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Crystallization and Structure of a Plant Peptide Deformylase

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(12) United States Patent

Houtz et al.

(54) CRYSTALLIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF A PLANT PEPTIDE DEFORMYLASE

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- (52) U.S. Cl. 435/227; 436/4
- (58) Field of Classi?cation Search None See application file for complete search history.

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(57) ABSTRACT

This invention relates to the crystal structure of a plant peptide deformylase polypeptide and methods of using the structure to design compounds that modulate the activity of the polypeptide.

4 Claims, 15 Drawing Sheets

Figure 1B

100 000 KDDKVA SATDVQFETP LKIVEYPDPI LRAKNKRIDI FDENLKNLVD AMFDVMYKTD $\begin{array}{rrrrrr} & 130 & 140 & 150 & 160 & 170 & 180 \\ \hline \texttt{GIGLSAPQVG} & \texttt{LNVQLMVFNP} & \texttt{AGEPGEGKEI} & \texttt{VLVNPKIKKY} & \texttt{SDKLVPFDEG} & \texttt{CLSFFGIYAE} \end{array}$ VVRPOSVKID ARDITGERFS ISLSRLPART FOHEYDHLEG VLFFDRMTDO VLDSIREELE

ALEKKYEEKT GLPSPER

FIG. 6, PANEL A

Motif I

FIG. 6, PANEL B

Motif II

FIG. 6, PANEL C

U.S. Patent

FIG. 7, PANEL A

Sheet 10 of 15

FIG. 7, PANEL B

Motif II

U.S. Patent

FIG. 7, PANEL C

FIG. 8, PANEL A

U.S. Patent

FIG. 8, PANEL B

FIG. 8, PANEL C

Motif III

 $\overline{\mathbf{S}}$

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CRYSTALLIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF A PLANT PEPTIDE DEFORMYLASE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/835,823 filed Aug. 4, 2006, the disclosure of Which is incorporated herein by reference.

STATEMENTS REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH

The invention Was funded in part by Grant No. MCB MCB-0240165 awarded by the National Science Foundation $_{15}$ (NSF). The government may have certain rights in the inven tion.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates to the crystallization and structure of plant peptide deformylase and methods of using the structure. 20

BACKGROUND

Peptide deformylase (DEF; EC 3.5.1.88) is a metallopep- 25 tidase that catalyzes the removal of an N-formyl group from N-formyl methionine, Which is the initiating amino acid resi due for prokaryotically translated proteins. DEF is an essen tial enzyme and mutations, deletions, or insertions in the DEF gene, or inhibition of enzymatic activity, are lethal to prokary otic organisms. For decades DEF Was believed to be exclu sively restricted to prokaryotes because protein translation in eukaryotic organisms initiates With an unformylated methionine residue. The restriction to prokaryotic organisms and the essentiality of DEF have made this enzyme the 35 molecular target of many research efforts directed toWards the development of broad-spectrum antibiotics, Which Would have little or no mammalian toxicity. In 2000 the existence of DEF in the chloroplasts of higher plants Was reported, and it was also discovered that actinonin, a potent inhibitor of DEF, 40 Was phytotoxic to all plant species. The lethality of actinonin to a Wide range of plants, including many agriculturally sig nificant weed species, suggests that DEF is an essential and highly conserved enzyme in plants, and inhibitors targeting this enzyme could potentially serve as a new class of broad- ⁴⁵ spectrum herbicides as Well as selectable markers. 30

Accordingly, plant peptide deformylase (DEF) polypep tides provide an attractive target for crystallization and struc tural studies which can lead to the identification and synthesis of new broad-spectrum herbicides and selectable markers 50 with high specificity towards plant DEF.

SUMMARY

Provided herein are crystalline forms of a peptide deformy 55 lase, and atomic coordinates derived therefrom, useful for designing and identifying compounds that modulate the activity of the peptide deformylase. Accordingly, in one embodiment, a crystalline form of a polypeptide comprising the amino acid residues of SEQ ID NO:1, is provided. In some $\,$ 60 $\,$ aspects, the crystalline form includes a structure character ized by tetragonal space group symmetry $P_1^2_1^2_2$ and unit cell of dimensions a, b, and c. In some aspects, a is about 40 A to about 60 Å, b is about 40 Å to about 60 Å, and c is about 120 Å to about 160 Å. In other aspects, $\alpha = \beta \rightarrow \gamma = 90^{\circ}$. In some 65 aspects, the polypeptide is a peptide deformylase isolated from Arabidopsis thaliana.

In some embodiments, the crystalline form includes a coor dinated metal ion selected from the group of consisting of Fe, Zn, and Ni, and any combination thereof. In one aspect, the metal ion is coordinated by amino acid residues Cys171, His213, and His217 of SEQ ID NO:1.

In another embodiment, a crystalline form of a polypeptide including a structure defined by one or more structure coordinates of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase amino acid residues Gly121, Glyl23, Leul24, Gln128, Glul69, Gly170, Cys171, Leul72, His2l3, Glu214, His2l7, and Tyr178 according to Table 1, is provided. In general, struc tures derived from these crystalline forms encompass struc tures having coordinates that differ by a root mean square deviation of less than about 1.5 Å, 0.75 Å, or 0.35 Å, or any deviation in this range, When superimposed on the non-hy drogen atom positions of the corresponding atomic coordi nates of Table 1. In some aspects, amino acid residues Gly121, Gly123,Leu124,Gln128, Glul69, Gly170,Cys171, Leul72, His2l3, Glu2l4, His2l7, and Tyr178 include the active site of the peptide deformylase. In some aspects, the polypeptide includes an amino acid sequence having at least 75%, at least 85%, or at least 95%, or any percent in this range, amino acid sequence identity to SEQ ID NO:1.

In other embodiments, a crystalline form of a polypeptide provided herein also includes a ligand complexed With the polypeptide. In some aspects, the ligand is a small molecule.

In another embodiment, a crystalline form of a polypeptide that includes the amino acid residues of SEQ ID NO:1 and an atomic structure characterized by the coordinates of Table 1, is provided.

In yet another embodiment, a machine-readable medium embedded With information that corresponds to a three-di mensional structural representation of a crystalline form of a polypeptide as provided herein.

In one embodiment, a computer system including a data base containing information on the three dimensional struc ture of a crystalline form of an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide and a user interface to vieW the information, is provided. In some aspects, the computer sys tem includes information related to diffraction data obtained from a crystalline form comprising SEQ ID NO:1. In other aspects, the computer system of includes information related to an electron density map of a crystal comprising SEQ ID NO:1.

In another aspect, a computer system provided herein includes information related to the structure coordinates of Table 1 or homologous structure coordinates for the amino acid residues of SEQ ID NO:1 that have a root mean square deviation of non-hydrogen atoms of less than about 1.5 A, 0.75 A, 0.35 A, or any percent in this range, When superim posed on the non-hydrogen atom positions of the correspond ing atomic coordinates of Table 1.

In other aspects, a computer system provided herein includes information related to the structure coordinates for one or more amino acid residues Gly121, Glyl23, Leul24, Glnl28,Glul69,Gly170,Cys171,Leu172,His213,Glu214, His2l7, and Tyr178 according to Table 1, or similar structure coordinates for the amino acids including a root mean square deviation of non-hydrogen atoms of less than about 1.5 A, 0.75 A, 0.35 A, or any percent in this range, When superim posed on the non-hydrogen atom positions of the correspond ing atomic coordinates of Table 1.

In another embodiment, a method of identifying a candi date compound that binds to the active site of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide, is provided. The method includes comparing the atomic structure of the com pound With a three-dimensional structure of a crystalline

form of an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide and computationally identifying a candidate compound for an ability to bind to the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase. In some aspects, the candidate com pound binds to the active site of the Arabidopsis thaliana 5 peptide deformylase. In other aspects, comparing the atomic structure of the compound With a three-dimensional structure of a crystalline form of an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide includes employing a computa tional means to perform a fitting operation between the com- 10 pound and at least one binding site of the peptide deformy lase.

In some embodiments, the candidate compound identified by a computational method provided herein can be synthe sized and screened for the ability to bind a plant peptide 15 deformylase in vitro or in vivo. In some aspects, the com pound is an herbicide.

In another embodiment, a method of identifying a candi date compound that binds to the active site of Arabidopsis *thaliana* peptide deformylase polypeptide, is provided. The 20 method includes comparing the atomic structure of the com pound With a three-dimensional structural representation of a crystalline form provided herein and computationally identi fying a candidate compound for an ability to bind to the active site of *Arabidopsis thaliana* peptide deformylase.

In yet another embodiment, a method of computationally designing a candidate compound that binds to Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide, is provided. The method includes comparing the atomic structure of chemical entities, or fragments thereof, with a three-dimensional struc- 30 tural representation of a crystalline form of a polypeptide provided herein; identifying chemical entities capable of associating With the three-dimensional structural representa tion of a crystalline form of a polypeptide; and assembling the chemical entities, or fragments thereof, into a single molecule 35 dues from the D1 polypeptide docked into the active site of to provide the structure of the candidate compound. In some aspects, the candidate compound binds to the active site of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase.

In another embodiment, a method of identifying a region of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide that 40 contacts a compound, is provided. The method includes obtaining X-ray diffraction data for a crystal of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase; obtaining X-ray diffraction data for a complex of a Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase and the compound; subtracting the X-ray dif 45 fraction data from the peptide deformylase With the X-ray diffraction data obtained from the complex to obtain the dif ference in the X-ray diffraction data; obtaining phases that correspond to X-ray diffraction data obtained for the peptide deformylase; correlating the data to generate a difference 50 like elements. Fourier image of the compound; and locating the region of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase contacted by the compound. In some aspects, the compound is actinonin.

In another embodiment, a method of modifying an inhibi tor of *Arabidopsis thaliana* peptide deformylase activity, is 55 deformylase polypeptides and atomic coordinate information provided. The method includes obtaining a crystal including an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide and an inhibitor; obtaining the atomic coordinates of the crystal; correlating the atomic coordinate data With one or more molecular modeling techniques; identifying at least one 60 modification predicted to effect the interaction of the inhibitor With the polypeptide; and modifying the inhibitor based on the prediction. In one aspect, the modification is a computer generated modification. In other aspects, the modification is a physical modification made to the structure of the 65 inhibitor. In one aspect, the crystal comprises the amino acid residues of SEQ ID NO:1.

