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A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF STARCH: EXPLORING NON-CONVENTIONAL SOURCES, STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Starch, a naturally occurring polysaccharide, plays a vital role in food, pharmaceutical, textile, and bio plastic industries due to its renewable, biodegradable, and versatile properties. Traditionally sourced from crops like corn, potato, and wheat, there is a growing interest in exploring non-conventional sources of starch such as banana, jackfruit seed, water chestnut, sago palm, and underutilized legumes and tubers. These alternative sources offer unique physicochemical characteristics, making them potential candidates for functional food formulations and novel industrial applications. The molecular structure of starch—composed of amylose and amylopectin significantly influences its functional properties including gelatinization, retrogradation, solubility, and digestibility. Advances in characterization techniques have allowed for deeper insights into starch granule morphology, crystallinity, and enzymatic resistance. Furthermore, chemical and physical modifications are employed to enhance starch performance in targeted applications, including drug delivery systems and sustainable packaging. This review aims to provide a holistic understanding of starch, covering its diverse sources, structural complexity, functional behavior, and current trends in modification. It also highlights the emerging prospects of starch in nanotechnology, biomedical engineering, and climate-resilient agriculture, underlining its future significance in replacing synthetic polymers and supporting circular bioeconomy models.

KEYWORDS: Starch, Non-conventional source, Amylose and Amylopectin, Starch modification.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Starch is the most abundant carbohydrate reserve in the plant kingdom, found in a wide range of tissues including leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, stems, and roots. It serves as a vital source of carbon and energy for plant metabolic activities. Synthesized from glucose generated through photosynthesis, starch is produced in two primary organelles: chloroplasts in green leaves, where synthesis is rapid and diurnal, and amyloplasts in storage organs such as tubers and cereal grains, where it accumulates over extended periods. During key developmental stages such as seed germination, fruit ripening, and tuber sprouting, stored starch is enzymatically mobilized to meet energy demands. Cereal grains predominantly store starch in the endosperm, while roots, tubers, legumes, and even certain unripe fruits like bananas and mangoes also serve as rich starch sources. The starch content in these plant organs can range widely, depending on the species and part of the plant. Each botanical species exhibits unique patterns of starch granule distribution, structure, and composition. Structurally, starch is composed of two main glucose polymers: amylose and amylopectin. Amylose is primarily a linear polymer of α-1, 4 linked glucose units with minimal branching, and typically comprising 15–30% of the starch granule. Amylopectin, making up the remaining 70–85%, is highly branched with α-1, 6 linkages occurring at regular intervals along the α-1, 4 glucose backbone. These molecular arrangements confer specific physical and functional properties to starch, influencing its digestibility, solubility, and industrial applications.

This review aims to explore not only conventional but also emerging non-traditional sources of starch, while discussing its biochemical synthesis, structural characteristics, and potential future prospects in food, pharmaceutical, and bio-based industries. The structural organization of starch is influenced by the polymodal distribution of α-glucan chains of varying lengths and the clustering of branching points within the amylopectin molecule. These features enable the formation of double helical structures. Amylose and amylopectin together form a semicrystalline matrix in starch granules, consisting of alternating amorphous (primarily amylose) and crystalline (mainly amylopectin) regions. These layered formations are often referred to as "growth rings" in the starch granules of higher plants. Certain starches are classified as “waxy” due to the glossy appearance of the endosperm tissues they originate from. These starches have a very low amylose content, typically less than 15%, and their high crystallinity requires more energy during gelatinization. On the other hand, some starches have a high amylose content, often exceeding 30%. These types may also include additional polysaccharide components and often show subtle distortions in granule shape. In cereal-based starches, lipid molecules such as phospholipids and free fatty acids are embedded within the granule structure, predominantly associated with the amylose portion. These lipid-amylose complexes form hydrophobic regions within the helical chains of amylose and, although present in small quantities (usually between 0.15% to 0.55% of the amylose fraction), they can significantly affect the functional properties of starch, such as reducing its swelling capacity.

Starch granules also contain small amounts of proteins, typically around 0.6%, mostly located on the surface. These proteins, together with the lipids, influence the physical properties of starch and contribute to its functionality. For instance, in wheat, the protein associated with starch granules plays a role in determining grain texture and hardness. Additionally, starch includes a minor mineral content of less than 0.4%, which typically comprises calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and sodium. Of these, phosphorus is particularly important and is found in starch in three primary forms: monophosphate esters, phospholipids, and inorganic phosphate. This intricate composition and structure of starch significantly influence its physicochemical properties, making it a versatile biomolecule in both natural and industrial contexts.

