

1 **miR167-ARF8, an auxin-responsive module involved in the formation of**
2 **root-knot nematode-induced galls in tomato**

3

4 Yara Nouredine¹, Martine da Rocha¹, Jing An², Clémence Médina¹, Joffrey Mejias¹, Karine
5 Mulet¹, Michael Quentin¹, Pierre Abad¹, Mohamed Zouine², Bruno Favery^{1,3} and Stéphanie
6 Jaubert-Possamai^{1*}.

7

8 ¹ INRAE, Université Côte d'Azur, CNRS, ISA, F-06903 Sophia Antipolis, France

9 ² Laboratoire de Recherche en Sciences Végétales, Université de Toulouse, CNRS, UPS,
10 Toulouse INP, 31320 Auzeville-Tolosane, France.

11 ³ International Research Organization for Advanced Science and Technology, Kumamoto University,
12 Kumamoto 860-8555, Japan

13

14 * Corresponding author: stephanie.jaubert@inrae.fr

15

16 **Abstract**

17 • Root-knot nematodes (RKN) from genus *Meloidogyne* induce the dedifferentiation of
18 root vascular cells into giant multinucleate feeding cells. These feeding cells result
19 from an extensive reprogramming of gene expression in targeted root cells, as shown
20 by transcriptomic analyses of galls or giant cells from various plant species.

21 • Small non-coding RNAs, and messenger RNAs from tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*)
22 galls and uninfected roots were sequenced. *De novo* microRNA prediction in the
23 tomato genome identified microRNAs expressed in galls and uninfected roots.
24 Statistical analyses identified 174 miRNA genes differentially expressed in galls at 7
25 and/or 14 days post infection (dpi).

26 • Integrative analyses combining small non-coding RNA and transcriptome datasets
27 with the specific sequencing of cleaved transcripts identified miRNA targets in tomato
28 galls. Functional analyses of promoter-GUS fusions and CRISPR-Cas9 mutants
29 highlighted the role of the miR167-regulated transcription factor AUXIN RESPONSE
30 FACTOR 8 (ARF8) in giant cell formation.

31

32 **Key words:** root-knot nematodes, galls, microRNAs, tomato, auxin, ARF8

33 **Introduction**

34 Root-knot nematodes (RKNs) are major crop pests causing massive yield losses, estimated at
35 millions of Euros annually, worldwide (Blok *et al.*, 2008; Abad & Williamson, 2010). These
36 microscopic worms of genus *Meloidogyne* have a wide host spectrum encompassing more
37 than 5,000 plant species, and a wide geographic distribution. After infecting the root, these
38 obligatory parasites induce the *de novo* formation of a specialized feeding site that is crucial
39 for nematode survival. The second-stage RKN juveniles (J2) penetrate the roots and migrate
40 within them; they then inject a cocktail of molecules into five to seven root parenchyma cells
41 (Favery *et al.*, 2016). In response to RKN signals, targeted root parenchyma cells
42 dedifferentiate into giant multinucleate hypermetabolic feeding cells. These “giant cells” form
43 the feeding site supplying the nematode with the nutrients it requires for its development
44 (Favery *et al.*, 2020). Dedifferentiation into giant cells involves an initial phase of successive
45 mitoses without cytokinesis, followed a second phase of endoreduplication (de Almeida
46 Engler & Gheysen, 2013). During feeding cell formation, the neighboring cells begin to
47 divide. This whole process results in a swelling of the root to form a gall, the characteristic
48 symptom of RKN infection. Feeding site formation involves several biological processes,
49 including the cell cycle (de Almeida-Engler *et al.*, 2011), metabolic reprogramming (Marella
50 *et al.*, 2013), cytoskeleton organization (Caillaud *et al.*, 2008), and auxin signaling (Gheysen
51 & Mitchum, 2019). Auxin (indole-3 acetic acid, IAA), is a major plant hormone that plays a
52 key role in root development by regulating cell division and the establishment/maintenance of
53 root primordia (De Smet *et al.*, 2007; Weijers & Wagner, 2016). The formation of RKN-
54 induced feeding sites has been shown to involve a peak in auxin levels (Karczmarek *et al.*,
55 2004; Absmanner *et al.*, 2013) and gall transcriptome analyses have shown that auxin
56 biosynthesis and auxin-responsive genes are upregulated in *A. thaliana* early galls, whereas
57 the genes encoding repressors of auxin response genes are repressed (Barcala *et al.*, 2010).

58 Multiple transcriptome analyses have been performed on RKN-infected roots, galls or
59 specifically on giant feeding cells, from various plant species, including tomato, initially by
60 microarrays, and more recently by RNA sequencing (Bar-Or *et al.*, 2005; Portillo *et al.*, 2013;
61 Shukla *et al.*, 2018). Four time points in feeding site formation have frequently been
62 investigated in transcriptome analyses: the early phase of feeding site formation at 3 days post
63 infection (dpi), 7 dpi, a time point corresponding to multiple mitoses without cytokinesis, 14
64 dpi, corresponding to the endoreduplication phase and cell expansion, and, finally, 21 dpi
65 when the feeding cells are mature and fully functional. All these analyses revealed a massive

66 reprogramming of plant gene expression in response to nematode infection, with about 10%
67 of protein-coding genes displaying changes in expression levels in response to RKN infection
68 (Cabrera et al., 2014). However, it remains unclear how this reprogramming occurs and how
69 these genes are regulated.

70

71 Small non-coding microRNAs may act as the master regulators of this reprogramming of
72 gene expression (Jaubert-Possamai *et al.*, 2019). MicroRNAs are major repressors of gene
73 expression in eukaryotes. Within the plant genome, microRNAs are encoded by *MIR* genes,
74 often organized into multigene families and transcribed as a single-stranded RNA precursor
75 that folds into a typical hairpin structure. This hairpin precursor is processed to generate a
76 microRNA duplex consisting of two complementary strands of 20-22 nucleotides. One of the
77 two strands is then loaded into the ARGONAUTE-1 protein and guides the RNA silencing
78 complex (RISC) to target messenger RNAs through miRNA/mRNA sequence
79 complementarity. The targeting of an mRNA by a microRNA induces its degradation or the
80 inhibition of its translation, depending on the mRNA/miRNA sequence complementarity.
81 Several recent studies have identified microRNAs expressed in galls (Jaubert-Possamai *et al.*,
82 2019) induced by RKN in *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Cabrera *et al.*, 2016; Medina *et al.*, 2017), in
83 tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*; Zhao et al., 2015; Kaur et al., 2017), in cotton (*Gossypium*
84 *hirsutum*; Pan *et al.*, 2019; Cai *et al.*, 2021) or in rice (*Oryza sativa*; Verstraeten *et al.*, 2021).
85 However, the roles of only four microRNAs have been validated by functional analyses: the
86 miR390/tasiRNA/*ARF3* module (Cabrera *et al.*, 2016), the miR159/*MYB33* pair (Medina et
87 al., 2017), the miR172/*TOE1/FT* module (Díaz-Manzano *et al.*, 2018) in *Arabidopsis* and the
88 miR319/*TCP4* pair in tomato (Zhao et al., 2015).

89

90 We investigated the gene regulation network involved in the plant response to RKN through a
91 combination of transcriptome, microRNome and degradome sequencing in uninfected roots
92 of tomato and tomato galls induced by the RKN *M. incognita* at two key time points in gall
93 development: 7 and 14 dpi. We identified 12 miRNA/targeted transcript pairs as robust
94 candidates for the regulation of gall formation. A key role in tomato gall formation was
95 demonstrated for the auxin-responsive miR167/*ARF8* transcript pair in functional analyses.

96

97

98

99 **Materials and methods**

100 **Biological materials, growth conditions and nematode infection**

101 For *in vitro* experiments, seeds of *Solanum lycopersicum* cv St Pierre or Micro-Tom (wild-
102 type, WT or transgenic *pARF8A::GUS* and *pARF8B::GUS* lines (Bouzroud *et al.*, 2018))
103 were surface-sterilized with chlorine solution (44% active chlorine) and washed three times
104 with water. Ten to 15 sterile seeds were sown on a Gamborg B5 (Duchefa Biochemie) agar
105 plates (1x Gamborg B5; pH = 6.4; 1% Sucrose; 0,7% Agar), placed at 24°C for 48 hours for
106 germination, and finally transferred in a growth chamber (8h light; 16h dark, 20°C). *M.*
107 *incognita* (Morelos strain) J2s were sterilized with HgCl₂ (0.01%) and streptomycin (0.7%)
108 as described before (Caillaud & Favery, 2016). One to two weeks after germination, roots
109 were inoculated with 1,000 sterile J2s per petri dishes.

110 For *in soil* infection assay, *S. lycopersicum* (cv Micro-Tom) WT plants and CRISPR lines
111 (*arf8a*, *arf8b* and *arf8ab*) were sown and individually transferred in pots filled with a mixture
112 of sand and soil (1:1, vol:vol), kept at 4°C for 48 hours, then transferred in a growth chamber
113 (16h light and 8h dark, at 24°C). Two weeks after germination, each plant was inoculated
114 with 200 J2s. Infection rate was evaluated six weeks after inoculation. The root system of
115 each plant was collected, rinsed with tap water, weighted and stained for 30 s. in eosin
116 (Sigma) solution (0.5%). Galls and egg masses were counted for each root under the
117 binocular magnifier MZFLIII (Leica). Mann–Whitney U tests ($\alpha = 2.5\%$) were performed
118 to determine the significance of the differences in the numbers of egg masses and galls per
119 root observed between mutants and WT.

120

121 **BABB clearing**

122 For giant cell area measurements, galls were collected 21 days post-infection (dpi), cleared in
123 benzyl alcohol/benzyl benzoate (BABB) as previously described (Cabrera *et al.*, 2018; Mejias
124 *et al.*, 2021) and examined under an inverted confocal microscope (model LSM 880; Zeiss).
125 The mean areas of giant cells in each gall, for WT and CRISPR lines, for two biological
126 replicates, were measured with Zeiss ZEN software. The impact of the mutation on the giant
127 cell surface was analysed using a Mann & Whitney Test.

128

129 **RNA extraction**

130 Total RNAs, including small RNAs (< 200 nt), were isolated from *in vitro* tomato (St Pierre)
131 galls or uninfected root fragments at 7 and 14 dpi. Approximately 40 galls or uninfected roots

132 devoid meristems were independently frozen into powder by using a tissue lyser (Retsch;
133 MM301) at 30 Hertz frequency for 30 seconds with 4 mm tungsten balls (Retsch; MM301).
134 Total RNAs were extracted from these samples with the miRNeasy Mini Kit (Qiagen),
135 according to the manufacturer's instructions, with three additional washes in RPE buffer.

