

KANTAR PUBLIC=



Food Standards Agency Transparency: Understanding public views and priorities

Report

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1. Executive Summary

The FSA is committed to ensuring consumers can access an affordable healthy diet, are confident food is safe and what it says it is, and are able to make informed choices about what they eat. To support this, the FSA engages in a range of activities to promote business' compliance with regulation and consumers' understanding of the UK food system.

From previous research the FSA understands that consumers want greater transparency in the food system and more in-depth knowledge about food issues than they have currently. Seven food issues were identified by the FSA as being of particular interest for this research: production methods, food cost, authenticity, animal welfare, composition of food and how it is labelled, food safety and regulation¹.

This research seeks to understand consumers' priorities for transparency for these food issues and to understand how they could be effectively engaged. It engaged 64 participants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales in a series of 8 reconvened workshops.² The socio-economic composition of groups was varied across locations and a range of gender, ethnicity, and life stage were included.

What does being transparent mean?

Although participants had not considered food issues in depth and were surprised by the complexity of UK food systems, they settled on a simple definition of transparency – honesty.

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. Participants had to feel the food they were buying was safe and aligned with their **personal value judgements**, both of which were subjective.³

To judge if a food met their personal standards, participants felt they had to be provided with **accurate information**, delivered in an **accessible way**. For information to be accurate, it had to genuinely reflect a product's content to inform purchase decisions. For instance, when buying minced beef participants wanted to know they were getting beef, the quality of the cut and whether it had been bulked out with water to artificially increase the weight and lower the cost. For information to be accessible, it had to be communicated in a way consumers could easily understand.

¹ Kantar Public (TNS BMRB), (2016), 'Our Food Future', <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/our-food-future-full-report.pdf>

² In total 64 members of the public engaged in this research, with 61 participants completing the research in full.

³ Safety comprised different things and for some included how a product had been produced, cultural norms and nutritional content. While appetites for risk varied in relation to food, none of the participants wanted to be able to buy unsafe food.

Fundamentally being transparent meant being honest. When considering the UK food system participants believed all stakeholders had to cooperate and be honest about their contribution. This was typically because participants did not believe that a single organisation or body had (or could have) sight of the whole food system. Although most were unaware of the FSA prior to the research, participants saw a clear role for regulators in encouraging honest and transparency. However, in essence, every link in the food chain had to be transparent about their contribution to the whole system.

What were participants' priorities for transparency?

Participants had the greatest interest in issues that would directly impact their day to day lives and inform their decisions.

Of the **seven food issues** considered, participants felt those connected to **public health and food safety should be prioritised**. Issues such as authenticity, composition of food and how it is labelled and food safety were seen as need to know issues. Production methods, cost of food, and regulation were seen as nice to know issues, to the extent that they did not link explicitly to food safety. Many participants felt conflicted about information related to animal welfare. Although they suspected conditions were unpleasant, they did not want to give up eating meat or be made to feel guilty.

Participants' priorities were **strongly influenced by the extent they believed they had agency**⁴ in relation to food issues. Views on agency were influenced by a range of factors, including participants' backgrounds, life circumstances and lifestyle choices. These created restrictions on the types of foods participants could buy (and therefore the **perceived need for information**) and influenced their **ability to and interest in engaging with information** on food issues. For instance, a consumer may prioritise transparency on animal welfare or food production to ensure a product meets their religious or cultural diet. Conversely, a consumer may feel disengaged from information about food issues they felt they could not act upon, if living on a limited income, with fewer food choices available to them. To a degree these variations are reflected in food businesses' current marketing practices - being transparent about a product's provenance or heritage can be a means of differentiating it as a premium or 'ethical' product.

Importantly, participants' **sense of agency and information needs can change over time**. Life events and education can trigger engagement in food issues. For example, a health concern may lead someone to look more closely at nutritional content or a food documentary may spark interest in topics such as sustainability or animal welfare. As a result, priorities and information needs should be seen as **malleable and evolving**.

Ultimately, however, the issue of transparency was fundamentally linked to consumers' trust in the UK food system as a whole. For participants to feel confident in the UK food system and trust the food they are buying, they need to believe that the information they have access to accurately describes the product or vendor they are purchasing from. Although they may not always choose to access this information, due to the reasons outlined above, the knowledge that the information is available is a comfort in itself.

How could the public be effectively engaged with food issues?

Engaging consumers on food issues relies on them seeing a need for information and feeling they can exercise choice over the food they buy. Participants saw a key need for balanced and independent information from a neutral source – this is something the FSA could potentially supply.

⁴ Agency refers to the ability of an individual to make choices and act freely in a given circumstance or context.

When researching food issues in the context of the research, participants **encountered a range of barriers**. Whilst there was a large volume of information about food issues available online, it was spread across multiple sites, hard to find and navigate to, often contradictory, and written in terms they found difficult to understand. Participants recognised that issues were complex and **doubted they would seek out information in ‘real life’** (i.e. outside of the research). This was typically because they had other priorities and did not feel searching out this information was a valuable way to spend their time.

In light of these reflections, participants made a range of practical, simple **suggestions for how people like them could be effectively engaged with food issues**.

1. **Provide information at the point of purchase:** This was when participants made decisions about food.
2. **Simplify information:** Avoid ‘scientific’ language where possible. Participants liked symbols and felt they helped them make quick judgements about food. However, some symbols used can be misunderstood or misinterpreted, which participants ultimately felt was misleading. More direct engagement with consumers to design symbols to accurately represent food standards (e.g. red lion, red tractor etc.) would help avoid confusion and consumers making inaccurate assumptions about systems, processes and standards.
3. **Consistency across product ranges:** consumers wanted honest information about all foods - rather than transparency being a marketing tool for premium products, consumers wanted industry to be honest about some of the cheaper products they sell too, to help consumers make actually informed choices about the food they are eating
4. **Sign-post to additional information:** As not all information was relevant to everyone and there were limitations on what could be shown at the point of purchase, participants felt they should be sign-posted to where they could learn more.
5. **Package or curate information:** Participants wanted access to balanced, nonpartisan information on food issues provided in one place. This would help them make informed judgements on their own.

Based on the above, the FSA may want to expand its position and create an ‘FSA explains’ resource to provide unpartisan and balanced information for consumers on food issues. Doing this could mitigate the sense of overwhelm and confusion experienced by participants and help overcome barriers to seeking out information. This is important given that a range of food issues were seen as important to participants. Becoming an independent, recognised, and trusted voice could provide consumers with somewhere to go when they have a question to which they need a simple and clear answer.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background to the research

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is an independent Government department set up to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food. The FSA is responsible for regulating food businesses in the England, Wales and Northern Ireland and for educating the public about risks associated with certain foods and behaviours. Ultimately, this is so that the public can make informed and safe choices about what and where they eat.

The FSA is committed to putting consumers first in everything it does so that consumers are confident food is safe and what it says it is, have access to an affordable healthy diet, and can make informed choices about what they eat.⁵ As outlined in its strategic plan, the FSA works with food businesses, government and consumers to ensure they are effectively protected and informed. This includes promoting transparency around food production and regulation, working with the public to inform policy decisions and communicating pertinent information to ensure that consumers understand how to handle food safely.

This research is focused on better understanding the public's priorities in relation to transparency in the food system and builds on earlier research conducted in relation to this. Kantar Public conducted research in 2016 that explored what people want the future of their food system to look like. The research found that consumers concerns and priorities for the future were diverse. There was a lot of confusion over how food systems work, supply chains, the stakeholders involved, the roles of these different stakeholders and how the system is regulated. There was also a strong desire to know more about a wide range of issues.⁶

Through this research, the FSA identified seven key food issues about which the public want additional transparency. This earlier research also suggests that the public feels there is a clear role for the Government, the FSA and food businesses in supporting this transparency. The FSA now wishes to understand in more detail the particular issues that the UK public prioritise in terms of understanding more about the food system. They will use the information to inform their strategic objectives going forward.

2.2 Aims and Objectives

The overall aims of the research are to understand what the public think being transparent about food means, what their priorities are in terms of greater transparency, how they think transparency should be enacted and who they see as being responsible for being transparent.

Specifically, the FSA wants to understand priorities in relation to seven food issues within transparency:

- **Production methods:** how food gets from farm to fork, including supply chains, assurance schemes and labelling practices
- **Cost of food:** why food costs what it does and what influences food price

⁵ <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/about-the-fsa>

⁶ <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/our-food-future-full-report.pdf>

- **Authenticity:** how the FSA regulates food producers to ensure food is what it says it is (including approaches to food fraud and food crime)
- **Animal welfare:** how animals are slaughtered and how their rearing is described
- **Composition of food and how this is labelled:** how information about food products is conveyed to consumers, including how products are labelled and the meaning of key terms and phrases
- **Food safety:** how consumers can be provided with information about food which will encourage them to behave in a way that will mitigate risks
- **Regulation:** how foods are regulated and the UK food system quality assured

2.3 Methodology

In order to achieve these aims, Kantar Public ran a series of reconvened deliberative Citizens' Forums with 61 members of the general public. From earlier work Kantar Public understands that consumers have a limited understanding of how food production is regulated or how food is produced. In addition, 'transparency' can be a somewhat abstract issue which the public may find difficult to engage with. For complex and unfamiliar issues researchers need to provide participants with time and space so that they can absorb the information and reflect on any implications. For this project, a two wave approach was agreed in order for participants to familiarise themselves with the realities of food systems in the UK and to provide them the opportunity to reflect on transparency as a concept.

The content and structure of the workshops is outlined below:

- **Wave 1:** 8 two hour sessions introducing transparency in the food system, issues within transparency and gathering participants initial responses to these.
- **Interval:** In order to maintain participant engagement and gather additional insights, participants were given a homework task to complete between waves. The task involved completing a worksheet on one of the seven food issues, describing what the issue meant to them, how the public could be informed about the issue, and who they see as responsible for being transparent about the issue.
- **Wave 2:** 8 two hour sessions in which the same participants reconvened and reported back on their homework, discussed who they thought was responsible for transparency and talked in greater depth about how they could be engaged.

Fieldwork took place in London, Leeds, Belfast and Cardiff between 31st Jan and 16th Feb 2017.

During the research Kantar Public utilized a range of research materials and stimulus in order to support participants' engagement with the concept of transparency in food. A full list of stimulus can be found in the appendix, and included:

- Fact sheets exploring transparency, food issues, common misconceptions about regulations and potential ways consumers could be engaged with food issues.
- Individual homework sheets tailored to each food issue allowing individual feedback on the seven issues to be gathered.
- Activity sheets to explore who is responsible for transparency and engagement mechanisms.

A complete set of all the research materials used in this research can be found in the Appendices.

2.4 Sample

Participants were recruited through face-to-face, telephone, and database recruitment methods. Recruitment was centred on four locations: Cardiff, Belfast, Leeds and London.

Each workshop was attended by 7-8 participants with a mixture of gender, ethnicity, and life stage within each group. The socio-economic composition of groups was varied across locations. In total 64 members of the public engaged in this research, with 61 participants completing the research in full.⁷

Location	Group No	SEG	Wave 1 dates	Wave 2 dates	Attended both waves
Cardiff	1	ABC1	02/02/2017	15/02/2017	8
	2	C2DE	02/02/2017	15/02/2017	8
Belfast	3	ABC1	31/01/2017	14/02/2017	8
	4	C2DE	31/01/2017	14/02/2017	8
London	5	ABC1	02/02/2017	16/02/2017	7
	6	C2DE	02/02/2017	16/02/2017	8
Leeds	7	ABC1	02/02/2017	16/02/2017	7
	8	C2DE	02/02/2017	16/02/2017	7

2.5 Structure of the report

For ease of reference, the remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter three:** The meaning of transparency: In this chapter we discuss how participants understand transparency, what importance they place on it and what appetite they have for information.
- **Chapter four:** Trust and responsibility: In this chapter we discuss who participants see as responsible for transparency and who they would trust to be transparent.
- **Chapter five:** Priorities for transparency: In this chapter we discuss what food issues they feel should be prioritised with regards to transparency. We also look in detail at each of the seven food issues in turn.
- **Chapter six:** Methods and channels for greater transparency: In this chapter we discuss how participants could be engaged about food issues.
- **Chapter seven:** Conclusions and implications: This chapter draws together the findings from the research and the implications for these for the FSA.

All quotations are verbatim, drawn from audio recordings of the workshops, and are presented in the following format:

"Quote" - SEG Location

⁷ A small number of participants dropped out between Wave 1 and Wave 2.

3. The meaning of transparency

This section explored participants' understanding of transparency and what it meant to them in relation to food, as well as how important it was to individuals.

Key findings

- Participants recognised that **transparency is complex** and **believed that total transparency in the food system is unlikely to be feasible**. This was due to the view that the complexity of food systems means no single body can have a view of everything that takes place.
- Fundamentally, participants defined being **transparent as being honest**. This meant describing food products or processes **accurately, using clear, simple language** members of the general public can easily understand. Honesty also meant **not lying by omission** - including all important facts so as to avoid any misconceptions.
- **Transparency was important** because without it participants did not feel they could **make informed decisions** about what they are buying and, crucially, exercise **freedom of choice**. This was particularly important when it related to public health, food safety, and value judgements.
- Despite a common recognition that transparency was important, **appetite for transparency varied** depending on the degree of **agency**⁸ participants believed they had to make food choices and whether or not they had a **need** for the information.

3.1 How transparency was defined

Participants' definition of transparency throughout the research remained simple: transparency meant being honest and upholding the spirit and not just the letter of the law (see Chapter 4). They tended to frame their understanding of transparency through labelling, and the role of food businesses. These definitions and the factors taken into account are discussed below.

"I don't think, when I go to the supermarket, I just pick it up and go home and eat it. I don't really think about that process, of what it goes through." - ABC1, Leeds

Participants believed that in order to be 'transparent' (and honest) a product had to meet certain criteria. Firstly, it had to be accurately described by the food business in terms of its content and provenance. In relation to food products, this meant that an item needed to be what it says it is and come from where it says it comes from. Participants were keen to emphasise that all stakeholders in the food supply chain needed to be honest if descriptions were to be accurate (see Chapter 4). Authenticity was a key priority for participants.

"I don't want to think that I'm feeding my son sausages, when it is a horse" - C2DE, Cardiff

⁸ Throughout this report we use the term 'agency' to refer to participants' perceptions of their ability to make choices about the food they buy and eat. Agency is influenced by a range of internal and external factors including: income, educational background, life circumstances, health, and how much free time they have. This idea of agency has emerged in previous research (see Our Food Future) and elsewhere (link to reports mentioned).

Secondly, alongside accuracy, the description needs to be written in clear, simple language members of the general public can easily understand - designed to disclose rather than mislead. Participants often found the language used to talk about food and some labelling and marketing practices to be confusing. Although recent labelling innovations, such as the food traffic light scheme, were appreciated, several participants felt confused by some labelling practices, particularly around sugar content, as well as fat and salt to a lesser extent. "Scientific" language to talk about ingredients and phrases such as 'free from' versus 'no added' were singled out as being misleading. Similarly, the use of branding and marketing terms – such to as 'heritage' and 'hand-crafted' – were generally perceived to be meaningless.

