

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

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 Albania.

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, Albania. The Commission requested this opinion as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of SRM that will be requested from Albania. It is recommended that this opinion on Albania 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

Albania was exposed to a **high** external challenge since 1990 (no data available before 1988), mainly due to imports of MBM from BSE affected countries (around 9,000 tonnes in total, most of it coming from IT).

The BSE/cattle system of Albania was and is **neutrally stable** since 1980.

Feeding of MBM to cattle was and is not forbidden. Albeit it seems to be unlikely, it is assumed that MBM would reach cattle whenever it is available and at least some of the MBM imported from Italy is likely to have reached domestic cattle. There is apparently no rendering industry in the country. Most, if not all, SRM are regarded edible and are apparently consumed by the human population but there is no SRM ban. If in fallen stock they will be incinerated. No measures exist to prevent cross contamination of cattle feed with MBM. BSE is notifiable since 2000. BSE surveillance and awareness raising measures are very limited (non existent before 2000).

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 Albania (**GBR III**).

From the neutral stability of the system it would follow that the GBR would remain as it is as long as no new external challenges appear. However, due to the absence of rendering, recycling of the agent is not possible and the GBR will decrease over time as long as no potentially contaminated feedstuffs are imported. Should this happen, however, new domestic cases were likely to result.

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 Albania 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.

Albania – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, March 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-87: Not addressed *; 1988-01: HIGH.		1980-2001: NEUTRALLY STABLE				
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	Surveillance, cross-contamination	
III	<p>UK: No imports</p> <p><u>Other BSE affected countries:</u></p> <p>1988-93: 192 animals imported from DE and FR according to EUROSTAT</p>	<p>UK: No imports</p> <p><u>Other BSE affected countries:</u></p> <p>1990-1999 around 9,000 t mainly from IT</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>No MBM ban. No detailed data on cattle feed.</p>	<p>OK</p> <p>No rendering industry.</p>	<p>Reasonably OK</p> <p>No SRM ban for cattle feed SRM consumed by human population</p>	<p><u>BSE surveillance:</u></p> <p>Non existent before 2000. BSE notifiable since August 2000.</p> <p><u>Cross-contamination:</u> Likely, no controls</p>	<p>Imported MBM (high external challenge) could have reached domestic cattle, leading to domestic cases.</p> <p>Without imports GBR will decrease over time, due to absence of recycling.</p>
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE
↑							<p>Likely present since 1988 and increasing with increasing MBM-imports.</p>

* Data insufficient