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(54) Title: TREATED SUBSTRATES AND METHODS OF PRODUCING THE SAME

(57) Abstract: Treated substrates and methods of forming the same are provided. In an exemplary embodiment, a treated substrate includes lignocellulose and a polymer fixed to the lignocellulose to form the treated substrate. The polymer includes a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride and a succinic acid moiety. The treated substrate has a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or less.

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TREATED SUBSTRATES AND METHODS OF PRODUCING THE SAME

PRIORITY CLAIM

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Non-Provisional Application No. 17/647,861, filed January 13, 2022, and U.S. Provisional Application No. 63/138,882, filed on January 19, 2021, which is incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] This description relates to treated substrates and methods of producing the same, and more particularly relates to lignocellulose substrates used in the pulp and paper industry that are treated with polymeric compounds.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Since the earliest days of the modern pulp and paper industry, efforts have been made to expand the property space of wood pulp fibers by attaching ionizable carboxylic acid groups to exposed fiber surfaces. These efforts are inspired by the knowledge that the presence of ionized carboxyl groups promote increased cellulose fiber swelling and flexibility, decreased hornification, increased ion exchange capacity, and increased adsorption capacity and strength during papermaking. The resulting papers can be better absorbents, and stronger both wet and dry.

[0004] Pure cellulose, by definition, does not have carboxylic acid groups. By contrast, wood pulp fibers have some ionized groups (usually carboxyl groups) owing to the presence of hemicellulose and lignin. The total fiber charge content is usually expressed as equivalents of titratable groups per mass of dry fiber, expressed as a positive number although the charges in most cases are negative. The ionizable carboxylic acid groups are titratable, so they can be measured. Bleached kraft pulps have low charge contents of the order 0.01 milliequivalent per gram of dry fiber (meq/g). Unbleached and chemi-thermomechanical pulps (CTMP pulps) typically have an order of magnitude more titratable charge. The topochemical distribution of charges within pulp fibers is usually characterized by two values, the “total charge” and the “surface charge”. The total charge can be measured by conductometric titration or by the adsorption of very low molecular weight

cationic polymers. Surface charge is determined from the adsorption of high molecular weight cationic polymers that cannot access the small pores in the pulp fiber walls.

[0005] Two common ways to introduce carboxyl groups onto and into pulp fiber are: 1) oxidation to give carboxylic acid groups; and, 2) the covalent grafting of charged molecules. Cellulose carboxymethylation with monochloroacetic acid in isopropyl alcohol is a good example of covalent attachment of small, charged molecules that has been frequently described in the literature. Neither oxidation nor small molecule grafting are suitable for implementation in a conventional pulp mill because they involve potentially polluting and expensive low molecular weight organic solvents and/or reagents.

[0006] An alternative approach to increasing fiber surface charge is the attachment of charged polymers. Although it is possible to grow polymers from fiber surfaces, a process called “grafting from,” this approach also involves small molecule organic chemistry and is not suitable for pulp mill application. Surface charge enhancement can give stronger fiber/fiber joints, increased ion-exchange capacities, increased water absorbency and increased functional groups for subsequent surface modification. In spite of these potential advantages, kraft market pulps with enhanced surface properties are not widely marketed because bleached cellulose fibers are barren, relatively unreactive surfaces that are difficult to chemically modify under the aqueous conditions in a pulp mill.

[0007] Surface modified pulp should be amendable to the papermaking process. Bales of dry market pulps should easily disperse into individualized fibers when added to water, a process called repulping in the paper industry. For treated pulps, polymer-enhanced fiber/fiber adhesion can impart high wet strength to dried pulp, preventing rapid repulping in a papermill. For example, maleic anhydride copolymers have been reported to impart high wet strength in both the patent (Jewell, R. A. Method of Increasing the Wet Strength of a Fibrous Sheet. Pat. US 6,579,415 B2, June 17, 2003) and the scientific literature (Xu, G. G.; Yang, C. Q.; Deng, Y. Effects of Poly(vinyl Alcohol) on the Strength of Kraft Paper Crosslinked by a Polycarboxylic Acid. *J. Pulp Paper Sci.* 2001, 27, 14-17; Yang, C. Q.; Xu, Y.; Wang, D. FT-IR Spectroscopy Study of the Polycarboxylic Acids Used for Paper Wet Strength Improvement. *Ind. Eng. Chem. Res.* 1996, 35, 4037-4042) This literature suggests such treatments lead to products that cannot be repulped easily. Pulp with a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or more is difficult to repulp, where pulp

with lower wet tensile indices are more amendable to rapid dispersion in pulpers before the papermaking process. The term “pulp” can refer to both a dried product and a wet suspension which does not have a wet tensile index. Pulp sheets, formed in a laboratory papermaking process, do have a wet tensile index.

[0008] Accordingly, treated substrates and methods of treating such substrates to produce lignocellulose with enhanced surface charges are desirable. In addition, the treated substrates should be amenable to the papermaking process with a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or less. Furthermore, other desirable features and characteristics will become apparent from the subsequent detailed description and the appended claims, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawing and this background.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0009] Treated substrates and methods of forming the same are provided. In an exemplary embodiment, a treated substrate includes lignocellulose and a polymer fixed to the lignocellulose to form the treated substrate. The polymer includes a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride and a succinic acid moiety. The treated substrate has a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or less.

[0010] In another embodiment a treated substrate comprises lignocellulose and a polymer fixed to the lignocellulose to form the treated substrate. The polymer includes poly(ethylene-co-maleic acid), and the treated substrate has a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or less. The treated substrate has a fixed Γ_f value that represents an amount of polymer fixed to the treated substrate measured in milliequivalents of a titratable carboxyl group of the polymer per gram of dry treated substrate. The fixed gamma value is about 0.001 milliequivalents per gram of dry treated substrate or greater.

[0011] In yet another embodiment, a method of forming a treated substrate is provided. The method includes applying a polymer ingredient to an untreated substrate to form a polymer substrate combination. The untreated substrate includes lignocellulose, and the polymer ingredient includes a polymer with a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride and a succinic acid moiety. The polymer is fixed to the untreated substrate to form the treated substrate by heating the polymer substrate combination to a curing temperature of about 100 °C or

greater for a curing time. The heating of the polymer substrate combination is terminated when a wet tensile index of the treated substrate is about 3 newton meters per gram or less, and when a fixed gamma value of the treated substrate is about 0.001 milliequivalents per gram of dry treated substrate or greater. The fixed gamma value represents an amount of polymer fixed to the treated substrate measured in milliequivalents of titratable carboxyl groups of the polymer per gram of dry treated substrate.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The present disclosure will hereinafter be described in conjunction with the following drawing figures, wherein like numerals denote like elements, and:

[0013] FIGS. 1 and 2 are schematic diagram of different embodiments of a process for producing a treated substrate, and the treated substrate; and

[0014] FIGS. 3-11 are charts showing experimental results for various aspects and factors influencing the results of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] The following detailed description is merely exemplary in nature and is not intended to limit the application or uses of the embodiments described. Furthermore, there is no intention to be bound by any theory presented in the preceding technical field, background, brief summary, or the following detailed description.

[0016] A cellulosic untreated substrate is treated with a polymer having succinic moieties to provide surface carboxylic acid moieties, which may be charged. A polymer ingredient is applied to the untreated substrate, and the polymer is fixed to the lignocellulose by heat to produce a treated substrate. The treated substrate, with the fixed polymer, is at least partially dried during the curing process. The polymer is fixed to the lignocellulose, where the polymer may be covalently bonded with an ester bond or physically adhered to the lignocellulose such that the polymer remains with the lignocellulose in subsequent processing, and increases paper strength made from the treated substrate. However, the treated cellulosic substrate tends to have a high wet tensile index, which makes re-pulping of the dried treated substrate difficult. Not to be bound by theory, but it is speculated that the process conditions that fix the polymer to the treated substrate also serve to

convert the succinic moieties from a succinic acid form to a succinic anhydride form, or to crosslink the fixed polymer to form a crosslinked network between fibers at points of fiber-fiber contact. It has been discovered that the polymer may be fixed to the lignocellulose while limiting the increase in the wet tensile index if the curing process is controlled, so extensive conversion of the succinic acid form to the succinic anhydride form is avoided. Many different equipment configurations may be utilized for fixing polymer to the substrate in various embodiments, so a measurable parameter has been determined to indicate the heating conditions in the curing process that provide a high fixation yield and a wet tensile index that is still at acceptably low values. This measurable parameter is a “beta gamma” product of the treated substrate ($\beta\Gamma_a$), defined more fully in the following disclosure.

[0017] Referring to FIG. 1, an untreated substrate **10** includes lignocellulose, where lignocellulose may include cellulose, hemicellulose, lignin, and other materials. Lignocellulose is a plant biomass. In an exemplary embodiment, the untreated substrate **10** primarily comprises wood pulp, and may comprise kraft pulp in some embodiments. As used herein, the term “primarily comprises” means the named component is about 50% by weight of the named material or more, based on a total weight of the named material. The untreated substrate **10** is a raw material for paper production in an exemplary embodiment, and may be formed from wood, cotton or other fiber crops, or other materials known to provide pulp suitable for papermaking processes. In an exemplary embodiment, the untreated substrate **10** may include from about 25 to about 100 weight percent lignocellulose, based on a total weight of the dried untreated substrate **10**. Other materials may also be present in the untreated substrate **10** in various embodiments.

[0018] A polymer ingredient **12** and the untreated substrate **10** are combined in a polymer application process **20** to form a polymer substrate combination **8** in an exemplary embodiment. The polymer ingredient **12** may be applied to the untreated substrate **10** in a dry process, as illustrated in an exemplary embodiment in FIG. 2, or a wet process as illustrated in an exemplary embodiment in FIG. 1, with continuing reference to FIG. 2. In the dry process, a limited amount of polymer ingredient **12** is added to the untreated substrate **10** such that the water content remains low, such as less than about 75% moisture, based on a dry weight of the untreated substrate. Some embodiments that may utilize the dry treatment process include a coating application process, size press application, or spraying.

[0019] In alternate embodiments, the polymer ingredient **12** is added to the untreated substrate **10** in a wet process to form a polymer substrate combination **8**, where the untreated substrate **10** and polymer ingredient **12** include significant amounts of water. Some exemplary embodiments that may utilize the wet process include a headbox of a pulp drying machine, a pulp chest, or into a pulp stream flowing through a pipe. In general, the amount of water in the polymer substrate combination **8** during the polymer application process **20** may vary from about 0% to about 99.9% water, based on a weight of the polymer substrate combination **8** (including any water present in the polymer substrate combination **8**.) The amount of water present in the polymer substrate combination **8** is not critical.

[0020] The polymer ingredient **12** includes a polymer, and may include water and other materials in various embodiments. In the wet process, the untreated substrate **10** may be de-watered before proceeding, such as by filtration or centrifugation. The polymer ingredient **12** may be added to the untreated substrate **10** as a solution, where water is present, but may also be added as a solid or high concentration polymer in alternate embodiments. The pH of the polymer substrate combination **8** is adjusted with appropriate acid(s) and/or base(s), such as hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, and/or sodium hydroxide. The acid(s) and/or base(s) may be added to the polymer ingredient **12** in some embodiments, or the acid(s) and/or base(s) may be added to the untreated substrate **10** or otherwise added to the polymer substrate combination **8** in alternate embodiments. In an exemplary embodiment, the polymer ingredient **12** includes about 2 weight percent polymer, based on a total weight of the polymer ingredient **12**, where water is the primary component of the polymer ingredient (i.e., over about 50 weight percent of the polymer ingredient **12**). However, a wide variety of different concentrations of polymer in the polymer ingredient **12** may be utilized in alternate embodiments as long as at least some of the polymer is present. For example, the polymer ingredient **12** may include from about 0.1 to about 100 weight percent polymer or from about 0.3 to about 50 weight percent polymer, or other concentrations in various embodiments. It is also possible to use solvents other than water, or in addition to water, such as acetone, ethanol, methanol, or a wide variety of other solvents. The polymer may be hydrolyzed when present in the polymer substrate combination **8**, as explained in more detail below.

