



Aktion gegen den Hunger
Wallstraße 15 a
10179 Berlin

Tel.: +49 (0)30 279 099 70
Fax: +49 (0)30 279 099 729
info@aktiongegendehunger.de
www.aktiongegendehunger.de

Bank für Sozialwirtschaft (Berlin)
IBAN: DE89 1002 0500 0001 3777 01
BIC: BFSWDE33BER

Berlin, May 22nd 2018

Violation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes threatens hundreds of thousands of children's lives each year

Dear Sir or Madam,

On May 17th, 2018, Aktion gegen den Hunger published a report titled „Let them choose“, documenting the industry's multiple and systematic breaches of the WHO Code.

The report shows the threat presented to the lives and health of millions of vulnerable children by the rapid growth of the market for baby milk formula. While recognising the need for certain infants to be formula-fed, the report cites evidence that demonstrates much of this growth stems from powerful marketing campaigns that have led mothers to limit or abandon breastfeeding. Yet, the unique life-saving and life-enhancing benefits of breastfeeding are proven!

In countries of the global South particularly, the use of breastmilk substitutes can have fatal consequences. A lack of access to sufficient, safe and affordable water and adequate sanitation often leads to diarrhoea – a major cause of child mortality worldwide. It is estimated that more than 800,000 child deaths would be prevented each year in low or middle-income countries if breastfeeding were adopted at close-to-universal levels.

More babies and small children are being fed infant formula than ever before. The industry is seeing a five-fold increase over just two decades – three times faster than the global economy. This also means more and more children's lives are in danger! We therefore urge you to enforce the WHO Code, which was adopted as early as 1982, stipulating:

- No advertising for infant feeding products for children under six months
- No gifts and other donations to hospitals and pharmacies
- No free samples to parents and health professionals
- No false health claims
- No use of photos or pictures that may idealize the use of instant formula
- No sponsorship of medical conferences and meetings

- Only factual and understandable information in national language

We are asking that you publicly commit to ending your company's aggressive marketing practices once and for all. As one of the leading companies, you should lead the way, by respecting the rights of mothers and babies, making the health of young children your first priority, and complying with the Code.

It is not acceptable that such inappropriate marketing practices, repeatedly condemned by all Member States of the WHA, should continue to encourage formula use to replace breastfeeding. This endangers the health of millions of children and may lead to their death – just to maximize your profits!

We would like to publish your response to our report on our website. If you wish to put a short statement of response, please send it to us by Wednesday 30th May.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J.S. Friedrich-Rust". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Jan Sebastian Friedrich-Rust
Executive Director Aktion gegen den Hunger