

Cloning and Expression Analysis of Wheat Cytokinin Oxidase/Dehydrogenase Gene *TaCKX3*

Xin Ma · De-Shun Feng · Hong-Gang Wang ·
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Published online: 22 May 2010
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Abstract Cytokinin oxidase/dehydrogenase plays an important role in regulating plant growth and development. A novel gene of *TaCKX3* was cloned from wheat by specific primers designed according to the Triticeae Full-Length CDS Database and was proved to be located on chromosome 7B by analyzing the nulli-tetrasomic lines of “Chinese Spring.” The genomic coding sequence was interrupted by three introns, which were 103, 421, and 458 bp, successively. The complementary DNA sequence of *TaCKX3* is 60% identical to that of *TaCKX1*, and the homology of their deduced proteins is even low. The putative *TaCKX3* protein shows highly homology with *ZmCKX10* but not with other known cytokinin oxidase/dehydrogenase. However, it contains conserved motifs as other cytokinin oxidase/dehydrogenase, such as flavin adenosine dinucleotide binding domain and cytokinin binding domain. Consistent with *ZmCKX10* and *AtCKX7*, nor the putative *TaCKX3* has signal peptide at N terminus, which means that *TaCKX3* functions in cytoplasm. Quantitative polymerase chain reaction analysis indicated that the expression of *TaCKX3* gene is significantly up-regulated in germinating embryos treated by 6-BA and slightly up-regulated by NaCl or PEG-6000.

Keywords Cloning · Cytokinin oxidase/dehydrogenase · Wheat · *TaCKX3* gene

Sequence data of *TaCKX3* from this article have been deposited at GenBank under accession number GQ925404.

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Abbreviations

BLAST	Basic Local Alignment Search Tool
cDNA	complementary DNA
CKs	cytokinins
CKX	cytokinin oxidase/dehydrogenase
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
FAD	flavin adenosine dinucleotide
MW	molecular weight
NT	nulli-tetrasomic
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
pI	isoelectric point
RNA	ribonucleic acid
RT-PCR	reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction

Introduction

Cytokinin oxidase/dehydrogenase (CKX; EC.1.5.99.12) enzyme is a flavoenzyme, containing flavin adenosine dinucleotide (FAD) as a cofactor. It is thought to be the only known plant enzyme that irreversibly degrades cytokinins (CKs) into inactive products by cleaving the N^6 -unsaturated side chain of the active CKs, such as isopentenyladenine, zeatin, and their ribosides (Hare and Van Staden 1994; Jones and Schreiber 1997; Galuszka et al. 2001). As important plant hormones, CKs are considered to play a key role in plant growth and development, including cell division and differentiation, apical dominance, shoot and root balance, transduction of nutritional signals, fruit development, leaf senescence, and other processes (Mok and Mok 2001; Ashikari et al. 2005; Hitoshi 2006). The CKXs, which commonly exist in plants, are involved in the above processes by controlling the levels of CKs.

The CKX activity was first discovered in crude tobacco culture by Pačes et al. (1971) and was then extensively

reported in various tissues and species (Galuszka et al. 2004). Since the first *CKX* gene was cloned from *Zea mays* by two independent teams simultaneously (Houba-Hérin et al. 1999; Morris et al. 1999), the amount of *CKX* genes have been identified from maize, *Arabidopsis thaliana*, rice, *Dendrobium*, barley, and wheat (Morris et al. 1999; Bilyeu et al. 2001; Werner et al. 2001; Schmülling et al. 2003; Yang et al. 2003a; Galuszka et al. 2004; Feng et al. 2008; Šmehilová et al. 2009). Phylogenetic analysis indicated that although the similarity of the entire protein sequences from different plant species is not very high, these *CKX* proteins contain two obviously conserved domains, one is for FAD binding located at N terminus and the other is for CK binding located at C terminus. These two conserved motifs are considered to be related with *CKX* catalytic activity.

The relationship between *CKXs* and *CKs* has been extensively investigated in order to figure out their functions in plant development. *CKX* activity in cultured tobacco cells was increased transiently by applying external *CKs* (Terrine and Laloue 1980; Chatfield and Armstrong 1986; Kaminek and Armstrong 1990). In maize kernels, *CKX* activity is much higher after pollination, coincident with the increased *CKs* levels (Whitty and Hall 1974; Dietrich et al. 1995). These results showed that *CKX* activity may be induced by the levels of *CKs*. *CKX* overexpression in tobacco led to stunted shoots and enlarged root meristems with more branched roots (Werner et al. 2001). *ZmCKX1*-transformed maize plants displayed male-sterile phenotype with the accumulation of *ZmCKX1* in reproductive tissues (Huang et al. 2003). Transgenic *A. thaliana* with *DSCKX1* gene exhibited *CK*-deficient developmental processes due to decreased *CKs* levels (Yang et al. 2003b). Reduced expression of *OsCKX2* caused *CK* accumulation in inflorescence meristems and increased the number of reproductive organs, resulting in enhanced grain yield (Ashikari et al. 2005).

Based on previously work, as an important gene family, several *CKX* genes have been identified from various plant species and proved to be functionally critical for the plant growth and development by decreasing *CK* levels. Hexaploid wheat also contain several *CKX* genes in its large genome, but there is little systematic identification of full-length *CKX* genes from this important economic species available in literature (Galuszka, et al. 2004; Feng et al. 2008). In this work, we identified a novel *CKX* gene, *TaCKX3* from wheat, and initially analyzed its characteristics.

Materials and Methods

Plant Materials and Growth Conditions

In this study, wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L. cv. Yanyou 361) was used to clone *TaCKX3* and nulli-tetrasomic (NT) lines

of “Chinese Spring” (CS) was used to locate the cloned gene onto the chromosome.

Stress Treatments

To investigate the expression of *TaCKX3* gene in germinating embryos under stress condition, the seeds of Y361 imbibed for 15 h were transferred to Petri dishes fitted with filter papers that were soaked in 250 mM NaCl, 10 μ M 6-BA, and 20% PEG-6000 and then cultured for 12 h at growth chamber. The embryos were separated from endosperms after the processing. Distilled water treatment was used as the mock control.

DNA and RNA Isolation

Genomic DNA was extracted from wheat according to cetyltrimethylammonium bromide method described by Saghai-Marouf et al. (1984). Total RNA was isolated from treated germinating embryos by RNeasy Plant kit (Qiagen, Beijing, China) according to the manufacturer’s protocol and quantified by GeneQuant (Amersham, Sweden). Total RNA was separated on 1.5% agarose gel to assess the quality of the isolated RNA.

Cloning and Sequencing of the *TaCKX3* Genomic DNA

Specific primer sets—forward, 5-ACCGCAGTGGGAA GAGAAGC-3, and reverse, 5-CAGCTATGATCGGTC GGTTCG-3—were used for gene amplification that were designed according to the sequence information deposited in the Triticeae Full-Length CDS Database (Mochida et al. 2009), which includes putative full-length complementary DNAs (cDNAs) for barley and wheat. The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was performed in a 50- μ L mixture containing approximately 200 ng of genomic DNA, 1 \times GC reaction buffer, 300 μ M dNTPs, 250 ng of each primer, and 0.5 U LA GC Taq DNA polymerase (TaKaRa, Dalian, China). The thermal cycle profile was 95°C for 3 min, 36 cycles of 94°C for 40 s, and 68°C for 3.5 min, with a final extension of 68°C for 10 min. The PCR products were separated by 1% agarose gel electrophoresis. DNA from the target band was excised from the gels and purified, then ligated into the pMD 18-T vector (TaKaRa, Dalian, China) and sequenced by Sangon Company (Shanghai, China).

Sequence Analysis of *TaCKX3*

Similarity searches for nucleotides and deduced amino acids were conducted using the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) Basic Local Alignment Search Tool (BLAST) network server (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.gov/BLAST>). The exon/intron constitution of *TaCKX3*

was determined by comparison between corresponding cDNA and genomic DNA sequence. The alignment of the putative amino acid sequences of *TaCKX3* with other known CKXs from wheat, maize, rice, and *A. thaliana* was carried out using DNAMAN software. The phylogenetic tree at amino acid level was also drawn using DNAMAN based on the sequence alignment. Signal peptides were predicted with the program SignalP (<http://www.cbs.dtu.dk/services/SignalP/>). Its isoelectric point (pI) and molecular weight (MW) were analyzed by pI/MW program (available on the ExPaSy Web site at <http://www.expasy.org/>).

Chromosomal Localization of *TaCKX3*

To determine the chromosomal localization of the novel gene, specific primer sets—forward, 5-GAGGATGCGGG AGATGATGC-3, and reverse, 5-TATAAGTGATCCC GGTCAGG-3—were designed according to the sequence of the obtained *TaCKX3* gene to amplify wheat genomic DNA. A series of wheat NT lines of CS were used in this work. The PCR products were separated with 6% sodium dodecyl sulfate–polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis gels, which stained by silver.

