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(54) Titre : SORBITOL DESHYDROGENASE, GENE CODANT POUR CELLE-CI ET LEUR UTILISATION

(54) Title: SORBITOL DEHYDROGENASE, GENE ENCODING THE SAME AND USE THEREOF

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A gene encoding D-sorbitol dehydrogenase (SLDH); a process for producing SLDH by culturing host cells transformed by an expression vector having the above gene; and a process for producing L-sorbose or 2-keto-L-gulonic acid (2KLGA) by using the above culture. 2KLGA is an important intermediate in the production of L-ascorbic acid. Thus, a process for producing L-ascorbic acid from the 2KLGA obtained by the above process is also provided.



ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention provide a gene encoding D-sorbitol dehydrogenase (SLDH), a method for producing SLDH by culture of a host cell transformed with a vector expressing this gene and a
5 method for producing L-sorbose or 2-keto-L-gulonic acid (2KLGA) using the culture. 2KLGA is an important intermediate for the production of L-ascorbic acid. Therefore, the present invention also provides a method for producing L-ascorbic acid from the 2KLGA obtained by the above-mentioned method.

SPECIFICATION**SORBITOL DEHYDROGENASE, GENE ENCODING THE SAME AND USE THEREOF
TECHNICAL FIELD**

This invention relates to a novel sorbitol dehydrogenase
5 (in the present invention, sorbitol dehydrogenase means an
enzyme capable of catalyzing a reaction for converting D-
sorbitol to L-sorbose by oxidation; hereinafter to be referred
to as SLDH), a gene encoding the same, a method for producing L-
sorbose and 2-keto-L-gulonic acid (hereinafter to be referred to
10 as 2KLGA) by gene manipulation using said gene, and an
expression system involved in the production thereof. The
present invention further relates to a method for producing L-
ascorbic acid or a salt thereof utilizing the 2KLGA obtained by
the above-mentioned method.

15

BACKGROUND ART

L-sorbose is an important intermediate for the synthesis
of L-ascorbic acid (vitamin C) by the Reichstein method (see Fig.
1). When D-sorbitol is chemically oxidized, approximately a
half of the product becomes D-sorbose, whereas when D-sorbitol
20 is brought into contact with a microorganism having an SLDH
activity, only an L-enantiomer is obtained in a yield of about
95%. Therefore, a fermentation method has been conventionally
used for converting D-sorbitol to L-sorbose.

On the other hand, 2KLGA is industrially synthesized by
25 chemically oxidizing L-sorbose. There are known microorganisms
that convert L-sorbose into 2KLGA by a two-step enzymatic
oxidation reaction by L-sorbose dehydrogenase (SDH) and L-
sorbosone dehydrogenase (SNDH), but the production amount of
2KLGA is low by these methods.

30 As a method by which to produce 2KLGA more efficiently
than before by a fermentation method, there is mentioned a
method comprising isolating an SLDH gene, introducing the gene
into a microorganism having an SDH or SNDH activity to give a
recombinant microorganism capable of synthesizing 2KLGA from D-

sorbitol, and bringing the microorganism into contact with D-sorbitol.

Several types of SLDHs have been isolated [*Agric. Biol. Chem.*, 46(1), 135-141 (1982); *Biokhimiia*, 43(6), 1067-1078 (1978); *J. Biol. Chem.*, 224, 323 (1957); *J. Biol. Chem.*, 226, 301 (1957); *J. Bacteriol.*, 71, 737 (1956)]. The present inventors have already isolated, from a strain belonging to *Gluconobacter oxydans*, a gene encoding SLDH which is of a membrane-bound type, consists of two large and small subunits and which binds with cytochrome c-like polypeptide and acts (international patent publication No. WO99/20763). However, there is no report on the cloning of a different type of SLDH gene.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a novel SLDH gene useful for the fermentative production of 2KLGA, and to provide a host microorganism transformed with said gene, particularly a transformant obtained by introducing said gene into a host already having SDH and SNDH activity, or a transformant obtained by introducing said gene together with SDH gene and SNDH gene. Another object of the present invention is to provide a method for producing L-sorbose or 2KLGA from D-sorbitol using said microorganism, and to provide a method for producing L-ascorbic acid from 2KLGA obtained by this method. It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a method for producing a recombinant SLDH by culture of a host microorganism transformed with said SLDH gene and a method for producing L-sorbose by an enzyme method using said SLDH.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

The present inventors have conducted intensive studies in an attempt to solve the above-mentioned problems and succeeded in cloning a DNA containing a coding region of SLDH from a chromosomal DNA library of a strain belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter* having said enzyme activity. As a result of the sequencing, the DNA was confirmed to contain a novel SLDH gene

completely different from the SLDH gene previously isolated by the present inventors. Moreover, the present inventors transformed *Pseudomonas* with an expression vector containing the DNA and succeeded in purifying a recombinant SLDH from the
5 culture of said recombinant *Pseudomonas*. They have also transformed *Pseudomonas* transformed with an expression vector containing said DNA, with an expression vector containing an SDH gene and an SNDH gene and efficiently converting D-sorbitol to 2KLGA using the culture of this transformant, which resulted in
10 the completion of the present invention.

Accordingly, the present invention provides the following.

- (1) An SLDH having the following physicochemical properties:
 - (a) action: catalyzes the reaction converting D-sorbitol to L-sorbose
 - 15 (b) molecular weight: about 54 kDa
 - (c) coenzyme: NAD(P)⁺ dependent
 - (d) substrate specificity: specifically oxidizes sorbitol, mannitol and arabitol, but does not act on xylitol, ribitol, inositol and glycerol.
- 20 (2) The SLDH of the above-mentioned (1), which is derived from the strain *Gluconobacter oxydans* G624.
- (3) An SLDH which is originated from the same gene as is the SLDH of the above-mentioned (2) in its molecular evolution.
- (4) The SLDH of the above-mentioned (3), which is derived from
25 a bacteria belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*.
- (5) An SLDH which is the following protein (a) or (b):
 - (a) a protein consisting of an amino acid sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:1
 - (b) a protein consisting of the same amino acid sequence as (a)
30 above, except that one to several amino acids are deleted, substituted, inserted, added or modified, which catalyzes a reaction converting D-sorbitol to L-sorbose.
- (6) A DNA encoding the SLDH of any of the above-mentioned (1) to (5).

(7) The DNA of the above-mentioned (6), which is (a) or (b) of the following:

(a) a DNA having a base sequence of base numbers 537 - 1991 of the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2

5 (b) a DNA capable of hybridizing to the base sequence of the above-mentioned (a) under stringent conditions.

(8) The DNA of the above-mentioned (6) or (7), which is derived from bacteria belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*.

(9) A gene encoding a protein having an SLDH activity, which is
10 a DNA capable of hybridizing a DNA having a base sequence of base numbers 537 - 1991 of the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2 and a partial DNA thereof.

(10) A protein derived from the genus *Gluconobacter*, which is encoded by the gene of the above-mentioned (9) and which has an
15 SLDH activity.

(11) A promoter gene comprising the DNA of the following (a) or (b):

(a) a DNA having a base sequence of base numbers 1 - 536 of the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2

20 (b) a DNA having a base sequence of the above-mentioned (a) wherein one to several bases is(are) deleted, substituted, inserted, added or modified, which DNA shows a promoter activity at least in one microorganism.

(12) A recombinant vector comprising a DNA of any of the above-
25 mentioned (6) to (9).

(13) An expression vector comprising a DNA of any of the above-mentioned (6) to (9).

(14) The expression vector of the above-mentioned (13), further comprising a DNA encoding an SDH and/or a DNA encoding an SNDH.

30 (15) A transformant obtained by transforming a host cell with an expression vector of the above-mentioned (13) or (14).

(16) The transformant of the above-mentioned (15), which belongs to a genus selected from the group consisting of *Escherichia coli*, the genus *Pseudomonas*, the genus *Gluconobacter*,

the genus *Acetobacter* and the genus *Pseudogluconobacter*.

(17) The transformant of the above-mentioned (15) or (16), which is capable of converting D-sorbitol to 2-KLGA.

(18) A method for producing a protein having an SLDH activity, which method comprises culturing a host cell transformed with an expression vector of the above-mentioned (13) in a medium and harvesting the SLDH of any of the above-mentioned (1) to (5) or the protein of (10) from the obtained culture.

(19) A method for producing an L-sorbose, which method comprises culturing a host cell transformed with an expression vector of the above-mentioned (13) in a medium and bringing D-sorbitol into contact with the obtained culture or a treated product thereof.

(20) A method for producing 2-KLGA, which method comprises culturing a host cell transformed with an expression vector containing a DNA encoding an SDH and a DNA encoding an SNDH in a medium and bringing the L-sorbose obtained according to the method of the above-mentioned (19) into contact with the obtained culture or a treated product thereof.

(21) A method for producing 2-KLGA, which method comprises culturing the transformant of the above-mentioned (17) in a medium and bringing D-sorbitol into contact with the obtained culture or a treated product thereof.

(22) A method for producing L-ascorbic acid or an alkali metal salt thereof or an alkaline earth metal salt thereof, which method comprises converting 2-KLGA obtained by the method of the above-mentioned (20) or (21) to L-ascorbic acid or an alkali metal salt thereof or an alkaline earth metal salt thereof.

The recombinant cell that expresses the SLDH gene of the present invention can be a useful means for the fermentative production of L-sorbose and 2KLGA. Therefore, the present invention is extremely useful for facilitated and large-scale production of L-ascorbic acid.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a reaction scheme of the synthesis of L-ascorbic acid, wherein R is alkyl group.

FIG. 2 shows a restriction enzyme map of DNA insert
5 portion of plasmids pUCP19-B7SX2 and pUCP19-HC, and a sequencing strategy of the DNA insert portion of pUCP19-HC.

FIG. 3 shows a gene map of plasmid pUCP19-SLDH.

FIG. 4 shows a gene map of expression vector pSDH-tufB1-Eco-d9U.

10 FIG. 5 shows a gene map of expression vector pBBR(Km)-SDH-SNDH.

FIG. 6 shows a gene map of expression vector pBBR(Tc)-SDH-SNDH.

FIG. 7 shows a gene map of expression vector pUCP19-SDH-
15 SNDH.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

The SLDH of the present invention is a protein having a molecular weight of about 54 kDa, which catalyzes a reaction to convert D-sorbitol to L-sorbose, and characteristically requires
20 NADP^+ or NAD^+ as a coenzyme. This enzyme can specifically oxidize mannitol and arabitol besides sorbitol, but does not act on xylitol, ribitol, inositol or glycerol.

The SLDH of the present invention is not particularly limited as regards the derivation as long as it shows the above-
25 mentioned characteristics. It may be derived from a naturally occurring organism, a spontaneous or artificial mutant, or a transformant which is obtained by introducing a heterologous (i.e. foreign) SLDH gene. Preferably, SLDH derived from acetic acid bacteria, particularly bacteria belonging to the genus
30 *Gluconobacter*, more preferably *Gluconobacter oxydans*, particularly the strain *Gluconobacter oxydans* G624 (FERM BP-4415; International Patent Publication No. WO95/23220) are exemplified. In another preferable mode, the SLDH of the present invention is an SLDH derived from the same gene as is

the SLDH derived from the strain *G. oxydans* G624 in its molecular evolution. As used herein, by the "derived from the same gene ... in its molecular evolution" is meant an SLDH reasonably concluded to have evolved from the same gene as has
5 an SLDH derived from strain *G. oxydans* G624 in its molecular evolution, as a result of the analyses of DNA sequence, physiological role and the like, and their DNA sequences show high homology. These SLDHs preferably have not less than 60%, most preferably not less than 80%, homology in the DNA sequence
10 with an SLDH derived from the strain *G. oxydans* G624. These genes can be cloned based on the DNA sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2 and using a suitable primer according to the PCR method or using a suitable probe according to the hybridization method, as detailed later.

15 In a more preferable mode, the SLDH of the present invention is a protein having an amino acid sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:1, or a protein having an amino acid sequence having the amino acid sequence comprising one to several amino acids deleted, substituted, inserted, added or
20 modified, as long as the SLDH activity is not impaired.

The SLDH of the present invention can be obtained by appropriately using (1) a method comprising isolating and purifying it from a culture of a cell or tissue as a starting material that produces the enzyme, (2) a method comprising
25 chemical synthesis, (3) a method comprising purifying it from a cell manipulated by gene recombinant technique to express SLDH and the like.

The isolation and purification of SLDH from a naturally occurring SLDH producing cell includes, for example, the
30 following steps. The cell is cultured in a suitable liquid medium, and a fraction having an SLDH activity is separated and recovered from the obtained culture. For example, when the enzyme is localized in cytosol (the SLDH of the present invention being NAD(P)⁺ dependent, localization in cytosol is

expected), the culture is centrifuged and/or filtrated to recover the cell, and the cell is ruptured by ultrasonication, lysozyme treatment, osmotic pressure shock and the like and centrifuged at about 10,000 - 40,000 rpm to recover a
5 supernatant (soluble fraction). The objective SLDH can be purified from the obtained soluble fraction by appropriately combining separation techniques conventionally used for separation and purification of enzyme proteins. Such separation techniques include, for example, methods utilizing difference in
10 solubility such as salting out, solvent precipitation method and the like, methods utilizing difference in molecular weight such as dialysis, ultrafiltration, gel filtration, non-denatured polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (PAGE), SDS-PAGE and the like, methods utilizing charge such as ion exchange chromatography,
15 hydroxyl apatite chromatography and the like, methods utilizing specific affinity such as affinity chromatography and the like, methods utilizing hydrophobicity such as reverse-phase high performance liquid chromatography and the like, and methods utilizing difference in isoelectric point such as isoelectric
20 focusing and the like.

Production of the SLDH of the present invention by chemical synthesis includes the steps of, for example, synthesizing, based on the amino acid sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:1, the entirety or a part of each
25 sequence using peptide synthesizer, and renaturing the obtained polypeptide under suitable renaturation conditions.

