GENETIC STUDIES OF PECTINOLYTIC ENZYMES OF BASIDIOMYCETES

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The article presents an overview of current ideas about the genetic organisation and functional characteristics of pectinolytic enzyme systems in basidiomycetes. The main families of enzymes involved in the degradation of pectin compounds are analysed, in particular glycosyl hydrolases (GH), polysaccharide lyases (PL) and carbohydrate esterases (CE), as well as the corresponding genes found in representatives of the genera Agaricus, Armillaria, Flammulina, Laccaria, Lentinula, Pleurotus, Schizophyllum and Trametes. A comparative characterisation of the genomes of these fungi is provided in terms of the quantitative indicators of pectinase genes, their structural affiliation and potential functional activity. Methodological approaches to studying pectinolytic potential are considered, in particular sequencing, transcriptomics, biochemical methods and comparative genomics tools. Prospects for further research in the context of the biotechnological application of enzymes of this group are outlined.

Keywords: pectinolytic enzymes, basidiomycetes, sequencing, transcriptomics, CAZy

Introduction. Pectin, as a general term, covers a heterogeneous group of carbohydrates with different molecular weights (Lara-Espinoza et al., 2018). Nevertheless, most pectins consist of a backbone represented by galacturonic acid residues linked by α -1,4-glycosidic bonds, which may be methylated or acetylated (Danalache et al., 2018). The main structural components are homogalacturonans and rhamnogalacturonans with side branches represented by arabinans, galactans, and arabinogalactans (Kaczmarska et al., 2022). This structure perfectly ensures the functional properties of pectin as a component of plant cell walls, which determines their strength, elasticity and water-holding capacity (Voragen et al., 2009).

The breakdown of pectin is catalysed by specific enzymes called pectinases (pectinolytic enzymes). This process can be carried out by depolymerisation (under the action of hydrolases and lyases) and deesterification (by esterases) (de Souza & Kawaguti, 2021). Pectinases are synthesised by many groups of microorganisms, including bacteria, yeasts, actinomycetes and fungi (Shet et al., 2018). In nature, these enzymes are involved in the pathogenesis and destruction of plants, mainly caused by fungi. That is why the first commercial pectinases were obtained using fungal producers (Haile & Ayele, 2022).

Traditionally, research on producers of pectinolytic enzymes has focused on ascomycetes (Benoit et al., 2012). However, there has been growing interest in basidiomycetes, which are also capable of effectively breaking down plant polymers, including pectin (Berger & Ersoy, 2022;

Shankar Naik et al., 2019). With the spread of genomics and transcriptomics, new opportunities have emerged for identifying pectinolytic enzyme genes, even without classical activity screening (Peng & de Vries, 2021). This opens up new prospects for finding producers with properties valuable for biotechnology and industry among representatives of different trophic groups and ecological niches.

The genera Pleurotus, Lentinula and Trametes belong to biotechnologically significant saprotrophs that demonstrate active degradation of higher plant cell wall components, including pectin, and are widely used in applied research in enzymatic biotechnology (Floudas et al., 2012; Moen et al., 2018). Flammulina velutipes, as a typical xylotroph, has a developed set of hydrolases and lyases, which ensures the effective mobilisation of wood polysaccharides, including pectin components (Yu et al., 2020). The genus Armillaria is represented by necrotrophic wood pathogens, whose genomes contain an expanded set of genes involved in the degradation plant of complex polysaccharides, in particular pectin (Sipos et al., 2017). Agaricus bisporus belongs to the humus-type saprotrophs with a high degree of genomic characterisation, which allows for the accurate identification of genes involved in the degradation of organic matter (Morin et al., 2012). Schizophyllum commune is a model basidiomycete with known potential for the biodegradation of plant polymers, as well as a fully sequenced genome that is actively used in functional genomics (Ohm et al., 2010). Finally, Laccaria bicolor is a representative of

ectomycorrhizal symbionts with a reduced hydrolytic profile, which was included in the analysis to compare the pectinolytic potential of saprotrophic and symbiotrophic macromycetes (Martin et al., 2008).

