

HFMA - The Voice of the Natural Health Industry. For information on HFMA membership, or enquiries, call 0208 481 7100 or email [office@hfma.co.uk](mailto:office@hfma.co.uk)



# Bulletin Board

— News, information and comment

The Voice of the  
Natural Health  
Industry



## Fighting fraud with science

The recent scandal following the discovery of horsemeat in cheap, ready-to-eat dishes labelled as beef has focused the nation on the complexity of the supply chain for the processed food sector.

This food fraud is not just impacting the meat industry. Foods and supplements including cod liver oil, aloe vera, Manuka honey, mozzarella and coffee have all been adulterated or mislabelled in the UK.

This action can occur for a variety of reasons, often linked to financial gain, as significant increases in profitability can be achieved using adulteration, mislabelling or to improve the perceived quality of products by mimicking an established brand.

The government expects retailers to take 'ultimate responsibility' but can they police the market with enough rigour? The variety of analytical and testing services at the UK's Food and Environment Research Agency detailed below could help the retailer offer more extensive protection for their consumers.

### Targeted analysis

This process screens for pre-determined components in a sample.



**Simon Pothecary,**  
General manager at  
Comvita and HFMA  
Council member

Foods are analysed using a range of techniques that compare the data with the known information stored in databases, in order to identify the contents of a food or supplement and screen for a given adulterant. Such targeted approaches have been used to identify the presence of illegal Sudan dyes, inclusion of meat binding products and determining the authenticity of claims for some active Manuka honey.

### Stable isotopes in the food chain

Analysis of stable isotope ratios in foods and supplements can also reveal economically motivated adulteration such as:

- The addition of cheap sugar syrups to honey or maple syrup
- Verification of whether chicken has been corn fed
- Whether flavorings are natural or synthetic

- Differentiation between organic and conventional farming methods

Even more sophisticated isotope analysis can be used to establish the geographic origin of agricultural products. This is relevant when provenance adds value in products such as Saffron Spice.

### Fingerprinting Techniques

DNA fingerprinting techniques can be applied to trace foods and to authenticate their identity DNA techniques are used to measure the composition of foodstuffs by mathematically processing its characteristics. This can be particularly used to screen the geographical origin and is used for a number of foods, such as chicken, beer, honey, and olive oil.

Science allows has the tools and apparatus to allow responsible brand owners and retailers to manage their increasingly complex supply chains while enabling consumer protection to be central to their thinking.

*I would like to thank Dr Adrian Charlton, head of chemical and biochemical profiling at the Food and Environment Research Agency for his help in preparing this article.*

### GETTING THE BEST FROM THE HFMA...

#### Business Advantage

Gaining the business edge in an already overcrowded market can be a challenge. To facilitate this, the HFMA remains a reliable and consistent point of contact for all of its members' business needs. Regular updates and a programme of practical and educational events means that support and advice are always available. Regular 'Working Group' meetings allow members to directly liaise with the HFMA's trusted industry experts face-to-face, and they are also on-hand for our members to contact for advice throughout the year. These services are available exclusively to all HFMA members. Log on to [www.hfma.co.uk](http://www.hfma.co.uk) for an additional, comprehensive, password-protected 'members-only' section.

### NEWS...

#### Antioxidants & Cancer

The HFMA recently came to the defence of the industry by responding to coverage of an academic paper published by Professor James Watson.

The report suggested nutritional supplements containing antioxidants could be doing more harm than good in relation to cancer.

An early alert on the report allowed the HFMA to draft a statement explaining the importance of understanding that the story was based largely on a theoretical opinion. The statement also explained that the majority of evidence shows protective associations for antioxidant vitamins and cancer.

## HFMA SPOTLIGHT

### What do you most enjoy about your job?

The diversity of it, no day is ever the same. Some days are filled with the routine tasks of market planning, whilst the next day you are visiting practitioners and hearing stories about how nutrition changes people's lives. The following weekend you may be visiting the opposite side of the country presenting new products at a health exhibition.

### What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

Breaking through the prejudices of people that hold the view that nutritional supplements are completely



**Rolf Forslund**  
Managing Director,  
Kenkou Selfcare AB,  
Sweden

unnecessary and that nutritional deficiencies are non-existent in the western world. Despite the growing evidence of the contrary, some of these people seem to more emotionally rather than scientifically cling on to this view, and quite often will publicly and very aggressively mock anyone who disagrees.

### Where do you see your business in 10

### years' time?

My vision is that Kenkou Selfcare will become well known as company which provides research-based nutritional supplements. I also hope that we will be able to have grown to such an extent, that we can make much larger contributions to nutritional research studies, which currently are very few in Sweden and often underfunded.

### What's the best piece of business advice you've ever been given?

Get out of your office. Meet people where they are. Life and business is all about personal relationships.

### What do you find most useful about being a member of the HFMA?

Receiving quick and up-to date information to all the new legislation affecting the market. Also, knowing that you are part of an organisation that does everything to question and challenge some of the less thought-through aspects of new legislation.

### If you could change one thing in the world what would it be?

Peoples' narrow-mindedness. Most conflicts, including wars, are in my opinion linked to people having the viewpoint of an ostrich with their head stuck in the ground.