

1 **CONVERTING COFFEE SILVERSKIN TO VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS BY A**
2 **SLOW PYROLYSIS-BASED BIOREFINERY PROCESS**

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15
16 **Abstract**

17 This work aims to transform coffee silverskin (CSS), the only waste from the coffee roasting
18 process, that worldwide amounts to about 76 million kg/year, into value-added products
19 within an integrated slow pyrolysis process. The study, performed at 280 °C, 400 °C and 500
20 °C, determined the potential applications of the resulting fractions. Biochar has been studied
21 as an adsorbent of organic pollutants in water, using methylene blue (MB) and methyl orange
22 (MO), which are respectively cationic and anionic aromatic dyes, as model compounds, and
23 with 400 °C biochar giving the highest removal values, at 98% with MB and 40% with MO.
24 Moreover, CSS biochar could be used to obtain renewable energy from its combustion, with
25 22.6 - 24.2 MJ/kg calorific values. The liquid fraction could be a potential source of caffeine,

26 among phenolics, with 400 °C aqueous phase presenting the highest concentration of caffeine
27 (14.3 g/L). Concerning the gas fraction, it could be used to obtain heat for biomass drying
28 before pyrolysis. Hence, use of the pyrolysis products as described would allow zero-waste to
29 be achieved in the coffee roasting industry, thus promoting the green and circular economy
30 and production of green chemicals and materials in a biorefinery context.

31

32 **Keywords**

33 Coffee silverskin; slow pyrolysis; pyrolysis liquid; biochar; adsorption; caffeine

34

35 **1. Introduction**

36 Coffee is one of the most commonly consumed beverages worldwide [1]. The roasted coffee
37 beans are produced in the coffee consuming countries from the roasting process of green
38 coffee beans [2], which are cultivated and imported from tropical areas. Specifically, the
39 most coffee consuming regions are EU, USA and Brazil, with around 2.8, 1.6 and 1.3 billion
40 kg consumed in 2018/19 season respectively. From the roasting process, it is obtained 84%
41 wt. of roasted coffee and around 0.75% wt. of coffee silverskin (CSS), which is the protective
42 skin of beans that shed during the process [1,3]. CSS is the only by-product from the coffee
43 roasting process, but it is generated on a large scale [4], amounting to about 76 million kg per
44 year since at least 2016 [1,5]. CSS is composed by a high amount of dietary fibre (56–62%);
45 it contains cellulose (18%), hemicellulose (13%) and it is also rich in protein (19%) and
46 minerals (8% ash) [6]. Nowadays, most CSS is discarded and often used as firelighters or
47 dispatched to landfills [1,7], representing a serious environmental problem due to the
48 phytotoxicity of this waste as a result of its high content of caffeine, polyphenols, and tannins
49 [8]. Therefore, it is necessary to look for greener waste management alternatives, by

50 converting the residue to a resource and complying with green solutions and circular
51 economy (zero waste approach).

52 Pyrolysis is a widely used treatment to transform biomass into value-added products. This
53 treatment, performed at elevated temperatures in the absence (or limited concentration) of
54 oxygen, decomposes the main polymers of biomass (hemicellulose, cellulose and lignin) into
55 liquid, gas and solid fractions [9]. The pyrolysis liquid and gas fractions could be used as
56 chemical and energy sources respectively, whereas the solid fraction (biochar) could be
57 considered as a value-added product itself due to the broad range of applications it has.

58 Hence, this work uses pyrolysis to completely valorise CSS, aiming to reach zero-waste in
59 the coffee roasting industry. Specifically, the treatment performed was slow pyrolysis in a
60 lab-scale reactor with a capacity of 0.3 kg/h at 280 °C, 400 °C and 500 °C, with temperature
61 being one of the main factors influencing the properties and proportion of the products.

62 However, and to the best of our knowledge, only a few papers have been addressed on the
63 pyrolysis of CSS and the valorisation of the resulting products. Polidoro et al. [8] optimised
64 the pyrolysis process (slow pyrolysis) focusing on the pyrolysis liquid yield and its use as
65 source of chemicals. On the other hand, a previous study from our research group [10]

66 regarded the valorisation of CSS by slow pyrolysis in a pilot plant with a capacity of 15 kg/h,
67 based mainly on pyrolysis liquid as a source of phenolics, and biochar as a solid fuel. There is
68 not yet a detailed study of all CSS pyrolysis products, information that would allow to
69 determine their potential applications.

70 In this sense, biochar has been attracting increasing attention due to its versatility and
71 environmental benefits [11], with large number of studies highlighting its use in terms of
72 mitigating global warming by means of carbon sequestration [12], and as a soil amendment to
73 enhance crop yields [13–15]. Several studies also reported that biochar showed excellent
74 ability to remove contaminants such as heavy metals and organic pollutants from water

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75 [13,15,16], since it can present large specific surface area, porous structure, abundant surface
76 functional groups and mineral components, which suggests its use as a contaminant adsorbent
77 [11,15,17]. The continuous development of industry and agriculture in recent years has
78 increased the level of pollutants in the environment, seriously threatening ecology and human
79 health [11,18]. Of the many ways to remove dissolved water contaminants, adsorption is
80 widely considered to be superior to other processing technologies in terms of cost, viability
81 and effectiveness [11,19,20]. Hence, the role of biochar as an adsorbent has gained attention
82 mainly due to its low-cost, high-efficiency and renewable characteristics [11]. A large
83 number of researchers also showed that biochar can have good adsorption of polycyclic
84 aromatic hydrocarbons [21], herbicides [22], pesticides [17], antibiotics [23] and dyes [24],
85 recently becoming a research hotspot in the environmental science field [11].

86 Based on the above, this work has studied the properties of CSS biochar as an adsorbent of
87 organic pollutants in aqueous media. The study has been carried out using methylene blue
88 (MB) and methyl orange (MO) as model compounds [25] in order to assess the adsorption
89 performance of CSS biochar. MB and MO are respectively cationic and anionic aromatic
90 dyes that may present same adsorption mechanisms on CSS biochar as other contaminants
91 with similar structures. Some of these mechanisms can include electrostatic and aromatic π -
92 π interactions, hydrogen bonds, and pore-filling [13]. Apart from their function as model
93 adsorbates, MB and MO are also extensively used in fabric staining [20,26]. With the rapid
94 development of the textile industry, dye effluents account for a large proportion of industrial
95 wastewater, and have become a significant source of pollution [11], organic dyes being well
96 known as toxic and carcinogenic substances [20]. Hence, the evaluation of the removal
97 efficiency of MB and MO by CSS biochar is in itself of great interest. The use of CSS

98 biochar as an adsorbent could protect the environment by both removing pollutants from
99 water and improving the waste management of CSS. In order to increase the efficiency of

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100 biochars as adsorbents, they are usually activated with KOH, steam or carbon dioxide,
101 increasing its surface area and functional groups. The activation process can, be however, be
102 prohibitively expensive at a large scale [16], so in this work, the study has been performed
103 with the original biochar as it was produced.

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104 Regarding CSS pyrolysis liquid, it has been described as a source of phenolics and caffeine,
105 among other value-added compounds [8,10]. Phenolics, which have been quantified in our
106 previous study by Folin-Ciocalteu and DPPH methods [10], are highly valued in
107 nutraceuticals and cosmetic industries [9,10] due to their antioxidant properties. Caffeine, on
108 the other hand, presents stimulant effects on the nervous, muscular and cardiovascular
109 systems, being used in a wide array of beverages and pharmaceutical products [27–29], and

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110 so, making its quantification interesting. Hence, CSS pyrolysis liquid could be studied as a
111 potential source of value-added compounds, which may differ from the previous work [10]
112 due to the reactor used in that case (pilot plant) was different from the one used in the present
113 study (lab-scale reactor).

