



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***MOLECULAR AND PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES OF RECALCITRANT
INDICA RICE TO PLURONIC F-68 DURING CALLUS REGENERATION***

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By

ANDREW KOK DE XIAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

June 2021

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science

**MOLECULAR AND PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES OF RECALCITRANT
INDICA RICE TO PLURONIC F-68 DURING CALLUS REGENERATION**

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ANDREW KOK DE XIAN

June 2021

Chair : Janna Ong Binti Abdullah, PhD
Faculty : Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences

Pluronic F-68 (PF-68) is a non-ionic surfactant commonly used as a growth additive in plant tissue culture. However, there are limited studies on the effects of PF-68 in rice. Therefore, this study was undertaken to evaluate the growth promoting effects of PF-68 on callus proliferation, shoot growth and root growth of recalcitrant MR219 rice. MR219 calli and shoot apices were cultured on Murashige and Skoog (MS) medium supplemented with different concentrations [0 %, 0.02 %, 0.04 %, 0.06 %, 0.08 %, 0.10 % (v/v)] of PF-68. Calli grown on MS medium supplemented with 0.04 % PF-68 improves callus proliferation rate by 1.59-fold (fresh weight), 1.24-fold (dry weight) and enhanced root induction from the calli by 1.29-fold. However, increasing frequency of brown and black calli was observed when 0.10 % PF-68 was used. In shoot growth study, PF-68 did not exhibit any growth promoting effects on MR219. On the other hand, optimum root growth was observed in shoot apices treated with 0.04 % PF-68. Growth of the roots was increased significantly by 1.43-fold and root length by 1.19-fold compared to the control. In order to evaluate the underlying mechanism of growth promoting effects of PF-68, callus was used as a study model and three different concentrations were selected for further analysis; namely control, optimum (0.04 % PF-68) and high concentration (0.10 % PF-68). Biochemical analyses revealed high accumulation of sugar (1.77 mg/mL) and protein (0.17 mg/mL) contents in 0.04 % PF-68-treated calli. Similarly, quantitative real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-qPCR) also revealed that high expressions of *sucrose synthase* (2.65-fold) and *NADH-dependent glutamate synthase* (1.86-fold) transcripts, which correlated with the high sugar and protein contents detected in 0.04 % PF-68-treated calli. Besides, calli treated with high concentration of PF-68 (0.10 %) recorded increased accumulation of phenolic (0.74 mg/mL), flavonoid (0.08 mg/mL), and phenylalanine ammonia lyase (PAL) activity (0.28 U/ μ g protein), which implied enhanced secondary metabolites biosynthesis in 0.10 % PF-68-treated calli. Further gene expression quantification also recorded an increased in *4-coumarate:CoA ligase 3* (1.28-fold) and *chalcone-flavonone isomerase* (1.65-fold) transcripts in 0.10 % PF-68-treated calli. Subsequent biochemical analyses revealed high H₂O₂ activity (0.10 mg/mL), malondialdehyde content (0.024 U/ μ g protein) and peroxidase activity (0.15 U/ μ g protein) in 0.10 % PF-68-treated calli. Consistently, high expression level of *ascorbate peroxidase* (1.61-fold) was observed in 0.10 % PF-68-

treated calli, suggesting activation of the plant defense mechanism against increasing stress induced from high concentration of PF-68. However, a decrease in esterase activity (34,204.50 nmol/ng protein) was recorded at 0.10 % PF-68, which implied increasing stress induced by PF-68 to trigger programmed cell death. Further comparative proteomic analysis revealed an upregulation of alpha-amylase and NADH-dependent glutamate synthase proteins detected in 0.04 % PF-68-treated calli. This indicates PF-68 enhances callus proliferation via enhanced carbon and nitrogen metabolism in 0.04 % PF-68-treated calli. In contrast, upregulation of PAL protein was detected in 0.10 % PF-68-treated calli. These results suggest that secondary metabolite biosynthesis was enhanced in 0.10 % PF-68-treated calli. In addition, nutrient ion analysis revealed an increased uptake of K, Mg, Ca, Fe, Zn, Cu and Mn ions were also observed in 0.04 % PF-68-treated calli. Among these nutrient ions, K had the highest increment of nutrient content detected in 0.04 % PF-68-treated calli. The increased K uptake plays an important role in plant growth and development such as protein synthesis and carbohydrate metabolism. Overall, the results from this study showed that the growth promoting effects of PF-68 on *in vitro* MR219 rice cultures were concentration dependent. Taken together, at optimum concentration, PF-68 improves recalcitrant rice callus proliferation via enhanced sugar metabolism, amino acid biosynthesis and nutrient uptake which are crucial towards plant growth and development. However, at high concentration, PF-68 induces stress response in plant as evidenced by the increased secondary metabolites content, H₂O₂ activity, malondialdehyde content and peroxidase activity. Hence, optimum concentration of PF-68 has potential to be utilized as an additive for plant growth and development in tissue culture of rice cultivars.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

