

1 **Septoria nodorum blotch of wheat: disease management and resistance breeding in the**  
2 **face of shifting disease dynamics and a changing environment**

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4 Rowena C. Downie<sup>1-2\*</sup>, Min Lin<sup>3\*</sup>, Beatrice Corsi<sup>1</sup>, Andrea Ficke<sup>3</sup>, Morten Lillemo<sup>4‡</sup>, Richard  
5 P. Oliver<sup>5‡</sup>, Huyen T. T. Phan<sup>6</sup>, Kar-Chun Tan<sup>6‡</sup>, James Cockram<sup>1‡†</sup>

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7 \*Joint first authorship

8 ‡Contributed equally

9 <sup>1</sup>John Bingham Laboratory, NIAB, 93 Lawrence Weaver Road, Cambridge, CB3 0LE, United  
10 Kingdom

11 <sup>2</sup>Department of Plant Sciences, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge, CB2  
12 3EA, United Kingdom

13 <sup>3</sup>NBIO, Høgskoleveien 7, NO-1432, Ås, Norway

14 <sup>4</sup>Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), P.O. Box 5003, NO-1432, Ås, Norway

15 <sup>5</sup>Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia

16 <sup>6</sup>Centre for Crop and Disease Management, School of Molecular and Life Sciences, Curtin  
17 University, Perth, WA, Australia

18 †Corresponding author: james.cockram@niab.com

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20 **Key words**

21 Wheat disease resistance, quantitative trait loci (QTL), *Septoria nodorum* blotch (SNB),

22 Necrotrophic fungal effectors, *Parastagonospora nodorum*

23

24

## 25 **Abstract**

26 The fungus *Parastagonospora nodorum* is a narrow host range necrotrophic fungal pathogen  
27 that causes Septoria nodorum blotch (SNB) of cereals, most notably wheat (*Triticum aestivum*  
28 L.). Although commonly observed on wheat seedlings, *P. nodorum* infection has the greatest  
29 effect on the adult crop. It results in leaf blotch, which limits photosynthesis and thus crop  
30 growth and yield. It can also affect the wheat ear, resulting in glume blotch which directly  
31 affects grain quality. Reports of *P. nodorum* fungicide resistance, the increasing use of reduced  
32 tillage agronomic practices and high evolutionary potential of the pathogen, combined with  
33 changes in climate and agricultural environments, mean that genetic resistance to SNB remains  
34 a high priority in many regions of wheat cultivation. In this review, we summarise current  
35 information on *P. nodorum* population structure and its implication for improved SNB  
36 management. We then review recent advances in the genetics of host resistance to *P. nodorum*  
37 and the necrotrophic effectors it secretes during infection, integrating the genomic positions of  
38 these genetic loci using the recently released wheat reference genome assembly. Finally, we  
39 discuss the genetic and genomic tools now available for SNB resistance breeding and consider  
40 future opportunities and challenges in crop health management using the wheat-*P. nodorum*  
41 interaction as a model.

## 42 **Septoria nodorum blotch of wheat: a disease of shifting global importance**

43 Septoria nodorum blotch (SNB) is a fungal disease of wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), a key crop  
44 underpinning global food security. SNB is caused by the necrotrophic fungal pathogen  
45 *Parastagonospora nodorum* (syn. *Phaeosphaeria nodorum* (E. Müll.), syn. *Leptosphaeria*  
46 *nodorum* (E. Müll.), syn. *Stagonospora nodorum* (Berk.), syn. *Septoria nodorum* (Berk.)) and  
47 is prevalent in wheat growing environments with relatively high, or periodically high, rainfall  
48 such as regions within Australia, Canada, Scandinavia, central and eastern Europe, eastern  
49 USA, and South America. Compared to biotrophic pathogens which require living host tissue,  
50 necrotrophs actively kill host tissue during colonisation, subsequently living on the contents of  
51 the dead or dying host cells (Laluk & Mengiste, 2010). The visual symptoms of SNB are  
52 chlorosis and necrosis of wheat leaf tissue (often in the form of necrotic lesions surrounded by  
53 chlorosis, later developing into irregular dark brown lesions), as well as discoloration and  
54 necrosis of the glumes, referred to as leaf blotch and glume blotch, respectively (Figure 1)  
55 (Solomon et al. 2006). Leaf blotch reduces the plant surface area capable of photosynthesis,  
56 therefore limiting overall crop growth and yield, while glume blotch directly affects grain  
57 quality. Due to such damage, SNB is known to cause yield losses of up to ~30 % (Bhathal et  
58 al. 2003). In practice, SNB disease often occurs in combination with other necrotrophic fungal  
59 diseases such as septoria tritici blotch (STB, caused by *Zymoseptoria tritici*) and tan spot (TS,  
60 caused by *Pyrenophora tritici-repentis*). When such disease complexes occur, it can often be  
61 difficult to visually determine which necrotrophic diseases are present. However, quantitative  
62 polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) molecular assays for *P. nodorum* (Oliver et al. 2008), *Z.*  
63 *tritici* (Bearehell et al. 2005) and *P. tritici-repentis* (Antoni et al. 2010) are now available,  
64 helping to distinguish the contributors to co-infections of wheat. Additionally, an ITS-RFLP  
65 test has been developed that distinguishes between necrotrophic pathogens including *P.*  
66 *nodorum* and *P. tritici-repentis* (Hafez et al. 2020). Before the 1980s, *P. nodorum* was the

67 dominant pathogen of the leaf blotch complex in Europe (Bearchell et al. 2005). However,  
68 SNB has undergone changes in its regional prevalence in recent decades. For example, over  
69 the last thirty years there has been a focal shift in much of North Western European countries  
70 from *P. nodorum* to *Z. tritici* (Bearchell et al. 2005; Shaw et al. 2008). The underlying reasons  
71 for this change are not fully understood and have been attributed to increased levels of *Z. tritici*  
72 host susceptibility, changes in climate, higher use of fertilisers use and increased SO<sub>2</sub> emissions  
73 (West et al. 2012; Shaw et al. 2008). It is notable that in Norway, *P. nodorum* is still the major  
74 necrotrophic fungal pathogen of wheat and that sulphur pollution has not been reported to be  
75 higher in Norway than in any other European countries in which *Z. tritici* dominates the wheat  
76 leaf blotch complex (Lin et al. 2020a). One possibility is that the overall SNB to STB shift is  
77 due to *Z. tritici* being better at adapting to fungicides, although this hypothesis would need  
78 further investigation. Nevertheless, *P. nodorum* remains an important pathogen of wheat  
79 worldwide, and appears to be moving into new niches. For example, in 2017 it was observed  
80 for the first time on emmer wheat (*T. dicoccoides*) in Turkey, and due to changing climatic  
81 conditions, SNB has now become a major problem in Himachal Pradesh, India (Cat et al. 2018;  
82 Katoch et al. 2019).

83

#### 84 ***Parastagonospora nodorum* lifecycle, infection process and epidemics**

85 *P. nodorum* is a fungal pathogen belonging to the Ascomycota as a member of the class  
86 Dothideomycetes. As the first of the Dothiideomycete class of fungal pathogens to have its  
87 genome sequenced (37 Mbp; Hane et al. 2007), *P. nodorum* became established as a model for  
88 the narrow host range necrotrophic pathogen lifecycle. It is known mostly as a wheat pathogen,  
89 but has also been reported to occasionally infect the related cereal crop barley (*Hordeum*  
90 *vulgare*) but with less damage (reviewed by Cunfer 2000), as well as wild grasses (Zhang &  
91 Nan, 2018). *P. nodorum* is a necrotrophic fungal pathogen that assimilates nutrients released

92 after host cell death (De Wit et al. 2009). A recent reclassification of fungal and oomycete  
93 pathogens (Hane et al. 2020) differentiated a new grouping described as narrow host range  
94 polymertrophs to which *P. nodorum* belongs. This group has a narrow host range (unlike  
95 *Botrytis cinera*) and induces immediate cell death so that polymeric plant substances become  
96 available for assimilation. This group typically produces proteinaceous effectors to fuel disease  
97 progression and triggering the plant's receptors to promote sensitivity and tissue death (De Wit  
98 et al. 2009). *P. nodorum* has both asexual and sexual cycles (Figure 2). As part of the asexual  
99 cycle, fruiting bodies, called pycnidia, form in lesions on the leaf to promote spore development  
100 for local dispersal. In contrast, the sexual life cycle produces ascospores, derived from  
101 pseudothecia, that allow long distance aerial dispersion. The presence of both sexual and  
102 asexual reproduction mechanisms is hypothesised to provide *P. nodorum* with a high  
103 evolutionary potential, resulting in increased diversity and fast clonal reproduction of  
104 favourable genotypes (Ruud & Lillemo, 2018). The primary inoculum of SNB is mostly  
105 forcibly discharged ascospores originating from wheat debris, although it is also seed-  
106 transmitted. Reduced tillage (the practice of minimising disturbance of the soil by allowing  
107 crop stubble to remain on the ground rather than being incorporated into the soil or discarded)  
108 is advocated to reduce soil erosion and limit water evaporation. However, this practice leads to  
109 higher amounts of infected wheat straw on the soil surface, which can serve as primary  
110 inoculum (Ficke et al. 2018). Once the pathogen has established the initial infection on a plant,  
111 large amounts of pycnidiospores can be produced and subsequently spread by rain-splash.  
112 Indeed, the high density of wheat fields makes it easier for pycnidiospores to spread to  
113 neighbouring plants. Semi-dwarf varieties of wheat may have a higher risk of secondary *P.*  
114 *nodorum* infection due to the close vertical spacing of the leaves, as conidia, produced by  
115 pycnidia, are sent on an upward trajectory by water droplets (Bahat et al. 1980). This is

116 particularly relevant as the majority of modern wheat varieties have a short ‘semi-dwarf’  
117 stature.

118

### 119 **Genetic structure of the *P. nodorum* pathogen population**

120 As *P. nodorum* undergoes frequent sexual reproduction, the resulting genetic recombination  
121 results in high genetic diversity in the pathogen population (McDonald & Linde, 2002). Isolates  
122 from the Middle East have been found to possess the highest genetic diversity globally.  
123 Indicating it is highly probable that the Fertile Crescent serves as the *P. nodorum* centre of  
124 origin (Ghaderi et al. 2020). Over the years, studies of *P. nodorum* population structure have  
125 been undertaken using a variety of different molecular marker types. Of the various populations  
126 investigated to date, sourced from a wide range of geographic locations, studies have typically  
127 found little population substructure and high genetic diversity (Blixt et al. 2008; Keller et al.  
128 1997; Lin et al. 2000a; McDonald et al. 2012; Murphy et al. 2000; Stukenbrock et al. 2006).  
129 For example, genetic studies carried out on *P. nodorum* populations collected from Europe and  
130 the USA found evidence of high gene flow but little evidence of genetic differentiation between  
131 populations (Keller et al. 1997), with similar results observed for populations from Australia  
132 (Murphy et al. 2000) and Norway (Lin et al. 2020a). Indeed, high levels of genetic diversity  
133 have even been found among isolates collected from the same lesion (McDonald et al. 1994).  
134 The most notable investigation to go against this general trend was an analysis of an  
135 international *P. nodorum* population sourced from five continents, where moderate  
136 differentiation was observed between geographically divided populations (Stukenbrock et al.  
137 2006). More recently, Richards et al. (2019) carried out a comprehensive analysis of the  
138 population structure and genome evolution of 197 *P. nodorum* isolates collected across the  
139 United States from durum, spring and winter wheat varieties, finding evidence of two *P.*  
140 *nodorum* populations that corresponded to the Upper Midwest and South-Eastern US.

141 Interestingly, most isolates in the South-Eastern US population lacked the effector *SnToxA*.  
142 This correlated with the lack of the ToxA effector sensitivity gene *Tsn1* in winter wheat  
143 varieties that were widely planted in the region thus suggesting that host genotype is a strong  
144 driver on the maintenance of effector genes.

145

146 Notably, most regional *P. nodorum* population genetic studies have been carried out using  
147 isolates sampled across a narrow timeframe, and thus offer limited insight into potential  
148 changes in the population structure over time. However, recently Phan et al. (2020) have  
149 examined the population structure of 155 *P. nodorum* isolates collected over a 44 year period  
150 across the South-Western Australian wheat growing region. Analysis of genetic  
151 polymorphisms using 28 simple sequence repeat (SSR) markers revealed that the population  
152 consisted of genetically distinct groups. Most isolates sampled were attributed to ‘core groups’  
153 that possessed the highest level of genetic diversity in the Australian population, and these  
154 groups were found throughout locations and times. Isolates belonging to ‘non-core groups’  
155 possessed a much lower level of genetic diversity, with limited distribution across locations  
156 and time. It was also observed that changes in group genotypes occurred during periods that  
157 coincided with major changes in the mass adoption of popular wheat cultivars across large  
158 areas of the Australian wheat cultivation zone. It was hypothesised that core groups maintain  
159 genetic variability whilst non-core groups emerge in response to large-scale changes in cultivar  
160 near-monocultures. Finally, work investigating the genetic diversity of *P. nodorum* and the  
161 closely related pathogen species *P. avenaria* f. sp. *tritici* 1 (*Pat1*) shows evidence of  
162 hybridisation at a frequency of ~4%, indicating that such gene transfer could be an additional  
163 source of genetic diversity in those regions in which the range of the two species overlap  
164 (McDonald et al. 2012).

165

## 166 **SNB disease management**

167 Disease management of SNB includes cultivar resistance (considered in more detail in the next  
168 section), fungicide treatment, seed cleaning and stubble management. Despite decades of  
169 breeding effort, all current wheat cultivars retain a significant level of susceptibility (Aguilar  
170 et al. 2005). Reduced tillage practices are becoming increasingly common all around the world,  
171 and significant correlations have been observed between the amount of residue and SNB  
172 disease severity in the field (Mehra et al. 2015). Residue management can effectively decrease  
173 the amount of primary inoculum and reduce disease severity (Solomon et al. 2006). SNB  
174 transmission via seed is regularly reported in some parts of the world such as the eastern USA  
175 but rarely elsewhere (Bennett et al. 2007). Seed fungicide treatment, directed primarily to  
176 control bunts and smuts, seems to be an efficient way to eradicate SNB from seed stocks.  
177 However, fungicidal control of foliar and glume SNB is more problematic. SNB typically  
178 occurs in combination with other diseases (tan spot, STB, yellow rust and powdery mildew),  
179 and is not normally the most predominant disease. The conditions where SNB is dominant are  
180 currently limited to particular geographic locations where yield is typically under 3-4 tonnes  
181 per hectare, as well as on lower value feed cereals such as triticale where fungicidal applications  
182 are limited in number and dose.

183

184 Before its relative decline in much of north-western Europe at or around the year 2000, *P.*  
185 *nodorum* was considered a model pathogen for fungicide discovery (Dancer et al. 1999). All  
186 the current major fungicide classes are efficient at controlling SNB: sterol demethylation  
187 inhibitors (DMIs), Qo inhibitors (QoIs) and Succinate Dehydrogenase Inhibitors (SDHIs).  
188 Reports of fungicide resistance in SNB are relatively rare. Resistance to QoI fungicides in  
189 Sweden was reported in isolates collected between 2003 and 2005 (Blixt et al. 2009) and  
190 resistance to DMI fungicides has been reported in isolates collected before 2000 in Denmark,

191 Sweden and Switzerland (Pereira et al. 2017, see also  
192 <https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.26.010199v1.full>). To our knowledge, no  
193 reports of resistance to SDHI fungicides have been made.

194

195 Fungicide resistance management focusses on reducing the selection pressure for resistance,  
196 by minimising dose and number of applications and using mixtures and alternations (Jørgensen  
197 et al. 2017). The primary foci of foliar fungicide application in wheat are normally yellow rust,  
198 STB and powdery mildew. The latter two diseases are particularly adept at evolving resistance  
199 (Oliver & Hewitt, 2014). QoI resistance was detected in both pathogens within two years of  
200 QoI application in 2001 (Bartlett et al. 2002). Control of STB by DMIs was substantially  
201 compromised by about the year 2010 (Cools et al. 2013). In the last decade, SDHIs became the  
202 main weapon against STB but resistance was well developed by 2016 in the UK and Ireland  
203 (Dooley et al. 2016). As SNB is not typically the only, or most dominant, pathogen amongst  
204 the disease complexes present in most geographic regions, it is possible that SNB has been  
205 inadvertently protected against resistance evolution by the development of resistance in the  
206 more damaging pathogen forcing a change in fungicide regime. New fungicides were  
207 introduced, lower doses applied and either mixtures or rotations carried out. As a result, SNB  
208 is not commonly subject to sustained pressure from a single mode of action class and has  
209 therefore likely only relatively rarely developed resistance.

210

### 211 **Genetics of wheat sensitivity to *P. nodorum*: necrotrophic effectors and host response**

212 While chemical control represents an important part of SNB disease management, the use of  
213 cultivars with increased genetic resistance helps to underpin more economically and  
214 environmentally sustainable wheat production. Resistance to both SNB leaf blotch and glume  
215 blotch are quantitatively inherited, but are reported to be controlled by different genetic

216 mechanisms (Chu et al. 2010; Wicki et al. 1999). Increased disease severity is also associated  
217 with shorter plant height and later plant maturation. However, residual resistance that is not  
218 associated with these traits is identifiable. It is this residual genetic resistance, along with the  
219 identification of host-specific gene-for-gene interactions determining the *P. nodorum*-wheat  
220 pathosystem (Liu et al. 2004), that provide immediate opportunities to further explore host  
221 genetic resistance in wheat breeding (Ruud & Lillemo, 2018).

222

223 Necrotrophic fungal pathogens are known to secrete effectors (typically proteins, but also low-  
224 molecular weight phytotoxic metabolites) during host infection which act as virulence factors  
225 facilitating disease development. The presence of effectors, also known as 'host selective  
226 toxins', was first described in 1933 through the study of the host-pathogen interaction between  
227 *Alternaria alternata* and Japanese pear, *Pirus serotina* (Tanaka, 1933). Since then, effectors  
228 and their corresponding host sensitivity loci have been identified in numerous necrotrophic  
229 fungal and bacterial plant pathogens (reviewed by Laluk & Mengiste, 2010). The necrotic  
230 response in a sensitive host plant is hypothesised to help pathogen colonisation, promoting  
231 infection and ultimately providing a rich nutrient source (Oliver & Solomon, 2010). This is  
232 known as effector-triggered susceptibility (ETS) and is genetically induced via an 'inverse gene  
233 for gene system' (Friesen et al. 2007). Understanding the genetics of host sensitivity to such  
234 effectors provides the opportunity to break down at least some components of the genetics of  
235 field resistance into their constitutive parts. *P. nodorum* is thought to derive nutrients from  
236 dying plant tissue, utilizing secreted effectors. These effectors induce a hypersensitive response  
237 in the host, which takes the form of programmed cell death (Friesen et al. 2007; Liu et al. 2009;  
238 Oliver et al. 2012). Evidence of eight *P. nodorum* effectors have been described to date, and  
239 designated SnToxA, SnTox1, SnTox2, SnTox3, SnTox4, SnTox5, SnTox6 and SnTox7, along  
240 with nine corresponding major wheat sensitivity loci *Tsn1* (Faris et al. 2010), *Snn1* (Shi et al.

241 2016), *Snn2* (Friesen et al. 2007), *Snn3-B1/Snn3-D1* (Friesen et al. 2008; Zhang et al. 2011),  
242 *Snn4* (Abeysekara et al. 2012), *Snn5* (Friesen et al. 2012), *Snn6* (Gao et al. 2015) and *Snn7*  
243 (Shi et al. 2015), respectively. Of these, only three effectors (SnToxA, SnTox1, SnTox3) and  
244 two host sensitivity loci (*Tsn1* and *Snn1*) have been identified at the gene level, discussed in  
245 more detail below. In addition to these major host loci, several minor effector sensitivity QTLs  
246 have been identified in wheat (Supplementary Table 1) (Cockram et al. 2015; Downie et al.  
247 2018; Lin et al. 2020b; Phan et al. 2016).

