

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

Adopted on 30/03/2001

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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 Brazil.

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 from 01 April 2001 onwards the import of SRM from all Third Countries that have not been "satisfactorily" assessed with regard to their BSE-Risk.

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

In September 2000 the Commission invited 46 Third Countries, which are authorized 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. 36 dossiers are received, 6 are already assessed, and 30 are in different state of assessment.

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

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.

In the case of Brazil the SSC is aware that the favorable assessment is based on the backtracking of about 6000 import cattle, carried out by the country authorities since January 2001. The Brazilian authorities certified the outcome of this exercise to be validated and correct and the SSC has no reason to doubt this.

THE ANALYSIS

Brazil imported 258 live cattle from the UK and 5,961 cattle from other BSE-affected countries. This would have posed a significant external challenge. However, this was reduced to negligible levels because it was convincingly demonstrated by the Brazilian Authorities that none of the UK-imported cattle were rendered and only a small fraction (436) of the animals imported from non-UK BSE-affected countries ended up in the feed chain.

In order to verify this, the Brazilian authorities carried out a thorough backtracking. They were able to establish the situation for all but 149 cattle. The remaining **external challenge** was therefore **negligible**, even if it would be assumed that this 149 cattle that are not yet back-traced were rendered. Hence it is highly unlikely that the BSE agent entered the Brazilian BSE/cattle system.

The BSE/cattle system of Brazil was and is **extremely unstable**. About 2 million cattle receive supplementary feed and feeding any animal protein to cattle was allowed until 1996 (RMBM ban). No feed controls were carried out thereafter and cross-contamination therefore cannot be excluded. In February 2001 a general MBM ban was installed, including laboratory testing of cattle feed for presence of mammalian protein. While it is too early to assess its efficiency, it is likely to improve the stability of the Brazilian BSE/cattle system. Ruminant material, including SRM, is rendered for feed under sub-standard conditions.

Because of the negligible external challenge it is concluded that it is highly unlikely that one or several cattle that are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE agent are currently present in the domestic herd of Brazil (**GBR-I**).

Note: This assessment is fully dependent on the information on the fate of the cattle imported into Brazil from BSE-affected countries that were provided by the Brazilian Authorities.

Given the “extremely unstable” system the GBR would increase with any external challenge. The recently introduced measures will improve, subject to appropriate implementation and control, the stability of the system and render it less vulnerable to external challenges.

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 Brazil 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 co-operation of the country's authorities.

BRAZIL - Summary of the GBR-Assessment, March 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION OF EXTERNAL CHALLENGE AND STABILITY
	1980-1999: Negligible		1980-1999: Extremely Unstable				
GBR level	Live cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	Surveillance, cross-contamination	
I	<p><u>UK</u>: 258 live cattle imports (80-90), all traced, none rendered</p> <p><u>Other BSE-affected countries</u>: 5,961 imported (80-97); 5,812 traced back.</p> <p>Fate of cattle from other BSE-affected countries: -2917 alive; now excluded from feed & food chain; - 436 slaughtered and rendered; -19 slaughtered for consumption on farm -2,440 dead and buried -149 not yet traced.</p>	<p>Negligible</p> <p><u>UK</u>: 146 kg (1997)</p> <p><u>Other BSE-affected countries</u>: 200 kg from FR (1992)</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>RMBM-ban in 1996 but no feed controls carried out, before February 2001.</p> <p>MMBM ban in February 2001, including feed controls. This may improve the stability of the Brazilian BSE/cattle system.</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>Rendering under atmospheric pressure.</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>Bovine offal is rendered, including SRM, from animals fit for human consumption.</p>	<p><u>BSE-Surveillance</u>: Mainly focused on rabies, not satisfactory until Feb. 2001, when active surveillance was installed.</p> <p><u>Cross-contamination of cattle feed with MBM</u>: Non-ruminant MBM was allowed for cattle until February 2001. No separate feed production lines. No feed controls before Feb 2001, when laboratory feed testing was installed.</p>	<p>Since 1980 an extremely unstable system was exposed to only negligible external challenges. Although significant live cattle imports have taken place it was convincingly demonstrated that no cattle imported from UK, and only relatively small numbers of cattle imported from other BSE-affected countries entered rendering. Hence the risk that the BSE agent entered the extremely unstable system is negligible and it is highly unlikely that an internal challenge developed in the country.</p> <p>Given the extremely unstable system any external challenge would lead to an increased GBR. The recently taken measures to increase stability, in particular the MMBM-ban and its control, will increase the stability of the system.</p>
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE
⇒	Negligible external challenge as only 436 entered rendering throughout the entire period.						It is highly unlikely that domestic cattle are infected with the BSE-agent.