

STATEMENT ON INFANT FEEDING CAC/MISC 2-1976

The following statement on certain aspects of infant feeding has been included on the request of the 11th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (1976):

"The effects of protein-calorie malnutrition on morbidity and mortality among infants in underprivileged socio-economic groups have been well recognized. Impaired physical growth and mental development have been scientifically shown, and the adverse effect malnutrition can play during pregnancy and lactation has also been recognized.

Thus, infant feeding represents a problem of prime importance and the value of breast-milk as an ideal food for the infant during the first six months of its life cannot be too strongly stressed. However, poor health of the mother and certain social conditions can reduce lactation, separate the infant from the mother or otherwise make breast-feeding impossible. In these circumstances it is necessary to use alternative foods such as infant formula to overcome the lack of breast- milk. Numerous formulae have been produced which offer a nutritionally adequate food for infants, and, provided they are prepared under hygienic conditions and given in adequate amounts, there is no contra-indication to the use of such products. However, when economic conditions do not permit the purchase of sufficient amounts of suitable infant food, such as infant formula, or where the mother is not familiar with the proper use of such foods (e.g. proper hygiene, appropriate quantity and proportion of the formula, etc.) infants thus fed may develop symptoms of nutritional deficiency or may even reach a state of severe malnutrition.

Therefore, it is necessary to encourage breast-feeding by all possible means in order to prevent that the decline in breast-feeding, which seems to be actually occurring, does not lead to artificial methods of infant feeding which could be inadequate or could have an adverse effect on the health of the infant."