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AMIRO/SONSTRO, 25-/25

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BSE-Kühe

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Born from crisis

Mad cow disease (BSE)? Many will barely remember the deadly animal disease that turns the brains of infested cows into a holeridden sponge. More than two decades ago, the disease transmitted via infectious feed was the prevailing topic for months - and the trigger for a crisis in consumer protection. When the first case of BSE in a Germanborn cow was announced at the end of 2000, uncertainty, fear and panic immediately spread. It had been known since 1996 that BSE could also infect humans and cause a new variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. Trust in the food industry, regional authorities and politics plummeted. The BSE crisis was the final catalyst for a reform of administrative consumer protection. Hedda von Wedel, then President of the Federal Court of Auditors, was commissioned with a corresponding expert opinion. It was published in July 2001 and recommended that risk assessment and risk communication should henceforth be separated from risk management. The Federal Institute for Consumer Health Protection and Veterinary Medicine (BqVV), which was dissolved in November 2002, gave rise to the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) and the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL). This established a clear demarcation between the areas of risk assessment and risk management. Independent and free from external influence, the BfR examines the health risks that can emanate from food. everyday products and chemicals. The BVL and other consumer protection institutions can use these assessments as a guide, as can ministries, authorities and the public.BSE has long since disappeared from the headlines. However, new crises have followed, such as the contamination of food with a highly dangerous EHEC strain in 2011. More recently, the health risks of Listeria, dioxin and Sars-CoV-2 have also been under discussion. Even 20 years after its foundation, the BfR is not running out of topics.