

HFMA UPDATE

Martin Last, Director General



Making your voice heard

Lately, with the frequent twists and turns of Westminster affairs, it could be easy to lose focus. With frequent U-turns and changes of direction, it can feel like following a map with many uncertain routes. This is why at the HFMA, we have refined our messaging with Ministers and Government to move the dial on issues members face by elevating them into political relevance and solution-based narratives.

The HFMA's key issues and policy priorities now sit within two clear and compelling pillars, to remove barriers to healthy lives and to establish healthy growth. By structuring our interests in this way, we are positioning HFMA to engage with stakeholders in the language that they use and demonstrate why our sector matters to the major debates being discussed, focussing on prevention, productivity, competitiveness and wellbeing. These pillars demonstrate how our various technical issues, from probiotics to SPS to maximum levels, all contribute to a bigger story about the role of the responsible health food industry in supporting a healthier nation and a stronger economy.

To achieve prevention without barriers, the UK must remove outdated regulatory and interpretative barriers that stop people accessing and understanding safe, effective supplements. The issue is not more legislation, or deregulation, it's modernisation to permit responsible communication, reduce confusion, and encourage low-cost, low-risk policies that changes and supports the NHS and empowers consumers.

The UK faces rising pressure on the NHS and growing public demand for simple, affordable,

preventative health solutions. Supplements, including vitamins and minerals, probiotics, etc., are widely used, safe, and backed by strong scientific consensus. Government policy restricts supplements from supporting the nation's preventative health goals, which ultimately leaves more people to rely on an already overstretched NHS. Our refined political messages are designed to speak to our Government in a meaningful and constructive way to demonstrate that our industry can be a key contributor to the growth of our economy.

To achieve the second pillar, unblocking healthy growth, we need to reduce the regulatory burdens which slow innovation, inflate cost, reduce investment and undermine SME competitiveness. Responsible UK manufacturers are bearing disproportionate burdens whilst rogue traders continue to evade scrutiny. For Government to achieve growth, it must ensure that regulation rewards responsibility, rather than punish it. Unblocking healthy growth is about coherence, proportionality, and targeted enforcement.

The UK health food and supplements industry is a high-potential, innovation driven sector that should be contributing to the Government's growth, competitiveness, and manufacturing agenda. Responsible SMEs are creating skilled jobs, investing in research, and supporting consumer demand for healthier lifestyles.

And HFMA initiatives are also designed to generate business by helping companies expand, and the seminar theme for our AGM on April 29, in London, will be exploring many aspects of opportunities for growth.



Earlier this year, we conducted a survey to members on export opportunities. This was taken prior to the announcements of President Trump's tariffs and so recently, we revisited this survey, which now reveals a change in priority markets because of these announcements. This will enable us to target the requirements to help members expand into target territories using our collaboration with Santander Bank and its export services. We are now planning events to support our members with seminars and educational programmes.

We are also planning an Autumn Seminar in London on November 3, which is planned to be a major industry event to help businesses with latest developments. This is seeking high profile speakers from across industry on the theme of looking to the future. More to follow.

Later this month, we will be attending the Making Nutraceuticals Show on April 21-22 at the Coventry Arena, where issues such as quality, compliance, innovation and progress will be on the seminar agenda. HFMA will have an active presence, and I will be presenting on GMP standards for food supplements and be part of the industry panel session on sustainability issues. On the second day, the HFMA Technical Advisor will be presenting the

many issues and solutions regarding novel foods. We will be available at the show to meet with members and wider industry stakeholders and help cover valuable insights into understanding the various issues our industry faces.

The HFMA continues to maintain meaningful communications to members through regular bi-weekly bulletins, quarterly working groups, and regular updates. Our new fortnightly *News and Insight* covers HFMA news, technical, regulatory and legislative updates, event announcements, and latest industry matters. *Natural Health Media Watch* provides a twice weekly round-up of health and nutritional news in mainstream and consumer press. *Nutrition and Botanicals Research Update* is a monthly round-up of nutritional and botanical research and *Political News* gives a fortnightly review of political news impacting the industry.

Through all these activities the HFMA provides meaningful and helpful information, advice, and guidance, on all industry issues to our members and represent these interests at all levels.

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.