



bulletin board

You can't control the weather

I guess we hear it all the time nowadays. "The world is changing," they say, seemingly on all fronts and at an alarming pace. But this year saw something I never expected: consecutive days above 20°C in February. Yes, that's right, February.

Okay, so it might not be the most dramatic event in recent history, and I'm not going to hail it as a portent of climate change which will see the human race doomed by the end of the century – but if you compare it with this time last year, when we were still in the grips of winter and being battered by the 'Beast from the East', then things are certainly a bit different this time around.

So why am I interested? Well apart from my inner biologist surfacing like the daffodils every spring, working for a natural healthcare company which uses numerous plants as raw materials means that dramatic swings in the weather can have quite an impact on business.

Plant-based products (botanicals) present a number of technical challenges for those who grapple



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with them. Not least because plants are inherently variable by nature, but also because weather, geographic location, soil types and other variables can impact their growth. This

"Plant-based products present a number of technical challenges for those who grapple with them"

can affect their chemical composition, which in turn can impact your raw materials and finished products. While you can't control the weather, you need to be prepared for what an early spring or a wet summer might mean for the plants

you need. But what about the other variables which can impact plant material quality, or the difficulties in managing a complex supply chain that spans the globe?

A new Code of Practice from the HFMA entitled *Maintaining Quality throughout the Supply Chain for Botanical Food Supplements* has been published to help address those very difficulties. The code encompasses everything from guidance on best practice, identification and verification techniques, to management of third parties – all presented within the context of modern quality management systems and encompassing risk management and mitigation approaches.

Whilst the new code can't control the weather, it can be a helpful tool to identify where potential risks and challenges in botanical supply chains might be lurking, and which steps can be taken to mitigate them. If you work with botanical materials, then it's definitely worth a read – but don't forget to look out the window and keep an eye on the weather as well!

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News ...

A good night's rest

New research published in *Current Biology* has found that sleep loss during the working week has a negative impact on people's metabolism, and trying to 'catch-up' on sleep at the weekend doesn't reverse this damage.

The study of the sleep habits of 36 healthy young adults found that once they were sleep deprived, they had reduced insulin sensitivity and were less able to regulate blood sugar.

Real life can get in the way of optimal sleep, and although this is sometimes unavoidable, there are some simple steps people can take to get a better quality of rest.

Experts recommend establishing a regular bedtime routine so your body will learn that this is the signal to wind down and prepare for sleep. This could include drinking herbal teas such as a calming chamomile or valerian, taking melatonin supplements, having a warm bath with lavender oil, winding down with yoga or reading a book.

THE CELEBRITY WELLNESS TREND GOES MASS-MARKET

If you follow any A-list celebrities on Instagram, you might have noticed one wellness trend which has been gaining momentum recently: the intravenous (IV) drip.

IV drips are used to supply boosts of vitamin D, B12 and C, and are also used for purposes including energy boosts, hangover cures and to provide anti-ageing benefits.

And while these celebrity-endorsed vitamin enhancements

are an expensive way to get your recommended intake (setting you back hundreds of pounds per treatment), the trend is now starting to go mass-market, with high-end IV clinics starting to pop up across the country.

However, clinical trials have not yet shown any clear results to confirm their efficacy. The vitamins go straight into the blood stream without being digested and we're yet to see evidence

that this actually has any real, meaningful benefit.

It is as important as ever for the message to be reiterated in the media that if someone's nutrient levels are insufficient then they should start by adjusting their diet and taking quality supplements where needed, rather than taking expensive 'quick-fix' therapies that are being heavily promoted on social media.