

# Protein Isolation from Tomato Seed Meal, Extraction Optimization

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## ABSTRACT

Water extraction of tomato seed meal proteins was studied to find optimal conditions for protein extraction and isolation. A central composite design including temperature, pH, time and water/solids was used and second order models were employed. Optimum conditions were: 50°C, pH 11.5, 20 min and water/solids = 30/1 (v/w). Experimental values were: extraction yield (extracted protein to that in raw material) 66.1%, protein content of product 72.0%, and total protein yield (protein in isolated product to that in raw material) 43.6%. Estimated values were in good agreement with experimental values. Optimum conditions were confirmed by a larger scale experiment.

Key Words: tomato, protein extraction, seed meal, optimization

## INTRODUCTION

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION caused by food processing wastes could be reduced by appropriate recovery of edible nutrients (Birch et al., 1976; Green and Kramer, 1979; Knorr, 1983). Tomato processing wastes, primarily skins and seeds, comprise 10 to 30% of raw fruit weight (Ben-Gera and Kramer, 1969; Geisman, 1981). Tomato seeds represent 50–55% of the pomace. Tomato pomace is mainly disposed of as animal feed or fertilizer (Tsatsaronis and Boskou, 1975; Canella et al., 1979; Cantarelli et al., 1989). A small fraction of the seeds is used by the oil industry (Canella et al., 1979; Geisman, 1981). About  $1 \times 10^6$  metric tons of tomatoes are processed into products annually in Greece (NSSG, 1990), generating  $\approx 100,000$  tons of tomato seeds.

The potential of tomato seeds as a food source has been reported (Ammerman et al., 1963; Drouliskos, 1976; Kramer and Kwee, 1977a,b; Abdel-Rahman, 1982; Al-Wandawi et al., 1985; Laszity et al., 1986; Rahma et al., 1986). The approximate composition of tomato seeds (dry basis) is: fat 11–20%, protein 15–22% and ash 3–7%. The high unsaturated fatty acid content of tomato seed oil ( $C_{18:1}$  20%,  $C_{18:2}$  55–60%,  $C_{18:3}$  2%) and the nutritive value of the protein compare favorably with soybeans (Rymal, 1973; Rymal et al., 1974; Brodowski and Geisman, 1980; Lazos and Kalathenos, 1988). The high lysine content (8–10 g/16 g N) of tomato seed protein (Rymal et al., 1974; Cantarelli et al., 1989) makes it suitable for supplementing proteins in cereal products (Brodowski and Geisman, 1980; Carlson et al., 1981; Yaseen et al., 1991). In addition the functionality of tomato seed proteins may have many uses in food systems (Kramer and Kwee, 1977a; Moharram et al., 1984; Doxastakis et al., 1988a,b; Doxastakis et al., 1988; Kiosseoglu et al., 1989). Tomato seeds lack antinutritional factors or toxic substances often found in other non-conventional protein sources (Rahma et al., 1986). Thus, the recovery and utilization of tomato seed protein for human consumption has been studied (Kwee, 1970; Canella et al., 1979; Doxastakis et al., 1988b; Cantarelli et al., 1989; Kiosseoglu et al., 1989).

Protein has been isolated from tomato seeds using a 3-step process: extraction, precipitation and drying of protein precipi-

tate (Kramer and Kwee, 1977b; Fazio et al., 1983). Canella and Castriota (1980) examined the effects of several individual factors on protein extraction from tomato seed meal. Latief and Knorr (1983a,b) studied the protein precipitation step using commercial tomato seeds.

Our objective was to determine the optimal conditions for protein extraction from defatted tomato seed meal, examining simultaneously effects of temperature, pH, time and water-to-solids ratio. The effect of extraction conditions on protein yield and on protein content of isolated product was also determined.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

### Materials

Tomato pomace was obtained from a tomato processing plant (KO-PAIS S.A. Aliartos, Greece). It was sundried (25–30°C, 3–4 days) and ground in a blender (Waring Commercial Blendor, Dynamics Co., New Hartford, CO). The major part of the skins was removed using a 1 mm sieve. The skins remaining on the sieve were separated from seeds with a fan blowing an upward airstream. The seed fraction was ground (Ultra-Centrifugal Mill, Type ZM1, F.K. Retsch GmbH & Co, Haan, Germany) to pass a 1 mm sieve. Tomato seed meal was prepared by defatting ground seeds with n-hexane in a Soxhlet apparatus and grinding (Ultra-Centrifugal Mill, Type ZM1, F.K. Retsch GmbH & Co, Haan, Germany) to pass a 0.5 mm sieve.

