

1        Comparative genomics among three cyst nematode species re-  
2        veals distinct evolutionary histories among effector families and an  
3        irregular distribution of effector-associated promoter motifs

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13

## 14 Abstract

15 Potato cyst nematodes (PCNs), an umbrella term used for two species, *Globodera pallida* and *G.*  
16 *rostochiensis*, belong worldwide to the most harmful pathogens of potato. Pathotype-specific host  
17 plant resistances are an essential handle for PCN control. However, the poor delineation of *G. pal-*  
18 *lida* pathotypes hampers the efficient use of available host plant resistances. Long-read sequencing  
19 technology allowed us to generate a new reference genome of *G. pallida* population D383 and, as  
20 compared to the current reference, the new genome assembly is 42 times less fragmented. For  
21 comparison of diversification patterns of six effector families between *G. pallida* and *G. rostochien-*  
22 *sis*, an additional reference genome was generated for an outgroup, the beet cyst nematode *Het-*  
23 *erodera schachtii* (IRS population). Large evolutionary contrasts in effector family topologies were  
24 observed. While VAPs diversified before the split between the three cyst nematode species, the  
25 families GLAND5 and GLAND13 only expanded in PCN after their separation from the genus *Het-*  
26 *erodera*. Although DNA motifs in the promoter regions thought to be involved in the orchestration  
27 of effector expression ('DOG boxes') were present in all three cyst nematode species, their presence  
28 is not a necessity for dorsal gland-produced effectors. Notably, DOG box dosage was only loosely  
29 correlated with expression level of individual effector variants. Comparison of the *G. pallida* genome  
30 with those of two other cyst nematodes underlined the fundamental differences in evolutionary  
31 history between effector families. Re-sequencing of PCN populations with deviant virulence charac-  
32 teristics will allow for the linking of these characteristics with the composition of the effector reper-  
33 toire as well as for the mapping of PCN diversification patterns resulting from extreme anthropo-  
34 genic range expansion.

35 **Words: 262 (ME: 'about 250 words')**

## 36 1. INTRODUCTION

37 Worldwide, affordable food and feed production depends on large-scale monocropping. For practical  
38 and economic reasons crop homogeneity in terms of yield quality and quantity is essential. At the  
39 same time, such systems are intrinsically vulnerable to damage by pests and pathogens. The highest  
40 susceptibility for biotic stressors is found in genetically homogeneous crops. Potato is the third most  
41 important staple food (Birch et al., 2012), and in most production systems clonally-propagated seed  
42 potatoes are used as starting material. Such production systems cannot do without rigorous disease  
43 management. Potato cyst nematodes (PCN), the common name for actually two species, *Globodera*  
44 *pallida*, and *G. rostochiensis*, are among the primary yield-limiting potato pathogens worldwide. PCN  
45 co-evolved with potato in the Andes in South America (see e.g. (Plantard et al., 2008)), and prolifera-  
46 tion of potato as a main crop outside of its native range was unintentionally paralleled by an enor-  
47 mous range expansion of PCN. For decades, PCN control has mainly been dependent on the applica-  
48 tion of nematicides. Due to the non-specific nature of these nematicides they have a highly negative  
49 impact on the environment, and their use is therefore either banned or severely restricted in most  
50 parts of the world. Currently, crop rotation and the use of resistant potato varieties are the main  
51 handles in PCN control. For economic reasons, the use of plant resistances is preferred over crop  
52 rotation. However, potato resistance genes such as *H1* (Toxopeus & Huijsman, 1952), *Gro1-4* (Paal et  
53 al., 2004), *Gpa2* (Bakker et al., 2003), and *H2* (Strachan et al., 2019) are only effective against specific  
54 pathotypes of one of these PCN species. Nevertheless, there is no robust (molecular) pathotyping  
55 scheme that would allow for the matching of the genetic constitution of field populations with effec-  
56 tive host plant resistance genes.

57         Effectors are proteins secreted by plant-pathogens that facilitate the manipulation of the  
58 physiology of the host plant and interfere with the host's innate immune response in favour of the  
59 invading organism (e.g. (Stergiopoulos & De Wit, 2009)). Potato cyst nematode effectors have some  
60 peculiar characteristics. With at least one known exception, HYPs (Eves-van den Akker, Lilley, Jones,

61 & Urwin, 2014), most effectors are produced in large single-celled glands referred to as the subven-  
62 tral and dorsal esophageal glands. These glands empty into the pharynx lumen, and the lumen is  
63 connected to a hollow protrusible stylet with which nematodes pierce plant cell walls. Via the orifice  
64 of the stylet, effector proteins are transferred to the apoplast or the cytoplasm of infected host plant  
65 cells. It is noted that subventral gland effectors are functional during plant penetration. Subse-  
66 quently, dorsal gland secretions are responsible for feeding site induction and the suppression of the  
67 host's innate immune system (Smant, Helder, & Govere, 2018). It has been hypothesised that com-  
68 mon transcription factors and/or common promoter motifs might facilitate coordinated expression  
69 of effectors during the infection process. Such mechanisms have been identified to regulate effector  
70 expression in plant pathogenic fungi and oomycetes (Jones et al., 2019; Roy, Kagda, & Judelson,  
71 2013). Also, among plant-parasitic nematodes, promoter motifs have been identified upstream of  
72 effectors that could contribute to the orchestration of the infection process. In the case of the potato  
73 cyst nematode *G. rostochiensis*, a DOrsal Gland motif ('DOG box') was identified by (Eves-van den  
74 Akker et al., 2016). For the pinewood nematode *Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*, a regulatory promoter  
75 motif referred to as STATAWAARS was demonstrated to affect effector expression (Espada et al.,  
76 2018). Expression of several effectors of Clade I tropical root-knot nematodes (Tandingan De Ley et  
77 al., 2002) was suggested to be steered by a putative cis-regulatory motif 'Mel-DOG' (*Meloidogyne*  
78 DOrsal Gland, (Da Rocha et al., 2021)).

79 Most likely as a reflection of the co-evolution between nematodes and their host(s), effec-  
80 tors are typically encoded by multigene families showing family-specific levels of diversification  
81 (Masonbrink et al., 2019; Van Steenbrugge et al., 2021). Cyst nematodes harbour numerous effector  
82 families (see for instance (Pogorelko, Wang, Juvale, Mitchum, & Baum, 2020), and genome (re-  
83 )sequencing is a rigorous approach to generate comprehensive overview of PCN effector family com-  
84 positions. The first genomes of *G. pallida* and *G. rostochiensis* were published by (Cotton et al., 2014)  
85 and (Eves-van den Akker et al., 2016). Although this constituted a major step forward, both genomes

86 are very fragmented, hampering effector family inventories. Recently, long-read technology allowed  
87 for the generation of a less fragmented and more complete reference genome for *G. rostochiensis*  
88 with - among other things - a 24 folds reduction of the number of scaffolds as compared to the initial  
89 reference genome (Van Steenbrugge et al., 2021). Here, we present a novel reference genome for  
90 the other potato cyst nematode, *G. pallida*, characterised by a 42-fold reduction of the number of  
91 scaffolds, together with a reference genome of the beet cyst nematode *Heterodera schachtii*. The *H.*  
92 *schachtii* genome was used to establish the polarity of effectorome contrasts between the two po-  
93 tato cyst nematode species. Detailed knowledge about the nematode's effector repertoire, a com-  
94 plete overview of variants within effector families, and insights in the evolutionary history of individ-  
95 ual effector families are an essential ingredients for a molecular pathotyping scheme. Next to com-  
96 paring effector diversification patterns, we investigated DOG box distribution and DOG box dosage  
97 (up to 16 DOG boxes were observed per putative promoter region) both within and among effectors  
98 families. Scrutinising putative effector promoter regions in three reference genomes allowed us to  
99 pinpoint the distribution of this putative regulatory motif among cyst nematode species, as well as  
100 among and within effector families. Subsequently, the impact of these new, long read technology-  
101 based reference genomes on ecological PCN diversification in general and on the development of  
102 effectorome-based pathotyping system for potato cyst nematodes in particular is discussed.

## 103 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 104 2.1 DNA isolation and sequencing

105 Cysts from *G. pallida* line D383 were used as starting material for the collection of pre-parasitic sec-  
106 ond-stage juveniles (J2). J2's were concentrated, and sucrose centrifugation was used to purify the  
107 nematode suspension (Jenkins, 1964). After multiple rounds of washing the purified nematode sus-  
108 pension in 0.1 M NaCl, nematodes were resuspended in sterilised MQ water. Juveniles were lysed in  
109 a standard nematode lysis buffer with proteinase K and beta-mercaptoethanol at 60°C for 1 h as  
110 described in (Holterman et al., 2006). The lysate was mixed with an equal volume of phenol: chloro-  
111 form: isoamyl alcohol (25:24:1) (pH 8.0) following a standard DNA purification procedure, and finally,  
112 DNA was precipitated with isopropanol. After washing the DNA pellet with 70% ethanol for several  
113 times, it was resuspended in 10mM Tris-HCL (pH 8.0). *G. pallida* D383 DNA (10 -20 µg) was se-  
114 quenced using Pacific Biosciences SMRT sequencing technology at Bioscience (Wageningen Research,  
115 Wageningen, The Netherlands). DNA (30 µg) from *H. schachtii* (IRS population) was isolated with a  
116 procedure similar to the one used for *G. pallida*, however DNA was precipitated using an ice-cold  
117 ethanol precipitation step (Jain et al., 2018). DNA fragments below 10 kb were depleted using a short  
118 read eliminator kit (Circulomics SS-100-121-01) and *H. schachtii* DNA (15 µg) was sequenced using  
119 Oxford Nanopore technology at NexOmics (Wuhan, China).