248

249 *ToxA-Tsn1* interaction: ToxA was first discovered to be secreted by *P. nodorum* in 2006  
250 (Friesen et al. 2006) and found to have 99.7 % DNA sequence similarity to the previously  
251 identified ToxA gene from *P. tritici-repentis* (subsequently termed here, PtrToxA). Due to the  
252 monomorphism of *PtrToxA* compared to the high levels of *ToxA* diversity, it is thought *ToxA*  
253 was introduced into the *P. tritici-repentis* genome through interspecific gene transfer from *P.*  
254 *nodorum* (Friesen et al. 2006). The corresponding host sensitivity locus, *Tsn1*, was first  
255 discovered in 1996 as conferring sensitivity to PtrToxA (Faris et al. 1996), and later confirmed  
256 as the corresponding host sensitivity locus for *P. nodorum* ToxA (Liu et al. 2006). This  
257 interaction was found to significantly contribute to disease incidence, accounting for up to 62%  
258 of disease severity at the seedling stage (Liu et al. 2006) and up to 20% at adult plant stage  
259 (Friesen et al. 2009). *Tsn1* is typically present at relatively high frequencies in wheat  
260 germplasm, e.g. 59% of Canadian varieties representing wheat development over that last  
261 century (Hafez et al. 2020). *Tsn1* encodes a predicted protein containing three predicted  
262 domains: a serine/threonine protein kinase (S/TPK) (with ATP binding, substrate binding site  
263 and activation loop), a nucleotide binding site (NBS) and 24 leucine-rich repeats (LRRs) (Faris  
264 et al. 2010). NBS-LRRs form the largest class of plant resistance (*R*) genes, and are well  
265 documented as controlling race-specific resistance to biotrophic fungal pathogens (Dubey &

266 Singh, 2018). *Tsn1* is localised to the chloroplast and does not directly interact with *ToxA*  
267 (Faris et al. 2010). However, *ToxA* has been shown to interact with the dimeric PR-1-type  
268 pathogenesis-related protein, TaPR-1-5, to activate *Tsn1*-controlled cell death pathways (Breen  
269 et al. 2016). *Tsn1* expression is subjected to regulation by light and the circadian clock,  
270 providing a possible explanation for the light dependent nature of the *ToxA-Tsn1* interaction  
271 (Faris et al. 2010; Manning & Ciuffetti, 2005). Recently, it was shown that another wheat and  
272 barley pathogen *Bipolaris sorokiniana*, the cause of spot blotch, also possesses a *ToxA* gene  
273 that likely originated from *P. nodorum*, pointing to a selective advantage of carrying the  
274 virulence factor *ToxA* (Friesen et al. 2018).

275

276 *Tox1-Snn1 interaction*: *Tox1* was first characterized as a host selective effector produced in *P.*  
277 *nodorum* culture filtrates interacting with the wheat sensitivity locus *Snn1* on chromosome 1B  
278 (Liu et al. 2004). *Tox1* encodes a cysteine rich protein with 117 amino acids which is light  
279 dependent and critical for fungal penetration (Liu et al. 2012) and serves a dual function:  
280 binding host chitinases to protect fungal infection and causing host tissue death to promote  
281 infection (Liu et al. 2016). The *Tox1-Snn1* interaction was found to contribute up to 58 % and  
282 19 % of SNB at juvenile and mature plant stages, respectively (Liu et al. 2004; Phan et al.  
283 2016). The recent map-based cloning of *Snn1* found it to encode a galacturonic acid binding  
284 (GUB) wall associated kinase (WAK), and to possess calcium binding epidermal growth factor  
285 (EGF CA) and serine/threonine kinase (S/TPK) domains (Shi et al. 2016). WAK proteins are  
286 known to be members of pattern recognition receptors (PRRs) which directly interact with  
287 pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs), such as oligogalacturonides (OGs), which  
288 trigger programmed cell death and are involved in plant defence mechanisms against biotrophic  
289 pathogens (Brutus et al. 2010).

290

291 SnTox3-*Snn3-B1* interaction: The *P. nodorum* effector SnTox3 was first identified by Friesen  
292 et al. (2008), and the protein sequence later characterised as a 25.8 kDa immature protein, with  
293 the first 20 residues of the 230 aa chain forming a signal peptide for secretion (Liu et al. 2009).  
294 Tox3 has six cysteine residues that form disulphide bonds, at least one of these bonds is  
295 essential for biological function. Recent work has shown that an avirulent *P. nodorum* strain  
296 could become virulent with just the addition of the 693 bp intron-free *Tox3* (Liu et al. 2009;  
297 Waters et al. 2011). Discovery of SnTox3 led to the identification of the corresponding wheat  
298 sensitivity locus, *Snn3* (more recently termed *Snn3-B1*), on the short arm of chromosome 5B.  
299 This interaction has been shown to explain 24 % of the phenotypic variation in field SNB  
300 resistance/susceptibility, and more than 51 % of the variation in seedling inoculation (Ruud et  
301 al. 2017). Culture filtrate containing SnTox3 was first produced using a wild-type *P. nodorum*  
302 isolate, SN15, and host sensitivity was genetically mapped using the BR34 x Grandin wheat  
303 population (Friesen et al. 2008) and later confirmed in subsequent studies (e.g. Downie et al.  
304 2018; Phan et al. 2016; Shi et al. 2016; Lin et al. 2020b). While a *Snn3-B1* homoeologue was  
305 found on chromosome 5D in the diploid wild wheat relative *Aegilops tauschii* (*Snn3-D1*)  
306 (Zhang et al. 2011), a corresponding locus on the D sub-genome of hexaploid wheat has not  
307 been reported. As was the case for ToxA, yeast-two-hybrid studies have shown that the Tox3  
308 protein interacts with PR-1 proteins (Breen et al. 2016)

309

310 ***P. nodorum* effectors hijack pathways involved in biotrophic pathogen host defence**  
311 ***signalling***

312 Given *Tsn1* and *Snn1* both encode classes of proteins that are well known to control disease  
313 resistance in biotrophic pathogens, it is hypothesised that *P. nodorum* has evolved to hijack  
314 existing pathways in order to become a susceptibility pathway for necrotrophs (Faris et al.  
315 2010; Shi et al. 2016; Faris & Friesen, 2020). Specifically, it is thought that host recognition

316 of SnTox1 activates pathogen-associated molecular pattern (PAMP)-triggered immunity (PTI)  
 317 and that ToxA/PtrToxA recognition activates effector-triggered immunity (ETI). The finding  
 318 that Tox1 does not enter the plant cell (Liu et al. 2016) indicates that its recognition is mediated  
 319 via host membrane-bound proteins. This fits both with the prediction that *Snn1* spans the host  
 320 cell membrane and contains extracellular binding domains (Liu et al. 2016; Shi et al. 2016),  
 321 and with the interaction of *Snn1* with Tox1 *in vitro* (Shi et al. 2016). As noted by Shi et al.  
 322 (2016), while the expression patterns of PTI and ETI pathways overlap, the expression patterns  
 323 of certain classes of genes commonly differ. Activation of mitogen-activated protein kinase  
 324 (*MAPK*) genes have been shown to be transient in PTI responses, whilst their expression is  
 325 more prolonged during ETI (Tsuda & Katagiri, 2010). Notably, the rapid and transient  
 326 upregulation of *TaMAPK3* in a compatible *Snn1*-Tox1 interaction within 15 minutes of Tox1  
 327 infiltration further implicates the PTI pathway (Shi et al. 2016). Finally, it has been noted that  
 328 wheat varieties carrying both *Tsn1* and *Snn1* have higher levels of necrosis than varieties  
 329 carrying either *Tsn1* or *Snn1* alone, indicating that simultaneous hijacking of both the PTI and  
 330 ETI pathways for necrotrophic effector (NE) triggered susceptibility enhances pathogen  
 331 survival and reproduction (Chu et al. 2010; Shi et al. 2016).

332

### 333 ***Epistatic interactions between P. nodorum effectors and between host sensitivity loci***

334 The NE-*Snn* model supports additive contributions to disease from each compatible interaction  
 335 (Friesen et al. 2007; Tan et al. 2012). However, epistatic interactions are also evident. For  
 336 example, SnTox5-*Snn5* and SnTox6-*Snn6* are epistatic to *Snn3-B1* (et al Friesen. 2012; Gao et  
 337 al. 2015). Similarly, Friesen et al. (2008) showed that the SnToxA-*Tsn1* interaction is epistatic  
 338 to SnTox3-*Snn3-B1*, and that the SnTox3-*Snn3-B1* interaction is only evident in the absence  
 339 of a compatible SnTox2-*Snn2* interaction (Friesen et al. 2008). The epistatic effects on SnTox3-  
 340 *Snn3-B1* were further explored in subsequent work using a series of effector gene deletion

341 mutants generated in the *P. nodorum* strain SN15. While the *SnTox1-Snn1* interaction  
342 dominated seedling sensitivity using the wild-type SN15 strain, deletion of the *SnTox1* gene in  
343 SN15 led to an increase in *SnTox3* expression in the pathogen and the identification of *Snn3-*  
344 *BI* as contributing to host sensitivity at the seedling stage (Phan et al. 2016). Furthermore, a  
345 modified strain of SN15 in which *SnToxA*, *SnTox1* and *SnTox3* were deleted unmasked a  
346 sensitivity QTL in the region of the *Snn2* locus which was not identified using the wild-type or  
347 *SnTox1* mutant strain, indicating that *SnToxA* and/or *SnTox3* could be epistatic to *Snn2* (Phan  
348 et al. 2016). Unlike *ToxA*, it was found that *Tox3* interacts with a broad range of PR-1 proteins  
349 and it has been hypothesised that interactions with TaPR-1 proteins facilitate host infection  
350 (Breen et al. 2016). As more effectors and host sensitivity loci are cloned and their allelic  
351 diversity characterised, it is likely that the identification of new alleles at these loci will further  
352 increase the complexity of the NE-*Snn* network. Thus, the epistatic and allelic interactions  
353 occurring between effectors in the pathogen, and between sensitivity loci in the host, take what  
354 are largely relatively simple gene-for-gene interactions to create a more complex set of possible  
355 interactions. As the effect of a NE-host receptor interaction can vary depending on the presence  
356 or absence of other effectors and receptors present at the time of infection makes this disease  
357 typically quantitative and difficult to predict.

