

**Question for written answer E-002419/2011
to the Commission
Rule 117
Luigi de Magistris (ALDE)**

Subject: Addition of synthetic DHA to artificial milk and potentially misleading advertising

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recently issued a favourable opinion with regard to the possibility of artificial milk producing companies claiming in advertisements that adding synthetic DHA (docosahexaenoic acid, which is present naturally in mothers' milk) to artificial milk for breastfeeding babies promotes babies' cognitive development and visual acuity.

That claim, which is supported by the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) of the Italian Paediatric Confederation (CIP), by a host of public associations and relevant players (MAMI Movimento Allattamento Materno Italiano, Associazione GAAM Gruppo Aiuto Allattamento Materno di Carpi, Associazione da Mamma a Mamma di Cugguiono, Associazione di volontariato Mamme Amiche, di Sesto Fiorentino, Associazione La Goccia Magica, Organizzazione di Volontariato a sostegno dell'Allattamento materno di Albano Laziale, etc.), as well as by important nutritional scientists, may potentially be misleading, since the world of science is not unanimous on this issue.

Indeed, the EFSA itself issued an opinion in October 2008 which indicated that studies conducted did not allow a cause and effect relationship to be scientifically established between the addition of that acid to artificial milk and beneficial effects on babies. This is a very delicate issue, as such a claim, if used in advertising, would be bound to have a media impact and clear commercial consequences.

Does the Commission not feel that if the addition of synthetic DHA were genuinely and unanimously proven, scientifically, to have extremely positive effects for babies, that the competent European and national authorities should, at the least, make it obligatory for that substance to be added to all types of artificial milk on the market?

Does the Commission not consider that the administration of artificial milk, with or without that additive, cannot in any way compare with the widely-acknowledged physical and psychological benefits of breastfeeding, as is recommended by the World Health Authority (WHO)? Does the Commission not feel that the aim of the EU regulations on health and nutritional information, and in particular that concerning babies, should be to point the public towards the most natural and healthy options, such as breastfeeding and homemade products?