2.0 Starch: Structure, Sources, and Applications

Starch is a naturally occurring polymer synthesized by plants to serve as a major form of energy storage. In the animal kingdom, the functional counterpart to starch is glycogen. Starch typically accumulates in seeds, roots, tubers, and the pith of stems, appearing as minute granules ranging from 1 to 100 microns in size. The shape and size of these granules are often specific to the plant species from which they are derived. Chemically, starch is composed of two primary polysaccharide components: amylose and amylopectin. Amylose consists of long, linear chains of glucose molecules connected by α-1,4-glycosidic bonds and usually contains more than 100 glucose units. In contrast, amylopectin has a branched molecular structure, where the main glucose chains are also linked by α-1,4-glycosidic bonds but include branch points through α-1,6-glycosidic linkages, with each chain typically containing around 20 glucose units.

Starch plays a significant role in the human diet and nutrition. It is the main source of stored energy in plants and represents a major component of dietary carbohydrates globally. While it constitutes a large portion of carbohydrate intake in many populations, the percentage varies across regions. For example, in some Western diets, starch contributes less than half of total carbohydrate calories, with simple sugars comprising a larger share. Beyond its dietary importance, starch is a highly valued material in industrial and pharmaceutical applications. Its natural abundance, hydrophobicity, biocompatibility, and biodegradability make it an attractive option in the formulation of drug delivery systems. It is used as a binder, disintegrant, and filler in various pharmaceutical dosage forms. Starch is also one of the most prevalent organic compounds in nature, produced through photosynthesis and stored in plant organs such as roots, stems, and seeds. Though it is generally inexpensive and readily available, its cost can fluctuate significantly due to market dynamics, similar to other agricultural or fossil-based resources. Since the 1980s, starch has been explored as a sustainable alternative in the production of biodegradable plastics. Thanks to its polymeric structure, it can be directly used to replace certain petroleum-derived plastics or hydrolyzed into glucose for fermentation-based bioproducts. Recent scientific understanding has reshaped the perception of starch digestion. While it was long believed that starch is slowly and completely digested in the small intestine, newer research suggests that the digestibility of starch can vary greatly depending on its botanical origin and how it is processed. Some starches break down rapidly, impacting blood glucose levels quickly, while others resist digestion, providing potential health benefits such as improved glycemic control and promoting gut health.

2.1 Size and Shapes

Starches obtained from different plant sources exhibit distinct granule structures and morphologies. In most cases, each starch granule develops independently within a separate amyloplast. However, in certain plants such as rice, waxy rice, oats, and wrinkled peas—multiple granules can form within a single amyloplast, resulting in what are known as compound starches. These compound granules are often more challenging to isolate due to their clustered arrangement. As shown in the figure, starch granules vary widely in shape, including spherical, oval, polygonal, lenticular, elongated, and kidney-like forms. A correlation has been observed between amylose content and specific granule characteristics. For instance, maize starch with elevated amylose levels tends to exhibit a greater proportion of filamentous granules. Additionally, the size of starch granules differs significantly among plant species, ranging from less than one micron to as much as 100 microns in diameter.

2.2 Structure of starch

- At the most basic structural level, starch granules are composed of alternating layers of amorphous and semi-crystalline materials, commonly known as "growth rings," which typically range from 100 to 400 nanometers in thickness. The radial arrangement of amylopectin chains within these layers is believed to cause the phenomenon of optical birefringence in starch, as the periodic structure interacts with visible light wavelengths (approximately 100–1000 nm), resulting in polarized light effects.
- On a finer scale, X-ray diffraction studies reveal a repeating structural pattern within the granule, measuring about 9–10 nanometers. This pattern reflects the presence of crystalline and amorphous lamellae within the semi-crystalline regions. These lamellae are formed by clusters of short side chains branching from the radially oriented amylopectin molecules. Remarkably, this level of organization is consistent among starches from different plant sources, indicating a conserved mechanism of starch biosynthesis.
- To improve the clarity of X-ray powder diffraction data, starch samples are often mildly treated with acid to selectively remove amorphous regions, thereby enhancing the visibility of the crystalline structure. The resulting diffraction patterns help classify starches based on their crystalline forms, or allomorphs. For example, most cereal starches display an A-type crystalline structure, while B-type patterns are typically found in tuber starches such as potato and lesser yam, as well as in rhizomes like canna and some high-amylose cereals. In contrast, legume starches generally exhibit a C-type crystalline structure, representing a mixture of A- and B-type characteristics.
- **Amylose and Amylopectin**

