

## L.2.- BSE overview: consumer-Risk assessment

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The bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) epizooty has been monitored in France since the end of 1990, whereas BSE was described first in 1987 in Great-Britain (GB). A risk analysis undertaken in France in 1990 led to the conclusion that BSE might have spread to France via import of British meat and bone meal (MBM) (Savey et al. 1990). Epidemic surveillance was therefore set up at the end of 1990 with different steps:

- BSE is a notifiable disease (June 1990);
- Clinical surveillance based on a mandatory reporting system (December 1990);
- Complementary programs as checking for BSE each animal suspected of rabies (1998)...;
- Pilot screening program using rapid tests for the detection of PrPres in BSE infected animals (June 2000) in the North-Western France;
- Since January 2001, every cow aged 30 months and more is tested at slaughter (24 months and more since July 2001).

### **Regulation measures**

The main measures in France have been :

- June 1989 : ban on the import from GB of live cattle and ban on MBM;
- July 1990 : ban on MBM for cattle feed;
- December 1994 : ban on MBM for all ruminant feed;
- August 1996 : removal of specified risk materials (SRM) and cadavers from MBM ;
- November 2000 : ban on MBM and on certain animal fats for all farmed animals.

The two major measures (feed ban and removal of SRM) were set up at different dates in other European countries : 1988 and 1990 respectively in GB, whereas in all other countries these measures were not implemented until 2000.

### **French Food Safety Agency (Afssa)**

Afssa was created in 1999. The government asked the Agency to evaluate the preventive system against BSE. From 2000 to 2002, the Agency has performed several (and when possible, quantitative) risk assessments about different topics in order to increase the level of consumer's protection:

- Nutritional and zootechnic consequences of the ban ;
- Risk of pitching for slaughtering;
- Evaluation of different strategies for slaughter policies;
- Implementation of the testing programs in collaboration with the French administrations;
- Update of the SRM list according to the scientific state of the art;
- Risks assessments for the "embargo" concerning GB and Portugal;
- Evaluation of the residual risk for the French consumer.

Since the middle of 2002, based on the decreasing incidence of BSE, the Agency has opened some "bolts" such as the re-introduction of thymus in human food chain, of some animal fats in animal feed, or the slaughtering policy based on a "cohort" strategy etc....

Compared to the European Union regulation, the French one is more restrictive in the following fields: SRM list, ban concerning certain animal fats, age of testing healthy animals but these discrepancies are going to decrease.

### **The epidemiological status of BSE epizooty in 2003 / 2004**

#### *In France*

A decreasing number of cases has been observed : 276 in 2001, 240 in 2002, 142 in 2003 and 27 in May 2004. Between August 2001 and December 2003, the overall prevalence was divided by 4 and the median age increased: 5.9 years in 2000, 7.5 years in 2003.

Whereas more than 80 cases were notified as "Born after the second ban – BASB" (animals born after 1996) : the meaning of these reports needs further evaluation.

*In European countries*

More ten millions tests were performed in 2003 (8 700 000 in healthy animals). 78 % of the cases were detected by the tests.

The number of cases and the overall prevalence decreased by 36 % and 33 % respectively between 2002 and 2003. The number of cases in young animals (under 5 years) decreased and the mean age of cases increased. Both observations support the effectiveness of the preventive measures.

No case was reported in Finland, Sweden , Austria, Greece, and Luxembourg. Concerning the new European countries, cases were reported in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovak Republic.

**Keywords**

*BSE, French food safety, regulation measures*