>
<td>Lazaridou et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGL-110</td>
<td>110 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>HPSEC with Refractive index (RI) detector</td>
<td>Lazaridou et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGL-140</td>
<td>140 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>HPSEC with Refractive index (RI) detector</td>
<td>Lazaridou et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGL-250</td>
<td>250 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>HPSEC with Refractive index (RI) detector</td>
<td>Lazaridou et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS-1cI</td>
<td>1.7 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Root of Angelica sinensis</td>
<td>Gel permeation chromatography</td>
<td>Cao et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS-1cII</td>
<td>3.9 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Root of Angelica sinensis</td>
<td>Gel permeation chromatography</td>
<td>Cao et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhynchelytrum repens -Glucan</td>
<td>250 \times 10^5 to 20 \times 10^5</td>
<td>Leaf blades, sheaths, stems, and young leaves of Rhynchelytrum repens</td>
<td>Gel permeation chromatography on Sepharose 4B Column</td>
<td>De Paula et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agaricus blazei β –glucan</td>
<td>30 \times 10^3 to 50 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Agaricus blazei</td>
<td>Gel filtration</td>
<td>Kim et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-Betaglucan</td>
<td>0.43 \times 10^5 to 7.58 \times 10^5</td>
<td>Wheat bran powder</td>
<td>(HPSEC) equipped with Right angle laser light scattering (RALLS), and a refractive index detector</td>
<td>Wei et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fungal β- glucan</td>
<td>15 \times 10^4</td>
<td>Phellinus linteus</td>
<td>Gel filtration chromatography with sapharose CL-4B column</td>
<td>Gi-Young et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley β- glucan</td>
<td>6.3 \times 10^4 to 3.3 \times 10^5</td>
<td>Hulless barley mushroom Flammulina velutipes.</td>
<td>Gel filtration chromatography</td>
<td>Kjell et al., 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mushroom β glucan</td>
<td>30.8 \times 10^4</td>
<td></td>
<td>HPSEC</td>
<td>Smidler et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat b- d glucan</td>
<td>4.3 \times 10^5 to 75.8 \times 10^5</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>High performance size exclusion chromatography (HPSEC) with Triple Detector System</td>
<td>Wei et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye β glucan</td>
<td>13.4 \times 10^4</td>
<td>Rye bran</td>
<td>Size exclusion chromatography with low angle laser light scattering (SEC-LALLS).</td>
<td>Roubroeks et al., 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum β- glucan</td>
<td>3.6 \times 10^4</td>
<td>Sorghum bicolor</td>
<td>SE-HPLC methods</td>
<td>Honnaivally et al., 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oat bran β- glucan</td>
<td>25 \times 10^4</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>HPSEC</td>
<td>Danielle et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oat fractions β- glucan</td>
<td>206 \times 10^3 to 230 \times 10^3</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>Calcofluor detection,</td>
<td>Aman et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley β- glucan</td>
<td>0.45 \times 10^6 to 1.32 \times 10^6</td>
<td>From six barley varieties</td>
<td>HPSEC with MALLS detector</td>
<td>Irakli et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat β- glucan</td>
<td>3.29 \times 10^5</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>HPSEC equipped with three detectors; a right angle laser light scattering detector (RALLS), a differential pressure viscometer (DP) and a refractive index detector (RI)</td>
<td>Lia et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG-High MW</td>
<td>6.87 \times 10^5</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>SE-HPLC equipped with refractive index detector three serially connected columns (Ohpab SB-806 HQ, Ohpab SB-805 HQ and Ohpab SB-804 HQ)</td>
<td>Kim and White, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG-Med MW</td>
<td>3.71 \times 10^5</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>SE-HPLC equipped with refractive index detector three serially connected columns (Ohpab SB-806 HQ, Ohpab SB-805 HQ and Ohpab SB-804 HQ)</td>
<td>Kim and White, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG-Low MW</td>
<td>1.56 \times 10^5</td>
<td>Oat</td>
<td>SE-HPLC equipped with refractive index detector three serially connected columns (Ohpab SB-806 HQ, Ohpab SB-805 HQ and Ohpab SB-804 HQ)</td>
<td>Kim and White, 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, they have a capacity to alter some other physiological responses when they are intended to be used in cereal based products (Izydorczyk and Biladeris, 2000; Vaikousi et al., 2004).

HEALTH IMPLICATION OF β-GLUCAN

A large number of studies indicated the effectiveness of β-glucan against various diseases and disorders, and several applications reported in previous scientific work are the tendency to reduce onset of colorectal cancer (Dongowski et al., 2002), increased stool bulk and provide assistance against constipation (Odes et al., 1993; Valle-Jones, 1985), reduction in glycemic index (Cavallero et al., 2002; Jenkins et al., 2002; Granfeldt et al., 2008), flattening of the postprandial blood glucose levels and insulin rises (Hallfrisch et al., 2003; Li et al., 2003; Jenkins et al., 2002), prevention of insulin resistance (Brennan and Cleary, 2007; Hlebowicz et al., 2008), reduction in serum cholesterol levels (Delaney et al., 2003; Kang, et al., 2003; Kerckhoffs et al., 2003; Li et al., 2003; Yang et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2004), prevention of coronary heart disease (Jinshui et al., 2002), production of short-chain fatty acids (Wisker et al., 2000), prevention of hepatic damage by reducing taxol-induced hepatic damage (Karaduman et al., 2010), and promotion of the growth of beneficial gut microflora (Crittenden et al., 2002; Tungland, 2003).

