Want to sell cell-based meat in Tennessee? You’ll face a million-dollar fine in yet another chapter in the ‘long-running fight over the future of protein’

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis declared his support for banning a food product that barely exists — cell-cultivated or “lab-grown” meat — by dismissing the very concept at a press conference.

“We’re not going to do that fake meat,” DeSantis, a Republican, said to the crowd. “That doesn’t work.”

DeSantis was referring to a Florida state bill to ban the production and sale of cell-cultivated meat — which is different from products made by companies like Impossible Foods that use plant ingredients to mimic meat.

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Meanwhile, politicians in Tennessee are pushing a cell-cultivated meat sales ban that imposes a $1 million fine on violators.

Federal lawmakers in heavy farming states, mostly Republicans but also some Democrats, are also putting up roadblocks to cell-cultivated meat with the support of the conventional meat industry.

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Such protectionism runs counter to the routine platitudes that elected officials — especially those on the right — typically espouse about competitive free markets, regulation, and innovation. DeSantis has boasted that Florida ranks first in the nation in entrepreneurship, yet he’s supportive of a bill that would stifle entrepreneurship.

But the bills also ring hollow when you consider that cell-cultivated meat isn’t even available for sale.

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