  Starch is composed of glucose units arranged in long polymer chains, primarily in the form of two distinct components:

1. **Amylose** – This is a mostly linear polymer made up of glucose molecules connected by α-1, 4 glycosidic bonds. In typical starches, such as those from corn or potato, amylose constitutes approximately 25% of the total starch content. The chains of amylose can be very long, consisting of hundreds to thousands of glucose units. Although generally linear, amylose may contain minor irregularities, such as slight branching or the presence of phosphate groups, which can interfere with enzymatic breakdown.
2. **Amylopectin** – This component is a highly branched polymer, where most of the branch points are formed by α-1, 6 glycosidic bonds, accounting for about 4–5% of its total structure. Due to its branched configuration, amylopectin is more readily accessible to enzymes and is generally digested more easily than amylose.

2.3 Sources of Starch and Methods of extraction

The rising industrial demand for starch has encouraged the exploration of alternative sources beyond the commonly used corn, wheat, rice, and potato. This growing interest in non-conventional sources aligns with goals of sustainability, support for local agriculture, and opportunities for income generation. Researchers are now investigating various underutilized plant parts such as seeds, roots, tubers, and rhizomes for their distinct properties and potential applications. Understanding the characteristics of these lesser-known starch sources is key to unlocking their full potential. This review delves into the attributes and functional benefits of non-traditional starches, focusing on their roles in both food and non-food industries. In doing so, it emphasizes their commercial viability, promotes eco-friendly practices, and underscores their contribution to regional development and job creation. Unlike conventional starches, these alternative sources often come from crops cultivated primarily for other purposes, are regionally specific, and are typically produced on a smaller scale. Their properties can vary widely depending on environmental conditions, genetic makeup, and processing techniques. Despite these challenges, many of these starches can be modified to enhance their functionality, offering diverse and promising options for industrial applications.

2.3.1 Non-Traditional Sources of Starch

Table 1: Summarization of Non-Traditional Sources of Starch.

Plant Part	Examples	Potential Applications
Fruit Seeds	Mango seed, Avocado seed	Bioplastics, film-forming agents, pharmaceutical excipients
Fruit Pulp	Banana, Peach palm	Food thickener, functional food ingredient
Rhizomes	Ginger, Turmeric	Nutraceuticals, biodegradable packaging
Peels	Banana peel, Peach palm peel	Starch films, feed, and biodegradable containers
Culms	Bamboo	Industrial starch extraction, paper and bioenergy
Tubers	Yam, Parsnip	Alternative starch for food and pharmaceutical use
Food Industry By-products	Cassava bagasse, Potato peel waste	Biocomposites, feed, bioethanol production
Cereals	Pigmented corn, Black rice	Functional foods, antioxidant starch films
Stems	Pineapple, Sweet potato stem	Biodegradable films, adhesives, modified starches

3.0 Extraction of Starch

3.1 Starch Extraction from Non-Traditional Sources

The growing interest in non-conventional starch sources has driven the development of specialized extraction techniques tailored to the unique characteristics of each plant material. Extracting starch from these sources is more complex than from traditional crops, often requiring a series of carefully controlled steps to separate pure starch from accompanying components such as fibers, proteins, lipids, and other bioactive compounds. The choice of extraction method is largely influenced by the plant's anatomical structure and chemical composition, including the location and density of starch granules within the tissue. To obtain high-quality starch, several techniques are employed each with distinct advantages and limitations.

Aqueous extraction is one of the most commonly used methods due to its simplicity, safety, and environmentally friendly nature. It involves soaking and mechanically disrupting the plant tissue, followed by filtration and sedimentation to isolate the starch granules. However, this method often yields lower starch recovery, especially from sources with tightly bound or low-starch content tissues. Alkaline extraction uses chemical agents like sodium hydroxide (NaOH) to enhance starch release and improve purity. The alkaline environment helps in breaking down cell walls, solubilizing proteins and other impurities that may interfere with starch isolation. While this method can significantly improve extraction efficiency and yield, it may also alter the physicochemical properties of starch, including its gelatinization behavior and functional characteristics.

Acidic and enzymatic methods are also employed, especially when selective hydrolysis of non-starch components is required. Enzymes such as proteases or celluloses can target specific matrix components without compromising starch integrity, making enzymatic extraction highly specific and suitable for sensitive applications. Overall, optimizing the extraction process for non-traditional starch sources is essential to ensure high yield, purity, and retention of native starch properties. Innovations in green processing technologies and the use of mild, eco-friendly reagents are gaining attention as industries seek sustainable and efficient methods for harnessing alternative starch sources.

