Tackling Health Claims
Making health and nutrition claims about added ingredients is an effective way to make products seem like the healthy option. For many years we have been advocating that claims (except perhaps lactose-free claims) should not be allowed on foods for infants and young children because they are so misleading. No baby food has a health advantage over breastfeeding or healthy family foods. But the industry opposition to controls is fierce and all over the world, claims are persuade parents that expensive and often poorly quality products will make their children brainier, healthier or safer. It is an issue policy makers should not ignore.

In the UK we prompted a crackdown by the Government on several unauthorised claims such as ‘closer to breastfeeding’ and succeeded in getting some good rulings from the Advertising Standards Authority. We have also helped Member States bring in Guidelines and Resolutions at the World Health Assembly and Code calling for claims to be prohibited.

In Europe we helped strengthen the European Health and Nutrition Claims Regulations. This Regulation does not prohibit baby food claims (as we wanted) but aims to make sure claims are truthful and to make sure claims are truthful and to bring in the right of people to organise in areas once again, including staff hours. The economic downturn has much reduced. Cuts elsewhere.

UK Gov. Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (2007) 'Closer to breastfeeding' claims are so misleading: "The risks are left to the industry dossiers, relying only on the industry dossiers, and the risks are left to the food industry.

States and the Commission decide if it should be allowed. Parliamentarians then have a chance to comment. However this process has serious flaws. EFSA is only required to look at the efficacy - does the ingredient do what it claims? - not risk - is the claim or ingredient safe? Nor is EFSA required to look at independently funded evidence, relying only on the industry dossiers, some parts of which are kept confidential for commercial reasons. The risks are left to the European Commission and Member States who meet behind closed doors.

Nevertheless, and much to the fury of the food industry, EFSA has decided that the majority of the thousands of claims submitted are unsubstantiated, including many formula claims for Immunofortis, probiotics etc. But a claim is only as good as its weakest link, and EFSA has given a positive opinion on a few formula claims (related to long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LCPUFAs). This is in conflict with leading scientific opinion such as the 2007 Cochrane Systematic Review which found that "feeding term infants with milk formula enriched with LCPUFAs had no proven benefit regarding vision, cognition or physical growth." EFSA admitted that it could not have reached its conclusion without considering the studies claimed by the applicant as proprietary".

We find the case for labeling infant formula or follow on formula with health or nutrition claims entirely unsupportable. If an ingredient is unequivocally beneficial as the 2007 Cochrane Systematic Review which found that: "feeding term infants with milk formula enriched with LCPUFAs had no proven benefit regarding vision, cognition or physical growth." EFSA admitted that it could not have reached its conclusion without considering the studies claimed by the applicant as proprietary. EFSA admitted that it could not have reached its conclusion without considering the studies claimed by the applicant as proprietary.

The following served as area contacts during the year:
- Patricia Hamilton, Caroline Hind, Joanna Malpass, Adele McGarry-Watson, Julie Lawrence, Steven Lee, Kristie Legg, Sue Hindley, Jenifer Inman, Vicky Islam, Liz Malpass, Dharmavandana, Anne Dowden, Maria Marianne Cowpe, Belinda Cox, Dh. Dharmavandana, Anne Dowden, Maria Marianne Cowpe, Belinda Cox, Dharmavandana, Anne Dowden.

Overheads 13%

The following served as area contacts during the year:
- Sarah Hansen, Office Manager
- Kevin Watkins, Dr. Tony Waterston, Patti Rundall, OBE, Policy Director
- Dr. Penny Stanway, Tim Lobstein, Gabrielle Zinkin.
- Prof. Raymond Hodgson, Sheila Kitzinger, Dr.
2009 BABY MILK ACTION

Members and supporters were essential in raising awareness of the importance of protecting infant and young child health. Area contacts and staff held stalls and workshops at events in the UK, including those organized by the Lactation Consultants GB. Baby Friendly Initiative, Breastfeeding Network, and La Leche League GB. We participated in the first Ulverston Breastfeeding Festival in the Lake District in August.

We coordinate the international boycott of Nestlé, the company responsible for more aggressive baby food promotion than any other. We also monitor other companies such as Danone, the world’s second largest baby food manufacturer. Danone promised us it would conduct a ‘root and branch’ review after taking over the Nutricia, Milupa and Cow&Gate brands. We are evaluating the results of this.

In October we promoted International Nestlé- Free Week which took off as a Halloween boycott of Nestlé candy in the US in 2009.

We continued to pursue a joint complaint about Nestlé at the UN Global Compact Office on behalf of the coalition that we formed in setting up the Nestlé Critics website, a portal to information on all aspects of Nestlé’s business.

At Nestlé’s AGM in April in Lausanne we once more raised concerns about a Nestlé’s milk marketing, its use of ‘education’ and sponsorship, and its claims that formula protects babies. This year Greencut cut through the protest to call attention to the exploitation of rainforests, and more charges were made about Nestlé’s spying activities. Fighting to be heard over the drilling noise, Chairman Peter Brabeck made his usual boast about the company and then warned that tying corporations up in a regulatory straightjacket is unnecessary when companies such as Nestlé have such sound principles and core values!

Our YouTube video of soap marketing guru, Mr. Henry Nastie, was filmed at our demonstration at Nestlé (UK) HQ in Croydon in May.

