



Research Article

Confirmations on gene introgression events and hybridity for BLB resistance and yield in rice

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ABSTRACT

A superior variety of rice with high yield and resistance to diseases is expected to meet the increasing demand for this one of the most important carbohydrate sources worldwide. Bacterial leaf blight (BLB) caused by *Xanthomonas oryzae* pv. *oryzae* (Xoo) is one of the major biotic stresses limiting rice production. Combining BLB resistance and high-yield traits is possible through gene pyramiding. Introgression of targeted traits in the parental genotypes and hybridity confirmation in the F₁ generation are important initial steps in gene pyramiding. This study aimed to confirm the presence of targeted genes in parent genotypes using specific molecular markers and to confirm the hybridity of F₁ plants generated from three crosses combinations of Inpari 32 (as the female parent) and three Code-qTSN4 lines (as the male parents) using SSR markers. This study successfully confirmed the introgression of BLB-resistance genes in Inpari 32 (Xa4, Xa7, and Xa21) and in Code-qTSN4 (Xa4, Xa7). The introgression of yield-related QTL, qTSN4, was confirmed in the three Code-qTSN4 lines (A10-1, B12-2, and A16-5) by RM17483 marker. Five SSR markers (RM5, RM55, RM105, RM223, and RM561) successfully confirmed the hybridity of F₁ derived from Inpari 32x A10-1 (five individuals), Inpari 32xB12-2 (one individual), Inpari 32xA16-5 (two individuals). These confirmed hybrids can be further evaluated in the F₂ generation.

Keywords: Gene pyramiding; molecular marker; SSR; qTSN4; Xoo.

INTRODUCTION

Rice is the primary staple food for half of the globe's population, especially in China, India, Indonesia, Japan, and other Southeast Asian countries. However, there are abiotic and biotic factors that impact rice cultivation and significantly limit its production (Dar et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2020).

Bacterial leaf blight (BLB) disease caused by the bacterium *Xanthomonas oryzae* pv. *oryzae* (Xoo) is one of the biotic factors that causes a significant decrease in rice production. The disease was reported to have become an epidemic in several locations of rice cultivation in many countries including Indonesia (Naqvi, 2019). The Xoo pathogen that infects rice plants produces bacterial droplet blight, which is the initial cause of a decrease in grain yield (Chukwu et al., 2019). BLB disease was recorded to reduce rice production by around 20%-30% (Saha et al., 2015). Therefore, the development of a high-

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yielding variety resistant to several BLB strains in rice breeding programs is expected to meet the constantly high demand for rice worldwide (Arunakumari et al., 2016).

At present, a total of 46 genes (*Xa1-Xa46*) involved in rice resistance to various *Xoo* strains have been reported (Fiyaz et al., 2022). Developing new promising rice lines possessing durable resistance against BLB disease by pyramiding several desirable BLB resistance genes is essential in long-term BLB management and anticipating the emergence of a broader population of *Xoo* (Ramalingam et al., 2020). In addition to BLB resistance, attempts to meet the continuously increasing rice demand should include yield improvement. A previous study reported the *qTSN4* (total spikelet number) locus as a major QTL associated with increasing the number of rice grains (Fujita et al., 2012). Pyramiding of major genes/QTL related to BLB resistance and yield is expected to create superior rice varieties resistant to BLB with high yield.

Introgression major gene/QTL associated with resistance to BLB and high yield can be applied in popular superior rice varieties. Ciherang is the most popular variety in Indonesia and occupied more than 40% of the rice fields in the country by 2011 (Anas et al., 2022) with potential productivity of 7.05 tons ha⁻¹ (Satoto et al., 2016). Ciherang variety is therefore used as a genetic background for creating many superior varieties in rice breeding, one of which is Inpari 32.

Inpari 32 was generated from the crossing of the Ciherang rice variety and the rice line IRBB64. The IRBB64 rice line was known to have several BLB resistance genes, namely *Xa4*, *Xa5*, *Xa7*, and *Xa21* (Khoshkdaman et al., 2014). Further improvement of Inpari 32 can be done by crossing this variety with a high-yielding rice variety. Code is a high-yielding rice variety (7.5 tons ha⁻¹) carrying BLB resistance genes *Xa4* and *Xa7*, where the BLB resistance gene originated from IRBB64 and IRBB7 (Fatimah et al., 2014; Suryadi et al., 2016). Code variety was improved by inserting *qTSN4*, a locus that regulates the total spikelet number and early maturity, and resulted in a Code-*qTSN4* line (Tasliyah et al., 2015) which was further evaluated by molecular analysis and adaptation assessment (Tasliyah et al., 2019). Crossing Inpari 32 and Code-*qTSN4* is expected to generate superior rice variety with higher yield and better resistance to BLB.

