Guideline on Complementary Food for Infant and Young Children in China

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BACKGROUND

Complementary baby food is a supplement to satisfy infants’ nutrition demands starting from 6 months. According to statistics, 50 million babies need complementary food annually in China. Due to implementation of “two-child” policy in 2016, the baby boom will inevitably boost consumption and precipitate further growth in the complementary food market in China. It is anticipated that based on consumption of approximately 1.8 million tons a year, the market size of complementary food will amount to 87~170 billion Yuan in the next 3 years. This article provides a comprehensive look at relevant regulations, compliance requirements, market data and other issues related to complementary baby food in China.

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1 Introduction

Complementary baby food refers to home-made or commercially-processed food which is prepared to supplement baby nutrition. Typically it covers the period from 6 to 36 months and is classified into 3 major categories in China:

- **Cereal-based complementary foods for infant and young children**: they are processed with one or more kinds of grains (for instance: wheat, rice, barley, oat, rye, corn, etc.) by adding right amount of nutrient fortifiers and other accessory ingredients, in which the grains account for over 25% of the dry matter basis. For example, infant formula rice flour, biscuits for infant and young child.

- **Canned complementary foods for infant and young children**: they are commercially-processed food that packaged in can, like fruit puree, minced meat.

- **Complementary food supplements**: they are a kind of food supplements containing multiple micronutrients (vitamins and minerals, etc.). Complementary food supplements can either be added to the ready-to-eat complementary foods for infants and young children from 6 months old to 36 months old or be consumed by children from 37 months old to 60 months old. For instance: nutrient-dense food supplement for complementary feeding, foodlets for complementary food supplements and sprinkles for complementary food supplements.

2 Market of complementary baby food in China

Parental dietary choices for their children have shifted considerably in the last decade. In the past Chinese parents believed that homemade food was best for babies. Nowadays complementary baby food is extremely popular, and the market will also inevitably expand due to implementation of the “two-child” policy. Despite the increased popularity of these products, the complementary baby food market is still small when compared to the infant formula market. Compared with more developed markets like the US and Europe, China’s complementary is still underdeveloped and offers considerable opportunities going forward.

2.1 Cereal-based complementary food

According to online sales data from Market Report on Complementary Baby Food in 2015, sales of cereal-based complementary baby food (including rice flour, biscuit and noodles) accounted for nearly 55% of all sales in this category. Obviously it is most welcomed by Chinese parents as canned complementary food just occupies 14% of the total amount online.
Rice flour cereal based complementary foods are the most popular due to reduced risk of anaphylaxis. The rice flour segment of the complementary baby food sector has been subject to rapid development. In 2006, its market size was 1.1 billion Yuan, in 2008 was 1.8 billion Yuan and in 2014 was 5.2 billion Yuan.
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