



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***DEVELOPMENT OF JATROPHA FRUIT SHELLING MACHINE FOR  
KERNEL RECOVERY IN BIODIESEL PRODUCTION***

**LIM BO YUAN**

**FK 2016 3**



**DEVELOPMENT OF *JATROPHA* FRUIT SHELLING MACHINE FOR  
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By

**LIM BO YUAN**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**March 2016**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## **DEVELOPMENT OF *JATROPHA* FRUIT SHELLING MACHINE FOR KERNEL RECOVERY IN BIODIESEL PRODUCTION**

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**March 2016**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Rosnah Shamsudin, PhD**  
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Most of available shelling machines remove outer shells of *Jatropha* fruits to produce seeds, without removing husks (outer coating of seeds). The presence of the husks will affect oil yield and quality during oil extraction process in biodiesel production. Therefore, the project has developed a Multistage *Jatropha* Fruit Shelling Machine which is capable to produce oil-rich kernels (nucleus) by removing both of shells and husks from *Jatropha* fruits. The developed machine consists of two cracking units with screw-type rollers (rollers with male threads) and three separators (two blowers and a vibratory sieve). The designed screw-type rollers were found to be able to reduce breakage of kernels and kernel loss during separation process through blower. During performance evaluation, the roller clearance, blower air speeds and *Jatropha* fruits' moisture content were found could significantly affect the machine performance. Based on the findings, the machine could remove 99.45 % of shells and 52.84 % of husks while controlling the kernel loss at 5.24 %. Further, the study has carried out Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) multiphase modeling of separation process through blower to understand dynamic behaviour of *Jatropha* fruits' particles under airstreams. For the modeling, Dense Discrete Phase model (DDPM) under Eulerian framework in ANSYS Fluent software was selected to define particle injections following Rosin Rammler particle size distribution. The shape of particles was identified using Matlab Image Region Analyzer and the calculated aspect ratio, 0.625 was used to define non-spherical drag law. The numerical results show that the particles tend to flow in such a way to follow the direction of diverted air flow and vortices in separator duct with slope end design. The phenomena have a tendency to cause particle momentum loss especially for heavier kernel particles, causing the kernel particles to drop in the separator and leading to lower kernel loss during separation process. Furthermore, a scaling factor was developed based on dimensional analysis. The developed scaling factor suggests that the air airflow rate should be controlled to keep air velocity to be a constant parameter in order to ensure similar working condition in scale-up unit. In fact, the research project has successfully developed a more efficient shelling machine for kernel recovery and provided validated numerical model and scaling factor as better insights for making decision during development of future commercial unit that benefits *Jatropha* biodiesel industry.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

## **PEMBANGUNAN MESIN PEMBUANGAN KULIT BUAH *JATROPHA* UNTUK MENGHASILKAN INTI YANG DIGUNAKAN DALAM INDUSTRI BIODIESEL**