358

### 359 **Genetics of wheat sensitivity to *P. nodorum* at the juvenile and adult plant stages**

360 In order to characterise the *P. nodorum*-wheat pathosystem and use this information to improve  
361 SNB resistance, knowledge of host resistance to target pathogens at the juvenile and adult  
362 stages are commonly investigated. Resistance to SNB at both of these plant stages is polygenic  
363 and large genotype-by-environment interactions are observed (Fried & Meister, 1987; Wicki  
364 et al. 1999). Correlation between seedling and adult plant resistance is generally reported to be  
365 low (e.g. Francki 2013; Fried & Meister, 1987; Rosielle & Brown, 1980; Ruud & Lillemo

2018; Shankar et al. 2008; Tommasini et al. 2007). This has been suggested to be due to the use of different isolates in greenhouse seedling testing compared to those used in adult plant field trials (Ruud & Lillemo 2018; Ruud et al. 2017). Additionally, as the natural *P. nodorum* population is usually genetically diverse, it is difficult to identify representative isolates for greenhouse assays, and field testing can be affected by cross-infection with the natural *P. nodorum* population. Such complications mean that even where the same isolate mixtures are used for greenhouse and field trials, correlation between seedling and flag leaf disease scores can be low (0.31) or even not significant between seedling and glume blotch severity (Shankar et al. 2008). Despite this, there are examples of relatively high correlations when the same isolate is used for both seedling and field testing (Jönsson, 1985). Genetic mapping of seedling SNB resistance has identified genetic loci on all 21 wheat chromosomes except for chromosomes 1D and 3D (Abeysekara et al. 2009; Adhikari et al. 2011; Arseniuk et al. 2004; Czembor et al. 2003; Friesen et al. 2006, 2007, 2012; Gao et al. 2015; Gonzalez-Hernandez et al. 2009; Gurung et al. 2014; Hu et al. 2019; Jighly et al. 2016; Lin et al. 2020b; Liu et al. 2004, 2015; Phan et al. 2016; Ruud et al. 2017, 2019; Rybak et al. 2017). Similarly, numerous adult plant QTLs have been identified: across 16 chromosomes for leaf blotch (1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 2D, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 6A, 6B, 7A, 7B and 7D (Aguilar et al., 2005; Czembor et al. 2019; Francki et al. 2011, 2018, 2020; Friesen et al. 2009; Lin et al. 2020b, 2020c; Lu & Lillemo, 2014; Phan et al. 2016; Ruud et al. 2017, 2019; Shankar et al. 2008), and 12 chromosomes for glume blotch (2A, 2B, 2D, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5D, 6A, 6B and 7D (Aguilar et al. 2005; Czembor et al. 2019; Francki et al. 2018; Jighly et al. 2016; Lin et al. 2020b; Schnurbusch et al. 2003, Shankar et al. 2008; Shatalina et al. 2014; Tommasini et al. 2007; Uphaus et al. 2007). All QTLs are listed in Supplementary Table 1.

389

390 While it has been clear from the outset that NE-*Snn* interactions are relevant to seedling  
391 resistance, discussion of their importance on SNB resistance in the field is ongoing (Francki,  
392 2013). However, there is now mounting evidence that at least some NE-*Snn* interactions also  
393 contribute to susceptibility to SNB in the field. Friesen et al. (2009) used an isolate producing  
394 both ToxA and Tox2 for spray inoculation in the field on a mapping population segregating for  
395 *Tsn1*, *Snn2* and *Snn3-B1*, finding *Tsn1* and *Snn2* to explain 18 % and 15 % of the phenotypic  
396 variation for SNB resistance, respectively. Significant correlation between ToxA sensitivity  
397 and SNB disease severity have been observed in an association mapping panel under  
398 Norwegian field conditions (Ruud et al. 2019). Another study applied artificial inoculation of  
399 an isolate producing all three known NEs, showing *Snn1* explained 19 % of the phenotypic  
400 variation for adult plant disease severity (Phan et al. 2016). Similarly, studies in Norway have  
401 found *Snn3-B1* to affect field SNB disease susceptibility using a bi-parental population (Ruud  
402 et al. 2017).

403

404 Further cross-comparison of juvenile plant and adult plant sensitivity with major and minor  
405 effector and culture filtrate sensitivity loci have historically been problematic due to factors  
406 such as the relatively large genetic intervals identified and the use of different genetic mapping  
407 populations and genetic marker systems. Genetic mapping of response to *P. nodorum* infection  
408 has mainly relied on different bi-parental wheat populations. However, more recently  
409 association mapping (Cockram et al. 2015; Downie et al. 2018; Ruud et al. 2019; Tommasini  
410 et al. 2007) and multi-founder (e.g. Lin et al. 2020b, 2020c) populations have also been used.  
411 While each type of population comes with its own advantages and disadvantages (reviewed by  
412 Cockram & Mackay, 2018), one benefit of association mapping and multi-founder populations  
413 is that allelic variation at the genomic locations controlling the target traits are more likely to  
414 be sampled than might be the case in bi-parental populations, and the effects of these alleles

415 are assessed in a wider range of genetic backgrounds. This allows straightforward cross-  
416 comparison of QTLs for numerous related traits within a single genetic mapping population.  
417 Furthermore, the availability of high-density genotyping platforms and a wheat reference  
418 genome assembly (IWGSC, 2018) means that cross-comparison of previously published SNB  
419 QTLs identified using different genetic mapping populations is much more straightforward to  
420 do. Here, we have used these resources to anchor previously published QTLs controlling host  
421 response to *P. nodorum* infection, as well as infiltration using culture filtrates and necrotrophic  
422 effectors, to the wheat physical map (Figure 3; Supplementary Table 1). The results help  
423 highlight several interesting observations. For example, recent studies using multiparent  
424 advanced generation inter-cross (MAGIC) populations constructed using wheat varieties  
425 grown in UK (Mackay et al. 2014) and German (Stadlmeier et al. 2018) agronomic  
426 environments have allowed genetic control of resistance to *P. nodorum*, as well as sensitivity  
427 to known effectors, to be assessed in experimental populations that capture relatively high  
428 amounts of genetic variation (Lin et al. 2020b, 2020c). Field testing of SNB resistance  
429 identified robust co-localising QTLs on the long arm of chromosome 2A controlling leaf blotch  
430 in the UK MAGIC (*QSnb.niab-2A.3*; Lin et al. 2020b) and German MAGIC (*QSnb.nmbu-2A.1*;  
431 Lin et al. 2020c) populations, as well as culture filtrate sensitivity QTL that co-locate to the  
432 same locus in the UK MAGIC population (Lin et al. 2020b). This chromosome 2A QTL is  
433 located within the confidence interval for the seedling resistance QTL *QSnb.fcu-2A*  
434 (Abeysekara et al. 2009) and the SNB resistance QTL *Qsnb.cur-2AS.1* (Phan et al. 2016).  
435 However, whether these QTL represent the same underlying locus is not currently known, and  
436 the *Qsnb.cur-2AS.1* physical interval is notably large. Nevertheless, collectively these results  
437 suggest that an as-yet uncharacterised necrotrophic effector present in *P. nodorum* culture  
438 filtrate used by Lin et al. (2020b) interacts with the *QSnb.niab-2A.3* locus and is implicated in  
439 the control of SNB resistance in adult plants. While Lin et al. (2020b) also found a QTL

440 controlling glume blotch to colocalise to the same genetic locus on chromosome 2A, the allelic  
441 effects at the QTL were predicted to be opposite to those for glume blotch, suggesting that a  
442 different mechanism may be involved. This supports previous reports that resistance to leaf  
443 blotch and glume blotch are thought to predominantly be controlled by different genetic  
444 mechanisms (Aguilar et al. 2005; Chu et al. 2010; Francki et al. 2018; Schnurbusch et al. 2003;  
445 Shankar et al. 2008).

446

447 Analysis of additional culture filtrate sensitivity QTL and minor-effect effector sensitivity QTL  
448 finds several to co-locate with genetic loci controlling adult plant SNB resistance (Figure 3,  
449 Supplementary Table 1), further supporting the presence of additional effector sensitivity loci  
450 relevant to field resistance. For example, *QTox3.niab-2A.1* controlling Tox3 sensitivity  
451 (Downie et al. 2018) co-locates with a QTL for adult plant leaf blotch (*QSnb.niab-2A.4*, also  
452 controlling seeding resistance, Lin et al. 2020b), all in the same eight-founder MAGIC  
453 population. Additionally, SNB resistance QTL *QSnb.niab-3A* and *QSnb.niab-6A.2* identified  
454 in the MAGIC population collocated with a culture filtrate sensitivity QTL (Lin et al. 2020b)  
455 and the previously reported effector sensitivity locus *Snn6* (Gao et al. 2015; Arseniuk et al.  
456 2004), respectively. The co-location of culture filtrate/effector sensitivity loci with SNB QTL  
457 indicates that natural variation at genetic loci controlling additional components of effector  
458 sensitivity pathways may play a role in modulating adult plant resistance phenotype. Whether  
459 there are additional NE-*Snn* interactions playing roles in adult plant susceptibilities is still yet  
460 to be determined.

461

#### 462 **Common QTL between SNB and tan spot diseases of wheat**

463 Increasing numbers of publications on QTL mapping of both SNB and tan spot has revealed a  
464 number of common QTL between the two diseases. That *Tsn1* confers sensitivity to both ToxA

465 and PtrToxA is a well-known example (Friesen et al. 2006), although investigation of  
466 resistance to *P. tritici-repentis* and *P. nodorum* using a bi-parental tetraploid wheat (*T. durum*)  
467 population indicated while the *Tsn1*-ToxA interaction was important for *P. nodorum* infection,  
468 it did not play a significant role in *P. tritici-repentis* interaction in the tetraploid wheat *T. durum*  
469 system, and that this was likely due to low *PtrToxA* expression in *P. tritici-repentis* (Viridi et  
470 al. 2016).

471

472 *P. nodorum* resistance/sensitivity QTL *Qsnb.cur-2AS.1* (Phan et al. 2016) which was detected  
473 at the seedling and adult plant stage has also been found to be a major contributor to tan spot  
474 resistance in seedlings and mature plants (Manisha et al. 2017; Phan et al. 2016). A QTL  
475 identified on the long arm of chromosome 5A is another instance of shared common genomic  
476 regions significantly associated with both diseases (Hu et al. 2019). This phenomenon may  
477 indicate that the two diseases possibly share common susceptibility/resistance mechanisms. It  
478 would be interesting to find out if they have more effectors in common. The mutual interactions  
479 could be promising targets for wheat breeders, as they could introduce resistance to both  
480 diseases - especially for those QTL with relatively large effect and at both the seedling and  
481 adult plant stages.

