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2	Unraveling the Performance of Dispersion-Corrected
3	Functionals for the Accurate Description of Weakly
4	Bound Natural Polyphenols

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1 GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



3 ABSTRACT

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4 Long-range non-covalent interactions play a key role in the chemistry of natural polyphenols. 5 We have previously proposed a description of supramolecular polyphenol complexes by the 6 B3P86 density functional coupled with some corrections for dispersion. We couple here the 7 B3P86 functional with the D3 correction for dispersion, assessing systematically the accuracy of 8 the new B3P86-D3 model using for that the well-known S66, HB23, NCCE31 and S12L datasets 9 for non-covalent interactions. Furthermore, the association energies of these complexes were 10 carefully compared to those obtained by other dispersion-corrected functionals, such as 11 B(3)LYP-D3, BP86-D3 or B3P86-NL. Finally, all this set of models were also applied to a 12 database composed of seven non-covalent polyphenol complexes of the most interest.

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1 1. Introduction

2 Polyphenols constitute one of the most important groups of natural compounds with ca. 10⁵ 3 defined structures including phenolic acids, lignans, flavonoids, coumarins and stilbenoids. They 4 are abundant in the plant kingdom and can be isolated from all plant organs (e.g., wood, root, 5 flower, leaf, fruit) [1,2]. Their properties have been extensively investigated over the past years. First of all, because the human diet is rich in polyphenols and due to their chemical diversity, 6 7 they exhibit a broad range of biological activities including cardiovascular [3], hepatic [4,5] and 8 neurologic [6] protective activities. Second, elucidation of their biomimetic synthesis has always 9 been a very active field of research [7] with the purpose of discovering new active compounds. 10 Last but not the least, numerous polyphenols are colored (e.g., anthocyanidins, chalconoids, 11 curcuminoids), which opens many opportunities in food industry to control pigmentation and 12 develop new hues.

13 Theoretical chemistry has provided useful insights for all this phenomena by giving an 14 accurate atomistic-like picture for the understanding of their macroscopical activities [8-15]. It 15 has been of particular help to rationalize the capacity of polyphenols to form non-covalent self-16 assemblies in real-world samples. Many physical chemical processes are influenced by these 17 supramolecular assemblies such as (i) UV/Vis properties [16,15,17] and thus pigmentation, (ii) 18 regio- and stereoselectivity of oxidative coupling [18-20,14], and (iii) kinetics of free radical 19 scavenging [12]. The related key biological processes strongly depend on the underlying non-20 covalent interactions such as: (i) plant color persistence [16,13] and hue variety in fruit and 21 beverages [21,22], (ii) biomimetic syntheses [7], and (iii) antioxidant activity [12,23,24], 22 respectively. These fields now require more than ever a deep understanding at the molecular 23 level, which can be efficiently supported by quantum-chemical calculations. The cost-efficient 24 yet accurate treatment of these interactions by *ab initio* methods is still challenging regarding the 25 large size of these real-world systems and the interplay between electrostatic and dispersion 26 interactions. Thus, Density Functional Theory (DFT) nowadays has become a judicious 27 compromise to perform such calculations for large systems, reaching a high accuracy at a 28 reasonable computational time. On one hand, the use of fine-tuned expressions for non-covalent 29 interactions, such as dispersion-corrected DFT-D [25-31] or DFT-NL [32-34] methods, is key to 30 accurately describe supramolecular assemblies of natural compounds. The choice of the ad 31 equate functional is, on the other hand, also important for the description of electronic structure

1 issues. In this context, we have recently proposed the coupling of the B3P86 functional with the 2 DFT-D2 [15] and DFT-NL formalisms [14], since B3P86 has been shown to behave accurately 3 enough for the rich chemistry of polyphenol compounds [15,14,35-37]. Therefore, the present 4 study aims at an improvement of this description using the DFT-D3 formalism and then the 5 corresponding B3P86-D3 method is thoroughly assessed against standard non-covalent 6 databases, but also for a 7-member group of non-covalent natural polyphenol systems including 7 selected supramolecular geometries [38,15,14] of the most interest (see Scheme 1 and Figure 1).

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Scheme 1. Chemical structures of (a) phenol, (b) ε-viniferin, (c) 3-O-methylcyanidin and (d)
 quercetin. The hydrogen atoms and corresponding C-H bonds have been omitted for clarity.