Oleh

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Kulit buah-buahan *Jatropha* boleh dibuang dengan menggunakan mesin tetapi kebanyakan mesin tidak dapat membuang sekam (lapisan luar benih). Kandungan sekam boleh memberi kesan negatif pada hasil dan kualiti minyak semasa proses pengekstrakan minyak dalam industri biodiesel. Oleh itu, projek ini telah membangunkan sebuah mesin (*Multistage Jatropha Fruit Shelling Machine*) yang dapat membuang kedua-dua kulit luar dan sekam daripada buah-buahan *Jatropha* untuk menghasilkan inti *Jatropha* (nukleus yang berminyak). Mesin yang berikut melibatkan dua peringkat peretakan yang disiapkan dengan roda yang mempunyai benang skru dan tiga peringkat pengasingan (dua peniup dan satu ayak bergetar). Roda yang tersebut dapat mengurangkan pecahan inti dan mengurangkan kehilangan inti semasa proses pengasingan yang menggunakan angin. Selepas eksperimen, didapati bahawa jarak antara roda, kelajuan udara peniup dan kandungan air buah *Jatropha* dapat menjejaskan pretasi mesin tersebut. Mesin itu didapati boleh membuang kulit luar sebanyak 99.45 % dan sekam sebanyak 52.84 % manakala kehilangan inti hanya 5.24 %. Selain itu, proses pengasingan antara sekam dan inti dalam peniup telah disimulasikan dengan menggunakan *Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) multiphase modeling* daripada *ANSYS Fluent. Dense Discrete Phase Model (DDPM)* daripada rangka kerja *Eulerian* dan taburan saiz zarah-zarah daripada cara *Rosin Rammler* telah dipilih untuk menubuhkan suntikan zarah-zarah ke dalam aliran udara yang disimulasikan. Bentuk zarah-zarah telah dikenal pasti dengan menggunakan *Image Region Analyzer* daripada *Matlab*. 0.625 yang dikira sebagai nisbah aspek telah digunakan untuk menentukan *non-spherical drag law*. Selepas kajian, didapati bahawa arah aliran zarah-zarah telah dijejaskan oleh pengalihan arah aliran udara dan vorteks yang terbentuk dalam salur yang direka. Ini menyebabkan kehilangan momentum zarah-zarah inti *Jatropha*. Maka, fenomena tersebut berpotensi untuk mengurangkan kehilangan inti *Jatropha* semasa proses pengasingan. Di samping itu, faktor skala juga telah dibangunkan berdasarkan cara analisis dimensi. Analisis itu menunjukkan bahawa halaju udara tidak boleh diubahkan semasa pembesaran model manakala kadar aliran udara perlu ditukar dengan mengikuti luas keratan rentas salur udara untuk memastikan keadaan yang sama dalam mesin yang lebih besar. Secara keseluruhan, projek telah berjaya membangunkan mesin pembuangan kulit *Jatropha* yang berkesan dan menyediakan model berangka dan faktor skala yang berguna untuk pembangunan mesin yang berkapasiti lebih tinggi pada masa hadapan.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 31 March 2016 to conduct the final examination of Lim Bo Yuan on his thesis entitled "Development of *Jatropha* Fruit Shelling Machine for Kernel Recovery in Biodiesel Production" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CFD	Computational Fluid Dynamics
DDPM	Dense Discrete Phase Model
DEM	Discrete Element Method
EU	European Union
FEA	Finite Element Analysis
KTGF	Kinetic Theory of Granular Flow

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

Natural gas, coal and crude oil are fossil fuels which have been widely used for many purposes such as vehicle power and electricity and heat generation. However, the fossil fuels are in danger of exhaustion resulting from overuse of fossil fuels for the country development. Unstable supplies and price fluctuations of fossil fuels in market can also have an effect on the economies of developing countries. Further, the usage of coal, natural gas and crude oil together was reported to be more than 80 % of the total world energy consumption in 2013 (BP, 2014). Meanwhile, the energy demand for the world was estimated to grow again by 37 % from 2013 to 2035 (BP, 2015). Further, the statistics indicate that the fossil fuels keep to be primary resources in order to fulfil current energy demand.

The high dependency on energy and the fossil fuel depletion have drawn attention towards developing sustainable solution. For this reason, biodiesel has been proposed to be one of alternative resources. In fact, the biodiesel, which is similar to conventional diesel, has been reported as a promising replacement for diesel (Atadashi et al., 2010). Biodiesel is basically derived from animal fats or vegetable oil (Mehla, 2007). Biodiesel can be used in a compression ignition engine and no major engine modification is required with up to 20 % (B20) of biodiesel blends (Kumar and Sharma, 2008). Further, the biodiesel has advantage over conventional diesel as it produces less particulate matter, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide (Pandey et al., 2012). Therefore, the biodiesel blends will directly reduce environmental impact. In addition, the current world trend shows the fossil fuel based diesel is being slowly superseded by biodiesel.

Different countries use different vegetable oils for biodiesel production. The United States, which is an edible oil exporter, uses soybean as the raw material (Ong et al., 2011). Meanwhile, the European countries mostly use rapeseed oil for biodiesel production (Ong et al., 2011). In tropical countries (e.g. Malaysia), the palm oil or coconut oil is basically used for the purpose. On the other hand, India uses non-edible oils (e.g. *Jatropha*, *Karanja* and *Simarouba*) to produce biodiesel since the India is trying to reduce its dependency on edible oils (Ong et al., 2011). Further, the biodiesel can be a feasible and prospective fuel if it can compete economically with fossil fuels, be readily available and be technically viable (Srivastave and Prasad, 2000). In fact, the cost of biodiesel production can be reduced by using a less expensive source such as inedible oil, animal fat, waste food oil or the by-products of refining vegetable oils (Veljkovic et al., 2006).

