

Investigation of chloride transport mechanisms in *Arabidopsis thaliana* root

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Table of Contents

Table of Figures	5
List of Tables	7
Abbreviations and symbols	8
Abstract	12
Chapter 1 Introduction, literature review and research aims	15
1.1 Introduction.....	15
1.2 Soil salinity and Australian agricultural production.....	17
1.3 Plant response to salinity	18
1.4 Chloride as a plant micronutrient.....	19
1.5 Chloride toxicity varies in plants.....	20
1.6 Chloride loading pathways	21
1.7 Chloride transport across the plasma membrane.....	22
1.8 Regulation of chloride transport within plants	22
1.8.1 Reducing net Cl ⁻ uptake from the soil	23
1.8.2 Chloride compartmentalization in roots	23
1.8.3 Xylem loading through anion conductances	25
1.8.4 ABA regulates xylem loading	26
1.9 Chloride and nitrate.....	27
1.10 Gene families responsible for Cl ⁻ transport in plants	29
1.10.1 <i>AtCLC</i> family.....	29
1.10.2 <i>AtSLAC/SLAH</i> family	30
1.10.3 <i>AtNRT</i> family	31
1.10.4 <i>AtCCC</i>	32
1.11 Regulation of anion transporters/ channels.....	33
1.11.1 The selectivity filter of anion transporters	34
1.11.2 Anion transporters/channels regulated by protein kinases	37
1.12 Thesis outlines/ hypothesis	40
Chapter 2: General materials and methods	42
2.1 Growing Arabidopsis.....	42
2.1.1 Plant materials.....	42
2.1.2 Plant growth	42
2.1.3 Hydroponically grown Arabidopsis.....	42
2.1.4 Soil grown Arabidopsis	43
2.2 Selection of transgenic plants.....	44
2.2.1 Selection of transgenic plants on solid MS media.....	44
2.2.2 Select transgenic plants in soil.....	44
2.3 Plant genomic DNA extraction.....	45
2.3.1 Quick gDNA isolation method	45
2.3.2 Edwards method.....	45
2.3.3 Phenol/chloroform/iso-amylalcohol method.....	46
2.4 Total RNA extraction and cDNA synthesis	46
2.4.1 Total RNA extraction	46
2.4.2 cDNA synthesis	47

2.5 Molecular cloning and plasmid constructions.....	47
2.5.1 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR).....	47
2.5.2 Agarose gel electrophoresis	49
2.5.3 DNA extraction from agarose gel.....	49
2.5.4 Cloning PCR products into a Gateway® entry vector.....	50
2.5.5 Cloning PCR products into Gateway® destination vector through an LR reaction	50
2.5.6 <i>E. coli</i> transformation	50
2.5.7 Plasmid DNA extraction from transformed <i>E. coli</i>	51
2.5.8 Restriction digestion.....	51
2.5.9 DNA sequencing	51
2.6 <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i> -mediated Arabidopsis transformation.....	52
2.7 Genotyping transgenic plants.....	52
2.7.1 Identifying insertion lines	52
2.7.2 Southern-blotting	53
2.8 Statistical analysis	55
Chapter 3: Selection of candidate proteins that catalyze root-to-shoot transfer of chloride	56
3.1 Introduction.....	56
3.2 Materials and methods	58
3.2.1 Mining of microarray data	58
3.2.2 <i>In silico</i> analysis using public database.....	58
3.2.3 Plant material and growth condition.....	58
3.2.4 Quantitative RT-PCR (qRT-PCR) of GOI expression analysis in Arabidopsis root.....	59
3.3 Results	60
3.3.1 Candidate genes preferentially expressed in the root stele were selected from microarray analysis.....	60
3.3.2 Candidate gene profiling using public database.....	60
3.3.3 Candidate gene expression upon NaCl and ABA treatment	73
3.4 Discussion	76
3.4.1 Selection of candidate genes.....	76
3.4.2 <i>AtSLAH1</i> , <i>AtSLAH3</i> and <i>AtNRT1.5</i> were selected as GOI that might be involved in Cl ⁻ xylem loading.....	77
3.4.3 Other candidate genes that may contribute to xylem loading of Cl ⁻	79
3.5 Conclusion	79
Chapter 4 Functional characterization of candidate gene in heterologous systems	80
4.1 Introduction.....	80
4.2 Materials and methods	82
4.2.1 Gene cloning and plasmid construction	82
4.2.2 Mutagenesis PCR	83
4.2.3 Expression of candidate genes in <i>X. laevis</i> oocyte	86
4.2.4 Characterization of gene function in yeast.....	88
4.2.5 Transient expression in Arabidopsis mesophyll protoplasts.....	89
4.2.6 Split yellow fluorescence complementation (split-YFP) assay	90
4.3 Results	91