**PERUBAHAN MOLEKUL DAN FISIOLOGI DALAM BERAS *INDICA*
REKALSITRAN TERHADAP PLURONIC F-68 SEMASA REGENERASI
KALUS**

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Pluronic F-68 (PF-68) adalah surfaktan bukan ionik yang biasa digunakan sebagai aditif pertumbuhan dalam kultur tisu tumbuhan. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat kajian terhadap mengenai kesan PF-68 dalam beras. Oleh sebab itu, kajian ini dilakukan untuk menilai kesan peningkatan pertumbuhan PF-68 terhadap percambahan kalus, pertumbuhan pucuk dan pertumbuhan akar beras MR219 kultivar. Kalus MR219 dan pucuk apeks dikultur di dalam media Murashige dan Skoog (MS) ditambah dengan PF-68 pada kepekatan yang berbeza [0 %, 0.02 %, 0.04 %, 0.06 %, 0.08 %, 0.10 % (v/v)]. Dalam kajian ini, kalus yang tumbuh pada 0.04 % PF-68 meningkatkan percambahan kalus secara signifikan sebanyak 1.56-kali ganda (berat segar), 1.24-kali ganda (berat kering) dan meningkatkan pertumbuhan akar kalus sebanyak 1.29-kali ganda. Walau bagaimanapun, peningkatan frekuensi kalus coklat dan hitam diperhatikan pada 0.10 % PF-68. Dalam kajian pertumbuhan pucuk, PF-68 tidak menunjukkan kesan peningkatan pada pertumbuhan pucuk MR219. Sebaliknya, dalam kajian pertumbuhan akar, pertumbuhan akar optimum diperhatikan pada pucuk apeks yang ditambah dengan 0.04 % PF-68. Pada 0.04 % PF-68 peningkatan yang signifikan dalam pertumbuhan akar dari segi jumlah akar (1.43-kali ganda) dan panjang akar (1.19-kali ganda) telah dicatatkan berbanding dengan kawalan. Untuk menilai mekanisme yang mendasari kesan mempromosikan pertumbuhan PF-68, kalus yang ditambah dengan PF-68 digunakan sebagai model kajian dan tiga kepekatan yang berbeza dipilih untuk analisis yang selanjutnya; iaitu kawalan, 0.04 % PF-68 dan 0.10 % PF-68. Analisis biokimia menunjukkan pengumpulan kandungan gula (1.77 mg/mL) dan protein (0.17 mg/mL) yang tinggi dalam 0.04 % PF-68. Selanjutnya, quantitative real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-qPCR) mendedahkan bahawa ekspresi tinggi transkrip *sucrose synthase* (2.65-kali ganda) dan *NADH-dependent glutamate synthase* (1.86-kali ganda), yang berkorelasi dengan kandungan gula dan protein yang tinggi dikesan pada 0.04 % PF-68. Sementara itu, kalus yang ditambah dengan kepekatan tinggi PF-68 (0.10 %) memerhatikan pengumpulan fenolik (0.74 mg/mL), flavonoid (0.08 mg/mL), dan aktiviti phenylalanine ammonia lyase (PAL) (0.28 U/ μ g protein), menunjukkan peningkatan biosintesis metabolit sekunder pada 0.10 % PF-68. Kuantifikasi ekspresi gen selanjutnya menunjukkan peningkatan dalam transkrip *4-coumarate: CoA ligase 3* (1.28-kali ganda) dan *chalcone-flavonone isomerase* (1.65-kali

