

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

adopted by the SSC on 10 April 2003

**Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the  
GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY  
(GBR)  
in PARAGUAY – 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 Paraguay as assessed in April 2003.

**THE ANSWER**

Due to the fact that only negligible BSE infectivity entered the country, there was no risk 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 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 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.

Paraguay 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 Paraguay.

## THE RISK ASSESSMENT

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

## THE ANALYSIS

### EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

As only very few cattle and no MBM were imported into Paraguay from BSE risk countries, the **external challenge** was always **negligible**.

### STABILITY

On the basis of the available information it was concluded that the country’s BSE/cattle system was **very 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*

Before 1996 it was legally possible to feed MBM to cattle in Paraguay. Since 1996 there is a ruminant MBM-to-ruminant feed ban in force. Because such a feed ban is not controllable, feeding is assessed “**not OK**” throughout the reference period.

### *Rendering*

Rendering exists in Paraguay. Since 2001 the rendering industry has increased its production. The rendering systems do not appear to meet the 133°C/3 bar/20 min. standard. Therefore, rendering is assessed as “**not OK**” throughout the reference period.

### *SRM-removal*

As SRM from cattle fit for human consumption are eaten, this factor can be considered to be “**reasonably OK**”. SRM from condemned or fallen stock is burnt or buried and it is unlikely that it could reach cattle.

### *BSE surveillance*

Regarding the surveillance system, Paraguay would most probably not be able to detect small numbers of clinical BSE-cases.

## CONCLUSION ON THE CURRENT GBR

Due to the negligible risk that BSE-infectivity entered the country there was no risk 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**).

**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 Paraguay 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.*

Paraguay – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, April 2003							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-2000: Negligible		1980-today: very unstable				
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	BSE surveillance	
I	<p>UK: no live cattle from the UK according to the country. Confirmed by UK export records, And Eurostat</p> <p>Other BSE risk countries: 15 cattle from France and 27 cattle from Switzerland according to Eurostat and other data</p>	<p>UK: No imports according to the country import data and to Eurostat and other data</p> <p>Other BSE risk countries: No imports according to the country import data and to Eurostat and other data .</p>	<p><b>Not OK 1980-today</b></p> <p>Before 1996 it was legally possible to feed MBM to cattle in Paraguay.</p> <p>Since 1996 there is a ruminant MBM-to-ruminants ban in force.</p>	<p><b>Not OK 1980-today</b></p> <p>Rendering exists in Paraguay.</p> <p>The rendering systems did not appear to meet the 133°C/3 bar/20 min. standard.</p>	<p><b>Reasonably OK 1980-today</b></p> <p>SRM from cattle fit for human consumption are consumed by the human population.</p> <p>SRM from condemned cattle or from fallen stock is burnt or buried and it is unlikely that it could reach cattle.</p>	<p>BSE is officially notifiable since 1996.</p> <p>Regarding the surveillance system, Paraguay would not be able to detect small numbers of clinical BSE-cases</p>	The BSE/cattle system of Paraguay was since 1980 not exposed to a significant external challenge.
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE