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Genome-wide identification and characterization of the fibrillin gene family in *Triticum aestivum*

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Background. Fibrillin (*FBN*) is a highly conserved family of genes that is widely distributed in the photosynthetic organs of plants. Members of this gene family are widely involved in the growth and development of plants and their response to biotic and abiotic stresses. Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), which is an important food crop, has a complex genetic background and little progress in the understanding of its molecular mechanism. **Methods.** In this study, we identified 26 *FBN* genes in the whole genome of *T. aestivum* through bioinformatics. These genes were divided into 11 subgroups and distributed on 11 chromosomes of *T. aestivum*. Interestingly, most of TaFBN genes are located on the chromosomes 2A, 2B and 2D. The gene structure of each subgroup of gene family members and the position and number of motifs were highly similar. **Results.** The evolutionary analysis results indicated that the affinities of *FBNs* in monocots were closer together. Tissue-specific analysis revealed that *TaFBN* genes were expressed in different tissues and developmental stages. In addition, some *TaFBNs* were involved in one or more biotic and abiotic stresses. These results provide a basis for further study of the biological function of the *FBNs*.

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Genome-wide identification and characterization of the

fibrillin gene family in *Triticum aestivum*

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14 Abstract

- **Background.** Fibrillin (*FBN*) is a highly conserved family of genes that is widely distributed in
- the photosynthetic organs of plants. Members of this gene family are widely involved in the
- 17 growth and development of plants and their response to biotic and abiotic stresses. Wheat
- 18 (*Triticum aestivum*), which is an important food crop, has a complex genetic background and
- 19 little progress in the understanding of its molecular mechanism.
- 20 **Methods.** In this study, we identified 26 *FBN* genes in the whole genome of *T. aestivum* through
- 21 bioinformatics methods. These genes were divided into 11 subgroups and distributed on 11
- 22 chromosomes of *T. aestivum*. Interestingly, most of *TaFBN* genes are located on the
- 23 chromosomes 2A, 2B and 2D. The gene structure of each subgroup of gene family members and
- 24 the position and number of motifs were highly similar.
- 25 **Results.** The evolutionary analysis results indicated that the affinities of *FBNs* in monocots were
- 26 closer together. Tissue-specific analysis revealed that *TaFBN* genes were expressed in different



- 27 tissues and developmental stages. In addition, some *TaFBNs* were involved in one or more biotic
- and abiotic stresses. These results provide a basis for further study of the biological function of
- the FBNs.
- 30 Subjects: Bioinformatics, Genomics, Plant Science
- 31 Keywords: Fibrillin, *Triticum aestivum*, Abiotic stress, Gene duplication, Phylogenetic tree,
- 32 *Cis*-regulatory elements

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Introduction

- Fibrillins (FBNs) are named after fibrils because these proteins were first detected in fibrils
- in the chromoplasts of dog rose (*Rosa rugosa*) and bell pepper (*Capsicum annuum*) fruit
- 37 (Newman et al., 1989; Deruère et al., 1994; Kim et al., 2015). Since then, FBN proteins have
- been increasingly found in different organelles, including plastoglobules (PGs) in the
- 39 chloroplasts and algal eyespots. Therefore, members of the FBN protein family have been given
- 40 many different names, including plastid-lipid associated protein (PAP), plastoglobule (PGL),
- 41 chloroplastic drought-induced stress protein of 34 kDa (CDSP 34), and chromoplast-specific
- 42 carotenoid-associated protein (ChrC) (Pozueta-Romero et al., 1997; Ting et al., 1998; Kim et al.,
- 43 2015). FBN proteins are located in the photosynthetic organs of cyanobacteria and some higher
- plants (Kim et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2017). Lundquist et al. (2012) identified 14 FBN genes in
- 45 Arabidopsis by proteomic analysis, 50% of which were in PGs and others are mainly distributed
- in stroma and thylakoid membranes (Lundquist et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015).
- So far, the FBN protein family is mainly composed of 12 subfamilies; 11 of these have been
- 48 found in higher plants and one has been identified in algae (Lohscheider and Río Bártulos, 2016;
- 49 Kim et al., 2017). The members of these subfamilies were found to have similar hydrophobic
- 50 structures; however, the biophysical properties of these proteins are quite diverse, including
- proteins with molecular weights of 20–42 kDa and isoelectric point (pI) values of 4–9 (Vidi et al.,
- 52 2006; Lundquist et al., 2012). These findings suggest that each FBN protein may have specific



biological functions. In Arabidopsis thaliana, FBN proteins contain a conserved hydrophobic 53 domain (lipocalin motif 1) in the N-terminus and amino acid residues near the C-terminus, 54 including aspartic acid (Singh et al., 2010). Furthermore, Lohscheider and Río Bártulos (2016) 55 predicted that the three-dimensional structure of FBNs is similar to that of lipocalin, with the 56 ability to bind and transport small hydrophobic molecules (Lohscheider and Río Bártulos, 2016), 57 which suggests that the FBN family may have similar biological functions (Singh et al., 2010; 58 59 Francesc et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2015). FBN proteins have a variety of important biological functions, such as participating in 60 photosynthesis, the formation of lipoprotein structures, and responses to abiotic and biotic 61 stresses (*Kim et al.*, 2015). Initially, researchers found that fibrillins located on the outer surface 62 of red pepper chromoplast fibrils by Immunogold electron microscopy (*Deruère et al.*, 1994). 63 Furthermore, fibril-like structures can be reconstituted in vitro from a mixture of FBN protein, 64 lipids, and bicyclic carotenoids (*Deruère et al., 1994; Kim et al., 2015*). Compared to wild-type 65 plants, RNAi-transgenic tomato plants with suppressed LeChrC (FBN1) accumulate 30% less 66 carotenoids (Leitner-Dagan et al., 2006; Singh et al., 2010). In addition, when FBN5 gene was 67 deleted in Arabidopsis thaliana and rice, mutant plants were more sensitive to light stress and the 68 levels of PQ-9 and PC-8 in the leaves were induced (Kim et al., 2017). These results suggest that 69 FBNs regulated the formation of chromoplast fibrils and the accumulation of carotenoids. In 70 71 addition to structural roles, Fibrillin gene expression is also regulated by numerous abiotic and 72 biotic stresses, especially oxidative stress (Youssef et al., 2010). For example, the expression of the Chrc (FBNI) is induced in cucumber leaves infected with Sphaerotheca fuliginea (Leitner-73 Dagan et al., 2006). Similar results have been reported when tomato plants infected with the 74 fungus Botrytis cinerea. However, the expression patterns of fibrillins were varied and 75 76 complexed during abiotic stress such as heat, cold, drought, high light and wounding treatment (Pruvot et al., 1996; Kuntz et al., 1998; Georg et al., 2001; Leitner-Dagan et al., 2006; Simkin et 77 al., 2008). AtFBN1a expression was induced and AtFBN2 expression was repressed when 78 subjected to drought or cold treatment (Laizet et al., 2004). High levels expression of fibrillin 79



