

# Genetic structure and evidence of putative Darwinian diversifying selection in the *Potato yellow vein virus* (PYVV)

Estructura genética y evidencia de una posible selección darwiniana diversificadora en el virus del amarillamiento de las venas de la papa (PYVV)

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## ABSTRACT

The population structure and genetic variation of *Potato yellow vein virus* (PYVV) were estimated by analysis of the nucleotide and deduced amino acid sequence of the coat protein of 69 isolates, reported in GenBank, from *Solanum tuberosum* (ST) and *Solanum phureja* (SP) hosts from different regions; predominantly Cundinamarca, Antioquia and Nariño, located in central and southwestern Colombia. Bioinformatics analysis revealed that despite the wide geographic distribution of different hosts and different collecting years, PYVV maintains a genetic similarity between 97.1 to 100.0%, indicating high spatial and temporal genetic stability of the major coat protein. No recombination events were found, but evidence was seen for the first time that this protein could be undergoing Darwinian diversifying selection.

**Key words:** *Solanum tuberosum*, viral proteins, genetic variability, *Crinivirus*.

## RESUMEN

En este trabajo se estimó la estructura poblacional y variación genética del virus del amarillamiento de las venas de la papa (PYVV) infectando cultivos en Colombia por medio del análisis de 69 secuencias nucleotídicas y aminoácidos deducidos de la proteína mayor de la cápside (CP) reportados en el banco de genes (GenBank). Los aislamientos de PYVV fueron obtenidos de los hospederos *Solanum tuberosum* (ST) y *Solanum phureja* (SP) en diferentes regiones de Colombia, predominantemente los departamentos de Cundinamarca, Antioquia y Nariño localizados en la región Central y Sur Oeste del país respectivamente. El análisis bioinformático reveló que a pesar de la amplia distribución geográfica de los hospederos y diferentes años de colecta, PYVV mantiene una similitud genética entre 97,1 y 100,0% indicando una gran estabilidad genética espacial y temporal en la CP. En este estudio no se detectaron eventos de recombinación, pero se presenta evidencia por primera vez de que esta proteína podría estar bajo selección darwiniana diversificadora.

**Palabras clave:** *Solanum tuberosum*, proteínas virales, variabilidad genética, *Crinivirus*.

## Introduction

Worldwide, the potato is considered the fourth most important crop, after rice, wheat and maize. The potato can be infected by different viruses, including the *Potato yellow vein virus* (PYVV) which reduces the yield and quality of tubers (Salazar *et al.*, 2000). PYVV has affected potato crops in Colombia for more than 50 years and has spread to neighboring countries in the Andean region. PYVV is classified as a tentative species of the *Crinivirus* genus in the *Closteroviridae* family. PYVV has a tripartite single strand and positive sense RNA genome. Virions are flexible, located in the phloem of the plant. The genome sequence indicates that the CP protein of PYVV consists of 756 nucleotides (252 aa) (Salazar *et al.*, 2000). The virus

is semi-persistent, transmitted by the greenhouse whitefly (*Trialeurodes vaporariorum*, Westwood) vector (Livieratos *et al.*, 2004). PYVV is the causal agent of the potato yellow vein disease (PYVD) which reduces the production in number of tubers by over 50% in the *Solanum tuberosum* group Andigena (Livieratos *et al.*, 2004).

A characteristic of RNA viruses is that they have high genetic variability, due to the ability to generate large populations and the lack of a proof reading activity of RNA polymerase (Domingo and Holland, 1997). However, there are other factors that influence genetic diversity, such as genetic recombination, genomic rearrangement, genetic drift and natural selection (García-Arenal *et al.*, 2001). Genetic diversity among different viruses varies according

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to factors such as the virus–vector relationship, host range or geographic incidence. Characterization studies of genetic variability are of practical interest for the control of viruses; and strategies based on monogenic resistance are influenced by genetic variation of the pathogen (Vives *et al.*, 2002).

Sequence analyses show that, in most instances, the selection acting on virus genes is negative. The degree of selection can be determined from the ratio between nucleotide diversities at non-synonymous and synonymous positions (dN/dS). This ratio indicates the amount of variation in the nucleotides that results in variation in the encoded protein. Virus encoded proteins are not less constrained than those of their eukaryotic hosts and vectors, which suggests that the need to establish functional interactions with host and vector encoded factors is constraining the variability of virus encoded proteins (Garcia-Arenal *et al.*, 2003). In virus genes, negative and positive selection may be acting in particular domains of the viral proteins, and are evidenced by detailed analyses of the encoding sequence. Positive selection acts with resistance-breaking isolates (Garcia-Arenal *et al.*, 2003).

Sequence analysis, *in silico*, of nucleotide or amino acids allows for the determination of possible phylogenetic relationships and similarities or differences among viral isolates, as has been reported for various species of viruses that infect plants using public sequences reported in the GenBank (Ge *et al.*, 2007; Marco and Aranda, 2005; Martin *et al.*, 2006; Rangel *et al.*, 2011). Since there is currently no genetic variability or Darwinian selection analysis of PYVV using the CP sequences reported from different potato producing regions in Colombia, the aim of this study was to identify genetic variation in PYVV isolates infecting the potato in

producing regions and to determine the presence of positive selection as an evolutionary force in PYVV based on 69 nucleotide sequences reported from different regions of Colombia. The results obtained for a region of 586 nucleotides within the coat protein gene covering a region encoding 195 aminoacids indicates low genetic variability, confirming previous studies (Guzmán *et al.*, 2006; Offei *et al.*, 2004; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, for the first time, we present evidence of positive Darwinian selection in two amino acids of the CP, suggesting this virus could be looking for change or speciation strategies.

## Materials and methods

### Origin of sequences

The nucleotide analysis was carried out with a total of 69 sequences of the coat protein (CP) of PYVV, which were obtained from the public database GenBank. The 68 sequences were obtained from major potato producing departments in Colombia; namely Antioquia, Boyaca, Cauca, Cundinamarca and Nariño. One sequence reported in Cajamarca, Peru (Livieratos *et al.*, 2004) (GenBank AJ557129) was also used. Origin, year of collection and hosts are listed in Tab.1.

### Sequence edition for analysis

Since the nucleotide sequences of PYVV's CP reported in GenBank have different lengths, for the analysis, all sequences were aligned using the ClustalW program implemented in the program MegAlign™ (DNASTar, Madison, WI) package for sequence analysis, version 7.2.2 and were adjusted to a length of 586 nucleotides flanked by the highly conserved amino acid sequences KDDSYNLDL and DLTANYLKF (Fig. 2). The CP sequences of PYVV starting

TABLE 1. Identification of sampled Colombian PYVV isolates.

	Accession number	Location	Place	Host	Colection year
1	HQ620554	Nariño	Ipiales - Suras	NA	2010?
2	HQ620553	Nariño	Ipiales - Saguaran	NA	2010?
3	HQ620552	Nariño	Pasto - Obonuco	NA	2010?
4	HQ620551	Nariño	Pasto - La Victoria	NA	2010?
5	HQ620550	Antioquia	La Union - Buena Vista	NA	2010?
6	HQ620549	Antioquia	La Union -El Vergel	NA	2010?
7	HQ620548	Cundinamarca	Facatativa	NA	2010?
8	HQ620547	Antioquia	Carmen del Viboral	NA	2010?
9	HQ620546	Antioquia	Santuario - El Carmen	NA	2010?
10	HQ620545	Antioquia	Sonson	NA	2010?
11	JF718318	Cundinamarca	Chipaque	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
12	JF718317	Cundinamarca	Chipaque	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
13	JF718316	Cundinamarca	Sibate	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
14	JF718315	Cundinamarca	Sibate	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008

Continues

**TABLE 1.** Identification of sampled Colombian PVV isolates. Location, place, host and collection date are indicated (*continued*).

