

ISDI Statement

Breastmilk Substitutes Call to Action – The Road to Compliance

Brussels, 29 March 2021

ISDI acknowledges the Breastmilk Substitutes ‘Call to Action’ – the Road to Compliance with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (WHO Code), issued by the World Health Organization, UNICEF and a group of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on 25 June 2020, and welcomes the collective dialogue to achieve our common goal of improving the nutritional status of infants and young children.

As the leading international expert association on special dietary foods, ISDI welcomes the continued dialogue and the momentum created by the Call to Action’s 10-year process and will continue to play its role as a platform of discussion for the industry.

In responding to the Call to Action, companies have confirmed that the infant and young child nutrition industry supports the aims and principles of the WHO Code and public health goals that protect and promote breastfeeding. ISDI and its members, moreover, are committed to full compliance with all laws, regulations and policies as implemented by national governments.

Every infant has the right to high quality nutrition. There is no doubt that breastfeeding is the optimal way to ensure the healthy growth and development of infants during the first months of life. When breastfeeding is not possible, the only recognised and proven alternatives are scientifically developed and clinically demonstrated breastmilk substitutes (BMS).

However, too many infants around the world, whether they are breastfed, formula fed or mixed-fed, are afflicted by malnutrition and its consequences. The infant and young child nutrition industry remains committed to providing high quality, safe and age-appropriate nutrition for pregnant mothers, infants and young children, and to offering education on healthy nutrition to accelerate progress towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals of ‘Zero Hunger’ (SDG2) and good health and well-being (SDG3).

Infant feeding choices and nutrition are complex and multifaceted, whereby environmental, socioeconomic and cultural factors should be taken into account. The

WHO and UNICEF identify seven targets for improving breastfeeding rates¹. These targets include measures to enhance funding, workplace policies, family leave, counselling and community networks.

The Call to Action is an important step in recognising the need for a multi-stakeholder approach towards this complex issue. All sectors of society – i.e. governments, policy-makers, CSOs, academia, healthcare professionals, industry, parents and the general public – are required to create an all-inclusive, supportive ecosystem to encourage breastfeeding and to improve nutritional outcomes for mothers, infants and young children. We need to continue to work on this important issue together and we look forward to building upon the progress made so far through continued dialogue and fruitful partnerships (SDG17).

We remain committed to working constructively with all relevant stakeholders and engaging in locally acceptable, effective, ethical and sustainable initiatives to address nutrition and development challenges.

About ISDI:

ISDI is the leading international expert association on special dietary foods, including foods specifically designed for infants and young children. ISDI members are national and international associations that are active in this sector from more than 20 countries over 6 continents. Our members manufacture and market foods that are formulated, in accordance with applicable Codex Alimentarius standards, to meet the compositional criteria, quality requirement and nutritional needs of infants and young children.

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¹ Global Breastfeeding Collective, <https://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/global-breastfeeding-collective/en/>