



PRESS RELEASE: US trade lobby ignores global health concerns

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At this year's World Health Assembly in Geneva – three hot topics are on the agenda: baby foods, WHO's interactions with Business and chronic diseases.

The International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), has been following these issues for decades and is alarmed to hear how the United States, backed by other producer countries in the EU and New Zealand – has been attempting to sabotage a new Guidance proposed by WHO.¹

The Guidance aims to help countries tackle the inappropriate marketing of baby foods and formulas - markets that are rapidly expanding. ² Worldwide sales of formula milks are almost US\$45 billion, and likely to rise by 55% to US\$70 billion by 2019. Formulas targeting older babies – looking just like formulas for newborns – are being aggressively and deceptively promoted and account for 50% of absolute growth.³

These new processed, expensive milks, often sweetened and flavored, are not only unnecessary, but contribute to the alarming rates of childhood overweight and obesity – underlying factors in chronic diseases - while adding to environmental degradation.

Bad diet is acknowledged to be the biggest cause of death and disability and WHO is eager to help the many developing countries that are having these products dumped on them and are struggling to bring in effective legislation.

The ironic fact is that the countries that are undermining the Resolution that is on the table have no intention to implement the Guidance. They are blocking the chance of the Guidance having any 'weight' in trade talks – simply so they can export these products without constraint. The producer countries are lobbying to promote the status of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, a body with weak Conflict of Interest rules, whose meetings are dominated by industry (often 40% of the delegates). The Codex baby food standard permits much higher sugar levels than recommended by WHO.

IBFAN's spokesperson on Global Advocacy, Patti Rundall, says: *"The World Health Assembly is the world's highest health policy setting body. It cannot be right that it is forced to convey a message implying that trade is more important than health."*

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¹ Guidance on ending the inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children. (A69/7 Add1)

² Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes: National Implementation of the International Code Status Report 2016-05-26

³ ICDC Focus 2016 Growing-up milks: aggressive promotion www.babymilkaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/GUMs-final.pdf

