



专论与综述

合成微生物群落用于木质纤维素生物质转化的研究进展

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摘要: 木质纤维素在自然界中的储量可观,是生物燃料生产的重要来源。联合生物加工(consolidated bioprocessing)指在不添加酶的情况下,将木质纤维素“一步”转化为生物燃料的过程,在能源危机日益严重的今天具有重要的应用价值。合成微生物群落(synthetic microbial consortia)是由两种或多种纯培养微生物(野生菌株或工程菌株)共同培养而形成的菌群,具有复杂性低、稳定性高等优点,通过协调微生物之间的相互作用以及整个生态系统的稳定,从而实现特定的功能。近年来,合成生物学的快速发展有利于开发新的方法和工具用于合成微生物群落的构建及优化,促进其在联合生物加工方面的应用。本文聚焦于木质纤维素的联合生物加工,综述了合成微生物群落在该领域的研究进展。简单介绍了系统生物学为合成微生物群落的设计提供指导,详细介绍了合成微生物群落的设计原则、优化工具和在实际生产中的应用与挑战,为木质纤维素的联合生物加工提供借鉴意义。

关键词: 合成微生物群落, 木质纤维素, 联合生物加工, 生物燃料

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Synthetic microbial consortia for lignocellulosic biomass conversion

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Abstract: Lignocellulose has considerable reserves in nature and is an important source of biofuel production. Consolidated bioprocessing refers to the process that conversion of lignocellulose into a biological product in one step without the addition of hydrolytic enzyme and has important application value in today's increasingly serious energy crisis. The synthetic microbial consortium is formed by the co-culture of two or more pure cultured microorganisms (wild or engineered strain), and it has the advantages of low complexity and high stability, and can achieve specific functions by coordinating microbial interactions and the stability of the entire ecosystem. In addition, the rapid development of synthetic biology facilitates the development of new methods and tools for the construction and optimization of synthetic microbial communities. This article focuses on the consolidated bioprocessing of lignocellulose, and reviews the research progress of synthetic microbial communities in this field. We first briefly introduce that systems biology provides guidance for the design of synthetic microbial communities, and then detail the design principles, optimization tools, application and challenges in the actual production of synthetic microbial consortium, which provides a reference for consolidated bioprocessing of lignocellulose.

Keywords: Synthetic microbial consortium, Lignocellulose, Consolidated bioprocessing, Biofuel

目前,全球约 80%的能源需求靠化石燃料满足,化石燃料的大量使用导致二氧化碳排放量持续升高,被认为是全球变暖的罪魁祸首^[1-2]。生物燃料具备取代化石燃料的潜力,是近年来研究热点之一。世界各国都投入了大量的资金以加速生物燃料研究和商业化开发^[3-4]。木质纤维素生物质是地球上最丰富的可再生能源,全球每年大约有 1 万亿 t 纤维素被合成和降解,被认为是生物燃料的潜在候选^[5-6]。自然菌群中不同微生物之间相互协调,能产生复杂的协同酶系统,不同类型的酶共同催化能有效促进木质纤维素的转化。近年来,人们采用选择性培养的方法从自然环境中富集出高效降解木质纤维素的复合菌系,能有效强化木质纤维素的水解作用,使之转化成能源物质,如乙醇、甲烷、氢和丁醇等,为木质纤维素的资源化利用

提供了基础^[7-9]。

木质纤维素转化为生物燃料和化学用品的生物工艺通常包括 4 个步骤:生物质的预处理、糖化作用、可溶性糖的发酵和下游加工,复合菌系在前 2 个步骤中效果显著,但是其内部代谢通路复杂,很难对最终代谢产物进行控制。传统的联合生物加工方法试图将所有需要的生化功能整合到一个菌株中,这种想法很难实现,主要原因包括导入菌体的基因难以稳定遗传,工程菌株的酶活不高,菌株对代谢产物的耐受性比较低^[10]。随着合成生物学的发展,人们尝试将所需的生化功能分配到不同的微生物,这些微生物所组成的菌群称为合成微生物群落,其能够一步将木质纤维素转化成所需的产物,这种策略的灵感来源于自然菌群^[11-12]。利用合理的策略构建微生物菌群并赋予其新的功能,能有

