

1 ***Microvirga tunisiensis* sp. nov., a root nodule symbiotic bacterium isolated from *Lupinus***  
2 ***micranthus* and *L. luteus* grown in Northern Tunisia**

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16

17 **Abstract**

18

19 Three bacterial strains, LmiM8<sup>T</sup>, LmiE10 and LluTb3, isolated from nitrogen-fixing nodules  
20 of *Lupinus micranthus* (Lmi strains) and *L. luteus* (Llu strain) growing in Northern Tunisia  
21 were analysed using genetic, phenotypic and symbiotic approaches. Phylogenetic analyses  
22 based on *rrs* and concatenated *gyrB* and *dnaK* genes suggested that these *Lupinus* strains  
23 constitute a new *Microvirga* species with identities ranging from 95 to 83% to its closest  
24 relatives *Microvirga makkahensis*, *M. vignae*, *M. zambiensis*, *M. ossetica*, and *M.*  
25 *lotoonidis*. The genome sequences of strains LmiM8<sup>T</sup> and LmiE10 exhibited pairwise  
26 Average Nucleotide Identities (ANIb) above 99.5%, significantly distant (73-89% pairwise  
27 ANIb) from other *Microvirga* species sequenced (*M. zambiensis* and *M. ossetica*). A  
28 phylogenetic analysis based on the symbiosis-related gene *nodA* placed the sequences of the  
29 new species in a divergent clade close to *Mesorhizobium*, *Microvirga* and *Bradyrhizobium*  
30 strains, suggesting that the *M. tunisiensis* strains represent a new symbiovar different from  
31 the *Bradyrhizobium* symbiovars defined to date. In contrast, the phylogeny derived from  
32 another symbiosis-related gene, *nifH*, reproduced the housekeeping genes phylogenies. The  
33 study of morphological, phenotypical and physiological features, including cellular fatty acid  
34 composition of the novel isolates demonstrated their unique profile regarding close reference  
35 *Microvirga* strains. Strains LmiM8<sup>T</sup>, LmiE10 and LluTb3 were able to nodulate several  
36 *Lupinus* spp. Based on genetic, genomic and phenotypic data presented in this study, these  
37 strains should be grouped within a new species for which the name *Microvirga tunisiensis* sp.  
38 nov. is proposed (type strain LmiM8<sup>T</sup> = CECT 9163<sup>T</sup>, LMG 29689<sup>T</sup>).

39

40 **Keywords:** Phylogenetic analysis; Average Nucleotide Identity; *Microvirga*; *Lupinus*  
41 *micranthus*; *Lupinus luteus*; Root nodule symbiosis

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43

## 44 **Introduction**

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46 Several *Lupinus* spp. are widespread in the Mediterranean basin and are mainly nodulated, as  
47 are most lupines, by slow-growing rhizobial strains classified in the genus *Bradyrhizobium*  
48 [3, 6, 32]. Recently, it has been shown that endosymbionts isolated from nodules of *Lupinus*  
49 *micranthus* plants grown in Algeria and Spain (100% of 101 isolates) belonged to the  
50 *Bradyrhizobium* genus [10]. In Northern Tunisia, Msaddak et al. [25] reported that this  
51 legume is nodulated by bacteria belonging to the *Bradyrhizobium* (28 out of 50 isolates),  
52 *Microvirga* (20 isolates) and *Phyllobacterium* (2 out of 50 isolates) genera. The same authors  
53 obtained a collection of 43 isolates of *L. luteus* from the same region, out of which 41  
54 belonged to the genus *Bradyrhizobium* and just two to *Microvirga* [26]. The genus  
55 *Microvirga* currently comprises eighteen species [1, 4, 11, 13, 20, 21, 27, 30, 33, 34, 37-39],  
56 of which only four have been described as effective root nodule bacteria: *M. lotononidis* and  
57 *M. zambiensis* isolated from *Listia angolensis* nodules [4], *M. lupini*, from *Lupinus texensis*  
58 [4] and *M. vignae* from *Vigna unguiculata* [27]. Through in-depth analysis of genetic,  
59 genomic and phenotypic data, we show here that *Microvirga* strains isolated from the root  
60 nodules of Northern Tunisian *L. micranthus* and *L. luteus* plants are representatives of a new  
61 symbiotic species that we propose to designate as *Microvirga tunisiensis*.

62

## 63 **Material and Methods**

64

65 The three *Microvirga* strains used in this work, LmiM8, LmiE10 and LluTb3, were isolated  
66 from *Lupinus micranthus* (Lmi strains) and *L. luteus* (Llu strain) grown in three different sites

67 in Northern Tunisia, Mraissa, El Alia and Tabarka respectively [25, 26]. These strains were  
68 selected as representatives from a previously reported collection of 22 root-nodule  
69 *Microvirga* isolates, 20 from *L. micranthus* [25] and 2 from *L. luteus* [26]. The strains were  
70 cultured in yeast mannitol agar (YMA, [35]) or tryptone yeast (TY, [7]) media at 28°C.  
71 Cultures were conserved in glycerol (20%) at -80°C for long-term storage.

