



# Politics of ultra-processed products

International Scientific Webinar on WBW 2020, 31st August 2020

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IBFAN Global Council

# Things that **businesses want** and **what we should remember**

# strategic priorities...

*“The top strategic priority of many transnational marketing and media businesses (who have contributed to the NCD epidemic) **is to change traditional food patterns and cultures in lower and middle-income countries.**”*

Prof Philip James, the founder of the Obesity Task Force

*“.... international capital at the top is mobile and is running circles around governments....”*

US Economist, Prof Jeffrey Sachs, BBC Radio 4

# Using the tobacco playbook

The screenshot shows the article page for "Interference in public health policy: examples of how the baby food industry uses tobacco industry tactics" in the journal World Nutrition. The page features a dark red header with the journal title and WPHNA logo. A navigation bar includes links for Current, Archives, Archive (issues 2010-2014), Submissions, and About the Journal. The article title is prominently displayed, followed by a list of authors: Sabrina Ionata Granheim, Katrin Engelhardt, Patti Rundall, Stella Bialous, and Alessandro Iellamo. A photograph of a child in a field is included, along with a PDF download button and the publication date of 2017-12-08. The right sidebar contains social media links, an archive link, and information for readers, authors, and librarians.

**World Nutrition** WPHNA

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## Interference in public health policy: examples of how the baby food industry uses tobacco industry tactics

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# Baby food industry uses all 6 tactics:

1. Hijack political and legislative processes;
2. Exaggerate their economic importance;
3. Manipulate public opinion to appear respectable;
4. Use front groups (astroturfing\*)
5. Discredit proven science; and
6. Intimidate governments with litigation.

\* [www.babymilkaction.org/archives/25523](http://www.babymilkaction.org/archives/25523)

# BIG SNACK pretends to be BIG FOOD

- products *not* essential to health
- highly processed snacks eaten between meals or replace meals
- such companies not 'part of the solution'



# Risks of Ultra Processed products



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- **Ultra-processed foods and NCDs:**
- cardiovascular disease, diabetes, Type 2 Diabetes, cancer, depression, mortality, plastic packaging...
- Higher energy density, more free sugar and saturated and trans fats
- Less dietary fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals and bioactive compounds.
- Overall deterioration of the nutritional quality (shown in national studies of 10 middle- and high-income countries)
  
- **Thanks to Dr. Maria Laura Louzada, PhD  
Assistant Professor, Dept of Nutrition, USP, Brazil**

# Breastmilk substitutes (BMS), many other globally traded products are Ultra-Processed

- Aside from contamination and adulteration, in order to stay on the shelves for 2 years, BMS contain non food ingredients. Chemical additives are used to stabilize, emulsify, thicken, regulate acidity, and act as anti-oxidants.
- These 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”.
- **Increasingly BMS are using Palm oil and other ingredients that are derived from deforestation – legal or illegal.**
- **Many products are now in single use plastic packaging**

\* IBFAN recent Codex comments: [www.babymilkaction.org/archives/24252](http://www.babymilkaction.org/archives/24252)

# Codex Alimentarios sets benchmarks used by the World Trade Organisation

Codex is riddled with COI **Typically:**  
**40% are** food industry, **59** as  
Business Interest NGOs (BINGOS).

Businesses are often invited to  
speak for governments.



Patti Rundall @pattirundall · 6 Dec 2016

why is DSM - manufacturer of formula ingredients speaking for Chile at the Codex meeting in Hamburg?



GAIN at Codex in 2013, promoting  
fortified supplements while  
undermining foods such as eggs



# Over-emphasis on nutrients risks promoting ultra processed products



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elephants  
the stars  
snowflakes  
fireworks  
movies  
the ocean  
flowers  
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\* vs same routine formula without DHA and ARA studied at 12 months; longer-term impact not measured.

LEARN MORE

Stare at a banana all day and you will not see the nutrients it contains.

A quick glance at a package laden with health and nutrition claims immediately inspires confidence – even though many of the important nutrients have been destroyed by the high processing and storage.

