

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

Adopted on 29/06/2001

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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 El Salvador.

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)", which 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.

In September 2000 the Commission invited Third Countries that 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 52 dossiers have been received from Third Countries, 32 are already assessed, and 19 are in different states of assessment.

This opinion concerns only one country, El Salvador. The Commission requested this opinion following the provision by the country of a dossier for the assessment of their epidemiological status with regard to BSE. The result will serve as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of exports from El Salvador with regard to SRMs and other relevant products. It is recommended that this opinion on El Salvador 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.

The SSC is further concerned of the less than optimal quality of the available information on international trade of products that could carry the BSE agent, in particular bovine derived animal meals or bovine live animals. This is of particular relevance whenever the assessment of the GBR indicates that the BSE/cattle system of a country would (have) recycle(d) the BSE-agent.

THE ANALYSIS

During the reference period, 1980-2000, El Salvador was exposed to **negligible** external challenges. It has not imported any live cattle or MBM from the UK or any other BSE-affected country (confirmed by all data sources).

Throughout the reference period, 1980-2000, the BSE/cattle system of El Salvador was **extremely unstable**. The feeding of MBM to cattle is still legal and likely to happen. According to the information provided by the country, no rendering industry exists in El Salvador. However, at a total population of 1.4 million cattle of which 500,000 are dairy cows older than 3 years, the argument of insufficient raw material is not fully convincing and a sub-industrial scale rendering is assumed to exist. This could, for example process offal or dead animals for tallow extraction and the residues could be used for different purposes, including feed. There is no SRM ban but SRM are said to be consumed by humans and carnivores at unknown quantities. It cannot be excluded that SRM and fallen stock therefore would have been processed at some time and some place in the country, inter alia into feed. BSE was made notifiable in 1998. Surveillance was and is inefficient with regard to BSE. Cross contamination is not an issue as feeding MBM to cattle is still legal.

According to the available data the extremely unstable BSE/cattle system was never exposed to any external challenge. It is therefore regarded 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 El Salvador (**GBR I**).

However, the SSC wants to point out that any indirect import of the BSE-agent via contaminated MBM or live cattle, or via commodities not taken into account in this assessment would, in view of the insufficient stability, put the country at risk of developing a BSE epidemic. It also would make a more thorough analysis of the assumed "sub-industrial-scale" rendering necessary.

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 El Salvador 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.

EI Salvador – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, June 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-00: NEGLIGIBLE.		1980-00: EXTREMELY UNSTABLE				
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	Surveillance, cross-contamination	
I	<p><u>UK:</u> No live cattle imports from UK (all data sources).</p> <p><u>Non UK:</u> No live cattle imports from any other BSE-affected country (all data sources).</p>	<p><u>UK:</u> No MBM imports from UK (all data sources).</p> <p><u>Non UK:</u> No MBM imports from any BSE affected country (all data sources).</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>Feeding MBM to cattle is still legal and happens.</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>No rendering industry but sub-industrial scale rendering assumed in view of the size of the cattle population.</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>No SRM ban. SRM are said to be eaten by humans, at unknown amounts. SRM, animals dead at arrival and condemned in ante mortem inspection might be rendered.</p>	<p><u>BSE Surveillance:</u> BSE notifiable since 1998. Surveillance found to be inefficient.</p> <p><u>Cross-contamination:</u> Not an issue as feeding MBM to cattle is still legal.</p>	<p>According to the available data the extremely unstable BSE/cattle system was not exposed to any external challenge, i.e. it is highly unlikely that the BSE-agent entered the country.</p> <p>However, in view of the assumed existence of some kind of sub-industrial scale processing of ruminant materials not fit for human consumption, the system was and is extremely unstable and any BSE infectivity that would have entered or would enter the country in the future would most likely also enter cattle feed. The BSE agent would be recycled and fast amplified.</p>
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE
							<p>Since 1980, internal challenge highly unlikely to have occurred and to be present.</p>