

# Factors Influencing CO2 Biofixation by Microalgae

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The production of microalgal biomass is highly influenced by the suitability of microalgae strains, CO2, light, pH, culture system, temperature, and nutrients. The sources of CO2 and nutrients for microalgal cultivation can be flue gas and wastewater, respectively. Therefore, many studies have investigated whether flue gas and wastewater can be integrated with microalgal cultivations, to achieve not only CO2 reduction, but also CO2 reuse for microalgal biomass conversion to produce biofuels. Flue gas and wastewater can also be treated by microalgal cultivations to obtain environmentally friendly and health-friendly effects. In the process of microalgae cultivation, one single factor does not affect the growth of microalgae; it is often the interaction of multiple factors. Therefore, keeping the performance of long-term and stable microalgal cultivation will determine the microalgal growth, especially outdoor cultivation.

CO2 biofixation

microalgae

flue gas

wastewater

## 1. Microalgal Strains

Many studies have indicated highly efficient ways to obtain CO<sub>2</sub>-tolerant, alkali-tolerant, and/or thermotolerant microalgae with high CO<sub>2</sub> fixation efficiency. Microalgal strains could be obtained by screening the environment, by random mutagenesis or by genetic modification (**Table 1**). Improving the capacity of CO<sub>2</sub>-tolerant microalgae was good for application in flue gas containing high concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> poisoning effect and increase CO<sub>2</sub> fixation productivity <sup>[1]</sup>. The level of CO<sub>2</sub>-tolerant microalgae is usually referred to as high, very high, and extremely high, according to ranges of 2–5, 5–20, and 20–100% CO<sub>2</sub>-tolerant concentrations <sup>[2]</sup>. As shown in **Table 1**, these strains not only have the ability to withstand very high CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations, but also have better growth performances, to obtain higher CO<sub>2</sub> fixation efficiency. Flue gas from steel plants containing approximately 25% CO<sub>2</sub>, 70–80 ppm nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and 80–90 ppm sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) resulted in up to 90% NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>, along with 50% CO<sub>2</sub> removal efficiency by the cultivation of *Chlorella* sp. MTF-15 <sup>[3][4]</sup>. Because CO<sub>2</sub> is the main component in boiler flue gas with trace amounts of sulfur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>), the resulting biomass after CO<sub>2</sub> fixation may be used as an animal additive or feed without the concern of posing biosafety risks <sup>[5]</sup>. To improve the CO<sub>2</sub> fixation efficiency, the screening of alkali-tolerant microalgae has been investigated <sup>[6][7][8]</sup>. It is known that when the pH of water is above 6.3, dissolved CO<sub>2</sub>, bicarbonate (HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>), and carbonate (CO<sub>3</sub><sup>2-</sup>) are the dominant species <sup>[9]</sup>. Therefore, elevated CO<sub>2</sub> dissolution can be utilized in microalgae growth by increasing the pH of the culture medium. An alkali-tolerant *Chlorella* sp. AT1 was isolated and cultured in alkaline medium (pH = 11) with 10% CO<sub>2</sub> aeration <sup>[6]</sup>. *Chlorella sorokiniana* SLA-04, which was isolated from alkaline Soap Lake, could adapt to

growth in extremely high-pH media (pH > 10) [7][8]. The high biomass productivities of *Chlorella sorokiniana* SLA-04 were obtained by scavenging CO<sub>2</sub> from only the atmosphere at high rates in pH > 10 medium during phototrophic cultivation. Excessive light intensity will cause the internal temperature of the cultivation system to rise, causing the growth of microalgae to be inhibited. Two effective thermotolerant mutants, M18, and M24 of *Chlorella pyrenoidosa* obtained by mutagen treatment, were capable of surviving at temperatures up to 47 °C, and showed optimal growth at 37 °C [10]. The research on screening specific algae strains in **Table 1** is mainly in Taiwan, including the characteristics of CO<sub>2</sub>, alkali, and thermo-tolerance. However, in subtropical zones, the temperature of microalgal culture broth in PBRs can go up to about 40 °C by irradiation of sunlight [3], showing that the screening of thermotolerant strains is very important. The thermotolerance of *Chlorella* sp. M4, which was obtained by mutagenesis treatment from *Chlorella* sp. GD, was capable of overcoming high-temperature inhibition during outdoor culture due to high photosynthetic efficiency and biomass productivity at 40 °C with high-concentration CO<sub>2</sub> aeration [11]. Thermotolerant microalgal strains can also be screened from high-temperature zones, such as the effluent of steel-making, power generation plants, and hot springs [12]. Thermotolerant microalgae are excellent candidates for large-scale outdoor cultivation, especially in subtropical and tropical countries [13]. Dual CO<sub>2</sub> and thermotolerant *Chlorella* sp. strains 283 and 359 were isolated from their original strain of *Chlorella vulgaris* ESP-31 by *N*-methyl-*N*-nitro-*N*-nitrosoguanidine (NTG) mutagenesis [14]. The microalgal strain grew well at 40 °C and had high biomass productivity, 0.73–0.89 g L<sup>-1</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>, for a 4-day culture.

