

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

Adopted by the SSC on 27 June 2002

Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (GBR) in TURKEY – June 2002

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 Turkey as assessed in June 2002.

THE ANSWER

The very unstable BSE/cattle system of Turkey was exposed to a high and very high external challenge since the early 80s. It is therefore likely that the BSE agent was introduced into the country and recycled and amplified. As the system is still regarded to be unstable it is therefore concluded that it is likely but not confirmed that one or several domestic cattle are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE-agent (**GBR III**).

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.

Turkey 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 Turkey.

THE RISK ASSESSMENT

For Turkey, the SSC concluded that it is “likely but not confirmed” (**GBR III**) that one or several domestic cattle in Turkey are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent.

THE ANALYSIS

EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

The level of the external challenge that has to be met by the BSE/cattle system is estimated according to the guidance given by the SSC in its final opinion on the GBR of July 2000 (as updated in January 2002).

- Live cattle imports:

In total the country imported over the period 1980-2001 more than 1.1 million live cattle from BSE-risk countries, of which 929 came from the UK. Most of these cattle were imported for immediate slaughter or fattening but overall these imports represent a **very high external challenge**. Broken down to 5-years periods the resulting external challenge resulting from live cattle imports was very low from 1980-1985, high from 1986 to 1990, very high from 1991-1995 and high thereafter. This assessment takes into account all aspects that allow assuming that certain imported cattle did not enter the domestic BSE/cattle system, i.e. were not rendered into feed, while approaching the end of the BSE-incubation period.

- MBM imports:

In total the country imported over the period 1980 to 2001 more than 65.000 tons of MBM from BSE-risk countries but nothing from the UK. The claim that 90% of these imports were fishmeal or non-mammalian MBM was not substantiated. Together these imports are therefore assumed to represent a very high external challenge. Broken down to 5-years periods the resulting external challenge was high from 1980-1985, very high from 1986-1990, and moderate thereafter. This assessment takes into account all aspects that allow assuming that certain imported MBM did not represent an external challenge.

STABILITY

On the basis of the available information it was concluded that the country’s BSE/cattle system was **very unstable** from **1980** to **1995** and has been **unstable** since **1996/97**.

Feeding

Until a feed ban was adopted in 1996/97, feeding MBM to ruminants was legally possible. Therefore feeding is assessed as **"not OK"** before 1997. Controls of the 1997-feed ban are in place since 1997 and feeding is regarded **"reasonably OK"** since 1996/97.

Rendering

Rendering was and is common practise in Turkey. SRM appear to be potentially included in the rendering but fallen stock is excluded. The process conditions seem to be generally appropriate but cannot be fully assessed as evidence for these and for controls is not supplied. Rendering is assessed as **"reasonably OK"** throughout the reference period.

SRM-removal

There is no SRM ban. While fallen stock is apparently not rendered it cannot be excluded that SRM entered/enters rendering. SRM removal is therefore assessed as **"not OK"** throughout the reference period.

BSE surveillance

Passive BSE surveillance existed since some time but BSE only became notifiable in 1997. Active surveillance has begun in June 2001 but this is not yet regarded to be sufficient to detect low levels of BSE-incidence.

CONCLUSION ON THE CURRENT GBR

The very unstable BSE/cattle system of Turkey was exposed to a high and very high external challenge since the early 80s. It is therefore likely that the BSE agent was introduced into the country and recycled and amplified. As the system is still regarded to be unstable it is concluded that it is likely but not confirmed that one or several domestic cattle are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE-agent (**GBR III**).

EXPECTED DEVELOPMENT OF THE GBR

As long as the stability remains as low as it is, the probability of cattle to be (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE-agent will increase, also without any further external challenge.

A table summarising the reasons for the current assessment is given in annex 1 to this opinion. A detailed report on the assessment of the GBR of Turkey 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 co-operation of the country's authorities.

TURKEY – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, June 2002							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-1985: High 1986-1995: Very high 1996-2000: High		1980-1995: Extremely unstable 1996-2000: Very unstable				Before 1996 the very unstable system of Turkey was exposed to external challenges resulting from live cattle and MBM imports from BSE risk countries. It is therefore likely that the BSE agent entered Turkey and reached domestic cattle in that period. In view of the very unstable system it was most probably recycled and amplified. The external challenges that continued to be experienced fuelled the growth of the internal challenge also after 1997, when the system improved to “unstable”.
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	BSE surveillance	
III	<p>UK: 929 according to country import data and 880 according to other export data.</p> <p><u>Other BSE risk countries:</u> 1,141,476 according to the country import data. According to other export data, 551,734 from AT, BE, CZ, DK, EE, FR, DE, HU, IE, IT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, CH, GR and JP.</p> <p>About 76% for immediate slaughter or fattening and slaughter at less than 24 months.</p>	<p>UK: No imports according to country import data and to other export data.</p> <p><u>Other BSE risk countries:</u> According to country import data: 80-85: 21,564 t 86-90: 42,791 t 91-95: 151 t 96-2000: 690 t Total: 65,196 t</p> <p>According to other export data: 80-85: 21,779 t 86-90: 41,597 t 91-95: 257 t 96-2000: 772 t Total: 64,406 t</p> <p>Claimed to be largely non-mammalian but exact composition of the imported MBM not verifiable.</p>	<p>Not OK: 1980-1995, Reasonably OK: 1996-2000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feed ban adopted in 1996/97, Before feeding MBM to ruminants legally possible but according to country 99% fed to poultry. Information provided on results of controls of feed ban but significance cannot fully be appreciated, as definition of a positive feed sample is not given. 	<p>Reasonably OK: 1980-2000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rendering was and is common practise in Turkey. SRM appear to be included in the rendering but fallen stock is excluded. The process conditions in all plants are said to be at least as severe as the 133/20/3 standard but this cannot be fully assessed, as evidence for these conditions and for their control is not supplied. 	<p>Not OK 1980-2000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No SRM ban. SRM entering rendering cannot be excluded. Fallen stock not rendered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passive BSE surveillance since some time but BSE only became notifiable in 1997. Active surveillance has begun in June 2001 but is not yet regarded to be sufficient to detect low levels of BSE-incidence. 	
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE
stable or increasing							An internal challenge might have occurred in Turkey at the beginning of the eighties, when domestic cattle could have got access to imported, contaminated MBM. Since 1986 an internal challenge is likely to be present and growing due to very high (1986-1996) and high (since 1997) external challenges which met the very unstable (1980-1996) and since 1997 unstable BSE/cattle system of Turkey. An internal challenge is therefore likely to be present in Turkey.