
The report notes that compliance with the Code has improved in recent years but suggests that marketers of infant formulas still fall well short of global health policy standards. Using the Initiative’s scoring system that evaluates company policies, internal systems, and marketing practices, the report concludes that while one company has a compliance score of 68%, most others are below 50% compliant with the Code. According to the report, some companies’ inconsistent implementation in different product lines and in different countries compounded with inconsistent government policies across countries creates a major gap that it suggests should be addressed to improve breastfeeding rates worldwide.

By way of background, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes for member countries to recommend reviews of sales promotion activities on baby foods and introduce restrictions on accompanying marketing claims through advertising regulation where necessary. In particular, the initiative seeks to restrict claims made by infant formula manufacturers that promote formula as a better or healthier alternative to...
breastfeeding. In the U.S., while FDA closely regulates infant formula (and has issued guidance on labeling and structure/function claims for formula), it has not implemented any regulations suggested in the Code.

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