

1 **Technical note: Methionine, a precursor of methane in living plants**

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16 INTRODUCTION

17 The observation that plants produce methane (CH₄) under aerobic conditions has
18 caused considerable controversy amongst the scientific community (Keppler et al.,
19 2006;Dueck et al., 2007;Evans, 2007;Beerling et al., 2008;Kirschbaum and Walcroft,
20 2008;McLeod et al., 2008;Vigano et al., 2008;Wang et al., 2008;Nisbet et al., 2009;Bloom
21 et al., 2010, Covey et al. 2012, Zhang et al. 2014). Despite much scepticism a number of
22 recent studies provide support for the phenomenon not only for living plants but also
23 for dead plant matter (Keppler et al., 2009;Qaderi and Reid, 2011;Bruhn et al.,
24 2012;Wang et al., 2013).

25 Non-microbial CH₄ release has been shown to occur under ultraviolet (UV) irradiation
26 and elevated temperatures from dry and detached fresh plant material (McLeod et al.,
27 2008;Vigano et al., 2008;Bruhn et al., 2009). Pectin has been considered a source of CH₄
28 production primarily because of its high degree of methylation (Keppler et al.,
29 2008;Bruhn et al., 2009;Messenger et al., 2009). A reaction of reactive oxygen species
30 (ROS) with pectic polysaccharides was suggested as a possible route to CH₄ formation
31 under UV radiation (Messenger et al., 2009). From plant matter CH₄ can be derived from
32 other structural components as shown with commercially purified lignin and cellulose
33 (Vigano et al., 2008), leaf surface waxes (Bruhn et al., 2014), and even from ascorbic acid
34 under highly oxidative conditions (Althoff et al., 2010). For further information on CH₄
35 formation, from dry and fresh detached plant matter and specific plant structural
36 compounds, the reader should refer to the recent reviews of Bruhn *et al.* (2012) and
37 Wang et al. (2013).

38 Stable isotope analysis has been employed to demonstrate that living plants release CH₄
39 at rates ranging from 0.16 to 12 ng g⁻¹ dry weight (DW) h⁻¹ (Brüggemann et al.,
40 2009;Wishkerman et al., 2011). Isotope labelling studies involving young poplars grown
41 in a ¹³CO₂ atmosphere (Brüggemann et al., 2009) together with several plants cell
42 culture experiments with ¹³C-labelled sucrose (Wishkerman et al., 2011) confirmed that
43 CH₄ is produced in plants per se and not by their associated micro-organisms. Here it
44 was suggested that CH₄ formation was the result of abiotic stress factors to which the
45 plant had been exposed, an idea supported by findings of two other recent studies
46 (Qaderi and Reid, 2009, 2011). Although these results would support the contention that
47 living plants release CH₄, the mechanism of its formation and its precursors still remain
48 unknown.

49 A first step towards delineating the formation pathway was recently undertaken by
50 Wishkerman et al. (2011) who investigated the influence of the toxin sodium azide
51 (NaN₃) on cell cultures such as tobacco, sugar beet and grape vine. As sodium azide is
52 known to disrupt electron transport flow at the cytochrome c oxidase (complex IV) in
53 plant mitochondria, findings of the study suggested that disturbance of the electron
54 transport chain (ETC) cause CH₄ formation in plant cells. Thus CH₄ formation in living
55 plants may be an integral part of cellular responses to changes in oxidative status
56 present in all eukaryotes. It has been hypothesized that compounds such as
57 phosphatidylcholine or methionine (Met) might be carbon precursors of CH₄ in both
58 animal and plant cells particularly when under stress conditions (Wishkerman et al.,
59 2011;Bruhn et al., 2012)