效减少生产成本,在生物质加工方面具有很大的优势。我们主要从合成微生物群落的设计、新的生物分析工具及其在生物燃料生产方面的应用与挑战方面系统总结近年来在木质纤维素联合生物加工领域的研究进展。

1 系统生物学为合成微生物群落的设计提供指导

自然菌群在生物质能源生产方面具有绿色无污染和可持续发展等优点^[13-14],然而环境中只有不足 1%的微生物可以通过传统的培养技术获得,人们对于菌群内部协同关系的了解非常有限,使得预测与控制菌群中微生物行为的难度大大增加,阻碍了微生物资源的开发与利用^[15]。合成微生物群落相较于自然菌群具有组成明确、功能稳定和代谢模型简单等优点,可以对微生物实现精准的控制与监测,通过对关键菌株的改造以及菌株之间协同关系的设计,能有效提高物种之间的合作,减少环境带来的生存压力,从而高效地转化木质纤维素,使合

成微生物群落具有更多的应用。

自然菌群是合成微生物群落的基础和来源,其内部尚未探明的复杂机制限制了合成微生物群落的研究进展,要想全面探究菌群的协同机制需要采取多种方法的联合。系统生物学试图用数学和计算方法在系统层面上分析、理解、建模和模拟复杂的生物系统,是全面解析微生物菌群及其发酵过程的重要研究方法^[16],在解决合成微生物群落设计与优化的技术问题方面起主导作用,促进了合成微生物群落在联合生物加工领域的应用。近年来,由于高通量测序技术的迅速发展,组学技术(基因组、转录组、蛋白质组、代谢组和代谢流组等)已被广泛应用于菌群的研究,系统生物学方法能够借助组学数据对微生物群落中的功能多样性、基因表达水平、遗传和代谢通路进行全面描述^[17-22],为合成微生物群落的设计奠定了基础,主要包括功能菌株的选择与代谢途径的设计、功能基因的筛选与表达以及菌株之间协同机制的探究与优化(图 1)。

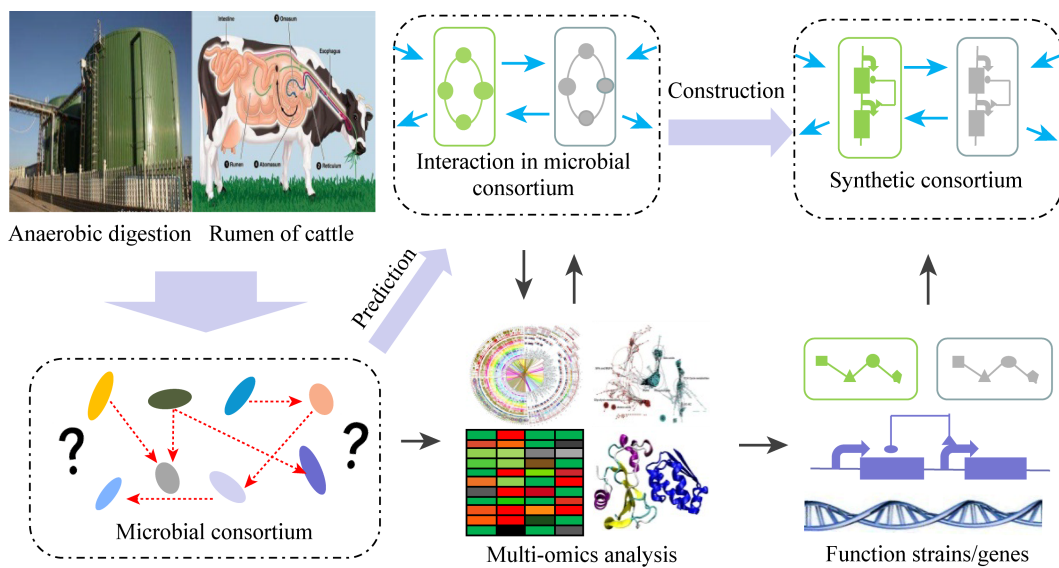


图 1 系统生物学为合成微生物群落的设计提供指导

Figure 1 Systems biology provides guidance in designing synthetic microbial consortia

Note: The molecular interaction mechanisms between microorganisms in microbial consortia could be elucidated by multi-omics analysis (e.g., genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, etc.), which could provide insights for the design and construction of synthetic consortia^[11].

