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# DANONE's COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN THE FIRST 1000 DAYS

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Position Paper



DANONE

# ADEQUATE NUTRITION IN THE FIRST 1000 DAYS: A GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH PRIORITY

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## ➤ The importance of nutrition in the first 1000 days

The first 1000 days, from conception up to two years old, are critical for lifelong health. The adequate provision of nutrients is crucial to ensure good physical and mental development of young children. Ensuring every mother and child receives adequate nutrition during this 1000-day window can yield dividends for a lifetime, as a well-nourished child is better protected against disease and is likely to perform better in school<sup>i</sup>. It also benefits society, by boosting productivity and improving economic prospects for families and communities.

## ➤ The reality: mothers and children are often not getting the nutrition they need

Despite significant global progress against malnutrition in the last decade, an alarming number of pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants and young children suffer from inappropriate, over- or undernutrition. For mothers, this means increased risk of giving birth to a pre-term, underweight or malnourished infant. For infants and young children, poor nutrition in the early years often means irreversible damage to bodies and minds during the time when both are developing rapidly. Malnutrition traps children, families, communities and nations in an intergenerational cycle of illness and poverty<sup>ii</sup>.

## ➤ The political mandate to address this problem

In this context, maternal, infant and young child malnutrition has been identified as a public health priority. In May 2012, the World Health Assembly identified six priority areas for action and endorsed global targets in these areas on the horizon for 2025<sup>iii</sup>. These targets were reaffirmed by the United Nations in the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in December 2015, which will guide the international development agenda until 2030<sup>iv</sup>.

WHO's Global Targets 2025 are vital for catalysing global change. Danone is taking an active role to help achieve them as we believe that we can make a difference – namely, through contributing to increasing breastfeeding rates, reducing anemia, and stabilising childhood obesity rates.

## ➤ Danone's role as a nutrition solution provider

At Danone, our mission is to bring health through food to as many people as possible. We encourage healthier and more sustainable eating and drinking practices, respecting different cultures and thus offering products inspired and developed out of local needs and insights. We believe we have a crucial role to play to ensure there is both awareness and understanding of the importance of nutrition in the first 1000 days. We also believe that parents should be protected from unethical or incomplete information about their nutritional choices. As a leading company in nutrition and health, we are doing our utmost to provide mothers with the right nutritional support for themselves, their infants and young children to help provide the best start in life. We do this via our products and services, and through partnerships.

# ADDRESSING TODAY'S CHALLENGES: OUR CONVICTIONS AT DANONE

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Barriers to achieve adequate nutrition, as identified by the international health community include the lack of investment in ambitious education and nutrition programs. As breastfeeding provides infants with the best and most complete form of nourishment available, low breastfeeding rates have been highlighted as a key issue, often polarising the debate. Yet, malnutrition is a large scale and complex challenge that requires a multi-dimensional, multi-stakeholder, localised approach. This approach should focus on increasing breastfeeding rates and on appropriate feeding and weaning practices in early life.

## First conviction: Breastfeeding needs to be protected and promoted

*Increasing breastfeeding rates worldwide requires a two-fold approach. Firstly, breastfeeding mothers should be respected in their feeding decision and protected from any unethical argument or marketing practices. Secondly, all stakeholders should take a leadership role to promote the best start in life and benefits of breastfeeding.*

### ➤ Protecting breastfeeding: the importance of responsible marketing

Danone supports the WHO's global public health recommendation calling for exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of age and continued breastfeeding up to two years and beyond, combined with the safe introduction of appropriate complementary foods. We believe that it is the industry's responsibility to adopt, implement and enforce strict policies to ensure marketing practices do not negatively affect the choice and ability of mothers to breastfeed their infants optimally, in line with the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes<sup>v</sup> (the WHO Code).

### ➤ Beyond responsible marketing: Danone's role to promote breastfeeding

Sustainable health is an integral part of our business model. We believe that educating mothers on the benefits of breastfeeding, as well as supporting them in their choice to breastfeed, will lead to prolonged breastfeeding and higher awareness about their subsequent feeding decisions. Our goal is to install good feeding habits and reduce the incidence of inappropriate, unsafe or unhealthy nutrition options such as the feeding of young children with 'adult' food.

Governments in all countries play a critical role to help parents and create a supportive environment for breastfeeding, and we believe that other stakeholders can partner with governments to improve actions that support them. These actions include policies giving families access to maternal and paternal leave, ensuring that workplaces and public facilities offer women a suitable place to breastfeed their babies outside of the home, and ensure working women are offered breaks to feed or collect breast milk while on the job.

