



Consumer Focus

► by the *Center for Food Integrity*

Science denial and today's food consumer

Overwhelming scientific consensus tells us that genetically modified foods are safe and that humans contribute more to antibiotic resistance than animals. Yet, consumer skepticism about these and other issues is widespread, leaving those dedicated to improving lives through science-based technology and innovation asking, "Science says it's so, so why is there still debate?"

Consumer research

"Cracking the Code on Food Issues: Insights from Moms, Millennials and Foodies," the new consumer trust research from the Center for Food Integrity (CFI), provides a roadmap for those in today's food system to make complex, technical and controversial information relevant and meaningful to the decision-making process of today's consumer.

"This research provides guidance to the food system for overcoming the many communication barriers that keep consumers from integrating science-based information into their decisions," said Charlie Arnot, CFI CEO. "The food system can use CFI's new models developed through this research as a guide to connect with consumers, especially moms, millennials and foodies, but it will

require communicators to embrace a new approach."

A key takeaway from the research is how important food issues are to moms, millennials and foodies. They help define who they are as people and shape their cultural identities. Foodies, in particular, express a higher level of concern about food-related topics than any other segment. Because these issues are meaningful and relevant to each of these groups, how technical and scientific information is introduced to them is crucial. By following the approach outlined in the research, we can find new ways to encourage informed decision-making.

"I hope all of those who dedicate their lives to technology and innovation that benefits society will incorporate these strategies from CFI's latest research to

assure that the value of their work will be recognized and given proper consideration by those whose welfare it can improve," said Dan Kahan, an Elizabeth K. Dollard Professor of Law and professor of psychology at Yale Law School and member of the Yale Cultural Cognition Project, which focuses on how cultural values shape public-risk perceptions and related policy beliefs.

Survey information

The 2014 CFI web-based survey was completed by 2,005 respondents who reflect the general U.S. consumer population. To provide deeper insights into moms, millennials and foodies, the groups who are driving consumer thought on key food issues, the results were segmented into the three groups.

Additionally, using scenarios on the topics of genetically modified ingredients in food and antibiotic use in animal agriculture, the survey tested three voices: a mom scientist, a federal government scientist and a peer "who shares my interest about food."

After reading information about the two topics by each of the three voices, trust in the mom scientist and government scientist remained strong while the peer lost trust. This indicates that once shared values have been established, having technical expertise and a credential build credibility when communicating technical information.

The research also revealed respondents' trusted sources for food-system information. Websites rank highest for moms, millennials and foodies. The second choice for moms is local television stations, while millennials and foodies prefer friends (not online). Food-specific TV programs and networks are important sources for foodies.

Since 2007, CFI has conducted annual consumer-trust research to track trends and attitudes, and provide insights and guidance to those in agriculture and food on how to best engage today's increasingly skeptical consumer.

To download the 2014 CFI Consumer Trust Research report or learn more, visit www.foodintegrity.org or email CFI at learnmore@foodintegrity.org.

CFI is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to build consumer trust and confidence in today's food system. Its members represent every segment of the food system, from farmers and ranchers to universities, NGOs, restaurants, food companies, retailers and food processors. CFI does not lobby or advocate for individual food companies or brands. For more information visit www.foodintegrity.org.



Editor's Note: This article is provided by CFI.