

Effects of Dietary n-3 Rich PUFA Mixture on Performance, Plasma Metabolites and Muscle Fatty Acids Profile in Growing Pigs

Anca Gheorghe*¹, Mihaela Hăbeanu¹, Nicoleta A. Lefter¹, Lavinia Idriceanu¹

¹National Research Development Institute for Animal Biology and Nutrition,
077015-Balotesti, Calea Bucuresti, 1, Romania

Abstract

The study was conducted to assess the effect of feeding an n-3 PUFA-enriched diet on growth performance, plasma metabolites, and muscle fatty acids composition in growing pigs. Forty growing pigs (13.1±1.8 kg body weight) were randomly divided to receive a control [C based on corn-triticale-soybean meal (SBM)] or n-3 PUFA mix diet [extruded linseed EL: walnut meal WM, where the 80 g/kg dietary mixture (50:30 wt/wt) partially replace SBM] for 30 days. At the end of the trial, blood and muscle samples were collected for plasma profiles and fatty acids analyses. Feeding pigs with n-3 PUFA-enriched diet slightly improved body weight and average daily gain (P>0.05) with similar feed intake, and tend to improve feed efficiency (P=0.058). There was no effect on plasma protein profile, but the plasma urea nitrogen was decreased (P=0.042) indicating a higher utilization of dietary nitrogen. Plasma lipid profile was affected as a response to the dietary mixture by reducing the total cholesterol concentration (P=0.04) vs C diet. The *Longissimus Dorsi* muscle of pigs fed dietary mixture had higher contents in alpha-linolenic acid (P=0.030), docosahexaenoic (P=0.050), total PUFA (P=0.0001) and n-3 PUFA (P=0.019), and a lower n-6: n-3 ratio (P=0.002) vs pigs fed C diet. In conclusion, the dietary mixture had a positive effect on growing pigs' performance and health status, improving the plasma lipo-protein response and enhanced the fatty acid profile of the meat.

Keywords: meat fatty acids, pigs' performance, plasma parameters, n-3 PUFA mix

1. Introduction

Bioactive compounds (e.g. alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), lignans, polyphenols, antioxidants, dietary fibre) are present in many plant sources and provide health benefits (anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antioxidant, hypoglycemic and hypolipidemic properties) beyond the primary nutritional value [1, 2] Linseed (*Linum usitatissimum* L.) has received much consideration and interest due to the beneficial fatty acid composition, mainly its richness in ALA precursor of the long-chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty

acids (PUFA) [1, 3-5]. It has been reported that incorporation of different forms and varieties of linseed in human or animal diets influence the serum parameters, especially the lipid fraction [6-8]. Linseed addition has been found to be effective in quickly improve the ratio between n-6 and n-3 PUFA and raised the ALA content in pork meat [3, 9, 10].

Dietary modifying the pig meat lipids structure could help consumers meet health recommendations if we take into consideration the n-3 PUFA potential therapeutic roles [11].

The processing of walnut fruits (*Juglans regia* L.) results in considerable amounts of by-products including oilseed meals, with a higher content of omega-6 and omega-3 PUFA, which led to a beneficial effect on animal health [12].

* Corresponding author: Anca Gheorghe
Email: anca.gheorghe@ibna.ro

Moreover, the re-use of by-products as alternative sources of feed in farm animal diets beyond the nutritional aspects provide environmental and economic benefits [13].

To date, there is little information about the effects of walnut by-product in pigs' diets [2, 14] or their mixture with linseed [11, 15].

Therefore, the study aimed to assess the complementary effects of dietary n-3 PUFA rich mixture on growth performance, plasma metabolites and muscle fatty acids composition in growing pigs.

2. Materials and methods

Animals and experimental diets

All trial procedures were approved by the Animal Care Committee of the INCDBNA Balotesti (Romania), and pigs were handled in conformity

with EU Directive 2010/63/EU [16].

Forty growing pigs Topigs [♀ Large White x Hybride (Large White x Pietrain) × ♂ Talent, mainly Duroc], average body weight 13.1±1.8 kg, were randomly allotted into two groups (male: female, 1:1) with 2 replicate each (10 pigs/pen).

