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Review Article

Environmentally Favourable and Unfavorable Bacteria

Abstract

Most of bacteria can be distinguished into three groups: saprophytic; symbiotic and parasitic. Microbial communities have a vast importance to the ecosystem and can be used by humans for their health or industrial applications. Saprophytic bacteria are the major decomposers of organic matter that can be applied in treatment of metalliferous mine or radioactive environmental wastes, biodiesel production, among others. Symbiotic bacteria live in a mutually beneficial association with other organisms providing essential nutrients to their host organisms. Some bacteria are able to cause diseases, the parasitic bacteria. Antimicrobial peptides and polypeptides such as lectins are promising candidates for being used as new antibiotics. Lectins are able to interact with carbohydrates in bacterial cellular walls and promote antibacterial activity. The aim of this chapter was to describe the importance of bacteria to environments, their use as biological control agents and the application of lectins to control pathogenic bacteria.

Keywords: environmental; bacteria; saprophytic; symbiotic; parasitic; biocontrol; lectins

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1. INTRODUCTION

Bacteria are single-celled microorganisms, being classified as prokaryotes. There are over 3.6 billion years bacteria are present on Earth in almost all possible locations of life occurrence. This long co-evolution allowed bacteria to develop several beneficial relationships to the environment and, therefore, beneficial to themselves, since they form part of this system. The number of bacterial species that have been described is low (~7,000) in relation to the millions of bacteria that have been predicted to reside on Earth; the lack of knowledge about the ecology of each of the known species is greater [1].

Microbial communities have a vast importance to the ecosystem and to agriculture, being important components of the forest ecosystem since they facilitate organic matter decomposition and nutrient cycling in the soil [2]. Free-living bacteria of beneficial importance to agriculture and abound in the rhizosphere, the region around the root, have more than one mechanism of accomplishing increased plant growth, such as the production of enzymes, bioactive factors, antibiotics, metabolites as well as growth promoters [3].

Bacteria can be classified, in terms of their morphology, as bacilli (rods), coccus (spherical), spiral and many others (Figure 1). The bacillus is rod-shaped and can be found as isolated bacilli, diplobacilli or streptobacilli. Coccus is circular and can be isolated as dipococcus, tetracoccus, sarcina micrococcus, streptococci, and staphylococci. Other bacterial shapes of lowest occurrence can occur as spirillum (*Treponema pallidum*), as vibrio (*Vibrio cholerae*), transitional forms such as coccobacillus and involution forms, a survival mechanism to adverse environmental conditions such as spores [4].

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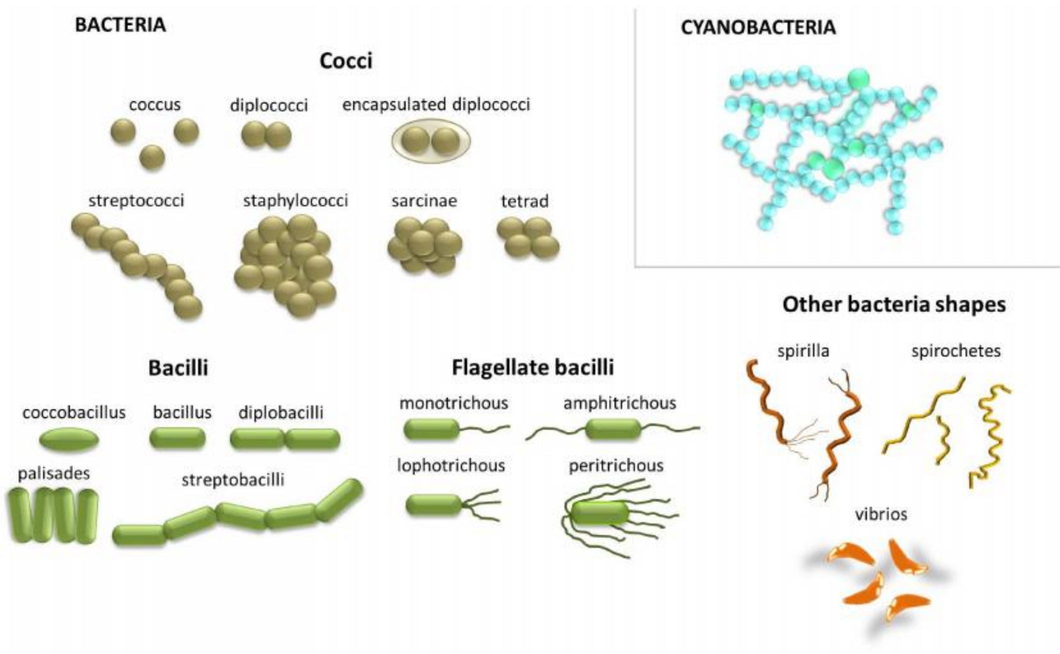

Figure 1: Types and shapes of bacteria.

