



## Microbial Biosurfactants: Current trends and applications in Agricultural and Biomedical industries

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1 **Microbial Biosurfactants: Current trends and applications in Agricultural and**  
2 **Biomedical industries**

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7 Running title: Bioactivity of Microbial biosurfactants

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## 25 **Summary**

26 Synthetic surfactants are becoming increasingly unpopular in many applications due to previously  
27 disregarded effects on biological systems and this has led to a new focus on replacing such products  
28 with biosurfactants that are biodegradable and produced from renewable resources. Microbially derived  
29 biosurfactants have been investigated in numerous studies in areas including: increasing feed  
30 digestibility in an agricultural context, improving seed protection and fertility, plant pathogen control,  
31 anti-microbial activity, anti-biofilm activity, wound healing and dermatological care, improved oral  
32 cavity care, drug-delivery systems and anti-cancer treatments. The development of the potential of  
33 biosurfactants has been hindered somewhat by the myriad of approaches taken in their investigations,  
34 the focus on pathogens as source species and the costs associated with large-scale production. Here  
35 we focus on various microbial sources of biosurfactants and the current trends in terms of agricultural  
36 and biomedical applications.

37

38 Key words: rhamnolipids, sophorolipids, lipopeptides, wound healing, anticancer.

39

## 40 **Introduction**

41 It is now accepted that widespread use of synthetic surfactants negatively affects the environment. An  
42 area of particular concern relates to the use of synthetic surfactants that are utilised in abundance by  
43 various industries, including pharmaceutical and medical manufacturing, the food and feed industry,  
44 agriculture, environmental remediation and the petroleum industry. Environmental concerns in  
45 developed countries and increasingly worldwide have resulted in increasing legal and societal  
46 pressure for these substances to be biodegradable and produced sustainably using renewable  
47 substrates. These requirements have led to intensification of research and more recently the  
48 development of new technologies involving biogenic surface-active substances of microbial origin i.e.  
49 biosurfactants, (Marchant and Banat 2012a; Santos *et al.* 2016).

50 Biosurfactants, have many advantages over chemically produced surfactants, such as high  
51 biodegradability and low ecotoxicity, and can be easily produced from renewal energy resources  
52 (Makkar and Cameotra 2002). These microbially derived surface-active substances are widely used in  
53 the pharmaceutical, food, cosmetic, textile, oil and agricultural industries (Figure 1). They can be used  
54 as anti-fungal as well as antibiofilm agents (Gudiña *et al.* 2010; Banat *et al.* 2014a; Diaz de Rienzo *et*  
55 *al.* 2015; Haque *et al.* 2016). In a microbiological context, there is a particular interest in those  
56 biosurfactants produced by bacteria and their anti-bacterial, antifungal and anti-viral properties. In  
57 addition, these compounds also have a range of possible therapeutic and biomedical benefits. Despite  
58 the potential of biosurfactants the fact that the significant producers namely *Pseudomonas* and  
59 *Bacillus* are potentially pathogenic has proved a drawback hence the interest in yeasts and yeast-like  
60 fungi including *Starmerella bombicola* and non-pathogenic, bacteria which are generally seen as not  
61 posing a risk in terms of toxicity or pathogenicity. There is increasing evidence that biosurfactants as  
62 well as displaying the industrially valuable properties of detergency, emulsification, and foaming may  
63 also have significant bioactivities applicable to human and animal health (Fu *et al.* 2008; Shao *et al.*  
64 2012; Fracchia *et al.* 2015).

65 The focus of many reviews in the area have been on the biosurfactants themselves and indeed recent  
66 reviews include those, which have focussed specifically on applications in agriculture or industry  
67 (Minif and Ghribi 2016; Santos *et al.* 2016; Singh *et al.* 2019). This review focuses on microbial  
68 biosurfactants and current trends in agricultural and health related applications.

69

## 70 **Classification and structure of microbial biosurfactants of interest**

71 Biosurfactants are classified according to their molecular weight and categorised, by their microbial  
72 origin and composition. The high molecular weight biosurfactants include the lipopolysaccharides but  
73 those of main interest are the low molecular weight glycolipids and lipopeptides (LP's) and  
74 phospholipids. Of the glycolipids (Minif and Ghribi 2016), which include trehalolipids, cellobiose  
75 lipids, mannosylerythritol lipids (MELs), rhamnolipids, (derived from mainly *Pseudomonas*) and

76 sophorolipids (SL's), (derived from *Candida* and related species) are of the most interest. The  
77 glycolipids (Marchant and Banat 2012b) and the LP's (derived mainly from *Bacillus* spp) are the  
78 biosurfactants of most interest in terms of their therapeutic potential of those investigated thus far.

79 Rhamnolipids are amphipathic in nature comprising hydrophobic and hydrophilic moieties which  
80 enable them to reduce surface and interfacial tensions. The antimicrobial property of rhamnolipids is  
81 attributed to their permeablising effect which leads to disruption of the bacterial cell plasma  
82 membrane (Sotirova *et al.* 2008; Fracchia *et al.* 2015; Diaz de Rienzo *et al.* 2016a; Diaz de Rienzo *et*  
83 *al.* 2016b; Diaz de Rienzo *et al.* 2016c), their ability to compromise cell surface charge (Kaczorek  
84 2012) and ability to change bacterial cell hydrophobicity (Sotirova *et al.* 2009). They also have the  
85 ability to prevent and obstruct biofilm formation making the constituent bacteria more susceptible to  
86 antimicrobial agents (for a comprehensive review of the potential applications of rhamnolipids see  
87 Chen *et al.* 2017).

