



# Commercial Utilization of Microbial Polysaccharides: A Brief Global Perspective

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## Abstract

Microbial polysaccharides are the water soluble renewable biopolymers which comprise a variety of polysaccharides produced by bacteria, fungi and yeast. These microbial polysaccharides have unusual molecular structure and peculiar conformations rendering them with unique and potentially interesting properties. In recent years, demand of natural polymers for various industrial applications has led to an increased attention towards production of microbial polysaccharides. Since the microbial origin polysaccharides have properties identical to the currently used gums they have been widely used as an alternative in various food, pharmaceutical, and cosmeceutical industries as emulsifiers, binders, gelling agents and suspending agents. There has been an increase in the adoption of microbially sourced polysaccharides and this surge in demand has resulted in the manufacturers to now focus on enhancing their production capacity. The current review deals with the worldwide commercial utilization of the microbial polysaccharides and their present status in the polysaccharide market.

**Keywords:** Commercial Utilization; Global Market; Microbial Polysaccharides

## Introduction

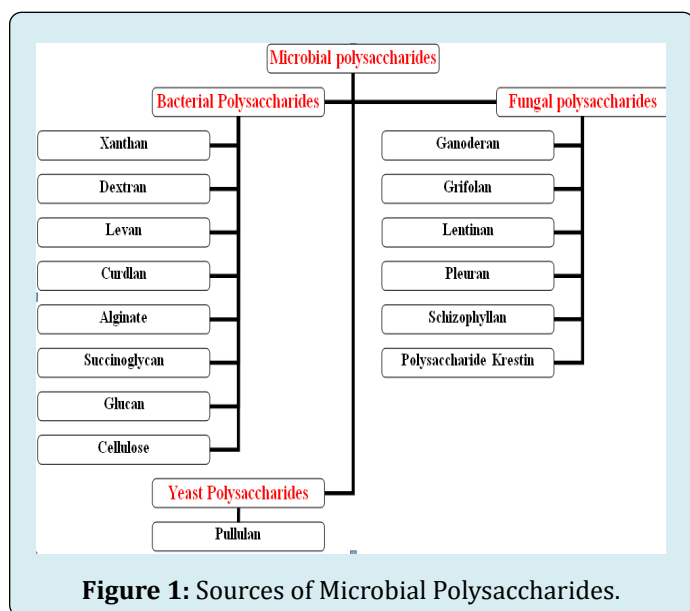
Microbial polysaccharides are renewable, biodegradable, versatile bio-polymers produced by several bacteria, yeast and fungi [1]. These are generally high molecular weight hydrated polysaccharides containing repeated units of sugar or sugar derivatives such as glucose, fructose, mannose etc [2]. Microorganism are a rich underexploited source of polysaccharides which serve as energy reserves, structural materials, are involved in molecular interactions and also store information [3]. The forms of polysaccharides produced by the organisms can be subdivided into bound polysaccharides or soluble polysaccharides. The bound polysaccharides are closely bound to the cell (sheaths, capsular polymers, condensed gels, loosely bound polymers, and attached organic materials) and soluble polysaccharides

or the exopolysaccharides are weakly bound or are dissolved into the solution (soluble macromolecules, colloids, and slimes) [4,5]. There is a high demand for naturally derived products since their synthetic counterparts are often associated with various potential health and environmental hazards. This rise in demand from the consumers has resulted in increased attention towards the production of polysaccharide by a variety of microbes [6]. These microbial polysaccharides have peculiar commercially important properties which makes them suitable for use across a wide range of applications in chemical, food, cosmetics and medical industries. Many researchers have discovered the potential of these microbial polysaccharides to act as a viscosifying, stabilizing, emulsifying, or gelling agents in food and pharmaceutical products. Besides these, polysaccharides are also known to possess a variety of bioactive properties

such as antitumor, antioxidant, antibacterial, antiulcer, and cholesterol-lowering activity [7-10]. However, numerous potential applications still wait to be explored and developed into commercial applications. The most important microbial polysaccharides include xanthan, the commercial polymer produced by the bacteria *Xanthomonas campestris*, Gellan (*Sphingomonas paucimobilis*), Cellulose (*Acetobacter xylinum*), Dextran (*Leuconostoc mesenteroides*), Spirulan (*Arthospora platensis*), Alginate (*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*), Levan (*Bacillus subtilis*), Hyaluronan (*Pasteurella multocida*) and Curdlan (*Alcaligenes species*) [2]. Microbial polysaccharides have a higher production cost than that of the other natural or synthetic polymers such as corn starch and cellulose-derived products. The high production cost is the main constraint to their wider use in different fields and thus there is a need to develop new strategies in order to lower their production cost.

