



National WIC Association
Your child has you. And you have WIC.



NWA Position on Functional Ingredients

As the nation's premier public health nutrition program, WIC is a cost-effective, sound investment—ensuring the health of our children.

NWA'S MISSION

NWA provides its members with tools and leadership to expand and sustain effective nutrition services for mothers and young children.

Today, a growing number of food products are offered with functional ingredients e.g., long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids such as docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and arachidonic acid (ARA), prebiotics, and probiotics. These products are actively marketed to consumers as contributing health or developmental benefits, e.g., improved vision and brain development. The inclusion of these ingredients inevitably results in higher costs to the consumer.

Currently, the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) regulates the safety of foods including functional ingredients, but has no authority to monitor whether these ingredients offer the nutritional benefits manufacturers claim.

NWA is:

- skeptical about the science and the claims that are used to support the addition and aggressive marketing of these ingredients.
- concerned about marketing practices of infant formula and other food products containing functional ingredients that lead to confusion among parents and directly conflict with breastfeeding support and nutrition education efforts.
- concerned that suggestions WIC may appear to be paying a “premium” for these enhanced products creates the unfortunate and erroneous impression that WIC Agencies are not good stewards of federal resources despite the Program's highly successful cost-containment initiative that netted WIC \$2 billion in nontax revenues in 2009 allowing WIC to serve approximately 2.2 million more mothers and young children.
- concerned that decreases in breastfeeding support and peer counselor funding will undermine WIC's ability to compete with aggressive marketing of functional ingredients in infant formulas.

NWA believes:

- the use of functional ingredients is a critical public health nutrition issue affecting all consumers.
- functional ingredients warrant the attention of policymakers at all levels.
- that a comprehensive resolution requires the full involvement of the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) necessitating:
 - » a strengthening of FDA's oversight authority over functional ingredients;
 - » more robust funding of the FDA to provide for necessary oversight;
 - » a strong partnership between the FDA and the USDA empowering the Secretary of Agriculture to make appropriate decisions in the interest of WIC Consumers and for the continued good stewardship of the Program.

NWA looks to a strengthened FDA with the clear oversight authority to address efficacy claims for the good of all consumers. NWA is committed to securing a comprehensive strategy and response that assures FDA will provide WIC consumers, indeed all consumers, the knowledge they need to make healthy choices in the foods that they consume. At the end of the day, we do not see this as simply a cost containment issue, but a nutrition issue that warrants the full oversight involvement of the FDA.