In other aspects, the one or more molecular modeling tech niques are selected from the group consisting of graphic molecular modeling and computational chemistry. In another aspect, obtaining the atomic coordinates of the crystal includes detecting the interaction of the inhibitor to one or more amino acid residues Gly121, Gly123, Leu124, Gln128, Glul69, Glyl70, Cys17l, Leu172, His2l3, Glu2l4, His2l7, and Tyrl78 of SEQ ID NO:l.

The details of one or more embodiments of the disclosure are set forth in the accompanying draWings and the descrip tion beloW. Other features, objects, and advantages Will be apparent from the description and draWings, and from the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A depicts a polyacrylamide gel showing that limited trypsinolysis creates a core protein that retained activity and remained soluble in the absence of high salt concentrations.

FIG. 1B depicts the amino acid sequence of the AtDEF peptide (SEQ ID NO: 1).

FIG. 2A depicts a ribbon representation of crystallized AtDEF2. The cylinders represent helices and the arrows represent sheets.

FIG. 2B depicts a slab vieW of the ribbon representation of trypsinolyzed AtDEF2 highlighting the active-site-metal binding ligands (l Cys and 2 His) from motifs II and III, respectively (EGCLS and QHEXXH) (SEQ ID NOS 15-16).

FIG. 3 depicts a graph of substrate specificity comparison of AtDEFl and AtDEF2.

FIG. 4 depicts a comparison of amino acid sequence con servation of the three motifs in AtDEFl and 2 and bacterial DEFs (SEQ ID NOS 2-5).

FIG. 5 depicts a molecular model of the N-terminal resi Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase.

FIG. 6 depicts a phylogenetic analyses comparing Motif l (SEQ ID NO: 6), Motif 2 (SEQ ID NO: 7) and Motif 3 (SEQ ID NO: 8) of plant AtDEFl peptide deformylase With the amino acid sequence of other peptide deformylase sequences.

FIG. 7 depicts a phylogenetic analyses comparing Motif l (SEQ ID NO: 9), Motif2 (SEQ ID NO: 10) and Motif3 (SEQ ID NO: 11) of plant AtDEF2 peptide deformylase With the amino acid sequence of other peptide deformylase sequences.

FIG. 8 depicts a phylogenetic analyses comparing Motif l (SEQ ID NO: 12), Motif 2 (SEQ ID NO: 13) and Motif 3 (SEQ ID NO: 14) of various peptide deformylase amino acid sequences.

Like reference symbols in the various drawings indicate

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Provided herein are novel crystalline forms of peptide related to such crystals. Also provided are methods of using such information to identify, design and/or modify com pounds that modulate the activity of a peptide deformylase. In addition, computer systems that include such information are provided. The crystal structures and information derived therefrom are suitable for designing and identifying, for example, broad spectrum herbicides. Such herbicides can be used, for example, to inhibit or prevent the growth of undesirable vegetation.

The crystal structure is based, at least in part, on the dis covery of a plant nuclear gene that encodes a chloroplast targeted peptide deformylase polypeptide. The gene has sub stantial homology to bacterial peptide deformylase. The deduced translation of this nucleic acid sequence reveals the presence of three conserved protein motifs associated With prokaryotic peptide deformylase (see e.g., FIGS. 6, 7, and 8). Nucleic acid and amino acid sequences for plant peptide 5 deformylases are disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,730,634, issued May 4, 2004, and US. Patent Application Publication No. 20040088755, the contents of Which are incorporated herein by reference.

It is to be understood that the crystalline form of a plant 10 peptide deformylase from Which the atomic structure coordi nates of the invention can be obtained is not limited to Wild type Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide, or a truncated form of the polypeptide (see e.g., SEQ ID NO: 1) as provided herein. Indeed, the crystals may comprise 15 mutants of wild-type Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 . Mutants can be obtained by replacing at least one amino acid residue in the sequence of the wild-type Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth 20 in SEQ ID NO:1 With a different amino acid residue, or by adding or deleting one or more amino acid residues Within the wild-type sequence and/or at the N- and/or C-terminus of the wild-type Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1. Prefer- 25 ably, such mutants Will crystallize under crystallization con ditions that are substantially similar to those used to crystal lize the wild-type Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1.

The types of mutants contemplated by this invention 30 include conservative mutants, non-conservative mutants, deletion mutants, truncated mutants, extended mutants, methionine mutants, selenomethionine mutants, cysteine mutants and selenocysteine mutants. A mutant may have, but need not have, *Arabidopsis thaliana* peptide deformylase 35 activity. Preferably, a mutant displays biological activity that is substantially similar to that of the Wild-type polypeptide or that of SEQ ID NO:1.

It Will be recognized by one of skill in the art that the types of mutants contemplated herein are not mutually exclusive; 40 that is, for example, a polypeptide having a conservative mutation in one amino acid may in addition have a truncation of residues at the N-terminus.

In addition, conservative or non-conservative amino acid substitutions can be made to amino acids of wild-type $Ara-$ 45 bidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 that are implicated in the active site of the polypeptide (e.g., amino acid residues Glyl2l, Glyl23, Leu124,Gln128,Glu169, Gly170,Cys171, Leu172, His213, Glu2l4, His217, and Tyr178 of SEQ ID 50 NO:1). Such conservative or non-conservative substitutions can affect, e.g., the affinity with which wild-type $Arabidopsis$ thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 binds to a substrate. In certain embodiments, the conservative or non-conservative amino 55 convenient to substitute, delete from and/or add amino acid acid substitutions can increase the affinity with which wildtype Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 binds to a substrate.

Conservative amino acid substitutions are Well-knoWn in 60 the art, and include substitutions made on the basis of a similarity in polarity, charge, solubility, hydrophobicity and/ or the hydrophilicity of the amino acid residues involved. Typical conservative substitutions are those in Which the amino acid is substituted With a different amino acid that is a 65 member of the same class or category, as those classes are defined herein. Thus, typical conservative substitutions

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include aromatic to aromatic, apolar to apolar, aliphatic to aliphatic, acidic to acidic, basic to basic, polar to polar, etc. Other conservative amino acid substitutions are Well knoWn in the art. It Will be recognized by those of skill in the art that generally, a total of about 20% or fewer, typically about 10% or fewer, most usually about 5% or fewer, of the amino acids in the Wild-type polypeptide sequence can be conservatively substituted With other amino acids Without deleteriously affecting the biological activity and/or three-dimensional structure of the molecule, provided that such substitutions do not involve residues that are critical for activity. The folloW ing abbreviations are used for amino acids throughout this disclosure: A=Ala=Alanine, T=Thr=Threonine,
V=Val=Valine, C=Cvs=Cvsteine, L=Leu=Leucine. C=Cys=Cysteine, $Y = Tyr = Tyrosine$, I=Ile=Isoleucine, N=Asn=Asparagine, P=Pro=Proline, Q=Gln=Glutamine, F=Phe=PhenyIalanine, D=Asp=Aspartic Acid, W=Trp=Tryptophan, W=Trp=Tryptophan, E=Glu=Glutamic Acid, M=Met=Methionine,
K=Lys=Lysine, G=Gly=Glycine, R=Arg=Arginine, $K = Lys = Lysine$, $G = Gly = Gly$ ine, $R = Arg = Argininie$, S=Ser=Serine, H=His=Histidine.

In some embodiments, it may be desirable to make muta tions in the active site of a polypeptide, e.g., to reduce or completely eliminate deformylase activity. Mutations that Will reduce or completely eliminate the activity of a particular protein Will be apparent to those of skill in the art. For example, the amino acids identified in Table 1 could be mutated in order to reduce or eliminate the binding activity of wild-type Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1.

The amino acid residue Cys (C) is unusual in that it can form disulfide bridges with other Cys (C) residues or other sulfhydryl-containing amino acids ("cysteine-like amino acids"). The ability of Cys (C) residues and other cysteine like amino acids to exist in a polypeptide in either the reduced free -SH or oxidized disulfide-bridged form affects whether Cys (C) residues contribute net hydrophobic or hydrophilic character to a polypeptide.

While in most instances the amino acids of wild-type $Area$ bidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 Will be substituted With genetically-encoded amino acids, in certain circumstances mutants may include genetically non-encoded amino acids. Alternatively, in instances Where the mutant Will be prepared in Whole or in part by chemical synthesis, virtually any non encoded amino acids may be used, ranging from D-isomers of the genetically encoded amino acids to non-encoded natu rally-occurring natural and synthetic amino acids.

Conservative amino acid substitutions for many of the commonly known non-genetically encoded amino acids are well known in the art. Conservative substitutions for other non-encoded amino acids can be determined based on their physical properties as compared to the properties of the genetically encoded amino acids.

In some instances, it may be particularly advantageous or residues to wild-type Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 in order to provide convenient cloning sites in cDNA encod ing the polypeptide, to aid in purification of the polypeptide, etc. Such substitutions, deletions and/or additions that do not substantially alter the three dimensional structure of the native Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 Will be apparent to those having skills in the art. These substitutions, deletions and/or additions include, but are not limited to, His tags, BirA tags, intein-containing self-cleaving tags, maltose binding protein fusions, glutathione S-transferase protein

fusions, antibody fusions, green fluorescent protein fusions, signal peptide fusions, biotin accepting peptide fusions, and the like.

Mutations may also be introduced into a polypeptide sequence where there are residues, e.g., cysteine residues, 5 that interfere With crystallization. Such cysteine residues can be substituted With an appropriate amino acid that does not readily form covalent bonds With other amino acid residues under crystallization conditions; e. g., by substituting the cys teine with Ala, Ser or Gly. Any cysteine located in a non-10 helical or non-beta-stranded segment, based on secondary structure assignments, are good candidates for replacement.

It should be noted that the mutants contemplated herein need not exhibit deformylase activity. Indeed, amino acid substitutions, additions or deletions that interfere with the 15 binding activity of wild-type Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or the sequence of amino acids set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 are specifically contemplated by the invention. Such crystalline polypeptides, or the atomic structure coordinates obtained therefrom, can be used to provide phase information 20 to aid the determination of the three-dimensional X-ray struc tures of other related or non-related crystalline polypeptides.

