IN SITU TRANSESTERIFICATION OF OIL-CONTAINING *JATROPHA CURCAS* SEEDS TO PRODUCE BIODIESEL FUEL

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate in situ transesterification allowing direct production biodiesel from jatropha seed. The influences of amount of KOH catalyst, methanol to seed ratio, amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, stirring speed, temperature and reaction time were examined to define the best performance of biodiesel yield and quality. Generally, methanol to seed ratio, amount of KOH and n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio affected biodiesel yield. An increase of biodiesel yield was observed as methanol to seed ratio, amount of KOH and n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio were increased. Stirring speed, temperature and reaction time did not affected biodiesel yield. Highest biodiesel yield (89%) was obtained under 6:1 methanol to seed ratio, 0.075 mol/L KOH in methanol, 3:3:1 n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, 600 rpm stirring speed, 40 °C temperature and 6 h reaction time. The effect of process parameters on biodiesel quality was less important. In all experiments tested, the biodiesel quality was very good (acid value < 0.3 mg of KOH/g, viscosity < 5.5 cSt, saponification value > 183 mg of KOH/g). The quality of biodiesel produced under optimum reaction condition was in accordance with the Indonesian Biodiesel Standard.

Keywords: biodiesel, in situ, jatropha seed, transesterification

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memproduksi biodiesel secara langsung dari biji jarak pagar melalui proses transesterifikasi *in situ*. Parameter proses yang dipelajari adalah pengaruh konsentrasi katalis KOH, rasio metanol terhadap bahan, rasio n-heksan terhadap metanol dan bahan, kecepatan pengadukan, suhu dan waktu reaksi terhadap rendemen biodiesel dan kualitasnya. Rasio metanol terhadap bahan, konsentrasi KOH dan rasio n-heksan terhadap metanol dan bahan berpengaruh nyata terhadap rendemen biodiesel. Semakin tinggi rasio metanol terhadap bahan, konsentrasi KOH dan rasio n-heksan terhadap metanol dan bahan, rendemen biodiesel semakin meningkat. Kecepatan pengadukan, suhu dan waktu reaksi tidak berpengaruh nyata terhadap rendemen biodiesel. Rendemen biodiesel tertinggi (89%) diperoleh dari perlakuan rasio metanol terhadap bahan 6:1, 0.075 mol/L KOH dalam metanol, rasio n-heksan terhadap metanol dan bahan 3:3:1, kecepatan pengadukan 600 rpm, suhu 40 °C dan waktu reaksi 6 jam. Kualitas biodiesel yang dihasilkan dari proses transesterifikasi *in situ* biji jarak pagar pada seluruh perlakuan yang diuji sangat baik (bilangan asam < 0.3 mg KOH/g, viskositas < 5.5 cSt, bilangan penyabunan > 183 mg KOH/g), dan tidak dipengaruhi oleh parameter-parameter proses. Kualitas biodiesel yang dihasilkan dari kondisi proses optimum memenuhi Standar Biodiesel Indonesia.

Kata kunci: biodiesel, *in situ*, biji jarak, transesterifikasi

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1. Introduction

Jatropha curcas is a drought-resistant shrub or tree belonging to the family *Euphorbiaceae*, which is cultivated in Central and South America, South-East Asia, India and Africa (Gubiz et al., 1999). It is a plant with many attributes, multiple uses and considerable potential (Openshaw, 2000; Kumar and Sharma, 2008; Achten et al., 2008). In Indonesia, the *jatropha* cultivation land area is growing because this plant can be used to reclaim land, to prevent and/or control erosion, and it provides a new agriculture development mode without competition between food and non food uses.

The seed is a part of *jatropha* plant with the highest potential for utilization. It contains between 40 and 60% of oil, and between 20 and 30% of protein. The *jatropha* seed is generally toxic to humans and animals. Phorbol ester and curcin have been identified as the main toxic agents responsible for toxicity (Gubiz et al., 1999; Haas and Mittelbach, 2000).

Jatropha curcas oil is regarded as a potential diesel substitute. Vegetable oils used as alternative fuel have numerous advantages. They are notably non toxic, safely stored and handled because of their high flash point. Without any previous detoxification, *jatropha* oil has no nutritional value. It is thus a very attractive source for fuel production.