136

137 **RNA sequencing**

138 Small RNA libraries were generated by ligation, reverse transcription and amplification (11
139 cycles) from total RNAs (1 µg), with the reagents of the NEB Next Small RNA Library Prep
140 Set for Illumina. Libraries were then quantified with the Bioanalyzer High Sensitivity DNA
141 Kit (Agilent) and sequenced at the Nice-Sophia Antipolis functional genomics platform
142 (France Génomique, IPMC, Sophia Antipolis, France). The full raw sequencing data were
143 submitted to the GEO database (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/>), accession number
144 PRJNA799360.

145 PolyA-RNA libraries from St Pierre tomato were generated from 500 ng of total RNA using
146 Truseq Stranded mRNA kit (Illumina). Libraries were sequenced on a NextSeq 500 platform
147 (Illumina) with 2 × 75bp paired-end chemistry as described in (Mejias *et al.*, 2022). RNA-
148 seq data are available at SRA database accession number #PRJNA799360. PolyA sequencing
149 of galls from the *arf8* mutants and microtom wild type was performed by the Beijing
150 Genomics Institute (BGI) by using the DNBSeg technology. RNA-seq data are available at
151 SRA database accession number #XXX

152

153 **miRNAome and transcriptome analysis**

154 For each small RNA library, adapters were trimmed and reads matching ribosomal RNA,
155 mitochondrial RNA and repeat sequences were removed by performing Blast analyses with
156 the sequences listed in the Rfam database (Nawrocki *et al.*, 2015). The STAR 2.5 aligner (: --
157 twopassMode Basic --alignEndsType EndToEnd) was then used to align the trimmed reads
158 (Dobin *et al.*, 2013) on a virtual concatenated genome generated from the *S. lycopersicum*
159 genome (V3.01, annotation V3.2) and the *M. incognita* genome (Blanc-Mathieu *et al.*, 2017).
160 Each read was attributed to the *S. lycopersicum* and/or *M. incognita* genome on the basis of
161 the best alignment obtained. Low-quality mapped reads were removed. The htseq-count
162 package version 0.9.1 (Anders *et al.*, 2015) was used to count reads mapping perfectly onto
163 the *S. lycopersicum* genome. The counts for protein coding genes from each replicate were
164 used for differential expression analysis with the R package EdgeR version 3.4.1 (Robinson *et*

165 *al.*, 2009) and DSeq2 (Anders & Huber, 2010). Differentially expressed miRNAs, identified
166 with a false discovery rate of 5% (adjusted pvalue<0.05; Benjamini-Hochberg adjustment).
167 *De novo* microRNA encoding genes were predicted in tomato genome V3.0 by using three
168 algorithms MirCat (Paicu *et al.*, 2017), Shortstack (Axtell, 2013) and MirDeep plant (Yang &
169 Li, 2011) with default parameters. The sequence homology between newly predicted miRNA
170 mature sequences and mature miRNA sequences listed in miRBase 22.1 was analysed by
171 using SSearch algorithm (Kozomara *et al.*, 2019). The HTSEQCOUNT package (Anders *et*
172 *al.*, 2015) was used to count reads mapping perfectly onto the predicted *S. lycopersicum*
173 mature microRNA 5P or 3P sequence. Reads mapping to multiple loci were counted for each
174 of the loci concerned. The counts for mature miRNAs (5P and 3P) from each replicate were
175 used for differential expression analysis by using DSeq2 statistical analysis (Anders and
176 Huber, 2010). Mature miRNAs with an adjusted p value below 0.05 were considered as
177 differentially expressed.
178 GO analyses of genes differentially expressed in galls were performed by using over-
179 representation test from PANTHER analysis tools (Mi *et al.* 2019) with a Fisher's exact test,
180 a FDR threshold of 0.05 and by selecting "Biological Process » as GO category.

181

182 **Degradome analysis**

183 Degradome libraries were constructed from total RNAs extracted from galls at 7 and 14 dpi
184 by Vertis Biotechnologie (Freising, Germany) using the parallel analysis of RNA ends
185 (PARE) protocol described by German *et al.* (2009). The PARE libraries were sequenced on
186 an Illumina High Sequencing 2000 platform. The full raw sequencing data were submitted to
187 the GEO database (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/>), accession XXX. To identify miRNA
188 targets, degradome reads were analysed and classified by using the CleaveLand 4.0 (Addo-
189 Quaye *et al.*, 2009) algorithm with default parameters. All hits are classified into five
190 categories based on the abundance of the diagnostic cleavage tag relative to the overall profile
191 of degradome tags matching the targets.

192

193 **GUS staining analysis**

194 We localized the promoter activity in tomatoes transgenic lines expressing a reporter gene
195 GUS fused to the promoter of the two tomato genes *ARF8A* (*Solyc02g037530*) and *ARF8B*
196 (*Solyc03g031970*) (pARF8A:GUS and pARF8B:GUS lines) (Bouzroud *et al.*, 2018). We
197 inoculated 21-day-old seedlings *in vitro*, as described above. GUS staining was performed 7
198 and 14 dpi as previously described (Noureddine *et al.* 2022), and the roots were observed

199 under a Zeiss Axioplan 2 microscope. Stained galls were dissected, fixed by incubation in 1%
200 glutaraldehyde and 4% formaldehyde in 50 mM sodium phosphate buffer pH 7.2, dehydrated,
201 and embedded in Technovit 7100 (Heraeus Kulzer, Wehrheim, Germany), according to the
202 manufacturer's instructions. Sections were cut and mounted in DPX (VWR International Ltd,
203 Poole, UK), and observed under a Zeiss Axioplan 2 microscope (Zeiss, Jena, Germany).

204

205 **Quantitative RT-PCR**

206 Total RNA was extracted from galls and uninfected roots produced in soil with the miRNeasy
207 kit (QIAGEN) according to the manufacturer's instruction. 500ng of total RNA were
208 subjected to reverse transcription with the Superscript IV reverse transcriptase (Invitrogen).
209 qPCR analyses were performed as described by Nguyen *et al.* (2018). We performed qPCR
210 on triplicate samples of each cDNA from three independent biological replicates. *SIPSKRI*
211 (*Solyc01g008140*) and a gene coding for a Sucrose Synthase (*SuSy3*, *Solyc07g042550*) were
212 used for the normalization of qRT-PCR data. Quantifications and statistical analyses were
213 performed with SATqPCR (Rancurel *et al.*, 2019), and the results are expressed as
214 normalized relative quantities. Primers used to amplify the premature miRNAs and the
215 transcripts are listed in Table S1.

216

217 **Generation of *ARF8* mutants by CRISPR/Cas9**

218 For CRISPR/Cas9 construct, the sgRNA sequence (AAGCTTTCAACATCAGGAA)
219 commune to SlARF8a and SlARF8b was designed by using the CRISPR-P website tool
220 (<http://cbi.hzau.edu.cn/crispr/>). The sgRNA was cloned into pAGM4723 final vector by
221 golden gate ligation method. Construct was confirmed by sequencing before introduction into
222 the C58 *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* strain. Tomato seedlings were used for the next step
223 plant transformation according to Hao *et al.* (2015).

224

225 **Results**

226 **Gall formation results from a massive reprogramming of gene expression in root cells**

227 Two statistical methods, DSeq2 and EdgeR, were used to compare transcript levels between
228 tomato galls and uninfected roots. These two methods were applied to 19,918 genes, and
229 those found to be differentially expressed by both methods, with an adjusted *p*-value below
230 0.05, were identified as differentially expressed genes (DEG). We found 1,958 DEGs at 7 dpi
231 (**Table S2**) and 3,468 DEGs at 14 dpi (**Table S3 and Figure 1a**). In total, 1,239 genes were

232 identified as DEGs at both 7 and 14 dpi, including 625 genes downregulated and 600 genes
233 upregulated at both time points and 14 DEGs with opposite patterns of change in expression
234 levels at 7 and 14 dpi. The 719 genes displaying differential expression in galls specifically at
235 7 dpi comprised 327 upregulated and 392 downregulated genes. The 2,229 genes displaying
236 differential expression in galls specifically at 14 dpi comprised 1,006 upregulated and 1,223
237 downregulated genes. The change in gene expression in galls detected by sequencing was
238 confirmed by RT-qPCR for six of these genes at 7 dpi and six at 14 dpi (**Figure S1 and**
239 **Table S4**). Gene ontology (GO) analysis DEGs in galls at 7 and/or 14 dpi revealed an
240 overrepresentation of genes associated with biological processes previously reported to be
241 involved in the formation of giant cells (**Table S5**), including i) “cell division”, with multiple
242 categories linked to cytokinesis and cell wall biogenesis, ii) “response to auxin”, iii)
243 “response to endogenous stimulus” (including response to hormone and to cytokinin) and iv)
244 “response to abiotic stress”. This analysis confirms that a massive reprogramming of gene
245 expression in root cells underlies the formation of galls and feeding cells.

246

247 **microRNAs regulate gene expression in galls**

248 For the identification of regulators of gene expression in galls, we constructed libraries of
249 small non-coding RNAs from tomato galls and uninfected roots, from three independent
250 replicates at two points of gall development: 7 and 14 dpi. These libraries were sequenced,
251 generating a total of 333,949,327 raw reads (**Table S6**). The reads were cleaned and mapped
252 to a virtual genome constructed from the *S. lycopersicum* genome (genome V3.0; ITAG3.3)
253 concatenated with the genome of *M. incognita* (genome V2.0; Blanc-Mathieu et al., 2017) to
254 reflect the dual composition of root galls. A *de novo* prediction of microRNAs was then
255 performed (**Table S7**), based on an integration of the results of three prediction algorithms:
256 MirCat, Shortstack and MirDeep plant.

257

258 Levels of microRNA expression were compared between galls and uninfected roots in DSeq2
259 statistical analyses (Anders & Huber, 2010). We identified 174 mature microRNAs (5P
260 and/or 3P) corresponding to 148 *MIR* genes as differentially expressed (DE) between
261 uninfected roots and galls at 7 and/or 14 dpi (**Table S8**). We identified 129 of the 174 mature
262 microRNAs DE in galls as specifically DE at 7 dpi, 11 as specifically DE at 14 dpi and 34
263 mature microRNAs were found to be DE in galls at both 7 and 14 dpi (**Figure 1b**). These 148
264 *MIR* genes DE in galls comprised 65 known *MIR* genes listed in miRbase (Kozomara *et al.*,
265 2019) and 73 previously unknown *MIR* genes. The 65 known *MIR* genes DE in galls are

266 organized into 20 miRNA families, 14 of which are conserved between tomato and other
267 plants, the other six being specific to tomato.

