

BARLEY AS A POTENTIAL CEREAL FOR PRODUCING HEALTHY AND FUNCTIONAL FOODS

Amna Eyadah

Department of Technological Laboratories – Chemistry
College of Technological Studies
The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training
Shuwaikh, Kuwait City, Kuwait
Email: amna.a.e77@gmail.com

Abstract

Barley, a versatile and widely cultivated cereal grain, has gained increased attention as a potential ingredient for producing healthy and functional foods. This research paper aimed to explore the nutritional composition of barley, its health benefits, and its potential applications in the food industry. The paper delved into the various bioactive compounds found in barley, such as dietary fibers, antioxidants, and phytochemicals, which contribute to its beneficial effects on human health. Furthermore, it discussed the potential of barley in the development of functional foods, including its use in bakery products, beverages, and snacks. The paper also examined the challenges and opportunities associated with incorporating barley into the food industry. Overall, this research paper aimed to highlight barley as a promising cereal grain for producing nutritious and functional foods.

Keywords: Barley, nutrition, antioxidants, dietary fiber, phytochemical.

الملخص

لقد اكتسب الشعير، وهو من الحبوب المتنوعة والمزروعة على نطاق واسع، اهتمامًا متزايدًا كعنصر محتمل لإنتاج أغذية صحية وفعالة. تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى استكشاف التركيب الغذائي للشعير وفوائده الصحية وتطبيقاته المحتملة في صناعة الأغذية. وتطرقت الورقة إلى مختلف المركبات النشطة بيولوجيا الموجودة في الشعير، مثل الألياف الغذائية ومضادات الأكسدة والمواد الكيميائية النباتية، والتي تساهم في آثاره المفيدة على صحة الإنسان. علاوة على ذلك، ناقشت الورقة إمكانات الشعير في تطوير الأطعمة الوظيفية، بما في ذلك استخدامه في منتجات المخبوزات والمشروبات واللوجبات الخفيفة. تناولت الورقة أيضًا التحديات والفرص المرتبطة بدمج الشعير في صناعة الأغذية. بشكل عام، تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تسليط الضوء على الشعير كحبوب واعدة لإنتاج أغذية مغذية ووظيفية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعير، التغذية، مضادات الأكسدة، الألياف الغذائية، الكيمياء النباتية.

Introduction

Barley is a cereal plant belonging to the Poaceae family, and is cultivated for its edible grain. Barley, a crop cultivated in diverse environmental conditions, ranks as the fourth most significant grain crop on a global scale, following wheat, rice, and maize. A cereal crop with a long-standing historical background spanning several millennia has recently garnered significant interest due to its potential as a fundamental component in the production of nutritious and beneficial food products. Barley, due to its notable nutritional composition and adaptable functional qualities, presents a great opportunity for the development of food products that not only satisfy hunger but also enhance overall wellness and health (El-Hashash & El-Absy, 2019).

As the global demand for nutritious and functional foods continues to rise, exploring the potential of barley as a cereal for producing such products becomes increasingly important. Barley, scientifically known as *Hordeum vulgare*, is one of the oldest cultivated grains, originating in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East. Traditionally used as a staple food in many cultures, barley has been overshadowed by other cereals like wheat and rice in recent times. However, emerging research has shed light on the exceptional nutritional profile and functional attributes of barley, making it an intriguing option for the development of innovative food products.

The nutritional composition of barley is noteworthy, as it contains a balanced combination of macronutrients and micronutrients. It is a good source of dietary fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, all of which contribute to its potential health benefits. Additionally, barley contains bioactive compounds such as phenolic acids, flavonoids, and beta-glucans, which have been associated with various positive health outcomes (Shvachko et al., 2021). Moreover, barley possesses functional properties that make it an attractive ingredient for food formulation. Its ability to gel, thicken, stabilize, and emulsify food products offers numerous possibilities for enhancing the texture, sensory attributes, and shelf-life of food products (Punia, 2020).

The unique functional characteristics of barley have led to its successful incorporation into a range of food items, including bakery products, beverages, and snacks. In light of the growing interest in functional foods, which are designed to provide specific health benefits beyond basic nutrition, barley holds great promise. The potential health benefits associated with consuming barley-based foods are vast. Scientific studies have suggested that barley may aid in weight management, reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, and improve gut health. Furthermore, barley based foods have been found to promote satiety, regulate blood sugar levels, and lower cholesterol levels (Miyamoto et al., 2018).

By harnessing the potential of barley, we can not only contribute to the development of healthier food options but also foster sustainable agricultural practices. The utilization of barley in functional foods can simultaneously address the growing consumer demand for nutritionally enhanced products and the need for diversification in cereal crops (Shvachko et al., 2021). Through this research, we hope to inspire further exploration, collaboration, and development in the field of barley-based healthy and functional foods.

