

# Interaction of picolinamide fungicide primary metabolites UK-2A and CAS -649 with the cytochrome bc 1 complex Qi site: mutation effects and modeling in Saccharomyces cerevisiae

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David Young, Nick Wang, Brigitte Meunier. Interaction of picolinamide fungicide primary metabolites UK-2A and CAS -649 with the cytochrome bc 1 complex Qi site: mutation effects and modeling in Saccharomyces cerevisiae. Pest Management Science, In press, 10.1002/ps.6893. hal-03643114

# HAL Id: hal-03643114 https://hal.science/hal-03643114v1

Submitted on 15 Apr 2022

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1	Title: Interaction of picolinamide fungicide primary metabolites UK-2A and CAS-649 with the
2	cytochrome $bc_1$ complex Qi site: mutation effects and modeling in Saccharomyces cerevisiae
3	
4	Running title: Effects of Qi site mutations on UK-2A and CAS-649
5	
6	David H. Young, <sup>a,*</sup> Brigitte Meunier <sup>b</sup> and Nick X. Wang <sup>a</sup>
7	
8	Abstract
9	
10	BACKGROUND: Fenpicoxamid and florylpicoxamid are picolinamide fungicides targeting the Qi site of
11	the cytochrome $bc_1$ complex, via their primary metabolites UK-2A and CAS-649, respectively. We
12	explore binding interactions and resistance mechanisms for picolinamides, antimycin A and ilicicolin H in
13	yeast by testing effects of cytochrome b amino acid changes on fungicide sensitivity and interpreting
14	results using molecular docking.
15	
16	<b>RESULTS:</b> Effects of amino acid changes on sensitivity to UK-2A and CAS-649 were similar, with highest
17	resistance associated with exchanges involving G37 and substitutions N31K and L198F. These changes,
18	as well as K228M, also affected antimycin A, while ilicicolin H was affected by changes at G37 and L198,
19	as well as Q22E. N31 substitution patterns suggest that a lysine at position 31 introduces an electrostatic
20	interaction with neighboring D229, causing disruption of a key salt-bridge interaction with
21	picolinamides. Changes involving G37 and L198 imply resistance primarily through steric interference.
22	G37 changes also showed differences between CAS-649 and UK-2A or antimycin A with respect to
23	branched versus unbranched amino acids. N31K and substitution of G37 by large amino acids reduced
24	growth rate substantially while L198 substitutions showed little effect on growth.

26	<b>CONCLUSION:</b> Binding of UK-2A and CAS-649 at the Qi site involves similar interactions such that general			
27	cross-resistance between fenpicoxamid and florylpicoxamid is anticipated in target pathogens. Some			
28	resistance mutations reduced growth rate and could carry a fitness penalty in pathogens. However			
20				
29	certain changes involving G37 and L198 carry little or no growth penalty and may pose the greatest risk			
30	for resistance development in the field.			
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32				
33	Keywords: UK-2A; CAS-649; picolinamide fungicide; antimycin A; ilicicolin H; resistance mutation			
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#### 42 1 INTRODUCTION

43 Fenpicoxamid (Fig. 1) was recently introduced as a new fungicide which acts at the Qi site of the cytochrome  $bc_1$  complex (complex III) in the mitochondrial electron transport chain.<sup>1</sup> As the first Qil 44 45 fungicide with efficacy against Ascomycete pathogens, fenpicoxamid provides a new mode of action for 46 control of Septoria leaf blotch (Zymoseptoria tritici) and other diseases in cereals, as well as black 47 Sigatoka (Mycosphaerella fijiensis) in bananas. Chemically, fenpicoxamid belongs to a new "picolinamide" class of fungicides and is derived from the natural product UK-2A,<sup>2</sup> a highly potent Qi site 48 49 inhibitor.<sup>3,4</sup> UK-2A is structurally related to the Qi site inhibitor antimycin A and is produced by 50 fermentation of *Streptomyces* s. 517-02.<sup>1</sup> Conversion of UK-2A to fenpicoxamid is achieved by addition 51 of an isobutyryloxymethyl ether substituent. This modification to the hydroxyl substituent on the 52 picolinamide head group increases stability on the plant surface, and results in greatly improved disease 53 control.<sup>1</sup> Within the plant or pathogen, fenpicoxamid is then converted back to UK-2A, as the 54 fungicidally active species. 55 56 Exploration of structure-activity relationships for UK-2A analogs enabled the design of a fully synthetic 57 new Qil fungicide florylpicoxamid (Fig. 1), which is currently in commercial development and lacks the complex 9-member macrocycle of UK-2A.<sup>5</sup> The primary metabolite CAS-649 is responsible for activity of 58 florylpicoxamid, and is generated in vivo by removal of the acetyl substituent on the picolinamide head.<sup>5</sup> 59

- 60 An important feature of florylpicoxamid is its strong efficacy against a broad range of Ascomycetes,
- 61 including *Botrytis, Colletotrichum* and *Alternaria* species, as well as powdery mildew pathogens.<sup>6</sup> This
- 62 will expand the use of picolinamide fungicides to many additional markets and provide a new mode of
- 63 action for controlling important diseases in row crops, fruits and vegetables.