# misleading claims in Botswana



Dear Healthcare Professional,

**NESTLÉ LAUNCHES  
THE FIRST ACIDIFIED  
GROWING UP MILK IN  
SOUTHERN AFRICA.**

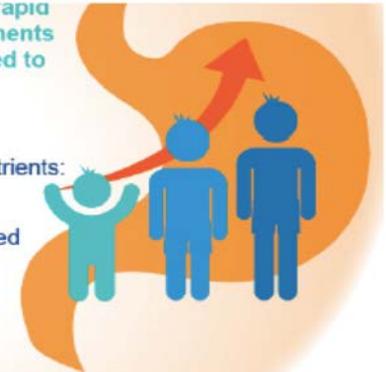


**NAN PELARGON  
Growing Up milk  
is now available  
for toddlers!**

Growing up milk supports the rapid growth and nutritional requirements of pre-school children compared to regular milk.<sup>1,2</sup>

Growing Up Milk provides:

- Higher content of key micronutrients: Vitamin A, Iron, Zinc<sup>3</sup>
- Lower protein content compared to regular cow's milk<sup>4</sup>
- High content of essential fatty acids<sup>5,6</sup>



## NAN PELARGON 3:

**REDUCES** risk of infection from:



**Acidification with lactic acid has been shown to:**

**Suppress the growth of certain pathogenic bacteria<sup>9</sup>**



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## Formulas promoted as 'protection': Latin America



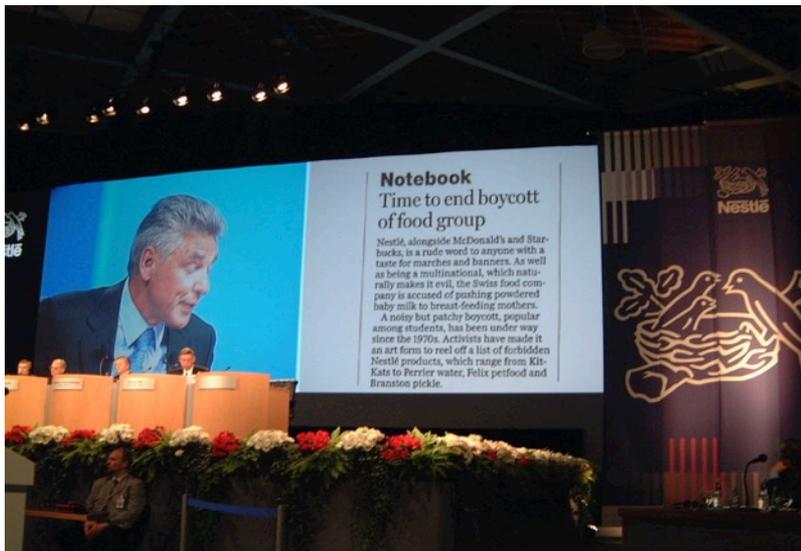
Similac® 3 con HMO\*



# How industry changed the conversation to get a place at the table

- “We are not like tobacco.”
- “Everyone needs food.”
- “We are not the problem – we are part of the solution...”

# Just sit back and trust us ...



*“Tying corporations up in regulatory straightjackets is unnecessary when companies such as Nestlé already have sound principles and core values.”*

Peter Brabeck, Nestle Chair and CEO, AGM 2010. Vice-Chairman, Foundation Board, World Economic Forum.

# But...the baby food market was built on trust

*“In less developed countries, the best form of promoting baby food formulas may well be the clinics which the company sponsors”*

Busy health workers in South Africa relied on Nestlé ‘milk nurses’ to inform mothers.