60 Furthermore, very recently a chemical reaction showing that CH₄ can be readily formed
61 from organosulfur compounds under oxidative conditions, ambient atmospheric
62 pressure and temperature has been suggested (Althoff et al., 2014). In the first step of
63 the reaction, methyl sulfides are oxidised to the corresponding sulfoxides. Then, in the
64 next step, demethylation of the sulfoxide via homolytic bond cleavage leads to methyl
65 radical formation and finally to CH₄. In the same study tobacco plants (*Nicotiana*
66 *tabacum*) grown under sterile conditions were supplemented with positionally labelled
67 Met, where only the methyl group (-S-CH₃) was enriched with ¹³C atoms. These
68 experiments provided the first evidence that the thio-methyl group of Met is a parent
69 compound of CH₄ in tobacco plants. The potential role of methionine and its oxidation
70 product methionine sulfoxide (MSO) in CH₄ biosynthesis in living plants was also
71 suggested by Bruhn *et al.* (2012). Additionally methionine has been shown to be
72 involved in CH₄ formation in saprotrophic fungi (Lenhart et al., 2012).

73 In this study we investigated methionine, an amino acid that plays a major role in trans
74 methylation reactions, as a precursor of CH₄ biosynthesis in living plants under dark
75 conditions. We employed lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) which was previously
76 shown to produce significant amounts of CH₄ both under normal and stress conditions
77 such as physical wounding and anoxia (Wang et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2011b; Wang et al.,
78 2011a). We made use of stable isotope techniques and ¹³C-positionally labelled
79 methionine to verify in vivo formation and identify the carbon atom precursor of CH₄.

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81

82 MATERIAL & METHODS

83 Cultivation of plants

84 Commercially available lavender plants (*Lavendula angustifolia*) grown to
85 approximately 20-25 cm were purchased for the initial experiment (consecutive
86 treatment experiment). Plants used in the second experiment (parallel treatment
87 experiment) were grown in a greenhouse until a height of 20 cm was reached. Trace gas
88 measurements were carried out at 22 ± 2 °C and 100 % humidity under dark conditions.

89

90 Supplementation of lavender plants with ^{13}C -methionine

91 Lavender plants were removed from pots and the soil washed from the roots. For
92 incubation, each plant was placed inside a 2.5 l flask (Weck®, Hanau, Germany)
93 containing 50 ml distilled H_2O and then sealed with a lid held in place with a rubber
94 band. To facilitate headspace sampling each lid had a central hole fitted with a silicone
95 stopper. In the ^{13}C -Met labelled flasks the distilled water was supplemented with 0.4 mM
96 ^{13}C -Met. We used a positionally labelled Met where only the methyl group ($-\text{S}-\text{CH}_3$) was
97 enriched with ^{13}C atoms. After sealing, measurements of headspace CH_4 concentrations
98 and ^{13}C - CH_4 signatures were conducted over a four day period. Different incubation
99 periods and measurement intervals were necessary to correspond with the available
100 schedule times for use of the isotope measurement system. For isotope measurements
101 the incubation flask was directly connected to the IRMS system.

102

103

104 **Physical stressing of plants**

105 Detached leaves of *Lavendula angustifolia* have previously been shown to release
106 significant amounts of CH₄ both under normal and stress conditions, such as physical
107 wounding by cutting (Wang et al., 2011b). However, stressing of the lavender plants by
108 cutting is a time-consuming process and a rapid, stress-induced increase in CH₄
109 emissions might occur during this process and before the flasks were sealed. Therefore,
110 physical stress in our study was performed by gently compressing individual leaves of
111 each plant between fingertips for a short time period (one to two seconds). This
112 procedure took approximately one minute for each plant, i.e. until the bigger part of the
113 leaves was injured.

114

115 **Analytical procedures**

116 Gas samples were analysed within 24 h on a gas chromatograph (Shimadzu GC-14B,
117 Kyoto, Japan) with a flame ionization detector (CH₄) and an electron capture detector
118 (N₂O, CO₂) operated at 230 and 320 °C with N₂ as carrier gas (25 ml min⁻¹) (Kammann
119 et al., 2009;Kammann et al., 2012). The GC column (PorapakQ, Fa. Millipore,
120 Schwallbach, mesh 80/100) was 3.2 m long and 1/8 inch in diameter. The length of the
121 precolumn was 0.8 m. The GC gas flow scheme and automated sampling was that of
122 Mosier and Mack (1980) and Loftfield et al. (1997), and peak area integration was
123 undertaken with the Software PeakSimple, version 2.66. The s.d. of the mean of six
124 atmospheric air standard samples was below 1.0%, 0.5%, and 0.2% for CO₂, N₂O, and
125 CH₄, respectively.

