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1 **The lipid biochemistry of eukaryotic algae**

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35 **Abstract: (203)**

36 Algal lipid metabolism fascinates both scientists and entrepreneurs due to the large diversity of
37 fatty acyl structures that algae produce. Algae have therefore long been studied as sources of
38 genes for novel fatty acids; **and**, due to their superior biomass productivity, algae are **also**
39 considered a potential feedstock for biofuels. However, a major issue in a commercially viable
40 “algal **oil**-to-biofuel” industry is the high production cost, because most algal species only
41 produce large amounts of **oils** after being exposed to stress conditions. Recent studies have
42 therefore focused on the identification of factors involved in TAG metabolism, on the
43 subcellular organization of lipid pathways, and on interactions between organelles. This has
44 been accompanied by the development of genetic/genomic and synthetic biological tools not
45 only for the reference green alga *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* but also for *Nannochloropsis spp.*
46 and *Phaeodactylum tricornutum*. Advances in our understanding of enzymes and regulatory
47 proteins of acyl lipid biosynthesis and turnover are described herein with a focus on carbon and
48 energetic aspects. We also summarize how changes in environmental factors can impact lipid
49 metabolism and describe present and potential industrial uses of algal lipids.

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59 **Key words:** Algal lipid metabolism; Acetyl-CoA carboxylase; β -oxidation; Mitochondrial
60 respiration; Reducing equivalents; Triacylglycerols; Environmental effects; Commercial
61 exploitation

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69 **Abbreviations:** (as a footnote)

70 α -CT, α -carboxyltransferase; ACCase, acetyl-CoA carboxylase; ACK, acetate kinase; ACAD,
71 acyl-CoA dehydrogenase; ACOX, acyl-CoA oxidase; ACP, acyl carrier protein; ACS, acetyl-
72 CoA synthetase; AOX, alternative oxidase; APX, ascorbate peroxidase; ASC, ascorbate; β -CT,
73 β -carboxyltransferase; BADC, biotin attachment domain-containing protein; BC, biotin
74 carboxylase; BCAA, branched chain amino acid; BCCP, biotin carboxyl carrier protein; CAT,
75 catalase; CEF, cyclic electron flow; CoA, coenzyme A; CTS1, comatose 1; COX, cytochrome
76 oxidase; DAG, diacylglycerol; DGAT, diacylglycerol acyltransferase; DGDG,
77 digalactosyldiacylglycerol; DHA, docosahexaenoic acid; DH, dehydrogenase; DGTA, 1,2-
78 diacylglyceryl-3-O-2'-(hydroxymethyl)-(N,N,N-trimethyl)- β -alanine; DGTS, diacylglyceryl-3-
79 O-4'-(N,N,N-trimethyl)-homoserine; DYRK, dual-specificity tyrosine-phosphorylation-
80 regulated kinase; EPA, eicosapentaenoic acid; ER, enoyl-ACP reductase; FA, fatty acid; FAD,
81 fatty acid desaturase; FAT, fatty acyl-ACP thioesterase; FAX1, fatty acid export1; KAS, 3-
82 ketoacyl-ACP synthase; G3P, glycerol-3-phosphate; G6PDH, glucose-6-phosphate
83 dehydrogenase; GPAT, glycerol-3-phosphate acyltransferase; HAD, hydroxyacyl-ACP
84 dehydrase; HL, high light; KAR, ketoacyl-ACP reductase; LACS, long chain acyl-CoA
85 synthetase; LEF, linear electron flow; Lyso-PA, lysophosphatidic acid; LPAAT,
86 lysophosphatidic acid acyltransferase; MCMT, malonyl-CoA:ACP malonyltransferase; Mal,
87 malate; MDA, malondialdehyde; ME, malic enzyme; MFP, multi-functional protein; MGDG,
88 monogalactosyldiacylglycerol; NO, nitric oxide; NRR1, nitrogen response regulator1; OAA,
89 oxaloacetate; PA, phosphatidic acid; PAT, phosphate acetyltransferase; PAP, phosphatidic acid
90 phosphatase; PtdCho, phosphatidylcholine; PDAT, phospholipid:diacylglycerol
91 acyltransferase; PDH, pyruvate dehydrogenase; PDK, pyruvate dehydrogenase kinase; PtdCho,
92 phosphatidylcholine; PtdEtn, phosphatidylethanolamine; PtdSer, phosphatidylserine; PtdIns,
93 phosphatidylinositol; PtdGro, phosphatidylglycerol; PGRL1; proton gradient regulation 5 like
94 1; PL, phospholipid; PLA2, phospholipase A2; PXN, peroxisomal NAD⁺ carrier; PPP, pentose
95 phosphate pathway; PUFA, polyunsaturated fatty acid; SAD, stearyl-ACP desaturase; SQDG,
96 sulfoquinovosyldiacylglycerol; TAG, triacylglycerol; TAR1, triacylglycerol accumulation
97 regulator1; TCA, tricarboxylic acid; TF, transcription factor; TOR, target of rapamycin;
98 VLCPUFA, very long chain polyunsaturated fatty acid.

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171 **1. Introduction**

172 Algae, *sensu lato*, are a large, diverse, and polyphyletic group of photosynthetic organisms.
173 They range from unicellular microalgae (including *Ostreococcus*, the smallest known free-
174 living eukaryote [1]) to the giant kelp, which can reach 45 m in length [2]. Most scientists no
175 longer consider prokaryotes, such as cyanobacteria, amongst the algae, but it is from
176 prokaryotes that algal plastids are derived [3]. While green and red algae contain primary
177 chloroplasts of endosymbiotic origin, heterokont algae (diatoms and brown algae, or more
178 properly Phaeophyceae) contain secondary plastids most commonly derived from
179 endosymbiotic red algae [4]. The three-membraned secondary plastids of the Euglenophyceae
180 and the four-membraned secondary plastids of the Chlorarachniophyta are exceptions however,
181 being derived from endosymbiotic green algae. Algae have a range of reproductive strategies
182 and, as implied earlier, can be unicellular organisms or possess complex multicellularity [5].
183 Although there is as yet no accurate tally of the total number of algal species, a recent estimate
184 is that there are 72,500 species in the biosphere [6].

185 As befits their diversity, algae can use sunlight for photosynthesis or can exist as
186 mixotrophs or facultative heterotrophs. Some of the latter have lost their ability to
187 photosynthesize and have become obligate heterotrophic parasites, such as *Plasmodium* and
188 *Toxoplasma* [5]. There are also those species of algae that form important symbiotic
189 relationships with other organisms such as in coral reefs [7], lichens [8] and sea sponges. The
190 complexity of algae is manifested in the origins and functions of algal genes [5] as well as in
191 their lipid biochemistry [9].

192 Algae are prominent in bodies of water (both freshwater and marine) but are also found
193 in unusual environments such as snow and ice or hot springs. In most cases they are at the base
194 of food chains and provide core ecosystem functions such as supplying half the oxygen we
195 breathe [10]. In high densities, such as algal blooms, algae can outcompete other life forms and
196 cause a health hazard. In other situations, algae can act as indicator organisms to monitor
197 pollution [11].

198 Algae have been exploited by humans for hundreds of years and are currently used to
199 produce agar and other alginates, fertilizers, nutritional products and pigments, in addition to
200 their use in bioremediation. With our increasing knowledge of algal genomes and availability
201 of algal transcriptomes [12], there are more opportunities to exploit algae for biotechnological
202 purposes such as for biofuels, nutraceuticals, and pharmaceuticals [5]. Opportunities related to
203 lipids are discussed in **section 7**.

204 For background information on algal lipid biochemistry, please refer to [13-16]. In this
205 review we will concentrate on literature following the review by Guschina and Harwood [9].
206 As a special note, the term “lipid” is used in a more strict sense in this review, i.e. refers mainly
207 to “glycerolipid”.

208

209 **2. Lipids in algae**

210 The major lipid classes in algae are the membrane lipids (glycosylglycerides,
211 phosphoglycerides, betaine ether lipids) and the storage lipids (in the form of triacylglycerol)
212 [17]. Algae also possess small amounts of other lipid classes such as terpenoids, sphingolipids,
213 hydrocarbons, sterols and, of course, pigments that are present in different percentages
214 depending on the class of alga.

215 There are a number of ‘unusual’ compounds which have been detected in a limited
216 number of species. No doubt many more will be found. For example,
217 phosphatidylsulphocholine (the sulphonium analogue of phosphatidylcholine) has been
218 identified in diatoms and *Euglena* [14], halogenated fatty acids (FAs) and their derivatives [18]
219 in various algae and novel hydrocarbons in *Botryococcus braunii* [9].

220 **Table 1** shows the acyl lipid composition of a variety of algae. In keeping with the
221 diverse structure of different algae, the quantitative and qualitative compositions of lipids varies
222 considerably. While the three glycosylglycerides (monogalactosyldiacylglycerol, MGDG;
223 digalactosyldiacylglycerol, DGDG; sulphoquinovosyldiacylglycerol, SQDG) are major
224 components, their % contributions are distinct. In general there is more MGDG than DGDG,
225 as in higher plants [17] but, in contrast to the latter, SQDG is often a major constituent of algae.
226 Although there has been little effort to examine the subcellular distribution of SQDG, one
227 presumes that in those algae with a high content, it is not just localized to thylakoids (unlike in
228 higher plants). As in land plants, the MGDG of algae tends to contain a higher proportion of
229 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) than DGDG. Both galactolipids are more unsaturated than
230 SQDG [19]. There is an acylated derivative of SQDG, 2'-O-acyl-
231 sulphoquinovosyldiacylglycerol, which is found in algae of both primary and secondary
232 endosymbionts, such as *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* [20] and *Phaeodactylum tricorutum*
233 [21]. There has been considerable interest in analyzing the molecular species of the
234 glycosylglycerides, especially MGDG. This interest is in relation to the so-called ‘prokaryotic’
235 and ‘eukaryotic’ pathways of acyl lipid synthesis (see [22]) and is discussed in **section 4**.
236 However, it is also relevant to a study in diatoms where MGDG and DGDG molecular species
237 were compared in two centric species (*Skeletonema marinoi*, *Thalassiosira weissflogii*) with

238 pennate species (*Phaeodactylum tricornutum*, *Haslea ostrearia*, *Navicula perminuta*) [23].
239 Although monoacyl-glycosylglycerides have been reported in algae [24], artifactual formation
240 during extraction is possible if careful precautions to inhibit any endogenous lipases are not
241 taken.

242 Several betaine lipids are important components of algae. DGTS (diacylglyceryl-*O*-
243 (*N,N,N*-trimethyl)-homoserine is the most common in nature and is found in green algae (**Table**
244 **1**). DGTA (1,2-diacylglyceryl-3-*O*-2'(hydroxymethyl)-(*N,N,N*-trimethyl)-beta-alanine) is
245 typically found in many brown algae. The third betaine lipid is DGCC
246 (diacylglycerylcarboxylhydroxymethylcholine) and was first discovered in the marine genus
247 Haptophyceae, such as in *Pavlova luthera*. The distribution of these betaine lipids in many
248 different species of algae have been reported [25-27]. A recent evaluation of the occurrence and
249 molecular diversity of betaine lipids in marine microalgae has been published [28].

250 With a few exceptions, the amount of phosphoglycerides in algae is much less than that
251 of the glycosylglycerides (**Table 1**). All the usual phosphoglycerides are found even in minor
252 amounts but phosphatidylcholine (PtdCho), phosphatidylethanolamine (PtdEtn) and
253 phosphatidylglycerol (PtdGro) are the main ones. Even in brown algae there is a wide variation
254 in the percentages of different phosphoglycerides [29]. Phosphatidyl-*O*-*N*-(2-
255 hydroxyethyl)glycine (PHEG: preciously called N-CAPE), a ceramidephosphoinositol and an
256 arsenic-containing phospholipid were also detected in a variety of brown algal species [29].

257 Because of the current interest in algae as sources of particular FAs or in the use of their
258 accumulated triacylglycerol (TAG) for biofuel (**section 7**), there has been much research on
259 evaluating TAG by mass spectrometry [30]. Such research has revealed the evolutionary
260 divergence of the main TAG synthesis pathways in green microalgae [31]. Since TAG is the
261 main lipid accumulated, it may be necessary to rapidly screen many species (or lines) in order
262 to pinpoint those which could be usefully considered by industry. This has led to evaluation of
263 FAs as biomarkers or 'characteristic' components for the quantitation of TAG in algae [32-35].

264 Remarks about the overall FA composition of algae as well as their location in different
265 lipids have been summarized in [9, 14, 15]. Specific comments in relation to single cell oils are
266 in [36]. A recent important and informative survey by Lang et al [37] has examined the
267 stationary phase compositions of algae within the SAG culture collection. A selection of their
268 analyses are shown in **Table 2**. What is immediately apparent is that the FA compositions of
269 different species vary widely, as noted before [14]. Moreover, even within the same class, there
270 is no very consistent pattern – for example, palmitate concentrations vary widely in
271 Haptophyceae while linoleate concentration varies widely in Conjugatophyceae (**Table 2**). A

272 recent review of diatoms, as the most abundant phytoplankton species, has noted that they tend
273 to have 14:0, 16:0, 16:1 and 20:5 as their main FAs [38]. The presence of 14:0 and a low amount
274 of 18C acids is rather characteristic, as can be seen from the diatom representative,
275 *Phaeodactylum tricorutum* in **Table 2**. For the commercially-important very long chain
276 PUFAs (VLC-PUFAs), such as eicosapentaenoic (EPA) and docosahexaenoic (DHA) acids,
277 only certain algal classes are productive (see **section 7**). Such FAs also tend to be more
278 prevalent in marine or salt-tolerant algae rather than, for example, freshwater green algae
279 (**Table 3**). Moreover, marine algae are also sometimes notable for their high concentrations of
280 arachidonic acid (ARA) as well as EPA (**Table 4**). It should also be noted that different lipid
281 classes will almost invariably have distinct FA compositions as mentioned above and discussed
282 further in [14, 19, 39]. Furthermore, growth conditions, seasonal variations and developmental
283 stages will all play a role in influencing the FA contents of algae and their individual lipid
284 classes [9, 14, 15, 40].

285 Evaluation of methodology for the extraction of lipids (and FAs)[41-43] and, especially,
286 in their further analysis have continued to be active areas of research. Special attention has been
287 paid to the increasing use of mass spectrometry (MS) [44] which, of course, is sensitive and
288 can provide information about molecular species and confirmation of identities. Nevertheless,
289 some inherent problems with quantification using MS should be considered [45]. The use of
290 MS methods versus the more traditional TLC plus GC techniques have been compared for two
291 microalgae (and *Arabidopsis*) by [39]. They point out the difficulties of using MS for
292 quantification but suggest a way of reducing the possible bias of MS data by using an external
293 standard.

294

295 **3. *De novo* FA synthesis in the chloroplast**

296 The pathway and organization of *de novo* FA synthesis in algae is mostly inferred from that of
297 plants wherein the steps and regulatory mechanisms of lipid synthesis have been better
298 characterized [46]. The first *in silico* analysis of the genes encoding proteins of FA synthesis in
299 algae was carried out for the model green alga *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* in 2005, which
300 allowed a reconstruction of the FA synthetic pathway [47, 48]. Later on, with the advent of
301 affordable genome sequencing and high sensitive RNAseq technologies, many more algal
302 genomes have been sequenced and subjected to *in silico* analyses of metabolic pathways. Up to
303 the time of this writing, ~30 algal genomes have been sequenced and annotated, allowing for
304 bioinformatic analyses of algal lipid metabolism and a scaffold for synthetic biological studies.
305 In all known eukaryotic species with a chloroplast (derived either from primary or secondary

306 endosymbiosis), *de novo* FA synthesis is known to occur in the stroma. For example, genome
307 and expressed sequence tags (ESTs) analyses of some algal species from diverse evolutionary
308 origins, including the diatom *Phaeodactylum tricornutum*, the eustigmatophytes
309 *Nannochloropsis sp.*, the red alga *Galdieria sulphuraria* and *Cyanidioschyzon merolae* [49-55],
310 revealed that FA synthesis is likely similar to that of the green lineage namely green algae
311 (Chlorophyta) and higher plants (Embryophyta) [32, 46, 56, 57]. A simplified scheme for *de*
312 *novo* FA synthesis, highlighting sources for carbon, ATP, and reducing equivalents is outlined
313 in **Figure 1**.

314

315 **3.1 Reactions and enzymes of FA synthesis**

316

317 **3.1.1 Acetyl-CoA carboxylase (ACCase)**

318 The first committed step for *de novo* FA synthesis is the ATP-dependent carboxylation of
319 acetyl-CoA to produce malonyl-CoA; a two-step reaction catalyzed by the biotin-containing
320 enzyme ACCase. In nature, ACCase occurs in two forms: one is a heteromeric, multisubunit
321 complex containing four different polypeptides including biotin carboxylase (BC), biotin
322 carboxyl carrier protein (BCCP) and α - and β -carboxyltransferase (α - and β -CT); while the
323 other is a homomeric form wherein each of the four aforementioned components are fused in
324 tandem on a single, large polypeptide. The subcellular location of ACCase varies between
325 organisms. Animal ACCase, which is of the homomeric form, is present in both the cytoplasm
326 and mitochondria, while plant and algal ACCase, which is of both homomeric and heteromeric
327 forms, is located in the cytoplasm and plastid [58-60]. The heteromeric form of ACCase,
328 present in all plants except graminaceous monocots, is plastid-localized, while the homomeric
329 form is either cytosolic or plastid-localized, depending on the species [61, 62]. Orthologues to
330 plant ACCase have been identified in all algal species with sequenced genomes [55, 63]. *In*
331 *silico* sequence analyses of the genome of *C. reinhardtii* identified the occurrence of both types
332 of ACCase [47]. However their subcellular locations have not been verified experimentally. A
333 comprehensive sequence analysis of ACCase across many algal species of diverse evolutionary
334 origin revealed that most algae of primary symbiotic origin (*i.e.* Chlorophyta and Rhodophyta
335 with their chloroplast surrounded by two envelope membranes) contain heteromeric ACCase
336 in their chloroplasts, as evidenced by the presence of heteromeric BCCP in these taxa (**Figure**
337 **2**). In contrast, algal and apicoplast-containing species which possess plastids derived from
338 secondary endosymbiosis (*i.e.* Heterokontophyta and Haptophyta), contain only the homomeric
339 ACCase in their chloroplast [64-66]. Thus, in general, the presence of heteromeric or

340 homomeric ACCase is dependent on chloroplast origin. The cytosolic ACCase, which is always
341 of homomeric form, is mostly known for its role in supplying malonyl-CoA for FA elongation
342 or polyketide synthesis.

343 ACCase plays an important role in the regulation of carbon flux into FA biosynthesis
344 [67], including in algae, wherein a positive correlation between ACCase activity and FA
345 amount has been observed in *Chlorella vulgaris* [68]. In plants, plastid targeting of a homomeric
346 ACCase to rapeseed plastids produced a 5% increase in seed lipid content [69]. In contrast,
347 overexpression of heteromeric ACCase in the diatom *Cyclotella cryptica* did not produce a
348 measurable increase in total FAs, despite a 2- to 3-fold increase in ACCase activity *in vitro*
349 [70]. Heterologous overexpression of the homomeric ACCase of the diatom *P. tricornutum* in
350 *Escherichia coli* resulted in a 2-fold increase in neutral lipid production based on Nile red
351 staining, although the identities of these neutral lipids remain unknown due to the absence of
352 diacylglycerol acyltransferase (DGAT) and hence triacylglycerol (TAG) accumulation in most
353 bacteria [71].

354 The heteromeric form of ACCase is an equally attractive target for metabolic
355 engineering as the homomeric form: overexpression of all four subunits of the heteromeric
356 ACCase in *E. coli* has been shown to result in a >100 fold increase in malonyl-CoA production
357 followed by a six-fold increase in the rate of *de novo* FA synthesis [72]. Although such an
358 experiment has not been performed in plants or algae, individual subunits of heteromeric
359 ACCase have been overexpressed in plants including the subunits β -CT [73], BC [74] and
360 BCCP [75]. In spite of successful overexpression, none of these transformants yielded increased
361 ACCase activity and one (BCCP) produced lower activity due to incomplete biotinylation [75,
362 76]. Collectively, these results suggest these three subunits are not limiting to ACCase activity
363 *in planta*. This was recently confirmed by absolute quantitation of each of the subunits of the
364 Arabidopsis ACCase during seed development [77]. Surprisingly, the α -CT subunit (which has
365 never been over-expressed in plants) is between 3-10-fold less abundant than its partner β -CT,
366 which is the only plastid-encoded subunit of heteromeric ACCase. Recently, a new plant
367 subunit to the heteromeric ACCase was identified [78]. This subunit, termed BADC (an
368 abbreviation for the original, tentative annotation as “biotin attachment domain-containing”),
369 resembles the BCCP subunit but is not biotinylated, acting as a negative regulator of ACCase
370 rather than as a carboxyl carrier. The regulation of ACCase by BADC and other factors is
371 discussed in brief in **section 3.8.1** and more comprehensively in a recent review [79].