**Table 1.** Growth performance and CO<sub>2</sub> fixation efficiency of microalgal *Chlorella* with different tolerant characteristics.

Tolerance Characteristics	Microalgae	Gas Aeration	Temp. (°C)	Maximum Biomass Conc. (g L <sup>-1</sup> )	Biomass Productivity (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	CO <sub>2</sub> Fixation Efficiency <sup>1</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>2</sup>	References
High-CO <sub>2</sub> tolerant	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. MTF-15	Flue gas <sup>4</sup>	26	2.52	0.515	0.942	TW	[4]
		10% CO <sub>2</sub>		3.22	0.293	0.536		
	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. AE20	20% CO <sub>2</sub>	28	3.13	0.285	0.522	CN	[15]
		30% CO <sub>2</sub>		3.02	0.275	0.503		
	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> NIOCCV	5% CO <sub>2</sub>		0.674	0.111	0.203		
		10% CO <sub>2</sub>	28	1.58	0.265	0.485	IN	[16]
		20% CO <sub>2</sub>		0.976	0.163	0.298		
High-CO <sub>2</sub> and CH <sub>4</sub> tolerant	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. MB-9	20% CO <sub>2</sub> and 80% CH <sub>4</sub>	26	2.35	0.243	0.445	TW	[17]

Tolerance Characteristics	Microalgae	Gas Aeration	Temp. (°C)	Maximum Biomass Conc. (g L <sup>-1</sup> )	Biomass Productivity (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	CO <sub>2</sub> Fixation Efficiency <sup>1</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>2</sup>	References
CO <sub>2</sub> tolerant	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. GD	Boiler flue gas <sup>3</sup>	26	6.54	0.892	1.632	TW	[5]
High-CO <sub>2</sub> tolerant	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. LAMB 31	40% CO <sub>2</sub>	26	~0.9	0.079	0.144	CN	[18]
High-CO <sub>2</sub> and thermotolerant	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> ESP-31, 283 and 359	Simulated flue gas (25% CO <sub>2</sub> , 80–90 ppm SO <sub>2</sub> , 90–100 ppm NO)	40	1.91 (283)/1.99 (359)	0.73 (283)/0.89 (359)	1.336 (283)/1.629 (359)	TW	[14]
Alkali-tolerant (pH 6–10)	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. AT1	10% CO <sub>2</sub>	26	5.08	1.010	1.848	TW	[19]
Alkali-tolerant (pH > 10)	<i>Chlorella sorokiniana</i> SLA-04	Air	20	0.9	0.059	0.108	US	[7]
		Air	20–25	0.74	0.046	0.078		[8]
	<i>Chlorella pyrenoidosa</i> M18			4.65	0.931	1.702	IN	[10]
	<i>Chlorella pyrenoidosa</i> M24		Air	4.11	0.822	1.504		
	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. M4	6% CO <sub>2</sub>	40	4.2	1.05	1.922	TW	[11]
Thermotolerant	<i>Chlorella pyrenoidosa</i> M18	Air	45	1.69	0.338	0.619	IN	[13]
2	<i>Chlorella sorokiniana</i>	10% CO <sub>2</sub>		1.16	0.232	0.425		
		15% CO <sub>2</sub>		1.05	0.211	0.384	IN	[12]
		5% CO <sub>2</sub> and 80 ppm NO	37	2	20.254	0.465		source for
			2	1.27				ems that
								uses flue