126

127 **Continuous flow isotope ratio mass spectrometry (IRMS) for measurement of $\delta^{13}\text{C}$**
128 **values of CH_4**

129 Headspace gas from the flasks was transferred to an evacuated sample loop (40 mL).
130 Interfering compounds were separated by GC and CH_4 trapped on Hayesep D. The
131 sample was then transferred to the IRMS system (ThermoFinnigan Delta^{plus} XL, Thermo
132 Finnigan, Bremen, Germany) via an open split. The reference gas was carbon dioxide of
133 high purity (carbon dioxide 4.5, Messer Griesheim, Frankfurt, Germany) with a known
134 $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ value of -23.64 ‰ (V-PDB). All $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values were normalized relative to V-PDB
135 (Vienna Pee Dee Belemnite) using a CH_4 standard. Samples were routinely analysed
136 three times ($n = 3$) and the average standard deviations of the GC/C/IRMS
137 measurements were in the range of 0.1 to 0.3 ‰.

138 All $^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$ -isotope ratios are expressed in the conventional δ notation in per mil versus
139 V-PDB, [‰] using the following equation (Eq. 1):

$$140 \quad \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{V-PDB}} = \left(\frac{(^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C})_{\text{sample}}}{(^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C})_{\text{standard}}} \right) - 1. \quad (\text{Eq. 1})$$

141

142 **Statistics**

143 Evaluation of results from experiments with Lavender plants utilised the software
144 package SPSS Version 20. In the initial experiment a paired sample *t*-test was used to
145 compare the rates of CH_4 production between consecutive treatments “non-stressed”
146 and “stressed” on the same plants (Levene-Test was 0.394 after log transformation of
147 data). For the purposes of brevity from this point forward this experiment will be
148 referred to as the consecutive treatment experiment. The second experiment where
149 simultaneously different samples were used to compare between “non-stressed” and

150 “stressed” treatments is referred to as the parallel treatment experiment. The CH₄ and
151 δ¹³CH₄ emission ratio between stressed and non-stressed plants (Tab. 1) was calculated
152 by using the mean value of the samples 9-11 as reference for the non-stressed plants.

153 Data from experiment 2 and differences between experiments 1 and 2 were analysed by
154 an independent samples t-test. Differences between results are given as significant (p <
155 0.05) or highly significant (p < 0.001).

156 In the case where no significant differences occurred between the control (no stress
157 applied or Met added) and the treatment where only Met was added, CH₄ emission rates
158 and CH₄:CO₂ ratios were pooled in order to calculate the mean values.

159

160 **RESULTS**

161 **Lavender plants supplemented with -S-CH₃ positionally labelled Met and the** 162 **effect of physical stress**

163 We investigated CH₄ emissions of *Lavendula angustifolia* supplemented with ¹³C-
164 positionally labelled Met (¹³CH₃-Met; only the methyl group -S-CH₃ was enriched with
165 ¹³C atoms). under stressed and non-stressed conditions. The incubations were carried
166 out in total darkness in order to exclude possible light effects and to measure the gross
167 respiration of plants. The effect of physical stress was investigated in parallel
168 experiments where in each case three different individual plants were placed under
169 “stressed” and “non-stressed” conditions. Additionally, an experiment was performed
170 where CH₄ emissions were first measured on intact plants, and then after physical stress
171 was applied to these plants, CH₄ emissions were again measured.

172

173 The CH₄ emission rates of non-stressed *L. angustifolia* plants ranged from 0.06 to 0.57 ng
174 CH₄ g⁻¹ DW h⁻¹, with a mean value of 0.33 ±0.16 ng CH₄ g⁻¹ DW h⁻¹ (Table 1).

