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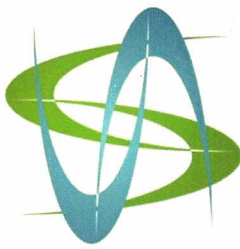
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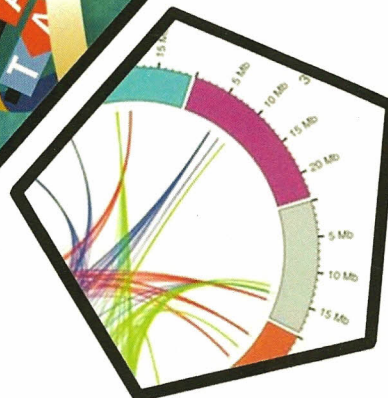
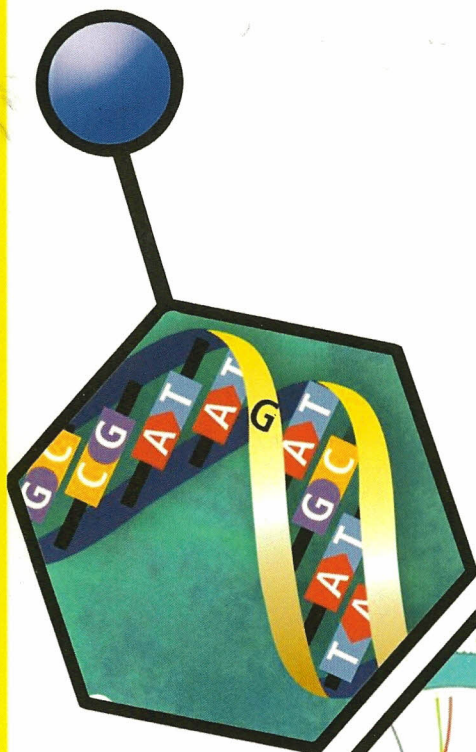
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Conservation and Use of Natural Genetic Variation of Eggplant in the Genomics Era

J. Prohens¹, M. Daunay², S. Knapp³, R. Meyer⁴, S. Vilanova¹

¹COMAV, Universitat Politècnica de València, 46022 València, Spain, ²INRA, Génétique et Amélioration des Fruits et Légumes, UR 1052, Montfavet (84), France, ³Dept. Life Sciences, Natural History Museum, London SW7 5BD, United Kingdom, ⁴Genomics Programme, The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, NY 10458, United States

Eggplant (*Solanum melongena* L.) is the second most important solanaceous fruit crop after tomato. Although there is a high potential of a wider use of natural intra and interspecific genetic and phenotypic variation, characterization of ex situ germplasm collections of the primary, secondary and tertiary gene pools has been so far limited. In situ collecting is still necessary, in particular for wild relatives. New genomic tools are useful for targeted conservation and use of genetic resources in eggplant. Screening eggplant germplasm with new molecular markers has revealed relationships and genetic structure of the crop germplasm and shed light on the domestication process. Development of eggplant intra- and inter-specific genetic maps is important for marker assisted selection and for the development of collections of introgression lines. The upcoming eggplant genome sequence will enhance comparative genomics with other solanaceous crops and the mining of species-wide genic and allelic diversity for traits of interest.