2 合成微生物群落的设计

利用合成微生物群落进行联合生物加工的主要障碍是其需要同时控制个体微生物和整个菌群系统的稳定^[23]。我们重点讨论由两种不同菌株构成的微生物群落,为了提高合成微生物群落的稳定性、高效性以及代谢物的耐受性,我们将菌群的设计原则总结为细胞间的协同关系和细胞间信号交流(图 2)。

2.1 细胞间协同关系

微生物群落中的许多相互作用模式(如共生、互利、竞争、中立、寄生或捕食)大部分是由微生物彼此之间的代谢物交换介导,其中基于互利关系的菌群更有可能实现群落的稳定和功能的强劲^[25-28]。在底物的转化过程中,一个物种将底物代谢成废物,作为第二个物种的底物,如果第一个物种产生的废物对其自身是“有毒”的,那么菌株之间的关系是互利的,因为第一个物种为第二个物种提供基质,而第二个物种通过清除毒素促进两个物种

的共存^[29]。

Shou 等^[30]通过建立数学模型分析了两种酵母菌在菌群中共生的限制条件,结果表明两种菌株的初始生长率、存活率及代谢产品的生产是两者协同作用发生的结果,与任何一种纯培养菌株相比均有更高的稳定性和高效性。Bayer 等^[31]利用产纤维素酶的放线菌 *Actinotalea fermentans* 将纤维素转化成乙醇和乙酸盐,然后由工程菌株 *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* 转化成甲基卤化物,可以有效促进两者的共存(图 3A)。Minty 等^[32]组建了一个包含 *Escherichia coli* 和产纤维素酶的真菌 *Trichoderma reesei* 的合成微生物菌群,*E. coli* 就像一个“骗子”,其不能产生纤维素酶但是却利用 *T. reesei* 的水解产物,合作-欺骗关系是该菌群保持稳定的关键,我们认为该方法有进一步被开发的潜力(图 3B)。

2.2 细胞间信号交流

信息的交换在影响微生物群落的种群行为方面起中心作用^[33],合成微生物群落的稳定性通常

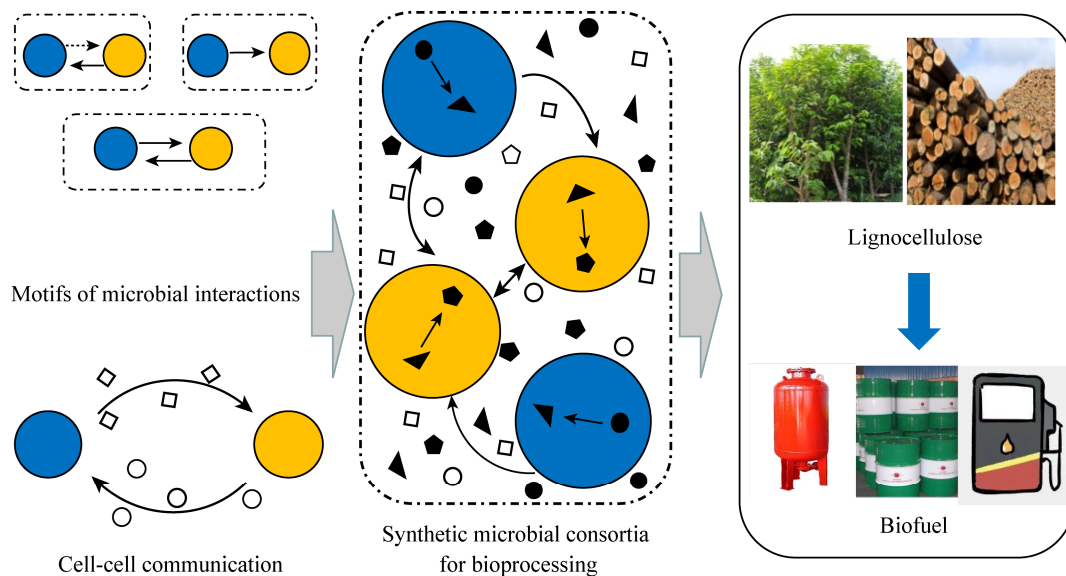


图 2 合成微生物群落的设计原则

Figure 2 The design principles of synthetic microbial consortia for consolidated bioprocessing

注:实线箭头和虚线箭头分别表示促进和抑制作用,空心的图形代表信号分子,实心的图形表示代谢物。

Note: The solid arrow and the dashed arrow indicate promotion and inhibition, respectively. The hollow graphics represent signal molecules, and the solid graphics represent metabolites in consortia. Engineering of microbial interactions and cell-cell communication are combined to enable coordination and biofuel formation^[24].

