

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

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 Mauritius.

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.

In July 2000 the SSC adopted its final opinion on "the Geographical Risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (GBR)". This opinion 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-assessment were published on the Internet for each of these countries.

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.

This opinion concerns only one country, Mauritius. The Commission requested this opinion as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of SRM that will be requested from Mauritius. It is recommended to read this opinion on the GBR of Mauritius 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.

THE ANALYSIS

Mauritius was exposed to a **moderate** (1980-85), **high** (1986-96) and **negligible external challenge** (since 1997). This external challenge resulted from continuous MBM-imports from France, which started in 1984 and continued until 1996, when an import ban was implemented, with annual imports between 10 and 800 tons. In addition exports from BE/LUX to Mauritius were registered in Eurostat that were not recorded in the import statistics of Mauritius. This may be explained by the existence of the free trade harbour in Mauritius but it also cannot be excluded that some of these imports entered the country. However, they would not have changed significantly the assessment of the external challenge. There were no imports of live cattle from BSE-affected countries into Mauritius.

Because there is no rendering on the island, even not at sub-industrial scale, and all offal is dumped in landfills, the BSE-agent could not be recycled. Therefore the BSE/cattle system of Mauritius was always **stable**. However, it was not very or optimally stable until 1996 when a feed ban was introduced, making it **very stable**. Before 1996, some of the imported MBM was added to cattle feed, and the remaining MBM was processed into poultry feed in the same feed mills and the same feed production lines that also were used to produce cattle feed. At the same time, feed controls were not carried out. Cross contamination of cattle feed with MBM is therefore most likely to have occurred until 1996, when MBM-imports were stopped and a feed ban was implemented. There is no SRM ban, and brain and spinal cord is for human consumption or goes to landfill but is not recycled to cattle. Surveillance is only passive but within the intrinsic limitations of such a system assessed as being satisfactory.

Given the fact that potentially BSE-contaminated MBM entered the country until 1996 and could have reached domestic cattle, it is possible that some cattle were infected as late as 1996. These could still be alive and it is therefore concluded that it is unlikely but not excluded that one or several cattle that are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE agent are currently present in the domestic herd of Mauritius (**GRB-II**).

Given the fact that since 1997 new infections are highly unlikely (import ban, feed ban) and that the infectivity that potentially could exist in the country will not be recycled, the GBR level will improve over time with the death of all potentially infected cattle, born before 1997.

A summary of the reasons for the current assessment is given in annex 1 to this opinion and a detailed report on the assessment of the GBR of Mauritius is published separately on the Internet. The GBR-task force of the SSC-secretariat produced it and the GBR-Peer group reviewed it. 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.

Mauritius - Summary of the GBR-Assessment, March 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-1985: Moderate; 1986-1996: High; since 1997: Negligible.		1980-1996: Stable; since 1997: Very Stable				
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	Surveillance, cross-contamination	
II	No live cattle imports from UK or other BSE affected countries.	MBM imported from FR (about 3,679t) and BE (about 2315 t) (Source: Eurostat, FR exports verified by national FR export statistic and detailed date from exporting companies.)	Not OK before 96, Reasonably OK since 1997 Imported MBM was added to cattle feed before 96. After MBM import and feed ban to farmed animals in 1996, feed controls were not established.	OK No rendering industry or sub-industrial rendering.	OK No SRM ban. Humans consume brain and spinal cord of "healthy" animals. Fallen stock and slaughter offal is buried.	BSE-Surveillance: Passive but satisfactory within the intrinsic limitations of a passive system. Cross-contamination: Occurring as long as MBM is available in the country because cattle feed is produced in the same feed production lines as are used for poultry feed. No feed controls.	If imported MBM was contaminated it could have reached domestic cattle. As regular imports of MBM from France were registered in the country's import statistics, it cannot be excluded that this happened before the import ban in 1996. Since 1996 the risk of new infections is significantly reduced and as no rendering exists, recycling will not happen. Therefore the disease will disappear over time, with the potentially infected cattle leaving the system.
GBR-trend		Most of the FR-imports before 1997 also recorded in the import statistic of Mauritius.					INTERNAL CHALLENGE
							It cannot be excluded that an internal challenge occurred in the 80s and as late as in 1996 and is still existing.