gas into microalgal culture ponds, which might lead to rapid changes in the pH of the culture broth [4][20][21]. When microalgae cannot adapt to extreme culture conditions, death of the microalgae will occur. Therefore, it is necessary to screen microalgae for pH tolerance. In general, the main component of flue gas is CO<sub>2</sub>, which presents a variety of CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations, depending on the fuel source and the design of the plant. *Chlorella* sp. MTF-15 was cultured with flue gas aeration from a hot stove (26% CO<sub>2</sub>), coke oven (25% CO<sub>2</sub>), or power plant (24% CO<sub>2</sub>) at the China Steel Corporation, the largest steel plant in Taiwan. The biomass productivity of the microalgae cultured with flue gases from coke ovens, hot stoves, and power plants was 0.515, 0.314, and 0.342 g L<sup>-1</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>, respectively [4]. *Chlorella* sp. was cultured in medium, with a controlled pH of 6, by aerating with synthetic flue gas (30% CO<sub>2</sub>) obtained from the African Oxygen Company in South Africa, and the maximum biomass Taiwan (TW), China (CN), and India (IN). Concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the flue gas and boiler gas was 25% and 8%, respectively [22]. When *Chlorella sorokiniana* was aerated with flue gas (16% CO<sub>2</sub>) from the oil-producing industry of India, the maximum

CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration was 3.07 g L<sup>-1</sup> [23]. The maximum biomass concentration and biomass productivity of *Chlorella* sp. KR-1 aerated with flue gas from a coal-burning power plant in Korea were 2.81 g L<sup>-1</sup> and 0.561 g L<sup>-1</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>, respectively, and the CO<sub>2</sub> removal efficiency was approximately 13% [24]. The maximum specific growth rate and biomass concentration of *Chlorella fusca* LEB111 aerated flue gas (10% CO<sub>2</sub>) from coal power plants in Brazil were 0.181 d<sup>-1</sup> and 1.24 g L<sup>-1</sup>, respectively [25]. The efficient biomitigation of CO<sub>2</sub> (12–15%), NO<sub>x</sub> (0.01–0.08%), and SO<sub>x</sub> (0.006–0.06%) of flue gas from a power plant was obtained by the cultivation of *Chlorella vulgaris* [26][27]. The biomass concentration and amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration of *Chlorella* sp. aerated with flue gas produced from the burning of coal were 1.92 g L<sup>-1</sup> and 0.974 g L<sup>-1</sup>, respectively [28]. When integrated with sewage and flue gas in microalgal cultivation, the biomass concentration and CO<sub>2</sub> removal efficiency of *Chlorella vulgaris* aerated with a coal-burning boiler (6% CO<sub>2</sub>) in India were 1.72 g L<sup>-1</sup> and 90%, respectively [29]. A microalga *Chlorella* sp. Cv could tolerate the full-simulated flue gas, 10% CO<sub>2</sub> + 200 ppm NO<sub>x</sub> + 100 ppm SO<sub>x</sub>. Under optimal conditions, the microalga could tolerate the simulated flue gas, and the maximum specific growth rate was 0.9824 d<sup>-1</sup> [30]. It was proposed that the upregulation of several genes related to photosynthesis, oxidative phosphorylation, CO<sub>2</sub> fixation, sulfur metabolism, and nitrogen metabolism was beneficial for the evolved microalga strain to tolerate the simulated flue gas [21]. Countries with high dependence on coal, such as China and India, are also actively engaged in CO<sub>2</sub> carbon reduction research, using CO<sub>2</sub> from the exhaust gas in microalgal cultivation to achieve carbon reduction, and use the produced microalgae biomass as a feedstock of biofuels. It has the opportunity to achieve economic and environmental sustainability by integrating the CO<sub>2</sub> reutilization of exhaust gas and the effective development of biofuels.

**Table 2.** Growth, CO<sub>2</sub> fixation efficiency, and lipid productivity of the microalgae *Chlorella* cultures using flue gas.

