
JEFF BENNETZEN

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Jeff Bennetzen earned his PhD in Biochemistry at the University of Washington in 1980 while undertaking studies on the molecular genetics of yeast. During his postdoctoral work, in a collaborative project between the Freeling and Walbot labs, he began to learn plant genetics and also managed to clone the maize *adh1* gene. After setting up his own lab at the International Plant Research Institute in 1981, he cloned the Mu1 transposable element (TE) of maize. In 1983, he moved to the Department of Biological Sciences at Purdue University, and spent the next twenty years there studying the structure and evolution of plant genomes. Among the discoveries made at Purdue were the epigenetic regulation of transposable elements associated with DNA methylation, the observation that nested LTR retrotransposons make up the majority of many plant genomes, and the isolation of novel pathogen recognition specificities created by unequal recombination at the Rp1 rust-resistance locus of maize. Since moving to the University of Georgia in 2003, the Bennetzen lab has been using full genome sequence analysis and bioinformatics approaches to further investigate the mechanisms, rates and specificities of genome evolution in plants.

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