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13	To do it, the parameters entering into the -D3 correction have been fitted against the S66
14	database following a brute-force procedure. It must be stressed that two types of damping
15	functions have been proposed within the DFT-D formalism, namely Zero-Damping (ZD) and
16	Becke-Johnson[39-41] (BJ) damping functions. To evaluate the robustness of the new model,
17	both B3P86-D3(BJ) and B3P86-D3(ZD) functionals were first tested against the S66 [42], HB23
18	[43] and NCCE31 [44-46] databases and consequently compared to well-known Becke family
19	functionals, i.e., BP86, BLYP, B3LYP and B3P86 variants (including or not various dispersion
20	corrections). Our previous parameterizations of B3P86-D2 and B3P86-NL are also included to
21	underline the improvement provided by DFT-D3 formalism. Finally, the B3P86-D3 performance
22	is validated on more real-world systems from S12L database [47] and seven natural non-covalent
23	polyphenol systems,

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4 2. Theoretical considerations

5 2.1. Computational details

6 All calculations were performed with the ORCA 2.8.1 and 2.9.0 packages for both DFT-D2 and

7 DFT-NL formalisms, respectively [48], while the DFT-D3 study (i.e., ZD- and BJ-functions as

8 well as three-body term) was carried out using Grimme's code [49].

9 The different parameters for the –D3 function were obtained by a brute-force method for both

10 ZD and BJ functions, namely B3P86-D3(ZD) and B3P86-D3(BJ), respectively. With the former

11 function, a set of s_8 and $s_{r,6}$ values in the ranges 0.500-3.500 and 0.500-2.100, respectively, were

12 tested against the S66 dataset. For the latter function, the s_8 , α_1 and α_2 values were tested in the

13 0.700-3.000, 0.300-0.700 and 4.000-5.000 ranges, respectively. This screen will cover

1 extensively all the physically meaningful space (vide infra). It must be stressed that the 2 elucidation of B3P86-D3(ZD) parameters was investigated in order to provide a complete 3 assessment of B3P86-D3 refinement. However, the use of ZD function is not recommended with 4 respect to BJ one since the latter consider the correct physical short-range behavior.[Ref] 5 The Def2-QZVPP (large) basis set used is believed to be close to the asymptotic region, thus preventing from Basis Set Superposition Error (BSSE) [14]. Note also that we used Resolution-6 7 of-the-Identity (RI) together with the "Chain-Of-Sphere eXchange" (COSX) algorithms, leading 8 to dramatic speed-up of calculations without exhibiting any significant lack of accuracy (see

9 Supporting information [50,51]. The Def2-OZVPP auxiliary basis set (i.e., Def2-OZVPP/JK) 10 was taken from the hardwired library. Numerical thresholds were systematically increased during 11 the B3P86-D3 parameterization (i.e., VeryTightSCF, NoFinalGrid, GRID7, GRIDX6) with 12 respect to the defaults to avoid as much as possible any numerical error. The numerical threshold 13 and basis set were slightly modified for both S12L and polyphenol datasets to overcome 14 numerical stability issues on very large systems (i.e., Def2-TZVPP, TightSCF, NoFinalGrid, 15 GRID6, GRIDX5). When needed (i.e., polyphenol complexation measured in water [52]), 16 calculations were performed using implicit solvent models in which the solute is embedded in a 17 shape-adapted cavity surrounded by a structure-less dielectric continuum, namely COnductor-18 like Screening MOdel (COSMO) [53].

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20 2.2. Comparison of B3P86-D3 parameters with respect to known functionals

21 A true minimum in the three-parameter dependent hypersurface was obtained with $s_8 = 2.483$, α_1 = 0.541 and α_2 = 4.306 for B3P86-D3(BJ). As expected, s_8 is 24% higher for the GGA functional 22 23 compared to the corresponding hybrid ($s_8 = 3.282$ and 2.483 for BP86-D3(BJ) and B3P86-24 D3(BJ), respectively, see Supporting Information). This is similarly observed for the BLYP-25 D3(BJ)/B3LYP-D3(BJ) values (s₈ is 26% higher for BLYP-D3(BJ)). This trend is in perfect 26 agreement with previous studies since B88-based exchange functionals have been shown to 27 exhibit a larger s_8 parameter than others (e.g., PBE0-D3(BJ) s_8 parameter is 1.218) [28]. Besides, 28 $\alpha_{l}(\alpha_{2})$ parameters are higher(lower) for B3P86-D3(BJ) than for B3LYP-D3(BJ), while it is 29 higher(lower) for BLYP-D3(BJ) than for BP86-D3(BJ) (see Table 1a). This might indicate how 30 the correction of B3P86-D3(BJ) is less long-ranged and more atom-pair dependent than B3LYP-

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- 1 D3(BJ). In other words, B3P86 inherently requires less correction because behaves less
- 2 repulsively than B3LYP, which also agrees with the previous DFT-D2 parameterization since s_6 3 was also found to be lower for B3P86-D2 than for B3LYP-D2 [15].
- 4 The two functional-dependent parameters for B3P86-D3(ZD) have been also correspondingly
- 5 obtained ($s_8 = 0.720$ and $s_{r,6} = 1.110$, see Supporting Information). The value of s_8 for B3P86-
- 6 D3(ZD) is significantly lower than for B3LYP-D3(ZD) ($s_8 = 0.720$ and 1.703 for B3P86-D3(ZD)
- 7 and B3LYP-D3(ZD), respectively, see Supporting Information).
- 8 As a first sight, the combination of the hybrid B88 exchange functional with the P86 9 correlation functional might better perform for long-range description than the combination with 10 LYP as a correlation functional. It must be noted that BLYP has appeared less repulsive than 11 BP86 [27], in contradiction with the present results obtained for the hybrid forms. Our results 12 clearly suggest that the hybrid form B3P86 might be well-suited for an accurate description of 13 long-range interactions when coupled with a correction for dispersion. We hope to confirm these 14 finding next by assessing the B3P86-D3 parameterizations against various databases dedicated to 15 non-covalent interactions.
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17 3. Relevance of B3P86-D3 against standard databases

18 **3.1. The biochemically inspired S66 database**

19 The S66 database comprises a set of bioinspired molecular structures (e.g., amino acids from-20 proteins or nucleic acids from DNA) exhibiting the most common non-covalent interactions 21 (including dispersion, electrostatic and mixed systems) [42]. A summary of the benchmarking 22 done is presented in Figure 2a with further details for the different subsets reported in Table 1. 23 MAD was reduced to 0.46 and 0.36 kcal.mol⁻¹ for B3P86-D2 and B3P86-NL, respectively (see 24 Figure 2a), thus validating the previous parameterization of B3P86 within the DFT-D2 and DFT-25 NL framework using smaller databases for it [15,14]. Interestingly, the MAD of B3P86-D3 is ca. halved with respect to B3P86-D2, whatever the damping function is used (MAD = 0.24, 26 kcal.mol⁻¹ for both B3P86-D3(BJ) and -D3(ZD), see Figure 2a). 27 28 Broadly speaking, B3P86-D3 results are slightly better than BP86-D3 and B3LYP-D3 but

without outperforming those obtained by BLYP-D3 (e.g., MAD = 0.31, 0.25 and 0.17 kcal.mol⁻¹,

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1 for BP86-D3, B3LYP-D3 and BLYP-D3, respectively, see Figure 2a). However, no clear

2 statement can be provided regarding the slight differences observed between these functionals.

Figure 2. Mean absolute deviation (MAD, kcal.mol⁻¹) of selected functionals with or without
dispersion corrections, for the (a) total S66, (b) HB23 and (c) NCCE31 benchmarks. All the
calculations were performed with the Def2-QZVPP basis set.

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8 In the remaining of this section, only the dispersion and mixed (electrostatic and dispersion) 9 interactions are separately discussed, as the S66 electrostatic-like subset is contained (*vide infra*) 10 in the HB23 database. Among all the functionals used, the lowest MAD values for the S66 11 dispersion subset are again in a very narrow range. Actually, the lowest MAD is observed for 12 both B3P86-D3 revisions (MAD = 0.15 kcal.mol⁻¹ for both B3P86-D3(BJ) and -D3(ZD), see 13 Table 1). It must be emphasized that B3P86-NL seems also suitable for dispersion-driven 14 systems while B3P86-D2 and B3LYP-D3(ZD) appears less appropriate (MAD = 0.17, 0.66 and

0.29 kcal.mol⁻¹, for B3P86-NL, -D2 and B3LYP-D3(ZD), respectively - see Table 1). On the
 other hand, no significant difference is observed between the different corrections for the mixed
 systems (e.g., MAD = 0.26 and 0.13 kcal.mol⁻¹ for B3P86-D2 and B3P86-D3(BJ), respectively,
 Table 1). Overall, the dispersion-corrected B3P86 functionals appear well-suited for this mixed
 (electrostatic and dispersion) class of biochemically inspired systems.

