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**Senadeera, Wijitha and Bhandari, B. R. and Young, G. and  
Wijesinghe, B. (1998) Fluidisation behaviour of cylindrical green  
bean particulates in drying. Tropical Agricultural Research 10:pp.  
192-202.**

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## FLUIDIZATION BEHAVIOUR OF CYLINDRICAL GREEN BEAN PARTICULATES DURING DRYING

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**ABSTRACT.** *Changes in fluidization behaviour of green bean particulates with change in moisture content during drying were investigated using a fluidized bed dryer. Fluidization behaviour was characterised for cylindrical shape particles with three length diameter-ratios; 1:1, 2:1 and 3:1.*

*All drying experiments were conducted at  $50 \pm 2$  °C and  $13 \pm 2$  % RH using a heat pump dehumidifier system. Fluidization experiments were undertaken for the bed heights of 100, 80, 60 and 40 mm and at 10 moisture content levels.*

*Data were analysed using SAS, and an empirical relationship of the form  $U_{mf} = A + B e^{-Cm}$  was developed for change of minimum fluidization velocity with moisture content during drying. Also a generalized equation was used to calculate minimum fluidization velocity.*

### INTRODUCTION

The use of *fluidization* is one of main applications in drying of agro-food materials. When an air stream is passed through a free flowing material resting on a permeable support, the bed starts to expand when a certain air velocity is reached. The *superficial velocity* of the air at this stage is the *minimum fluidization velocity*, with continual increase in air velocity, a stage is reached where the pressure across the fluidized bed drops rapidly, and the product is carried along the air stream. The velocity of air at this stage is called terminal velocity. During fluidizing operations the superficial velocity of the air should remain between *minimum fluidization velocity* and *terminal velocity*.

Fluidized bed drying has been recognized as a gentle, uniform drying, down to a very low *residual moisture* content, with a high degree of efficiency (Borgotte et al., 1981). This is a very convenient method for heat sensitive food materials as it prevents them from overheating (Gibert et al., 1980, Giner and Calvelo, 1987). The fluidized bed drying for granular materials is now established (Butler, 1974, Masters, 1992) and many driers are operating throughout the world in the chemical

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and food industries. The properties of particulate materials relate to the type of fluidization technique (Shilton and Niranjana, 1993). The application of this technique is best suited to smaller and spherical particles. The disadvantages of this method include entrainment of friable solids by the gas and limited application to larger and poorly fluidized materials. Simultaneous moisture removal, shrinkage and structural changes are common in drying operations. These changes affect the physical properties of the agro-food materials and hence influence fluidization behaviour (Senadeera et al., 1998)

The Ergun equation (Ergun, 1952) is the widely accepted model to determine *minimum fluidization velocity* of a fluid to fluidize the particle (Kunii and Levenspiel, 1969; Zenz and Harbor, 1971; Michelis and Calvelo, 1994)

:

$$(1 - \varepsilon_{mf}) (\rho_s - \rho_f) g = 150 \frac{(1 - \varepsilon_{mf})^2}{\varepsilon_{mf}^3} \frac{\mu u_{mf}}{(\phi d_p)^2} + 1.75 \frac{(1 - \varepsilon_{mf})}{\varepsilon_{mf}^3} \frac{\rho_f u_{mf}^2}{\phi d_p} \quad (1)$$

The Ergun equation was used to calculate minimum fluidization velocity of baker's yeast (Egerer et al., 1985), peas (Rios et al., 1984) and diced potato and potato strips (Vazquez and Calvelo, 1980; Vazquez and Calvelo, 1983). An equation similar to Ergun was valid for peas (Michelis and Calvelo, 1994).

