



HFMA UPDATE

by Robert Taylor,
Chair

Collaboration and cooperation

It is my privilege to be writing this at a time when the Health Food Manufacturers' Association, the leader in defending our natural health sector, is making huge strides and achieving much for the industry. Given the disjointed and fractured political and social landscape we are living through, it is even more important than ever to highlight that the HFMA's achievements are gained through hard work, consensus and winning cooperation. So, cooperation is very much the recurring theme of this article.

First and foremost, our cooperation with Government, regulators and officials, both here and overseas. Our Executive Director has mentioned frequently in his articles in this same magazine our unique support of the MHRA on glucosamine, but it was subsequently the HFMA gaining the cooperation of so many stakeholders that ensured the commercial fallout and repercussions for manufacturers were minimised, and change was seamlessly introduced to avoid both confusion and negative reporting. Glucosamine is just one example. When the issue of the novel foods catalogue hit CBD products in January, we wasted no time in commissioning a legal overview and meeting with the FSA.

As you will know, HFMA officials are constantly attending meetings with officials and taking a strong lead in consultations to prioritise our members' concerns, whether it be ingredients, advertising, or labelling. Or tackling unfair and illegal trading practices, especially in advertising and marketing. The natural health industry is booming with digital start-ups, but many don't even know they are in breach of regulations! This, of course, remains a high HFMA priority, and which incidentally we have plans to

step up greatly in the coming year, through CLEAR CHECK service.

Secondly, cooperation with other trade associations. A very recent example has been working closely alongside the Irish Health Trade Association (IHTA) and the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRNUK) to plan strategy and meet with senior officials from the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) to discuss serious concerns relating to its *Scientific Report on The Safety of Vitamins and Minerals in Food Supplements* and approaches to maximum permitted levels. While there is a lot more to do, I believe our detailed joint position paper gave the FSAI pause for thought and could potentially prove to be a game changer. We also supported the IHTA with its hugely important STOP THIS VAT campaign, which has so far proven extremely successful in gaining a deferral by the Revenue in Ireland

of the implementation of this very damaging move.

Our cooperation in Europe through our European federation, the EHPM, is, of course, vital and it is heavily strengthened through Martin Last's continuing role as Vice-Chair of the EHPM Board and Chair of its Technical and Regulatory Committees. And, of course, through our HFMA Vice-President, Penny Viner, who works tirelessly on important botanical and herbal issues across Europe. I thank them both for all their commitment, including extensive travel to Brussels, sometimes multiple times a month. Whatever the UK's future holds in Europe, there will be no let-up in HFMA representing our members interests on whatever issues arise, be it customs, tariffs, labelling or health claims.

But it is our work with HFMA member companies, of course that defines us. And we must be doing something right because, I'm pleased to say, new member interest has never been so buoyant. In fact, we have had more new applications and members join us, large and small alike, in the last six months than at any time in our history. This is because companies know that the only way to protect and grow our special

and innovative market is to work together, and the way to do that is through the HFMA. We are truly here for the interests of all sizes of business, from the largest players, to SMEs, to micro-business and start-ups. These are not mere words, but actions; I see time and again the work that

goes into tackling a niche issue that matters to perhaps just one small company – but if you happen to be that small company, we are here for you.

It's important to recognise that whatever the size of your business, you get the same vote, the same say, and same right to join our technical groups, committees and council, so please get involved and put yourself forward! Over the coming years, as the challenges continue to grow, I believe industry cooperation between the large and the small, new and established players, must increase, and we must speak with one united voice.

So, in an often polarised, difficult and less than cooperative world, I thank you all for helping us stand together. I would like to thank our very hard working and dedicated Executive Director, Graham Keen. I can tell you there is no-one who cares more about this organisation than Graham, there may be those who care as much, but nobody who cares more! Graham always displays the right balance of instinct and strategy, displaying tact and tactics in equal measure. Thanks also to our Secretariat, officers, advisers and, last but not least, our Council, who give so freely of their time. I would also like to thank and pay tribute to our newly strengthened and enlarged CLEAR CHECK team.

And finally, to each and every member company for their support. Together, we form the voice of the industry and we are proud to be helping the nation to be healthier. **hfb**

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.