The SLDH derived from *G. oxydans* G624, which is one mode of the present invention, is an extremely unstable enzyme in non-physiological conditions, and may be deactivated during
30 purification by the above-mentioned method. Such enzyme can be quickly purified by affinity chromatography utilizing an added/modified sequence having affinity for a specific substance, according to the histidine tag method, GST method and the like. Therefore, a particularly preferable method for obtaining the

SLDH of the present invention includes the steps of, as detailed in the following, cloning a DNA encoding the enzyme from the DNA of a cell having this enzyme, and adding, to this DNA by gene manipulation, a nucleotide sequence encoding an amino acid
5 sequence capable of adsorbing to a metal ion chelate.

An enzyme gene can be generally cloned by the following method. A desired enzyme is purified completely or partially from a cell or tissue that produces the enzyme by the above-mentioned method, and the N terminal amino acid sequence is
10 determined by the Edman method. The enzyme is partially digested by a sequence-specific protease and the amino acid sequence of the obtained oligopeptide is also determined by the Edman method. Oligonucleotides having base sequences corresponding to the amino acid sequences thus determined are
15 synthesized, and using these as primers or probes, a DNA encoding this enzyme is cloned from RNA or DNA prepared from a cell or tissue capable of producing the enzyme, by the PCR method or colony (or plaque) hybridization method.

Alternatively, an antibody against the enzyme is prepared
20 using the entirety or a part of a completely or partially purified enzyme as an antigen by a conventional method, and a DNA encoding the enzyme can be cloned from a cDNA or genomic DNA library prepared from a cell or tissue capable of producing the enzyme, by immunoscreening.

25 However, in the case of an enzyme that is unstable and whose purification is difficult, such as the above-mentioned SLDH derived from *G. oxydans* G624, the gene of the enzyme can be screened using its enzyme activity as a marker, as a fragment containing its promoter sequence from the genomic DNA library.
30 Inasmuch as SLDH converts D-sorbitol to L-sorbose, a clone having an SLDH activity can be selected by detecting the generated L-sorbose. Note that the application of this method often accompanies technical difficulty.

To be specific, a chromosomal DNA is isolated from a cell

or tissue having an SLDH activity by a conventional method, and digested by a suitable restriction enzyme, preferably partially digested by a restriction enzyme having many restriction sites in a chromosomal DNA, and the obtained fragment is inserted in a
5 suitable cloning vector. As the cloning vector, exemplified are plasmid vector, phage vector and the like. Because of the capability of accommodating a large DNA insert and recovering as a colony, a cosmid vector and a charomid vector are preferable. When a phage vector, a cosmid vector and the like are used, in
10 *vitro* packaging is further applied to obtain a genomic DNA library.

When a cosmid library is used, a suitable indicating bacteria, preferably *Escherichia coli* competent cell having high transformation capability, after infection with a packaging
15 solution obtained as above, is plated on a solid medium and cultured. The resulting respective colonies are individually inoculated to a liquid medium containing D-sorbitol and cultured. After the completion of the culture, a culture supernatant is recovered and candidate clones having an SLDH activity are
20 selected using, for example, a color identification reaction with ketohexose, such as a resorcin-hydrochloric acid reaction (Cohen, *J. Biol. Chem.*, 201, 71, 1953), a resorcin-ferric salt-hydrochloric acid reaction (Kulka, *Biochem. J.*, 63, 542, 1956) and the like.

25 The presence of SLDH activity (conversion of D-sorbitol to L-sorbose) in the obtained clone is confirmed by the detection of sorbose in the culture supernatant by, for example, HPLC and the like.

Because the DNA insert of cosmid clone is considerably
30 large (35 - 45 kb), a part of a non-SLDH gene region of the insert DNA is desirably removed for downsizing for facilitated subcloning to plasmid. For downsizing of the DNA insert, for example, subcloning to a charomid vector and the like is employed. Since a charomid vector has a spacer DNA of various

lengths, DNA having various lengths smaller than a cosmid vector can be cloned. In the present invention, for example, a charomid vector capable of accommodating an about 10 - 20kb DNA insert is preferably used. The charomid clone having an SLDH
5 activity can be selected according to the method mentioned above.

The subcloning to a plasmid vector can be done by, for example, applying plural charomid clones obtained as mentioned above to restriction enzyme mapping, downsizing a DNA insert using a restriction enzyme found to have no restriction site in
10 the SLDH gene, and ligating with a plasmid vector that underwent a restriction enzyme treatment.

Apart from the above-mentioned strategy, moreover, a DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention can be directly cloned using the PCR method. That is, PCR is conducted
15 according to a conventional method, using a genomic DNA or cDNA (or mRNA) derived from a cell or tissue having the enzyme activity as a template, and using a pair of oligonucleotides, where an amplification fragment suitably covers the coding region of SLDH, as a primer to amplify a DNA fragment containing
20 the coding region of SLDH. This method is particularly useful for cloning of an SLDH gene having the same origin in the molecular evolution with an SLDH having a known sequence. For example, when an SLDH gene derived from a bacteria, which is speculated to have the same origin in the molecular evolution
25 with an SLDH derived from the strain *G. oxydans* G624, is to be cloned, sense and antisense primers capable of amplifying a DNA fragment having high homology with a DNA fragment containing a base sequence of base number 537 - 1991 from the sequence is constructed based on the DNA sequence depicted in Sequence
30 Listing SEQ ID NO:2 and the PCR method is performed. When the DNA sequence of SLDH having high homology with the objective SLDH is unknown, for example, PCR is performed using some sequences conserved relatively well in the 5' upstream region as sense primers, and some complementary strand sequences conserved

relatively well in the 3' downstream region as antisense primers to clone the SLDH gene. When the upstream and downstream sequences of SLDH are unknown, the annealing temperature needs to be set lower, so that a template DNA and a primer to be used
5 containing some mismatches can still be bound. Therefore, the PCR product may be a mixture of a fragment containing the objective SLDH gene and a non-specific amplification fragment. In this case, the obtained amplification fragment is cloned to a suitable cloning vector (for example, plasmid vector for TA
10 cloning and the like). When the objective amplification fragment does not contain a promoter region, the obtained amplification fragment is cloned to an expression vector, with which a competent cell, such as *Escherichia coli*, is transformed, and the transformant having an SLDH activity is screened by the
15 aforementioned method.

As a different strategy for the cloning of an SLDH gene having the same origin in the molecular evolution with an SLDH having a known sequence, direct cloning by hybridization method such as Southern method and the like may be employed, wherein a
20 genomic DNA or cDNA (or mRNA) derived from a cell or tissue having an SLDH activity is used as a template and the entirety or a part of a known DNA sequence is used as a probe. The conditions of the hybridization may be an appropriately altered stringency depending on the origin of the DNA. For example, the
25 conditions may be changed based on the degree of closeness in the relation of the microorganism to be cloned and the like, such as those under which, of the base sequence, only a sequence having about not less than 60% homology forms a hybrid, only a sequence having about not less than 80% homology forms a hybrid,
30 and the like.

The base sequence of the DNA insert obtained in the above-mentioned manner can be identified by a known sequencing technique, such as Maxam-Gilbert method, dideoxy termination method and the like.

A DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention preferably encodes an amino acid sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:1, or an amino acid sequence wherein, in the above-mentioned amino acid sequence, 1 to several amino acids
5 are deleted, substituted, inserted or added (provided that a protein consisting of the mutated amino acid sequence can catalyze the reaction to convert D-sorbitol to L-sorbose). More preferably, a DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention is a DNA substantially consisting of a base sequence having a base
10 number 537 - 1991 of the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2. As used herein, by the "DNA substantially consisting of" is meant a DNA consisting of this specific base sequence and a DNA consisting of a base sequence capable of hybridizing to the DNA consisting of this specific base sequence
15 under stringent conditions, and encoding a protein having similar physicochemical properties as the protein encoded by the DNA consisting of this specific base sequence. The "stringent conditions" here mean those under which a DNA having about not less than 60% homology of base sequence can hybridize. The
20 stringency can be controlled by appropriately changing the temperature, salt concentration and the like of hybridization reaction and washing.

Another DNA of the present invention also encompasses a gene consisting of a base sequence capable of hybridizing to a
25 base sequence having a base number 537 - 1991 from the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2 and a partial DNA thereof, and encoding a protein having an SLDH activity. Therefore, a protein having an SLDH activity, which is encoded by this gene, particularly a protein derived from the genus
30 *Gluconobacter*, is also within the scope of the present invention.

The DNA of the present invention may be a DNA obtained from a genomic DNA as mentioned above, or a cDNA obtained from mRNA, or DNA chemically synthesized based on a base sequence having a base number 537 - 1991 from the base sequence depicted

in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2.

The DNA encoding SLDH, which is obtained from a genomic DNA with the SLDH activity as an index as mentioned above, contains a promoter gene sequence in the 5' upstream region.

5 This promoter gene preferably has a base sequence having a base number 1 - 536 from the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2, or said base sequence wherein one to several amino acids are deleted, substituted, inserted, added or modified, which is a DNA having a promoter activity in at least
10 one microorganism. As the "microorganism" here, there are preferably exemplified prokaryotes such as bacteria (e.g., *Escherichia coli*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Pseudomonas*, *Gluconobacter*, *Pseudogluconobacter*, *Acetobacter* and the like) and actinomyces, and certain eucaryotes such as yeast and the like.

15 The present invention provides a recombinant vector containing a DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention. The recombinant vector of the present invention is not particularly limited as long as it can replicate/maintain or autonomously proliferate in various host cells of procaryotic
20 and/or eucaryotic cells, and encompasses a plasmid vector, a phage vector and the like. The recombinant vector can be conveniently prepared by inserting a DNA encoding SLDH into a cloning vector or expression vector available in the pertinent field, by the use of a suitable restriction enzyme site.

25 Particularly, the recombinant vector of the present invention is an expression vector wherein a DNA encoding SLDH is disposed under the control of a promoter functional in a certain host cell. Usable vector is not particularly restricted as long as it contains a promoter region functional in various host
30 cells such as procaryotic and/or eucaryotic cells and is capable of controlling the transcription of a gene disposed in the downstream thereof, and a transcription termination signal of said gene, namely, a terminator region, wherein said promoter region and the terminator region are ligated via a sequence

containing at least one restriction enzyme recognition site, preferably a unique restriction site. It is preferable that it further contain a selection marker gene for the selection of a transformant. Where desired, this expression vector may contain
5 an initiation codon and a stop codon in the downstream of the promoter region and the upstream of the terminator region, respectively.

When bacteria is used as a host cell, an expression vector generally needs to contain, in addition to the above-mentioned
10 promoter region and terminator region, a replicable unit capable of autonomous replication in a host cell. The promoter region includes a promoter, an operator and a Shine-Dalgarno (SD) sequence. For example, when the host is *Escherichia coli*, trp promoter, lac promoter, recA promoter, lpp promoter, tac
15 promoter and the like are exemplified as the promoter region, and when the host is *Bacillus subtilis*, the promoter region includes SPO1 promoter, SPO2 promoter, penP promoter and the like. As the terminator region, a naturally occurring or synthetic terminator, which is typically used, can be used. As
20 the selection marker gene, resistant genes against various drugs, such as tetracyclin, ampicillin, kanamycin and the like, can be used. As the initiation codon, ATG is generally used. In some cases, GTG can be also used. As the stop codon, conventional TGA, TAA and TAG can be used.

25 When a DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention is prepared from a genomic DNA derived from a cell or tissue that produces the enzyme, and obtained in a form containing inherent promoter and terminator regions, and the expression vector of the present invention can be prepared by inserting the DNA into
30 a suitable site of a known cloning vector that can replicate/maintain or autonomously proliferate in a host cell to be transformed. The usable cloning vector in the case where the host is bacteria is exemplified by pBR vector, pUC vector and the like derived from *Escherichia coli*, pUB110, pTP5 and pC194,

derived from *Bacillus subtilis*, and the like.

When an expression vector containing a DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention is used for the production of a recombinant SLDH, particularly when the SLDH is extremely unstable and typical purification method may cause deactivation of the enzyme on the way of purification, the use of an expression vector containing a modified SLDH coding sequence, as in the following, is particularly preferable. The modified SLDH coding sequence comprises, a sequence wherein a base sequence encoding a specific amino acid sequence capable of accelerating the purification of SLDH is added to the terminus of the SLDH coding sequence to allow expression of SLDH in which the specific amino acid sequence has been added to the terminus of the original SLDH amino acid sequence. The specific amino acid sequence capable of accelerating the purification of SLDH is exemplified by amino acid sequence capable of adsorbing to a metal ion chelate, preferably a sequence consisting of basic amino acids such as histidine, lysine, arginine and the like, more preferably a sequence consisting of histidine. Such sequence can be added to the terminus of amino or carboxyl of SLDH, with preference given to addition to the carboxyl terminus. Such modified SLDH coding sequence can be constructed by synthesizing an oligonucleotide wherein a base sequence encoding the amino acid sequence to be added is added to a base sequence consistent with a terminus sequence of the inherent SLDH coding sequence, and, using this as one of the primers and SLDH DNA as a template, performing PCR. The resulting recombinant SLDH can be quickly isolated and purified using a carrier on which a metal ion chelate capable of adsorbing the added amino acid sequence has been immobilized, as detailed in the following.

When an expression vector containing a DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention is used for the production of 2KLGA, an expression vector containing, in addition to the DNA, a DNA encoding SDH and/or SNDH in a form permitting expression

in the host cell may be used. The DNA encoding SLDH, a DNA encoding SDH and a DNA encoding SNDH may be placed under control of different promoters, or two of which or more may be placed in tandem under the control of the same promoter.

5 The transformant of the present invention can be prepared by transforming a host cell with a recombinant vector containing a DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention. The host cell is not particularly limited as long as it can be adapted to the recombinant vector to be used and can be transformed, and
10 various cells conventionally used in this field, such as a naturally occurring cell or an artificially produced mutant cell or a recombinant cell, can be utilized. Preferably, bacteria, particularly *Escherichia coli* (e.g., DH5 α , HB101 and the like), *Bacillus subtilis*, the genus *Pseudomonas* bacteria (e.g.,
15 *Pseudomonas fluorescence* and the like), the genus *Gluconobacter* bacteria (e.g., *Gluconobacter oxydans* and the like), the genus *Pseudogluconobacter* bacteria, the genus *Acetobacter* bacteria and the like are used.

