

To:

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
43/F, Queensway Government Offices,
66 Queensway, Hong Kong

Subject: Reply to consultation on formula products and foods for infants and young children

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to provide my views and raise my concerns about the legislative proposals relating to formula products and foods intended for infants and young children under the age of 36 months. Although I agree to the objective of this proposal for protecting breastfeeding and ensuring infants and young children from unsafe and inadequate nutrition, the current form of law can probably bring serious impact as below to both consumers and industries.

1. Consumers have rights to obtain information and they need to be educated as to their choices, especially for those mothers who are not able to breastfeed. We are all enjoying the flexibility built in to the existing system that allows consumers to pick and choose from which companies they wish to hear from, etc. By passing such law, it would propel Hong Kong from first place to last place amongst the freest and easiest markets;
2. There is grave concern of possibly killing hundreds of thousands of jobs that includes people employed directly and those indirectly supporting the industry - including people employed to promote and market the baby milk formula products as well as backend chain support. Many of these are well paying jobs from middle to senior management level, not to mention a high number of supporting workers who rely the income to support their livelihood;
3. Hong Kong citizens are amongst the most intelligent, literate, and discerning consumers in the world. What Hong Kong needs is the same healthy balance between the needs of the consuming public and the businesses that serve them. This balance always puts the consumer in the position of ultimate control and forces businesses to be competitive in order to earn their trust and their business. Hong Kong has long been admired for its system of industry self-regulation and market forces, and indeed this system has worked well for both consumers and businesses for decades; Let's keep it that way in the interest of all parties.



In order to strike a balance, I strongly recommend that we can follow the World Health Organization (WHO) Code of marketing of breast milk substitutes and other international best practices, reinforcing the law for formula products and foods intended for infants and young children under the age of 6 months. Otherwise, Hong Kong will be single out for having inconsistent code. Worse still, we may not only fail to pursue its original purpose but also bring grave damages to our core values.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Matthew Lee
Account Manager
Datatrade Limited