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114 With reference to the gas fraction, it can be composed of CO, H₂ and CH₄, which are
115 combustible gases, and so, a potential energy source [12].

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116 The objective of the present work is to study and characterise the solid, liquid and gas
117 products resulting from the slow pyrolysis of CSS in a lab-scale reactor at 280 °C, 400 °C
118 and 500 °C, in order to determine the potential applications of each pyrolysis fraction within
119 an integrated CSS biorefinery context. In this way, and for the first time, biochar from CSS

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120 has been studied as an absorbent of organic pollutants in aqueous media; CSS pyrolysis
121 liquids have been considered as a source for caffeine production with quantitative analysis;
122 and the gas fraction has been valued as an energy source. The valorisation of the CSS
123 pyrolysis products would allow to achieve zero-waste in the coffee roasting industry and
124 contribute to circular economy and bioeconomy, promoting the production of green

125 chemicals and materials and representing a potential improvement for the economy and the
126 environment.

127

128 **2. Materials and methods**

129 **2.1. Feedstock**

130 CSS was supplied by a roasting coffee company from Spain in briquette format. The CSS
131 briquette was crushed and sieved to a homogeneous particle size of 1 mm, before pyrolysis.
132 The moisture of CSS (1 mm) was 10.1 wt. % (data obtained from the loss of weight from
133 heating 1.5 g of CSS at 105 °C overnight; 0.15 of standard deviation; measurement performed
134 in triplicate and averaged).

135

136 **2.2 Reactor system**

137 Slow pyrolysis of CSS was performed at 280 °C, 400 °C and 500 °C in a bench-scale auger
138 reactor described elsewhere [30]. Nitrogen gas was used to purge and remove oxygen from
139 the system. The solid residence time was fixed at 10 min and the feeding rate at 300 g/h. The
140 solid product was collected from the char collection vessel, after cooling to room
141 temperature, and placed in a sealed plastic bag for further physicochemical analysis. The
142 condensable vapours were collected from a cooling and liquid collection system, comprised
143 of a water-cooled condenser fixed at 20 °C (flask 1) and two ice-fingers filled with dry ice
144 and acetone (flasks 2 and 3), placed in sealed brown glass containers and stored at 4 °C for
145 further analysis. The non-condensable gases were filtered using a cotton filter, passed
146 through a gas meter and analysed every 3 min by an online MicroGC in order to analyse the
147 gas distribution (GC; VARIAN CP-4900, USA).

148

149 **2.3 Product yields**

150 Yields of solid, liquid and gas fractions, from each pyrolysis experiment, were calculated by
151 dividing the mass of the resulting pyrolysis products by the mass of the feedstock used in the
152 experiment. Data was expressed as wt. % on dry feedstock basis.

153 Biochar was weighed after cooling and collected from the char collection vessel. Liquid
154 product weight was obtained from the difference between the mass of the glassware for liquid
155 collection after the pyrolysis experiment and before. The 280 °C pyrolysis liquid only
156 presented one phase. Two-phase pyrolysis liquid was obtained from the 400 °C and 500 °C
157 pyrolysis experiments; these two phases were separated by decantation and weighed. The
158 weight of gas product was obtained from the volume of the gas, measured by the gas meter,
159 and its density (ρ), calculated from the MicroGC data according to Eq. 1.

160
$$\rho_{\text{gas}} = \sum \frac{\% \text{vol}_i \cdot \rho_i}{100} \quad (1)$$

161 where % vol_i was the volume percentage obtained from [the](#) MicroGC, and ρ_i was the density,
162 of each pyrolysis gas product. Losses of the pyrolysis experiment were calculated by
163 difference.

164

165 **2.4 Analysis of feedstock and biochar~~s~~**

166 2.4.1 Feedstock and biochar~~s~~ characterisation

167 The bulk density of CSS and biochar was measured by weighing 5 mL of sample using a
168 graduated cylinder. The measurement was performed in triplicate.

169 The ash content was determined following ASTM standards E1755 and D1762 (for biomass
170 and char, respectively), where about 0.5 g of dried sample (105 °C, overnight) was heated for
171 30 min at 250 °C, and then for 6 hours at 750 °C for biochars and 575 °C for feedstock. The
172 measurement was performed in triplicate and the results were expressed as wt. % on dry
173 basis.

174 For subsequent analysis (pH, TGA, FTIR, porosimetry, elemental), CSS and biochars were
175 ground with a mortar and pestle and then sieved to a particle size under 425 μm using a mesh
176 sieve. Before the analyses, the samples were dried at 105 $^{\circ}\text{C}$, overnight.

177 The pH of CSS and biochars was determined in 1:100 wt. sample / distillate water suspension
178 using a pH meter (Sartorius PB-11). The suspension was stirred overnight at 600 rpm before
179 measurement. pH analysis was performed 5 times for each sample and the results averaged.

180 Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) of feedstock and biochars was carried out with a Perkin
181 Elmer Pyris 1 TGA, with each sample analysed in duplicate. The analysis was performed by
182 heating the sample from 60 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ to 900 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ with a heating rate of 10 $^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$.

183 Proximate analyses (ash and volatile matter contents) were performed in accordance with the
184 ASTM standards D1762-84 and E1131. The fixed carbon content was calculated by
185 difference.

186 Surface functional groups of CSS and biochars were characterised by Fourier-transform
187 infrared spectroscopy (FTIR, PIKE Technologies GladiATR and Spectrum software). The
188 scanned wavelengths were 4000 to 400 cm^{-1} , with a resolution of 4 cm^{-1} and using 16 scans.
189 The measurement was performed in duplicate.

190 Nitrogen porosimetry was measured with a Quantasorb Nova 4000e. The analysis was
191 performed only for the 400 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ and 500 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ biochars due to biochars produced at low
192 temperatures are expected to have low surface areas [31]. The samples, weighing between
193 0.20 and 0.35 g, were outgassed under vacuum at 200 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ overnight and then, placed into the
194 evacuated sample chamber of the analyser. BET surface area and pore size distribution output
195 was obtained through the Novawin 11.0 software.

196 Elemental composition (CHNS) of CSS and biochars was determined in duplicate using a
197 Thermo Fisher Scientific Flash 2000 Organic Elemental Analyzer. Oxygen content (on dry
198 basis) was calculated by difference.