65 Fungicides which target the bc1 complex act at either the Qo or Qi sites that are formed by the central 66 subunit of the multisubunit complex, namely cytochrome b (cyt b). They are referred to as QoI and QiI fungicides, respectively. Resistance to QoIs and QiIs is most commonly caused by cyt b changes at their 67 68 respective target sites, such that resistance mutations at the Qo site do not reduce efficacy of QiI fungicides, and vice-versa.<sup>7,8</sup> In the specific case of picolinamide fungicides, the G143A change 69 70 responsible for strobilurin-resistance does not reduce efficacy of fenpicoxamid and florylpicoxamid in Z. 71 tritici, <sup>1,6,7</sup> and there is some evidence for negatively correlated cross-resistance.<sup>8</sup> Strobilurins represent 72 the largest class of bc1 complex inhibitors, which when first introduced were believed to be at low risk 73 for resistance development because the target protein, cyt *b*, is encoded by a mitochondrial gene. 74 Multiple applications per season and use in solo applications rather than mixtures likely contributed to a rapid development of resistance.<sup>9</sup> The mutation G143A is responsible for efficacy loss in most cases of 75 76 strobilurin resistance, while the F129L mutation confers lower levels of field resistance in Phakopsora 77 pachyrhizi (soybean rust), Pyrenophora teres (net blotch in barley), Alternaria solani (potato/tomato early blight) and Pythium aphanidermatum (Pythium blight of turfgrass).<sup>10,11</sup> Effects of these mutations 78 79 have been explained by their impacts on binding interactions at the Qo site in cyt b molecular docking experiments.<sup>12</sup> The Qil fungicides cyazofamid and amisulbrom were launched in 2001 and 2003, 80 81 respectively, and are used to control Oomycete diseases. Cyt b modifications which cause resistance 82 have been reported in Plasmopara viticola (grape downy mildew), involving the insertions E203-DE-V204 and E203-VE-V204, as well as substitution L201S.<sup>13</sup> Another Oomycete fungicide, ametoctradin, is 83 believed to bind to both Qo and Qi sites<sup>14</sup> and the Qi site resistance mutation S34L has been reported.<sup>15</sup> 84 85 Baseline sensitivity monitoring for fenpicoxamid in Z. tritici populations has shown a relatively narrow 86 range of sensitivities and no detectable resistance.<sup>9</sup> In the laboratory, however, mutants resistant to 87

fenpicoxamid and UK-2A have been isolated in yeast and Z. tritici: amino acid substitutions N31K, G37C

89 and L198F at the Qi site conferred resistance in Saccharomyces cerevisiae,<sup>7</sup> and the mutation G37V was 90 identified in lab mutants of Zymoseptoria tritici by selection in the presence of fenpicoxamid using an experimental evolution approach.<sup>8</sup> Target site changes conferring resistance to fenpicoxamid have not 91 92 yet been reported in field populations. However, the aforementioned examples of resistance to 93 commercialized bc1 complex inhibitor fungicides, as well as lab studies with fenpicoxamid, suggest that 94 target site resistance to both fenpicoxamid and florylpicoxamid must be anticipated and appropriate 95 resistance management practices implemented. To preserve its effectiveness, fenpicoxamid should be 96 applied only once per season and in mixture with another effective mode of action. Suitable resistance 97 management strategies will also be employed for florypicoxamid when it is commercialized, as 98 appropriate for the targeted disease and crop.

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100 The isolation of resistant mutants in yeast, or modification of binding sites through introduction of 101 specific amino acid changes, combined with crystallographic and modeling studies has been a successful 102 strategy in understanding binding site interactions for a wide variety of  $bc_1$  complex inhibitors.<sup>16-19</sup> 103 Moreover, S. cerevisiae is the only fungal species currently amenable to introduction of specific amino 104 acid substitutions in the mitochondrially encoded cyt b. This allows proposed inhibitor docking poses to 105 be evaluated experimentally, resulting in more robust binding site models. In addition, mechanisms 106 responsible for target site resistance can be explored by analyzing effects of amino acid exchange. In our 107 current study, we use yeast as a model system to compare binding site interactions and resistance 108 mechanisms for UK-2A and CAS-649, as well as two other natural product Qi site inhibitors antimycin A 109 and ilicicolin H, providing insights into similarities and differences between these structurally different 110 ligands.

112	The ability of amino acid changes to disrupt target site interactions without significant fitness penalty
113	will likely determine the identity of resistance mutations which might emerge in pathogen populations
114	exposed to picolinamide fungicides. Consequently, similarities and differences between UK-2A and CAS-
115	649 with respect to effects of mutations on sensitivity are of practical importance in assessing the
116	likelihood of cross-resistance in pathogens on certain crops where both fenpicoxamid and
117	florylpicoxamid might be registered, and in providing recommendations for resistance management.

