



# Complete Genome Sequence of *Cellulomonas* sp. JZ18, a Root Endophytic Bacterium Isolated from the Perennial Desert Tussock-Grass *Panicum turgidum*

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## Abstract

*Cellulomonas* sp. JZ18 is a gram-positive, rod shaped bacterium that was previously isolated from the root endosphere of the perennial desert tussock-grass *Panicum turgidum*. Genome coverage of PacBio sequencing was approximately 199X. Genome assembly generated a single chromosome of 7,421,843 base pairs with a guanine-cytosine (GC) content of 75.60% with 3240 protein coding sequences, 361 pseudo genes, three ribosomal RNA operons, three non-coding RNAs and 45 transfer RNAs. Comparison of JZ18's genome with type strains from the same genus, using digital DNA–DNA hybridization and average nucleotide identity calculations, revealed that JZ18 might potentially belong to a new species. Functional analysis revealed the presence of genes that may complement previously observed biochemical and plant phenotypes. Furthermore, the presence of a number of enzymes could be of potential use in industrial processes as biocatalysts. Genome sequencing and analysis, coupled with comparative genomics, of endophytic bacteria for their potential plant growth promoting activities under different soil conditions will accelerate the knowledge and applications of biostimulants in sustainable agriculture.

## Introduction

*Cellulomonas* species are Gram-positive, rod-shaped, G + C rich bacteria belonging to the phylum *Actinobacteria*. A major distinguishing characteristic of this genus is their ability to breakdown cellulose and hemicellulose by xylanases, endo- and exoglucanases [1, 2]. Indeed, different species of *Cellulomonas* have been studied and shown to have a potential for biotechnological applications as well as, recently, as biostimulants and biocontrol agents in agriculture. For

example, xylan degradation and production of  $\beta$ -xylanase and  $\beta$ -xylosidase activities were studied in *C. uda* [3], *C. fimi* [4] and *C. pachnodae* [5]. *Cellulomonas flavigena* was shown to produce a set of enzymes, cellulases, xylanases and endoglucanases, for the breakdown of plant biomass such as cellulose and hemicellulose [6–9], which indicate their potential for use in biotechnological applications [10].

*Cellulomonas* species were previously isolated from the roots Mexican husk tomato plants (*Physalis ixocarpa*) [11]. Zinniel et al. [12] isolated *Cellulomonas* sp. SE017 from sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*) and claimed their ability to colonize wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), potato (*Lycopersicon esculentum*), and tomato (*Solanum tuberosum*). They were also shown to colonize the rhizosphere and phyllosphere of winter wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) and pea (*Pisum sativum*) and to promote the nodulation and shoot and root biomass of pea [13, 14]. Co-inoculation of *C. flavigena* with other bacterial genera was shown to promote growth of rice (*Oryza sativa*) [15]. These studies suggest the ability of *Cellulomonas* to promote plant growth and, thus, to be used as biostimulants in agriculture. In addition, Takegawa et al. [16] previously demonstrated the ability of a polysaccharide lyase (possibly a pectate lyase), isolated from a soil bacterium that was identified as *Cellulomonas* sp., to degrade *Fusarium* and *Gibberella* acidic polysaccharides. The authors speculate a role of

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these acidic polysaccharides in the two pathogenic fungi in host-parasite interactions and, thus, species of *Cellulomonas* could play a role as biocontrol agents in agriculture.

Here, we report the genome of *Cellulomonas* sp. JZ18, an endophyte isolated from the root endosphere of the perennial desert tussock-grass *Panicum turgidum* in Jizan, Saudi Arabia [17]. It was previously identified using biochemical assays to possess the ability to tolerate growth under salt, osmotic and heat stresses, colonize *Arabidopsis* root surface and produce biofilms and exoproteases [17].

## Materials and Methods

### Growth Conditions and Genomic DNA Extraction

Isolate JZ18 was grown in/on tryptone soy broth/agar (g/L: Bacto tryptone-15; Bacto soytone-5; NaCl-5; agar-15) at 28 °C. Fresh, pure bacterial cultures were used for total genomic DNA extraction using Sigma's GenElute bacterial genomic DNA kit (Sigma Aldrich) following the manufacturer's protocol. DNA quality and quantity were assessed by 0.7% agarose gel electrophoresis (35 V, 12 h), NanoDrop 2000 (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and Qubit dsDNA BR assay kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific).