The relevance of the study is due to the growing effective enzyme systems demand for biotechnological processes, such as plant biomass processing, juice production, winemaking, textile and paper industries, as well as bioremediation (Berger & Ersoy, 2022; Haile & Ayele, 2022). Basidiomycetes, in particular representatives of the genera Agaricus, Armillaria, Flammulina, Laccaria, Lentinula, Pleurotus, Schizophyllum and Trametes, demonstrate significant pectinolytic potential, which remains understudied compared to ascomycetes (Sahu et al., 2022). The development of genomic and transcriptomic technologies opens up new opportunities for identifying pectinase genes without traditional activity screening, which contributes to the search for new biotechnologically valuable producers (Peng & de Vries, 2021). In addition, the study of pectinolytic enzymes of basidiomycetes is important for understanding their ecological role in saprotrophic, pathogenic and symbiotic interactions, which is important for the development of strategies for the sustainable use of natural resources (Sipos et al., 2017).

The aim of the study is to systematise current data on the genetic organisation and methodological approaches to the study of pectinolytic enzymes of basidiomycete macromycetes, in particular the analysis of GH, PL and CE family genes in representatives of the genera Agaricus, Armillaria, Flammulina, Laccaria, Lentinula, Pleurotus, Schizophyllum and Trametes, as well as determining the prospects for their biotechnological application. To achieve this goal, the classification of pectinolytic enzymes, the organisation of their genes in genomes, modern methods of sequencing, transcriptomics and comparative genomics are considered, and directions for further research are outlined.

1. Classification and biological role of pectinolytic enzymes

Pectinases are a functionally diverse group of enzymes involved in the degradation of pectin substrates. Depending on the type of catalytic reaction and the target of enzymatic action, pectinases belong to three main types of enzymes: hydrolases, lyases and esterases (Table 1). This division is based on the generally accepted enzyme classification system proposed by the International Enzyme Commission (EC) (KC et al., 2020; Ozojiofor & Rasheed, 2023; Yüksel et al., 2024).

Table 1.

Classification of pectinases (Patidar et al., 2018; Zheng, Xu, et al., 2021)

Enzyme	EC number	Reaction products
Exopolygalacturonase	3.2.1.15	Oligogalacturonates
Endopolygalacturonase	3.2.1.67, 3.2.1.82	Mono-, di-, oligogalacturonates
Endoligalacturonatlyase	4.2.2.2	Unsaturated oligogalacturonates
Endolymethyl galacturonatlyase	4.2.2.10	Unsaturated methyloligogalacturonates
Pectin methylesterase	3.1.1.11	Pectates, methanol
Pectyacetylesterase	3.1.1.6	Pectates, ethanol

(EC Hydrolases 3.2.1.x) include those pectinolytic enzymes that hydrolytically cleave α-1,4-glycosidic bonds in the polygalacturon chain – polygalacturonases. (Roman-Benn et al., 2023). Polygalacturonases themselves are divided depending on the localization of the substrate attack site into endopolygalacturonase (cleaves internal bonds) and exopolygalacturonase (cleaves monomers from the terminal regions of polymers) (KC et al., 2020; Roman-Benn et al., 2023).

Lyases (EC 4.2.2.x), such as pectin lyases and pectate lyases, catalyze the cleavage of pectin of various degrees of esterification, mainly highly esterified) without the participation of water by the β -elimination mechanism with the formation of unsaturated hydrolysis products (Zheng, Guo, et al.,

2021). The reaction produces 4,5-unsaturated unmethylated or methylated oligogalacturonides without the accumulation of toxic methanol (Saharan & Sharma, 2019; Samreen et al., 2019; Zheng, Xu, et al., 2021). Lyases involved in the breakdown of pectin are also known as polymethylgalacturonate lyase and polygalacturonate lyase (Zheng, Xu, et al., 2021).