"If you read something on the packaging that this is like 96% less fat or whatever, what they're actually trying to say is that this is 4% fat and that is actually very misleading and they're allowed to do that." - C2DE, Belfast

"You read all the words that marketing people use like authentic, hand crafted, heritage, these are all handy words that people use, [and you think] oh that must be OK...." - C2DE, Belfast

There was recognition, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, that food businesses are motivated by profit and as such they may comply with the 'letter of the law' around transparency and production standards, but may not go beyond this to deliver the 'spirit' of the law. For example, participants felt that food businesses would not want to clearly communicate any negative aspects of products unless they were forced to, and may deliberately frame things in such a way to mask aspects of production that consumers may find off-putting. As a result, participants felt that transparency would need to be regulated and policed, if it is to be delivered to the extent desired by participants.

3.2 Why is transparency important to people

Participants felt they needed transparency (honesty/authenticity and accurate, clear communications) in order to make informed decisions about what they are buying and exercise freedom of choice and experience a sense of agency over the food they were buying. Without accurate descriptions, they felt they would not be able to judge the quality of the food they were purchasing. In the absence of clear and simple language they would not be able to understand the information they were given.

"Transparency is about providing the consumer with every piece of information so that I as a buyer can make my own, informed decisions about what I buy" - C2DE, London

Participants wanted transparency on issues that could potentially have an immediate impact on their day-to-day lives and health. Issues perceived to be more remote or abstract were deprioritised (see Chapter 5 for further detail on customers' priorities). The two key issues where transparency was believed to be particularly important were for issues that:

- **Impact health:** Participants wanted to know that the food they are buying is 'safe' and wanted transparent information in order to act safely, for example in being made aware of allergens, or the safe way to store or prepare food. Safety had a number of meanings for participants. Particularly in the London groups, food safety did not just relate to the prevention of illness, but also related to health and nutrition. This drove interest in transparency about nutritional content and levels of sugar and salt.
- **Linked with value judgements:** Participants wanted to choose food products that met their own ethical or moral standards. They needed goods to be accurately described for them to be able to make this assessment. This was particularly important when an issue related to a person's identity. For instance, where a person had adopted a certain diet (e.g. vegan, vegetarian), was following religious requirements (e.g. eating halal) or held particularly strong views about production practices (e.g. battery eggs vs free range, organic vs non-organic) transparency became more salient.

These priorities in the context of the importance of food choice revealed a number of interesting dimensions. Ultimately, participants wanted to feel that the food they ate was safe. At a basic level, safety was expected to be a given and not something people should actively need to make choices about. In contrast, participants felt they made more choices around food that aligned with their wider lifestyle and/or identity. It was thus important that participants felt in control over what they were consuming, and able to make the food choices that aligned with their values.

In general, participants had not considered issues of food transparency much prior to the research. While recognising the importance of transparency, at the start of the research most felt UK food systems were performing well and that consumers had access to the information they needed to make informed decisions. However, as participants learnt more about UK food systems during the research they often felt surprised, shocked and, in some cases, deceived by the realities of the UK food system.⁹ Some participants came to realise that regulations were more relaxed, standards lower and definitions weaker than they had assumed or would like. They were concerned and disappointed about this, as they assumed that food businesses would be unlikely to exceed minimum requirements (see Chapter 4). The importance participants placed on transparency increased as a result.

When participants learnt that their assumptions had been wrong, many felt that they had been tricked. Some felt betrayed. This was particularly the case when they were consciously trying to exercise control over what they were eating for reasons of their identity, such as being 'good' by eating healthily or buying ethically sourced foods. For instance, across the board participants were shocked to learn that the chicken in a well-known supermarket brand's chicken sandwich came from Thailand, had been stored for an extensive time period and was sold under the 'made in Britain' label (see Appendix A for research stimulus). This was disconcerting on a number of levels. Firstly, the fact the chicken came from Thailand and had been stored for an extensive period of time was perceived to be 'unsafe'. Many assumed regulatory standards, animal welfare and production methods were lower in Thailand (e.g. more chemicals used) and suspected they would engage in practices banded in the UK. Foreign meat was believed to be more 'risky'. In addition, the fact the chicken was also frozen and shipped for up to 6 months meant it was perceived to be 'old' and to come with a higher risk of spoiling.

"What is fresh? Has the product been frozen before?" - C2DE, Cardiff

Further, participants had assumed that 'made in Britain' meant that a product was made in the UK with British ingredients. They felt they had been misled when they learnt that the majority of the ingredients had come from outside of the UK. Participants who had been making a conscious effort to 'buy British' were particularly annoyed. Although there was recognition that food businesses may not be breaking any rules when they describe their product as 'made in Britain', such practices did not meet participants' standards of "honesty" and were felt to be purposefully misleading. Generally, when they learnt that the product they had bought was not actually 'good' or did not meet their definitions of 'genuine' or 'real', participants questioned their own judgements and their abilities to live their values.

Ultimately, the importance participants came to place on transparency was driven in part by the feeling of having been misled. As a result, they came to emphasise the importance of honesty as a mechanism through which they could make informed choices and live their identities as a result.

3.3 How much of an appetite is there for transparency

Across the board, participants recognised that transparency was an important issue if consumers were to be and feel safe, able to make informed decisions and exercise their consumer rights. However, participants' appetites for information on food issues varied. Below we will discuss how participants' experience of

⁹ This resonates with findings in relation to regulation. Kantar Public (Kantar Public), Regulating our Future: research with the public <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rofresearchwiththepublic.pdf>

agency, their views on whether they could meaningfully exercise freedom of choice and perspective on whether they needed information shaped their thoughts on transparency. Ultimately, these factors shaped the extent to which they actively or passively engaged with information, and the types of information they were interested in (discussed in Chapter 5).

All participants recognised that as consumers they needed some information about the content of the food they were buying in order to make informed choices. For some this meant knowing what the product was (i.e. beef lasagne) whereas others wanted more detailed information on ingredients, allergens and nutritional content. However, participants' interest in actively engaging with such information varied. Whereas some took a cursory glance at information, others conducted a more in-depth review and sometimes proactive research.

The amount and type of information relating to transparency participants wanted, was typically driven by whether they felt they could make a choice (had agency), on the one hand, and their perceived need for this information, on the other. These two factors were typically influenced by their backgrounds (culture, education, social norms etc.), life-circumstances (where they lived, income, access to transport, etc.) and any lifestyle choices they had made (e.g. diet, identification as an 'ethical' shopper, etc.).¹⁰

These factors created restrictions on the range and type of food participants could eat, shaped their need for information and their sense of agency over making food choices, and influenced their ability to engage with information, which are discussed below:

- **Food restrictions (permanent/semi-permanent)**

Some participants' cultures, social norms and health issues meant they experienced permanent restrictions on what they could eat. These restrictions shaped their freedom of choice and meant they actively engage with food issues as a result. As an example, someone with a permanent life-circumstance, such as an allergy or diabetes, may need to follow a particular diet and seek out information on food packaging due to this.

Similarly, culture and social norms influenced the type of information participants were interested in and the extent they perceived it as valid. Participants' whose religious beliefs or cultural background required them to follow certain dietary practices were more likely to actively engage with food issues because they needed to know that a food was 'safe' for them to eat.

- **Food restrictions (temporary)**

Participants' life-circumstances and life-styles choices also shaped the range of foods they were able to buy and the degree they were interested or motivated to uncover information about their food.

Like the issues discussed above, lifestyle choices some lifestyle choices meant that certain foods were restricted. For instance, following a choice-based diet (e.g. vegan, gluten-free) or identifying with a particular community/identity (e.g. being an 'ethical' shopper) motivated some people to learn more about specific issues or gain access to resources.

In contrast, life-circumstances sometimes imposed external restrictions on the types of foods participants could buy, and their willingness to engage with food issues. For example, some mentioned the limitations of being on a tight budget, or lived in an area where they only had access to one supermarket or were unable to access transport to shop in alternative locations. This sometimes meant they felt they did not have a meaningful choice in relation to food, and disengaged from information as a result.

¹⁰ Although these were not always consciously acknowledged by participants as shaping their ability to make informed choices, they were sometimes recognised as influencing the types of information they were interested in.

Unlike food restrictions linked to health, culture or social norms, individuals' life-circumstances can change. Participants may become able or motivated to engage with information (or discouraged to do so) as they learn more about specific issues, or their circumstances change, for example.

- **Limits on ability to engage**

Several participants mentioned that they struggled to understand the information available to them, such as the meaning of symbols or listed ingredients (e.g. different terms for sugar). This was often because the information was overly technical / scientific. This suggests participants' educational background plays a role in their ability to understand information linked to transparency and may shape their ability to make choices about the food they purchased. If they did not feel they could understand the information they were not motivated to seek it out and engage with it.

Participants' perceptions over their agency in relation to food and their information needs shaped the extent to which they were willing to actively engage with information about food. Some participants claimed they wanted, expected and would use information on a variety of issues and from a range of sources. These participants typically felt they possessed a high degree of agency over what type of food they bought and where they bought it. For instance, they may live in easy reach of several supermarkets or feel they have more disposable income or time. They also often had an identified 'need' based on either their backgrounds or life-styles.

Others wanted to be able to take it for granted that the food they were eating was safe to eat and is what it says it is. They felt they would be unlikely to seek out additional information if it was not going to impact their health. These passively engaged participants (who may glance at information but not deeply consider it) were less likely to have a reason to seek out information, had fewer resources / less ability to make choices about their purchases and were potentially less able to understand available information. In effect, these people felt disempowered to the extent that they saw limited benefit to engaging with information on food issues.

Ultimately, participants' views on transparency and the importance they placed on this information shaped who they felt was responsible and who they would trust to provide information. This is discussed in the next chapter.

4. Trust and responsibility

Participants were asked who they believed had a role, who was responsible and who they would trust in being transparent about food. In this section their reactions are discussed.

Key findings

- Participants felt that everyone involved in the food chain was responsible for what they were directly involved with. A transparent food system thus relied on the cooperation and engagement of all stakeholders throughout the food chain (including industry, government and the public).
- It was fundamentally the responsibility of those closest to an issue or food stuff to be transparent as participants believed that no one body has a full view of the whole food chain.
- Given this, participants felt food businesses had the greatest responsibility for being transparent. However, food businesses were not trusted to be transparent in the absence of regulation and enforcement mechanisms. Participants felt food businesses were motivated by profit and would not want to be transparent about issues, processes or systems that might put off consumers.
- Participants had a high degree of confidence in UK food, but low knowledge about how the system works, in terms of the processes, standards and quality assurance mechanisms in place. When participants learnt that their assumptions were wrong, they felt often felt disappointed. Those who had had their identity and values challenged when they learnt the truth often felt this more strongly.
- Greater transparency would aim to narrow the gap between consumers' expectations and the reality the UK food system. This particularly relates to labelling about issues consumers may have strong feelings about.

4.1 Who do participants feel are responsible for being transparent about food

Participants acknowledged that a wide range of stakeholders had a role in promoting transparency, including food businesses, the government (both local and national), public bodies and consumers. Below we will unpack how participants viewed and attributed responsibility to these different stakeholders, and came to see food businesses as being ultimately responsible for transparency.

"[Transparency means that] each person from the farm to plate is honest about what their role is, the steps they have taken and the price it costs." - C2DE, London

Broadly, participants had a high degree of confidence in UK food regulation, meaning the rules and regulations, enforcement measures and compliance with food safety. At the start of the research, there was a general consensus that regulation and enforcement activities provide effective protection. As mentioned above, for the most part participants assumed that food standards in the UK are high, regulations are robust, enforcement rigorous, and that the government is doing the 'right' thing (i.e. protecting the public, ensuring good animal welfare, preventing the misrepresentation of goods and services etc.). There was a strong belief

that UK standards are among the best in the world and that other countries' food systems are weaker and have lower standards, which resonates with wider research.¹¹

Participants believed that the strength of the UK food system relies on the cooperation of various stakeholders. Food businesses (farmers, producers, manufacturer, and retailers), government (local, regional and national), regulators¹², consumers, and others (the third sector, the media etc.) all have a role to play in protecting the consumer, as participants felt no single body has a full view of the whole food system. For example, whilst the FSA may have regulatory oversight, they are unlikely to know what happens day to day on the ground.

Participants believe that the food system relies on:

- Legislators ensuring regulation is in place to ensure that standards are high and are ultimately in the public's interest (**central and regional government**)
- Food businesses (**farmers, producers, manufacturers and retailers**) throughout a supply chain being honest and keeping to defined standards set by legislators
- Regulators (e.g. the **FSA¹³/Local Authorities**) being in place to ensure compliance and **media** engagement to 'keep businesses honest' and expose non-compliance / issues.
- **The public** being engaged and educated so that they can understand available information and hold legislators and food businesses to account



Participants applied this same line of thinking to the issue of transparency. As with the food system as a whole, it was felt that various stakeholders have a part to play in ensuring the UK food system is transparent. Fundamentally, however, participants saw responsibility as diffuse and compartmentalised with each 'link in the chain' responsible for being transparent and meeting their statutory obligations. In other words, the personal handling or producing the food is the one best placed to judge if they are in compliance with the law and to communicate this in an honest way.

This typically meant that food businesses were seen as responsible across all seven food issues, with regulators holding them to account. This assessment endured even once participants had learnt that many of their assumptions were untrue (see Chapter 3). Although they began doubt the strength of the UK food system as a whole and who they would trust to be transparent, participants did not change who they saw as responsible. This has implications for what the FSA can do to support the public's engagement with food issues and is discussed in the next section.

4.2 Who do participants trust to be transparent about food

¹¹ Please see, Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2016), Regulating our Future: research with the public <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rofresearchwiththepublic.pdf>;

¹² Awareness of the FSA was low. Participants variously described 'regulators' as including the police, National Crime Agency, trading standards and Local Authorities.

¹³ As mentioned above, most participants were not aware of the FSA prior to the research.

Although participants felt transparency was predominantly the responsibility of food businesses, there was a low degree of trust in these businesses to be transparent. As has been consistently found in recent consumer research¹⁴, this was due to the view that food businesses are fundamentally driven by profit and maximising their financial bottom-line (rather than promoting the public good). Participants identified a clear role for government to encourage businesses to be transparent through regulation and enforcement activities.

Participants felt food businesses adopt pricing and marketing strategies designed to improve their market share. Competition was suspected to tempt food businesses to cut corners during production and not be fully transparent or honest. During production, participants' hypothesised businesses might feel pressured to use lower quality meat to reduce costs for instance. Similarly, in advertising or labelling food businesses may comply with the letter of the law, but not necessarily the spirit of the law. They may communicate the minimum required or use scientific language to make a product appear healthier. There was a sense food businesses would not be incentivised to communicate honest information about their products that may put consumers off buying them.

"If the food industry polices itself they're in the business of making profit and they will tell you some information but they can withhold an awful lot of other information to give you the impression that oh, you're being told the full truth." - C2DE, Belfast

Participants thought transparency was most likely to be an issue for large businesses that were more remote from the end consumer. Large businesses, particularly those with long supply chains, were believed to be of higher risk of being dishonest.¹⁵ This was linked to the fact that participants felt they could not as easily ask questions or 'connect' with the company or suppliers. As a result, some participants said they had decided to buy their groceries from local, independent stores. Meat sold by a local high-street butcher and produce bought from a farmers market, for example, was felt to be more trusted because they believed it was more 'honest' or 'authentic'. Consumers could ask questions about the product and learn more about the supplier and production methods.

