RESEARCH ARTICLES

Identifcation of elite Indian sugarcane varieties through DNA fngerprinting using genic microsatellite markers

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Abstract

Sugarcane is one of the important crops for sustainable economy and global energy security with high phenotypic polymorphism. Precise identifcation and characterization of plant genetic resources is one of the most essential aspects for breeding programs. Sugarcane popular hybrid varieties and genetic stocks routinely being used as a parent in hybridization program were included in the study. Molecular cataloguing was accomplished using a set of 70 primer pairs, of which \sim 39% were found to be robust polymorphic and unique in all the genotypes used. The number of DNA bands amplifed by expressed sequenced tags derived simple sequence repeat (EST-SSR) primers ranged from 1 to 10 with an average of 5 bands per primer pair and their fragment size ranged between 50 and 1690 bp. Polymorphism information content (PIC) values were ranged from 0.17 to 1.00 with an average of 0.58. Unique DNA fngerprints of thirteen elite sugarcane varieties were generated with 27 polymorphic sugarcane specifc EST-SSR markers. Analyses of DNA profles produced by microsatellite markers showed the unique bands specifc for individual variety. Generated DNA profles would facilitate accurate variety identifcation in the perspective of protection of the breeder's intellectual property rights, farmer's rights and their purity testing. In addition, developed reliable DNA fngerprinting system will be able to track a potent parent genotype for breeding programs. The identifed genotype specifc and unique EST-SSR markers will be valuable for conservation and management of sugarcane genetic resources.

Keywords DNA fngerprinting · EST-SSR markers · Morpho-agronomical descriptors · Variety identifcation · Germplasm conservation and management · Purity testing

Introduction

Sugarcane (*Saccharum* sp. hybrid L.) is an important agroindustrial crop which contributes greatly to national gross domestic product (GDP) and provides employment opportunities to farmers, agriculture labourers, transporters and factory workers in India as well as in many other countries

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(Hoang et al. [2015\)](#page-8-0). Sugarcane crop provides feedstock to industry for sugar and jaggery production and industrial cellulosic biomass reprocessed to electricity production and second-generation bioethanol production (De Souza et al. [2013](#page-8-1)). Ever-increasing number of sugarcane varieties being developed by the diferent public or/and private institutions in India and many other sub-tropical and tropical countries of the world. Variety diversifcation is the most important to improve farmers economic status and survival of the sugar industry. This is not only the desirableness of variety protection as well as the exigency of monitoring the genetic diversity in breeding programs. Therefore variety identifcation and characterization is extremely important for all agricultural practices (Anonymous [2012](#page-8-2)). Precise identifcation of the newly developed crop varieties is also essential for their registration, seed multiplication, trade and inspection, and germplasm conservation and management. Since genotype identifcation and characterization is the primary step in any crop improvement program, quick recognition of cultivars

would hence provide value-aided information for crop breeding (Korir et al. [2012](#page-8-3)).

The traditional approach to germplasm identifcation is based on set of morpho-agronomical descriptors which involves observation and recording of gross morphological characters (Artschwager and Brandes [1958;](#page-8-4) LaBorde et al. [2008](#page-8-5)). In sugarcane there are the some major characteristics used to assess the distinctiveness, uniformity and stability (DUS) which includes; leaf sheath trichomes, shape of ligule, dewlap colour, leaf blade curvature, leaf blade width, internode colour, internode diameter, shape of internode, rind surface appearance, stalk waxiness, shape and size of bud, groove of bud, bud tip in relation to growth ring, number of millable canes (NMC) per stool, cane height, and others (Anonymous [2006](#page-8-6)). Phenotypic traits are often multigenic, not available at all growth stages and considerably infuenced by prevailing environment (viz; light, ambience temperature, relative humidity, rainfall, atmospheric pressure, soil health and others) as well as geographical factors (latitude, altitude, tropical and sub-tropical) (Govindaraj et al. [2012](#page-8-7); Singh et al. [2018](#page-8-8)). Thus, in present scenario a strong base is extremely required for the cultivar identifcation, protection of the breeder's intellectual property rights, germplasm conservation and paternity testing of the released varieties (Hemaprabha et al. [2010\)](#page-8-9) and early assessment of plantlets in sugarcane nursery (Silva et al. [2012](#page-8-10)).