The preparation of biodiesel from various vegetable oils based on alkaline transesterification of triglycerides with polyhydric alcohol has been studied for several decades, and a major amount of industrial production has been achieved with this method (Ma and Hanna, 1999; Leung et al., 2010). However, the transformation of *jatropha* seed in oil industry requires extra-steps during the extraction and refining processes. As the cost of the vegetable oil production contributes to approximately 70% of the biodiesel production cost (Harrington and d'Arcy-Evans, 1985; Haas et al., 2004), there is a need for the development of a new biodiesel production process that is simple, compact, efficient, low-cost, and that consumes less energy.

On the other hand, the preparation of biodiesel based on in situ transesterification has been successfully carried out from various oilseeds (Harrington and d'Arcy-Evans, 1985; Siler-Marinkovic and

Tomasevic, 1998; Ozgul-Yucel and Turkey, 2003; Haas et al., 2004; Georgogianni et al., 2008; Qian et al., 2008; Shuit et al., 2010; Hincapié et al., 2011). In situ transesterification is a biodiesel production method that uses the original agricultural products as the source of triglycerides instead of purified oil for direct transesterification, and it works virtually with any lipid-bearing material. It can reduce the long production system associated with pre-extracted oil, and it maximizes ester yield.

The conversion of *jatropha* seed to fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) by acid-catalyzed in situ transesterification has been successfully carried out (Shuit et al., 2010). Using seed size less than 0.355 mm and n-hexane as co-solvent under reaction conditions of 60 °C temperature, for 24 h, 7.5 mL/g methanol to seed ratio, and 15 %-wt of H₂SO₄, the FAME yield reached 99.8%. However, the conversion of *jatropha* oil to FAME by in situ alkaline transesterification has never been reported. We thus investigated and identified optimal reaction conditions for in situ alkaline transesterification *jatropha* seed.

The objective of this study was to investigate the in situ transesterification allowing to produce directly biodiesel from *jatropha* seed. The influences of amount of KOH catalyst, methanol to seed ratio, amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, stirring speed, temperature and reaction time were examined to define the best performance of biodiesel production yield and biodiesel quality.

2. Methodology

2.1 Materials

All trials were carried out using *jatropha* seed that was supplied by Indonesian Spices and Industrial Crops Research Institute, Sukabumi-Indonesia. The *jatropha* seed variety was the Lampung one. The oil content of the seed, expressed in relation to its dry matter content (standard NF V 03-908) was 39.4%, or 36.9% in relation to its wet basis. The seed moisture content at storage was 6.2% (standard NF V 03-903). Methanol (>98% purity) and n-hexane (>98% purity) were supplied by BRATACO Chemical Ltd (Indonesia). All solvents and chemicals for analysis were pure analytical grades that were obtained

from Sigma-Aldrich, Fluka and J.T. Baker (Indonesia and France).

2.2 Experimental

In all trials, the moisture content and mesh size of jatropha seed were less than 2% and 20, respectively. To obtain a moisture content of less than 1%, the jatropha seed was dried at 60-70 °C during 24-48 h. The dried jatropha seed was then milled using an electric grinder fitted with a mesh size of 35.

For the study of KOH amount effect and methanol to seed ratio effect on biodiesel production yield and biodiesel quality, 100 g of milled jatropha seed were mixed with methanol in which KOH was firstly dissolved. The amount of KOH and the methanol to seed ratio (v/w) were 0.05-0.1 mol/L in methanol and 2:1-6:1, respectively. The KOH amount used in this study was based on literature reported elsewhere (Qian et al., 2008). 100 ml of n-hexane [seed to n-hexane ratio (w/v) of 1:1] was then added to increase oil miscibility in the mixture, to accelerate the reaction and to perform it in a single phase. The reaction was carried out in a three-necked 2000 mL round bottom flask equipped with a reflux system, a magnetic stirrer and a heater, under reaction conditions of 700 rpm for the stirring speed, 60 °C for the temperature and 4 h for the reaction time (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Diagram of experimental apparatus and system for in situ transesterification of jatropha seed

