



## HFMA UPDATE

by Graham Keen,  
Executive Director

2020 was a year that none of us will quickly forget, our *miseri annos singulos* just seemed to go from bad to worse as we learned before Christmas of the new variant COVID quickly spreading across the country. There seemed to be no respite as we headed into 2021, in fact, if anything, the situation seemed to be deteriorating quickly before any obvious signs of improvement.

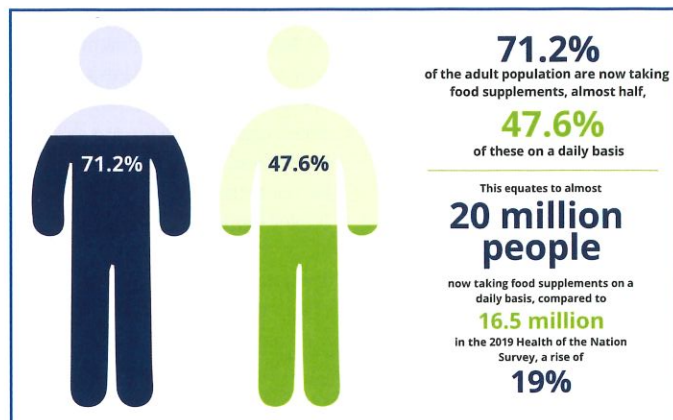
And then two things happened. On Christmas Eve, we received the very timely news that the seemingly impossible EU-Exit post-transition deal had been reached. And between Christmas and New Year, we learned that the MHRA had approved the AstraZeneca vaccine. Then, more directly related to our industry, I got sight of the initial findings from our newly commissioned HFMA Health of the Nation Survey, and the great news for our industry that it provides.

Things moved quickly after the announcement of the 'deal' and, as you will know, the EU (Future Relationship) Bill completed all of its Parliamentary stages and received Royal Assent to be signed into law. The Bill passed with a majority of 521 votes to 73 in the House of Commons, a substantial majority, and the UK and the EU officially signed the treaty on the future trading relationship. This meant that, at 23.00 GMT on New Year's Eve, the UK-EU post-Brexit transition period came to an end, and the new trading relationship between the UK and the EU came into effect as a result.

This meant that existing EU international treaties would cease to apply to the UK, including trade agreements the EU had signed with third countries. New international trade agreements, which the Government has negotiated over the transition period, including with 63 countries outside of the EU, would take effect.

In addition, the current EU system of free movement of people

## All's well that ends well?



ended in the UK. The UK and the EU agreed that visa-free travel, including for short business trips, would be limited to 90 days in any 180-day period going forward. The European Court of Justice ceased to have direct legal jurisdiction in Great Britain (it will still have a role in Northern Ireland, as per the Northern Ireland Protocol), and existing EU-wide access arrangements for financial services came to an end. The EU is expected to make a unilateral decision on equivalence arrangements for UK financial services in 2021.

Of direct relevance to our members and this industry, aside from the critical fact that the deal secures us tariff-free access to EU markets going forward, is that new border checks will be required on goods travelling between Great Britain and the EU and these trading arrangements have already taken effect. This includes new customs, regulatory and rules of origin checks on goods moving between the UK and the EU.

Although the deal reached between the UK and the EU will reduce the prospect for border disruption, the introduction of these new arrangements (including the phase-in of the Government's new Border Operating Model with the EU) will likely present a number of short-term logistical challenges. New arrangements to govern trading

between Great Britain and Northern Ireland will take effect, as per the Northern Ireland Protocol, including internal customs checks between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

As I said at the beginning of this article, we have now received the raw data from our new Health of the Nation Survey, the HFMA's comprehensive research into the key consumer drivers influencing our sector. This research was conducted by 3gem on our behalf of 10,000 adults in the UK during November 29 and December 9, 2020. The survey, one of the largest of its kind, covered a comprehensive gender, geographical and adult age

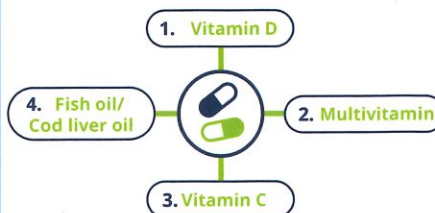
almost 20m people now taking food supplements on a daily basis, compared to 16.5m in the 2019 Health of the Nation Survey, a rise of 19 per cent.

And 23.9 per cent of the 10,000 people surveyed stated that they now take more food supplements than before the pandemic started, and 30.7 per cent have started taking food supplements for the first time in the last year. Asked about their general health, 31.5 per cent felt it had worsened since the start of the pandemic. Significantly, nearly three-quarters of adults, 72.2 per cent, are planning to take more food supplements as they get older. The four most popular food supplements are vitamin D, a multivitamin, vitamin C, and fish oil/cod liver oil.

The findings from this latest survey confirm what we have always known – that our industry continues to play a vital role in helping our nation to be healthier. And our products have probably never been held in more esteem by consumers, and perhaps more understood by Government and Regulators, than they are right now.

I am not suggesting for a moment that our troubles are over, we clearly have a long way to go in getting to grips with the pandemic, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. Moreover, from a trading perspective, we can now plan ahead with more confidence now that our relationship with the EU is based on more solid ground. Combined with the latest data from our new survey, I'm entering 2021 with far more confidence than I might have predicted just one month ago. **hfb**

### The four most popular food supplements:



representation.

The early conclusions are very positive, with significant rises in the numbers of adults now taking food supplements, particularly those taking them on a daily basis; 71.2 per cent of the adult population are now taking food supplements, almost half, 47.6 per cent of these on a daily basis. This equates to

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 [graham@hfma.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto:hfma@hfma.co.uk) or call 020 8481 7100.

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