Bioinformatic Prediction of SNP Markers in WRKY Sequences of Palms

Manju, K. P¹ and Arunachalam, V^{2, 3*}

Abstract

WRKY transcription factors are unique to plants and performs many imperative functions mainly disease resistance. In the present study we have analyzed the WRKY transcription factor gene sequences to assess the variation at single nucleotide level. We have retrieved 525 sequences of WRKY genes of palms of 334 Kb size. The sequences were purified by employing EST trimmer and were clustered into 31 contigs using CAP3. Single nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNP) and insertion/deletions (indels) were detected in contigs using the AUTOSNP software. Alternatively candidate SNP containing contigs were aligned by Clustal X to locate the SNPs. Results from these two methods were compared and false SNPs were eliminated. Finally, about 568 SNPs were found including 250 transitions, 120 transversions and 198 indels. The SNPs were seen at a frequency of 2.84/100bp in the WRKY sequences of palms. Primers were designed flanking to SNP/ indel sites with potential as markers in palms. We could obtain two novel WRKY-SNP markers (WRKY 7 and WRKY 12) which are not reported before in palms.

Key words: SNP, Arecaceae, Cocos nucifera, WRKY

¹DIT Agribioinformatics Promotion Centre, Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kudlu, Kasaragod-671124, Kerala, India.

²Molecular Biology Lab, Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kudlu, Kasaragod 671124, Kerala, India.

^{3*} Present addresses: Horticulture Section, ICAR Research Complex for Goa, Old Goa North Goa Goa 403 402 India *corresponding author's email <u>v.arundevi@gmail.com</u>

Introduction

WRKY transcription factors are a superfamily of proteins containing one or two highly conserved WRKY domain among the family members. WRKY domains have conserved regions constituted of 60 amino acid sequence with a WRKYGOK at its N-terminal end, together with a C₂H₂ or C₂HC novel zincfinger like motif. This domain often exhibit sequence-specific DNA binding activity and have potential for activating or repressing transcription of target genes. This domain binds specifically to the DNA sequence motif (T) (T) TGAC(C/T), which is known as the W box. The invariant TGAC core is essential for function and WRKY binding (Eulgem et al., 2000). Thus WRKY proteins play significant roles in development and response to biotic and abiotic stresses. Thus they are very important regulators of defense transcriptome and disease resistance (Eulgem et al., 2000). Studies indicated that WRKY genes play a role in the signaling cascade of innate immunity in many other plant species such as Arabidopsis, tobacco, rice and parsley (Wu et al., 2005). Some WRKY TFs are manipulated by pathogen effectors to promote virulence. Multiple pathogen effectors are targeted to host nuclei and modify expression of the defense transcriptome. Also the WRKY transcriptional networks provide a suitable environment to respond and arrest pathogens. simultaneously by preventing the defense responses that are deleterious to plants itself (Pandey et al., 2009).

Evidences suggest that the WRKY gene during evolution families arose through duplication. The phylogenetic analysis of WRKY genes can serve as a useful guide for studying their roles in plants and the phylogenetic analyses of the WRKY domain sequences provide support for the hypothesis that gene duplication of single- and two-domain WRKY genes, and loss of the WRKY domain, occurred in the evolutionary history of this gene family in rice (Xie et al., 2004). Also the WRKY transcriptional network may provide the proper balance to respond quickly and efficiently to deter pathogens, but at the same time to restrict

bi-allelic in nature, so can be easily assayed. SNPs are becoming the marker of choice for molecular genetic analysis. SNPs represent sites, where the DNA sequences differ by a single base. SNPs represent the most common form of genetic variation in both plants and animals, and play a key role in revealing the molecular mechanisms underlying traits. SNPs are

marker.

defense responses that can be detrimental for

plant growth and development (Lopez et al.,

2007). Diversity in coconut populations was

analyzed using SNP and SSR markers derived

from WRKY gene families (Mauro-Herrera et

al., 2006). WRKY gene based marker system is

a rapid and simple method for generating

sequence specific markers for plant gene

genotype and phenotype, for the production of

molecular genetic maps and to assess the genetic

diversity within and between related species. An

Polymorphisms (SNPs) are single DNA

sequence variation in the genome, which usually

Molecular markers provide a link between

Single

Nucleotide

families (Kim et al., 2007).