Given this, participants believed government would need to play a role in fostering transparency. Most participants trusted government and public bodies to act in the public good. Despite an initial reduction in confidence following exposure to information about current regulation standards and processes (see Chapter 3), regulation and enforcement activities (e.g. inspections) were seen as the primary mechanisms for encouraging businesses to be transparent.

Participants believed that it was necessary for there to be a strong regulatory framework in place establishing high minimum requirements for businesses with regards to transparency across food issues. Enforcement activities needed to be strong in order to ensure compliance. Crucially, even these minimum requirements needed to be rigorous and aligned to consumers' understanding/expectations, which was not felt to currently be the case (see Chapter 2). Establishing even higher standards and stronger enforcement mechanisms was seen as a way for encouraging food businesses to be more transparent.

Ultimately, there was a lack of alignment between participants' expectation and understanding of systems, regulations, standards and terms (e.g. 'Made in Britain'), and those being used by food businesses. Without this alignment, consumers' trust and confidence in UK food systems and the transparency of the system as a whole will be weakened. They may feel deceived or in some cases betrayed when they learn the 'truth' or learn that their assumptions are wrong. In light of this, greater transparency may be sought by working to close the gap between consumers' expectations and assumption on the one hand, and what happens in

¹⁴ For example, see Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2016), Regulating our Future: research with the public

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rofresearchwiththepublic.pdf>;

Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) Our Food Future (2016) <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/our-food-future-full-report.pdf>

¹⁵ This resonates with findings from Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2016), Regulating our Future: research with the public

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rofresearchwiththepublic.pdf>;

practice on the other. This could be achieved through education the public about food issues, or by encouraging industry to follow the 'spirit of the law' i.e. to use consumers' expectations as the driving force behind their use of terms and application of symbols and assurance schemes (e.g. Red Tractor).

In the next chapter, participants' priorities for the areas in which they want greater transparency are discussed.

5. Priorities for transparency

This section explores participants' priorities for the issues they most want transparency about and those that are lower priority; and the reasons for this. Detailed reactions to each of the seven food issues within transparency are also discussed.

Key findings

- Participants felt the **greatest transparency was needed around food issues that would directly impact their day-to-day lives** and where they would need honest, accurate and clear information in order to **make informed choices**.
- Participants felt **'need to know' food issues were those explicitly related to issues of public health and food safety**: authenticity, composition of food and communication about this, and food safety.
- **Issues not explicitly linked to public health and food safety were deprioritised**. However, participants often felt that health and safety was relevant to all of the seven food issues that they were presented with.
- Compared to food safety, issues such as cost, production methods and regulation were seen as **issues that were 'nice to know'** about. Although participants may have been curious, they commonly (i) **did not feel that information would influence their decision making** or (ii) **were sceptical that transparency could be achieved about these issues**.
- Issues participants did **'not want to know' about were those that provoked negative emotional reactions**, such as disgust or apathy (as well as not being actionable or feasible). **Animal welfare** and some elements of food production were included here.
- **Priorities typically varied depending on whether an issue was regarded as 'need to know' and the degree to which they believed they had freedom of choice** over what they bought.

5.1 Participants reactions to the seven food issues tested

As part of the research, participants were presented with a range of information about the different food issues (as shown in Figure 1), including background information that we expected participants would not typically be aware of. In total, seven discrete food issues were considered by participants. These were: animal welfare; authenticity; composition of food and how this is labelled; cost of food; food safety; production methods; and regulation (please see methodology in Chapter 1 for further detail and the Appendix for copies of stimulus). Participants were asked what their priorities would be across these issues for increasing transparency.

Participants' reactions to each of these issues are discussed in turn below. The issues have been ordered by how important participants felt it was to have transparency over them (see figure 2 below). Participants' priorities and the rational for these are discussed in greater detail in section 5.2 below.

Figure 1: The seven food issues considered by participants

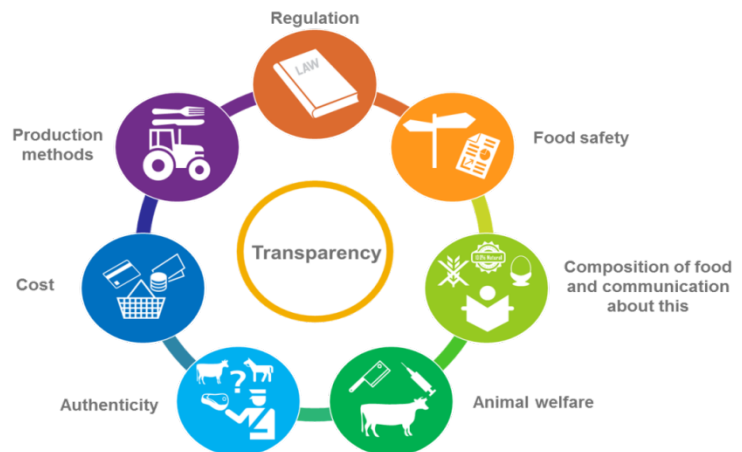


Figure 2: Ranking of perceived importance of issues



5.1.1 Authenticity

Authenticity was seen as the lynchpin of a transparent food system

Authenticity was intimately connected in participants' minds with issues of food labelling, with many participants raising 'authenticity' issues spontaneously when discussing other food issues. Several participants had heard of instances where products had been found to be inauthentic. For instance, one London participant was aware that a famous vegetarian sausage brand had been found to contain meat and was given a record fine. Other participants identified situations where they would regard a product as being inauthentic or misleading, but whose manufacturers are in fact acting within the law. For instance, another London participant had found that a well-known brand of chicken flavoured rice did not contain chicken, but was positioned as 'chicken' flavoured and suitable for vegetarians. They viewed this as misleading. Such behaviour was also felt to have the potential to be unsafe.

Participants saw authenticity as critical for consumer safety, their ability to make informed choices about food and exercise their consumer rights. As discussed in Chapter 3, participants' trust in the food system is damaged if they feel that they have been tricked or misled. They wanted to be assured that the food they were buying was what it says it is (e.g. that their organic vegetables were organic). This was particularly the

case if they were paying a premium for the product. They also wanted to be assured that the food they were buying had not been modified to make it more appealing to consumers (e.g. chicken pumped with water to make it appear larger/heavier). Participants' emotional reactions were particularly strong in situations where they were trying to 'live their values' and see making certain food choices as a part of their identity.

Fundamentally, participants believed that an honest food system relied on products being authentic and that without this authenticity a product could not be transparent.

"If it is policed well enough then it is not going to come into the system then we will not get our hands on it" - C2DE, Cardiff

5.1.2 Composition of food and how this is labelled

The composition of food and labelling is the mechanism through which consumers are told what a food is (i.e. that it is authentic). Consumers need to be confident that the information is accurate.

Given the importance participants placed on authenticity, it is unsurprising that the composition of food and how it was labelled was seen as important for transparency. All groups spoke in broadly positive terms about how food is labelled in the UK. The 'traffic light system' was well-known and praised. However, participants were able to identify potential improvements to food labelling, flagged areas which they found to be confusing and wanted reassurance that they were being legitimately applied (i.e. authenticity).

"In terms of the ingredients I think it is well marked out for everything I had to look at." - C2DE, Leeds

In line with other research¹⁶, participants commonly found the following confusing or felt they could be improved:

- **Different units used to provide calorie/nutritional information:** Participants commented that they found it frustrating when a package would display the calories per 100g but not calories per portion.
- **Jargon/scientific terms:** for instance, the use of technical names for types of sugar (fructose vs glucose etc.)
- **The use of percentages:** for instance, saying 96% fat free on the front of the package but contains 4% fat on the back of the package was felt to be a way for brands to represent a product as being low in fat and 'healthy'.
- **Meaning of symbols:** for instance, not everyone was aware of country of origin symbols.
- **Meaning of specific terms:** for instance, the legal definition of country of origin, organic etc. often did not match participants' expectations. There was a strong desire for these to align.
- **Size of font:** some found the font too small to read.
- **Use by/best before:** felt to sometimes be used to encourage people to buy more, rather than to protect consumer health.

"If you buy something and it says low fat, then you read more and you find out it is full of sugars and this is worse for you" - C2DE, Cardiff

"It's all jargon, there's no transparency for the consumer. It might be transparent to the legal team in Tesco or wherever but it's not very transparent to the consumer" - C2DE, Belfast

Often participants' confusion was due to lack of familiarity with some elements of food labelling and a disconnection between their assumed definition of terms, and the legal definition of terms. Participants

¹⁶ Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2016), 'Understanding NI Consumer Needs Around Food Labelling', https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consumer-needs-around-food-labelling_0.pdf

commonly relied on symbols as heuristic, i.e. short-cuts to make quick judgements about what food to purchase. This led some to feel they were being 'tricked' and that the food they were buying was not authentic.

Ultimately, participants want easy to understand labels that are not misleading. As a result, the FSA may need to support customers in how they understand and interpret these labels. In effect, improving transparency may involve some form of consumer education in how to read labels, or the simplification of labelling, rather than just increasing content.

5.1.3 Food safety

Food safety was seen as a critical issue but one that was a hygiene factor: participants believed unsafe products should not be on the market.

Participants strongly believed that the food they eat should be safe. Most were aware of and valued mechanisms intended to keep them safe (e.g. Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, labelling practices, advice and guidance on how to prepare food) although they did not always follow advice, using their own experience, judgement and cultural practices to guide behaviour instead.¹⁷ For example, some continued to wash chickens despite seeing advice. Similarly, although tools such as the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) and use by/best before labels were consulted, some questioned their validity.

Overall, trust in the safety of food sold in the UK was high. Food safety concerns focused on the effectiveness of regulation and compliance (participants knowledge was low here, see Chapter 3) and what the practices and processes were for food imported from overseas, which was seen as inherently more risky.

As was touched on in Chapter 3 and will be discussed in greater detail in section 5.3 participants' priorities and sensitivities to public health and food safety issues varied. Some saw this as only being in relation to immediate safety issues (e.g. food poisoning), while others wanted longer term health protection (e.g. healthy lifestyle support). This impacted interest and appetite for information on food safety.

Fundamentally, however, all participants were trying to make safe choices and did not want or expect to be given the option to buy unsafe food. As a result, they wanted to make sure that there was transparency on what they could do to keep the 'safe' food they were already buying from spoiling or harming them.

5.1.4 Cost of food

Transparency over the cost of food somewhat confused participants. On the whole, engagement with the issue was in relation to retailers and pricing. Participants did not feel it would be feasible for them to access information on cost or use it in a meaningful way to inform purchase decision.

Price and quality were participants' main interests when it came to cost. Participants wanted to know that they were paying a 'fair' price for their food and that they were not being tricked into buying something that was inauthentic. There was a broad sense that 'you get what you pay for' and that lower cost food was lower quality.

Participants viewed the cost of food as complicated and commercially sensitive. As a result they questioned whether there was scope for additional transparency. Participants generally did not know why food costs what it does or the factors that may influence food price. There was a vague understanding that seasonality, country of origin, negotiations between retailers and manufacturers, and competition between retailers influence the cost of food. However, there was some confusion and ignorance over specific pricing mechanisms and why specific items cost what they do. For instance, some participants were confused about

¹⁷ Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2014), 'Balance of Risks & Responsibilities' <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/risk-responsibility-report.pdf>; Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2015), 'Food Hygiene Practices and Attitudes amongst Black and Minority Ethnicity groups' <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/food-hygiene-practices-and-attitudes-bme-groups.pdf>; Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2015), 'Consumer understanding of food risk: rare burgers' <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa-risk-rare-burgers.pdf>

why two packets of mince beef cost different amounts if they weigh the same and are both '100% beef'. Likewise, some were shocked to learn that products may be sold at a loss in order to encourage consumers to shop in certain stores or that the same suppliers may sell produce to different retailers that may in turn sell food at different prices. Such practices were believed to exploit farmers and deceive consumers.

However, one area where participants across several groups did want additional transparency was in relation to the price paid to farmers, although this was ultimately seen as something that was 'nice to know' rather than 'need to know'. When discussing the example of the price of milk, participants did not feel that it was fair for farmers to be paid less than the cost of production. There was a concern that such practices would risk damaging British producers, and also a willingness to pay more to support sustainability. A few believed that transparency would help support farmers and encourage producers or retailers to pay suppliers a fair price.

"Morrison's the other day were saying if you buy this you will pay 50p more but that money will go directly to the farmer - so I chose that one and made a conscious choice. I like that transparency and I hope it did really happen" – ABC1, Cardiff

"At the end of the day the only people who are going to suffer, not just the farmers, we are as well, consumers because there's going to be less people there to produce that milk, therefore we're going to have to go outside the UK where it will cost more anyway. So if it's going to cost more anyway why don't we give that to our British farmers?" - ABC1, Leeds

The reactions of participants to the issue of cost in food suggest that it is of interest, and there are certainly knowledge gaps. For some, it was deprioritised to an extent as participants felt it was unlikely that transparency about pricing could be achieved, suggesting that this may be an area where consumers currently feel disempowered around information and understanding.

5.1.5 Production methods

Production methods were of interest to the extent that they influence safety. Other aspects of production – food miles, organic/non-organic, country of origins, etc. – were not top of mind considerations and not seen as key drivers to purchase for most.

When presented with information related to food production, most participants were surprised by the complexity involved in getting food from farm to fork and were concerned about certain production methods. They became very engaged with the conversation and claimed that they would alter their behaviour as a result of what they had learnt. Most had not considered food production methods prior to the research and were not aware of the length of supply chains, what terms could be used to describe products to customers and why foods which could be produced in the UK were imported from overseas. When they learnt more about food production they were often concerned about the health implications and whether or not they had been tricked or duped. Production methods often produced the emotional reactions (discussed in Chapter 3).

"Everything you eat, you don't generally think I wonder where this started off." - C2DE, Cardiff

"Why don't we have enough chickens here, why do we have to bring them in from Thailand?" - C2DE, Cardiff

When presented with the 'chicken sandwich' case study¹⁸ most participants were shocked by the number of countries involved, that the chicken had been frozen and stored for over 6 months and that companies were able to market it as a British product. In particular, participants felt the product was being misrepresented when sold as 'British' and 'fresh'.

¹⁸ Please see Appendix A.

Participants had particular concerns over the public health and food safety implications of such supply chains and practices. In particular, participants wanted greater transparency over how meat had been reared and slaughtered, stored and imported from overseas. Standards abroad were considered to be lower. Regulation and compliance was also believed to be weaker. Some said that learning this information made them reconsider whether they would buy such products in the future.

"Six months and they put fresh?! I hadn't thought about this, but now I know I will think twice" – ABC1, Cardiff

"It makes me feel sick; I'll take my own food to work." – ABC1, Cardiff

However, some participants did recognise that there was a need to import goods to the UK and recognised that they had been eating foods that had been produced in this way or transported for long distances for years. For instance, one participant from Leeds was aware that Scottish shrimp was shipped to China, processed and then shipped back to the UK. This was because it was cheaper to do this than have it processed in the UK. Some felt that long supply chains contributed to lower prices in the UK. Imports / long supply chains were generally seen as more acceptable for 'exotic' foods, e.g. bananas, as these could not be grown in the UK.

