



## **Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust**

# Championing British Agriculture

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**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this report are entirely my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, my sponsor, or any other sponsoring body.

# 1. Executive summary

Increasing public awareness of how food is produced, processed, distributed and retailed has placed significant challenges on our food supply chain, meaning that it is no longer enough to rely on demonstration of competence - through the use and promotion of technical protocols and ever increasing regulations and legal restrictions - to justify today's food systems to the consumer.

The rise of highly professional public lobby groups soliciting public support for their causes and the constant pressure of increased regulation and red-tape have raised the bar significantly both nationally and globally.

To be effective in building public trust and improving public perception across the food supply chain, all involved in the food industry need to up their game, developing a more effective approach to public trust initiatives, using all the skills in their vast armoury more efficiently to deliver public messages to greater effect.

Yet, how could that be achieved in an industry as diverse and competitive as the food chain?

My Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust Award study was conducted throughout 2010 and the first half of 2011, including eight weeks of study-travel to South-east Australia, New Zealand and the Midwest region of the USA.

The initial aim of my study was to look for ways to improve the public perception of agriculture. As the study evolved, it focused on seeking better ways of working together as a 'food chain' industry to improve the planning, delivery and quality of public relations work undertaken to improve public trust.

During my study time, I witnessed farmer-led initiatives 'Farming for Our Future' (NZ) and 'US Farmers and Ranchers Alliance' (USA) bringing farming industry sectors together to

set a national cross-sector agenda for active management of projects to improve the public perception of agriculture.

Many of their objectives were similar to those we strive to achieve in the UK through the many projects and initiatives that already exist. The key point of difference was the way in which the projects were co-ordinated and supported to achieve an effect greater than the sum of the individual projects.

I visited 'The Center for Food Integrity' (CFI) in Kansas City, a food chain initiative with five years of experience and an interesting, science based approach to the management of public trust across the food chain.

Through its food chain remit, CFI took a wider view of the situation than FFOF and USFRA. CFI employed advanced scientific techniques to advance the development of its ways of working. Understanding consumer drivers better, allowed CFI to understand the issues better as well and thus develop more effective methods of improving public trust in the food chain.

As a result of my study, it is clear that many of the public relations works that we already deliver through various mechanisms are comparable to those undertaken in Australia, New Zealand and the USA. The key point of difference is the way in which those projects are co-ordinated, supported and delivered.

Initiatives such as CFI demonstrated that understanding the subject of public trust and its drivers is simply a matter of applying the appropriate scientific techniques, rather than thinking of it as being a 'dark art'. CFI also demonstrated the benefits of the food chain pulling together to co-ordinate, deliver and support public relations work that is aimed to improve public trust in the food chain.

As a result of my study, it is recommended that we shift our thinking from 'improving public perception of agriculture' to 'improving public trust in the food chain' (from farm to retailer).

To achieve the latter objective effectively, industry leaders from across the food chain need to collaborate.

The most effective form of collaboration in this instance would follow the example set by The Center for Food Integrity in the USA, providing leadership in building public trust in a food chain that aims to provide safe, affordable food to the world.

This collaboration would then allow for more effective management, co-ordination, delivery and support of works designed specifically to improve public trust in the food chain.

This collaboration would benefit from an independent chair, capable of enabling the collaboration through impartial mediation.

The US and New Zealand experiences have shown that it can take two years or more to build a significant support base plus funding to operate effectively. Lessons learned from this scholarship will significantly reduce that lead-in time.

## 2. Personal background

Brought up as a farmer's son in Herefordshire, farming is in my blood and continues to drive my ambition to farm in my own right.

I was the first boy in recent family history to attend university rather than agricultural college, studying Biology and Biochemistry at Keele University in the late 1980s. As a result, I developed a career in agriculture that has followed a path from farm management; through supplying fresh produce to supermarkets; ultimately leading to my current job as Key Customer Account Manager for Natural England managing partnerships with major national food industry businesses.

I've either farmed or worked with farmers for over 20 years and have always been impressed by the dedication to excellence and the attention to detail that is required to make a successful farm business.

Despite this, I have on many social and professional occasions in the past two decades come across antipathy towards British farmers and less than favourable opinions of the methods employed to produce food in Britain. This has often come from people living in large cities with little or no connection to farming.

It annoyed me intensely that people felt this way, not least because these were regular misconceptions that were obviously not being effectively addressed.

The way that pressure groups have picked on these 'weaknesses' and used them for their own gain served to frustrate me further and I began to seek answers as to how we could improve the public image of farming in our cities and gain greater public support for home-produced foods.

Being awarded a Nuffield Farming Scholarship provided me with the chance to spend some 'quality time' looking into this issue, which



is increasingly topical as pressure groups become ever more prevalent in our daily lives.

As a result of this study, I look forward to :

- the day when British consumers choose to buy British food over imported every time they visit the supermarket, not because it's on offer, but because they understand the true value of British food.
- a day when the public hold British farmers in high regard for the superb standards of practice that go into producing British food.
- a day when I cannot produce enough food because it's in such high demand at home and abroad.

### 3. Introduction to my study subject: Championing British Agriculture

Fifty years ago, farmers could go about their business producing food with little challenge from the public because people were hungry, money was tight and farmers were trusted to produce safe, nutritious food in the interests of the nation.

Since then four key elements of progress have served to change the game markedly:

- EEC/EU membership, introducing a variety of new food sources
- Development of modern long-distance transport methods, bringing that food to the supermarkets
- Increased incomes and wealth, giving the public more choice in what they buy
- Urbanisation, distancing people from food producers

This progress has allowed major multiple retailers and public lobby groups to flourish. Not only is the variety and value of food on supermarket shelves greater than ever, the public now expect that variety and value as a given and, in many cases, ethical choice is an integral part of the buying process.