120

### 121 2.2 Genome assemblies and synteny

122 For *G. pallida* D383, raw PacBio reads, and for *H. schachtii* IRS, Oxford Nanopore reads were cor-  
123 rected to, in essence, merge haplotypes using the correction mode in Canu (Koren et al., 2017), by  
124 reducing the error rate to a maximum of 15% and the corrected coverage to a minimum of 200. Us-  
125 ing wtdgb2 v2.3 (Ruan and Li, 2020), multiple initial genome assemblies were generated based on  
126 the corrected Nanopore reads while manually refining the parameters minimal read length, k-mer  
127 size, and minimal read depth. These parameters were optimised to generate an assembly close to

128 the expected genome size of *G. pallida* and *H. schachtii*. After optimisation, for *G. pallida*, a minimum  
129 read length cut-off of 5,000, minimal read depth of 6, and a k-mer size of 18 was used. To generate  
130 the assembly of *H. schachtii*, a minimum read length cut-off of 6,000, minimal read depth of 8, and a  
131 k-mer size of 21 were used. The remaining haplotigs were pruned from the assemblies using Purge  
132 Haplotigs v1.0.4 (Roach *et al.*, 2018). The contigs from the assemblies were then improved using Fin-  
133 isherSC v2.1 (Lam *et al.*, 2015) at default settings and scaffolded using SSPACE-Longread v1.1  
134 (Boetzer and Pirovano, 2014). Gaps in the assemblies were then filled using GapFiller v1.0 (van  
135 Steenbrugge, 2021). For *G. pallida*, the resulting assembly was polished with Pacbio reads by three  
136 iterations of Arrow v2.3.3 (<https://github.com/PacificBiosciences/GenomicConsensus>), followed by  
137 five iterations of polishing with Pilon v1.23 (Walker *et al.*, 2014) using Pacbio and Illumina NovaSeq  
138 reads. Finally, the assembly of *H. schachtii* was polished with Medaka v1.4.1 model  
139 r941\_prom\_hac\_g3210 using Nanopore sequencing reads. Repeat regions were softmasked using  
140 RepeatModeler v1.0.11 (<https://github.com/Dfam-consortium/RepeatModeler>) and RepeatMasker  
141 v4.0.9 (Tarailo-Graovac and Chen, 2009). Using Braker v2.1.2 (Brůna *et al.*, 2021), gene annotations  
142 were predicted for both assemblies at default settings outputting gff3 annotations and aided by  
143 RNAseq data of different life stages (*G. pallida*: NCBI Bioproject PRJEB2896, *H. schachtii*:  
144 PRJNA767548). Full details on the generation of the genome assemblies and prediction of genes are  
145 available on [https://github.com/Jorisvansteenbrugge/Gros\\_Gpal\\_Hsch](https://github.com/Jorisvansteenbrugge/Gros_Gpal_Hsch). For *Globodera rostochiensis*,  
146 the Gr-Line19 genome assembly described in (Van Steenbrugge *et al.*, 2021) was used (NCBI GenBank  
147 assembly accession: GCA\_018350325.1).

148 The synteny between the *G. rostochiensis*, *G. pallida*, and *H. schachtii* genomes was assessed by a  
149 progressive genome alignment using Mauve v2.4.0 (Darling *et al.*, 2004). The resulting alignments of  
150 regions larger than 1 kb and larger than 3kb were visualised in Circos v0.69-9 (Krzywinski *et al.*,  
151 2009).

152

### 153 2.3 Identification of Effector Homologs

154 Effector gene families were identified in the genomes based on the predicted genes by BRAKER2.  
155 Homologs for Gr-1106/Hg-GLAND4 were identified using HMMer v3 with a custom HMM profile  
156 based on GenBank entries JQ912480 to JQ912513. SPRY homologs were identified with HMMer using  
157 a pre-calculated profile HMM in the PFAM database (PF00622). Homologs to CLE-like proteins were  
158 identified with a custom profile HMM-based on UniProt sequences (D1FNJ7, D1FNK5, D1FNJ9,  
159 D1FNK2, D1FNK8, D1FNK3, D1FNK0, D1FNK4). Homologs to Venom Allergen-like proteins (VAP) were  
160 identified with a custom profile HMM-based on Uniprot sequences (Q8MQ79, A0A0K3AST9, P90958,  
161 Q19348, A0A0K3AWG2, Q967G4, Q9BID5, A0A3Q8UEU8, Q963I7, B8LF85, A7X975, A0A7G7LJV8). Hg-  
162 GLAND5 and Hg-GLAND13 were identified with BLASTP searches with GenBank sequences KJ825716  
163 and KJ825724, respectively, maintaining thresholds at 35% identity, 50% query coverage, and an E-  
164 value of 0.0001. Each effector homolog was tested for the presence of a signal peptide for secretion  
165 by Phobius v1.01 (Käll, Krogh, & Sonnhammer, 2007) and the presence of one or multiple DOG-box  
166 motifs in the promoter region using a custom script (available on GitHub  
167 [https://github.com/Jorisvansteenbrugge/Gros\\_Gpal\\_Hsch](https://github.com/Jorisvansteenbrugge/Gros_Gpal_Hsch)).

168 For *G. rostochiensis*, effector annotations were used as described in (J. J. M. van Steenbrugge et al.,  
169 2021), except for CLE-like proteins. CLE variant Gros19\_g16105.t1 was excluded since the gene  
170 model likely contains errors, and the exact location of this variant in the phylogenetic tree is there-  
171 fore uncertain. Furthermore, the HMM scoring cut-off was lowered to 300 to include two more po-  
172 tential CLE variants.

173

### 174 2.4 Phylogeny

175 A multiple sequence alignment was generated for each effector gene family using Muscle v3.8.1551  
176 based on gene coding sequences to infer the phylogeny of effector gene families between species.  
177 Next, phylogenetic trees were produced with RaxML v8.2.12 (Stamatakis, 2014) using the



178 GTRGAMMA model with 100 bootstrap replicates. The GTRGAMMA model was selected based on  
179 recommendations by ModelTest-NG v0.2.0 (Darriba et al., 2020). Finally, using Figtree V1.4.4 , the  
180 resulting trees were visualised and annotated.

181

## 182 2.5 DOGbox identification and Gene expression Analysis

183 RNAseq reads (add repository) were mapped to the *G. pallida* D383 genome, Reads xxx were  
184 mapped to the *G. rostochiensis* Gr-Line19 genome, and Reads xxx were mapped to the *H. schachtii*  
185 IRS genome using Hisat2 v2.1.0, generating alignments tailored for transcript assemblers (--dta op-  
186 tion). Based on the alignments, abundances were estimated and normalized to transcripts per million  
187 (TPM) for the transcripts predicted by Braker2 using StringTie v2.1.7b (Kovaka et al., 2019). Expres-  
188 sion values of SPRYSEC genes in all three cyst nematode species were extracted, and plotted against  
189 the number of DOG-box motifs in each gene. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to deter-  
190 mine relationship between TPM and the number of DOG-box motifs.

191

## 192 3. RESULTS

### 193 3.1. The use of long read sequence technologies to generate novel reference genomes

194 The mapping of diversification patterns of effector families requires a high-quality reference genome  
195 with preferably a low number of scaffolds and a minimal gap length. (Cotton et al., 2014) were the  
196 first to present a reference genome of the potato cyst nematode species *G. pallida*. For our specific  
197 purpose, *i.e.*, the generation of complete inventories of effector families, this reference genome was  
198 too fragmented, and the gap length was too large. PacBio long-read technology allowed us to gener-  
199 ate a new reference genome from the *G. pallida* population D383 with a 42-fold reduction of scaf-  
200 folds and a 21-fold reduction of the total gap length. As one of the results, the number of predicted  
201 genes increased from 16,403 to 18,813.

202 In addition, we assembled the genome sequence of the IRS population of beet cyst nematode *Het-*  
203 *erodera schachtii*. This allowed us to compare effector family diversification among the two potato  
204 cyst nematode species, *G. pallida* and *G. rostochiensis*, and establish the polarity of these contrasts  
205 by using *H. schachtii* as an outgroup (both *Globodera* and *Heterodera* belong to the family Heterode-  
206 ridae). The current genome size, 190 Mb, is slightly above the genome size estimated by flow cy-  
207 tometry, 160 - 170 Mb (Eves van den Akker, personal communication). It is noted that both the pre-  
208 dicted number of genes and transcripts were about 50% higher in *H. schachtii* than in the two *Glo-*  
209 *bodera species*.

210 Two synteny plots were generated based on the alignment of regions >1 kb and >3kb to compare the  
211 genomic organisation of the three cyst nematode species. Not unexpectedly, the two potato cyst  
212 nematode species share numerous >1 kb regions (Fig. 1A). In the *H. schachtii* genome, several ho-  
213 mologous >1kb regions cluster together in genomic segments that span over 2 Mb (Fig. 1A, segments  
214 1-8). It is noted that the homologous >1kb regions in these segments have equivalents in both *G.*  
215 *pallida* and *G. rostochiensis*. Alignment of >3kb fragments severely reduced the number of homolo-  
216 gous regions among the three cyst nematode species (Fig. 1B). Nevertheless, the number of shared

217 >3kb regions between *G. pallida* and *G. rostochiensis* (N: 76) is considerably higher than the number  
218 of shared regions between *H. schachtii* and *G. rostochiensis* (N: 23) (Fig. 1B).

219

### 220 3.2 Effector family selection

221 In our comparison between the three cyst nematode species, we concentrated on effectors. Cyst  
222 nematodes were shown to harbour numerous effectors families (Pogorelko et al., 2020). Here we  
223 concentrated on six effector families. For four of these families, one or more representatives are  
224 known to be involved in the suppression of plant innate immune system (SPRYSEC (Diaz-Granados,  
225 Petrescu, Goverse, & Smant, 2016; Mei et al., 2018), GLAND4 (also referred to as Gr-1106) (Barnes,  
226 Wram, Mitchum, & Baum, 2018), GLAND5 (also referred to as G11A06) (Yang et al., 2019), and VAP  
227 (Wilbers et al., 2018)). CLE (Wang et al., 2021) is an intriguing effector family involved in feeding site  
228 induction, and the GLAND13 (Danchin, Guzeeva, Mantelin, Berepiki, & Jones, 2016) family is essential  
229 in the hydrolysis of plant sugars once they are taken up by the nematode.