88 Sophorolipids (SL's), are produced by yeasts. They have a dimeric carbohydrate sophorose linked to a  
89 long-chain hydroxyl fatty acid through a glycosidic bond (for a recent detailed review of  
90 Sophorolipids see de Oliveira *et al.* 2015). It is rapidly becoming apparent that the range of  
91 biosurfactant congeners produced by a microorganism may have very different types and extents of  
92 bioactivity and therefore it is important to use highly purified individual congeners to assign  
93 unequivocally an activity to a specific congener. In the case of SL's the acidic and lactonic forms  
94 show very different properties (Van Bogaert *et al.* 2007). In addition to the properties of detergency  
95 and bioactivity the effectiveness of acidic SL's as a capping agent has been studied in the synthesis of  
96 various metal-based nano-particles (Kasture *et al.* 2007; Dhar *et al.* 2011). Singh *et al.* (2013)  
97 reported the mesoscale molecular assembly of SL using pulse UV laser processing technique. The  
98 available reports suggest that SL could be utilised as a carrier system for drug delivery by exploring  
99 its structure-forming attributes. Lactonic (LT) forms are more hydrophobic (Joshi-Navare *et al.* 2013)  
100 and have been, reported to have better biocide activities (Ito *et al.* 1980) spermicide, cytotoxic and  
101 proinflammatory activities. Work by Shao and co-workers suggest that the LT form possessed  
102 anticancer activity (Shao *et al.* 2012) however more recent work (Callaghan *et al.* 2016) suggest this

103 is not the case albeit in another model system when using highly purified congeners. The acidic forms  
104 are better foaming agents, have higher water solubility (Hirata *et al.* 2009) and have shown potential  
105 in the food, bioremediation and cosmetics industries (Ma *et al.* 2011). SL's bear two different polar  
106 heads on the two ends of the lipophilic core this referred to as 'asymmetric bolas'. Being, amphiphilic,  
107 in nature, they tend to form self-assemblies or 'liposomes' (Rodrigues, 2015) with unique structural  
108 and physiochemical properties as well as functionality (Dubey *et al.* 2013) and biofilm disruption  
109 activity (Diaz De Rienzo *et al.* 2015), (for a review of the applications of SL's see de Oliveira *et al.*  
110 2015).

111 Lipopeptides (LP's) are, composed of lipid moieties attached to a peptide chain and have biological  
112 activities including antimicrobial and anti-cancer. The most characterised LP's are Daptomycin and  
113 polymixin B, which are microbial-derived LP antibiotics. Surfactin (SUR), iturin and fengycin are  
114 among the best, known LP's and have a myriad of potential applications (Fracchia *et al.* 2015) (for a  
115 comprehensive review of lipopeptides see Mnif and Ghribi 2015)

116

### 117 **Antimicrobial and antifungal properties of biosurfactants**

118 Given the rise in antibiotic resistance, the need to identify new anti-microbials and find a means of  
119 rehabilitating current antibiotics used in medicine has become clear. There has been a global call to  
120 arms (WHO, 2017) in terms of efforts both nationally (DoH and DEFRA 2013) and internationally  
121 (CDC, 2015) to meet the challenge of antibiotic resistance. Biosurfactants are, ideally placed to  
122 answer the call in terms of their applications including; bactericidal, bacteriostatic, biofilm formation  
123 inhibition, biofilm disruption, synergistic and adjuvant effects with antibiotics.

124 Properties of biosurfactants include inhibition of bacterial and fungal growth (Kim *et al.* 1998,  
125 Lotfabad *et al.* 2010; Diaz de Rienzo *et al.* 2016a,). Biosurfactants produced by *S. saprophyticus*  
126 SBPS 15 showed antibacterial activity against *K. pneumoniae*, *E. coli*, *V. cholera*, *B. subtilis* and *S.*  
127 *aureus* (Mani *et al.* 2016). Rhamnolipid has been, reported to have biofilm disruptive capability  
128 against *B. pumilus* (Dusane *et al.* 2010). The biosurfactant SUR can control the growth of *Listeria*

129 *monocytogenes* in food (Sabate and Audisio 2013) and some Gram-positive bacteria like *B. pumilis*,  
130 *M. flavus* (Das *et al.* 2007). LP's can damage and penetrate lipid containing negatively charged cell  
131 membranes. It has been suggested that a charge imbalance develops at the cell surface interface as a  
132 results of the polar element attempting to preserve solubility. This results in a loss of cell morphology  
133 leading to pore formation in the lipid containing cell membrane of Gram-negative bacteria causing  
134 cell damage/death.

135 In the case of rhamnolipids there, is clear evidence that they reduce bacterial growth in the  
136 exponential phase, which suggests that these compounds may have an influence on normal cell  
137 division. Diaz de Rienzo *et al.* (2016a) suggest that rhamnolipids and SP's may have different  
138 mechanisms of action against different microorganisms. They postulate that rhamnolipids inhibit the  
139 growth in the exponential phase but that the antimicrobial effects of SP's occurs between the  
140 exponential and stationary phases and, as evidenced by the enhanced effect produced by the inclusion  
141 of caprylic acid in this study, may be more comparable with conventional antibiotics than  
142 rhamnolipids. The differing results found when identical microorganisms are, challenged with  
143 biosurfactants in antimicrobial assays versus biofilm assays is a case in point. Often these assays give  
144 contradictory results for the same organisms in the presence of the same biosurfactant because of the  
145 different mechanism/mode of action at work.

146 The scientific literature also suggests that rhamnolipids may be more effective against Gram positive  
147 bacteria than Gram negative bacteria due to the presence of an outer membrane in Gram negative  
148 bacteria which can work to exclude biosurfactant molecules (Sotirova *et al.* 2008; Bharali and  
149 Konwar 2011) Another suggestion, is that rhamnolipids cause cell membrane damage by insertion of  
150 acyl tails causing cell leakage of cytoplasmic components (Yalçın and Ergene 2009). Sana *et al.*  
151 (2018) showed that both *E. coli* and *S. aureus* were sensitive to rhamnolipid and that because of its'  
152 hydrophilic and hydrophobic parts it interacts with the non-polar part of the cell membrane. The  
153 membrane disintegrates leading to penetration of the cell wall and plasma membrane by pore  
154 formation and subsequent leakage of inner cytoplasmic materials leading to cell death (Meincken *et*  
155 *al.* 2005, Ortiz *et al.* 2006). Another possibility is that rhamnolipid inserts its' shorter acyl tails into

156 the cell membrane and attacks the configuration of the cell wall and plasma membrane (Sanchez *et al.*  
157 2006; Yalçın and Ergenen 2009,) alternatively, the membrane permeability produced by rhamnolipid  
158 may be, enhanced by its interaction with the phospholipid component of the plasma membrane (Ortiz  
159 *et al.* 2006). In terms of SL's, the vigorous membrane distorting potentiality of SUR is dependent on  
160 the size of the peptide ring with the peptide moiety penetrating into the cell membrane and generating  
161 a variance of charge at the site of action on the membrane surface (Heerklotz and Seelig 2001). These  
162 mechanisms might help explain how the lipopeptide produced by *B. stratosphericus* (Sana *et al.* 2018)  
163 has an antibacterial effect against both *S. aureus* and *E. coli*.