80	(FBN1) were observed in potato plants during water stress (Lee et al., 2007). Similarly, the
81	mutants of pgl1 and pgl2 were more sensitive to high light stress than was the wild-type in
82	Synechocystis(Cunningham et al., 2010). Moreover, when LeChrC (FBN1), FBI4 and AtFBN4
83	were knocked down in tomato, apple, and Arabidopsis, the mutant plants were more susceptible
84	to the phytopathogenic fungus Botrytis cinerea and pathogenic bacteria Erwinia amylovora and
85	Pseudomonas syringae pv. tomato, respectively (Cooper et al., 2003; Leitner-Dagan et al., 2006;
86	Singh et al., 2010). Meanwhile, FBN gene expression is regulated by hormones, including
87	gibberellic acid, jasmonate, and abscisic acid, during plant growth and developmental stages, as
88	well as when plants are subjected to stresses (Yang et al., 2006; Youssef et al., 2010; Kim et al.,
89	2017). The accumulation of FBN proteins were decreased in tomato flacca mutant plant, which
90	is defective in ABA biosynthesis, subjected to drought stress. And the level of FBN protein can
91	be induced when exogenous supply of ABA (Gillet et al., 2001). Moreover, The FBN1 and
92	FBN2 proteins are involved in the jasmonate biosynthesis pathway in response to light and cold
93	stress (Youssef et al., 2010). By contrast, FBN1 mRNA and protein levels declined in red pepper
94	fruit when treated with gibberellic acid (Deruère et al., 1994).
95	Wheat (Triticum aestivum L.) is an important food crop that is widely grown around the
96	world. Approximately 40% of the global population depends on <i>T. aestivum</i> as their staple food
97	(Paux et al., 2008; Han et al., 2019). Common T. aestivum is a heterogenous hexaploid
98	containing A, B, and D genomes; therefore, the genome information is large and complex (Ling
99	et al., 2013; Glover et al., 2015; Han et al., 2019). Moreover, owing to the complex genetic
100	background of T. aestivum, only part of genes, which regulated important agronomic traits and
101	molecular breeding, were reported in wheat. Therefore, the study of <i>T. aestivum</i> functional
102	genomics is lagging far behind rice and corn. In recent years, high-quality wheat genome
103	sequencing has been completed (International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium et al.,
104	2018); this will play an important role in elucidating the molecular mechanisms involved in
105	growth and development, resistance, and high yield (Pradhan et al., 2019; Rahimi et al., 2019).
106	Although there is increasing evidence that <i>FBN</i> s play major roles in photosynthetic



organisms, to date, they have been identified and characterized in few plant species. In addition, the biological functional study of *T. aestivum FBNs* (*TaFBNs*) is limited in wheat. The identification and functional characterization of the *FBN* family in *T. aestivum* will contribute to elucidating the stress response mechanisms. In this study, we performed a genome-wide survey using the reported FBN protein sequences in the *T. aestivum* database. We identified 26 *FBN* genes in *T. aestivum* and used bioinformatic methods to analyze their biophysical properties, including gene structures and conserved motifs, as well as the chromosome distribution and gene duplication of *FBN* genes. In addition, we analyzed the expression profiles of *TaFBN* genes in different tissues, at different developmental stages, and in response to abiotic and biotic stresses using the *T. aestivum* expression database. These results may provide a basis for studying the biological function of the *FBN* gene in different growth and development stages of *T. aestivum*.

Materials & Methods

Plants material cultivation and treatments

The common *T. aestivum* cultivar "Chinese spring" was used in this study. *Triticum aestivum* seeds were sterilized with 1% NaOCl for 15 min, rinsed thoroughly with distilled water five times, and soaked in distilled water overnight at room temperature (18 °C). The seeds were transferred to filter paper and germinated for three days. The seedlings were cultured in nutrient solution and grown in a growth chamber with 16 h light (22 °C), 8 h dark (18 °C), and 50% humidity. The nutrient solution was replaced every three days at the growth stage. At 21 days old, seedlings were treated with 20% (m/V) PEG 6000 (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) for 6 h. Untreated seedlings were used as a control, and each treatment contained three independent biological replicates. The roots, shoots, and leaves were collected separately for further analysis at 1 and 6 h after treatment.

Identification of *TaFBN* genes

We used protein sequences of *Arabidopsis thaliana FBN* (*AtFBN*) and *Oryza sativa* FBN (*OsFBN*) genes as queries to perform a BLAST (E-value le⁻¹⁰) search against the *T. aestivum*



133	genome database (genome assembly from IWGSC; http://ensembl.gramene.org/). We obtained
134	a dataset of TaFBN sequences and filtered out the redundant sequences. The protein sequences of
135	AtFBN and OsFBN genes were downloaded from the Arabidopsis Information Resource
136	database (https://www.arabidopsis.org/) and the Rice Annotation Project database
137	(https://rapdb.dna.affrc.go.jp/). Since a typical FBN protein is reported to contain a conserved
138	PAP_fibrillin domain (PF04755), the online tools SMART (http://smart.embl-heidelberg.de/)
139	and InterProScan (http://www.ebi.ac.uk/interpro/) were used to predict the functional domains of
140	potential TaFBN proteins. To verify our results, all of the proteins were compared to the
141	PAP_fibrillin domain using the HMMER 3.0 program with the default E-value (E-value<10 ⁻³).
142	Proteins without the PAP_fibrillin domain were removed. The biophysical properties of the final
143	TaFBN proteins were calculated using the ExPASy ProtParam tool (https://web.expasy.org),
144	including the theoretical values of pI, relative molecular mass, and the grand average of
145	hydrophobicity (GRAVY). The subcellular localization of TaFBNs was analyzed using ProComp
146	(http://linux1.softberry.com) and WoLF PSORT II (https://www.genscript.com/wolf-psort.html).
147	In addition, the signal peptide and chloroplast transit peptides of <i>TaFBN</i> genes were predicted
148	using the SignalP 4.1 server (http://www.cbs.dtu.dk/services/SignalP-4.1/) and ChloroP 1.1
149	server (http://www.cbs.dtu.dk/services/ChloroP/).
150	Multiple sequence alignments and phylogenetic analysis
151	Full-length protein sequences of FBN gene family members identified in 13 plant species,
152	including eight monocotyledon species and five dicotyledon species, were downloaded from the
153	NCBI database (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/), the Ensembl Plants database (genome assembly
154	from IWGSC; http://ensembl.gramene.org/), and the Phytozome v12.1 database
155	(https://phytozome.jgi.doe.gov/pz/portal.html). Full-length protein sequences of these FBN genes
156	were aligned using MAFFT software (https://mafft.cbrc.jp/alignment/server/). Based on FASTA
157	files, a neighbor-joining phylogenetic tree was constructed using Molecular Evolutionary
158	Genetics Analysis (MEGA) version 7.0 software with 1000 bootstrap replicates.
159	Analysis of gene structures and conserved motifs



