

# A comprehensive review on operating parameters and different pretreatment methodologies for anaerobic digestion of municipal solid waste



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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 1 June 2014

Received in revised form

20 May 2015

Accepted 21 July 2015

Available online 7 August 2015

### Keywords:

Biogas

Anaerobic digestion

Operating parameters

Pretreatment

Municipal solid waste

## ABSTRACT

Municipal solid waste (MSW) management is becoming a serious issue in all over the world. Anaerobic digestion (AD) is one of the technologies to convert that waste into useful form of energy. But megacities like Singapore having limited resources, cannot fulfill the cow dung or other animal manure requirements in AD. Therefore there is a need to study critically the operating parameters and also the pretreatment technologies available for treating the substrate so that one can get the maximum output with limited input. To fulfill the need, the present paper deals with the review of various operating parameters and their effects on AD. This paper also reviews different pretreatment methods including mechanical, thermal, chemical and biological methods to improve the effectiveness of AD of MSW.

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## Contents

1. Introduction . . . . .	143
2. Anaerobic digestion (AD) . . . . .	143
3. AD process . . . . .	144
3.1. Enzymatic hydrolysis . . . . .	144
3.2. Fermentation . . . . .	144
3.3. Acetogenesis . . . . .	144
3.4. Methanogenesis . . . . .	144
4. Microbial communities . . . . .	144
4.1. Hydrolytic bacteria . . . . .	144
4.2. Fermentative bacteria . . . . .	144
4.3. Acetogenic bacteria . . . . .	144
4.4. Methane-forming (methanogenic) bacteria . . . . .	144
5. Factors affecting the biodigestion or generation of gas . . . . .	145
5.1. pH value . . . . .	145
5.2. Temperature . . . . .	145
5.3. Total solid content of feed material . . . . .	145
5.4. Loading rate . . . . .	145
5.5. Seeding . . . . .	145
5.6. Uniform feeding . . . . .	145
5.7. Diameter to depth ratio . . . . .	145
5.8. Carbon to nitrogen (C/N) ratio . . . . .	145
5.9. Nutrients . . . . .	146

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5.10. Stirring	146
5.11. Retention time or rate of feeding	146
5.12. Type of feedstocks	146
5.13. Toxicity due to end product	146
5.14. Pressure	146
5.15. Acid accumulation inside the digester	147
6. Classification of anaerobic digesters/approaches	147
6.1. Continuous and batch types	147
6.1.1. Continuous plant	147
6.1.2. The batch plant	147
6.2. The dome and drum types	148
6.2.1. The floating gas holder plants	148
6.2.2. Fixed dome digester	148
7. Biogas enrichment	148
7.1. Biogas enrichment process	148
7.2. Concept of alternative bio-CNG	148
8. Biogas composition and energy and mass balance	149
8.1. Quality of biogas	149
9. Substrate pretreatment	150
9.1. Mechanical pretreatment	150
9.2. Thermal pretreatment	151
9.3. Chemical pretreatment	151
9.4. Biological pretreatment	152
10. Discussion	152
11. Conclusion	152
Acknowledgment	152
References	152

## 1. Introduction

MSW amount from societies has increased over the last few years, out of which, food waste contributes a considerable fraction. The food waste generated annually in Singapore was 542,700 t in 2006 and reached about 570,000 t in the year 2008 and 680,000 t in 2011 [1]. Food waste management is a challenge faced by any developing nation as untreated and unmanaged food waste creates odor, hygiene concerns and cause adverse environmental impacts [1–3]. Singapore is a highly populated, industrialized city with limited land area. Semakau Landfill is Singapore's only landfill for waste disposal which is also going to be filled completely in the next

few years. Singapore's offshore landfill accepts only inert wastes that are inorganic. Therefore, almost no MSW is sent to the landfill and the majority of MSW is directed to incineration plants [2]. The remaining 10–15% is sent for recycling via AD, followed by composting of the digestate material. But incineration also produces high amount of ash which again has to go for landfilling. Also lots of energy and cost are incurred in transporting the waste to incineration plants, therefore an idea has come into picture to digest the food waste anaerobically in decentralized manner so that on one side we can reduce the amount of ash generated through incinerator and on the other side the heavy investment in transportation can be reduced. AD is considered as the most effective method for the treatment of MSW [3]. In view of the increasing demand of the anaerobic digestion technology, the present paper reported the different aspects of AD along with the factors affecting the digestion process and different approaches/digestion systems.

Pretreatment of substrate is the necessary step nowadays to accelerate the AD and to obtain suitable by-products. A number of review papers have been published in the recent past on different pretreatment technologies, specially focused on pretreatment of wastewater sludge. The present paper has also attempted to report the different pretreatment technologies and their effect on AD of MSW.

## 2. Anaerobic digestion (AD)

AD is a method to decompose organic matter with the help of variety of anaerobic microorganisms under anaerobic or oxygen-free conditions. The end product of AD includes biogas (60–70% CH<sub>4</sub>, 30–40% CO<sub>2</sub> and rest being the impurities) and an organic residue. This technology has been successfully implemented in the treatment of agricultural wastes, food wastes and wastewater sludge due to its capability of reducing chemical oxygen demand (COD) and biological oxygen demand (BOD) from waste streams and producing renewable energy [4–7]. AD processes are classified based on operating parameters and reactor design such as based on continuity it is batch versus continuous, based on operating

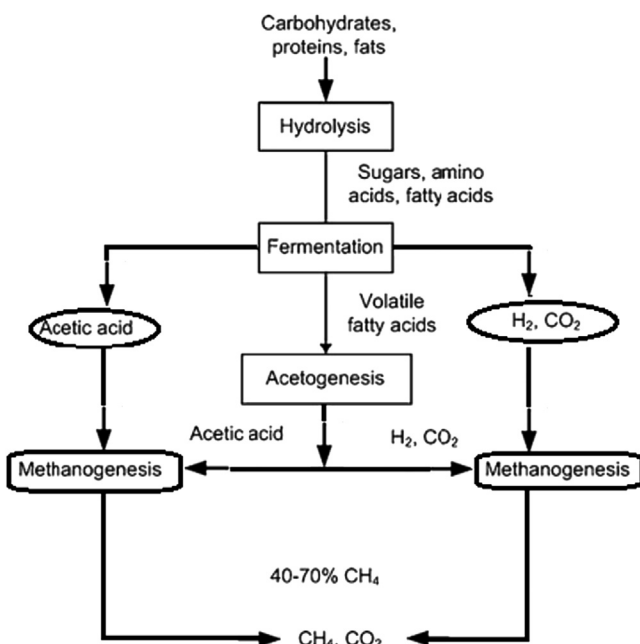


Fig. 1. Flow diagram of AD process [57,59].

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