72 Genomic DNA preparation, DNA fragment amplification and Sanger sequencing were  
73 performed as previously described [25]. Sequences were edited and assembled with Geneious  
74 Pro 5.6.5 (Biomatters Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand) and were deposited in GenBank  
75 (accession numbers listed in Figs. 1-3). Phylogenetic reconstructions were performed with  
76 MEGA7 [23] using the CLUSTALW implementation for alignment [12]. Trees were inferred  
77 by the maximum likelihood (ML) method with default parameters provided by MEGA.  
78 Previous to inference, model testing was carried out within MEGA7 for each alignment, and  
79 the most favoured model was used. Tree topologies were tested using 1,000 bootstrap  
80 replicates.

81 Genomes were sequenced externally at the Arizona State University Genomic Core Facility,  
82 Tempe, AZ, using Illumina MiSeq technology (Illumina MiSeq v.3, 2x300 PE libraries, over  
83 2 million reads). Initial read quality control and adapter-trimming were done at the  
84 sequencing facility using Illumina utilities. Once received, reads were quality filtered in-  
85 house with Trimmomatic [8], assembled with SPAdes v 3.5.0 [5], and draft assemblies  
86 submitted to Genbank (Bioprojects PRJNA558674 and PRJNA558675 for LmiM8 and  
87 LmiE10, respectively). Pairwise average nucleotide identities (ANI) from genome sequences  
88 of Lmi strains and type strains of species of the genus *Microvirga* available in the GenBank  
89 database were determined using the JSpeciesWS server [28] and the BLAST algorithm  
90 (ANiB).

91

## 92 **Results and Discussion**

93

94 Phylogenies of *rrs*, and concatenated *gyrB* and *dnaK* housekeeping genes from strains  
95 belonging to different *Microvirga* species are shown in Figs. 1 and 2, respectively. The three  
96 strains described in this work, isolated in locations separated by more than 100 km, had  
97 identical sequences for the three genes. *M. tunisiensis* strains appeared as a clade clearly  
98 differentiated from all the described *Microvirga* species. When the phylogenies based on the  
99 *rrs* gene or on the concatenation of *gyrB* and *dnaK* were compared, some differences were  
100 observed. On the one hand, the closest species in the analysis based on *rrs* gene were *M.*  
101 *makkahensis* and *M. vignae* (99 to 97 % nucleotide identity; Fig. 1) whereas in the phylogeny  
102 based on the two concatenated genes the closest species were *M. ossetica*, *M. zambiensis* and  
103 *M. lotononidis* (85 to 83 % amino acid identity; Fig. 2).

104 Genes responsible for symbiosis with the legume host can be transmitted horizontally and  
105 their phylogeny does not usually correspond to that of their bacterial host (reviewed in [3]). A  
106 phylogenetic tree based on symbiotic gene *nodA* revealed that the *M. tunisiensis* sequences  
107 cluster in a distinct branch, distantly related to sequences from a disparate group of root  
108 nodule bacteria nodulating diverse legumes, including *M. vignae* [27], *M. lotononidis* [4], *M.*  
109 *zambiensis* [4], *M. lupini* [4], several species of *Bradyrhizobium* [15-17, 19], *Rhizobium*  
110 *giardinii* [2], and *Mesorhizobium plurifarum* [14] (Fig. 3A). This suggests that *nod* genes,  
111 responsible for determining the specificity of the plant-bacterial symbiosis [3], may have  
112 indeed been recently acquired by *M. tunisiensis* strains through horizontal transfer from  
113 unrelated root nodule bacteria [24]. Notably, the phylogeny inferred from another, highly  
114 conserved symbiotic gene, *nifH*, one of the structural genes for the enzyme nitrogenase [9],  
115 reproduced the species phylogeny, suggesting that *nif* genes, on the contrary, were anciently  
116 acquired by *M. tunisiensis* (Fig. 3B).

117 The genomes of *L. micranthus* strains LmiM8<sup>T</sup> and LmiE10 were sequenced to a draft level  
118 (908 and 851 contigs above 1 kb, respectively; Table 1). They were highly similar and were  
119 also similar in size and composition to the genome of *M. ossetica* V5/3M<sup>T</sup>, the only  
120 completely sequenced *Microvirga* genome, although this is a non-symbiotic strain with a  
121 larger complement of plasmids, which probably explains its larger genome (Table 1). The *L.*  
122 *micranthus* LmiM8<sup>T</sup> and LmiE10 genomes exhibited pairwise ANI<sub>b</sub> values above 99.5%  
123 (Table 2) and were well separated from other described *Microvirga* species, with ANI<sub>b</sub>  
124 values ranging from below 89% for their closest relative *M. ossetica* V5/3M<sup>T</sup>, to under 73%  
125 for *M. massiliensis* JC119<sup>T</sup>, in all cases well below the 95-96 % threshold commonly used for  
126 species circumscription. Included among these was *M. lupini* Lut6<sup>T</sup>, a strain nodulating *L.*  
127 *texensis* [4].