4.3.1 Electrophysiological characterization of GOI in <i>X. laevis</i> oocytes	91
4.3.2 Characterization of GOI anion transport properties in <i>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</i>	101
4.3.3 Examine the potential interaction between SLAH1 and SnRk2.2/2.3 in Arabidopsis mesophyll protoplasts using BiFC.....	117
4.4 Discussion	119
4.4.1 AtSLAH1 is not directly involved in Cl ⁻ and NO ₃ ⁻ transport in heterologous systems...	119
4.4.2 AtSLAH3 is involved in likely to transport both Cl ⁻ and NO ₃ ⁻ in heterologous systems.	120
4.4.3 AtNRT1.5 might be involved in both Cl ⁻ and NO ₃ ⁻ transport.....	123
Chapter 5 Functional characterization of long-distance anion transport candidates in planta	125
5.1 Introduction.....	125
5.2 Materials and Methods	126
5.2.1 Generation of constitutive over- expression lines.....	126
5.2.2 Generation of <i>AtSLAH1</i> -amiRNA lines	126
5.2.3 Generation of cell type-specific over-expression lines.....	127
5.2.3 DIDS treatment.....	128
5.2.4 Phenotyping transgenic plants	128
5.3 Results	129
5.3.1 Selection of positive transformants.....	129
5.3.2 <i>AtSLAH1</i> amiRNA knock down lines (T ₂) showed low chloride accumulation in the shoot under low Cl ⁻ supply.....	131
5.3.3 <i>AtSLAH1</i> amiRNA containing lines (T ₂) did not result in a shoot chloride accumulation change under high Cl ⁻ supply compared to null lines	132
5.3.4 <i>AtSLAH1</i> amiRNA containing lines (T ₂) did not affect the shoot nitrate accumulation after exposure to low and high Cl ⁻	133
5.3.5 The <i>35S:AtSLAH1</i> transgenic lines (T ₂) accumulated high Cl ⁻ in shoot under high salt (75 mM) when compared to nulls	134
5.3.6 The <i>35S:AtSLAH1</i> transgenic lines (T ₂) accumulated low NO ₃ ⁻ in shoot under low chloride (2 mM) conditions	135
5.3.7 The <i>35S:AtSLAH3</i> transgenic lines (T ₂) accumulated low Cl ⁻ in the shoot under both high and low salt conditions.....	137
5.3.8 The <i>35S:AtSLAH3</i> transgenic lines (T ₂) accumulated high NO ₃ ⁻ in shoot under high salt (75 mM) conditions	138
5.3.9 The <i>35S:AtNRT1.5</i> transgenic lines (T ₂) accumulated low Cl ⁻ in shoot under high Cl ⁻ conditions.....	139
5.3.10 <i>35S:AtNRT1.5</i> transgenic lines (T ₂) did not have significantly altered shoot NO ₃ ⁻ accumulation under both high and low Cl ⁻ conditions	140
5.3.11 DIDS treatment affected the anion accumulation in the Arabidopsis shoot.....	141
5.4 Discussion	146
5.4.1 AtSLAH1 regulates Arabidopsis shoot anion accumulation.....	146
5.4.2 AtSLAH3 was able to regulate Arabidopsis shoot anion accumulation.....	147
5.4.3 AtNRT1.5 was able to regulate Arabidopsis shoot anion accumulation.....	149
5.4.4 DIDS affected anion accumulation in Arabidopsis.....	150
Chapter 6 General Discussion	151