160	To investigate the structure of <i>TaFBN</i> genes, we used the Gene Structure Display Server 2.0
161	database (http://gsds.cbi.pku.edu.cn/) to analyze the distribution of exons and introns in <i>TaFBN</i>
162	genes. Conserved motifs were predicted using the Multiple EM for Motif Elicitation (MEME)
163	database (http://alternate.meme-suite.org/; the number of motifs was set to 10 and the motif
164	width was set to 6–50).
165	Chromosome distribution of FBN genes in T. aestivum
166	The TaFBN gene distribution map was analyzed based on the sequencing genome
167	information of the <i>TaFBN</i> gene family. The information on the position of the <i>TaFBN</i> gene
168	family on chromosomes was obtained from the Ensembl Plants database
169	(http://plants.ensembl.org/). The distribution of FBN genes on chromosomes were plotted using
170	TBtools software (https://github.com/CJ-Chen/TBtools) (Chen et al., 2018).
171	Analysis of the cis-regulatory element of FBN gene promoters
172	In this study, 2000-bp sequences upstream of translational start sites of TaFBN genes were
173	set as promoter sequences. PlantCARE software
174	(http://bioinformatics.psb.ugent.be/webtools/plant care/html/) was used to predict the cis-
175	regulatory elements based on these promoter sequences. The distribution of cis-regulatory
176	elements in the promoter of the TaFBN gene was displayed using TBtools software
177	(https://github.com/CJ-Chen/TBtools) (Chen et al., 2018).
178	Analysis of TaFBN gene expression patterns
179	The expression profile data used in this study were obtained via the Wheat Expression
180	Browser database (http://www.wheat-expression.com/) (Philippa et al., 2016; Ricardo et al.,
181	2018). We searched for FBN genes on the website using the gene ID as query terms. The
182	expression of TaFBNs in different tissues, at different developmental stages, and under different
183	abiotic and biotic stress conditions (including drought, cold, heat, and stripe rust) were analyzed.
184	The results were presented as heatmaps, with different colors representing the absolute signal
185	values. The color scale of the heatmap was given in \log_2 ratio values. The cultivar used in the
186	gene expression profiles analysis was "Chinese spring".



Total RNA isolation and real-time PCR analysis
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Total RNA from different tissues was extracted using TRIzol Reagent (Invitrogen). The total RNA was treated with RNase-free DNase I for 15 min to remove the remaining genomic DNA. First-strand cDNA was synthesized according to the manufacturer's instructions (TOYOBO, Kita-ku, Osaka, Japan), diluted 20 times, and used as a template for quantitative real-time PCR (qRT-PCR), which was performed using AceQ qPCR SYBR Green Master Mix (Vazyme, Nanjing, China). For an endogenous control, we used the *T. aestivum actin* gene (AB181991). At least three biological replicates, with three technical replicates each, were used for each treatment. Relative expression levels were calculated using the comparative 2^{-ΔΔCt} method (*Willems et al.*, 2008). The *TaFBN* primers used for qRT-PCR are listed in Table S1.

Results

Identification and characterization of FBN genes in Triticum aestivum

In this study, a total of 26 *FBN* genes were identified in *T. aestivum*, which we named *TaFBN-A1–TaFBN-D10* according to their genome location (Table 1). The *TaFBN* characteristics, including the chromosomal position, intron number, gene length, number of amino acids, molecular mass, CDS, subcellular localization, signal peptide, and instability index, are listed in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, the *TaFBN* protein sequences ranged from 219 to 402 amino acids and the molecular weights ranged from 23.75 to 43.59 kDa. The prediction of subcellular location indicated that 18 *TaFBN*s were located in the chloroplasts and eight were located extracellularly. At present, the GRAVY values is an important indicator to measure the hydrophobicity of protein; the GRAVY values of almost all TaFBN proteins are less than 0, except for *TaFBN-A1*, *TaFBN-B1*, and *TaFBN-B6*. Meanwhile, the prediction results showed that no signal peptides were found in any TaFBN proteins, but all TaFBN proteins contain chloroplast transit peptides.

Gene structure analysis of *TaFBN* genes

To gain insight into the evolution of the *TaFBN* gene family, a diagram of the *TaFBN* exon–intron gene structure was constructed based on cDNA and genomic DNA sequence



information (Supplementary text 1) using the Gene Structure Display Server (Figure 1b). A 214 neighbor-joining phylogenetic tree was also constructed to explore the evolutionary relationship 215 and the phylogenetic classification of FBN gene in wheat. Gene structure analyses indicated that 216 homologous genes had similar exon–intron distribution patterns (Fig. 1b). However, the number 217 of introns in different *TaFBN* gene family members varied greatly (ranging from 2 to 10 introns), 218 while there was almost no difference between members of the same subfamily. We found that all 219 220 TaFBN genes contain a conserved PAP FBN domain (PF04755), and the distribution of domains 221 was consistent with the genetic homology (Fig. 1c). These results suggested that members of the same subfamily may have similar biological functions. In addition, we used the MEME online 222 tool to analyze the conserved motifs of TaFBN genes; the results showed that all TaFBN 223 members contained five to nine conserved motifs (Fig. 2). The logo representation of the 10 224 225 conserved motifs identified for proteins encoded by *TaFBN* genes is described in Supplementary Fig. 1. Figure 2 showed that motif 1, motif 2, motif 3, motif 4, and motif 5 were highly 226 conserved and widely distributed in all TaFBN proteins. Motif/domain analysis revealed that 227 motif 1 contained conserved amino acid residues in the C-terminal and motif 3 contained a 228 conserved lipocalin motif (Supplementary Fig. 2). The types and distribution of conserved motifs 229 may be the reason for the functional diversity of TaFBNs. 230 Phylogenetic and evolutionary analysis of *TaFBN* 231 An unrooted phylogenetic tree was constructed for 179 FBN genes from eight 232 monocotyledon species (with 26 FBNs from T. aestivum, 9 from Oryza sativa, 11 from Zea mays, 233 10 from Sorghum bicolor, 9 from Panicum hallii, 20 from Panicum virgatum, 10 from Setaria 234 italica, and 4 from Hordeum vulgare) and five dicotyledon species (with 14 FBNs from A. 235 thaliana, 12 from Brassica oleracea var. capitata, 11 from Nicotiana tabacum, 21 from Glycine 236 max, and 22 from Coffea arabica) to study the evolutionary relationships of TaFBN members 237 (Fig. 3). Based on the FBN gene characteristics of A. thaliana, these FBN genes can be classified 238 into 11 subfamilies (Group 1 to Group 11). Interestingly, the members of TaFBNs were 239