"Everything is made in the global village so I just accept that..." - C2DE, Leeds

Participants' strong interest and reactions to transparency over food production methods suggests that additional transparency here may be valuable and even translate into changes in food behaviours. However, it also suggests that education is needed over the levels of 'risk' associated with certain production methods and the reasons why food businesses may choose to or need to import goods.

5.1.6 Regulation

Regulation was seen as an important issue but not something participants wanted to actively consider. Participants wanted to take it for granted and know only what they need to know to make an informed choice and exercise their rights (e.g. how to complain).

Across groups, participants felt they knew very little about how food businesses are regulated and the factors which regulators take into account when inspecting food businesses. Participants commonly raised questions related to the regulation process, wanted to know what their rights were as consumers and what opportunities they have for recourse should something go wrong. A lot of their faith in the UK's regulators was based on trust rather than knowledge of the system. Some felt that they had little ability to really know what was going on or whether or not a business was meeting a certain standard – they just had to hope that someone was doing it and 'looking out for them' as the consumer.

"After that horsemeat scandal we sort of found out that actually we are very ignorant and that's maybe where the FSA should have been watching our backs...you have trust they do that for you." C2DE, Belfast

As part of the discussion of regulation, the FSA's work with stakeholders under its Regulating our Future programme was discussed (see Appendix A).¹⁹ Participants' views on this were mixed. Participants believed regulators should make more effective use of modern technology, with some shocked that systems had not changed in 30 years. However, there were some concerns over businesses being trusted to conduct their

¹⁹ For example, see Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2016), Regulating our Future: research with the public <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rofresearchwiththepublic.pdf>;

own audits or submit their own data. As discussed in Chapter 4, participants generally did not believe food businesses would always act in the consumers' best interest.²⁰

"Sounds really dodgy, let's all do our own audits. It should be an external auditor, not themselves" - ABC1, Cardiff

Participants believed there was a clear link between effective regulation and food safety. As a result, participants felt there needed to be 'tight' regulations which were rigorously enforced to ensure they were safe. However, participants typically did not express a strong appetite for how this was being done to be communicated to them. Regulation was instead a hygiene factor and something they wanted to take for granted.

"If you get this right it looks after all of the other ones." - ABC1, Leeds

5.1.7 Animal welfare

Transparency on animal welfare divided participants. Although they were interested to the extent it would impact on public health and food safety, many actively did not want to know how their meat was reared or slaughtered because they thought it would make them feel guilty/put them off eating meat/animal products.

For the most part, participants wanted to know there were systems and processes in place to make sure animals did not unduly suffer during the slaughter process and were reared in conditions that would support the development of healthy meat. Animal health (e.g. illnesses and conditions such as mad cow disease) and the chemicals used to keep animals healthy or help them grow faster were believed to have a potential negative impact on humans. As a result, several participants were confused about why the FSA was not responsible for regulating farms. Again, there was a concern producers would be dishonest, and that ill animals could enter the food chain. Across groups, there were concerns over the animal welfare standards of meat imported from outside the UK and the systems in place for ensuring that standards are high and that meat had been safely produced. This was closely associated with issues of food production and regulation, however, more so than animal welfare itself.

"How do they check meat that comes from outside the UK" - ABC1, Cardiff

Despite the recognised importance of animal health, however, there was little appetite for access to information or transparency. Participants did not want to be presented with detailed information on how animals had been reared or the conditions in which they were slaughtered. Like with regulation, they wanted to know that standards were good and to be able to take that for granted. They wanted to know that unsafe meat would not reach the market.

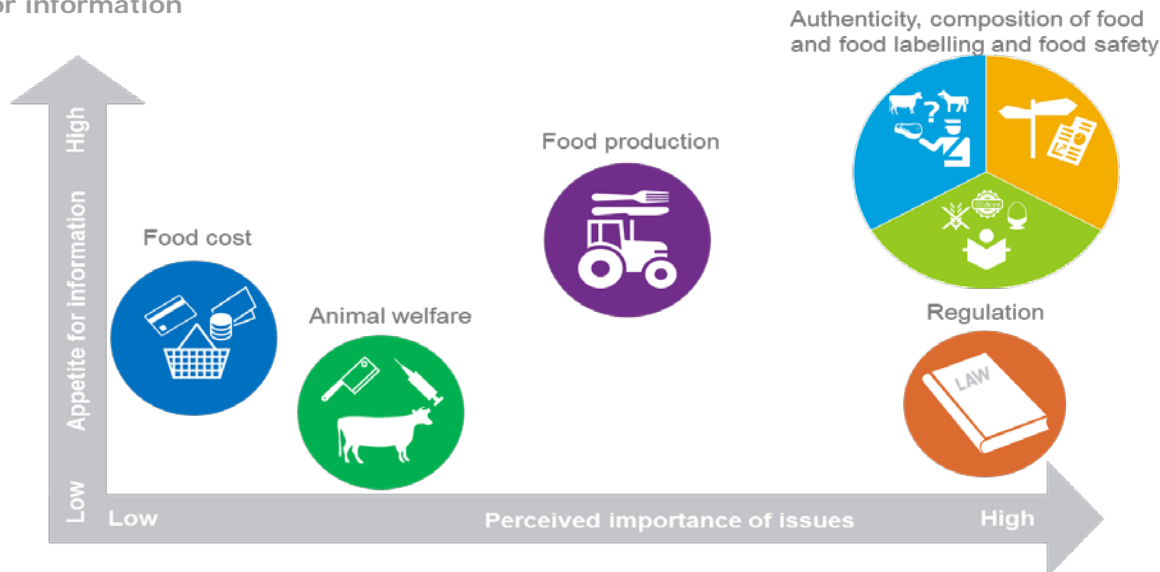
5.2 Participants' priorities

Participant's priorities for transparency were broadly consistent across groups. However, participants' perceptions over the importance of these issues and their appetite for information did vary in line with their views on their ability to act on the information and their perceived need for it (see Chapter 3). Importance and appetite were not perfectly correlated.

²⁰ Kantar Public has conducted extensive work on the regulating our future programme and is currently running a consumer panel into the direction of the programme. For example, see Kantar Public (TNS BMRB) (2016), *Regulating our Future: research with the public* <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rofresearchwiththepublic.pdf>; FSA, (Feb 2017), 'First meeting of the Regulating our Future Consumer Panel', <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/about-the-fsa/regulating-our-future/regulating-our-future-newsletter/rof-consumer-panel-blog>

The importance of an issue was typically informed by whether or not an issue contributed to public health or food safety. In contrast, participants' appetite for information was informed by whether or not they believed having that information would be useful (i.e. the extent they could make a decision based on having that information).

Figure 3 Prioritisation of issues based on perceived importance and participants appetite for information



First and foremost, participants felt the greatest transparency was needed in areas that would directly impact their day-to-day lives and where they would need honest, accurate and clear information in order to make informed choices. Important issues were those where they would need information to decide what to do next.

When considering the seven food issues, participants tended to group them into those which they perceived to be 'need to know', 'nice to know' and 'not want to know' issues.

5.2.1 Food issues considered 'need to know' by participants

- Composition of food and communication about this
- Authenticity
- Food safety

Participants felt 'need to know' food issues were those explicitly related to issues of public health and food safety. Participants wanted to know food was what it says it is, had been labelled correctly and exhaustively (i.e. all ingredients were listed), and was safe to eat. As a result, authenticity, composition of food and communication about this, and food safety were commonly seen as key priorities across groups, and areas around which there would need to be effective regulation and enforcement. The emphasis placed on these areas across groups was largely because participants felt that without transparent information here people would not be able to make informed, safe choices.

"If the food safety is bad then all the rest of it falls apart" – C2DE, Cardiff

Though those three were the most directly associated with food safety and health, participants generally recognised that all the issues discussed had some bearing on food safety. For instance, some saw animal welfare (both how animals were reared and slaughtered) and food production as having an impact on the safety of food. Others highlighted chemicals in food may be dangerous to humans.

"What are the hormones you are getting [in milk], the added extras?" - C2DE, Cardiff

Participants had particular concerns about food imported from overseas. There was a concern that food from abroad that had travelled long distances and been stored for long periods of time may be more likely to be unsafe, particularly if rules were not followed or were not in place from the outset. Participants commonly believed that non-British products will not have been produced to the same high standards that participants assume to be in place in the UK. As discussed in Chapter 4, participants typically had lower trust in organisations which they perceived to be more remote or to have more stakeholders involved, as they believed there was a greater potential for something to go wrong. The result of these strong perceptions and participants' low knowledge base meant that imports were seen as more risky. Ultimately, participants wanted reassurance that imports were safe and transparency over what country their food had come from and how long ago it had been harvested or slaughtered.

Participants who identified public health and food safety implications in a broad range of issues (i.e. not those explicitly linked to authenticity, composition or labelling and food safety) typically had perceived they had a high degree of agency over the food they bought and had identified a need for the information (discussed in Chapter 3). This is discussed at greater length in section 5.3 below.

5.2.2 Food issues considered 'nice to know' about by participants

- Cost
- Production methods (in relation to cost)
- Regulation

Food issues that were not seen as explicitly related to issues of public health and food safety were commonly seen as issues that were 'nice to know' about. This was often because participants either believed knowing about these issues would not influence their behaviour/factor into their decision making processes about the food they eat, or because they felt providing transparency was not feasible. Issues participants commonly saw as 'nice to know' about included the cost of food, production methods and regulation.

The main way in which participants engaged with the issue of food cost was through pricing. Participants were often price sensitive and wanted to know where they could get the best deals on food. They commonly associated particular stores with particular price points. Participants understood that a product may cost one amount in one store, but considerably more (or less) in another. However, they did not always know why. With participants having little knowledge about what influences price, it was variously attributed to issues such as greed, competition, and taxes.

"Why does it cost essentially double for a steak in Belfast [compared with the countryside]?" - C2DE, Belfast

Though this was an area of interest that sparked curiosity, participants typically viewed having transparency in this area (i.e. why food costs what it does) as not particularly feasible or valuable. They saw pricing as a sensitive, commercial issue. As a result, they thought consumers may not be best placed to understand why a particular retailer is able to charge less than another as it may be the combination of a number of complex issues, e.g. a long term relationship with the supplier, the product of negotiation, the grade of the product bought. The cost of food was also generally believed not to be something participants could influence and, as a result, not something they wanted additional transparency about. In effect, they felt disempowered around the issue to the extent that they did not see the point of engaging with it.

"At the end of the day no matter what food you're buying it's somebody else's business isn't it. You wouldn't normally ask for a breakdown from somebody's business... I agree to a certain degree there should be some transparency but people are in business to make money, they're not in business to be fair. You can be fair it's just that you're not going to make as much money..." - ABC1, Leeds

However, there were some participants who did express an interest in having transparency over cost, particularly in relation to ethics, labour practices and supply chains. While they still did not feel it was a 'need to know' issue, a few participants wanted to know that the original producer was being paid fairly (e.g. the farmer). This came through in the discussion around the stimulus that presented the cost of milk (see Appendix A). Some participants were passionate around the ethical concerns of fair wages to farmers. Some mentioned 'fair trade' standards as a useful tool for understanding this (although some did question the validity of the 'fair trade' system).

Participants' views on authenticity, food costs and safety linked closely with their views on food production, particularly when these fed into wider life-style choices or self-identity (e.g. being environmentally conscious). It was important that products labelled as free-range or organic were genuinely so. Similarly, they wanted to know that if they were paying a premium for a product it was worth it. For instance, some participants were surprised to learn that a producer may supply multiple retailers when this was mentioned as a practice by other group participants. They questioned why they were paying a premium at certain stores for what (they believed) was the same product. When they learnt this some participants believed that they were being 'tricked' and felt greater transparency was needed as a result. Again, participants felt they needed to know this in order to make an informed choice. Such 'deceptions' challenged their sense of identity and the extent they felt they were in control (as discussed in Chapter 3).

As with cost, regulation was typically seen as important, but not something participants actively wanted to know about. Most understood that effective regulation was key to maintaining a safe food system and assumed this was in place. They believed that in the absence of regulatory standards food businesses would likely cut corners and engage in practices that might put people at risk (see Chapter 4). However, most did not want to actively engage with information about regulation. They wanted information on this only to the extent that they could exercise their rights and access recourse. Beyond this they merely wanted to know that standards were in place and that their rights were protected. Ultimately they saw regulation not something to be transparent about but as something that would force or facilitate transparency.

"Does the consumer really want to know about regulation, is it top of the list really, no. I don't think you go into the shop and say before I buy this is it regulated?" - C2DE, Belfast

5.2.3 Food issues considered 'not want to know' about by participants

▪ Animal Welfare

Issues participants did 'not want to know' about were those that provoked emotional reactions, such as disgust or apathy (as well as not being actionable or feasible). While some participants were less interested in regulation as they perhaps viewed it as not particularly engaging, participants often actively did not want transparency about food production and animal welfare. This was because the issue made them uncomfortable.

Participants assumed or suspected standards were low due to the price they were paying or what they were already aware of from the media and other sources. Despite knowing that there were elements of animal welfare and farming practice that they were not aware of (and in some cases feeling uncomfortable with this in itself), many did not want to be confronted with the 'proof' about their suspicions and shown potentially unpleasant practices. Some feared being confronted with this information would force them to change their behaviour or make them feel guilty. Participants typically did not want this to happen either because they liked the product, liked being able to buy meat cheaply, or felt they would not be able to afford better alternatives. In effect they did not want to have their behaviour challenged and preferred to remain ignorant.

"If you find out too much you end up not eating!" - C2DE, Belfast

"[In regards to animal welfare] It's sort of you want to know more but you don't want to know more at the same time." - ABC1, Leeds

The exceptions to the above were participants who identified as 'ethical' shoppers, or who were vegetarians.

5.3 Variations in participants' priorities

The extent to which participants felt they had agency over the food they buy and the degree they perceived a 'need' for the information (as discussed in Chapter 3) fed into their categorisation of issues as 'need to know' and 'nice to know' issues, as described above. It also had implications for how they expected to engage with information on food transparency (see chapter 6).

Even within the area that was seen as the greatest priority across groups – public health and food safety – there was a lot of variation in participants' interest. Across all participants there was a desire for certainty that the food they were going to buy and consume was not going to make them seriously ill or kill them. For some, typically those less able to exercise freedom of choice, this was the start and end of the matter. Others, however, had a broader definition of public health and food safety. Among some participants there was an additional desire to know that the food they were eating was healthy, would contribute to a healthy lifestyle and would not have long term health implications. These participants were typically more affluent. They also commonly felt they had more access to food options and could make decisions over where they shopped and what types of products they could buy.

Consumers clearly have different needs and information appetites, depending on their personal values and circumstances - though some of these attributes can be influenced or changed. These findings also suggest that if consumers are to make informed choices about the food they eat, work will need to be done to empower them to feel they have meaningful control over the food they buy and where they buy it, regardless of where they live, or their level of income. Engagement options are discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

6. Methods and channels for greater transparency

In this section, participants' information seeking behaviour, attitudes towards available information and mechanisms through which they could be effectively engaged are discussed.

