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Original Paper

HOW CHANGES IN PLANT TAXONOMY ARE REFLECTED IN PRACTICE, THE CASE OF *SALIX ALBA, S. EUXINA* AND *S. ×FRAGILIS* COMPLEX: AN EXAMPLE OF LATVIA'S OFFICIAL NORMATIVE DOCUMENTS

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In 2009, the nomenclature of the former 'Salix fragilis' *complex was revised; as a result, the pure species* Salix euxina *Belayeva was described. Over the past ten years, these changes have been ignored by a number of authors (both in Latvia and abroad), and only some authors have used all the names within this complex according to nomenclatural changes introduced by Belayeva. In the context of these taxonomic changes, the official Latvian normative documents (regulations) were analysed in regard to the species* Salix alba, S. euxina and S. ×fragilis (=Salix ×rubens). *Unfortunately, the taxon* S. euxina *is not recognised at the official level in Latvia, but the name* 'S. fragilis' *is widely used, referring more to the* S. euxina*; and* S. ×rubens *for the* S. alba/euxina *hybrid complex. Given that plant taxonomy is studied by experienced scientists rather than political organisations, in theory, politicians who lay down national laws and regulations as well as scientists should follow reasoned and justified changes in plant taxonomy. In case of the former* S. fragilis *complex, these taxonomic changes are also confirmed by genetic studies, which gives an even greater justification for their validity. Therefore, there is no reason to ignore these taxonomic changes.*

Keywords: *biodiversity, botany history, cultivars, hybrids, name usage.*

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, Christensen and Jonsell (2005) proposed to conserve the name '*Salix fragilis'*, while also conserving the type. This proposal was subsequently not supported and was therefore rejected (Brummitt, 2009). Rejecting the proposal to conserve the name '*S. fragilis*', it was emphasised that in the classical sense this name included both the unnamed species and hybrids of that species with *Salix alba* Linnaeus (1753) (Brummitt, 2009). It was also shown that Linnaeus, in describing his '*S. fragilis'*, was dealing exclusively with hybrids (Christensen and Jonsell, 2005; Belayeva, 2009; Brummitt, 2009). Therefore, Belayeva (2009) performed the necessary revision of the '*S. fragilis*' nomenclature by typifying the Linnaeus species as well as describing the species *Salix euxina* Belayeva previously unnoticed within the '*S. fragilis*' complex.

Although it was shown that Linnaeus looked at hybrids rather than a pure species, Christensen and Jonsell (2005) proposed: 1) to conserve the name *Salix ×rubens* Schrank (1789) for hybrids, and; 2) to conserve the name *S. fragilis* for a pure species. If that proposal were to be supported, the use of the name *S. fragilis* in a different sense from that which would have been associated with the plant material considered by Linnaeus would be maintained. In this way, the subsequently published name *S. ×rubens* would be supported for hybrid plants. However, Belayeva (2009) very well substantiated that there was no basis for that, and described a species, *S. euxina*, with which the name *S. fragilis* had so far been partially associated in literature.

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The work of organising the nomenclature is very important for scientists to understand what they are dealing with. In addition, it is also important in this process that the meaning of species names is not unnecessarily changed, thus honouring the author who first introduced and used the name in a particular sense (intentionally or unintentionally). Consequently, in view of the different interpretations of names and species before 2009, Belayeva's (2009) nomenclatural revision was very important. Furthermore, in view of the evidence of the plants used by Linnaeus, the use of his name only for *S. alba*/*euxina* hybrids, *S.* ×*fragilis* L., is self-evident and logical. Theoretically, after 2009, the use of different names should also be clear in the field of nature protection. But is it?

Looking at the issues related to alien plant species in Latvia and from the terminological view point, it was noticed that in Latvia authors do not use the above-mentioned names as they should be. Given that *S. euxina* is a relatively common species in Latvia, after 2009 the name should have appeared frequently in connection with the Latvian flora. Unfortunately, this has not happened in the last ten years. On the internet, this name can be found on only two Latvian portals, where citizen science collects data from nature observations. The names *S. euxina* and *S. fragilis* were synonymised on both internet portals. Only the specified synonymy ratio differs. In one case, *S. euxina* is indicated as the accepted name and *S. fragilis* is used as a synonym for *S. euxina* (https://dabasdati.lv/, accessed 8 June 2020), but in the second case, the synonymy is indicated in the opposite direction (https://dziedava.lv/daba/daba.php, accessed 8 June 2020). However, the name *'S. fragilis'* is quite often used in Latvian official regulatory documents in the field of nature protection. Considering the current understanding of the name *'S. fragilis'* from the point of view of botanical nomenclature (Belayeva, 2009), this study analyses the understanding of the species of the former *'S. fragilis'* complex (accordingly, *S. alba*, *S. euxina*, and *S.* ×*fragilis*) in official documents of Latvian governmental institutions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study analyses the understanding of both the use and attribution of *Salix* names of the '*S. fragilis*' complex before and after the 2009 nomenclatural changes introduced by Belayeva (2009). The official normative documents (regulations) of Latvia have been used for the analysis. These regulations are viewed on the official internet portal https://likumi.lv/.

