



IBFAN STATEMENT on World Food Safety Day June 7, 2020 *Food Safety Everyone's Business*

The WHO initiative, its second World Food Safety Day aims to draw attention to the need to prevent foodborne risks, contribute to food security, human health economic prosperity and sustainable development amongst other food related concerns.

For IBFAN with its primary aim, to protect infant and young child health, through the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding and nutritious family food based complementary feeding; food safety and food security is a human right.

The importance of breastfeeding to achieve the highest attainable standard of health for infants and children, prevent over 800,000 child deaths every year and protect the health of mothers from serious conditions such as cancers and diabetes is well documented. When this normative is disrupted risks to health, security and sustainability are compromised. The current COVID – 19 pandemic has reinforced the critical life saving importance of the immunological protection breastfeeding provides.

Food security is of fundamental importance in this crisis, as we see high levels of unemployment, lack of effective social policies, and lack of accessible clean water. For many families this has led to food insecurity and even hunger. Breastfeeding is a guarantee of sufficient and healthy food.

The promotion of breastfeeding replacements, infant formulas, follow-up formulas, formulas promoted for young children and commercial complementary foods undermine the practice of breastfeeding and the use of family foods putting infants and young children at nutritional and infection risk - not only the lack of optimal nutrition and immunological protection that puts health at risk but also the foodborne contaminants inherent in processed foods.

Contamination of formula products is commonplace, ranging from microbes in powdered formulas, insect parts, pesticides, to heavy metals such as lead, aluminium, cadmium. As well the intentional adulteration of melamine and the leakages of various packaging chemicals all have been cause for numerous product recalls. Chemical additives to stabilize, emulsify, thicken, regulate acidity, and act as anti-oxidants are all “permitted” by Codex Alimentarius standards, some at regulated levels and others according to “good manufacturing practices”, with their safety declared not by independent and convincing science but on the basis of political consensus and claims of “history of safe use”. Thus putting infants in uncontrolled feeding trials.

Even the industry influenced Codex Alimentarius criteria notes the ethical difficulty of testing additives on infants and has stated that technically there should be no food additives in products for infants below the age of 12 weeks. Since the baby food industry cannot combine the required ingredients to appear like “milk” without the additives they claim they are essential to “deliver” nutrition to infants.

Baby food products are fraudulently presented and labelled with idealized imagery and claims of “gentle proteins”, “easier to digest”, “hypoallergenic”, “protects baby’s immune system”, “benefits babies’ vision and brain development”. Lacking are the warnings that their use can lead to increased respiratory and diarrheal disease; that reconstitution at 70 degrees C is needed to avoid serious illness or death from the intrinsic bacterial contaminant *Cronobacter sakazakii*; and that life-long conditions such as obesity, cancers, diabetes and cardiovascular disease are significantly higher in formula fed populations.

Breastfeeding provides not only food safety for a mother and her child but also health equity, food security and sustainability. No environmentally destructive industrial processes are required and no costly products need to be purchased.

What is needed is:

- the protection of breastfeeding from the predatory marketing by the baby food industries,
- for governments to ensure that the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent WHA resolutions are implemented into law,
- for governments to ensure that food safety and monitoring and enforcement systems are kept free of commercial influence,
- for governments to provide mandatory paid maternity, protection,
- for health care systems and workers to support breastfeeding by embracing the Baby Friendly Initiative and provide skilled help for breastfeeding mothers.

The protection of breastfeeding is everyone’s business.

More information on the protection of breastfeeding is available at: www.ibfan.org