372

373

374 **3.1.2 Malonyl-CoA: ACP malonyltransferase (MCMT)**

375 The malonyl-CoA generated by ACCase enters into the steps dedicated to *de novo* FA synthesis.
376 Malonyl-CoA is first converted to malonyl-acyl carrier protein (ACP) by MCMT. Over-
377 expression of the native gene encoding MCMT in *Nannochloropsis oceanica* resulted in an
378 31% increase in neutral lipids together with a modified FA composition with eicosapentaenoic
379 acid (20:5, EPA) increased by 8% [80]. This finding is of particular interest because neutral
380 lipid content is increased together with an increased growth rate and photosynthetic
381 performance. However, it is worth noting here that only one transgenic event is evaluated.
382 Therefore further efforts in generating large number of transgenes with better expression levels
383 might be worthwhile.

384

385 **3.1.3 The FA synthase (FAS) complex**

386 Malonyl-ACP is then ligated to an acetyl-CoA molecule to form a 3-ketoacyl-ACP by ketoacyl-
387 ACP synthase, while releasing a molecule of CO₂. The 4-carbon 3-ketoacyl-ACP is
388 subsequently reduced (by ketoacyl-ACP reductase, KAR), dehydrated (by hydroxyacyl-ACP
389 dehydrase, HD), reduced again (by enoyl-ACP reductase, ER) until finally a 6-carbon-ACP is
390 formed. The enzymes involved (KAS, KAR, HD, ER) collectively form the multi-subunit
391 bacterial type II FA synthase (FAS) complex [81]. In most algal or plant species, the FAS
392 reaction repeats for 7 cycles until the formation of a C16-ACP. The C16-ACP has three fates:
393 it can be acylated to glycerol by chloroplast-resident acyltransferases to produce chloroplast
394 lipids; it can also be further elongated to C18-ACP by a KASII; or it can be converted to a C16
395 free FA by acyl-ACP thioesterase (FAT). C18-ACP is either desaturated by stearoyl-ACP
396 desaturase (SAD) or converted to free FA by FAT. The saturated and unsaturated C18 fatty
397 acyl ACPs are substrates of FAT and their metabolic products (i.e. non-esterified (free) FAs)
398 are exported out of the chloroplast. Expression of the cyanobacteria KAR in the chloroplast of
399 the red alga *Cyanoidioschyzon merolae* resulted in strains over-accumulating TAG while
400 maintaining cellular growth; transcriptome and metabolome analysis of the overexpressing
401 lines suggest that KAR over-expression and N starvation, although both led to increased TAG
402 accumulation, likely employed different metabolic routes for TAG accumulation [82]. The only
403 algal SAD studied to date is that from *Chlorella zofingiensis* [83], which exhibited a substrate
404 preference for 18:0 similar to the plant enzyme.

405 In addition to the multi-component type II FAS, some algae also contain a cytosolic type
406 I FAS, which normally is involved in FA elongations (>C18 FA), or may complement type II
407 FAS when the demand for FA synthesis is high. For instance, it was observed that transcription

408 of type I FAS was increased in cells of *Nannochloropsis gaditana* exposed to high light (HL),
409 which is mirrored by a decrease in transcription of type II FAS, suggesting a shift in FA
410 synthetic activities from chloroplast to cytoplasm [84].

411

412 **3.1.4 Acyl-ACP thioesterase (FAT or TE)**

413 During the FAS extension cycles, the acyl chains are covalently bound via a thioester linkage
414 to the prosthetic group of a soluble ACP. Termination of the chain elongation is thus carried
415 out via the action of FAT which hydrolyzes acyl-ACP to form non-esterified FA and ACP. This
416 step determines quantity and type of FAs that are exported. In 16:3 plants such as *Arabidopsis*,
417 the acyl-flux through FAT has been determined to be ~60% of total FAs made in the chloroplast,
418 and the flux can reach 90% in 18:3 plants [85]. FAT represents a key enzyme in the partitioning
419 of *de novo* synthesized FAs between the prokaryotic and eukaryotic pathways (see **section 4**),
420 and from a biotechnology perspective, FAT is therefore an important target for genetic
421 engineering studies aiming to tailor FA production.

422 Based on sequence alignments and substrate specificities, FATs have been classified
423 into two major families, FatA and FatB [86, 87]. FatAs from diverse plant/algal species show
424 strict substrate preference towards 18:1-ACP, whereas FatBs primarily hydrolyze saturated
425 acyl-ACPs with 8 to 18 carbons [86, 88, 89]. Several medium-chain specific FatBs have been
426 cloned from *Umbellularia californica* (California bay) and from several species of the genus
427 *Cuphea* known to produce oils rich in medium chain FAs (MCFA, C6-12) in their seeds [90].
428 Heterologous expression of MCFA-specific FatBs have been shown to produce MCFAs in
429 transgenic oilseed crops [89, 91, 92]. Lately, transgenic expression of some of these specialized
430 plant FatBs have resulted in production of MCFAs in algae including *P. tricornutum* [93],
431 *Dunaliella tertiolecta* [94] and *C. reinhardtii* [95]. Interestingly, heterologous expression of a
432 thioesterase of *Dunaliella tertiolecta* in *C. reinhardtii* has resulted in a 50% increase in total
433 FA production [96]. A first report on characterization of algal FAT is the study of a novel
434 thioesterase from *P. tricornutum* where PtTE showed no similarity to characterized plant and
435 bacterial thioesterases [97], but its endogenous overexpression in *P. tricornutum* led to a 72%
436 increase in FA content without altering FA composition [97]. **Strikingly, *P. tricornutum* strains
437 where PtTE was silenced accumulated 1.7-fold more TAG than native strains with marked
438 change in fatty acid profile [98].** Moreover, recent work in *C. reinhardtii* has identified the
439 important role of protein-protein (ACP-FAT) interaction in chloroplast FA synthesis [99],
440 implying the importance of subcellular context in genetic engineering studies. In summary,

441 current evidence show that FATs play not only a role in determining FA chain length but can
442 also impact FA total amount.

443

444 **3.1.5 FA export**

445 Currently, no direct evidence is available regarding how the nascent FAs assembled in the
446 stroma pass through the two, three or sometimes four envelope membranes of algal
447 chloroplasts. Genes encoding known protein components of transport pathway in plants,
448 including the fatty acid export 1 (FAX1) [100] and long-chain acyl-CoA synthetase 9 (LACS9)
449 [101], can be identified in algal genomes, but the putative orthologues and their functions in
450 FA export have not been examined in algae. Various similarities and differences in lipid
451 transport between plants and algae are reviewed recently in [32, 102].

452

453 **3.1.6 FA modifications: elongation and desaturation**

454 Neo-synthesized FAs (C16:0, C18:0; and C18:1) are usually further elongated or desaturated
455 to finally constitute the lipid makeup of a given organism. FA elongations are mostly known to
456 uniquely occur in the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) [103]; while FA desaturations occur both
457 inside the chloroplast and in extra-chloroplast compartments. Except for SAD, mostly known
458 desaturases are membrane-bound [104, 105]. Steps and enzymes required for desaturation of
459 FA in *C. reinhardtii* have mostly been identified and are recently reviewed in [57]. One
460 interesting feature is the occurrence of only one plastidial ω -3 FA desaturase (CrFAD7) in *C.*
461 *reinhardtii* [106], which often occurs in multiple isoforms present in both chloroplast and extra-
462 chloroplast of plant cells [55].

463 A survey of VLCPUFA synthesis in algae was included in the previous review by [9]
464 and here we provide an update on the pathways involved in the model diatom *Phaeodactylum*
465 *tricornutum* where high amount of polyunsaturated fatty acids are made (**Figure 3**) [108] [55].
466 For both the n-3 and n-6 pathways, metabolism begins with Δ 6-desaturation in most organisms.
467 However, Δ 9-elongation from LA or from LNA provides an alternative route which has been
468 found in *Parietochloris incisa* [107], *Isochrysis galbana* [108], *Pavlova salina* [109], *Emiliania*
469 *huxleyi* [110] and *Euglena gracilis* [111]. As shown in **Figure 3**, ω 3-desaturation can convert
470 n-6 into n-3 PUFAs and such a conversion for ARA into EPA has been shown in
471 *Nannochloropsis* sp. [53], *Monodus subterraneus* [112] and *Porphyridium cruentum* [113]. In
472 some marine eukaryotes of the Thraustochytriaceae, a polyketide synthase (PKS) pathway is
473 used to make VLCPUFA. The pathway is used by *Schizochytrium* but in *Thraustochytrium* a

474 desaturation/elongation pathway is utilised [114]. Due to the nutritional importance of very
475 long chain PUFAs (see **section 7**), elongases and desaturases in algae have been intensively
476 researched, and several reviews cover this area [50, 55, 115].

477

478 **3.2 Carbon sources for acetyl-CoA synthesis**

479 Increasing evidence suggests a positive link between the rate of FA synthesis and the amount
480 of carbon precursors in plants and algae [116-120], implying that enhancing the rate of carbon
481 flux into chloroplasts might be a worthwhile approach for genetic engineering attempts to
482 improve FA amount. This finding highlights the importance of understanding the potential
483 sources and their contributions to chloroplast acetyl-CoA production. Various sources and use
484 of acetyl-CoA in plants has been summarized in [121]. In addition to the chloroplast acetyl-
485 CoA pool, acetyl-CoA is also made by reactions inside the mitochondria and peroxisomes
486 [122]. Activation of the pyruvate dehydrogenase complex (PDH) protein while silencing the
487 pyruvate dehydrogenase kinase (PDK) has boosted acetyl-CoA production and, therefore,
488 neutral lipid content in *Phaeodactylum tricornutum* [123]. Carbons contained in acetyl-CoA
489 can be shuttled to other compartments, but must first be converted into malate or pyruvate,
490 which are transported across membranes through malate shuttles or by other solute transporters
491 [124, 125]. Thus far, no known acetyl-CoA transporter is reported in any organism. Acetyl-
492 CoA is thus considered not directly imported by chloroplasts [126], but rather generated by
493 chloroplastic enzymes. Four possible routes can lead to acetyl-CoA production, as discussed
494 below. The relative importance of these possible sources varies between species, and between
495 phototrophic or heterotrophic tissues, or trophic style of a given species. Moreover, these carbon
496 sources are by no means exclusive, for instance, through a chemical-genetic screen for oil
497 inducers in *P. tricornutum*, the authors have suggested that sterol metabolism contributes to
498 TAG synthesis probably by providing acetyl-CoA [127].

499

500 **3.2.1 Chloroplast pyruvate dehydrogenase (PDH)**

501 In plants and algae grown photoautotrophically, acetyl-CoA is mostly produced via the
502 oxidative decarboxylation of pyruvate by the chloroplast PDH enzyme [128]. In addition to
503 acetyl-CoA, this reaction generates CO₂ and NADH [129]. In turn, pyruvate can be made from
504 glycolysis, malate (through malic enzyme, ME), as a side reaction of RuBisCO, or pentose
505 phosphate pathway (PPP) linked to photosynthesis or to sugar oxidation (oxidative PPP =
506 OPPP) (**Figure 1**). The proportion of their contribution to pyruvate formation has not been
507 worked out, but it most likely varies by species and trophic style. The temporal expression of

508 plastid PDH upon N starvation, i.e. during high rate of oil synthesis, is consistent with its role
509 in FA synthesis in several algal species including *C. reinhardtii* [116, 130]. Indeed, silencing
510 of a gene encoding a putative chloroplast E1 α subunit of PDH using microRNA in *C.*
511 *reinhardtii* has resulted in strains producing >40% less total FAs than control strains expressing
512 only an empty vector during photoautotrophic N starvation, but there was little or no impact on
513 lipid accumulation during photoheterotrophic growth (i.e. with the presence of acetate) [131].
514 In addition, photosynthetic parameters and growth of PDH-E1 α silenced strains were also
515 negatively affected, implying the importance of chloroplast PDH not only in FA synthesis but
516 also in general algal physiology and development. Indeed, acetyl-CoA is a key intermediate in
517 a number of different metabolic pathways [132]. Moreover, high CO₂ supply has been observed
518 to increase FA synthesis in several algal species [133-136] (see also **section 6.1.**), suggesting
519 the importance of photosynthesis in carbon supply. However, the picture could be different if
520 acetate is present as already observed in the PDH-silenced strains. This is consistent with the
521 recent finding that when acetate is present, *C. reinhardtii* employs principally the CO₂ carbon
522 fixation pathway for starch synthesis whereas acetate is used mainly for FA synthesis [137].

523

524 **3.2.2 Acetyl-CoA synthetase (ACS)**

525 Acetyl-CoA can also be produced from acetate: a direct conversion through ACS or through a
526 two-step reaction catalyzed by acetate kinase (ACK) and phosphate acetyltransferase (PAT).
527 This feature enables radio-tracer studies of lipid metabolism in algae via simply feeding cells
528 with radio-labelled C¹⁴- acetate. The ACS route is widely present in plants and algae, whereas
529 the ACK/PAT route occur mostly in prokaryotes and some eukaryotic microalgae [138], with
530 both routes requiring ATP. The idea of “acetate-to-acetyl-CoA” for FA synthesis has been
531 discarded in plants due to extensive *in vivo* flux analyses demonstrating the actual source of
532 acetyl-CoA is from PDH [139]. Nevertheless, the ACS route is known to play a major role in
533 heterotrophically or mixotrophically grown algae, because it has been shown recently that *de*
534 *novo* FA synthesis is boosted by increased acetate supply in *C. reinhardtii* in three independent
535 studies [117, 119, 140], and also in other heterokont species as reviewed in [141]. Furthermore,
536 heterogeneous expression of a bacteria ACS in a marine alga *Schizochytrium sp.* increased its
537 FA proportion by 11.3% [142]. Nevertheless, it remains to be determined what the relative
538 contribution of ACS is versus that of the ACK/PAT pathway for acetyl-CoA formation in those
539 algae where both routes are present.

540

541

542 **3.2.3 ATP: citrate lyase (ACL)**

543 Another possible source of acetyl-CoA for *de novo* FAS is the cleavage of citrate by ATP-
544 citrate lyase (ACL). Cytosolic ACL has been shown to play a critical role in determining the
545 oleaginicacy of animals and yeasts where *de novo* FAS occurs in cytoplasm [143-145], and in
546 plants, cytosolic ACL has been shown to play a critical role in FA elongation [146]. The
547 involvement of ACL in FA synthesis in algae remains to be demonstrated. The ACL enzymatic
548 activities from the glaucocystophyte alga *Cyanophora paradoxa* were found associated with
549 the cytosol; however its involvement in FA synthesis has not been addressed. A single gene
550 (Cre05.g241850) encoding a putative ACL homolog has been identified in the genome of *C.*
551 *reinhardtii*. The putative protein does not contain any transit peptide based on analyses using
552 Predalgo [147], and is likely cytosolic and therefore it is anticipated to provide a role in filling
553 the cytosolic acetyl-CoA pool for FA elongation in the cytoplasm, as *C. reinhardtii* does contain
554 20:1n-9 and 22:1n-9 [148]. Nevertheless, the contribution of plastidial ACL, if it occurs, to *de*
555 *novo* FAS remains to be examined in algae.

556

557 **3.3 Sources of reducing equivalents in the chloroplast**

558 As lipids are highly reduced compounds, lipid synthesis requires large quantities of NAD(P)H
559 supplied in a stoichiometric ratio with respect to acetyl-CoA and ATP [46, 60]. Indeed, a
560 positive correlation between the level of reducing equivalents and FA synthesis has been
561 established in fungi, algae and plants [149, 150]. For instance, recent transcriptomic studies in
562 *P. tricornutum* found that a buildup of precursors such as acetyl-CoA and reducing equivalents
563 may provide a more significant contribution to TAG accumulation than an increase in ACCase
564 activity alone [151, 152]. Neither NADH nor NADPH are permeable to the chloroplast
565 envelope; therefore they have to be produced by chloroplast-localized reactions including
566 photosynthesis, ME, PDH, pentose phosphate pathway (PPP) and glycolysis.

567

568 **3.3.1 Chloroplast PDH**

569 As detailed in **section 3.2.1** considering its contribution as a carbon source, the plastidial PDH
570 also produces one NADH for each molecule of acetyl-CoA produced. The trans 2-enoyl-ACP
571 reductase of *de novo* FAS complex is shown to require one mole of NAD(P)H to ensure *de*
572 *novo* FAS [153, 154]. This provides a compelling argument for acetyl-CoA coming from the
573 plastid PDH since this is one of only a few enzymes that produces NADH in plastids.

574

575

576 **3.3.2 Photosynthesis**

577 In photosynthetically active cells (algae or plants), photochemical reactions are believed to
578 provide a significant part of reducing equivalents (NADPH) for anabolic reactions inside
579 chloroplast. The finding that cells exposed to HL possessed higher amount of total FAs could
580 be considered an evidence to support this [84, 155-157]. However, upon HL exposure the entire
581 photosynthetic chain is upregulated: increased NADPH production occurs together with
582 enhanced CO₂ fixation. Therefore the observed effect on increased lipid amount could be due
583 to a combinatory effect of the increase in both carbon precursors and reducing equivalents.

584

585 **3.3.3 Glycolysis**

586 Glycolysis is defined as the set of reactions that lead to the generation of pyruvate from glucose.
587 In addition to its obvious role as a carbon source, glycolysis produces two (net) ATP and two
588 NADH. Glycolysis can occur in both cytoplasm and chloroplast, and parallel pathways operate
589 in both compartments in *A. thaliana* [158]. In *C. reinhardtii* a single pathway operates: the
590 “upper half” of the pathway occurs in the chloroplast, and the ‘lower half’, i.e. reactions after
591 3-phosphoglycerate (3-PGA) occurs in the cytoplasm [159]. This compartmentation of
592 glycolysis can have implications on the chloroplast redox state and subcellular energetics. For
593 example, in *C. reinhardtii* glycolysis produces two NADHs inside the chloroplast and two
594 ATPs in the cytoplasm. NADH produced by glycolysis could contribute substantially to FA
595 synthesis especially when starch degradation is high.

596

597 **3.3.4 Malic enzyme (ME)**

598 Malic enzyme catalyzes the reversible conversion of malate to pyruvate while producing
599 NADPH. The contribution of ME to *de novo* FA synthesis has been demonstrated through an
600 overexpression study where strains over-expressing ME possessed improved FA synthesis in
601 the diatom *P. tricornutum* and also in the green alga *Chlorella pyrenoidosa* [150, 160].
602 Furthermore, reducing NADPH supply via inhibition of ME activities using sesamol in
603 *Haematococcus pluvialis* and *Nannochloropsis sp* led to reduction in total FAs [161].
604 Moreover, a high docosahexaneic acid (DHA) production and total lipid content in the marine
605 alga *Schizochytrium sp* has been found to correlate positively with the cultivation stages when
606 the activities of ME is high [162]. When *Schizochytrium sp* was fed with malate, DHA
607 production is increased by 47% [163]. In addition to supplying the FAS complex with NADPH,
608 the reaction catalyzed by ME also produces pyruvate, which is a substrate for acetyl-CoA

609 synthesis using PDH. Therefore, the contribution of ME to FA synthesis could be two-fold:
610 providing both carbon and reducing equivalents.

611

612 **3.3.5 Pentose phosphate pathway (PPP)**

613 Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PDH) catalyzes the conversion of glucose-6-
614 phosphate (G6P) to 6-phospho-D-glucono-1,5-lactonate and while generating NADPH for
615 anabolic reactions. G6PDH is a key enzyme of the PPP pathway, and its over-expression led to
616 a 3.7-fold increase in lipid content in *P. tricornutum*, highlighting the critical role of G6PDH
617 in algal lipid accumulation by enhancing NADPH supply [164]. The contribution of OPPP
618 pathway to supply NADPH for FA synthesis has also been observed in the oleaginous diatom
619 *Fistulifera solaris* [165].

620

621 **3.4 ATP supply for FA synthesis**

622 For every two NAD(P)H molecules supplied to the FAS complex, one molecule of ATP is
623 required (2:1 NAD(P)H:ATP). While sources of acetyl-CoA and NAD(P)H for FA synthesis
624 have been studied intensively [32, 49, 56, 57, 166], the supply of ATP for the FAS complex is
625 often overlooked. It is generally considered that most of the ATP needed for biosynthetic
626 reactions in algae is provided by photophosphorylation (i.e. photosynthesis) or respiratory
627 oxidative phosphorylation (mitochondrial respiration), but the re-partition of ATP produced
628 between various anabolic reactions has not been investigated, and most current observations in
629 this area remain correlative.

630

631 **3.4.1 Linear and cyclic electron pathway (LEF and CEF)**

632 When algae are starved for N (i.e. during active TAG synthesis), it has been observed that
633 although the LEF rate and the respiration rate drop, the CEF pathway (as well as the activity of
634 thylakoid membrane-located ATP synthase) increase significantly [167]. The CEF pathway
635 around photosystem I cycles electrons back to the lumen therefore generating a proton motive
636 force to drive ATP synthesis but without O₂ evolution or NADPH production. The CEF
637 pathway has been suggested to supply ATP for lipid production during N starvation in *C.*
638 *reinhardtii* mutants impaired in the proton gradient regulation 5 like 1 protein (PGRL1), which
639 nonetheless accumulates significantly less neutral lipids under N starvation [168].

640

641

642

643 **3.4.2 Mitochondrial respiration**

644 In the context of lipid metabolism, mention of mitochondrial respiration is reminiscent of the
645 respiration of acetyl-CoA during peroxisomal FA β -oxidation [169-171]. Although less known
646 and often ignored, the interaction between mitochondrial respiration and lipid synthesis has
647 started to be appreciated, mostly due to its role in supplying ATP for FA synthesis in algae
648 [172]. Studies of the ATPase mutant (FUD50) of *C. reinhardtii* have revealed that
649 photosynthetic ATP production is not essential during heterotrophic growth as long as
650 mitochondrial respiration is functioning, implying the occurrence of active ATP transport from
651 mitochondria to chloroplasts [172]. Put another way, defects in ATP synthesis in the chloroplast
652 can be compensated for by ATP derived from mitochondrial respiration. Furthermore, it has
653 been reported that Chlamydomonas mutants of complex I or complex III were impaired in their
654 lipid production activity during sulfur deprivation [173, 174]. Interplay between mitochondrial
655 metabolism and lipid synthesis could occur at two levels: metabolic (Krebs cycle) as well as
656 energetic (supply of NADH and ATP) (detailed in **section 3.5**). Nevertheless, detailed
657 interactions between these pathways are yet to be characterized. With the increasing number of
658 respiratory mutants available for *C. reinhardtii* [175, 176], a systematic analysis of the
659 interaction between FA synthesis and mitochondrial respiration should be possible.

660

661 **3.5 Chloroplast redox poise and FA synthesis**

662 Photosynthesis converts light energy into ATP and NADPH, and this energy is subsequently
663 used to drive CO₂ assimilation through the Calvin-Benson-Bassham (CBB) cycle. In the
664 absence of exogenous carbon supply, photosynthesis is the only provider of energy and carbon
665 skeletons for all anabolic reactions in the cell. In addition to the CBB cycle, NAD(P)H is a
666 ubiquitous electron carrier also required for starch and FA synthesis. The flux along these
667 pathways is mostly determined by the ratio of NAD(P)H versus NAD(P⁺) or ATP levels.
668 Photoautotrophs live in an ever-changing environment where metabolic demand for NAD(P)H
669 and ATP is constantly changing. Multiple strategies have evolved to fine tune photosynthesis
670 to meet downstream metabolic needs because excess production of reducing power may result
671 in an over-reduction of the photosynthetic electron transport chain and consequent photo-
672 oxidative damage [177, 178]. The processes known to poise chloroplast redox balance could
673 have an impact on FA synthesis.

674 During N starvation, photosynthetic electron transport chain complexes are reduced
675 [179, 180]. Lipid production during N starvation has often been thought to act as an electron
676 sink to accommodate an over-reduced chloroplast [59, 181], but this theory has recently been

677 partly challenged by the observation that heterotrophic cultures accumulate TAGs and starch
678 during N starvation [137]. Nevertheless, this accumulation does occur to a lesser extent – the
679 amount of TAG accumulated during heterotrophic N starvation (in the dark) is four times less
680 than that accumulated in N-starved autotrophic cultures. TAG may thus at least partly serve as
681 an electron sink for N-starved autotrophic algae.

682

683 **3.5.1 Chloroplast-located alternative electron dissipation pathways**

684 Several chloroplast-located alternative electron pathways (notably the cyclic electron flow, O₂
685 photoreduction processes, chlororespiration and the water-to-water cycle) are known to play
686 roles in dissipation of photo-reductant [182, 183]. The importance of CEF in metabolism of N-
687 starved cells is further supported by the observation that in N-starved cells of *C. reinhardtii*,
688 LEF fell approximately 15% more than CEF over the first 24 h of N starvation [179]. This is
689 further supported by the observation that the rate of CEF increased while LEF decreased during
690 the cell's adaptation to N starvation in *Chlorella sorokiniana* [168]. Perturbation of the above
691 pathways should have impact on FA synthesis. Thus, for instance, the *pgrl1* mutant defected in
692 the proton gradient regulation 5 like 1 (PGRL1) accumulated 30% less neutral lipids based on
693 BODIPY staining than its corresponding wild type. This finding could be interpreted as
694 indicating that CEF supplies ATP for FA synthesis (discussed in **section 3.4.1**), or could also
695 imply a possible competition for NADPH between CEF and FA synthesis [168]. A systematic
696 analysis of the interaction between various chloroplast electron dissipation pathways and FA
697 synthesis remains to be conducted. With the large number of *Chlamydomonas* mutants available
698 (*Chlamydomonas* Mutant Library – CLiP library: <https://www.chlamylibrary.org/>) [184], it
699 should be possible to comprehensively address questions related to the interaction between FA
700 synthesis and various electron dissipation mechanisms.

701

702 **3.5.2 Electron dissipation through collaboration with mitochondria**

703 Recently, it has also been shown that chloroplast redox poise can be achieved through export
704 of excess reducing equivalents to mitochondria in green algae [185] and diatoms [186].
705 Structural components involved in the energy trafficking between chloroplasts and
706 mitochondria have not been identified, but malate shuttles and triose phosphate transporters
707 (TPTs) are strong candidates. Once inside mitochondria, reducing equivalents (NADH) are
708 consumed by oxidative respiration operating through two pathways in plants and algae, i.e.
709 cytochrome oxidase (COX) pathway and alternative oxidase (AOX) pathway [173, 176, 187].
710 The COX pathway couples consumption of NADH to ATP synthesis, while they are uncoupled

711 in the AOX pathway. For a long time, the latter was considered a wasteful process and its
712 physiological significance was uncertain. However, lately it has been observed that expression
713 as well as translation of AOX genes in a number of algal species are upregulated in conditions
714 when photosynthetically-produced reducing equivalents should be attenuated [130, 188-190].
715 Indeed, inhibition of the AOX pathway using salicylhydroxamic acid (SHAM) under N
716 starvation led to a 23% increase in FA amount in the marine alga *Isochrysis galbana* [188].
717 These authors suggest that the increase in FA production is likely a result of an increase in
718 chloroplast NADPH (although not measured in above study) due to a defect in its dissipation
719 through the mitochondria AOX pathway. Taken together, these studies suggest that the
720 chloroplast reduction state can be increased, via blocking the mechanisms of NADPH
721 dissipation, therefore boosting FA synthesis.

722

723 **3.5.3 Energy interactions between peroxisomes and chloroplasts impact FA synthesis**

724 Energetic exchanges between mitochondria and chloroplast have been evidenced, and the
725 impact on FA synthesis has also been evaluated in some cases (discussed in **section 3.5.2**). Until
726 lately, little was known about the energetic interactions between chloroplast and peroxisome,
727 although these two organelles are often seen located in close proximity [191, 192]. We recently
728 showed that, during acclimation of *C. reinhardtii* to N starvation or HL exposure, extensive
729 energetic exchanges occur from peroxisome to chloroplast employing the peroxisomal malate
730 dehydrogenase (MDH2) and redox-based signaling [193]. This interorganelle communication
731 between peroxisome and chloroplast is essential in maintaining chloroplast redox poise, and in
732 its absence, the chloroplast is over-reduced, therefore activating FA and starch syntheses.

733

734 **3.6 Relationship between FA synthesis and starch accumulation**

735 During a diurnal cycle, most green algae, like plant leaves, accumulate starch during the day
736 and degrade it to provide cells with carbon and energy at night [194]. Lipid synthesis also
737 follows a similar cycle [195, 196]. Upon stress (for example N starvation or HL) massive
738 amount of starch and neutral lipids, mostly TAGs, accumulate [32, 56, 156]. Because
739 glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate is a common precursor for both FA and starch synthesis, it has
740 sometimes been suggested that there occurs a competition for carbon precursors between
741 biosynthesis of starch and lipid. Following this idea, the carbon partitioning between starch and
742 TAG upon N starvation has been intensively studied in the past 10 years, mostly based on the
743 starchless *Chlamydomonas* mutant *bafJ5* defected in the small catalytic subunit of ADP-glucose
744 pyrophosphorylase (AGPase) [197]. Some studies reported that there occurs a competition for

745 carbon precursors between starch and lipid synthesis under N starvation [198, 199] yet the
746 competition does not occur during N replete growth [200], while others reported that this
747 competition is minor, if at all, even under N starvation [201, 202].

748 The contrasting conclusions (above) could be due partly to the way the oil content is
749 expressed (per cell versus per dry biomass), or due to the use of control strains (with or without
750 cell wall), or due to cell culture conditions (light, CO₂ level, cell growth stage). The reported
751 difference could also be due to the fact that interplays between starch and lipids go beyond a
752 mere competition for carbon allocation, and likely also involve a competition for energy (i.e.
753 ATP) and reducing equivalents. Cellular redox context varies depending on genetic as well as
754 environmental factors (such as light quality/quantity, autotrophy versus mixotrophy, CO₂
755 versus air, growth phases). Increasing evidence suggests the simultaneous occurrence of starch
756 synthesis and turnover in the light [203-205], and starch breakdown eventually generates
757 reduced carbons, phosphorylating power and reducing equivalent, impacting stromal redox
758 balance and therefore anabolic reactions of starch and FA synthesis. Thus, a much more
759 complex relationship between starch and lipid synthesis likely occurs at both the carbon and
760 energetic level. The energetic aspects of interaction between starch and lipid accumulation have
761 so far mostly been ignored and definitely beg further examination.

762 It is worth noting that, in addition to the defects at the AGPase locus, the *bafj5* mutant
763 harbors two additional mutations: i.e. a defect in cell wall synthesis and a defect in a gene
764 encoding a respiratory burst oxidase [206]. These additional mutations could impact lipid
765 metabolism, either via competition for carbon precursors (in the case of the cell wall mutations),
766 or via their effect on redox metabolism (in the case of the respiratory burst oxidase). But these
767 hypotheses remain to be tested.

768

769 **3.7 Relationship between FA synthesis and chrysolaminarin accumulation**

770 Instead of starch, most photosynthetic heterokonts, including *P. triornutum* and *Thalassiosira*
771 *pseudonana*, accumulate chrysolaminarin, another type of storage polysaccharide [207-209].
772 Similar to starch, chrysolaminarin accumulates during the day and is mobilized at night,
773 supporting its role as a source of carbohydrates for heterotrophic metabolism in the dark. Two
774 differences are observed between starch and chrysolaminarin: i) starch is stored in chloroplasts,
775 while chrysolaminarin is found in vacuoles [210], and ii) in contrast to massive starch
776 accumulation in N-starved green algal cells, N starvation does not seem to stimulate
777 chrysolaminarin over-accumulation. Silencing the chrysolaminarin synthase gene in
778 *Thalassiosira pseudonana* resulted only in a transient accumulation of TAG [208]. Considering

779 the widespread interest in the use of diatoms for biofuel and biochemical applications, the
780 development of a routine method for quantification of chrysolaminarin [207], and genome
781 editing technologies for diatoms [211, 212], we should expect many more studies on
782 chrysolaminarin metabolism and its relation to lipid synthesis in the near future.

783

784 **3.8 Regulation of FA synthesis**

785 Due to the central importance of lipids in cell metabolism, physiology, and its interaction with
786 the environment, FA synthesis is subjected to multi-level control.

787

788 **3.8.1 Regulation at the level of ACCase**

789 ACCase catalyzes the first and committed step in *de novo* FA synthesis and is known to be
790 regulated by a myriad of mechanisms at both the transcriptional and post-transcriptional level.
791 Plant heteromeric ACCase is activated by light, chloroplast redox status (thioredoxin), and
792 precursor supply, and is inhibited by acyl-ACP; as recently summarized [79]. It remains to be
793 determined which of these regulatory mechanisms are conserved in various algae, and whether
794 algae possess other unique ACCase regulatory mechanisms. We currently know very little
795 about the regulation of homomeric ACCase, which is the exclusive ACCase isoform present in
796 many algal taxa (see **section 3.1.1**). A better understanding of ACCase regulation promises to
797 significantly advance algal lipid biotechnology. Here we will discuss the recent discovery of
798 two new classes of proteins identified as negative regulators of plant ACCase: BADC and PII.

799 BADC is an abbreviation for the prior (but rather unfortunate) annotation of this protein
800 as a “biotin attachment domain-containing” protein [78]. As mentioned in **section 3.1.1**, BADC
801 is derived from BCCP but lacks the latter’s conserved biotinylation motif and biotinyl-Lys
802 residue. As a consequence, rather than acting as a carboxyl carrier, BADC acts as a negative
803 regulator of heteromeric ACCase through its competition with BCCP for binding to the holo-
804 ACCase complex [78]. Additionally, the BADC gene family may be partially responsible for
805 the feedback regulation of ACCase [213]. In Arabidopsis, BADCs are represented by three
806 genes, and all three lack the conserved biotinylation motif and biotinyl-Lys residue. Gene
807 silencing of BADC isoform 1 results in a slight, but significant increase in oil content in seeds
808 of *A. thaliana* [78]. BADC is present in higher plants and in a limited subset of green algae
809 (including *Chlorella* spp., *Volvox* spp. and *Coccomyxa* spp.) but is otherwise absent from
810 eukaryotic algae with a single exception (**Figure 2a**), suggesting that it diverged from BCCP
811 in green algae. The only non-chlorophyte BADC representative is found in the red alga
812 *Galdieria sulphuraria*, the most extremophilic red algal species, which has obtained large

813 numbers of archaeal and bacterial genes through horizontal gene transfer [214]. The BADC in
814 *G. sulphuraria* appears likely to have resulted from such a horizontal transfer (perhaps from an
815 ancestral green alga).

816 The second negative regulator of ACCase recently identified is PII (At4g01900), a small
817 homotrimeric protein that acts at the interface of C and N metabolism [215]. PII, acting as a 2-
818 oxoglutarate sensor, inhibits ACCase via binding to the biotin portion of BCCP, and this
819 inhibition can also be relieved by high pyruvate concentrations. The implication is that PII
820 connects carbon and N metabolism by sensing 2-oxoglutarate, pyruvate, and possibly the
821 broader energy and nitrogen (N) status of the chloroplast [216]. Algal PII, which is of bacterial
822 origin, is, like heteromeric ACCase, present in algae with chloroplasts of primary
823 endosymbiotic origin (*i.e.* Chlorophyta, Rhodophyta), the *Paulinellidae*, as well as in higher
824 plants, but is absent from other eukaryotic algal taxa (**Figure 2b**). PII appears, however, to have
825 been lost from many red algal taxa. As N-starvation has been shown to induce transcription of
826 genes encoding algal ACCase subunits [130, 190, 217], it seems likely that additional
827 mechanisms exist to coordinate N-status and ACCase activity in algae. It is worth noting that
828 PII shares distant orthology with the N-fixation-related *nifH* from archaea, but plants have not
829 retained a *nifH*-derived ortholog.

830

831 **3.8.2 Transcriptional regulation**

832 Although genes encoding the enzymes of lipid metabolism in microalgae can be predicted from
833 those of plants (based on amino acid sequence identity) [32, 57], the regulatory mechanisms of
834 lipid synthesis in algae cannot be as easily inferred. Drastic changes in transcript levels of many
835 putative transcription factors (TFs) have been observed in N-deplete versus N-replete
836 *Chlamydomonas* cells, implying their potential involvement in regulation of lipid metabolism
837 [130, 190, 218]. However, only a couple of them have been experimentally validated to play
838 such a role. A putative zinc-finger protein (Cre14.g624800) has been identified as a regulator
839 of stress-induced lipid synthesis, and overexpression or silencing of the corresponding gene
840 results in altered lipid content [219]. The regulatory mechanisms and downstream molecular
841 targets of this protein remain, however, to be deciphered. A SQUAMOSA promoter-binding
842 protein domain transcription factor was recently identified in *C. reinhardtii*, and it was named
843 as N response regulator 1 (NRR1) and the insertional knockout mutants accumulated only half
844 amount of the TAG usually found in WT strains upon N starvation, but not under other nutrient
845 stresses (S, P, or Zn) [217]. A correlation between the level of transcription of *NRR1* and that
846 of a major DGAT1 has been observed, but several uncertainties remain. At a molecular

847 mechanistic level, it remains to be determined what the targets of the NRR1 are; and from a
848 biotechnological perspective, it is unknown if overexpression of *NRR1* could impact lipid
849 production.

850 Another relatively well-studied transcription factor implicated in lipid metabolism is the
851 phosphorus starvation response 1 (PSR1). PSR1 belongs to the MYB-CC (MYB coiled-coil
852 domain) transcription factor family and was originally described as a component of the
853 phosphate starvation pathway [220]. Two recent studies have suggested the role of PSR1 in
854 regulation of lipid metabolism in *C. reinhardtii* [221, 222]. Ngan et al [221] showed that oil
855 content is positively correlated to the expression level of *PSR1*, which were altered by creating
856 knock-out or overexpressor lines. Bajhaiya et al [222] further showed that PSR1 is not only
857 regulating lipid synthesis but also starch synthesis. PSR1 overexpression lines showed
858 increased starch content but reduced neutral lipid content under P starvation, and the phenotype
859 is persistent regardless of the acetate status. The reason for the contradictory changes in lipid
860 content in *PSR1* overexpressors is not clear, but could be due to the use of different nutrient
861 stress (N versus P). In summary, PSR1 likely plays a role in the regulation of global metabolism,
862 but not specifically limited to lipid synthesis.

863 In addition to the studies carried out in *C. reinhardtii*, a basic helix-loop-helix (bHLH)
864 TF and a basic leucine zipper (bZIP)-domain containing TF have been identified from *N. salina*,
865 and their overexpression led to an increase in both growth and lipid productivity [223, 224].
866 Therefore those TFs identified here could serve as genetic engineering targets for improving
867 the production of biofuels and biomaterials in algae. Furthermore, overexpression of known
868 plant TFs, for example the Dof-type (DNA binding with one finger) TF in *C. reinhardtii* [225]
869 and the *Arabidopsis* AtWRI1 in *N. salina* [226], have resulted in transgenic strains with
870 increased lipid production. These studies suggest the conserved nature of some of these
871 regulatory mechanisms between plants and algae.

872

873 **3.8.3 Regulation by kinases and other subcellular processes**

874 Alongside TFs, a given pathway can also be regulated by other mechanisms [221]. For example,
875 alterations of lipid content have also been observed in knock-out mutants of *C. reinhardtii* for
876 two members of the dual-specificity tyrosine-phosphorylation-regulated (DYRK) kinase, i.e.
877 the plant specific DYRKP [227] and the *Chlamydomonas* triacylglycerol accumulation
878 regulator1 (TAR1) - an orthologue of the yeast Yet another kinase1 (Yak1) subfamily [228].
879 Lipid production in *N. gaditana* is doubled by knocking out a homolog of fungal Zn(II)2Cys6
880 encoding a transcriptional regulator of N assimilation pathways [229]. Furthermore,

881 manipulation of the target of rapamycin (TOR) or nitric oxide (NO) signaling pathway is also
882 shown to impact lipid production in algae [230-232]. It is worth noting that molecular targets
883 or the regulatory circuits of the above regulatory proteins related to lipid metabolism have not
884 yet been worked out, and biochemical or molecular research in this direction is needed. For
885 additional details on the relation between autophagy and lipid synthesis, readers are referred to
886 [171, 233-235].

887

888 **4. Glycerolipid synthesis**

889 As noted in **section 2**, eukaryotic algae contain phosphoglycerides, glycosylglycerides and,
890 often, betaine lipids in significant amounts. Because algae carry out oxygen-evolving
891 photosynthesis, their thylakoid membranes contain four lipids also typical of plants and
892 cyanobacteria - MGDG, DGDG, SQDG and PtdGro. When present, betaine lipids are in
893 extrachloroplast membranes. DGTS is found in many green algae while DGTA and DGCC are
894 found in different algal species such as brown algae (Phaeophyceae). Algae with significant
895 betaine lipids usually have little or no phosphatidylcholine (PtdCho) [19]. Of the
896 phosphoglycerides apart from phosphatidylglycerol (PtdGro), these are in extraplastidial
897 membranes. PtdCho and phosphatidylethanolamine (PtdEtn) are usually the most significant
898 while phosphatidylinositol (PtdIns) and phosphatidylserine (PtdSer) are minor components.

899 A brief discussion of the origins of algal chloroplasts and the differences between
900 primary plastids (where the two plastid membranes were derived from the cyanobacterial
901 endosymbiont) and complex plastids, which are surrounded by three or four membranes, is
902 given in [19]. Genes involved in glycosylglyceride synthesis often show strong similarity to
903 those of higher plants. These include *MGD1*, *DGD1*, *SQD1* and *SQD2*. Indeed, DGDG
904 synthases in eukaryotic algae have been shown to be similar to the plant type enzymes [20,
905 236]. However, analysis of chloroplasts is often complicated by the extra membranes in
906 secondary plastids [51].

907 The Glaucophyta are a small group of rare freshwater algae. Only 13 species are known,
908 none of which is particularly common. Along with red algae, they harvest light through
909 phycobilisomes and also store fixed carbon in the cytosol. There is rather little information
910 about their lipids and, indeed, of their classification---mainly because they have been little
911 studied. They contain the three glycosylglycerides (MGDG, DGDG, SQDG)[237] but there is
912 little consistent information about genes encoding enzymes for MGDG and DGDG formation.
913 It is thought, however, that SQDG synthesis is similar to that in plants and *Chlamydomonas*
914 [19].