482

### 483 **Roles of new technology-based and breeding approaches in delivering genetic gains in** 484 **SNB resistance**

485 Advances in the understanding of SNB resistance have been applied in breeding programmes  
486 since 2005. For example, sequencing the *P. nodorum* genome revealed the presence of *ToxA*  
487 and that it was the source of the related gene previously identified in *P. tritici-repentis*. It was  
488 a simple matter to express the gene in microbial hosts, infiltrate the protein into wheat seedling  
489 leaves and determine whether plants were sensitive or not. An important factor was that these

490 assays could be carried out with equipment as simple as a refrigerator and a needleless syringe;  
491 even a greenhouse was not essential. As such, crop breeders found this assay practical and  
492 accurate. Armed with expressed ToxA since 2005, Tox3 since 2011 and Tox1 since 2012,  
493 researchers and breeders could determine the relationship between effector sensitivity and  
494 cultivar susceptibility. For *P. tritici-repentis* in Australia, a very simple picture emerged; all  
495 isolates of the pathogen carried *PtrToxA*, and sensitivity to this effector in wheat was strongly  
496 correlated with tan spot disease susceptibility. Large numbers of ToxA doses were distributed  
497 to breeders over the next few years and the use of ToxA sensitive wheat grown was reduced  
498 by half in three years. Considering these changes in more detail in more recent periods, the  
499 total area sown to *tsn1* wheat varieties in Western Australia increased from 69.9% in 2009–  
500 2010 to well over 85% in 2018 (Oliver et al. 2014; Western Australia Crop Growing Guide  
501 2020; <https://www.cbh.com.au/en/customers>) and no detectable yield penalty is associated  
502 with insensitivity to ToxA (Oliver et al. 2014; Vleeshouwers & Oliver, 2014). The application  
503 of “effector-assisted breeding” to SNB was more complicated. In Australia, effectively all *P.*  
504 *nodorum* isolates carried all three effectors, but the relationship between effector insensitivity  
505 and cultivar resistance was not as clear cut. As noted above, epistasis between NE genes was  
506 apparent. Nonetheless the elimination of effector sensitivity genes has never been shown to  
507 decrease SNB resistance or to have any other deleterious effect. It either has no effect or a  
508 positive effect on resistance. Analysis of the *ToxA* sequence in a diverse *P. nodorum* isolate  
509 collection indicates that the gene is positively selected (Stuckenbrock & McDonald, 2007). It  
510 is likely that *ToxA* will continually evolve into forms that are more potent in host cell death  
511 induction unless *Tsn1* is bred out from widely planted wheat germplasms (Tan et al. 2012). In  
512 the case of Tox1 sensitivity, while the gene underlying the sensitivity locus *Snn1* has been  
513 cloned, the natural genetic variants determining insensitivity have not been formally identified.  
514 For Tox3 sensitivity, while highly significant markers closely linked to *Snn3-B1* have been

515 identified in experimental mapping populations, the observation that these markers provide  
516 surprisingly low prediction of Tox3 sensitivity in screens of wider germplasm collections (eg  
517 Downie et al. 2018) indicates that multiple sensitivity alleles may be present. Similarly, while  
518 the *WAK* gene underlying the Tox1 sensitivity locus *Tsn1* has been cloned using a bi-parental  
519 population, the natural variant(s) controlling insensitivity have not yet been determined, and so  
520 screening with the Tox1 protein remains likely the most pragmatic approach for robustly  
521 determining sensitivity, at least until the causative variant(s) controlling insensitivity are  
522 identified.

523

524 In the coming years, the use of other emerging technologies will help speed up the identification  
525 and functional characterisation of SNB/effector resistance genes and provide efficient routes  
526 to use these in breeding programmes. Here we briefly summarise a subset of these resources  
527 and approaches, ending with an example of how a combination of these could be applied to  
528 future SNB resistance research and breeding.

529

530 Access to the wheat gene space within a target genetic interval is a key resource to help identify  
531 causative genes and variants. While a wheat reference genome is now available (IWGSC,  
532 2018), it has been constructed using an Asian landrace called ‘Chinese Spring’, genetically  
533 distant to the wheat grown in most of the world. This may be particularly relevant to effector  
534 sensitivity, as of the two cloned effector sensitivity loci in wheat, allelic variation at the *Tsn1*  
535 locus conferring ToxA sensitivity is due to the presence or absence of the underlying gene  
536 (Faris et al. 2010). As ‘Chinese Spring’ is insensitive to ToxA, the wheat reference genome  
537 assembly lacks the *Tsn1* gene. To help address such issues, the construction of genome  
538 assemblies for several additional bread wheat varieties are underway. This includes 14 cultivars  
539 via the 10+ Wheat Genomes Project ([www.10wheatgenomes.com](http://www.10wheatgenomes.com)) and the founders of the UK

540 MAGIC population (<https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=BB%2FP010741%2F1>). To help  
541 annotate the genes in any new wheat assembly, and to provide information on where and when  
542 a gene within your genomic region of interest is expressed, high-throughput RNA sequencing  
543 using next-generation sequencing platforms can be undertaken. This can be done using  
544 relatively short read technologies (e.g. RNA-seq using Illumina platforms), or long-read  
545 technologies to sequence full-length transcripts (e.g. Isoform Sequencing using PacBio  
546 platforms or Nanopore technology). By combining genomic and RNA sequence datasets,  
547 candidate genes and polymorphisms within a target genomic region can be identified.  
548 Candidate genes can then be explored using reverse genetic approaches. Currently, a TILLING  
549 (Targeting Local Lesions in Genomes) population with an associated exome capture-based  
550 genomic sequence databased is available for the wheat variety ‘Cadenza’ (Krasileva et al.  
551 2017), allowing lines with putative deleterious mutations to be identified *in silico* and ordered.  
552 Alternatively, transgenic approaches such as RNA interference (RNAi), CRISPR/Cas9 gene  
553 editing and virus-induced gene silencing (VIGS) are all now used in wheat (e.g. Travella et al.  
554 2006; Shan et al. 2013; Scofield et al. 2005). For further reading on the routes for wheat gene  
555 functional annotation, see the recent review by Adamski et al. (2020).

556

557 Next, we outline a case study for SNB improvement based on the environmentally stable adult  
558 plant resistance QTL *QSnb.niab-2A.3* identified in the UK MAGIC population by Lin et al.  
559 (2020b). First, to rapidly generate suitable germplasm to further the investigation of this locus,  
560 the residual genetic variation present in MAGIC RILs could be exploited to generate a pair of  
561 nearly isogenic lines (NILs) for a given QTL in a single generation (as described in more detail  
562 by Scott et al. 2020). This NIL pair could be inter-crossed to generate F<sub>1</sub> seed, and the F<sub>1</sub>s  
563 selfed to produce large numbers of F<sub>2</sub> seed. As the culture filtrate from *P. nodorum* isolate  
564 203649 was found to identify a QTL at the *QSnb.niab-2A.3* locus, F<sub>2</sub> individuals could be

565 screened for genetic recombination within the target interval, and their F<sub>3</sub> progeny phenotyped  
566 at the seedling stage for sensitivity to culture filtrate. This subset of recombinant lines, and  
567 their progenies, would be used to further refine the genetic interval. Once sufficient genetic  
568 mapping resolution is obtained, the gene content in the interval could be determined by  
569 projecting the genomic sequence and gene annotations of the relevant MAGIC founders onto  
570 the interval, and RNA-seq and IsoSeq gene expression data from leaf tissues harvested from  
571 the NIL germplasm pre- and post- culture filtrate infiltration overlaid. Collectively, these  
572 datasets would allow candidate genes within the genetic interval to be identified and accurately  
573 annotated via bioinformatic analysis of the DNA variants, gene expression and splice variant  
574 data generated. Subsequently, VIGS could be used to transiently silence candidate genes at the  
575 seedling stage, and any effect on sensitivity to culture filtrate infiltration determined. Further  
576 functional validation of the candidates prioritised/validated by VIGS could then be assessed at  
577 the adult plant stage using stable gene silencing methods such as CRISPR/Cas9. Diagnostic  
578 markers for the natural causative polymorphisms underlying the functionally validated gene  
579 would be developed for marker assisted selection, preferably using genotyping systems  
580 commonly used by wheat breeding companies, such as Kompetitive Allele-Specific PCR  
581 (KASP) assays (LGC Biosearch Technologies).

582

583 It is important to mention that application of the marker-informed breeding methodology  
584 ‘genomic selection’ is now feasible in large genome crop species such as wheat (reviewed by  
585 Sun et al. 2019). Rather than relying on explicit identification of the QTL/genes underlying the  
586 target trait, genomic selection exploits the ability to cheaply generate high-density genetic  
587 marker datasets across the genome, and use this alongside phenotypic data generated in a  
588 ‘training set’ lines to use the markers to predict the performance of their progeny across  
589 multiple subsequent generations. This allows selection to be applied based on genetic marker

590 data and phenotypic data on the training set alone, without the need for field-based phenotypic  
591 selection in multiple subsequent rounds of population advancement. This potentially reduces  
592 breeding cycle time, increases selection accuracy and increases selection intensity. Genomic  
593 selection is likely to be a major source of improvement in plant breeding practice over the next  
594 decades, and the methodologies can also likely be modulated to incorporate additional datasets  
595 such as diagnostic markers in order to help improve prediction accuracy (Mackay et al. 2020).  
596 Numerous studies have followed on from the first report of genomic selection in wheat (De los  
597 Campos et al. 2009) and include studies of diseases such as yellow rust (Ornella et al. 2012),  
598 Fusarium head blight (Herter et al. 2019) and STB (Herter et al. 2019). Of these, the study  
599 conducted by Herter et al. (2019) using 1120 lines derived from 14 bi-parental families found  
600 that while genomic selection provided a selection advantage of ~10 % for fusarium head blight,  
601 no significant advantage was observed for STB resistance (Herter et al. 2019). This suggests  
602 that for phenotypes with strong genotype  $\times$  environment interaction, genomic selection appears  
603 to be challenging (Herter et al. 2019). Based on the published literature, genomic selection has  
604 not been explicitly applied to SNB improvement, indicating a possible as yet untested route for  
605 genetic improvement. We also noted that genome editing approaches such as CRISPR/Cas9  
606 would be well suited for host-pathogen interactions that follow the inverse gene-for-gene  
607 model, whereby host effector sensitivity loci could be edited to make them insensitive. In the  
608 future, we might see application of genomic selection methodology that combine targeted  
609 selection against NE sensitivity alleles and/or selection for gene edited NE insensitivity alleles  
610 along with the use of genome-wide markers to capture all small-effect loci in a cost-effective  
611 manner for plant breeding programs.

612

613 **General conclusions**

614 Ultimately, the most efficient control of SNB will involve a combined approach based on  
615 agricultural and agronomic practices, disease monitoring and genetic improvement. The  
616 widespread adoption of conservation agriculture including limited tillage methods means that  
617 SNB is likely to increase in prevalence in areas where ploughing has previously been the norm.  
618 Methods to improve the genetic resistance of cultivars will surely remain the most important  
619 method of control. So far, no full genetic resistance to SNB has been identified. It is becoming  
620 increasingly apparent that SNB is found not only in the presence of easily distinguished  
621 diseases like yellow rust and powdery mildew, but also with the symptomatically similar  
622 diseases such as STB, tan spot and possibly spot blotch as well. Selection for resistance to  
623 diseases occupies a substantial amount of time and resources available to breeders, particularly  
624 as yield and quality will always be prioritised. Furthermore, we know very little about how  
625 diseases interact. This is a particular area of fascination given that three of these pathogens  
626 share effectors.