6

7 Table 1. Mean Absolute Deviation (MAD, kcal.mol⁻¹) on S66 subsets (i.e., Dispersion and

8 Mixed, see text) and NCCE31 subsets (i.e., NCCE31-CNOH, rare gas NCCE31-RG and halogen

9 NCCE31-X, see text) for selected functionals of interest with or without dispersion corrections.

10 All the calculations were performed with the Def2-QZVPP basis set.

Functional	Dispersion correction	S66		NCCE31		
Functional	Dispersion correction	Dispersion	Mixed	CNOSH	RG	Х
	Uncorrected	6.08	3.72	2.39	0.39	1.25
BLYP	D3(BJ)	0.20	0.11	0.30	0.13	2.02
	D3(ZD)	0.52	0.32	0.41	0.07	1.82
	Uncorrected	5.50	3.31	2.02	0.60	1.28
BP86	D3(BJ)	0.36	0.18	0.42	0.36	2.08
	D3(ZD)	0.70	0.46	0.52	0.29	2.02
	Uncorrected	5.11	2.96	1.72	0.29	0.64
B3LYP	D3(BJ)	0.18	0.15	0.39	0.07	1.16
	D3(ZD)	0.29	0.23	0.34	0.03	0.99
	Uncorrected	4.70	2.69	1.48	0.46	0.66
	D2	0.66	0.26	0.58	0.24	0.88
B3P86	D3(BJ)	0.15	0.14	0.42	0.27	1.01
	D3(ZD)	0.15	0.14	0.36	0.23	0.91
	NL(b=5.1)	0.17	0.18	0.56	0.21	1.43

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12 3.2. The Hydrogen bonding HB23 database

13 The HB23 database is an improved version of the S66 electrostatic-like subset, in which

14 association energies have been recently refined by Di Labio et al [43]. Indeed, the original S66

15 database possibly underestimated association energies of the electrostatic-like subset systems due

16 to the counterpoise correction used originally.

1 As it should be, B3P86 dispersion corrected MAD values are significantly lower than those 2 from the uncorrected B3P86. B3P86-D3(BJ) exhibits the lowest MAD (MAD = 0.40, 0.42, 0.433 and 0.70 kcal.mol⁻¹ for B3P86-D3(BJ), B3P86-D3(ZD), B3P86-D2 and B3P86-NL, respectively 4 - see Figure 2b). No significant differences were observed between the DFT-D2 and DFT-D3 5 corrections. A slightly higher MAD was observed for B3P86-NL; however, this functional should not be discarded since MAD is still acceptably low. 6 7 In summary, B3P86-D3(BJ) exhibits reliable results with respect to the best performing BLYP-D3(BJ) (MAD = 0.22 and 0.40 kcal.mol⁻¹ for BLYP-D3(BJ) and B3P86-D3(BJ), 8

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11 3.3. The atypical long-range NCCE31 database

respectively, Figure 2b).

The S66 database focuses on biochemically inspired systems, so only compounds made of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and hydrogen are included, as being the most common atoms of living organisms. However, dispersion effects attributed to halogen atoms, as chlorine and fluorine, may exhibit some specific behavior due to larger polarizability effects. To explore further this feature, the NCCE31 database was built by Truhlar et al. [44-46], in which chemical systems include either halogen atoms, namely chlorine and fluorine, or rare gas atoms, namely helium, neon and argon.

19 The results from B3P86-D3(ZD) closely agree with those from B3LYP-D3(ZD). Indeed, these 20 two dispersion-corrected hybrid functionals provided the best description of long-range interactions on such systems (MAD of 0.55 and 0.53 kcal.mol⁻¹, respectively, see Figure 2c). 21 22 This highlights the importance of HF-like exchange to improve description of systems containing 23 halogen atoms. However, MAD values were significantly higher than those obtained here for the 24 S66 and HB23 databases. As a representative example, B3P86-D3(BJ) MAD was 0.62 and 0.24 25 kcal.mol⁻¹ for NCCE31 and S66, respectively (see Figure 2a&c). Nevertheless, all dispersion-26 corrected functionals are still under the "chemical accuracy" threshold (i.e., < 1 kcal.mol⁻¹) except for those based on BP86 (MAD = 1.05 and 1.06 kcal.mol⁻¹ with BP86-D3(BJ) and BP86-27 28 D3(ZD), respectively, see Figure 2c).

The lower performance on NCCE31 was thoroughly studied by designing three *ad hoc* NCCE31 subsets according to atomic composition, namely (i) NCCE31-CNOSH containing exclusively C-, N-, O-, S- and H-atoms; (ii) NCCE31-RG containing helium, neon, argon and Florent Di Meo 21/9/2015 13:25 Deleted: exhibits the best performance (Florent Di Meo 21/9/2015 13:25 Deleted: , being in the same range than B3P86-D3(BJ), BP86-D3(BJ) and B3LYP-D3(BJ) (e.g., MAD = 0.40, 0.42 and 0.37 kcal.mol⁻¹, respectively,

without halogen; and (iii) NCCE31-X containing chlorine and fluorine but discarding rare gas
 atoms.

