

## Short communication

### **Identification of the resistant sources for sunflower downy mildew in sunflower**

#### **Abstract**

Four different evaluation trials were conducted in the field between 2017 and 2021, with varied numbers of genotypes, to evaluate the performance of sunflower genotypes for agromorphological features and resistance to Sunflower Downy Mildew (SDM) at Latur, Maharashtra, India. A validation experiment was carried out in 2021–2022, using artificial screening in National Disease Plot Screening Facility at Latur, to screen a small number of accessions that had previously shown resistance to SDM during 2017–2020. For the released variety "Morden," at least 60% of the SDM incidence is recorded for four years. This indicates that *Plasmopara halstedii* may be present in the experimental soils and makes the variety particularly vulnerable to SDM disease. Out of the tree genotypes that were reported to be resistant in field screening viz., GMU-481 (GP1 909 genotype), Ec-198078, and RHA 1-1 (selection) only two GMU-481 (GP1 909 genotype) and Ec-198078 were verified to be resistant under artificial screening in 2021–2022 and can be designated as sources of resistance for SDM disease. These two genotypes with resistance to SDM could be used in future breeding attempts and as potential gene donors for SDM.

**Keywords:** Sunflower, screening, sunflower downy mildew, resistance, donor

#### **Introduction**

The cultivated sunflower (*Helianthus annuus* L.) is one of the most important oilseed crop in the world after soybean, rapeseed-mustard and groundnut. Sunflower Downy Mildew (SDM) was a devastating disease that caused yield losses of up to 100% in the state of Maharashtra, particularly in the Marathwada region, since the introduction of the sunflower crop in India (Chaudhari *et al.*, 2022). Researchers discovered in the late 1980s that *Plasmopara halstedii* (Farlow) Berlese and de Toni are the fungus that induces SDM disease (Shirshikar 2005; Spring 2019). Nearly all of the Indian states that grow sunflowers Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab are now reporting cases of the disease spread (Ghodke *et al.*, 2016; Chaudhari *et al.*, 2022), which results in 5–80% yield losses (Patil *et al.*, 1992; Mayee and Patil 1987; Shirshikar 2005; CABI and EPPO, 2014; Chaudhari *et al.*, 2022). To improve the SDM resistant breeding program in India, a crucial first step is the systematic artificial screening and identification of suitable donor sources. Hence the objectives of the present investigation was to identify the resistant sunflower genotype with '0' incidence of SDM through field and artificial screening.

Four distinct evaluation trials with varying numbers of genotypes in the field between 2017 and 2021 were undertaken to assess the performance of the sunflower genotypes for both agromorphological traits and Sunflower Downy Mildew (SDM) resistance/tolerance at

Latur, Maharashtra, India. Two replications of the field evaluation trial were carried out in RBD. The germplasm evaluation trial was planted in 4-meter rows each year, with 12–15 plants per row. In addition to several agromorphological traits, the genotypes' performance was evaluated for resistance to Sunflower Downy Mildew (SDM) under field condition. The observations on SDM incidence were recorded from 30 days to up to 60 days after sowing by counting infected seedlings with SDM incidence. All the plants in each entry were scored for SDM incidence. Finally, mean disease incidence percentage from all the replications was calculated for each test entry according to Shirshikar (2008). In 2021–2022, a validation experiment was conducted under artificial screening to screen a small number of accessions that were already resistant to SDM (Dudhe *et al.*, 2023). The National Disease Plot Screening Facility in Latur, Maharashtra, India is accessible for screening breeding material for SDM resistance or tolerance (Ghodke *et al.*, 2016; Chaudhari *et al.*, 2022). Sunflower downy mildew is a soil-borne disease, and spread through seeds, soil, and plant debris (Shirshikar, 2005). *Plasmopara halstedii* race-100 pathogen is often observed in the center's experiment site; as a result, infected plants can be seen at the Oilseeds Research Station, Latur, during conduction of trials or in sunflower growing plots. In all the years sunflower released 'Morden' variety and highly susceptible check for SDM screening (Chaudhari *et al.*, 2022; Dudhe *et al.*, 2023) were evaluated for the SDM incidence under field condition. Therefore, information gathered at Latur centre from field screening will help to identify genotypes that are resistant or tolerant of SDM.