627

628 Breeding for resistance to SNB has always been challenging because full evaluation of a new  
629 cultivar requires the use of adult plants under field conditions. Inoculation with a representative  
630 set of isolates adds to the difficulties. One clear recommendation to emerge from recent studies  
631 is to make large annual isolate collections especially from the current most resistant cultivar.  
632 These new isolates can be assessed phenotypically for new effectors and virulence  
633 characteristics as well as genotypically to track for selected chromosomal regions. Any new  
634 effectors can be expressed and assessed for their role in virulence. The main value of the isolate  
635 collections is that they allow the rational selection of the minimum set that represents the total  
636 phenotypic variance of the pathogen to which resistance should be sought. Finally, based on  
637 our current understanding of *P. nodorum* epidemiology and host resistance, we provide the  
638 following recommendations for SNB management:

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1. Establish annual *P. nodorum* isolate collections and disease outbreak monitoring programmes.
2. Use these contemporary *P. nodorum* isolates to test for cultivar resistance and assess for the presence of new effectors.
3. Where genetic structure is observed in a regional pathogen population, undertake rapid genotypic analysis to monitor the population.
4. Grow wheat cultivars with differing genetic background to avoid a build-up of a specialised pathogen population, especially in areas where minimum tillage practices are common.
5. Where local pathogen populations contain known effector genes, grow wheat varieties with insensitive alleles at the corresponding host loci.
6. Continue wheat research and development activities to identify and deploy additional sources of SNB genetic resistance.

657 **Acknowledgements**

658 JC, BC, MinL, AF and ML were funded within the framework of the 2<sup>nd</sup> call ERA-NET for  
659 Coordinating Plant Sciences via the 'EfectaWheat' project, funded by the Biotechnology and  
660 Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC, grant BB/N00518X/1) and The Research  
661 Council of Norway (grant NFR251894). RD was funded by a BBSRC Doctoral Training  
662 Partnership PhD studentship. KT and HP were supported by a joint initiative of Curtin  
663 University and the Grains Research and Development Corporation bilateral grant (CUR00023).  
664 Joint coordination and planning of project activities by JC and RO was aided by networking  
665 activities funded under the COST Action 'SUSTAIN'.

666

667 **Author contributions**

668 RD, MinL and JC wrote the manuscript. MinL and JC undertook bioinformatic analysis. All  
669 other authors edited the manuscript and contributed to scientific supervision and/or discussions.

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1139 **Supplementary Table legends**

1140

1141 **Supplementary Table 1.** Summary of QTLs for *P. nodorum* infection, culture filtrate  
1142 infiltration and effector sensitivity. QTLs, and relevant cloned genes from wheat, are anchored  
1143 to the reference wheat genome assembly (cultivar Chinese Spring, RefSeq v1.0. IWGSC,  
1144 2018). Anchoring was undertaken using marker DNA sequences as queries for BLASTn  
1145 searches of the wheat reference genome. Where BLASTn hits were identified on a non-target  
1146 homoeologous location, and the e-values for the homoeologues were comparable, physical  
1147 location is reported for the homoeologue on the chromosome identified by the relevant genetic  
1148 map. Genetic markers for which no associated DNA sequences could be found for BLASTn  
1149 analysis are highlighted in red.

1150 **Figure legends**

1151

1152 **Figure 1.** Septoria nodorum blotch (SNB) symptoms in bread wheat. (A) On leaves. (B) On the  
1153 spikelets of a wheat inflorescence (ear).

1154

1155 **Figure 2.** Illustration of the *Parastagonospora nodorum* infection cycle on wheat. Initial  
1156 infection of wheat seedlings is via *P. nodorum* ascospores present in infected stubble, or via  
1157 seeds infected with *P. nodorum* mycelium which produce pycnidiospores under wet or humid  
1158 conditions. Pycnidiospores produced as a result of this initial infection can then be spread via  
1159 rain splash or wind, causing secondary infection further up the wheat canopy as the crop  
1160 matures, and can result in infection of the wheat ears.

1161

1162 **Figure 3.** Projection of published QTLs for SNB leaf blotch (black), glume blotch (blue),  
1163 culture filtrate/effector infiltration sensitivity at the seedling stage (brown) and seedling *P.*  
1164 *nodorum* resistance (green) onto the wheat reference genome assembly (RefSeq v1.0; IWGSC,  
1165 2018). The locations of relevant cloned wheat genes are shown in red. QTL are named  
1166 according to their publication, and full details for all QTL are listed in Supplementary Table 1.



