


Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	1997/2066(INI)	Procedure completed
Follow-up to the recommendations on the bovine spongiform encephalopathy BSE		
Subject 3.10.08.05 Animal diseases 4.60.04.04 Food safety		

Key players			
European Parliament			
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	<div><div>AGRI</div>Agriculture and Rural Development</div> <div><div>ENVI</div>Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection</div>		
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2045	17/11/1997
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2034	20/10/1997
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2028	22/09/1997
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2025	22/07/1997
	Health	2013	05/06/1997

Key events			
23/04/1997	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
05/06/1997	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
22/09/1997	Debate in Council	2028	
20/10/1997	Debate in Council	2034	
06/11/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
17/11/1997	Debate in Council	2045	
18/11/1997	Debate in Parliament		Summary
18/11/1997	Decision by Parliament	A4-0362/1997	
18/11/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1997/2066(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Special committee/Committee of inquiry
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 207
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	TEMP/4/08817

Documentation gateway

Document attached to the procedure		COM(1997)0509	20/10/1997	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0362/1997 OJ C 371 08.12.1997, p. 0004	06/11/1997	EP	

Follow-up to the recommendations on the bovine spongiform encephalopathy BSE

The European Commission adopted its final report on the follow up of the European Parliament's recommendations in relation to the continuing BSE crisis. This document outlines the progress made since the end of the inquiry by Parliament, in particular with regard to eradication of BSE, protection of public health and restoration of consumer confidence. According to the report the investigations in progress have shown that there are malfunctions in the official monitoring of meat production in the Member States and the Commission will therefore take steps to strengthen the system of veterinary controls in the Union in order to improve the safety of foodstuffs and to prevent fraud. The report draws particular attention to an ambitious work programme on food safety which it will implement and monitor in close cooperation with the other Community institutions and with the Member States. Subsequent progress will be described in other reports which it will submit twice a year to Parliament and the Council. The Commission also stresses that the number of cases of BSE has fallen sharply, in particular because of the slaughter of about 1.7 million cattle over thirty months, as provided for by the Florence agreement. The number of known cases has thus fallen from 3 000 new cases a month in 1992/93 to less than 500 in 1997. The Commission reiterates that it will not hesitate to use the legal means at its disposal to ensure that the legislation is correctly implemented. A considerable number of other steps undertaken in relation to the management of this matter (mainly internal reorganization) are also pointed out to members. With regard to the disciplinary measures called for by the European Parliament, the Commission states that it has studied the question and found no grounds to justify starting such a procedure. It should be noted that the Commission shares Parliament's view concerning compensation for the victims of nv-CJD, a human version of the transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. Lastly, the Commission highlights some major problems which will have to be dealt with in future: - how to ensure that the Union's exports do not face unjustified restrictions on access to the world market while remaining able to set the level of protection for human health it considers appropriate; - provision of a derogation for pharmaceutical products as analysis of risk must also take their beneficial effects into account so as to avoid a shortage of essential medicines in the Community; - how to ensure the full implementation of Community legislation when the responsibility for effective checks on its implementation rests with the Member States, the Commission's role essentially being to check how they perform this task. Here the Commission suggests that the Member States should adopt a more common approach with regard to procedures, organization, teaching standards and training of their inspectors. ?

Follow-up to the recommendations on the bovine spongiform encephalopathy BSE

The committee adopted the report by Reimer BÖGE (EPP, D), thereby winding up its proceedings, after a marathon four-hour voting session. The committee was set up in order to monitor how far the reforms made by the Commission and the United Kingdom met the demands put forward by the committee and Parliament last February. The committee welcomed the significant progress made in certain areas, while remaining critical of the shortcomings which remained. Mr BÖGE was satisfied with the achievements of the committee and said that the threat of a motion of censure had enabled Parliament to assert its rights vis-à-vis the Commission and carve out a position within the institutional system where it could carry out its supervisory role effectively. The reorganisation of the scientific committees reflects a drive for greater transparency. The Commission has undertaken to draw up proper legislation to protect the health of consumers, in particular a framework directive on food law. The Commission departments involved have been reorganised, with monitoring functions being separated from legislative activities. The report argues that the best way to dispose of carcasses is by rendering them down for the manufacture of meat and bone-meal, provided that strict sterilisation standards are met (133°C, 3 bar for 20 minutes) and that carcasses of sick animals or those unfit for human consumption are not used. It calls for these high standards to form the basis for negotiation within the WTO. The report also says that labelling rules are still inadequate and calls for the ban on feeding such meal to ruminants to be clearly and legibly marked, along with the ingredients. Victims of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease are due to receive financial assistance from the EU, which will be channelled through associations of victims' families. At its October part-session in Strasbourg, Parliament adopted a budget amendment to provide the necessary funding. The report deplores the fact that, while most of the Commission officials implicated in the BSE case have been assigned to other duties, none have been penalised. However, MEPs welcomed the promise given by the Commission President, Mr SANTER, to amend the disciplinary provisions of the Staff Regulations. The United Kingdom's port checks, through which the embargo is supposed to be enforced, remain a weak point but, the report says, the Commission should also make efforts to monitor any loopholes. However, it does welcome the measures (documentation, surveillance, cutting up, staining) taken to ensure that meat which is unfit for human consumption is not released on to the market (even though these measures have come too late) but stresses that such efforts must not be confined to the plants visited by Parliament's delegation to the UK. ?

Follow-up to the recommendations on the bovine spongiform encephalopathy BSE

In adopting a joint resolution of the PSE, PPE, UPE, ELDR, GUE/NGL, V and EDN Groups by 427 votes to 33 with 45 abstentions, the European Parliament has given its support to the conclusions of the report by Mr Reimer BÖGE (PPE, D). The Commission's action is approved, with a number of reservations and a call for careful surveillance. Parliament instructs its committees of inquiry to monitor the Commission's application of the recommendations of its temporary committee of inquiry into BSE on the basis of the half-yearly progress reports which the Commission has undertaken to provide. It calls on the Commission, at the next Intergovernmental Conference, to join with it in calling for full codecision powers to be granted to Parliament for all sectors of the common agricultural policy. As the latest results of scientific research have proved the existence of a close link between BSE and new variant Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease, Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States to allocate the necessary financial resources in order to express their solidarity with the families of the victims of this disease. Regarding disciplinary provisions, it calls on the Commission to review the Staff Regulations before 1999 in order to introduce more flexibility into disciplinary procedures. It recommends the organization of a joint conference with the Commission towards the end of 1998 in order to establish which of its committee of inquiry's recommendations have not been applied and to evaluate the consequences thereof. Finally, it calls for measures to ensure that a Member State's government is in future required to send one of its members to appear before a European Parliament committee of inquiry where necessary.