3.2 Novel extraction techniques

1. Gluten washing novel method - "gluten washing" method extracts starch from plant flours containing starch and protein. This technique involves adding wheat gluten to the flour, mixing and kneading with water to form a gluten network, and then washing out the starch. The starch is recovered through centrifugation and drying. This method can be applied to various cereals, legumes, and seeds, producing high-purity starch.

2. Ultrasound-assisted milling - Ultrasound-assisted milling is a green technology that enhances starch extraction by disrupting cell membranes and breaking cell walls, releasing starch from protein matrices. This method increases starch yield, reduces processing time and SO2 content, and preserves starch properties. However, ultrasonic treatment can alter starch structure, particularly in amorphous regions. It's also used to improve cereal hydration, cooking, and texture. Additionally, combining ultrasound with enzymatic digestion can aid starch isolation.

3. Microwave assisted method - Microwave-assisted starch extraction can increase starch yield, but it also alters starch structure and functional properties, such as water holding capacity and emulsifying stability. Microwave treatment can degrade amylopectin molecules, especially in kernel starch, affecting its overall properties.

4.0 Chemical composition and structure of starch

Starch is a semi-crystalline carbohydrate that naturally exists in granular form within the chloroplasts of green leaves and the amyloplasts of tubers and cereal grains. Chemically, starch is made up of two primary polysaccharide components: amylose, which contributes to the amorphous regions, and amylopectin, which forms the crystalline regions. Both are composed of glucose units but differ in structure and function. Amylose is a mostly linear polymer, consisting of glucose molecules linked by α-1, 4 glycosidic bonds. It typically makes up about 20–30% of the total starch content. In contrast, amylopectin is a highly branched polymer with linear segments also connected by α-1, 4 bonds and branching points through α-1,6 linkages. In certain plant varieties, starch consists almost entirely of amylopectin; these are known as waxy starches examples include waxy maize and waxy potato. Waxy starches are favored in applications requiring better stability against retrogradation. On the other hand, starches with higher amylose content are valued for their role as resistant starch, contributing to dietary fiber and offering health benefits.

The physical and functional properties of starch vary widely across plant species, largely due to differences in the ratio of amylose to amylopectin. The structure and compactness of amylopectin play a key role in determining the size and form of starch granules, which are formed during endosperm development in grains. The shape of amylopectin is influenced by the proportion of long to short chain branches, affecting the overall packing and granule morphology. Granule size can range from 1 to 100 microns in diameter, and their shapes include polygonal, spherical, oval, and lenticular forms. Additionally, the functional behavior of starch is significantly influenced by factors such as amylose content, the pattern of branching in amylopectin, granular structure, and the presence of components like phospholipids, monoester phosphates, and lipids.

5.0 Starch properties

5.1 Key Properties of Starch

1. Composition

The proportion of amylose and amylopectin within starch granules varies significantly between plant species and can even differ within the same species grown under different environmental conditions. Even after extraction, starch often retains minor amounts of other components such as proteins, fibers, and lipids. These residual substances can influence the functional behavior of starch. For example, lipids can form complexes with amylose, which may lead to notable changes in starch characteristics—such as increased gelatinization temperature, reduced solubility in water, altered gel strength, retrogradation behavior, and swelling capacity.

2. Gelatinization

Starch is generally insoluble in cold water. However, when heated in water above approximately 52 °C, it undergoes a transformation known as gelatinization**,** a process typically studied using techniques like Differential Scanning Calorimetry (DSC). Gelatinization is an endothermic process that occurs in two main stages:

- Initial Swelling Phase: As heat is applied, hydrogen bonds within the amorphous regions of the starch granule begin to break, allowing water to penetrate and initiate swelling.
- Hydration and Reorganization: Water acts as a plasticizer, further hydrating the amorphous regions. This results in increased molecular motion and the disruption of the crystalline structure of amylopectin. As crystallinity decreases, more water is absorbed, causing further swelling, solubilization of starch molecules, and loss of optical birefringence.

As water continues to infiltrate the granule, the internal organization becomes increasingly disordered. Eventually, the granule ruptures, and amylose is leached out into the surrounding medium. This release of amylose leads to the formation of a viscous starch paste, which significantly increases the viscosity of the solution.