164

165 The anti-adhesive activity of biosurfactants is also an important property particularly if you are  
166 seeking to prevent biofilm formation (Galié *et al.* 2018). Biofilm formation plays a key role in the  
167 survival of both pathogenic (Kumar *et al.* 2017) and non-pathogenic microorganisms. The process of  
168 surface attachment and the growth of heterogeneous cells within a matrix can be considered generic  
169 i.e. common to both pathogenic and non-pathogenic microorganisms. In pathogens, the mechanisms  
170 of attachment to and colonisation of surfaces are key and there are numerous examples of clinically  
171 relevant biofilm formers e.g. *Pseudomonas* in the lungs (Lopes 2015); *Pseudomonas* on contact  
172 lenses (El-Ganiny *et al.* 2017) and *Staphylococci* in orthopaedic implants and breast implants (Arciola  
173 *et al.* 2015; Seng *et al.* 2015). While biofilms can be composed of multiple species or a single species  
174 it is the case that many diseases including nosocomial infections are essentially biofilm associated  
175 diseases associated with individual species e.g. *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, *Candida albicans*,  
176 *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Staphylococcus epidermidis*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and  
177 *Mycobacterium abscessus*. Key to the success of these biofilms are the advantages they afford to their  
178 pathogenic inhabitants principally: drug tolerance, avoidance of the host immune responses and  
179 recalcitrance of infection. The literature suggests, that biosurfactants can play an important role in  
180 preventing biofilm formation on surfaces e.g. silicon (Rodrigues *et al.* 2006, Ceresa *et al.* 2015),  
181 titanium (Ciandrini *et al.* 2016) and polystyrene plates (Gomez *et al.* 2016). Gudiña *et al.* (2015)  
182 showed that glycoprotein biosurfactant from *L. agilis* inhibited the adhesion of *S. aureus* and Madhu &



183 Prapulla (2014) in their evaluation of a glycoprotein from *L. plantarum* CFR2194, also showed  
184 inhibition of *S. aureus* adhesion. Importantly, workers (Gudiña *et al.* 2015) have also shown the anti-  
185 adhesive properties can also be affected by the carbon source in the medium in which the producer  
186 strain is grown. Hence, changes in the proportion of carbohydrate, lipid and protein present in  
187 polymeric fractions of microbial biosurfactants can play a role in their biological effectiveness.

188 Quinn *et al.* (2013) have shown that Rhamnolipid is effective in inhibiting *S. aureus*, *B. subtilis* and  
189 *M. luteus* single species biofilms and that they were in fact more effective than broad-spectrum  
190 antibiotics used in the study. Rivardo *et al.* (2009) demonstrated the anti-adhesion activity of two  
191 biosurfactants produced by *Bacillus* spp therefore preventing human bacterial pathogens from  
192 producing bacterial biofilms. Rivardo and co-workers (2011) have also shown the synergistic effect of  
193 lipopeptide biosurfactant with antibiotics against *E. coli* CFT073 biofilm. It has, been previously  
194 demonstrated that the use of biosurfactants preventively i.e. prophylactically can prevent the  
195 formation of fungal biofilms (Dusane *et al.* 2012).

196 Immunocompromised and transplant patients and those with medical implants are highly susceptible  
197 to fungal infections such as those caused by *Candida albicans* and other *Candida* species and  
198 *Candida auris* in particular (Schwartz and Patterson 2018). Haque *et al.* 2016 found the SL derived  
199 from *Starmerella bombicola* MTCC1910 inhibited *C. albicans* hyphal growth and biofilm formation  
200 as well as reducing the viability of preformed biofilms. Additionally, when used with amphotericin B  
201 (AmB) or fluconazole (FLZ) two potent anti-fungal agents the SL combination was, found to act  
202 synergistically against biofilm formation and preformed biofilm. Sarwar and co-workers (2018a,  
203 2018b) in their investigations of microbial biosurfactants from *Bacillus* species found that LP extracts  
204 displayed antifungal activity against *Fusarium moniliforme*, *Fusarium oxysporum*, *Fusarium solani*  
205 and *Trichoderma atroviride*. Additionally, the LP extracts showed haemolytic activity and ~~their~~  
206 potential as biocontrol agents against various *Fusarium* and *Trichoderma* species.

207

208 Fengycin is a cyclic lipodecapeptide produced by *Bacillus subtilis* strains, and appears to act by  
209 increasing the plasma membrane permeability of the target cell (Vanittanakom *et al.* 1986). Fengycin  
210 has been shown to exhibit strong fungitoxic activity specifically against filamentous fungi, inhibiting  
211 some enzymes (Loeffler *et al.* 1986; Steller and Vater 2000). The antifungal mechanism of fengycin  
212 may be as a result of its physicochemical properties due to its amphiphilic characteristics and affinity  
213 for lipid bilayers. Roy *et al.* (2013) in studies with fengycin did not show any antibacterial effects but  
214 did show anti-fungal activity of a fengycin-like peptide from *Bacillus thuringiensis* strain SM1 against  
215 *Candida albicans* and showed that treated cells displayed membrane blebs suggesting loss of contact  
216 between the cell membrane and the cell wall.

217 As previously mentioned the focus of research has now moved from the potential antimicrobial  
218 effects of biosurfactants themselves to how, they might act in unison with current antibiotics to  
219 maintain or even improve their efficacy. In the face of antibiotic resistance, these may include  
220 inhibitory or antibacterial adjuvant activities against various microorganisms (Fracchia *et al.* 2012;  
221 Joshi-Navare and Prabhune 2013)

222

223 The presence of a trans-envelope multidrug resistance (MDR) pump in some Gram-negative bacteria  
224 suggests that they may be resistant to a number of antibiotics (Girish and Smith 2008). This could be,  
225 overcome since both rhamnolipids and LP act on cell surfaces only. LP biosurfactant antimicrobial  
226 properties are associated with their lytic membrane properties. Basit *et al.* (2018) revealed that  
227 cationic lipopeptides exhibited significant antibacterial and antifungal activity against *S. aureus*, *E.*  
228 *coli*, *P. aeruginosa*, *K. pneumonia*, *A. niger* and *C albicans*. In addition, they showed antiviral activity  
229 against Newcastle disease virus (NVD). In susceptibility testing the largest zones of inhibition were,  
230 found against *S. aureus* and the smallest against *Aspergillus flavus*. These results were in accordance  
231 with previously reported antibacterial, antifungal and antiviral activity of biosurfactants (Gomaa  
232 2013; Jemil *et al.* 2017; Borsanyiova *et al.* 2016).

