



**Parents disagree low breastfeeding rate is due to milk formula promotion**

**Also disagree to the contents of the Draft HK Code**

**Government should consider public opinion and extend the consultation period**

**(Hong Kong: 20 December 2012)** The Hong Kong Infant and Young Child Nutrition Association (“HKIYCNA”) today announced the result of a **Survey on Parents’ Views on the Draft HK Code and Related Issues** jointly conducted by the Public Opinion Programme, the University of Hong Kong (HKUPOP).

**Almost 70% respondents were unaware of the public consultation on the Draft HK Code**

Among the 515 respondents who are local parents raising at least one child, almost 70% (68%) were not aware that the government has recently launched a public consultation about regulating the promotional and marketing practices of formula milk and related products such as milk bottles and teats. This shows that the public do not have sufficient time to understand the related issues thoroughly.

**Majority of parents considered regulation up to 3 years old as unnecessary**

Some developed countries prohibit the promotion of milk formula for infants aged 6 months or below. When asked whether the ban should be applied for young children aged 6 months old or above if the government would like to legislate for similar regulation, 40% of respondents considered it as unnecessary (no need to extend to 6 months or above: 26%; should not be prohibited at all:14%). Only 12% of the respondents thought that the government should prohibit the promotion of milk formula for young children up to 3 years old. This reflects that there is a gap in the scope of the Draft HK Code which proposes regulating milk formula and related products up to 3 years old is and the general opinion of parents.

**Half of parents disagreed that low breastfeeding rate is due to influence of advertisements and opposing to banning advertisements**

Over 50% of parents objected to the view that “the low breastfeeding rate in Hong Kong is mainly due to the influence of the advertisements and promotional activities of milk formula for young children aged 6 – 36 months”. Only 20% of the respondents supported such view. Moreover, when asked whether it is a good or bad thing for the consumers if all the release of information of formula milk for infants and young children aged 36 months or below is banned in the future, about half of



parents regarded it as bad (quite bad:35%; very bad:12%). Around 20% thought that it is good (quite good:18%; very good:5%). As shown in the above survey results, the public understand that the low breastfeeding rate in Hong Kong has little to do with the effects of advertisements of milk formula. And they also believed that banning the advertisements and the release of information about milk formula for young children aged under 3 years old could in no way help to raise the breastfeeding rate.

### **Majority of parents disagreed with the contents of the Draft HK Code**

The Draft HK Code forbids the manufacturers of formula milk and related products to provide information and conduct public promotion. However, over 60% (62%) parents were conceived that the formula milk manufacturers should not be prohibited from providing information on feeding and nutrition to customer. Only 26% of the respondents supported the prohibition. Besides, more than 70% (71%) of parents showed objection to banning formula milk manufacturers from organizing activities involving infants, young children, pregnant women and mothers of infants or young children, such as seminars and baby crawling competition. Only 18% supported banning such activities. In addition, 64% of parents objected to prohibiting the formula milk manufacturers from giving free sample of formula milk for young children aged 6-36 months to consumers. Only 24 % parents supported it. From the survey results, it is clear that majority of parents disagreed with the contents and the scope of regulation proposed by the Draft HK Code. They hope that formula milk manufacturers can provide information, organize activities and distribute free samples to them.

To conclude, Dr. Robert Chung, the Director of HKUPOP said that as an academic, he advocated the freedom of information and did not think that banning promotional activities would solve the problem.

### **The Association requests to extend the consultation period**

The results of the survey revealed that the public consultation of the draft HK Code has not been sufficient while parents also disapprove of its content. If the HK Code is to be implemented in such a hurry, it may fail to meet the best interests of parents and children.

The Association is requesting for a meeting with Dr. Ko, the Secretary for Food and Health to discuss the HK Code in more details and proposing an extension of consultation period, so that the government can listen to the views from more parents,



industry members and different social sectors. Regarding the best way to present the products for young children aged above 6 months, the Association is open to listen to different views, and strives to find a win-win-win solution for the parents, the government and the industry.

### **Listen to the views of parents**

#### **Emily Kong, a mother: low breastfeeding rate is due to other reasons**

Emily Kong is a working mom whose baby boy is 11-months old. She is fortunate enough to have a considerate employer who allowed her 2 breastfeeding breaks, one at 11:30am and the other at 3:30pm, to pump and store her breast milk in the conference room. Given that her baby is not satisfied by the expressed breastmilk, she feeds the baby with milk formula when necessary, adopting a mixed feeding approach which benefits her and her boy, and make her more relax. She thinks that the low breastfeeding rate is due to short maternity leave, not enough facilities, work pressure and the inadequate government promotion on breastfeeding. “Breastfeeding has to be learnt and it is hard. Mothers may be psychologically unprepared. As you stay only 3 days at hospital (after giving birth), you feel lonely and helpless after returning home. She once quitted breastfeeding when her baby was 8 months and a half since she was sick. Emily is against banning advertisements of milk formula. She hopes to obtain information from various channels so as to make the best choice for her child.

#### **Mathew Shum, a father: dads' support is crucial to moms' success in breastfeeding while the effects of advertising is minimal**

Mathew Shum is a full time father and has 2 boys who are 2 and 3 years old respectively. His wife is a teacher and exclusively breastfed the babies until they were 18 months old. He thinks if the government is to promote breastfeeding, allowing paternity leave is the right direction, because the first few days are the most difficult for a mother to breastfeed. Support from the father is crucial. He believes that there should be many choices to life and infant feeding. Promoting breastfeeding does not mean to ban milk formula's promotion. Banning advertising of milk formula will surely narrow down parents' choices.

#### **About The Hong Kong Infant and Young Child Nutrition Association**

The HKIYCNA is formed by 6 founding members, namely, Abbott Laboratories Limited, Danone Baby Nutrition (HK) Limited, Friesland Campina (Hong Kong) Limited; Mead Johnson Nutrition (Hong Kong) Limited, Nestlé Hong Kong Limited



**Hong Kong  
Infant and Young Child  
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