175 Physical stress enhanced CH₄ emissions by a factor of 5.7 up to a mean CH₄ emission rate
176 of 1.7 ±0.57 ng g⁻¹ h⁻¹ (n = 8). The effect of physical stress was significant both for plants
177 undergoing consecutive treatment (paired t-test with $p = 0.002$, n = 5) and those in the
178 parallel treatment experiment (independent samples t-test with $p = 0.005$). Addition of
179 Met did not affect the CH₄ production of non-stressed *L. angustifolia* plants (Tab. 1,
180 comparison of flasks 6-8 vs. 9-11; $p = 0.632$, n = 3).

181
182 Lavender plants (n = 2) supplemented with ¹³CH₃-Met showed a strong response in the
183 isotope signal with δ¹³C(CH₄). After addition of ¹³CH₃-Met to the roots (n = 2) δ¹³C(CH₄)
184 values increased from -47 at time 0 to 29 and 97 ‰ after 20 h in non-stressed (Fig. 1d)
185 and stressed plants (Fig. 1f), respectively, whereas in the control samples (n = 3) only a
186 marginal change (± 1 ‰) was noted (Fig. 1b). Mean changes in Δ¹³CH₄ signature were
187 0.39 ±0.16 ‰ g⁻¹ h⁻¹ for the non-stressed plants. After stressing, a strong response in the
188 mixing ratio of CH₄ occurred (Fig. 1), reaching a Δ¹³CH₄ up to 0.64 ±0.30 ‰ g⁻¹ h⁻¹ (Tab.
189 1). The ¹³C signature increase in headspace-CH₄ over time (Fig. 1d, f) clearly shows that
190 the methyl group of Met is a precursor of CH₄ in plants under both non-stressed and
191 stressed conditions.

192
193 For non-stressed and stressed plants, 0.008 and 0.009 ‰ of ¹³CH₃-Met molecules were
194 on average daily converted to CH₄ assuming that all ¹³CH₃-Met was taken up by the
195 plant.

196 The ratio of CH₄ emissions (5.7) and $\Delta^{13}\text{CH}_4 \text{ h}^{-1} \text{ g}^{-1}$ (1.9) between stressed and non-
197 stressed plants (Tab. 1) indicated a higher effect of physical stress on CH₄ formation
198 than on the changes in $\delta^{13}\text{C}(\text{CH}_4)$ values.

199

200 **Respiration**

201 During incubation of *L. angustifolia*, changes in the CO₂ mixing ratio were also
202 monitored. Since the incubation was conducted in the dark no CO₂ uptake took place and
203 thus changes in the mixing ratio only reflect the plants respiration. Respiration was on
204 average for non-stressed and stressed plants 0.36 ± 0.14 and $0.50 \pm 0.16 \text{ mg CO}_2 \text{ g}^{-1} \text{ h}^{-1}$,
205 respectively.

206 The CO₂ production by respiration reflects metabolic activity of the plants, and to relate
207 CH₄ production to metabolic activity we related CH₄ formation to respiration by
208 calculating the CH₄:CO₂ ratio [mol:mol x 10⁶] separately for each sample. Figure 2 shows
209 the CH₄ and CO₂ production rates and the respective CH₄:CO₂-ratio, which was 2.0 ± 1.1
210 for the non-stressed plants (n = 6) and 8.5 ± 1.8 for the plants where physical stress was
211 applied (n = 3). Thus, physical damage resulted in a 4-fold increase in the CH₄:CO₂ ratio
212 ($p = 0.004$). Supplementation of plants with Met did not affect the CH₄ or CO₂ emission
213 rates ($p > 0.1$).

214

215

216 **DISCUSSION**

217 **Effects of physical stress on CH₄ production**

218 Methane emission rates of 0.33 ± 0.16 and 1.71 ± 0.57 ng g⁻¹ DW h⁻¹ were observed for *L.*
219 *angustifolia* under non-stressed and physically stressed conditions, respectively. The
220 upper range (under physical stress) here is still considerably lower (one to two orders
221 of magnitude) than the range of CH₄ emission rates from intact living plants (12 to 370
222 ng g⁻¹ DW h⁻¹) reported by Keppler et al. (2006) and those reported from crop species
223 under environmental stress (Qaderi & Reid, 2009; Qaderi & Reid, 2011).

