Project title:

Development of a novel biocomposite-integrated thin film reactor for the intensification of biosolar energy-driven gas clean-up processing

Project ID *(optional)*: *Please leave blank*

Accept all year-round applications

Funding information: Self-funded students only

Project description:

This proposed project seeks to establish an entirely new, scalable, solar energy driven microbial gas absorber technology by a novel combination of advanced photoreactive biocomposite materials, experimental thin film absorber design and modelling approaches. This is significant both for utilizing solar energy for gaseous carbon capture and the potential to significantly intensify the reactivity of photosynthetic microorganisms for gas clean-up via the development of a continuously operated, thin film bioreactor. Two versions of such a reactor will be developed: a spinning disk version and a spinning tube version. The reaction surface will be coated with a “microbial paper” containing a very high density of photosynthetic micro-organisms - a technology recently discovered at North Carolina State University (NCSU) [1]. Photosynthetic bacteria, cyanobacteria and algae can be concentrated and immobilised within an adhesive paper-based nonwoven biocomposite material formed by controlled drying into defined thinness, adhesion and pore structure. When the paper is rehydrated and illuminated, the entrapped microbes can be photosynthetically active for 100s to 1,000s of hours.

This proposed project aims to demonstrate that thin, continuous and controllable liquid films flowing over the surface of a paper-based biocomposite material can intensify gas uptake and biotransformation by a high density of entrapped photosynthetic micro-organisms. A preliminary proof of concept project has highlighted promising potential for such a technology to be developed further to achieve bioprocess intensification of CO2 uptake [2]. If successful, this technology will enable many different types of microbial biotransformations of waste carbon gases at industrial scales with applications to valorization of not only CO2 but also syngas (CO), biogas (CH4), and volatile organic carbon (VOC) pollutants.

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References (optional):

[1] O.I. Bernal, C.B. Mooney, M.C. Flickinger, Specific Photosynthetic Rate Enhancement by Cyanobacteria Coated Onto Paper Enables Engineering of Highly Reactive Cellular Biocomposite ‘‘Leaves’’, Biotech. Bioeng. (2014) 111(10), 1993-2008.

[2] Ekins-Coward, T., Boodhoo, K, S. Velasquez-Orta, G. Caldwell, A. Wallace, R. Barton, and M. C. Flickinger, A microalgae biocomposite-integrated Spinning Disc Bioreactor (SDBR): Towards a scalable engineering approach for bioprocess intensification in light-driven CO2 absorption applications, Ind. Eng. Chem. Res., 58(15), 5936-5949 (2019).

Application enquires:

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econometrics

financial economics

macroeconomics

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further education

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primary education

secondary education

special needs education

other

Engineering

acoustics engineering

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atomic engineering

automotive engineering

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control systems

cybernetics

dynamics

electrical engineering

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energy technologies

environmental engineering

fluid mechanics

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nutrition

ophthalmology

optometry

pathology

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tissue engineering

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