identified into nine subfamilies, each subfamily containing two or three FBN genes. The analysis

240



241	also revealed that the FBN genes in monocots (i.e., T. aestivum, O. sativa, Z. mays, P. hallii, and
242	S. bicolor) were more closely related than those of the dicots (i.e., A. thaliana, B. oleracea var.
243	capitata, and N. tabacum).
244	Analysis of TaFBN cis-regulatory elements
245	To further identify the cis-regulatory elements located upstream of the TaFBN genes, 2000-
246	bp sequences upstream from translational start sites of putative TaFBN gene families were
247	analyzed using the PlantCARE tool. As shown in Fig. 4, many cis-regulatory elements were
248	identified in the promoters of <i>TaFBN</i> genes. These <i>cis</i> -regulatory elements can be divided into
249	three types: hormone response elements, stress response-related elements, and light response-
250	related elements. The hormone response elements, including the methyl jasmonate (MeJA)-
251	responsive, abscisic acid-responsive, gibberellin-responsive, salicylic acid-responsive, and
252	auxin-responsive elements, were widely distributed in promoters of the <i>TaFBN</i> s. The responses
253	to abiotic stress were the light response-related, low temperature response-related, and drought
254	stress-related response elements, respectively. These results suggested that <i>TaFBN</i> genes may be
255	involved in photosynthesis, stress responses, and in maintaining the hormone balance in plants,
256	thereby improving the chances for organisms to escape or better cope with the damaging effects
257	of adverse environmental conditions.
258	Chromosomal location of TaFBN in the T. aestivum genome
259	To clarify the distribution of TaFBN genes on T. aestivum chromosomes, the 26 TaFBN
260	genes were mapped onto <i>T. aestivum</i> chromosomes; these <i>TaFBN</i> genes were distributed on 11
261	chromosomes (Fig. 5). As shown in Fig. 5, we found that TaFBN genes were not randomly
262	distributed on the chromosome; chromosomes 2A, 2B, and 2D contained six TaFBN genes;
263	however, the other chromosomes (i.e., 1A, 1B, 1D, 4A, 4B, 4D, 5A, and 5B) had only one
264	TaFBN gene. The unequal distribution of TaFBN genes on the chromosomes may be caused
265	through ancient gene duplications.
266	Tissue specific expression patterns of $TaFBNs$ at different developmental stages
267	To explore the tissue-specific expression patterns of <i>TaFBN</i> genes at different growth and



developmental stages in T. aestivum, publicly available expression data sets for 26 TaFBNs were 268 analyzed to examine the transcription levels in various T. aestivum tissues, including the root, 269 270 shoot, anther, spikelet, and leaf. Most of the *TaFBN* genes can be detected in at least two or more different tissues. The results suggested that TaFBN genes may be widely expressed in wheat 271 tissues (Fig. 6a). However, the expression levels of *TaFBN* genes varied among the different 272 tissues. The expression levels of TaFBNs in the tissues with high chlorophyll contents (leaf, 273 274 shoot, and internode) were significantly higher than those in other tissues. As shown in Fig. 6b, the expression levels of *TaFBN* were notably different at different developmental stages. 275 Tafbn-A1, Tafbn-B1, Tafbn-A2, Tafbn-B2, Tafbn-D2, Tafbn-A3, Tafbn-A6, Tafbn-B6, 276 and TaFBN-D6 were highly expressed at all developmental stages. However, the expression 277 levels of TaFBN-B4, TaFBN-D5, TaFBN-A9, TaFBN-B9, and TaFBN-D9 were inhibited at all 278 279 developmental stages. The expression levels of other TaFBN genes did not change significantly during any of the developmental stages. These data indicated that TaFBN genes have tissue-280 specific expression patterns, and some TaFBN genes play a vital role in the growth and 281 developmental stages of *T. aestivum*. 282

Expression profiles of *TaFBN* genes in response to abiotic stresses

To further clarify the potential functions of TaFBN genes under abiotic stress responses, the 284 expression levels of TaFBN genes were analyzed under drought, stripe rust, cold and heat 285 conditions. Most of the TaFBN genes could be shown to be involved in the response to one or 286 287 more abiotic stresses (Fig. 7). The transcripts of TaFBN-A1, TaFBN-B1, TaFBN-A2, TaFBN-B2, TaFBN-D2, and TaFBN-B6 were significantly upregulated by drought, stripe rust, cold, and heat 288 treatments. However, the expression levels of TaFBN-A5, TaFBN-B5, TaFBN-D5, TaFBN-A9, 289 290 TaFBN-B9, TaFBN-D9, TaFBN-A10, TaFBN-B10, and TaFBN-D10 were slightly downregulated under drought, stripe rust and heat stresses. In addition, most of TaFBN genes were up-regulated 291 after 12h of drought treatment and 11 days of stripe rust infection, respectively. Interestingly, 292 almost all TaFBN genes had a high level of expression under cold stress. In addition, other 293 TaFBNs can be induced to express under some of the stress conditions. The transcription levels 294



- of the tested *TaFBN* genes were significantly downregulated under drought stress conditions.
- 296 These results indicated that *TaFBN* genes might participate in response to abiotic stresses,
- especially drought, stripe rust, cold and heat stress in *T. aestivum*.

