

Food Standards Australia New Zealand Response to Questions on Notice from Senate RRAT Committee briefing held 25 February 2013

Question 1 What is the size of the cattle herds in the Netherlands and Croatia?

According to <http://faostat.fao.org/site/573/DesktopDefault.aspx?PageID=573#ancor>, the cattle population of Croatia is on average 0.45 million head and the Netherlands 3.94 million head over the last three years.

Country/year	2009	2010	2011
Croatia	0.447 million	0.444 million	0.446 million
Netherlands	3.968 million	3.975 million	3.885 million

Question 2 Describe the beef traceability system in the European Union

Traceability systems for beef in EU countries are mandatory under Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000, updated by Regulation (EC) No 1791/2006. The regulation establishes cattle identification and registration systems and a labelling system for beef and veal. The regulation mandates that any beef product destined for human consumption must be traceable across the entire production chain including a complete history of the animal from which the product was sourced. It is mandatory to have registration of and electronic ear tags for all cattle within EU countries and this information must be maintained in a central electronic database. Cattle without ear tags are not permitted to be moved to establishments or holdings and cannot be slaughtered for human consumption. The system allows efficient monitoring on the status of imports (and exports) as well as exchange of information on animal health, inspections, and identification and health emergencies.

Complementary to the above EC regulation is the TRACES, a trans-European web-based system that allows exchange of electronic certification and other importation documents between the competent authorities responsible for animal health controls. The system covers imports and exports of animals, animal products (semen, ova, embryos, hatching eggs, and animal by-products including meat and bone meal (MBM) and material containing MBM), and products of animal origin (fresh meat, meat products, meat preparations, and milk). The system has been in place since 2004 and all EU Member States are required to use it by law. The system distinguishes trade within the EU, imports from third countries into the EU, and exports to a third country from the EU. All fresh meat and meat products are traceable from retail to source animal by means of a unique number which is shown as a bar code on the packaging and can be entered into TRACES. The bar code contains production information such as source animal, parent animals, feed that was eaten by the animal, and the farm where the animal resided. The bar code number is retained with all carcasses and parts of carcasses during processing.

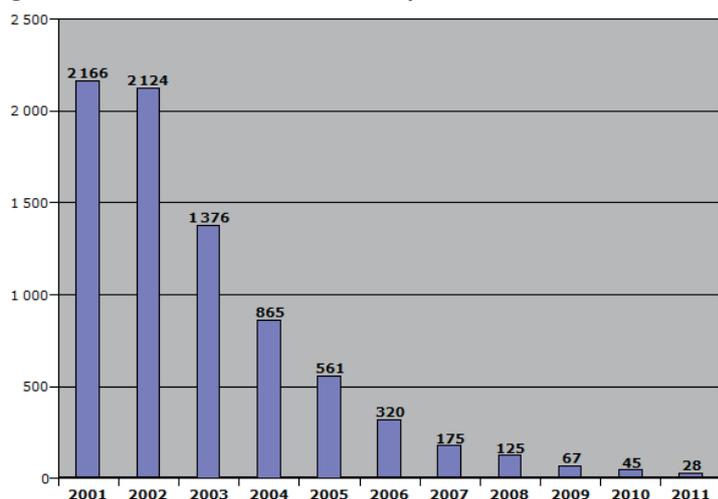
Cattle identification and traceability of beef in the Netherlands and Croatia is described more fully in section 10 of the BSE Food Safety Risk Assessment Report for the Netherlands and the BSE Food Safety Risk Assessment Report for Croatia respectively, available on the FSANZ website. The summaries of these two assessment reports were provided to the Senate RRAT Committee at the briefing held on 25 February 2013.

Question 3 How much BSE testing is conducted in European Union countries?

In 2011, a total of 6,361,591 bovine animals were tested in the EU 27 member countries under the framework of the BSE monitoring programmes. Under this framework, all at risk animals and those animals suspected of a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) must be examined in accordance with Article 12.2 of Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain TSEs (TSE Regulation). 28 bovine animals tested positive. Of the 28 BSE cases identified in 2011, 23 were submitted for discriminatory testing by the Member States, on a voluntary basis. These tests confirmed 17 cases of classical BSE, 3 cases of atypical H-type BSE and 3 cases of atypical L-type BSE. Among the total of 6,361,591 bovine animals tested by rapid tests, 1,090,192 were risk bovine animals and 5,270,593 were healthy animals. No BSE cases were found in Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden. The number of BSE cases and the overall prevalence in tested animals decreased by 27 % in 2010 and a further 38% in 2011. The trend in BSE cases within the European Union is shown in Figure 1.