The feed was given in the pelletized form. Free access to feed and water was provided for pigs all period. For 30 days feeding trial, pigs receive a control [C, based on corn-triticale-soybean meal (SBM)] or n-3 PUFA mix diet [extruded linseed EL: walnut meal WM, where 80 g/kg EL: WM mixture (50: 30 *wt/wt*) partially replace SBM]. The diets were isocaloric, isonitrogenous and meet nutrient requirements of pig's hybrid.

The analyzed composition of diets and dietary n-3 PUFA mix is given in Table 1. Dietary mixture addition higher the ALA concentration (5-fold) and lower the LA: ALA ratio (6-fold) of the experimental diet.

Table 1. Chemical composition of growing pig diets and dietary n-3 PUFA mixture

Item %	Diets		n-3 PUFA mixture
	C	EL: WM	(50: 30)
Dry matter	88.43	88.18	91.02
Crude protein	17.10	17.20	25.11
Lysine	1.05	1.05	0.91
Methionine + Cystine	0.67	0.67	0.98
Calcium	0.90	0.90	0.27
Phosphorus	0.70	0.70	0.84
Crude fibre'	4.66	4.97	15.93
Crude fat	4.37	4.80	16.02
ME (MJ/kg) ¹	12.67	12.66	15.36
Fatty acid (% of total FAME ²)			
Linoleic (LA)	50.14	40.10	35.67
α-linolenic (ALA)	4.48	22.46	35.91
LA: ALA ratio	11.19	1.79	1.00

C–control diet, EL: WM–extruded linseed:walnut meal diet. Results are given as mean (n=2)

¹ME calculated using regression equations [17]; ²FAME: fatty acids methyl esters

Pigs were weighed at the beginning, and the end of the feeding trial, feed intake (FI) was registered daily, to calculate average daily gain (ADG), average daily feed intake (ADFI) and gain: feed ratio.

Sampling

Blood samples (n=8/group) were collected by jugular venipuncture in heparinized vacutainer tubes (6 mL) and centrifuged (3000 rpm for 15 min.) for plasma separation.

Longissimus dorsi muscle (200 g) samples (n=2/group) were collected at the end of the trial.

The samples were individually vacuum-packed and stored at –18°C until analyses.

Chemical and fatty acids analyses

The proximate chemical composition (dry matter, crude protein, ether extract, crude fibre, and crude ash) were analyzed in duplicate using standardized methods [18].

Fatty acids composition analyses were done by gas chromatography method (SR CEN ISO/TS 17764-2:2008) using Perkin Elmer 500 chromatograph, as previously described [19]. Muscle samples were analyzed in duplicate.

Biochemical analyses

The plasma lipid (total cholesterol, TC; HDL-cholesterol, HDL-C; triglycerides, TG), protein (total protein, T-Pro; total bilirubin, T-Bil; albumin, Alb; creatinine, Cre; uric acid, UA; plasma urea nitrogen, PUN), mineral (calcium, Ca; magnesium, Mg, inorganic phosphorus, IP) and enzyme (glutamyl oxaloacetic transaminase, GOT; glutamyl pyruvic transaminase, GPT; creatine phosphokinase, CPK; gamma-glutamyl transferase, GGT) profiles were determined by Spotchem EZ SP-4430 chemistry analyzer (Arkray, Japan).

Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed by using one-way ANOVA in the GLM procedure of SPSS software (IBM SPSS Statistics version 20.0). Results are given as means and standard error of the mean (SEM). Differences were considered significant at $P \leq 0.05$.

3. Results and discussion

Growth performance

No significant difference ($P > 0.05$) was observed

on performance of growing pigs fed dietary n-3 PUFA mix (Table 2), even a slightly improved on final BW (+6%; $P > 0.05$) and ADG (+8%; $P > 0.05$) was noticed. The ADFI was similar between treatments ($P > 0.05$), and the feed efficiency of pigs fed dietary n-3 PUFA mix tend to be improved (1.15 times higher in EL: WM group than C group; $P = 0.058$).

There are a few previous studies reported results of feeding weaned piglets with different n-3 PUFA rich mixture, e. g. peas: linseed (3:1) with no influence on productive performance [1] or extruded linseed: walnut meal (8:1) mixture with a positive effect on body weight and average daily gain [15]. Recently, Hăbeanu et al., [11] stated that feeding barrows with 60 g/kg extruded linseed: walnut meal mixture (50:50 wt/wt) had no significant effect on growth performance but higher average daily gain (3.63%) and decrease the gain: feed ratio (5.22%) vs control diet. Tarricone et al., [20] also shown that feeding 3% extruded linseed in growing-fattening local swine breed for a long time (32 weeks) did not affect the growth performance (average daily gain, feed intake and feed conversion ratio).