	<b>Accession number</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Host</b>	<b>Collection year</b>
15	FJ718314	Cundinamarca	Sibate	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
16	JF718313	Cundinamarca	Sibate	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
17	JF718312	Cundinamarca	Sibate	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
18	JF718311	Cundinamarca	Sibate	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
19	JF718310	Cundinamarca	Chipaque	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
20	JF718309	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
21	JF718308	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
22	JF718307	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
23	JF718306	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
24	JF718305	Antioquia	Marinilla	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
25	JF718304	Antioquia	Marinilla	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
26	JF718303	Antioquia	Marinilla	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
27	JF718302	Antioquia	Marinilla	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
28	JF718301	Antioquia	Marinilla	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
29	JF718300	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
30	JF718299	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
31	JF718298	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
32	JF718297	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
33	JF718296	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
34	JF718295	Nariño	Puerres	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
35	JF718294	Nariño	Puerres	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
36	JF718293	Nariño	Puerres	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
37	JF718292	Nariño	Puerres	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
38	JF718291	Nariño	Puerres	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
39	JF718290	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
40	JF718289	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
41	JF718288	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
42	JF718287	Cundinamarca	Chipaque	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
43	JF718286	Cundinamarca	Chipaque	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
44	JF718285	Cundinamarca	Chipaque	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
45	JF718284	Cundinamarca	Chipaque	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
46	GQ344830	Cauca	San Sebastian	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
47	GQ397987	Antioquia	Sonson	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
48	GQ397986	Antioquia	La Union	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
49	GQ397985	Antioquia	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
50	GQ397984	Nariño	Pupiales	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
51	GQ397983	Nariño	Pupiales	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
52	GQ397982	Antioquia	Marinilla	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
53	GQ397981	Antioquia	Marinilla	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
54	GQ397980	Antioquia	Sonson	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
55	GQ397979	Antioquia	Sonson	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
56	GQ397978	Boyaca	Tunja	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
57	GQ397977	Boyaca	Tunja	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2008
58	GQ397976	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
59	GQ397975	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. chaucha</i>	2008
60	GQ397974	Cundinamarca	?	<i>Solanum. sp</i>	2008
61	GQ397973	Cauca	?	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
62	GQ397972	Cauca	?	<i>S. phureja</i>	2008
63	AJ560291	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2003?
64	AJ586117	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. phureja</i>	2003?
65	AJ586116	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2003?
66	AJ586115	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2003?
67	AJ586114	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. phureja</i>	2003?
68	AJ586113	Cundinamarca	?	<i>S. tuberosum</i>	2003?

with GenBank code HQ (*i.e.*, HQ620554) were adjusted from nucleotide position 86 to 668. Sequences starting with code JF (*i.e.*, JF718316) were adjusted from nucleotide position 109 to 696. Sequences starting with code GQ (*i.e.*, GQ397987) were adjusted from nucleotide position 1 to 588 and sequences starting with code AJ (*i.e.*, 586113) were adjusted from nucleotide position 76 to 661. We assumed a high quality for the sequences deposited in GenBank, which were generated by third parties.

### Phylogenetic analysis

The phylogenetic relationship of the nucleotide sequences was inferred by the Neighbor-Joining method (Saitou and Nei, 1987). Evolutionary distances were calculated using the Kimura 2-parameter method (Kimura, 1980), using 1000 replications to estimate the confidence of the taxon grouping in tree branches (Felsenstein, 1985). All positions containing gaps and missing data were eliminated. The evolutionary analysis was performed in the program MEGA 5 (Tamura *et al.*, 2011).

### Recombination and selection

The search for putative recombination events was done using the genetic algorithm for recombination detection (GARD) (Kosakovsky Pond *et al.*, 2006). The nucleotide-substitution model was selected automatically before being applied to the site-recombination analysis. The search for amino acids undergoing selection was performed using the algorithms FEL (fixed effects likelihood), REL (random effects likelihood), (Kosakovsky Pond and Frost, 2005) and MEME (mixed effects model of evolution) implemented in

the HyPhy program (hypothesis testing using phylogenies) (Pond and Frost, 2005) in the datamonkey server (Delpont *et al.*, 2010). This method allows for the identification of codons undergoing positive selection and removes the assumptions about the demographics associated with other statistical selection tests (Cavatorta *et al.*, 2008).

## Results and discussion

### Nucleotide similarity

Unlike previous reports (Guzmán *et al.*, 2006; Offei *et al.*, 2004), this is the first study that analyzed the genetic variability of the CP of PYVV using 68 sequences from different geographical regions of Colombia, hosts and different years of sampling. All sequences are available in GenBank (Tab. 1). Nucleotide similarity among the CP ranged from 97.1 to 100.0%, with 97.3% being the most frequent value, as indicated by the graph of frequency obtained from 2,278 nucleotide paired comparisons (data not shown). The results indicate that Colombian PYVV isolates exhibit high genetic stability over time and among different departments and years. Several collected PYVV isolates, either in different years or departments, had 100% nucleotide similarity (Tab. 2).

