

CFD model for tubular SOFC stack fed directly by biomass

*Original*

CFD model for tubular SOFC stack fed directly by biomass / Papurello, D.; Canuto, D.; Santarelli, M.. - In: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HYDROGEN ENERGY. - ISSN 0360-3199. - ELETTRONICO. - 47:10(2022), pp. 6860-6872. [[10.1016/j.ijhydene.2021.12.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhydene.2021.12.015)]

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11583/2969278 since: 2022-07-02T22:00:59Z

*Publisher:*

Elsevier Ltd

*Published*

DOI:[10.1016/j.ijhydene.2021.12.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhydene.2021.12.015)

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(Article begins on next page)

# International Journal of Hydrogen Energy

## CFD model for tubular SOFC stack fed directly by biomass

--Manuscript Draft--

<b>Manuscript Number:</b>	
<b>Article Type:</b>	Short Communication
<b>Section/Category:</b>	Fuel Cells & Applications
<b>Keywords:</b>	Electrochemistry; SOFC Stack; Biomass; Gasification; COMSOL Multiphysics®; DB-SOFC
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<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>The energy transition can also benefit from the exploitation of biomass. Residual biomass in Mediterranean areas can be exploited to a greater extent through highly efficient fuel cell systems. The Direct Biomass-SOFC project is based on a direct coupling between biomass power supply and SOFC tubular cells. This research project stems from the need to cover the growing need for electricity by avoiding the use of non-renewable sources, with unused or little-used sources that can be exploited from the Mediterranean area.</p> <p>To this purpose, analyses were conducted to model a SOFC tubular cell stack by investigating the optimal configuration. The basic objective is to dimension a SOFC tubular cell stack, fed by syngas to produce at least 200 W. Two configurations were chosen: a square and a circular arrangement. Another objective of the study is to choose the best temperature control system. A pressurised water system and an air system are studied. The results show that the best performance is guaranteed by a square arrangement with an air temperature control system. The maximum electrical power produced is 225 W.</p>



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To the Editors of International Journal of Hydrogen Energy

**OBJECT:** Submission of the article manuscript entitled “*CFD model for tubular SOFC stack fed directly by biomass*”

Dear Editor(s),

We are submitting to your kind attention a work focused on The energy transition can also benefit from the exploitation of biomass. Residual biomass in Mediterranean areas can be exploited to a greater extent through highly efficient fuel cell systems. The Direct Biomass-SOFC project is based on a direct coupling between biomass power supply and SOFC tubular cells. This research project stems from the need to cover the growing need for electricity by avoiding the use of non-renewable sources, with unused or little-used sources that can be exploited from the Mediterranean area.

All authors agree for submitting the manuscript.

The manuscript is original work of authors and has not been submitted earlier.

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I am available as a reviewer.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Best Regards,

Torino | August 13, 2021

Daide Papurello

On behalf of all Authors

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## Highlights

- The Direct Biomass SOFC system was developed numerically for 25 tubular cells
- 25 tubular cells were able to produce 225 W from syngas
- The square tubular cell arrangement showed better results
- The air temperature control system showed better results

# CFD model for tubular SOFC stack fed directly by biomass

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5 **Abstract**

1 6 The energy transition can also benefit from the exploitation of biomass. Residual biomass in  
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4 7 Mediterranean areas can be exploited to a greater extent through highly efficient fuel cell systems.

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6 8 The Direct Biomass-SOFC project is based on a direct coupling between biomass power supply and  
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9 9 SOFC tubular cells. This research project stems from the need to cover the growing need for  
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12 10 electricity by avoiding the use of non-renewable sources, with unused or little-used sources that can  
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14 11 be exploited from the Mediterranean area.

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16 12 To this purpose, analyses were conducted to model a SOFC tubular cell stack by investigating the  
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19 13 optimal configuration. The basic objective is to dimension a SOFC tubular cell stack, fed by syngas  
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31 18 is 225 W.

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31	<b><u>Nomenclature</u></b>	
32		
2	$A_{i,an/cat}$	Pre-exponential factor [S/m <sup>2</sup> ]
3		
4	$AU$	Air Utilization [-]
5		
6	$c_p$	gas specific heat capacity [J/(kgK)]
7		
8	$CFD$	Computational Fluid Dynamic
9		
10	$CHP$	Combined Heat and Power
11		
12	$d_{pore}$	diameter of electrodes pore [m]
13	$D_{eq}$	equivalent diameter [m]
14		
15	$D^{eff}$	Effective diffusion coefficient [m <sup>2</sup> /s]
16		
17	$D_i^{F,K}$	sum of Fick and Knudsen diffusion coefficient [m <sup>2</sup> /s]
18		
19	$D_i^K$	Knudsen diffusion coefficient of a generic species $i$ [m <sup>2</sup> /s]
20		
21		
22	$D_{ij}$	Binary diffusion coefficient [m <sup>2</sup> /s]
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24		
25	$E$	Equilibrium potential [V]
26		
27	$E_{act,an/cat}$	Activation Energy [J/mol]
28		
29		
30	$F$	Faraday's constant [C/mol]
31		
32	$FU$	Fuel Utilization [-]
33		
34	$H$	Heat of reaction [J/mol]
35		
36	$h$	Convective heat transfer coefficient [W/m <sup>2</sup> K]
37		
38	$\bar{h}$	molar enthalpy [J/mol]
39	$i$	current density [A/cm <sup>2</sup> ]
40		
41	$i_0, an/cat$	equilibrium current density [A/cm <sup>2</sup> ]
42		
43	$i_l$	limiting current density [A/cm <sup>2</sup> ]
44		
45	$K_{pr}$	SMR Equilibrium constant [Pa]
46		
47	$K_{ps}$	WGS Equilibrium constant [-]
48		
49	$k$	thermal conductivity [W/(m*K)]
50		
51	$k_{r,forward/backward}$	SMR catalysed reaction rate constant [-]
52		
53	$k_{s,forward/backward}$	WGS catalysed reaction rate constant [-]
54		
55	$LSM$	Lanthanum Strontium Manganite
56	$Ni/YSZ$	Yttria Stabilized Zirconia within atoms of metallic Nickel
57		
58	$M_i$	Molar mass [kg/mol]
59		
60	$\dot{n}$	Molar flow [mol/s]
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<i>OK</i>	Olive Kernel
<i>Pr</i>	Prandtl number [-]
<i>p</i>	pressure [Pa]
<i>p<sub>0</sub></i>	ambient pressure [Pa]
<i>Q</i>	thermal source/sink [W/m <sup>3</sup> ]
<i>Q</i>	conductive heat flux [W/m <sup>2</sup> ]
<i>Re</i>	Reynolds number [-]
<i>R<sub>r/s</sub></i>	Volumetric rate of reaction [mol/(m <sup>3</sup> s)]
$\bar{R}$	universal gas constant [J/molK]
$\bar{s}$	molar entropy [J/molK]
<i>SDG</i>	Sustainable Development Goal
<i>SMR</i>	Steam Methane Reforming
<i>SOFC</i>	Solid Oxide Fuel Cell
<i>T</i>	Temperature [K]
<i>TPB</i>	Three Phase Boundary
<i>U</i>	velocity vector [m/s]
<i>x<sub>i</sub></i>	molar fraction [-]
<i>WGS</i>	Water Gas Shift reaction
<i>Z</i>	charge number [-]

**Greek symbols**

$\delta$	thickness of diffusion [m]
$\varepsilon$	porosity [-]
$\rho$	gas density [kg/m <sup>3</sup> ]
$\sigma_i$	mean characteristic length of species i [Å]
$\tau$	tortuosity [-]
$\Omega_D$	dimensionless diffusion collision [-]

**keywords**

Electrochemistry; SOFC Stack; Biomass; Gasification; COMSOL Multiphysics®; DB-SOFC.

