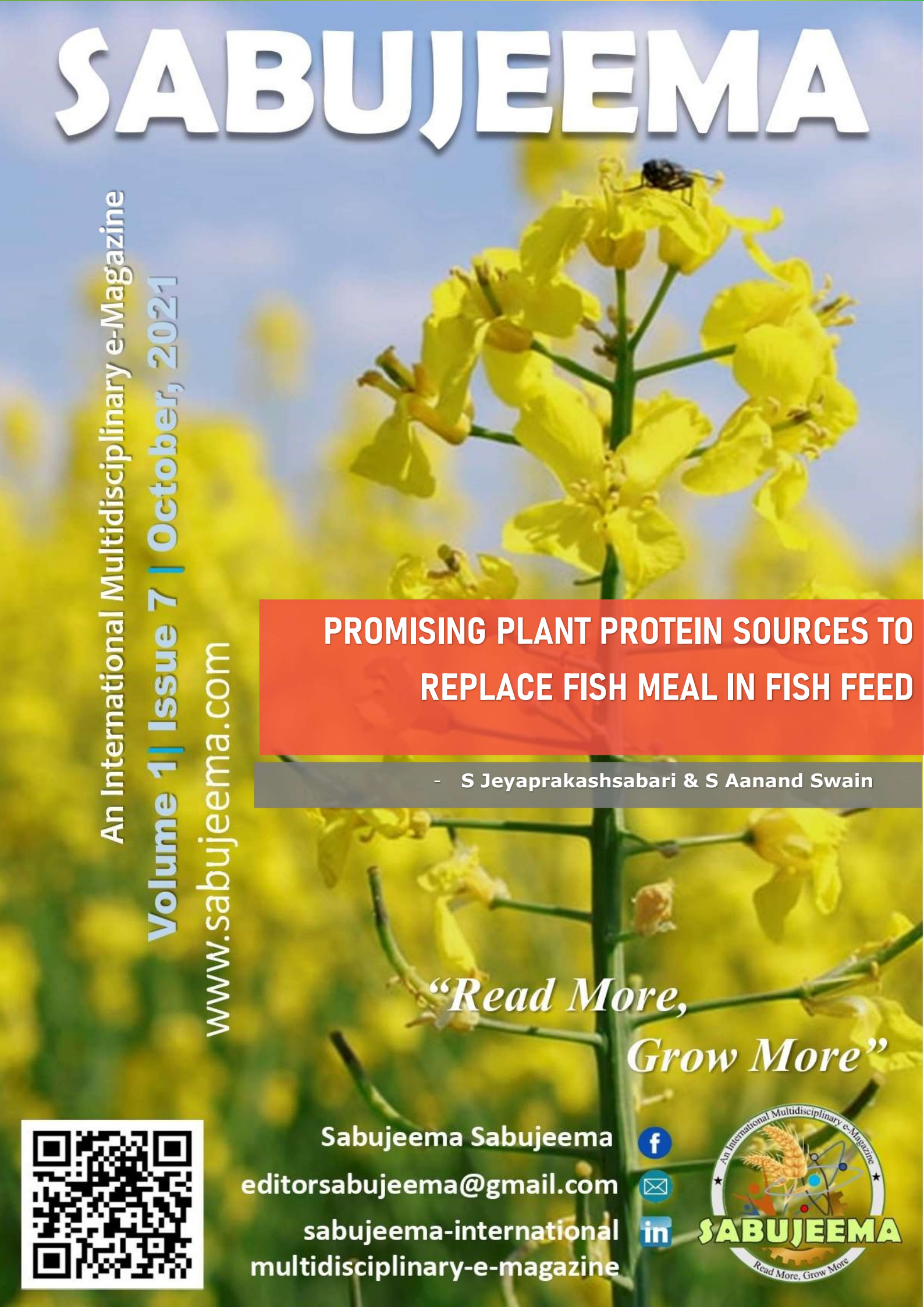
SABUJEEMA

An International Multidisciplinary e-Magazine

Volume 1 | Issue 7 | October, 2021

www.sabujeema.com



PROMISING PLANT PROTEIN SOURCES TO REPLACE FISH MEAL IN FISH FEED

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sabujeema-international multidisciplinary-e-magazine

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[Article ID: SIMM0140]

