

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

Adopted on 11/05/2001

Following the confirmation of domestic BSE cases in this country, the GBR assessment is currently under revision.

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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 Slovenia.

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 46 dossiers have been received from Third Countries, 28 are already assessed, and 18 are in different state of assessment.

This opinion concerns only one country, Slovenia. The Commission requested this opinion that will serve as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of exports from Slovenia with regard to SRMs. It is recommended that this opinion on Slovenia is 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 ANALYSIS

Since 1992 Slovenia is considered as fully independent while before it was part of the former Republic of Yugoslavia. As the information available on the BSE/cattle system in the former Republic of Yugoslavia was insufficient to assess the stability, information prior to 1992 is described for illustrative purposes but not taken into account for this GBR-assessment of Slovenia. This provides, however, a certain impression of the risk that the BSE-agent could have reached Slovenia before its independence.

Before and after 1992 no cattle or MBM was directly imported from the UK. However, significant imports occurred from other BSE-affected countries.

According to the Slovenian dossier (Eurostat does not provide such data for that period) the Slovenian part of former Yugoslavia imported about 2,400 live cattle from BSE-affected countries (DE, IT and FR), mainly since 1987. It also received about 4,600 tonnes of MBM, mainly from IT in 1981-1984.

Since 1992, Slovenia imported 2,446 cattle from BSE-affected countries (DE, NL, DK, FR, IT) of which 1,455 were breeding animals and 991 were for immediate slaughter or fattening. Also 147 tonnes of MBM were imported from BSE-affected countries (IT, DE).

Taking into account of the imports before 1992, the external challenge faced by Slovenia was assessed as **moderate** between 1980-1985 and as **low** for the period 1986-1991. The imports after 1991 would have represented also a moderate challenge, mainly due to the live cattle imports. However, Slovenia was able to confirm that in May 2001, still 1,093 animals imported from BSE-affected countries were alive while up to 1,353 imported cattle could have been rendered. The age at death of the latter is not known but it is estimated that a significant fraction was imported for slaughter or fattening and hence rather young at slaughter. In view of this information the overall external challenge faced by Slovenia since 1992 is assessed as **low** (and not moderate).

The stability of the system before 1992 is not known, as insufficient data were available to assess the stability of former Yugoslavia before the independence of Slovenia.

Between 1992 and 2000 the BSE/cattle system of Slovenia was **neutrally stable**, i.e. the BSE-agent, should it have been present in the country, could have been recycled but would not have been amplified. The reasons for this assessment are that rendering was apparently done under satisfactory conditions (in order to control Anthrax), feeding animal proteins to cattle was infrequent but occurring and confirmed for the period 1993-1995 (calf starters), and SRM and fallen stock were included in rendering material.

Since 2001 the Slovenian system is regarded to be **stable** because a total feed ban is in place since January 2001. Currently SRM and fallen stock are rendered, using the established appropriate rendering process and all MBM is stored, pending incineration.

From the above follows that since 1992 a neutrally stable system was exposed to a low external challenge, mainly resulting from imported live cattle. Should indeed infected cattle have been imported, they could have been slaughtered relatively young, if imported young for fattening. They also might have been already older at slaughter if imported for immediate slaughter at higher age, or if imported as breeding animals and being slaughtered several years after import. In any case they would have ended-up in a rendering process able to significantly reduce BSE-infectivity. Since 1997 also the feeding was reasonably OK, indicating that the risk that MBM reached domestic cattle was somewhat reduced.

In view of this analysis it is therefore regarded unlikely but not excluded that domestic cattle (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent are currently present in the domestic herd of Slovenia (**GBR II**).

If the total feed ban of 2001 is fully implemented the GBR will decrease rapidly, in particular once the cattle born before 1997, i.e. before the ruminant to ruminant ban was established, are eliminated from the system.

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 Slovenia 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.

Slovenia – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, May 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-85: MODERATE; 1986-91: LOW; 1992-2000: LOW.		1980-1991: <i>Not addressed</i> 1992-2000-: NEUTRALLY STABLE; Since 2001: STABLE.				1980-1991: Not addressed.
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	Surveillance, cross-contamination	
II	<p>From UK: No imports (all data sources).</p> <p>Non UK: According to Slovenia (consistent with Eurostat¹ data)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80-82 no data • 82-87 : 550, mainly DE • 88-93: 2,150 mainly DE and IT • 94-00: 2,200 from DK, DE, FR, IT, NL <p>92-00: Total import: 2,450 Of these: 1,455 breeding, 991 slaughter. 1,093 still alive in May 2001, up-to 1,353 may have been rendered</p>	<p>From UK: No imports (all data sources).</p> <p>Non UK: According to Slovenia (consistent with Eurostat¹ data)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80-85: 4,400 from IT • 86-90: 101 t from IT, DE • 91-93: 163 t from IT, DE and DK • 94-99: 119t from IT and DE <p>92-00: 149 t from IT, DK, DE</p>	<p>1980-1991 : Not addressed</p> <p>1992-1996: Not OK</p> <p>1997-2000: Reasonably OK since 1/2001: OK</p> <p>MBM fed to cattle before 1996.</p> <p>Ruminant to ruminant ban in May 96.</p> <p>Total feed ban since January 2001 for all farm animals.</p>	<p>1980-1991: Not addressed</p> <p>1992-2000: OK</p> <p>Appropriate heat treatment parameters (133°C, 3 bar, 20 min) reliably applied since 1982 because of high prevalence of Anthrax in the country.</p>	<p>1980-2000: Not OK</p> <p>No SRM ban until November 2000. SRM and fallen stock were rendered for feed.</p> <p>Since January 2001, SRM and fallen stock are again rendered but all MBM is bought and stored under official supervision, pending incineration.</p>	<p><u>BSE Surveillance:</u> BSE notifiable since 1995 but some BSE testing already since 1992. Some active surveillance since 1995. Good active surveillance since January 2001 (8,914 animals over 30 months tested until end of April 2001, more than 5,000 older than 60 months in comparison of an estimated total population over 60 months of 60.000) No positives so far.</p> <p><u>Cross-contamination:</u> Likely until '96. Less likely between '97-11/2000 but possible. Unlikely since 1/2001.</p>	<p>1992-2000: A neutrally stable system was exposed to a low external challenge, due to imports of live cattle from DK, DE, FR, IT and NL and some smaller imports of MBM from DE, DK and IT. If infectivity entered the country, which cannot be excluded, the neutrally stable system could have recycled it but would not have amplified it. In view of the good rendering and the improved feeding after 1996 it might also have not been recycled.</p>
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE
							Unlikely but cannot be excluded.

¹ Eurostat data only available since 1992