



**HAL**  
open science

## **Corn pith as insulating biomaterial: from biomass fractionation to composite production**

Claire Mayer, L. Haurie Ibarra, M. Palumbo, Amélie Breysse, Frederic Mabilie, A. Lacasta, Cecile Barron

### ► **To cite this version:**

Claire Mayer, L. Haurie Ibarra, M. Palumbo, Amélie Breysse, Frederic Mabilie, et al.. Corn pith as insulating biomaterial: from biomass fractionation to composite production. 4. International Conference on Biobased Materials and Composites (ICBMC 2017), Mar 2017, Nantes, France. 2017. <hal-01603803>

**HAL Id: hal-01603803**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01603803v1>**

Submitted on 2 Jun 2020

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 - Attribution - ShareAlike - International License

## Corn pith as insulating biomaterial: from biomass fractionation to composite production

Mayer-Laigle C.<sup>a</sup>, Haurie Ibarra L.<sup>b</sup>, Palumbo M.<sup>c</sup>, Breysse A.<sup>a</sup>, Mabilille F.<sup>a</sup>, Lacasta A.<sup>b</sup> and Barron C.<sup>\*a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> UMR IATE, INRA, CIRAD, Montpellier SupAgro, Université de Montpellier – 34060 Montpellier, France. \* cecile.barron@inra.fr

<sup>b</sup> EPSEB, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Av. Dr. Marañón 44-50, 08028 Barcelona, Spain

<sup>c</sup> Departamento de Engenharia Civil, Universidade Federal Fluminense, rua Miguel de Frias 9, Icaraí, Niterói, RJ, Brasil

Considering the over-exploitation of fossil resources and the release of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere, the development of a plant biorefinery is a major challenge for the next years in order to produce biomolecules, bioenergy and biomaterials. The conversion of lignocellulosic biomass coming from forest residuals, crop residues, and energy crops present a special interest as it is not actually competing with food applications. In this context the present work focuses on an agricultural by product, the corn stalk which is composed of two main anatomical parts: the pith, the inner part constituted of some vascular bundles dispersed in large parenchyma cells, and the rind, composed of closely spaced vascular bundles embedded in small-diameter parenchyma tissue. The alveolar structure observed in the pith is similar to the structure of expanded polystyrene and could explain the insulating properties observed in composites prepared from crop pith like sunflower and corn<sup>[1, 2]</sup>. One of the challenges to produce crop bio-based insulating boards at large scale is obtaining the pith by a mechanical and scalable method. Dry fractionation processes, which exhibit strong arguments of sustainability (no water consumption or drying of effluents), allowed dissociating plant structures at the relevant scale (0.5-4mm). In this work, firstly a dry fractionation diagram was developed at the kilogram scale in order to separate the rind from the pith of corn stem internode while preserving pith alveolated structure. Coarse grinding, based on shear as main mechanical stress, allowed dissociating both anatomical parts of the stem. They have been further separated based on their difference in apparent density using a gravimetric table. About 41% of the initial pith was recovered in fractions containing more than 92% of pith and with particles size higher than 1mm. Insulating composites were then produced with two fractions of corn pith and alginate as binder (Figure 1). The thermal conductivity is 0.046 W/mK (Fig1a), and 0.052 W/mK (Fig. 1b). This collaborative work highlights that dry fractionation preserves initial pith structure and the bio-based composited exhibit thermal conductivities in the range of conventional insulating materials.

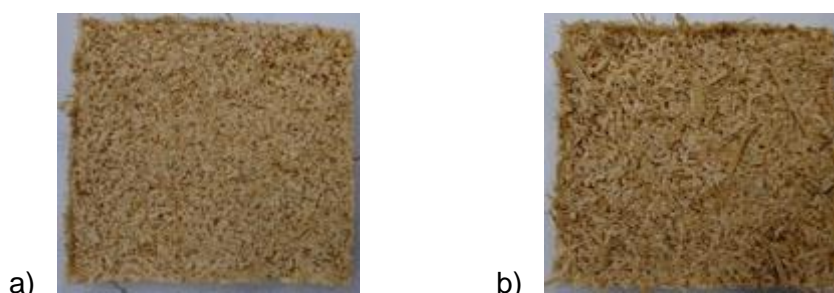


Figure 1. Bio-based insulating corn-alginate composites made from two corn pith fractions

[1] N. Mati-Baouche N., H. De Baynast, A. Lebert, S. Sun, C. Lopez-Mingo, P. Leclaire & P. Michaud. *Ind. Crops. Prod.*, **58** (2014) 244-250.

[2] M. Palumbo, A.M. Lacasta, N. Holcroft, A. Shea & P. Walker, P. *Construction and Building Materials*, **124** (2016), 269-275..