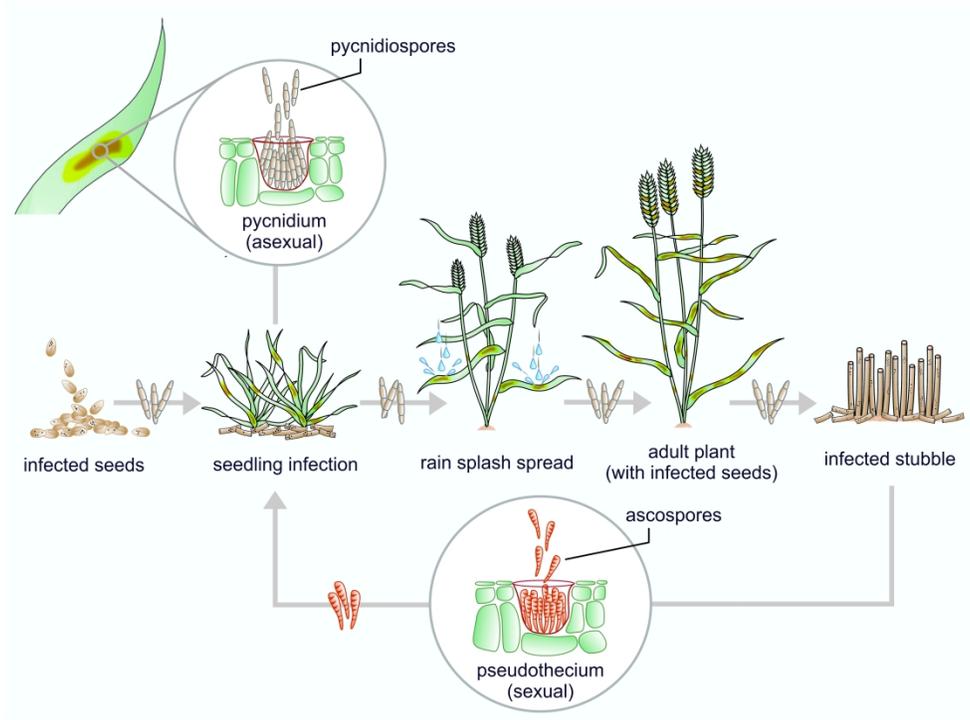
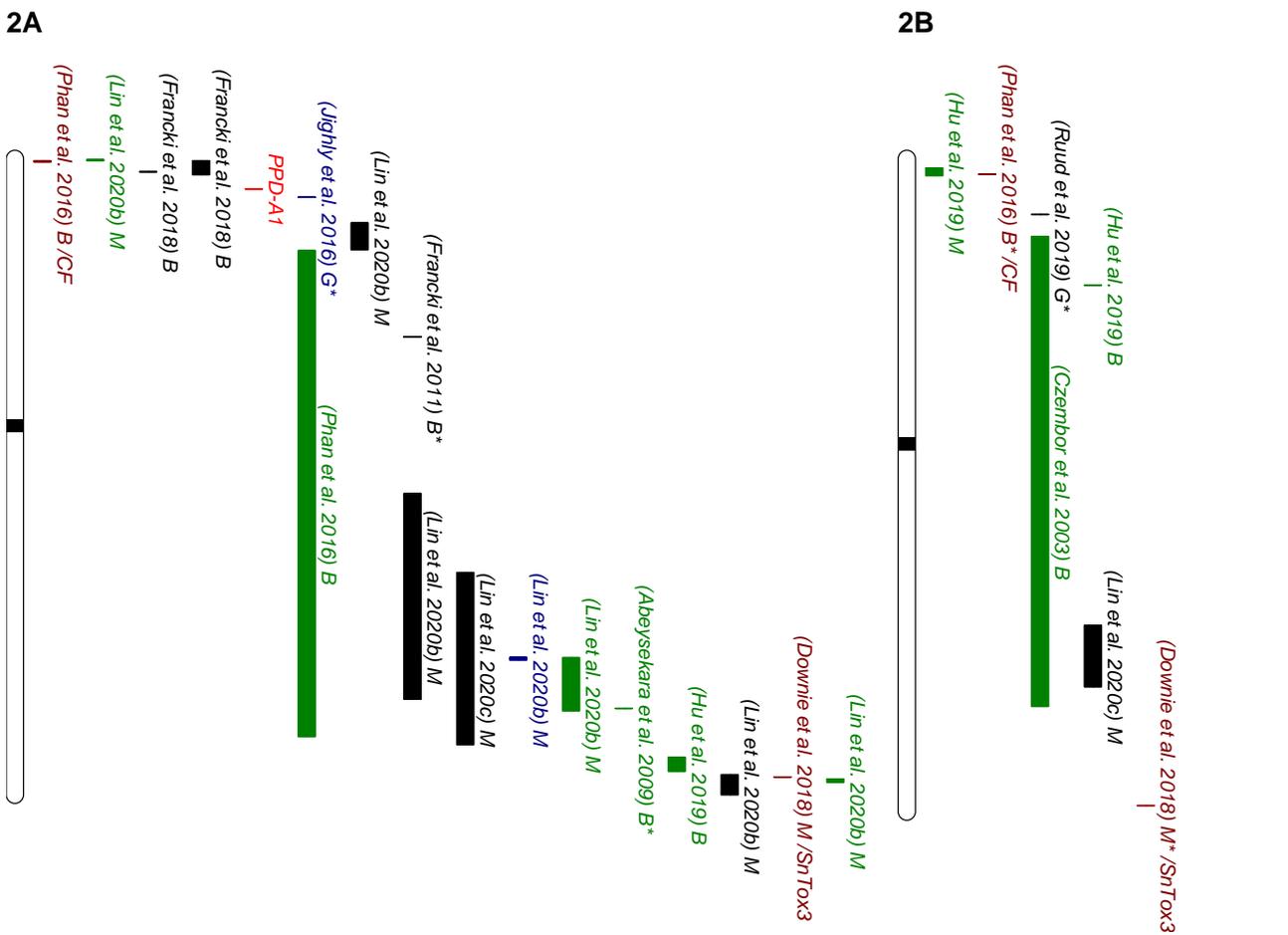
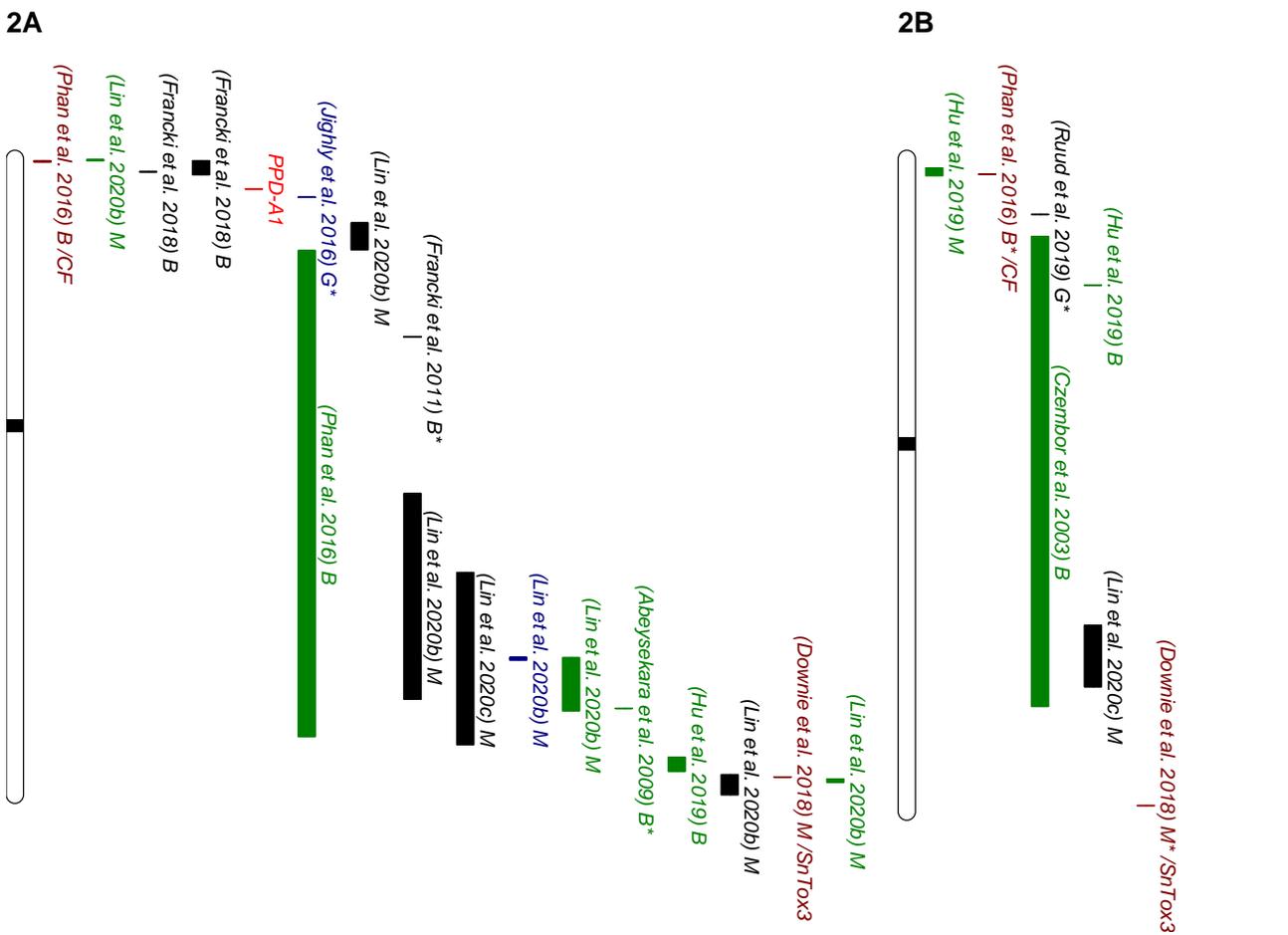
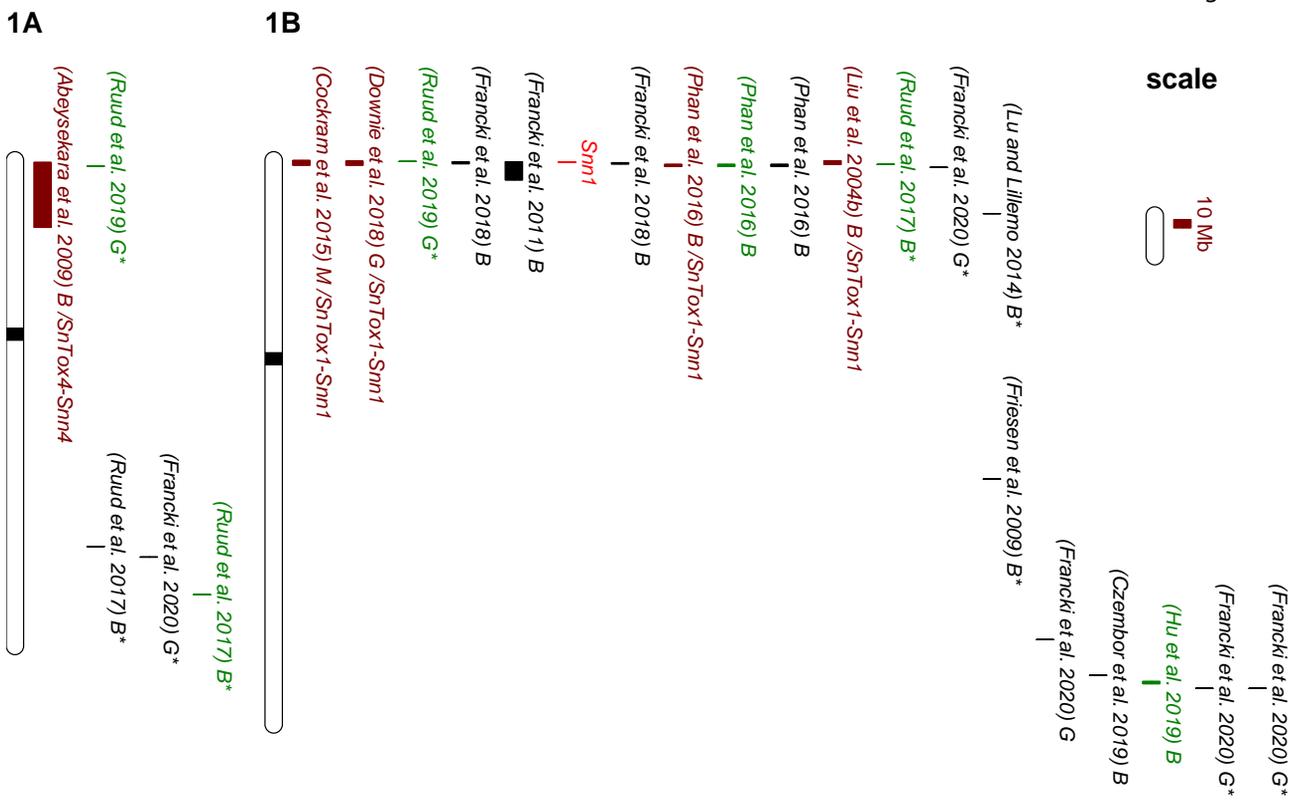
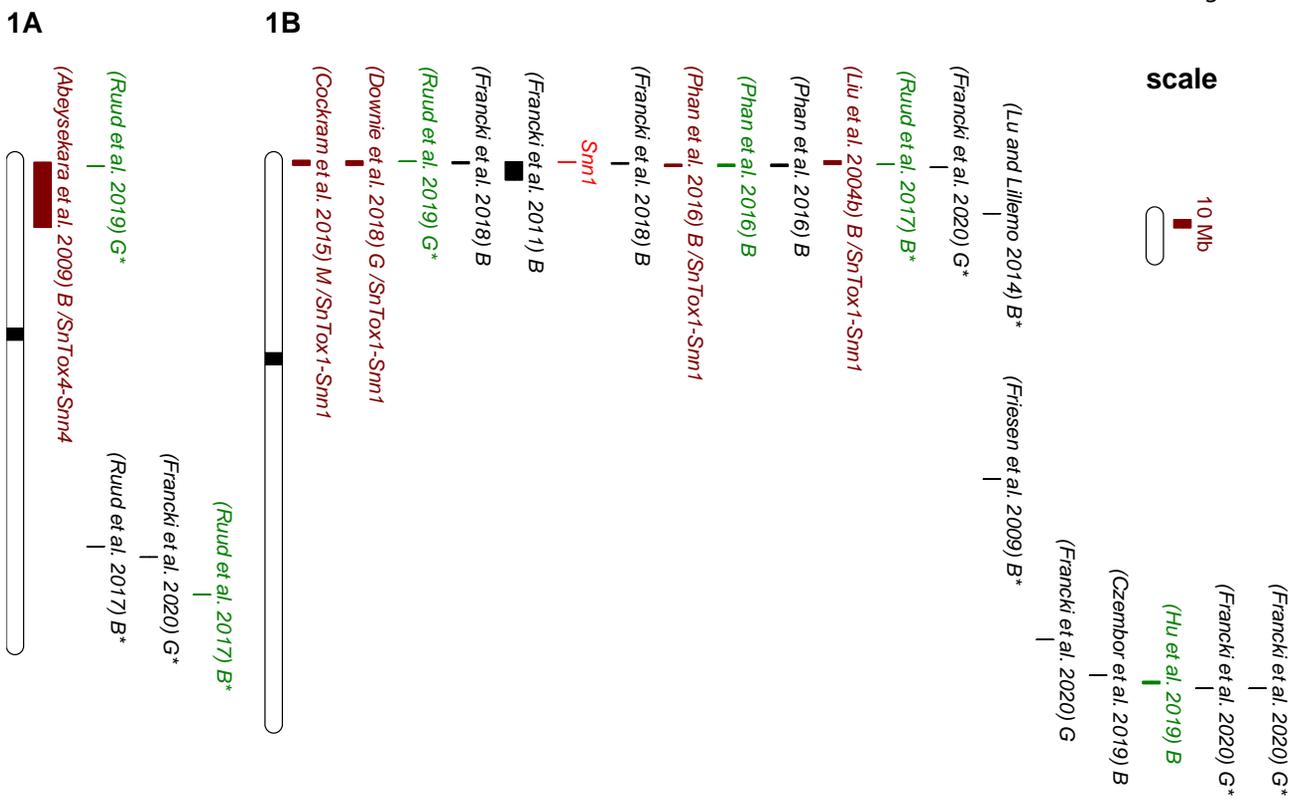


