Opinion

The genus name *Sinorhizobium* Chen *et al.* 1988 is a later synonym of *Ensifer* Casida 1982 and is not conserved over the latter genus name, and the species name '*Sinorhizobium adhaerens*' is not validly published. Opinion 84

Judicial Commission of the International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes

Correspondence

B. J. Tindall

bti@dsmz.de

The Judicial Commission affirms that the genus name *Sinorhizobium* Chen *et al.* 1988 is a later synonym of *Ensifer* Casida 1982, and that the former genus name is not conserved over the latter genus name. The species name '*Sinorhizobium adhaerens*' is not validly published.

At its meetings in July 2005 at the IUMS Congress in San Francisco, the Judicial Commission of the International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes ruled on the Requests for an Opinion of Willems *et al.* (2003) and Young (2003), both dealing with the synonymy of the genus names *Sinorhizobium* Chen *et al.* 1988 and *Ensifer* Casida 1982, together with the status of the proposed species name '*Sinorhizobium adhaerens*' Willems *et al.* 2003.

The genus name *Ensifer* Casida 1982 has priority over the genus name *Sinorhizobium* Chen *et al.* 1988, and the two names have been shown by Willems *et al.* (2003) to be synonyms. It was generally felt that the transfer of the members of the genus *Sinorhizobium* to the genus *Ensifer* would not cause confusion and, therefore, the Judicial Commission denied the request to conserve the genus name *Sinorhizobium* Chen *et al.* 1988 over the genus name *Ensifer* Casida 1982. A direct result of this ruling is that the name '*Sinorhizobium adhaerens*' Willems *et al.* 2003 is also not validly published, since it was proposed in anticipation of this Opinion. The Judicial Commission also noted that the Request for an Opinion of Willems *et al.* (2003) had not interpreted Principle 9 correctly. In this case, further taxonomic studies have shown that there is reason to

consider the names *Sinorhizobium* Chen *et al.* 1988 and *Ensifer* Casida 1982 to be synonyms, and the Rules of the Bacteriological Code (Lapage *et al.*, 1992) indicate that the principle of priority would result in the members of the genus *Sinorhizobium* being transferred to the genus *Ensifer*, as proposed by Young (2003).

References

- Lapage, S. P., Sneath, P. H. A., Lessel, E. F., Skerman, V. B. D., Seeliger, H. P. R. & Clark, W. A. (editors) (1992). *International Code of Nomenclature of Bacteria (1990 Revision)*. Bacteriological Code. Washington, DC: American Society for Microbiology.
- Willems, A., Fernández-López, M., Muñoz-Adelantado, E., Goris, J., De Vos, P., Martínez-Romero, E., Toro, N. & Gillis, M. (2003). Description of new *Ensifer* strains from nodules and proposal to transfer *Ensifer adhaerens* Casida 1982 to *Sinorhizobium* as *Sinorhizobium adhaerens* comb. nov. Request for an Opinion. *Int J Syst Evol Microbiol* 53, 1207–1217.
- Young, J. M. (2003). The genus name *Ensifer* Casida 1982 takes priority over *Sinorhizobium* Chen *et al.* 1988, and *Sinorhizobium morelense* Wang *et al.* 2002 is a later synonym of *Ensifer adhaerens* Casida 1982. Is the combination '*Sinorhizobium adhaerens*' (Casida 1982) Willems *et al.* 2003 legitimate? Request for an Opinion. *Int J Syst Evol Microbiol* 53, 2107–2110.