Farming representative groups in the UK undertake significant public relations works, many of which have a positive impact on the public perception of farming.

However, my study found that it is often challenging for organisations involved in work of this nature to justify wider public engagement projects to farmers: not least because this type of work is way out of many farmers' comfort-zone.

UK farming advocates (known as 'advocates' in the USA) such as Guy Smith, Adam Henson, Kate Humble, Jimmy Doherty and Matt Baker to name but a few, have come to the fore and are having a significant positive effect in

building links between the urban population and their food sources. However, these excellent works are not currently co-ordinated and the people who valiantly "put their heads above the parapet" are often left out in the cold when subject to public criticism or the attention of public lobby groups.

Many sector-specific levy bodies have focused efforts on promoting the benefits of their product(s) to the public, using the traditional approach of research and development as a tool to justify these claims and notably all selling their products on the same basic values of health, convenience and an element of fun, resulting in duplication of effort and cost.

For a number of years now, the food chain has used technical protocols demonstrating competence (Assured Farm Standards, British Retail Consortium protocols, etc.) as a flagship way to build public trust.

Despite this admirable action on many fronts, the challenge of improving the public perception of farming appears to grow daily as public lobby groups seek to feather their nests and the consumer becomes more and more confused by the volume and complexity of information placed in front of them.

The Achilles heel of farming when tackling public perception issues lies in its diverse nature. Fundamental differences between sectors and production types split opinion within the industry in many cases, hampering constructive dialogue and collaboration. This, in turn, has to date in many cases prevented the development of industry-wide solutions to common issues.

Understanding this situation and the challenges we face, my study set out to identify more effective solutions to improving the public perception in farming and, notably, consumer trust in British food.

## 4. Setting the scene

To be effective in dealing with such a broad topic, I needed advice from someone who had previously dealt with a similar subject.

An initial discussion with Guy Smith at a Nuffield event in 2010 provided the necessary advice:

*“In the first instance, keep the topic broad, so that you don’t miss opportunities. When you come across new ideas, drill down to find an answer that’s relevant to the UK.”*

This was sound advice that kept me focused throughout my travels.

Keeping the topic broad in the first instance was no problem. Almost every week the farming press contained at least one article questioning the public perception of agriculture, putting the case forward for improving the public perception of farming in the context of the environment, animal welfare or novel technologies. Those articles demonstrated the timely nature of this topic and highlighted the main issues.

In other words, it was a hot topic.

Public engagement and education campaigns have become more prevalent in recent years, following in the wake of the evergreen Open Farm Sunday, Farming and Countryside Education (FACE) and projects such as “Why Farming Matters” and “Just Ask” managed by the NFU and CLA respectively amongst others.

Meanwhile public interest in TV programmes such as Countryfile, Springwatch, Lambing Live and the celebrity chefs has increased dramatically.

Most of the aforementioned organisations and projects have made progress in informing a mainly urban British public how food is produced, how the countryside is managed and where they can go to learn more. All this has led to a better understanding of farming.

All good stuff, but judging by the number of lobby groups regularly in the news, the industry is obviously not doing enough to bring the public fully on-board with farmers’ values.

The rise of public lobby groups has been nothing short of meteoric. Each one has a single purpose worked into a strategy. They are generally highly organised, very skilled and focused on gaining as much public support as they can.

Despite recent government attempts to cut red-tape, legislation is at an all time high, leaving farmers with piles of paperwork and less time than ever to actually farm.

It all seemed so gloomy, so there was a clear incentive to identify more effective ways of working if farmers are to meet the challenges of improving the public perception of agriculture, be effective at managing the effects of public lobby groups and resist the rising tide of legislation.

Further research into the subject soon showed that other countries had taken different approaches to the UK and there were to be some surprises along the way.

It was time to travel...

## 5. My study tour : an overview

At the start of my Nuffield journey in March 2010, I was invited to attend a Contemporary Scholars Conference in the USA. This event brought together around 100 agriculturalists from around the world, providing me with a great opportunity to discuss my topic outside the normal circle of friends and colleagues, while developing my leadership skills into the bargain.

The public perception of agriculture is much more of an issue in societies that have a distinct rural/urban divide and where a large proportion of the public can afford to make food choices based on provenance and ethics as well as price. These are inherently the countries in which pressure groups flourish.

In order to find solutions appropriate for the UK, I therefore needed to visit countries that fitted those criteria.

The countries with similar social drivers were the Antipodes, the USA, Canada and Europe.

Initial research indicated that the Australian National Farmers Federation had undertaken

some work to influence public opinion and subsequent research showed the USA to be a hot-bed of activity relating to agricultural public relations work.

While I was travelling to the Antipodes for a month, I chose to 'nip across' to New Zealand for a week. The internet hadn't revealed any specific leads prior to my visit. It just made best use of the flight – and I'm so glad I made this effort as you will see.

As the year progressed, I learned of various projects happening in the USA, so I built in a month of travel based around the Mid-West States of Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota to ensure that I had enough time to consider all the relevant projects.

During the 18 months of my scholarship, I also attended an eye-opening trip to Brussels and a couple of Nuffield Study Tours within the UK. All of which were engaging, informative and fun.

For further details please read on ....



## 6. Contemporary Scholars Conference - USA 2010

This was my first opportunity to travel with the International Nuffield Scholars and it demonstrated the value of open debate and discussion.

The two and a half weeks passed so quickly, yet during that time I felt that my personal and professional development had grown tenfold.

