Oxidation of Indole-3-Acetic Acid to Oxindole-3-Acetic Acid by an Enzyme Preparation from Zea mays

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ABSTRACT

Indole-3-acetic acid is oxidized to oxindole-3-acetic acid by Zea mays tissue extracts. Shoot, root, and endosperm tissues have enzyme activities of 1 to 10 picomoles per hour per milligram protein. The enzyme is heat labile, is soluble, and requires oxygen for activity. Co-factors of mixed function oxygenase, peroxidase, and intermolecular dioxygenase are not stimulatory to enzymic activity. A heat-stable, detergent-extractable component from corn enhances enzyme activity 6- to 10-fold. This is the first demonstration of the in vitro enzymic oxidation of indole-3-acetic acid to oxindole-3-acetic acid in higher plants.

OxI2 is a naturally occurring catabolite of IAA in Zea mays (15). The peroxidative decarboxylation pathway is a minor component in corn since feeding [1-14C]IAA to either endosperm of entire seedlings, or shoot or shoot pieces results in only 1 to 5% decarboxylation per hour of the labeled IAA (2, 14). Twenty-four h incubations of Zea mays tissues with labeled IAA result in the synthesis of OxI, and the further oxidation of OxI to 7-OH-OxI and 7-OH-OxI-Glc (13, 10). Seven-OH-OxI and 7-OH-OxI-Glc are also naturally occurring compounds in corn (10, 13).

Recently, Tsurumi and Wada (19, 20) have shown that IAA is conjugated to IAA-aspartate and oxidized to a conjugate of DiOxI (3-[O-β-glucosyl]-2-indolone-3-acetylaspartic acid) in the dicot Vicia faba (19, 20). DiOxI is oxidized at the 2 and 3 positions of the indole ring while OxI is oxidized at only the 2 position of the ring, both with carboxyl retention. OxI and DiOxI and their 5-hydroxy analogs were also shown to occur naturally in Oryza sativa (rice) bran (8). The occurrence of IAA catabolites which retain their carboxyl moieties in monocots and a dicot may indicate a wider distribution of non-decarboxylating pathways.

The in vitro decarboxylation of IAA catalyzed by horse radish peroxidase is well characterized (11). The present work is the first demonstration of an enzyme system which catalyzes oxidation of IAA without decarboxylation. A previous abstract of these studies has appeared (17).

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1 Abbreviations: OxI, oxindole-3-acetic acid; DiOxI, dioxindole-3-acetic acid; 7-OH-OxI-Glc, 7-hydroxy-oxindole-3-acetic acid 7'-O-β-D-glucopyranoside; 7-OH-OxI, 7-hydroxy-oxindole-3-acetic acid; PFB, pentafluorobenzyl.

1ABSTRACT

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Plant Materials. Zea mays cv Stowell's Evergreen Sweet corn kernels (W. Atlee Burpee Co.) were surface sterilized in 1% NaOCl for 10 min, then soaked in running water at 15°C for 16 h. After incubation, the kernels were grown in moist paper towels for an additional 80 h at 25°C and 80% RH. Shoot (coleoptile plus primary leaves and mesocotyl), kernel (endosperm plus scutellum), and root tissues were excised and harvested into ice-chilled beakers, using a phototropically inactive green light for manipulations. For the sterile-culture experiments, kernels were germinated on sterilized moist paper towels in 2.5 × 25 cm culture tubes.

Enzyme Preparation. Endosperm, shoot, or root tissues were homogenized in 0.05 M phosphate buffer (pH 7.0) containing 5% (w/w tissue) insoluble polystyrene (PS) and centrifuged at 12,000g for 10 min. The resulting supernatant fluid was filtered through 20 cm of the dialysis medium where indicated. Following homogenization of plant tissue, the buffer extract was filtered through two layers of cheesecloth and centrifuged at 12,000g for 10 min. The resulting supernatant fluid was dialyzed overnight against 2.5 L of extraction medium. The dialyzed solution was centrifuged at 12,000g for 10 min; the supernatant fluid was assayed immediately following activity or frozen in liquid N2 for subsequent analyses. Over 80% of the initial enzymic activity could be recovered following 2 months of storage at −196°C.