important

base. SNPs represent the most common form of genetic variation in both plants and animals, and play a key role in revealing the molecular mechanisms underlying traits. SNPs are increasingly becoming the marker of choice in genetic analysis and are used routinely as markers in agricultural breeding programs (Gupta et al., 2001). They also have many uses in human genetics, such as for the detection of alleles associated with genetic diseases and the identification of individuals (Nikiforov et al., 1994). SNPs are invaluable as a tool for genome mapping offering the potential for generating very high density genetic maps, which can be used to develop haplotyping systems for genes or regions of interest. The low mutation rates of SNPs also makes them excellent markers for studying complex genetic traits and as a tool for understanding of genome evolution. None of the other markers is as frequent as SNPs which was discovered later. Variation in the DNA sequence can affect how organisms develop diseases and respond to pathogens, chemicals, drugs, vaccines and agents. But as far as the reports are concerned, the discovery and characterization of SNPs are highly expensive and toil. While, the electronic mining of SNPs from the sequence sets furnish the cheapest supplier of plentiful polymorphic marker (Gu et al., 1998; TaillonMiller et al., 1998; Buetow et al., 1999; Picoult-Newberg et al., 1999).

Recently Meerow *et al.*, (2009) reported gene sequences of seven WRKY families in palms. This study reports a large WRKY gene sequences in palm which including the earlier known WRKY gene sequences formed the material for our study.

The WRKY conserved domains were useful in the development of molecular markers. Through this study we have analyzed 7 different WRKY loci and located SNP markers within the loci using two software tools. This study is helpful to assess the genetic diversity of palm species using WRKY gene derived SNP markers.

Materials and Methods

Sequence Retrieval

We have retrieved 525 sequences of WRKY genes of (WRKY2, WRKY6, WRKY7, WRKY12, WRKY16, WRKY19, and WRKY21) palms (73 species) of 334 Kb size from the nucleotide public domain NCBI (<u>http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/</u>). Sequences were retrieved as FASTA format for subsequent analysis to explore the frequency of SNPs in WRKY genes in palms.

Sequence Pre-processing

The interpretation of any analysis performed on a contaminated sequence can be perplexed by the presence of segments of foreign origin and will generate misleading data. This vector segment contaminations. involves ambiguous sequences, distal oligoN series and poly A (T) tails. Marker mining was performed only after the driving out of these erroneous regions. In the present study, this was accomplished by EST trimmer software (Thiel, 2001), a perl script useful for pre-preprocessing the sequences. All repeating nucleotides of set type "T" from 5' end and "A" from the 3'end were purposefully removed. Also non sequenced regions results from the potentially accumulating sequencing failures containing a minimum of X/N repeats were also removed.

Sequence Assembly

CAP3 (Huang *et al.*, 1999), a perl program embedded with Auto_snip, was used to generate clusters and generate contigs from the given FASTA formatted sequence of WRKY. It had given the –ace format file as output along with corresponding files such as contigs, singlets, info and quality files. The contigs clustered in the – ace file were being used by the onward program to mine the polymorphic regions.

SNP Detection

Once a proper substrate data set is attained, then later will be the matter of ascertain true allelic variation from the sequencing errors (Marth et al., 1999). This issue could be remedied using a perl script Auto snip/d2SNP (version 1.0) to detect SNPs and insertion/deletions (indels). This script takes a fasta or ace format file, aligns the sequences and detects SNPs within the alignment. Thus from the assembled contigs, Auto snip program generated an HTML format output file to allow the user to browse through the SNP results. A list of SNP sites, contig informations, positions of short insertions/deletions could extract.

Multiple Sequence Alignment

In order to scrutinize the result, SNP containing contigs were subjected to alignment by clustal X. This step attempts to discern between true polymorphism and false positives. Clustal is windows interface software for the multiple sequence alignment of nucleic acid and protein sequences. It provides an integrated environment for performing multiple sequence alignments and analyzing the results and also to locate single base substitutions and indels.

Primer Designing and Verification

On the basis of the predicted SNPs, primer pairs were designed keeping the focus on the marker regions in the specific polymorphism containing sequences. Primers were designed using the softwares such as FastPCR / Primer3. Primers were derived from the upstream and downstream parts of the conserved sequences of WRKY. Later on the primer dimers/self annealing and loopings were healed and the resultant primers were verified using the stand alone Oligoanalyzer software. Oligo analyzer is a simple tool to evaluate the physical properties of the primer, like Tm, GC%, primer loops, primer dimers and primer-primer compatibility.