A recombinant vector can be introduced into a host cell by
20 a method conventionally known. For example, when the host is bacteria such as *Escherichia coli*, *Bacillus subtilis* and the like, the method of Cohen et al. [*Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, 69: 2110 (1972)], protoplast method [*Mol. Gen. Genet.*, 168: 111 (1979)], competent method [*J. Mol. Biol.*, 56: 209 (1971)],
25 electroporation method and the like can be used.

Particularly, the transformant of the present invention is a host cell transformed with an expression vector containing a DNA encoding the SLDH of the present invention. When the transformant is prepared with the aim of producing 2KLGA from D-
30 sorbitol, the host cell needs to have an ability to convert L-sorbose to 2KLGA. Preferably, the host cell produces SDH and SNDH activity. Such naturally occurring cell is, for example, bacteria belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*, the genus *Acetobacter*, the genus *Pseudogluconobacter* and the like,

specifically *Gluconobacter oxydans* T-100 (FERM BP-4415; International Patent Publication No. WO95/23220) and the like. Such artificially prepared cell is, for example, a cell transformed with an expression vector functionally containing a DNA encoding SDH and SNDH isolated from the above-mentioned naturally occurring bacteria and the like, preferably *Escherichia coli*, the genus *Pseudomonas* bacteria, the genus *Gluconobacter* bacteria, the genus *Pseudogluconobacter* bacteria, the genus *Acetobacter* bacteria and the like. Specifically, *E. coli* JM109-pUC19SD5 (International Patent Publication No. WO94/20609), *Gluconobacter oxydans* NB6939-pSDH-tufB1, *Gluconobacter oxydans* NB6939-pSDH-trp6, *Gluconobacter oxydans* NB6939-pSDH-PL1, *Gluconobacter oxydans* NB6939-pSDH-tac8 (all from International Patent Publication No. WO95/23220) and the like are exemplified.

The transformant of the present invention can be also obtained by transforming a host cell with an expression vector containing, in addition to the above-mentioned DNA encoding SLDH, a DNA encoding SDH and/or a DNA encoding SNDH in a form permitting expression in the host cell. When the expression vector lacks one of the DNA encoding SDH and the DNA encoding SNDH, the host cell may be co-transformed along with a different expression vector containing said DNA.

The recombinant SLDH of the present invention can be produced by culturing a transformant containing an expression vector containing a DNA encoding the above-mentioned SLDH in a suitable medium and harvesting SLDH from the obtained culture.

The nutrient medium to be used contains, as a carbon source, saccharides such as glucose and fructose, glycerol, preferably L-sorbose and D-sorbitol. It may contain an inorganic or organic nitrogen source (e.g., ammonium sulfate, ammonium chloride, hydrolysate of casein, yeast extract, polypeptone, bactotrypton, beef extract and the like). When desired, other nutrient sources [e.g., inorganic salt (e.g.,

sodium diphosphate or potassium diphosphate, potassium hydrogenphosphate, magnesium chloride, magnesium sulfate, calcium chloride), vitamins (e.g., vitamin B1), antibiotics (e.g., ampicillin, kanamycin) etc.] may be added to the medium.
5 Preferably, the medium contains D-sorbitol, yeast extract, CaCO_3 and glycerol as ingredients. The medium has a sugar (D-sorbitol) concentration of generally 1 - 50%, preferably 2 - 40%.

A transformant is cultured at generally pH 5.5 - 8.5, preferably pH 6 - 8, at generally 18 - 40°C, preferably 20 - 35°C
10 for 5 - 150 h.

SLDH can be purified by appropriately combining various separation techniques typically used according to the fraction having an SLDH activity. Since the SLDH of the present invention is NAD(P)^+ dependent, it highly likely localizes in a
15 soluble fraction of the transformant. In this case, after the completion of the culture, the culture is filtrated or centrifuged to recover the cell, which is then ruptured by ultrasonication, lysozyme treatment, osmotic pressure shock and the like to give a cell extract for use.

20 When the recombinant SLDH is produced in the aforementioned form wherein a specific amino acid sequence is added to the terminus, the SLDH can be quickly and easily purified by a treatment including chromatography using a carrier, on which a metal ion chelate capable of adsorbing the specific
25 amino acid sequence is immobilized (immobilized metal affinity chromatography; IMAC). The metal ion chelate adsorber to be used can be prepared by bringing a solution containing a transition metal (e.g., divalent ion such as cobalt, copper, nickel and iron, trivalent ion such as iron, aluminum and the
30 like, preferably divalent ion of cobalt) into contact with a matrix to which a ligand, for example, iminodiacetate group, nitrilotriacetate group, tris(carboxymethyl)ethylenediamine group and the like, has been attached to allow binding with the ligand. The matrix portion of the chelate adsorbent is not

particularly limited as long as it is a typical insoluble carrier.

According to the production method of L-sorbose of the present invention, any transformant containing an expression
5 vector containing the above-mentioned DNA encoding SLDH is cultured in a suitable medium, and D-sorbitol is brought into contact with the obtained culture, or, when the SLDH activity is present in an intracellular fraction of the transformant, with a cell extract thereof, to give L-sorbose. The method for
10 bringing D-sorbitol into contact with the culture includes culture of the transformant in a medium containing D-sorbitol.

The present invention also provides a production method of 2KLGA, which utilizes L-sorbose obtained by the above-mentioned method. That is, a host cell capable of converting L-sorbose to
15 2KLGA, preferably a host cell transformed with an expression vector containing a DNA encoding SDH and a DNA encoding SNDH, is cultured in a suitable medium, and L-sorbose obtained by the above-mentioned method is brought into contact with the obtained culture, or, when the SDH and SLDH activity is present in an
20 intracellular fraction of the host cell, with a cell extract thereof, to give 2KLGA. The method for bringing L-sorbose into contact with the culture includes culture of the host cell in a medium containing L-sorbose.

According to a different production method of 2KLGA of the
25 present invention, a host cell capable of converting L-sorbose to 2KLGA, which is transformed with an expression vector containing a DNA encoding the above-mentioned SLDH, is cultured in a suitable medium, and D-sorbitol is brought into contact with the obtained culture, or, when the SLDH, SDH and SLDH
30 activity is present in an intracellular fraction of the host cell, with a cell extract thereof, to give 2KLGA. The method for bringing D-sorbitol into contact with the culture includes culture of the host cell in a medium containing D-sorbitol.

The medium and culture conditions to be used for the

production method of L-sorbose and the production method of 2KLGA of the present invention may be the same as or partially different from those used for the above-mentioned production method of SLDH.

5 When D-sorbitol or L-sorbose is brought into contact with a cell extract, the culture after the completion of culture is centrifuged or filtrated to recover the cell, which is suspended in a suitable buffer, such as acetate buffer, and the cell is ruptured by ultrasonication and the like and subjected to a
10 centrifugation treatment to give a supernatant which can be used as a cell extract.

The L-sorbose or 2KLGA thus produced can be purified from a reaction mixture (when the transformant is cultured in a medium containing D-sorbitol or L-sorbose, a culture
15 supernatant) by a purification method generally used (for example, dialysis, gel filtration, column chromatography on a suitable adsorbent, high performance liquid chromatography and the like).

The purified 2KLGA can be converted to L-ascorbic acid or
20 a salt thereof (for example, salt with an alkali metal or alkaline earth metal) by a method conventionally known. Such method is not particularly limited and exemplified by a method including heating 2KLGA by adding a strong acid such as hydrochloric acid.

25 The present invention is explained in detail in the following by referring to Examples. These examples are merely exemplifications and do not limit the scope of the present invention in any way.

Example 1 Cloning of SLDH

30 (1) Preparation of chromosomal DNA

A single colony of the strain *G. oxydans* G624 (FERM BP-4415; International Patent Publication No. WO95/23220) was cultured in a medium (pH 6.0) containing 2.5% mannitol, 0.3% polypeptone and 0.5% yeast extract at 37°C for 48 hours. The

cells were collected by centrifugation (6,000 rpm, 10 minutes) and suspended in sterilized water (1 ml). The suspension was diluted with STE buffer [1 ml, 20% sucrose - 50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0) - 1 mM EDTA] and lysozyme (2 mg) was added. The mixture
5 was stood at 37°C for 30 minutes. Thereto were added a sarcosyl solution [2.5 ml, 1% lauroylsarcosylate 100 mM EDTA (pH 8.5)] and proteinase K (final concentration 100 µg/ml), and the mixture was stood at 50°C for 2 hours. Thereto were added caesium chloride (5.5 g) and 5 mg/ml ethidium bromide (0.3 ml)
10 and the mixture was ultracentrifuged at 20°C, 50,000 rpm for 16 hours. The part containing a chromosomal DNA was isolated, dissolved in TE buffer [30 ml, 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0) - 1 mM EDTA] and dialyzed twice against 5 L of 1 mM EDTA. The dialyzate was washed 4 times with isobutanol, twice with phenol
15 and 3 times with chloroform, and purified by ethanol precipitation. This was dissolved in TE buffer (10 ml) to give a 180 µg/ml chromosomal DNA solution.

(2) Preparation of cosmid library

A single colony of *Escherichia coli* DH1/pcos6EMBL (ATCC
20 37571; purchased from ATCC through Sumitomo Pharma International Co. Ltd.) was cultured in a 50 µg/ml kanamycin-containing LB medium [3 ml, 1% polypeptone, 0.5% yeast extract, 1% sodium chloride (pH 7.4)] at 37°C for 16 hours, and 0.5 ml thereof was inoculated to 50 µg/ml kanamycin-containing LB medium (50 ml) in
25 a 500 ml Erlenmeyer flask. The medium was cultured at 37°C for 8 hours and the cells were harvested by centrifugation (6,000 rpm, 10 minutes). The cosmid pcos6EMBL was purified with QIAGEN Plasmid Midi Kit (QIAGEN). The pcos6EMBL (25 µg) was digested with 50 U BamHI at 37°C for 2 hours, and purified by ethanol
30 precipitation. This was subjected to dephosphorylation with 3 U calf intestine-derived alkaline phosphatase (CIAP) at 37°C for 1 hour and purified by ethanol precipitation. Separately, the chromosomal DNA (100 µg) of the strain *G. oxydans* G624 obtained in the above-mentioned (1) was partially digested with 5 U

Sau3AI at 37°C for 1 minute, and purified by ethanol precipitation. The partial digest (ca. 1.5 µg) and BamHI digest of pcos6EMBL (ca. 3 µg) were ligated with 3 U T4 DNA ligase at 4°C for 16 hours. A portion (3 µl) thereof was subjected to *in vitro* packaging using GIGAPACK II Gold Packaging Extract (STRATAGENE). This packaging solution was diluted 50-fold with SM buffer [50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5) - 100 mM NaCl - 8 mM MgSO₄ - 0.1% gelatin] and 25 µl of the indicating bacteria (*Escherichia coli* XL1-Blue MRA) was infected with 25 µl thereof, sown on a 50 µg/ml kanamycin-containing LB plate and stood at 37°C overnight. About 400 colonies were obtained, which means a cosmid library of about 400000 clones was obtained.

(3) Screening of clone having SLDH activity

In a 96 well plate rounded bottom (Nalge) containing a 0.9-fold diluted LB medium containing 5% sorbitol and 50 µg/ml kanamycin by 150 µl per well, 368 cosmid clones were cultured with gentle shaking at 30°C for 3 days. After centrifugation (2,000 rpm, 10 minutes), 0.5 mg/ml resorcin-ethanol solution (30 µl) and 0.216 mg/ml ferric sulfate (III) ammonium-hydrochloric acid solution (30 µl) were added to the culture supernatant (20 µl), and the mixture was heated at 80°C for 1 hour. Using a medium alone similarly reacted as a control, 3 clones of 1A4, 1A5, 4A9 which showed deeper brown color than did the control were selected as the clones having a conversion capability to sorbose (fructose). The culture supernatants thereof were analyzed by HPLC [column: Polyspher OA KC (E. Merck), 7.8×300 mm; temperature: room temperature; migration phase: 0.01N H₂ SO₄; flow amount: 0.4 ml/minute; detection: RI] and sorbose was detected for each clone. Thus, these 3 clones were considered to have an SLDH activity. The length of the insert part of these cosmid clones was about 40 kb for all of them.

(4) Subcloning to charomid vector (downsizing of insert)

The cosmid clone 1A4 (300 ng) having an SLDH activity was partially digested with 20 mU Sau3AI at 37°C for 1 hour. The

charomid 9-28 (1 µg, Nippon Gene) was digested with 4 U BamHI at 37°C for 1 hour. These two solutions were mixed, purified by ethanol precipitation, dissolved in 2-fold diluted TE buffer (5 µl) and ligated with 1 U T4 DNA ligase at 4°C for 16 hours.

5 One(1) µl thereof was subjected to *in vitro* packaging using GIGAPACK II XL Packaging Extract (STRATAGENE). The packaging solution (75 µl) and SM buffer (75 µl) were mixed and used for infecting 150 µl of indicating bacteria (*Escherichia coli* DH-1), which was sown on a 50 µg/ml ampicillin-containing LB plate and
10 incubated at 37°C for 1 day. Of the colonies appeared, 95 colonies were cultured with gentle shaking at 30°C for 3 days in a 96 well plate rounded bottom (Nalge) containing a 0.9-fold diluted LB medium containing 5% sorbitol and 50 µg/ml kanamycin by 150 µl per well. After centrifugation (2,000 rpm, 10
15 minutes), 0.5 mg/ml resorcin-ethanol solution (30 µl) and 0.216 mg/ml ferric sulfate (III) ammonium-hydrochloric acid solution (30 µl) were added to the culture supernatant (20 µl), and the mixture was heated at 80°C for 1 hour. Using a medium alone similarly reacted as a control, 6 clones of G1, C2, A4, B7, H10,
20 B12 which showed deeper brown color than did the control were selected as the clones having a conversion capability to sorbose. The length of the insert part of these charomid clones was about 15 kb for all of them.

