

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)

# hfma Bulletin Board

— News, information and comment

The Voice of the  
Natural Health  
Industry

## Quality and credibility are key to preserving consumer confidence

At a time when new EU legislation makes communicating about our products increasingly difficult, it is essential that consumers have absolute confidence in the products they buy.

Buying from reputable suppliers is one way to ensure quality products, and looking for suppliers who belong to trade associations such as the Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) is a good place to start.

HFMA members must comply with all aspects of food legislation and are also required to comply with additional standards of good manufacturing practice appropriate for foods and food supplements.

Consumers need as much information as possible, so labels need to be clear, accurate and legal. Reputable manufacturers will have their labels checked by organizations such as the HFMA before the product reaches the market, but there is always the possibility that rogue products can tarnish the reputation of the industry.

In the case of herbals, a Traditional Herbal Registration gives consumers absolute reassurance of the standards



**Janet Groves**  
Chairman, G R lane  
Health Products and  
a member of the  
HFMA Council

that the product has been manufactured to, as well as a clear indication of how to use the herb safely and the benefit they should expect to get. It is therefore essential that retailers offer a good range of THRs.

The HFMA has always strongly advocated the dual route to the market for herbals and botanicals, and I also believe that there is a place for herbal supplements, more commonly referred to as botanicals, alongside THRs, and that we must fight to maintain a position for these products under food law, but in doing so it is essential that such products are safe and credible.

Herbal supplements should not be confused with medicines, and I see potential safety issues if medicinal herbs are made available as supplements without adequate information about how they should be used.

I am also concerned about the idea that a medicinal herb may be sold as a supplement if it is below the therapeutic level.

Health maintenance claims helped the consumer understand the different roles of supplements and medicines, but, in the absence of any of these claims, will consumers understand that low potency products are not medicines? Potentially, this approach could make the industry vulnerable to media claims that the products we sell are ineffective.

If a company decides to sell a medicinal herb as a supplement at a sub-therapeutic level, it is important that customers understand clearly that they are buying a product which is not formulated to provide therapeutic benefit. If they are expecting a medicinal action and are disappointed, then this could damage the credibility not just of the product but of herbal medicines generally.

In the absence of claims, there is an important job to be done to build confidence in the products we sell and ensure that consumer's expectations are being correctly managed.

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

As an important part of its efforts to represent the interests of its members, the HFMA's key partnerships with stakeholders ensure members are represented and kept reliably informed both nationally and internationally. Maximizing influence in Whitehall, Westminster and Brussels is crucial to HFMA efforts to ensure that legislation and implementation is proportionate and responsible. The HFMA currently holds membership with the current relevant organisations including the European Botanical Forum and the European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers. For more information visit: [www.hfma.co.uk](http://www.hfma.co.uk).

### NEWS...

#### In defence of omega-3

A surprising defence of the omega-3 industry came recently from the *Daily Mail* which featured an article from Dr Martin Scurr, voicing his reservations about the recent media coverage which reported that taking omega-3 supplements is associated with a higher incidence of prostate cancer.

Mirroring the HFMA's earlier response to this research, Scurr pointed out the important distinction between the association presented in this study, and an actual cause. In addition, he argued that the essential fatty acids (EFAs) necessary for brain health cannot be produced by the body, so must be obtained by the diet instead, and that stories such as this were confusing for anyone aware of the importance of these EFAs.

### HFMA SPOTLIGHT

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

As our main target is to offer health products to help provide the population with a better quality of life, the most exciting part of my job is to create products which fulfil this goal.

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

I believe there are three distinct aspects of our sector which you need to manage: understanding the real needs of consumers; understanding the real market moves; and utilising the most important research in our



**Raimon Cortada**  
Director, Vitae Natural  
Nutrition UK Ltd

sector. This calls for a lot of work, effort and financial investment.

#### Where do you see your business in ten years' time?

Offering natural health products whose proven efficacy can be used as alternative remedies for illnesses.

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

Do all you can to build a good team with the people working in your company; and spend rationally and carefully – reinvest your profits in developing added value products.

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

As we are a Barcelona-based company, being a member of HFMA has been very important in making a good start for our UK branch's commercial activities.

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

I would like to enforce a rule whereby politicians take a turn at working as normal employees every two years so that they could gain a better connection with their citizens.

#### Who is your biggest inspiration and why?

The thing that inspires me most is looking at the differences between nature and human beings; there's such a big gap now, and the further we come the bigger this becomes.