6.1 Aims of this project.....	151
6.2 Summary of work accomplished in this thesis	151
6.2.1 <i>AtSLAH1</i> misexpression affects shoot Cl ⁻ accumulation in Arabidopsis.....	151
6.2.2 <i>AtSLAH3</i> might transport both NO ₃ ⁻ and Cl ⁻ in heterologous systems and in <i>planta</i>	152
6.2.3 NRT1.5 might regulate both NO ₃ ⁻ and Cl ⁻ transport	153
6.3 Future work	154
6.3.1 Future directions for characterizing candidate protein transport properties in heterologous systems.....	154
6.3.2 Future directions for characterizing GOI transport properties <i>in planta</i>	157
6.3.3 Other candidate genes	158
6.3.4 Would forward genetics also be helpful in improving plant salinity tolerance?	159
6.3.5 Using functional genomic to identify the candidate anion transporters	160
6.3.6 Is it possible to improve the salinity tolerance of a crop using a gene from another plant species?	161
References.....	163
Appendix 1	180
Appendix 2	181
Appendix 3	182
Appendix 4	190
Appendix 5	191

Table of Figures

Figure 1.1 Three major components of a crop plant responses to salt tolerance.	20
Figure 1.2 Scanning electron microscopy and X-ray microanalysis was used to provide a qualitative measure of Cl ⁻ accumulation in different root cell types of cryo-fixed wild-type (Col-0) <i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i> seedlings.	25
Figure 1.3 Representative current-voltage curves for three anion transporter conductances observed in barley root parenchyma cells.	27
Figure 1.4 Subcellular localization of the SLACs/SLAHs, ALMTs, and CLCs families <i>Arabidopsis</i>	29
Figure 1.5 A summary of nitrate transporters have been identified in <i>Arabidopsis</i>	34
Figure 1.6 Role of SLAC1 channels in stomatal closure.	36
Figure 1.7 3D homology structure of SLAC1 and SLAH2 established based on the crystal structure of Hi-TehA.	37
Figure 1.8 The anion transport activities of different mutants of HR.	38
Figure 2.1 The assembly for a Southern blotting DNA transfer.....	50
Figure 3.1 the transcript level changes of all candidate genes upon 150 mM NaCl treatment for 0-24 hours.....	59
Figure 3.2 the transcript level changes of all candidate genes upon ABA (20 μM) treatment for 0.5-3 hours.....	60
Figure 3.3 Expression of GOIs in different parts of <i>Arabidopsis</i> tissues and different development stages.....	61
Figure 3.4 The transcript levels of candidate genes treated with control (2 mM NaCl), 50 mM and 100 mM NaCl for 7 days, or 20 μM +/- cis, trans ABA for 4/16 hours.....	72
Figure 4.1 Site-mutation PCR process.....	83
Figure 4.2 Electrophysiological characterization of <i>NRT1.5</i> in <i>X. Laevis</i> oocytes.....	89
Figure 4.3 Electrophysiological characterization of <i>SLAH1</i> in <i>X. Laevis</i> oocytes	91
Figure 4.4 Electrophysiological characterization of <i>SLAH1-Snrk2.3</i> injected <i>X. laevis</i> oocytes..	93
Figure 4.5 ³⁶ Cl ⁻ Uptake measured in oocytes injected with either mutated <i>ΔSLAH1</i> or water in a background of 100 mM NaCl, CsCl and NMDG-Cl for 1 hour.....	94
Figure 4.6 Electrophysiological characterization of <i>SLAH3</i> in <i>X. laevis</i> oocytes.....	96
Figure 4.7 Characterization of <i>NPF2.4</i> in <i>X. laevis</i> oocytes with TEVC or unidirectional ³⁶ Cl ⁻ uptake assay.....	97
Figure 4.8 <i>SLAH1</i> , <i>ΔSLAH1</i> , <i>SALH3</i> , <i>ΔSLAH3</i> , <i>NRT1.5</i> and empty vector (pYES-DEST52) transformed yeast grown on the plate containing various salts (halogen family) with different concentrations.....	105
Figure 4.9 The growth rate of <i>NRT1.5</i> transformed yeast was examined using small-volume liquid assay.....	108
Figure 4.10 The growth rate of <i>SLAH1</i> transformed yeast was examined using the small-volume liquid assay.....	109
Figure 4.11 The growth rate of <i>SLAH3</i> transformed yeast was examined using small-volume liquid assay.....	112

