

Prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs)

1998/0323(COD) - 10/04/2006 - Implementing legislative act

ACT: Commission Regulation 657/2006/EC amending Regulation 999/2001/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the United Kingdom and repealing Council Decision 98/256/EC and Decisions 98/351/EC and 1999/514/EC.

CONTENT: this Decision repeals Decision 98/256/EC, prohibiting the export, from the United Kingdom, of live cattle and products derived from cattle slaughtered in the United Kingdom, which are liable to enter the food or feed chain or which are destined for use in cosmetics or medical/pharmaceutical products.

The ban on the export of UK beef was issued in March 1996, due to the high incidence of BSE cases in the UK at the time. The provisions of this Decision state that the UK will be able to export live cattle born after 1 August 1996, and bovine meat and products produced after 15 June 2005, under the same terms as other Member States.

The export ban on UK cattle, their meat and products, has been in place since March 1996. In 1999, the ban was amended to allow de-boned beef and beef products from the UK produced under the Date-based Export Scheme (DBES) to be exported. Under the DBES, the UK could export beef and products from cattle born after 1 August 1996, subject to a series of strict and limited conditions. These included requirements that the animal was between 6 and 30 months old, had been clearly traced and identified throughout its lifetime, its mother did not develop BSE, and that beef from cattle older than 9 months was de-boned.

In proposing to end the ban, the Commission laid out very clear conditions which had to be met before the restrictions on UK beef exports could be lifted. Firstly, the UK would have to have a BSE incidence below 200 cases per million animals, and secondly, the EU Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) would have to deliver a favourable report on the enforcement of BSE controls in the UK and its compliance with EU legislation in this field.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) issued an Opinion in May 2004, confirming that BSE incidence in the UK was below 200 cases per million, and therefore not anymore considered a high BSE risk country. In June 2005, an inspection carried out by the EU Food and Veterinary Office confirmed that BSE controls were being properly enforced in the UK, and that its compliance with EU legislation, particularly in relation to identification and registration of bovine animals and testing, was satisfactory.

In the interest of clarity and coherence the following Decisions have also been repealed: Commission Decision 98/351/EC setting the date on which dispatch from Northern Ireland of bovine products under the Export Certified Herds Scheme may commence; Council Decision 98/256/EC and Commission Decision 1999/514/EC setting the date on which dispatch from the United Kingdom of bovine products under the date-based export scheme may commence.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 2 May 2006.