128 Phenotypic characterization of *M. tunisiensis* strains was based on characteristics previously  
129 shown to be useful for lupine microsymbionts and *Microvirga* species differentiation [16, 19,  
130 38] (Table 3). The effects of temperature and pH on growth of the strains were determined by  
131 incubating cultures in YMA at 20, 25, 28, 37, 40 and 45°C, and at pH ranging from 4.0 to 12,  
132 respectively. The optimum pH was 7-8 as it has been shown for other *Microvirga* species. *M.*  
133 *tunisiensis*, *M. ossetica* and *M. arabica* grew better at 28 °C whereas *M. zambiensis*, *M. lupini*  
134 and *M. lotononidis* preferred higher temperatures (35-41 °C). Salt tolerance was tested by  
135 adding NaCl to YM medium. *M. tunisiensis* strains were unable to grow with 1% NaCl (w/v),  
136 while several *Microvirga* spp. can tolerate up to 4% (Table 3). Natural antibiotic resistance  
137 was tested on YMA plates containing the antibiotics indicated in Table 3. Strains LmiM8<sup>T</sup>,  
138 LmiE10 and LluTb3 were very sensitive to ampicillin, gentamycin, tetracycline,  
139 spectinomycin, kanamycin and streptomycin and resistant to nalidixic acid (Table 3). Six  
140 carbon sources were utilized by all the *M. tunisiensis* strains, a trait shared with *M. lupini* and

141 *M. lotononidis*. *M. ossetica* and *M. arabica* were unable to use saccharose, as was *M.*  
142 *zambiensis*, a species that was also unable to use L-arabinose (Table 3).

143 Cellular fatty acid composition analyses for the isolates LmiM8<sup>T</sup>, LmiE10 and the type  
144 strains of other *Microvirga* species were performed at the Spanish Type Culture Collection  
145 (Colección Española de Cultivos Tipo, CECT, Paterna, Valencia) (Table 4). Cultures were  
146 collected after growing aerobically on TY medium at 28° C for five days. Fatty acid methyl  
147 esters were prepared and resolved using as described by Sasser [31], and identified with the  
148 MIDI (2008) Sherlock Microbial Identification System (version 6.1), using theTSBA6  
149 database at CECT. Fatty acids composition of strains LmiM8<sup>T</sup> and LmiE10 were very similar  
150 (Table 4). A total of 8 fatty acids were detected in strain LmiM8<sup>T</sup>. The higher percentages  
151 were found for C<sub>16:0</sub> (5.97), C<sub>18:0</sub> (1.27) and C<sub>19:0</sub> cyclo w 8c (7.64). Summed features 2 (2.72  
152 %), 3 (6.13 %) and 8 (73.05 %) comprising, respectively: 1) 14:0 3OH / 16 :1 iso I / 12 :0  
153 aldehyde; 2) 16:1 ω7c / 16:1 ω6c; and 3) 18:1 ω7c / 18:1 ω6c, were also relatively abundant.  
154 These data were compared to those from the closest *Microvirga* species type strains (*M.*  
155 *ossetica*, *M. arabica*, *M. makkahensis* and *M. zambiensis*) (Table 4), and differences among  
156 the five strains at the level of percentages and in the presence / absence of certain fatty acids  
157 were found. Among other, we can point out that LmiM8 and *M. ossetica* differed in 5 fatty  
158 acids, 2 present only in LmiM8, and 3 only present in *M. ossetica*. *M. arabica* and *M.*  
159 *makkhaensis* lacked C<sub>19:0</sub> cyclo ω8c, which is abundant in the rest of the strains. *M.*  
160 *zambiensis* differed from the rest by having C<sub>20:0</sub> ω6,9c, and also differed from LmiM8 by  
161 having C<sub>14:0</sub> and C<sub>18:1</sub> ω7c 11-methyl. The obtained patterns are consistent with previous  
162 reports for *Microvirga* strains [30, 34] and observed differences may be due to the different  
163 cultivation conditions used.

164 Several *Microvirga* species can form effective nodules with legumes. *M. tunisiensis* strains  
165 were isolated from *Lupinus micranthus* and *L. luteus*, two legumes usually nodulated by

166 members of the genus *Bradyrhizobium* [10, 26]. Many bradyrhizobia [22] and lupines [18]  
167 prefer acidic soils. Therefore, it is interesting that *M. tunisiensis* strains adapted to growth at  
168 higher pH (Table 3), effectively nodulate lupines in alkaline soils from Tunisia. Symbiotic  
169 characteristics of these *M. tunisiensis* strains were examined by means of cross-inoculation  
170 tests (Table 5). Effective, N<sub>2</sub>-fixing nodules were observed in *L. micranthus*, *L. luteus*, *L.*  
171 *angustifolius* and *Macroptilium atropurpureum* plants inoculated with the three *M. tunisiensis*  
172 strains; in contrast, only white nodules were observed when these strains were used to  
173 inoculate *L. mariae-josephae* (very low nitrogen fixation activity) or *Vigna unguiculata* (no  
174 nitrogen fixation activity) (Table 5).

175

#### 176 **Description of *M. tunisiensis* sp. nov.**

177

178 *Microvirga tunisiensis* (tu.ni.si.en'sis. N.L. fem. adj. *tunisiensis* pertaining to Tunisia,  
179 where the type strain was isolated).

180 The isolates were obtained from surface-sterilized, effective nodules from *Lupinus* plants  
181 grown in Tunisian soils, and grown on Yeast Mannitol Agar (YMA). They are Gram  
182 negative, non spore-forming rods, with mean generation times of 5 h in TY. Colonies grown  
183 at 28°C for 4 days on YMA medium are circular, beige, opaque, and 2 mm in diameter. After  
184 8 days of growth a brown/pinky spot is observed at the centre of the colony. Optimum growth  
185 occurs at pH 6.8-8.0 (range 4 to 12). They do not tolerate 1 % NaCl (w/v) and are sensitive to  
186 ampicillin, chloramphenicol, gentamicin and kanamycin, while they are resistant to nalidixic  
187 acid. They utilize D-mannitol, D-glucose, D-galactose, L-arabinose, D-fructose and  
188 saccharose as carbon sources. Eight fatty acids were detected in LmiM8<sup>T</sup>, and C<sub>19:0</sub> cyclo  
189 ω<sub>8</sub>c, summed feature 8 (C<sub>18:1</sub> ω<sub>7</sub>c/18:1 ω<sub>6</sub>c) and C<sub>16:0</sub> were the predominant species.



