

Bedeutung und Regulation des Methioninzyklus in Pflanzen

Dissertation

zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der
Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät
der Christian-Albrechts-Universität
zu Kiel

vorgelegt von
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aus Berlin

Kiel
2009

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Tag der mündlichen Prüfung: 15.05.2009

Zum Druck genehmigt: 15.05.2009

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ABKÜRZUNGSVERZEICHNIS

| | |
|--------|--|
| 1-MCP | 1-Methylcyclopropen |
| ACC | 1-Aminocyclopropan-1-Carboxylsäure |
| ACL5 | <i>acauliss5</i> |
| ACO | ACC-Oxidase |
| ACS | ACC-Synthase |
| ADP | Adenosindiphosphat |
| AdoMet | S-Adenosylmethionin (\rightarrow SAM) |
| ARD | Acireducton-Dioxygenase |
| ATP | Adenosintriphosphat |
| BLAST | <i>Basic local alignment search tool</i> |
| BUD | <i>bushy and dwarf</i> |
| bp | Basenpaare |
| BSA | Rinderserumalbumin (<i>bovine serum albumin</i>) |
| cDNA | komplementäre DNA (<i>copy-DNA</i>) |
| CGS | Cystathionin- γ -Synthase |
| CTR | <i>constitutive triple response</i> |
| cv. | Kultivar |
| Cys | Cystein |
| DNA | Desoxyribonukleinsäure (<i>desoxyribonucleic acid</i>) |
| dNTP | Desoxyribonukleosidtriphosphat |
| dSAM | Decarboxyliertes SAM |
| DZ | Differenzierungszone |
| EBP | <i>ethylene-responsive element binding protein</i> |
| EDTA | Ethyldiamintetraessigsäure |
| EIL | <i>ethylene insensitive3 like</i> |
| EIN | <i>ethylene insensitive</i> |
| ER | Endoplasmatisches Retikulum |
| ERS | <i>ethylene response sensor</i> |
| EST | <i>expressed sequence tag</i> |
| et al. | et alli |
| eto3 | <i>ethylene overproducer3</i> |
| EZ | Elongationszone |
| GC | Gaschromatographie |
| GSH | Glutathion |
| HPLC | <i>High performance liquid chromatography</i> |

| | |
|--------|--|
| IDI | <i>iron deficiency induced</i> |
| IM | Interkalares Meristem |
| kDa | Kilodalton |
| KMTB | 2-Keto-4-Methylthiobutyrat |
| LB | Medium für die Anzucht von Bakterien (<i>lysogeny broth</i>) |
| Met | Methionin |
| mRNA | Boten RNA (<i>messenger RNA</i>) |
| MS | Nährmedium nach Murashige und Skoog |
| MTA | 5'-Methylthioadenosin |
| MTAN | MTA/SAH-Nukleosidase |
| MTK | Methylthioribose Kinase |
| MTN | MTA-Nukleosidase |
| MTR | Methylthioribose |
| MTR-P | Methylthioribose-Phosphat |
| NA | Nicotianamin |
| NAAT | Nicotianaminaminotransferase |
| NAS | Nicotianaminsynthase |
| NOR | <i>non-ripening</i> |
| Nr | <i>never-ripe</i> |
| nt | Nukleotid |
| OAS | O-Acetylserin |
| PAGE | Polyacrylamidgelektrophorese |
| PCR | Polymerasekettenreaktion (<i>polymerase chain reaction</i>) |
| Put | Putrescin |
| PVDF | Polyvinylidenfluorid |
| qPCR | quantitative <i>Real Time PCR</i> |
| RIN | <i>ripening-inhibitor</i> |
| RNA | Ribonukleinsäure (<i>ribonucleic acid</i>) |
| rpm | Umdrehungen pro Minute (<i>revolutions per minute</i>) |
| RT-PCR | Reverse Transkription-PCR |
| SAH | S-Adenosylhomocysteine |
| SAM | S-Adenosylmethionin (→ AdoMet) |
| SAMDC | SAM Decarboxylase |
| SDS | Natriumdodecylsulfat |
| SMM | S-Methylmethionin |
| Spd | Spermidin |
| SPDS | Spermidinsynthase |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Spm | Spermin |
| SPMS | Sperminsynthase |
| SRH | S-Ribosylhomocystein |
| SSC | <i>saline-sodium citrate</i> |
| STS | Silberthiosulfat |
| Taq | <i>Thermus aquaticus</i> |
| THF | Tetrahydrofolat |
| THF-CH ₃ | Methyltetrahydrofolat |
| Tris | Tri(hydroxymethyl)-Aminomethan |
| v/v | Volumen/Volumen |
| w/v | Gewicht/Volumen (<i>weight per volume</i>) |
| WT | Wildtyp |

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Im Methioninzyklus wird Methylthioadenosin (MTA), das Nebenprodukt der Ethylen-, Polyamin- und Nicotianaminbiosynthese, über eine Reihe von Zwischenschritten zu Methionin (Met) recycelt. Die Regulation und Bedeutung dieses Zyklus sind bislang nur wenig verstanden. In dieser Arbeit wurde die Bedeutung des Methioninzyklus für die Ethylensynthese, sowie für die Metabolisierung von MTA über die Analyse von Mutanten in Arabidopsis untersucht. In der *mtk/eto3* Doppelmutante, die bei gleichzeitig erhöhter Ethylensynthese das Zwischenprodukt des Methioninzyklus, Methylthioribose, nicht zu Met recyceln kann, limitierte der Methioninzyklus die Ethylensynthese. Es konnte somit zum ersten Mal gezeigt werden, dass der Methioninzyklus für hohe Ethylensyntheseraten essentiell ist. Ethylen regulierte die Expression von Genen, die für Enzyme des Methioninzyklus kodieren, jedoch weder in Arabidopsis, noch während der Fruchtreife in Tomate. In Reis stiegen zwar die Transkripte des MTA-Nukleosidase (MTN) Gens *OsMTN*, sowie die MTN-Enzymaktivität nach Überflutung parallel mit der Ethylensynthese an, waren jedoch nicht direkt durch Ethylen reguliert. Es konnte somit gezeigt werden, dass Gene des Methioninzyklus in diesen Pflanzen nicht durch Ethylen reguliert werden. Die S-Adenosyl-methionin (SAM)-Gehalte waren in *mtk* und *mtk/eto3* Pflanzen bei Anzucht unter schwefel-limitierenden Bedingungen im Vergleich zum Wildtyp reduziert, was darauf hindeuten könnte, dass der Methioninzyklus für die Aufrechterhaltung der SAM-Spiegel wichtig ist, wenn die *de novo* SAM-Synthese limitiert ist. Eine weitere wichtige Funktion des Methioninzyklus scheint in der Detoxifizierung von MTA zu liegen. Arabidopsis besitzt zwei MTN Gene, *AtMTN1* und *AtMTN2*. *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* Pflanzen, die MTA nicht metabolisieren können, waren in ihrer Entwicklung gestört. *mtk* Pflanzen dagegen, die MTA noch zu Methylthioribose verstoffwechseln können, zeigten unter Schwefelvollversorgung keine Entwicklungsunterschiede im Vergleich zum Wildtyp, was darauf hindeutet, dass nicht eine limitierte Met-Versorgung, sondern die fehlende Metabolisierung von MTA für die Entwicklungsstörungen in *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* ursächlich ist. Die Analyse von *mtn* Einzelmutanten zeigte, dass MTN1 zu mehr als 80% zur MTN-Enzymaktivität beiträgt. Das Substrat der MTN, MTA, induzierte die MTN-Enzymaktivität, nicht aber die Genexpression. Immunoblot Analysen zeigten, dass diese Regulation vermutlich auf Ebene der Proteinmenge erfolgt. *mtn1-1* Keimlinge waren bei Anzucht auf MTA in ihrem Wachstum gehemmt und sie akkumulierten MTA, SAM und die Polyamine Putrescin und Spermin. Möglicherweise hemmt MTA über Feedback Regulation SAM konsumierende und MTA produzierende Synthesewege. Eine wichtige Funktion des Met Zyklus könnte demzufolge darin bestehen, eine solche Feedback Inhibierung zu verhindern.

SUMMARY

As a by-product of ethylene, polyamine and nicotianamine synthesis, methylthioadenosine (MTA) is released and subsequently recycled to methionine (Met) through the Met cycle. The role of the Met cycle in plant sulfur metabolism as well as its regulation are only poorly understood. In this study *Arabidopsis* mutants were employed in order to analyze the role of the Met cycle for ethylene synthesis and for the metabolism of MTA. Knockout of the Met cycle limited ethylene synthesis in the *mtk/eto3* mutant which overproduced ethylene and at the same time was unable to regenerate Met from methylthioribose, an intermediate of the Met cycle. Hence, it was shown for the first time that high rates of ethylene synthesis depend on the Met cycle. Ethylene on the other hand did not regulate the expression of genes encoding enzymes of the Met cycle in *Arabidopsis* or during fruit ripening in tomato. In rice, transcripts of the MTA nucleosidase (MTN) gene *OsMTN* as well as OsMTN enzyme activity increased in parallel with ethylene production during submergence, but were not regulated by ethylene. Thus, it was shown that Met cycle genes are not regulated by ethylene in these plants. S-adenosylmethionine (SAM) levels were reduced in *mtk* and *mtk/eto3* plants under sulfur-limiting conditions. These data indicate that the Met cycle might be required to sustain SAM levels when *de novo* SAM synthesis is limited. Another important task of the Met cycle might be the metabolism of MTA. *Arabidopsis* possesses two MTN genes, *AtMTN1* and *AtMTN2*. *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* plants that are unable to metabolize MTA were impaired in plant development and reproduction. In contrast, *mtk* plants that are capable of metabolizing MTA to methylthioribose were not altered in development or reproduction under sulfur-replete conditions when compared to wild-type. These observations indicate that disturbed metabolism of MTA, rather than limited Met supply might cause developmental defects in *mtn1-1/mtn2-1*. Analysis of *mtn* single-mutants revealed that more than 80% of the total MTN activity was contributed by *MTN1*. MTA, the substrate of MTN, induced MTN enzyme activity, but not MTN transcript levels. Immunoblot analyses showed that this regulation presumably occurs through regulation of protein abundance. When MTA was supplied as sole sulfur source, *mtn1-1* seedlings were impaired in growth and accumulated MTA, SAM, and the polyamines putrescine and spermine. An explanation might be that MTA inhibits SAM consuming and MTA releasing biosynthetic pathways via a negative feedback loop. An important task of the Met cycle could thus be to prevent this feedback inhibition.

EINLEITUNG

Die Rolle des Methioninzyklus im Schwefelmetabolismus

Schwefel, eines der essentiellen Makroelemente, ist Bestandteil der proteinogenen Aminosäuren Cystein (Cys) und Methionin (Met), sowie von Oligopeptiden wie Glutathion und Phytochelatinen, von Vitaminen und Co-Faktoren wie Thiamin, Biotin oder S-Adenosylmethionin (SAM) und von sekundären Pflanzenmetaboliten wie zum Beispiel Glucosinolaten in *Brassicaceen*. Pflanzen und die meisten Mikroorganismen können Schwefel in organische Verbindungen assimilieren (Leustek, 2002; Saito, 2004). Für Säugetiere dagegen ist Schwefel in Form von Met essentiell und muss über die Nahrung aufgenommen werden (Ravanel et al., 1998). Zentraler Schritt der Assimilation von anorganischem Schwefel ist der Einbau von reduziertem Schwefel in die Aminosäure Cys. In diesem Schritt wird freies Sulfid aus dem Sulfatreduktionsweg auf O-Acetylserin (OAS) übertragen. Diese Reaktion wird von OAS-(Thiol)Lyasen katalysiert. OAS ist eine aktivierte Form von Serin, die von Serinacetyltransferasen aus Serin und Acetyl-CoA hergestellt wird. Serinacetyltransferasen katalysieren den geschwindigkeitslimitierenden Schritt der Cysteinbiosynthese (Jost et al., 2000; Hirai et al., 2003; Wirtz et al., 2004; Wirtz und Droux, 2005; Wirtz und Hell, 2006; Heeg et al., 2008; Haas et al., 2008). Für die Biosynthese der Aminosäure Met wird Cys benötigt. Im Eingangsschritt der Methioninbiosynthese katalysiert die Cystathionin- γ -Synthase (CGS) die Synthese von Cystathionin aus Cys und O-Phosphohomoserin, das aus Aspartat entsteht (Abbildung 1). Cystathionin wird anschließend von der Cystathionin- β -Lyase zu Homocystein umgesetzt. Im letzten Schritt der Methioninbiosynthese wird Homocystein von der Methioninsynthase zu Met umgesetzt. CGS konkurriert mit dem Schlüsselenzym der Threoninsynthese, der Threoninsynthase, um das gemeinsame Substrat O-Phosphohomoserin. In *Arabidopsis thaliana* scheint die *de novo* Met Synthese über die Aktivierung der Threoninsynthaseaktivität und gleichzeitige posttranskriptionelle Herunterregulierung der CGS reguliert zu sein. Ein Anstieg von SAM führt zu einem Translationsstop und zur Degradation der CGS mRNA. In anderen Pflanzenspezies, wie zum Beispiel der Kartoffel (*Solanum tuberosum* L.), scheint die Rate der *de novo* Met Synthese nur über eine Steigerung der Aktivität der Threoninsynthase bei SAM Akkumulation reguliert zu sein (Inaba et al., 1994; Chiba et al., 1999; Zeh et al., 2001; Amir et al., 2002; Nikiforova et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2002; Hesse und Hoefgen, 2003; Kreft et al., 2003; Hesse et al., 2004; Ravanel et al., 2004; Onouchi et al., 2004, 2005).

Nur etwa zwanzig Prozent des internen Met werden für die Proteinbiosynthese verwendet. Die restlichen achtzig Prozent werden in einer ATP-abhängigen Reaktion von SAM-Synthetasen im Cytosol zu SAM aktiviert (Giovanelli et al., 1985). SAM dient als

Methylgruppendonor und ist Co-Substrat zahlreicher Methylierungsreaktionen. Des Weiteren ist SAM Ausgangssubstrat für die Biosynthese von Polyaminen wie Spermidin und Spermin, die ubiquitär in Prokaryoten und Eukaryoten vorkommen (Tabor und Tabor, 1984; Smith, 1985). In Pflanzen werden neben Polyaminen das Phytohormon Ethylen und der Metallchelator Nicotianamin aus SAM synthetisiert. In Poaceen werden auch Phytosiderophore aus SAM über Nicotianamin als Zwischenprodukt synthetisiert. Phytosiderophore sind Eisenchelatoren, die der Aufnahme von Eisen aus der Erde dienen (Ravanel et al., 1998; Miyazaki und Yang, 1987; Crusack und DellaPenna, 1999; Ma et al., 1995; Mori und Nishizawa, 1987; Hell und Stephan, 2003).

Die löslichen Methioninspiegel hängen neben der Rate der Met Biosynthese von drei Recyclingstoffwechselwegen ab. In einem Stoffwechselweg kann die Methylgruppe nach der Verwendung von SAM als Methylgruppendonor regeneriert werden. Dabei wird S-Adenosyl-Homocystein (SAH), das Nebenprodukt der Methylierungsreaktionen, zunächst von der SAH-Hydrolase zu Homocystein umgesetzt, das anschließend zu Met recycelt wird (Mull et al., 2006; Li et al., 2008). In einem weiteren Stoffwechselweg kann Met über den S-Methylmethionin (SMM) Zyklus regeneriert werden. Eine Funktion des SMM Zyklus wird weniger in der Regulation des Met Spiegels, als in der kurzfristigen Kontrolle des SAM Spiegels vermutet. In einigen Pflanzenspezies dient SMM als Haupttransportmolekül von reduziertem Schwefel zwischen *sink* und *source* Organen (Giovanelli et al., 1981; Bourgis et al., 1999; Ranocha et al., 2001). Im dritten Stoffwechselweg, dem Methioninzyklus, in Pflanzen auch als Yang Zyklus bekannt, wird das Amino-Kohlenstoffgerüst regeneriert, das für die Synthese von Polyaminen, Ethylen und Nicotianamin verwendet wird. Bei der Synthese von Polyaminen, Ethylen oder Nicotianamin aus SAM wird Methylthioadenosin (MTA) als Nebenprodukt freigesetzt. MTA enthält die reduzierte Schwefelgruppe des Met und kann im Methioninzyklus über eine Reihe von Zwischenschritten zu Met recycelt werden. Der Methioninzyklus existiert in Bakterien, Pflanzen und Tieren. In Pflanzen wurde der Methioninzyklus in den 1970er Jahren entdeckt. Die Hauptschritte wurden enzymatisch beschrieben und die beteiligten Enzyme charakterisiert (Wang et al., 1982; Yang und Hoffman, 1984; Miyazaki und Yang, 1987).

Im ersten Schritt des Methioninzyklus wird MTA von der MTA-Nukleosidase (MTN) unter Abspaltung eines Adenins zu Methylthioribose (MTR) umgesetzt (Abbildung 1). Die MTA/SAH-Nukleosidasen (MTAN) aus Bakterien verfügen über eine Doppelfunktion. Neben MTA kann auch SAH als Substrat dienen. Aus SAH entsteht unter Abspaltung eines Adenins S-Ribosylhomocystein, das entweder zu Homocystein und Furanon umgesetzt wird oder als Substrat für die Biosynthese von *Quorum sensing* Autoinduktoren dient, die eine Rolle in der chemischen Kommunikation zwischen Bakterien spielen (Duerre, 1962; Cornell et al., 1996; Sekowska und Danchin, 1999; Schauder et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2004). Im

nächsten Schritt wird MTR durch die MTR-Kinase (MTK) zu MTR-1-Phosphat phosphoryliert (Ferro et al., 1978; Tower et al., 1993). Die Umsetzung von MTA zu MTR-1-Phosphat wird in Tieren von einem einzigen Enzym, der MTA-Phosphorylase, katalysiert (Cornell et al., 1996; Schlenk, 1983). Pflanzliche MTA-Nukleosidasen (EC 3.2.2.16) und Methylthioribose-Kinasen (EC 2.7.1.100) wurden zuerst aus Lupine (*Lupinus luteus* L.) und Tomate (*Solanum lycopersicum* L.) aufgereinigt und charakterisiert (Guranowski et al., 1981; Kushad et al., 1983; Wasternack et al., 1985; Kushad et al., 1985). Später wurden *MTK* Gene in Reis (*Oryza sativa* L.) und Arabidopsis identifiziert und die Enzyme charakterisiert (Sauter et al., 2004). Die enzymatischen Aktivitäten einer Isomerase und einer Dehydratase/Phosphatase/Enolase werden anschließend benötigt, um MTR-1-P zu Acireducton umzusetzen (Zhang et al., 2004). Acireducton wird von einer Acireducton-Dioxygenase (ARD) zu 2-Keto-4-Methylthiobutyrat (KMTB) umgesetzt. ARDs gehören zur Proteinfamilie der Cupine. Cupine sind Metalloenzyme, die eine aus β -Faltblättern bestehende fassförmige Struktur bilden. ARD kann Eisen oder Nickel binden. Die Eisen gebundene Form Fe-ARD katalysiert die Methioninzyklusreaktion. Die Nickel gebundene Form Ni-ARD setzt Acireducton zu Methylthiopropionat, Kohlenmonoxid und Format um. Pflanzliche Orthologe zu ARD wurden zuerst in Reis charakterisiert (Dai et al., 2001; Al-Mjeny et al., 2002; Sauter et al., 2005). Rekombinantes OsARD1 aus Reis kann, wie bakterielles ARD, in einer Eisen oder Nickel gebundenen Form vorliegen. Die Bildung von Fe-ARD ist jedoch favorisiert. Ob die durch Ni-ARD katalysierte Reaktion in pflanzlichen Zellen stattfindet, ist bislang noch nicht geklärt. Im letzten Schritt des Methioninzyklus wird KMTB, das Produkt der Fe-ARD katalysierten Reaktion, durch Transaminasen zu Met umgesetzt. Das Kohlenstoffgerüst des Met wird dabei aus dem Riboseanteil des zur Aktivierung von Met verwendeten ATP regeneriert (Miyazaki und Yang, 1987). Weder eine Isomerase, Dehydratase/Phosphatase/Enolase, noch eine Transaminase, die spezifisch für den Methioninzyklus sind, wurden bislang in Pflanzen eindeutig identifiziert, obwohl Kandidatengene aufgrund von Sequenzähnlichkeit mit Enzymen aus *Bacillus subtilis* vorgeschlagen wurden (Kobayashi et al., 2005). Die Aktivierung von Met zu SAM ist nicht spezifisch für den Methioninzyklus, sondern auch Bestandteil des primären Met Metabolismus. SAM-Synthetasen werden von kleinen Genfamilien kodiert, die differentiell reguliert sind (Van Breusegem et al., 1994; Izhaki et al., 1995; Lee et al., 1997; Gómez-Gómez und Carrasco, 1998; Whittaker et al., 1997).

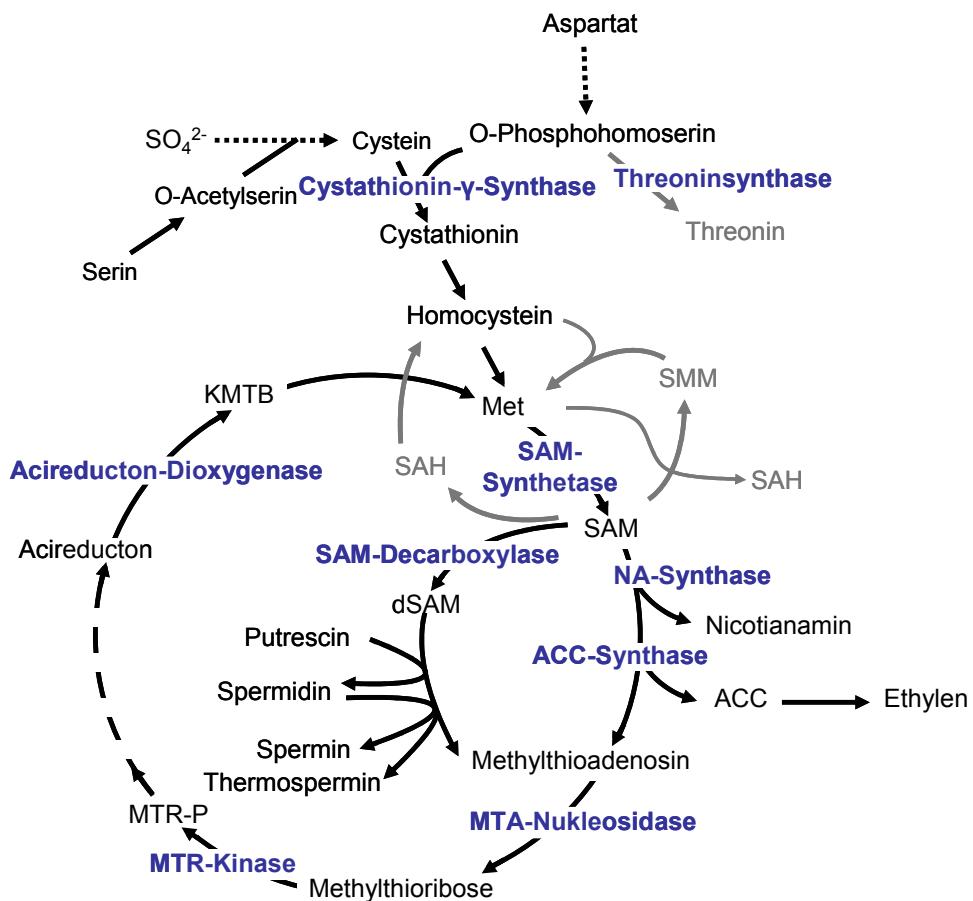


Abbildung 1: De novo Met Synthese und Met Recycling in Zusammenhang mit der Ethylen-, Polyamin- und Nicotianaminsynthese

Die Aminosäure Cystein wird aus einer aktivierte Form von Serin, O-Acetylserin, und anorganischem Schwefel, der zu Sulfid reduziert wurde, synthetisiert. Im ersten Schritt der Methionin (Met) Synthese wird Cystathionin aus Cystein und Aspartat via O-Phosphohomoserin synthetisiert. O-Phosphohomoserin ist das gemeinsame Substrat der Cystathionin- γ -Synthase und der Threoninsynthase, den Schlüsselenzymen der Met- und Threoninbiosynthese. Cystathionin wird über Homocystein zu Met umgesetzt, das durch S-Adenosylmethionin (SAM)-Synthetasen zu SAM aktiviert werden kann. SAM ist Methylgruppendonator und Ausgangssubstrat der Ethylen-, Nicotianamin- und Polyaminbiosynthese. Met kann über S-Adenosylhomocystein (SAH), S-Methylmethionin (SMM) oder über den Methioninzyklus recycelt werden. Die MTA-Nukleosidase katalysiert den Eingangsschritt des Methioninzyklus, in dem MTA unter Abspaltung eines Adenins zu Methylthioribose (MTR) umgesetzt wird. MTR wird anschließend von der MTR-Kinase zu MTR-1-Phosphat (MTR-P) phosphoryliert. Über eine Reihe von Zwischenschritten entsteht Acireducton, das von der Acireducton-Dioxygenase zu 2-Keto-4-Methylthiobutyrat (KMTB), der direkten Met Vorstufe, umgesetzt wird. Ethylen wird in zwei Schritten aus SAM über 1-Aminocyclopropan-1-Carboxylsäure (ACC) als Intermediat synthetisiert. Die Nicotianamin (NA)-Synthase synthetisiert NA aus drei Molekülen SAM unter Freisetzung von drei Molekülen MTA. Dient SAM als Aminopropylgruppendonator in der Biosynthese der Polyamine Putrescine, Spermidine, Spermine oder Thermospermine, wird SAM zunächst zu decarboxyliertem SAM (dSAM) umgesetzt. Die Eingangsenzyme dieser drei Stoffwechselwege, ACC-Synthase, SAM-Decarboxylase und NA-Synthase konkurrieren um das gemeinsame Substrat SAM.

Biosynthese, Signaltransduktion und physiologische Wirkungen von Ethylen

Das gasförmige Phytohormon Ethylen reguliert eine Vielzahl physiologischer Prozesse wie zum Beispiel Blühinduktion, Fruchtreife, Wachstum, Abscission und Seneszenz. Auch in Antwort auf biotischen und abiotischen Stress wird vermehrt Ethylen gebildet (Abeles et al., 1992; Theologis, 1992; Bleeker und Kende, 2000; Dolan, 2001; Grbic und Bleeker, 1995; Young et al., 2004). Die Biosynthese von Ethylen aus SAM erfolgt in zwei Schritten. Im ersten Schritt wird SAM von einer 1-Aminocyclopropan-1-Carboxylsäure (ACC)-Synthase (ACS) zu ACC umgesetzt, wobei Pyridoxalphosphat als Co-Faktor benötigt wird. Das Nebenprodukt dieser Reaktion, MTA, wird über den eingangs erwähnten Methioninzyklus zu Met recycelt. ACC wird im zweiten Schritt zu Ethylen umgesetzt. Diese Reaktion wird von der ACC-Oxidase (ACO) katalysiert und benötigt zusätzlich Sauerstoff und Ascorbat. Als Nebenprodukte entstehen Cyanid und Kohlendioxid. Das Cyanid wird über das Enzym β -Cyanoalanin-Synthase zu β -Cyanoalanin detoxifiziert (Yang und Hoffman, 1984; Kende, 1989; Poulton, 1990).

Beide Enzyme der Ethylenbiosynthese, ACS und ACO, werden von kleinen Multigenfamilien kodiert. Die Expression dieser Gene ist durch verschiedene Entwicklungs-, Umwelt- und Hormonsignale differentiell reguliert (Kende, 1993; Zarembinski und Theologis 1997; Barry et al., 2000; Llop-Tous et al., 2000). Die C-Termini der ACS unterscheiden sich in der Länge und der Anzahl an potentiellen Phosphorylierungsstellen. Anhand dieser Strukturunterschiede werden ACS in drei Gruppen unterteilt, die unterschiedlichen Regulationsmechanismen unterliegen. ACS der Gruppe 2 werden über Proteinabbau im Proteasomenweg reguliert (Wang et al., 2004; Yoshida et al., 2005; Argueso et al., 2007). ACS katalysieren in der Regel den geschwindigkeitslimitierenden Schritt der Ethylenbiosynthese (Kende, 1989, 1993; Yang und Hoffman, 1984). ACO ist in den meisten vegetativen Geweben konstitutiv exprimiert, wird aber unter anderem in Reis nach Überflutung oder in Tomate während der Fruchtreife induziert (Gray et al., 1992; Spanu et al., 1991; Mekhedov und Kende, 1996). Es wird vermutet, dass ACOs eine regulative Rolle in der Ethylenbiosynthese während der Fruchtreife in Tomate spielen (Liu et al., 1985; Balague et al., 1993; Barry et al., 1996).

Ethylen wird von Rezeptoren perzipiert, die Ähnlichkeit mit bakteriellen Zweikomponenten-Histidinproteinkinaserezeptoren aufweisen. Die Rezeptoren sind hauptsächlich in der ER-Membran lokalisiert und als Dimere aktiv. Für die Ethylenbindung wird Kupfer als Co-Faktor benötigt (Rodriguez et al., 1999; Schaller et al., 1995; Kendrick und Chang, 2008). Die Ethylenrezeptoren werden, wie auch die Gene der Ethylenbiosynthese, von Multigenfamilien kodiert. Es werden zwei Typen von Ethylenrezeptoren unterschieden, Typ 1 und Typ 2 Rezeptoren, die eine unterschiedliche Anzahl an Transmembrandomänen und unterschiedliche Kinaseaktivitäten besitzen. Diese beiden Rezeptor-

isoformen tragen zu einem unterschiedlichen Grad zur Kompetenz bei, auf Ethylen antworten zu können. In Arabidopsis vermitteln Typ 1 Rezeptoren den größten Teil der Ethylenantwort und können nicht durch Typ 2 Rezeptoren ersetzt werden. In Tomate dagegen spielen Typ 2 Rezeptoren die größere Rolle in der Ethylenantwort (Klee, 2004; Chen et al., 2005; Hall et al., 2007; Kevany et al., 2007). Ethylenrezeptoren wirken als Repressoren der Ethylenantwort. In der ethylenungebundenen Form sind die Rezeptoren aktiv und aktivieren dadurch CTR1 (CONSTITUTIVE TRIPLE RESPONSE 1), einen negativen Regulator der Ethylenantwort. Wird Ethylen gebunden, werden seine Rezeptoren inaktiviert. Dadurch wird CTR1 inaktiviert, so dass die Inhibierung des Ethylensignalweges aufgehoben wird. Mutationen in einem einzelnen Ethylenrezeptor, die zum Beispiel die Bindung von Ethylen verhindern, führen zu Ethyleninsensitivität, da der Rezeptor permanent aktiviert bleibt und somit die Weiterleitung eines Ethylensignals verhindert (Kieber et al., 1993; Hua und Meyerowitz, 1998). CTR1 reprimiert EIN2 (ETHYLENE INSENSITIVE 2), einen positiven Regulator der Ethylenantwort. EIN2 leitet das Ethylensignal über einen bislang unbekannten Mechanismus an Transkriptionsfaktoren der EIN3-Familie weiter, die schließlich die Expression ethylenresponsiver Gene regulieren. Zu der EIN3-Familie von Transkriptionsfaktoren gehören neben EIN3 auch mehrere EIN3-Like (EIL) Proteine. *EIN3* und *EIL* Gene sind konstitutiv exprimiert. Die Proteine werden über regulierte Degradation im Proteasomenweg reguliert (Solano et al., 1998; Alonso et al., 1999).

Zwei der am besten untersuchten Regulationen durch Ethylen sind die Anpassung von semiaquatischen Pflanzen wie Reis an Überflutung, sowie die Fruchtreife in klimakterischen Früchten. In Reis steigen die Ethylengehalte nach Überflutung zum einen durch verringerte Diffusion von Ethylen in Wasser, zum anderen auch durch eine erhöhte Biosynthese von Ethylen an. Die erhöhte Biosynthese erfolgt durch Erhöhung der Transkriptmengen und der Aktivitäten von ACS sowie ACO (Métraux und Kende, 1983; Cohen und Kende, 1987; Mekhedov und Kende, 1996; Zarembinski und Theologis, 1997). Ethylen vermittelt Anpassungen von Reis an die veränderte Umweltbedingung. Ziel der Anpassungen ist es, die Sauerstoff- und Nährstoffversorgung in den überfluteten Pflanzenteilen aufrecht zu erhalten. Zu diesen Anpassungen gehören verstärktes Sprosswachstum, Aerenchymbildung und Bildung von Adventivwurzeln (Sauter, 2000). Klimakterische Fruchtreife ist gekennzeichnet durch einen Anstieg in der Respiration, gefolgt von einem starken Anstieg der Ethylensynthese, die der Fruchtreife voraus gehen. Ohne Ethylen können klimakterische Früchte nicht reifen. In Tomate werden während der frühen Entwicklungsstadien nur basale Mengen an Ethylen synthetisiert (Herner und Sink, 1973; Lincoln und Fischer, 1988). Während dieser Phase ist die Ethylensynthese zunächst auto-inhibitorisch. Bei Übergang der Früchte in die Fruchtreife wechselt die Regulation der Ethylensynthese von dem auto-inhibitorischen System 1 zum System 2, das auto-stimulatorisch ist. Die Ethylensynthese und

der Wechsel von System 1 zu System 2 während der Fruchtreife werden über differentielle Expression von ACS und ACO Genen reguliert (Barry et al., 2000). Dieser Wechsel wird vermutlich über Fruchtreife-assoziierte Transkriptionsfaktoren wie zum Beispiel den MADS-Box Transkriptionsfaktor RIN (RIPENING INHIBITOR), sowie durch Ethylen verursacht (Vrebalov et al., 2002; Giovannoni, 2004).

Die Polyaminbiosynthese

Neben Ethylen werden auch die Polyamine Spermidin, Spermin, sowie Thermospermin aus SAM synthetisiert. Polyamine sind polykationische Verbindungen, die an einer Vielzahl von Entwicklungsprozessen wie Embryonalentwicklung, Blütenentwicklung, Fruchtreife und Seneszenz, sowie in Stressantworten beteiligt sind (Evans und Malmberg, 1989; Galston und Sawhney, 1990; Bouchereau et al., 1999; Paschalidis et al., 2005; Kusano et al., 2007; Yang et al., 2007). Auch Sprosswachstum und die Apikaldominanz des Sprosses sind durch Polyamine beeinflusst (Hanzawa et al., 1997; Geuns et al., 2001; Alcázar et al., 2005). Über ihre positive Ladung interagieren Polyamine mit Makromolekülen, die anionische Gruppen enthalten, wie zum Beispiel mit DNA, RNA, Proteinen und Lipiden (Tiburcio et al., 1993). Die genaue Funktionsweise und physiologische Bedeutung von Polyaminen, sowie die Regulation des Polyaminstoffwechsels sind bislang jedoch nur unvollständig verstanden.

Die Biosynthese des Diamins Putrescin erfolgt in Pflanzen entweder über Ornithin, in einer von der Ornithin-Decarboxylase katalysierten Reaktion, oder über Arginin via Arginin-Decarboxylase, Agmatin-Iminohydrolase und N-Carbamoylputrescin-Amidohydrolase (Galston und Kauhr-Sawhney, 1995). Durch Übertragung einer Aminopropylgruppe auf Putrescin entsteht das Triamin Spermidin, aus dem durch Übertragung einer weiteren Aminopropylgruppe das Tetraamin Spermin oder das Sperminisomer Thermospermin synthetisiert werden. Als Aminopropylgruppendonator dient SAM, das dazu zunächst von einer SAM-Decarboxylase (SAMDC) decarboxyliert wird. Die Spermidinsynthase (SPDS) katalysiert die Synthese von Spd aus Put. Die Synthese von Spermin und Thermospermin wird von einer Sperminsynthase (SPMS) beziehungsweise einer Thermosperminsynthase (ACL5, ACAULIS5) katalysiert. In Arabidopsis kodieren vier Gene für Proteine mit SAMDC Aktivität. SAMDCs sind differentiell reguliert und katalysieren den geschwindigkeits-limitierenden Schritt der Biosynthese der Tri- und Tetraamine (Tassoni et al., 2000). Herunterregulierung von SAMDC in der *samdc1-1* oder der *bud2* (*bushy and dwarf*) Mutante resultierte unter anderem in Zwerigenwachstum und veränderter Gefäßmorphologie. Die *samdc1-1/bud2* Doppelmutante war embryolethal (Ge et al., 2006). Die Spermidinsynthase wird in Arabidopsis von zwei Genen kodiert, *SPDS1* und *SPDS2*. Ausschalten von *SPDS1* oder *SPDS2* beeinflusste Spermidingehalte und Pflanzenwachstum nicht. Ausschalten beider *SPDS* Gene resultierte in Embryolethaliät (Imai et al., 2004a). Jeweils ein Gen kodiert

für die Sperminsynthase (*SPMS*) und die Thermosperminsynthase (*ACL5*). Wird die Sperminsynthase ausgeschaltet, wie in der *spms-1* Mutante, sind die Spemingehalte stark reduzierte, aber Pflanzenwachstum und -entwicklung sind unverändert. Ist dagegen die Thermosperminsynthase ausgeschaltet, wie in der *acl5-1* Mutante, sind die Pflanzen zwergwüchsig und die Gefäßentwicklung ist verändert (Hanzawa et al., 2000; Imai et al., 2004b; Imai et al., 2006).

Biosynthese und Funktion von Nicotianamin und Phytosiderophoren

Neben Ethylen und Polyaminen wird auch Nicotianamin (NA) aus SAM synthetisiert und dabei MTA als Nebenprodukt freigesetzt. NA ist universell im Pflanzenreich vorhanden und kann eine Vielzahl von Metallen wie Eisen, Mangan, Kupfer, Zink und Nickel chelatieren (Beneš et al., 1983; Anderegg und Ripperger, 1989; Callahan et al., 2007). Des Weiteren dient NA als Schlüsselmetabolit der Biosynthese von Mugineinsäuren, die als Phytosiderophore dienen (Shojima et al., 1990). Eine Hauptfunktion von NA wird in der Aufrechterhaltung der Eisen-Homeostase vermutet. Es wird angenommen, dass NA der Haupteisenchelator im Cytosol ist und am inter- und intrazellulären Transport von Eisen beteiligt ist. NA scheint allerdings nicht nur im Cytosol, sondern auch im Apoplasten lokalisiert zu sein. Möglicherweise ist NA auch an der Kontrolle des Gehalts an apoplastischem Eisen beteiligt (Cassin et al., 2009). Für die Aufnahme von Eisen über die Wurzeln existieren in Pflanzen zwei Strategien. Strategie I beruht auf einer Ansäuerung der Rhizosphäre über Export von Protonen über eine Plasmamembran P-Typ ATPase, die zu einer verbesserten Löslichkeit von Fe^{3+} führt. Fe^{3+} wird anschließend von einer Fe^{3+} -Chelat-Reduktase zu dem löslicheren Fe^{2+} reduziert, das schließlich über Eisentransporter in die Zelle importiert wird (Hell und Stephan, 2003). Strategie II-Pflanzen sekretieren Phytosiderophore, die Fe^{3+} extrazellulär chelatieren. Die Phytosiderophor- Fe^{3+} -Komplexe werden anschließend über aktiven Transport in die Pflanze aufgenommen. Alle Höheren Pflanzen, mit Ausnahme der Poaceen, nutzen System I. Poaceen nutzen System II. Während Phytosiderophore nur Fe^{3+} chelatieren, kann NA sowohl Fe^{2+} , als auch Fe^{3+} chelatieren. Fe^{2+} -NA Komplexe sind jedoch stabiler (von Wieren et al., 1999).