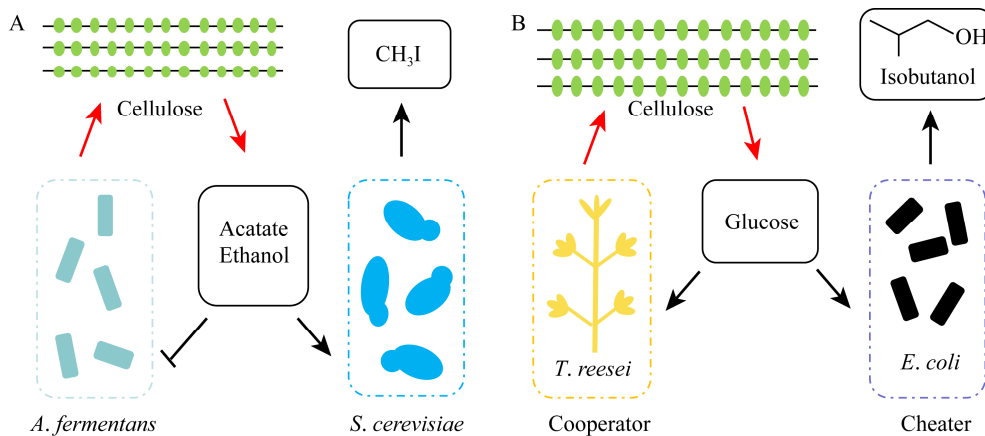


图3 合成微生物群落的互利共生模型

Figure 3 The cooperation and commensalism model of synthetic microbial consortia

注: A: *A. fermentans* 将纤维素转化成醋酸盐和乙醇, 这些产物对 *A. fermentans* 有抑制作用, *S. cerevisiae* 能利用这些产物为能源生产 CH_3I ^[31]. B: *T. reesei* 产生纤维素酶将纤维素水解成葡萄糖, 葡萄糖同时是 *T. reesei* 和 *E. coli* 的生长底物, *E. coli* 可以将葡萄糖发酵成异丁醇^[32].

Note: A: *A. fermentans* ferments cellulose to acetate and ethanol, and that has inhibition to *A. fermentans*, but *S. cerevisiae* can convert that as energy sources to CH_3I ^[31]. B: *T. reesei* produces cellulases that hydrolyze cellulose to glucose which as growth substrates for *T. reesei* and *E. coli*, and *E. coli* ferments glucose into isobutanol^[32].

需要通过生物体之间的信号分子和细胞间接触来调节。微生物可以通过群体感应机制与其他微生物进行信息交流, 部分自然信号分子已经被用于工程菌株的开发, 使通过人工合成信号分子来控制菌群成为可能^[34-35]。

合成微生物群落面临的一个重大挑战是如何通过细胞之间传递信号来控制整个微生物群体。Groß 等^[36]构建了一个由两株酵母共培养的菌群, 利用一种天然酵母信息素(α 因子)控制细胞间信号交流和目标蛋白的表达, 通过基因模块化和细胞间信号交流的结合使每个菌株的功能独立优化成为可能。Weber 等^[37]以挥发性乙醛为信号, 使细菌、酵母和哺乳动物细胞之间能进行信号交流, 更多新的信号系统应该能够实现跨物种的通信, 包括基于细胞间直接接触和不接触的信号。Kylilis 等^[38]利用一个自动选择正交通信的软件(ChemComms-calculator-v1.0)识别出 4 个正交通道, 并通过实验证明了 3 个通道同时存在于合成微生物群落。开发多个非干扰的细胞间通信通道是一个可行的步骤, 有助于合成微生物群落中细胞间信号传递效率的