The first lesson came at a meeting with Poul Christensen, Chair of Natural England at their head office in London. In response to a presentation exercise, Poul taught us how clear and determined you need to be if you want to get your point across to a wide audience.

A week later in Washington DC, I was listening to key industry figures wearing their hearts on their sleeves as they passionately put forward sometimes controversial viewpoints. I recalled the lesson I had learned in London and added another factor, that being passionate about a

subject is equally as important as clarity and determination when trying to put across your point.

Visiting a 2,800 cow dairy herd, complete with robotic milking machines and anaerobic digester opened my eyes to the gap between the farm and the bottle of milk sat on the supermarket shelf.

A trip to the American Civil War battlefields at Gettysburg taught me how to lead and win by adapting, innovating and overcoming. These were lessons that would bear fruit in the conclusions of this study.

And finally, wonderful receptions at the Canadian Embassy and the Governor of Pennsylvania's house taught me to be confident, proud and outgoing in situations that would previously have sent me scurrying for fresh air!

## 7. Australia

While in Australia, I met with directors and senior managers of many farming industry organisations, as well as some Nuffield Scholars plus farmers who were engaged in activities working to improve the public perception of farming.

Visits to many of the main levy bodies in Sydney and Canberra highlighted the level of competition between sectors. This competition is so fierce that rarely do the sectors collaborate to address industry perception issues. Dominant sectors such as Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) were more involved in marketing and public relations activity, but they inevitably dominated projects and there was little incentive for other sectors to engage.

With every levy body and sector looking after themselves, there was little room for collaboration on the wider issues of public perception of farming, for example.

Despite finding some small nuggets of information and a wider awareness of the challenges we all face, I left feeling that I had exposed more challenges, seen a distinctly similar attitude to the UK but no obvious solutions.

Through the internet I saw that the National Farmers Federation (NFF) in Australia had used public relations agencies in the past to promote a new farming practice or technology prior to that practice being given government approval. The idea of influencing voters to gain government approval was novel and I was keen to see how it worked in more detail.

Thus, I headed for the National Farmers Federation (NFF), where I was looking forward to discussing the results of their work with PR agencies. Surely this would offer the solution I craved?

Brett Heffernan of NFF was most welcoming and helpful. However, he duly explained that the PR work had not actually been as successful as the documents I had read had me to believe and the NFF had turned from this approach back to lobbying government directly. A contributory factor towards the failure of this initiative was the cost of communicating with the public at large (no mean feat in a country the size of Australia) versus the cost of lobbying parliament.

I hit the country roads and went to meet some farmers and Nuffield Scholars who would surely shed some light on this issue.

Roma Britnell is a 2011 Nuffield Scholar studying "The Value of Agriculture" within the context of identifying the value and thus communicating that value to the public. So I was delighted when Roma offered to host me for a night on my way around Victoria.

At that time, we agreed that our topics had synergy, but because Roma had yet to start her travels, we were unable to take the topic much further forward. Six months later Roma and I were to talk again when she introduced me to Charlie Arnot of the Centre for Food Integrity in the USA, a key contact of whom I would have been unaware without Roma's assistance.

Throughout my Australian travels, I met some wonderful farmers and farming champions. They re-enforced the message that Australia had its fair share of individual projects to engage with the public. The underlying theme was that these all ran autonomously. As such there was no co-ordination and a lack of overarching strategy to ensure that the right message was being delivered to the right people at the right time. The Australians whom I met were as frustrated as I was with the lack of public trust and understanding of farming.

### **Lessons Learned - Australia**

Australia showed me that, like the UK, it has many public facing projects and initiatives running, all aimed at reducing the urban/rural divide and addressing the other key public issues facing the farming industry.

The other thing that we had in common was that many of these projects were managed by individual sectors or related to single aspects of public engagement, e.g education and farm visits. What both Australia and the UK appeared to lack was co-ordination of activity to make the most of the existing works, reduce duplication and provide a platform on which to build a more effective public relations strategy.

## 8. New Zealand

I felt that I ought to visit New Zealand while I was “in the area”. This was a decision based more on making the most of an expensive flight rather than strategy, because my initial research had not uncovered any obvious answers in New Zealand to the questions posed by my study topic.

I had, fortunately, come across two New Zealand Nuffield scholars, James Parsons and Ali Undorf-lay. Both were interested in my topic and had experience in those fields.

Two Skype calls later from a hotel in Australia and I had been signposted by Ali and James to Christchurch a few days after the February earthquake that felled Christchurch Cathedral. It was not somewhere I had expected to visit at such a tragic time, but the offer of a few nights’ accommodation at the home of Sandra Taylor (an agricultural journalist) was too good to miss.

It was within the dust and debris of Christchurch that I was presented with the New Zealand answer to effective management of farm industry public relations activity - 'Farming For Our Future' (FFOF). At last I had found a tangible solution to the issue of lack of co-ordinated PR activity that was so prevalent throughout the UK and Australia.

The New Zealand Fish and Game lobby group entitled “Dirty Dairy” had run a high profile and relatively successful national smear campaign some two years previously slating the dairy sector practices and environmental credentials, and this was the catalyst for the evolution of FFOF.

Two years later, amongst the debris of Christchurch earthquake, FFOF steering group consisted of fifteen farmers and farm industry advocates (including Sandra Taylor, my host) all working to gain industry support for the project and planning establishment of a legal

entity that would raise funds and drive the agenda forward.