#### 119 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### 120 2.1 Cytochrome b mutants

A wild-type diploid strain of *S. cerevisiae* containing an intron-free version of the cytochrome *b* gene was
 used as the parental strain. Mutants containing the G37C, L198F and N31K changes were isolated by
 selection on fenpicoxamid or antimycin A.<sup>7</sup> All other mutants were generated by site-directed
 mutagenesis and mitochondrial transformation by methods described previously.<sup>20,21</sup>

125

### 126 2.2 Fungitoxicity assays

127 Compounds were dissolved in DMSO and 3-fold dilutions in DMSO were prepared by serial dilution.

128 Aliquots (1 µL) of each dilution were transferred to wells of flat-bottomed 96-well microtiter plates, with

129 three replicate wells for each treatment, and DMSO alone in control wells. Wells then received 100 μL of

130 YPEth broth (10 g of yeast extract, 20 g of Bacto peptone and 2% (v/v) of ethanol per liter). Cells taken

131 from overnight cultures grown on YPD agar (Becton, Dickinson and Co., Sparks, MD, USA) at 30 °C were

132 suspended in YPEth broth at a cell density of  $2 \times 10^5$  cells mL<sup>-1</sup>. Wells were inoculated with 100  $\mu$ L of cell

133 suspension and the plates were incubated at 30 °C for 45 h. After mixing well contents to provide

134 homogeneous cell suspension, growth was measured using a NEPHELOstar Galaxy plate reader (BMG

135 Labtech, Cary, NC, USA) and 50% effective concentration (EC50) values for growth inhibition were

determined using the CALCUSYN program (Biosoft, Cambridge, UK). Mutants were tested in two or more

137 independent experiments and average EC50 values ± SEM determined across all replicates.

138

#### 139 2.3 Molecular docking of ligands at the *S. cerevisiae* Qi site

140 The crystal structure of the *S. cerevisiae* cytochrome  $bc_1$  complex (PDB: 1EZV)<sup>22</sup> was used as the protein

- 141 target. The structure was first parameterized and then refined in the QuickPrep of MOE (CCG Inc.,
- 142 Montreal, Canada) using Amber14:EHT force field. After the protein system had been well prepared, UK-

2A, CAS-649, antimycin A and ilicicolin H were docked into the Qi site using the Induce Fit docking
method with MMFF94x force field in MOE. Each docking run generated 30 docking poses. The most
likely binding pose for each molecule was selected based on measured target site mutation effects and
docking score.

147

### 148 **2.4** Evaluation of kinetic growth rate

149 Cells from overnight cultures grown on YPD medium at 30 °C were suspended in YPEth broth and 150 adjusted to  $A_{600}$  = 0.3 in a 1 cm cuvette. Cell suspensions (100 µL)were added to wells of a 96-well flat-151 bottom tissue culture plate (Cat. No. 655180, Greiner Bio-One, Monroe, NC, USA) with 8 replicate wells per strain. The plate was sealed with Breathe-Easy<sup>™</sup> sealing film (Cat. No. BEM-1, Diversified Biotech, 152 153 Dedham, MA, USA). Growth curves were measured in a Cytation 3 instrument (BioTek Instruments, 154 Winooski, VT, USA) at 30 °C using continuous double orbital shaking at 425 cpm with 3 mm amplitude 155 and measurements taken at 1 h intervals. Specific growth rates were determined during exponential 156 growth over the 6 - 11 h period after start of the experiment and used to calculate doubling time. All 157 experiments were repeated twice with 8 replicates per experiment and growth rate ± SD determined 158 across all replicates.

#### 160 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 161 **3.1 Qi site mutants**

162 The Qi site mutant strains used in the study were selected based on various criteria (Table 1). Different 163 amino acid substitutions at N31, G37 and L198 were designed to explore mechanisms responsible for reduced sensitivity of N31K, G37C/V and L198F, which confer resistance to UK-2A,<sup>7,8</sup> to characterize 164 165 effects of these changes on CAS-649, antimycin A and ilicicolin H, and evaluate natural variants found in fungal pathogens. Mutations Y16A and M221F were studied to investigate proposed roles in ligand 166 binding<sup>,</sup> of Y16<sup>23</sup> and F221,<sup>33</sup> a natural variant in Z. tritici. Several additional mutations known to confer 167 168 reduced sensitivity to other Qi site ligands were also included to evaluate potential cross-resistance to 169 UK-2A and CAS-649.