(5) Subcloning of SLDH gene to plasmid vector

25 From the restriction enzyme map of the clones obtained so far, it was found that SLDH gene did not have a SacI site or a XbaI site. Thus, 1 µg of charomid B7 was digested with 10U of SacI and 10U of XbaI to give about 6 kb (B7SX3) and about 9 kb (B7SX2) SacI-XbaI fragments. These two fragments were
30 respectively ligated with *Escherichia coli*-*Pseudomonas* shuttle vector pUCP19 [1.8 kb PstI fragment derived from pRO1614 was inserted into NarI site of pUC19 and purified from *Escherichia coli* DH5 αF' (ATCC 87110)] and transformed with *Pseudomonas* (this strain was later named *Pseudomonas* sp. F-1, hereinafter to

be referred to by this designation) by the electroporation method to give Ps./pUCP19-B7SX3 and Ps./pUCP19-B7SX2. The preparation of competent cell and conditions of transformation followed those of *Escherichia coli*. These two clones were
5 cultured in a medium containing sorbitol. As a result, sorbose conversion capability was found in Ps./pUCP19-B7SX2. Therefore, Ps./pUCP19-B7SX2 was cultured in a medium (pH 7.4) containing 5% sorbitol, 1% bactotrypton, 0.5% yeast extract, 1% sodium chloride and 50 µg/ml ampicillin at 30°C for 4 days to give 2.4
10 mg/ml of sorbose (conversion efficiency: 5%). This sorbose was separated by HPLC and the coincidence of retention time with the standard product was confirmed. HPLC was performed under the same conditions as in the above-mentioned (3). Using GC/MS [column:DB-5 (J & W Scientific), 0.32 mm × 30 m (film 0.25 µm);
15 temperature: injection=230°C, column=100°C (5 minutes) → heating at 10°C/minute for 10 minute → 200°C (5 minutes) → heating at 30°C/minute for 1 minute → 230°C (4 minutes), detect=230°C; flow amount: pressure control 20 kPa(He)], the coincidence of mass pattern with the standard product was confirmed.

20 (6) Determination of base sequence of SLDH gene

The restriction enzyme map of the insert part of plasmid pUCP19-B7SX2 of transformant of *Pseudomonas*, Ps./pUCP19-B7SX2, that expresses an SLDH activity was assumed as shown in FIG. 2. By digestion of 1 µg of pUCP19-B7SX2 with 10U of Hind III at
25 37°C for 1 hour, about 4 kb Hind III-Hind III fragment was obtained. This Hind III-Hind III fragment was ligated with vector pUCP19 and plasmid pUCP19-HC was constructed. *Pseudomonas* was transformed with this plasmid to give Ps./pUCP19-HC. This transformant was cultured in a medium
30 containing sorbitol. As a result, expression of SLDH activity was acknowledged. Thus, this Hind III-Hind III fragment was found to contain full length SLDH gene. The base sequence of this about 4 kb Hind III-Hind III fragment was determined. First, the insert part of pUCP19-HC was divided into about 1.1

kb SphI-SphI fragment (S1), about 0.8 kb EcoRI-SphI fragment (ES) and about 1.3 kb EcoRI-EcoRI (E1) fragment (FIG. 2), and each was subcloned to pUC18 to give pUC18-S1, pUC18-ES and pUC18-E1.

5 Using plasmids pUCP19-HC, pUC18-S1, pUC18-ES and pUC18-E1 as templates and using universal primer and reverse primer (New England Labs.), which were M13 sequencing primers, first sequencing was performed. The sample was fluorescent labeled with BigDye Terminator Cycle Sequencing kit (Applied Biosystems) and analyzed with ABI PRISM 310 Genetic Analyzer (Applied Biosystems). The following 11 kinds of primers were synthesized and using pUCP19-HC as a template sequencing was performed, whereby the base sequence of about 4 kb Hind III-Hind III fragment was determined (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2).

15 SLDH gene sequencing primer

SL1 GCTGCTGAGTGATCCG (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:3)
 SL2 GACTGCTACTTCGATCC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:4)
 SL3 CCTACACCTAGCCTGC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:5)
 SL4 CAGTGCCGTCATGAGG (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:6)
 20 SL5 TCCTGATCTCGGTGCG (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:7)
 SL6 GATGCTTCAGCACGGC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:8)
 SL7 GACGATCACGGAAGGC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:9)
 SL8 GGTTACGTGGTCGAGG (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:10)
 SL9 CTATACGTGACAGGTCC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:11)
 25 SL10 GCGCGATCTGGATACG (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:12)
 SL11 CGAGGATCTCGAACGG (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:13)

From the analysis of the base sequence, 1455 bp ORF was found (base number 537 - 1991). Therefore, SLDH was assumed to consist of 485 amino acids and has a molecular weight of about 30 54 kDa. As a result of the homology search, it showed 42% homology with mannitol dehydrogenase of *Pseudomonas fluorescence*.

Example 2 Production of recombinant SLDH

(1) construction of plasmid expressing SLDH having histidine-tag

(hereinafter to be referred to as His-tagged SLDH)

For purification of the recombinant protein, a tag system utilizing 6xhistidine was an extremely easy method. That is, a protein having 6 histidine tag is expressed, and utilizing
 5 interaction of a metal (e.g., cobalt, nickel) and histidine residue, the protein is separated by IMAC. For insertion of 6xHis into the C terminus side of SLDH, the following two pairs of primers were respectively used and using pUCP19-HC (5 ng) as a template, PCR was performed with pfu DNA polymerase (2.5 U)
 10 (94°C, 30 seconds→55°C 2 minutes→72°C, 2 minutes, 25 cycles). The primer (each 20 pmol) was heated to 99°C for 4 minutes and rapidly cooled before use.

PCR 1

Primer 1 (sense) [sequence that coincides with sequence near
 15 NheI site (underlined) in SLDH coding sequence]

CGGATTGCTAGCGATGGC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:14)

Primer 2 (antisense) [containing sequence that coincides with 3' terminus of SLDH coding sequence, 6xHis (H), stop codon (*) and BamHI site (underlined part)]

20 ATCGAGGATCC TCA ATGATGATGATGATGATG GGCCGGGATGGCGGC

* H H H H H H

(Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:15)

PCR 2

Primer 3 (sense) [including BamHI site (underlined) and
 25 sequence that coincides with sequence immediately after stop codon of SLDH gene]

ATCGAGGATCCATTCGGCTTTTAGGGTAGC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:16)

Primer 4 (antisense) [including sequence that coincides with
 30 sequence near BglII site in 3' non-coding region of SLDH gene and SacI site (underlined)]

TAGCTGAGCTCATGGGACAGATCTGAGC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:17)

The about 360 bp fragment specifically amplified in PCR 1 was digested with NheI and BamHI, and the about 100 bp fragment

specifically amplified in PCR 2 was digested with BamHI and SacI. Separately, the about 2 kb fragment obtained by digesting pUCP19-HC with BglII and PstI was inserted into BamHI-PstI fragment of pUCP19 to give plasmid pUCP19-SLDH (FIG. 3) wherein
5 the downstream of BglII site of the insert was removed. This was digested with NheI and SacI, and the obtained about 6.2 kb fragment was ligated with the above-mentioned two PCR amplification fragments with T4 DNA ligase to construct pUCP19-SLDH-His. *Pseudomonas* was transformed with this plasmid to give
10 *Ps.*/pUCP19-SLDH-His.

(2) Purification of His-tagged SLDH

One loopful of cryopreservation stock of transformant *Ps.*/pUCP19-SLDH-His was inoculated to LB medium (2 ml) containing 50 µg/ml ampicillin in a 15 ml centrifuge tube
15 (Corning) and cultured at 30°C for 16 hours. The 1.5 ml thereof was inoculated to LB medium (50 ml) containing 5% sorbitol and 50 µg/ml ampicillin in a 500 ml Erlenmeyer flask and cultured at 25°C for 3 days. The cells were harvested by centrifugation (6,000 rpm, 4°C for 5 minutes), and suspended in 10 ml of 100 mM
20 NaCl-containing 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0). The suspension was treated with an ultrasonication homogenizer (Tomy UD-201) for 5 minutes (50% interval), centrifuged (15,000 rpm, 4°C for 10 minutes) and a supernatant was recovered to give a cell-free extract. TARON resin (2 ml, CLONTECH) was placed in a 15 ml
25 centrifuge tube (Corning), and washed twice with 10 ml of 100 mM NaCl-containing 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0) for equilibration. The above-mentioned cell-free extract (5 ml) was added and the mixture was shaken at room temperature for 20 minutes to adsorb His-tagged SLDH, followed by washing 3 times with 100 mM NaCl-
30 containing 20 mM Tris-HCl (10 ml, pH 8.0) over 10 minutes. 100 mM NaCl-containing 20 mM Tris-HCl buffers (2 ml, pH 8.0) respectively containing 10 mM, 30 mM, 50 mM and 100 mM imidazole were added successively, and shaken at room temperature for 2 minutes to elute His-tagged SLDH. As a result, SLDH activity

eluted in a 30 mM - 50 mM imidazole fraction. This fraction was applied to SDS-PAGE analyze to detect nearly single band.

(3) Analysis of N terminus amino acid sequence

The His-tagged SLDH purified in the above-mentioned (2) was electrophoresed using a multigel (Daiichi Pure Chemicals) having a gel concentration of 12.5% with 40 mA current over 1 hour, and using Horiz-Blot (Atto), transferred onto a PVDF membrane (Immobilon PSQ; Millipore). The membrane was stained with coomasie brilliant blue G-250, and a band seemingly an about 55 kDa SLDH was cut out with a pair of scissors. This PVDF membrane was subjected to amino acid sequence analysis using protein sequencer G100A (Hewlett-Packard) and PTH analyzer 1090 (Hewlett-Packard). As a result, a sequence (MITRETLKSL; Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:18) consistent with N terminus amino acid sequence expected from ORF of SLDH gene was obtained.

(4) Confirmation of SLDH activity

In the same manner as in the above-mentioned (2) except that the cell-free extract to be applied was by 10 ml, the resin after His-tagged SLDH adsorption was washed 6 times, and His-tagged SLDH was eluted with 50 mM imidazole and 100 mM NaCl-containing 20 mM Tris-HCl (5 ml, pH 8.0), His-tagged SLDH was purified. The obtained His-tagged SLDH was reacted with sorbitol and the resulting product was analyzed. The composition of the reaction solution (2 ml) was 10 mM (1.82 mg/ml) sorbitol, 0.1 M glycine/NaOH buffer (pH 10.1), 5 mM NADP⁺ and His-tagged SLDH 0.2 ml (41.4 µg protein) and the reaction was carried out at 25°C for 24 hours. As a result, 1.12 mg/ml sorbose was generated (sorbitol remaining in 0.70 mg/ml; conversion efficiency: 62%). Thus, His-tagged SLDH purified by cobalt type IMAC was confirmed to be sorbitol dehydrogenase that oxidizes sorbitol and generates sorbose.

Example 3 Characterization of SLDH

(1) Coenzyme dependency and active pH range

To a solution containing 0.1 ml of 50 mM NAD⁺ (or NADP⁺), 0.2 ml of 500 mM buffer, 10 μ l of His-tagged SLDH solution (2.1 μ g protein) prepared in Example 2(4) and distilled water (0.29 ml) was added to 500 mM sorbitol (0.4 ml) to start the reaction (25°C), and increase in NADH (or NADPH) was measured by a spectrophotometer (UV-2200; Shimadzu) based on absorbance at 340 nm as an index. For the reaction solutions having pH 10.1 and pH 9.0, glycine/NaOH buffer was used, and for reaction solutions having pH 8.0 and pH 7.0, potassium phosphate buffer was used.

The enzyme activity (1 unit) was defined to be an amount to generate 1 μ mol of NADH (or NADPH) per minute. The molecular extinction coefficient of NAD(P)H was 6.3 mM⁻¹ cm⁻¹. The protein amount was measured with bovine serum albumin (BSA) as a standard by the Lowry method. As a result, SLDH could utilize both NAD⁺ and NADP⁺ as coenzymes, and NADP⁺ showed higher specificity. The activity of this enzyme was higher in the alkaline pH (Table 1).

Table 1

Coenzyme	pH	Activity (U/mg protein)
NADP ⁺	10.1	130.2
	9.0	30.0
	8.0	22.9
	7.0	4.2
NAD ⁺	10.1	8.1
	9.0	3.4
	8.0	1.2
	7.0	0.1

(2) Substrate specificity

In the same manner as in the above-mentioned (1) except that the reaction solution contained various substrates to replace sorbitol, the buffer was glycine/NaOH buffer (pH 10.1), and coenzyme was NADP⁺, the SLDH activity was measured. As a result, this enzyme could utilize, besides sorbitol, mannitol and arabitol as a substrate, but showed no action on xylitol,

ribitol, inositol or glycerol (Table 2).

Table 2

Substrate	Activity (U/mg protein)
sorbitol	130.2
mannitol	85.7
arabitol	88.1
xylitol	0
ribitol	0
inositol	0
glycerol	0

5

(3) Michaelis constant

Using sorbitol as a substrate, SLDH activity was measured according to the method of the above-mentioned (2). As a result, the K_m value for sorbitol was 132 mM (25°C).

10

Example 4 Preparation of *Pseudomonas* transformant having SNDH/SDH expression vector and study of 2KLGA productivity by this transformant

Of the pBBR plasmids that are broad host range plasmids [Gene, 166, 175 (1995)] supplied by Dr. Kovach at Louisiana State University, Medical Center, SNDH/SDH gene was introduced into the genus *Pseudomonas* strain using pBBR1MCS-2 (kanamycin resistant) and pBBR1MCS-3 (tetracycline resistant) as vectors, and fermentative production of 2KLGA from L-sorbose by the obtained transformant was studied.