Confirmation of the presence of target genes in the parental genotypes as well as hybridity confirmation of the progenies are crucial stages in a gene pyramiding strategy (Suarez-Gonzalez et al., 2018). Molecular marker is a swift and accurate method to verify the presence of target genes and to confirm hybridity (Miah et al., 2013; Chukwu et al., 2019). This study aimed to confirm the presence of major genes/QTLs linked to BLB resistance and yield in the Inpari 32 variety and the Code-*qTSN4* lines and to confirm hybridity in the F₁ generation using molecular markers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Confirmation of the presence of xa/Xa genes and qTSN4 in parental genotypes

The *Xa4*, *Xa5*, *Xa7*, and *Xa21* BLB resistance genes were introgressed into the Ciherang variety by crossing it with IRRBB64, resulted in Inpari 32 (Khoskadam et al., 2014). The *qTSN4* locus was introgressed into Code variety by crossing it with the IR64-NIL-*qTSN4* resulting in Code-*qTSN4* line (Tasliyah et al., 2015). The genetic materials used as parental genotypes in this study were Inpari 32 (as the female parent) and three backcross Code-*qTSN4* lines (as the male parent) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The genetic material used as parental genotypes in rice crosses for pyramiding genes for BLB resistance and high-yield.

Line/Variety	Genetic background	Reference
Inpari 32	Ciherang x IRBB64 (as female parent)	IAARD (2020)
A10-1	BC ₁ F ₅ Code x <i>qTSN4</i> (as male parent)	Tasliyah et al. (2019)
A16-5	BC ₁ F ₅ Code x <i>qTSN4</i> (as male parent)	Tasliyah et al. (2019)
B12-2	BC ₂ F ₄ Code x <i>qTSN4</i> (as male parent)	Tasliyah et al. (2019)

Total genomic DNA was isolated from the leaves of seedlings at 14 days after planting (DAP) using the modified CTAB method of Aboul-Maaty and Oraby (2019). DNA concentration was estimated using NanoDropTM2000 (Thermo Scientific, USA), while DNA purity was estimated based on the absorbance ratio values A_{260}/A_{280} and A_{260}/A_{230} . The PCR reaction was carried out with a total volume of 10 μL with a composition of 2 μL of 20 $\text{ng } \mu\text{L}^{-1}$ genomic DNA, 0.5 μL of forward and reverse primers with a concentration of 10 μM , 5 μL of 2x MyTaqTM HS Red Mix, and 2.5 μL of sterile distilled water. Primers used to confirm the presence of BLB resistance-related genes (*Xa4*, *xa5*, *Xa7*, *Xa21*) and *qTSN4* in the parental genotypes are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. List of primers to confirm the presence of *xa/Xa* genes and *qTSN4* in the parental rice genotypes.

Marker	Primer	Gene/ QTL	Primer sequence (5'-3')	Amplicon (bp)	Reference
STS	MP	<i>Xa4</i>	F:ATCGATCGA TCTTCACGAGG R:TCGTATAAAAAG GCATTCGGG	120 (Susceptible) 150 (Resistant)	Ma et al. (1999)
	M5	<i>Xa7</i>	F:CGATCTTACTGGCTCTGCAACTC TGT R:GCATGTCTGTGTCGATTCGTCCG TACGA	294 (Resistant) 1,170 (Susceptible)	Porter et al. (2003)
pTA248		<i>Xa21</i>	F:AGACGCGGAAGGGTGGTTTCCCG GA	700 (Susceptible)	Chunwongse et al. (1993)
			R:AGACGCGGTAATCGAAAGATGA AA	960 (Resistant)	Huang et al. (1997)
SNP	RG556/ DraI	<i>xa5</i>	F:TAGCTGCTGCCG TGCTGCGC	950 (Susceptible)	Huang et al. (1997)
			R:AATATTTTCAGTGT GCATCTC	450 (Resistant)	
SSR	RM17483	<i>qTSN4</i>	F:TAGCTTCGGTTCTTGATCGTTGG R:AAACAGATTGCTCACCACCTTGG	157	Fujita et al. (2012) Tasliyah et al. (2015)

