



Open letter

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

28 February 2008

Dear Mr. Barroso,

Re: cloning of animals for food

The EU will soon be deciding whether or not to allow cloning for food production and the import of food products from cloned farm animals.

It is the view of the undersigned organisations that the cloning of animals for food production is totally unacceptable and unnecessary. There are strong concerns that the use of cloning for animal production could lead to further industrialisation of livestock production with the related animal health and welfare problems. It would also be contrary to the objectives of the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy to “mitigate climate change”, with animal production contributing 18% to the total of global human-induced greenhouse gas emissions¹ and to “Safeguard the earth’s capacity to support life in all its diversity.” In addition it is worrying that a decision could be taken without widespread public consultation and debate.

We call on the EU to take into account the conclusions of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) Opinion on the ethical aspects of animal cloning for food supply, adopted on 16th January. In its conclusions, the EGE “does not see convincing arguments to justify the production of food from clones and their offspring”. The Group grounds its assumption on the current level of suffering and health problems of surrogate dams and animal clones. It also expresses its concern that intensive breeding techniques may adversely affect animal welfare and asks for a review of current practices to be conducted at European level. The Group recalls that animals are recognized as sentient beings in EU law (Amsterdam Treaty).

The EGE Opinion follows the 11 January publication by EFSA of its draft Scientific Opinion on food safety, animal health and welfare and environmental impact of animal cloning. EFSA concluded that “the health and welfare of a significant proportion of clones has been found to be adversely affected”.

We have concerns about the following aspects of cloning:

- The cloning process is inefficient, wastes animals’ lives and has a huge potential to cause pain, suffering and distress at all stages of the process².
- Farm animals are already seen by some as commodities rather than sentient beings. Cloning would compound this view, leading to less concern for animal welfare and less willingness to address welfare issues.
- The routine use of cloning would greatly reduce genetic diversity within livestock populations, increasing the chances of whole herds being wiped out by disease to which they would all be equally susceptible. In addition the European Commission and the Member States currently provide subsidies to farmers who conserve traditional breeds of livestock through rural development funding. Promoting cloning of farm animals would go against this rural development objective of conserving genetic diversity in farm animals.

¹ Steinfeld et al. (2006). Livestock’s Long Shadow : environmental issues and options. FAO, Rome.

² The rate of survival using cloning by nuclear transfer (percentage of viable offsprings as compared to the number of embryos transferred) is currently 3% in goats, 3-5% in pigs, 8% in sheep and 15-20% in bovine (data presented by Prof. András Dinnyés at EFSA 5th Anniversary, Brussels, November 2007),

- The development of animal cloning as a method of food production is being pursued without public awareness and in spite of well-documented public concerns relating to the use of biotechnology in food production (eg GM foods).
- Routine use of cloning technologies in animal farming would make farmers dependent on patented technologies owned by big companies, compromising food sovereignty.

We therefore call on the European Commission and the EU Member States to support the introduction of an immediate ban on the cloning of animals for food production, and on the import and sale of imported food products from cloned animals and their offspring.

Yours Sincerely,

Sonja Van Tichelen, Director, **Eurogroup for Animals**

G rard Choplin, Coordinator, **European Farmers Coordination (CPE)**

Helen Holder, European Coordinator (GMOs, food and farming), **Friends of the Earth Europe**

Monika Kosińska, Secretary General, **European Public Health Alliance**

Marco Schl ter, Director, **IFOAM EU Group**

Mark Worth, Coordinator, **Food & Water Watch Europe**

Helen Wallace, Director, **Genewatch UK**

Claire Oxborrow, **Friend of the Earth, UK**

Gillian Madill, **Friends of the Earth, US**

David S nchez, **Friends of the Earth, Spain**

Reinhild Benning, **Friends of the Earth, Germany**

Bernard Jarman, **Biodynamic Agricultural Association**

Stuart Parkinson, Executive Director, **Scientists for Global Responsibility**

Susan Curtis, Medicines Director, **Neals Yard Remedies**

Daniel Lesinsky, Director, **Centre for Sustainable Alternatives (CEPTA)**

Stella Semino, **Grupo de Reflexion Rural, Argentina**

Peter Lundgren, **FARM**

Jane O'Meara, **The GM-Free Dorset Campaign**

Anthony Jackson, **Munlochy Virgil (Scotland)**