### Genome Sequencing and Assembly

DNA was size selected to 10 kb using the BluePippin™ Size-Selection System (Sage Science), following the “High-Pass™ DNA Size Selection of ~20 kb SMRTbell™ Templates” manual. The SMRTbell™ template library was prepared according to the instructions from Pacific Biosciences's “Procedure and Checklist—20 kb Template Preparation using BluePippin™ Size-Selection System” guide. The SMRT cells were run at the KAUST Bioscience Core Labs on the PacBio RSII (Pacific Biosciences) sequencing platform using P6-C4 chemistry. One SMRT cell was run, taking one 360 min movie. Raw data from PacBio's platform was assembled into a draft assembly using the Hierarchical Genome Assembly Process v4 (HGAP4) [18] from PacBio's SMRT Analysis pipeline v2.3.0.140936 patch 5. The assembly workflow can be broken down to three main steps: a pre-assembly step that mapped single pass reads to seed reads to generate consensus reads that were then quality trimmed. De novo assembly was done using the overlap layout consensus approach. The final step is consensus polishing using Quiver to reduce indels and base substitution using quality scores embedded in the raw data. To determine whether assembled contigs are circular, dot plots were generated using Gepard [19] for detecting overlaps at the peripheries. Overlaps were collapsed and the genome was closed using Minimus2 [20]. Finally, additional polishing rounds were performed using Quiver by applying quality scores from raw data to correct

for indels and base substitutions where the output from one round was used as input to the next round.

### Genome Annotation

The annotation of the genome was performed using NCBI's prokaryotic genome annotation pipeline (PGAP) [18, 19]. Function and pathway analysis was also performed using BlastKOALA web tool of KEGG database [20]. The identification of gene clusters for the biosynthesis of secondary metabolites was performed using antiSMASH v.4.2.0 [21].

### Phylogenetic Analysis

The 16S rRNA gene sequences of JZ18 were predicted using RNAmmer 1.2 and the most common and identical sequences of the three copies were compared to known sequences listed in NCBI's GenBank using BLASTn [22]. The sequences with the highest similarity in terms of sequence identity and query coverage, along with other *Cellulomonas* strains from similar and distant genera were used for the phylogenetic tree construction. Alignment of 16S rRNA sequences and construction of phylogenetic tree was performed as previously described [23]. For distinguishing between *Cellulomonas* strains at species level, digital DNA–DNA hybridization (dDDH) and average nucleotide identity (ANI) calculations were performed. Pairwise BLAST-based average nucleotide identity values (ANIb) were obtained using JSpecies [24]. The genome sequence data were uploaded to the Type (Strain) Genome Server (TYGS), a free bioinformatics platform available under <https://tygs.dsmz.de>, for a whole genome-based taxonomic analysis [25]. All pairwise comparisons among the set of genomes were conducted using GBDP and accurate intergenomic distances inferred under the algorithm 'trimming' and distance formula d5 [26]. 100 distance replicates were calculated each. Digital DDH values and confidence intervals were calculated using the recommended settings of the GGDC 2.1 [26].

### Sequence Accession Number

The data for the bacterial genome assembly of *Cellulomonas* sp. JZ18 and sequencing were deposited in NCBI/DDBJ/EMBL database under the accession number CP045245, BioSample SAMN13011526 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/biosample/13011526>).

