



Brussels, 31 January 2011
UECBV Ref: 248

Cloning for food production – UECBV Position

Key points

- ✚ Although at present the meat sector is not directly affected by cloning technology, it is indirectly involved in the debate due to the technological advancements in other sectors, such as the milk sector.
- ✚ A possible ban or even a moratorium could damage the breeding sector and the EU livestock-meat sector as a whole (by rising of production costs because of regulatory burdens). Consequently we believe that scientific research should be pursued in the EU even if this technology is not authorised at the present time.
- ✚ The planned temporary measures to be reviewed after five years, the establishment of a traceability system for imports of reproductive materials from clones, such as semen and embryos of clones and the related measures for EU operators should be developed in close cooperation with the competent stakeholder organisations as they are directly affected by the proposed package of measures. Any measures should be based on sound science. The proposed system of industry-run databases relating to the animals originating from reproductive materials should receive proportionate EU support.
- ✚ Last but not least, in order to prevent misinformation and unfounded public concerns about the EU decision to temporarily suspend animal cloning for food production, appropriate information campaigns should be implemented by the competent authorities at EU and national level as they are the appropriate bodies in a position to provide credibility while explaining why this breeding technique will not, at present, be used for food production. Such steps would help to provide reassurances and avoid misunderstandings in relation to regulatory management decisions and potential public food safety concerns.

The Commission's planned temporary suspension of animal cloning for food production in the EU

The UECBV is deeply concerned about the potential effects of the Commission's proposed package of measures to temporarily suspend the use of cloned farm animals and the marketing of food from clones in the EU.

The UECBV supports the European Commission rejection of calls from the EP for a total ban on the marketing of food both from clones and their offspring as well as on the import of semen and embryos from clones.

The UECBV believes that only EU harmonised rules can provide operators with a clear and transparent legal framework, and we are therefore very concerned about possible national bans on the use of animal cloning.

Although the UECBV welcomes the decision not to suspend cloning for uses other than food, such as research, conservation of endangered species and use of animals for the production of pharmaceuticals, we are concerned about the effect of the moratorium on the public's wider perception of new technologies in food production.

Consumer perceptions of cloning

The results of the [Eurobarometer survey](#) indicate that people's views of emerging new technologies, notably cloning (as well as nanotechnology) vary depending on the final use. People tend to have differing views on the acceptability of the different technology purposes, and responses also vary according to the instruction level.

UECBV representatives have taken part in several consultation meetings, urging participants to adopt a sound science-based approach in order to avoid spreading misleading information about a technology that could and should be further studied before any possible emotionally-driven ban which may impact on EU operators through international trade disruptions¹.

Potential implications for the livestock-meat business operators

While some third countries already use cloning to produce breeding animals, currently there is no reliable way of identifying products of animal origin from clones and their offspring. The only available option is in-depth paper-based traceability that, while in principle could be implemented and enforced in respect of EU operators, would not offer the same guarantees in respect of products of animal origin coming from outside Europe².

While cloning enables the selection of desired traits of farmed animals, a competitive advantage will lie with those countries who are better placed to exploit such a

1 E.g. see summary record of the SANCO plenary meeting of the Advisory Group (AG) on the food chain and animal and plant health held on 26th March 2010.

2 It is well known that many foreign operators enjoy significant lower production costs in relation to labour and notably animal feed, and these establishments may also have a less restrictive legal framework.

technology, especially against the background of rising world demand for products of animal origin.

EU operators have a knowledge-based background and are in a position to produce food of animal origin in a sustainable manner. Livestock-meat business operators urge the EU authorities to avoid a further loss of competitiveness arising from a long term restrictive EU approach over the use of this technique in the face of political pressures.

Is there any danger from consumption of cloned animals or their progeny?

Significant research has shown no danger (EFSA / FDA / FSA). The scientific arguments should continue to be the core of the European decision making process.

A scientific approach

The UECBV believes that scientific research on this “new” technology should be encouraged also to improve the welfare of farmed animals, and to explore the possibility of introducing suitable breeding programmes, for instance to develop livestock suited to grazing on marginal land and identifying diets that provide maximum nutrition with minimal green house gas emissions (GHGs), as well as to select better resistance to animal diseases.

The EFSA opinion includes conclusions that death and disease rates of clones are significantly higher than those observed in conventionally reproduced animals. Consequently, even if animal cloning represents a promising new technology to be implemented alongside other breeding systems, it needs to be improved before its potential widespread use³.

³ Significant research has reduced the incidence of abnormalities and improved the frequency of successful development. Nevertheless, according to the available information, somatic cell nucleus transfer (S.C.N.T.) is not an efficient technique, it is much more expensive than the other techniques and EU consumers do not trust this technique.