

## Animal cloning for farming and clone imports face full EU ban

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News

Two of the European parliament's committees have backed plans to ban the cloning of farm animals, as well as preventing their descendants and clone-derived products appearing in the EU market.



The environment, public health and food safety (ENVI) and the agriculture and rural affairs (AGRI) committees went further than proposed by the European commission, citing EU citizens' serious ethical and animal welfare concerns.

The vote on Wednesday also turned the proposal from a directive that would require transposition into member states' national laws into a regulation that must be applied unilaterally across the EU.

MEPs also pointed to the high mortality rates that exist at all developmental stages in the cloning process and extended the ban to all species used for farming purposes, as opposed to the commission's proposals which limited the scope to cows, horses, goats and sheep.

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ENVI co-rapporteur Renate Sommer, said, "Due to the negative effects on animal welfare, cloning for farming purposes is rejected by a large majority of consumers. Furthermore, we do not need cloning to ensure meat supplies in the EU."

The European People's Party group deputy said the ban constituted "a matter of European values and principles", adding, "Consequently, the ban should apply not only to clones themselves but also to their reproductive material (semen and embryos), their descendants and any products derived from them, including imports."

Animals are already cloned for farm purposes in some countries and the report calls for import certificates for animals coming into the European market proving that they are not clones or the descendants of cloned animals. The same system would apply to imports of animal germinal products and food and feed of animal origin.

Sommer said, "This is necessary because otherwise we would merely promote cloning in third countries".

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group co-rapporteur Giulia Moi agreed, stressing, "The ban on placing animal clones or their offspring on the EU market is a red line for us. We are well aware that cloning is allowed in certain third countries that [the] EU trades with, but we cannot allow these products to be placed on the EU market."

The report also pointed to a 2008 opinion from the European food safety authority (EFSA) which stated that the health and welfare of a significant portion of clones are adversely or fatally affected by the cloning process.

This, said EFSA, results in a low efficiency rate in cloning, with multiple embryo implants often required to generate a single cloned animal, as well as abnormalities or oversized offspring complicating the birthing process or leading to neonatal fatalities.

A 2008 Eurobarometer survey on Europeans' attitudes towards animal cloning showed that 84 per cent of citizens felt the long term effects of animal cloning were unknown and 61 per cent said that the practice of cloning animals was "morally wrong".

MEPs cited research showing that EU citizens strongly oppose the placing of cloned foodstuffs on the market and that a majority disapprove of cloning for farm purposes on animal welfare and ethical grounds.

Greens and European Free Alliance (EFA) group spokesperson on food safety Bart Staes said, "MEPs have voted for robust EU rules to address the very serious concerns with cloning and the use of clones and their descendants in food production."

"The committee voted to significantly strengthen the draft law proposed by the EU commission upgrading the proposed provisional moratorium to an outright ban and, crucially, ensuring it applies not just to food from clones but also from their descendants, which is where the real threat lies. To ensure the rules can be properly enforced, MEPs also voted to introduce provisions on the traceability of these foods."

His Greens colleague and agriculture spokesperson José Bové also highlighted the impact cloned food can have on "areas such as livestock management and food security, but also in terms of genetic diversity or animal welfare".

"It would be totally irresponsible to ignore these and continue with the attitude of blind faith in competitiveness and patent-based inventions as the only solutions for adapting to farming's future challenges," added the French MEP.

The report goes before parliament's Strasbourg plenary session in early September.

## About the author

Desmond Hinton-Beales is deputy editor of the Parliament Magazine

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