Extract from the minutes of the SSC meeting of 29-30 March 2001

"The safety of TSE treatment and disposal of animal waste by alkaline hydrolysis at 150°C during 3 Hours and at at least 5 bars"

According to the EU regulation in force on 1 January 2001, animals, animal waste or products derived thereof (e.g., animal meat and bone meal) potentially contaminated with TSE agent by-products shall be disposed of by incineration or co-incineration. Alternative ways may be allowed following scientific opinion.

A method for treating animal waste by alkaline hydrolysis at elevated temperature was submitted to European Commission services as a possible alternative for disposal by (co-)incineration. The Commission Services submitted the following questions for opinion to the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC):

1. Can the treatment of animal waste as described by the dossier to be considered safe in relation to TSE risk? Can the liquid residues be considered safe in relation to TSE risk?

2. Can the by-products resulting from this treatment (i.e. ash of the bones and teeth of vertebrates) be considered safe in relation to TSE risk?

The SSC considered that it is not part of its mandate to evaluate and possibly endorse production processes or equipment submitted by individual companies. It will however prepare a general framework of criteria against which the appropriate services can evaluate the safety with regard to BSE of new processes and/or equipment developed by the industry.

For the time being, comparing with the results of already available TSE inactivation studies but keeping in mind that a validation study of this specific process is still ongoing, the SSC considers that the alkaline hydrolysis at 150°C during 3 Hours and at at least 5 bars and the liquid residues and the by-products resulting from this treatment (i.e. ash of the bones and teeth of vertebrates) appears to be a very effective infectivity reduction method. However, the quantification in terms of reduction of infectivity will depend upon a further analysis of the process by the appropriate service against the framework for evaluation to be prepared the outcome of the presently ongoing inactivation study and the composition of the residues of the process.

The above statement does not address the possible environmental impact of the technology (e.g., disposal of the effluents and of the process residues), which should be addressed by the appropriate scientific committee.