915 Glycosylglyceride synthesis has been studied most in red and green algae, especially
916 Chlamydomonas. Overall the lipid and fatty acid composition of Chlorophyta resembles that of
917 higher plants. Interestingly, *C. reinhardtii* has some unusual fatty acids -16:4 Δ 4,7,10,13,
918 pinolenic acid (18:3 Δ 5,12) and coniferonic acid (18:4 Δ 5,9,12,15) [236]. An ω 13-desaturase is
919 responsible for the Δ 5 double bonds introduced into linoleic and α -linolenic acids [238]. A Δ 4-
920 desaturase uses 16:3 (Δ 7,10,13) bound to MGDG as a substrate to form 16:4 [239] and may be
921 important in controlling overall MGDG synthesis. On the other hand, VLCPUFAs such as
922 arachidonic acid (ARA) or EPA are usually only present in small amounts or absent from green
923 freshwater algae. An exception is *Lobosphaera* (formerly *Parietochloris*) *incisa* which is an
924 oleaginous species that has high amounts of ARA in its membrane lipids and TAG (see **section**
925 **7**). In contrast, both ARA and EPA are often present in low proportions in marine green algae.
926 For example, in *Ulva fenestrata* they are found in significant quantities in DGTS but not in
927 glycosylglycerides [240].

928 Diatoms are the most abundant phytoplankton species and, consequently, are major
929 producers at the bottom of food chains. They occur ubiquitously in freshwater and marine
930 habitats. Their metabolism, including the production of VLCPUFAs (mainly EPA) through
931 lipid-linked desaturases has been detailed by [38].

932 One matter which should be borne in mind when describing acyl lipid synthesis in algae
933 is that the biochemistry of the reactions has lagged behind the identification of genes encoding
934 the putative enzymes involved. Thus, in review papers describing metabolism of acyl lipids in
935 diatoms [38] or in *C. reinhardtii* [57] it will be seen that, while genes for most of the enzymes
936 concerned have been identified, functional proof of their activity (and substrate specificity) is
937 much less clear. Nevertheless, for now it can be assumed that the pathways identified in higher
938 plants [241-243] are on the whole followed in eukaryotic algae though, perhaps, in a simpler
939 form with less genetic redundancy [32](**Figure 4**). In an overall survey by comparative
940 genomics and subcellular localisation, it was concluded that the pathways for acyl lipid
941 metabolism in the unicellular red alga *Cyanidioschyzon merolae* were essentially similar to
942 Arabidopsis [244].

943 Although, as noted above, there has been relatively little biochemistry carried out on the
944 algal enzymes used for acyl lipid formation and the reader is referred to previous work to serve
945 as a background [9]. For example, when studying the distribution of different acyl lipids (and
946 their molecular species as being 'prokaryotic' or 'eukaryotic' in origin: see [245]),
947 Eichenberger's group found that MGDG, DGDG, SQDG and PtdGro in *C. reinhardtii* were

948 clearly of plastidic ('prokaryotic') origin while DGTS and PtdEtn, enriched in 18:3(Δ 5,9,12)
949 and 18:4(Δ 5,9,12,15) were of 'eukaryotic' origin [246]. These data were followed by
950 radiolabelling experiments to study the time-course of their metabolism which identified, for
951 example, that lipid-linked desaturation on DGTS could give rise to PUFA formation on the sn-
952 2 position while, for MGDG and DGDG, desaturation was at the sn-1 position [247]. Similar
953 radiolabelling experiments in other eukaryotic algae are summarised by [14] and, later, by [9].

954

955 **4.1 The Kennedy Pathway**

956 Glycerolipids are synthesized using what is commonly known as the Kennedy pathway (**Figure**
957 **5**). This is named after Eugene P. Kennedy who discovered and characterised many of the
958 individual reactions for phosphoglyceride formation, although the first two (acylation) reactions
959 were originally reported by Kornberg and Pricer [245]). The penultimate intermediate of the
960 Kennedy pathway, DAG, is used to form zwitterionic phosphoglycerides (PtdCho, PtdEtn),
961 TAG and the galactosylglycerides MGDG and DGDG (**Figure 5**).

962 The relative contributions of 'eukaryotic' and 'prokaryotic' pathways of glycerolipid
963 synthesis has been discussed further by [248]. They point to the use of the 'prokaryotic'
964 pathway by *Chlamydomonas* because it lacks thylakoid lipids with 18C acids at the sn-2
965 position [115, 246, 247]. But this has recently been challenged by the discovery of an ER-
966 located lysophosphatidate acyltransferase (LPAAT) with substrate preference of 16C rather
967 than an 18:0 FA at its sn-2 position in *C. reinhardtii* [249]. In addition, a chloroplast pathway
968 for TAG formation in *C. reinhardtii* was recently reported [250]. In contrast, galactolipids of
969 *Dictyopteris mambranacea* [251] and several other brown algal species [252] are almost
970 completely of the 'eukaryotic' type. On the other hand, green algae such as *Chlorella kessleri*
971 and *Acetabularia mediterranea* and some red and brown algae seem to employ two parallel
972 pathways of lipid formation [248].

973 Because *Chlamydomonas* lacks PtdCho, which is known to be intimately involved in
974 the 'eukaryotic' pathway in plants, the lack of such synthesis in *C. reinhardtii* has been
975 suggested to be explained by the lack of PtdCho [253]. However, as pointed out by [248],
976 several brown algae that lack PtdCho have thylakoid lipids made by the 'eukaryotic' pathway.
977 This suggests that PtdCho is not essential for the 'eukaryotic' pathway of chloroplast lipid
978 formation.

979 Three pathways have been suggested for the accumulation of a 'prokaryotic' type of
980 TAG in the cytosol of algae such as *Chlamydomonas* or *Dunaliella bardawil* [248]. The first
981 pathway forms TAG at the chloroplast envelope while, in the second pathway, TAG is

982 assembled in the ER using DAG exported from the plastid. In the third pathway, both DAG and
983 TAG are formed on the ER. For the latter, specific mechanisms are needed to channel 16C fatty
984 acids onto the sn-2 position of DAG [248].

985 Before describing the Kennedy pathway and its constituent enzymes in detail, it is timely
986 to mention the recent use of metabolomics for the study of lipid synthesis in algae. For example,
987 Juppner et al [195] used GC-MS to study polar metabolites and lipids in synchronous cultures
988 of *C. reinhardtii*. Although this paper was mainly a technical advance, this proof-of-concept
989 study has the potential to be used for further in depth metabolic phenotyping and the
990 identification of biomarkers for various cellular processes, at least in *C. reinhardtii*.

991

992 **4.2 The Kennedy pathway in detail and phosphoglyceride formation**

993 The Kennedy pathway (**Figure 5**) begins with glycerol 3-phosphate (G3P). This intermediate
994 is produced by reduction of dihydroxyacetone phosphate (DHAP) derived from photosynthesis
995 and/or starch degradation [164]. Under normal growth conditions the supply of G3P can be one
996 controlling factor that may influence total lipid synthesis (and oil accumulation). However,
997 under osmotic stress, hydrolysis of glycerolipids can also take place, leading to an accumulation
998 of glycerol [254]. Moreover, the conversion of G3P back to DHAP under salt stress is also well
999 known [164, 254]. The synthesis and degradation of G3P in *Dunaliella salina* under
1000 extracellular salt stress has been well studied (see [255, 256]).

1001 Proteomic [257] and transcriptome analysis [118, 190, 258, 259] have shown that the
1002 activity of cytosolic glycerol 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GPDH) is positively correlated with
1003 TAG accumulation in algae. Moreover, overexpression of GPDH in *P. tricornutum* [260] and
1004 *C. reinhardtii* [261] increased lipid production. A multiple gene engineering strategy, including
1005 overexpression of glycerol kinase, GPDH and acetyl-CoA carboxylase, in *Scenedesmus*
1006 *quadricauda* increased the G3P pool and was paralleled by an increase in oil content [262].
1007 These data suggest that augmentation of G3P levels may be important to enhance lipid
1008 accumulation [263].

1009 An interesting recent observation with *C. reinhardtii* is the regulation of a gene GPD2
1010 that encodes a multi-domain enzyme with GPDH and phosphoserine phosphatase activities.
1011 This enzyme is, therefore, capable of synthesising either G3P or glycerol, depending on
1012 environmental conditions and/or metabolic demands [264].

1013 Candidate genes for the expression of chloroplast-localised glycerol 3-phosphate
1014 acyltransferase (GPAT) in *C. reinhardtii* were listed by [253] and by [57]. For diatoms, a gene
1015 for GPAT was predicted from the *Phaeodactylum tricornutum* genome [265] and molecular

1016 characterisation carried out [266]. The gene was overexpressed in *P. tricornutum* and resulted
1017 in a two-fold increase in non-polar lipids (presumably TAG). This altered the overall fatty acid
1018 composition in the transgenics with a significant decrease in saturated acids and an increase in
1019 PUFA. This was interesting since PUFA such as EPA are thought to be synthesised on the ER
1020 [38] even though the GPAT was a chloroplast enzyme [266]. A membrane-bound GPAT was
1021 characterised from the marine diatom *Thalassiosira pseudonana* and found to regulate the acyl
1022 composition of glycerolipids when expressed in a GPAT-lacking mutant of yeast [267] with
1023 increases in 16:0 and decreases in 16:1 and 18:1 in both TAG and phosphoglycerides.

1024 A GPAT-like gene (with sequence similarity to *Arabidopsis* GPAT9), was identified in
1025 the freshwater trebouxiophyte *Lobosphaera* (formerly *Parietochloris*) *incisa* which, when over-
1026 expressed in *C. reinhardtii*, increased TAG production [268]. The same alga was examined by
1027 Ouyang et al. [269], who considered it localised to chloroplasts. Substitution of Arg to His in
1028 the glycerol 3-phosphate binding site increased the enzyme's activity and led to raised
1029 phospholipid levels when expressed in yeast.

1030 Two candidate genes for LPAAT were noted in *C. reinhardtii* [57]. The CrLPAAT1
1031 was reported to be located the chloroplast with a preference for 16C at its sn-2 position [270],
1032 whereas LPAAT2 has recently been identified as the ER isoform but also with a preference of
1033 16C at its sn-2 position [249]. Both are found to be implicated in TAG synthesis, because
1034 plastidial over-expression of *CrLPAAT1* increased oil content [270], and silencing of
1035 *CrLPAAT2* reduced oil content during N starvation [249]. The potential regulatory role of
1036 AGPAT (acylglycerolphosphate acyltransferase) in *Phaeodactylum tricornutum* for TAG
1037 synthesis has been discussed [271]. A genome-wide analysis of LPAAT genes has been carried
1038 out in algae [272] and in *Nannochloropsis* two differently-localised enzymes have been found,
1039 both of which are needed for TAG formation [273].

1040 Phosphatidic acid, the product of LPAAT activity, is at a branch-point of the Kennedy
1041 pathway (**Figure 5**) where it can be converted to CDP-DAG for the formation of anionic
1042 phosphoglycerides, PtdIns, PtdGro and DiPtdGro (diphosphatidylglycerol, cardiolipin).
1043 Putative genes for phosphatidate cytidyltransferase, phosphatidylglycerolphosphate (PGP)
1044 synthase and phosphatidylinositol synthase were described in *C. reinhardtii* [57, 253] and one
1045 for phosphatidylglycerol synthase noted in *P. tricornutum* [38] but, until recently, there has
1046 been a dearth of work on the synthesis of such anionic phospholipids in eukaryotic algae except
1047 for indirect studies on inoculum size in altering phosphoglyceride profiling [274] and the work
1048 on both PGP synthase and PGP phosphatase 1 from *C. reinhardtii* [275, 276]. Two homologues
1049 of PGP synthase (CrPGP1 and CrPGP2) were isolated and characterised from *C. reinhardtii*

1050 [275]. Their function was demonstrated by complementation of a mutant of *Synechocystis* sp.
1051 PCC 6803. In nutrient-starved algae, expression of both homologues was decreased by P-
1052 depletion at 4h but restored after 5 days. In contrast, while CrPGP1 was reduced by N-depletion,
1053 expression of CrPGP2 was unaffected.

1054 For PGP phosphatase (PGPP), the gene was isolated from *C. reinhardtii* and its function
1055 shown using a yeast mutant [276]. While two aspartate residues were essential in yeast PGPP,
1056 only the first was needed for function in the algal phosphatase, despite conservation of the
1057 putative catalytic motif.

1058 When *C. reinhardtii* was grown in sulphur-deficient medium, synthesis of PtdGro was
1059 enhanced and the accumulating phospholipid compensated for the loss of negatively-charged
1060 SQDG. Similar activation of PtdGro synthesis was also observed in a SQDG-deficient mutant
1061 under S-replete growth conditions. The data were suggested to indicate a critical role for PtdGro
1062 under S-starved conditions in the maintenance of Photosystem I activity [277]. In addition, a
1063 role for PtdGro in Photosystem II was suggested in two PtdGro-deficient mutants of *C.*
1064 *reinhardtii* [278]. In these mutants there was a marked reduction of PtdGro and a complete loss
1065 of its $\Delta 3-16:1$ component. This unique fatty acid is confined to PtdGro in higher plants where
1066 there have been studies on its enigmatic function and localisation (see [279, 280]). In algae, it
1067 is likely to have similar properties but more research is needed to define these.

1068 Diphosphatidylglycerol (DiPtdGro, cardiolipin) is a characteristic lipid component of
1069 the inner mitochondrial membrane, as originally demonstrated in plants (see [281]). Cardiolipin
1070 synthase (CLS) was identified in *C. reinhardtii* [282] when it rescued a CLS-mutant of yeast.
1071 The sequence for the gene was similar to that from other eukaryotes suggesting that the *C.*
1072 *reinhardtii* CLS catalyses a reaction using CDP-DAG as opposed to the *E.coli* enzyme which
1073 uses two molecules of PtdGro [245].

1074 For the formation of the zwitterionic phosphoglycerides, PtdCho and PtdEtn,
1075 phosphatidate needs to be dephosphorylated to DAG. Genes for eleven putative plastid
1076 phosphatidate phosphatases (PAP) were identified in *C. reinhardtii* [57] and two in *P.*
1077 *tricornutum* [38]. The mRNA level of the CrPAP2 isoform was found to increase in *C.*
1078 *reinhardtii* grown in nitrogen-limiting conditions. RNA interference of the gene reduced total
1079 lipid by up to 17% while overexpression caused an increase, indicating that PAP activity can
1080 regulate lipid accumulation. The CrPAP2 enzyme showed PAP activity when expressed in
1081 *E.coli* [283].

1082 Once DAG has been formed in the Kennedy pathway it can be used for PtdCho and
1083 PtdEtn production as well as the synthesis of glycosylglycerides and TAG (**Figure 5**). For the

1084 biosynthesis of PtdCho and PtdEtn by the Kennedy pathway, the cytidylyltransferase reaction
1085 is considered to show the most flux control, at least in higher plants [284] and animals [245].
1086 The CTP: phosphoethanolamine cytidylyltransferase has been studied in *C. reinhardtii* [285].
1087 It showed a typical signature peptide sequence for the cytidylyltransferase family and was
1088 probably localised to mitochondria. It showed cell cycle fluctuations with high activity in the
1089 dark. The same group also identified a cDNA encoding CDP-ethanolamine phosphotransferase
1090 and expressed it in a yeast mutant deficient in both choline- and ethanolamine
1091 phosphotransferase activity and found that it had both activities. This was notable since *C.*
1092 *reinhardtii* only contains PtdEtn and the PtdCho is replaced by DGTS in this alga. Other kinetic
1093 properties of the expressed enzyme were measured and parallels with the higher plant enzyme
1094 noted [286]. In *Chlamydomonas*, no gene for PtdSer decarboxylase has been found and,
1095 therefore, it can be assumed that PtdEtn is made exclusively by the Kennedy pathway using
1096 CDP-Etn [253].

1097 As noted in **section 2**, PtdCho is found in most algae but not in a few species, of which
1098 *C. reinhardtii* is one. However, some species of the *Chlamydomonas* genus do contain PtdCho
1099 [287]. Accordingly, Sato et al [288] studied the biosynthesis of PtdCho in these algae. In plants
1100 PtdCho can be made by the CDP-base pathway as well as by methylation in three steps from
1101 PtdEtn [245]. There are also some extra methylation routers (see e.g. [289] Sato et al [288])
1102 used radiolabelling studies in conjunction with comparative genomics to elucidate the pathways
1103 in three *Chlamydomonas* species together with the red alga *Cyanidioschyzon merolae*. Their
1104 results are shown in **Figure 6** and revealed that both *C. sphaeroides* and *C. merolae* form
1105 PtdCho from PtdEtn by methyl transfers. In *Chlamydomonas asymmetrica*, PtdCho can be
1106 made by the CDP-base pathway or by methylation, as well as the intermediate conversion
1107 of phosphoethanolamine to phosphocholine. These data revealed an unexpected diversity in the
1108 ability of *Chlamydomonas* strains to synthesise PtdCho [288]. Presumably, this will also be
1109 reflected in other algae.

1110 Transcriptional analysis (during N stress) of *N. oceanica* indicated that PtdEtn is
1111 synthesised by two distinct pathways (PtdSer decarboxylation as well as the Kennedy pathway).
1112 In fact, PtdSer was below detection levels in this alga, indicating that it mainly served as a
1113 precursor for PtdEtn formation [290]. Such observations make the need for some biochemistry
1114 (enzymology) even more urgent.

1115 One subject that should be emphasised when discussing acyl lipid biosynthesis is the
1116 fact that individual classes have distinct and usually well-preserved fatty acid compositions.
1117 This was eluded to in **section 2** but a particular example in *C. reinhardtii* is shown in **Figure 7**.

1118 Other algae also show distinct patterns and, of course, these may be quite different to *C.*
1119 *reinhardtii* [291]. So far as the three main phosphoglycerides are concerned, PtdEtn is more
1120 unsaturated than PtdGro, which often contains species with the unique trans-3-hexadecenoic
1121 acid. For algae containing both PtdCho and PtdEtn, then these classes tend to have a rather
1122 similar lipid composition [252]. Presumably this reflects either the formation of both PtdCho
1123 and PtdEtn from the same DAG pool or the conversion of PtdEtn to PtdCho by methylation, as
1124 discussed above.

1125 Formation of DAG also allows biosynthesis of glycosylglycerides (**Figure 4**), which are
1126 the main membrane constituents of chloroplast thylakoids.

1127

1128 **4.3 Biosynthesis of glycosylglycerides**

1129 The enzyme synthesising MGDG uses DAG and UDP-galactose substrates and is referred to as
1130 MGDG synthase. Only one enzyme is found in Chlorophyta (e.g. *C. reinhardtii*) in contrast to
1131 higher plants where there are three MGD genes [47, 51]. Similarly, one DGDG synthase is
1132 found in *C. reinhardtii* [47] and many other green algae [19]. Although DGDG synthase also
1133 uses a UDP-galactose substrate the galactose link on DGDG is α -anomeric whereas the first
1134 galactose (on MGDG) is in the β -anomeric configuration. The DGD in *C. reinhardtii* resembles
1135 DGD1 of higher plants [51, 292] but a second isoform is additionally found in *Ostreococcus*
1136 *tauri*, which resembles the plant DGD2 [292]. An interesting short review discusses the
1137 pathways for glycosylglyceride synthesis in cyanobacteria and different algae with reference to
1138 the endosymbiotic origin of chloroplasts [293]. The authors noted that, even within the red
1139 algae, the situation is complicated with *Cyanidioschyzon merolae* differing from, say,
1140 *Porphyridium purpureum*.

1141 A complication in the formation of MGDG and DGDG in green algae is the variable
1142 contribution of the ‘prokaryotic’ (exclusively in the plastid) and the ‘eukaryotic’ pathways
1143 (where the ER also participates). Green algae can be divided into the first group (e.g. *Chlorella*)
1144 where the DAG is derived from PtdCho on the ER and a second, more common, group (e.g. *C.*
1145 *reinhardtii*, *Dunaliella* sp.) where only the ‘prokaryotic’ pathway is used [19]. In *Dunaliella*
1146 two routes exist for the formation of DGDG. The first uses sequential desaturation of 18:1/16:0-
1147 DGDG to form 18:2/16:0- and 18:3/16:0-DGDG and the second uses more unsaturated species
1148 of MGDG to form DGDG species where further desaturation can lead to 18:3/16:3- or
1149 18:3/16:4-DGDG[19].

1150 For algal species where 20C or 22C fatty acids are important an ‘omega pathway’ has
1151 been suggested [51]. In this, VLCPUFA are formed by elongation and desaturation reactions

1152 on the ER. Apart from the involvement of elongase(s), the ‘omega’ pathway is superficially
1153 similar to the ‘eukaryotic’ pathway (as defined above). Our knowledge (or lack of!) of the
1154 detailed biochemistry of the formation of lipids with VLCPUFA has been covered in detail [38,
1155 51]

1156 The situation in diatoms has been summarised recently by [38]. Since VLCPUFA are
1157 characteristic of diatoms (section 2), the contribution of the ER is very important (see above).
1158 For the red alga, *Cyanidioschyzon merolae*, desaturation does not occur in the plastids and
1159 PUFA have to be imported, resulting in a coupled pathway for galactolipid synthesis [294].