Also contemplated are homologs of the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase. The present invention provides
a computer-assisted method for homology modeling an Ara- 25 bidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog including: aligning the amino acid sequence of an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog With the amino acid sequence of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase SEQ ID NO:1 and incorporating the sequence of the *Arabidopsis thaliana* 30 peptide deformylase homolog into a model of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase derived from structure coordi nates set forth in Table 1 to yield a preliminary model of the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog; subjecting the preliminary model to energy minimization to yield an 35 energy minimized model; remodeling regions of the energy minimized model Where stereochemistry restraints are vio lated to yield a final model of the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog.

As used herein, the term "homolog" refers to the polypep- 40 tide molecule or the nucleic acid molecule Which encodes the polypeptide, or a functional domain from said polypeptide from a first source having at least about 30% , 40% or 50% sequence identity, or at least about 60%, 70% or 75% sequence identity, or at least about 80% sequence identity, or 45 more preferably at least about 85% sequence identity, or even more preferably at least about 90% sequence identity, and most preferably at least about 95%, 97% or 99% amino acid or nucleotide sequence identity, With the polypeptide, encod ing nucleic acid molecule or any functional domain thereof, 50 from a second source. The second source may be a version of the molecule from the first source that has been genetically altered by any available means to change the primary amino acid or nucleotide sequence or may be from the same or a different species than that of the first source. Homology mod- 55 eling is further discussed beloW.

Accordingly, provided herein are crystalline forms of a plant peptide deformylase. Referring to FIG. 1A, limited trypsinolysis creates a core protein that retained activity and remained soluble in the absence of high salt concentrations. 60 Analysis of wild-type and proteolyzed AtDEF2 on an 8-16% gradient SDS-PAGE. Trypsinolysis produces a truncated DEF2 With a mobility shift corresponding to a 3 kDa loss in molecular mass from AtDEF2, a 24.598 kDa enzyme. The truncated DEF2, Which loses its hexahistidyl sequence, Was 65 subsequently separated from undigested DEF2 by loading the digested sample onto a HiTrap® affinity column (Amersham

Pharmacia) and collecting the flowthrough. Undigested DEF2 remained bound to the column. Referring to FIG. 1B, the amino acid sequence of the truncated DEF2 polypeptide is provided.

It is understood that the term "crystalline form" includes a polypeptide associated With a plant peptide deformylase can include just the polypeptide, or the polypeptide complexed With a metal, a ligand, or any other chemical entity suitable for crystallization With the polypeptide. An exemplary polypeptide includes Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase, or fragments thereof, suitable for crystallization. Such fragments include optionally, the crystal may include a coor dinated metal ion selected from the group of consisting of Fe, Zn, Ni, or combinations thereof. Thus, "crystalline form" and "crystal" refer to a composition comprising a polypeptide complex in crystalline form. The term "crystal" includes native crystals, heavy-atom derivative crystals and poly-crys tals. "Native Crystal" refers to a crystal Wherein the polypep tide complex is substantially pure.

Referring to FIG. 2A, the crystal structure of DEF2 Was determined by molecular replacement and refined to a resolution of 2.7 A. "Molecular Replacement" refers to the method of calculating initial phases for a new crystal of a polypeptide Whose structure coordinates are unknown by ori enting and positioning a polypeptide Whose structure coordi nates are known within the unit cell of the new crystal so as to best account for the observed diffraction pattern of the new crystal. Phases are then calculated from the oriented and positioned polypeptide and combined With observed ampli tudes to provide an approximate Fourier synthesis of the structure of the polypeptides comprising the new crystal (Jones et al., 1991, Acta Crystallogr. 47:753-70; Brunger et al., 1998, Acta Crystallogr. D. Biol. Crystallogr. 54:905-21).

The overall fold of the enzyme resembles the $\alpha+\beta$ conformation of known bacterial peptide deformylases, with an r.m.s deviation of about 1.04 A on main chain atoms relative to the E. coli enzyme. The largest differences occur in the orientation of the C-terminal helix (helix 3) and the confor mation of the loop between β strands 2 and 3, which form part of the five-stranded central sheet. Motif I, II and III are colored blue, green and pink, respectively. The active site metal, modeled as zinc due to the conditions of crystallization, is a space-filled sphere in the middle of the structure. Referring to FIG. 2B, a slab vieW of the ribbon representation of trypsi nolyzed AtDEF2 highlighting the active-site-metal binding ligands (1 Cys and 2 His) from motifs II and III, respectively (EGCLS (SEQ ID NO: 2) and QHEXXH (SEQ ID NO: 3) is provided. As used herein, the term "active site" refers to regions on a protein or a structural motif of a protein that are directly involved in the function or activity of the peptide deformylase.

As used herein, the terms "binding site" or "binding pocket" refer to a region of a polypeptide or a molecular complex comprising the polypeptide that, as a result of the primary amino acid sequence of the polypeptide and/or its three-dimensional shape, favorably associates With another chemical entity or compound including ligands or inhibitors.

The crystalline form can include the tetragonal space group symmetry $P_1^2_1^2_2$ and includes a unit cell having dimensions a, b, and c; Wherein a is about 40 A to about 60 A, b is about 40 Å to about 60 Å, and c is about 120 Å to about 160 Å; and wherein alpha=beta=gamma=90 degree. In some aspects, a is about 49 Å to about 52 Å, b is about 49 Å to about 52 Å, and c is about 143 A to about 147 A.

"Unit Cell" refers to the smallest and simplest volume element (i.e., parallel piped-shaped block) of a crystal that is completely representative of the unit or pattern of the crystal, such that the entire crystal can be generated by translation of the unit cell. The dimensions of the unit cell are defined by six numbers: dimensions a, b and c and angles α , β and γ (Blundel et al., 1976, Protein Crystallography, Academic Press). A crystal is an efficiently packed array of many unit cells. "Tetragonal Unit Cell" refers to a unit cell in which a≠b≠c; and $\alpha = \beta = \gamma 90^\circ$. "Crystal lattice" refers to the array of points defined by the vertices of packed unit cells. "Space group" refers to the set of symmetry operations of a unit cell. In a space group designation (e.g., C_2) the capital letter indicates 10 the lattice type and the other symbols represent symmetry operations that can be carried out on the unit cell without changing its appearance. "Asymmetric Unit" refers to the largest aggregate of molecules in the unit cell that possesses no symmetry elements that are part of the space group sym-15 metry, but that can be juxtaposed on other identical entities by symmetry operations.

When a crystal is placed in an X-ray beam, the incident X-rays interact with the electron cloud of the molecules that make up the crystal, resulting in X-ray scatter. The combina- 20 tion of X -ray scatter with the lattice of the crystal gives rise to nonuniformity of the scatter; areas of high intensity are called diffracted X-rays. The angle at which diffracted beams emerge from the crystal can be computed by treating diffraction as if it were reflection from sets of equivalent, parallel 25 planes of atoms in a crystal (Bragg's Law). The most obvious sets of planes in a crystal lattice are those that are parallel to the faces of the unit cell. These and other sets of planes can be drawn through the lattice points. Each set of planes is identified by three indices, hkl. The h index gives the number of 30 parts into which the a edge of the unit cell is cut, the k index gives the number of parts into which the b edge of the unit cell is cut, and the l index gives the number of parts into which the c edge of the unit cell is cut by the set of hkl planes. Thus, for example, the 235 planes cut the a edge of each unit cell into 35 halves, the b edge of each unit cell into thirds, and the c edge of each unit cell into fifths. Planes that are parallel to the bc face of the unit cell are the 100 planes; planes that are parallel to the ac face of the unit cell are the 010 planes; and planes that are parallel to the ab face of the unit cell are the 001 planes. 40

When a detector is placed in the path of the diffracted X-rays, in effect cutting into the sphere of diffraction, a series of spots, or reflections, are recorded to produce a "still" diffraction pattern. Each reflection is the result of X-rays reflecting off one set of parallel planes, and is characterized by an 45 intensity, which is related to the distribution of molecules in the unit cell, and hkl indices, which correspond to the parallel planes from which the beam producing that spot was reflected. If the crystal is rotated about an axis perpendicular to the X-ray beam, a large number of reflections is recorded 50 on the detector, resulting in a diffraction pattern.

The unit cell dimensions and space group of a crystal can be determined from its diffraction pattern. First, the spacing of reflections is inversely proportional to the lengths of the edges of the unit cell. Therefore, if a diffraction pattern is 55 recorded when the X-ray beam is perpendicular to a face of the unit cell, two of the unit cell dimensions may be deduced from the spacing of the reflections in the x and y directions of the detector, the crystal-to-detector distance, and the wavelength of the X-rays. Those of skill in the art will appreciate 60 that, in order to obtain all three unit cell dimensions, the crystal can be rotated such that the X-ray beam is perpendicular to another face of the unit cell. Second, the angles of a unit cell can be determined by the angles between lines of spots on the diffraction pattern. Third, the absence of certain reflec- 65 tions and the repetitive nature of the diffraction pattern, which may be evident by visual inspection, indicate the internal

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symmetry, or space group, of the crystal. Therefore, a crystal may be characterized by its unit cell and space group, as well as by its diffraction pattern.

Once the dimensions of the unit cell are determined, the likely number of polypeptides in the asymmetric unit can be deduced from the size of the polypeptide, the density of the average protein, and the typical solvent content of a protein crystal, which is usually in the range of 30-70% of the unit cell volume (Matthews, 1968, J. Mol. Biol. 33:491-497).

The diffraction pattern of a crystal is related to the threedimensional shape of the molecules that constitute the crystal by a Fourier transform. It has been established that diffraction patterns of a crystal can result from X-ray diffraction as well as Laue, electron or neutron diffraction. X-ray diffraction has been the most widely used methods for determining macromolecular structures. It is therefore used by way of illustration to discuss the processes of diffraction data collection and subsequent structure determination. The scope of the present invention is, however, by no means limited only to X-ray diffraction analyses of crystalline forms of polypeptides. After enough diffraction data are collected for a crystal, the process of determining the solution is in essence a re-focusing of the diffracted X-rays to produce a three-dimensional image of the molecule in the crystal. Since lenses capable of focusing X-ray radiation do not yet exist, the structure determination can be done via mathematical operations that simulate the re-focusing process.