### Protein isolation from tomato seed

Tomato seed meal (10 g) was extracted with deionized water (10:1–30:1 ratio) in a stirred glass vessel. The pH of the suspension (7.5–11.5) was kept constant during the extraction by adjusting with 0.5N NaOH. Temperature (30–50°C) was regulated within  $\pm 0.2^\circ\text{C}$  by a water bath. The slurry was centrifuged at  $2600 \times g$  for 20 min, the supernatant was collected and the pH was adjusted to the isoelectric point (3.9) using 0.5N HCl. The protein precipitate was separated by centrifugation at  $2600 \times g$  for 25 min and freeze dried. The solid residue after protein extraction was dried at 60°C under vacuum and was used for protein determination.

### Isoelectric point (pI)

The pI of tomato seed proteins was determined as the pH value of maximal precipitation. 20g of tomato seed meal was extracted as described, under the conditions: water-to-solids ratio 20:1 (v/w), pH 10, 40°C, 30 min. The pI was found by titrating aliquots of the collected extract to specific pH values and determining the protein content of the supernatant after centrifugation. The protein content was determined according to the method of Lowry et al. (1951).

### Analytical methods

Moisture, crude fat, ash, total dietary fiber and crude protein (Nx6.25) were determined according to standard methods (AOAC, 1990). Minerals were determined by atomic absorption/emission spectroscopy (Perkin-Elmer Model 2380, Perkin Elmer Co., Norwalk, CT). Phosphorus was determined photometrically by the ascorbic acid method (Hach Company, 1989), after digestion with concentrated sulfuric acid and hydrogen peroxide (50%) in a Digesdahl apparatus (Hach Company, Loveland, CO). Total sugars were measured according to the phenol-sulfuric acid method (Dubois et al., 1956) using glucose as standard.

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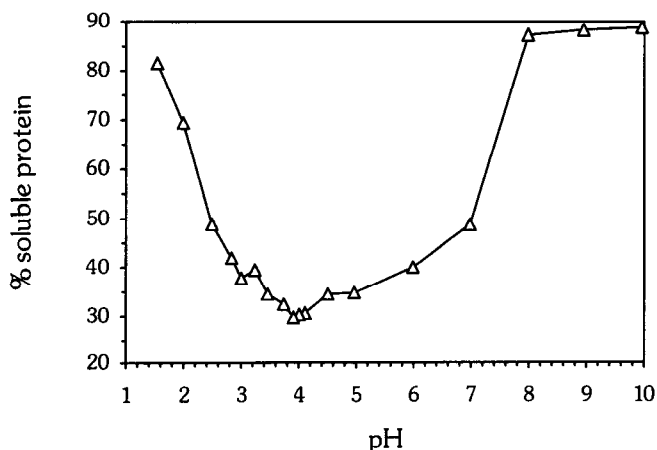
**Table 1**—Variables and levels for central composite design

Variable	Symbol	Coded variables levels <sup>a</sup>				
		-2	-1	0	1	2
Temperature (°C)	x <sub>1</sub>	30	35	40	45	50
pH	x <sub>2</sub>	7.5	8.5	9.5	10.5	11.5
Time (min)	x <sub>3</sub>	20	30	40	50	60
Water-to-solids ratio (v/w)	x <sub>4</sub>	10:1	15:1	20:1	25:1	30:1

<sup>a</sup> Passage from coded variable (X<sub>i</sub>) level to natural variable (x<sub>i</sub>) level is given by the following equations: x<sub>1</sub>=5X<sub>1</sub> + 40; x<sub>2</sub>=X<sub>2</sub> + 9.5; x<sub>3</sub>=10X<sub>3</sub> + 40; x<sub>4</sub>=(5X<sub>4</sub> + 20):1.