230

### 231 3.3. SPRYSECs

232 SPRYSEC is an acronym for a family of secreted effectors with an SP1a/Ryanodine receptor domain.  
233 This family was recently shown to be highly diverged in the potato cyst nematode *G. rostochiensis* (J.  
234 J. M. van Steenbrugge et al., 2021). Fig. 2 shows a phylogenetic tree with (supposedly) all SPRYSECs  
235 present in the three cyst nematode species under investigation. The number of paralogs in *G. pallida*,  
236 *G. rostochiensis*, and *H. schachtii* is respectively 24, 60 and 13. Despite the poor backbone resolution  
237 of the SPRYSEC tree, two moderately supported SPRYSEC clades (A and B) could be distinguished.  
238 Clade A comprises SPRYSEC variants exclusively from the two potato cyst nematode species, and *G.*  
239 *pallida* SPRYSEC paralogs are interspersed with *G. rostochiensis* SPRYSEC variants. SPRYSEC Clade A is  
240 characterised by a dosage of 0 – 6 DOG box elements. Clade B harbours fewer SPRYSEC paralogs than  
241 Clade A (27 versus 35 in Clade A). Notably, Gr19\_g7942 is not preceded by a signal peptide for secre-

242 tion, whereas three DOG box elements are present in the promoter region directly upstream of this  
243 paralog. Clade B is characterised by a mix of SPRYSEC variants solely originating from *G. pallida* and  
244 *G. rostochiensis*. Compared to Clade A, Clade B is typified by an overall higher DOG box dosage (on  
245 average, 1.7 and 5.2 DOG boxes per paralog). Up to 16 DOG box elements were identified in the  
246 promoter regions of paralogs in Clade B.

247 The more basal part of the SPRYSEC tree (Fig. 2, part C) harbours, next to paralogs from the two po-  
248 tato cyst nematode species, all 13 SPRYSEC variants from *H. schachtii*. None of the promoter regions  
249 of the 35 SPRYSEC paralogs in this part of the SPRYSEC tree harbours DOG boxes. Both *H. schachtii*  
250 and *G. rostochiensis* harbour SPRYSEC paralogs with at least one transmembrane domain (gene ID in  
251 italics with lighter colour).

252

#### 253 3.4. GLAND4

254 The number of GLAND4 (also referred to as Gr-1106) paralogs in Gr-Line19, Gp-D383, and Hs-IRS is  
255 respectively 10, 9, and 15. The phylogenetic analysis yields a tree with a well-supported backbone  
256 (Fig. 3) showing a clear separation between the outgroup *H. schachtii*, and both *Globodera* species.  
257 While the GLAND4 paralogs in Gr-Line19 and Gp-D383 show little divergence, they end up in sepa-  
258 rate species-specific clusters. On the other hand, Hs-IRS paralogs show more intraspecific diversifica-  
259 tion. All but two *G. pallida* paralogs (Gpal\_D383\_g17346.t1 and Gpal\_D383\_g13669) contain a signal  
260 peptide for secretion. For all but one of the GLAND4 genes in Gr-Line19, the promoter region in-  
261 cluded a DOG-box motif, while promoter regions of only four GLAND4 genes in Gp-D383 and one in  
262 Hs-IRS contained such a motif.

263

#### 264 3.5. GLAND5

265 With 13 homologs, the GLAND5 effector family (also referred to as G11A06) was significantly less  
266 diversified in Gr-Line19 than in Gp-D383 and Hs-IRS with respectively 25 and 27 paralogs. In all three

267 species, the majority of the GLAND5 paralogs harbour a signal peptide for secretion. It is worth not-  
268 ing that a relatively high percentage of the GLAND5 paralogs in Gr-Line19 was not preceded by a  
269 signal peptide for secretion (23%). In contrast, in *H. schachtii* and *G. pallida*, respectively, 88.9% and  
270 92% of the paralogs comprised a signal peptide. The phylogenetic analysis (Fig. 4) shows that  
271 GLAND5 is a diversified gene family. Several well-supported branching events define a set of sub-  
272 clades that either exclusively comprises *H. schachtii* or contain GLAND5 variants from both potato  
273 cyst nematode species in the more distal branches. Even though the GLAND5 paralogs Gr-Line19 and  
274 Gp-D383 occur together in individual subclades, no obvious sets of potential orthologs between the  
275 two species could be identified. In *H. schachtii*, 82% of the paralogs contain at least one DOG-box  
276 motif in the promoter region. Out of the three GLAND5 paralogs without a signal peptide for secre-  
277 tion, two (Hs-IRS\_g6495.t1 and Hs-IRS\_g22438.t1) had at least one DOG box motif in their promoter  
278 region. DOG boxes were less prominently present among the *G. rostochiensis* and *G. pallida* GLAND5  
279 variants (39% and 20% of the paralogs).

280

### 281 3.6. VAP (Venom Allergen-like Proteins)

282 The levels of diversification in the VAP effector family were highly comparable between the three  
283 cyst nematode species. In Gp-D383, Hs-IRS, and Gr-Line19, respectively, 8, 8, and 9 VAP paralogs  
284 were identified. The phylogenetic analysis resulted in a tree with a well-supported backbone (Fig. 5).  
285 The tree contains three clusters (Fig. 5, boxes A, B, C) with a high level of diversification between the  
286 clusters. At the base of the tree, a small cluster of 4 *H. schachtii* paralogs (Fig. 6, box C) is present that  
287 all lack a signal peptide for secretion. Box B harbours Gp-D383 and Gr-Line19 VAP paralogs, of which  
288 all but two lack a signal peptide for secretion. Three sub-clusters are present in Box A: one with ex-  
289 clusively Gr-Line19 variants, a second one with just Gp-D383 variants, and the third with an ortholo-  
290 gous pair between Gr-Line19 and Gp-D383. In the largest cluster at the top of the tree (Fig. 5, box A),

291 VAP paralogs of all three species are present, including the only secreted VAP variant in Hs-IRS with a  
292 DOG-box motif in the promoter region.

293

### 294 3.7. CLE (CLAVATA3/ESR-related peptides)

295 With 16 variants, the CLE-like effector family is considerably more diversified in *H. schachtii* than in *G.*  
296 *pallida* and *G. rostochiensis* (respectively, 10 and 11 paralogs). Analysis of the CLE families on the  
297 three cyst nematode species resulted in a phylogenetic tree with a reasonably well-resolved back-  
298 bone (Fig. 6). It is worth noting that nearly all variants are united in species-specific clusters, and in  
299 this sense, the CLE diversification patterns resemble the patterns observed for the GLAND4 (Gr-1106)  
300 family (Fig. 3). Whereas Gp-D383 and Gr-Line19 are characterised by similar-sized, moderately di-  
301 verged clusters of CLE paralogs, the CLE family has much more diverged in *H. schachtii*.

302 In *G. rostochiensis*, two functional classes of CLE peptides have been described, CLE-1 and  
303 CLE-4 (Lu et al. 2009). The CLE-1 class (Fig. 6) comprises two Gr-Line19 paralogs that show only dis-  
304 tant homology to *G. pallida* CLEs. Similarly, four *G. rostochiensis* CLE's belonging to functional CLE  
305 class 4 (Fig. 6) do not have clear equivalents in *G. pallida* and *H. schachtii*. Unlike all other effector  
306 families investigated so far, all CLE variants from the three cyst nematode species are preceded by a  
307 signal peptide for secretion. At the same time, none of them has a DOG-box motif in the promoter  
308 region.

309

### 310 3.8. GLAND13 (Glycosyl Hydrolase Family 32 (GH32) members)

311 GLAND13 effectors investigated so far were identified in *G. pallida* and coded for invertases belong-  
312 ing to glycosyl hydrolase family 32 (GH32). While these enzymes are not secreted into the plant, they  
313 are essential as they catalyse the hydrolysis of the primary type of sugar the nematode takes up from  
314 its host, sucrose (Danchin et al., 2016). This gene family shows a large difference in the number of  
315 paralogs present in the three species; while Gr-Line19 and Gp-D383 harbour 10 and 7 paralogs, Hs-

316 IRS holds only 3 copies. In the phylogenetic tree (Fig. 7), the paralogs in *H. schachtii* are positioned at  
317 the tree's base. In Box A, paralogs of Gr-Line19 and Gp-D383 are interspersed, while in Box B, all but  
318 one paralogs are from Gr-Line19. In Gr-Line19, 70% of the GLAND13 paralogs comprise a signal pep-  
319 tide for secretion, slightly lower percentages (67% and 57%) were observed in Hs-IRS and Gp-D383.  
320 Variants showing high similarity to each of the five GLAND13 paralogs from *G. pallida* (population  
321 Lindley; indicated as GPLIN\_ number) are indicated in Fig. 7.  
322 For half of the GLAND13 effector variants in Gr-Line19, a DOG-box motif in the promoter region was  
323 shown. One gene, Gr19\_g13610, contained the motif two times. In *H. schachtii*, this motif was pre-  
324 sent in 2 out of 3 genes, while in *G. pallida*, DOG boxes were found in one variant with a signal pep-  
325 tide for secretion (Gpal\_D383\_g17582), and in one paralog without such a signal  
326 (Gpal\_D383\_g09388). It is noted that these DOG box motifs were found in promoter regions of *G.*  
327 *pallida* effectors that are not expressed in the dorsal gland (Danchin et al., 2016).

