



# bulletin board

## A sticky situation

In a world where consumers are increasingly aware of the source, efficacy and safety of the food products they consume, it has never been more important for responsible manufacturers to be taking matters into their own hands to uphold the standards of our industry. The awareness spiked with the now infamous 'horsemeat' scandal of 2013, and while the incident did not pose a direct public health risk, it shook confidence in the security of the food supply chain, particularly with food products imported from Europe and sold in the UK.

Now, with the impending Brexit deal still in discussions, and the issue of regulation within the natural products industry still fairly far down in the list of priorities within a trade deal, it will continue to be critical that companies maintain the consumer trust that has taken years to obtain. This self-regulation is even more vital with an increasingly international market for product sourcing.

Manuka honey is a prime example of this. In a market that has in the past been rife with food crime,



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previous years have seen more 'manuka' sold in the UK than has actually been exported from New Zealand. Further issues for consumers have come from the differing scales used to define the antimicrobial activity within the product.

While everything from TA, NPA, UMF and MGO (methylglyoxal) have all been used interchangeably for several years, the New Zealand Government has now brought in more strict legislation around manuka honey and how it is labelled. New stricter tests will check for four active ingredients only found in manuka honey, and the DNA of manuka pollen, measuring the amount of MGO in the pot. The product will need to be tested both on its way out of New Zealand, and on its arrival in the UK to ensure no tampering or blending has occurred that could prove

detrimental to the product ending up on UK shelves.

The issues of these new regulations are twofold. Firstly, the process will prove extremely costly for both manufacturers and retailers, and a financial burden that many smaller providers will not be able to withstand. This is particularly the case with smaller online outlets where customers will turn for cheaper products, not expecting increased manufacturing costs to be passed on to the final retail cost.

Secondly, these new regulations are non-compulsory in the UK market, meaning that, while this represents 'best practice' within the industry, there will always be certain manufacturers who avoid regulations which they see as unnecessary when there are savings to be made. In this transition period, the accountability for protecting consumer interests will lie at the door of responsible retailers within the industry, and trade associations such as the HFMA will continue to be instrumental as a source of advice and guidance to keep its members on the right track.

## Getting the best from the HFMA

### Living in the digital world

In an increasingly online world, understanding the impact of good digital practice could propel your brand further and help you truly understand your customer. Whether it's digital targeting, SEO prowess or customer testimonials, your online presence could be worth more than you think. This November, the HFMA will host its second digital marketing seminar, where a line-up of speakers will enlighten attendees on the psychology of the click, how every word can add to your bottom line, and why good content beats clickbait every time.

For further information and booking details, go to: <https://www.hfma.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/digital-marketing-seminar-13.11.18.pdf>

## News ...

### Garlic supplements could ward off high blood pressure, says study

The purported blood-thinning properties of garlic have been well established for a number of years, but the amount of garlic one would need to consume to reap the benefits is unrealistic within the constraints of a daily diet.

A recent University of Adelaide study has found that in the case of people with high blood pressure, garlic supplements could be the answer to reducing hypertension. Beginning on six supplements a day, alongside a healthy, balanced diet, participants recorded reductions in their blood pressure of up to 12/5mmHg.

With more than one in four adults in the UK suffering from high blood pressure, these are particularly encouraging and relevant findings.

## ORGANIC PRODUCT SALES GROW FOR SEVENTH STRAIGHT YEAR

Organic produce sales grew by 5.3% for the year ending June 2018, while sales of dairy – the largest overall sector for organic – grew by 3.5%. This increase comes despite a difficult year for farmers, with unprecedented drought and excessive heat.

Research from the Soil Association found that factors such as 'healthiness' and 'taste' were key for consumers purchasing organic produce, and this latest report follows findings

from earlier in the year showing that sales of organic food in supermarkets, independent farm shops and health food stores, as well as sales of organic food to restaurants all continue to increase, indicating that a variety of outlets are successfully tapping into consumer demand for organic.

The growth in the popularity of organic products is particularly marked among younger demographics. With the ever-

expanding pool of advocates and advocacy channels – particularly through social media – that are helping to educate consumers on the myriad benefits of natural and organic products, events such as the HFMA's digital media seminar provide companies with an ideal opportunity to discover the best ways to utilize digital channels effectively, tapping into a key consumer base to ensure this growth continues.