Farming For Our Future proposed to:

- Co-ordinate, create and support initiatives that improve both the understanding and image of agriculture, farming and food production industries.
- Encourage the awareness and uptake of best farming practice, highlight the importance of agriculture to New Zealand and attract young people into agriculture and associated careers.
- Operate a website providing information about farming and food production to the general public.
- Generate educational material to allow an accurate perception of the industry to be portrayed.
- Engage with media to highlight and promote best farming practice examples.
- Ensure that educational and public relations resources within the agricultural industry are fully utilised.

I was aware that much of this work is already being done in the UK by organisations such as Farming and Countryside Education (FACE) and the National Farmers Union (NFU).

The point of difference in New Zealand was that FFOF was being established to specifically deal with public perception issues by whatever means necessary - a new model in the delivery of these objectives.

The project was in its early days. However I learned much from Sandra and her colleagues about the challenges of establishing an organisation of this type and valued my time spent in New Zealand immensely. At last, I had witnessed an example of an organisation whose primary objective was to improve the public perception of farming by whatever methods necessary.

### **Lessons Learned - New Zealand**

In the face of adversity, the farming industry is likely to support an organisation that proposes to co-ordinate public relations activity.

It takes time (around two years) and commitment from many industry leaders, on a voluntary basis, to develop this concept to a stage where it can “go live”.

It can take two years or more to establish the legal entity that will raise funds from industry and has potential to raise the public perception of farming. This is because it's not always easy to convince the agricultural industry to commit financially to such broad initiatives.

Care is needed to avoid duplication with existing public initiatives in the UK.

Collaboration is the key to industry-wide action.

## 9. USA

It was while reading the Farmers Guardian in November 2010 at the 2010 Nuffield Conference in Edinburgh, that I noticed a small article informing me that American farmers had formed what they called the “U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance” (USFRA). By all accounts this was a collaboration across many sectors of farming in the USA to manage works that improve the public perception of agriculture in the country.

A day or so later I had arranged to meet Hugh Whaley (General Manager of USFRA) and booked a flight to America.

I arrived at the offices of Drake and Co in St Louis, Missouri, wondering why it didn't have a USFRA sign out front. Thankfully Hugh greeted me warmly, explaining that I had come to the right place.

### 9a. US Farmers and Ranchers Alliance (USFRA)



*Hugh Whaley of Drake & Co  
representing the US Farmers and Ranchers Alliance*

USFRA became a legal entity in 2010 following cross-sector talks over a two year period (a similar timescale to FFOF in New Zealand). It is an alliance, consisting of a wide range of

prominent farmer and rancher-led organisations and agri-business partners.

Philip Bradshaw, one of the pioneers of this initiative, explained during my visit to his farm that the main drivers behind the initial discussions were the leaders from the soybean, maize and beef sectors who were broad-thinking enough to see the benefit in cross-sector talks aimed at improving the public perception of food production methods.

Initial discussions showed that competitive sectors could collaborate if certain topics were removed from the table (farm policy and biofuels in this instance). The project gained momentum. Philip and his colleagues soon recognised that although they were industry leaders, they did not possess the skills that would be required to effectively run a collaborative project of this nature: balancing the needs of ever greater numbers of competitive organisations and raising funds, plus planning and delivering projects and initiatives that aimed to improve the public perception of agriculture.

Through a tender process, they secured the services of Drake and Co, an association management business that had a good track record, experience in rural matters and enthusiasm for the project.

In the past 12 months, USFRA has raised over \$20 million from some 50 national and regional farmer-led organisations (Appendix 1) and global agri-businesses. With this money the alliance, through their service agreement with Drake and Co, has so far engaged a prominent public relations company and developed a plan of action.

It's worth noting that Drake and Co are fully accountable for all operations undertaken under the name of USFRA. Hugh Whaley works for Drake and Co and sits on the board

of USFRA as an ex-officio member.

## USFRA mission & objectives

### Mission

- Enhance consumer trust in the U.S. food production system. *“We want consumers to know that America’s farmers and ranchers share their values. We are committed to answering Americans’ questions about how we raise our food – while being stewards of the environment, responsibly caring for our animals and maintaining strong businesses and communities”.*
- Maintain and enhance the freedom of U.S. farmers and ranchers to operate in a responsible manner. In particular, the campaign will emphasize farmers’ and ranchers’ dedication to continuous improvement of how food is raised in order to meet growing demands.
- Strengthen collaboration within the food production, processing and distribution systems to lead the discussion and to share information about food supply and the industry itself more effectively with Americans.

### Objectives

1. Increase the share of voice in key media outlets (national and state, traditional and social).
2. Increase the number of policymakers and government officials (at all levels) who value modern agriculture production.
3. Engage key customer decision makers in the dialogue about the value of modern food production.
4. Work with leading national influencer organisations (medical, cultural, dietary, environmental, etc.) to create partnerships in support of today’s agriculture.
5. Increase the role of farmers and ranchers as the voice of animal and crop agriculture on local, state and national food issues.

Through these objectives, USFRA aims to turn the cultural wars we witness today into constructive dialogue led by farmers.

In the UK, these objectives are all addressed in one form or another through the works of the NFU, CLA and other industry organisations, with the possible exception of Point 5.

USFRA claims that success will be measured as follows:

- Increasing share of voice in key media (national and state, traditional and social).
- Increasing the number of policymakers and government officials (at all levels) who accept the value of modern agriculture production.
- Engaging key customer decision makers in the dialogue about the value of modern food production.
- Working with leading national influencer organisations (medical, cultural, dietary, environmental, etc.) to create partnerships in support of today’s agriculture.
- Increasing the role of farmers and ranchers as the voice of animal and crop agriculture on local, state and national food issues

USFRA offered an interesting insight into the use of an association management company to manage an industry-wide project. Also, their ambition to make better use of farmer voices to improve the public perception of agriculture would apply equally well in the UK.

