

Essere Animali's contribution regarding Italy's TRIS notification for draft law 2023/0469/IT

22 September 2023

Dear Ministers,
Dear Member State representatives,

On 27 July 2023 the Italian government submitted a TRIS notification to the European Commission for draft law 2023/0469/IT¹. We, NGO Essere Animali, are writing to you today to express our strong opposition to this bill.

As an animal welfare association advocating for a more sustainable and resilient food system we represent more than 800,000 supporters, activists, and followers on digital and offline communication channels, and we are truly concerned about the provisions against both cultured meat and plant-based alternatives to meat included in this measure, which we deem out of time and far from the demands of consumers and businesses. The bill banning the production and commercialization of cultivated meat for human and animal consumption in Italy is an anti-scientific move that harms the Italian economy, the environment and animals, which will discourage private investors and damage especially small and medium-sized Italian companies. Included in Art. 3 of the bill is also the Prohibition of Meat Designation for Processed Products Containing Vegetable Protein, an off-topic provision from the focus of the bill, as well as in contrast with current market trends and likely to undermine fair competition between EU business operators marketing substitutable products.

Given that food production already accounts for more than a third of climate change causing greenhouse gases², we can not meet this additional demand for animal protein using conventional methods without failing to address our current climate and biodiversity loss crises. As the EU's flagship Farm to Fork Strategy also underlines, European consumers need to move to "a more plant-based diet with less red and processed meat". For this to happen, convenient alternative sources of proteins must be made available and easily identifiable to consumers. Alternative proteins like plant-based and cultivated meat emerge as a key solution to mitigate the environmental impact of our food system, decrease the risk of zoonotic disease, and ultimately feed more people with fewer resources.

A huge body of research, including the 2022 IPCC Sixth Assessment Report on Climate Change³, acknowledges that emerging food technologies – such as precision fermentation, cultivated meat, and plant-based foods – can promise substantial reductions in direct greenhouse gases emissions from food production. Estimates from a comprehensive Life Cycle Assessment analysis⁴ published in January 2023 has confirmed that cultured meat production could decrease land use by 64 to 90 percent, emit 20 to 94 percent less greenhouse gases, cause 69 to 98 percent less soil acidification and 75 to 99 percent less eutrophication than conventional meat production. Research⁵ also shows that plant-based alternatives to meat emit 30%–90% less greenhouse gas, use 47%–99% less land and 72%–99% less water, and cause 51%–91% less aquatic nutrient pollution than conventional meat.

¹ <https://technical-regulation-information-system.ec.europa.eu/en/notification/24242>

² Xu, Xiaoming, et al. [Global greenhouse gas emissions from animal-based foods are twice those of plant-based foods](#). Nature Food 2.9, 2021.

³ Babiker, M., G. Berndes, K. Blok, B. Cohen, A. Cowie, O. Geden, V. Ginzburg, A. Leip, P. Smith, M. Sugiyama, F. Yamba, 2022: Cross-sectoral perspectives. In [IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, R. Slade, A. Al Khourdajie, R. van Diemen, D. McCollum, M. Pathak, S. Some, P. Vyas, R. Fradera, M. Belkacemi, A. Hasija, G. Lisboa, S. Luz, J. Malley, (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA.

⁴ Sinke, P., Swartz, E., Sanctorem, H. et al. [Ex-ante life cycle assessment of commercial-scale cultivated meat production in 2030](#). Int J Life Cycle Assess 28, 234–254 (2023).

⁵ <https://gfi.org/resource/environmental-impact-of-meat-vs-plant-based-meat/>

Alternative proteins also present a substantive economic opportunity for Italy and all Member States. Global demand for meat is expected to sharply increase by 50% or more by 2050. By focusing on more sustainable farming practices and creating a thriving ecosystem for food innovation, Europe has the opportunity to position itself as a world leader and exporter of alternative protein sources that meet global demand more sustainably. Such prohibitions included in this legislation are very much likely to stifle innovation within industry and academia, and prevent Italy – with wider implications on Europe – from benefiting economically from the growth of cultivated meat and plant-based industries, leaving the entire EU Block lagging behind the rest of the world in such an existential race for complementary proteins.

Not only is this national legislation short-sighted from an economic and environmental point of view, it would also produce an illegitimate deviation from EU Regulation on Novel Foods⁶ which already provides a clear framework to assess the safety of novel foods like cultivated meat and seafood, and from the recently-revised CMOs Regulation⁷ which includes provisions in favor of the use of meat denominations for plant-based food. This latter issue is expected to be tackled with the forthcoming ruling by the EU Court of Justice, which will determine once and for all whether the EU will take a harmonized approach to plant-based food labels, thus eventually making such a national variation out-of-law. To avoid fragmentation of trade and disruption within the EU Single Market, by virtue of the European Commission's exclusive competence on the matter, we call upon the highest EU institution to ensure consistency across all Member States, thus suspending any national attempt to legislate on the matter.

Not least, the activation of the precautionary principle to “safeguard Italy's nation's heritage” – as recently stated by Italy's Minister for Health, Orazio Schillaci, would represent an unlawful application of the principle set in Art. 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)⁸, and a dangerous precedent which would threaten European credibility.

Over the last months, we have collected more than 52,000 signatures against the proposal to prohibit terms such as burger, sausage, steak and others for all plant-based food products. The same proposal had already been rejected by the European Parliament in 2020 and a survey of consumers on attitudes to sustainable food conducted by BEUC⁹ in 2020 found that 88% of Italians are not concerned about the naming of veggie ‘burgers’ or ‘sausages’, as long as the products are clearly identifiable as vegetarian/vegan.

To conclude, for these reasons and more, we invite the European Commission to issue a formal opinion opposing final passage of 2023/0469/IT.

Yours Sincerely,
Essere Animali ETS

⁶ [Regulation \(EU\) 2015/2283](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on novel foods.

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/common-organisation-of-agricultural-markets-cmo.html>

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:12016E191>

⁹ BEUC, [One bite at a time: consumers and the transition to sustainable food](#), An analysis of a survey of European consumers on attitudes towards sustainable food, June 2020.