The above is extracted from the [report on the monitoring of ruminants for the presence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy in the EU in 2011](#) published by the European Commission’s Health and Consumers Directorate - General.

Figure 1: Trend of the number of BSE positive cases in the 27 EU Member States since 2001



Question 4 Describe the requirements for Category C BSE risk countries under the previous BSE policy

In 2002, the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA, the predecessor of FSANZ) established the Australian BSE Country Categorisation Committee for Human Food Products (ABCCC) to assess data supplied by countries for country BSE risk assessment and categorisation. The BSE risk categorisation system developed at the time was based on a combination of criteria set out in Articles 2.3.13.2 - 2.3.13.6 of the International Animal Health Code published by the International Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Geographical BSE Risk (GBR) assessments undertaken by the Scientific Steering Committee of the European Commission. The ABCCC allocated countries to one of the following four categories, according to the level of BSE risk:

Category A – beef and beef products from these countries are regarded as posing a negligible risk to human health.

Category B – these countries, while not reporting cases of BSE, may have been exposed to high risk factors, such as the importation of high-risk meat and bone meal.

Category C – countries in this category are known to have considerable exposure to BSE risk materials, but have not reported indigenous cases of BSE.

Category D – beef and beef products from countries in this category pose the highest level of risk and will be refused entry to Australia. These countries have reported cases of indigenous BSE in their herds.

Based on information provided by Croatia in 2002 regarding ruminant populations, animal trade, animal feed, meat and bonemeal bans, specified risk material bans, BSE surveillance, rendering and feed practices, and animal slaughter methods, ANZFA assigned Croatia *Category C* status in April 2003. This status was similar to the *GBR III* status assigned to Croatia by the European Commission’s Scientific Steering Committee in June 2003.

Beef or beef products from countries being assigned Category A, B or C status were imported into Australia under the former BSE policy, subject to import certification requirements. The stringency of the certification requirements for individual countries is proportionate to the BSE risk category as shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Certification requirements of countries according to BSE risk status

BSE risk status	Mandatory declaration required on certificate issued by designated national government authority
Category A	The beef and beef product is derived from bovine animals that have been born, raised and slaughtered in Category ‘A’ risk countries or zones. The category A country must be specified in the documentation.
Category B	<p>The beef and/or beef product is derived from bovine animals that have lived in Category ‘B’ risk countries or zones where the feeding of ruminant-derived meat meal to bovine animals is banned and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. there has not been exposure to high risk factors; ii. ante- and post-mortem veterinary inspection is carried out on all bovine animals; and iii. the product does not contain, and is not derived from, BSE risk materials. <p>The category B country must be specified in the documentation.</p>
Category C	<p>The beef and/or beef product is derived from bovine animals that have lived in Category ‘C’ risk countries or zones and that satisfies the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. animals affected by BSE and, for females, their last progeny born within 2 years prior to or after the onset of clinical symptoms, were slaughtered and completely destroyed; and ii. the feeding of ruminant-derived meat meal to bovine animals is banned; iii. ante- and post-mortem veterinary inspection is carried out on all bovine animals; and iv. the bovine animals from which the beef and/or beef product originates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - were 30 months of age or younger at slaughter; and - were permanently identified enabling them to be traced back to the dam and herd of origin; and - were not the progeny of BSE suspect or confirmed females; and - either were born after the date of the ban on feeding ruminant-derived meat meal to bovine animals; or were born and remained in herds in which no case of BSE had been confirmed during the preceding seven years; and v. the beef and/or beef product does not contain, and is not derived from, BSE risk materials, and vi. a system is in operation enabling the beef and/or beef product to be traced back to the abattoir and animals from which it was derived; and vii. verifiable means exist for assessing compliance. <p>The category C country must be specified in the documentation.</p>