

MINI REVIEW

Industrial enzyme production using recombinant DNA technology

Pritilisa Sahoo¹ and Sindhusagar Mohapatra²¹Department of Microbiology, MITS School of Biotechnology, Bhubaneswar, India²Department of Microbiology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, India

ABSTRACT

Industrial enzymes have become indispensable biocatalysts in modern industry due to their high specificity, catalytic efficiency, and environmentally sustainable nature. Many industries use them, including food and beverage processing, pharmaceuticals, detergents, textiles, pulp and paper, and biofuel production. But conventional enzyme production processes that depend on native organisms are often inhibited by low productivity, inconsistent quality, restricted scalability, and insufficient adaptability to demanding industrial conditions. These challenges have enhanced the adoption of recombinant DNA technology as a robust and versatile platform for enzyme production.

Recombinant DNA technology allows exact manipulation and expression of genes encoding target enzymes in improved host systems, allowing for high-yield production, better stability, and tailored functional properties. This review provides a critical overview of recombinant enzyme production, around fundamental genetic engineering principles, selection and optimization of host organisms, and progressive strategies such as protein engineering and metabolic pathway modification. It examines key aspects of bioprocess development, highlights recent advances in genome editing, synthetic biology, and computational enzyme design, which are driving innovation in enzyme biotechnology. Major challenges, including expression limitations, regulatory constraints, and economic factors, are also discussed. Overall, recombinant enzyme technology is presented as a transformative approach that supports efficient, scalable, and sustainable industrial processes, with significant potential for future development and application.

Introduction

Enzymes are highly particular biological catalysts that trigger biochemical reactions under mild conditions, making them vital in industrial processes. Their ability to improve reaction efficiency, reduce energy consumption, and minimize environmental effects has led to their extensive adoption across many sectors. However, conventional enzyme production methods, which depend on naturally occurring microorganisms or plant and animal sources, often fail to meet industrial demands due to low productivity, variability, and limited control over enzyme characteristics [1].

The introduction of recombinant DNA technology has reformed enzyme production by allowing precise manipulation of genetic material. Through this approach, genes encoding desired enzymes can be cloned and expressed in appropriate host organisms. This technological progression has mainly expanded the scope of enzyme applications and enabled the development of cost-effective and sustainable industrial processes [2].

This review aims to provide a detailed analysis of industrial enzyme production using recombinant DNA technology. It covers fundamental concepts, host systems, engineering strategies, process optimization, and applications, while also addressing current challenges and future opportunities [3].

Overview of Enzymes in Industrial Applications

Enzymes are highly effective biocatalysts that play a vital role in facilitating chemical changes across a broad range of industrial processes. Their noticeable specificity toward substrates,

coupled with their ability to function under comparatively mild conditions of temperature and pH, distinguishes them from conventional chemical catalysts. These characteristics not only enhance reaction competence but also contribute to reduced energy consumption, lower environmental impact, and improved product quality. The demand for enzymes has grown as industries gradually adopt sustainable and eco-friendly technologies [4].

Enzymes are broadly categorized into six major classes based on the type of reactions they catalyze: oxidoreductases, transferases, hydrolases, lyases, isomerases, and ligases. Among these, hydrolases are found in the largest group utilized in industrial applications due to their versatility in catalyzing the breakdown of complex molecules. Proteases, amylases, cellulases, and lipases are among the most widely used enzymes, each serving distinct functions in various sectors. Laccases and peroxidases, like oxidoreductases, are progressively gaining attention for their role in environmental and biotechnological applications, particularly in processes involving oxidation-reduction reactions [5].

Enzymes are indispensable for enhancing processing efficiency and improving product quality in the food and beverage industry. They are active in diverse applications such as starch conversion, dairy processing, baking, brewing, and juice clarification. For example, amylases and glucoamylases facilitate the hydrolysis of starch into fermentable sugars, which are important in brewing and bioethanol production. Proteases are used in baking to modify gluten structure, thereby improving dough handling and final product texture. In dairy processing,

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enzymes such as lactase are utilized to produce lactose-free products, catering to consumers with lactose intolerance. Pectinases are widely used in fruit juice preparation to increase yield and clarity by breaking down pectic substances [6].

The detergent industry represents another major application area for enzymes, where they are combined into formulations to enhance cleaning efficiency. Enzymes such as proteases, lipases, amylases, and cellulases work synergistically to remove various types of stains, including protein-based, lipid-based, and carbohydrate-based residues. The use of enzymes in detergents allows effective cleaning at lower temperatures, thereby reducing energy consumption and extending the lifespan of fabrics. Moreover, enzyme-based detergents are biodegradable and environmentally friendly, aligning with the growing demand for sustainable consumer products [7].