328

### 329 3.9 Effects of DOG-box dosage on SPRYSEC Expression

330 Although DOG-box motifs in the promoter regions of effector variants are present in many effector  
331 families, their presence is not a necessity for the functioning of an effector family. For example, none  
332 of the variants of the CLE family contained DOG-box motifs, regardless of the species (Fig. 6). Dorsal  
333 gland-expressed effectors can therefore be expressed and secreted without the presence of DOG-  
334 box motifs. This is further illustrated in Fig. 8A, this bar chart shows DOG box distribution of over the  
335 six effector families. For the three cyst nematode species under investigation it demonstrates that  
336 DOG boxes can be entirely absent (CLE), present in some species only (VAP, SPRYSEC), or present in  
337 all species (GLAND4, GLAND5, GLAND13). The ample presence of DOG boxes in the diversified  
338 SPRYSEC family prompted us to investigate whether there is a correlation between the DOG-box  
339 dosage and SPRYSEC expression levels. SPRYSEC effectors from all three cyst nematode species were  
340 taking into account (Fig. 8B). A modest correlation ( $R^2 = 0.66$ ) between the DOG-box dosage and the

341 expression levels based on RNA abundance is present for this family. Especially in *G. pallida* high ex-  
342 pression levels of SPRYSEC variants can be reached in absence of DOG boxes in its promoter region  
343 (Fig. 8B).  
344



#### 345 4. DISCUSSION

346 In our attempts to fundamentally understand the interaction between plant-parasitic nema-  
347 todes and their hosts, the usefulness of high-quality reference genomes of these pathogens  
348 is beyond discussion. Keeping in mind the enormous impact of PCN in all major potato pro-  
349 duction regions of the world, it is not surprising that high priority was given to the sequenc-  
350 ing of both the *G. pallida* (Cotton et al., 2014) and the *G. rostochiensis* (Eves-van den Akker  
351 et al., 2016) genome. This was done before long-read sequencing technologies became  
352 available. Although some research questions can very well be addressed with these refer-  
353 ence genomes, less fragmented genomes are needed for studying effector diversification.  
354 Therefore, a new reference genome was generated from *G. pallida* population D383. As  
355 compared to the *G. pallida* Lindley genome assembly, this resulted in a 42-fold reduction in  
356 the number of scaffolds and a 24-times increase of the N50. In the comparison of the effec-  
357 toromes of the two PCN species, we included a newly generated genome of the *H. schachtii*  
358 population IRS as an outgroup. It is noted that reference genomes from these obligatory  
359 sexually reproducing pathogens are actually population-based consensus genomes. Long  
360 read sequencing technologies require DNA from 10,000s genetically non-identical nema-  
361 todes. While an individual of these diploid species could theoretically carry a maximum of  
362 two haplotypes per locus, a population has the potential to carry many more. It is essential  
363 to mine these haplotypes and assemble them into a single haploid assembly to generate a  
364 proper reference. This is not a trivial process and requires specialised bioinformatics soft-  
365 ware (Roach et al., 2018). As the sizes of the current genome assemblies are comparable to  
366 the genome sizes assessed by flow cytometry, and as the BUSCO duplication scores are rela-

367 tively low, we assume that the current genomes assemblies are a reasonable reflection of  
368 their actual constitution.

#### 369 4.1 Effector diversification

370 In our analyses we concentrated on six selected effector families, and this selection included  
371 relatively widespread effector families such as the CLE, GLAND13 and the VAP family, as well  
372 as families that appear to be cyst nematode lineage specific such as SPRYSEC, GLAND4 and  
373 GLAND5. Although the protein architecture is distinct between lineages (see e.g. (Mitchum,  
374 Wang, Wang, & Davis, 2012)), the CLE family - a category of effectors involved in feeding site  
375 induction - were shown to be present as well in root-knot and reniform nematodes (Rutter  
376 et al., 2014; Wubben, Gavilano, Baum, & Davis, 2015). GLAND13 effectors, members of gly-  
377 cosyl hydrolase family 32, were shown to be present in a range of root knot and cyst nema-  
378 todes species as well as in other plant-parasitic nematodes such as *Nacobbus aberrans* and  
379 *Rotylenchus reniformis* (Danchin et al., 2016). The distribution of VAP within the phylum  
380 Nematoda is even broader (Wilbers et al., 2018). Venom allergen-like proteins were discov-  
381 ered in the animal parasite *Ancylostoma caninum* (Hawdon, Jones, Hoffman, & Hotez, 1996).  
382 Later on it was isolated from the root-knot nematode *Meloidogyne incognita* (Ding, Shields,  
383 Allen, & Hussey, 2000), and subsequently in a wide range of obligatory plant parasitic nema-  
384 tode including various cyst nematode species. A number VAP variants were shown to be im-  
385 plicated in the suppression of both PAMP triggered immunity and effector triggered immu-  
386 nity (e.g. (Li et al., 2021) for the burrowing nematode *Radopholus similis*). Our effector fam-  
387 ily selection also included families that (so far) appear to be specific to the cyst nematode  
388 lineages. This includes SPRYSEC (Diaz-Granados et al., 2016), GLAND4 (also referred to as Gr-  
389 1106), and GLAND5 (also referred to as G11A06). For all of these effector families it can be

390 said that at least a subset was shown to be involved in repression of the host plant immune  
391 system.

392 While comparing the overall diversification patterns of the six effector families under inves-  
393 tigations, striking differences are observed. In case of SPRYSEC, GLAND5 (G11A06), and  
394 GLAND13 (GH32 members), virtually all *H. schachtii* paralogs appeared to be phylogenet-  
395 ically isolated from the *G. pallida* and *G. rostochiensis* effector family variants, while repre-  
396 sentatives from the two potato cyst nematode species were presented in mixed clusters.  
397 These results should be taken with some caution as the backbone resolution of these phy-  
398 logenetic trees ranges from poor (SPRYSEC) to robust (GLAND5, GLAND13). These patterns  
399 suggest that SPRYSEC, GLAND5 and GLAND13 effectors started to diversify after the split  
400 between *Heterodera* and *Globodera*.

401 Effector families GLAND4 (Gr-1106) and CLE showed distinct diversification patterns; by far  
402 most paralogs are grouped in species-specific clusters. Keeping in mind that both effector  
403 families show a reasonable backbone resolution, we hypothesize that these effector families  
404 might have diverged after the split between *G. pallida* and *G. rostochiensis*.

405 Phylogenetic analysis of the VAP effector family in the three cyst nematode species revealed  
406 an opposite pattern as an almost complete mixtures of representative paralogs from the  
407 individual species was observed. VAPs constitute an exceptionally widespread effector fam-  
408 ily within the phylum Nematoda (Wilbers et al., 2018), and our results point at diversification  
409 of this family before the split between the cyst nematode genera *Globodera* and *Heterodera*.

410

411 4.2 Regulation of effector gene expression

412 Various stages of the parasitic life cycle of cyst nematodes such as plant invasion, feeding  
413 site induction and feeding site maintenance require the carefully orchestrated expression of  
414 distinct blends of effector proteins (Elashry et al., 2020; Thorpe et al., 2014). For some  
415 obligatory plant-parasitic nematodes promoter elements have been identified that were  
416 suggested to be involved in this orchestration (Da Rocha et al., 2021; Eves-van den Akker et  
417 al., 2016). For the three cyst nematode species we showed the presence of a short DNA box  
418 motif ('DOG box'; ATGCCA) in the promoter region of some members of some of the effector  
419 families. The absence of DOG boxes in the CLE family, the scattered presence of DOG boxes  
420 in the other 5 families and the loose correlation between DOG box dosage and expression  
421 level, prompt us to conclude that DOG boxes might contribute to the orchestration of effec-  
422 tor expression, but we see little evidence for a central role of this DNA motif in this process.  
423 Further investigation is necessary to elucidate the function of DOG boxes in effector regula-  
424 tion.

425 In case of plant pathogenic fungi, a few transcription factor have been identified that were  
426 shown to steer effector expression. SIX Gene Expression 1 (Sge1), a conserved member of  
427 Gti1/Pac2 protein family, was instrumental in the regulation of effector repression in a range  
428 of fungal pathogens including *Verticillium dahlia* (Santhanam & Thomma, 2013), *Zymosepto-*  
429 *ria tritici* (Mirzadi Gohari et al., 2014), and *F. oxysporum f. sp. cubense* (Hou et al., 2018). As  
430 another example AbPf2 could be mentioned, a zinc cluster transcription factor from the ne-  
431 crotrophic plant pathogen *Alternaria brassicicola*. Via a loss of function approach, this tran-  
432 scription factor was shown to regulate the expression of eight putative effectors (Cho, Ohm,  
433 Grigoriev, & Srivastava, 2013). Evidently, plant pathogenic fungi are only very distantly re-

434 lated to plant parasitic nematodes, and these examples should only be considered as an il-  
435 lustration how effector expression is organized in other pant pathogen systems.

## 436 5. CONCLUSIONS

437 The potato cyst nematode *Globodera pallida* and its sibling species *G. rostochiensis* co-  
438 evolved with potato in the Andes in South America. These pathogens have been introduced  
439 unintentionally in all major potato growing regions in the world. Currently, PCN belongs to  
440 the most harmful pathogens in potato production systems, and as a result of this extreme  
441 anthropogenic range expansion potatoes worldwide can't be grown without adequate PCN  
442 management. For both *G. pallida* and *G. rostochiensis* host plant resistances belong currently  
443 to most powerful means to control these soil pathogens. However, their effectiveness de-  
444 pends on the proper matching between the genetic constitution of the PCN field population  
445 and the set of host plant resistances present in modern potato varieties. In 2014, (Niere,  
446 Krüssel, & Osmer, 2014) reported about *G. pallida* populations that could no longer be con-  
447 trolled by any of the currently used potato cultivars. This, combined with inherent imper-  
448 fectness of the current *G. pallida* pathotyping system (e.g. (Phillips & Trudgill, 1983)), under-  
449 lines the need for a new pathotyping system. Such a system will be based on distinctive ef-  
450 fector variations present in any given PCN population. The availability of a high quality refer-  
451 ence genome is a prerequisite for the development of such a system. We demonstrated that  
452 the quality of the *G. pallida* genome presented in this paper allows for the mapping of com-  
453 plete effector families. With this resource, re-sequencing data from pathotypically diverse *G.*  
454 *pallida* populations will provide insight in the ecological diversification of this extreme range  
455 expander, and enable the development of a new pathotyping system that will facilitate the  
456 targeted and durable use of precious host plant resistances against this notorious plant  
457 pathogen.