This research paper aimed to explore the potential of barley as a cereal for producing healthy and functional foods. By examining its nutritional composition, functional properties, health benefits, and applications in various food products, we can gain insights into the role of barley in promoting health and wellness. Additionally, this paper addressed the challenges in utilizing barley for functional foods and propose future perspectives for further research and innovation in this field.

Nutritional composition of barley

This section of the investigation examines the macronutrient and micronutrient composition of barley, providing insights into its recognized significance as a beneficial component of a well-rounded dietary regimen. This inquiry pertains to the examination of the macronutrient composition of barley.

- **Macronutrients**

Macronutrients are the nutrients that our bodies require in large amounts to sustain energy and promote growth. Barley is a rich source of carbohydrates, providing a substantial amount of energy. These complex carbohydrates are digested slowly, leading to a steady release of glucose into the bloodstream, which can help regulate blood sugar levels and provide a sustained feeling of fullness. Furthermore, barley contains a moderate amount of protein. While not as high in protein as some other grains, such as quinoa, barley still contributes to meeting our daily protein requirements. Protein is essential for tissue repair, muscle growth, and the production of enzymes and hormones. Incorporating barley into a balanced diet can be particularly beneficial for individuals following a plant-based or vegetarian lifestyle (Trautwein & McKay, 2020).

- **Carbohydrates**

Barley serves as a plentiful source of intricate carbohydrates, predominantly in the form of starch. Starch, being a polysaccharide formed by glucose units, assumes the role of the primary energy reservoir in plants. Within barley grains, it functions as the major carbohydrate constituent, encompassing approximately 60-70% of the overall dry mass. In the context of barley, starch can be classified into two types: amylose and amylopectin. Amylose denotes a linear glucose polymer, whereas amylopectin is characterized by its extensive branching. The ratio between amylose and amylopectin diverges across various barley varieties, thereby exerting an influence on the culinary and processing attributes of barley-based products (Sultan, 2013).

Carbohydrates dominate the composition of barley grains, typically constituting 78%–83% of the total dry mass. The carbohydrates in barley can be broadly classified into low molecular weight carbohydrates, non-structural polysaccharides, and cell wall polysaccharides. Low molecular weight carbohydrates encompass glucose, fructose, and sucrose. Monosaccharides, exemplified by glucose and fructose, represent the simplest carbohydrates and generally account for 3%–8% of the entire sugar content in mature barley grains (Keller & Pharr, 2017). Disaccharides, in the form of sucrose and maltose, consist of two sugar molecules linked by a glycosidic bond (Pokrzywnicka & Koncki, 2018).

Sucrose, being the primary disaccharide involved in photosynthesis, transforms into starch to serve as a storage substance. Maltose, however, does not participate in starch synthesis and is typically produced during the germination process of barley. Oligosaccharides can be characterized as carbohydrates consisting of 2–10 monomeric residues connected through O-glycosidic bonds. Raffinose, comprising approximately 25% of the total sugar content in mature barley grains, diminishes rapidly during germination (Henry, 1988).

The composition of starch in barley grains is primarily classified into two categories, namely amylose and amylopectin, based on their structural characteristics. Amylose is composed of linear chains of α -(1–4) linkage, with 100–10,000 glucose residues linked together. This component constitutes approximately 20%–30% of the total starch in non-waxy grains. The synthesis of amylose is primarily facilitated by the enzymes adenosine diphosphate (ADP)-glucose pyrophosphorylase (AGPase) and granule-bound starch synthase (GBSS) (Jeon et al., 2010).

In barley, the waxy gene encoding GBSS is responsible for amylose synthesis, and any mutations in this gene can significantly impact the amylose content and the morphology of starch granules (Li, et al., 2019). The initial report of the high amylose mutant Glacier AC38 was provided by Merritt in 1967, with the high amylose phenotype being attributed to the *amo1* gene. Barley varieties with high amylose content are commonly characterized by shrunken kernels and reduced kernel weight (Schondelmaier, et al., 1992). On the other hand, amylopectin, which constitutes the majority of the total starch content (typically 70%–80%), is highly branched with 20 α -(1–4)-linked glucose residues and α -(1–6) linkages (Sorndech et al., 2016).

