

Brussels, 22 June 2011

New campaign to stamp out food from cloned animals

Eurogroup for Animals has today launched a campaign, Clone-Free-Food, and a Declaration to gather support to end as soon as possible the use of cloning for food production in Europe.

The campaign encourages European citizens, politicians and companies, especially food producers and retailers, to show their opposition to cloning by signing the Declaration. During Eurogroup for Animals Annual General Meeting today, Kartika Liotard MEP, rapporteur of the recent Novel Foods directive review became the first signatory to the declaration and encouraged as many people as possible to share her concerns.

Cloning, a technique to reproduce identical animals is very controversial and opposed on ethical, animal welfare and health grounds, due to the many animals that die in the process and the suffering it causes during pregnancy and birth. Scientists agree that the health and welfare of a significant proportion of cloned animals is seriously affected and mortality is considerably higher than with sexually reproduced animals.

“It is a disgrace that European consumers without knowing and against their will are being served food produced as a result of cloning although 77% of them refuse to accept it according to the Eurobarometer survey. The Commission must now act and respect the wishes of Europe’s citizens and defend the welfare of Europe’s animals,” said Kartika Liotard MEP. *We encourage as many people and organisations as possible to sign this declaration and share the information on cloning with their family, friends and colleagues”*

This campaign is designed to raise awareness of the issues related to cloning and to show the European Commission and the European Council that not only European Parliamentarians but the society as a whole does not want food on their plates which are the result from animal suffering.

“Cloning of animals for use in food is completely unethical and unnecessary. We are convinced that banning the products from our markets is possible and in line with international trade rules. What we miss is the political will and the courage to defend our consumers, to protect animals and to find a real solution.” said Sonja Van Tichelen, director of Eurogroup for Animals.

The European Commission is in the process to prepare new legislation. Eurogroup is concerned that simply banning the technique in Europe itself will not stop semen and embryos from clones being imported and as a result cloning will only shift abroad. While the Commission claims that tracing the products will be problematic but at the same time is proposing to introduce labelling dumping the responsibility on the consumer. Milk and meat resulting from clones will therefore continue to end up in our plates.

To sign the declaration and learn more about the campaign visit www.clonefreefood.eu

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Notes

- 1 Eurogroup for Animals represents animal welfare organisations in all EU Member States. Since its launch in 1980, the organisation has succeeded in encouraging the EU to adopt higher legal standards for animal protection. Eurogroup represents public opinion through its membership organisations across the Union, and has both the scientific and technical expertise to provide authoritative advice on issues relating to animal welfare. For more information, visit www.eurogroupforanimals.org
- 2 The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) carried out an investigation following a request by the European Commission to EFSA for advice on the implications of animal cloning on food safety, animal health and welfare and the environment (8 March 2007). EFSA's Scientific Committee adopted its opinion on the 15th July 2008. The EFSA opinion acknowledges the many animal health and welfare concerns associated with the cloning of animals for food production, here are a few:
 - An increase in failed pregnancies and increased frequency of problems during pregnancy (hydrops, dystocia and consequential Caesarean section) are observed which are likely to affect the future fertility of the surrogate dam.
 - Mortality and morbidity of clones are higher than in sexually produced animals.
 - A proportion of clones that do survive until birth show some adverse physiological effects which can be temporary and or contribute to death or disorders. The causes of death and pathological conditions in cloned animals may be attributable to developmental defects or to other causes including infections.
- 3 The Eurobarometer on citizens' views on cloning for food production was conducted among more than 25,000 randomly selected people from all 27 EU member states in July 2008. Some interesting facts:
 - A majority (58%) of EU citizens were not willing to accept animal cloning for food production.
 - Three quarters agreed that there are ethical grounds for rejecting animal cloning
 - As many as 69% agreed that animal cloning would risk treating animals as commodities
 - A majority said it was unlikely that they would buy meat or milk from cloned animals even if a trusted source stated that such products were safe to eat.
 - Special labelling should be required according to 83% of citizens, if food products from cloned animals became available in the shops.
- 4 Cloned animals die younger and suffer more defects than normal animals. Many clones suffer from defects such as contracted tendons, respiratory failure, limb and head deformities, heart disease and kidney problems. Dolly the sheep, the first mammal cloned from an adult cell, had to be put down at the early age of six after developing arthritis and lung disease. According to research by the National Institute for Agricultural Research in France, clones of cows reach puberty 62 days later and 56 kilos heavier than normal cows.
- 5 Cloning for food is being opposed in Europe by organisations such as Scientists for Global Responsibility, Friends of the Earth, Centre for Sustainable Alternatives, European Public Health Alliance, European Farmers Coordination, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, FARM, Biodynamic Agricultural Association, and Euro Coop, the European Association of Consumer Cooperatives.
- 6 The European Group on Ethics said in its final opinion published on 11 January 2008 that it "does not see convincing arguments to justify the production of food from clones and their offspring."