



Foreign Agricultural Service

**GAIN Report**

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## Italy

### Livestock and Products

## Mad Cow Concerns Spread to Italy

### 2000

Approved by:

**Elizabeth Berry**

**U.S. Embassy**

Prepared by:

Franco Regini

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**Report Highlights:** The furor in France over the discovery that some beef from cattle infected with BSE may have been sold in supermarkets has spread to Italy, which imports about two thirds of its live animals for fattening from France, with beef consumption declining 10-20% last week alone. The Italian Council of Ministers, on November 17, adopted measures to address consumer fears until a common decision is taken by the EU. These measures include banning imports of French cattle older than 18 months and beef-on-the-bone, requiring that all beef in retail outlets be labeled immediately based on country of origin and that all adult cattle be tested for BSE.

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report , IT0039

The near-panic in France over the discovery that some beef from cattle infected with BSE may have been sold in supermarkets has spread to Italy which imports about two-thirds half of its live animals for fattening from France. New articles have come out daily describing consumer demands and concerns over the issue. Many schools have banned beef from their cafeterias, and beef consumption declined 10-20% last week alone.

Both Health Minister Veronesi and Prime Minister Amato have expressed their belief that Italian beef is safe. The Italian Ministry of Health has already banned the use of animal meal in feed for ruminants. To date, no native case of BSE has been identified (although several live animals imported from within the EU developed the disease) and Italy has recorded no deaths caused by the bovine variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Italian officials had hoped for guidance from the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the European Union Veterinarian Committee in Brussels. Since no help was forthcoming, the Italian Council of Ministers met, November 17<sup>th</sup>, to establish a packet of measures to be applied until a common decision is taken by the EU. These measures include a ban on importing cattle older than 18 months (most of the imported animals are under 18 months) and on beef-on-the-bone. Additionally, all cattle over 24 months of age are to be tested for BSE. The testing is expected to begin in January. Currently the test is being made by random sampling. A requirement that all beef in retail outlets be labeled with the origin of beef (city and country) and location of the slaughter house is expected to go into effect well ahead of the date currently required by EU regulations.

Producers are supporting the ban on imports, fearing that the declining demand for beef in France may lead their counterparts to dump exports over the border. According the Italy Livestock Association, BSE is already taking a heavy toll on the sector with measures to cope with mad cow fears costing farmers 500,000 lire (\$240) per head. Compounding the issue are problems faced by the Italian rendering and slaughter industries in disposing of Specified Risk Material (SRM), or the portions of a carcass that are considered to have a risk of transmitting BSE. Under EU regulations, the material must be separated from the meat destined for human consumption and cannot be used for animal feed. Previously the SRM material had been stored at the rendering plants but new regulations prohibit this practice. As a result, with nowhere to dispose of the material, many slaughterhouse are having to stop production.

With the expectation of a general ban on animal protein meal for feed consumption, there is anticipated a dramatic increase in the feed use of soybean meal, most of which is either imported directly or locally produced from imported beans. Some groups are also warning that the ban on animal meals will force Europe to accept genetically modified soybeans and meal.