

COAGU'CAPT: SENSOR IN VAT FOR MONITORING REAL-TIME MILK COAGULATION

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INTRODUCTION:

This COAGUCAPT project, supported by the CNIEL, Région BFC and BPI, concerns the development of a milk coagulation sensor, in situ, immersed into the vat. The sensor will allow a precise evaluation of the milk clotting time (transition from a liquid state to a gel state), of the speed of the gel formation and the state of curd firmness, for an appropriate cutting time.

The outcome for the cheesemaker is to obtain the most stable production quality over time and to increase manufacturing yield.

METHODS:

The technology concerns the development of a milk coagulation sensor, and its onboard electronics (Figure 1) based on a principle of generating a localized, nonpropagating acoustic wave.



Figure 1 : COAGU'CAPT acquisition system

This wave is generated by a piezoelectric transducer glued to a stainless steel membrane (Figure 2). The rigidity of the gel during coagulation (curdled milk) induces mechanical damping on the enabling membrane the electrical properties of the piezoelectric transducer measured to be and the rigidity parameters of the gel to be extracted.



Figure 2 : Frontside to the COAGU'CAPT sensor

RESULTS:

After the introduction of the coagulant, the frequency shifts providing access to different parameters (Figure 3), for example:

- clotting time (CT)
- gel firmness after one clotting time (GF)



Figure 3 : Sensitivity of the COAGU'CAPT sensor to the amount of rennet (a) and the amount of proteins (b).

CONCLUSION:

The sensor will be validated at different scales: in the laboratory, pilot cheese-making plant and cheese industry (reproducibility, sensitivity, influence of technological conditions, comparison with existing at line sensors).

A real-time processing of the data will allow the prediction of the different parameters of interest for the cheesemakers.

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