Table 2. Effect of dietary n-3 PUFA mix on the performance of growing pig

Item	Diets		SEM	P-value*
	C	EL: WM		
No. pigs	20	20		
Body weight, Kg				
Initial (51 d)	13.10	13.50	0.32	0.140
Final (81 d)	30.12	31.93	0.62	0.166
ADG, kg/d	0.567	0.614	0.13	0.543
ADFI, kg/d	1.53	1.40	0.06	0.313
Gain : Feed ratio, kg: kg	0.38	0.44	0.10	0.058 ^T

C–control diet, EL: WM–extruded linseed: walnut meal diet; SEM, standard error of the mean. ADG, average daily gain; ADFI, average daily feed intake.*Means within rows do not differ significantly ($P > 0.05$); T=Tendency to be influenced by treatment

Plasma metabolites

The effect of dietary n-3 PUFA mix on plasma metabolites response is presented in Table 3. Generally, at the end of the feeding trial, the plasma biochemistry parameters of both pigs' groups range in normal limits [21-24].

The results of our study showed that plasma lipid profile was affected as a response to n-3 PUFA rich mixture by decreasing the concentration of TC (7.84%; $P = 0.040$), while the HDL-C, VLDL-C and TG concentrations insignificantly

decreased compared with the control diet. Other study reported no significant effect on the plasma concentrations of glucose, cholesterol and triglycerides in the piglets fed with 3% nor 5% residual walnuts diets [2]. Gheorghe et al., [25] feeding piglets with 9% dietary mixture extruded linseed: walnut meal (8:1) reported no evident effect on plasma lipid profile (TC, HDL-C, and TG), and a positive correlation between dietary ALA fatty acids content and plasma HDL-C concentration. Our present results showed that the

dietary mixture had no effect on plasma T-Pro and its major fractions (Alb, UA), that are related to protein synthesis [26]. The dietary n-3 PUFA lowered PUN value (11.36%; $P=0.045$) that indicated a higher utilization of dietary nitrogen [27] and explained the growth performance of pigs; even the difference was not significant. Our study results showed that PUN: Cre ratio, an important indicator of renal disorders [23], range in normal limits (>10 mg/dL). The present results are in line with our previous study in weaned piglets that showed positive effects on growth

performance and plasma protein profile, especially on PUN by feeding dietary extruded linseed: walnut meal (8:1) mixture [15]. Other study found that feeding weaned piglets with a pea: linseed mixture (3:1) are a good opportunity to optimize diet, with no significant effects on growth performance, lipid and protein biochemical profile, and urea: creatinine ratio [1]. Feeding pigs with n-3 PUFA-enriched diet did not significantly affect the plasma mineral profile and enzyme activity ($P>0.05$).

Table 3. Effect of dietary n-3 PUFA mix on plasma metabolites response

Plasma parameters	Limits	C	EL: WM	SEM	P-value
TC (mg/dL)	67.0-377 ²	112.85 ^a	104.00 ^b	2.28	0.040
HDL-C (mg/dL)	38.7-48.3 ⁴	47.71	45.14	1.52	0.471
VLDL-C (mg/dL)*	-	7.69	7.11	1.81	0.503
TG (mg/dL)	33-50 ¹	38.43	35.57	0.36	0.503
T-Pro (g/dL)	5.0-8.3 ¹	5.20	5.48	0.16	0.451
Alb (mg/dL)	2.3-4.0 ¹	3.00	3.37	0.11	0.135
T-Bil (mg/dL)	0-0.5 ¹	0.40	0.45	0.01	0.110
Cre (mg/dL)	0.8-2.3 ¹	1.32	1.26	0.04	0.408
UA (mg/dL)	-	0.59	0.57	0.01	0.552
PUN (mg/dL)	8.2-25 ¹	15.14 ^a	13.42 ^b	0.40	0.042
PUN: Cre ratio	10-20 ³	11.46	10.78	0.28	0.322
Ca (mg/dL)	6.8-14.8 ²	14.01	13.81	0.21	0.685
Mg (mg/dL)	2.3-3.5 ¹	2.37	2.42	0.05	0.425
IP (mg/dL)	5.5-9.3 ¹	8.98	8.77	0.13	0.485
GOT (U/L)	22-47 ¹	23.43	22.14	2.18	0.737
GPT (U/L)	31-75 ¹	52.00	53.71	2.29	0.715
CPK (U/L)	66-689 ²	344.00	284.00	45.98	0.188
GGT (U/L)	31-52 ¹	43.85	43.57	4.30	0.977

