

THE STUDY OF THE MAJOR MERCHANDISING ASPECTS OF BABY FOOD

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Introduction. The best food for a baby is breastfeeding. But it so happens that a baby receives breast milk in insufficient quantity and quality, or a mother loses her breast milk at all. In this case, the best solution is to use the high-quality baby food. According to the data of the Association of baby food manufacturers in Ukraine 22% of nursing mothers naturally breastfeed their children, other women use baby food.

The **aim** of our work was to study the merchandising characteristics of baby food presented at the market of Ukraine.

Results and discussion. There are 40 milk substitutes, about 100 kinds of cereals and other types of products at the Ukrainian market. The volume of baby food import into the territory of Ukraine in 2015 amounted to 3987 tons; it is 43 % of consumption of this product by the Ukrainians. The main importers of baby food to the territory of Ukraine are the Netherlands (22%), Switzerland (20%) and Germany (19%).

The share of these importers in the total import of the product to Ukraine is practically the same. Smaller importers are Slovenia (12%) and Austria (10%). The share of other countries in total imports of milk baby food does not exceed 4%. Export of baby food outside Ukraine is insignificant. Ukraine exports milk baby food mainly to one country – Moldova. Minor exports (about 1%) are to USA and Japan.

It is interesting to note that import of baby food to the territory of Ukraine increase by 15% for 3 months in 2016 compared to the same period in 2015.

The range of products for baby food is divided into groups by age:

- group I – products for healthy infants from birth to one year,
- group II – for healthy young children from one year up to three years and preschool children,
- group III – for nutritional therapy of children with special needs.

Baby food for kids can be either in a dry form or as a finished product – in a liquid form. The convenience of a dried product is that an accurately dosed portion can be prepared from the powder. A liquid formula is indispensable for traveling and long trips.

For packaging baby food the following consumer containers are used: jars, bottles, tubes, containers made of polymeric and composite materials. For dry products cardboard boxes with immediate packaging of foil or paper are used, it can be parchment, paraffined, with polymer-coated or lacquered cellophane.

Labeling baby food contains the following information:

- the product name, country, the name and address of the manufacturer,
- the child's age;
- if the baby food needs additional preparation for consumption, the label contains the information concerning the method of preparation or use of the product and the amount of the product for one feeding taking into account the child's age;
- the energy value expressed in kJ or kcal, as well as the content of proteins, carbohydrates and fats.

Today there are only 3 main plants producing baby food in Ukraine: “Khorol dairy canning plant for baby food” PJSC manufacturing baby milk powders “Malyutka”, “Malyatko M”, “Malysh”, “Vitalact M”; “Pridniprovs'kiy” Complex JCS (“Zlagoda” TM) manufacturing milk and dairy products for children; “Balts'kiy dairy canning plant for baby food” JCS, Odessa region, manufacturing baby milk powders “Detolact-1”, “Detolact-2”.

The domestic market of dairy baby food is also presented by such manufacturers as “Favor” LLC (Kyiv), “Baby Food Plant “Salus”” JSC (Odessa), “City dairy factory-kitchen of baby food” Public Utility Company (Kharkiv). In 1992 the Association of baby food manufacturers was created in Ukraine. Its products are presented by TM “Malysh” (Baby) and “Karapuz” (Toddler).

In Ukraine little attention is paid to production of baby food. It can be explained by a number of causes:

- significant obstacles when entering the market in the form of complicated procedures of registration and certification;
- high prices for purchased ingredients (predominantly vitamins and minerals);
- obsolete equipment at most of the specialized enterprises and the lack of benefits for the purchase of a new equipment;
- limitation of production profitability and the limited level of markup in the retail network for the domestic baby food;
- limited entry of domestic baby food products into the European market;
- informed culture of consumption of baby food, the lack of information about the value and advantages of the Ukrainian baby food, including information in the retail chain.

Conclusions. Therefore, the baby food market in Ukraine is represented mainly by imported products (Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany). The main merchandising characteristics of baby food, such as assortment, packing and labeling, have been analyzed.