199 Higher Heating Value (HHV) was calculated by the following formula from Channiwala and
200 Parikh [32]:

$$\begin{aligned} 201 \quad \text{HHV} = & 0.3491C + 1.1783H + 0.1005S \\ 202 \quad & -0.1034O - 0.0151N - 0.0211\text{Ash} \quad (\text{MJ/kg}) \quad (2) \end{aligned}$$

203 C, H, O, N, S and Ash were expressed in mass percentage on dry basis.

204

205 2.4.2 Adsorption tests

206 Methylene blue (MB) ($\geq 82\%$) and methyl orange (MO) ($\geq 85\%$), supplied by Sigma-Aldrich,
207 were the dyes chosen to perform the adsorption tests. These tests were conducted in batch,
208 equally for MB and MO, using 25 mg of adsorbent (CSS and biochars, with a particle size
209 under $425 \mu\text{m}$) and 10 mL of dye solution (100 mg/L) in a centrifuge tube. The mixture was
210 placed in a sonicator for 3 hours at $50 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, and then, it was centrifuged at 3000 rpm for 2
211 hours. The concentration of dye in the solution was analysed in triplicate using UV- Vis
212 spectrophotometer (Thermo Scientific Evolution 220), on the basis of a linear calibration
213 curve (20-100 mg/L). The results, expressed as percentage of dye removal (%R), were
214 calculated by the following formula [19]:

$$215 \quad \%R = \frac{100(C_0 - C_t)}{C_0} \quad (3)$$

216 C_0 (mg/L) was the initial concentration of dye (100 mg/L), and C_t (mg/L) was the
217 concentration of dye after centrifugation step. In order to avoid deviations to the Beer-
218 Lambert Law due to high values (> 2) of absorbance, mixtures were diluted 1:10 with
219 distillate water. The measurements were performed by scanning from 800 nm to 600 nm in
220 the case of MB (maximum wavelength around 670 nm) [19], and from 550 to 350 nm for
221 MO (maximum wavelength of 464 nm) [20].

222

223 **2.5 Analysis of pyrolysis liquid**

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224 CSS pyrolysis liquid was chemically characterised by gas chromatography – mass
225 spectroscopy (GC-MS). The analysed samples were the ones collected in the first flask, after
226 the water-cooled condenser (see Section 2.2). The analysis was carried out in a Shimadzu
227 GCMS QP2010 SE system equipped with a capillary (Rtx-5MS) column (30 m × 0.25 mm
228 inner diameter × 0.25 µm film thickness). Before injection, samples were diluted in HPLC
229 grade acetone (≥ 99.9%, purchased from Sigma Aldrich), and then filtered (0.45 µg Millipore
230 filter) to avoid obstruction of liner due to suspended ashes/solids after pyrolysis process. A
231 volume of 1 µL was then injected, applying split mode, with the injection port at 300 °C.
232 Helium was used as carrier gas with a flow of 2 mL/min. The oven temperature was as
233 follows: 55 °C for 9 min, 20 °C/ min to 125 °C, 5 °C/min to 325 °C and 325 °C for 10 min.
234 The total run time was 64.50 min. Compounds were identified from the chromatograms by
235 computer matching of mass spectra of the peaks with the National Institute of Standards and
236 Technology (NIST) library; the semi-quantification was performed relating the total area of
237 the compounds, as shown in previous publications [9,10,33].
238 Caffeine from CSS pyrolysis liquids (aqueous fraction) was quantified by high-performance
239 liquid chromatography system coupled to an ultraviolet-visible detector (HPLC-UV/Vis)
240 (Series 1100, Agilent Technologies). The HPLC-UV/Vis was equipped with a binary pump, a
241 DAD detector and ZORBAX SB-C18 analytical column (4.6 × 100 mm, 1.8 µm particle size)
242 from Agilent Technologies. Water: methanol (60:40, v/v) was used as mobile phase, at a flow
243 rate of 0.4 mL/min at room temperature (25 °C). 4 µL of sample was injected and caffeine
244 was determinate at the wavelength of maximum absorbance ($\lambda = 273$ nm), using an external
245 standard calibration curve with a concentration range of 100 – 1000 ppm. Caffeine content
246 was expressed as g caffeine/L of aqueous phase from the pyrolysis liquid.

247

248 2.6 Analysis of gas fraction

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249 Data collected from the MicroGC was processed by the software provided by the
250 manufacturer of the online gas chromatograph (GC; VARIAN CP-4900, USA). The
251 MicroGC used 5Å Molsieve and PortalPLOT columns, and Helium as carrier gas. The
252 chemical composition of gas was obtained by the average of the data corresponding to the
253 pyrolysis process and expressed as % vol.

254 The heating value of gas was calculated using the following formula [30]:

$$255 \quad \text{HHV}_{\text{gas}} = \sum(\% \text{ vol}_i / 100) \cdot \text{HHV}_i \quad (\text{MJ/m}^3) \quad (4)$$

256 where % vol_i and HHV_i were the volume percentage and the heating value, respectively, for
257 each gas species present in the pyrolysis gaseous product.

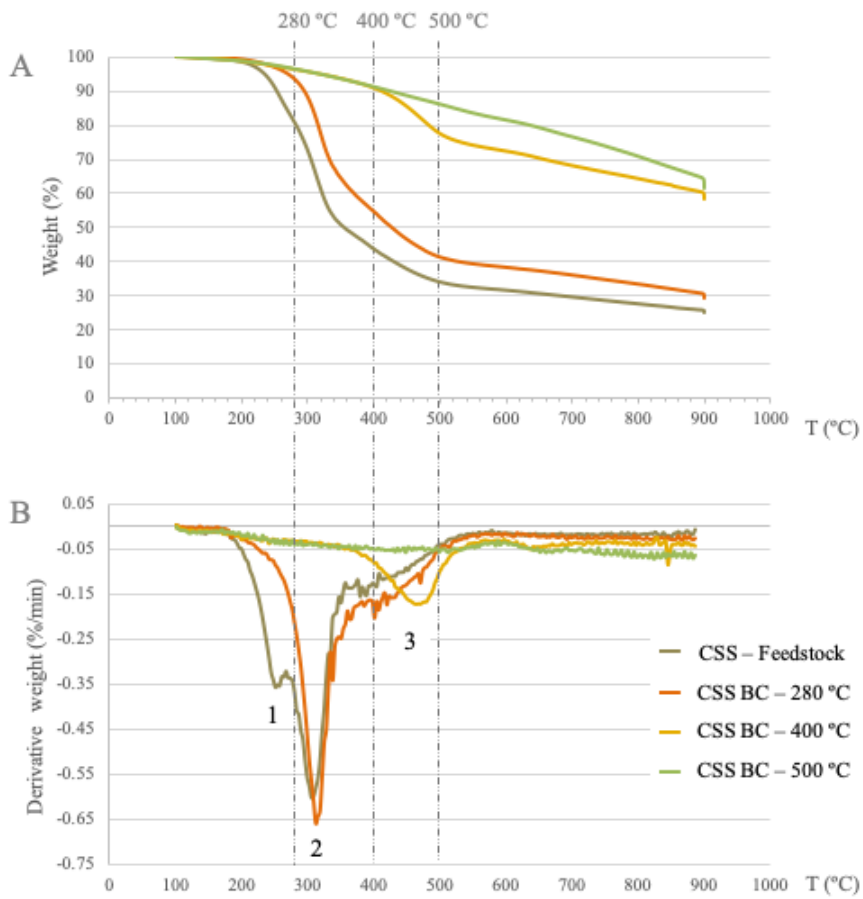
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259 **3. Results and discussion**

260 **3.1. Slow pyrolysis**

261 **3.1.1 Thermal degradation of CSS and biochars**

262 TGA of CSS and biochars resulting from the slow pyrolysis of CSS at 280 °C, 400 °C and
263 500 °C were carried out in order to study the thermal degradation of CSS during the pyrolysis
264 process. TGA, performed under nitrogen atmosphere, gave information on how the different
265 polymers of biomass (hemicellulose, cellulose, and lignin) degrade in function of the
266 temperature (see Fig. 1).



