

# Physicochemical Properties of Films from Semirefined Carrageenan/TiO<sub>2</sub> Integrated with Cinnamaldehyde Pickering Emulsion for Active Food Packaging

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**Abstract:** Plastic waste has become a significant global environmental issue, particularly in the context of food packaging. In the present study, active packaging films were fabricated by integrating chitosan-stabilized cinnamaldehyde Pickering emulsion (PE) and titanium dioxide particles (TNPs) into the semirefined carrageenan (SRC) matrix. The impact of cinnamaldehyde PE and TNPs on the physical and mechanical attributes of the SRC films was explored. The integration of TNPs (3%, w/v) and 0.5% cinnamaldehyde PE revealed promising mechanical properties, with 21.86 MPa tensile strength and 34.21% of elongation at break value. The inclusion of TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE led to enhancements in the moisture content and water solubility of the SRC films. The thermal stability of the film was marginally increased with 0.5% cinnamaldehyde PE. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) revealed a uniform distribution of active compounds in the SRC matrix. The study findings highlight the potential of cinnamaldehyde PE and TNPs in active food packaging films as eco-friendly alternatives to conventional petrochemical-derived plastics in food packaging.

**Keywords:** Active food packaging, plastics waste, nanoparticle, pickering emulsion, cinnamaldehyde, titanium dioxide.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Renewable polymers like polysaccharides, proteins, and lipids are being explored as eco-friendly packaging materials for food products, as a replacement for non-degradable petrochemical-based alternatives [1,2]. Carrageenan-derived polysaccharides from red algae are abundant biopolymers with strong gel properties, used in packaging as film-forming material due to their superior mechanical properties and effective barrier against gases, lipids, and oils (Aga *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, semirefined carrageenan (SRC) has a lower purity than other carrageenan products, with cellulose remaining from seaweed for enhanced binding and gelling properties at a lower cost [3]. Nonetheless, because of their hydrophilicity, most of the biopolymers are restricted in their application in food packaging due to the fact that the materials possess an affinity for water [4]. Utilizing carrageenan in conjunction with other biopolymers like cellulose nanofibril (CNF) improves the mechanical, barrier, and thermal properties of biopolymer packaging films [5]. Cellulose, comprised of the major substance in plant cell walls, is

abundant, cost-effective, and coupled with its outstanding capability to form packaging films [6,7].

Nowadays, researchers have recently shown significant interest in incorporating nanofiller compounds to improve the functional properties of biopolymer-based packaging films, such as nanocellulose/gellan gum [8], gelatin/cellulose nanofiber/zinc oxide nanoparticles [9], chitosan/NiO nanoparticles [10], and cellulose nanofibrils/ZnO nanoparticles/Pickering emulsion-oregano essential oil [11]. In this scenario, titanium dioxide nanoparticles (TNPs) have received a lot of attention as a safe, cost-effective, and stable metal oxide nanoparticle used as a functional filler for packaging films [12,13]. Furthermore, TNPs presents numerous advantages, including antibacterial properties, biocompatibility, photocatalytic activity, high refractive index, and ultraviolet absorption [12,14]. Packaging films incorporating various TNPs such as those made from sago starch [15], gelatin [16], chitosan [17], and hydroxypropyl methylcellulose [18], demonstrated enhanced antibacterial activities, tensile properties, and water vapor permeability.

On the other hand, essential oils (EOs) have garnered significant attention as a potential substitute for food preservation because of their bacteriostatic

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[19]. Cinnamaldehyde, found in natural EOs like cinnamon cassia, rose, and cinnamon bark has various pharmacological functions including antioxidant, antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and anticancer [20]. Employing EOs that are potent with antibacterial and antioxidant compounds in food packaging materials can mitigate food safety risks related to oxidation [21,22]. Nevertheless, the utilization of EOs constrained by the active compound's high volatility, and the compatibility between EOs and matrix polymers is poor and susceptible to phase separation, leading to the deterioration of film's properties [23,24]. Therefore, it is essential to choose suitable carriers for encapsulating EOs as an approach to safeguarding against the evaporation and oxidation of EOs. To address these limitations, a Pickering emulsion (PE) are utilized to enhance the dispersion of hydrophobic substances stabilized by solid particles such as chitosan, starch and zein [23]. The preparation of PE involves techniques such as, high shear homogenization and ultrasonication to create stable oil droplets [25]. The integration of PE, which contains EO stabilized by hydrophilic polymers, improves the biological performance of biodegradable packaging films [26].

However, limited research exists on the impact of SRC incorporated with TNPs and cinnamaldehyde EO stabilized by PE on the physicochemical properties of active packaging films. Our previous study showed excellent mechanical properties on the film formulation with SRC/TNPs [27] and SRC/cellulose nanofibril (CNF) [28]. In this study, cinnamaldehyde PE was prepared by chitosan as a stabilizer. Then, SRC/CNF packaging films loaded with TNPs and varying concentration of cinnamaldehyde PE were developed. The resulting films will be analyzed for their structure morphology, mechanical, thermal, and physical properties.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 2.1. Materials

Semirefined carrageenan was obtained by CV Simpul Agro Globalindo, Indonesia. Titanium dioxide (size: 20–25 nm, 99.7% purity), glacial acetic acid (99 %), chitosan (medium molecular weight), cinnamaldehyde (natural, ≥95%) and glycerol were provided from Sigma-Aldrich, USA. Cellulose nanofibril was supplied from UPM Biomass Centre. Ultra-pure water was used to fabricate films and Pickering emulsion.

### 2.2. Preparation of Cinnamaldehyde PE

Cinnamaldehyde PE was prepared following a previously described method with minor modifications [29]. First, chitosan (2%, w/v) was dissolved in 10 mg/mL glacial acetic acid solution using magnetic stirrer at 1500 rpm for 16 h. The chitosan nano-suspension was prepared by ultrasonication (Q700 Sonicator, Newtown) at an amplitude of 20 for 10 min while maintaining a constant temperature by immersing the suspension in cold water. Subsequently, cinnamaldehyde (1%, v/v) was blended into the chitosan nano-suspension and agitated using homogenizer (T25 UltraTurrax, IKA Werke GmbH & Co, Germany) at 10,000 rpm for a duration of 10 min. The sample was transferred to a transparent vial and stored at 4 °C prior to the analysis. The droplet size and the polydispersity index (PDI) of cinnamaldehyde Pickering emulsion was measured by Zetasizer Nano ZS (Malvern Instruments, UK) at room temperature.

### 2.3. Preparation of SRC/Cinnamaldehyde PE Films

The SRC/cinnamaldehyde PE films were fabricated by solution casting method with minor modifications [30]. Initially, SRC (2%, w/v) was added into ultra-pure water and subjected to continuous stirring at 80 °C for 30 min. Glycerol (45%, v/v, based on SRC) was introduced as a plasticizer, and CNF (10%, v/v) was added as a reinforcing material [31] into the film-forming solution. The TNPs (3%, w/v) were initially suspended in ultra-pure water and subjected to sonication (Q700 Sonicator, Newtown) for 30 min. Afterwards, TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE at various concentrations (0.1, 0.5, 1, and 3%, v/v) were added to the film solution at a constant temperature. Film without cinnamaldehyde PE was prepared as a control film. The film solution was subsequently cast onto a non-stick casting plate. The films were dried in an oven at 40 °C overnight and then stored at room temperature for further analysis. The film samples were developed as the following Table 1.

### 2.4. Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) Analysis

The FTIR spectrum of the film sample within the wavelength range of 600 to 4000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  was evaluated using the attenuated total reflection (ATR) component (Nicolet iS5 spectrometer, Thermo Fisher Scientific, United States).