In an attempt to discriminate potential PYVV genetic groups circulating in Colombia, we built a phylogenetic tree using 32 PYVV haplotypes that were deduced in the program SNAP (Price and Carbone, 2005). The phylogenetic tree of PYVV haplotypes (Fig. 1) does not show evidence of genetic groups, indicating that PYVV in Colombia is

**TABLE 2.** Identification of PYVV isolates reported in different years and/or locations with 100% of similarity. NA, not available.

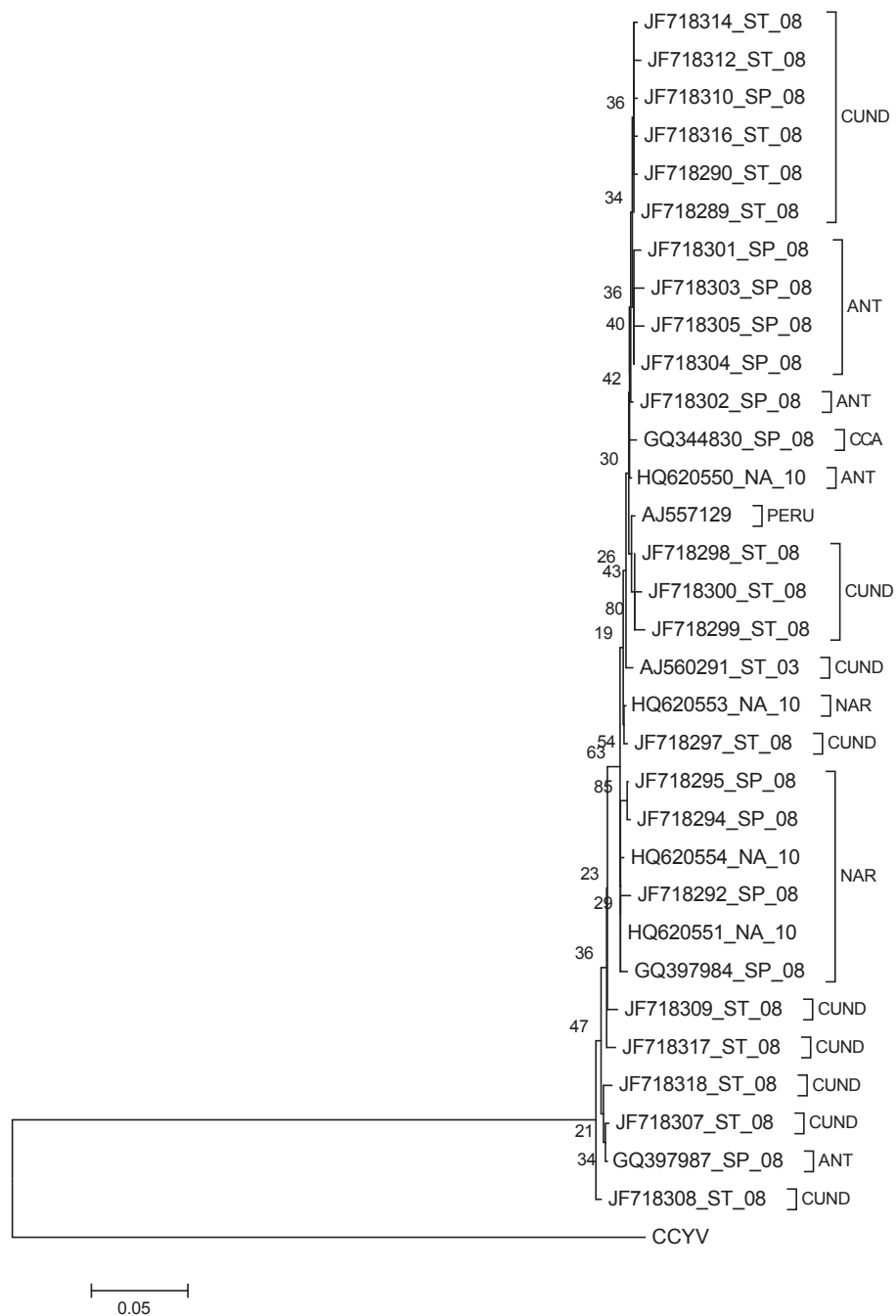
Accesion	Department	Location	Year	=	Accesion	Department	Location	Year
HQ620548	Cundinamarca	Facatativa	2010	=	HQ620550	Antioquia	La Union - Buena Vista	2010
JF718311	Cundinamarca	Sibate	2008	=	HQ620549	Antioquia	La Union - El Vergel	2010
JF718296	Cundinamarca	NA	2008	=	HQ620553	Nariño	Saguaran	2010
JF718289	Cundinamarca	NA	2008	=	HQ620549	Antioquia	La Union - El Vergel	2011
JF718288	Cundinamarca	NA	2008	=	HQ620549	Antioquia	La Union - El Vergel	2011
GQ397986	Antioquia	La Union	2006	=	HQ620550	Antioquia	La Union	2011
GQ397985	Antioquia	NA	2006	=	HQ620547	Antioquia	Carmen del Viboral	2011
GQ397982	Antioquia	Marinilla	2006	=	HQ620547	Antioquia	Carmen del Viboral	2011
GQ397981	Antioquia	Marinilla	2006	=	JF718298	Cundinamarca	NA	2008
GQ397980	Antioquia	Sonson	2006	=	GQ397987	Antioquia	Sonson	2006
GQ397978	Boyaca	Tunja	2006	=	JF718304	Antioquia	Marinilla	2008
GQ397977	Boyaca	Tunja	2006	=	HQ620553	Nariño	Ipiales	2011
GQ397975	Cundinamarca	NA	2006	=	GQ397976	Cundinamarca	NA	2006
GQ397974	Cundinamarca	NA	2006	=	GQ397987	Antioquia	Sonson	2006
GQ397972	Cauca	NA	2006	=	HQ620549	Antioquia	La Union - El Vergel	2011
AJ586117	Cundinamarca	NA	2004	=	HQ620550	Antioquia	La Union - Buena Vista	2011
AJ586113	Cundinamarca	NA	2004	=	HQ620549	Antioquia	La Union - El Vergel	2010
AJ586115	Cundinamarca	NA	2004	=	AJ560291	Cundinamarca	NA	2010
AJ586116	Cundinamarca	NA	2004	=	AJ560291	Cundinamarca	NA	2010

