



HFMA UPDATE

by Graham Keen,
Executive Director

Helping a nation to be healthier

As I write this, the intensity of the summer months has continued, but it must be said that this has been much more positive in nature.

Early in September we held our latest Parliamentary reception, which turned out to be our best yet, and we managed to get ahead of the attempt by Which? to discredit our great industry, providing a robust rebuttal of their claims.

As I have said, our annual Parliamentary event, entitled 'Vitamin D for a Healthy Nation', was a great success, attended by 19 Parliamentarians (17 MPs and two from the Lords), and around 35 representatives from HFMA member companies, many attending such an event for the first time. It was great to see some of our members seizing the opportunity to interact with their constituency MP. Unfortunately our host, Marcus Evans MP, had been delayed due to his commitments as one of the Government's recently-appointed 12 new Small Business Ambassadors, but his place was taken by David Treddinick MP, a long-standing supporter of our industry, and he very ably introduced the event.

HFMA chair, Lynn Lord, gave a strong speech, reminding all present that our industry helps keep the UK healthy, with over 17 million people in the UK choosing to take a food supplement at least four times a week, and this was followed by a passionate speech of support from Kate Green MP, Shadow Spokesperson for Equalities, who has previously spoken in House debates on the issue of vitamin D deficiency. You can imagine just how encouraging it was to hear her say "We need to get the message out that this type of supplementation



isn't some kind of gimmick, and it isn't a case of saying 'it's all right, you'll get everything you need from your diet'".

Renowned expert on vitamin D, Dr Rosemary Bland, who is Associate Professor at the University of Warwick Medical School, gave an excellent talk on the subject, which was warmly appreciated by all present. In this photo you'll see me pictured with Rosemary and HFMA chair Lynn Lord.

In the middle of the build-up to the Parliamentary reception, we were required to deal with the negative coverage, throughout the national media, prompted by Which? magazine's now ritual annual attack on our industry. I'm pleased to say that our PR company, Pegasus, was able to have advanced warning of this attack, and so we were able to get ahead of this by putting out a strong statement in defence of our members and this industry. The national coverage, most notably on BBC Radio 4 News and, as you might expect, the *Daily Mail*, which carried a banner front page headline 'Exposed: Health

Supplement Con', in virtually every instance included sections of our own statement and was the only response being reported in defence of our industry and products.

It was particularly welcome (and not a little ironic) to see, over the following weekend, a couple of instances of a backlash to the negative Which? report, including a double-page spread in the *Mail on Sunday* under the headline 'WHO NEEDS VITAMIN PILLS – after consumer group Which? dismisses the health claims of Britain's favourite supplements as 'misleading hype', our experts insist they DO have proven benefits and spell out exactly who should be taking them – and for what.' Great to see.

Finally, I would like to mention our upcoming October HFMA seminar. Our events are, by nature, often of a very technical and/or regulatory nature, but I'm pleased to say that this time we are focusing on those marketing and commercial individuals in our industry. Taking place on Wednesday, October 16,

2013 at The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn in London, our autumn seminar is entitled 'Well, what can I say? – communications opportunities in a post-health claims regulation world'.

We are now living with the Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation, and the resulting challenges of how we can communicate effectively with our consumer, and this seminar brings together an impressive array of speakers, including Duncan McKenzie-Reid, Head of Corporate Services at Pegasus PR, Katharine Mason, Food Copy Advice Executive at the Advertising Standards Authority, Katie King, Managing Director at Zoodikers Consulting, Jacqueline Biggs, Co-founder of Brand Camp, Dave Kaye, Managing Director at marketing consultancy Kiosk, Nigel Baldwin, Director, Scientific and Regulatory Consulting Europe at Intertek, and Marlon Bouman, Account Director at Pegasus PR.

They will talk on subjects such as identifying your target consumer, the social media, food advertising, media management and corporate communications, and will help to identify what we can say to our consumers going forward and alternative approaches that might be taken. Regular attendees of our events will know that they are usually sold-out events, and places will go fast, so please book early. The event is open to members of the HFMA and also non-members, contact us if you would like to know more.

The valuable work we do at the HFMA is clear for all to see. In most cases, if we don't do it, it just doesn't get done. If you 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.