Enzyme Assay. The standard assay included 0.9 ml of enzyme plus 0.1 ml of addendum (metal ions, sulfhydryl reagents, or cofactors of oxidation reactions dissolved in 0.05 M phosphate buffer, see "Results"). [1-14C]IAA (57 mCi · mmol−1, 50 μCi · ml−1 Amersham) diluted with 2-propanol 2.8 v/v was the substrate for the assay. The radiolabeled IAA was 98% radiochemically pure as determined by C18 HPLC (16) with ethanol:H2O:acetic acid (20:79:1 v/v, solvent system I) as eluant. The enzymic reaction was initiated by the addition of 10 μl of the diluted [1-14C]IAA (1.7 nmol) to the enzymic mixture, and incubated with shaking (Duboff Metabolic Shaking Incubator, Precision Scientific Co.) at 30°C for 1 to 12 h. The reaction was terminated by the addition of acetone to the assay mixture 2:1, v/v. Acid precipitation of the protein was avoided to reduce denaturation of the acid-labile IAA and OxI. Carbon-14 recoveries for the enzyme reaction were determined by mixing a 20 μl aliquot of the enzyme mixture with 200 μl of 0.1% aqueous phosphoric acid, followed by the addition of scintillation cocktail (Safety-solve RPI). Radioactivity was measured on a Beckman LS 7000 scintillation counter. Samples were frozen at −20°C until assayed by HPLC. Samples were centrifuged at 12,000g for 10 min; the resulting supernatant fluid was evaporated to near dryness with reduced pressure at 35°C. Ethanol, H2O, and concentrated acetic acid were added to the sample to make a final concentration of 20:79:1 (v/v), respectively, in 200 μl. A 10 μl aliquot was mixed with scintillation cocktail, and the radioactivity was counted to estimate recovery.

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The remainder of the sample was chromatographed on a Varian 5000 HPLC, 0.46 × 25 cm 10 μm Partisol 10 ODS column (Whatman, Inc.) with a CoPel ODS precolumn (Whatman, Inc.), and eluted with solvent system 1 at 1 ml/min. Eluant between 5 and 8.5 min was collected in 0.5 ml fractions and radioactivity determined by scintillation counting. OxIAA had a retention time of 7.5 to 7.8 min under these conditions, and 7-OH-OxIAA and IAA had retention times of 5.6 and 18 min, respectively. For more complete radioactive profiles, eluant between 2 and 20 min was collected. In later experiments, the solvent system was switched at 8 min to 100% ethanol and 2 ml/min resulting in elution of IAA at 14 min. This method decreased the assay time (baseline resolution between IAA and OxIAA was maintained) and cleaned the column between injections. A channel ratio H# method (Beckman 137Ce quench) showed the efficiency of radioactivity counting to be 82 to 85%.

The amount of [14C]OxIAA formed was corrected for recovery using [14C] recovery, and converted into nmol of OxIAA by multiplication by the specific radioactivity:

\[
\frac{\text{[14C]}\text{OxIAA}_{\text{HPLC}} \times [\text{14C}]_{\text{IAA initial}}}{\text{[14C]}_{\text{HPLC}} \times \text{initial nmol IAA}} \times [\text{14C}]_{\text{IAA initial}} = \text{nmol OxIAA synthesized}
\]

The equation is valid since the specific radioactivity of IAA and the OxIAA synthesized are the same, and since the recoveries of IAA and OxIAA are essentially identical following HPLC. Since \([\text{14C}]_{\text{IAA initial}} = [\text{14C}]_{\text{IAA initial}}\), the equation can be reduced to:

\[
\frac{\text{[14C]}_{\text{HPLC}} \times [\text{14C}]_{\text{reaction recovery}}}{\text{[14C]}_{\text{HPLC}} \times \text{initial nmol IAA}} = \text{nmol OxIAA synthesized}
\]

where \([\text{14C]}_{\text{OxIAA}_{\text{HPLC}}} = [\text{14C]}_{\text{OxIAA isolated following HPLC;}}\)

\[\text{[14C]}_{\text{HPLC}} = \text{total radiolabel applied to HPLC;}\]