We coordinated the Infant Formula Explained Unit project by the Baby Feeding Law Group (BFLG) producing educational films for healthworkers and parents - available under license in 2011.

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We continued to support our partners’ efforts to strengthen legislation in countries such as the Philippines and South Africa.

We are the UK member of IBFAN (the International Baby Food Action Network) which has more than 200 groups in over 100 countries. We are responsible for company campaigns and Code advocacy in Europe.

IBFAN celebrated its 30th Birthday in October in Geneva. Among the many speakers, David Clark, Legal Advisor for UNICEF, highlighted a new global marketing report from Euromonitor International, which clearly showed the impact of regulation on sales and why companies are so opposed to regulations - unless it’s to protect brands and intellectual property.

We kept a close eye on the UN Codex Alimentarius meeting in September in Rome in November, where the food industry and GAIN are pushing their market-led approaches through new work on fortified baby foods and supplements.

Networking

We are the Secretariat of the 23 Member UK BFLG which includes the Royal Colleges of Paediatrics, Midwives and Nursing, the Community Practitioners and Health Visitors’ Association and UNISON. We are also on the Steering Group of the

Code Advocacy

Baby Milk Action tries to ensure that breastfeeding and the International Code are safeguarded in UK, EU and UN Nations policy setting, submitting comments to consultations and taking a lead role in the coordination of NGO advocacy and networking.

Since May, the UK has been governed by a Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition which presents new challenges. The Liberal Democrats are endorsers of the Nestlé Boycott and at the BFLG’s demand to fully implement the WHO/UNICEF International Code and WHO Resolutions. The Coalition Programme for Government also promises to ‘crackdown on irresponsible marketing,’ to ‘promote public health,’ to ‘protect consumers’ and to ‘look into malpractice’ etc. Despite this, the Coalition clearly favours voluntary approaches over regulation and has even invited the major food giants to fund and lead the obesity programme Change4Life (C4L).

Fearing that Start4Life (S4L) (which deals with infant feeding) would be affected, BFLG and the Breastfeeding Manifesto Coalition (BMC) set out their joint position on its funding. We stated that funding from any infant feeding, food, tobacco or alcohol company, or any company targeting families, would be totally unacceptable. The Department of Health and Secretary of State for Health have promised that BFLG will be consulted on any potential S4L sponsors.

In 2010 the Royal College of Midwives, a key member of the BFLG, stopped carrying adverts for breastmilk substitutes in its journal. Another BFLG member, the Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association is steadily reducing the number of infant formula adverts carried.

We represent IBFAN on the European Commissioner’s Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health which was evaluated during the year. We continue to highlight the need for the EU to harmonise with WHO Resolutions, the importance of independent monitoring and the risks of corporate sponsorship of education.

We joined the Save the Children team and IBFAN at the World Health Assembly in May where two Resolutions were adopted which could have a long-lasting impact on child health. WHA Resolution 63.23 addressed four of IBFAN’s concerns: infant feeding in emergencies, the need for regulation rather than voluntary measures, the inappropriate marketing of baby foods and health and nutrition claims (see back page). WHA Resolution 63.14 endorsed WHO’s Recommendations on Marketing of Foods to Children - the ‘Junk Food Code’ (see below) - which among many things, called on governments to take a lead in policy setting, to restrict marketing in ‘settings where children gather’ and to ‘avoid conflicts of interest’

Marketing and Advertising

We developed an online training course on monitoring the baby food industry. Members can do the first two courses free of charge.

We produce the Campaign for Ethical Marketing action sheets, exposing marketing malpractice around the world by all baby feeding companies and helping supporters write letters to company executives.

We launched an email Nestlé campaign in June, over its latest global baby milk marketing strategy: it is promoting its formula with the claim it ‘protects’ babies and had dismissed our direct complaints. After receiving thousands of emails, Nestlé said it has discontinued a leaflet claiming its formula is ‘The New Gold Standard’ in infant nutrition and has admitted that adding ingredients highlighted in its protect’ logos - such as DHA and ARA - to formulas ‘to prove benefit’. However, it is still refusing to remove the logos and the campaign continues.

We monitor the baby food marketing in the UK with the help of people reporting through the BFLG website, which we manage. We also supported people in registering complaints with the enforcement authorities, breastfeedinglawgroup.org.uk

We are a Trustee of the Children’s Food Bill, the UK Consortium on AIDS, the CASE Privatisation Group, the Trade Justice Movement and the UK Food Group.

Marketing and Advertising

IBFAN is an observer of the WHO Code Committee and the Secretariat of the UK Children’s Food Bill. The website and the Campaign and new Policy blogs are regularly updated. We received about 600,000 visitors in the course of the year. We are also on Facebook and Twitter.

Our fully updated Infant Feeding and Obesity Poster is available in French and English (see above left).

In November we sent our supporters in the UK and 86 countries copies of Update Newsletter.

Planning and Budgeting

Members are extremely important as multipliers and over half of our income comes from membership, donations and merchandise sales.

In November we sent our supporters in the UK and 86 countries copies of Update Newsletter.

Above: Briefing on claims and WHO’s ‘Junk Food Code.’

Below: Fully updated Infant Feeding and Obesity poster - new in French too!

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