

Robert Taylor speech 30 June 2015

My Lords, ladies and gentlemen

As Chairman of the HFMA, it is my privilege to address you this evening, on this most historic occasion and my enormous thanks to Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Lords, the Right Honourable Lord Philip Hunt for such a wonderful speech. Lord Hunt's connection to this industry and the HFMA goes back to nearly half of the 50 years we are celebrating tonight.

Before I say a few words, it is my great pleasure to announce this year's winner of the HFMA's Health Journalist of the year award.

I am delighted to tell you that The HFMA's Health Journalist of the Year is Dr Hilary Jones.

Dr Hilary Jones qualified as a GP in 1976 at the Royal Free Hospital in London, and became the TV-AM doctor from May 1989. He has featured regularly on GMTV since 1993, where he was their health and medical advisor. In 2014, he became the media doctor for Good Morning Britain. As part of this role, he reports on emerging medical news stories as well as informing the public about medical problems such as weight issues, a healthy diet, surgery and cancer.

His work with health charities is extensive, and he is a patron and ambassador for the Meningitis Research Association, the Stroke Association and the British Heart Foundation amongst many others. He has written seven books addressing broad areas of health from dealing with the menopause, to children's health.

Most recently, Hilary has helped to defend the natural health industry in a feature for Good Morning Britain, where he explained the great prevalence of micro-nutrient deficiency in the UK, and quoted HFMA information on the importance of vitamins.

His position as the nation's favourite sofa doctor for over 25 years has given him a huge opportunity to offer influential and responsible health advice to the nation. In this role as the current Health Editor of ITV's breakfast television, he advocates a sensible attitude to diet and exercise and encourages preventative lifestyle approaches including supplementation.

Ladies and gentlemen – the winner of the HFMA Health Journalist of the Year is Dr Hilary Jones. Hilary, would you please come up to receive your award.

MAIN SPEECH

Thank you Dr Hilary Jones for those kind and wise words and congratulations on the very well deserved award.

I am truly humbled to be part of this great celebration to mark five decades of the Health Food Manufacturers' Association. Joining us this evening we have HFMA member companies, fellow trade organisations, our advisors, consumer associations, the Department of health, Defra, the MHRA, the Better Regulation Delivery Office and Public Health England, along with journalists, Peers and MPs. You may like to know that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, has also sent a letter to the HFMA to send his best wishes for a successful event.

We are also delighted to be joined by so many past winners of this industry's most prestigious annual award, the Maurice Hanssen Award of Honour, which was inaugurated in 1995, as well as past members of secretariat and past Chairs, including many of the handsome & beautiful faces appearing on the special card on your table. I'm sure you have been using the card to spot faces in the room like a game of bingo! We are honoured to have you all here with us this evening.

As many of you know, the HFMA was founded in 1965 by Maurice Hanssen and Jimmy Lee Richardson, who led a group of manufacturers who were concerned over some products that they felt were damaging the credibility of the emerging health industry. Within a few short years a phenomenal amount was achieved, building links with MPs, MAFF and working with the BHMA to achieve an early victory to secure a safe home for herbal medicines under section 12.2. This was followed a decade later by the formation of the European Association the EHPM; the first HELFEX, the formation of LAPAD and the creation of the first real standards for the industry. I'm pleased to tell you now that LAPAD remains as healthy and respected as ever, and is represented here tonight by Gwyneth Massey and Jenny Akers.

All of this happened under Maurice's watch, as Chairman and then President, so I would like to pay special tribute to Maurice, who sadly left us 10 years ago, but it's wonderful that his wife Jan is here with us this evening, and I am sure she is proud to be see the milestone we have reached.

This has probably been the most momentous year in the history of the organisation, with so many special initiatives:

Firstly, we have our new 50-year industry timeline, a glimpse of which was cleverly included with your menus tonight. Just think how much our vibrant health food industry has done to improve the health of the nation over the last half century, and the wealth of products we take for granted today that so many of the people in this room helped pioneer; wholegrain bread, gluten free foods, low fat dairy, the first probiotic products, 'superfoods' and the emergence of supplements for particular needs, such as folic acid in pregnancy, to name just a few. The timeline was made for our 50th not just because it's nice to look back, but because it's important to show that our industry is a powerhouse for the future.

