



HFMA UPDATE

by Martin Last,
Chairman

Business is like riding a bike – in order to keep your balance you must keep moving

This rather wet summer will be spent, by most of us in this industry, balancing the reviewing of packaging and marketing materials, considering future compliance with new legislation and managing transition periods with the economic downturn and keeping our businesses in the healthiest condition possible to cope with inevitable changes.

The two businesses I manage are both SMEs in every sense, and I share the pain of every business owner trying to manage this ongoing juggling act. At times like this I need all the help I can get, so I find it very hard to imagine not being able to call on the HFMA for all of the help and assistance they offer.

It is imperative that throughout these changes we continue to develop our businesses and a key role of the HFMA is in helping our members to achieve that.

There is a plethora of information that the HFMA reviews and disseminates in order to keep our members informed. Not a week goes by without key information from Brussels, Westminster or our own national authorities requiring assessment as to how it will impact this industry, and the HFMA tries not just to explain this, but also its implications for your business and what you need to be doing to react to it.

Over and above the daily contact our members have with our Executive Director, Graham Keen, and our secretariat, information is also provided through our regular member e-mailouts, which provide a summary of latest news and developments to help keep us up to date. Our seasonal *Communicator*

newsletter focuses on specific topical issues and industry news. And our website continues to expand and provide much of the detailed industry data and facts that are designed to be helpful to your businesses.

Our Working Group meetings in London are regularly attended by technical and marketing colleagues from over 30 member companies and provide updates on the situation regarding technical, VMS and herbals issues. The meetings provide on-hand advice and input from our specialist advisers on the raft of issues affecting our industry. It is also an opportunity for us at the HFMA to hear, first hand, member issues, questions and concerns regarding the key issues and how we manage the change that results.

Our seminars and workshops prove to be extremely popular, covering key topics, and the next of these will be announced shortly. The provisional date for a workshop on transition and compliance with the Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation is Tuesday, September 18, and it is also hoped to hold an event on the subject of the future for botanicals later in the year, possibly in early November. These should help not just company personnel

from technical and marketing departments, but also senior management, to understand the challenges that face us.

Obviously, the hot topic of the moment is the NHCR and now that the Regulation itself is entering its final stage of implementation we will provide helpful guidance to members on its interpretation and implementation. This document has been created by our technical team and is hoped to be available to members by the time you read this. We believe that this will enable members to make informed decisions about change, and how to manage this, and will be a credible document to help all stakeholders. It contains input from our specialist

advisers and LAPAD (our Labelling, Advertising and Promotions Advice Division).

We recently introduced a new 'In the news' service to members, providing a regular update on any industry-related articles that have appeared in the national media. A constant challenge is the threat of news 'scuds', those damaging articles that attempt to bring discredit to our industry. We are doing a much better job of meeting these scuds head-on, sometimes heading them off before they become an issue for us. It is noticeable that we are seeing a reduced incidence of these articles.

We work closely with all our industry media and it is through articles such as this that we can help keep you informed and updated. Not just for our members, but for all of those companies who are looking to constantly improve and develop. What better way to do this than with a collective voice under the auspices of the leading trade association, the Health Food Manufacturers' Association?

With nearly 50 years of experience behind us, it is no surprise that the HFMA has become a respected and substantial organisation, engaging with stakeholders on scientific, technical, regulatory, political and media fronts, as well as helping to promote our industry and be the voice with which our Government and enforcement agencies can liaise on your behalf.

So, whether it rains or shines the HFMA remains alert and ready, and in a position to defend and support this industry in the way that I'm proud to say it has always done. **hfb**



HFMA membership is vital to ensure that your company keeps abreast of the fast-changing regulatory environment. The HFMA is the UK's best source of information and most effective defender of our industry's interests. To help the HFMA defend your business at this most critical time contact hfb@hfma.co.uk or call 020 8481 7100.

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The Voice of the Natural Health Industry