## Results and Discussion

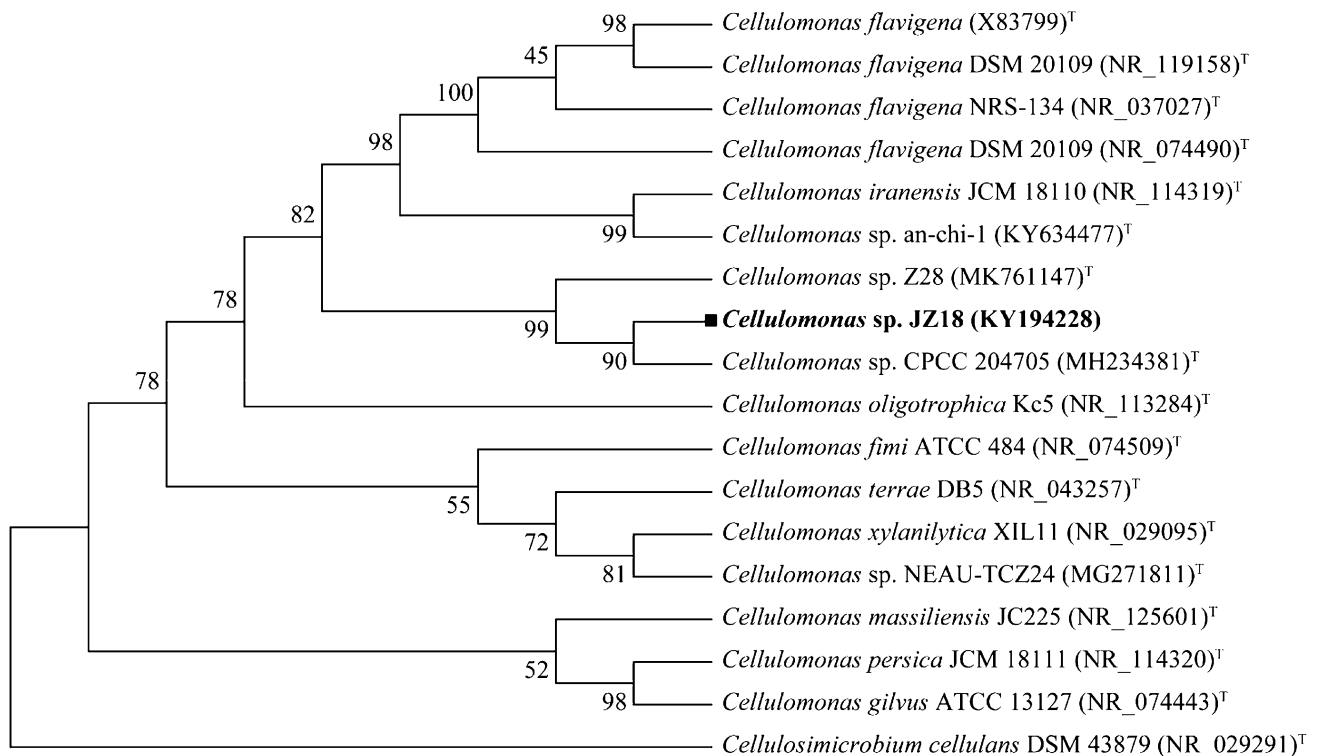
Sequencing of *Cellulomonas* sp. JZ18 using PacBio technology (estimated genome coverage of 199X) resulted in a chromosome of 4,043,325 bp with a GC content of 75.60% (Table 1). Annotation pipeline generated a total of 3658 ORFs of which 3240 are protein coding sequences (CDS), 361 pseudo genes, three rRNA operons, three ncRNAs and 45 tRNAs.

**Table 1** Summary of JZ18 genome features

Feature	Chromosome
Genome coverage	199X
Genome size (bp)	4,043,325
GC content (%)	75.60
ORF	3658
Gene density (genes/Mbp)	756.31
CDS	3240
Pseudo genes	361
rRNAs	9
16S-23S-5S operons	3
ncRNAs	3