Microalgae	Flue Gas Source	CO <sub>2</sub> (%)	Biomass Productivity <sup>1</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	CO <sub>2</sub> Fixation Efficiency <sup>1</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Lipid (%)	Lipid Productivity <sup>2</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>3</sup>	References
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. MTF-15	Coke oven	13	0.528	0.966	21.5	0.614	TW	[4]
		25	0.515	0.942	26.4	0.666		
	Hot stove	13	0.449	0.822	33.8	0.866		
		26	0.314	0.575	35.2	0.591		
	Power plant	12	0.423	0.774	36.3	0.792		
		24	0.342	0.626	41.6	0.633		
<i>Chlorella sorokiniana</i>	Industrial flue gas	16	0.231	0.423	21.1	0.049	IN	[23]
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. KR-1	Coal-fired flue gas	13	0.561	1.027	29.9	0.168	KR	[24]
<i>Chlorella</i> sp.	Coal	5	0.273	0.500	8.69	0.024	IN	[28]

Microalgae	Flue Gas Source	Biomass CO <sub>2</sub> (%)	Productivity (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Efficiency <sup>1</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Lipid (%)	Lipid Productivity <sup>2</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>3</sup>	References
burning								
<i>Chlorella fusca</i> LEB 111	Coal power plant	10	0.111	0.203	15.5	0.017	BR	[25]
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Coal burning boiler	6	0.312	0.571	23.2	0.074	IN	[29]
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. GD	Boiler flue gas	8	1.296	2.372	21.7	0.214	TW	[5]
<i>Chlorella</i> sp.	Flue gas	30	0.145	0.265	24.7	0.036	ZA	[22]
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. Cv	Simulated flue gas	15	0.53	0.969	ND	ND	CN	[21]
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Power plant	12	0.502	0.919	40.1	0.201	ES	[26]
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. C2	Power plant	3	0.314	0.575	31.5	0.099	CN	[31]

globally will decrease by 40% by 2030. However, more than 80% of the world's wastewater is discharged into the

environment without treatment. The management model for wastewater should be changed from "treatment and disposal" to "reuse, recycle, and resource recovery". Therefore, the use of wastewater for microalgae cultivation is

a technological development trend [32][33][34]. The source of wastewater can be mainly divided into three categories: <sup>1</sup> CO<sub>2</sub> fixation efficiency (g L<sup>-1</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>) was calculated by 1.83-fold of biomass productivity. <sup>2</sup> Lipid productivity (g L<sup>-1</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>) = (biomass productivity × lipid content)/100. <sup>3</sup> Country abbreviation: Taiwan (TW), India (IN), Korea (KR),

biomass productivity of microalgae cultured in different types of wastewater were different because the contents of Brazil (BR), South Africa (ZA), China (CN), Spain (ES).

COD, total nitrogen (TN), total phosphorus (TP), and specific inorganic substances in wastewater were obviously different [35][36][5][37].

### 3.1. Agriculture Wastewater

The main source of agricultural wastewater was large livestock and poultry operations, and the main components in this wastewater were ammonium and organic nitrogen, which are good for microalgal growth. Piggery wastewater is commonly used in microalgal cultivation because this wastewater is rich in nutrient sources [38][39][40][41][42]. Additionally, aquaculture is a fast-growing industry because it has significantly increased the global demand for fish and seafood. Novel aquaculture systems incorporating wastewater treatment and effluent reuse have been rapidly developed for compliant wastewater discharge. Although the nutrient content of aquaculture wastewater is significantly lower than that of piggery wastewater, the content of pathogenic microorganisms and heavy metals contained in aquaculture wastewater is relatively low [43][44]. Therefore, aquaculture wastewater can be used as a large amount of water needed for microalgal cultivation, and the resulting microalgae biomass can be applied not only to a feedstock of biofuels, but also to animal additives or feed, which is a more minimal biosafety issue [5]. In Taiwan, most livestock wastewater is produced from pig farming. Therefore, it can be seen that the state has actively invested in research on the treatment of piggery wastewater. The raw piggery wastewater without pre-

treatment could also be applied in microalgal cultivation. The produced microalgal biomass has about 20% lipids and is suitable for use as a feedstock of biodiesel [35][5][39][45].

