Social research strategies to explore trust in the food system and its regulator
We often look at things through the lens of trustworthiness

• The uncomfortable truth is that your average person has very little knowledge of the journey their food has taken, before it got to their kitchen or their plate.

• That disconnect breeds unease and distrust. Years spent building reputation and trust are undermined if someone, somewhere, in the food system getting it wrong.

• Our qualitative research consistently shows that the public worries that food production is so complex that it’s impossible to know what to choose. They delegate responsibility to us to take care of their interests. We need to demonstrate that we deserve that trust (cf. O’Neill).

• For us, our basis in science, evidence and openness helps us deserve that trust – but to do so sometimes means communicating a level of honest uncertainty.
We engage regularly with consumers

• About three-quarters of consumers tell us that they trust the food they buy to be what it says it is (75%) and trust food in restaurants (74%). 69% of them trust the FSA to do its job. Of the 79% of people who say they know what we do, 72% trust us to tell the truth, and 60% trust that the industry is regulated fairly.

• Trust in whether the people producing food have the consumers’ best interests at heart is much lower (41%)

• This has obvious implications for science, for policymakers and for Governments. It also has particular implications for food.
Trust is a complicated concept, feeling and action: definitions were complex, fluid and often seemingly contradictory

**Trust is a:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Necessary evil – required to navigate the people, organisations and systems around us</th>
<th>Enjoyable part of being human– something that we want to do, that feels good</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vulnerability</strong> – a surrender of control</td>
<td><strong>Source of strength</strong> – being supported, a problem shared</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decision</strong> – attempting to avoid risk</td>
<td><strong>Instinct</strong> – something largely automatic, felt without deliberation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal feeling and behaviour</strong> – something I feel/do - or don’t,</td>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong> – a give and take between me/other</td>
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The current state of trust in food

- The narrative of ‘trust in crisis’ is not clearly underpinned by polling evidence as far as the UK is concerned.
- Generalised trust in the UK is slightly above the OECD and EU averages and persistent over time.
- The FSA is more trusted than the government more generally. Measures of trust in ‘government’ tend to show low and volatile trust.
- Regulators more trusted than the industry

**Interpersonal trust**

*Mean average, on a scale from 0 (you do not trust any other person) to 10 (most people can be trusted), 2013*


Surveys are limited when it comes to measuring trust
Our Food Future 2015-6

• A literature review covering the evidence base exploring people’s connection to the wider food system.

• Public dialogues in across the UK

• An event in London involving 200+ stakeholders from across the food system, with 2000+ people watching online
Transparency and the food industry - 2017

- Qualitative research with the public exploring the gap between what people know, what they want to know, and their priorities for information.

- Participants were often surprised about the complexity of food issues and that some of their core assumptions about the UK food system were inaccurate. This realisation sparked concern and disappointment among many participants.

- Once aware of their knowledge gaps, participants saw the provision of transparent information as essential for making informed choices about food.

- Being able to exercise choice was important to participants because food met a range of their physical, cultural and emotional needs.
The Trust Project - 2018

- A rapid evidence assessment covering the drivers and barriers to trust in industry, the food system and in regulators in the modern age, including academic and grey literature

- Qualitative research – iterative focus groups or public dialogues – exploring with citizens the beliefs, barriers and drivers of their trust in food

- Analysis of these to produce a) a synthesis for consideration by the Exec and Board and b) a proposed corporate measures for the FSA

- New questions around trust in Food and You – our flagship biennial survey (in field now)

- Literature review and qualitative report published last week.
INITIAL SCOPING TO DETERMINE WHAT ‘TRUST’ MEANS
Brief pre-task to help with participants explore how they might be understanding and responding to questions about trust (Participants noted brands and organisations they do and don’t trust and why)

EXPLORING CUSTOMER VIEWS ON TRUST
6 hour deliberative workshops to explore how the public interpret, consider and answer questions about trust and understanding initial drivers of/barriers to trust in industry and understanding where the FSA fits into this

KEEPING PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED
Having discussed FSA and its role at a high level, participants asked to capture moments in their everyday lives that increase or decrease trust in the food system/food regulation.

DEFINING THE PROPOSITION OF TRUST
Participants return for 2nd deliberative sessions to explore and determine what is the shape of trust in the FSA, and what drives this
How easily trust is given, gained and lost depends on context. Sensitivity is much higher in some situations, and for some people.

Trust relies on a social assessment of intention: do you intend to do me well? Without this belief, trust is difficult if not impossible.

Then, it’s down to delivery. Can you do what you said you would do for me?

Consumer trust is:

- weak, routine, not reflexive in general
- Based in underlying norms and values

Trustworthiness can be established by:

- Competent, positive intent, openness
- Response to crisis
- Consistency of regulatory/industrial behaviour over time
- Neutrality of the regulator

However, transparency can also mean complexity (and anxiety)
Confidence or Concern?

Increasing knowledge of complexity raises salience of risk but knowledge of FSA raises confidence in safety.

- Confusion: Potential of failure at every stage of the system can be overwhelming – especially when seeing examples of ill intent, and realising there is real personal risk.
- Concern: This is too complex for me to fully engage with – I want to delegate responsibility to someone I trust; FSA now ticks affective trust boxes, and most of my cognitive trust boxes – though I’d like to hear/see you do more!
- Confidence: This is too complex for me to fully engage with – I want to delegate responsibility to someone I trust; FSA now ticks affective trust boxes, and most of my cognitive trust boxes – though I’d like to hear/see you do more!

Decision context reframe + Cognitive trust drop

Stakes rise, affective and cognitive trust drop

Too complex – can I delegate?

Role of FSA as regulator stim revealed

Discussing food safety within the context of understanding the food system

Food system stim revealed

Discussing food sector and food safety in the UK

Confidence or Concern?

Pre consideration – individual experience reigns

Gut level reflection: surely it’s working ok – I’m safe and healthy?

Complexity and density of food system surprises: I have to think about this more than I’d like, and can every point in the chain be trusted to deliver

This is too complex for me to fully engage with – I want to delegate responsibility to someone I trust; FSA now ticks affective trust boxes, and most of my cognitive trust boxes – though I’d like to hear/see you do more!