[0021] The polymer in the polymer ingredient **12** includes a succinic moiety. The succinic moiety can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride moiety and a succinic acid moiety. The

succinic acid moiety (often referred to as the “acid”) includes two carboxylic acid moieties that react with each other to form the anhydride. The two carboxylic acid moieties are separated from each other by two atoms in the succinic acid moiety, where the two atoms are carbon atoms. The



anhydride is in the form of , and each carboxylic acid moiety of the succinic acid moiety is in the form of $C(=O)OX$, wherein X is a hydrogen atom or a compound ionically bound to the $C(=O)O$ group, such as a chloride ion, a sulfate ion, a potassium ion, or other cations. As such, the term “succinic acid moiety” and “carboxylic acid moiety” includes the acid form, where X is a hydrogen atom, and also includes carboxylic acid salts, where X is a cation other than hydrogen. The succinic moiety includes titratable carboxyl groups, where a succinic anhydride moiety or a succinic acid moiety includes two titratable carboxyl groups, and the carboxylic acid moiety includes one titratable carboxyl group. Therefore, the total titratable carboxyl groups of the polymer include the sum of (i) the two carboxyl groups of the succinic anhydride moiety, (ii) the two carboxylic acid moieties of the succinic acid moiety, and (iii) any titratable carboxylic acid moieties of the polymer that are not part of a succinic anhydride moiety or a succinic acid moiety.

[0022] The polymer may have a weight average molecular weight of from about 1 to about 100,000 kilodaltons or more in some embodiments. In an exemplary embodiment, the polymer has a weight average molecular weight of from about 2 to about 10,000 kilodaltons, but in an alternate embodiment the polymer has a weight average molecular weight of from about 20 to about 100 kilodaltons. However, other weight average molecular weights may be utilized in alternate embodiments.

[0023] In an exemplary embodiment, the polymer is a copolymer formed from maleic anhydride or maleic acid with another compound that will polymerize with maleic anhydride or maleic acid. The other compound may include a double bond, such as an alkene, and may include other functional groups, such as acrylics, methacrylics, or other compounds. For example, the polymer may be a copolymer of maleic anhydride, maleic acid, or combinations thereof with a monomer selected from acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, styrenesulfonic acid, vinylsulfonic acid, acrylamidomethylpropane sulfonic acid, diallyldimethylammonium salt, acryloylethyltrimethyl ammonium salt, acryloylethyl dimethylamine, ethacryloylethyltrimethyl ammonium salt,

ethacryloylethyl dimethylamine, methacryloylethyl trimethyl ammonium salt, methacryloylethyl dimethylamine, acrylamidopropyltrimethyl ammonium salt, acrylamidopropyl dimethylamine, methacrylamidopropyl trimethyl ammonium salt, methacrylamidopropyl dimethylamine, vinylformamide, vinylamine, acrylamide, methacrylamide, N-alkylacrylamide, vinylformamide, ethylene, methyl vinyl ether, octadecene, styrene, isobutylene, and mixtures thereof.

[0024] In an exemplary embodiment, the polymer includes poly(ethylene-co-maleic acid) compounds, where the term “maleic acid,” when used in the name of a polymer, refers to a moiety that may be reversibly changed between the succinic acid moiety and the succinic anhydride moiety. The maleic group may provide the polymer with succinic moieties, such as the succinic anhydride and/or the succinic acid moieties, and other co-monomers may optionally also provide succinic moieties and/or carboxylic acid moieties on the polymer. In an exemplary embodiment, the polymer includes poly(ethylene-co-maleic acid), poly(butadiene-co-maleic acid), and combinations thereof. In an alternate embodiment, the polymer includes poly(ethylene-co-maleic acid).

[0025] In an exemplary embodiment, the polymer substrate combination **8** is adjusted to a pH of about 4. In different exemplary embodiments, polymer substrate combination **8** may be adjusted to a pH of from about 2 to about 5, or a pH of about 3 to about 4.5, or a pH of about 3.5 to about 4.5. The low pH (at a value of less than about 5) ensures at least some of the succinic moiety includes succinic acid moieties, which may aid in a reaction with a hydroxy moiety of the lignocellulose to form an ester bond. In some embodiments, the pH of the polymer substrate combination **8** is adjusted by adjusting the pH of the polymer ingredient **12**, where the polymer ingredient **12** is applied as an aqueous solution. In some embodiments, the polymer substrate combination **8** is free of a catalyst. For example, specific catalysts that may not be present (i.e., which may be excluded) include, but are not limited to, alkali metal hypophosphites and phosphites, (i.e., MH_2PO_2 , MH_2PO_3 and M_2HPO_3), where M is an alkali metal; an alkali metal salt of polyphosphoric acid; lithium dihydrogen phosphate; sodium dihydrogen phosphate; potassium dihydrogen phosphate; sodium hypophosphite; sodium salt of dichloroacetic acid; p-toluenesulfonic acid; 1,4-dimethylaminopyridin; 1-methylimidazole; and combinations thereof. As used herein, the term “not present” means the named component is present in a concentration of 0.01 weight percent or less, based on a total weight of the named composition, (i.e., the polymer

substrate combination 8).

[0026] Still referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, the polymer is fixed to the untreated substrate 10 in a curing process 22 to form a treated substrate 14. Not to be bound by theory, but in an exemplary embodiment it is assumed that at least some of the polymer forms an ester linkage with the lignocellulose, where a succinic anhydride of the polymer reacts with a hydroxy group of the lignocellulose to form the ester linkage. Some of the polymer may also be physically fixed to the treated substrate 14 without being covalently bonded. Physically fixed polymer will not wash out of the treated substrate 14 in aqueous solutions, even after agitation and soaking for a period of two days. As such, any polymer physically fixed to the treated substrate 14, but which may not be covalently bonded, remains with the treated substrate 14 during subsequent processing, so the benefits of the polymer are displayed by paper made from the treated substrate 14. Not to be bound by theory, but it is hypothesized that essentially all of the polymer is covalently bonded to the treated substrate 14, and physical fixation may be an insignificant factor. The amount of polymer present may be expressed as the “added polymer,” which includes the total amount of polymer added to the untreated substrate 10, and which may be referred to as an added gamma (Γ_a). The “fixed polymer,” which is the amount of polymer fixed to the treated substrate 14, may be referred to as a fixed gamma (Γ_f). The amount of fixed polymer divided by the added polymer (Γ_f/Γ_a) gives the fixation yield of the curing process 22.

[0027] The curing process 22 includes applying heat to the untreated substrate 10 wetted with the polymer ingredient 12. In an exemplary embodiment, the untreated substrate 10 and polymer ingredient 12 are heated to a curing temperature 16 of at least about 100 degrees Celsius ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) for a curing time 18. In alternate embodiments, the untreated substrate 10 and polymer ingredient 12 are heated to a curing temperature 16 of from about 120 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ to about 500 $^{\circ}\text{C}$, or a temperature of about 150 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ to about 400 $^{\circ}\text{C}$, or about 180 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ to about 300 $^{\circ}\text{C}$. The untreated substrate 10 and polymer ingredient 12 are exposed to the curing temperature 16 for a curing time 18 sufficient to fix the fixed polymer to the treated substrate 14, but where the curing time 18 is brief enough that the wet tensile index remains below the desired value, as described more fully below. In some embodiments, the curing process 22 may be a multi-step curing process 22 that involves two or more separate heating processes (not illustrated), where the untreated substrate 10 and the polymer ingredient 12 are heated in a first step, and then re-heated again in subsequent step(s).

[0028] Reference herein to the “wet tensile index” of the treated substrate **14** refers to a wet tensile index of a handsheet formed from the treated substrate **14**, where a mass of the dry handsheet includes at least about 90 weight percent of the treated substrate **14**, based on a weight of the dry treated substrate **14**. The wet tensile index measurement as used herein is defined as the wet tensile index of a handsheet, so direct measurement of a treated substrate **14** in a form other than a handsheet is not applicable. The handsheet may be formed by a variety of methods, where an exemplary method is described in the “EXAMPLES” section below. As such, the term a “wet tensile index” of a treated substrate **14** is comparable to a wet tensile index of a handsheet formed from the treated substrate **14**.

[0029] A beta gamma product of the treated substrate ($\beta\Gamma_a$) may be useful in determining an appropriate curing time **18**, but the desired value of the $\beta\Gamma_a$ varies with different types of untreated substrates **10** and with different types of polymers. Besides the type of untreated substrate **10** and polymer, the curing time **18** will vary with many other factors, including but not limited to the thickness of the untreated substrate **10** when exposed to the curing temperature **16**, the amount of water absorbed in the untreated substrate **10**, the amount of water freely mixed with the untreated substrate **10**, the rate at which the temperature is brought up to the curing temperature **16**, the type of equipment utilized, and other variables. The curing time **18** will be limited, because the longer the exposure, the greater the wet tensile index, and the greater the beta gamma product.

[0030] Exemplary curing times **18** may be from about 30 seconds to about 2 hours, or from about 30 seconds to about 1 hour, or from about 1 minute to about 30 minutes, or from about 1 minute to about 15 minutes, or from about 1 minutes to about 10 minutes. The curing time **18** includes the sum of all the heating period time in each of heating process of a multi-step curing process **22**. Residual heat in the treated substrate **14** may contribute to further curing once removed from a source of heat, and this residual heat should be included in the process calculation for determining the $\beta\Gamma_a$. In an exemplary embodiment applicable to a commercial papermaking process, the curing time **18** may be the time a wet pulp is in a dryer section of the of a pulp drying machine. The polymer ingredient **12** may be applied to the untreated substrate **10** prior to, within, or after the dryer section of a pulp drying machine. The residence time and/or temperature in the dryer section may be adjusted to provide adequate fixation with a satisfactory wet tensile index. A beta gamma product corresponding to a wet tensile index of 3 newton meters per gram of treated substrate

($\beta\Gamma_{a3}$), as described more fully below, may be determined in a laboratory for a desired type of pulp and a desired polymer, where the $\beta\Gamma_{a3}$ may guide the determination of the residence time and temperature in the dryer section. The treatment process may include other techniques, either in addition or in place of the dryer section, where the untreated substrate **10** may be exposed to infrared driers, heating ovens, or other techniques of applying heat to the untreated substrate **10** and the polymer ingredient **12**.

[0031] Not to be bound by theory, but it is speculated that the succinic moiety converts to the succinic anhydride moiety as the curing time **18** progresses, so longer exposure results in more succinic acid moieties converting to the succinic anhydride moieties. It is also possible that longer curing times **18** produce more covalent bonds linking the polymer, or other mechanisms. In any event, the desired level of wet tensile index result when the curing process **22** is controlled and terminated before the wet tensile index increases too much, such as to a level of greater than about 3 newton meters per gram.

[0032] The fixed gamma (Γ_f) value represents the amount of polymer fixed to the treated substrate **14**, and is measured in milliequivalents of titratable carboxyl groups of the polymer per gram of dry treated substrate (meq/g). All carboxylic acids and anhydrides are titratable, where the succinic anhydride moieties tend to convert to the succinic acid moieties when exposed to water. The lifetime of anhydrides in water is short because they quickly revert to acid, so all carboxylic acid and anhydride groups are measured during the titration, as mentioned above. The treated substrate **14** is titrated to measure the titratable carboxylic groups, so the initial titration includes titratable carboxyl groups attributable to the polymer combined with any titratable carboxyl groups attributable to the untreated substrate **10**. The amount of titratable carboxyl groups on the untreated substrate **10** is measured before the treatment process is initiated, and this value is subtracted from the amount of titratable carboxyl groups found after the treatment process to determine the amount of polymer fixed to the treated substrate **14**, measured in milliequivalents of titratable carboxyl groups of the polymer per gram of dry treated substrate **14**. The milliequivalents of titratable carboxyl groups can be measured by conductometric titration. The treated substrate **14** may be washed before the titration to remove any polymer remaining in the treated substrate **14** that is not fixed.

[0033] To convert meq/g of the polymer to the mass of an exemplary polymer, such as grams of

poly(ethylene-co-maleic anhydride)(PEMA) per g of dry pulp, multiply meq/g by the carbonyl equivalent weight of the polymer, which for PEMA is 63.05 Daltons. The treated substrate **14** should have a certain minimum amount of polymer fixed to it to provide the desired available carboxylic acid groups. Therefore, the fixed gamma (Γ_f) value should be at least about 0.001 meq/g, such as a Γ_f value of from about 0.001 to about 4 meq/g. In an alternate embodiment, the Γ_f value for the treated substrate **14** is from about 0.001 to about 1 meq/g, or about 0.005 to about 0.5 meq/g.

