



bulletin board

We all need good advice

It is evident that the level of scrutiny from UK and EU regulators on food supplements and the associated food business operators (FBOs) is on an upward trend. At the start of the CLEAR CHECK seminar on 23 of October, Graham Keen, executive director of the HFMA, highlighted a few high-profile cases which are indicative of this trend.

Prime example cases include: the 'glucosamine' medicinal level determination by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency; the Advertising Standards Authority's activities with regards to Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation (NHCR) exemption and category headings; and the Department of Health's intention to extend the remit of the NHCR to business-to-business.

While it is reassuring that regulators seek to protect consumers from potentially serious side-effects, misleading information and the risk of wasting money on sub-standard products from rogue traders, there have also been noteworthy occasions where regulators are impeding those FBOs that operate in the best interest of their customers.



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Through associations such as the HFMA, those FBOs that have a high regard for their consumers can have a voice on such matters and are able to help identify feasible and unfeasible compliance measures in line with industry best practice and relevant legislation.

A great example of one of the ways that the HFMA helps member companies navigate the complex regulatory landscape is through the highly cost-effective advice offered by CLEAR CHECK, and seminars like the one held in October. The CLEAR CHECK team has a combined experience of more than 50 years, making it an area specialist in a highly complex regulatory environment. Its labelling advice helps to keep us in line with UK and EU legislation, whilst maintaining market relevance. Moreover, it is an accredited compliance service,

having been assessed for the service it provides by Surrey and Buckinghamshire Trading Standards, which is the HFMA's Primary Authority partner.

The seminars offer a comprehensive and condensed overview of food supplement regulatory controls and labelling requirements, using practical examples that are applicable to concerns familiar to most FBOs. The seminars cover grey areas and help attendees learn to make justifiable decisions using a combination of regulatory pragmatism and appropriate due diligence.

It's also worth a mention that, in addition to the steep learning curve, another reason to attend the seminars is that the HFMA is renowned for hosting events in landmark buildings rich in history. It did not fail to deliver on this occasion. We were hosted in the Waterhouse Suite in the De Vere Holborn Bars, a building with a history dating back to the early 1870s, which was built on the site of the former Furnival's Inn, where Charles Dickens was reputed to have written some of his most famous works.

Getting the best from the HFMA

Operating in a fast-changing media landscape, it has never been more important to have a proactive and dedicated PR function for your brand. The HFMA's PR specialists provide a vital service for its members, communicating the association's updates to the national media and keeping abreast of the news agenda.

Meeting on average five to ten key journalists face-to-face per month, these strong relationships with the press make sure that the HFMA is frequently front-and-centre of journalists' minds when looking for information on new product developments, trends in natural health or commentary on wider industry issues.

News ...

A good time to be Spanish

According to new research from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in Seattle, by 2040 Spaniards are predicted to have the longest life expectancy, a finding that has been strongly linked to their Mediterranean diet. Pipping Japan – which has for a number of years enjoyed the highest life expectancy on the planet – to the top spot, the Spanish are expected to have an average lifespan of an impressive 85.8 years by 2040.

This news, while relatively unsurprising, is a positive endorsement for the natural health market, advocating the concrete benefits of a diet based around fruits, vegetables, legumes, fish, wholegrains and olive oil. It vindicates the advice of many nutritionists who champion good quality, fresh food, eaten in moderation, and the addition of healthy fats – from sources such as olive oil – to the diet.

FOLIC ACID TO BE ADDED TO FLOUR

The UK Government says it is likely to back a policy for making it mandatory for all flour to be fortified with folic acid. Ministers have pushed forward with the plan after a long-running campaign by doctors and scientists argued that it would see a reduction in spina bifida and other health conditions in newborns.

This policy would see many more women getting the nutri-

ents they need during pregnancy, by practical and low-cost means.

Public health experts have stressed that appropriate safeguarding will be needed – as with any food intervention of this scale – to make sure it is safe for the wider population, and there is updated guidance on supplementation. There is a risk of unintended consequences coming into play on this issue. There

is no question that the population's overall folate status would improve, but modest additional intake from this source can't provide the full required protection, therefore raising awareness on the need to take a supplement and improve the diet would become even more important, as women may mistakenly believe that including bread in their diet means they are no longer at risk.