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Profiling of small RNAs derived from cucumber mosaic virus in infected Nicotiana benthamiana

plants by deep sequencing

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Highlights

The profile of vsRNAs was characterized in CMV-m2b infected Nicotiana benthamiana.

The NbRDR6 was confirmed to enhance the antiviral defense by amplifying vsRNAs.

The NbAGO proteins bind different vsRNAs to promote the antiviral silencing.

ABSTRACT

In plants, RNA silencing is a conserved mechanism underlying antiviral immunity. To investigate

antiviral responses in Nicotiana benthamiana, we analyzed the profiles of the virus-derived small RNAs

(vsRNAs) in wild-type N. benthamiana and NbRDR6 mutant plants infected with the cucumber mosaic

virus (CMV) 2b-deficient mutant. We observed that NbRDR6 regulates RNA silencing by producing

vsRNAs that trigger an effective antiviral response, while NbRDR1 may nonredundantly and

synergistically function with NbRDR6 to mediate immune responses. The vsRNAs in N. benthamiana

and NbRDR6 mutant plants mainly comprised 21 or 22 nucleotides, and mostly consisted of a 5'-terminal

adenine. Additionally, NbAGO2 expression was significantly up-regulated in N. benthamiana and

NbRDR6 mutant plants, suggesting that NbAGO2 is closely associated with the antiviral activities of

vsRNAs. The distribution of vsRNAs in the CMV genome was biased toward RNA sense strands in both

N. benthamiana and NbRDR6 mutant plants. These findings indicate the specific and conserved antiviral

immunity in Nicotiana benthamiana.

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