267

268 **Fig. 1.** Pyrolysis curves of CSS and biochars from the slow pyrolysis of CSS, at 280 °C, 400
 269 °C and 500 °C. Graph A shows the weight loss, and graphic B, the rate of weight loss, on dry
 270 basis. The numbers correspond to the weight loss mainly associated to hemicellulose (1),
 271 cellulose (2) and lignin (3) decomposition. (CSS, coffee silverskin; BC, biochar; T,
 272 temperature)

273

274 CSS TGA showed two main losses of weight around 255 °C (1) and 300 °C (2), attributed to
275 hemicellulose and cellulose decomposition respectively, and a smaller weight loss around
276 400 °C (3), associated with lignin degradation (see Fig. 1). This data is consistent with the
277 one obtained in a previous study carried out by our research group [10]. As expected from
278 CSS TGA (see Fig. 1), pyrolysis at 280 °C resulted in the degradation of hemicellulose. This
279 was reflected in 280 °C CSS biochar TGA, where only cellulose (2) and lignin (3)
280 decomposition peaks were observed. In the same way, pyrolysis at 400 °C degraded
281 hemicellulose and cellulose, resulting in a lignin-based biochar. Lignin decomposition peaks
282 (3) shown in Fig. 1-B were very low due to the low lignin content of CSS (1% wt.) [34]. It is
283 also shown that lignin from CSS and 280 °C CSS biochar degraded at around 250 °C to 500
284 °C, presenting small and wide peaks with a maximum at 400 °C; however, in 400 °C CSS
285 biochar, part of lignin had already degraded and the peak (3) narrowed from 400 °C to 500
286 °C, changing its maximum to 470 °C. This could be due to structural modifications of lignin
287 at elevated temperatures [14]. Concerning the pyrolysis at 500 °C, all three polymers were
288 decomposed since 500 °C corresponded to approximately the end of CSS biomass thermal
289 degradation; this is evidenced in CSS and 500 °C CSS biochar TGA (see Fig. 1). As the
290 resulting CSS biochars presented different hemicellulose, cellulose and lignin compositions,
291 they are expected to have distinct properties from each other, which would be reflected in
292 different potential applications.

293

294 **3.1.2 Product yields**

295 Slow pyrolysis of CSS, at 280 °C, 400 °C and 500 °C, resulted in the yields shown in Table
296 1, information that contributes to determine the best CSS pyrolysis temperature in function of
297 the desired products.

298

299 **Table 1**

300 Product yields from the slow pyrolysis of CSS at the following temperatures. Data is
 301 expressed as wt. % on dry feedstock basis. (T, temperature; AP, aqueous phase of the
 302 pyrolysis liquid; NAP, non-aqueous phase of the pyrolysis liquid)

| T (°C) | Solid (wt. %) | Liquid | | Gas (wt. %) | Losses (wt. %) |
|--------|---------------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| | | AP (wt. %) | NAP (wt. %) | | |
| 280 | 80.5 | 4.1 | - | 10.3 | 5.1 |
| 400 | 40.5 | 15.4 | 18.2 | 20.7 | 5.2 |
| 500 | 31.5 | 15.7 | 22.5 | 22.4 | 7.9 |

303
 304
 305 Product distribution trends of CSS, shown in Table 1, are in accordance with the common
 306 thermal degradation of biomass: biochar yield (%solid) decreased with temperature, while
 307 liquid (%AP, %NAP) and gas fractions increased. Biochar yields were also consistent with
 308 CSS TGA, that showed 80.7%, 43.6% and 33.7% of solid weight at 280 °C, 400 °C and 500
 309 °C, respectively (see Table 1 and Fig. 1). The slight differences between TGA data and
 310 biochar yields are mainly related to the differences between heat transfer of the processes.
 311 Regarding the liquid fraction, and based on TGA data (Section 3.1.1), the aqueous phase
 312 (AP) was mainly composed of the hydrophilic products from hemicellulose decomposition in
 313 the 280 °C case, and hemicellulose and cellulose degradation in the 400 °C and 500 °C
 314 pyrolysis liquids. On the other hand, non-aqueous phase (NAP) mainly consisted of
 315 hydrophobic products from partial (400 °C) and total (500 °C) decomposition of lignin [10].
 316 According to the hydrophilicity and hydrophobicity of pyrolysis liquid compounds, they
 317 usually separate in two phases, AP and NAP, as in the present case [9,35]. The pyrolysis
 318 process resulted in a mass loss of about 5.0 - 7.9% (see Table 1), which is mainly associated

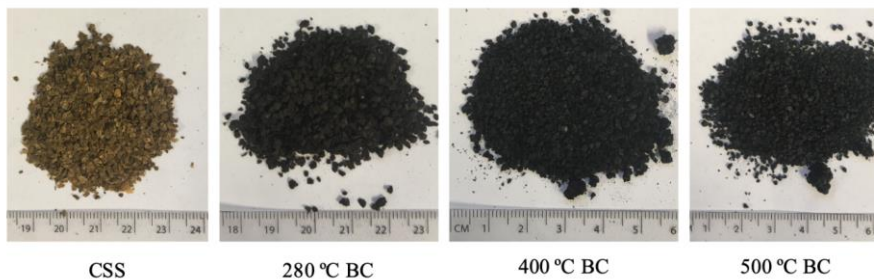
319 with the fact that some solid pyrolysis products could have remained inside the reactor. The
320 obtained losses values are nevertheless acceptable for the scale of the reactor.

321

322 3.2 Feedstock and biochars

323 3.2.1 Solid product characterisation

324 Raw CSS and biochars from the slow pyrolysis of CSS (see Fig. 2) were studied and
325 characterised in order to determine their potential uses, paying particular attention to their
326 role as adsorbents in aqueous media.



327

328 **Fig. 2.** CSS and biochars from the slow pyrolysis of CSS at 280 °C, 400 °C and 500 °C. The
329 unit of the ruler is in cm. (CSS, coffee silverskin; BC, biochar)

330

331 **Table 2**

332 Characterization of CSS and biochars from the slow pyrolysis of CSS at 280 °C, 400 °C and
333 500 °C. Data is expressed as Mean (standard deviation). Ash, proximate and ultimate analysis
334 are expressed as wt % on dry basis. (CSS, coffee silverskin; BC, biochar; VM, volatile
335 matter; FC, fixed carbon; HHV, higher heating value; BET surface area)

| | CSS | BC 280 °C | BC 400 °C | BC 500 °C |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Ash (% large oven) | 8.34 (0.11) | 8.01 (0.14) | 16.51 (0.36) | 21.81 (0.11) |
| Density (g/mL) | 0.31 (0.01) | 0.26 (0.00) | 0.20 (0.00) | 0.19 (0.01) |

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| | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| pH | 5.35 (0.03) | 6.66 (0.04) | 8.9 (0.00) | 10.05 (0.05) |
| <u>Proximate Analysis</u> | | | | |
| VM (%) | 76.41 (0.05) | 70.43 (0.67) | 41.80 (0.16) | 38.53 (1.74) |
| FC (%) ¹ | 16.07 (0.18) | 20.95 (1.22) | 41.90 (0.37) | 40.74 (0.66) |
| Ash (%) | 7.52 (0.13) | 8.62 (0.55) | 16.29 (0.53) | 20.72 (1.08) |
| <u>Ultimate Analysis</u> | | | | |
| N (%) | 3.50 (0.07) | 3.37 (0.09) | 3.10 (0.02) | 2.90 (0.05) |
| C (%) | 47.69 (0.02) | 54.23 (0.39) | 60.10 (0.61) | 60.78 (0.72) |
| H (%) | 5.61 (0.00) | 5.87 (0.02) | 4.44 (0.07) | 2.59 (0.05) |
| S (%) | 0.24 (0.02) | 0.11 (0.01) | 0.04 (0.06) | 0.15 (0.02) |
| O (%) ¹ | 34.66 (0.02) | 28.42 (0.49) | 15.92 (0.62) | 11.78 (0.84) |
| Molar H/C | 1.40 (0.00) | 1.29 (0.00) | 0.88 (0.02) | 0.51 (0.00) |
| Molar O/C | 0.55 (0.00) | 0.39 (0.01) | 0.20 (0.01) | 0.15 (0.01) |
| Molar (O+N)/C | 0.61 (0.00) | 0.45 (0.01) | 0.24 (0.01) | 0.19 (0.01) |
| HHV (MJ/kg) ² | 19.47 (0.01) | 22.70 (0.21) | 24.18 (0.21) | 22.56 (0.39) |
| <u>N₂ Porosimeter</u> | | | | |
| BET (m²/g) | - | - | 3.6 | 2.3 |
| Pore size (nm) | - | - | 39.6 | 88.8 |

336 ¹Fixed carbon and oxygen content are calculated by difference.