224 Without the application of physical stress the calculated emission rates were
225 considerably lower (factor of three) with maximum values reaching 0.57 ng CH₄ g⁻¹ DW
226 h⁻¹ and are similar to those reported in previous studies employing stable carbon
227 isotope labelling tools (Bruggemann *et al.*, 2009; Wishkerman *et al.*, 2011). The very low
228 values reported here again highlight the benefit of using stable isotope tools as it would
229 be very difficult to clearly monitor aerobic CH₄ formation in non-stressed living plants
230 without their employment. This might also include the sensitive optical online methods
231 employed in several studies (Dueck *et al.*, 2007; Beerling *et al.*, 2008). However, these
232 spectroscopic methods might be able to measure CH₄ formation in plants under
233 particular stress conditions.

234 Earlier studies (Wang *et al.*, 2009; Wang *et al.*, 2011a; Wang *et al.*, 2011b) already
235 revealed a significant increase in CH₄ emissions after physical injury and suggested
236 reactive oxygen species (ROS) to be involved in the cleavage of methyl groups from
237 pectin and/or lignin (Wang *et al.*, 2011b; Keppler *et al.*, 2008; McLeod *et al.*, 2008;
238 Messenger *et al.*, 2009). Our finding of close to a 4-fold increase in CH₄ emissions after

239 application of physical stress is within the range of the values reported by Wang et al.
240 (2011b) where the CH₄ emission rates of lavender plants were 0.42 ±0.05 and 6.32
241 ±0.69 ng g⁻¹ h⁻¹ for intact leaves and after wounding, respectively. In that study
242 observations of CH₄ emission rates of intact plants (0.4 ng g⁻¹ h⁻¹) and after wounding
243 (0.7 ng g⁻¹ h⁻¹) for 56 plant species were reported. The discrepancy in the physical
244 stress-induced response in CH₄ emissions of lavender plants might be due to an
245 exceptionally high response of this species when compared to other species tested by
246 Wang et al. (2011b). Differences in the stress-response between samples for the
247 lavender plants (ratio between stressed and non-stressed plants was in a range of 3.3 to
248 11.2) in this study might be due to a different degree of injury during the compression of
249 the individual leaves of each plant.

250

251 **CH₄:CO₂-ratio**

252 Based on the CH₄ and CO₂ emission rates the calculated CH₄:CO₂ ratio [mol:mol x 10⁶] of
253 intact lavender plants was 2.0 ±1.1 (n = 6), i.e. per mol CO₂ 2.0 μmol CH₄ was released by
254 the plants.

255 This is close to the ratios observed for saprotrophic fungi including *Pleurotus sapidus*,
256 *Stereum sanguinolentum*, *Panaerochaete chrysosporium* where the CH₄:CO₂-ratio was 3.5
257 ±1.92 mol:mol x 10⁶ or 1.15 ±0.70 ng:mg (Lenhart et al., 2012) and cryptogams
258 including, mosses and , lichens (n =31) with a ratio of 2.58 ±2.60 mol:mol x 10⁶ or 0.94
259 ±0.95 ng:mg (Lenhart et al., submitted). The CH₄:CO₂-ratio of lavender tends to be lower,
260 but, as indicated by the standard deviation, this difference is probably not significant.

261 The physical stress-induced increase in the CH₄:CO₂ ratio (factor 4) of up to 8.5 ±1.8 was
262 caused by a significant increase in CH₄ emissions accompanied only by a small increase
263 in respiration. The overall stress-induced increase in respiration of lavender plants
264 compared to non-stressed plants was 40 % (n.s., $p > 0.3$), which is similar to that
265 observed by Wang et al. (2009) who reported a 50 % increase in CO₂ emissions for
266 plants physically wounded by cutting compared to those left uncut. The CH₄:CO₂-ratio
267 might be a useful tool to relate CH₄ emissions to metabolic activity in the dark and to
268 compare CH₄ emission rates of different species obtained under different conditions.

