

Panel paves way for beef, pork products from clones

Kyodo News

Beef and pork products from cloned animals have a greater chance of being put on the Japanese market now that a government food safety panel has compiled a report stating such products are safe.

A working group of the Cabinet Office's Food Safety Commission reached the conclusion that cloned cows and pigs are "as safe as conventionally bred cows and pigs" from a food safety standpoint.

The commission will carry out an assessment of the panel's report before making a final decision and proposing it to the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry, which has the final say on whether products from cloned animals will be allowed for domestic consumption.

Intense debate can be expected because many consumers and experts are disinclined to accept products from cloned livestock, officials said.

Questions have been raised over the safety of such products, partly due to the high rate of cow and pig clones to die at birth or shortly afterward.

The working group brushed aside such concerns after looking into more than 200 studies and other material issued in Japan and abroad, maintaining that cloned cows "grow as healthily as conventionally bred cows around six months after birth if they reach that point."

The group's report also rules out any problems regarding the safety of products from cloned pigs and the naturally bred offspring of cloned cows and pigs.

The nutritional value of meat and milk from cloned

cows and pigs as well as their progenies is of the same quality as that from noncloned animals, according to the group, chaired by Takao Hayakawa, head of a Kinki University laboratory.

The report refers to the need for continued information-gathering efforts to keep up with developments in food safety studies linked to cloning technology, noting this field of biological sciences is still new.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced last January that meat and milk from cloned animals are as safe for human consumption as products from conventionally bred animals.

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