Quantitative Real-Time PCR Analysis

The first-strand cDNA was synthesized from 2 µg total RNA using the RevertAid First Strand cDNA Synthesis Kit (Fermentas, Canada) and oligo (dT) primer. Real-time PCR experiments were performed using SYBR Green RealMasterMix (Tiangen) and CFX96TM Real-Time System (BioRad, Hercules, CA) according to the manufacturer's protocols. β-Actin expression was used as an internal standard. Three biological replications were analyzed for each point. PCR was performed using the following primer sets: *TaCKX3*, forward, 5-CGTGGCTCAACCTCTTCGTC-3, reverse, 5-GTTCGGGTCCCACCTTGCTC-3; actin, forward, 5-GCAA TGTATGTCGCAATCCAG-3, reverse, 5-CTTCATTA GATTA TCCGTGAGGT -3.

Results

Cloning and Sequence Analysis of *TaCKX3*

A 2,555-bp full-length DNA of *TaCKX3* was obtained from wheat by using primer *TaCKX3F* and *TaCKX3R*. Comparison between cDNA and genomic sequence was performed to determine the introns' positions and sequence. Sequence analysis showed that the coding region of *TaCKX3* has three introns, which are 103, 421, and 458 bp, successively (Fig. 1).

We performed a BLAST search of wheat EST GenBank database and found that the cDNA of *TaCKX3* was more highly homologous with known *TaCKX3* EST (BE404516.1) than any other *TaCKX* ESTs from wheat. According to the previous work (Galuszka et al. 2004), we named the novel gene as *TaCKX3*. The full-length nucleotide sequence was submitted to the GenBank Data Libraries under the accession number GQ925404.

Bioinformation Analysis of Amino Acid Sequence Deduced from *TaCKX3*

The *TaCKX3* cDNA with a TAG stop codon encodes a 516-polypeptide. To analyze the homologous identity scores of the predicted protein with other known CKXs, sequence alignment of the deduced amino acid sequence with other known CKXs was performed and a phylogenetic tree based on evolutionary distances was constructed using DNAMAN program. As shown in the alignment, two functional domains with characteristics of *TaCKX3* were identified by sequence comparison: the FAD binding domain (from positions 70 to 192 of amino acid sequences) and the CK binding domain (from positions 224 to 504 of amino acid sequences; Fig. 2). The alignment also displayed many conserved motifs, like GHS motif in FAD binding domain around position 80 and PHPWLN motif around 370 (Fig. 2). A PGQXIF signature (X stands for K or D amino acid) was present at the C-terminal ends of the proteins (Fig. 2). Some of the conserved regions may play important roles in catalytic action of CKX.

The phylogenetic tree revealed that the putative polypeptide of *TaCKX3* has significant homology with *ZmCKX10*, up to 82% identity, but less than 35% identity scores to other known CKX used for comparisons (Fig. 3). The result showed that *TaCKX3* is closely related to *ZmCKX10* and has low homologies with other CKXs to some extent.

The theoretical molecular mass of the encoded protein is 55.7 kDa with a calculated pI of 5.93 (<http://expasy.org/tools/>). *TaCKX3* gene may be a nonsecreted CKX gene in wheat. The protein of *TaCKX3* differs from that of *TaCKX1*, which carries typical N-terminal sequences of secretion pathway protein (Feng et al. 2008). As *AtCKX7* and *ZmCKX10* (Schmülling et al. 2003; Šmehilová et al. 2009), the deduced sequence of *TaCKX3* has no signal peptide, and therefore, *TaCKX3* may carry out functions in cytoplasm.

Chromosomal Localization

PCR using DNA of CS NT lines as templates showed that Y361 and other 20 NTs produced the target band except N7BT7A (Fig. 4). Therefore, the novel gene of *TaCKX3* was located on wheat chromosome 7B.

Fig. 1 Nucleotide sequence of the *TaCKX3* gene and the deduced amino acid sequence. The amino acid sequence is shown in the *single letter code* below each nucleotide codon. Nucleotide and amino acid numbers are indicated at the *right*. The *short bar* below the nucleotide sequence indicates a stop codon