\([\text{14C]}_{\text{reaction recovery}} = \% \text{ recovery of radiolabel at termination of the enzymatic reaction (this factor corrects for underestimation of [14C] recovery due to enzymic decarboxylation);}\]

Initial nmol IAA = nmol IAA added to the enzyme assay; and

\([\text{14C}]_{\text{IAA initial}} = \text{radiolabeled IAA added to the enzyme assay.}\]

Validation of Enzyme Assay. The enzyme assay was validated by a reverse isotope dilution assay (4). Unlabeled OxIAA was added to the enzyme mixture following termination of the reaction by acetone. The specific radioactivity of the OxIAA was determined by measuring the radioactivity in the OxIAA HPLC peak versus the area of the 254 nm absorbance of the peak. The 254 nm absorbance area was integrated by an IBM 9000 computer and compared to an OxIAA standard curve (absorbance versus OxIAA amount). Results from the two quantitation methods were identical, and the radioactivity recovery method (see preceding section) was routinely used to quantitatively estimate OxIAA synthesized.

To determine whether 7-OH-OxIAA was synthesized by the in vitro system the following solvent system II (10) was used: 10% A plus 90% B from 5 to 20 min (A = ethanol plus 0.1% acetic acid, and B = H₂O plus 1% acetic acid).

Biological activity of OxIAA was measured by a Z. mays mesocotyl straight growth assay according to the method of Nitsch (12). Mesocotyl sections (4.6 ± 0.1 mm cut 2 mm below the coleoptile node) were incubated in the dark for 20 h in pH 5.0 citrate-phosphate buffer plus 20 mg/L of chloramphenicol, 2% sucrose (w/v), and IAA or OxIAA. Mesocotyl length was measured to the nearest 0.1 mm using a dissecting microscope.

Gas chromatography of the putative pentafluorobenzyl ester of OxIAA was performed on a Varian 3700 gas chromatograph with a 2 mm i.d. × 2 m 3% OV-17 (Gas chrom Q, Applied Science) column using N₂ (30 ml/min) as the carrier gas. The PFB-OxIAA was chromatographed at 220°C isothermally, and detected by FID. The acid ring expanded OxIAA (2-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydroquinoline-4-carboxylic acid) (7) was chromatographed with C18 HPLC and eluted with solvent system I. Methyl-2-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydroquinoline-4-carboxylic acid and PFB-OxIAA were eluted from C18 HPLC by ethanol: H₂O 30:70 (v/v) and 43:57 (v/v), respectively.

The oxygen requirement for the reaction was examined by 10 min vacuum evacuation of 10 ml Thunberg tubes containing the complete reaction mixture, followed by a 30 second argon or air flushing. The evacuation and flushing were repeated 3 times at 0°C. The Thunberg tubes were incubated at 30°C for 4 h and the reaction mixture assayed for OxIAA formation as previously described.

The sedimentation characteristics of the enzyme were examined by centrifugation at 100,000 g for 1 h on a Spinco model L centrifuge with a 50Ti rotor. The preparation was assayed prior to centrifugation, and the supernatant fluid and resuspended pellet were assayed following centrifugation.

RESULTS

Since the enzyme assay is an end-point analysis the linearity over time and protein concentration was determined. The enzymic reaction was a linear function of time up to 4 h, and slowed between 4 to 6 h. The leveling off of activity could not be accounted for by the depletion of substrate IAA. Enzymic activity for endosperm plus scutellum was linear over the protein concentration range 0.1 to 2.4 mg protein·ml⁻¹, and linear from 0.1 to 1 mg protein·ml⁻¹ for vegetative mesocotyl tissue. Standard incubation periods were 4 h for detergent extracted enzyme and buffer extracted enzyme, with 1 to 2 mg protein·ml⁻¹. The pH optimum for the enzyme assay was 7.0. Enzymic activity was destroyed after 5 to 10 min at 100°C.