Key findings

- Participants' decisions to actively engage with information were driven by their views of whether or not the information was needed and their self-perceived ability to act on this information. Most participants did not proactively seek out information unless they needed it for cultural or health reasons, or to fulfil certain lifestyle choices.
- Changes in circumstances or exposure to a particular issue which was recognised as relevant/concerning triggered engagement in information related to food.
- Participants were overwhelmed by the amount of information available. Typically, they found information sources difficult to navigate, vague, inconsistent and confusing.
- Participants recognised that the food issues they were considering were complex. Although many struggled to identify a trusted source of guidance, there was an appetite for support from a trusted advisor to help find the 'right' answer.
- Participants brought forward a range of suggestions for how they could be engaged with food issues, and who they would trust to provide this information. Suggestions were often practical, focused on existing behaviour/channels already used and what they considered to be realistic and feasible for both industry and consumers such as them.
- Participants felt that they could be **effectively engaged** if information was provided at the **point of purchase, delivered in simple, easy to understand terms**, that **additional sources of information were sign-posted** as needed, and **information was curated/packaged**.

6.1 Information seeking behaviour among participants

Across the workshops participants were asked about how they could be engaged about issues relating to transparency. As will be discussed below, awareness and engagement with information and information sources was generally low. When participants learnt more about this information and sources, their attitudes were mixed. Often opinions were somewhat negative because they found information difficult to find and understand and sometimes doubted the information's validity. As a result, participants believed there was a need for an independent source of neutral information, 'laying out the facts' in plain, simple language available at the point of purchase. We feel the FSA may be able to fill this gap.

Participants recognised that there was a need for consumers to have access to information relating to food if they were to make informed choices. However, for the most part, participants did not proactively seek out information, beyond what was immediately available to them in-store (e.g. in a supermarket) or in-venue (e.g.

at a restaurant). Although some consulted nutritional content and lists of ingredients on food packages and FHRs rating, many did not go beyond this.

Participants' decisions to actively engage with information were driven by their views of whether or not the information was needed and their perceived ability to act on this information. As mentioned in Chapter 2, views on public health and food safety were a key influence on participants across groups. Participants actively engaged with information if they identified a need and had the agency to act on the information. In contrast, participants who did not see a need for the information or who lacked agency did not prioritise engaging with information. Participants often considered themselves to be too busy meeting other commitments (e.g. busy lives, child care requirements) to look for and reflect on food information, or did not feel having access to the information would influence their behaviour²¹. Most participants doubted their willingness to search out information related to transparency in the absence of a specific need for information as a result.

"It's really interesting to see but when you're dashing around a supermarket with two kids under the age of four, how bothered are you... I haven't got the time to think this chicken sandwich I'm eating, where's the chicken come from." - ABC1, Leeds

Participants' views on whether or not information was 'needed' were shaped by the permanent and temporary restrictions on food they experienced, as explained in Chapter 2. These restrictions, and consequently participants' decisions whether or not to actively seek out information, had sometimes been triggered by events in their lives or exposure to food issues. Although some had inherited certain cultural practices, beliefs or lifestyles, others had adopted new practices and had become more engaged in food issues as a result.

Common events which triggered participants to become interested in food issues included:

- **Poor personal health/health of family member:** for instance, one participant in Leeds mentioned that his father had needed to avoid certain foods because he was diabetic. As a result he checked the nutritional content of the food he bought for his father.
- **Exposure to information relating to health risks:** for instance, some participants across groups mentioned they were more aware of sugar content due to media coverage of the long term risks of sugar consumption.
- **Exposure to information relating animal welfare:** several participants described being sent information by friends or coming across information on animal welfare on social media (Facebook/twitter). While some consciously chose to ignore this information and carry on regardless, others had changed their behaviour (e.g. buying free-range eggs) as a result.
- **Exposure to information relating to other food issues:** several participants mentioned that becoming aware of food issues made them more conscious about the food they buy. For instance, one participant in Cardiff had watched a documentary about fish, which made him aware of the negative environmental impact of catching fish through nets. As a result, he wanted to know how his fish had been caught (through net or line fishing) when he went shopping in order to promote the sustainability of food stocks. Likewise, other participants mentioned documentaries such as 'What the Doctor Doesn't Tell You' and programmes delivered by Jamie Oliver as making them more interested in their health and food issues in general.

There is evidence that exposure to information about food issues increases participants' appetite for information and contributes to them feeling more empowered around food. There may be scope for the FSA

²¹ This reflects findings in wider research with consumers on their shopping behaviours, and the limited cognitive 'bandwidth' people have for decision making in supermarkets. See, for example, Kantar Public (2016); FSA Understanding NI Consumer Needs Around Food Labelling https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consumer-needs-around-food-labelling_0.pdf

to increase participants' awareness about food issues, which may contribute to them feeling able to make more informed choices.

6.2 Participants' views on information and information sources about food

As part of the workshops, participants were asked to complete a homework task in which they researched one of the seven food issues and described what it meant to them (see Chapter 1 Methodology and Chapter Appendix A and C for further information). Participants' views about the process of finding information, the information available and the sources were often mixed.

When feeding back on their homework task, participants commonly had often been surprised by the amount of available information. To an extent, they were overwhelmed by it. Many had not considered food issues to a great extent before and had relied on a range of assumptions to inform their purchase decisions (see Chapter 3). As they researched their issue, most consulted multiple sources of information from different organisations and learnt that many of their assumptions were not completely accurate.

"You have to dig for it and there's a lot to dig through...if I was writing a thesis on it, it would be brilliant but if I'm going to buy some fish fingers, [it's] not great." - ABC1, Belfast

Many found the process of finding the information they needed challenging. Information was not always available in places where participants intuitively felt it would be stored and individual websites were sometimes difficult to navigate. For instance, a participant from Cardiff researched the FHRs system. She approached this by first looking at the websites of some of her local restaurants. She was very surprised to find there was no information on their FHRs score available directly on their websites and found this disappointing saying:

"On the website I'd like to have a quick look and see, it would help me to choose the restaurant I'd go to, if the information was out there I'd be quite interested in that."

Generally, she had found it difficult to find information on food safety online. Although she had discovered the FSA's website, she found it difficult to navigate. In general, there was a sense among participants that they lacked access to single, independent, authoritative source of information: typically participants needed to go to multiple sources to find the answers they needed and had low awareness and understanding of the FSA (prior to the research).

"There's nothing on the FSA website that says 'safety - this is what we do' it's quite hard to find information about it" - ABC1, Cardiff

In almost all instance, participants had conducted their research online using search engines as their starting point. Participants researching issues like food safety used the FSA website in some form, although sometimes found it difficult to find a specific answer to their questions (e.g. who regulates food imported into the UK). Those researching non-safety related issues, such as food production or animal welfare, had often approached the task with a specific product in mind. They looked at manufacturers' websites or the websites of charities (e.g. RSPCA), advocacy groups, or the providers of assurance schemes (such as the Red Tractor).

Once participants had found information on the questions they were trying to answer, they typically described the information as vague, inconsistent and confusing. Often the language was believed to be overly technical and scientific, with some believing this was intended by food businesses who wanted to misrepresent their products to maximise profit (see Chapter 4). This often meant participants did not feel they had reached a satisfactory answer to their questions. Despite having consulted various websites, including the FSA's, they did not know who was responsible, what standards were or how things were regulated. Some, who did find specific answers, believed the information was contradictory or biased or queried the validity and interpretation of information.

"It was very hard to get specific information and I still don't know who's in charge. How are they being transparent when it's all vague information?" - ABC1, Belfast

Having identified a range of information sources and learnt more about their food issue, participants came to recognise that the food issues they were researching were complex and that there may be more than one 'right' answer (or no 'right' answer at all). For instance, one Leeds participant said Fairtrade was problematic as you did not know if it was really beneficial for farmers or beneficial in a meaningful way (i.e. were they just paid a nominal amount more than someone working at a non-Fairtrade farm). He was also unsure if it was better to buy Fairtrade or buy goods locally, as there was an environmental impact to importing goods from overseas.

Given this complexity, participants recognised they may need 'expert' advice in order to make an informed choice or come to an informed opinion on particular issues.²² However, there was often a tension between the perceived need for expert advice and guidance (or an authoritative source of information) and participants' trust in this advice. Participants recognised that 'experts' may have a particular agenda or viewpoint, and may not present all the facts or not present facts in a neutral way. For instance, people who sell fair trade products want you to believe it is a good thing and present it as such. As a result, they may not tell you negative or critical information. Likewise, participants felt some media sources may sensationalise certain issues.

"The slide you had up and fourteen, fifteen different bodies all trying to do something similar. You're not quite sure where a consistent message is coming from or if you can trust it." - ABC1, Leeds

There was also recognition that not everything is known. Scientific discoveries may mean 'best practice' advice or accepted cultural practices (e.g. washing chickens) are no longer considered safe. Changes in advice or guidance may lead some participants to question the authority of the speaker.

Participants' attitude towards information was influenced by who was providing it. 'Official' sources of information, generally from government (e.g. FSA, PHE) or public sector bodies (e.g. NHS, LA, Dentists) were the most trusted as they were believed to be acting in the public interest. Participants often challenged information provided by food businesses, who they saw as ultimately driven by making profit. For example using different words for sugar or percentages to give the impression a product is good for you or health (see Chapter 4). Although some believed food businesses would want to be truthful, others felt they would be incentivised to represent their product in their best light.

"I trust that has to be true cos why would they risk their name?" - ABC1, Belfast

"I just don't trust them, they're selling you something...Are they giving you everything? I don't know..." - ABC1, Belfast

Overall, many described the process of finding information as challenging, believing they had to 'dig deep' to reach a satisfactory answer to their questions. Participants were left with the impression through their research that there was a lot of available information but that the volume, level, and presentation of information was/is difficult to engage with. Participants recognised that many of the issues they were researching were complex and that there may not be single 'right' answers. What they wanted, however, was a single authoritative source of information where they could have various 'facts', 'points of view' and 'arguments' presented to them, in order that they might come to their own informed conclusion.

6.3 Participants views on engaging consumers with food issues

²² 'Experts' were typically discussed in vague terms by participants, but included government bodies (such as the FSA), health advisers, and authorities on particular subjects.

Participants brought forward a range of suggestions for how they could be engaged with food issues, and who they would trust to provide this information. Suggestions were often practical, focused on existing behaviour/channels already used and what they considered to be realistic and feasible for both industry to provide and consumers to engage with. Participants' suggestions and the reasons for these are described below.

Participants were aware that as consumers they are often busy and want to take many issues related to food for granted. For instance, they did not want to seek out information on food safety, as they believed that unsafe food should not be sold. Participants also recognised that as consumers they were not currently engaging with much of the information that is available, even that which is displayed in their immediate environment (e.g. on packaging, in store, in restaurant etc.). As a result, they felt it was important consumers should have to put relatively little effort into finding the information they want, and that the most relevant/pertinent information should be the most readily available.

"I don't think we need to know overall, I just think we need to know that someone is checking. If you had every single piece of information on the packaging you wouldn't read it, you wouldn't read any of it... it's just knowing someone is watching your back and doing all the research for you." - C2DE, Belfast

Participants also believed there were practical limitations on how information could be delivered to them. They were very conscious that food businesses are running commercial operations and that there would be a limit to the type of information they would provide. They also felt there were factors that would limit what food businesses would willingly be transparent about (see Chapter 4). Participants also thought that it was not feasible to display all information related to a particular issue everywhere. For instance, there is only a certain amount of space on a box or packet and, as a result, judgements would need to be made on what information was displayed on the box/instore and what would be stored online.

Given this context, participants' believed consumers could be most effectively engaged if:

- **Information was provided at the point of purchase:** This was when participants made decisions about what they were going to buy. They suggested information should be displayed in store (e.g. on shelves, pop-up stands by advocacy groups etc.) and more information provided on packaging. Some expressed an interest in behind-the-scenes tours of retailers so that participants could see how things are done.

"The interface between industry and us is on the label on packaging, so [its] more information at point of sale on the packaging [that is needed]" - C2DE, London

- **Simplify information to minimize burden:** Participants found symbols (e.g. RSPCA Assured, Red Tractor, FHRS stars, lion on eggs, traffic lights) helpful shorthand for understanding at a glance whether or not food or a venue was suitable for them. Although participants engaged in the research came to recognise that they did not always fully understand all the information behind these symbols or schemes, they were quick and easy to use and could easily fit into participants busy lives. There may be an opportunity for the FSA to work with food businesses to close the gap between the meaning consumers assign to symbols, and their actual meaning to avoid consumers being misled. Another area where participants felt simplification was needed was in relation to the language used to describe certain foods/ingredients. Where possible, scientific terms should be avoided and terms such as 'made in Britain' should align to consumers understanding / interpretation of these terms.

"Maybe like an FSA stamp on the food, everybody will recognise it like the way Scores on the Doors are, maybe on the food." - C2DE, Belfast

- **They were clearly directed to additional sources of information:** Participants recognised not all information could be delivered in store. Participants suggest QR codes and websites could contain pertinent or 'nice to know' information that could not be displayed at the point of purchase, or which might only be of interest to some consumers. Links to this additional information should however be provided in-

store and on products so that consumers could easily find it if they needed it. Some also wanted to be offered tours of producers' premises (or shown videos) so that they could get additional 'behind the scenes' insight. Although this may not be feasible to deliver or something consumers would necessarily trust (in light of views on food businesses' motivations discussed in Chapter 4), it suggests an appetite for 'how stuff works' style information, i.e. videos or documentaries to bring some distant parts of the food chain to life.

- **Information is balanced, and packaged or curated:** Participants understood that some food issues are complex and also that there may be businesses and individuals that want to exploit the consumer or commit crimes. As a result, they felt there was a need for an independent voice to provide balanced information on food issues which are in the public's interest. In effect, some participants wanted to be told what an issue is, what the various arguments about it are (both for and against) and why it matters. Several mentioned how documentaries, newspaper articles and media reports had made them aware about certain food issues and want to learn more. They also felt there was a role for a government body, such as the FSA, to raise awareness about issues and provide an independent voice and point of view on what was safe.

As discussed in previous chapters, there are varying appetites for transparency about food issues based on whether or not a participant feels the information is needed and that they have agency over what they buy. The identification of a 'need' is sometimes drawn from permanent factors of a persons' life, such as their background, heritage and health. In other instances, however, it is the result of being exposed to information about food which led them to seeing a 'need' where before they did not. As participants were exposed to information about the UK food system in the course of the research, they identified a role for a trusted body to provide information on food issues in a balanced way, and also for more information to be provided at the point of purchase, when it is most relevant. In large part this was because participants recognised that if consumers are not aware that an issue exists or the various sides of the debate they are not able to accurately judge whether they need to know about an issue or make informed choices around food. In light of this, there may be a role for the FSA in providing this balanced voice on food issues.

7. Conclusions and implications

This section draws together the findings from this research about the food issues that should be priority areas for greater transparency, and the reasons for this.

7.1 Prioritisation for transparency

Participants' priorities are described in the table below, along with analysis of which issues represent the greatest opportunities or possible risks for the FSA. Participants' broader reactions are discussed beneath.