Upon achieving reaction period, the mixture was cooled to room temperature, and was vacuum filtered to separate the filtrate from a cake. The filtrate was then evaporated using a rotary evaporator to recover methanol and n-hexane, and allowed to settle to be separated into two layers. The lower layer was dark brown in color and contained glycerol, while the upper layer was

yellow in color and contained the fatty acid methyl esters (crude biodiesel) and the unreacted triglycerides. The upper layer was then washed with water until neutrality, and dried at 105 °C during 1 h. The mass of upper layer was measured, and the biodiesel production yield was calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Biodiesel yield (\%)} = \frac{m_1 (g)}{m_2 (g)} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

m_1 = Mass of biodiesel after washing and drying

m_2 = Mass of oil contained in jatropha seeds

The cake was dried overnight at room temperature. The total volatile matter content (standard NF V 03-903) and the n-hexane extracted matter content (standard NF V 03-908) were determined.

For the study of the operating conditions effects on biodiesel production yield and biodiesel quality, the experiments were conducted using the values previously optimized for methanol to seed ratio and amount of KOH (6:1 and 0.075 mol/L in methanol, respectively). The different operating conditions were examined by varying the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio (1:5:1, 2:4:1, 3:3:1), the stirring speed (200-600 rpm), the temperature (40-50 °C) and the reaction time (4-6 h). Sample collection and analysis were performed according to procedure developed in the previous study. The randomized factorial experimental design with 2 replications and ANOVA (F-test at $\alpha = 0.05$) were applied to study the effects of amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, stirring speed, temperature and reaction time on biodiesel production yield and biodiesel quality using SAS software.

2.3 Biodiesel quality analysis

The quality parameters of biodiesel included acid value (standard NF T 60-204), saponification value (standard NI 01-3555-1998), iodine value (standard AOCS-Cd 1d-92), and viscosity (AOAC 974:07). Moreover, the fatty acid methyl esters content of biodiesel was determined by gas chromatography using the FAME method. The biodiesel produced under the optimal operating condition was completely characterized in accordance with the Indonesian Biodiesel Standard.

3. Results and Discussion

The oil content of jatropha seed in this study was 39.4%. Such amount of oil in jatropha seed was in agreement with the results reported (22-48%) by a few researchers (Achten et al., 2008; Becker and Makkar, 2008). Jatropha oil used in this study was rich in oleic (39.44%) and linoleic (36.52%) fatty acids, such as other jatropha oils described by a few researchers in previous studies (Foidl et al., 1996; Gubiz et al., 1999; Haas and Mittelbach, 2000; Openshaw, 2000; Kumar and Sharma, 2008; Achten et al., 2008; Becker and Makkar, 2008), and it contained 1.82% of free fatty acids. In alkaline transesterification, the free fatty acids quickly react with the catalyst to produce soaps that are difficult to separate. This may reduce the quantity of catalyst available for transesterification, lowering the ester production yield. Low free fatty acids content in the oil (less than 3%) is therefore required for alkali-catalyzed transesterification (Canakci and Gerpen, 2001).

The simultaneous solvent extraction and in situ transesterification on biodiesel processing from jatropha seeds affected positively both biodiesel production yield and biodiesel quality. The main advantage of this combined process is that it allows solvent extraction to be applied to oilseeds and then in situ transesterification to extracted oils. Methanol proved to be a solvent not very efficient for oil extraction due to its immiscibility. However, the addition of a small quantity of a co-solvent such as n-hexane into the reaction mixture can improve significantly the mass transfer of oil into alcohol (methanol or ethanol) and also intensify the transesterification reaction between oil and alcohol (Hincapié et al., 2011; Shuit et al., 2010; Zeng et al., 2010; Qian et al., 2010). n-Hexane is an efficient solvent for oil extraction from oilseeds. In the case of jatropha seed, its non-polarity can also limit the removal of free fatty acids and water from the seed (Qian et al., 2010). In this study, the ratio of n-hexane added to seed was 1:1 (v/w) for all the experiments carried out.

