

Consumers Union

Nonprofit Publisher
of Consumer Reports

September 13, 2007

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Consumers Union Urges You to Sign SB 63 (Migden)

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger,

Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine and *Consumers Reports Online*, urges you to sign into law SB 63, a bill that would require labeling of food produced from cloned animals. An overwhelming majority of Americans believe that milk and meat from cloned animals should be labeled, according to a recent national poll by Consumers Union. Eighty-nine percent of those polled said they want cloned food to be labeled, while 69 percent were concerned about eating milk or meat from cloned animals.

Food from cloned animals will likely reach the marketplace, unlabeled, by the end of this year. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last December gave preliminary approval to the sale of milk and meat from cloned animals and their offspring, without labeling it as derived from cloned animals. Consumers Union believes FDA based its findings on very scanty data about the long-term health effects of eating food from cloned animals. The FDA's final approval is on hold, pending the reception of tens of thousands of public comments about its preliminary risk assessment, most expressing concern about the technology and in opposition to marketing food from cloned animals.

Scientists still do not know very much about the long-term human impacts of Somatic Cell Nuclear Transplant (SCNT), the technical name for cloning. This type of cloning entails taking a nucleus (part of the cell that contains the vast bulk of genetic material) from an adult body cell and inserting it into an egg that has had its own nucleus removed. Many problems can occur in this process, which could explain why clones have serious health problems. Clones are often severely deformed, with weaker immune systems, thus making them more prone to disease and in need of antibiotic treatment.

There is a general paucity of data on the compositional differences in meat and milk from clones and their offspring. The best study, from France, was published in the January 2007 issue of *Theriogenology* (the international journal of animal reproduction). This study was scientifically much more rigorous (more rigorous experimental design) than the US studies that FDA consulted. The French study found subtle differences in the fatty acid composition of meat and milk from cloned cows that could be linked to allergenicity, and therefore, called for further research: "Our results, instead of being

fully conclusive about the lack of allergenicity of products (milk, meat) from clones, provided strong support for the need for more comprehensive analysis of risks related to potential allergenicity...Our view is that the establishment of a larger framework for multidisciplinary research in emerging topics such as animal cloning should still be considered as a prerequisite before analyzing the risk management of food products derived from this biotechnology...If the products of clones (and most probably from clone offspring) are susceptible to entering the human food chain, further research should be shared worldwide, remain transparent and open to debate for consumers."

Another problem with cloning is that it leads to genetic uniformity—a herd of cattle that is basically genetically identical. If a disease strikes such a herd, there is no "survival of the fittest" that biodiversity provides, and the entire herd becomes uniformly vulnerable to the disease.

There is absolutely no benefit to consumers from cloned food products, not in quality, price, availability, or safety. Given all the uncertainties, spotty science, and lack of benefits to consumers, Consumers Union has urged FDA to proceed very carefully with the marketing of food from cloned animals. And we urge you, Governor Schwarzenegger, to give Californians a choice by labeling these foods. Aside from consumer choice, the only way future health impacts resulting from this new technology can be tracked is by labeling food from cloned animals.

Please sign SB 63 into law. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Elisa Odabashian, Director
Consumers Union
West Coast Office