Reconnecting Australian consumers and producers: Identifying problems of distrust

Abstract

A growing gap between the production and consumption of food has led to a decline in consumer trust in food, and a desire for increased regulation of food. The aim of this study was to investigate the nature of consumer trust in food production and regulation in the wake of shifts in food technology, globalisation and production. Semi-structured interviews (n=47) were conducted in 2009 with participants living in rural and metropolitan South Australia. Rural participants were more trusting of food production because of their direct experience with producing food than their metropolitan counterparts. Consumers' embeddedness in food production impacts their trust in food. Increasing local food production and consumption may increase consumer trust in food, and decrease consumer dependence on government regulation.

1. Introduction

The past few decades, consumers have been witness to a shift in the production and consumption of food via increased food miles (Feagan, 2007), food deserts (Coveney and O'Dwyer, 2009), globalisation (Allen, 1999), and the mass production of food (Bildtgard, 2008). Herein, we argue that these shifts have resulted in a growing gap between producers and consumers and consequently, have created a deficit in consumer knowledge and control over the foods they purchase. The large scale economic growth of the production and marketing of food has led to a need for more specialized knowledge regarding food practices

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(Norberg-Hodge, 2007); specialized knowledge that is often beyond the capacity of lay individuals. Modern society has become more complex and consequently, the choices lay individuals make about food have become increasingly complex: What do we buy? Who do we buy from? Locally or globally? Organic or non-organic? Ethically? Economically? The role of trust in food has become increasingly complex because lay individuals cannot possibly be knowledgeable about all of the underlying issues surrounding food choices (Gaskell et al., 2001). Indeed, Kjaernes (2006, p, 922) argues that:

> "the increasingly complex and dynamic character of modern systems of food provisioning, knowledge and regulation has frequently been mentioned as important and characteristic features that lead to unpredictability, fragmentation and contradictions, seen as core features of modern consumption and contemporary issues of trust."

The following article presents results from research investigating Australians' trust in food production. The aim of our research was to examine the nature and dimensions of consumer food trust. To explore this we recruited participants from a wide range of locations and backgrounds. This article reports on results in relation to participants in rural and metropolitan areas. It compares and contrasts views on trust in the food supply and in particular, food regulation, from participants with experiences at different parts of the food chain (proximity to food production). We argue that the changing nature of food production is impacting consumer trust and consequently, health and wellbeing. The data presented also provides support for policy makers and local public health representatives pursuing initiatives to increase local food production.

2. Background

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Despite the lack of agreement regarding its definition, across social science literature trust is conceptualized as the optimistic acceptance of a vulnerable situation which is based on positive expectations of the intentions of the trusted individual or institution (Dugan et al., 2005; Gilson, 2003; Hall et al., 2001). Theoretically, trust can be understood to be a solution for increasing complexity (Luhmann, 1979), a lack of knowledge (Giddens, 1994; Mollering, 2001, 2006), and is important for the health and wellbeing of society (Ward and Meyer, 2009). Trust is a means of bridging knowledge and uncertainty – in the absence of relevant information, individuals invest trust as a means of making their decisions less complex; the choice to trust is a reflexive (questioning) conscious choice. Thus, an investigation into consumers' trust in food in the wake of the increasingly complex nature of food production is timely.

With regards to food, trust in food production, regulations and safety is a means of assisting consumers to make choices about what to eat amidst the increasingly complex nature of food. For example, an individual may choose to trust the packaging on organic food labels, that it is indeed organic and not just labelled in that way. However, their decision to trust would infer that they consciously and reflexively considered the alternative - that the label was misleading. Their trust suggests that they are aware of the risk that the food may be mislabelled; there is a degree of incomplete knowledge or uncertainty. Nonetheless, their experience with purchasing organic foods that are familiar simplifies the decision to trust the product in the future. Former positive experiences decrease the perceived risk in trusting.

Due to recent shifts in the food industry, consumer knowledge of food production has decreased. A lack of knowledge and control regarding food choice makes it difficult for consumers to act *reflexively* with respect to trust. For example, if a consumer does not have

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the capacity to question the labelling of organic foods, they cannot in theory, be trusting but rather, they are confident or dependent (Barbalet, 2009; Luhmann, 1988). Of concern is that for a proportion of individuals, the lack of knowledge and control may lead to dependence on food producers and regulators because in the absence of food autonomy, one does not even have the capacity to choose to (dis)trust (Lupton, 1997; Meyer and Ward, 2009; Ward and Coates, 2006). That is to say, it is far simpler for consumers to relinquish responsibility than address food issues about which they have little knowledge or control.

It may be argued that a proportion of lay individuals do, indeed, actively make reflexive decisions with regard to food choice. These decisions can be witnessed in the form of a rejection of certain forms of production (for example, rejecting GM (Costa-Font et al., 2008)) or through choosing alternative forms of consumption (for example, buying locally, choosing vegan or vegetarian lifestyles) (Giddens, 1991). Moreover, people act reflexively when they choose to reject or ignore professional or 'expert' advice regarding food choice (Dixon and Banwell, 2004).

Allen (1999) has argued that the lack of communication and growing gap between producers and consumers has led to a distinct disembeddedness. Disembeddedness has been described as a process by which localisation and familiarity with social systems and material objects are decoupled (Dixon and Banwell, 2004). Giddens (1991) notes that one result of the disembedding of social life is knowing something without being directly involved or understanding what is happening. It could be argued that this is exactly what has happened with the food supply.