Figure 4.12 The growth rate of <i>SLAH1</i> , Δ <i>SLAH1</i> , <i>SLAH3</i> and Δ <i>SLAH3</i> transformed yeast were examined using small-volume liquid assay.....	113
Figure 4.13 Subcellular localisation of <i>SLAH1</i> and SnRk2.2 or SnRK2.3, or Δ <i>SLAH1</i> and SnRk2.2 or SnRK2.3 in <i>Arabidopsis</i> mesophyll protoplasts.....	115
Figure 5.2 Southern-blotting was performed on T ₁ mutant plant gDNA to examine the copy number.....	127
Figure 5.3 The transcript level of amiRNA- <i>AtSLAH1</i> lines (T ₂), the shoot Cl ⁻ concentration and the correlation between transcript level and shoot Cl ⁻ contents under low Cl ⁻ conditions...129	
Figure 5.4 The transcript level of <i>AtSLAH1</i> amiRNA containing lines (T ₂) and shoot Cl ⁻ concentration under high salt stress.....	130
Figure 5.5 The shoot NO ₃ ⁻ concentration of amiRNA- <i>AtSLAH1</i> mutant lines (T ₂) under low and high Cl ⁻ supply.....	131
Figure 5.6 The shoot NO ₃ ⁻ /Cl ⁻ ratio was determined in amiRNA- <i>AtSLAH1</i> mutant lines and null under low and high Cl ⁻ supply.....	131
Figure 5.7 The shoot Cl ⁻ content of <i>35S:AtSLAH1</i> transgenic plants (T ₂) under high and low Cl ⁻ conditions.....	132
Figure 5.8 The shoot NO ₃ ⁻ concentration of <i>35S:AtSLAH1</i> transgenic plants (T ₂) under high and low Cl ⁻ conditions.....	133
Figure 5.9 The shoot NO ₃ ⁻ /Cl ⁻ ratio was determined in <i>35S:AtSLAH1</i> mutant lines and null under low and high Cl ⁻ supply.....	133
Figure 5.10 The shoot Cl ⁻ content of <i>35S:AtSLAH3</i> transgenic plants (T ₂) under high and low Cl ⁻ conditions.....	134
Figure 5.11 The shoot NO ₃ ⁻ concentration of <i>35S:AtSLAH3</i> transgenic plants (T ₂) under high and low Cl ⁻ conditions.....	135
Figure 5.12 The shoot NO ₃ ⁻ /Cl ⁻ ratio was determined in <i>35S:AtSLAH3</i> mutant lines and null under high Cl ⁻ supply (A) and low Cl ⁻ supply (B).....	136
Figure 5.13 The shoot Cl ⁻ content of <i>35S:AtNRT1.5</i> transgenic plants (T ₂) under high and low Cl ⁻ conditions.....	137
Figure 5.14 The shoot NO ₃ ⁻ concentration of <i>35S:AtNRT1.5</i> transgenic plants (T ₂) under high and low Cl ⁻ conditions.....	138
Figure 5.15 The shoot NO ₃ ⁻ /Cl ⁻ ratio was determined in <i>35S:AtNRT1.5</i> mutant lines and null under high Cl ⁻ supply (A) and low Cl ⁻ supply (B).....	138
Figure 5.16 Effect of DIDS on shoot accumulation of Cl ⁻ (A), NO ₃ ⁻ (B) and NO ₃ ⁻ /Cl ⁻ ratio (C) in the <i>Arabidopsis</i> under salt stress.....	140
Figure 5.17 Effect of DIDS on shoot accumulation of Cl ⁻ (A), NO ₃ ⁻ (B), NO ₃ ⁻ /Cl ⁻ ratio (C) and shoot biomass (D) in the <i>Arabidopsis</i> under salt stress.....	141
Figure 5.18 Effect of DIDS on shoot accumulation of Cl ⁻ (A), NO ₃ ⁻ (B), NO ₃ ⁻ /Cl ⁻ ratio (C), shoot biomass (D) and chlorophyll contents (E) in the <i>Arabidopsis</i> under different salt treatments.....	142
Figure 6.1 Proposed strategies for the integration of physiology and systems biology to gain insights into abiotic stress responses in cereals and the future development of abiotic stress tolerant crops.....	158