233 Diaz de Rienzo and co-workers (2016a) showed that pre-formed biofilms of *P aeruginosa* PA01, *E*  
234 *coli* NCTC 10418, *B. subtilis* NCTC 10400 and *S. aureus* ATCC 9144 on glass coverslips were  
235 disrupted with SL's (5%) in the absence of an adjuvant i.e. caprylic acid. Domalson *et al.* (2018) in  
236 their investigation of short proline rich LP's revealed an amphiphilic non-haemolytic non-cytotoxic L-  
237 lipopeptide that significantly potentiated the activity of minocycline and rifampicin against multi-drug  
238 resistant MDR and XDR clinical isolates of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Ghribi and Ellouze-Chaabouni  
239 (2011) isolated a biosurfactant producing strain *B. subtilis* SPB1 (HQ392822) and identified  
240 antimicrobial activity against microorganisms with multi-drug resistant profiles (Ghribi *et al.* 2012).  
241 Rossi *et al.* (2016) showed that some strains of biosurfactant producing *Staphylococcus haemolyticus*  
242 had antimicrobial activity against a range of Gram positive and Gram-negative bacteria and sub-  
243 inhibitory concentrations of the biosurfactant were able to decrease biofilm formation and showed  
244 synergistic effects with tetracycline.

245 The antimicrobial effects of SL's are dependent on the SL structure and class of bacteria examined.  
246 SL's have been shown to have virucidal and antibiotic adjuvant characteristics (Shah *et al.* 2005;  
247 Joshi-Navare and Prabhune 2013). A study using natural SL mixtures with a variety of sugar head  
248 groups reported antimicrobial activity against a range of predominately Gram-positive bacteria (Shah  
249 and Prabhune 2007). Equally important given the renewed focus on maternal sepsis both in the  
250 developed and developing world are biosurfactant studies carried out in rat models of peritonitis.  
251 Bluth *et al.* (2006) demonstrated that SL's block the lethal effects of septic shock in rats in a caecal  
252 ligation and puncture model of experimental sepsis and Hardin and co-workers (2007) showed that  
253 SL's derived from *C. bombicola* (now *Starmerella bombicola*) can improve sepsis survival. Di-  
254 rhamnolipid preparations have also been found to be successful in treating chronic decubitus ulcers  
255 (Piljac *et al.* 2008) and in the enhanced healing of full-thickness burn wounds (Stipcevic *et al.* 2006).

## 256 **Inhibition of Biofilm formation**

257 Some of the most promising candidates for the inhibition of biofilms have come from biosurfactants  
258 since they have strong anti-adhesive, anti-microbial and biofilm disruption properties (Banat *et al.*  
259 2014a; Sharma *et al.* 2014). It has been proposed that biosurfactants play an important role in

260 organisms that produce them by partially disrupting the developing biofilm and maintaining channels  
261 for gas and nutrient diffusion and it is thus not surprising that they are effective in disrupting biofilms  
262 at appropriate concentrations. Researchers in this area point to the dispersal of a biofilm of pathogenic  
263 bacteria by decreasing bacterial cell viability and the reduction of bacterial adhesion properties as  
264 evidence of the effectiveness of biosurfactants. The suggested mechanism of action may be related to  
265 the binding of the biosurfactant molecules to cell wall components or the cell surface resulting in  
266 severe changes in outer membrane hydrophobicity. The insertion of biosurfactants into the bilayer  
267 structure of cell membrane may result in disruption of its integrity. The effects on both Gram-negative  
268 and Gram-positive bacteria may be due to the release of LPS molecules from the outer membrane or  
269 due to the formation of transmembrane pores resulting in increased permeability of the cell wall  
270 (Sotirova *et al.* 2008; Rivardo *et al.* 2009), (for further discussion of the various roles of  
271 biosurfactants see Satpute *et al.* 2016).

272 Previously, numerous studies have shown that biosurfactants inhibit biofilm formation by preventing  
273 adhesion of microorganisms to solid surfaces (Kuiper *et al.* 2004; Rodrigues *et al.* 2004; Rivardo *et al.*  
274 *et al.* 2009; Janek *et al.* 2012). Mukherji and Phrunane (2014) reported anti-biofilm activity of SL  
275 against *Vibrio cholerae*, indicating that ~~the biofilm inhibitory activity of SL~~ it is likely to be broad-  
276 spectrum. The morphological changes to microbial cells as, a result of SL treatment (Haque *et al.*  
277 2016) may go some way towards explaining the broad-spectrum nature of SL's and other  
278 biosurfactants (Haque *et al.* 2016). These changes could be associated with loss of cell membrane  
279 integrity resulting in cell death as reported previously for tetracycline-SL or cefaclor-SL combination  
280 treatment against *S. aureus* and *E. coli* respectively (Joshi-Navare and Prabhune, 2013). Furthermore,  
281 deformation of cells and loss of cell membrane integrity have been reported as the mechanisms of  
282 antimicrobial activity of many biosurfactants (Gudñia *et al.* 2013).

283 Importantly, Rhamnolipids have been, shown to be active against pre-existing bacterial biofilms of *S.*  
284 *typhimurium* (Leis *et al.* 2005). *Salmonella* remains an important cause of food-poisoning infections  
285 and has recently seen a resurgence in the EU primarily as, a result of zoonotic infections (EFSA and  
286 ECDC 2017). *Salmonella* causes gastroenteritis and in some cases septicaemia (Wang *et al.* 2013a).

287 *Salmonella enterica* is able to grow on stainless steel surfaces, resulting, in a 3D structure with several  
288 layers of cells, which may present different morphologies depending on the available nutrients (Wang  
289 *et al.* 2013b). Untreated steel is more easily colonised by *Salmonella* than polished or finished steel  
290 (Schlisselberg and Yaron 2013). In dry conditions, *S. enterica* has, been shown to survive in a biofilm  
291 on stainless steel for over a year (Morita *et al.* 2011). However, in contrast to other pathogens glass  
292 surfaces are not as easily colonised by *Salmonella* (De Oliveira *et al.* 2014). Given the continued  
293 disease burden caused by *Salmonella* a number of workers have investigated the potential of various  
294 biosurfactants against *Salmonella* including SUR's produced by *B. subtilis*. SUR's have been,  
295 reported to inhibit the growth of biofilms of *Salmonella* spp cultivated on PVC microtiter plates and  
296 urethral catheters (Mireles *et al.* 2001).