Validation of *TaFBN*s by qRT-PCR

To further detect the expression level of *TaFBN* genes in different tissues, we selected nine representative genes from the *TaFBN* gene family (*TaFBN-A1*, *TaFBN-B1*, *TaFBN-A2*, *TaFBN-B2*, *TaFBN-B5*, *TaFBN-B6*, *TaFBN-B9*, and *TaFBN-B9*, and *TaFBN-D9*) based on their expression profile, and analyzed the expression level using qRT-PCR (Fig. 8a). The results showed that the expression of nine *TaFBNs* in the leaves and shoots was significantly higher than that in the roots. We also analyzed the *TaFBN* gene expression in the leaf under drought stress in *T. aestivum* seedlings (Fig. 8b). The results suggest that the expressions of some *TaFBN* genes, such as *TaFBN-A1*, *TaFBN-B1*, *TaFBN-A2*, *TaFBN-B2*, *TaFBN-D2* and *TaFBN-B5*, were induced at different time points under drought stress. However, *TaFBN-A1*, *TaFBN-B1*, *TaFBN-A2*, and *TaFBN-B2* displayed downregulation after drought treatment. In addition, as the treatment time increased, the expression level was significantly upregulated or downregulated. These results are consistent with the data of the above expression profiles.

Discussion

In this study, we identified 26 *FBN* genes in the *T. aestivum* genome. These genes were distributed on 11 chromosomes and had molecular masses ranging from 23.75 to 43.59 kDa and pI values ranging from 4.59 to 9.61. This diversity suggests that *TaFBN* genes may have specific biological functions in different metabolic processes. Furthermore, the study results indicate that most of the *TaFBN* genes are located on the chloroplast and contained chloroplast transit peptides. This provides strong evidence that various FBNs might participate in photosynthesis. GRAVY was used to calculate the overall hydrophobicity of the protein sequence, with higher positive GRAVY values indicating a greater level of hydrophobicity (*Faya et al., 2015*). Almost all of the *TaFBN* genes' GRAVY values were less than 0, which means that most of the proteins are hydrophilic. In contrast, previous studies have reported that the FBN family can bind to and



322	transport small hydrophobic molecules in A. thaliana (Singh and McNellis., 2011; Kim et al.,
323	2015). However, the specific spatial structure and the percentage of hydrophobic residues may
324	affect the hydrophobicity of proteins (Dyson et al., 2004). Therefore, these different results may
325	reflect the biological function diversity of <i>TaFBN</i> genes.
326	The phylogenetic tree analysis showed that the number of FBN gene family members in T .
327	aestivum was higher than those in the other monocots and dicots in this study. In the other hands,
328	gene family members of FBN in wheat are always clustered together with rice, maize and
329	sorghum. However, the members of FBN gene in <i>P. hallii</i> , <i>P. virgatum</i> , <i>S. italic</i> and <i>H. vulgare</i>
330	have a distant evolutionary relationship with <i>TaFBN</i> genes. And surprisingly, only four members
331	of FBN gene family have been found in <i>H. vulgare</i> genome. Based on these phenomena, we
332	believe that wheat, rice, maize and others monocots have a common ancestor. The evolutionary
333	separation time of wheat and rice may be closer than others species such as P. hallii, P. virgatum,
334	S. italic and H. vulgare. However, because the genome sequences of some species are
335	incomplete, more evidences is needed to support these conclusions. To analyze the evolutionary
336	relationships of FBN genes, we constructed a phylogenetic tree with 179 FBNs from T. aestivum,
337	O. sativa, S. bicolor, Z. mays, P. hallii, P. virgatum, S. italica, H. vulgare, A. thaliana, B.
338	oleracea var. capitate, N. tabacum, G. max, and C. arabica. These FBN genes were divided into
339	11 subfamilies using the classification method described for FBN in A. thaliana (Singh and
340	McNellis., 2011). Interestingly, the exon-intron structures and numbers of conserved motifs were
341	similar in the same subgroups. This phenomenon suggests that TaFBN genes in the same
342	subgroup may have similar functions.
343	Gene expression levels in different tissues and at different developmental stages may be
344	determined by gene function. Previous studies have shown that FBNs are regulated by a variety
345	of biological and environmental factors at different growth and developmental stages (Singh and
346	McNellis, 2011). We analyzed the expression patterns of the TaFBN gene family during different
347	growth and development stages and under biotic and abiotic stresses in <i>T. aestivum</i> through
348	publicly available expression data. In these studies, we obtained 26 TaFBN gene expression



349	profiles, which showed that most of the genes were highly expressed in the leaf, shoot, and
350	internode. Similar results have been reported in potato, Arabidopsis, and Brassica rapa (Monte e
351	al., 1999; Kim et al., 2001; Yang et al., 2006). Furthermore, the expression profile data
352	suggested that TaFBN-A1, TaFBN-B1, TaFBN-A2, TaFBN-B2, TaFBN-D2, and TaFBN-B6
353	expressions were strongly induced under drought, stripe rust, cold, and heat stresses, but TaFBN-
354	A5, TaFBN-B5, TaFBN-D5, TaFBN-A9, TaFBN-B9, TaFBN-D9, TaFBN-A10, TaFBN-B10, and
355	<i>TaFBN-D10</i> expressions were slightly inhibited under these stresses. In addition, other <i>TaFBN</i> s
356	responded to one or more stresses. These is some evidences that fibrillin protein, such FBN1a,
357	FBN1b and FBN2, level increases in leaves of rice, Arabidopsis, Brassica and potato plants
358	subjected to drought and cold stress (Gillet et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2001; Laizet et al., 2004; Lee
359	et al., 2007). Furthermore, the accumulation of FBN1 protein in tomato flacca mutant, which is
360	defective in ABA biosynthesis, was significantly declined than wild type during drought stress
361	(Gillet et al., 2001). We get similar results in wheat plants subjected to drought stress. It is
362	possible that fibrillin gene expression was regulated through endogenous ABA concentration in
363	response to numerous stresses (Singh and McNellis, 2011). As we know, transcription factors
364	participate in various biological processes by regulating the expression of downstream gene cis-
365	regulatory elements (Ning et al., 2017). In this study, many cis-regulatory elements were
366	detected in the promoter sequences of TaFBN genes. These elements contained light response-
367	related elements, drought response-related elements, and hormone response elements, such as
368	MeJA, abscisic acid, gibberellic acid, salicylic acid, and auxin. Interestingly, all of the <i>TaFBN</i>
369	genes include many light response-related elements. For example, Rey et al. (2000) found that
370	overexpressing FBN1 can promote plant height and flowering under high light levels in tobacco
371	(Rey et al., 2000; Singh and McNellis., 2011). Leitner-Dagan et al (2006) studies show that
372	fibrillin gene expression and carotenoid accumulation in flower tissue of cucumber were
373	increased during GA treatment, and nice GA-responsive elements were found on FBN promoter
374	sequences (<i>Leitner-Dagan et al., 2006</i>). By contrast, auxin (IAA) can delay the accumulation of
375	FBN protein in bell pepper fruit, but abscisic acid (ABA) can promote this process (Deruère et