The PCR program used initial denaturation at 95°C for 5 min, followed by 35 cycles consisting of denaturation at 94°C for 30 sec, annealing at 55°C for 1 min, and elongation at 72°C for 1 min. The PCR reaction ended with a final elongation process for 7 min at 72°C. Amplicons generated by the STS and SNP markers were visualized by electrophoresis in a 1.5% (w/v) agarose gel at a voltage of 100 V for 45 min in a 0.5x TBE buffer. The electrophoresis gel was then immersed in 0.5 $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ EtBr solution for 60 sec and washed with distilled water for 5 min before being visualized using a UV transilluminator (Gel Doc EZTM, Bio-Rad, USA). Meanwhile, amplicons produced by the SSR marker were analyzed by electrophoresis in a 7% polyacrylamide gel at a voltage of 80V for 110 min in 1x TBE buffer, following the electrophoresis method described by Mesapogu et al. (2013).

Hybridity confirmation of F₁ plants generated from three crossing combinations of Inpari 32xCode-qTSN4

Three crossing combinations were developed by crossing Inpari 32 (as the female parent) with three Code-qTSN4 lines (A10-1, B12-2, and A16-5). Flowering synchronization of the female and male parents was done by adjusting the planting time. The emasculation of female flowers was conducted one day before pollination to minimize the occurrence of self-pollination following the artificial hybridization method for self-pollinated plants (Sha, 2013). Six F₁ seeds from each cross combination were sown in a 14 cm x 14 cm pot containing planting medium with 200 g per pot manure, urea 300 kg ha^{-1} (42 g per pot), SP-36 150 kg ha^{-1} (2.1 g per pot) and KCl 75 kg ha^{-1} (1.05 g per pot).

Hybridity confirmation used simple sequence repeats (SSR) markers. Screening for SSR markers to confirm hybridization was carried out by amplifying the genomic DNA of the parental genotype using 21 markers (Table 3). Total genomic DNA was isolated from the leaves of seedlings at 14 DAP using a modified CTAB method of Aboul-Maaty and

Oraby (2019). The PCR reaction was carried out with a total volume of 10 μL with a composition of 2 μL of 20 $\text{ng } \mu\text{L}^{-1}$ genomic DNA, 0.5 μL of forward and reverse primers with a concentration of 10 μM , 5 μL of 2x MyTaqTM HS Red Mix, and 2.5 μL of sterile distilled water. The steps of the PCR program followed its references in Table 3. Amplicons were analyzed by electrophoresis in a 7% polyacrylamide gel (80 V for 110 min), following the polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis of Mesapogu et al. (2013) method.

Table 3. SSR markers to screen polymorphic in the parental genotypes to confirm hybridity of the F₁ progenies.