[0034] The wet tensile index of the treated substrate **14** is measured. In an exemplary embodiment, the wet tensile index is measured with a Tappi Standard wet tensile index test, such as TAPPI methods T456 om-10 and/or T494 om-96. Other wet tensile index tests may also be used in alternate embodiments, such as modifications of the TAPPI methods, such as changes in the test strip size or the number of repetitions. In an exemplary embodiment, the wet tensile index for the treated substrate **14** is from about 0 to about 3 newton meters per gram (Nm/g). Reference to the wet tensile index of a treated substrate **14** means the wet tensile index of a handsheet prepared from the treated substrate **14**, as mentioned above. Experience suggests the treated substrate **14** may be repulped without excessive effort if the wet tensile index is about 3 Nm/g or less, but repulping efforts become prohibitive if the wet tensile index is above about 3 Nm/g. However, the treated substrate **14** is easier to repulp if the wet tensile index is about 2.5 Nm/g or less, and even easier to repulp if the wet tensile index is about 2 Nm/g or less. Therefore, in alternate embodiments, the wet tensile index of the treated substrate **14** may be from about 0.5 to about 2.5 Nm/g, or from about 0.5 to about 2.2 Nm/g or less, or from about 0.5 to about 2 Nm/g. Easier repulping of the treated substrate **14** may lead to lower paper manufacturing costs, because less time and effort are required for repulping.

[0035] Beta (β) is the fraction of succinic acid moieties that have been converted to succinic anhydride moieties, which may occur during curing. It is proposed that β is a good single measure of the progress of curing during the treatment process. The β value is a dimensionless fractional value ranging from 0 to 1. Methods for estimating β are described below in the EXAMPLES section. Actual measurement of the number of succinic anhydride moieties divided by the total number of succinic moieties is difficult. The β value has been estimated by a model for the results presented herein, as explained in the EXAMPLES section below, where reaction rate calculations

are used. The β value only represents the succinic moieties converted to the succinic anhydride form, and does not include any carboxylic acid moieties present in the treated substrate **14** that are not part of the succinic moieties, such as any carboxylic acid moieties present on hemicellulose or otherwise present in the untreated substrate **10**, or any carboxylic acid moieties on the polymer that are not part of the succinic moieties. This would include such things as a carboxylic acid moiety on the polymer from an acrylic copolymer. Any carboxylic acid moieties present in the treated substrate **14** that are not part of the succinic moiety are subtracted or removed from the calculation of the beta value.

[0036] The wet tensile index has been shown to be related to the beta gamma product of the treated substrate ($\beta\Gamma_a$), where the $\beta\Gamma_a$ is a result of multiplying the β value (a unitless number) by the Γ_a value, where the Γ_a value is measured in meq/g, as described above. This $\beta\Gamma_a$ can be correlated to the wet strength of the treated substrate **14** resulting from the contributions of (i) the amount of added polymer and (ii) the degree to which the polymer and the treated substrate **14** are cured. The wet strength of the treated substrate **14** is measured and discussed herein as the wet tensile index. If the $\beta\Gamma_a$ product becomes too high, the wet tensile index grows and the treated substrate **14** becomes difficult to repulp. The wet tensile index has been measured for pulp treated while dry in the EXAMPLES section below, but the results are applicable to pulp treated when wet, so the $\beta\Gamma_a$ product indicates if the pulp is re-pulpable despite the method of treatment. The curing process **22** requires heat, so the treated substrate **14** is dried to some extent at the termination of the curing process **22** because water is evaporated and/or boiled off. The value of the $\beta\Gamma_a$, in the units described above, can be determined in a laboratory, and this may simplify determination of the variables in the curing process **22** that produce a treated substrate **14** with a sufficiently low wet tensile index.

[0037] In an exemplary embodiment, the $\beta\Gamma_a$ product is determined for a series of curing conditions and a beta gamma product corresponding to a wet tensile index of 3 newton meters per gram of treated substrate ($\beta\Gamma_{a3}$) can be determined by measuring the $\beta\Gamma_a$ in meq/g corresponding to the wet tensile index of 3 Nm/g for the treated substrate **14**, in the form of a treated laboratory handsheet, as mentioned above. Therefore, $\beta\Gamma_{a3}$ predicts conditions for the curing process **22** that will lead to a wet tensile index of 3 Nm/g. Alternate beta gamma products may be determined for other desired maximum wet tensile indices, such as a wet tensile index of 2 Nm/g, in alternate

embodiments. A laboratory determination of $\beta\Gamma_{a3}$, (or any other beta gamma product for an alternate desired wet tensile index), may be determined for each different combination of pulp and polymer.

[0038] Combinations of strong untreated substrates **10** and high molecular weight polymers tend to have high fixation yields, so control of the curing time **18** and curing temperature **16** to limit the β value helps limit the wet tensile index and the corresponding $\beta\Gamma_a$ to below the desired value. Fixation yields tend to be lower for low molecular weight polymers, so control of the curing time **18** and curing temperature **16** help to increase the fixation yield. The $\beta\Gamma_a$ product is an effective way to balance the competing challenges of different molecular weights of the polymer.

[0039] The following experimental data is provided to demonstrate the details of this disclosure. The graphs in FIGS. 3-12 should be viewed with continuing reference to FIGS. 1 and 2.

EXAMPLES

[0040] Materials. Poly(ethylene-co-maleic anhydride) (PEMA, Mw 100-500 kDa), was repurchased from Sigma-Aldrich®. ZeMac® E60 (PEMA Mw 60 kDa) was supplied by Vertellus®, US. Never-dried northern softwood bleached was provided by ®, Canada. TAPPI standard blotter papers were purchased from Labtech Instruments™ Inc., Canada. All the other chemicals were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich®.

[0041] Testing of the pH of the polymer ingredient **12** during treatment of the untreated substrate **10** demonstrated that pH has a significant influence on the retention of polymer by the treated substrate **14**.

[0042] Polyanhydride Hydrolysis. Polyanhydride copolymers were hydrolyzed to the corresponding polyacids. In a typical hydrolysis experiment, 1 gram of poly(ethylene-co-maleic anhydride), sometimes referred to herein as PEMA, powder was dispersed in 49 grams (g) of 1 millimolar (mM) sodium chloride (NaCl) solution. Most of the experiments herein were conducted in dilute salt to control the ionic strength. After 2 days, the poly(ethylene-co-maleic acid) (PEMAc) solution was clear.

[0043] Handsheet Preparation. Pulp sheets were prepared for polymer treatment (75 grams per square meter (g/m^2)). The pulp sheets were made with never-dried bleached pulp (15 g, dry mass) was diluted to 2 liters (L) with deionized water and disintegrated in a British disintegrator

(Labtech® Instruments Inc., model 500-1) for 15,000 revolutions. 200 milliliters (mL) of 0.75% pulp was added to a semiautomatic sheet former (Labtech® Instruments Inc., model 300-1) where the pulp was further diluted to 0.019% with deionized water before dewatering. Wet handsheets were pressed (Standard Auto CH Benchtop Press, Carver®, Inc., US) between blotter pads with a pressure of 635 kilopascals (kPa) for 5 minutes (min) at room temperature (about 23 °C). The pressed sheets were placed in drying rings to dry overnight at 50% relative humidity and 23 °C.

[0044] Pulp Treatment. In a typical treatment experiment, 3 mL of 2 wt% PEMAc solution at the desired pH was added dropwise across the surface of a dry pulp sheet (~ 1.5 g, 75 g/m²) over about 2 min. The wet pulp sheet was then placed between two blotter papers and rolled with two passes using a Technical Association of Pulp and Paper Industry (TAPPI)-standard brass couch roller (102 millimeter (mm) diameter and 13 kilogram (kg) mass) to remove excess polymer ingredient **12**. The sheet was weighed before treatment and after pressing to facilitate calculating the mass of applied polymer. The treatment sheet was cured between two blotting papers on a speed dryer (Labtech® Instruments Inc.) at the curing temperature **16** for the curing time **18**, such as at 120 °C for 10 min.

[0045] The amount of polymer that could be washed off the pulps was measured to estimate the quantity of polymer remaining fixed to the fibers. Specifically, a pulp sheet was placed in 200 mL of 1 mM NaCl solution in a 250 mL beaker. Not to be bound by theory, but it is possible a carboxyl group of the polymer reacts with a hydroxy group of the ester to form a covalent ester linkage between the polymer and the treated substrate **14**. Some of the polymer may also be physically fixed to the treated substrate **14**, where there is no covalent chemical bond between the polymer and the treated substrate **14**, but the polymer may be adhered or otherwise physically connected to the treated substrate **14** without a covalent bond. After stirring 30 min with a magnetic stirring bar, the pulp was filtered to separate the fibers and the polymer content in the wash solution was measured by conductometric titration. The washing procedure was repeated to ensure there was no polymer in the second wash solution.

[0046] Washing for Fixation Yield. The amount of polymer that could be washed off the pulps was measured to estimate the quantity of polymer remaining fixed to the fibers. Specifically, a pulp sheet was torn into small pieces that were added to 200 mL of 1 mM NaCl solution in a 250 mL beaker. After stirring 30 min with a magnetic stirring bar, the pulp was filtered to separate the

fibers. The washing procedure was repeated. The polymer contents of the washing solutions were measured to calculate the PEMAc bonding yield based on the wash solution. The PEMAc content of the fibers was also directly measured by conductometric titration. In cases where the wet strength was high, the pulp sheets were repulped using a NutriBullet® Baby Bullet® blender followed by a standard disintegrator (30,000 revolutions (r)) to separate the pulp into individual fibers.

[0047] Polyelectrolyte Titration The quantity of fixed PEMAc on exterior fiber surfaces was measured by polyelectrolyte titration. To 40 mL poly(diallyldimethylammonium chloride) (PDADMAC) (1.177 meq/L) in 1mM NaCl was added approximated 0.1 g dry mass of wet, washed PEMAc grafted pulp. The suspension was mixed with a magnetic stirring bar for 30 min at pH 10 to facilitate PDADMAC adsorption. The suspensions were then filtered on a 4.7 cm Büchner funnel fitted with Whatman® 5 qualitative filter paper. The unabsorbed PDADMAC concentration in the filtrate was determined by titration with potassium polyvinylsulfate (PVSK) (1 meq/L). The endpoint was determined with a Mütek® PCD-03 particle charge detector. The charge of the starting cellulosic substrate was subtracted to determine the quantity of fixed PEMAc.

[0048] Wet Strength Measurements. Paper specimens (1.5 cm × 14 cm) were cut from conditioned paper sheets and then were soaked in 1 mM NaCl for 5 min before testing. Excess water was removed by slight pressing between two blotter papers. The tensile strength was measured with an Instron® 4411 universal testing system fitted with a 50 newton load cell (Instron® Corporation, Canton, MA) generally following the TAPPI methods T46 om-10 and T494 om-96. The crosshead speed was 25 millimeters per minute (mm/min). Each type of paper was measured at least three times.

[0049] PEMAc Quantification. Conductometric titration was used to measure PEMAc concentrations in solutions and on pulp fibers. To a wet pulp sample (dry mass 0.2 g) was added 90 mL, 4 mM NaCl solution. The initial pH was adjusted below 3.0 by adding 1 M hydrochloric acid (HCl). 0.1 M NaOH solution was added at the rate of 0.05 mL/min up to pH 11.5 by using an auto titrator (MANTECH, Benchtop Titrator Model, MT-10). Titrations were repeated with fresh samples at least three times. The volume of base consumed by the weak carboxyl groups was determined by the points of intersection of three trendlines going through the linear sections of the

titration curve, as shown in an example in FIG. 3.

[0050] FIGS. 4 and 5 show the fixation yield dependencies on the pH of the treatment polymer ingredient **12**, the curing temperature **16**, and PEMAc molecular weight. H-PEMAc refers to high molecular weight poly(ethylene-co-maleic acid) with a molecular weight of from about 100 to about 500 kilodaltons (kDa), and L-PEMAc refers to low molecular weight poly(ethylene-co-maleic acid) with a molecular weight of about 60 kDa. FIG. 4 shows the treatment yield as a function of treatment solution pH and the PEMAc molecular weight for pulp sheets cured at 23 °C for greater than 12 hours. At this temperature, no chemical conversion of succinic acid moieties to succinic anhydride moieties is expected. Physical fixation is the only operative mechanism. The fixation yield for H-PEMAc (100-500 kDa) was about 50% from pH 2 -11 with a peak of about 70 at pH 4. The H-PEMAc is shown with square data points, and the L-PEMAc is shown with circular data points throughout the Experimental Data graphs. The corresponding fixation yields for pulps cured at 120 °C for about 10 minutes are shown in FIG. 5. Note that the high yield samples could not be repulped for titration so the yields were based on wash water measurements. When the treatment solution is acidic, the yields are high and independent of PEMAc molecular weight suggesting chemical curing. Whereas with basic solutions the H-PEMAc yield levels at ~ 0.4 due to physical fixation, whereas no L-PEMAc remained on the washed pulp.