458

459

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467 **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

468 SvdE performed the DNA extraction and library preparations for PCN. JL performed the DNA  
469 extraction and library preparations for *H. schachtii*. JvS, PT, and MH conceptualised the ge-  
470 nome assembly pipeline. JvS and MH generated the genome assemblies. JvS, MS and JH con-  
471 ceptualised the comparative genomics analyses. JvS performed the comparative genomics /  
472 effectromics and phylogenetic analyses. JvS and JH wrote the manuscript. JH and GS ac-  
473 quired the main part of the funding and supervised the project. PT, MS, AG, VP and GS sub-  
474 stantially revised/commented on the manuscript. All author(s) read the final version of the  
475 manuscript and approved it.

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690

691 **Table 1.** Comparative genome statistics of four cyst nematode genome assemblies. In bold, data from the current paper, data on *Globodera pallida* Lindley and *G. rostochiensis* Line 19 ge-  
 692 nomes were published by respectively (Cotton et al., 2014) and (Van Steenbrugge et al., 2021)

Nematode species population	Size (Mb)	Number of Scaffolds	N50 (Mb)	N90 (Mb)	Number of Gaps	Gap length	Number of Genes	Number of Transcripts
<i>Globodera pallida</i> Lindley	124.7	6,873	0.122	0.011	6,873	19,990,795	16,403	16,403
<i>G. pallida</i> Pa2 - D383	<b>113</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>0.515</b>	<b>22,788</b>	<b>945,137</b>	<b>18,813</b>	<b>27,787</b>
<i>G. rostochiensis</i> Line 19	92	173	1.70	0.582	2,733	130,000	17,928	21,037
<i>Heterodera schachtii</i> IRS	<b>190</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.132</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>4,285,731</b>	<b>29,851</b>	<b>31,564</b>
	<b>BUSCO</b>							

<i>G. pallida</i> , Lindley	<b>C:48.2% [S:43.9%,D:4.3%], F:22.4%, M:29.4%, n:255</b>
<i>G. pallida</i> , D383	<b>C:79.6% [S:78.9%, D:0.7%], F:10.6%, M9.8%, n:303</b>
<i>G. rostochiensis</i> Line 19	C:83.9 [S:82.2%, D: 1.7%], F: 7.9%, M8.2%, n: 303
<i>H. schachtii</i> , IRS	<b>C:86.3% [S:80.8%, D:5.5%], F:7.1%, M:6.6%, n:255</b>

693

694 **Figure legends.**

695

696 **Fig. 1.** Synteny between *G. pallida* (population D383), *G. rostochiensis* (Gr-Line19) and *H. schachtii*  
697 (population IRS) based on a progressive genome alignment in Mauve. In Fig. 1 A syntenic regions  
698 larger than 1 kb are shown, in panel B syntenic regions larger than 3 kb are shown. In panel A, *H.*  
699 *schachtii* genome regions are indicated where multiple syntenic regions cluster together into seg-  
700 ments spanning over 2 Mb (Fig. 1A, segments 1-8). It is noted that these segments have equivalents  
701 in both *G. pallida* and *G. rostochiensis*.

702

703 **Fig. 2.** Phylogeny of SPRYSEC effector genes (see e.g. (Diaz-Granados et al., 2016)) of *G. pallida* (popu-  
704 lation D383) (ochre), *G. rostochiensis* (Gr-Line19) (green) and *H. schachtii* (population IRS) (purple). A  
705 multiple sequence alignment was made using MUSCLE on the coding sequence. A phylogenetic tree  
706 was made using RAxML using a GTRGAMMA model, validated by 100 bootstrap replicates. Bootstrap  
707 values < 50 % are indicated by a “-”. Gen IDs in italics in lighter shades of ochre, green or purple are  
708 used to indicate effector variants with at least one predicted transmembrane domain. Boxed clusters  
709 (A and B) highlight two moderated supported subclades with on average moderate (A) and high DOG  
710 box dosages. C refers to the basal part of the SPRYSEC tree.

711

712 **Fig. 3.** Phylogeny of GLAND 4 (equivalent to 1106, see, e.g., (Noon et al., 2015)) effector genes of *G.*  
713 *pallida* (population D383) (ochre), *G. rostochiensis* (Gr-Line19) (green) and *H. schachtii* (population  
714 IRS) (purple). A multiple sequence alignment was made using MUSCLE on the coding sequence. A  
715 phylogenetic tree was made using RAxML using a GTRGAMMA model, validated by 100 bootstrap  
716 replicates. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a “-”. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a  
717 “-”. Gen IDs in lighter shades of ochre, green or purple are used to indicate effector variants lacking a  
718 signal peptide for secretion.

719

720 **Fig. 4.** Phylogeny of GLAND 5 (equivalent to G11A06, see, e.g., (Noon et al., 2015)) effector genes of  
721 *G. pallida* (population D383) (ochre), *G. rostochiensis* (Gr-Line19) (green) and *H. schachtii* (population  
722 IRS) (purple). A multiple sequence alignment was made using MUSCLE on the coding sequence. A  
723 phylogenetic tree was made using RAxML using a GTRGAMMA model, validated by 100 bootstrap  
724 replicates. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a “-”. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a  
725 “-”. Gen IDs in lighter shades of ochre, green or purple are used to indicate effector variants lacking a  
726 signal peptide for secretion.

727

728 **Fig. 5.** Phylogeny of VAP (Venom Allergen-like Protein, see, e.g., (Wilbers et al., 2018)) effector genes  
729 of *G. pallida* (population D383) (ochre), *G. rostochiensis* (Gr-Line19) (green) and *H. schachtii* (popula-  
730 tion IRS) (purple). A multiple sequence alignment was made using MUSCLE on the coding sequence.  
731 A phylogenetic tree was made using RAxML using a GTRGAMMA model, validated by 100 bootstrap  
732 replicates. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a “-”. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a  
733 “-”. Gen IDs in lighter shades of ochre, green or purple are used to indicate effector variants lacking a  
734 signal peptide for secretion.

735

736 **Fig. 6.** Phylogeny of CLE (CLAVATA3/ESR-related peptides, see, e.g., (Lu et al., 2009) ) effector genes  
737 of *G. pallida* (population D383) (ochre), *G. rostochiensis* (Gr-Line19) (green) and *H. schachtii* (popula-  
738 tion IRS) (purple). A multiple sequence alignment was made using MUSCLE on the coding sequence.  
739 A phylogenetic tree was made using RAxML using a GTRGAMMA model, validated by 100 bootstrap  
740 replicates. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a “-”. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a  
741 “-”. Gen IDs in lighter shades of ochre, green or purple are used to indicate effector variants lacking a  
742 signal peptide for secretion.

743

744 **Fig. 7.** Phylogeny of GLAND13 (invertases, see, e.g., (Danchin et al., 2016)) effector genes of *G. pallida*  
745 (population D383) (ochre), *G. rostochiensis* (Gr-Line19) (green) and *H. schachtii* (population IRS) (pur-  
746 ple). A multiple sequence alignment was made using MUSCLE on the coding sequence. A phylogenetic  
747 tree was made using RAxML using a GTRGAMMA model, validated by 100 bootstrap replicates.  
748 Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a “-”. Bootstrap values < 50 % are indicated by a “-”. Gen IDs  
749 in lighter shades of ochre, green or purple are used to indicate effector variants lacking a signal pep-  
750 tide for secretion.