170

171 **3.2** Effects of mutations on inhibitor sensitivity

172 Despite considerable structural differences between UK-2A and CAS-649, the effects of mutations at the 173 Qi site on sensitivity were quite similar overall for the two molecules (Figs. 2 and 3). Among the various 174 amino acid changes examined, those associated with high resistance factors for the two molecules 175 involved various G37 changes, and substitutions N31K and L198F. The same changes affected sensitivity 176 to antimycin A, although resistance factors were lower (Fig. 4). Sensitivity to antimycin A was also reduced by mutation K228M, which did not affect UK-2A or CAS-649. The similarity in mutation effects 177 178 for UK-2A and CAS-649 in yeast suggests that cross-resistance between fenpicoxamid and 179 florylpicoxamid is most likely to be observed in plant pathogens should target site resistance develop in 180 the field. 181

182 Illicicolin H is structurally different from UK-2A, antimycin A and CAS-649, and is known to be affected by
 183 a number of Qi site mutations including S20I/L/T, Q22E/T, G37C/D/S, L198F and M221E/Q.<sup>19,25,26,30</sup> The

strong resistance observed in our study for Q22E, G37C/S and L198F (Fig. 5) is in agreement with
previous work. M221Q conferred only a low level of resistance, consistent with the weak effect reported
for this mutation at the enzyme level.<sup>26</sup> Whereas cross-resistance between illicicolin H, antimycin A and
picolinamides was seen for L198F and G37 substitutions, differences between ilicicolin H and the other
ligands were apparent for N31K, which did not confer resistance to ilicicolin H, and for Q22E which
strongly reduced sensitivity to Ilicicolin H but did not affect the other inhibitors.

190

### 191 3.3 Binding poses for UK-2A, CAS-649 and antimycin A

192 The preferred docking poses for UK-2A and CAS-649 show the flat, polar picolinamide head located deep 193 within the binding pocket and the bulky hydrophobic tail portions extending towards the outside of pocket (Figs. 6 and 7). For the head moiety, both molecules use the protonated pyridine N to form a 194 195 strong salt bridge with the deprotonated carboxylic side chain of D229. As reported previously, this pose 196 for UK-2A is strongly supported by analysis of yeast mutation effects on activity of analogs with different 197 head groups and the importance of the pyridyl N for activity.<sup>7</sup> Different binding interactions are 198 employed by antimycin A (Fig. 8), which instead forms two hydrogen bonds with D229 using the 199 hydroxyl and formamide substituents of the phenyl head. The carbonyl of the formylamino group also 200 forms a H-bond network via a water molecule with K228 and N31. UK-2A, CAS-649 and antimycin A 201 share the same amide linker which forms an intramolecular hydrogen bond between the amide N and 202 the OH substituent on the aryl ring to stabilize the co-planar conformation of the head. The tail portions 203 of UK-2A and antimycin A share the same bislactone core but differ with respect to side chain 204 substituents. UK-2A has 2-methyl propanoate and benzyl at the C-7 and C-8 positions, respectively, 205 whereas antimycin A has 3-methyl butanoate and a hexyl moiety. Binding interactions for the tail 206 portions of UK-2A, CAS-649 and antimycin A are primarily hydrophobic and the ligands are near residues 207 G37 and L198, which can explain altered sensitivity in response to substitution of these residues.

208 In a Z. tritici binding model, an alternative binding orientation with the picolinamide head of UK-2A 209 flipped by 180° had been postulated primarily to explain high potency towards Z. tritici of certain 210 analogs with alternative head groups which lack the ability to form a salt bridge, yet are highly active 211 against Z. tritici.<sup>33</sup> In this pose, the OH substituent on the picolinamide head binds to D229, rather than 212 the pyridyl N, and this pose is enabled by pi-pi stacking with F221 as a key interaction. Since in yeast the 213 pi-pi stacking interaction is not feasible due to a methionine instead of a phenylalanine at position 221, 214 we used the yeast system to compare these two amino acids in terms of their impact on sensitivity to 215 UK-2A and CAS-649, based on the assumption that an increase in sensitivity should be observed if pi-pi 216 stacking with F221 was enabled to mimic the Z. tritici binding pocket. The fact that the M221F 217 substitution did not alter sensitivity to UK-2A and CAS-649 (Figs. 2 and 3) argues against the suggested 218 pi-pi interaction with F221 in Z tritici as a key interaction for analogs with the picolinamide head. A 219 critical role for F221 in binding is also not supported by sequence analysis of other pathogens since 220 some pathogens which are highly sensitive to picolinamides, such as Erysiphe necator, Blumeria graminis 221 and Puccinia triticina, have M221 like yeast, or I221 in the case of Phakopsora pachyrhizi (Table 2). While 222 the potency against Z. tritici of picolinamide analogs with alternative head groups that lack the ability to 223 form a salt bridge may indeed involve an alternative pose enabled by pi-pi stacking with F221, for 224 picolinamides like UK-2A and CAS-649 the pose involving the salt bridge interaction between the pyridyl 225 N and D229 is the most likely. Another amino acid which has been proposed to play a possible role in binding of UK-2A is Y16,<sup>23</sup> a 226

residue which is highly conserved across fungi. In the binding pocket this residue lies in close proximity
to the benzyl substituent at C8 of the bislactone ring with the possibility of participation in a pi-pi
stacking interaction. Although CAS-649 and UK-2A adopt a similar binding pose, pi-pi stacking with Y16
would be less likely for CAS-649 because the branched *p*-fluoro phenyl substituent of CAS-649 is farther
from Y16 than the benzyl of UK-2A. To test the possible role for Y16 in binding, we evaluated the Y16A

mutation since introduction of an alanine would negate any pi-pi stacking interaction. In fact, the Y16A
change did not reduce sensitivity to UK-2A and CAS-649, but instead increased sensitivity, particularly
for CAS-649 (Figs. 2 and 3). These results suggest that interaction with Y16 is not required for binding of
picolinamides.

