



May 9, 2016

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

**We want to stress the importance of the United States rejecting the current Guidance Document<sup>1</sup> the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Secretariat plans to present at this month's World Health Assembly.** It is our understanding that the Administration recognizes that this proposal, as written, would discourage consumption of nutritious dairy products by young children here in the United States and around the world. It is therefore essential that the United States remain firm in highlighting the significant flaws in this document and insisting on the need for further revisions to address those concerns before this can be held up as completed international guidance.

**Discouraging parents from providing their young children with milk, one of the most nutritious foods in the human diet, flies in the face of common sense. Yet that is exactly what this WHO document proposes to do.** Increased milk and dairy product consumption in recent years has helped improve nutritional outcomes for hundreds of millions of children around the world. This very positive trend should be further encouraged, not thwarted by ill-advised and unsubstantiated guidance from WHO.

**The U.S. dairy community – farmers and processors – shares the goal of ensuring that young children get a strong start in life.** The WHO guidance document, however, wrongly portrays milk and dairy products as obstacles to that good start in life, rather than as essential building blocks for proper nutrition. This contradicts not only extensive U.S. nutritional guidance, including the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the American Academy of Pediatrics' support for the introduction of milk at one year of age, but also existing WHO nutritional guidance that similarly supports consumption of dairy products by young children.

**As currently worded, the proposal suggests that common images such as a toddler enjoying strawberry yogurt, a one year old eating cubes of cheese or a two year old drinking a glass of milk are somehow inappropriate and should be prohibited.** This is despite the fact that dairy is a nutritional mainstay in children's diets: among toddlers aged 12 to 24 months, dairy products provide 27% of their total energy intake, 68% of calcium intake, 80% of vitamin D intake, 40% of potassium intake, and 40% of protein intake. It is frankly difficult to envision how millions of toddlers – here in the U.S. and around the world – would benefit from public health guidance that effectively places a gag-order on companies' ability to encourage consumption of these types of healthy products.

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<sup>1</sup> Ending the Inappropriate Promotion of Foods for Infants and Young Children



**We greatly appreciate the active role your Administration has taken in seeking clarifications and changes to this document over the past several months.** We are deeply disappointed that the WHO Secretariat has steadfastly refused to fully address these critical issues. Two revisions issued to the original January 2016 proposal failed to address the document's fundamental message discouraging consumption of various dairy products.

**Given the important leadership role the United States plays on global health issues, it is vital that the U.S. government lead in insisting that the many shortcomings with this guidance document be fully addressed before it can be held up by the WHO as credible international guidance on the topic at hand.** At this advanced stage, those efforts should include both directly continuing to seek changes to this deeply flawed document and effective use of the WHA Resolution process to clearly capture U.S. concerns with the harmful nutrition, commercial and trade impacts that implementation of this policy would foster. As currently drafted, this WHO proposal is much more likely to damage child nutrition than support it. The United States must not stand by while that happens.

We thank you for your Administration's extensive work on this issue.

Sincerely,

Jim Mulhern  
President & CEO  
National Milk Producers Federation

Connie Tipton  
President & CEO  
International Dairy Foods Association

Thomas M. Suber  
President  
U.S. Dairy Export Council

cc:

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Service  
The Honorable Michael Froman, United States Trade Representative  
The Honorable John Kerry, Secretary of State  
The Honorable Penny Pritzker, Secretary of Commerce  
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader  
The Honorable Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives House of Representatives  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Democratic Leader House of Representatives  
The Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader