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Combining Asymmetrical Flow Field-Flow Fractionation with Light Scattering and Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometric Detection for Characterization of Nanoclay used in Biopolymer Nanocomposites

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Bjørn Schmidt, Jens Højslev Petersen, Christian Bender Koch, David Plackett, Nini Johansen, et al.. Combining Asymmetrical Flow Field-Flow Fractionation with Light Scattering and Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometric Detection for Characterization of Nanoclay used in Biopolymer Nanocomposites. *Food Additives and Contaminants*, 2009, 26 (12), pp.1619-1627. 10.1080/02652030903225740 . hal-00573889

HAL Id: hal-00573889

<https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00573889>

Submitted on 5 Mar 2011

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Combining Asymmetrical Flow Field-Flow Fractionation with Light Scattering and Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometric Detection for Characterization of Nanoclay used in Biopolymer Nanocomposites

Journal:	<i>Food Additives and Contaminants</i>
Manuscript ID:	TFAC-2008-411.R1
Manuscript Type:	Special Issue
Date Submitted by the Author:	11-Jun-2009
Complete List of Authors:	Schmidt, Bjørn; Technical University of Denmark, National Food Institute; University of Copenhagen, Department of Basic Sciences and Environment Petersen, Jens; Technical University of Denmark, National Food Institute Koch, Christian; University of Copenhagen, Department of Basic Sciences and Environment Plackett, David; Technical University of Denmark, Risø National Laboratory Johansen, Nini; Technical University of Denmark, Risø National Laboratory Katiyar, Vimal; Technical University of Denmark, Risø National Laboratory Larsen, Erik; Technical University of Denmark, National Food Institute
Methods/Techniques:	ICP/MS
Additives/Contaminants:	Food contact materials, Food simulants, Migration, Packaging
Food Types:	

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4 **Combining Asymmetrical Flow Field-Flow Fractionation with Light Scattering**
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7 **and Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometric Detection for**
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10 **Characterization of Nanoclay used in Biopolymer Nanocomposites**
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33

34 **Abstract**

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37 It is expected that biopolymers obtained from renewable resources will in due course become fully
38
39 competitive with fossil fuel-derived plastics as food packaging materials. In this context,
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41 biopolymer nanocomposites are a field of emerging interest since such materials can exhibit
42
43 improved mechanical and barrier properties and be more suitable for a wider range of food
44
45 packaging applications. Natural or synthetic clay nanofillers are being investigated for this purpose
46
47 in a project called NanoPack funded by the Danish Strategic Research Council. In order to detect
48
49 and characterize the size of clay nanoparticulates, an analytical system combining asymmetrical
50
51 flow field-flow fractionation (AF⁴) with multi angle light scattering detection (MALS) and
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53 inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) is presented here. In a migration study
54
55 we tested a biopolymer nanocomposite consisting of polylactide (PLA) with 5 % Cloisite®30B (a
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4 derivatised montmorillonite clay) as a filler. Based on AF⁴-MALS analyses we found that particles
5
6 ranging from 50 to 800 nm in radius indeed migrated into the 95 % ethanol used as food simulant.
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9 The full hyphenated AF⁴-MALS-ICP-MS system showed however, that none of the characteristic
10
11 clay minerals were detectable, and we conclude that clay nanoparticles were absent in the migrate.
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14 Finally, by means of centrifugation experiments, a platelet aspect ratio of 320 was calculated for
15
16 montmorillonite clay using AF⁴-MALS for platelet size measurements.
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21 **Keywords:** Biopolymer nanocomposites, asymmetrical flow field-flow fractionation, transmission
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23 electron microscopy, inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry, aspect ratio, migration
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30 **Introduction**

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32 The packaging industry accounts for about 41 % of total global plastic production and out of this 47
33
34 % are presently used in food packaging (Fomin and Guzeev 2001). The plastics used for food
35
36 packaging are at present largely fossil fuel derived. However, polymers obtained from renewable
37
38 plant resources or biopolymers are now available and are useful in some applications. The sources
39
40 include fermentation products from agricultural crops and wastes, starch, plant oils, cellulose,
41
42 gelatine and chitosan. Unfortunately, undesirable biopolymer properties such as brittleness, low
43
44 thermal stability, and high gas permeability can restrict their practical use. A solution to these
45
46 problems is to improve the chemical and physical properties of the biopolymer by incorporating
47
48 nanofillers (Fomin and Guzeev 2001; Ray and Bousmina 2005). Layered aluminium silicates
49
50 (clays) can be used as nanofillers, but other minerals, such as layered double hydroxides (LDH)
51
52 (Taviot-Gueho and Leroux 2006) may also be used. Evidently, there is a potential for combining
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54 green materials with nanotechnology for the development of a new generation of advanced
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56 packaging materials. The overall goal of the on-going NanoPack project (www.nanopack.dk) is to
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4 develop a technological basis for a cost-efficient production and use of biopolymer nanocomposites
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6 produced from renewable resources for use in the food packaging industry. These novel
7
8 nanocomposites must meet the demands made by consumers and various authorities in terms of
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10 functionality, sustainability and safety.
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16 Many successful attempts have been made to develop nanocomposite films, and mostly x-ray
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18 diffraction and electron microscopy have been used for characterization of the composite structure
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20 (Pluta et al. 2002; Pospisil et al. 2004; Rhim et al. 2006; Zhang et al. 2007). Other methods
21
22 including dielectric spectroscopy (Pluta et al. 2007) and solid state NMR spectroscopy (Bourbigot
23
24 et al. 2008) have also been explored.
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30 To our knowledge no attempt has been made to characterize materials migrating from
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32 nanocomposites into liquid food simulants such as ethanol-water mixtures. The most widely
33
34 investigated clays for nanocomposites are montmorillonites that have been chemically modified by
35
36 long hydrocarbon side-chain quaternary ammonium compounds (e.g. Cloisite®, Southern Clay
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38 Products, Gonzales, Texas). Depending on the modifier chain length, these clays exhibit more or
39
40 less hydrophobic surface characteristics. Unfortunately, none of the organomodifiers of this type are
41
42 yet to be found on the positive list in the current EU food contact plastics legislation (EU 2002).
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47 From a food safety point of view it is important to characterize migrates from nanocomposites
48
49 containing clays as fillers. As a general rule, nanocomposites must comply with the total migration
50
51 limit of 10 mg dm^{-2} (EU 2002). In order to further characterize nanoparticles contained in such
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53 migrates, asymmetrical flow field-flow fractionation (AF^4) is well-suited for determining the size
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55 distribution of particles suspended in the food stimulant used for the migration study. In AF^4 an
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57 external field force or gradient, rather than partitioning between phases, causes differential retention
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4 of nanoparticles according to their hydrodynamic radius (Giddings 1993). Following the time and
5
6 size-resolved elution, the analyte particles are carried to one or several detectors. Detection
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8 techniques commonly used in conjunction with AF⁴ include multi angle light scattering (MALS), or
9
10 ultraviolet (UV) and fluorescence (FL) spectrometry. In order to acquire data on the sizes (radii) of
11
12 the separated nanoparticles the MALS detector is particularly useful. This non-destructive detection
13
14 technique employs a laser beam, which is passed through a flow cell in which the suspended analyte
15
16 particles cause the incident laser light to be scattered. The intensity of the scattered light is
17
18 measured simultaneously by several photodiodes placed at different scattering angles in the plane
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20 around the cell. By measuring the angular dependence of the scattered light, it is possible to deduce
21
22 the radius of the particles (Wyatt 1998). The radius of the particles measured by this technique is
23
24 the so-called root mean square (rms) radius, which is a mass-averaged squared distance of each
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26 scattering point in the particle from the particle's center of mass. The theory and application of
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28 field-flow fractionation was originally developed by Giddings (Giddings 1966) and is today widely
29
30 used with MALS detection for particle characterization in environmental analysis. Furthermore,
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32 coupling the non destructive technique AF⁴-MALS to inductively coupled plasma mass
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34 spectrometry (ICP-MS) gives an additional detection and quantisation possibility of a wide range of
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36 elements contained in the separated nanoparticles such as nanoclay platelets (Baalousha et al. 2006;
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38 Beckett 1990; Hassellöv et al. 1999; Kammer 2005).
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49 The aim of this study was to characterize migrates obtained from PLA nanocomposites with respect
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51 to total migration as well as particle size and elemental composition of nanosized matter. For this
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53 purpose an analytical platform consisting of AF⁴ coupled with MALS and ICP-MS was established
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55 and applied. Some of the challenges regarding the correctness of the analytical characterization of
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4 particle size were associated with the high aspect ratio of the nanoclay platelets and the wide size
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6 range of these platelets in suspension.
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10 11 **Materials and methods**

12 13 *Chemicals*

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15 Sodium dodecyl sulphate (SDS, ReagentPlus $\geq 98.5\%$) and sodium azide (SigmaUltra) were
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17 purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA). Water was obtained from Milli-Q
18
19 Element water purification system (Millipore, Massachusetts, USA). Ethanol (gradient grade for
20
21 liquid chromatography $\geq 99.9\%$) and 25 % ammonia solution were obtained from Merck
22
23 (Darmstadt, Germany). Paraffin oil was obtained from Sigma-Aldrich (Milwaukee, Wisconsin,
24
25 USA). Glass distilled water was used for the migration study. Nitric acid (PlasmaPURE 67-69 %)
26
27 and hydrochloric acid (PlasmaPURE 34-37 %) from SCP Science (Champlain, New York, USA) as
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29 well as hydrogen peroxide (Suprapur 30 %) and hydrofluoric acid (Suprapur 40 %) from Merck
30
31 (Darmstadt, Germany) were used for dissolution of the clay minerals.
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40 41 *Clays and polylactide*

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43 Two types of Cloisite® clays were used in the experiments, Cloisite®Na⁺ and Cloisite®30B.
44
45 Cloisite®Na⁺ is natural montmorillonite clay and Cloisite®30B is montmorillonite, which has been
46
47 organically modified with methyl tallow bis-2-hydroxyethyl quarternary ammonium cations. The
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49 PLA used in this work was L-9000, an L-polylactide obtained from Biomer (Krailling, Germany).
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54 55 *Polylactide and polylactide/Cloisite®30B extrusion*

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57 In order to produce films for the migration studies, PLA granulate was first dried under vacuum at
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59 40°C for three hours. Similarly, the Cloisite®30B clay was dried under vacuum at 100°C for three
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4 hours. For practical reasons, PLA and PLA-Cloisite®30B granulates were initially prepared from
5
6 the starting polymer using a Haake twin-screw extruder with counter-rotating screws. The
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8 Cloisite®30B clay were added to the PLA granules at a 5 % w/w loading and physically mixed by
9
10 mechanical tumbling in a plastic container for five min. In order to ensure adequate adhesion of the
11
12 clays to the polymer granules, the latter were first mixed with ~0.4 % w/w paraffin oil before clay
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14 addition. The twin-screw extruder has four zones and these were typically set to temperatures in the
15
16 150-190°C range with increasing temperature from the in-feed to the out-feed. In each case the
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18 extrudate was immediately cooled by passing rapidly through a water bath before pelletising. After
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20 drying the pellets at 40°C under vacuum for a minimum of three hours, the resulting dried pellets
21
22 were fed into a Haake single screw extruder with five temperature zones set in the range 150-195°C
23
24 with increasing temperature from in-feed to out-feed. The extrudate from the single-screw extruder
25
26 was fed through a film die and then through chill rolls set at 50°C to generate film with thickness in
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28 the range of 100-200 µm and width up to 12 cm.
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38 ***Characterization of polylactide/Cloisite®30B***

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40 The nanocomposite used in this study was examined for intercalation and exfoliation of nanoclay
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42 platelets in the PLA matrix by x-ray diffraction (XRD) and transmission electron microscopy
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44 (TEM).
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46 *X-ray diffraction*

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48 As shown in equation 1, Bragg's law can be used to calculate the spacing between planes in the
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50 lattice of the clays.
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$$56 \quad n \cdot \lambda = 2 \cdot d \cdot \sin \theta \quad (1)$$

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4 In equation 1, n is an integer, λ is the wavelength of the x-rays, d is the spacing between planes and
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7 θ is the angle between the incident x-rays and the scattering planes. Nanocomposite films were
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9 studied by x-ray diffraction using a Siemens D500 diffractometer (Bruker, Karlsruhe, Germany)
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11 equipped with a Co tube and a diffracted beam monochromator.
12

13 *Transmission electron microscopy*

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16 The morphology of PLA/Cloisite®30B nanocomposites was examined by performing bright field
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18 imaging using a Tecnai G² transmission electron microscope (FEI Company, Hillsboro, Oregon,
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20 USA) optimized for this purpose. The microscope was operated at an accelerating voltage of 200
21
22 kV. Ultrathin sections of PLA/Cloisite®30B nanocomposites (~ 80 nm thickness) were prepared at
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24 room temperature using a Leica EM UC6 ultramicrotome (Leica Microsystems, Wetzlar, Germany)
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26 equipped with a glass knife. The microtomed slices were transferred directly from a dry glass knife
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28 to copper grids for examination in the TEM.
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35 *Acid digestion- and inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry of clays*

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37 The two clays were digested according to method 3052 of the United States Environmental
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39 Protection Agency (United States Environmental Protection Agency 1996) using a mixture of
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41 hydrogen peroxide, nitric-, hydrochloric- and hydrofluoric acids. For determination of elements in
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43 the acid-digested clays or in the eluting clay fractions from the AF⁴, an Agilent 7500ce ICP-MS
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45 system (Agilent Technologies, California, USA), equipped with a Micromist nebulizer, was
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47 operated in the non-cell mode. The on-line and real-time coupling of the AF⁴-MALS system with
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49 the ICP-MS detector was achieved by a short length of capillary tubing from the outlet of the
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51 MALS detector to the inlet of the nebuliser of the ICP-MS. The ICP-MS operating conditions used
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56 are given in Table 1.
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Instrumentation for separation and size determination of clays

Centrifugation

The system consisted of a centrifuge model 3-18K from Sigma Laborzentrifugen (Osterode, Germany) with an 11180 swing bucket rotor. Sample tubes were 15 ml Sarstedt (Nümbrecht, Germany) tubes.

Asymmetrical flow field-flow fractionation with multi angle light scattering detection

The AF⁴ instrument used was an Eclipse 3 system equipped with a Dawn HELEOS MALS detector (Wyatt Technology Europe GmbH, Dernbach, Germany), which was used in combination with an Agilent 1200 HPLC system (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, California, USA). The AF⁴ and MALS operating conditions are given in Table 1.

Migration study

Studies of migration from the biopolymer were carried out in triplicate using a mixture 95 % ethanol and 5 % glass distilled water mixture as a simulant for fatty foods according to the current EU legislation (EU 2002) and European Standard (CEN 2002; 2004). One dm² of each of the biopolymer nanocomposite and the pure PLA films were totally immersed into the simulant at 40°C for 10 days. Furthermore, a food simulant blank and food simulant spiked with 2 mg of Cloisite®30B were included in the experiments. One full set of samples were used for gravimetric determination of total migration according to the standardised procedure. Using a second set of samples the migrates were evaporated almost to dryness, re-suspended in 20 ml food simulant and analysed by AF⁴-MALS-ICP-MS without any further sample preparation. Prior to analysis the spiked sample was diluted 1:9 with simulant and the analyses were performed using 500 µl injections. The ICP-MS signal intensity of ²⁶Mg was used for on-line detection of clay, due to its high abundance in the clay and at the same time low content in the blank food simulant.

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4 Furthermore, ten millilitres of the same migrates were acid digested and a range of elements
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6 characteristic to clay were analysed by ICP-MS for additional characterization of the elemental
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8 composition of clay.
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11 12 13 ***Determination of aspect ratio of clay by way of centrifugation***

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15 Cloisite®Na⁺ (50 mg) was weighed into to each of nine centrifuge tubes and five ml of water and
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17 one drop of 25% ammonia solution were added. The ammonia solution was added to enhance the
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19 stability of the suspension by electrostatic repulsion of the negatively charged nanoclay platelets at
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21 alkaline pH. The suspensions were ultrasonicated for 15 min and mixed overnight attached to a
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23 vertical rotating wheel. The next day, the nine solutions were centrifuged at 4700 rpm for two, five,
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25 10, 15, 20, 25, 50, 100 and 200 minutes respectively. From the top one cm, 750 µl supernatant was
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27 sampled and 20 µl were injected into the AF⁴-MALS for analysis.
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35 **Results and discussion**

36 37 ***Characterization of biopolymer nanocomposite***

38 39 ***PLA/Cloisite®30B structure by wide angle x-ray diffraction***

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41 The X-ray diffractogram in Figure 1 (curve B) indicates that Cloisite®30B derivatised with the
42
43 quaternary ammonium compound had a fairly well-ordered intercalated system with a basal spacing
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45 between platelets of approximately 1.8 nm (as indicated at $5.7^\circ 2\theta$) and very little low-angle
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47 scattering. In contrast, curve A demonstrates that the PLA/clay nanocomposite was highly
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49 disordered with a basal spacing of 1.6 nm (as indicated at $6.3^\circ 2\theta$) and an extensive low-angle
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51 scatter from exfoliated plates and PLA.
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56 57 ***Transmission electron microscopy***

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4 In order to acquire representative TEM images of the nanocomposite, nine images of two
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6 nanocomposites were recorded and a representative image is shown in Figure 2. Single exfoliated
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8 clay platelets can be observed as needle-shaped bodies in the figure, which suggests that the clay
9
10 was largely exfoliated in the polymer matrix. Some occurring darker areas also indicated
11
12 intercalation of clay platelets. The information obtained from the TEM-images therefore confirmed
13
14 the XRD data, namely that the desired exfoliation of clay indeed occurred in the PLA matrix. This
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16 information together with the features of the TEM image also indicated that the individual platelets
17
18 had large aspect ratios.
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26 *Clay analysis using inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry*

27 *Mass spectrometric characterization of elemental composition of clays*

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29 The ICP-MS spectra of acid-digested Cloisite®Na⁺ shown in Figure 3 A-B were obtained following
30
31 subtraction of the acid blank from the mass spectrum recorded for the sample. The mass spectrum
32
33 for Cloisite®30B (data not shown) was similar to that obtained for Cloisite®Na⁺. The mass
34
35 spectrum in Figure 3 showed that Cloisite®Na⁺ contained a range of elements that were useful as a
36
37 multi-variable elemental fingerprint of the clay. In addition to the presence of isotopes of major
38
39 elements like ²⁸Si, ²⁷Al, ⁵⁸Fe and ²⁶Mg in the clays, the lower signal intensities of the mass spectra
40
41 demonstrate that Cloisite®Na⁺ also contained a range of trace or ultra-trace isotopes like ⁷Li, ⁴⁵Sc,
42
43 ⁴⁸Ti, ⁵¹V, ⁵⁵Mn, ⁶³Cu, ⁶⁴Zn, ⁶⁹Ga, ⁸⁸Sr, ⁸⁹Y, ⁹⁰Zr, ⁹³Nb, ¹²⁰Sn, ¹³⁸Ba, ¹³⁹La, ¹⁴⁰Ce, ¹⁴¹Pr, ¹⁴⁴Nd, ¹⁵⁶Gd,
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45 ¹⁸⁰Hf, ¹⁸¹Ta, ²⁰⁸Pb, ²³²Th and ²³⁸U.
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54 *Selective on-line detection of clay by inductively coupled mass spectrometry*

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56 A fractogram of a nanoclay suspension using the hyphenated AF⁴-MALS-ICP-MS system is
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58 presented in Figure 4 showing overlaid intensity profiles corresponding to the 90° light scattering
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4 signal and the ICP-MS signals. Isotopes of a minor and a major element, ^{90}Zr and ^{26}Mg , were
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6 selected for on-line detection of Cloisite®Na⁺ by ICP-MS coupled with AF⁴-MALS, because of
7
8 their low background level or high abundance in the clay matrix, respectively. The fact that the light
9
10 scattering and ICP-MS signals coincide in time show that particles detected by the MALS detector
11
12 are in fact clay platelets. Finally, the rms radii derived from the MALS detection show that the
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14 platelet radii of the large unresolved AF⁴ peak eluting between 10 and 45 min (Figure 4) are in the
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16 range 20-250 nm.
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21 22 23 *Migration study*

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25 The results obtained from the migration study in Table 2 report values for total migration, particle
26
27 sizes of migrated matter, and indicate whether or not clay was detected by ICP-MS in the migrates.
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29 Particle sizes of migrated matter were deduced from the cumulative number fraction as depicted in
30
31 Figure 5 B. The results show that nano-sized particles were detected in the blank food simulant,
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33 which suggested that the migration cells or the solvents used as food simulant were contaminated
34
35 with particles. All total migration values were therefore corrected for this blank value. Furthermore,
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37 the standard deviation obtained from the triple gravimetric determinations of all samples was well
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39 below the acceptable levels as prescribed in the CEN standard. The migrated substances are thought
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41 to be low-molecular weight PLA oligomers from the PLA matrix (Paul et al. 2005; Katiyar
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43 Unpublished data) or methyl tallow bis-2-hydroxyethyl quarternary ammonium modifier of the
44
45 derivatised Cloisite®30B. The results demonstrated (Table 2) that there was a large difference
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47 between the pure PLA and the nanocomposite with respect to the particle size distributions and also
48
49 with respect to the upper particle size limit in the corresponding migrates. Finally, the results of this
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51 migration study showed that the amount of total migration differed between the two samples. Both
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53 sample materials however, were in compliance with the total migration limit of 10 mg dm^{-2} .
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4 Analysis of the migrate obtained from the nanocomposite material using the full hyphenated
5 analytical system is shown in Figure 6. The fractogram shows that the migrate indeed contained
6
7 nanosized particulates as indicated by the light scattering signal and that their sizes ranged from 50-
8
9 800 nm. The 20th to 80th percentiles of the size distribution were 190 nm and 230 nm, respectively,
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11 in rms radii as shown in Table 2. The fractogram however, also demonstrates absence of clay as no
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13 increase in the time resolved ICP-MS signal was seen for ²⁶Mg within the elution time window. In
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15 order to confirm this finding the migrates were separately submitted to acid digestion and the
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17 isotope pattern following ICP-MS analysis indeed showed that clay was absent.
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26 Šimon et al. (2008) discussed in theory the possible migration of particles from nanocomposites and
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28 concluded that only very small particles with a diameter of about 1 nm could migrate. A
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30 prerequisite for this conclusion was that the polymer matrix had a relative low dynamic viscosity
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32 and that it did not interact with the nanoparticles. To our knowledge the migration study presented
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34 here is the first attempt to characterize migrates from nanocomposites by using size separation and
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36 determination by AF⁴-MALS-ICP-MS and our results confirm the theoretical predictions by Šimon
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38 et al.
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45 *Clay aspect ratio*

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47 Information on clay aspect ratio, α , was of importance for the correctness of the determination of
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49 nanoparticle radius by light scattering techniques. This was mainly because the algorithms applied
50
51 to the collected raw light scattering data did not immediately apply to estimation of radius of
52
53 particles with large aspect ratios. The aspect ratio is given by $\alpha = d_p/h$ where h is the thickness and
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55 d_p the diameter of the platelet. To prevent large clay platelets from precipitating in the AF⁴ channel,
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57 removal of this fraction of the suspensions was necessary prior to running the analyses and was
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4 carried out by centrifugation. For a given centrifuge the desired run times in seconds to achieve a
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6 certain maximum nanoparticle diameter in the supernatant can be calculated according to Bernhardt
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8
9 (1994)

$$t_s = \ln\left(\frac{r_{out}}{r_{in}}\right) \frac{18\eta}{4\pi^2 \Delta\rho d^2 (rpm/60)^2} \quad (2)$$

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21 This equation allows calculation of the time t_s it takes for a spherical particle with a diameter d to
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23 travel from a given surface in a tube (fill-up point r_{in}) to a chosen distance below that surface
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25 (sampling point r_{out}) at constant force (revolutions per min, rpm). The difference in density of the
26
27 particles relative to the surrounding medium is given by $\Delta\rho$ and η is the viscosity of the medium.
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29 The constant values used in the equation are $r_{out} = 12.5$ cm, $r_{in} = 11.5$ cm, $\Delta\rho = 1.86$ g ml⁻¹, rpm =
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31 4700 and $\eta = 0.000894$ Pa s. For non-spherical particles, like nanoclay platelets, equation (2) can
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33 not be used. The effective sedimentation diameter d_s for platelets has been described as (Jennings
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35 and Parslow 1988):
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$$d_s = d_{pl} \sqrt{\frac{1.5}{\alpha} \arctan \alpha} \quad (3)$$

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48 where d_{pl} is the diameter and α is the aspect ratio of a platelet. Combination of equations (2) and (3)
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$$t_s = \ln\left(\frac{r_{out}}{r_{in}}\right) \frac{18\eta}{4\pi^2 \Delta\rho \left(d_{pl} \sqrt{\frac{1.5}{\alpha} \arctan \alpha}\right)^2 (rpm/60)^2} \quad (4)$$

which allows for the estimation of the equivalent travel time for a platelet with diameter d_{pl} and an aspect ratio α .

The two clays included in this study originated from the same montmorillonite source. The determination of α , which was carried out for Cloisite®Na⁺ because of its immediate compatibility with aqueous solvents, was based on data obtained from centrifugation tests. The apparent rms radii of the nanoclay platelets in the supernatants obtained following variation of centrifugation time were determined by AF⁴-MALS analysis. The 98th percentile of the cumulative number fraction was used to characterize the upper cut-off radius of the size distribution (Figure 5 A). The use of the 98th percentile rather than the maximum value of determined radii improved the robustness of this metric by excluding a few large agglomerated particles from the measured size range.

The experimental fit between centrifugation time and 98th percentile diameter is shown in Figure 7 curve A using 2 times the rms radius from AF⁴-MALS as the equivalent diameter, d_{rms} . This value is used as the best estimate of d_{pl} in equation 4. Using d_{rms} as d_{pl} of the platelets we iterate an α value by estimating t_s values which most closely fitted the experimental data. The best fit was obtained by an α value of 320 and can be seen in Figure 7 curve B. The fit obtained using an aspect ratio of 320 however, is valid only for particle sizes (d_{rms}) above 450 nm. This may be due to a different aspect ratio of the fraction of smaller nanoclay platelets but further iterations of the α -value did not lead to any successful match between calculated t_s values and experimental set t_s values for the smaller nanoparticles.

Conclusions

This study demonstrated that AF⁴ with MALS detection was useful for characterizing the size of nanoparticles contained in migrates from nanocomposites of PLA and organomodified montmorillonite clay as filler. However, this coupled instrumentation alone did not provide any information on the identity of the nanoparticulates occurring in the food simulant. This limitation was overcome by coupling the AF⁴-MALS to the element-selective ICP-MS detector, which provided additional information on trace elements known to be naturally present in the clay. The hyphenated analytical system was used for selective detection and size characterization of suspensions of the unmodified montmorillonite Cloisite®Na⁺. Furthermore, the analytical system was applied for characterization of migrates from nanocomposite films of PLA and the organomodified Cloisite®30B montmorillonite clay used as filler. The results demonstrated that nanoparticulates at 50-800 nm in radius indeed migrated from the nanocomposite but ICP-MS signals corresponding to clay minerals were absent.

A possible drawback to an accurate size determination of nanoclay platelets by the MALS detector is their large aspect ratio. The algorithms of the manufacturer's software for radius calculations of nanoparticles were in theory valid only for specific particle shapes and not for platelets. The experimental determination of the aspect ratio by centrifugation experiments led to a value of about 320, demonstrating a highly anisotropic particle morphology. Applying this aspect ratio made possible a reliable determination of platelet size by AF⁴-MALS.

Acknowledgements

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4 The authors would like to thank The Danish Strategic Research Council for funding the NanoPack
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6 project. The authors are grateful for assistance on the Tecnai transmission electron microscope
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8 provided by personnel at the Center for Electron Nanoscopy, Technical University of Denmark.
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7 Figure 1. X-ray diffraction patterns of, A, PLA containing 5 % Cloisite®30B and B, pure
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9 Cloisite®30B.

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14 Figure 2. TEM micrograph of a biopolymer nanocomposite consisting of PLA with 5 %
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16 Cloisite®30B and paraffin oil as wetting agent.

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21 Figure 3. Mass spectra of Cloisite®Na⁺. The spectra have been divided into two. A, signal intensity
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23 between 5000 and 1000000 and B, above 1000000. The clays were dissolved in acid according to
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25 the procedure described in the experimental section.

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30 Figure 4. AF⁴-MALS-ICP-MS detection of nanoclay in the supernatant of a suspension of 50 mg
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32 Cloisite® Na⁺ in 5 ml water following centrifugation for 50 minutes at 4700 rpm. The four curves
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34 represent a main constituent (²⁶Mg, left y-axis), a trace constituent (⁹⁰Zr, right y-axis), the 90° light
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36 scattering signal intensity (right y-axis, relative signal to be multiplied by 900) and rms radius (right
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38 y-axis) as a function of retention time.

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44 Figure 5. Evaluation of the cumulative number fraction curves from suspensions of nanoclays. (A)
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46 Supernatant following centrifugation for 10 minutes of Cloisite®Na⁺ and (B) Food simulant spiked
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48 with Cloisite®30B. Particle sizes are given as root mean square (rms) radius.

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54 Figure 6. Combined AF⁴-MALS and ICP-MS data for a migrate from PLA containing 5 %
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56 Cloisite®30B.

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5 Figure 7. Nanoparticle diameter as a function of centrifugation time and. The curves represent, A,
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7 Experimental d_{rms} determinations of Cloisite®Na⁺ in supernatants as a function of centrifugation
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9 times, B, d_s as a function of modelled centrifugation times applying d_{rms} as d_{pl} and an aspect ratio of
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11 320 in calculations of d_s .
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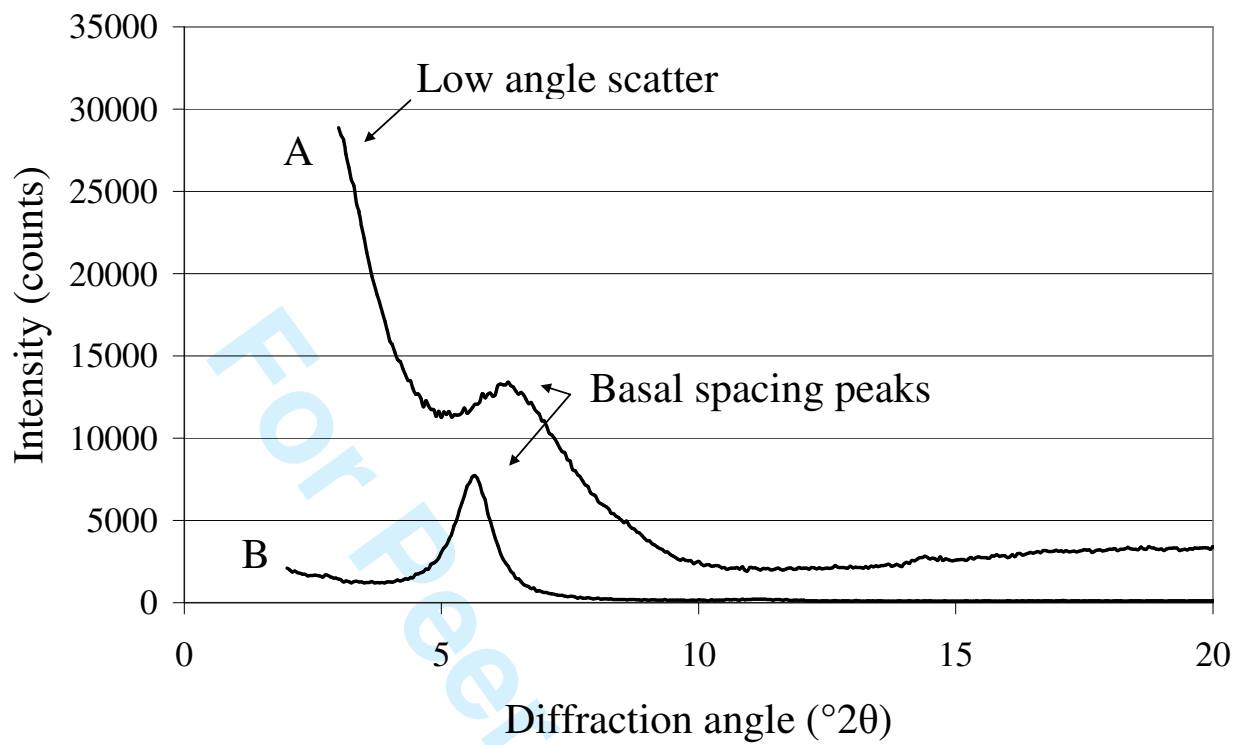


Figure 1.

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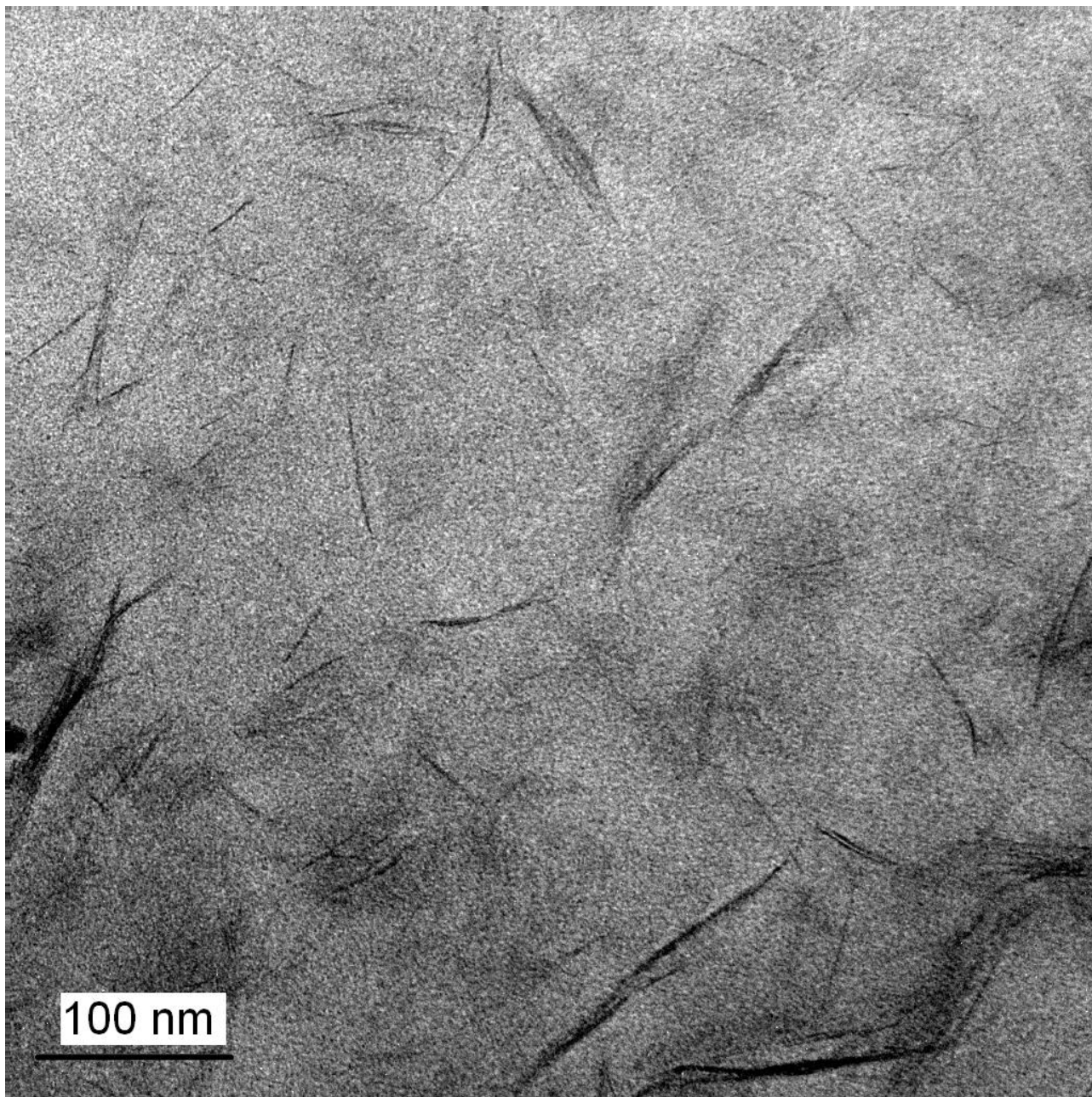


Figure 2.

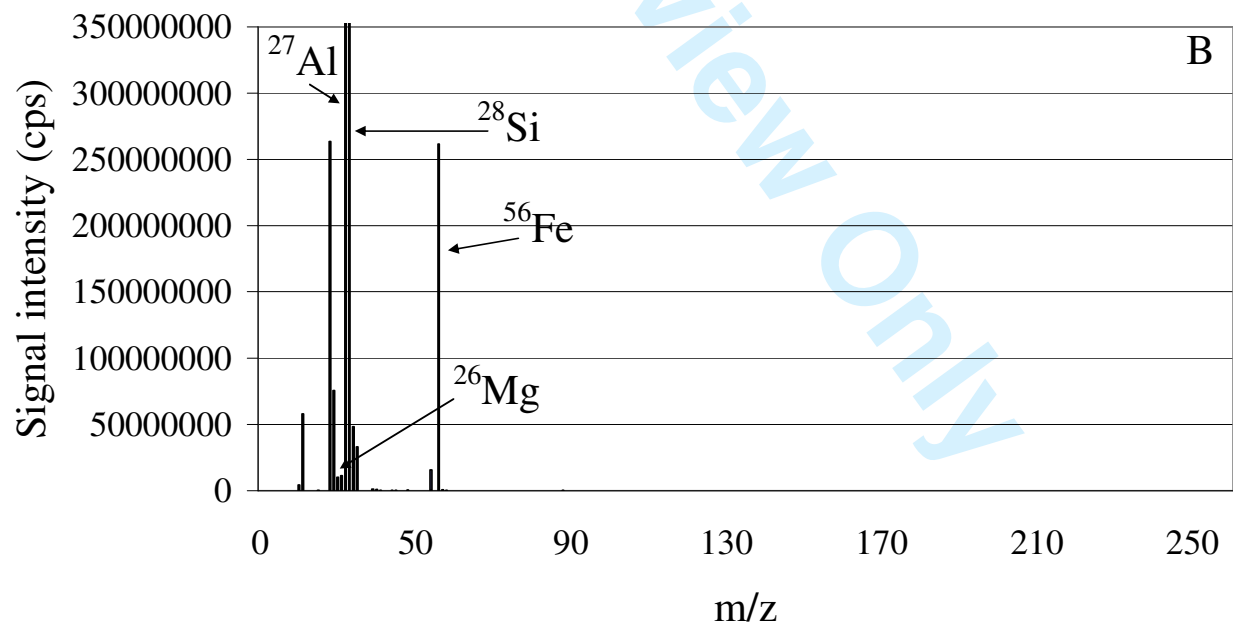
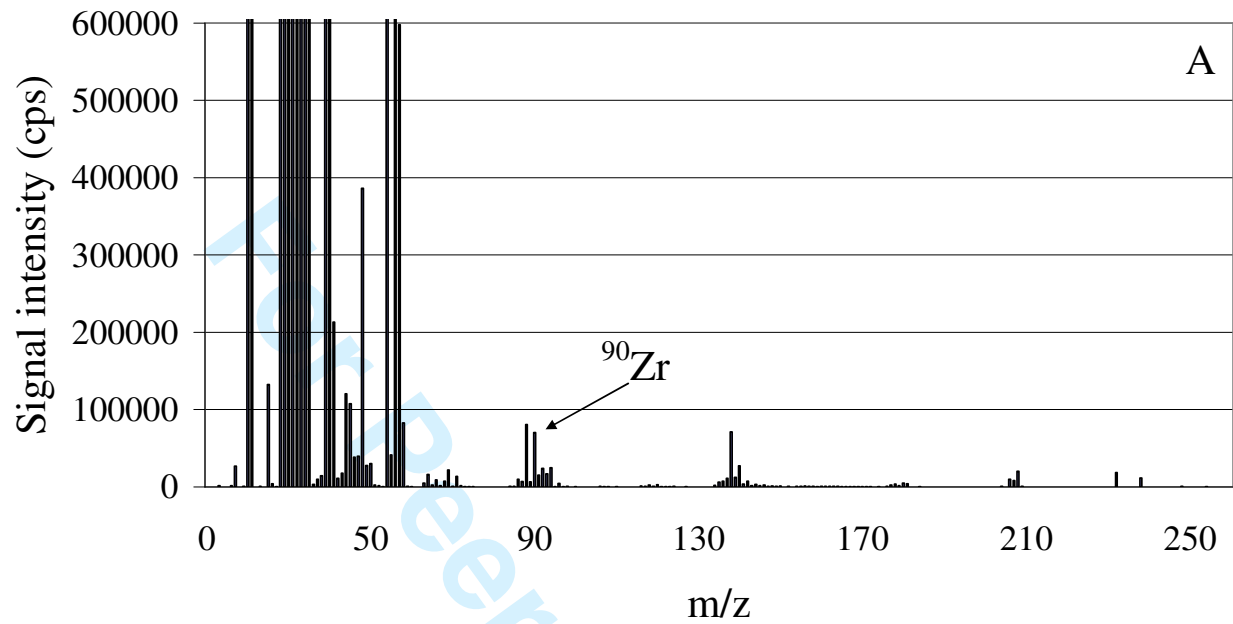


Figure 3.

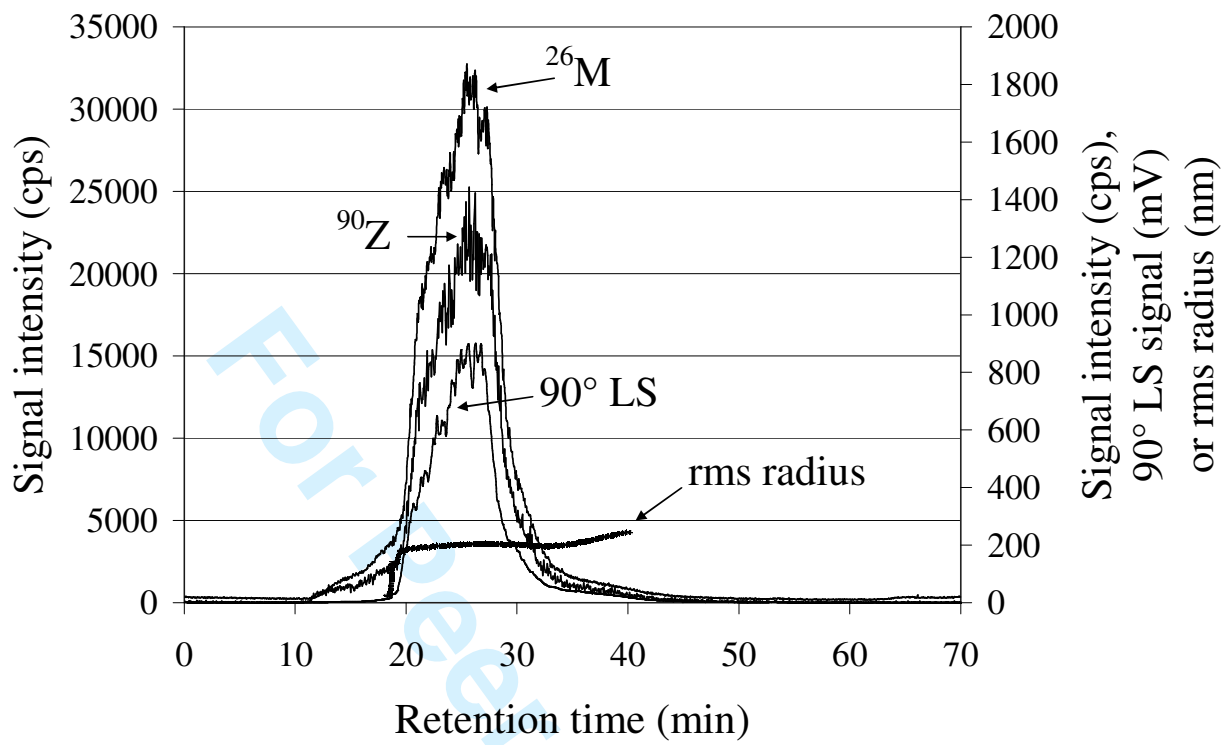


Figure 4.

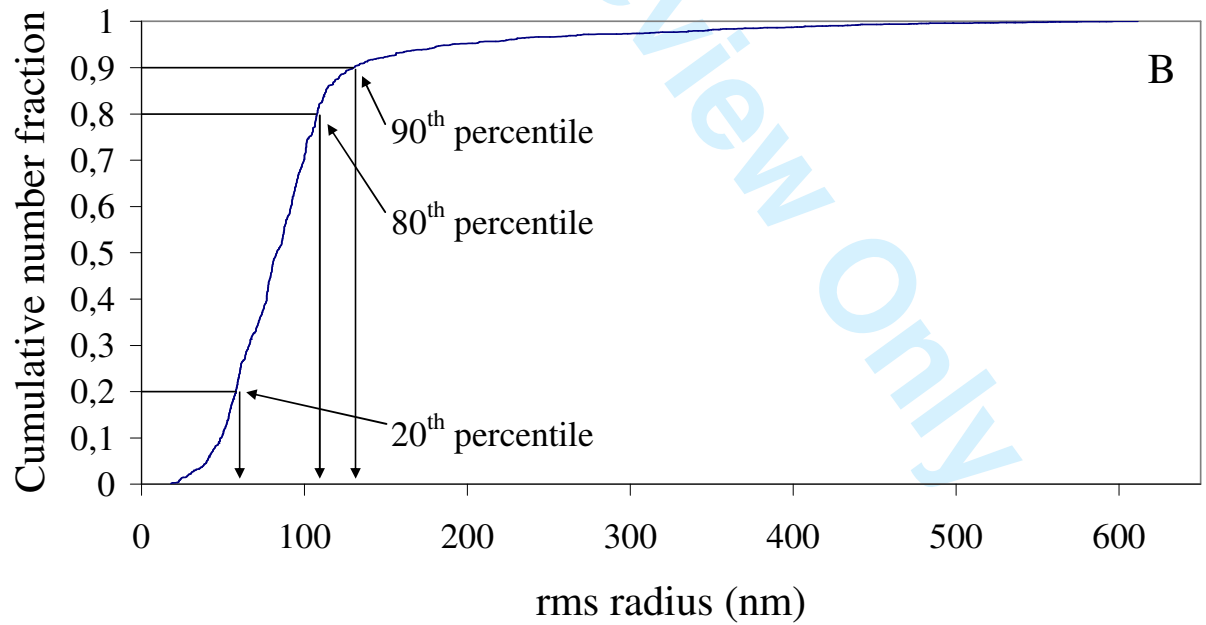
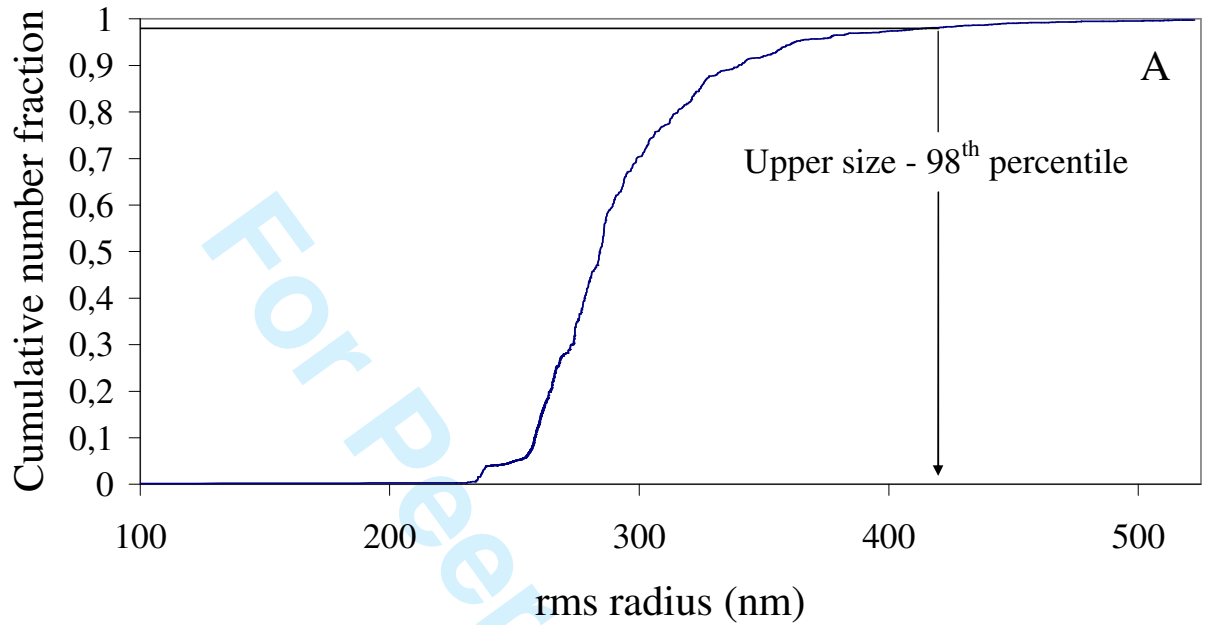


Figure 5.

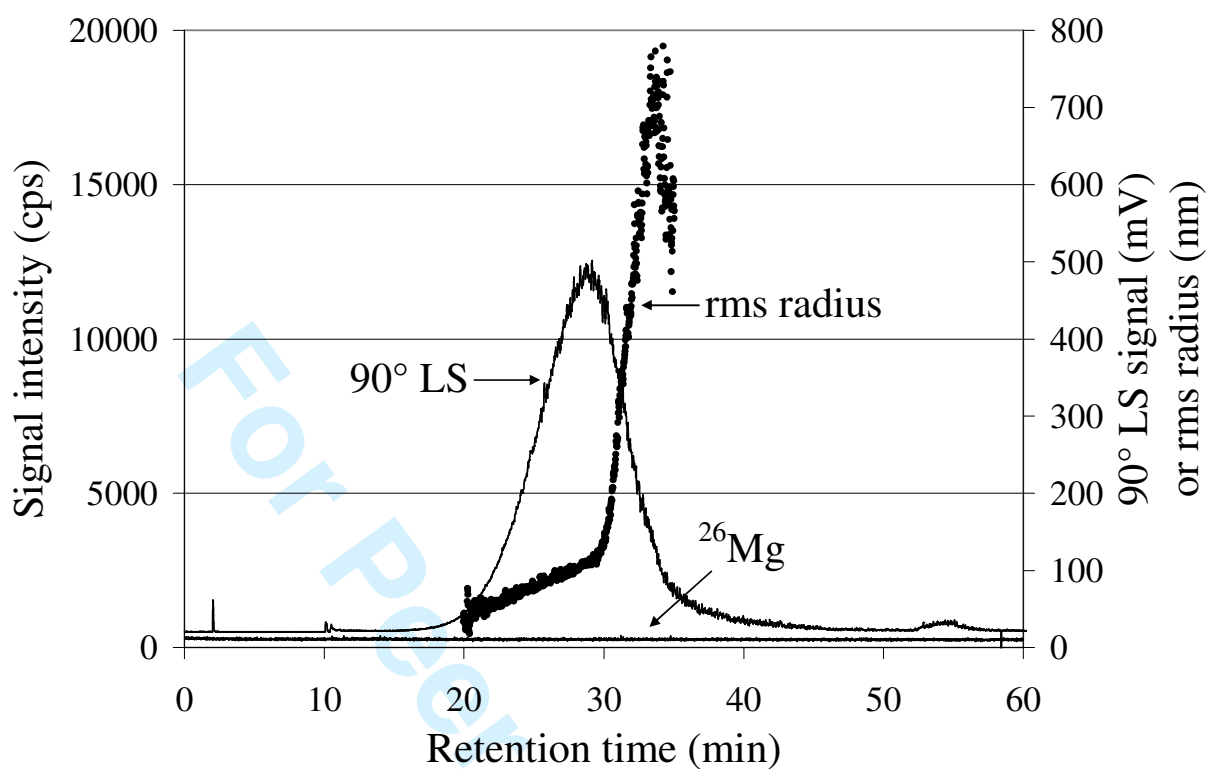


Figure 6.

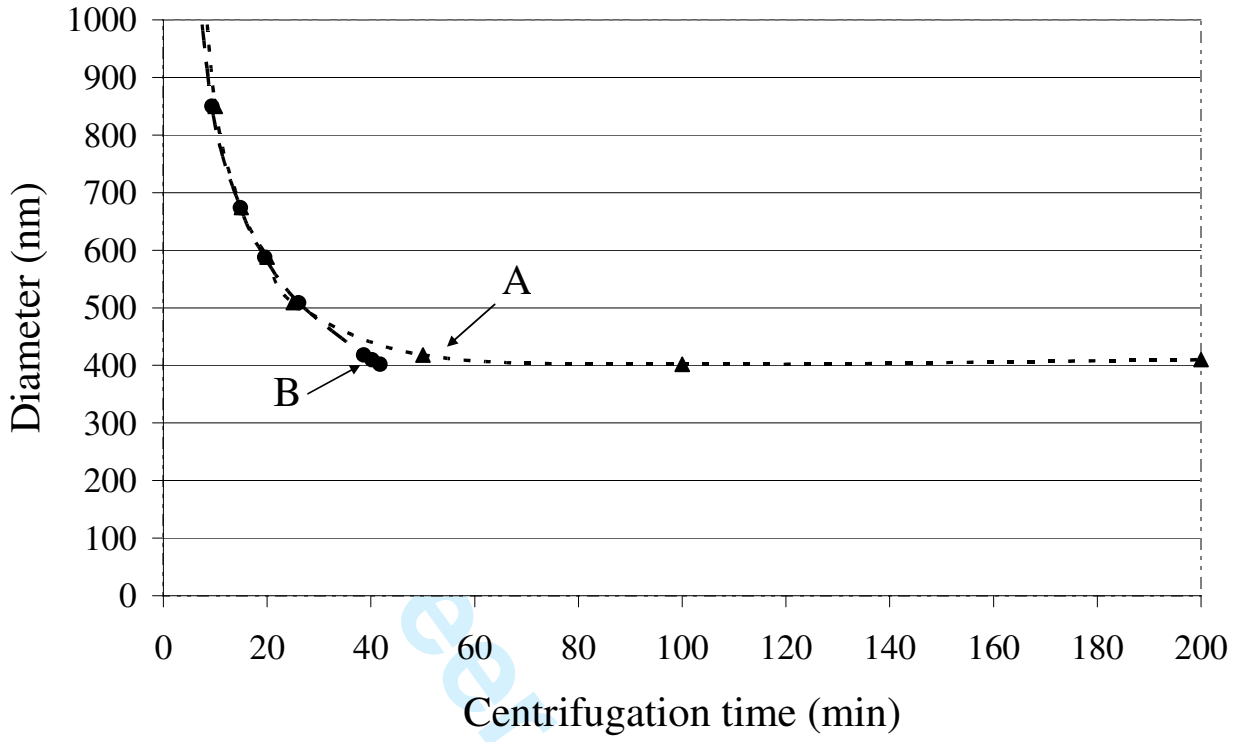


Figure 7.

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Table 1. Operating conditions for the AF⁴-MALS and the ICP-MS

AF ⁴ -MALS operating conditions						
Channel	Short channel with a “wide” 350 µm thick spacer and a 10 kDa pore size regenerated cellulose membrane					
Carrier	0.05% SDS and 200 ppm sodium azide in water					
Fitting algorithm	Berry 2 nd order polynomial fit					
Collection interval	1 second					
Flow Field-flow fractionation program						
Time (min)	Detector Flow (ml min ⁻¹)	Cross Flow (ml min ⁻¹)	Focus Flow (ml min ⁻¹)	Injection Flow (ml min ⁻¹)	Mode	
0-2	1	0.5	0	0	Elution	
2-3	1	-	2	0	Focus	
3-9	1	-	2	0.2	Focus+Injection	
9-10	1	-	2	0	Focus	
10-30	1	0.5-0.1 linear gradient	0	0	Elution	
30-52	1	0.1	0	0	Elution	
52-61	1	0	0	0	Elution	
61-70	1	0	0	0.2	Elution+Injection	
ICP-MS operating conditions						
	Mass scan m/z 6-254			Time resolved detection of m/z 26 and 90		
RF power	1500 W			1550 W		
Carrier gas	0.83 L min ⁻¹			0.88 L min ⁻¹		
Makeup gas	0.33 L min ⁻¹			0.31 L min ⁻¹		
Number of points per mass	3			1		
Acquisition time	111 s			4198 s		
Number of repetitions	1			1		

Table 2. Results from the migration studies

Sample	Total migration (mg dm ⁻²)	Parameter measured		
		rms radius range corresponding to 20 th -80 th percentile ^b (nm)	rms radius corresponding to 90 th percentile ^b (nm)	Cloisite®30B detected in migrates by ICP-MS after acid digestion ^c
Blank simulant	0.4	20-31	40	No
Pure PLA	1.7 ^a ± 0.6	20-40	100	No
PLA/5%	6.7 ^a ± 0.5	190-230	235	No
Cloisite®30B Spiked simulant	2.1 ^a ± 0.5	60-110	130	Yes

^aValues are corrected for the blank simulant

^bPercentiles are given for the size distribution of measured radius of nanoparticulates

^cBased on signal intensities of ²⁶Mg being significantly higher blank