

# CURRENT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN BIOTECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AT IIUM

VOLUME IV

Editors:

Ma'an Alkhatib  
Abdullah Al Mamun  
Faridah Yusof



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*(VOLUME IV)*

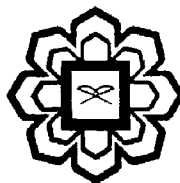
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**Ma'an Alkhatib**

**Abdullah Al Mamun**

**Faridah Yusof**

**Department of Biotechnology Engineering  
Faculty of Engineering  
International Islamic University Malaysia**



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### ISOLATION OF BACTERIA FROM SOIL FOR PLASTICS DEGRADATION

Ma'an Alkhatib, Nur Amalina Binti Ahmad, Alade Abass Olanrewaju

Department of Biotechnology Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, International Islamic University Malaysia, Gombak, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

#### ABSTRACT

Plastics pollution has a bad impact to the environment and it is increasing day by day as people keep disposing them. Some plastics are degraded quickly and some are not, but when plastics are buried in the soil, the bacteria act on them by "eating" the carbon chain of the plastics as source of food, under the degradation process. However, some plastics can only be degraded by certain microorganisms. Thus, in order to monitor the degradation process, specific bacteria must be isolated from rich source such oil-polluted soil and identified first the species of the bacteria. The type of plastic examined in this study was polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHA), which were mixed with the growth media which contains NaCl, K<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub>, KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, MgSO<sub>4</sub>•7H<sub>2</sub>O, CaCl<sub>2</sub>•H<sub>2</sub>O, NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub>, and distilled water. Then, the isolated and purified bacteria were used to degrade PHA. The plastic was gradually degraded and the more bacteria grow, the higher chance the PHA will be degraded.

**Keywords:** biodegradation, microorganisms, packaging material, plastic

#### INTRODUCTION

Plastics are often used in disposable applications, such as packaging, which are utilized in almost every manufacturing industry ranging from automobiles to medicine. (Reddy, 2003) These materials contribute to the volume of solid wastes, particularly, when disposed haphazardly. Various countries such as Malaysia, are confronting the escalating problem of environmental pollution related to the disposal of plastic wastes (Gan, 2007). Due to plastics insolubility in water and relative chemical inertness, pure plastics generally have low toxicity in their finished state, and may even pass through the digestive system with no ill effect (other than mechanical damage or obstruction) (Gan, 2007). Moreover, some plastics often contain a variety of toxic additives such as plasticizers (adipates and phthalates often added to brittle plastics like polyvinyl chloride - PVC) to make them pliable enough for use in food packaging, children's toys and teethingers, tubing, shower curtains and other items. Traces of these chemicals can leach out of the plastic when it comes into contact with food. Some compounds leaching from polystyrene food containers have been found to interfere with hormone functions and are suspected human carcinogens.

Moreover, while the finished plastic may be non-toxic, the monomers used in its manufacture may be toxic; and small amounts of those chemical may remain trapped in the product. It has been recognized that the chemical used to make PVC, vinyl chloride, as a