	ACCGCAGTGGGAAGAGAAGCGCTTGCTTGCCCAAG	-1
ATGATGCTCGCCTACATGGACCGCGCCGCGGCGCCGCGGAGCGGGACGCGCTCGAGCTGACCGTGGTGGCCGCGACGCGGCA		90
M M L A Y M D R A A A G A A A E R D A L E L T V V A A D A A		30
GAGTGC CGCGGCGGAGGGACTTCGGCGGCTTGTGAGCGCGCCCGCGGCGTCTCGGCCGCGGAGCGGGACGACGTGCCAGC		180
E C A A A R D F G G L V S A R P A A V V R P A S A D D V A S		60
GCCATCCGCGCGGCGCGCGCACACGCACTCACCGTGGCGCCCGCGGCAACGGCCACTCGGTGCCGGGACGGCCATGTCGGAGGGC		270
A I R A A A R T T H L T V A A R G N G H S V A G Q A M S E G		90
GGCCTCGTCTCGACATGCGCGCGCGGCGGCTCGCGGCGCTCGAGATGAAGCTCGTCTCGCCTGGCGGTGGGGCGGCTTCGCCGAC		360
G L V L D M R A G A A S R R L Q M K L V S P G G G A A F A D		120
GTCCCGGCGGCGCTCTGGGAGGAGTCTCCACTGGGCGTCTCGAACACGGCCTCGCCCCACCTCTGGACGGACTACCTCGG		450
V P G G A L W E E V L H W A V S N H G L A P T S W T D Y L R		150
CTCACCGTGGCGGACGCTCTCCAACGGCGGCTCAGCGGGCAGTCTTCCGGTACGGCCCGAGGTGTCAAACGTGGCCGAGCTCGAG		540
L T V G G T L S N G G V S G Q S F R Y G P Q V S N V A E L E		180
GTGGTACC GGCGAAGCGAGTGC CGCTCTGCTCCACTCCGCCACCCCGACCTCTTCTCGCGTCTCGGCGGCTCGGCCAGTTC		630
V V T G E G E C R V C S H S A H P D L F F A V L G G L G Q F		210
GGCGTACACCGCGCCCGCATCCCGCTCTCCCGCGCCACAACGgtaccctacgactccccatccgcatcctcatcgtcgaacga		720
G V I T R A R I P L S P A P Q T		226
cgcacgctcaccggccggcgtgcgctgccccttgactgactgcagGTGAAGTGGGCGCGTGGTTTACGCGAGCTTCGGGAGTACGCG		810
V K W A R V V Y A S F A E Y A		241
GCGGACGCGGAGTGGTGGTGACGCGGCGGCGGAGTCGGCTTCGACTACGTGGAGGGCTTCGCGTTCTGTCGCGAGCGACGACCCGGT		900
A D A E W L V T R P A E S A F D Y V E G F A F V R S D D P V		271
AACGGTGGCGTTCGGTCCCATCCCGCGGCGCGGCTTCGACCCGTCGCTCTCGCGGCGAGTCCGGCCCGCTGCTCTACTGC		990
N G W P S V P I P A G A R F D P S L L L A G E S G P L L Y C		301
CTGGAGGTGGCCCTGTACCAGCACCCGACCCAGCAGCCCGACGACGTGGACGAGgtaggccggcactggcgctgtaactccccgaggat		1080
L E V A L Y Q H P H Q Q P D D V D E		319
gtcgtcgtctatctcccgtgattgtggccccggaccgccccgcgctcgcgcccactccccggccccccccaccacgcccacg		1170
cccaccggtcgcgcccaatccagcaatccagtcagtcgctgcgacggccgatctcacgtcgtacaatggggccgagccccccccacc		1260
tcacctcactcagctctcctttgtccccatggaacagctcagccatccatctatctacaccagcagcagcactaggccggcatgtgacg		1350
acgtgacacgatagcgtccgtcgttactcgttactcgtctgctgccaagaccattgatcttgattcgcctcctcgtcgtcgtcgtcat		1440
gtatgtttgtccgtgtccgtgcagAGGATGCGGGAGATGATGCGGCGGCTCAAGTACGTGCGGGCCCTGGAGTACGCGGCGGACGCTCCG		1530
R M R E M M R R L K Y V R G L E Y A A D V R		341
GTACGTGGAGTTCCTGTGCGCGTGAACCGGGTGGAGGAGGAGGCGCGCGGAGCGGACGCTGGCGGCGCGCACCCGCTGGCTCAACCT		1620
Y V E F L S R V N R V E E E A R R S G S W A A P H P W L N L		371
CTTCGTCTCGCGCGGACATCGCCGACTTCGACCGCGCGTCTCAAGGGCATGCTCGCCGCGGCGTGCAGCGGGCCATGCTCATCTA		1710
F V S A R D I A D F D R A V L K G M L A D G V D G P M L I Y		401
CCCCATGCTCAAGAGCAAgtgagatcccacttatacactccaacgatgacgcaccacctctcctcttcttggattgcttccgcgcgcc		1800
P M L K S K		407
gctcggcgcatgagcagagttgccatttggcgagctcttgcgacgtcaccgacgcatggtggcgagcggtgagcctccccctgctcag		1890
tcagagcaccgctgacggcaggagtgatcctgaccgggatcacttataataagacggctcctccgacttctccatcaatcccgtt		1980
ccgttttggattagccgtgcaagatcgcgcttagcagctaccagctcagtcctatgattgataaaactattattatcaccatgcaag		2070
tctctcagccacaggccatgcaactgctgtgtgtgacgacggcgccattgtttacgacagctctcttctctctcttcttcttctgt		2160
atcgtgacgctggtgacttgacGTGGACCCGAACAGTCCGTGGCGTGC CGGAGGGCGAGGCTTCTACCTGGTGGCGCTGCTG		2250
W D P N T S V A L P E G E V F Y L V A L L		428
CGGTTCTGCCGGGCGGACGGCGCGGCGTGGAGGAGCTGGTGGCGCAGAACGGCGGATCGTGCAGCCTGCCGGAGCAGCGGCTAC		2340
R F C P G G S G A A V E E L V A Q N G A I V D A C R S S G Y		458
GACTTCAAGACCTACTCCCGCACTACCGCAGGAGCCGACTGGGCGCGCCACTTCGGCCAAAGTGGGCCCGCTTCGTGCAGCCGCAAG		2430
D F K T Y F P H Y R T E A D W A R H F G A K W A R F V D R K		488
GCCCGTACGACCCGCTGGCGATCCTCGCCCGGGCCAAAAGATCTTCCGCGGACCCCTCTCTCCCGAACCGACCGATCATAGCTG		2520
A R Y D P L A I L A P G Q K I F A R T P S S S R T D R S -		516