190 *M. tunisiensis* strains are genomically divergent from the closest species within the  
191 *Microvirga* genus, sharing less than 89% ANI with their closest relative, *Microvirga ossetica*  
192 V5/3M<sup>T</sup>. They establish diazotrophic root nodule symbioses with *Lupinus micranthus*, *L.*  
193 *luteus*, *L. angustifolius* and *Macroptilium atropurpureum* but not with *Vigna unguiculata* or  
194 *L. mariae-josephae*. The type strain Lmi M8<sup>T</sup> (CECT 9163<sup>T</sup>=LMG 29689<sup>T</sup>) was isolated  
195 from *L. micranthus* nodules collected from Mraissa, Tunisia.

196 The Digital Protologue TaxoNumber (Rosselló-Móra et al. [29]) for strain LmiM8<sup>T</sup> is  
197 TA00627.

198

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206

### 207 **Conflict of interest**

208 The authors declare that there are not conflicts of interest.

209

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336

337

338 **Figure legends**

339

340 **Fig. 1.** Maximum Likelihood phylogenetic tree of *M. tunisiensis* isolates (highlighted in  
341 bold) and related species based on near-complete *rrs* gene sequences (1,300 nt). Bootstrap  
342 values (1,000 replications) above 50 % are shown. GenBank accession numbers are shown  
343 in brackets. Bar, 0.02 substitutions per nucleotide position. *Sphingobium tyrosinilyticum*  
344 MAH-12<sup>T</sup> was used as outgroup.

345

346 **Fig. 2.** Maximum Likelihood phylogenetic tree of *M. tunisiensis* isolates (highlighted in bold)  
347 and reference strains based on amino acyl sequences derived from concatenated *gyrB* (616 bp)  
348 and *dnaK* (665 bp) gene sequences. Bootstrap values were calculated for 1,000 replications and  
349 those greater than 70% are shown at the internodes. GenBank accession numbers are shown in  
350 brackets. Bar, 0.2 substitutions per position. *B. japonicum* USDA6 was included as outgroup.

351

352 **Fig. 3.** Maximum Likelihood phylogenetic tree of *M. tunisiensis* isolates (highlighted in bold)  
353 and reference strains based on *nodA* (panel A) or *nifH* (panel B) gene sequences. Only  
354 bootstrap values (1,000 replications) above 70% are indicated at the internodes. GenBank  
355 accession numbers are shown in brackets. Bars, 0.1 and 0.02 substitutions per nucleotide  
356 position, respectively. *Azorhizobium caulinodans* ORS571 (panel A) and *Sinorhizobium*  
357 *meliloti* 1021 (panel B) were included as outgroups.

358



**Table 1.** Genomic features of *M. tunisiensis* strains

	<i>M. tunisiensis</i> M8	<i>M. tunisiensis</i> E10	<i>M. ossetica</i> V5/3M
Assembly quality	Draft	Draft	Complete
Estimated genome size (Mb)	9.35	8.98	9.63
Average coverage	106	95	— <sup>f</sup>
N50 (kb)	114	104	— <sup>f</sup>
Contigs > 1kb	908	851	— <sup>f</sup>
GC (%)	61.77	61.76	62.67
rRNA operons <sup>a</sup>	4	4	4
tRNAs <sup>b</sup>	59 (+12) <sup>c</sup>	59 (+12) <sup>c</sup>	59 (+12) <sup>c</sup>
<i>nod/nif</i> symbiotic genes <sup>d</sup>	+	+	—
Plasmids <sup>e</sup>	1	1	5

<sup>a</sup> Since rRNA operon copies are identical or almost identical, in draft assemblies they collapse into a higher coverage consensus sequence. The number of copies was estimated from the excess read coverage of the assembled rRNA region over the average genome read coverage.

<sup>b</sup> Numbers of tRNAs associated to rRNA operons (three tRNAs per operon) are shown in brackets.

<sup>c</sup> As estimated by the tRNAscan-SE server ([http:// lowelab.ucsc.edu/tRNAscan-SE/](http://lowelab.ucsc.edu/tRNAscan-SE/)).

<sup>d</sup> Presence or absence was estimated from results of BLAST hits against the phylogenetically close (see Fig. 3) symbiotic region from the *Mesorhizobium ciceri* genome (accession number NZ\_CM002796.1).

<sup>e</sup> In draft sequences, this was estimated as the number of unique BLAST hits against the *M. ossetica* V5/3M plasmid replication *repAB* genes.

<sup>f</sup> Not applicable.

**Table 2.** Pairwise Average Nucleotide Identity (ANIb) among genome sequences of *M. tunisiensis* strains LmiM8<sup>T</sup> and LmiE10 and other *Microvirga* type strains.

