

(Tentative translation)
**The Food Safety Risk Assessment Related to the Import of
Beef and Beef Offal from the U.S.A. and Canada.**
- Summary -

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Secretariat of the Food Safety Commission,
Cabinet Office
JAPAN

1. Background

On May 24, 2005, in compliance with the Food Safety Basic Law, Article. 24.3., the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF) requested the Food Safety Commission (FSC) to conduct its food safety risk assessment on human health, related to the import of beef and beef offal from U.S.A. and Canada, implementation of which is laid down in Article.11.1.

In response to this request, the Prion Expert Committee, a subcommittee of FSC, convened 10 separate sessions for assessment and deliberation and drafted the assessment report on October 31, 2005.

Then based on the decision made at the 118th FSC meeting held on November 2, 2005, FSC set the four weeks of public comment period to accept opinions and information on this draft assessment report until November 29, 2005.

2. The Draft Assessment Report

(1) Conclusion

The Prion Expert Committee concludes that science-based assessment was difficult in proving the equivalence of the BSE risk in beef and beef offal between the U.S.A./Canada and Japan. It is mainly because the Committee, from both qualitative and quantitative perspective, had insufficient or fewer clear-cut data available for these two North American countries, thus it had to carry out the assessment on the assumption that both the U.S.A. and Canada adhere to their BSE control measures and regulations. On the other hand, provided that their export programs (SRM removal from the all cattle, 20 months aged or younger cattle, etc.) are observed strictly, the difference of risk level between beef and beef offal imported from U.S.A./Canada and those processed from the Japanese cattle of all ages is thought to be very small.

(2) Addendum to Conclusion

- It must be noted that the risk management agencies have to fulfill their accountability to the people on the basis of risk assessment report. If these agencies determine to lift the beef import ban, they should bear the responsibility for commitment to ensuring the export countries' observance of the export programs.
- The risk assessment was carried out on the assumption that the export programs would be strictly observed. Establishment of a framework, therefore, would be crucial to secure the above mentioned observance, from both hardware and software perspectives. Should the export program be not observed; the result of this assessment would be entirely inapplicable.
- The following issues discussed during the assessment sessions should also be of note :
 - ()The efficacy was unclear with regard to the monitoring of the SRM removal

performed in the U.S.A./Canada slaughter houses. In addition, we could not eliminate misgivings about the practicability of the safety warranty given by the risk management agencies. The monitoring system must be strengthened.

- () To get a grasp of the BSE infection status correctly and implement appropriately safety measures in the U.S.A. and Canada, effective surveillance must be maintained constantly.
 - () To prevent BSE amplification, the use of SRM must be prohibited completely. In other words, the ban must be applied not only to cattle feed but also to all other animal food/feed that may cause cross-contamination.
- The risk management agencies are required to set up a system so that the risk reduction measures can be implemented properly for beef and beef offal exported to Japan.
 - Furthermore, even after the import ban is lifted, the risk management agencies should be required to halt the import again, if the human risk becomes apparent because the compliance of the control measures fails on the part of the exporting countries, including such cases where no evidence is provided to prove cattle age or SRM is not removed effectively.

3. Roadmap

- (1) The period for the public comments is set for four weeks from November 2 to November 29, and the public meetings for an exchange of the views are to be held at major cities in Japan from November 14 to 22, 2005.
- (2) After summarizing the public comments, the Food Safety Commission is to deliberate the draft assessment report and notify the final report to the MHLW and MAFF.