Parliament votes for total ban of cloned products on EU soil

Written by Julie Levy-Abegnoli on 8 September 2015 in News

MEPs have voted to ban the cloning of 'all farm animals, their descendants and products derived from them, including imports into the EU', despite reluctance from the Commission.

A report by European People's Party MEP Renate Sommer, and Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy MEP Giulia Moi, has been adopted by 529 votes to 120, with 57 abstentions.

It takes the Commission's proposal to ban animal cloning a step further by calling for the restriction to apply to "all farm animals, their descendants and products derived from them, including imports into the EU", said the European Parliament in a press release.

The text also demands that the legislation become a regulation, meaning it would apply directly to all member states without requiring any further national legislation.
This comes amid concerns that once in place, the transatlantic trade and investment partnership (TTIP) would allow the US to import cloned animal products onto the EU market.

Sommer was pleased that the vote, "reflects the position of the EU population, demonstrating that the Parliament is representative of citizens and is not simply populist. We hold the same concerns as people back home - we think cloning is animal cruelty and could be potentially dangerous if we continue on with it."

She was also worried that, "if shown to work well on animals, cloning techniques could be extended to humans, leading to other ethical issues."

A 2008 Eurobarometer survey revealed that 84 per cent of Europeans felt the long-term effects of animal cloning were unknown, while 61 per cent believed the practice was "morally wrong".

Research has shown that cloned animals have premature mortality rates of up to 90 per cent, are often born with deformities and can suffer from respiratory problems and liver failure, among other things.

However, European health and food safety Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis, speaking on behalf of European agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan, insisted the college would not change its position on the issue. The Commission does not want to ban food obtained from clones' offspring.

Sommer said, "I'm very disappointed. The Commission basically said Parliament was being irrational. The Commission is scared of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and that countries that do use cloning will bring the EU before the WTO".

Her co-rapporteur Giulia Moi was proud that MEPs had, "defended what our citizens were calling for, their voice has been heard and expressed by the Parliament."

European United Left/Nordic Green Left MEP Anja Hazekamp said, "I find cloning morally repugnant and it should be banned. EU citizens don't want it, consumers don't want it, farmers don't need it and animals pay the price."

Greens/European Free Alliance deputy Bart Staes described the result of the vote as "a victory for common sense. Given the myriad ethical, environmental and other concerns over cloning, the only responsible approach is to apply the brakes."

His colleague José Bové said, "cloned food brings significant concerns, with impacts in areas such as livestock management and food security, but also in terms of genetic diversity and animal welfare. It would be totally irresponsible to ignore these concerns and plough ahead with cloning as some misguided technological fix."

The co-rapporteurs will now enter into negotiations with the Council and Commission before the regulation can become law.
About the author

Julie Levy-Abegnoli is a journalist and editorial assistant for the Parliament Magazine

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