<b>Strain</b>	<b>LmiM8<sup>T</sup></b>	<b>LmiE10</b>
<i>M. tunisiensis</i> Lmi M8 <sup>T</sup>	-	99.66
<i>M. tunisiensis</i> Lmi E10	99.96	-
<i>M. ossetica</i> V5/3M <sup>T</sup>	88.16	88.22
<i>M. lupini</i> Lut6 <sup>T</sup>	84.59	84.65
<i>M. lotononidis</i> WSM3557 <sup>T</sup>	83.86	83.84
<i>M. flocculans</i> ATCC BAA-817 <sup>T</sup>	82.56	85.55
<i>M. vignae</i> BR3299 <sup>T</sup>	79.36	79.35
<i>M. massiliensis</i> JC119 <sup>T</sup>	72.40	72.47

**Table 3.** Phenotypic differences of *M. tunisiensis* strains as compared to closely-related *Microvirga* species type strains

Characteristic	<i>M. tunisiensis</i> <sup>#</sup>	<i>M. ossetica</i> <sup>*</sup>	<i>M. zambiensis</i> <sup>**</sup>	<i>M. lupini</i>	<i>M. arabica</i> <sup>***</sup>	<i>M. lotononidis</i>
<i>Isolation source</i>	Root nodule	Root nodule	Root nodule	Root nodule	Soil sample	Root nodule
<i>Colony colour</i>	pink	transparent	cream	pale orange	pink	light pink
<i>Temperature for growth (°C)</i>						
Optimum	28	28	35	39	28-30	41
Range	20-37	20-37	15-38	10-43	20-37	15-44
<i>pH for growth</i>						
Optimum	6.8-8.0	ND	7-8.5	7.0-8.5	7	7.0-8.5
Range	4-12	ND	6-9.5	4-12	6-9	4-12
<i>Salt tolerance:</i>						
1% (w/v) NaCl	-	+	-	+	+	+
2% (w/v) NaCl	-	+	-	-	-	+
4% (w/v) NaCl	-	+	-	-	-	ND
<i>Symb. N<sub>2</sub> fixation</i>	+	-	+	+	ND	+
<i>Resistance to antibiotics (µg/mL<sup>-1</sup>)</i>						
Ampicillin (100)	-	ND	ND	-	ND	-
Gentamycin (30)	-	ND	ND	-	ND	+/-
Tetracycline (5)	-	ND	ND	-	ND	-
Spectinomycin (50)	-	ND	ND	+/-	ND	+/-
Kanamycin (50)	-	ND	-	-	ND	+/-
Chloramphenicol (20)	-	ND	ND	+/-	ND	+/-
Nalidixic acid (20)	+	ND	ND	+/-	ND	+
Rifampicin (5)	-	ND	ND	-	ND	+
Streptomycin (10)	-	ND	ND	+	ND	-
<i>Utilization of C sources</i>						
Mannitol	+	-	+	+	-	+
D-glucose	+	+	+	+	+	+
D-galactose	+	ND	ND	+	ND	+
L-arabinose	+	ND	-	+	+	+
D-fructose	+	+	+	+	ND	+
Saccharose	+	-	-	+	-	+

<sup>#</sup>All three *M. tunisiensis* strains exhibited the same phenotype

ND, Not Determined.

<sup>\*</sup> Data taken from Safranova et al. [30].

<sup>\*\*</sup>Data taken from Ardley et al. [4].

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>Data taken from Veyisoglu et al. [34].

+, Positive; -, negative; +/-, weakly positive

**Table 4.** Fatty acid composition of *Microvirga tunisiensis* LmiM8<sup>T</sup> and related strains.

Fatty acid / Strains	1	2	3	4	5	6
12:0	-	-	0.87	-	-	-
14:0	-	-	0.71	0.48	0.44	0.60
16:0	5.97	6.38	8.23	9.80	8.79	10.56
15:0 3OH	-	-	-	-	0.30	-
17:1 ω8c	0.46	0.68	-	-	0.71	-
17:1 ω6c	-	-	-	-	0.95	-
17:0 cyclo	0.81	1.20	-	-	1.37	2.13
17:0	0.58	1.04	1.64	1.27	2.27	1.02
18:0	1.27	1.06	3.30	3.71	2.07	2.45
18:1 ω7c 11-methyl	-	-	-	0.72	-	0.84
18:1 ω9c	-	-	1.04	-	-	-
19:0 cyclo ω8c	7.64	7.95	6.18	-	-	19.02
19:0 10-methyl	0.95	0.97	1.08	1.18	0.96	0.69
18:0 3OH	0.43	0.51	1.03	1.17	1.67	1.55
20:0 ω6,9c	-	-	-	-	-	0.64
Summed Feature 2	2.72	2.75	3.41	3.22	2.90	4.01
Summed Feature 3	6.13	6.82	3.12	5.34	4.25	2.73
Summed Feature 8	73.05	70.63	69.39	73.12	65.35	53.74