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INTRODUCTION

India is the second-largest fish producing country in the world. The feed sector plays a dominant role in the growth of the aquaculture industry. According to FAO (2016), world farmed fish production stood at 73.8 million tons in 2014, which was just 1.6 million tons in 1960. This includes 49.8 million tons of fish (US$ 99.2 billion), 16.1 million tons of shellfish (US $ 19 billion), 6.9 million tons of crustaceans (US $ 36.2 billion), and 7.3 million tons of other aquatic animals (3.7 billion US $). The sustainability of aquaculture depends on many factors, and among them, cost-effective feed is one of the crucial factors. Because feed only contributes around 60% of total operating cost in aquaculture. Therefore, the remarkable growth of the aquaculture industry will be greatly benefited by the development of cheaper aqua feed.

ANIMAL FEED MARKET:

The Indian animal feed market was valued at almost ₹403.5 billion in the year 2020. The animal feed market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15% between 2021 and 2026 and reach almost ₹933.3 billion by 2026. The animal feed market in India is segmented into three groups: poultry, cattle, and aqua.

AQUAFEED MARKET:

The global aquafeed market was valued at USD 70 billion in 2016 and is expected to reach USD 155.5 billion by 2022 with a CAGR of 12.5%. The Indian aquaculture feed market was valued at USD 1.20 billion in 2017 and is expected to reach a value of USD 2.3 billion in 2023 with a CAGR of 10.4%. Indian feed mills can produce 2.88 million metric tons of aqua feed per year. The aquafeed market is segmented based on the type of feed into two groups: fish feed and crustacean feed. The carp feed ranks first among fish because carps account for 89% of the freshwater feed and P. vannamei feed dominates the crustacean feed category.

MAJOR COMPONENTS OF AQUAFEED:

A fish diet must provide a suitable energy source and be in proper balance concerning Proteins, Lipids, Carbohydrates, Vitamins and Minerals. Among these components, protein is one of the essential components for all animal tissue. It plays a vital role in determining the rate of growth in different life stages of fish. Protein is the major bio-molecule involved in the cell's various physiological functions and is a significant component of any animal feed.

PROTEIN SCARCITY:

Nowadays, there is a protein scarcity in the aquafeed, which is one of the critical constraining factors blocking the development of the Indian aquafeed industry. Moreover, aqua feed industry relies heavily on the fish meal to meet the protein requirement of farmed species. Globally 20.2 % of total fish catch has been used for the production of fish meal. Among the 60.8 % of the whole fish meal produced was utilized by the aquafeed industry to produce compound feed for the animals. But due to declining marine capture fisheries, the production rate of fish meal gradually decreases at the rate of 1.7 % annually. Hence, as the demand for fish meal increases, the cost of the fish meal will rise in the market. Higher demand will lower the quality of the fish meal. Further, the World aquaculture society (WAS) recommends not using fish meal as a protein source in fish feed. All these things make the feed formulators and researchers look for alternative feedstuff which can replace the fish meal as a protein source in aquafeed in a cost-effective way without affecting the growth performance of the animal.

INVESTIGATION FOR NEW PROTEIN SOURCES:

Due to the protein scarcity in the aquafeed, the feed formulators have been investigating various protein sources. Among them, plant-based protein sources are economically feasible feedstuff to replace fish meal in the aquafeed. These plant protein sources can either be a conventional protein source as well as a non-conventional protein source.

CONVENTIONAL PLANT SOURCES:

GROUNDNUT OIL CAKE:

It is one of the most critical protein ingredients with a protein and fat content of 40% and 7%. It has a pleasant flavour, is highly palatable and has better binding properties compared to soybean meal. But it is deficient in specific essential amino acids such as methionine and lysine. Among the various plant protein sources, it is the most economical protein ingredient with easy availability. Its global production status was stood at 43.2 million tons during 2017-18.

SOYA BEAN MEAL:

Soya bean meal is the by-product of the extraction of soybean oil, which is to be used as an essential protein source in animal feed. And soya bean meal was graded into two categories based on the protein content: De-hulled type and with hull or parts of hull type with 47-49% and <47% crude protein content, respectively. At the same time, it has some anti-nutritional factors such as trypsin inhibitors, Haemaglutinins and methionine deficiency. Several processes exist in the production of soya bean meal, such as mechanical extraction method with >3% oil content and solvent extraction method with <2% oil content. The global Production status of soya bean meal stood at 337.9 million tons during 2017-18.

