Marker assisted recurrent selection for genetic male sterile population improvement in rice

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Abstract
In the present study, by deploying marker assisted recurrent selection (MARS) strategy, the improvement of IR58025B genetic male sterile maintainer population for drought and salinity tolerance was carried out to develop maintainers with drought and salinity tolerance. Individual crosses were performed among sterile plants of IR58025B maintainer population and donors of drought tolerance viz., Vandana (qDTY12.1) and FL478 (Saltol). F₁ plants were confirmed for the presence of target genes/QTLs with the help of SSR markers and raised to produce F₂ seeds. Selected F₂ plants were harvested and seeds from each cross combination were mixed in equal proportions to generate population for the first random mating or recurrent selection cycle. The same process is continued up to 4th cycle and 200 selected plants were subjected to genotyping for drought and salinity with the help of reported SSR markers. About 48 plants were found positive for salinity tolerance, 17 plants were positive for drought and 10 plants were positive for both the traits. These lines were advanced by pedigree method of breeding for deriving maintainers with drought and salinity tolerance.

Keywords
MARS, recurrent selection, Genetic male sterility, Population improvement, SSR markers, maintainers, Hybrid rice

INTRODUCTION
Rice is the most important staple food for more than 60% of world’s population (Shaheen et al 2017). India is the 2nd largest producer of rice after China with the production of 106 million tonnes. The main goal of breeders is to increase the rice productivity by imparting tolerance against biotic and abiotic stresses. In general, biotic stresses of rice include leaf blight, blast, plant hoppers and leafhoppers; and abiotic stresses include salt, drought, temperature, etc. Among all the abiotic stresses, salinity and drought significantly limit the rice yield compared to biotic stresses (Hossain, 1995; Dey et al 1995; Asch et al 1997).

Drought stress is a major problem for much of the world’s cultivation land (O’Toole and Chang, 1979; Chang et al 1982). Yield stability and production in rainfed areas are severely affected by drought stress (Shaheen et al 2017). As drought is the most severe abiotic constraint in upland rice cultivation, breeding strategies for production of cultivars with an improved drought tolerance were in quick progress (Bernier et al 2008). In addition to drought, rice cultivation is also affected by salinity especially in inland areas due to excessive irrigation with poor quality of water and improper drainage systems (Ismail et al 2010). Some other factors that significantly increase salt affected areas are increased surface evaporation, weathering of rocks, salt water irrigation, over-exploitation of underground water and poor cultural practices (Rekha et al 2018). However, rice is sensitive to salinity at early vegetative and reproductive stages and can survive well in standing water. (Ismail et al 2007)

Recurrent Selection (RS) has been widely used to increase a desired gene frequency in a population which leads to breakdown of undesirable linkage (Hull, 1945; Fujimski, 1979) in crop systems like maize (Dudley and Lambert, 2004) and rice (Hull, 1945;). It includes three phases - development of base population for selection, evaluation of selected individuals and selection of best individuals followed by their inter-crossing to generate a new population. In general, compared with cross pollinated crops, this approach is difficult to implement in self pollinated crops due to tedious inter-crossing. To overcome this, strategy of genetic male sterility was introduced in rice (Fujimski, 1979), soybean (Werner and Wilcocoax, 2004) and wheat (Wang et al 1996) for
facilitating intercrossing. With this background, the present study was targeted to derive the maintainer lines that are tolerant to salinity and drought with the help of genetic male sterility mediated marker-assisted recurrent selection.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Plant Materials: The genetic male sterile maintainer population in the background of IR58025 B was obtained from IRRI, Philippines was maintained by IIRR as DRCP-105 population was utilized in the present study. GMS maintainer population was developed by ethyleneimine mediated induced chemical mutation by IRRI. Drought tolerant genotype Vandana carrying qDTY12.1 and salinity tolerant genotype FL478 carrying Saltol were chosen as donors for transferring drought and salt tolerance to maintainer population.

Execution of the Experiment: From the IR 58025B base population, sterile plants (with white-shriveled anthers) were selected and confirmed by pollen study under microscope by staining with 1 % I-KI (Virmani et al 1997). These sterile plants were individually crossed with the drought and salt tolerant donors. F1s were grown as and evaluated for their heterozygosity and all were found to be fertile.

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\text{msms (sterile) } \times \text{MSMS(fertile)} \rightarrow \text{MSms (fertile)}
\]

Selected F2 plants were harvested and seeds from each individual cross were bulked in the equal quantity to generate first random mating population. At the time of peak anthesis supplementary pollination was given to maximize out-crossing. After maturity, out crossed seeds on sterile plants were harvested and dried properly. Bulked seeds from sterile plants of first random mating cycle constituted second random mating and the same procedure continued till the fourth cycle. During the fourth random mating cycle, 200 plants were genotyped for drought and salt tolerance. Plants showing homozygous and heterozygous banding patterns were advance by pedigree method of breeding for further evaluation.

DNA was extracted from fresh rice leaf samples through mini preparation method suggested by (Zheng et al 1995). Microsatellite markers were amplified in Thermal Cycler (Eppendorf vapo. protect) using 30ng template DNA, 2.5mM dNTPs each, 10p moles of each primer, 1 U/µl Taq polymerase (Genaxy Scientific Limited, India) and 10 X Taq buffer A with tris and 15mM MgCl2 (Bangalore Genei, India) in a volume of 10µl reaction with initial denaturation at 94º C for 5 min, followed by 30 s at 94º C, 30 s at 55ºC, and 1 min at 72ºC for 35 cycles, and final extension at 72ºC for 7 min. The PCR products were separated on 3.5% agarose gel with ethedium bromide staining followed by UV visualization.