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Summary of anion transporters/ channels regulating mechanisms in SLAC1 family.....	35
Table 2.1 The composition of the germination solution and Basal Nutrient Solution (BNS) used for the Arabidopsis hydroponic experiments.....	40
Table 2.2 The composition of a standard PCR.....	45
Table 2.3 standard PCR cycling conditions.....	45
Table 2.4 the PCR composition used to produce the DIG-probe.....	51
Table 3.1 Primers used to qRT-PCR analysis in this chapter.....	56
Table 3.2 Candidate genes that preferentially expressed in root stelar than cortex were selected upon microarray data.....	57
Table 4.1 Primers used to clone candidate gene coding sequence from Arabidopsis root cDNA.....	80
Table 4.2 Primers used to perform the colony PCR and the constructs generated for heterologously expressing candidate genes in <i>X. laevis</i> oocytes, yeast and Arabidopsis mesophyll protoplasts.....	82
Table 4.3 Restriction enzymes and primers used to confirm the direction of insertion and primers used for sequencing.....	82
Table 4.4 Primers used to site-mutate the <i>SLAH1</i> and <i>SLAH3</i> in pCR8® entry vector.....	82
Table 4.5 The composition of SD media.....	86
Table 4.6 Summary of growth inhibition assay performed on solidified plates.....	100
Table 5.1 The antibiotic and herbicide used for selecting T ₁ transgenic plants and the resistant rate.	127

Abbreviations and symbols

Abbreviation	Full term
#	Number
%	Percentage
±	Plus and minus
x	Times
°C	Degree celsius
µg	Microgramme(s)
µl	Microliter(s)
µM	Micromolar
µmol	Micromole(s)
β	Beta
3′	Three prime end
3-D	Three dimensional
5′	Five prime end
A-9-C	Anthracene-9-carboxylic acid
ABA	Abscisic acid
ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
ABRC	Arabidopsis Biological Resource Centre
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACPFG	Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics
AGRF	Australian Genome Research Facility
amiRNA	Artificial micro ribonucleic acid
At	Arabidopsis thaliana
BLAST	Basic Local Alignment Search Tool
BNS	Basal Nutrient Solution
bp	Base pair
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
Ca ²⁺	Calcium ion
CaMV	Cauliflower mosaic virus
CCC	Cation chloride co-transporter
cDNA	Complimentary deoxyribonucleic acid
CFP	Cyan florescent protein
Cl ⁻	Chloride ion
CLCs	Chloride channel proteins
cm	Centimeter
Col-0	Columbia-0
cRNA	Capped ribonucleic acid
dH ₂ O	Deionised water