269

270 **Methionine as a precursor of CH₄ in plants**

271 Based on the addition of ¹³CH₃-Met and stable carbon isotope measurements it was
272 possible to clearly monitor ¹³CH₄ formation in lavender plants. The increase in the
273 δ¹³CH₄ signature of CH₄ released by lavender plants after supplementation with ¹³CH₃-
274 Met (Fig. 1, Tab. 1) is a strong indicator that the methyl thiol group of Met is a CH₄
275 precursor during metabolic processes. When plants were physically stressed, there was
276 not only an increase in CH₄ release but also an increase in its ¹³CH₄ signature (Fig. 1, Tab.
277 1).

278 It is important to note that our data cannot be used to conclude that the methionine *per*
279 *se* is a direct precursor of CH₄ in plants. Indeed, since most methionine resides in
280 proteins it is much more likely to be the source of CH₄ production after oxidation by ROS
281 as suggested by Bruhn *et al.* (2012). These workers based their hypothesis on the
282 finding that dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) could act as a hydroxyl radical scavenger in cells

283 and produces CH₄ via a radical mechanism (Repine *et al.*, 1981). They argued that when
284 the amino acid methionine is oxidized the first oxidized product is methionine sulfoxide,
285 where the side chain is similar to DMSO. Therefore methionine sulfoxide might also be a
286 precursor of CH₄ biosynthesis. The concentration of the free amino acid in normal plant
287 tissues is <100 μM (Inaba *et al.*, 1994), while that found in protein is two to three orders
288 of magnitude higher (Bruhn *et al.*, 2012). Methionine residues are known to be prone to
289 oxidation by H₂O₂ (Levine *et al.*, 1996; Moller *et al.*, 2007) to form methionine sulfoxide.
290 Based on the calculations of Bruhn *et al.* (2012) it would only require a conversion rate
291 and release of less than one CH₄ molecule per hour for every 1000 protein methionine
292 sulfoxide to explain a release rate of 10 ng CH₄ g⁻¹ DW h⁻¹ by intact plant tissues. These
293 considerations are strongly supported by findings reported in a recent chemical study
294 (Althoff *et al.* 2014) which suggest that under oxidative conditions demethylation of
295 sulfoxides might lead to CH₄. In that study methyl groups of organosulfur compounds
296 were shown to be efficiently converted to CH₄ when using iron(II/III), hydrogen
297 peroxide and ascorbic acid as reagents. It is thought that methyl sulfides are first
298 oxidised to the corresponding sulfoxides and demethylation of the sulfoxide via
299 homolytic bond cleavage leads to methyl radical formation and then to CH₄.

300 However, in our study we focused on the identification of the precursor compound of
301 CH₄ in living plants and the location of the carbon atom within the precursor molecule.
302 Thus additional investigations and measurements concerning the formation of ROS,
303 distinguishing between free methionine and that in protein, as well as the possibility of
304 methionine residue oxidation to Met-SO will need to be undertaken.

305 Next to methionine, several other organic compounds with methyl- or methoxyl groups
306 were already identified to serve as a substrate for CH₄ formation in plants (McLeod et al.,
307 2008;Vigano et al., 2008;Bruhn et al., 2009, Keppler et al., 2008, Messenger et al., 2009).
308 Thus, in our experiment besides Met also other organic compounds such as pectin, lignin
309 or choline might serve as further methyl-group donors for CH₄ formation. A detailed
310 discussion on potential plant precursors of CH₄ was recently provided by Wang et al.
311 (2013).

312

313 **Conclusions and Outlook**

314 Our study is an important step in deciphering the precursor compounds involved in CH₄
315 biosynthesis in living plants. The employment of ¹³CH₃-Met clearly showed that the
316 sulphur bonded carbon atom of the methyl group in methionine was transferred to CH₄
317 in lavender plants. Knowledge of the precursor compound and identification of the
318 carbon atom involved is a first step towards elucidating the pathway of its formation. An
319 understanding of the mechanisms of CH₄ formation in living plants may reveal if the
320 process has a more general physiological role. Further experiments where other stress
321 factors in combination with ¹³CH₃-methionine are investigated should provide further
322 insight into the pathways involved in CH₄ formation.

