

Response to Public Eye Inquiry on Nestlé Infant Cereals

24 October 2025

Dear Laurent,

Thank you for your message and for sharing the preliminary findings of Public Eye's new investigation.

We would like to reiterate our position and clarify our practices in response to the concerns raised by Public Eye. This is the response that we would appreciate you including in any report you publish which can be described as Nestlé's response to your allegations:

"At Nestlé, we apply a consistent approach to nutrition for all babies everywhere. We do not have double standards. We've been improving our portfolio for years and we offer options of infant cereals with and without added sugars positioned in the same price range.

We have been accelerating the rollout of no added sugars variants globally, including in Africa to ensure their availability by the end of 2025 in all Nestlé markets where we sell our products. No added sugars variants are already on shelf in 94% of our markets.

We always declare sugar content transparently, be it total or added, based on local regulatory requirements. We do not mislead consumers.

Our goal is clear: we provide nutritious products that support children's growth and development needs, while giving parents trusted choices – with or without added sugars."

We have appreciated your willingness to engage with us in the past on this topic. I wrote to you a couple of days ago offering again to meet and the offer remains open. As well as meeting with you and with Ekō previously, where we shared information openly and transparently about our infant cereals portfolio. Last week, we met with the African Diaspora Council of Switzerland who had shared with you their letter to Nestlé, listening to them and clarifying our views and actions in prioritizing the health and well-being of all children.

We welcome constructive dialogue and remain open to further engagement.

To address your concerns in full, we are providing further clarification and context below regarding the specific claims raised in your investigation:

1. Public Eye: Overall, 94% of the Cerelac products sold in Africa we could examine contained added sugar. The limited number of products with no added sugar found were for the most part imported from Europe and not intended for the African market.

Nestlé: We aim to offer options of infant cereals with and without added sugars to consumers. We've been continuing our rollout of no added sugars variants in many markets including in Africa. By the end of 2025, we aim to have introduced variants of no added sugars to all markets where we operate.

Today, variants of no added sugars designed for African markets and registered by local authorities have already been introduced in North Africa and ESAR (East and Southern Africa Region) – for example, in South Africa (December 2024), Djibouti (April 2025) and Egypt (August 2025), and are being rolled out further to Zimbabwe this month and Central & West Africa, next month.

The vast majority of our products sold in Africa are produced locally. Where it is not the case, the products manufactured elsewhere are intended for the African market and based on local requirements.

It should be noted however that products manufactured elsewhere may be imported by independent retailers via different sales channels. These activities by third parties are not controlled by Nestlé.

2. Public Eye: On average, our analysis found nearly 6g of added sugar per serving, or about one and a half sugar cubes. The highest amount - 7.5g per serving, nearly two sugar cubes - was found in a product sold in Kenya and targeted at six-month-old babies.

Nestlé: We are not aware of the details of analysis or the products. Your results may include sugars occurring naturally in ingredients. If we exclude sugars coming from ingredients like milk, cereals and fruits, none of the infant cereals products that we sell anywhere have the level of added sugars you claim are present.

Depending on regulations, added sugars may include those which come from cereals (e.g. wheat, rice) during processing and those from ingredients such as honey, fruit juices, etc.

Our internal guidelines have a threshold for added sugars which is half that set by CODEX Alimentarius.

We are not in a position to comment further.

3. Public Eye: In Switzerland, Nestlé's home country, the company's leading baby cereal brand comes with no added sugar. In key markets such as Germany and the United Kingdom, where Nestlé does sell Cerelac, all products targeted at babies from six months are sugar-free.

Nestlé: The statements are not accurate. In Europe, including in Switzerland, the UK, and Germany, Nestlé offers infant cereals both with and without added sugars. For example, *Nestlé Cerelac Wheat* is available in Switzerland, while *Nestlé Cerelac Honey & Wheat with Milk* is available in Germany and the United Kingdom.

Our 'no added sugars' products are not labelled or marketed as sugar-free. The claim 'no added sugars' is defined by EU law and any naturally occurring sugars from ingredients are clearly indicated on both packaging and our website.