297

## 298 **Nano-particles**

299 Nanoparticle- based therapeutics have been considered as some of the most promising platforms in  
300 drug delivery applications due to their ability to increase drug accumulation in solid tumours by  
301 enhanced permeability and retention (EPR) and MDR reversal through bypassing or inhibiting P-gp  
302 activity (Bao *et al.* 2016). Furthermore, Basak *et al.* (2014) reported that SL capped ZnO  
303 nanoparticles mediated *C. albicans* cell death occurs via membrane bursting followed by oozing out  
304 of proteins and intracellular materials. In addition to functioning as a cyclic lipopeptide the  
305 biosurfactant, SUR has, been found to exhibit versatile bioactive features including adjuvant for  
306 immunisation and anti-tumour properties. Based on its unique amphipathic properties SUR has the  
307 potential for self-assemble (under certain conditions) into nanoparticles to function as a drug carrier  
308 for loading hydrophobic drugs. Combining the anticancer activity of SUR and the characteristics of  
309 nanoparticles such as EPR effects and MDR reversal, might improve cancer chemotherapy by  
310 designing SUR as a carrier to load anticancer drugs. In an investigation by Huang and co-workers  
311 (2018), SUR was assembled by a solvent-emulsion method to load the anticancer drug doxorubicin  
312 (DOX). The DOX@SUR assembly was shown to induce stronger cytotoxicity against DOX-resistant  
313 human breast cancer MCF-7/ADR cells compared to free DOX. The DOX@SUR nanoparticles

314 exhibited enhanced cellular uptake and decreased cellular efflux. Moreover, *in vivo* DOX@SUR  
315 nanoparticles accumulated more efficiently in tumours than free DOX. The DOX@SUR showed  
316 stronger, tumour inhibition activity and fewer side effects in MCF-7/ADR-bearing nude mice  
317 suggesting that SUR-based nanoparticles might be used as potential anticancer drug carriers to reverse  
318 MDR in cancer chemotherapy.

319

## 320 **Current trends and applications**

### 321 Applications in agriculture

322 Biosurfactants are integral components of many commercial products in a variety of agricultural  
323 applications, for both plant and farm animal production systems. Furthermore, biosurfactants, due to  
324 their low organismal and environmental impact, (low toxicity, low irritation response/hypo-  
325 allergenicity) while exhibiting high digestibility as well as high biodegradability appear to offer  
326 excellent advantages over their synthetic and other natural counterparts.

327 In farm animal production, nutritional/dietary manipulation is one of the main directions of  
328 biosurfactant applications. Natural biosurfactants, such as plant derived alkyl polyglucosides (APG)  
329 have been, shown to be effective in ruminant nutrition, due to their positive effects on physiological  
330 and production parameters in e.g. ruminants. Both ruminal and intestinal digestibility of organic  
331 matter are, increased together with ruminal microbial protein synthesis resulting in increased duodenal  
332 microbial flow of nitrogen (Yuan *et al.* 2010). Additionally, APG may have positive indirect effects in  
333 terms of its ability to modify the rumen microbial community as it increases total volatile fatty acid  
334 production in the rumen *in vivo*. APG has the ability to increase the activities of ruminal  
335 carboxymethyl cellulase and xylanase (Yuan *et al.* 2010), together with its ability to modify ruminal  
336 fatty acids composition and decrease the population of *Ruminococcus albus in vivo* (Zeng *et al.* 2012)  
337 hence providing a favorable ruminal environment. Available research would indicate that microbial  
338 biosurfactants may have similar effects to those ascribed to APG in ruminant nutrition, e.g.  
339 rhamnolipid (produced by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*) has shown increased activity of xylanase, and

340 overall increased degradation rates of organic matter *in vitro* (Liu *et al.* 2011). Past research has also  
341 acknowledged that incorporation of yeast cultures with emulsified glyco-protein into ruminant diets  
342 can improve the digestibility of organic matter, including digestibility of cellulose and hemicellulose  
343 (Wiedmeier *et al.* 1987) and more recent work (Feye *et al.* 2016) suggests that *Saccharomyces*  
344 *cerevisiae* fermentation products may mitigate faecal shedding of antibiotic resistant *Salmonella* in  
345 poultry (fed Original XPC™). Any development that can reduce the potential for the spread of  
346 antibiotic resistance in the agrarian environment (Conwell *et al.* 2017) is to be welcomed. Aside from  
347 improving the activity of fibrolytic enzymes in ruminant nutrition, microbial biosurfactants with their  
348 emulsifying properties have been suggested for improved digestibility of fats/oils in animal diets.  
349 Fats/oils are normally, added to animal diets as an inexpensive source of energy however, their use is  
350 limited by the animal's physiological ability to digest high levels of dietary fats/oils. Thus, more  
351 recent livestock and poultry feed additives consisting of lysophospholipids, of undisclosed origin have  
352 appeared on the market claiming enhanced effects on emulsification of nutritional fats/oils and hence  
353 improved digestion of fats/oils and improved absorption of other nutrients (for more information see:  
354 Lysoforte®, Kemin Industries, Inc., USA). It is possible that specific microbial biosurfactants could  
355 be, introduced to emulsify fats/oils in animal feed for specific age groups of animals or to decrease the  
356 cost of feed by increasing the oil/fat content above the level of animal/physiological ability to  
357 effectively digest without the negative effects on animal health. Hence, the inclusion of biosurfactants  
358 may prove to be financially effective in animal production. Other avenues for further exploration, may  
359 involve designer microbial biosurfactants that would aim to modify the ruminal microbiome and  
360 favour a bacterial "ruminotype" associated with low methane production over those with high  
361 methane outputs e.g. species belonging to *Ruminococcus* (Kittelman *et al.* 2014).