However, with USFRA in its infancy, it was not possible to draw conclusions as to the success and effectiveness of this approach.

While reflecting on how lessons learned from my visit to the USFRA and their interested parties might be adapted to fit the UK situation, I sent a quick catch-up email to Roma Britnell, the Australian 2011 Nuffield Scholar whom I knew had just returned from

her initial travels. While I was able to brief her on the works of USFRA, she in turn had news. She had come across a man named Charlie Arnot of the Center For Food Integrity (CFI), who had been speaking at a conference in Canada. Apparently Charlie was involved in work relating to public trust in the food chain.

## 9b. The Center for Food Integrity (CFI)

I went in pursuit of Charlie and tracked him down to an office in Kansas City, thankfully only a hundred miles away from where I was staying.



*Charlie Arnot: Founder of CMA, representing Center for Food Integrity*

CFI was established in 2006 as a non-profit organisation managed by CMA, an association management company owned and run by Charlie Arnot.

In that time, Charlie explained, CFI had developed four core competencies aimed at equipping people in the food chain with the skills and messages they needed to effectively communicate with consumers on issues of concern:

1. Design and development of models that fundamentally define and communicate trust
2. Research and development of messages that build consumer trust

3. Training and development of highly qualified messengers to deliver their messages to key influencer audiences
4. Leadership in delivering programmes and messages that build consumer trust

To be honest, it sounded like a very scientific, technical approach to what I thought was a 'soft skill' or 'dark art' topic.

Charlie explained that the benefit of a science-based approach was clear knowledge of consumer drivers based on logical, rational analysis; thus allowing issues to be approached in the most effective manner to achieve the desired outcome.

This logical approach to understanding the situation has stood CFI in good stead throughout.

### CFI Mission:

To build consumer trust and confidence in today's food system by sharing accurate, balanced information, correcting misinformation, highlighting best practices and engaging stakeholders to address issues that are important to consumers.

### To see CFI's current projects please turn to page 17

At the time of my meeting with Charlie, I had not considered the difference between 'public perception' and 'public trust'.

### I learned from Charlie that public trust and public perception were two different concepts.

#### Public Perception

The social phenomenon known as public perception can be seen as the difference between an absolute truth based on facts and a virtual truth shaped by popular opinion, media coverage and/or reputation. Public perception may be based on an absolutely



accurate assessment of the industry, or it may be based on biased media reports and faulty scientific studies. Public perception can also be affected by cultural bias and prejudice.

## Public Trust

The concept of public trust is much more complex. It has links to sociology, psychology, economics and philosophy. In this case public trust is defined as:

1. The willingness of the consumer to rely on the actions of the food chain;
2. reasonable expectation (confidence) of the consumer that the food chain will behave in a way beneficial to the consumer;
3. risk of harm to the consumer if the food chain does not behave accordingly;
4. the absence of consumer enforcement or control over actions performed by the food chain

From this definition we can see that influencing public trust can bring many more benefits than simply addressing public perception issues. With this focus we can aim towards a food chain that is led by trust, not regulation (Point 4).

**I also learned from Charlie about the concept of a 'Social Licence'.**

## Social Licence

The Social Licence is defined as existing when a practice or method has the ongoing approval of consumers and stakeholders and where there is broader ongoing social acceptance.

The concept of the Social Licence is rooted in the trust, beliefs and opinions held by the consumer (and other stakeholders) in the food chain. It is therefore 'granted' by the community.

It is also intangible, unless effort is made to measure the trust, beliefs and opinions. Finally, it is dynamic and non-permanent because trust, beliefs and opinions are subject to change as new information is acquired. Hence the Social Licence has to be earned and then maintained.

Three escalating levels of Social Licence have been identified:

1. Legitimacy
2. Credibility
3. Trust

*The graph on the next page shows an example of Social Licence in action within the mining sector.*

During my research, I came across an interesting quote that summed up the concept of a Social Licence:

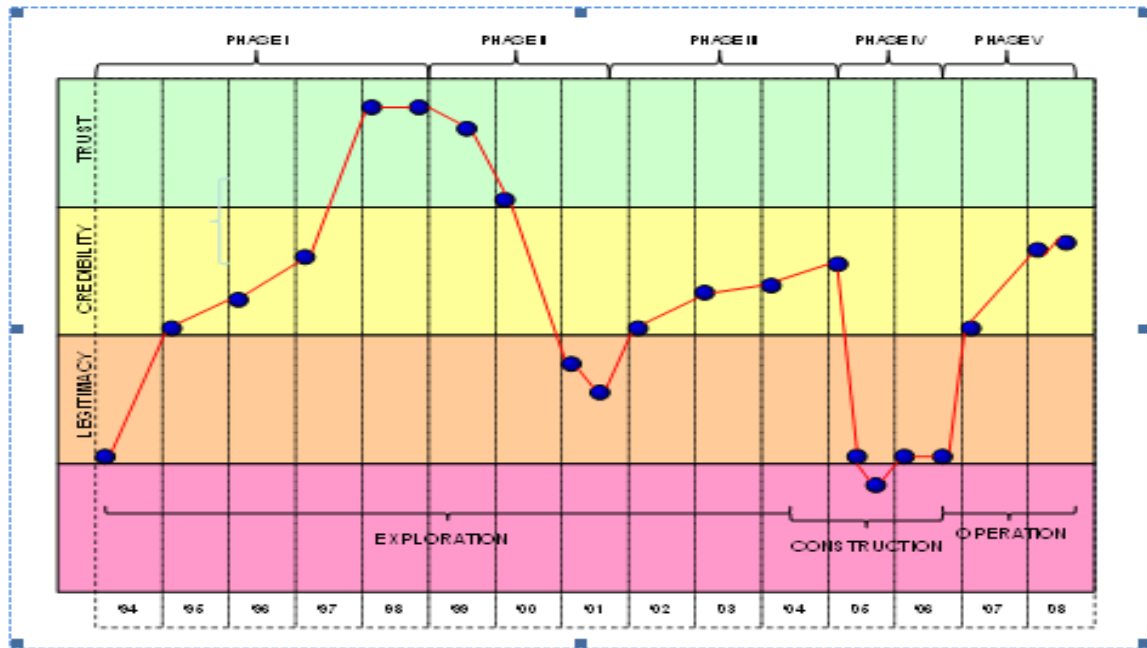
*"You don't get your social licence by going to a government ministry and making an application or simply paying a fee ... It requires far more than money to truly become part of the communities in which you operate."* - Pierre Lassonde, President of Newmont Mining Corporation