Most bacteria are unable to manufacture their own organic food and hence dependent on external source (heterotrophic). These bacteria can be distinguished into three groups: 1) saprophytic; 2) symbiotic and 3) parasitic. Many bacteria that are associated with plants are actually saprophytic and do not harm the plant itself. However, a small number, around 100 species, is able to cause diseases, promoting looses in agriculture [5].

Microorganisms may be beneficial to humans microbiotes, complex infective bacteria that inhabit sites in and on the human body such as gut, skin, and oral cavity. Special situations as in patients whose normal innate defenses fail to function properly can lead to an imbalance of an individual species that are pathogens in the classical sense such as *Enterobacter sp*., *Escherichia coli* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* [6].

The control of bacteria grown is a way to avoid ecosystem imbalance and disease caused by some of these microorganisms. However, massive use of antibiotics

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for this purpose has led to bacterial resistance, generated by selection processes including increase in the frequency of resistance bacterial genes [7]. As an alternative, antimicrobial polypeptides such as lectins have been isolated and characterized from tissues and organisms from every kingdom and phylum [8]. The complete understanding of mechanisms of action from new alternatives to biological control may provide models and strategies for developing novel antimicrobial agents, that may also increase immunity, restore potency or amplify the mechanisms of conventional antibiotics, and minimize antimicrobial resistance mechanisms among pathogens.

2. Saprophytic bacteria

The saprophytic bacteria are the major decomposers of organic matter (Figure 2), breaking down complex mixtures into simple soluble forms, freeing their atoms to be re-used by other bioprocesses [9]. The ability of some acidophilic bacteria to withstand raised concentrations of certain metals through biological oxi-redution reactions has been applied in a variety of industrial fields such as treatment of metalliferous mine wastes, acid mine waters and sulphurous flue gases. The Matsuo Mine in Japan applied this biological treatment system using *Thiobacillus ferrooxidans* to treat 28m^3/min of mine water at pH 2.5 oxidising more than 95 % of soluble ferrous iron [10]. Microbial systems can detoxify the metal ions either by extracellular biomineralization, biosorption, complexation or precipitation or intracellular bioaccumulation. The cell wall reductive enzymes or soluble secreted enzymes can be involved in the reductive process of metal ions by bacteria [11].

Some environmental factors such as availability of iron and sulphide and a micro-aerobic environment are important for proliferation of the magnetotactic bacteria *Magnetospirillum magneticum*. Magnetic minerals produced by these bacteria such as

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greigite and biogenic magnetite form a post-depositional remanent magnetization that is indicative of rapid local environmental change. These biomarkers are used by archeologists to establish the chronology and environmental history of a place. Linford et al. [12] discovered bacterial magnetosomes at the village of Yarnton (Oxford, UK) suggesting a transformation of the previously dry river valley to an active flood plain.

Radiation-resistant micro-organisms have been used in the treatment of highly radioactive environmental wastes for their ability to transform, detoxify, or immobilize a variety of metallic and organic pollutants [13, 14] or used for decontamination of acid mine drainage waters through anaerobic degradation [15].

The techniques traditionally applied for the treatment of radioactive environmental residuals have been based on chemical methods of neutralization and precipitation. These quick and effective techniques have several disadvantages, such as the need for building additional plant treatments, the high cost of the chemical reagents used and the generation of an important volume of sludges which need to be relocated [15].

Some bacteria, when in contact with environmental stress, produce a signal transduction cascade in which certain promoters are induced, leading to expression of proteins that adjust to the ecological impact of altering the environment. Bioluminescent bacteria is being used as tools to detect some special compounds that are toxic and/or are of current interests as inorganic and organic pollutants from water, soil and air, as well as to monitor the level of toxicity of the influents from industries into urban wastewaters, effluents from plant treatments, and water. Recombinant bioluminescent bacterial strains are increasingly receiving attention as environmental biosensors due to their advantages, such as high sensitivity and selectivity, low costs, ease of use and short measurement times. Exposure of recombinant *Escherichia coli* strain, containing a

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fusion of a promoter to the *Vibrio fisheri lux* genes (Ecolum-5), to a toxic or lethal condition results in a decrease in bioluminescence [16]. The toxicity of benzene in air was determined using the Ecolum-5 [17].

Biodiesel production is been stimulated as a result of search for renewable fuels. The transesterification of vegetable oils or animal fats, with ethanol or methanol generate glycerol as the main byproduct. With the increasing production of biodiesel, glycerol is becoming of great environmental and economical concern due to its toxicity to aquatic organisms [18]; fermentation processes of this byproduct can result in value-added products, such as 1,3-propanediol (1,3-PD) and ethanol. The 1,3-PD has many applications in polymers, cosmetics, foods, adhesives, lubricants, laminates, solvents, antifreeze, and in medicine; ethanol could be used in the esterification of biodiesel, contributing to develop cheaper and environmentally cleaner processes. Several bacterial strains have been isolated and characterized for their ability to convert this raw glycerol into 1,3-propanediol (1,3-PD) and ethanol [19, 20]. Rossi et al. [21] showed that a *Klebsiella pneumoniae* was able to simultaneously produce up to 9.4 g/L of 1,3-PD with yields of 0.41 mol product mol^{-1} glycerol; and 6.1 g/L of ethanol with yields of 0.14 mol product mol^{-1} glycerol.

