



HFMA UPDATE

by Graham Keen,
Executive Director

Shared concerns

I have just returned from my first visit to the beautiful capital of Hungary, Budapest, where the annual meeting of the members of our European federation, EHPM, took place. On this occasion, we were joined by representatives from 10 other Member State associations for a series of productive and, in the main, constructive presentations and discussions. What is for sure is that one thing never changes – it doesn't matter where in Europe you are from, we all face the same threats and challenges and it is always good to share our experiences and discuss potential solutions.

During a very interesting session where each association shared some of its current priorities and issues, it was clear to everyone how few of these were country-specific, i.e. they were either issues of uneven or disproportionate 'harmonisation', or if they were specific to a particular Member State, they were likely to broaden into wider issues due to the harmonisation process. The degree to which individual Member State authorities do not implement and enforce legislation in a harmonised way is also very evident when you attend a meeting like this.

And that was the exactly the situation with the issues I raised on behalf of the HFMA. In the limited time allocated, I decided to update the meeting by focusing on just five of the many issues we are currently dealing with; glucosamine status, over-reach by UK authorities on the application of the health claims regulation, questions over the status on turmeric/curcumin products, the ongoing saga of permitted additives for the production of food supplements and finally the industry's concerns about adulteration of botanical ingredients and how to address this. All of these issues resonated deeply with



everyone present and stimulated a lot of interest, but I'm pretty sure that if I hadn't raised them, there's a good chance that they would not have come up at all at the meeting.

One of the presentations was from a prominent French lawyer, who was bringing everyone up to speed on Article 8 of the Addition of Nutrients Regulation. For the last four to five years, we have been pointing out the potential danger of this 'back-door' way for a Member State and/or the Commission to place an alert on certain substances that are not vitamins and minerals, and I'm afraid this is now coming to pass more frequently. The most recent examples are green tea catechins, monacolin K (the active ingredient in red yeast rice) and hydroxyanthracene derivatives (HADs – potentially found in senna and aloe).

You can certainly expect to be hearing more about this going forward.

The EHPM secretariat provided an update on the findings of its recent survey of EHPM members, and also on its plans for increased activity in social media, and the representative of the Irish

association, the IHTA, explained the excellent new paper that has been developed by the EHPM Botanicals Working Group, proposing an alternative approach for the review of the thousands of botanical health claims still currently on hold and awaiting the outcome of the Commission's REFIT review.

One of the most refreshing presentations came from our friends at the trade association in the Netherlands, NPN. They have been working on what appears to have been a successful programme to boost the public image of food supplements in their country, and this has taken the form of the introduction of an annual 'Food Supplement of the Year' election. Voted for by consumers, the winners for the first two years were vitamin D and magnesium, and this seems to have generated some excellent media coverage.

In addition, we saw a very interesting presentation from the representative of the Greek association, pointing out the extraordinary lengths her company had made to address the requirements of GDPR (the General Data Protection Regulation).

I would be surprised if any organisation or company within EHPM (or HFMA) membership had taken such significant steps to ensure that the requirements of GDPR were being met in full.

So, a really good meeting and I think I should close by saying two things. Firstly, special thanks to our hosts from the Hungarian trade association, who organised a great event and helped to make it such an enjoyable trip in their great capital. And secondly, on a more serious note, that it is evident to me that, whether the UK is 'in' or 'out' of the EU, the HFMA needs to stay closely aligned to its European federation. Our ability to directly influence the legislative environment in the EU is likely to be seriously diminished as we move forward, but if we are to 'inherit' new EU legislation in the future, better that we can try to influence the discussion from within, rather than from the outside.

Lastly, I will take this opportunity to make you aware of some excellent upcoming HFMA events in 2018, all of which are open to members and non-members alike:

■ **September 20** – HFMA/BHMA Seminar: 'Maintaining High Quality Standards in Herbal Products'.

■ **October 23** – CLEAR CHECK Labelling Workshop.

■ **November 13** – Digital Marketing Seminar.

If you would like to know any more about any of these events, please contact us at hfma@hfma.co.uk.

To help us in our efforts to protect this industry and benefit from the gold-standard advice we provide, join the HFMA at the earliest opportunity. To 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.