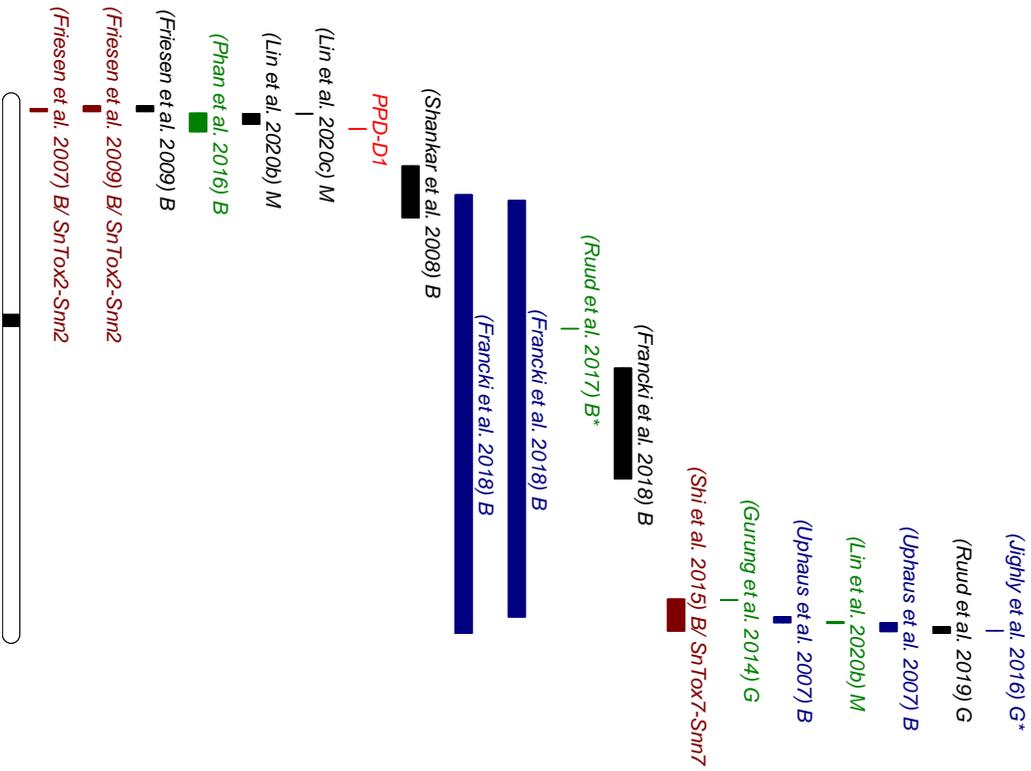
Figure 2. Illustration of the *Parastagonospora nodorum* infection cycle on wheat. Initial infection of wheat seedlings is via *P. nodorum* ascospores present in infected stubble, or via seeds infected with *P. nodorum* mycelium which produce pycnidiospores under wet or humid conditions. Pycnidiospores produced as a result of this initial infection can then be spread via rain splash or wind, causing secondary infection further up the wheat canopy as the crop matures, and can result in infection of the wheat ears.

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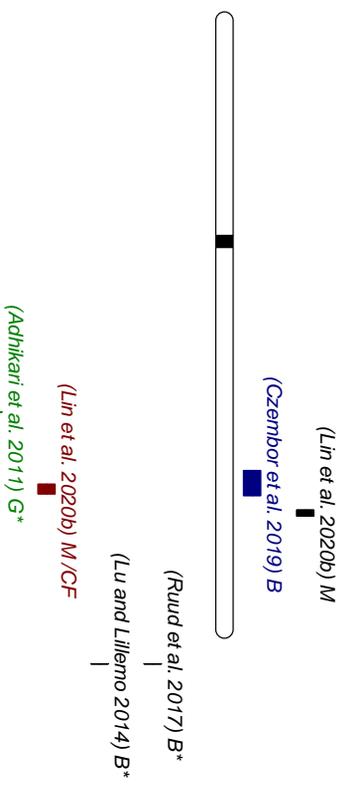
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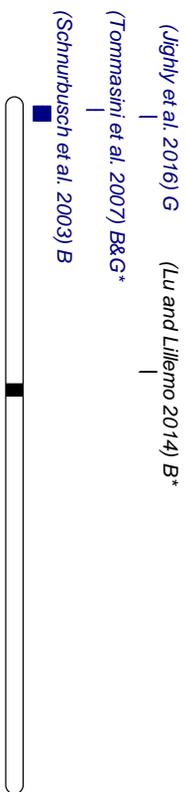
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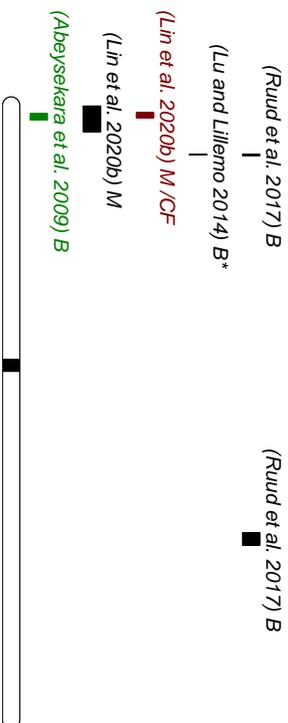
4A



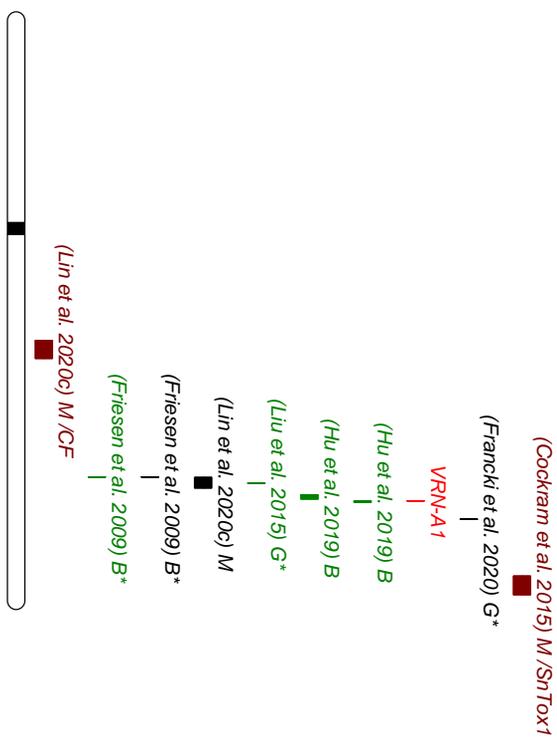
3B



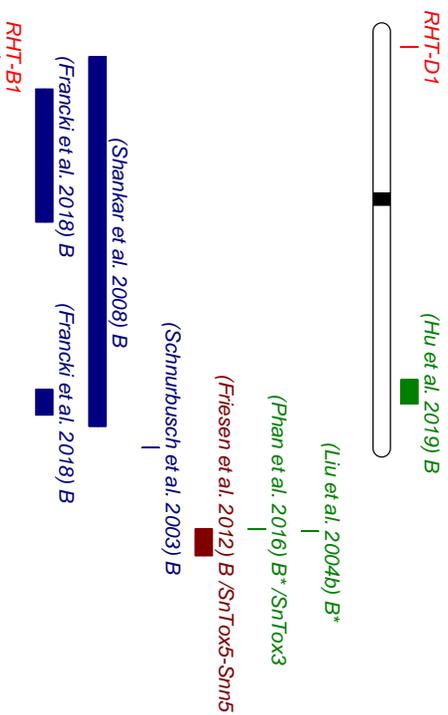
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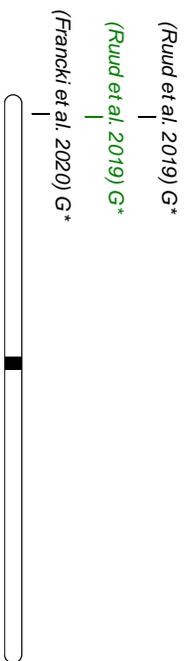
5A



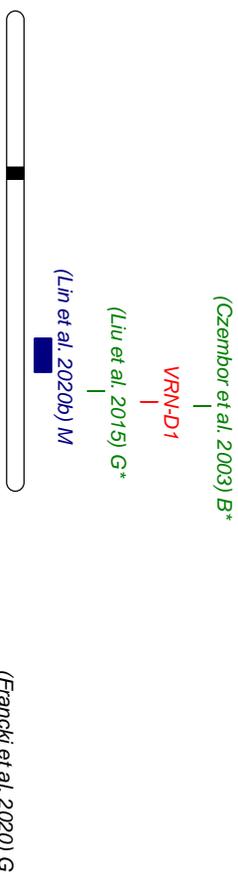
4D



4B



5D



(Gurung et al. 2014) G\*

Tsn1

(Francki et al. 2018) B

(Lin et al. 2020b) M/CF

(Lin et al. 2020b) M

(Liu et al. 2015) G\*/SnToxA-Tsn1

(Francki et al. 2020)

(Lu and Lillemo 2014) B\*

(Friesen et al. 2006) B/SnToxA-Tsn1

(Francki et al. 2018) B

(Lin et al. 2020b) M

(Lin et al. 2020b) M/SnToxA-Tsn1

(Hu et al. 2019) B\*

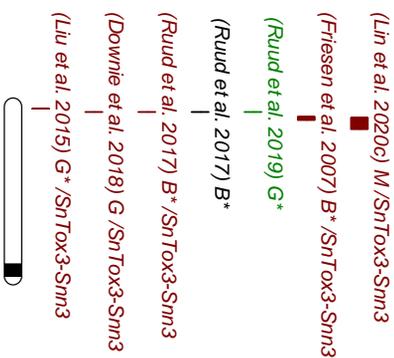
(Francki et al. 2020) G\*

(Lin et al. 2020c) M/CF

(Liu et al. 2015) G\*

(Czembor et al. 2003) B\*

5BS



5BL