1160 A thorough review of the evolution of MGDG and DGDG biosynthetic pathways has
1161 been published [51]. This compares these pathways based on both molecular and biochemical
1162 data and highlights enzyme reactions that have been conserved and those which have diverged.
1163 In addition, the *Chlamydomonas* genome encodes an orthologue of the
1164 trigalactosyldiacylglycerol (TGD) transport protein, needed for ER to chloroplast lipid
1165 trafficking [295]. In a *tgd* mutant, MGDG synthase was strongly stimulated but with TAG
1166 accumulation due to the defective lipid trafficking.

1167 The pathway for SQDG synthesis in green algae is similar to that in higher plants. The
1168 pathway was first proposed by [296] and the genes involved (SQD1, SQD2) were later isolated
1169 by Benning’s group [297, 298] to provide independent confirmation (see [299]). SQD1
1170 catalyses a complex overall reaction to generate UDP-sulfoquinovose before the transfer of
1171 sulfoquinovose to DAG by SQD2 to generate SQDG. SQD1 sequences are highly conserved in
1172 plants and algae. They form three distinct clusters – in green algae, in red algae (and some
1173 cyanobacteria e.g. *Synochocystis*) and in Archaea. The gene was first identified in *C. reinhardtii*
1174 by [20]. In addition, two further putative genes for SQDG synthase have been identified (see
1175 [57]).

1176 In general, SQDG is thought to play an important role in photosynthesis as discussed by
1177 [253]. It is important for the structural integrity and heat-tolerance of Photosystem II [300].
1178 Also of note is the presence in *C. reinhardtii* of 2-*O*-acyl-SQDG [20], a lipid of unknown
1179 function. Various SQDGs or monoacyl derivatives (SQMG) have been suggested to be potential
1180 anti-neoplastic agents, which inhibit DNA polymerase [301]. Moreover, while the
1181 galactosylglycerides can often serve to supply fatty acids during stress-induced TAG
1182 accumulation (see later), SQDG can also provide a major sulphur source for protein synthesis
1183 during early phases of sulphur starvation in *C. reinhardtii* [302].

1184 Red algae (Rhodophyta) differ from green algae in often having ARA and EPA as major
1185 fatty acids (**Tables 2 and 5**) [303-305]. Such acids accumulate in the glycosylglycerides as well

1186 as other lipid classes. In red algae (e.g. *Porphyridium cruentum*) galactolipids are formed by
1187 both the ‘prokaryotic’ and ‘eukaryotic’ pathways which give rise to 20C/16C or 20C/20C
1188 species, respectively. In the case of *P. cruentum* or *Porphyra yezoensis* the main MGDG species
1189 will be 20:5/16:0 and 20:5/20:5 [113, 306]. PtdCho is the source of the ‘eukaryotic’ moieties
1190 [113] while 20C fatty acids can also come from any TAG reserves [307]. In contrast, the DGDG
1191 in different Rhodophyta appears to be mainly 20:5/16:0 (i.e. ‘prokaryotic’) as is the SQDG
1192 [306].

1193 MGDG synthases and DGDG synthases of red algae form a clade separated from green
1194 algae [308]. Rhodophyta have one MGDG synthase and most of them have one or two plant-
1195 like DGDG synthase. DGD2-like isoforms are found in *Chondrus crispus* and many other red
1196 algae [51] while the SQDG genes (SQD1, SQD2) are highly related to higher plant orthologues
1197 [19].

1198 There is a small group of primitive red algae of the order Cyanidiales, which have a very
1199 simple fatty acid composition, lacking the usual 20C fatty acids found in most red algae [294].
1200 The formation of their glycosylglycerides is discussed in [19].

1201

1202 **4.4 Betaine lipids**

1203 As mentioned in **section 2**, algae often contain betaine lipids as major membrane constituents.
1204 DGTS is a significant component of *C. reinhardtii* while DGTA is found in most brown algae
1205 as well as some other species. DGTS is formed by reaction of DAG with S-adenosylmethionine
1206 and the gene has been identified in *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*. It codes for a single betaine
1207 synthase (BTA1Cr) protein whose function was confirmed by expression in *E. coli* [47]. The
1208 reaction contrasts with the two enzymes needed for DGTS biosynthesis in the photosynthetic
1209 bacterium, *Rhodobacter spaeroides* [47]. In algae the original pathway proposed involved
1210 transfer of a 4C amino acid moiety from methionine (in S-adenosylmethionine) followed by
1211 three methylations [309, 310]. DGTS has been proposed as a major source of fatty acids during
1212 TAG accumulation following N-starvation in *P. tricornutum* [311]. However, since *P.*
1213 *tricornutum* contains DGTA as a major lipid [21], this may (also) be a source of fatty acids.
1214 DGTS can be converted to DGTA in brown algae [312] and in *P. tricornutum* [311].

1215 For the other betaine lipids, despite being important components of many marine algae,
1216 only a little is known of the biosynthetic pathway for DGTA. Early labelling experiments
1217 identifying DGTA (then an unidentified lipid) as a rapidly metabolised lipid are summarised in
1218 [14]. Experiments using differentially radiolabelled methionine isomers in *Ochromonas danica*
1219 suggested that DGTS could be converted to DGTA by decarboxylation and recarboxylation of

1220 the polar part (and simultaneous deacylation and reacylation of the glycerol moiety)[312]. The
1221 same workers suggested that DGTA could act as a substrate for desaturation. Using a different
1222 brown alga, *Ectocarpus fasciculatus*, Eichenberger's group found that, after labelling with
1223 [14C]oleate, label rapidly appeared in phosphoglycerides such as PtdGro, PtdEtn and PtdCho
1224 but little in DGTA [313]. In contrast, when another brown alga, *Dictyopteris membranacea*,
1225 was labelled with 14C-acetate or 14C-oleate [314] label rapidly appeared in DGTA (and
1226 PtdGro) and was then transferred to glycosylglycerides during a 6-day chase period. These data
1227 confirmed experiments with other brown algae such as *Fucus serratus* [315] or *A. nodosum*
1228 [252] in showing that DGTA was actively metabolised and could supply fatty acids to
1229 chloroplast glycosylglycerides. They also emphasise that generalisations about metabolism or,
1230 indeed, betaine lipid distributions in brown algae cannot be made.

1231 *Pavlova lutheri* contains not only DGTA and DGCC but also a
1232 diacylglycerylglucuronide (DGGA). Radiolabelling experiments in this alga showed that while
1233 both DGTA and DGCC were extra-plastidic lipids, only DGCC was important for re-
1234 distribution of fatty acids back to plastid components such as MGDG [316].

1235

1236 **4.5 Triacylglycerol biosynthesis and accumulation**

1237 Recent commercial interest in using oleaginous microalgae for VLCPUFA-enriched oils or for
1238 biofuels (see **section 7**) has led to a surge in interest in TAG metabolism. During normal growth,
1239 algae usually contain only small amounts of TAG but this is increased remarkably under stress
1240 conditions, such as N or P deficiency, elevated temperature or light intensity [317, 318]. *C.*
1241 *reinhardtii* has often been used in studies because this model green alga accumulates TAG
1242 rapidly under various stresses [56] such as N-deficiency which also halts cell division and then
1243 causes quiescence [319]. Key genes in the process have been identified by forward or reverse
1244 genetic approaches [56, 317]. These include forward genetic screening by insertional
1245 mutagenesis [49, 181, 320], deep transcriptome analysis by RNA sequencing [179, 190, 206,
1246 321] and proteomics [190, 233, 322]. In the latter case, a major lipid droplet protein (MLDP)
1247 was identified in *Chlamydomonas*, [proposed to play a similar role as plant oil crop oleosin](#) [323-
1248 325]. In order to evaluate TAG accumulation and, hence, the usefulness of particular algae or
1249 growth conditions, efficient analytical methods (especially high-throughput) are needed. Two
1250 such procedures are in [30, 291].

1251 For TAG synthesis by the Kennedy pathway, four reaction steps are required (**Figure**
1252 **5**). In addition it is known from work in higher plants that phospholipid:diacylglycerol
1253 acyltransferase (PDAT)[326] can have a prominent role, depending on the plant species [327]

1254 [328]. In *Chlamydomonas* there is one PDAT [217, 329] but six diacylglycerol:acyl-CoA
1255 acyltransferases (DGATs) of two types, type 1 DGAT and type 2 DGTT (an abbreviation has
1256 been adopted for algal researchers). The DGAT genes are called DGAT1 and DGTT1-5 [130,
1257 217, 330]. There is a little confusion in the literature regarding nomenclature of the type 2
1258 DGATs. For example, in *C. reinhardtii* these are referred to as DGTT1-5 or DGAT2 A-E (see
1259 [331]) or even as CrDGAT2-1 to CrDGAT2-5 [332]. Nevertheless, regardless of nomenclature,
1260 there is a pattern across algal species with, in general, most having a single DGAT1 but multiple
1261 DGAT2 genes. Three picoplankton species (*M. pusilla*, *O. taura*, *O. lucimarinus*) did not
1262 contain a putative DGAT1 but this could be due to incomplete genome sequences or because
1263 their DGAT1 sequences were too divergent to be detected by similarity searches [333]. These
1264 authors speculate as to why algae contain multiple copies of DGATs which suggest multiple
1265 origins rather than gene duplication events. The same conclusion was reached from a study of
1266 DGATs in a wide variety of different organisms from mammals through to fungi and yeasts but
1267 including *Chlorella* and *Coccomyxa* sp. [334].

1268 While most attention has been paid to the multiple DGAT2 genes/enzymes, a putative
1269 sequence for DGAT1 in *C. reinhardtii* [57] has been reported. For *P. tricornutum*, a DGAT1
1270 was cloned and its activity demonstrated in a yeast mutant [335] where a preference for
1271 saturated 16 or 18C fatty acids was displayed.

1272 For the type-2 DGATs in *C. reinhardtii*, CrDGAT2A, B and C were investigated in
1273 overexpressing strains but total TAG accumulation was not changed significantly from wild-
1274 type under normal growth or after N- or S-depletion [330]. The substrate selectivity of
1275 CrDGTT1, 2 and 3 (DGAT2B, E and D, respectively) was assessed. CrDGTT1 preferred
1276 PUFAs, CrDGTT2 preferred monounsaturated acyl-CoAs and DGTT3 preferred 16C acyl-
1277 CoAs [336]. Knock-down of each of the three genes caused a 20-35% decrease in TAG together
1278 with a change in TAG fatty acids. Hung et al. [331] performed heterologous complementation
1279 assays for *C. reinhardtii* DGTT1-4 in yeast mutants and showed that DGTT1, 2 and 3 but not
1280 4 complemented the TAG deficiency phenotype. Complementation with DGTT2 was the most
1281 effective. In agreement with previous reports, the authors could not detect transcripts for
1282 DGTT-5.

1283 In the green alga, *Ostreococcus tauri*, three putative DGAT2 genes were identified. No
1284 homologues to DGAT1 or DGAT3 could be detected and two of the three DGAT2 sequences
1285 (*OtDGAT2A* and *OtDGAT2B*) gave enzyme activity in TAG-free yeast mutants. *OtDGAT2B*
1286 was shown to have a broad substrate specificity [337]. Gong et al. [338] identified four putative
1287 type 2 DGAT genes in *P. tricornutum* (now considered to have five such genes; [38]). The

1288 *PtDGAT2B* was expressed in yeast mutants to restore TAG formation. Moreover, up-regulation
1289 of *PtDGAT2A* and *PtDGAT2B* preceded TAG synthesis in the alga. However, *PtDGAT2B* was
1290 not regulated by N-starvation [338].

1291 Instead of the Kennedy pathway, using DGAT, TAG can also be produced by
1292 phospholipid: diacylglycerol acyltransferase (PDAT) (**Figure 4**). The relative contributions of
1293 PDAT versus DGAT in plants is still a matter of debate (see [328]). A gene encoding PDAT
1294 was found in *C. reinhardtii* and its activity demonstrated by expression in a TAG-deficient
1295 yeast mutant. MicroRNA silencing of PDAT in *C. reinhardtii* altered membrane lipid
1296 composition and reduced the growth rate [329]. The CrPDAT also had a strong lipase activity
1297 and was suggested to be functional during the log phase of growth under normal conditions but
1298 not during the large induction of TAG deposition on N-depletion [329]. It is noteworthy that
1299 this conclusion contrasts with the increase in PDAT expression following N starvation observed
1300 by [217]. In higher plants PDAT is thought to generally use PtdCho, which is not present in
1301 *C.reinhardtii* although Boyle et al. [217] reported that the *CrPDAT* complemented TAG-
1302 deficient yeast (where it may well have used PtdCho). Moreover, the gene for *CrPDAT* is
1303 predicted to be chloroplast-located [339] so the ability of the enzyme to use MGDG (but not
1304 DGDG or SQDG) as acyl donor in this alga is important [329]. It will be interesting to look at
1305 the characteristics of other algal ‘PDAT’ enzymes such as in *P. tricornutum* where a putative
1306 gene has been identified [38].

1307

1308 **4.6 Regulation of triacylglycerol accumulation**

1309 Because of the commercial interest in enhancing TAG accumulation (**section 7**), the regulation
1310 of TAG biosynthesis is an active area of research. Recently, the use of transcriptional
1311 engineering has been reported [340]. By identifying transcription factors whose expression was
1312 enhanced during the TAG accumulation caused by N-deprivation in *N. gaditana*, ZnCys was
1313 shown to be a key factor whose expression could be fine-tuned to increase TAG formation with
1314 only a minimal reduction in total carbon productivity [229]. These initial experiments are
1315 encouraging, although still fall short of commercial requirements [340, 341]. An additional
1316 survey about gaps in our knowledge about the biochemistry of TAG accumulation and possible
1317 avenues for engineering has been made [342]. Other aspects that impinge on lipid accumulation
1318 in green algae are chemical activators [343] and carbon precursor supply [344]. Because TAG
1319 biosynthesis is increased by nutrient deprivation, overexpression of important enzymes such as
1320 the type 2 DGAT (DGTT4) can be elicited with a P-starvation inducible promoter [345].

1321 Parallel studies have also been made with the commercially-promising *P. tricornutum* (e.g.
1322 [151]).

1323 Stress (usually nutrient-deprivation) induction of TAG production is a widely employed
1324 method to increase algal oil accumulation. However, it has been noted that our knowledge of
1325 the process is largely based on genome predictions which have yet to be experimentally verified
1326 [346]. The impact of N-starvation has been examined in nine algal strains (chosen as promising
1327 for oil production from 96 candidates) where aspects such as biomass production and the
1328 duration of productivity were documented [347]. As an alternative to N-starvation, an RNAi
1329 knock-down of nitrate reductase can also enhance lipid biosynthesis in *P. tricornutum* [348].
1330 The authors also noted the changed expression (and binding) of transcription factors, thus
1331 heralding their recent use, referred to above [340].

1332 In another oleaginous alga (*Nannochloropsis gaditana*), the availability of detailed
1333 genetic information allowed predictions of lipid metabolism to be made [66]. When this alga
1334 was grown under N-starvation, the formation of TAG was accompanied by a decrease in
1335 galactosylglycerides (and a reorganisation of the photosynthetic apparatus) [349]. Similarly, in
1336 *N. oceanica* under N-stress, the amounts of MGDG (as well as DGTS and PtdCho) decreased
1337 dramatically and expression analysis accompanying the changes identified a number of genes
1338 that seemed to be involved [290]. In *Chlorella* also, N-stress caused decreases in membrane
1339 lipids which accompanied the increase in TAG and this was confirmed by radiolabelling
1340 experiments [350]. As an adjunct to increasing TAG accumulation by increased biosynthesis,
1341 disrupting lipid catabolism has also been used in the diatom *Thalassiosira pseudonana* [351].

1342 The consistent mobilisation of membrane acyl groups for TAG formation in various
1343 algae under N stress begs the question about which enzymes might be responsible. In *N.*
1344 *oceanica*, a phospholipase was upregulated [290] while in *C. reinhardtii* a galactoglyceride
1345 lipase is involved [181]. The unusual substrate selectivity of the so-called ‘PDAT’ in *C.*
1346 *reinhardtii* should also be noted, together with its lipase activity [329]. In *Coccomyxa*
1347 *subellipsoida*, N stress caused extensive chain remodelling of membrane lipids as well as TAG.
1348 Over 2/3rds of the chloroplast lipids were lost during TAG accumulation, which was produced
1349 by the prokaryotic pathway [352].

1350 Because TAG (especially when accumulated under nutrient stress) is found in lipid
1351 droplets, several groups have focussed on these organelles. Most of the work has been with *C.*
1352 *reinhardtii* and the overall composition [353] and a major lipid droplet protein (MLDP) that
1353 affects droplet size [324] reported. The MLDP was described by others (see [325, 354]) but, in
1354 the studies by Huang et al [355] was found to only interact with the lipid droplet surface

1355 intermittently. The whole topic of microalgal lipid droplets, including their composition,
1356 formation and function has been reviewed by Goold et al [354].

1357 For further details of the overall subjects of TAG biosynthesis and its elevation under
1358 nutrient stress see the reviews [38, 56, 57, 248, 317] as well as the later **sections 6 and 7**.

1359 TAG synthesis under nutrient, temperature or chemical stress is thought to be a
1360 protective mechanism to reduce reactive oxidant damage to photosynthetic membranes, as
1361 discussed by Du and Benning [317]. It will occur whenever carbon supply outstrips the capacity
1362 for starch synthesis [117] and will be observed commonly in other algae (e.g. in the marine alga
1363 *Desmodesmus* sp.)[356].

1364 In contrast to *Chamydomonas*, the oleaginous algae *Nannochloropsis* sp. accumulate
1365 TAG not only under stress conditions but during normal growth [357]. Under such growth,
1366 TAG is around 10% of the dry weight [358]. Nevertheless, following stress (nutrient
1367 deprivation), *Nannochloropsis* will produce substantial amounts of carbohydrates, although
1368 TAG is always the major reserve compound [317]. *Nannochloropsis* differs also from *C.*
1369 *reinhardtii* in containing PtdCho as well as DGTS (*C. reinhardtii* only has DGTS; [359] and in
1370 the high amounts of VLCPUFA (EPA) in its lipids [358].

1371 The genomes of several *Nannochloropsis* species have been sequenced including *N.*
1372 *oceanica* CCMP1779 [53], *N. oceanica* IMET1 [357] and *N. gaditana* [63]. The first of these
1373 has a relatively small genome (28.7 Mb) coding for around 12,000 genes [53]. Some 10 putative
1374 genes probably involved in TAG synthesis were identified including those for all the reactions
1375 of the Kennedy Pathway (**Figure 5**). There were no less than 13 putative DGAT genes and two
1376 for PDAT. In addition, a major lipid droplet protein (LDSP) was identified in *Nannochloropsis*
1377 [317]. Such studies provide important background information for the potential industrial
1378 exploitation of *Nannochloropsis* (**section 7**).

1379

1380 **5. Glycerolipid breakdown and β -oxidation of FAs**

1381 Cells require the ability to degrade storage TAGs and cell membranes when needed, or to digest
1382 extraneously supplied FAs as food source. In laboratories, this condition can be easily
1383 mimicked by manipulating the N content in the culture medium. As shown in **Figure 8**, TAGs
1384 are made upon N starvation and then degraded rapidly when N is added back. This process is
1385 accompanied by a degradation and then re-synthesis of membrane lipids [201]. Based on this
1386 observation, several forward genetic screens have been performed aiming to isolate mutants
1387 defective in lipid catabolism [181, 196, 319, 320]. Accompanying this process, many genes of
1388 lipid hydrolysis exhibit drastic alterations in their expression [130, 190]. The process of lipid

1389 breakdown is collectively called lipolysis and requires highly specialized enzymes called
1390 lipases. Most lipases act at the interface of hydrophobic and hydrophilic phases and are
1391 membrane proteins, making them very difficult to study; therefore despite intensive research
1392 on algal lipid metabolism and several forward genetic screens carried out in the past 10 years
1393 [181, 217, 228, 319, 320, 329], only six algal lipases have been identified and studied in more
1394 or less detail; yet the major TAG lipase remains to be identified in the most studied algal model
1395 *C. reinhardtii*.

1396

1397 **5.1 Known algal lipases**

1398 The known lipases from algae include two orthologues of the Arabidopsis major TAG lipase
1399 (Sugar dependent 1, SDP1) [360-362], a DAG lipase (CrLIP1) from *C. reinhardtii* [363], a *sn*-
1400 2 MGDG lipase from *C. reinhardtii* (PGD1)[181], an orthologue of the Arabidopsis CGI58
1401 found in the diatom *Thalassiosira pseudonana* [351], a putative patatin-like phospholipase
1402 domain-containing protein 3 (PNPLA3) from *P. tricornutum* [33], including a recently
1403 identified envelop-located TAG lipase OmTGL from *P. tricornutum* [364]. . Moreover the
1404 Chlamydomonas PDAT was observed to also possess lipase activity *in vitro* [329]. Expressional
1405 manipulation of the above-mentioned genes has often resulted in strains with modified TAG
1406 amount. The lipolytic processes and enzymes involved have recently been reviewed in [171]
1407 for microalgae. In this section, we therefore chose to focus on the oxidation of FAs, the major
1408 products of lipolysis.