COTTONSEED MEAL:

Cottonseed meal is the by-product of oil extraction from cotton seeds with a protein content of 49%. It is widely used as animal feed as well as organic fertilizers. The global Production status of this cottonseed meal is 43.4 million tons (2017-18). India, China and the USA are the major cotton-producing countries in the world. Though it has many merits, it contains gossypol, which is a major anti-nutritional factor affecting animals' performance.

SUNFLOWER SEED MEAL:

The protein content of the sunflower seed meal varies from 28% for the hulled seed meal to 42% for the de-hulled seed meal. Besides being used as fish feed, it can also feed pigs and poultry under certain conditions. Sulphur containing amino acids and methionine were rich than other protein sources but low in lysine content. Global Production status was 49.7 million tons (2017-18).

NON-CONVENTIONAL PLANT SOURCES:

CORN GLUTEN MEAL:

Corn gluten meal is commonly used as livestock feed containing about 65% crude protein. It can be used as a source of protein, energy, and pigments. But one of the drawbacks of this meal is its low lysine content. Corn gluten meal is occasionally confused with corn gluten feed, a mixture of bran, steep liquor, and maize germ oil from the milling process with a low crude protein content of 22%. Globally 1.07 million metric tons of corn gluten meal is produced every year.

WHEAT GLUTEN MEAL:

Wheat gluten meal is a protein-rich ingredient with a crude protein content of 79.8% and fat content of 1.6%. It is mainly composed of two types of proteins, namely Gliadins and Glutenins. Besides a protein source, it can also be used as a binding ingredient in animal feeds. Low in lysine, but it contains more sulfur amino acids and is also high in glutamine, which improves gut health and modulates the immune system in the animal. Globally 766.5 million tons of wheat gluten meal is being produced every year.

RAPESEED MEAL:

Rapeseed meal is widely used to feed all classes of livestock, including the fishes, with a crude protein content of 40%. But rapeseed oil has a poor reputation due to the presence of erucic acid, which gives a bitter taste and causes health problems in live stocks. Also, it contains anti-nutritional factors such as glucosinolates and tannins, which are detrimental to animal performance. The leading producer of rapeseed meals is the European Union, China, Canada, and India. 75.6 million tons of rapeseed meal was produced worldwide during 2017-18.

CANOLA MEAL:

Canola meal ranks second in the global production of protein feedstuff from oilcakes and meals. In 2019, 27.4 million tons of canola meal was produced worldwide. Canola is the name given to genetically selected rapeseed varieties produced by *Brassica napus* and *Brassica campestris* species with a crude protein content of 38%. It also contains anti-nutritional factors such as glucosinolates and erucic acid but is comparatively lower than rapeseed meals. The presence of high levels of several constituents common to all oilseed protein products, and some components unique to canola/rapeseed meals (e.g. glucosinolates), prevents the full expression of this high quality of canola protein.

CASE STUDY:

Plant-based protein sources can partially or fully replace fish meals if certain dietary recommended conditions are provided (Daniel, 2018). For example, grass carp *(Ctenopharyngodon idella)* fed with cottonseed meal, sunflower seed meal and corn meal at 75% inclusion level in their diet provides good nitrogen utilization without any adverse effect in growth performance

(Koprucu and Sertel, 2012). Similarly, common carp *(Cyprinus carpio)* showed no negative impact on the growth and feeding performances when fed with 50% de-fatted rubber seed meal (Suprayudi et al., 2015). Besides finfish, 25% inclusion of mixed corn gluten meal, rapeseed meal, sorghum and wheat gluten in the diet of black tiger shrimp *(Penaeus monodon)* did not negatively impact the growth performance (Richard et al., 2011). Further research findings reveal that 100% inclusion of plant protein source in the diet of Nile tilapia *(Oreochromis niloticus)* (Liti et al., 2006) and plant protein concentrate in the diet of rainbow trout *(Oncorhynchus mykiss)* (Zhang et al., 2012) had no negative effect on growth performance.

CONCLUSION:

The present article highlights the various available plant protein sources that can be utilized as animal feed ingredients. However, careful selection based on availability, processing procedure, performance on the species selected etc., need to be analyzed before deciding on the component for feed preparation. Earlier research findings and current trends in research will help find a sustainable way to overcome dependence on the fish meal in the production of aquafeed. All these together will pave the way for "fish free feed to the fishes" in the future.

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