268

269 **Integration of data from the transcriptome, small RNAs and degradome sequencing to** 270 **construct a gene-microRNA regulation network in galls**

271 Once the miRNAs expressed in galls had been identified, the transcripts cleaved by the
272 microRNAs in galls were identified by degradome sequencing (German *et al.*, 2009) on
273 mRNA extracted from galls at 7 (G7) and 14 dpi (G14). The CleaveLand pipeline (Addo-
274 Quaye *et al.*, 2009) was used to analyze degradome sequencing data and to predict the
275 mRNAs cleaved by miRNAs in galls. We restricted our analysis to the highest confidence
276 targets by selecting CleaveLand categories 0 and 1 with a degradome *p*-value below 0.05. In
277 total, 153 transcripts targeted by microRNAs in galls were identified (**Table S9**), including 58
278 targets common to both the G7 and G14 libraries, whereas 45 targets were identified
279 specifically in the G7 library and 50 were found only in the G14 library. We identified 111
280 targets of 135 known miRNAs from 39 known miRNA families. The 298 newly identified
281 miRNAs in galls included 46 that targeted 47 transcripts in galls at 7 and/or 14 dpi.

282

283 We integrated transcriptome, microRNA and degradome sequencing data to construct a
284 gene-miRNA regulation network putatively involved in the gall formation. Transcriptome
285 analysis showed that 32 of the 153 transcripts identified as targeted by microRNAs expressed
286 in galls were DE in galls. Nineteen of the targeted genes were DE in galls at both 7 and 14
287 dpi; 11 of these genes were upregulated and eight were downregulated. Five targeted genes
288 were specifically DE at 7 dpi, including three transcripts that were upregulated and two that
289 were downregulated in galls. At 14 dpi, only eight transcripts identified as targets were DE,
290 three of which were upregulated, the other five being downregulated. Most plant miRNAs
291 silence gene expression by cleaving the targeted transcripts. An inverse correlation of
292 expression profiles between the microRNA and its target gene is, therefore, usually expected.
293 We identified 12 miRNA/mRNA pairs for which such an inverse correlation of expression
294 levels was observed (**Table 1**). These miRNA/mRNA pairs are the most robust candidates for
295 involvement in gall formation.

296

297

298

299 **ARF8 auxin-related transcription factors are expressed in nematode-induced feeding**
300 **sites**

301 Among the 12 microRNA/mRNA pairs with opposite patterns of gene expression, two of the
302 strongest genes candidates for regulation by a microRNA are the *AUXIN RESPONSE*
303 *FACTORS 8A* (*Solyc02g037530*) and *8B* (*Solyc03g031970*), both of which are cleaved
304 miR167. These two genes are ARF transcription factors, which relay auxin signaling at the
305 transcriptional level by regulating the expression of auxin-responsive genes (Guilfoyle &
306 Hagen, 2007). Transcriptomic analyses of galls showed that *ARF8B* was overexpressed in
307 tomato galls at 7 and 14 dpi and *ARF8A* was overexpressed at 14 dpi (**Table 1**).

308

309 Five *MIR167* genes were identified in the tomato genome, including the four described by Liu
310 *et al.* (2014), all of which have the same mature sequence and are downregulated in galls,
311 whereas both the *ARF8* genes were found to be upregulated. The fifth *MIR167* gene was
312 annotated as SLYMIR167B in miRBase (Kozomara *et al.*, 2019) and was not DE in galls.
313 However, it was expressed at a much lower level than the other four *MIR167* genes (**Figure**
314 **S2**). *ARF8B* transcripts have been shown to be cleaved by miR167 in tomato (Liu *et al.*,
315 2014) and this regulation is conserved in *A. thaliana* (Wu *et al.*, 2006). The downregulation
316 of miR167 and the upregulation of *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* observed in galls suggest that, by
317 repressing *MIR167* expression, the RKN prevents the *ARF8* silencing by miR167 that occurs
318 in uninfected roots.

319

320 We investigated the spatiotemporal expression of *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* in RKN-infected roots
321 *in vivo* further, by analyzing the activity of both the *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* promoters in
322 transgenic tomato lines expressing promoter-GUS fusions (Bouzroud *et al.*, 2018). Strong
323 blue staining indicating GUS activity was observed 7 and 14 dpi in galls from two
324 independent *pARF8B::GUS* and *pARF8A::GUS* lines and in root tips from uninfected roots
325 (**Figure 2a-f**). Histological sections of the galls showed strong GUS staining within the giant
326 feeding cells and in neighboring cells (NC) at 7 and 14 dpi for both *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* lines
327 (**Figure 3a-d**). The strong activity of both the *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* promoters observed in galls
328 *in vivo* confirms the upregulation in galls observed on transcriptomic analysis.

329

330 **Generation of *SIARF8A* and *SIARF8B* mutants by the CRISPR/Cas9 gene-editing**
331 **system.**

332 We investigated the function of *SIARF8A* and *SIARF8B* during plant-nematode interaction, by
333 generating tomato Micro-Tom *slarf8* KO mutants with CRISPR/Cas9 gene-editing
334 technology. *SIARF8A* and *SIARF8B* single and double mutants were obtained with a sgRNA
335 complementary to a region identical in both genes (Figure 4a). The transformed lines were
336 screened and six independent R0 lines were generated and validated for the presence of the
337 construct in their genome. All mutants had mutations in the targeted region and the features
338 of the mutant plants were similar. In the R1 and R2 generations, the presence of mutation was
339 confirmed in more progeny lines. Three Cas9-free and homozygous mutant lines containing
340 single (*SIARF8A* or *SIARF8B*) or double mutation (*SIARF8A* and *SIARF8B*) were selected in
341 the following experiments. These three mutants types can be classified as *SIARF8A* single
342 mutation (*slarf8acr*), *SIARF8B* single mutation (*slarf8b-cr*) and *SIARF8A* & *B* double mutation
343 (*slarf8a&b-cr*) (Figure 4b). As shown in figure 4, the deletion mutations led to a frame shift
344 mutation followed by an early stop codon leading to the expression of truncated SIARF8
345 proteins that do not contain the ARF family functional domains B3, III and IV. For *slarf8a-*
346 *cr*, a deletion of 2 nt was detected in the sgRNA1 targeted region, leading to a 13 amino acid
347 (aa) protein rather than the 845 aa WT protein; for *slarf8b-cr*, an 11nt deletion was observed
348 in the sgRNA1 target region, leading to a 9 aa protein sequence rather than 843 aa in WT
349 protein; and, for *slarf8a&b-cr*, there was a 2 nt deletion on *SIARF8A* and a 4 nt deletion on
350 *SIARF8B* resulting in a 13 aa SIARF8A protein and a 20 AA SIARF8B protein.

351

352 **ARF8 auxin-related transcription factors are involved in tomato-RKN interactions**

353 We investigated the role of both *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* in gall development, by analyzing the
354 effect of CRISPR deletions within *ARF8* coding sequences on *M. incognita* infection. The
355 *arf8a*^{CR-2}, *arf8b*^{CR-11} and *arf8ab*^{CR-2,4} double-mutant CRISPR lines had root phenotypes
356 identical to that of the WT (**Figure S3 and Table S10**). The rate of infection of these
357 CRISPR lines after inoculation with *M. incognita* was determined by counting the galls on
358 infected roots and the egg masses produced by the adult females at the root surface at the end
359 of the RKN lifecycle. A significant large decrease, by approximately 50%, in the numbers of
360 galls and egg masses was observed for the *arf8a*^{CR-2}, *arf8b*^{CR-11} and *arf8ab*^{CR-2,4} lines relative
361 to WT plants (**Figure 5a and Table S10**). Thus, *ARF8* disruption decreases susceptibility to
362 infection, thereby demonstrating that *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* play a key role in the plant-RKN
363 interaction. We investigated the reasons for the lower susceptibility of the *arf8a*^{CR-2}, *arf8b*^{CR-}
364 ¹¹ and *arf8ab*^{CR-2,4} lines, by measuring the area covered by giant cells directly with a confocal
365 microscope, after gall clearing with BABB (Cabrera *et al.* 2017). A comparison of the mean

366 surface areas covered by giant cells in each gall showed that giant cells from the CRISPR
367 lines were approximately 30% smaller than those from control plants (**Figure 5b-c**). These
368 results demonstrate that the expression of *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* is required for correct giant cell
369 development during the tomato-RKN interaction.

370

371 **Identification of *ARF8A*- and *ARF8B*-regulated genes in galls**

372 For the identification of genes regulated by ARF8A and ARF8B in galls, mRNA from 14 dpi
373 galls of *arf8a*^{CR-2}, *arf8b*^{CR-11} mutants and WT Micro-Tom tomatoes were sequenced.
374 Transcript levels in the galls from WT and mutant plants were compared in DESeq2 and
375 EdgeR statistical analyses. These two methods identified 189 and 66 genes, respectively, as
376 differentially expressed between galls from WT and *arf8a*^{CR-2} or *arf8ab*^{CR-2,4} mutants (**Table**
377 **S11a and b**). Several auxin-inducible genes have already been identified as candidate genes
378 downstream from ARF8s in tomato floral tissue (Liu *et al.* 2014): *SMALL AUXIN-*
379 *UPREGULATED RNAs* (SAUR; *Solyc07g042490.1.1*) and two *EXPANSINS*
380 (*Solyc08g077900.3.1* and *Solyc08g077910.3.1*) were found to be repressed in *arf8a*^{CR-2} tomato
381 galls. Only 16 DEGs were common to both mutants (**Table S11c**). These genes are located
382 directly or indirectly downstream from ARF8 in tomato galls. No defense marker genes, such
383 as orthologs of salicylic acid-mediated response marker *PATHOGENESIS-RELATED*
384 *PROTEIN-1* (PR1), jasmonic acid-mediated defense maker *PROTEINASE INHIBITOR*
385 *2* (*PIN2*) or *PLANT DEFENSINS*, were found to be induced in *arf8a*^{CR-2} or *arf8ab*^{CR-2,4} galls.
386 This absence of defense marker gene induction in the galls of *arf8a*^{CR-2} and *arf8ab*^{CR-2,4}
387 mutants indicates that the decrease in galls and egg masses observed is due to a loss of
388 susceptibility rather than the induction of a plant defense mechanism. Together with the
389 requirement of ARF8s for correct giant cell development, this findings supports a key role for
390 ARF8s in feeding site formation.