No.	Food issue	Participants' views	Implications
1	Authenticity	These three issues were seen as mutually dependent, and the most important to be transparent about. Participants prioritised their ability to make informed choices to both meet their health needs and their moral standards.	Safety is important, but should be a given. Issues that link to consumers' identities, which are delivered through authenticity and labelling, are of great importance for participants and inspire a strong emotional response if participants' assumptions are revealed to be inaccurate.
2	Composition and food labelling		
3	Food safety		
4	Food production	This was categorised as a 'nice to know' compared to other issues, though information revealed a lot of unknowns.	Learning more about the journey from farm to fork generated a lot of interest among participants. This suggests transparency or promoting activities may have traction.
5	Cost	As issue somewhat difficult to engage with, and feeling of low current understanding. Some felt it could not be (i) made transparent or (ii) be influenced by the consumer.	A complex area, yet participants engaged with the issues of pay and fair pricing for producers. Participant reactions suggest this may be an area where participants feel confused, disengaged, and disempowered.
6	Regulation	This was something that was expected to 'just work' behind the scenes. Participants' main interest in this focused on how to complain - otherwise there was comparatively lower engagement with this issue.	Providing additional transparency on this issue (other than how to complain/access recourse) could be deprioritised.
7	Animal welfare	This food issue was controversial and sparked disengagement and discomfort among participants. They suspected standards were low and did not want to confront reality and risk having these suspicions confirmed.	Engagement in this area should be considered carefully as it is divisive and sensitive - consumers are not sure they want a voice in this space.

7.1.1 Issues that were seen as 'need to know'

In Chapter 5, views on public health and food safety were shown to drive participants' priorities for transparency. Fundamentally, participants wanted to ensure that the food they were eating and feeding to their families would not make them ill and would align to their individual lifestyle choices, cultural identities and values. To be able to do this, they needed to have practical information related to the **authenticity** of a product, **the composition and labelling of a product** and **food safety**. These were seen as the key 'need to know' issues across groups and among participants with varying views on agency.

However, although participants talked about their priorities in terms of safety, in many respects they felt food safety issues should be a given and not something they should have to make active choices about. There was a strong sense that if a food stuff or process was unsafe, it should not be allowed to be sold. Importantly, participants' views on safety were driven by what they felt in their gut was safe, rather than an objective fact based assessment. As a result, their desire for information was sometimes driven by anxieties over unsafe practices or low standards that in reality may not represent a threat to their health. Therefore although research participants highlighted transparency over food safety as one of their key priorities, it is in fact a greater priority to have a safe food system. Information should be provided to reassure participants that minimum standards have been met and to encourage food businesses to meet these standards.

More significant for participants was having transparency about food issues that related to their identity. This was primarily delivered through the authenticity of food and transparent labelling, driving the interest in honesty and adherence to the 'spirit of the law'. Ethical consumers or those following a healthy diet wanted to buy the 'right' things that adhere to their values. Discovering that these choices may be undermined did more than annoy people about being overcharged for a luxury product - it fundamentally undermined people's attempts to live their food values, something closely linked to individual and group identity-making. In many respects, the gap between participants' expectations and the realities of the food systems in this space may damage their trust in the effectiveness of the UK food system.

7.1.2 Issues that were seen as 'nice to know' or 'not want to know'

Other food issues (food cost, food productions, regulation, animal welfare) were seen as 'nice to know' or 'not want to know' issues, to the extent that they did not have an impact on human health. However, these issues revealed varying levels of interest and engagement, and often related to people's individual food values. **Food production** was seen as a consumer rights issue and was a highly engaging issue for participants. Again, participants wanted confidence that they were not being miss-sold a product. They wanted terms like 'made in Britain' to match their definition of this and that the free-range eggs are actually free-range. This ultimately links back to labelling and authenticity, though reveals the fact that production, food chain complexity and provenance are all areas of consumers interest.

Participants were curious about **food cost** but generally engaged with the issue in a fairly narrow sense, with the perception that the issue was possibly too complex for consumers to genuinely engage with. Some participants were interested in issues relating to labour rights, supply chains and pay, with some ('ethical' shoppers) interested in ideas of paying more for better conditions for producers. Ultimately, the issue was deprioritised for transparency due to the perception that clarity about the cost and price of food would be difficult to achieve, that consumers could do little to influence cost, or that information would meaningfully impact their behaviour. There may be an opportunity to empower consumers about an issue largely perceived to be outside of their control.

The final two issues, **regulation** and **animal welfare** were in many ways seen as hygiene factors. Participants did not feel they needed transparency about regulations (beyond how to complain) as they should be robust and keep them safe. In most instances this was what participants assumed to be the case prior to the research. Likewise, animal welfare should be high. Participants wanted to take animal welfare and regulations for granted and did not want to actively engage in information about this. Animal welfare was also a controversial issue, with participants expressing a preference to avoid engaging with uncomfortable

facts about meat production. This is likely to be a sensitive and divisive issue and consequently does not represent a clear priority for increasing transparency about.

7.2 Priorities are individual

Participants' views on transparency and attitudes towards food issues were fundamentally driven by whether they thought they needed the information and whether they felt they could make decisions in light of this information. As discussed in Chapter 3, participants' needs and views on agency were shaped by whether they had any restrictions on the types of food they could eat and whether they could understand available information. These typically were drawn from participants' backgrounds, life-circumstances, and lifestyle choices.

These two factors – perceived agency and need – intersected and shaped whether participants were motivated to actively engage with food issues. Those who felt they had freedom of choice and had identified a need for the information were typically more actively engaged with issues of transparency than those who felt they had less agency and had not identified a need for this information. These two factors also influenced the specific issues participants felt should be prioritised.

Crucially, participants' backgrounds, life circumstances and lifestyle choices were not fixed. Some views and lifestyles changed over time, as did participants' information needs and priorities. Participants were able to describe situations where they had been triggered to become engaged with food issues. These are described in greater detail in Chapter 6 but included changes in circumstance such as becoming ill or being exposed to food issues they were previously unaware of. In either case, some participants perceived a need for additional information and changed their behaviour around food as a result.

7.3 The role for industry and the FSA

In Chapter 6, participants made a number of suggestions for how they could be effectively engaged with information relating to transparency. Participants reflected that they were time-poor and unlikely to proactively seek out additional information. The process of researching information online was found to be challenging due to the volume, style and quality of the information available. In light of this, and participants' agency (as described above), there may be roles for industry and the FSA to support consumers' engagement with information about food issues while accommodating consumers' preferences for information to be delivered in context and in easily comprehensible formats.

7.3.1 Opportunities for industry

Participants saw their main way to engage with food and food issues as being through information in-store or on packaging. Participants wanted to see more simplified language being used to help them understand and interpret what they were being told. Food businesses' engagement with existing tools such as FHRS and traffic light labelling were believed to be effective ways of helping consumers make choices about the food they eat. Participants wanted to see additional similar mechanisms developed and applied. While this appetite among consumers should be acknowledged, there is a tension here as although participants appreciate symbols and heuristics to support quick decision making, they also run the risk of surface-level understanding, or misconceptions about the meaning of symbols used. Greater transparency could be achieved if industry or those running labelling schemes were led by consumers' interpretation of the short-hands used, to help narrow the gap between expectation and reality.

Participants recognised that not all information could be delivered through labelling. Some information was very complex, not relevant / of interest to everyone and there were practical limitations to what manufacturers could display on packaging. Given this, participants wanted to be sign-posted to where they could learn more (ideally instore or on products). Some also believed they could be provided with information

by being physically shown elements of the UK food system that are not typically accessible to them. There was an appetite for 'behind the scenes' access to elements of food production, such as being given tours of factories or being shown documentaries which illustrate how things are produced and/or the systems and process that are in place to keep them safe. This would likely need to be industry led for information to be considered authentic, although (as discussed in Chapter 4) some may query industry's motives in providing this information or whether they were being shown an accurate representation of how things are done.

Ultimately, industry will need to walk the line between promoting their products and respecting customers' identities. For many of our participants it was not enough that industry complies with the letter of the law. Their expectations and standards extended beyond this to include businesses doing the 'right' thing, 'acting morally' and upholding the 'spirit of the law'. While all of these things are, to an extent, subjective, industry will need to connect with consumers to reduce the gap between the consumers' understanding of language and symbols and their actual meaning.

7.3.2 Opportunities for the FSA – 'the FSA explains'

Currently, there was felt to be a gap in the market for a 'trusted advisor', with the majority of participants unaware of the FSA (prior to the research). There is an appetite for such unbiased, unpartisan information on food issues which does not appear to currently be filled by existing resources. Ideally, participants wanted information to be curated and packaged in order that they could digest and act on it. This would be done by an 'expert' or respected authority that was able to present a balanced argument. As such, there may be scope for the FSA to fill this role and position itself as a trusted source of balanced information on food issues. Many participants assumed this was the case or a part of the FSA remit. Industry may be able to support the FSA in meeting this need, by providing advice and guidance and accurate information.

There may be additional opportunities for the FSA to support participants in becoming actively engaged in issues of food transparency, in addition to the areas discussed above and taking into consideration the factors that may trigger consumers to engage with food issues (discussed in 7.2). The primary way of encouraging engagement is likely to be through promoting awareness of food issues, developing tailored information that highlights the need or relevance of particular food issues, or by working with consumers and industry to empower customers to have freedom of choice over what they eat. Suggestions to achieve this are included below:

- Work with schools to increase food literacy and comprehension of food issues – this could potentially help avoid consumers feeling 'shocked' or 'betrayed' by common practices, standards, or definitions (e.g. supply chains, meaning of terms such as made in Britain).
- Provide education on the meaning of symbols and terms to close the gap between consumers' assumptions and realities. Provide advice and guidance for consumers on how to use and apply these to their lives.
- In order to help participants feel a sense of agency over their food choice regardless of external restrictions (e.g. where they live, income, etc.), provide information that allow consumers to identify how and where they can make choices about the food they buy and eat (e.g. how to cook healthy, safe meals on a budget).
- Support awareness of various food issues (e.g. supply chains, food waste, chemicals in food, meaning of terms like 'Made in Britain' etc.) so that consumers are aware they exist. Consumers need to be aware of an issue to know whether or not it is something they care about and want to engage with. This could be achieved through the FSA establishing itself as a source of balanced information on food issues, i.e. taking a position of 'the FSA explains'.

- Work to align consumers understanding of key terms, systems and processes with those used by industry and government.

Fundamentally, the above steps by industry and the FSA may enable consumers to decide for themselves what their personal priorities are and act in accordance with these.



8. Appendix A – Wave 1 Discussion guide and Stimulus

FSA Transparency
Discussion Guide for Workshop 1

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Research objectives

Across the above broad aims, as we understand it the specific objectives of the qualitative research are to:

1. Understand what being transparent about food means to people, and how they think transparency should be enacted, in terms of
 - a. understanding whose responsibility is it to be transparent about food
 - b. the role of the food industry in improving transparency
 - c. exploring how people envision engaging with information
2. Understand people's priorities in terms of greater transparency in the food system, and the reasons for this prioritisation.

List of stimulus materials

- Recorder
- Discussion Guide
- Stimulus
- Multi coloured stickers/dots
- Pens
- Paper
- Blue tac
- Post-it notes
- Buzzer

Please note:

The following guide does not contain pre-set questions but rather lists the key themes and sub-themes to be explored with each group. It does not include follow-up questions like 'why', 'when', 'how', etc. as participants' contributions will be fully explored in response to what they tell us throughout in order to understand how and why views and experiences have arisen. The order in which issues are addressed and the amount of time spent on different themes will vary between groups; the key areas for discussion are the same.

Furthermore, this guide is for the first of two sessions and is intended to generate basic knowledge on the issues highlighted as a priority by the FSA and introduce the themes that will be further discussed in the second session. For this reason, in this session we have omitted a detailed discussion on the FSA's role in transparency and the concept of transparency as this will be a key focus in the second session.

1. Welcome and current queries and concerns when buying food (20 mins)

Aim: To warm up participants and build an understanding of what their concerns and priorities are for buying food	Stimulus / tasks	Approx. timing
<p>1.1 Kantar Public's introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce yourself and Kantar Public – an independent social research agency. State that we facilitating this panel on behalf of the FSA (Food Standards Agency). ○ Overview of the research session: The FSA is an independent Government department set up to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food, including risks caused by the way in which food is produced or supplied. It wants to develop a better understanding of what you need and want to know about with regards to food in the UK, who should be responsible for this and how this information should be delivered. ○ This is the first of two workshops. In this session we will be looking at what you currently know about and want to know about. We've been provided with some information by the FSA based on earlier research which has been identified as of interest to the public. ○ In the second session we will be looking at who is responsible for providing this information and how it can be delivered to you. ○ Clarify that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No right or wrong answer – interested in your views ○ Length – 2 hours ○ Participation is voluntary – participation will not affect your current or future relationship with FSA or food industry, you can withdraw at any time ○ Your contribution will be treated in confidence and anonymously: your personal details will not be shared with the FSA ○ Information provided will be used for research purposes only ○ Gain permission for audio recording – shared only with the Kantar Public research team. 		3 mins

<p>1.2 Group introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants introduce themselves covering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Name ○ What keeps them busy day to day: family, work, hobbies ○ Their favorite food <p>1.3 Thinking about food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Current food buying behavior – either in-store, or when going to eat in a restaurant or buy food on the go ○ How do they choose where to go or where to buy food from ○ When thinking specifically about making a weekly shop, what do they want to know about the food they are buying? What about when going out for a meal? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderator to list these out and priorities from most important to least ○ And what do they want to know about where their food comes from? Moderator to list. ○ How do they know or find out if the food they are buying – whether in store or from a restaurant etc. – meets these criteria? ○ Moderator to select three or four of the areas discussed and probe on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What would they understand the area to mean (e.g. if quality mentioned, what does quality mean? If ‘made in Britain’ important, what does that mean to them?) ▪ Behaviours – checking labels, FHRS, rules of thumb ▪ Information sources – packaging and signage, campaigns, independent research, family, friends, retailers and other influencers ○ What do they struggle to find out about? Where are the gaps? ○ Where do they think more information needs to be provided? ○ How do they think this information should be provided? 	<p>Flipchart responses</p>	<p>2 mins</p> <p>5 mins</p> <p>5 mins</p>
<p>1.4 Common knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Considering the areas that have been discussed, what do they think should be common knowledge about food? ○ What is the implication of consumers knowing about these things? ○ What do they think people would do differently? Would they do anything differently? ○ Whose responsibility do they feel it is that the public are aware of these issues? 		<p>5 mins</p>

2. Introduction to areas of transparency (40 mins)

Aim: To introduce the public to the areas the FSA have identified as being key to transparency	Stimulus / tasks	Approx. timing
<p>Moderator to explain that over the last few years the FSA has conducted a number of research projects from which they understand people want greater transparency about the food they eat.</p> <p>2.1 Overview of transparency areas and prioritization round 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to introduce the transparency overview slide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Production methods ○ Cost of food ○ Authenticity ○ Animal welfare ○ Composition of food and how this is labelled ○ Food safety ○ Regulation ○ Before introducing these in more detail, what are they most curious about? What excites the most interest for them? ○ What do they feel they know the most about at the moment? ○ What do they feel they know the least about? ○ How do they feel about their current knowledge levels? Blissful ignorance? anxious and knowledge seeking? ○ What do they feel people need to know about? Why these particular areas? <p>We are now going to look at each of these in more detail. Which are you most interested in?</p> <p>Note to moderator: Randomize order</p>	<p>Overview slide on projector</p>	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>2.2 Production methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to introduce slide and the example ○ What do they know about this area? ○ What further questions do they have? ○ What other aligned areas do they identify? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If not arising spontaneously, introduce the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complexity of supply chains ▪ Production miles – environmental issues and impact of climate change ▪ Provenance of food (where food comes from)– imports, country of origin, labelling ○ What do they need to know? 	<p>Relevant slide</p>	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>2.3 Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to introduce slide and the example ○ What do they think of the cost of food in the UK? 	<p>Relevant slide</p>	<p>5 mins</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do they know about this area? What springs to mind when they hear cost? ○ What do they feel influences prices? ○ What further questions do they have? ○ What issues do you feel links to this? 		
2.4 Authenticity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to introduce slide and the example ○ What do they know about this area? ○ What further questions do they have? ○ What issues do you feel link to this? ○ If not arising spontaneously, introduce the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food Fraud ▪ Food Crime ○ What do they need to know? 	Relevant slide	5 mins
2.5 Animal welfare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to introduce slide and the example ○ What do they know about this area? What standards do they expect with regard to animal welfare? ○ What further questions do they have? ○ What issues do you feel link to this? ○ If not arising spontaneously, introduce the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stun/Non Stun – do people want to know how animals are being killed / if they are being stunned ▪ Animal welfare and the number of prosecutions – are the public concerned over this ○ What do they need to know? 	Relevant slide	5 mins
2.6 Composition of food and labelling about this <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to introduce slide and the example ○ What do they know about this area? ○ What further questions do they have? ○ What issues do you feel link to this? ○ If not arising spontaneously, introduce the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nutritional content ▪ Health claims ○ What do they need to know? 	Relevant slide	5 mins
2.7 Food safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to introduce slide and the example ○ What do they know about this area? ○ What further questions do they have? ○ What other similar areas do they identify? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Food safety at home ○ Food safety when eating out 	Relevant slide	5 mins

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ○ What do they need to know? 		
2.8 Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to introduce slide and the example ○ What do they know about this area? ○ What further questions do they have? ○ What issues do you feel link to this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If not arising spontaneously, introduce the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy process ○ What do they need to know? 	Relevant slide	5 mins

3. Creative discussion (55 mins)

Aim: To engage in a discourse over the elements of transparency, unpicking which areas are of most interest to the public, which raise the greatest number of questions and to gain an early steer on who is responsible to be transparent about food	Stimulus / tasks	Approx. timing
<p>Moderator to divide room into four 'teams' of two and hand out the A3 worksheets (two per team). Place the overview screen on a projector behind with headings for different topic areas.</p> <p>3.1 Brainstorm and question generation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to explain that we are going to spend the next 30 minutes brainstorming questions we have for each of the topic areas. They are going to work in pairs and rotate around each of the task sheets on the wall. Answer: ○ What do they know about this area? ○ What would they want someone to come and explain to them about? ○ The aim is to get as many questions as possible in 3 minutes before having to rotate around ○ After 15 minutes introduce some "fun facts" about food in the UK before getting people to continue to rotate. ○ In final 5 minutes allow pairs to return to spots they've already visited and add questions based on the fun facts / anything else why want to add. 	<p>Stick task dots to wall</p>	<p>5 mins</p> <p>30 mins</p>
<p>3.3. Group discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to return to the transparency overview slide and for each of the 7 areas ask what each groups' key questions would be? ○ Moderator to note key questions on A3 papers around the room ○ Moderators to hand out three stickers to each person. Get them to circulate and stick the stickers on the issues they think are most important to least ○ Once this ranking has been established discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why is this issue the most important? ○ Why is this then next most important etc.? ○ At this point, what do they feel is the most important area / the area where the greatest transparency is needed? 	<p>Stickers to attach to A3 posters on wall</p>	<p>15 mins</p>

4. Close: Wrap-Up and homework task (10 mins)

Aim: To conclude the group and prepare participants for the next session	Stimulus / tasks	Approx. timing
4.1 Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We've talked about a lot of different areas over the course of the session. ○ Before we go I'd like to touch on the issue of responsibility. ○ Whose responsibility do they think it is to be transparent about food? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE: Industry, FSA, Legislators, Retailers, you as individuals ○ How would you like to receive this information. If they had to learn more about any of these areas what do they think they would do next? 		5 mins
4.2 Homework task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hand out homework sheet, emphasizing that completing it is important and that they will receive an additional £20 for completing the task. ○ Explain that their task is to research one of the 7/8 areas and answer the two top questions / two key things people want to know more about. ○ What this area means to me ○ We will be kicking off the next session with a show and tell of what they have found out. The group will vote on the most interesting fact/story found out 		3 mins
4.3 Close <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If they had one recommendation for the FSA on what to do to be more transparent about food, what would it be? ○ Thank ○ Remind of time and date of next session ○ Incentive. Next session remainder will be added to the card, plus the additional £20 for completion of the homework. 		2 mins

Wave 1 stimulus

Overview: Previous research suggests consumers want transparency in a number of areas...



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3

Increased transparency, accessibility and clarity of information on...

... the production methods of food



- The food supply chain is becoming increasingly complex.
- The farm to fork process can now span over continents.
- Imported food makes up an increasingly large part of the UK diet and about 50% of food consumed in the UK is from countries outside the UK.
- Food from the British Isles and elsewhere is often processed and packaged together as a single product (e.g. ready meals).
- There are assurance schemes and labelling to communicate this to customers.

What does it take to make a supermarket sandwich?

1. Rear, slaughter and prepare chicken in Thailand.
2. Freeze and then ship to a sandwich factory in the UK (this can take 6 months)
3. The factory makes 3 million sandwiches a week. It uses 300,000 locally baked loaves of bread, containing wheat imported from Canada.
4. Factory workers assemble the sandwich using butter from a creamery in the British Isles and lettuce and tomatoes grown in Holland and Germany.

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4

Increased transparency, accessibility and clarity of information on...

... animal welfare in the production of food



- The FSA has specially trained Official Veterinarians carry out checks to and make sure appropriate procedures in place to safeguard animal welfare.
- FSA operational staff make checks on the unloading and handling of animals, where they are kept and restraining of animals, the effectiveness of the stun (rendering the animal insensible to pain), and the efficiency of bleeding, so that the risk of any animal suffering during the process is minimised.
- There are 280 approved slaughterhouses in England.
- Animal welfare legislation permits slaughter without stunning to be carried out in accordance with religious rites, providing specific requirements on killing are met.
- Animal welfare prior to slaughter is not part of the FSA's remit. However, information on how animals have been reared is communicated to customers through labelling (e.g. from caged birds, barn birds and free range), country of origin and assurance schemes.

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5

Increased transparency, accessibility and clarity of information on...

... why food costs what it does



- Food is big business and there are a number of factors which impact food prices, including the supply of particular commodities and consumer demand for them.
- Increasingly, there's more demand for food, greater pressure on resources and uncertainty around production due to climate change
- Food price is the biggest influence on what and how much we decide to buy.

The cost of milk

- Milk can be a hot topic for consumers.
- Supermarkets can compete to attract customers by discounting milk. They sometimes sell it at a loss in order to get more customers through their doors.
- What impacts the cost of milk? (See next slide).

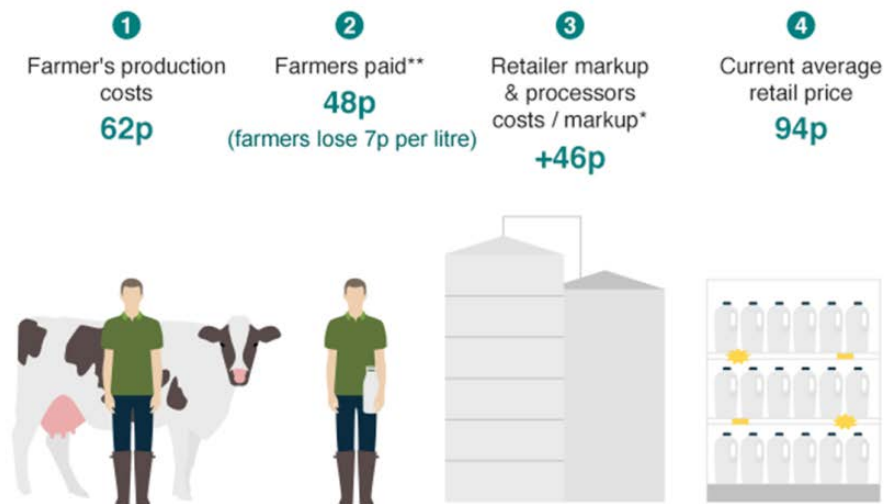
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<https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/01/Feeding-Britain.pdf>

6

The cost of milk

Approximate cost of a 2 litre bottle



*Some retailers pay farmers directly. Example figures only, which may vary.

**Equivalent to 24p per litre average, Aug 2015

Source: AHDB, NFU, RABDF

BBC

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<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-18951422>

7

Increased transparency, accessibility and clarity of information on...

... whether food is what it says it is



- One of the FSA's key roles is to ensure food is safe and is what it says it is and has a National Food Crime Unit dedicated to ensuring food is authentic.
- However, where there's profit to be made, it can lead to the development of financially motivated dishonesty in food.
- This can happen when food stuffs are deliberately diluted, mislabelled, misrepresented, tampered with or substituted with another product.
- **Food fraud and food crime** is a growing problem in Britain. Food fraud costs families as much as £1.17 billion a year, according to officials.

Examples of food crime

- DNP is a chemical often sold as a 'fat burner' and sold to people who want to lose weight or speed their metabolism (e.g. bodybuilders, dieters). Taking it can lead to poisoning symptoms and death.
- Fake versions of branded vodka containing methanol or anti-freeze – more than 35,000 fake bottles were seized at Dover.
- **Examples of food fraud**
- Olive oil mislabelled as extra virgin or adulterated.
- Cheaper cage eggs being mislabelled as organic or free range.

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<https://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/campaigns/help-us-prevent-another-dnp-death>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/24/food-fraud-in-the-uk-fake-vodka-and-pet-food-meat-again-to-buy/>
<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/efsa-food-crime-assessment-2016.pdf>

8

Increased transparency, accessibility and clarity of information on...

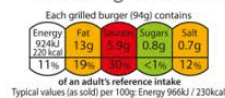
... the composition of food and how its labelled



- There are legal requirements in place that govern the labelling of food products
- Legislation has recently come into force for pre-packed foods on which allergen information must be emphasised in the ingredients list.
- Nutrition labelling is also required for most pre-packed foods detailing the amount of amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein, salt and calories.
- There is also specific EU legislation that requires country of origin information to be displayed.

How is this communicated?

- Traffic light scheme



- Bolding of allergens on packets
- Country of origin/Designated country of origin/ protected designation of origin
- Organic status and certification
- Health claims



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<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/publication/countryoriginlabellingscot.pdf>

9

10

Increased transparency, accessibility and clarity of information on... ... the regulation of food



- The FSA works closely with local authority enforcement officers to make sure food law is applied throughout the food chain
- The FSA is redesigning how food businesses are regulated in the UK (Regulating our Future)
- The current model hasn't changed in 30 years and relies on costly face to face inspections, does not take full advantage of modern technology and employs a one size fits all approach.

How are things changing?

- The FSA is moving to use businesses own data in this assurance processes. For instance, some retailers takes internal audits of its systems and the FSA is looking at how comparable this data is to its own standards

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<http://www.thegrocer.co.uk/opinion/columnists/leader/tesco-the-horsegate-villain-rides-to-bay-rescue/542766.article>

12

Fact cards

What does country of origin mean?

Country of origin is not defined in the law covering food labelling. However, when dealing with food from one country which is processed in another, the approach taken for food labelling is based on 'the place of last substantial change'. Broadly, this means that the last country in which a food is substantially changed is the country of origin.

What does 'free-range' mean?

For chicken meat or eggs to be called 'free-range', it must be produced to standards laid down by EU law. The chickens must be provided with 'access to open-air runs' that are 'mainly covered with vegetation'. Other standards cover how much space chickens have to move around (stocking density), the provision of shelter outdoors for hens laying eggs, and the fact that meat birds must live for at least 56 days (81 days for 'traditional free-range')

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Participants were given a slide per discussion area, as seen below, to raise any questions they may have:

Increased transparency, accessibility and clarity of information on...
... the production methods of food

Questions



9. Appendix B - Interval homework activity

Participants given one activity sheet to complete as an interim activity. Each participant had one area to consider

**Increased transparency, accessibility and clarity of information on...
... food safety**

Homework sheet



What does this area mean to me?

How could the public be better informed about this?

Who's responsibility is it to be transparent about this and why?

Question 1

Question 2

10. Appendix C – Wave 2 Discussion guide and Stimulus

FSA Transparency

Discussion Guide for Workshop 2

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Research objectives

Across the above aims, as we understand it the specific objectives of the qualitative research are to:

3. Understand what being transparent about food means to people, and how they think transparency should be enacted, in terms of
 - a. understanding whose responsibility is it to be transparent about food
 - b. the role of the food industry in improving transparency
 - c. exploring how people envision engaging with information
4. Understand people's priorities in terms of greater transparency in the food system, and the reasons for this prioritisation.

List of stimulus materials

- o Recorder
- o Discussion Guide
- o Stimulus
- o Multi coloured stickers/dots
- o Pens
- o Paper
- o Blue tac
- o Post-it notes
- o Buzzer

Please note:

The following guide does not contain pre-set questions but rather lists the key themes and sub-themes to be explored with each group. It does not include follow-up questions like 'why', 'when', 'how', etc. as participants' contributions will be fully explored in response to what they tell us throughout in order to understand how and why views and experiences have arisen. The order in which issues are addressed and the amount of time spent on different themes will vary between groups; the key areas for discussion are the same.