Die Nicotianaminsynthase (NAS) katalysiert die Synthese von NA aus drei Molekülen SAM. Als Nebenprodukt entstehen drei Moleküle MTA. Über Deaminierung von NA durch die Nicotianaminaminotransferase (NAAT) wird Deoxy-Mugineinsäure synthetisiert, die anschließend durch Dehydroxylierung zu Mugineinsäure umgesetzt wird. Über weitere Hydroxylierung von Deoxy-Mugineinsäure oder Mugineinsäure können weitere Mugineinsäurederivate gebildet werden. Pflanzen der NA-freien *Chloronerva* Mutante in Tomate waren in Spross- und Wurzelwachstum reduziert und chlorotisch, nur die Blattadern ergrünten. Auch der apoplastische Gehalt an Eisen war in dieser Mutante im Vergleich zum

Wildtyp reduziert (Becker et al., 1995). In Tabakpflanzen (*Nicotiana tabacum* L.), die eine NAAT aus Poaceen überexprimierten, waren die NA-Gehalte reduziert. Die Reduktion von NA in diesen transgenen Tabakpflanzen führte zu reduziertem Wachstum, Chlorose in den jungen Blättern, abnormalen Infloreszenzen, sowie vollständiger Sterilität (Takahashi et al., 2003). Die Überexpression einer NAS aus *Thlaspi caerulescens* in Arabidopsis führte zu einer erhöhten Nickeltoleranz. Die Nickeltoleranz war mit der Höhe der NA-Akkumulation korreliert, was auf eine Funktion von NA nicht nur in der Eisen-Homeostase, sondern auch in der Nickel-Homeostase hindeutet (Pianelli et al., 2005). Die Eisenaufnahme, sowie die Eisenverteilung innerhalb der Pflanze waren in diesen Pflanzen nicht verändert, allerdings war die Sensitivität gegenüber Eisenmangel in diesen transgenen Pflanzen erhöht. Eine mögliche Erklärung könnte in einer geringeren Eisenverfügbarkeit liegen, die möglicherweise durch erhöhte Eisen-Sequestrierung im Apoplasten von Blättern bedingt sein könnte (Cassin et al., 2009).

Regulation des Methioninzyklus in Abhängigkeit von der Ethylen-, Polyamin- und Nicotianaminsynthese

Die Eingangsenzyme der Synthese von Ethylen, Polyaminen, sowie Nicotianamin, ACS, SAMDC und NAS konkurrieren um das gemeinsame Substrat SAM und katalysieren die geschwindigkeitslimitierenden Schritte der jeweiligen Stoffwechselwege (Yang und Hoffman, 1984; Tassoni et al., 2000). Alle diese Stoffwechselwege produzieren MTA als Nebenprodukt, das über den Methioninzyklus zu Met recycelt wird. Die Arabidopsis *mtk* Mutante, in der der Methioninzyklus ausgeschaltet ist, kann MTA nicht als Schwefelquelle nutzen. Unter Schwefelvollversorgung sind Pflanzenwachstum und -entwicklung im Vergleich zum Wildtyp allerdings nicht beeinträchtigt. Unter diesen Bedingungen scheint Methioninrecycling also nicht essentiell zu sein (Sauter et al., 2004). In *Lemna spec* werden nur etwa 6% des Met über den Methioninzyklus recycelt, 19% des Met stammen aus der *de novo* Methioninsynthese, die übrigen 75% des Met werden über Homocystein, das aus SAM-abhängigen Methylierungsreaktionen entsteht, regeneriert (Giovanelli et al., 1985). *Lemna* produziert allerdings keine signifikanten Mengen an Ethylen. Während der Fruchtreife in klimakterischen Früchten ist ein Anstieg der Ethylensynthese um den Faktor 1000 im Vergleich zu den basal produzierten Ethylenmengen möglich (Miyazaki und Yang, 1987). Baur und Yang (1972) postulierten, dass die hohen Ethylensyntheseraten gelagerter Äpfelfrüchte ohne externe Schwefelquelle auf kontinuierlichem Methioninrecycling beruhen. In Reis induzierte Ethylen nach Überflutung die Expression des Methioninzyklusgenes *OsARD1* in einer frühen Antwort. Die Regulation erfolgt direkt ohne den Bedarf neuer Proteinbiosynthese, möglicherweise unter Beteiligung von Transkriptionsfaktoren der EIN3/EIL-Familie (Sauter et al., 2005). Neben dieser ethylenabhängigen Regulation des

Methioninzyklus wurde des Weiteren gezeigt, dass Eisenmangel die Genexpression von Genen des Methioninzyklus in Reis und Gerste induziert (Yamagushi et al., 1999; Kobayashi et al., 2005). Wie die Polyamin-, Ethylen- und NA-Stoffwechselwege untereinander reguliert und miteinander korreliert sind und welche Bedeutung Methioninrecycling über den Methioninzyklus für die Synthese dieser Moleküle hat, ist allerdings noch weitestgehend unverstanden.

Zielsetzung

Im Rahmen dieser Arbeit sollte die Funktion und Regulation des Methioninzyklus molekulargenetisch untersucht werden. Ein Ziel dieser Arbeit war es, zu untersuchen, ob Methioninrecycling für hohe Ethylensyntheseraten notwendig ist. Dazu sollte eine *mtk/eto3* Mutante in Arabidopsis untersucht werden, die aufgrund der *eto3* (*ethylene overproducer3*) Mutation Ethylen überproduziert, gleichzeitig aber das Zwischenprodukt des Methioninzyklus, MTR, nicht zu Met recyceln kann, da die MTK ausgeschaltet ist (*mtk*). Ein weiteres Ziel der Arbeit lag darin, regulatorische Zusammenhänge zwischen der Ethylensynthese und dem Methioninzyklus zu untersuchen. Dazu sollte die Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus in *eto3* und *mtk/eto3* und in weiteren Arabidopsismutanten untersucht werden, in denen entweder die Ethylenperzeption inhibiert ist oder der Ethylensignalweg konstitutiv aktiviert ist. Um die Frage zu klären, ob Ethylen die Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus nicht nur in Reis, sondern eventuell allgemein in Pflanzen mit natürlichen Phasen hoher, langanhaltender Ethylensynthese reguliert, sollte die Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus während der Fruchtreife in Tomate untersucht werden. Neben Wildtyppflanzen sollten auch Mutanten analysiert werden, die in der Fruchtreife im Allgemeinen oder in der Ethylenperzeption im Speziellen inhibiert waren. Eine weitere Aufgabe dieser Arbeit lag in der Analyse der MTA-Nukleosidase, die den Eingangsschritt des Methioninzyklus katalysiert. An überexprimiertem OsMTN aus Reis sollte die Substratspezifität des Enzyms analysiert werden. Außerdem sollte die Regulation von OsMTN auf Transkriptebene und auf Ebene der Enzymaktivität in Antwort auf Überflutung in Reis untersucht werden. In Arabidopsis sollte die Regulation von MTN in Abhängigkeit von der Schwefelquelle untersucht werden. Um die Bedeutung der Metabolisierung von MTA im Methioninzyklus zu untersuchen, sollte eine *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* Doppelmutante in Arabidopsis analysiert werden, in der keine MTN-Aktivität detektierbar war. Über die Analyse dieser Mutante, sowie der beiden Einzelmutanten, sollte des Weiteren untersucht werden, welchen Einfluss MTA auf die Ethylen-, sowie auf die Polyaminbiosynthese hat.

KAPITEL 1

Methioninrecycling ist für hohe Ethylensyntheseraten in Arabidopsis notwendig

Um die Bedeutung von Methioninrecycling für die Ethylensynthese zu untersuchen, wurde eine Doppelmutante generiert, die vermehrt Ethylen produzierte (*eto3*), gleichzeitig aber MTA, das Nebenprodukt der Ethylensynthese, nicht über den Methioninzyklus zu Met regenerieren konnte (*mtk*). *eto3* Keimlinge produzierten im Vergleich zum Wildtyp stark erhöhte Mengen an Ethylen. Bei gleichzeitigem Ausschalten des Methioninzyklus in der *mtk/eto3* Doppelmutante war die Ethylensynthese im Vergleich zu *eto3* signifikant reduziert. Wir konnten somit zeigen, dass Methioninrecycling essentiell für hohe Ethylensyntheseraten ist. Anders als in Reis regulierte Ethylen die Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus in Arabidopsis nicht. Die ethylenabhängige Regulation von Genen des Methioninzyklus scheint demnach kein allgemeiner Regulationsmechanismus in Pflanzen zu sein. Ausschalten des Methioninzyklus in der Arabidopsis *mtk* Mutante resultierte im Vergleich zum Wildtyp in einer Verringerung der SAM-Gehalte unter schwefellimitierenden Bedingungen, zum Beispiel bei Anzucht auf Medium mit 100 µM Sulfat als Schwefelquelle oder auf Schwefelmangelmedium. Unter diesen Bedingungen sind die *de novo* Met- und SAM-Synthese limitiert. Wie auch in der *mtk* Mutante waren die SAM-Gehalte in *mtk/eto3* unter schwefellimitierenden Bedingungen reduziert. Wir vermuten daher, dass eine Funktion des Methioninzyklus in der Aufrechterhaltung des SAM-Spiegels bestehen könnte, vor allem, wenn Schwefel limitiert ist.

Die in diesem Kapitel vorgestellten Arbeiten, mit Ausnahme der Erzeugung der *mtk/eto3* Doppelmutante, der Schwefelmetabolitmessungen, sowie der statistischen Auswertung der Daten, wurden im Rahmen der Diplomarbeit "Molekulargenetische Analysen zum Methioninzyklus und seiner Bedeutung für die Ethylenbiosynthese" von mir begonnen und während der Promotion zur Publikationsreife weitergeführt.

The role of methionine recycling for ethylene synthesis in *Arabidopsis*

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Received 9 June 2006; revised 5 September 2006; accepted 20 September 2006.

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Summary

The methionine (Met) cycle contributes to sulfur metabolism through the conversion of methylthioadenosine (MTA) to Met at the expense of ATP. MTA is released as a by-product of ethylene synthesis from S-adenosylmethionine (AdoMet). Disruption of the Met cycle in the *Arabidopsis mtk* mutant resulted in an imbalance of AdoMet homeostasis at sulfur-limiting conditions, irrespective of the sulfur source supplied to the plants. At a low concentration of 100 μ M sulfate, the *mtk* mutant had reduced AdoMet levels and growth was retarded as compared with wild type. An elevated production of ethylene was measured in seedlings of the ethylene-overproducing *eto3* mutant. When Met cycle knockout and ethylene overproduction were combined in the *mtk/eto3* double mutant, a reduced capacity for ethylene synthesis was observed in seedlings. Even though mature *eto3* plants did not produce elevated ethylene levels, and AdoMet homeostasis in *eto3* plants did not differ from that in wild type, shoot growth was severely retarded. The *mtk/eto3* double mutant displayed a metabolic plant phenotype that was similar to *mtk* with reduced AdoMet levels at sulfur-limiting conditions. We conclude from our data that the Met cycle contributes to the maintenance of AdoMet homeostasis, especially when *de novo* AdoMet synthesis is limited. Our data further showed that the Met cycle is required to sustain high rates of ethylene synthesis. Expression of the Met cycle genes *AtMTN1*, *AtMTN2*, *AtMTK*, *AtARD1*, *AtARD2*, *AtARD3* and *AtARD4* was not regulated by ethylene. This result is in contrast to that found in rice where *OsARD1* and *OsMTK* are induced in response to ethylene. We hypothesize that the regulation of the Met cycle by ethylene may be restricted to plants that naturally produce high quantities of ethylene for a prolonged period of time.

Keywords: methionine cycle, ethylene synthesis, sulfur metabolism, S-adenosylmethionine, *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

Introduction

The methionine (Met) cycle exists in prokaryotes and eukaryotes. It allows the recycling of Met from methylthioadenosine (MTA), which is formed as a by-product of polyamine biosynthesis. In plants, the Met cycle is furthermore linked to ethylene synthesis. The first committed step in ethylene synthesis, catalyzed by 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylate (ACC) synthase (ACS), results in the formation of ACC from S-adenosylmethionine (AdoMet), and releases MTA as a side product. Comparison of the rate of ethylene synthesis in the climacteric apple fruit with Met content led to the prediction that the sulfur retained in MTA must be recycled (Baur and Yang, 1972). Subsequent work showed that Met is recycled from the sulfur group and the ribose

moiety of MTA (Wang *et al.*, 1982; Yang and Hoffman, 1984) in a cyclic pathway known either as the Met or Yang cycle.

For Met recycling, MTA is depurinated to 5-methylthioribose (MTR) by MTA nucleosidase (MTN), which is encoded by two genes in *Arabidopsis* (Sauter *et al.*, University of Kiel, unpublished data). Subsequent phosphorylation of the C-1 hydroxyl group of the ribose moiety of MTR by MTR kinase (MTK) yields 5-methylthioribose-1-phosphate. In *Arabidopsis*, MTK is encoded by a single gene (Sauter *et al.*, 2004). MTR-P undergoes enzymatic isomerization and dehydration to acireductone in a reaction that is catalyzed by an enolase/phosphatase. Genes for these enzymes have not been described in plants to date. The resulting acireductone

reacts with dioxygen to produce 2-keto-4-methylthiobutyrate (KMTB), the immediate precursor of Met, and formate. Acireductone dioxygenase (ARD), which catalyzes this step, was characterized recently in plants (Sauter *et al.*, 2005). It is encoded by four genes in *Arabidopsis*.

A genetic approach was used to knock out the Met cycle through insertional mutagenesis of the single *MTK* gene in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. The *mtk* mutant was unable to utilize MTA as a sulfur source, but neither showed any obvious phenotypic alteration nor growth retardation when grown either on sulfur sources other than MTA or on sulfur-depleted media (Sauter *et al.*, 2004). It was predicted early on that the recycling of Met from MTA was required for sustained ethylene synthesis in stored apples (Baur and Yang, 1972). Yet the significance of the Met cycle for ethylene synthesis and its contribution to either Met or AdoMet homeostasis have not been investigated in detail. We therefore set out to study these aspects in *Arabidopsis*. In order to achieve high rates of ethylene synthesis, we employed the *eto3* mutant (Woeste *et al.*, 1999). *Arabidopsis eto3* has a point mutation in the *ACS9* gene that renders the encoded ACS9 protein more stable (Chae *et al.*, 2003). As the formation of ACC from AdoMet through enzymatic activity of ACS is the rate-limiting step in ethylene synthesis, the overall rate of ethylene synthesis is highly increased in *eto3*. For our studies, we crossed *eto3* with the *mtk* mutant resulting in plants with high ACS activity and no capacity for regeneration of the ACS substrate AdoMet from MTA (Figure 1a).

Results

Methionine cycle knockout plants are impaired in maintaining AdoMet homeostasis in sulfur-deficient conditions

The *mtk* mutant of *Arabidopsis* is impaired in its phosphorylation of methylthioribose, and is thus not able to recycle Met through the Met cycle. We previously described that the *mtk* mutant is unable to grow on MTA as source of sulfur, but does not otherwise display a morphological phenotype when grown on various other sulfur sources (Sauter *et al.*, 2004). In our current study we set out to study the role of the Met cycle for AdoMet metabolism and ethylene synthesis. AdoMet is the substrate of the Met cycle and MTA is its immediate product. Steady state levels of both metabolites were measured in wild-type (wt) and *mtk* plants grown on sulfate, Met or MTA as the sulfur source. No significant differences in either AdoMet or MTA levels were observed in shoots of 3-week-old wt and *mtk* plants grown on sulfur replete media, such as MS media or MS media with either 500 µM sulfate or 500 µM Met as the defined sulfur sources (Figure 2a,b). Without supplemental sulfur ($P = 0.0016$) and at either 100 µM sulfate ($P = 0.011$) or 100 µM Met ($P < 0.001$), shoots of *mtk* plants had lower

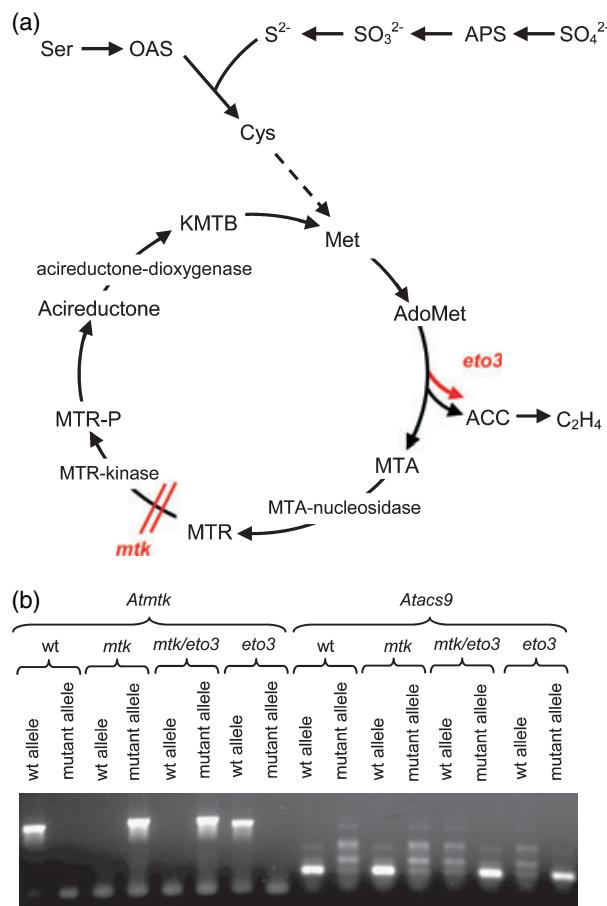


Figure 1. The Met cycle is linked to ethylene biosynthesis.

(a) Methionine (Met) is synthesized *de novo* from reduced sulfur and O-acetylserine (OAS), which in turn is derived from serine (Ser). Sulfate, the prime sulfur source of plants, is reduced to sulfide via 5'-adenylylsulfate (APS) and incorporated into cysteine (Cys). Cys is metabolized in several steps to Met. The Met cycle regenerates Met and subsequently S-adenosylmethionine (AdoMet) from methylthioadenosine (MTA), which is formed as a side-product of 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylate (ACC) synthesis in the ethylene biosynthetic pathway. MTR, methylthioribose; MTK, methylthioribose kinase; MTR-P, methylthioribose phosphate; ARD, acireductone dioxygenase; KMTB, 2-keto-4-methylthiobutyrate. The genes that are affected in the mutants are ACC synthase for *eto3* and *MTK*. The red arrow indicates an activating mutation in *eto3*. The red double line indicates the knock out of *MTK*.

(b) Homozygosity of the *mtk/eto3* double mutant was verified by PCR amplification of wild-type (wt) and mutant alleles. The *mtk* T-DNA insertion mutation was verified using a T-DNA border primer and an *mtk* primer yielding a PCR product of 849 bp. The wt allele was amplified with two *MTK* gene-specific primers that gave a product of 774 bp. The *eto3* allele was amplified under stringent conditions using an *AtACS9*-specific primer that differed from the wt primer in one nucleotide at the 3' end and a second primer common to both the wt and mutant genotype. Amplification products had the same size of 218 bp for both *AtACS9* and *Atacs9*.

AdoMet levels compared with wt. At 100 µM Met, MTA levels were significantly reduced in the shoots of *mtk* plants ($P = 0.003$).

Wild-type plants maintained steady state AdoMet levels at around 15 pmol mg⁻¹ fresh weight, except when either Met or MTA were supplied as the sulfur source in high concen-

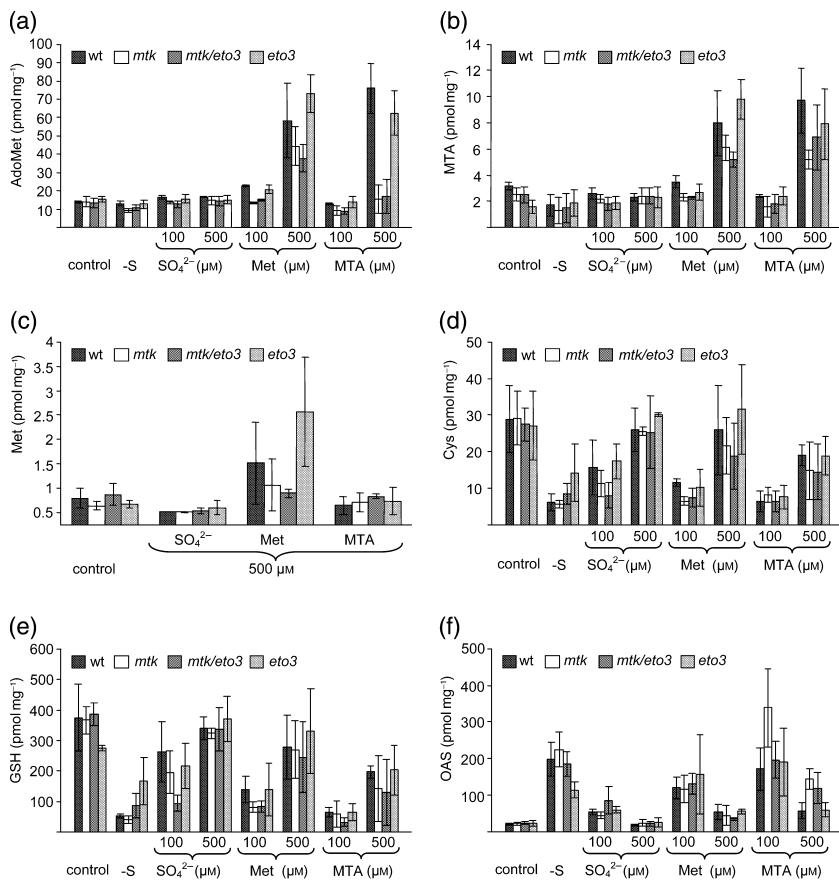


Figure 2. Steady state levels of the Met cycle metabolites AdoMet, MTA and Met are dependent on the sulfur source and are altered in the *mtk* mutant. Steady state levels of AdoMet (a), MTA (b), Met (c), Cys (d), glutathione (GSH; e), and *O*-acetylserine (OAS; f) were determined in wt and in *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* mutants. Arabidopsis plants were grown for 3 weeks on complete MS media (control), on media lacking sulfur (-S) or on media containing SO₄²⁻, Met or MTA at either 100 or 500 μM as a sulfur source. Results represent mean values and standard deviations (\pm SD) of three independent biological experiments with at least 10 plants in each.

trations. These conditions resulted in a 4–5-fold increase in AdoMet levels. Strikingly, the MTA levels appeared to change in a closely coordinated manner with AdoMet in wt plants exposed to various sulfur supplements, including a strong increase when grown on either 500 μM Met or MTA (Figure 2a,b), indicating that high concentrations of Met and AdoMet were, at least in part, channeled into MTA-producing metabolic pathways. In *mtk* plants that were supplemented with MTA, synthesis of AdoMet was reduced ($P = 0.003$), as would be expected from a plant in which the MTA salvage pathway was impaired (Figure 2a).

Measurement of Met by HPLC was impossible in plants under sulfur-deficient conditions as the peak for Met was superimposed by a signal from a highly abundant stress-induced metabolite. Statistically significant differences between wt and *mtk* in sulfur-sufficient conditions were not detected because of high variations in the total values amongst the three independent experiments performed (Figure 2c). In plants grown on 500 μM MTA, steady state levels of AdoMet ($P = 0.001$ for wt; $P = 0.029$ for *eto3*) and MTA (values for wt did not show a normal distribution; $P = 0.004$ for *eto3*), but not of Met, were elevated (Figure 2c).

The second sulfur-containing proteinogenic amino acid, cysteine, and its derivative glutathione (GSH) also showed great sulfur-source-dependent variations in steady state

levels (Figure 2d,e), and levels of the cysteine precursor *O*-acetylserine (OAS) were inversely correlated to Cys levels (Figure 2f), as described previously (Wirtz *et al.*, 2004). Under sulfur-limiting conditions, Cys levels were strongly reduced both in wt and *mtk* plants. When grown on 100 μM Met, the synthesis of Cys and GSH in the *mtk* knockout mutant was more impaired than in wt, confirming our finding that efficient metabolism of Met requires a functional Met cycle. In summary, in the Arabidopsis shoot Met and AdoMet levels were controlled more tightly than were Cys levels. Metabolization of MTA altered AdoMet but not Met homeostasis. Furthermore, the Met cycle contributed to steady state AdoMet levels mostly under sulfur-limiting conditions.

Interestingly, OAS levels in *eto3* plants were significantly lower than in wt plants grown under sulfur-deficient conditions ($P = 0.044$), but were not affected in plants grown with a regular sulfur supply, indicating that *eto3* plants can adapt more efficiently to total sulfur starvation (Figure 2f). Accordingly, Cys and GSH steady state levels in *eto3* plants were higher in zero sulfur supply conditions (Figure 2d,e). As the positive sulfate adaptation effect of *eto3* can be partially reverted by crossing *eto3* with *mtk*, it seems to be directly associated with enhanced ethylene formation in *eto3*, although the supply of sulfur at a low concentration of

100 μM sulfate, 100 μM Met or 100 μM MTA resulted in similar levels of Cys and GSH in wt and *eto3* plants.

Steady state levels of AdoMet are reduced in the mtk but not in the eto3 mutant

In order to study the role of the MTA salvage pathway at high rates of ethylene synthesis, we employed the *eto3* mutant. As a result of an amino acid exchange in ACS9, ACC synthesis and consequently ethylene production is greatly enhanced in *eto3* (Woeste *et al.*, 1999). We generated an *mtk/eto3* double mutant by pollinating *mtk* flowers with *eto3* pollen and selecting progeny with an *eto3* phenotype. Plants homozygous for the *eto3* allele in the double mutant were identified by PCR using a gene-specific primer that selectively amplified the *eto3* over the *ACS9* allele (Figure 1b).

Metabolite analysis of *eto3* and *mtk/eto3* mutants and comparison with wt and *mtk* showed that AdoMet levels were determined by the *mtk* but not by the *eto3* mutation with similar steady state AdoMet levels in wt and *eto3*, and similar AdoMet levels in *mtk* and *mtk/eto3*, under all conditions (Figure 2a). Such a strict correlation was not observed for Met, Cys or GSH levels (Figure 2c–e).

Met cycle knockout limits ethylene synthesis

To study the contribution of Met recycling to the ethylene biosynthetic capacity of *Arabidopsis* we measured ethylene emission in wt, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* plants grown on various sulfur sources (Figure 3). Unexpectedly, on complete MS media, ethylene evolution was higher in wt than in *mtk* ($P = 0.002$), *mtk/eto3* ($P = 0.005$) or *eto3* ($P = 0.009$). Also, ethylene release was higher from wt than from either

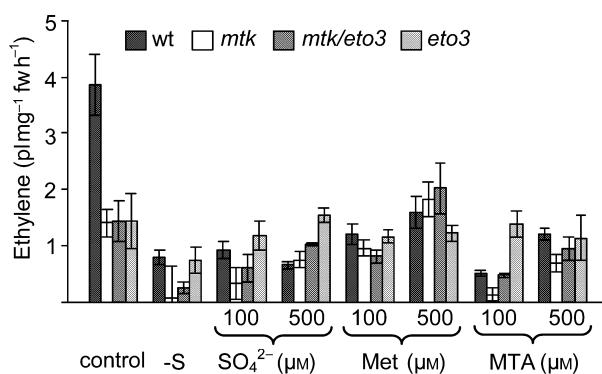


Figure 3. Knock out of the Met cycle limits ethylene synthesis in 3-week-old *Arabidopsis* plants grown under sulfur-limiting conditions.

Plants were grown for 3 weeks on MS media (control), on media lacking sulfur (−S) or on media containing SO_4^{2-} , Met or MTA at either 100 or 500 μM as the sulfur source, and ethylene evolution was measured over a 24-h period. Without sulfur, at 100 μM SO_4^{2-} , and with MTA as the sulfur source *mtk* plants produced less ethylene than wt or *eto3* plants, and similar levels as the *mtk/eto3* double mutant. Results are averages ($\pm \text{SE}$) of two independent biological experiments.

mtk ($P = 0.002$) or *mtk/eto3* ($P = 0.02$) when plants were grown on sulfate-deficient media.

Differences in ethylene evolution between genotypes on media containing MTA as the sulfur source were not statistically significant. On the other hand, overall ethylene evolution was lower in wt ($P < 0.001$), *mtk* ($P < 0.001$) and *mtk/eto3* ($P = 0.017$), but not in *eto3*, grown on sulfur-depleted media compared with growth on full media, indicating that even in adult plants a lack of sulfur in the media limited ethylene production. However, a correlation of ethylene synthesis with the immediate ethylene precursor AdoMet was not observed (Figures 1a and 3). Nonetheless, it is conceivable that although steady state levels of AdoMet remain constant, AdoMet fluxes might vary.

Ethylene emission from the *eto3* mutant was largely independent of the type of sulfur supplied. However, overall ethylene synthesis in adult plants was very low. By contrast, it is known that *eto3* seedlings produce high quantities of ethylene (Woeste *et al.*, 1999). We therefore decided to study 4-day-old etiolated seedlings.

Phenotypic analysis indicated no differences between wt and *mtk* seedlings (Figure 4a). Seedlings showed a typical etiolated phenotype with long hypocotyls and roots. *eto3* seedlings on the other hand displayed a typical triple response with short and thick hypocotyl, increased curvature of the apical hook and strongly reduced root growth (Figure 4a). The *mtk/eto3* double mutant showed an intermediate phenotype with an intermediate length hypocotyl, intermediate hook bending and partially inhibited root growth (Figure 4a).

Analysis of ethylene synthesis revealed very low rates in wt and *mtk* seedlings (Figure 4b). As described previously (Woeste *et al.*, 1999), ethylene emission from *eto3* seedlings was many-fold higher than from wt. Seedlings of *mtk/eto3* emitted levels of ethylene that were intermediate between *mtk* and *eto3* (Figure 4b), indicating that Met recycling was required to sustain high rates of ethylene synthesis.

The eto3 phenotype is only partially caused by ethylene signaling

It is generally assumed that the phenotype of *eto3* results from the continuous detection of high levels of ethylene. However, it is conceivable that the continuous production of high rates of ethylene in *eto3* causes secondary effects. In order to test this hypothesis, wt, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* seedlings were grown in the dark, either on 50 μM silver thiosulfate (STS) to inhibit ethylene signaling, or without an effector as a control (Figure 5a,b). In wt and *mtk* seedlings STS was without effect on the total seedling length. *mtk/eto3* seedlings were reverted to the wt phenotype in the presence of STS. In contrast, the phenotype of *eto3* seedlings was only partially reverted by STS treatment. Apical hook bending was eradicated in *eto3* in the presence of STS, but

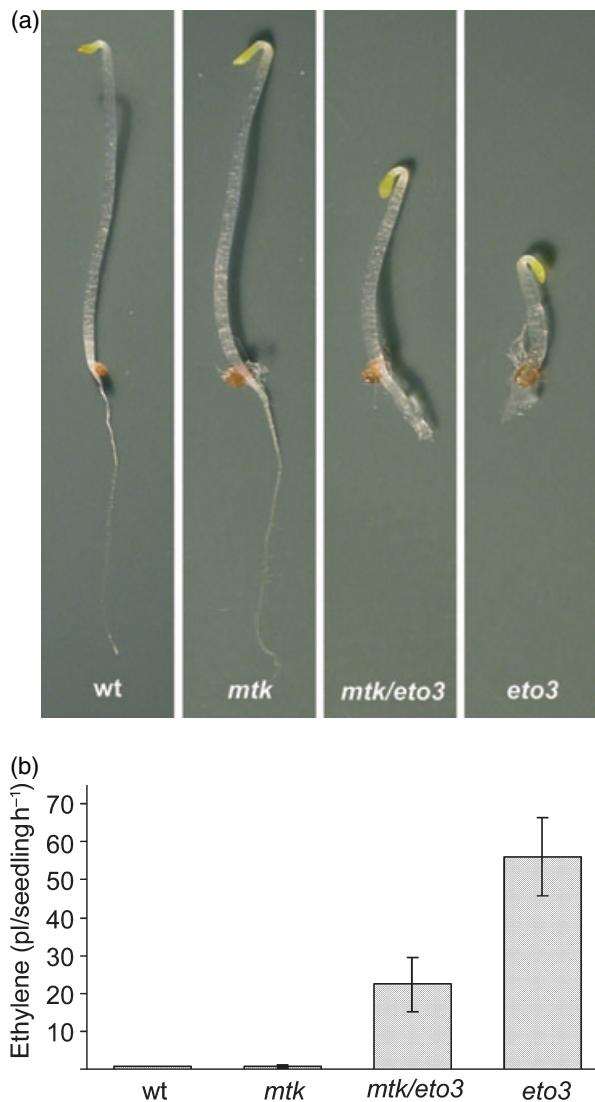


Figure 4. The Met cycle is required to sustain high rates of ethylene synthesis in etiolated *Arabidopsis* seedlings. (a) Phenotypes of *wt*, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* seedlings grown for 4 days in the dark. (b) Ethylene synthesis rate of *wt*, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* seedlings grown for 4 days in the dark. Results are averages (\pm SD) from 15 independent measurements with 25 seedlings each.

the inhibition of shoot and root growth was only partially reverted (Figure 5b,d,e). Similar results were obtained when STS was applied at a higher concentration. Wild-type seedlings had an average shoot length of 10.3 mm (± 1.12 mm SD) in the absence of STS, and an average shoot length of 11.3 mm (± 1.22 mm SD) in the presence of 100 μ M STS. *Eto3* seedlings had an average length of 3.92 mm (± 0.51 mm SD) without STS, and 7 mm (± 1.41 mm SD) with 100 μ M STS.

In addition, we treated seedlings of the different genotypes with 10 μ M ACC to promote the synthesis of high rates of ethylene. Treatment of *wt*, *mtk* and *mtk/eto3* with ACC did not inhibit either shoot or root growth to the same extent as

observed for *eto3* without ACC treatment (Figure 5c). The triple response induced by ACC treatment in *wt* was completely reverted by STS, showing that STS was effective in suppressing ethylene signaling (Figure 5c, *wt* + STS). The *eto3* phenotype was not aggravated by treatment with ACC pointing to a saturated ethylene effect. By contrast, root and shoot growth of *mtk/eto3* seedlings was further reduced in the presence of ACC, indicating that the ethylene-induced triple response was not quite saturated in *mtk/eto3*. Wild-type seedlings that were treated with ethylene at the concentration produced by *eto3* seedlings had an average seedling shoot length of 5.65 mm (± 0.66 mm SD), which was significantly longer than the average shoot length of *eto3* seedlings (3.92 ± 0.51 mm SD).

We concluded from these data that *eto3* seedlings suffered from growth inhibition that was partly independent of ethylene signaling. To further test this hypothesis we used 1-methyl-cyclopropene (1-MCP) to inhibit ethylene detection in a more specific manner than with STS treatment. Seedlings were treated with 1 ppm 1-MCP and seedling roots and shoots growths were measured after 4 days (Figure 5f,g). Wild-type and *mtk* seedlings had comparable shoot and root lengths either with or without treatment with 1-MCP. As described, *mtk/eto3* seedlings displayed reduced root and shoot growth compared with *wt* in the absence of 1-MCP. This growth inhibition was reverted by treatment with 1-MCP (Figure 5f,g), as was observed with STS (Figure 5a,b,d,e).

Growth inhibition of *eto3* mutant seedlings was partly relieved by the presence of 1-MCP in both shoots and roots. However, full restoration of growth was not achieved supporting the results obtained with STS. Shoot lengths of *eto3* seedlings recovered to either 66.1% of *wt* ($P < 0.001$) or 73.2% of *mtk/eto3* ($P < 0.001$), whereas the roots of *eto3* either achieved 55.5% the length of *wt* roots ($P < 0.001$) or 64.2% the length of *mtk/eto3* seedling roots ($P < 0.001$). We propose that the growth inhibition of *eto3* seedlings was a combined effect of ethylene signaling and ethylene synthesis-related constraints. As the growth of *mtk/eto3*, but not of *eto3*, was restored by blocking ethylene detection, the knock out of the Met cycle in *mtk/eto3* may alleviate growth inhibition through reduced ethylene synthesis rather than through reduced ethylene detection.

Long-term growth of eto3 is supported by methionine supplementation

Neither supplementation with different sulfur sources nor growth on sulfur-deficient media had an effect on the fresh weight of 4-day-old *wt*, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* or *eto3* seedlings (data not shown). However, the shoot growth of 3-week-old plants varied depending on the type and quantity of sulfur source supplied, as reported previously for *wt* and *mtk* plants (Sauter *et al.*, 2004; Figure 6a,b). Growth of all genotypes

Figure 5. The phenotype of *mtk/eto3* is reverted to wt, whereas the phenotype of *eto3* is only partly reverted to wt, by STS and 1-MCP.

(a) Phenotypes of wt, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* seedlings grown for 4 days in the dark.

(b) Seedlings of wt, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* were grown on 50 µM STS for 4 days in the dark.

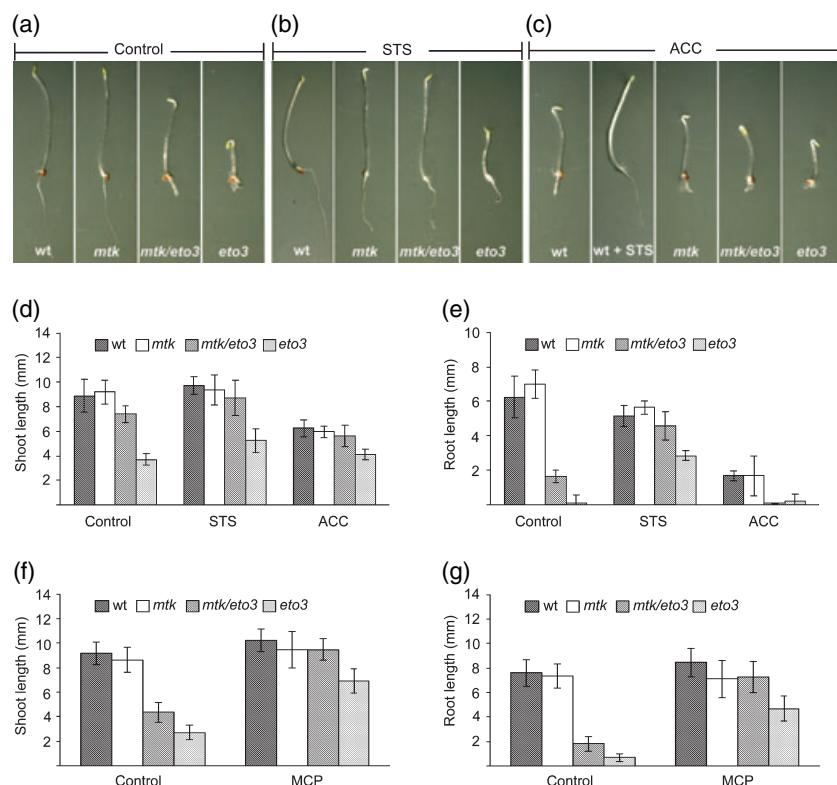
(c) Seedlings of wt, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* were grown on 10 µM ACC for 4 days in the dark. Wild-type seedlings were also grown in the presence of 50 µM STS and 10 µM ACC (wt + STS).

