

INFORMATION

Brussels, 14 January 2008

European Commission guilty of ignoring its own legislation

Eurogroup for Animals, which represents animal welfare organisations from all over Europe, will be filing a complaint of maladministration against the European Commission with the European Ombudsman. By delaying action on the cloning of animals for food, the Commission has failed to respect the EU directive for the protection of farm animals, which states that reproduction techniques which cause animals to suffer cannot be used. Commissioners decided yesterday in Strasbourg to once again put off submitting a proposal, claiming more scientific answers were needed as well as a debate with international trading partners. Eurogroup for Animals is appalled by this wait-and-see approach as all the scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that cloning is harmful for the animals.

Eurogroup director Sonja Van Tichelen said: *“We are shocked that the Commission is disrespecting its own rules because it values trade relations over the welfare of animals and the wishes of consumers. The Commission has let down animals and people by failing to propose a ban on the cloning of animals for food. The wasteful practice has been shown to cause animals to suffer at every stage, yet the Commission has chosen to ignore all the scientific evidence, the majority of Europeans who are against it, as well as the advice of the EU’s own institutions.*

“Eurogroup will be calling on member states to apply the directive for the protection of farm animals and introduce national bans if the Commission continues to do nothing.”

A decision is needed now as European consumers already run the risk of unknowingly digesting the products of cloned animals and their offspring:

- In March 2008 Dundee Paradise and Dundee Paratrooper, the offspring of a clone, were put up for auction in Bristol, England.
- In 2008 Spaniard Victoriano del Rio had his prize-winning bull Alcalde cloned by American company ViaGen.
- American companies already have semen and embryos of cloned animals that could be sold. Donald Coover admitted in July 2008 that he had already been openly selling semen from cloned bulls and that other companies had been doing the same thing.

The Commission is also considering developing a mandatory labelling scheme for products derived from cloned animals.

Director Van Tichelen commented: *“The proposal to introduce a labelling scheme is hypocritical and misleading the consumer as traceability of food from cloned animals is problematic. By not taking action, the Commission is seriously undermining citizens’ confidence in the EU.*

Eurogroup believes the cloning of animals for food production is totally unacceptable and unnecessary:

- The cloning process is inefficient, wastes animals’ lives, and causes pain, suffering and distress at all stages
- The routine use of cloning would greatly reduce genetic diversity within livestock populations, increasing the chances of whole herds being wiped out by a disease to which they would all be equally susceptible
- Animal cloning is being pursued as a method of food production despite consumers stating in various surveys that they are against it

Cloning of animals for food is being opposed by the majority of Europeans. Nearly six out of ten people in Europe (58%) feel that animal cloning for food production should never be justified, according to a Eurobarometer survey published in October 2008. In addition, 43% said they were “not at all likely” to buy food from cloned animals while 41% said they would not consider products from the offspring of cloned animals.

The European Group on Ethics said in its final opinion published on 11 January 2008 that it “does not see convincing arguments to justify the production of food from clones and their offspring”.

The European Food Safety Authority outlined grave concerns over the impact of cloning on animal welfare in its final opinion published on 24 July 2008, while emphasising there are still too many uncertainties about the technology.

The European Parliament voted on 3 September 2008 with 622 votes in favour of a motion for resolution urging the Commission to prohibit cloning of animals for food and any products from cloned animals and their offspring.

EU legislation also puts legal constraints on cloning for food as European Directive 98/58/EC states that *“natural or artificial breeding procedures which cause, or are likely to cause, suffering or injury to any of the animals concerned shall not be practiced (Annex, point 20)”*.

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For more information or to receive a copy of the annual report call Steven Blaakman, senior press officer at Eurogroup, on 0032 (0)27400823 or email him on s.blaakman@eurogroupforanimals.org. Outside office hours please call 0032 (0)475 731066.

Notes:

- Eurogroup for Animals represents animal welfare organisations in nearly each of the EU 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 Europe by organisations such as Scientists for Global Responsibility, Friends of the Earth, Centre for Sustainable Alternatives, European Public Health Alliance, European Coordination Via Campesina, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, FARM, Biodynamic Agricultural Association, and Euro Coop, the European Association of Consumer Cooperatives.