Pectinesterases catalyze the deesterification of esterified groups of pectin to form pectic acid (Samreen et al., 2019). The main enzymes of this class, represented in the decomposition of pectin, are pectin methylesterase and pectin acetylesterase, which cleave methyl and acetyl residues, respectively (Yüksel et al., 2024). Fungal enzymes of this class act randomly, removing esterified

groups by a multi-chain mechanism (Patidar et al., 2018).

Pectinolytic enzymes ensure the growth of both phytopathogenic and saprotrophic basidiomycetes (Baldrian, 2008). Polygalacturonases are involved in the destruction of polygalacturonan, which provides access to other structural polysaccharides of the cell wall (Safran et al., 2023). Pectate lyases are also synthesised by pathogenic fungi when colonising substrates. pectin-rich However. endopolygalacturonate lyases are more common for them than exoforms of this enzyme (Patidar et al., 2018). In turn, the presence of pectinases is important for the activity of other pectinolytic enzymes, since non-esterified or low-esterified substrates are more easily subjected to enzymatic hydrolysis (Bonnin & Pelloux, 2020).

2. Organisation of the genome and gene family of pectinolytic enzymes in basidiomycetes

The molecular biology of basidiomycetes is a key area of fundamental mycology, providing a deep understanding genome organisation of functional regulation in fungi (Yang, 2011). Basidiomycetes, including saprotrophic (Agaricus, Flammulina, Lentinula, Pleurotus, Schizophyllum, Trametes), pathogenic (Armillaria) and symbiotic (Laccaria) species, exhibit significant genomic diversity, reflecting their ecological strategies. Genome sizes range from compact (about 30 Mb) in saprotrophs to larger (up to 60 Mb) in pathogens and symbionts, which is associated with adaptations to degradation, plant material pathogenesis symbiosis (Table 2.) (Morin et al., 2012; Sahu et al., 2022).

Table 2. Characterisation of the basidiomycete genome (Park et al., 2018; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2020)

Genera	Approximate total genome size, Mb	Approximate size of the pectinase genome, kb
Agaricus	30,4	68-144
Armillaria	58,2	158-324
Flammulina	35,6	174-324
Laccaria	60,7	20-69
Lentinula	46,1	168-252
Pleurotus	34,3	134-228
Schizophyllum	38,5	72-321
Trametes	44,8	22-141

Notes: The size of the genome attributable to pectinolytic genes was calculated based on the approximate size of the gene (2-3 kb) and the number of these genes (Kües, 2000)

Saprotrophs have a developed set of carbohydrate-active enzyme (CAZymes) genes, in particular pectinases, while symbionts are characterised by their reduction (Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017).

Pectinases, which include glycosyl hydrolases (GH), pectate lyases (PL) and carbohydrate esterases (CE), play a key role in the breakdown of pectin components of plant cell walls (Table 3.).

Table 3. Distribution of pectinase genes by families in some macromycetes (Park et al., 2018; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2020)

Genera	Gene families			
Genera	GH	PL	CE	
Agaricus	GH28	PL1, PL3, PL4, PL9	CE8, CE12	
Armillaria	GH28	PL1, PL3, PL4, PL9	CE8, CE12	
Flammulina	GH28	PL1, PL3, PL4, PL9	CE8, CE12	
Laccaria	GH28	-	CE8, CE12	
Lentines	GH28	PL1, PL4	CE8, CE12	
Pleurotus	GH28	PL1, PL3, PL4	CE8, CE12	
Schizophyllum	GH28	PL1, PL3, PL4, PL9	CE8, CE12	
Trametes	GH28	PL4	CE8, CE12	

Their proportion in basidiomycete genomes remains low (less than 1%), but varies depending on the ecological niche. Saprotrophic species, such as Flammulina and Pleurotus, have a higher proportion of pectinases, which ensures effective degradation of lignocellulosic substrates, while pathogenic species, such as Armillaria, demonstrate an expanded set of pectinolytic genes associated with pathogenesis. Symbiotic species, such as Laccaria, have minimal pectinases, reflecting their dependence on their host (Park et al., 2018; Sipos et al., 2017). Among saprotrophs, Schizophyllum and Trametes are distinguished by the variability of pectinases, which makes them promising for biotechnological applications such as bioremediation and processing

of plant biomass (Park et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020).