(d) Shoot lengths of 10 seedlings were measured and the averages (\pm SD) were calculated.

(e) Average root lengths (\pm SD) of the seedlings analyzed in (d).

(f) Shoot lengths of wt, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* seedlings grown on MS media either with or without 1 ppm 1-MCP in the gas phase for 4 days in the dark. Results are averages (\pm SD) of 40–60 seedlings analyzed in two independent experiments.

(g) Average root lengths of seedlings incubated as described in (f).



was less on 100 µM sulfate than on full medium ($P < 0.001$) and, with the exception of *eto3*, was less on 100 µM than on 500 µM sulfate ($P < 0.001$). Wild-type plants grew best either on complete media or on sulfate. Growth on 500 µM Met was comparable to that on 100 µM sulfate, but was less than that seen on complete medium or 500 µM sulfate, indicating that Met is not best suited for supplying the plant with sulfur. Growth on 100 µM MTA was comparable to growth on 100 µM Met, indicating that MTA was readily converted to Met through the Met cycle, as previously demonstrated by Kim and Leustek (2000). Growth of the *mtk* mutant was similar to wt either on complete media or with sulfate or Met supplementation. In contrast to wt, and in agreement with the disruption of the Met cycle, *mtk* plants were unable to utilize MTA as previously described (Sauter *et al.*, 2004).

Unlike either wt or *mtk* plants, the *eto3* mutant grew best on either Met or low levels of MTA as a sulfur source, possibly indicating that Met was a limiting factor for growth. Even though steady state levels of Met and AdoMet were not reduced in *eto3* compared with wt, it is conceivable that a high demand for AdoMet in *eto3* led to reduced fluxes into other metabolic pathways that utilize either Met or AdoMet, such as protein synthesis and methylation reactions. Alternatively, it is conceivable that Met or a metabolite of Met inhibited ethylene detection or signaling, thus improving growth in the *eto3* mutant. Growth of the *mtk/eto3* double mutant was sustained equally well by Met as it was by sulfate, again pointing to a positive effect of Met supple-

mentation in plants with an *eto3* background. Overall, growth of *mtk/eto3* was intermediate to growth of *eto3* and *mtk*, except when supplied with either MTA or suboptimal levels of Met as a sulfur source.

Met cycle genes in *Arabidopsis* are not regulated by ethylene

In plants, genes for three enzymes of the Met cycle have been identified so far, not counting AdoMet synthetases, which are not exclusive to the Met cycle. Cleavage of adenine from MTA is catalyzed by MTA nucleosidase, which is encoded by two genes in *Arabidopsis* (Sauter *et al.*, University of Kiel, unpublished data). These were named *AtMTN1* (At4g38800) and *AtMTN2* (At4g34840). Methylthioribose kinase is encoded by a single gene in *Arabidopsis* and phosphorylates methylthioribose (At1g49820; Sauter *et al.*, 2004). Acireductone dioxygenase catalyzes the conversion of acireductone to 2-keto-4-methylthiobutyrate, the immediate precursor of Met. In the *Arabidopsis* genome, four ARD genes were identified based on protein sequence homology to the functionally characterized OsARD1 protein from rice (Sauter *et al.*, 2005). These were named *AtARD1* (At4g14716), *AtARD2* (At4g14710), *AtARD3* (At2g26400) and *AtARD4* (At5g43850). To find out if Met cycle genes were regulated by ethylene, we used mutants of either ethylene synthesis or ethylene detection. We also studied gene expression in *mtk* and in the *mtk/eto3* double mutant.

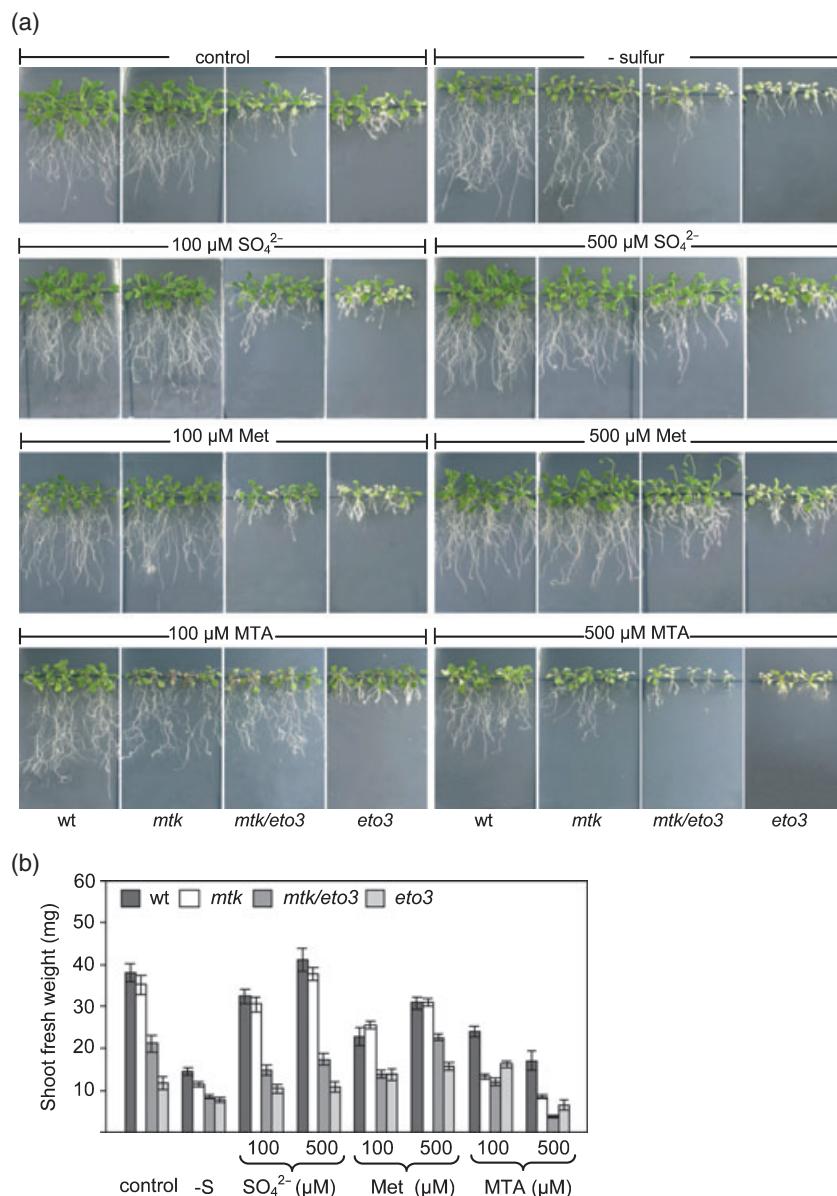


Figure 6. *mtk/eto3* plants have an intermediate phenotype compared with *mtk* and *eto3* plants. Phenotype of *wt*, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3* and *eto3* plants that were grown on MS media (control), on media lacking sulfur (-S) or on media containing SO_4^{2-} , Met or MTA at either 100 or 500 μ M as the sulfur source (a). Fresh shoot weight of 3-week-old plants (b) grown as described in (a).

Estimation of transcript quantities by semiquantitative RT-PCR revealed little or no regulation of gene expression by ethylene in shoots of 4-day-old etiolated seedlings (Figure 7). Neither ethylene overexpression in *eto3* nor a constitutively active ethylene signaling pathway in the *ctr1* mutant led to altered transcript quantities of *AtARD1*, *AtARD2*, *AtARD4*, *AtMTN1*, *AtMTN2* or *AtMTK* compared with *wt* (Figure 7a). Transcripts of *AtARD3* were not detected and were found in microarray analysis to be in general very low (data from genevestigator at <https://www.genevestigator.ethz.ch/>). The disruption of ethylene signaling in the *ein4* (Hua *et al.*, 1998) mutant did not alter the steady state mRNA quantities compared with either *wt* or *ctr1*, further supporting the conclusion that ethylene was not a signal that regulated Met cycle genes. In support of this conclusion we also did not

observe substantially altered gene expression after the treatment of seedlings with ethylene (Figure 7b). As a positive control, mRNA levels of *AtEBP*, which codes for an ethylene response factor (Büttner and Singh, 1997), were also analyzed. Unlike Met cycle genes, expression of the *AtEBP* gene was induced by ethylene treatment, as expected.

Discussion

The Met cycle contributes to AdoMet homeostasis under sulfur-limiting conditions

The sulfur-containing amino acid Met and its activated form AdoMet are essential metabolites in all organisms. In plants, AdoMet serves as a methyl donor and is a substrate for

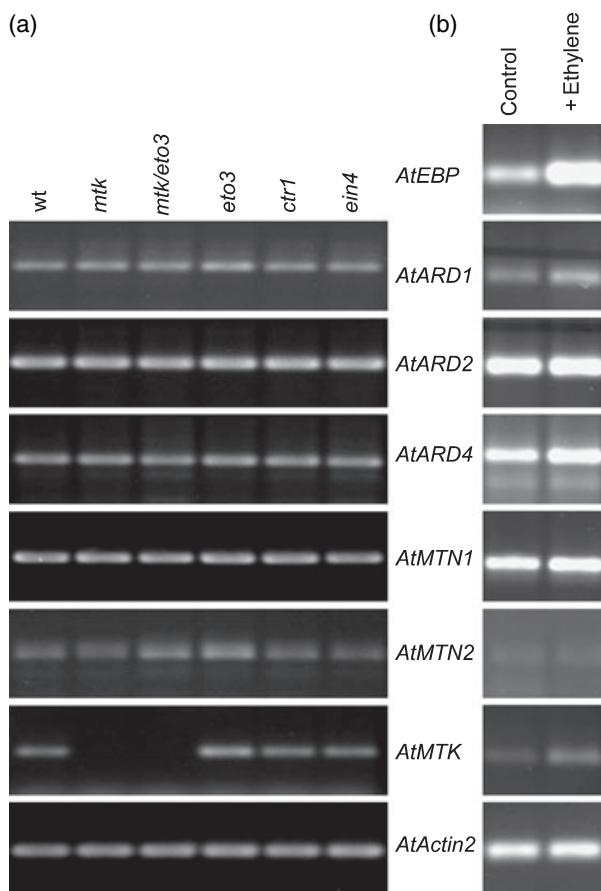


Figure 7. Expression of Met cycle genes in *Arabidopsis* is neither affected by Met cycle knockout nor by ethylene.

(a) Expression of *AtARD1*, *AtARD2*, *AtARD3*, *AtARD4*, *AtMTN1*, *AtMTN2* and *AtMTK* was analyzed by RT-PCR in the shoots of 4-day-old wt, *mtk*, *mtk/eto3*, *eto3*, *ctr1* and *ein4* seedlings. Relative transcript levels of *AtActin2* were determined as a control. Amplification products of *AtARD3* were not detected and data are not shown. As a result of a T-DNA insertion, the *AtMTK* gene is not expressed in the *mtk* and *mtk/eto3* mutants. Results were confirmed in two additional independent experiments.

(b) Relative transcript levels of *AtARD1*, *AtARD2*, *AtARD4*, *AtMTN1*, *AtMTN2*, *AtMTK*, *AtEBP* and *AtActin2* were analyzed by RT-PCR in shoots of 4-day-old wt seedlings treated either with or without 100 ppm ethylene for 6 h. *AtActin2* transcript levels were determined as a control for RNA input. *AtEBP* is an ethylene-induced gene that served as a positive control for ethylene treatment.

ethylene, polyamine and phytosiderophore synthesis. AdoMet must be supplied continuously to these various synthetic pathways and high demands for one pathway must be compensated for. During the synthesis of ACC in the ethylene synthetic pathway, MTA is formed as a by-product. Similarly, synthesis of spermidine, spermine and phytosiderophores releases MTA (Ma *et al.*, 1995). The reduced sulfur contained in MTA is salvaged through the Met cycle such that AdoMet is regenerated at the expense of ATP. In theory, high rates of ethylene, polyamine or phytosiderophore synthesis can be sustained through elevated rates of Met recycling without affecting the steady state AdoMet levels.

Previous work on *Arabidopsis* showed that wt plants grew better on MTA as the sulfur source than the *mtk* knock-out mutant, indicating that the Met cycle contributes to sulfur metabolism (Sauter *et al.*, 2004). Here we showed that the *mtk* mutant displayed lower steady state AdoMet levels compared with wt. Supplementation with Met at low levels did not fully restore growth in either wt or *mtk*, but it did sustain the growth of wt and *mtk* equally well. Although feeding with low levels of Met restored the growth rate in the *mtk* mutant to that found in wt, Met feeding did not restore AdoMet levels in *mtk* to wt levels. This result supported the idea that the AdoMet pool was dependent on *de novo* AdoMet synthesis as well as on AdoMet recycling. In *Lemna paucicostata*, quantitative analysis of Met metabolism indicated that the Met cycle accounted for 6% of the Met, whereas the *de novo* synthesis contributed 19% and recycling from AdoMet-dependent methylations accounted for 75% (Giovanelli *et al.*, 1985). *Lemna* does not produce ethylene and the 6% of the Met pool coming from the Met recycling pathway were attributed to polyamine biosynthesis. Thus, in an ethylene-producing plant one might expect an overall higher contribution of the Met cycle to Met and AdoMet pools.

When plants were grown on Met as the sulfur source, MTA levels were lower in *mtk* plants than in wt plants. It is conceivable that MTR accumulates in *mtk* because the MTR metabolizing enzyme is missing. MTR could exert feedback inhibition of the MTA-producing reactions. However, proof of such a regulatory feedback mechanism has yet to be provided.

The Met cycle is required for sustained synthesis of high levels of ethylene

To study the contribution of the Met cycle to ethylene synthesis, AdoMet homeostasis and shoot growth, we used the *eto3* mutant that has an unusually high ACS activity. This mutant consumes AdoMet and produces ethylene at high rates. At the seedling stage, the *mtk/eto3* double mutant displayed a more than twofold reduced ethylene synthesis rate compared with *eto3*, but still displayed a higher ethylene production rate than that observed in wt or *mtk* plants. Thus, the elimination of the Met cycle limited ethylene synthesis. Vice versa we can conclude that high rates of ethylene production depend on the Met cycle, the role of which is to contribute to the supply of Met and its activated form, AdoMet.

In mature green plants, *acs9* transcripts were detected in roots and siliques with RT-PCR (Yamagami *et al.*, 2003). On the other hand, promoter:GUS analysis of 15-day-old green plants showed no *acs9* expression in the roots, but instead found *acs9* expression in the petioles and leaf blades of younger leaves (Tsuchisaka and Theologis, 2004). β -Glucuronidase activity was neither detected in etiolated nor light-

grown P_{acs9} :GUS seedlings, although *eto3* seedlings produced highly elevated levels of ethylene (Figure 4b; Woeste *et al.*, 1999). It is conceivable that the promoter:GUS study did not reveal the actual expression pattern of *acs9*, e.g. because an incomplete promoter was used in that study. The expression of *eto3* in roots and siliques only could explain why we did not observe elevated ethylene emission from plant shoots. This result is in accord with the observation that steady state metabolite levels in plant shoots were mostly similar in *eto3* and wt plants.

Even though ethylene production in the shoots of *eto3* plants was not elevated under sulfur-sufficient conditions, shoot growth in *eto3* plants was strongly retarded. Most likely *eto3* seedlings suffered irreversible growth defects, e.g. defects caused by limitations in either Met or AdoMet supply. Although steady state metabolite levels recovered as the plant matured, the growth defects remained. Seedlings of *mtk/eto3* produced less ethylene and *mtk/eto3* plants had less severe growth inhibition than *eto3* plants, further correlating the shoot phenotype of plants with seedling stage ethylene synthesis rates.

The eto3 phenotype may be a result of ethylene and an imbalance in the sulfur-dependent metabolic pathways

Stunted seedling shoots of *eto3* are attributed to the ethylene-induced triple response (Woeste *et al.*, 1999). In fact, *eto3* seedlings displayed a seventy times higher rate of ethylene synthesis than that observed in either wt or *mtk* seedlings. In *mtk/eto3*, lowered ethylene production resulted in less severe growth inhibition. On the other hand, the *eto3* phenotype was only partially restored when ethylene perception was blocked by STS. In *mtk/eto3* seedlings STS fully prevented ethylene activity, resulting in a wt phenotype. Similarly, wt seedlings treated with ACC displayed a triple response that was prevented by the simultaneous application of STS. In wt and *mtk/eto3* mutants the ethylene-induced phenotype was completely reversible, whereas the phenotype of the *eto3* mutant was not.

STS inhibits any copper-containing protein and may have unspecific side effects. However, blocking ethylene detection with the highly specific inhibitor 1-MCP (Binder *et al.*, 2004) yielded similar results to STS treatments, indicating that the *eto3* phenotype was not caused by ethylene signaling only. Possibly, the *eto3* mutation leads to secondary effects of high ethylene production during seedling development that may be related to sulfur metabolism and result in irreversible growth defects.

In plant shoots, steady state levels of the sulfur metabolites OAS, Cys, GSH, Met and AdoMet were not different in *eto3* compared with wt under sulfur-sufficient conditions, whereas the response of *eto3* to sulfur starvation was altered in comparison to wt plants. It is conceivable that fluxes, e.g.

either of Met going into protein synthesis or of AdoMet being available for methylation reactions or polyamine synthesis, became limiting in *eto3* even at the seedling stage. Limitations in such fundamental cellular pathways could explain the irreversibility of the growth defects. Chlorosis observed with *eto3* plants may be taken as supportive evidence for restrictions in methylation-dependent pathways, as AdoMet-based methylation reactions are required for chlorophyll synthesis (Radmer and Bogorad, 1967).

It was described previously that the inhibition of ethylene synthesis through the inhibition of ACS resulted in the increased incorporation of AdoMet into spermidine (Even-Chen *et al.*, 1982), thus providing evidence that AdoMet-fueled pathways do interact. In pea seedlings, treatment with ethylene was shown to inhibit AdoMet decarboxylase, the first enzyme in the spermidine and spermine biosynthesis pathway (Apfelbaum *et al.*, 1984). As growth inhibition in *eto3* was, in part, independent of ethylene signaling it is conceivable that elevated shuttling of AdoMet into the ethylene synthetic pathway in *eto3* contributed to the decreased polyamine biosynthesis and growth reduction as a consequence. In barley seedlings, the exogenous application of polyamines was shown to promote shoot and root growth (Locke *et al.*, 2000). However, interactions between ethylene and polyamine biosynthetic pathways appear to be complex. Treatment of barley seedlings with the ethylene biosynthesis inhibitor aminoethoxyvinylglycine (AVG) increased the levels of putrescine even more than the levels of spermidine and spermine (Locke *et al.*, 2000). Putrescine is not synthesized from AdoMet and thus not linked directly to ethylene synthesis, as is the case for spermidine and spermine.

Regulation of the Met cycle by ethylene may be restricted to plants with high intrinsic rates of ethylene biosynthesis

The significance of the Met cycle for ethylene biosynthesis was pointed out previously for detached apple fruit, which have a limited supply of Met and an excessive ethylene biosynthesis rate (Baur and Yang, 1972). This observation led to the prediction of a Met-sulfur recycling pathway, later identified as the Met cycle (Yang and Hoffman, 1984). The apple belongs to those seed plants that display climacteric fruit ripening with a burst in ethylene synthesis. The elevated activity of the Met cycle enzymes MTN and MTK was reported during ripening of tomato, another climacteric fruit (Kushad *et al.*, 1985). Immediate/early regulation of the Met cycle gene *OsARD1* by ethylene was described in deepwater rice (Sauter *et al.*, 2005). Deepwater rice produces high rates of ethylene when partially submerged (Raskin and Kende, 1984) as a result of elevated ACS activity (Cohen and Kende, 1987), which may be caused by the increased expression of *Os-ACS5* (Van Der Straeten *et al.*, 2001). *Rumex palustris* is

another well-studied semi-aquatic plant. In *Rumex*, ACS and ACC oxidase (ACO) were found to be transcriptionally and translationally induced to sustain ethylene synthesis when the plant is submerged (Voesenek *et al.*, 2003).

By contrast, an ARD homolog from barley, *IDI1*, was not induced by submergence (Yamaguchi *et al.*, 1999). However, it is not known whether submergence increased ethylene synthesis in barley roots. In *Arabidopsis*, we did not observe a noticeable regulation of genes encoding the Met cycle enzymes MTN, MTK or ARD by ethylene. One should keep in mind that the high ethylene production rate found in *eto3* is not inherent to ontogeny of wt *Arabidopsis*. Thus, in evolutionary terms, there may have been no need to link the regulation of the Met cycle activity to ethylene production through ethylene signaling. More generally speaking, ethylene regulation of the Met cycle may be restricted to plants that encounter periods of continued high rates of ethylene synthesis, such as plants with climacteric fruit ripening or plants that are flooded for long periods of time and that use ethylene as a hormonal signal for submergence adaptation.

Experimental procedures

Plant material

All *Arabidopsis* genotypes used were of ecotype Columbia (Col-0). Wild-type seeds were originally obtained through GABI-KAT (Max-Planck Institut, Köln, Germany). The T-DNA insertion mutant line 633954 was obtained from the SALK Institute (La Jolla, CA, USA) and was characterized as the *mtk* knockout mutant (Sauter *et al.*, 2004). The *eto3* mutant was obtained from the *Arabidopsis* Biological Resource Center (ABRC, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA). The *eto3* mutant has a point mutation in the *Atacs9* coding sequence, which leads to an amino acid exchange resulting in the increased stability of the AtACS9 protein and increased ethylene production (Chae *et al.*, 2003; Woeste *et al.*, 1999). An *mtk/eto3* double mutant was produced by pollinating *mtk* plants with *eto3* pollen. Seeds of the T2 generation were grown on MS agar and plants showing the *eto3* phenotype with reduced shoot growth and more root hairs were selected. Plants of the T2 generation homozygous for the *mtk* (Sauter *et al.*, 2004) and *eto3* mutations were identified by PCR.

To characterize the *eto3* point mutation, genomic DNA was extracted with a rapid genomic DNA isolation method (Weigel and Glazebrook, 2002). PCR was performed using the primer pair Atacs9F1 (5'-TTCACCTGGTCAAGTGC-3') and Atacs9R1 (5'-GCTACAAATTCTCAGGGAAAC-3') for the first ten PCR cycles generating a 503-bp fragment. Then, either Atacs9R2 (5'-CGGCCATGAAACCGGAAA-3'), a primer specific for the wt *Atacs9*-allele, or AtacsR3 (5'-CGGTCCATGAAACCCGGAAAT-3'), a primer specific for the *eto3* *Atacs9*-allele, were added to the PCR reaction and 24 additional cycles were performed amplifying a 218-bp fragment. The PCR reaction conditions used were as follows: one cycle at 94°C for 5 min, 10 cycles with 94°C for 1 min, 55°C for 45 sec and 72°C for 45 sec, and 24 cycles with 94°C for 1 min, 60°C for 45 sec and 72°C for 45 sec and a final extension step at 72°C for 5 min. Genomic DNA from *Arabidopsis* wt plants was used as a control. Plants were grown in a 1:1 sand-humus mixture that was frozen at -80°C for a

few hours to avoid insect contamination and watered regularly with tap water. Prior to germination, seeds were stratified at 4°C in the dark for 4 days and then transferred to a growth chamber under long daylight conditions with 16 h of light (70 µmol m⁻² sec⁻¹) and 8 h of dark at 22°C. The *mtk/eto3* double mutant will be made available upon request.

Plant treatments

Arabidopsis seeds were surface-sterilized for 20 min in 1 ml 0.5% (w/v) sodium hypochlorite. After sterilization, seeds were washed with autoclaved water five times and then laid out under sterile conditions on square plates containing modified MS medium with 1.5% sucrose solidified with 0.8% agarose (Murashige and Skoog, 1962). Starvation experiments were performed as described by Sauter *et al.* (2004) using complete medium, sulfur-deficient medium and medium containing defined sulfur sources as indicated. These were based on sulfur-deficient medium supplemented with either 100 or 500 µM of MgSO₄, Met or 5'-methylthioadenosine. After 3 weeks of growth under long daylight conditions as described above, fresh shoot weight, ethylene synthesis or sulfur metabolites were measured.

Analysis of metabolites

Metabolites were extracted with 0.5 ml 0.1 M HCl using 0.2 g (fresh weight) of plant material powdered in liquid nitrogen. The levels of OAS and thiols were measured as described in Wirtz *et al.* (2004) after derivatization with either the AccQ-Tag fluorescence dye (Waters, Milford, PA, USA) or monobromobimane (Calbiochem, Darmstadt, Germany), respectively.

Methionine (Met) was quantified as its fluorescent conjugate of AccQ-Tag after separation by reversed-phase HPLC on a Nova-Pak® C₁₈ 3.9 × 150 mm column with a pore size of 4 µm. The column was equilibrated with buffer A (140 mM sodium acetate, pH 6.3, 7 mM triethanolamine) at a flow rate of 1 ml min⁻¹ and kept at 37°C. Pure acetonitrile served as buffer B. The gradient was produced by the following concentration changes: 0.5 min 9% buffer B, hold for 16 min, 44.5 min 15% buffer B, hold for 47.5 min, 60% buffer B, hold for 50.5 min, 0% buffer B, re-equilibration for 9.5 min. Settings of the fluorescence detector were the same as for quantification of OAS.

MTA and SAM were derivatized with chloroacetaldehyde at 80°C for 10 min in a total volume of 1 ml that contained 0.15 ml of sample, chloroacetaldehyde (3.6% v/v) and citrate/phosphate buffer (0.48 and 0.59 M, respectively, pH 4.0). Derivatized samples were immediately cooled to 4°C and centrifuged for 1 h at 4°C and 16 900 g to remove particles. The resulting supernatant (10 µl) was injected into a Waters HPLC system consisting of 600E pumps, eluent degasser, 717⁺ autosampler and a FP 920 fluorescence detector (JASCO, Tokyo, Japan). The excitation and emission wavelength for the detection of adenosine compounds were set to 280 and 410 nm using a gain of 10 and an attenuation of 1. All chromatograms were recorded and processed with the Millenium³² software (Waters). The separation method for adenosine compounds was developed based on the method described by Haink and Deussen (2003).

Effector treatment and ethylene measurement

Ethylene was measured in 4-day-old etiolated seedlings and 3-week-old plants grown on defined media as described above.

Twenty five seedlings were grown in 22 ml GC vials containing 15 ml of MS-medium. Seeds were cold-treated at 4°C for 2 days and then exposed to light for 2 h. The time at which the vials were transferred to a growth chamber at 23°C in the dark was set as 0. After 3 days of growth the vials were sealed. Plants were grown on plates as described above. After 3 weeks fresh shoot weight was measured and 45–70 mg of plant material was transferred to 22 ml vials containing 15 ml of sulfur-deficient medium. The vials were sealed immediately. Ethylene released from either the seedlings or plants into the sealed vials was measured after 24 h on a GC-14B gas chromatograph (Shimadzu, Hamburg, Germany) essentially following the method described by Vogel *et al.* (1998).

Seedlings were grown in the dark on square plates as described above. Media used were MS medium or MS medium supplemented either with 10 µM ACC, 50 µM STS or with both 10 µM ACC and 50 µM STS. After 4 days of growth, shoot and root lengths were measured. To treat seedlings with ethylene, they were grown in GC vials. Vials were sealed after 3.75 days of growth and seedlings were either treated with 100 ppm ethylene for 6 h or kept in closed vials without ethylene for 6 h as the control.

For the 1-MCP treatment of seedlings, 10.2 mg EthylBloc (Flora-life, Walterboro, SC, USA) were dissolved in 20 ml hot water in a sealed dessicator to yield a final concentration of 1 ppm 1-MCP in the gas phase. Seeds were exposed to light for 3 h to promote germination and seedlings were grown on MS plates for 4 days in the dark at 22°C.

Statistical analysis

Means from different data sets were compared and analyzed for statistical significance with the Student's unpaired *t*-test. Constant variance and normal distribution of data points were carefully checked with SigmaStat 3.0 (Systak Software, Erkrath, Germany) prior to statistical analysis.

RNA extraction and RT-PCR

Total RNA was extracted from the shoots of 4-day-old etiolated *Arabidopsis* seedlings using TRI-REAGENT™ (Sigma-Aldrich Chemie GmbH, Taufkirchen, Germany) following the User's manual. Total RNA (500 ng) was used for oligo(dT) primed first-strand synthesis with RevertAid M-MuLV reverse transcriptase (Fermentas, St Leon-Rot, Germany) according to the manufacturer's instructions. PCR reactions were performed in a total volume of 20 µl with 1 µl of cDNA. PCR conditions were as follows: one initial cycle at 94°C for 3 min, additional cycles at 94°C for 1 min, 55°C for 1 min and 72°C for 1 min, and a final elongation step of 72°C for 5 min. Twenty five cycles were performed for *AtActin2*, 35 cycles for *AtARD2* and *AtMTN1*, 37 cycles for *AtMTK* and *AtARD4*, and 40 cycles for *AtMTN2*. The primers used were: Atard1 F1, 5'-ACTAACATCACGAGGAA-C-3'; Atard1 R1, 5'-GATATAGAGAGGAAGCTC-3'; Atard2 F1.2, 5'-GCCTAACGAAGAACGAAAG-3'; Atard2 R1.1, 5'-GATGTACTCT-TCCCTTGAGG-3'; Atard3 F1, 5'-GAGTGGTTGTGTTCTAC-3'; Atard3 R1, 5'-AGAGTTCTTACGCTGAAGC-3'; Atard4 F1, 5'-GCATTACACAACGAAGATC-3'; Atard4 R1, 5'-AACAACTATCCAGAAGG-AGCC-3'; Atmtn1 F3, 5'-GAATCGGAAGAGAGGGATAAG-3'; Atmtn3 R3, 5'-ATAAAAAGGAAGAACAGAAAG-3'; Atmtn2 F2, 5'-CAACAGATTACGCCCTCGTT-3'; Atmtn2 R2, 5'-CCAATGCACATACT-GAACAG-3'; Atactin2 F1, 5'-CAAAGACCAGCTTCCATCG-3'; Atactin2 R1, 5'-CTGTGAACGATTCTGGACCT-3'; AtEBP F1, 5'-GATTATGCCCTCTCGTCAC-3'; AtEBP R1 5'-CTTCCTCCGCCGTGTT-GAAC-3'.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Rens Voesenek and Frank Millenaar (Utrecht University, The Netherlands) for the gift of 1-MCP and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for financial support.

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KAPITEL 2

Charakterisierung der MTA-Nukleosidase aus Reis

In diesem Teil der Arbeit wurde die Substratspezifität von OsMTN aus Reis analysiert, sowie die Regulation von OsMTN in Antwort auf Überflutung untersucht. In Reis kodiert ein Gen, *OsMTN*, für eine MTA-Nukleosidase. Es konnte gezeigt werden, dass ektopisch überexprimiertes OsMTN aus Reis über eine MTN-Aktivität mit einem K_m von 2,1 μM für MTA verfügte. Zusätzlich metabolisierte rekombinantes OsMTN auch S-Adenosylhomocystein (SAH) mit etwa 16% der Effizienz im Vergleich zu MTA. Eine solche duale Funktion einer MTN wurde bislang nur für bakterielle, nicht aber für pflanzliche Enzyme gezeigt. Aufgrund der niedrigen intrazellulären SAH-Spiegel bleibt jedoch zu klären, ob diese SAH-Nukleosidase Funktion *in planta* relevant ist. In Antwort auf Überflutung stiegen sowohl *OsMTN*-Transkriptmengen, als auch die Enzymaktivität von OsMTN langsam und parallel zueinander an. Dieser Anstieg verlief parallel zur Biosynthese von Ethylen, das in überfluteten Pflanzengewebe vermehrt gebildet wird und eine zentrale Rolle in der Anpassung von Reis an Überflutung spielt. Weder Ethylen, noch das Substrat der MTN, MTA, oder Met induzierten die *OsMTN* Expression oder Enzymaktivität direkt. Die Regulation der OsMTN Aktivität scheint vorrangig auf der Transkriptebene zu erfolgen und parallel zur Ethylensynthese zu verlaufen, aber unabhängig von Ethylen reguliert zu sein. Die Analyse der Metabolitgehalte zeigte, dass die MTN-Aktivität während der Überflutung hoch genug war, um eine Verarmung an Met und SAM während langanhaltender Ethylensynthese zu verhindern.

Die in der nachfolgenden Publikation veröffentlichten Messungen der spezifischen MTN-Enzymaktivität wurden im Rahmen dieser Promotionsarbeit angefertigt.

RESEARCH PAPER

OsMTN encodes a 5'-methylthioadenosine nucleosidase that is up-regulated during submergence-induced ethylene synthesis in rice (*Oryza sativa* L.)

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Received 25 October 2006; Revised 11 January 2007; Accepted 17 January 2007

Abstract

Methylthioadenosine (MTA) is released as a by-product of S-adenosylmethionine (AdoMet)-dependent reactions central to ethylene, polyamine, or phytosiderophore biosynthesis. MTA is hydrolysed by methylthioadenosine nucleosidase (MTN; EC 3.2.2.16) into adenine and methylthioribose which is processed through the methionine (Met) cycle to produce a new molecule of AdoMet. In deepwater rice, submergence enhances ethylene biosynthesis, and ethylene in turn influences the methionine cycle through positive feedback regulation of the acireductone dioxygenase gene *OsARD1*. In rice, MTN is encoded by a single gene designated *OsMTN*. Recombinant *OsMTN* enzyme had a K_M for MTA of 2.1 mM and accepted a wide array of 5' substitutions of the substrate. *OsMTN* also metabolized S-adenosylhomocysteine (AdoHcy) with 15.9% the rate of MTA. *OsMTN* transcripts and *OsMTN*-specific activity increased slowly and in parallel upon submergence, indicating that regulation occurred mainly at the transcriptional level. Neither ethylene, MTA, nor Met regulated *OsMTN* expression. Analysis of steady-state metabolite levels showed that MTN activity was sufficiently high to prevent Met and AdoMet depletion during long-term ethylene biosynthesis.

Key words: Methylthioadenosine nucleosidase, sulphur metabolism.

Introduction

The methionine (Met) cycle is a metabolic route that helps maintain intracellular levels of Met and S-adenosylmethionine (AdoMet). AdoMet is consumed in the biosynthetic pathways of ethylene (Wang *et al.*, 1982), certain polyamines (Miyazaki and Yang, 1987), and phytosiderophores (Mori and Nishizawa, 1987), producing methylthioadenosine (MTA) as a by-product. MTA, in turn, is a potent inhibitor of the polyamine biosynthetic enzyme spermine synthase (Pegg *et al.*, 1981), of AdoMet-dependent protein methylations such as histone methylation (Woodcock *et al.*, 1983), and of ethylene biosynthesis (Hyodo and Tanaka, 1986).

In plants, the Met cycle was first characterized biochemically (Wang *et al.*, 1982; Miyazaki and Yang, 1987). In recent years, some of the corresponding genes have been identified and characterized (Sauter *et al.*, 2004, 2005; Kobayashi *et al.*, 2005). In plants as well as in most bacteria, the substrate MTA is metabolized by MTA nucleosidase (MTN; Fig. 1). MTN hydrolyses the glycosidic bond between ribose and adenine moieties (Guranowski *et al.*, 1981; Cornell *et al.*, 1996) to release methylthioribose (MTR) and adenine (Ade). In bacteria, this enzyme exerts a second function by hydrolysing AdoHcy (S-adenosylhomocysteine) to S-ribosylhomocysteine (SRH) and Ade (Lee *et al.*, 2003) and is designated MTAN. In plants and in bacteria, MTR is phosphorylated to MTR-1-P (MTR-1-phosphate) by MTR kinase (MTK; EC 2.7.1.100). In contrast, in animals, yeasts, cyanobacteria, and archaea, MTA is converted to MTR-P and Ade by a single

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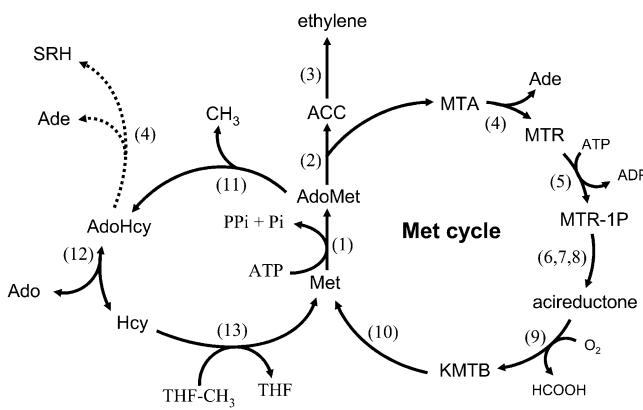


Fig. 1. Methionine metabolism and ethylene biosynthesis. Methionine (Met) is activated at the expense of ATP to AdoMet by AdoMet synthetase (1). AdoMet is the substrate of ACC synthase (2). ACC is converted to ethylene by ACC oxidase (3). Resulting MTA enters the Met cycle and is hydrolysed by MTA nucleosidase (4), yielding methylthioribose (MTR) and Ade. MTR is converted back to Met through five successive steps of the Met cycle involving MTR kinase (5), isomerase (6), dehydratase (7), E1 enolase/phosphatase (8), and acireductone dioxygenase (9), which produces KMTB (2-keto-4-methylthiobutyrate) and a transaminase (10). AdoHcy originating from AdoMet-dependent transmethylation reactions (11) is hydrolysed by AdoHcy hydrolase (12) in a reversible reaction to produce Ado and Hcy. AdoHcy hydrolysis by MTN (4, dotted line) would yield Ade and S-ribosylhomocysteine (SRH). Methionine synthase (13) catalyses the transfer of a methyl group from methyltetrahydrofolate (THF-CH₃) to AdoHcy, producing tetrahydrofolate (THF) and Met.

enzyme, MTA phosphorylase (EC 2.4.2.28). MTR-P is converted back to Met through five successive steps involving an isomerase, dehydratase, E1 enolase/phosphatase, acireductone dioxygenase, and transaminase (Fig. 1; Murphy *et al.*, 2002).

The phytohormone ethylene regulates developmental programmes and adaptive responses in plants. Ethylene acts as a growth promoter in semi-aquatic plants such as *Rumex palustris* (Voesenek *et al.*, 2003) and rice (Keith *et al.*, 1986). Growth-promoting effects are also seen in species intolerant to hypoxia under defined conditions. For instance, ethylene was shown to promote elongation of the hypocotyl of *Arabidopsis* seedlings grown in the light (Smalle *et al.*, 1997), which contrasts with the better known growth-inhibiting effect of ethylene involved in the triple response of dark-grown *Arabidopsis* seedlings (Lieberman, 1979).

Growth of semi-aquatic plants in response to ethylene has been particularly well characterized in deepwater rice (Kende *et al.*, 1998). In submerged deepwater rice, ethylene biosynthesis was shown to be strongly enhanced through increased transcription of at least two ACC (1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid) synthase (ACS) genes (Zarembinski and Theologis, 1997; Van der Straeten *et al.*, 2001), and one ACC oxidase gene (Mekhedov and Kende, 1996). ACS activity catalyses the rate-limiting step in the biosynthesis of ethylene, where AdoMet is converted to ACC, and MTA is released as

a side product. In deepwater rice, *in vivo* ACS activity was shown to reflect ethylene biosynthetic activity (Cohen and Kende, 1987). Salvage of the methylthioribose moiety of MTA through the methionine cycle replenishes AdoMet. Thus, ethylene can potentially be produced at high rates without interfering with Met or AdoMet homeostasis (Wang *et al.*, 1982).