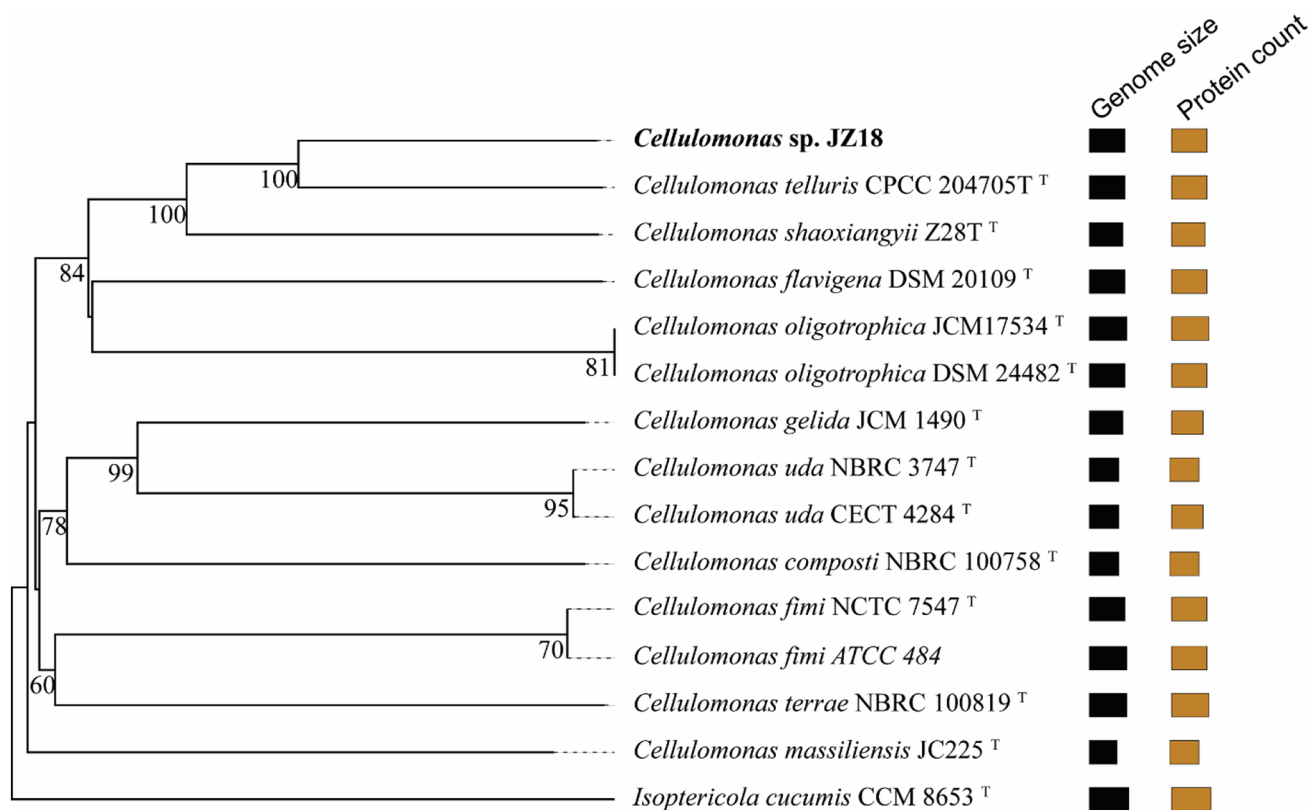
Phylogenetic analysis based on 16S rRNA sequences of JZ18 and closest relatives (based on top BLAST hits) showed clustering of JZ18 with *Cellulomonas* sp. CPCC 204,705 and *Cellulomonas* sp. Z28 (Fig. 1), which represent the type strains of *C. telluris* and *C. shaoxiangyii* [27, 28]. Whole-genome sequence phylogenetic analysis of JZ18 with other *Cellulomonas* type strains revealed clustering of JZ18 within a clade of *C. telluris* CPCC 204705T and *C. shaoxiangyii* Z28T (Fig. 2). Further analysis revealed displays the highest similarity with *C. iranensis* NBRC 101,100 and *C. flavigena* DSM 20,109 with ANI<sub>b</sub> values of 80.73% and 80.26%, respectively (ESM\_2 Table S1). JZ18 also displayed high similarity with *C. telluris* CPCC 204705T and *C. shaoxiangyii* Z28T with dDDH values of 72.8% and 50.2% (formula  $d_0$ ), respectively (Table 2; ESM\_2 Table S2). However, the ANI<sub>b</sub> and dDDH values do not exceed the species cut-off of 95% and 70%, respectively. Based on these results, JZ18 may potentially be a new species.

Functional analysis (BlastKOALA) of the chromosome was performed and identified 1,564 genes (43.4%) with assigned functions. Genome mining revealed the presence of genes involved in abiotic stress responses and tolerance (e.g. detoxification systems, trehalose and glutamate biosynthesis), disruption and degradation of plant cell walls



**Fig. 1** Phylogenetic analysis of JZ18. Phylogenetic tree generated using 16S rRNA sequence alignment using MUSCLE, evolutionary relationships inferred using the Neighbor-Joining method and the evolutionary distances computed using the Kimura 2-parameter

method. GenBank accession numbers of isolates are presented before taxonomic names and type strains are indicated by <sup>T</sup>. The percentage of replicate trees in which the associated taxa clustered together in the bootstrap test (1000 replicates) are shown next to the branches



**Fig. 2** Genome blast distance phylogeny (GBDP) tree of JZ18 with *Cellulomonas* type strains based on whole-genome sequences. Tree inferred with FastME 2.1.6.1 from GBDP distances calculated from genome sequences [40]. The branch lengths are scaled in terms of

GBDP distance formula  $d_5$ . The numbers above branches are GBDP pseudo-bootstrap support values >60% from 100 replications, with an average branch support of 71.7%. The tree was rooted at the midpoint [41]. Type strains are indicated by <sup>T</sup>