C-control diet, EL: WM-extruded linseed: walnut meal diet; n=8 samples/group; SEM, standard error of means.

^{a,b}Means with different superscript within a row differ significantly ($P<0.05$).

¹Merck Veterinary Manual, [21]; ² Perri et al., [22]; ³Washington and Van Hoosier, [23]; ⁴Koreza et al., [24].

*VLDL-cholesterol=Triglycerides/5 [28].

Table 4. Effect of dietary n-3 PUFA mix on fatty acid composition of *Longissimus dorsi* muscle

Fatty acids, % of total FAME	C	EL: WM	SEM	P-value
C18:2n-6 (LA)	12.71	13.21	0.20	0.257
C18:3n-3 (ALA)	1.29 ^b	1.46 ^a	0.04	0.030
C20:5n-3 (EPA)	0.07	0.10	0.02	0.102
C22:5n-3 (DPA)	0.10	0.16	0.03	0.339
C22:6n-3 (DHA)	0.01 ^b	0.05 ^a	0.01	0.050
ΣSFA	38.41	38.88	0.16	0.151
ΣMUFA	42.53	41.46	0.20	0.104
ΣPUFA	16.69 ^b	17.51 ^a	0.23	0.000
Σn-6 PUFA	15.41	14.91	0.17	0.138
Σn-3 PUFA	1.93 ^b	2.41 ^a	0.12	0.019
n-6: n-3 ratio	7.98 ^a	6.19 ^b	0.41	0.002

C – control diet, EL: WM – extruded linseed: walnut meal diet. n=2 samples/group. SEM, standard error of means

^{a,b}Means with different superscript within a row differ significantly ($P<0.05$).

ΣSFA=C14:0+C15:0+C16:0+C17:0+C18:0; ΣMUFA=C15:1+C16:1+C17:1+C18:1cis-9;

ΣPUFA=C18:2n-6+C18:3n-3+C20:2n-6+C20:3n-3+C20:4n-6+C20:5n-3.

Muscle fatty acid composition

The effect of dietary n-3 PUFA mix on the fatty acid composition of *Longissimus dorsi* muscle is shown in Table 4. As expected, the muscle of pigs fed dietary n-3 PUFA mix had higher contents in ALA (P=0.030), DHA (P=0.050), total PUFA (P=0.0001) and n-3 PUFA (P=0.019), and a lower n-6: n-3 ratio (P=0.002) compared with pigs fed a control diet with no adverse effect on the muscle quality parameters such as colour and texture (data not shown).

Similarly, Hăbeanu et al. [11] shown that the ALA concentrations increase in *Longissimus dorsi* and *Semitendinosus* muscles and n-6: n-3 ratio decreases as an effect of feeding barrows with 60 g/kg extruded linseed: walnut meal mixture (50:50 wt/wt).

Tarricone et al., [20] shown that feeding 3% extruded linseed in growing-fattening local swine breed improved the fatty acid profile of meat increasing the n-3 PUFA and decreasing the n-6:n-3 ratio, with benefits for human health. Nevrkla and Vaclavkova, [29] confirmed that feeding 7% linseed scrap in gilts diet positively influenced the fatty acid profile in the intramuscular fat and backfat with no adverse effect on the oxidative stability of the fat in the meat. Other research proved that utilisation of extruded or co-extruded linseed up to 5% improves the fatty acid profile of the pork meat [30-32].

4. Conclusions

The use of 80 g/kg dietary n-3 PUFA rich mixture based on extruded linseed: walnut meal (50:30 wt/wt) had a positive effect on growing pigs' performance and health status improving the plasma lipo-protein response. Dietary n-3 PUFA rich mixture enhanced the n-3 fatty acid profile of the meat.

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