

**Sarah Lebeer** is a Professor of Microbiology and Biotechnology at the University of Antwerp. The focus of her work is on the bacterial group Lactobacilli, including a strong component related to women's health. Lactobacilli are found in the normal human body and play an important role in maintaining the health of the vagina. They are the main bacteria used to make yogurt and alter the taste of bread to produce sourdough. They are also used in some probiotics to rebalance intestinal microbiota (microbes), along with other bacteria and yeasts.

Sarah Lebeer has performed an impressive number of research studies resulting in over 100 peer-reviewed publications and has collaborated extensively across the world. She was a driving force behind a global effort to refine the taxonomy of Lactobacilli. She has studied Lactobacilli in the context of woman's health, skin therapy, adjuvants to antimicrobial therapy, protecting honeybees, and reducing waste through preparing fermented foods. Her work expands the use of Lactobacilli outside what would be considered traditional uses which demonstrates innovation and thinking 'outside the box'. She integrates cutting-edge systems biology tools with phenotypes, such as vaginal colonization capacities.

An important aspect of her work is based on citizen science projects, including one called Isala, allowing her to collect an impressive collection of vaginal lactobacilli, associated with information about women's health and lifestyle. She has engaged 1000's of women in answering detailed questionnaires and submitting vaginal samples for culture. Other citizen science projects included fermentation of food – Fermes-Pekes and Sonmat.

Overall, Sarah Lebeer has demonstrated excellence in her research work, creativity, social engagement with the very real prospect significant advances in human health and novel foods.