

Influence of crop conditions on the composition of structural polysaccharides in several lignocellulosic grass crops

Bruno Godin^{1,2}, Richard Agneessens¹, Thomas Schmit¹, Stéphane Lamaudière², Sylvain Hennart¹, Jean-Pierre Goffart¹, Patrick A. Gerin²,

Didier Stilmant¹, Jérôme Delcarte¹

¹ Walloon Agricultural Research Center - CRA-W, Rue du Serpont, 100, B-6800 Libramont, Belgium

² Université catholique de Louvain - UCL, Earth & Life Institute, Bioengineering group - Croix du Sud, 2 box L7.05.19, B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
Corresponding email : b.godin@cra.wallonie.be



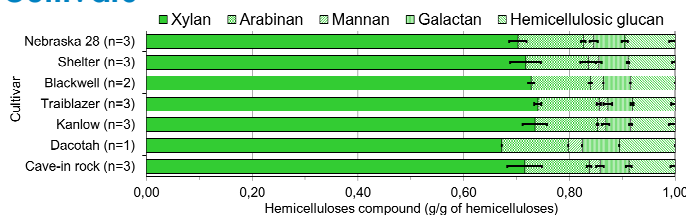
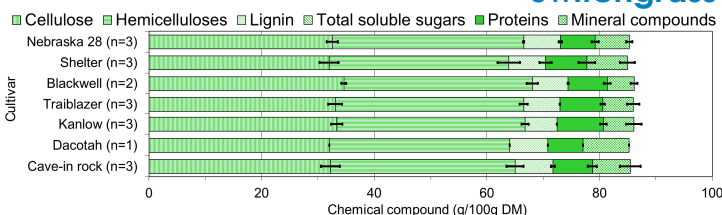
Introduction

• Switchgrass, tall fescue and 'cocksfoot-lucerne' association are promising perennial lignocellulosic grass crops as a source of cellulose and hemicelluloses in the field of bioenergy and biorefinery, owing to their high polysaccharides content and high biomass yields. Their optimal valorization in lignocellulose-based biorefineries requires a good knowledge of the biomass composition, and especially of the molecular composition of hemicelluloses.

Biomass characterization

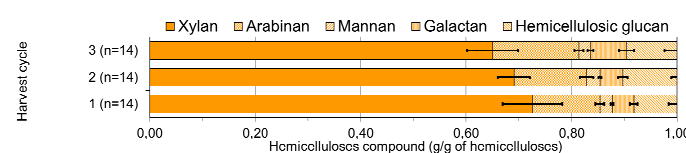
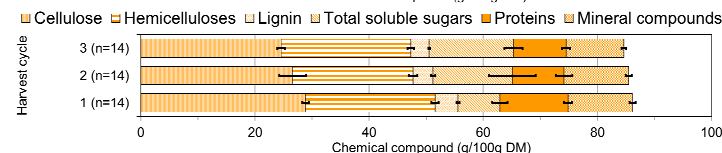
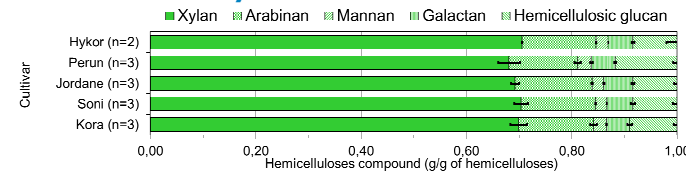
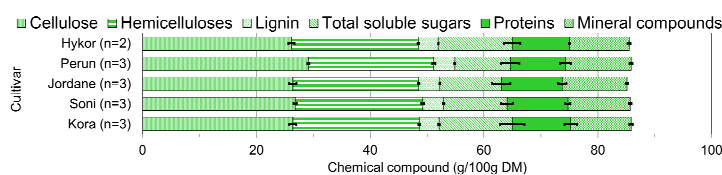
• The main chemical components (cellulose, hemicelluloses, lignin, total soluble sugars, proteins and mineral compounds) and more specifically the monosaccharidic content (cellulosic glucan, xylan, arabinan, mannan, galactan and hemicellulosic glucan) were analysed in several lignocellulosic grass crops: switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L. ; cultivars: Cave in rock, Dacotah, Kanlow, Trailblazer, Blackwell, Shelter and Nebraska 28 ; late winter harvest) grown at Gembloux (Belgium), tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea* Schreb. ; cultivars: Kora, Soni, Jordane, Perun and Hykor ; 3 harvest cycles) grown at Gembloux (Belgium) and 'cocksfoot-lucerne' association (*Dactylis glomerata* L.-*Medicago sativa* L. ; Nitrogen fertilisation levels applied in June: 0, 50 or 100 kg_N ha⁻¹ ; 3 harvest cycles) grown at Libramont(Belgium) in 2009.

