

# HFMA Bulletin

Robert Taylor, HFMA chair and senior vice president, Vitabiotics Ltd



## Protecting our industry's interests

The HFMA held its annual general meeting of members on 29 July – not in the usual prestigious surroundings of previous years thanks to COVID, but courtesy of Zoom. It was my pleasure to address the members as I enter my final year as chair of this leading organization. It is a great privilege to be part of an industry, which is far from the UK's biggest, yet whose impact on UK citizens and their health punches far above its weight.

The HFMA has stepped up more strongly than ever during the last year to protect the natural products industry, consumers, our member companies and their employees. The COVID-19 crisis has brought a national and global focus on personal health, wellness and prevention that none of us have witnessed before, bringing with it sustained high-profile coverage on nutrients like vitamin D, and shining a powerful spotlight on the critical importance of this industry in helping the nation to stay healthy.

This past year has been deeply challenging for many reasons. Just one of the HFMA's significant achievements from the last 12 months is its campaign to keep health stores open right at the start of the COVID crisis, which secured early confirmation directly from 10 Downing Street and was swiftly followed by confirmation of the 'key worker' status of HFMA members' employees.

There were many more milestones over the year: the HFMA Advertising Code of Practice received Assured Advice accreditation; our commitment to the protection of members' interests in Ireland carried on as we worked closely alongside the Irish Health Trade Association (IHTA) to achieve the best outcomes on the Food

Safety Authority of Ireland's review of maximum levels, and we also supported the IHTA's 'STOP THIS VAT' campaign, which saw the most damaging, highest VAT level of 23% on food supplements in Ireland avoided.

Now to the future, and the HFMA has turned its attention to helping our health food stores survive in a post-COVID world that is already increasingly dominated by major online retailers. Health food stores have historically pioneered the introduction of our innovative products, and our new Heathy-DoesIt campaign will drive home the public message that their advice, expertise and choice is unsurpassed.

We will of course continue to passionately protect our members' interests post-Brexit through our European federation, the EHFM, and greatly value HFMA council member Martin Last's role as vice chair of the EHFM board, and chair of its technical and regulatory committee.

Overall, the HFMA has never been in a stronger position, with a growing and stronger member base that truly allows us to say that we represent the entire industry – from mass-market vitamins, herbals and CBD, to the most specialized of ingredients. Our protection is here for the interests of all sizes of business.

Finally, I extend sincere thanks and gratitude to Peter Aldis as he steps down from his position as HFMA president (only the second in its history), and congratulate Penny Viner as she steps into Peter's big shoes. With Penny's experience and industry expertise, there can be no better or more worthy next president of our association. I wish her luck and success in the role.

*The views expressed by our columnists do not necessarily reflect the views of our editor or publishers*



The Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) is the voice of the natural health industry. For further information, advice or details about membership, visit [www.hfma.co.uk](http://www.hfma.co.uk)