

Summary account of the first meeting of the Scientific Steering Committee, held in Brussels on 21 November 1997

Preliminary remark. The report hereafter is only a short account of the meeting of 21 November 1997. The minutes will be made public only after their adoption during the second meeting of the Scientific Steering Committee on 8-9.12.97.

1. Participants

The Scientific Steering Committee had its first plenary session on 21 November 1997. The attendance was as follows:

(a) Members of the SSC as nominated by the Commission on 29 July 1997:

Prof. Michael J. GIBNEY

Prof. Philip JAMES

Prof. Dr. Werner KLEIN

Prof. Dr. R. KROES

Prof. G.PASCAL

Prof. Vittorio SILANO

Prof. Dr.Ir.M.VANBELLE

Prof. Martin WIERUP

(b) Chairpersons of the Scientific Committees which are automatically members of the SSC:

Dr.Georges BORIES, chairman, Scientific Committee on Animal Nutrition

Prof.Helmut GREIM, vice chairman Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment, representing Prof.Dr. James W.BRIDGES, Chairman

Prof.Dr.F.GARRIDO-ABELLÀN, chairman, Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare

Prof.Dr.Keith H.JONES, chairman, Scientific Committee on Medicinal Products and Medical Devices

Prof.Dr.med. F.H.KEMPER, chairman, Scientific Committee on Cosmetic Products and Non-Food Products intended for Consumers

Dr. Ib KNUDSEN, chairman, Scientific Committee on Food

Prof.Dr. Albert OSTERHAUS, chairman, Scientific Committee on Veterinary Measures relating to Public Health

Prof.Dr. Antonio M.S. SILVA-FERNANDES, chairman, Scientific Committee on Plants.

2. Agenda

The agenda which was adopted is attached to this summary.

3. Chairpersons of the SSC

Prof.G.Pascal was elected chairman of the Scientific Steering Committee;

Prof. V.Silano and Prof.M.Vanbelle were elected vice-chairmen.

4. Ad hoc group on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies, including BSE:

Dr.M.Gibney was appointed as chairperson of the ad hoc Group on TSE. This group will be composed of a core team of about 10 to 12 scientists. This core team shall consist of four members of the SSC (Prof. P.James, Prof.A.Osterhaus, Prof.Vanbelle and Prof. Gibney), one representant of each of the scientific committees most concerned (SC-Animal Health and Animal Welfare, SC-Veterinary Public Health, SCAN) and external specialised scientists.

During its next meeting the SSC will discuss further the membership of the TSE/BSE ad-hoc group. All SSC members are requested to propose external candidates, the chairmen of the three scientific committees mentioned above shall identify the representatives of their committees. In addition to this core it is foreseen to establish a roster of experts from which the TSE/BSE ad-hoc group can draw whenever necessary.

5. Multidisciplinary matters: genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

Four requests have been submitted to the Commission for the market authorisation of genetically modified plants. The dossiers refer to 3 genetically modified maize and one genetically modified winter rape seed. Scientific advice is now requested on this issue.

The Scientific Steering Committee has proposed that the Scientific Committee for Plants acts as leading Committee for this issue. It should complement its working group with experts from the Scientific Committees on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment; Animal Nutrition and on Food, receive the report of this working group and eventually adopt the opinion on the four plants.

6. Multidisciplinary matters: Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies, including Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

6.1. Specified risk materials

The SSC received the report of the working group installed on 16 October 1997. The report was not discussed in detail, but will be a priority item on the agenda of the next meeting of 8 - 9.12.97. The appointed members of the TSE/BSE ad-hoc group will, together with the members of the previous SRM working group, draft an opinion for that date. An additional meeting of the working group will take place in order to finalise the draft opinion.

6.2. Safety of tallow, meat and bone meal.

The members received the report of the working group installed on 16 October 1997. The report was not discussed in detail, but will be discussed during the meeting of 8 - 9.12.97. An additional meeting of the working group will take place in order to finalise the draft opinion.

6.3. The UK Date Based Export Scheme and the UK Offspring Cull proposal.

Both proposals submitted by the UK Government were considered as priority matters. A rapporteur has been appointed and a small working group identified. They will analyse the proposals and report back to the Scientific Steering Committee on 8/9.12.97.

6.4. List of criteria ("compliance matrix") needed for the evaluation of the TSE status of a country.

Taking into account the requests from Member States and from third countries to be considered as BSE- and/or scrapie free countries, and given the fact that several more similar requests are expected in the near future, the establishment of a standard list of criteria ("compliance matrix") needed for the evaluation of the TSE status of a country was considered to be of high priority. A rapporteur has been appointed to establish a list of the already applied criteria and a small working group will be identified during the next meeting of the SSC with the mandate to verify this list of criteria and to assess the requests mentioned above. They will report back to the Scientific Steering Committee early in 1998.

7. Dates of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on 8 and 9 December 1997.

In future the SSC will in principle meet every third Thursday/Friday in each month, the secretariat will propose a calendar for 1998 at the next meeting of the SSC.

Adopted agenda for the meeting of the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) held in Brussels on 21 November 1997

1. Welcome, apologies, introductory remarks
2. Mutual presentation of members of the Scientific Steering Committee:
3. Approval of the agenda
4. Organisation of the Scientific Steering Committee
 - 4.1 Information on the mandate;
 - 4.2 Election of the chairperson and the two vice-chairpersons;
 - 4.3 First discussion of a draft proposal regarding the internal rules of procedure (once adopted, these rules of procedure will be made publicly available) of the Scientific Steering Committee (including aspects such as declarations of interest; the handling of confidential material; etc.).
 - 4.4 Constitution of the TSE/BSE ad hoc group of the Scientific Steering Committee (including initial membership; chairmanship; date of first meeting; etc.).
 - 4.5 Dates of the next meetings and general planning (calendar) of the meetings in 1998;
5. Multidisciplinary matters.
 - 5.1 Draft list of pending questions, on which the SSC needs to decide how these should be handled and by which Scientific Committee an opinion should be formally adopted. Discussion on how to address these issues and initial planning.
 - 5.2. Requests for scientific advice on one genetically modified winter rape seed variety and on three genetically modified maize varieties.
6. Reports by the chairpersons of the 8 Scientific Committees.
7. Reports by Commission services on matters related to consumer health.
8. Any other business.