Figure 2 shows that the methanol to seed ratio and the amount of alkali (KOH) catalyst affected generally the biodiesel production yield. As previously observed by a few researchers (Haas et al., 2004;

Georgogianni et al., 2008; Qian et al., 2008; Qian et al., 2010), an increase of both methanol to seed ratio and KOH amount increased the biodiesel production yield. For all the amounts of KOH tested, a systematic increase of the biodiesel production yield was observed when the methanol to seed ratio became higher than 2:1. In addition, increasing the amount of KOH from 0.05-0.075 mol/L increased significantly the biodiesel production yield. However, when the amount of KOH exceeded 0.075 mol/L, it had no significant effect on the biodiesel production yield. The highest biodiesel production yield (76% with a fatty acid methyl esters purity of 99.95%) was therefore obtained under methanol to seed ratio of 6:1 and KOH amount of 0.075 mol/L in methanol. By comparison, the optimal molar ratio for the conventional alkaline transesterification of different oils is of the order of 6:1 at 60°C (Foidl et al., 1996; Ma and Hanna, 1999; Achten et al., 2008; Lu et al., 2009; Leung et al., 2010). Thus, the in situ transesterification of jatropha oil from seed used about 17 times more methanol than the conventional method. However, the excess reagents could be recovered for reuse.

The biodiesel produced by in situ transesterification of jatropha oil from seed had an excellent quality under a methanol to seed ratio of 6:1. The increase of KOH concentration did not improve significantly the biodiesel quality. The acid value and the viscosity remained stable at less than 0.3 mg of KOH/g of biodiesel and less than 3.5 cSt, respectively. The saponification value and the fatty acid methyl esters purity were high (>190 mg of KOH/g of biodiesel and >99.6%, respectively).

The quality of biodiesels produced by in situ transesterification of jatropha oil from seed under a methanol to seed ratio of less than 6:1 was relatively poor. The acid value and the viscosity were high (> 0.5 mg of KOH/g of biodiesel and > 8 cSt, respectively), while the fatty acid methyl esters purity was low (2-60%). The increase of the methanol to seed ratio and the increase of the amount of KOH in methanol improved the biodiesel quality. The acid value and the viscosity decreased, and the fatty acid methyl esters purity increased with the increase of the methanol to seed ratio and the increase of the amount of KOH in methanol. The saponification value remained stable at more

than 190 mg of KOH/g of biodiesel as the methanol to seed ratio and the amount of

KOH in methanol increased.

Figure 2. Influence of methanol to seed ratio and amount of alkali (KOH) catalyst on biodiesel production yield (%) (700 rpm for the stirring speed, 60 °C for the temperature and 4 h for the reaction time)

Figure 3. Influence of amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, stirring speed, temperature and reaction time on the biodiesel production yield

Figure 3 shows the influence of amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, stirring speed, temperature and reaction time on the biodiesel production yield. Generally, the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio affected biodiesel production yield. An increase of biodiesel yield was observed as amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio was increased. The stirring speed, temperature and reaction time did not affected biodiesel yield. Furthermore, the ANOVA applied to actual data (F-test at $\alpha = 0.05$) shows that the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio significantly affected the biodiesel production yield, while the temperature, the stirring speed and the reaction time did not significantly affect it. The biodiesel production yield at the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 1:5:1 was significantly different compared with those obtained at the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 2:4:1 and 3:3:1. On the other hand, the biodiesel production yields at the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 2:4:1 and 3:3:1 were not significantly different. Highest biodiesel yield (89%) was obtained under amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 3:3:1, stirring speed of 600 rpm, temperature of 40°C, and reaction time of 6 h.

For all the reaction conditions tested, the biodiesel quality was satisfactory. The acid value and the viscosity remained stable at less than 0.3 mg of KOH/g of biodiesel and less than 5.5 cSt, respectively. The saponification value was high (more than 183 mg of KOH/g of biodiesel). These qualities were favorable for its use as automotive diesel, and they were in accordance with the Indonesian Biodiesel Standard.