Given that amendments to laws and regulations are adopted by passing new laws and regulations, each of these documents is regarded as a separate normative document issued in different years. It helps to understand the reflection of taxonomic changes in the regulatory documents issued before 2009 and after 2009. The use of the names *S. alba*, *S. euxina*, '*S. fragilis*' and *S.* ×*rubens* is viewed in each of the regulatory documents. The year of the issue of each regulatory document is registered for analysis; and the year was compared to the time before and after the nomenclatural changes published by Belayeva (2009). Normative documents that are no longer in force were also used for the analysis.

RESULTS

The searched *Salix* species names (except *S. euxina*) were found mentioned in 85 official normative documents, of which 84 documents were issued by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia and one document was issued by the Rīga City Council (Table 1).

The correspondences of the names indicated in Table 1 (between the nomenclature adopted here and the names used in the regulatory documents viewed) are conditional because the scope of understanding of the meaning of the name '*S. fragilis*' used in the regulations is just a hint. However, the name probably stands more for *S. euxina* than for *S.* ×*fragilis* (=*S.* ×*rubens*).

It is interesting that until 2010 the name *S. fragilis* was not used at all in regulatory documents, and this 'species' is the only one that is "officially" designated as native to Latvia, as the other viewed *Salix* taxa are all listed as alien. However, this applies to the regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers (Table 1), but the cultivar under the name *S. fragilis* 'Bullata' (here = *S. euxina* 'Bullata') used in the regulations issued by Rīga City Council is indicated as an alien species (RD, 2005). As shown in Table 1, the "offi-

Table 1. The names of the taxa of the '*Salix fragilis*' complex used in the official Latvian regulatory documents (regulations)

Year of issue	Originally used plant name and number of normative documents issued in particular year				
	Salix alba	*Salix alba* 'Sericea'	*Salix fragilis*	*Salix fragilis* 'Bullata'	*Salix* ×*rubens*
2003	1	1	—	—	1
2005	1	—	—	1	1
	1	1	—	—	1
2006	3	3	—	—	3
2007	8	8	—	—	8
2008	9	9	—	—	9
2009	8	8	—	—	8
2010	2	—	2	—	2
2011	5	—	5	—	5
2012	24	—	24	—	24
2013	4	—	4	—	4
	1	—	1	—	—
2014	2	—	2	—	2
2015	2	—	2	—	2
2016	2	—	2	—	2
2017	4	—	4	—	4
	1	—	1	—	—
2018	3	—	3	—	3
	1	1	—	—	1
2019	3	—	3	—	3
	Name accepted now				
	Salix alba	*Salix* ×*fragilis* f. *vitellina* 'Sericea'	*Salix euxina*	*Salix* ×*fragilis* f. *fragilis* 'Bullata'	*Salix* ×*fragilis*

cial" status of the particular species or cultivar does not correspond to that recognised here (see Discussion section).

It is noticeable that many normative documents issued by the Cabinet of Ministers were amended in 2012, replacing the previous versions of the regulations with new ones. These amendments replace the previously listed taxa *S. alba*, *S. alba* 'Sericea' and *S.* ×*rubens* with the following taxa: *S. alba*, '*S. fragilis*' and *S.* ×*rubens*. The exception is one of the regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2018, which mentions the same taxa that were listed in the regulatory documents before 2010.

In almost all cases (except two regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2013 and 2017), the searched *Salix* species are listed in the annexes to the regulations, which refer to "Protected trees — large trees of native and alien species". Thus, in fact, those annexes repeat almost the same information specified next to the individual regulations on protection and use for each protected area. From an administrative point of view, this is a very bureaucratic approach because a large number of regulations need to be amended as taxonomies or views on the range of specific species on these lists change. The futility of this bureaucratic approach is demonstrated by the fact that the rules on the individual treatment of certain protected areas, which were approved before 2010, are still in force. Consequently, there are two types of lists of protected trees, and some of them do not mention '*S. fragilis*', but *S. alba* 'Sericea' (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

Taxonomic changes in non-taxonomic publications are always implemented with a slight delay. For example, in the case of slugs, the name '*Arion lusitanicus'* was also attributed to the species *Arion vulgaris* Moquin-Tandon after 20 years (Stalažs and Dreijers, 2019), although it was proved 20 years ago that they are two different species (Castillejo, 1997); which was later also confirmed molecularly (Quinteiro *et al.*, 2005). However, as this study shows, such necessary changes in the nomenclature, in relation to the former '*S. fragilis*' complex, have not been reflected in the Latvian regulatory documents either. This applies even to normative documents issued ten years after Belayeva's (2009) publication.