The biosynthesis of amylopectin involves a series of enzymatic reactions coordinated by AGPase, soluble starch synthases (SS), starch branching enzymes (SBE), and starch de-branching enzymes (DBE). The loss of SSIIa enzyme activity, referred to as *sex6* mutants, leads to a reduction in amylopectin synthesis and a shortened chain length distribution. Furthermore, the silencing of SBE genes using RNA interference methods has resulted in the development of a novel starch variant composed solely of amylose, known as amylose-only starch (Zhao, et al., 2021).

• Protein and lysine

In the context of barley grains, proteins play a crucial role in various functions, including structural support, metabolic processes, and the provision of nitrogen for the developing embryo. Extensive research involving over 1000 genotypes of barley has demonstrated a wide range of protein content, varying from 7% to 25%. It is important to note that the protein content in barley grains is greatly influenced by both the genetic makeup and the surrounding environment. Based on their biological functions, barley grain proteins can be broadly categorized into seed storage proteins and structural proteins (Gubatz, et al., 2010).

Non-storage proteins are primarily located in the aleurone and embryo, while storage proteins are predominantly found in the endosperm. One of the major storage proteins in barley grains is hordein, constituting approximately 35%–50% of the total protein content. Hordein can be further classified into four groups, namely A, B, C, and D, based on their molecular mass and amino acid composition. Similar to other cereals, lysine is the most limiting amino acid in barley. Consequently, enhancing the lysine content has been a significant objective in the breeding of barley for food production (Baik & Ullrich, 2008).

Notably, high-lysine cultivars have been successfully developed for various cereals. For instance, high lysine maize exhibits a lysine content of 3.4%, while high lysine sorghum contains 3.33% lysine content, as compared to the normal maize and sorghum with 2% lysine content. In the case of barley, high lysine cultivars such as Hiproly and Risø Mutant 1508 have lysine contents of 4.1% and 5%, respectively, whereas the normal barleys possess a lysine content of 3.5% (Mohamed el Lozy, & Kerr, 1977).

- **Micronutrient**

The barley grain possesses a significant amount of micronutrients, rendering it a highly nutritious food source. The compound encompasses a diverse array of essential vitamins and minerals that play a vital role in sustaining an individual's overall well-being (Loskutov & Khlestkina, 2021).

- **Vitamins**

Vitamins are generally classified into two distinct categories, namely fat-soluble vitamins and water-soluble vitamins. The former encompasses vitamins A, D, E, and K, whereas the latter includes inositol, as well as vitamins C and B. It is worth noting that vitamin B is generally found in abundance in cereals. In terms of its beneficial properties, vitamin E, also referred to as tocopherols, is considered to have a positive impact on human health as it aids in reducing the risks of various diseases (Ravisankar, et al., 2015).

Vitamin E itself is comprised of eight different isomers, consisting of four tocopherols and four tocotrienols. When comparing different cereals, barley stands out as a particularly rich source of vitamin E. Furthermore, it should be noted that vitamin E content in barley may vary significantly depending on genotype, ranging from 8.5 to 68.8 µg dry weight. Additionally, hulled barley tends to contain a higher concentration of tocopherols compared to hullless barley (Blake et al., 2011).

However, an interesting exception can be observed in the case of hullless waxy variety known as washonubet, which actually exhibits a higher tocopherol content than its hulled counterparts in terms of the distribution within barley grains. It has been observed that the majority of tocopherols are located in the embryo, while tocotrienols are primarily present in the endosperm and pericarp (Legzdina, et al., 2022).

- **Minerals**

The ash content of barley typically falls within the range of 2.5% to 3.1%. The distribution of minerals is spread across the entirety of the grain, although they are primarily concentrated in the outer layers of the grains. Consequently, the mineral content is significantly higher in hulled barley compared to the hullless variety. Based on their concentration in plant tissues, minerals can be categorized into two groups: macro elements and micro elements. The macro elements consist of Ca, P, K, Mg, Na, Cl, and S, while the micro elements include Co, Cu, Fe, I, Mn, Se, and Zn (Blake et al., 2011).

Among these elements, K and P are the most abundant in barley grains, accounting for 0.37% - 0.50% and 0.33% - 0.60% of the dry matter, respectively. K serves an essential macronutrient for maintaining electrical potential, hydrostatic pressure, and biochemical activity in numerous enzymes. P on the other hand, is another crucial macronutrient, the scarcity of which can impact the growth and development of plants (Panizo-Casado, et al., 2020).

In barley and cereals grains, phytic acid (PA) represent the main storage form of phosphorus, accounting for 65% - 85% of the total phosphorus in seeds. PA poses a limitation on the nutritional value of animal feed, and furthermore, excrements containing PA may lead to water contamination. Consequently, a low content of PA in grains is desirable for feed barley. Mutants with low phytic acid have been identified in the barley cultivar (Bregitzer & Raboy, 2006).

