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OPTIMIZED VEGETAL WOOLS FOR INDOOR COMFORT: COUPLING FIRE TREATMENT WITH ACOUSTIC AND HYGROTHERMAL PERFORMANCES

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Vegetal wools are interesting materials to be used as insulator, as they provide high acoustic and hygrothermal performances [1]–[3]. Moreover, they are bio-based materials and store carbon to contribute to a sustainable development of the construction industry. However, one major concern arises regarding the material's fire resistance, especially for this application, as bio-based materials are usually flammable [4]. Therefore, to expand the applications of vegetal wools for green building insulation a fireproof treatment for this material should be considered. This work aims to investigate different methods of treatment and their impact on the acoustic and thermal performance of vegetal wools.

In this study, hemp fibres (a base material for vegetal wool), were fireproof treated with phytic acid, a bio-based source of phosphorus which can be used to improve the fire resistance of natural fibres, and urea, with two different methods: impregnation, where the fibres are immersed in solution, and pulverization, where the solution is sprayed over the fibres. Subsequently to the application of the solution, the fibres are taken to an oven for 2h, in order to graft the phosphorus on the fibres. In this step, two conditions were tested: mild (treatment at 80°C) and intermediate (treatment at 120°C). Thermal properties of reference and treated fibres were evaluated by thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) and their acoustic performance was measured by the impedance tube test.

The mass loss and its respective derivative (DTG) results are presented in Figure 1a. The reference fibres (in black) show a small mass loss until 100°C, which is related to the loss of humidity, then at around 230°C, the degradation of hemicellulose starts, followed by the thermal degradation of the cellulose, which lasts until 380°C and represents the biggest mass loss of the test [4]. Afterwards, a third mass loss is observed, which is a further degradation of the products of the combustion, known as humins [5]. This step occurs between 380°C and 520°C in the reference fibres.

In comparison with the reference, it is possible to see an earlier thermal degradation for the treated fibres. The DTG peak for the reference is at 334°C, whereas for the treated fibres, it varies from 261 to 300°C. Then, the reference fibres continue to degrade between 420°C and 520°C, and at 800°C, the residue is small (3.5%). For treated fibres, at 500°C, the mass left varies from 25.3% to 36.2%. This result is associated with the formation of a char layer over the fibres. It protects and delays the

degradation of the fibres. The earlier thermal degradation and a higher amount of residue indicates a greater amount of phosphorus grafted, and consequently, a lower flammability [6].

The Figure 1b presents the sound absorption of hemp fibres samples as a function of the frequency obtained by the impedance tube test. At low frequencies, especially lower than 300 Hz, the fibres do not perform well, in terms of sound absorption, with a α value of 0.40 for the reference fibres. From 600 Hz and onwards, the reference presented a sound absorption higher than 0.80. Overall, the results shown that the reference had a better performance, followed by IMP-MILD, IMP-INT, PUL-INT and PUL-MILD, indicating that the treatment decreased the acoustic performance. At 750 Hz, for example, the reference fibres presented a α value of 0.85, whereas the PUL-MILD fibres presented a α value of 0.69.

Further investigations will be made to evaluate the impact of the treatment on the microstructure of the fibres, which could explain the decrease in acoustic performance, and to characterize the material reaction to fire. Also, the hygrothermal performance will be evaluated as a function of the treatment. Then, the object of study will be switched from fibres to vegetal wools.

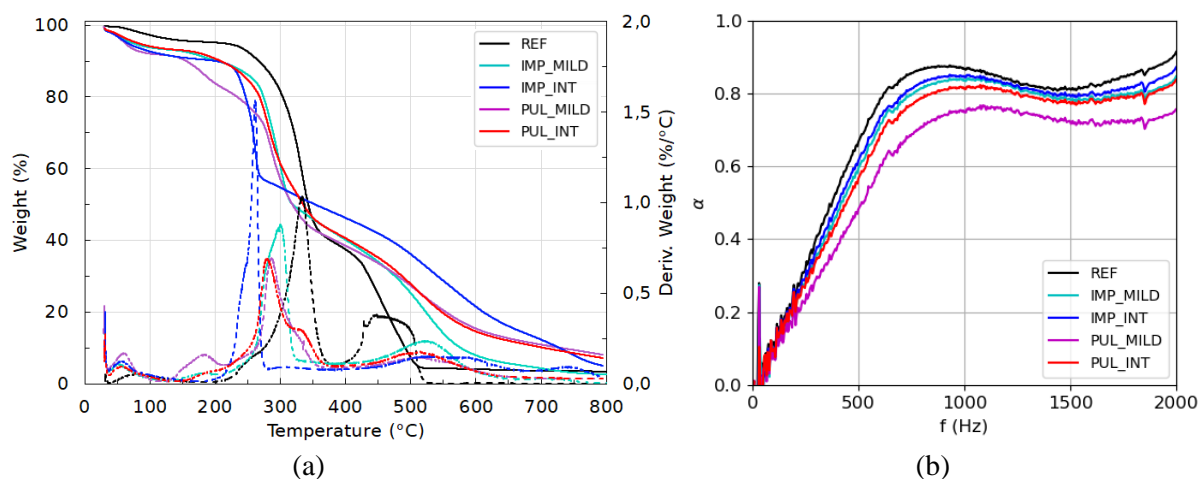


Figure 1: (a) TGA (solid line) and DTG (dashed line) of treated and non-treated hemp fibres; (b) Sound absorption of treated and non-treated hemp fibres.

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