

Media release



Cloned cattle entering the EU

CETA - putting transparency and consumer choice at risk

7 February 2017 / Research conducted by Testbiotech has shown that cows and their offspring stemming from cloned bulls are registered in a professional breeders database in the UK. It is likely that a considerable number of animals stemming from clones have already entered the EU. At present, the EU has no labelling or registration requirements for these kinds of imports, which makes it almost impossible to identify breeding material stemming from cloned bulls. The research was commissioned by the Greens/EFA Group in the EU Parliament.

The Testbiotech report shows that every year around 30 to 40 tons of bull sperm enter the EU from the US for the purpose of cattle breeding. Further imports originate from Canada. These imports might include breeding material from cloned bulls, particularly as the US is known to be one of the countries actively engaged in cloning in the cattle breeding sector. The semen is frozen and traded globally. Only the breeders know if material from cloned bulls is used, and they choose not to make their breeding registers accessible to the public. Access to the UK data remains an exception.

The European Parliament, as well as the German Bundestag and the German government all advocate a ban on cloned animals for food production in the EU. The reasons are mostly ethical concerns, since cloning involves a high degree of animal suffering due to interference in the gene regulation of the animals. For this reason, the EU Parliament is amongst those institutions demanding that systems are established to gain more transparency and to register the clones, their offspring, relevant products and breeding material. Without such measures, the animals and food derived thereof can enter the market unnoticed. As yet, there is a complete lack of transparency, and there is no information available to competent authorities, farmers, food producers or consumers.

As the research from Testbiotech shows, the upcoming free trade agreement CETA might obstruct greater levels of transparency in future. Mandatory labelling of relevant products might, according to CETA, simply be regarded an unjustified barrier to trade. Testbiotech recommends that the EU Parliament seeks legal certainty and clarity before a final vote on the free trade agreement is taken. Otherwise, adopting CETA might lead to the EU parliament being in conflict with its own resolutions, political goals and previous achievements.

“Our report shows, that after all the discussions on CETA, farmers, food producers and consumers will, in future, be left in a state of continuing uncertainty if transparency and freedom of choice cannot be ensured. Unless this crucial question is resolved, CETA remains a nightmare in the making for everyone who believes that free trade should never override the interests of consumers,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech.

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The new report of Testbiotech: www.testbiotech.org/node/1840