**Table 2**—Proximate composition and mineral content of tomato seed meal (dry basis)

	Tomato seed	Tomato seed meal
Moisture (%)	8.3	8.1
Protein (%)	25.5	31.3
Crude fat (%)	18.2	1.3
Ash (%)	3.7	4.6
Total sugars (%)	2.9	3.2
Total dietary fiber (%)		54.1
K (mg/100 g)		1046
Na (mg/100 g)		70
Ca (mg/100 g)		294
Mg (mg/100 g)		491
P (mg/100 g)		903
Fe (mg/100 g)		10
Mn (mg/100 g)		6
Cu (mg/100 g)		2
Zn (mg/100 g)		4



**Fig. 1**—Precipitation of extracted proteins from tomato seed meal as related to pH.

**Experimental design and statistical analysis**

The process variables (factors) and the responses (dependent variables) were defined from preliminary studies and published data (Latlief and Knorr, 1983a; Rustom et al., 1991). The process variables (x<sub>i</sub>) were: temperature (x<sub>1</sub>), pH (x<sub>2</sub>), and time of extraction (x<sub>3</sub>) and water-to-solids ratio (x<sub>4</sub>). Each variable was coded at five levels: -2, -1, 0, 1, 2 (Table 1).

Selected responses which evaluate the extraction process included protein extraction yield (EY) defined as the ratio of total extracted protein to total protein in the raw material, expressed as percentage. Also included were protein content of the product (PR) and total protein yield (TY) defined as the ratio of total protein in the isolated product to total protein in the raw material, expressed as percentage.

A central composite design (CCD) was arranged to allow for fitting of a second-order model (Cohran and Cox, 1957; Adler et al., 1975). The CCD combined the vertices of a hypercube whose coordinates were given by the 2<sup>n</sup> factorial design (runs 1–16) with the “star” points (runs 17–24). The star points were added to the factorial design to provide for estimation of curvature of the model (Joglegar and May, 1987). Seven replicates at the center point of the design (runs 25–31) were used to allow for estimation of the “pure error” sum of squares. All experiments were carried out in a randomized order to minimize any effects of extraneous factors on the observed responses. The regression coefficients

**Table 3**—Central composite design arrangement and responses (1–31) and experimental runs at the optimum conditions (32–39)

Run	Variable levels <sup>a</sup>				Responses		
	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	EY	PR	TY
1	1	1	1	1	56.60	73.38	37.64
2	1	-1	1	1	49.91	67.66	26.16
3	-1	1	1	1	57.31	74.90	38.87
4	-1	-1	1	1	48.53	71.34	34.62
5	1	1	-1	1	57.16	72.58	40.98
6	1	-1	-1	1	49.98	70.60	30.84
7	-1	1	-1	1	53.06	72.39	34.84
8	-1	-1	-1	1	50.02	69.77	29.57
9	1	1	1	-1	48.74	74.64	30.55
10	1	-1	1	-1	43.91	73.50	30.82
11	-1	1	1	-1	50.60	76.22	37.84
12	-1	-1	1	-1	48.11	72.04	30.43
13	1	1	-1	-1	54.02	74.95	28.77
14	1	-1	-1	-1	50.14	74.48	26.17
15	-1	1	-1	-1	48.30	70.35	29.03
16	-1	-1	-1	-1	46.49	71.75	32.12
17	2	0	0	0	46.63	73.94	24.48
18	-2	0	0	0	51.45	69.37	30.75
19	0	2	0	0	55.41	69.83	35.96
20	0	-2	0	0	48.37	69.32	26.95
21	0	0	2	0	49.02	75.23	36.24
22	0	0	-2	0	51.71	74.36	29.37
23	0	0	0	2	53.32	71.56	35.83
24	0	0	0	-2	42.83	72.64	24.90
25	0	0	0	0	54.49	71.97	35.38
26	0	0	0	0	51.35	75.00	33.35
27	0	0	0	0	50.20	74.05	31.90
28	0	0	0	0	47.85	74.34	29.80
29	0	0	0	0	51.38	73.24	34.41
30	0	0	0	0	46.07	74.48	29.35
31	0	0	0	0	48.13	72.18	30.44
32	-2	2	2	2	63.67	71.79	41.05
33	-2	2	2	2	65.62	71.81	39.93
34	-2	2	2	2	62.51	72.45	42.46
35	-2	2	2	2	64.29	72.07	40.28
36	2	2	-2	2	67.23	69.16	40.07
37	2	2	-2	2	67.73	71.92	42.82
38	2	2	-2	2	65.19	73.37	46.13
39	2	2	-2	2	64.19	73.42	45.31