The aim of the present study was to understand regulation of the Met cycle during enhanced ethylene production. In rice, genes for two enzymes of the Met cycle have been characterized so far. *OsARD1*, which encodes an acireductone dioxygenase, was up-regulated during submergence in deepwater rice. Gene regulation was shown to be under control of ethylene, indicating that ethylene produced during submergence promoted *OsARD1* expression via a positive feedback loop (Sauter *et al.*, 2005). MTR kinase (*OsMTK*) gene expression, on the other hand, was not elevated during submergence of deepwater rice (Sauter *et al.*, 2004). Pursuing efforts to understand how and at which levels the Met cycle was regulated in relation to ethylene biosynthesis, *OsMTN*, the unique gene encoding MTN in rice, was identified and characterized.

Materials and methods

Plant material

Seeds of *Oryza sativa* L. cultivar Pin Gaew 56 were originally obtained from the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI, Los Baños, Philippines). Rice plants were grown as described (Sauter, 1997). For submergence experiments, 10- to 12-week-old plants were submerged in a 600 l plastic tank filled with tap water, leaving about 30 cm of the leaves above the water surface. For MTA and ethephon treatments of stem sections, 20 cm long stem sections containing the youngest internode, cut 2 cm below the second uppermost node, were incubated in 20 ml of 1 mM MTA, 20 ml of 150 µM ethephon, or in the same volume of water for controls. Internodal tissues were harvested as follows, starting above the second highest node: 0–5 mm containing the intercalary meristem, 5–15 mm including the elongation zone, and 30–50 mm representing differentiated tissues (Raskin and Kende, 1984). Freshly harvested tissues were frozen in liquid nitrogen.

Cloning of *OsMTN* cDNA and overexpression of *OsMTN* protein

A full-length cDNA encoding *OsMTN* from rice was isolated through 5'-rapid amplification of cDNA ends from EST C61317, sequenced and deposited in the database under the accession number AF458088. The open-reading frame encoded a protein of 259 amino acids that was named *OsMTN* (accession number AAL58883). *Bam*H I and *Not*I restriction sites were adapted by PCR at the 5' and 3' end of the full-length *OsMTN* cDNA, respectively, using the forward primer MTN3/*Bam*H I 5'-ATATTG-GATCCCGCCGCCCTCCGAC-3' and reverse primer MTN4/*Not*I 5'-TTAATAGCGGGCGATTCAAAGATCCGATAT-3'. The *OsMTN* PCR product was cloned into pGEM-T Easy (Promega, Mannheim, Germany) and the *Bam*H-*Not*I fragment subsequently shuttled into pGEX-6P-1 (GE Healthcare, Munich, Germany). For expression studies, transformed *Escherichia coli* BL21 cells were cultured in 250 ml of 2YT medium (Sambrook and

Russel, 2001) supplemented with 100 µg ml⁻¹ ampicillin at 37 °C until the OD₆₀₀ reached 1.0. Recombinant protein expression was induced for 2 h at 27 °C by incubation in 0.4 mM isopropyl-β-D-thiogalactopyranoside (IPTG). Cells were subsequently harvested by centrifugation, lysed by passage through a French press, and soluble recombinant protein released by sonication three times for 15 s each. Lysates were clarified by centrifugation at 30 000 g and 4 °C for 30 min. Recombinant proteins were purified from the supernatant by affinity chromatography on a 4 ml glutathione-Sepharose column according to the manufacturer's specifications (GE Healthcare, Munich, Germany). On an SDS-polyacrylamide gel, a single protein band of the expected size of 55 kDa was seen when as much as 1 µg of purified recombinant glutathione-S-transferase (GST)-OsMTN fusion protein was separated (data not shown). Purified proteins were aliquoted and stored in 10 mM glutathione, 50 mM TRIS, pH 8.0 at -80 °C. For enzyme analysis, the GST tag was cleaved off using PreScission protease (GE Healthcare, Munich, Germany), and purified OsMTN protein was recovered by filtration on a glutathione-Sepharose column. An *E. coli* MTAN-specific ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) demonstrated that the purified recombinant OsMTN protein preparation contained no detectable native enzyme derived from the *E. coli* host cell (data not shown).

RNA isolation and Northern blot hybridization

RNA was extracted from frozen powdered tissues harvested from the youngest internode with Tri-reagent (Sigma-Aldrich, Munich, Germany) following the instructions provided by the manufacturer. A 20 µg aliquot of RNA was separated on a denaturing agarose gel containing 1% (w/v) agarose dissolved in 20 mM MOPS [3-(*N*-morpholino)-propanesulphonic acid] buffer and 6% (v/v) formaldehyde. Loading of the gels was controlled through ethidium bromide staining of rRNA. RNAs were transferred in 10× SSC (saline sodium citrate; Sambrook and Russel, 2001) by capillary action to a Hybond N⁺ membrane (GE Healthcare, Munich, Germany) and were subsequently cross-linked to the membrane with a Hoefer UV-500 cross-linker (NovoDirect, Kehl, Germany). *OsMTN* cDNA was amplified by PCR using M13 forward and M13 reverse primers that annealed on pBluescript II around the insert. The full-length cDNA was used to obtain a probe labelled with [α -³²P]dCTP using a Ready-To-Go dCTP labelling kit (GE Healthcare Europe, Munich, Germany) according to the instructions provided. Hybridization and washing of the RNA filter were performed as described (Sauter, 1997).

Enzyme kinetics

MTN activity was measured using the differential absorbance spectra between the MTA substrate and Ade product. Activity was measured as a decrease in absorbance at 275 nm over time, and the rate calculated using the molar extinction coefficient for MTA of 1.6 mM⁻¹ cm⁻¹ (Singh *et al.*, 2004). Assays were performed using a Cary100 UV/Vis spectrophotometer (Varian, Walnut Creek, CA, USA) with temperature controlled to 22 °C. Reactions contained 990 µl of MTA (0–20 µM) in 50 mM potassium phosphate, pH 7.0, and were initiated by addition of 10 µl of enzyme (1–5 pmol). A decrease in absorbance at 275 nm was monitored for 5–10 min, and initial reaction velocities calculated by fitting the data to a line using WinUV software (Varian, Walnut Creek, CA, USA). The results were fit to the Michaelis–Menten equation using the Cleland enzyme kinetics program (Cleland, 1979).

MTN substrate specificity and specific activity in rice protein extract

To study the substrate specificity of OsMTN, a xanthine oxidase-coupled enzyme assay was used (Lee *et al.*, 2005). This procedure

takes advantage of the reactivity of the product Ade with a second enzyme, xanthine oxidase, to form dihydroxyadenine which is capable of oxidizing a weakly coloured tetrazolium salt [2-(4-iodophenyl)-3-(4-nitrophenyl)-5-phenyltetrazolium chloride; INT] to a violet colour that has a strong absorbance in the visible range (470 nm). From the changes in absorbance at 470 nm, the amount of Ade released was calculated using the molar absorption coefficient of 15.4 mM⁻¹ cm⁻¹ at pH 7.0. All substrates were tested at 100 µM, and the rates compared with results obtained with the native substrate MTA. Reactions were mounted in 1 ml containing 50 mM potassium phosphate, pH 7.0, 100 µM MTA, or alternative substrate, 1 mM INT, and 0.25 U of xanthine oxidase grade III from bovine milk (Sigma-Aldrich, Munich, Germany). Enzyme (1–5 pmol) was added, and absorbance at 470 nm was recorded for 5–10 min. The reaction velocity was determined by fitting the data to a line and calculating the initial slope.

To measure OsMTN-specific activity from rice protein extracts, tissue samples from rice plants submerged for the times indicated were ground in liquid nitrogen. Soluble proteins were extracted on ice for 30 min with 50 mM potassium phosphate buffer, pH 7.0. Extracts were centrifuged twice at 30 000 g for 30 min at 4 °C. Protein quantity was measured from the supernatant according to Bradford (1976) using Rotiquant reagent (Roth, Karlsruhe, Germany). A 20 µg aliquot of protein was adjusted to a volume of 20 µl with potassium phosphate buffer and was added to 780 µl of the reaction mixture that contained 50 mM potassium phosphate pH 7.0, 200 µM MTA, 0.2 U of xanthine oxidase grade III from bovine milk, and 1 mM INT (Sigma-Aldrich, Munich, Germany). Initial MTA and Ade levels present in the protein extract were measured from samples without added MTA. Absorbance at 470 nm was measured every 10 min over 2 h with a DU530 spectrophotometer (BeckmanCoulter, Krefeld, Germany).

Analysis of metabolites

Metabolites were extracted in 0.5 ml of 0.1 M HCl using 0.2 g of fresh weight of plant material that was powdered in liquid nitrogen. Met was quantified as its fluorescent conjugate of AccQ-Tag after separation by reversed-phase HPLC on a Nova-Pak® C₁₈ 3.9×150 mm column (pore size 4 µm). The column was equilibrated with buffer A (140 mM sodium acetate pH 6.3, 7 mM triethanolamine) at a flow rate of 1 ml min⁻¹ and kept at 37 °C. Pure acetonitrile served as buffer B. The gradient was produced by the following concentration changes: 0.5 min 9% B, held for 16 min, 44.5 min 15% B, 47.5 min 60% B, 50.5 min 0% B, re-equilibration for 9.5 min. MTA and AdoMet were derivatized with chloroacetaldehyde at 80 °C for 10 min in a total volume of 1 ml that contained 0.15 ml of sample, chloroacetaldehyde (3.6%, v/v), and citrate/phosphate buffer (0.48 M and 0.59 M, respectively, pH 4.0). Derivatized samples were immediately cooled to 4 °C and centrifuged for 1 h at 4 °C and 16 900 g to remove particles. A 10 µl aliquot of the resulting supernatant was injected into a Waters HPLC system consisting of 600E pumps, eluent degasser, 717⁺ autosampler, and an FP 920 fluorescence detector (Jasco, Groß-Umstadt, Germany). The excitation and emission wavelengths for detection of adenosine compounds were set to 280 nm and 410 nm, respectively, using a gain of 10 and an attenuation of 1. All chromatograms were recorded and processed with the Millenium³² software (Waters, Eschborn, Germany). The recovery rates for MTA and AdoMet were determined by spiking of samples prior to extraction with naturally occurring amounts of the respective metabolites. The recovery rates were 83% and 106% with a standard deviation of ~15% for AdoMet and MTA, respectively. The recovery rate of Met was not determined in this study, since extraction of Met from diverse plant tissues by using 0.1 M HCl is routinely used. Key metabolites were identified (i) by spiking of

samples with standards using the chromatographic method described above and (ii) by applying an alternative chromatographic method for separation of AdoMet and MTA in which the gradient of buffer B was changed in order to vary the resolution. No significant differences in the amounts of AdoMet and MTA were observable when both methods were applied.

Statistical treatment of the data

Means and standard deviations were calculated and graphically represented for each data point. Student's *t*-tests were used to compare means and assess statistical significance through calculation of two-tailed probability values (*P*-values).

Results

OsMTN encodes a unique MTA nucleosidase in rice

In rice, MTN is encoded by a single gene that was cloned and deposited as *OsMTN* under the accession number

AF458088. The open reading frame encodes a protein of 259 amino acids (accession number AAL58883) which showed 25%/51% identity/similarity to MTAN from *E. coli* (Fig. 2). The cDNA of *OsMTN* was cloned into a bacterial expression vector in-frame with an N-terminal GST in order to express and purify a GST–OsMTN fusion protein in amounts sufficient to perform enzyme assays. After binding onto a GST column, overexpressed protein was purified by elution with glutathione and the GST tag was cleaved by a site-specific protease. The activity of the recombinant rice MTN was subsequently characterized. The kinetic constant was determined using a direct UV absorbance assay according to Singh *et al.* (2004). Velocities were fit to the Michaelis–Menten equation using the Cleland enzyme kinetics program, and yielded a *K_M* for MTA of $2.1 \pm 0.2 \mu\text{M}$ (Fig. 3). The substrate specificity of OsMTN was monitored with a xanthine

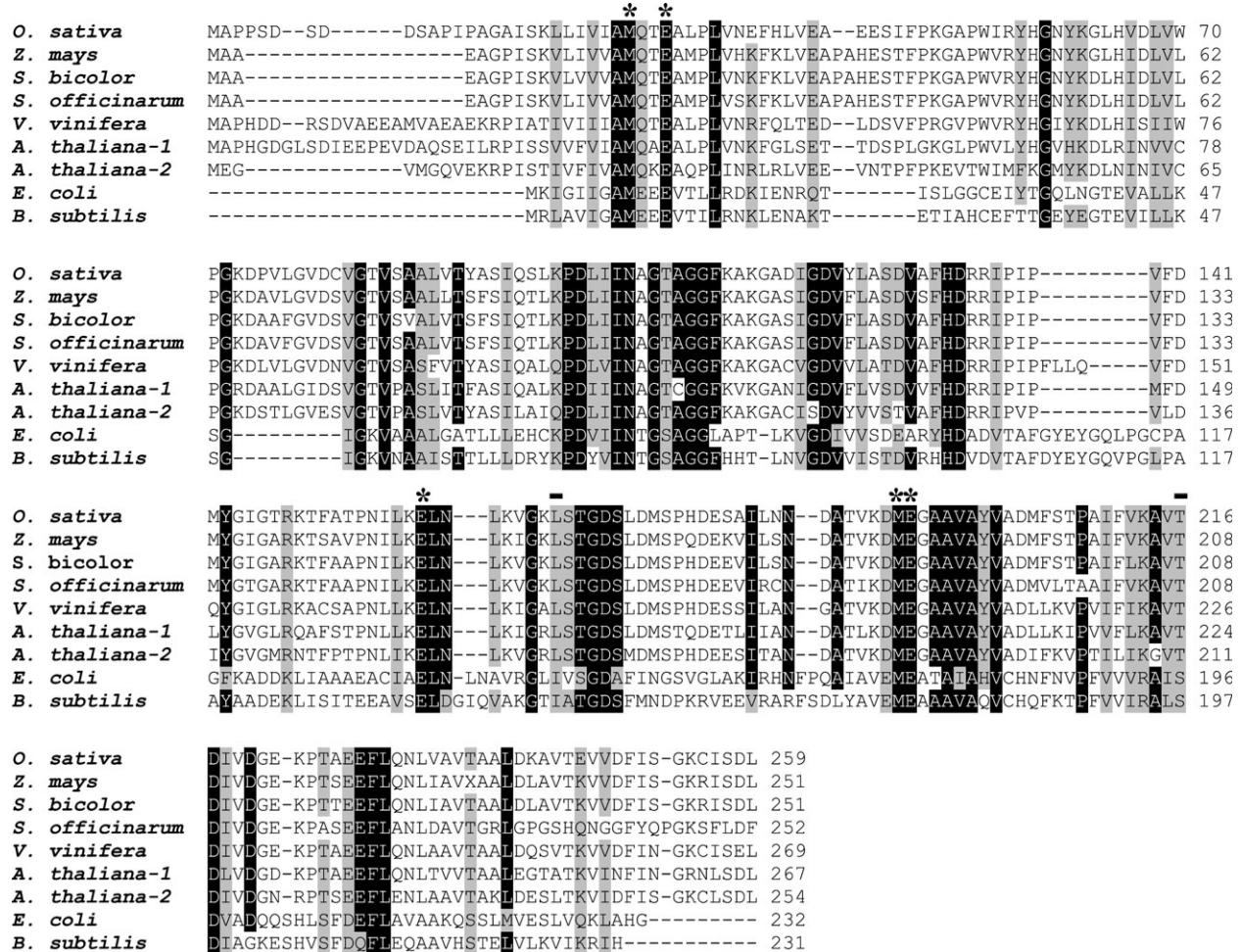


Fig. 2. Alignment between plant MTN and bacterial MTAN sequences. Putative MTNs were identified from EST databases in maize (*Zea mays* DV164025), *Arabidopsis thaliana* (At4g38800 for *A. thaliana-1* and At4g34840 for *A. thaliana-2*), sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor* CN129650), sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum* CA118557 and CA288933), and wine grape (*Vitis vinifera* CAB85633), and compared with rice OsMTN. *Escherichia coli* (NP_414701) and *Bacillus subtilis* (O32028) MTAN sequences were included in the alignment for comparison. Identical and similar amino acids are shaded black and grey, respectively. Asterisks indicate conserved residues involved in catalysis or substrate binding. Black bars point out two residues involved in purine binding that diverge between bacterial MTANs and plant MTNs.

oxidase-coupled assay (Lee *et al.*, 2005). Activity assays with various substrates showed that the plant enzyme accepts a wide array of 5' substitutions. OsMTN retained 60–80% activity with substrates harbouring short 5' alkyl-chains such as ethylthioadenosine (ETA), isopropylthioadenosine (iPTA), propylthioadenosine (PTA), isobutylthioadenosine (SIBA), and butylthioadenosine (BTA; Table 1). These results largely corroborate those reported by Kushad *et al.* (1985) who measured MTN activity from tomato extracts. With bulkier substitutions such as phenyl or iodo groups in phenylthioadenosine (PhTA) or 5'-iodoadenosine (IAdo), activities were reduced to ~50%. Addition of charged 5' cysteinyl or homocysteinyl groups decreased the substrate activity by >80%. Unlike previously published results for lupin (Guranowski *et al.*, 1981), the present results showed that AdoHcy can serve as a substrate for MTN with 16% of the activity obtained with MTA (Table 1).

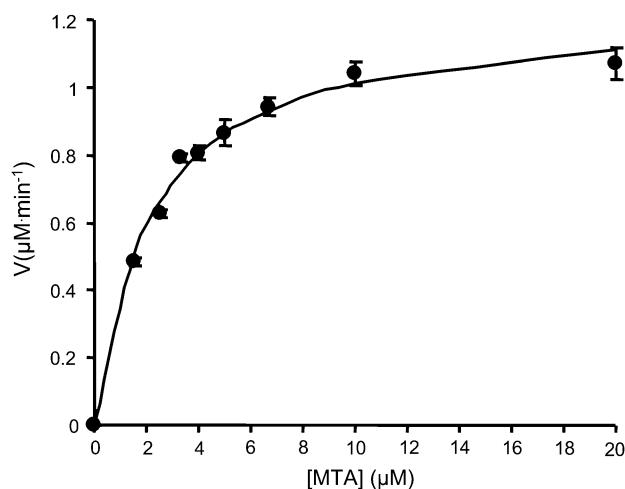


Fig. 3. Velocity versus substrate plot for recombinant OsMTN. Velocities were determined using the extinction coefficient for MTA, $\Delta\varepsilon_{275}=1.6 \text{ mM}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$. Results were fit to the Michaelis–Menten equation and yielded a K_M for MTA of 2.1 μM.

Table 1. OsMTN substrate specificity

A xanthine oxidase-coupled assay was used (Lee *et al.*, 2005). All substrates were tested at 100 μM, and the rates compared with those of identical assays performed with the native substrate MTA. Results are averages ($\pm \text{SE}$) of three experimental determinations.

| Substrate | Abbreviation | Specific activity (μmol min⁻¹ mg⁻¹) | Maximum activity (%) |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--|-------------------------|
| Methylthioadenosine | MTA | 3.84±0.19 | 100 |
| Ethylthioadenosine | ETA | 2.95±0.16 | 76.7 |
| Isopropylthioadenosine | iPTA | 3.04±0.19 | 79.1 |
| Propylthioadenosine | PTA | 2.85±0.31 | 74.2 |
| Isobutylthioadenosine | SIBA | 2.75±0.21 | 71.7 |
| Butylthioadenosine | BTA | 2.35±0.08 | 61.1 |
| Phenylthioadenosine | PhTA | 2.07±0.32 | 53.8 |
| 5'-Fluorosulphonylbenzoyladenosine | FSBAdo | 0.84±0.07 | 21.8 |
| 5'-Iodoadenosine | IAdo | 2.24±0.09 | 58.4 |
| 5'-Adenosylcysteine | AdoCys | 0.28±0.01 | 7.27 |
| 5'-Adenosylhomocysteine | AdoHcy | 0.61±0.08 | 15.9 |

Plant MTN sequences are well conserved and structurally related to bacterial MTANs

Putative MTN sequences from plants and bacteria were retrieved from protein or EST (expressed sequence tag) databases through BLAST searches. Plant proteins with at least 60% amino acids identical to OsMTN were assigned a putative function as an MTN (Fig. 2). The MTN sequence of wine grape (*Vitis vinifera*) shared 71% similar and 86% identical amino acids with OsMTN and was first identified as a ripening-related protein termed Grip58 (Davies and Robinson, 2000). Although grape berry is not classified as a climacteric fruit with high rates of ethylene biosynthesis, expression of *MTN* (Davies and Robinson, 2000) is in accord with the recent finding that ethylene was required in some aspects of grape fruit ripening (Chervin *et al.*, 2004). Two closely related sequences from *Arabidopsis*, AtMTN1 and AtMTN2, were 60% identical to each other and 62% and 63% identical to rice MTN, respectively. Available microarray data (Genevestigator, Zimmermann *et al.*, 2004) showed that *AtMTN1* was expressed throughout development in all tissues, with the highest expression in pollen grains. *AtMTN2* was, on the other hand, expressed without apparent regulation at levels 10 times lower than those of *AtMTN1*.

Plant MTNs diverge most from bacterial proteins in their N-terminal half. They possess an extension of up to 20 mostly hydrophobic amino acids at the very N-terminus (Fig. 2). These additional N-terminal tails do not contain any known signal peptides that could target plant MTNs to extracytoplasmic compartments. Residues that were shown to be essential for catalysis in *E. coli* MATN, Glu12, Glu174, and Asp197 (Lee *et al.*, 2005), were strictly conserved in all putative MTN sequences identified in plants. In addition, Met173, which is critical for ribose binding and catalytic efficiency, was conserved. Two residues involved in purine binding, Phe151 and Ser196, were replaced in plants by conservative substitutions with leucine and threonine, respectively. More noticeable divergence occurred in residues involved in forming the

5' alkylthio-binding pocket. In *E. coli*, this pocket consists of residues from the monomer (Met9, Ile50, and Phe207) and is formed partly by the neighbouring subunit in the homodimer (Pro113, Tyr107, Phe106, and Val102). Only Met9 was strictly conserved. Ile50 and Val102 were replaced by conservative substitutions, valine and isoleucine, respectively. Phe207 was replaced by alanine in OsMTN and either serine, threonine, or alanine in other plant species, while Phe105, Tyr107, and Pro113, which comprise a capping loop donated from the adjacent subunit in the *E. coli* enzyme, were absent from plant sequences.

OsMTN expression is induced during submergence

To see if *OsMTN* was regulated during submergence, gene expression was monitored in submerged plants through northern blot hybridization. *OsMTN* transcript levels were measured in the intercalary meristem, in the elongation zone, and in the differentiation zone of growing internodes. The youngest, growing rice internode contains a meristem at the very base that is about 5 mm long. This intercalated meristem produces new cells that are displaced into the elongation zone just above it that extends up to 15 mm in non-submerged and up to 35 mm in submerged plants (Sauter *et al.* 1995). When cells stop elongating, they enter the differentiation zone that extends below the uppermost node and is of variable size depending on the age of the internode.

OsMTN transcript abundance increased between 2 h and 6 h of submergence in the intercalary meristem (Fig. 4A). Minor induction of *OsMTN* expression was observed after 18 h in the elongation zone. Overall low transcript abundance with no induction by submergence was observed in differentiated tissues. In stem sections treated with the ethylene-releasing compound ethephon, induction of *OsMTN* gene expression was not observed in a segment encompassing the meristem and part of the elongation zone, indicating that *OsMTN* was not an ethylene-regulated gene (Fig. 5A).

OsMTN activity is primarily regulated at the transcriptional level

To find out if *OsMTN* was regulated at the protein level, MTN activity was measured in internodes of non-submerged control plants and plants submerged for 2, 4, 6, or 18 h. In non-submerged control plants, MTN activities of 0.59, 0.50, and 0.30 nmol mg⁻¹ min⁻¹ were measured in the meristem, elongation zone, and differentiation zone, respectively (Fig. 4B). MTN activities in non-submerged plants mirrored *OsMTN* transcript levels initially present in different tissues (Fig. 4A). MTN activity measured in rice was in agreement with previously reported MTN activity measured in tomato fruits which varied between 0.4 nmol mg⁻¹ min⁻¹ and 1.2 nmol mg⁻¹ min⁻¹ depending on the ripening stage (Kushad *et al.*, 1985).

As was observed for *OsMTN* transcript levels, MTN activity was higher in the growing region than in the differentiation zone (Fig. 4A). Activities in the meristem and in the elongation zone were similar to each other at each time point. Between 0 h and 18 h of submergence, MTN activity rose significantly in the meristem ($P=0.0021$) and in the elongation zone ($P=0.003$). Changes in MTN activity in the differentiation zone were not statistically significant ($P > 0.05$). Increased MTN activity during submergence paralleled elevated *OsMTN* transcript levels. It was therefore concluded that MTN activity was regulated at the transcriptional level.

Since ACC, the immediate precursor of ethylene, is mainly produced in the meristem and in the elongation zone (Cohen and Kende, 1987), regulation of *OsMTN* gene expression during submergence occurred in the same tissues that produce ethylene during submergence. However, ethylene itself was not the signal that induced either *OsMTN* expression (Fig. 5A) or OsMTN activity (Fig. 5B) since treatment with the ethylene-releasing compound ethephon did not alter either one within 18 h as compared with controls. Independent experiments confirmed that *OsMTN* transcript levels were not regulated by ethylene.

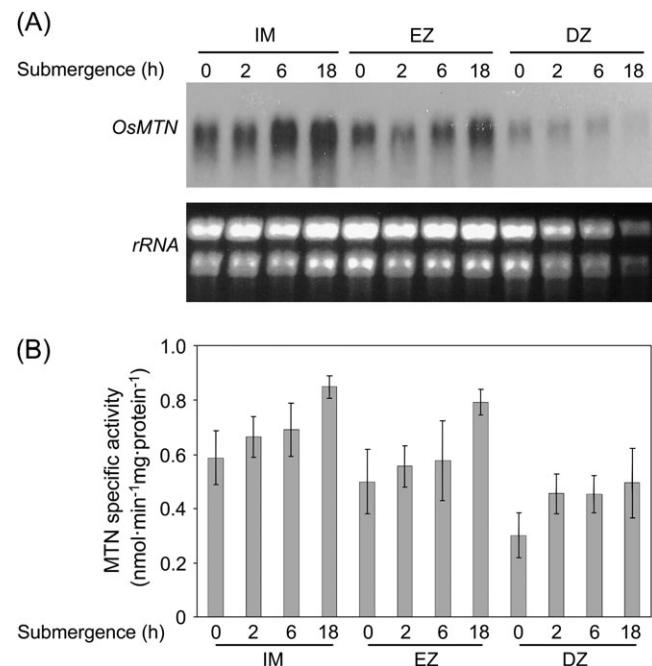


Fig. 4. *OsMTN* expression and *OsMTN* specific activity during submergence. (A) *OsMTN* expression was analysed in the intercalary meristem (IM), elongation zone (EZ), and differentiation zone (DZ) of the youngest internode of non-submerged plants (0 h) and of plants submerged for 2, 6, or 18 h. (A) RNA (20 µg) was loaded in each lane. Ethidium bromide-stained rRNA was used to control loading of the RNA. (B) *OsMTN* enzyme activity was measured in the same tissues as in (A). Assays were performed on 20 µg of total protein for 80 min. Results are averages of five measurements (\pm SD) obtained from two independent experiments.

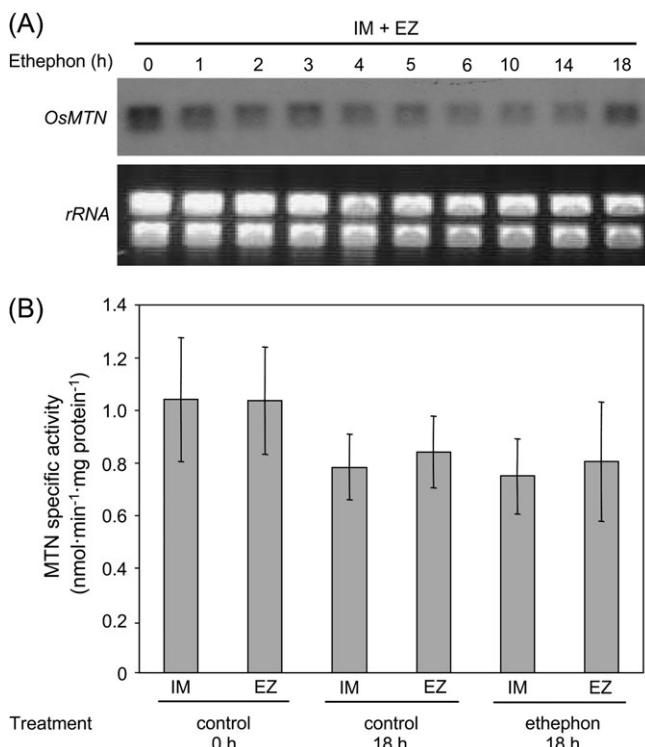


Fig. 5. *OsMTN* expression and *OsMTN* specific activity in ethephon-treated stem sections. (A) Ethephon was used at a concentration of 150 μ M for the indicated times and *OsMTN* expression was monitored in a portion of the internode encompassing the intercalary meristem (IM) and part of the elongation zone (EZ). Ethidium bromide-stained rRNA was used to control loading of the RNA. (B) *OsMTN* enzyme activity was measured in the intercalary meristem (IM) and in the elongation zone (EZ) of untreated stem sections at 0 h (control, 0 h) or 18 h (control, 18 h), or of sections incubated for 18 h in the presence of 150 μ M ethephon. Assays were performed on 20 μ g of total protein for 80 min. Results are averages of eight measurements (\pm SD) obtained from four independent experiments.

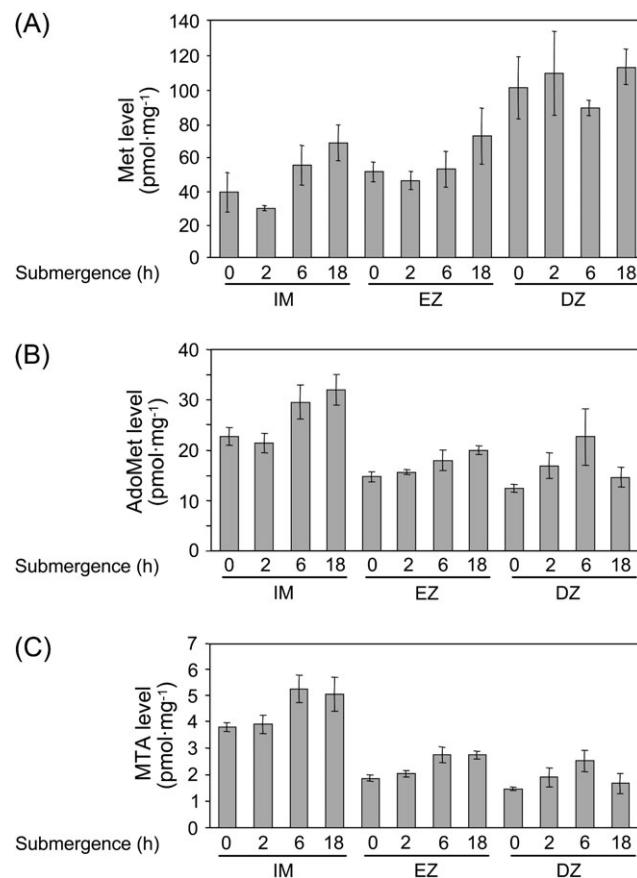


Fig. 6. Levels of Met, AdoMet, and MTA in internodal tissues of submerged deepwater rice plants. Each data point represents an average of three measurements (\pm SD) made with 100–200 mg of tissue collected from the intercalary meristem (IM), elongation zone (EZ), or differentiation zone (DZ) of non-submerged plants (0 h) or plants submerged for the times indicated. Metabolites measured were (A) Met, (B) AdoMet, and (C) MTA.

Submergence-induced changes in Met, AdoMet, and MTA levels

Unlike *OsARD1* which was shown to be an immediate-early ethylene-responsive gene (Sauter *et al.*, 2005), *OsMTN* was not regulated by ethylene. In yeast, *MET* genes that encode transcription factors and enzymes responsible for Met and cysteine homeostasis are under control of transcriptional regulation that is sensitive to variations in Met levels (Smothers *et al.*, 2000). To find out more about possible mechanisms of *OsMTN* regulation, an investigation was carried out to determine if levels of Met, AdoMet, or MTA varied during submergence. Metabolite concentrations were measured in internodal tissues of non-submerged plants and of plants submerged for 2, 6, or 18 h (Fig. 6). Overall, AdoMet and MTA levels increased in all internodal tissues during long-term submergence, although at different absolute values, with the highest amounts present in the meristem. Changes observed after 2 h of submergence were not significant for

any of the metabolites measured ($P > 0.05$). In the meristem, AdoMet ($P=0.0033$) and MTA ($P=0.01$) began to accumulate within 6 h of submergence and remained elevated up to 18 h. In the elongation zone, a significant increase was measured for AdoMet ($P=0.011$) after 18 h and for MTA after 6 h ($P=0.008$) and 18 h ($P=0.0033$) as compared with controls. In the differentiation zone, a transient increase in AdoMet ($P=0.036$) and MTA ($P=0.011$) levels was observed after 6 h of submergence. Both AdoMet and MTA returned to basal levels after 18 h.

The distribution of Met in the growing internode differed from that of AdoMet and MTA. Met was present at 2-fold higher levels in the differentiation zone compared with meristem or elongation zone. Overall levels did not change, however, with submergence treatment, with the exception of Met levels in the meristem which were elevated after 18 h as compared with controls ($P=0.032$).

Discussion

The rice MTN is similar to, yet distinct from bacterial MTANs

Animals, yeasts, cyanobacteria, and archaeae use MTA phosphorylase (EC 2.4.2.28) in the Met cycle to convert MTA to MTR-P. Bacteria and plants metabolize MTA in two steps to MTR-1-P through the intermediate MTR. Bacterial MTANs were described as having a dual function as MTA and AdoHcy nucleosidases which are active in the Met cycle and in the biosynthesis of quorum-sensing autoinducer-2 (Miller and Bassler, 2001). The sequence/structure–activity relationship between bacterial MTANs and plant MTNs is well conserved, although plant MTNs possess a leucine in place of a phenylalanine residue in the purine-binding site. While a phenylalanine to alanine mutation at this location in the *E. coli* MTAN elevated the K_M by 20-fold and reduced the catalytic efficiency to <1% of the wild-type protein, the rice enzyme maintained MTN activity with a K_M for MTA of 2.1 μM . Possibly, the predicted essential p–p electron interactions between the adenine purine ring and Phe151 are functionally compensated for in plants by stabilizing hydrophobic interactions with the conserved leucine and/or H-bond interactions with the adjacent conserved aspartate residue. Other interactions with highly conserved phenylalanine residues in the plant enzyme (Phe140, Phe151, and Phe211) are potentially possible through slightly different folding in the substrate pocket.

Loss of a consecutive stretch of residues conserved in the bacterial MTANs is also interesting. This loop comprising amino acids 105–113 caps the alkylthio-binding pocket and is provided by the adjacent subunit of the dimeric enzyme. In the bacterial protein, Phe105, Tyr107, and Pro113 all form the distal end of a large hydrophobic pocket thought to aid in sequestering the 5' alkylthio moiety from the solvent and thus improving the stability of the oxacarbenium transition state. Loss of this loop in plant proteins suggests that the adjacent monomer in the plant enzyme does not contribute to the binding of substrate. The reduced depth of the pocket may help explain the decreased activity of OsMTN for substrates bearing larger 5' substitutions (FSBAdo, AdoCys, and AdoHcy).

Involvement of MTN in AdoHcy hydrolysis might be relevant in the case of limited AdoHcy hydrolase activity

Plants possess dedicated AdoHcy hydrolases, also called adenosylhomocysteinases, to catalyse AdoHcy breakdown (Guranowski and Pawełkiewicz, 1977; Stępkowski *et al.*, 2005). Database searches revealed the existence of a single gene encoding AdoHcy hydrolase in the rice genome (Os11g26850) and two in *Arabidopsis* (At4g13940 and At3g23810). Previous work reported that MTN purified from lupin (*Lupinus luteus*) seeds did not accept AdoHcy

as a substrate (Guranowski *et al.*, 1981). Using recombinant protein, it was shown here that rice OsMTN could hydrolyse substrates with a wide range of 5' substitutions. In particular, AdoHcy was hydrolysed with 16% efficiency as compared with MTA. MTAN from *Escherichia coli* showed 40% activity efficiency with AdoHcy as substrate (Della Ragione *et al.*, 1985). Hydrolysis of AdoHcy by MTN might be a remnant of the activity of an ancestral enzyme from which plant MTNs and bacterial MTANs evolved. Whether AdoHcy hydrolase activity of MTN is also conserved in other plant species remains to be determined. Another major question is whether the AdoHcy hydrolase activity measured *in vitro* at high substrate concentrations will occur *in planta* since AdoHcy is maintained in plants at relatively low levels (Moffatt *et al.*, 2002). It is a by-product of AdoMet-dependent methylations and is metabolized to Ado and Hcy by AdoHcy hydrolase (Fig. 1).

The reaction catalysed by AdoHcy hydrolase purified from lupin seeds was reversible and the net reaction measured *in vitro* was that of AdoHcy synthesis, which was estimated to be 60 times faster than AdoHcy hydrolysis (Guranowski and Pawełkiewicz, 1977). AdoHcy hydrolase activity was affected by the presence of inhibitors such as AdoMet, Hcy, and Ade (Poulton and Butt, 1976). MTN releases Ade during hydrolysis of MTA and may therefore contribute to AdoHcy hydrolase inhibition. However, it is unlikely that Ade levels *in vivo* reach the inhibitory concentrations required in the *in vitro* assay performed by Poulton and Butt (1976). On the other hand, MTA itself was reported to inhibit AdoHcy hydrolase in bovine liver (Patel-Thombre and Borchardt, 1985), which suggests that metabolic fluxes towards MTA-producing reactions and MTA catabolites might be accompanied by reduced AdoHcy hydrolase activity. To test this hypothesis in internodal tissues of submerged deepwater rice plants, it would be important to measure (i) the affinity of the rice MTN for AdoHcy; (ii) AdoHcy levels; and (iii) AdoHcy hydrolase activity. Like MTN, AdoHcy hydrolase is encoded by a single gene in rice. Expression analysis of both genes coupled with metabolite profiles could help uncover the contribution of MTN in AdoHcy depurination *in planta*.