337 ²HHV is calculated mathematically from Channiwala and Parikh [32] formula.

338

339 The analyses performed on CSS and CSS biochars are summarised in Table 2 and Fig. 3.

340 Proximate analysis shows, as expected, a relative increase of ash content and fixed carbon

341 with temperature, at the expense of volatile matter (see Table 2) [15]. This has also been

342 observed in the previous section (3.1.1), where the number of volatile compounds removed

343 from CSS increased with increasing the temperature of the pyrolysis process (see Fig. 1). In

344 the same way, density decreased with increasing temperature due to the removal of volatile

345 compounds. Ash data, which were obtained by different methods (oven and proximate

346 analysis), presented similar results, with the highest difference between the values being 1%,

347 for the 500 °C biochar (see Table 2). This biochar also presented the highest ash value (21%)
348 as a result of the concentration of inorganic compounds with the temperature.

349 Regarding pH, it increased substantially at higher temperatures due to the increased relative
350 concentration of basic surface oxides of alkali and alkaline earth metals [9] (see Table 2). The
351 main metals present in the CSS are, specifically, potassium (27 mg/g), calcium (7 mg/g) and
352 magnesium (3 mg/g) [10]. During pyrolysis, the mineral content of feedstock is largely
353 retained and concentrated in biochars [37], justifying the basic pH of CSS biochars.

354 In reference to ultimate analysis, pyrolysis performed at high temperatures led to high
355 degrees of carbonisation (see Table 2), that resulted in the formation of aromatic and
356 graphitic structures on the biochar [31]. This fact is supported by increasing %C, and %H and
357 %O decreasing, with increasing pyrolysis temperature. Molar ratios of the elements have
358 been used to estimate the aromaticity (H:C), polarity (O:C) and oxygen functionality
359 ((O+N):C) of chars [38], information that can be related to their behaviour as adsorbents. The
360 reduction of these values indicates the removal of polar surface functional groups and the
361 formation of aromatic structures through a higher degree of carbonization [31]. Specifically,
362 the molar H/C ratio of ≤ 0.3 suggests highly condensed aromatic ring systems, and the lower
363 molar O/C ratio, produced at higher temperature, indicated the arrangement of aromatic rings,
364 originating stable crystal graphite-like structures [15]. In this way, with increasing
365 temperature, biomass underwent dehydration and decarboxylation reactions, forming volatile
366 dissociation products of lignin, cellulose and hemicelluloses, and condensation reactions,
367 forming the graphitic structures [39,40]. Hence, as shown in Table 2, the more aromatic and
368 less polar biochar was the one produced at 500 °C. Ultimate analysis also suggests the
369 potential use of CSS biochars as compost due to their high amount of nitrogen (>2%)
370 compared to other composting materials, such as cow dung (1.87 %N) [41]. On the other
371 hand, the carbon content of biochars, which was higher than 50% of the dry mass, complies

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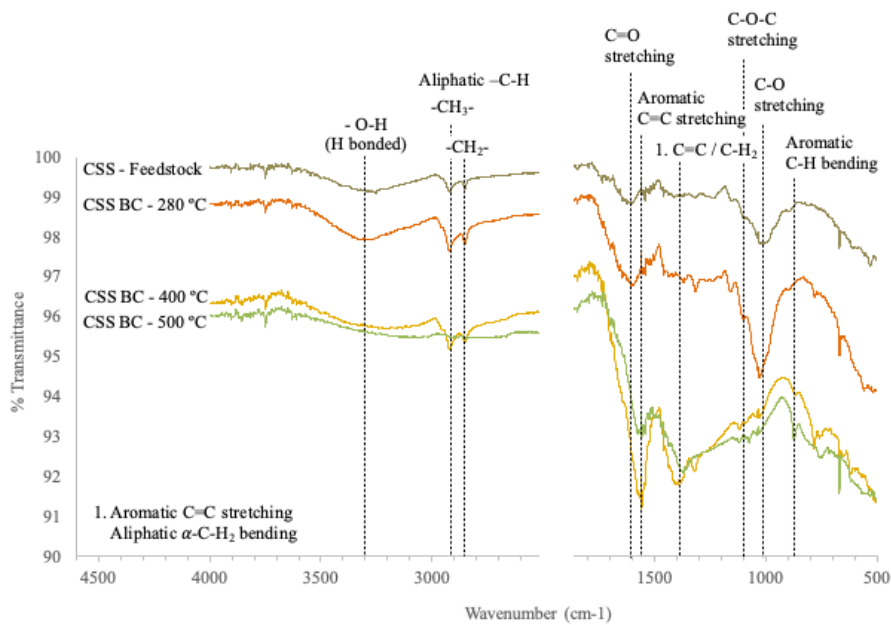
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372 with the European Biochar Certificate (EBC) requirements [42]. This indicates that the
373 biochars produced from CSS can be potentially used in soil applications, although limited by
374 a relatively high ash content.

375 Calorific values (HHV) also indicates the use of CSS biochars for combustion purposes, as
376 already observed in a previous study by our research group [10] (see Table 2). The heating
377 values of biochars, with no significant differences between them, were similar to other fuels
378 such as coal (14.6 – 26.7 kJ/kg) [43,44], representing an ideal alternative to renewable energy
379 [11]. The increase of the biochar energy value compared to CSS feedstock is related to the
380 increase of %C and the decrease of %O in biochars [40]. The low sulphur content of biochars
381 (0.04-0.15 % wt.) can also favour their use as energy source due to the low sulphur oxides
382 emissions that would be released in the combustion of biochars (see Table 2).

383 Concerning the role of CSS biochars as adsorbents, porosimetry and FTIR analysis, shown in
384 Table 2 and Fig. 3., give information about properties associated to the adsorption capacity of
385 biochars. Nitrogen porosimetry informs about the surface area (BET) and pore size
386 distribution, which are related to the amount of active adsorption sites and the size of
387 potential adsorbates, respectively. The analysis was carried out on the 400 °C and 500 °C
388 biochars since appreciable surface area values are only expected for the highest pyrolysis
389 temperatures [31]. This is because surface areas typically increase with increasing pyrolytic
390 temperature due to the escape of volatile substances and the formation of channel/pore
391 structures [45]. Nevertheless, the obtained surface areas were extremely low ($< 4 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$) (see
392 Table 2). This fact can be explained due to the relatively low pyrolysis temperature, and the
393 lack of an activation treatment, which are widely used to increase the surface area of biochars
394 during the pyrolysis process [46]. Apart from that, porosity is also related to the lignin
395 content of feedstock. Lignin-rich biomass, together with high pyrolysis temperature, typically
396 results in high surface areas because of structural modifications of lignin at elevated

397 temperature, after the release of volatiles [14]. The role that lignin plays in porosimetry is not
 398 only as a precursor but also as a pore-size controller [47]. Hence, the low lignin content of
 399 CSS (1%, wt.) [34] contributed as well to the low porosity of biochars. Furthermore, biochar
 400 pores could be plugged by inorganic compounds from ash, tars (condensed volatiles), and
 401 other amorphous decomposition products which are known to partially block the micropores
 402 [14]. In this case, blocking of the pores could be favoured due to the relatively long vapour
 403 residence time in the reactor during the slow pyrolysis, putting the vapour in contact with the
 404 solid product for longer time.