<sup>a</sup> Coded variables

and the ANOVA tables were computed using the Data analysis-Regression option of EXCEL 5.0 (Microsoft Corporation) program.

**Optimization**

Optimum extraction conditions were estimated by the steepest ascent method (Adler et al., 1975) using a computer program written in BASIC. The program using the fitted model for each response searched the experimental space for optimum responses that were generated by feasible combinations of all factors simultaneously. Several experimental runs were conducted at the predicted optimum conditions; these runs in combination with the earlier ones were used for estimation of new coefficients for fitted models.

**Contour plots**

Variables with significant linear terms were chosen for axes of contour plots for each response. Contour plots were generated by assigning constant (zero) values to two of the four variables and solving the fitted equations as a quadratic equation in the remaining two variables.

**RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

Dried tomato pomace consisted of about 53% seeds and 47% skins (weight basis). The seeds were separated from skins, not only because they contained most of the proteins but also because the essential amino acid content and the biological value of seed proteins are higher than those of skin proteins (Lasztity et al., 1986).

The seeds had a protein content of 25.5% (dry basis) considered adequate for protein recovery. Seeds were defatted, since tomato seed oil is recognized as an edible oil (Canella et al., 1979). The proximate composition of tomato seeds and tomato

**Table 4**—Regression coefficients for the fitted second-order models

Coefficients	Initial models			New models		
	EY	PR	TY	EY	PR	TY
b <sub>0</sub>	49.924	73.609	32.090	50.295	73.860	32.792
b <sub>1</sub>	-0.067	0.507*	-1.164*	-0.021	0.590**	-1.154**
b <sub>2</sub>	2.199****	0.804****	2.325****	2.127****	0.755**	2.189****
b <sub>3</sub>	-0.452	0.356	1.181**	-0.497	0.274	1.171**
b <sub>4</sub>	2.218****	-0.728**	2.069***	2.146****	-0.777***	1.932****
b <sub>11</sub>	-0.061	-0.405	-0.803	-0.189	-0.492*	-1.047**
b <sub>22</sub>	0.652	-0.925***	0.157	0.523	-1.012****	-0.087
b <sub>33</sub>	0.271	0.380	0.494	0.142	0.293	0.250
b <sub>44</sub>	-0.302	-0.293	-0.116	-0.431	-0.380	-0.360
b <sub>12</sub>	0.404	0.022	0.632	0.541	0.270	0.662
b <sub>13</sub>	-1.176*	-0.854**	-1.112	-0.960**	-0.708**	-0.702
b <sub>14</sub>	0.089	-0.712**	0.677	0.226	-0.464	0.707
b <sub>23</sub>	0.430	0.683*	0.497	0.293	0.435	0.467
b <sub>24</sub>	0.793	0.593*	1.531**	0.576	0.447	1.121**
b <sub>34</sub>	0.608	-0.183	-0.781	0.471	-0.431	-0.711

\* P<0.1  
 \*\* P<0.05  
 \*\*\* P<0.01  
 \*\*\*\* P<0.001

**Table 5**—F values, coefficient of determination and coefficient of variation for the fit of experimental data to models

	Initial models			New models		
	EY	PR	TY	EY	PR	TY
F values	3.91***	4.41***	3.97***	27.15****	3.90***	14.75****
R <sup>2</sup>	0.774	0.795	0.778	0.941	0.695	0.896
CV(%)	4.48	1.80	8.55	3.94	1.90	7.23

