

China

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In 2008, the National Science Foundation of China (NSFC) funded over 50 projects mainly using Arabidopsis and rice model species under the “Molecular Mechanisms of Plant Hormone Initiative”. These projects cover quite diverse aspects of plant hormone researches. To meet the increasing demand for hormone analysis, NSFC also supported a project to set up a core facility for quantitative analysis of plant hormones at the National Center for Plant Gene Research (Beijing) hosted by the Institute of Genetics and Developmental Biology (IGDB), Chinese Academy of Sciences. The core facility currently provides services for quantitative analysis of IAA and ABA. Expertise on other plant hormones is being developed. In addition, NSFC also launched a new five-year initiative on epigenetics and stem cell research in 2008 in which two plant projects were funded.

“Genetic and epigenetic regulation on organ formation in higher plants”, a team project coordinated by Dr. Xiaofeng Cao of IGDB, CAS was launched by the “Development and Reproduction Program”, under the National Basic Research Initiative of China. This project includes more than 10 principal investigators from IGDB, Peking University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Institute of Botany, CAS, etc. They mainly focus on: 1) genetic and epigenetic network governing the transition from vegetative growth to reproductive growth, 2) molecular mechanism and modeling in plant organ formation, 3) molecular basis of organ size control in higher plants.

The Institute of Plant Sciences, headed by Dr. Hong Ma recently returned from Pennsylvania State University, USA, was inaugurated in December 3, 2008 in Fudan University, Shanghai. Over 150 plant biologists from all over China attended the opening ceremony. In support of such new development, the annual symposium on Arabidopsis research was held in Shanghai Institute of Plant Physiology and Ecology, where over 300 Arabidopsis researchers and students exchanged ideas and initiated new collaborations. It is also worth mentioning that Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory recently set up an office in Suzhou to bring the Banbury Meeting to China. In addition, several Chinese journals, including Molecular Plant, Journal of Integrative Plant Biology, Journal of Genetics and Genomics, and Cell Research, now are international, publishing peer-reviewed English articles. These new developments will undoubtedly have a great impact on Chinese biological research as a whole.

Major funding sources for Arabidopsis functional genomics:

National Science Foundation of China
83 Shuangqing Road, Haidian district, Beijing 100080, China
Website: <http://www.nsfc.gov.cn/>

Ministry of Science and Technology
15B, Fuxing Road, Beijing, 100862, China