CHEMICAL CHARACTERIZATION OF BRAZILIAN HULLESS BARLEY VARIETIES, FLOUR FRACTIONATION, AND PROTEIN CONCENTRATION

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ABSTRACT: Even though hulless barley is widely known due to its nutritional potential, in Brazil it is only grown at a few agricultural experimental stations. There is no published data about the chemical composition of Brazilian hulless barley varieties; however, research laboratories have studied their agronomical characteristics. The objectives of this study were to present the chemical characterization and effect of flour fractionation on protein concentration of six Brazilian hulless barley varieties, namely IAC IBON 214/82, IAC 8612/421, IAC 8501/31, IAC 8501/12, IAPAR 39-Acumaí, and IAC 8501/22. The analyses included: ash, ether extract, total protein, starch, total insoluble and soluble dietary fiber, and β-glucans. Flour fractionation was carried out by sieving. The flour fractions were evaluated for crude protein, protein, and protein and non-protein nitrogen. Chemical composition varied (P < 0.05) among all the varieties. IAC 8501/22, IAC 8501/31, and IAC 8501/12 showed the highest protein content (15.69, 15.25, and 14.94% respectively). Differences (P < 0.05) among the protein of the fractionated flours were detected, and might be attributed primarily to genetic background since all varieties were grown under the same environmental conditions. Fractionating the flour increased the total protein content, in some fractions, by up to 2%. These results may be useful in the food industry for the selection of hulless barley varieties for human consumption and to produce substantially protein-enriched flour fractions.

Key words: cereals, naked barley, protein fractionation, sieving, chemical composition

INTRODUCTION

Barley (Hordeum vulgare L.) is used mainly for brewing and as animal feed but there is a growing interest in it for human food and industrial uses (Oscarson et al., 1996). It contributes significantly to the human food supply as malt products, and to animal livestock feed (Elfversion et al., 1999). Many spontaneous and induced barley varieties occur, and this offers the potential to select particular genotypes for specific uses (Nilan &
Ullrich, 1993). Hullless (HB) or naked barley is a genetically improved variety that allows easier removal of the hull and a fairly new industry has developed around uses of selected HB in order to increase the digestible energy of the grain, especially for swine and poultry (Bhatty, 1999b). HB has been investigated for several potential new applications as whole grain, and for its value-added products. These include bran and flour for multiple food applications (Bhatty, 1999a).

In Brazil, barley is grown in the Southern states, which produced 235,150 tons in 2002 (IBGE, 2003). Almost 100% of the Brazilian covered barley production is used for malting. Hullless barley is still being cultivated only in experimental stations in order to evaluate its possible use as food. The Canadian production of HB was the highest in 1998, with a barley grain yield of around 800,000 tons (Bhatty, 1999b).

Interest in hulless barley has increased due to its soluble dietary fiber, β-glucan, and high protein contents. Even when compared to oats, a β-glucan-rich cereal, barley presents higher amounts. (Lapvetelainen & Aro, 1994; Marconi et al., 2000; De Francisco & De Sá, 2001). β-glucan is particularly interesting for human consumers because it decreases blood cholesterol and glucose levels (Newman et al., 1998).

In relation to other grains, barley and wheat are similar in their protein content (11-12%); however, both are higher in protein than corn (9.5%) and rice (7.5%) (Lockhart & Hurt, 1986). Hullless barley usually has higher total protein, amino acid, and digestible energy contents than hulled barley. Some varieties are high in lysine, the essential amino acid that is most limiting in cereals (Munck, 1992; Shewry, 1993).

