

An **IBFAN-ICDC** report on baby food marketing practices



This page forms part of the global monitoring report – Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules 2010. Companies' marketing behaviour is measured against the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and WHA resolutions.

Friso

Company profile & Code violations

The Executive Summary to Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules 2010 is available at www.ibfan.org

Royal FrieslandCampina is a young company in name. Formed in December 2008 following a merger of several cooperatives under the Friesland Foods (formerly Friesland Coberco) and the Campina groups, it is wholly owned by the dairy cooperative Zuivelcoöperatie FrieslandCampina. The cooperative has 15,300 member dairy farms in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium and its roots date back to 1879 when its first dairy established.

FrieslandCampina products which include milk-based drinks, cheese, milk, yoghurts, desserts, butter, cream, milk powder, dairy-based ingredients and fruit-based drinks are sold in more than 100 countries. Key regions are Europe, Asia and Africa.

In 2009, the company's annual turnover amounted to €8.2b, a 14% drop from the previous year. However, its Consumer Products division which governs baby foods, posted a 2% increase in revenue due to growth in emerging markets. The company has also managed to pass on increased raw material prices to consumers.

One of the emerging markets is Vietnam. According to an interview given to Associated Press (AP) in 2009, a women's health clinic reportedly had an exclusive deal whereby doctors get a commission for each Dutch Lady formula sold. As the practice constitutes an offence under Vietnamese law, this was obviously denied by Friesland. It is, however, significant that along with other companies, Friesland announced a price increase of 10% for its powdered milk in Vietnam in 2010, citing rising prices of raw materials and a weak national currency. Since spending on advertising is capped at 10% of overall cost for all companies, the Ministry of Finance investigated and found one of the reasons for the cost hikes was huge marketing costs. The ministerial finding is not surprising given the AP report on kickbacks to doctors. For more information on Friesland activities in Vietnam as uncovered by the AP report, see section on *Stretching the Rules*.

HEAR THIS! SUBVERTING MOM'S CHOICE TO BREASTFEED?

In 2009, a mother in Singapore complained that she was contacted by a Friso representative before delivery. She was advised that should she decide to partially bottle feed, she could choose **Friso**. After delivery at a private hospital, she was given 4 bottles of unsolicited **Friso** in a discharge bag. How Friesland managed to access expectant women at the crucial stage when they are making infant feeding decisions was a mystery. When another cold call offering samples was made, this time to a mother four months after delivery, the inquisitive mother found out on persistent questioning to the caller that Friso had obtained her data from her gynaecologist, in breach of professional confidentiality. A warning has purportedly been issued to Friesland by the relevant authority in Singapore.

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Brands

Friso
Dutch Lady
Frisian flag
FrisoCrem

Logos



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Promotion to the public and in shops

- Article 5.1 of the Code prohibits advertising and all other forms of promotion of products under the scope of the Code.
- Article 5.2 and 5.4 of the Code prohibit companies from giving samples and gifts to mothers.
- Article 5.3 bans promotional devices at the retail level.
- Article 5.5 prohibits direct or indirect contact with mothers.



- ❖ In Hong Kong, a TV ad for **Friso 2** shown on Jade channel of TVB in Hong Kong (see 1) shows a baby having problems opening his bowels. A man in white coat then appears and suggests that babies with constipation can take milk powder with prebiotics to increase beneficial bacteria in the gut; reduce constipation with no worry about “heatiness” and helps strengthen immunity. A slogan below a packshot of **Friso 2**, Friso 3 and Friso 4 states, “*Boostimune: multi component immune formula.*” This ad is the subject of a complaint to the HK Broadcasting Authority by a group of children’s rights agencies. The reasons given are that the ads are misleading and lack scientific evidence on the claims made. There is also concern about oversimplification of of potentially more serious health concerns.

A barrage of idealising images on Hong Kong TV hammer home the benefits of **Friso**.

- ❖ The Code of Ethics on the Sale of Infant Foods in Singapore prohibits “point of sale” materials such as shelf talkers and block-stack displays. Infant formulas must only be displayed within the allocated/normal shelf space. As the pictures show (see 2), none of these appear to matter to Friesland. Upon complaint by the Breastfeeding Mothers’ Support Group, Friesland was asked to reposition the shelf talker and to remove the hotline number of its Baby Nutrition Centre. The Singaporean Code is weaker than the International Code.