Viscous fibers are responsible for beneficial physiological responses in human, animal, and animal-alternative in vitro models (Cheryl et al., 2006). These responses are altered primarily by β-glucan, but arabinoxylan may also influence these changes since both types of fiber have a tendency to increase viscosity in solutions (Newman and Newman,1992). There is evidence indicating that β-glucan and other dietary fibers have protective roles to play in preventing or delaying the onset of chronic diseases and disorders such as coronary heart disease (Liu et al., 2000; Truswell, 2002), diabetes mellitus, cancer, and colon dysfunction (Meyer et al., 2000; Sudha et al., 2007). Tungland and Meyer (2003) also reviewed a range of dietary fiber including β-glucan with reference to beneficial physiological influences that they exert on the human body. To achieve these physiological responses 3 g soluble fiber consumption daily may lower the total cholesterol by 0.41 mmolL–1 in hypercholesterolemic persons and 0.13 mmolL–1 in normcholesterolemic persons (Kerckhoffs et al., 2003). Similarly, Behall et al. (1997) reported that ingestion of 2.1 g of β-glucan on a daily basis reduces total cholesterol by 9.5%, whereas some findings by some researchers (Jenkins et al., 2002) indicated that 4 units decline in glycemic index can be achieved by taking 1 g of β-glucan per 50 g of carbohydrates. FDA has also recommended a daily consumption of 3 g β-glucan to achieve such health benefits (FDA, 1997).

In a comparison study to evaluate the effect of oat bran and oat meal (same quantity) on reduction of LDL-cholesterol, oat bran was found to have a greater capability over oat meal to reduce LDL-cholesterol levels (Davidson et al., 1991). As concerned with source of β-glucan, barley β-glucan was more effective in the regulation of glucose and insulin responses compared to oat β-glucan (Hallfrisch and Behall, 2000; Yokoyama et al., 1997; Hallfrisch et al., 2003; Granfeldt et al., 2008). Regarding the cholesterol lowering mechanism and binding of bile acid, it was noticed that β-glucan containing extrudates from oat have an ability to bind bile acid and to replenish the deficiency of bile acid, more cholesterol from the body is consumed for the synthesis of bile acid thus lowering the serum cholesterol level in the body (Drzikova et al., 2005). Higher bile acid binding capacity in oat β-glucan can be achieved by amination (Liu et al., 2010) and oxidation (Park et al., 2009) thus help in the removal of more cholesterol due to the introduction of cationic groups into the β-glucan molecules (Shin et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2010).

Apart from cereal grains such as barley, oats, rye, certain fungi containing β-D-glucan have a capacity to reduce total blood cholesterol level within the body (Genc et al., 2001; Oezdemir and Genc, 2001). Oat extract diets are considered to lower the total and LDL cholesterol levels, and a significant difference with respect to lowering of cholesterol was also observed within both high oat and low oat containing diets. This difference was attributed due to difference in β-glucan contents in the diets (Behall et al., 1997).

Consumption of a diet high in barley β-glucan has been shown to prevent insulin resistance and can be used for diabetic patients (¨Ostman et al., 2006; Brennan and Cleary, 2007; Hlebowicz et al., 2008). The beta glucan containing diet promoted hepatic insulin signaling by decreasing serine phosphorylation of insulin receptor (Choi et al., 2010). In a recent study, Beck et al. (2009) observed decrease in insulin response and increased postprandial cholecystokinin levels after ingestion of β-glucan in overweight human subjects. Granfeldt et al. (2008) suggested intake of 4 g oat β-glucans to achieve significant decrease in glucose and insulin responses in healthy subjects thus favoring the diabetic patients. Several researchers advocated the need for re-evaluation of the quantity, the food vectors, and the tolerability of β-glucan products to improve the metabolic profile of type 2 diabetic subjects in the long term (Cugnet-Anceau et al., 2010).

APPLICATION OF β-GLUCANS IN FOOD PRODUCTS

Apart from health and nutritional benefits (Mälkki and Virtanen, 2001), β-glucan also has various suitable functional properties such as thickening, stabilizing, emulsification, and gelation. These properties determine the suitability of β-glucan to be incorporated in soups, sauces, beverages, and in other food products (Dawkins and Nnanna, 1995; Burkus and Temelli, 2000). Barley β-glucan is particularly well suited for such applications, being capable of imparting a smooth mouth feel to beverage products, and also makes the beverage an excellent source of soluble dietary fiber. Its properties enable it to be incorporated alternatively in traditional beverage thickeners as replacement for gum Arabic, alginates, pectin, xanthan gum, and
carboxymethyl-cellulose (Giese, 1992). Previous and recent research is focused to explore the ways to incorporate β-glucans into various food systems (Hallfrisch and Behall, 1997; Ahmad et al., 2008). In this context, β-glucan is extracted from different sources and marketed in various forms such as β-glucan concentrate extracted from oats (“Oattrime”), β-glucan from barley (“NutrimXe”) and β-glucan extracted from rice (“Ricetrim”) (Inglett et al., 2004).