With the devise of several molecular marker techniques, morpho-agronomical descriptors have supplemented with DNA markers in genotype identifcation and characterization (Singh et al. [2019a\)](#page-8-11). Uniquely, DNA-based markers are not infuenced by environmental fuctuations and detectable in all tissues regardless of plant age, growth and developmental stages, thus allowing precise germplasm identifcation, conservation and management across diferent environmental conditions (Singh et al. [2013,](#page-8-12) [2014a](#page-8-13), [2015](#page-8-14)). Thus, molecular markers have emerged as powerful tools to identify the plant varieties. Several molecular marker techniques have been devised for DNA fngerprinting based genotype identifcation (Singh et al. [2011,](#page-8-15) [2017\)](#page-8-16). Microsatellites or simple sequence repeat (SSR) marker technique preferred as a potent molecular tool owing to their desirable genetic attributes of reproducibility, relative abundance, multiallelic nature, co-dominant inheritance and amenable to high throughput genotyping in sugarcane and allied grasses (Cordeiro et al. [2001](#page-8-17); Varshney et al. [2002](#page-8-18); Singh et al. [2014b](#page-8-19), [2019b](#page-8-20)).

However cost-efective DNA marker systems (SSRs) have been developed by several research groups over the world, but a huge number of varieties have been developed and used in breeding which makes fngerprinting job expensive in terms of laboratory resources, labor and time expenditure (Zhu et al. 2012 ; Singh et al. $2019a$). In spite of that, it is inevitable to assemble the fngerprinting database of the elite commercial sugarcane varieties for frequent and unambiguous identifcation with the other developed similar varieties (Hemaprabha et al. [2010](#page-8-9); Singh et al. [2017\)](#page-8-16). In present study, EST-derived sugarcane microsatellites (EST-SSR) markers developed by our team (Singh et al. [2019a\)](#page-8-11) in previous investigation were used to identify and characterize 13 popular Indian sugarcane varieties through DNA fngerprinting. Most of the selected varieties are under cultivation at medium to large scale in sub-tropical areas of India. Used varieties represent important genetic stock and frequently being used as parents to establish a cross for breeding high yielding variety. The variety specifc molecular cataloging was carried out for each individual accession which maintained as a reference dataset at Sugarcane Research Institute (UPCSR), Shahjahanpur, (U.P.) India.

Materials and methods

Sugarcane varieties

A set of 13 promising sub-tropical CoS, (Coimbatore–Shahjahanpur) CoSe (Coimbatore–Seorahi) and UP (Uttar Pradesh) sugarcane varieties developed at Sugarcane Research Institute (UP Council of Sugarcane Research), Shahjahanpur, (UP), and its regional center Genda Singh Sugarcane Breeding & Research Institute (GSSBRI), Seorahi, (UP), India were selected. Although used all the 13 varieties are not frequently under cultivation at farmer's felds but, they have ruled over the entire sugarcane growing areas of the northern India and are still being cultivated in many of the sugar factories of Uttar Pradesh. Since they are having some untapped useful alleles in their genome, owing to this reason these varieties are frequently used as proven parents in sugarcane genetic improvement programs to breed promising varieties for subtropical India. Genetically pure material of these genotypes was collected from experimental farms of the institute. Variety name, their parentage, maturity group, year of release, and originating center are detailed in Table [1.](#page-2-0)

Extraction of genomic DNA and PCR amplifcation

Genomic DNA was extracted from disease free immature fresh leaves of all the 13 sugarcane varieties using CTAB protocol described by Hoisington ([1992](#page-8-22)) with minor modifcations (Singh et al. [2011\)](#page-8-15). To remove out the RNA content, raw DNA was treated with RNase enzyme for 1 h at 37 °C. The DNA was diluted to a final concentration of \sim 25 ng/ μ l as determined by agarose-gel electrophoresis using known concentration of uncut λ DNA as standard. Total 361 functionally informative microsatellite primers were designed from conserved nucleotide sequences SSR motifs of the

S. no.	Sugarcane varieties	Parentage	Maturity group	Year of release and notification	Originating centre UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
1.	CoS 767	Co 419 \times Co 313	Mid-late	1982		
2.	CoS 99259	CoS 0767CG	Mid-late	2004	UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
3.	CoS 96268	Co $1158\times$ Co 62198	Early	2007	UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
4.	CoS 8432	MS 68/47 × Co 1148	Mid-late	1987	UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
5.	UP 0097	$Se1444/91 \times Se1854/91$	Mid-late	2003	SRS, Gorakhpur	
6.	CoS 95255	Co $1148\times$ Co 62198	Early	2004	UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
7.	CoS 96269	BO $108 \times$ Co 1148	Mid-late	2004	UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
8.	CoSe 05451	CoPant 90223 GC	Early	2012	GSSBRI, Seorahi	
9.	CoS 8436	MS 68/47 × Co 1148	Early	1987	UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
10.	CoS 08279	$CoLK8102\times Co89003$	Mid-late	2012	UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
11.	CoSe 92423	$BO\,91\times Co\,453$	Mid-late	2001	GSSBRI, Seorahi	
12.	CoS 03251	Co $1158 \times C0$ 62198	Early	2011	UPCSR, Shahajahanpur	
13.	CoSe 03234	BO 91 PCGC	Early	2008	GSSBRI, Seorahi	

