



THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S TSE ROADMAP

ISSUE

1. Defra and the FSA have asked SEAC to consider the European Commission's TSE Roadmap.

BACKGROUND

2. The key piece of EU legislation whose aim is to protect human and animal health from the risks of TSEs is Regulation (EC) 999/2001. In Europe over the last four years a decreasing number of cases of BSE have been detected each year. Therefore the European Commission is considering whether current BSE control measures may be relaxed without endangering the health of consumers, or reducing the likelihood of eradicating BSE.
3. The Commission published its TSE Roadmap (Annex 1) on 15 July 2005. This document envisages amendments to EU BSE control measures in the short, medium and long-term and sets out a number of strategic goals in relation to BSE policy. Controls and surveillance of other animal TSEs are also considered.
4. Chief Veterinary Officers from EU member states, including the UK, will give evidence in relation to the Roadmap to the European Parliament on 22-23 September 2005. Commission and Council Working Group meetings from October to December will begin the process of translating the Roadmap proposals into amendments to legislation.
5. The purpose of asking SEAC to consider the Roadmap at this early stage is to inform the UK's initial position in EU discussions. As discussions develop, and in light of SEAC's comments at SEAC 89, Defra and the FSA are likely to ask the committee for more specific advice in future. At present, the committee is only

asked to consider the Commission's strategic goals for the short and medium term (2005-2009).

6. For the short and medium term (2005-2009) the Commission sets out seven strategic goals :
 - 1) To ensure and maintain the current level of consumer protection by continuing to assure the safe removal of specified risk material (SRM) but modify the list and age of removal based on new and evolving scientific opinion.
 - 2) A relaxation of certain measures of the current total feed ban when certain conditions are met.
 - 3) To reduce the number of tests of bovine animals and at the same time continue to measure the effectiveness of the measures in place with a better targeting of the surveillance activity.
 - 4) Simplification of the categorisation criteria and conclusion of the categorisation of the countries before 1 July 2007.
 - 5) Review and relaxation of the eradication measures for small ruminants taking into account the new diagnostic tools available but ensuring the current level of consumer protection.
 - 6) To stop the immediate culling of the cohort in bovine animals.
 - 7) To discuss the lifting of the additional restrictions on exports of beef and beef products from the UK if there is compliance with preset conditions.
7. Under each strategic goal the Commission sets out, in broad terms, possible future policy options. For example, in relation to changing the EU SRM rules, the Commission notes that any amendment should be based on new, evolving scientific knowledge whilst maintaining the existing high level of consumer protection. It envisages giving consideration to amending the list of SRM with a possible increase in the age limit for removal of central nervous system tissue, in particular for vertebral column. The Commission also foresees a possible relaxation of the requirements for the processing of tallow, collagen and gelatine.
8. For each strategic goal, Defra and FSA have asked the committee to consider whether the Commission has identified all of the risk issues that need to be taken into account when considering changes to current control measures. At this meeting the committee is not asked to consider the age limit for removal of vertebral column since it considered this in detail at its meeting in April 2005 (SEAC 87).

SUMMARY OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE AND RISK ASSESSMENTS

9. Any future EU policies must have a sound evidence base. Similarly, the UK position in discussions on the Roadmap and in negotiations on amendments to legislation must be based on sound scientific evidence and robust risk assessments.
10. A summary of the main elements of the evidence base (scientific research and risk assessments) relevant to each of the strategic goals has been provided by Defra (Annex 2). Annex 2 summarises opinions from the EC Scientific Steering Committee, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), SEAC and some other bodies. It includes evidence on which current measures are based, new evidence that may inform changes to the measures and relevant ongoing research.
11. For each strategic goal, Defra and FSA have asked the committee to identify any additional existing evidence or results of work in progress that would be required for SEAC to provide, when needed, an assessment of the risk from specific regulatory changes.

ADVICE SOUGHT FROM THE COMMITTEE

12. The committee is requested:
 - To advise whether, for each of the strategic goals, the Commission has identified all of the risk issues that need to be taken into account when considering changes to current control measures
 - To advise whether any additional existing evidence or results of work in progress would be required for SEAC to provide, when needed, an assessment of the risks from specific regulatory changes