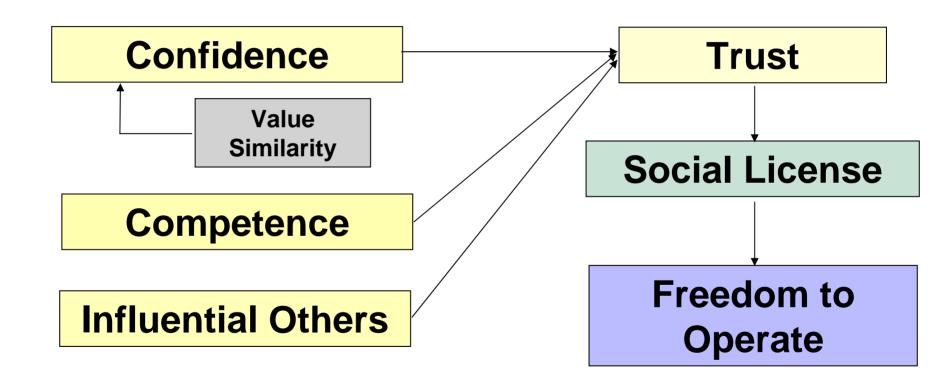


# Building Consumer Trust and Confidence in Today's Food System

Charlie.Arnot@Foodintegrity.org

# Earning and Maintaining the Social License (Sapp/CMA)

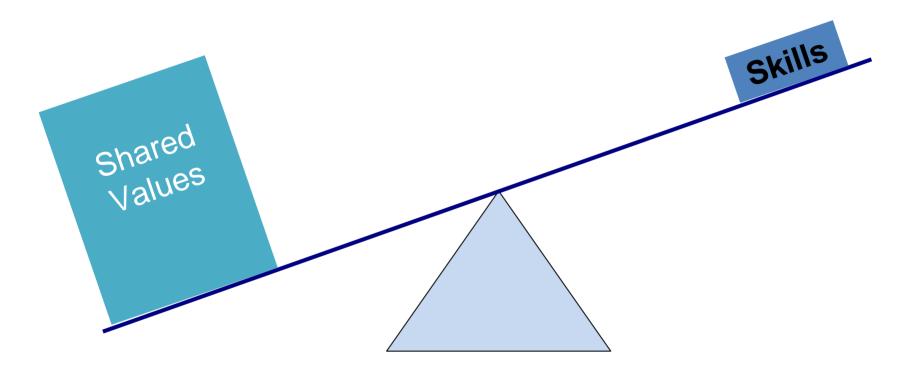




Trust research was published in December, 2009 – Journal of Rural Sociology

### What Drives Consumer Trust?





Shared values are 3-5X more important in building trust than demonstrating competence

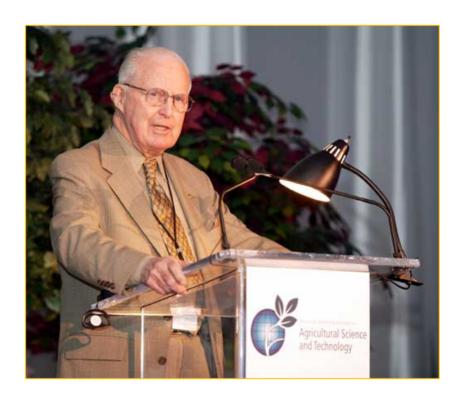
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### The Need for More



"...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



### **National Discussion**



"A long-overdue national conversation about food so far hasn't been much of a conversation. Instead, what we have are two armed camps deeply suspicious of one another shouting past each other."

- Russ Parsons, Los Angeles Times, Jan. 2010







### CFI Annual Consumer Trust Survey



- Qualitative research component added for 2009 Study
  - "What will cause consumers to grant more social license?"
  - Eight consumer focus groups
    - April 2: Des Moines, IA
    - April 7: Syracuse, NY
    - April 8: Nashville, TN
    - April 13: Fresno, CA
      - Farms, size matters (trust family farms, not company farms)
      - Consumers responsible for nutrition
      - Everyone has responsibility for food safety

### **Two Observations**



- Disinterested and uninformed.
  - "Give me safe food, and I will trust you to give me safe food. I will trust you (farmers) until you do something to break that trust." Connie, Nashville focus group
  - "They could let us know more about what they do... I've never been on a farm, I don't know what they do?" Judy, Des Moines focus group
- Trust farmers but aren't sure contemporary production is still farming.
  - "Large producers are about the money and rushing production with antibiotics... Small farmers are concerned about their name..."— Consuela, Nashville focus group
  - "There is a difference: a farmer grows and sells locally with ethics, whereas commercial producers are all about the paycheck." Maria, Nashville focus group