3. Symbiotic bacteria

Symbiotic bacteria live in a mutually beneficial association with other organisms. Such bacteria derive the essential nutrients from their host organisms and in that process help the host through some of their biological activities. Plant growth-promoting bacteria can positively provide the plant with compounds that is synthesized by the bacterium or by facilitating the uptake of nutrients from the environment by the plant. Nitrogen-fixing bacteria from *Rhizobium* genus can fix atmospheric nitrogen and

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supply it to plants (Figure 2). Most of biological nitrogen fixation (80%) is carried out by diazotrophic bacteria, such as the *Rhizobium* genus, in symbiosis with legumes. Moreover, some bacteria which are free-living in soil (e.g., cyanobacteria, *Pseudomonas, Azospirillum*, and *Azotobacter*) may fix significant amounts of nitrogen [22].

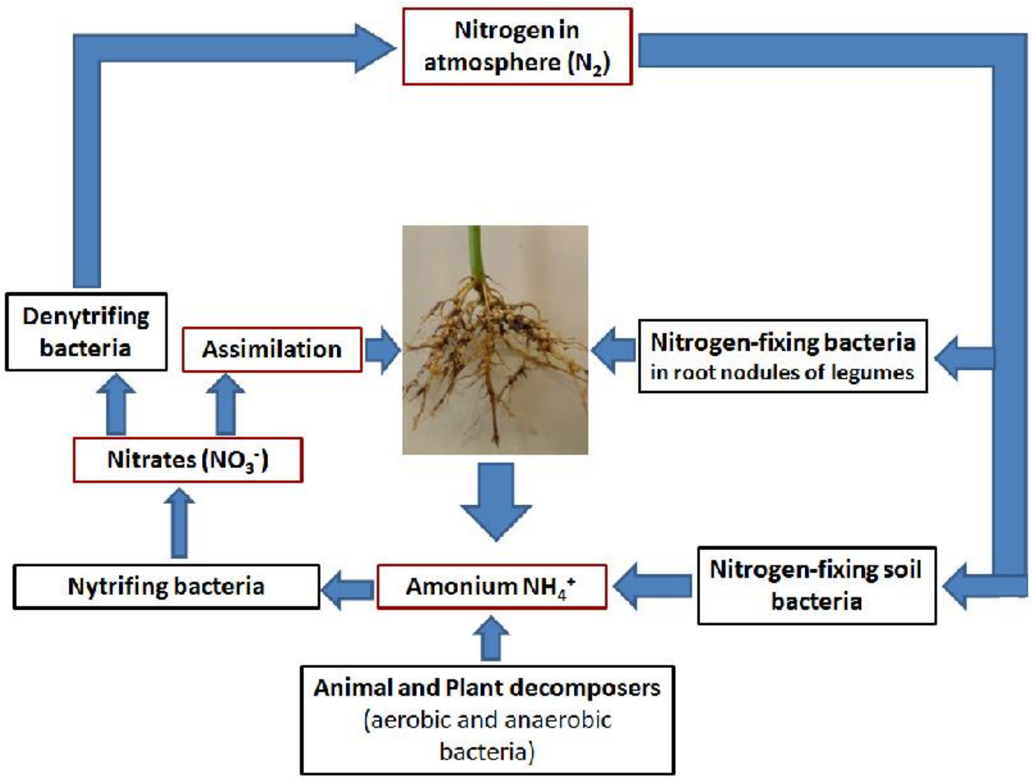

Figure 2: Importance of saprophytic and symbiotic bacteria to the nitrogen cycle.

Other bacteria can synthesize siderophores, chelating agents which has more affinity to metals than plant siderophores and can solubilize and sequester iron from the soil providing it to plant cells. Antibiotics, which antagonize phytopathogenic fungi and pathogenic bacteria, and synthesize phytohormones, including auxins and cytokinins can enhance various stages of plant growth, and enzymes that can modulate plant growth and development [23, 24, 25].

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Bacteria may be beneficent when they are associated with other organisms in the removal of contaminants from the environment, a process called bioremediation [26]. Glick et al [23] showed that the synergistic use of the plant *Brassica campestris* and the bacterium *Enterobacter cloacae* added to the roots lead to an increase in the number of seeds that germinated and the amount of biomass that the plants were able to attain due to reduction in the level of ethylene, an inhibitor of root elongation. Furthermore, the bacterium synthesizes antibiotics, inhibiting the proliferation and invasion of phytopathogens.