362 More recently the potential of biosurfactants in seed protection and growth stimulation have been  
363 investigated, showing the effectiveness of LP's (Toral *et al.* 2018) against phytopathogens including  
364 *Botrytis cinerea* and that of rhamnolipids (Borha *et al.* 2016) against *Fusarium verticillioides* a major  
365 pathogen of maize. In addition, rhamnolipids have shown potential as biopesticides (Soltani  
366 Dashtbozorg *et al.* 2016), fungicides (Sha *et al.* 2015) and as anti-zoospore agents (Miao *et al.* 2015).

367 Sha *et al.* (2012) attributed the antifungal effect of cell-free culture broth of rhamnolipids to surface  
368 activity and rupture of plasma membranes.

369

## 370 **Health related applications**

### 371 *Applications in Wound healing*

372 A wide variety, of bioactive metabolites, including biosurfactants are, viewed as having potential for  
373 dermatological applications including wound healing. Zouari *et al.* (2016b) evaluated the *in vitro*  
374 antioxidant activities and the wound healing potential of *Bacillus subtilis* SPB1 LP on excision  
375 wounds induced in experimental rats. They found a significant increase in the percentage of wound  
376 closure compared with untreated and CICAFLORA™ treated groups. Biopsies treated with SPB1  
377 LP's showed entirely re-epithelised wounds with perfect epidermal regeneration. It has been,  
378 suggested that the free-radical scavenging properties of the LP's help to prevent inflammation and  
379 improve tissue formation, re-epithelisation and differentiation of epidermis (Jemil *et al.* 2017). In  
380 addition, SPB1 has been shown previously to inhibit multidrug resistant bacteria (Ghribi *et al.* 2012)  
381 and show activity against phytopathogenic fungi (Minif *et al.* 2016). Gupta *et al.* (2017) investigated  
382 accelerated wound healing in rat tissue *in vivo* using a glycolipid produced by *B. licheniformis* SV1  
383 containing ointment and found re-epithelisation and fibroblast cell proliferation in the early stage of  
384 wound healing with more rapid collagen deposition in the later stages. It has been suggested that the  
385 wound healing properties exhibited by those LP's investigated may be as a result of their ability to  
386 reduce oxidative stress through the prevention of reactive oxygen species (ROS) production. Ohadi *et*  
387 *al.* 2017 in their study of wound healing in rats showed that the LP produced by *Acinetobacter junii*  
388 B6 increased free-radical scavenging activities and improved histopathological remission. Lydon and  
389 co-workers (2017) tested a highly purified preparation of micelle-forming non-acetylated acidic SL  
390 that contained 90% C18 congener suggesting that acidic sophorolipids can be used as a component of  
391 antimicrobial creams to reduce the risk of wound infection during healing.

### 392 *Dermatological applications*



393 The anti-bacterial preservatives used in the majority of personal care products are synthetic and can  
394 cause skin irritation and allergic reactions by interaction with keratin or collagen and elastin and  
395 encourage the removal of lipids from the skin surface and affect the skin cells themselves (Bujak,  
396 2015). On the other hand, biosurfactants are composed of lipid and proteins and are compatible with  
397 the skin cell membrane (Stipcevic *et al.* 2013). While the majority of biosurfactant related work is  
398 focussed on biosurfactants that are produced extracellularly by microorganisms much less work has  
399 been carried out on cell-bound biosurfactants many of which are produced by e.g. probiotic  
400 Lactobacilli strains which have the added advantage of being non-toxic, biodegradable and  
401 environmentally friendly (Satpute *et al.* 2016). Vecino *et al.* (2018) investigated the anti-microbial  
402 and anti-adhesive properties of cell-bound biosurfactants, produced by *Lactobacillus pentosus* (PEB),  
403 which are characterised as glycolipid molecules, against several microorganisms found amongst  
404 human skin flora. The performance of PEB was compared against the glycolipids produced by  
405 *Lactobacillus paracasei* (PAB). The PEB showed anti-microbial activity against *P. aeruginosa*,  
406 *Streptococcus agalactiae*, *S. aureus*, *E. coli*, *Streptococcus pyogenes* and *C. albicans*, which was  
407 comparable with the results from PAB. Importantly, extracts prepared with phosphate buffered saline  
408 (PBS) were more effective than phosphate buffer (PB) in the case of *P. aeruginosa*, *S. aureus* and *E.*  
409 *coli*. Those extracted in PBS had a higher lipid content while those extracted in PB had a higher  
410 carbohydrate content. Both PEB and PAB showed anti-adhesive properties against all the  
411 microorganisms tested except for *E. coli* and *C. albicans*. PAB produced biosurfactants with a lower  
412 content of lipids than those produced by PEB. However, Sharma and Saharan (2016) investigated the  
413 antimicrobial of glycolipid from *Lactobacillus helveticus* and found higher anti-microbial activity  
414 against *E. coli* and *S. epidermidis*. On the other hand, Gudina and co-workers (2015) working with  
415 *Lactobacillus agilis* found no anti-microbial activity against *E. coli* or *C. albicans*. Ashby and co-  
416 workers (2011) investigated the potential of biopolymer embedded SL's to improve the antimicrobial  
417 potential of SL's against *Propionibacterium acnes* and found the efficacy varied depending on the  
418 biopolymer matrix. Interestingly, when different carbon sources and different fermenting conditions  
419 are applied then the same strain can produce different biosurfactants with different anti-microbial  
420 properties (Singh *et al.* 2014).

421 In nature *P. aeruginosa* releases rhamnolipids to form vesicles or micelles and sheds flagellin. Meyer-  
422 Hoffert and co-workers (2011) demonstrated that rhamnolipid secretion facilitates the expression of  
423 antimicrobial protein psoriasis in human healthy skin via flagellin. Flagellin will activate  
424 keratinocytes to induce the expression of the antimicrobial protein psoriasin, which can kill *P.*  
425 *aeruginosa*. Therefore, healthy skin can prevent colonisation of pathogens before pathogens can  
426 develop strategies to disrupt the immune defence response. Antimicrobial hydrogels incorporating  
427 biosurfactants (Paniagua-Michel *et al.* 2014) have been studied as an auto-defense mechanism for  
428 combating drug resistant infections associated with the skin, because polymeric gels exhibit many  
429 properties avoiding the freely dissolved condition, which enable them to remain in place, on the skin,  
430 while maintaining antimicrobial activity (Li *et al.* 2013). These characteristics suggest potential for  
431 wound healing, implant/catheter coatings and skin infections.