**1. Introduction**

39 Distributed power production is a good solution for sustainable development goals (SDG). Gonzalez  
1  
240 et al. (2020) showed the main barriers for the biomass gasification systems for small power generation  
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41 [1]. The search for new solutions in sustainable power generation is crucial given the increasing focus  
4  
51 on the green transition. The main barriers can be grouped into Penetration of technology, Lack of  
6  
742 information and Regulation and policy [2–4]. The problem of barriers can be overcome with the help  
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943 of government policies that could help also the local community. The Penetration of technology could  
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1244 be assessed with engineered systems for energy production using a circular approach exploiting  
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1545 biomass sources. Many studies have presented interesting results regarding the use of biomass  
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1746 systems for energy production [1,5–8].  
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21 In the Mediterranean area, there is a substantial availability of residual biomass that could be adopted  
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2449 for sustainable energy production [9,10]. The biomass availability from these residual materials has  
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2750 been quantified by Velazquez-Marti et al. (2011) [10,11]. The residual biomass from olive pruning  
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2951 was quantified with an average of 1.31 t ha<sup>-1</sup> from the annual pruning [10]. The residual biomass  
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3252 produced from vineyards was quantified at 2.15 t ha<sup>-1</sup>, while the presence of irrigation increases the  
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3453 yields by 42% [11].  
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3654 Zabaniotu (2014) focused on the CHP energy production fed by agro biomass [12]. The integration  
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3955 between a gasifier section and a SOFC stack was investigated considering olive kernels as starting  
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4156 biomass. The overall efficiency achieved 60% value, while commercial turbines achieve an overall  
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4457 efficiency around 40% [12].  
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4658 Syngas used in SOFC systems should not contain sulphur [7,13] and tar compounds must be properly  
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4959 controlled using catalytic systems [14–16]. Sulphur compounds bind irreversibly above a certain  
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5160 concentration (>2-5 ppmv) with the catalytic active sites, reducing the TPB and consequently, the  
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5461 performance of the individual cell [17–19]. The phenomenon of carbon deposit formation from the  
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5662 presence of carbon-based trace compounds is investigated in the literature [20,21]. The solution  
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5863 generally adopted to limit the carbon deposition on SOFCs is the fuel mixing with the proper  
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6164 reforming agents [22,23], while trace contaminants (sulfur-based) should be removed through  
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65 adsorption systems [24–27]. Aravind et al. (2012) studied how biomass systems for syngas production  
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266 can be integrated with high-temperature cleaning systems for the removal of unwanted compounds  
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57 for SOFC systems [28]. These aspects are extensively studied in literature when there is no studies  
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768 for the direct biomass feeding systems. The literature gap that should be addressed concern the tubular  
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1069 configuration system fed by syngas produced from biomass residues. In this paper, preliminary results  
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1270 from the direct biomass to SOFC stack system are presented. The goal of the DB-SOFC project is to  
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1571 produce 200 W of electrical power exploiting residual biomass that can be found in the Mediterranean  
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1772 area. Residual biomasses are exploited for the production of electricity and heat “directly” from the  
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1973 biomass that gasifies into the system. In our previous work, a single tubular cell is directly fed by  
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2274 syngas and it was modelled with encouraging results [29]. In this work, 25 tubular cells are directly  
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2475 fed by biomass derived from olive kernels. This biomass source needs to be treated in temperature.  
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2776 In this study, two different operating studies were selected before the injection into the stack (500 °C  
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2977 and 800 °C). Two different arrangements of the tubular cells and the cooling system were analysed.  
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3278 The cells were arranged in circular and in square configurations, while the cooling system was  
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3479 designed with pressurised liquid water and air.

## 37 3880 **2. Technology overview**

4181 25 tubular SOFC cells are placed vertically (Figure 1) and fed directly from the syngas produced from  
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4482 the biomass loaded in the upper part, with the help of the distribution screw. The anode side is directly  
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4683 exposed to the syngas, while air is injected into the cathode compartment via nozzles.  
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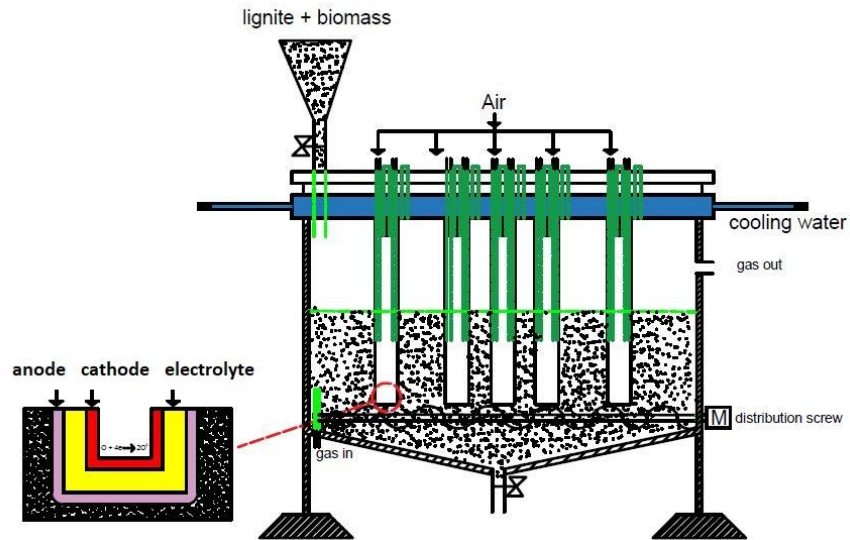


Figure 1. Vertical section of the stack

SOFCs are devices able to generate electrical power exploiting the syngas produced from the residual biomasses. The electrochemical reactions involved in the process are:

Anode)



Cathode)



These reactions occur at the three-phase boundary, where oxygen ions, fuel molecules and electrons are involved in the process [30].

