

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

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 Colombia.

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 from 01 April 2001 onwards 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)". It describes a method and a process for the assessment of the GBR and summarized 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 authorized 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, Colombia. The Commission requested this opinion as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of SRM that will be requested from Colombia. It is recommended that this opinion on Colombia 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 ANALYSIS

Colombia was exposed to a **negligible external challenge** until 1987 and to a **low external challenge since 1988** due to imports of live cattle from countries other than UK affected by BSE. For the large majority of these imported cattle their fate after import is not known. Small amounts of MBM, MM, BM and greaves were imported after 1988, posing only a negligible challenge. It is concluded that it is possible that the BSE agent was imported into the country via live cattle imports.

The BSE/cattle system of Colombia was and is **very unstable**. MBM may have been fed to cattle, as there was no feed ban until March 2001. Only part of the rendering in the country is carried out under conditions that could be equivalent to the $133^{\circ}\text{C}/20^{\text{min}}/3^{\text{bar}}$ standard. SRM from animals fit for human consumption are eaten by man but SRM included in condemned materials or in animals that are dead at arrival at the slaughterhouse will be rendered. BSE-surveillance is very poor.

As it cannot be excluded that the BSE-agent entered the country via the cattle imports and met the very unstable system, it is concluded that it is unlikely but not excluded that one or several cattle that are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE agent are currently present in the domestic herd of Colombia (**GBR-II**).

Given the very unstable system the GBR would increase in the future, if BSE were indeed already in the country, even without any further external challenges.

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 Colombia 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.

COLOMBIA - Summary of the GBR-Assessment, March 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION OF EXTERNAL CHALLENGE AND STABILITY
	Negligible until 1987, low since 1988		1980-00 Very unstable				
GBR level	Live cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	Surveillance, cross-contamination	
II	<p><u>UK</u>: No imports</p> <p><u>Other BSE-affected countries, mainly DE, SP</u>: Before 88: 400 88-99 : 2,400</p>	<p><u>UK</u>: 21 tons in 1992.</p> <p><u>Other BSE-affected countries</u>: None.</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>No MBM ban before March 2001 (MMBM ban).</p> <p>Animal protein was added to 24% of cattle feed.</p>	<p>Not OK</p> <p>Only parts of rendering industry operating at conditions equivalent to the 133°C/20^{min}/3^{ba} standard.</p>	<p>Reasonable OK</p> <p>SRMs of animals fit for human consumption are eaten by man but if condemned it will be rendered.</p>	<p><u>BSE-Surveillance</u>: not in place until 2001.</p> <p><u>Cross-contamination of cattle feed with MBM</u>: Likely to occur.</p>	<p>The BSE agent might have entered Colombia as early as in 1986, if cattle imported from France and later from DE were infected. If that was the case, these infected animals could have been rendered since the early 90s. The MBM thereof would have carried the agent and could have been included in cattle feed leading to infected domestic cattle since around 1993. These cattle would again be rendered and could have led to a second generation of domestic cases in the late 90s, still being alive. In view of the low external challenge the above-described scenario is regarded to be unlikely but not excluded.</p> <p>In the light of the unstable system the GBR will increase over time, even if no further external challenges are experienced, if indeed the BSE agent is already present in the country.</p>
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE
↑							An internal challenge is unlikely but cannot be excluded to exist in the country since the early 90s.