



Press Release

FSA fails to support CBD & Hemp Industry whilst Cannabis companies pivot to supply and assist the NHS during the COVID-19 Crisis

Due to current circumstances, many Cannabis Trades Association (CTA) members have pivoted their operations to aid the NHS and other healthcare related businesses, by supplying, donating and indeed manufacturing PPE and hand sanitisers. To date, over £1.5m worth of supplies has been gifted by CTA members and a further £4m of sanitisers, PPE and 3D manufactured products have been supplied at heavily discounted rates. We consider it of prime importance to support the NHS, and we are very proud of this, as a team.

The FSA has consistently failed to acknowledge that most of our members have continued to trade to the general public with highly discounted cannabinoid preparations in order to maintain the health and wellbeing of the population.

On the 31st of March 2020, the CTA respectfully requested from the FSA an extension of the requirements to present a validated Novel Foods Application. This was due to the impact upon the economy caused by the global pandemic.

We further raised the following concerns:

1. In January, the FSA advised that the UK would have its own registration procedure. To date, the FSA has yet to put this registration procedure in place.
2. The FSA also confirmed that products registered in the EU would not automatically be granted the same registration in the UK.

On the 9th of April, the CTA received the following response from the FSA

“The FSA has not received any evidence in support of the suggestion that recent events with COVID-19 has rendered CBD businesses incapable of formulating novel food applications to the appropriate standard to meet next year’s deadline. This view is additionally in the context of the background to CBD extracts and the fact that CBD businesses have already had well over a year and have just under a further year to progress novel food applications; a total of over 2 years. Furthermore, discussions with yourselves and others in the industry have been ongoing for significantly longer. We consider that this is more than enough time to have planned and started the necessary studies. In fact, several CBD businesses have and are building the applications aiming towards the validated application process deadline date, with some having already submitted initial applications.

As such I can confirm there is no change in approach and the deadline as previously set out by the FSA remains.”

The FSA states that it *“has not received any evidence in support of the suggestion that recent events with COVID-19 has rendered CBD businesses incapable of formulating novel food applications to the appropriate standard to meet next year’s deadline”.*

We consider this demonstrably incorrect. Many of our members have had to furlough staff and in lockdown, business activities will clearly reduce. Staff in the laboratories and other ancillary industries will also be in lockdown and therefore capacity will be substantially reduced. We find the FSA’s position on this to be quite baffling, unsympathetic and unaligned with all government departments at this moment of national and international crisis. Especially when many in our Industry have pivoted and committed immense resources to fighting this life-threatening Virus.

A refusal to extend the deadline could see companies that have committed to this fight, potentially fail in the future when they do not have the time to fulfil the requirements for novel foods. To see this, happen would cast a shadow of shame upon the UK FSA and its priorities in these dark times.

We are concerned that the FSA is incapable of understanding that the majority of products in the UK market are unable to comply with Novel Food regulations, because they are manufactured from a natural ingredient, as opposed to a denatured and standardised one. Indeed, the only validated product at the present time is synthetic.

We do not believe that this is how the public wants its CBD. We suggest that the public wants to have a range of natural cannabinoids in their diet, the way humans have been ingesting cannabinoids for thousands of years.

Extracts of hemp are not novel! Denatured isolates and high-purity selective CBD extractions (distillates) are. This is a position that the CTA continues to hold, and we will continue to fight for recognition of this position. Our aim is to ensure the sustainability of our member businesses, so that they may continue to supply natural health and wellbeing products, in the UK and Europe and indeed all around the world wherever they may operate.

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