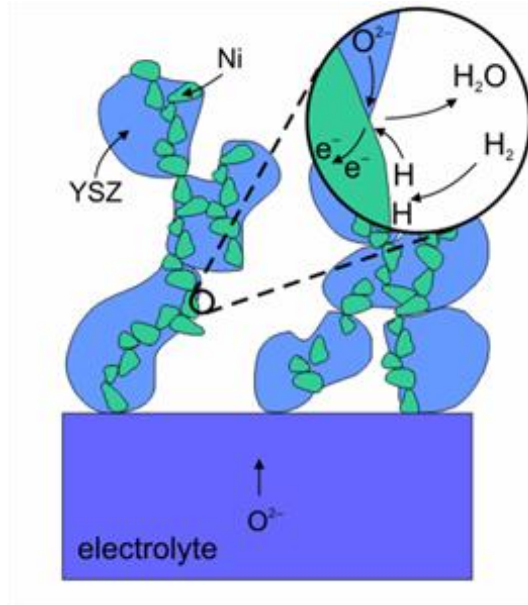
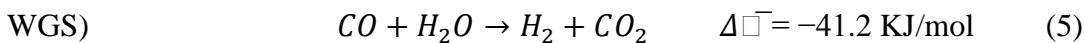
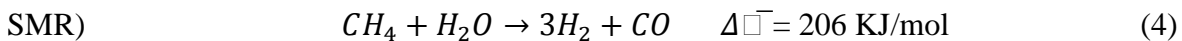


Figure 2. Anodic three-phase boundary [31]

The biomass is injected into the stack after a pre-treating process conducted at two different temperatures 500 and 800 °C for the performance investigation. The gasification process is conducted with CO<sub>2</sub>, and/or H<sub>2</sub>O, for the production of a gas mixture of H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>O, CO, CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub>. This mixture can feed the stack obtaining electrical and thermal energy. In addition, on the anodic side, two other reactions occur from the contact between methane and carbon monoxide with water vapour.

They are the steam methane reforming (SMR) and the water gas shift (WGS):



There is also a screw biomass distributor within the system. This is a worm screw that is required to evenly distribute the pre-treated biomass pellets. In the upper part of the system, there is a water or air cooling system.

### 3. Material and methods

The tubular cells are made with conventional materials shown in the literature [20,32–34]. More in detail, the anode (thickness of 30 μm) is composed by the Cermet, a particular alloy composed by a ceramic matrix of Ytria Stabilized Zirconia within atoms of metallic Nickel (Ni/YSZ), the cathode

112 (thickness of 30  $\mu\text{m}$ ) is composed by the Lanthanum Strontium Manganite (LSM). The total diameter  
 1  
 113 of a singular tubular cell is 2 cm.

114 The relevant features of the three materials are reported in the table below and some of these are  
 115 assumed to be temperature-dependent.

**Anode – Ni-YSZ**

<i>Density [g/cm<sup>3</sup>]</i>	6.4 [35]
<i>Electrical conductivity [S/m]</i>	$\sigma_{an} = \frac{95 \cdot 10^6}{T} * \exp(-\frac{1150}{T})$ [36]
<i>Ionic conductivity [S/m]</i>	10 <sup>-1</sup>
<i>Tortuosity</i>	3 [37]
<i>Porosity</i>	0.3 [38]

**Cathode – LSM**

<i>Density [g/cm<sup>3</sup>]</i>	5 [36]
<i>Electrical conductivity [S/m]</i>	$\sigma_{cat} = \frac{42 \cdot 10^6}{T} * \exp(-\frac{1200}{T})$ [36]
<i>Ionic conductivity [S/m]</i>	6.3 * 10 <sup>-2</sup> [39]
<i>Tortuosity</i>	5 [38]
<i>Porosity</i>	0.335 [38]

Table 1. Properties of the electrodes

**Electrolyte – YSZ**

<i>Electrical conductivity [S/m]</i>	1.75 * 10 <sup>-2</sup> [40]
<i>Ionic conductivity [S/m]</i>	3.34 * 10 <sup>4</sup> * exp(- $\frac{10300}{T}$ ) [36]
<i>Density [g/cm<sup>3</sup>]</i>	5.16 [41]

Table 2. Properties of the electrolyte

118 The assumptions underlying the model developed with Comsol Mutiphysics® are listed here:

- 119 – Steady-state conditions;
- 120 – Initial temperature of a single cell sets to 800 °C;
- 121 – Nominal voltage sets to 0.7 V;

<sup>1</sup> I assume this quantity is the same of the electrolyte because the principal material is the same

- 122 – Dimensionless electrodes;
- 123 – No carbon deposition;
- 124 – Fast gasification process;
- 125 – Laminar flow of syngas and air in the flow channels;
- 126 – Velocity values of the inlet of air and syngas are, respectively, 0.4 m/s and 0.05 m/s [42]
- 127 – The reactant gas mixtures are approximated as an ideal gas;
- 128 – Three linear distributions of temperature were assumed for the inlet of the syngas.

Subsequently, it has been applied various physic nodes to the geometry to describe completely the phenomenon that will be presented in the detail.

### Electrochemical model

This model is necessary to evaluate the voltage of every cell to estimate the current density of the stack,  $i$  [ $A \cdot m^{-2}$ ]. The current density is derived by the electrochemical reaction of  $H_2$  and  $CO$  contained in the syngas mixture. The equilibrium potential equations on the anodic side are reported below [37,43]:

$$E_{H_2} = 1.253 - 0.00024516 * T + \frac{\bar{R} * T}{2 * F} * \ln \left[ \frac{(p_{H_2}) * (p_{O_2})^{0.5}}{(p_{H_2O})} \right] \quad (6)$$

$$E_{CO} = 1.46713 - 0.0004527 * T + \frac{\bar{R} * T}{2 * F} * \ln \left[ \frac{(p_{CO}) * (p_{O_2})^{0.5}}{(p_{CO_2})} \right] \quad (7)$$

in which the factor “2”, before the Faraday’s constant, represents the electrons exchanged in the oxidation reaction of  $H_2$  and  $CO$ ;  $p_i$  are the partial pressures of every  $i$  species involved in the reactions divided by the ambient pressure;  $T$  is the cell temperature and  $\bar{R}$  is the universal gas constant.

For the evaluation of the activation overvoltages, it is used the Linearized Butler-Volmer equation with this anodic/cathodic transfer coefficient:  $\alpha_{an}^{H_2} = 1.5$ ,  $\alpha_{cat}^{H_2} = 0.5$ ,  $\alpha_{an}^{CO} = 0.62$ ,  $\alpha_{cat}^{CO} = 0.38$  and  $\alpha_{an/cat}^{O_2} = 0.5$  [44]. Moreover, the activation current density for the anode and the cathode must be evaluated as reported in the article of Andersson et al. (2012) [41] and reported below:

$$i_{0,an} = \frac{\bar{R} * T}{Z_{an} * F} * A_{i,an} * \exp \left( - \frac{E_{act,an}}{\bar{R} * T} \right) \quad (8)$$

$$i_{0,cat} = \frac{\bar{R} * T}{Z_{cat} * F} * A_{i,cat} * \exp\left(-\frac{E_{act,cat}}{\bar{R} * T}\right) \quad (9)$$

$A_{i,an/cat}$  are the pre-exponential factor and  $E_{act,an/cat}$  are the activation energy of the two electrodes and their values are summarized in Table 5 [41]. As reported in Ni (2012) [37], the activation current density of the CO reaction at the anode has been supposed to be 40% of  $i_{0,an}$ .

