Animal Cloning for Food Production

POSITION PAPER

Date: 10 August 2012

Els Bedert
Adviser Food & Nutrition
T: +32 2 738 06 42
bedert@eurocommerce.be
EU legislators should take the decision on whether or not to authorise the commercialisation of products from cloned animals and their offspring

Any decision on animal cloning by EU legislators should be based on a complete, official scientific assessment of the risks for human health, animal health and welfare, the environment (biodiversity), genetic variety and on the opinions resulting from ethical debates. In case of authorisation of products from cloned animals and their offspring, obligations and rules should be made clear and precise. Offspring (first generation) in this respect refers to an animal produced by a traditional breeding technique where at least one of its parents is a clone¹.

Need for continued scientific studies and risk assessment on animal health and welfare, human health and the environment

EuroCommerce supports the question from the European Commission to EFSA to provide an update on the state of play on animal cloning, expected by the end of June (mandate M-2011-0386) and considers it essential information for the development of legislation on animal cloning.

To keep up with the continued research progress on animal cloning techniques, EuroCommerce believes that additional EFSA studies and opinions need to be published at regular intervals.

Ethical considerations to be taken into account

EuroCommerce believes that in the case of animal cloning, ethical considerations play an important part. Therefore it is essential that besides scientific data, other legitimate factors, such as ethical considerations, are taken into account in the decision to continue or not animal cloning in the EU.

If cloning techniques remain authorised, ethical considerations should also be taken into account in the official decision-making process of public authorities leading to authorisation or not, of commercialisation of food products from cloned animals and their offspring.

EuroCommerce stresses the importance of a continued open, thorough and transparent discussion bringing together all actors, including civil society, before the adoption of any opinions on the ethical questions put by animal cloning at official level (at both national and Community level).

These discussions should be on cloning in general, consumption of food from these animals, their offspring, access to (patented) genetic heritage or on specific opinions case-by-case. The commerce sector itself has no intention to participate in the ethical debates.

Consumer acceptance

Retailers and wholesalers are the interface between industry and consumers, therefore consumer acceptance is essential for EuroCommerce. In case of authorisation by the public authorities, retailers will retain the freedom to sell products from cloned animals or not, in respect of the consumers' freedom of choice; any such product will be sold according to its acceptance by the consumer.

¹ Glossary IPM consultation on animal cloning for food production 2012
http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=animalcloning
Public information

Public authorities, together with scientists, media and operators should continue to inform citizens about animal cloning, the benefits, risks and impacts, so that consumers are not left without any knowledge; even if food safety and other assessments have proven such foods to be without risk. The difference between animal cloning and GM animals is one of the general areas which need to be clarified.

Traceability

Should food products from clones and offspring of clones be authorised for the European Market, than a practical solution needs to be found to enable traceability of these products along the whole food supply chain.

---

EuroCommerce and the commerce sector

EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations and companies in 31 European countries.

Commerce plays a unique role in the European economy, acting as the link between manufacturers and the nearly 500 million consumers across Europe over a billion times a day. It is a dynamic and labour-intensive sector, generating 11% of the EU’s GDP. One company out of three in Europe is active in the commerce sector. Over 95% of the 6 million companies in commerce are small and medium-sized enterprises. It also includes some of Europe’s most successful companies. The sector is a major source of employment creation: 31 million Europeans work in commerce, which is one of the few remaining job-creating activities in Europe. It also supports millions of dependent jobs throughout the supply chain from small local suppliers to international businesses.