

HFMA UPDATE

Martin Last, Director General



Happy New Year

Last year proved to be one of the most difficult trading conditions experienced for decades but our industry has shown some growth, despite the successive uncertainty brought on by ad hoc Government policy and frequent changes of party politics and leadership.

It is in such times that the HFMA provides certainty and continuity by providing members with reliable and up to date information of the medium- and longer-term picture, enabling a means to plan, and for member companies to focus their attention to ongoing day-to-day management and operations. HFMA has been doing this for 60 years, formed in 1965 to support and improve our industry by keeping members informed of the various matters of the day and giving a collective voice to affect those matters, be them regulators, Government, industry, or consumers. Our political lobbying is as active as ever and we are listened to cross-party in the seats of governance.

We celebrated our 60th birthday with an enjoyable garden party at Kew Gardens in June attended by around 200 people, members and supporters alike. It provided us with an opportunity to look back to past achievements but more importantly, it provided a platform for us to look forward to the future and one thing we can be certain of is the HFMA will continue to support members and the industry.

We continue to regularly seek the views of members. The responses give us a perfect opportunity to ensure we provide what members want

and perhaps more importantly, what they need from us. As rules and regulations change and demands on businesses alter, it is vital that we as an organisation manage those requirements so we can continue to offer effective support.

In 2025, education and discussion extended with a wider scope of influence with new services on pet supplements and cosmetics adding to our general food updates and advice on food supplements. This education covers technical, scientific, political, and general advice in our fortnightly bulletins in all matters that affect our industry. This guidance gives members security and confidence that they are kept informed through membership and can apply that knowledge to a generation of growth.

The popular monthly 'Coffee Mornings' via Zoom have evolved with the addition of 'Tech Talks' and Webinars on key topics where additional guidance is available to all members of staff and provides a 30 minute glimpse into topics whilst enjoying a mid-morning break, designed to be informal and to encourage participation and greater insight. We are planning more in 2026 and have planned a major industry in-person seminar in the autumn, which is already attracting high-profile speakers on topics that influence the marketplace. We will keep you informed of this event.

Our Technical and Working Group is another opportunity for member companies to come together, share information and experiences, as well as catch up with the HFMA team, our advisors and network with



colleagues. We are updating the offerings this provides and whilst there is clear benefit from these in-person meetings, we recognise that for members who have far to travel that a hybrid option as well is helpful. By moving to 11 Cavendish Square, near Oxford Street, it has enabled us to improve the facilities to provide better connections for all.

In 2026, we are introducing certificates of attendance to accompany all training events, including our working groups and webinars, to support members, which will contribute towards individual CPD schemes. This could provide up to 22 additional CPD points for attendees and provide greater purpose to engagement at these events. We are also looking later in 2026 to the possibility of training modules for certain topics which also can attract CPD involvement. More of this is to follow.

Our political engagement has increased since the introduction of our Health of The Nation survey to MPs and Lords, resulting in several helpful one-to-one meetings, and valuable follow-up on all our key political objectives.

It was not just our birthday in 2025, but also that of our European counterparts, EHPM, which celebrated its 50th anniversary within the EU Parliamentary building

in Brussels, with talks from supportive MEPs and a Commission spokesperson. Over 70 people were present, including yours truly and Penny Viner, Penny being one of the original signatories on the EHPM formation document, as we continue this valuable connection with our European neighbours.

Our AGM next year will be held in London on April 29 so please save the date. More detail will be sent nearer to the event, and this will include announcements on our new export initiative and support for our members with generating new overseas trade, plus our activity engagement with other relevant trade associations, be them UK, EU, and global.

I can assure you of our developments to keep the HFMA looking into the future as we grow membership services and seek to attract new members, plus further improvements to our retention programmes. The HFMA staff look forward with vigour to 2026, and it just leaves me to wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

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.