(1) Construction of SNDH/SDH expressing broad host range plasmid

Plasmid pSDH-tufB1-Eco-d9U (FIG. 4) (5 µg) containing SNDH/SDH gene and using tufB as a promoter was digested with EcoRI (50U, Behringer-Mannheim) at 37°C for 1 hour, and electrophoresed on 0.8% agarose gel, which was followed by separation of a 3.7 kb EcoRI/EcoRI fragment containing SNDH/SDH gene. This fragment was inserted into the EcoRI site of pBBR1MCS-2. The plasmid inserted in the same direction as the β-galactosidase gene was taken as pBBR (Km)-SDH·SNDH (FIG. 5).

Plasmid pSDH-tufB1 (10 µg, construction method is described in European Patent Publication EP 0758679 A1) containing an SNDH/SDH gene and using tufB as a promoter was digested with EcoRI (50U, Behringer-Mannheim) at 37°C for 1 hour and the termini were blunted by a treatment using Klenow fragment (Nippon Gene) at room temperature for 30 minutes. Using a T4 DNA ligase (TOYOBO), PstI linker (GCTGCAGC, TOYOBO) was ligated with the termini and digested with PstI (50 U, Behringer Mannheim) at 37°C for 1 hour. This digest was electrophoresed with 0.8% agarose gel and a 3.7 kb PstI/PstI fragment containing an SNDH/SDH gene was separated. This fragment was inserted in the PstI site of pBBR1MCS-3. The plasmid inserted in the same direction as the β-galactosidase gene was taken as pBBR(Tc)SDH·SNDH (FIG. 6).

(2) Preparation of competent cell of *Pseudomonas*

The glycerol cryopreservation stock of *Pseudomonas* sp.F-1 was inoculated to L medium (3 ml, pH 7.4) containing 1% bactotrypton (Difco), 0.5% yeast extract (Difco) and 1% sodium chloride in a 16.5×165 mm test tube and cultured at 30°C overnight. The entire amount of the culture solution was inoculated to L medium (50 ml) in a 500 ml Erlenmeyer flask, and cultured at 25°C for 6 hours. The culture solution was centrifuged to harvest the cells and the cells were washed twice with cold 10% aqueous glycerol solution (30 ml). The washed cells were suspended in a small amount of cold 10% aqueous glycerol solution, dispensed by 60 µl and instantaneously frozen with liquid nitrogen.

(3) Transformation of *Pseudomonas*

The competent cells of *Pseudomonas* cryopreserved in liquid nitrogen sp.F-1 were thawed in ice water, and solutions of an SNDH/SDH expressing broad host range plasmid constructed in the above-mentioned (1), pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH and pBBR(Tc)-SDH·SNDH, were added by 1 µl (ca. 1 µg) each, and stood at 4°C for 30 minutes. This was transformed using a Gene Pulser gene transfer

device (Bio-Rad) in a cuvette having a distance of 0.1 cm between electrodes under the conditions of 200Ω, 1.8 kV, 25 μF, and suspended in L medium containing 0.4% glucose, which was followed by shaking at 30°C for 1 hour. They were sown on an L agar plate containing 50 μg/ml kanamycin and an L agar plate containing 20 μg/ml tetracycline, cultured at 30°C for 2 days to give transformant Ps./pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH and Ps./pBBR(Tc)-SDH·SNDH.

10 (4) Fermentative production of 2KLGA from sorbose by the transformant

A single colony of transformants Ps./pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH and Ps./pBBR(Tc)-SDH·SNDH obtained in the above-mentioned (3) was each inoculated to 5 ml of L medium in a 16.5x165 mm test tube and cultured at 30°C for 2 days. The culture solution (0.5 ml) was inoculated to a medium (10 ml, pH 7.4) for 2KLGA production containing 5% sorbose, 0.1% glucose, 0.9% bactotrypton (Difco), 0.45% yeast extract (Difco), 0.9% sodium chloride and 2% calcium carbonate in a 100 ml Erlenmeyer flask, and cultured at 30°C for 5 days. The culture solution was separated by centrifugation and sorbose, sorbosone, 2KLGA and L-idonic acid in the culture supernatant were quantitatively determined. The sorbose, sorbosone, 2KLGA and L-idonic acid were each quantitatively determined by HPLC under the following conditions.

25 [sorbose]

column: Polyspher OA KC (7.8 mm inner diameterx300 mm; Cica-MERCK)

migration phase: 0.01N H₂SO₄

column temperature: room temperature

30 flow rate: 0.4 ml/minute

detection: differential refractometer

[sorbosone (post-column labeling method)]

column: Polyspher OA KC (7.8 mm inner diameterx300 mm; Cica-MERCK)

migration phase (labeling agent): 0.04M benzamidine
hydrochloride

0.25M potassium sulfite

2 mM boric acid/0.1N potassium hydroxide

5 flow rate: 0.3 ml/minute

detection: fluorescent detector (excitation wavelength: 315 nm,
detection wavelength: 405 nm)

[2KLGA and L-idonic acid]

column: Capcell pak NH2 (4.6 mm inner diameter×250 mm;

10 Shiseido)

migration phase: 30% acetonitrile, 20 mM calcium phosphate (pH
3.0)

flow rate: 1.2 ml/minute

detection: UV-210 nm

15 As a result, the conversion efficiency from sorbose to
2KLGA by *Ps./pBBR(Km)*-SDH·SNDH was about 18%, and about 37%
combined with the conversion efficiency to L-idonic acid. The
conversion efficiency from sorbose to 2KLGA by *Ps./pBBR(Tc)*-SDH·
SNDH was about 26%, and about 47% combined with the conversion
20 efficiency to L-idonic acid (Table 3).

Table 3
culture results by transformant (mg/ml)

transformant	sorbose	sorbose	2KLGA	L-idonic acid
<i>Ps./pBBR(Km)</i> - SDH·SNDH	12.5 (25.0)	0.3 (0.6)	8.9 (17.8)	9.6 (19.6)
<i>Ps./pBBR(Tc)</i> - SDH·SNDH	15.6 (31.2)	0.15(0.3)	13 (26.0)	10.3(20.6)

25 The figures in parentheses are conversion efficiency (% of
product concentration to initial sorbose concentration).

For comparison, production of 2KLGA and L-idonic acid by a
non-transformant *Pseudomonas* sp. F-1 was also investigated. The
30 glycerol cryopreserved cells of *Pseudomonas* sp. F-1 were

inoculated to 5 ml of L medium in a 16.5x165 mm test tube and cultured at 30°C for 1 day. The culture solution (1 ml) was inoculated to a medium (10 ml, pH 7.4) containing 5% sorbose, 0.9% bactotrypton (Difco), 0.45% yeast extract (Difco) and 0.9% sodium chloride in a 100 ml Erlenmeyer flask, and cultured at 30°C for 3 days. The culture solution was centrifuged and sorbose, sorbosone, 2KLGA and L-idonic acid in the culture supernatant were similarly determined quantitatively. As a result, sorbose was consumed (5.7 mg/ml) but sorbosone, 2KLGA and L-idonic acid were not detected.

From the above, by the introduction of SNDH/SDH gene into 2KLGA and L-idonic acid non-producing *Pseudomonas* sp. F-1, a transformant that highly produces 2KLGA and L-idonic acid from sorbose could be obtained.

Example 5 Preparation of *Pseudomonas* transformant containing SNDH/SDH expression vector and consideration of 2KLGA productivity of the transformant - (2)

In the same manner as in Example 4 and using a different strain [strain *Pseudomonas* IFO3309; supplied by the Institute for Fermentation, Osaka (17-85, Juso-honmachi 2-chome, Yodogawa-ku, Osaka)] belonging to the genus *Pseudomonas* as a host, a transformant was prepared, into which the SNDH/SDH gene was introduced, and the 2KLGA and L-idonic acid productivity of this transformant was investigated.

(1) Introduction of SNDH/SDH gene into strain *Pseudomonas* IFO3309

Glycerol cryopreserved cells of the strain *Pseudomonas* IFO3309 were treated in the same manner as in Example 4(2) to prepare cryopreserved cells of competent cells. The competent cells cryopreserved in liquid nitrogen were thawed in ice water, and a solution 1 µl (ca. 1 µg) of Ps./pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH, which was an SNDH/SDH expressing broad host range plasmid, was added and the mixture was stood at 4°C for 30 minutes. This was

transformed using a Gene Pulser gene transfer device (Bio-Rad) under the same conditions as in Example 4(3) to give transformant Ps. IFO3309/pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH.

(2) Fermentative production of 2KLGA by the transformant

5 One loopful of the Ps. IFO3309/pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH obtained in the above (1) was inoculated to a medium (5 ml, pH 7.0) containing 2% sorbitol and 0.5% yeast extract (Difco) in a 16.5x165 mm test tube, and cultured at 28°C for 1 day. The culture solution (1 ml) was inoculated to a medium (10 ml, pH
10 7.0) containing 5% sorbitol, 0.5% yeast extract (Difco), 0.2% polypeptone (Wako Pure Chemical Industries), 0.1% K_2HPO_4 , 0.5% $MgSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$ and 2% $CaCO_3$ in a 100 ml Erlenmeyer flask and cultured at 28°C for 7 days. The culture solution was centrifuged and in the same manner as in Example 4(4), sorbitol,
15 sorbose, sorbosone, 2KLGA and L-idonic acid in the culture supernatant were quantitatively determined. For comparison, non-transformant the strain *Pseudomonas* IFO3309 was cultured under the same conditions and sorbitol, sorbose, sorbosone, 2KLGA and L-idonic acid in the culture supernatant were
20 quantitatively determined.

As a result, by the non-transformant, sorbitol was consumed (0.4 mg/ml), sorbose was produced (3.9 mg/ml) but sorbosone, 2KLGA and L-idonic acid were not detected. On the other hand, 2KLGA (1.2 mg/ml) and L-idonic acid (0.5 mg/ml) were
25 produced by the transformant Ps. IFO3309/pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH (Table 4). In other words, it was confirmed that, by the introduction of SNDH/SDH gene into this host, the ability to produce 2KLGA and L-idonic acid from sorbitol was imparted even under the conditions where *Pseudomonas* IFO3309 cannot produce
30 2KLGA or L-idonic acid.

Table 4

culture results by transformant (mg/ml)

transformant	sorbose	sorbose	2KLGA	L-idonic acid
<i>Ps.</i> 3309/pBBR(Km) - SDH·SNDH	0.41	1.8	1.2	0.5

Example 6 Production of 2KLGA by *Pseudomonas* transformant into
5 which SLDH expression vector and SNDH/SDH expression vector were
introduced

(1) Preparation of *Pseudomonas* transformant having SLDH
expression vector and SNDH/SDH expression vector

As mentioned above, an expression vector pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH
10 (FIG. 5) was constructed by incorporating an SNDH/SDH gene
derived from *G. oxydans* T-100 (FERM BP-4188; European Patent
Publication EP 0758679 A1) into pBBR1MCS-2. pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH
was introduced into recombinant *Pseudomonas* *Ps.*/pUCP19-B7SX2
obtained in Example 1(5) by the electroporation method to give
15 *Ps.*/pUCP19-B7SX2+pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH.

(2) Production of 2KLGA by *Pseudomonas* transformant

Ps./pUCP19-B7SX2+pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH was cultured in a
medium (pH 7.4) containing 5% sorbitol, 1% bactotrypton (Difco),
0.5% yeast extract (Difco), 1% sodium chloride, 50 µg/ml
20 ampicillin, 50 µg/ml kanamycin and 2% light calcium carbonate at
30°C for 4 days to give 1.1 mg/ml of 2KLGA and 1.7 mg/ml of
idonic acid. The 2KLGA was separated by HPLC and coincidence
with a standard product in the retention time was confirmed.
Using GC/MS, coincidence with a standard product in the mass
25 pattern was confirmed. HPLC and GC/MS were performed under the
same conditions as in Example 1(3) and (5).

Example 7 Preparation of various *Pseudomonas* transformants

(1) *Ps.*/pUCP19-SLDH+pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH

30 *Pseudomonas* sp.F-1 was transformed with pUCP19-SLDH
constructed in Example 2(1) to give *Ps.*/pUCP19-SLDH. pBBR(Km)-

SDH•SNDH was further introduced into this recombinant *Pseudomonas* to give Ps./pUCP19-SLDH+pBBR(Km)-SDH•SNDH.

(2) Ps./pUCP19-SLDH-tufB+pBBR(Km)-SDH•SNDH

To introduce SspI site into the upstream of initiation
 5 codon of SLDH gene, PCR was performed using pUCP19-SLDH (5 µg) as a template in the presence of the following primers (20 pmol each) using pfu DNA polymerase (2.5 U) (94°C, 30 seconds→55°C, 2 minutes→72°C, 2 minutes, 25 cycles).

sense primer [including SspI site (underlined) and sequence
 10 identical with 5' terminus of SLDH coding sequence]

TAGGAATATTTCTCATGATTACGCGCGAAACCC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:19)

antisense primer [sequence identical with sequence downstream of EagI site in SLDH coding sequence]

15 GATGCTTCAGCACGGC (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:20)

The about 360 bp fragment specifically amplified by PCR was digested with SspI and EagI. pUCP19-SLDH was digested with PstI and EagI to give about 5.7 kb fragment. These two fragments and PstI-SspI fragment (Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:21)
 20 containing tufB promoter were ligated with T4 DNA ligase to construct pUCP19-SLDH-tufB. *Pseudomonas* was transformed with this plasmid to give Ps./pUCP19-SLDH-tufB. Furthermore, pBBR(Km)-SDH•SNDH capable of expressing SNDH/SDH activity was introduced to give Ps./pUCP19-SLDH-tufB+pBBR(Km)-SDH•SNDH.

25 (3) Ps./pUCP19-3DH

pUCP19-SLDH-tufB (5 µg) was digested with 40 U KpnI and 40 U PstI at 37°C for 1 hour to give a 1.6 kb fragment. pUCP19-SLDH•SNDH (expression vector obtained by incorporating SNDH/SDH gene derived from *G. oxydans* T-100 into pUCP19; FIG. 7) (1 µg)
 30 was digested with 10 U KpnI and 10 U PstI at 37°C for 1 hour to give a 8.2 kb fragment. These two fragments were ligated with T4 DNA ligase to construct pUCP19-3DH. *Pseudomonas* was transformed with this plasmid to give Ps./pUCP19-3DH.