Switchgrass cultivars



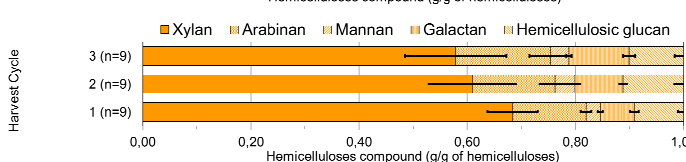
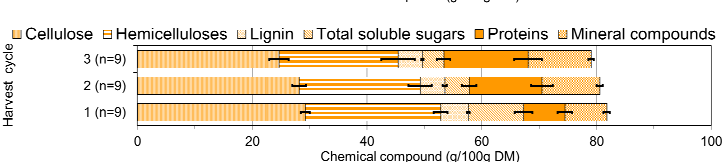
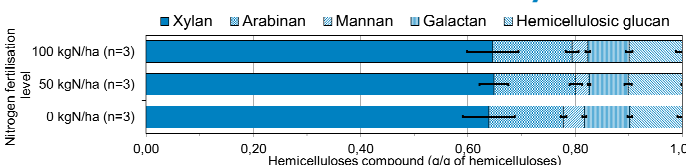
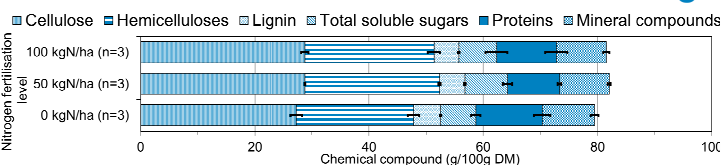
- **Switchgrass** → Higher cellulose, hemicelluloses and xylan content as compared to the tall fescue and to 'cocksfoot-lucerne' association
- **Cultivar effect** → No significant influence

Tall fescue cultivars and harvest cycles



- **Tall fescue** → From spring to autumn, the cellulose content decreased while the total soluble sugars content increased
- **Hemicelluloses** → From spring to autumn, the relative xylan content decreased while the arabinan, galactan and hemicellulosic glucan contents increased
- **Cultivar effect** → Significant influence for most compounds
- **Harvest cycle effect** → Significant influence for most compounds and higher impact than the cultivar effect

'Cocksfoot-lucerne' association nitrogen fertilisation levels and harvest cycles



- **'Cocksfoot-lucerne' association** → Cellulose, hemicelluloses and total soluble sugars contents decreased while the amount of protein increased because of an increased presence of lucerne in the 2nd and 3rd harvest cycle.
- **Hemicelluloses** → From spring to autumn relative xylan content decreased while the relative arabinan, galactan and hemicellulosic glucan contents increased, as observed for tall fescue.
- **Nitrogen fertilisation effect** → Few significant influence on compounds
- **Harvest cycle effect** → Significant influence for most compounds

Conclusions

- Cellulose and hemicelluloses are the major components of the dry matter. The major hemicellulosic components are, by order of decreasing importance, xylan, arabinan, hemicellulosic glucan, galactan and mannan.
- Plant species and harvest cycle has the most significant influence on the structural polysaccharide composition, while the influence of cultivar and nitrogen fertilisation were only rarely significant.



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