### 2.5. Mechanical Properties

The film thickness was determined as the average of measurements taken at five randomly selected

**Table 1: Film Formulation**

Sample	TNPs (% w/v)	Cinnamaldehyde PE (% v/v)
SRC	–	–
SRC/TNPs	3	–
SRC/TNPs/0.1PE	3	0.1
SRC/TNPs/0.5PE	3	0.5
SRC/TNPs/1PE	3	1.0
SRC/TNPs/3PE	3	3.0

positions (Vernier caliper). The tensile strength (TS) and elongation at break (E) of the film samples (10 × 1 cm<sup>2</sup>) were determined in accordance with the ASTM D 882 standard method (ASTM International) using tensile testing machine (AG-X plus, Japan) at a constant speed of 10 mm/min. The stress-strain curves offered the film values for TS (MPa) and E (%).

## 2.6. Water Solubility

The film samples (2 × 2 cm<sup>2</sup>) were subjected to drying in an oven at 100 °C until a constant weight,  $W_0$ , was achieved [31]. Following this, the film samples were immersed in 30 mL of distilled water for 24 hours at room temperature. Subsequently, the undissolved film samples were dried at 100 °C to a constant weight,  $W_f$ . The water solubility was calculated using the following equation:

$$\text{Water solubility (\%)} = \frac{W_0 - W_f}{W_0} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

## 2.7. Moisture Content

The moisture content of the film samples was determined by measuring the weight loss of the films (2 × 2 cm<sup>2</sup>) before drying ( $W_1$ ) and after undergoing a 24-hour drying process in an oven at 100 °C ( $W_2$ ) [31]. Moisture content was then calculated using the specified equation.

$$\text{Moisture content (\%)} = \frac{W_1 - W_2}{W_1} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

## 2.8. Opacity

The opacity of the films was assessed using a UV-visible spectrophotometer (U-1800, Japan) at a wavelength of 600 nm, employing an empty plastic cuvette as the reference [31]. The opacity of the films was then determined through the following equation:

$$\text{Opacity} = \frac{\text{Abs}_{600}}{d} \times 100 \quad (3)$$

where  $Abs$  is the absorbance, and  $d$  is the thickness of the film (mm).

## 2.9. Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)

SEM a technique used to study the surface morphology and topography of materials at high magnification. When applied to semi-refined carrageenan films, SEM can provide detailed information about its micro-surface of films.

## 2.10. Thermogravimetric Analysis (TGA)

The thermal stability of the films was assessed employing a TGA (SDT Q600 V20.9 Shimadzu, Tokyo) analyzer. Samples weighing 1–2 mg were positioned in the heating chamber, enveloped by an inert nitrogen atmosphere (with a flow rate of 50 mL/min), and subjected to a heating rate of 10 °C/min. The examination of thermal stability was conducted within the temperature range of 25 °C to 400 °C.

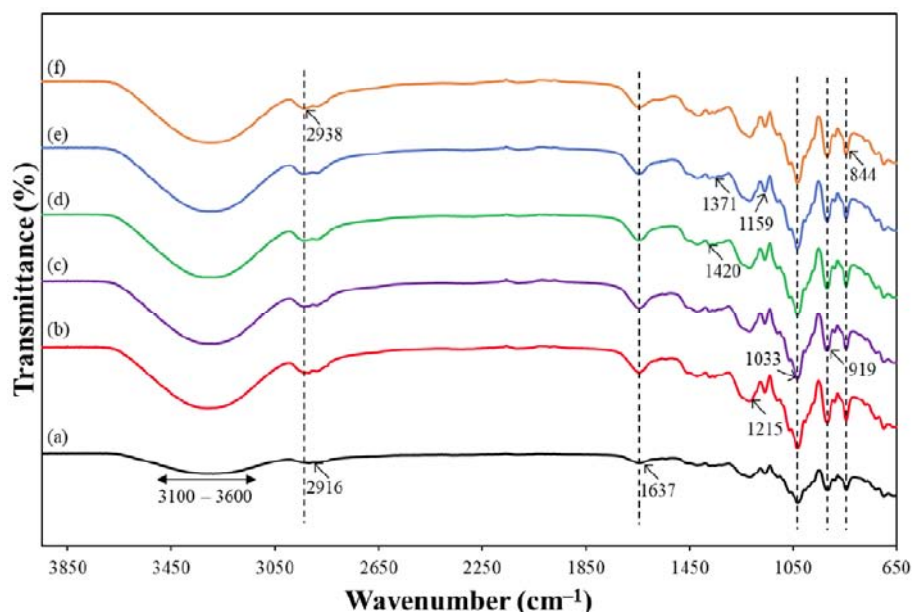
## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Characterization of Cinnamaldehyde PE