• **Phenolic acids**

Phenolic compounds, namely phenolic acid, flavonoid, and proanthocyanidins, are the primary source of antioxidant compounds found in whole grains. In the case of barley grain, these compounds are predominantly distributed in the husks, pericarp, testa, and aleurone. The overall content of phenolics varies between 130 to 481 mg gallic acid equivalents (GAE)/100 g of dry weight (Han et al., 2018; Shen et al., 2018).

The content of total flavonoids and total proanthocyanidins ranges from 50 to 150 mg rutin equivalents (RE)/100 g and 29 to 65.26 mg/100 g of dry weight, respectively. Ferulic acid (FA) and p-coumaric acid (p-CA) are the primary phenolic acids present in barley, accounting for 1.13 to 4.04 $\mu\text{g/g}$ and 0.19 to 3.53 $\mu\text{g/g}$, respectively. As vital secondary metabolites in plants, phenolic compounds not only have a significant role in plant growth, development, and stress resistance, but they also have beneficial effects on human health due to their potent antioxidant properties. In the brewing industry, phenolic compounds impact the quality aspects of beer, including taste, flavor, haze stability, and appearance (Kaur, 2023).

• **Dietary fiber**

Barley is an excellent source of dietary fiber, specifically beta-glucan, which has been shown to reduce cholesterol levels and promote heart health. Additionally, barley is rich in vitamins such as niacin, thiamine, and vitamin B6, which play essential roles in energy production, brain function, and the metabolism of macronutrients. When it comes to minerals, barley contains noteworthy amounts of magnesium, phosphorus, and selenium. Magnesium is involved in numerous biochemical reactions in the body, including muscle and nerve function, while phosphorus is necessary for bone health and energy metabolism. Selenium acts as a powerful antioxidant, protecting cells from oxidative damage and supporting a healthy immune system (Gush, et al., 2021).

Bioactive compounds and its health benefits in barley

Barley, a versatile grain, has gained significant attention in recent years due to its remarkable nutritional profile. Beyond its role as a staple food, barley is rich in various bioactive compounds that contribute to its health benefits of antioxidants, dietary fiber, and phytochemicals in barley, highlighting their potential impact on human health.

- **Antioxidants:**

Barley stands out as an excellent source of antioxidants, which are compounds that protect the body from harmful free radicals. These unstable molecules can cause oxidative stress and damage cells, leading to various chronic diseases. Barley's high antioxidant content, particularly in the form of phenolic compounds, helps combat oxidative stress and reduce the risk of diseases such as cardiovascular ailments, certain cancers, and neurodegenerative disorders. The antioxidants found in barley contribute to its overall health-promoting properties (Slavin, 2013).

Health benefits → Barley contains antioxidants that help protect the body against oxidative stress caused by free radicals. Oxidative stress can lead to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular ailments, certain cancers, and neurodegenerative disorders. By neutralizing free radicals, antioxidants in barley help reduce the risk of these diseases and promote overall health (Abdel-Aal & Rabalski, 2008).

- **Dietary Fiber:**

One of the key highlights of barley is its impressive dietary fiber content. Dietary fiber plays a crucial role in maintaining digestive health, regulating blood sugar levels, and supporting weight management. Barley contains both soluble and insoluble fiber, with the majority being soluble fiber known as beta-glucans. These beta-glucans have been shown to lower cholesterol levels, improve glycemic control, and enhance gut health by promoting the growth of beneficial gut bacteria. Incorporating barley into one's diet can help prevent constipation, reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, and support overall digestive well-being (Behall, 2004).

Health benefits → The dietary fiber in barley, particularly beta-glucans, offers several health benefits. Firstly, it aids in maintaining digestive health by promoting regular bowel movements and preventing constipation. Secondly, beta-glucans have been shown to lower cholesterol levels by reducing the absorption of dietary cholesterol in the intestines. This, in turn, can reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Lastly, dietary fiber helps regulate blood sugar levels by slowing down the absorption of glucose, making barley beneficial for individuals with diabetes or those looking to manage their blood sugar levels.

- **Phytochemicals:**

Barley is also abundant in various phytochemicals, which are naturally occurring compounds found in plant-based foods. These phytochemicals, such as flavonoids and lignans, have been associated with numerous health benefits. Flavonoids, for instance, possess potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, protecting against chronic diseases like heart disease and certain types of cancer (Wu, et al., 2015).

Lignans, on the other hand, have been linked to a reduced risk of hormone-related cancers, such as breast and prostate cancer. The presence of these phytochemicals in barley reinforces its status as a nutritional powerhouse (Teklić, et al., 2021).