405
 406 **Fig. 3.** FTIR spectra for CSS feedstock and CSS biochars. (CSS, coffee silverskin; BC,
 407 biochar)

408
 409 FTIR, on the other hand, indicated the functional groups located on the surface of CSS
 410 feedstock and CSS biochars, which affects their potential interactions with adsorbates [15].

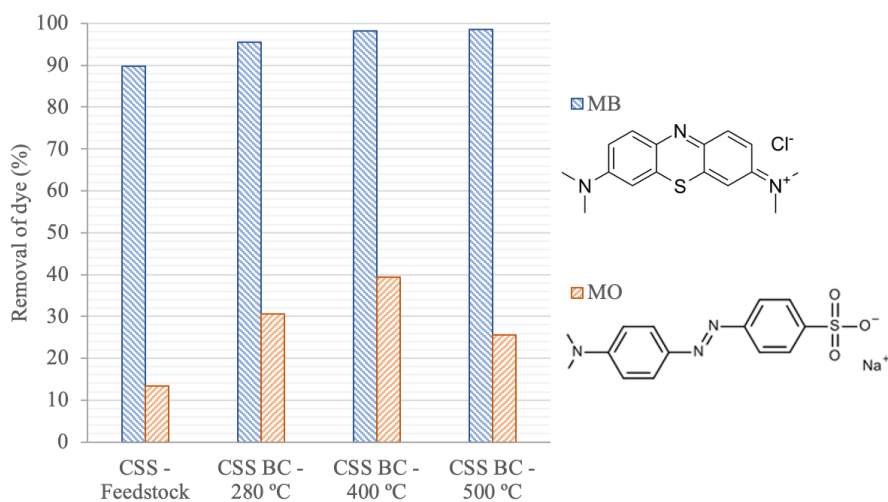
411 As observed in Fig. 3, and in agreement with the ultimate analysis from Table 2, polar
412 functional groups were removed, and aromatic structures were formed with increasing
413 pyrolysis temperature. A broad peak around 3300 cm^{-1} , corresponding to O-H stretching for
414 alcohols and phenols, and a $2800\text{-}3000\text{ cm}^{-1}$ peak, attributable to aliphatic C-H stretching,
415 were present in CSS, 280 °C and 400 °C biochars, but not in 500 °C biochar [31,38]. Similar
416 results were seen by Uchimiya et al. [31] in a study of cottonseed hulls biochars. Reduction
417 of C=O (around 1600 cm^{-1}), related to carboxylate group, and C-O (1078 cm^{-1} for COC and
418 1000 cm^{-1} for acidic CO) were also observed in 400 °C and 500 °C biochars [30,31]. By
419 contrast, aromatic peaks from C=C stretching (1566 cm^{-1}), as well as C-H bending (874
420 cm^{-1}) increased in 400 °C and 500 °C biochars [13,31,38]. The reduction of the polar
421 functional groups, from dehydration and depolymerisation reactions during the pyrolysis
422 process, led to the growth of aromatic and graphitic structures [38], which can interact with
423 aromatic species. Hence, although the porosity of CSS biochars was low, their surface
424 chemical characteristics indicated that they could be used as potential adsorbents of aromatic
425 organic pollutants.

426

427 **3.2.2 Adsorption of MB and MO from aqueous solution**

428 This section is focused on studying the adsorbent properties of CSS biochars in aqueous
429 media. This would demonstrate their potential use to remove contaminants from water,
430 increasing the value of the biochar and promoting a CSS pyrolysis-based biorefinery by using
431 the resulting solid, liquid and gas pyrolysis products for different purposes.

432 The study was carried out using MB and MO as model compounds (see Fig. 4) which
433 allowed to evaluate the potential removal efficiency of aromatic ionic pollutants by CSS
434 biochar.



435

436 **Fig. 4.** Removal (%) of MB and MO from an aqueous solution with CSS feedstock and CSS
 437 biochars. (CCS, coffee silverskin; MB, methylene blue; MO, methyl orange; BC, biochar).

438

439 As shown in Fig. 4, CSS biochars were efficient in removing MB and, to a lesser extent, MO,

440 with 400 °C CSS biochar being the best one in both cases, reaching respectively 98% and

441 40% removal. CSS feedstock also showed high MB removal values; however, with the

442 production of biochar, it is also obtained liquid and solid products, which could be used as

443 chemical and energy sources respectively, making pyrolysis a potential treatment for CSS.

444 The affinity of biochars with MB and MO can be explained by $\pi-\pi$ dispersion interaction

445 between the aromatic rings of dyes and the aromatic structure of biochars (see Section 3.2.1,

446 ultimate analysis) [26,48]. The functional groups present on the biochar surface (see Section

447 3.2.1, FTIR analysis) can also play a major role in MB and MO adsorption, especially by

448 means of electrostatic interactions, electron donor-acceptor and hydrogen bonding

449 mechanisms [26]. Electrostatic interactions may take place between the negatively charged

450 carboxylate of biochars and the charged groups of the dyes (See Fig. 4). In the MB case,

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451 there can be an electrostatic attraction between the nitrogen positive charge of MB and the
452 biochars [26], whereas concerning MO, there can be a repulsion force between the
453 negatively-charged sulphonic group of MO and carboxylate anions of biochars, leading to
454 lower levels of removal of MO compared to MB. The differences between MB and MO were
455 reflected in Fig. 4, where MB removal values were substantially higher than the MO ones.
456 Electron donor-acceptor interactions, on the other hand, could take place between carbonyl
457 oxygens in the biochar, that would act as an electron donor, and the aromatic ring of MB and
458 MO, that would be the electron acceptor [26]. In terms of hydrogen bonds, they could be
459 formed between hydroxyl groups of biochars and nitrogen from MB and MO [26]. As CSS
460 presents low lignin content [34], most of the hydroxyl groups originated from hemicellulose
461 and cellulose. The restrictive effect of the hydrogen-bond network of cellulose molecules
462 leads to hydroxyl groups having low accessibility on the biomass surface [19]. In this regard,
463 the main contribution in MB and MO adsorption would be π - π dispersion and electrostatic
464 interactions.