Additionally, bacteria can remove from the environment many potentially toxic compounds like metals, organic compounds (such as petroleum hydrocarbons and pesticides), inorganic (such as arsenic, sodium, nitrate, ammonia or phosphate) and radioactive (such as uranium, cesium or strontium) compounds [23]. The bacterium *Kluyvera ascorbata* protects *B. campestris* against high levels of nickel in the soil, producing siderophores [27].

A group of bacteria named microbial flora (Figure 3) is able to beneficially affects the host animal with contributions to nutrition, health and development by secreting Vitamin K, B12 and folate; preventing colonization by pathogens by competing for attachment sites or for essential nutrients in the oral cavity, intestine, skin, and vaginal epithelium; excrete ammonium that can be used to synthesize proteins and nucleic acids; and synthesize and excrete enzymes that act in the digestion of carbohydrates [28]. The genera present in the intestinal tract (probiotic bacteria) generally seem to be those from the environment or the diet. Probiotics in aquaculture can prevent pathogens proliferating in the intestinal tract, on the superficial structures, or in the water.

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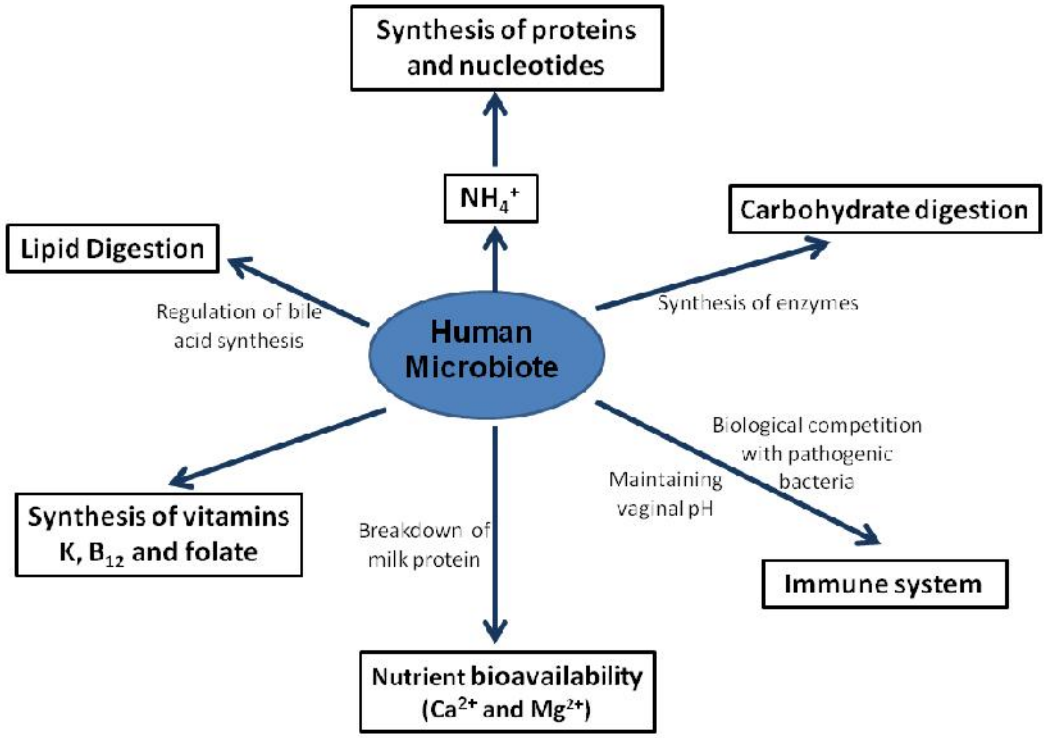

Figure 3: Benefits of human microbiote.

Probiotics can be used as biological control agents [29, 30]. This activity has been reported with lactic acid bacteria (*Lactobacillus* and *Pediococcus* genus) as biocontrol agents against the phytopathogenic and spoilage bacteria and fungi [31]. A bacterial strain (*Alteromonas haloplanktis*) isolated from the gonads of Chilean scallop displayed *in vitro* inhibitory activity against the pathogens *V. ordalii, V. parahaemolyticus, V. anguillarum, V. alginolyticus,* and *Aeromonas hydrophila* [32].

The exact modes of action of the probiotics were not completely elucidated, but it is suggested that microbial populations may release chemical substances such as antibiotics, lysozymes, proteases, hydrogen peroxide and organic acids that have a bactericidal or bacteriostatic effect on other microbial populations. Rouse et al. [33] showed that a lactic strains *Pediococcus pentosaceous* produced antifungal. Other possibilities of modes of action are by competition for nutrients as iron or adhesion sites

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on gut or other tissue surfaces, by enhancement of the immune systems of animals against infections by viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites or by improvement of water quality [29].

