

Dear Reader,

In the year 2017 the Editorial Office of *Food Technology and Biotechnology* received 518 manuscripts. In the same period 57 papers were published in four issues, indicating an average acceptance rate of about 11 %. The number of published manuscripts is more or less constant every year and reflects the financial and technical potential of the journal but in the recent years we have been confronted with a pronounced increase in the number of submitted papers. Such trend should expectedly lead to higher quality of the selected, published papers and to some extent this seems to be true. Still, according to our metric and statistical parameters, the increase in quality is less than expected. Thus, the increase in quantity of manuscripts submitted to FTB is accompanied with a decrease in quality. Indeed, the number of papers rejected in the early evaluation steps by the Editor-in-Chief and Field Editors due to insufficient quality is ever higher. As expected, there are two main reasons for rejection of a manuscript before even getting to the reviewers' check. The first is the low quality of the project, *i.e.* the research presented in the manuscript, while the second is the low quality of the manuscript itself. So what is usually wrong with the content of so many submissions? Very often papers do not start with a clear scientific question, therefore, it is not clear why the experiment(s) in the paper have been undertaken in the first place. Such manuscripts usually contain (sometimes much) analytical data that have been properly acquired but in the absence of corresponding questions their scientific significance cannot be assessed. My advice to younger and less experienced researchers is to reexamine and clarify the aim of your research. If all your questions begin with "what", the answers may not be so interesting for broader scientific community. Questions starting with "which" or "where" look more promising, but see that you have at least one question starting with "why". This simple exercise may give a better perspective of your research and increase the chances of getting your work published in a high-ranking journal, even if the paper is more "technologically" oriented. An extensive analysis of a certain substrate may be important for an industrial process or a medical evaluation. In the scientific sense, however, it may only present a fundament for a research process still to follow. Simply, research must comprise an investigation pathway starting with relevant questions and leading to the answers that have to be documented and scientifically proven. Usually, one experiment does not make a complete investigation. Unfortunately, due to reasons that have very little to do with true science, authors try to divide their research in individual papers. This reduces the quality of the papers as it is difficult from such excerpts to grasp the significance of entire research. Such papers are less likely to survive the early evaluation, as well.

A reason for early rejection of some papers is the lack of novelty or originality. Papers sometimes describe only optimizations of already well known and established processes. This again may have some importance for practical applications of (bio)technological processes but at the same time does not have high scientific importance. Besides, a repetition of research already performed on a different microorganism is hardly going to be interesting if the conclusions only support the previously gained knowledge. Would you be interested in reading such papers?

The second reason for rejecting a manuscript in the early stage of evaluation is poor language. The quality of English has to be underlined since in too many cases the language, grammar and style errors are so numerous that the meaning of the text cannot be assessed without doubt. The technical quality of the manuscript is the responsibility of the authors and they are strongly advised to get help of a native English speaker or a professional service. Again, try to imagine you are the editor receiving such a manuscript for publication. What would you do, even if the results may be of interest? Even if

the paper is not rejected due to poor English, it will surely be returned for corrections before reviewing, thus prolonging the publication procedure. The quality of figures is sometimes also quite dubious to the extent that they do not reflect explicitly the results presented in the text. Even if this seems obvious, check again if what you state in the text can actually be seen in the figure you refer to. More attention should also be given to figure legends that often do not explain the figures clearly. They should make the figure understandable by itself.

Finally, an element of the paper that very often lacks sufficient quality is the summary. Authors should keep in mind that many readers will only read this part of the text and that every reader will read the summary first. Therefore, it should contain the clear and concise explanation of questions the paper addresses, the methodology used to reach the answers, and the answers themselves. The authors should explain the significance and novelty of their research. Instead of giving individual numerical results, an abstract should rather point out their connection and importance. Only thus it may intrigue the reader to read the rest of the manuscript. In other words, the results you have put so much effort to obtain will reach broader recognition.

This editorial, of course, does not aim to provide systematic advice for authors how to improve their papers and get them published. It simply presents the Editor's personal insight in a problem of a flood of manuscripts of insufficient quality that burdens scientific journals and the whole scientific community. For the less experienced authors it can serve as a guideline but in any case my strongest advice would be: "read the *Instructions for Authors* at our website carefully and prepare your manuscripts exactly and to every detail as it is stated there". This will make your and our lives much easier.



Prof. Vladimir Mrša
(Editor-in-Chief)