Best seller rating to induce sales at Giant, Tampines, Singapore



At Guardian Pharmacy, the Baby Nutrition Centre sign with the slogan “growing up together: Friso”; the Friso banner displaying the Frisoshield System of Nutrients and the shelf talker gives a boost to sales of all products under the Friso range, including infant formula.

*Cantonese ‘yit hei’/Mandarin ‘er qi’ (literally ‘heatiness’) – means that the body is out of equilibrium from eating too much of the wrong foods.

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❖ Elsewhere in Singapore:

- Tie-in sales, reduced prices and gifts with purchase (extra 900 g with purchase of a bigger tin, 6 cans of **Friso Gold** for the price of 5, free **Friso Crem**) are commonly offered with the purchase of **Friso 2**. A prime example of this sort of promotion is found in this **Friso Triple Baby Bonus Deals** flyer. (see 3)
- An advertisement in *Motherhood* magazine promotes **Friso 2**, **Friso 3** and **Friso 4** with the tagline “Support your child’s development” to promote the ‘Frisoshield’ system of nutrients with claims that draw similarities with breastmilk. (see 4)
- The same “Support your child’s development” tagline is used in another **Friso** advertisement in *Mumcentre*. This parenting website advertises the entire Friso range including **Friso 2**. (see 5)

❖ In Vietnam, the **Dutch Lady** website (<http://dutchlady.com.vn>) advertises the following products with claims prohibited under WHA 58.32 [2005] (see 6):

- **Frisolac 1 and 2**: capable of giving children “a natural and strong start in life” and as “a unique formula, containing a new and completely balanced range of essential nutrients.”
- **Friso Gold**: contains a “breakthrough protection formula with Synbiotics, a unique combination of prebiotics and probiotics ... to stimulate the immune system and therefore to protect kids right from the inside, preventing the risk of getting gastrointestinal and respiratory diseases.”
- **Dutch Lady Gold Step 1**: “helps to complete growth of your babies’ brains in the first year of life and lists all the essential nutrients which are also found in human milk.”
- **Dutch Lady Step 1**: “enriched with DHA, AA, SA ... and choline for an optimal mental and physical development of your baby. Dutch Lady Step 1 provides Tryptophan and Tyrosine ... which helps babies absorb and process information faster.”

The Vietnamese Decree prohibits advertising of infant formula and requires that information materials contain information on breastfeeding. This requirement is not met.

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Misleading text and pictures which violate the Code

- Article 4.2 requires all information material to advocate for breastfeeding and not contain pictures or text which idealises the use of breastmilk substitutes.
- For health professionals, Article 7.2 of the Code allows only product information that is factual and scientific.
- WHA resolution 58.32 (2005) prohibits nutrition and health claims unless specifically provided for in national legislation.
- ❖ In the Netherlands, Friso brochures are distributed at a baby fair. Products promoted are follow-up formula but they target pregnant women and the promotion of **Friso 2** is just as effective as promoting **Friso 1**, which the law prohibits.

- One brochure entitled, “Pregnant? Free Starter Package” shows a baby clutching a feeding bottle. It invites mothers to fill a form at www.frisokindervoeding.nl to get a free starter package – an effective way of generating a useful database of potential consumers. It entices pregnant women to visit the Friso booth at the baby fair with the statement that Friso has been doing everything to give tiny ones “the best start in life.” (see 1)

Zwanger?

Vul op www.frisokindervoeding.nl de coupon in, neem hem mee en ontvang een

Gratis startpakket!

Friso Kindervoeding doet er al 75 jaar alles aan om kleintjes de **beste start** in hun leven te geven. Daarom kun je op de Negenmaandenbeurs bij onze stand terecht voor een **gratis startpakket** als je zwanger bent.

Daarnaast kun je voordelig kennismaken met onze hapjes & papjes. Gezond, omdat er geen suiker is toegevoegd, en toch verrassend lekker!

