

Collagen: a challenge met

– The HFMA Report on Collagen: 2023

The collagen market is as complex as it is large. It has captivated entrepreneurs with its easy story-telling marketing message, strong scientific support and perfect positioning in consumer demographics that are supplement-interested.

From its early days in the gelatine industry to sophisticated manufacturing methods producing hydrolyzed collagen peptides, the market has evolved in many aspects – not just forms, but in how it can be imported, regulatory requirements and quality considerations. Collagen alternatives, such as amino acid blends, have also entered the arena.

Throughout this evolution, HFMA members became aware of the need for industry to hold itself to high standards. But why, and how?

The HFMA Collagen Special Interest Group was set up to tackle these questions head on. With representation from HFMA members, our scientific advisor, Dr Michele Sadler, and our technical advisor, Professor Paul Berryman, we set about asking and answering key questions about the collagen market as it stands today.

Chaired by Robert Taylor, senior VP at Vitabiotics, the aim of the Collagen Special Interest Group was 'to establish benchmark standards and guidelines for anyone manufacturing or retailing collagen in the UK and relay this information in a way that is practically helpful, scientifically robust and from the strongest industry advice'.

Maura Lavelle, marketing executive at Willows Ingredients, says: "As suppliers of specialist ingredients to health and wellness manufacturers, including a range of collagen products, we were keen to add our voice to the HFMA Collagen Special Interest Group. This forum has been a significant platform allowing us to meet with manufacturers and brand owners, share



Esther Mills-Roberts, HFMA communications director, presents *The HFMA Report on Collagen: 2023*



information and learn from other members about the key issues, challenges and significant opportunities facing their sectors.

This knowledge-sharing helps to inform our decisions around the ingredients we will supply and how we can best meet the market demand proactively."

Dr Bhanu Surikutchi, head of R&D at Nutrivitality, adds: "We also wanted to share our understanding on amino acid supplementation as a vegan alternative in terms of mechanism of action and clinical findings. Price is king, but education and information are paramount when marketing the brand."

Absolute Collagen's head of operations, Liane Kynaston, explains how collaborative work benefits all: "We believe that if our industry worked from a shared value of high



quality standards, then it would benefit everyone. It will inevitably result in improvements in products on the market, the benefits to customers and also the impact of our actions on global issues such as sustainability and carbon footprint. It is important to do this in a shared environment and under the influence of an independent trade association such as the HFMA. It creates a platform which allows others within the industry to participate and contribute to driving those high industry standards."

Over the past year, the group has worked to: establish scientific and regulatory definitions for collagen; outline manufacturing and quality standards; establish types of collagen in the body, and those

found on the market; establish guidelines around quality management, risk management, supply chain, source materials, traceability and sustainability, quality standards, manufacturing standards, stability testing, purity and contaminants; and determine storage and distribution best practice.

This information has been captured in the *HFMA Report on Collagen: 2023*. Taylor outlines the report's big wins: "It is quite an accomplishment – with so many different types and forms of collagen, different

approaches to selling and emerging research – to have established a collagen paper of such solidity. It is testimony to the HFMA members who have contributed to this work, and the expertise of the HFMA team in pulling it together."

So, with this report as a robust reference, where to for collagen from here? As the market becomes more sophisticated, the HFMA is firmly placed to lead the dialogue around key industry issues. The need for a united voice never goes away.

"We see the collagen market becoming even more saturated over the coming years, with even more brands entering the market through contract manufacturing or bespoke development of collagen products," says Dr Surikutchi.

"We contributed to this work as an active member of the HFMA to help educate the industry and consumers about the differences between collagen ingredients," adds Lavelle. "Together, via HFMA initiatives, we can help to generate more stewardship around the whole collagen industry."

Kynaston expresses the sentiment of many within the Collagen Special Interest Group, stating: "The more work that is critically approved and published, the stronger the credibility and reputation for the whole sector."

Our team here at the HFMA will continue to advise members of any collagen updates via our member communications: Member Mailout, Media Insider and our Technical and Regulatory Working Group Meetings.

The *HFMA Report on Collagen: 2023* encompasses the work of the HFMA Collagen Special Interest Group. It is an expertly written and practically applied guide for members. This report will be used to inform journalists, as a platform for key messaging about collagen and to showcase how responsible and reputable brands work together, under the umbrella of the HFMA.

For more information about the HFMA, and this report, please contact comms@hfma.co.uk.

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