very homogeneous without clear genetic groups according to geographical precedence, host or year. More Colombian PYVV sequences are needed in order to better estimate phylogenetic inferences.

Haplotypes and related isolates are listed in Tab. 3. The most common PYVV haplotype in Colombia is identified as H28, which includes isolates obtained from different potato species sampled in the departments of Cundinamarca,

Antioquia and Cauca. Geographically, the departments of Antioquia and Cundinamarca are adjacent to one another in the central region of Colombia and the Cauca department is located in the southwest of the country (Fig. 1).

High nucleotide similarity values between PYVV isolates suggest: first, a high spatial and temporal genetic stability and second, the possible movement between departments of tubers infected with the virus. Indeed, the presence of



**FIGURE 1.** Phylogenetic tree with 32 deduced haplotypes of PYVV's CPs. *Solanum tuberosum* (ST), *Solanum phureja* (SP), NA not available. *Cucurbit chlorotic yellows virus* (CCYV) was used as an out-group. Collection year and precedence are indicated.

**TABLE 3.** Deduced PVV haplotypes.

Haplotype	Isolates
H1	JF718307, JF718306
H2	CCYV
H3	JF718309
H4	JF718300
H5	JF718317
H6	JF718299
H7	HQ620547, HQ620546, GQ397985, GQ397982, AJ557129
H8	JF718298, GQ397981
H9	JF718294
H10	HQ620551, GQ397983, GQ397979
H11	GQ344830
H12	GQ397984
H13	JF718292
H14	JF718303
H15	JF718305
H16	JF718310, JF718287, JF718286, JF718285, JF718284
H17	JF718304, GQ397978
H18	JF718301
H19	JF718302
H20	AJ560291, AJ586116, AJ586115
H21	JF718312
H22	HQ620553, HQ620552, JF718296, GQ397977
H23	JF718297
H24	JF718316
H25	HQ620550, HQ620548, GQ397986, AJ586117, HQ620545, GQ397976, GQ397975
H26	JF718290
H27	JF718314
H28	JF718289, JF718311, AJ586113, HQ620549, GQ397972, JF718288, AJ586114, GQ397973, JF718313, JF718315
H29	HQ620554
H30	JF718295, JF718293, JF718291
H31	JF718308
H32	JF718318
H33	GQ397987, GQ397980, GQ397974