"X-ray Diffraction" refers to a type of wave interference created when high energy X-ray radiation interacts with any obstruction in its traveling path. The obstruction is often in the form of a crystal of protein, nucleic acid, or inorganic compound. The electrons that surround the atoms in the crystal, rather than the atomic nuclei, are the entities which physically interact with the incoming X-ray photons. When X-ray radiation hits the atoms in a crystal, they make the electronic clouds of the atoms move as does any electromagnetic wave. The re-emitted X-ray radiation gives rise to constructive or destructive interferences. This phenomenon is called X-ray diffraction. In X-ray crystallography, the X-ray diffraction patterns of closely spaced lattices of atoms in the crystal are recorded and then analyzed to reveal the structural nature of the crystal. For example, the spacing between the crystal lattices can be determined using Bragg's law. X-ray diffraction is widely used in chemistry and biochemistry to determine the structures of an immense variety of molecules, including inorganic compounds, DNA and proteins. X-ray diffraction is commonly carried out using single crystals of a material, but if these are not available, microcrystalline powdered samples may also be used, although this requires different equipment. A detailed discussion on X-ray diffraction may be found in Chapter 4 in "Principles of Protein X-ray Crystallography" by Drenth, second edition 1999, Springer-Verlag Inc.

"Bragg's Law" refers to the principle that defines the diffraction conditions that give rise to constructive interferences. When the phase shift of the incident radiation is proportional to 2π , the condition can be expressed as: $n\lambda = 2d \sin(\theta)$, where n is an integer; λ is the wavelength of the X-ray radiation, or radiations caused by moving electrons, protons and neutrons; d is the spacing between the planes in the atomic lattice, and θ is the angle between the incident ray and the scattering planes.

"Crystallization" in the context of protein X-ray crystallography refers to the processes during which soluble proteins are transformed into their crystalline forms. Crystals of a protein can be grown out of its solution state under experimental conditions that allow controlled phase transition. Such

experimental conditions include a mixture of multiple solutions that often contain an aqueous solution of the target protein, a solution of one or a mixture of precipitants, and one or more compounds that contribute to the overall pH or ionic strength of the final mixture.

Provided herein are crystalline forms of a plant peptide deformylase polyepeptide, or a deformylase complexed with other molecules or chemical entities. Analysis of such crystalline forms of a polypeptide provides data in the form of structure coordinates. Exemplary structure coordinates for 10 Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide are provided in Table 1. As used herein, the term "atomic coordinates" or "structure coordinates" refers to mathematical coordinates that describe the positions of atoms in crystals of a plant peptide deformylase in Protein Data Bank (PDB) 15 format, including X, Y, Z and B, for each atom. The diffraction data obtained from the crystals are used to calculate an electron density map of the repeating unit of the crystal. The electron density maps may be used to establish the positions (i.e., coordinates X, Y and Z) of the individual atoms within 20 the crystal. Those of skill in the art understand that a set of structure coordinates determined by X-ray crystallography is not without standard error. For the purpose of this invention, any set of structure coordinates for a plant peptide deformylse from any source having a root mean square deviation $(r.m.s.d)$ 25 of non-hydrogen atoms of less than about 1.5 Å when superimposed on the non-hydrogen atom positions of the corresponding atomic coordinates of Table 1 are considered substantially identical or homologous. Moreover, any set of structure coordinates for plant peptide deformylse from any source having a root mean square deviation of non-hydrogen atoms of less than about 0.75 Å when superimposed on the non-hydrogen atom positions of the corresponding atomic coordinates of Table 1 are considered substantially identical or homologous.

The term "root mean square deviation" means the square root of the arithmetic mean of the squares of the deviations. It is a way to express the deviation or variation from a trend or object. For purposes of this invention, the "root mean square deviation" defines the variation in the backbone of a protein 40 from the backbone of a Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase polypeptide or an active site portion thereof, as defined by the structure coordinates described herein. "Having substantially the same three-dimensional structure" refers to a polypeptide that is characterized by a set of atomic 45 structure coordinates that have a root mean square deviation $(r.m.s.d.)$ of less than or equal to about 1.5 Å when superimposed onto the atomic structure coordinates of Table 1 when at least about 50% to 100% of the C α atoms of the coordinates are included in the superposition.

Slight variations in structure coordinates can be generated by mathematically manipulating the plant peptide deformylase structure coordinates provided herein. For example, the structure coordinates set forth in Table 1 could be manipulated by crystallographic permutations of the structure coor- 55 dinates, fractionalization of the structure coordinates, integer additions or subtractions to sets of the structure coordinates, inversion of the structure coordinates or any combination of the above. Alternatively, modifications in the crystal structure due to mutations, additions, substitutions, and/or deletions of 60 amino acids, or other changes in any of the components that make up the crystal, could also yield variations in structure coordinates. Such slight variations in the individual coordinates will have little effect on overall shape. If such variations are within an acceptable standard error as compared to the original coordinates, the resulting three-dimensional shape is considered to be structurally equivalent. Thus, for the purpose

of the structures provided herein, any active site, binding site or binding pocket defined by a set of structure coordinates for a polypeptide or for a homolog of a polypeptide from any source having a root mean square deviation of non-hydrogen atoms of less than about 1.5 Å when superimposed on the non-hydrogen atom positions of the corresponding atomic coordinates of Table 1, are considered substantially identical or homologous.

Active sites are of significant utility in the identification of compounds that specifically interact with, and modulate the activity of, a particular polypeptide. The association of natural ligands or substrates with the active sites of their corresponding receptors or enzymes is the basis of many biological mechanisms of action. Similarly, many compounds exert their biological effects through association with the active sites of receptors and enzymes. Such associations may occur with all or any parts of the active site. An understanding of such associations helps lead to the design of compounds that modulate the activity of their target. Therefore, this information is valuable in designing potential modifiers of plant peptide deformylase activity, as discussed in more detail below. For example, the structure of a substrate utilized by a particular deformylase can be used to design compounds that bind to an active site of a peptide deformylase. Referring to FIG. 3, substrate specificities for plant peptide deformylase AtDEF1 and AtDEF2 are shown. AtDEF1 and 2 activities are influenced by peptide substrate sequence. Peptide mimics of the N-termini of chloroplast-translated proteins, ribosomal protein S18 (f-MDKS), Rubisco LS (f-MSPO), D1(f-MTAI), PSI-I (f-MTTF), PSII-I (f-MLTL), and ATPase subunit III (f-MNPL) were tested as substrates. In addition to a control substrate for the assay (f-MAS), the formate-dehydrogenaselinked assay was performed with 4 mM substrate and either 1.2 mg AtDEF1 or 0.2 mg AtDEF2. The numbers above the grouped bars represent the ratio of AtDEF2 to AtDEF1 activities. (Dirk et al., Arch Biochem Biophys 406:135-141).

The term "active site (or binding pocket)," as used herein, refers to a region of a molecule or molecular complex, that, as a result of its shape, favorably associates with another chemical entity or compound. Thus, an active site may include or consist of features such as interfaces between domains. Chemical entities or compounds that may associate with an active site include, but are not limited to, compounds, ligands, cofactors, substrates, inhibitors, agonists, antagonists, etc.

An exemplary active site for a plant peptide deformy lase is provided by amino acid residues Gly121, Gly123, Leu124, Gln128, Glu169, Glv170, Cys171, Leu172, His213, Glu214, His217, and Tyr178 of SEQ ID NO:1 and as shown in Table 1. Referring to FIG. 5, a model of the D1 N-terminus in AtDEF2's active site is provided. Potential H-bond highlighted between the Thr in the P_2 position of the polypeptide substrate and a conserved AtDEF2 Tyr178 just carboxy terminal to motif II. The model was generated by taking a snapshot from a molecular dynamics simulation using AMBER. The total length of the simulation was 1 ns, and this snapshot is at 126 ps.

In general, the exemplary active site is defined by a set of points having a root mean square deviation of less than about 0.35 Å from points representing the backbone atoms of amino acids as represented by structure coordinates listed in Table 1. As noted above, the crystalline form optionally includes additional molecules such as a coordinated metal ion selected from the group of metals consisting of Fe, Zn, Ni and combinations thereof. In some aspects, the metal ion is coordinated by the amino acids Cys171, His213, and His217.

Also provided are scalable three-dimensional configuration of points, at least a portion of said points derived from structure coordinates of at least a portion of an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase molecule or molecular complex listed in Table 1 and having a root mean square deviation of about 1.04 Å from said structure coordinates. Preferably, at least a portion of the points are derived from the Arabidopsis 5 thaliana peptide deformylase structure coordinates derived from structure coordinates representing the locations of at least the backbone atoms of a plurality of the amino acids defining at least one Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase-like active 10 site, the active site including amino acids Gly121, Gly123, Leu124, Gln128, Glu169, Gly170, Cys171, Leu172, His213, Glu214, His217, and Tyr178.

The structure coordinates generated for a plant peptide deformylase, or an active site thereof, as shown in Table 1 15 define a unique configuration of points in space. Those of skill in the art understand that a set of structure coordinates for a polypeptide, or a polypeptide complexed with a chemical entity, or a portion thereof, define a relative set of points that, in turn, define a configuration in three dimensions. A similar 20 or identical configuration can be defined by an entirely different set of coordinates, provided the distances and angles between coordinates remain essentially the same. Accordingly, the coordinates provided in Table 1 provide a "scalable" configuration of points that can be modified by increas- 25 ing or decreasing the distances between coordinates by a scalar factor while keeping the angles essentially the same.

The atomic structure coordinates provided herein can be used in molecular modeling and design, as described more fully below. The present invention encompasses the structure 30 coordinates and other information, e.g., amino acid sequence, connectivity tables, vector-based representations, temperature factors, etc., used to generate the three-dimensional structure of the plant peptide deformylase polypeptide for use in the software programs described below and other software 35 programs.