5.2 Functional Properties of Starch

1. Gelatinization Temperature

The temperature at which starch gelatinizes is influenced by several factors, including the botanical origin of the starch, moisture content, pH, and the presence of salts. Water plays a critical role during this process, acting as a plasticizer that facilitates the swelling and molecular mobility within the starch granule.

2. Pasting Properties

Pasting behavior refers to the changes in viscosity of starch when heated in the presence of water under shear. It can be analyzed using instruments such as the Rapid Visco Analyser (RVA) or a rheometer. When starch is heated with continuous stirring, the granules absorb water and swell, eventually rupturing and releasing amylose. This results in the formation of a viscous paste.

Key pasting parameters include:

- **Pasting Temperature**: The point at which viscosity begins to rise sharply, indicating the start of granule swelling.
- **Peak Viscosity**: The maximum viscosity reached during heating, reflecting the water-holding capacity and swelling potential of the starch.
- **Minimum Viscosity**: The lowest viscosity recorded at the highest temperature phase, after granule rupture.
- **Final Viscosity**: Measured after cooling, this value indicates the ability of starch to form a stable gel or paste after cooking.
- **Setback Viscosity**: The difference between final and peak viscosity; it provides insight into the starch's tendency to retrograde or undergo syneresis during storage.
- **Total Setback Viscosity**: Calculated by subtracting minimum viscosity from final viscosity; it reflects the overall retrogradation potential. Amylose content is closely linked to pasting behavior. Higher amylose levels are generally

associated with increased final viscosity and greater retrogradation potential, while inversely related to peak viscosity and gelatinization temperature. Protein content, particularly proteins with disulfide bonds, can also affect the texture and strength of starch gels.

3. Light Transmittance

Light transmittance measures the clarity of starch pastes, typically evaluated at a wavelength of 640 nm. This property indicates how much light can pass through the starch gel, providing insight into its transparency. Starches with covalently bonded phosphate monoesters on amylopectin tend to form clearer pastes with higher light transmittance. In contrast, starches with phospholipids bound to amylose produce more opaque pastes, reducing light transmittance. A higher transmittance value usually suggests fewer granule remnants and a more homogeneous gelatinized matrix.

4. Freeze–Thaw Stability

This refers to the ability of starch or starch-containing products to retain water and structural integrity during repeated freezing and thawing cycles. Poor freeze–thaw stability can result in syneresis, or water separation, which negatively affects texture and appearance. Starches with better freeze–thaw stability are desirable for use in frozen foods to maintain consistency and prevent degradation over time.

6.0 Application of starch

6.1 Industrial Applications and Versatility of Starch

Native starch extracted from tapioca has emerged as a promising thickening agent, particularly for use in fruit-based fillings. The food industry places high value on the physical, chemical, physicochemical, pasting, and thermal properties of tapioca starch, making it a desirable ingredient for various formulations. Beyond its role in food processing, starch demonstrates exceptional versatility across multiple industries. In the pharmaceutical sector, starch derived from sources like water chestnut and pine seeds has been explored for its suitability as an excipient and its potential in controlled drug delivery systems. Starch is also gaining recognition in the development of edible and biodegradable films. For example, rice husk fiber starch has been successfully used to create sustainable, eco-friendly films, while modified corn starch coatings have been applied to fruits such as Red Crimson grapes to prolong their freshness and shelf life.

In the biofuel industry, starch contributes to sustainability efforts by serving as a renewable feedstock. Cassava starch, particularly from varieties such as Sri Kanji 1, has been utilized in the production of bioethanol, offering a more economical and environmentally friendly alternative to petroleum-based fuels. In industrial applications, starch plays an important role in the paper manufacturing process, where it enhances coating quality and improves the surface characteristics of paper products. Furthermore, starch-based materials are being increasingly adopted in the oil and gas industry, where they offer biodegradable and cost-effective alternatives to conventional materials. In summary, starch is a multifunctional and sustainable resource with wide-ranging applications across the food, pharmaceutical, packaging, biofuel, and paper industries. Its adaptability, biodegradability, and cost-effectiveness make it an essential component in both traditional and emerging industrial sectors.

6.2 Industrial use of starch

6.2.1 Beyond Food: Industrial Applications of Starch

Starch is widely recognized for its role in food, but its importance goes far beyond the kitchen. For centuries, it has played a key role in industrial applications—historically used as an adhesive for stiffening fabrics, treating textiles, and coating paper. In modern industries, starch continues to be a critical raw material, with global demand steadily rising due to its versatility, biodegradability, and renewable nature.

