A novel hybrid forward osmosis – nanofiltration (FO-NF) process for seawater desalination: Draw solution selection and system configuration

C.H. Tan, H.Y. Ng*

Division of Environmental Science & Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, National University of Singapore, Block EA #03-12, 9 Engineering Drive 1, Singapore 117576
Tel. +65 6516 4777; Fax +65 6774 4202; email: esenghy@nus.edu.sg

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ABSTRACT

A hybrid forward osmosis–nanofiltration (FO-NF) process for seawater desalination is proposed in this study. Seven potential draw solutions for the FO-NF process were investigated using laboratory-scale forward osmosis (FO) and nanofiltration (NF) test cells. Results from both FO and NF tests suggested that the hybrid FO-NF process is a feasible process for seawater desalination. Water fluxes of about 10 L/m²h, for both FO and NF processes could be achieved. Solute rejection of the FO membrane was maintained at over 99.4% for all seven draw solutes tested. Solute rejection of the NF membrane for the four selected draw solutions could achieve a maximum of 97.9%. A hybrid FO-NF process with two-pass NF regeneration is proposed to achieve good quality product water that meets the recommended drinking water total dissolved solids (TDS) guideline, of 500 mg/L from the World Health Organisation. It is possible to desalinate seawater with this system configuration to obtain product water with TDS of 113.6 mg/L. Finally, MgSO₄ and Na₂SO₄ are proposed as the most likely draw solution for the hybrid process.

Keywords: Forward osmosis; Nanofiltration; Seawater desalination

* Corresponding author.