## Recreancy Theorem

A milestone in the evolution of CFI was the publication of a 'trust-building model' called Recreancy Theorem.

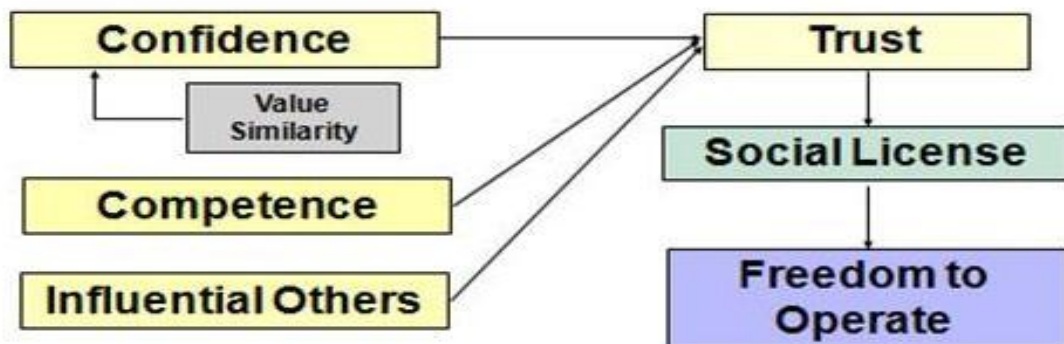
Recreancy Theorem proved that 'shared values' are 3-5 times more effective at building consumer trust than demonstrating competence. The flowchart on the next page details the findings of this research.

As well as demonstrating a sound understanding of the subject, Charlie Arnot showed me that influencing public opinion is not necessarily the 'dark art' that, at the beginning of my journey, I thought it might be. The scientific approach taken by CFI has proved that logic, science and evidence can all be used to positively influence public trust.



*Minera San Cristobal: The evolution of Social Licence to operate: an example of Social Licence in action within the mining sector*

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



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

*The Recreancy Theorem*

Table showing CFI's current projects (page 14 refers)

Project	Role of CFI
Annual Food System Summit	Host
North American Strategy Conference in Animal Agriculture	Host
<b>Training packages:</b>	
ENGAGE	Interactive training package developed and managed by CFI entitled: "Using the Power of Shared Values" including a Social Media Helpdesk
Can We Talk?	"Can we talk using values to engage in constructive conversations?" is an interactive shared-values curriculum developed by CFI for high school and college students
<b>Education and Information:</b>	
Best Food Facts	Website providing balanced, objective answers to common food system questions
Coalition for Sustainable Egg Supply	Scientific research to better understand the impact and viability of various laying hen housing systems on a sustainable supply of eggs.
Farmers Feed Us	An interactive, state-specific campaign that gives consumers a chance to meet the farmers and farm families who grow their food.
Farmer Resource Center	A web-based platform for livestock and crop producers to actively respond to issues or misinformation in the media, or online.
Project Public Voice	A project providing food system stakeholders with messaging, training and other related resources as they work to deliver common themes and messages without sacrificing their own messaging.

*CFI's current projects*

### 9c. Comparing USFRA and CFI

Although they have very different modes of action, similarities exist between USFRA and CFI. For example, both organisations:

- Seek constructive dialogue on food issues
- Support a farming industry that can feed the world in a sustainable way

- Use association management companies to run their operations

#### **Association Management**

Association management companies (a new concept for me until that time) were

employed by both USFRA and CFI. The concept certainly exists in the UK as I subsequently found out, but is less commonly associated with farming related projects.

The scale of both USFRA and CFI and their national roles within such a large country make the use of association management companies almost essential if you want to get a point across in all American States.

### **Stakeholders**

One final thing that these two projects had in common was that they each had a couple of stakeholders who were not keen to join the party. In one case it was the organic

movement and in the other case it was the organisation representing smaller farms and smallholders.

It was clear that the balance of power lay with USFRA and CFI who had built a strong collaborative base, leaving the 'hard-to-get' stakeholders as outsiders. In that case, being an outsider appeared to be a lonely place.

Finally, the idea of working as part of the food chain was also attractive, not least because it broadened the funding base significantly, but because it also meant that everyone in the chain of trust was pulling together in the same direction.

### **Lessons Learned - USA**

Encourage and empower more farmers to have a public voice.

Leave contentious topics at the door when engaging competitive sectors or stakeholders. This will allow them to focus on the task in hand.

Consider farming as an integral part of the food chain, not simply an industry on its own - after all farming is just a small, if vital, link in the food chain.