ganda) dalam 0.10 % PF-68. Analisis biokimia seterusnya mendedahkan kandungan H_2O_2 (0.10 mg/mL), malondialdehid (0.024 U/ μ g protein) dan aktiviti peroksidase (0.15 U/ μ g protein) yang tinggi dijumpai pada 0.10 % PF-68. Secara konsisten, tahap ekspresi tinggi *ascorbate peroxidase* (1.61-kali ganda) diperhatikan pada 0.10 % PF-68, menunjukkan pengaktifan mekanisme pertahanan tanaman terhadap peningkatan tekanan yang disebabkan oleh kepekatan tinggi PF-68. Walau bagaimanapun, penurunan aktiviti esterase (34,204.50 nmol/ng protein) dicatat pada 0.10 % PF-68, menunjukkan peningkatan tekanan yang disebabkan oleh PF-68 yang memicu kematian sel. Analisis proteomik selanjutnya menunjukkan peningkatan regulasi protein alpha-amylase dan NADH-glutamate synthase yang dikesan dalam 0.04 % PF-68. Ini menunjukkan PF-68 meningkatkan percambahan kalus melalui metabolisme karbon dan nitrogen dalam 0.04 % PF-68. Sebaliknya, peningkatan regulasi PAL dikesan pada 0.10 % PF-68. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahawa peningkatan biosintesis metabolit sekunder ditingkatkan pada 0.10 % PF-68. Sementara itu, analisis ion nutrien mendedahkan peningkatan pengambilan ion K, Mg, Ca, Fe, Zn, Cu dan Mn juga diperhatikan pada 0.04 % PF-68. Di antara ion nutrien ini, K merupakan kenaikan kandungan nutrien tertinggi yang dikesan pada 0.04 % PF-68 berbanding dengan kawalan. Peningkatan pengambilan K memainkan peranan penting dalam pertumbuhan dan perkembangan tanaman seperti sintesis protein dan metabolisme karbohidrat. Secara keseluruhan, hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kesan pertumbuhan PF-68 terhadap penanaman padi *in vitro* MR219 bergantung kepada jumlah kepekatan. Secara bersama, pada kepekatan optimum, PF-68 meningkatkan percambahan kalus beras yang cepat melalui peningkatan metabolisme gula, biosintesis asid amino dan pengambilan nutrien yang penting terhadap pertumbuhan dan perkembangan tanaman. Walau bagaimanapun, pada kepekatan tinggi, PF-68 mendorong tindak balas tekanan pada tanaman seperti yang dibuktikan oleh peningkatan kandungan metabolit sekunder, aktiviti H_2O_2 , kandungan malondialdehid dan aktiviti peroksidase. Oleh itu, kepekatan optimum PF-68 berpotensi untuk digunakan sebagai bahan tambahan untuk pertumbuhan dan perkembangan tanaman dalam kultur tisu kultivar padi.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
APPROVAL	vi
DECLARATION	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
LIST OF APPENDICES	xvi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	3
2.1 <i>Oryza sativa</i> L.	3
2.1.1 Recalcitrant <i>Oryza sativa indica</i> cv. MR219	3
2.1.2 <i>Indica</i> rice tissue culture	4
2.2 Pluronic F-68	5
2.2.1 General applications of PF-68	5
2.2.2 Applications of PF-68 in plant tissue culture	6
2.2.3 Proposed mechanism of PF-68	7
2.3 Plant growth and development	7
2.3.1 Plant growth regulators	8
2.3.2 Nutrients uptake	8
2.3.3 Potassium role in plant growth and development	9
2.4 Proteomic study	10
2.4.1 Liquid chromatography tandem mass spectrometry	11
3 MATERIALS AND METHODS	13
3.1 Plant materials	13
3.1.1 Seed sterilisation	13
3.1.2 Callus induction	13
3.2 Effects of PF-68 treatment on recalcitrant <i>Oryza sativa indica</i> cv. MR219	13
3.2.1 Callus proliferation study	13
3.2.2 Shoot induction study	14
3.2.3 Shoot growth study	14
3.2.4 Root growth study	14
3.2.5 Growth efficiency assessment	15
3.3 Biochemical assessments of MR219 callus treated with PF-68	15
3.3.1 Total soluble sugar content	15
3.3.2 Total protein content	15
3.3.3 Glutamate synthase activity	16
3.3.4 Total phenolic content	16
3.3.5 Total flavonoid content	16
3.3.6 Phenylpropanoid ammonia lyase activity	17
3.3.7 Hydrogen peroxide content	17
3.3.8 Malondialdehyde content	17

3.3.9	Peroxidase activity	17
3.3.10	Esterase activity	18
3.4	Gene expression study on MR219 callus treated with PF-68	18
3.4.1	RNA extraction and cDNA synthesis	18
3.4.2	Primer design	18
3.4.3	Primer optimization and validation	19
3.4.4	RT-qPCR analysis	19
3.4.5	RT-qPCR data analysis	19
3.5	Callus nutrient ions content analysis on MR219 callus treated with PF-68	19
3.5.1	Sample preparation	20
3.5.2	Atomic absorption spectrometry analysis	20
3.6	Proteomic analysis on MR219 callus treated with PF-68	20
3.6.1	Protein extraction	20
3.6.2	Liquid chromatography tandem-mass spectrometry analysis	21
3.7	Statistical analysis	21
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	22
4.1	Effects of PF-68 treatment on recalcitrant <i>Oryza sativa indica</i> cv. MR219	22
4.1.1	Callus proliferation study	22
4.1.2	Shoot induction study	25
4.1.3	Shoot growth study	25
4.1.4	Root growth study	27
4.2	Biochemical and molecular assessments of MR219 callus treated with PF-68	30
4.3	Nutrient ions content analysis on MR219 callus treated with PF-68	38
4.4	Proteomic analysis on MR219 callus treated with PF-68	39
5	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	53
	REFERENCES	55
	APPENDICES	71
	BIODATA OF STUDENT	96
	LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	97