Results and Discussions

Available 525 sequences of WRKY genes from 73 species in 16 genera of *Arecaceae* family were explored in the present study. The pre-processing and clustering had made the sequences unstained and free from redundancy. The duplicated sequences were assembled into 66 contigs keeping back the 54 singletons. From the 66 contigs generated by CAP3 from multiple individuals sharing the common traits, only contigs with four or more sequence reads was undergone SNP verification leading to a total contigs number of 30.

Since the SNP detection was upon single nucleotide changes, the in silico SNP prediction will be highly sensitive to errors and less reliability. In fact, a greater number of mismatches were identified at the clustering stage, and many of these mismatches were associated to base-calling or sequencing errors. In this study, from the direct preliminary prediction of SNPs from Auto snip program, we could detect a total of about 1241 SNPs, including 374 transitions, 345 transversions and 522 indels from 50 contigs (Table 1). The SNPs were seen at a frequency of 5.8/100bp. Since this type of polymorphism is the change in a single nucleotide, the non-redundant sequences are clustered and aligned to detect the single changes. The principle of multiple sequence alignment by clustal moves on with the progressive alignment and weightage for every match, we have customized the algorithm as to represent the base wise comparison in each column. The polymorphic sites shown were then scanned manually. Thus we could predict WRKY palm SNPs devoid of false positives to an extent.

The presence of a single base polymorphism from a set of sequence data can be hindered by the unending high through put sequencing errors. Rather than the mere prediction of polymorphic sites using particular programs or tools the analysis and verification of the electronic markers must be performed. False outputs have been used to accumulate, but the filtering of relevant polymorphism among the junk materials will be the key and critical step in these kinds of bioinformatic predictions. Thus in order to obtain relevant SNPs as far as possible, we have screened the datasets twice using two different programs to monitor the hypocritical candidates. Thus we could hamper the erroneous candidates on lend by the multiple sequence alignment program giving significant ones.

So in total 566 polymorphic regions are predicted in palm WRKY sequences with a frequency of 2.84 per 100 bp including the 223 indel polymorphisms (Table 2). A greater number of indel sites were also seen with a frequency of 1.11/100bp kept the remaining 1.72/100bp of SNP polymorphisms. The percentages of $A \leftrightarrow G$, $T \leftrightarrow C$, $A \leftrightarrow C$, $T \leftrightarrow G$, A \leftrightarrow T and G \leftrightarrow C were 18, 22, 4, 4, 8 and 3 (Table 3). Of the 566 SNPs, 228 were transitions (40%) and 115 were transversions (19%) giving a transition-to-transversion ratio of 2.1:1 (Fig 1). This prediction of ratios found in equivalence with the 2:1 ratio of transitions-to-transversions in mammals (Cheng et al., 2004) and 2.1:1 in Cattles (Lee et al., 2005).

As a general trend we observed that the most frequent type of mutation is that having a base change of either A/G or C/T (Table 3) (Picoult-Newberg et al., 1999). This satisfies our record of more transition rates than transversions/indels with the earlier reports of greater transition frequency by many SNP prediction programs (Garg et al., 1999; Picoult-Newberg et al., 1999;). Again this study is in accordance with the proved fact in monocots that the $T \leftrightarrow C$ transition will be outnumbered than $A \leftrightarrow G$ (Douglas *et al.*, 1998). While the least common type of base change is $G \leftrightarrow C$. The SNPs predicted in this study can be verified by the PCR techniques and sequencing, so the primers designed keeping the marker region as target using FastPCR/Primer3 tools are listed in the Table 4 and will be useful for the further studies on palm WRKY species.