As mentioned, the plant sources including rapeseed oil, soybean oil, coconut oil and palm oil are currently being used for biodiesel production. Most of the feedstock are edible and the plants require a large growing space. Overuse of food based crops in the industry will potentially result in a food crisis problem. For this issue, inedible vegetable oil can be a more suitable choice. In fact, food security issue is always being considered during feedstock selection in any bioenergy development. Ideally, cultivation of feedstock for biodiesel production should not likely to compromise future

demands in terms of food supply (BEFS, 2010). Therefore, with no disturbance of food supply and displacement of food based crops, the focus has been shifted from first generation edible feedstocks to *Jatropha curcas L.* as energy crop of choice (Acthen et al., 2007; Hanny and Shisuko, 2008; Moser et al., 2010; Kalam et al., 2012). Meanwhile, the *Jatropha* has been widely accepted due to high adaption of *Jatropha* trees to poor soil or waste land (Silitonga et al., 2011). Moreover, *Jatropha* is a perennial crop with deeper root system enabling it to effectively retain water and nutrients (Heller, 1996; Gübitz et al., 1999; Eijck et al., 2014). Therefore, the plant requirement for water and nutrients is lower. Further, the cultivation of *Jatropha* can also help reclaiming waste land, controlling erosion and stimulating rural development (Francis et al., 2005; Ogunwole et al., 2008; Silitonga et al., 2011).

### **1.1.1 Preparation of *Jatropha* Feedstock for Biodiesel Production**

The cultivation of trees, fruit harvesting, harvested fruit pretreatment, oil extraction, oil purification and biodiesel production are basically the activities involved in *Jatropha* biodiesel production (Koh and Ghazi, 2011; Kalam et al., 2012). Production on a large scale basis is needed to cope with energy source depletion issue. Meanwhile, large amount of *Jatropha* seeds are required for the production to meet energy demand. Further, the harvested mature fruits need to be cleaned to remove foreign matter and dried prior to a shelling process. The shelling process is a production activity carried out to remove and separate outer shells of fruits in order to recover *Jatropha* seeds prior to oil extraction process. As part of pretreatment process it is an important step due to a fact that the outer shells, which do not contain any oil, can prevent oil from leaving oil-rich kernels and also tend to absorb the oil during the extraction process. A previous report stated that oil yield during oil extraction process could be higher with decorticated seeds when compared to whole fruits (Kumar & Sharma, 2011). In addition, shell content can lead to high pressing pressures and energy loss in the oil expeller (Zheng et al., 2005).



**Figure 1.1. The composition and oil yield of Jatropha fruits, shells, seeds, husks and kernels (Reinhardt et al., 2008; Pandey et al., 2012; Kalam, et al., 2012)**

The shelling process can be carried out manually or mechanically (FACT, 2010). The usual manual method uses a hard material to break the fruits. After that, the detached shells are removed directly by using fingers (Achten et al., 2008). The process is labour intensive with low output rates. A manual process worker can only remove shells from 50 kg of dried fruits per day which is a relatively low rate as compared a rate of 100 kg hr<sup>-1</sup> achieved by a motorised machine (FACT, 2010; Wang et al., 2011). Further, labour shortages and labour costs are the major concerns as the labours are required at all stages with a series of activities including fruit collection, drying and shelling during seed production stage (Wang et al., 2011). Replacing labour by machine can ensure low production costs and improve sustainability of biodiesel feedstock in the industry.

A shelling machine normally comprises a dehulling/shelling unit and a separation unit. The principle of shelling is to break, loosen and open Jatropha fruits by applying adequate impulsive, compression or shearing force in order to detach fruits' shells from the fruits. According to literatures, Jatropha shells can be detached using different means such as cylindrical rollers, rotating shearing blades or a horizontal rotating cylinder (FACT, 2010; Pradhan et al., 2010; Shamsudin et al., 2010). After that, the detached shells need to be separated and discharged prior to oil extraction process. The separation process can be easily completed using a sieve or mesh that matches size of the seed. However, a zero shell content cannot be achieved because of some of the shells are similar in size to seeds and thus they can pass through the mesh along with the seeds. Therefore, blower is commonly added and used to further improve cleanness level of Jatropha seed.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

At present, shelling process has gained renewed interest not only due to labour and mechanisation issues, but also due to some negative impacts of seeds' coating, commonly called husks. The researchers have actually extended the study to investigate possibility to further remove the husks from the *Jatropha* seeds for kernel recovery. The husks are thin and brittle seeds' coating. Besides that, the husks do not contain oil and can obstruct oil extraction from oil-rich kernels inside the seeds. This was proven by some past reports revealing a reduction of husk content could actually improve oil yield (Shukla, 2006; Wim et al., 2007; Amoah, 2012). In order to eliminate the barrier, the whole seeds have to be cracked and the husks has to be removed from kernels. The other report stated that fibre content decreased with lower husk content (Greyt et al., 2007). Therefore, the reduction of husks can also reduce fibre content and thus reducing wear and tear of the press during extraction process. However, it is important to understand that zero husk content is not encouraged since an adequate pressing pressure from husk content is still required in an oil expeller to speed up oil extraction from kernels (FACT, 2010).