DIDS	4,4'-Diisothiocyano-2,2'-stilbenedisulfonic acid
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTP	Mixture of equal equivalents of dATP, dTTP, dCTP and dGTP
dS	Decisiemens
DTT	Dithiothreitol
E.coli	Escherichiacoli
ECe	Electrical conductivity
EDTA	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FW	Fresh weigh
g	Gravity
g	Gram(s)
gDNA	Genomic deoxyribonucleic acid
GFP	Green fluorescent protein
GOI	Gene of interest
GUS	β -glucuronidase protein
H ⁺	Hydrogen ion
H ⁺ - ATPase	Proton-ATPase
ha	Hectare
HCl	Hydrochloric acid
HEPES	4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid
HKT	High-affinity K ⁺ transporter
hr	Hour(s)
Hv	Hordeum vulgare
IBSC	International Barley Genome Sequencing Consortium
ICP-AES	Inductively Coupled Plasma Optical Emission Spectrometry
K ⁺	Potassium ion
kb	Kilo base pairs
KBr	Potassium bromide
KCl	Potassium chloride
KD	Knock down
kD	Kilo dalton
KF	Potassium fluoride
KOH	Potassium hydroxide
LB	Left border (of T-DNA)
LBmedia	Luria betanimedia
Ler	Lands bergerecta
M	Molar
MES	2-(N-morpholino) ethanesulfonic acid
mg	Milligram (s)
MgCl ₂	Magnesium chloride
Min	Minute (s)
ml	Millilitre (s)
mol	Mole

MS	Murashige and Skoog media
mV	Micro voltage
MYTH	Membrane Yeast Two-Hybrid
nA	Nanomolar
Na ⁺	Sodium ion
NaBr	Sodium bromide
NaF	Sodium fluoride
NaNO ₃	Sodium nitrate
NaOH	Sodium hydroxide
NASC	European Arabidopsis Stock Centre
NCBI	National Centre for Biotechnology Information
ng	Nanogram (s)
nl	Nanolitre
NLWRA	National Land & Water Resource Audit
nM	Nanomolar
nm	Nanometer
NMDG	N-Methyl-D-glucamine
NO ₃ ⁻	Nitrate ion
NRTs	Nitrate transporters
NUE	Nitrogen use efficiency
OD	Optical density
OEX	Over- expression
OR	Outward rectifying
Os	Oryzasativa
P/B	Peak/background ratio
PEG	Polyethylene glycol
PBS	Phosphate buffered saline
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PM	Plasma membrane
POT	Protodependent oligo-peptide transporter
qRT-PCR	Quantitative reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction
QTL	Quantitative trait loci
RIL	Recombinant inbred lines
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
RO	Reverse osmosis treated
rpm	Rotation per minute
RT-PCR	Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction
SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulfate
SEM	Standard error of the mean
SKOR	Stelar k ⁺ outwardly-rectifying channel
SLAC	Slowly activated anion conductance
SSC	Saline sodium citrate
TAE	Tris-acetate-EDTA
TAIR	The Arabidopsis Information Resource

Taq	Polymerase identified from <i>T. aquaticus</i>
T-DNA	Transfer deoxyribonucleic acid
TEVC	Two electrode voltage clamp
T _m	Melting temperature
TMD	Trans-membrane domain
Tris	tris(hydroxymethyl)aminomethane
T _x	Transgenic plants of generation x
U	Unite(s)
UAS	Upstream activation sequence
UTR	Untranslated region
w/v	Weight per volume
Ws	Wassilewskija
WT	Wildtype
X-IRAC	Xylem-inwardly rectifying anion conductance
X-KORC	Xylem-K ⁺ outward rectifying channel
X-QUAC	Xylem-quickly activating anion conductance
X-SLAC	Xylem-slow activating anion conductance
YFP	Yellow fluorescent protein

Abstract

Salinity tolerance is correlated with shoot chloride (Cl^-) exclusion in many horticultural and crop species (e.g. grapevine, soybean). It is hypothesized that the key regulatory step in root-to-shoot transfer of Cl^- is conferred by plasma membrane-localised anion transporters associated within the root vasculature. Reducing long-distance Cl^- transport by manipulating the regulation of anion transporters in the root vasculature is therefore a strategy that promises to increase plant tolerance to saline environments. However, the information of which candidate genes are responsible for this process is limited. To gain a greater knowledge of the long distance Cl^- movement from a molecular aspect, a number of candidate anion transporters from *Arabidopsis thaliana* were identified from a preliminary microarray study. Quantitative PCR was used to indicate transcriptional levels of candidate anion transporters that decreased upon NaCl and ABA treatment. Based on this analysis, *AtSLAH1*, *AtSLAH3* and *AtNRT1.5* were selected as genes of interest (GOI) that were likely to be involved in the Cl^- movement between the root stele symplast and the xylem vessels.

