



## HFMA UPDATE

by Martin Last,  
Director General

# The voice of UK natural health

It looks like spring is finally arriving, bringing longer, brighter days, and a sense of optimism and purpose after a long, wet winter. And the show season is upon us too, with opportunities to meet, network and catch up on the latest issues affecting us.

I continue to lead the HFMA with several initiatives to help modernise and improve our contact with membership, our interaction with stakeholders, and our authorities. The organisation has been restructured to help achieve this and I am pleased to say that staff levels are returning to full capability. We now have our political advisors, Cavendish, in place and we are delving deep into the issues where we need active political engagement with our Government and MPs, and this is on target for the first phase to be implemented ahead of a probable November election.

Communications are now being driven by a new team within the HFMA with a plan of activity to meet our needs. In addition, we have now added across all member bulletins and notices options for interactive feedback on several member issues at each opportunity. This helps us understand our members needs better and adapt and improve what we do in a steady path of small changes to help deliver this. We are using regular questionnaires to cover key topics, not just on preferences for meetings and structure but also on product and industry issues.

Recent changes to our Working Group format resulted in a 30 per cent uplift of companies attending these quarterly London meetings, where we not only update on current issues affecting our members, but now includes a networking lunch session, followed by an afternoon presentation on a relevant topic to the group, enabling us to explore best practice going forward. I am keen to develop this regular interaction with our membership and it enables the

HFMA and our members to listen and learn along the process.

In addition to our regular meetings, the HFMA also has ongoing bulletins, education and advice with our various Insider publications, webinars and CLEAR CHECK Chats, training and will be looking to upgrade the website over the coming months to make it more user friendly. Of course, we have our scientific and technical advisers providing important updates and to develop position statements, plus being available for managing expert enquiries.

In addition, I attend and interact with all the major Government departments and authorities to keep us updated on the issues affecting our industry and appreciate the input from other members of the HFMA team in this ongoing work. We also reach out to other stakeholders and trade associations and seek collaborative approaches where possible, whether they be UK, EU or internationally based.

The HFMA has a strong, committed membership, and I am looking at ways that that commitment can be recognised and a review of our retention and recruitment policies is already underway. I am also keen to clarify the rules of the HFMA to make it clearer for members and the HFMA what is expected and enjoyed from membership.

We are eager to make more new companies aware of the benefits of membership and how this can be best used to assist their businesses.

A lot of these improvements were part of my five-year plan, which I share with Council, and which will become a rolling plan of development



A previous working group meeting

for the HFMA to follow, and these are now taking effect. Since I took over last July, it was never my intention to make wholesale radical changes in one go but more to work on upgrading and encouraging gradual improvement for all, and I appreciate that in this, my operating style probably differs from that of the past. I welcome that and will continue to implement a vision that will encourage an inclusive and outward looking organisation so that it is robust and prepared for the future challenges we face and reflects the total commitment that I have for the HFMA.

In addition to my role as Director General of HFMA, I continue as Vice President of the Federation of European Health Product Associations (EHPM), bringing continuity with our friends and colleagues in the EU, particularly as Europe prepares for new elections in June. The EHPM is not just our main European partner but are important to provide greater links with regulatory and political developments in Europe and insight into issues affecting trade with our closest trading countries. I still

chair their Quality and Technical Committee and several specific task forces, which enables us to have purposeful interaction on all issues and to keep our two regulatory regimes here and in the EU mirroring each other where at all possible, which again is in all our best interests. I would like to take this opportunity to commend our HFMA President, Penny Viner, for her support and active participation in managing this EHPM connection.

So, whilst we keep our industry at the forefront of the regulatory and political agenda, defending our industry, and representing the interests of our members, the HFMA is also being structured and developed positively and robustly to enable us to navigate today's and tomorrow's pathways. All these things together enable us to continue be the voice of the UK natural industry.

If you would like to know more about the benefits of membership to your company, simply visit our website, [www.hfma.co.uk](http://www.hfma.co.uk), to learn more, or contact me directly at [martin@hfma.co.uk](mailto:martin@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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