

## Cloning regulation should not cripple small business

Written by Ulrike Müller on 11 June 2015 in Opinion  
Opinion

The key question surrounding the proposed ban on commercial animal cloning is just how extensive that ban should be, says Ulrike Müller.



The welfare and health of humans and animals are very sensitive matters, both on an emotional and an ethical level.

Therefore, the issues surrounding these topics must be approached with a certain professional distance and in a well-structured manner.

Obviously, this applies to the cloning of animals kept for farming purposes - an issue that requires the clarification of a number of questions related to human and animal health and welfare. I have clear priorities for assessing whether or not to regulate this type of cloning, and how to do so.

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I believe that it is our duty to guarantee the highest levels of food safety, that livestock breeding is ethically responsible and avoids unnecessary suffering and that any legislation on the subject should be pragmatic and lean, securing the priorities outlined above without going too far and creating unnecessary costs or hurdles for farmers, breeders and food companies.

It is important to remember that most agricultural and food chain companies are SMEs, and face higher relative costs to adopt new regulations compared to their bigger counterparts.

So what does this mean for the cloning report? The European commission asked the European food safety agency (EFSA) to investigate agricultural cloning and the first report was published in 2008 followed by several updates up to 2012.

The reports relayed the very important message that there is absolutely no evidence to justify food safety concerns - food from cloned animals is exactly the same as food from conventionally bred animals.

However, we must also respect the results of the 2008 and 2010 Eurobarometer surveys, which revealed citizens' concerns on cloning for food production.

The EFSA studies also reiterated the repeatedly confirmed finding that both surrogate dams (a livestock term that breeders use to refer to the female parent of an animal) and their clones are very likely to be exposed to suffering and neonatal death.

Clearly, this is not in line with our ethical responsibility regarding livestock breeding. For this reason, I fully agree that we must ban the commercial use of cloning for food production, until it no longer poses a risk to animal welfare.

Therefore the essential question is, how extensive should the ban be on safeguarding the welfare of farm animals without creating a disproportionate burden for those affected businesses?

Ongoing committee debates have revealed that many MEPs support a quite radical ban that would include the descendants of cloned animals and even their products.

Bearing in mind that our aim is to ensure animal welfare, I believe this would be unnecessary regulatory interference - cloning does not negatively affect descendants, since they are conventionally bred.

Extending the ban to them and their products would not promote animal welfare, instead it would force many small businesses into providing extensive documentation and could threaten the import of meat and dairy products from countries that allow cloning for agricultural purposes in general.

This is not required, either for animal protection or food safety. In my opinion, it is more than enough to ban the use of cloning itself and of products directly related to cloned animals, namely food.

This solution means there would be no commercial incentive to practice cloning, while respecting consumer' concerns.

Any further measures would not have a positive enough effect to justify additional expenditure.

## About the author

Ulrike Müller (DE) is parliament's ALDE group shadow rapporteur on the cloning of animals for farming purposes

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[Animal Welfare](#) [4]

[Agriculture](#) [5]

[Food](#) [6]

## Categories

[Agriculture and rural affairs](#) [7]

[Science, technology and research](#) [8]



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- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/cloning-ban-should-also-apply-imports>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/high-time-eu-cloning-regulation>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/animal-welfare>
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- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/food>
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