

**Opinion of the**  
**Scientific Steering Committee**  
**on the**  
**GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF**  
**BOVINE SPONGIFORM**  
**ENCEPHALOPATHY (GBR) in**  
**BRAZIL**

adopted by the SSC on 10 April 2003

**Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the  
GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY  
(GBR)  
in BRAZIL – update 2003**

**THE QUESTION**

The Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) was asked by the Commission to provide an up-to-date scientific opinion on the Geographical BSE risk (GBR), i.e. the likelihood of the presence of one or more cattle being infected with BSE, pre-clinically as well as clinically, in countries that have formally requested the determination of their BSE status in accordance with Article 5 of the Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

This opinion addresses the up-to-date GBR of Brazil as assessed in April 2003.

**THE ANSWER**

Due to the fact that only a very low BSE infectivity entered the country and this risk was largely mastered, it is highly unlikely that BSE infectivity was recycled or propagated. It is therefore concluded that it is highly unlikely that domestic cattle are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent (**GBR-I**).

The SSC considers that this favourable assessment depends fully on the information about the fate of animals imported from the UK and other BSE risk countries that was provided by the Brazilian authorities

**THE BACKGROUND**

In July 2000 the SSC adopted its final opinion on "the Geographical Risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (GBR)". It described a method and a process for the assessment of the GBR and summarised the outcome of its application to 23 countries. Detailed reports on the GBR-assessments were published on the Internet for each of these countries.

On 1 July 2001, Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council entered into force. This regulation lays down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in animals (TSE Regulation). Appropriate risk management measures are defined in relation to the BSE Status category. In Annex II of this Regulation the method for the determination of the BSE status is described. It requires two steps, namely a risk assessment and the evaluation of specific criteria listed in annex II, chapter A, point (b) to (e). The Commission regards the GBR as provided by the SSC as an adequate Risk Assessment as required by the regulation. However, countries may also provide their own risk assessment in which case the SSC will be requested to provide a scientific opinion on the validity of that risk assessment as well as of its result.

In January 2002 the SSC updated its opinion on the GBR and determined that exports from all countries classified as GBR III or IV pose a certain risk of carrying the BSE-agent, independent if they have or have not confirmed at least one domestic BSE case. The SSC also provided an estimate of the level of risk emitted from these "BSE risk countries" in relation to the time of export.

Brazil has formally requested the determination of its BSE status in accordance with Article 5 of the TSE Regulation and subsequently the Commission asked the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) to provide an up-to-date scientific opinion on the Geographical BSE risk of Brazil.

## THE RISK ASSESSMENT

The SSC concluded that it was “highly unlikely” (**GBR I**) that domestic cattle in Brazil are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent.

## THE ANALYSIS

### EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

- Live cattle imports:

It is assumed that the country, in the period 1980-2000, imported a total of 6,810 live cattle from BSE risk countries, of which 254 came from the UK. Together these imports represent a high external challenge. However, according to the information available on the fate of the imported cattle and discussed in detail in the report, only a small portion of these cattle could have entered the Brazilian rendering system.

- MBM imports:

In total the country imported 200 kg MBM from France in 1992. Together these imports represent a negligible external challenge.

It is concluded that the live cattle and MBM imports into Brazil represented a negligible external challenge from 1980 to 1990; a very low external challenge from 1991 to 1995; and a negligible external challenge from 1996 until 2000.

### STABILITY

On the basis of the available information it was concluded that the country’s BSE/cattle system was **extremely unstable** from 1980 until today. This indicates that BSE infectivity, if imported, could have reached domestic cattle and could have been recycled and amplified.

#### **Feeding**

Feeding of any MBM to cattle was legal until 1996, when a ruminant MBM to ruminant feed ban was introduced. However, also after the implementation of this feed ban contaminated feed could have reached cattle due to cross-contamination. Therefore feeding is assessed as “**not OK**” before and after the 1996 feed ban. The reinforced mammalian MBM to ruminant feed ban, installed in February 2001 improved this stability factor to “**reasonably OK**”.

