Building Trust in Today’s Food System

Why Do They Mistrust Us?

Understanding Consumer Angst and What to Do About It

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Today’s Objective

• Today’s food consumers
  – Shifting societal attitudes
  – Mistrust in farming & food
• CFI models
• Why we should embrace consumer skepticism
• Recommendations on what we can do
The Center for Food Integrity

**Mission:** To build consumer trust and confidence in today’s food system

**Vision:** Facilitate dialogue with consumers and the food system to create better alignment with consumer expectations
Members and Project Supporters:

- Food Companies
- Retailers
- Restaurants
- NGO’s
- Universities
- Government
- Cooperatives
- Financial Companies
- Technology Companies
- Food System Suppliers
- State and National Trade Associations

FoodIntegrity.org  BestFoodFacts.org
CFI Core Values

• We **support informed choice** – provide balanced, credible information to support informed decision making

• We **respect the diversity of today’s food system** - embrace diverse practices and perspectives and encourage robust dialogue to strengthen understanding of complex challenges and opportunities

• We **welcome and embrace consumer skepticism and concerns**: - embrace concern and skepticism; respect differing viewpoints; create innovative and flexible strategies to encourage dialogue and build trust

• We **believe a sustainable food system must be ethically grounded, scientifically verified and economically viable**

• We are **consumer serving** – foundation of trust building is meeting consumer needs and expectations and aligning practices to consumer values and expectations
Breaking Through Consumer Skepticism
Meat, dairy products add to climate change

Feeding Kids Meat Is Child Abuse

Fight the Fat: Go Vegan
Right Direction/Wrong Track

34% Right Direction
38% Wrong Track

28% Unsure

39% Right Direction
42% Wrong Track

Early Adopters

43%

Believe the food system is on the wrong track

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Today’s Food System

• Today food is:
  – Safer
  – More available
  – More affordable

• Yet - very systems – created - safest, most abundant, most affordable food in history… challenged every day

• How did that happen?
1968

THE YEAR THAT
SHAPE A
GENERATION.
History: The Decline of Trust

- Iran Contra - 1986
- Three Mile Island - 1979
- Exxon Valdez - 1989
- Clinton Impeached
- Clinton Scandal - 1998
- Enron - 2000
- Arthur Andersen - 2002

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Consolidation, Integration and Industrialization
## Significant Social Shifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Then</th>
<th>Now</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority is granted by office</td>
<td>Authority is granted by relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad social consensus driven by WASP males</td>
<td>No single social consensus, great diversity, many voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication is formal, indirect (mass communication)</td>
<td>Communication is informal, direct (masses of communicators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress is inevitable</td>
<td>Progress is possible</td>
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Trust in Today’s Food System
Understanding Consumer Angst
Why Do We Struggle?

Even though we care and are committed to doing the right thing, we struggle to convey that to consumers. Why?
Kohlberg’s Moral Hierarchy

**Principle driven / innate responsibility**

**Societal expectations**

**Direct impact on me**

- **Universal ethical principle orientation**
  - We have an ethical obligation to our employees, the environment, animals and our communities

- **Social contract orientation**

- **The “law & order” orientation**
  - We comply with all environmental, welfare and employment laws and regulations

- **The “good boy / nice girl” orientation**

- **Personal rewards orientation**
  - We provide for the well-being of animals because that’s when we get the best ROI

- **Punishment-Obedience**
## Kohlberg’s Moral Hierarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle driven / innate responsibility</th>
<th>Social contract orientation</th>
<th>Universal ethical principle orientation</th>
<th>Non-Governmental Orgs / Advocacy Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Societal expectations</td>
<td>The “law &amp; order” orientation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct impact on me</td>
<td>The “good boy / nice girl” orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal rewards orientation</td>
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<td>Businesses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Punishment-Obedience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trust research was published in December, 2009 – *Journal of Rural Sociology*
Social License

**Definition:** The privilege of operating with minimal formalized restrictions (legislation, regulation, or market requirements) based on maintaining public trust by doing what’s right.

**Public Trust:** A belief that activities are consistent with social expectations and the values of the community and other stakeholders.
Trust research was published in December, 2009 – *Journal of Rural Sociology*
Focus on what you have in common.