The values for velocity obtained by the Ergun equation are mostly reliable for spherical and relatively small particles. Most agro-food particulates however comprise of various shapes and sizes, and consist of larger particles. Therefore, the minimum fluidization values obtained from Ergun equation does not conform to the experimental values (McLain and McKay, 1980, 1981a, 1981b; McKay et al., 1987)

The Ergun equation consists of *viscous* and *kinetic energy* terms (1st and 2nd LHS part of the equation 1). In the case of larger particles at higher Reynolds numbers ( $Re > 1000$ ) the fluidization behaviour was mainly governed by the kinetic energy term in the Ergun equation. Hence the Ergun equation can be simplified to (Kunii and Levenspiel, 1969) :

$$u_{mf}^2 = \frac{\phi d_p^2 (\rho_s - \rho_f)}{1.75 \rho_f} g \varepsilon_{mf}^3 \quad (2)$$

For wide variety of systems it was found that value  $\frac{1}{\phi \varepsilon_{mf}^3} \cong 14$  (Wen and Yu, 1966) and a generalized equation can be applied to predict  $U_{mf}$  for larger particles when  $Re > 1000$ .

$$u_{mf}^2 = \frac{d_p (\rho_s - \rho_f)}{24.5 \rho_f} g \quad (3)$$

There is a continuous change in physical properties of the particulates during drying, which also changes the fluidization behaviour of the particles. It is important to understand these changes, so that the air-flow during drying can be controlled to achieve an optimum fluidization.

The objective of this study is to study the continuous change in minimum fluidization velocity for a given shape of food material (green bean in this case) during drying and relate this to moisture content by a suitable model, and compare the minimum fluidization velocity with the generalized model.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Fresh green beans *Phasecolus vulgaris* of the variety Labrador was used for producing cylindrical particles. Beans were purchased from the same supplier to maximize reproducibility of results. Care was taken when selecting the size of beans to obtain a consistent diameter of near 10 mm. Size was measured using a vernier caliper with an accuracy of 0.05mm. Initially both ends of the beans were cut and only the middle portions, which resemble a cylindrical shape, were used to produce the required samples. Samples were prepared at three length to diameter ratios of 1:1, 2:1 and 3:1, and each experiment was repeated three times. After cutting, beans were kept in a plastic container in a cold room at 4<sup>0</sup> C for more than 12 hours before experimentation to stabilize the moisture content.

Drying experimentation was carried out using a heat pump dehumidifier system at a temperature of 50± 2<sup>0</sup> C and relative humidity of 13 %. Materials were placed inside the drying system on mesh trays and stacked vertically to achieve maximum exposure to the air-flow. During drying, samples were taken from the dryer at ten arbitrary moisture levels. These samples were collected into a sealed container and used for fluidizing experiments and physical measurements.

All fluidization trials were conducted in a batch type flexi-glass fluidizing column of 185mm inside diameter and 1m long (Fig. 1). The hot air was taken from a heat pump dehumidifier system coupled to the dryer. Hot air entered the material bed through a perforated plate with circular holes of 1mm diameter (18 holes/ cm<sup>2</sup>). An even air distribution was achieved by placing another perforated plate (with 10 mm diameter holes with a diametral pitch of 40 mm in concentrically arranged holes), 10mm vertically below the perforated plate. Air flow entering the dryer was varied by means of varying the incoming flow to the fan and velocity of the incoming air was read from a digital manometer (EMA 84, range 0 - 10kPa ) connected to a pitot tube (Dwyer DS-300). Pressure drop across the bed was measured by a U-tube manometer connected to the drying chamber below the air distributor plate and above the bed of bean samples. In order to determine the optimum bed height for improved fluidization, bed heights of 100, 80, 60 and 40 mm were used. Used samples were collected in a separate container and reused for the drying experimentation.

To determine the particle density, a known number of particles were weighed by a Sartorius electronic balance, and the volume was measured by the difference in meniscus levels before and after immersion of particles in liquid paraffin in a measuring cylinder. The difference in meniscus levels was measured by a vernier caliper (accuracy 0.05mm). This value was used to calculate the equivalent diameter of the particle, which was used in the generalized equation (Equation 3). Moisture content was determined by measuring the loss in weight of finely chopped samples held at 70<sup>0</sup> C and -13.3 Kpa vaccum for 24 hours ( AOAC, 1995).