The invention encompasses machine-readable media embedded with the three-dimensional structure of the model described herein, or with portions thereof. As used herein, "machine-readable medium" refers to any medium that can 40 be read and accessed directly by a computer or scanner. Such media include, but are not limited to: magnetic storage media, such as floppy discs, hard disc storage medium and magnetic tape; optical storage media such as optical discs or CD-ROM; electrical storage media such as RAM or ROM; and hybrids 45 of these categories such as magnetic/optical storage media. Such media further include paper on which is recorded a representation of the atomic structure coordinates, e.g., Cartesian coordinates, that can be read by a scanning device and converted into a three-dimensional structure with an OCR. 50

A variety of data storage structures are available to a skilled artisan for creating a computer readable medium having recorded thereon the atomic structure coordinates of the invention or portions thereof and/or X-ray diffraction data. The choice of the data storage structure will generally be 55 based on the means chosen to access the stored information. In addition, a variety of data processor programs and formats can be used to store the sequence and X-ray data information on a computer readable medium. Such formats include, but are not limited to, Protein Data Bank ("PDB") format (Re- 60 search Collaboratory for Structural Bioinformatics; Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre format; Structure-data ("SD") file format (MDL Information Systems, Inc.; Dalby et al., 1992, J. Chem. Inf. Comp. Sci. 32:244-255), and linenotation, e.g., as used in SMILES (Weininger, 1988, J. Chem. 65 Inf. Comp. Sci. 28:31-36). Methods of converting between various formats read by different computer software will be

readily apparent to those of skill in the art, e.g., BABEL (v. 1.06, Walters & Stahl, .COPYRGT.1992, 1993, 1994). All format representations of the polypeptide coordinates described herein, or portions thereof, are contemplated by the present invention. By providing computer readable medium having stored thereon the atomic coordinates of the invention, one of skill in the art can routinely access the atomic coordinates of the invention, or portions thereof, and related information for use in modeling and design programs, described in detail below.

While Cartesian coordinates are important and convenient representations of the three-dimensional structure of a polypeptide, those of skill in the art will readily recognize that other representations of the structure are also useful. Therefore, the three-dimensional structure of a polypeptide, as discussed herein, includes not only the Cartesian coordinate representation, but also all alternative representations of the three-dimensional distribution of atoms. For example, atomic coordinates may be represented as a Z-matrix, wherein a first atom of the protein is chosen, a second atom is placed at a defined distance from the first atom, a third atom is placed at a defined distance from the second atom so that it makes a defined angle with the first atom. Each subsequent atom is placed at a defined distance from a previously placed atom with a specified angle with respect to the third atom, and at a specified torsion angle with respect to a fourth atom. Atomic coordinates may also be represented as a Patterson function, wherein all interatomic vectors are drawn and are then placed with their tails at the origin. This representation is particularly useful for locating heavy atoms in a unit cell. In addition, atomic coordinates may be represented as a series of vectors having magnitude and direction and drawn from a chosen origin to each atom in the polypeptide structure. Furthermore, the positions of atoms in a three-dimensional structure may be represented as fractions of the unit cell (fractional coordinates), or in spherical polar coordinates.

Additional information, such as thermal parameters, which measure the motion of each atom in the structure, chain identifiers, which identify the particular chain of a multichain protein in which an atom is located, and connectivity information, which indicates to which atoms a particular atom is bonded, is also useful for representing a three-dimensional molecular structure.

Accordingly, also provided herein is a machine-readable data storage medium including a data storage material encoded with machine readable data which, when using a machine programmed with instructions for using the data. displays a graphical three-dimensional representation of at least one molecule or molecular complex selected from the group consisting of (i) a molecule or molecular complex including at least a portion of an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylaselike active site including amino acids Gly121, Gly123, Leu124, Gln128, Glu169, Gly170, Cys171, Leu172, His213, Glu214, His217, and Tyr178 the active site being defined by a set of points having a root mean square deviation of less than about 1.5 Å from points representing the backbone atoms of the amino acids as represented by structure coordinates listed in Table 1.

Structure information, typically in the form of the atomic structure coordinates, can be used in a variety of computational or computer-based methods to, for example, design, screen for and/or identify compounds that bind the crystallized polypeptide or a portion or fragment thereof, or to intelligently design mutants that have altered biological properties, and the like. Three-dimensional modeling may be performed using the experimentally determined coordinates

derived from X-ray diffraction patterns, such as those in Table 1, for example, wherein such modeling includes, but is not limited to, drawing pictures of the actual structures, building physical models of the actual structures, and determining the structures of related subunits and /ligand and subunit/ligand 5 complexes using the coordinates. Such molecular modeling can utilize known X-ray diffraction molecular modeling algorithms or molecular modeling software to generate atomic coordinates corresponding to the three-dimensional structure of a plant peptide deformylase.

As described above, molecular modeling involves the use of computational methods, preferably computer assisted methods, to build realistic models of molecules that are identifiably related in sequence to the known crystal structure. It also involves modeling new small molecule inhibitors bound 15 to a plant peptide deformylase starting with the structures of deformylase alone or complexed with known ligands or inhibitors. The methods utilized in ligand modeling range from molecular graphics (i.e., 3D representations) to computational chemistry (*i.e.*, calculations of the physical and 20 chemical properties) to make predictions about the binding of ligands or activities of ligands; to design new ligands; and to predict novel molecules, including ligands such as compounds that inhibit the activity of a plant deformylase. Such compounds may be useful as herbicides, for example.

One approach to rational design of a compound is to search for known molecular structures that might bind to an active site. Using molecular modeling, rational design programs can look at a range of different molecular structures of compounds that may fit into the active site of an enzyme or 30 protein, and by moving them in a three-dimensional environment it can be decided which structures actually fit the site well. An alternate but related rational compound design approach starts with the known structure of a complex with a small molecule ligand and models modifications of that small 35 molecule in an effort to make additional favorable interactions with peptide deformylase polypeptides, and/or the active site of such polypeptides.

The present invention includes the use of molecular and computer modeling techniques to design and select ligands, 40 such as small molecule agonists or antagonists or other compounds that interact with peptide deformylase polypeptides. Such compounds include, but are not limited to, actinonin and derivatives thereof.

This invention also includes the design of compounds that 45 act as uncompetitive inhibitors of at least one function of peptide deformylase polypeptides. These inhibitors may bind to all, or a portion of, the active sites or other regions of the polypeptide already bound to a ligand and may be more potent and less non-specific than competitive inhibitors that 50 compete for active sites. Similarly, non-competitive inhibitors that bind to and inhibit at least one function of peptide deformylase polypeptides whether or not it is bound to another chemical entity, such as a natural ligand, for example, may be designed using the atomic coordinates of the chimeras 55 or complexes comprising the chimeras of this invention.

The atomic coordinates of the present invention also provide the needed information to probe a crystal of a peptide deformylase polypeptide with molecules composed of a variety of different chemical features to determine optimal sites 60 for interaction between candidate inhibitors and/or activators. For example, high resolution X-ray diffraction data collected from crystals saturated with solvent allows the determination of where each type of solvent molecule sticks. Small molecules that bind to those sites can then be designed and syn- 65 thesized and tested for their inhibitory activity (Travis, J., Science 262:1374 (1993)).

The present invention also includes methods for computationally screening small molecule databases and libraries for chemical entities, agents, ligands, or compounds that can bind in whole, or in part, to peptide deformylase polypeptides. In this screening, the quality of fit of such entities or compounds to the binding site or sites may be judged either by shape complementarity or by estimated interaction energy (Meng, E. C. et al., J. Comp. Chem. 13:505-524 (1992)).

The design of compounds that bind to, promote or inhibit the functional activity of peptide deformylase polypeptides according to this invention generally involves consideration of two factors. First, the compound must be capable of physically and structurally associating with the peptide deformylase polypeptide. Non-covalent molecular interactions important in the association of the peptide deformylase polypeptide with the compound include hydrogen bonding, van der Waals and hydrophobic interactions. Second, the compound must be able to assume a conformation that allows it to associate with a peptide deformylase polypeptide. Although certain portions of the compound may not directly participate in the association with peptide deformylase polypeptide, those portions may still influence the overall conformation of the molecule. This, in turn, may have a significant impact on binding affinities and potency. Such 25 conformational requirements include the overall three-dimensional structure and orientation of the chemical entity or compound in relation to all or a portion of the active site or other region of a peptide deformylase polypeptide, or the spacing between functional groups of a compound comprising several chemical entities that directly interact with a peptide deformylase polypeptide.

The potential, predicted, inhibitory agonist, antagonist or binding effect of a ligand or other compound on a peptide deformylase polypeptide may be analyzed prior to its actual synthesis and testing by the use of computer modeling techniques. If the theoretical structure of the given compound suggests insufficient interaction and association between it and the peptide deformylase polypeptide, synthesis and testing of the compound may be obviated. However, if computer modeling indicates a strong interaction, the molecule may then be synthesized and tested for its ability to interact with a peptide deformylase polypeptide. In this manner, synthesis of inoperative compounds may be avoided. In some cases, inactive compounds are synthesized predicted on modeling and then tested to develop a SAR (structure-activity relationship) for compounds interacting with a specific region of a peptide deformylase polypeptide.

One skilled in the art may use one of several methods to screen chemical entities fragments, compounds, or agents for their ability to associate with a peptide deformylase polypeptide and more particularly with the individual binding pockets or active sites of the peptide deformy lase polypeptide. This process may begin by visual inspection of, for example, the active site based on the atomic coordinates of the polypeptide or the polypeptide complexed with a ligand. Selected chemical entities, compounds, or agents may then be positioned in a variety of orientations, or docked within an individual binding pocket of the peptide deformylase polypeptide. Docking may be accomplished using software-such as Quanta and Sybyl, followed by energy minimization and molecular dynamics with standard molecular mechanics forcefields, such as CHARMM and AMBER.

Specialized computer programs may also assist in the process of selecting chemical entities. These include but are not limited to: GRID (Goodford, P. J., "A Computational Procedure for Determining Energetically Favorable Binding Sites on Biologically Important Macromolecules," J. Med. Chem. 28:849-857 (1985), available from Oxford University, Oxford, UK); MCSS (Miranker, A. and M. Karplus, "Functionality Maps of Binding Sites: A Multiple Copy Simultaneous Search Method." Proteins: Structure, Function and Genetics 11: 29-34 (1991), available from Molecular Simulations, Burlington, Mass.); AUTODOCK (Goodsell, D. S. and A. J. Olsen, "Automated Docking of Substrates to Proteins by Simulated Annealing" Proteins: Structure. Function, and Genetics 8:195-202 (1990), available from Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, Calif.); DOCK (Kuntz, I. D. et al., "A Geometric Approach to Macromolecule-Ligand Interactions," J. Mol. Biol. 161:269-288 (1982), available from University of California, San Francisco, Calif.); Gold (Jones, G. et al., "Development and validation of a genetic algorithm for flexible docking." J. Mol. Biol. 267: 727-748 (1997)); Glide (Halgren, T. A. et al., "Glide: a new approach for rapid, accurate docking and scoring. 2. Enrichment factors in database screening." J Med Chem, 47:1750-1759 (2004), Friesner, R. A. et al., "Glide: a new approach for rapid, accu-20 rate docking and scoring. 1. Method and assessment of docking accuracy." J Med Chem, 47:1739-1749 (2004)); FlexX (Rarey, M. et al., "A fast flexible docking method using an incremental construction algorithm." J. Mol. Biol. 261: 470-489 (1996)); and ICM (Abagyan, R. A. and Totrov, M. M., J. $_{25}$ Mol. Biol. 235: 983-1002 (1994)).