Make 'increase in public trust' the primary objective of public relations work and 'public perception' will improve as a result.

Focus on promoting shared values rather than simply demonstrating competence.

Don't be afraid to employ the best talent that you can afford for each job.

## 10. Conclusions

1. Still in their infancy, FFOF and USFRA appear to be gaining significant industry buy-in to their objectives, demonstrating industry confidence in this model of public relations management.
2. However, replicating either of these models would simply duplicate the work of many existing organisations in the UK and is unlikely to represent good value for money.
3. The UK stands to benefit by adding the following objective to its existing armoury:  
  

***Empowering and encouraging farmers to increase the role they play as the voice of animal and crop agriculture at local, county and national levels. (based on Point 5 of the USFRA objectives)***
4. This objective could perhaps be incorporated into the remit of an existing industry representative organisation such as the NFU or CLA to take advantage of this opportunity at minimal cost.
5. However, of all the organisations I visited, it was the Center for Food Integrity in Kansas City that impressed me most. Its experience, successful track record and focus on influencing public trust across the whole food chain was very impressive and opened my eyes to the potential for much wider gains than I had previously thought possible.
6. Applying the principles of the Center For Food Integrity to the UK situation would raise our game considerably.

## 11. Recommendations

1. This study has shown that the most effective way of improving consumer trust in British food is a joined-up food chain approach, not least because agriculture is a just a small (if vital) part of the food chain that links farmers with the public.
2. If we are to reach the level of public engagement required to meet the increasing challenges posed by pressure groups/NGOs; the existing public engagement works of food industry (including farming) organisations need to be supported and complemented by an independent, industry-funded organisation whose primary objective is developing the improvement of consumer trust in food.
3. Focused on that primary objective, the proposed organisation could be empowered to lead the food chain industry in building public trust without the baggage of political or commercial objectives, following the successful example of the Center for Food Integrity in the USA.
4. Its core strengths would be 'independence' through industry-wide funding and 'leadership' through management by a board of key food-chain industry figures who all pulled together in the interests of the whole food chain. If necessary take 'hot' topics such as 'government/EU policy' off the table in order to facilitate focus on the primary objectives of improving consumer trust in British food.
5. Those strengths would allow it to fundraise without prejudice from across a vast array of interested parties to provide a suitable communications budget. That budget would then allow development and broadcast of messages that have broad appeal to a majority of consumers. These would be regular, clear, positive industry messages that could be broadcast at the most appropriate time, and level, using the most appropriate media mechanism.
6. The net effect would be a truly independent food chain voice on how food is produced, manufactured, processed, distributed and retailed in the UK.
7. My study has also shown that there is likely to be significant value in co-ordinating the activity of industry advocates. My report therefore recommends that food-chain industry advocates be brought together through a membership database, providing them (for a membership fee) with the necessary training, messages and opportunities to represent the industry in the most effective manner. An added benefit of this co-ordination would be the provision of support for industry advocates at times when they come under direct fire from pressure groups.

*continued overleaf*

## Recommendations - continued

8. Not only would this support existing advocates, but would give up-and-coming advocates the support and tools required to build their confidence in stepping up to the plate.
9. This database could be developed and managed by the proposed organisation, once again providing independent, industry-led support that is necessary to avoid the pitfalls associated with commercial/political influence.
10. By learning from the existing successful methods employed by the Center for Food Integrity, by following the examples of Farming For Our Future and the US Farmers and Ranchers Alliance and by adapting those to suit the UK situation, we can save significant time and money in capitalising on this fantastic opportunity to improve consumer trust in British food.
11. An independent organisation of the nature proposed would also be able to draw from the extensive knowledge-base and experience of industry partners. This would make best use of existing resources and using them to better effect that can be currently achieved.

## 12. Personal statement

My Nuffield journey has taken me to places I never dreamed of visiting, meeting and learning from some of the most dynamic and inspirational people in the world.

My travels have opened my eyes and engaged my senses, such that I now feel empowered to influence the industry about which I am so passionate.

As a result of my Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust award, I am working with industry leaders to fulfil the aspirations of my report recommendations and strive towards the vision of a society in which the public share my trust and passion for all products grown, bred or reared on British farms.



## 13. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the board of the UK Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, in particular John Stones, for recognising the importance of this subject, seeing my potential to rise to the challenge, and for supporting me along the way.

To my mentors in the Nuffield application process, Louise Manning and Geoff Sansome: I am so pleased that you noticed my potential, and eternally grateful for your encouragement, support and friendship.

To all the people who have so generously given up their time to share their knowledge and experience with me, I am truly grateful. It was an amazing experience to be received in such an open and warm manner throughout my research and travels.

In particular, my heartfelt thanks go to Bart Ruth and Charlie Arnot (USA), Jim Geltch (Australia) and Sandra Taylor (NZ) for their generous hospitality, their personal contributions to the debate and their support while introducing me to some of the most inspirational people I have ever met (including them).

To my employer, Natural England, and colleagues who have supported me in my quest for knowledge and covered for me while I was away: thank you for enabling me to gain the Nuffield experience.

Finally, and most importantly, to my wife Kate, son Tim, daughter Clara and wider family. Thank you all for allowing me to go on this journey. Without your love, devotion and support before, during and after my travels, none of this would have been possible.

