
Preface

Because of their health-associated benefits, species of the genus *Bifidobacterium* are undoubtedly among the bacteria with more increasing industrial potential. Bifidobacteria are majority gut populations which are widely used as probiotic organisms in a vast array of formulations for alleviation and treatment of many intestinal disorders. Scientific knowledge on the physiology and genetics of this group of microorganisms has enormously expanded during the last two decades. Moreover, recent genomic and proteomic techniques have gathered an impressive amount of data that could not be envisaged a few years ago.

These reasons prompted us to considerer collecting recent (molecular-oriented) data of bifidobacteria into this book, which is intended to fulfil the growing interest and recent research advances in basic and applied aspects on this microbial group. Authors and contributors to the chapters were selected among well-recognised experts working in the cutting edge of research in bifidobacteria. The reported knowledge is thought to engage the attention of industrial, academic and medical professionals, and to be useful for the many graduate and PhD students interested in this exciting and important microbial genus.

Baltasar Mayo and Douwe van Sinderen