Public consultation: appropriate age for introduction of complementary feeding of infants

EFSA is seeking feedback from stakeholders and other interested parties on its scientific opinion on the appropriate age for introduction of complementary feeding of infants.

The Panel on Nutrition, Novel Foods and Food Allergens (NDA) reviewed around 300 studies for the opinion. Its main conclusions are that:

The appropriate age to introduce complementary foods depends on the infant’s characteristics and development, even more so in pre-term infants. In most infants, this age is between about 3-4 and 6 months.

Most infants do not need complementary foods for nutritional reasons until around 6 months, except some exclusively breast-fed infants at risk of iron depletion.

There is insufficient data to determine a precise age at which complementary foods should be introduced to all infants in Europe.

There is no evidence that early introduction of potentially allergenic foods – such as egg, cereals, fish and peanuts – increases the risk of children developing allergies.

There is no evidence for either beneficial or adverse effects of introducing foods containing gluten earlier than 6 months of age.

The opinion considers the introduction of complementary foods from a developmental, nutritional and health perspective. It is not an evaluation of the optimal duration of exclusive breast-feeding, as the assessment is applicable irrespective of whether infants are initially exclusively breast-fed or formula-fed.

The deadline for submitting comments is 29 May 2019.

Public consultation: Appropriate age for introduction of complementary feeding into an infant’s diet