No-added sugars recipes similar to those sold in Europe are also available in several countries in Africa and are being expanded as part of our ongoing rollout. Examples include: *Nestlé Cerelac Banana with Milk* in South Africa, *Nestlé Cerelac Wheat* in Germany, *Nestlé Cerelac Wheat* in the UK. These three recipes have the same levels of naturally occurring sugars from ingredients, as can be seen on the respective labels.

4. Public Eye: Nestlé also claims that its products, which are fortified with zinc, calcium, vitamin D, and magnesium, are key to “help fight malnutrition”, especially across sub-Saharan Africa, where “millions of children are impacted by micronutrient deficiencies”.

Nestlé: We fortify our infant cereals to help address nutritional gaps, as many young children do not meet their daily micronutrient needs. In Africa, one in two children under five suffers from hidden hunger – micronutrient deficiencies – that contributes to over 340 million cases and are linked to the highest burden of disease across the continent.

Studies show that fortified cereals, like Nestlé Cerelac, help increase key nutrient intake. Our nutrition claims are based on clinical studies by universities and academia in many countries, including in Africa, as well as on published evidence on the role of fortified cereals in tackling malnutrition. Sample references can be provided upon request.

5. Public Eye: World Health Organization (WHO)’s guidelines ban added sugar in baby foods as exposure to sugar early in life can create a life-long preference for sugary products and is a major risk factor for developing obesity and other related chronic illnesses.

Nestlé: There is no ban on added sugars in baby foods. The link referenced does not cite WHO guidelines, but rather a document titled ‘Nutrient and Promotion Profile Model’ issued by WHO Europe. This model serves as a recommendation for children’s diets in the European region and has not been adopted into EU legislation.

International standards for infant nutrition are set by Codex Alimentarius (a joint program of the FAO and WHO) which countries use as a basis for developing local regulations.

Nestlé complies fully with all applicable laws and regulations in every market where we operate. Our internal guidelines have a threshold for added sugars which is half that set by CODEX Alimentarius.

6. Public Eye: Nestlé is aware that sugar is bad for infants. “Do not add sugar to your infant’s diet”, the company writes on its website for the Middle East and North Africa, as it can “weaken his immune system”. Sugar leads to “both short- and long-term risks in children”, Nestlé warns.

Nestlé: The quotes referenced are incorrect. Nestlé's stance is aligned with public health and scientific consensus: high sugar intake poses both short and long-term risks for children. This is clearly stated on the website you referenced. This is why we apply a single global nutritional standard – which is aligned with Codex, and in the case of added sugars, is even more stringent.

In one of the links shared, reference is made to honey. While we recognize the role that honey can play in taste development in early life, we also state that particular attention should be paid to this ingredient. This is due to the risk associated with the presence of certain bacteria if honey is not treated appropriately. Whenever honey is used in our recipes, it undergoes externally validated heat treatment, and its presence is clearly declared on pack.

7. Public Eye: But Nestlé keeps adding high levels of sugar to its most popular baby cereal brand sold in lower income countries in Africa. The amount of added sugar in the products is even often – in around 2/3 of the products examined - not disclosed to consumers.

Nestlé: We disagree. The early childhood food category is governed by international standards set by CODEX Alimentarius which serve as the basis for local laws in many countries. These standards include limits on added sugars, and all our recipes comply with the CODEX, local laws, and Nestlé's own internal nutritional guidelines, which are often stricter.

We always transparently declare and communicate to consumers the composition of our recipes including total and/or added sugars levels, as per local regulatory requirements. We do not mislead consumers.

8. Public Eye: Our investigation in South Africa showed that consumers are generally unaware that Cerelac contains added sugar. Mothers we could interview said they do not want sugar in their products and told us that the fact such products are sold sugar free in Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe makes them angry.

Nestlé: Our approach is to offer consumers infant cereal options with and without added sugars, positioned in the same price range. Options without added sugars are available in South Africa, with several variants for babies from 6 months onwards. Information about our portfolio, including variants without added sugars is available for parents and caregivers.

We are fully transparent about the composition of our products and do not mislead consumers about the sugars in our recipes. Total sugars are declared on pack.

Product claims vary from country to country based on local regulations. For example, in South Africa, our recipe without added sugars bears the 'unsweetened' claim. In Europe, the same recipe would be labelled 'no-added sugars' on the packaging. We do not use the claim 'sugar-free' in Europe.