$A_{i,an}$ [S/m <sup>2</sup> ]	$6.54 * 10^{11}$
$A_{i,cat}$ [S/m <sup>2</sup> ]	$2.35 * 10^{11}$
$E_{act,an}$ [J/mol]	$1.4 * 10^5$
$E_{act,cat}$ [J/mol]	$1.37 * 10^5$

Table 3. Values adopted for the evaluation of the equilibrium current densities

### Diffusion model

The generation of diffusion overpotential in the cell, due to the motion of species involved in the flow channel and the porous electrodes, can be taken into account by evaluating the diffusion coefficients of the species involved in the process both at the anode and at the cathode. It is adopted the Fick's model, Ni (2013) [43]:

$$D_i^{eff} = \frac{\varepsilon}{\tau} * \left( \frac{1-x_i}{\sum_{j \neq i} \frac{x_j}{D_{ij}}} + D_i^K \right) \quad (10)$$

Where  $x$  is the molar fraction of the species considered and  $\varepsilon$  and  $\tau$  are, respectively, the porosity and the tortuosity of the material.  $D_i^K$ , is the Knudsen diffusion coefficient for the porous electrodes according to Andersson et al. (2012) [41].

$$D_i^K = \frac{d_{pore}}{3} * \sqrt{\frac{8 * \bar{R} * T}{\pi * M_i}} \quad (11)$$

with the pore diameter value ( $d_{pore}$ ) is assumed to be  $0.68 \mu\text{m}$  [41] and  $M_i$  is the molar mass of the species taken into account. The term  $D_{ij}$  (cm<sup>2</sup>/s) is the binary diffusion coefficient [45]:

$$D_{ij} = \frac{0.0026 * T^{1.5}}{p * \frac{2 * M_i * M_j}{M_j + M_i} * \left(\frac{\sigma_i + \sigma_j}{2}\right)^2 * \Omega_D} \quad (12)$$



164 where  $p$  is the pressure (bar), of the total mixture containing the chemical species analyzed,  $M_{i/j}$  are  
 1  
 2  
 165 the molar mass in kg/mol and  $\Omega_D$  is a dimensionless diffusion collision coefficient:

$$166 \quad \Omega_D = \frac{1.06036}{B^{0.1561}} + \frac{0.193}{\exp(0.47635*B)} + \frac{1.03587}{\exp(1.52996*B)} + \frac{1.76474}{\exp(3.89411*B)} \quad (13)$$

$$167 \quad B = \frac{k_b * T}{\sqrt{\varepsilon_i * \varepsilon_j}} \quad (14)$$

168  $k_b$  is the Boltzmann's constant ( $1.38066 * 10^{-23}$  J/K) and values of  $\sigma_{i/j}$  and  $\varepsilon_{i/j}$  are reported in Table 4.

	CO	CO <sub>2</sub>	H <sub>2</sub>	O <sub>2</sub>	CH <sub>4</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	H <sub>2</sub> O
$\sigma_i$ [Å]	3.69	3.941	2.827	3.467	3.758	3.798	2.641
$\varepsilon_i/k_b$ [K]	91.7	195.2	59.7	106.7	148.6	71.4	809.1

Table 4. Values of  $\varepsilon_i/k_b$  and  $\sigma_i$  [45]

### 170 Steam methane reforming and water gas shift reactions

171 Another fundamental modelization part is the methane reforming (SMR) and the CO shift reaction  
 172 (WGS), which increase the hydrogen to carbon ratio inside the syngas mixture. The kinetic of these  
 173 two reactions is shifted towards the products at a temperature of almost 800 °C for the SMR and at a  
 174 temperature of almost 300 °C for the WGS.

175 It is assumed that the SMR occurs and it is favoured by the high temperature at which the SOFC  
 176 works, whereas it cannot be the same for the WGS reaction. The equilibrium constant of both  
 177 reactions is evaluated with the equations proposed by Haberman et al. (2004) [46] derived by  
 178 experimental tests.

$$179 \quad K_{pr} = 1.0267 * 10^{10} * \exp(-0.2513 * Z^4 + 0.3665 * Z^3 + 0.5810 * Z^2 - 27.134 * Z + 3.2770) [Pa]$$

$$180 \quad (15)$$

$$181 \quad K_{ps} = \exp(-0.2935 * Z^3 + 0.6351 * Z^2 + 4.1788 * Z + 0.3169) \quad (16)$$

182 in which

$$183 \quad Z = \frac{1000}{T} - 1 \quad (17)$$

184 and, subsequently, the forward catalysed reaction rate constants are:

$$185 \quad k_{r,forward} = 2395 * \exp\left(-\frac{231266}{R*T}\right); \quad (18)$$

$$186 \quad k_{s,forward} = 0.0171 * \exp\left(-\frac{103191}{R*T}\right) \quad (19)$$

187 Finally, it is possible to obtain also the backward reaction rate thanks to the relation of the two  
188 catalysed reaction rate constants with the equilibrium constant.

$$189 \quad K_{p,r/s} = \frac{k_{r/s,forward}}{k_{r/s,backward}} \quad (20)$$

190 Now, it is possible to estimate both the volumetric rate of reaction that is expressed in [mol m<sup>-3</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>],  
191 as follows [47].

$$192 \quad R_r = k_{r,forward} * p_{CH_4} * p_{H_2O} - k_{r,backward} * p_{CO} * p_{H_2}^3 \quad (21)$$

$$193 \quad R_s = k_{s,forward} * p_{CO} * p_{H_2O} - k_{s,backward} * p_{CO_2} * p_{H_2} \quad (22)$$

194 In conclusion, the molar rates of formation can be formulated and multiplied by the molar mass of  
195 the species taken into account, [kg\*m<sup>-3</sup>\*s<sup>-1</sup>].

$$196 \quad \begin{cases} R_{CH_4} = -R_r * M_{CH_4} \\ R_{CO} = (R_r - R_s) * M_{CO} \\ R_{CO_2} = R_s * M_{CO_2} \\ R_{H_2O} = (-R_r - R_s) * M_{H_2O} \\ R_{H_2} = (3 * R_r + R_s) * M_{H_2} \end{cases} \quad (23)$$

## 197 Heat management

198 The heat transfer model is implemented on COMSOL® with the physic node *Heat transfer in Solids*.

$$199 \quad \rho * c_p * u * \nabla T + \nabla q = Q \quad (24)$$

200 in which  $u$  is the velocity vector in m/s,  $\rho$  is the density of the gas in kg/m<sup>3</sup>,  $c_p$  is the specific heat  
201 capacity of the gas [J/kg\*K] and  $Q$  is the thermal source/sink in W/m<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore,  $q$  is the  
202 conductive heat flux:

$$203 \quad q = -k * \nabla T \quad (25)$$

204 The temperatures of the two fluids involved in the electrochemical process are inserted in the model  
205 as Dirichlet boundary conditions. The convective contribution is considered by introducing the

206 velocity field term in the cathodic and the anodic flow channels. Instead, for the heat generated, or  
 1  
 207 absorbed, by the WGS and SMR is inserted a heat source boundary condition in which are summed  
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 208 the WGS heat generation contribution and the SMR endothermicity starting from:

$$\begin{cases} H_{SMR} = -(206205.5 + 19.51 * T) & \left[ \frac{J}{mol} \right] \\ H_{WGS} = 45063 - 10.28 * T & \left[ \frac{J}{mol} \right] \end{cases} \quad (26)$$

10  
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 12 and multiplying each contribution with the respective rate of reaction  $R_r$  and  $R_s$  calculated in the  
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 15 previous paragraph [37,41].

16  
 17 In addition, the heat is generated due to other three contributions: heat generated by Joule heating in  
 18  
 19 the cell, heat derived by the reaction irreversibilities that occur at the anode electrode and heat  
 20  
 21 generated by the activation of the electrochemical reaction.