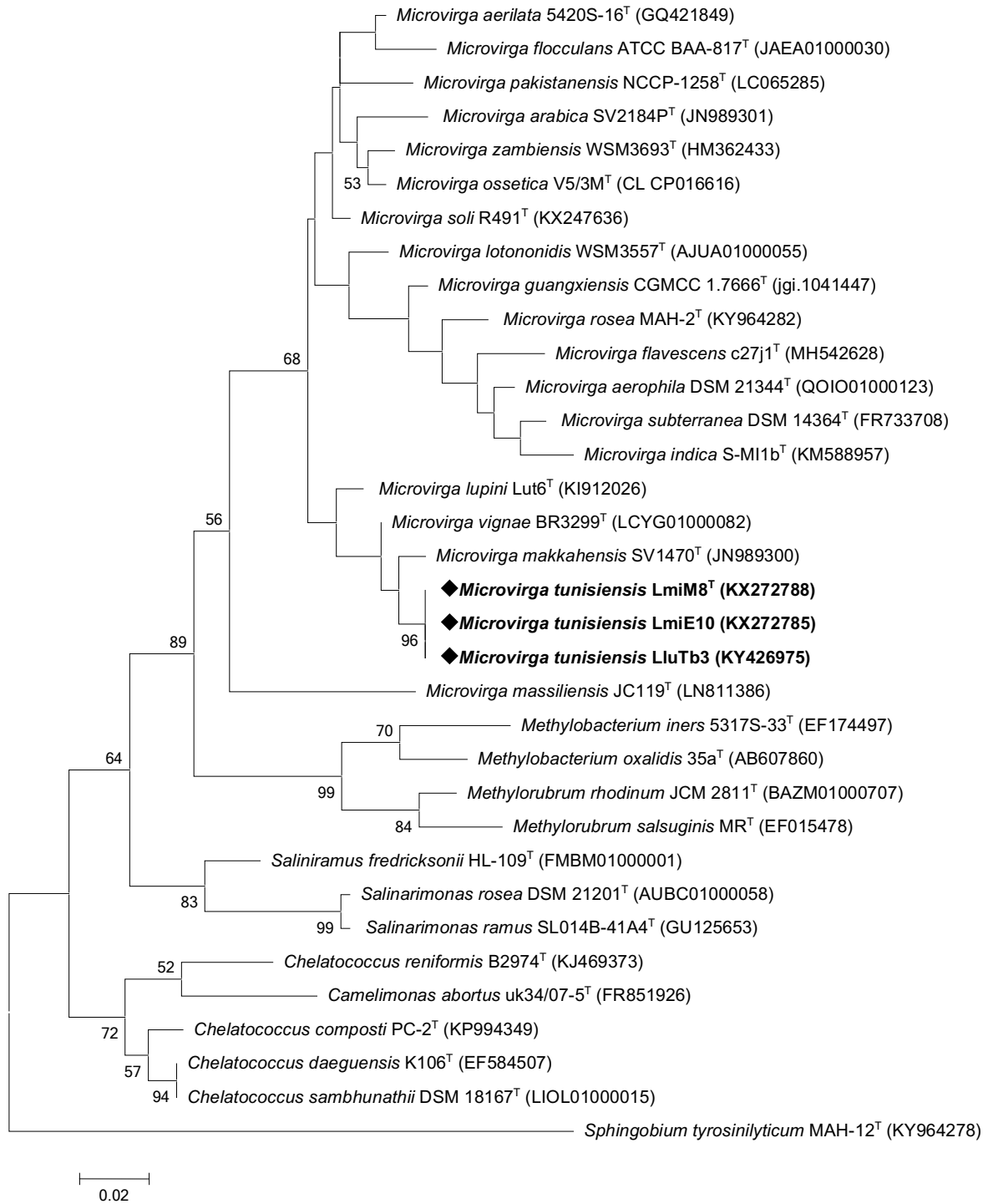
Strains: 1, *M. tunisiensis* LmiM8<sup>T</sup>; 2, *M. tunisiensis* LmiE10; 3, *M. ossetica* V5/3M<sup>T</sup>; 4, *M. arabica* SV2184P<sup>T</sup>; 5, *M. makkhaensis* SV1470<sup>T</sup>; 6, *M. zambiensis* WSM3693<sup>T</sup>. Summed Feature 2 comprises 14:0 3OH / 16 :1 iso I / 12 :0 aldehyde ; Summed Feature 3 comprises 16:1 ω7c /16:1 ω6c; Summed Feature 8 comprises 18:1 ω7c /18:1 ω6c.

