



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 6/19/2006

GAIN Report Number: GM6020

Germany

Livestock and Products

Germany adjusts BSE testing age to EU level

2006

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Report Highlights:

Germany raises the age for mandatory Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) testing for cattle from 24 to 30 months, thus aligning it with the EU standard. The change in policy is expected to lower the German industry's mandatory BSE tests expenses by US\$ 5 to 6 million (4 - 5 million Euro) and is intended to bring the testing costs in line with EU competition.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Berlin [GM1]
[GM]

The German *Bundesrat* (comparable to U.S. Senate) passed a law on May 16, 2006, that aligns the German BSE testing requirements to those of the EU.

The EU requires routine BSE testing at slaughter for all cattle above 30 months of age. Only at risk animals¹ have to be tested at above 24 months of age. In contrast, the German government required routine BSE tests for all cattle above 24 months of age, irrespective of their risk status. The mandatory BSE tests went into effect in January 2001.

The adjustment concludes more than two years of discussions in which the German meat industry argued that the stricter testing requirement puts them at a competitive disadvantage compared to other EU producers. They also asserted that the German policy did not provide extra benefits to the consumers. While the German Ministry for Food, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection (BMELV) insisted on an additional safety period it did acknowledge that the additional testing increased costs. Currently, the transmission through meat and bone meal (MBM) is the most widely accepted theory for contracting BSE. MBM was banned from animal feed in Germany in December 2000. Thus, theoretically, from June 2003 onwards, all animals slaughtered at 30 months or younger should not have had contact with feed containing MBM.

The harmonization with the less restrictive EU requirements was supported by scientists of the German Federal Research Institute for Animal Health (*Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, FLI*) and the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (*Bundesinstitut fuer Risikobewertung, BfR*). Both organizations concluded that lifting the general testing age in Germany to the EU level of 30 months would not pose a threat to public health.

According to BMELV estimates, the additional costs for BSE testing of animals between 24 and 30 months was between U.S. \$ 5 and 6 million² (4 to 5 million Euro³) in 2004 and 2005. This put the German meat industry at a disadvantage compared to their EU competitors, whose mandatory testing age started at 30 months.

The law still has to be signed by the BMELV Minister and will go into effect the day after publication in the Federal Gazette (*Bundesgesetzblatt*). This is expected to occur by June 23, 2006.

Related reports:

Number	Date Released	Title
GM1033	11/27/2001	One year after the detection of BSE in Germany (Includes a detailed outline of the German risk management system)
GM3006	02/27/2003	German Cattle Identification and Beef Labeling
GM6003	01/27/2006	BSE in Germany - Update Covering 2005

¹ Risk animals include deceased animals, animals that died in transit, downers (i.e. non-ambulatory animals), animals that show any kind of disease symptoms, animals that show clinical BSE symptoms, or were part of destroyed herds or cohorts of a previously confirmed BSE case (birth cohort = animals born on the same farm within 12 months before or after the birth; feeding cohort = animals that were raised together with animal with confirmed BSE within the first 12 months of life of the latter, all offspring).

² Exchange rate as of June 19, 2006: 1 US\$ = 0.791 Euro; 1 Euro = US\$ 1.2636.

³ Calculation based on average costs for a BSE test of 16.250 Euro and the number of animals slaughtered between the age of 24 and 30 months in the years of 2004 and 2005.

GM6004	02/16/2006	Germany plans to adjust BSE testing age to EU level
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