\*\*\* P<0.01  
 \*\*\*\* P<0.001

**Table 6**—Observed and predicted responses at the optimum conditions

Point	EY		PR		TY	
	Predicted	Observed <sup>a</sup>	Predicted	Observed <sup>a</sup>	Predicted	Observed <sup>a</sup>
-2,2,2,2	64.2	64.0	72.2	72.0	41.2	40.9
2,2,-2,2	66.1	66.1	71.9	72.0	45.6	43.6

<sup>a</sup> Mean values of four replicates

seed meal were compared (Table 2). Protein content of tomato seeds was higher but ash and crude fat content were slightly lower than reported values (Brodowski and Geisman, 1980; Latlief and Knorr, 1983a; Moharram et al., 1984). This may be due to differences in tomato cultivars and processes.

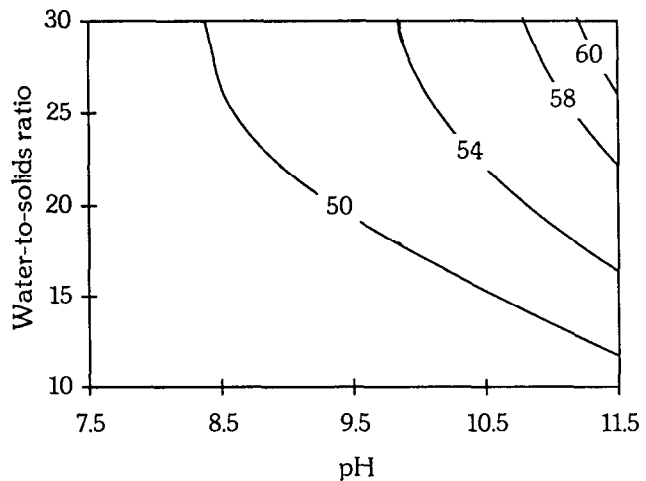
Tomato seed meal was rich in protein (31.3% d.b.) and compared favorably with other oilseed meals as a potential non-conventional source of protein (Yazicioglu et al., 1981; Liadakis et al., 1993). According to Cantarelli et al., (1989), tomato seed meal is more suitable for protein isolates production because of high fiber content.

Protein precipitation was done at the pI which was 3.9 (Fig. 1). Other values of tomato seed proteins pI have been reported to be between 3.8 and 4.6 (Kramer and Kwee, 1977b; Canella and Castriota, 1980; Latlief and Knorr, 1983a,b; Fazio et al., 1983).

Protein extraction yield (EY), protein content of the product (PR) and total protein yield (TY) obtained by different combinations of the extraction conditions were compared (Table 3). Widely dispersed values of EY were obtained with different combinations of extraction conditions, varying from 42.8 to 57.3%. TY also showed widely dispersed values, from 24.5 to 41%. As protein extraction increased, more proteins were in solution, and more proteins could be precipitated, contributing to total yield increase, thus explaining the same pattern of EY and TY values. However, PR of isolated products did not vary much, ranging from 67.7 to 76.2%, relatively high for such products (Kramer and Kwee, 1977b; Tchorbantov et al., 1986). Nevertheless, these products were characterized as concentrates.

### Model fitting

Regression coefficients for the fitted models were compared (Table 4). pH and water-to-solids ratio were the most significant



**Fig. 2**—Contour plots for EY as related to pH and water-to-solids ratio; the other two variables were fixed at zero coded levels.

factors for all models. Especially, for the PR model, pH showed highly significant ( $P < 0.01$ ) linear and quadratic terms. This implies that pH and water-to-solids ratio were the predominant factors for modeling of protein isolation from tomato seed meal, as reported by Rustom et al., (1991) for peanuts. Note that temperature was not a significant factor in any models; Canella and Castriota, (1980) reported a similar effect, however, others have reported that temperature influenced protein extraction from proteinaceous sources (Drawert et al., 1979; Rustom et al., 1991).