### 3.2. Municipal Wastewater

At present, a large amount of municipal wastewater is being produced due to an increase in urban population growth. The composition of municipal wastewater varies greatly because of the substances from various families, businesses, and institutions. For example, the COD and TN in a municipal sludge digestate were 2175 mg L<sup>-1</sup> and 840 mg L<sup>-1</sup>, and 164 mg L<sup>-1</sup> and 43.2 mg L<sup>-1</sup> [46], in municipalities with reserve osmosis concentrate [47], respectively. Generally, the COD, TN, and TP utilization efficiencies of municipal wastewater in microalgal *Chlorella* cultivation were approximately 85–100%, 80–100%, and 90–100%, respectively (Table 3). However, growth and biomass productivity are low because municipal wastewater lacks nutrients for microalgae utilization [48][49][50]. Research on the reutilization of municipal wastewater in microalgae cultivation is commonly seen in many countries, such as United Kingdom (GB), USA (US), Australia (AU), etc. Due to the difference in the compositions of wastewater, to apply the technology of microalgal cultivation to cities, the culture process needs to be modified depending on the region to achieve stable growth of microalgae, and further, to achieve the dual advantages of wastewater purification and CO<sub>2</sub> reduction.

### 3.3. Industrial Wastewater

Some small- and medium-sized enterprises and informal industries often discharge wastewater into municipal pipelines or directly discharge it into the environment. Compared with the hazards caused by agricultural and municipal wastewater, industrial wastewater could be more harmful to water resources and the environment due to the contents of toxic heavy metal components. There are also studies on diluting the wastewater to reduce the sensitivity of the microalgal strain towards the toxicity of wastewater, and increase the wastewater utilization effectivity to obtain the microalgal growth [35][51]. However, wastewater from food processing is usually regarded as a safety resource and is suitable for the production of microalgal biomass for feed or food uses [52]. Because the sources of industrial wastewater were obviously different, the ranges of COD, TN, and TP utilization efficiencies of industrial wastewater in microalgal *Chlorella* cultivation were approximately 25–95%, 30–100%, and 50–100%, respectively [46][53][54][55] (Table 3). The COD, TN, and TP contents of the food industry wastewater is relatively rich, which is very suitable for use as nutrient sources for microalgae cultivation. Therefore, the better growth of microalgae can be obtained. However, the problem of bacterial contamination is more likely to occur because of the higher nutrient contents. This will affect the long-term stable performance of the microalgal cultivation technology.

**Table 3.** Biomass and lipid production and productivity of the microalgae *Chlorella* cultures using wastewater.

Wastewater Source	Microalgae	COD <sup>1</sup> (mg L <sup>-1</sup> )	TN <sup>1</sup> (mg L <sup>-1</sup> )	TP <sup>1</sup> (mg L <sup>-1</sup> )	Biomass Productivity <sup>2</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	CO <sub>2</sub> Fixation Efficiency <sup>2</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Lipid (%)	Lipid Productivity <sup>3</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>4</sup>	References
Agricultural wastewater										

Wastewater Source	Microalgae	COD <sup>1</sup> (mgTN L <sup>-1</sup> )	mgTP <sup>1</sup> (mg L <sup>-1</sup> )	Biomass Productivity (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	CO <sub>2</sub> Fixation Efficiency <sup>2</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Lipid (%)	Lipid Productivity <sup>3</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>4</sup>	References	
Raw dairy	<i>Chlorella</i> sp.	2593	283	116	0.261	0.478	-	-	CN	[38]
Anaerobically treated piggery	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> CY5	377	287	28	0.281	0.514	19.6	0.055	TW	[39]
Piggery	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. GD	490	550	20	0.681	1.246	21.8	0.148	TW	[35]
Aquaculture		121	234	15	1.296	2.372	21.3	0.276	TW	[5]
Swine	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> UTEX-265	1481	307	4.3	0.247	0.452	27.1	0.067	KR	[40]
Piggery	<i>Chlorella sorokiniana</i> AK-1	1500–4500	500–700	150–250	0.55	1.006	-	-	TW	[45]
Livestock waste	<i>Chlorella</i> sp.	2000	222	103	0.289	0.529	36.3	0.105	CN	[41]
Municipal wastewater										
Centrate	<i>Chlorella sorokiniana</i> UTEX1230	-	53	9.4	0.083	0.152	9.4	0.008	GB	[48]
Domestic	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	142	56	9	0.054	0.099	21.5	0.012	US	[56]
	<i>Chlorella minutissima</i>				0.049	0.090	22.9	0.011		
Municipal	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> SAG 211-11b	2175	840	10	0.144	0.264	23	0.033	FI	[46]
Secondary	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> UTEX 26	131	112	35	0.078	0.143	8.7	0.021	MX	[49]
	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> CICESE				0.105	0.192	20.2	0.025		
Centrate	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	513	803	32	0.071	0.130	29.6	0.021	CN	[50]
Municipal (osmosis concentrate)	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	164	43.2	13.1	0.32	0.585	-	-	AU	[47]
Industrial wastewater										
Meat processing	<i>Chlorella</i> sp. UM6151	2100	212	54	0.171	0.313	17.5	0.029	US	[52]