376	al., 1994; Singh and McNellis, 2011). Although the expression patterns of TaFBN genes were
377	varied and complexed, overall, these genes had similar functions in plant stress resistance and
378	chromoplast development (Singh and McNellis, 2011).
379	Conclusion
380	In this study, we identified 26 FBN genes in T. aestivum using a genome-wide screening
381	approach. Based on their phylogenetic relationships, these FBN genes were classified into 11
382	subfamilies. The TaFBN gene structures and conserved motifs were highly conserved in the
383	same subgroup. Many cis-regulatory elements were found in the TaFBN gene promoter
384	sequences, which showed that the expression of TaFBN genes was regulated by various
385	hormones and environmental factors. Moreover, almost all TaFBN genes were highly expressed
386	in the leaf, shoot, and internode. The expression profiling data suggest that TaFBN-A1, TaFBN-
387	B1, TaFBN-A2, TaFBN-B2, TaFBN-D2, and TaFBN-B6 were responsive to many biotic and
388	abiotic stresses. These results can help us to clarify the structural and functional relationships
389	among <i>TaFBN</i> gene family members.
390	
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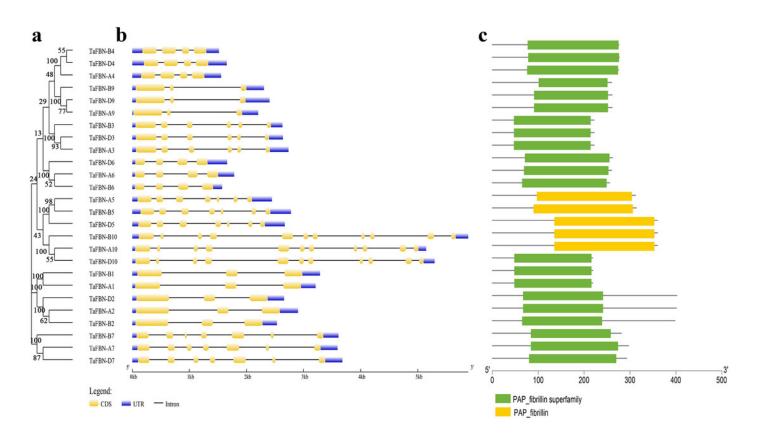


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Phylogenetic relationship of the *TaFBN* genes, exon-intron *TaFBN* gene structure and functional domain analysis of TaFBN proteins.

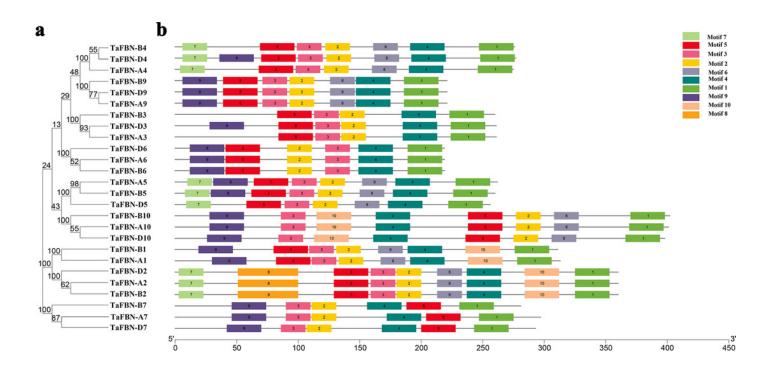
(a) A phylogenetic tree inferred using the neighbor-joining method in MEGA7, with bootstrap values of 1000, was constructed to determine whether the exon-intron distribution patterns correlated with the phylogenetic classification of *TaFBN* (the same phylogenetic tree is also shown in Figs 2 and 4). (b) The coding sequences (CDS) of exons are indicated by yellow boxes, introns are represented by lines, and blue boxes indicate untranslated regions (UTRs). (c) Conserved domains of TaFBN proteins were identified using the Conserved Domain Database (CDD) of NCBI against the Pfam v30.0 database (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Structure/cdd/wrpsb.cgi).





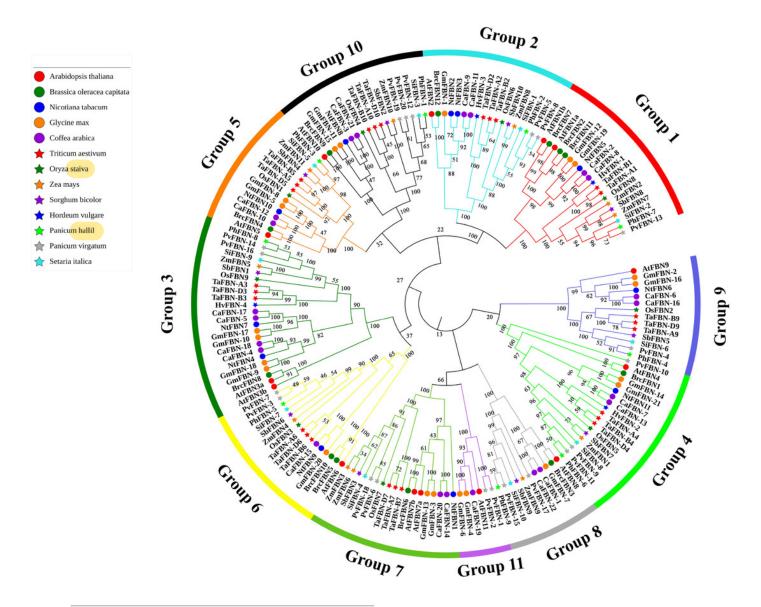
Motif distribution of proteins encoded by Triticum aestivum FBN genes.

(a) The phylogenetic tree of TaFBN genes was constructed using the neighbor-joining method in MEGA7, with bootstrap values of 1000. (b) Conserved Motifs were predicted using Multiple Em for Motif Elicitation (MEME) (http://alternate.meme-suite.org/). Box length indicates the number of amino acids in the motif.



