

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

Adopted on 30/03/2001

**Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the
GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM
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in the Slovak Republic**

THE QUESTION

The Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) was asked by the Commission to express its 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, at a given point in time, in a number of Third Countries.

This opinion addresses the GBR of Slovak Republic.

THE BACKGROUND

In December 1997 the SSC expressed its first opinion on Specified Risk Materials where it stated, inter alia, that the list of SRM could probably be modulated in the light of the species, the age and the geographical origin of the animals in question.

In June 2000 the European Commission adopted a Decision on SRM (2000/418/EC), prohibiting the import of SRM from all Third Countries that have not been "satisfactorily" assessed with regard to their BSE-Risk.

This opinion concerns only one country, the Slovak Republic. The Commission requested this opinion as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of SRM that will be requested from the Slovak Republic. It is recommended that this opinion on the Slovak Republic is read in the light of the GBR of the SSC of July 2000.

In September 2000 the Commission invited 46 Third Countries, which are authorised to export products to the EU that are listed in annex II to the above mentioned SRM-Decision, to provide a dossier for the assessment of their GBR.

Until today 36 dossiers have been received, 6 are already assessed, and 30 are in different state of assessment.

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The SSC is concerned that the available information was not confirmed by inspection missions as they are performed by the FVO in the Member States. It recommends that BSE-related aspects are included in the program of future inspection missions, as far as feasible.

THE ANALYSIS

Czechoslovakia was exposed to a **high external challenge** from 1988-1992 (insufficient data on cattle imports before 88 and on MBM imports before 86). According to EUROSTAT data, during that period, in total 6,459 live cattle were exported to Czechoslovakia from FR, BE, NL, DK, and DE. During 1986-1990, in total 5,950 tonnes of MBM were exported from FR and in total 6,887 tonnes exported from DE, FR and BE, during 1991-1992.

Since 1993 the Slovak Republic is **independent** and the **external challenge** has been **high** since 1993, mainly due to MBM-imports from France, Germany, Belgium and NL (around 3,000 tonnes in total).

On the basis of information provided by the Czech Republic and by the Slovak Republic, between 1980 and 1992, the BSE/cattle system of Czechoslovakia is assessed as **very unstable**.

The BSE/cattle system of Slovak Republic was **very unstable** until 1997 and is **neutrally stable** since 1998.

Feeding ruminant MBM to cattle was not allowed in the Slovak Republic (due to feed standards). This was reaffirmed by adopting specific Veterinary regulations in 1994. Feeding cattle with MBM was not allowed either. This was reaffirmed by adopting specific Veterinary regulations in 1997. Analytical feed controls only started in 1998 in very small numbers. Voluntary feeding was very unlikely but cross-contamination cannot be excluded. Rendering is apparently done under conditions that are able to reduce BSE-infectivity but no evidence is provided concerning controls. There is no SRM ban and the material is normally rendered.

It is concluded that it is likely but not confirmed that one or several cattle that are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE agent are currently present in the domestic herd of the Slovak Republic (**GBR III**).

Given the very unstable system and the fact that the BSE-agent is likely to be already present in the country due to live cattle and MBM imports, it is assumed that the GBR is increasing.

A summary of the reasons for the current assessment is given in annex 1 to this opinion.

A detailed report on the assessment of the GBR of Slovak Republic is published separately on the Internet. It was produced by the GBR-task force of the SSC-secretariat and peer reviewed by the GBR-Peer group. The country had two 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.

Slovak Republic – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, March 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-87: Not addressed *; 1988-92: HIGH; 1993-99: HIGH.		1980-1997: VERY UNSTABLE; 1998-2000: NEUTRALLY UNSTABLE.				
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	Surveillance, cross-contamination	
III	<u>Before 1993 (Czechoslovakia):</u> 6,459 live cattle exported mainly from DE, FR, DK (EUROSTAT data, imports from UK negligible) Country dossier indicates 877 animals imported into the current territory of SKR.	<u>Before 1993:</u> In total around 6900 t mainly from FR and DE (EUROSTAT). <u>Since 1993:</u> Around 3,000 t imported mainly from DE and BE/Lux.	Not OK 1980-1997, Reasonably OK 1998-2000 Before 1994, not included officially in feed recipes but no evidence for control. RMBM ban in 94 and a MMBM ban in 97. Analytical controls started in 98.	Reasonably OK 1980-1997, OK since 1998 Rendering done according to 113°C / 20 min / 3 bars standard Evidence of controls start in 98.	Not OK No SRM ban. SRM normally rendered for feed production.	<u>BSE surveillance:</u> Notification of BSE compulsory since 1993. Surveillance improved since 2001. <u>Cross-contamination:</u> Could occur due to insufficient controls.	Before 1993, the very unstable system of Czechoslovakia was exposed to a high external challenge (MBM imports). It is likely that an internal challenge occurred. Since 1993, the still very unstable system of the Slovak Republic was again exposed to a high external challenge. Without imports GBR will decrease over time, due to absence of recycling.
GBR-trend	↑						INTERNAL CHALLENGE
	<u>Since 1993 (Slovak Republic):</u> Around 6,000 animals imported mainly from DE, NL and FR (EUROSTAT).						Since 1988 internal challenge was likely to be present and growing.

* Data insufficient