1409 Following their release from a membrane lipid or TAG, non-esterified FAs are first
1410 activated to their CoA esters by members of the long chain acyl-CoA synthetase (LACS)
1411 family. LACS proteins belong to a multi-protein family, and are ubiquitously present in
1412 numerous algal lineages. The resultant activated FA in the form of acyl-CoA is then ready for
1413 oxidative attack at the C-3 or β -carbon position, giving rise to the name β -oxidation. An acetyl-
1414 CoA (C_2) is cleaved off the acyl-CoA (C_n) with each round of the β -oxidation spiral, and the
1415 remaining acyl-CoA (C_{n-2}) re-enters the spiral to repeat this process until acyl-CoA is
1416 completely converted to acetyl-CoA.

1417

1418 **5.2 The β -oxidation of FAs**

1419 All living organisms have developed the capacity to breakdown FAs to produce acetyl-CoAs,
1420 which are further metabolized either for energy production when coupled to mitochondrial
1421 electron transport chain, or for synthesis of sugars when coupled to glyoxylate and
1422 gluconeogenesis pathways [170, 365]. With the exception of cyanobacteria [366], β -oxidation

1423 of FAs is universally present and has been intensively studied in mammals [367], oleaginous
1424 yeast [368, 369] and in germinating oilseeds [170] and senescing leaves [370].

1425

1426 **5.2.1 Subcellular location of β -oxidation and phylogenetics of acyl-CoA** 1427 **dehydrogenases/oxidases**

1428 FA β -oxidation begins with the enzymes acyl-CoA dehydrogenase (ACAD) or acyl-CoA
1429 oxidase (ACOX), which catalyze the dehydrogenation of acyl-CoA to trans-2-enoyl-CoA either
1430 via the reduction of O₂ to generate peroxide (ACOX) or via the reduction of FAD to FADH₂
1431 (ACAD). It was previously believed that ACOX is exclusively peroxisomal, while ACAD is
1432 mitochondrial, but peroxisomal ACAD has since been reported from humans and from the
1433 fungus *Ustilago mayis* [371]. The β -oxidation of FAs occurs mostly in peroxisomes in yeast and
1434 plant cells, in contrast to mammalian cells wherein it occurs principally in mitochondria, with
1435 a small peroxisomal contribution [367, 372, 373]. FA degradation has been studied in various
1436 algal species, although by no means comprehensively, and the location of FA β -oxidation in
1437 algae varies extensively, occurring either in the peroxisome, the mitochondrion or both [374-
1438 378]. A better understanding of ACOX/ACAD evolution and localization is essential for the
1439 successful engineering (and control) of algal lipid catabolic pathways.

1440 Based on a comprehensive phylogenetic analysis (**Figure 9**), ACOXs and ACADs
1441 appear to have diverged and diversified during early prokaryote evolution, as previously
1442 reported [379]. Eukaryotes then inherited over twenty distinct ACOXs/ACADs, either via
1443 endosymbiosis or via lateral gene transfer, and these inherited prokaryotic genes in turn gave
1444 rise to eukaryotic subfamilies. Additional archaeal sequences made available since previous
1445 analyses of ACAD evolution [379] now suggest that the major eukaryotic ACAD lineages are
1446 of both archaeal and bacterial ancestry rather than solely arising from the latter, while ACOX
1447 appears to be exclusively of bacterial origin (**Figure 9**).

1448 As a result of the distinct prokaryotic ancestry of the different eukaryotic ACOX/ACAD
1449 subfamilies, inter-subfamily inferences regarding enzyme localization are fraught with peril.
1450 Furthermore, the presence of contrasting mitochondrial and peroxisomal members within the
1451 same ACAD subfamily indicates that even intra-subfamily localization is not always conserved
1452 (e.g. group D-II in **Figure 9**). Nonetheless, some common trends are apparent: all ACOXs thus
1453 far characterized are peroxisomal, with peroxisomal localization (and accompanying catalase
1454 activity) perhaps being essential for efficient activity of these peroxide-producing enzymes. By
1455 contrast, ACADs are either mitochondrial or peroxisomal.

1456 The conservation of eukaryotic members of the various ACOX/ACAD subfamilies
1457 varies extensively by taxonomic group [379], particularly in the case of eukaryotic algae, and
1458 may be in part responsible for establishing the organellar location of β -oxidation. Green,
1459 heterokont and haptophyte algae possess a variety of ACADs and ACOXs, while red algae
1460 (with two exceptions, perhaps due to sequence contamination or lateral gene transfer) possess
1461 members of only a single ACOX subfamily (O-III), making them potentially interesting
1462 candidates for the engineering of enhanced lipid accumulation through tightened control of β -
1463 oxidation. Similarly, Arabidopsis does not contain any ACADs and an absence of ACADs may
1464 explain the exclusive peroxisomal localization of β -oxidation in higher plants. However, the
1465 lower plants *Physcomitrella patens* and *Marchantia polymorpha* do retain members of the D-
1466 X ACAD subfamily, which is also present in green algae (in addition to subfamilies D-II, D-
1467 VII, and DXI); it is unknown whether these enzymes are of peroxisomal or mitochondrial
1468 localization. By far the widest array of ACADs are present in the heterokont algae, which
1469 possess members of up to 10 separate ACAD subfamilies, one of which (D-I) is unique to
1470 heterokont and cryptomonad algae. Much work remains to be done in the study of
1471 ACOXs/ACADs, with the localization and enzymatic properties of many algae-containing
1472 eukaryotic subfamilies remaining completely unexplored.

1473 Below we discuss current literature on the known steps of peroxisomal FA β -oxidation
1474 in *Chlamydomonas*, which is thus far the best studied model alga for lipid catabolism [171,
1475 196].

1476

1477 **5.2.2 Core reactions of peroxisomal β -oxidation**

1478 The core peroxisomal pathway requires the acyl-CoA oxidase (ACOX), multifunctional protein
1479 (MFP) and 3-ketoacyl-CoA thiolase (KAT) to catalyze the sequential oxidation, hydration and
1480 dehydrogenation, and thiolytic cleavage of the acyl-CoA molecule (**Figure 10**). Although genes
1481 encoding putative orthologues to known proteins of FA β -oxidation can be identified in algal
1482 species [57, 217, 380], only the ACOX2 catalyzing the first step in the FA β -oxidation spiral
1483 has been characterized experimentally at both genetic and biochemical levels. ACOX2, which
1484 is closely related to Arabidopsis ACOX2 (**Figure 9**) exhibited high activity toward a broad
1485 range of acyl-chains, and showed highest activity toward C16 and C18 acyl-CoAs [196]. The
1486 *acox2* (or *acx2*) mutants lost >50% of the wild-type capacity in remobilization of TAGs upon
1487 N resupply following a period of N starvation; and moreover, the *acox2* mutants accumulated
1488 30% more TAG during photoheterotrophic N starvation and with a modified TAG composition
1489 [196]. The occurrence of five ACOX isozymes is not surprising [171, 381], since FA β -

1490 oxidation is a chain-shortening reaction, and different isozymes should be required to shorten
1491 acyl-CoA of various chain lengths [245]. It is worth noting here that the above core enzymatic
1492 activities of FA β -oxidation are not sufficient for the oxidation of unsaturated FAs whose
1493 degradation normally requires the participation of additional enzymatic reactions. Two
1494 alternative pathways are known in plants [46] (Aralip:
1495 <http://aralip.plantbiology.msu.edu/pathways/pathways>), of which only the *Arabidopsis* enoyl-
1496 CoA isomerase (ECI) has been studied in detail [382], and none of which have been
1497 characterized in algae.

1498

1499 **5.2.3 Metabolism of hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂)**

1500 In addition to acetyl-CoAs, peroxisomal FA β -oxidation produces hydrogen peroxide and
1501 reducing equivalents in a molar ratio of approximately 1:1:1. In higher plants, the highly
1502 oxidative H₂O₂ is usually decomposed to water by peroxisome-resident catalase; which is a
1503 major protein in plant peroxisomes and is at the origin for the formation of a crystalloid core
1504 apparent under transmission electron microscope [383]. The crystalloid core is however often
1505 absent in peroxisomes of *C. reinhardtii* [192]. Based on subcellular fractionation studies, Kato
1506 et al [384] showed that catalase activities in *C. reinhardtii* could be associated to mitochondria
1507 fractions. Nevertheless, homology searches using known plant catalase have identified at least
1508 two genes encoding putative catalases in the genome of *C. reinhardtii* [381], but their
1509 subcellular localization and biological function remain to be determined. Indeed, it has long
1510 been questioned whether *C. reinhardtii* contains any H₂O₂-producing activities [385, 386]. We
1511 have lately shown that the primitive peroxisomes or microbodies in *C. reinhardtii* do indeed
1512 contain reactions that generate H₂O₂, at the first step of FA β -oxidation using ACOX2. It is
1513 observed that *in vitro*, the recombinant Chlamydomonas ACOX2 catalyzes the conversion of
1514 acyl-CoA to trans-2-enoyl-CoA while producing H₂O₂. This study was the first to demonstrate
1515 that *C. reinhardtii* uses a peroxisomal pathway for FA degradation, and that H₂O₂ producing
1516 activities had already evolved in green microalgae.

1517 From an evolutionary perspective, it is not clear if there is any advantage of housing FA
1518 β -oxidation in peroxisomes instead of mitochondria. The mitochondrial pathway employs an
1519 acyl-CoA dehydrogenase at its first step, and this reaction is directly coupled to the
1520 mitochondrial respiratory pathway for ATP production, therefore energy is conserved; whereas
1521 in the peroxisomal pathway, energy is transferred to O₂ with the production of H₂O₂ and
1522 subsequently H₂O; therefore energy is lost. This loss of energy could potentially be
1523 advantageous under some conditions, allowing FA degradation to occur without affecting

1524 cellular energy/redox status. This also raises questions regarding the possible physiological
1525 roles or significance of peroxisome-derived H₂O₂. A study in *Arabidopsis* has shown that in
1526 mutant plants defective in the ascorbate peroxidase (APX)/monodehydroascorbate reductase
1527 (MDAR) electron transfer system, the escaped H₂O₂ inhibited the activities of the major TAG
1528 lipase SDP1 and this slowed TAG hydrolysis [387]. This study implies therefore a possible role
1529 of H₂O₂ in coordinating lipolysis to β-oxidation of FAs. H₂O₂ is the most stable form of reactive
1530 oxygen species (ROS), and is known to play dual roles in cellular physiology – in excess it can
1531 cause oxidative damage, but in sub-lethal levels, chloroplast-derived H₂O₂ is known to play a
1532 signaling role [178]. Through characterization of two mutants defected in the peroxisomal
1533 malate dehydrogenase 2 (MDH2), we have recently provided evidence that peroxisome-derived
1534 H₂O₂ likely plays a role in transmitting the redox state of the peroxisome to the chloroplast,
1535 thereby impacting photosynthesis, *de novo* FA synthesis and starch metabolism (discussed in
1536 detail in **section 3.5.3**) [193]. However the mechanisms by which peroxisome-derived H₂O₂
1537 passes through the peroxisomal membranes remains largely unknown (i.e. is it by free diffusion
1538 or an aquaporin mediated process?).

1539

1540 **5.2.4 NADH re-oxidation in peroxisomes**

1541 Similar to most oxidative reactions, β-oxidation of FAs also produces NADH through the
1542 reaction catalyzed by the 3-hydroxyacyl-CoA dehydrogenase (MFP-DH). *De novo* NAD⁺
1543 synthesis occurs in the cytoplasm [388, 389], yet it is required by reactions present in almost
1544 every subcellular compartment. Its transport and homeostasis therefore can play a key role in
1545 regulation of metabolic pathways [124, 390]. Newly-synthesized NAD⁺ is imported from the
1546 cytoplasm into the peroxisome by the peroxisomal NAD⁺ carrier (PXN) [391, 392]. However,
1547 studies in yeasts and plants show that re-oxidation of peroxisomal NADH must occur inside the
1548 organelle because the peroxisomal membrane is not permeable to NAD⁺ [393]. Lately it has
1549 been shown that the peroxisomal malate dehydrogenase 2 (MDH2) in *C. reinhardtii* plays a
1550 major role in NADH re-oxidation because the *mdh2* mutants defected in MDH2 protein are
1551 impaired by 80% in their capacity to reutilize TAGs following N resupply [193]. MDHs are
1552 ubiquitous enzymes, and each subcellular compartment usually contains at least one isoform
1553 [124, 381, 390]. Alongside the peroxisomal MDH2, Chlamydomonas genome encodes one
1554 NADP⁺-dependent chloroplast MDH5 [394], and three other NAD⁺-dependent MDHs (MDH1,
1555 MDH3 and MDH4) [381].

1556 In addition to MDH2, two other mechanisms are known to play a role in NADH re-
1557 oxidation in plant peroxisomes. These additional pathways of NADH re-oxidation employ

1558 either a peroxisomal hydroxypyruvate reductase (HPR) [395], or the APX/MDAR electron
1559 transfer system [387]. Genes encoding putative orthologues to these proteins can be identified
1560 in algal genomes, but their function remains unknown. The serious impairment in oil
1561 reutilization observed in the *mdh2* mutants suggest that other mechanisms, if they occur, are
1562 not expected to play major roles in *C. reinhardtii*, at least not under the conditions tested (i.e.
1563 N resupply following a period of N starvation [193]).

1564

1565 **5.3 Additional roles for the β -oxidation spiral**

1566 Mostly through phenotypic analyses of *Arabidopsis* mutants defected in various steps of FA β -
1567 oxidation, it has become obvious that the β -oxidation spiral does not only play a role in FA
1568 breakdown, but also plays a role i) in the production of lipid-based signaling molecules such as
1569 jasmonic acid, ii) in the conversion of indole butyric acid to the phytohormone indole acetic
1570 acid, and iii) in the later steps of BCAA degradation, therefore impacting plant physiology and
1571 development [191, 396-398]. Thus unlike many other metabolic pathways, peroxisomal β -
1572 oxidation is multi-functional, and is sometimes called “a pathway with multiple functions”
1573 [368]. Jasmonic acid has been identified in *Euglena gracilis*, *Chlorella* and *Spirulina* [399] and
1574 also a variety of marine algae [400] but nothing is known about the enzymes or subcellular
1575 locations for their biosynthesis in microalgae.

1576

1577 **6. Environmental effects**

1578 Early studies of the effects of the environment on lipid metabolism in algae were summarised
1579 by Pohl and Zurheide [15]. In our previous review on algal lipids we also discussed effects of
1580 nutrition (especially N, P and S limitation), other growth conditions (temperature, light, pH)
1581 and some pollutants (e.g. heavy metals) [9]. It is noteworthy that many of these chemical or
1582 non-chemical stresses can induce TAG accumulation, which may also be accompanied by
1583 alterations in FA and lipid composition [317]. Induction of TAG biosynthesis in algae is also
1584 relevant to industrial uses of algal oils (**section 7**).

1585

1586 **6.1 Nutrients**

1587 Algal species vary in their nutritional requirements although the basic macro-nutrients for all
1588 species are carbon, N and phosphorus (P). Some marine microalgae (e.g. many diatoms) need
1589 silicon [38]. For a common freshwater green alga like *Chlorella*, growth declines once N and P
1590 concentrations are below 31.5 and 10.5 mg/l, respectively [401]. For *Chlorella vulgaris*,
1591 nitrogen deficiency below 0.5 mg/l gives an optimal induction of lipid production [402]. Indeed,

1592 N is the usual stress used to induce TAG production [318]. Under these conditions, green
1593 microalgae or diatoms will accumulate TAG at 20-50% dry weight [318]. Similarly, phosphorus
1594 deficiency has major effects on lipid metabolism and, hence, algal oil content [21, 49, 403].

1595 Naturally, because of the interest in using algae for industrial purposes (especially post-
1596 induction of oil accumulation), most attention has focussed on species which offer commercial
1597 possibilities. Nevertheless, examination of a variety of microalgae showed that most of them
1598 increased TAG production when grown in N-deficient conditions. There were, however,
1599 significant differences in biomass production, %TAG accumulated and the duration of
1600 productivity [347, 404]. For promising feedstocks such as *P. tricornutum*, *Nannochloropsis*
1601 *spp.* and *Chlorella pyrenoidosa*, a variety of laboratories have examined their productivity
1602 under N-starvation [21, 290, 349, 405-407]. As mentioned in **section 4**, accumulation of TAG
1603 is allowed by *de novo* synthesis accompanied by a decrease in plastid galactolipids and
1604 consequent re-organisation of the photosynthetic apparatus in *Nannochloropsis gaditana* [349].
1605 A detailed examination of glycerolipid classes and their molecular species was made in *P.*
1606 *tricornutum*. Most lipids were relatively unaffected although large decreases in MGDG and
1607 PtdGro were noted. For the accumulating TAG there was an enrichment of 16:1 which
1608 correlated with its synthesis whereas 20:5 seemed to be transferred from MGDG [21]. In
1609 *Nannochloropsis oceanica*, the increase in TAG was accompanied not only by a decrease in
1610 MGDG but also of the extra-chloroplastic lipids DGTS and PtdCho [290]. Changes in FA
1611 profiles were also reported for *Phaeodactylum tricornutum* [408] and for other algae (*Pavlova*
1612 *viridis*, *Tetraselmis subcordiformis*)[409]. During the increased TAG accumulation on N-
1613 starvation in *Chlorella pyrenoidosa*, expression levels of genes for acetyl-CoA carboxylase and
1614 DGAT were increased [405]. The latter was also shown to be raised in *C. reinhardtii* along with
1615 other acyltransferases and a nitrogen responsive regulator [217]. Overall, it can be concluded
1616 that TAG formation is by a combination of *de novo* synthesis as well as transfer of FAs from
1617 membrane lipids.

1618 Only limited information is available regarding the mechanisms controlling TAG
1619 accumulation during N-limitation. Early on Boyle et al [217] showed that enhanced expression
1620 of a nitrogen response regulator accompanied N-starvation induction of TAG production.
1621 Furthermore, RNAi knock-down of nitrate reductase can enhance lipid biosynthesis in
1622 *Phaeodactylum tricornutum* [348]. Recently, ROC40, a transcription factor involved in
1623 circadian rhythm, was found to increase markedly on N-starvation. Further information from
1624 mutant analysis supported a role for ROC40 in N-starvation induction of TAG synthesis [342].
1625 Please see **section 3.8** for more regulatory factors involved in *de novo* FA synthesis.

1626 The effect of different N levels in the growth media for *N. oceanica* has been examined
1627 with a view to finding the best concentrations for lipid production [407]. The strain studied,
1628 DUT01 produced an unusually high amount of 16:2. In a separate study with three different
1629 microalgae, the effect of different N concentrations between zero and 1.76 mmol/L were
1630 examined. All three algae showed highest lipid accumulation with 0.22 mmol N/L and
1631 *Nannochloropsis oculata* and *Pavlova viridis* showed promise for biodiesel production because
1632 of the changes in their FA patterns [409].

1633 A second major nutrient needed for algal growth is phosphorus which, of course, is
1634 essential for phosphoglyceride biosynthesis. Riekhof et al [20] showed that *C. reinhardtii* had
1635 reduced levels of all phosphoglycerides on P-starvation. The 50% reduction in PtdGro, an
1636 essential thylakoid (photosynthetic) constituent, was critical but it could be replaced by another
1637 anionic membrane lipid, SQDG. In a low-phosphate bleaching mutant of *C. reinhardtii* (*lpb1*)
1638 it was shown that normal responses to P-deprivation (and S-deprivation) appeared as usual but
1639 that the *lpb1* mutant lacked critical acclimation ability [410]. In the fresh water
1640 eustigmatophyte, *Monodus subterraneus*, P-starvation caused increases in DGDG and DGTS
1641 (and TAG) which accompanied the loss of phosphoglycerides. The increase in DGDG (but not
1642 MGDG) resembled the response of higher plants to P-deprivation. There were also some
1643 changes in the FA contents of individual lipid classes [403]. As noted above, P-starvation
1644 triggers lipid (TAG) accumulation in the same way as N-deprivation does [405], but not to the
1645 same extent [21]. When considering the time-course of changes in *Phaeodactylum tricornutum*,
1646 it was noted that there was a step-wise adaptive response. The authors suggested that
1647 phosphoglycerides provided emergency P following their catabolism and that there was some
1648 replacement with non-phosphorus lipids, which included SQDG for PtdGro and DGTA for
1649 PtdCho [21]. The effect of P-starvation in diatoms is discussed thoroughly by [38].

1650 Other macronutrients, such as carbon dioxide [411] or sulphur can alter lipid
1651 metabolism. In the latter case, S-starvation can increase non-polar lipids in *Chlorella*
1652 *ellipsoidea* [412] or *C. reinhardtii* [413]. Sulphur is utilised for the synthesis of proteins and a
1653 wide variety of metabolites critical for growth. When *C. reinhardtii* was transferred to S-
1654 depleted conditions, some 85% of the SQDG was broken down to yield a major pool of S for
1655 protein synthesis [302]. To an extent this utilisation of SQDG is consistent with its role as an
1656 important contributor to the global S cycle [414, 415].

