

UPDATE on Nutricia Alert

Thanks to all of you who wrote to Nutricia (NUMICO) to complain about their plans to give 50,000 CDs to mothers in China who buy their formula. (“Gold in our hands” said Nutricia’s Director in China).

The CD marketing campaign was to start in March 2004. After launching the Alert we received replies from Nutricia, who first said that we misinterpreted, that the gift was meant for consumers who bought formula for children of over 6 months of age. When that was reported in Dutch newspapers and dismissed as still a Code violation, the company wrote that it intended to adjust the marketing programme to be “entirely in line with the Chinese regulations” which meant that the logo on the CD would be changed and ensuring the promotion would only be related to products intended for babies older than 1 year.

IBFAN is still not happy with that because both brands involved, “Cow & Gate” and “Kissing My Baby” have infant formulas with labels that are nearly identical to follow-up formula and the No. 3 formula. Promoting any one of these would automatically promote the infant formula.

Moreover, the Code forbids companies from seeking contact with mothers.



The Director of Nutricia China is arranging the CD against formula tins. Shown on this display are three Cow & Gate (Numico) formulae, a poster promoting Cow & Gate baby food and in the background, three other tins of Nutricia formulae called “Kissing My Baby”. The CD shows a “Kissing My Baby” packshot. Source: RTL4 TV News, 20 Feb 2004

Reports from China indicate that the CD campaign was suspended or possibly called off. As far as we know, there has been no promotional gift with either “Kissing My Baby” or “Cow & Gate” formulas in any supermarket. But then we heard that a mother had received the CD after calling the Nutricia hotline and enrolling in a mother’s club – another kind of Code violation.

It is difficult to know exactly what is happening in Shanghai and other places on the Chinese east coast but we owed you an **Update** and want you to know that we are determined to follow through and protect breastfeeding against clever promotional tactics.

After 13 infants died from consuming tainted powdered milk in April, UNICEF China issued a press release blaming “the increased use of breastmilk substitutes” and the “failure to effectively monitor and enforce the Code.” “The recent tragedy”, says UNICEF, “may thus be seen as a *wake up call* to the health system and the community at large to take concerted action now to resolve breastfeeding to the levels of past decades.”

Attached to the press release was “Look What They’re Doing in China”, a summary of Code violations in China by IBFAN. We attach it here as a PDF file.