Bacteria as *Pedobacter* sp. can act on many species of microalgae of red tide plankton as, for example, *Microcyctis aeruginosa* [34] function for controlling harmful blooms and further studies will provide new insights into its role in water environment with prospects to use this algicidal bacteria as microbial pesticides.

Bacteria in the aquatic environment are used as food by adults and larvae of bivalve, providing nitrogen and carbon and recycling organic and mineral matter released by bivalves. Marine bacteria excrete various substances, including amino acids, carbohydrates, and vitamins of group B. Bacteria of bivalve microflora are important in the digestive process, metabolism and metamorphosis [35]. Prieur et al. [36] isolated cellulolytic bacteria from the digestive tract of the bivalve *Teredo navalis* that had the ability to degrade mannose and galactose. Belkin et al. [37] showed that the associated bacteria from gill tissues of a mussel from deep ocean *Bathymodiolus thermophilus* were capable of CO_2 fixation indicating that the symbiotic bacteria have an autotrophic metabolism. Bivalve bacteria that live in sulphide-enriched habitats are important in the degradation of the organic matter through anaerobic metabolism [36].

Among the environmental factors that induce or influence metamorphosis of many marine invertebrates, the occurrence of bacterial film and organic particles trapped within the film could also be used as food by larvae ready to metamorphose; alternatively, bacteria living in the biofilm could synthesize certain compounds such as low and high molecular weight polysaccharides, low molecular weight peptides and neurotransmitters, diffusible into the environment, which could induce metamorphosis. Water-soluble chemical cues produced by the biofilm of two bacterial strains

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Macrococcus sp. and *Bacillus* sp. induced larval settlement of the green-lipped mussel, *Perna canaliculus* [38].

4. Parasitic bacteria

Parasitic bacteria occur in the body of animals and in plants obtaining their organic food or releasing poisonous secretions called toxins. Many of these toxins are specific to target-organism. Thus, the majority of bacterial pathogens are highly specialized for a limited number of eukaryotic host organisms. Plant pathogenic bacteria (Figure 4) are responsible for some of the most devastating losses of major agricultural crops and vital fruit trees, causing millions of dollars in damage annually [39]. *Ralstonia solanacearum* is a soil borne bacterium, capable of inducing disease on more than 250 plant species, invading its roots, colonizing the xylem vessels, and causing a lethal wilting known as bacterial wilt disease [40]. Seeds of cashew, cocoa, coffee, pumpkin, and tomato are protected from this bacteria because they produce oligo- and poly-saccharides that block the pathogen lectins from *R. solanacearum*, inhibiting its binding to xylem cell wall glycans [41].

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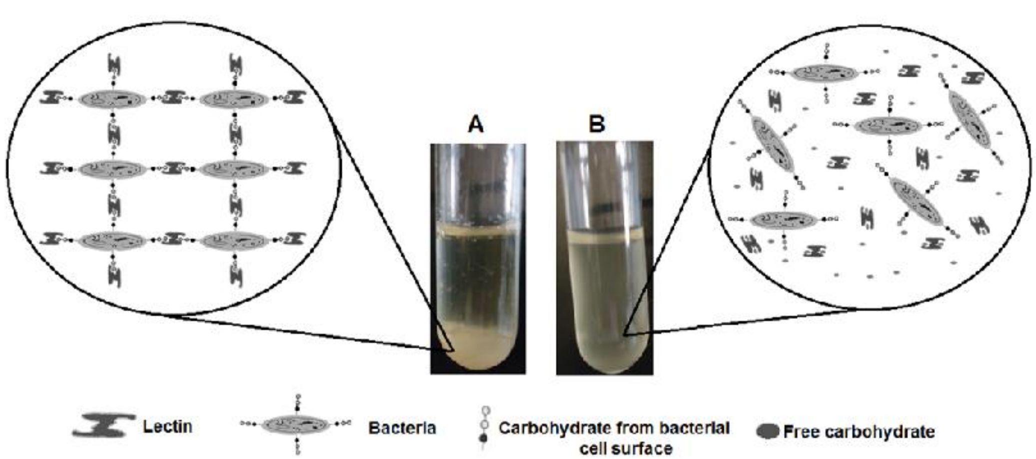

Figure 4: (A) Agglutination of *Staphylococcus aureus* by incubation with the *Schinus terebinthifolius* leaf lectin (SteLL). (B) Inhibition of agglutination in the presence of the carbohydrate inhibitor of SteLL (N-acetyl-glucosamine). The circles show schematizations of the phenomena occurring in the assay tubes.

Bacterial canker is another disease caused by phytopathogen that has economic impact. Bacterial canker of grapevine caused by *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *viticola* can be manifested in various parts of the plant. In leaves, the symptoms are small, dark and angular leaf spots that may coalesce and dry up, causing necrotic areas and leaf blight. Cankers were often observed on petioles, stems and rachis and were also observed in grapes [42].

