

STATEMENT BY SWITZERLAND AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON
SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

1. At the Committee's meeting on 29-30 May 1996, the Swiss delegation informed the Committee of the situation concerning bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) (see document G/SPS/W/68, dated 14 June 1996). This communication reports on recent developments.
2. Between 1990 and 26 September 1996, 224 BSE cases were reported in Switzerland, 39 of them in 1996. Compared with 1995, this means a 30 per cent reduction. In all, 13 affected animals were born after the ban on animal-derived meal, six of them immediately after the ban of 1 December 1990 (the feed products in question already delivered to breeders had not been recalled and could therefore still be used).
3. As to fodder imports, new sanitary requirements concerning necessary treatment and banned products will be entering into force on 1 October 1996 (see notification G/SPS/N/CHE/1, of 14 August) in order to bring these requirements into line with those in force in Switzerland and the European Union.
4. The Government has also decided to slaughter all direct descendants of BSE-affected cows, a total of approximately 100 animals.
5. On 16 December, the Swiss Government submitted a proposal to Parliament to obtain BSE-free cattle. More particularly, the proposed measures include slaughtering by mid-1999 the part of the cattle population that includes most of the potential BSE carriers, in other words, all animals born before 1 December 1990. This amounts to about 230,000 animals, roughly one third of all cows. Parliament will discuss this matter at its next session, in December 1996.
6. In the opinion of the Government, this measure should also help to restore consumer confidence and confidence abroad. In this connection, it should be noted that the competent veterinary authorities might also take certain frontier measures. The aim of such measures, which are still under examination, would be to protect consumers in the same way for national products and imported products. They would, where necessary, be measures adopted on a non-discriminatory basis, in conformity with the SPS Agreement, particularly Article 2.3, and with Article XX.B of GATT 1994. Furthermore, such measures may be adapted, in accordance with Article 6 of the SPS Agreement, depending on the objective circumstances of the supplier countries.