The adequacy of each model was tested by the lack of fit test and the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  (Table 5). All three models were significant by the F-test at the 1% confidence level and none of the models exhibited lack of fit. Our three models for EY, PR and TY showed  $R^2$  values of 77.4, 79.5 and 77.6% respectively, adequate for models of this type. Reproducibilities of our models were very good (CV 4.5, 1.8 and 8.6% respectively).

### Optimization

Fitted models were introduced as objective functions in an optimization program based on the steepest ascent method. Predicted optimum EY values were 70.3 and 67.5 at (-2,2,2,2) and (2,2,-2,2) respectively (variables in coded levels). For PR optimum values of 80.4 and 75.0 were predicted at (2,-0.9,-2,-2) and (-2,1.7,2,2) respectively. For TY the predicted optimum values were 52.0 and 50.5 at (2,2,-2,2) and (-0.5,2,2,2) respectively. As seen from these values, both EY

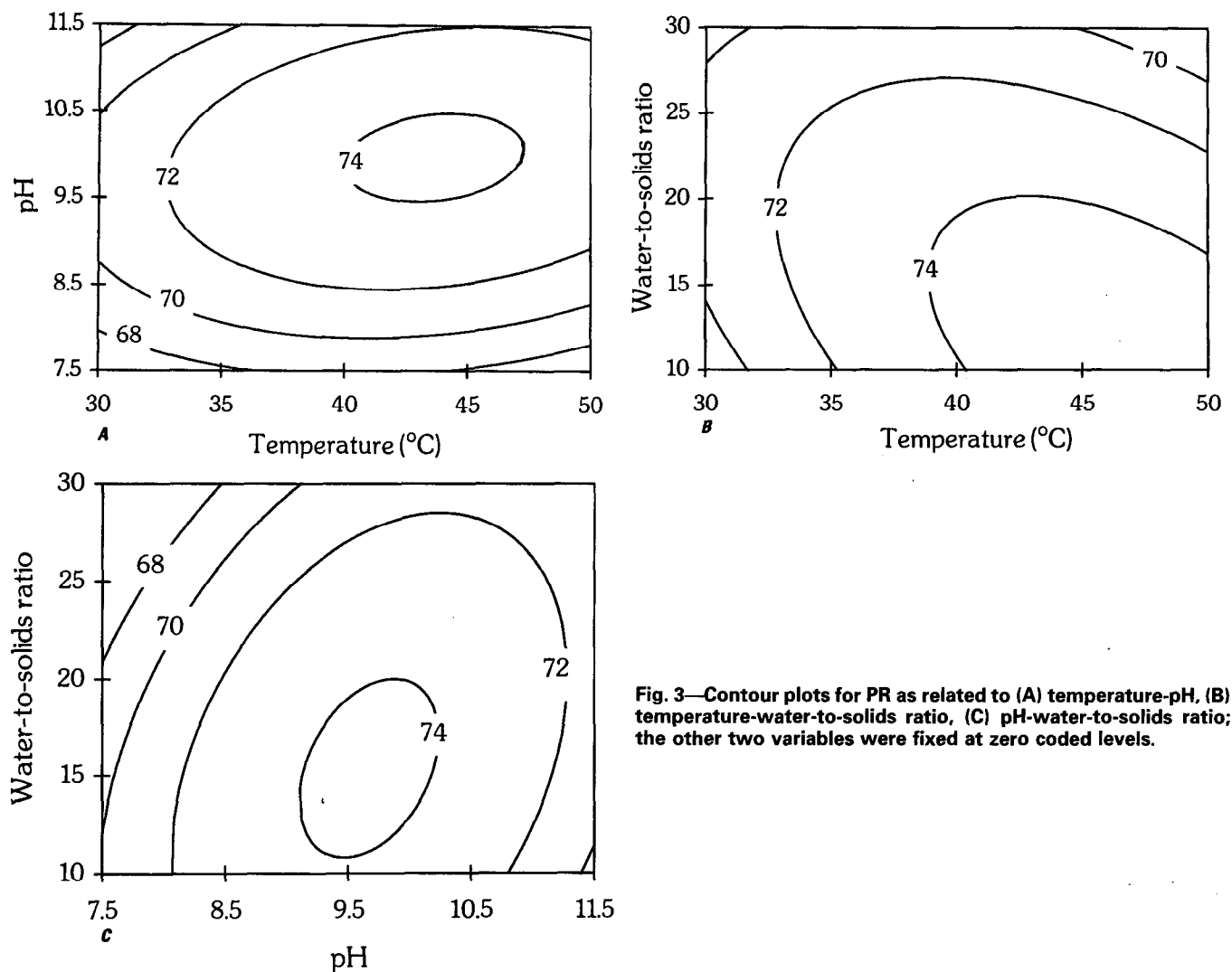


Fig. 3—Contour plots for PR as related to (A) temperature-pH, (B) temperature-water-to-solids ratio, (C) pH-water-to-solids ratio; the other two variables were fixed at zero coded levels.

and TY showed their optimum values at the same factor region. Because protein extraction is the predominant step for protein isolation, we decided to examine further the optimum conditions for EY. Observing optimum EY conditions, note that maximum EY values were obtained at the high level of pH and water-to-solids ratio, low temperature-high time level as well as high temperature-low time level. As is well known, protein solubility increases as pH increases above 7.5 (Kwee, 1970; Kramer and Kwee, 1977b; Canella and Castriota, 1980; Latief and Knorr, 1983a; Fazio et al., 1983). In addition increased water-to-solids ratio facilitates protein extraction. The combinations of high temperature-short time as well as low temperature-long time give better results of protein extraction, avoiding protein denaturation.