Blackleg, a major bacterial disease of potato, is caused by bacteria *Pectobacterium carotovorum* subsp. *carotovorum*. This bacterium can cause rotting of potato tubers (soft rot) during storage. Control of potato blackleg is hampered by the absence of effective tools and strategies and by the dispersing ability of the bacterium, being spread via surface and rain water, by aerosols and also, by insects [43].

Acidovorax citrulli is the bacterial causal agent of bacterial fruit blotch, a devastating disease of melon (*Cucumis melo*) and other Cucurbitaceae, and its

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destructive potential stems from the fact that, under favorable conditions, infection spreads rapidly throughout the field [44]. Symptoms of bacterial fruit blotch including water-soaking and coalescing reddish-brown lesions on cotyledons and reddish-brown lesions on leaves that developed along the venation [45].

Among pathogenic bacteria to humans, there is *Staphylococcus aureus*, which is a coccus (spherical) microorganism usually with irregular distribution in clusters like bunches of grapes that is responsible for many infections in humans such as endocarditis, acute hematogenous osteomyelitis, meningitis or pulmonary infection. *Escherichia coli*, which is in the form of rod-shaped (a bacillus), is part of the normal flora and accidentally cause diseases (urinary tract infection, diarrhea, meningitis and septicemia); *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, a mobile aerobic bacillus widely distributed in nature and is found in small groups of normal intestinal flora and on human skin [4].

5. Antibacterial lectins

Antimicrobial peptides and polypeptides are promising candidates for using as new antibiotics. The carbohydrate recognizing proteins known as lectins are noteworthy since they are able to interact with carbohydrates in bacterial cellular walls [46-48].

Lectins can agglutinate cells and precipitate polysaccharides, glycoproteins or glycolipids, without structural modifications [49]. The presence of lectins in a sample can be evaluated in a microtiter plate through incubation with erythrocytes. The linkage between lectins and glycoconjugates from erythrocyte surface maintains the cells agglutinated and suspended in solution.

Gomes et al. [50] isolated an antimicrobial chitin-binding-lectin from leaves of the medicinal plant *Schinus terebinthifolius*. The authors reported that this lectin

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showed antibacterial activity against *E. coli* (MIC, minimal inhibitory concentration, of 28.5 µg⁄ml; MBC, minimal bactericidal concentration, of 115 µg⁄ml), *K. pneumoniae* (MIC of 3.59 µg⁄ml; MBC of 115 µg⁄ml), *Proteus mirabilis* (MIC of 3.59 µg⁄ml; MBC of 14.37 µg⁄ml), *P. aeruginosa* (MIC of 1.79 µg⁄ml; MBC of 14.37 µg⁄ml), *Salmonella enteritidis* (MIC of 0.45 µg⁄ml; MBC of 115 µg⁄ml), and *S. aureus* (MIC of 1.79 µg⁄ml; MBC of 7.18 µg⁄ml).

Lectins can also promote agglutination of bacterial cells. Figure 5 shows the agglutination of *Staphylococcus aureus* promoted by *S. terebinthifolius* leaf lectin (SteLL) in assay tubes. The agglutination occurs through linkage between the carbohydrate binding sites of lectin and glycoconjugates from bacterial surface as schematized in Figure 5A. The bacterial agglutination was inhibited in the presence of the carbohydrate inhibitor of SteLL (N-acetyl-glucosamine) as shown in Figure 5B. The inhibition of bacteria agglutination by lectin after incubation with free carbohydrates or glycoconjugates ensures that lectin binding to bacteria involves the carbohydrate-binding sites.

