



# Bulletin Board

News, information and comment

The voice of  
the natural health  
industry



## Innovation and growth drives a \$200BN US market

In March I had the pleasure of once again visiting the Natural Products Expo West Show, now in its 36th year, in Anaheim California. This is undoubtedly the world's largest natural, organic and healthy products event, with more than 77,000 attendees, 3,000 exhibiting companies, including more than 600 first-time exhibitors, and over 350sqft of exhibition space. I never cease to be inspired by this show, and I always return invigorated and ready for the challenges ahead.

A strong growth for the US natural products market of 9% per year is predicted, with total sales expected to exceed \$200 billion in 2016, driven in part by new and emerging brands. Sales of natural and organic food and beverage products in the US surged 11% last year to sales of \$67.2 billion. The trend towards organic options is a key driver in the market and, whilst becoming ever more competitive, is resulting in a lot of growth for brands responding to the challenge.



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This trend is driving mainstream consumers into specialist stores in search of innovative products, and a major trend in this growth appears to be consumers paying more attention to the products they buy – fuelled partly by media attention – which means they are reading food labels and scrutinising their purchases. Consumers are looking for products that get back to a simpler way, focusing on the nutrient values that they provide as well as 'closer to nature' processing.

Product categories such as superfoods, krill oil and coconut products continue to fuel product growth generally. However some noticeable products such as Justin's

Mini Dark Chocolate Peanut Butter and Noosa's Vanilla Yoghurt attracted much attention at the show. Other innovations showed how consumer demand is being catered for, such as Biodegradable Edible cups in a variety of flavours from Loliware, providing an exciting and fun alternative to 'disposable' plastic cups. Use of squeeze packs replacing traditional tubs was also evident, as was the attention to traceability and sustainability of food sources, particularly in seafood products.

It is a very common adage that what happens in the States will be happening five years later here in the UK, but in this ever-smaller world of instant communications and an all-powerful social media that knows no national boundaries, we can now expect that what goes for the US will now be with us next month, or even next week! So it behoves us all to watch what is happening and anticipate and get ahead of the fast-changing consumer market.

### News... sweet dreams

A recent study has publicized that the consumption of dark chocolate does not only offer antioxidants, lower blood pressure and raise HDL, but could also be key to getting a good night's sleep. Dark chocolate is rich in the essential mineral magnesium, which researchers at Edinburgh and Cambridge Universities have discovered helps cells to work with the natural cycle of day to night, ensuring the body clock runs on time.

Whilst chocolate may not be the answer to the body's nutritional needs, the importance of micro-nutrients as part of a healthy diet seems to be one that is increasingly being communicated to consumers.

### Getting the best from the HFMA

#### Media relationships

In addition to keeping the political interests of the industry represented across Whitehall, Westminster and Brussels, the HFMA – through the help of its communications consultancy Pegasus – maintains important relationships with prominent health, science and news journalists across the national media, providing valuable expert contributions to ensure accurate reporting. Regular meetings with national news editors mean that the HFMA can effectively communicate – and hopefully influence positively – news stories and significant new research developments from across the industry. The close relationships also make the HFMA the first port of call to provide a balance of opinion for any negative stories which may be on the immediate or longer-term horizons.

### NEWS... THE FUTURE OF VHMS

When one of the most important factors for an industry is constantly changing legislation, it has never been more important to look to the future and plan and prepare accordingly.

The Natural & Organic Products Europe show gave the HFMA the chance to do just that during a lively and informative debate entitled *20:20 vision*:

*imagining the VHMS category in 2020.*

Sitting on the panel on the day were the HFMA chair Robert Taylor as well as executive director Graham Keen and HFMA expert adviser Marilyn Glenville, who, along with Shona Wilkinson (head of nutrition, NutriCentre), Dr Robert Verkerk (scientific director, ANH) and Andrew Thomas

(managing director, BetterYou), discussed a wide range of issues, from personalized nutrition and delivery methods, to the future of the supermarket and the impact of a changing European regulatory environment for natural products suppliers.

As well as providing an opportunity to address the potential threats to the indus-

try from current and impending legislation, the discussion also gave contributors the chance to reflect on the huge amount of progress and innovation achieved by the industry over the past 20 years, and speculate on future new product development and its vital role in achieving the industry's goal of helping a nation to be healthier.