The objectives of this study were to determine the chemical composition of flour from six hulless barley varieties and to evaluate the effects of its fractionation on protein content.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**Plant material**
Six Brazilian hulless barley varieties (IAC-IBON 214-82, IAC 8612-421, IAC8501-31, IAC 8501-12, IAPAR 39 ACUMAI, IAC8501-22) were analyzed. All varieties were grown in experimental fields in 2001, at Mauá da Serra, PR, Brazil (23°49’21”S; 51°14’35”W). Before analysis, 50 g of each barley cultivar was ground using a 1.0 mm screen. Duplicate 100 g samples of each ground sample were fractionated to concentrate protein using a rotary-tapping shaker (Ro-Tap RX 29-16 II-724, WS Tyler, Mentor, OH, USA) equipped with 80 (180 µm), 100 (150 µm), and 140 mesh (106 µm) sieves (ASTM-E11 Specification, Tyler Equivalent WS Tyler, Mentor, OH, USA) for 30 minutes. The flour fractions retained on each sieve were weighed and the percentage of the total weight was calculated for each fraction (as-is basis). Crude protein content was determined by the conventional Kjeldahl method, and protein and non-protein nitrogen were determined according to Novoa et al. (1993).

**Statistical analyses**
Differences in chemical composition and protein fractions among the varieties were evaluated by analysis of variance and Tukey’s HSD multiple pairwise comparisons using the Statistical computational software (version 6.0). Data correspond to the average of three replicates grown in the field.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The chemical composition of the six Brazilian hulless barley varieties can be summarized as follows: Ash contents (%) were found in the ranges from 1.51-2.27, ether extract 2.91-4.00, protein 12.55-15.92, starch 57.46-63.14, total dietary fiber 12.37-17.39, insoluble dietary fiber 8.07-12.16, soluble dietary fiber 4.30-6.45 and β-glucans 3.70-5.77 (Table 1). The highest constituents were starch (57.5-63.1%), total protein (12.5-15.9%) and total dietary fiber (12.4-17.4%). Starch (58.59-67.46%) and total protein (12.55-16.17%) contents are in agreement with those previously reported for Swedish (Elfverson et al., 1999) and Canadian (Li et al., 2001) varieties. Total dietary fiber was not reported in the above studies; however, our results (12.37-17.39%) are in ac-
Table 1 - Chemical composition (%, w/w dry basis) of Brazilian hulless barley varieties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varieties</th>
<th>Ash</th>
<th>Ether Extract</th>
<th>Total Protein</th>
<th>Starch</th>
<th>TDF²</th>
<th>IDF³</th>
<th>SDF⁴</th>
<th>β - Glucans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IAC-IBON- 214/82</td>
<td>2.27 ± 0.02³</td>
<td>3.20 ± 0.16³</td>
<td>15.83 ± 0.11³</td>
<td>60.76 ± 1.63³</td>
<td>16.89 ± 1.42³</td>
<td>10.43 ± 0.90⁵</td>
<td>6.45 ± 0.59⁵</td>
<td>5.02 ± 0.19³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAC- 8612/421</td>
<td>2.26 ± 0.02³</td>
<td>2.91 ± 0.22³</td>
<td>13.65 ± 0.11³</td>
<td>60.40 ± 1.32³</td>
<td>15.85 ± 0.47³</td>
<td>10.77 ± 0.70³</td>
<td>5.07 ± 0.25³</td>
<td>4.41 ± 0.21³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAC- 8501/31</td>
<td>1.87 ± 0.01¹</td>
<td>4.00 ± 0.21³</td>
<td>15.17 ± 0.12³</td>
<td>63.14 ± 0.91³</td>
<td>13.51 ± 1.11³</td>
<td>8.72 ± 0.87³</td>
<td>4.78 ± 0.23³</td>
<td>3.70 ± 0.12³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAC- 8501/12</td>
<td>1.61 ± 0.04⁴</td>
<td>3.19 ± 0.15³</td>
<td>15.92 ± 0.18³</td>
<td>62.39 ± 1.40³</td>
<td>12.37 ± 0.38³</td>
<td>8.07 ± 0.30³</td>
<td>4.30 ± 0.07³</td>
<td>4.42 ± 0.22³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAPAR-39-ACUMAI</td>
<td>1.51 ± 0.08³</td>
<td>3.22 ± 0.24³</td>
<td>12.55 ± 0.13³</td>
<td>57.46 ± 0.47³</td>
<td>17.39 ± 0.63³</td>
<td>12.16 ± 0.12³</td>
<td>5.23 ± 0.51³</td>
<td>5.77 ± 0.31³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAC- 8501/22</td>
<td>1.81 ± 0.09⁵</td>
<td>3.43 ± 0.06³</td>
<td>15.61 ± 0.03³</td>
<td>58.59 ± 1.95³</td>
<td>14.56 ± 1.17²</td>
<td>8.67 ± 0.93³</td>
<td>5.88 ± 0.23³</td>
<td>5.40 ± 1.00³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Total Nitrogen × 6.25  
²TDF=Total Dietary Fiber; ³IDF=Insoluble Dietary Fiber;  
⁴SDF=Soluble Dietary Fiber  
⁵Means of three trials followed by standard deviations  
⁶Tukey test  

