

A commentary on the carbon footprint of milk formula: harms to planetary health and policy implications.

Smith JP. *International Breastfeeding Journal* (2019) 14:49

Background and Aim: Infant formula requires mass production by the dairy industry, with plastic and other waste and degradation of land and waterways. Millions of babies, two thirds globally, now have milk formula, with breastfeeding in dramatic decline in Asia.

The ongoing global transition in infant and young child feeding (IYCF) toward milk formula use makes urgent the investigation of its environmental costs, including greenhouse gas (GHG) implications and warrants urgent action to protect breastfeeding in all country settings. Socially vulnerable populations are also particularly exposed to climate change risks, but have the least voice and agency.

ACADEMIC P.E.A.R.L.S

Pediatric Evidence And Research Learning Snippet



Carbon Footprint of Milk Formula : Harm to Planet

The important role of public health advocacy: A ground-breaking study in 2016 showed emissions from just six Asia Pacific countries were equivalent to 6 billion miles of car travel. **Each kilogram (kg) of milk formula generated 4 kg of (carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent) greenhouse gas** during production. Much of this was from unnecessary toddler formula. Recent research reveals that if looking at the full product lifecycle, including consumer use, **GHG emissions per kg are actually three times higher than these pioneering estimates.**

Conclusion: Formula feeding is a maladaptive practice in the face of contemporary global environmental and population health challenges. The Lancet Commission on Planetary Health (2) has identified that dietary shifts including to processed foods (which include milk formula) are contributing both to disease burdens and greenhouse gas emissions. Promoting dietary change could improve nutrition and health as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Key message: Effective and cost-effective policies and interventions exist for increasing breastfeeding and reducing unnecessary use of formula. Implementing such measures presents a rare opportunity to both reduce the greenhouse gas problem and improve human nutrition, health, and health equity.

EXPERT COMMENT

“Breastfeeding protection, support and promotion will help to safeguard planetary and human health by decreasing environmental harm & disease burden.”



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With warm regards,

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Reference

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