**Regulation of *P. vulgaris* CLAVATA3/EMBRYO SURROUNDING-related (CLE) Peptides During Pathogenic Interactions**

Mattinson AA1, Hastwell AH1, Aitken EAB1, Ferguson, BJ1

*a.mattinson@uq.edu.au*

1 School of Agriculture and Food Sustainability, University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia.

Plants contain a multitude of intricate and tightly regulated molecular signalling pathways to control growth, development, and response to biotic and abiotic stimuli. CLAVATA3/EMBRYO SURROUNDING-related (CLE) peptides are a family of small signalling molecules involved in diverse pathways that regulate and optimise plant development. CLE peptides, such as RIC1, RIC2, and NIC1, are known for their ability to control legume nodulation as part of the Autoregulation of Nodulation mechanism. However, the role of CLE peptides in the context of pathogen interactions has not yet been thoroughly investigated. We used *Macrophomina phaseolina*, the pathogen responsible for the agriculturally-devastating charcoal rot disease, to investigate the differential expression of the complete family of CLE peptide encoding genes in common bean (*P. vulgaris*). Several differentially expressed candidates have now been identified that respond to infection with the pathogen. We are now functionally analysing these candidates to establish their role in symbiotic and pathogenic interactions. Findings could help in the development of synthetic peptides, or the identification of genetic targets, that help enhance crop resistance to harmful pathogens in agriculture.