### Sources of Microbial Polysaccharides

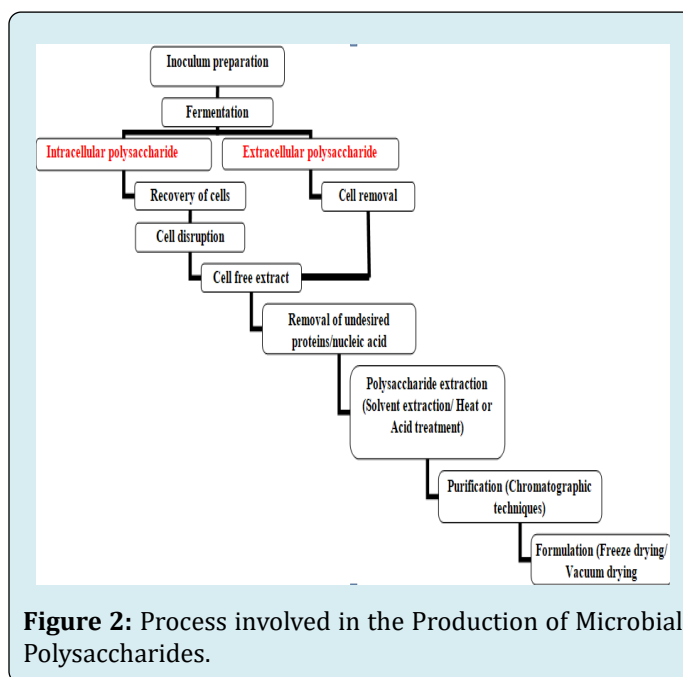
The microbial polysaccharides are usually classified as those derived from bacteria, fungi, algae and yeast (Figure 1).



### Production of Microbial Polysaccharides

The typical microbial polysaccharide fermentation starts with the growth phase which is followed by the production phase [11]. The production is mostly carried out by batch fermentation in the presence of excessive carbon source and is significantly affected by the fermentation conditions which include temperature, pH, production medium, carbon source, nitrogen source etc. The differential synthesis of different polysaccharides can be achieved by manipulating the nutrient supply for e.g. limiting the nitrogen supply results in the production of neutral polysaccharides whereas

limiting the metal ions results in the production of acidic polysaccharides. Since the production of polysaccharides depend upon the mode of operation, design of the fermenter and the microbial system used each production process requires a specific design [12]. Therefore, to accomplish the industrial production of desired polysaccharide the parameters affecting the entire production process should be well defined [13]. Figure 2 given below depicts the general procedure involved in the production of exopolysaccharides.



### Commercially Available Microbial Polysaccharides and their Applications

Microbial polysaccharides are of a great commercial importance. These polysaccharides are water soluble gums that possess unique properties and have emerged as new and industrially important polymeric substances competing with natural gums obtained from marine algae and higher plants [14]. Xanthan, gellan, dextran, and alginate are among the common microbial polysaccharides in current use. The microbial polysaccharides are widely employed in the stabilization of foods, and production of several industrial and pharmaceutical compounds [15]. Due to their unique conformations and physicochemical characteristics, microbial polysaccharides have found a wide range of applications as emulsifiers, stabilizers, binders, gelling agents, coagulants, and suspending agents. Other potential applications of these microbial polysaccharides such as immuno-modulation, anti-tumor, anti-microbial, anti-oxidant etc. are also reported. Table 1 summarizes some of the commercially available microbial polysaccharides and their applications.