Phenotyping for seedling stage salinity tolerance and reproductive stage drought tolerance: Some of the rice lines found to be possessing Saltol 1 by marker assisted selection during progeny evaluation were phenotyped for seedling stage salinity tolerance along with the negative and positive controls as reported by Gregorio et al 1997. Prominent drought tolerant lines identified by genotyping for drought tolerance were subjected to the phenotyping for reproductive stage drought tolerance as reported by Fischer et al 2012.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Genotyping: On genotyping 200 plants in the 4th recurrent selection cycle with the reported markers for salinity tolerance - RM3412 linked to Saltol QTL located on chromosome 1 (Thomson et al 2010) and drought tolerance - RM511 linked to qDTY12.1 QTL located on chromosome 12 (Arvind kumar et al 2012), we had identified 48 plants showing positive banding pattern for salinity tolerance, 17 plants showing positive banding pattern for drought tolerance and 10 plants were identified to carry both drought and salinity tolerance banding patterns. (Fig. 1)
Five plants of each of these tolerant lines were raised in three row pedigree method during *Kharif* 2015 and evaluated with the help of markers for salinity and drought tolerance. Salt tolerant lines further segregated as 67 plants and 39 plants which were homozygous and heterozygous respectively. Drought tolerant lines showed 22 plants homozygous and 12 plants heterozygous for drought tolerance QTL. Further genotyping of plants from salinity-drought tolerant lines are resulted in obtaining three plants with genes for the QTLs of salinity and drought tolerance.

Phenotyping for Agromorphological Traits: Statistical analysis on R-software of crop duration, tillering ability, plant height and single plant yield of individual plants from IR 58025B maintainer base population, 4th and 5th cycles of recurrent selection showed that, there was a negative correlation between crop duration and tillering ability (Fig. 2). On analyzing plants for tillering ability, large number plants of GMS maintainer population, it was observed that on an average productive tillers of 10-15; in the 4th recurrent selection cycle 10-12 tillers containing plants were dominant, followed by 5-10 tillers and also plants with 5-30 tillers were also seen; In the 5th cycle was observed to be dominant with 5-20 tillers and also plants with 10-20 tillers were frequent (Fig. 3). When plant height was observed among these three populations, lesser variations among plant height was seen in base population; more variance in plant height was there in the 4th cycle and 5th cycle has showed plants with stable plant height (Fig. 4). On observing for crop duration among these three populations, early, medium and late duration plants were seen in base population and variable crop duration was observed in the 4th recurrent selection cycle; and a stabilized duration range of 95-125 days was seen in the 5th cycle but very less number of late plants were also obtained (Fig. 5). Coming to the single plant yield, yield of single plants was distributed in the range of 5-60grams but 15-20grams per plant was predominant in DRCP105 maintainer population; in the 4th cycle single plant yield was slightly increased than base population and up to 90grams per plant was also seen but up to 25grams per plant was regular. In the same way, the 5th cycle was observed to be with the plants of decreased single plant yield than to the 4th cycle but added advantage was found as plants with tolerance to salinity and drought stresses (Fig. 6).

![Fig.2. Correlation among DRCP105 maintainer population, the 4th and 5th recurrent selection cycles](image-url)
Fig. 3. Comparison of Tillering Ability of DRCP105 Maintainer Population, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cycles of Recurrent Selection

Fig. 4. Comparison of Plant Height of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cycles of Recurrent Selection with DRCP105 Maintainer Population
Fig. 5. Comparison of Crop Duration of the 4th and 5th cycles of Recurrent Selection with DRCP105 Maintainer Population

Fig. 6. Comparison of Single Plant Yield of the 4th and 5th cycles of Recurrent Selection with DRCP105 Maintainer Population
Drought and salinity are major abiotic constrains for the rice production. Drought affects the progress of rice production in rainfed areas of Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Fischer et al. 2012). Excessive irrigation with poor quality of water and lack of proper drainage facility exposes rice to salinity stress in inland areas (Ismail et al. 2010). Therefore, the breeders aim in improving rice for salinity and drought stress tolerance. Our current study includes marker assisted recurrent selection using genetic male sterility to improve rice for salinity and drought tolerance. Our aim was to develop suitable maintainer lines which are incorporated with these traits. We could identify prominent maintainer lines that are having tolerance towards salinity and drought individually; and also the plants having traits of both salinity and drought tolerance were seen. These plants were analyzed for phenotypic traits (SES, 2013). Phenotyping for rice seedling stage salinity tolerance was performed and the data generated is being analyzed for correlation with genotyping. Currently, the rice lines are being phenotyped for reproductive stage drought tolerance by means of late planting in the field. The results of salinity and drought tolerance screening are in progress. Therefore, it could be concluded that these maintainer lines could be potentially used to produce improved IR58025A CMS lines by repeated backcrossing with improved salinity and drought tolerance. Further, these stress tolerance lines will be evaluated for grain quality traits, including aroma.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The first author is highly thankful to Department of Science and Technology, SERB, Govt of India for the fellowship received from the project No. SERB/ No.SR/FT/LS-28/2011. The support received from ICAR-IIRR to carry out this research work is highly acknowledged.

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