



HFMA UPDATE

by Graham Keen,
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Post-Brexit enlightenment?

I cannot describe how nice it was to hold the HFMA's recent annual members' meeting in person for the first time in three years. Lots of friendly faces on a beautiful summer's day in a spectacular location in London. And we were able to announce a number of great initiatives, not least of which was the HFMA's gifting of the HealthyDoesIt programme, website etc., in its entirety to the National Association of Health Stores. We know it is in safe hands and we look forward to seeing it continue to grow and flourish.

At the AGM, as part of my presentation to members, I was able to provide several examples where, in this still very new post-Brexit environment we find ourselves in, a key UK agency has clearly shown an enlightened approach that we might otherwise have not expected. They have not simply accepted the EU/EFSA party line, but instead have independently arrived at their own conclusions.

One of the examples was related to titanium dioxide and its continued use as an additive (principally, as a colouring agent) in foods and, critically, food supplements. In its wisdom, the European Commission has determined that it should be banned in these products, although, interestingly, not in medicinal products. Whether you agree or not with the EU line here is not my point, rather, it is the fact that, had we still been part of the EU, we would be living with this now. Instead, the UK Food Standards Agency disagreed with this line, said it needed further review, and referred the matter for the consideration of a couple of key independent UK safety committees, COT and COM, before taking any final decision.

So, I mention all of this because we have seen a very interesting and related recent development. The equivalent agency to the FSA in Canada, Health Canada, has just



published its own evaluation on the status of titanium dioxide as a food additive, and it makes very interesting reading. But the key point to mention here is the following sentence found in the summary of this important and serious piece of work: "Overall, Health Canada's Food Directorate did not identify any compelling health concerns for the use of TiO₂ as a constituent of food." Aside from calling into question the conclusions reached by EFSA, I think this serves to vindicate the line pursued by the FSA here in the UK.

And here is another such example. As I'm sure you must be aware, the FSA has also been front and centre in the establishing the lawful status of CBD products and, as you'd expect, the HFMA has been following the situation closely and assisting our member companies as they deal with the new procedure put in place by the Food Standards Agency. At the end of June, the FSA announced that it had updated its public list of CBD products that can be marketed in England and Wales. These are products that are linked to a credible application submitted for Novel Food authorisation to the FSA and are not new to the market.

Incredibly, having previously

published its original list of CBD products, which resulted in an outcry from aggrieved companies that were led to believe their products would be included in this list but in practice were not, almost 6,000 additional CBD products had been added to the list, meaning that nearly 12,000 products are now on the list! Whatever your take on the appropriate status for CBD products, or the tortuous journey to arrive at the current situation, it really is worth highlighting that this means that there are nearly 12,000 CBD products lawfully on the market (under certain criteria of course) in the UK that cannot otherwise be sold with the EU. The list is now closed and further requests to have products put on the public list or evidence sent are no longer being accepted. Businesses can continue to apply for authorisation of CBD food products, however, new applications will not be eligible for the public list and should not be put on sale until they have been fully authorised.

In another example of the HFMA's tireless efforts to promote the industry standards, we have recently launched a new special interest (SI) group of HFMA member companies involved in the manufacture and marketing of collagen products in the food supplement, food and beauty sectors. Over the past five years, there has been huge interest in use of collagen across the food supplement, food and beauty sectors. In food supplements, this has principally been in the beauty and joint health categories.

So, with the overall aim to create consistent and standardised messaging around collagen to show uniformity of approach, strengthen awareness of high quality products and demonstrate industry voluntary guidelines, this new group will look to set minimum requirements for collagen supplements, especially those used in beauty products and cosmeceuticals, in terms of product

quality, review collagen research to create science-based information around efficacy, collagen forms and appropriate use. We will also aim to establish responsible, accurate and trustworthy information for the consumer around purchase and use of collagen and consider the creation of a new industry quality standard for collagen products and raw materials, and guideline statements for use on consumer information, including cosmetic claims.



In closing, I thought I would give a shout out to two members of the HFMA team that have recently been promoted. Katie Burren and Esther Mills-Roberts, in their new roles of Director of Technical & Regulatory Affairs and Director of Communications respectively, will play a key role in helping the HFMA to carry on its great work well into the future. Many of you will know them both well and I'm sure you'll join me in congratulating them both! **hfb**

This is a great example of the work that we undertake at the HFMA on behalf of 140-plus member companies. If your company is not in membership and you would like to help us in our efforts to protect this great industry and benefit from the gold-standard services we provide, you should join the HFMA at the earliest opportunity. To learn more about our activities, please contact graham@hfma.co.uk

HFMA membership is vital to ensure that your company keeps abreast of the fast-changing regulatory environment. The HFMA is the UK's best source of information and most effective defender of our industry's interests. To help the HFMA defend your business at this most critical time contact hfma@hfma.co.uk or call 020 8481 7100.