323 Although it has been argued that plants may not produce CH₄ as an end-product or by-
324 product of their metabolism (Nisbet et al., 2009), our results would strongly indicate
325 that plants do contain a mechanism for CH₄ production. The stress-induced increase in
326 CH₄ emissions together with studies on sterile plants (Wishkerman *et al.*, 2011) or

327 cryptogamic covers supplemented with diverse inhibitors (Lenhart *et al.*, submitted), do
328 not support the hypothesis of a noteworthy contribution of *Archaea* to plant-derived
329 CH₄-formation in this study. However, we did not scan for methanogenic Archaea in the
330 wooden parts of lavender plants to exclude Archaeal-derived CH₄ formation as
331 postulated by Covey *et al.* (2012). Furthermore, it is considered that organosulfur
332 compounds might play an important role in the formation of CH₄ in living plants
333 particularly when under stress conditions.

334

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340

341 **Figure legends**

342 **Figure 1:** Mixing ratios (a, c, e) and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values (b, d, f) of CH_4 produced by *Lavendula*
343 *angustifolia* (n = 3) in the control flasks (a, b) without addition of methionine or physical
344 stress, supplemented with ^{13}C -labelled Met without physical stress (c, d), and
345 supplemented with ^{13}C -labelled Met and the application of physical stress (e, f). Different
346 symbols mark the replicates per treatment.

347

348 **Figure 2:** (a) Methane and CO_2 emissions of *L. angustifolia* supplemented with ^{13}C -
349 labelled Met under non-stressed conditions and after application of physical stress, and
350 (b) CH_4 to CO_2 emission ratio. Control plants were not supplemented with Met or
351 exposed to physical stress.

352

353

354 **Table 1:** Rates of formation and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ signature increase of CH_4 released during
 355 incubation of *Lavendula angustifolia* plants before and after physical stress. Samples 1-5
 356 were measured in experiment 1 (consecutive treatment experiment, measurements at
 357 day 1, non-stressed and 2, stressed), samples 6-14 in experiment 2 (parallel treatment
 358 experiment). The difference in the CH_4 rate increase between the treatments “non-
 359 stressed” and “stressed” was significant ($p = 0.003$ and $p = 0.005$ for *Exp. 1* and *Exp. 2*,
 360 *respectively*). *supplemented with ^{13}C -Met

Sample	CH_4 [$\text{ng g}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$]			$\Delta^{13}\text{CH}_4$ [$\text{‰ g}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$]		
	non-stressed	stressed	Ratio stressed/non-stressed	non-stressed	stressed	Ratio stressed/non-stressed
1	0.52	1.70	3.3	-	-	
2	0.57	1.87	3.3	-	-	
3	0.43	2.41	5.6	-	-	
4*	0.31	1.21	3.9	0.27	0.39	1.4
5*	0.18	1.67	9.1	0.11	0.34	3.2
6	0.37	-		-	-	
7	0.39	-		-	-	
8	0.14	-		-	-	
9*	0.24	-		0.36	-	
10*	0.06	-		0.43	-	
11*	0.40	-		0.79	-	
12*	-	1.26	5.4	-	0.78	1.5
13*	-	0.98	4.2	-	0.63	1.2
14*	-	2.61	11.2	-	1.07	2.0
Mean	0.33	1.71	5.7	0.39	0.64	1.86
±sd	±0.16	±0.57	±2.9	±0.25	±0.30	±0.81