The enzymic activity from steriley cultured corn seedlings and nonaseptically cultured corn was 1.1 pmol · h⁻¹ · mg⁻¹ protein and 1.0 pmol · h⁻¹ · mg⁻¹ protein, respectively. Fungal contamination was not present in the asceptically grown corn as shown by culturing of corn and media from the asceptically cultured corn on potato dextrose agar. Thus, the oxidation rate of IAA by nonaseptically grown corn was not influenced by microbial contamination, and corn kernels sterilized with 1% NaClO and grown nonsterilely were used routinely for enzyme preparations.

Triton prepared enzyme from shoot, root, and endosperm tissues had 1 to 10 pmol · h⁻¹ · mg⁻¹ protein of enzymic activity. The highest activity was from endosperm tissue at 6 to 10 pmol · h⁻¹ · mg⁻¹ protein, while shoot and root tissues had 3 to 5 pmol · h⁻¹ · mg⁻¹ protein. Vegetative tissues had the lowest recovery of radioactive 14C following the assay with 30 to 60% recovery. For vegetative tissues, the lower rate of oxidation of IAA to OxIAA may be partly explained by the lower availability of substrate IAA due to a competing peroxidase decarboxylation reaction. Peroxidase activity has been reported for corn tissues, but its in vivo role in oxidizing IAA has been shown to be minimal (2, 14).

The chromatographic properties of the product of IAA's enzymic oxidation are shown in Table I. Chromatography as both the free acid, pentafluorobenzyl ester, and acid ring-expanded OxIAA were similar for both authentic and enzymically synthesized OxIAA. OxIAA has been shown to be a naturally occurring compound by GC-MS in Z. mays tissue (16) and chromatographic evidence also supports the in vitro oxidation of IAA to OxIAA. The further oxidation of OxIAA to 7-OH-OxIAA or 7-OH-OxIAA-gluc was not observed in the in vitro system. A polar catabolite of IAA with a similar retention time to 7-OH-OxIAA with HPLC solvent system I was often synthesized along with OxIAA, but it was separated from 7-OH-OxIAA under C18 HPLC solvent system II (see “Materials and Methods”). The unknown had a retention volume of 20 to 21 ml and the
Table I. Authentic OxIAA and Enzymically Synthesized Putative OxIAA Have the Same Chromatographic Properties as Evidenced by HPLC and GLC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chromatography</th>
<th>Retention Time (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OxIAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPLC Free acid</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPLC PFB ester</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLC PFB ester</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPLC Quinoline</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPLC methyl ester</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7-OH-OxIAA 24 ml with HPLC solvent system II; the putative and authentic OxIAA had retention volumes of 30 to 31 ml.

Flushing Thunberg tubes three times with Ar decreased enzymic activity nine times versus the air flushed control (Fig. 1) showing oxygen was required for optimal enzymic activity. However, demonstration of oxygen incorporation into the indole ring awaits 18O2 experiments.

When enzyme preparations were centrifuged at 100,000 g for 1 h, both shoot and endosperm preparations retained most of the activity in the supernatant fluid, 90 and 87%, respectively (Table II). Minor activity remained in the unwashed pellet. Sedimentation characteristics of the enzyme preparation resembled a soluble enzyme and not a microsomal enzyme. The results were similar whether the enzyme was prepared with or without Triton X-100.

Inorganic ions and cofactors of oxygenase reactions were tested for enhancement of enzymatic activity (Tables III and IV). Ca2+ and Fe2+ were not stimulatory at 50 μM concentrations, while Zn2+ at 5 μM was inhibitory by 15 to 20%. Mercaptoethanol and dithiothreitol were inhibitory to enzymic activity by 90 to 100% when added at 5 to 50 μM. Cofactors of peroxidase, Mn2+, H2O2, and 2,4-dichlorophenol, decreased 14C recovery from the enzyme reaction by over 50%, without increasing the amount of OxIAA synthesized. Peroxidase plus Mn2+ and H2O2 decarboxylates IAA to hydroxymethylxindole, indole-3-aldehyde, etc. but does not decarboxylate OxIAA (6). The oxidation of IAA to OxIAA is thus a separate pathway from the well studied in vitro oxidative decarboxylation of IAA by peroxidase.

