



HFMA UPDATE

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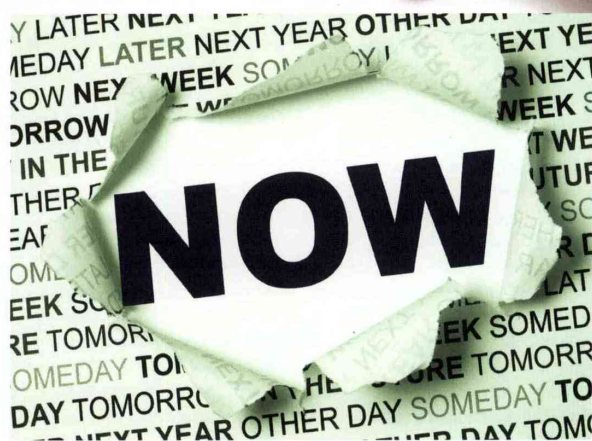
It's all around us at the moment; 'change', or 'shake up'. You might grab these times with both hands, seeing a chance for growth and development. You could sit tight and see how things develop or, as many have more discreetly done, wonder what on earth needs to be done.

In those moments, our industry leaders find themselves in discussions that may impact what our industry is going to look like in the months and years ahead. With so much happening, especially in Westminster and Whitehall, one phrase predominates: "If there was ever a time, that time is now."

One only has to take a look at the timings of the Brexit Freedom Bill to see why. Introduced on September 22, it will enable Parliament to amend more easily, or repeal and replace, retained EU law. Fast forward to December 31, 2023, and the plan is for the UK Government to end the special status of all retained EU law. According to Business Secretary, Jacob Rees-Mogg, it provides opportunity to "remove needless bureaucracy that prevents businesses from investing and innovating in the UK". Whilst the 'sunset period' might extend to 2026 for specific parts of EU law, for the most part, it seems that they want it done and dusted sooner. The HFMA has carefully considered the issues and opportunities that should be brought to the fore now.

If you're fatigued or frustrated by how long you've been hearing about the need for labelling change around probiotics, your ears should prick up. You're right – it's been over 15 years since the guidance from EFSA on probiotics set in place a nonsensical precedent for everything written about probiotics from that point onwards. But we may now have the opportunity to correct this. The time is now. The HFMA is part of an industry effort to increase awareness of probiotic opportunities with key

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Parliamentarians, to garner support for a positive change of front of pack requirements which permits use of the term 'probiotics'. This would be helpful to the consumer, helpful to business and most importantly, helpful to UK health. What's more, consumers deserve products that align with communication about the benefits of 'probiotics', used in scientific studies, mentioned in the media and passed on by nutritional practitioners. With other EU countries taking a more dynamic approach, it's time, here in the UK, to demonstrate that consumers, and common sense health messaging, come first.

At a time when more and more products are coming under Novel Foods scrutiny, it's right to review the processes and procedures that are in place at present, and to thoughtfully assess how these stack up in terms of the impact on business, innovation and availability of products to the consumer. Questions are being asked about the rationale behind the arbitrary date of May 1997 being used as the date by which products have to have proven use on the market. In real terms, even our phones weren't smart in those days (10 years before the launch of the iPhone). How much further we have progressed

in terms of modern assessment/ assay methods, consumer marketing methods and consumer understanding. It's the right time to be questioning the relevance of this fixed cut-off date.

The HFMA continues to monitor and evaluate activity around Novel Foods, and we also get vital insights from the EHPM, our European federation. With respect to Novel Foods, EHPM has created a new Task Force to assess the impact of the current Novel Food Regulation. *Griffonia simplicifolia*, 5-HTP are currently under threat, with ginkgo potentially on the horizon. To this end, our technical and botanical working groups are constantly looking for ways to safeguard the interests of our industry in ways that are synonymous with the HFMA approach; solid science, common-sense rationale, and with the aim of keeping business strong.

As mentioned last month, a great deal of work has been done on botanical health claims. Working with EHPM, the HFMA has submitted a paper which proposes an alternative approach for the assessment of botanical health claims, advocating for a graded approach (from certain to plausible), and taking into account a history of safe use. This would allow consumer

information to include qualified language to communicate potential health benefits in a way that is most helpful and accurate.

Extensive work has also been completed on nutravigilance and the HFMA is, as ever, representing the best interests of its members, and the wider UK industry generally.

In the important debate about folic acid supplementation, at this critical time when Government is shaping and forming its plans for folic acid fortification of flour, the HFMA is being particularly vocal. The HFMA is working strategically to show how fortification, whilst welcomed, is not a robust single solution to tackling the requirement for folic acid pre-conception or in the first trimester of pregnancy. Whilst we welcome a public health strategy as a safety net for some pregnant women (those who eat a lot of refined flour-based products), communication about the continued critical need for folic acid supplements is vital, especially when they provide a low calorie, cost-effective and convenient way for women to safeguard their folic acid intakes at every stage of life.

This industry's time is now. Our 2022 HFMA Member Survey, currently under way, is expected to affirm that we are serving our members well, and the feedback from it will help to shape and form key strategies for the future. Together, we are the voice of UK natural health, and we look forward to sharing our 2023 plans with you soon. **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