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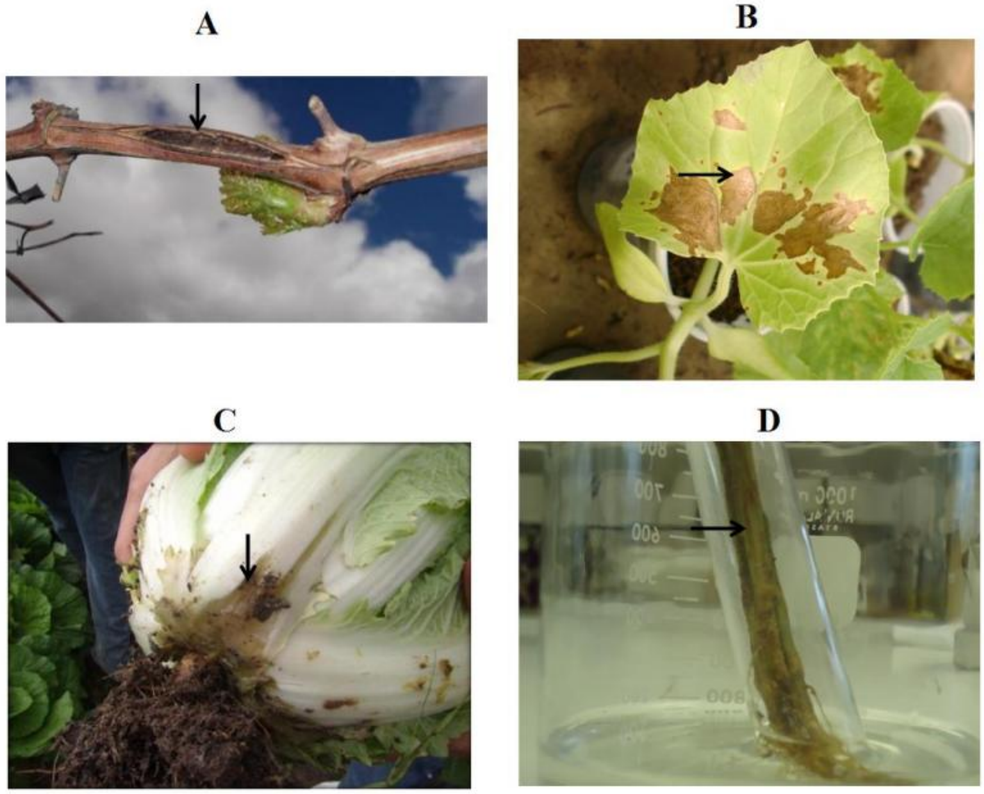

Figure 5. Diseases caused by phytopathogenic bacteria. Bacterial canker of grapevine caused by *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *viticola* (A); blotch of melon caused by *Acidovorax citrulli*, showing reddish-brown lesions on leaves (B); rooting of *Brassica pekinensis* by *Pectobacterium carotovorum* subsp. *carotovorum* (C); tomato wilt disease caused by *Ralstonia solanacearum*, showing colonization of xylem vessels (D).

Oliveira et al. [51] isolated an antibacterial lectin from *Eugenia uniflora* seeds (EuniSL), which inhibited the growth of *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Klebsiella* sp. with MIC of 1.5 µg/ml. Additionally, EuniSL also inhibited the growth of *Bacillus subtilis*, *Streptococcus* sp. and *Escherichia coli*, although less efficiently (MIC of 16.5 µg/ml). The authors also showed that EuniSL was able to agglutinate *S. aureus*, *Streptococcus* sp., *Klebsiella* sp. and *P. aeruginosa*.

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MuHL, a chitin-binding-lectin isolated from *Myracrodruon urundeuva* heartwood, was able to inhibit the growth and agglutinate the Gram-positive bacteria *S. aureus* (MIC of 0.58 µg⁄ml; MAC, minimal agglutinating concentration, of 2.34 µg⁄ml), *Enterococcus* (*Streptococcus*) *faecalis* (MIC of 2.34 µg⁄ml; MAC of 4.68), *B. subtilis* (MIC of 2.34 µg⁄ml; MAC of 4.68 µg⁄ml), and *Corynebacterium callunae* (MIC of 1.17 µg⁄ml; MAC of 4.68 µg⁄ml), as well as the Gram-negative bacteria *E. coli* (MIC of 9.37 µg⁄ml; MAC of 9.37 µg⁄ml), *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (MIC of 9.37 µg⁄ml; MAC of 9.37 µg⁄ml) and *P. aeruginosa* (MIC of 4.68 µg⁄ml; MAC of 9.37 µg⁄ml) [52]. *M. urundeuva* heartwood is very resistant to the deteriorative biological agents and the authors pointed out that antibacterial activity of MuHL may be involved in this resistance.

A lectin isolated from leaf of *Phthirusa pyrifolia* also showed antibacterial potential, being active against Gram-positive (*Staphylococcus epidermidis*, *Enterococcus* (*Streptococcus*) *faecalis* and *Bacillus subtilis*) and Gram-negative (*Klebsiella pneumoniae*) bacteria, and the MIC values ranged from 250 µg⁄ml to >2000 µg⁄ml [53]. WSMoL, a water-soluble lectin purified from seeds of *Moringa oleifera*, reduced the growth of *S. aureus* and *E. coli* and was also active against ambient lake water bacteria [54].

Antimicrobial lectins have also been isolated from animals. Nunes et al. [55] purified a lectin from *Bothrops leucurus* snake venom, which inhibited the growth of the Gram-positive bacteria *S. aureus*, *E. faecalis* and *B. subtilis* with MIC of 31.25, 62.25 and 125 µg/ml, respectively. Table 1 lists antibacterial lectins and species against which they are active.

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Table 1. Antimicrobial activity of lectins.

