

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

Adopted by the SSC on 27 June 2002

Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (GBR) in Vanuatu – 2002

THE QUESTION

The Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) was asked by the Commission to provide an up-to-date 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, in countries that have formally requested the determination of their BSE status in accordance with Article 5 of the Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

This opinion addresses the up-to-date GBR of Vanuatu as assessed in June 2002.

THE ANSWER

Due to the fact that no BSE infectivity entered the country, there was no risk that BSE infectivity was recycled or propagated. It is therefore concluded that it is highly unlikely that domestic cattle are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent (**GBR-I**).

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 BACKGROUND

In July 2000 the SSC adopted its final opinion on "the Geographical Risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (GBR)". It 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.

On 1 July 2001 Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council entered into force. This regulation lays down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in animals (TSE Regulation). Appropriate risk management measures are defined in relation to the BSE Status category. In Annex II of this Regulation the method for the determination of the BSE status is described. It requires two steps, namely a risk assessment and the evaluation of specific criteria listed in annex II, chapter A, point (b) to (e). The Commission regards the GBR as provided by the SSC as an adequate Risk Assessment as required by the regulation. However, countries may also provide their own risk assessment in which case the SSC will be requested to provide a scientific opinion on the validity of that risk assessment as well as of its result.

In January 2002 the SSC updated its opinion on the GBR and determined that exports from all countries classified as GBR III or IV pose a certain risk of carrying the BSE agent, independent if they have or have not confirmed at least one domestic BSE case. The SSC also provided an estimate of the level of risk emitted from these "BSE-risk countries" in relation to the time of export.

Vanuatu has formally requested the determination of its BSE status in accordance with Article 5 of the TSE Regulation and subsequently the Commission asked the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) to provide an up-to-date scientific opinion on the Geographical BSE-Risk of Vanuatu.

THE RISK ASSESSMENT

For Vanuatu, the SSC concluded that it was “highly unlikely” (**GBR I**) that domestic cattle in Vanuatu are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent.

THE ANALYSIS

EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

As no cattle or MBM was ever imported to Vanuatu from BSE risk countries, the **external challenge** was always **negligible**.

STABILITY

On the basis of the available information it was concluded that the country’s BSE/cattle system was and is “**very unstable**”:

Feeding

Before 1995 feeding cattle with MBM was legally possible but is regarded unlikely in view of the specific structures of the BSE/cattle system of Vanuatu. However, pig and poultry feed contains MBM and cross feeding cannot be excluded. As no controls are in place to monitor the appropriate implementation of the feed ban of 1995, feeding is regarded as “**reasonably OK**” before and after this ban.

Rendering

One rendering plant exists in Vanuatu, processing bovine waste including SRM but excluding fallen stock. It is unclear which rendering process was/is used and rendering is therefore assessed as “**not OK**”.

SRM-removal

There is no SRM ban and SRM is included in the rendered bovine material. Therefore SRM-removal is “**not OK**” throughout the reference period. Fallen stock is buried.

BSE surveillance

Awareness training has been established since 1995 but no BSE suspects have ever been detected. An additional programme is under development to examine all brains from cull cattle, and adult fallen stock, from the only dairy farm existing in Vanuatu, about 40 per year.

CONCLUSION ON THE CURRENT GBR

Due to the fact that no BSE infectivity entered the country, there was no risk that BSE infectivity entered processing, was recycled or propagated. It is therefore concluded that it is highly unlikely that domestic cattle are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent (**GBR-I**).

EXPECTED DEVELOPMENT OF THE GBR

As long as no external challenge occurs, the GBR will remain as low as it is. However, given the low stability of the system, any external challenge could lead to the building-up of an internal challenge.

A table summarising the reasons for the current assessment is given in annex 1 to this opinion. A detailed report on the assessment of the GBR of Vanuatu as produced by the GBR-Peer Group is published separately on the Internet. The country had 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.

Vanuatu – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, June 2002						
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY			INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980 - at current: Negligible		1980 – at current: Very unstable			
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	BSE surveillance
I	UK: No imports according to country import data and to other export data. Other BSE risk countries: No imports according to the country import data and to other export data.	UK: No imports according to the country import data and to other export data. <u>Other BSE risk countries:</u> No imports according to the country import data and to other export data.	Reasonably OK 1980 – at current. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before 1995 feeding MBM to cattle was legally possible but regarded unlikely due to specific structures of BSE/cattle system of Vanuatu. Official Feed ban (RMBM to ruminants) adopted in 1995 but no controls in place. 	Not OK 1980 – at current. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One rendering plant existing which processes bovine waste including SRM but excluding fallen stock. Rendering Process is unclear. 	Not OK 1980 – at current. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No SRM ban, SRM is rendered. Fallen stock is buried. 	Awareness training established since 1995 but no BSE suspects have ever been detected. Additional programme is under development to examine all brains from cull cattle and adult fallen stock from only dairy farm (about 40 per year).
GBR-trend						INTERNAL CHALLENGE The occurrence of an internal challenge from 1980 to at current is regarded highly unlikely. Due to the fact that no BSE infectivity entered the country, there was no risk that BSE infectivity entered processing, was recycled or propagated.