

Harnessing Epigenetics for Crop Improvement: New Frontiers in Plant Science

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Abstract

Epigenetics, the study of heritable changes in gene expression without alterations to the underlying DNA sequence, is emerging as a powerful tool for crop improvement. Unlike traditional genetic modification, epigenetic modifications can be environmentally induced, offering a potential avenue for enhancing crop traits in response to changing climatic conditions. This paper explores the role of epigenetics in plant science, with a focus on how epigenetic modifications—such as DNA methylation, histone modifications, and non-coding RNAs—can be harnessed to improve crop resilience, yield, and quality. Advances in epigenetic technologies, including CRISPR-based epigenome editing and high-throughput sequencing, are accelerating the identification and modification of key epigenetic regulators in plants. The potential for epigenetic strategies to complement traditional breeding methods and genetically engineered crops is discussed, as well as the challenges related to stability, inheritance, and off-target effects. By providing new insights into plant development and stress responses, epigenetic research offers a promising path forward for crop improvement.

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