TaCKX3	MMLAYMDRAAAGAAAERDALELTVVAADAEECAAAAR.....DFGCLVSRPAAVWRPA	53
ZmCKX10	MMLAYMDRATA.AAPEDAGREPATTAGCCAAAAT.....DFCCLASMPAAVWRPA	52
TaCKX1MAIVYVLLVALITAASHAPHGAHQQTWHGDLAA.LAAAAGKPRSDPNATLAASTDFGNITAAALPAAWLFPS	69
ZmCKX 1	...MAVYVYLLLAGLIACSHALAACTPALGDDRGRPWASLAA.LALDGKLR TDSNATAAASTDFGNITSALPAAWLFPS	76
OsCKX1	...MAAIYLLIAALIASHALAAHCAGACVPLAAAAPLPFPGLAASGKLR TDPNATVPASDFGNITAAALPAAWLFPC	76
Consensus	dfg a paav p	
TaCKX3	SADDVASAIRA..AARTTHDTVAARCNCHSVAGQAMSEGGVLVDMRAGAA.SRRLQMKLVSP...GGCAAFADVP...	122
ZmCKX10	SADDVASAIRA..AALTPHLTVAAARCNCHSVAGQAMSEGGVLVDMRS LAAPS RRAQMQLVWQCPDGGCRRCFADVP...	127
TaCKX1	SPADVAALLRGAHTTVAWPYTISFRGRHSLMCGALAPGGV.....VWDMPSLGGPS SAARINVSAD	131
ZmCKX 1	STGDLVALLSAANSTPCWPTYTIAFRGRHSLMCGAFAPGGV.....VWNMASLGDAAPPRINVSAD	138
OsCKX1	SPGDVAELLRAAYAAPGRPFTVSRFRGRHSTMGQALAAAGGV.....VWHMQSMGGCGAP.RINVSAD	137
Consensus	s d t rg ghs gqa gg v	
TaCKX3GCALWEEVLHWAQVSNHGLAPTSWTDYLR LTVGCTLSNCCVSGQSFYRGPQVSNVAELBWWTGCECRVCSHSAH	196
ZmCKX10GCALWEEVLHWAQVDMHGLAPASWTDYLR LTVGCTLSNCCVSGQSFYRGPQVSNVAELBWWTGCEBRRVCSHSSH	201
TaCKX1	CQYVDAGCEQMWIDVLRATLERGVAPRSWTDYLR LTVGCTLSNACHSCQTYRHCPQISNVLELDWITGHCERMVTC SKLSLS	211
ZmCKX 1	CRYVDAGCEQVWIDVLRASLARGVAPRSWTDYLR LTVGCTLSNACHSCQAFRHCPQISNVLELDWITGHCERMVTC SKQLN	218
OsCKX1	GAYVDAGCEQLWIDVLRPAQARGVAPRSWTDYLR LTVGCTLSNACHSCQTYRHCPQISNVLELDWITGHCERTVTC SKAVN	217
Consensus	gg a g ap sw dyl ltvggtlsn g sqq r gpq snv e v tg ge cs	
TaCKX3	PDLFFAVLGGLGQFCVITRARIPLSPAPQTVKMARVYASFAEYAADAEWLVTRPAESAFDYVEGFAPVRSDDPVNGWPS	276
ZmCKX10	PDLFFAVLGGLGQFCVITRARIPLHRAPQAVPWTRVYASIAADYADAEWLVTRPPDAAFVYVEGFAPVNSDDPVNGWPS	281
TaCKX1	ADLFDVAVLGGGQFCVITRARIAPAPTRAPMARLVYTDFAAFSADQERLAA...PCTRRRVRADLPRCGRGLREPPQGR	289
ZmCKX 1	ADLFDVAVLGGGQFCVITRARIAPAPTRAPMARLVYTDFAAFSADQERLTAAPRGGGASFCGMSYVEGSVFNQSLA	298