The use of software such as GRID, a program that determines probable interaction sites between probes with various functional group characteristics and the macromolecular surface, is used to analyze the surface sites to determine struc- $_{30}$ tures of similar inhibiting proteins or compounds. The GRID calculations, with suitable inhibiting groups on molecules (e.g., protonated primary amines) as the probe, are used to identify potential hotspots around accessible positions at suitable energy contour levels. The program DOCK may be used 35 to analyze an active site or ligand binding site and suggest ligands with complementary steric properties. See also, See, also, Kellenberger, P. N et al., "Recovering the true targets of specific ligands by virtual screening of the protein data bank," Proteins 54(4):671-80 (2004); Oldfield, T., "Applications for $_{40}$ macromolecular map interpretation: X-AUTOFIT, X-POW-ERFIT, X-BUILD, X-LIGAND, and X-SOLVATE," Methods Enzymol. 374:271-300 (2003); Richardson, J. S. et al., "New tools and data for improving structures, using all-atom contacts," Methods Enzymol. 374: 385-412 (2003); Terwill- 45 iger, T. C., "Improving macromolecular atomic models at moderate resolution by automated iterative model building, statistical density modification and refinement," Acta Crystallogr D Biol Crystallogr. 59(Pt 7): 1174-82 (2003); Toerger, T. C. and Sacchettini, J. C., "TEXTAL system: artificial intel- 50 ligence techniques for automated protein model building," Methods Enzymol. 374:244-70 (2003); von Grotthuss, M. et al., "Predicting protein structures accurately," Science 304 (5677):1597-9 (2004); Rajakiannan, V. et al., "The use of ACORN in solving a 39.5 kDa macromolecule with 1.9 Å $_{55}$ resolution laboratory source data," J Synchrotron Radiat. 11(Pt 4):358-62 (2004); Claude, J. B. et al., "CaspR: a web server for automated molecular replacement using homology modeling," Nucleic Acids Res. 32(Web Server issue): W606-9 (2004); Suhre, K. and Sanejouand, Y. H., "ElNemo: 60 a normal mode web server for protein movement analysis and the generation of templates for molecular replacement," Nucleic Acids Res. 32(Web Server issue): W610-4 (2004).

Once suitable chemical entities, compounds, or agents have been selected, they can be assembled into a single ligand 65 or compound or inhibitor or activator. Assembly may proceed by visual inspection of the relationship of the fragments to

each other on the three-dimensional image. This may be followed by manual model building using software such as Quanta or Sybyl.

Useful programs to aid in connecting the individual chemical entities, compounds, or agents include but are not limited to: CAVEAT (Bartlett, P. A. et al., "CAVEAT: A Program to Facilitate the Structure-Derived Design of Biologically Active Molecules." In Molecular Recognition in Chemical and Biological, Problems, Special Pub., Royal Chem. Soc., 78, pp. 82-196 (1989)); 3D Database systems such as MACCS-3D (MDL Information Systems, San Leandro, CA and Martin, Y. C., "3D Database Searching in Drug Design," J. Med. Chem. 35: 2145-2154 (1992); and HOOK (available from Molecular Simulations, Burlington, Mass.).

Several methodologies for searching three-dimensional databases to test hypotheses and select compounds for screening are available. These include the program CAVEAT (Bacon et al., J. Mol. Biol. 225:849-858 (1992)). For instance, CAVEAT uses databases of cyclic compounds which can act as "spacers" to connect any number of chemical fragments already positioned in the active site. This allows one skilled in the art to quickly generate hundreds of possible ways to connect the fragments already known or suspected to be necessary for tight binding.

Instead of proceeding to build an inhibitor activator, agonist or antagonist of a peptide deformylase polypeptide in a step-wise fashion one chemical entity at a time as described above, such compounds may be designed as a whole or "de novo" using either an empty active site or optionally including some portion(s) of a known molecules. These methods include: LUDI (Bohm, H.-J., "The Computer Program LUDI: A New Method for the De Novo Design of Enzyme Inhibitors", J. Comp. Aid. Molec. Design, 6, pp. 61-78 (1992), available from Biosym Technologies, San Diego, Calif.); LEGEND (Nishibata, Y. and A. Itai, Tetrahedron 47:8985 (1991), available from Molecular Simulations, Burlington, Mass.); and LeapFrog (available from Tripos Associates, St. Louis, Mo.).

For instance, the program LUDI can determine a list of interaction sites into which to place both hydrogen bonding and hydrophobic fragments. LUDI then uses a library of linkers to connect up to four different interaction sites into fragments. Then smaller "bridging" groups such as -CH2and -COO- are used to connect these fragments.

Once a compound has been designed or selected by the above methods, the affinity with which that compound may bind or associate with a peptide deformylase polypeptide may be tested and optimized by computational evaluation and/or by testing biological activity after synthesizing the compound. Inhibitors or compounds may interact with the deformylase in more than one conformation that is similar in overall binding energy. In those cases, the deformation energy of binding is taken to be the difference between the energy of the free compound and the average energy of the conformations observed when the compound binds to a peptide deformylase polypeptide.

A compound designed or selected as binding or associating with a plant peptide deformylase may be further computationally optimized so that in its bound state it would preferably lack repulsive electrostatic interaction with the protein. Such non-complementary (e.g., electrostatic) interactions include repulsive charge-charge, dipole-dipole and chargedipole interactions. Specifically, the sum of all electrostatic interactions between the inhibitor and the chimera when the inhibitor is bound, preferably make a neutral or favorable contribution to the enthalpy of binding. Weak binding compounds will also be designed by these methods so as to determine SAR.

Specific computer software is available in the art to evaluate compound deformation energy and electrostatic interac- 5 tion. Examples of programs designed for such uses include: Gaussian 92, revision C (M. J. Frisch, Gaussian, Inc., Pittsburgh, Pa., COPYRGT 1992); AMBER, version 4.0 (P. A. Kollman, University of California at San Francisco, COPY-RGT 1994); QUANTA/CHARMM (Molecular Simulations, 10 Inc., Burlington, Mass. COPYRGT 1994); Insight II/Discover (Biosysm Technologies Inc., San Diego, Calif. COPY-RGT. 1994); and Delphi (A. Nicholls and B. Honig "A rapid finite difference algorithm, utilizing successive over-relaxation to solve the Poisson-Boltzman equation" J. Comp. 15 Chem. 12: 435-445 (1991), M. K. Gilson and B. Honig. "Calculation of the total electrostatic energy of a macromolecular system: Solvation energies, binding energies and conformation analysis" Proteins 4: 7-18 (1988), M. K. Gilson et al., "Calculating the electrostatic potential of molecules in 20 solution: Method and error assessment" J Comp. Chem 9: 327-335 (1987)). Other hardware systems and software packages will be known to those skilled in the art.

Once a compound that associates with the peptide deformylase polypeptide has been optimally selected or 25 designed, as described above, substitutions may then be made in some of its atoms or side groups in order to improve or modify its binding properties. Generally, initial substitutions are conservative, i.e., the replacement group will have approximately the same size, shape, hydrophobicity and 30 charge as the original group. It should, of course, be understood that components known in the art to alter conformation may be avoided. Such substituted chemical compounds may then be analyzed for efficiency of fit to a peptide deformylase polypeptide by the same computer methods described in 35 detail, above.

Accordingly, as described above the present invention provides a computer-assisted method for obtaining structural information about a molecule or a molecular complex of unknown structure including: crystallizing the molecule or 40 molecular complex; generating an x-ray diffraction pattern from the crystallized molecule or molecular complex; applying at least a portion of the structure coordinates set forth in Table 1 to the x-ray diffraction pattern to generate a threedimensional electron density map of at least a portion of the 45 molecule or molecular complex whose structure is unknown.

In another aspect, the present invention provides a computer-assisted method for homology modeling an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog including: aligning the amino acid sequence of an Arabidopsis thaliana 50 peptide deformylase homolog with the amino acid sequence of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase SEQ ID NO:1 and incorporating the sequence of the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog into a model of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase derived from structure coordi-55 nates set forth in Table 1 to yield a preliminary model of the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog; subjecting the preliminary model to energy minimization to yield an energy minimized model; remodeling regions of the energy minimized model where stereochemistry restraints are vio- 60 lated to yield a final model of the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog.

Domains of peptide deformylase polypeptides retain sequence and structural conservation. Accordingly, these conserved regions can be used to model deformylase 65 homologs. Referring to FIG. 4, conservation of the three motifs in AtDEF1 and 2 and bacterial DEFs are shown.

AtDEF1- and 2-like sequences were identified with a tblastn (BLAST) search of plant EST databases, aligned around the indicated motifs, and submitted for analysis by WebLogo. For the bacterial DEF alignment, the first 100 bacterial sequences from a blastp using the SwissProt database with $Q2VP16$ (E. coli) as query were used for the similarity analyses. Sequence conservation is represented by WebLogo images by the overall height of the stack and relative frequency of the amino acid at the position within the sequence is represented by the height of its symbol (Crooks et al., Genome Res. 14:1188-1190; Schneider and Stephens, Nucl. Acids Res. 18:6097-6100).

Due to the nature of the sequences used for the plant DEFs, different numbers of sequences were used for each motif in the generation of FIG. 4. For motif I, there were 34, 42 and 100 sequences for 1, 2 and bacterial DEFs, respectively; whereas, there were 36, 40, and 100 for motif II and 40, 32, and 100 for motif II.