**Table 2** Pairwise comparisons of *Cellulomonas* sp. JZ18 versus type strain genomes

Subject strain	dDDH*			Biosample accession
	( $d_0$ , in %)	( $d_4$ , in %)	( $d_6$ , in %)	
<i>Cellulomonas telluris</i> CPCC 204705T	72.8	35	63.2	SAMN09926135
<i>Cellulomonas shaoxiangyii</i> Z28T	50.2	27.3	43.1	SAMN11356698
<i>Cellulomonas flavigena</i> DSM 20,109	29.8	22.8	27.1	SAMN02598424
<i>Cellulomonas oligotrophica</i> JCM17534	29.4	22.4	26.7	SAMN11869273
<i>Cellulomonas oligotrophica</i> DSM 24,482	31.1	22.4	27.9	SAMN05878280
<i>Cellulomonas fimi</i> ATCC 484	24.9	21.5	23.2	SAMN00713615
<i>Cellulomonas fimi</i> NCTC 7547	24.9	21.5	23.2	SAMEA24553168
<i>Cellulomonas massiliensis</i> JC225	23.1	21.3	21.8	SAMEA2272357
<i>Cellulomonas composti</i> NBRC 1,00,758	20.6	21.2	19.8	SAMD00166262
<i>Cellulomonas uda</i> NBRC 3747	22.6	21.1	21.3	SAMD00093690
<i>Cellulomonas gelida</i> JCM 1490	22	21	20.9	SAMD00245252
<i>Cellulomonas uda</i> CECT 4284	22.7	21	21.5	SAMN12025146
<i>Cellulomonas terrae</i> NBRC 1,00,819	20.4	21	19.6	SAMD00166263
<i>Isoptericola cucumis</i> CCM 8653	15.6	20.4	15.6	SAMD00244873

\*The following table contains the pairwise dDDH values between JZ18 genome and the selected type strain genomes. The dDDH values are provided for the three different GBDP formulas:  $d_0$  (a.k.a. GGDC formula 1): length of all HSPs divided by total genome length;  $d_4$  (a.k.a. GGDC formula 2): sum of all identities found in HSPs divided by overall HSP length;  $d_6$  (a.k.a. GGDC formula 3): sum of all identities found in HSPs divided by total genome length

and their constituents (e.g. xylan and cellulose degradation, xylose and cellobiose metabolism), colonization, and motility and chemotaxis (ESM\_2 Table S3). These genes may be involved in previously demonstrated salt, osmotic and heat stress in vitro survival phenotypes [23]. However, earlier experiments demonstrated the absence of swimming/swarming motility, which complements the absence of important genes required for flagellar assembly (ESM\_1 Fig. S1). A number of xylanases and an endoglucanase were also found and could contribute to potential application for degradation of plant biomass as discussed previously. Interestingly, *C. telluris* CPCC 204705T that was isolated from soil samples in the Badain Jaran desert, and which displayed highest similarity to JZ18 based on the phylogenetic analysis, also produces endoglucanase [27].

AntiSMASH analysis revealed the presence of four clusters for secondary metabolite biosynthesis, three of which were similar to known clusters: Carotenoid (710,466–731,419, BGC0000644, 50% similarity), Desferrioxamine B (2,762,393–2,815,397, BGC0000941, 80%) and Alkylresorcinol (3,770,187–3,782,112, BGC0000282, 100%). Alkylresorcinols are phenolic lipids that occur in plants, fungi and bacteria and have been associated with a range of biological activities such as antioxidant, cytotoxic, antimicrobial and signaling properties [29–31]. The genome of JZ18 also contains a gene encoding a cutinase (ESM\_2 Table S3), a hydrolase that was originally isolated from the fungal plant pathogen *Fusarium solani*, which could play a role in pathogenicity [32, 33].

A gene encoding a pectate lyase is also present and could contribute to plant colonization or virulence [34, 35], but also antifungal potential as discussed in the introduction. Indeed, JZ18 was able to colonize Arabidopsis roots but failed to promote plant growth under salinity stress conditions and had negative growth effects [23]. Despite Arabidopsis not being the native host of JZ18, a previous study found *Cellulomonas* species in the leaves and roots of *Arabidopsis thaliana* [36]. In addition to potentially helping in biocontrol activity, the cutinase and pectate lyase could be of interest as biocatalysts in industrial processes [37–39]. Whether these enzymes, cutinase, endoglucanase, xylanase and pectate lyase, have a superior activity to enzymes currently used in industry has to be tested. Nevertheless, genome sequencing of bacterial endophytes and the biochemical, genomic and phenotypic analyses of these endophytes could pave way for their use in biotechnology and agriculture.

**Supplementary Information** The online version contains supplementary material available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00284-021-02429-5>.

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**Author Contributions** AE performed the, gDNA extraction and taxonomic analysis. SB performed genome assembly, gene prediction, annotation of genome data, IA integrated all bioinformatics databases and facilitated all genomic annotation platforms. AE, MS, and HH wrote the manuscript. MS, and HH conceived the overall study.

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## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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