[0051] The Influence of Curing Time and Temperature. FIGS. 6 and 7 shows the influences of curing time **18**, curing temperature **16**, and PEMAc molecular weight, on the PEMAc content of washed fibers. FIG. 6 illustrates a constant curing temperature **16** of about 120 °C, with the curing time **18** shown on the X axis, and FIG. 7 shows a constant curing time **18** of 10 minutes with the curing temperature **16** shown on the X axis. Curing of the H-PEMAc is illustrated in FIGS. 6 and 7, with the solid boxes indicating pH 4 polymer ingredient **12** and the open boxes indicating pH 8 polymer ingredient **12**. With pH 4 treatment, most of the added polymer was fixed after 10 min curing at 120 °C, therefore increasing the curing time **18** or curing temperature **16** had little impact. L-PEMAc gave much lower polymer contents than did H-PEMAc. Physical fixation was far less effective with L-PEMAc.

[0052] FIG. 8 shows the influence of curing temperature **16** on wet strength. The solid boxes indicate pH 4 polymer ingredient **12** was used, and the open boxes indicate pH 8 polymer ingredient **12** was used, where the curing time **18** was 10 minutes, and the variable curing

temperature **16** is shown on the X axis. Wet strength increases with curing temperature **16**. The numbers beside the data points are the corresponding fixation yields.

[0053] FIG. 9 shows the wet strength of cured pulp sheets treated at pH 4 as functions of the corresponding fixation yield. The scattered points in FIG. 9 do not reflect noise or experimental error but instead result from using a range of curing times **18**, curing temperatures **16**, PEMAc dosages, and PEMAc molecular weights. As noted above, the circular shaped data points are for the L-PEMAc, and the square shaped data points are for the H-PEMAc. The ideal result is no wet strength and a fixation yield of 1 (the lower right-hand corner of FIG. 9). Pulp sheets with WTIs below about 2 Nm/g were easily repulpable in a standard laboratory disintegrator whereas those reaching 3 Nm/g required more aggressive redispersion. For the high molecular weight H-PEMAc, all but one of the fixation yields are high. The major challenge with H-PEMA was maintaining low WTI and thus repulpability. By contrast, with L-PEMAc, the WTIs were low, however, many of the fixation yields were too low. Focusing on yields greater than 0.8 and WTIs < 3 Nm/g we see it is possible to obtain high yields and low wet strengths. However, the data portrayal in FIG. 9 says nothing about the amounts of added polymer, the curing temperatures **16**, or the curing times **18**.

[0054] The experimental results in FIG. 9 reveal curing conditions do exist yielding both high fixation yields and low WTIs (i.e., good repulpability). However, there are many adjustable parameters in our treatment studies including the molecular weight of the polymer, the amount of polymer applied to the untreated substrate **10**, the pH of the polymer ingredient **12** applied to the untreated substrate **10**, curing time **18**, and curing temperature **16**. Not to be bound by theory, but one potential reason for the WTI to increase during the curing is the conversion of carboxylic acids of the succinic acid moiety converting to the corresponding succinic anhydrides. The extent of anhydride formation from the corresponding succinic acid moieties is defined herein as the dimensionless parameter beta, with a value ranging from 1 to 0. Beta is the fraction of succinic acid moieties that have been converted to succinic anhydride moieties, which may occur during curing. It is proposed that beta is a good single measure of the progress of curing during heating treated pulp.

[0055] In the absence of accurate measurements of beta in our cured pulp sheets, Equations 1 and 2, below, were used to estimate beta values corresponding to the various curing conditions.

Succinic anhydride formation from succinic acid moieties is a unimolecular, first-order reaction. Therefore beta should depend upon curing time **18** and curing temperature **16** but should be independent of the mass fraction of PEMAc (or other polymer) in the pulp sheet. The rate expression for beta as a function of curing time **18**, t , is given in Equation 1, where k_r is the rate constant for anhydride formation. The temperature dependence of the rate constant is given by the Arrhenius expression, shown in Equation 2. To apply Equation 1, the pulp temperature may be determined as a function of curing time **18** so k_r can be expressed as a function of time in Equation 1. In the absence of detailed temperature/time data during curing, we assumed isothermal curing and beta was evaluated by Eq. 3. Two other assumptions used were the reaction was irreversible and the rates of water transport out of the pulp were not rate determining. These two assumptions are reasonable because, in the experiments, the beta values were low (most far less than 0.2) and the polymer deposits on the substrate surfaces were thin..

Equation 1.
$$\beta = 1 - \exp\left(-\int_0^t k_r t\right)$$

Equation 2.
$$k_r = A \cdot \exp\left(\frac{-E_a}{RT}\right)$$

Equation 3.
$$\beta = 1 - \exp(-k_r t)$$

[0056] For PEMAc films (no pulp present) dried from pH 4 solutions, the activation energy used was $E_a = 50$ kJ/mol, and the pre-exponential factor was $A = 1.24 \times 10^3$ s⁻¹. Published values for the activation energy of PEMA is 56 kJ/mole and for poly(vinyl methyl ether-alt-maleic anhydride) is 78.7 kJ/mole. Beta is a useful parameter to describe the extent of curing because it encompasses both the curing time **18** and curing temperature **16**. However, in our experimental data, beta is an estimation of anhydride formation kinetics, as opposed to an actual measurement of the anhydride formation kinetics. It is anticipated that the wet tensile index of a PEMAc treated pulp sheet will increase with the product of the applied polymer content, the fixed gamma (measured in meq/g), the applied gamma, and the extent of curing, beta.

[0057] FIG. 10 is a log/log plot showing experimental H-PEMAc treated pulp wet tensile indices

as functions of the beta gamma product. The applied gamma (Γ_a) values were determined based on the added polymer, as opposed to the fixed polymer, and the beta values were obtained by applying the experimental curing times **18** and curing temperatures **16** to Equation 3, shown above. The open boxes correspond to experiments with very high dosages of applied polymer, where the Γ_a was > 0.4 meq/g or equivalently > 25 kg of added PEMA per metric tonne of dry pulp. The closed boxes correspond to experiments where the Γ_a value was less than or equal to 0.4 meq/g. The dashed straight line fitted to the data points in FIG. 10 suggests a power-law relationship between the wet tensile index and the beta gamma product. The empirical fitted line was calculated by Equation 4, below, where WTI stands for wet tensile index, where $b = 0.6$, and $a = 70$ Nm/g. The horizontal line in FIG. 10 denotes where $WTI = 3$ Nm/g. Most of the high dose results (i.e., the open boxes) fell below the power-law line. The power-law line in FIG. 10 fits the wet tensile indices versus the beta gamma product under conditions where the fixation yield is very high and where $\Gamma < 0.4$ meq/g. FIG. 10 yields $\beta\Gamma_{a3} = 0.052$ meq/g corresponding to a wet tensile index of 3 Nm/g, corresponding to the intersection point of the 3 Nm/g horizontal line with the power-law curve. This $\beta\Gamma_{a3}$ value can be used as design tool for choosing curing conditions in larger scales treatment scenarios. The corresponding $\beta\Gamma_{a2}$ value is 0.0027 meq/g reflecting a more conservative design target, where $\beta\Gamma_{a2}$ represents the $\beta\Gamma_a$ value corresponding to a wet tensile index of 2 Nm/g.

Equation 4.
$$WTI = a \cdot \frac{\beta\Gamma}{meq/g}^b$$

[0058] Reference is made to FIG. 11 that compares wet tensile index versus $\beta\Gamma_a$ for three cases: a strong pulp with high molecular polymer (dashed line closed to Y-axis, bleached softwood pulp + H-PEMA), a strong pulp with a lower molecular weight polymer (circles, bleached softwood pulp + L-PEMA), and a weaker pulp with a high molecular weight polymer (diamonds, bleached hardwood pulp + H-PEMA). All three combinations display power-law behaviors, each with a slope of 0.6. However, the weaker combinations are shifted to right, giving higher $\beta\Gamma_{a2}$ and $\beta\Gamma_{a3}$ values. It is recommended that laboratory handsheet studies be conducted to generate figures corresponding to FIGS. 10 and 11 for each new combination of polymer and substrate, so $\beta\Gamma_{a2}$ and/or $\beta\Gamma_{a3}$ values can be determined for the specific polymer and substrate combination. The table

below summarizes these values for FIG. 11.

Table 1

Polymer	Pulp	a (Nm/g)	b	$\beta\Gamma_2$ (meq/g)	$\beta\Gamma_3$ (meq/g)
H-PEMAc	Softwood	70	0.6	0.0027	0.0052
L-PEMAc	Softwood	45	0.6	0.0056	0.011
H-PEMAc	Hardwood	30	0.6	0.011	0.022

The power-law coefficients for Eq. 4 and the corresponding repulpability limits $\beta\Gamma_{a2}$ giving wet tensile index = 2 Nm/g and $\beta\Gamma_{a3}$ for 3 Nm/g extracted from the power-law lines plotted in FIG.11.

[0059] While the present disclosure has been described with respect to particular embodiments thereof, it is apparent that numerous other forms and modifications will be obvious to those skilled in the art. The processes and products described in this application generally should be construed to cover all such obvious forms and modifications, which are within the true scope of the present disclosure.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A treated substrate comprising:
lignocellulose;
a polymer fixed to the lignocellulose to form the treated substrate, wherein the polymer comprises a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride moiety and a succinic acid moiety, wherein the treated substrate has a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or less.
2. The treated substrate of claim 1, wherein:
the polymer comprises a copolymer of maleic anhydride, maleic acid, or combinations thereof with a monomer selected from the group of acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, styrenesulfonic acid, vinylsulfonic acid, acrylamidomethylpropane sulfonic acid, diallyldimethylammonium salt, acryloylethyltrimethyl ammonium salt, acryloylethyl dimethylamine, ethacryloylethyltrimethyl ammonium salt, ethacryloylethyl dimethylamine, methacryloylethyl trimethyl ammonium salt, methacryloylethyl dimethylamine, acrylamidopropyltrimethyl ammonium salt, acrylamidopropyl dimethylamine, methacrylamidopropyl trimethyl ammonium salt, methacrylamidopropyl dimethylamine, vinylformamide, vinylamine, acrylamide, methacrylamide, N-alkylacrylamide, vinylformamide, ethylene, methyl vinyl ether, octadecene, styrene, isobutylene, and mixtures thereof.
3. The treated substrate of claim 1, wherein:
the polymer is selected from poly(ethylene-co-maleic acid), poly(butadiene-co-maleic acid), and combinations thereof.
4. The treated substrate of claim 1, wherein the polymer is a homopolymer formed from maleic acid or maleic anhydride.
5. The treated substrate of any of claims 1 to 4, wherein:

a fixed gamma (Γ_f) value represents an amount of the polymer fixed to the treated substrate measured in milliequivalents of a titratable carboxyl group of the polymer per gram of dry treated substrate, and wherein the Γ_f value is at least about 0.001 milliequivalents per gram of the dry treated substrate.

