



FARM & FOOD
Care SASKATCHEWAN

Improving Public Trust Can Help Feed the World

Kim Kennett, Farm & Food Care
Saskatchewan

With the recent release of the SaskCanola's License to Farm documentary and the research results from the US Center for Food Integrity, there's been a lot of discussion in the agriculture industry of late regarding the importance of creating trust with consumers.

[SaskCanola's documentary](#) released at the Crop Production Show in anuary 2016, invites farmers to join the conversation about food and become advocates for the industry. The video, designed to inspire farmers to talk with consumers and strengthen relationships with the people who eat the food they produce, emphasizes that now is the time to work together to gain and maintain our social license.

Similarly, a study conducted by the US Center for Food Integrity concludes that if you increase transparency with consumers, you will increase trust. ["A Clear View of Transparency and How It Builds Trust"](#) highlights 2015 consumer trust research and some best practices that the food system can use as a guide for increasing transparency. The study also reveals who the public holds most responsible for demonstrating transparency, specific areas where they expect transparency, and precisely where consumers want to access information that is most important to them.

But how does improving consumer trust and being transparent about how food is produced here at home affect the rest of the world?

We all agree that striving to develop relationships with the consumers and publicly sharing the story of food and farming will help people understand what is involved in food production. According to

the national 2012 Ipsos Reid *Study of Consumer Attitudes Towards Food and Farming*, the general public believes that farmers are credible sources of information on topics such as animal and environmental care and food safety. However, people are very much influenced by the growing trend in animal rights and anti-GMO-hormone-antibiotics sentiments promoted by activists. Given that many Canadians - and people in the first world - are many generations removed from agrarian ways of life, activism has gained a strong foothold in North America and even more so in the European Union where farmers have been forced to vastly change the way they farm because of pressure from activist groups.

Anti-biotechnology organizations have had tremendous success in blocking the third world from developing sustainable food production systems and enhancing the quality of food they produce.

Western activism has had a serious and devastating impact on developing countries. Anti-biotechnology organizations have had tremendous success in blocking the third world from developing sustainable food production systems and enhancing the quality of food they produce. An example is the controversy surrounding genetically engineered vitamin A enriched "golden rice". The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 250,000 children worldwide suffer from vitamin A deficiency. UNICEF contends that In India, a country that has well-implemented vitamin A

supplementation programs, 57 percent of children under the age of six are still not getting enough vitamin A.

There are many lost opportunities for improving agriculture production and alleviating hunger in the third world that are stalled, and sometimes completely shut down, by privileged first world countries.

Golden rice could significantly contribute to helping solve the problem of vitamin A deficiency in developing countries. But even though golden rice has been around since 2005 and could be feeding millions of people to prevent hunger and disease, pressure from activists has meant that golden rice still isn't approved for sale on the world market. There are many lost opportunities for improving agriculture production and alleviating hunger in the third world that are stalled, and sometimes completely shut down, by privileged first world countries.

And this is just one example of activist interference. There are many more. The stark reality is that activists have been incredibly successful in influencing government agricultural and trade policy and regulations in many western countries. This not only hamstring farmers locally, but affects the health and welfare of people in developing nations far away.

**The challenge that lies before us is this:
To ensure a viable future for agriculture in Saskatchewan, it is imperative to increase public trust by becoming more transparent and engaging in our approach.**

Saskatchewan farmers are proud of the food they grow that is exported all over the world. We are Canada's top agri-food exporting provinces, with exports of \$13.9 billion in agricultural and agri-food products distributed to 153 countries around the world in 2014. By 2050, more food than ever will be required to feed the estimated 9 billion people who will live on this planet. Activists, whether intentionally or unintentionally, could seriously curtail farmers' ability to produce food.

We all know that most farmers in Saskatchewan are committed to doing the "right thing". They're proud of what they do and care about feeding people, whether in Saskatchewan, Canada or India. The challenge that lies before us is this: To ensure a viable future for agriculture in Saskatchewan, it is imperative to increase public trust by becoming more transparent and engaging in our approach. We need to share stories about the safe food we produce and speak up about the myths surrounding modern agriculture.

Research demonstrates that consumers want to know how their food is produced. Let's give them what they're asking for. By collaborating in our message of caring, responsible, technologically advanced farming and ranching, we can help consumers better understand modern agriculture and the food they eat.

References:

<http://bioscience.oxfordjournals.org/content/55/9/726.full>

<http://www.dw.de/genetically-modified-golden-rice-variety-stirs-up-controversy/a-17396082>

<http://www.foodintegrity.org/research/consumer-trust-research/current-research/>

http://www.saskcanola.com/news/latest_news.php?detail=678