1657 Silicon depletion was also noted to induce TAG formation in the diatom *Cyclotella*
1658 *cryptica* [416]. This TAG had a modified FA composition (less unsaturated) compared to cells
1659 grown in adequate silicon concentrations. In fact, as noted previously, silicon is a macronutrient

1660 for many diatoms [38], including oleaginous species. Thus, silicon depletion will enhance TAG
1661 production in those diatoms that need it [417, 418] and, for example, *Thalassiosira pseudonana*
1662 will accumulate an average of 24% more lipids than it does under N-starvation [406, 419].
1663 *Phaeodactylum tricornutum*, in contrast, has little, if any, requirement for silicon [419].
1664 However, although silicon does not seem to be required for laboratory or factory cultures of
1665 *Phaeodactylum tricornutum*, it seems to be needed for normal expression of miRNAs and
1666 growth [420].

1667 Clearly, carbon is a macronutrient, although it will normally be sourced from the
1668 atmosphere. Nevertheless, with culture conditions in mind, there has been some attention paid
1669 to different concentrations of CO₂ or to various regimes. In *Chlorella kessleri*, CO₂
1670 concentrations have a dramatic effect on lipid metabolism and on the incorporation of
1671 [14C]acetate into FAs (and lipids). Part of the changes were due to adjustment of the
1672 ‘prokaryotic’ versus ‘eukaryotic’ pathways and one result was elevated 18:3 at low CO₂ levels
1673 [421]. Likewise, glycerol feeding in batch cultures of *Schizochytrium* sp. [422] or alterations
1674 in inorganic carbon regimes supplied to *C. reinhardtii* changed FA patterns [423]. Carbon
1675 metabolism in diatoms, including the impact of environmental factors, has been discussed
1676 recently [38, 55]. Furthermore, a general commentary on growth and lipid accumulation by
1677 nutrient depletion and supplementation in *C. reinhardtii* has been recently published [424].

1678 Micronutrients, needed in trace amounts (e.g. Co, Cu, Fe, Mg, Mn, Mo, Zn) may have
1679 a strong influence on algal growth since they can alter normal enzyme activity [425]. Elements
1680 such as Fe and Zn have been shown to influence TAG accumulation in *Chlamydomonas* [426,
1681 427]. Of course, for many such elements there is a fine line between nutrient deficiency,
1682 sufficiency, and toxicity [428]. Iron seems to be a key factor in regulating phytoplankton
1683 biomass. When FeCl₃ was added to fresh medium at 1.2 x 10⁻⁵ mol/l in late exponential phase
1684 cultures of *Chlorella vulgaris*, it boosted biomass and % lipid composition whereas lower
1685 concentrations led to lower lipid levels [429]. In Fe-starved *C. reinhardtii*, lipid droplets and
1686 TAG accumulated. An increased saturation index was noted, suggesting that desaturase activity
1687 was compromised. The FA profiles of DGDG and DGTS (but not MGDG) were changed and
1688 gene expression of enzymes or proteins involved in TAG accumulation (e.g. the major lipid
1689 droplet protein or DGAT) was increased [427]. Effects of Fe-deficiency in *Phaeodactylum*
1690 *tricornutum* were coincident with a partial deficiency of photosynthetic transport and a high
1691 sensitivity to light [430].

1692 Like iron, copper is needed for certain enzyme activities [428]. However, toxic effects
1693 have been noted in a variety of algae as well as changes to lipid metabolism (see [9, 14]). Copper

1694 response regulator1-dependent and –independent responses of *C. reinhardtii* to dark anoxia
1695 were shown to be important. Under hypoxic conditions this alga accumulates TAG which, in
1696 contrast to during N-depletion, was enriched in unsaturated FAs [431]. When chromium effects
1697 were studied in *Euglena gracilis* obtained from a culture or collected from a polluted river,
1698 PUFA levels were most affected. Electron microscope examination revealed thylakoid
1699 disorganisation in treated cells [432]. Another toxic metal is cadmium, which affects lipid
1700 metabolism [9]. As noted for other algae, susceptibility to heavy metal toxicity varies
1701 considerably with species (see [14]) and *Phaeodactylum tricornutum* is relatively resistant to
1702 Cd probably because it has protective transport and detoxification processes [433].

1703

1704 **6.2 Light**

1705 Naturally, for photosynthetic organisms, light is a major controlling factor for algal growth [15]
1706 [9]. Its duration and intensity influence both biochemical composition and algal mass yield
1707 [434]. Of course, algal species vary in their requirements [425]. Increasing light intensity raises
1708 the photosynthetic rate and growth until the latter levels off as photosynthesis is balanced by
1709 photorespiration and photoinhibition [435]. Intensities for maximum growth (and lipid
1710 production) have been reported for a number of algal species recently [402, 436] as well as the
1711 effect of different light intensities in combination with CO₂ levels [437] or salinity and N [438].
1712 These can affect both qualitative and quantitative aspects of lipid metabolism.

1713 In *Pavlova lutheri*, the percentage of EPA and DHA in polar lipids was highest at low
1714 light intensities whereas their synthesis was best at intermediate (19 w/m²) intensities [439].
1715 For the red alga, *Trichocarpus crinitus*, low light conditions favoured an increase in membrane
1716 components especially SQDG, PtdGro and PtdCho. However, in contrast to *Pavlova lutheri*
1717 there were no differences in total FAs under different light regimes. Nevertheless, there were
1718 some changes in individual lipid classes. For example, the percentage of 20:5 in MGDG
1719 decreased but in PtdGro it increased. HL increased the proportion of trans-16:1 in PtdGro [440].
1720 Differences in how individual algae respond to light was also emphasised in a study of four
1721 freshwater phytoplankton species (including rarely examined Chrysophyceae and
1722 Zygnematophyceae) under different light intensities. While there were significant changes in
1723 all algae examined, no generalisations about these alterations could be made [441].

1724 HL intensity tends to increase TAG levels together with decreases in polar lipid classes.
1725 This has been observed in the diatom, *Thalassiosira pseudonana* [442], the red alga
1726 *Trichocarpus crinitus* [440] and various freshwater species [443]. For *C. reinhardtii* saturating
1727 light induces sustained accumulation of TAG in lipid droplets. Interestingly, some of these

1728 droplets appeared to be located in plastids in contrast to N-deprived growth wherein 60% are
1729 of ER-origin [156]. Also in *Chlamydomonas*, extended (24h) dark periods cause TAG
1730 accumulation [431]. Prolonged darkness in *Phaeodactylum tricoratum* has also been studied
1731 in detail and information about nuclear transcriptional activity, pigment content and
1732 photosynthesis reported during darkness and following re-illumination [444].

1733 Finally, the effect of UV-B irradiation in various algae has been examined. The extent
1734 of changes depended on whether the algae were UV sensitive or tolerant. In particular, reduction
1735 in VLCPUFAs, such as EPA and DHA, were noted and also that nutrient-deprived cells were
1736 more sensitive [445].

1737

1738 **6.3 Temperature**

1739 Previous studies indicated that temperature can influence not only FA proportions but also the
1740 lipid class content in different algae [9, 15]. Optimal algal growth usually occurs at 20-30°C
1741 [446] but each species has its optimal value [447]. This has important implications for outdoor
1742 culture systems [425]. Of course, some specialised algae can endure temperatures of 40°C while
1743 those growing in hot springs can tolerate temperatures of 80°C.

1744 Naturally, given the diversity of algal species and the temperature range of their habitats,
1745 it is unsurprising that lipid analyses have revealed differences. Anesi et al. [448] examined ten
1746 dinoflagellates from different freshwater habitats with 4, 13 or 20°C temperatures. They could
1747 be grouped depending on the molecular species of their lipid classes. The glycosylglycerides
1748 (MGDG, DGDG, SQDG) seemed particularly useful for classification. The range of
1749 dinoflagellate tolerance was concluded to be best reflected in thylakoid glycolipids while
1750 phylogeny could be better revealed by the distribution of non-thylakoid lipids and their species
1751 [448]. A study of a lipid-producing, cold-tolerant yellow green alga (Xanthophyceae) isolated
1752 from the Rocky Mountains showed that it produced the highest amount of lipids when grown
1753 with HL at 4°C. Under these conditions *Heterococcus* sp. DN1, produced enhanced amounts of
1754 PUFA (especially EPA) at the expense of 16:1 [449].

1755 Temperature can be used as a stressor to encourage the production of valuable
1756 metabolites [450] and can be used in combination with other parameters to increase lipid yields
1757 [451]. Increased growth temperature can be used to elevate lipid contents in several species
1758 [317] [9] including *Chlamydomonas* [322, 452]. The broad effects of culture temperature on
1759 growth, lipid composition and FA quality have been studied fairly extensively (see [9]). With
1760 the important application of algae in biotechnology (**section 7**), species of commercial interest
1761 have formed the main recent focus. Thus, the thrustochytrid, *Aurantiochytrium*, that forms

1762 appreciable DHA, was examined in the range 10-30°C and optimised at 10°C [453]. In addition,
1763 the combination of N-stress with different growth temperatures has been studied in *C.*
1764 *reinhardtii* in connection with potential biofuel production. In these experiments growth at
1765 32°C seemed optimal for FA content and composition in connection with potential use as
1766 biofuel [454]. With increased global warming some relevant studies have been conducted
1767 recently with regard to heat stress (in *Chlamydomonas*) [452, 455] and for climate warming in
1768 *Scenedesmus obliquus* [456]. In the latter case, even a relatively moderate increase in ambient
1769 temperature (20 to 28°C) resulted in significant changes in endogenous lipids and their
1770 metabolism. In particular, the decrease in unsaturation and, consequently, essential PUFAs has
1771 implications concerning food quality for higher trophic levels.

1772

1773 **6.4 Other factors**

1774 Production of lipids in algae can be influenced by such factors as dehydration, salinity, culture
1775 age and pH. For more general details on these factors please refer to [9, 317, 425].
1776 Supplementary information for hyper salinity is provided for *Chlamydomonas* where PtdOH
1777 seems to be involved as a second messenger [457], and for various stressors (salinity, N- or P-
1778 deprivation, temperature) in combination with elevated carbon dioxide. For *Nannochloropsis*,
1779 EPA yields were increased by nitrate, low salinity and low temperature [458]. Lipid
1780 accumulation in 50 strains of microalgae during fluctuating brackish and sea water locations
1781 has also been examined. From these studies, some promising algae for biodiesel or ω -3 FA
1782 production were found [459].

1783 Finally, two special conditions for changes in acyl lipid production have been found for
1784 *Chlorella* spp. In *Chlorella sorokiniana*, the impact of inoculum sizes on phospholipid
1785 metabolism revealed that PtdGro, PtdEtn and several molecular species of PtdCho may be
1786 changed under the experimental conditions. The authors suggested that their data may help in
1787 providing potential targets for engineering to improve biofuel production [274]. Additionally,
1788 air drying of cells was found to stimulate TAG synthesis in *Chlorella kessleri* by 2.7-fold. The
1789 same conditions also stimulated oil accumulation in *C. reinhardtii* but to a much smaller extent
1790 [460].

1791

1792 **7. Algae for industry**

1793 Commercial applications of algae have been reviewed extensively over the years since the
1794 article by Guschina and Harwood [9] see [5, 115, 425, 461-468]. Apart from uses in the food
1795 or aquaculture industries, algae can be used for pigments, various useful chemicals and, of

1796 course potentially for biofuel. While being used for these purposes, algae can also serve
1797 environmental applications [463] such as in bioremediation [464]. While much of recent
1798 research has concentrated on biotechnological products for wealthy countries [469], the data
1799 are also applicable to developing countries where the use of macroalgae, such as seaweeds is
1800 growing significantly [470, 471].

1801 Before discussing uses of algae, some comments should be made about important
1802 technical aspects. One of the most expensive stages in the industrial use of algae is extraction
1803 of lipids (and other products). This subject is covered in many of the above reviews but is
1804 specifically highlighted in others (e.g. [333, 472-474] and, importantly, the use of a forward
1805 genetic screen to identify useful oil mutants [320] is notable. Some useful technical aspects
1806 include LC-MS technology [475], optimisation of productivity using FTIR analysis [476] and
1807 high throughput analysis with MS [477].

1808 Furthermore, there have been important developments in the molecular biology of algae,
1809 particularly species which have been earmarked as commercially important. Following
1810 publication of a diatom EST database [478], the *Phaeodactylum* genome [265] and that for
1811 *Nannochloropsis gaditana* [63], further comments about diatoms have been up-dated [38].
1812 Additional technical aspects include stable nuclear transformation of *P. tricornutum* [479], gene
1813 silencing in the same species [480], RNAi-based gene knockdown in *N. oceanica* [481] and the
1814 use of CRISPR technology for genome editing [482].

1815 Of the various uses of eukaryotic algae for industry, two topics have attracted particular
1816 attention over the last decade. These are, respectively, algae as sources of VLCPUFAs and for
1817 biofuel production.

1818

1819 **7.1 Algae as sources of very long chain fatty acids (VLCPUFAs)**

1820 Humans and most animals require essential fatty acids of the n-3 and n-6 series [245]. The basic
1821 acids of these series are, respectively, α -linolenic (LNA) and linoleic (LA) acids. The usual
1822 sources of such are vegetable oils either in the form of spreads or cooking oils but they are also
1823 contained in most food products. However, current diets (especially 'Western diets') provide
1824 excessive amounts of n-6 PUFA so that a typical ratio of dietary n-6/n-3 PUFA is around 15,
1825 whereas the best nutritional advice suggests that a ratio of 3-4 would be more appropriate [483-
1826 485]. This is because the main role of the essential fatty acids is to be converted to various 20C
1827 or 22C PUFAs which are then oxidised to powerful signalling compounds such eicosanoids,
1828 resolvins and protectins. Those signalling molecules derived from n-3 PUFAs are generally
1829 anti-inflammatory while those from n-6 PUFAs are generally pro-inflammatory [245, 486].

1830 This is believed to have led to an increase in chronic inflammation and associated diseases (e.g.
1831 arthritis, cardio-vascular complaints) in Western societies [487-489].

1832 Although LA and LNA are the main PUFAs in the diet and are thought to be appropriate
1833 for normal health requirements [490], they are poorly converted (especially by men) to ARA,
1834 EPA and DHA which are the immediate precursors of signalling compounds. Thus, under
1835 certain situations there is a 'conditional requirement' for ARA and/or EPA and DHA in the diet
1836 [491]. In fact, the perceived need for more n-3 PUFA in diets has led to an increased
1837 consumption of fish oils as a convenient source of EPA and DHA. However, given the advised
1838 human (and animal) daily requirements [492] and perceived over-fishing in the World, this is
1839 not a sustainable situation [493-495].

1840 Following the undeniable demonstration of the importance of VLCPUFA for good
1841 health, the commercial market for such products has increased considerably. This has led to a
1842 search for algal sources to supplement the obvious limitation to fish oil supplies [36, 496]. Such
1843 algal oils have proven useful in infant milk formulations, adult nutraceuticals and in fish feeds.
1844 The first of such oils was 'DHASCO' from *Crypthecodinium cohnii* [497] and, later, those from
1845 *Schizochytrium* spp. have proven commercially successful (**Table 5**). Other sources of DHA
1846 were discussed in [36, 498], where some of the advantages of algal oils are described. For
1847 example, algal oils are usually enriched in a particular VLCPUFA whereas fish oils often have
1848 a variable ratio of EPA/DHA (depending on the algae that the fish consumed). Furthermore,
1849 the potential problem of toxic compounds in fish oils (or in fish themselves) is obviated by
1850 culturing algae [36].

1851 The primary producers of PUFAs are photosynthetic organisms and, in the case of EPA
1852 and DHA, are marine algae [461]. In fact, ironically, fish are often as poor as humans in
1853 converting LA to ARA or LNA to EPA and DHA [499]. This has led to the increasing use of
1854 algae as direct sources of VLCPUFAs in human diets [500] as well as for farmed fish feeds
1855 [501-503]. Thus, for example, *Nannochloropsis* spp. and *Phaeodactylum tricornerutum* can have
1856 an EPA content of up to 40% total fatty acids under autotrophic conditions [496, 504].
1857 Similarly, *Thraustochytrium* and *Schizochytrium limacinum*, when grown under heterotrophic
1858 fermentation conditions, can accumulate 30-40%DHA [500]. One comment that should be
1859 made here is that EPA and DHA (despite being metabolically interconvertible) seem to have
1860 independent effects on humans [505, 506].

1861 Wen and Chen [507] have discussed the production of EPA by microorganisms in some
1862 detail. Although considerable interest has been focussed on *Shewanella* spp. (a marine
1863 bacterium), factors affecting production in microalgae (e.g. *Nannochloropsis*) including

1864 diatoms (e.g. *Phaeodactylum tricornutum*) have been described. These include the use of
1865 different systems as well as various environmental factors [507]. Because fish oils contain a
1866 mixture of EPA and DHA, the question of a need for EPA *per se* is important (see [508, 509];
1867 and remarks above). Moreover, in terms of nutraceuticals, the subject is complicated by the
1868 known ability of dietary DHA to be retro-converted to EPA [510].

1869 The other important VLCPUFA is ARA which, together with DHA, is a prominent
1870 component of brain and other nervous tissues [511]. This acid is accumulated in many
1871 bryophytes and some marine algae, such as Phaeophyceae [15]. On the other hand, it rarely
1872 accumulates to any great extent in most microalgae [37]. However, a freshwater microalga,
1873 *Lobosphaera incisa* (formerly *Parietochloris incisa*), accumulates ARA at around 50% of total
1874 fatty acids in TAG under N-starvation conditions [512]. To convert oleic acid into ARA
1875 requires three desaturases ($\Delta 5$, 6 and 12) which have been cloned from *L. incisa* [513] as well
1876 as an elongase [514]. In addition, overexpression of a ‘GPAT-like’ gene from *L. incisa* was
1877 shown to increase TAG synthesis [268]. The accumulation of TAG in microalgae, stimulated
1878 by nutrient stress (see **section 6**) is associated not only with increased synthesis but also
1879 mobilisation of carbon from membrane lipids, for example those in chloroplasts [21, 130, 190].
1880 This may involve autophagy [515, 516]. Moreover, since N-starvation is a reversible process,
1881 the transient production of TAG-enriched lipid bodies gives rise to the transfer of fatty acids
1882 back into chloroplast membranes during recovery in *L. incisa* [517].

1883 The commercial production of DHA by *Schizochytrium* has been thoroughly discussed
1884 by [518]. These organisms are Thraustochytrids which make up a significant proportion of
1885 phytoplankton, although they are often under-reported [519]. (It should be noted that, although
1886 most researchers will call Thraustochytrids algae, their classification is a little controversial).
1887 The PKS system for making VLCPUFAs (sometimes called PUFA synthetase) first identified
1888 by Metz et al. [114] has been studied further with respect to its acyl carrier protein (ACP)
1889 domains [520], expression in *E. coli* to make DPAn-6 and DHA [521] and formation of non-
1890 esterified fatty acids as end products [522]. Commercial uses of *Schizochytrium* oils have been
1891 evaluated for feeds (fish, poultry and cattle – where DHA-enriched milks have been produced),
1892 breads, milk drinks, nutritional bars, margarines etc. [518]. A review of how lipid metabolism
1893 could be manipulated in *Schizochytrium* and other Chromista, especially *P. tricornutum*, to
1894 increase EPA and DHA has been made [141].

1895 A background to the use of algae for producing high-value products, like VLCPUFAs,
1896 is given in [523] while for specific aspects of the latter see [524]. A variety of algae from

1897 different classes have been or are of interest either as species for basic research or for
1898 biotechnological development (**Table 5**).

1899 Several freshwater or marine species of the genus *Nannochloropsis* (e.g. *N.gaditana*, *N.*
1900 *oculata*) contain high concentrations of EPA in their DGTS as well as chloroplast glycerolipids
1901 [525] [349] which can be transferred to TAG. Another eustigmatophyte, *Trachydiscus minatus*,
1902 also contains a high % of EPA in storage lipids and may be a potential industrial source [526,
1903 527]. Likewise, diatoms (in particular *Phaeodactylum tricornutum*) have attracted attention not
1904 only as a source of EPA but also DHA [528, 529]. *P. tricornutum* has been genetically modified
1905 to enhance productivity of n-3 VLCPUFAs [530] and its biotechnological economics assessed
1906 [531]. Additionally, haptophytes like *Isochrysis galbana* or *Pavlova lutheri*, are important
1907 potential industrial species. Marine macroalgae often contain high amounts of LCPUFAs [9,
1908 14, 15] and their use in nutrition has been considered [470].

1909 As mentioned previously, culture conditions are critical in ensuring good growth and
1910 productivity. Some relevant studies are [532-534] [535]. Moreover, some aspects of genetic
1911 modification of algae to enhance productivity are discussed by Khozin-Goldberg et al [528]. In
1912 particular, information about TAG accumulation in *Chlamydomonas* has been applied to the
1913 oleaginous microalgae *Nannochloropsis* sp. which is often considered one of the best species
1914 for industrial utility [358] especially for the production of EPA [536]. Knowledge of its genome
1915 and RNA-sequencing of samples from N-replete and -deprived growth, have revealed that many
1916 of the genes involved in the Kennedy pathway, as well as PDAT1 and PDAT2 are up-regulated
1917 on N-deprivation [317].