391

392 **Discussion**

393 **Identification of miRNA/mRNA target pairs involved in gall formation**

394 RKN of the genus *Meloidogyne* are highly polyphagous sedentary plant parasites that can
395 induce the formation of giant feeding cells in most crop species. The formation of feeding
396 cells by RKN has been shown to result from a massive reprogramming of plant gene
397 expression induced by the nematode (Jammes *et al.*, 2005; Fuller *et al.*, 2007; Ibrahim *et al.*,
398 2011; Damiani *et al.*, 2012; Yamaguchi *et al.*, 2017; Kaur *et al.*, 2017). In this study, we

399 identified 4187 protein-coding genes, corresponding to 12.3% of all annotated tomato genes,
400 as differentially expressed in tomato galls 7 and 14 dpi with *M. incognita* relative to
401 uninfected roots. This proportion is consistent with previous transcriptomic analyses in
402 *Arabidopsis* and tomato (Yamaguchi *et al.* 2017; Portillo *et al.* 2013). We investigated the
403 regulators of this reprogramming of gene expression, by analyzing the expression of
404 microRNAs and mRNAs in galls and uninfected tomato roots and using degradome
405 sequencing to identify transcripts cleaved under the guidance of microRNAs. Finally, a gene
406 regulation network for gall development was built by integrating all these -omics data.
407 Twelve of the 153 transcripts identified as targeted by microRNAs in tomato galls in
408 degradome analysis were considered the most robust candidates, based on their expression
409 profiles, which were inversely correlated with those of the corresponding microRNA. Some
410 of these 12 miRNA/mRNA pairs have already been reported to be involved in the plant-
411 nematode interaction in *Arabidopsis*: the miR408/UCCLACYANINE (blue copper protein)
412 and the miR398/copper superoxide dismutase (Noureddine *et al.* 2022), and the auxin-
413 regulated miR172/APETALA2 pair (Díaz-Manzano *et al.* 2018). Moreover, other pairs as
414 also appear to be interesting candidates based on the processes in which they are involved.
415 This is the case, for example for the miR164/NAC transcription factor involved in lateral root
416 development (Guo *et al.* 2005). In *Arabidopsis* root, the auxin-mediated induction of miR164
417 induces the silencing of *NO APICAL MERISTEM-1 (NAC1)* transcripts, thereby affecting
418 transmission of the auxin signal and regulating lateral root growth.

419

420 ***ARF8s* are regulated at posttranscriptionally by miR167 in tomato roots**

421 Among the 12 most robust miRNA/mRNA pairs identified as putatively involved in the
422 formation of galls, the *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* targets of miR167 were selected for further
423 functional analyses based on their role in auxin signaling, as auxins are a class of hormones
424 controlling root development and architecture (De Smet *et al.*, 2007; Quint & Gray, 2008;
425 Majda & Robert, 2018). ARF8 is an auxin-responsive factor (ARF). The transcription factors
426 of this family regulate the activation or repression of auxin-induced genes by binding to the
427 auxin response elements (AuxREs) in their promoters (reviewed in Guilfoyle and Hagen,
428 2007; Chandler, 2016; Li *et al.*, 2016). The ARF gene family is conserved across the plant
429 kingdom and is well described in various plant species, including *A. thaliana* (23 genes)
430 (Hagen & Guilfoyle, 2002), *S. lycopersicum* (22 genes) (Zouine *et al.*, 2014), and *Oryza*
431 *sativa* (25 genes) (Wang *et al.*, 2007). The ARF family has been implicated in the regulation
432 of plant developmental processes, such as embryo morphogenesis (Rademacher *et al.*, 2011),

433 the formation of lateral roots in response to low levels of nitrogen (Gifford *et al.* 2008), the
434 formation of adventitious roots (Lee *et al.*, 2019), leaf structure and senescence (Wilmoth *et*
435 *al.*, 2005), flower development (Ellis *et al.*, 2005) and fruit initiation (Liu *et al.*, 2014). Like
436 ARF5, 6, 7 and 19, ARF8 has been described as a transcriptional activator (reviewed in
437 Guilfoyle and Hagen, 2007). In *Arabidopsis*, a partial redundancy between ARF8 and ARF6
438 has been reported, with both these activators silenced by miR167 (Reeves *et al.* 2012). The
439 *Arabidopsis arf6arf8* double mutant has defective flower development, as the flower is
440 entirely sterile (Nagpal, 2005), whereas the *arf8* mutant presents defects of pollination and
441 fertilization (Tian *et al.*, 2004; Vernoux *et al.*, 2011). A role for ARF8 has been reported in
442 the formation of lateral roots in *Arabidopsis* and soybean (Gifford *et al.*, 2008; Wang *et al.*
443 2015) and in the formation of adventitious roots (Gutierrez *et al.*, 2009). ARF6 and ARF8
444 were recently implicated in cambium establishment and maintenance (Ben-Targem *et al.*,
445 2021). The *arf6arf8* double mutant displays low levels of xylem occupancy and an absence of
446 fiber accumulation until very late stages of plant growth.

447

448 In *A. thaliana* and tomato, *ARF8* genes are regulated posttranscriptionally by miR167 (Wu *et*
449 *al.*, 2006; Liu *et al.*, 2014). Transcriptomic analyses of galls showed that *ARF8B* is
450 overexpressed in tomato galls at 7 and 14 dpi, whereas *ARF8A* is overexpressed at 14 dpi.
451 The infection of tomato lines expressing the GUS reporter gene under the control of the
452 *ARF8A* or *ARF8B* promoter revealed high levels of activity for both *ARF8* promoters in giant
453 cells and neighboring cells at 7 and 14 dpi, confirming the overexpression observed in the
454 transcriptomic analyses. Gall degradome analysis identified *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* transcripts as
455 cleaved by members of the miR167 family. Four tomato *MIR167* genes encode mature
456 proteins with identical sequences and are downregulated in tomato galls at 7 and 14 dpi. This
457 suggests that the *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* transcripts are cleaved by miR167 in uninfected tomato
458 roots, as demonstrated in *A. thaliana* roots. We showed that RKN infection induces the
459 inhibition of miR167 in galls, thereby decreasing the cleavage of *ARF8* transcripts by
460 miR167, resulting in an overexpression of *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* in galls.

461

462 **Auxin is a major factor regulating the formation of feeding cells in tomato**

463 We used tomato lines with CRISPR deletions within the *ARF8A*, *ARF8B* and *ARF8AB* coding
464 sequences to analyze the function of *ARF8* in plant-nematode interactions. The *arf8a*, *arf8b*
465 and *arf8ab* lines displayed decreased susceptibility to nematode infection, with fewer gall and
466 egg masses in mutants than in wild-type tomato plants. Moreover, the phenotyping of giant

467 feeding cells within cleared galls showed the giant cells from the three CRISPR lines to be
468 smaller than those from the wild type. These defects, associated with CRISPR mutations,
469 confirmed the involvement of *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* in the tomato response to RKN interaction
470 and that requirement for functional *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* for the correct development of
471 feeding cells.

472

473 MicroRNAs and transcription factors regulate *ARF8* expression, whereas auxin peaks
474 regulate *ARF8* activity: when auxin levels are high, *ARF8* (class II ARFs) activates the
475 transcription of auxin-responsive genes (Tiwari *et al.*, 2003). Auxin is known to be a major
476 factor regulating the formation of feeding cells in response to RKN signals (reviewed in
477 Gheysen and Mitchum, 2019; Oosterbeek *et al.*, 2021). Microarray analyses of *A. thaliana*
478 gall transcripts have revealed an early activation of genes responsible for auxin homeostasis
479 and auxin-responsive genes, and a downregulation of repressors of auxin responses (Hammes
480 *et al.*, 2005; Jammes *et al.*, 2005; Barcala *et al.*, 2010). Studies of lines expressing reporter
481 genes under the control of the synthetic auxin-responsive DR5 promoter showed that this
482 promoter is activated in galls induced by RKN (Hutangura *et al.*, 1999; Karczmarek *et al.*,
483 2004; Absmanner *et al.*, 2013b). In *A. thaliana* galls, a strong signal was detected in both
484 giant cells and neighboring cells at 4 dpi for DR5:GUS lines (Cabrera *et al.*, 2014). This
485 increase in auxin levels in the galls may be controlled by either the plant or the nematode.
486 Auxin-mimicking compounds have been found in nematode secretions (De Meutter *et al.*,
487 2003, 2005).

488

489 **ARF8 is involved in plant responses to biotic and abiotic stresses**

490 *ARF8* transcription factors have been implicated in plant responses to microorganisms. *ARF8*
491 is regulated in tomato leaves in response to biotic stresses, such as flagellin treatment or
492 infection with *Pseudomonas syringae* (Bouzroud *et al.*, 2018). A recent study in *Arabidopsis*
493 provided evidence for a suppression of miR167 expression, together with an induction of
494 *ARF6* and *ARF8*, in response to infection with *P. syringae* pv. tomato DC3000 in *A. thaliana*
495 (Caruana *et al.*, 2020). The P35S:*MIR167* and *arf6 arf8* double mutants were found to be
496 more resistant to bacterial infection than the wild type. The authors suggested that *ARF6* and
497 *ARF8* modulate salicylic acid defenses response to *P. syringae* infection under miR167
498 regulation. Furthermore, soybean *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* have been shown to downregulate the
499 nodulation induced by miR167 (Wang *et al.*, 2015). All these studies suggest that the auxin-
500 responsive pathway, including miR167/*ARF8*, is a key actor in the response to

501 microorganisms. Analysis of the transcriptomes of two tomato CRISPR *arf8* mutants showed
502 no induction of genes associated with plant defense in galls from *arf8* mutants. This finding
503 supports the notion that the lower levels of RKN infection observed in *arf8* mutants result
504 from a loss of susceptibility rather than an enhancement of plant defense.