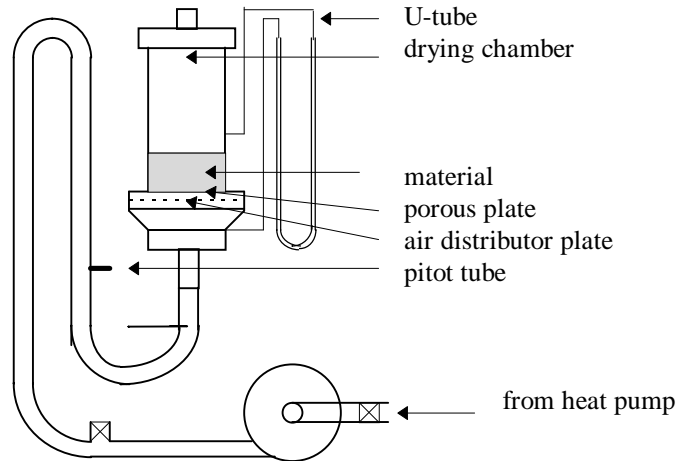


Figure 1 A fluidized bed experimental setup

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Modelling of minimum fluidization velocity with change in moisture content

The behaviour of minimum fluidization velocity is given in Figure 2 for different length to diameter ratios and different bed heights. *Slugging* and *channelling* were a common phenomena at the initial higher moistures for every L:D ratio. It was difficult to achieve good fluidization at initial moisture levels. This was more evident when the L/D ratio increased. Visual observation of the bed at an instance of fluidization after bed expansion was the criteria considered to categorise minimum fluidization. Also this value was compared with graphical variation, the pressure drop of the bed with velocity. Both observed and graphical values were identical.

Using Statistical Analysis System (SAS), a model which correlate with a L:D ratio of 1:1 was fitted to the variation of minimum fluidization velocity with moisture during drying (Figure 3). The data were best fitted to the model  $U_{mf} = A + B e^{-Cm}$  and its parameters are shown in the Table 1 for different bed heights. The same model was used for other ratios (2:1, 3:1). They were poorly correlated for L:D = 2:1 and 3:1. It should be noted that for L:D = 2:1 and 3:1, the slugging and channelling were commonly observed phenomena (results not shown).

Table 1. Parameters for Equation  $U_{mf} = A + B e^{-Cm}$  for variable bed heights

Bed height	A	B	C	r <sup>2</sup>	MAE%
100 mm	2.3541	0.8825	0.0017	0.91	3.8973
80 mm	2.2990	0.8514	0.0015	0.91	4.0703
60 mm	2.0793	0.7097	0.0019	0.86	4.6296
40 mm	2.1202	0.7691	0.0016	0.86	4.5223

At initial moisture values, minimum fluidization occurs together with channelling and slugging. This were more pronounced in larger L:D ratios. As moisture was reduced, the quality of fluidization improved reducing slugging and channelling. Good fluidization was observed at 32% (wb) for L:D ratio 3:1, 52 % (wb) for L:D ratio 2:1 and 60 % (wb) for L:D ratio 1:1. There was an increase in minimum fluidization velocity at very low moistures (< 4.1 % db), this can be probably attributed to an increase in the particle density due to shrinkage. This is also supported by the generalized equation (Equation 3). *Mean absolute error percentage* (MAE%) (Equation 4) was calculated according to the methods given by Mayer and Butler (1993) for different L:D ratios and are given in Table 1.

$$\text{MAE\%} = 100 \left[ \frac{\sum (|y_i - \hat{y}_i| / |\hat{y}_i|)}{n} \right] \quad (4)$$

#### **U<sub>mf</sub> calculation based on dimensional changes during drying**

The *Generalized model* was used to calculate the predicted values of minimum fluidization velocity. For all three L:D ratios, this generalized model gave underestimated values except at lower moisture levels. The predicted versus observed plots of minimum fluidization velocity are presented in Figure 4.

**Table 2. Mean Absolute Error % for predicted versus observed Minimum fluidization values**

<b>L:D</b>	<b>MAE%</b>
1:1	9.54
2:1	7.66
3:1	5.32

The MAE% values were less than 10 % (Table 2), indicating that the use of these models can be satisfactorily applicable (Kleijn, 1987) to predict the minimum fluidization velocity of green bean particulates, with reasonable accuracy.