Genes encoding GH28 family pectinases are key to pectin degradation by basidiomycetes, although their characterisation is somewhat limited compared to ascomycetes (Gacura et al., 2016). The enzymes synthesized as a result of the expression of these genes are aimed at breaking down the backbone of the pectin molecule, while the side chains can be broken down by the products of the GH3, GH43 and other gene families (Wefers et al., 2017). The number of glycosyl hydrolase, polysaccharide lyase, and esterase genes involved in the decomposition of pectin in some macromycetes is shown in Figure 1.

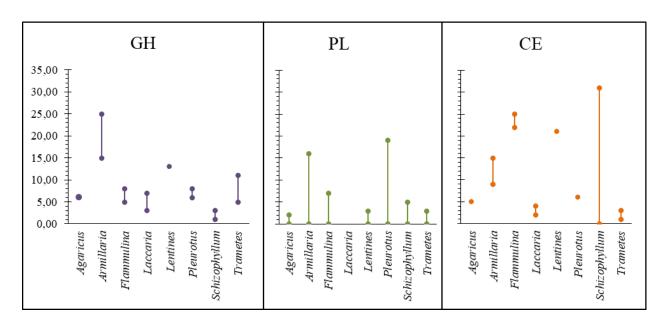


Fig. 1. Number of pectinase-encoding genes in some macromycetes (Park et al., 2018; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2020)

According to Floudas et al., the number of glycosyl hydrolase (GH28) genes in brown rot fungi ranges from 7 to 13 (Floudas et al., 2012). The GH28 family genes are most fully described in phytopathogens. For example, Chondrostereum purpureum has five isoforms corresponding to five cloned GH28 genes (Reina et al., 2019). At the same time, representatives of the Armillaria family are characterised by a significant number of genes from this family, while in Schizophyllum they are practically absent (Park et al., 2018; Sipos et al., 2017). Similar heterogeneity in gene distribution was observed among esterase genes. There is significant variation in the number of these genes even among representatives of the same genus (Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021). At the same time, the smallest number of genes among the studied CAZy families was recorded among polysaccharide lyases. Representatives of the Armillaria and Pleurotus

genera demonstrate a larger number of genes of this family (Sipos et al., 2017). Similar variability in the number of genes indicates the evolutionary adaptation of basidiomycetes to specific substrates. For example, wood-decaying species (*Trametes*, *Schizophyllum*) are characterised by a smaller set of GH28, while pathogenic species (*Armillaria*) have an expanded set of pectinases, which is consistent with their life cycle and mode of infection (Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sahu et al., 2021).

3. Methods for studying pectinolytic enzymes of basidiomycete

Pectinolytic enzymes of basidiomycetes, encoded by genes of the GH, PL and CE families, are key to pectin degradation and have significant biotechnological potential (Rytioja et al., 2014). The genomes of these fungi show significant variability in the size and composition of CAZymes genes, reflecting their adaptation to different ecological niches – from wood-decaying saprotrophs to pathogens (Floudas et al., 2012).

study of pectinolytic enzymes The in basidiomycetes is based on a complex of modern molecular genetic methods, including nucleic acid whole-genome sequencing, isolation, genome annotation, transcriptomic analysis, enzyme CAZy identification using databases, and comparative genomics.

Sample preparation involves the use of DNA and RNA extraction methods, including the phenol-chloroform method, CTAB protocols, and commercial kits such as the PowerMax MOBIO DNA Isolation Kit and RNeasy Midi Kit (Martin et al., 2008; Morin et al., 2012; Park et al., 2019; Sipos et al., 2017).

Whole-genome sequencing is performed using Sanger, Illumina HiSeq, PacBio RS II platforms or combinations thereof. Genome assembly is performed in environments such as Velvet, JAZZ, HGAP3, Falcon and others, which ensures high-quality genomic sequences (Martin et al., 2008; Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017). Genome annotation is performed using automated tools such as JGI Annotation Pipeline, AUGUSTUS, GeneMark-ES, DIAMOND, Fgenesh, Genewise, and EuGène. Pectinolytic enzymes are identified based on the CAZy, dbCAN, Pfam, and InterProScan databases,

and the secretory properties of proteins are determined using SignalP 5.0 (Martin et al., 2008; Morin et al., 2012; Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017).