The ANOVA applied to actual data of acid and saponification values (F-test at $\alpha = 0.05$) shows that the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, the temperature, the stirring speed and the reaction time did not significantly affected the acid and saponification values. The ANOVA applied to actual data of viscosity (F-test at $\alpha = 0.05$) shows that the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio significantly affected the viscosity of biodiesel, while the temperature, the stirring speed and the reaction time did not significantly affect it (Figure 4). The viscosity of biodiesel at the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 3:3:1 was significantly different compared with those obtained at the amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 2:4:1 and 1:5:1. On the other hand, the viscosity of biodiesel at the amount of n-

Figure 4. Influence of amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, stirring speed, temperature and reaction time on the viscosity of biodiesel

Table 1. Jatropha Crude Biodiesel Quality Produced Under Optimal Reaction Condition

Parameter	Unit	Jatropha biodiesel	Biodiesel standard
Density at 40°C	g/cm ³	0.871	0.850-0.890
Viscosity at 40°C	cSt	4.21	2.3-6.0
Flash point	°C	107	100 min
Pour point	°C	0	0 max ^b
Cloud point	°C	11	18 max
Acid value	mg of KOH/g	0.20	0.8 max
Cetane number	-	62.5	48 min
Water and sediment	%-wt	trace (< 0.05)	0.05 max
Sulfated ash content	%-wt	0	0.02 max
Iodine number	g of iodine/mg	75.26	115 max
HHV	MJ/kg	39.73	35 min

(amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 3:3:1, 600 rpm for the stirring speed, 40°C for the temperature and 6 h for the reaction time)

hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 2:4:1 and 1:5:1 were not significantly different. Lowest viscosity of biodiesel (3.45 cSt) was obtained under amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 1:5:1, stirring speed of 200 rpm, temperature of 40°C, and reaction time of 4 h.

The analysis of the biodiesel produced by solvent extraction and in situ transesterification of jatropha oil from seeds under the optimal reaction condition (amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 3:3:1, 600 rpm for the stirring speed, 40 °C for the temperature and 6 h for the reaction time) indicated that the product met the standard specification for biodiesel fuel in most regards (Table 1).

4. Conclusion

This study showed that the in situ transesterification of jatropha seed has been successfully carried out, and was a promising alternative technology for biodiesel processing directly from jatropha seed. Moreover, the n-hexane was an excellent co-solvent. This new technology allowed the solvent extraction to be applied to oilseed and the transesterification to the extracted oil at the same time and in the same machine.

The methanol to seed ratio and amount of KOH affected biodiesel production yield and its quality. An increase of biodiesel yield and quality was observed as methanol to seed ratio and amount of KOH were

increased. Highest biodiesel yield (76%) and best biodiesel quality were obtained under methanol to seed ratio of 6:1 and amount of KOH of 0.075 mol/L in methanol. The acid value was less than 0.3 mg of KOH/g, viscosity was less than 3.5 cSt, and saponification value was more than 210 mg of KOH/g.

The amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio affected biodiesel production yield. An increase of biodiesel yield was observed as amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio was increased. The stirring speed, temperature and reaction time did not affected biodiesel yield. Highest biodiesel yield (89%) was obtained under amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio of 3:3:1, stirring speed of 600 rpm, temperature of 40 °C, and reaction time of 6 h. The effects of amount of n-hexane to methanol and seed ratio, stirring speed, temperature and reaction time on biodiesel quality were less important. In all experiments tested, the biodiesel quality was very good. The acid value was less than 0.3 mg of KOH/g, viscosity was less than 5.5 cSt, and saponification value was more than 183 mg of KOH/g. The quality of biodiesel produced under optimal reaction condition was in accordance with the Indonesian Biodiesel Standard.

Finally, the biodiesel processing with in situ transesterification resulted in a biodiesel production yield and a biodiesel

quality equivalent to those obtained with the conventional method. The flexibility of the process would permit to treat different seeds, and to use other co-solvents. In addition, the process compactness and its flexibility, the lack of interdependence between the oil extraction from oilseeds and the transesterification of extracted oils, and the minimization of investment costs allow seed treatment capacities lower than those of the conventional method. These lower capacities could be adapted to treat the local oilseeds productions, especially specific varieties, to increase the added value of oilseeds.

Acknowledgement

The authors wish to thank DP2M DIKTI KEMENDIKNAS for financial support (Hibah Kerjasama Luar Negeri dan Publikasi Internasional contract no. 447/SP2H/PP/DP2M/VI/2010, 11 June 2010).

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