EU legislation on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) and on related feed and food controls - implementation and outlook

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) and on related feed and food controls - implementation and outlook. It welcomes the Commission's TSE Road Map 2 - A Strategy Paper on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies, and its proposals for certain revisions of the current TSE legislation regime in the EU, but stresses that certain provisions need thorough assessment and will only be supported under certain conditions.

Members underline the importance of ensuring that the significant decline in BSE cases in the EU - from 2167 cases in 2001 to 67 cases in 2009- does not lead to less stringent TSE measures or to a reduction in the strict control and surveillance mechanisms in the EU.

BSE surveillance: Parliament takes note of the increase in age limits for TSE testing of bovine animals above 72 months in 22 Member States (Commission Decision amending Decision 2009/719/EC) and it urges the Commission to increase the age limits in the remaining Member States only if supported by sound risk assessments in order not to jeopardise a high level of animal health and consumer protection. It expresses its concern about another rise in the age limits for testing in bovine animals in view in particular of the sample size testing which will govern the BSE monitoring system in bovine animals from January 2013, and it calls on the Commission to inform Parliament about progress and new findings on the sample sizes to be chosen. The Commission is urged to maintain the testing of risk animals as an important element in continuing to monitor the trend of BSE cases in the EU.

Revision of the feed ban: in the light of the existing protein deficit in the EU, Members support the Commission proposal to lift the provisions banning the feeding of processed animal proteins to non-ruminants, provided that this applies to non-herbivores only, and only under certain conditions which it specifies in the report, including the following: (i) the processed animal proteins are only derived from species which are not linked to TSEs, (ii) the production and sterilisation methods used for processed animal proteins comply with the highest safety standards and with the rules laid down in the animal by-products Regulation and use the newest and safest technology available; and (iii) the existing prohibitions on intra-species recycling (‘cannibalism’) remain in place. Parliament calls on the Commission:

- to investigate the need for separate authorisation for slaughterhouses in which both non-ruminant and ruminant animal by-products are produced, so as to ensure a clear separation of these by-products;
- to assess the need to control imports of processed animal proteins in order to ensure that intra-species recycling, the use of category 1 and 2 material and violations of hygiene rules can be excluded; underlines that regular and unannounced on-site checks are also necessary to this end.

SRM list: Members expect the Commission to maintain the strict standards contained in the EU SRM list, and they urge the Commission to consider modifications to the EU SRM list only if supported by scientific facts, under the application of the precautionary principle.

Research on TSEs: Members dismiss the Commission proposal to reduce EU funding for research on TSEs. They urge the Commission to encourage genetic control of scrapie in sheep through breeding and rearing programmes aimed at avoiding inbreeding or genetic drift, and to put into place measures to

encourage ongoing research on scrapie resistance in goats and on atypcial scrapie as this could contribute to the eradication of TSEs in the EU. In addition, the Commission is called upon to encourage ongoing research to develop ante-mortem and post-mortem rapid BSE-diagnostic tests.

Cohort culling: Members feel that prior to any change to the cohort culling policy, the following aspects must be taken into account in order to maintain a high level of consumer trust: (1) consumer protection, (2) any risks to human and animal health and (3) continuing the practice of enabling risk managers and legislators to take the necessary immediate action in the case of a re-emergence of BSE in the EU.

Food and feed safety: Members take note of the Commission Report on the overall operation of official controls in the Member States in food safety, and call on the Commission to execute efficient monitoring of the controls performed by Member States. They express concern about the contamination of food and feed, e. g. with dioxin, and call on Member States to enforce and apply existing regulations on food and feed controls and risk management very strictly and if needed, to strengthen those rules and ensure harmonised implementation by using common guidelines across the internal market. Parliament calls on the Commission and Member States to take measures to ensure that the requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 and in implementing Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 relating to the treatment of animal by-products prior to their transformation into biogas and the use or disposal of digestion residues are complied with and illegal diversion into the feed chain is prevented. It urges the Commission to monitor the way in which the current rules are implemented in the Member States to ensure a closed circuit for this activity.

Mechanically separated meat: Parliamentexpresses concern about current EU legislation and implementation in the Member States on mechanically separated meat, and calls on Member States to review their implementation of definitions of mechanically separated meat in line with the existing rules. It wants mandatory labelling of mechanically separated meat in food in order better to inform consumers. Lastly, Members ask the Commission to inform third countries about any changes made to the TSE Regulation and measures related to TSEs.