WRKY	No. of	Consensus	SNP	Transitions	Transversions	Indels	Frequency
	contigs	Size (bp)					(per 100bp)
2	6	4037	625	236	308	81	15.48
6	4	2618	463	161	283	19	17.69
7	4	2990	32	16	9	7	1.07
12	3	2220	45	34	10	1	2.03
16	10	4900	140	37	33	70	2.86
19	12	4760	106	27	25	54	2.23
21	11	9207	332	75	84	173	3.61
	50	30,732	1743	586	752	405	5.67

Table 1. AutoSNP data: Frequency of nucleotide polymorphisms in WRKY sequences of palms

Table 2. Predicted frequency of nucleotide polymorphisms/indels in WRKY sequences of palms

WRKY	No. of	Consensus	SNP	Transitions	Transversions	Indels	Frequency
	contigs	Size (bp)					(per 100bp)
2	4	2748	133	72	47	14	4.84
6	2	1519	46	32	4	10	3.03
7	4	2990	32	16	9	7	1.07
12	2	1457	40	31	8	1	2.75
16	6	2949	65	20	9	36	2.20
19	5	2426	63	18	9	36	2.60
21	7	5853	187	39	29	119	3.19
	30	19942	566	228	115	223	2.84

Table 3.	Nucleotide	substitution	types for	• the	identified	WRKY	SNPs
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Types	Number of	Percent	Mutation	Ratio*		
	SNPs		Туре			
A↔G	103	18%	Transition	2.1		
T↔C	125	22%	Tansition	2.1		
A↔C	25	4%				
T↔G	25	4%	Transversion	1		
A↔T	43	8%	Tansversion	1		
G↔C	22	3%				

*Ratio indicates the transition over transversion



Figure 1. Transition – Transversion ratio in WRKY sequences of palms

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			Tm	GC		Tm	GC	Product
Locus	Contig	Forward	(⁰ C)	(%)	Reverse	(^{0}C)	(%)	size (bp)
WRKY2	1	AACTTACCTCGGATTTGGG	51.8	47.4	CACTTCAATGCCGGTTAC	51.3	50	416
	2	ACTCTAAGGTGAACGCTC	51	50	AACTTACCTCGGATTTGGG	51.8	47.4	534
	3	GCGACACATCCACTTCAAT	52.9	47.4	AACTTACCTCGGATTTGGG	51.8	47.4	436
	4	ATGTCACTGGGTTGCGAT	53.8	50	AACTTACCTCGGATTTGGG	51.8	47.4	306
WRKY6	1	GTTTCATAGTCTGAGCTTGCC	53.6	47.6	TATCTGGCCCGACAGCAT	55	55	200
	3	TTCATAGTCTGAGCTTGCC	51.7	47.4	CCAACAAGACCGACATCA	52	50	485
WRKY7	1	ATTCCTCAGTTTCGTTTGGTG	53.2	42.9	CCCAACAGAACCAGCTTAG	53.1	52.6	545
	2	AGAAGGTGGTGAAAGGCAAT	55.6	47.6	AACAGACCTGGACAACGC	55	55.6	266
	3	CAGAAGGTGGTGAAAGGC	53.6	55.6	CAACAGACCTGGACAACG	53.3	55.6	274
	4	TGAACCCGATGCAAAGCG	561.	55.6	AACAGACCTGGACAACGC	55	55.6	511
WRKY12	1	AGATGGGCCTCGCTTTG	54.9	42.9	TGCCAGAACATACCTTGGATT	53.8	58.8	434
	3	CAACCTAGCCGCCGATAC	55	61	ACAAAGCACAAAAGTCCACAT	54	40	693

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Table 4a. Designed SNP primers for all the extracted contigs