In order to verify the predicted values a series of experimental runs at the optimum conditions was conducted, at the points  $(-2,2,2,2)$  and  $(2,2,-2,2)$  (Table 3). The observed value for EY compared favorably with the predicted one only at  $(2,2,-2,2)$ . Because of the discrepancies found between predicted and observed values, we decided to reevaluate the coefficients of fitted equations using all 39 experimental runs (1-31 CCD runs + 32-39 optimum points runs) (Table 4). For all models no essential change was observed for significant factors and interactions; coefficients had slightly modified values, keeping the same sign. The refitted equations were also adequate. All adequacy tests were improved for EY and TY models, especially  $R^2$  being 94.1 and 89.6% for EY and TY respectively. Only PR model showed a slight decrease in  $R^2$  (Table 5).

Predicted values from the refitted equations (Table 6) and observed values were in very good agreement. The  $(2,2,-2,2)$  point was selected as conditions giving the maximum EY and TY values.

### Contour plots

Variables with significant effect were chosen as axes for contour plots for each response; the other variables were fixed at the central (zero) level. (Fig. 2-4).

EY increased with increasing water-to-solids ratio and pH level (Fig. 2). The highest EY resulted at high pH and water-to-solids ratio. PR showed maximum values at temperature  $>40^\circ\text{C}$  (Fig. 3A,B), pH between 9.5-10.5 (Fig. 3A,C) and low water-to-solids ratio (Fig. 3B,C). TY increased as pH (Fig. 4A,C) and water-to-solids ratio (Fig. 4B,C) increased. A significant interaction between pH and water-to-solids ratio was observed for TY (Fig. 4C).

A larger scale experiment was conducted at optimum conditions  $(2,2,-2,2)$ . Tomato seed meal (130 g) was treated following the same procedure. The experiment gave results in close agreement with those of the small scale, with an EY of 64.1%, and a TY of 41.2%. The product proximate composition and the solid residue remaining after protein extraction were analyzed (Table 7). The economic feasibility of protein isolation process also depends on utilization of by-products. The whey remaining after protein precipitation could be concentrated or