It is clear that in general the taxonomy of the '*S. fragilis*' complex is ignored at a high level in Latvia, which is very well reflected in the official normative documents of the country. Thus, in Latvia, '*S. fragilis*' is still incorrectly understood as a complex that includes both *S. euxina* and *S. alba*/*euxina* hybrids (=*S.* ×*fragilis*), and a group of cultivars belonging to *S. euxina* and *S.* ×*fragilis*. This incorrect taxonomic approach has created problems in explaining the results of the recent genetic studies (Rungis *et al.*, 2017), because the authors viewed *Salix* species without knowing the boundaries between species-specific taxa. Earlier and recent molecular studies also testify to the previous misunderstanding of '*S. fragilis*' (De Cock *et al.*, 2003; Rungis *et al.*, 2017), which only confirms that this group of plants really needed clarification provided by Belyaeva (2009) and Belyaeva *et al.* (2018).

The status of *S. alba* may not have been clear in the past due to the fact that *S. alba*, *S. euxina*, and *S.* ×*fragilis* have not been correctly recognised so far, as evidenced by the information in literature on the various clones as well as the cultivars attributed to the wrong taxa (e.g., Evarts-Bunders, 2005; Mauriņš and Zvirgzds, 2006; Evarte-Bundere *et al.*, 2022), e.g., the cultivar 'Vitelina', which has so far been attributed to *S. alba*, not *S.* ×*fragilis* in Latvia (Table 2). This cultivar is currently recognised as one form of *S.* ×*fragilis*, to which several similar cultivars (Belyaeva *et al.*, 2018) belong, and such 'Vitelina' classification is also confirmed molecularly (Rungis *et al.*, 2017).

However, Latvia is not the only country where the species of the former '*S. fragilis*' complex are not named according to the latest nomenclature. A number of authors have stuck to the old nomenclature after 2009 as well (e.g., Holland-Clift *et al.*, 2011; da Cunha *et al.*, 2012; Oberprieler *et al.*, 2013; Parise, 2017). Of course, not all specialists are able to keep track of the changes in plant nomenclature, and it is understandable why zoologists, when looking at food plants for insects (Parise, 2017), or ecologists, when studying ecology (Holland-Clift *et al.*, 2011; da Cunha *et al.*, 2012), overlook nomenclatural changes because these issues may be unfamiliar to them. Theoretically, the same would be true for geneticists, but when it comes to taxon comparisons (Oberprieler *et al.*, 2013; Rungis *et al.*, 2017), the latest findings in plant classification should still be considered. In some cases, researchers use outdated sources of information on taxonomic issues (e.g., Holland-Clift *et al.*, 2011; Rungis *et al.*, 2017), so they have a high chance of not noticing changes in nomenclature. However, several authors have recognised *S. euxina* as a separate species since 2009, and this is not just concern direct botanical research (e.g., Khalili *et al.*, 2010; Kalníková and al., 2017; Gudžinskas, 2018; Gregor *et al.*, 2019; Zwaenepoel, 2020). However, al-

Table 2. Comparison of *Salix alba* und *Salix* ×*fragilis* cultivar assignations in the past and today

Evarts-Bunders, 2005	Mauriņš and Zvirgzds, 2006	Belyaeva, 2009; Kuzovkina, 2015, Belyaeva *et al.*, 2018
—	*Salix alba* var. *caerulea* (syn. 'Calva')	*Salix alba* 'Caerulea'
Salix alba 'Liempde'	—	*Salix alba* 'Liempde'
Salix alba 'Sericea'	*Salix alba* 'Sericea'	*Salix alba* 'Sericea'
Salix alba 'Vitellina'	*Salix alba* 'Vitellina'	*Salix* ×*fragilis* f. *vitellina* 'Vitellina'
Salix alba 'Britzensis' (syn. 'Chermesina')	*Salix alba* 'Britzensis' (syn. 'Chermesina')	*Salix* ×*fragilis* f. *vitellina* 'Britzensis' *Salix* ×*fragilis* f. *vitellina* 'Chermesina'
Salix fragilis 'Bullata'	*Salix fragilis* 'Bullata'	*Salix* ×*fragilis* f. *fragilis* 'Bullata'

though Gregor *et al.* (2019) recognise *S. euxina*, for the *S. alba*/*euxina* hybrids the mentioned authors use the name *S.* ×*rubens* (instead of *S.* ×*fragilis*).

