Opinion of the

Scientific Steering Committee

on the

GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (GBR) in

POLAND

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 Poland.

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-assessments 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, Poland. The Commission requested this opinion as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of SRM that will be requested from Poland. It is recommended that this opinion on Poland is read in the light of the GBR 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

Poland was exposed to a **very low** challenge between 1980-86, a **very high** external challenge between 1987-90 and an **extremely high external** challenge since 1991, mainly due to massive imports of MBM from BSE affected countries (in the range of 1,700,000 tonnes in total, mainly from DE: around 1,000,000 tonnes in total). High imports of cattle are also recorded for the period since 1988.

The BSE/cattle system of Poland was and is **very unstable** since 1980.

Feeding MBM to cattle was legally possible until March 1997 and is likely to have occurred, even if it was uncommon practice. The efficiency of the feed-ban cannot be assessed, as feed controls were apparently not carried out. Rendering is and was common practice in Poland. Material includes ruminant material, including SRM, condemned material, and a limited proportion of fallen stock. The rendering processes used were adequate for reducing BSE-infectivity since a long time. There is no SRM ban. Cross contamination is most probable (no specified feed lines, no controls described). BSE is notifiable since 1997 and surveillance was nearly non existent until 1997. Since 1977, passive surveillance does not fulfil OIE requirements. Active surveillance has started in 2001.

It is concluded that it is likely but not confirmed that one or several cattle that are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE agent are currently present in the domestic herd of Poland **(GBR III).**

Given the very unstable system and the fact that the BSE-agent is likely to be already present in the country, it is assumed that the GBR is increasing.

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 Poland 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 good co-operation of the country's authorities.

ANNEX 1

Poland - Summary of the GBR-Assessment, February 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		**STABILITY**				**INTERACTION OF EXTERNAL CHALLENGE AND STABILITY**
	80-86: very low; 87-90: very high; 91-01: extremely high		**1980-2001: Very unstable**				The very high to extremely high external challenge met a very unstable system and could have led to contamination of domestic cattle in Poland from 1987 onwards. This internal challenge again met the still very unstable system and increased over time. The continuing very high external challenge supported this development.
GBR-level	***Live cattle imports***	***MBM imports***	***Feeding***	***Rendering***	***SRM-removal***	***Surveillance, cross-contamination***	
III	<u>UK :</u> 0 <u>Other BSE affected countries:</u> Between 80-87: 737 animals (mainly DE). Since 1988 around 89,000 animals and around 23,000 animals since 1994, imports mainly from DE, NL, FR and DK	<u>UK:</u> 176 tonnes (94-95) <u>Other BSE affected countries:</u> 86-90: around 41,000 t mainly from FR and DK Since 1991: around 1.7 million tonnes, mainly from DE,DK, NL. Around 1 million tonnes from DE since 1990.	**Not OK** MBM-ban since 1997, but no feed controls.	**Reasonably OK** Heat treatment equivalent to 133°C / 20min / 3 bar standards, but no evidence provided on compliance.	**Not OK**. No SRM-ban, SRM are rendered and included in cattle feed.	<u>BSE surveillance</u>: Not sufficient before 2001. <u>Cross-contamination</u>: Lines for ruminant and non-ruminant feed in feed-mills only separated in time and no analytical controls carried out.	
GBR-trend							**INTERNAL CHALLENGE**
increasing							Likely present since 1987 and growing.