361

362

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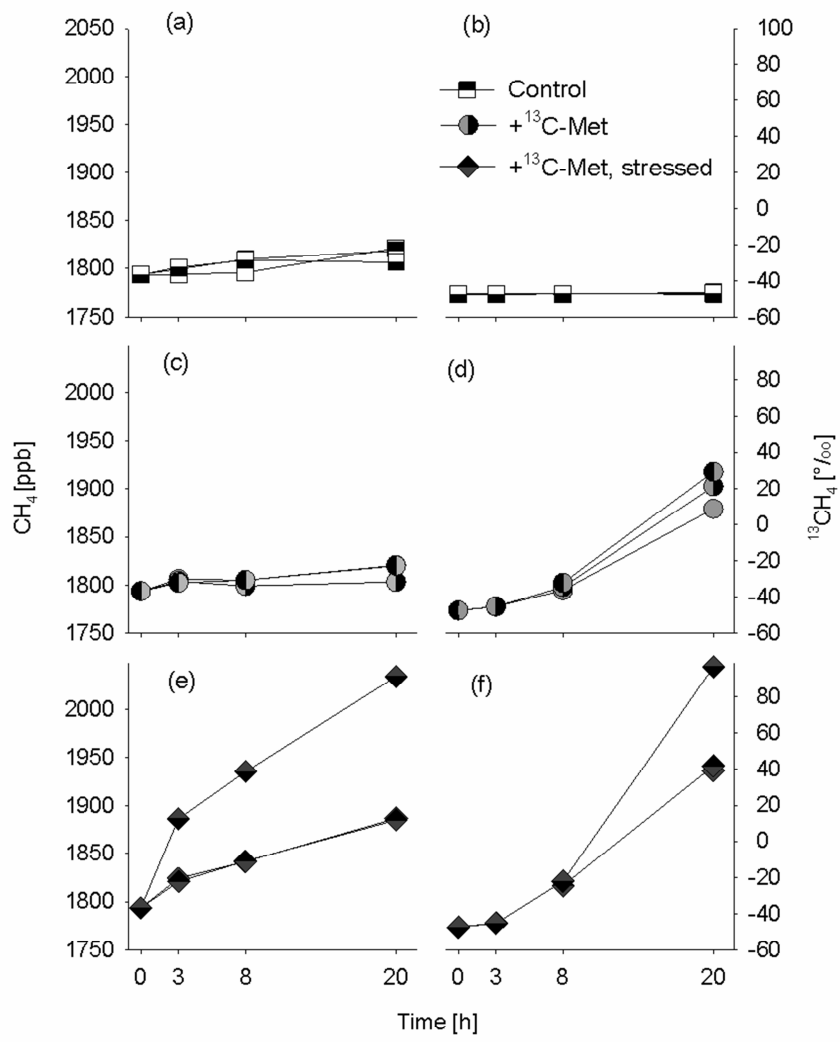
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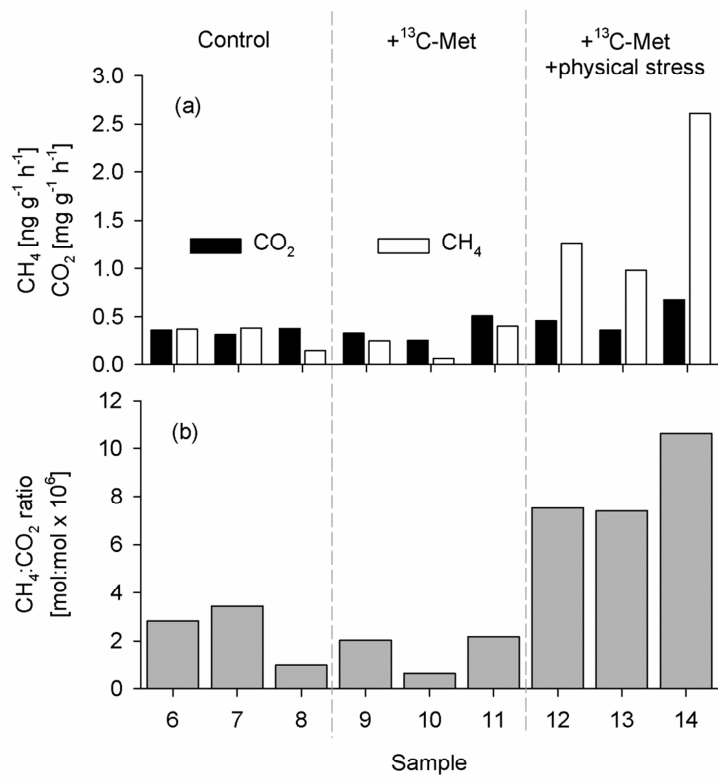
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465 Figure 1



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467 Figure2