22 The heat generated by the irreversibilities is estimated by evaluating the entropy changes in the  
 23  
 24 electrochemical reaction of hydrogen and carbon monoxide. These are evaluated from the Nist-Janaf  
 25  
 26 thermochemical tables [48]. These values are reported in Table 5 for 800 °C.

$\bar{s}_{H2}$	$\bar{s}_{H2O}$	$\bar{s}_{CO}$	$\bar{s}_{CO2}$	$\bar{s}_{O2}$
166.83	236.06	236.34	274.15	245.83

Table 5. Molar entropies [kJ/molK] at 1073 K

27 The values of specific heat capacity and the conductivity of each material adopted are reported in

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Table 6.

**Anode – Ni-YSZ**

<i>Thermal conductivity, <math>k_{AN}</math> [W/mK]</i>	11
<i>Specific Heat, <math>c_{p,AN}</math> [J/kgK]</i>	450

**Electrolyte – YSZ**

<i>Thermal conductivity, <math>k_{ELY}</math> [W/mK]</i>	2.7
<i>Specific Heat, <math>c_{p,ELY}</math> [J/kgK]</i>	470

**Cathode – LSM**

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Thermal conductivity,  $k_{CAT}$  [W/mK]

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Specific Heat,  $c_{p,CAT}$  [J/kgK]

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Table 6. Thermal parameters of every layer composing the cell [41]

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The heat generated by the processes described above is controlled with a cooling system placed on top of the stack. In this work, it is designed in two ways: the first one with water at 200 °C and at a pressure of 18 bar, to avoid the evaporation of the fluid, and the second one with air at 650 °C.

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The cooling system is modelled with the *Boundary Heat Source* in COMSOL®. The convective heat flux was built with the fluid temperature and the heat transfer coefficient. The heat transfer coefficient was calculated with the Dittus-Boelter correlation with the fluid circulating in a non-circular tube with an equivalent diameter of 0.03 m.

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$$Nu = 0.023 * Re^{0.8} * Pr^{0.3} = \frac{h * D_{eq}}{k} \quad (27)$$

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$$Re = \frac{\rho * v * D_{eq}}{\mu} ; \quad Pr = \frac{c_p * \mu}{k} \quad (28)$$

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The resulting heat transfer coefficients for the two cooling systems are 8370 W\*m<sup>-2</sup>\*K<sup>-1</sup> for the water, and 161 W\*m<sup>-2</sup>\*K<sup>-1</sup> for the air.

#### 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

## 4. Results

### 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165

### Syngas gas mixture

The syngas molar concentration was achieved with the steam methane reforming and water gas shift reaction model, using the pre-treated biomass in two different conditions (500 and 800 °C). The starting biomass is the olive kernel (OK) with preliminary values already published (Table 7) [49].

Elemental analysis (wt%)	Olive Kernel
C	50.2
H	5.9

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N	0.7
O	40.2
S	0.02
H/C	1.41
O/C	0.60

Table 7. Chemical analysis and heating values of raw samples

The production of the final products from the gasification model are: CO, CO<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>O and CH<sub>4</sub>.

The scheme of the reactions is reported in our previous publication [29]. The results of the gasification model are shown in the following tables (Table 8 and 9) for the pre-treated biomass at 800 °C and 500 °C. The concentration distribution with the operating temperature within the system is shown in the supplementary material section.

	X <sub>0,CH4</sub>	X <sub>0,H2</sub>	X <sub>0,CO</sub>	X <sub>0,CO2</sub>	X <sub>0,H2O</sub>
<b>800 °C</b>	8.168*10 <sup>-5</sup>	9.72*10 <sup>-3</sup>	3.66*10 <sup>-1</sup>	4.41*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.832*10 <sup>-1</sup>
<b>787.5 °C</b>	7.32*10 <sup>-5</sup>	8.13*10 <sup>-3</sup>	3.25*10 <sup>-1</sup>	4.80*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.867*10 <sup>-1</sup>
<b>775 °C</b>	6.48*10 <sup>-5</sup>	7.29*10 <sup>-3</sup>	2.83*10 <sup>-1</sup>	5.19*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.90*10 <sup>-1</sup>
<b>762.5 °C</b>	5.225*10 <sup>-5</sup>	5.63*10 <sup>-3</sup>	2.09*10 <sup>-1</sup>	5.89*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.96*10 <sup>-1</sup>
<b>750 °C</b>	4.0*10 <sup>-5</sup>	4.80*10 <sup>-3</sup>	1.68*10 <sup>-1</sup>	6.28*10 <sup>-1</sup>	2.0*10 <sup>-1</sup>

Table 8. Temperature distribution of the syngas OK800 and relative species quantities between 800 °C and 750 °C

	X <sub>0,CH4</sub>	X <sub>0,H2</sub>	X <sub>0,CO</sub>	X <sub>0,CO2</sub>	X <sub>0,H2O</sub>
<b>800 °C</b>	9.806*10 <sup>-5</sup>	4.34*10 <sup>-3</sup>	3.84*10 <sup>-1</sup>	4.29*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.829*10 <sup>-1</sup>
<b>787.5 °C</b>	1.06*10 <sup>-4</sup>	4.48*10 <sup>-3</sup>	3.42*10 <sup>-1</sup>	4.68*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.861*10 <sup>-1</sup>
<b>775 °C</b>	1.06*10 <sup>-4</sup>	4.87*10 <sup>-3</sup>	3.08*10 <sup>-1</sup>	4.98*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.89*10 <sup>-1</sup>
<b>762.5 °C</b>	1.12*10 <sup>-4</sup>	4.84*10 <sup>-3</sup>	2.42*10 <sup>-1</sup>	5.59*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.94*10 <sup>-1</sup>
<b>750 °C</b>	1.21*10 <sup>-4</sup>	5.23*10 <sup>-3</sup>	2.25*10 <sup>-1</sup>	5.74*10 <sup>-1</sup>	1.95*10 <sup>-1</sup>

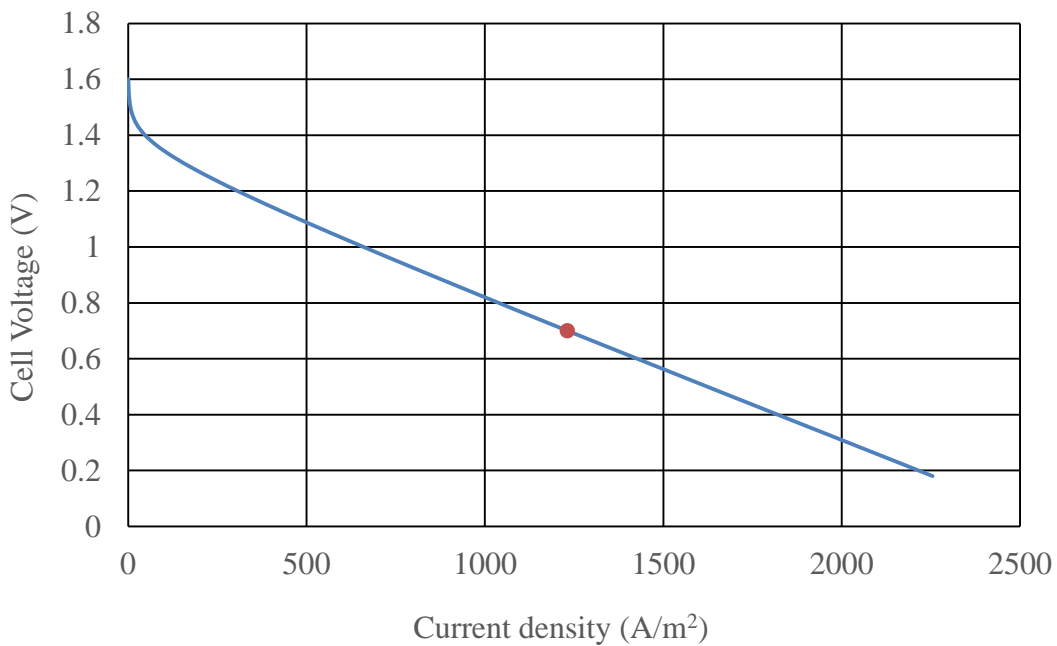
Table 9. Temperature distribution of the syngas OK500 and relative species quantities between 800 °C and 750 °C