Name of the Polysaccharide	Producer Organism	Applications	References
Xanthan	<i>Xanthomonas campestris</i>	Improves the texture, mouth feel of the food product, enhances the stability, controls rheology, and reduces the syneresis.	[16]
Dextran	<i>Leuconostoc mesenteroides</i>	Used in drugs as a blood plasma expander, as an adjuvant, stabilizer, carrier and emulsifier in food, pharma and chemical industries, also used as a thickener and viscosifier in food industry.	[17]
Levan	<i>Lactobacillus sanfranciscensis</i> LTH 2590	Prebiotic properties, Anti-tumor, Cholesterol lowering property, Inhibition of smooth muscle proliferation, blood plasma expander, anti-AIDS activity, anticlotting can act as an emulsifier, thickener, stabilizer, purification of biological materials, synthesis of nanostructured films,	[9,18-20]
	<i>Streptococcus 352 salivarius</i> , <i>Streptococcus mutants</i> , <i>Leuconostoc mesenteroides</i> NRRL B-512F, and <i>Lactobacillus reuteri</i> LB121		
Curdlan		Anti-AIDS, Anti-viral activity, Immunomodulating, Anti-inflammatory, Used in drug delivery, Heavy metal adsorption, act as a binder, viscosifier, texture enhancer	[21-26]
Alginate		Delivery of small drugs and proteins, wound dressings; Cell culture; Tissue regeneration; thickening, gel forming, stabilizing agents.	[27]
Succinoglycan		Viscodifying and Emulsifying activity, Pseudo plasticizing, Crosslinking property, Cosmetic additive,	[28]
Pullulan		Development of food packaging films, capsule shells, Tissue engineering, Targeted drug delivery, Gene delivery, Thickening, stabilizing agent in food and cosmetics.	[29-31]
Fungal Glucans	<i>Amauroderma rugosum</i> , <i>Cerrena unicolor</i> , <i>Ganoderma lucidium</i> , <i>Pleurotus albidus</i> , <i>Fkammulina velutipes</i>	Immunomodulatory, Hypolipidemic, Anti-oxidant, Antimicrobial	[32-35]
Lentinan	<i>Lentinus edodes</i>	Free radical scavenging activity, Increase plasma insulin and reduce BGL, Antimicrobial activity against <i>Streptococcus mutans</i> , <i>Prevotella intermedia</i> , <i>E. coli</i> , <i>S. aureus</i> and <i>Sarcina lutea</i> , Potently stimulated cytokine production, stimulate phagocytosis	[36-44]
Grifolan	<i>Grifola frondosa</i>	Macrophage activation, induction of IL-1, IL-6, and TNF-a secretion, Antimicrobial activity against Enterovirus 71, Reduce the serum levels of fasting blood glucose (FBG), oral glucose tolerance (OGT), cholesterol (TC), triglyceride (TG) and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C), and significantly decrease the hepatic levels of TC, TG and free fatty acids (FFA)	[45-47]

Schizophyllan	<i>Schizophyllum commune</i>	Activation of T cell, increase interleukin, and TNF- $\alpha$ production, Radical scavenging activity, ferric ion reducing power	[48-50]
Pleurotan	<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i>	Radical scavenging activity, ferric ion reducing power, chelating transition metal ions, lipid peroxidation inhibition, and fluorescence quenching, Decrease alanine transaminase and aspartate transaminase levels in blood, increase superoxide dismutase, catalase, and glutathione peroxidase levels, and decrease malondialdehyde levels in blood and liver, Bursal disease virus, Stimulates macrophages, splenocytes, and thymocytes	[51-53]
Polysaccharide-Krestin (PSK)	<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Stimulate cytokine production; HIV	[54-57]
Polysaccharopeptide (PSP)			

**Table 1:** Commercially available Microbial Polysaccharides and their Applications.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Microbial Polysaccharides in Comparison with Plant and Algal Counterparts

A majority of polysaccharides which are being commercially used in various industries are of plant origin. The studies on microbial polysaccharides have increased in the last decade because of their novel and unique properties making them compatible for use in various industries. The microbial polysaccharides have proved themselves to be equally competent with the polysaccharides of plant origin [58]. The advantages of microbial polysaccharides over its plant and algal counterparts have been summarized below:

- The production of microbial polysaccharides lacks seasonal dependency. It can be carried out under controlled conditions with more degree of freedom. The plant and algal counterparts however suffer from seasonal and regional dependency causing variability in the quality and quantity of exopolysaccharide produced.
- The production of polysaccharides by the microbes is not time consuming and is only a matter of few days, whereas it requires months and even years for the completion of production cycle in case of plants.
- In case of microbes the yield of polysaccharide can be enhanced by employing genetic engineering. The microbes have simpler genetics as compared to the higher organisms and thus the genetic manipulation of the microbes involved is much easier [59]. However, there are certain disadvantages as well connected with the microbial polysaccharides:
- Costly up-streaming and down-streaming process. The cost of the substrates and the infrastructure required for the large scale production of microbial polysaccharide is very high in comparison with simple extraction

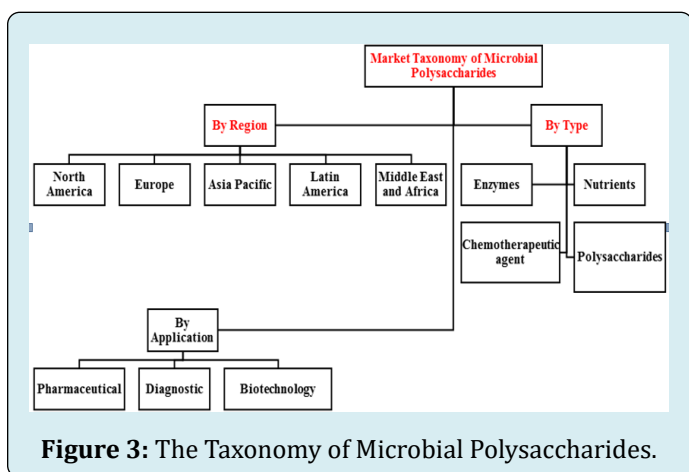
processes for plant polysaccharides.

- The overall productivity is comparatively low and the resultant viscosity of the polysaccharide limits the mass transfer.

### Market of Microbial Products

The market for microbial polysaccharides is experiencing notable growth driven by their versatile properties and eco-friendly production methods. These polysaccharides, derived from microbial fermentation, offer a range of applications across various industries including food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, agriculture, and biotechnology. One of the key drivers behind the expansion of this market is the increasing demand for natural and sustainable ingredients. Microbial polysaccharides fit well within this trend, as they are biodegradable, renewable, and can be produced using organic waste materials or agricultural by-products, reducing reliance on traditional resources.

The global microbial products market is segmented on the basis of types, source, applications and end users. Based on types, the market has been segmented as enzymes, polysaccharides, nutrients (amino acids, nucleotides, vitamins, and organic acids, others), chemotherapeutic agents, antibiotics, vaccines, others. Based on the source, it has been segmented as bacterial, viral, fungal and others. On the basis of applications, the market has been segmented as pharmaceutical, diagnostic, biotechnology and others and on the basis of end users, the market has been segmented into pharmaceutical and biotechnological industries, hospitals & clinics, diagnostic labs, research & academics and others. In the similar fashion the taxonomy of microbial polysaccharide is also divided under the same heads (Figure 3).



The market for microbial products is driven by factors such as growing prevalence of diseases, rising demand for healthcare nutrients such as vitamins, rising rates of cancers, rising demand for diagnostics microbial products, rise of lifestyles industry recommending many of these products etc. The constraints on the market are the highly fragmented nature of the industry, pressures on profits due to cut throat competition, secrecy surrounding the fermentation process, substandard and low quality producers operating from unknown locations etc. Considering all these factors, the market for microbial products was valued at 6206.67 Million USD in 2020 and is expected to grow with a CAGR of 5.25% from 2020 to 2027. One another reason for this drastic growth can be considered to be the health consciousness of the consumers which have stimulated the clean label movement thus forcing the producers to use both the organic