Health benefits → The phytochemicals present in barley, such as flavonoids and lignans, offer various health benefits. Flavonoids possess potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, which help protect against chronic diseases like heart disease and certain types of cancer. Lignans, on the other hand, have been associated with a reduced risk of hormone-related cancers, including breast and prostate cancer. By incorporating barley into one's diet, individuals can benefit from these protective effects provided by phytochemicals (Teklić, et al., 2021).

Functional properties in barley

Barley possesses functional properties that make it a valuable ingredient in various food products. It has the ability to gel, thicken, stabilize, and emulsify food products.

- **Gelling Properties**

Barley contains a significant amount of soluble fiber, particularly beta-glucan, which contributes to its gelling properties. When cooked, barley releases starches that form a gel-like substance, increasing the viscosity of food products. This property makes barley an excellent ingredient for soups, stews, and puddings, as it enhances texture and provides a satisfying mouthfeel (Goudar, et al., 2020).

- **Thickening Properties**

Due to its high starch content, barley has excellent thickening properties. When cooked in liquid, the starch granules in barley absorb moisture, swell, and release amylose, a component responsible for thickening. This characteristic makes barley an ideal ingredient for thickening gravies, sauces, and other liquid-based dishes (Goudar, et al., 2020).

- **Stabilizing Properties**

Barley's ability to stabilize food products is attributed to its fiber content and protein composition. The soluble fiber in barley forms a protective layer around particles, preventing them from agglomerating or settling. This property aids in stabilizing emulsions, suspensions, and foams in various food applications. Barley can be used to stabilize dressings, sauces, beverages, and even ice creams, allowing for improved texture and extended shelf life (Goudar, et al., 2020).

- **Emulsifying Properties**

Emulsification is the process of dispersing fat or oil droplets in water-based systems, creating a stable and uniform mixture. Barley proteins possess emulsifying properties, allowing them to interact with both oil and water phases in food products. This property makes barley an effective emulsifier in salad dressings, mayonnaise, and other oil-in-water emulsions, ensuring a homogeneous and creamy texture (Goudar, et al., 2020).

Role of barley in improving texture, sensory attributes, and shelf life of food products

Barley plays a significant role in enhancing the texture, sensory attributes, and shelf-life of various food products. In texture improvement, barley contains high levels of soluble and insoluble dietary fibers, such as beta-glucans and arabinoxylans, which contribute to improved texture in food products. These fibers can absorb water, enhancing the water-holding capacity of food formulations, resulting in improved moisture retention and reduced staling. The presence of barley fibers can also contribute to the development of desirable mouthfeel and viscosity in products like soups, sauces, and bakery items. Moreover, sensory attributes enhancement, barley can impart unique flavors and aromas to food products, enhancing their sensory appeal (Al-Ansi, et al., 2022).

Al-Ansi, W., Zhang, Y., Alkawry, T. A. A., Al-Adeeb, A., Mahdi, A. A., Al-Maqtari, Q. A., Ahmed, A., Mushtaq, B.S., Fan, M., Li, Y. & Wang, L. (2022). Influence of germination on bread-making behaviors, functional and shelf-life properties, and overall quality of highland barley bread. *LWT*, 159, 113200.

The malty and nutty flavors of barley can be utilized in the production of beverages like beer or as a flavor enhancer in bread, cookies, and granola bars. Barley can add a pleasant chewiness or crunchiness to products like breakfast cereals, granola, and snack bars. Further, Shelf-life Extension, barley contains natural antioxidants, including phenolic compounds, which can help delay lipid oxidation and extend the shelf-life of food products. These antioxidants can help prevent rancidity and maintain the quality of fats and oils used in various food formulations (Al-Ansi, et al., 2022).

Barley's natural antioxidants can also play a role in preserving the color, flavor, and overall quality of food products, leading to longer shelf-life. It is important to note that the specific impact of barley on texture, sensory attributes, and shelf-life may vary depending on the food product and the processing methods used. Incorporating barley into formulations requires careful consideration of its functional properties and compatibility with other ingredients (Al-Ansi, et al., 2022).

Potential applications of barley

Barley offers a wide range of potential applications in various food products. Such as, bakery items, beverages, and snacks (Farang, et al., 2022).

1. Bakery Items:

- Barley flour: Barley flour can be used as a partial substitute for wheat flour in bread, muffins, cookies, and cakes, providing a unique flavor and texture profile.
- Barley flakes: Barley flakes can be used in granola bars, bread, and cookies to add texture, flavor, and nutritional value.
- Barley malt: Barley malt extract or syrup can be utilized as a natural sweetener or flavor enhancer in baked goods like bread, bagels, and pretzels (Sullivan, et al., 2013).