1918 As a result of such studies, several commercial companies have exploited algae for the
1919 production of EPA and/or DHA. These include the use of *Nannochloropsis* [537] or *Odontella*
1920 *aurita* [538, 539] for EPA production. For DHA, *Cryptocodinium cohnii* (Dinophyta) and
1921 *Schizochytrium* (Thraustochytriaceae) have been used for several years in the infant formula
1922 market [537] (**Table 6**). Such algal oils have been shown to be efficacious, non-toxic and of
1923 high nutritional value [528].

1924 As mentioned previously, the first commercial SCO (single cell oil) containing DHA
1925 was from *C. cohnii*, a dinoflagellate. There are over 2000 identified dinoflagellates, of which
1926 only about half are photosynthetic. The production of DHA in such species and, especially, in
1927 *C. cohnii* is well discussed in [540]. This has included the use of substrates other than glucose
1928 to boost or extend production [541]. For the latter, it was demonstrated that higher yields of
1929 DHA (compared to glucose) could be obtained using acetic acid or ethanol. Glycerol is also a
1930 potential substrate [542] although that produced in surplus from biofuel manufacture is not of

1931 food grade [541]. In addition, there have been studies of lipid productivity (in *Chlorella* and *N.*
1932 *salina*) using a lab-scale open pond simulating reactor [543].

1933 General considerations used for the commercial processing of algal oils, particularly as
1934 applied to VLCPUFA products, are described by Ratledge et al [544]. Not only are algal
1935 VLCPUFAs important in the human nutritional food industry, they are also increasingly used
1936 in feed to modify meat, milk or egg characteristics, in pet formulations [545] and in aquaculture
1937 [546].

1938

1939 **7.2 Biofuels**

1940 A second major area for the applied use of algae is in their potential as sources of biofuels [425].
1941 As fossil fuels are diminishing, sustainable replacement sources are required. Moreover such
1942 sources would not elevate atmospheric carbon dioxide and, hence, contribute to climate change.

1943 General reviews on the production and uses of algal oils (TAG) for biofuel production
1944 (and other purposes) are given by [318, 547-552] in addition to those given in the introduction
1945 to **section 7**.

1946 Microalgal-based fuels are eco-friendly and non-toxic and, of course, are formed by
1947 fixing atmospheric carbon dioxide [553]. Microalgae grow rapidly and have been estimated to
1948 have the potential of transforming 9-10% of solar energy into biomass with a theoretical yield
1949 of around 77g/biomass/m²/day (equivalent to 280 tonne/hectare/year) [554, 555]. It is also very
1950 important that the growth of algae does not use agricultural land and, therefore, does not
1951 compete with food/feed production, unlike most plant crops. Moreover, algae can often use
1952 saline or waste water or can even be employed to simultaneously remove pollutants [556-558],
1953 including phytoremediation of domestic wastewater [464]. In addition, the great diversity of
1954 microalgae provides opportunities for selection of species and strains that can produce oils
1955 which can yield biofuels with specific properties. Furthermore, there are also possibilities of
1956 using genetic manipulation to enhance productivity and/or modified oil properties [559].

1957 From the above discussion, it can be concluded that algae appear to be one (some would
1958 argue the only [560]) source of renewable biodiesel capable of meeting future demands.
1959 However, the present high cost makes the use of algae for high-value oils rather than biodiesel
1960 currently more attractive and economic [36] (see later discussion). For more information about
1961 the use of microalgae to make biodiesel, see [560, 561] [562-564].

1962 Many algae can produce substantial quantities of TAG (up to 80% of total lipids which
1963 can be up to 70% dry weight)[559]. However, this usually occurs in response to nutrient
1964 deprivation (especially N)[5]. Nevertheless, the green alga, *Botryococcus braunii*, produces

1965 >60% of its lipid as hydrocarbons. The bulk of these are accumulated outside cells [559],
1966 making recovery somewhat easier. There are different types of *B. braunii*; the A-race, B-race
1967 and L-race strains [565].

1968 Clearly, a key consideration in choosing appropriate algae for biofuel production will
1969 be the nature of the oil produced (fatty acid composition), as well as the productivity of the
1970 strains selected. Such considerations are discussed in [566-568].

1971 As mentioned above, TAG is the lipid normally accumulated in algae and aspects of its
1972 biosynthesis are discussed in **section 4.5**. The accumulation of TAG following nutrient stress
1973 (see **section 6**) is a major hurdle to be overcome, because growth ceases leading to poor overall
1974 productivity [569, 570]. In efforts to address this problem, research has concentrated on
1975 enzymes important for TAG synthesis, such as DGAT [333] and seeing which of its isoforms
1976 were upregulated on N starvation [130]. Follow-up experiments to use a strong light-responsive
1977 promoter of the DGAT genes, however, failed to increase TAG levels, pointing to tight control
1978 of lipid synthesis (in *C. reinhardtii*) [5]. In comparison, expression in *Phaeodactylum*
1979 *tricornutum* under control of the light-responsive FCPC promoter increased neutral lipid levels
1980 [571]. Somewhat unexpectedly, it also changed the fatty acid composition of membrane as well
1981 as storage (TAG) lipids [5]. Other methods to attempt to overcome the nutritional stress
1982 problem are discussed in [5].

1983 Further aspects of the biosynthesis of hydrocarbons [572] and of TAGs are given in
1984 [351, 573-576]. This includes the use of multiple carbon fixation pathways [151], reduction of
1985 competing catabolism [351] and the recent use of a transcriptional regulator [229, 341]. Please
1986 refer to **sections 4.6 and 6** for additional discussion of the regulation of TAG biosynthesis and
1987 accumulation. A recent review has focussed on the use of small molecules (through the process
1988 of ‘chemical genetics’) to improve algal lipid production [576].

1989 Once TAG has been harvested from algae, it has to be converted into fatty acid methyl
1990 esters (FAMES) for biodiesel. Four methods (base-catalysed transesterification, acid-catalysed
1991 transesterification, non-catalytic conversion, lipase-catalysed techniques) can be used [559].
1992 The properties of the biodiesel produced are largely dependent on the fatty acid composition of
1993 the original TAG [577] and this is very important for the final standard of the finished product
1994 [578]. Thus, strain selection [579] and growth conditions (e.g. temperature, light, salinity) [559]
1995 are vital considerations.

1996 In terms of technical aspects, the use of Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy to
1997 monitor lipid production under various combinations of temperature and cell densities has been
1998 reported [476] while the use of various photobioreactors [580] and lipid synthesis in an open

1999 pond simulating reactor have been published [581]. The influence of the growth medium has
2000 been studied with regard to the use of oil crop biomass residues [582] or palm oil mill effluent
2001 [583]. Finally, new developments in biodiesel conversion technology have been reviewed
2002 [584].

2003 As mentioned earlier, the main problem with algal-derived biodiesel currently is its cost
2004 versus petroleum-based products. A comprehensive evaluation of the economic (and
2005 environmental) impacts of microbial biodiesel has been made, including net energy balance,
2006 cost of goods sold etc. [585]. Their evaluation is based on current crops but highlights the
2007 necessity to mitigate against greenhouse gas emission. Chisti [586] argued strongly that
2008 microalgae are better than crops (as used for bioethanol) in terms of their smaller impact on the
2009 environment and their efficiency in producing biodiesel. His arguments were disputed by [587]
2010 but then further countered by Chisti [588]. With our present technology, algae seem to offer a
2011 realistic solution to replacing petroleum and, even more so, as a source of high-value products.
2012 For calculation of the theoretical maximum algal oil production (at different global sites) see
2013 [589].

2014 Further general aspects of biodiesel production are covered by Ratledge and Cohen [36]
2015 and economic analysis by Davis et al. [590] while the future of algal biofuels has been discussed
2016 [549]. All the subjects covered in **section 7.2** are included in the comprehensive review by
2017 [591]. Although this is focussed on a particular programme, the review encompasses the same
2018 general area as this current article.

2019 Research on the commercial production of biofuels from algae has been carried out for
2020 three decades but, to date, the high cost of production (over an order of magnitude) [9, 552]
2021 compared to petroleum supplies, means that economic viability is not yet possible. Reducing
2022 costs remains the most important target and, until that has been done significantly, then high-
2023 value products (such as VLCPUFA) will remain much more attractive [559].

2024

2025 **7.3 Other useful products**

2026 There are a number of other valuable chemicals produced by algae which have a commercial
2027 niche.

2028

2029 *Carotenoids*

2030 Carotenoids have utility in the food, cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries [592]. Different
2031 algae accumulate various pigments of which the most important commercially are astaxanthin,
2032 beta-carotene, phycobiliproteins, phycocyanin and phycoerythrin [188]. Beta-carotene is a

2033 useful food supplement and is produced by *Dunaliella salina* at over 10% of its dry mass [593].
2034 Astaxanthin is commercially valuable and it is produced by *Haematococcus pluvialis* at 4-5%
2035 dry mass [594]. Phycobiliprotein pigments are fluorescent agents [163] while phycocyanin and
2036 other pigments from red algae are used in both the food and cosmetic industries [595]. See [425,
2037 596] for further discussion.

2038

2039 ***Sterols***

2040 Phytosterols are used in the pharmaceutical industry and as nutraceuticals [425]. *Pavlova* and
2041 *Thalassiosira* genera are rich in sterols [597-599]. These microalgae have been found to
2042 produce up to nearly 3% dry mass as sterols [600]. Some 40 different sterols have been reported
2043 in over 100 species of diatoms. Major sterols in Glaucocystophyta are sitosterol, campesterol
2044 and stigmasterol, dinoflagellates produce mostly 4 α -methyl sterols while 24-propylidene-
2045 cholesterol is mainly accumulated in *Pelagophyceae* [425].

2046

2047 ***Proteins and enzymes***

2048 Microalgae produce 2-8 tonnes/hectare/year of proteins [601] and a number of algae, such as
2049 *Chlorella*, produce marketable material [425]. Recently, there has been an increasing interest
2050 in many algal enzymes for the genetic manipulation of plants, particularly in order to produce
2051 VLCPUFAs [602]. A considerable number of genes for such enzymes had already been isolated
2052 when we last reviewed the area [9]. Nevertheless, there seems to be constant improvements in
2053 the conversion rates of ALA to EPA and DHA by employing newly characterised desaturases
2054 and elongases. For example, front-end delta4 and delta6 desaturases from the green alga
2055 *Ostreococcus* RCC809 gave 15% desaturation of 22:5 and 54% desaturation of ALA
2056 respectively. A Δ 6 elongase from the cold-water diatom *Fragilariopsis cylindrus* gave 38%
2057 elongation of gamma-18:3. These genes allowed an expansion of activities available for the
2058 potential commercial production of EPA and DHA [602].

2059 Any of the enzymes mentioned in **sections 3, 4 and 5** could, potentially, be utilised for
2060 commercial purposes. Early work in this area included enzymes useful for the conversion of
2061 EPA into DHA [603] and front-end desaturases to produce unusual fatty acids (pinolenic and
2062 coniferonic acids) [238]. Another example would be the use of three front-end desaturases from
2063 *P. salina* for DHA biosynthesis which could be expressed in higher plants [604]. More
2064 information on useful algal lipid enzymes and their utilisation will be found in [591].

2065

2066

2067 **8. Conclusions**

2068 It should be clear from the preceding text and accompanying references, that significant
2069 advances have taken place in the dozen years since the last time [this topic has been reviewed](#)
2070 [intensively for](#) eukaryotic algae [9]. These advances have taken place in all aspects but with an
2071 increasing use of molecular biology to facilitate progress. Much of the research has been driven
2072 by the heightened interest in using algae for industrial purposes such as for nutraceuticals or
2073 biofuel.

2074 Over the last decade, *C. reinhardtii* has become established as a model organism
2075 although, of course, given the diversity of algae this green microalga is not always a good
2076 substitute for specific organisms or situations. *Nannochloropsis* spp. and *Phaeodactylum*
2077 *tricornutum* have also been well studied because of their identification as algae of interest for
2078 commercialization.

2079 We look forward to future advances in our knowledge which undoubtedly will take
2080 place. Perhaps these may eventually include the utilization of algae for biofuels---an area which
2081 is urgently needed within the background of climate change. This is just one area where the
2082 fascinating and diverse biochemistry of algae can have a global impact.

2083

2084 **9. Acknowledgements**

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2089

2090 **Legend for figures and tables:**

2091

2092 **Figure 1. De novo fatty acid synthesis – carbon and energy sources.**

2093 Abbreviations: ACP, acyl-CoA binding protein; ACCase, acetyl-CoA carboxylase; MCMT,
2094 malonyl-CoA: ACP malonyltransferase; Dof-type TF, DNA binding with one finger type
2095 transcription factor; bHLH, a basic helix-loop-helix; bZIP, a basic leucine zipper-domain
2096 containing TF; ER, enoyl-ACP reductase; KAS, keto-acyl-CoA synthase; KAR, ketoacyl-ACP
2097 reductase; HAD, hydroxyacyl-ACP dehydrase; ME, malic enzyme; FatA/B, fatty acid
2098 thioesterase A/B; PDH, pyruvate dehydrogenase complex; PSR1, Pi Starvation Response 1;
2099 SAD, Stearoyl-ACP Desaturase; FAX1, fatty acid export 1; TF, transcription factor.

2100

2101 **Figure 2. Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of ACCase negative regulators.**

2102 (A). BADC/BCCP tree.

2103 (B). PII tree.

2104 Known Arabidopsis sequences were used as PSI-BLAST queries to comprehensively identify
2105 eukaryotic algal orthologs from the NCBI non-redundant database, or, for algal species/genes
2106 not present on NCBI, from the JGI algal genome database. Representative non-algal sequences
2107 of interest were also identified and included. For red algal BCCPs/BADCs, only a single
2108 representative sequence per family was retained for the final phylogenetic tree to avoid
2109 overcrowding, except in the case of the Cyanidiaceae. Amino acid sequences were aligned with
2110 the MAAFT (v. 7.308) plugin in Geneious (v. 11.1.4) using the E-LNS-I option. Target peptides
2111 and non-homologous or erroneous sequence regions were manually trimmed, alignments were
2112 further refined with MAAFT, and sites with 50% or more gaps were removed from the
2113 alignments. Trees were constructed with the RAxML 8.2.11 plugin using the Gamma JTT
2114 protein model and 100 rapid bootstrap replicates and were plotted with FigTree 1.4.3 followed
2115 by manual formatting in Adobe Illustrator. Bootstrap support is indicated by the darkness of
2116 branch lines while clades are colored by taxonomic group.

2117

2118 **Figure 3. Fatty acid desaturations in diatoms.**

2119 The biosynthesis of LC-PUFAs in diatoms. Schematic representation of $\Delta 6$ - and $\Delta 8$ -pathways
2120 for LC-PUFAs biosynthesis. Diagram were taken from Sayanova et al [55] (with permission).

2121

2122 **Figure 4. Glycerolipid synthesis in *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*.**

2123 This schema is made partly based on that of Kim et al ([249]. It is worth noting here that PDAT
2124 has been shown to use *in vitro* phosphalipids and galactolipids as acyl donors [329], however
2125 the situation *in vivo* is not clear.

2126 Abbreviations: CoA, Coenzyme A; DAG, diacylglycerol; DGAT, diacylglycerol
2127 acyltransferase; DGDG, digalactosyldiacylglycerol; DGTS, diacylglycerol-3-O-4'-(*N,N,N*-
2128 trimethyl)-homoserine; FAX1, fatty acid export 1; G3P, glycerol-3-phosphate; GPAT, glycerol
2129 3-phosphate acyltransferase; LPAAT, lysophosphatidic acid acyltransferase; MGDG,
2130 monogalactosyldiacylglycerol; PDAT, phospholipid:diacylglycerol acyltransferase; PA,
2131 phosphatidic acid; PAP, phosphatidic acid phosphatase; TGD, trigalactosyldiacylglycerol;
2132 TAG, triacylglycerol.

2133

2134

2135 **Figure 5. A simplified Kennedy pathway for lipid biosynthesis.**

2136 This schema is made based on that of [245] (with permission).

2137 Abbreviations: G3P, glycerol-3-phosphate; GPAT, glycerol 3-phosphate acyltransferase;
2138 LPAAT, lysophosphatidic acid acyltransferase; PA, phosphatidic acid; DAG, diacylglycerol;
2139 PDAT, phospholipid:diacylglycerol acyltransferase; PAP, phosphatidic acid phosphatase;
2140 DGAT, diacylglycerol acyltransferase; CoA, Coenzyme A; TAG, triacylglycerol.

2141

2142 **Figure 6. Pathways of synthesis of phosphatidylcholine (PtdCho) in various plants and**
2143 **algae.** Diagram were taken from Sato et al., 2016 [288] (with permission).

2144

2145 **Figure 7. Fatty acid and glycerolipid molecular species distribution in *Chlamydomonas*.**

2146 Data are taken from Li-Beisson et al., 2015 [57] (with permission).

2147

2148 **Figure 8. Changes in lipid content in response to changes in nitrogen status in the media.**

2149 **(A).** Changes in cellular TAG levels as quantified by Flow cytometry after cells being stained
2150 with Nile red.

2151 **(B).** Changes in polar membrane lipid content.

2152 Abbreviations: A.U.: artificial unit; MM, minimal media; N, nitrogen; TAG, triacylglycerol;
2153 TAP, tri-acetate-phosphate media; PL, polar lipids. Data are modified based on [201].

2154

2155 **Figure 9. Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of eukaryotic algal acyl-CoA**
2156 **oxidases/dehydrogenases.**

2157 Phylogenetic analysis was performed as in **Figure 2**, except that PSI-BLAST queries were
2158 supplemented with known human and *Ustilago mayis* acyl-CoA oxidases/dehydrogenases
2159 (ACOXs/ACADs) and sites with 10% of more gaps were removed from the alignment. Dotted
2160 lines surround distinct eukaryotic ACOX/ACAD subgroups, with subgroups being designated
2161 by a letter indicating their provenance (D = ACAD, O = ACOX, and G = Glutaryl-CoA
2162 dehydrogenase) followed by a dash and a roman numeral (e.g. D-XI). The thicker dashed line
2163 in the middle of the figure indicates the approximate division between ACOXs and ACADs
2164 based on enzyme activities of known members. Note that ACOXs are paraphyletic, with group
2165 O-IX, which contains *Arabidopsis* acyl-CoA oxidase 4, having likely arisen via horizontal gene
2166 transfer of an early eukaryotic glutaryl-CoA dehydrogenase into proteobacteria, followed by a
2167 horizontal transfer of the resultant proteobacterial glutaryl-CoA dehydrogenase back into the

2168 eukaryotic lineage and then followed by functional mutation into an acyl-CoA oxidase as
2169 described more comprehensively in [379].

2170

2171 **Figure 10. Lipolysis and β -oxidation of fatty acids in microalgae – carbon and energetic**
2172 **aspects.**

2173 Abbreviations: TAG, triacylglycerol; LCS, long chain acyl-CoA synthetase; CTS1, comatose
2174 1; ACOX, acyl-CoA oxidase; CoA, coenzyme A; MFP, multi-functional protein; DH,
2175 dehydrogenase; ASC, ascorbate; MDA, malondialdehyde; APX, ascorbate peroxidase; CAT,
2176 catalase; Mal, malate; PXN, peroxisomal NAD carrier translocator; OAA, oxaloacetate.

2177

2178 **Table 1. The acyl lipid compositions of some algae.**

2179 Data taken from Harwood and Jones [14], where original references will be found.

2180

2181 **Table 2. Fatty acid composition of selected algae from the SAG culture collection.**

2182 The major fatty acids are shown as the % composition recalculated from data in Lang et al 2011
2183 [37] where other compounds (eg phytol) are sometimes listed. 16:1 (9z), 16:2 (9z, 12z), 16:3
2184 (7z, 10z, 13z), 18:1 (9z), *18:1 (11z), 18:2 (9z, 12z), 18:3 (9z, 12z, 15z), 18:4 (6z, 9z, 12z,
2185 15z), 20:4 is ARA, 20:5 is EPA and 22:6 is DHA. [Although all the algae analysed \[37\] were in](#)
2186 [the stationary phase, it should be borne in mind that their fatty acid composition can alter](#)
2187 [significantly with culture conditions \(see Section 6\). Therefore, this table should be used as a](#)
2188 [guide. Only commonly occurring major fatty acids are listed.](#)

2189

2190 **Table 3. Total fatty acid compositions of some algae.**

2191 Data taken from Harwood and Jones [14] where original sources are listed. Although the
2192 original papers did not always fully define the double bond configuration and position, it can
2193 be assumed that these were probably as indicated in **Table 2**, with 16:4 being (6z, 9z, 12z, 15z)
2194 and 18:1 being oleic acid, 18:1 (9z). tr = trace (<0.5%).

2195

2196 **Table 4. Total fatty acid composition of some marine algae.**

2197 Taken from Harwood and Jones [14]. See **Tables 2 and 3** for information about the unsaturated
2198 fatty acids. tr = Trace (<0.5%).

2199

2200 **Table 5.** Very long chain PUFA produced by different algae of industrial interest. For further
2201 details see [528].

2202

2203 **Table 6.** Comparison of the fatty acid composition of *Cryptocodinium cohnii* and
2204 *Schizochytrium sp.* and commercial oils produced from them.

2205 Taken from information in [36].

2206

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