We note first that all dispersion-corrected functionals provided excellent results for both NCCE31-CNOSH and NCCE31-RG subsets (see Table 1) in which dispersion has a major contribution. For instance, B3P86-D3(BJ) exhibits MAD values lower than 0.45 kcal.mol⁻¹ (0.42 and 0.27 kcal.mol⁻¹ for NCCE31-CNOSH and NCCE31-RG-based subsets, respectively, Table 1).

8 On the other hand, the dispersion-corrected functionals failed at accurately describing the 9 NCCE31-X subset, providing deviations even higher than the corresponding uncorrected forms 10 (Table 1). The presence of halogens in such small systems increases the local electrostatic bond 11 feature, which is inherently well described by uncorrected functionals. Therefore, the use of such 12 dispersion corrections tends to overbind NCCE31-X complexes by overestimating the dispersion 13 contribution, Mean Deviation being e.g., -0.81 and -0.48 kcal.mol⁻¹ for B3LYP-D3(BJ) and 14 B3P86-D3, respectively (see Supporting Information).

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16 4. Assessment of the B3P86-D3 model for large systems

17 4.1. The S12L database

18 Recently, the S12L database has been proposed to assess dispersion-corrected functionals on 19 large π -delocalized systems having real-world applications, including e.g., non-covalent 20 complexes with C₆₀ and C₇₀ fullerenes or dicationic ferrocene derivatives [47]. This database has 21 been especially designed to assess both the three-body term (so-called ABC-term) contained in 22 the DFT-D3 formalism, as well as the thermodynamic contributions. It must be stressed that the 23 present study only deals with the former; vibrational analysis would have required huge 24 computational resources, which are beyond the scope of work. Note also that calculations were 25 performed here with the triple- ζ basis set due to some numerical instabilities when using the 26 quadruple- ζ basis set. This is however not expected to largely influence the conclusions dropped 27 here.

28 The different dispersion corrections are able to drastically improve the description of S12L

association energies (see Table 2). Interestingly, B3P86-D2 provides a very low error (MAD =

30 1.6 kcal.mol⁻¹) while B3P86-NL appears not so suited to predict association energies for these

systems (MAD = 8.3 kcal.mol⁻¹). B3P86-NL should thus be carefully used for the large S12L
systems. DFT-D3 correction ranges from 2.2 to 6.0 kcal.mol⁻¹ (see Table 2), the relevance of the
ABC-term within the DFT-D3 framework was previously highlighted for such big systems [47].
DFT-D3(BJ) is more affected by ABC-term correction than DFT-D3(ZD), the MAD difference
between the uncorrected and corrected values being 2.2 and 1.0 kcal.mol⁻¹ for DFT-D3(BJ) and

6 DFT-D3(ZD), respectively (Table 2).

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8 **Table 2.** Association energies (kcal.mol⁻¹) and mean absolute deviation (MAD, kcal.mol⁻¹) for

9 S12L dataset. All the calculations were performed with the Def2-TZVPP basis set.

Structure	tructure B3D86		Structure B3P86		B3P86-D2	B3P86-D3(BJ)		B3P86-D3(ZD)		D oforonoo ^b
Structure	D 3F80	-D2	no-ABC	ABC	no-ABC	ABC	$-NL^a$	Kelelelice		
1	2.1	-1.6	-3.1	-3.0	-2.5	-2.4	-2.6	-2.8		
2a	1.6	-29.7	-37.1	-35.2	-32.2	-30.4	-37.0	-30.3		
2b	3.4	-19.5	-24.7	-23.3	-20.9	-19.6	-24.2	-20.5		
3a	2.1	-23.1	-29.6	-27.7	-27.0	-25.2	-32.3	-24.4		
3b	-5.4	-18.7	-22.2	-21.5	-21.3	-20.5	-24.5	-20.4		
4a	14.9	-30.9	-41.1	-37.7	-30.4	-27.2	-44.9	-31.8		
4b	15.4	-33.1	-44.3	-40.5	-33.2	-29.6	-47.0	-32.6		
5a	-14.8	-36.7	-38.7	-37.6	-38.2	-37.2	-41.5	-31.9		
5b	-3.9	-23.1	-26.3	-25.2	-25.2	-24.2	-28.1	-20.4		
6a	-61.9	-83.0	-87.7	-85.3	-87.6	-85.3	-89.9	-82.2		
6b	-62.0	-79.8	-83.7	-81.7	-83.5	-81.6	-85.1	-78.9		
7a	-84.4	-132.9	-138.7	-133.8	-137.2	-132.3	-146.0	-129.6		
7b	5.0	-25.2	-31.7	-28.2	-30.2	-26.8	-35.5	-25.7		
MAD	26.4	1.6	6.0	3.8	3.2	2.2	8.3	-		