236

#### 237 3.4 Binding pose for ilicicolin H

238 The most likely binding pose of ilicicolin H (Fig. 9) overlaps those of UK-2A, CAS-649 and antimycin A but 239 involves different ligand-protein interactions. A key interaction involves H-bonding of the phenol head 240 to Q22. The high level of resistance conferred by the Q22E mutation can be explained by loss of this 241 interaction. In contrast to Q22E, the Q22M change reduced sensitivity to ilicicolin H only slightly suggesting that a methionine can substitute for glutamine in H-bonding. The hydroxyl group in the 242 243 middle ring of ilicicolin H forms an intramolecular hydrogen bond with the nearby ketone group to 244 position the bulky fused ring portion between the G37 and L198 residues. As for picolinamides and 245 antimycin A, proximity to these residues explains the mutation effects resulting from amino acid 246 substitution. Unlike the other ligands, no involvement of N31 or D229 is apparent in this binding pose. 247 Our binding pose differs from an earlier model in *Candida albicans* in which a key interaction of the phenol moiety with N31 was proposed.<sup>30</sup> However, such an interaction is not consistent with the lack of 248 249 effect of N31K on sensitivity (Fig. 5). Iilicicolin H is positioned very close to both G37 and L198, with 250 closest distances of 3.6 and 3.5 Å, respectively. This close proximity suggests that replacement of these 251 amino acids by larger residues would interfere with binding due to steric effects and likely explains the 252 high levels of resistance associated with G37 changes and L198F (Fig. 5).

253

254 3.5 N31 Mutations

Since changes involving N31, G37 and L198 are the primary ones associated with reduced sensitivity to UK-2A and CAS-649, we explored the mechanisms responsible for resistance by comparing the effects of various substitutions at these positions. We also examined effects of these changes on growth rate in the hope of gaining insight into potential fitness penalties, which could determine mutations most likely to appear in pathogens in nature in response to fungicide selection pressure.

260

In the crystal structure of the  $bc_1$  complex from *Bos taurus* with bound antimycin A<sup>35</sup> and in our yeast 261 262 models for binding of UK-2A and CAS-649, there is no direct interaction between the ligands and N31 263 (N32 in B. taurus). According to the bovine structure, N31 participates in an extensive H-bonding chain 264 involving other amino acids and water molecules: one water molecule forms a link between N31, K228 and I26, while a second water links N31, S34 and D229.<sup>35</sup> The latter residue has been proposed to bind 265 266 to the benzoquinone moiety of coenzyme Q6 and act as a proton donor during reduction of the 267 substrate.<sup>22</sup> Exchange of N31 by other amino acids or substitution of S34 should disrupt this H-bonding 268 network and would likely impact D229, potentially interfering with its key role in binding of picolinamide 269 fungicides and antimycin A (Figs. 6 - 8). However, in the yeast crystal structure with the bound natural substrate coenzyme Q6 (ubiquinone 6),<sup>22</sup> N31 does not interact with D229 via water. It is not clear 270 271 whether the apparent differences in binding of N31 to D229 via water between the bovine structure 272 with bound antimycin A and the yeast structure with bound coenzyme Q6 are a consequence of 273 different induced fit conformational changes during binding of antimycin A versus coenzyme Q6, the 274 different protein sources, or methods for preparation of crystals. It is significant that resistance to UK-275 2A, CAS-649 and antimycin A was associated with introduction of the basic lysine side chain and not with 276 acidic (aspartate), polar neutral (serine) or glycine residues, or with the S34L exchange (Figs. 2-4). If 277 resistance from substitution of N31 was due to disruption of a H-bonding network, these other 278 mutations would also be expected to confer resistance. A more likely explanation is that introduction of

279 a lysine at position 31 affects D229 by electrostatic lysine-aspartate attraction and prevents or weakens 280 the critical ligand binding interactions involving D229. In Ascomycete and Basidiomycete pathogens, N31 281 is conserved (Table 2), and in yeast its replacement by other amino acids resulted in markedly lower 282 growth rates (Table 3). It is possible that this reflects a loss in efficiency of the  $bc_1$  complex resulting 283 from an effect, via the H-bonding network mentioned above, on the nearby D229 through interference 284 with its proposed catalytic function in substrate reduction. These considerations suggests that the N31K 285 mutation, although conferring a high level of resistance in yeast, might carry a considerable fitness 286 penalty if it were to occur in field populations of plant pathogens.

