

HFMA UPDATE

Martin Last, Director General



Happy 50th EHPM

The EHPM was created on August 29, 1975, in reaction to the effect that the European Common Market, as it was then, was having on trade in health products between member states. In a meeting between the HFMA and the German Verband der Reformwaren-Hersteller (VRH) at the Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky in Amsterdam, it was agreed that a forum of national associations was needed to debate the many issues, legal systems, and cultural differences within various markets to be able to work towards a common position.

The founding document was signed by Maurice Hanssen and Neville Kirby on behalf of the HFMA, and by Dr Klaus Hancken on behalf of the VRH. And so started the ability to share a common position and enable us to have one voice with the European Commission and establish a mutual, helpful and credible dialogue.

The EHPM then invited all other European countries to join, provided that they adopted the constitution. As a result, the EHPM quickly grew to become fully representative and has worked closely with the Commission and European Parliament, drawing on expert help from all its members.

At the AGM of 1994, it was unanimously agreed that the policy making body within the EHPM should be the Council of Presidents of National Associations and on October 19, 1995, the constitution was revised to bring the EHPM in line with this thinking. This document was signed on behalf of HFMA by Penny Viner, our

current HFMA President. It also has a signature of Michel Horn from the Belgium Association, who is the last remaining active EHPM Board member and ex-Chair to currently sit on the EHPM Board. I too am proud to represent our HFMA today on their board as Vice President of EHPM, which not only retains HFMA's influence into Europe but also reflects the importance we have in helping determine the EU agenda.

I have always said that our links with Europe are more than just geographical; apart from being our closest trading partners, recent world events have seen how close collaboration remains on all fronts. We are seeing regulations affecting our industry which originate from Europe mostly follow into UK law. This convergence is welcomed, helping to minimise the red tape that regulation brings, although does not necessarily mean that everything follows the same route, moreover that it enables the UK to evaluate regulations independently to ensure they meet the needs of the UK market.

In addition to the role on the EHPM Board, I also chair some important groups in Brussels on regulatory and quality issues, technical matters, and special groups covering vigilance, Novel Foods, probiotics, and more recently to look at developing member guidance on social media marketing and the role of market influencers. Penny continues to be involved as Vice Chair on working groups and represents our interests on all issues on botanicals. She provides a quarterly



international update for EHPM, which is also circulated through HFMA mailings.

The position of President of EHPM has a three-year term and is currently held by Nicolas Cappelaere. Nicolas has been a long-standing, active member of the EHPM Board, representing the French Trade Association, Synadiet.

The EHPM currently has 14 national associations and 11 member companies, representing approximately 1,600 health product manufacturers and distributors, the majority of whom are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in 17 European countries. EHPM members provide consumers with safe, science-based, high-quality products as well as accurate and helpful information about their nutritional value and use. EHPM's focus is very much on securing a workable regulatory structure for these companies. These updates are regularly communicated to our HFMA members in our bulletins and UK working groups.

Since the newly elected Commission and Parliament was established in June last year, we are now starting to see the work schedules of the Commission and their various departments being announced. These set the issues

management required in Europe over the next five years. EHPM has a manifesto which has been generated through its political advisors and has been widely communicated to the Commission and MEPs to address these issues as they arise.

This all reflects the importance of HFMA membership of the EHPM in terms of being at the heart of European issues, which assists HFMA membership to keep abreast of developments. A relationship nurtured in the 50 years of the EHPM's history, and which endures. In the HFMA's 60th year, it demonstrates the ongoing efforts that are maintained, often behind the scenes, to fully represent our industries and is why the HFMA is the voice of the industry.

So, congratulations EHPM on 50 years. Penny and I look forward to celebrating this event with our EHPM friends in November in Brussels at a high-level event being held at the European Parliament.

If you would like to know more about the benefits of membership, visit www.hfma.co.uk to learn more, or contact me on 020 8481 7100.