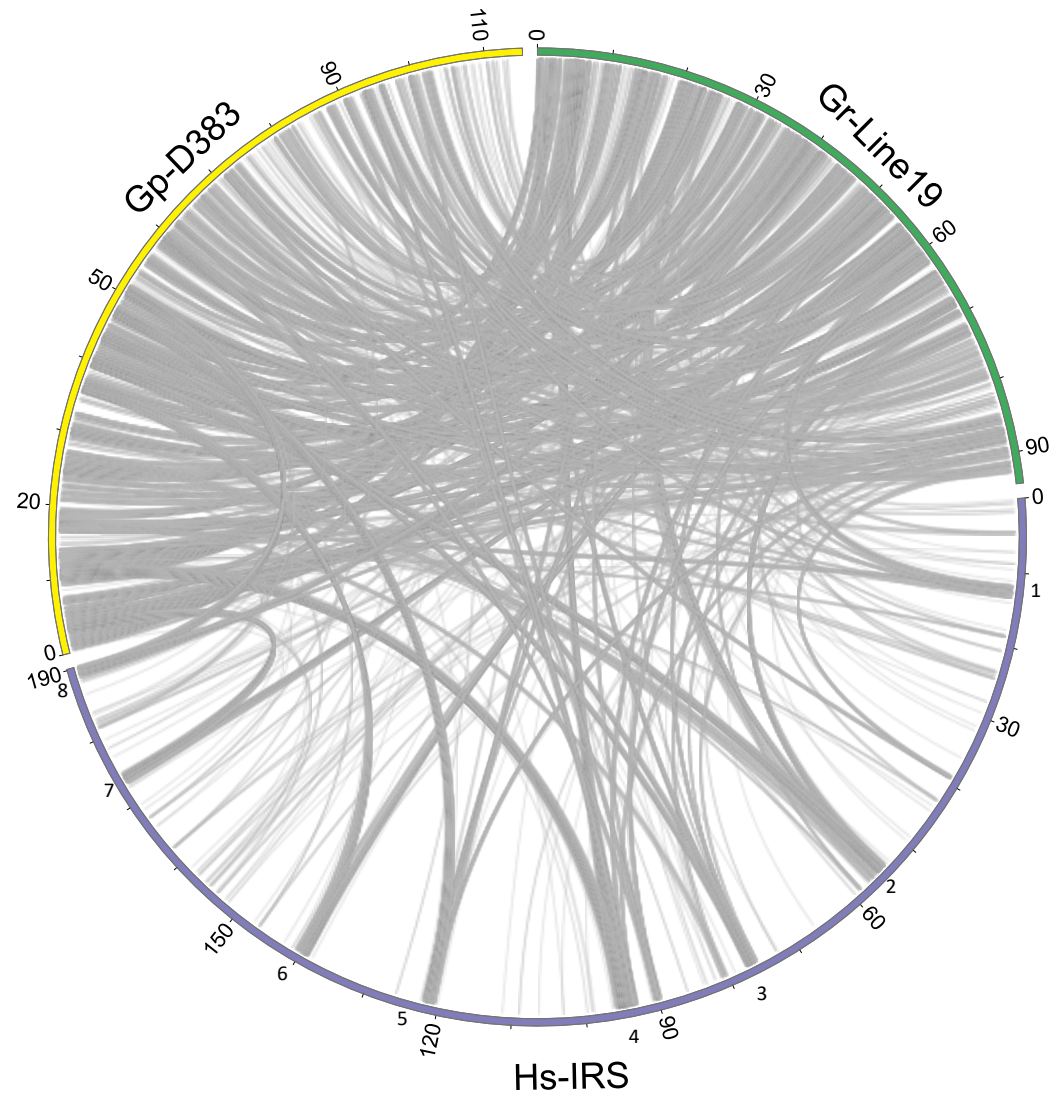
751  
752 **Fig. 8.** This distribution of a DOrsal Gland promoter element motif (‘DOG box, (Eves-van den Akker et  
753 al., 2016)) among a selection of cyst nematode species. Fig. 8A shows the percentages of variants per  
754 effector family with one or more a DOG boxes in their promoter region. In Fig. 8B the relationship  
755 between DOG box dosage and expression level (expressed as log<sub>2</sub> TPM (Transcript Count Per Million)  
756 is presented.



Fig. 1

A

1kb+ regions



B

3kb+ regions

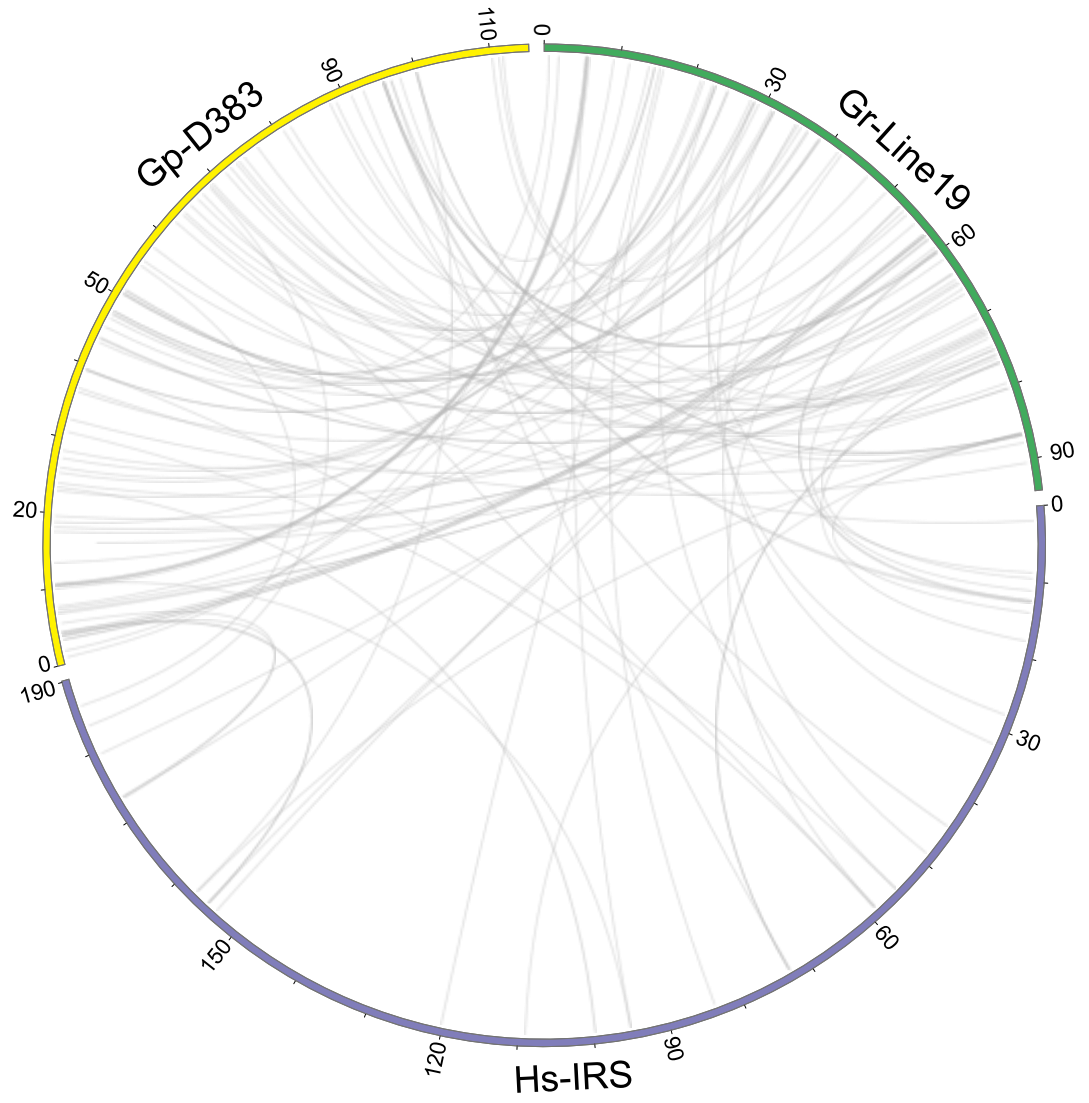
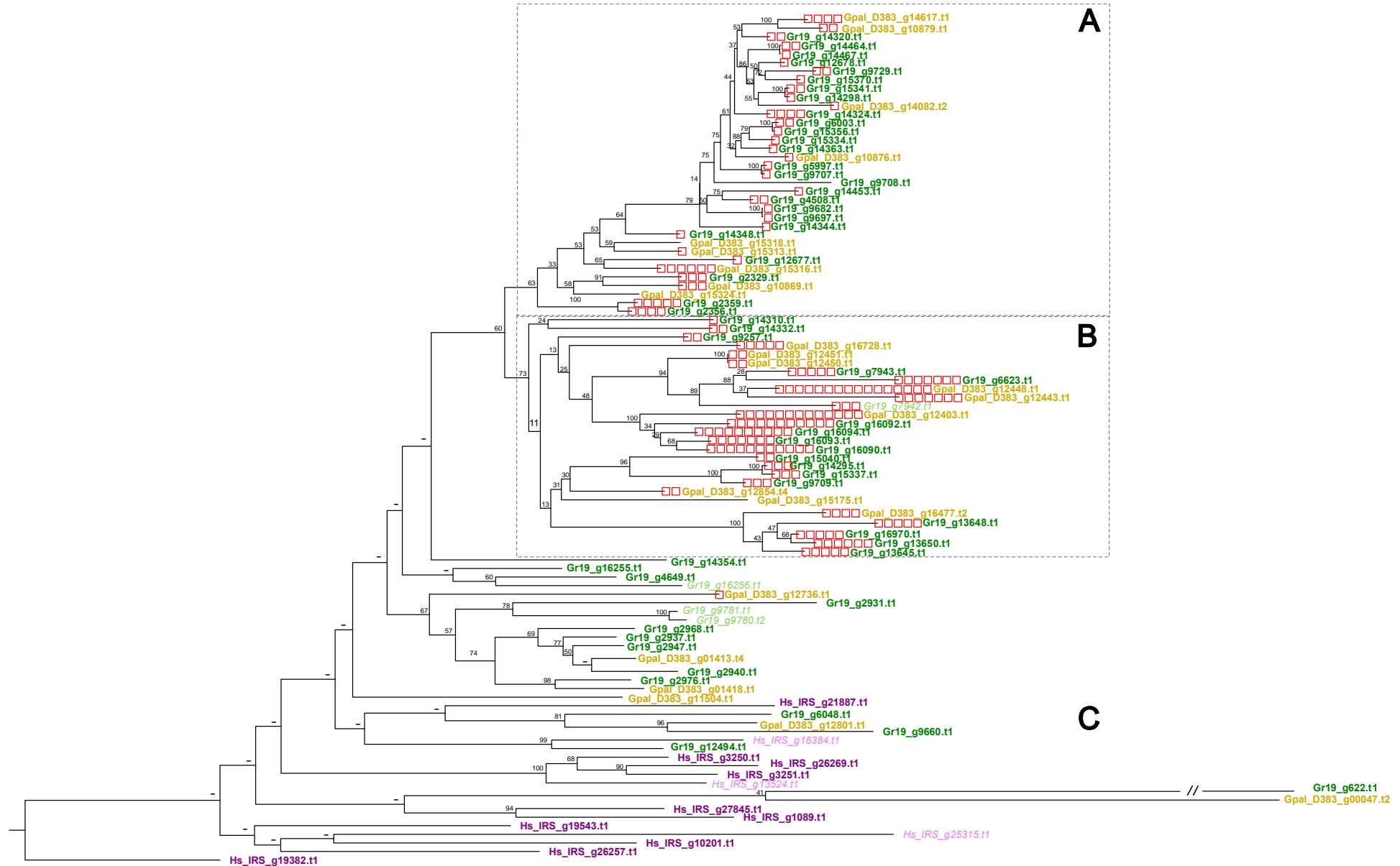


