

POSTER PRESENTATION

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Characterising the role of the *Eucalyptus grandis* *SND2* promoter in secondary cell wall biosynthesis

Jonathan Botha^{1*}, Desre Pinard¹, Nicky Creux¹, Steven Hussey¹, Christine Maritz-Olivier¹, Antanas Spokevicius², Gerd Bossinger², Eshchar Mizrahi¹, Alexander Myburg¹

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Background

NAC and MYB transcription factors (TFs) have been shown to play prominent roles in the regulation of plant developmental processes. Two *Arabidopsis thaliana* NAC domain TFs (AtSND2, AtSND3) and one MYB domain TF (AtMYB103) were shown to be downstream targets of two master regulators of xylem fibre cell development, NST1 and SND1 [1,2]. These TFs were able to induce the expression of a GUS reporter gene under the control of the *AtCesA8* promoter [3], indicating that they may be involved in the regulation of cellulose biosynthesis in the secondary cell walls of *A. thaliana* xylem fibres. It is hypothesized that putative orthologs of these TFs will also play important roles in regulating fibre secondary cell wall biosynthesis in woody plants such as *Eucalyptus grandis*. The transcriptional network regulating wood fibre development is uncharacterized in *E. grandis*, therefore it would be beneficial to identify upstream components of this transcriptional network in *E. grandis*. In this ongoing study we aim to identify TFs which bind to the promoter of the putative ortholog of *AtSND2* in *E. grandis* (*EgSND2*) and possibly also to the promoters of the orthologs of *AtSND3* and *AtMYB103*. In parallel, we are characterizing the detailed heterologous expression patterns of the *EgSND2*, *EgSND3* and *MYB103* promoter regions in *A. thaliana* plants. This work forms part of an effort to elucidate the transcriptional network regulating wood fibre development in *E. grandis*.

Methods

A reverse BLAST approach was used to identify candidate orthologs of *AtSND2*, *AtSND3* and *AtMYB103* in *Eucalyptus*, *Populus* and *Vitis*. *In silico cis*-element analysis was performed on the promoter regions of the putative orthologs to identify previously characterised and novel *cis*-elements. The 1.5 kb regions upstream of the translational start site (TSS) of *EgSND2*, *EgSND3* and *EgMYB103* were isolated from *E. grandis* genomic DNA. The amplified fragments were cloned into pMDC162, a GUS reporter vector, and introduced into *A. thaliana* Col-O plants for heterologous GUS expression analysis. The same reporter constructs were also transformed directly into the vascular cambium of potted *E. grandis* plants to determine endogenous promoter activity by Induced Somatic Sector Analysis (ISSA, [4]). Qualitative GUS reporter analyses were performed on the *EgSND2promoter::GUS*, *EgSND3promoter::GUS* and *EgMYB103promoter::GUS* constructs in *Arabidopsis* plants at 1, 3 and 6 weeks. A 500 bp truncation upstream of the TSS of *EgSND2* was generated and cloned into the pHIS2.1 vector along with the 1.5 kb *EgSND2* promoter sequence for use in yeast one-hybrid (Y1-H) screening. Candidate proteins which bind to the cloned promoter sequences will be identified using Y1-H analysis and further characterised.

Results and discussion

A number of previously described (e.g. [5]) and novel *cis*-elements were present in the three cloned *Eucalyptus* promoters (*EgSND2*, *EgSND3* and *EgMYB103*) suggesting regulation by an overlapping set of upstream transcription factors. The 1, 3 and 6-week GUS analyses of the *EgSND2promoter::GUS* and *EgSND3promoter::GUS*

* Correspondence: Jonathan.Botha@fabi.up.ac.za

¹Department of Genetics, Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0002, South Africa
Full list of author information is available at the end of the article

constructs revealed strong GUS expression in vascular tissues, but the GUS expression was not specific to vascular tissues as reported for the endogenous *AtSND2* and *AtSND3* genes [3]. This suggests that the 1.5 kb region upstream of the translational start site may not be sufficient for fibre-specific expression in a heterologous system. Similarly, the *EgMYB103promoter::GUS* construct was expressed in stems and leaves, in contrast to strong stem specificity reported by Zhong et al., [3] for the *Arabidopsis* ortholog. ISSA (ongoing) results of endogenous expression in *Eucalyptus* may clarify the possible regulatory divergence in these promoter sequences. We hope to soon identify and functionally annotate a number of protein candidates binding to the *EgSND2* promoter using Y1-H analysis.

Conclusions

The *EgSND2*, *EgSND3* and *EgMYB103* promoters were found to contain common *cis*-regulatory elements, which suggests at least partial co-regulation in *E. grandis*. The 1.5 kb upstream regions of *EgSND2*, *EgSND3* and *EgMYB103* induced strong heterologous GUS expression in vascular and non-vascular tissues of *A. thaliana* suggesting either that these promoter sequences have functionally diverged in *Arabidopsis* and *Eucalyptus*, or that the 1.5 kb upstream regions alone are not sufficient to induce fibre-specific expression as previously reported in *Arabidopsis*.

Author details

¹Department of Genetics, Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0002, South Africa. ²Department of Forest and Ecosystem Science, Melbourne School of Forest and Ecosystem Science, University of Melbourne, Australia.

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