



PRESS RELEASE

Pro-REACH groups say: “Breast is still best”

Brussels, Tuesday, 27 June 2006 – Health and environmental groups (1) have joined forces to protect breastfeeding in the campaign for safer EU chemical policy, known as REACH. (2)

At a lunch-time meeting today in the European Parliament, Friends of the Earth Europe will launch “Toxic Inheritance”, a report revealing that traces of 300 man-made chemicals are found in breast milk. (3)

While the results of this breastmilk sampling and testing, known as “biomonitoring”, indicates that chemical residues are found in our bodies, the meeting will reaffirm that mother’s milk remains the optimal food for babies.

“Despite the adverse effects of human exposure to hazardous chemicals at all stages in our lives, studies show that breastfeeding has a protective effect,” says Maryse Lehnert, IBFAN International Babyfood Action Network, who is a speaker at the meeting. She will describe recent studies that have shown that breastfeeding counteracts the adverse effects of prenatal exposure to chemicals of concern, such as PCBs and dioxins. (4)

The World Health Organization confirmed breastfeeding as optimal for child health in April 2006 when new growth reference standards were agreed that refer to breastfeeding as “the biological norm” in international benchmarks for children’s growth. This implies that a lack of breastfeeding presents a risk to the baby and to the child and to health later in life. (5)

Ample evidence exists to support the contention that bottle-feeding is sub-optimal. For example, breastfed babies are less vulnerable to acute infectious diseases, including respiratory and gastrointestinal infections, according to scientific studies. (5)

Breastfeeding helps protect the environment from waste and pollution. “Breastmilk is environmentally friendly; it is a unique and renewable natural resource, perfectly adapted to each individual baby. Breastfeeding generates no waste: there are no problems of disposal of plastics and packaging, no transport costs and no traffic pollution,” says Alison Linnecar, International Coordinator, IBFAN-GIFA.

Without a strong REACH, the impact of a toxic inheritance in Europe will have serious consequences for future human health. “This meeting demonstrates the need for REACH to protect breastfeeding both for child health and environmental protection – and breastfeeding is under threat from chemical residues found in breastmilk,” according to Géron Jensen, Executive Director, European Public Health Alliance Environment Network (EEN). “Health and environment groups are determined to work together to both protect breastfeeding and promote REACH to reduce the threat of a toxic inheritance.”

For further information please contact:

Diana Smith, EEN Communications: Tel: +33 1 55 25 25 84. Mobile: +33 6 04 2943. Email:

Diana@gsmith.com.fr

Alison Linnecar, GIFA: Tel: + 41 22 798 91 64 Mobile: + 33 622 18 72 88 + email:

alison.linnecar@gifa.org

Maryse Lehnars, IBFAN (Initiativ Liewensufank, Luxembourg): Tel: +352 36 05 98. Email : secretariat@liewensufank.lu

Genon Jensen, European Public Health Alliance Environment Network (EEN): Tel: +32 2 234 3641. E-mail: genon@env-health.org

Notes for journalists

1. The health and environment NGOs taking part in the meeting are:

Friends of the Earth Europe, the European branch of the world's largest grassroots environmental network uniting 73 national member organisations and some 5,000 local activist groups on every continent. FOEE influence European and EU policy and raises public awareness on environmental issues by providing institutions, media and the public with regular information via a wide range of campaigns, publications and events

European Public Health Alliance - Environment Network is an international non-governmental organizations advocating environmental protection as a means to improving health and well-being. It brings together more than 40 groups working at the European level.

IBFAN, the International Baby Food Action Network, consists of more than 200 public interest groups working around the world to promote the health and well-being of infants, young children and their mothers through the protection, promotion and support of optimal infant and young child feeding practices. IBFAN works to eliminate the irresponsible marketing of breastmilk substitutes and feeding bottles through full and universal implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent, relevant World Health Assembly Resolutions.

2. The Commission proposed a new EU regulatory framework for the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) on 29 October 2003. The aim is to improve the protection of human health and the environment through the better and earlier identification of the properties of chemical substances. <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/reach.htm>

3. Invitation to the lunch-time meeting and details of the report from Friends of the Earth Europe below.

4. Boersma ER and Lanting CI. Environmental exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxins. Consequences for longterm neurological and cognitive development of the child lactation. Adv. Exp. Med Biol 2000; 478:271-87.

5. Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk, Paediatrics 2005; 115: 496-506. Available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/115/2/496>

Friends of the Earth Europe
PRESS INVITATION: Breast milk chemicals report launch to MEPs and press,
Tuesday 27 June 12:30

300 TOXIC POLLUTANTS IN BREAST MILK: CHEMICALS REPORT LAUNCHED TO MEPS

On Tuesday June 27, Friends of the Earth Europe will host a discussion for the launch of their REACH chemicals report to MEPs: "Toxic inheritance: More than 300 pollutants in breast milk – time for a new chemicals policy".

The report examines studies that analyse breast milk to measure persistent

pollutants in humans, revealing the worrying presence of over 300 toxic chemicals in breast milk. In this context, the report makes recommendations to strengthen REACH in the second reading, in order to tackle chemical contamination.

WHAT: Press event to launch report on toxic chemicals in breast milk to MEPs

WHEN: Tuesday 27 June 2006, 12:30

WHERE: Room ASP 1 E 3, European Parliament, Rue Wiertz

WHO: Avril Doyle MEP, Friends of the Earth Europe, BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany), International Babyfood Action Network, European Public Health Alliance Environment Network

Speakers:

- Welcome and Introduction: Avril Doyle, Member of the European Parliament
- About "Toxic Inheritance": Patricia Cameron, BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany)
- Chemicals and Our Health: Genon Jensen, European Public Health Alliance Environment Network
- The benefits of breastfeeding: Maryse Lehnert, IBFAN International Babyfood Action Network
- Chair: Fouad Hamdan, Friends of the Earth Europe

Hard copies of the report will be available at the press conference.

The full report is available at:

http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/2006/toxic_inheritance.pdf

A summary of the report is available at:

http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/2006/toxic_inheritance_summary.pdf

Both documents will be publicly available at www.foeeurope.org on Tuesday 27 June.

For more information, please contact:

Rosemary Hall, Communications Officer for Friends of the Earth Europe: Tel: +32 25 42 6105, Mobile: +32 485 930515, rosemary.hall@foeeurope.org