Primer	Primer sequence (5' to 3')	Reference
RM5	F: TGCAACTTCTAGCTGCTCGA R: GCATCCGATCTTGATGGG	Masduzzaman et al. (2016)
RM19	F: CAAAAACAGAGCAGATGAC R: CTCAAGATGGACGCCAAGA	Ashraf et al. (2016)
RM55	F: CCGTCGCCGTAG TAGAGAAG R: TCCCGGTTATTTTAAGGCG	Masduzzaman et al. (2016)
RM105	F: GTCGTCGACCCATCGGAGCCAC R: TGGTCGAGGTGGGGATCGGGTC	Masduzzaman et al. (2016)
RM161	F: TGCAGATGAGAAGCGGCGCCTC R: TGTGTCATCAGACGGCGCTCCG	Masduzzaman et al. (2016)
RM202	F: CAGATTGGAGATGAAGTCCTCC R: CCAGCAAGCATGTCAATGTA	Adegbaju et al. (2015)
RM215	F: CAAAATGGAGCAGCAAGAGC R: TGAGCACCTCCTTCTCTGTAG	Nachimuthu et al. (2015)
RM223	F: GAGTGAGCTTGGGCTGAAAC R: GAAGGCAAGTCTTGGCACTG	Lang et al. (2017)
RM230	F: GCCAGACCGTGGATGTTC R: CACCGCAGTCACTTTTCAAG	Grimm et al. (2013)
RM254	F: AGCCCCGAATAAATCCACCT R: CTGGAGGAGCATTTGGTAGC	Rejeth et al. (2020)
RM287	F: TTCCCTGTTAAGAGAGAAATC R: GTGTATTTGGTGAAAGCAAC	Nachimuthu et al. (2015)
RM413	F: GGCGATTCTTGGATGAAGAG R: TCCCCACCAATCTTGTCTTC	Nachimuthu et al. (2015)
RM431	F: TCCTGCGAACTGAAGAGTTG R: AGAGCAAAACCTGGTTCAC	Masduzzaman et al. (2016)
RM464	F: AACGGGCACATTCTGTCTTC R: TGGAAGACCTGATCGTTTCC	Goswami et al. (2017)
RM474	F: AAGATGTACGGGTGGCATTTC R: TATGAGCTGGTGAGCAATGG	Nachimuthu et al. (2015)
RM528	F: GGCATCCAATTTTACCCCTC R: AAATGGAGCATGGAGGTCAC	Ngangkham et al. (2019)
RM561	F: GAGCTGTTTTGGACTACGGC R: GAGTAGCTTTCTCCCACCCC	Zhang et al. (2022)
RM3843	F: CCAGATCATCCAGGCATAACATCACC R: CGGCGCTGGTAAACTCCATTCC	Ngangkham et al. (2019)
RM23835	F: TTCCGCTGTTTCTTCTTGTGC R: CTGGTTCTGCTGGTTCTGTAGTTGG	Goswami et al. (2017)
M23865	F: TCATCCCATTCTTTCCTCACC R: CATA CGGCCATACAAATGAACC	Goswami et al. (2017)
RM23869	F: GGCATATTCGTGTTGTCTCACC R: GCCACGCGTACCTGAGATATGG	Goswami et al. (2017)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Confirmation of the presence of *xa/Xa* genes and *qTSN4* in parental genotypes

The Inpari 32 variety was expected to have the BLB resistance genes (*Xa4*, *xa5*, *Xa7*, and *Xa21*) from the IRBB64 line as the male parent (Khoshkdaman et al., 2014). However, the successful introgression of these resistance genes has not been confirmed in present

research. Confirmation of successful introgression of the BLB resistance gene in the Inpari 32 variety is essential before using this variety as a female parent to pyramid the BLB resistance genes and yield (*qTSN4*). Introgression of the *Xa4* gene in the parental genotype is confirmed using MP primers which produced approximately 120 bp amplicon in the susceptible genotype and approximately 150 bp amplicon in the resistant genotype (Ma et al., 1999; Wang et al., 2020; Djedatin et al., 2022). Our result showed that the MP primer produced approximately 150 bp amplicons in the parental genotypes (A10-1, B12-2, A16-5, and Inpari 32) as shown in Figure 1a. This result confirmed the presence of *Xa4* in all parental genotypes.

RG556/DRAI was used to confirm the presence of *xa5* since the RG556 primer was reported to produce 1,000 bp and 1,500 bp amplicons in the rice genome (Huang et al., 1997). The PCR product was further digested with the Dra I enzyme to produce a specific amplicon polymorphism (SAP), estimated at 390+410 bp in the resistant genotype and 320+450 bp in the susceptible genotype (Huang et al., 1997). However, this study failed to detect amplicons in the parental genotypes after many repeated experiments (Figure 1b). A previous study reported that the *xa5* gene was also not detected using six RFLP markers (one of which was RG556) in 61 F₂ individuals resulting from the IR24×IRBB5 cross (Yoshimura et al., 1995). This indicates that the presence of *xa5* in the parental genotypes in this study needs to be confirmed using different markers.