5. Welcome and show and tell (45 mins)

Aim: To warm up participants and feedback on the homework task.	Stimulus / tasks	Approx. timing
<p>1.1 Kantar Public's introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce yourself and Kantar Public – an independent social research agency. State that we facilitating this session on behalf of the FSA (Food Standards Agency). ○ Recap on the objectives of this research: The FSA is an independent Government department set up to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food, including risks caused by the way in which food is produced or supplied. FSA wants to develop a better understanding of <u>what you need and want to know</u> about with regards to food in the UK, who should be responsible for this and how this information should beprovided.. ○ This is the second of two workshops. In this session we will be looking at what your priorities are, based on the homework you've done, who you feel should be responsible for being transparent about food and how you envision being communicated with about these issues. ○ Clarify that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No right or wrong answer – interested in your views ○ Length – 2 hours ○ Participation is voluntary – participation will not affect your current or future relationship with FSA or food industry, you can withdraw at any time ○ Your contribution will be treated in confidence and anonymously: your personal details will not be shared with the FSA ○ Information provided will be used for research purposes only ○ Gain permission for audio recording – shared only with the Kantar Public research team. 		5 mins

<p>1.2 Group introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants introduce themselves covering ○ Name ○ One stand out fact from last time – what they think is the most important issue for them. 		5 mins
<p>1.3 Show and tell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to remind participants that they should have completed a home work sheet in advance of the session. ○ For the next 30 minutes ask participants to present back on their assigned area. Moderator to provide a topline re-cap on what the area of transparency was (e.g. Food production = how food is produced and reaches the UK, e.g. supply chains etc.). After each presentation, have a short discussion (as time allows) on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Anyone else participants think should be involved in ensuring transparency ○ Any other questions participants would add ○ If they think the questions/info they presented should be ‘common knowledge’ ○ If time allows, ask respondents to organise themselves in order of priority from most to least important. Get them to stand along the room. Capture the debate and reasons for their ranking. 		35 mins

6. Responsibility to be transparent (30 mins)

Aim: To unpick, who participants feel should be responsible for ensuring transparency and variation by transparency areas.	Stimulus / tasks	Approx. timing
<p>2.1 Who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency</p> <p><i>Note to moderator: Throughout this section please pull out the distinction between who has a role and who is responsible for ensuring transparency.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At an overall level, who has a role in ensuring there is transparency in these areas? ○ Moderator to show the overview slide. ○ Moderator to flipchart and probe on all areas of transparency. ○ Emphasize that the people/organisations they feel have a role do not need to be involved in all areas. ○ If necessary top up with the following list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Farmer/Producer ▪ Manufacturer ▪ Retailer ▪ Local authorities ▪ Central government ▪ The public ▪ The media ▪ Charities/the third sector ▪ The FSA ○ At an overall level, who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency? ○ Moderator to tick those seen as ultimately responsible for ensuring overall transparency ○ Probe on why ○ What role to they feel the food industry has in improving transparency? ○ What role does government (local or central and the FSA as a non-government department) have in improving transparency? ○ If time allows, what about “others” (e.g. media, charities/ third sector)? 	<p>Have overview slide on projector</p> <p>Flipchart paper</p>	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>2.2 Variation in responsibility by issue: walk and label</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Get the participants into pairs and give them each a set of stickers. ○ Ask them to circle the room and identify which stakeholder group has the greatest responsibility for ensuring there is transparency, who has middling responsibility and who has no direct responsibility for ensuring there is transparency. ○ Moderator to clarify that this is not about who is responsible for making sure standards are high / welfare good / gold standard. This is purely about communicating the way things are done / regulated / produced. 	<p>Have clarification slide projected</p> <p>Sticker set</p>	<p>10 mins</p>
<p>2.3 Who is responsible: role and clarification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to circulate each of the 7 sheets and discuss who was seen as most and least responsible and the reasons for this. ○ If more than one was seen as ‘responsible’ what are the roles of the different parties? Who is primarily responsible? 	<p>Have clarification slide</p>	<p>15 mins</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To what extent would they trust the information that was being provided? Why? ○ What would encourage / facilitate their trust in the information they were being given? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Considering industry (e.g. farmers?/producers/retailers) how could trust be built here? ○ Refer back to discussion and flip chart on who has a role in ensuring transparency and who is ultimately responsible for overall transparency. Has this changed at all? <p><i>Note to moderator: Please pull out the distinction between who is responsible and who has a role in ensuring transparency.</i></p>	<p>projected</p> <p>Sticker set</p>	
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7. Informing the public: (25 mins)

Aim: To understand how the public could and would like to be informed about these issues, variation by different issue areas and feasibility / workability	Stimulus / tasks	Approx. timing
<p>3.1 Ways to receive information about elements of transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to explain that there are lots of different ways you could engage with information relating to transparency around the food they eat. ○ Are they aware of any ways the FSA, industry, government, or others currently try to engage the public with these issues? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If necessary, use examples such as food labelling, news stories, campaigns ○ Moderator to show 'some ways to engage' slide and explain there are numerous ways to engage with issues around food which are already available to the public. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Newspaper reports / investigations ○ Labelling ○ FHRS scheme ○ Public Health Schemes ○ Legislation around allergens ○ Certifications ○ Providing additional information e.g. safety standards ○ Website providing additional information on provenance of food ○ Are there any others which they can think of? ○ Thinking just of these types of activities, what would give you more trust in the food you buy? 	<p>Flipchart</p> <p>Some ways to engage slide</p>	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>3.2 How to effectively engage the public in these issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explain that the FSA wants to understand how members of the public, like them, could be effectively engaged around issues of food transparency and what would help trust the food they eat. ○ Get participants into pairs and give each of them a sheet. ○ Tell them that they've been given a 'grid sheet' (one per pair) with the different types of bodies which could be involved in providing information about transparency in different areas. We'd now like you to think about what these organizations could realistically do to engage the public – what would make them want to learn more? What would make it easy to find out any information they would want to know? What would they trust? ○ Remind them that we've already agreed who we think is 'most' responsible for being transparent about food, so they should start there. ○ Recap that there are lots of different ways organisations could do this: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Show the 'some ways to engage' slide and remind them there could be communications on packaging etc. ○ After 10 – 15 minutes, get everyone to feedback. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ During feedback, ask participants who they would trust to be transparent (government', 'industry' and 'other' orgs such as [moderator to probe participants for who they think could fill this 	<p>Hand out grid sheets</p>	<p>20 mins</p>

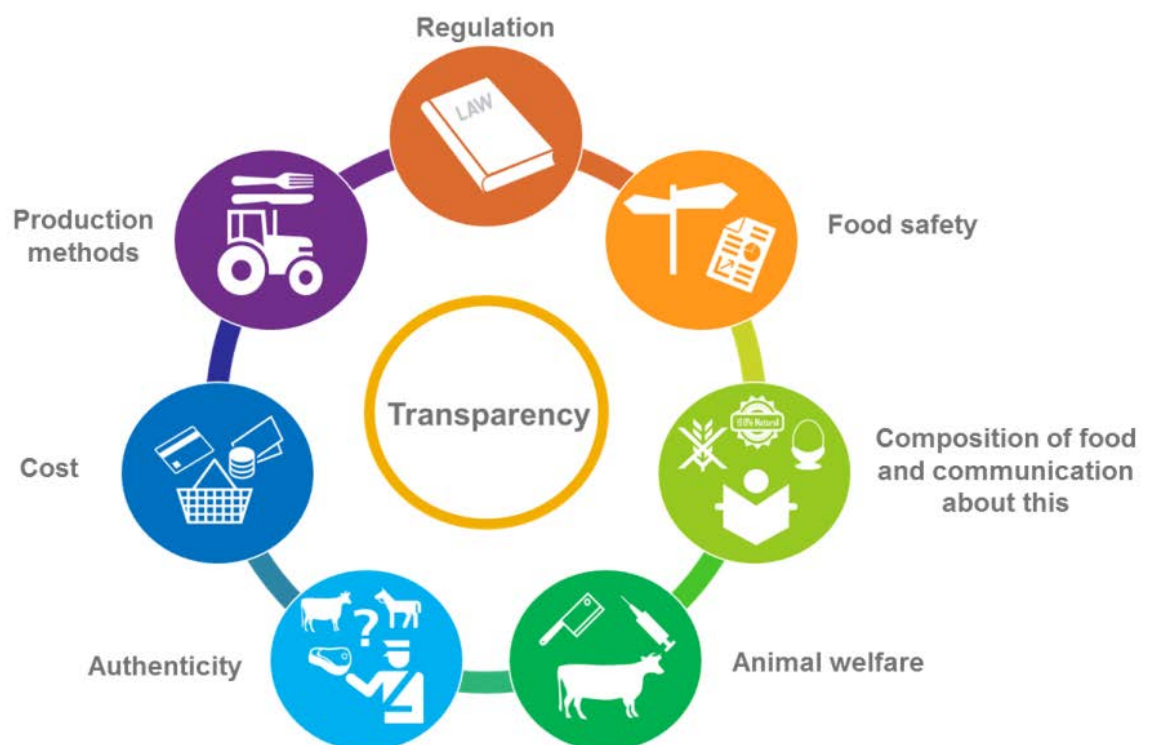
gap]).		
○ Probe on:		
▪ What could industry do to be transparent?		
▪ Would increased transparency improve their trust in the food industry?		

8. Close: Wrap-Up and homework task (20 mins)

Aim: To conclude the group and gather final considerations from participants	Stimulus / tasks	Approx. timing
4.1 Prioritisation / Ranking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Break into two groups ○ Hand out one set of sort and rank cards showing each of the areas to each group. ○ As a group, ask participants to sort and rank the cards from most to least important ○ Come back together and compare the two groups. Spend 5 more minutes consolidating into a final ranking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderator to remind group what the top 3 choices were from previous section. In light of these presentations would we choose these again? Has anything gone down in ranking or gone up? ○ Explore reasons for ranking 	Show 'rank' slide Hand out sort discs	15 mins
4.2 Close <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hand out close sheet and ask them to fill it in. ○ Then go round the room and ask them, when considering all of the different issues that have been discussed over the course of the sessions, what does transparency about food mean to them? ○ What one thing do they want more transparency on and why? ○ Would this help them build trust in the food you eat? ○ Thank and explain incentives 		5 mins

Wave 2 Stimulus

What were the 7 areas of transparency we considered last time?



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Who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency over...
... the production methods of food



Greatest responsibility for ensuring transparency (select one or two stickers)

Middling/partial responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

No direct responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

Who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency over...
... why food costs what it does



Greatest responsibility for ensuring transparency (select one or two stickers)

Middling/partial responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

No direct responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

Who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency over...
... whether food is what it says it is



Greatest responsibility for ensuring transparency (select one or two stickers)

Middling/partial responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

No direct responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

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Who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency over...
... animal welfare in the production of food



Greatest responsibility for ensuring transparency (select one or two stickers)

Middling/partial responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

No direct responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

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Who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency over...
... the composition of food and how its communicated

Greatest responsibility for ensuring transparency (select one or two stickers)



Middling/partial responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

No direct responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

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Who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency over...
... food safety

Greatest responsibility for ensuring transparency (select one or two stickers)



Middling/partial responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

No direct responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

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Who is responsible for ensuring there is transparency over...
... the regulation of food

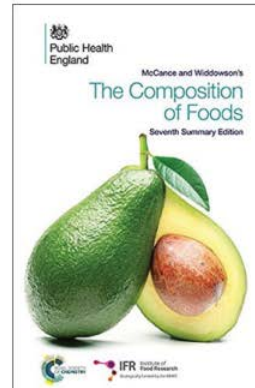


Greatest responsibility for ensuring transparency (select one or two stickers)

Middling/partial responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

No direct responsibility for ensuring transparency (choose all that apply)

Some ways to engage:



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The role of industry



Provenance is a platform supported by the Co-op and other businesses. It lets customers trace where a particular food item has come from. The Co-op are currently trialling the tool to see if it can be used with products across their stores.

The FSA is working with Tesco and Mitchells & Butlers to pilot changes to the food regulation systems in the UK. The FSA is looking to make greater use of large food businesses' own data from their internal audit and quality control systems and wants to understand if these 'super' food businesses standards are comparable with their own.

Retail survey on levels of campylobacter on chicken



Last updated: 19 May 2015

The 12-month survey, running from February 2014 to February 2015, is looking at the prevalence and levels of campylobacter contamination on fresh whole chilled chickens and their packaging. The survey tests 4,000 samples of whole chickens bought from UK retail outlets and smaller independent stores and butchers.

Cumulative results are available. The cumulative Q1-Q4 results will be published on 28 May 2015.

The Food Standards Agency runs a Campylobacter Retail Survey in which it tested for the prevalence and levels of campylobacter contamination on fresh whole chilled chickens and their packaging. To do this, it works with industry to access and test its chickens.

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More on Provenance

PROVENANCE


SIGN IN

We live in the world we buy into

Every day we buy products that impact our planet. Opaque supply chains are devastating environments and compromising the wellbeing of people, animals and communities. Every product and business is different, but rarely do we have the information we need to make positive choices about what to buy.

Provenance is a platform that empowers brands to take steps toward greater transparency by tracing the origins and histories of products. With our technology, you can easily gather and verify stories, keep them connected to physical things and embed them anywhere online.

The Dalles, Oregon, USA




Our collective power is in our shared knowledge

We aren't a shop - you can't buy products here. We are a framework for knowledge. We are here for businesses that want to form a genuine connection with the people who support them. We aren't claiming to be 'ethical' or 'sustainable', but we are striving for both these ideals through a firm commitment to open, accessible information.

PROVENANCE

SIGN IN



Discover products with a story

Browse featured products, stories and members near you - wherever you are. Claim products you buy and contribute to the stories of the products you love. Very soon, you can use our powerful search tool to find products with a particular provenance, ask questions and endorse the supply chains that touch your community.

[Explore](#)

What could different bodies do to engage the public in...

Food safety and the composition of food and communication about this



Industry			Government			Others		
 Grower/ Producer	 Manufacturer	 Retailer	 Central Government	 Food Standards Agency	 Local Authorities	 The Media	 You	 Charities / the third sector

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What could different bodies do to engage the public in...

Food production and animal welfare



Industry			Government			Others		
 Grower/ Producer	 Manufacturer	 Retailer	 Central Government	 Food Standards Agency	 Local Authorities	 The Media	 You	 Charities / the third sector

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What could different bodies do to engage the public in...

How food businesses and systems are regulated



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What could different bodies do to engage the public in...

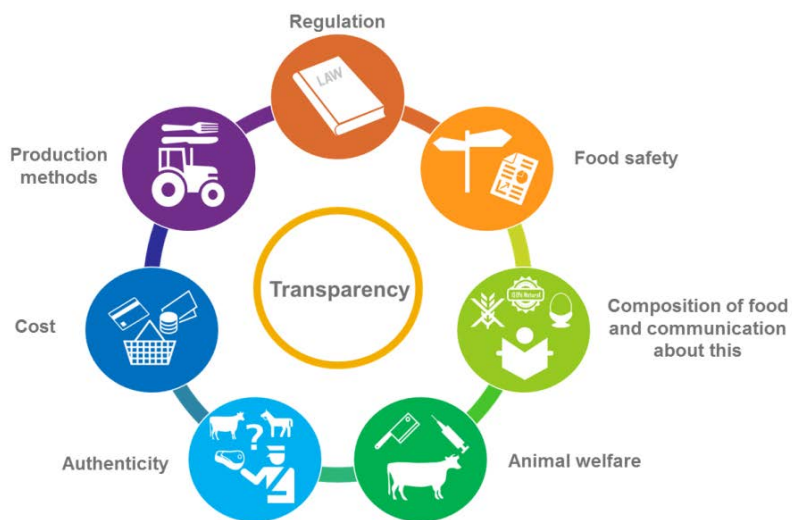
Cost of food and authenticity



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Rank these from most to least important



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Final three questions

When thinking about all of the different issues that have been discussed over the two sessions...

What does transparency about food mean to you?

What one thing do you want more transparency on and why?

Would this help you build trust in the food you eat?

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11. Quality assurance:

This project was carried out in compliance with our certification to ISO 9001 and ISO 20252
(International Service Standard for Market, Opinion and Social Research)