OsCKX1	SDLFDVAVLGGGQFCVITRARIAPAPTRAPMARLVYADFAAFSADQERLVAARPDGSH...GPWSYVEGAVYLGRGL	294
Consensus	dlf avl ggl gq f g v i r a r a p s w d y l t v g g t l s n g s q q r g p q s n v e v t g g e c s	
TaCKX3	VPIPAGARFDP SLLLAGESGPLLYCLEVALYQH PHQPPD VDERMRE.....MMRRLKYVRGLEAYAA.DVRYVEFL	346
ZmCKX10	VPIPGGARFDP SLLPAGA.GPVLYCLEVALYQY AHR.PDDVDDDEEDQAAVTVSRMMAPLKHVRGLEFAA.DVGYVDFL	358
TaCKX1	RABELC..RVLHRRRRRRI VAVAAARMATTYVYIETTLNYD.SAT...AASVDQELS PVLATLRHEEGLAFVRDASYLEFL	364
ZmCKX 1	TDLANT..GFFTDADVARI VALACERNATTVYS IEATLNYD.NATAAAAAVDQELASVLGTLSYVECFAPQRDVAIAFL	375
OsCKX1	AVALKSSGCF FSDAD AARVVALAAARNATAVYS IEATLNYAANATPSS..VDAVAALCDLHFACFSF SRDVTVEEFL	372
Consensus	d y fl	
TaCKX3	SRVNRVVEEARRSGSMAAPHWLNLFVSARDIADFDRAWLKGMLADGVD..CPMLIYPLKSKRQDPNTSVALPEGEVFFYL	424
ZmCKX10	SRVNRVVEEARRNCSMDAPHPWLNLFVSARDIADFDRAWLKGMLADCID..CPMLVYPLKSKRQDPNTSVALPEGEVFFYL	436
TaCKX1	DRVHGEVAVLADKICLWRVPHWLNLFVPSRIADFDRCWFKGILQD.TDIACPLVYVPLNKSRQDQMSAVTPAEK..VF	441
ZmCKX 1	DRVHGEVAVLADKICLWRVPHWLNLFVPSRIADFDRCWFKGILQD.TDIACPLVYVPLNKSRQDQMSAATPSED..VF	452
OsCKX1	DRVYSVEEALAKACLWRVPHWLNLFVPGSRIADFDRCWFKGILQATTDIACPLIYVPLNKSRQDAAMS AVTPEGEBEVF	452
Consensus	rv e g w phwln v iadfd v kg l d gp yp ks wd s p	
TaCKX3	VALLRFPCPGSGAAVEELVAQNCAITVDACRSGCYDFRTYFPHYRTEADWARHFGAKWA.RFVDRKARYDPLAILAPGQKI	503
ZmCKX10	VALLRFCSRGGP.AVDELVAQNCAILRACRANGYDYKAFPSYRCEADWARHFGAAARWRFFVDRKARYDPLAILAPGQKI	515
TaCKX1	YAVSLFSSVAD.DLKRLEAQNQKILRFCDLACIGYKRYLAHYTAHGDDWRHFGG.KWRRFVEMKORYDKRLLSPGQDI	519
ZmCKX 1	YAVSLFSSVAPNDLARLQEQNRRILRFCDLACIQYKRYLARHTDRSDWRHFGAAKWRRFVEMKORYDKRLLSPGQDI	532
OsCKX1	YVWSLFSAVA.NDVAALEAQNRRILRFCDLACIGYKRYLAHYDSRGGDWRHFGG.AKWRDFVDRKORYDKRLLSPGQDI	530
Consensus	l qn i c g k y dw rhfg rfv k ydp l pqg i	
TaCKX3	FARTPSSSRTRDR	515
ZmCKX10	FPRVPASVAV	525
TaCKX1	FNLVL	524
ZmCKX 1	FN	534
OsCKX1	FN	532
Consensus	f	

