

HFMA UPDATE

Martin Last, Director General



HFMA's European collaboration

Our links with Europe are more than just geographical; apart from being our closest trading partners, recent world events have seen how close collaboration remains on all fronts. We are seeing regulations affecting our industry originating from Europe mostly follow into UK law. This is welcomed, helping minimise red tape that regulation brings, although this does not necessarily mean everything follows the same route, moreover that it enables the UK to evaluate regulations independently to ensure they meet the needs of the market.

Just over a year ago, the UK and EU agreed the Windsor Framework, which provides new arrangements for movement of goods across EU borders, the aim being to restore smooth flow of trade within the UK market, safeguard Northern Ireland's place in the Union, and address the democratic deficit at the heart of the original Northern Ireland Protocol. As part of this, the UK Internal Market Scheme agreed milestones to ensure goods moved into Northern Ireland will be freed of unnecessary paperwork, checks and duties. The latest guidance on phase 3 was announced in February to cover the products in scope in greater detail, including expanding on definitions, and details on products with exemptions to labelling.

The guidance provides lists of commodity codes affected and that are exempt. There is new guidance on composite food supplements to bring this into line with EU rules,

although there are still issues relating to the clarity of the guidance, which has instigated discussions directly with DEFRA to obtain clarification. Last October, Government announced the 'Not for EU' UK wide labelling requirements was all but scrapped following consultation with business. However, authorities continue to monitor the UK Internal Market to address risks to product availability and phase 3 is designed to clarify which products may require 'Not for EU' labelling for Northern Ireland products from the UK and to apply from July 1, 2025. Discussions with DEFRA continue.

The HFMA continues to be active in the European arena through membership of the European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers (EHPM), which plays a vital role representing the interests of specialist health product manufacturers and distributors in Europe. It works towards developing an appropriate regulatory framework for members' products and promotes industry best practices for quality and safety. The HFMA was one of the founding members in 1975 and has been actively involved at board level and through Working Groups to keep informed of European regulatory issues. It now has 14 national associations and 11 member companies, representing 1,600 manufacturers and distributors, the majority of which are SMEs, in 17 European countries. EHPM members provide consumers with safe, science-



based, high-quality products as well as accurate information about nutritional value and use. EHPM's focus is very much on securing a workable regulatory structure for these companies.

At the Annual General Assembly of the EHPM in February, Antonino Santoro stood down from his successful three-year role as President and Nicolas Cappelaere was appointed the new President. Nicolas has been a long-standing EHPM Board member, representing the French trade association, Synadiet, and the EHPM look forward to his continued active involvement. At the same meeting, I was re-elected as Vice President and continue to represent the HFMA on the EHPM Board. This not only retains the HFMA's influence into Europe but reflects the importance we have in helping determine the EU agenda. In addition, I chair important groups in Brussels on regulatory, quality, and technical matters, and special groups covering vigilance, Novel Foods and probiotics. Penny Viner, HFMA President, is also involved and represents our interests on the EHPM

Botanicals Working Group.

Since the newly elected Commission and Parliament was established last June, we are starting to see work schedules of the Commission and various departments announced. This will set the issues management required in Europe over the next five years. EHPM has a manifesto generated through its political advisors, which has been widely communicated to the Commission and MEPs to address issues as they arise. This reflects the importance of HFMA membership of the EHPM in terms of being at the heart of European issues which assists our membership to keep abreast of developments. A relationship which has been nurtured in the 50 years of the EHPM's history and which endures. In the HFMA's 60th year, it demonstrates the ongoing efforts that are maintained, often behind the scenes, to fully represent our industries and is why the HFMA is the voice of the industry.

If you would like to know more about the benefits of membership, visit www.hfma.co.uk to learn more, or contact me on 020 8481 7100.