WOMEN'S HEALTH Action

14th June 2012

Re: VOTE in the European Parliament, 14th June on amendments to the *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on food intended for infants and young children and on food for special medical purposes Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety*

Rapporteur: Frédérique Ries

Dear Frédérique,

Women's Health Action is a women's health promotion, information and advisory service. We are a non-government organisation that works with health professionals, policy makers and other not for profit organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women in Aotearoa New Zealand. Women's Health Action, which grew out of Fertility Action, founded by women's health activist Sandra Coney is in its 27th year of operation and remains on the forefront of women's health in Aotearoa New Zealand. We are highly regarded as leaders in the provision of quality, evidence-based consumer-focused information and advice to ensure health policy and service delivery meets the needs of diverse women, and has intended and equitable outcomes. We have a special focus on breastfeeding promotion and support, as well as women's sexual and reproductive human rights (SRHR). The protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding both in the community, and at policy level, is a key area of our work. We take a special interest in ensuring that the activities of the infant formula industry, in particular the marketing of infant formula products, are in-line with the WHO's International Code of the Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and do not undermine the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.

The United Nations recommendations are clear that the promotion of all breast milk substitutes - including follow-on formulas for older babies should not be permitted. The widespread promotion of these products has confused and misled countless parents and undermined the messages health authorities are trying to disemminate.

Please VOTE FOR Amendment no 86 which will specifically allow Member States to prohibit the advertising of follow-on formulas.

Please also VOTE AGAINST Amendment 13 (the need for formulas for pre-term babies is not supported by reputable robust) - VOTE INSTEAD FOR Amendment 83.

There are many other good amendments that call for independent research and the precautionary principle to be used in decisions - please support the following:
85 - which allows Member States to ban the advertising of baby foods – please vote for this if Amendment 86 does not get through;
84 - calling for stricter rules on pesticides in the production of food for infants and young children because they are especially sensitive to endocrine disruptors or other toxic substances;
14, 57 - requiring peer-reviewed and independently evaluated evidence;
54 - national competent authorities to ensure an adequate system of oversight;

58 - products shall not imply prevention, treatment or cure of human disease;
59 - infant formula and follow-on formula labels shall not include pictures of infants, nor other pictures or text which may idealise; &
68 - calls for post- market monitoring.
76 calls for more transparency
81 calls for an assessment by EFSA of milks for older babies (the so-called 'growing up' and 'toddler' milks

We hope you will consider the evidence and matters letter before voting on the above amendments which will have considerable impacts on all European children and their families.

Yours sincerely,

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