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The Recent Development of Eco-Friendly Supercapacitors

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Abstract

Carbon from biomass as an active material for supercapacitor electrodes has attracted interest due to its environmental soundness, abundance, and favourable physical and chemical properties. In this context, activated carbon prepared from coconut shells via a simple activation process (water or steam as activation agents) was used as the active material in the fabrication of supercapacitors electrodes. Activated carbon produced by this approach exhibits a graphitic phase, a high surface area, a large pore volume, and high electrical conductivity. The energy storage properties of activated carbon electrodes correlate with the morphological and structural properties of the precursor material. In particular, electrodes made of activated carbon exhibiting the largest Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) surface area, i.e. 1998 m²/g, showed a specific capacitance of 132.3 F g⁻¹ in aqueous electrolyte (1.5 M H₂SO₄), using expanded graphite sheets as current collector substrates. Remarkably, this sample in a configuration with ionic liquid (1-methyl-1-propyl-pyrrolizinium bis(fluorosulfonyl)mide) (MPPyFSI) as electrolyte and a polyethylene separator displayed a specific capacitance of 219.4 F g⁻¹. To the best of our knowledge, these values are the highest ever reported for ionic liquid-based supercapacitors with activated carbon obtained from the biomass coconut shells. We have also investigated the incorporation of Triton X-100, into the aqueous H₂SO₄ electrolyte to make the polyethylene separator more compatible with the electrolyte by altering its surface properties. The addition of Triton X-100 to the H₂SO₄ electrolyte showed better permeability of ions through the hydrophobic polyethylene separator by decreasing the contact angle from 101.5° to 30.2° for the electrolyte. This change from hydrophobic to hydrophilic enhances the wetting of the separator membrane facilitating ionic transport through the separator. This modification leads to a specific capacity of 55.3 F/g with the addition of 48.8% (V/V) Triton X-100 to the 1M H₂SO₄ electrolyte concentration.