**Table 5.** Legume host-range analysis of *M. tunisiensis* strains

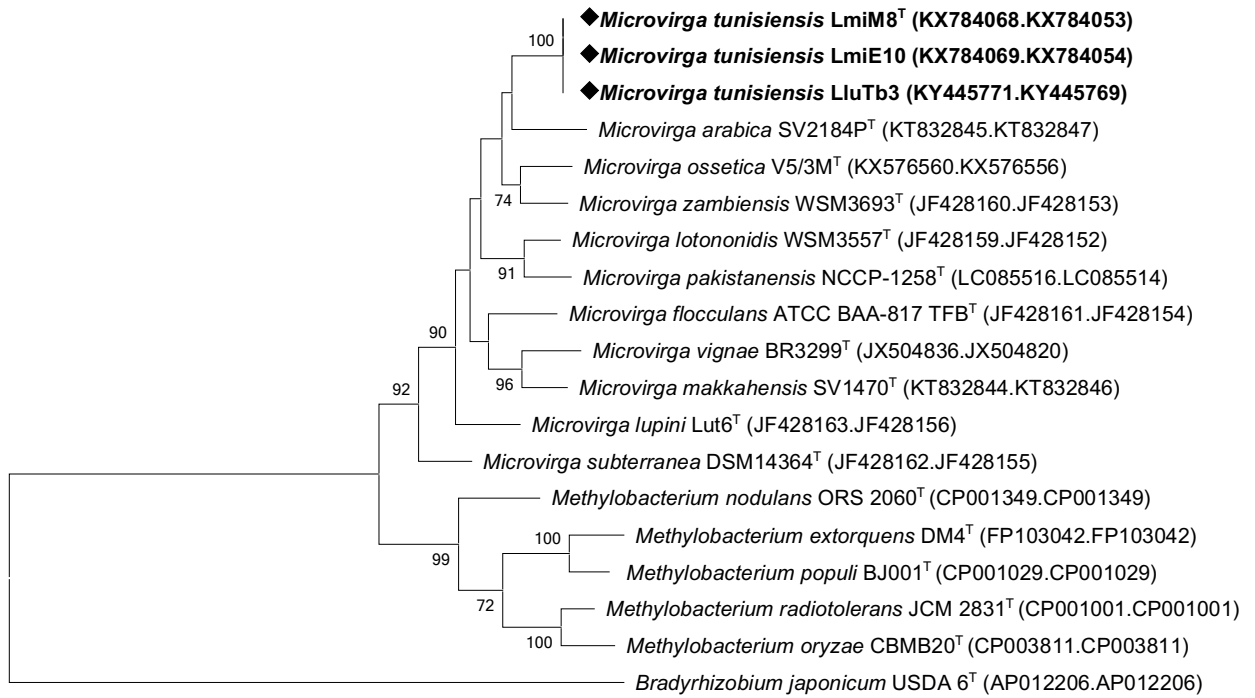
Strains	<i>Lupinus micranthus</i>		<i>L. luteus</i>		<i>L. angustifolius</i>		<i>L. mariae-josephae</i>		<i>V. unguiculata</i>		<i>M. atropurpureum</i>	
	Nod	NF	Nod	NF	Nod	NF	Nod	NF	Nod	NF	Nod	NF
	<b>LmiM8<sup>T</sup></b>	+	20.0	+	15.4	+	3.7	+W	0.3	+W	0	+
<b>LmiE10</b>	+	18.4	+	14.4	+	9.1	+W	0.2	+W	0	+	6.4
<b>LluTb3</b>	+	15.2	+	17.5	+	ND	+W	0	+W	0	+	ND

Nod: (+) red nodules, (+W) white nodules. Nitrogen fixation (NF) was determined by the acetylene reduction test and expressed as  $\mu\text{mol}$  of acetylene reduced  $\times (\text{h} \times \text{g of nodules})^{-1}$ .

Values are the average of two replicates and standard deviations were less than 15 %.