## 4. Light

Because of photosynthesis for microalgal growth, light is the most important parameter in microalgal cultivation. Lighting in microalgal cultivation contains two main factors: light intensity and the wavelength of light. In general, the growth rate of microalgae can be greatly increased along with an increase in light intensity; however, when the light intensity exceeds the saturation light that can be tolerated by microalgae, the growth rate of microalgae will be significantly decreased [57]. Therefore, to achieve the maximum growth rate of microalgae, the light intensity is usually controlled to “light saturation”. Because microalgae itself will block light from passing, the light intensity decreases sharply with distance through the surface, causing a decrease in the growth rate of microalgae [58].

Wastewater Source	Microalgae	COD <sup>1</sup> (mg TN <sup>1</sup> L <sup>-1</sup> )	TP <sup>1</sup> (mg L <sup>-1</sup> )	Biomass Productivity (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	CO <sub>2</sub> Fixation Efficiency <sup>2</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Lipid Productivity <sup>3</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>4</sup>	References
Food	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> [59]	341	-	0.207	0.379	31	0.064	CN [53]
Pulp and paper	<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> SAG 211-11b	905	350	28	0.208	0.381	21.7 [60] [61] 0.045	FI [46]
Alcohol and starch processing	<i>Chlorella pyrenoidosa</i>	3599	334	39	0.376	0.688	19.7 [62]	0.074 CN [54]
Tofu whey	<i>Chlorella pyrenoidosa</i> FACHB-9	-	592	49	0.283	0.518	17.5	0.049 CN [55]

autotrophic cultivation of *Chlorella vulgaris* was investigated, and the results showed that red LED light (630–665 nm) resulted in small cells with active divisions, while blue light (430–465 nm) LED illumination led to a significant increase in cell size [63]. The mixed LED light wavelength with red and blue LED light (e.g., red:blue is 5:5) also affects and enhances microalgal growth, including *Scenedesmus obliquus*, *Neochloris oleoabundans*, and *Chlorella vulgaris* [64].

<sup>1</sup> COD, TN, and TP: chemical oxygen demand, total nitrogen, and total phosphorus of wastewater. <sup>2</sup> CO<sub>2</sub> fixation efficiency (g L<sup>-1</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>) was calculated by 1.83-fold of biomass productivity. <sup>3</sup> Lipid productivity (g L<sup>-1</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>) = (biomass productivity × lipid content)/100. <sup>4</sup> Country abbreviation: China (CN), Taiwan (TW), Korea (KR), United Kingdom (GB), USA (US), Finland (FI), Mexico (MX), Australia (AU).

The pH of culture broth affects the enzyme activity related to the metabolism of microalgae and the ion absorption efficiency of microalgae, which in turn affects the growth and carbon fixation efficiency of microalgae [6] [65]. The optimal pH for growth varies among microalgal species, and in general, the optimum pH is neutral for most microalgae [66]. Flue gas usually contains high concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub> [4]. When microalgae were directly aerated with flue gas containing 10–30% CO<sub>2</sub>, the pH of the culture broth might be reduced to 5.5 [67]. When the microalgae were aerated with flue gas containing SO<sub>2</sub> at 100 to 250 ppm, the pH of the culture broth decreased to pH 2.5 to 3.5 to generate bisulfite (HSO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>), sulfite (SO<sub>3</sub><sup>2-</sup>), and sulfate (SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup>) [67]. If the flue gas is directly aerated into the culture broth of microalgae without dilution, the excess CO<sub>2</sub> of flue gas will be discharged back to the atmosphere. To reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> discharged back to the atmosphere, the CO<sub>2</sub> captured from flue gas aerated into alkaline medium is easily converted into HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>, which is dissolved in water and used for microalgal growth. The solubility of CO<sub>2</sub> in water is low, but the CO<sub>2</sub> content in the culture broth can be increased under alkaline conditions to further increase the CO<sub>2</sub> utilization efficiency of microalgae [68]. In addition, gradually increasing the pH in a microalgal culture is desirable for reducing microbial diversity and is good for outdoor cultivation of microalgae [69].