465 Based on the MB and MO main mechanisms, CSS biochar could be used to remove
466 compounds with aromatic rings in their structure from water, and especially compounds with
467 positive charge. Examples of this could be aromatic antiepileptic drugs (AED),
468 sulphonamides (synthetic bacteriostatic antibiotics), thiacloprid pesticide, estrogens,
469 ibuprofen and paracetamol derivates, apart from the MB and MO dyes themselves [13,17,48].
470 Particularly in MB case, CSS biochars, which were performed without any activation
471 treatment, presented similar removal values as a commercial activated carbon (Norit) ($\geq 99\%$
472 removal) shown in a previous work [49], with removal rates of 95.5% with 280 °C biochar
473 (38.1 mg MB/ g biochar), 98.2 % with 400 °C biochar (39.3 mg MB/ g biochar) and 98.5 %
474 with 500 °C biochar (39.4 mg MB/ g biochar) (See Fig. 4). Commercial activated carbons
475 are known to have the highest removal efficiency since their large surface area and presence

476 of surface functional groups facilitate interactions with various compounds [26]; however,
477 their resource- and energy-intensive production process also makes them expensive products
478 [13]. In this way, CSS biochars could be a potential sustainable and more affordable
479 alternative to activated carbon for the adsorption of cationic aromatic compounds, as they
480 present a similar structure to MB. Apart from organic pollutants, CSS biochars could be also
481 effective in the removal of cationic heavy metals by means of electrostatic attraction [13] or
482 complexation with carbonyl groups of biochar [16], considering that the contamination of
483 water by toxic metals has become a pervasive problem throughout the world [13]. Biochars
484 have also significant potential to address not just the pollutants in water, but also in soil and
485 gaseous media [11].

486

487 **3.3 Pyrolysis liquid**

488 **3.3.1 Pyrolysis liquid description**

489 Slow pyrolysis of CSS at 280 °C, 400 °C and 500 °C also resulted in the pyrolysis liquid
490 shown in Fig. 5. As shown, 280 °C pyrolysis liquid consisted of a single aqueous phase; on
491 the other hand, 400 °C and 500 °C pyrolysis liquids were composed of two phases, an
492 aqueous phase and a non-aqueous phase. This is because this type of pyrolysis generates high
493 amounts of reaction water, separating the hydrophilic and hydrophobic compounds of
494 pyrolysis liquid in two phases [9,35]. As hydrophobic compounds are mainly from lignin
495 degradation [9,33], the phase separation only took place at 400 °C and 500 °C, at which a
496 higher amount of lignin has been decomposed (see Section 3.1.1). On the contrary,
497 hydrophilic compounds are mostly from hemicellulose, cellulose and part of lignin
498 decomposition [9,33,50].

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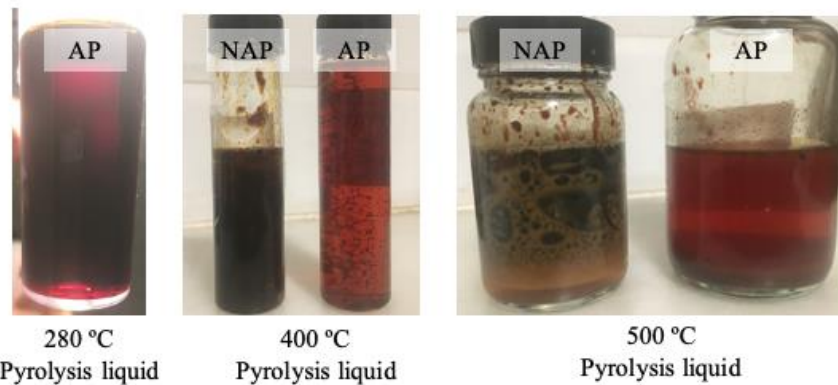
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501 **Fig. 5.** Pyrolysis liquids from the slow pyrolysis of CSS at 280 °C, 400 °C and 500 °C. (CSS,
 502 coffee silverskin; AP, aqueous phase of the pyrolysis liquid; NAP, non-aqueous phase of the
 503 pyrolysis liquid)

504

505 3.3.2 Pyrolysis liquid composition

506 The chemical composition of the CSS pyrolysis liquids was analysed by GC-MS (see Fig. 6),
 507 showing caffeine as the most abundant compound in all samples. In contrast with pyrolysis
 508 liquid from classical forest biomass [51,52] or other agricultural wastes, such as grape
 509 pomace [33] or olive mill waste [9], CSS pyrolysis liquids showed low phenolic content. This
 510 is due to most of the phenolics originating from the degradation of lignin, which is low in
 511 CSS (1% wt.) [34]. It is also observed that CSS pyrolysis liquids were particularly rich in
 512 nitrogen compounds, since the amount of nitrogen present in CSS was high (3%) (see Section
 513 3.2.1, ultimate analysis). This characteristic was detected as well by Polidoro et al. [8] and in
 514 the previous study performed by our research group [10].

515 As shown in Fig. 6, 400 °C and 500 °C pyrolysis liquids presented similar compositions,
 516 which were much higher than the one at 280 °C, as expected from TGA data that showed
 517 lower devolatilisation at 280 °C (see Section 3.1.1). AP (Graphic A) was mainly composed of

518 caffeine (compound 19) and to a lesser extent, pyridine (2), phenolics (13, 15, 16) and other
 519 low molecular weight oxygenated products (1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12). NAP (Graphic B), on the
 520 other hand, mostly contained caffeine (16), phenolics (5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11), nitrogenated
 521 compounds (1, 2, 12, 13), hydrocarbon chains (14, 15, 17) and sterols (18, 19). Hence, CSS
 522 pyrolysis liquids seem to be a potential source of caffeine (see Fig. 6), which is a value-added
 523 compound widely used in food and pharmaceutical industry [27–29].

524

525 **Table 3**

526 Content of caffeine in aqueous phase of pyrolysis liquid from the slow pyrolysis of CSS at
 527 280 °C, 400 °C and 500 °C (CSS, Coffee Silverskin; AP, Aqueous Phase of the pyrolysis
 528 liquid).

| Caffeine concentration | AP 280 °C | AP 400 °C | AP 500 °C |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| In aqueous phase (g caffeine/L AP) | 11.5 | 14.3 | 10.4 |
| From feedstock (mg caffeine AP/g CSS) | 1.75 | 3.81 | 2.81 |

529

530

531 In this regard, caffeine concentration from AP samples was quantified by HPLC-UV/Vis (see
 532 Table 3), with AP 400 °C showing the highest amount of caffeine (14.3 g caffeine /L AP;
 533 3.81 mg caffeine AP/ g CSS). Specifically, from each tonne of CSS, it was obtained 154 kg
 534 of AP (400 °C), which contained 2 kg of caffeine. It is reported that the total content of
 535 caffeine in CSS feedstock is around 4.4 – 10.0 mg caffeine /g CSS by Bresciani et al. [53],
 536 8.3 – 13.7 mg caffeine /g CSS by Napolitano et al. [54], and 7.7 – 10.3 mg caffeine /g CSS
 537 by Toschi et al. [55], the difference between these values being attributed to the different
 538 methods used for its measurement [55]. In view of this data, it is assumed that just part of

