

Article

Hemp Seed Cake Flour as a Source of Proteins, Minerals and Polyphenols and Its Impact on the Nutritional, Sensorial and Technological Quality of Bread

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Abstract: Hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) seeds contain a high concentration of proteins and biologically active compounds. The protein content is even higher in case of lipid part removal in oil production. The remaining part is considered a leftover, usually being used in animal feed. The aim of this study was to investigate the physicochemical composition of hemp seed cake flour, its nutritional quality and its impact on bread quality parameters. The properties of hemp seed cake flour were assessed in terms of protein quality, mineral composition, polyphenols and antioxidant activity. Hemp seed cake proved to be an important source of high-quality protein (31.62% d.m.) with the presence of eight essential amino acids. The biologically active potential of hemp seed cake has been demonstrated by the high content of polyphenols, especially those from the Cannabisin group. Hemp seed cake flour was incorporated in wheat flour at levels from 5 to 40% (*w/w*) to investigate its influence on bread quality parameters. The addition of hemp seed cake flour increased the total phenol content of bread, thus greatly enhancing the antioxidant activity. The protein content of bread was found to be enhanced from 11.11% d.m (control sample) to 18.18% d.m (for sample with 40% hemp seed cake flour). On the other hand, the addition of hemp seed cake flour led to decreased bread porosity, increased hardness and decreased resilience in the seed cake. Although, all bread samples recorded sensorial attributes ranging between “slightly like” and “like it very much”.

Keywords: *Cannabis sativa* L.; hemp seed cake flour; bread; protein; amino acids; phenols; antioxidant activity; sensorial acceptance; CATA



Citation: Capcanari, T.; Covaliov, E.; Negoïța, C.; Siminiuc, R.; Chirsanova, A.; Reșitca, V.; Țurcanu, D. Hemp Seed Cake Flour as a Source of Proteins, Minerals and Polyphenols and Its Impact on the Nutritional, Sensorial and Technological Quality of Bread. *Foods* **2023**, *12*, 4327.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/foods12234327>

Academic Editor: João Miguel F. Rocha

Received: 6 November 2023

Revised: 20 November 2023

Accepted: 24 November 2023

Published: 29 November 2023



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1. Introduction

Food has always been a basic necessity, but it is also often a pleasure that prompts people to buy more and more products, whether or not it is necessary [1,2]. In a world where food waste is becoming a “normality”, the problem of the resulting waste is increasingly pronounced, and the consequences for the environment are not at all negligible [3–5]. Food waste is among the main sources of environmental pollution and can also be an ethical issue in terms of global hunger [6–9]. For these reasons, correct food waste management must be a significant objective for consumers and companies operating in this industry [10–12].

Hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) is a low-cost, unconventional feed resource with a unique phytochemical composition and various uses (pharmaceutical industry, food industry, etc.) [13–15]. However, it has long been controversial because of the confusion about the health risk due to the increased content of hallucinogenic substances (tetrahydrocannabinol, THC) [16,17]. Taking as a starting point the multiple therapeutic effects ascribed to the content in active biocompounds and the content of THC below the toxicity limits ($\geq 0.2\%$), the use of industrial (*Cannabis sativa* L.) hemp has been rethought and acquired new valences [18–21]. More than that, starting in January 2023, the new Common Agricultural

Policy (CAP), adopted by European Council and the European Parliament, entered into force. The new CAP stipulated that the permitted THC level in hemp products was raised from 0.2% to 0.3% [22,23]. Hemp seeds stand out due to their fairly high protein content (22.17%) with high biological value, reflected in a high essential amino acid content [24–26]. Equally, hemp seeds have a high energy value due to their fat content (26.25% (*w/w*) to 37.50%), to which the beneficial fatty acid structure is added. Nowadays, the by-products or leftovers of hemp seeds (cakes from oil factories) are unutilized for human consumption, being used in animal feed [27–29]. However, hemp seed cake contains up to 50% proteic substances, 9–20% lipids, 6–7% dietary fibre, important amounts of minerals and could be successfully used in the manufacture of food products for human consumption [30–34].

Bread has been an important staple food product to many cultures over the centuries [35,36]. It is referred to as the “staff of life” in the *Bible* and it is still the most eaten product in some regions [37]. On the other hand, several studies have found a significant relation between bread consumption and body weight, abdominal fat distribution, high postprandial glucose, etc. [38–41]. This may be attributed to the fact that nowadays most bread is refined, with a low content of fibre and vitamins, thus providing quick and easily digestible carbohydrates. Thus, people are encouraged to restrict bread from their diet or to give preference to breads enriched with fibres, proteins and other biologically active compounds [41–43]. As a result of these considerations, consumer demands have increased; they want their bakery products to have a satisfying taste and texture, while respecting nutritional health trends [42,44]. To satisfy all these attributes, in the challenging global context, the bakery industry has to face many challenges [45,46]. Thus, innovative solutions are sought to be able to provide distribution networks with tasty and nutritious bakery products, which keep their freshness longer and which are obtained using sustainable means [47–50].

Therefore, the objective of this study was to evaluate the nutritional and biological value of hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) seed cake and therefore the impact of the wheat flour substitution by hemp seed cake on the sensory, physicochemical, textural and technological characteristics of bread.

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