### ➤ We protect breastfeeding with far-reaching internal rules and policies to ensure responsible and ethical marketing practices

Danone has established and implemented strict marketing policies for all Danone employees to ensure we support the aims and principles of the WHO Code, and subsequent relevant WHA resolutions. Our policy, which is publicly available<sup>vi</sup>, applies worldwide and prohibits, without exception, the advertising and promotion of infant formula and delivery products (such as bottles and teats) for infants up to six months of age. In countries classified as higher-risk countries (in terms of levels of infant mortality and morbidity<sup>vii</sup>), Danone has voluntarily extended its advertising and promotion prohibition up to 12 months of age, which often goes beyond local legislation. In these countries, Danone also prohibits the promotion of complementary foods and drinks for use by infants up to six months.

All current and new Danone employees responsible for the manufacturing, marketing, distribution and/or selling of these products are carefully trained to ensure that they understand their individual and collective responsibilities in the implementation of our policy.

Danone is the first, and so far the only, company to apply a voluntary global policy that prohibits the advertising and promotion of infant formula for infants aged 0-6 months, even if permitted by local laws. Danone is also one of only two infant formula manufacturers included in the **FTSE4Good Global Responsible Investment Index**<sup>viii</sup> and was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes category of the 2016 **ATNI Global Index**<sup>ix</sup>, with our management systems recognised as some of the strongest evaluated.

## Second Conviction: Best nutrition for mothers, infants and young children needs to be assured

*Improving the nutritional status of mothers, infants and young children worldwide requires a multi-dimensional approach combining: (1) Education programs which raise awareness about the importance of nutrition in the first 1000 days; (2) Science-based information empowering women to make safe and personally-relevant feeding choices; (3) Continuous investments in the development of high quality, safe products that meet the specific nutritional needs of infants and young children; and (4) A tailored approach that fits different cultural and economic contexts.*

### ➤ Closing the knowledge gap: the role of education

The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding (WHO/UNICEF, 2003)<sup>x</sup> states that "knowledge is often a greater determinant of malnutrition than the lack of food". Unfortunately, in many countries, healthcare professionals receive only limited training on the importance of nutrition in early life, resulting in inadequate nutrition support for parents and their infants. In contrast, where governments have prioritised nutrition training and education programs, significant improvements in nutritional status have been observed. At Danone, we believe that we have an important role to play in ensuring that the important and specific role of nutrition during the first 1000 days is understood and recognised by healthcare professionals and parents alike.

➤ **Empowering mothers who are not able, or choose not to (exclusively) breastfeed, with science-based nutrition information**

In today's world, not all mothers are able to, or want to (exclusively) breastfeed, for multifactorial reasons related to individual determinants, social attitudes and/or work and employment conditions. We believe that they should be fully empowered and have the right to make the best choices for themselves and their family. These choices should not be influenced by unethical arguments or practices, but instead should be respected. WHO recognises that the only safe and legitimate breast-milk substitute is infant formula. Factual, science-based information about the appropriate preparation, use and nutritional composition of our products is therefore essential to support mothers in their feeding decisions - in a way that does not discourage mothers from breastfeeding.

➤ **Investing in the development of high quality, safe products**

For more than a century, the paediatric nutrition industry has been providing vital nutrition in the first 1000 days, promoting healthy growth and development of infants and young children when they are most vulnerable. High quality, safe and nutritious products, such as infant and young child formulas and complementary foods, help parents ensure the specific nutritional requirements of their children are met.

In addition to products for healthy infants and young children, foods for special medical purposes (FSMPs) also play a crucial role and often save lives. FSMPs are specifically formulated products to feed those who, because of a particular disease, disorder or medical condition (such as prematurity, low birth weight, cow's milk allergy or digestive health problems), have nutritional needs that cannot be met by normal food.

This is why the industry has a key role to play through investing in research & development programs that result in producing and marketing high quality, safe, affordable products which meet the specific nutritional needs of all mothers, infants and young children in the first 1000 days.

# LOOKING AHEAD: OUR 2020 COMMITMENTS TO HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN THE FIRST 1000 DAYS

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As a leading company in nutrition and health, Danone has an important role to improve nutrition in the first 1000 days. We strive to partner with stakeholders to provide mothers, infants and young children with the most appropriate nutritional solutions; based on strong scientific evidence and adapted to local needs. We also recognise the important role we can play in promoting and supporting behaviour change and improving the health of current and future generations.

