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CRISPR CAS-9 Technology – Mechanism and its Applications

Umesh Kumar V.[1] and M. Mounika[2]
[1]Assistant Professor, Genetics and Plant Breeding, Hyderabad
[2]M.Sc. Scholar, School of Agricultural Sciences, Mallareddy University, Hyderabad

SUMMARY

CRISPR technology, or Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats, is a revolutionary genetic editing tool that is closely related to plant breeding as it allows for precise and efficient genetic editing of plants. Plant breeding is the process of developing new plant varieties through the deliberate manipulation of the genetic makeup of plants. Traditionally, plant breeding has been done through selective breeding, where only plants with desired traits are chosen to be used for breeding. However, this process can be time-consuming and may not result in the desired traits. CRISPR technology offers a new approach and scientists can quickly and easily insert, delete, or modify specific genes in plants. This makes it possible to introduce new traits into plants much faster and more efficiently than traditional breeding methods.

INTRODUCTION

CRISPR technology can be used to create crops that are resistant to specific diseases or pests. This can significantly reduce crop losses and the need for chemical pesticides. Additionally, CRISPR can be used to improve the nutritional content of crops, create crops that are more tolerant to environmental stressors such as drought and high temperatures, and improve the growth and yield of crops thus improving agricultural productivity and food security.It is important to note that CRISPR technology in plant breeding is still in the early stages of development and it still must overcome some challenges such as ensuring the safety and efficacy of the edited crops, ensuring the absence of unintended effects, and ethical concerns.

Components of CRISPR CAS-9

The main components of CRISPR technology include:

CRISPR RNA (crRNA): This is a short RNA molecule that is responsible for binding to the target DNA sequence. It is composed of a "guide" region that binds to the target DNA sequence, and a "spacer" region that binds to the Cas9 enzyme.

Trans-activating CRISPR RNA (tracrRNA): This is a small RNA molecule that is required to form a complex with crRNA to create a functional guide RNA.

Cas9 enzyme: This is an enzyme that is responsible for cutting the DNA at the target location. It is an endonuclease enzyme that makes a double-stranded break in the DNA. Target DNA sequence: The DNA sequence that the CRISPR system is designed to target.

PAM (Protospacer Adjacent Motif): A short sequence of nucleotides that is located immediately next to the target sequence and is necessary for the Cas9 enzyme to recognize and bind to the target DNA.

gRNA (guide RNA) : It is a synthetic RNA molecule that is created by combining crRNA and tracrRNA. It guides the Cas9 enzyme to the specific location on the DNA where the cut is made.

Donor template: It is a piece of DNA that is used in the homology-directed repair mechanism. It provides the cell with the genetic information needed to repair the cut made by Cas9 enzyme.

Delivery method: CRISPR system must be delivered into cells or organisms in order for it to function, different methods can be used such as viral vectors, electroporation, and nanoparticles.

Mechanism of CRISPR CAS-9

CRISPR technology is a genetic editing tool that targets and edits specific sequences of DNA. It is composed of two main components: the guide RNA (gRNA) and the Cas9 enzyme. The gRNA is a short RNA molecule that is designed to bind to a specific sequence of DNA, it is composed of a "guide" region that binds to the target DNA sequence, and a "spacer" region that binds to the Cas9 enzyme. The Cas9 enzyme is a nuclease, an enzyme that can cut DNA. When the gRNA and Cas9 enzyme bind to the target DNA sequence, the Cas9 enzyme makes a double-stranded break in the DNA. Once the DNA is cut, the cell's repair mechanisms are activated, allowing for the insertion or deletion of genetic material. In agriculture, CRISPR technology is used to introduce specific genetic changes into crops that make them more resistant to disease or pests, improve their nutritional content, or make them more tolerant to environmental stressors such as drought and high temperatures. For example, scientists can use CRISPR to introduce genes from wild relatives of crops that are resistant to a specific pathogen or pest into a domesticated crop, or scientists could use CRISPR to edit genes that control the biosynthesis of a nutrient such as Vitamin A in a crop to improve the nutritional content.

Applications of CRISPR technology

Some of the most notable applications of CRISPR technology include:

Disease treatment: CRISPR technology has the potential to be used in the treatment of genetic disorders such as cystic fibrosis and sickle cell anaemia, by editing the specific genetic mutations that cause these diseases. Additionally, CRISPR can be used in gene therapy, which is a treatment that delivers functional genes to cells to replace missing or malfunctioning ones.

Cancer research: CRISPR technology allows scientists to study the genetic mutations that drive cancer development and progression, and to develop new therapies to target these mutations.

Agriculture: CRISPR technology can be used to develop disease-resistant crops, improve the nutritional content of crops, and create crops that are more tolerant to environmental stressors such as drought and high temperatures.

Vaccine development: CRISPR technology can be used to create new vaccines by editing the genetic makeup of viruses to make them safer for use in vaccines.

Biotechnology: CRISPR technology can be used to improve the efficiency and precision of industrial processes such as the production of biofuels and the optimization of enzymes used in industrial processes.

Basic research: CRISPR technology has been used in various organisms to study gene function, regulation, and evolution.

Animal breeding: CRISPR technology can be used to improve the genetic makeup of animals, for example, making them more resistant to disease or more efficient for meat production.

CONCLUSION

As a result of giving farmers a precise tool for crop genetic modification, CRISPR technology has the potential to change agriculture. It can be used to create plants that are nutrient-rich, resistant to disease, and able to flourish in challenging conditions. Using less pesticide and producing more crops are all benefits of this method. Before wide use, it's crucial to carefully assess the safety and any potential effects. CRISPR can be a key tool in the production of sustainable food for an expanding global population by utilizing ethical research and development.

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