

HFMA Bulletin

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A new era for the HFMA

At the July meeting of the council, after seven years in the role I stood down as chair of the HFMA and was honoured to become the third person in the organization's 56-year history to take up the role of vice president. I wish Steve Mann of Nelsons all the very best of luck as he takes up the position of chair, and I know that he will do a fantastic job.

The HFMA has never been in better shape and from our latest member survey, we are reassured to know that nine out of ten members would actively recommend membership to a fellow company. Looking back over the last seven years, it's hard to imagine that there has been a more dramatic, eventful time in the HFMA's history, or a time when we've ever stepped up more strongly.

Since our 50th anniversary there have been countless achievements that we now take for granted. One of these was the formation of our Micronutrients and Health All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). Our initial APPG meeting led to our first ever meeting on nutrition with the head of Public Health England. Around that time, we stood shoulder to shoulder with the MHRA in the Royal Courts of Justice and managed to save the future of glucosamine as a food supplement, introducing new guidance.

Following the Brexit result in 2016, engaging with UK officials became more important than ever, and in 2017 we launched our formal Brexit position paper in preparation. However, nobody could ever imagine that in 2020 we would be facing a far bigger issue – one that would

even eclipse our exit from the European Union. During the COVID crisis, the HFMA has stepped up more strongly than ever in our history to protect the natural products industry, including our successful campaign to keep health stores open throughout the crisis and, critically, the manufacturers and supply chains that serve them. This was by no means a given; to have our employees classed as 'critical workers' was testament to why trade associations are needed.

As well as protecting members' interests, our HealthyDoesIt campaign was launched in August last year to drive home the importance of natural health products. I truly believe our products have never been held in higher regard than now; by the public, scientists and – we hope – regulators too.

However, there are many challenges ahead. We are still living with an inability to say what most of our ingredients actually do! One ingredient – probiotics – as if like Voldemort, cannot even be named! I can guarantee you that no other organization is working harder to put that right as soon as possible.

We know, from our *Health of the Nation: Lockdown Survey* that over 70% of the UK population now take a supplement. That's almost 20 million adults on a daily basis. A few years ago I said: "For decades the standard approach to health has been like putting an ambulance at the bottom of a cliff." Now, as I step down as HFMA chair, I can truly say we've helped the nation to build a fence at the top of that cliff.

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