# Bovine spongiform encephalopathy BSE. 1998 2nd biannual report

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The Agriculture and Environment Committees have issued a stark warning that the BSE crisis is not over and a further spread of new-variant CJD cannot be ruled out. Rapporteurs Reimer BÖGE (EPP, D) and Dagmar ROTH-BEHRENDT (PES, D) are sharply critical of the Member States and voice some crticism of the Commission in their joint resolution on the Commission's second half-yearly BSE follow-up report, which was adopted unanimously by the committees. While MEPs are pleased with the Commission's progress in implementing a number of its recommendations for eradicating BSE, they point to the "catastrophic picture" of the failure by 13 Member States to implement BSE-related Community measures which is revealed by the legal proceedings brought against them by the Commission and they cite "negligence and omissions in the policy on combatting BSE". MEPs are "extremely concerned at the sharp rise in cases of BSE in Portugal", which prompted the Commission to ban exports of live cattle, meat-and-bone meal and beef and veal from Portugal in November 1998, and demand that those responsible for illegal exports of British beef are prosecuted. They also condemn the "totally unacceptable conduct of Member States" in refusing to cooperate with the Commission by providing information on the numbers of food and veterinary inspectors they have. The Agriculture and Environment Committees are demanding a proper legislative role for the EP in agriculture under the codecision procedure, instead of its present consultative role, and the power to censure individual Commissioners and they insist that preventive health and consumer protection must be given top priority in all the measures taken to tackle BSE. The two committees advocate the radical approach of removing complete herds from the food chain in order to eradicate the disease. They press the Commission to complete its work on diagnostic tests for BSE in bovines without delay. They also call for a ban on the general use of antibiotics in feedingstuffs as growth promoters and insist that they should only be administered on veterinary prescription. The MEPs' criticisms of the Commission centre on its poor personnel management which, they say, has left vacancies in the Agriculture Directorate-General unfilled, and on its lack of accountability to the EP. Its private offices, in particular, should made more accountable. However, the creation of a scientific steering committee under the responsibility of the Directorate-General for consumer protection is a welcome step forward.