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
2.1	Differential proteomic studies in rice plant and methods employed.	11
4.1	The concentration of nutrient ions content of control, 0.04 % PF-68 and 0.10 % PF-68 after 4 weeks incubation	38
4.2	Top 20 proteins show significant abundance difference (together with their accession numbers) in each treatment group. The list is sorted according to descending increased and decreased fold changes of each protein.	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
4.1	Data obtained from callus proliferation incubated for three weeks in callus proliferation media supplemented with different concentrations of PF-68.	23
4.2	Morphology of calli treated with different concentrations of PF-68 after three weeks of incubation.	24
4.3	Effects of different concentrations of PF-68 on shoot growth after four weeks of incubation on shoot induction medium.	26
4.4	Effects of different concentrations of PF-68 on root growth after four weeks of incubation on root growth medium.	28
4.5	Morphology of MR219 cultivar seedlings after four weeks of incubation on root growth medium.	29
4.6	Enzymatic assays performed on callus incubated in control (0 %), optimum (0.04 %) and high (0.10 %) concentration of PF-68; (A) Total soluble sugar. (B) Total protein content. (C) Glutamate synthase (GOGAT) activity. (D) Total phenolic content. (E) Total flavonoid content.	32
4.7	Enzymatic assays performed on callus incubated in control (0 %), optimum (0.04 %) and high (0.10 %) concentration of PF-68; (A) Phenylalanine ammonia-lyase (PAL) activity. (B) Hydrogen peroxide (H ₂ O ₂) content (C) Malondialdehyde (MDA) content (D) Peroxidase activity (E) Esterase activity.	35
4.8	Normalized relative gene expression of <i>4CL3</i> , <i>APX</i> , <i>CHI</i> , <i>NADH-GOGAT</i> , and <i>SUS</i> in calli grown on 0.04 % PF-68 and 0.10 % PF-68.	36
4.9	Comparative proteomic analysis of control (0 %), optimum (0.04 %) and high (0.10 %) concentration of PF-68.	41
4.10	KEGG-pathway analysis of differentially expressed proteins identified in three treatment groups.	43
4.11	Proposed mechanism on the roles of PF-68 in enhancing callus proliferation of recalcitrant MR219 cultivar.	45

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2,4-D	2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
BAP	Benzylaminopurine
DW	Dry weight
FDA	Fluorescein diacetate
FC	Folin-Ciocalteu
FW	Fresh weight
GOGAT	Glutamate synthase
H ₂ O ₂	Hydrogen peroxide
IAA	Indole-3-acetic acid
KEGG	Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes
LC-MS/MS	Liquid chromatography tandem mass spectrometry
MDA	Malondialdehyde
MARDI	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
MS	Murashige and Skoog
NAA	1-Naphthaleneacetic acid
PF-68	Pluronic F-68
PMSF	Phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride
PAL	Phenylalanine ammonia-lyase
PBS	Phosphate buffered saline
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PEO	Polyethylene oxide
PPO	Polypropylene oxide
PCD	Programmed cell death

ROS	Reactive oxygen species
RT-qPCR	Real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TDZ	Thidiazuron



LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix		Page
1	Primers used for respective genes.	71
2	Validation of primers used in RT-qPCR analysis via standard curve and melt curve analyses.	72
3	Exploratory analysis output of callus incubated in different concentrations of PF-68 via Perseus v1.6.0.7.	76
4	Top 100 proteins showing significant abundance difference (together with their accession numbers) in calli incubated with 0.04 % PF-68.	78
5	Top 98 proteins showing significant abundance difference (together with their accession numbers) in comparison between calli incubated in control and 0.10 % PF-68.	84
6	Top 100 proteins showing significant abundance difference (together with their accession numbers) in comparison between calli incubated in 0.04 % PF-68 and 0.10 % PF-68.	90

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rice is one of the major staple food and Asia countries being the top producer and consumer. In Malaysia alone, a total land area of 671 679 hectares has been utilized for growing paddy with the highest production occurred in Kedah, Perak, Perlis and Penang (FAO, 2017). However, the rice production in Malaysia is still unable to sustain the demand of the ever-increasing population. Therefore, rice crop improvement, such as increasing yield and quality are crucial. Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) is the leading research institute conducting research related to livestock, food, and crops, including rice. MARDI has released 45 rice varieties for planting through plant breeding (MARDI, 2017). Among these rice varieties, MR219 cultivar is one of the most widely cultivated rice cultivars in Malaysia.