The particle size and PDI of cinnamaldehyde PE were 314.7 nm and 0.520, respectively. Previous study demonstrated a similar trend with droplet diameter of chitosan-loaded nanoemulsion with 0.5% EO (342.33 nm) than that of chitosan-loaded NE with 1% EO (455.13 nm) [32]. The mean droplet size of nanoemulsions that is smaller than 500 nm and PDI < 0.7 has been recognized as colloidal dispersion droplets, which bring homogeneity and stability and prevent droplet aggregation [19,33].

### 3.2. FTIR Analysis

The FTIR were employed for the analysis of chemical bonding and alterations in the functional



**Figure 1:** FTIR spectra of (a) SRC, (b) SRC/TNPs, (c) SRC/TNPs/0.1PE, (d) SRC/TNPs/0.5PE, (e) SRC/TNPs/1PE, and (f) SRC/TNPs/3PE.

groups of active packaging films. Figure 1 showed the FTIR spectra in the wavenumbers ranging from 500 – 4000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of SRC, TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE. The films displayed a broad band between 3100 and 3600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , corresponding to the O—H stretching vibration of the hydrogen bond–hydroxyl group in carrageenan and absorbed water [34,35]. The peak detected at  $\sim 2916$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$  corresponds to the vibration of C—H stretching in all the films [36]. In the SRC films, signature bands of kappa carrageenan were noticeable at 1215  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , 844  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , and 919  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . There were attributed with the sulfate ester (O=S=O stretching), galactose-4-sulfate (C—O—S stretching), and 3,6-anhydro-galactose ring, respectively [34,36,37]. The band at 1159  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  is associated with the symmetric stretching of C—O—C, while the band at 1033  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  corresponds to the stretching of C—O and C—OH groups [38].

The titanium dioxide spectra display a wide band below 600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , signifying the formation of nanostructures attributed to the metal-oxygen (Ti—O stretching) mode [39]. Previous studies demonstrated a similar trend, with a broad peak below 850  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , indicating the stretching of the TiO for pure titanium dioxide nanostructure [40]. The interaction of various concentrations of cinnamaldehyde PE and TNPs in the SRC matrix led to a subtle change and shifting in the intensity of the bands, evident in all SRC films. Furthermore, the SRC films loaded with cinnamaldehyde PE showed stronger absorption spectra at approximately 1420  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and 1371  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  compared to unloaded cinnamaldehyde films.

Meanwhile, the characteristic band at 2916  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  for the SRC films shifted to 2938  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  at a higher concentration of cinnamaldehyde in the films. A comparable pattern was disclosed in the study by Basumatary *et al.* [41], signifying the interaction between the combined active agents in the chitosan films with a shift and alteration in peak intensity.

