



Guidance on MPI's Botanical Synonym Assessment Process

Members have queried MPI's botanical synonym assessment process for seeds for sowing. The NZGSTA and MPI have developed some guidance to aid members with understanding this process and to provide an indication of timeframes and responsibilities around the process itself.

What is a synonym?

For any taxon, only one scientific name is considered correct at any given time, this name is considered the 'preferred' or 'correct' name. Any earlier scientific name(s) which have been superseded or is no longer valid is referred to as a synonym. Synonyms often arise when: the same taxon is described and named more than once, existing taxa are changed, two taxa are joined to become one taxon, or if a taxon is moved to a different genus or species.

How do I get MPI to recognise an alternative scientific name (a synonym)?

You will need to apply to MPI for a botanical synonym assessment if you want to import a seed species under an alternative recognised name (a synonym) that is different from the one listed in the Plant Biosecurity Index (PBI).

What is the process for assessing a synonym?

A synonym assessment requests *must* be made before the seeds arrive in NZ to avoid delays at the border. To apply for a botanical synonym assessment, email PlantImports@mpi.govt.nz

In the email, detail:

- the purpose of the request
- the botanical name (genus and species) of the plant listed in the PBI for which you want a synonym assessment
- the plant synonyms (genus and species) you wish MPI to assess
- if you have information to support your request (for example, scientific papers, or links to botanical websites).

Requests for synonym assessment can take a minimum of 10 working days to process, depending on the complexity of the request. If a synonym is confirmed, MPI will notify the requestor of the outcome and MPI will then update the PBI. MPI aims to update the PBI within 10 working days of synonym confirmation. However, this is an indicative time frame.

Where to find the synonym information to support your request?

There are several international databases that provide information on preferred scientific names and other scientific names (e.g. synonyms). These can include:



- Plants of the World Online (<https://powo.science.kew.org/>)
- Global Biodiversity Information Facility (<https://www.gbif.org/>)
- The World Flora Online (WFO) Plant List (<https://wfoplantlist.org/plant-list>)
- EPPO Global Database (<https://gd.eppo.int/>)
- CABI Compendium Database (<https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/journal/cabicompndium>)
- ScienceDirect and other scientific papers

Cost of the synonym assessment:

There is no MPI costs associated with a synonym assessment or for amending the PBI. However, MPI reserves the right to charge a rush fee for any urgent assessments. We recommend you submit your assessment request and receive the outcome prior to shipping to avoid potential charges.

Further questions

If you have any further questions regarding the synonym assessment process, or need assistance with validating a synonym, please contact NZGSTA Cressida Patrick on:

cressida.patrick@seedindustrynz.co.nz

The information provided here has been extracted from MPI's website "[Steps for importing seeds for sowing](#)" as at 21/09/2023. Please note the information on the website can be updated from time to time. You can access up to date information on the MPI webpage on this link - [Steps to importing seeds for sowing | NZ Government \(mpi.govt.nz\)](#)

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