

Letter dated:
March 2006

From:
Nordic Work Group for International
Breastfeeding Issues (NAFIA)

To:
European Commission
Health and Consumer Protection DG
Unit C4 – Health Determinants
Luxembourg

Subject: Green Paper: "Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases"

The Nordic Work Group for International Breastfeeding Issues (*Nordiska Arbetsgruppen för Internationella Amningsfrågor – NAFIA*) has studied the Green Paper with great interest and welcomes the initiative, which may add weight and legitimacy to the measures in Sweden in which the National Food Administration (*Livsmedelsverket*), the National Institute of Public Health (*Folkhälsoinstitutet*), the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) and the National Board for Consumer Policies (*Konsumentverket*) are involved.

It is also exemplary that civil society is being offered the opportunity to comment on and participate in drawing up the measures. Nevertheless, the NAFIA is dismayed to find that no mention at all is made of the diet of pregnant women and the care of children in their first year of life. According to the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), "Programs that target lifestyle changes must include (...) provisions for the original anti-obesity diet – human milk".

Parents-to-be and those who have just become parents form a target group which is extremely grateful for information on nutrition and diet, and practically all studies have found that breastfed children are given an optimum start in life. Breast milk protects both the child and the mother from various complaints and diseases, and not least obesity. See *Overweight and Obesity – A Vision for the Future*,
http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact_vision.htm

NAFIA would therefore above all like to stress that there is an important question which has not been dealt with in the Green Paper and which should be borne in mind (V.11). Breastfeeding! There are a number of guidelines and policy statements on breastfeeding which can be incorporated into various measures and action plans. One example of how this can be done is the CDC Guide to Breastfeeding Interventions (available on the CDC's homepage: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
<http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/resources/guide.htm>)

NAFIA would also like to comment briefly on the issues discussed in section V.12 concerning self-regulation. Our experience is that a company's profit motive overrides everything else. Furthermore, especially where impressionable groups such as future and new parents, children,

older people and the disabled are involved, there must be clear regulation with effective monitoring of compliance and follow-up. Responsibility for protecting and promoting public health should not be left in the hands of the private sector.

Göteborg and Solna; March 2006

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NAFIA is a non-profit organisation working to promote, support and protect breastfeeding in the cause of infants' health by shaping public opinion, lobbying of public authorities and dissemination of information on breastfeeding in a global perspective, especially to other organisations.