6. The treated substrate of any of claims 1 to 4, wherein:
the treated substrate comprises wood pulp.
7. The treated substrate of any of claims 1 to 4, wherein:
the treated substrate comprises kraft pulp.
8. The treated substrate of any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the polymer has a weight average molecular weight of from about 2 to about 10,000 kilodaltons.
9. The treated substrate of any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the wet tensile index of the treated substrate is about 2 newton meters per gram or less.
10. A method of forming a treated substrate, the method comprising the steps of:
applying a polymer ingredient to an untreated substrate to form a polymer substrate combination, wherein the untreated substrate comprises lignocellulose, the polymer ingredient comprises a polymer, and wherein the polymer comprises a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride moiety and a succinic acid moiety;
fixing the polymer to the untreated substrate to form the treated substrate by heating the polymer substrate combination to a curing temperature of about 100 degrees Celsius or greater for a curing time; and
terminating the heating of the polymer substrate combination when a wet tensile index of the treated substrate is about 3 newton meters per gram or less, and when a fixed gamma (Γ_f) value of the treated substrate is about 0.001 milliequivalents per gram of dry treated substrate or greater, wherein the Γ_f value represents an amount of polymer fixed to the treated substrate

measured in milliequivalents of titratable carboxyl groups of the polymer per gram of dry treated substrate.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising:
adjusting a pH of the polymer substrate combination to from about 2 to about 5, and
wherein fixing the polymer to the untreated substrate comprises heating the polymer ingredient and the untreated substrate to the curing temperature, wherein the curing temperature is about 150 degrees Celsius or greater.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein:
terminating the heating of the treated substrate when a beta gamma product of the treated substrate ($\beta\Gamma_a$) is less than or equal to a beta gamma product corresponding to the wet tensile index of 3 newton meters per gram of the treated substrate ($\beta\Gamma_{a3}$), where beta (β) is a total succinic anhydride moiety of the polymer divided by a total succinic moiety of the polymer, and an applied gamma (Γ_a) of the treated substrate is the amount of polymer added to the untreated substrate in milliequivalents per gram of dry treated substrate.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein:
terminating the heating comprises producing the treated substrate wherein the wet tensile index of the treated substrate is about 2 newton meters per gram or less.