Vragen?
Wij staan voor je klaar! Kom voor een **persoonlijk advies** langs op onze stand of bel gratis met onze voedingsdeskundigen: 0800-0227434. Neem ook eens een kijkje op www.frisokindervoeding.nl

FRISO

Friso flesvoeding Standaard 2 & 3
Friso 2
Friso 3
Stap 1 voor €5,-
Stap 2 voor €8,-
(t.w.v. €8,55)

Hét drinkpapje zonder toegevoegde suikers!*
Friso goetelacht!
Friso goetelacht!
Stap 1 voor €2,-
Stap 2 voor €2,-
(t.w.v. €2,97)

Eerste Fruitsmoothie voor kleintjes!
Friso Fruitsmoothie
Stap 1 voor €2,-
(t.w.v. €3,98)

Voor elke stap de juiste hap!
Friso
4-6 maanden
3x fruit
6-12 maanden
of 12+ maanden
2x fruit
4x maaltijd
Gratis!
Stap 1 voor €5,-
(t.w.v. €10,55)

1

- Another brochure bearing the same image, also aimed at future moms is entitled “What formula do you choose”. The brochure begins correctly by praising breastfeeding but the requirements of the International Code related to information on infant feeding are not met. Also, the brochure quickly goes on to explain how Friso has developed different kinds of formula to suit each and every baby and contribute to their optimal growth and development. Apart from standard formula, products promoted include one for premature babies (**Friso Prematuur**), one for colicky and regurgitating babies (**Friso Comfort**) and a

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hypoallergenic one for those allergic to cows' milk (**Friso Hypo-Allergeen**). It tells mothers that should they choose at "a certain point to change to formula, or to combine breast and bottle" then Friso formulas are sure to give everything the child needs. (see 2)

- An ad for the product found in Kraamsupport, starts with the slogan "Good amino acids DHA and AA? I'm ready for Friso Kindervoeding formula." Showing a happy baby sitting with a fallen sippy cup and a full range of Friso 2 products, the text states that "all formula (except for Friso Intensief H.A. 2) contain the good fatty acids DHA and AA that are naturally present in breastmilk. These fatty acids are necessary for good brain development. So let's get those fats." (see 3)
- ❖ In Vietnam, promotion of Friso products abounds with materials showing how **Frisolac** and **Dutch Lady** are the source of good high quality nutrition and the products are a good investment for "future harvest". (see 4)



This baby is clutching a tommyeetippee feeding bottle to drive the message home about bottle feeding.



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Promotion in health care facilities and to health workers

- Article 6.2 bans promotion of products within the health care system.
- Article 6.3 prohibits the display of products, placards and posters and the distribution of company materials unless requested or approved by the government.
- WHA resolution 47.5 (1994) urges an end to free or subsidised donations of products to all parts of the health care system.
- ❖ In Lebanon, mothers report that they are given prescriptions for Friso 1 in hospitals and clinics in an obvious private arrangement between Friesland and the health profession.
- ❖ In Singapore,
 - a newly born baby is spotted wearing mittens bearing the Friso name and logo. Apparently, the mittens are 'hospital property' begging the question if there is any arrangement between Friesland and the hospital for such blatant product promotion to take place. (see 1)
 - If mittens don't work and mothers are not convinced that babies should be given Friso off-hand, this Friso powder container given for mothers to take home should do the trick. (see 2)

Labelling

- Article 9 of the Code requires labels to NOT discourage breastfeeding and inform about the correct use of the product, the risk of misuse and abide by a number of other points.
- WHA resolution 54.2 (2001) advises exclusive breastfeeding for six months which means that the recommended age for use of complementary foods cannot be under six months.
- ❖ In Lebanon, the label of Friso 2 replaces the 'breast is best' statement with a paragraph describing how the product is *"completely balanced formula containing all essential nutrients to stimulate the development of the brain and the eyes, strengthen the immune system and support digestion."* The label carries a mark in huge font showing that the product contains new DHA and prebiotics, and it has a long-eared toy rabbit as the product mascot. (see 3)
- ❖ In the Netherlands
 - The product mascot for Friso 2 is a toy mouse and it has a different formulation. DHA is combined with AA, fatty acids that are also *"prevalent in breastmilk"*. Idealising statements include *"first choice after breastfeeding"*, *"for good brain development"*, *"with all nutrition your baby needs to grow well and develop well."* (see 4)



A "hand"some endorsement



See-through container so mothers can see clearly how much they are meant to feed their babies.



Stretching the Rules

This page highlights marketing practices which undermine or discourage breastfeeding especially those relating to products which may not come under the scope of the Code. Sponsorship activities which may give rise to conflicts of interest are also reported here. These activities are intended to promote breastmilk substitutes even though they are not Code violations.