### 3.3. Mechanical Properties of the Films

Packaging film with favorable mechanical properties, such as high tensile strength (TS) and elongation at break (E), proves beneficial for the efficient distribution and storage of food items. The TS and E properties of the films are primarily determined by the interaction among compounds and the internal structure within the film matrix [12]. Table 2 shows the thickness, TS and E properties of the films. The TS of TNPs-containing film increased slightly to 15.11 MPa when compared to the TS of SRC/CNF film (14.48 MPa). Furthermore, TNPs-loaded SRC films increased the E value of the SRC films from 15.76% to 20.97%. The higher content of TNPs significantly has a notable impact on the agglomeration of particles within the film matrix, consequently affecting the TS of the films [42]. This study suggests that TNPs at a specific concentration can be evenly distributed, serve as fillers, and reinforce the film network.

Conversely, incorporating cinnamaldehyde PE resulted in an enhancement of both the TS and E, and the film containing 0.5% cinnamaldehyde possessed

the highest TS and E values, measuring at 21.86 MPa and 34.22%, respectively. Nevertheless, as the concentration of the cinnamaldehyde PE increased from 0.5% to 3%, both the TS and E values of the films declined. The integration of the emulsion substances could function as a plasticizer in the matrices, improving the flexibility and strength of the films [25]. On the contrary, with an elevated concentration of cinnamaldehyde PE, there is a possibility of droplet aggregation during the film's casting and drying, resulting in a subsequent decline in the mechanical properties of the films [43]. Larger oil droplets have the potential to disturb the internal structure of the film matrix, resulting in an uneven structure [29]. Hence, the study revealed that incorporating cinnamaldehyde PE and TNPs at a particular concentration markedly improved the TS and E values of the films.

**Table 2: Tensile Strength and Elongation Values of SRC Films with TNPs and Varying Concentrations of Cinnamaldehyde PE**

Sample	TS (MPa)	E (%)
SRC	14.48 ± 0.67	15.76 ± 0.89
SRC/TNPs	15.11 ± 1.53	20.97 ± 1.87
SRC/TNPs/0.1PE	17.25 ± 1.09	24.98 ± 2.34
SRC/TNPs/0.5PE	21.86 ± 0.42	34.22 ± 1.56
SRC/TNPs/1PE	19.14 ± 3.76	27.63 ± 2.85
SRC/TNPs/3PE	13.79 ± 1.02	26.34 ± 1.54

### 3.4. Physical Properties of the Films

The water solubility (S) and moisture content (M) of the SRC films are summarized in Table 2. The M value is an indicator that refers to the total void volume occupied by water molecules in the film matrix [44]. The addition of TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE to the SRC films slightly decreased the M values from

33.23% to 31.00%. The decrease in M value likely resulted from the robust intermolecular interaction within the compounds in the matrices, impeding the effective absorption of water molecules [45]. In addition, the hydrophobic nature of the oil encapsulated in the O/W emulsion would replace the partial interaction of polymers, active compounds, and water molecules in the matrices, consequently reducing the M value of the film [46]. Shen *et al.* [47] found that combining pullulan-gelatin-based films with PE containing clove essential oil reduced the M value, making the films more moisture-resistant. In particular, the incorporation of TNPs is thought to change the physical properties of the films and reduce the M value of the films. According to the study conducted by Dash *et al.* [44], an increment in the TNPs concentration from 0 to 4% reduced the M values of the starch film, measuring at 23.12% to 15.15%.

The S value is a crucial functional property for biodegradable-based packaging films due to its close linkage with the material's hydrophilicity property [48]. Conversely, high humidity conditions can soften the film's structure, leading to the use of lower-solubility films to minimize wetness for packaging applications [44]. The S value exhibited improvement with the incorporation of TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE at any concentration, with values ranging from 86.99% to 47.82% (Table 3). The lowest S value was achieved with the incorporation of 1% cinnamaldehyde, possibly due to the homogeneous structure in biodegradable active films [49]. According to the study by Zhao *et al.* [50], the solubility of chitosan nanoparticle films stabilized with Pickering emulsion is lowest due to stronger hydrogen bond interactions within the polymers and active compounds, which hindered the interaction of hydroxyl groups with water molecules. Hasheminya *et al.* [51] also observed a decrease in the S value of the gum-based films that incorporated EO-based nanoemulsions, and this phenomenon was