提升。

人工合成细胞-细胞的信号分子是调整合成微生物群落的一个有价值的工具。但是, 导入或者敲除的基因容易发生失活或修复, 细胞间信号交流受阻的合成微生物群落往往很难维持物种的稳定, 在微流控设备之外难以培养^[25,39-40]。

3 合成微生物群落的优化

我们相信, 深入理解合成微生物群落中的代谢相互作用, 最终将使我们更好地了解 and 开发微生物菌群的代谢潜力。为了实现合成微生物群落的广泛优化, 阐明群落中微生物的生理和代谢模型是很重要的^[41]。例如, 代谢组学和蛋白质组学最近被用来阐明 *Bacillus megaterium* 和 *Ketogulonicigenium vulgare* 之间的相互作用^[42-43], 结果表明, 两者在微生物群落中的生理特征和通过代谢物进行的信息交流是决定种群动态和功能稳定的关键。Chignell 等^[44]利用定量蛋白质组学方法对由 *Pseudomonas putida* KT2440 和 *Bacillus atrophaeus* ATCC 9372 组成的人工菌群进行了研究, 结果发

现,与纯培养菌株相比,在包含两种菌株的群落中有 100 多种蛋白质出现上调或下调。另外,种群动态模型、空间模型和 IBM 模型(individual-based models)也被用来描述细胞间协同关系^[45],与代谢工程的联合将有助于微生物群落针对目标功能进行合理的优化。

代谢模型必须建立在准确获取微生物群落的生物量、底物和代谢物的基础之上。Klitgord 等通过代谢流平衡分析(flux balance analysis, FBA)预测了微生物在不同环境条件下的相互作用^[46],结果表明,该方法不仅能证明已知的相互作用,还能预测新的相互作用,有可能确定菌群的最佳培养条件。该结果有助于充分了解合成微生物群落的动态和进化,开发新的代谢途径并应用于代谢工程。近年来,基因工程(包括 CRISPR/Cas 系统,用于有效的基因删除、插入和转录控制)^[47]和快速组装 DNA 片段^[48]的方法取得飞跃式的进步,尤其是单细胞测序技术的普及^[49-50],越来越多的跨学科研究策略使得通过合理构建代谢途径来控制微生物行为成为可能^[51-52],因此,合成微生物群落的概念不仅在联合生物加工方面得到更多的应用,在污染物降解和生物医药等方面也有很大的开发空间^[53-54]。

4 合成微生物群落在联合生物加工方面的应用与挑战

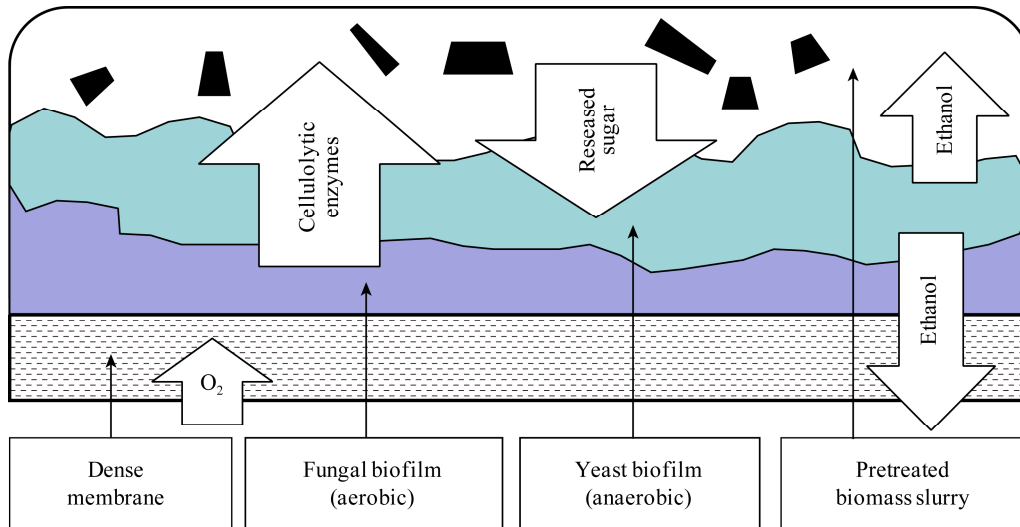
在单个反应器中,利用合成微生物群落将木质纤维素转化为生物燃料的方法具有效率高、成本低的巨大优势,相关实例见表 1,但是大部分合成微生物群落的研究仅停留在实验室条件下,其工业化应用仍然处于起步阶段,要想充分发挥微生物的潜力还需将菌群动态和代谢模型与实际生产进一步结合。我们认为除了考虑合成微生物群落中细胞间协同关系、信号交流以及菌株耐受性和外来物种入侵等问题,在实际生产中还需要以灵活的方式对菌群的空间生态位提供必要的控制。