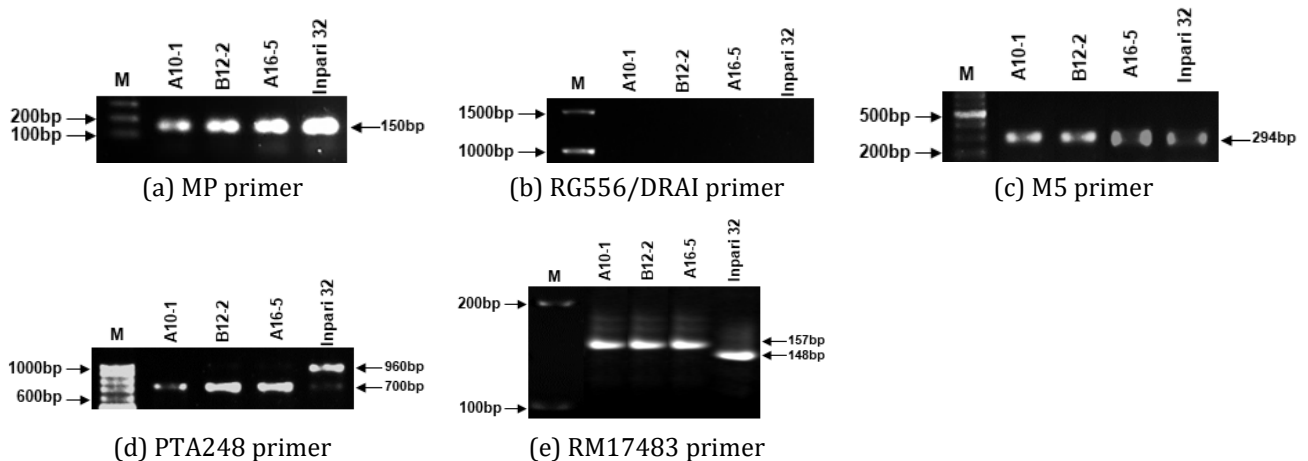


Figure 1. Electropherogram of parental genotypes to confirm the presence of genes of *Xa4* (a), *xa5* (b), *Xa7* (c), *Xa21* (d), and *qTSN4* (e). M: Marker DNA ladder 100 bp.

The M5 primer was used to confirm the presence of the *Xa7* gene. This marker was developed from the mapping of a cross-population between IR24 (susceptible) and IRBB7 (resistant) (Ogawa et al., 1991). Primer M5 has a distance of ≤ 27 kb from *Xa7*, and it amplified a 1,170 bp amplicon in IR24 (susceptible) and a 294 bp amplicon in IRBB7 (resistant) (Porter et al., 2003). The presence of the *Xa7* gene in the parental genotypes (A10-1, B12-2, A16-5, and Inpari 32) was confirmed by the presence of an approximately 294 bp amplicon (Figure 1c).

The presence of the *Xa21* gene was confirmed using the PTA248 primer which was developed from the RAPD marker, RAPD248, and further designed as a restriction fragment length polymorphisms (RFLP) linked to *Xa21* (Ronald et al., 1992). The PCR product from this primer produces a 900 bp amplicon in the resistant genotype and a 700 bp amplicon in the susceptible genotype (Chunwongse et al., 1993). The PTA248 was used to identify the presence of the *Xa21* gene in the development of gene-pyramid lines with durable bacterial blight resistance (Kumar et al., 2016). In our study, the 900 bp of Inpari 32 confirmed the presence of the *Xa21* resistance gene, while the 700 bp amplicon of A10-1, B12-2, and A16-5 confirmed the presence of the *Xa21* susceptible gene (Figure 1d).

The presence of *qTSN4* was confirmed using primer RM17483 developed from mapping NIL YTH326[YP9]. The *qTSN4*[YP9]-related RM17483 is located between RM3424 and RM17492 with a distance of 398 kbp (Fujita et al., 2009). The RM17483

generated PCR product (Figure 1e) showed an amplicon of 157 bp, confirming the successful introgression of *qTSN4* in Code-qTSN4 lines A10-1, B12-2, and A16-5 (Fujita et al., 2009, 2012; Tasliah et al., 2015; Tasliah et al., 2019). An approximately 148 bp amplicon was observed in Inpari 32 (Figure 1e). The identity of this amplicon and its effect on yield needs to be investigated further.

Crossing between Inpari 32 and three Code-qTSN4 lines was carried out after the presence of the BLB resistance gene and *qTSN4* in the parental genotypes was confirmed. Hybridity confirmation in F₁ is a crucial stage in self-pollinated plants since the occurrence of self-pollination after artificial hybridization is often observed (Sha, 2013). Seeds resulting from self-pollination cannot be physically distinguished from seeds resulting from cross-pollination. The Grow-Out-Test (GOT), a conventional method to test hybrid purity, is considered less accurate, time-consuming, and laborious (Bora et al., 2016). Therefore, hybridity confirmation utilizing molecular markers can be done by comparing the banding patterns of F₁ plants and their parents (Deshmukh et al., 2013). Screening for simple sequence repeat (SSR) markers to confirm hybridization was carried out by amplifying the genomic DNA of the parental genotypes using 21 markers. The screening results showed that 15 markers were monomorphic, one marker showed no amplicon, and five markers were polymorphic (Table 4).

Table 4. Screened SSR polymorphic markers in the parental genotypes to confirm hybridity of the F₁ progenies.

Polymorphic		Monomorphic	
Primers	Amplicon (bp)	Primers	Amplicon (bp)
RM5	A10-1 (117)	RM19	226
	B12-2 (117)	RM161	187
	A16-5 (117)	RM202	189
	Inpari 32 (123)	RM215	148
RM55	A10-1 (213)	RM230	257
	B12-2 (213)	RM254	165
	A16-5 (213)	RM287	118
	Inpari 32 (223)	RM413	79
RM105	A10-1 (131)	RM431	251
	B12-2 (131)	RM464	(no band)
	A16-5 (131)	RM474	252
	Inpari 32 (140)	RM528	232
RM223	A10-1 (158)	RM3843	100
	B12-2 (158)	RM23835	194
	A16-5 (158)	RM23865	149
	Inpari 32 (163)	RM23869	174
RM561	A10-1 (198)		
	B12-2 (198)		
	A16-5 (198)		
	Inpari 32 (190)		

Therefore, only five polymorphic SSR markers were further used to confirm the hybridity of the F₁ seedlings, which can differentiate the female parent (Inpari 32) from the male parents (A10-1, B12-2, A16-5). The RM5 marker produced an approximately 117 bp amplicon in the male parental genotypes and 123 bp in Inpari 32 (Figure 2a). The RM55 marker produced an approximately 213 bp amplicon in the male parental genotypes and 223 bp in Inpari 32 (Figure 2b). The RM105 marker produced an approximately 131 bp amplicon in the male parental genotypes and 140 bp in Inpari 32 (Figure 2c). The RM223 marker produced an approximately 158 bp amplicon in the male parental genotypes and 163 bp in Inpari 32 (Figure 2d). The RM561 marker produced an approximately 198 bp amplicon in the male parental genotypes and 190 bp in Inpari 32 (Figure 2e).

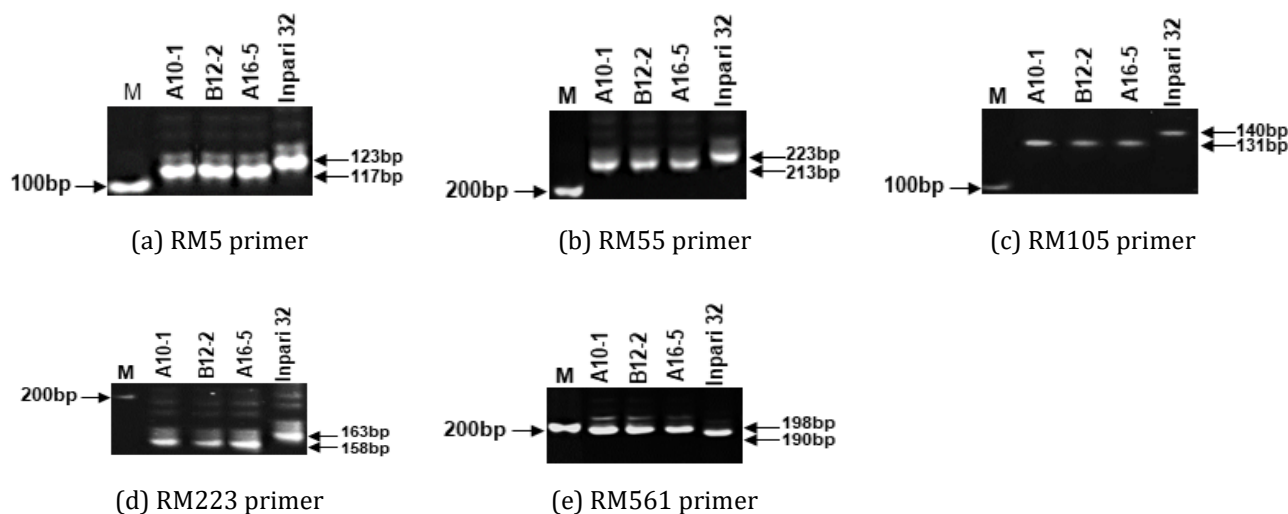


Figure 2. Electropherogram of parental genotypes with SSR Markers RM5 (a), RM55 (b), RM105 (c), RM223 (d), and RM561 (e). M: Marker DNA ladder 100 bp.