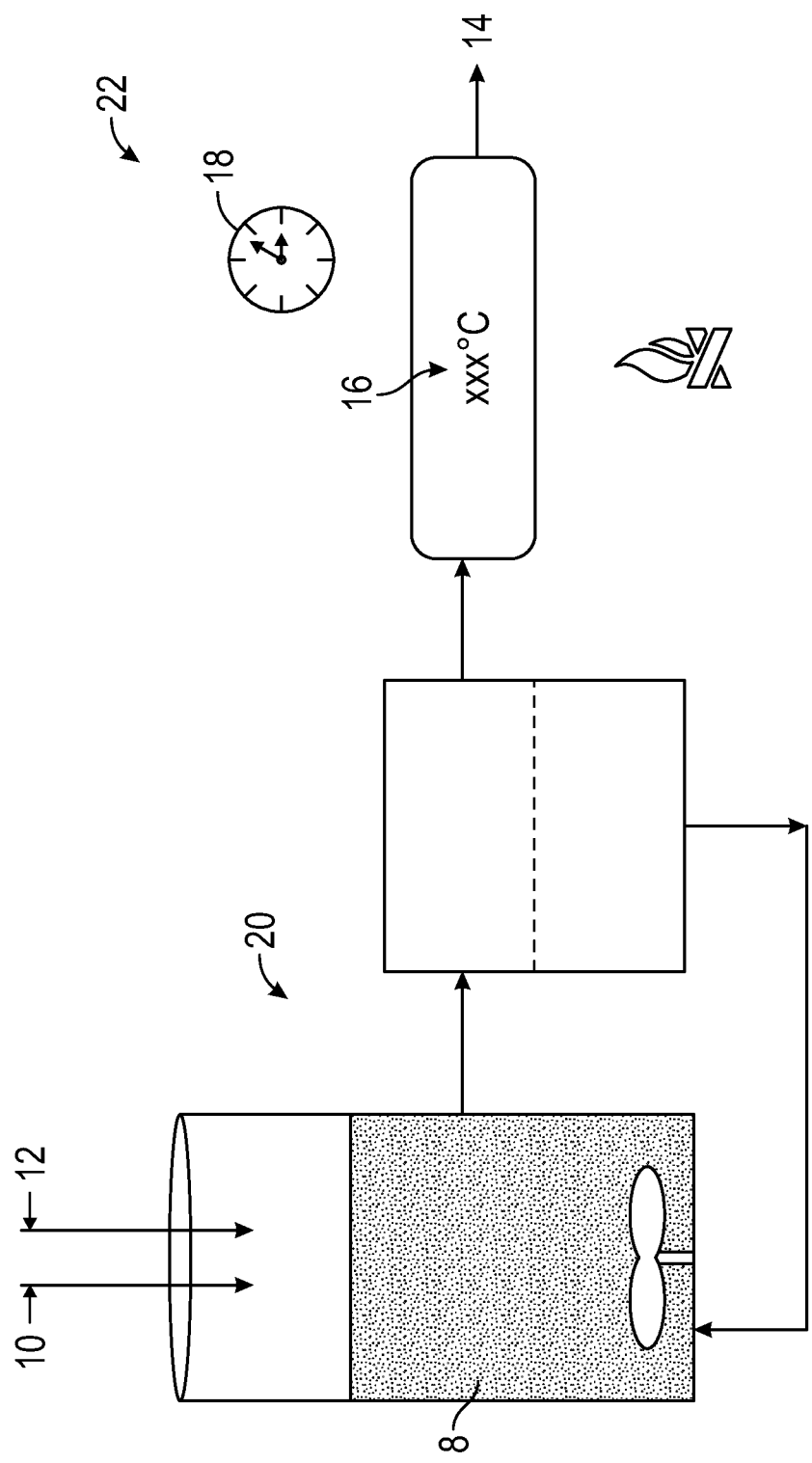


FIG. 1

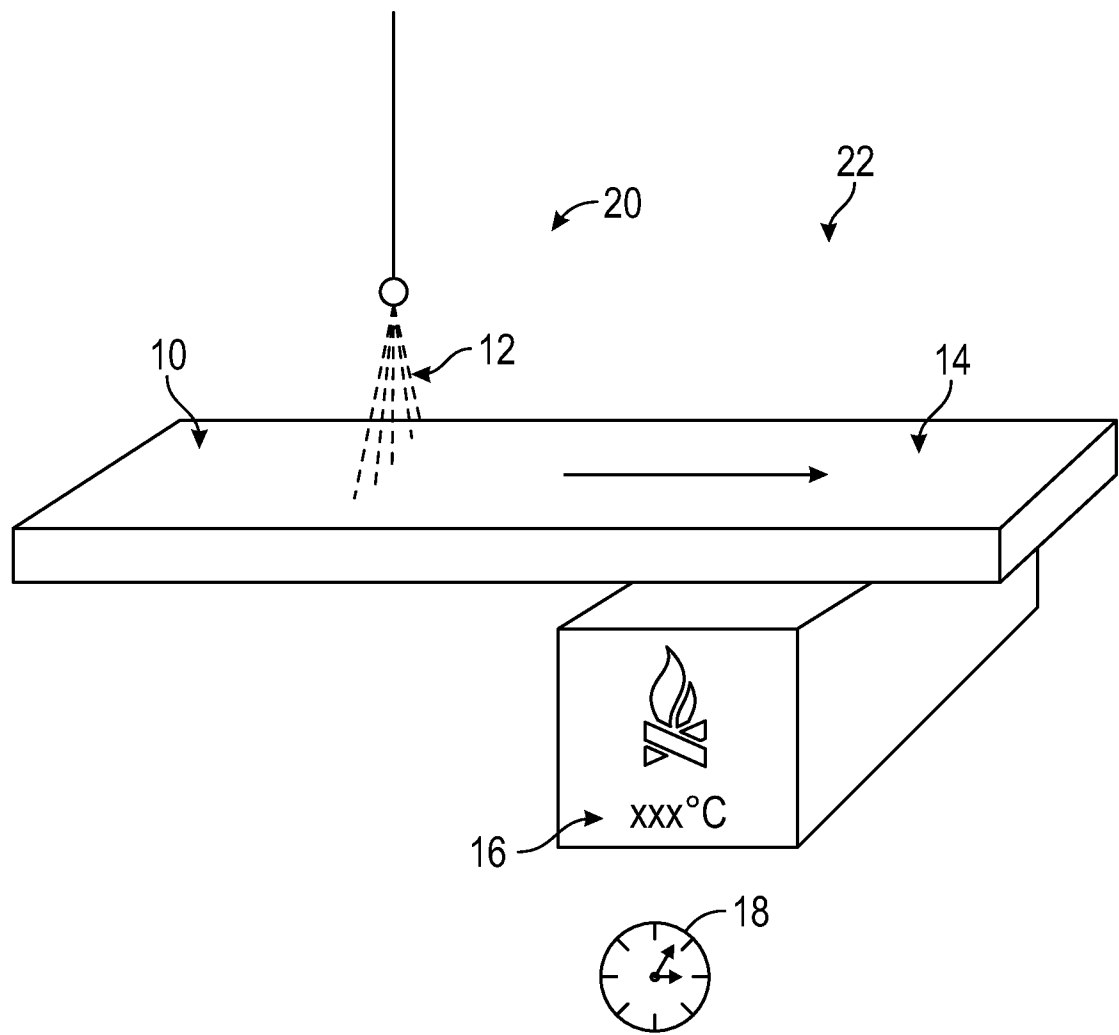


FIG. 2

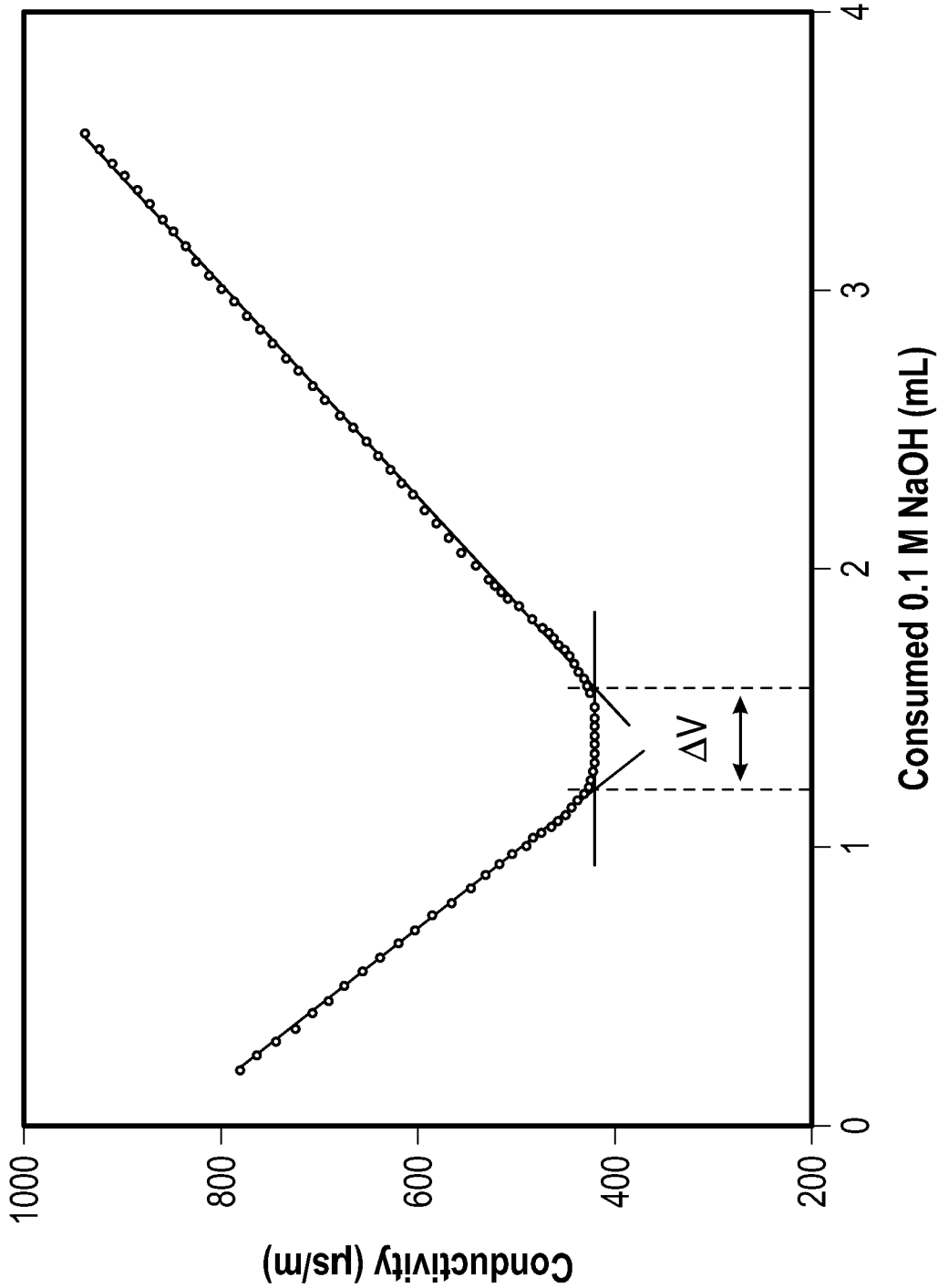


FIG. 3

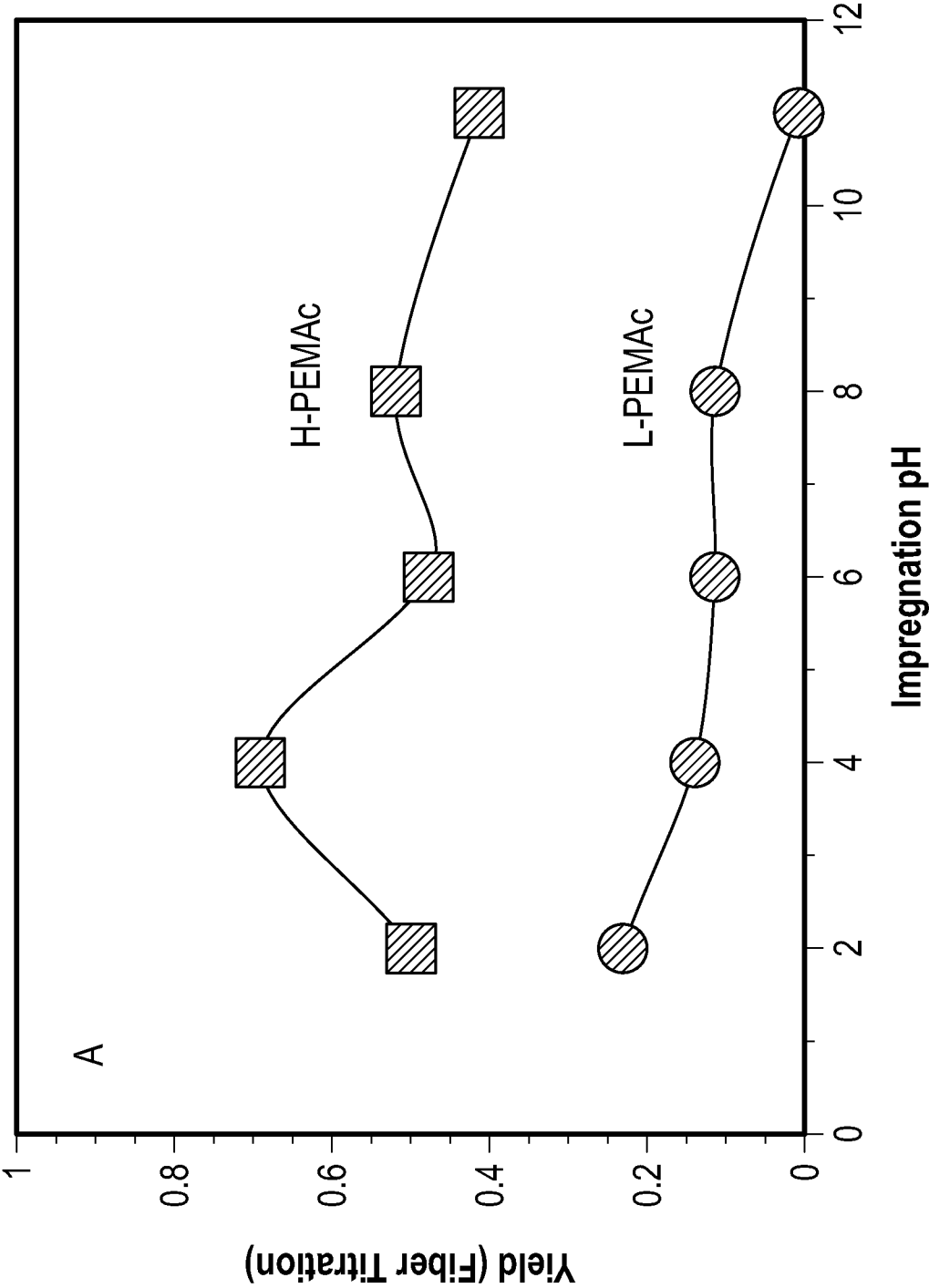


FIG. 4

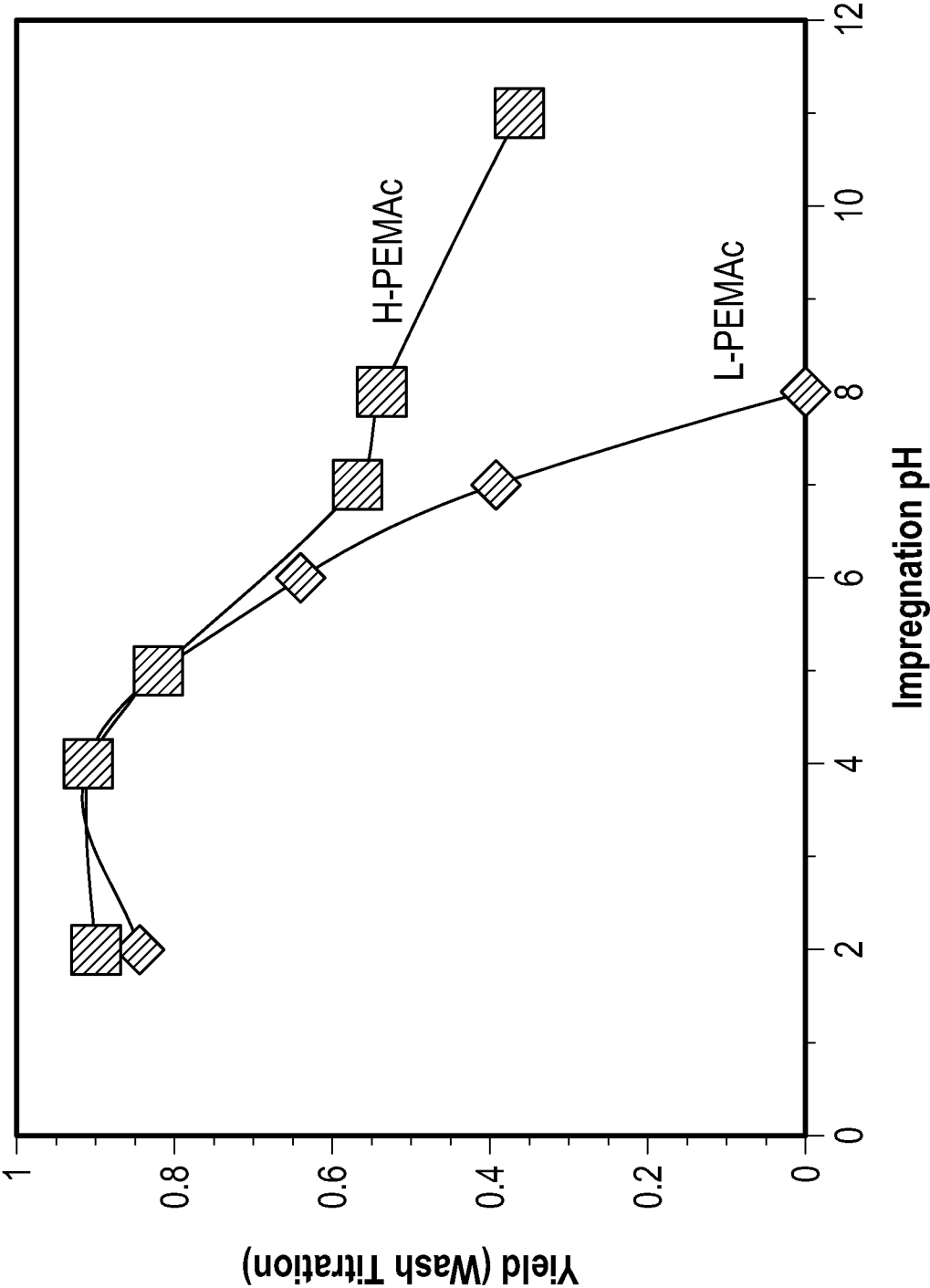