**Table 3: Moisture Content and Water Solubility of SRC Films with TNPs and Varying Concentrations of Cinnamaldehyde PE**

Sample	Moisture Content (%)	Water Solubility (%)
SRC	33.23 ± 0.98	86.99 ± 1.36
SRC/TNPs	33.16 ± 1.25	73.31 ± 0.69
SRC/TNPs/0.1PE	31.45 ± 2.44	74.39 ± 0.73
SRC/TNPs/0.5PE	32.15 ± 0.13	66.34 ± 3.87
SRC/TNPs/1PE	31.00 ± 1.86	47.82 ± 1.93
SRC/TNPs/3PE	32.17 ± 0.23	71.26 ± 0.14

attributed to the hydrophobicity of the oil. Hence, the hydrophilic disadvantage of films can be somewhat mitigated by adding nanoparticles and/or emulsions containing essential oils.

### 3.5. Thickness and Opacity of the Films

The thickness of the SRC films in this study ranged from 0.0830 to 0.1270 mm (Table 4). The study found that incorporating active compounds resulted in the creation of more intricate matrices, consequently increasing the thickness of the SRC films [27].

**Table 4: Thickness and Opacity of SRC Films with TNPs and Varying Concentrations of Cinnamaldehyde PE**

Films	Thickness (mm)	Opacity ( $\text{mm}^{-1}$ )
SRC	$0.0830 \pm 0.0051$	$3.10 \pm 0.41$
SRC/TNPs	$0.0900 \pm 0.0032$	$12.47 \pm 0.97$
SRC/TNPs/0.1PE	$0.0870 \pm 0.0085$	$13.78 \pm 0.37$
SRC/TNPs/0.5PE	$0.0930 \pm 0.0048$	$11.47 \pm 0.62$
SRC/TNPs/1PE	$0.0900 \pm 0.0091$	$13.44 \pm 0.34$
SRC/TNPs/3PE	$0.1270 \pm 0.0035$	$10.95 \pm 0.73$

Film transparency is crucial in food packaging for quality control, especially for perishable foods like meat, but it can also cause oxidation reactions from the light, leading to spoilage [13,40]. The opacity of the film is determined by ultraviolet-visible spectroscopy at the absorbance value of 600 nm with the film thickness [9,16]. Table 4 shows the opacity value of the SRC films incorporated with TNPs and various concentrations of cinnamaldehyde PE. The addition of 3% TNPs increased the opacity of the film from 3.10 to 12.47  $\text{mm}^{-1}$ . However, the addition of cinnamaldehyde PE at 0.1% and 1% slightly increased the film's opacity, with values of 13.78  $\text{mm}^{-1}$  and 13.44  $\text{mm}^{-1}$ , respectively. In contrary, the film with 3% cinnamaldehyde PE exhibited a lower opacity value of 10.95  $\text{mm}^{-1}$  as compared to the unloaded cinnamaldehyde film. A previous study revealed that the transparency of pectin/gelatin film decreased with TNPs concentration, and film with 5% TNPs having the highest opacity, possibly due to the light scattering of nano-substances in the film matrix [40]. Nonetheless, the addition of cinnamaldehyde PE increased the opacity of the film, which may be due to the dispersion of droplets in the film matrix. The opacity of a film is significantly influenced by the size and number of scattered oil droplets, which are determined by the

difference in refractive index between the two phases [52]. Liu *et al.* [53] showed a similar trend, adding cinnamon oil-Pickering emulsion to cellulose-based film reduced light transmittance due to the oil droplet dispersion.

