

International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)

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Agenda Item 11.6 : Health, Environment and Climate Change

IBFAN welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy on health, environment and climate change.

Much more should be done to protect, promote and support breastfeeding, a practice that has no carbon footprint, contributes to water conservation and helps in the reduction of air pollution.

While we are calling for reduction of avoidable environmental risks, global sales of breastmilk substitutes increase rapidly every year, boosted by sophisticated marketing techniques against which breastfeeding cannot compete. These products are, of course, necessary for babies who are not breastfed, but they need energy to manufacture, materials for packaging, fuel for transport distribution and water, fuel and cleaning agents for daily preparation and use, and they generate Green House Gases. Between 11-25 kilos of CO₂ and more than 4000 liters of water are estimated to be needed along the production pathway to produce just 1 kg of BMS powder.

If breastfeeding was considered a public health intervention for climate change prevention and mitigation, more would be done to end misleading marketing of baby food companies and support women who want to breastfeed.

At the very minimum, all governments should fully implement the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and relevant WHA Resolutions. We regret that goal 12 of the draft strategy does not include the requirement that national and local governments set up proper safeguards against conflicts of interest and commercial influence when facilitating “cross-sectorial cooperation”.

Like other green priorities, supporting new parents with breastfeeding now, will benefit future generations.

Thank you.

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See also:

IBFAN's 6-country study of the impact of formula production on GHG emissions:<http://ibfan.org/docs/Carbon-Footprints-Due-to-Milk-Formula.pdf>