



Soybeans with Increased Resistance to Sclerotinia Stem Rot and Drought Tolerance

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Inventors: Mehdi Kabbage, Damon Smith, Ashish Ranjan

The Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) is seeking commercial partners interested in developing transgenic soybeans with increased resistance to a highly damaging fungal pathogen, as well as improved drought tolerance.

Overview

Sclerotinia sclerotiorum is a widespread fungal pathogen that is difficult to control and can cause considerable damage to crops. In soybean, this fungus causes Sclerotinia stem rot, also known as white mold. Yield losses exceeding 10 million bushels (270 million kg) per year are common.

The disease is a major problem for crop plants in the north-central United States and southern Canada. Although soybean cultivars have been identified that show partial resistance to *Sclerotinia* infection, resistance among commercial varieties is limited.

The Invention

UW–Madison researchers have demonstrated that knocking down expression of a specific soybean respiratory burst oxidase homolog protein (GmRBOH-VI) leads to enhanced resistance to *S. sclerotiorum* and confers drought tolerance.

Using protein sequence similarity searches, the researchers identified seventeen GmRBOHs and studied their contribution to *Sclerotinia* disease development, drought tolerance and nodulation. Transcript analysis of all seventeen GmRBOHs revealed that out of the six identified groups, group VI (GmRBOH-VI) was specifically and drastically induced following *S. sclerotiorum* challenge. Virus-induced gene silencing of GMRBOH-VI resulted in enhanced resistance to the fungus and, coincidentally, drought stress.

Based on these discoveries, the researchers have developed modified soybeans and production methods available for licensing.

Applications

- Production of soybean lines resistant to Sclerotinia stem rot
- Commercial cultivars

Key Benefits

- Enhanced protection against stem rot/white mold
- The risk of long and severe drought is increasing worldwide.

Stage of Development

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To further the development of this work, the researchers plan to generate transgenic plants where the RBOH-VI genes are knocked down or knocked out, and evaluate the performance of the plants against a wide range of abiotic and biotic stresses.



WARF
Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation

| info@warf.org | 608.960.9850

Additional Information

For More Information About the Inventors

- [Mehdi Kabbage](#)
- [Damon Smith](#)

Tech Fields

- [Animals, Agriculture & Food : Plant biotech](#)

For current licensing status, please contact Emily Bauer at emily@warf.org or 608-960-9842

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