^a b=5.1, see Ref. [14]

^b From Ref. [47]

1 We are aware that these results can be analyzed only at a semi-quantitative level. The basis set 2 used is not sufficiently large and the use of counterpoise (CP) correction might overestimate the 3 associated BSSE [47]. However, some trends emerged from the array of data [54,55]. As a 4 matter of illustration, the D3-like corrections used led to an accurate description of these systems 5 considering that the "chemical accuracy" (defined as an error below 1 kcal.mol⁻¹) is unrealistic for large systems. In other words, an error of 2-3 kcal.mol⁻¹ would be a more realistic target. 6 7 The common dispersion correction tends to overestimate association energies (see Supporting 8 Information) and, finally, the use of the repulsive ABC-term for B3P86-D3 significantly

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11 4.2. Natural polyphenol dataset

decreases this overestimation.

Over the past years, the chemistry of polyphenol has been of utmost importance in food science. 12 13 Non-covalent interactions have been shown to play a key role in optical, chemical and biological 14 properties of polyphenols [17,18,15,12,16,22]. Even if we are aware that theoretical chemistry 15 aims at finding the generally applicable methods, we believe that, regarding the huge amount of 16 phenolic derivatives and the huge amount of possible non-covalent association of interest, both 17 dispersion and H-bonding interactions drive polyphenol non-covalent dimerization. Thus, we 18 still believe that this family deserves particular attention (i.e. specific methods and database for 19 further benchmarking).

Therefore, the seven non-covalent polyphenol systems studied here include the phenol Tshaped dimer taken from S22; for which the geometry was obtained at the MP2/CBS level of theory [29]. This system is driven only by H-bond since no π -stacked conformation has been identified yet as being more stable.

The complete potential energy surface of the 3-*O*-methylcyanidin:quercetin dimer (namely **C:Q**) was previously explored at the B3P86-D2/cc-pVDZ level of theory, revealing the existence of five conformations, namely **C:Q** conformers 1-5 [15]. These systems are mainly driven by π stacking forces, as favored by the strong π -electron delocalization character of **C:Q**. The existence of numerous OH groups in each partner (see Scheme 1) induces a strong competition between intra- and intermolecular H-bonding (Figure 1), making the global H-bonding contribution weak in these complexes. The use of the five conformations allows having a

1 reasonable conformational sampling. The Boltzmann-weighted average association energy

2 derived from the relative electronic energy between all five conformers can then be compared to

3 the reference experimental value [52].

4 The third system includes the ε -viniferin dimer previously elucidated [14]. This system

- 5 exhibits both H-bonding and π -stacking contributions. The complete potential energy surface has
- 6 not been yet explored due to the high number of degrees of freedom and the system size,
- 7 however this dimer might be used as a relevant system for studying the interplay between hybrid
- 8 H-bonding and π -stacking.
- 9
- 10 **Table 3.** BSSE-uncorrected association energies (kcal.mol⁻¹) for the 7-member group of non-
- 11 covalent natural polyphenol systems with (a) B3P86 and (b) SCS-MP2 methods refinements. All
- 12 the calculations were performed with Def2-TZVPP basis set.
- 13 (a)

	Conf B3P86 -D2	B	B3P86	B3P86-D3(BJ)		B3P86-D3(ZD)		B3P86-NL	
		no- ABC	ABC	no- ABC	ABC	b=5.1	b=5.3		
Phenol dimer		-3.7	-6.9	-7.3	-7.2	-7.3	-7.3	-7.5	-7.3
C:Q	1	14.0	-9.8	-12.8	-11.6	-10.3	-9.2	-14.7	-13.5
	2	14.5	-10.4	-13.1	-11.9	-11.0	-9.8	-15.3	-14.0
	3	14.8	-11.2	-15.1	-13.8	-12.1	-10.8	-17.1	-15.8
	4	14.9	-10.5	-13.8	-12.5	-11.5	-10.3	-15.8	-14.5
	5	16.8	-10.9	-14.0	-12.6	-11.5	-10.1	-16.7	-15.2
ε -viniferin dime	r	21.5	-8.5	-11.6	-9.8	-9.5	-7.8	-14.3	-12.9

14

15 (b)