In addition, referring to FIGS. 6, 7 and 8, a phylogenetic analyses of the distribution of amino acid substitutions throughout the available collection of peptide deformylase sequences from plants compared with bacterial deformylase is provided. The results are presented as a comparison of both the number and percentage of substitutions found at any location within the sequence of peptide deformylase $1 \& 2$ from plants as well as $E.$ coli. There are a number of residue changes which suggest selection pressure in the evolution of peptide deformylase specifically adapted to plants. Thus, these changes are indicative of specific sites where residue changes are likely to affect peptide deformylase activity and/ or specificity without adversely affecting enzyme stability and are useful as targets for mutational changes.

Thus, the structure coordinates set forth in Table 1 can be used to aid in obtaining structural information about another crystallized molecule or molecular complex. A "molecular complex" means a protein in covalent or non-covalent association with a chemical entity or compound. The method of the invention allows determination of at least a portion of the three-dimensional structure of molecules or molecular complexes which contain one or more structural features that are similar to structural features of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase. These molecules are referred to herein as "structurally homologous" to Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase. Similar structural features can include, for example, regions of amino acid identity, conserved active site or binding site motifs, and similarly arranged secondary structural elements (e.g., α helices and β sheets). Optionally, structural homology is determined by aligning the residues of the two amino acid sequences to optimize the number of identical amino acids along the lengths of their sequences; gaps in either or both sequences are permitted in making the alignment in order to optimize the number of identical amino acids, although the amino acids in each sequence must nonetheless remain in their proper order. Preferably, two amino acid sequences are compared using the Blastp program, version 2.0.9, of the BLAST 2 search algorithm, as described by Tatusova et al., FEMS Microbiol Lett., 174:247-50 (1999). Preferably, the default values for all BLAST 2 search parameters are used, including matrix=BLOSUM62; open gap penalty=11, extension gap penalty=1, gap x_dropoff=50, expect=10, wordsize=3, and filter on. In the comparison of two amino acid sequences using the BLAST search algorithm, structural similarity is referred to as "identity." Preferably, a structurally homologous molecule is a protein that has an amino acid sequence sharing at least 65% identity with the amino acid sequence of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase. Methods for generating structural information

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about the structurally homologous molecule or molecular complex are well-known and include, for example, molecular replacement techniques. By using molecular replacement, all or part of the structure coordinates of *Arabidopsis thaliana* peptide deformylase (and set forth in Table 1) can be used to 5 determine the structure of a crystallized molecule or molecular complex whose structure is unknown more quickly and efficiently than attempting to determine such information ab initio.

Molecular replacement provides an accurate estimation of 10 the phases for an unknown structure. Phases are a factor in equations used to solve crystal structures that cannot be determined directly obtaining accurate values for the phases, by methods other than molecular replacement, is a time-consuming process that involves iterative cycles of approxima-15 tions and refinements and greatly hinders the solution of crystal structures. However, when the crystal structure of a protein containing at least a structurally homologous portion has been solved, the phases from the known structure provide a satisfactory estimate of the phases for the unknown struc- 20 ture.

Thus, this method involves generating a preliminary model of a molecule or molecular complex whose structure coordinates are unknown, by orienting and positioning the relevant portion of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase accord-25 ing to Table 1 within the unit cell of the crystal of the unknown molecule or molecular complex so as best to account for the observed x-ray diffraction pattern of the crystal of the molecule or molecular complex whose structure is unknown. Phases can then be calculated from this model and combined 30 with the observed x-ray diffraction pattern amplitudes to generate an electron density map of the structure whose coordinates are unknown. This, in turn, can be subjected to any well-known model building and structure refinement techniques to provide a final, accurate structure of the unknown 35 crystallized molecule or molecular complex (E. Lattman, "Use of the Rotation and Translation Functions," in Meth. Enzymol., 115:55-77 (1985); M. G. Rossman, ed., "The Molecular Replacement Method," Int. Sci. Rev. Ser., No. 13, Gordon & Breach, New York (1972)).

Structural information about a portion of any crystallized molecule or molecular complex that is sufficiently structurally homologous to a portion of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase can be resolved by this method. In addition to a molecule that shares one or more structural features with 45 Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase as described above, a molecule that has similar bioactivity, such as the same catalytic activity, substrate specificity or ligand binding activity as Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase, may also be sufficiently structurally homologous to Arabidopsis 50 thaliana peptide deformylase to permit use of the structure coordinates of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase to solve its crystal structure.

In addition, using homology modeling, a computer model of an Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog can 55 be built or refined without crystallizing the homolog. First, a preliminary model of the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog is created by sequence alignment with Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase, secondary structure prediction, the screening of structural libraries, or any 60 combination of those techniques. Computational software may be used to carry out the sequence alignments and the secondary structure predictions. Structural incoherences, e.g., structural fragments around insertions and deletions, can be modeled by screening a structural library for peptides of 65 the desired length and with a suitable conformation. For prediction of the side chain conformation, a side chain rotamer

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library may be employed. Where the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase homolog has been crystallized, the final homology model can be used to solve the crystal structure of the homolog by molecular replacement, as described above. Next, the preliminary model is subjected to energy minimization to yield an energy minimized model. The energy minimized model may contain regions where stereochemistry restraints are violated, in which case such regions are remodeled to obtain a final homology model. The homology model is positioned according to the results of molecular replacement, and subjected to further refinement including molecular dynamics calculations.

In another aspect, the present invention provides a computer-assisted method for designing a potential modifier of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase activity including: supplying a computer modeling application with a set of structure coordinates of a molecule or molecular complex, the molecule or molecular complex including at least a portion of at least one Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase-like active site, the active site including amino acids Gly121, Gly123, Leu124, Gln128, Glu169, Gly170, Cys171, Leu172, His213, Glu214, His 217, and Tyr178; supplying the computer modeling application with a set of structure coordinates for a chemical entity; evaluating the potential binding interactions between the chemical entity and active site of the molecule or molecular complex; structurally modifying the chemical entity to yield a set of structure coordinates for a modified chemical entity; and determining whether the modified chemical entity is expected to bind to the molecule or molecular complex, wherein binding to the molecule or molecular complex is indicative of potential modification of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase activity.

The present invention also provides a computer-assisted method for designing a potential modifier of Arabidopsis *thaliana* peptide deformylase activity de novo including: supplying a computer modeling application with a set of structure coordinates of a molecule or molecular complex, the molecule or molecular complex including at least a portion of at least one Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase like active site, wherein the active site includes amino acids Gly121, Gly123, Leu124, Gln128, Glu169, Gly170, Cys171, Leu172, His213, Glu214, His217, and Tyr178; forming a chemical entity represented by set of structure coordinates; and determining whether the chemical entity is expected to bind to the molecule or molecular complex, wherein binding to the molecule or molecular complex is indicative of potential modification of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase activity.

In another aspect, the present invention provides a method for making a potential modifier of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformy lase activity, the method including chemically or enzymatically synthesizing a chemical entity to yield a potential modifier of *Arabidopsis thaliana* peptide deformylase activity, the chemical entity having been identified during a computer-assisted process including supplying a computer modeling application with a set of structure coordinates of a molecule or molecular complex, the molecule or molecular complex including at least a portion of a Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase or Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase-like active site; supplying the computer modeling application with a set of structure coordinates of a chemical entity; and determining whether the chemical entity is expected to bind to the molecule or molecular complex at the active site, wherein binding to the molecule or molecular complex is indicative of potential modification of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase activity.

In another aspect, the present invention provides a method for making a potential modifier of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase activity, the method including chemically or enzymatically synthesizing a chemical entity to yield a potential modifier of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase 5 activity, the chemical entity having been designed during a computer-assisted process including supplying a computer modeling application with a set of structure coordinates of a molecule or molecular complex, the molecule or molecular complex including at least a portion of a Arabidopsis thaliana 10 peptide deformylase or Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase-like active site; supplying the computer modeling application with a set of structure coordinates for a chemical entity; evaluating the potential binding interactions between the chemical entity and the active site of the mol-15 ecule or molecular complex; structurally modifying the chemical entity to yield a set of structure coordinates for a modified chemical entity; and determining whether the chemical entity is expected to bind to the molecule or molecular complex at the active site, wherein binding to the molecule 20 or molecular complex is indicative of potential modification of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase activity.

In general, methods for making a potential modifier of a plant peptide deformylase activity are provided herein. Such methods include chemically or enzymatically synthesizing a 25 chemical entity to yield a potential modifier of plant peptide deformylase activity. Those skilled in the art of crystallography will understand that the atomic coordinates provided herein can be used to design a chemical entity during a computer-assisted process that includes supplying a computer 30 modeling application with a set of structure coordinates of a molecule or molecular complex, the molecule or molecular complex including at least a portion of a plant peptide deformylase or Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylaselike active site; forming a chemical entity represented by set 35 of structure coordinates; and determining whether the chemical entity is expected to bind to the molecule or molecular complex at the active site. Binding to the molecule or molecular complex is indicative of potential modification of Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase activity. 40

FIGS. 6-8 contain phylogenetic analyses of the distribution of amino acid substitutions throughout the available collection of peptide deformylase sequences from plants compared with bacteria. The results are presented as a comparison of both the number and percentage of substitutions found at any 45 location within the sequence of peptide deformylase $1 \& 2$ from plants as well as E. coli. There are a number of residue changes which suggest selection pressure in the evolution of peptide deformylase specifically adapted to plants. Thus, these changes are indicative of specific sites where residue 50 changes are likely to affect peptide deformylase activity and/ or specificity without adversely affecting enzyme stability and are useful as targets for mutational changes.

AtDEF2 is an essential plant enzyme responsible for the co-translational processing of chloroplast translated proteins. 55 crystal. Although biochemically characterized, no structure exists for

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AtDEF2 in part because of a requirement for 0.5 M NaCl for solubility. The dependency on sodium chloride for solubility was removed by limited tryptic proteolysis and crystals of AtDEF2 were obtained. The structure was determined by molecular replacement and refined to a resolution of 2.7 Å. The overall fold of the enzyme closely resembles the alpha+ beta conformation of known bacterial peptide deformylases, with an r.m.s deviation of 1.04 Å on main chain atoms relative to the $E.$ coli enzyme. The largest differences occur in the orientation of the C-terminal helix (helix 3) and the conformation of the loop between beta strands 2 and 3, which form part of the five-stranded central sheet. Modeling the preferred substrate for AtDEF2 (the N-termini of the D1 polypeptide from photosystem II), in both chloroplast protein structures can be used to elucidate the mechanism underlying the 102fold greater activity of AtDEF2 on this sequence (see FIG. 3). Structural comparison can also be accomplished with the known eubacterial peptide deformylase structures to determine approaches for designing specific inhibitors against the chloroplast enzyme. Specific AtDEF2 inhibitors could potentially be used as broad-spectrum herbicides without impact on soil microorganisms.