Our company has embarked on a transformation journey towards 2020 guided by the recently published Danone Manifesto<sup>xi</sup>. As a leading company in nutrition and health, we commit to:

## 1. Ensure ethical marketing practices

Implement the most progressive ethical marketing policies, and promote and initiate responsible marketing practices across the entire industry.

## 2. Support breastfeeding

Support initiatives to encourage mothers to breastfeed in every country we operate, knowing it provides infants with the best, most natural and complete form of nourishment available. This includes ensuring that from the first contact of any parent with us (such as care lines, websites), they will be offered the opportunity to connect with local breastfeeding support organisations.

## 3. Co-build with partners initiatives on the First 1000 Days

Work with governments, health authorities, public agencies and NGOs to implement initiatives that reach millions of mothers and mothers-to-be with 'First 1000 Days' awareness programs, and to support healthy eating habits in local contexts.

## 4. Publicly share our research data from nutritional studies

Share with governments, health authorities, public agencies and NGOs the results of our numerous national 'Nutriplanet' studies on local eating habits and health status across the world, to improve efficiency, effectiveness, impact and outcomes of public-private partnerships.

## 5. Address the needs of the very low income families

To better address the needs of the most underprivileged mothers and infants, when mainstream market mechanisms are not fit, we will propose to operate through, or jointly with, health and poverty alleviation NGOs, social workers and entrepreneurs, as well as local authorities, to organise product delivery fitting these specific needs. In that case, based on our 'Danone.Communities' experience, we commit to opt for a social, not-for-profit business model.

## 6. Start with our own employees

Implement, through our 'DanParents' program, a comprehensive worldwide parental policy for Danone employees, to support and encourage best practices for new parents and breastfeeding mothers in all our work places.

## COLLABORATION FOR COLLECTIVE SUCCESS

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Our success depends on collaborative action. Besides mobilising the private sector and taking a leading role in over 45 national, regional and global trade associations<sup>xii</sup>, we believe public-private partnerships are essential to mobilise the combined energy, resources and expertise of all stakeholders. We will strive to strengthen our existing partnerships and establish new ones that will help address today's critical health challenges.

We remain fully committed to our mission to 'bring health through food to as many people as possible', and, more than ever, we are proud of our Early Life Nutrition business.

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- <sup>i</sup> Dr. Rajiv Shah, Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)  
<http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/speeches/2013-june-10-remarks-administrator-rajiv-shah-bread-world-and-concern-worldwide-event>
- <sup>ii</sup> Improving Child Nutrition, The achievable imperative for global progress, UNICEF, April 2013  
[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Nutrition\\_Report\\_final\\_lo\\_res\\_8\\_April.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Nutrition_Report_final_lo_res_8_April.pdf)
- <sup>iii</sup> WHO Global targets 2025: (1) 40% reduction in the number of children under-5 who are stunted; (2) 50% reduction of anaemia in women of reproductive age; (3) 30% reduction in low birth weight; (4) No increase in childhood overweight, (5) Increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months up to at least 50%; (6) Reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5%. <http://www.who.int/nutrition/global-target-2025/en/>
- <sup>iv</sup> Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 2, Target 2.2: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2>
- <sup>v</sup> WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes  
<http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/40382/1/9241541601.pdf>
- <sup>vi</sup> Danone Policy for the Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes  
[http://www.danone.com/fileadmin/Publications/Danone\\_Policy\\_for\\_the\\_Marketing\\_of\\_BMS.pdf](http://www.danone.com/fileadmin/Publications/Danone_Policy_for_the_Marketing_of_BMS.pdf)
- <sup>vii</sup> FTSE4Good BMS Criteria [http://www.ftse.com/products/downloads/F4G\\_BMS\\_Criteria.pdf](http://www.ftse.com/products/downloads/F4G_BMS_Criteria.pdf)
- <sup>viii</sup> FTSE4Good Index Series <http://www.ftse.com/products/indices/FTSE4Good>
- <sup>ix</sup> ATNI Global index 2016 <https://www.accesstonutrition.org/index/2016>
- <sup>x</sup> Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding  
<http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/9241562218/en/>
- <sup>xi</sup> Danone Manifesto <http://www.danone.com/en/for-all/our-mission-in-action/our-manifesto/>
- <sup>xii</sup> Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition contribution to Industry Associations  
[http://www.danone.com/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Danone\\_ELN\\_contribution\\_to\\_Industry\\_Associations\\_dedicated\\_to\\_Infant\\_and\\_young\\_children\\_nutrition.pdf](http://www.danone.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Danone_ELN_contribution_to_Industry_Associations_dedicated_to_Infant_and_young_children_nutrition.pdf)