

Bid to ban cloned foods in Europe collapses

March 29 2011, by Laurent Thomet



Handout photo of six cows produced through cloning by US researchers at Advanced Cell Technology in Worcester, Massachusetts. An effort to ban cloned foods from reaching supermarket shelves in Europe collapsed on Tuesday after EU states and the parliament failed to agree a law to control the industry.

An effort to ban cloned foods from supermarket shelves in Europe collapsed on Tuesday after EU states and the parliament failed to agree a law to control the industry.

Although both sides agree on banning meat directly derived from cloned animals, government officials and Euro MPs clashed over regulating foods produced from the offspring of clones.

Hungary, chair of the rotating European Union presidency, accused MPs of "political grandstanding" after a 12-hour round of all-night talks broke down without agreement, sending the rules back to the drawing board.

Parliament members wanted strict labels to be slapped on meat from offspring of clones, but the two sides were unable to agree on labelling all foods, with governments only willing to put them on fresh beef.

EU states argue that the labelling proposal was unrealistic and would lead to a "full-blown trade war" with nations that produce clone-derived meat and [dairy products](#), such as Argentina, Brazil or the United States.

Hungarian rural development minister Sandor Fazekas said the parliament proposal was a "misleading, unfeasible 'solution' that in practice would have required drawing a family tree for each slice of cheese or salami."

It could take "several years" for the EU's executive Commission to come up with a new proposal, the Hungarian presidency said.

The breakdown effectively leaves in place 14-year-old rules that do not prevent the sale of food from clones.

"It is deeply frustrating that (the European) Council (of governments) would not listen to public opinion and support urgently needed measures to protect consumer and [animal welfare](#) interests," Euro MPs said in a statement.

"We made a huge effort to compromise but we were not willing to betray consumers on their right to know whether food comes from animals bred using clones," said lawmakers Gianni Pittella and Kartika Liotard.

"Since European [public opinion](#) is overwhelmingly against [cloning](#) for food, a commitment to label all food products from cloned offspring is a bare minimum."



Cows file in to be milked at a farm in rural France. An effort to ban cloned foods from reaching supermarket shelves in Europe collapsed on Tuesday after EU states and the parliament failed to agree a law to control the industry.

Euro MPs originally wanted a total ban on food from the offspring of clones, but they later proposed a labelling system to show consumers the animal's history.

French Euro MP Corine Lepage said some states, including Britain, were willing to allow a breakdown in talks "because it is in their interest to be able to import cloned semen without any controls."

The European consumers group BEUC said the failure to reach an agreement was "shameful."

"The choice made by Europeans is clear: they do not want cloning to be used for food production, and they were clearly ignored," said BEUC director general Monique Goyens.

European health commissioner John Dalli, who had presented the so-called "novel foods" regulation, said the negotiations breakdown was a "pity" and that he would "reflect on the disappointing outcome in view

of assessing the next steps."

Asked whether he would eat cloned meat, Dalli said scientific assessments on cattle found "absolutely no risk to health as there is no differentiation at all between cloned animals and normally-bred animals."

"Yes, I would eat cloned meat," he said.

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