

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

Adopted on 11/05/2001

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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 Costa Rica.

## **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, Costa Rica. The Commission requested this opinion following the provision of a dossier by the country. The result will serve as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of exports from Costa Rica with regard to SRMs. It is recommended that this opinion on Costa Rica 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

During the reference period, 1980-2000, Costa Rica was exposed to **negligible** external challenges. It has not imported any live cattle or MBM from the UK (confirmed by all data sources) or, according to the country dossier, from any other BSE-affected country. Also EUROSTAT only registered insignificant exports to Costa Rica, namely 35 animals from SP in 1998 and 5 tonnes of MBM from NL in 1999.

Throughout the reference period, 1980-2000, the BSE/cattle system of Costa Rica was **extremely unstable**. The feeding of MBM to cattle was legal until February 2001. The available information on the control of this recent feed ban is insufficient to assess its efficiency. Rendering of ruminant material is common and the process parameters are not efficient with regard to BSE-infectivity reduction. About half of the annual production was used in cattle feed. There is no SRM ban and SRM, and cattle condemned in ante mortem inspection or dead at arrival (but not on-farm fallen stock) is normally rendered. BSE has been made notifiable in February 2001. Surveillance was and is inefficient with regard to BSE. Cross contamination was not an issue until the February 2001 feed ban. Although there are measures now in place to reduce it, the efficiency of them cannot be judged and it is assumed that cross-contamination occurs.

The extremely unstable BSE/cattle system was never exposed to an external challenge that was not negligible. It is therefore regarded highly unlikely that one or several cattle that are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE agent are currently present in the domestic herd of Costa Rica (**GBR I**).

*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 Costa Rica 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.*

Costa Rica – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, May 2001							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-00: NEGLIGIBLE.		1980-00: EXTREMELY UNSTABLE				
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	Surveillance, cross-contamination	
I	<p><u>UK:</u> No live cattle imports from UK (all data sources).</p> <p><u>Non UK:</u> According to the Country dossier no live cattle imports have taken place from other BSE-affected countries.</p>	<p><u>UK:</u> No MBM imports from UK (all data sources).</p> <p><u>Non UK:</u> According to the Country dossier no MBM imports have taken place from other BSE-affected countries</p>	<p><b>Not OK</b></p> <p>Feeding MBM to cattle was legal and regularly done until 2/2001.</p> <p>Available information on control of feed ban does not allow its efficiency to be judged</p>	<p><b>Not OK</b></p> <p>Rendering of ruminant material for feed is common. Process conditions not sufficient as regards BSE. About 50% of the annual production used in cattle feed.</p>	<p><b>Not OK</b></p> <p>No SRM ban. Animals dead at arrival and condemned in ante mortem inspection are rendered, fallen stock on farms normally not.</p>	<p><u>BSE Surveillance:</u> BSE notifiable since 2/2001. Surveillance found to be inefficient.</p> <p><u>Cross-contamination:</u> Not an issue until recent installation of feed ban (02/2001). Measures now in place to reduce cross-contamination but the efficiency of measures cannot be judged on the basis of the available information.</p>	<p>The extremely unstable BSE/cattle system was not exposed to significant, non-negligible external challenge, i.e. it is highly unlikely that the BSE-agent entered the country.</p> <p>However in view of the extremely unstable system any BSE infectivity that would have entered the country would most likely also entered cattle feed. The BSE agent would have been recycled and fast amplified.</p>
GBR-trend	EUROSTAT states 35 animals were imported in 1998 from SP.	EUROSTAT states 5 t were imported from NL in 1999.					<p><b>INTERNAL CHALLENGE</b></p> <p>Since 1980, internal challenge highly unlikely to have occurred and to be present.</p>