

HFMA UPDATE

Martin Last, Director General



Working for our members

The HFMA has a very public face with members and the industry. It remains the voice of the natural health trade, giving informed support and advice to members to help manage the complex regulatory, scientific and political issues which continue to challenge our industry. The HFMA is an influential and authoritative association, and its scope of influence ever widens.

The HFMA works hard at maintaining meaningful communications to members through regular bi-weekly bulletins, quarterly working groups, Insider updates on research, media and Westminster, and now through our regular coffee mornings and webinars, keeping members informed, as well as being increasingly active on social media.

CLEAR CHECK provides expert advice on compliance issues, which is not just about ensuring regulatory compliant labels, but with a wide range of services to help as an extension to companies' marketing departments to assist marketing materials, releases, and strategic development for products presented as foods, food supplements, functional foods, cosmetics and pet supplements.

However, many may not know that the work of the HFMA extends well beyond its public persona. To manage and keep abreast of industry issues, there is much preparatory work, membership contact, strategic meetings, liaison with other bodies, all required to ensure

the HFMA has a workable industry perspective and supports the interests of our members.

The HFMA attends weekly and bi-weekly Government update meetings on various topics from border controls, Northern Ireland impact liaison, business readiness forums, food supply issues, and safety forums. It attends regular meetings in London to cover updates and liaison with the MHRA, Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), Food Standards Agency (FSA), on Codes of Advertising (CAP), on industry monitoring and insight of compliance issues, as well as liaison regarding Government initiatives and consultations on industry positions. This often extends to meetings with Ministers of Parliament and Government authorities to clarify specific industry matters.

It meets regularly to liaise on industry positions with the Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB), Committee for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), European Specialist Sports Nutritional Alliance (ESSNA), Irish Health Trade Association (IHTA), Health Food Institute (HFI) and with all food related associations via the Business Expert Group.

The HFMA has a special relationship with Bucks and Surrey Primary Authority in the UK and with Glamorgan County Council in Wales, where membership helps ensure assured advice on trading standard issues, which in effect automatically provides our members with a country-wide common

position that our PA support. This two-way relationship keeps us and them updated and informed and is key to help us maintain a level playing field in the industry.

HFMA continues its important relationships with Europe and is an integral part of the European Federation of Food Supplement Associations (EHFM), where, as a member of the EHFM Board, I am also Vice President and Chair of the Quality & Technical Groups, as well as involvement in its various task forces on issues such as novel foods, probiotics, post market monitoring, botanicals, etc. Whilst the UK is technically no longer part of the European community, it is intrinsically linked together, not just as our closest trading partners, but with regulatory development, which will continue to impact UK law makers. Keeping informed on EU developments is a crucial factor in management and planning of UK issues and with uncertain times ahead on US economic trading links, establishing secure EU ties will become ever more vital.

The EU link is not just with the EHFM; it also provides us with access to Food Drink Europe (FDE), Food Supplements Europe (FSE), and International Alliance of Dietary Associations (IADSA) and Codex Alimentarius (CODEX) to keep track of international developments.

In addition to our external connections, the HFMA operates like any other organisation and has a valuable team working to maintain and manage our operational and financial

matters, as well as personnel, staff welfare, and office and organisational management. This involves internal liaison between the departments and to help develop strategic approaches to matters arising, as well as looking at future and potential issues to address and to develop guidance to members as a result.

Given the nature of the HFMA work, there is much in-house expertise on technical and regulatory matters and managing the CLEAR CHECK workload. Where specialist advice is required, the team work together with our expert advisors on key issues, providing background and clarification to enable development of strategic positions and guidance on matters relating to technical, scientific, communications and political affairs. From time to time, this enables HFMA Special Interest Groups to be formed, including experts from member companies to address key issues and help mitigate problem areas and improve our insight into the issues before us.

All this means that members can be confident that, in our regular communications, the HFMA provides meaningful and helpful information, advice, and guidance on all industry issues based on a wide range of well-informed expertise. I am proud to lead this association and am thankful to the dedicated team of staff and Council that support all our activities.

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