Comparative genome analysis includes the identification of orthologs and clustering of protein sequences using MCL, OrthoFinder, Tribe-MCL, and FastOrtho tools. Phylogenetic studies are performed based on MAFFT alignments, with cleaning in Gblocks and tree construction in RAxML, PRANK, FastTree; time calibration is performed using r8s (Martin et al., 2008; Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017). The evolution of the PL1 and GH28 gene families is analysed using CAFE, and quantitative differences in copy number are analysed using statistical tests, including Bonferroni-corrected binomial tests and Fisher's exact test (Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021).

Transcriptomic analysis methods, including RNA-seq and microchips based on Agilent technologies, are used to assess the expression levels of pectinolytic genes. Expression data analysis is performed using software tools such as CyberT, edgeR, limma, and EPCLUST (Martin et al., 2008; Morin et al., 2012; Sipos et al., 2017).

Generalised information on the latest approaches to studying the genes of pectinolytic enzymes of basidiomycetes is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Approaches for studying pectinase genes of basidiomycetes

Method	Platform/tool	Target genera	References
Sample preparation: cultivation and isolation of genetic material	CTAB, Phenol- chloroform, PowerMax MOBIO, RNeasy Midi Kit	Flammulina, Armillaria	(Park et al., 2019; Sipos et al., 2017)
Genome assembly and annotation retrieval via online databases	JGI MycoCosm, NCBI SRA, JGI Portal, GenBank et al.	Pleurotus, Agaricus, Armillaria, Trametes, Laccaria	(Martin et al., 2008; Morin et al., 2012; Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017)
Whole genome sequencing	Illumina, PacBio, Sanger	Pleurotus, Flammulina, Agaricus, Armillaria, Trametes	(Martin et al., 2008; Morin et al., 2012; Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017)
Genome annotation	AUGUSTUS, GeneMark, InterProScan	Agaricus, Flammulina, Lentinula, Pleurotus, Schizophyllum, Trametes, Armillaria, Laccaria	(Martin et al., 2008; Morin et al., 2012; Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017)
Genome quality assessment	BUSCO 4.1.1	Agaricus, Pleurotus, Trametes	(Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021)
Protein clustering	MCL, OrthoFinder	Pleurotus, Armillaria, Laccaria	(Martin et al., 2008; Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017)
Phylogenomic analysis	RAxML, MAFFT, FastTree	Pleurotus, Armillaria, Trametes	(Martin et al., 2008; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017)

CAZymes annotation	CAZy, dbCAN, Pfam	Pleurotus, Schizophyllum, Laccaria, Trametes	(Martin et al., 2008; Morin et al., 2012; Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021; Sipos et al., 2017)
Microarray expression analysis	Agilent Microarrays	Agaricus	(Morin et al., 2012)
Transcriptomic analysis	Illumina RNA-seq	Armillaria, Laccaria	(Martin et al., 2008; Sipos et al., 2017)
Signal peptide prediction	SignalP 5.0	Flammulina, Laccaria	(Martin et al., 2008; Park et al., 2019)
Analysis of gene family evolution	CAFE 4.1	Trametes, Laccaria, Armillaria	(Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021)
Statistical analysis of copy number	Fisher's test, Bonferroni	Agaricus, Flammulina, Lentinula, Pleurotus, Schizophyllum, Trametes, Armillaria, Laccaria	(Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021)

4. Prospects for research into the genetic studies of pectinolytic enzymes of basidiomycetes

Further development of genetic research on pectinolytic enzymes in basidium macromycetes opens up new opportunities for improving analysis methods and expanding their application. One of the key areas is the introduction of third-generation sequencing technologies, such as Oxford Nanopore, which provide longer reads and higher accuracy in detecting complex genomic regions, including introns and regulatory sequences of pectinolytic genes (Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021) This will allow us to refine the annotation of the PL1, GH28, and CE8–CE12 genes in species with limited data, such as *Lentinula* and *Trametes* (Riley et al., 2014; Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021).