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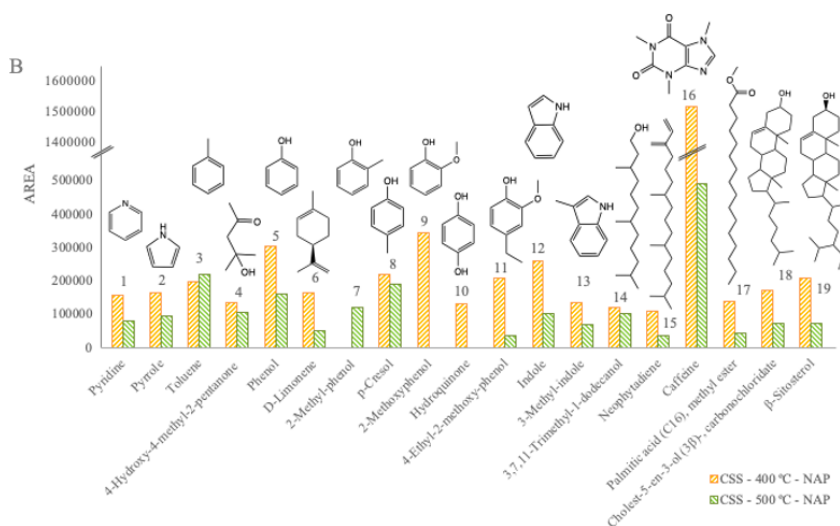
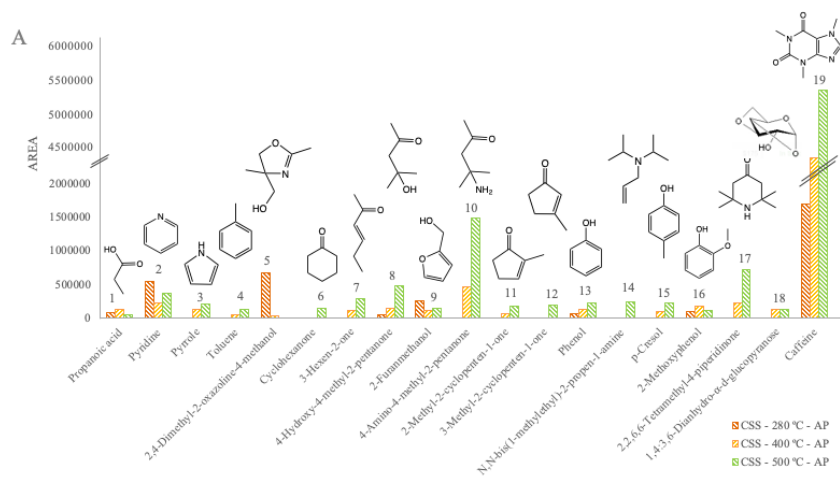
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539 CSS caffeine was concentrated in the AP liquid fractions, while the rest should be in the NAP
540 pyrolysis liquids (see Fig 7, graphic B). Still, CSS AP pyrolysis liquids, mainly the 400 °C
541 sample, contained an appreciable concentration of caffeine.

542 Apart from caffeine, CSS pyrolysis liquids were also composed of other value-added
543 products, such as phenolics and β -sitosterol (19, Fig. 6.B). Phenolics are known for their
544 antioxidant properties, which are highly valued in nutraceuticals and cosmetic industries
545 [9,10]. Specifically, our previous study determined the total phenolic content and the
546 antioxidant capacity of 280 °C, 400 °C and 500 °C CSS pyrolysis liquids, showing them as
547 potential source of phenolics [10]. On the other hand, β -sitosterol is usually used in medicine
548 for heart disease, hypercholesterolemia, modulating the immune system, prevention of
549 cancer, as well as for rheumatoid arthritis, tuberculosis, cervical cancer, hair loss and benign
550 prostatic hyperplasia [56]. In this way, CSS pyrolysis liquids could be considered as potential
551 sources of value-added products, in particular caffeine, which amount between 10.4 and 14.3
552 g/L in the AP. It should be noted that these products need to be first separated and purified.



553
 554 **Fig. 6.** Most abundant compounds of AP (A) and NAP (B) phases of CSS pyrolysis liquids
 555 determined by GC-MS analysis. (CCS, coffee silverskin; AP, aqueous phase of the pyrolysis
 556 liquid; NAP, non-aqueous phase of the pyrolysis liquid)

557
 558 **3.4 Gas fraction**

559 CSS pyrolysis gases mainly consisted of CO₂, CO, CH₄, and, to a lesser extent, H₂, C₂H₆,
560 C₂H₄ and C₃H₈ (see Table 4). From all gases, CO₂ was the most abundant compound,
561 followed by CO. CO₂ and CO are related to the pyrolysis of hemicellulose and cellulose [57],
562 the first polymers to be thermally degraded (see Section 3.1.1). CO₂ is mainly released from
563 the cracking and reforming of carboxyl (C=O) and carboxylic acid (COOH), mostly present
564 in hemicellulose, whereas CO is mainly obtained from carbonyl (COC) and carboxyl (C=O)
565 decomposition, mostly concentrated in cellulose [57]. On the contrary, H₂ gave low
566 percentages, being almost negligible at low pyrolysis temperatures (see Table 4). Similar
567 results were obtained by Yu et al. [30] in the pyrolysis of rice husk and corn stalk, performed
568 in the same auger reactor as the present study, where H₂ percentage was not significant till
569 pyrolysis temperatures were above 500 - 550 °C [30,57]. Regarding CH₄ and the other light
570 hydrocarbons, they are attributed to the reforming and cracking of methoxyl groups, mainly
571 present in lignin, and heavier hydrocarbons [30,57].

572 Moreover, Table 4 shows that as the temperature of the pyrolysis process was increased, the
573 proportion of CO₂ decreased, and the proportions of the other gas compounds increased, as
574 also observed by Yu et al. [30]. This fact is reflected in the gas calorific values, which
575 increased with the increase in CH₄ and light hydrocarbons [58]. In this way, 500 °C gas gave
576 the highest calorific value (10.25 MJ/m³). The heat of combustion of the pyrolysis gases
577 could be used for biomass drying before thermochemical treatment, since the feedstock
578 should have low moisture content (typically no more than 10 wt. % of moisture).
579 Specifically, the resulting flue gas could be used as a drying medium in a direct rotary drums
580 and belt conventional dryers, where biomass could be heated by the hot flue gas directly
581 using the thermal energy in the hot gas [59]. Hence, the integration of biomass drying to
582 pyrolysis process could improve the overall efficiency of the process, apart from contributing
583 to the circular economy and the bioeconomy.

584

585 **Table 4**

586 HHVs and composition of gas fractions from the slow pyrolysis of CSS at 280 °C, 400 °C and
587 500 °C. Data of gas composition is expressed as % vol, obtained from GC analysis. (HHV,
588 higher heating value; CCS, coffee silverskin)

| | Gas fraction | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 280 °C | 400 °C | 500 °C |
| HHV (MJ/m³) | 1.88 | 3.79 | 10.25 |
| <u>Gas composition</u> (%vol) | | | |
| CO₂ | 84.21 | 74.48 | 54.42 |
| CO | 15.44 | 23.07 | 26.23 |
| CH₄ | 0.07 | 1.41 | 9.47 |
| H₂ | 0.21 | 0.18 | 5.16 |
| C₂H₆ | 0.02 | 0.45 | 2.98 |
| C₂H₄ | 0.05 | 0.25 | 0.97 |
| C₃H₈ | 0.00 | 0.16 | 0.77 |

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590 **4. Conclusions**

591 The present work deals with the management of CSS, which is the only by-product from the
592 coffee roasting process. By employing slow pyrolysis, it allows closer biorefinery integration
593 of CSS by exploring the potential uses of the resulting fractions, demonstrating biochar as an
594 adsorbent of mainly cationic and aromatic organic pollutants from water; pyrolysis liquid as
595 caffeine source; and gas fraction as a heat source for biomass drying before pyrolysis
596 treatments. Specifically, pyrolysis of one tonne of CSS at 400 °C would generate 405 kg of
597 biochar and could result in up to 2 kg of caffeine to be extracted from the aqueous pyrolysis

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598 liquid fraction. This study promotes the sustainability, circular economy and zero-waste in
599 the coffee roasting industry.

600

601 **Declaration of competing interest**

602 The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interest or personal
603 relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper

604

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609

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