concordance to the description for an American HB waxy cultivar (Anderson et al., 1999). These three constituents together make up more than 90% of the dry matter. According to Oscarsson et al. (1996), the contents of starch, total protein, and total dietary fiber may be affected by both genetic and environmental factors. Bhatty & Rossnagel (1998) showed that there were differences in protein, starch, and total dietary fiber contents between the Japanese and Canadian barley varieties tested. The differences (P < 0.05) among the six varieties may be attributed primarily to genetic background, since all varieties were grown under the same environmental conditions.

Covered and hulless barley genotypes were differentiated on the basis of their average contents of constituents that are enriched in the husk. Correa (2003) studied seven different Brazilian covered barley cultivars and showed that the protein contents ranged from 11.14-12.53% while the Brazilian HB varieties showed a broad range of total protein contents (12.55-15.92%). High total protein contents may be attributed to a concentration effect caused by the lack of hulls and/or to the result of breeding for increased protein content in feed barley (Edney et al.,1992; Li et al., 2003). The addition of high protein cereal for enrichment is one way to increase protein intake.

The ash (1.61-2.27%) and ether extract (2.91-4.00%) contents were in agreement with results by Oscarsson et al. (1996), who reported ash and ether extract ranges from 1.3-2.1 and 2.1-3.7%, respectively. Ash consists mainly of inorganic compounds. The major mineral compounds in barley flour are phosphorus and potassium, while iron and zinc are the major trace minerals (Bhatty, 1993).

The total fiber content is represented by both soluble and insoluble fibers. The ratio of soluble dietary fiber and total dietary fiber was 1:3 in all HB varieties. The β-glucan contents ranged from 3.70 to 5.77%, as previously reported (Bhatty, 1997; Knuckles et al., 1992; MacGregor & Fincher, 1993). Several papers have shown that soluble dietary fiber and β-glucan are of particular interest to consumers due to their effects on blood cholesterol and blood glucose. Thus, the Brazilian HB varieties showed high potential as sources of soluble dietary fiber and β-glucan, and are vital ingredients in health-promoting food products (Wu et al., 1994; Bhatty, 1999b).

**Fractionation of the protein**

The yield of the HB flour fractions obtained was 29.43 (+180 µm), 6.10 (+150 µm), 7.34 (+106 µm), and 57.14% (-106 µm). The concentrations of crude protein, protein, and protein and non-protein nitrogen is shown in Table 2. Differences (P < 0.05) were detected among the total protein of the fractioned flour. The 150-106 µm fraction presented the highest total protein content for all varieties, while the lowest total protein content was obtained for unfractoned flour and the < 106 µm fraction. Protein nitrogen was approximadely 80% higher than non-protein nitrogen, indicating that Brazilian HB varieties may be considered nutritionally valuable. Linko et al. (1989) evaluated the protein composition of a high protein barley flour and reported similar results for protein nitrogen. The ability to prepare products with different protein contents could increase the economic value of Brazilian HB by opening the possibility of tailoring fractions to specific foods.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The differences in chemical composition of barley varieties compared to previous studies may be explained by genetic make-up, since all varieties were grown under the same environmental conditions. It is important to consider these differences in chemical composition when comparing results from varieties grown in...
Brazil with those grown in others countries. The flour fractionation method might be a good alternative for protein concentration in the food industry to produce HB ingredients with high added value, and also to produce enriched fractions at low cost. The chemical composition of hulless barley of the Brazilian varieties studied were found to be similar to those reported for Canadian and Swedish cultivars. We have identified a fraction of hulless barley flour with the highest protein content of about 2% extra protein.

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