505

506

507 **ARF8, an environmental hub connecting development and stress responses**

508 We have shown that *ARF8* genes are posttranscriptionally regulated by miR167 in galls, but
509 the transcriptional regulation of these genes has yet to be deciphered. *ARF8* was recently
510 shown to be regulated by a complex network of multiple activating and repressing
511 transcription factors in *A. thaliana* (Truskina *et al.*, 2021). Interestingly, some of these
512 transcription factors, such as WUSCHEL, Squamosa Promoter Binding Protein Like-13
513 (SPL13) and WRKY33, have also been implicated in plant development, and many *ARF8*
514 regulators are also associated with plant responses to biotic and abiotic stresses. Based on
515 these results, Truskina *et al.* suggested that ARF8 may act as an environmental hub
516 connecting development and stress responses mediating auxin responsiveness. The formation
517 of RKN-induced feeding sites interferes with plant developmental processes, including, in
518 particular, the development of lateral roots (Cabrera *et al.*, 2014, Olmo *et al.* 2020), which
519 suggests that the nematode may hijack this process. For example, the transcription factor
520 LBD16 and the microRNA miR390a, two key components of the auxin pathway and
521 transducers of lateral root development, are involved in gall formation in *Arabidopsis* and
522 tomato (Cabrera *et al.*, 2014, Olmo *et al.* 2020). *ARF8* has also been implicated in lateral root
523 formation in *Arabidopsis* (Gifford *et al.* 2008) and may, therefore, integrate biotic stress and
524 developmental processes during the formation of giant feeding cells. The common induction,
525 in tomato and *Arabidopsis* galls, of *ARF8* and of the transcription factor *LBD16* (Olmo *et al.*
526 2020) and miR390a (Diaz Manzano *et al.* 2016), suggests that there may be a conserved
527 auxin-mediated molecular pathway in galls. Early in the development of galls in *Arabidopsis*,
528 at 3 dpi, the silencing of *ARF3* by miR390 via tasiRNAs, and the induction of *ARF5* have
529 been shown to be required for parasitism (Cabrera *et al.* 2014a; Olmo *et al.* 2020). These
530 results suggest that there is a complex network involving ARFs and microRNAs responsible
531 for mediating auxin signaling during the development of galls induced by RKN.

532

533 **Acknowledgments**

534 The microscopy work was performed at the SPIBOC imaging facility of Institut Sophia
535 Agrobiotech. We thank Dr Olivier Pierre and the entire team of the platform for assistance
536 with microscopy. This work was funded by the INRAE SPE department and the French
537 Government (National Research Agency, ANR) through the ‘Investments for the Future’
538 LabEx SIGNALIFE: program reference #ANR-11-LABX-0028-01 and IDEX UCAJedi
539 ANR-15-IDEX-0, and by the French-Japanese bilateral collaboration programme PHC
540 SAKURA 2019 #43006VJ. Y.N. was supported by a doctoral fellowship from Lebanon
541 (Municipal Council of Aazzée).

542 **Author contributions**

543 Y.N., B.F and S.J.P. designed the study, performed the experimental work and wrote the
544 manuscript. Y.N. and C.M. produced biological material for sequencing. M.dR. analyzed
545 NGS data. M.Z. and JA designed, generated and characterized *arf8* CRISPR-Cas9 mutants.
546 KM participated to the qPCR analyses. M.Q., J.M. and P.A. participated in the writing of the
547 manuscript. All the authors analyzed and discussed the data.

548 **Data availability**

549 s

550 **References**

551

552 **Abad P, Williamson VM. 2010.** Plant Nematode Interaction: A Sophisticated Dialogue.
553 *Advances in Botanical Research* **53**: 147–192.

554 **Absmanner B, Stadler R, Hammes UZ. 2013a.** Phloem development in nematode-induced
555 feeding sites: The implications of auxin and cytokinin. *Frontiers in Plant Science* **4**.

556 **Absmanner B, Stadler R, Hammes UZ, Jammes F, Lecomte P, Almeida-Engler J De,**
557 **Bitton F, Martin-Magniette M-L, Renou JP, Abad P, et al. 2013b.** Parasitic nematodes
558 modulate PIN-mediated auxin transport to facilitate infection (J Jones, G Gheysen, and C
559 Fenoll, Eds.). *Mol Plant Microbe Interact* **26**: 107–109.

560 **Addo-Quaye C, Miller W, Axtell MJ. 2009.** CleaveLand: A pipeline for using degradome
561 data to find cleaved small RNA targets. *Bioinformatics* **25**: 130–131.

562 **de Almeida Engler J, Gheysen G. 2013.** Nematode-induced endoreduplication in plant host
563 cells: why and how? *Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions* **26**: 17–24.

564 **Anders S, Huber W. 2010.** Differential expression analysis for sequence count data. *Genome*

565 *Biology* **11**: R106.

566 **Anders S, Pyl PT, Huber W. 2015.** HTSeq--a Python framework to work with high-
567 throughput sequencing data. *Bioinformatics* **31**: 166–169.

568 **Axtell MJ. 2013.** ShortStack: Comprehensive annotation and quantification of small RNA
569 genes. *RNA* **19**: 740–751.

570 **Bar-Or C, Kapulnik Y, Koltai H. 2005.** A broad characterization of the transcriptional
571 profile of the compatible tomato response to the plant parasitic root knot nematode
572 *Meloidogyne javanica*. *European Journal of Plant Pathology* **111**.

573 **Barcala M, García A, Cabrera J, Casson S, Lindsey K, Favery B, García-Casado G,**
574 **Solano R, Fenoll C, Escobar C. 2010.** Early transcriptomic events in microdissected
575 *Arabidopsis* nematode-induced giant cells. *The Plant Journal* **61**: 698–712.

576 **Ben-Targem M, Ripper D, Bayer M, Ragni L. 2021.** Auxin and gibberellin signaling cross-
577 talk promotes hypocotyl xylem expansion and cambium homeostasis. *Journal of*
578 *Experimental Botany* **72**: 3647–3660.

579 **Blanc-Mathieu R, Perfus-Barbeoch L, Aury J-M, Da Rocha M, Gouzy J, Sallet E,**
580 **Martin-Jimenez C, Bailly-Bechet M, Castagnone-Sereno P, Flot J-F, et al. 2017.**
581 Hybridization and polyploidy enable genomic plasticity without sex in the most devastating
582 plant-parasitic nematodes (T Gojobori, Ed.). *PLOS Genetics* **13**: e1006777.

583 **Blok VC, Jones JT, Phillips MS, Trudgill DL. 2008.** Parasitism genes and host range
584 disparities in biotrophic nematodes: the conundrum of polyphagy versus specialisation.
585 *BioEssays* **30**: 249–259.

586 **Bouzroud S, Gouiaa S, Hu N, Bernadac A, Mila I, Bendaou N, Smouni A, Bouzayen M,**
587 **Zouine M. 2018.** Auxin Response Factors (ARFs) are potential mediators of auxin action in
588 tomato response to biotic and abiotic stress (*Solanum lycopersicum*) (K Wu, Ed.). *PLOS ONE*
589 **13**: e0193517.

590 **Cabrera J, Barcala M, García A, Rio-Machín A, Medina C, Jaubert-Possamai S, Favery**
591 **B, Maizel A, Ruiz-Ferrer V, Fenoll C, et al. 2016.** Differentially expressed small RNAs in
592 *Arabidopsis* galls formed by *Meloidogyne javanica*: a functional role for miR390 and its
593 TAS3-derived tasiRNAs. *New Phytologist* **209**: 1625–1640.

594 **Cabrera J, Díaz-Manzano FE, Sanchez M, Rosso MN, Melillo T, Goh T, Fukaki H,**

- 595 **Cabello S, Hofmann J, Fenoll C, et al. 2014.** A role for LATERAL ORGAN
596 BOUNDARIES-DOMAIN 16 during the interaction Arabidopsis-Meloidogyne spp. provides
597 a molecular link between lateral root and root-knot nematode feeding site development. *New*
598 *Phytologist* **203**: 632–645.
- 599 **Cabrera J, Olmo R, Ruiz-Ferrer V, Abreu I, Hermans C, Martinez-Argudo I, Fenoll C,**
600 **Escobar C. 2018.** A Phenotyping Method of Giant Cells from Root-Knot Nematode Feeding
601 Sites by Confocal Microscopy Highlights a Role for CHITINASE-LIKE 1 in Arabidopsis.
602 *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* **19**: 429.
- 603 **Cai C, Li C, Sun R, Zhang B, Nichols RL, Hake KD, Pan X. 2021.** Small RNA and
604 degradome deep sequencing reveals important roles of microRNAs in cotton (*Gossypium*
605 *hirsutum* L.) response to root-knot nematode *Meloidogyne incognita* infection. *Genomics*
606 **113**: 1146–1156.
- 607 **Caillaud M-C, Dubreuil G, Quentin M, Perfus-Barbeoch L, Lecomte P, de Almeida**
608 **Engler J, Abad P, Rosso M-N, Favery B. 2008.** Root-knot nematodes manipulate plant cell
609 functions during a compatible interaction. *Journal of Plant Physiology* **165**: 104–113.
- 610 **Caillaud M-C, Favery B. 2016.** In Vivo Imaging of Microtubule Organization in Dividing
611 Giant Cell. *Methods in molecular biology (Clifton, N.J.)* **1370**: 137–44.
- 612 **Caruana JC, Dhar N, Raina R. 2020.** Overexpression of Arabidopsis microRNA167
613 induces salicylic acid-dependent defense against *Pseudomonas syringae* through the
614 regulation of its targets ARF6 and ARF8. *Plant Direct* **4**.
- 615 **Chandler JW. 2016.** Auxin response factors. *Plant Cell and Environment* **39**: 1014–1028.
- 616 **Damiani I, Baldacci-Cresp F, Hopkins J, Andrio E, Balzergue S, Lecomte P, Puppo A,**
617 **Abad P, Favery B, Hérouart D. 2012.** Plant genes involved in harbouring symbiotic
618 rhizobia or pathogenic nematodes. *New Phytologist* **194**: 511–522.
- 619 **De Meutter J, Tytgat T, Prinsen E, Gheysen G, Van Onckelen H, Gheysen G. 2005.**
620 Production of auxin and related compounds by the plant parasitic nematodes *Heterodera*
621 *schachtii* and *Meloidogyne incognita*. *Communications in agricultural and applied biological*
622 *sciences* **70**: 51–60.
- 623 **De Meutter J, Tytgat T, Witters E, Gheysen G, Van Onckelen H, Gheysen G. 2003.**
624 Identification of cytokinins produced by the plant parasitic nematodes *Heterodera schachtii*