Fig. 2 Alignment of the deduced amino acid sequences of TaCKX3 and the known CKX from GenBank. *Shaded regions* show identical amino acids

Expression Levels of TaCKX3 Gene in Germinating Embryos

The expression of the *TaCKX3* gene in germinating embryos after different stress treatments was measured by real-time quantitative reverse transcription PCR analysis. The water-treated germinating embryos have little expression of *TaCKX3* (Fig. 5). Compared with the water mock treatment, all of NaCl, 6-BA, and PEG-6000 treatments increase *TaCKX3* mRNA expression in germinating embryos (Fig. 5). The expression of *TaCKX3* in germinating embryos treated with PEG-6000 and NaCl increased

slightly. *TaCKX3* transcription was strongly up-regulated by 6-BA. This experiment indicated that *TaCKX3* gene is salt and drought inducible and can be significantly up-regulated by 6-BA.

Discussion

As a class of plant hormones, endogenous CKs levels in plants are maintained by the balance between biosynthesis and metabolism. The CKX was thought by far to be the only enzyme in plants to catalyze the catabolism of the

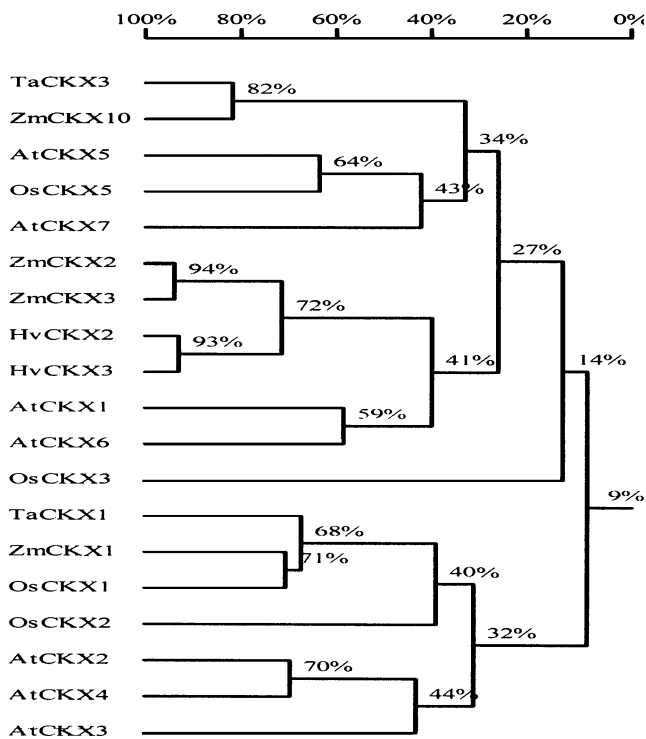


Fig. 3 Phylogenetic tree of protein sequences of TaCKX1 and other known CKX from maize, rice, Arabidopsis, and barley. The numbers on the branches presented correspond to the degree of shared sequence similarity. TaCKX1 (DQ784573), TaCKX3 (GQ925404), ZmCKX1 (Y18377), ZmCKX2 (AJ606942), ZmCKX3 (AJ606943), ZmCKX10(ACJ06785), OsCKX1 (EAY72836), OsCKX2 (AP003244), OsCKX3 (AC051632), OsCKX5 (AP003344),HvCKX2 (AF540382), HvCKX3 (AY209184), AtCKX1 (NM219714), AtCKX2 (AF303978), AtCKX3 (AF303979), AtCKX4 (AF303980), AtCKX5 (AF303982), AtCKX6 (NM116209), and AtCKX7 (AF303981)

specific CKs (Hare and Van Staden 1994; Jones and Schreiber 1997; Galuszka et al. 2001). Since the activity of CKX was first discovered (Pačes et al. 1971), the molecular and biochemical characteristics of CKX were well analyzed in the previous studies (Jones and Schreiber 1997). However, the detailed functions of CKX in plant growth and development were still unclear. It has been made great progress to study the functions of CKX in the past few years since the first CKX gene was cloned from maize (Houba-Hérin et al. 1999; Morris et al. 1999). Overexpressing *DSCCKX1* orchid resulted in CKX activity increasing with a reduction of CK content. On the contrary, antisense transgenic plants showed higher endogenous CK content than wild-type plants (Yang et al. 2003a). In maize, though all of *ZmCKX1*~5 were expressed at early stages of

Fig. 4 Amplified products by specific primer of *TaCKX3* using the DNA of NT lines of CS and Y361 as template