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## Appendix 1: US Farmers and Ranchers Alliance Affiliates July 2011

Alabama Farmers Federation  
 American Egg Board  
 American Farm Bureau Federation\*  
 American Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers  
 American Farmers for the Advancement and Conservation of Technology  
 American National Cattle Women  
 American Sheep Industry  
 American Soybean Association  
 American Sugar Alliance  
 Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation  
 Association of Agriculture Production Executives  
 California Farm Bureau Federation  
 Cattlemen's Beef Board/Beef Checkoff\*  
 Dairy Farmers of America  
 Federation of State Beef Councils\*  
 Illinois Farm Bureau  
 Illinois Soybean Association\*  
 Indiana Farm Bureau Federation  
 Iowa Association Soybean\*  
 Kansas Farm Bureau Federation  
 Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation  
 Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council\*  
 Missouri Farmers Care  
 National Association of Wheat Growers  
 National Cattlemen's Beef Association\*  
 National Corn Growers Association\*  
 National Cotton Council  
 National Milk Producers Federation\*  
 National Pork Board\*  
 National Pork Producers Council\*  
 Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation  
 Nebraska Soybean Board\*  
 New York Farm Bureau Federation  
 North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation  
 North Dakota Soybean Council  
 Pennsylvania Farm Bureau  
 South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation  
 Southern Peanut Farmers Federation  
 Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation  
 Tennessee Soybean Promotion Board  
 United Egg Producers\*  
 United Fresh Produce Association  
 United Sorghum Checkoff Board  
 United Soybean Board\*  
 USA Rice Federation  
 U .S. Grains Council  
 U.S. Poultry & Egg Association\*  
 U.S. Soybean Federation  
 Western Growers

\*= Board participants

## Appendix 2 : The Center for Food Integrity Members July 2011

[American Farm Bureau Federation](#)  
[Burnbrae Farms Limited](#)  
[Dairy Council of California](#)  
[Dairy Farmers of America](#)  
[Dairy Management, Inc.](#)  
[DairyCARES](#)  
[Elanco Animal Health](#)  
[Foster Farms](#)  
[Illinois Soybean Association](#)  
[Indiana Corn Marketing Council](#)  
[Indiana Farm Bureau Federation](#)  
[Indiana Soybean Alliance](#)  
[Indiana State Department of Agriculture](#)  
[Iowa Farm Bureau Federation](#)  
[Kansas Soybean Commission](#)  
[Kentucky Soybean Promotion Board](#)  
[Michigan Ag Council](#)  
[Michigan State University](#)  
[Monsanto Company](#)  
[National Pork Board](#)  
[National Pork Producers Council](#)  
[National Restaurant Association](#)  
[Novus International](#)  
[North Carolina Soybean Producers Association](#)  
[Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Bank](#)  
[Ohio Farm Bureau Federation](#)  
[Ohio Soybean Council](#)  
[Pacific Egg & Poultry](#)  
[Pfizer Animal Health](#)  
[Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin](#)  
[Purdue University](#)  
[Rabobank America](#)  
[South Dakota Soybean Research & Promotion Council](#)  
[Tyson Foods, Inc.](#)  
[United Soybean Board](#)  
**CFI Animal Agriculture Committee**  
[Ag United for South Dakota](#)  
[American Farm Bureau Federation](#)  
[American Meat Institute](#)  
[Burnbrae Farms Limited](#)  
[Dairy Business Association](#)  
[Dairy Council of California](#)  
[Dairy Farmers of America](#)  
[Dairy Management, Inc.](#)  
[DairyCARES](#)

[Elanco Animal Health](#)  
[Illinois Pork Producers Association](#)  
[Illinois Soybean Association](#)  
[Indiana Corn Marketing Council](#)  
[Indiana Farm Bureau Federation](#)  
[Indiana Soybean Alliance](#)  
[Indiana State Department of Agriculture](#)  
[Iowa Soybean Association](#)  
[Kansas Soybean Commission](#)  
[Kentucky Soybean Promotion Board](#)  
[M2P2](#)  
[Maple Leaf Farms](#)  
[Maschhoffs, The](#)  
[Michigan Ag Council](#)  
[Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee](#)  
[Michigan State University](#)  
[Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council](#)  
[Missouri Farmers Care](#)  
[Monsanto Company](#)  
[National Chicken Council](#)  
[National Corn Growers Association](#)  
[National Milk Producers Federation](#)  
[National Pork Board](#)  
[National Pork Producers Council](#)  
[National Restaurant Association](#)  
[National Turkey Federation](#)  
[Nebraska Corn Board](#)  
[Nebraska Soybean Board](#)  
[New York Animal Agriculture Coalition](#)  
[Novus International](#)  
[Ohio Livestock Coalition](#)  
[Ohio Soybean Council](#)  
[PennAg Industries Association](#)  
[Pfizer Animal Health](#)  
[Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin](#)  
[Purdue University](#)  
[Rabobank America](#)  
[South Dakota Soybean Research & Promotion Council](#)  
[Tyson Foods, Inc.](#)  
[Tennessee Soybean Promotion Board](#)  
[United Egg Producers](#)  
[United Soybean Board](#)  
[USA Poultry and Egg Export Council](#)  
[Validus Services](#)  
**[Coalition for Sustainable Egg Supply \(CSES\)](#)**  
[American Humane Association](#)  
[Bob Evans Farms](#)

[Burnbrae Farms Limited](#)  
[Cargill Kitchen Solutions](#)  
[Cracker Barrel Country Store, Inc.](#)  
[Daybreak Foods, Inc.](#)  
[DineEquity, Inc.](#)  
[Egg Farmers of Canada](#)  
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[Flowers Foods](#)  
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[McDonald's USA](#)  
[Michael Foods, Inc.](#)  
Midwest Poultry Services  
[Michigan State University](#)  
[Novus International](#)  
[Ohio Egg Marketing Program](#)  
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