Lectin	Source	Antibacterial activity
Lectins from plants		
EuniSL	Seeds of *E. uniflora*	*S. aureus*, *P. aeruginosa* and *Klebsiella* sp
MuHL	Heartwood of *M. urundeuva*	*S. aureus*, *E. faecalis*, *B. subtilis*, *C. callunae*, *E. coli*, *K. pneumoniae* and *P. aeruginosa*
PpyLL	Leaves of *P. pyrifolia*	*S. epidermidis*, *E. faecalis*, *B. subtilis* and *K. pneumonia*
WSMoL	Seeds of *M. oleifera*	*S. aureus*, *E. coli* and bacteria from ambient lake water
SteLL	Leaves of *S. terebinthifolius*	*E. coli*, *K. pneumonia*, *P. mirabilis*, *P. aeruginosa*, *S. enteritidis* and *S. aureus*
Lectin from animal		
BIL	*B. leucurus* snake venom	*S. aureus*, *E. faecalis* and *B. subtilis*

References: [50-52, 54, 55].

Moura et al. [56] overviewed processes involved in biofilm formation and in biocorrosion of pipes for oil transportation, which occurs due to fixation of bacteria that release metabolites and form biofilms inducing or accelerating corrosion. The authors highlighted five groups of bacteria (EPS-producing bacteria, acid-producing bacteria, sulfur-oxidizing bacteria, iron-precipitating bacteria and sulfate-reducing bacteria) as promoters of biocorrosion. In addition, authors pointed out the use of biocides, protective coatings (antifouling) and corrosion inhibitors as the main methods applied by industry to prevent corrosive bacteria spreading. It was then suggested that plant compounds, including lectins, are interesting candidates to be used as controlling biocorrosion agents.

6. Bacteria as biological control agents

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Pesticides are used to control organisms considered harmful [57]. However, the main problem of the use of chemical pesticides is the development of resistance, resulting in reduced efficiency of the product and increased environmental risk. Pesticides are one of the causes of water pollution, and some pesticides are persistent organic pollutants which contribute to soil contamination [58].

Bacteria have been studied as safer and more eco-friendly alternatives for the control of postharvest decays caused by fungi. The bacteria used for this purpose usually act as antagonistic microorganisms probably through competition for nutrients and space as well as by production of antibiotics, direct parasitism, and possibly induced resistance in the harvested commodity. *B. subtilis* has been used as antagonist for phytopathogenic fungi that attack fruits [59].

Investigations carried out by Yoshiyama and Kimura [60] showed that seven bacteria strains belonging to *Bacillus* genus, isolated from digestive tract of the Japanese honeybee (*Apis cerana japonica*), inhibited the development of the Gram-positive bacterium *Paenibacillus larvae*, the causal agent of American foulbrood. This disease is contagious and affects the larval and pupal stages of honeybees. The authors suggested that these *Bacillus* strains can be used for control of this disease by acting as antagonists of *P. larvae*.

An alternative is the use of *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a bacterium that produce toxins with hemolytic and cytolytic activity. This versatile pathogen is capable of infecting protozoa, nematodes, flatworms, mites and insects [61]. *B. thuringiensis* is characterized by the production of crystals composed of protein known as deltaendotoxins that are toxic to insect pests [62].

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B. thuringiensis (Bt), before 1976, was used exclusively to the control of insect pests in agriculture. The discovery of a pathogenic strain against Diptera, called Bt israelensis (Bti) initiated the use of this bacterium in the control of disease vector. Insects such as *Aedes aegypti* (Culicidae), vector of dengue and yellow fever, and insects of the Simuliidae family, transmitters of filariasis, are included in the Diptera order. The use of bacteria for biological control of insect larvae from Culicidae and Simuliidae family has highlighted by having more kinds of formulation (granules, powder or liquid), genetic stability, not toxic to humans, besides being more advantageous considering social and environmental costs of using non-selective insecticides in aquatic ecosystems [63].

A strategy used in Brazil as part of the National Program of Dengue Control is the biological control with *Bacillus thuringiensis* serovar *israelensis* (Bti). The endotoxin Cry1AC, produced during Bti sporulation, is digested by enzymes of larvae midgut releasing larvicidal toxins; tablet containing spore and crystals (15%, w/w) of *B. thuringiensis* was able to cause 100 % mortality of larvae and was suggested for use in programs to control dengue vector [64]. Cry1AC has an *N*-acetylgalactosamine-specific lectin domain that binds glycoconjugates at insect midgut [65, 66]. Another example of larvicidal protein produced by bacterial strains is that from *Bacillus sphaericus*, which was lethal to the 3rd instar larvae of *Culex pipiens*, the vector of the West Nile fever and the Rift Valley fever [67].

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this review was to approach the biological importance of bacteria to distinct environments, how they are used as biological control agents and the importance of lectins to control pathogenic bacteria that affect animals (including

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humans) and plants. Moreover, this review showed biotechnological applications of bacteria in many areas of human interest. This review was motivated by the lack of knowledge about the ecology of bacteria and by the success of plant lectins as antimicrobial agents.

Competing Interest

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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