#### 432 *Oral care*

433 In the natural environment, biosurfactants have, been found to contribute to innate oral care.  
434 Biosurfactant producers such as *Streptococcus mitis* in the oral cavity can discourage the adhesion of *S.*  
435 *mutans*. In their study of the effectiveness of rhamnolipids derived from non-pathogenic *Burholderia*  
436 *thailandensis* E264, Elshikh and co-workers (2017) identified a 3-4 log decrease in bacterial viability  
437 amongst oral pathogens (The potential of biosurfactants in oral cavity care has been reviewed in detail  
438 by Elshikh *et al.* 2016). Bouassida and co-workers (2017) examined the potential of *Bacillus subtilis*  
439 SPB1 lipopeptide in toothpaste formulation and showed that lipopeptide-based product exhibited an  
440 important antimicrobial activity against *Enterobacter* sp and *Salmonella typhimurium*. Previous  
441 reports on the effectiveness of *Bacillus subtilis* SPB1 strain (HQ392822) revealed a wide spectrum of  
442 actions including antimicrobial activity towards microorganisms with multidrug resistant profiles  
443 (Ghribi *et al.* 2012) antifungal activity against phytopathogenic fungi (Mnif and Ghribi 2016) and  
444 antidiabetic and anti-lipidemic properties in alloxan-induced diabetic rats (Zouari *et al.* 2016a).

#### 445 *Drug delivery systems, including vaccines*

446 The use of biosurfactants as drug delivery agents offers attractive applications such as passive  
447 immunisation particularly where drug treatment options are limited. For instance, the treatment of  
448 candidiasis is difficult due to the limited availability of antifungal drugs and their toxicities and severe  
449 side effects in humans (Laniado-Laborin and Cabrales-Vargas 2009; Nett, 2014). These issues can be,  
450 overcome by incorporating anti-fungal drugs into various drug delivery systems (Schinabeck *et al.*  
451 2004; Ramage *et al.* 2013). Vesicular drug delivery systems including liposomes and niosomes are  
452 thought to be particularly important for targeted delivery of drugs and to minimise undesirable side  
453 effects (Jain *et al.* 2014).

454 Liposomes stand as promising candidates with wide applicability based on a drug delivery approach  
455 including vaccination (Loew *et al.* 2011, Davitt and Lavelle 2015). Mannosylerythritol lipid-A, a type  
456 of glycolipid biosurfactant that contains cationic liposomes has been shown to promote gene  
457 transfection efficiency by five to seven times with mammalian cultured cells (Inoh *et al.* 2001).  
458 Liposomes are made up of two hydrophobic tails and may or may not contain cholesterol in the  
459 structure whereas niosomes are non-ionic surfactant based vesicles made up of single hydrophobic  
460 chain, which makes them eminently suitable as carrier molecules in drug delivery applications (Kazi  
461 *et al.* 2010; Khan and Irchhaiya 2016). Niosomes are constructed by hydration with or without the  
462 amalgamation of cholesterol or other lipids (Kazi *et al.* 2010). The hydrophilic core of the niosome  
463 provides an ideal environment for hydrophilic drugs since hydrophobic drugs are mainly localised to  
464 the hydrophobic regions i.e. the lipid layer. Haque *et al.* 2017 compared the efficiency of SL-  
465 Amphotericin B (AmB) niosome with a commercially available formulation of AmB and found fewer  
466 fungal hyphae in biofilm treated with the SL-Amb niosome whereas more budding cells were found in  
467 biofilm treated with Phosome (Amphotericin B) alone. Fungal pseudohyphae/true hyphae are thought  
468 to be one of the most important virulence factors in *C. albicans* (Mayer *et al.* 2013). It is suggested  
469 that SL-AmB niosomes may interfere with gene expression, downregulating expression of hyphal  
470 genes. This is, supported by other work indicating that antifungal drugs inhibit such genes (Cheng *et*  
471 *al.* 2009; VEDIYAPPAN *et al.* 2010).

472 Lipopeptide biosurfactants have also been shown to enhance the humoral immune response  
473 additionally they are non-toxic and non-pyrogenic making them prospective adjuvants in vaccines.  
474 The WHI fungin has, been shown to produce the SUR lipopeptide, which has been suggested as a  
475 potential adjuvant for immunization through the oral route (Gao *et al.* 2013). Additionally  
476 Mittenbuhler and co-workers (2003) have suggested that LP's increased the humoral immunity to the  
477 tetanus toxoid, without a decrease in serum IgG levels in a mouse model. Work by Basit *et al.* (2018)  
478 in an investigation of LP's as adjuvant in inactivated low pathogenicity avian influenza H9N2 vaccine  
479 suggest that biosurfactant based vaccine increased the titre of antibodies in both broiler and layer  
480 chickens and showed comparable immunogenicity to oil based vaccine.

#### 481 **Anticancer potential of biosurfactants**

482 The LP's, glycolipids and other types of biosurfactants owing to their structural novelty and diverse  
483 biophysical properties have emerged as possible broad-spectrum agents for cancer  
484 chemotherapy/biotherapy and as safe vehicles or ingredients in drug delivery formulations. However,  
485 while it is possible to show cancer cell killing activity *in vitro* the *in vivo* evidence is limited, and in  
486 many cases contradictory suggesting that in the short-term biosurfactants have limited clinical use  
487 except for topical or gut application. However, some studies have shown that lipopeptides and  
488 glycolipids can selectively inhibit the proliferation of cancer cells and disrupt cell membranes causing  
489 their lysis through apoptosis pathways (Gudina *et al.* 2013). Furthermore, the evidence from the  
490 literature suggests that the anti-cancer effects are based mostly on mixtures of congeners. There is a  
491 need to separate out these congeners in order to fully elucidate their individual anticancer effects.

492 The LP's and SL's are the biosurfactants most studied in terms of anti-cancer potential. The LP's are  
493 composed of a peptide and a fatty acid chain and have been shown to exhibit anti-tumour activity *in*  
494 *vitro* (Zhao *et al.* 2018). Reports on the *Bacillus* LP's namely, SUR, Iturin and Fengycin suggest that  
495 they possess anti-tumour activities. Iturin has been shown to inhibit the proliferation of MDA-MB-231  
496 cancer cells (Dey *et al.* 2015). Fengycin can block non-small cell lung cancer cell 95D and inhibit the  
497 growth of xenografted 95D cells in nude mice (Yin *et al.* 2013). Recently, Zhao *et al.* (2018) showed  
498 the *B. subtilis* LP's consisting of a majority of iturin exhibited promising potential in inhibiting

499 chronic myelogenous leukaemia *in vitro* via simultaneously causing paraptosis, apoptosis, and  
500 inhibition of autophagy. The anticancer mechanisms of Bacillus LP's have been extensively studied  
501 and SUR has been found to display an anti-proliferative effect via apoptosis induction, cell cycle  
502 arrest and survival signalling suppression.

503 Amongst the suggested uses of SL's are their potential in human cervical cancer treatment. Li *et al.*  
504 (2017) showed induction of apoptosis of HeLa cells and inhibition of cancer cells in tumour bearing  
505 mice but the vast majority of studies have been conducted *in vitro* (Table 1). However, the more  
506 recent studies have included xerograph and *in vivo* studies. In therapeutic and preventative xerograph  
507 models of B16-EGRFRvIII melanoma cells the self-adjuvant LP vaccine micelles effectively  
508 prevented tumour growth as well as tumorigenesis (Chen *et al.* 2018). Different anticancer mechanism  
509 for SL's have, been proposed including a role in differentiation and apoptosis. While it is well  
510 accepted that SLs have anticancer activity *in vitro*, Li *et al.* (2017) is one of the few studies to suggest  
511 anti-tumour activity *in vivo*. Moreover, there are conflicting reports in the literature including  
512 Callaghan *et al.* (2016) suggesting that lactonic SL's may increase tumour burden in Apc min+/-  
513 mice.

514

## 515 **Future trends and conclusions**

516 The two main obstacles to the further development of biosurfactant applications and unlocking their  
517 potential remain the large numbers of assays and approaches to this type of work. Microbial  
518 biosurfactants are produced as mixtures of congeners and the proportions of congeners will vary  
519 based on producer strain, growth conditions and growth medium (Singh *et al.* 2014, Diaz de Rienzo *et*  
520 *al.* 2016a). Since different congeners have different properties and activities the use of 'mixtures' in  
521 experiments leads to confusing results. There is also the problem of endotoxin contamination of  
522 biosurfactants produced by Gram negative bacteria and very few investigators have taken steps to  
523 ensure that their experimental material is free of such highly bioactive molecules. Although expensive  
524 and time consuming bioactivity needs to be determined with pure single congeners. The different

525 assays currently employed may be providing different kinds of information on the mode of action of  
526 biosurfactants and the mechanism of action of biosurfactant either singly or in combination with other  
527 therapies against pathogenic microorganisms. There is a need for the standardisation of approaches  
528 and methodologies associated with biosurfactant research (recently reviewed in detail by Irorere *et al.*  
529 2017).

530 The evidence of the efficacy of different biosurfactants from different microorganism in differing  
531 contexts remains a challenge. There is good evidence of the effectiveness of biosurfactants in terms of  
532 antimicrobial activity and there is increasing evidence of the benefits of biosurfactants in terms of  
533 wound healing, dermatological applications and oral care (Elshikh *et al.* 2017). There is promising  
534 work in the area of drug delivery but in the area of cancer treatment where biosurfactants might prove  
535 most efficacious there remains much conflicting data. It has to be pointed out, however, that their  
536 anticancer applications are likely to be limited to situations where topical application is possible e.g.  
537 skin or oral or for gastrointestinal administration.

538 The target market is of fundamental importance to any scale of biosurfactant production. To date  
539 developments have been limited for industrial applications such as bioremediation due to the deficit in  
540 the investment required and the feasibility of viable industrial production (Banat *et al.* 2014b).

541 Therefore, the potential applications discussed here in terms of healthcare therapeutics are much more  
542 promising given the value added nature of such products and their likely benefit to human health. The  
543 cost benefits would appear to be more favourable (Marchant and Banat 2012a) in terms of the  
544 biomedical applications because, production is viable on a small-scale. Of the range of potential  
545 applications discussed here, it is likely that the innate antimicrobial nature of many biosurfactants and  
546 the ability of some of these to act in synergy and/or as adjuncts to current therapeutics in the context  
547 of the ever increasing threat of antibiotic resistance that may prove the most beneficial.

548

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551 **Conflict of Interest**

552 The authors declare no conflict of interest

553

554 **References**

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Table 1. Effects of Biosurfactants on various cancer cell lines

Biosurfactants class	Biosurfactant name	Source	Reference	Effect on Cell Line
Lipopeptide	Surfacin	<i>Bacillus subtilis</i>	Kim <i>et al.</i> 2007	Suppression of LoVo (colon carcinoma) cell line
Lipopeptide	Surfacin	<i>Bacillus natto TK-1</i>	Cao <i>et al.</i> 2010	Killing of MCF-7 (human breast cancer) cell line
Lipopeptide	Iturin	<i>Bacillus subtilis</i>	Zhao <i>et al.</i> 2018	Inhibition of K562 leukemia cells
Glycolipid	Mannosylerythritol lipid -A Mannosylerythritol lipid -B	<i>Candida Antarctica T-34</i>	Isoda <i>et al.</i> 1997	Induced HL60 (leukemia cell line) differentiation
Sophorolipid	Sophorolipid	<i>Candida bombicola</i> ATCC 22214	Joshi-Navaere <i>et al.</i> 2011	Increased in LN-229 differentiation
Sophorolipid	di-acetylated lactonic C18:1	<i>Wickerhamiella domercqiae</i>	Chen <i>et al.</i> 2006	Apoptosis in H7402 (liver cancer) cells
Sophorolipid	cetyl alcohol sophorolipid	<i>Candida bombicola</i> ATCC 22214	Nawale <i>et al.</i> 2017	Anti-proliferation of HeLa cells
Sophorolipid	Various derivatives	<i>Candida bombicola</i> ATCC 22214	Fu <i>et al.</i> 2008	Killing of human pancreatic cancer cells
Sophorolipid	Various derivatives	<i>Wickerhamiella domercqiae</i>	Shao <i>et al.</i> 2012	Inhibition of oesophageal cancer cells
Sophorolipid	Various derivatives	<i>Starmerella bombicola</i>	Ribeiro <i>et al.</i> 2015	Killing of MDA-MB-231 breast cancer cells