In the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors, enzymes serve both as therapeutic agents and as tools for drug synthesis and diagnostics. Enzymes are employed in the production of active pharmaceutical ingredients through stereospecific reactions that are difficult to achieve using conventional chemical processes. They are also used in diagnostic assays for the detection of diseases, where their specificity enables accurate and rapid analysis. Certain enzymes are directly used as therapeutic agents, for example, in enzyme replacement therapies for metabolic disorders [8].

The role of enzymes in the biofuel industry has become increasingly important in the context of global efforts to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Enzymes such as cellulases and hemicellulases are used to break down lignocellulosic biomass into simple sugars, which can then be fermented to produce bioethanol [9]. This enzymatic approach offers a more sustainable and environmentally friendly alternative to traditional chemical methods of biomass conversion. Continuous research is focused on improving enzyme efficiency and reducing production costs to make biofuel processes economically feasible [10].

In the textile industry, enzymes are used for processes such as desizing, bio-polishing, and bleaching. Amylases are employed to remove starch-based sizing agents from fabrics, while cellulases are used to improve fabric appearance and softness by removing microfibrils from the surface. Enzymatic bleaching processes, which utilize oxidoreductases, offer a less harsh alternative to chemical bleaching, thereby reducing damage to fibers and minimizing environmental pollution [11].

The pulp and paper industry also benefits from enzymatic processes, where enzymes are used to enhance pulp bleaching, reduce chemical usage, and improve paper quality. Xylanases are used to pre-treat pulp, making it more amenable to bleaching and reducing the need for chlorine-based chemicals. This not only improves the environmental sustainability but also enhances the strength and quality of the final product [12].

Environmental applications of enzymes are gaining attention, particularly in the field of bioremediation. Enzymes such as laccases, peroxidases, and dehalogenases are capable of degrading a wide range of pollutants, including dyes, phenolic compounds, and industrial waste products. Their use in wastewater treatment systems helps in the efficient removal of contaminants, contributing to enhanced environmental quality and compliance with regulatory standards [13].

The expanding scope of enzyme applications is closely linked to advancements in biotechnology, mainly recombinant DNA

technology, which permits the production of enzymes with enhanced properties. This has allowed industries to overcome many of the limitations linked with natural enzymes, like low stability and limited availability. As a result, enzymes are increasingly being tailored to meet specific industrial requirements, further driving their adoption [14].

In addition to their functional advantages, enzymes contribute to the economic efficacy of industrial processes. By reducing reaction times, minimizing waste generation, and lowering energy requirements, they help industries achieve cost savings while maintaining high-quality standards. The global enzyme market has witnessed steady growth, reflecting the increasing reliance on enzymatic processes across sectors [15].

Overall, enzymes signify a keystone of modern industrial biotechnology, offering a combination of efficiency, specificity, and sustainability that is different from traditional chemical catalysts. Their continued development and integration into industrial processes are expected to play a vital role in addressing future challenges related to resource utilization, environmental protection, and sustainable development [16].

Basics of Recombinant DNA Technology

Recombinant DNA technology includes the artificial combination of genetic material from several sources to produce desired proteins in host organisms. The process starts with the identification and isolation of a gene encoding the enzyme of interest. This gene is then inserted into a vector, typically a plasmid, which serves as a carrier for transferring the genetic material into a host cell [17].

Once inside the host, the recombinant DNA integrates into the cellular system and directs the synthesis of the target enzyme. The host organism utilizes its transcriptional and translational machinery to express the introduced gene, resulting in the production of the desired enzyme.

The key steps in recombinant enzyme production include gene isolation, vector construction, transformation into host cells, selection of successful transformants, and expression analysis. Advances in molecular biology techniques have significantly improved the efficiency and precision of these processes, enabling high-yield enzyme production [18].

Host Systems for Recombinant Enzyme Production

The selection of an appropriate host system is important for successful recombinant enzyme production. Different host organisms offer distinct advantages depending on the nature of the enzyme and its intended application [19].

Prokaryotic systems, particularly *Escherichia coli*, are extensively used due to their rapid growth, ease of genetic manipulation, and ability to produce high levels of recombinant proteins. However, they cannot perform complex post-translational modifications, which can be important for the functionality of some enzymes [20].

Eukaryotic systems, such as yeasts (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and *Pichia pastoris*), provide improved protein folding and secretion capabilities. These systems are particularly useful for producing enzymes that require disulfide bond formation or glycosylation.

Filamentous fungi, including *Aspergillus niger*, are very efficient in secreting huge quantities of enzymes into the culture medium, making downstream processing easier. Higher eukaryotic systems, such as plant and animal cell cultures, are

used for particular applications where specific changes are needed [21].

Genetic Engineering Strategies for Advanced Enzyme Production

To maximize enzyme production, many genetic engineering strategies are applied. Codon optimization is used to align the gene sequence with the preferred codon usage of the host organism, thereby improving translation efficiency.