OsMTN is up-regulated concomitantly with increased ethylene biosynthesis but is not regulated by ethylene

In deepwater rice, ethylene is produced in the youngest internode. Upon submergence, ethylene synthesis was shown to be increased through elevated ACS activity in the meristematic and elongation zones, whereas ACS activity remained low in differentiated cells (Cohen and Kende, 1987). Accordingly, *OsMTN* transcripts accumulated in the intercalary meristem and in the elongation zone, but not in the differentiation zone. Thus both spatial

distribution and temporal changes in *OsMTN* expression in the internode correlated with ACS activity. One should keep in mind that polyamine biosynthesis is also activated in submerged deepwater rice (Cohen and Kende, 1986). AdoMet decarboxylase activity produces decarboxylated AdoMet that is used for spermine and spermidine synthesis, releasing MTA as a by-product. AdoMet decarboxylase activity was shown to increase upon submergence in the meristem but not in the elongation zone (Cohen and Kende, 1986). *OsMTN* transcript levels and enzyme activity were elevated not only in the meristem but also in the elongation zone after 18 h of submergence, indicating that regulation of *OsMTN* expression during submergence might be coupled to ethylene rather than to polyamine biosynthesis.

Induction of *OsARD1* expression occurred within 2 h of submergence when ethylene has accumulated to physiologically relevant levels (Sauter *et al.*, 2005). *OsMTN* transcript accumulation occurred later between 2 h and 6 h, which argues against a direct regulation through ethylene signalling. In fact, treatment with ethylene did not induce *OsMTN* expression in stem sections, confirming that ethylene was not a signal for *OsMTN* gene regulation. *OsMTN* transcript or MTN activity levels were not altered when rice stem sections or suspension-cultured rice cells were incubated in the presence of Met or MTA (data not shown). Thus, the nature of the signal inducing *OsMTN* during submergence remains elusive. In summary, it can be said that Met cycle genes are not coordinately regulated during submergence (Sauter *et al.*, 2004, 2005; this study). Rather, regulation appears to be exerted by a combination of signals.

OsMTN might support long-term ethylene biosynthesis

One of the functions of the Met cycle is to maintain Met pools during sustained ethylene biosynthesis (Wang *et al.*, 1982). ACS activity in deepwater rice increased about 2-fold within 2 h of submergence and was elevated over controls about 4-fold after 20 h of submergence (Cohen and Kende, 1987). It was shown here that levels of AdoMet, Met, and MTA did not change substantially within the first 2 h of submergence; neither did *OsMTN* transcript levels nor MTN activity. Taken together, these results indicated that the basal activity of *OsMTN* was high enough to metabolize MTA released during early ethylene synthesis.

When rice plants were submerged for longer periods, not only ethylene biosynthetic rates, but also MTN activity increased. Concomitantly, steady-state levels of Met, AdoMet, and MTA increased, possibly indicating that the plant adapted to long-term ethylene biosynthesis by up-regulation of the Met cycle including elevation of Met cycle intermediates. This adaptation may be advantageous for long-term ethylene production as was described

for submerged deepwater rice which produces ethylene for many days at levels up to 50 times higher than in unsubmerged plants (Métraux and Kende, 1983). This conclusion would fit the observation that most of the changes observed in metabolite amounts and MTN activity occurred in the growing region where ethylene biosynthetic rates are highest (Cohen and Kende, 1987).

Surprisingly, for Met, the highest levels were measured in the differentiation zone. This observation might be partly explained by a reduced flux of Met into AdoMet synthesis or decreased rates of protein biosynthesis in non-growing cells. In general, changes in AdoMet and MTA show a high degree of correlation. Even though this can be taken as a result of the substrate–product relationship between AdoMet and MTA, the result is surprising in view of the fact that AdoMet can be metabolized by enzymes that do not produce MTA and can also be synthesized through pathways other than the Met cycle. For Met, no tight correlation was observed with either AdoMet or MTA, reflecting that Met can be produced through several pathways (Fig. 1) including *de novo* biosynthesis. The regulatory mechanisms that control these steady-state sulphur metabolite levels remain to be uncovered.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

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KAPITEL 3

Funktionelle Charakterisierung der MTA-Nukleosidase über Mutantenanalyse in *Arabidopsis thaliana*

In *Arabidopsis* kodieren zwei Gene für die MTA-Nukleosidase, *AtMTN1* und *AtMTN2*. Von beiden Genen wurden im Rahmen dieser Arbeit T-DNA-Insertionslinien identifiziert und charakterisiert. Die Analyse der beiden Einzelmutanten sowie des Wildtyps zeigte, dass MTN1 zu mehr als 80% zur MTN-Aktivität beiträgt. Das Substrat MTA induzierte die MTN-Aktivität, nicht aber die Genexpression. Anders als in Reis war die MTN-Aktivität in *Arabidopsis* posttranskriptionell reguliert. Eine Verringerung der MTN-Aktivität in der *mtn1-1* Mutante führte zu reduziertem Keimlingswachstum auf MTA als Schwefelquelle. Mit dieser Wachstumshemmung einher gingen eine Akkumulation von MTA, sowie von SAM. Auch die Polyaminspiegel, nicht aber die Ethylensynthese waren in *mtn1-1* Keimlingen verändert. Die Polyamine Putrescin und Spermin akkumulierten in *mtn1-1*, während Spermidin gehalte unverändert waren. In der *mtn2-1* Mutante, die eine mit dem Wildtyp vergleichbare MTN-Enzymaktivität hatte, war das Wachstum nicht gehemmt und MTA und SAM, sowie die Polyamingehalte waren unverändert zum Wildtyp. Diese Ergebnisse deuten auf einen direkten Zusammenhang von MTA-Metabolismus und Polyaminstoffwechsel hin, möglicherweise über eine *Feedback*-Inhibierung der Polyaminbiosynthese oder Polyamin-katabolisierender Enzyme durch MTA.

Die Ergebnisse sind im nachfolgenden Manuskript zusammengefasst, das zur Begutachtung eingereicht wurde. Die im Manuskript enthaltenen Arbeiten, mit Ausnahme der Erzeugung der *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* Doppelmutante, sowie der Schwefelmetabolit- und Polyaminmessungen, wurden im Rahmen dieser Doktorarbeit von mir angefertigt.

Inhibition of 5'-methylthioadenosine metabolism in the Yang cycle alters polyamine levels, and impairs seedling growth and reproduction in *Arabidopsis*

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Running title MTA regulates polyamine metabolism

Keywords MTA nucleosidase

Yang cycle

Polyamines

Sulfur metabolism

Ethylene

Growth regulation

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Total word count | 5733 |
| Summary | 187 |
| Introduction | 553 |
| Results | 1916 |
| Discussion | 1083 |
| Experimental procedures | 908 |
| Acknowledgements | 12 |
| References | 527 |
| Figure legends | 930 |

SUMMARY

The methionine (Met) or Yang cycle recycles Met from methylthioadenosine (MTA) which is produced from S-adenosylmethionine (SAM) as a by-product during the synthesis of ethylene, spermidine, spermine, and nicotianamine. MTA nucleosidase catalyzes the first reaction of MTA metabolism and is encoded by two genes in *Arabidopsis thaliana*, *AtMTN1* and *AtMTN2*. T-DNA insertion mutants for both genes were identified and characterized. Analysis of single gene mutants and of wt revealed that MTN1 provides approximately 80% of the total MTN activity. Severe knock down of MTN enzyme activity in the *mtn1-1* mutant resulted in accumulation of S-adenosylmethionine and MTA in seedlings grown on MTA as sulfur source. In addition, levels of polyamines but not of ethylene were altered in *mtn1-1*. Putrescine and spermine levels were elevated, while no change in spermidine was observed. *mtn2-1* seedlings with near wt enzyme activity had wt levels of SAM, MTA, and polyamines. Furthermore, *mtn1-1*, but not wt or *mtn2-1* seedlings suffered from growth retardation. The work presented reveals a regulatory link between the Yang cycle and polyamine biosynthesis that may be due to product inhibition of the polyamine biosynthetic pathway by MTA.

INTRODUCTION

Methionine (Met) is a sulfur-containing amino acid that is essential for protein synthesis but also for the synthesis of S-adenosylmethionine (SAM). SAM is a co-substrate for methylation reactions. In addition, SAM serves as substrate for the synthesis of ethylene, the polyamines spermidine and spermine, and the iron chelator nicotianamine (Figure 1). In the ethylene biosynthetic pathway 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylate (ACC) synthase (ACS) utilizes SAM to produce ACC which is subsequently converted to ethylene by ACC oxidase (ACO). In the polyamine biosynthetic pathway SAM is decarboxylated by SAM decarboxylase. dSAM serves as co-substrate for spermidine synthase (SPDS) and spermine synthase (SPMS) that produce spermidine from putrescine and spermine from spermidine, respectively. Nicotianamine is the precursor of phytosiderophores which aid in iron acquisition in graminaceous plants as chelators. In dicot plants, nicotianamine is thought to play a role in metal cation homeostasis (Higuchi et al., 2001). Nicotianamine synthase (NAS) produces nicotianamine from three molecules of SAM. The reactions catalyzed by ACS, SPDS, SPMS and NAS not only consume SAM, but release methylthioadenosine (MTA) as a by-product which is recycled to Met via the Met cycle, also named Yang cycle (Miyazaki and Yang, 1987; Figure 1).

In plants, MTA is hydrolyzed to methylthioribose (MTR) and adenine by MTA nucleosidase (MTN) which is encoded in *Arabidopsis* (*Arabidopsis thaliana*) by two genes, *AtMTN1* and *AtMTN2* (Rzewuski et al., 2007). MTR is subsequently phosphorylated to MTR-phosphate by MTR kinase, encoded by the unique *AtMTK* gene in *Arabidopsis* (Sauter et al., 2004). MTR-P is converted to acireductone by an isomerase and a dehydratase-enolase-phosphatase. The acireductone reacts with dioxygen to produce 2-keto-4-methylthiobutyrate (KMTB) catalyzed by an acireductone dioxygenase (Sauter et al., 2005). KMTB is subsequently transaminated to yield methionine. Activation of methionine to SAM is catalyzed by S-adenosylmethionine synthetase (SAMS) with ATP as co-substrate.

It was proposed that methionine recycling in plants was required for maintenance of high rates of ethylene and polyamines such as occur during climacteric fruit ripening or fruit storage (Miyasaki and Yang, 1987). Bürstenbinder et al. (2007) recently described an *Arabidopsis* mutant which combined ethylene overproduction through the *eto3* mutation with a dysfunctional Met cycle through knock out of the single *MTK* gene. The *mtk/eto3* double mutant displayed reduced capacity for ethylene synthesis compared to *eto3* indicating that high rates of ethylene synthesis were indeed dependent on Met recycling. If, and to what extent, Met recycling is required for synthesis of the tri- and tetraamines spermidine and spermine is not clear.

MTA nucleosidase catalyzes the first step in MTA metabolism within the Met cycle (Adams and Yang, 1977; Guranowski et al., 1981). In submerged deepwater rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) *OsMTN* transcript levels and MTN enzyme activity were up-regulated in parallel with ethylene biosynthesis (Rzewuski et al., 2007). By contrast *MTK* transcripts were not up-regulated (Sauter et al., 2004) pointing to MTN as a key enzyme in the Met cycle. Enzymatic characterization of the two MTN proteins from Arabidopsis revealed a nine times greater rate constant and a four-fold greater efficiency for catabolizing MTA for AtMTN1 as compared to AtMTN2 (Siu et al., 2008). Crystal structure analysis of AtMTN1 revealed that the enzyme acts as a dimer (Park et al., 2006). To further study the role of MTA metabolism for ethylene and polyamine metabolism and consequently for plant development the *MTN* knock down mutants *Atmtn1-1* and *Atmtn2-1* were analyzed.

RESULTS

Arabidopsis MTN is encoded by two genes

Arabidopsis possesses two genes that encode proteins with homology to MTA nucleosidase, *AtMTN1* and *AtMTN2*. A T-DNA insertion line was identified for each gene and obtained (SALK Institute, La Jolla, CA, USA), and homozygous plants were selected (Figure 2A-C). A double knock-down mutant was generated by crossing *Atmtn1-1* and *Atmtn2-1*. Single or double knock-down gene expression was verified by PCR amplification of reversed transcribed mRNA. In *Atmtn1-1*, residual transcript levels remained, whereas no *AtMTN2* transcripts were detected in *Atmtn2-1* (Figure 2D). Single *MTN* gene mutants did not display an obvious morphological phenotype whereas *Atmtn1-1/Atmtn2-1* plants displayed delayed flowering and an altered flower morphology (Figure 2E, F) with barely any seed production. Because of the reproductive failure of the double mutant, only single gene knock downs were employed for the analysis of seedlings. These are subsequently termed *mtn1-1* and *mtn2-1*.

Seedlings growth is inhibited in *mtn1-1* grown on MTA

The phenotypes of wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* seedlings grown on sulfur sufficient media containing 500 µM MgSO₄ were comparable (Figure 3A). When MTA was supplied at 500 µM as the sole sulfur source *mtn1-1* but not *mtn2-1* seedlings suffered from growth retardation (Figure 3B). Since *mtk* seedlings, in which the single *MTK* gene of Arabidopsis is knocked out did not show any growth retardation when grown on 500 µM MTA (Bürstenbinder et al., 2006), it is concluded that insufficient MTA catabolism rather than limited Met supply was responsible for growth retardation in *mtn1-1* seedlings.

After 3 weeks wt, *mtn1-1* and *mtn2-1* plants showed overall reduced growth when cultured on 500 µM MTA as compared to growth on 500 µM MgSO₄ (Figures 3C, D). *mtn1-1* plants had somewhat shorter roots than wt or *mtn2-1* plants, but the growth retardation was not as severe as that seen at the seedling stage. Shoot fresh weight of plants grown on complete media, or on either 100 µM or 500 µM sulfate or Met did not differ significantly between wt, *mtn1-1* and *mtn2-1*, and was comparable to that of the previously described *mtk* mutant. When grown on 500 µM MTA as sole sulfur source, *mtn* mutants had slightly less fresh weight than wt, but shoot growth inhibition was much more severe in the *mtk* background with no functional Met cycle. It is possible that the residual MTA nucleosidase activity present in single gene knock downs was high enough to support growth at the post-seedling stage (Figure 3C-E). Furthermore, no phenotypic differences were observed between *mtn1-1*, *mtn2-1* and wt plants grown in sulfur-deplete conditions (Figure 3E). By contrast the *mtk* knock out mutant was growth-retarded when grown in the absence of sulfur as described previously (Figure 3E; Sauter et al., 2004). Thus, growth inhibition of the *mtn1-1* mutant was most severe at the seedling stage.

Regulation of MTA nucleosidase activity by MTA

Transcript levels of *AtMTN1* were determined by northern analysis in 3-week-old wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* plants grown on either 500 µM sulfate or 500 µM MTA (Figure 4A; Supplemental Figure 1). Transcript levels of *MTN2* were too low to be detected by northern blotting. Expression of *MTN1* was constitutive in wt and *mtn2-1* grown on either 500 µM MgSO₄, 500 µM Met, or 500 µM MTA as sulfur sources, indicating that expression of *AtMTN1* was not dependent on the sulfur source supplied. RT-PCR analysis confirmed that *MTN1* was expressed in a constitutive manner (Supplemental Figure 1). Similarly, *MTN2* was not regulated at the conditions applied. Expression analysis of *mtn1-1* and *mtn2-1* plants further showed that knock out of one *MTN* gene did not affect expression of the remaining *MTN* gene.

We next analyzed protein abundance of MTN1 and MTN2. To that end, polyclonal antibodies were raised against unique peptide sequences and the specificity of the Abs was tested using MTN1 and MTN2 protein that was ectopically overexpressed in *Escherichia coli* (Supplemental Figure 2). The amount of MTN2 protein in crude extracts isolated from 3-week-old plants was too low to be detected by immunoblotting. The antibodies raised against MTN1 recognized a protein band of the expected size of 28.5 kDa in crude extract (Figure 4B, C). In *mtn1-1* plants, the signal at about 28 kDa was absent confirming that it resulted from MTN1 protein. In wt plants grown on 500 µM MTA, MTN1 protein appeared to be more abundant as compared to plants grown on 500 µM sulfate (Figure 4B). In *mtn2-1* plants, no

difference in MTN1 abundance was observed after treatment with either sulfate or MTA. This result was confirmed in two additional immunoblot analyses (data not shown).

Finally, enzyme activity was measured in wt and in single *MTN* knock-down mutants. Enzyme activities were determined in seedlings (Figure 4D) and in 3-week-old plants (Figure 4E). Overall enzyme activities were 4- to 5-fold higher in seedlings as compared to the older plants indicating that MTA production and hence MTA metabolism was higher at the seedling stage. Analysis of wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* revealed that more than 80% of the total MTA nucleosidase activity was contributed by *MTN1*. This was the case in seedlings as well as in 3-week-old plants. In plants with overall lower enzyme activity, growth on MTA as sulfur source resulted in a 2- to 3-fold increase in MTN specific activity (Figure 4E). Elevated enzyme activity was observed in wt as well as in *mtn2-1* plants. In *mtn1-1* plants, the residual MTA nucleosidase activity was too low to detect a possible induction. In sulfur-free medium a weak induction of MTN enzyme activity was measured. Thus it can be concluded that *MTN1* and possibly *MTN2* enzyme activity is induced by their substrate MTA and, to a minor degree by sulfur-deficient conditions. Taken together, the results indicated that MTN activity in *Arabidopsis* plants was subject to regulation by MTA, and that regulation of enzyme activity occurred posttranscriptionally.

Knock down of MTN activity in seedlings results in accumulation of MTA and SAM

As described above knock out of *AtMTN1* expression reduced MTN activity to low levels in seedlings and to non-detectable levels in older plants, possibly abolishing the plant's ability to efficiently metabolize MTA. To test this assumption, MTA and other sulfur containing metabolites were measured in plants grown at the same conditions as for the transcript and enzyme activity analyses, i.e. on defined sulfur sources under sterile conditions (Figure 5).

In *mtn1-1* seedlings, knock down of MTN activity resulted in a 2-fold higher accumulation of MTA as compared to wt (Figure 5A). Furthermore, in *mtn1-1*, SAM levels were elevated more than 10-fold and the upstream sulfur metabolites Cys and GSH accumulated to higher levels than in wt (Figure 5C, E, G). In *mtn2-1* seedlings, both MTN enzyme activity, MTA, SAM, Cys, and glutathione (GSH) levels were comparable to those found in wt (Figures 4E and 5A-D). Growth of seedlings from wt, *mtn1-1* and *mtn2-1* on 500 µM Met resulted in accumulation of SAM and MTA and in strong accumulation of Cys and GSH (Figure 5C, D). It was described previously for tomato and *Arabidopsis* that SAM inhibits cystathionine-γ-synthase (CGS) thus reducing Met synthesis (Chiba et al., 2003; Onouchi et al., 2004, 2005; Katz et al., 2006). Accumulation of Cys and GSH in seedlings grown on high Met may have resulted from feedback inhibition of CGS with subsequent accumulation of Cys and channeling of Cys into GSH synthesis.

MTA and SAM levels were overall much lower in 3-week-old plants than in seedlings (Figure 5). Plants grown on 500 µM Met or 500 µM MTA showed elevated SAM and MTA levels but maximal metabolite levels were still only one tenth of those found in seedlings. In addition, no genotype-specific differences in metabolites were detected (Figure 5E-I). Thus, reduction of MTN activity in *mtn1-1* seedlings caused specific accumulation of MTA and of upstream metabolites whereas in mature plants with overall lower MTN activity, further down-regulation through knock-down of *AtMTN1* had no effect on MTA metabolism. This indicated that low residual MTN enzyme activity in *mtn1-1* plants provided sufficient Met cycle activity.

Cys and GSH levels in seedlings and plants fluctuated strongly depending on the sulfur source supplied as reported previously (Figure 5; Bürstenbinder et al., 2007) with generally lower levels in sulfur-replete conditions. However genotype-specific differences were not pronounced, indicating that overall sulfur supply rather than metabolism of MTA may be a limiting factor. ADP and ATP levels were determined in wt, *mtn1-1* and *mtn2-1* to see if knock down of either *MTN* gene affected the general energy supply. No genotypic differences in ADP and ATP levels or ADP to ATP ratios were observed in seedlings or in plants of wt, *mtn1-1* or *mtn2-1* grown on full media or on 100 µM or 500 µM sulfate, Met or MTA (Figure 6). The mutant genotypes had ADP and ATP levels comparable to wt when grown on sulfur-deplete media indicating that the plant's overall energy supply was not impaired by either mutation. The growth inhibition observed in *mtn1-1* seedlings thus appeared to be specifically related to MTA metabolism rather than to the general energy status.

In summary, lowered MTN activity in *mtn1-1* seedlings was accompanied by specific accumulation of MTA and SAM and resulted in inhibition of seedling growth indicating a causal relationship between MTA metabolism and growth. The data further showed a regulatory role of MTN activity in general sulfur metabolism.

***mtn1-1* seedlings have elevated levels of putrescine and spermine**

In order to test if knockdown of MTA nucleosidase activity affected metabolic pathways that produce MTA as a by-product, we first analyzed polyamines. Synthesis of spermidine from putrescine and synthesis of spermine from spermidine consumes dSAM and releases MTA. dSAM is synthesized from SAM (Figure 1). In *mtn1-1* seedlings grown on 500 µM MTA, a 10.8-fold increase in Put and a 3.9-fold increase in the level of Spm was observed compared to seedlings grown on 500 µM sulfate as sulfur source (Figure 7A, C). The levels of Spd were not affected by genotype or sulfur source (Figure 7B). wt and *mtn2-1* seedlings had comparable levels of polyamines with no significant differences observed when seedlings were grown on sulfate or MTA. Three-week-old wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* plants had comparable levels of Put, Spd, and Spm when grown on either sulfate or MTA (Figure 7D-F).

Taken together, the results showed that an excess exposure of MTA to *mtn1-1* seedlings not only resulted in accumulation of MTA, but further affected a metabolic pathway that naturally produces MTA, namely polyamine synthesis (Figures 5B and 7D-F).

Ethylene synthesis is not altered in *mtn1-1* or *mtn2-1* mutant seedlings

MTA is released not only during synthesis of Spd and Spm but also in the ethylene biosynthetic pathway when ACC is synthesized from SAM. To analyze if ethylene biosynthesis was affected in *mtn* mutants, we measured ethylene production from seedlings grown on either 500 µM sulfate or 500 µM MTA (Figure 8). Ethylene production did not differ significantly between wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* seedlings grown on sulfate. Growth on MTA resulted in an overall slight increase in ethylene production. However this increase was observed in all genotypes and was thus unrelated to knock down of MTN activity. The data showed that ethylene synthesis in seedlings was not inhibited by high levels of MTA. The ethylene biosynthetic capacity was further not diminished when MTN enzyme activity and hence MTA metabolism was strongly reduced as is the case in the *mtn1-1* mutant (Figures 4D, 5B, and 8). Thus, MTA appeared to specifically affect the polyamine synthesis pathway providing a specific regulatory loop between the Met cycle and polyamine homeostasis.

DISCUSSION

The Met cycle mutants *mtk* and *mtn* are phenotypically different

The plant Met cycle metabolizes MTA that is released during synthesis of ethylene, tri- and tetraamines, and nicotianamine to regenerate Met at the sole expense of an ATP and an amino group transfer. In apple, continuous ethylene evolution was observed during storage without depletion of Met indicating that long-term ethylene synthesis was supported by the activity of the Met cycle (Baur and Yang, 1972). In Arabidopsis, high rates of ethylene synthesis as occur in the *eto3* mutant were shown to depend on a functional Met cycle (Bürstenbinder et al., 2007). Knock out of the single *MTK* gene in the *eto3* background resulted in reduced ethylene production and in partial rescue of the *eto3* phenotype. MTK catalyzes phosphorylation of methylthioribose, the immediate product of MTA nucleosidase activity. The *mtk* mutant itself did not display morphological phenotypes at the seedling or plant stage indicating that the Met cycle itself is not an essential pathway.

Unlike the *mtk* mutant, the *mtn1-1* knock down mutant displayed altered phenotypes with respect to growth and development. Knock down of MTN enzyme activity to less than

20% of wt activity in *mtn1-1* seedlings was sufficient to severely inhibit seedling growth in the presence of MTA as sulfur source. The differences in *mtk* versus *mtn1-1* phenotypes indicated that a metabolic effect other than recycling of Met may be involved. Analysis of Met cycle metabolites revealed that MTA accumulated to more than twofold higher levels in *mtn1-1* than in wt seedlings grown on 500 µM MTA. The MTA precursor SAM accumulated to more than 10-fold higher levels in *mtn1-1*, possibly due to feedback inhibition by MTA on SAM-consuming reactions such as ethylene, polyamine, or nicotianamine synthesis. In addition to MTA and SAM, *mtn1-1* seedlings grown on MTA accumulated Cys and GSH. Cystathionine γ -synthase (CGS) catalyzes the first committed step in the Met synthesis pathway with Cys as a substrate. In Arabidopsis, CGS activity is subject to feedback inhibition by SAM which down-regulates the stability of the CGS1 mRNA (Chiba et al., 2003; Onouchi et al., 2004). This feedback inhibition at high SAM levels favours accumulation of Cys and consequently synthesis of GSH as an alternative route for Cys metabolism (Figure 1).

Metabolism of MTA as a crucial task of the Met cycle?

The Met salvage pathway not only converts methylthioribose to Met, it also salvages adenine (Ade) to replenish adenosine phosphate pools. The fact that growth and development of *mtn1-1* but not of *mtk* was impaired, pointed to a crucial role of the first step in the Met salvage pathway as catalyzed by MTA nucleosidase. Knock out of MTR kinase prevents metabolism of 5'-methylthioribose whereas MTN deficiency prevents hydrolytic cleavage of MTA with the formation of 5'-methylthioribose and Ade. It might be expected that downregulation of Ade-releasing MTN activity negatively affects levels of Ade nucleosides. However steady state levels of ADP or ATP were not lowered in *mtn1-1* indicating that supply of Ade was not limited by Met cycle activity.

Growth retardation in *mtn1-1* seedlings correlated with genotype-specific accumulation of MTA and SAM. In tobacco transformed with SAM synthetase driven by the strong constitutive 35S promoter, SAMS overexpressing plants and plants co-suppressed for SAMS were recovered. Overexpression of SAMS correlated with yellow-green leaves whereas down-regulation of SAMS activity and lowered SAM levels resulted in growth-retardation (Boerjan et al., 1994). Based on these observations, elevation of SAM levels would not be expected to cause growth inhibition, leaving MTA as a crucial regulatory metabolite. In mammals, MTA was shown to influence numerous critical cellular responses such as transcriptional regulation, cell proliferation and differentiation (Avila et al., 2004). Similar studies on the regulatory role of MTA in plant metabolism are missing. We showed that MTN activity is subject to feedback activation by MTA, indicating that MTA levels are naturally kept low in the cell. MTN1 activity in Arabidopsis was recently shown to be

regulated through direct interaction with the calcium sensor calcineurin B-like 3 (CBL3) in a calcium-dependent manner (Oh et al., 2008). If and how regulation by CBL3 and MTA are linked remains to be analyzed.

***mtn1-1* seedlings have altered polyamine levels**

Ethylene and PAs are known to control plant growth. Altered ethylene or PA levels could hence contribute to growth inhibition. In potato, in two out of three lines expressing antisense SAM decarboxylase, downregulation of *SAMDC* expression was accompanied by lowered Spd and Spm but also by lowered Put levels. The plants had abnormal phenotypes with dwarfness, branched stems, small leaves, and early senescence (Kumar et al., 1996). Downregulation of *SAMDC* not only affected PA levels but also resulted in an up to 40-fold increase in ethylene evolution. Both, increased ethylene and reduced PAs may have contributed to the phenotypes observed in potato. In *mtn1-1* seedlings grown on MTA as sulfur source, ethylene evolution was slightly elevated. However, this increase was observed in all genotypes including wt. No genotype-specific increase in ethylene synthesis was observed in *mtn1-1* seedlings indicating that growth inhibition was not due to ethylene.

In SPDS-RNAi plants of *Arabidopsis*, spermidine levels were reduced to about one fourth those found in wt and seedling development was arrested at the heart-torpedo stage (Imai et al., 2004). Specific accumulation of MTA in *mtn1-1* seedlings grown on MTA was accompanied by 10.8-fold elevated Put. Accumulation of Put could be a direct result of inhibition of SPDS by MTA. In *Arabidopsis* plants, overexpression of arginine decarboxylase led to elevated putrescine (Put) levels and to growth retardation (Alcazar et al., 2005) supporting the view that inhibition of SPDS by MTA and resulting accumulation of Put causes growth inhibition. In mammalian cells, MTA is a strong inhibitor of SPDS and to a lesser extent of SPMS (Avila et al., 2004). Spermine synthesis was not impaired in *mtn1-1* seedlings. Rather, a 3.9-fold increase in Spm levels was observed. This accumulation could result from increased biosynthesis or from reduced metabolism. Further studies will be required to resolve this point. It will also be of interest to elucidate the molecular mechanism by which MTA feedback-inhibits SPDS.

In conclusion, the work presented here provides strong evidence that regulatory links exists within the Met cycle, and between the Met cycle and PA biosynthesis. MTA acts as a crucial metabolite in this regulatory network. When MTA accumulates, MTA nucleosidase activity is upregulated. Regulation of the crucial, i. e. first enzymes of the Met cycle and of PA synthesis may help ensure that the activities of these two linked pathways are properly adjusted.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

Plant material and mutant generation

Wild type seeds of *Arabidopsis* (*Arabidopsis thaliana*) ecotype Columbia (Col-0) were originally obtained through GABI-KAT (Max-Planck Institut, Köln, Germany). *Arabidopsis* seeds were pretreated at 4°C for 3 days and grown on a 1:2 sand:humus mixture under long-day conditions as described previously (Sauter et al., 2004).

T-DNA insertion lines 085385 and 071127 were obtained from the SALK Institute (La Jolla, CA, USA). Line 085385 had an insertion in the third intron of the *AtMTN1* gene (At4g38800). Line 071127 carried an insertion in the second exon of the *AtMTN2* gene (At4g34840). To characterize the mutants, genomic DNA was isolated following the protocol for rapid genomic DNA isolation (Weigel and Glazebrook, 2002). 1 µl of DNA was used for a 20 µl PCR reaction. PCR was performed using the primers AtMTN1-F3 (GAATCGGAAGAGAGGGATAAG) and AtMTN1-R3 (ATAAAAAAAGGAAGAGAACAGAAG) or AtMTN2-F1 (CAACAGATTACGCCTCGTTG) and AtMTN2-R1 (ACAGGTATTCTTCTGTCATGG) to amplify the wild-type allele of *AtMTN1* and *AtMTN2*, respectively. Primers AtMTN1-F3 and Salk-LBb were used for line 085385 to amplify the *mtn1* allele carrying the T-DNA-insertion, primers Salk-LBb and AtMTN2-R1 were used to identify the T-DNA tagged *mtn2* allele of line 071127. PCR conditions used were as follows: One time 94°C for 5 min, 35 cycles with 94°C for 1 min, 55°C for 1 min and 72°C for 1 min and a final extension step at 72°C for 5 min. Genomic DNA from *Arabidopsis* wild-type plants was used as a control. Plants of the T₂ generation homozygous for the corresponding insertion in *mtn1* and *mtn2* were identified by PCR and used for all subsequent experiments and for generating the *mtn1/mtn2* double mutant.

Growth on defined sulfur media

Arabidopsis seeds were surface-sterilized for 20 min in 1 ml 1% (v/v) sodium hypochlorite. After sterilization, seeds were washed with autoclaved water 5 times and then laid out under sterile conditions on square plates containing modified Murashige and Skoog (MS)-medium solidified with 0.8% (w/v) Agarose and 1.5% (w/v) sucrose (Murashige and Skoog, 1962). Starvation experiments were performed as described previously (Bürstenbinder et al., 2007) using complete medium, sulfur-deficient medium and medium containing 100 µM or 500 µM MgSO₄, methionine or 5'-methylthioadenosine. After 4 days of growth seedlings were collected. Shoots were collected from 3 week-old plants. Tissues were immediately frozen in liquid nitrogen and used for analysis of gene expression, MTN enzyme activity or measurement of sulfur metabolites.

RNA extraction, northern blot analysis and RT-PCR

Total RNA was extracted from leaves of 3-week-old wt, *mtn1*, and *mtn2* plants using TRI-REAGENT™ (Sigma-Aldrich Chemie GmbH, Taufkirchen, Germany) following the users manual. For Northern blot analysis, 20 µg of total RNA were used as described (Rzewuski et al., 2007) and hybridizations were performed according to Sauter (1997). *AtMTN1* cDNA was amplified using primers AtMTN1-F3 and AtMTN1-R3. PCR products were purified using a cDNA purification kit (Macherey Nagel, Düren, Germany) and used to generate a ³²P-labeled probe. RT-PCRs were performed as described (Bürstenbinder et al., 2007).

MTA nucleosidase activity

Soluble protein was extracted form ground plant tissue using 50 mM potassium phosphate buffer, pH 7.0. Samples were centrifuged twice at 30,000 g for 20 min at 4°C to remove cell debris. Proteins were quantified according to Bradford (1976). MTN specific activity was measured using a xanthine oxidase-coupled enzyme assay (Lee et al., 2005). 20 µg of soluble protein in a volume of 20 µl were added to 780 µl reaction mixture. Reactions were carried out in 50 mM potassium phosphate pH 7.0, 200 µM MTA, 0.2 U of xanthine oxidase grade III from bovine milk and 1 mM INT (Sigma-Aldrich, Munich, Germany). As a control, a reaction mixture lacking protein extract was used. Absorbance was measured every 25 min over 125 min with a DU530 spectrophotometer (BeckmanCoulter, Krefeld, Germany).

Immunoblot analysis

Polyclonal antibodies were raised in rabbit against peptide epitopes of MTN1 (MAPHGDSLSDIEEPEVDAQSE) and MTN2 (VNTPFPKEVTWIMFKGMYK). The specificity of the antibodies was tested using overexpressed, His-tagged MTN1 and MTN2 protein (Supplemental Figure 2). For immunoblot detection of MTN protein in plant extract, 10 µg of total soluble protein were separated on a 12.5% SDS-PAGE (Laemmli, 1970) and transferred onto a polyvinylidene difluoride membrane (PVDF) using a semidry electroblotting system (Peqlab, Erlangen, Germany) according to the manufacturer's protocol. To check transfer efficiency and equal loading, blots were stained with Ponceau S. After blocking of PVDF with 5% (w/v) milk powder, a horseradish peroxidase-anti-rabbit-IgG conjugate (GE Healthcare, Uppsala, Sweden; 1:50000) was used to detect the primary antibodies (1:5000). Signals were detected using the ECL Plus Western Blotting detection System (GE Healthcare).

Analysis of metabolites

Leaf material (0.1 g fresh weight) was powdered in liquid nitrogen and extracted at 4°C for 15 min with 0.5 ml of 0.1 M HCL. The plant homogenate was centrifuged twice for 10 min at 4°C and 16,400 g to remove cell debris and membranes. The resulting supernatant was used for analysis of SAM, MTA, ADP, ATP, Cys and GSH. SAM, MTA, ADP and ATP were derivatized with chloroacetaledhyde and quantified after separation by HPLC as described in Rzewuski et al. (2007), while the thiols Cys and GSH were determined after labeling with monobromobimane followed by reverse phase chromatography (Wirtz et al., 2004). All chromatograms were recorded and processed with the Millenium32 software (Waters).

Analysis of free polyamines

4 volumes of 5% (v/v) perchlorid acid were added to fresh plant material (30 to 50 mg). Samples were frozen immediately and stored at -20°C. Putrescine, spermidine, and spermine were extracted and quantified according to Bhatnagar et al. (2002).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for financial support.

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FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1. The Met cycle, and ethylene, polyamine, and nicotianamine biosynthetic pathways. The sulfur containing amino acid methionine (Met) is synthesized from asparagine (Asp) through the intermediates O-phosphohomoserine (OPHS), cystathionine (CYT), and homocysteine (Hcy). Sulfate is reduced and incorporated into Cys which can subsequently be converted to glutathione (GSH) or serve as cosubstrate for Met synthesis. Cysteine- γ -synthase (CgS) catalyzes a regulated step in Met synthesis. In the Met cycle, Met is activated at the expense of ATP by S-adenosylmethionine synthetase (SAMS) to SAM. SAM serves as substrate for 1-aminocycloprane-1-carboxylate (ACC) synthase (ACS), which is the substrate for ACC oxidase (ACO), the ethylene forming enzyme. SAM also serves as substrate for the biosynthesis of nicotianamine (NA) by NA synthase (NAS). In all pathways MTA is released as a by-product and recycled to Met, successively involving MTA nucleosidase (MTN), methylthioribose (MTR) kinase (MTK), which produces methylthioribose phosphate, an enolase/phosphatase, acireductone dioxygenase (ARD), which produces 4-keto-methylthiobutyrate (KMTB), and a transaminase.

Figure 2. *mtn1-1*, *mtn2-1*, and *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* T-DNA insertion mutants.

- (a) A T-DNA is inserted in the third intron of *MTN1* in *mtn1-1*.
- (b) *mtn2-1* contains a T-DNA insertion in the fourth exon of *MTN2*.
- (c) PCR analysis of the wt alleles of *MTN1* and *MTN2* and of the T-DNA present in *mtn1-1* and *mtn2-1* using genomic DNA as template.
- (d) RT-PCR amplification of *MTN1* and *MTN2* transcripts in *mtn1-1*, *mtn2-1*, and in the *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* double mutant indicates that the T-DNA insertions prevent accumulation of the corresponding transcript.
- (e) Plants of wt, *mtn1-1*, *mtn2-1*, and *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* at the flowering stage. *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* plants have a delayed flowering phenotype.
- (f) *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* plants are infertile.

Figure 3. Growth of *mtn1-1* seedlings is impaired on MTA as sulfur source.

- (a, b) wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* seedlings were grown for 4 days on (a) 500 μ M SO_4^{2-} or (b) 500 μ M MTA as sulfur source. No phenotypic differences were observed between genotypes on SO_4^{2-} , whereas growth of *mtn1-1* was severely retarded on MTA.
- (c, d) wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* plants were grown for 3 weeks on (c) 500 μ M SO_4^{2-} or (d) 500 μ M MTA as sulfur source.

(e) Shoot fresh weight of 3-week-old wt, *mtn1-1*, *mtn2-1*, and *mtk* plants grown on complete media (C), on media lacking sulfur (-S), or on media with 100 µM or 500 µM SO₄²⁻, Met, or MTA as sulfur source. Results are averages (\pm SE) of at least 50 plants analyzed per genotype and treatment.

Figure 4. *MTN* gene expression, MTN protein abundance, and MTN enzyme activity in wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1*.

(a) Northern analysis of *MTN1* expression in shoots of 3-week-old wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* plants grown on 500 µM sulfate, 500 µM Met, or 500 µM MTA as sulfur source. Expression of *MTN2* was too low to be detected by northern.

(b) Immunoblot analysis of MTN1 protein abundance. Soluble protein was extracted from shoots of 3-week-old plants. An antibody raised against MTN1 (Supplemental Figure 1) recognized a protein of the expected size of about 28 kDa in wt and *mtn2-1* that was absent in *mtn1-1*.

(c) The protein blot used for the immunological detection in (b) was stained with Ponceau S Red as a control of protein loading.

(d) Specific enzyme activity of MTN was measured in 4-day-old wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* seedlings grown on complete medium (C), on sulfur-deficient medium (-S), or on medium containing 100 µM or 500 µM SO₄²⁻, Met, or MTA. Results are averages (\pm SD) of three independent biological experiments.