FIG. 5

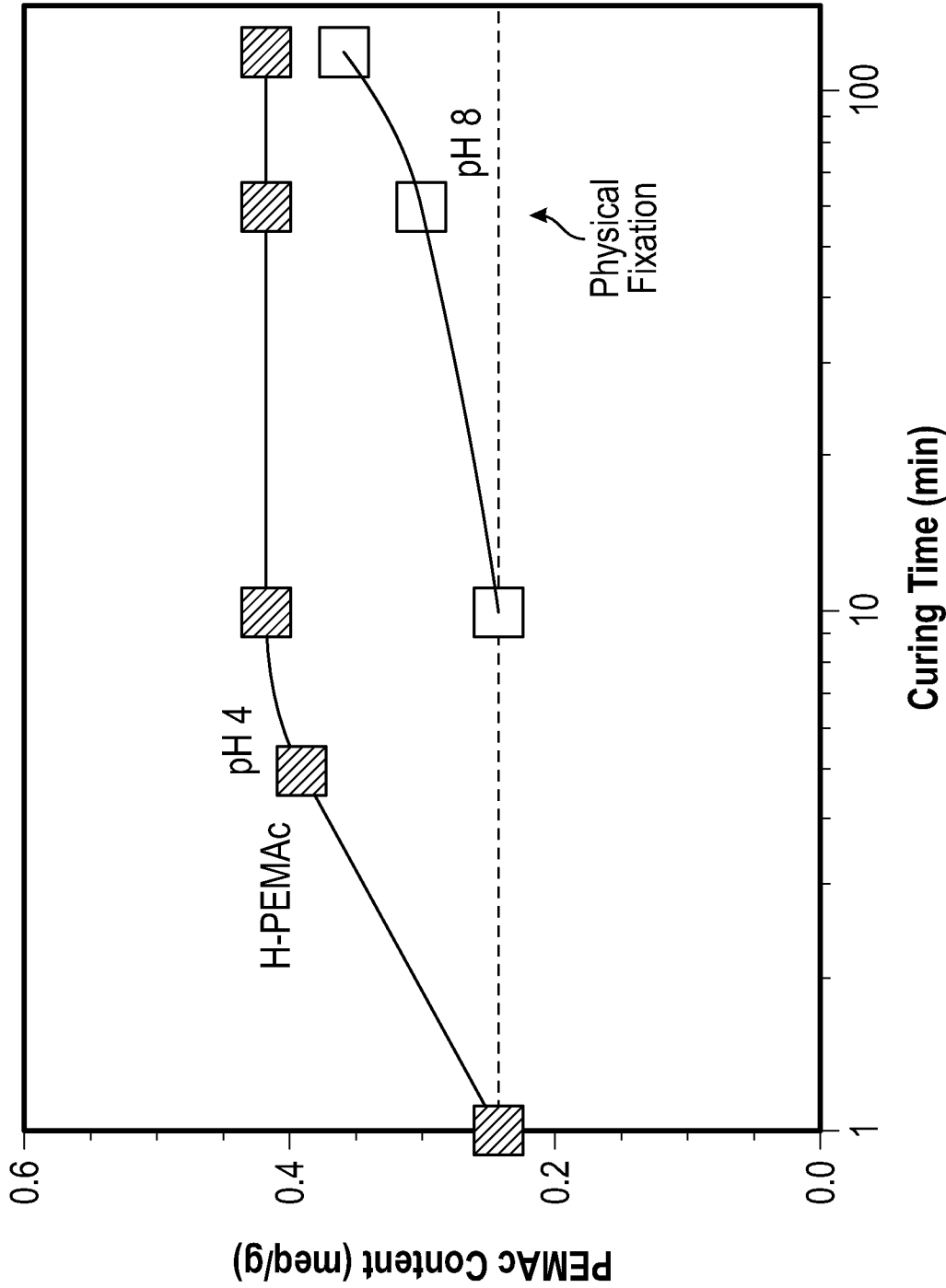


FIG. 6

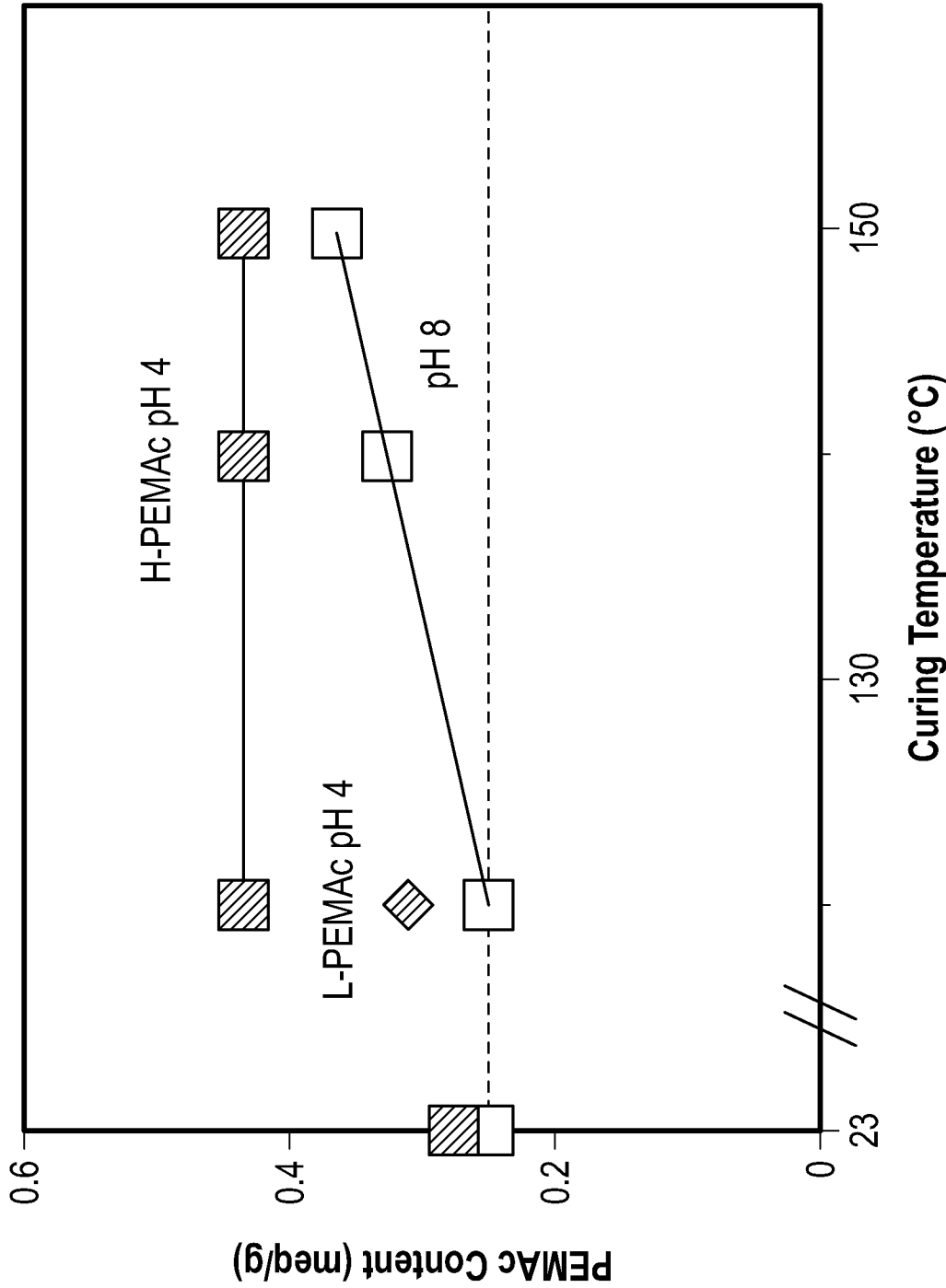


FIG. 7

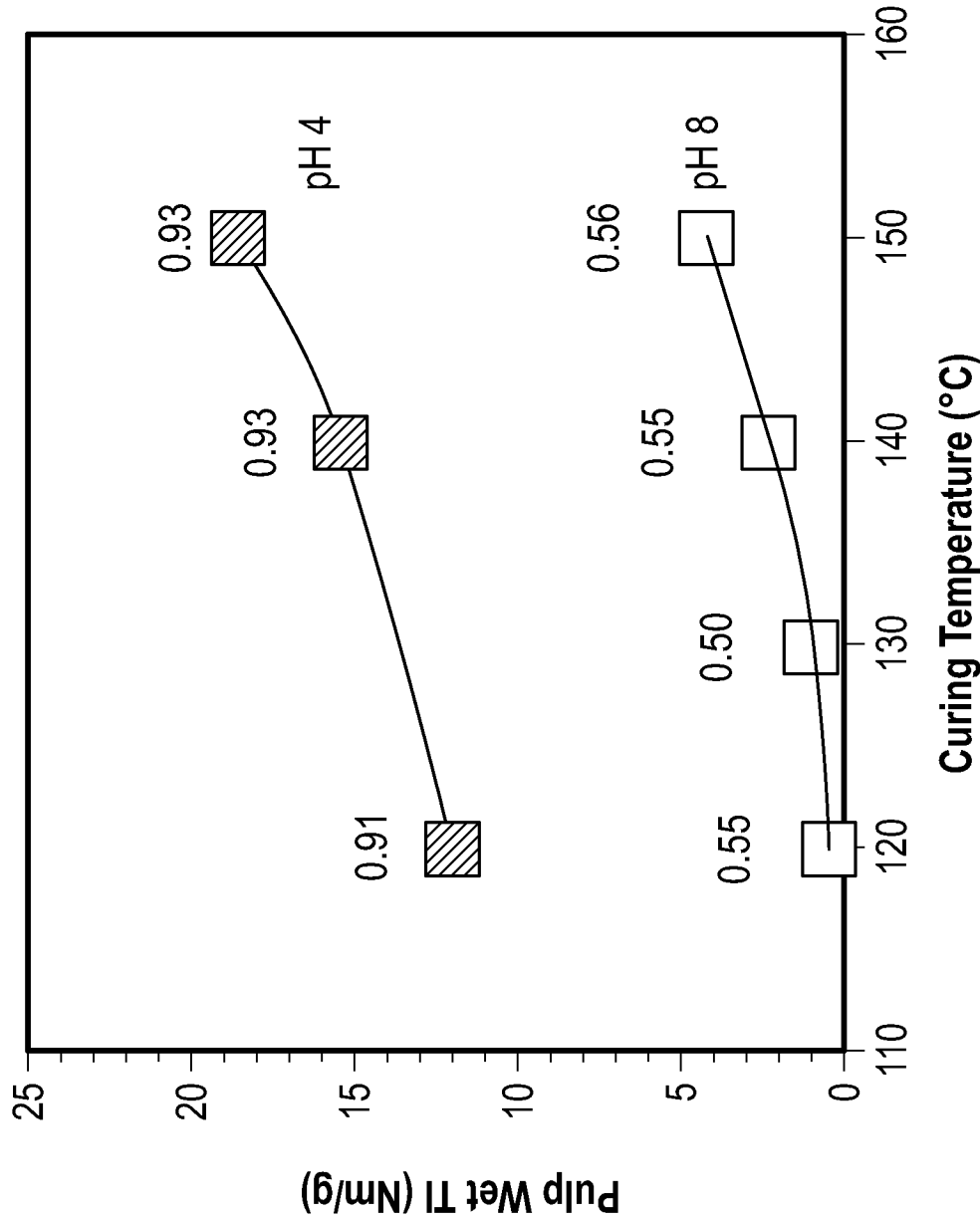


FIG. 8

9/11

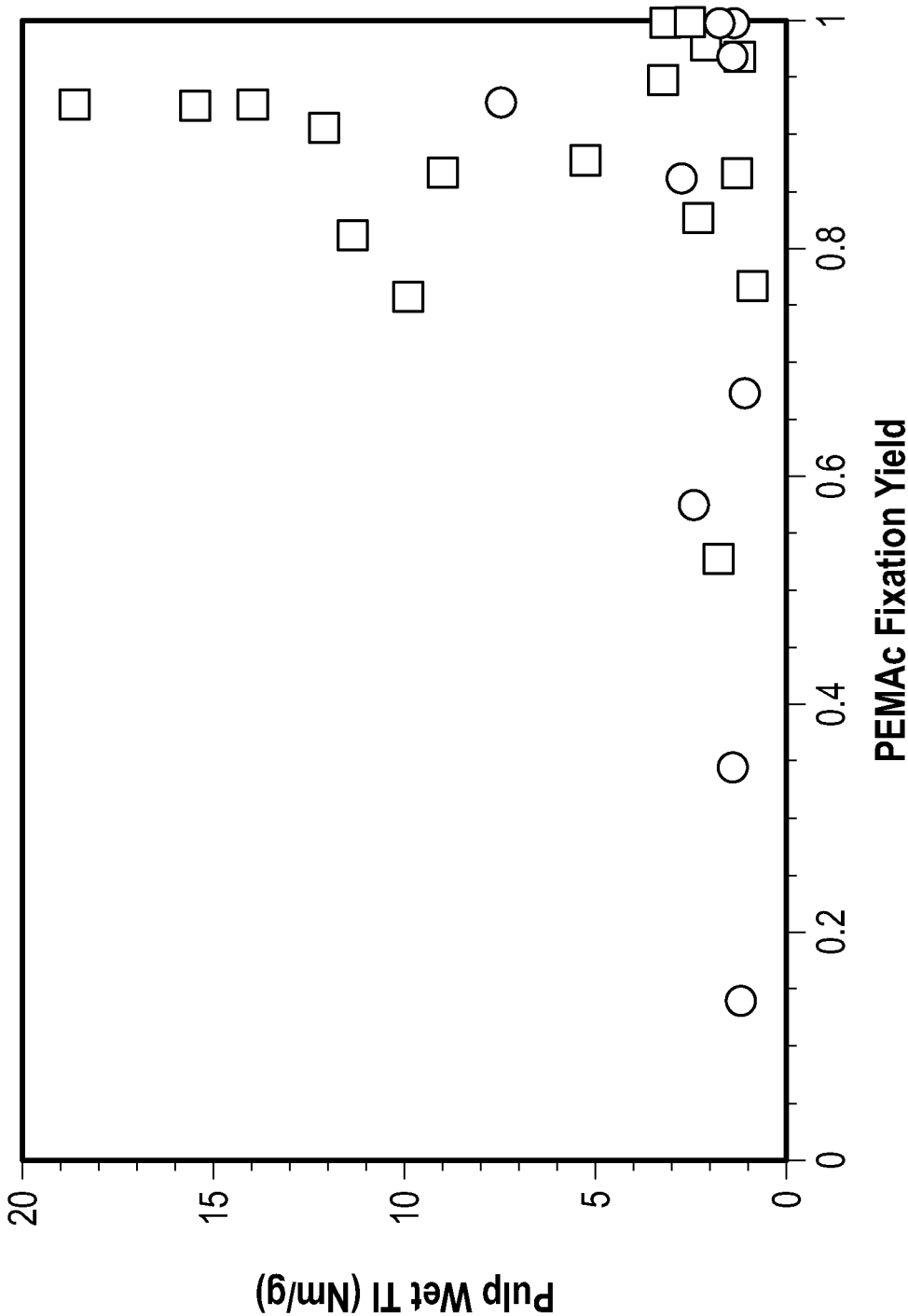
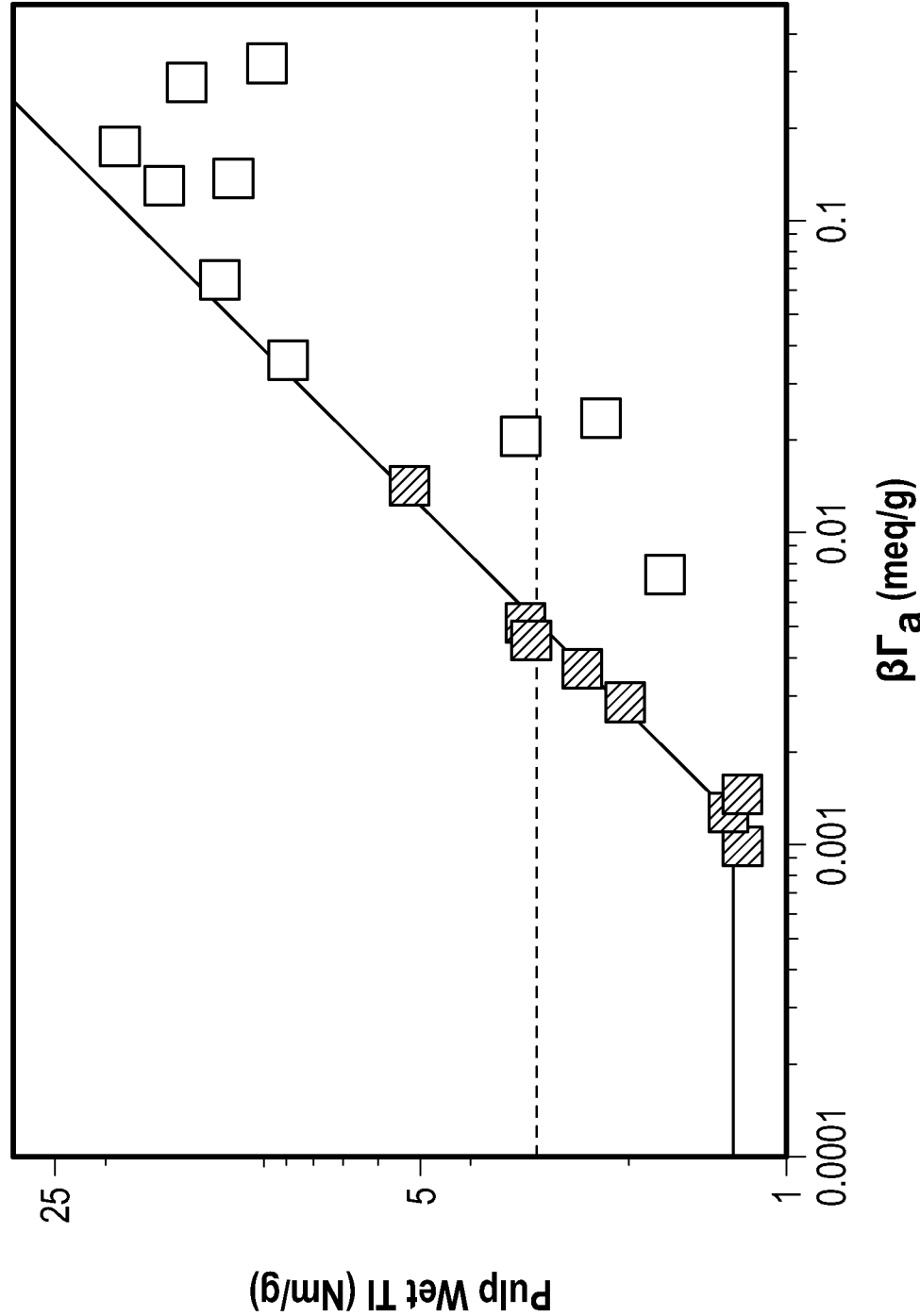