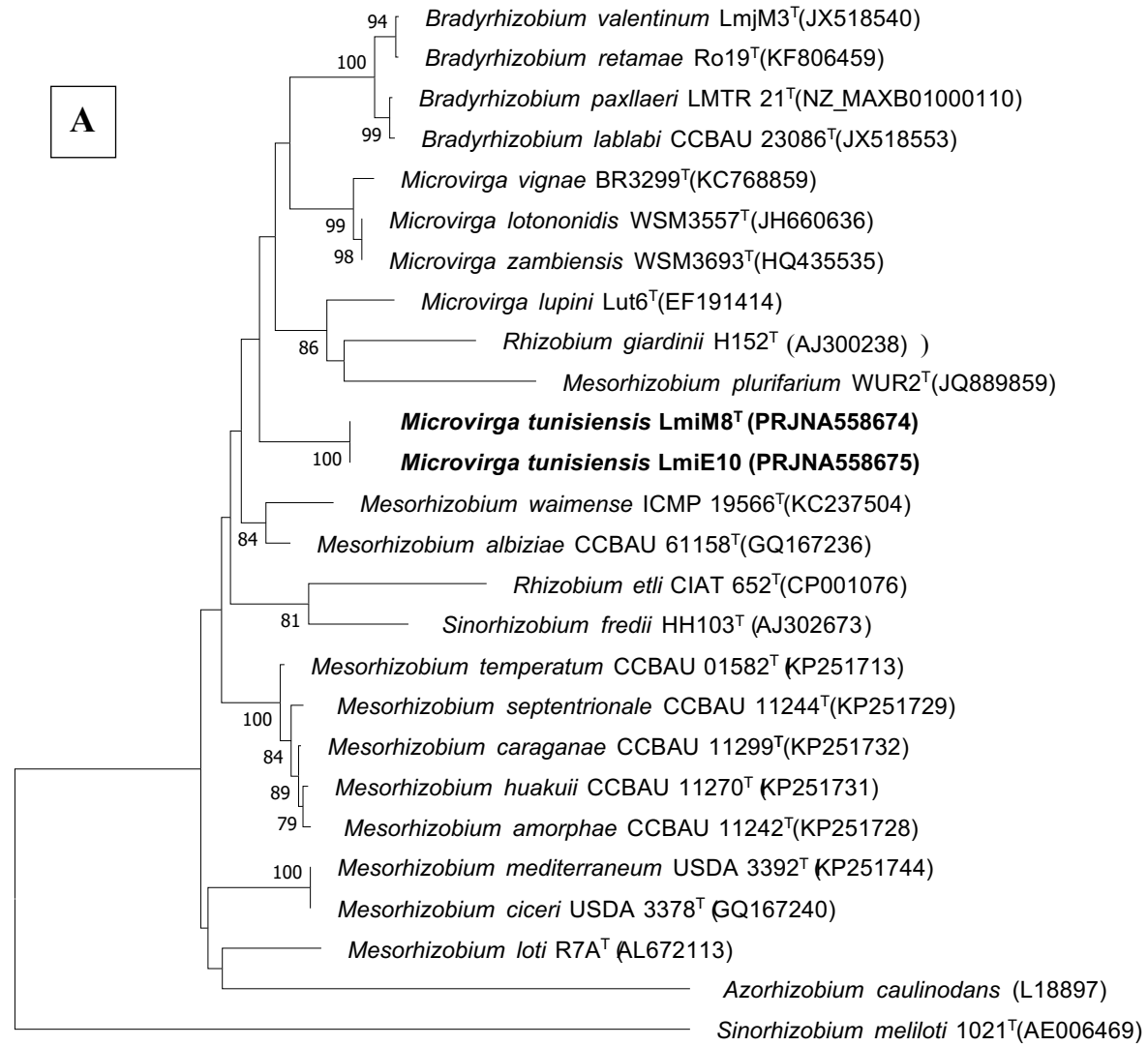


**Fig. 1.** Maximum Likelihood phylogenetic tree of *M. tunisiensis* isolates (highlighted in bold) and related species based on near-complete *rrs* gene sequences (1,300 nt). Bootstrap values (1,000 replications) above 50 % are shown. GenBank accession numbers are shown in brackets. Bar, 0.02 substitutions per nucleotide position. *Spingobium tyrosinilyticum* MAH-12<sup>T</sup> was used as outgroup.



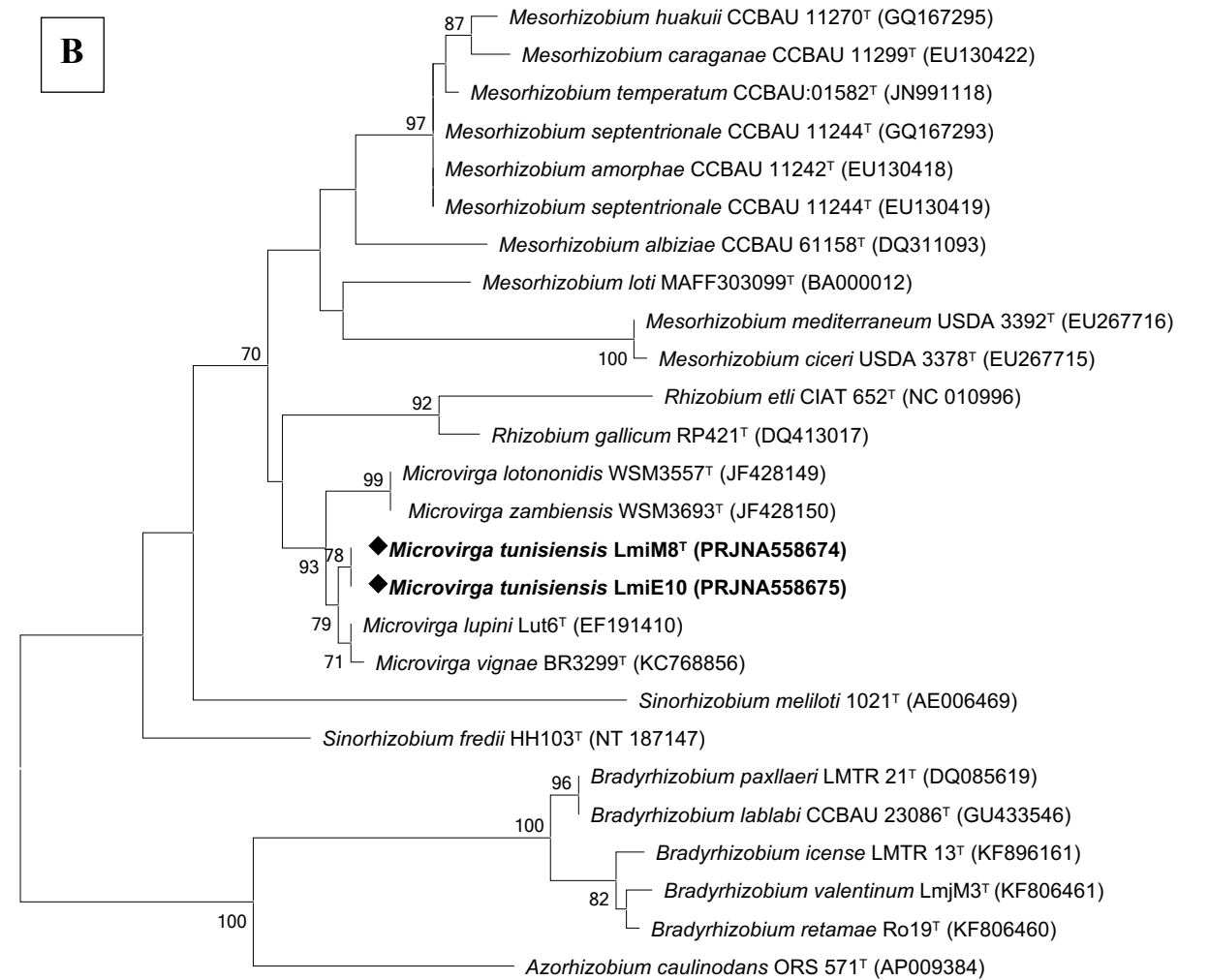
0.2

A



0.10

B



0.02