The model results show that pre-treatment of biomass at 500 °C is best for the syngas concentrations available for tubular cells. Pre-treatment at 500 °C leads to a good yield in terms of CO concentration (38.4%) while a slight decrease in H<sub>2</sub> is less relevant (0.43%). Similar results are achieved by Guizani et al. (2014) [50].

## 2D model reconstruction

251 The main objective is to recreate a syngas-powered stack for the production, under nominal  
1  
252 conditions, of 200 W; i.e. 8 W per cell.

253 First of all, it was necessary to verify the consistency of the dimensionless electrodes hypothesis by  
254 reconstructing the 2D model of a single cell, fed by biomass pre-treated at 800 °C, without volumetric  
255 electrodes and comparing the results with those obtained by Somano et al. (2021) [29]. The resulting  
256 difference is due to some cold spots in the temperature distribution within the model. The model is  
257 finished using volumetric electrodes. The thickness of the anodic/cathodic GDL amount to  $1.95 \cdot 10^{-5}$   
258 m and the anodic/cathodic catalyst layer has got a thickness of  $1.05 \cdot 10^{-5}$  m, while the tube cell  
259 length was fixed to 16 cm. The power goal is achieved with the scaled-down model with an electrical  
260 power output of 8.66 W. The polarization curves (i-V and i-p) of the 2D model are reported below:



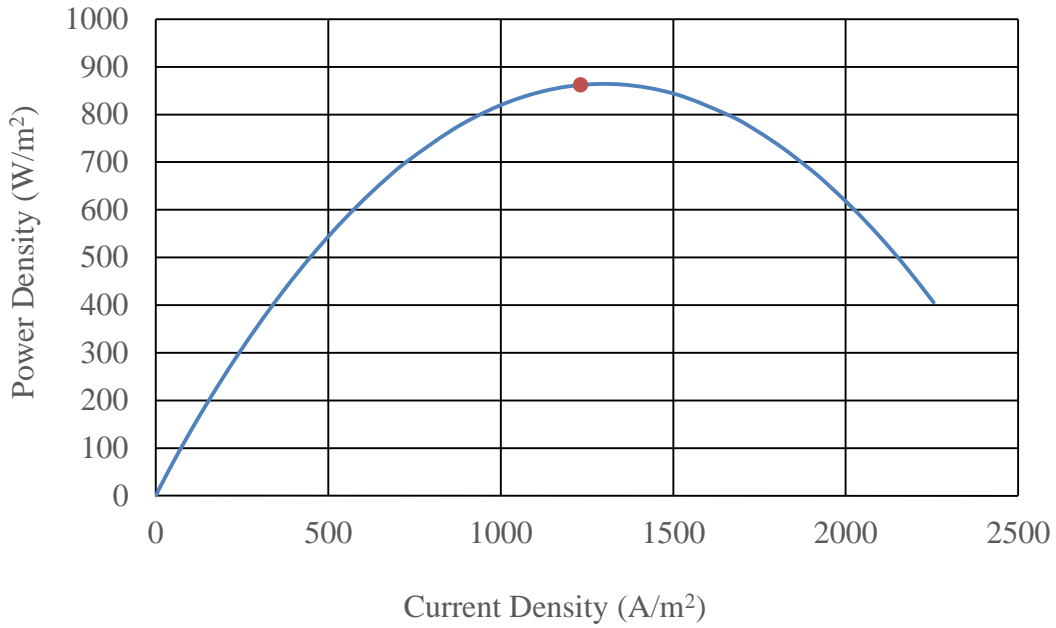


Figure 3. Polarization curves of the tubular cell 2D model

A similar model was approached by Kattke et al. (2011) where a tubular cell powered by liquid fuels is investigated [51]. The 1-D CFD electrochemical model shows a cell electrical power ranging from 7.6 to 10.8 W.

### 3D model

Afterwards, the same cell shown above was modelled using a 3D model with a coarser mesh to limit the computational cost. In this 3D model, the material properties were taken into account by including their dependence on the temperature distribution achieved. The maximum electrical power achieved by a single tubular cell is 9.5 W. Adding into the model the temperature control system, the temperature distribution improves. The electrical output increases with both water and air temperature control. As can be seen from the figure below (Fig. 4), the tubular cell has a higher level and a more uniform Temperature distribution with the air system and the electrical power goes up to 12.63 W (see Table 10).

	Water cooling system	Air cooling system
Electrical current (A)	16.52	18.05

Electrical power (W)	11.57	12.63
Efficiency (%)	27.18	29.68
AU (%)	51.57	56.32
FU (%)	56.8	62.0
Conversion efficiency (%)	47.85	47.85

Table 10. Overall results of the 3D model with the two different cooling systems

The difference in power output is due to the inhibition of the upper part of the cell by the water cooling system, because, due to the enormous difference between the temperature inside the cell and the temperature of the fluid, the ionic conductivity of the electrolyte in this area reaches a value close to zero. The conversion efficiency of the syngas within the electrochemical reaction is constant. The parameter penalised by the water temperature control system is the overall efficiency of the cell, which in turn is linked to the limitations induced on the electric current and consequently on the electric power. Consequently, the cell FU also decreases.