FIG. 9



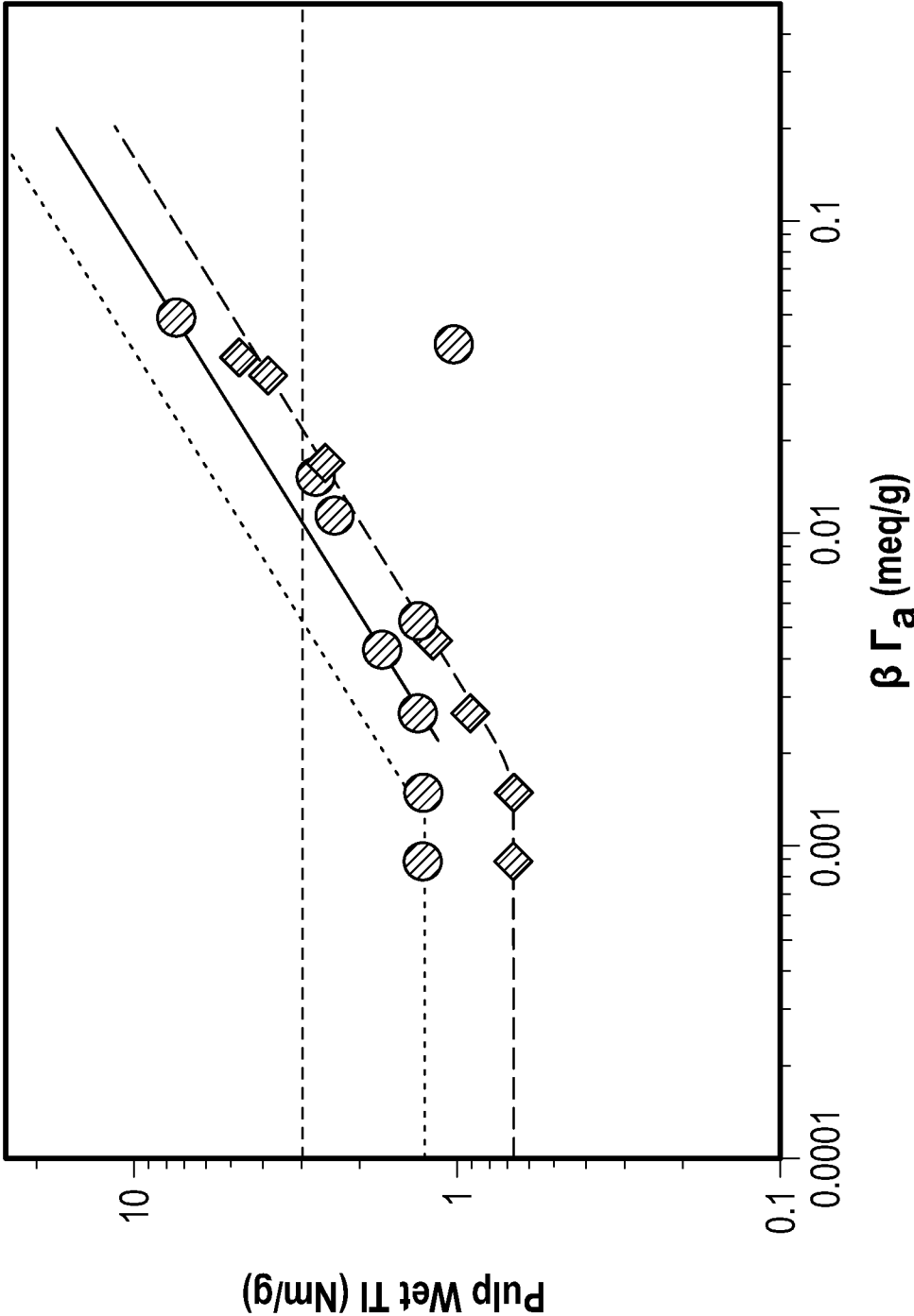


FIG. 11

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US 22/70216

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC - B27N 3/00; C08J 5/18; C08F 283/00 (2022.01)

CPC - B27N 3/002; B32B 21/13; B32B 21/14

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

See Search History document

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

See Search History document

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

See Search History document

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2004/118540 A1 (Garnier et al.) 24 June 2004 (24.06.2004) para [0005]-[0006], para [0014], para [0021], para [0024], para [0026], para [0039]-[0040], para [0058]-[0059], para [0110],	1-9
A	US 2011/060148 A1 (O'Connor et al.) 10 March 2011 (10.03.2011) para [0058],	1-9
A	US 2011/190423 A1 (Varnell et al.) 04 August 2011 (04.08.2011) entire document	1-9
A	US 2005/048207 A1 (Gutowski et al.) 03 March 2005 (03.03.2005) entire document	1-9
A	US 2012/183723 A1 (Srinivasan et al.) 19 July 2012 (19.07.2012) entire document	1-9
A	US 2003/131962 A1 (Lindsay et al.) 17 July 2003 (17.07.2003) entire document	1-9

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

04 March 2022

Date of mailing of the international search report

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Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US 22/70216

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:
-----see supplemental box-----

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of additional fees.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☒ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:
1-9

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.
- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

Bx. III (Lack of Unity)

This application contains the following inventions or groups of inventions which are not so linked as to form a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1. In order for all inventions to be searched, the appropriate additional search fees must be paid.

Group I: Claims 1-9 is directed toward a treated substrate comprising: lignocellulose; a polymer fixed to the lignocellulose to form the treated substrate, wherein the polymer comprises a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride moiety and a succinic acid moiety, wherein the treated substrate has a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or less.

Group II: Claims 10-13 is directed toward a method of forming a treated substrate, the method comprising the steps of: applying a polymer ingredient to an untreated substrate to form a polymer substrate combination, wherein the untreated substrate comprises lignocellulose, the polymer ingredient comprises a polymer, and wherein the polymer comprises a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride moiety and a succinic acid moiety; fixing the polymer to the untreated substrate to form the treated substrate by heating the polymer substrate combination to a curing temperature of about 100 degrees Celsius or greater for a curing time; and terminating the heating of the polymer substrate combination when a wet tensile index of the treated substrate is about 3 newton meters per gram or less, and when a fixed gamma (Ff) value of the treated substrate is about 0.001 milliequivalents per gram of dry treated substrate or greater, wherein the Ff value represents an amount of polymer fixed to the treated substrate.

The inventions listed as Groups I-II do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons:

Special Technical Features:

The invention of Group II includes the special technical feature of a method of forming a treated substrate, the method comprising the steps of: applying a polymer ingredient to an untreated substrate to form a polymer substrate combination; fixing the polymer to the untreated substrate to form the treated substrate by heating the polymer substrate combination to a curing temperature of about 100 degrees Celsius or greater for a curing time; and terminating the heating of the polymer substrate combination when a wet tensile index of the treated substrate is about 3 newton meters per gram or less, and when a fixed gamma (Ff) value of the treated substrate is about 0.001 milliequivalents per gram of dry treated substrate or greater, wherein the Ff value represents an amount of polymer fixed to the treated substrate, not required by Group I.

Shared Technical Features:

The inventions of Groups I-II share the technical features of a treated substrate comprising: lignocellulose; a polymer fixed to the lignocellulose to form the treated substrate, wherein the polymer comprises a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride moiety and a succinic acid moiety, wherein the treated substrate has a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or less.

However, these shared technical features do not represent a contribution over prior art, because the shared technical feature is being anticipated by US 2004/118540 A1 to Garnier et al. (hereinafter "Garnier").

Garnier teaches a treated substrate (para [0005], the present invention is directed to a paper web in which the strength characteristics of the web may be specifically tailored through use of a bicomponent strengthening system. In general, the process of the present invention includes providing a slurry of pulp fibers and treating the fibers with a bicomponent strengthening system prior to forming a web from the fibers; and para [0021]. The paper webs of the present invention may be converted and used as is to form a single ply paper product; A single ply paper product is a substrate) comprising: lignocellulose (para [0110], The fibrous web is generally a random plurality of papermaking fiber; and para [0024], "Papermaking fibers," as used herein, include all known cellulosic fibers; and para [0026], the term "cellulosic" is meant to include any material having cellulose as a major constituent, and Specifically comprising about 50 percent or more by weight of cellulose or cellulose derivatives. Thus, the term includes cotton, typical wood pulps; Wood pulp is a lignocellulosic material; see US 2011/060148 A1 to O'Connor et al., para [0058], Examples of suitable lignocellulosic materials include wood pulp); a polymer fixed to the lignocellulose to form the treated substrate (para [0039], the present invention is directed to a novel bicomponent strengthening system for a paper web...the first component of the strengthening system is a polymer containing primary amine functionality and the second component is one that may complex and/or react with the first component to form the strengthening system in a paper web; and para [0040], the first and second components are added separately to a slurry of pulp fibers in order to improve the strength properties of a web formed from the pulp fibers; The polymer can be fixed to the substrate in a wet process; see instant specification, para [0019], the polymer ingredient 12 is added to the untreated substrate 10 in a wet process to form a polymer substrate combination), wherein the polymer comprises a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride moiety and a succinic acid moiety (para [0006], The second component may be either a polymeric anionic compound; and para [0058], Polymeric anionic compounds, as used herein, are polymers having repeating units containing two or more anionic functional groups that may bond to hydroxyl groups of cellulosic fibers...Polymers, including copolymers, terpolymers, block copolymers, and homopolymers, of maleic acid represent one embodiment, including copolymers of acrylic acid and maleic acid; Maleic acid comprises a succinic moiety that can reversibly change between a succinic anhydride moiety and a succinic acid moiety; see instant specification, para [0024], the term "maleic acid," when used in the name of a polymer, refers to a moiety that may be reversibly changed between the succinic acid moiety and the succinic anhydride moiety), wherein the treated substrate has a wet tensile index of about 3 newton meters per gram or less (para [0014], the bicomponent Strengthening System of the present invention can act as a temporary wet strength agent and the paper web thus produced may have a wet tensile index after Soaking in water for about one hour of less than about 2 Nm/g).

-----Continued on Supplemental Box-----

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US 22/70216

Bx. III (Lack of Unity)

As the common features were known in the art at the time of the invention, they cannot be considered special technical features that would otherwise unify the groups.

Therefore, Groups I-II lack unity under PCT Rule 13 because they do not share a same or corresponding special technical feature.