

## Screening and Applications of Functional Lactic Acid Bacteria: A Perspective

Zhao Chen\*

Department of Microbiology, The New York City College of Technology, New York, United States of America

### DESCRIPTION

Lactic Acid Bacteria (LAB) have long been recognized for their crucial role in various food fermentation processes, contributing to flavor, texture, and preservation. However, recent scientific advancements have unveiled their potential beyond the realm of food production. Functional lactic acid bacteria are strains that not only facilitate fermentation but also offer health benefits when consumed. This article delves into the screening, selection, and diverse applications of functional lactic acid bacteria, shedding light on their remarkable potential in promoting human health.

### Screening for functional lactic acid bacteria

The process of identifying functional lactic acid bacteria involves several stages, each designed to evaluate the strains' characteristics and potential benefits. Initial screening focuses on their ability to survive harsh gastrointestinal conditions, ensuring they can reach the intestines alive, where their beneficial effects occur. This involves subjecting the strains to simulated gastric and intestinal environments to mimic the conditions they encounter during digestion.

Subsequent tests evaluate other functional properties, such as adhesion to intestinal epithelial cells, antimicrobial activity against harmful pathogens, and production of bioactive compounds like exopolysaccharides and bacteriocins. These properties can contribute to enhanced gut health and immune system modulation.

In addition to these *in vitro* assessments, *in vivo* studies using animal models and clinical trials on human subjects are conducted to validate the strains' potential health benefits. These studies help elucidate the impact of functional lactic acid bacteria on parameters such as gut microbiota composition, immune response, and overall well-being.

### Applications of functional lactic acid bacteria

**Probiotic supplements:** Functional lactic acid bacteria have gained significant recognition as probiotics-live microorganisms that confer health benefits when administered in adequate

amounts. Probiotic supplements containing specific strains of LAB have been linked to improved digestion, enhanced nutrient absorption, and bolstered immune function. Moreover, their ability to restore gut microbial balance makes them invaluable in alleviating gastrointestinal disorders like irritable bowel syndrome and inflammatory bowel disease.

**Fermented functional foods:** Traditional fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kimchi have been consumed for centuries due to their probiotic content. However, advancements in LAB screening have enabled the development of novel functional foods with tailored health benefits. These foods may be enriched with specific strains of LAB to target conditions like lactose intolerance, cardiovascular health, and metabolic disorders.

**Gut-brain axis regulation:** Emerging research suggests a strong link between gut health and brain function, known as the gut-brain axis. Functional lactic acid bacteria may play a pivotal role in this connection, influencing mood, cognition, and behavior. Strains with the ability to produce neurotransmitters like serotonin and Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid (GABA) hold promise in managing conditions such as anxiety and depression.

**Oral health products:** Functional lactic acid bacteria have also found applications in oral health. Certain strains have demonstrated the capacity to inhibit the growth of oral pathogens, reducing the risk of dental caries, gum disease, and bad breath. This has paved the way for the development of probiotic oral care products like toothpaste and mouthwash.

**Bio preservation and food safety:** Beyond their human health benefits, functional lactic acid bacteria contribute to food safety by producing antimicrobial compounds that inhibit the growth of spoilage and pathogenic microorganisms. This natural bio preservation property extends shelf life and reduces the need for synthetic additives, aligning with the growing demand for clean-label food products.

### CONCLUSION

The screening and application of functional lactic acid bacteria represent a paradigm shift in harnessing the potential of these microorganisms beyond their traditional role in food

**Correspondence to:** Zhao Chen, Department of Microbiology, The New York City College of Technology, New York, United States of America, E-mail: chenzhaoqq@gmail.com

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fermentation. The ability of these strains to confer health benefits, modulate the gut microbiota, and impact various physiological systems opens up new avenues for improving human health and well-being. As ongoing research continues to

unveil their diverse applications, functional lactic acid bacteria are poised to play a pivotal role in the future of healthcare and nutrition.