Example 8 Consideration of productivity of 2KLGA

Since production of 2KLGA by recombinant *Pseudomonas* was confirmed, the productivity of 2KLGA was studied in media having various compositions by 4 transformants obtained in Examples 6
5 and 7.

[culture 1]

One loopful of cryopreservation stock of *Ps.*/pUCP19-B7SX2+pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH was inoculated to a medium (2 ml, pH 7.4) containing 1% bactotrypton (Difco), 0.5% yeast extract
10 (Difco), 1% NaCl, 50 µg/ml ampicillin and 50 µg/ml kanamycin in a 15 ml tube (Falcon) and pre-cultured at 30°C for 24 hours. The pre-culture solution (0.5 ml) was inoculated to a main culture medium (10 ml, pH 7.0) containing 5% sorbitol, 5% yeast extract (Difco), 0.15% MgSO₄ · 7H₂O, 50 µg/ml ampicillin, 50 µg/ml
15 kanamycin and 4% calcium carbonate in a 100 ml Erlenmeyer flask and cultured at 30°C for 3 days.

[culture 2]

The cells were cultured in the same manner as in [culture 1] except that 5% yeast extract in the main culture medium was
20 changed to 5% casamino acid.

[culture 3]

The cells were cultured in the same manner as in [culture 1] except that 1% glycerol was further added to the main culture medium.

25 [culture 4]

The cells were cultured in the same manner as in [culture 1] except that *Ps.*/pUCP19-SLDH+pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH was used as the producing bacteria and 5% glycerol was further added to the main culture medium.

30 [culture 5]

The cells were cultured in the same manner as in [culture 1] except that *Ps.*/pUCP19-SLDH-tufB+pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH was used as the producing bacteria and 5% glycerol was further added to the main culture medium.

[culture 6]

The cells were cultured in the same manner as in [culture 1] except that Ps./pUCP19-3DH was used as the producing bacteria, kanamycin was removed from the pre-culture medium and the main culture medium and 5% glycerol was further added to the main culture medium.

The sorbitol, sorbose, sorbosone and 2KLGA in each culture were quantitatively determined. The results are shown in Table 5. The propensity toward increased conversion efficiency to 2KLGA was observed by the addition of glycerol to the medium.

[culture 7]

The cells were cultured for 7 days in the same manner as in [culture 1] except that the yeast extract concentration of the main culture medium was set to 2% and 5% glycerol was further added to the main culture medium. The sorbitol, sorbose, sorbosone and 2KLGA at day 1, 3, 5 and 7 of culture were quantitatively determined. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

20

culture		sorbitol	sorbose	sorbosone	2KLGA	idonic acid
1		44.1	6.3	0.1	3.7	1.6
2		44.8	3.1	0	4.8	2.2
3		26.7	5.1	0	10.9	8.4
4		26.6	0	0	9.0	ND
5		26.6	0	0	10.7	ND
6		30.7	5.2	0	7.5	ND
7	days	sorbitol	sorbose	sorbosone	2KLGA	idonic acid
	1	41.1	0	0	4.2	ND
	3	25.6	0	0	10.6	ND
	5	14.2	0	0	16.3	ND
	7	7.6	0	0	18.4	15.5

(unit: mg/ml)

ND: Not determined

Example 9 Fermentative production of sorbose or 2KLGA by *Pseudomonas putida* transformant into which SLDH expression vector and/or SNDH/SDH expression vector were introduced

In the following test, the preparation and transformation of competent cells of the strain *Pseudomonas putida* IFO3738 followed the above-mentioned *Pseudomonas* sp.F-1. Because the strain *Pseudomonas putida* IFO3738 is ampicillin resistant, when
5 ampicillin resistance is used as a selection marker, cells were sown on an L agar plate containing 500 µg/ml ampicillin (10-fold amount of normal level) after electroporation, and cultured at 30°C for 1 day to pick up large colonies for the selection of transformant.

- 10 (1) Fermentative production of sorbose from sorbitol by transformant into which SLDH expression vector was introduced

SLDH gene (pUCP19-SLDH) was introduced into the strain *Pseudomonas putida* IFO3738. A single colony of the obtained transformant *Pseudomonas putida* IFO3738/pUCP19-SLDH was
15 inoculated to a medium (10 ml, pH 7.4) for sorbose production, which contained 5% sorbitol, 0.9% bactotrypton (Difco), 0.45% yeast extract (Difco), 0.9% sodium chloride and 500 µg/ml ampicillin in a 100 ml Erlenmeyer flask and cultured at 30°C for 3 days. The culture solution was centrifuged and sorbitol and
20 sorbose in the culture supernatant were quantitatively determined. As a result, 34.6 mg/ml of sorbitol remained and 7.6 mg/ml of sorbose was generated.

- (2) Fermentative production of 2KLGA from sorbose by transformant into which SNDH/SDH expression vector was
25 introduced

SNDH/SDH gene (pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH) was introduced into *Pseudomonas putida* IFO3738. A single colony of the obtained transformant *Pseudomonas putida* IFO3738/pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH was inoculated to a medium (10 ml, pH 7.4) for 2KLGA production,
30 which contained 5% sorbose, 0.9% bactotrypton (Difco), 0.45% yeast extract (Difco), 0.9% sodium chloride, 2% calcium carbonate and 50 µg/ml kanamycin in a 100 ml Erlenmeyer flask and cultured at 30°C for 7 days. The culture solution was centrifuged and sorbose, 2KLGA and idonic acid in the culture

supernatant were quantitatively determined. As a result, 34.3 mg/ml of sorbose remained and 13.9 mg/ml of 2KLGA and 3.5 mg/ml of idonic acid were generated.

(3) Fermentative production of 2KLGA from sorbitol by transformant into which SLDH expression vector and SNDH/SDH expression vector were introduced

SLDH and SNDH/SDH genes (pUCP19-SLDH and pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH) were introduced into the strain *Pseudomonas putida* IFO3738. A single colony of the obtained transformant *Pseudomonas putida* IFO3738/pUCP19-SLDH+pBBR(Km)-SDH·SNDH was inoculated to a medium (10 ml, pH 7.4) for 2KLGA production, which contained 5% sorbitol, 0.9% bactotrypton (Difco), 0.45% yeast extract (Difco), 0.9% sodium chloride, 2% calcium carbonate, 500 µg/ml ampicillin and 50 µg/ml kanamycin in a 100 ml Erlenmeyer flask and cultured at 30°C for 7 days. The culture solution was centrifuged and sorbitol, sorbose, 2KLGA and idonic acid in the culture supernatant were quantitatively determined. As a result, 35.6 mg/ml of sorbitol remained and 13.2 mg/ml of 2KLGA and 6.2 mg/ml of idonic acid were generated. Sorbose was not detected.

20

Free text of Sequence Listing

SEQ ID NO:3: Oligonucleotide designed to act as primer for sequencing insert DNA of pUCP19-HC.

SEQ ID NO:4: Oligonucleotide designed to act as primer for sequencing insert DNA of pUCP19-HC.

SEQ ID NO:5: Oligonucleotide designed to act as primer for sequencing insert DNA of pUCP19-HC.

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- SEQ ID NO:10: Oligonucleotide designed to act as primer for sequencing insert DNA of pUCP19-HC.
- SEQ ID NO:11: Oligonucleotide designed to act as primer for sequencing insert DNA of pUCP19-HC.
- 5 SEQ ID NO:12: Oligonucleotide designed to act as primer for sequencing insert DNA of pUCP19-HC.
- SEQ ID NO:13: Oligonucleotide designed to act as primer for sequencing insert DNA of pUCP19-HC.
- 10 SEQ ID NO:14: Oligonucleotide designed to act as sense primer for amplifying DNA sequence encoding His-tagged SLDH and promoter.
- SEQ ID NO:15: Oligonucleotide designed to act as antisense primer for amplifying DNA sequence encoding His-tagged SLDH and promoter.
- 15 SEQ ID NO:16: Oligonucleotide designed to act as sense primer for amplifying DNA sequence of 3' non-coding region of SLDH gene.
- SEQ ID NO:17: Oligonucleotide designed to act as antisense primer for amplifying DNA sequence of 3' non-coding region of SLDH gene.
- 20 SEQ ID NO:18: N-terminal amino acid sequence of SLDH.
- SEQ ID NO:19: Oligonucleotide designed to act as PCR primer (sense) for introducing SspI restriction site into 5' upstream region of SLDH coding sequence.
- 25 SEQ ID NO:20: Oligonucleotide designed to act as PCR primer (antisense) for introducing SspI restriction site into 5' upstream region of SLDH coding sequence.

This application is based on patent application Nos. 72810/1999 and 224679/1999 filed in Japan, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

All of the references cited herein, including patents and patent applications are hereby incorporated in their entireties by reference.

sequence listing.txt

SPECIMEN SEQUENCE LISTING

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Met						
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att acg cgc	gaa acc ctt	aag tct ctt	cct gcc aat	gtc cag gct	ccc @	587
Ile Thr Arg	Glu Thr Leu	Lys Ser Leu	Pro Ala Asn	Val Gln Ala	Pro	
5 @ 10 @ 15						
ccc tat gac	atc gac ggg	atc aag cct	ggg atc gtg	cat ttc ggt	gta @	635
Pro Tyr Asp	Ile Asp Gly	Ile Lys Pro	Gly Ile Val	His Phe Gly	Val	
20 @ 25 @ 30						
ggt aac ttt	ttt cga gcc	cat gag gcg	ttc tac gtc	gag cag att	ctt @	683
Gly Asn Phe	Phe Arg Ala	His Glu Ala	Phe Tyr Val	Glu Gln Ile	Leu	
35 @ 40 @ 45						
gaa cac gct	ccg gac tgg	gcg att gtt	ggt gtt ggc	ctg acg ggc	agt @	731
Glu His Ala	Pro Asp Trp	Ala Ile Val	Gly Val Gly	Leu Thr Gly	Ser	
50 @ 55 @ 60 @ 65						
gac cgt tca	aag aaa aaa	gcc gag gaa	ttc aag gcc	cag gac tgc	ctg @	779
Asp Arg Ser	Lys Lys Lys	Ala Glu Glu	Phe Lys Ala	Gln Asp Cys	Leu	
70 @ 75 @ 80						
tat tcc ctg	acc gag acg	gct ccg tcc	ggc aag agc	acg gtg cgc	gtc	827
Tyr Ser Leu	Thr Glu Thr	Ala Pro Ser	Gly Lys Ser	Thr Val Arg	Val	
85 @ 90 @ 95						
atg ggc gcg	ctg cgt gac	tat ctg ctt	gcc ccg gcc	gat ccg gaa	gcc @	875
Met Gly Ala	Leu Arg Asp	Tyr Leu Leu	Ala Pro Ala	Asp Pro Glu	Ala	
100 @ 105 @ 110						
gtg ctg aag	cat ctt gtt	gat ccg gcc	atc cgc atc	gtt tcc atg	acg @	923
Val Leu Lys	His Leu Val	Asp Pro Ala	Ile Arg Ile	Val Ser Met	Thr	
115 @ 120 @ 125						
atc acg gaa	ggc ggc tac	aac atc aac	gag acg acc	ggt gcg ttc	gat @	971
Ile Thr Glu	Gly Gly Tyr	Asn Ile Asn	Glu Thr Thr	Gly Ala Phe	Asp	
130 @ 135 @ 140 @ 145						
ctg gag aat	gcg gca gta	aag gcc gac	ctc aag aac	ccg gaa aag	ccg	1019
Leu Glu Asn	Ala Ala Val	Lys Ala Asp	Leu Lys Asn	Pro Glu Lys	Pro	
150 @ 155 @ 160						
tct acc gtt	ttc ggt tac	gtg gtc gag	gcc ctg cgt	cgt cgt tgg	gat	1067
Ser Thr Val	Phe Gly Tyr	Val Val Glu	Ala Leu Arg	Arg Arg Trp	Asp	
165 @ 170 @ 175						
gcc ggt ggt	aag gca ttt	acg gtc atg	tcc tgt gat	aac ctg cgt	cat	1115
Ala Gly Gly	Lys Ala Phe	Thr Val Met	Ser Cys Asp	Asn Leu Arg	His	
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aac ggc aat	gtc gcc cgc	aag gcc ttc	ctc ggc tat	gcg aag gcg	cgc	1163
Asn Gly Asn	Val Ala Arg	Lys Ala Phe	Leu Gly Tyr	Ala Lys Ala	Ala	
195 @ 200 @ 205						
gat ccg gag	ttg gcg aag	tgg att gag	gaa aac gcg	acc ttc ccg	aac	1211
Asp Pro Glu	Leu Ala Lys	Trp Ile Glu	Glu Asn Ala	Thr Phe Pro	Asn	
210 @ 215 @ 220 @ 225						
gga atg gtt	gat cgc atc	acc ccg acc	gtt tcg gcg	gaa atc gcc	aag	1259
Gly Met Val	Asp Arg Ile	Thr Pro Thr	Val Ser Ala	Glu Ile Ala	Lys	
230 @ 235 @ 240						
aag ctg aac	gcg gcc agt	ggg ctg gat	gac gac ctg	ccg ctg gtg	gcc	1307
Lys Leu Asn	Ala Ala Ser	Gly Leu Asp	Asp Asp Leu	Pro Leu Val	Ala	
245 @ 250 @ 255						
gag gat ttc	cat cag tgg	gtg ctg gaa	gac cag ttt	gcg gat ggc	cgt	1355
Glu Asp Phe	His Gln Trp	Val Leu Glu	Asp Gln Phe	Ala Asp Gly	Arg	
260 @ 265 @ 270						
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sequence listing.txt

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 Thr Glu Thr Val Arg Arg Ala Ile Glu Asp Lys Arg Asp Leu Ser Arg
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 <211> 16

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<212> DNA
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<220>
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<210> 4
<211> 17
<212> DNA
<213> Artificial Sequence

<220>
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DNA of pUCP19-HC.

<400> 4
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<210> 5
<211> 16
<212> DNA
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<220>
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DNA of pUCP19-HC.