Since one oxygen atom is added to the IAA molecule to form oxindole-3-acetic acid, a mixed function oxygenase reaction was indicated. For such a reaction, a reductant would be required since one oxygen would be incorporated into the indole ring and the other oxygen reduced to water. However, NADPH at 0.67 or at 1.2 mM was not stimulatory to the enzyme's activity. NADPH plus pterin (6,7 dimethyl-5,6,7,8 tetra-hydropterine, Sigma) 1.2 and 0.5 mM, respectively, were also not active. At low concentrations (10 μM), flavin adenine dinucleotide was not stimulatory to enzymic activity.

Fe2+, α-ketoglutarate, and ascorbic acid are co-substrates for the oxidation of gibberellins (5) by an intermolecular dioxygenase reaction by co-oxidation of α-ketoglutarate to succinate and CO2. But oxidation of IAA to OxIAA was not increased by Fe2+, α-ketoglutarate, ascorbate at 1.1, and 5 mM concentrations, respectively. The substitution of NADPH for ascorbate was also not stimulatory. Thus, none of the most likely types of oxidation reactions, peroxidase, mixed function oxygenase, or intermolecular dioxygenase were involved in the oxidation of IAA to OxIAA since cofactors and co-substrates of these reactions were ineffective.

To increase recovery of the enzymic activity during extraction, the nonionic detergent Triton X-100 was added to the homogenization medium. Following preparation with and without 0.4% Triton X-100, the enzyme was dialyzed overnight against 0.05 M phosphate buffer, and then assayed. Triton X-100 addition to the homogenate prior to the enzyme assay had no effect on enzymic activity, but homogenization of tissue with buffer plus Triton X-100 enhanced enzymic activity by up to 10-fold. If Triton X-100 was added to the homogenate prior to dialysis (absent from the tissue homogenization medium), activity was increased twofold without an increase in protein recovery. These experiments indicated that the Triton effect could be due to the preferential extraction of a lipid-soluble enzyme, or of the extraction of a lipid soluble cofactor or co-substrate. The total amount of protein recovered by buffer with and without Triton X-100 was similar, so the possible presence of a cofactor was studied by adding boiled Triton prepared enzyme to enzyme (prepared without Triton X-100). The addition of the boiled Triton extract increased enzyme activity up to sixfold (Fig. 2). The addition of boiled enzyme (without Triton X-100 preparation) was ineffective in stimulating enzymic activity. These results indicated that a heat-stable, lipid-soluble factor was extracted by Triton X-100 and was responsible for the detergent enhancement of enzymic activity.

OxIAA has been previously shown to be inactive in stimulating plant growth in five bioassays (cf. 5), although the initial report for pea stem sections showed stimulation. Solutions of 10−7 to 10−1 M OxIAA and IAA were assayed in a corn mesocotyl bioassay. OxIAA was inactive from 10−7 to 10−4 M, while IAA was stimulatory over the same concentration range with maximum activity at 10−7 M (Table V). These results support the view that the oxidation of IAA to OxIAA results in loss of biological activity for the molecule.

**DISCUSSION**

An enzyme system which will oxidize IAA at the 2 position of the indole ring while retaining the carboxyl side chain has been partially characterized in enzyme preparations of corn. This
Table III. Effect of Inorganic Ions, and Sulphydryl Reagents on the Enzymic Oxidation of IAA to OxIAA with Endosperm Enzyme Preparations and Triton X-100 Endosperm Enzyme Preparations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Endosperm (Triton)</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Endosperm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>μM</td>
<td>% of control b</td>
<td>μM</td>
<td>% of control b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe²⁺</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ca²⁺</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cu²⁺</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zn²⁺</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mn²⁺</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercaptoethanol</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dithiothreitol</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Control value, 8.3 ± 1.8 pmol ⋅ h⁻¹ ⋅ mg⁻¹ protein.  b Control value, 3.8 ± 1.1 pmol ⋅ h⁻¹ ⋅ mg⁻¹ protein.

