HFMA UPDATE

Martin Last, Director General

Managing the issues

We all watch the news and are aware of the major issues of the day affecting our lives, whether it be economic change or personal. What doesn't make the news is the work behind the scenes to keep the cogs working.

The activity of the HFMA is much the same, where the many issues we face require ongoing monitoring and action, thus ensuring members feel updated and confident of what needs to be addressed. Whilst this is highlighted at our Working Groups and in Bulletins, ongoing attention to these issues continues to be integral part of the work of the HFMA team daily. Here is a round-up of some of the key issues we have recently been addressing.

The work on probiotics, where the fight to permit the use of the term on labels, continues to be a key policy of HFMA and for political lobbying to MPs. In May, I met with Steve Reed, UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and efforts are in place to now seek follow up meetings with key officials. In the meantime, the UK Tripartite Group of HFMA, CRN, and PAGB have resumed mailings to MPs on the topic.

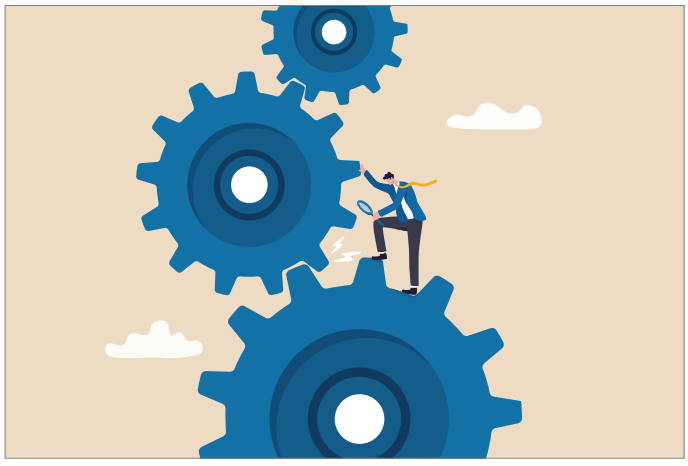
In the regular Government meetings we attend, we still hear the authorities discussing proposals that alternative descriptors such as 'friendly bacteria' should also not be permitted, and we engage at the heart of this debate on behalf of industry, defending against such proposals.

HFMA have always maintained that the setting of maximum levels (MPLs) for food supplements is a crucial issue for the future of our industry and to maintain consumer choice. The discussions currently occurring in Europe, if adopted here, could be a major threat and therefore the HFMA are actively engaging in its role with the EHPM to achieve a desired outcome in Europe on MPLs.

HFMA actively support EHPM lobbying of the Commission for appropriate scientific models to be adopted and for transparency in the MPL process. This involved unifying the various EU associations of EHPM, FSE, FDE and ASEGP, and now IADSA, and agreeing alignment of the MPLs model for food supplements to speak with one voice to the Commission. As a result, the Commission is now engaging with industry, and it is understood that the timetable for implementation of their proposals for setting of maximum levels has now been extended.

Closer to home, in February, DEFRA launched its guidance on Phase 3 of the Windsor Framework with a revised list of Commodity Codes. At regular meetings of the Business Expert Group, a coalition of the major UK trade associations, discussions were possible to obtain clarity on the guidelines. This confirmed that on composite products, most supplements and composite supplements which are not based on products of animal origin (POAO) are exempt from 'Not for EU' labelling. It also confirmed that POAO classified supplements are not exempt.

Since 2024, concerns were raised globally over the safety of ashwagandha, and many countries have conducted their own reviews. Our Food Standards Agency (FSA) issued consultations last September and HFMA coordinated data received from members in response. This



is currently under review by the FSA. The data was also shared with EHPM and is helping to engage with discussions in the Netherlands and Ireland specifically. Such efforts help to clarify concerns and for adoption of proportionate and appropriate responses.

On Article 8 substances under scrutiny, the UK authorities are now waiting on two risk assessments for green tea catechins and hydroxy anthracene derivatives (HADS) before they consult on their proposals for monacolins. In Europe, many of these are facing full bans.

This May saw the Commission working groups downgrade from a full ban on alpha lipoic acid (ALA) to be 'Under Union Scrutiny', allowing additional consultation. Opinions on berberine and sweet fennel are expected by September and December 2025 respectively. This indicates why the HFMA needs to keep ahead of such developments, which in time are likely to also affect us here in the UK.

These key issues form the main agenda items for our HFMA working groups and communications with our members where HFMA recommend and can discuss appropriate actions and best practice to address issues as they arise. In addition, multiple other issues need to be monitored and shared, including work on botanicals, pet supplements, cosmetics, CBD, sustainability, additives, contaminants, packaging and packaging waste regulations, novel foods, claims, and many other issues where our members have concerns and seek our guidance. The HFMA team and advisors work tirelessly behind the scenes to establish solutions and guidance on all these topics.

It highlights how much membership of a strong and active trade association provides our members with confidence to keep ahead of the myriads of issues that they face today. HFMA membership helps reduce the daily concerns of companies knowing that advice and guidance is readily available and help ensure members are not adversely affected.

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.