It is routine practice to systematically assess the germplasm accessions for agromorphological and other commercially significant features. In all the four years Four separate evaluation trials with various numbers of genotypes were conducted (Table 1). The greatest number of genotypes (70) were used for the evaluation in 2019, with the next most used years being 2018 (65), and 2017 (40). Our group confirmed previous results from a validation experiment that was done in 2021–2022 to screen SDM resistant accessions under artificial screening (Dudhe *et al.*, 2023). Under field conditions, nine genotypes with zero incidence in 2017 and 2020 were recorded, respectively, out of the genotypes evaluated. On the other hand, in all, 8 genotypes of the evaluated sunflower were shown to have 0 incidence of SDM over 2018 and 2019. Results of the SDM screening and evaluation conducted between 2017 and 2020 are not disclosed/unpublished. Range of the SDM incidence per cent under the validation experiment conducted during 2021-22 was 0-100 % while under the field condition 0-85 % during 2019. In the released variety "Morden," which is extremely susceptible to SDM screening and indicates the presence of *Plasmopara halstedii* in the experimental soils, a minimum of 60% of the SDM incidence is reported in all the years (Table 1). It is important to notice that in every year with zero incidence of SDM, among GMU-481 (GP1 909 genotype), Ec-198078 and RHA 1-1 (selection) were recorded. RHA 1-1 (selection) is the parental line/ male line (RHA 1-1) of the LSFH 171 released hybrid from Latur centre for all India cultivation. In terms of height, maturity, seed size, and leaf color variation, it deviates from the parental line. The Latur center received both genotypes viz., GMU-481 (GP1 909 genotype) and Ec-198078 from the Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR) located in Rajendranagar, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.

**Table 1: Assessment of the genotypes of sunflowers in the field and artificial screening and results for *Plasmopara halstedii* race 100**

Sr. No.	Year of evaluation	No. of genotypes evaluated under field condition	Field evaluation location/s	Range of the SDM incidence under field evaluation (%)	Artificial screening results	Total number and list of the few genotypes with '0' incidence of SDM	Incidence of SDM in the Susceptible check "Morden" (%)	Published/ Unpublished data
1	2017	40	Latur	0-95	Not available	(9) RHA-1-1 (selection), EC-601951, LTRR-341, <b>EC-198078</b> , GMU 494, GMU-78, <b>GMU-481</b>	62	Unpublished
2	2018	65	Latur	0-90	Not available	(8) EC-601951 RHA-1-1 (selection), LTRR-341, <b>EC-198078</b> , GMU 494, <b>GMU-481</b>	60	Unpublished
3	2019	70	Latur	0-85	Not available	(8) RHA-1-1 (selection), LTRR-341, EC-198078, <b>GMU-481</b>	71	Unpublished
4	2020	34	Latur	0-90	Not available	(9)RHA-1-1 (selection), GMU-770, EC-399512, <b>EC-198078</b> , <b>GMU-481</b>	68	Unpublished
5	2021-22	28	Latur, Akola, Solapur IIOR, Hyderabad	0-100	National Screening Facility (diseased plot) at Latur	RHA-1-1 EC-399512 EC-178168-2 EC-601901 <b>EC-198078</b> GMU-770 <b>GMU-481</b> LTRR-341 GMU-841 GMU-494	100 (Artificial screening)	Published Dudhe <i>et al.</i> , 2023

Of the 28 genotypes screened for SDM resistance, these two lines (GMU-481 and Ec-198078) demonstrated 0 incidence for the SDM during the validation experiment conducted under the artificial screening for the SDM (Dudhe *et al.*, 2023). Because of this, these two genotypes namely GMU-481 and Ec-198078 possess genes that are resistant to SDM and the innate ability to tolerate the high pressure of disease that is imposed by artificial screening. Our findings corroborate those from the SDM screening conducted at ORS, Latur, Maharashtra (Ghodke *et al.*, 2016; Chaudhari *et al.*, 2022; Dudhe *et al.*, 2023). These two genotypes that exhibit resistance to SDM may serve as prospective gene donors for SDM and

may be employed in further sunflower SDM resistance breeding. In conclusion two genotypes viz., GMU-481 and Ec-198078 have been found as resistant to SDM with 0 incidence based on results from a multiyear field screening program and artificial screening.

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