



Consumer Federation of America

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Statement from CFA's Carol Tucker Foreman:
Bush Administration Forces Food from Cloned Animals and Progeny on the Public

The Bush Administration, after days of internal debate, has rejected public opposition and the pleas of the food industry and consumer groups and approved putting milk and meat from cloned animals in our food.

Milk and meat from cloned animals and their offspring will enter the food supply. They can do so immediately. The products will not be labeled as such and American consumers will have no way to avoid consuming them.

The FDA, in a "Guidance to Industry" document issued today states that, because its risk assessment determined that they are safe, milk and meat from cattle, swine and goat clones can be sold just as milk or meat from any non-cloned animal. The products will enter the market freely, with no identifying labels.

Laboratory analysis cannot determine whether a product contains cloned milk or meat so consumers will not be able to identify them or avoid them. The message to American consumers is, "if the FDA says it is safe, you have to eat it."

The pro-cloning juggernaut has successfully turned aside Congressional concerns and rolled over consumer opposition.

However, it is clear the Administration is concerned that negative public reaction will hurt food sales here and abroad. The FDA and the Department of Agriculture are trying to reduce the market impact of the decision. They say it is unlikely that milk or meat from clones will actually be sold in the next several years because the clones are too valuable and that it will be several years before the offspring of clones are ready for market. In fact, cloned cows can be milked while somatic cells are being used to produce other clones. Cells from cattle breeding stock can be collected and stored and the animals then slaughtered for food.

Second, the USDA's marketing service has said it will ask cloners to continue to withhold their products from the market. However, the "voluntary moratorium" was requested by the FDA. It has approved the sale of the products. USDA's animal health

and marketing agency has no ability to penalize anyone who ignores the “voluntary” moratorium on a product the FDA has cleared as safe. USDA does not have commitments from cloning companies not to sell their animals for food.

While the FDA has no authority to consider moral and ethical issues, the Department of Health and Human Services does. Today the Department rejected a petition filed by the Center for Food Safety and other consumer and animal welfare groups including CFA, asking that the Department use its authority to establish an advisory committee to consider moral and ethical issues.

Cloning advocates insist that safety should be the only standard for putting a product into the food supply. They play on fears that considering moral and ethical concerns will lead FDA to ban safe contraceptives because some groups oppose contraception. The comparison between drugs and foods is specious.

The FDA does not approve a drug just because it is safe. The agency must rule that a drug is both safe and effective for the purpose for which it is intended. Further, in this country no one is required to consume any drug. A consumer determines with his or her physician that a particular drug addresses a specific medical need. The physician must authorize the use of the drug. In order to get access to a prescription drug a physician must determine the patient needs the medication. The products are fully labeled.

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The Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of 300 consumer groups, representing more than 50 million Americans. It was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy. The Food Policy Institute at CFA works to promote a safer, healthier and more affordable food supply. Carol Tucker Foreman is a distinguished fellow at CFA's Food Policy Institute and a former assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer services from 1977 to 1981.