商业纤维素酶通常由真菌产生,而 *Trichoderma reesei* 因其产生纤维素酶的能力更强而被广泛研究。一般来说,真菌对木质纤维素的降解是在好氧情况下发生,而微生物的发酵作用是在厌氧的情况下发生,因此,好氧-厌氧菌群结构被认为是联合生物加工最具潜力的组合之一。为了同时满足两者的生存条件,可以设计一种多物种生物膜反应器,好氧菌在紧靠膜的位置,为上方的厌氧菌创造厌氧环境和提供相关底物(图 4)。例如,通过 *Trichoderma reesei*、*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* 和 *Scheffersomyces stipitis* 的联合作用,以经稀酸预处理

表 1 利用木质纤维素生产生物燃料的相关实例

Table 1 Recent examples of biofuel production from lignocellulose based on microbial consortia

糖化菌株/发酵菌株	基质	产物	产率	滴度	来源
Saccharolytic strain/Fermentation strain	Substrate	Product	Yield (g/g)	Titer (g/L)	Source
<i>Clostridium phytofermentans</i> / <i>S. cerevisiae</i> cdt-1	α -cellulose	Ethanol	0.31	22.0	[55]
<i>Acremonium cellulolyticus</i> C-1/ <i>S. cerevisiae</i> ATCC 4126	Solka floc (cellulose)	Ethanol	0.18	46.3	[56]
<i>Kluyveromyces fragilis</i> LOCK 0027/ <i>Zymomonas mobilis</i> 3881	Jerusalem artichoke	Ethanol	0.48	99.0	[57]
<i>Clostridium thermocellum</i> ATCC 27405/ <i>Clostridium saccharoperbutylacetonicum</i> N1-4	Avicel	Butanol	0.20	7.9	[58]
<i>Clostridium celevecescens</i> / <i>C. acetobutylicum</i>	Filter paper	Butanol	0.09	2.7	[59]
<i>Clostridium cellulovorans</i> 743B/ <i>Clostridium beijerinckii</i> NCIMB 8052	Corn cobs	Butanol	0.12	8.3	[60]
<i>Thermoanaerobacterium</i> sp. M5/ <i>Clostridium acetobutylicum</i>	Hemicellulose	Butanol	0.14	8.3	[61]
Engineered consortium of <i>C. cellulovorans</i> / <i>C. beijerinckii</i>	Alkali extracted corn cobs	Butanol	0.14	11.5	[62]

图4 多物种生物膜反应器的设计^[63]Figure 4 Conceptual overview and design of the multispecies biofilm membrane reactor^[63]

理后的小麦秸秆为底物, 生产了 9.8 g/L 乙醇^[63]。本实验室利用从木质纤维素降解复合菌系 WSC-6 中分离的厌氧菌(*Clostridium* sp.)和好氧菌(*Bacillus* sp.和 *Clostridiaceae* sp.)共培养, 以滤纸为底物, 通过乙醇和甲酸等代谢物探索三者之间的协同关系, 结果表明, 好氧菌可以通过消耗共培养体系中氧气和小分子有机酸来促进厌氧菌的生长, 进而提高木质纤维素降解率, 促进乙醇的累积^[28,64-67]。除了生物燃料的生产, 这种概念的验证设计可以用于菌群从木质纤维素中生产其他生物产品(例如乳酸)^[68], 证明了基于合成微生物群落的联合生物加工技术利用木质纤维素生产高价值化学物质的可能性。