Polymorphic SSR primers verified that F₁ plants number 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 from the Inpari 32x A10-1 (Figure 3a), F₁ plant number 10 from the Inpari 32xB12-2 (Figure 3b), and F₁ plants number 17 and 18 from the Inpari 32xA16-5 (Figure 3c) as hybrids. These F₁ plants showed bands from both parents (Inpari 32 and the Code-qTSN4 lines). Amplification of other F₁ plants using the five SSR markers only produced the same amplicon as Inpari 32 as the female parent, indicating the occurrence of self-pollination. This study showed that the Inpari 32x A10-1 resulted in the most hybrids compared to the other two cross combinations. The verified F₁ hybrids are recommended to be evaluated further in the F₂ generation.

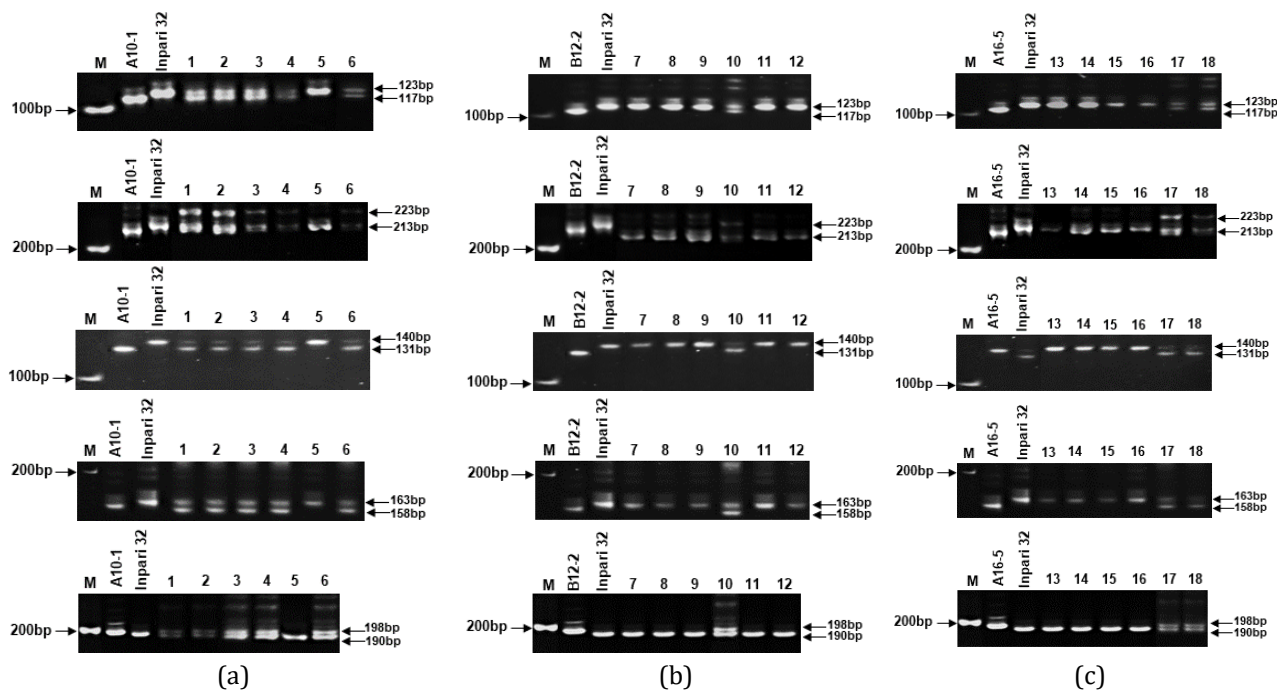


Figure 3. Electropherogram of F₁ Inpari 32x A10-1(a), F₁ Inpari 32xB12-2 (b), F₁ Inpari 32xA16-5 (c) using SSR markers RM5, RM55, RM105, RM223, and RM561, respectively. M: Marker DNA ladder 100bp.

CONCLUSIONS

The presence of *the Xa4*, *Xa7*, and *qTSN4* was confirmed in Code-qTSN4 lines (A10-1, B12-2, and A16-5), while the presence of *Xa4*, *Xa7*, and *Xa21* was confirmed in Inpari 32. The RG556/DRAI marker failed to verify the presence of *xa5* in this study. Five F₁ plants derived from the Inpari 32xA10-1 cross, one F₁ plant from the Inpari 32xB12-2 cross, and two F₁ plants from the Inpari 32xA16-5 cross were confirmed as hybrids by five SSR markers and can be continued to be evaluated further in the F₂ generation.

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