MR219 cultivar is well known for its high yielding, increased grain weight, and resistance towards leaf blight disease (Liew et al., 2012). Despite having these desirable traits, MR219 cultivar is sensitive towards environmental stresses (Tan et al., 2017). For instance, production of rice suffers when it is grown under drought or excess soil salinity conditions. These environmental stresses cause the reduction in water use efficiency in plants, which in turn, impairs plant growth and development. Thus, crop improvement via genetic manipulation is required in order to overcome these limitations. However, genetic manipulation in MR219 cultivar remains a challenge. This is because of its recalcitrant trait towards *in vitro* regeneration responses which include poor callus proliferation, low regeneration efficiency and long regeneration period (Amandeep Kaur et al., 2014). For instance, a total of eight weeks is required to produce embryogenic callus in MR219 (Zuraida et al., 2012), as compared to two weeks for *japonica* rice to produce embryogenic callus prior to shoot regeneration (Duan et al., 2012). Therefore, improving *in vitro* response of MR219 cultivar, such as callus proliferation, would be the first step towards the success of genetic manipulation on MR219 cultivar (Low et al., 2018).

In order to improve the *in vitro* responses of MR219 cultivar, optimization of plant growth medium is required. In this case, exogenous plant growth hormones and additives are the key components in improving the *in vitro* responses of MR219 cultivar (Abiri et al., 2017). Numerous studies were undertaken in order to establish an efficient tissue culture system for *indica* rice using different combinations of plant growth hormones such as benzylaminopurine (BAP), 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D), indole-3-acetic acid (IAA), thidiazuron (TDZ), 1-naphthaleneacetic acid (NAA), and kinetin (Abiri et al., 2017; Wani, Sanghera, & Gosal, 2011; Zuraida et al., 2011; Shahsavari et al., 2010). Among these studies on plant growth hormones, application of 2,4-D and kinetin were observed to be effective in callus proliferation of MR219 cultivar (Zuraida et al., 2011). Nevertheless, to achieve a desirable amount of callus in a short period remains to be a challenge for recalcitrant rice cultivar like MR219.

Pluronic F-68 (PF-68) is a non-ionic, co-polymer surfactant that has been employed as an additive in both *in vitro* animal and plant cultures (Barbulescu et al., 2011; Meier et al., 1999). PF-68 has been widely used in animal cell suspension culture to protect and repair damaged cells from constant sparging and agitation (Meier et al., 1999). Besides, studies have found that application of PF-68 in animal cell culture was able to enhance plasma membrane permeability that in turn, enhanced growth in animal cell culture (Shelat et al., 2013). On the other hand, application of PF-68 in plant tissue culture was found to enhance shoot regeneration in *Citrus sinensis* (Curtis & Mirkov 2012), *Pyrus communis* (Dashti et al., 2012), *Ricinus communis* (Kulathuran & Narayanasamy 2015) and *Abelmoschus esculentus* (Irshad et al., 2018). Notably, PF-68 was demonstrated to improve shoot regeneration of recalcitrant *Brassica napus* embryos (Barbulescu et al., 2011). This implies that PF-68 could be a good candidate for plant cell growth and regeneration improvement of the recalcitrant cultivar. Despite its successful growth enhancement in various plant species, application of PF-68 at higher concentrations was found to retard plant growth (Curtis & Mirkov 2012). Therefore, in order to maximize the usage of PF-68 as a growth additive, concentration optimization and understanding the mode of its action is crucial.

To date, there are no reported studies on the growth promoting effects of PF-68 on recalcitrant rice cultivar. Besides, the underlying growth promoting mechanism of PF-68 in plant cell remains largely unknown. Hence, this study aimed to improve *in vitro* cultivation of recalcitrant MR219 cultivar through supplementation of PF-68. In addition, proteomic profiling, biochemical assays and gene expression analysis were also performed to shed light on the possible mechanism of PF-68 in promoting rice callus growth.

The objectives of this study were:

1. to determine the suitable concentration of PF-68 on callus growth, shoot induction, shoot growth, and root growth of recalcitrant MR219 cultivar,
2. to assess the effects of PF-68 on MR219 callus proliferation through biochemical assays and gene expression analysis, and
3. to determine the differentially expressed proteins between callus treated with PF-68 and untreated callus

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