

Martin Savage, worked with nabim for 11 years where he managed all aspects of policy and influencing functions on issues ranging from plant breeding, wheat production, technical and research issues, food safety and trade.

nabim is the trade association representing the UK and Ireland flour-milling sector, which is a significant processor of wheat. He lives in West Berkshire, United Kingdom.

### **Could you tell me a bit about your career history? What got you involved in not only flour milling but nabim too?**

I spent 20 years at ADAS [a UK environmental consulting agency] in various roles starting as an entomologist and ending up working at headquarters. Then I was self-employed for a short time doing short-term contracts with various clients including the food and agriculture section of the East of England Development Agency. Next, I spent four years working with the Crop Protection Association and then the last 11 years with nabim, so I've had a fair bit of food and agriculture experience over the years.

### **What do you think are the main challenges flour millers will face over the next five years?**

Everyone's asking that question. At one level we've got Brexit and none of us know what that's going to mean—especially in terms of trading. Another challenge is our reliance upon our external wheat supply. And then Mister Michael Gove (UK Secretary of State for Department of Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs - DEFRA) in the command paper has emphasisedemphasised a focus upon the environment—perhaps over food production. Obviously, if the European Union (EU) single area payments are removed, the whole farming industry could look very different in a few years, and they are our suppliers. (Although it's too early to predict what may happen). And of course, millers are going to be faced with many of the same issues. The good news is that our population is growing and will always need food and bread. Perhaps we will have to modify our diet if foods that were easily imported before become restricted due to trade barriers, or even currency issues. We currently enjoy a diversified diet and eat lots of different things such as pizzas and tacos and wraps, but they are still wheat and bread related, so the outlook for our industry is still positive, it's just the uncertainty of the supply chains.

### **Food safety is very important in this industry – how do you think we can maintain food safety in an economical manner?**

Food safety is central to the food industry and I don't see that changing. We have our own food safety agency and I don't see standards being changed at all. If the EU changes any regulation, certainly in the transition period, we're going to follow suit and will probably always shadow them for two reasons:

First, if we want to export anything to Europe we're going to have to meet their standards; Second, what the government would tell its people: okay you were used to this standard but we're going to have to lower it. It would not make for an appealing message.

### **What makes nabim so important to the milling industry? And how can we make sure it stays a first point of contact for people to seek information regarding flour and milling?**

The biggest thing is our representation. We represent more than 99 percent of UK production and there's only one company who's not a member. We speak with a united voice because our members are so committed and volunteer to work on many committees. We're lucky that all wheat varieties are classified using nabim's own system, which immediately gets us in front of farmers and millers and others in the supply chain. We might be a small organisation, but we have a loud and balanced voice.

### **Now that you're retiring, do you plan to stay active in the industry?**

It depends on what offers come my way! (laughs). I don't plan on working full time, but it depends on what opportunities come along.

### **Who is going to replace you at nabim?**

The latest I've heard is that I won't be replaced until the autumn, so there will be a bit of a gap – it depends on the recruiting process.

### **What advice would you give to the person who may be taking over your previous roles at nabim?**

My advice would be to build strong links throughout the whole supply chain. The links I've built have come from research – because research is absolutely fundamental to our future – through the farming community, to official UK bodies like the food standards agency DEFRA, the Cereal Liaison Group, the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board's (AHDB) Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, and the various industry trade associations. We are very much a united processor force, which gives us strength and authority when we serve on any body on any industry subject.



- ◆ Close attention to the plant's nutritional requirements, disease control and optimum harvesting conditions are crucial to growing a crop that maximises profitability.
- ◆ Modern bread-making wheat varieties are both high-yielding and achieve the desired quality.
- ◆ Group 3 wheat varieties are the most popular and

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