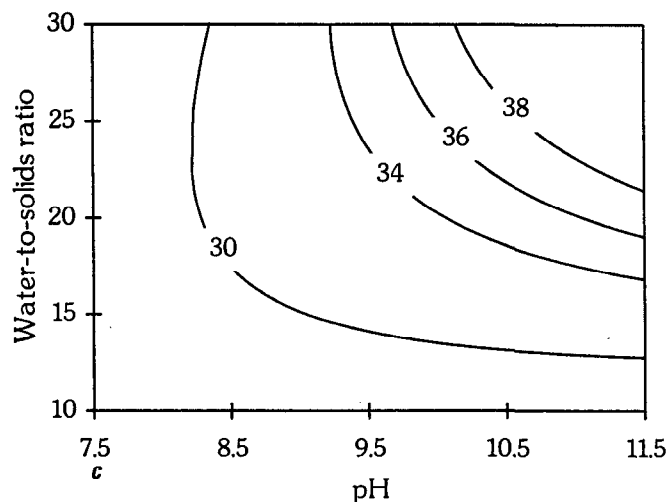
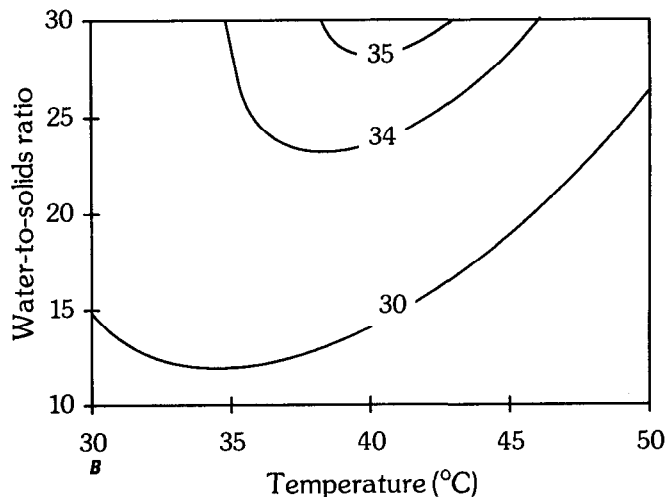
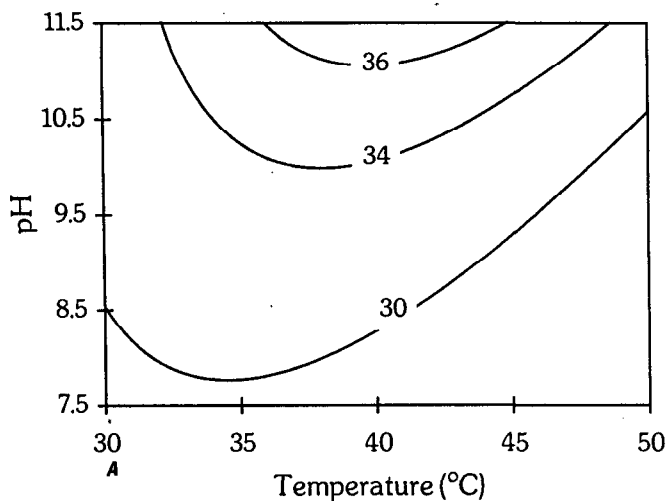


Fig. 4—Contour plots for TY as related to (A) temperature-pH, (B) temperature-water-to-solids ratio, (C) pH-water-to-solids ratio; the other two variables were fixed at zero coded levels.

Table 7—Proximate composition and mineral content of tomato seed protein concentrate and solid residue after protein extraction (dry basis)

	Tomato seed protein conc	Solid residue
Crude protein (%)	71.3	18.5
Ash (%)	3.4	5.5
Total sugars (%)	0.8	0.7
Total dietary fiber (%)	16.1	71.0
K (mg/100 g)	193	400
Na (mg/100 g)	596	912
Ca (mg/100g)	525	214
Mg (mg/100 g)	102	282
P (mg/100 g)	570	473
Fe (mg/100 g)	15	13
Mn (mg/100 g)	2	6
Cu (mg/100 g)	2	1
Zn (mg/100 g)	3	5

spray-dried to recover proteins and the solid residue of the extraction could be used as animal feed.

### CONCLUSION

OPTIMUM EXTRACTION of tomato seed proteins with water for protein isolation, could be achieved by extracting one part of tomato seed meal with 30 parts of water (w/v ratio) at pH 11.5 at 50°C for 20 min. These conditions resulted in extracting 66.1% of the proteins contained in tomato seed meal, at a total protein yield of 43.6%. Isolated product had a protein content of 72%.

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