



Recombinant Proteins Using Monosodium Glutamate

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Why in News?

Researchers at the **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru** have made a significant breakthrough in the mass production of **recombinant proteins** by utilising **Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)**.

- This advancement is crucial for producing essential substances like vaccine antigens, insulin, and monoclonal antibodies.

What are Recombinant Proteins?

- **About:**
 - Recombinant proteins are proteins engineered in the lab by inserting the **gene coding for the protein into bacterial, viral, or mammalian cells.**
- **Production:**
 - Typically, these proteins are produced in large bioreactors using the cells of a specific yeast which contains a unique promoter, called the **alcohol oxidase (AOX) promoter.**
 - The AOX promoter can be activated by **methanol** to produce recombinant proteins in large quantities.
 - The process involves inserting the **desired gene next to the AOX promoter,** feeding the **yeast with glycerol or glucose,** and then adding **methanol** to activate protein production.
- **Risks with Methanol:**
 - **It is highly flammable and hazardous,** requiring stringent safety measures. It can also produce harmful byproducts like **hydrogen peroxide,** which can induce oxidative stress in yeast cells or damage the recombinant proteins.
- **Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) - a Safer Alternative:**
 - MSG can activate a different promoter in the yeast genome that codes for an enzyme called **phosphoenolpyruvate carboxykinase (PEPCK),** leading to protein production similar to the methanol-induced process, without the associated risks.
 - MSG is safer and more **environmentally friendly compared to the traditional methanol-induced process.** It can be used in biotech industries to mass-produce valuable proteins, including: milk and egg proteins, baby food supplements, nutraceuticals, and therapeutic molecules.

Methanol

- It is the simplest alcohol (also known as **Wood alcohol or Methyl alcohol**) with the **chemical formula CH₃OH.** It appears as a **colourless, fairly volatile liquid** with a faintly sweet pungent odour, and completely mixes with water.
 - Methanol is flammable, light, and poisonous, and its consumption can cause blindness.
- Methanol was first isolated by **Robert Boyle** and is now prepared by the direct combination of carbon monoxide gas and hydrogen in the presence of a catalyst.
 - It is commonly used as a laboratory solvent and as a denaturant additive in the

manufacturing of [ethanol](#).

- Methanol has various uses, including in [polymers](#), production of [hydrocarbons](#), and as a fuel for [internal combustion engines](#).

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. What is Cas9 protein that is often mentioned in news? (2019)

- (a) A molecular scissors used in targeted gene editing
- (b) A biosensor used in the accurate detection of pathogens in patients
- (c) A gene that makes plants pest-resistant
- (d) A herbicidal substance synthesised in genetically modified crops

Ans: (a)

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