identical PVV haplotypes infecting potato crops in different departments of Colombia indicates that there is an urgent need to improve the quality of potato tubers with a certified seed production program. It is also important to regulate and limit the transport of seeds between departments and borders, because PVV is a virus that can be transmitted through tubers (Salazar *et al.*, 2000). The transfer of potato tubers between departments is a practice that is often used among Colombian farmers, but the detection of the virus by visual analysis is not possible because the infected tubers have no apparent symptoms, making it difficult to predict whether or not they have the virus. Control of viral spread remains the most efficient method to reduce viral diseases in potato seed production.

Within the family Closteroviridae, other viruses have been reported with low CP genetic diversity from geographically distant isolates (Alicai *et al.*, 1999; Rubio *et al.*, 2001a; Rubio *et al.*, 2001b; Rubio *et al.*, 1999). Several references pointing to similar results indicate that low heterogeneity is the norm for viruses in the genus *Crinivirus*.

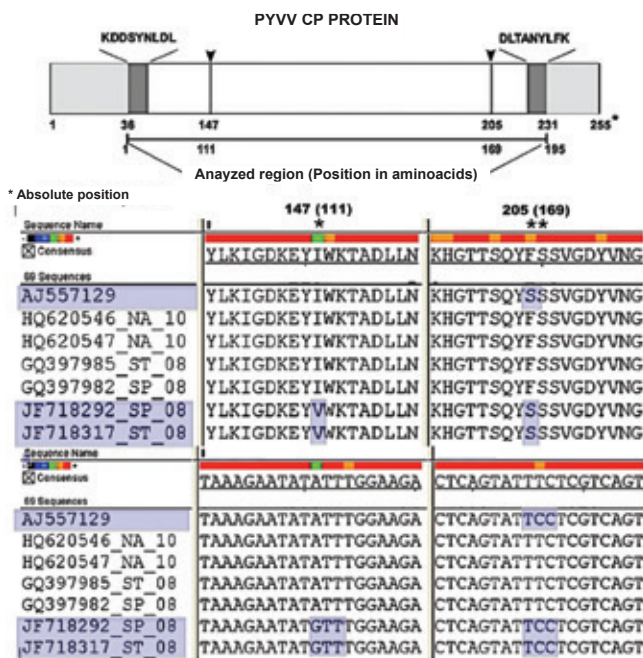
### Selection analysis

Nucleotide or amino acid selection can be exercised to maintain the primary, secondary or tertiary structural characteristics in the viral genome that are important for replication, such as the 3' non coding genomic regions of the single strand RNA virus. Another group of selection factors is associated with the host plant. The differentiation of natural populations according to the host plant can also be taken as evidence of host-associated selection (Garcia-Arenal *et al.*, 2001). Most positive-strand plant RNA viruses are adapted to infection of plant hosts. The comparison of genetic maps of representative viruses has revealed genes in plant viral genomes that appear to be essential adaptations needed for success in invasion and dispersal throughout their plant hosts. (Goldbach *et al.*, 1994).

A non-synonymous substitution rate (dN) significantly higher than the percentage of synonymous substitution (dS), or  $\omega = dN/dS$  greater than 1, points to positive Darwinian selection (Delpont *et al.*, 2009). Since the selection acting on viral genes is negative in most cases, (Garcia-Arenal *et al.*, 2003), and positive selection is less frequent (Gojbori *et al.*, 1990), we focused on positively selected codons. The prior selection analysis was searched for possible recombination events, because it may contribute to a false inference of positive selection (Scheffler *et al.*, 2006). With no evidence of recombination, the nucleotide segment was not subdivided for further selection analysis (Scheffler *et al.*, 2006). For the CP of PVV, three different algorithms, designed to detect selection in a particular codon, coincided in suggesting that codon 205 is undergoing diversifying selection (Fig. 2).

