

Trends in industry and products (Future Prospects for Industrial Biotechnology)

This chapter examines recent trends in biofuels, bio-based chemicals and bioplastics. There is also some discussion of the future critical role of the integrated biorefinery. Biofuels have, unsurprisingly, dominated industrial biotechnology of late, and is reflected in recent country policies to promote biofuels production. The platform chemicals concept is explored and the platform chemicals that are likely to be important initially in the integrated biorefinery are identified. Bio-based chemicals also cover bulk, fine and specialty chemicals. Recent advances in biodegradable plastics and bio-based plastics have seen the market potential grow quickly as applications far beyond traditional packaging applications have started to emerge. In particular, the emergence of biobased thermoplastics is set to affect the plastics world significantly, with very steep growth predicted over the next few years. Biofuels have enjoyed a wide range of supportive policy measures, but bio-based chemicals and bioplastics have not.

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