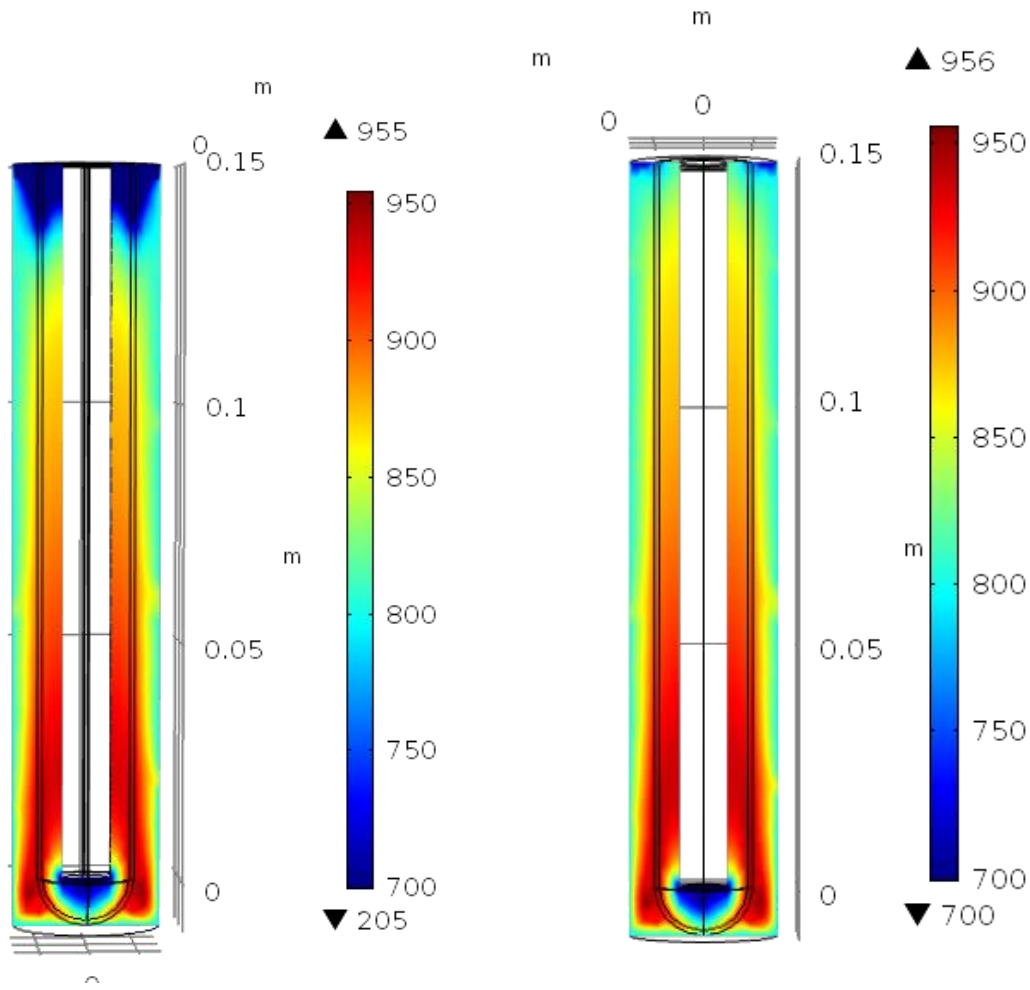


Figure 4. Temperature distribution inside a 3D cell cooled by water (on the left) and cooled by air (on the right)

As reported by Boigues-Munoz et al. (2014), the temperature control is of great importance in the system overall efficiency [52].

This manuscript focuses on the arrangement study of the individual tubular cells for the 200 W SOFC stack. The arrangement of the tubular cells is carried out either as a square (32 cm side) or in a circle configuration (36.3 cm). The aim is to choose the best temperature control system for the two cell arrangements. The molar composition of syngas from residual biomass is defined in the initial part of the chapter. The arrangement of the cells in a square or circle is shown in the following figure 5.

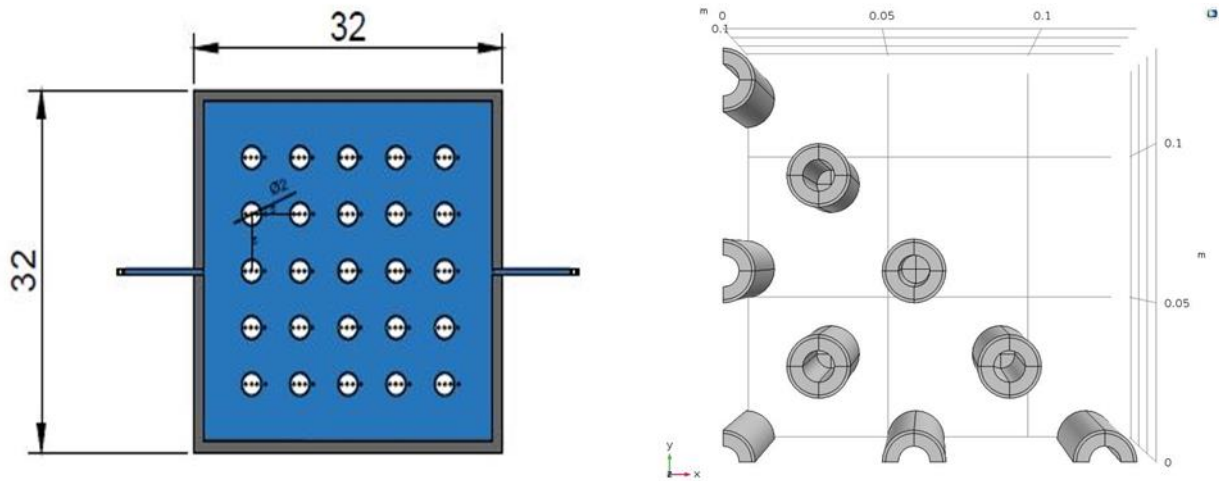


Figure 5. The two stacks configurations - on the left the square configuration and on the right the circular configuration. The connections between the cells are established by connectors outside the stack at the top of the tubular cells. There is no influence of the connectors within the fluidic current of the syngas. Cells in square configuration are connected in series. The connection features of the tubular cells in circular configuration is reported below:

- connect the 5 cells in position 0 m in series;
- connect 4 cells in position -0.03 m with 1 cell in position -0.06 m and, symmetrically, the corresponding cells on the right of the stack;
- connect the last 10 cells, five by five, on the right and on the left of the stack.

The electrical powers produced by the stack in circular or square configuration are shown in the following tables. The dependence of the power production on the operating temperature variation is also shown. The selected range starts at 650 °C and goes up to 800 °C.

#### Power Outputs – Squared Stack

	Water cooling	Air cooling
800 – 750 °C	206 W	219 W

800 – 700 °C	162 W	171 W
800 – 650 °C	135 W	142 W

Table 11. Power outputs of the squared stack powered by the 800 °C pre-treated biomass

### Power Outputs – Circular Stack

	Water cooling	Air cooling
800 – 750 °C	193 W	204 W
800 – 700 °C	136 W	141 W
800 – 650 °C	104 W	106 W

Table 12. Power outputs of the circular stack powered by the 800 °C pre-treated biomass

The tables show how the electrical power produced by the SOFC tubular cell stack with air temperature control is advantageous, under all conditions, compared to temperature control with pressurised water. The electrical power produced with a temperature distribution of 50 °C is advantageous and allows to achieve the target electrical power of 200 W. The best configuration is the square configuration for all temperature conditions and stack temperature control system. This result is due to the better and more uniform temperature distribution under the same operating conditions. The electrical power distribution within the stack is presented in figure 6 (square configuration 5x5 cells). The best temperature control system has been chosen, while the role of the pre-treatment temperature is highlighted (500 °C and 800 °C).