6.2.2 Primary Industrial Sources of Starch

The major botanical sources of starch for industrial use include-

These crops are cultivated and processed on a large scale specifically to meet the needs of the textile, paper, pharmaceutical, packaging, and biofuel industries.

Table 2: Primary industrial sources of starch.

Plant Source	Botanical Name	Typical Starch Content	Common Industrial Applications
Corn (Maize)	*Zea mays*	60–70% (by dry weight)	Sweeteners (e.g., glucose syrup), adhesives, paper, bioethanol
Potato	*Solanum tuberosum*	65–80% (by dry weight)	Textiles, paper coatings, food thickeners, biodegradable films
Wheat	*Triticum aestivum*	60–75% (by dry weight)	Bakery products, noodles, adhesives, pharmaceuticals
Tapioca Cassava)	*Manihot esculenta*	70–85% (by dry weight)	Food thickener, biodegradable plastics, textiles, pharmaceuticals

7.0 Starch Extraction and Processing

To serve industrial purposes, starch is first extracted from plant sources using techniques that ensure high yield and purity. Once isolated, the native starch may undergo further processing to tailor its functional properties for specific applications. The transformation of native starch into industry-ready forms involves two main strategies:

1. Post-Extraction Modifications

These are chemical, physical, or enzymatic treatments applied to starch after it has been extracted. They include:

- Chemical modifications (e.g., esterification, cross-linking, oxidation) to improve properties like stability, solubility, or resistance to heat and shear.
- Physical modifications (e.g., heat-moisture treatment, annealing) to alter gelatinization behavior and texture.
- Enzymatic modifications for targeted structural changes without the use of harsh chemicals.

These modifications allow starch to meet the technical demands of various industries, such as increasing adhesive strength for paper, improving film-forming ability for packaging, or enhancing gel clarity for pharmaceuticals.

2. Genetic and Breeding Innovations

Advancements in plant biotechnology and traditional breeding have enabled the development of crop varieties that naturally produce starch with desirable traits. These innovations aim to:

- Alter the ratio of amylose to amylopectin**,** optimizing starch for specific end-uses like resistant starch for health supplements or waxy starch for stable food products.
- Improve starch structure and granule size**,** enhancing performance in targeted applications.
- Enhance extractability and reduce impurities, making industrial processing more efficient

8.0 Future Prospects

As the demand for sustainable, renewable, and biodegradable materials continues to grow across the globe, starch stands out as a key biomaterial with immense future potential. From food technology to pharmaceuticals, packaging, and bioenergy, starch-based innovations are expected to play a central role in shaping greener and more efficient industrial processes. Advancements in genetic engineering, plant breeding, and biotechnological tools offer opportunities to produce crops with tailor-made starch properties. These crops can yield starches with enhanced viscosity, thermal stability, or resistance to retrogradation traits desirable in sectors such as processed foods, adhesives, and pharmaceuticals. The exploration of non-traditional starch sources such as jackfruit seeds, water chestnuts, lotus rhizomes, taro, and lesser-known tubers—opens up avenues for diversifying raw materials. These sources are often more sustainable, region-specific, and adaptable to marginal lands, offering economic benefits to small-scale farmers and reducing dependence on major starch crops like corn and wheat. With growing environmental concerns regarding plastic pollution, starch-based bio plastics are gaining attention as a biodegradable alternative to petroleum-based plastics. Ongoing research focuses on improving the mechanical properties, water resistance, and shelf-life of starch films to make them commercially viable in packaging, agriculture, and even electronics. In the pharmaceutical sector, starch continues to show promise as a biocompatible carrier for targeted and controlled drug delivery. Nanotechnology-based applications such as starch nanoparticles and microspheres are being developed for precision medicine, offering improved bioavailability and reduced side effects.

Starch is a major feedstock in the production of bioethanol, especially in countries looking to reduce fossil fuel consumption. As fermentation technologies improve, and as high-starch crops like cassava are optimized, starch-derived biofuels could become more economically and environmentally competitive. Emerging applications include the development of smart starch coatings for fruits, vegetables, and even pharmaceuticals. These coatings can enhance shelf life, indicate spoilage, or deliver functional ingredients such as antioxidants or antimicrobials combining food preservation with consumer safety. Starch modification is set to revolutionize the functional food market. Resistant starches, slowly digestible starches, and prebiotic starches are being incorporated into products aimed at managing blood sugar, improving gut health, and enhancing satiety, aligning with health-conscious consumer trends.

9.0 Conflict of interest

There is no any conflict of interest.

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