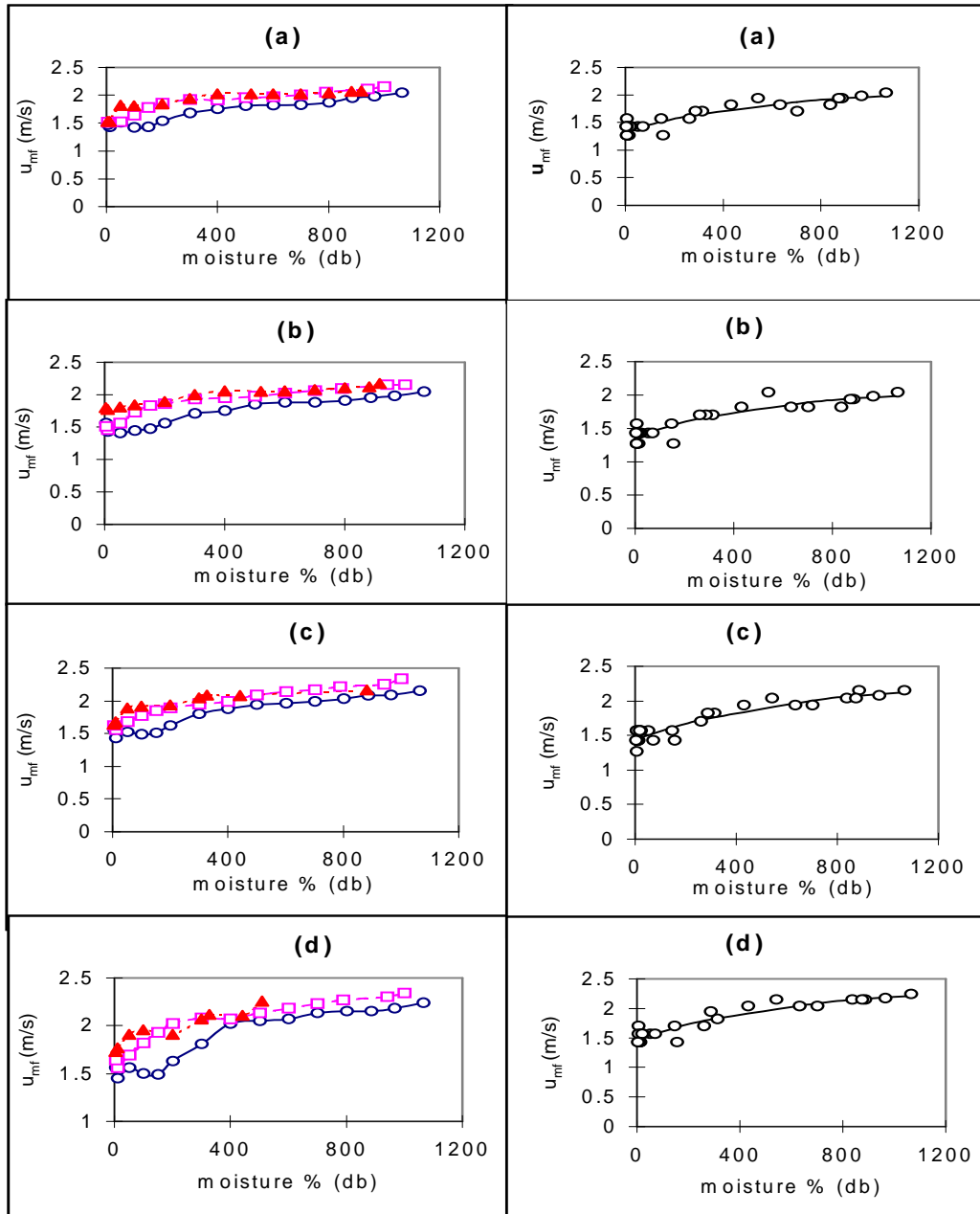


Figure 2. Fluidization behaviour of beans      Figure 3. Fluidization models L:D=1:1

(a) 40 mm (b) 60 mm

(a) 40 mm (b) 60 mm

(c) 80 mm (d) 100 mm

(c) 80 mm (d) 100 mm

(o L:D=1:1    L:D=2:1  $\Delta$  L:D=3:1)

(o experimental — model)