287

### 288 3.6 G37 Mutations

289 Among the G37 modifications explored, a high level of resistance to both UK-2A and CAS-649 was found 290 for G37V/C/I/L, while G37M conferred a moderate level of resistance (Figs. 2 and 3). G37V/C/I/L also 291 conferred resistance to antimycin A (Fig. 4) although resistance factors (RFs) were lower than for picolinamides. The data suggest a rough correlation between RFs and amino acid size, consistent with 292 293 steric effects on binding since the highest RFs were found for G37V/C/I/L and the smallest for G37A/S. 294 However, branching at the  $\beta$  carbon atom of amino acids also impacted the level of resistance in the 295 case of UK-2A and antimycin A, since the branched amino acids valine and isoleucine produced 296 significantly higher RFs than unbranched residues of comparable size, cysteine and leucine. Interestingly, 297 the differential effect of branched and unbranched amino acids observed for these natural products, 298 which have the same 9-membered macrocyclic scaffold, was not apparent for CAS-649. These data 299 suggest that subtle differences in binding interactions may exist between UK-2A and CAS-649 in the 300 region near G37. In the case of ilicicolin H, the exchange of G37 by other amino acids resulted in even 301 higher RFs than observed for the other ligands, suggesting even more stringent steric limitations in this 302 region of the binding site. The G37M exchange presented a curious exception to the general correlation

between level of resistance and residue size. Although methionine was the largest amino acid among
those examined, the G37M change resulted in lower RFs against all ligands than was observed for
substitution of G37 by various smaller amino acids. The reason for this is unknown but these data
suggest that the G37M change may alter the binding pocket in such a way as to modulate the effect of
size alone on ligand binding.

308

309 Pathogens which are most sensitive to fenpicoxamid and florylpicoxamid have a glycine or an alanine in 310 position 37 (Table 2). This appears consistent with the relatively small effect of the yeast G37A mutation 311 on sensitivity. Fusarium spp. are relatively insensitive to fenpicoxamid and florylpicoxamid (unpublished 312 results, Corteva Agriscience) and contain L37 and M198. In yeast, the change L198M showed little effect 313 on sensitivity to all ligands and no reduction in growth rate. However, G37L caused very high resistance 314 to the picolinamides, suggesting that the L37 variant may explain insensitivity of Fusarium spp. Yeast 315 mutant G37L+L198M was designed to mimic the Fusarium Qi site more closely, and showed interesting 316 differences from the G37L mutant in terms of inhibitor sensitivity and growth rate. For G37L+L198M, 317 resistance to UK-2A and antimycin A was lower than for the G37L mutant. However, this was not the 318 case for CAS-649 and ilicicolin H which had equivalent RFs for both the single and double mutant. 319 Moreover, in the double mutant, the L198M change compensated partially for a large reduction in 320 growth rate associated with the G37L change. One can speculate that occurrence of these two variations 321 together in Fusarium spp. may overcome effects of an otherwise deleterious G37L change, if it occurred 322 alone.

323

Mutations involving G37 impacted growth rate to varying degrees (Table 3). Substitution of glycine by relatively small amino acids, alanine and serine, did not affect growth rate. Among mutants which showed strong resistance to picolinamides, G37S showed no reduction in growth rate, G37C showed a 327 slight reduction in growth rate, while growth of G37V/I/M was substantially reduced. It is interesting to 328 note that G37C was the mutation identified in yeast through selection in the presence of fenpicoxamid<sup>7</sup> 329 although G37V/I mutants have higher resistance factors. Similarly, for ilicicolin H G37V/I mutants had 330 higher resistance factors than G37S. Yet G37S/D were the mutants isolated by selection on ilicicolin.<sup>25</sup> It 331 is likely that the smaller fitness penalties in terms of growth rate for G37C/S favored their isolation in 332 these cases. By contrast, in Z. tritici the only mutants obtained by selection on fenpicoxamid using 333 experimental evolution contained the G37V mutation.<sup>8</sup> This mutation, which produced a high level of 334 resistance to UK-2A, caused a lower efficiency of  $bc_1$  complex in a cell-free Z. tritici mitochondrial assay 335 but, unlike in yeast, did not affect the in vitro growth rate. These examples highlight the fact that the 336 particular mutant(s) selected in the laboratory or field may differ depending on the organism, and is 337 dependent on both the associated level of resistance and effect on growth or fitness.

338

#### 339 3.7 L198 Mutations

The L198F mutation was found previously by selection in the presence of fenpicoxamid<sup>7</sup> and ilicicolin H,<sup>25</sup> and showed cross-resistance to antimycin A. This mutation also conferred resistance to CAS-649 (Fig. 3). Binding poses indicate a similar distance of 3.8 or 3.9 Å between L198 and these various ligands (Figs. 6 – 9). L198F introduces the largest amino acid among the variants tested and showed the greatest mutation effect against all compounds. Other changes, involving smaller amino acids, had little or no effect on sensitivity to the picolinamides and antimycin A and relatively small effects on Ilicicolin H. These data suggest that L198F confers resistance due to a steric clash with the ligands

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For the L198F mutant, RFs for UK-2A and CAS-649 were lower than for some G37 mutants: G37V/I/L in
the case of UK-2A, and G37I/L in the case of CAS-649. However, in contrast to those changes involving
G37, substitution of L198F did not reduce growth rate (Table 3). Occurrence of F198 as a natural variant

in *Rhizoctonia solani* has been suggested as a possible explanation for the low sensitivity of this

pathogens to fenpicoxamid.<sup>36</sup> The combination of a fairly high level of resistance and little impact on
 growth in the yeast model highlights L198F as a mutation of interest which potentially could lead to field
 resistance to picolinamide fungicides in plant pathogens.

