Journal of Plant Biochemistry & Physiology
ISSN: 2329-9029
OPEN ACCESS Freely available online
Perspective

Role of Auxins, Cytokinins, Gibberellins, Abscisic acid and Ethylene

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INTRODUCTION

Plant hormones are crucial signalling molecules that orchestrate various physiological processes essential for growth, development and responses to environmental stimuli in plants. Among the key plant hormones are auxins, cytokinins, gibberellins, Abscisic Acid (ABA) and ethylene, each playing distinct yet interconnected roles in regulating plant physiology.

DESCRIPTION

Auxins

Auxins, primarily represented by Indole-3-Acetic Acid (IAA), are pivotal in promoting cell elongation and differentiation, particularly in apical dominance, root initiation and phototropism. They regulate gene expression by binding to specific receptors and initiating signaling cascades that control cell growth. Auxins also influence tropic responses, guiding plant growth towards light sources (phototropism) and in response to gravity (gravitropism). Their role in vascular tissue differentiation and fruit development further underscores their importance in plant growth and architecture.

Cytokinins

Cytokinins, such as zeatin, are crucial for stimulating cell division and growth, particularly in roots and shoots. They interact synergistically with auxins to maintain the balance between cell proliferation and differentiation. Cytokinins also delay senescence (aging) by promoting chloroplast development and nutrient mobilization from older leaves to younger tissues. Their involvement in regulating apical dominance and promoting lateral bud growth contributes to overall plant architecture and productivity.

Gibberellins

Gibberellins (GAs) regulate various aspects of plant growth and development, including seed germination, stem elongation, leaf expansion and flowering. They promote cell elongation by promoting the degradation of DELLA proteins, which act as growth repressors. GAs also coordinate developmental transitions such as the transition from vegetative to reproductive growth and fruit development. Their role in breaking seed dormancy and promoting germination further highlights their significance in plant life cycles.

Abscisic Acid (ABA)

ABA plays a critical role in plant responses to environmental stresses such as drought, salinity and cold. It triggers stomatal closure to reduce water loss and regulates seed dormancy and germination. ABA levels increase under stress conditions, promoting adaptive responses that enhance plant survival. Conversely, ABA levels decrease during favorable conditions to facilitate growth and development, illustrating its role as a key regulator of stress responses and growth transitions.

Ethylene

Ethylene is a gaseous hormone that regulates various physiological processes, including fruit ripening, leaf and flower senescence and response to mechanical stress. It promotes fruit ripening by triggering the expression of ripening-related genes and enhancing fruit softening and color changes. Ethylene also mediates responses to biotic stresses such as pathogen attack and insect damage, as well as abiotic stresses like flooding and mechanical injury. Its dual role as a growth regulator and stress hormone highlights its versatility in coordinating plant responses to diverse environmental cues.

Interactions and integration

While each hormone has specific functions, their actions often intersect and integrate to coordinate plant growth and development holistically. For example, auxins and cytokinins work together to regulate cell division and differentiation in meristematic tissues, while gibberellins and auxins collaborate during fruit development to coordinate cell enlargement and fruit growth. ABA and ethylene may act synergistically during stress responses to optimize plant survival strategies.

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Received: 24-Jun-2024, Manuscript No. jpbp-24-32283; **Editor assigned:** 27-Jun-2024, PreQC No. jpbp-24-32283 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 11-Jul-2024, QC No. jpbp-24-32283; **Revised:** 11-Jun-2025, Manuscript No. jpbp-24-32283 (R); **Published:** 18-Jun-2025, DOI: 10.35248/2329-9029.25.13.361

Citation: de Smet I (2025) Role of Auxins, Cytokinins, Gibberellins, Abscisic acid and Ethylene. J Plant Biochem Physiol. 13:361.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the intricate network of auxins, cytokinins, gibberellins, ABA and ethylene underscores their indispensable roles in regulating plant growth, development and responses to environmental changes. Understanding their mechanisms of action and interactions is crucial for enhancing agricultural productivity, improving stress tolerance in crops and unraveling the complexities of plant adaptation in dynamic environments. Continued research into plant hormone signaling pathways promises to unveil new insights into optimizing plant performance and sustainability in agriculture and natural ecosystems alike.