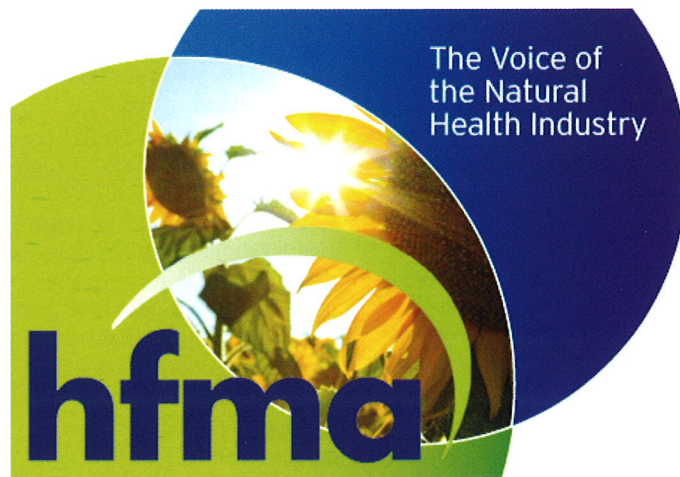




HFMA UPDATE

by Martin Last,
Chairman

The HFMA – still leading from the front



During the recent Natural & Organic Products Europe at Olympia, the HFMA held its annual meeting, and I was able to address members for the final time as the Chair of their association. This was an opportunity to reflect on the last year and where we are as an organisation.

During my time as Chair I have sought to help improve this organisation and ensure it is up to date, well resourced and prepared for the challenges our industry faces, and as a result there have been some significant changes.

The HFMA is the leading UK association in the natural health sector, and is now in its 47th year, having been formed in 1965 by a small group of passionate and forward-thinking companies. It now enjoys respect from stakeholders as a result of the professional and pragmatic approach it takes.

The HFMA is also a strong organisation that is not afraid of some of the difficult decisions that challenges bring, and it is ideally positioned to stay at the centre of the important debates that influence and affect our industry.

A good example of this occurred in mid-2012, when we undertook a legal challenge to the Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation along with our Dutch counterparts, NPN, and now we await the result of this, probably in 2014. No organisation takes such action lightly and yet we are able and strong enough to see this through to its conclusion, positive or otherwise.

This time last year I had just started my role on the board of our European federation, the EHPM, and I recall saying how I looked forward to being involved. In that short time the EHPM has undergone fundamental change and I have been pleased to help

lead its Executive Team to enable it to achieve self-governance and thereby improve the service for its membership. This has not been without its issues, no more so than the resignation of the incumbent chair at the end of 2012, but now we have enabled a stronger European association comprising industry associations from 16 EU member states, a strong new board, which, for the first time in many years, includes a German representative, with its own offices and a new Director General in place, and ideally positioned to carry on the important work needed in Europe. I am very proud to say that we were one of the original founding members of EHPM, and this is fundamental change for an organisation now in its 38th year. It will enable us, as the HFMA, to better influence the issues in Europe that will impact us here in the UK.

We also now have in place new political advisors in the shape of Portcullis Public Affairs, which is bringing a revitalised strategic approach to our relationships with Westminster and Brussels. We have completed surveys of members and stakeholders to better understand where we fit in the overall

environment and this has already enabled us to re-focus our messages to better suit the stakeholders that we need to influence. We have already seen, for the first time, joint meetings with our political and media advisors to better coordinate our efforts, as well as reinforcing and strengthening our messages. This will enable us to better communicate where and how our industry is perceived by politicians, authorities and other influencers.

Not only are we 'the voice of the industry' but we are getting better at vocalising our messages.

We continue to listen to our membership and thank them for their invaluable support. We welcome the various events where we meet with them, not just our seminars and at trade shows, but at our very active working groups and through day to day contact, which helps us to better understand their needs, whether they are a large or small organisation. We are always seeking to enhance our member services and a great example of this was the introduction last year of our regular 'In the News' bulletins, which help them to be better informed on the media, current issues and the news of the day.

I would like to thank the HFMA's secretariat and officers and our various invaluable, experienced and very knowledgeable advisors who help guide us, as an organisation to make the informed decisions and action we need to take. This only happens as a result of the tireless commitment and effort of everyone working with the HFMA and I would like to personally thank all of them for what they do for us.

I particularly wish to make special note for Graham Keen. Graham is the cement that holds everything together, and as Chair, I see the absolute commitment that he demonstrates every day. He lives and breathes this organisation and is central to its success. I respect his judgement, professionalism and friendship, and thank him deeply for his support.

So as I conclude my time as Chair, I am proud to have been given the trust of our members to lead the organisation as I felt was needed. I always wanted to give back to this industry what it has done for me and thank our members for supporting me. I feel that I leave this role with the organisation strong and well positioned for the future.

To my successor, I wish every bit of success, and my support, to help maintain this momentum and can suggest to, whoever is our new chair, that they make this role their own, without comparisons.

And finally, I can assure all of our members that I will continue to be active in helping to defend and promote our industry causes, wherever that takes us. I thank them for enabling me to make a difference. **hfb**

If you want to know more, or would like to join the HFMA or learn more about our activities, please contact me at graham@hfma.co.uk.

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 hfma@hfma.co.uk or call 020 8481 7100.

