

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

Adopted on 30/03/2001

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

**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 the Republic of Cyprus.

**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)". It describes 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, the Republic of Cyprus. The Commission requested this opinion as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of SRM that will be requested from the Republic of Cyprus. It is recommended that this opinion on the Republic of Cyprus 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

The Republic of Cyprus was exposed to a **high external challenge** from 1980-1999 due to large amounts (about 34,000t) of MBM, MM, BM or greaves imported from UK, FR, BE, NL, DK, IT, SP and DE, with particular high imports since 1993. In fact, after 1993 the imports would have presented a very high external challenge but because of the strict measures (i.e. import bans, certification) that have been enforced since 1991, the overall external challenge is only assessed as high. According to the country dossier the Republic of Cyprus has not imported any live cattle from the UK or other BSE affected countries, however EUROSTAT data show exports from FR and NL of live cattle (426 in total), but these would be assessed as negligible anyway.

The BSE/cattle system of the Republic of Cyprus was **stable** before 1990, **very unstable** from 1990-1995, **neutrally stable** from 1996 to 2000, and will become potentially **very stable in 2001**. Feeding RMBM to cattle was legal until 1990 and feeding of non-ruminant MBM until 1994. Separate feed mills and the absence of co-farming reduce the risk of cross-contamination, but it cannot be fully excluded. No rendering industry existed before 1990 and all slaughterhouse offal was buried or incinerated. Since 1990 rendering is carried out according to the  $133^{\circ}\text{C}/20^{\text{min}}/3^{\text{bar}}$  standard though there has only been evidence of controls since 1996. SRM from animals fit for human consumption is rendered; the rest is buried or burned. Since January 2001, SRM is removed and destroyed. BSE has been notifiable since 1990, but surveillance was insufficient. Since 1998 it has improved and targeted sampling has been performed since mid 2000, without any positive cases yet. Since 2001 a systematic testing program as applicable in EU Member States is enforced. In view of the current improvements in surveillance and SRM-removal, the stability of the system is expected to move to very stable in the near future, depending on the implementation of these measures.

Given the fact that the BSE-agent could have reached domestic cattle via MBM imports from BSE affected countries and that it was most probably recycled since 1990, it is concluded that it is likely that one or several cattle that are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE agent are currently present in the domestic herd of the Republic of Cyprus (**GBR-III**).

Because the system is now neutrally stable, and probably moving towards even higher stability, the likelihood of the presence of BSE-infected cattle is expected to decrease in the near future. The currently installed measures, such as systematic testing and SRM-removal, will support this.

*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 the Republic of Cyprus 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.*



| The Republic of Cyprus – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, March 2001 |   |   |  |   |  |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
|  | EXTERNAL CHALLENGE  |   | STABILITY  |   |  |   | INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY  |
|  | 1980-at current: High   |   | 1980-89: Stable; 1990-1995: Very Unstable; 1996-2000: Neutrally Stable   |   |  |   |  |
| GBR-Level  | Live Cattle imports   | MBM imports   | Feeding  | Rendering   | SRM-removal  | Surveillance, cross-contamination   |  |
| III  | <p>UK: no imports</p> <p>Other BSE affected countries: none according to the country. According to EUROSTAT, 426 live cattle imported from FR and NL between 1980-99.</p>   | <p>UK: 223 t (93-99)</p> <p>Other BSE affected countries:</p> <p>80-85: 9,340 t<br/>86-90: 6,831 t<br/>91-93: 4,894 t<br/>94-99: 12,756 t</p> <p>1991: effective measures to reduce the risk posed by imports (certificates, import controls)</p> | <p><b>Not OK before 1997, reasonably OK after</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RMBM ban in 1990 and MBM ban in 1994 but insufficient controls.</li> <li>▪ Feeding of MBM possible after 1994 due to cross-contamination.</li> <li>▪ Feed controls since 1997.</li> </ul> | <p><b>OK before 1990, reasonably OK between 90-95, OK since 1996.</b></p> <p>Offal buried or burned before 1990. Rendering industry exists since 1990, process conditions: 133°C/20<sup>min</sup>/3 bar, Evidence of controls since 1996.</p> | <p><b>OK before 1990, Not OK between 90-2000, at current OK.</b></p> <p>Buried or burned before 1990. Since 1990 normally rendered, except if condemned or from fallen stock. SRM ban since 2001 (not rendered).</p> | <p><b>BSE-Surveillance:</b><br/>Insufficient before 1996, since then improved. Since early 2001 systematic rapid testing of cattle &gt;30 months at risk, starting in July 2001 of all cattle &gt;30 months.</p> <p><b>Cross-contamination of cattle feed with MBM:</b><br/>No systematic checks, possible.</p> | <p>It cannot be excluded that the BSE agent reached domestic cattle via imported MBM, especially before 1991 when the MBM consignments were not certified and no RMBM ban was yet installed. Therefore the BSE-agent might have been present in the country as early as in 1985. The continuous imports and, between 1990 and 1995, the possible recycling increased this risk. Since then amplification of the agent became unlikely and the risk that domestic cattle were exposed to the BSE-agent decreased, both because the external challenges decreased due to better controls and certification and because of the reduced risk of recycling.</p> <p>In view of the neutrally stable system, the GBR will remain the same. However, in view of the recent measures that will make the system very stable, the GBR will decrease rather quickly, if external challenges can be controlled.</p> |
| GBR-trend  | <b>INTERNAL CHALLENGE</b>   |   |  |   |  |   |  |
| ↓  | Internal challenge possibly occurred between 1985 and 90, due to exposure to imported MBM. After 1990 recycling became possible and makes it likely that any existing internal challenge increased. Since 1996 it is unlikely that it grew further but it would not have started to decrease before 2001, once the system is very stable. |   |  |   |  |   |  |