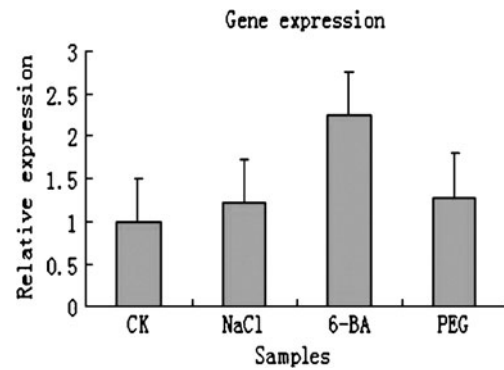


Fig. 5 Quantitative real-time PCR analysis of *TaCKX3* transcripts in germinating embryos after treated with H₂O, 250 mM NaCl, 10 μM 6-BA, and 20% PEG-6000 for 12 h

kernel development, each *ZmCKX* gene had its own spatial and temporal expression profile (Massonneau et al. 2004). In other words, the functional study of CKX genes has shown the direct relationship between CKX activity and CKs metabolism.

The results of previously cloned CKX genes showed that CKX genes belong to multigene family (Galuszka et al. 2004). There are 7 homologous CKX genes in *Arabidopsis* and at least 11 in rice and 5 in maize (Galuszka et al. 2004; Massonneau et al. 2004). The large volume of wheat genome implies that there may be more CKX genes in wheat. However, the full-length CKX genes were rarely cloned from wheat by now (Feng et al. 2008). In this work, we cloned a novel *TaCKX3* gene from Hexaploid wheat. The cDNA nucleotide sequence of *TaCKX3* was aligned with that of *TaCKX1* using DNAMAN, and the result showed that they share 60% identity (data not shown). Nevertheless, the deduced proteins of the two *TaCKX* genes have lower identity.

As other known CKXs, the deduced amino acid polypeptide of *TaCKX3* has two conserved domains for FAD binding and CK binding, respectively. However, the predicted sequence lacks signal peptide, which means that it may be a nonsecreted protein and function in the cytosol. There is generally only one CKX per plant genome that lacks a translocation signal (Šmehilová et al. 2009). By alignment analysis, the putative protein has low sequence homology with other CKX except ZmCKX10, which also has no signal peptide (Šmehilová et al. 2009). TaCKX3 and ZmCKX10 have significant identity scores and were distributed in one group in the phylogenetic tree, which suggests that they may have similar biochemical functions. Interestingly, AtCKX7 is also a cytoplasm protein without

signal peptide (Schmülling et al. 2003), but it has low homology with TaCKX3 and ZmCKX10.

Environmental stress can change plant growth by altering gene expression and cellular metabolism. Under drought stress, the amount of CKX increased threefold in the roots of sunflower plants (Manju et al. 2001) and the enzyme activity had been enhanced in the stressed leaf tissue. Although many data of the biochemical properties of the enzyme were reported at present, the CKX gene expression and its regulation were still not clear. One study demonstrated that drought could induce CKX1 expression at the pedicel region of maize kernels on molecular level (Brugiére et al. 2003). Vaseva-Gemisheva et al. (2005) showed that *PsCKX1* and *PsCKX2* mRNA expression was both increased in leaves of drought stressed pea plants. Up to now, the study of CKX in responding to salt stress in plants is few reported.

In this work, the real-time quantitative reverse transcription PCR showed that *TaCKX3* gene can be significantly induced by 6-BA in germinating embryos, and the gene expression increased slightly in germinating embryos treated by NaCl or PEG-6000 comparing with that treated by H₂O. The results suggest that *TaCKX3* is a salt and drought inducible gene. Many researches have demonstrated that CKX activity may be induced by CKs (Jones et al. 1992; Dietrich et al. 1995). In our study, the result showed that the *TaCKX3* gene was enhanced by exogenous 6-BA. It is consistent with the previous studies of applying exogenous CKs resulted in the increasing of CKX expression (Wang et al. 2009). These results clearly show the positive response of the CKX transcription under CK induction on the molecular level. Because each CKX gene's spatial and temporal expression profile are almost different in one plant (Massonneau et al. 2004), further work is required in order to illuminate the detailed functions of CKX in every stage of plant growth and development.

Acknowledgments The authors thank Dr. Bin Liu (Department of Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology, University of California, Los Angeles) for the critical review of the manuscript. They also thank Prof. Bin Wang (Institute of Genetics and Developmental Biology, Chinese Academy of Science) for sending us seeds of nulli-tetrasomic lines of "Chinese Spring." This project was supported by the Scientific Research Award Foundation for Outstanding Young and Middle-Aged Scientists of Shandong Province of China (BS2009NY037) and the International Cooperation Program for excellent Lecture of 2009 by Shandong Provincial Education Department, P.R. China.

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