To functionally characterize the transport properties of all GOIs at a protein level, various heterologous systems were used to investigate the anion (Cl^- and NO_3^-) transport capacity. Two-electrode voltage clamp electrophysiology was used to measure the currents that were generated by the target anions crossing oocyte membranes. A yeast expression system was also used to further study the anion transport properties *in vitro*.

AtSLAH1 cRNA injected oocytes were not able to produce significant anion currents. Also, no evident anion currents were generated from a site-directed mutant of *AtSLAH1* in a putative phosphorylation site injected into oocytes. Although there was evidence that anion currents were elicited from *AtSLAH1* and *AtSnRk2.3* co-injected oocytes, due to difficulties in the ability to reproduce these results, it is uncertain whether *AtSLAH1* can function as an anion transporter in the conditions tested. Both wild type and site-mutated *AtSLAH1* was also separately transformed into yeast for further examination without an observable phenotype.

In order to examine the effect of altered *AtSLAH1* expression on shoot anion accumulation, *AtSLAH1* amiRNA knockdown and constitutive over expression of *AtSLAH1* mutant plants were generated. *AtSLAH1* knockdown lines (T_2) exhibited strong repression in transcript abundance in low salt environments and resulted in a significant reduction in shoot Cl^- when compared to nulls. Constitutive over expression of *AtSLAH1* showed increased shoot Cl^- contents under high salt stress. These results indicated the potential role of *AtSLAH1* in Cl^- transport in plants.

Electrophysiological characterization of *AtSLAH3* in oocytes showed that *AtSLAH3* was able to produce significant NO_3^- but not Cl^- currents suggesting a role in the efflux of NO_3^- out of cells in most of circumstances. Similar results were gained in *AtSLAH3*- transformed yeast. However, *AtSLAH3* over-expression lines showed a decreased shoot Cl^- without an effect on shoot NO_3^- under high salt stress compared to null plants. The potential reasons for this are discussed and further experiments are proposed to test these hypotheses.

Although *AtNRT1.5* has been reported to transport NO_3^- , electrophysiological characterization of *AtNRT1.5* in *X. Laevis* oocytes was not able to detect any anion currents induced by the gene. Interestingly, *AtNRT1.5* transformed yeast showed a significant inhibited phenotype (grow less well than empty vector control) when challenged with high concentration of Cl^- and NO_3^- within the growth media, indicating a role the transport of both anions. Constitutive over- expression lines showed a potent shoot Cl^- reduction under high salt stress compared to nulls. Interestingly, no significant NO_3^- accumulation in shoot was identified. These results might suggest that *AtNRT1.5* was able to regulate both Cl^- and NO_3^- transport from root to shoot; however, the mechanism by which this occurs is unclear.

Previous findings indicated the possibilities that Cl^- and NO_3^- can be transported through the same anion channel/transporter. To further study the regulation of Cl^- and NO_3^- uptake, an anion blocker (DIDS) was used to test the anion shoot accumulation under different salt conditions. Under high salt stress, DIDS was able to reduce the Cl^- accumulation and increase

the NO_3^- contents in shoots. Further experiments are required at both a physiological and molecular level to further understand how plants recognize and respond to this blocker, as the molecular targets of this blocker are a potential way to improve the plant salt tolerance and nitrogen use efficiency under high salt stress.

In summary, new information was revealed on several candidates that affect root-to-shoot loading of chloride and new research avenues have been proposed based on the findings of this study.