- 625 and *Meloidogyne incognita*. *Molecular Plant Pathology* **4**: 271–277.
- 626 **Díaz-Manzano FE, Cabrera J, Ripoll J-JJ, Del Olmo I, Andrés MF, Silva AC, Barcala**
627 **M, Sánchez M, Ruíz-Ferrer V, de Almeida-Engler J, et al. 2018.** A role for the gene
628 regulatory module microRNA172/TARGET OF EARLY ACTIVATION TAGGED
629 1/FLOWERING LOCUS T (miRNA172/TOE1/FT) in the feeding sites induced by
630 *Meloidogyne javanica* in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. *New Phytologist* **217**: 813–827.
- 631 **Díaz-Manzano FE, Barcala M, Engler G, Fenoll C, de Almeida-Engler J, Escobar C.**
632 **2016.** A Reliable Protocol for In situ microRNAs Detection in Feeding Sites Induced by
633 Root-Knot Nematodes. *Front Plant Sci.* **7**: 966.
- 634 **Dobin A, Davis CA, Schlesinger F, Drenkow J, Zaleski C, Jha S, Batut P, Chaisson M,**
635 **Gingeras TR. 2013.** STAR: ultrafast universal RNA-seq aligner. *Bioinformatics*: 1–7.
- 636 **Ellis CM, Nagpal P, Young JC, Hagen G, Guilfoyle TJ, Reed JW. 2005.** AUXIN
637 RESPONSE FACTOR1 and AUXIN RESPONSE FACTOR2 regulate senescence and floral
638 organ abscission in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. *Development* **132**: 4563–4574.
- 639 **Favery B, Dubreuil G, Chen MS, Giron D and Abad P. 2020.** Gall-Inducing Parasites :
640 convergent and conserved strategies of plant manipulation by insect and nematodes. *Annu.*
641 *Rev. Phytopathol.* **58**(1) :1-22.
- 642 **Favery B, Quentin M, Jaubert-Possamai S, Abad P. 2016.** Gall-forming root-knot
643 nematodes hijack key plant cellular functions to induce multinucleate and hypertrophied
644 feeding cells. *Journal of insect physiology* **84**: 60–69.
- 645 **Fuller VL, Lilley CJ, Atkinson HJ, Urwin PE. 2007.** Differential gene expression in
646 *Arabidopsis* following infection by plant-parasitic nematodes *Meloidogyne incognita* and
647 *Heterodera schachtii*. *Molecular Plant Pathology* **8**: 595–609.
- 648 **German MA, Luo S, Schroth G, Meyers BC, Green PJ. 2009.** Construction of parallel
649 analysis of rna ends (Pare) libraries for the study of cleaved mirna targets and the rna
650 degradome. *Nature Protocols* **4**: 356–362.
- 651 **Gheysen G, Mitchum MG. 2019.** Phytoparasitic Nematode Control of Plant Hormone
652 Pathways. *Plant Physiology* **179**: 1212–1226.
- 653 **Gifford ML, Dean A, Gutierrez RA, Coruzzi GM, Birnbaum KD. 2008.** Cell-specific
654 nitrogen responses mediate developmental plasticity. *Proceedings of the National Academy of*

- 655 *Sciences of the United States of America* **105**: 803–808.
- 656 **Guilfoyle TJ, Hagen G. 2007.** Auxin response factors. *Current Opinion in Plant Biology* **10**:
657 453–460.
- 658 **Gutierrez L, Bussell JD, Pacurar DI, Schwambach J, Pacurar M, Bellini C. 2009.**
659 Phenotypic Plasticity of Adventitious Rooting in Arabidopsis Is Controlled by Complex
660 Regulation of AUXIN RESPONSE FACTOR Transcripts and MicroRNA Abundance. *The*
661 *Plant Cell* **21**: 3119–3132.
- 662 **Hagen G, Guilfoyle T. 2002.** Auxin-responsive gene expression: Genes, promoters and
663 regulatory factors. *Plant Molecular Biology* **49**: 373–385.
- 664 **Hammes UZ, Schachtman DP, Berg RH, Nielsen E, Koch W, McIntyre LM, Taylor CG.**
665 **2005.** Nematode-induced changes of transporter gene expression in Arabidopsis roots.
666 *Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions* **18**: 1247–1257.
- 667 **Hao Y, Hu G, Breitel D, Liu M, Mila I, Frasse P, Fu Y, Aharoni A, Bouzayen M, Zouine**
668 **M. 2015.** Auxin Response Factor SIARF2 Is an Essential Component of the Regulatory
669 Mechanism Controlling Fruit Ripening in Tomato. *PLoS Genetics* **11**.
- 670 **Huang S-Y, Zhao G-H, Fu B-Q, Xu M-J, Wang C-R, Wu S-M, Zou F-C, Zhu X-Q. 2012.**
671 Genomics and molecular genetics of *Clonorchis sinensis*: current status and perspectives. (J
672 Jones, G Gheysen, and C Fenoll, Eds.). *Parasitology international* **61**: 71–6.
- 673 **Hutangura P, Mathesius U, Jones MGK, Rolfe BG. 1999.** Auxin induction is a trigger for
674 root gall formation caused by root-knot nematodes in white clover and is associated with the
675 activation of the flavonoid pathway. *Functional Plant Biology* **26**: 221.
- 676 **Ibrahim HMMM, Hosseini P, Alkharouf NW, Hussein EHA a, Gamal El-Din AEKY,**
677 **Aly MAMM, Matthews BF. 2011.** Analysis of Gene expression in soybean (*Glycine max*)
678 roots in response to the root knot nematode *Meloidogyne incognita* using microarrays and
679 KEGG pathways. *BMC Genomics* **12**: 220.
- 680 **Jammes F, Lecomte P, Almeida-Engler J, Bitton F, Martin-Magniette M-LL, Renou JP,**
681 **Abad P, Favery B, De Almeida-Engler J, Bitton F, et al. 2005.** Genome-wide expression
682 profiling of the host response to root-knot nematode infection in Arabidopsis. *The Plant*
683 *Journal* **44**: 447–458.
- 684 **Jaubert-Possamai S, Noureddine Y, Favery B. 2019.** MicroRNAs, New Players in the

- 685 Plant–Nematode Interaction. *Frontiers in Plant Science* **10**: 1–8.
- 686 **Karczmarek A, Overmars H, Helder J, Govere A. 2004.** Feeding cell development by
687 cyst and root-knot nematodes involves a similar early, local and transient activation of a
688 specific auxin-inducible promoter element. *Molecular Plant Pathology* **5**: 343–346.
- 689 **Kaur P, Shukla N, Joshi G, VijayaKumar C, Jagannath A, Agarwal M, Goel S, Kumar**
690 **A. 2017.** Genome-wide identification and characterization of miRNAome from tomato
691 (*Solanum lycopersicum*) roots and root-knot nematode (*Meloidogyne incognita*) during
692 susceptible interaction (Q Zou, Ed.). *PLOS ONE* **12**: e0175178.
- 693 **Kozomara A, Birgaoanu M, Griffiths-Jones S. 2019.** MiRBase: From microRNA
694 sequences to function. *Nucleic Acids Research* **47**: D155–D162.
- 695 **Lee HW, Cho C, Pandey SK, Park Y, Kim M-J, Kim J. 2019.** LBD16 and LBD18 acting
696 downstream of ARF7 and ARF19 are involved in adventitious root formation in *Arabidopsis*.
697 *BMC Plant Biology* **19**: 46.
- 698 **Li SB, Xie ZZ, Hu CG, Zhang JZ. 2016.** A review of auxin response factors (ARFs) in
699 plants. *Frontiers in Plant Science* **7**.
- 700 **Liu N, Wu S, Houten J Van, Wang Y, Ding B, Fei Z, Clarke TH, Reed JW, Van Der**
701 **Knaap E. 2014.** Down-regulation of AUXIN RESPONSE FACTORS 6 and 8 by microRNA
702 167 leads to floral development defects and female sterility in tomato. *Journal of*
703 *Experimental Botany* **65**: 2507–2520.
- 704 **Majda M, Robert S. 2018.** The Role of Auxin in Cell Wall Expansion. *International Journal*
705 *of Molecular Sciences* **19**: 951.
- 706 **Marella HH, Nielsen E, Schachtman DP, Taylor CG. 2013.** The amino acid permeases
707 AAP3 and AAP6 are involved in root-knot nematode parasitism of *Arabidopsis*. *Molecular*
708 *Plant-Microbe Interactions* **26**: 44–54.
- 709 **Medina C, Rocha M, Magliano M, Ratpopoulo A, Revel B, Marteu N, Magnone V,**
710 **Lebrigand K, Cabrera J, Barcala M, et al. 2017.** Characterization of microRNAs from
711 *Arabidopsis* galls highlights a role for miR159 in the plant response to the root-knot
712 nematode *Meloidogyne incognita*. *New Phytologist* **216**: 882–896.
- 713 **Mi H, Muruganujan A, Elbert D, Huang X and Thomas PD. 2019.** PANTHER version
714 14: more genomes, a new PANTHER GO-slim and improvements in enrichment analysis tools.

715 *Nucleic Acid Res.* **47**: D419-D426.

716 **Mejias J, Bazin J, Truong NM, Chen Y, Marteu N, Bouteiller N, Sawa S, Crespi MD,**
717 **Vaucheret H, Abad P, et al. 2021.** The root-knot nematode effector MiEFF18 interacts with
718 the plant core spliceosomal protein SmD1 required for giant cell formation. *New Phytologist*
719 **229**: 3408–3423.

720 **Mejias J, Chen Y, Bazin J, Truong N-M, Mulet K, Noureddine Y, Jaubert-Possamai S,**
721 **Ranty-Roby S, Soulé S, Abad P, et al. 2022.** Silencing the conserved small nuclear
722 ribonucleoprotein SmD1 target gene alters susceptibility to root-knot nematodes in plants.
723 *Plant Physiology* **189**: 1741–1756.

724 **Nagpal P. 2005.** Auxin response factors ARF6 and ARF8 promote jasmonic acid production
725 and flower maturation. *Development* **132**: 4107–4118.

726 **Nguyen CN, Perfus-Barbeoch L, Quentin M, Zhao J, Magliano M, Marteu N, da Rocha**
727 **M, Nottet N, Abad P and Favery B. 2018.** A root-knot nematode small glycine and
728 cysteine-rich effector, MiSGCR1, is involved in plant parasitism. *New Phytol.* **217**(2): 687-
729 699.

730 **Nikovics K, Blein T, Peaucelle A, Ishida T, Morin H, Aida M, Laufs P. 2006.** The
731 Balance between the MIR164A and CUC2 Genes Controls Leaf Margin Serration in
732 Arabidopsis. *The Plant Cell* **18**: 2929–2945.

733 **Noureddine Y, Mejias J, da Rocha M, Thomine S, Quentin M, Abad P, Favery B,**
734 **Jaubert-Possamai S. 2022.** Copper microRNAs modulate the formation of giant feeding
735 cells induced by the root knot nematode *Meloidogyne incognita* in Arabidopsis thaliana.
736 *New Phytol.* **8**. In press.

737 **Oosterbeek M, Lozano-Torres JL, Bakker J, Goverse A. 2021.** *Sedentary Plant-Parasitic*
738 *Nematodes Alter Auxin Homeostasis via Multiple Strategies.*

739 **Paicu C, Mohorianu I, Stocks M, Xu P, Coince A, Billmeier M, Dalmay T, Moulton V,**
740 **Moxon S. 2017.** MiRCat2: Accurate prediction of plant and animal microRNAs from next-
741 generation sequencing datasets. *Bioinformatics* **33**: 2446–2454.