Unrooted phylogenetic tree of all the *Triticum aestivum*, *Oryza sativa*, *Sorghum bicolor*, *Zea mays*, *Panicum hallil*, *Panicum virgatum*, *Setaria italic* Hordeum *vulgare* Arabidopsis thaliana, [i]Brassica oler

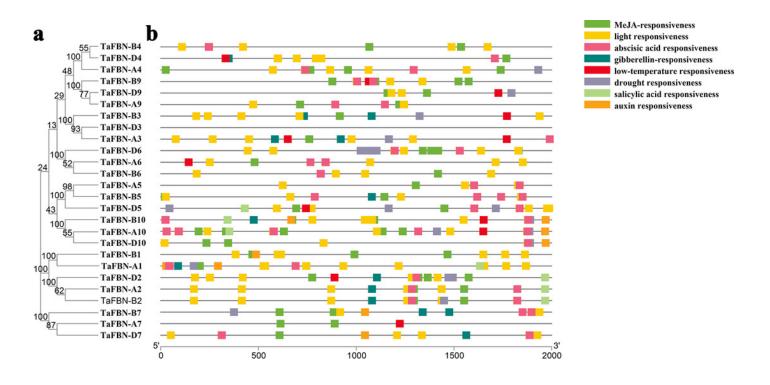
The phylogenetic tree was inferred using the neighbor-joining method in MEGA7, with bootstrap values of 1000. The FBN proteins are clustered into 11 subgroups, which are shown in different colors. Circles and stars indicate dicotyledons and monocotyledons plants, respectively. In addition, different colors represent different species.





The analysis of *cis*-regulatory elements of *TaFBN* gene promoters.

(a) A phylogenetic tree inferred using the neighbor-joining method in MEGA7, with bootstrap values of 1000, was constructed to determine whether the exon-intron distribution patterns correlated with the phylogenetic classification of *TaFBN*. (b) Promoter sequences (2000 bp) upstream of genes were chosen for *cis*-regulatory element analysis using the PlantCARE online tool (http://www.dna.affrc.go.jp/ PLACE/). Besides, each color indicates a *cis*-regulatory element.





Synteny and gene duplication in *TaFBN* genes.

A total of 26 *TaFBN* genes were unevenly located on 11 chromosomes. Seven segmentally duplicated gene pairs were identified in the wheat genome. Duplicated gene pairs are connected with green lines.



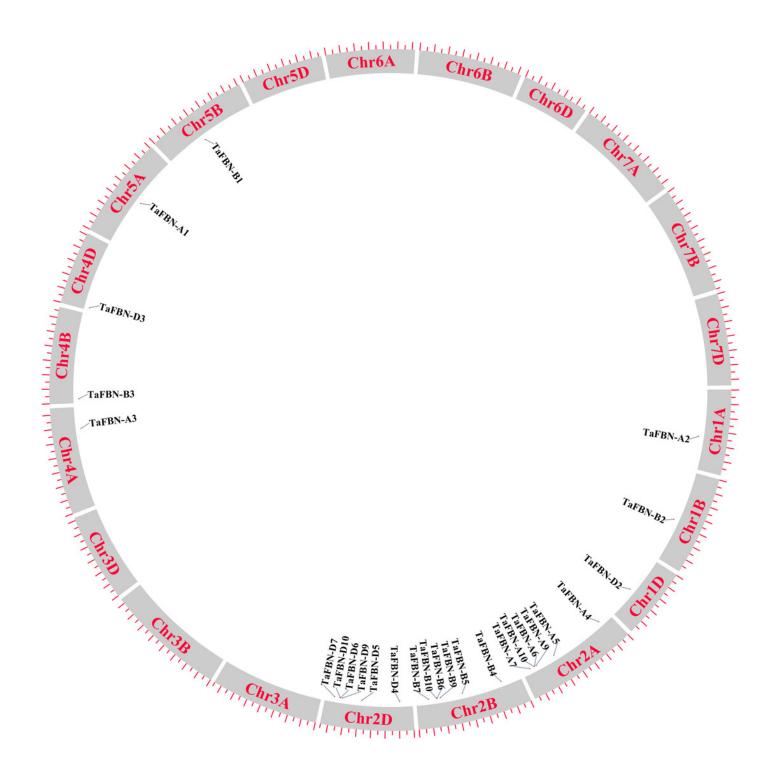




Table 1(on next page)

Fibrillin (FBN) gene family in Triticum aestivum.

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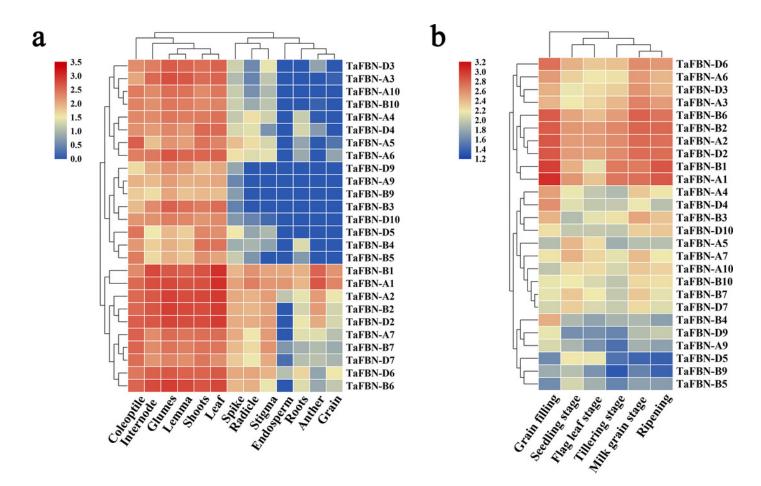
1 Table 1:

Gene name	Sequence ID	Chromosom e	Genomic position	Intron number	Gene length (aa)	Molecular weight (kDa)	pI	Predicted pfam domai n	Subcellular prediction by PC	Grand average of hydropathicity	Signal peptides	Chloroplast transit peptides
TaFBN-	TraesCS5A0	Chr5A	353189098-	2	314	33.06	7.77	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	0.039	NA	Y
A1	2G164600.1		353192310					n	•			
TaFBN-	TraesCS5B0	Chr5B	299020240-	2	312	32.94	7.77	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	0.056	NA	Y
B1	2G162100.1		299020330					n n	•			
TaFBN-	TraesCS1A0	Chr1A	350749390-	2	360	38.27	4.79	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.261	NA	Y
A2	2G193500.1		350752293					n				
TaFBN-	TraesCS1B0	Chr1B	378397002-	2	360	38.33	4.83	PAP fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.294	NA	Y
B2	2G208500.1		378399661					n	1			
TaFBN-	TraesCS1D0	Chr1D	278512124-	2	360	38.28	4.79	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.253	NA	Y
D2	2G197400.1		278514657					n	1			
TaFBN-	TraesCS4A0	Chr4A	583754471-	5	261	28.59	9.34	PAP fibrilli	Extracellular	-0.33	NA	Y
A3	2G272000.1		583757208					n				
TaFBN-	TraesCS4B0	Chr4B	28717109-	5	260	28.48	9.61	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.318	NA	Y
В3	2G042000.1		28719740					n	•			
TaFBN-	TraesCS4D0	Chr4D	16799419-	5	261	28.55	9.21	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.325	NA	Y
D3	2G039200.1		16802059					n n	•			
TaFBN-	TraesCS2A0	Chr2A	90688741-	3	275	28.99	8.95	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.244	NA	Y
A4	2G145900.1		90690297					n	•			
TaFBN-	TraesCS2B0	Chr2B	144596063-	3	276	29.35	9.51	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.267	NA	Y
B4	2G171300.1		144597581					n	_			
TaFBN-	TraesCS2D0	Chr2D	93046450-	3	277	29.41	9.51	PAP fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.277	NA	Y
D4	2G150500.1		93048107					n	_			
TaFBN-	TraesCS2A0	Chr2A	515959001-	6	262	28.96	9.16	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.213	NA	Y
A5	2G300200.1		515961447					n				
TaFBN-	TraesCS2B0	Chr2B	451833336-	6	260	28.67	9.28	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.178	NA	Y
B5	2G316500.1		451836114					n				
TaFBN-	TraesCS2D0	Chr2D	380429694-	6	256	28.43	9.36	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.2	NA	Y
D5	2G298100.1		380432365					n				
TaFBN-	TraesCS2A0	Chr2A	684246511-	3	219	23.78	8.8	PAP_fibrilli	Extracellular	-0.044	NA	Y
A6	2G431000.1		684248296					n				
TaFBN-	TraesCS2B0	Chr2B	646214215-	3	219	23.75	8.73	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	0.003	NA	Y
B6	2G452300.1		646215789					n				
TaFBN-	TraesCS2D0	Chr2D	540824383-	3	219	23.82	8.74	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.031	NA	Y
D6	2G428800.1		540826044					n				
TaFBN-	TraesCS2A0	Chr2A	722519297-	6	297	32.55	5.73	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.231	NA	Y
A7	2G487900.1		722522892					n	-			
TaFBN-	TraesCS2B0	Chr2B	710281451-	6	281	30.92	6.06	PAP_fibrilli	Chloroplast	-0.247	NA	Y
В7	2G515500.1		710285064					n	-			

TaFBN- D7	TraesCS2D0 2G488200.1	Chr2D	587697352- 587701032	6	293	32.03	5.35	PAP_fibrilli n	Chloroplast	-0.171	NA	Y
TaFBN- A9	TraesCS2A0 2G413700.1	Chr2A	670791911- 670794116	2	222	24.21	6.74	PAP_fibrilli n	Extracellular	-0.106	NA	Y
TaFBN- B9	TraesCS2B0 2G432500.1	Chr2B	621664679- 621666987	2	222	24.27	7.9	PAP_fibrilli n	Extracellular	-0.123	NA	Y
TaFBN- D9	TraesCS2D0 2G410900.1	Chr2D	525935293- 525937697	2	222	24.24	7.9	PAP_fibrilli n	Extracellular	-0.136	NA	Y
TaFBN- A10	TraesCS2A0 2G434800.1	Chr2A	686874975- 686880122	10	401	43.44	9.31	PAP_fibrilli n	Extracellular	-0.16	NA	Y
TaFBN- B10	TraesCS2B0 2G455900.1	Chr2B	650399573- 650405456	10	402	43.59	9.19	PAP_fibrilli n	Extracellular	-0.182	NA	Y
TaFBN- D10	TraesCS2D0 2G432600.1	Chr2D	544665056- 544670351	10	398	43.12	9.11	PAP_fibrilli n	Extracellular	-0.152	NA	Y

Expression of TaFBNs in various tissues and developmental stages.

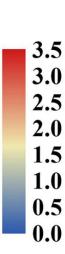
(a) Tissue-specific Expression of the *TaFBN* gene family in different wheat tissues; (b) Expression pattern of the *TaFBN* gene family at different developmental stages; (c) Heatmap was created in TBtools software and based on the expression data, The color scale represents relative expression levels, with red indicating higher levels of expression blue indicating lower expression levels.

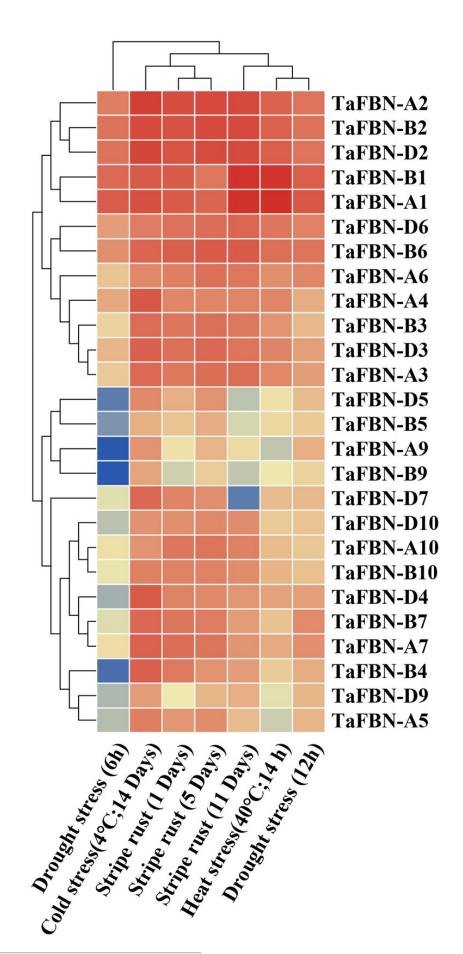




Heat map of expression profiles of *TaFBNs* in *Triticum aestivum* under biotic and abiotic stress.

Expression levels are indicated in different colors, with red indicating higher expression levels and blue indicating lower expression levels.







Expression analysis of TaFBN genes in different tissues and under drought sterss using qRT-PCR.

(a) the relative expression levels of TaFBN genes in different tissues. (b) the relative expression levels of TaFBN genes in leaves after drought treatment for 1h and 6h. each treatment contains three biological replicates .