Table 1 Description of the 13 elite sugarcane varieties identifed with informative microsatellite (EST-SSR) markers

non-redundant EST-database of sugarcane under our previous study (Singh et al. [2019a\)](#page-8-11). To check the genetic uniformity of the SSR primers, ten individual DNA samples of each sugarcane variety were assayed with five sugarcane specific EST-SSR primers. Only monomorphic DNA profles were observed between individuals within a genotype and thus establish confrmation to marker's genetic uniformity. A set of seventy sugarcane EST-SSR markers were employed in genetic characterization assay, among them 27 primer pairs (Table [2\)](#page-3-0) that generated unambiguous and reproducible profles were used to construct DNA fngerprints of the 13 sugarcane varieties under study. Conserved genetic regions of the SSR motifs were PCR amplifed with polymorphic EST-SSR primers in 10 µl reaction volume. PCR mixture were containing 25 ng of template DNA, 0.02 mM of both forward and reverse primers, 10 mM of each dNTPs (dATP, dTTP, dGTP, and dCTP), 0.5 U of Taq DNA polymerase (Bangalore Genei™, India) and 1.0 µl of 10× PCR bufer with 2.5 mM of MgCl_2 . The PCR reactions were performed in a thermo cycler (M J Research PTC 100) using the following thermal conditions as; initial denaturation at 94 °C for 5 min, followed by 30 cycles consisting of 94 °C for 1 min, primer annealing at optimised (50–60 °C) temperature for each primer pair for 1 min, and primer elongation at 72 °C for 2 min followed by a fnal primer extension step at 72 °C for 5 min. Three times PCR reactions were repeated for each primer pair to ensure the reproducibility of EST-SSRs.

Analysis of microsatellite (EST‑SSR) data

The PCR products were resolved on a 7.5% native polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (PAGE) in vertical gel electrophoresis unit (Bangalore Genei™) using 0.5× TBE bufer. Visualization of bands was carried out by 0.5 μg/ml

ethidium bromide (EtBr) and images were captured under UV light using gel documentation system (Alpha Innotech). Thirteen genotypes were compared with each other using their PCR amplifed DNA profles generated with specifc markers. Only unambiguous, clear-cut, robust, and reproducible bands were scored and unclear and difused bands ignored.

Results and discussion

DNA fngerprints and molecular cataloging of identifed varieties

The elementary DNA fngerprints of the 13 popular sugarcane varieties were generated successfully with the 27 robust polymorphic EST-SSR markers. A set of 70 primer pairs were used to amplifed, of which ~ 39% were found to be robust polymorphic. The number of DNA bands amplifed by EST-SSR primers was ranged from 1 to 10 with an average of 5 bands per primer and their fragment size ranged between 50 and 1690 bp. Polymorphism information content (PIC) value was ranged from 0.17 to 1.00 with an average of 0.58 (Table [2\)](#page-3-0). For instance, DNA profles of the sugarcane variety CoS 767 was generated using a set of 22 EST-SSR markers (Fig. [1\)](#page-4-0). The developed microsatellite markers were found to be potentially suitable for DNA fingerprinting based genotype identifcation and characterization. The molecular profles and genotype specifc unique DNA bands produced by diferent EST-SSR markers have maintained as a molecular catalogues of each identifed variety (Table [3](#page-5-0)).