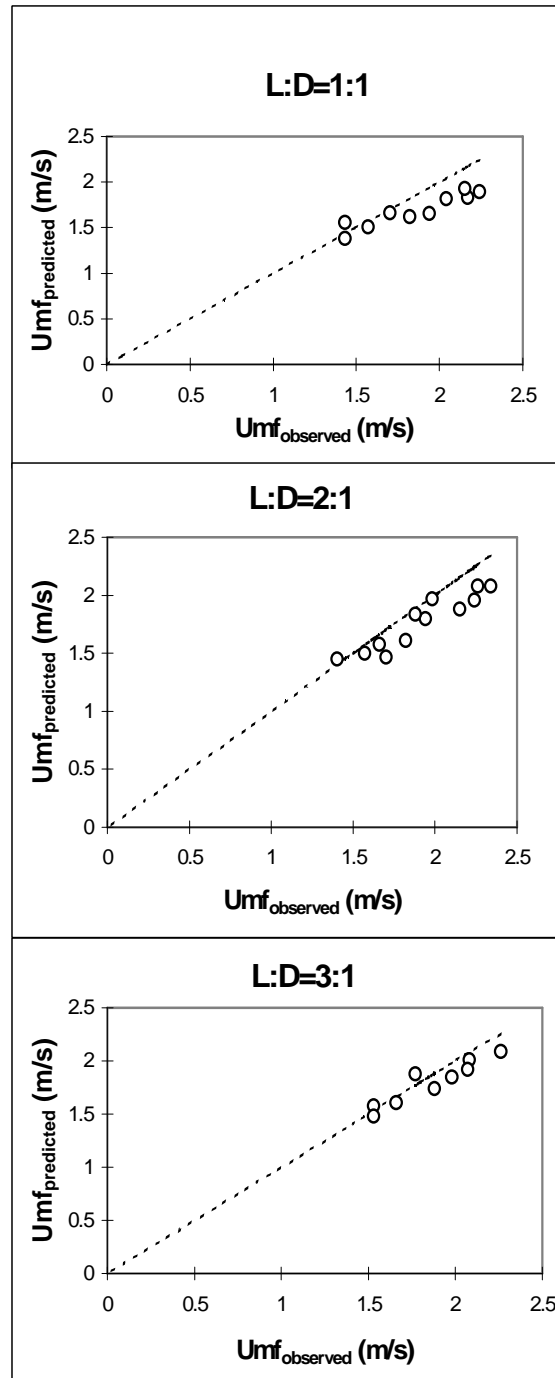


Figure 4. Predicted versus observed plots for different L:D ratios  
 [Note: Predicted values were calculated using  $u_{mf}^2 = \frac{d_p(\rho_s - \rho_f)}{24.5 \rho_f} g$ , and dotted line represents  $y = x$ , which

helps to determine over or under estimation by the model]



## CONCLUSIONS

The minimum fluidization velocity decrease as the drying proceeded. The minimum fluidization velocity of green bean with change in moisture can be predicted with an empirical model  $U_{mf} = A + B e^{-Cm}$  with a satisfactory fit for L:D = 1:1. Further, the calculated  $U_{mf}$  using a generalized equation  $u_{mf}^2 = \frac{d_p(\rho_s - \rho_f)}{24.5 \rho_f} g$ , based on the

dimensional changes of the product during drying can be applied to predict minimum fluidization velocity for all L:D ratios.

Further investigation of relationship between L/D change with moisture and bed height with minimum fluidization velocity is necessary.

## NOMENCLATURE

A	constant	
B	constant	
C	constant	
d	equivalent diameter	(m)
D	diameter	(m)
g	acceleration due to gravity	(m/s <sup>2</sup> )
L	length	(m)
m	moisture content (dry basis)	(kg/kg db)
Re	Reynolds number	
u	velocity	(m/s)
y	value	
$\phi$	sphericity	
$\epsilon$	porosity	
$\rho$	density	(kg/m <sup>3</sup> )
$\mu$	viscosity	(N s/m <sup>2</sup> )

### Superscripts

$\wedge$	predicted value
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### Subscripts

f	fluid
i	integer
mf	minimum fluidization
n	no of observations
p	particle
s	solid

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