



HFMA UPDATE

by Graham Keen,
Executive Director

Together we are louder!

Well, we're just back from a great weekend at the NOPE Show at ExCel and what a super event it turned out to be. After two days of being on my feet and talking non-stop, both of which I've been out of practice with for the last couple of years or so, like everyone else, I feel totally drained. I went into the weekend, like many others I spoke to, with a feeling of trepidation about the weekend to come, but those fears were to be completely unfounded.

I now feel a genuine excitement from the buzz and energy of the show, and the countless very positive conversations. Sure, business is very challenging right now, and it's clear that the 'bump' of the last two years has flattened, but this was an industry expressing confidence and positivity for the future. For me personally, it was great to see so many old friends over the weekend, and the show is generally agreed to have been a very welcome and successful return to normality for the industry. It was a particularly good show for the HFMA, the feedback from members on all that we have done throughout the pandemic was truly humbling.

And I'm pleased to say that interest in membership of the HFMA has never been higher. Nearly 150 members now, and counting, and lots of interest coming from the show. And all seeking the same support, advice and protection that all HFMA members derive by being part of the HFMA family. Whatever the issue of the moment is, you can be sure that the HFMA is on the case, acting as the eyes and ears for this great industry.

A topical case in point is the huge shakeout currently taking place in the market for CBD products. You cannot have visited NOPE and failed to notice the extraordinary level of activity and innovation in the CBD market, which now in value terms exceeds the combined market value of the rest of the VMS sector. And this is all set against the major changes

taking place with the Novel Food status of those products. We have been following events closely as the Food Standards Agency wrestles with the vast number of CBD product dossiers submitted for 'validation' to enable those products to remain on the market. The publication by the FSA of a list of over 3,500 products that can remain on the market has provided some clarity but created not a little furore as companies previously fully engaged with the process and expecting their products to be on the list, found that this was not actually the case. This has caused the FSA to revisit the list and we know already that a sizeable number of products are in the process of being reinstated to the list.

Some good news is that I have been reassured that there will not be a 'negative' list published as a result of this, i.e., those product dossiers submitted but rejected, as this would create an unfair bias against those products compared to all of the products on the market that have never even engaged with the process. That said, we understand the list will be fully searchable and will enable enforcement officers to see a product and then quickly identify if it is on the list. So, watch this space!

It's interesting to note that the issue of fortification of foods with folic acid returned to the Parliamentary agenda last week following several written questions from SNP MP Philippa Whitford. Whitford questioned the Government over the plans and timetable for proceeding with folic acid fortification of staple foods and grains. Whitford also asked the Government whether it plans to introduce folic acid fortification of grains and staple foods at the recommended level of 1mg/100g, 10 ppm. Responding for the Government, Minister for Vaccines and Public Health, Maggie Throup MP, stated that the level of folic acid



to be added to non-wholewheat flour is being consulted on as part of the Bread and Flour Regulations review. The Minister stated that a final decision on the required level of fortification will follow consideration of the consultation responses alongside advice from relevant expert committees. She added that as part of the Bread and Flour Regulations review, the Government will consult on updated regulations and an impact assessment once the Northern Ireland Assembly Elections have concluded.

The HFMA's position on this issue is clear and unchanged. Whilst there is no question that the overall folate status of the general population would improve as a result of mandatory fortification, raising awareness and education of the need to take a 400mcg folic acid supplement while

last week, the Health Secretary Sajid Javid MP and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) launched a review to promote the importance of vitamin D and identify ways to improve intake across the population, in particular, among at risk groups, including through dietary supplements and fortified food and drink. The call for evidence will last six weeks and will welcome responses from the public, public health experts, retailers, food manufacturers and other industry bodies on ambitious ways to improve uptake and tackle disparities.

During the pandemic, vitamin D sales exceeded the previous best-seller, a multivitamin, for the first time as a result of the positive association of vitamin D alleviating the worst effects of Covid. We've now seen those sales high level off so any news that the Government is going to highlight the positive benefits of vitamin D must surely be welcomed. Needless to say, we will be playing our part in keeping the profile of this key nutrient as high as possible.

All of which leads me to say that if your company is part of the UK's natural health industry but is not a member of the HFMA, then you really should be. Get in touch and join the HFMA, together we are louder! **hfb**



trying to conceive and during the first trimester of pregnancy will become even more important. There is a real risk that this programme may have the reverse of the intended effect. If thorough awareness and education is not provided, women are at risk of relying solely on, say, a couple of slices of toast each day as their source of folate. This modest intake would not sufficiently protect from NTDs and if it detracts from the message to take a folic acid supplement, could, perversely, not achieve the desired increase in folate status among the demographic that needs it most.

Changing the subject to vitamin D, you may well have noticed that in the

This is a great example of the work that we undertake at the HFMA on behalf of 140-plus member companies. If your company is not in membership and you would like to help us in our efforts to protect this great industry and benefit from the gold-standard services we provide, you should join the HFMA at the earliest opportunity. To learn more about our activities, please contact 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.