Arabinoylan and β-glucan when incorporated into flour for preparation of bread (Trogh et al., 2004; Ahmad et al., 2008), this addition not only markedly improved the loaf volume of bread, but also increased the soluble fiber (Trogh et al., 2004) and firmness of the bread crumb (Lazaridou et al., 2007). Addition of β-glucan from barley and oat sources was recently reported by Kalinga and Mishra (2010) with promising rheological and physical properties of cake batter. In another attempt, enrichment of bread (at 2.5 and 5%) using purified barley β-glucan fractions was evaluated for in vitro digestion process. This resulted in significant reduction in starch breakdown and this degradation is proportional to the amount of β-glucan incorporated into the breads (Symons and Brennan, 2004). High-fiber diets and foods with low glycemic index may act as prophylactic against prevention and treatment of coronary heart diseases and diabetes (Jinshui et al., 2002; Granfeldt et al., 2008). Incorporation of β-glucan into pasta products revealed a lower glycemic response (Yokoyama et al., 1997). Similarly, a reduced glycemic index was reported in β-glucan enriched breakfast bar (Jenkins et al., 2002) and β-glucan containing bread (Cavallero et al., 2002). β-glucan has various applications in the food process industry including the bread and baking industry as thickening agents for increasing viscosity, fat substitutes, as sources of dietary fiber, and for improvement of rheological properties (Ahmad et al., 2008; 2010; Andersson et al., 2009). Wheat flour, which is a poor source of dietary fiber (Dziezak, 1987) can be fortified by incorporating β-glucan for preparation of bread and other products (Trogh et al., 2004). This incorporation of β-glucan in breads have a capacity to slow down the release of reducing sugars (in vitro) and consequently, increase the starch availability for digestion ultimately reduce the hyperglycemic and hyperinsulinemic conditions (Brennan and Cleary, 2007; Thondre and Henry, 2009). This inclusion of β-glucan also improves the bread physiochemical characteristics (Cavallero et al., 2002), viscoelastic (Skendi et al., 2010), rheological, and sensory properties (Flander et al., 2007; Skendi et al., 2010).

There are controversial results for loaf volume; incorporation of β-glucan reduce the loaf volume (Rudel, 1990) by binding of large amounts of water so that limited amounts of water was available for the development of the gluten network and hence reduced loaf volume and tough textures was reported (Pomeranz et al., 1977). On the contrary, Yun-Hyoung et al. (2006) showed an improvement in loaf volume, and the textual and sensory properties of milky bread by incorporation of β-glucan. Enzymatic degradation of β-glucan during processing is a common problem during bread preparation (Cavallero et al., 2002; Moriartry et al., 2010) but it can be avoided by the use of coarse flour thereby providing protection to β-glucan from enzymatic degradation (Flander et al., 2007).

The use of β-glucan is not only confined to cereal based products but its incorporation was also evaluated in beverages (Lyly et al., 2003; Temelli et al., 2004) and dairy based products (Konuklar et al., 2004), it can also find some applications in the manufacture of low-fat ice creams and yogurts (Brennan et al., 2002) and it can also be incorporated in combination with other soluble dietary fiber into low fat dairy products and low fat cheese curds to improve gelation and rheological characteristics (Tudorica et al., 2004). The incorporation of barley β-glucan in combination with whey protein into food products may help in the enrichment of the diet and assist in the prevention of certain diseases (Temelli et al., 2004). Moreover, better soups can be prepared with a reasonable amount of β-glucan (Lyly et al., 2004; 2007). Ricetrim is another type of soluble β-glucan fiber extracted from rice and is used as fat replacer with a smooth mouth feel and texture. It is successfully used in cookies, pumpkin pudding, layer cake, dip for pot crust, taro custard, and sautechicken curry (Inglett et al., 2004).

CONCLUSION

β-glucan is a valuable functional ingredient that can provide a better physiological response and have several health promoting applications. Its promising physiochemical characteristics favor its use in various food systems. Extraction conditions often affect the quality, quantity, molecular weight, viscosities, and other physicochemical properties of β-glucan. Therefore, future research should focus on developing and characterization of new extraction technologies. To achieve complete benefits of this important functional ingredient, it is imperative that future research should be aimed at utilization of β-glucan for the development of new products. Unexplored areas about health application need special attention. Similarly, more research is required to understand the mechanism by which β-glucan enhances the immune system.

REFERENCES


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Poom discrimination from oat bran. US Patent 4961937.