The results of the DNA fngerprinting in promising sugarcane varieties have revealed the authenticity of EST-SSR marker system for the identifcation and characterization of

S. no.	Primer ID	Primer sequence $(5' \rightarrow 3')$	Repeat motif	Annealing temp $(T_a^{\circ}C)$	amplified	No. of band Band size range (bp)	PIC value
1.	SuMS1	F-GTCTCTTTTGGGTTTCATCTC R-AGATCTTTGCCTCAGTTTCAT	(ACC)4	50	$1 - 6$	50-556	0.77
2.	SuMS2	F-GCATATGCAATTATGACTTCAC R-CCAATGAATGTGTGTGTCTG	(GTCCT)5	52	$2 - 5$	106-1354	0.77
3.	SuMS3	F-AACAGAGATAGCGTTCAGGTT R-TAGACTATGACACGGACCAGT	(AC)11	50	$1 - 6$	50-1125	0.25
4.	SuMS4	F-CAAAGCAAAAGAAGAAGAAGA R-CCAGAAACTGCAAAAGATGT	(TCCT)4	52	$1 - 3$	103-940	0.72
5.	SuMS5	F-AATTGGAGAAATCAGGAAGAC R-AGAGTTTGCATGCCTGAC	(AGG)4	55	$1 - 9$	146-1560	1.00
6.	SuMS ₆	F-TGATTGTCTAGTTGTGTGTGC R-ATTTTCATCAACTGGCAGAG	(AAG)4	52	$1 - 4$	50-940	0.20
7.	SuMS7	F-AACAAAGCAAAAGAGAAGAGG R-AGAAGTCTACGCCAGCACT	(GA)12	53	$3 - 8$	206-1606	0.34
8.	SuMS8	F-GAGTATATAAGGAGGGCAAG R-TACAGGTTTAGGTCGTCGTTA	(GAG)4	53	$1 - 10$	110-1248	0.17
9.	SuMS9	F-ATCCAATCCAAGTTCCAAG R-CACGGACTGGATCGTTAC	(GTT)5	53	$1 - 7$	50-1280	0.50
10.	SuMS10	F-TGAAGCTTGCTTTAATCCATA R-CTATCCTGTTTTGTTGCATGT	(CCG)5	53	$1 - 7$	58-1310	0.50
11.	SuMS11	F-TTAATCTTGTTGAGTGGCTGA R-ATACTGTCACGATGGTGCTT	(GAGGA)3	53	$1 - 4$	50-1150	0.50
12.	SuMS12	F-AGAGAAGGTGATTGTTCTTGG R-GTTAGAATAACAAACGGCGTA	(AT)10	52	$1 - 6$	348-1182	0.50
13.	SuMS13	F-CCATTAAGGTGGTTCTCCA R-TTTTTGAGCATCCTGCTACT	(GCG)4	52	$1 - 7$	50-1495	0.47
14.	SuMS14	F-TAATATCGCGATGCTCTAGTT R-ATACTGTCACGACGGTGCT	(GGA)4	52	$2 - 10$	50-1205	0.60
15.	SuMS15	F-AGGTATTCGCGATGATCTAGT R-ATTTTCATCAACTGGCAGAG	(GGT)5	53	$1 - 7$	120-1595	0.86
16.	SuMS16	F-GCAAGCTTGAGGCTAGAAT R-CTTCAATTTGGAAGAAACTTG	(GGA)4	53	$1 - 7$	130-1690	0.70
17.	SuMS17	F-GTACGCGGGAGAGTCAAG R-GTTGCAGAAACAAATGAAAGA	(CGC)6	53	$1 - 8$	420-1321	0.67
18.	SuMS18	F-CTCCATGGGAAATCTTCAT R-GTGAGGGCGATAAATTAGG	(TGT)7	53	$0 - 6$	$75 - 1203$	0.60
19.	SuMS19	F-AGGATAAAGAGGGGAAGAAAG R-TTTCTCATCATCCTTCCTTTT	(TCA)4	53	$1 - 5$	150-1132	0.86
20.	SuMS20	F-GAAAGGATAAAGAGGGGAAG R-TTTTTCATTTTCTGGCTCTC	(AC)11	50	$0 - 4$	345-1132	0.25
21.	SuMS21	F-CGTTTATCATGTGGGTGTAGT R-ATTAATAGAGGCAAGCAAAGC	(AGCT)3	50	$1 - 8$	210-1200	0.50
22.	SuMS22	F-CTCGCTCCTCTTCGAGAT R-GCATCATCAAACAATCCTG	(ATCA)3	50	$1 - 4$	236-781	0.60
23.	SuMS23	F-CCTGCCTCCTCAGTCTCT R-GCGGAAAAAGGGTAGAGT	(GGTT)3	50	$1 - 6$	76-1666	0.20
24.	SuMS24	F-GTTCCCCTTTCTCTCGTC R-AGTTCTTCAAATCAAGCCTCT	(ATTG)3	50	$2 - 4$	$701 - 1245$	1.00
25.	SuMS25	F-AAGTTGAGCATCCATCCAT R-GTAGGCTTTCTTCTCTTCGTC	(AAG)6	53	$1 - 8$	74-943	0.56
26.	SuMS26	F-ATGCTCTTCTTCATAGTGTCC R-CAGCCTGATCCTCGTCTC	(ACTAT)3	53	$3 - 5$	81-650	1.00