742 **Palatnik JF, Wollmann H, Schommer C, Schwab R, Boisbouvier J, Rodriguez R,**
743 **Warthmann N, Allen E, Dezulian T, Huson D, et al. 2007.** Sequence and Expression
744 Differences Underlie Functional Specialization of Arabidopsis MicroRNAs miR159 and

- 745 miR319. *Developmental Cell* **13**: 115–125.
- 746 **Pan X, Nichols RL, Li C, Zhang B. 2019.** MicroRNA-target gene responses to root knot
747 nematode (*Meloidogyne incognita*) infection in cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum* L.). *Genomics*
748 **111**: 383–390.
- 749 **Portillo M, Cabrera J, Lindsey K, Topping J, Andr MF, Emiliozzi M, Oliveros JC, Garc**
750 **G, Solano R, Koltai H, et al. 2013.** Distinct and conserved transcriptomic changes during
751 nematode-induced giant cell development in tomato compared with Arabidopsis: A functional
752 role for gene repression. *New Phytologist* **197**: 1276–1290.
- 753 **Quint M, Gray WM. 2008.** Auxin signaling Marcel. *Curr. Opin. Plant Biol.* **9**: 448–453.
- 754 **Rademacher EH, Möller B, Lokerse AS, Llavata-Peris CI, Van Den Berg W, Weijers D.**
755 **2011.** A cellular expression map of the Arabidopsis AUXIN RESPONSE FACTOR gene
756 family. *Plant Journal* **68**: 597–606.
- 757 **Rancurel C, van Tran T, Elie C, Hilliou F. 2019.** SATQPCR: Website for statistical
758 analysis of real-time quantitative PCR data. *Molecular and Cellular Probes* **46**: 101418.
- 759 **Reeves PH, Ellis CM, Ploense SE, Wu MF, Yadav V, Tholl D, Chételat A, Haupt I,**
760 **Kennerley BJ, Hodgens C, et al. 2012.** A regulatory network for coordinated flower
761 maturation. *PLoS Genetics* **8**.
- 762 **Robinson MD, McCarthy DJ, Smyth GK. 2009.** edgeR: A Bioconductor package for
763 differential expression analysis of digital gene expression data. *Bioinformatics* **26**: 139–140.
- 764 **Shukla N, Yadav R, Kaur P, Rasmussen S, Goel S, Agarwal M, Jagannath A, Gupta R,**
765 **Kumar A. 2018.** Transcriptome analysis of root-knot nematode (*Meloidogyne incognita*)-
766 infected tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) roots reveals complex gene expression profiles and
767 metabolic networks of both host and nematode during susceptible and resistance responses.
768 *Molecular Plant Pathology* **19**: 615–633.
- 769 **De Smet I, Tetsumura T, De Rybel B, Frey NF dit, Laplaze L, Casimiro I, Swarup R,**
770 **Naudts M, Vanneste S, Audenaert D, et al. 2007.** Auxin-dependent regulation of lateral
771 root positioning in the basal meristem of Arabidopsis. *Development* **134**: 681–690.
- 772 **Tian CE, Muto H, Higuchi K, Matamura T, Tatematsu K, Koshiha T, Yamamoto KT.**
773 **2004.** Disruption and overexpression of auxin response factor 8 gene of Arabidopsis affect
774 hypocotyl elongation and root growth habit, indicating its possible involvement in auxin

- 775 homeostasis in light condition. *Plant Journal* **40**: 333–343.
- 776 **Tiwari SB, Hagen G, Guilfoyle T. 2003.** The roles of auxin response factor domains in
777 auxin-responsive transcription. *Plant Cell* **15**: 533–543.
- 778 **Truskina J, Han J, Chrysanthou E, Galvan-Ampudia CS, Lainé S, Brunoud G, Macé J,**
779 **Bellows S, Legrand J, Bågman AM, et al. 2021.** A network of transcriptional repressors
780 modulates auxin responses. *Nature* **589**: 116–119.
- 781 **Van Ha C, Le DT, Nishiyama R, Watanabe Y, Sulieman S, Tran UT, Mochida K, Van**
782 **Dong N, Yamaguchi-Shinozaki K, Shinozaki K, et al. 2013.** The auxin response factor
783 transcription factor family in soybean: Genome-wide identification and expression analyses
784 during development and water stress. *DNA Research* **20**: 511–524.
- 785 **Vernoux T, Brunoud G, Farcot E, Morin V, Van den Daele H, Legrand J, Oliva M, Das**
786 **P, Larrieu A, Wells D, et al. 2011.** The auxin signalling network translates dynamic input
787 into robust patterning at the shoot apex. *Molecular Systems Biology* **7**: 508.
- 788 **Verstraeten B, Atighi MR, Ruiz-Ferrer V, Escobar C, De Meyer T, Kyndt T. 2021.** Non-
789 coding RNAs in the interaction between rice and *Meloidogyne graminicola*. *BMC Genomics*
790 **22**: 560.
- 791 **Wang Y, Li P, Cao X, Wang X, Zhang A, Li X. 2009.** Identification and expression
792 analysis of miRNAs from nitrogen-fixing soybean nodules. *Biochemical and Biophysical*
793 *Research Communications* **378**: 799–803.
- 794 **Wang Y, Li K, Chen L, Zou Y, Liu H, Tian Y, Li D, Wang R, Zhao F, Ferguson BJ, et**
795 **al. 2015.** MicroRNA167-Directed Regulation of the Auxin Response Factors *GmARF8a* and
796 *GmARF8b* Is Required for Soybean Nodulation and Lateral Root Development. *Plant*
797 *Physiology* **168**: 984–999.
- 798 **Wang D, Pei K, Fu Y, Sun Z, Li S, Liu H, Tang K, Han B, Tao Y. 2007.** Genome-wide
799 analysis of the auxin response factors (ARF) gene family in rice (*Oryza sativa*). *Gene* **394**:
800 13–24.
- 801 **Weijers D, Wagner D. 2016.** Transcriptional Responses to the Auxin Hormone. *Annual*
802 *Review of Plant Biology* **67**: 539–574.
- 803 **Wilmoth JC, Wang S, Tiwari SB, Joshi AD, Hagen G, Guilfoyle TJ, Alonso JM, Ecker**
804 **JR, Reed JW. 2005.** NPH4/ARF7 and ARF19 promote leaf expansion and auxin-induced

805 lateral root formation. *Plant Journal* **43**: 118–130.

806 **Wu G, Park MY, Conway SR, Wang JW, Weigel D, Poethig RS. 2009.** The Sequential
807 Action of miR156 and miR172 Regulates Developmental Timing in Arabidopsis. *Cell* **138**:
808 750–759.

809 **Wu M-F, Tian Q, Reed JW. 2006.** Arabidopsis microRNA167 controls patterns of ARF6
810 and ARF8 expression, and regulates both female and male reproduction. *Development* **133**:
811 4211–4218.

812 **Yamaguchi YL, Suzuki R, Cabrera J, Nakagami S, Sagara T, Ejima C, Sano R, Aoki Y,**
813 **Olmo R, Kurata T, et al. 2017.** Root-Knot and Cyst Nematodes Activate Procambium-
814 Associated Genes in Arabidopsis Roots. *Frontiers in Plant Science* **8**: 1–13.

815 **Yang X, Li L. 2011.** miRDeep-P: A computational tool for analyzing the microRNA
816 transcriptome in plants. *Bioinformatics* **27**: 2614–2615.

817 **Zhao W, Li Z, Fan J, Hu C, Yang R, Qi X, Chen H, Zhao F, Wang S. 2015.** Identification
818 of jasmonic acid-associated microRNAs and characterization of the regulatory roles of the
819 miR319/TCP4 module under root-knot nematode stress in tomato. *Journal of Experimental*
820 *Botany* **66**: 4653–4667.

821 **Zouine M, Fu Y, Chateigner-Boutin A-L, Mila I, Frasse P, Wang H, Audran C, Roustan**
822 **J-P, Bouzayen M. 2014.** Characterization of the Tomato ARF Gene Family Uncovers a
823 Multi-Levels Post-Transcriptional Regulation Including Alternative Splicing (S Maas, Ed.).
824 *PLoS ONE* **9**: e84203.

825

826

827

828

829

Degradation Category	logFC 7dpi	padj 7 dpi	logFC 14dpi	padj 14dpi	mRNA family	mi
0	-0.45	0.27	-2.05	1.0354e-06	mi-r164	Sly3 Sly3C
0	-0.54	0.04	-0.63	0.27	mi-r164	Sly3 Sly3C Sly3

Table 1. The 12 miRNA/mRNA pairs with inversely regulated expression profiles.

830

831

832

833

834

835

836

837

838

839 Supporting Information

840

841 **Fig. S1. Quantification of tomato transcripts by RT-qPCR in galls relative to uninfected**
 842 **tomato roots, at 7 and 14 days post infection**

843 **Fig. S2. Expression of the Sly-miR167 family in galls and uninfected tomato roots.**

844 **Fig S3. Root phenotype of *crispr arf8* mutants**

845 **Table S1. Primers used for RT-qPCR.**

846 **Table S2. Protein-coding genes DE in galls at 7 dpi**

847 **Table S3. Protein-coding genes DE in galls at 14 dpi**

848 **Table S4. Quantification of tomato transcripts in galls by RT-qPCR (G) relative to**
849 **uninfected tomato roots (R), at 7 and 14 days post inoculation (dpi).**

850 **Table S5. Gene ontology (GO) analysis of the genes DE in galls at 7 and/or 14 dpi.**

851 **Table S6. The number of raw reads from the three libraries obtained from galls and**
852 **uninfected roots of *S. lycopersicum* at 7 dpi and 14 dpi.**

853 **Table S7. *De novo* prediction of *Solanum lycopersicum* MIR genes.**

854 **Table S8. MicroRNAs differentially expressed in galls at 7 and/or 14 dpi.**

855 **Table S9. 153 transcripts targeted by miRNAs in galls at 7 and/or 14 dpi identified by**
856 **degradome sequencing and CleaveLand analysis.**

857 **Table S10. Infection assays in *arf8* CRISPR lines infected with *M. incognita* and**
858 **comparison to WT.**

859 **Table S11. Genes differentially expressed between *crisprarf8* mutant galls and wild-type**
860 **(WT) galls.**

861

862 **Figure legends**

863

864 **Figures and Tables**

865 **Table 1. The 12 miRNA/mRNA pairs with inversely regulated expression profiles.**

866 Degradome analysis identified 12 genes targeted by miRNAs in galls. *Solanum lycopersicum*
867 (*Solyc*) gene expression levels were compared between galls and uninfected roots, by two
868 statistical methods (DSeq2 and EdgeR), and the expression of mature miRNAs was compared
869 by DSeq2. Gall/root fold-change differences in expression (LogFC) at 7 and 14 days post
870 infection (dpi) and the adjusted *p*-value obtained by the Benjamini-Hochberg method (adj *p*-
871 value) are indicated for genes and miRNAs. The genes and mature microRNAs upregulated in
872 galls are shown in red, and those downregulated in galls are shown in green.

