

Fake news  
 Mask fraud  
 Doses per bottle discussion  
 Vaccine fatalities  
**Consumer Trust = vulnerable**  
 Pesticide cancer claims  
 Unsafe food additives  
 New mRNA vaccines

**Fruitful approach to deal with it?**



**YES** → Addressing Trustworthiness of the entire sector, incl. government!



**NO** ↓ Addressing Consumer behaviour?



If you want to be trusted, you should be trustworthy.

**Status of trust**

To be protected      To be earned

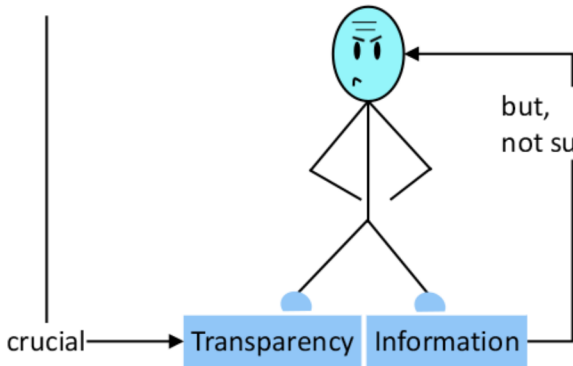
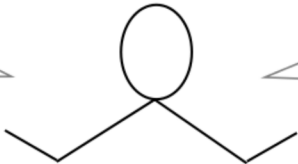
Knowing **what** one is doing is not enough, people also want to know **why**

Need for (i) reflection on, and explication of one's values, that underlie one's acting, and (ii) a clear distribution and interpretation of responsibilities

**Trustworthiness**

crucial → Transparency Information

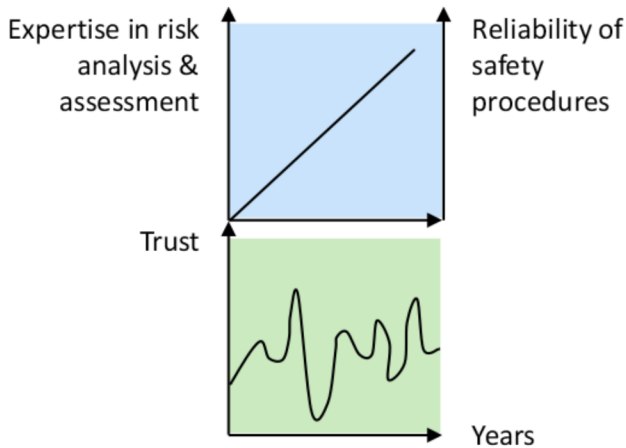
but, not sufficient

Who can still see through global food supply chains, and regulations from farm to fork?

Who understands how vaccines are made, controlled, and distribution is regulated?

## THE ISSUE OF TRUST



## WHY IS CONSUMER TRUST STILL AN ISSUE?

1. **New technologies**
  - ➔ Criteria of evaluation & acceptability unclear
2. **Growing distance in time and space between production and consumption**
  - ➔ Loss of control over ability to choose
3. **Scandals & Incidences**
  - ➔ Dioxin crisis, unsafe food additives, carcinogenic pesticides, vaccine fatalities, fake news, fraud cases, ...

## THE TENSION BETWEEN:



**Trust becomes crucial in situations of risk, or uncertainty.** As long as there is trust, lack of control and uncertainty are often not experienced, or not considered unpleasant

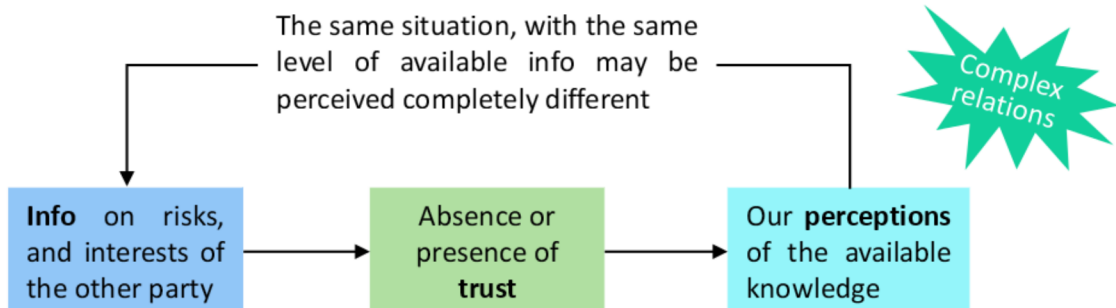


**Uncertainty regarding trustworthiness** of other stakeholders, and lack of clarity regarding what one may reasonably expect from others is the problem of consumer trust

## WHAT IS TRUST?

Trust is a form of **rational calculation** based upon available information. One trusts someone if one has adequate reason to believe it will be in that person's interest to be trustworthy

Genuine trust also has an **emotional character** that goes beyond the direct control of reason



## LESSONS ABOUT TRUST

Providing info, or reducing risk levels is required, but will not automatically yield an improved trust level

Being trustworthy is not merely showing *what* you are doing and *how* you are acting, but also clarifying *why* you are doing it

### Implications for both governments and companies:

- What 1. Be transparent (give info on risks)
- How 2. Explain own norms and values
- Why 3. Engage in critical discussions and explain what acting on these principles means in context

### ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

**NOT:** How can we convince consumers?

**BUT:** Why would consumers trust us?

Shows you are taking your **responsibility** seriously. Just doing what is legally obliged offers not enough ground to trust someone in a changing and complex situation

**Reflection** on and explanation of one's values (corporate responsibility) is essential for being trustworthy, yet not sufficient

Combination of responsibility and **responsiveness** is necessary

In morally pluralistic societies a discussion of values and responsibilities will not automatically lead to trust. Clarity about what a consumer may expect provides better ground for trusting

By Nele Schmitz

Adapted from:

*From Trust to Trustworthiness: Why Information is not Enough in the Food Sector.* Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics (2006) 19:427–442.

IMAGES: pixabay.com