

HFMA UPDATE

Martin Last, Director General



EU collaboration and the EHPM Summit

Ahead of UK developments of government alignment between with Europe and UK expected at the end of summer, the HFMA attended a major EHPM Summit in Brussels, represented by me as Director General and Penny Viner as our President. This was an excellent one-day event organised by Livia Menichetti, Director General of the EHPM, and opened by EHPM President, Nicolas Cappelaere.

The event achieved in bringing together scientists, policymakers, regulators, and industry leaders contributing to the positive narrative of food supplements in supporting preventative health and innovation in Europe. The summit provided an opportunity for dialogue on the evolving EU regulatory environment affecting the food supplements sector. It also strongly highlighted the need for collaboration between member states and the UK to approach European matters in a European way, understanding the practicalities of what is possible. By our attendance, the HFMA is well placed to take full advantage of this dialogue.

The first session focused on the European Safe Hearts Plan to protect EU citizens with a framework of preventative measures and responsible dietary supplement use. Research findings were presented by Prof Arrigo Cicero and Dr Federica Fogacci from the University of Bologna and indicated that the plan is to help people before they get ill, demonstrating that prevention can minimise risk factors of chronic heart disease and that this can be achieved by daily use of food supplements and lifestyle changes. The research also indicated that even small



changes, taken early, have a positive effect.

Livia moderated a panel discussion, which indicated that latest science should be translated into policy by regulators and that greater consumer knowledge and monitoring of consumer status is important for awareness and for consumers to be empowered to make positive choices through better information. Prof Cicero stated "to have innovative policy with the agility to make informed claims, it must allow innovative delivery of the right product at the right time and that a small move can produce significant effect. Food supplements do this and provide individual solutions towards better population health".

Saskia Geurts, Director of NPN in the Netherlands, presented the launch of new EHPM guidelines on influencers and marketing. These have been developed through the EHPM Working Group. They reflect the responsibility of industry to ensure influencer marketing is conducted through self-regulation as well as recent EU regulatory developments. The practical guide offers help to stakeholders to communicate responsibly while minimising risks to consumers and was widely welcomed. It was followed by examples of

how it applies in practice by Beckii Flint with insights as a UK influencer showing that influencer marketing is "powerful because it is personal but needs to be handled responsibly".

Valerie Vercammen, Managing Director of the Belgium association, be-sup, concluded the morning by exploring significant concerns for members on the Packaging and Packaging Waster Regulation (PPWR) and key challenges of the industry. Valerie calmly and effectively highlighted that, with regards to regulation, "packaging is not marketing but is part of product performance". She explained packaging changes cannot just switch overnight. Identifying packaging alternatives, validation methods, test methods, stability, etc., are processes that can take 24-36 months to implement, not weeks, and therefore a pragmatic transitional approach is required. She presented industry's perspective and proposed approaches to support compliance while addressing sustainability objectives, asking regulators for a possible deferred implementation timetable, stating that "this situation is not industry delay but is economic since a suitability solution is not yet available to industry". A position paper on PPWR on the EHPM position is being prepared for submission to DG Envi.

The afternoon session provided presentations from high level EU officials. Alexandra Nikolapoulou, EU Commissioner, spoke on the regulatory landscape for food supplements and how the needs of regulation developments affect Article 8 submissions and latest developments on EU-wide maximum levels for vitamins and minerals. The

Commissioner highlighted that the food supplements sector has grown from a niche market into a multi-billion-euro industry, with the key driver being demand, consumer demographics and product distribution changes. As a result, and as the market grows, the Commission must ensure a sound regulatory environment, harmonised not to limit choices but to ensure safety is of prime.

Frans Verstrate Department, Head of DG Sante, outlined the Article 8 procedure and clarified the state of play of key dossiers impacting EHPM members, including pyrrolizidine alkaloids and mineral oil hydrocarbons.

In the final session, Magdalini Selanikli, Board member, outlined novel foods and discussed this with Ivona Babic, from DG Sante E.2, covering the status of novel foods including practical experiences and developments on Article 4 consultation.

Clearly, it is important HFMA remains an active participant in EU developments and plays a role in these close ties with European partners. This alignment is vital to discussions in Brussels and members states. Increasingly, there is now firm industry alignment between major EU associations, particularly EHPM, FSE and FDE, and this is supported by close collaboration with all UK food supplement associations, such as CRN, PAGE, HFMA and ESSNA. This helps our industry to maintain joint industry positions and to have a common voice in these EU matters.

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