*FACTS* are 3-5x less important than *VALUES* in building trust.
Sustainable Systems

Economically Viable
- ROI
- Demand
- Cost Control
- Productivity
- Efficiency
Profitability

Scientifically Verified
- Data Driven
- Repeatable
- Measurable
- Specific
Objectivity

Ethically Grounded
- Compassion
- Responsibility
- Respect
- Fairness
- Truth
Value Similarity

Feelings
Belief

Knowledge

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Think Differently to Connect

- Economic Viability
- Scientific Verification
- Ethical Justification

Education Knowledge Information
Values Feelings Beliefs
Addressing Consumer Skepticism
Consumer Concerns About Life and Current Events

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All of the Most Concerning Life Issues are Beyond Consumer’s Direct Control

Women were more concerned about most issues than men.

Additional Food System Concerns*

- Imported Food Safety (63%)
- Food Safety (63%)
- Enough to Feed U.S. (56%)
- Humane Treatment of Farm Animals (51%)
- Environmental Sustainability in Farming (49%)
- Access to Accurate Info to Make Healthy Food Choices (48%)

Lowest concern was for having enough food to feed people outside the U.S. (29%)

*Top Box ratings (8-10)

Early Adopters

Earlier adopters were more concerned about all issues than later adopters.

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Sources of Information About Food
Radically Transparent Environment

ISSUE

Producer Processor Distributor

NGOs

Grocery Restaurants Brands

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook

Twitter

YouTube

SOCIAL MEDIA

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Traditional Communication Model is Less Effective in Today’s Environment

Traditional Communication Model

Expert

Consumer

Consumer

Tribal Communication Model

Online Friends

Friend

Family

Neighbor

Family

Online Friends

Family

Blogs
What information sources have you used to come to your conclusions that GMOs are dangerous?

Heidi: “I’m part of a moms group. When there is a big consensus, I think ‘there’s something here.’ You don’t need doctors or scientists confirming it when you have hundreds of moms.”
Lisa: “I think mom guilt is a huge factor. If someone is telling you something is dangerous, for example fructose, and you hear the message more than once you owe it to yourself to research it or quit consuming it. I can’t keep giving my kids fructose if there’s a potential problem. We have to do our best job.”
We are All Exposed to Complex Issues We’re Not Qualified to Evaluate

• We make decisions and process information based on bounded rationality (our access to information, our cognitive ability to understand the information and the time we allocate to the information/decision process).

• This leads to confusing correlation with causation, drawing conclusions from anecdotes, etc.

• Not being expert does not preclude having a strong opinion
Confirmation Bias

• We tend to look for information that supports our existing belief structure from “people like me” or credentialed individuals I trust.

• Overcoming the bias is more challenging on issues with a strong emotional connection and those integrated into personal identity, i.e. being a good mom, a foodie, etc.
Trust Building
Transparency
The “Big is Bad” Bias

- Inverse relationship between size and the perception of shared values
  - Industrial processes = void of values
  - Mass production increases error
  - Profit ahead of principle
Elements of Trust Building Transparency

Accuracy

Motivations

Disclosure

Credibility

Stakeholder Participation

Clarity

Relevance

Motivations

Disclosure

Stakeholder Participation

Clarity

Relevance
1. **Motivation** – Act in a manner that is ethical and consistent with stakeholder interest. Show you understand and appreciate issues and take action that demonstrates you put public interest ahead of self-interest.

2. **Disclosure** – Share information important to stakeholders, both positive and negative, even if it might be damaging. Make it easy to find; helpful in making informed decisions; easy to understand and timely.

3. **Stakeholder Participation** – Ask those interested in your activities and impact, for input. Make it easy to provide; acknowledge it has been received and explain how and why you make decisions.
4. **Relevance** – Share information stakeholders deem relevant. Ask them. Show you understand.

5. **Clarity** – Share information that is easily understood.
6. **Credibility** – Admit mistakes; apologize; accept responsibility; engage critics; share plans for corrective action. Demonstrate you genuinely care and present more than one side of controversial issues.