Another promising direction is the integration of multi-omic approaches combining genomics, transcriptomics, and proteomics. For example, the use of single-cell RNA-seq can help investigate the expression of pectinolytic genes in specific fungal tissues, such as hyphae or fruiting bodies, in *Agaricus* or *Pleurotus* (Morin et al., 2012). Supplementing transcriptomic data with mass spectrometry will confirm the presence and activity of enzymes encoded by the PL1 and GH28 genes under different environmental conditions (Sipos et al., 2017).

Improvements in algorithms for annotating CAZymes, such as updated versions of dbCAN with machine learning, may increase the accuracy of identifying pectinolytic genes in genomes with low assembly quality, such as *Armillaria* (Park et al., 2019; Sipos et al., 2017). In addition, the creation of specialised databases, such as JGI MycoCosm, focusing on specific enzyme genes, including pectinolytic ones, will facilitate comparative analysis between saprotrophic, pathogenic and symbiotic species (Ruiz-Dueñas et al., 2021).

The use of genome editing technologies such as CRISPR/Cas9 for functional analysis of pectinolytic genes is also promising. For example, knockout or overexpression of PL1 genes in *Flammulina* or *Pleurotus* may clarify their role in the degradation of plant cell walls (Park et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2014). This opens up opportunities for biotechnological applications, particularly in the development of enzyme preparations for industrial biomass processing.

Conclusions. Genomic and functional studies of pectinolytic enzymes in basidiomycetes indicate a high degree of structural and functional diversity. Representatives of the genera Agaricus, Armillaria, Flammulina, Laccaria, Lentinula, Pleurotus, Schizophyllum, and Trametes demonstrate the presence of different subfamilies of genes from the GH, PL, and CE families involved in the hydrolysis and β-elimination of pectin polysaccharides. The specificity of the genetic set and probable enzymatic activity varies between genera and is closely related to the ecological niche of the species and the type of wood or plant substrate.

Given the limited number of studies, especially experimentally confirmed functions of the identified genes, promising areas for further research include comprehensive genome annotation using metatranscriptomics, proteomics, and functional validation of pectinolytic enzyme activity. Special attention should also be paid to studying the conditions for inducing the expression of such enzymes when growing fungi on pectin-rich agricultural waste.

Deepening knowledge about the pectinolytic potential of basidiomycetes creates the basis for the biotechnological application of their enzymatic systems in the food industry, winemaking, textile and pulp and paper industries, as well as in environmental bioremediation.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest

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ГЕНЕТИЧНІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ПЕКТИНОЛІТИЧНИХ ФЕРМЕНТІВ БАЗИДІЄВИХ МАКРОМІЦЕТІВ

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У статті представлено огляд сучасних уявлень про генетичну організацію та функціональні особливості пектинолітичних ферментативних систем базидієвих макроміцетів. Проаналізовано основні родини ферментів, залучених до деградації пектинових сполук, зокрема глікозилгідролази (GH), полісахаридліази (PL) та карбогідратні естерази (СЕ), а також відповідні гени, виявлені у представників родів Agaricus, Armillaria, Flammulina, Laccaria, Lentinula, Pleurotus, Schizophyllum і Trametes. Наведено порівняльну характеристику геномів зазначених грибів за кількісними показниками генів пектиназ, їхньою структурною належністю та потенційною функціональною активністю. Розглянуто методологічні підходи до вивчення пектинолітичного потенціалу, зокрема секвенування, транскриптоміку, біохімічні методи та інструменти порівняльної геноміки. Окреслено перспективи подальших досліджень у контексті біотехнологічного застосування ферментів цієї групи.

Ключові слова: пектинолітичні ферменти, базидісві макроміцети, секвенування, транскриптоміка, САЗу.

Отримано редколегією 01.06.2025 р.

ORCID ID