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Changes in Rubulose-1,5-Bisphosphate Carboxylase/Oxygenase Turnover is the Key to Photosynthetic Acclimation to Elevated CO₂ in Rice

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Rice is grown in many different agro-ecological zones and it assimilates CO2 directly through \tilde{C}_3 photosynthesis. At present atmospheric CO_2 concentration, rice is not photosynthetically saturated, but as the CO_2 concentration rises in the atmosphere, photosynthetic rates will be accelerated but cannot be sustained during prolonged exposure and this The primary factor associated with process is termed "acclimation". acclimation response is a reduction in the amount of ribulose-1-5-bisphospate carboxylase/oxygenase (Rubisco) which is a rate limiting enzyme for C₃ photosynthesis. The mechanism of reduction of Rubisco content at elevated CO2 is still not well understood. The amount of Rubisco in the leaves is mainly determined by both synthesis and degradation and is regulated by internal and external signals. The most accepted hypothesis is that the decline in the Rubisco content at elevated CO2 is through accumulation of soluble sugars thereby suppressing the expression of genes for the large subunit of ribulose-1-5-bisphospate carboxylase/oxygenase (rbcL) and small subunit of ribulose-1-5-bisphospate carboxylase/oxygenase (rbcS). However, a negative relationship between Rubisco and soluble sugar has not always been reported. We tested the hypothesis that acclimation of leaf photosynthesis to elevated CO₂ is associated with factors other than accumulation of carbohydrates, plants were grown until maturity with a luxurious N supply, in an outdoor glass house at either ambient (390 µmol CO₂ mol) or elevated CO₂ (1000 µmol CO₂ mol). Immediately after emergence of flag leaf blade, plants were labelled with ¹⁵N tracer. Gas exchange measurements were carried out to estimate in vivo maximum carboxylation (V_{c.max}) and maximum electron transport capacity (J_{max}) during leaf development. Simultaneously, leaf blades were sampled for Rubisco, chlorophyll, total N, sucrose and hexose. Isolation of Rubisco and it's ¹⁵N measurements was carried out to calculate Rubisco synthesis and degradation. The changes in mRNA for *rbc*S and *rbc*L were also determined. In response to short-tem CO₂ enrichment, photosynthetic rates were increased by 40 per cent in leaf blades immediately after full expansion. Initial stimulation of photosynthesis was reduced during long-term exposure and reduction were associated with reduced amounts of Rubisco content and its maximum potential activity (V_{cmax}). However, acclamatory responses varied during leaf development and were more pronounced during the leaf senescence phase. This was largely due to changes in synthesis and degradation Rubisco. The level of rbcS and rbcL mRNAs, and amount of Rubisco synthesis were suppressed by elevated CO₂ but not well correlated with soluble sugar. Rubisco degradation was also accelerated by elevated CO₂ but the mechanism is still not well understood. This data suggests that acclimation of photosynthesis to elevated CO2 is partially due to reduced synthesis and rapid degradation of Rubisco.