So our most important initiatives are really about the future - in February the HFMA announced it is funding places for 50 students, one for each year since 1965, onto to the Health Food Institute's Professional Diploma course. All 50 places were filled in a matter of weeks and we have the first 2 of those people here tonight, Amy Clinkard of Planet Organic and Greg Weatherhead of Wassen, so please give us a wave and good luck with the training.

In April we held the HFMA's first ever Academic roundtable at the Royal Society of Medicine led by the very distinguished Professor Peter Aggett and supported by HFMA's new 'Opinion Health' research. I can announce this evening the roundtable will be publishing its report *Micronutrient Initiatives for Future Health* next month in July.

As a result of this roundtable the HFMA will be looking at how it can help efforts to improve micronutrient delivery to at-risk groups, and I can also announce for the first time tonight, the HFMA is planning to support the formation of a new All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Micronutrients for health.

Our industry is vital to the innovation of natural products with health benefits that none of us in this room even know about yet; in other words the new scientific findings that will emerge over the coming decades – and so in the future we absolutely need to be able to give our customers clear health information based on good science. This is one of the reasons why the European General Court's rejection of the HFMA's robust legal challenge to the highly flawed Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation was such disappointing news for industry and consumers alike. After years of detailed preparation and submissions, this represented a missed opportunity by the Court to recognise and address much of what is wrong with the

implementation of this Regulation that, for example, doesn't allow you to say that fibre is good for digestion.

However, I am heartened that nearly three years down the road, the Commission seems to be showing a willingness to open the discussion on certain areas of claims and other regulation, and I am extremely proud of our efforts to defend our industry and consumers and that the HFMA's fair and just arguments were powerfully presented on behalf of our members. Never more so has the HFMA been the true 'voice of the industry'.

Whilst we are not afraid of difficult decisions, we've also shown that, by working in cooperation with Regulators and other industry stakeholders we can achieve great things. There is no better example than the approved Article 14 disease risk reduction claim for folic acid and the reduced incidence of neural tube defects, the dossier for which was compiled by our Scientific Adviser Dr Michele Sadler. Working alongside other associations, we are now investigating the possibilities for a new Article 14 Disease Risk Reduction & Children's claim for Vitamin D and of its association with reduced bone deformities like rickets.

The HFMA has gained great respect working with Regulators in defence of the industry, for example in last years Judicial Review on glucosamine, when we successfully supported the MHRA in defence of a challenge to the continued existence of glucosamine as a food supplement, and we are committed to supporting the MHRA again in the Court of Appeal here in London this October.

No one knows what the next 50 years will bring. But we do know two things with almost certainty. Firstly, that the life blood of this industry, innovation for the better health of the nation, will not cease. And secondly, that the HFMA will be there to support the managers and organisations of today and tomorrow to help consumers to live healthier lives.

I would like to quote Ray Hill, who is here with us tonight, and who many of you will know as one of the pioneers of modern herbal medicine and retailing, and a past BHMA chairman: *"I have observed the progress of the HFMA from its formation in 1965 and cannot but laud its immense contribution to the status of the current health food trade. One dare not think where we would be without HFMA's authoritative voice in support of the industry over all these years."* Incidentally Ray was my mentor when I first joined the industry so thank you. Ray taught me how to calculate trade margins so if I've been getting them wrong all these years, please see Ray later!

To summarise, the support and dedication of the HFMA is truly inspiring, and the fact you are all here today is a real testament to the HFMA and the respect it has gained over the last 50 years, while playing a crucial role in promoting, protecting and defending this amazing industry. Together, we will be stronger to take on whatever the next half century holds.

Finally, I would like to specially thank our current President Peter Aldis for his longstanding great support, and his welcome to you all earlier, and our Executive Director Graham Keen for this enormous drive and commitment for this organisation, not least in the planning and execution of this evening's most special celebration.

And for her tireless work behind the scenes, attending to every last detail imaginable, very special thanks to the HFMA's office Manager Linda Phillips for coordinating this amazing event – Linda & Graham, if you would like to come up.

Thank you Lords, ladies and gentlemen and here's next 50 years and your very good health.