Fig. 2

SPRYSEC



0.6

Fig. 3



Fig. 4

GLAND5 / G11A06

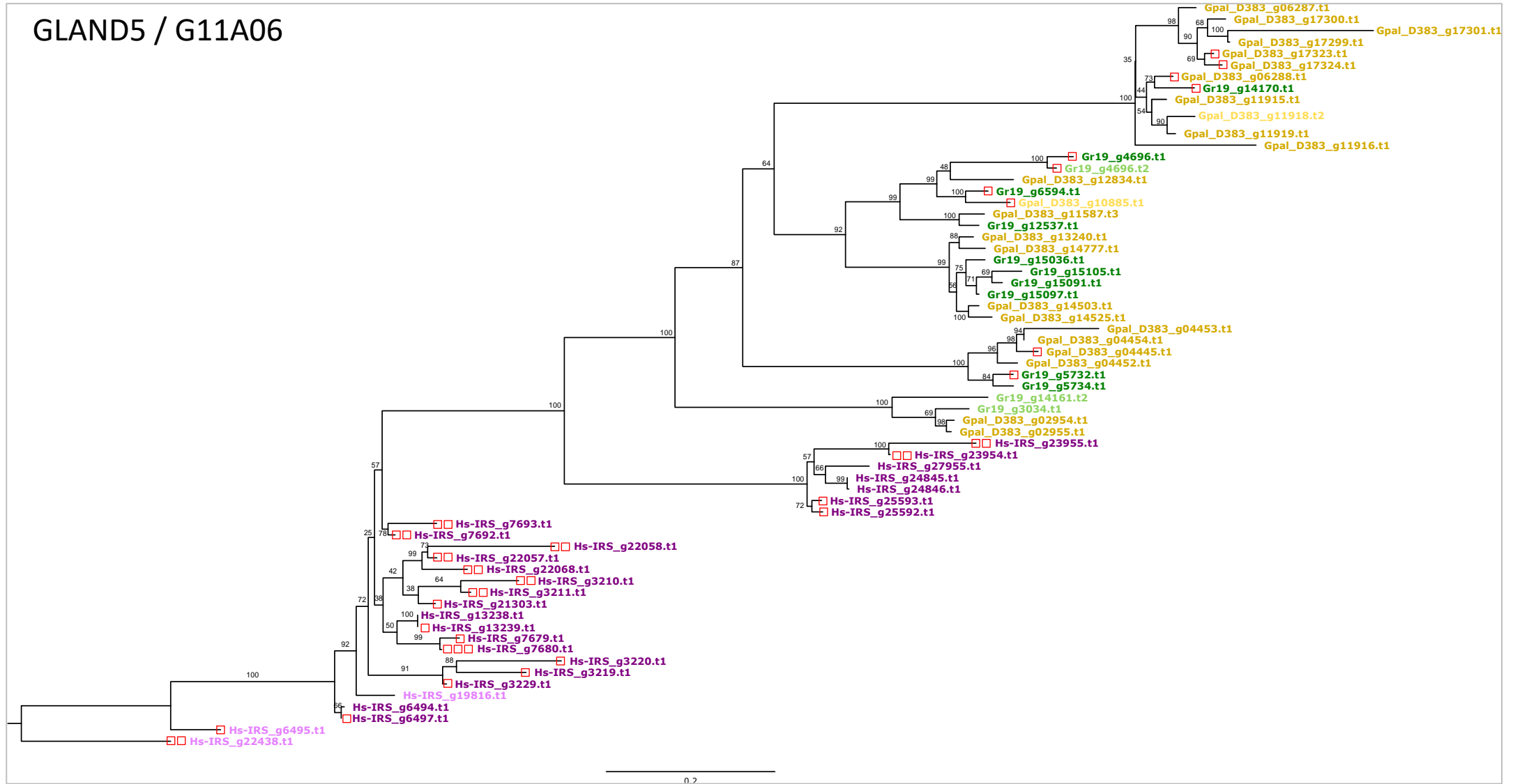


Fig. 5

VAP

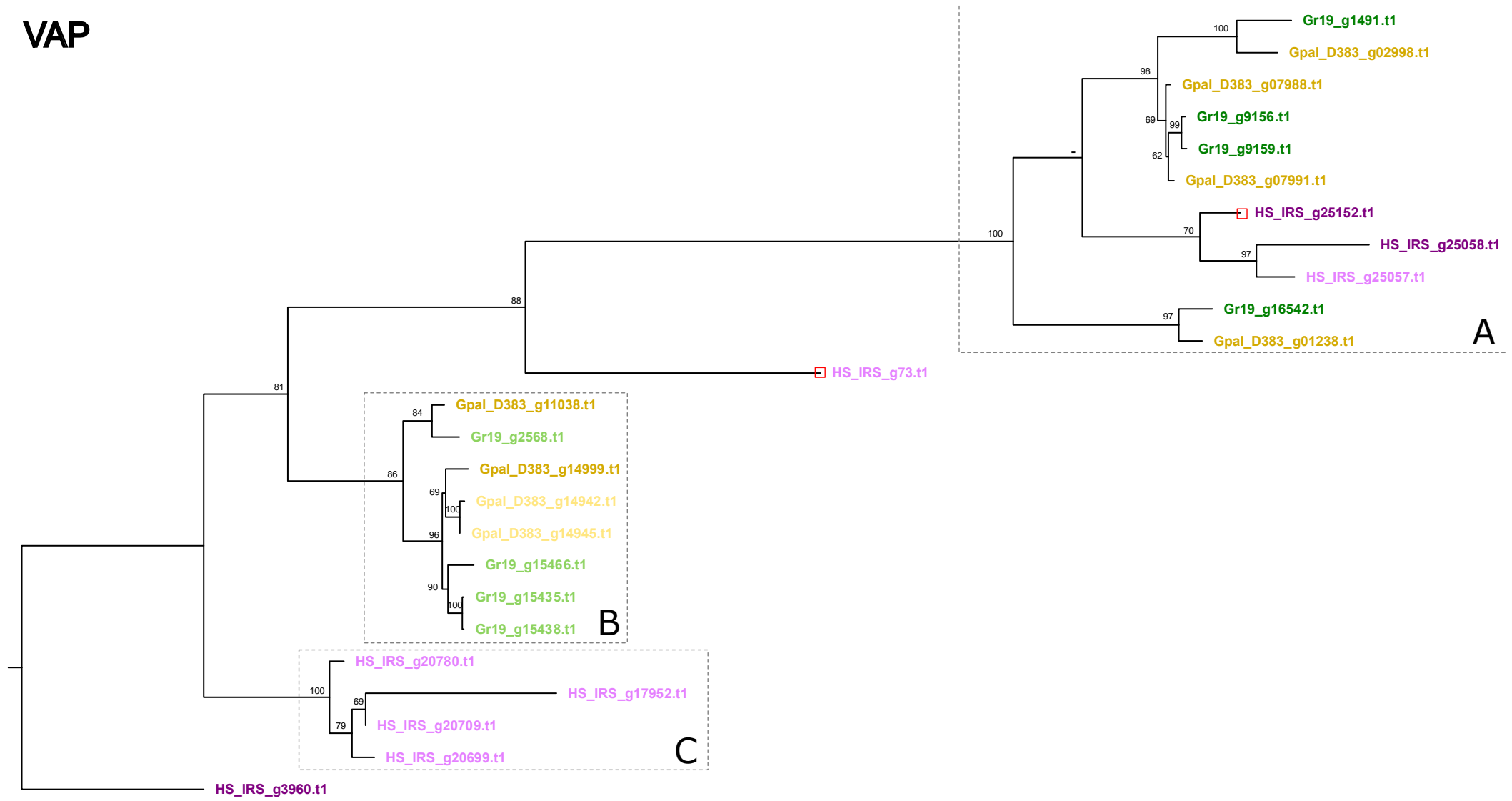


Fig. 6

CLE

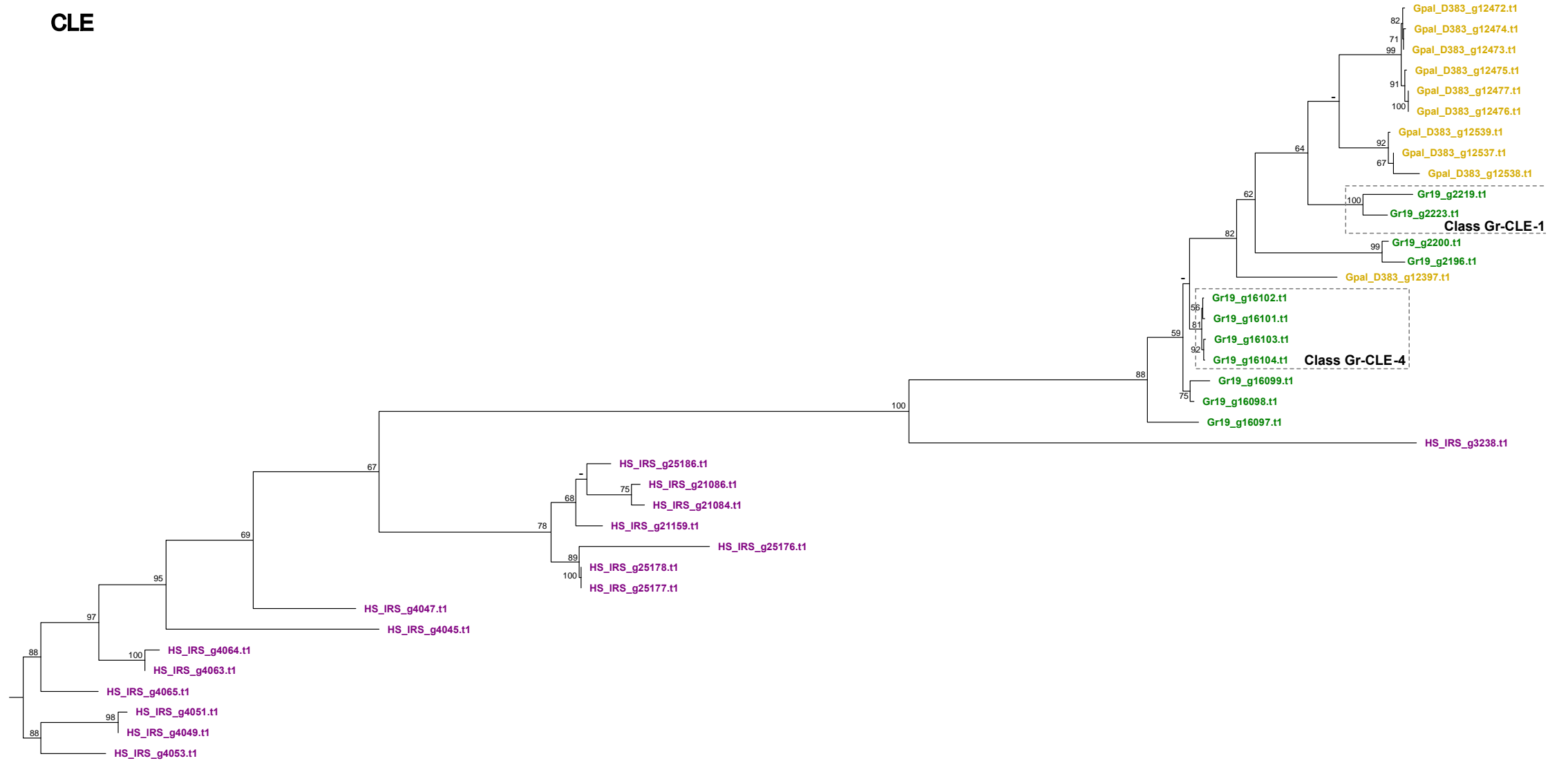