Previously, in a similar study, it was examined how different *Salix* species of the same complex are considered as native or alien taxa both in official communication in the state administration and in scientific publications (Stalažs, 2022). The mentioned study concluded that, at the official level, alien taxa are dominantly recognised as native, and the native species *S. alba* — as alien. Both the previous and this study show that in the state administration, when issuing regulatory frameworks in the field of nature protection, scientific knowledge should be followed more carefully. Of course, knowledge can change in science, which depends on the accuracy of research methods and new research opportunities, so the regulatory framework of each country should be much more dynamic.

Recently, there has been a call to return to the old nomenclature regarding the former '*S. fragilis*' complex, considering one of the pure species as '*S. fragilis*' and its hybrids with *S. alba* as '*S.* ×*rubens'* (Marchenko and Kuzovkina, 2022). This proposal should be taken with great care, since much time has passed since Belyaeva's (2009) publication and new plant names for *Salix* hybrids have been introduced based on the Belyaeva's approach. Marchenko and Kuzovkina's (2022) proposal is based on the fact that there are problems with type material in herbarium collections. Unfortunately, if this proposal is supported, it will create an irreparable mess of plant name usage in future work. This is because two different approaches will exist in parallel, and in the end, it will be difficult to understand which species is considered. Therefore, here is a proposal to conserve correct herbarium types for each taxon name in the future and not to return to the earlier nomenclature, especially because it was previously rejected (Brummitt, 2009) to conserve the previously used names to name taxa belonging to the '*S. fragilis*' complex.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although changes in specific plant taxonomy and nomenclature may not be noticed by researchers in other fields, which may have an excuse, but it cannot be acceptable for such issues to be ignored in the field of official biodiversity protection at the official level of the particular country. Theoretically, taxonomy (regardless of the group of organisms) should be reflected in official documents (regardless of the country). This should be especially the case when it comes to nature protection, including the control of alien species. As can be seen above, there is a gap between the official position of a given country and science. From a scientific point of view, it is important to know whether taxonomic changes, regardless of a particular group of organisms, are actually considered (from the moment such changes occur). Otherwise, only a handful of specialist publications will classify individual organisms according to the latest scientific knowledge, while the rest of the publications will ignore these changes and will not introduce them in further everyday communication — both in the official positions of countries and in the works of other scientists.

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KĀ PRAKSĒ TIEK ATSPOGUĻOTAS IZMAIŅAS AUGU TAKSONOMIJĀ, *SALIX ALBA, S. EUXINA* UN *S.* ×*FRAGILIS* KOMPLEKSA GADĪJUMS: LATVIJAS OFICIĀLO NORMATĪVO DOKUMENTU PIEMĒRS

Nesen, 2009. gadā tika pārskatīta bijušā kompleksa '*Salix fragilis*' nomenklatūra, un rezultātā tika aprakstīta tīrā suga *Salix euxina* Belayeva. Pēdējo desmit gadu laikā šīs izmaiņas ignorējuši vairāki autori (gan Latvijā, gan ārzemēs), un tikai daži autori ir lietojuši visus nosaukumus šī kompleksa ietvaros atbilstoši Beļajevas ieviestajām nomenklatūras izmaiņām. Šo taksonomisko izmaiņu kontekstā analizēti Latvijas oficiālie normatīvie dokumenti (noteikumi) attiecībā uz sugām *Salix alba, S. euxina* un *S.* ×*fragilis* (=*S.* ×*rubens*). Diemžēl Latvijā oficiālā līmenī nav atzīts taksons *S. euxina*, taču nosaukums '*S. fragilis*' tiek plaši izmantots, vairāk to attiecinot uz *S. euxina*; un *S.* ×*rubens*, runājot par *S. alba*/*euxina* hibrīda kompleksu. Ņemot vērā, ka augu taksonomiju pēta pieredzējuši zinātnieki, nevis politiskās organizācijas, teorētiski politiķiem, kas nosaka valsts likumus un noteikumus, kā arī zinātniekiem būtu jāseko saprātīgām un pamatotām augu taksonomijas izmaiņām. Bijušā *S. fragilis* kompleksu gadījumā šīs taksonomiskās izmaiņas apstiprina arī ģenētiskie pētījumi, kas dod vēl lielāku atbalstu to pamatotībai. Tāpēc nebūtu iemesla šīs taksonomiskās izmaiņas ignorēt.