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## **Targets and interventions to mitigate climate change**

Climate change due to global warming and environmental degradation is now a reality for many of us. It is more and more accepted that human activity is the cause. Nations are finally beginning to agree on the urgency of the need to prevent climate change by conserving water and mineral resources and reducing fossil fuel use.

Targets are being agreed to address global warming by reducing our dependency on fossil fuels and increasing our reliance on renewable energy. But the basic question remains : how to achieve these targets ? The **what** and the **when** are now being defined, but agreement has still to be reached on the ways to achieve this, the **how**.

## **In what ways does breastfeeding help us achieve these targets ?**

How many of us realise that breastfeeding is a vital practical step towards achieving targets to protect our health and our environment? Breastfeeding provides the first food, the first drink, the first vaccinations and the first medicine. Unlike formula feeding, it places no burden on our environment, causes no depletion of energy and water sources and produces no waste or pollution.

Breastfeeding in the hour that follows delivery is the very first step towards healthier children and a healthier environment. To ensure optimal child survival, growth and development, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months, followed by continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond, with the addition of locally produced complementary (solid) foods produced with respect for biodiversity, food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture. Using traditional local foods instead of ultra-processed industrial foods avoids the high costs of transport and packaging and cuts down on the waste and pollution they create.

To help protect our health and our planet we need to make the right decisions and initiate the right actions – and we need to start at the very beginning, with infant and young child feeding. Everyone must become involved, because this is a shared responsibility for all of us, for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

## **Breastfeeding - a renewable and sustainable resource that must be :**

- **Protected** against the powerful commercial forces that seek to undermine it by aggressive tactics to create and expand markets for formula. What to do ? Pressure our governments to implement the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes in national legislation that can be enforced and monitored ;
- **Promoted** as a precious natural resource that should be valued and not wasted, by informing women, families and society of its importance for our health and for our

environment. What to do ? Use social media to provide international and local information ;

- **Supported** by providing adequate maternity protection as well as assistance through mother to mother support and peer counselling, to give every mother time to care for her baby and the confidence she needs to breastfeed optimally. What to do ? Lobby our governments to provide funding for mother to mother support groups and enact maternity protection laws, and require all employers to comply with legislation.