Table 4b. Designed SNP primers for all the extracted contigs

WRKY16	1	AGTTCTCTGGTTTGTTGCCG	55.4	50	ACATGACCACAAGGAGCG	54.8	55.6	203
	3	GTCTCAGCTCCTTGTGGT	53.9	55.6	TACTTCGATCGGGCAAATC	52.1	47.4	261
	5	AGTTCTCTGGTTTGTTGCCC	55.3	50	ATAGCGGGTCCCAAATGC	55.2	55.6	366
	6	GTCTCAGCTCCTTGTGGC	55.6	61.1	AGTGGGAAGGGTACGACA	54.7	55.6	161
	9	TTGTTGCCGGTCCTACCC	57	61.1	GATGACCACAAGGAGCCC	55.5	61.1	196
WRKY19	1	GGCTCCAGCGTGTTCTCC	58.3	66.7	AGCACACCAAACCAGGGC	58.4	61.1	270
	2	TGTAAACCGGCGTAGTCT	52.7	50	GCGGTAGTAATTCCTGCG	53.1	55.6	161
	3	ATATGGCTCCAGCGTGTTC	54.7	52.6	GCGGTAGTAATTCCTGCCA	54.5	52.6	295
	5	TCTTGCTCCCATCATCAT	50.3	44.4	CCAAACCAGGGTAAAGAG	50.2	50	228
	6	CTTCTGCAAACTAACCACGA	52.7	45	ACGGTAGTAATTCCTGCGA	52.7	47.4	374
	9	CACGCAGAAATATGGCTC	51.1	50	CAATGAGTTCTCCACGGT	51.7	50	278
WRKY21	1	CCTTAGCTTGGATTCAGGC	53.2	52.6	TCGTCTGTTGAAGGCGTC	54.5	55.6	646
	4	CTTAGCTTGGATTCAGGC	50.5	50	CCCCATATCGTCTGTTGAA	51.5	47.4	614
	5	GTTTTGGTGTAGCTGTGAGT	57.2	50	TCGTCTGTTGAAGGCGTGC	57.8	57.9	506
	6	TGATTCGGTTTTGGTGTGGC	56.2	47.6	CAGAGTACCAATGCGGATGA	55.9	45.5	491
	9	AGGGAGCATGTTCGCTAC	54.3	55.6	GATGCTTGACCGAGTCCC	55.3	61.1	262
	10	TTCTGAGGGAGCAAGTTCGC	57.1	55	TTGAAGGCGTGCACGGAAC	58.4	57.9	462
	11	CACAAGTCTCATTGCCCA	52.4	50	GTATTGTCTGTTGAAGGCG	51.2	47.4	330

Polymorphism detection in many crops were already been reported while no studies have been performed in WRKY genes in Arecaceae. In an earlier report in ginger EST sequences, SNPs are found with a frequency of 0.84 SNPs/100bp (Riju et al., 2009) and 1.36 per 100 bp in oil palm (Riju et al., 2007). SNPs (SNP=1.72 and indel=1.1) in the present study is also comes in line with the similar range of frequency. Studies had suggested that the majority of the predicted SNPs and indels represent true genetic variation in ginger. So in this study of SNP in WRKY palms, the frequency of occurrence of SNPs was found to be increased shows that the high genetic variation among the WRKY loci will be due to the presence of high polymorphism. There was a similar study of mining of SNPs in maize by Batley et al., (2003), in which they have identified over 14,832 candidate SNPs in maize EST sequence, they demonstrates that candidate SNPs with high redundancy and co segregation confidence scores are likely to represent true SNPs. Also the transition to transversion ratio and indel size frequencies corresponds to those observed by direct sequencing methods of SNP discovery and suggested that the majority of predicted SNPs and indels identified using this approach represent true genetic variation in maize.

The predicted SNP data could be made valuable by the direct sequencing method in order to validate the electronic prediction. This fact was found successful in Maize EST sequence data by Batley et al., 2003. In an already circulated report on an important arecaceae member, the cocos nucifera L., WRKY SNPs are used as molecular markers to understand the diversity (Mauro-Herrera et al., 2006, 2007). This study included the WRKY families, WRKY-01 WRKY-02, WRKY-03, WRKY-05, WRKY-06, WRKY-10, WRKY-13, WRKY-16, WRKY-19, and WRKY-21, but does not include other WRKY families. Recently Meerow et al., (2009) reported gene sequences of seven WRKY families which we had used for mining. The preliminary report of primers amplifying WRKY loci directly from genomic DNA imparts a way for developing important

and beneficial genetic markers from members of a WRKY gene family (Borrone et al., 2004).

Here the SNPs were seen at a frequency of 2.84/100bp in the WRKY sequences of palms. Primers were designed flanking to SNP/ indel sites with potential as markers in palms. PCR products from these amplicons could be resequenced to validate the detected SNPs and evaluated for use as molecular markers. We could obtain two novel electronic WRKY-SNP markers (WRKY 7 and WRKY 12) which are not reported before in palms.

Conclusion

Potential SNP sites from the study could also prove useful to detect polymorphism in palm WRKY germplasm and also linkage mapping. The present data confirm that the frequency of SNP occurrence in palm is sufficient to make them appropriate markers for any kind of genetic studies. The two novel SNP markers and their corresponding designed primers provided by this study can lead to many mapping and polymorphic analysis. Some relevant primer pairs flanking to the desired WRKY polymorphic sites can also be used by the scientific community.

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