(e) Specific enzyme activity of MTN was measured in shoots of 3-week-old wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* plants grown on complete medium (C), on sulfur deficient medium (-S), or on medium containing 100 µM or 500 µM SO₄²⁻, Met, or MTA. Results are averages (\pm SD) of three independent biological experiments. MTN activity in *mtn1-1* plants was below the detection limit.

Figure 5. SAM and MTA accumulate to high levels specifically in *mtn1-1* seedlings grown on 500 µM MTA.

Steady state levels of (a, e) SAM, (b, f) MTA, (c, g) Cys, and (d, h) glutathione (GSH) were determined in (a-d) 4-day-old seedlings and (e-h) in shoots of 3-week-old plants of wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1*. Seedlings and plants were grown on complete media (C), on media lacking sulfur (-S), or on media containing 100 µM or 500 µM SO₄²⁻, Met, or MTA as a sulfur source. Results represent means (\pm SD) of three replicates.

Figure 6. ADP and ATP ratios are not altered in *mtn* mutants.

(a, b) ADP and (c, d) ATP steady state levels were measured in (a, c) 4-day-old seedlings and (b, d) in shoots of 3-week-old plants of wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1*. Seedlings and plants were grown on complete MS media (C), on media lacking sulfur (- S), or on media containing 100 µM or 500 µM SO₄²⁻, Met, or MTA as a sulfur source. Results represent means (\pm SD) of three replicates.

Figure 7. Put and Spm levels are elevated specifically in *mtn2-1* seedlings grown on MTA.

(a-c) 4-day-old seedlings and (d-f) 3-week-old plants of wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* were grown on medium containing 500 µM SO₄²⁻ or 500 µM MTA as sulfur source and levels of Put, Spd, and Spm were determined. Put and Spm, but not Spd were elevated at the seedlings stage in the *mtn1-1* mutant, whereas PA levels were comparable in all three genotypes in older plants.

Figure 8. Ethylene synthesis is not impaired by downregulation of MTN activity.

4-day-old seedlings of wt, *mtn1-1*, and *mtn2-1* were grown on medium containing 500 µM SO₄²⁻ or 500 µM MTA as sulfur source, and ethylene evolution was determined by gas chromatography.

Figure 1

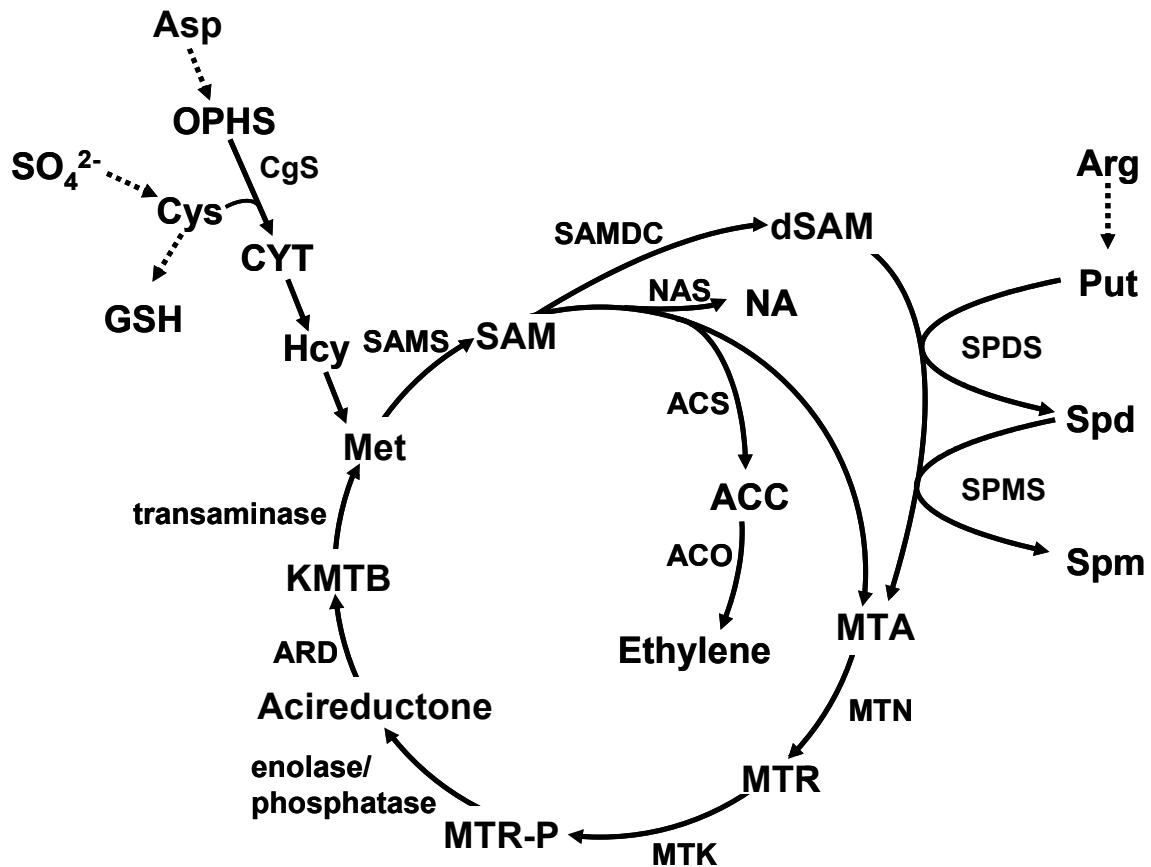


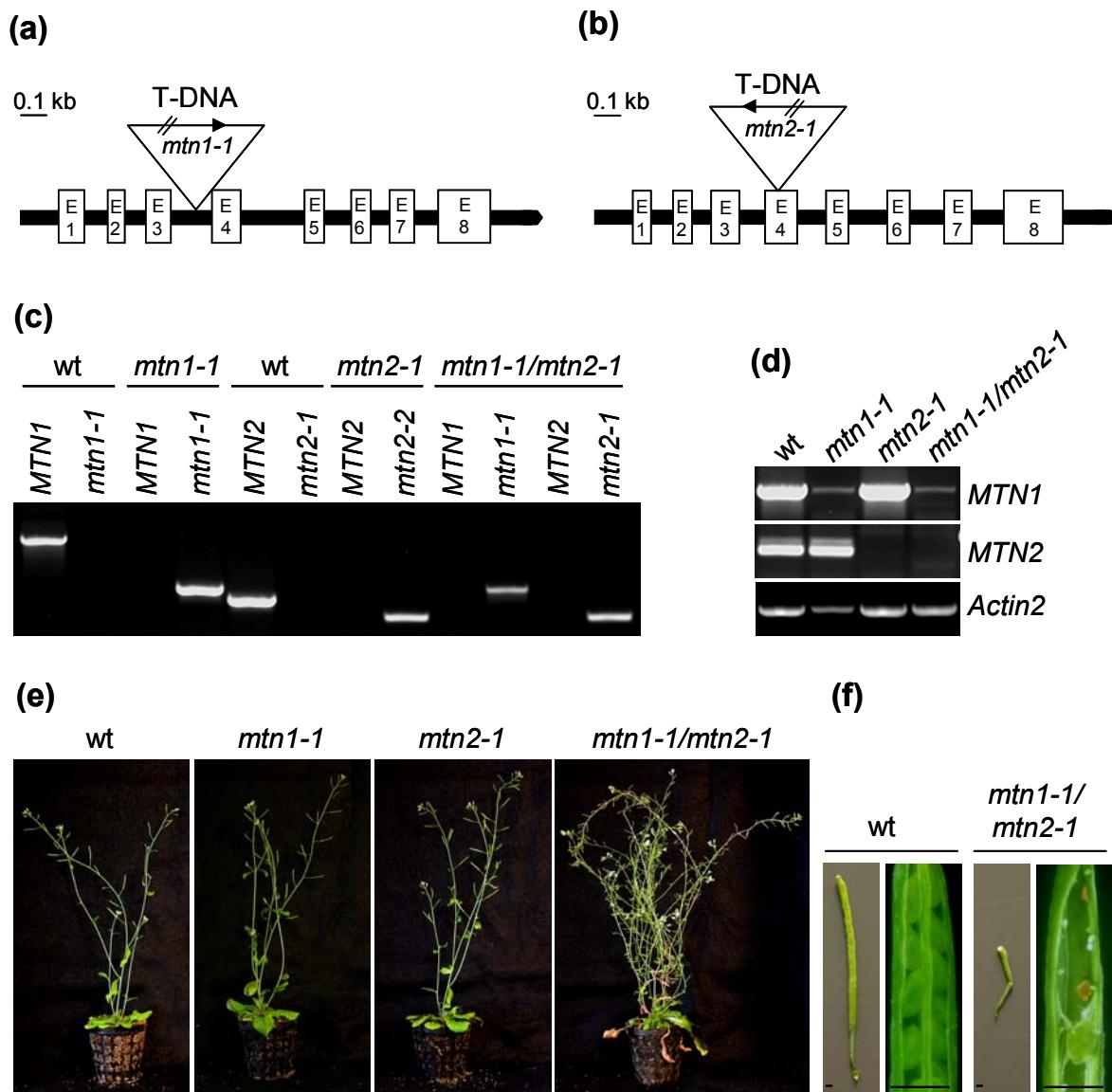
Figure 2

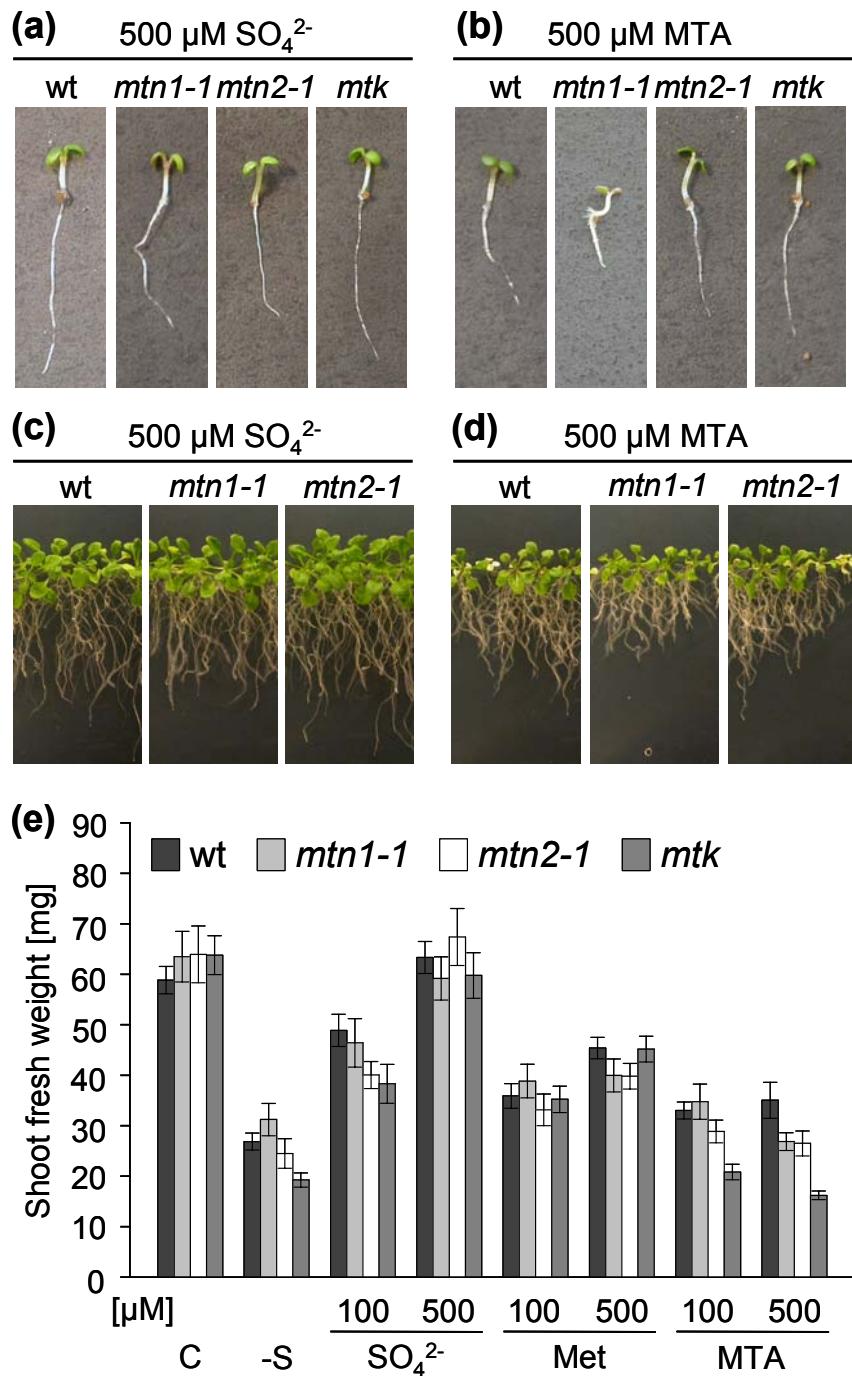
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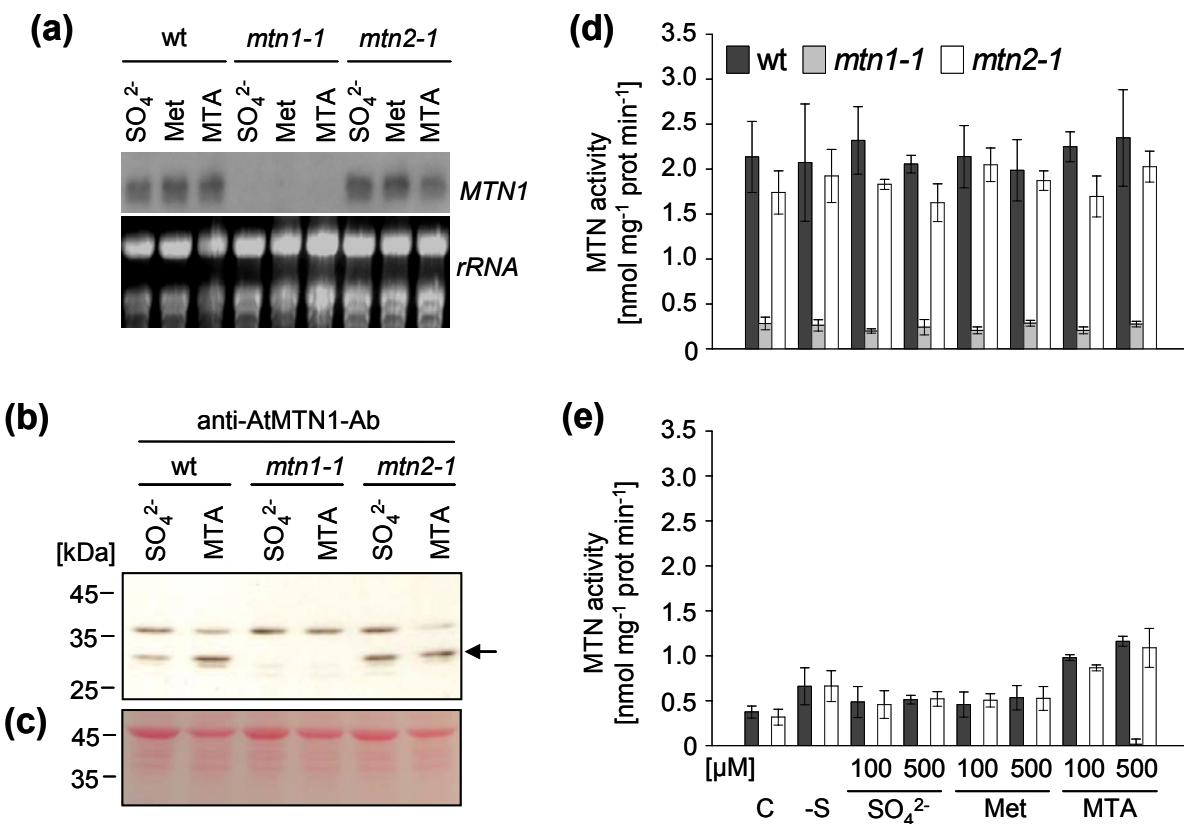
Figure 4

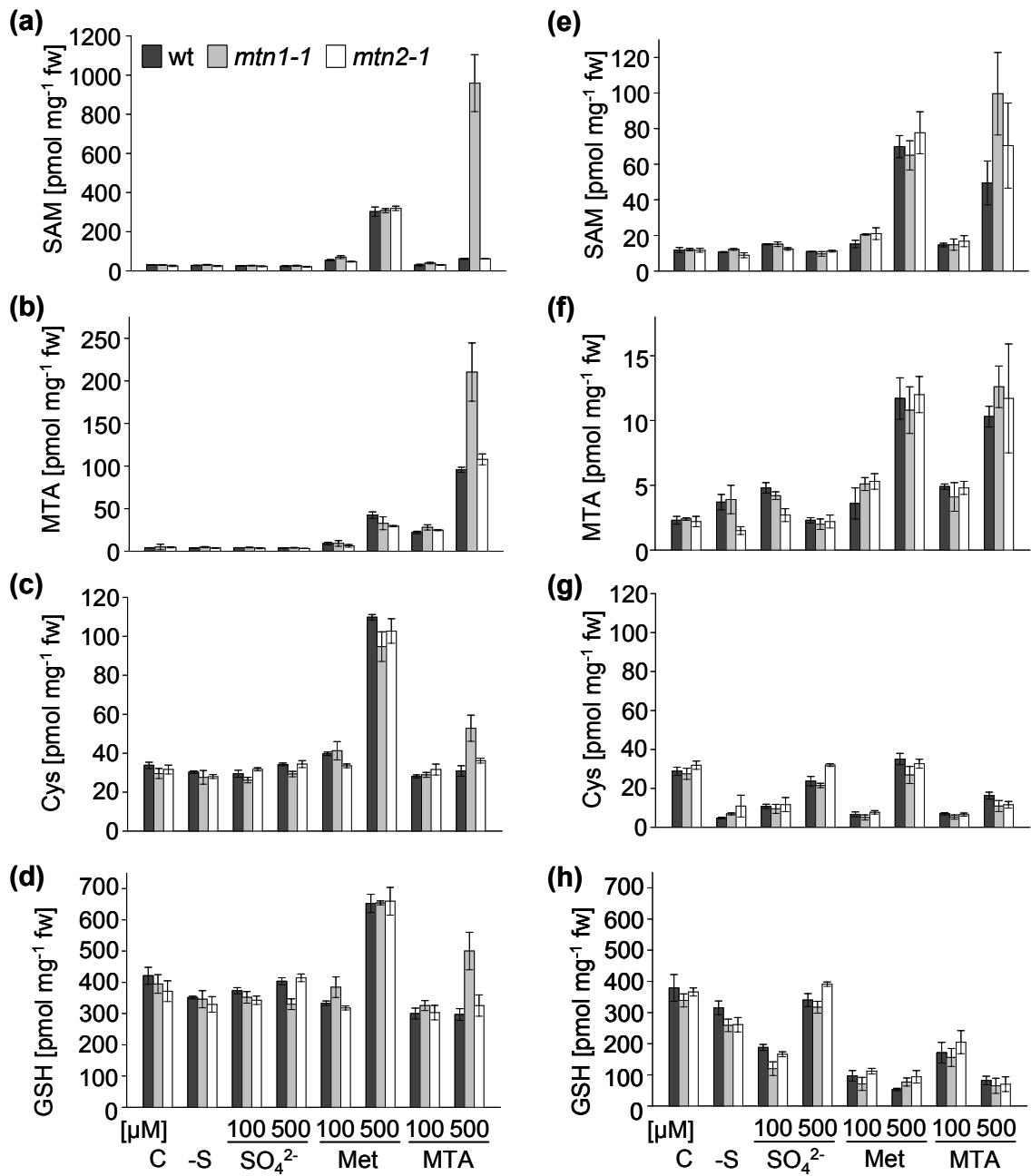
Figure 5

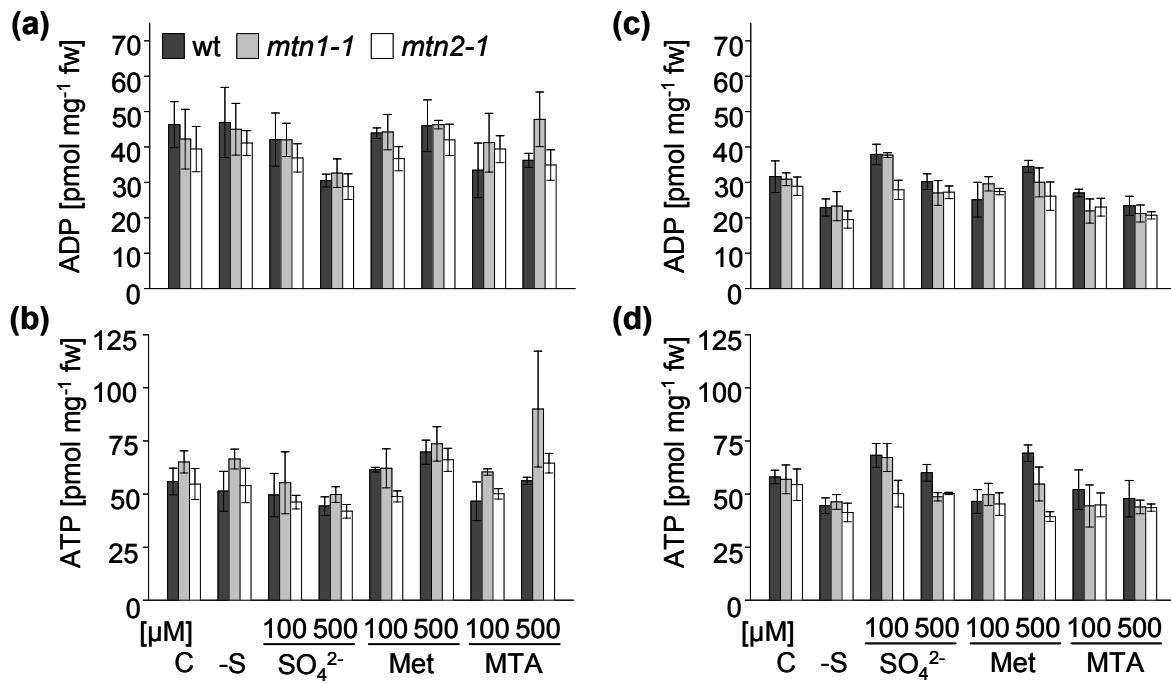
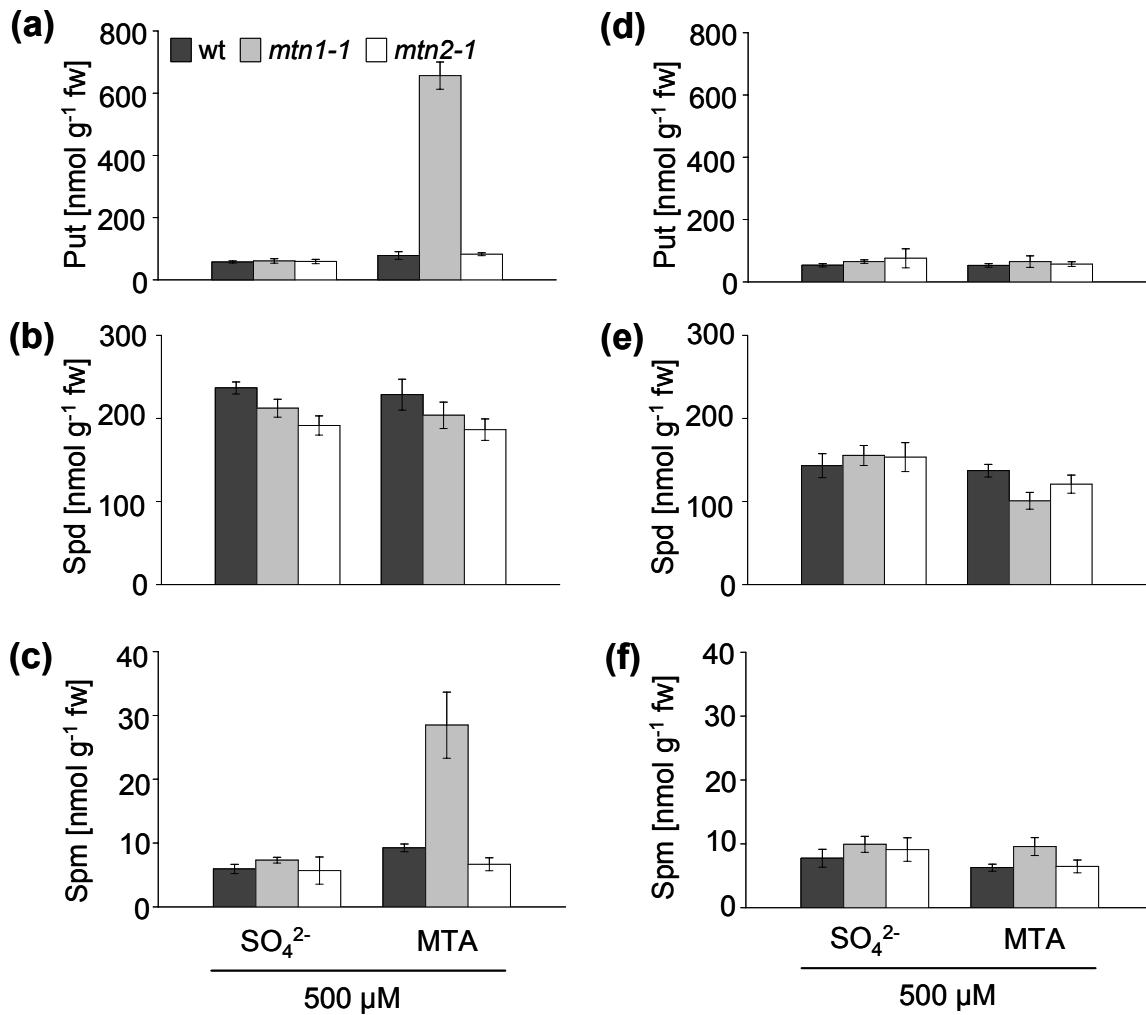
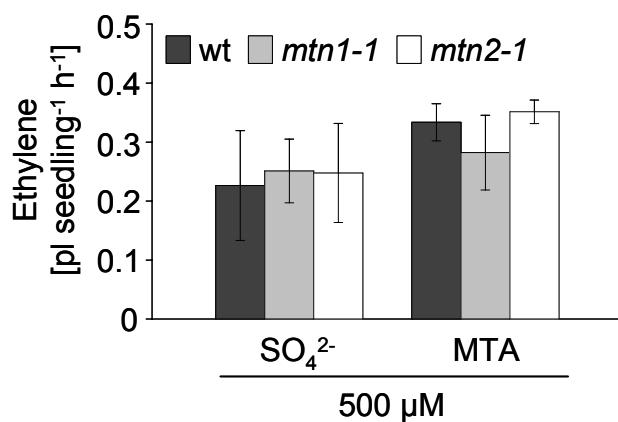
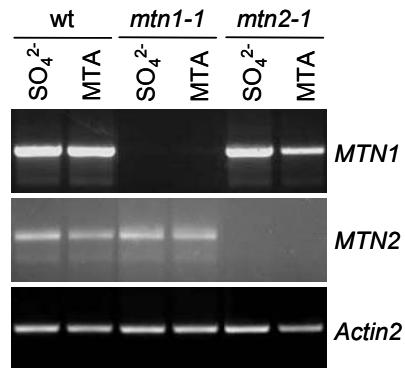
Figure 6

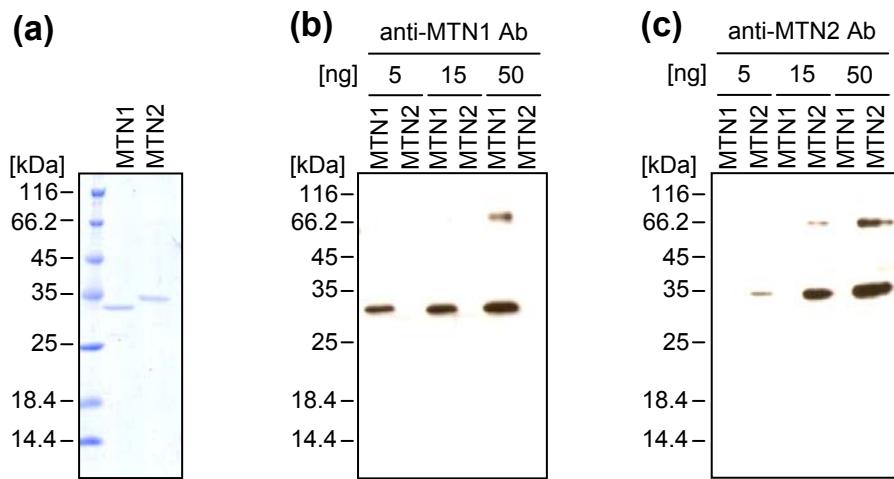
Figure 7**Figure 8**

Supplemental data

Figure 1



Supplemental Figure 1: Analysis of *MTN1* and *MTN2* expression in 3-week-old wt, *mtn1-1* and *mtn2-1* plants by RT-PCR. cDNA of *Actin2* was amplified as a control for equal RNA input.

Figure 2**Supplemental Figure 2:** Overexpression and immunological detection of MTN1 and MTN2.

(A) MTN1 and MTN2 proteins were ectopically overexpressed as His-tagged proteins in *Escherichia coli*, purified by affinity chromatography, separated on an SDS-PAGE, and stained with Coomassie Blue. (B) 5 to 50 ng of overexpressed MTN1 and MTN2 protein was separated on an SDS-PAGE and blotted. Immunoblot analysis with polyclonal anti-MTN1 antibodies diluted 1:5,000 and a secondary antibody diluted at 1:50,000 revealed specific binding to MTN1 protein. (C) 5 to 50 ng of overexpressed MTN1 and MTN2 protein was separated on an SDS-PAGE and blotted. Western analysis with polyclonal anti-MTN2 antibodies diluted 1:5,000 and a secondary antibody diluted at 1:50,000 revealed specific binding to MTN2 protein.

KAPITEL 4

Identifizierung von Genen des Methioninzyklus aus Tomate und Analyse der Genexpression während der Fruchtreife

Im letzten Teil dieser Arbeit wurde die ethylenabhängige Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus während der Fruchtreife in Tomate untersucht. Über *in silico* Analysen konnten in Tomate jeweils ein zu MTA-Nukleosidasen und MTR-Kinasen aus Arabidopsis und Reis homologes Gen, sowie zwei Homologe zu Acireducton-Dioxygenasen identifiziert werden und die vollständigen kodierenden Sequenzen dieser Gene gewonnen werden. Die Analyse der Expression dieser Gene im Wildtyp, sowie in Mutanten, in denen die Fruchtreife oder die Ethylenperzeption inhibiert waren, zeigte, dass die Transkriptmengen der untersuchten Gene weder allgemein während der Fruchtreife, noch durch Ethylen reguliert waren. Wir konnten somit zeigen, dass eine ethylenabhängige Regulation von Genen des Methioninzyklus, wie zum Beispiel von OsARD1 aus Reis, nicht allgemein in Pflanzen mit natürlichen Phasen langanhaltender hoher Ethylenproduktion vorhanden ist.

Die in diesem Kapitel vorgestellten Ergebnisse wurden von mir während eines Forschungsaufenthaltes in der Arbeitsgruppe von Prof. Dr. James J. Giovannoni am Boyce Thompson Institute (Ithaca, NY, USA) durchgeführt.

EINLEITUNG

Methionin (Met) ist eine schwefelhaltige Aminosäure, die zum einen Bestandteil von Proteinen, nach ihrer Aktivierung zu S-Adenosylmethionin (SAM) aber auch wichtigster Methylgruppendonator und Ausgangssubstrat für die Biosynthese zahlreicher organischer Verbindungen ist. Bei der Biosynthese von Polyaminen, Nicotianamin und dem Pflanzenhormon Ethylen entsteht als Nebenprodukt Methylthioadenosin (MTA), das die reduzierte Schwefelgruppe des Met enthält. Im Methioninzyklus wird MTA wieder zu Met recycelt. Bislang wurden pflanzliche Gene für drei Enzyme des Methioninzyklus identifiziert, MTA-Nukleosidase (MTN), MTR-Kinase (MTK) und Acireducton-Dioxygenase (ARD). Die MTA-Nukleosidase katalysiert den Eingangsschritt des Methioninzyklus. In *Arabidopsis thaliana* kodieren zwei Gene für MTN. In Reis (*Oryza sativa* L.) wird MTN von einem Einzelkopiegen kodiert. Sowohl für AtMTN1 und AtMTN2, als auch für OsMTN wurde eine MTA-Nukleosidase-Aktivität nachgewiesen (Siu et al., 2008; Rzewuski et al., 2007; Kapitel 2). Im zweiten Schritt des Methioninzyklus wird MTR durch Katalyse einer MTR-Kinase phosphoryliert. Dieses Enzym wird in Arabidopsis von einem einzelnen Gen kodiert. In Reis kodieren zwei Gene für MTKs. OsMTK1 aus Reis wurde enzymatisch charakterisiert (Sauter et al., 2004). ARDs setzen Acireducton zu 2-Keto-4-Methylthiobutyrat, der direkten Methioninvorstufe im Methioninzyklus, um. In Arabidopsis kodieren vier Gene für ARD. In Reis wird ARD von zwei Genen kodiert (Kapitel 1; Sauter et al., 2005). Für OsARD1 aus Reis wurde nachgewiesen, dass das Enzym über Acireducton-Dioxygenase-Aktivität verfügt. Baur und Yang (1972) zeigten, dass der interne Methioninpool in gelagerten Apfelfrüchten (*Malus sylvestris* (L.) Mill.) nur ausreichen würde, um eine Ethylenproduktion für einige Stunden aufrecht zu erhalten, Äpfel aber über Monate Ethylen ohne externe Schwefelquelle produzierten. Sie postulierten, dass kontinuierliches Methioninrecycling essentiell sei, um eine solche langanhaltende, hohe Ethylensynthese zu gewährleisten.

Der erste Nachweis einer direkten Regulation des Methioninzyklus durch Ethylen erfolgte in Reis. Reis ist eine semiaquatische Pflanze, die gut an Überflutung angepasst ist. Nach Überflutung steigt Ethylen aufgrund einer verringerten Diffusion in Wasser, sowie aufgrund erhöhter Ethylensyntheseraten im überfluteten Gewebe an (Métraux und Kende, 1983; Mekhedow und Kende, 1996; Zarembinski und Theologis, 1997). Die erhöhte Ethylenkonzentration vermittelt Anpassungen der Reispflanzen an Überflutung, wie zum Beispiel schnelles Streckungswachstum, Aerenchymbildung und Wachstum von Adventivwurzeln (Sauter, 2000). Des Weiteren induziert Ethylen direkt die Expression des Methioninzyklusgens OsARD1 in einer frühen Antwort, die ohne neue Proteinsynthese erfolgt (Sauter et al., 2005). Über diese direkte Induktion des Methioninzyklus scheint Ethylen die eigene Biosynthese damit sicherzustellen, dass kontinuierlich ausreichend Met zur Verfügung gestellt wird. In Arabidopsis dagegen hat Ethylen keinen Einfluss auf die

Expression von Methioninzyklusgenen (Kapitel 2; Bürstenbinder et al., 2007). Eine mögliche Erklärung für diese unterschiedlichen Regulationsmechanismen wäre, dass Ethylen Gene des Methioninzyklus nur in Pflanzen reguliert, die während ihres normalen Entwicklungszyklus Phasen langandauernder, hoher Ethylensynthese durchlaufen. Zu diesen Pflanzen gehören neben semiaquatischen Pflanzen auch Pflanzen mit klimakterischer Fruchtreife, zu denen neben den eingangs erwähnten Äpfeln auch Tomaten (*Solanum lycopersicum* L.) gezählt werden.

Die Fruchtentwicklung kann in mehrere Stadien eingeteilt werden, beginnend bei der Organogenese über Fruchtreife bis zur Seneszenz. In klimakterischen Früchten wie der Tomate geht der Fruchtreife ein Anstieg in der Respiration, gefolgt von einem starken Anstieg der Ethylensynthese voraus (Burg und Burg, 1962). Während der frühen Entwicklungsstadien werden nur basale Mengen an Ethylen synthetisiert (Herner und Sink, 1973; Lincoln und Fischer, 1988; Klee, 1993; Lashbrook et al., 1998). In Früchten des Tomatenkultivar Ailsa Craig beginnt der Anstieg der Ethylensynthese beim Übergang zur Fruchtreife im *Breaker* Stadium. Als *Breaker* wird das Stadium bezeichnet, in dem erste Anzeichen von Carotinoid-Akkumulation als Farbumschlag der Früchte von grün nach orange sichtbar werden. Während der darauf folgenden vier bis sieben Tage steigt die Ethylensynthese zunächst weiter an und nimmt anschließend im Verlauf der nächsten Wochen auf etwa 25-50% der maximalen Ethylensyntheserate ab (Grierson und Tucker, 1983; Giovannoni et al., 1989; Balbi und Lomax, 2003). Ohne Ethylen können klimakterische Früchte nicht reifen. Die *Never-ripe* Mutante (*Nr*) produziert während der Fruchtreife ähnliche Mengen an Ethylen wie der Wildtyp, kann diese allerdings aufgrund einer Mutation im Ethylenrezeptor *ERS1-Like* nicht wahrnehmen (Yen et al., 1995). Als Folge davon ist die Fruchtreife stark inhibiert. Früchte der *ripening-inhibitor* (*rin*) und *non-ripening* (*nor*) Mutanten sind im gesamten Fruchtreifeprozess inhibiert (Tigchelaar et al., 1978). *NOR* und *RIN* kodieren für Transkriptionsfaktoren, die die Fruchtreife vor Einsetzen des klimakterischen Anstiegs in Respiration und Ethylensynthese steuern (Moore et al., 2002; Vrebalov et al., 2002). Der Verlust der Genfunktion von *rin* oder *nor* führt zu einem Ausbleiben der Fruchtreife, die auch durch exogen appliziertes Ethylen nicht wiederhergestellt werden kann.

Um die Frage einer möglichen ethylenabhängigen Regulation der Genexpression von Methioninzyklusgenen in Tomate zu klären, wurden Transkriptmengen in Fruchtreifestadien mit hoher Ethylensynthese analysiert und mit den in Kontrollgeweben mit geringer Ethylensynthese vorkommenden Transkriptmengen verglichen. Zusätzlich wurden Pflanzen der *rin* und *nor* Mutanten, die in der Fruchtreife im Allgemeinen inhibiert sind, sowie Pflanzen der *Nr* Mutante, in der die Ethylenperzeption und, als unmittelbare Folge davon, die Fruchtreife inhibiert ist, in die Analysen eingeschlossen.

