

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



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

#### Your professional calendar

Like many UK business sectors, the natural products industry relies on an extensive network of industry experts, advisors and business leaders to support and promote your business needs. The HFMA provides its members with a full calendar of industry events, giving members new to the UK market an opportunity to establish important contacts, and providing established UK businesses with a place to strengthen vital professional relationships and network with key industry stakeholders.

HFMA members can also benefit from key contacts within regulatory bodies and government departments, and partnerships with other industry associations.

### IN THE NEWS ...

#### HFMA AGM

On 14 April the HFMA hosted its 48th annual meeting at the Natural & Organic Products Europe Show at Olympia. A new record of 74 attendees was reached, including 52 delegates from 41 member companies. The AGM featured a speech by chair, Lynn Lord, a presentation by treasurer Tom Moses and a review of the past year's activities by executive director Graham Keen.

Lord presented the HFMA's two annual awards: the Maurice Hanssen Award to honour former HFMA technical adviser Michael Evans for his dedication and passion for the industry throughout his professional life; and the Health Journalist of the Year Award which went to Caroline Jones, a highly acclaimed freelance health and lifestyle journalist.

## It's the Wild West out there on the Internet

Over the last few months this column has given my fellow HFMA council members the chance to let off steam concerning the mass of rules and regulations being imposed on our industry. And quite right they are to complain, because these regulations often seem to be illogical in the restrictions they impose as well as hugely expensive to implement. Reading back over previous columns I am struck by how professional, measured and reasoned they are, despite the frustration that must be felt by the authors. And it is this calm professional tone that is a reflection of the way the HFMA campaigns on behalf of our industry and explains why the HFMA has achieved such respect from the legislative bodies.

Anyway, I'm not going to go on about these rules and regulations again as I think plenty has already been said and I'm not sure I have the patience to be as polite as the previous contributors! Instead I'd like to highlight the growing problem of the largely unregulated online trade in supplements.

There has been a huge explosion in supplement 'traders', and when it comes to medical claims it is quite literally the Wild West out there – as many of wildest claims are for products imported from the US. Thanks to Amazon, the barriers to entry to the UK supplement market are now almost zero; in fact if you have a residential address and a kitchen table for pack-



**John Todd**  
is general manager at  
Lamberts Healthcare  
and an HFMA council  
member

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And what delights you can bring to UK consumers. This morning I could have bought a supplement 'for imbalances associated with kidney disease and chronic renal failure' (just £297.36). Then, having sorted out my kidneys, I might well have wanted something for

weight loss. Here I had plenty of choice but would probably have selected the one that 'helps burn body fat, reduce appetite and boost metabolism' as I could do with losing the 5-6lbs a week that the product promises. Then, being concerned about my memory, I could buy from a UK online pharmacy a beetroot supplement that can 'limit the chances of dementia'.

Clearly these claims are all illegal – and they make you appreciate that legislation is of course required to prevent vulnerable consumers from being ripped off. It also highlights the fact that when legislation exists, as it already does in the UK, that it is of little use if it is not effectively enforced. It seems a shame that we've ended up with the rather flawed decisions made by the EFSA by which responsible companies have to abide, whilst the legions of Internet traders seem to be getting away with murder.

But it is worth saying that some of these small 'rogue' firms are run by people passionate about natural health, who have formulated their products with the best intentions. Unfortunately they are often ignorant of the regulations and it is here that the HFMA can help. No other organization offers such comprehensive and constructive advice on everything from labelling to advertising. And we welcome everyone who genuinely wants to do it right.

## An award-winning team

The HFMA's executive director Graham Keen has been presented with the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Natural & Organic Awards 2014. The accolade celebrates a varied career that spans over 30 years in the natural health industry, both in the UK and the US.

The award is the highest individual accolade within The Natural & Organic Awards, and sees Graham join the esteemed company of previous win-

ners including Patrick Holden CBE, director of the Soil Association; Harriet Lamb, director of the Fairtrade Foundation; Sue Croft, director of Consumers for Health Choice; and Craig Sams, Organic and Fairtrade pioneer and founder of Green & Black's and Whole Earth.

Graham's current position as executive director of the HFMA sees him skilfully negotiating the needs of the HFMA's extensive membership with



Graham Keen (centre) with Countryfile presenter Julia Bradbury and Martin Last

Parliamentary lobbying, both in the UK and in Brussels. Graham also speaks on behalf of his members as 'the voice of the natural health industry', and is both vigilant and well trusted in his

defence of the natural products industry in the UK media and beyond.

On receiving his award, Graham commented: "Aside from my time living and working in the USA, I have spent all of my career in this industry, and have loved my time working closely with such creative, compassionate, caring and entrepreneurial people. Anyone who knows me knows that I have a passion for working to protect and promote the interests of the HFMA's member companies and everyone in the industry, so I take great pleasure and pride in receiving this prestigious award."