

Molecular characterization of Cowpea main storage protein breakdown products, generated during seed germination

S. Borgonovi, G. Heinzl, F. Castagna, C. Leogrande, S. De Benedetti, A. Scarafoni DeFENS, University of Milan



# BACKGROUND

Sprouting of legumes influence their nutritional quality. Seed storage proteins (SSP) are the nitrogen reserve that support seedling growth during first steps of germination. New findings indicate that several biological activities emerge after proteolytic breakdown, such as defense and antimicrobial plant properties, while bioactive peptide production, useful for human wellbeing, deserves investigations.



# AIM

To study the proteolytic products originating from the major Cowpea storage protein  $\beta$ -vignin, after its treatment with endogenous proteases extracted from germinating seeds.



## **RESULTS**

**β-vignin digestion gives rise to a resistant undigested core that remains** associated in a quaternary structure identical to the native protein



Digested  $\beta$ -vignin stability at different pH and ionic strength is lower than the native, but it is enough to allow a transient accumulation and reflects its solubility

#### Native

### Digested



- The presence of a stable intermediate of proteolysis Most acid fragment of digested  $\beta$ -vignin is predicted suggests a biological function to be an amyloid protein -> Amyloid formation was
- Potential interest for a plant biodefence purpose
- Potential interest for a human well being related
- recently described for SSPs









Native

Digested









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Seed

Nutrition

Pathogens

defense

Bioactive peptides

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Oligomerization of the native protein Solubility was compared was studied as a function of pH at different pH