MATERIALIEN UND METHODEN

Pflanzenmaterial

Untersuchungen an Tomate (*Solanum lycopersicum* L.) wurden am Kultivar Ailsa Craig, sowie an den nahe isogenen Linien der *Never-ripe* (*Nr*), *ripening-inhibitor* (*rin*) und *non-ripening* (*nor*) Mutationen durchgeführt. Alle verwendeten Tomatenlinien wurden von Prof. Dr. James J. Giovannoni (Boyce Thompson Institute, Ithaca, NY, USA) zur Verfügung gestellt. Tomatenpflanzen wurden auf Torf-basierter Erde für 12 h im Licht bei 26°C, gefolgt von 12 h im Dunkeln bei 20°C in den Gewächshäusern der Cornell University (NY, USA) angezogen. Alle Früchte wurden 7 Tage nach Bestäubung (DAP = *days after pollination*) entsprechend Alba et al. (2005) markiert und zu einem der folgenden Zeitpunkte geerntet: 17 DAP, 27 DAP, 38 DAP (*Mature Green*), 41 DAP (*Breaker - 1*), 42 DAP (*Breaker*), 43 DAP (*Breaker + 1*), 47 DAP (*Breaker + 5*), 52 DAP (*Breaker + 10*) und 57 DAP (*Breaker + 15*). Als *Breaker* wird das Fruchtreifestadium bezeichnet, in dem erste Anzeichen von Carotinoid-Akkumulation in Wildtypfrüchten als eine Farbänderung von grün nach orange beobachtet werden können. Das äußere Perikarp von zehn bis fünfzehn Früchten wurde in speziellen Fruchtreifestadien gesammelt, in flüssigem Stickstoff eingefroren und bis zur weiteren Verwendung bei -80°C gelagert. Die Ernte der Früchte erfolgte durch Dr. Rob Alba aus der Arbeitsgruppe von Prof. Dr. James J. Giovannoni (Boyce Thompson Institute, Ithaca, NY, USA).

Identifizierung von Methioninzyklusgenen aus Tomate über Sequenzierung von ESTs

Über *in silico* Analysen in den Tomaten-EST (*expressed sequence tag*)-Banken der SGN-Datenbank (<http://sgn.cornell.edu>) wurden putative Homologe von Methioninzyklusgenen über Vergleich der Sequenz mit Arabidopsisgenen identifiziert. In der SGN-Datenbank werden ESTs mit Sequenzfragmenten des gleichen Gens in *Contigs* assembliert. Jedes dieser *Contigs* wird als ein vorläufiges *Unigene* annotiert. Die bislang annotierten *Unigenes* enthalten häufig noch nicht den gesamten offenen Leserahmen der annotierten Gene. Um sicherzustellen, dass die cDNAs der putativen Methioninzyklusgene einen kompletten offenen Leserahmen enthalten, wurden entsprechende ESTs aus den cDNA-Datenbanken des Boyce Thompson Institute (Ithaca, NY, USA) entnommen und vollständig sequenziert. Als putative Acireducton-Dioxygenasen (*SIARD*) wurden TUS-32-E20 und cLET-11-E7 für das *Unigene* SGN-U313367, TUS-40-J21 für das *Unigene* SGN-U317544, sowie cLEL-27-P9 für das *Unigene* SGN-U334397 sequenziert und analysiert. Um Methylthioribose-Kinasen (*SIMTK*) zu identifizieren, wurden cTOB-21-J14 und cTOB-21-F17 für das *Unigene* SGN-U315232, cLEF-50-A3 für das *Unigene* SGN-U345605, sowie cLEL-10-H8 für das

Unigene SGN-U335047 sequenziert. Der offene Leserahmen des einzigen MTA-Nukleosidase-Kandidaten (*S/MTN*) wurde über Sequenzierung von TUS-30-O7 für das *Unigene* SGN-U319711 verifiziert. Die Anzucht der Klone erfolgte auf LB-Agar-Platten (*Lysogeny Broth* nach Bertani, 1951; LB-Flüssigmedium, USB Corporations, Cleveland, OH, USA, mit 1,5% (w/v) Agar) oder in LB-Flüssigmedium, das zur Selektion von Klonen der cLEL Datenbank mit 50 µg/ml Kanamycin (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA), für alle anderen Klone mit 50 µg/ml Carbenicillin (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) versetzt wurde. Plasmid-DNA wurde unter Verwendung des *Qiaprep Spin Miniprep Kits* (Qiagen, Valencia, CA, USA) nach Herstellerangaben isoliert und anschließend sequenziert. Dazu wurden 150-200 ng Plasmid-DNA in einem Gesamtvolumen von 20 µl mit 1 x Sequenzierungspuffer (80 mM Tris, 2 mM MgCl₂, pH 8,3), 2 µl Big Dye® (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, USA) und 1 mM Oligonukleotid angesetzt und die Sequenzierungs-PCR mit 25 Zyklen von 96°C für 10 s, 50°C für 5-10 s, 60°C for 4 min durchgeführt. Anschließend wurde der PCR-Ansatz mit 5 µl 125 mM EDTA, pH 8,0 und 60 µl 100% Ethanol bei Raumtemperatur für 40 min im Dunkeln gefällt. Nach zwanzigminütiger Zentrifugation bei 13000 rpm wurde der Überstand verworfen und das Pellet mit 100 µl 70% (v/v) Ethanol gewaschen. Nach Zentrifugation bei 13000 rpm für 3-4 min wurde der Überstand erneut verworfen, das Pellet getrocknet und in der Sequenzierabteilung des Boyce Thompson Institute (Ithaca, NY, USA) sequenziert. Alle ESTs wurden von beiden Seiten des Plasmids aus unter Verwendung des M13-Vorwärtsoligonukleotids (TGTAAAACGACGCCAGT) und des M13-Rückwärtsoligonukleotids (CAGGAAACAGCTATGACC) vollständig sequenziert.

DNA Extraktion und *Southern blot* Analysen

Genomische DNA wurde aus jungen, teilungsaktiven Blättern nach Barry et al. (2005) extrahiert. Zirka sechs junge Blätter wurden in ein Reaktionsgefäß mit 290 µl Extraktionspuffer (0,35 M Sorbitol, 0,1 M Tris, 5 mM EDTA, mit HCl auf pH 7,5 eingestellt, 0,02 M Natriumbisulfit) und zwei Glaskugeln gegeben und für 2-3 min in einer *Savant FP120 Fast prep machine* homogenisiert. Anschließend wurden 290 µl Kernlysispuffer (0,2 M Tris pH 7,5, 0,05 M EDTA pH 8,0, 2 M NaCl, 2% (w/v) Cetyltrimethylammoniumbromid) und 140 µl 5% (w/v) N-Laurylsarkosin dazupipettiert und die Lösungen kurz durch Vortexen gemischt. Nach vierzigminütiger Inkubation bei 65°C wurden 700 µl Chloroform:Octanol (24:1) hinzugegeben, die Reaktionsgefäße dreißigmal geschwenkt und für 15 min bei 8000 rpm zentrifugiert. Der Überstand wurde vorsichtig in ein neues Reaktionsgefäß überführt und die DNA durch Zugabe von 750 µl kaltem Isopropanol gefällt. Die DNA wurde durch zehnminütige Zentrifugation bei 13000 rpm pelletiert und das Pellet mit 60% (v/v) Ethanol gewaschen. Die DNA wurde in 100 µl TE-Puffer (10 mM Tris pH 8,0, 1 mM EDTA)

resuspendiert und zum Lösen für 5 min bei 65°C und anschließend über Nacht bei 4°C inkubiert. 5 µg DNA wurden in einem Gesamtvolumen von 40 µl über Nacht mit den Restriktionsenzymen *BamHI*, *EcoRI*, *EcoRV*, *HindIII* und *XbaI* (New England Biolabs, Beverly, MA, USA) nach Herstellerangaben verdaut. Anschließend wurde RNA für 45 min bei 37°C mit 1 µl RNase A (10 mg/ml) verdaut und die DNA über Nacht in einem 0,9% (w/v) Agarosegel aufgetrennt. Vor dem Transfer wurde das Gel für 30 s UV-Licht exponiert und anschließend für 30 min in Denaturierungspuffer (1,5 M NaCl, 0,4 N NaOH) inkubiert, um so die Transfereffizienz zu verbessern. Der Transfer der DNA auf eine Hybond N+ Membran (GE Healthcare, Milwaukee, WI, USA) erfolgte über Nacht unter Verwendung von Denaturierungspuffer. Nach dem Transfer wurde die Membran für 2 h bei 80°C erhitzt, um die DNA auf der Membran zu fixieren, und anschließend für 45 min bei 65°C in 0,1 x SSC, 0,5% (w/v) SDS gewaschen. Die *MTK* Sonde wurde von der *SIMTK* cDNA aus *Solanum lycopersicum* L. aus dem Plasmid cTOB21-F17 unter Verwendung der Oligonukleotide SIMTK-F3 (GCATGGTCGTCTCTCTCC) und SIMTK-R3 (CACTTGTAGGGTCCGAGA) amplifiziert. Die Länge der Sonde betrug 302 bp. Ausgehend vom Startkodon wurde der Bereich von nt 267 bis nt 569 amplifiziert. Die Hybridisierung der Membran erfolgte modifiziert nach Church und Gilbert (1984). Die Membran wurde mit der DNA beladenen Seite nach innen für 2,5 h bei 65°C in 5 x SSC, 0,5% (w/v) SDS, 50 mM Kaliumphosphatpuffer, pH 6,5 und 5 x Denhardts Lösung (0,1% (w/v) BSA, 0,1% (w/v) Ficoll 400, 0,1% (w/v) Polyvinylpyrrolidon) und 0,1 mg/ml denaturierter Fischsperma-DNA prähybridisiert. Zur Sondenherstellung wurden zirka 25 ng DNA unter Verwendung von Neunmer-Zufallsoligonukleotiden, Klenow-Fragment, dNTPs und Puffer, wie in Feinberg und Vogelstein (1983) beschrieben, mit α -³²P-dCTP markiert. Die Hybridisierung mit der radioaktiv markierten Sonde erfolgte bei 65°C für 16 h. Anschließend wurde die Membran bei 65°C 10 min in 2 x SSC, 0,1% (w/v) SDS, dann in 1 x SSC, 0,1% (w/v) SDS gewaschen. Das Signal wurde über Autoradiographie auf einem Kodak X-OMAT-AR Film durch Exposition bei -80°C visualisiert. Die Expositionszeit betrug drei Tage.

RNA Extraktion und Genexpressionsanalysen über quantitative Real-Time-PCR

Gesamt-RNA wurde aus 200 bis 250 mg gemörsertem Pflanzenmaterial mit dem *Plant RNeasy Kit* (Qiagen, Valencia, CA, USA) nach Herstellerprotokoll isoliert. Nach DNA Verdau mit 1 U/µl DNase wurde die RNA mit Hilfe des *RNeasy Plant Mini Kits* (Qiagen, Valencia, CA, USA) aufgereinigt und anschließend wurde photometrisch die Konzentration bestimmt. Um eine ausreichende Reinheit der RNA für die Verwendung in einer quantitativen *Real-Time-PCR* zu gewährleisten, sollte der Absorptionsquotient von 260 nm zu 280 nm bei 2,0, der Absorptionsquotient von 260 nm zu 230 nm mindestens bei 1,8 liegen. Die cDNA Synthese erfolgte aus 1,5 bis 2 µg Gesamt-RNA unter Verwendung von Sechsmer-Zufalls-

oligonukleotiden mit *SuperScript III Reverser Transkriptase* (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA) nach Herstellerangaben. Quantitative PCR (qPCR) Reaktionen wurden in 384-well Platten mit einem Applied Biosystems 7900HT *Real-Time PCR* Gerät unter Verwendung eines SYBR Green Mastermixes in einem Reaktionsvolumen von 20 µl ausgeführt. Jeder qPCR Ansatz enthielt 1 µl cDNA, 2 x SYBR Green Mastermix (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, USA) und 1 µl eines Oligonukleotidpaars. Die Oligonukleotidpaare SIARD1-F1 (AGACGTTGTCAACGCAGATGGC) und SIARD1-R1 (GCACACATCAAGAACAGCAAAGCC) sowie SIARD2-F1 (CTTGCAAAACCTGAGAGTGAGGCA) und SIARD2-R1 (GACTCTTGATATCCAATACAGGAGC), wurden in einer Konzentration von jeweils 0,15 µM verwendet. Die Oligonukleotidpaare SIMTK-F1 (ACACAACGGATCACAAACGTGCAG) und SIMTK-R1 (TGCCTCTGCATCGGCATCAAGATA), SINOR-F1 (AGAGAACGATGCATGGAGGTTTG) und SINOR-R1 (ACTGGCTCAGGAAATTGGCAATGG), sowie SI18S-F1 (CGGAGGGAGCCTGAGAA) und SI18S-R1 (CCCGTGTAGGATTGGTAATT) wurden in einer Konzentration von jeweils 0,2 µM verwendet. Das Oligonukleotidpaar SIMTN-F1 (ACGGCGATAAGTCAGCAGAAGTCA) und SIMTN-R1 (ACACGGAATTGAGGTCCTCGGTAA) wurde in einer Konzentration von jeweils 0,1 µM verwendet. Alle verwendeten Oligonukleotide stammten von Invitrogen (Carlsbad, CA, USA). Folgendes PCR-Programm wurde verwendet: 10 min bei 95°C, gefolgt von 40 Zyklen mit 15 s bei 95°C, 1 min bei 62°C und 30 s bei 72°C. Die Effizienz der PCR-Reaktionen wurde für jedes Oligonukleotidpaar über eine Verdünnungsreihe von cDNA des *Breaker + 1* Stadiums aus Wildtypfrüchten ermittelt und optimiert. Alle qPCR Reaktionen wurden mit einer biologischen Wiederholung durchgeführt. Pro qPCR Ansatz wurden Dreifachmessungen durchgeführt. Die Quantifizierung erfolgte über Standardkurven und Normalisierung der Zielgenkopien über einen endogenen Standard. Dazu wurde zunächst für alle PCR-Reaktionen der Fluoreszenz-Schwellenwert, der so genannte Ct-Wert, ermittelt. Der Ct-Wert ist der PCR-Zyklus, zu dem sich die Amplifikation in der exponentiellen Phase befindet und bei dem die Reporterfluoreszenz die Hintergrundfluoreszenz signifikant übersteigt. Der Ct-Wert jeder einzelnen PCR Reaktion wurde zunächst über die ermittelte Standardkurve des verwendeten Oligonukleotidpaars korrigiert und anschließend normiert, indem die Anzahl der cDNA-Kopien des Zielgens durch die Anzahl der cDNA-Kopien des Haushaltsgens dividiert wird. Die Spezifität der qPCR Reaktionen wurde über eine Analyse der Schmelzkurven der amplifizierten Produkte unter Verwendung der im System installierten Standardmethode bestimmt. Jede qPCR Reaktion enthielt eine Negativkontrolle mit Wasser anstelle von cDNA. Um eine mögliche Kontamination der RNA Proben mit genomischer DNA auszuschließen, wurde RNA zusätzlich zu der cDNA als *Template* für die qPCR eingesetzt.

Akzessionsnummern

Die Sequenzdaten der in dieser Arbeit untersuchten Gene können in der SGN Datenbank (<http://www.sgn.cornell.edu/>) unter folgenden Akzessionsnummern gefunden werden: Als *Acireducton-Dioxygenase 1 (SIARD1)* sind die unter den *Unigenes* SGN-U313367, SGN-U334304, SGN-U334305, SGN-U334306 und SGN-U334307 annotierten EST zusammengefasst, als *SIARD2* das *Unigene* SGN-U317544. Die *Methylthioribose-Kinase* aus Tomate (*SIMTK*) ist unter den *Unigenes* SGN-U315232, sowie SGN-U335047 annotiert. Die *MTA-Nukleosidase (SIMTN)* ist als *Unigene* SGN-U319711 annotiert. Die unter SGN-U345605 annotierte Sequenz könnte eventuell für eine weitere Methylthioribose-Kinase aus Tomate kodieren, *SIMTK2*. Der zu diesem *Unigene* gehörende EST Klon ist allerdings falsch in der Datenbank annotiert.

Die Proteinsequenzen der Enzyme des Methioninzyklus aus Reis sind in der *Genbank*-Datenbank (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>) unter den folgenden Akzessionsnummern zugänglich: OsARD1 (AF050200), OsARD2 (AF068332), OsMTN (AF458088), OsMTK1 (AY593959), OsMTK2 (CAE02820). Die Methioninzyklusenzyme aus Arabidopsis sind in der TAIR Datenbank (<http://www.arabidopsis.info/>) unter folgenden Genloci hinterlegt: *AtARD1* (At4g14716), *AtARD2* (At4g14710), *AtARD3* (At2g26400), *AtARD4* (At5g43850), *AtMTK* (At1g49820), *AtMTN1* (At4g38800), *AtMTN2* (At4g34840).

ERGEBNISSE

Identifizierung von Genen des Methioninzyklus in Tomate

Über *in silico* Analysen mit Sequenzen bekannter Methioninzyklusgene aus Reis und Arabidopsis wurde nach Homologen in Tomate gesucht. Im Gegensatz zu Reis und Arabidopsis ist das Tomatengenom noch nicht vollständig sequenziert. Die bisher im Rahmen des *International Tomato Sequencing Project* (Mueller et al., 2005) gesammelten Daten sind im *SOL genomics network* (<http://sgn.cornell.edu/>) allgemein zugänglich gemacht. In dieser Datenbank sind auch die vorhandenen EST-Klone annotiert. In den bisher sequenzierten Bereichen der genomischen DNA aus Tomate waren keine Homologen zu bekannten Methioninzyklusgenen zu finden. Eine BLAST-Suche in der EST-Datenbank lieferte einige Kandidatengene. Die in der EST-Datenbank zugänglichen Sequenzen sind aber in der Regel nur kurze Sequenzfragmente. Um sicherzustellen, dass die cDNAs tatsächlich Gene des Methioninzyklus repräsentieren, mussten die entsprechenden cDNAs zunächst vollständig sequenziert werden.

Identifizierung einer MTA-Nukleosidase aus Tomate

Über BLAST Suche wurde eine putative MTN-Sequenz aus Tomate identifiziert, die durch mehrere ESTs aus unabhängigen cDNA-Datenbanken belegt war. Über Sequenzierung wurde der offene Leserahmen erhalten und die Proteinsequenz abgeleitet (Abbildung 1).

| | | | |
|---------------|-----|---|-----|
| AtMTN1 | 1 | M A P H G D G L S D I E E P E V D A Q S E I L R -- P I S S V F V I A M Q A E A L P L V N K F G L S E T T D S P L G K | 58 |
| AtMTN2 | 1 | M E G ----- V M G Q V E K R -- P I S T I V E T V A M Q K E A Q P L I N R L R L V E E V N T P F P K | 45 |
| OsMTN | 1 | M A P P S D S ----- D D S A P I P A G -- A I S K L L I V I A M Q T E A L P L V N E F H L V E A E E S I F P K | 50 |
| S1MTN | 1 | M A P P H G D K S A E V K E E A A A V S S V D N R P I S T I D F I V A M Q T E A L P L V K K F Q L T E D L N S V F P K | 60 |
| AtMTN1 | 59 | G L P W V L Y H G V H K D L R I N V V C P G R D A A L C H D S V G T V P A S L I T F A S I Q A L K P D I I I N A G T C G | 118 |
| AtMTN2 | 46 | E V T W I M F K G M Y K D L N I N I V C P G K D S T L G V E S V G T V P A S L V T Y A S I L A I Q P D L I I N A G T A G | 105 |
| OsMTN | 51 | G A P W I R Y H G N Y K G L H V D L V W P G K D P V L G V D C V G T V S A A L V T Y A S I Q S L K P D L I I N A G T A G | 110 |
| S1MTN | 61 | G V P W V R F Y G N Y K G L T V N I V C P G K D P A L G V D G V G T V S A S L V T Y A S V Q A L K P D L I I N A G T A G | 120 |
| AtMTN1 | 119 | G F K V K G A N I G D V F L V S D V V F H D R R I P I P M F D I Y G V G L R Q A F S T P N L L K E L N L K I G R L S T G | 178 |
| AtMTN2 | 106 | G F K A K G A C I S D V Y V V S T V A F H D R R I P V P V D I Y G V G M R N T F P T P N L I K E L N L K V G R L S T G | 165 |
| OsMTN | 111 | G F K A K G A D I G D V Y L A S D V A F H D R R I P I P V F D M Y C I G T R K T F A T P N I L K E L N L K V G K L S T G | 170 |
| S1MTN | 121 | G F G A K G A S I G D V F I S S E V A F H D R R I P I P V F D I Y G V G S R K A F A T P N L L K E L N L K V G K L S T G | 180 |
| AtMTN1 | 179 | D S L D M S T Q D E T L I I I A N D A T L K D M E G A A V A Y V A D D L K I P V V F L K A V T D L V D G D K P T A E E F L | 238 |
| AtMTN2 | 166 | D S M D M S P H D E E S I T A N D A T V K D M E G A A V A Y V A D D F K V P T I L I K G V T D I V D G N R P T S E E F L | 225 |
| OsMTN | 171 | D S L D M S P H D E S A I I I A N D A T V K D M E G A A V A Y V A D M F S T P A I F V K A V T D I V D G E K P T A E E F L | 230 |
| S1MTN | 181 | D S L D M S P M D E A S I I I A N D A T I K D M E G A A V A Y V A D L L K V P A I F V K A V T D I V D G D K P T P E E F L | 240 |
| AtMTN1 | 239 | Q N L I T V V T A A L E G T A I K V I N F I N G R N L S D L | 267 |
| AtMTN2 | 226 | E N L A A V T A K L D E S L I K V I D F I S G K C L S D L | 254 |
| OsMTN | 231 | Q N L V A V T A A L D K A V T E V V D F I S G K C I S D L | 259 |
| S1MTN | 241 | E N L V A V T A A L D Q T A O V V D Y I S G K C L V E L | 269 |

Abbildung 1: Sequenzvergleiche von MTA-Nukleosidase-Proteinen aus Arabidopsis (AtMTN1, AtMTN2), Reis (OsMTN) und Tomate (S1MTN). Identische Aminosäuren sind schwarz unterlegt, Aminosäuren mit ähnlichen chemischen Eigenschaften sind grau unterlegt.

Das Protein wurde als SIMTN bezeichnet. Pflanzliche MTNs sind in ihrer Sequenz hoch konserviert (Kapitel 2; Rzewuski et al., 2007). So ist SIMTN aus Tomate auf Proteinebene zu 66,5% identisch und zu 84% ähnlich zu AtMTN1 aus Arabidopsis (Abbildung 1).

MTR-Kinasen in Tomate

Über Sequenzvergleich mit MTKs aus Reis und Arabidopsis wurden insgesamt drei putative MTR-Kinase-Kandidaten in Tomate gefunden. Nur eine dieser Sequenzen, SGN-U315232, war durch mehrere EST aus unabhängigen cDNA Datenbanken belegt. Von diesem MTK-Kandidaten, im folgenden *SIMTK* genannt, wurde über Sequenzierung von ESTs der offene Leserahmen erhalten. Die Proteインsequenz von SIMTK ist zu 76% identisch und zu 87% ähnlich zu AtMTK aus Arabidopsis (Abbildung 2). Die anderen beiden Sequenzen, SGN-U345605, sowie SGN-U335047, waren jeweils nur durch einen einzelnen EST belegt.

| | | | | |
|---------------|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|
| AtMTK | 1 | MSFEE-----FTIPLNEKSLVDYIKSTPAI | SSKIGADKSDDDLVIKEVGDGNLFV | 50 |
| OsMTK1 | 1 | MAAAAEQQQQQQQQQGFRP | LDEASLVAYIKATPAIAARLG--GSL | 58 |
| OsMTK2 | 1 | MAAAAEQQQ--QGFR | PRLDEASLVAYIKATPAIAARLG--GR | 55 |
| SIMTK | 1 | MASDG-----FRP | LDEKSLVYEIKSTPSELSILG--KQFD | 48 |
| AtMTK | 51 | FIVVGSSGSIVIK-QALPYIRCTGE | SWPMTRERAYFEATTL | 109 |
| OsMTK1 | 59 | YIVLSDAGSVVIKQ | QALPYIRCVGDSWPMTRERAYFEASALQKH | 118 |
| OsMTK2 | 56 | YIVLSDAGSVVIK-QALPYIR | LVGDSWPMRSRERAYFEASALQKH | 114 |
| SIMTK | 49 | YIVVAPSGSIVIK-QALPYIRCTGE | SWPMAKERAYFEATAKEHGR | 107 |
| AtMTK | 110 | TMALIGMRYLEPPHIILRKGLI | AGTEYPFLADHMSDYM | 169 |
| OsMTK1 | 119 | AMSLIGMRYIEPPHIILRKGLI | AQVEYPPLABHMADYMA | 178 |
| OsMTK2 | 115 | AMSLIGMRYIEPPHIILRKGLV | AGVEYPPLABHMADYMA | 174 |
| SIMTK | 108 | TMCLIGMRYLEPPHIILRKGLV | AGVEYPPLAQHISDYM | 167 |
| AtMTK | 170 | EFCGNVELCRLTEQVVFS | DPYRVSTENRWTSPYL | 229 |
| OsMTK1 | 179 | QYCDNVEMCRLTEQVVFS | DPYMLAKYNRCTSP | 238 |
| OsMTK2 | 175 | QYCDNVEMSR | LTEQVVFSDPYRAKYNRCTSP | 234 |
| SIMTK | 168 | EFCGNVELCRLTEQVVFS | DPYKVSEYNRCTSP | 227 |
| AtMTK | 230 | RAQALIHGDLHTGSV | MVTQDSTQVIDPEFSFYGPMG | 289 |
| OsMTK1 | 239 | RAQALLHGDLHTGSIM | VTPDSTQVIDPEFAFYGPMG | 298 |
| OsMTK2 | 235 | RAQAFIHGDLHTS | SIQMTVPDSTQVIDPEFAFYGPMG | 294 |
| SIMTK | 228 | RAQALIHGDLHTGS | LMVQDSTQVIDPEFSFYGPMG | 287 |
| AtMTK | 290 | NDRKEYKQWILRTIEQT | WNLFNKRFIALWDQN | 349 |
| OsMTK1 | 299 | NDRKVYKKWILKTIED | WLNFKFVELWNKHKDG | 358 |
| OsMTK2 | 295 | NDRKAYKKWILKTIED | DSWNFFHKKFVELWNKHKDG | 354 |
| SIMTK | 288 | NDRKSYKVWILKTITE | ETWNLFHOKFLALWD | 347 |
| AtMTK | 350 | NLLHDSLGFGAAKMIRRIV | GVAHVDFESIEEDK | 409 |
| OsMTK1 | 359 | SLFHDSLGFSAKMIRRIV | GTAHVDFESIEDASKR | 418 |
| OsMTK2 | 355 | SLFHDSLGFSAKMIRRIV | GTAHVDFESIEDASKR | 414 |
| SIMTK | 348 | ELFEDTLGFGAAKMIRRIV | GVAHVDFESIKDVAKR | 407 |
| AtMTK | 410 | GEVVSIAIQQQS-- | 420 | |
| OsMTK1 | 419 | GQVIVHVQSFDRD | 431 | |
| OsMTK2 | 415 | EQVIVHVQSFDRD | 427 | |
| SIMTK | 408 | EEVISTIEQVQLQ | 420 | |

Abbildung 2: Sequenzvergleiche von MTR-Kinase-Proteinen aus Arabidopsis (AtMTK), Reis (OsMTK1, OsMTK2) und Tomate (SIMTK). Identische Aminosäuren sind schwarz unterlegt, Aminosäuren mit ähnlichen chemischen Eigenschaften sind grau unterlegt.

Sequenzierung des einzigen für SGN-U335047 hinterlegten EST-Klons ergab, dass die Sequenz identisch zu *SIMTK* ist. Die Sequenz des unter SGN-U345605 annotierten EST-Klons stimmte nicht mit der in der Datenbank hinterlegten Sequenz überein. Der EST-Klon war falsch in der Datenbank annotiert. Um die Genkopienzahl von MTR-Kinasen im Tomatengenom zu bestimmen, wurden deshalb *Southern blot* Analysen durchgeführt (Abbildung 3).

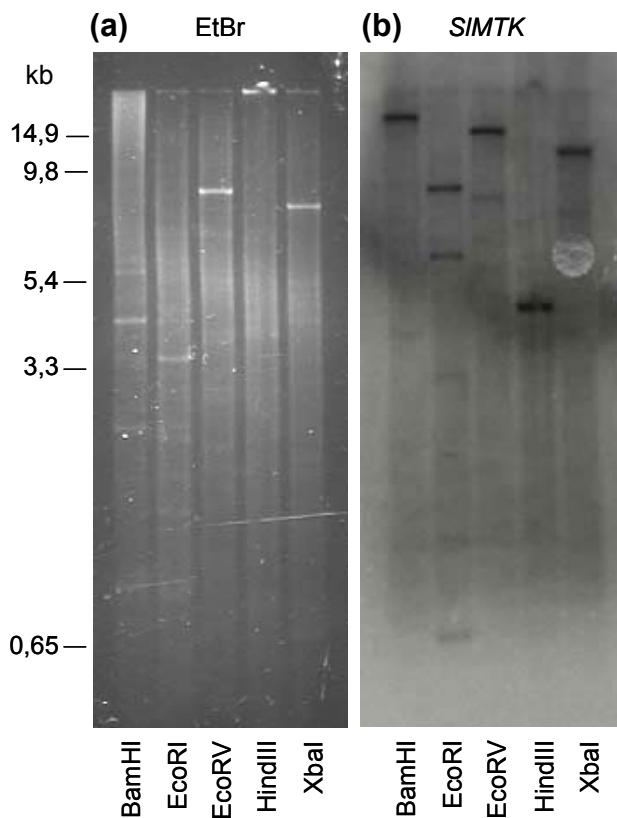


Abbildung 3: Bestimmung der MTK-Genkopienzahl im Tomatengenom über *Southern blot* Analyse

Genomische DNA wurde aus jungen, teilungsaktiven Blättern von Tomate isoliert, vollständig mit *BamHI*, *EcoRI*, *EcoRV*, *HindIII* oder *XbaI* hydrolysiert und anschließend über ein Agarosegel aufgetrennt. (a) Ethidiumbromid (EtBr) gefärbtes Agarosegel. (b) Nach dem Transfer auf eine Nylonmembran wurde der Blot mit einer α -³²P-dCTP-markierten *SIMTK* Sonde hybridisiert und das Signal über Autoradiographie visualisiert. *HindIII* hat eine Restriktionsschnittstelle in der *SIMTK* kodierenden Region bei nt 1187, die aber außerhalb des von der Sonde detektierten Bereichs liegt. Alle anderen verwendeten Endonukleasen haben keine Restriktionsschnittstellen in der kodierenden Sequenz von *SIMTK*.

Die verwendete *SIMTK*-Sonde hybridisierte mit hoch abundanten DNA-Fragmenten, die bereits im Ethidiumbromid gefärbten Gel vor dem DNA Transfer sichtbar waren. Dies deutete darauf hin, dass nichtspezifische Signale beobachtet wurden und die Stringenz der Hybridisierung nicht hoch genug war. Dennoch sind Banden stärkerer Intensität auf dem Blot

detektierbar, die vermutlich auf einer spezifischen Bindung der *SIMTK* Sonde beruhen. Bei der verwendeten Stringenz hybridisierte die *SIMTK* Sonde nach Restriktion mit *BamHI*, *EcoRV*, *HindIII* oder *XbaI* mit einer, oder, nach Restriktion mit *EcoRI*, mit zwei genomischen Fragmenten. Nach Restriktion mit *EcoRI* war die Signalstärke der Bande im niedermolekulareren Bereich etwas schwächer als die im höhermolekularen Bereich. Es kann nicht vollständig ausgeschlossen werden, dass es sich bei der Bande schwächerer Intensität um ein Hintergrundsignal handelt. Aufgrund des Hybridisierungsmusters kann davon ausgegangen werden, dass es vermutlich nur eine Genkopie, maximal jedoch zwei *MTK*-Genkopien in Tomate gibt.

Acireducton-Dioxygenasen in Tomate

Über Sequenzvergleiche wurden sechs putative ARD-Gene aus Tomate identifiziert. Zwei dieser Gene, SGN-U313367 (*SiARD1*) und SGN-U317544 (*SiARD2*) waren über zahlreiche ESTs aus mehreren unabhängigen cDNA Datenbanken belegt.

| | | | |
|---------------|-----|--|-----|
| AtARD1 | 1 | MGEAVKDGREEVIQAWYMDDSEEDQRLPHHKDPKEFVSLDKLAEGLVLSWRLDADNYETD | 60 |
| AtARD2 | 1 | MGEVVKGDRREEVIQAWYMDDSEEDQRLPHHKDPKEFISLDKLAEGLVLSWRLDADNYETD | 60 |
| AtARD3 | 1 | MGEAAKDKQTEEVIQAWYLDNKEEDQKLPHHKDPKEFVSLDKLAEGLVLCWRLADADNYETD | 60 |
| AtARD4 | 1 | MALE-----AWFMDDSNEDQRLPHHRNPKELVSLLDYLAEGLVLYWKLNPNENYEND | 50 |
| OsARD1 | 1 | MENEFQDGKTEVIEAWYMDDSEEDQRLPHHREPKEFIPVVDKLTELGVISWRLNPDNWENC | 60 |
| OsARD2 | 1 | MENQFQDGKKEEVIEAWYMDDSEEDQRLPHHREPKEFIPLSKLSELGILSWRLNADDWEND | 60 |
| SIARD1 | 1 | MGSIAKDPREDVIQAWYMDDNDEDQRLPHHRBPKEFVSLDKLAEGLVLSWRLDADNYETD | 60 |
| SIARD2 | 1 | MAIECK-----AWFMDENSEDQRLPHQKNEPEFVSVLKAVIGVLYWKLNPNNDYEND | 52 |
| AtARD1 | 61 | EDLKKIRESRGYSYMDFCCEVCPEKLPNYEVKVKSFEEHLHTDEEIRYCVAGTGYFDVRD | 120 |
| AtARD2 | 61 | EDLKKIRESRGYSYMDFCCEVCPEKLPNYEVKVKSFEEHLHTDEEIRYCVAGSGYFDVRD | 120 |
| AtARD3 | 61 | EELKKIRESRGYSYMDLCCEVCPEKLPNYEEKVKMFFEEHLHIDEEIRYCLAGSGYFDVRD | 120 |
| AtARD4 | 51 | SELSKIREDRGYDYMDDLLDCPKEVSNYEAKLKNFFEEHLHTDEEIRYCLAGSGYFDVRD | 110 |
| OsARD1 | 61 | ENLKKIREARGYSYVDICDVCPEKLPNYETKUKSFFEEHLHTDEEIRYCLEGSGYFDVRD | 120 |
| OsARD2 | 61 | ENLKKIREARGYSYMDICDVCPEKLPNYEAKLKNFFEEHLHTDEEIRYCLEGSGYFDVRD | 120 |
| SIARD1 | 61 | EELKKIREDRGYSYLDIFCEVCPEKLPNYEAKLKNFFEEHLHTDEEIRYAVAGSGYFDVRD | 120 |
| SIARD2 | 53 | EELKKIRQSRGYSYMDLLDCPKEVVDNYEQKLKNFYTETHIADEEIVTVWKGXGYFDVRD | 112 |
| AtARD1 | 121 | RNEAWIRVLVKGGGMIVLPAGIYHRFTVDSNDYIK-AMRLFVGEPVWTPYNRPHDHLPAR | 179 |
| AtARD2 | 121 | RNEAWIRVWVKGGGMIVLPAGIYHRFTVDSNDYIKQAMRLFVGEPVWTPYNRPHDHLPAR | 180 |
| AtARD3 | 121 | LNDIWIRVWVKGGGLIVFPGAGIYHRFTVDSNDYMK-AMRLFVGGPVWTAYNRPHDHLPAR | 179 |
| AtARD4 | 111 | KDDRWIRIWMPQGDLIVLPAGIYHRFTLTDASNYIK-LMRLFVGEPVWTPYNRPHDHLPAR | 169 |
| OsARD1 | 121 | QNDQWIRIWKGGGMIVLPAGIYHRFTLTDNDYIK-AMRLFVGDPVWTPYNRPHDHLPAR | 179 |
| OsARD2 | 121 | QNDQWIRVAVKGGGMIVLPAGIYHRFTLDSNDYIK-AMRLFVGEPVWTPYNRPHDHLPAR | 179 |
| SIARD1 | 121 | VNESWIRVWVKGGGMIVLPAGIYHRFTLDSNYIK-AMRLFVGDPWTPYNRPHDHLPAR | 179 |
| SIARD2 | 113 | KDDRWIRIWMPQGDMIVLPAGIYHRFTLDDNDYIK-LMRLFVGEPVWTPYNRQPEDHPAR | 171 |
| AtARD1 | 180 | KEYVDNFMD-----INASA 192 | |
| AtARD2 | 181 | KEYIDNFVKVNEG-GVIDASA 200 | |
| AtARD3 | 180 | KAYMKKFLKVIGD-RNIDASA 199 | |
| AtARD4 | 170 | KKYIHGLTYKFG--ETVKAH- 187 | |
| OsARD1 | 180 | KEFLAKLLKSEGENQAVEGF- 199 | |
| OsARD2 | 180 | KEYVEKII-NGGTQAVEAR- 198 | |
| SIARD1 | 180 | QEYVETFVNADGAGRAVNAAA 200 | |
| SIARD2 | 172 | KEYIKSVTERVGG--VPATAH- 189 | |

Abbildung 4: Sequenzvergleiche von Acireducton-Dioxygenase-Proteinen aus Arabidopsis (AtARD1, AtARD2, AtARD3, AtARD4), Reis (OsARD1, OsARD2) und Tomate (SIARD1, SIARD2). Identische Aminosäuren sind schwarz unterlegt, Aminosäuren mit ähnlichen chemischen Eigenschaften sind grau unterlegt.

Die vier übrigen Gene waren nur durch jeweils einen einzelnen EST belegt. Sequenzvergleiche zeigten, dass diese vier *Singlets* identisch zu der unter SGN-U313367 annotierten Sequenz waren. Somit konnten zwei ARD-Homologe aus Tomate identifiziert werden. SIARD1 aus Tomate ist zu 79% identisch und zu 88% ähnlich zu AtARD1 aus Arabidopsis. SIARD2 aus Tomate ist zu 58% identisch und zu 74% ähnlich zu AtARD1 (Abbildung 4).

Die Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus ist in Tomate nicht durch Ethylen reguliert

Über in *silico* Analysen und nachfolgende Identifizierung der offenen Leserahmen über Sequenzierung von ESTs konnten Homologe zu Methioninzyklusgenen in Tomate identifiziert werden. Um zu klären, ob eine ethylenabhängige Regulation des Methioninzyklus, wie sie in Reis, aber nicht in Arabidopsis zu finden ist, in Pflanzen mit Perioden langanhaltender Ethylenproduktion vorkommt, wurde die Expression von Methioninzyklusgenen in Tomate in Geweben analysiert, die hohe Ethylensyntheseraten aufweisen. Die Genexpression wurde in verschiedenen Fruchtreifestadien und in unterschiedlichen Genotypen verglichen. Der Anstieg in der Ethylensynthese beginnt in Früchten des Kultivars Ailsa Craig (WT) einen Tag vor Einsetzen des *Breaker* Stadiums und setzt sich bis fünf Tage nach Einsetzen des *Breaker* Stadiums (*Breaker* + 5) fort. Anschließend nimmt die Ethylensynthese im Verlauf der weiteren Fruchtreife (*Breaker* + 10, *Breaker* + 15) wieder auf etwa 25% der maximalen Ethylensynthesewerte ab. In Früchten früherer Reifestadien (17 DAP, 27 DAP und *Mature Green*) werden nur basale Ethylenmengen synthetisiert. Die *Nr* Mutante produziert vergleichbare Mengen an Ethylen wie der Wildtyp. In *rin* Früchten ist ein minimaler Anstieg in der Ethylensynthese 41 Tage nach Bestäubung (*Breaker* - 1) zu messen. In *nor* Früchten bleibt ein Anstieg der Ethylensynthese vollständig aus.