当不同物种在同一发酵装置培养时, 各菌种除了对氧气需求量不同之外, 对营养物质、温度和 pH 等需求的差异化也将不同程度地影响整体的生产效率^[69]。空间连接微生物群落(spatially linked microbial consortium, SLMC)根据目标功能的差异来选择不同的菌株和培养环境, 不需要为每个物种提供一致的生长条件^[70]。SLMC 允许在空间分布上对微生物进行控制, 可以为每个纯培养微生物提供最佳的生存环境以强化单个物种的代谢效率, 同

时微生物之间可以通过代谢物和信号分子进行交流, 有效提升整体的发酵效率(图 5)^[71]。由于其模块化设计, SLMC 将允许在乙醇生产之后附加额外的生物处理流程以转化乙醇, 例如成为生物柴油^[72-73]。SLMC 旨在提供一个多样化的生存环境, 以促进菌群中每个成员的生长和代谢功能, 结合空间生态位, 甚至可以将原本不可共存的物种联系起来以满足生产特殊产品的需求, 在联合生物加工方面具有巨大的开发潜力。

5 展望

在过去的几年里, 合成微生物群落在木质纤维素联合生物加工方面的研究进展快速, 证明其在开发生物燃料生产方面的巨大潜力。然而, 在合成微生物群落用于大规模联合生物加工之前有以下几个问题需要注意, 主要包括: (1) 继续筛选降解木质纤维素纯培养菌株, 不同菌株可能存在竞争或者生存条件差异较大, 可以尽量采用从同一生存环境中获取的菌株进行菌群构建; (2) 强化不同菌株之间协同机制的探究, 分别从微生物个体、菌群和基因层面建立数学模型, 为构建功能稳定的合成微生物菌群提供理论基础; (3) 设计多物种合成微生物群落以强化菌群的功能与稳定性, 重点在于开发满

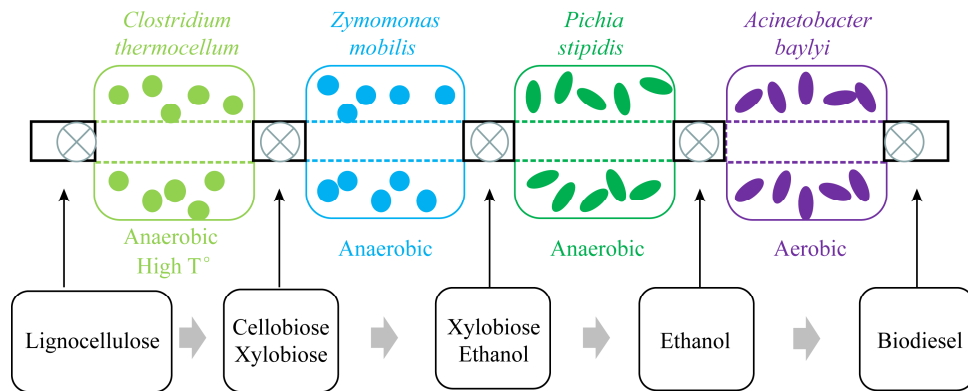


图 5 空间连接微生物菌群(SLMC)的设计^[71]

Figure 5 Design and potential application of a spatially linked microbial consortium^[71]

足多种微生物生存的工艺和培养基,例如空间连接的微生物群落(SLME)。随着系统生物学和合成生物学的快速发展,尤其是组学技术,在挖掘新的物种以及探究菌株之间协同机制方面取得巨大进步(图 1),同时对微生物进行基因编辑和基因精细调控的新工具正在出现^[74-75],为未来设计稳定高效的多物种合成微生物群落奠定基础。

利用合成微生物群落干扰自然形成的生态系统可以调节其行为和功能,甚至创建出原本不存在的协同关系,从而开发新的应用。例如,在原厌氧发酵系统中外源性加入合成微生物群落,将是提高木质纤维素降解率和提升甲烷产率的有效方法,同时对新形成的整个体系进行系统生物学分析将有利于合成微生物群落的再设计和优化。最后,合成微生物群落不仅在联合生物加工领域应用广泛,而且在生物修复、生物制药等领域均有广阔的开发前景,这一策略很可能是利用木质纤维素生物质生产生物燃料和化学用品最具成本效益的途径。

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