<400> 5
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<210> 6
<211> 16
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sequence listing.txt

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 <210> 13
 <211> 16
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 <211> 18
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 <211> 30
 <212> DNA
 <213> Artificial Sequence

sequence listing.txt

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<400> 16
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<210> 17
 <211> 28
 <212> DNA
 <213> Artificial Sequence

<220>
 <223> oligonucleotide designed to act as antisense primer for
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<210> 18
 <211> 10
 <212> PRT
 <213> Gluconobacter oxydans

<220>
 <223> N-terminal amino acid sequence of SLDH.

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 1 5 10

<210> 19
 <211> 33
 <212> DNA
 <213> Artificial Sequence

<220>
 <223> oligonucleotide designed to act as PCR primer (sense) for
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 SLDH coding sequence.

<400> 19
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<210> 20
 <211> 16
 <212> DNA
 <213> Artificial Sequence

<220>
 <223> oligonucleotide designed to act as PCR primer (antisense) for
 introducing Ssp I restriction site into 5' upstream region of
 SLDH coding sequence.

<400> 20
 gatgcttcag cacggc 16

CLAIMS

1. A sorbitol dehydrogenase having the following physicochemical properties:

(a) action: catalyzes the reaction converting D-sorbitol to L-sorbose

(b) molecular weight: about 54 kDa

(c) coenzyme: NAD(P)⁺ dependent

(d) substrate specificity: specifically oxidizes sorbitol, mannitol and arabitol, but does not act on xylitol, ribitol, inositol or glycerol.

2. The sorbitol dehydrogenase of claim 1, which is derived from the strain *Gluconobacter oxydans* G624.

3. A sorbitol dehydrogenase which is originated from the same gene as is the sorbitol dehydrogenase of claim 2 in its molecular evolution.

4. The sorbitol dehydrogenase of claim 3, which is derived from a bacteria belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*.

5. A sorbitol dehydrogenase which is the following protein (a) or (b):

(a) a protein consisting of an amino acid sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:1

(b) a protein consisting of the same amino acid sequence as (a) above, except that one to several amino acids is(are) deleted, substituted, inserted, added or modified, and catalyzing the reaction converting D-sorbitol to L-sorbose.

6. A DNA encoding the sorbitol dehydrogenase of any of claims 1 to 5.

7. The DNA of claim 6, which is (a) or (b) in the following:

(a) a DNA having a base sequence of base numbers 537 - 1991 of the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2

(b) a DNA capable of hybridizing to the base sequence of the above-mentioned (a) under stringent conditions.

5

8. The DNA of claim 6 or 7, which is derived from bacteria belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*.

9. A gene encoding a protein having a sorbitol dehydrogenase activity, which is a DNA capable of hybridizing a DNA having a base sequence of base numbers 537 - 1991 of the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2 and a partial DNA thereof.

10. A protein derived from the genus *Gluconobacter*, which is encoded by the gene of claim 9 and which has a sorbitol dehydrogenase activity.

11. A promoter gene comprising the DNA of the following (a) or (b):

(a) a DNA having a base sequence of base numbers 1 - 536 of the base sequence depicted in Sequence Listing SEQ ID NO:2

(b) a DNA having a base sequence of the above-mentioned (a) wherein one to several bases is(are) deleted, substituted, inserted, added or modified, which DNA shows a promoter activity at least in one kind of microorganism.

12. A recombinant vector comprising a DNA of any of claims 6 to 9.

30

13. An expression vector comprising a DNA of any of claims 6 to 9.

14. The expression vector of claim 13 further comprising a DNA

encoding sorbose dehydrogenase and/or a DNA encoding sorbosone dehydrogenase.

15. A transformant obtained by transforming a host cell with an
5 expression vector of claim 13 or 14.

16. The transformant of claim 15, which belongs to a genus
selected from the group consisting of *Escherichia coli*, the
genus *Pseudomonas*, the genus *Gluconobacter*, the genus
10 *Acetobacter* and the genus *Pseudogluconobacter*.

17. The transformant of claim 15 or 16, which is capable of
converting D-sorbitol to 2-keto-L-gulonic acid.

15 18. A method for producing a protein having a sorbitol
dehydrogenase activity, which method comprises culturing a host
cell transformed with an expression vector of claim 13 in a
medium and harvesting the sorbitol dehydrogenase of any of
claims 1 to 5 or the protein of claim 10 from the obtained
20 culture.

19. A method for producing an L-sorbose, which method comprises
culturing a host cell transformed with an expression vector of
claim 13 in a medium and bringing D-sorbitol into contact with
25 the obtained culture or a treated product thereof.

20. A method for producing 2-keto-L-gulonic acid, which method
comprises culturing a host cell transformed with an expression
vector containing a DNA encoding sorbose dehydrogenase and a DNA
30 encoding sorbosone dehydrogenase in a medium and bringing the L-
sorbose obtained according to the method of claim 19 into
contact with the obtained culture or a treated product thereof.

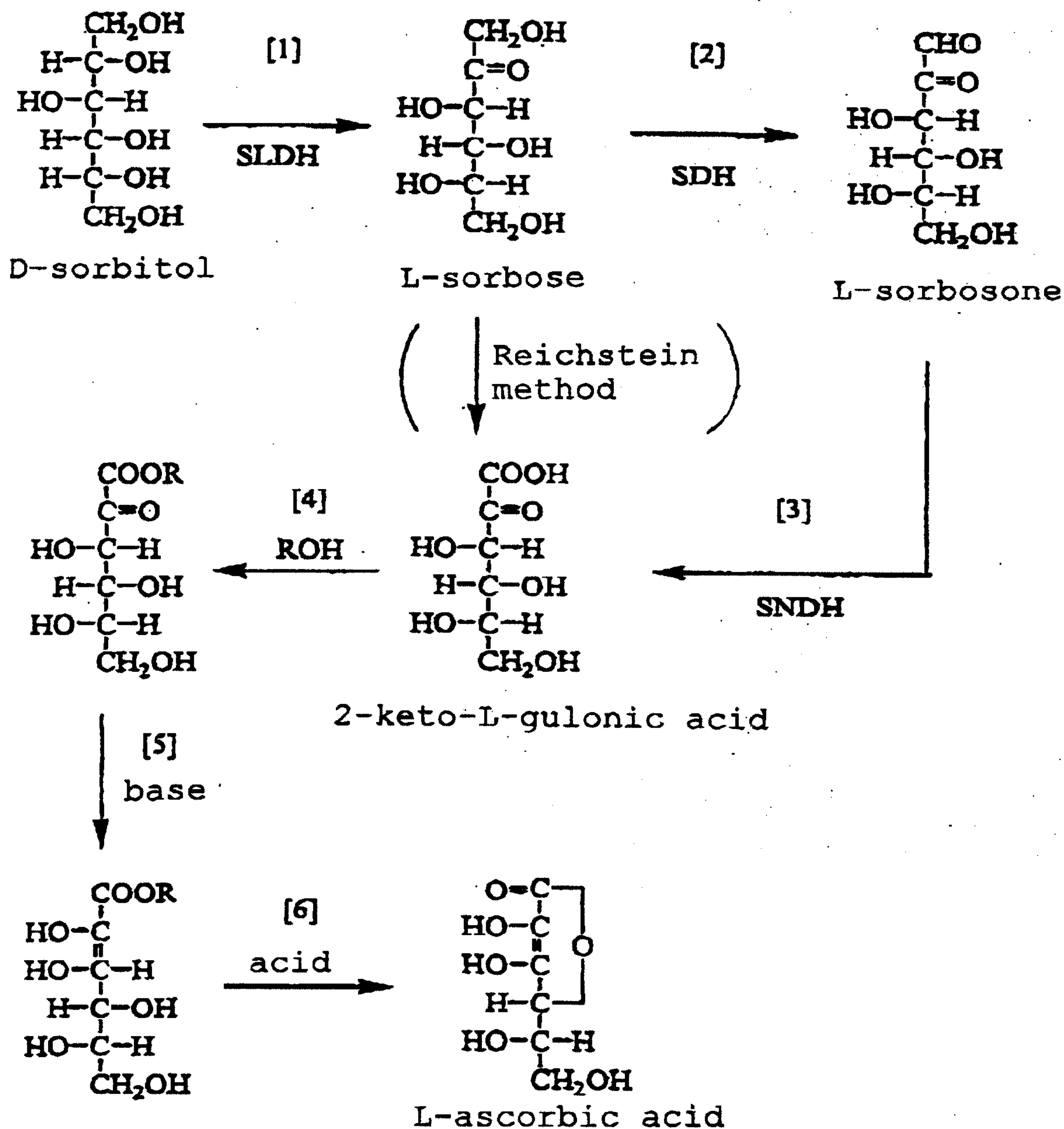
21. A method for producing 2-keto-L-gulonic acid, which method

comprises culturing the transformant of claim 17 in a medium and bringing D-sorbitol into contact with the obtained culture or a treated product thereof.

- 5 22. A method for producing L-ascorbic acid or an alkali metal salt thereof or an alkaline earth metal salt thereof, which method comprises converting 2-keto-L-gulonic acid obtained by the method of claim 20 or 21 to L-ascorbic acid or an alkali metal salt thereof or an alkaline earth metal salt thereof.