Die Bestimmung der relativen Transkriptmengen über qPCR zeigte nur geringe bis keine Regulation der Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus im Verlauf der Fruchtreife oder in Abhängigkeit der produzierten Menge an Ethylen (Abbildung 5a-d). Weder in der ethyleninsensitiven *Nr* Mutante, noch in den Fruchtreifemutanten *rin* oder *nor* waren die Transkriptmengen der analysierten Gene *SIMTN*, *SIMTK*, *SIARD1* und *SIARD2* signifikant verändert (Abbildung 5a-d). Zusammengefasst deuten diese Daten darauf hin, dass Ethylen in Tomate die Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus nicht reguliert. Als Kontrollgen für die Reinheit der verwendeten Fruchtreifestadien, sowie für die Verlässlichkeit der qPCR wurde *S/NOR* in die Analysen eingeschlossen. *S/NOR* kodiert für einen Transkriptionsfaktor, der spezifisch in Früchten in einem Fruchtreife-assoziierten Muster exprimiert wird

(persönliche Kommunikation, Prof. Dr. James J. Giovannoni, Boyce Thompson Institute, Ithaca, NY, USA).

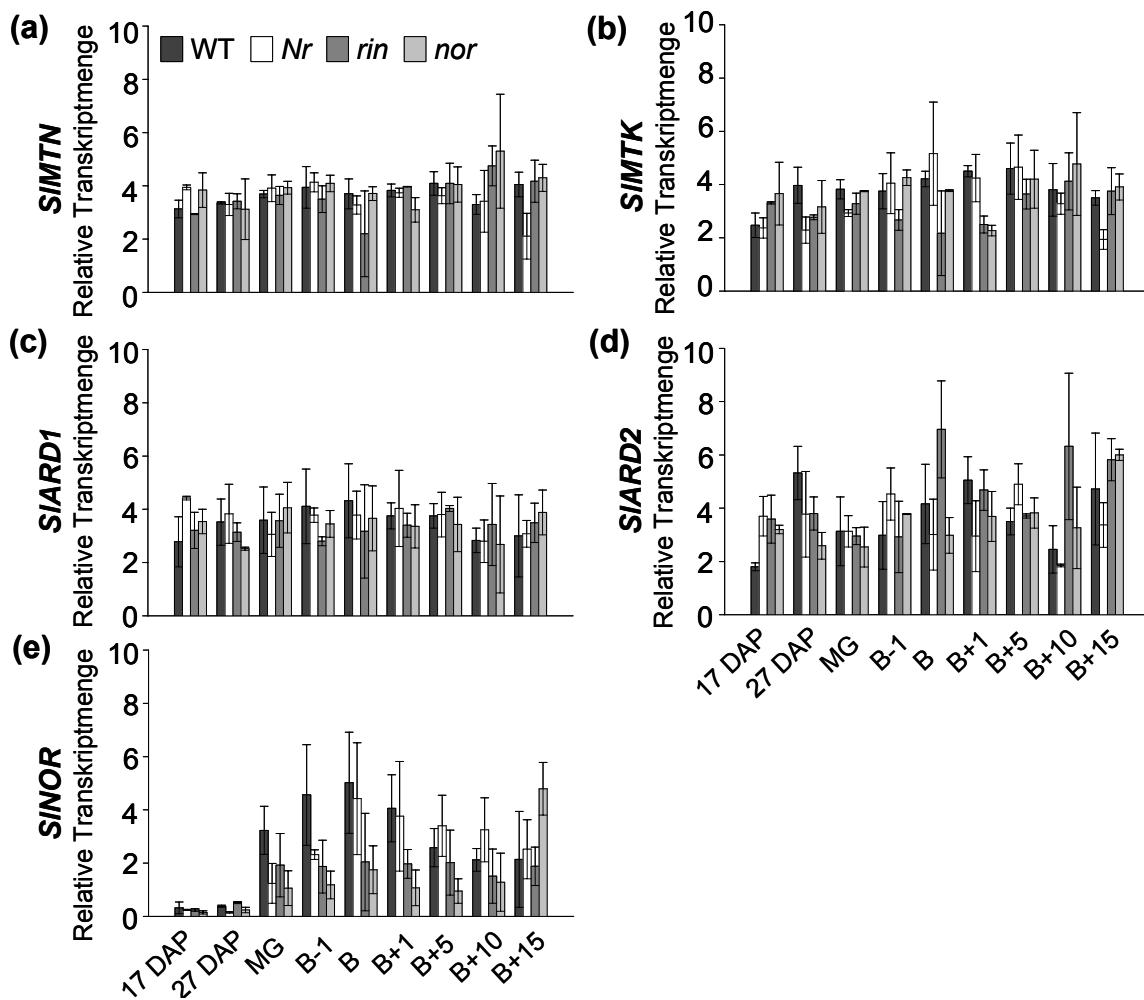


Abbildung 5: Die Expression von Methioninzyklusgenen in Tomate ist während der Fruchtreife nicht reguliert.

Relative Transkriptmengen von (a) *S/MTN*, (b) *S/MTK*, (c) *SIARD1* und (d) *SIARD2* wurden im Verlauf der Fruchtreife in neun verschiedenen Stadien (17 DAP, 27 DAP, Mature Green (MG), Breaker - 1 (B -1), Breaker (B), Breaker + 1 (B+1), Breaker + 5 (B + 5), Breaker + 10 (B + 10) und Breaker + 15 (B + 15)) im Wildtyp (WT) und in drei Fruchtreifemutanten (*Nr*, *rin*, *nor*) über qPCR analysiert. (e) *S/NOR* ist ein Fruchtreife-assoziiertes Gen, das als Kontrolle diente. Die Ergebnisse zeigen Mittelwerte aus zwei biologischen Wiederholungen mit jeweils drei Messungen (\pm SE).

In frühen Stadien der Fruchtreife liegen in Früchten des Wildtyps nur basale Transkriptmengen von *S/NOR* vor. Mit Einsetzen des *Mature Green* Stadiums steigen die Transkriptmengen an, erreichen ihr Maximum im *Breaker* Stadium und nehmen anschließend wieder auf etwa 30% der maximalen Transkriptmenge ab (Abbildung 5e). In der *Nr* Mutante ist das *S/NOR*-Expressionsmuster vergleichbar mit dem des Wildtyps, aber

Anstieg und Abnahme der *S/NOR*-Transkriptmengen sind im Vergleich zum Wildtyp etwas verlangsamt (Abbildung 5e). In der *rin* Mutante ist die Akkumulation von *S/NOR* Transkript im Verlauf der Fruchtreife signifikant verringert. In der *nor* Mutante unterbleibt dieser Anstieg nahezu vollständig, aber in späten Stadien der Fruchtreife akkumulieren *nor* Transkripte (Abbildung 5e).

DISKUSSION

Methioninzyklusgene werden nicht generell in Pflanzen mit hoher, langandauernder Ethylensynthese durch Ethylen reguliert

Ethylen wird in zwei Schritten aus SAM über 1-Aminocyclopropan-1-Carboxylsäure (ACC) als Intermediat produziert. In Reis steigt nach Überflutung die Ethylensynthese aufgrund erhöhter Expression und erhöhter Aktivität von sowohl ACC-Synthasen, als auch ACC-Oxidasen an (Cohen und Kende, 1987; Mekhedov und Kende, 1996; Zarembinski und Theologis, 1997; Van der Straeten et al., 2001). Ethylen wirkt dabei als Signal, das Anpassungen an Überflutung vermittelt. Während längerer Überflutungsperioden, in denen langandauernd viel Ethylen produziert wird, muss kontinuierlich SAM als Substrat für die Ethylensynthese zur Verfügung stehen. Der Bedarf an SAM wird dabei zumindest teilweise über den Methioninzyklus gedeckt (Miyazaki und Yang, 1987). Die höchsten Mengen an Ethylen werden in den wachstumsaktiven Geweben wie dem Meristem und der Elongationszone des jüngsten Internodiums produziert (Cohen und Kende, 1987). In diesen Geweben ist die Expression des Methioninzyklusgens *OsARD1*, das für eine Acireducton-Dioxygenase kodiert, direkt durch Ethylen induziert. Die Induktion erfolgt sehr unmittelbar, ohne die Notwendigkeit neuer Proteinsynthese (Sauter et al., 2005). Die Transkriptmengen, sowie die Enzymaktivität des Eingangsenzyms des Methioninzyklus, *OsMTN* sind in Reis ebenfalls nach Überflutung parallel mit der Ethylensynthese hochreguliert. Ethylen ist jedoch nicht direkt an dieser Regulation beteiligt (Rzewuski et al., 2007; Kapitel 2). Die Erhöhung der Methioninrecyclingkapazität über den Methioninzyklus könnte Reis ermöglichen, die erhöhte Ethylensynthese über einen langen Zeitraum aufrecht erhalten. Eine *Feedback* Aktivierung des Methioninzyklus über Ethylen könnte somit ein Teil der Anpassung von Reis an Überflutung zu sein.

Anders als in Reis ist in Gerste (*Hordeum vulgare*) das ARD-Homolog *IDI1* (*iron deficiency induced1*) nicht durch Überflutung induziert (Yamaguchi et al., 1999). Es ist allerdings unbekannt, ob Überflutung die Ethylensynthese in Gerste induziert. Auch in Arabidopsis reguliert Ethylen die Expression von Methioninzyklusgenen nicht (Kapitel 1; Bürstenbinder et al., 2007). Arabidopsis durchläuft während der Entwicklung allerdings, im Gegensatz zu Reis, keine natürlichen Phasen langandauernder, hoher Ethylensynthese. Um die Hypothese zu testen, ob Ethylen eventuell Gene des Methioninzyklus nur in Pflanzen mit solchen Phasen natürlicher hoher Ethylensynthese reguliert, wurde Tomate als Vertreter von Pflanzen mit klimakterischer Fruchtreife untersucht. Charakteristisch für die klimakterische Fruchtreife ist eine hohe Ethylensynthese über einen langen Zeitraum der Fruchtentwicklung (Burg und Burg, 1962). Der Anstieg der Ethylensynthese erfolgt zu einem charakteristischen Zeitpunkt der Fruchtentwicklung, am Übergang zur Fruchtreife. Ethylen wird dabei benötigt,

um die Fruchtreife zu induzieren. Wir konnten zeigen, dass die Expressionen von Genen, die für die Enzyme des Methioninzyklus MTN, MTK oder ARD kodieren, weder in Abhängigkeit von Fruchtreife, noch in Abhängigkeit von Ethylen reguliert waren. Eine ethylenabhängige Regulation des Methioninzyklus auf Transkriptebene scheint also keine allgemeine Anpassung von Pflanzen an langanhaltenden, erhöhten Ethylenbedarf zu sein.

Die Ethylensynthese während der Fruchtreife in Tomate wird möglicherweise durch *de novo* Methioninsynthese ermöglicht

Die von gelagerten Apfelfrüchten synthetisierten Ethylenmengen sind höher, als es die internen Methioninspiegel erlauben würden. Baur und Yang (1972) postulierten, dass ein Methioninrecyclingweg existieren müsste, der ermöglicht, auch ohne externe Schwefelquelle kontinuierlich Met zu regenerieren. Dieser Methioninrecyclingweg wurde später als Methioninzyklus identifiziert und wird auch als Yang-Zyklus bezeichnet (Yang und Hoffman, 1984). Die Expressionen der Gene, die für MTN, MTK und ARD kodieren, waren während der Fruchtreife in Tomate nicht reguliert. Aktuelle Arbeiten deuten darauf hin, dass der erhöhte Bedarf an Met für die Ethylenbiosynthese während der Fruchtreife durch eine gesteigerte *de novo* Synthese von Met gedeckt wird. So waren die Transkriptmengen der *Cystathionin-γ-Synthase* (CGS), die für das Schlüsselenzym der Methioninbiosynthese kodiert, in Tomate durch Ethylen induziert (Katz et al., 2006). Die CGS-Transkriptmengen stiegen parallel mit der Ethylensynthese und dem internen Methioningehalt während der Fruchtreife in Tomatenfrüchten an. Die Ethylensynthese während der Fruchtreife klimakterischer Früchte könnte also eher durch eine Steigerung der Met *de novo* Synthese als durch erhöhtes Methioninrecycling ermöglicht zu werden. Im Gegensatz zu gelagerten Äpfeln sind Tomatenfrüchte allerdings noch über die Verbindung zum Strauch mit Schwefel versorgt. Ein Recycling von Met über den Methioninzyklus könnte in klimakterischen Früchten unter Umständen erst dann für die Ethylensynthese essentiell werden, wenn Ethylen ohne *de novo* Met Synthese synthetisiert wird.

Posttranskriptionelle Regulation des Methioninzyklus

Die Transkriptmengen der untersuchten Methioninzyklusgene *MTN*, *MTK* und *ARD* aus Tomate waren im Verlauf der Fruchtreife nicht reguliert. Im Gegensatz dazu waren die Enzymaktivitäten von MTN und MTK in Tomate während der Fruchtreife reguliert (Kushad et al., 1985). Die MTN-Aktivität war in jungen, unreifen Fruchtstadien am höchsten, und nahm bereits während der frühen Entwicklung (27 DAP, *Mature Green*) stark ab. Diese Abnahme wurde lediglich im *Breaker* Stadium, also bei Einsetzen der Fruchtreife, durch einen

schwachen, kurzzeitigen Anstieg unterbrochen. Diese Regulation der MTN-Aktivität war unabhängig von der Menge an produziertem Ethylen, verlief aber parallel zu den Polyamingehalten in Tomatenfrüchten. Höchste MTN-Aktivität war in Fruchtreifestadien zu beobachten, in denen auch die Polyaminspiegel, vor allem von Putrescin und Spermidin, am höchsten waren (Saftner und Baldi, 1990). Die MTK-Aktivität dagegen war in jungen Fruchtreifestadien sehr gering, nahm im *Mature Green* Stadium zu und erreichte die höchsten Werte im *Breaker* Stadium. In späteren Fruchtreifestadien nahm die MTK-Aktivität wieder auf die Anfangswerte ab. Insgesamt schien die MTK-Aktivität parallel mit der Menge an produziertem Ethylen reguliert zu sein. Zusammengenommen mit den hier beobachteten Genexpressionsmustern lassen diese Daten eine Regulation der Enzymaktivität auf posttranskriptioneller Ebene vermuten. In Arabidopsis ist die MTN-Enzymaktivität Ca^{2+} -abhängig durch direkte Protein-Protein-Interaktion von Calcineurin B Like 3 mit AtMTN1 reprimiert (Oh et al., 2008). Des Weiteren induzierte MTA die MTN-Enzymaktivität, nicht aber MTN-Transkriptmengen in Arabidopsis (Kapitel 3). Der Mechanismus dieser Regulation ist allerdings noch unbekannt. In Tiefwasserreis dagegen sind sowohl MTN-Transkripte, als auch MTN-Enzymaktivität nach Überflutung induziert, was auf eine Regulation auf transkriptioneller Ebene hindeutet. Möglicherweise nutzen semiaquatische Pflanzen in der Anpassung an Überflutung andere Mechanismen zur Regulation des Methioninzyklus. Um diese Hypothese zu untersuchen, müsste die Regulation des Methioninzyklus in weiteren Pflanzenspezies, wie zum Beispiel *Rumex palustris*, die gut an Überflutung angepasst sind, untersucht werden.

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SCHLUSSFOLGERUNGEN

Die Bedeutung des Methioninzyklus

Im Methioninzyklus wird MTA, das Nebenprodukt der Ethylen-, Polyamin- und Nicotianaminbiosynthese über eine Reihe von Zwischenschritten zu Met recycelt. In tierischen und pflanzlichen Zellen ist MTA als Inhibitor der Spermidinsynthase, sowie der Sperminsynthase beschrieben (Hibasami et al., 1980; Raina et al., 1984; Sameyima und Yamanoha, 1982; Graser und Hartmann, 2000). Arabidopsispflanzen, die MTA noch metabolisieren können, das Zwischenprodukt des Methioninzyklus, MTR, aber nicht zu Met recyceln können, zeigten unter Schwefelvollversorgung keine Wachstumsunterschiede im Vergleich zu Wildtyppflanzen. Unter diesen Bedingungen war der Methioninzyklus also nicht essentiell (Sauter et al., 2004). Baur und Yang (1972) postulierten, dass langandauernde, hohe Ethylensyntheseraten ohne externe Schwefelquelle, wie zum Beispiel während der klimakterischen Fruchtreife in gelagerten Äpfelfrüchten, von kontinuierlichem Methioninrecycling abhängen. Über die Analyse von Mutanten in Arabidopsis wurde in dieser Arbeit die Bedeutung des Methioninzyklus für die Ethylensynthese, sowie für die Detoxifizierung von MTA untersucht.

Um zu untersuchen, in wie weit der Methioninzyklus für die Ethylensynthese notwendig ist, wurde die *mtk/eto3* Doppelmutante generiert, die das Zwischenprodukt MTR nicht über den Methioninzyklus zu Met metabolisieren kann, aber gleichzeitig vermehrt Ethylen synthetisiert. Das Ausschalten des Methioninzyklus limitierte die Ethylensynthese in *mtk/eto3*. Damit wurde erstmals gezeigt, dass ein intakter Methioninzyklus für hohe Ethylensyntheseraten notwendig ist. Für die in Wildtyppflanzen synthetisierten basalen Mengen an Ethylen war der Methioninzyklus dagegen nicht limitierend. In *Lemna spec* werden nur etwa 6% des internen löslichen Met über den Methioninzyklus recycelt (Giovanelli et al., 1985). Allerdings produziert Lemna auch nur geringe Mengen an Ethylen. Anders als in Arabidopsis oder Lemna werden während der klimakterischen Fruchtreife oder in semiaquatischen Pflanzen in der Antwort auf Überflutung natürlich hohe Mengen an Ethylen über einen längeren Zeitraum synthetisiert. Zu welchem Anteil der Methioninzyklus unter diesen Bedingungen zur Aufrechterhaltung der Ethylensynthese beiträgt, bleibt zu klären. Es ist anzunehmen, dass während dieser Entwicklungsphasen die Flussrate von Met durch den Methioninzyklus im Vergleich zu Lemna erhöht ist. In klimakterischen Früchten steigen die internen Met-Spiegel während der Fruchtreife an und erreichen ein Maximum in den Fruchtstadien, in denen die höchsten Mengen an Ethylen synthetisiert werden (Katz et al., 2006). Es konnte gezeigt werden, dass auch in überfluteten Reispflanzen die internen Met-Spiegel im Verlauf der Überflutung zusammen mit der Ethylensynthese anstiegen.

Dieser Anstieg der Met-Spiegel wird in Tomate zumindest teilweise durch eine erhöhte *de novo* Met Biosynthese erreicht (Katz et al., 2006). Die Transkriptmengen der *Cystathionin-γ-Synthase*, die für das Schlüsselenzym der Met Biosynthese kodiert, stiegen im Verlauf der Fruchtreife parallel mit der Ethylensynthese an und wurden durch Ethylen induziert. In Früchten der ethyleninsensitiven *Nr* Mutante dagegen waren die CGS Transkriptmengen geringer als im Wildtyp (Alba et al., 2005). Exogen appliziertes Met konnte die Ethylensynthese zusätzlich erhöhen, was darauf hindeutet, dass Met limitierend für die Ethylensynthese während der Fruchtreife in Tomate war (Katz et al., 2006). Neben einer gesteigerten Met Synthese könnte allerdings auch eine erhöhte Recyclingrate über den Methioninzyklus zu einer gesteigerten Ethylensynthese beitragen. So stieg die Enzymaktivität der MTK während der Fruchtreife in Tomate, sowie die Aktivität der MTN nach Überflutung in Reis parallel mit der Ethylensynthese an (Kushad et al., 1985; Kapitel 2). Die MTN-Aktivität in Tomate wies dagegen ein Maximum in frühen Fruchtentwicklungsstadien auf, in denen nur wenig Ethylen synthetisiert wurde (Kushad et al., 1985). In diesen Stadien war die Polyaminsynthese am höchsten (Saftner und Baldi, 1990). In Avocado (*Persea americana* Mill.) verliefen sowohl die MTN-, als auch die MTK-Aktivitäten parallel mit der Ethylensynthese, während keine erhöhten Enzymaktivitäten in Stadien und Geweben erhöhter Polyaminsynthese zu beobachten waren (Kushad et al., 1988). Aufgrund dieser Beobachtungen wurde vermutet, dass der Methioninzyklus in Avocado während der Ethylensynthese aktiver sei als während der Polyaminsynthese (Kushad et al., 1988). In Arabidopsis dagegen unterschieden sich die MTN-Aktivitäten zwischen ethylenüberproduzierenden Pflanzen und dem Wildtyp nicht (Daten nicht gezeigt). Auch die internen Met- und SAM-Gehalte waren in ethylenüberproduzierenden Arabidopsis-pflanzen im Vergleich zum Wildtyp nicht erhöht.

Methioninrecycling könnte vor allem dann wichtig werden, wenn die Schwefelversorgung limitiert ist. In dieser Arbeit konnte gezeigt werden, dass das Ausschalten des Methioninzyklus in Arabidopsis zu reduzierten SAM-Gehalten unter schwefellimitierenden Bedingungen führte. Unter diesen Bedingungen, in denen die *de novo* Synthese von Met und SAM limitiert war, waren die SAM-Spiegel in der *mtk* Mutante, sowie in der *mtk/eto3* Mutante verändert. In klimakterischen Früchten könnte eine Funktion des Methioninzyklus in der Aufrechterhaltung der SAM-Spiegel vor allem dann wichtig werden, wenn die Früchte nicht mehr über die Pflanze mit Schwefel versorgt werden. So werden zum Beispiel in Avocadofrüchten die MTN- und MTK-Enzymaktivitäten während der Lagerung noch über einen Zeitraum von acht Monaten aufrechterhalten, was darauf hindeutet, dass unter diesen Bedingungen Methioninrecycling essentiell für die andauernde Ethylensynthese sein könnte (Kushad et al., 1988). Möglicherweise besteht eine Funktion des Methioninzyklus in der Kontrolle der SAM-Spiegel. Für den SMM Zyklus wurde eine Funktion vor allem in der

kurzfristigen Kontrolle der SAM-Spiegel beschrieben. Es wurde vermutet, dass der SMM Zyklus eine Akkumulation an SAM und die damit verbundene Inhibierung der *de novo* Met Synthese verhindern könnte (Ranocha et al., 2001). In wie weit SMM Zyklus und Methioninzyklus untereinander regulatorisch verbunden sind, oder zu welchem Anteil diese beiden Zyklen die SAM-Spiegel kontrollieren, ist allerdings noch unbekannt.

Neben der Bedeutung von Methioninrecycling für die Ethylensynthese und für die Aufrechterhaltung der SAM-Spiegel wurde in dieser Arbeit gezeigt, dass eine Hauptfunktion des Methioninzyklus in der Detoxifizierung von MTA liegen könnte. In der *mtk* Mutante kann MTA noch zu MTR verstoffwechselt werden. Diese Mutante zeigte bei ausreichender Schwefelversorgung keine Wachstumsinhibition im Vergleich zum Wildtyp. War jedoch die Metabolisierung von MTA in der *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* Mutante inhibiert, so war die Pflanzenentwicklung stark gestört und die Pflanzen waren nahezu vollständig steril. Die wahrscheinliche Ursache für die Wachstumsstörungen in *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* ist demnach nicht eine limitierte Versorgung mit Met, sondern die gestörte Metabolisierung von MTA. Unterstützung für diese Hypothese zeigte sich über die Analyse der *mtn* Einzelmutanten. In Keimlingen der *mtn1-1* Mutante mit etwa 20% Restaktivität an MTN, die auf MTA angezogen wurden, war das Wachstum im Vergleich zum Wildtyp reduziert. Mit dieser Wachstumsreduktion korrelierte eine Akkumulation von MTA und SAM. Eine mögliche Erklärung für die Akkumulation von SAM könnte in einer *Feedback* Inhibition SAM konsumierender und MTA produzierender Stoffwechselwege durch MTA liegen.

Die Analyse der von SAM ausgehenden und MTA produzierenden Biosynthesewege zeigte, dass die Ethylenbiosynthese nicht durch die Akkumulation an MTA verändert war. Auch wenn in *mtn1-1* Keimlingen keine Änderungen in der Ethylenbiosynthese zu messen waren, ist nicht auszuschließen, dass in anderen Entwicklungsstadien oder Geweben Veränderungen in der Ethylensynthese durch gestörte MTA Metabolisierung verursacht werden. Die Polyamingehalte dagegen waren in *mtn1-1* Keimlingen stark verändert. Die freien löslichen Mengen des Diamins Putrescin stiegen stark an. Die Akkumulation an Putrescin könnte möglicherweise aus einer *Feedback*-Inhibition der Spermidinsynthase resultieren, die aus Putrescin unter Übertragung einer Aminopropylgruppe von dSAM Spermidin synthetisiert. Anzunehmen wäre, dass die Inhibition der Spermidinsynthase auch zu einer Verringerung der Spermidin- und möglicherweise auch Spermingehalte führen würde. Allerdings waren die Spermidingehalte unverändert und die Spermingehalte im Vergleich zum Wildtyp sogar erhöht. Die Messungen der Metabolitspiegel stellen allerdings nur *steady state* Messungen da. Über Änderungen der Flussrate können über diese Methode keine Aussagen getroffen werden. Eine verringerte Flussrate könnte zu einem verringerten Nettostoffumsatz führen, selbst wenn die *steady state* Werte erhöht oder unverändert sind. Über Messung der Aktivitäten von Enzymen der Polyaminsynthese und

von Polyamin-katabolisierenden Enzymen, sowie der Flussraten von SAM in die einzelnen Biosynthesewege könnte diese Frage geklärt werden. Des Weiteren fehlen Daten zur Menge an löslichen konjugierten, sowie unlöslichen konjugierten Polyaminen. Eine Akkumulation und Funktion von vor allem Hydroxyzimtsäure-konjugierten Polyaminen wurde zum Beispiel bei der Blütenbildung beschrieben (Flores et al., 1989). So waren Mutanten in Tabak, die keine Hydroxyzimtsäureamide enthielten, nicht fähig zu blühen, und in männlich sterilen Mutanten in Mais (*Zea mays* L.) unterblieb eine Akkumulation von Hydroxyzimtsäureamiden in den Antheren.

Neben der Biosynthese von Ethylen und Polyaminen entsteht auch bei der Biosynthese von Nicotianamin MTA als Nebenprodukt. In wie weit eine gestörte Metabolisierung von MTA zu Änderungen in den Gehalten an Nicotianamin führt, muss noch untersucht werden. Ein Einfluss von Nicotianamin auf die Fertilität von Pflanzen wurde zum Beispiel in Tabak beschrieben. Eine Verringerung der Nicotianamingehalte in transgenen Tabakpflanzen resultierte in Sterilität der Pflanzen (Takahashi et al., 2003). Zu welchem Grad gestörte Ethylen-, Polyamin- und Nicotianaminbiosynthese im einzelnen an den vielfältigen Entwicklungstörungen der *mtn1-1/mtn2-1* Mutante ursächlich beteiligt sind, bleibt zu klären.

Die Regulation des Methioninzyklus

Über die Regulation des Methioninzyklus, sowie mögliche Kontrollmechanismen dieser Regulation ist bislang nur wenig bekannt. Es wurde vermutet, dass die Biosynthese von Ethylen oder Polyaminen durch die Rate des Methioninrecyclings restriktiert werden könnte (Miyazaki und Yang, 1987). Im Rahmen dieser Arbeit wurden regulatorische Zusammenhänge zwischen dem Methioninzyklus und der Ethylensynthese untersucht. Ein weiteres Ziel dieser Arbeit lag darin, ein besseres Verständnis der Regulation der MTN, die den Eingangsschritt des Methioninzyklus katalysiert, zu erlangen.

In Reis induziert Ethylen die Expression des Methioninzyklusgenes *OsARD1* (Sauter et al., 2005). In dieser Arbeit wurde eine mögliche ethylenabhängige Regulation von *OsMTN* aus Reis, sowie von Genen des Methioninzyklus in Arabidopsis und, als Vertreter für Pflanzen mit klimakterischer Fruchtreife, in Tomate untersucht. Es konnte gezeigt werden, dass die Transkriptmengen von *OsMTN*, das für die einzige MTA-Nukleosidase in Reis kodiert, parallel mit der Ethylensynthese anstiegen. Anders als *OsARD1* wurde die Expression von *OsMTN* jedoch nicht direkt durch Ethylen reguliert. In Tomate und Arabidopsis wurden Mutanten analysiert, in denen die Ethylensynthese, die Ethylenperzeption oder der Ethylensignalweg verändert waren. Weder in Tomate, noch in Arabidopsis waren in den untersuchten Geweben und Entwicklungsstadien Änderungen der Expression von Genen des Methioninzyklus zu beobachten. Vor allem auch während der

Fruchtreife in Tomate, in der vermehrt Ethylen produziert wird, waren keine Änderungen in den Transkriptmengen der untersuchten Methioninzyklusgene zu detektieren. Eine ethylenabhängige Regulation von Genen des Methioninzyklus auf Transkriptebene, wie sie in Reis nach Überflutung zu beobachten ist, ist also kein allgemeiner Regulationsmechanismus in Pflanzen. Ob es sich bei der in Reis vorkommenden Regulation um eine Besonderheit in der Anpassung semiaquatischer Pflanzen an Überflutung handelt, könnte über Analyse weiterer semiaquatischer Pflanzen geklärt werden.

Die im Rahmen dieser Arbeit durchgeführten Messungen der OsMTN-Enzymaktivität in Antwort auf Überflutung in Reis zeigten, dass die MTN-Enzymaktivitäten, genau wie die oben beschriebenen OsMTN-Transkriptmengen parallel mit der Ethylensynthese anstiegen. Die Regulation der MTN-Aktivität in Reis scheint also hauptsächlich auf Transkriptebene zu erfolgen. Welche Faktoren allerdings für die erhöhten Transkriptmengen verantwortlich sind, bleibt noch zu klären. Weder Ethylen, noch das Substrat MTA oder Met beeinflussten die Expression von OsMTN oder die OsMTN-Enzymaktivität. Auch das Polyamin Spermidin hatte keinen Einfluss auf die MTN-Enzymaktivität (Daten nicht gezeigt). Eine Zunahme der MTN-Aktivität parallel zur Ethylensynthese, wie in Reis gemessen, wurde auch in Avocadofrüchten beobachtet (Kushad et al., 1988). Hier stiegen sowohl die MTN-, als auch die MTK-Aktivitäten parallel mit der Ethylensynthese an. In Stadien und Geweben mit erhöhter Polyaminsynthese dagegen waren keine erhöhten Enzymaktivitäten detektierbar. Die MTN-Aktivität war dabei während der höchsten Ethylensynthese fünfmal höher als während der maximalen Polyaminsynthese (Kushad et al., 1988). Auch in Tomate verlief die MTK-Enzymaktivität parallel zu der Ethylensynthese. Die MTN-Enzymaktivität dagegen war am höchsten in Geweben, die nur basale Mengen an Ethylen synthetisierten (Kushad et al., 1985). In diesen Geweben wurden hohe Mengen an Polyaminen synthetisiert (Saftner und Baldi, 1990). Anders als in Reis oder Avocado schien die MTN-Aktivität in Tomate also eher mit der Polyaminsynthese korreliert zu sein. Des Weiteren waren die beiden Enzyme MTN und MTK in Tomate nicht einheitlich reguliert, sondern wiesen Aktivitätsmaxima zu unterschiedlichen Zeitpunkten der Fruchtreife auf. Über Analyse der Transkriptmengen über quantitative *RealTime* PCR wurde untersucht, auf welcher Ebene die Regulation von MTN und MTK in Tomate erfolgte. Die Analysen zeigten, dass die Transkription von *SIMTN* und *SIMTK*, anders als die korrespondierenden Enzymaktivitäten, nicht während der Fruchtreife reguliert war. Diese Daten legen nahe, dass MTN und MTK in Tomate nicht auf Transkriptebene, sondern über posttranskriptionelle Mechanismen reguliert sind.

Eine Regulation einer MTN auf Proteinebene wurde kürzlich in Arabidopsis beschrieben (Oh et al., 2008). In Arabidopsis kodieren zwei Gene für Proteine mit MTN-Aktivität, *AtMTN1* und *AtMTN2*. Oh et al. (2008) zeigten, dass die Aktivität von AtMTN1 durch die Ca^{2+} gebundene Form von Calcineurin B Like 3 in *in vitro* Messungen inhibiert

wurde. Diese Inhibierung erfolgte vermutlich über direkte Protein-Protein-Interaktion. Hinweise für weitere Mechanismen einer Regulation von MTN aus Arabidopsis auf Proteinebene lieferten die im Rahmen dieser Arbeit durchgeführten Analysen der MTN-Enzymaktivität in Abhängigkeit von der Schwefelquelle. Über Analyse der *mtn2-1* Mutante konnte gezeigt werden, dass MTA die AtMTN-Enzymaktivität in Arabidopsis induzierte. Eine Analyse der Transkriptmengen über *Northern blot* zeigte keine Veränderung in der Expression von *AtMTN1*. Über immunologischen Nachweis von AtMTN1 konnte gezeigt werden, dass die Erhöhung der MTN-Enzymaktivität vermutlich über eine erhöhte Menge an Protein bedingt sein könnte. Ob diese erhöhte Proteinmenge aus einer erhöhten Proteinsynthese oder einer erhöhten Proteinstabilität resultiert, lässt sich allerdings noch nicht sagen.

Über die Analyse von *mtn1-1* und *mtn2-1* Einzelmutanten konnte des Weiteren gezeigt werden, dass AtMTN1 zu mehr als 80% zur MTN-Enzymaktivität in Arabidopsis beiträgt. Herunterregulierung von AtMTN1 in *mtn1-1* führte zu einer drastischen Reduktion der MTN-Enzymaktivität, während Ausschalten von AtMTN2 in *mtn2-1* nahezu keinen Einfluss auf die MTN-Enzymaktivität hatte. Diese Daten stimmen überein mit *in vitro* Enzymaktivitätsmessungen an rekombinatem AtMTN1 und AtMTN2, die eine höhere MTN-Aktivität für AtMTN1 beschrieben (Siu et al., 2008). Siu et al. (2008) zeigten weiterhin, dass AtMTN2 in der Lage war, neben dem eigentlichen Substrat, MTA, auch SAH mit 14% der Effizienz im Vergleich zu MTA zu metabolisieren. AtMTN1 dagegen akzeptierte nur MTA. Zusammengefasst deuten diese Daten darauf hin, dass AtMTN1 vermutlich den MTA Metabolismus in Arabidopsis dominiert, da die *AtMTN1* mRNA in allen Geweben über alle Entwicklungsstadien mindestens zehnmal höher abundant ist als die von *AtMTN2*, es spezifischer für MTA ist und effizienter MTA hydrolysiert (Zimmermann et al., 2004; Siu et al., 2008).

In dieser Arbeit konnte gezeigt werden, dass OsMTN aus Reis, genau wie AtMTN2, neben MTA auch SAH mit 16% der Effizienz im Vergleich zu MTA metabolisieren kann. MTN aus Lupinen dagegen akzeptierte, wie auch AtMTN1, SAH nicht als Substrat (Guranowski et al., 1981; Siu et al., 2008). Eine duale Funktion von MTN in der Hydrolyse von MTA und SAH war zuvor nur für bakterielle MTAN-Enzyme beschrieben (Della Ragione et al., 1985). In Bakterien ist diese duale Funktion für die Hydrolyse von SAH essentiell. Pflanzen dagegen besitzen, im Gegensatz zu Bakterien, zusätzliche Enzyme, die SAH hydrolysiieren können (Guranowski und Pawelkiewicz, 1977; Stepkowski et al., 2005). In Arabidopsis existieren zwei Gene, die für SAH-Hydrolasen kodieren. In Reis ist ein Gen beschrieben. Obwohl AtMTN2 und OsMTN *in vitro* SAH metabolisieren können, bleibt unklar, ob diese Funktion *in planta* relevant ist. Die SAH-Gehalte in Pflanzen sind normalerweise deutlich niedriger als die in den *in vitro* Messungen eingesetzten Substratkonzentrationen (Moffatt et al., 2002). Des Weiteren ist die Affinität für SAH im Vergleich zu bakteriellen MTAN-Enzymen deutlich

geringer. MTAN aus *Escherichia coli* zum Beispiel metabolisierte SAH mit 40% der Effizienz im Vergleich zu MTA (Della Ragione et al., 1985). Eventuell tragen also AtMTN2 und OsMTN unter normalen Wachstumsbedingungen *in planta* nicht zur SAH Hydrolyse bei. Möglicherweise handelt es sich bei den *in vitro* gemessenen SAH-Nukleosidase Aktivitäten um Überreste einer enzymatischen Aktivität eines gemeinsamen Vorläuferproteins, aus dem sich bakterielle MTANs und pflanzliche MTNs entwickelten.

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DANKSAGUNG

Allen voran danke ich meiner Doktormutter Prof. Dr. Margret Sauter ganz herzlich für die Unterstützung während der gesamten Doktorarbeit, für die Diskussionen und die konstruktive Kritik, sowie für das mir entgegengebrachte Vertrauen. Insbesondere danke ich auch für die Hilfe bei der Planung und Durchführung des Forschungsaufenthaltes am Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, Ithaca, NY, USA.

Prof. Dr. James J. Giovannoni danke ich für die freundliche Aufnahme in seine Arbeitsgruppe, für sein Interesse an meiner Arbeit, sowie für die Möglichkeit, ein Teilprojekt meiner Arbeit in seinem Labor durchgeführt haben zu können.

Dem DAAD danke ich für die Gewährung und Finanzierung des Kurzzeitstipendiums.

Allen Kooperationspartnern, ganz besonders Dr. Markus Wirtz, danke ich für die kontinuierlich gute Zusammenarbeit und die problemlose Kommunikation.

Des Weiteren bedanke ich mich bei allen Laborkollegen und Mitarbeitern der Arbeitsgruppe, vor allem bei Timo Staffel, für die angenehme Arbeitsatmosphäre und die Hilfe bei methodischen Problemen.

Schließlich danke ich meiner Familie, die mir durch ihre Unterstützung das Studium der Biologie ermöglichte.

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ERKLÄRUNG

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit „Bedeutung und Regulation des Methioninzyklus in Pflanzen“ selbstständig verfasst habe und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel verwendet habe. Die Dissertation wurde bisher an keiner anderen Hochschule oder Universität vorgelegt.

Teile der Arbeit sind in folgenden Publikationen enthalten:

Bürstenbinder K, Rzewuski G, Wirtz M, Hell R, Sauter M (2007) The role of methionine recycling for ethylene synthesis in *Arabidopsis*. Plant J 49:238-249

Rzewuski G, Cornell KA, Rooney L, Bürstenbinder K, Wirtz M, Hell R, Sauter M (2007) *OsMTN* encodes a 5'-methylthioadenosine nucleosidase that is up-regulated during submergence-induced ethylene synthesis in rice (*Oryza sativa* L.). J Exp Bot 58:1505-1514

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