

CLONING ANIMALS FOR FOOD PRODUCTION (NOVEL FOODS REGULATION)

Thank you for your round robin email regarding the Novel Foods Regulation (EC/258/97) and in particular the proposals by the European Commission on the cloning of animals for food production (COM 2010/0585).

This legislative proposal has been highly controversial not only within the European Institutions, but also among interest groups and citizens. The process of cloning animals has major implications worldwide, be it for the purpose of pharmaceuticals testing, aiding famine in the third world or providing alternatives to organ donors. The positive and negative arguments are numerous on both sides, with each camp bringing serious points to the table, so I fully appreciate why you wish to bring this to my attention.

The European Parliament repeatedly reiterated its opposition to meat and milk produced from cloned animals and wanted to exclude food derived from cloned animals or their offspring from the Novel Foods Regulation. However, the European Commission, backed by many member states including the UK, wanted a more limited, temporary (5 year) ban that would apply to clones and not their progeny. The European Commission proposed this ban as a way of breaking the deadlock with the European Parliament over the Novel Foods Directive.

However, on the 28th of March all-night conciliation talks to update the Novel Foods Regulation broke down without agreement after Council refused a final compromise offer from the European Parliament. This means that the current Novel Foods Regulation, adopted in 1997, will remain in force and your previous meat and milk from providers will remain under the same legislation as before.

Conservative MEPs have always been wary about the issue of cloning of animals for food production due to ethical and animal welfare concerns, including the high mortality rate of both clones and surrogate mothers and the often increased size of cloned animals when they are born, causing severe animal welfare problems for the surrogate mother. Nevertheless, world experts now assert that such problems have been overcome. According to the findings of EFSA (European Food Safety Authority), meat and milk from cloned animals is no different to that from a conventionally bred animal.

The ECR Group supported the five year temporary ban for cloning related to food production but urged the Commission to use this time to monitor the scientific and technological development of cloning in order to assess whether, or when, these measures should be removed. In the meantime, the ECR Group believes that cloning for research, for the production of pharmaceuticals and for the conservation of endangered species is acceptable.

My UK Conservative colleague and strong supporter of animal welfare Struan Stevenson MEP said that MEPs had been too eager to over-complicate the issue by demanding complex labelling and traceability measures which would have placed great pressure on EU producers. Unfortunately the lack of compromise means we have lost the chance to have any regulation at all.

Giles Chichester MEP