	Conf.	SCS-MP2	SCS-MP2- D2	SCS-S66-MP2
Phenol dimer		-6.9	-7.5	-8.0
C:Q	1	-15.8	-20.7	-21.7
	2	-16.4	-21.5	-24.8
	3	-20.1	-25.4	-24.8
	4	-18.0	-23.2	-22.8

_	5	-18.8	-24.5	-22.9	
ε -viniferin dimer		-20.3	-26.4	-14.2	

2 Assessment of association energies. For the phenol dimer, the reference association energy ($\Delta E =$ 3 -7.1 kcal.mol⁻¹, see Figure 3a) was obtained with the current computationally acceptable "gold 4 standard" CCSD(T)/CBS level of theory [38]. The uncorrected B3P86 method exhibits association energy of -3.7 kcal.mol⁻¹, pointing out at least the qualitative correct description of 5 H-bonds (electrostatic-like) by B3P86. However, the use of dispersion correction is mandatory 6 7 for a more complete description of all the non-covalent interactions arising in the phenol dimer. 8 All dispersion corrected functionals (i.e., DFT-D or DFT-NL) provided association energies in 9 the range from -7.5 to -6.9 kcal.mol⁻¹, and thus in very good agreement with the CCSD(T)/CBS reference value (see Table 3 and Figure 3a). The triple- ζ basis set seems to be sufficient to reach 10 11 up the basis set limit for such a small system. The use of the ABC-term does not bring any 12 significant difference, as it was previously suggested for small systems [28,47]. It must be 13 stressed that two slightly different forms of B3P86-NL were assessed here. Recently, a different 14 attenuating parameter b = 5.3 [57] was proposed to couple the -NL correction to the B3P86 15 functional, comparable to our previous estimate of b = 5.1 [14]. As it is expected, association 16 energies do not differ between both methods (i.e., $\Delta E = -7.5$ and -7.3 kcal.mol⁻¹, for b = 5.1 and 17 5.3, respectively, see Table 3 and Figure 3a). 18 The association energy of reference for C:Q complexes was experimentally derived in solution 19 $(\Delta H = -13.9 \text{ kcal.mol}^{-1})$, see Table 4 and Figure 3b) [52]. It must be stressed that calculations 20 from the present study do not include thermodynamic corrections. However, no significant 21 differences between enthalpy and internal energies are expected: vibrational thermal corrections 22 of each free partner are expected to cancel the global vibrational thermal correction on the dimer. 23 It must be stressed that specific solvation contributions to enthalpy are neglected. Theoretical 24 association energies are either presented for each conformation (Table 3) or as a Boltzmann-25 weighted interaction energy (ΔE_{boltz} , see Table 4 and Figure 3b). The latter is used when

26 theoretical results are compared to the experimental value.

27 B3P86-D2 association energies in the present study are significantly higher (by 2.8 kcal.mol⁻¹)

than those performed in our previous study [15] (see Table 3). Our previous association energies

1 were performed with a lower basis set and corrected by the counterpoise correction, and will be 2 thus recalculated here. DFT-D3 is the best performing with respect to DFT-NL and DFT-D2, 3 providing the closest value to experiment (Table 4 and Figure 3b). The use of the three-body 4 term together with the ZD-damping function obviously enhances the error by adding the ABC-5 repulsive term ($\Delta E_{\text{boltz}} = -11.8$ and -10.5 kcal.mol⁻¹ for B3P86-D3(ZD) without or with threebody correction, respectively, Table 4). The use of the BJ-damping function is thus 6 recommended to describe such systems since results are closer to the experimental value (ΔE_{boltz} 7 = -13.4 and -14.8 kcal.mol⁻¹ for B3P86-D3(BJ) with or without three-body correction, 8 9 respectively, Table 4). C:Q are systems big enough to be significantly affected by the three-body

10 correction, which is thus recommended to be always included for large supramolecular

11 complexes.

12

13 **Table 4.** Calculated and reference association energies (ΔE , kcal.mol⁻¹) of Boltzmann-weighted

Method			ΔE_{boltz}^{a}
DFT	B3P86		14.3
	B3P86-D2		-10.9
	B3P86-D3(BJ)	No-ABC	-14.8
		ABC	-13.4
	B3P86-D3(ZD)	No-ABC	-11.8
		ABC	-10.5
	B3P86-NL	b=5.1	-16.8
	B3P86-NL(b=5.3)	b=5.3	-15.5
SCS-MP2	SCS-MP2		-19.9
	SCS-MP2-D2		-25.2
	SCS-S66-MP2		-24.7

^{*a*} Experiments exhibits association enthalpy $\Delta H = -13.9$

kcal.mol⁻¹, see Ref. [52]