Table IV. Effect of Cofactors and Co-substrates of Oxygenases and Peroxidase Reactions on the Oxidation of IAA to OxIAA by Endosperm Enzyme Preparations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Tissue</th>
<th>endosperm (Triton X100)</th>
<th>% of control b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,4 dichlorophenol 5 μM</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,4 dichlorophenol 5 μM + Mn²⁺ 5 μM</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe²⁺ 50 mM + 500 μM</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pterin 500 μM + 1.2 mM NADPH</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAD 10 μM + 1.2 mM NADPH</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe²⁺ 1 mM + 1.2 mM NADPH + α-keto-glutarate 1 mM</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe²⁺ 1 mM + 5.7 mM ascorbate + α-keto-glutarate 1 mM</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mn²⁺ 0.1 mM + 17 mM H₂O₂</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NADPH 0.7</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Control value, 8.3 ± 1.8 pmol ⋅ h⁻¹ ⋅ mg⁻¹ protein.  b Control value, 3.8 ± 1.1 pmol ⋅ h⁻¹ ⋅ mg⁻¹ protein.

is a novel enzyme system discrete from the peroxidative oxidation of IAA since peroxidase cofactors do not stimulate formation of OxIAA. OxIAA was shown not to be an intermediate in horse radish peroxidase’s decarboxylation of IAA (6).

The enzyme requires oxygen for optimum activity. In oxidation of IAA by peroxidase to 3-methylenoxindole, ¹⁸O₂ and H₂¹⁸O experiments showed that H₂O is the source of oxygen in the oxindole ring (11). The source of the oxygen in the oxindole nucleus of oxindole-3-acetic acid remains to be identified by heavy isotope experiments.

The reaction’s stimulation by Triton X-100 preparation of the enzyme, or by the addition of boiled Triton X-100 prepared enzyme indicates involvement of a heat-stable, lipid-soluble component in the reaction. The existence of a lipid-soluble, heat-stable component is currently being investigated for this novel reaction.

The extent of peroxidase’s involvement in catabolism of IAA needs to be reinvestigated. In corn, decarboxylation of IAA was only 5 to 12% of the turnover for intact tissues, while isolated corn peroxidase readily catalyzed the oxidation of IAA to seven major decarboxylated products (1).

In pea, peroxidase activity was mainly a cut surface phenomenon which could largely be washed away, and was proportional to the number of pieces into which the tissue was cut (21). In
Pinus sylvestris, Scots Pine, an in vitro system rapidly metabolized IAA to indole-3-methanol and four other decarboxylated metabolites. However, when IAA was fed to Scots pine protoplasts, IAA was more slowly metabolized to two compounds: an unidentified carboxyl-retaining catabolite and indole-3-methanol (minor catabolite) (18). Recently, isotope dilution experiments have confirmed that oxidindole-3-acetic acid is a naturally occurring compound in Pinus sylvestris seedlings (3). The nondecarboxylation pathways observed in the dicots Vicia faba and Pinus sylvestris, and the monocot Z. mays (implicated in Oryza sativa, Ribes rubrum, and Brassica rapa, [8, 9]) warrant the reexamination of the route(s) of IAA catabolism in plants, and suggest that the decarboxylation pathway may have been overestimated by the experimental conditions utilized.

In corn, IAA is oxidized to OxIAA; OxIAA may be further oxidized to 7-OH-OxIAA and 7-OH-OxIAA-gluc. The first enzyme in this pathway has been partially characterized. Since catabolic oxidation of IAA to OxIAA is the first reaction in the catabolism pathway, and is apparently irreversible (it is inactive in bioassays including corn) it may have an important role in regulating the steady state level of IAA during IAA-mediated growth.

Acknowledgments—We thank Jocelyn Ozga for her technical assistance and statistical analysis.

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