7. **Accuracy** – Share information that is truthful, objective, reliable and complete.
Elements of Trust Building Transparency

- Motivations
- Disclosure
- Stakeholder Participation
- Credibility
- Accuracy
- Clarity
- Relevance

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How Do We Address the Great Divide?
Americans Want Antibiotic-Free Chicken, And The Industry Is Listening

Study: Meat, dairy may be as bad for your health as smoking cigarettes

Dairy’s expansion fuels pollution complaints

Breakfast is not a Science Experiment!
It’s not about trying to get someone to change their values and beliefs about today’s food. It is about helping them understand that today’s food is better aligned with their values and beliefs than perhaps they thought.
Our New Reality

- The social decision making process in complex and multidimensional
- Decisions are not made on facts and rational thought alone
- Mistrust of institutions has become the social norm
- Growing trend of questioning the motives and data of experts
- Tribal communication and “relational expertise” influences trusted sources and messages
Implications for You

• Who you are is as important as what you know
  – Communicating shared values makes technical information more relevant and accessible

• Embrace skepticism – It’s not personal, it’s a social condition
  – Skepticism is the fuel for scientific discovery

• The public wants information from academics but not academic information
  – Learn to speak the language of social media

• Transparency is no longer optional
  – Authentic transparency is the path to building trust in science and technology in food
Three Things You Can Do

1. Begin your public engagement using shared values
   – “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” T. Roosevelt

2. Use independent scientific support to build credibility and use accessible language to make your message relevant
   – Words are the tools we use to shape perception. Use the right tool

3. Commit to engaging early, often and consistently.
   – Your voice, your knowledge and your credibility matter. You can make a difference in building public support, but you have to learn how to play by new rules
CFI Resources

- FoodIntegrity.org
  - Official site of CFI

- BestFoodFacts.org
  - Experts answer consumer ?’s about food

- CFIEngage.org
  - 411 on industry events & shared values guidance

- TheFoodJournal.com
  - Compelling issues in-depth
Credible Resources

www.BestFoodFacts.org

- Connects consumers with food system experts (university based)

- Food for Thought Blog

- True or Not? Meter
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What is The Ethical Choice?
Which Chicken?
Global Trends by 2050

Source: United Nations
Changing Eating Habits

Per capita meat consumption in China

- 1,000 – 2,000 liters of water to produce a kg of wheat
- 10,000 – 13,000 liters of water to produce a kg of beef

Source: FAO
Growing Resource Scarcity

Water stress is a looming crisis. By 2030, 47% of the global population will live in arid areas.

Asia has the lowest per-capita land/water availability in the world.
Doing More With Less

Population \times Consumption \neq \text{Source: WWF}
Growth Limitations

- 80% of future production growth must come from increased yields - responsible use of innovation & technology
- 10-15% could be achieved from higher cropping density
- 5-10% from expansion of land use

Source: UN FAO
The Need for More

“...The world has the technology to feed, on a sustainable basis, 10 billion people. The pertinent question today is whether farmers and ranchers will be permitted to use this technology.”

— Norman Borlaug, 2000
“By almost any measure, producing food has the largest impact of any human activity. Most estimates suggest that we will need to produce twice as many calories on the same amount of land we use today if we want to maintain biodiversity and ecosystem functions.”

- Jason Clay, World Wildlife Fund
Shift the Focus

Choose your system: productivity needs to double

Focus on performance, not practices to produce more with less
Shift the Focus

Persistent Issues
• Globalization
• GMOs
• Animal Welfare
• Organic
• Buying local

Important Issues
• Resource Scarcity & Waste
• Food Security & Global Trade
• Pre-competitive Approaches
• Illegal Products

Source: WWF
Giant Global Challenges

- Population - Increasing demand for food
- Urbanization
- Globalization
- Changing patterns of consumption
- Regulations & market conditions (local/national/international)
- Limited natural resources: water, biodiversity, soil, energy
- Limited land area
- Climate change & environmental impact
- Bio-energy
- Health & wellness
- Food safety & emerging pathogens and pests
- Public acceptance
The Ethical Discussion

The increasing global demand for food comes, in large part from the developing world. The social challenges to today’s food system come, in large part, from the developed world. The impact on the environment and natural resources from the food system are global challenges.

If stakeholders in the developed world establish standards for agriculture and food production, are we:

A. Setting appropriate standards necessary for global survival?
B. Attempting to impose our ethics and morals on others?
C. Changing the market dynamics so that food is produced in areas with less social control and greater impact on the environment?
D. All of the above.
E. Others?