Fig. 7

GLAND13

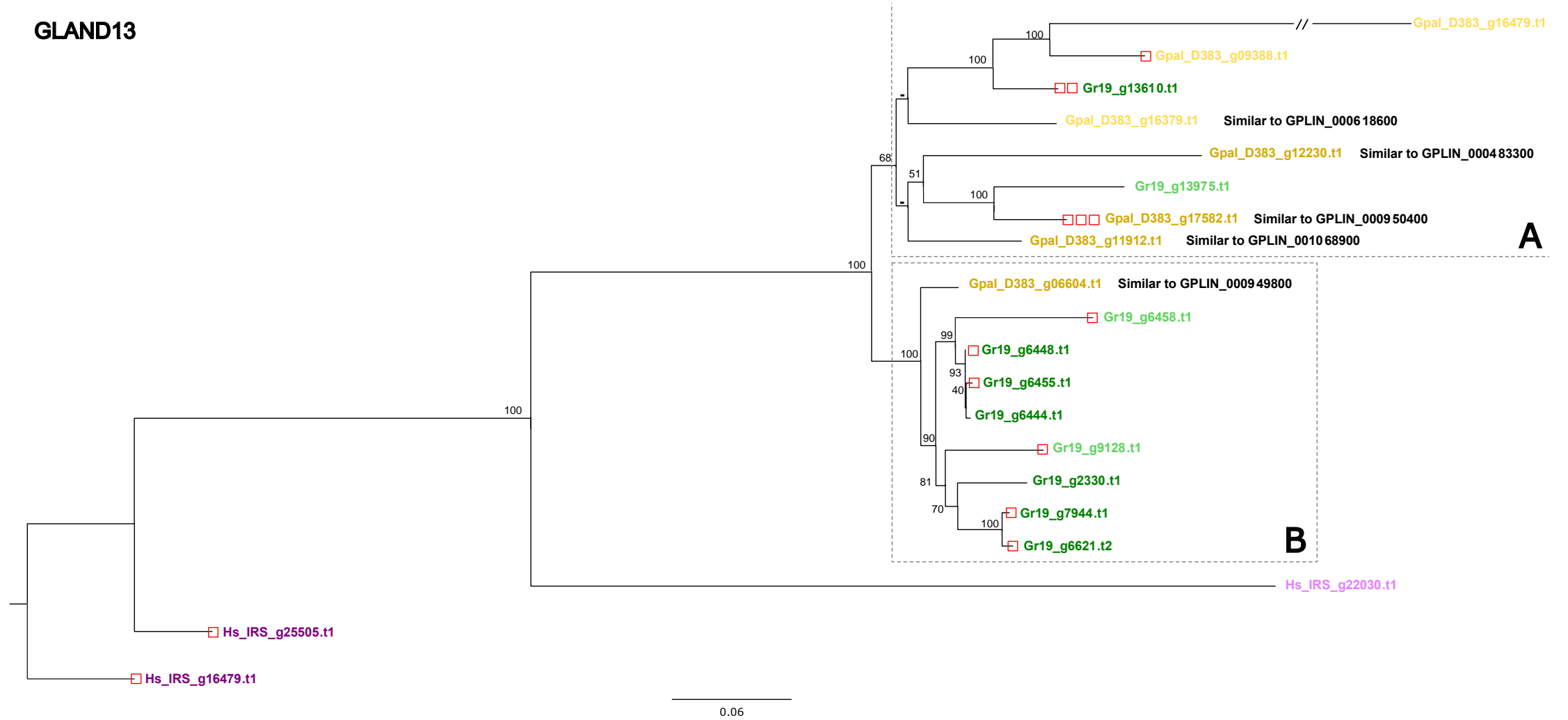


Fig. 8A

Bar-graphs – effector family members / distribution DOG boxes

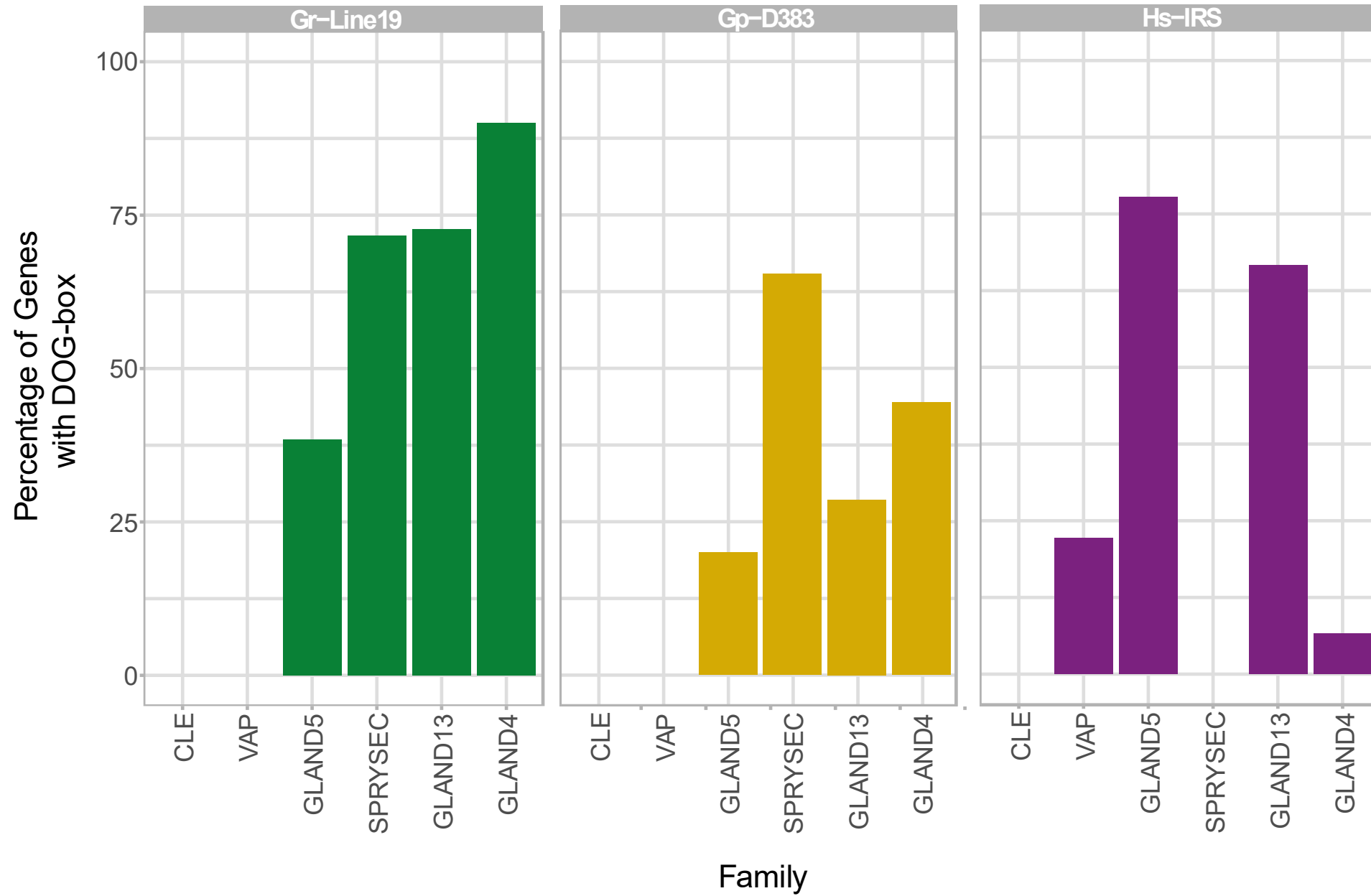




Fig. 8B

### SPRYSEC: DOGbox versus TPM

