

INFORMATION

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Call for ban on cloning for food after report shows major concerns over animal welfare

Eurogroup for Animals is calling for the European Commission to ban the cloning of animals for food immediately after a report by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) outlined grave concerns over its impact on animal welfare while emphasising there are still too many uncertainties about the technology.

EFSA was charged in March last year to investigate the implications of cloning animals for food, and today it has published its findings in a final report. In January it already came out with a draft report which also acknowledged that cloning was an inefficient method which caused animals to suffer.

Eurogroup for Animals, which helped to advise EFSA on the animal welfare aspects, is now urging the Commission to ban the trade and import of products from cloned animals and their offspring once and for all. It is also encouraging the Commission to listen to the advice of its own European Group on Ethics which concluded in January there is no justifiable reason to approve cloning for food. Cloning is an incredibly wasteful process with only about five animals out of a 100 being born alive. The ones who do live die earlier and suffer from more defects than normal animals.

Sonja Van Tichelen, director of Eurogroup for Animals, said: "The science is now there. The evidence is clear: there are problems with it.

"The EU is now obligated to follow its own rules. Under the general farm directive a breeding technique that causes suffering should not be allowed. The treaty protocol on animal welfare says full regards should be paid to the welfare of animals. In the light of these legal obligations, it leaves the EU with only one option: to ban animal cloning for food."

Research on both sides of the Atlantic show people do not want food products from cloned animals. The Food and Drug Administration in the US commissioned the report Focus Groups on the Public's Perception on the Health Risk Associated with Products from Animal Clones, which showed the majority of Americans would oppose it. Each of the focus groups surveyed for the report brought up serious health and

ethical concerns, and all of the parents questioned said they would never give food products from cloned animals to their own children. Last month research by the Food Standards Agency in Britain indicated consumers were worried about the impact the technology had on animals and questioned what benefits there were.

Mrs Van Tichelen added: "Consumers in neither America nor Europe want to have food products from clones or their offspring, so why introduce it in the first place? People are rightly concerned about this practice being forced on them. Conventional methods work, so there is no need to approve cloning which would cause so many animals to suffer and die."

Eurogroup for Animals is leading a coalition to prevent cloning for food being approved in the European Union. The coalition includes organisations representing anything from farmers, to scientists, consumers and environmentalists.

Later this year the results of a Eurobarometer survey on people's attitudes on food products from cloned animals will be published. The Commission will base any proposals on cloning on the reports by EFSA and the European Group on Ethics, as well as the results of the Eurobarometer.

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Notes:

- Eurogroup for Animals represents animal welfare organisations in nearly each of the European member states. Since it was launched in 1980, the organisation has succeeded in encouraging the European Union to adopt higher legal standards of animal protection. For more information about Eurogroup, visit www.eurogroupforanimals.org.
- Cloned animals die younger and suffer more defects than normal animals. Many clones suffer from defects such as contracted tendons, respiratory failure, limb and head deformities, heart disease and kidney problems. Dolly the sheep, the first mammal cloned from an adult cell, had to be put down at the early age of six after developing arthritis and lung disease. According to research by the National Institute for Agricultural Research in France, clones of cows reach puberty 62 days later and 56 kilos heavier than normal cows.
- Cloning for food is being opposed in the US by organisations such as Center for Food Safety, American Anti-Vivisection Society, Consumers Union, Farm Sanctuary, Food & Water Watch, and the Humane Society of the United States.
- Recent opinion polls also demonstrate that Americans are against cloning for food. A Gallup poll found that more than 60% believe the practice is immoral, and a survey by the Consumers Union discovered 69% of Americans have concerns about cloned meat and dairy product in the food supply.
- Cloning for food is being opposed in Europe by organisations such as

Scientists for Global Responsibility, Friends of the Earth, Centre for Sustainable Alternatives, European Public Health Alliance, European Farmers Coordination, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, FARM, Biodynamic Agricultural Association, and Euro Coop, the European Association of Consumer Cooperatives.