2. Beverages:

- Barley water: Barley water is a traditional beverage made by boiling barley grains. It can be consumed as a refreshing drink on its own or used as a base for flavored drinks or cocktails.
- Barley tea: Roasted barley grains are used to make barley tea, which is popular in many Asian countries. It has a nutty flavor and can be enjoyed hot or cold.
- Barley-based beverages: Barley can also be used as an ingredient in the production of malt beverages, such as beer or non-alcoholic malt beverages (Farang, et al., 2022).

3. Snacks:

- Barley snacks: Barley can be used to make healthy and crunchy snacks like roasted barley kernels or popped barley. These snacks can be enjoyed on their own or included in trail mixes.
- Barley-based granola bars: Barley flakes or barley flour can be incorporated into granola bar recipes to enhance their nutritional content and add a unique texture and flavor.
- Barley crackers: Barley flour can be used to make crispy crackers that are rich in fiber and have a distinct taste (Frag, et al., 2022).

These are just a few examples of how barley can be used in various food products. Its versatility and nutritional benefits make it an interesting ingredient to explore in the food industry.

Health benefits of barley

The health benefits associated with consuming barley-based foods. From its high fiber content to its rich nutritional profile, barley proves to be a valuable addition to a balanced diet.

- **Promotes Heart Health:**

Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of barley on heart health. Barley is known to be a rich source of beta-glucan, a soluble fiber that helps reduce cholesterol levels. Research suggests that regular consumption of barley-based foods can lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels, thus reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases (Sharma, et al., 2022).

- **Manages Blood Sugar Levels:**

Barley's low glycemic index and high fiber content make it an excellent choice for managing blood sugar levels. Studies have shown that consuming barley-based foods can help regulate blood glucose levels, making it beneficial for individuals with diabetes or those at risk of developing the condition (Sharma, et al., 2022).

- **Supports Digestive Health:**

The fiber content in barley plays a crucial role in promoting healthy digestion. Barley is a good source of both insoluble and soluble fibers, which aid in maintaining regular bowel movements and preventing constipation. Furthermore, the prebiotic properties of barley can support the growth of beneficial gut bacteria, contributing to overall gut health (Sharma, et al., 2022).

- **Provides Nutritional Value:**

Barley-based foods offer a wide array of essential nutrients. They are rich in vitamins, minerals (such as magnesium, phosphorus, and selenium), and antioxidants. These nutrients contribute to overall well-being, support immune function, and help protect against oxidative stress (Biel et al., 2020).

- **Weight Management:**

Including barley in one's diet can be beneficial for weight management. Its high fiber content promotes feelings of fullness and helps control appetite. Studies have shown that consuming barley-based foods can aid in weight loss and the reduction of visceral fat (Sharma, et al., 2022).

- **Potential Cancer Prevention:**

Emerging research suggests that certain compounds found in barley, such as phenolic acids and lignans, may possess anti-cancer properties. While further studies are needed, the initial findings highlight the potential role of barley-based foods in cancer prevention (Sharma, et al., 2022).

- **Diabetes:**

Barley has a low glycemic index, which means it causes a slow and gradual rise in blood sugar levels. This can be beneficial for individuals with diabetes or those at risk of developing the condition. The high fiber content in barley also helps regulate blood sugar levels by slowing down the absorption of glucose (Sharma, et al., 2022).

Barley and functional food

There exist various instances of functional foods that integrate barley, including high-fiber breakfast cereal, barley bread, and barley energy products.

- **Breakfast cereals**

Many breakfast cereals now include barley as an ingredient to boost their fiber content. These cereals often combine barley flakes or barley flour with other grains, such as oats or whole wheat. Barley has the potential to be integrated into breakfast cereals that are rich in dietary fiber, thereby offering individuals seeking a wholesome morning meal a nourishing and satiating choice. Barley exhibits a notable fiber content, hence facilitating the enhancement of digestive well-being and inducing satiety throughout the morning hours (Lyu, et al., 2022).

- **Barley bread**

Barley flour can be used as an ingredient in bread-making to increase the fiber and nutrient content. Barley-enriched bread can be found in some specialty or health food stores. It may be labeled as "barley bread" or "barley-enriched bread." Barley bread is a type of bread that has increased fiber content and enhanced nutritional value when compared to conventional white bread. This characteristic renders it a favored option for individuals seeking to integrate a greater quantity of whole grains into their dietary regimen. These bread varieties offer the benefits of barley's fiber and other nutrients in a convenient and delicious way (Lyu, et al., 2022).

