CONTROL OF THE GRAPEVINE MOTH L. BOTRANA THROUGH THE MANIPULATION OF THE PLANT TERPENOID PROFILE

Umberto Salvagnin1, Mickael Malnøy1, Stefan Martens1, Manuela Campa1, Federica Trona2, Marco Tasin2, Gianfranco Anfora1

1 Research and Innovation Centre, Fondazione Edmund Mach, Via Mach 1, 38010 San Michele all’Adige, Italy. umberto.salvagnin@fmac.it
2 Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, P.O. Box 102, 230 53 Alnarp, Sweden.

Introduction: The grapevine moth Lobesia botrana is one of the key pests of grape. Damages of the vineyard are achieved both by direct larval feeding on reproductive tissue of the plant (flowers, berries) and by secondary infections of microorganisms. Current control systems are either based on pesticides (many of which are currently being phased out) and mating disruption, that does not work well in non-delimited areas, or areas where pest population is high. We therefore suggest a method that instead works on the female by modifying the host-finding and the egg-laying behaviors, which in herbivore insects are mostly mediated by kairomones manipulation.

Recent wind-tunnel studies have shown that a blend of the 3 grape terpenoids (E)-b-caryophyllene, (E)-farnesene and (E)-4,8-dimethyl-1,3,7-nonatriene (DMNT) elicits attraction comparable to that of the complete fruit headspace collection in laboratory essays. The same blend gave also promising result when tested in field conditions. It was shown also that the specific ratio among compounds is crucial, since both the subtraction and the percentage variation of any of the three chemicals resulted into an almost complete loss of activity.

Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM)

Dorsal side (A) covered with scale few sensilla project from the surface. In the ventral side (B), only partially covered by scales, several types of sensilla are placed. The most densely distributed are the sensilla trichodea and sensilla auricillica. An electrotyphonically sharpened tungsten wire was used to penetrate the insect head cuticle to serve as ground electrode, while another electrotyphonically sharpened tungsten electrode was inserted at the base of the sensilla to establish contact with the receptor neurons.

Single-Cell Recording

Recordings were made from the ventral surface of medial segments of the antenna, which lodges most of the sensilla. SCR responses to kairomones were strongly female-specific and sensilla auricillica-specific, and in the same range of spike frequency.

Targeted Terpens

The three specific terpenes β-caryophyllene, β-farnesene and DMNT are evolved by different Terpene Synthase Enzymes (TPE) from the same substrate, Farnesyl Pyrophosphate (FPP). Many TPS gene families were characterized in recent years in various species, also in Grapevine. It is now possible a genetic engineering approach for the manipulation of the terpenoid profile emitted by the plant.

First Strategy: TPS genes overexpression

Candidate TPS genes expression is driven by strong constitutive promoter

Second Strategy: RNAi on TPS genes

The formation of a siRNA targeting the TPS candidate genes lead to RNAi.

Regenerants will give plants with altered terpenoid profile.

Conclusion: The plants obtained will be a potential useful tool to investigate further the plant-insect interactions, and are a likely starting point of new insect control strategies based on kairomones manipulation in plants.