## 6. Temperature

The optimal temperature range for microalgae growth is generally 15–26 °C [70]. Ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase/oxygenase (Rubisco) activity may be a primary site of damage by elevated temperature to cause a decrease in photosynthesis efficiency [71]. In contrast, there was not only a decrease in the metabolic rate of microalgae, but also a decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> solubility in culture broth. Therefore, the optimal temperature for growth varies among microalgal species. The temperature of the flue gas will generally be as high as 120 °C or even higher [4]. Flue gas usually needs cooling to be aerated into the culture broth because the temperature of flue gas is too high. If the thermal-tolerant potential of microalgae is good, the cost of flue gas cooling can be reduced. In

addition, when sunlight is used outdoors as a light source, the temperature of the culture broth easily changes with the surrounding environment. Béchet et al. [72] indicated that 18,000 GJ year<sup>-1</sup> ha<sup>-1</sup> of heat energy must be removed to maintain the broth temperature of column PBRs at or below 25 °C. Considering the cost of temperature control, thermotolerant microalgal strains are needed, especially in large-scale outdoor cultivation. When *Chlorella sorokiniana* was cultivated in outdoor 51-L column PBRs, the culture broth temperature reached 41 °C without growth inhibition [73], and similar results showed better growth performance under uncontrolled temperature in outdoor conditions [11][13].

## 7. Microalgal Cultivation System

Open (raceway) ponds and PBRs of microalgal cultivation systems are usually—and primarily—adopted. Studies on CO<sub>2</sub> fixation by microalgae used in open ponds and PBRs are outlined in **Table 4**. It has been reported that microalgal biomass production produced from open ponds is more efficient than 90% of worldwide biomass production [74]. The most prominent features of open ponds include simple construction, low cost and easy operation [75][76]. However, disadvantages of open ponds are also obvious, such as a large footprint, difficulties in operation control, unstable culture conditions, high evaporation loss, easy contamination, and the decay of light intensity with medium depth. Compared with open ponds, PBRs have many advantages, such as the most efficient mixing, the best growth conditions, high volumetric mass transfer rates, low risk of contamination, lowest losses of CO<sub>2</sub>, low shear stress and relatively low energy consumption [77][37][78]. However, the limitations of PBRs are construction cost and scale-up [79]. Overcoming the above shortcomings of cultivation systems is a future research direction for developing advanced cultivation systems. The two cultivation systems still have many challenges in practical operation [80]. Closed cultivation systems, e.g., PBRs, are still not widely applied in industry because the operation cost and construction costs of the systems are too high despite the high microalgal biomass productivity [81]. To solve the limitations of large-scale outdoor microalgae cultivation systems, from an engineering perspective, how to increase the efficiency of gas aeration and mixing should be considered. Low cost and energy consumption can both be achieved by the design of air mixing with flue gas CO<sub>2</sub> aeration to improve microalgal growth by sufficient CO<sub>2</sub> utilization. Therefore, outdoor large-scale microalgae cultivation systems can become closer to the industrialization process and commercial application by improving the efficiency of gas aeration and mixing. Suitable microalgal cultivation systems usually depend on factors such as cost, CO<sub>2</sub> capture source, nutrient sources, and the type of target products. At present, most studies on CO<sub>2</sub> fixation by microalgae are used in open ponds or PBRs, and few studies have integrated both microalgal cultivation systems to enhance biomass productivity [59][82]. In our previous study [59], an efficient PBRs/raceway circulating (PsRC) system integrated with the advantages of PBRs and paddlewheel-driven raceway ponds had great potential for the mass cultivation of microalgae. The total amount of CO<sub>2</sub> fixation of the PsRC system was approximately 1.2 kg d<sup>-1</sup> with 50% CO<sub>2</sub> utilization efficiency, as simultaneous microalgal biomass production and CO<sub>2</sub> fixation occurred by cultivating alkali-tolerant *Chlorella* sp. AT1 with alkaline-CO<sub>2</sub> capturing operation in the PsRC system. Long-term cultivation for 40 days in a novel membrane photobioreactor, the steadily growth of *Chlorella vulgaris* were obtained and the maximum removal efficiency of CO<sub>2</sub> was 80%. Because the self-forming dynamic membrane from microalgae was easy to harvest, the potential of achieving a sustainable CO<sub>2</sub> fixation technology [83]. To investigate the carbon