### 3.6. SEM Analysis

The SEM analysis (Figure 2) was employed to examine the surface morphology of the SRC films, revealing their microstructure and the distribution compatibility of compounds within the film matrix. The SEM images exhibited a surface with fold-like features and the absence of any holes or cracks for all of the SRC films. The even distribution of TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE throughout the polymer matrix showcases the uniform distribution of the compounds in the matrices. The study indicates that incorporating TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE exhibits compatibility with polymer compounds in the film matrix, resulting in the formation of a continuous structure in the film. Research conducted by Kim *et al.* [6] illustrated a uniform distribution of active compounds in the matrices, and it was observed that the droplet size of the compounds increased with concentration in CNF-based films.

### 3.7. Thermal Properties of the Films

The thermal degradation and decomposition of the SRC films were evaluated by TGA to observe the thermal stability, which was helpful for determining the films' resistance to incineration [54]. The rapid thermal change (evaporation and decomposition) in the film samples was provided by the DTG peak. The TGA thermogram pattern (Figure 3) showed that the thermal degradation of the films is classified into multi-stages. First, initial weight loss was observed between 30 – 100 °C indicated to the evaporation of any remaining solvent and water [54,55]. Next, the majority of weight loss took place between 140 – 400 °C, due to the heat degradation of glycerol and polysaccharides, and the highest decomposition of the materials occurring roughly at 222 – 224 °C [56]. The addition of cinnamaldehyde PE at 0.5% slightly increased the thermal stability of the films as compared to the other SRC films. The char residual of the films increased marginally from ~22% to ~26% at 600 °C.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The addition of TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE enhanced the mechanical and physical properties of the SRC films. The study found that the incorporation

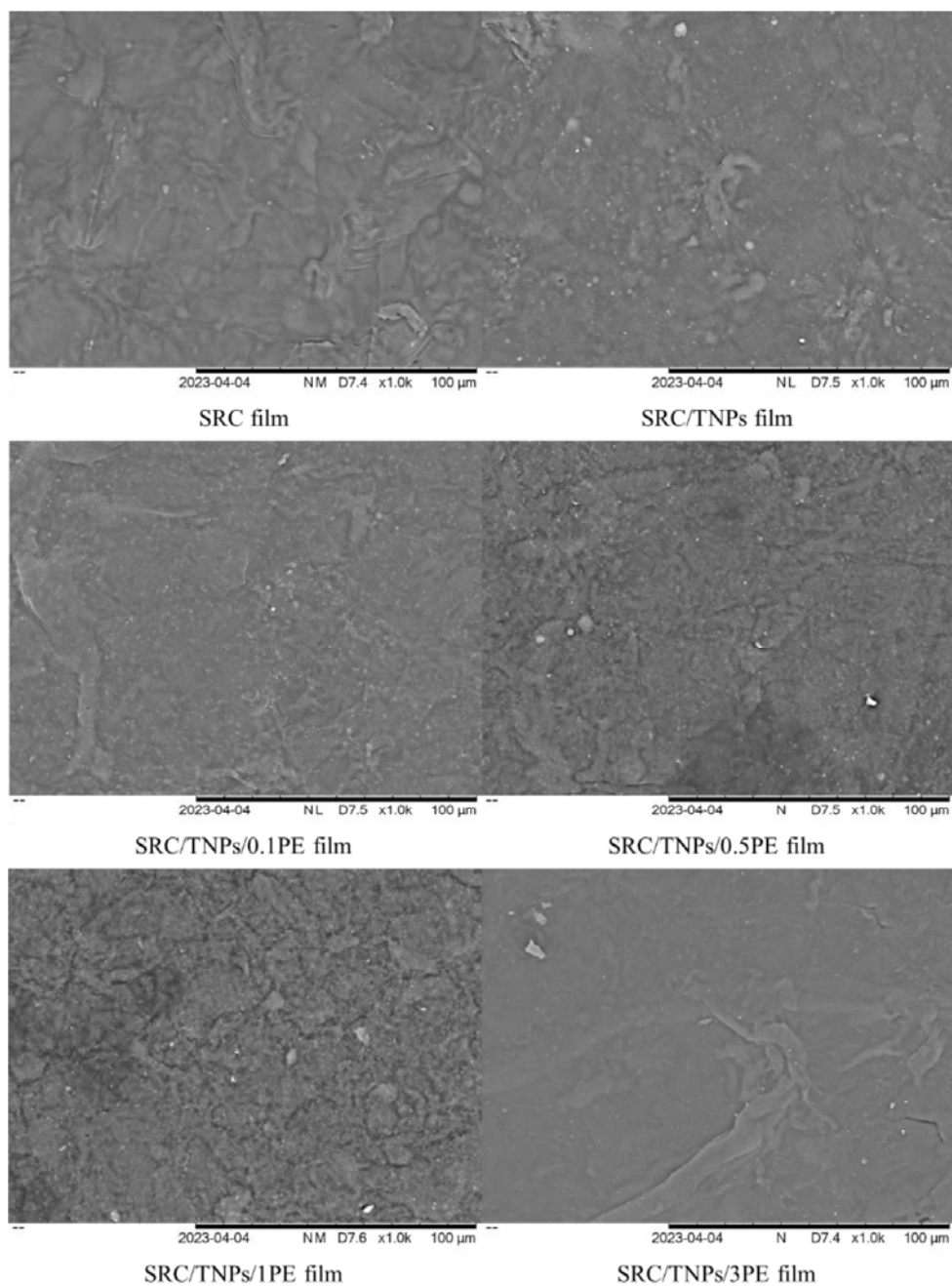


Figure 2: Surface morphology of SRC films with TNPs and varying concentrations of cinnamaldehyde PE.

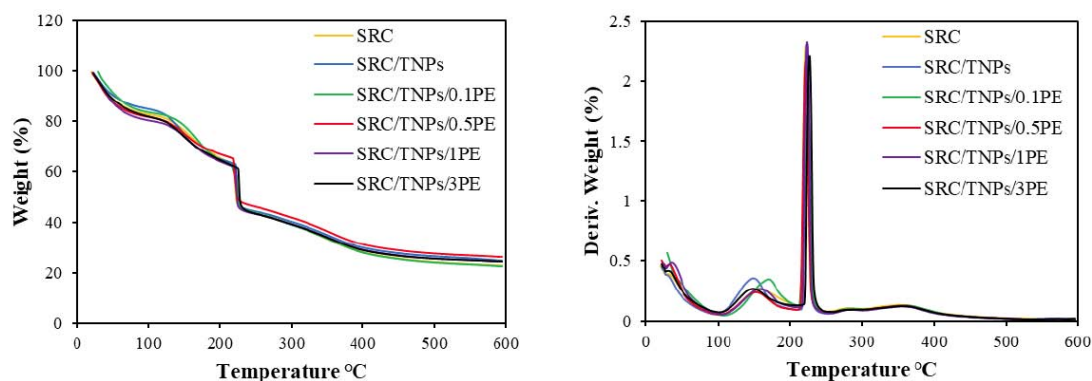


Figure 3: Thermal profile (a) TGA and (b) DTG of SRC films with TNPs and varying concentrations of cinnamaldehyde PE.

of 0.5% cinnamaldehyde PE possessed the highest TS and E with values of 21.86 MPa and 34.22%, respectively, in the SRC film. Furthermore, the SRC film with TNPs and 0.5% cinnamaldehyde PE showed a smooth surface morphology as compared to the other SRC films. The moisture content and water solubility of the films improved with the addition of TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE at any concentration. The thermal stability of the films marginally increased with the incorporation of cinnamaldehyde PE at 0.5%. Hence, this study integrated that the addition of TNPs and cinnamaldehyde PE enhanced the mechanical, physical, and thermal properties of the SRC films, which presenting favorable attributes to support the preservation of packaged food as an eco-friendly alternative to non-degradable packaging materials.

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