



Bulletin Board

News, information and comment

The voice of
the natural health
industry



Clean labels: 'blurring the line'?

Whenever possible I choose food products that have 'clean labels', and who wouldn't? Having said that, I don't think I can define what constitutes a 'clean label'; I've checked Wiki for a definition, but there isn't one, suggesting to me that it's down to the consumer to decide what constitutes a 'clean label'.

I assume that most people will want there to be no chemical-sounding ingredients, no GMO ingredients and only wholesome, natural ingredients. Some ingredients (such as wheat, gelatine and soya) will generate horror for some people and indifference for others, making it hard for manufacturers to get it right for everyone.

Driving the trend for 'clean labels' are probably two consumer trends, the first being the general move towards healthy eating, coupled with a growing suspicion that large food manufacturers are trying to 'get away' with cheap tasteless ingredients by masking them with food additives. There's probably some truth in this, but at least our strict food labelling regulations mean that consumers are able



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to make an informed choice, and if they don't want highly manufactured foods then they can just pop into their local health food store to buy something more wholesome.

I feel that the 'clean label' trend is starting to blur the lines between foods and food supplements. For me the point of a supplement is that it is a highly concentrated source of nutrients, in a small dose format, that 'tops-up' nutrients that may be deficient in someone's diet. However, I'm seeing a lot of supplements declaring that they deliver tiny quantities of ingredients such as 'fresh freeze-dried organically grown parsley', all neatly delivered in a capsule with the promise of some vitamins and minerals in there as well. The consumer's attention is diverted away from the really exciting bit – the amazing technical and scientific achievement which allows each capsule is able to deliver a

whole day's worth of micronutrients. Instead they're focused on the fact that there's a speck of organic beetroot in the capsule.

Tablet manufacturers perform an incredible feat in accurately delivering minute quantities of nutrients with a permitted variance of just 10%. You try mixing 2.5g (a teaspoon) of vitamin B12 into half a tonne of powder so that each of the 500,000 tablets in the batch contains 5mcgs! That's why supplements have to be made to exacting pharmaceutical-style standards to ensure accuracy, safety and stability. It does also mean that some non-active ingredients (excipients) are necessary. Let's be honest about this.

Consumers should be encouraged to include plenty of lovely, healthy culinary herbs and spices in their diet; they can buy them in any good health food shop, right next to the supplements aisle.

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Getting the best from the HFMA

With the uncertainty of Brexit continuing to loom large, the ability to have an influence in Westminster and with regulatory authorities remains vital for the industry. The Micronutrients and Health All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), the secretariat for which is managed by the HFMA, was inaugurated in 2016 and meets quarterly to discuss issues relating to public health and in particular the role of micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) in helping people to be healthy. It serves as an invaluable opportunity for members to speak directly to Parliamentarians about the issues affecting their businesses. This year's first meeting on 20 March saw the APPG welcome its new chair, Carolyn Harris MP. For more information on the APPG, visit www.micronutrientsappg.org

News ...

Ashwagandha is the new turmeric
During 2017 we saw numerous articles eulogizing the health benefits of turmeric and it emerged as a trendy ingredient in everything from coffee to popcorn. Whilst its popularity is far from waning, recent trend-spotting analysis from Google suggests that ashwagandha is expected to be the next big ingredient.

A natural adaptogen with a wealth of studies supporting its efficacy in everything from stress relief to cancer treatment, ashwagandha has been used for medicinal purposes for millennia. While so-called health fads are often best taken with a pinch of salt, the compelling blend of scientific evidence and thousands of years of recreational use suggest the current interest in ashwagandha may be more than a flash in the pan.

MILLENNIALS FORECAST TO BE FATTEST GENERATION IN HISTORY

Recent population trends predict that seven in ten millennials will be obese by the time they reach middle-age. The analysis, carried out by Cancer Research, highlights the rising levels of obesity compared to the 'baby boomer' generation – around half of which were fat at that age – as well as the vital link between weight gain and 13 different types of cancer.

The analysis further underlines Britain's status as the fat-



test nation in Western Europe, signalling a worrying regression despite the greater access to healthy foods and to information about healthy lifestyles available now, in comparison to previous generations. There are myriad factors – spanning tech-

nology, fast food and increasingly busy work lives – that go some way to explaining this rise and hint at the considerable job we as a society have on our hands to begin to reverse the current trend. As the voice of the health food industry, the HFMA has a central role to play in educating the public on the importance of healthy eating and natural products, and in initiating a sea change toward a healthier population.