fixation effectiveness of microalgae in outdoor cultivation, many studies have used the design of the cultivation system to scale up to pilot scale and industrial scale. The pilot scale is mainly used for research, because the expansion of the outdoor cultivation system may increase the cost of construction, the risk of microorganism pollution, and the release large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>. In **Table 4**, the research in China and Taiwan has reached a ton scale, and it can be combined with waste gas for microalgae cultivation. The cultivation system combination the strategy of an increase of the CO<sub>2</sub> content in the water for the microalgal growth and enhance the CO<sub>2</sub> carbon fixation efficiency. One is to couple with spraying absorption tower to increase the CO<sub>2</sub> content in the water [84], another is to use alkali-tolerant mutant strain combined with alkaline-CO<sub>2</sub> capturing medium [59].

**Table 4.** Biomass productivity and CO<sub>2</sub> fixation efficiency of microalgae *Chlorella* in different cultivation systems.

Microalgae	Cultivation System	Cultivation Scale (L)	CO <sub>2</sub> (%)	Maximum Biomass Conc. (g L <sup>-1</sup> )	Biomass Productivity (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	CO <sub>2</sub> Fixation Efficiency <sup>1</sup> (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>2</sup>	References
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. MTF-15	Column-type PBR	1	12.5 (1/2 flue gas)	2.855	0.528	0.966	TW	[4]
		1200		1.555	0.197	0.361		
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Porous air-lift PBR	16	0.03 (air)	0.095	0.004	0.174	HK	[85]
	Loop air-lift PBR			0.126	0.007	0.231		
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. GD	Column-type PBR	1	2	4.813	0.870	1.592	TW	[35]
				4.921	1.296	2.333		
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Plastic bottle	15	4	3.151	0.378	0.711	PL	[86]
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Flat-plate PBR	1.6	5	2.303	0.551	1.008	CN	[57]
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Bubble column PBR	56	0.03 (air)	0.962	0.043	0.079	MY	[87]
<i>Chlorella pyrenoidosa</i>	Open raceway pond	8000	99.5	0.927	0.114	0.214	CN	[84]
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Coiled tubular tree PBR	1.2	0.03 (air)	0.552	0.084	0.153	CA	[88]
<i>Chlorella</i>	Flat panel PBR	90	5	1.913	0.091	0.167	US	[89]

Microalgae	Cultivation System	Cultivation Scale (L)	CO <sub>2</sub> (%)	Maximum Biomass Conc. (g L <sup>-1</sup> )	Biomass Productivity (g L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	CO <sub>2</sub> Fixation Efficiency <sup>1</sup> (g CO <sub>2</sub> L <sup>-1</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	Country <sup>2</sup>	References	
<i>sorokiniana</i>									
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Pilot-scale PBR	150	Without aeration	2.211	0.198	0.362	CN	[90]	
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. AT1	PBRs/Raceway circulating system	Column-type PBR	1	10	7.372	1.011	1.851	TW	[19]
			288		2.561	0.321	0.588		
			528		1.963	0.237	0.434		
			1008	2	1.052	0.107	0.195	TW	[59]
			3600		1.686	0.150	0.275		
			6600		1.257	0.109	0.199		
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. HS2	Flat panel PBR	2	1	3.811	0.543	1.021	KR	[91]	
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> UTEX 26	Raceway	1100	0.03 (air)	0.25	20–26 (g m <sup>-2</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> for 65 days culture)	-	MX	[75]	
<i>Chlorella pyrenoidosa</i> PY-ZU1	Pond-tubular hybrid PBR	<5 (a model system)	15	2.3	0.770	1.409	CN	[82]	
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>	Raceway with computational fluid dynamics	20	50 (mix with air and pure CO <sub>2</sub> gas)	5.2	11.89 (g m <sup>-2</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> , 14 cm depth of raceway)	-	TW	[76]	
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> CCAP 211/11B	Membrane photobioreactor	40	15	1.01	0.166	0.704	IT	[83]	

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