The Arabidopsis thaliana DEF2 protein was over-expressed and purified from E. coli. Limited tryptic proteolysis yielded a form of Arabidopsis thaliana DEF2 (see FIG. 1B, SEQ ID NO:1) which readily crystallized. The useful crystals all belong to the tetragonal space group. The unit cell parameters were a, b, and c; wherein a is about 40 Å to about 60 Å, b is about 40 Å to about 60 Å, and c is about 120 Å to about 160 Å.

Crystals of the truncated peptide deformy lase construct are grown by hanging drop vapor diffusion in 24 well plates with well solutions containing 15-18% peg monomethyl ester 550, 28-70 mM ZnSO₄, and 70 mM MES pH 6.5. Protein solution at approximately 5 mg/ml is mixed 1:1 with well solution to a final volume of 2-5 microliters for the crystallization drops. Crystals form in several days to several weeks. To prepare the crystals for data collection, they were briefly placed into a solution containing the same components as the well solution in addition to 20% glycerol, mounted in nylon or mylar loops, and flash-cooled by plunging into liquid nitrogen.

Table 1 lists the atomic structure coordinates for the Arabidopsis thaliana peptide deformylase (A. thaliana DEF2) molecule as derived by x-ray diffraction from a crystal of the protein. The following abbreviations are used in Table 1. "Atom type" refers to the element whose coordinates are measured. The first letter in the column defines the element. "X, Y, Z" crystallographically define the atomic position of the element measured. "B" is a thermal factor that measures movement of the atom around its atomic center. "Occ" is an occupancy factor that refers to the fraction of the molecules in which each atom occupies the position specified by the coordinates. A value of "1" indicates that each atom has the same conformation, i.e., the same position, in all molecules of the

Table 1 is provided below:

REMARK coordinates from simulated annealing refinement

REMARK refinement resolution: 500.0-2.4 A

REMARK starting $r = 0.2407$ free_ $r = 0.2946$

REMARK final $r = 0.2352$ free_ $r = 0.2983$

REMARK $\text{rmsd bonds} = 0.007053 \text{ rmsd angles} = 1.33915$

REMARK wa_initial = 2.77981 wa_dynamics = 3.30373 wa_final = 2.90342

 $REMARK$ target = mlf md-method = torsion annealing schedule = slowcool

REMARK starting temperature = 2500 total md steps = $100 * 6$

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-continued

-continued

The examples set forth above are provided to give those of ordinary skill in the art a complete disclosure and description of how to make and use the embodiments of the devices, systems and methods of the invention, and are not intended to limit the scope of what the inventors regard as their invention. 5 Modifications of the above-described modes for carrying out the invention that are obvious to persons of skill in the art are intended to be within the scope of the following claims. All patents and publications mentioned in the specification are indicative of the levels of skill of those skilled in the art to 10 which the invention pertains. All references cited in this disclosure are incorporated by reference to the same extent as if each reference had been incorporated by reference in its entirety individually.

In addition, it is understood that the terminology used 15 herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodi-

ments only, and is not intended to be limiting. As used in this specification and the appended claims, the singular forms "a," "an," and "the" include plural referents unless the content clearly dictates otherwise. Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to which the invention pertains. Although any methods and materials similar or equivalent to those described herein can be used in the practice for testing of the invention(s), specific examples of appropriate materials and methods are described herein.

A number of embodiments of the invention have been described. Nevertheless, it will be understood that various modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, other embodiments are within the scope of the following claims.

SEOUENCE LISTING

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ln Phe Glu Thr Pro $1\qquad \qquad 5\qquad \qquad 10\qquad \qquad 15$ $\begin{tabular}{lllllllllllll} \textsc{Leu }\textsc{Lys }\textsc{11e }\textsc{Val }\textsc{Glu }\textsc{Tyr }\textsc{Pro }\textsc{Asp }\textsc{Pro }\textsc{11e }\textsc{Leu }\textsc{Arg }\textsc{Ala }\textsc{Lys }\textsc{Asn }\textsc{Lys } \\ \textsc{20} & \textsc{25} & \textsc{30} \end{tabular}$ Arg Ile Asp Ile Phe Asp Glu Asn Leu Lys Asn Leu Val Asp Ala Met 35 40 Phe Asp Val Met Tyr Lys Thr Asp Gly Ile Gly Leu Ser Ala Pro Gln 50 56 60 Val Gly Leu Asn Val Gln Leu Met Val Phe Asn Pro Ala Gly Glu Pro 70 65 75 80 Gly Glu Gly Lys Glu Ile Val Leu Val Asn Pro Lys Ile Lys Lys Tyr 90 85 Ser Asp Lys Leu Val Pro Phe Asp Glu Gly Cys Leu Ser Phe Pro Gly 100 1.05 110 Ile Tyr Ala Glu Val Val Arg Pro Gln Ser Val Lys Ile Asp Ala Arg 120 115 125 Asp Ile Thr Gly Glu Arg Phe Ser Ile Ser Leu Ser Arg Leu Pro Ala 135 130 140 Arg Ile Phe Gln His Glu Tyr Asp His Leu Glu Gly Val Leu Phe Phe 145 150 155 160 Asp Arg Met Thr Asp Gln Val Leu Asp Ser Ile Arg Glu Glu Leu Glu 165 170 Ala Leu Glu Lys Lys Tyr Glu Glu Lys Thr Gly Leu Pro Ser Pro Glu 180 185 190

Arg

<210> SEQ ID NO 2 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 14 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana $<$ 220> FEATURE: <221> NAME/KEY: MOD_RES $<$ 222> LOCATION: (2)

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-continued

<221> NAME/KEY: MOD_RES <222> LOCATION: (6) <223> OTHER INFORMATION: variable residue $<$ 220> FEATURE: <221> NAME/KEY: MOD_RES $<222>$ LOCATION: (11) <223> OTHER INFORMATION: variable residue $<$ 220> FEATURE: <221> NAME/KEY: MOD_RES $<222>$ LOCATION: (13) <223> OTHER INFORMATION: variable residue <400> SEQUENCE: 5 Xaa Xaa Xaa Xaa Arg Xaa Phe Gln His Glu Xaa Asp Xaa Leu Gln $\mathbf{1}$ 5 10 15 <210> SEQ ID NO 6 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana <400> SEQUENCE: 6 Arg Leu Ala Pro Gly Val Gly Leu Ala Ala Pro Gln Ile Gly Val Pro \sim 5 10 15 Leu Arg <210> SEQ ID NO 7 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana <400> SEQUENCE: 7 Lys Lys Ala Leu Phe Phe Glu Gly Cys Leu Ser Val Asp Gly Phe Arg $1\qquad \qquad 5\qquad \qquad 10\qquad \qquad 15$ 15 Ala Ala $<$ 210> SEQ ID NO 8 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana <400> SEQUENCE: 8 Ala Ser Gly Trp Gln Ala Arg Ile Leu Gln His Glu Cys Asp His Leu $\mathbf{1}$ 5 10 15 Asp Gly <210> SEQ ID NO 9 $<\!\!211\!\!>$ LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana <400> SEQUENCE: 9 Lys Thr Asp Gly Ile Gly Leu Ser Ala Pro Gln Val Gly Leu Asn Val \sim 5 10 1 15 Gln Leu <210> SEQ ID NO 10 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana <400> SEQUENCE: 10 Leu Val Pro Phe Asp Glu Gly Cys Leu Ser Phe Pro Gly Ile Tyr Ala
 $1\,$ 5 $\,$

-continued

Glu Val

<210> SEQ ID NO 11 <211> LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana <400> SEQUENCE: 11 Ser Ser Leu Pro Ala Arg Ile Phe Gln His Glu Tyr Asp His Leu Glu $1 \qquad \qquad 5$ 10 $\overline{15}$ Gly Val <210> SEQ ID NO 12 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Escherichia coli <400> SEQUENCE: 12 Tyr Ala Glu Lys Gly Ile Gly Leu Ala Ala Thr Gln Val Asp Ile His $\mathbf{1}$ -5 10 15 Gln Arg <210> SEQ ID NO 13 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT $<$ 213> ORGANISM: Escherichia coli <400> SEQUENCE: 13 Gly Glu Thr Gly Ile Glu Glu Gly Cys Leu Ser Ile Pro Glu Gln Arg $\mathbf{1}$ 5 10 15 Ala Leu <210> SEQ ID NO 14 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 18 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Escherichia coli <400> SEQUENCE: 14 Ala Asp Gly Leu Leu Ala Ile Cys Ile Gln His Glu Met Asp His Leu $\mathbf{1}$ \sim 5 10 -15 Val Gly <210> SEQ ID NO 15 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 5 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana <400> SEQUENCE: 15 Glu Gly Cys Leu Ser $\mathbf{1}$ 5 <210> SEQ ID NO 16 $<$ 211> LENGTH: 6 $<$ 212> TYPE: PRT <213> ORGANISM: Arabidopsis thaliana $<$ 220> FEATURE: <221> NAME/KEY: MOD_RES

What is claimed is:

1. A crystalline form of a polypeptide consisting of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 complexed with Zn²⁺, 15 wherein said crystalline form has the space group symmetry
P4₁2₁2; unit cell dimensions of a=about 49 angstroms to about 52 angstroms, b=about 49 angstroms to about 52 angstroms, and c=about 143 angstroms to about 147 angstroms and alpha=beta=gamma=90 degrees.

2. The crystalline form of claim 1, wherein said crystalline form produces the structural coordinates as set forth Table 1 upon X-ray diffraction pattern analysis.

3. The crystalline form of claim 1, wherein said crystalline form diffracts X-rays to a resolution of 2.4 angstroms.

4. The crystalline form of claim 1, wherein said unit cell dimensions are $a=50.902$ angstroms, $b=50.902$ angstroms, and c=144.783 angstroms.

> \ddot{x} \ast \rightarrow \star \ast