

Cloned farm animals

Background:

The political debate on food from cloned farm animals has been going on for several years.

In 2008, the European Commission (EC) published a report on cloning, together with a proposal to revise EU legislation. This was quickly followed by a report from the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies, which said that cloning causes suffering to the animals and that the risks of negative effects were grave enough to keep cloned products off the European market. The same year, a Eurobarometer survey indicated that 63% of respondents considered it unlikely they would buy food from clones, while 83% believed that such a food should be labelled if put on sale.

Not surprisingly, inter-institutional discussions on the 2008 proposal made little progress and no agreement could be reached between member states and the European Parliament on any of the issues linked to cloning. Conciliation failed in March 2011 and the European Parliament called upon the Commission to present a proposal on cloning, based on an impact assessment.

Since then, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) updated its [scientific publication on cloning](#) confirming that milk and meat from cloned livestock were safe for human consumption but highlighting the low efficiency of the cloning technique in comparison to other reproduction techniques.

Current situation:

At this stage, food from clones still falls under the scope of the [Novel Food Regulation \(258/97\)](#) and is thus subject to pre-market approval, based on a safety risk assessment. No application for food derived from cloned farmed animals has been submitted so far.

Back in December 2013, the Commission published an impact assessment on cloning together with [two proposals for directives](#). They are now on the table for discussions.

The main aims of these proposals are:

- To ban the use of cloning techniques in the EU for farm animals (bovine, ovine, caprine, porcine and equine species) on a temporary basis;
- To ban the imports of animal clones and the marketing of their food in the EU on a temporary basis

- To review the legislation on the basis of the experience gained by the member states in its implementation and of a scientific review of possible progress made by the technique. The impact assessment accompanying the Commission's proposals suggested that labelling of food from clones' offspring would require major investments and maintenance costs.

In September 2015, Parliament adopted amendments to the proposals including:

- The form of the legal act to be changed from a directive, into a regulation, which EU countries would have to transpose into their national laws, and which would apply directly in all of them.
- The ban is extended to cover:
 - the cloning of all species of farm animals (instead of only bovine, ovine, caprine and equine species under the Commission proposal).
 - Not only animal clones but also their reproductive material, their descendants and any products derived from them.
 - Not only the use of cloning techniques in the EU but also the imports from third countries of animal clones and their descendants, reproductive material, and food and feed of animal origin deriving from animal clones or their descendants.

What's next?:

Following the adoption of the Parliament report on cloning, the text will now be discussed at the EU Council of ministers. The two EU institutions will then have to start negotiating before a legislative proposal can be adopted.

Third countries, where cloning practices exist (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada and the US), are expected to monitor developments closely and demand that measures taken remain science-based.

In the meantime, a [study on the labelling of products from cloned animals and their offspring has been launched](#) by the Commission in 2014. The main objective of this study is to analyse the burden on business operators triggered by the requirement to label food from the offspring of clones. The study will focus on farm animals susceptible to be cloned and used for food production – with particular attention to be given to cattle and pigs. For food products, the study will concentrate on the feasibility of labelling meat and meat products as well as milk and dairy products from the offspring of cloned animals. Results are expected to be available by the end of 2015/beginning of 2016.

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