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## **ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT**

# A PARAMETRIC RESPONSE SURFACE STUDY OF FERMENTATIVE HYDROGEN PRODUCTION FROM CHEESE WHEY

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Batch factorial experiments were performed on cheese whey + wastewater sludge mixtures to evaluate the influence of pH and the inoculum-to-substrate ratio (ISR) on fermentative  $H_2$  production and build a related predictive model. ISR and pH affected  $H_2$  potential and rate, and the fermentation pathways. The specific  $H_2$  yield varied from 61 (ISR = 0, pH = 7.0) to 371 L  $H_2/kg$  TOC<sub>whey</sub> (ISR = 1.44 g VS/g TOC, pH = 5.5). The process duration range was 5.3 (ISR = 1.44 g VS/g TOC, pH = 7.5) – 183 h (ISR = 0, pH = 5.5). The metabolic products included mainly acetate and butyrate followed by ethanol, while propionate was only observed once  $H_2$  production had significantly decreased. The multiple metabolic products suggested that the process was governed by several fermentation pathways, presumably overlapping and mutually

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