#### **Rendering**

Rendering is considered “**not OK**” throughout the reference period because the process parameters are not equivalent with the 133°C/20min/3bar standard.

#### **SRM-removal**

SRM removal is “**not OK**” throughout the reference period because SRM are rendered for feed production, even if fallen stock is not rendered.

#### **BSE surveillance**

BSE-surveillance has been carried out under the rabies surveillance program until February 2001. Since then an active surveillance system was installed. It is assumed that the surveillance carried out until February 2001 was not adequate to detect low level of clinical BSE incidence.

### **CONCLUSION ON THE CURRENT GBR**

The current geographical BSE-risk (GBR) level is *I*, i.e. it is *highly unlikely* that domestic cattle are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent. This assessment depends fully on the information about the fate of animals imported from the UK and other BSE-affected countries that was provided by the Brazilian authorities.

### **EXPECTED DEVELOPMENT OF THE GBR**

As long as no external challenge occurs, the GBR will remain as low as it is. However, given the low stability of the system, any external challenge could lead to the building-up of an internal challenge.

*A table summarising the reasons for the current assessment is given in annex 1 to this opinion. A detailed report on the updated assessment of the GBR of Brazil as produced by the GBR-Peer Group is published separately on the Internet. The country had opportunities to comment on different drafts of the report before the SSC took both, the report and the comments, into account for producing this opinion. The SSC appreciates the good co-operation of the country's authorities.*

| Brazil – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, April 2003 |   |   |   |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|
|  | EXTERNAL CHALLENGE  |   | STABILITY   |  |   |  | INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY  |
|  | 1980-1990: Negligible<br>1991-1995: Very Low<br>1996-2000: Negligible   |   | 1980-2000: Extremely unstable<br>2001-today: Very unstable  |  |   |  | An extremely unstable system was exposed to a very low external challenge, which was largely mastered by the specific measures, targeted on the imported animals and specific circumstances i.e. only a very limited number of cattle are fed with concentrates in Brazil. |
| GBR-Level  | Live Cattle imports   | MBM imports   | Feeding   | Rendering  | SRM-removal   | BSE surveillance   |  |
| I  | <p><u>UK</u>: 254 according to the country import data. 486 according Eurostat and other data.</p> <p><u>Other BSE risk countries</u>: 6,556 according to the country import data<br/>6,058 according Eurostat and other data.</p> <p><u>Comment</u>: Brazil provided detailed information that confirmed that 254 live cattle were imported from the UK.</p> | <p><u>UK</u>: No imports from the UK according to the country import data. Confirmed by the UK export data. and Eurostat.</p> <p><u>Other BSE risk countries</u>: No imports according to the country import data. 200 kg from France in 1992 according Eurostat.</p> | <p><b>not OK 1980-2000; reasonably OK since 2001.</b></p> <p>Feeding of any MBM to cattle was legal until 1996, when a ruminant MBM to ruminant feed ban was introduced.</p> <p>However, cross contamination was possible also after this feed ban.</p> <p>In 2001 the reinforced mammalian MBM to ruminant feed ban was installed.</p> | <p><b>not OK 1980-today</b></p> <p>The process parameters are not equivalent with the 133°C/20min/3bar standard.</p> | <p><b>not OK 1980-today</b></p> <p>SRM are rendered for feed, even if fallen stock is not rendered.</p> | <p>BSE is notifiable since 1997.</p> <p>The surveillance carried out was not adequate to detect low level of clinical BSE incidence until 2000.</p> <p>Since 2001 active surveillance in place.</p> <p>BSE-surveillance has been carried out under the rabies surveillance program until 2000.</p> |  |
| GBR-trend  | INTERNAL CHALLENGE  |   |   |  |   |  |  |
|  | It is highly unlikely that the registered external challenges could have led to an internal challenge in Brazil throughout the reference period.  |   |   |  |   |  |  |