



HFMA UPDATE

by Martin Last,
Director General

Not just a day out of the office

Most Annual General Meetings have inevitable formalities that must be undertaken, after all, that is often the key purpose of the event. For our 59th AGM on June 12, we chose a modern, air-conditioned venue in central London, perfect to gather over 80 people from 33 member companies on a hot summer's day. But the day was not just about formalities, we had a tasty networking lunch followed by an afternoon of seminars with speakers who covered a range of live and key industry issues.

I started the day by providing an update on the year past, stating that 2023 had been a year of change and that this gave an opportunity to take stock and to look forward to the future. I explained that my first task in this new role was to establish a rolling five-year plan, including applying restructuring, new operating procedures and policies, all designed so that we can engage with the plan and move ahead together. This included improved IT systems and communications being made more purposeful and relevant, with greater interaction with members, plus new initiatives and member benefits being worked on.

I addressed head on the necessary reform on the existing Unfair and Illegal Competition (UIC) process, it being replaced with the new Regulatory Compliance Process (RCP), recognising that HFMA are not an enforcement agency but are about compliance, and that non-compliance in the market should not go unchallenged.

Of course, we continue to have close links with Europe, Government, and trade associations in the UK, EU, and globally. In line with the HFMA's drive on sustainability, I pointed out that the lanyards provided were made from sustainable bamboo, all documents were printed on recycled paper, and that the next AGM is planned to be paperless.

Then Tom Moses, Treasurer of the HFMA of 24 years, spoke of the careful stewardship of members funds, noting record subscriptions and that as a not-for-profit organisation, reserves are healthy and that interest in membership is still strong and this is important to help HFMA continue its great work, particularly in the current challenging trading environment. He encouraged companies or organisations not currently in membership to join. Our Chair presented two major awards, with the 2024 Health Journalist of the Year going to Rachel Symonds from Target Publishing, noting her long-standing support to our industry over the last 19 years. And the prestigious 2024 Maurice Hanssen Award of Honour to Graham Keen; a timely award given his recent retirement and 15 years' service to the HFMA and the industry as Executive Director during that time.

Steve Mann continued with the annual Chair's Address and indicated that sustainability was firmly at centre stage. He commented on the various elections taking place this year around the world, and that whatever kind of world emerges that HFMA will still be there supporting its members. Steve also sees the year ahead as challenging and is assured that our industry will continue to grow and flourish,

Steve thanked the whole HFMA team for their dedication, commitment, and endeavours and commended Council members, officers, advisors, committee chairs, and all working group attendees for generously giving their time to the many causes that HFMA undertakes. He sincerely thanked the members for making the HFMA what it is, and he made special notice that planning is already underway for our 60th anniversary next year.

After an enjoyable and tasty networking lunch, the first afternoon seminar was from Jack Spriggs,



Account Director of Cavendish political advisors to the HFMA, providing an overview of the political strategy and key objectives. He noted that some of this had been interrupted by the election but that engagement plans will commence on July 5, whoever is in Government.

Charles Wigfall, as Chair of the HFMA Sustainability Interest Group, updated members on the HFMA Guidance document being prepared, with insights on the importance for all companies to engage in the sustainability process.

Martin Allen, Senior Trading Standards Officer of The Bucks and Surrey Primary Authority, outlined the role that Food Improvement Notices (FIN) will have when they are fully introduced this autumn for non-compliant health claims. He explained that such notices will be enforced where businesses refuse to engage in regulatory compliance, with firm timelines applied before legal action is imposed. He urged members to engage with HFMA with this process.

To end the day, Livia Menichetti, Director General of the EHPM, outlined the political landscape in the EU and the plans for EHPM to engage with the new Commission. Livia was unable to attend in person but the live link to Brussels was seamless.

The day following, HFMA issued a member survey to obtain valuable feedback, and I believe that the following response sums up all the positive comments that we thankfully received: "You know what it's like – I have a full day out of the office – hard to fit in. But the day was super interesting and so informative to me. Nice to see people in person and it was a great venue with slick audio visual. It is now a confirmed day for me every year to attend in person and will invite other colleagues from the business next year."

If you would like to know more about the benefits of membership to your company, simply visit our website, www.hfma.co.uk, to learn more, or contact me directly at martin@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.

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