- ❖ In Malaysia, Friso Gold 3 and 4 are the sponsors of a family outing and a contest conducted by parenting bloggers. To get invited to the event, parenting bloggers are asked to come up with a design of their own to show how their kids fight off bacteria and germs – an oblique suggestion to the Frisoshield element in Frisogold products in Malaysia, including Friso 1 and 2. At the family outing, a nutrition expert from Friso Gold shares her opinion on how “good nutrition” supports the child’s immune system. The winner of the contest walks away with a 3-day/2-nights holiday package for a family of four to Disneyland in Hong Kong. (see photo group 1)



- ❖ In Singapore:
 - An ad in Motherhood advertises one of Singapore’s biggest parenting events, featuring a talk and demonstration on weaning by Friesland. (see 2)
 - Several flyers were distributed door-to-door – they include a registration form for the Working Mothers Forum sponsored by Friso with the support of the Obstetrical & Gynaecological Society of Singapore and the Singapore Paediatric Society. Also distributed were an assurance on product safety for Friso 2, 3 and 4 and an ad for Frisomum. (see picture group 3)



- ❖ In Vietnam
 - While Dutch Lady denies allegations that they compensate doctors, clinics, hospitals or their staff for selling or promoting products to health facilities in Vietnam (see company profile), it acknowledges providing furniture for a women’s health clinic.
 - In return, the clinic signed a contract to promote a Dutch Lady powdered milk product for pregnant and nursing mothers. The clinic also printed a Dutch Lady logo on registration forms for women who came for ultrasounds or prenatal check-ups.
 - Professional ethics aside, this sort of medical endorsement is harmful to breastfeeding. When women are told by their doctors that they need a certain brand of powdered milk for the healthy development of their foetuses and to breastfeed successfully, the myth is perpetrated that women need special nutrition and preparation to breastfeed. Additionally, women who can afford the extra costs often do not need the product while those who need the additional nutrition cannot afford it.

JUST IN

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This page contains information received after the company report was finalised. They are assembled alphabetically by country rather than sequentially according to Code Articles.

- ❖ In Estonia, a magazine ad advertises Friso 2 formula, a newcomer to the Estonian market. The picture and accompanying text in the ad idealise the product by showing a warm and cosy family unit and the statement that “Friso is a good choice” and “irreplaceable nutrition”. For little ones to grow “healthy, smart and strong”, the solution appears to be ‘healthy food’ developed by FrieslandCampina. (see 1)

1



Cosy image makes for good marketing in Estonia

- ❖ In Malaysia, several Friso activities are found to be in violation of the Code of Ethics for the Marketing of Infant Foods and Related Products. They are explained in the captions below the pictures. (see 2)

2



Free supplies are not allowed in Malaysian health facilities but Frisolac 1 Gold sends top management to convince hospitals to receive full size tins of Frisolac 1 on a regular basis. These supplies are in turn given as samples to mothers.



Friso tries to circumvent the Malaysian Code by promoting Friso Gold 3 & 4, products not covered by the Malaysian Code, in this ad for the *Healthy Mum, Healthy Child Forum*. It overlooks the fact that under the Malaysian Code companies are not allowed to conduct any activity that involves babies, pregnant women and mothers, or offer them gifts.



A Handbook for Mom talks about minor digestive problems children suffer from during the first few years of life such as colic, constipation and diarrhoea. Again, Friso tries to circumvent the Malaysian Code by promoting Friso Gold 3 & 4 but the information relayed applies also to young babies and indirectly promotes the Friso name found on formula products.

VIOLATION



3

What lies beneath the gift in Holland?

- ❖ In the Netherlands, free towels bearing the Friso 2 logo are given to pregnant women who visit *pretecho baby in beeld*, a health service in Zwolle where mothers can get ultrasound scans of their unborn babies. Friso 2 is a product intended for babies above 6 months so the promotion is discomfiting as the product is unsuitable for newborns. (see 3)
- ❖ In Vietnam, FrieslandCampina works with the National Institute of Nutrition to sponsor seven hospitals in a clinical nutrition project to develop and apply ‘nutrition’ as therapy to hospitalised patients. This gives rise to conflicts of interest as health workers are required to promote breastfeeding. (see 4)



Picture: Thanhien News

Upon their discharge from hospitals and patients are no longer under the clinical nutrition project, it is likely that parents will need to shop for Friso products, like this Vietnamese father is doing.