

# Campaign for ethical marketing

BABY MILK  
ACTION



April 2007

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): "Marketing practices that undermine breastfeeding are potentially hazardous wherever they are pursued: in the developing world, WHO estimates that some 1.5 million children die each year because they are not adequately breastfed. These facts are not in dispute." You can help to stop marketing malpractice.

The *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* was adopted as a 'minimum requirement' for all countries by the World Health Assembly (which sets the policy of WHO - the World Health Organisation) in 1981. The *International Code* aims to protect breastfeeding by restricting company marketing practices and to ensure breastmilk substitutes are used properly when these are necessary. A number of Resolutions address questions of interpretation and changes in marketing practices and scientific knowledge, and have equal weight to the *International Code*.

## Dairy industry attempts to weaken Brazil's baby milk law

**Background:** The Brazilian law implementing the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* and subsequent, relevant Resolutions of the World Health Assembly is successfully stopping aggressive baby food marketing practices. Breastfeeding rates have been increasing in Brazil as a result of this and other efforts to promote breastfeeding. It is now under attack by the dairy industry, which puts its own profits before the health of infants and the rights of mothers.

In 2003 Baby Milk Action's supporters joined with others as the dairy industry attempted to weaken the law in the Brazilian Congress. We succeeded on that occasion. Now the industry is trying again. Congress members sympathetic to the industry brought amendments to a law promoting economic growth, arguing that a warning on labels was hampering the dairy industry. Despite opposition mobilized by our partners in Brazil, the law will be weakened if the Senate does not block the changes.

The law presently requires labels of whole milks to contain a 'Ministry of Health warning' about the risks of using the product for infant feeding. This has been described by a member of the 'rural platform' of Congress members as an 'injustice'. They have voted to downgrade the warning to an 'important notice'.

Whole milk is a third of the price of infant formula and companies such as Nestlé market whole milk in the infant feeding sections of pharmacies and supermarkets. One study found that 70% of poor mothers who were using powdered milk for infant feeding used whole milk rather than formula.

You can help by sending a message to Senators along the following lines. You can send these by email to the addresses given with the on-line version of this sheet in the 'codewatch' section of the Baby Milk Action website [www.babymilkaction.org](http://www.babymilkaction.org).

Brazil's law on the marketing of baby milk, No. 11.265/2006, is seen as an example to other countries as it is ensuring mothers receive correct information about infant feeding. As a result breastfeeding rates are recovering in Brazil and the risk of inappropriate feeding are reduced.

It is a concern to hear that Brazil may weaken the 'Ministry of Health warning' on whole milks. It is essential this warning remains as incorrect use of whole milk is too common. I hope you will take appropriate action.



### Ministry of Health Warning

**This product must not be used to feed children under one year of age, except on the express indication of a doctor or nutritionist.**

**Breastfeeding prevents infections and allergies and is recommended until two years of age or more.**

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It is a mark of the strength of the Brazilian legislation that the concerns of our partners on the ground are about inappropriate use of whole milks. Sponsorship of health workers (principally by Nestlé) is another concern as this creates conflicts of interest. But the advertising seen in the UK and the idealizing infant formula labels as seen in the Philippines (targets of current Baby Milk Action campaigns) are not found in Brazil.

It is also a mark of the desperation of the industry that it wishes to increase sales of whole milks for inappropriate infant feeding



**Nestlé promotes whole milks alongside more expensive formula in the infant feeding sections of pharmacies and supermarkets. It refuses to stop this practice, arguing there are no restrictions on how it markets whole milks.**

**This picture is taken from one of Nestlé's own audit reports and shows the Nido whole milk next to Nan formula.**