# The Challenge

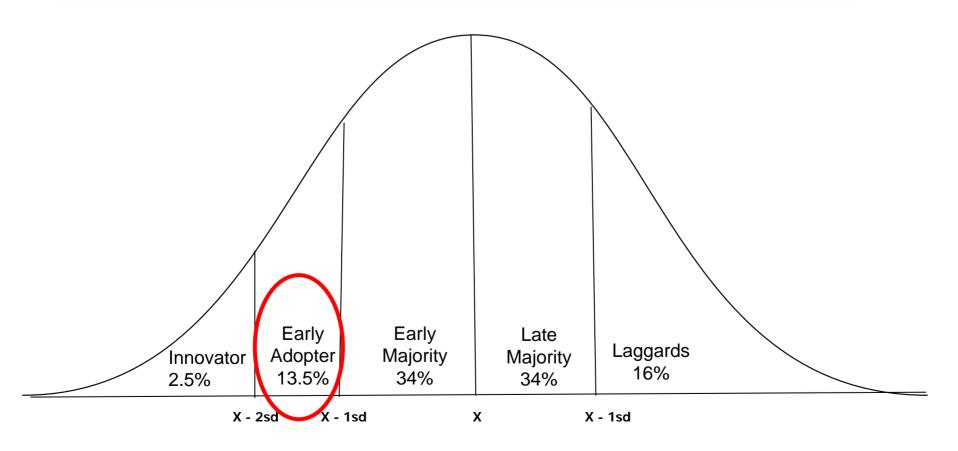


- Building trust and confidence in the contemporary food system among a public that is largely disinterested and uninformed.
- The contemporary food system is not perceived as being consistent with the understanding or values of consumers or with the positive attributes historically assigned to farmers.
- Voices questioning current food system practices are increasing in number, volume and impact.

# Adopter Segments



Past research has shown that the Adopter Segments are normally distributed in a social system/market (bell curve)



### Characteristics of Early Adopters\*



#### **Personality Characteristics**

- Greater empathy
- Less dogmatic
- Higher levels of achievement motivation
- Greater ability to deal with abstractions
- Greater rationality
- Greater intelligence
- More favorable attitude toward change
- More able to cope with uncertainty and risk
- More favorable attitude toward education.
- More favorable attitude toward science

#### Social and Economic Characteristics

- More years of education
- Higher social and professional prestige
- Greater degree of upward professional mobility
- Larger-sized businesses
- More active in professional organizations

#### **Communication Behavior**

- More social participation
- More highly interconnected in the social system
- More change agent contact
- Greater exposure to interpersonal communication channels
- Seek information about innovations more actively
- Greater knowledge of innovations
- Higher degree of opinion leadership

<sup>\*</sup> In comparison to later adopters

### Methodology



- 2010 qualitative research with ONLY early adopters.
- Eight focus groups in four cities between April 26 and May 1, 2010.
  - Concord, California
  - Minneapolis, Minnesota
  - Atlanta, Georgia
  - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Two focus groups were conducted at each location.
  - One female-only group and one male-only group per location.
  - 63 total participants (7-8 per group)



# **Key Findings**

# Key Findings



- Early Adopters seek unbiased information about the food system from sources they consider unbiased.
- Many Early Adopters were very skeptical that adequate regulatory oversight was being applied to the food system and about the good intentions of large companies. Some of this may stem in part from a general distrust of regulation due to the recent financial crisis.
- Early Adopters are deeply skeptical and distrustful of claims that improvements in technology and innovation in food production/processing are beneficial to the health and welfare of consumers, the environment or animal well-being.



- Nutrition, health and food safety (which are seen as related to health) were the topics of greatest concern to most Early Adopters.
- Some Early Adopters felt that U.S. consumers have more food choices available than they really need and that this "excess" is bad, while others felt that having many choices was highly desirable.
- Large farms are considered "factory farms" regardless of their family ownership.
- Many Early Adopters felt that it would be more socially responsible and healthier for consumers to eat more organic foods, buy foods locally and eat what is in season.



- Many Early Adopters considered "convenience" and "health" or "nutrition" variables that cannot be solved simultaneously; convenience foods are not as healthy or nutritious as non-convenience foods and consumers must choose one or the other end benefit.
- Early Adopters had difficulty believing that food was safer in light of a seemingly unending chain of food recalls and negative media coverage.
- Early Adopters wanted messages to contain more balance to not just cite the positives but also acknowledge there are some negatives.
- Messaging that is presented as facts about the food system must be attributed to sources that are considered credible to be accepted.



- Cheap food was generally considered unhealthy. Many Early
  Adopters felt that they had to choose between feeding their family
  lower quality "processed" food that was within their budget or buying
  more expensive fresh foods.
- Many respondents blamed the food industry (primarily developers and marketers of processed foods) and the school lunch program for the growth in obesity in the U.S.
- Most Early Adopters felt strongly that the U.S. should focus first on addressing food system issues locally, rather than have the U.S. underwrite a global effort to do so.



- Many Early Adopters had a hard time squaring the increase in obesity (which they believe) with CFI messaging that claims that due to technology and innovation food is healthier now than it was in the past.
- Many Early Adopters had difficulty accepting that food production MUST increase in efficiency to feed a growing population, because they feel this will further industrialize agriculture and probably make food less healthy.











"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

### The Ethical Choice



Support responsible, food production systems that allow us to produce the food we need using fewer resources to meet the growing global demand for food.





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