873

874 **Figure 1. Tomato protein-coding genes and miRNAs differentially expressed in *M.***
875 ***incognita*-induced galls relative to the corresponding uninfected roots, at 7 and/or 14**
876 **dpi. The numbers of genes differentially expressed at 7 days post inoculation (dpi) (pink)**

877 and/or 14 dpi (yellow) between galls and the corresponding uninfected roots are indicated in
878 Venn diagrams.

879

880 **Figure 2. *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* are strongly transcribed in tomato galls induced by *M.***
881 ***incognita*.** The activity of the *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* promoters (*pARF8A* and *pARF8B*) was
882 studied in galls induced by *M. incognita* in *S. lycopersicum* lines expressing the
883 *pARF8A::GUS* or the *pARF8B::GUS* construct, at 7 and 14 days post inoculation (dpi). Blue
884 staining indicating GUS activity under the control of *pARF8A* was observed in (a) uninfected
885 root tips and (b-c) galls induced by *M. incognita* at 7 dpi (b) and 14 dpi (c). GUS activity
886 under the control of *pARF8B* was observed in (d) uninfected root tips and in (e-f) galls at 7
887 dpi (e) and 14 dpi (f). Bars: 500 μm .

888

889 **Figure 3. *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* are strongly transcribed in 14 dpi nematode-induced**
890 **feeding sites.** The activity of the *ARF8A* and *ARF8B* promoters (*pARF8A* and *pARF8B*) was
891 studied in galls induced by *M. incognita* in *S. lycopersicum* expressing the *pARF8A::GUS* (a-
892 b) or the *pARF8B::GUS* (c-d) construct, at 7 and 14 days post inoculation (dpi). Gall sections
893 (5 μm) were cut after GUS staining and observed by dark-field microscopy. Red staining,
894 reflecting GUS activity, was observed in giant cells and neighboring cells in *pARF8A::GUS*
895 galls (a) 7 dpi and (b) 14 dpi. Strong GUS activity was observed in giant cells and
896 neighboring cells in the galls of *pARF8B::GUS* plants at (c) 7 dpi and (d) 14 dpi. *, giant
897 cells; nc: neighboring cells; Bars: (a,b) 100 μm (c,d) 50 μm .

898

899 **Figure 4. Tomato *slarf8-KO* lines.** Generation of *slarf8-KO* mutant lines by CRISPR/Cas9.
900 Guide RNAs (sgRNA, red bar) anchored next to the Zinc Finger Motif (ZFM) were designed
901 for CRISPR/Cas9 strategy. Protospacer adjacent motif (PAM) are indicated in blue. Mutations
902 within *slarf8* coding sequences corresponding to nucleotide deletions are shown in green.
903 Three types of mutants predicted to produce heavily truncated proteins were chosen for
904 further phenotypic characterization. These mutants are annotated as *arf8a-cr* (*arf8a* single
905 mutant), *arf8b-cr* (*arf8b* single mutant), *arf8ab-cr* (*arf8a* and *arf8b* double mutant). The
906 predicted mutated proteins are schematically illustrated (right panel).

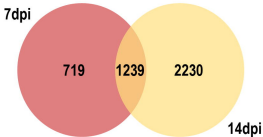
907

908 **Figure 5. The single mutants *arf8a*^{CR-2} and *arf8b*^{CR-11} and the double mutant *arf8ab*^{CR-2,4}**
909 **were significantly less susceptible to *M. incognita* than the wild type.** (a), The
910 susceptibility of the single and double CRISPR-Cas9 mutant lines and wild-type (WT)
911 MicroTom plants to *M. incognita* was evaluated by counting the numbers of galls and egg
912 masses per plant (G/plant and EM/plant, respectively) in two independent infection assays in
913 soil. (b) The effect of deleting *ARF8A* and/or *ARF8B* on the development of giant feeding
914 cells was further evaluated by measuring the size of the feeding site produced in each mutant
915 line and comparing it to that in the WT. Galls were collected 21 days post infection (dpi) *in*
916 *vitro* to measure the area (mm²) covered by the giant cells by the BABB clearing method
917 (Cabrera et al., 2018). The impact of plant genotype was assessed in Mann-Whitney tests. *,
918 $P < 0.05$. Boxes indicate the interquartile range (25th to 75th percentile). The central lines
919 within the boxes represent the medians. Whiskers indicate the minimum and maximum usual
920 values present in the dataset. The circle outside the box represents an outlier. n, the number of
921 plants analyzed in each assay. Bars 50 μ m.

922

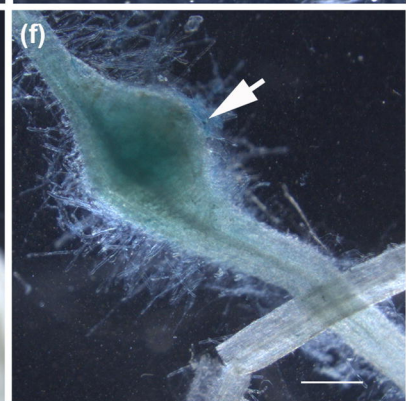
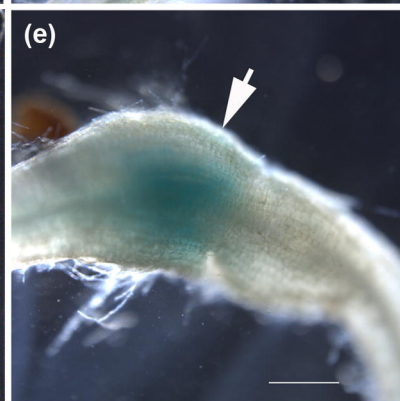
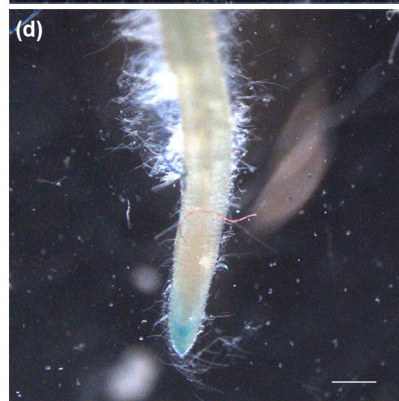
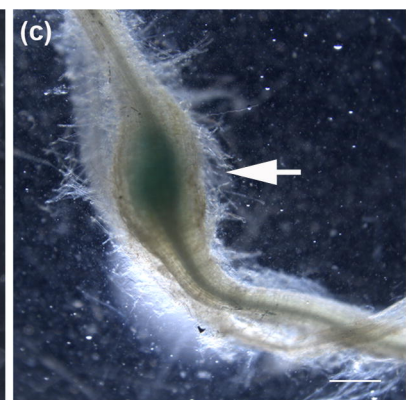
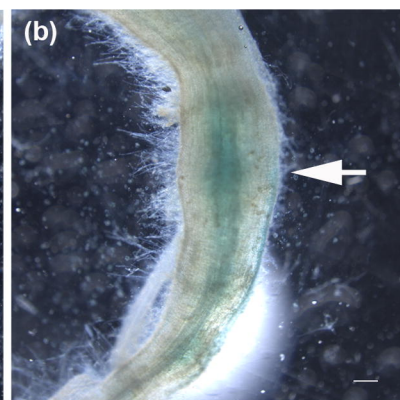
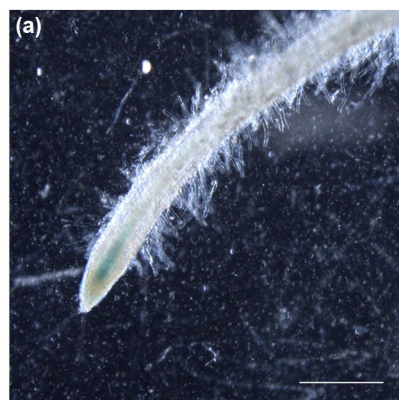
923

Protein coding genes

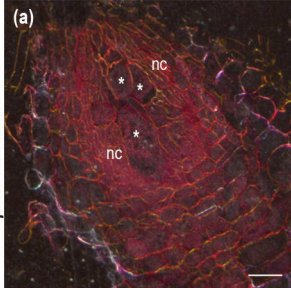


miRNAs

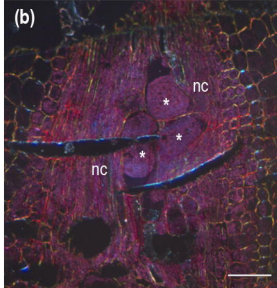




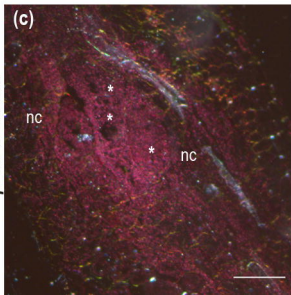
pARF8A::GUS



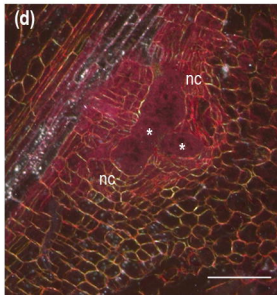
(b)



pARF8B::GUS

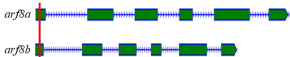


(d)



100 bp

sgRNA1



PAM

Slarf8a ATGAAGCTTTCAACATCAGGAA**TGG**GT CAGCAAGCTCATGAAG

Slarf8a-cr ATGAAGCTTTCAACAT--GGAATGGGT CAGCAAGCTCATGAAG

Slarf8ab-cr ATGAAGCTTTCAACAT--GGAATGGGT CAGCAAGCTCATGAAG

Slarf8b ATGAAGCTTTCAACATCAG**TGG**GT CAGCAGGCTCATGAAGG

Slarf8b-cr ATGAAGCTTTCAACATCAG-----CAGGCTCATGAAGG

arf8ab-cr ATGAAGCTTTCAA-----AGGAATGGGT CAGCAGGCTCATGAAGG

(845 aa)



(843 aa)