On the other hand, quality of biodiesel production is highly depended on *Jatropha* crude oil quality (Hynd and Smith, 2004; Uriarte, 2010). In fact, the husk content tends to affect colour of crude oil and form sediment in extracted crude oil. Therefore, the husk content has a tendency to reduce efficiency of crude oil purification process during biodiesel production as well as affecting commercial value of final biodiesel product. In addition, kernels with low husk content will require less solvent during oil extraction through solvent extraction method. Therefore, achieving removal of husk can also lower production cost.

However, the removal of husks is yet to be a common practice due to not much commercial technology available to directly recover the *Jatropha* kernels from whole fruits on a large scale basis. Currently, all commercially available machines are basically designed to recover whole seeds from fruits without removing the husks (FACT, 2010; Pradhan et al., 2010; Shamsudin et al., 2010). In fact, an additional seed cleaning system or device is required for further removing the husks from seeds. This will lead to a higher capital cost. Further, very few seed dehulling system can be found, indicating that the technology development is still at an emerging stage. The *Jatropha* seed dehulling system in India and China occupied a large production space since the system consists of a few individual machines, including grading machine, feeding elevator, seed shelling machine, sorting machine and air classifier (He, 2014; Goldin, 2014). As a result, the system is costly and not suitable for small scale industry. On the other hand, a shelling drum on a fixed concave was used to remove the husks from *Jatropha* seeds in Ghana and Sudan (Amoah, 2012; Kheiralla et al., 2015). Both approaches were reported to be quite successful but the percentage of kernel loss has not been analysed. This is an important parameter which cannot be ignored since it decides profit of production operation especially when the production is carried out on a large scale.

Most of the machines are basically developed for a purpose of detaching and separating shells to produce whole seeds without dehulling seeds. This is due to the difficulty in dehulling seeds mechanically without crushing kernels which are inside the seeds. The crushed kernels are not desirable since the kernels in broken form are irregular in sizes and tend to have masses similar to the masses of husk particles, leading to high

difficulty in separating between kernels and husks mechanically. In fact, the shape of a *Jatropha* seed is oblong and each seed has fragile kernel. Besides that, the wall (husk) of the seed is hard and thicker around the edges of the seed (Mehla, 2007). Therefore, the breakage of kernel can be prevented only at a condition where the force on the seed is selective and applied only to the wall (husk) of the seed.

### 1.3 Objectives

Keeping the above arguments in mind, the study focused on the development of a viable machine to produce shell-free kernels with low husk content for better oil yield and oil quality. An efficient system was required to process a mixture of kernels, shells and husks with variable size, mass and shape. To achieve this, a novel design which is screw-type rollers (rollers with male threads on surface) has been developed and included in a newly developed Multistage *Jatropha* Fruit Shelling Machine. Meanwhile, the separation unit must be properly designed based on the differences in these properties. Furthermore, the design of the machine must consider both cost and size since high operational and maintenance costs could put the economic viability of production system at risk. On the other hand, none of the previous researches related to shelling machine considers modeling and simulation study of separation unit namely blower system. Thus, the potential for improvement in the efficiency of the blower system to reduce kernel loss has not been properly investigated. In summary, the project main goal was to develop a *Jatropha* fruit shelling machine which is capable of producing *Jatropha* kernels directly from the whole fruits so that higher oil yield and better oil quality can be achieved in *Jatropha* biodiesel production. The machine must be able to remove outer shells and husks while maintaining low kernel loss during the process. Furthermore, the study covered a multiphase modeling of air-solid flow using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) tool which has never been done before for *Jatropha* kernels production. The numerical modeling has also made possible the development and validation of a scaling factor, enabling scaling up of prototype unit to commercial scale unit in the future.

The specific objectives targeted to achieve the project goals are summarised as below:

- a. To develop a *Jatropha* shelling machine with cracking units coming complete with screw-type rollers and blower separators to produce *Jatropha* kernels directly from whole fruits.
- b. To carry out performance evaluation of developed shelling methods and machine to identify optimal process conditions, including roller clearance, blower air speed and fruits' moisture content, for cracking unit and separator of the machine.
- c. To perform a Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) multiphase modeling describing dynamic behaviour of *Jatropha* fruits' particles under airstream during separation process through blower.
- d. To develop and validate an appropriate scaling factor through dimensional analysis and numerical modeling respectively for use in achieving similar working condition for scale-up unit.

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