Bovine spongiform encephalopathy BSE. 1998 2nd biannual report

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PURPOSE : Second Bi-annual BSE Follow-up Report in the form of a Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. CONTENT : This is the second six-monthly report presented by the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on progress made in the implementation of the follow up of recommendations on BSE. The first report, which was presented in May 1998, provided a broad overview of practical measures taken to combat BSE and to implement the new approach in the fields of scientific advice, risk analysis, risk management, control and inspection. This second report shows that a large part of the work has been completed. A synopsis of this is provided in Annex 1. Desired progress, however, has not been achieved on a few points such as the EU becoming a full member of the WHO and the International Office of Epizootics. The following points should be noted : - despite the Commission's efforts, the Council has still not agreed a common approach to removing 'specific risk material' from the food and feed chain; - some Member States have been slow in implementing Community law concerning the control of BSE; - the Commission has been pushing ahead with work on validating a post-mortem BSE test. Shortly, the validation results will show whether the EU currently has a test that can reduce consumer risk; - the introduction of new structures for the Scientific Committees and checks carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office have yielded important information on current working methods. This will be carefully evaluated; - the importance of effective follow-up of scientific recommendations and inspection visits has been demonstrated over the past year; - an important issue to be agreed at international level is how to implement the precautionary principle within the context of a scientifically based consumer-protection policy. In addition, the judgment of equivalence is the subject of discussion at international level, in particular in the Codex Alimentarius. These issues will need to be taken into consideration by the Commission in the draft negotiation mandate to be given by the Council for the forthcoming WTO discussions on the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) Agreement; - the EP's and Commission's joint conference on food safety will provide an opportunity to take stock of past progress and future challenges from a variety of angles; - the Commission is to push ahead with its response to the debate on the Green Paper on Food Law; - the Commission intends to take up a number of points in its 1999-2001 consumer protection action plan. Article 152 of the Amsterdam Treaty gives more impact to Community action in the field of health protection.