

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

Adopted on 30/03/2001

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

## **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 Estonia.

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

Estonia is **independent since 1991**.

The **external challenge** to which Estonia was exposed between 1980-1987 was **very low**, **moderate** from 1988-1992 and **high** from 1993-1999.

It appears that the external challenge resulting from live cattle imports has been very low in the period 1980-87, due to imports from non-UK BSE-affected countries, moderate in the period 1988-93, due to imports of 39 cattle from UK during that period and negligible since 1994. It is noted that according to CD estimate that 46 animals (out of 61 imported in total from UK) of 24 months or older (at death) imported from UK might have entered the feed chain (35 of them before 1992).

There is no EUROSTAT data before 1993 as far as MBM exports are concerned. The imports of MBM (around 2,500 tonnes in total, mainly from DK) create a high external challenge since 1994. According to CD, around 4,400 tonnes of MBM were imported from BSE affected countries since 1980.

The BSE/cattle system of Estonia was **extremely unstable** from 1980-1994, **very unstable** between 1995-2000 and is **neutrally unstable** since 2001.

The measures adopted in November 2000 and during the first months of 2001 will improve the stability of the system pending outcome of controls over time. Rendering has been carried out under the 133°C / 20 min / 3 bars standards since 1995 but controls were not put in place before November 2000. There is no SRM ban and SRM is normally rendered for feed production. Measures to avoid cross-contamination could not be assessed. BSE surveillance is notifiable since 1990. Active surveillance is to start 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 Estonia (**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.

*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 Estonia 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.*

| Estonia – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, March 2001 |   |  |  |  |  |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|
|   | EXTERNAL CHALLENGE  |  | STABILITY  |  |  |  | INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY   |
|   | 1980-87: VERY LOW; 1988-92: MODERATE; 1993-01: HIGH.  |  | 1980-94: EXTREMELY UNSTABLE; 1995-2000: VERY UNSTABLE; SINCE 2001: NEUTRALLY STABLE.   |  |  |  |   |
| GBR-Level   | Live Cattle imports   | MBM imports  | Feeding  | Rendering  | SRM-removal  | Surveillance, cross-contamination  |   |
| III   | <p><u>UK:</u><br/>61 cattle between 1985-1989. 46 might have been rendered.</p> <p><u>Other BSE affected countries:</u></p> | <p><u>UK:</u><br/>15 t since 1994.</p> <p><u>Other BSE affected countries:</u><br/>According to Eurostat, around 2,500 t, mainly from DK since 1993.</p> | <p><b>Not OK</b><br/>Feeding of RMBM and MBM to cattle legal until November 2000.</p> <p>Uncommon but no evidence to demonstrate absence of feeding to cattle.</p> | <p><b>Not OK 1980-1994, Reasonably OK since 1995 OK since 2001</b><br/>From 1995 rendering done under 133°C/20min/3 bars standards.</p> <p>Controls not put in place before 2000 strengthened in November 2000</p> | <p><b>Not OK</b><br/>No SRM ban. SRM rendered for feed production.</p> | <p><u>BSE surveillance:</u><br/>Notification of BSE compulsory since 1990. Active surveillance to start 2001.</p> <p><u>Cross-contamination:</u><br/>No convincing information on control measures reported.</p> | <p>An extremely unstable system (80-94) and a very unstable system (95-00) was exposed to a moderate (88-93) and high (94-99) external challenge from live cattle and MBM imports. BSE was probably imported as early as late 80's (cattle) or since 1996 (MBM) and then recycled and amplified. Given the instability of the system this risk is likely to have increased over time.<br/>Without imports GBR will decrease over time, due to absence of recycling.</p> |
| GBR-trend   | <p>Around 630 animals imported before 1987 from DK and NL</p>   | <p>In total around 4,400 t, mainly from DK according to country data for the period 1980-2000.</p>   | <p>Measures adopted in November might improve this assessment, pending outcome of controls over time.</p>  |  |  |  | <p><b>INTERNAL CHALLENGE</b></p>  |
| ↑   | <p>Around 300 animals imported since 1991 from NL, DE and DK.</p>   |  |  |  |  |  | <p>From 1980-1987 internal challenge unlikely but not excluded. From 1988-1993 likely to be present and growing.</p>  |