and unadulterated products. A highly lucrative area for the development of the polysaccharides and oligosaccharides market is projected to be Asia Pacific region excluding Japan (APEJ) followed by Europe where the consumption of polysaccharides and oligosaccharides in expected to grow at a moderate pace. As per the report published by Persistence Market Research, titled 'Microbial Source Hydrocolloids Market: Global Industry Analysis 2013–2017 and Forecast 2018–2026' the market of microbial polysaccharides is forecasted to reach US\$ 509.1 Mn by the end of 2026 in terms of sales revenue. Among all the segments the bakery and confectionery segment is expected to consume a large share of microbial source polysaccharides as compared to the other segments which include beverages, meat & poultry, and dairy. By product type, the xanthan gum segment is expected to be a prominent segment in the microbial source hydrocolloids market whose segment's share is expected to rise to 57.7% by the end of 2026. The gellan gum segment holds the second-largest market share in the overall microbial source hydrocolloids market, and is expected to be 36.8% by the end of 2026 in the global microbial source hydrocolloids market. As per another report published by Fact.MR, titled "Polysaccharides and Oligosaccharides Market Forecast, Trend Analysis and Competition Tracking- Global Market Insights 2020 to 2030" the polysaccharides sourced from bacteria will witness the maximum growth and the global market of polysaccharides and oligosaccharides is estimated to leverage at a CAGR of over 5% during the period 2020-2030, reaching a value pool of over US\$ 22 Bn. Some of the key players involved in the manufacturing of the microbial polysaccharides are listed in Table 2 below.

Manufacturing Company	Polysaccharide Manufactured	Headquarters	Branches in India
Archer Daniels Midland Company	Xanthan gum	Chicago, Illinois	Gurugram, Haryana
Cargill, Inc	Xanthan gum, Carrageenan	Minnesota, U.S.	Bari, Haryana; Gurugram, Haryana; Bengaluru, Karnataka
CP Kelco,	Xanthan gum, Gellan gum, Carrageenan	Atlanta, U.S.	Mumbai, Maharashtra
Deosen USA, Inc.	Xanthan gum	Piscataway, New Jersey	-
Hawkins Watts	Xanthan gum, Gellan gum	Auckland, New Zealand	-
Hispanagar, S.A	Agar polysaccharides	Burgos, Spain	-
Jungbunzlauer Holding AG	Xanthan gum and Gellan gum (TayaGel®)	Basel, Switzerland	Mumbai, Maharashtra
Koninklijke DSM N.V.	Xanthan gum, Gellan gum, Welan gum	Heerleen, Netherlands	Chennai, India
Lubrizol Corporation	Marine polysaccharides	Ohio, U.S.	Mumbai, Maharashtra

**Table 2:** Key Players involved in the Manufacturing of the Microbial Polysaccharides.



## Conclusion

The interest in microbial polysaccharides especially extracellular polysaccharides has considerably increased in the past few years. Due to their diverse functionality these microbial polysaccharides have found applicability in different industries such as food, pharmaceutical, chemical, health etc. The demand for microbial polysaccharides is on the rise due to their ability to be manufactured using industrial waste as a substrate and their diverse range of desirable properties. This approach offers solutions to production and purification hurdles, ultimately enhancing product quality and advancing their journey towards commercial viability. Despite of their varied applicability the microbial polysaccharides constitute only a small fraction of the current polymer market since the cost involved in their production and recovery is comparatively high than the currently available gums. Lack of understanding of biosynthesis of polysaccharides and their extraction process pose an additional threat to the growth of polysaccharides and oligosaccharides market. Thus, in order to conquer the polysaccharide market the manufacturers should focus on the development of cost-effective production process, should explore high-value market niches such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and biomedicine and look for certain functional properties which are comparatively better than the traditional polysaccharides. Expanding the market for microbial polysaccharides involves strategic efforts aimed at increasing awareness, improving accessibility, and showcasing their value proposition. Expanding the market for microbial polysaccharides involves a multi-faceted approach encompassing research and development, product diversification, marketing, collaborations, regulatory compliance, education, customer engagement, and sustainability initiatives. Investing in research and development is crucial to enhancing production processes and developing new applications. Product diversification allows for catering to a wide range of industries, from food to cosmetics, thus increasing market reach. Effective marketing campaigns raise awareness about the benefits and eco-friendly nature of microbial polysaccharides, driving demand. Collaborations with industry players, research institutions, and government agencies accelerate market penetration and innovation. Regulatory compliance ensures product safety and quality, instilling confidence in customers. Educational initiatives inform stakeholders about the applications and proper use of microbial polysaccharides, fostering adoption. Strong customer engagement builds loyalty through feedback channels, technical support, and timely delivery. Emphasizing sustainability credentials aligns with growing environmental concerns, positioning microbial polysaccharides as eco-friendly alternatives. By implementing these strategies, stakeholders can effectively expand the market for microbial polysaccharides, capitalizing on their diverse applications and sustainable attributes across industries.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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