Table 2 Details of microsatellite (SSR) primers like; primer Id (SuMS; sugarcane microsatellite), primer sequence, repeat motifs, Ta, number and size of fragments amplifed, and their PIC value

Fig. 1 DNA profling of sugarcane variety CoS 767 generated by 22 sugarcane microsatellites (SMS) markers. Note: M—50 bp ladder, lane 1—SMS1, 2—SMS3, 3—SMS4, 4—SMS9, 5—SMS10, 6—SMS11, 7—SMS14, 8—SMS15, 9—SMS17, 10—SMS18, 11—

genotypes (Jannoo et al. [2001;](#page-8-23) Piperidis [2003](#page-8-24)). DNA fngerprinting in sugarcane is relatively simple than the in seed propagated crops and found to be more uniform and stable fngerprints once generated (Singh et al. [2011](#page-8-15)). Thus, DNA profles generated by these functional markers produced using genomic DNA create a unique identity of the analyzed genotype and hold promise the ultimate tool for biological individualization of sugarcane varieties (Singh et al. [2013](#page-8-12)).

Hence, DNA fngerprinting would provide accurate and stable varietal recognition in regards of plant variety protection, authenticity testing and germplasm conservation and utilization in addition to quality assurance for release of new varieties to the country (Singh et al. [2013,](#page-8-12) [2015](#page-8-14)). Molecular characterization to assign identity to the cultivars could also be used in DUS testing, variety registration, and in resolution of dispute (Hemaprabha et al.

SMS23, 12—SMS24 13—SMS25, 14—SMS27, 15—SMS28, 16— SMS29, 17—SMS30, 18—SMS33, 19—MS37, 20—SMS41, 21— SMS42, 22—SMS43

[2010\)](#page-8-9). Moreover, to develop a DNA profle of plants has great importance in breeding, owing to facilitating for the identifcation of duplicates in the germplasm collection and the organization of crosses leads to an improved breeding outcome (Ruiz et al. [2011](#page-8-25)). The identifcation of varieties based on molecular markers is important to set up distinctness, uniformity and stability of protected cultivars (Hemaprabha et al. [2010](#page-8-9); Swapna et al. [2011](#page-8-26)). Polymorphic microsatellites were used to generate unique molecular profles for the identifcation of individual genotypes that can be used in breeding program to assist the protection of new sugarcane varieties (Silva et al. [2012\)](#page-8-10). Accordingly, DNA fngerprinting is a valuable tool to serve in the protection of newly developing sugarcane varieties by the diferent breeding programs.

1082, 1203

SuMS8 110, 122,

SuMS8

135 114, 126,

135

183, 591, 1092

135, 618, 1017

128, 145, 588

149, 205, 255, 395, 618, 818, 936, 1058

110, 122,
139, 190,
611, 1050, 611, 1050,

SuMS9 122, 517 50, 130,

122, 517

SuMS9

210, 248, 325, 318, 1280

 62

58,370

SuMS10

59, 357

59

500, 680,
780, 1060
1310 780, 1060,

105, 124, 501

125, 525 121, 131,

125, 525

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483

115, 133, 213, 350, 540, 605, 1120

60, 408 60, 145 55, 73, 860 * 88, 150,

60, 145

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55, 73, 860

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88, 150,
223, 574

77, 127, 187, 470

60, 140, 225, 315

80, 136, 182, 207, 233, 372

125, 510 125 121, 132 51, 182,

125

125,510

121, 132

670, 781

160, 636 123, 210,

160,636

153, 170

380, 472, 643, 815

924, 1024, 1030, 1606

1016, 1087, 1307

135, 590 141 135 182 145, 175,

135

 141

135,590

182

237, 262, 575, 625, 700, 727, 1016, 1248

125, 146, 174, 225, 432, 810, 1100

170, 217

Table 3 (continued)

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Author contributions RBS conceived and designed the experiment, performed the experiments, and wrote the paper. BS was involved in acquisition and interpretation of data. RKS revised the paper.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no confict of interest directly or indirectly and informed consent to publish this study and that the manuscript complies with the ethical standards of the journal.

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