Positive selection in codon 147 is supported only by the REL algorithm. The amino acid at position 205 in the majority of the isolates corresponded to a phenylalanine, except for isolates JF718317 (ST) from Cundinamarca, JF718292 (SP) from Nariño and AJ557129 (ST) from Peru, which codified for a serine.

The dN/dS ratio of CP sequences analyzed in the MEGA program, where dN is the ratio of non-synonymous substitutions and dS is the ratio of synonymous substitutions, is 0.19. This value is in the range for viruses that infect plants



**FIGURE 2.** Section of PYVV's CP analyzed. The alignment of the amino acid sequence from position 36 (1) to position 231 (195) is indicated. The sequence of 9 amino acids at the beginning and end of the target region is conserved in all sequences. Arrows indicate the approximate position of codons 147 (111) and 205 (169) with reference to the absolute position and (analyzed region) may be undergoing positive selection according to algorithm 1 (\*) and algorithms 3 (\*\*).

(Garcia-Arenal *et al.*, 2001).  $dN/dS = 0.19$  indicates a negative selection pressure for the amino acid change in this genomic region. However, the results of selection pressure which fall in the average  $dN/dS$  range of a region of interest may have a poor statistical power to detect positive selection because only a few sites may be undergoing selection (Kosakovsky Pond and Frost, 2005). In a site to site search for selection, algorithms FEL ( $P$ -value 0.030), REL (Bayes Factor 279 379) and MEME ( $P$ -value 0.044) indicated that there is enough statistical evidence to suggest that codon 169 of the alignment is undergoing positive selection (Fig. 2). Unlike FEL and MEME, REL analysis further suggested that codon 111 may also be undergoing positive selection (Tab. 4).

Isolates that have amino acid changes at two positions undergoing putative diversifying selection included JF718292 (SP), JF718317 (ST) and AJ557129 (ST), the latter reported

**TABLE 4.** Amino acid positions undergoing positive selection in the CP of PYVV detected with at least one algorithm.

PYVV CP segment	Codon	FEL		REL			MEME
		$d_N-d_S$	$P$ -value	$d_N-d_S$	Posterior probability	Bayes factor	$P$ -value
aa36 (1) – aa231 (195)	147 (111)	-	-	3.85363	0.982815	127.193	-
	205 (169)	79.5713	0.0309	4.06015	0.9921	279.379	0.04498

in Peru. For Colombian PYVV isolates, at position 147 (111), there was a change of isoleucine to valine due to the transition of GTT → ATT. However, in this position, 24 other isolates presented a valine. For position 205 (169), only isolates JF718292, JF718 317 and AJ557129 had the amino acid change of phenylalanine to a serine, due to the transition of TTC → TCC.

Phenylalanine has been reported as an important amino acid in the differentiation of viral strains in *Citrus tristeza virus* (CTV) at position 124 of the CP. This amino acid causes the epitope responsible for the reaction with antibody MCA 13, which differentiates between severe and soft strains of CTV with 95% confidence (Pappu *et al.*, 1993; Permar *et al.*, 1990). Our *in silico* results could be coincidental, and the amino acid variation of serine or phenylalanine could indicate a change in epitope recognition for PYVV. However, this is a hypothesis that should be demonstrated because in this virus, there are no reports on strains expressing different symptoms. Amino acids identified as undergoing positive selection in PYVV could be in a region of interaction with proteins of the vector and positive selection reflects gain or loss of affinity for the interaction with the vector, since no correlation between the encoded amino acid and the host was found.

## Conclusions

The low heterogeneity found in PYVV is possibly due to its rapid expansion as a result of whitefly population growth and expansion, or similar selection pressures in the different species of *Solanum*.

The proposed functions of the positively selected amino acids in the CP of PYVV are speculative. We are extrapolating the function of another two suggested amino acids undergoing positive selection in an unrelated gene of virus species belonging to a different genus in the family *Closteroviridae*. Not much can be concluded from the small number of amino acid variants without a biological relationship. Although this does suggest selection pressure, one cannot guess what the selection would be without an obvious biological trait. For now, this change only suggests some limited variation among PYVV isolates. Further

studies must be carried out to determinate the biological significance of this variation.

## Literature cited

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