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### 356 5 CONCLUSIONS

357 Comparison of picolinamides with antimycin A and ilicicolin H showed both similarities and differences 358 in mutation effects which could be explained by overlapping binding poses. For UK-2A and CAS-649, 359 mutation effects were similar and molecular docking at the Qi site indicated common binding 360 interactions. This suggests that cross-resistance between fenpicoxamid and florylpicoxamid is likely in 361 plant pathogens should target site resistance develop in the field. Florypicoxamid is intended for use to 362 control diseases on many crops not targeted by fenpicoxamid, such that cross-resistance would have no 363 practical implications. However, the likelihood of cross-resistance is an important consideration for 364 resistance management in the case of crops like wheat and bananas where both compounds might be 365 used in future years. Certain changes involving G37 and substitution L198F were associated with high 366 levels of resistance and little or no effect on growth rate, as well as insensitivity in some species due to 367 natural variants. Notwithstanding obvious limitations in use of a yeast model to predict resistance and 368 disease-associated fitness in a different organism, our results highlight these residues as ones most likely 369 to be involved in target site resistance to picolinamide fungicides in pathogens under selection pressure 370 in the field.

371

372 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

373	The authors would like to thank the many colleagues at Corteva Agriscience involved in the discovery			
374	and development of florylpicoxamid. We would also like to acknowledge Meiji Seika Pharma Co. Ltd. for			
375	their collaboration on the development of fenpicoxamid.			
376				
377	SUPPORTING INFORMATION			
378	Supporting information may be found in the online version of this article.			
379				
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Figure 1. Structures of picolinamide fungicides fenpicoxamid and florylpicoxamid, their primary

494	metabolites UK-2A and CAS-649, antimycin A and ilicicolin H
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**Figure 2.** Effect of Qi site amino acid substitutions on sensitivity to UK-2A. Changes involving N31, G37

499 and L198 are highlighted in orange, green and blue, respectively. Resistance factor values represent

500 mean values, with SEM indicated by error bars.



**Figure 3.** Effect of Qi site amino acid substitutions on sensitivity to CAS-649. Changes involving N31, G37

and L198 are highlighted in orange, green and blue, respectively. Resistance factor values represent

506 mean values, with SEM indicated by error bars.



509 Figure 4. Effect of Qi site amino acid substitutions on sensitivity to antimycin A. Changes involving N31,

510 G37, L198 and K228 are highlighted in orange, green, blue and pink, respectively. Resistance factor

511 values represent mean values, with SEM indicated by error bars.







515 G37 and L198 are highlighted in yellow, green and blue, respectively. Resistance factor values represent

516 mean values, with SEM indicated by error bars. Asterisks indicate RF>indicated value due to <50%

517 inhibition at highest test concentration of 10  $\mu$ g mL<sup>-1</sup>.



- **Figure 6.** Docking pose of UK-2A bound to the Qi site of cytochrome *b*, showing the salt bridge
- 522 interaction with D229. Red arrows indicate the distances (Å) between the ligand and residues G37 and

523 L198.



- **Figure 7.** Docking pose of CAS-649 bound to the Qi site of cytochrome *b*, showing the salt bridge
- 528 interaction with D229. Red arrows indicate the distances (Å) between the ligand and residues G37 and

529 L198.



- **Figure 8.** Docking pose of antimycin A bound to the Qi site of cytochrome *b*, showing the H-bond
- 534 interactions with D229 and K228. Red arrows indicate the distances (Å) between the ligand and residues

535 G37 and L198.



538

- **Figure 9.** Docking pose of ilicicolin H bound to the Qi site of cytochrome *b*, showing the H-bond
- 540 interaction with Q22. Red arrows indicate the distances (Å) between the ligand and residues G37 and

541 L198.

# **Table 1.** Yeast mutants used in the current study containing amino acid substitutions in cytochrome *b*

## 544 and relevance of mutations

Mutation	Relevance			
Y16A	Y16 was hypothesized to to participate in UK-2A binding <sup>23</sup>			
I17F	Resistance to diuron and HQNO in <i>S. cerevisiae</i> <sup>24</sup>			
Q22E/M	Q22E confers resistance to ilicicolin H in S. cerevisiae <sup>25,26</sup>			
N31K	N31K confers resistance in <i>S. cerevisiae</i> to UK-2A, <sup>7</sup> antimycin A, diuron, and HQNO <sup>24,27</sup>			
N31G/S/D	Exploration of substitution at N31			
G33A	Resistance to funiculosin and HQNO in S. cerevisiae <sup>28</sup>			
S34A/L	S34L confers resistance to ametoctradin in <i>Plasmopara viticola</i> <sup>15</sup>			
G37A	Resistance to ML238, BRD6923 in <i>Plasmodium falciparum</i> <sup>29</sup>			
G37S	Resistance to ilicicolin H in S. cerevisiae <sup>25</sup>			
G37V	Resistance to UK-2A in Z. tritici, <sup>8</sup> antimycin A in S. cerevisiae, <sup>27</sup> ML238,			
	BRD6923 and antimycin A in <i>Plasmodium falciparum</i> 29			
G37C	Resistance to UK-2A in <i>S. cerevisiae</i> <sup>7</sup> and ilicicolin H in <i>Candida albicans</i> <sup>30</sup>			
G37I/M	Exploration of substitution at G37			
G37L	Exploration of substitution at G37 and natural variant in <i>Fusarium</i> spp.			
G37L+L198M	Natural variant in <i>Fusarium</i> spp.			
L38F	Proximity to G37 and natural variant in Z. tritici			
L198F	Resistance to UK-2A, antimycin A, <sup>7</sup> funiculosin <sup>31</sup> and ilicicolin H <sup>25</sup> in <i>S. cerevisiae</i>			
L198G/A/V/C/M	Exploration of substitution at L198			
L201S	Resistance to cyazofamid in <i>Plasmopara viticola</i> <sup>13</sup>			
H204Y, S206T/V	Resistance to HQNO in <i>S. cerevisiae</i> <sup>32</sup>			
M221F	F221 is a natural variant in <i>Z. tritici</i> and was hypothesized to participate in			
M334.0				
WIZZIQ	Resistance to HQNU, <sup>20</sup> ELQ 2/1 <sup>27</sup> and Ilicicolin H <sup>20</sup> in <i>S. cereviside</i>			
F225L	Resistance to diuron in <i>S. cerevisiae</i> <sup>27</sup>			
K228M	Resistance to antimycin A in S. cerevisiae			

# 547 **Table 2.** Amino acids at positions 16, 31, 37, 198 and 221 in various plant pathogens based on yeast

# 548 numbering

			An	nino Ao	cid	
Organism	NCBI Accession #	16	31	37	198	221
Saccharomyces cerevisiae	YP_009144709	Y	Ν	G	L	М
Zymoseptoria tritici <sup>a</sup>	AAP81933	Y	Ν	G	L	F
Pseudocercospora fijiensis <sup>a</sup>	YP_009681541	Y	Ν	G	L	F
Erysiphe necator <sup>a</sup>	QQY98156	Y	Ν	G	L	М
Cercospora beticola <sup>a</sup>	AFQ23210	Y	Ν	G	L	F
Puccinia triticinaª	YP_009680272	Y	Ν	G	L	М
Phaeosphaeria nodorum <sup>a</sup>	YP_001427390	Y	Ν	G	L	F
Phakopsora pachyrhiziª	ACT15476	Y	Ν	G	L	Ι
Botrytis cinerea <sup>a</sup>	ACL50595	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Magnaporthe grisea <sup>a</sup>	AAO91631	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Blumeria graminis f. sp. triticiª	QQY98353	Y	Ν	А	L	М
Alternaria alternata	QGA30432	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Venturia inaequalisª	AAB95255	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Colletotrichum acutatum	YP_009145212	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Colletotrichum gloeosporioides	AQT39566	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Colletotrichum graminicola	EFQ24843	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Monilinia laxa	ADF43785	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Monilinia fructigena	ADK35189	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Monilinia fructicola	ACT75643	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Rhynchosporium commune <sup>a</sup>	YP_008965385	Y	Ν	А	L	F
Fusarium solani	YP_005088108	Y	Ν	L	М	М
Fusarium graminearum	DAC73963	Y	Ν	L	М	М
Fusarium oxysporum	QJQ35616	Y	Ν	L	М	М
Rhizoctonia solani	YP_008082056	Y	Ν	G	F	F

<sup>a</sup>Highly sensitive to fenpicoxamid and/or florylpicoxamid.<sup>6</sup>

Change	Doubling time ± SD (h) <sup>a</sup>
None	4.33 ± 0.67 (n = 88)
N31G	6.21 ± 0.75 (n = 16)**
N31S	7.14 ± 1.27 (n = 16) **
N31D	5.84 ± 1.04 (n = 16) **
N31K	7.10 ± 0.66 (n = 16) **
G37A	4.22 ± 0.38 (n = 16)
G37S	4.14 ± 0.39 (n = 16)
G37V	7.36 ± 1.49 (n = 16) **
G37C	4.52 ± 0.60 (n = 16)
G37L	13.44 ± 3.50 (n = 16) **
G37L+L198M	8.26 ± 2.78 (n = 16) **
G37I	11.60 ± 2.47 (n = 16) **
G37M	7.78 ± 1.37 (n = 16) **
L198G	4.76 ± 0.69 (n = 16) *
L198A	4.53 ± 0.38 (n = 16)
L198V	4.25 ± 0.37 (n = 16)
L198C	3.74 ± 0.19 (n = 16) **
L198M	3.70 ± 0.20 (n = 16) **
L198F	3.91 ± 0.33 (n = 16) *

# **Table 3.** Effects of amino acid change at N31, G37 and L198 on doubling time

<sup>a</sup>One and two asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference in doubling time from the parent