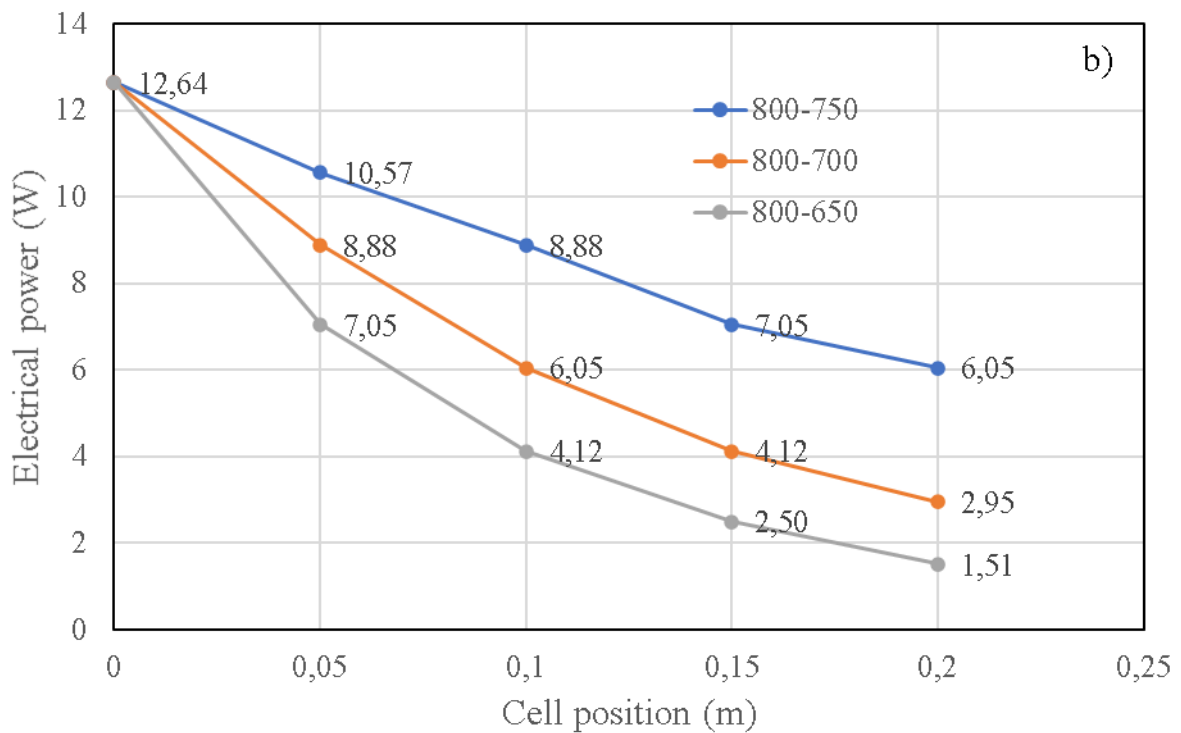
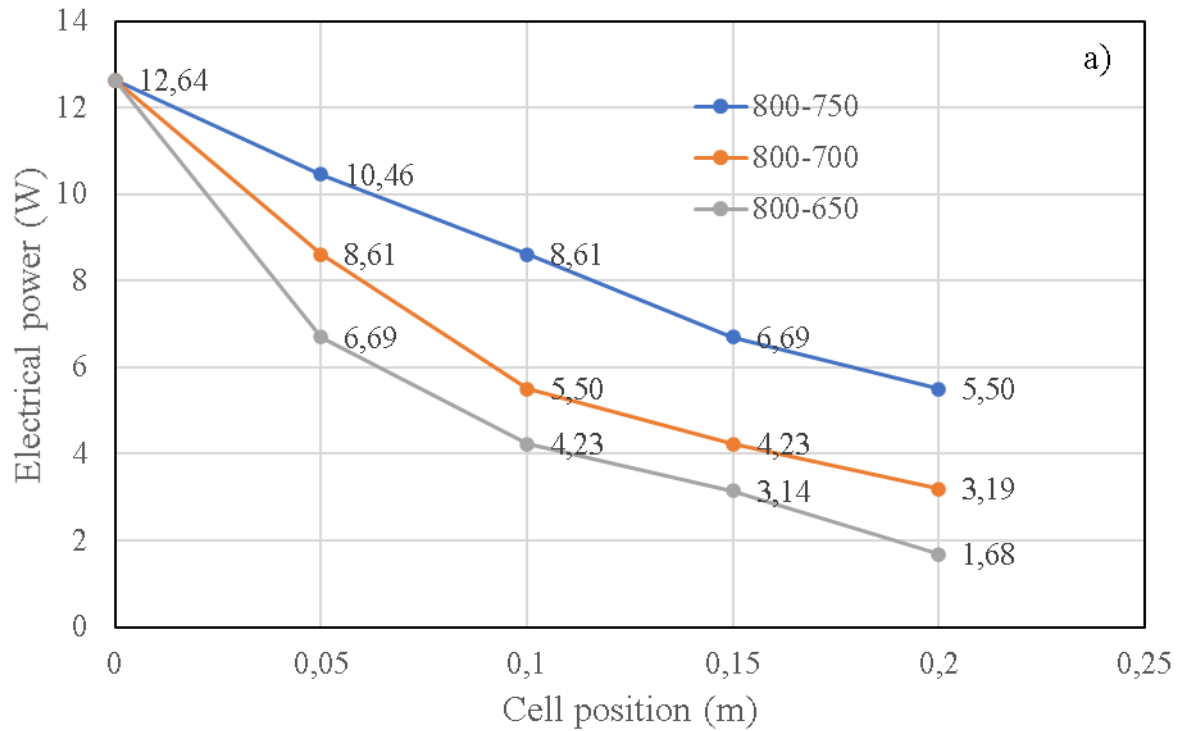


Figure 6. Electrical power distribution in the stack – a) biomass pre-treated at 800 °C and b) at 500 °C

The tubular cells arranged 5x5 in each position, from position 0 to 0.2 m, are able to provide 219 W with biomass pre-treated at 800 °C, while provide 225 W with biomass pre-treated at 500 °C. The results achieved by the model show better results for cells arranged in a square configuration, operating with the biomass pre-treated at 500 °C and controlled with air.

## 5. Conclusions

The SOFC tubular cell system fed directly by residual biomass from the Mediterranean areas was investigated. The study did not concern only the single cell, as done in the previous publication, but involved several aspects. The focus was on the syngas mixture obtained from the biomass, investigating the pre-treatment temperature, the cell layout and the temperature control system of the stack.

In conclusion, the configuration analysis showed that the best solution in terms of extracted power will be the square stack fed by the biomass pre-treated at 500 °C. The maximum electrical power output is achieved for the square tubular cell configuration, reaching 225 W. This power is distributed in the 5 by 5 rows of tubular cells controlled by the air system, with an even cell temperature distribution varying between 800 °C and 750 °C. However, with the OK500 pre-treated biomass, a pre-heating chamber will have to be designed to heat the solid fuel in an inert atmosphere, in order to limit the decreasing of CO and H<sub>2</sub>. Results of the coupling between the biomass feeding system and the gasification process will be published soon. The biomass feeding system operating at the cell temperature (800 °C) is able to produce 219 W. More generally, it appears that the circular configuration provides less power than the square configuration. The circular configuration is limited by the multiple series connection to the lowest current value. From a thermal point of view, the cells are subjected to high temperatures, especially on the lower part of the stack. Here the cooling system to control the thermal distribution can not operate efficiently. The high temperatures could be an advantage for the endothermic biomass gasification process. The minimum temperature values recorded from the water cooling system are dangerous for the cells integrity. Future works will be required for the carbon deposition phenomena investigation.

346 **Acknowledgements**

1  
347 This work has been partly funded by the European Union under the DB-SOFC project  
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348 (ERANETMED2-72-246).  
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**Declaration of interests**

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

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

Declarations of interest: none