Nestlé in Developing countries 1970

# Why Conflicts of Interest safeguards matter

TECH

## Bill Gates' climate-change investment firm bets on lab-produced breast milk

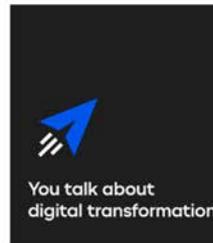
PUBLISHED TUE, JUN 16 2020-9:14 AM EDT | UPDATED TUE, JUN 16 2020-2:31 PM EDT

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### KEY POINTS

- Biomilq is targeting infant nutrition by attempting to reproduce mother's breast milk in a lab.
- The start-up has just earned the backing of the world's top investors, by raising \$3.5 million in Series A funding from Breakthrough Energy Ventures, Bill Gates' investment firm focused on climate change.
- The co-founders hope that the breast milk produced by Biomilq from culturing mammary epithelial cells will help reduce the carbon footprint from the global infant formula market.



The Food Programme

 **The Food Programme**

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### Top Banana: The Future of the World's Most Popular Fruit

Dan Saladino meets the scientists working on the future of a truly global food, the banana. Available now 28 minutes

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# **Some examples of problematic partnerships**

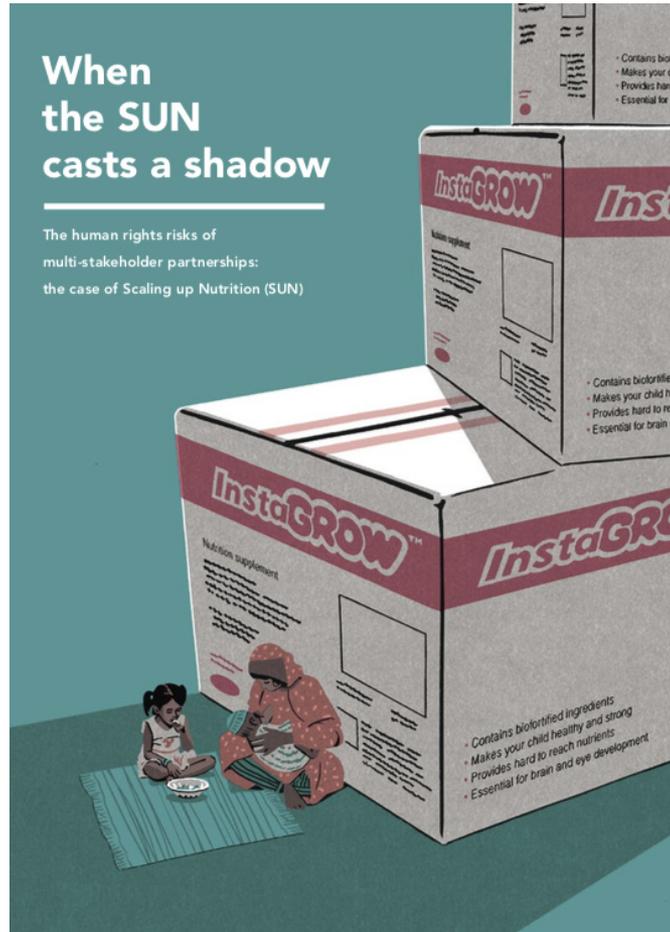
# The 'Business of Malnutrition' - the perfect cover

Babies are the perfect entry point for market-driven solutions, such as SUN and GAIN.

Many development NGOs and agencies are dependent on food sponsorship



# The risks of being a SUN country



## SUN Promotes:

- enhanced private sector access to policy-setting;
- short-term medicalized solutions;
- intensive agriculture and technologies such as GMO and biofortification;
- market-led approaches to food fortification

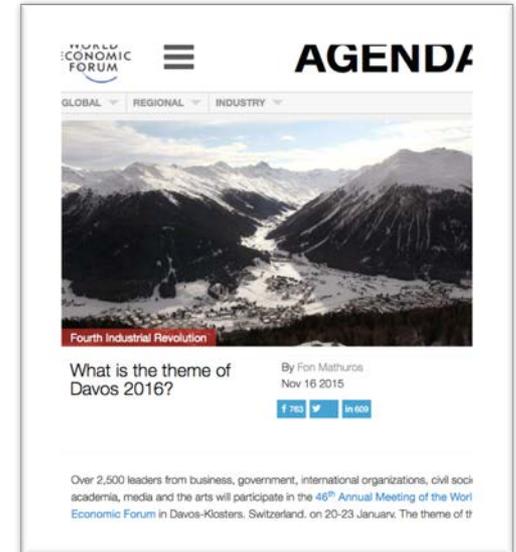
## SUN ignores:

- The **commerciogenic** causes of malnutrition;
- sustainable, culturally appropriate local foods;
- the concerns of communities most affected by hunger and malnutrition
- **undermines effective conflict of interest regulations**
- [www.babymilkaction.org/archives/24042](http://www.babymilkaction.org/archives/24042)

# Should we let businesses run the world?

- **WEF's Global Redesign Initiative** proposes that issues are taken off the agenda of the UN system and are addressed instead by *'plurilateral, often multi-stakeholder, coalitions of the willing and the able.'*
- WEF envisages a world managed by a coalition of multinational corporations, nation states (including through the UN System) and 'select'\* civil society organisations.

*\*corporate funded*



# Problematic partnerships

- UN Strategic Partnership Agreement with the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- FAO partnership with Danone to scale up sustainable food and agricultural practices and provide people with access to more diverse and healthier foods

# IBFAN opposes BMS Call to Action\* – it gives companies 10 year licence and could usher in partnerships that would derail the Code

## Companies Contacted

- 20 of the largest BMS companies were contacted directly and asked to respond.
- Industry associations also received the Call to Action – reaching additional companies.
- Advocates can consider sending the Call to Action directly to additional companies, inviting them to respond.



*The controversy over BMS marketing is holding back private sector from making a more positive contribution to global nutrition challenges.*

*Formula companies are prohibited from joining many global initiatives and partnerships.*

*Issue contributes to general distrust of private sector among global nutrition stakeholders.*

*To further progress, the Call to Action takes an approach to directly appeal to companies to take action, supplementing advocacy, social behavior change, and consumer education.*

\*[www.babymilkaction.org/archives/25260](http://www.babymilkaction.org/archives/25260)

# Building 'trust' through education



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## TACKLING OBESITY HOW COMPANIES USE EDUCATION TO BUILD 'TRUST'



Breastfeeding provides an ideal window of opportunity for obesity prevention and may help in the development of taste receptors and appetite control.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considered that there are only two potential, cost-effective interventions that can be put into place immediately to deal with the

As pressure builds to stop junk food advertising to children, many companies are focusing attention on nutrition and health education in an attempt to establish themselves as producers of healthy food. By building public trust in this image they can divert attention from the continued aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods. The education materials and facilities that are produced as a result present an even more complex problem than straightforward



Nestlé's Epode 'nutrition education' program in Spain is called 'Thao' and is also sponsored by Ferrero Rocher and Orangina Schweppes. This photo from the Thao website shows children wearing Nestlé branded T-Shirts. Other photos show branded posters and other promotions - all in violation of EU Commission rules. Since Thao is for for 0-12 year-olds it violates the International Code too. <http://go.gl/W5W0Y1>

*"All too often the education process is entrusted to people who appear to have no understanding of industry and the path of progress...The provision of education is a market opportunity and should be treated as such"*

European Round Table of Industrialists,  
1988

Since 1992 Nestlé has been sponsoring nutrition education programs in schools all over the world

# Key messages

- Remind your government – especially if it is a member of SUN - of their legal duty to protect human(and planetary) rights to health - free from commercial influence
- **Terminology matters:** *Partnership* implies shared governance and values. *Use carefully.* (UNICEF guidance: *Response to COVID-19: Guidance Note on Financial Contributions or Contributions in-kind from Food and Beverage companies Version 2\**)
- **'Inclusiveness'** is also problematic.
- Be wary of over-emphasising individual nutrients with health and nutrition claims – this can lead to promotion of ultra-processed foods.
- Promote policies that protect biodiversity, such as legislation to stop land and sea grabbing, deforestation, single use plastic packaging etc.

\*[www.babymilkaction.org/archives/24184](http://www.babymilkaction.org/archives/24184)



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# THANK YOU!

[www.babymilkaction.org](http://www.babymilkaction.org)

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