- **Energy bars**

Energy bars are popular snacks for those seeking quick and convenient sources of energy. Some energy bars now incorporate barley as a key ingredient to provide sustained energy and promote satiety. Barley has the potential to

be utilized in various energy-based consumables such as energy bars, beverages, and other convenience items, aiming to offer a prompt and effortless means of acquiring energy. These goods frequently incorporate barley alongside additional components such as nuts, seeds, and dried fruits in order to produce a delectable and nourishing snack (Lyu, et al., 2022).

When selecting functional foods incorporating barley, it is always a good idea to check the ingredient labels and choose options that have minimal added sugars and artificial additives. This way, you can enjoy the health benefits of barley while maintaining a balanced and nourishing diet.

Challenges and future perspective

There are some challenges and limitation of the utilization of barley in food production. There are potential barriers that arise when trying to incorporate barley into food products.

- **Limited Consumer Awareness:**

One of the primary challenges is the limited consumer awareness regarding the health benefits of barley. Despite its rich nutritional profile, including high fiber content, vitamins, and minerals, barley remains relatively unknown to many consumers. This lack of awareness can hinder the demand for barley-based products, ultimately limiting their availability and variety in the market (Newton, et al., 2011).

- **Processing and Taste:**

Barley possesses a distinct flavor and texture that may not appeal to everyone. The grain's chewy texture and nutty taste can be off-putting to some consumers, making it challenging to incorporate barley into a wide range of products. Additionally, the processing of barley, such as milling and grinding, requires specialized equipment and techniques, which can pose challenges for food manufacturers (Newton, et al., 2011).

- **Gluten Content:**

Another limitation of barley is its gluten content. Barley contains gluten, making it unsuitable for individuals with gluten intolerance or celiac disease. This restricts the market potential for barley-based products, as a significant portion of the population follows gluten-free diets. While alternative barley varieties with low gluten content have been developed, their availability and acceptance in the market remain limited (Newton, et al., 2011).

- **Price and Sourcing:**

The cost of barley can also be a limiting factor. Compared to other grains, such as wheat or rice, barley may be more expensive due to factors like cultivation requirements and market demand. This can impact the affordability and accessibility of barley-based products, making them less accessible to certain consumer groups. Additionally, the sourcing and availability of high-quality barley may be limited in some regions, further hindering its widespread use (Newton, et al., 2011).

- **Culinary Adaptability:**

Barley's culinary adaptability is another challenge when utilizing it in food production. While it is commonly used in soups, stews, and salads, incorporating barley into other food products, such as baked goods or snacks, can be more complex. The unique properties of barley, including its ability to absorb water and its impact on texture, require careful formulation and recipe development to ensure desirable end products (Newton, et al., 2011).

Strategies to improve the limitations

There are potential strategies we can use.

- **Improving barley processing techniques:**

Enhancing the processing techniques can help improve the taste, texture, and overall appeal of barley-based foods. This could involve developing innovative processing methods that preserve the nutritional value of barley while also enhancing its flavor and versatility in various food applications (Biel et al., 2020).

- **Enhancing consumer acceptance:**

Increasing consumer acceptance of barley-based products can be achieved through various means. One way is by creating attractive and flavorful recipes that showcase barley as a delicious and versatile ingredient. This could involve collaborating with chefs and food experts to develop appealing and easy-to-prepare recipes that highlight the health benefits and unique qualities of barley. Additionally, conducting consumer education campaigns to raise awareness about the nutritional value and potential uses of barley can help overcome any existing misconceptions or lack of knowledge (Biel et al., 2020).

- **Promoting awareness of barley's health benefits:**

Educating consumers about the health benefits of barley is crucial. This can be done through marketing campaigns, health fairs, workshops, and online content that emphasize the nutritional advantages such as high fiber content, antioxidants, and low glycemic index. Collaborating with nutritionists or health professionals to provide credible information about the health benefits of consuming barley can also help increase awareness and encourage its inclusion in a balanced diet.

- **Collaborating with food industry stakeholders:**

Collaborating with food manufacturers, retailers, and distributors can help increase the availability and accessibility of barley-based products in the market. Encouraging partnerships between barley producers, food companies, and research institutions can lead to the development of new and innovative barley-based products that cater to consumer preferences and needs (Biel et al., 2020).

- **Government support and policies:**

Governments can play a role in promoting the production and consumption of barley-based foods through supportive policies and incentives. This could include funding research and development projects, providing grants or subsidies to farmers and food companies, and implementing regulations that promote the use of barley in food

products. By implementing these strategies, we can work towards overcoming the challenges associated with utilizing barley for producing healthy and functional foods, and promote its acceptance and consumption among a wider range of consumers. Finally, the future prospects of barley-based functional foods are promising, with ample room for further research and innovation (Biel et al., 2020).