Promoter engineering involves the use of regulated and strong promoters to control gene expression levels. Signal peptides are incorporated to direct the secretion of enzymes, which streamlines purification and reduces manufacture costs.

Increasing the gene copy number within the host genome can enhance enzyme yield. Metabolic engineering techniques are used to optimize cellular pathways, ensuring that resources are efficiently utilized for enzyme production rather than competing processes. These strategies collectively improve productivity, reduce costs, and enable the development of robust production systems [22].

Protein Engineering and Enzyme Optimization

Protein engineering has a critical role in managing enzyme properties to meet industrial needs. Directed evolution is an approach that shows natural selection by introducing random mutations and selecting variants with improved performance.

Rational design involves modifying specific amino acid residues based on structural and functional knowledge of the enzyme. This approach allows for targeted improvements in stability, activity, and substrate specificity.

Semi-rational approaches combine elements of both strategies, focusing on regions of the enzyme that are likely to influence its properties. These techniques have been successfully used to develop enzymes with enhanced thermostability, resistance to harsh conditions, and improved catalytic efficiency [23].

Fermentation and Bioprocess Optimization

Efficient production of recombinant enzymes requires careful optimization of fermentation processes. Upstream processing involves selecting appropriate growth media and optimizing parameters such as temperature, pH, and oxygen levels [24].

Different fermentation strategies are employed based on production goals. Batch fermentation is simple and cost-effective, while fed-batch fermentation allows for controlled nutrient supply and higher yields. Continuous fermentation offers consistent production but requires complex control systems.

Scaling up from laboratory to industrial scale presents challenges in maintaining uniform conditions and ensuring consistent product quality. Advances in bioreactor design and process control have significantly improved scalability and efficiency.

Downstream Processing and Purification

Downstream processing involves the recovery and purification of enzymes from the production system. For intracellular enzymes, cell disruption techniques such as mechanical or chemical methods are used to release the product [24].

Initial separation steps include filtration and centrifugation to remove cell debris. Purification techniques such as precipitation, ultrafiltration, and chromatography are then employed to achieve the desired purity level.

The choice of purification method depends on factors such as enzyme properties, intended application, and cost considerations. Efficient downstream processing is essential for ensuring product quality and economic viability.

Industrial Applications of Recombinant Enzymes

Recombinant enzymes have significantly enhanced industrial processes by providing consistent quality and improved performance. In the food industry, they are used for starch processing, dairy product enhancement, and beverage clarification [25].

In detergents, engineered enzymes enable effective cleaning at lower temperatures, reducing energy consumption. Pharmaceutical applications include enzyme-based drug synthesis and diagnostic tools [7].

In biofuel production, recombinant cellulases and hemicellulases facilitate the conversion of biomass into fermentable sugars. Environmental applications include wastewater treatment and bioremediation, where enzymes help degrade pollutants and improve sustainability [9].

Challenges and Limitations

Despite their advantages, recombinant enzyme production faces several challenges. The formation of inclusion bodies in host cells can result in inactive proteins, requiring additional processing steps for refolding [26].

Differences in post-translational modifications between host and source organisms can affect enzyme functionality. Scaling up production processes often introduces variability and increases costs.

Regulatory requirements and biosafety concerns associated with genetically modified organisms also pose challenges. Addressing these limitations is essential for expanding the use of recombinant enzymes in industry.

Regulatory and Ethical Considerations

The production and use of recombinant enzymes are governed by strict regulatory frameworks to ensure safety and environmental protection. Guidelines focus on the containment and controlled use of genetically modified organisms.

Risk assessments are conducted to evaluate potential impacts on human health and ecosystems. Ethical considerations include public perception and acceptance of biotechnology-derived products. Compliance with international standards and transparent communication are critical for building trust and ensuring sustainable development in this field.

Recent Advances and Emerging Trends

Recent advancements in genome editing technologies, particularly CRISPR-based systems, have enabled precise and efficient genetic modifications. Synthetic biology approaches are facilitating the design of novel enzymes and metabolic pathways.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning are increasingly being used to predict enzyme structure and optimize performance. Cell-free systems are emerging as an alternative platform for enzyme production, offering greater flexibility and control. These innovations are accelerating the development of next-generation enzyme production technologies.

Conclusion

Recombinant DNA technology has transformed industrial enzyme production by enabling high efficiency, scalability, and

customization. Through continuous advancements in genetic engineering, protein design, and bioprocess optimization, recombinant enzymes have become essential tools in modern industry.

While challenges remain, ongoing research and technological innovation are expected to further enhance their potential. The integration of emerging technologies will continue to drive the evolution of enzyme production, making it a cornerstone of sustainable industrial development.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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