A structured growth model for Hairy roots of *Beta vulgaris*

**Growth morphology and secondary metabolite distribution in dense root networks**

F Lenk¹, T. Bley¹ & J. Steingroever¹

¹ Institut für Lebensmittel- und Bioverfahrenstechnik, Technische Universität Dresden, 01062 Dresden, Germany

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**Introduction and Aims:**

Plant cells can be used to produce a wide range of nutritional-physiological and pharmaceutical relevant secondary metabolites. While usual suspended in vitro cultures need a constant level of different hormone concentrations, *Agrobacterium* rhizogenes induced Hairy roots can be cultivated in hormone free media. In general the growth of these tissue cultures on agar plates, in shaking flasks or bioreactors for industrial use has been heavily investigated experimentally but only limited theoretical descriptions of the growth process exist. In order to model the growth morphology and the distribution of secondary metabolites beetroot (*Beta vulgaris*) was chosen as a model system. It produces the red dye Betanin which is used as a food color and is also responsible for the red color of the root network. Therefore it can be used to identify the distribution of Betanin optically. The presented structured growth model is an approach to simulate and visualize the growth of dense root networks in different environments. While the model kinetics can be changed to adapt to other species, the gained knowledge can therefore be used by other scientists to improve their cultivation protocols and to simulate growth of their own cultures by amending the parameters of the model.

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**Materials and Methods:**

The proposed model uses an individual-based matrix approach for growth simulations on agar plates. It consists of a 2-dimensional organ matrix containing a vector with information about each state of a cell (e.g. age, size, metabolite concentration) and a nutrient matrix which represents the composition of the nutrient media (e.g. carbon source, solved oxygen etc.).

In dense root networks growth can be determined spatially at three different parts of the organ complex (see Fig. 4):

- Tip movement (a: elongation)
- Branching (b)
- Overall biomass growth (c: secondary thickening)

The mentioned growth processes can be structured further. At first the type of growth must be identified (a, b or c). For case a kinetics and directions of growth have been identified experimentally but only limited theoretical descriptions of the growth process exist. In order to model the growth morphology and the distribution of secondary metabolites beetroot (*Beta vulgaris*) was chosen as a model system. It produces the red dye Betanin which is used as a food color and is also responsible for the red color of the root network. Therefore it can be used to identify the distribution of Betanin optically. The presented structured growth model is an approach to simulate and visualize the growth of dense root networks in different environments. While the model kinetics can be changed to adapt to other species, the gained knowledge can therefore be used by other scientists to improve their cultivation protocols and to simulate growth of their own cultures by amending the parameters of the model.

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**Results and future prospects:**

A model grid for the simulation of Hairy root growth was established and the three main forms of growth in dense root networks were identified and structured into the growth process algorithm. Field studies to quantify the distributions of the growth parameters have been conducted and will be the basis for systematical investigations. For comparable simulation results information about morphology and distribution of secondary metabolites will also be taken from automatically analyzed images of the root networks during the cultivation process. Therefore a customized solution of picture recognition will be developed. Results shown in Figure 6 are a very limited simulation of growth with an exemplary distribution of distribution of the darkness depending on the age of each cell. Each dot represents one cell which forms the root network.