15

16 Regarding association energies of the ε -viniferin, the following sequence is observed: B3P86-17 D2 \approx B3P86-D3(ZD)-ABC > B3P86-D3(ZD) > B3P86-D3(BJ)-ABC > B3P86-D3(BJ) > B3P86-18 NL. It must be stressed that neither experimental reference value nor high-level post-HF 19 calculations (i.e., CCSD(T)/CBS calculation) are available for this dimer. The association energy

20 of ε-viniferin dimer was previously obtained at the SCS-MP2/Def2-TZVPP level of theory,

- 1 which will be confirmed here [14]. It must be stressed that SCS-MP2 method consists in a
- 2 refinement of MP2 one, in which spin-paired and spin-unpaired electron contributions are scaled
- 3 [58]. Three SCS-MP2 methods were actually also assessed for the 7 non-covalent polyphenol
- 4 prototypes, namely the native SCS-MP2 method [58] and a pair of dispersion-driven
- 5 refinements; the SCS-MP2-D2; and the SCS-S66-MP2 variant [59]. Indeed, its native form
- 6 (SCS-MP2) exhibits significant error with respect to S66, while the SCS-MP2-D2 refinements
- 7 for non-covalent interactions are expected to be more accurate for this study [42,59].
- 8 For the sake of comparison, the BLYP, BP86 and B3LYP functionals (with and without their
- 9 respective DFT-D3 correction) were also assessed and their results reported in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Calculated and reference association energies (ΔE, kcal.mol⁻¹) of (a) Phenol dimer and
(b) Boltzmann-weighted C:Q subset. All the calculations were performed with the Def2-TZVPP
basis set.

It must be noticed that all SCS-MP2 based methods overestimate binding of phenol dimer and C:Q complexes with respect to reference values (see Table 3b and Figure 3). The use of SCS-MP2 related methods is therefore not as appropriate as dispersion-corrected DFT, considering the involved higher computational effort. The same concluding remark could be applied to B3P86-NL, but to a lesser extent. This formalism tends to globally overestimate binding for the

1 7-member group of non-covalent natural polyphenol systems as shown in Tables 4 and Figure 3. 2 Interestingly, among conventional DFT functionals, BLYP and B3LYP exhibit good agreement 3 with respect to reference only with DFT-D3(BJ) correction including ABC-term while BP86 4 tends to overestimate polyphenol binding energies. Such results again highlight the importance 5 of three-body term for polyphenol systems since only DFT-D3 corrections including ABC term 6 provide acceptable results. Among all dispersion-corrected DFT assessed here, the following 7 sequence is given BP86-D3(BJ) < B3P86-NL \approx B3P86-D2 < B3LYP-D3(BJ) < BLYP-D3(BJ) \approx 8 B3P86-D3(BJ), in terms of accuracy.

9

10 5. Conclusion

11 In this study, the parameterization of the B3P86-D3 dispersion-corrected model is done against the S66, and further assessed using the HB23, NCCE31 and S12L databases of non-covalent 12 13 compounds. Both the BJ- and ZD-damping functions were systematically evaluated. The 14 performance of B3P86-D3 has been compared with that of BLYP-D3, BP86-D3 and B3LYP-D3, 15 showing that B3P86-D3(BJ) emerges one of the best performing and cost-efficient methods for 16 real-world phenolic systems. We have also confirmed the goof performance of B3P86-D3 on the 17 7-member group of non-covalent natural polyphenol systems providing a significant 18 improvement with respect to the other previously derived dispersion-corrected B3P86 methods. 19 B3P86-D3(BJ) is thus recommended for dealing with challenging (supramolecular issues) in 20 polyphenol chemistry, also considering the low computational effort compare to the "gold-21 standard" CCSD(T) or related SCS-MP2 methods. Keeping in mind that environmental 22 conditions (e.g., polarity, pH, specific intermolecular interaction with solvent, presence of metal 23 ions) should also be carefully treated when needed, we believe that the methodology is fully 24 applicable for i) food and wine application (tuning optical properties in copigmentation 25 complexes), and ii) in biology (antioxidant) properties.

26

Supporting Information. Description of non-covalent refinement within DFT formalism; DFT D3 parameters for studied functionals; Interaction energies for studied functionals with S66,
 HB23 and NCCE31 databases; Global statistical analysis including MAD, RMSD and MD for
 S66, HB23, NCCE31, and S12L databases; XYZ-coordinates of seven non-covalent polyphenol

1 systems and corresponding stand-alone polyphenols; Assessment of RIJCOSX reliability to

2 energy minimum for C:Q system

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