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Healthy growth and immunity top drivers of infant formula purchases

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Healthy growth and immunity are the health benefits most likely to influence mothersâ?? purchases of infant or toddler formula, a global survey for Arla Foods Ingredients has found.

Arla Foods Ingredients commissioned YouGov to survey 6,800 women in 13 different countries. All were aged 18-45 and educated to at least college level, and either had children aged 0-4, or were pregnant.

Asked an open question about the factors that mattered to them when choosing a formula product, 40 per cent of the mothers named quality, 40 per cent mentioned nutrients and ingredients, and 30 per cent named health and safety â?? all of which ranked higher than price or brand.

When shown a list of health benefits and asked to pick three that were most important when buying formula, healthy growth scored highest (chosen by 61 per cent), followed by immunity (56 per cent) and gut comfort (44 per cent).

Only half the mothers surveyed were able to name any ingredients in infant formula. However, when prompted, lactose was very widely heard of, followed by probiotics, milk fat and plant proteins. Mothers in Asian countries, especially China, displayed higher than average awareness of and preference for specialised protein ingredients like alpha-lactalbumin, whey protein hydrolysate and milk fat globule membrane.

Viorela Andreea Indolean, Industry Marketing Manager Early Life Nutrition, at Arla Foods Ingredients, said: â??The goal of this research was to explore awareness of formula products, as well as the way priorities and preferences vary between markets. Although the names of specific ingredients arenâ??t top of mind for most mothers, itâ??s clear that when theyâ??re shopping for formula, theyâ??re thinking about health, safety and nutritional quality more than factors like price or brand. We

hope these insights will be valuable for manufacturers â?? both in terms of understanding what parents want from formula products, and improving their understanding of the ingredients they contain.â?

Other key findings were:

Paediatricians topped the list of reliable sources of information about formula.

The highest priority in terms of product labelling was nutritional information, which mothers saw as more important than indications of organic status or sustainability-related features.

Six in ten respondents had switched formula brands at least once. The most common reason for switching was tolerance issues.