Health and wellness trends, as consumers increasingly prioritize health and wellness, there is a growing demand for functional foods that offer added nutritional benefits. Barley, with its high fiber content, antioxidants, and potential cholesterol-lowering properties, is well-positioned to meet this demand. Further research can explore and validate these health benefits, paving the way for the development of more targeted and evidence-based barley-based functional foods.

Further, sustainable and environmentally friendly, barley is a sustainable crop that requires fewer resources compared to other grains. It thrives in diverse climates and has a lower water footprint, making it an environmentally friendly choice. With sustainability becoming a key consideration for consumers, the potential for research and innovation in developing sustainable barley-based functional foods is significant. This could involve exploring new processing techniques, developing eco-friendly packaging, and creating products that align with sustainable consumption patterns (Biel et al., 2020).

In addition, diversification of barley-based products, currently, many barley-based products primarily focus on traditional food items like bread, soup, and porridge. However, there is considerable potential for diversification and innovation in creating new and exciting barley-based products. This could include snacks, beverages, ready-to-eat meals, and ingredient blends that cater to different dietary preferences and cultural contexts. Exploring the versatility of barley in various food applications can open up new markets and increase consumer acceptance. Furthermore, culinary innovation, barley offers a unique flavor and texture profile that can be harnessed through culinary innovation (Biel et al., 2020).

Chefs and food experts can play a vital role in creating appealing and delicious recipes that showcase the versatility of barley. This can help overcome any preconceived notions about barley-based foods and enhance consumer acceptance. Continued research and collaboration between the culinary and food science sectors can lead to exciting breakthroughs in creating innovative and tasty barley-based functional food options. Further research can focus on fortifying barley-based functional foods with additional nutrients to address specific health needs. This could involve incorporating vitamins, minerals, probiotics, or other bioactive compounds into barley-based products to enhance their nutritional value and potential health benefits (Biel et al., 2020).

Customized fortification strategies based on specific target populations or health conditions can open up new market opportunities and meet diverse consumer demands. The future prospects of barley-based functional foods are bright, with opportunities for further research and innovation. By exploring the health benefits, sustainability aspects, product diversification, culinary creativity, and nutritional fortification, we can unlock the full potential of barley as a versatile and nutritious ingredient in the functional food market (Biel et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Barley offers an impressive macronutrient and micronutrient profile. Its carbohydrate and protein content provide sustained energy, while its fiber, vitamins, and minerals contribute to overall well-being. Incorporating barley into one's diet can aid in maintaining healthy blood sugar levels, promoting heart health, supporting brain function, and providing essential nutrients for overall health. The potential health benefits associated with the nutritional components found in barley include protection against oxidative stress and chronic diseases, improved digestive health, reduced cholesterol levels, regulated blood sugar levels, and a decreased risk of certain cancers.

These benefits make barley a valuable addition to a healthy and balanced diet. Barley's functional properties, including its ability to gel, thicken, stabilize, and emulsify food products, make it a versatile and valuable ingredient in the culinary world. Its gelling and thickening properties enhance texture and mouthfeel, while its stabilizing and emulsifying properties improve the stability and uniformity of various food formulations. Incorporating barley into different recipes not only adds nutritional value but also enhances the overall sensory experience of the final product. Furthermore, scientific studies and research have shed light on the numerous health benefits associated with consuming barley-based foods.

From promoting heart health and managing blood sugar levels to supporting digestive health and aiding in weight management, barley proves to be a valuable addition to a well-rounded diet. Incorporating barley into various food products, such as bakery items, beverages, and snacks, provides an opportunity to harness its nutritional advantages and enhance the overall health benefits offered by these products. As further research unfolds, barley's potential as a functional food ingredient continues to captivate the interest of both the scientific community and consumers alike. However, despite its numerous health benefits and potential as a functional food ingredient, barley faces several challenges and limitations in its utilization for producing healthy and functional foods.

Limited consumer awareness, processing requirements, gluten content, price, and culinary adaptability all contribute to these hurdles. Overcoming these challenges will require continued research, awareness campaigns, and innovation to create delicious and accessible barley-based products that cater to diverse consumer preferences and dietary needs. By addressing these limitations, we can maximize the potential of barley as a valuable ingredient in the quest for healthier and functional food options. Finally, the future prospects of barley-based functional foods are bright, with opportunities for further research and innovation. By exploring the health benefits, sustainability aspects, product diversification, culinary creativity, and nutritional fortification, we can unlock the full potential of barley as a versatile and nutritious ingredient in the functional food market.

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