10

FIG. 1



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CA 02395092 2001-09-17

FIG. 2

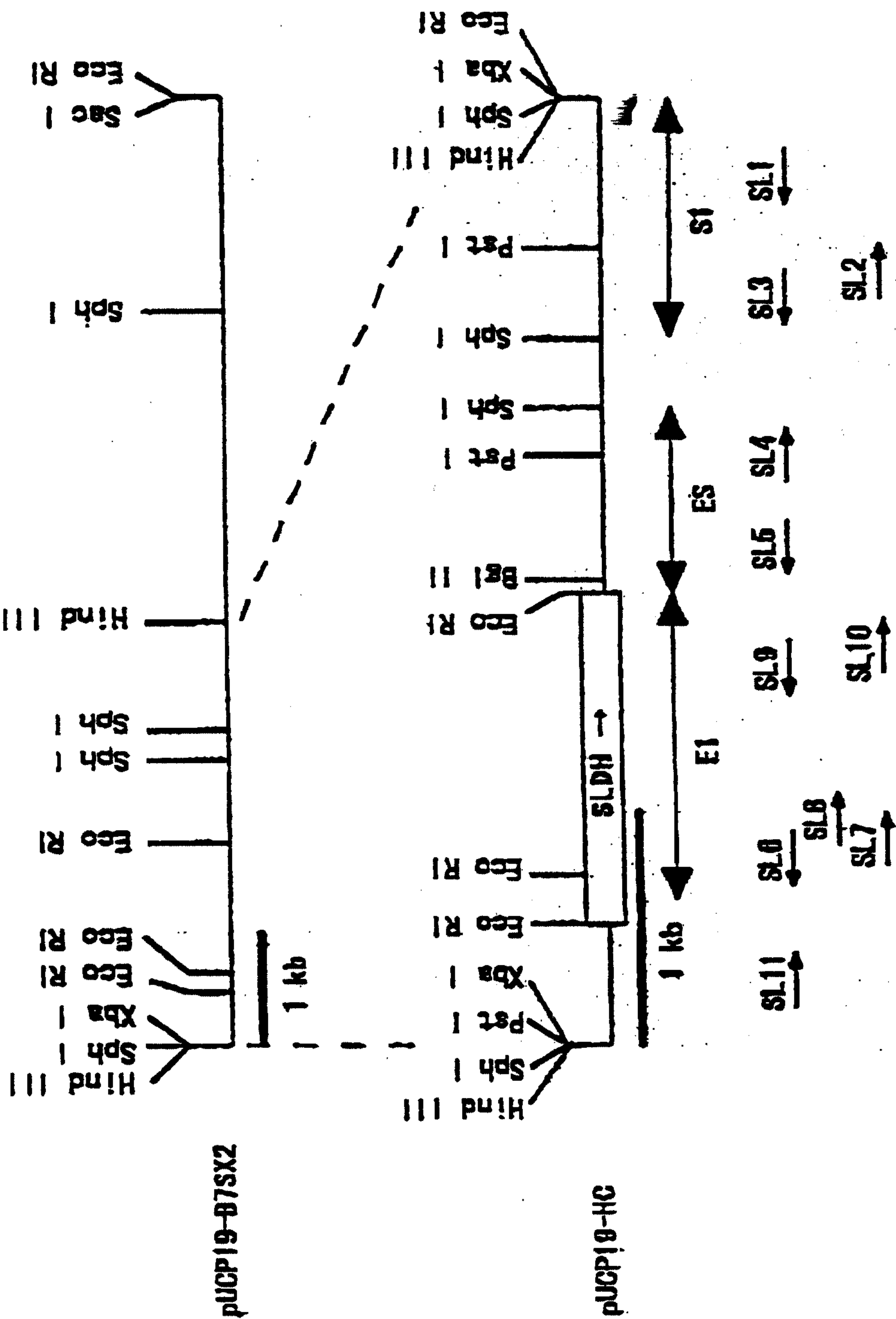


FIG. 3

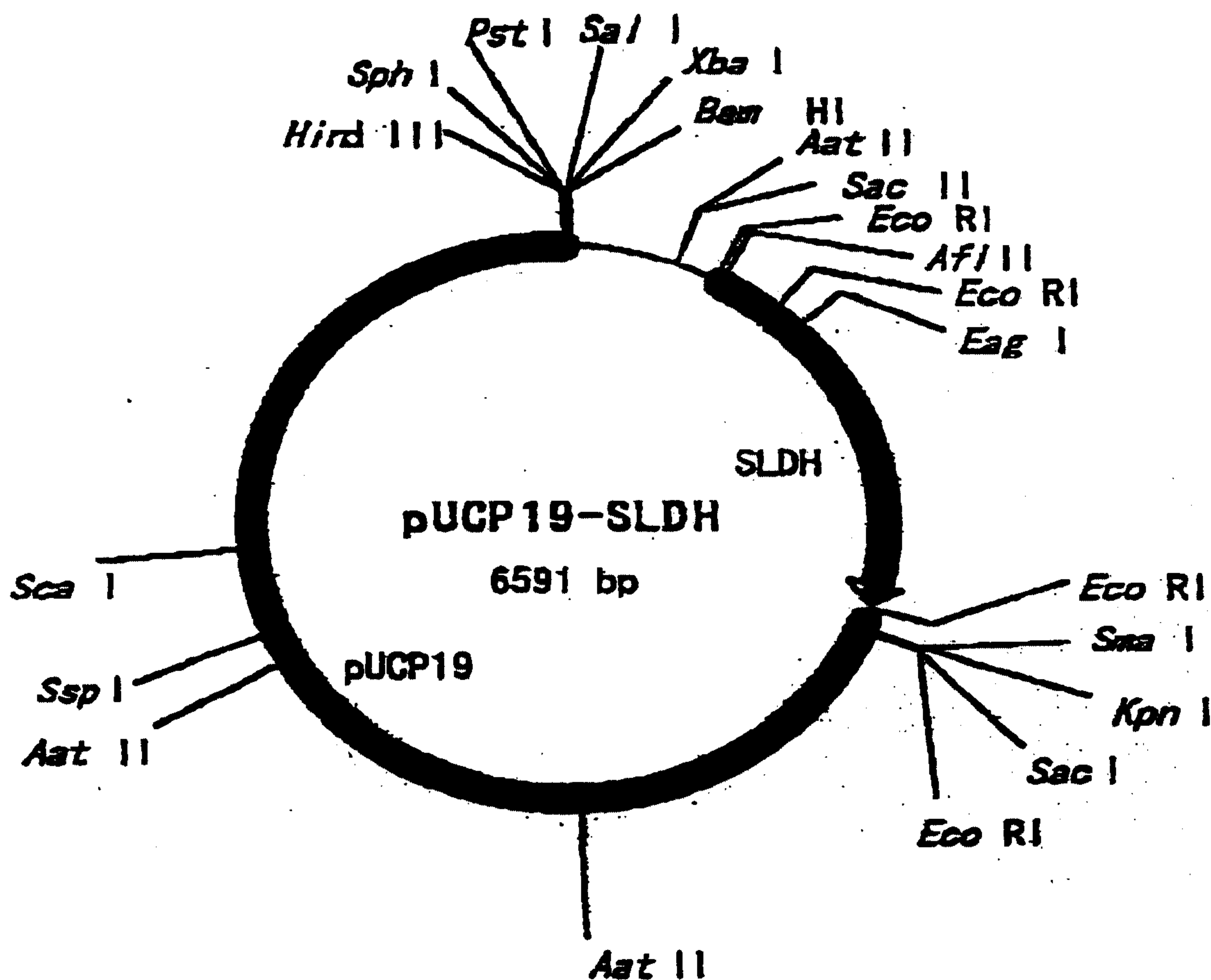


FIG. 4

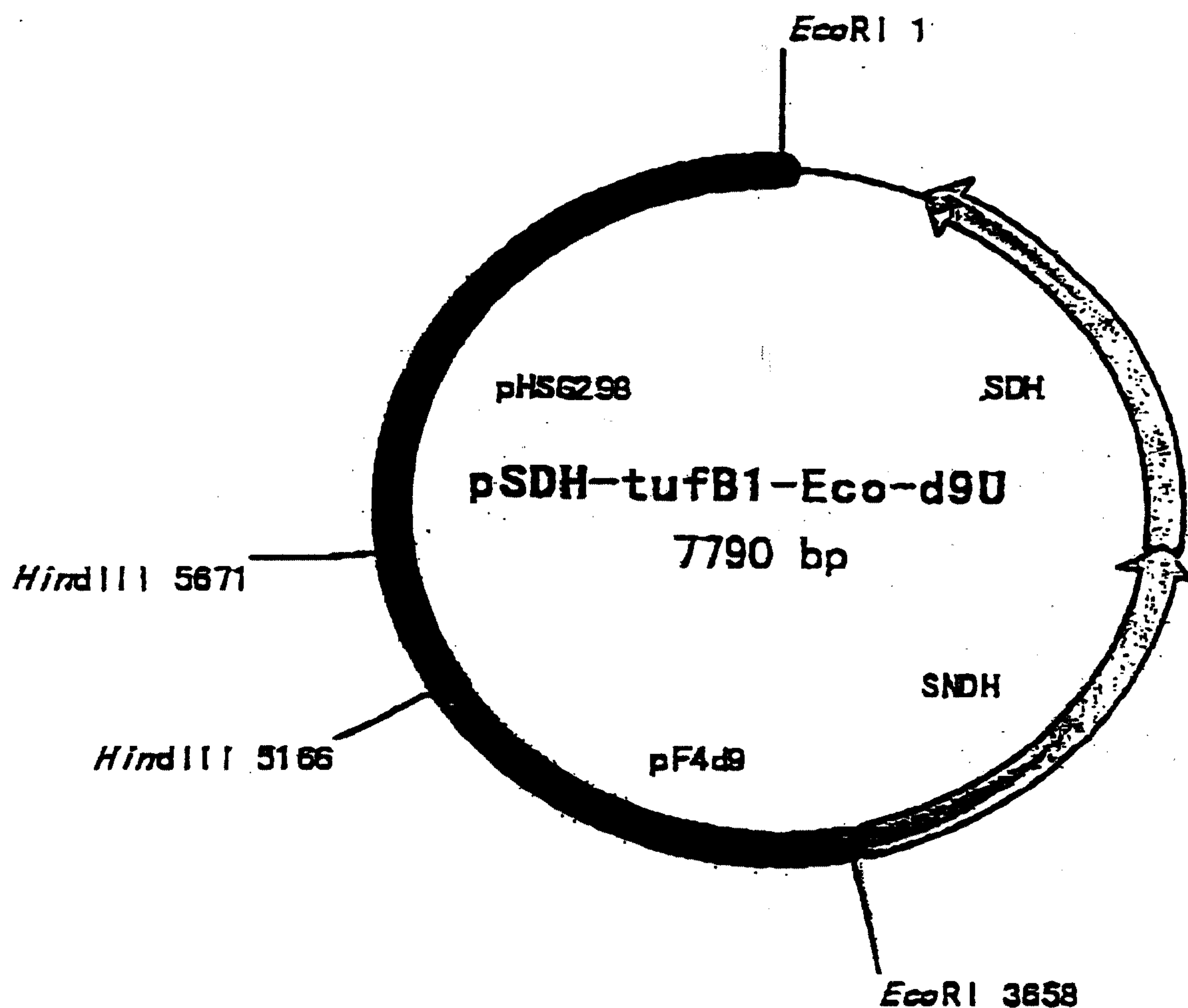


FIG. 5

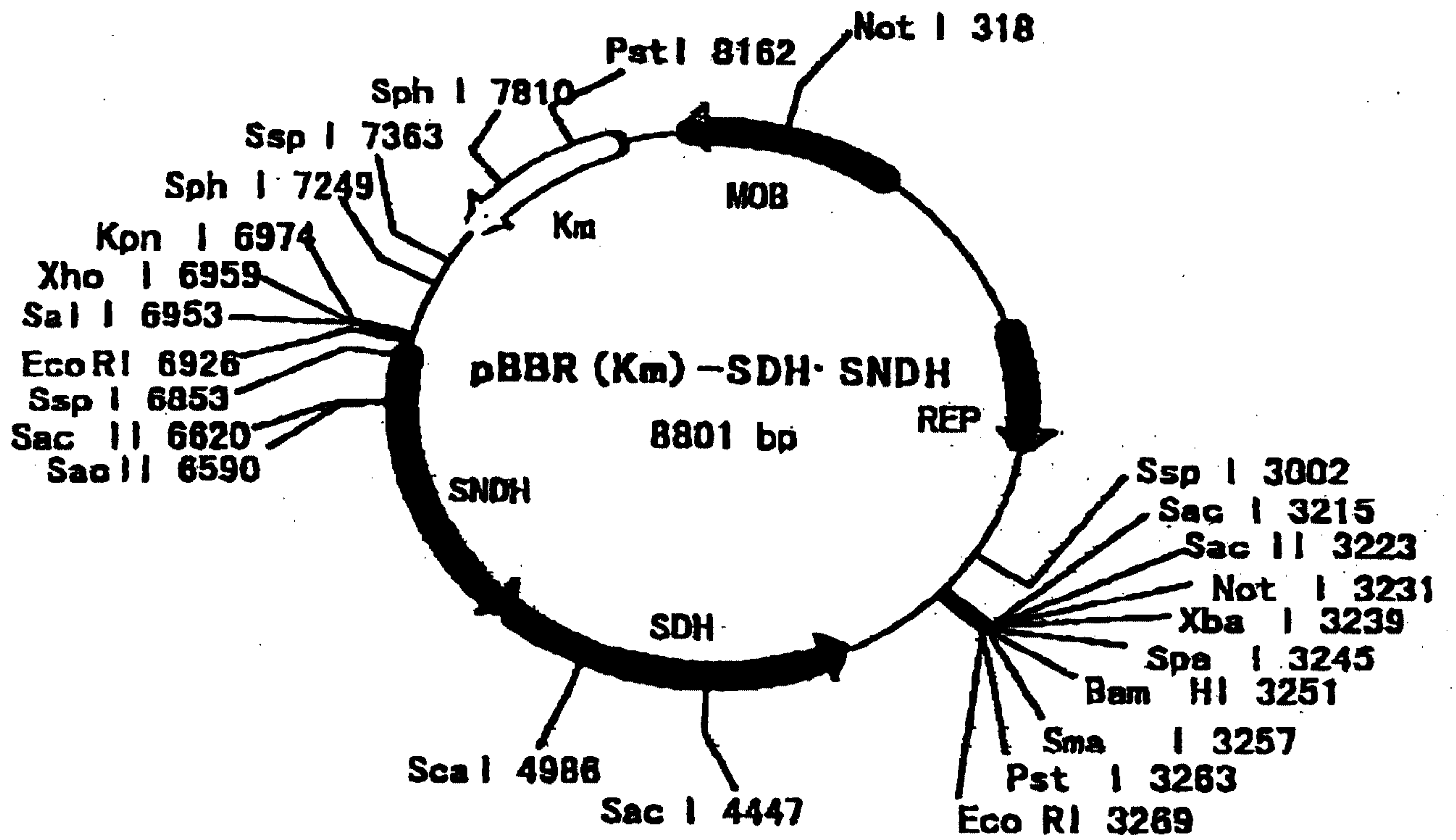


FIG. 6

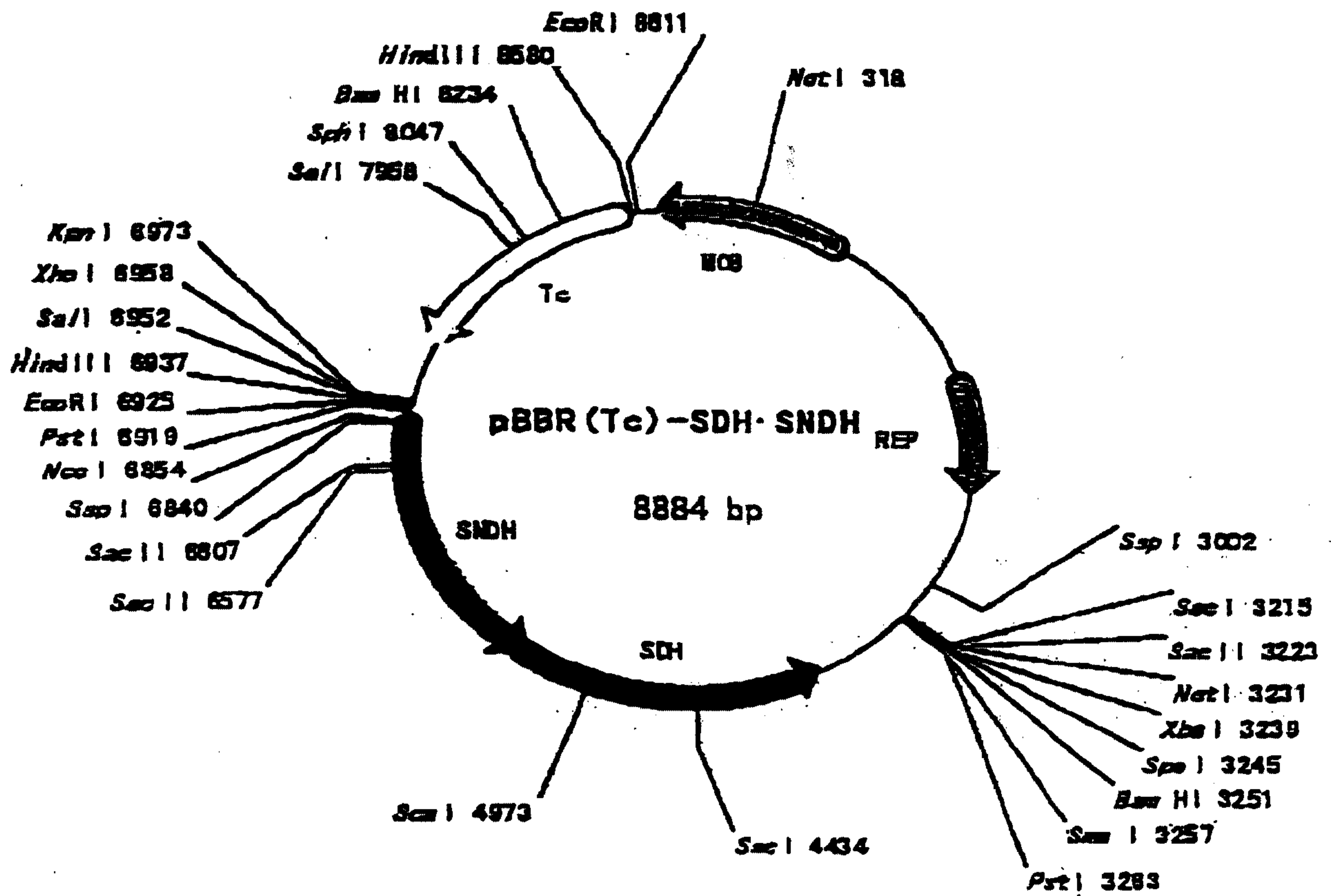


FIG. 7

