

## SNE and EDA call for specific rules on Young Child Formula

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**Specialised Nutrition Europe (SNE)<sup>1</sup> and the European Dairy Association (EDA)<sup>2</sup> call on the European Commission to propose specific legislation on Young-Child Formula by implementing the updated Codex Standard for young children's products into EU law.**

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Young Child Formula (YCF) is specifically formulated to provide essential nutrients that are often lacking in the diets of young children's (1-3 years), such as n-3 PUFA, iron, vitamin D and iodine. **However, the EU does not regulate the nutritional composition and labelling, (which should be based on adequate Nutrient Reference Values (NRV) for YCF),** unlike the stringent regulations for formulae intended for babies of up to 1 year of age. Consequently, products with inappropriate compositions targeting young children may be placed on the EU market. For example, drinks with high sugar content or inadequate levels of nutrients.

The absence of specific and harmonized legal requirements for the nutritional composition and labelling (which should be based on adequate Nutrient Reference Values (NRV) for YCF) is not consistent with the international framework and general principles of EU law. In early 2023, Codex Alimentarius, the global body for foods standards, adopted and published a Standard<sup>3</sup> regulating the specific composition of formulae for young children. This standard was also supported by the EU and its Member States. Whereas Codex Alimentarius Standards are not directly binding, the EU has a legal obligation to duly consider them. According to the EU's General Food Law, international standards *'shall be taken into consideration in the development or adaptation of food law'*<sup>4</sup>.

Codex Standards usually reflect the minimum level of protective measures on which the international community can agree. The EU very often adopts stricter legislation, but in this case, EU legislation remains much less strict than the Codex Standard. **The role of proper nutrition for optimal development during the first 3 years of life cannot be overestimated,** and we strongly believe that young children would be fully protected if the composition and labelling (which should be based on adequate Nutrient Reference Values (NRV) for YCF) was specifically regulated, similarly to other products for infants and young children.

Moreover, today, due to the lack of harmonised legal requirements on the nutritional composition of YCF, recipes and labels often have to be adapted to the different interpretations and requirements of Member States. This causes challenges in the EU internal and global markets and brings legal uncertainty and an unfavourable environment for food business operators.

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<sup>1</sup> Specialised Nutrition Europe (SNE) represents the specialised nutrition sector across Europe. Transparency register: 33498019160-40.

<sup>2</sup> European Dairy Association (EDA) represents the European milk processing industry. Transparency register: 42967152383-63.

<sup>3</sup> Food and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO). Codex Alimentarius, International Food Standards, Standard for Follow-Up Formula for Older Infants and Product for Young Children, CXS 156-1987. (2023).

<sup>4</sup> Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and procedures in matters of food safety. Article (5.3) General Principles of Food Law.

According to the European Commission's database "*Monitoring EU Agri-Food Trade*", the product category "infant food and other cereals, starch or milk preparations", which includes YCF, accounts for approximately €8bn EUR of EU exports to the rest of the world per year, making it one of the top three agri-food exports in several of the last five years<sup>5</sup>.

Consequently, SNE and EDA respectfully request that the **composition and labelling in relation to Nutrient Reference Values (NRV) requirements for YCF at EU level should be aligned with the newly revised Codex Standard for young children's products.**

**This request would ensure a high level of protection for young children both within the EU and outside, while also providing consistency and alignment with the international framework.** It would offer legal certainty for food business operators and clarity for national authorities regarding the **free movements of goods** within Member States, as well as potentially influencing other countries to look to the European Union as a model.

At SNE and EDA, we remain committed to maintaining the high quality and safety of nutrition products intended for infants and young children – which will be further supported by a consistent EU regulatory framework.

For additional information, please see:

- SNE Position "[Let's close the regulatory gap on Young Child Formula!](#)".
- SNE [YCF Factsheet](#)
- Article Parliament Magazine: "[Young Children are not Mini-Adults: Why Young Child Formula should be regulated in the EU](#)".

For more questions, please contact:

Beat Späth, Specialised Nutrition Europe (SNE) Secretary General: [b.spath@specialisednutritioneurope.eu](mailto:b.spath@specialisednutritioneurope.eu)  
Alexander Anton, European Dairy Association (EDA) Secretary General: [aanton@euromilk.org](mailto:aanton@euromilk.org)

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission, Monitoring EU Agri-Food Trade: developments in 2021.