Indeed, food chains are made up of complex networks that include various companies involved in producing, processing and retailing products (Fritz and Fischer, 2007) which

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makes interaction between the producers and consumers difficult. Feagan (2007, p, 38) argues that "as food chains become stretched further and in more complex ways across space, we experience both the physical and psychological displacement of production from consumption, and all of the other disconnections and disembedding which follow in that stead." The disembedded nature of producer/consumer relationships are compounded by the differential knowledge of lay and experts regarding food causing anxiety in lay individuals who lack an understanding regarding food safety and production (Hansen et al., 2003).

Herein, we argue that the re-embedding of consumers in the food supply as a whole is necessary to reduce consumer dependence and increase consumer capacity to reflexively (dis)trust in food production and regulation. Following, we present the methods and results of our study, moving on to discuss consumer embeddedness in the food system and the role it plays in consumer trust. Finally, we discuss the practical implications of our results for re-embedding consumers in the food supply, and increasing trust in forms of regulation.

3. Methods

Data for this study were collected through 47 semi-structured interviews. Participants were aged between 18 and 65 years and chosen on the basis of being the primary shopper for the household as earlier research suggests that these people are more likely to consider the safety and quality of their food (Coveney, 2006). The study used purposive sampling techniques to attract participants who have experience of the phenomena under examination and are regarded as information rich (Patton, 2002). Popay et al. (1998, p, 346) argue that one of the markers of quality in qualitative research is sampling via relevance; that is choosing a sample which produces "the type of knowledge needed to understand the structures and processes within which the individuals or situation are located." The sample for this study was

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structured by location, age and gender. Participants were sought from three locations: from the high socioeconomic status (SES) eastern suburbs (n=17) and low SES southern suburbs of Adelaide (n=16) with a third group of participants drawn from rural South Australia (n=14). The sample was structured by location as existing research suggests that reflexivity is stratified by class (Lupton, 2003; Shilling, 2002; Ward, 2006; Ward and Coates, 2006). Rural participants were sought as their physical access to food outlets is more limited, and their familiarity of, or direct experience with, primary food production more extensive. Four rural participants were recruited from areas surrounding Adelaide and ten from the mid North of South Australia, a region approximately 230 kilometres north of Adelaide.

Participants were primarily recruited from the electronic white pages (an electronic record of listed phone numbers). However, this was skewed towards homeowners and renters, so younger participants were purposively recruited through flyers on campus at Flinders University (followed by snowball sampling from the initial younger participants). Participants from farming families in rural South Australia (n=7) were also purposively recruited through snowball sampling as initial interviews indicated that these participants were sceptical about the over regulation of food production. In order to further investigate this theme, interviews continued until saturation (Morse, 1994).

The interviews were of approximately one hour duration and addressed issues of food choice; information about food; food safety; governance of food; trust in institutions and overall level of trust in the food supply. The study sought to interrogate theories of trust through examining the role of reflection in consumer trust in the Australian food supply. The data for this article are primarily drawn from discussions of trust in governance of the food supply and demonstrates differences in reflexivity between rural and urban participants. The

interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Data were analysed using techniques from grounded theory, which seeks to provide a depiction of reality through allowing the theory to emerge from the data. The data were initially coded using open codes which identify concepts and their properties and later subject to axial coding which makes links between the concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

4. Results

Table 1 provides a demographic comparison of metropolitan and rural participants. As evident in the table, the groups are comparable by gender and level of post secondary education, although a greater proportion of rural participants have undertaken vocational and technical qualifications rather than university qualifications. The samples differ however, in relation to age and household income. The rural sample is skewed towards older participants and the majority of rural participants (81%) had household incomes of $44,999 or less in the last year. Income levels may reflect the extent of involvement of farming families who are asset rich but have little disposable income and may also reflect the impact of ongoing drought at this stage.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of rural and metropolitan participants

	Metropolitan N=33	Rural N=14
Gender		
Males	8 (24%)	4 (28%)
Females	25 (76%)	10 (72%)
Age		
18-29 years	8 (24%)	2 (14%)
30-39 years	7 (21%)	1 (7%)
40-49 years	9 (27%)	4 (29%)

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50-59 years	6 (18%)	6 (43%)
60-65 years	3 (9%)	1 (7%)
Highest level of Education completed		
University	12 (36%)	3 (21%)
TAFE or technical qualifications	8 (24%)	5 (36%)
Secondary	12 (36%)	6 (43%)
Primary	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
Household income		
0-14,999	3 (11%)	3 (27%)
15,000-29,000	1 (4%)	3 (27%)
30,000-44,999	4 (14%)	3 (27%)
45,000-59,999	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
60,000-74,999	6 (21%)	1 (9.5%)
75,000-89,999	3 (11%)	1 (9.5%)
90,000-104,999	5 (18%)	0 (0%)
105,000-119,999	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
120,000-134,999	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
135,000-149,000	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
$150,000 or more	3 (11%)	0 (0%)

Our results demonstrated some differences between the views of rural participants and metropolitan participants concerning food regulation and legislation, with rural participants demonstrating greater knowledge of and reflexivity with regards to food regulation. We present the results by reporting separately on each group of participants. We then compare and contrast the results from each group to highlight the salient points. The perspectives of rural participants are given first.

4. 1 Over regulation and expertise

A feature of the interviews with rural participants was the notion of 'over regulation', and a number of rural participants thought that regulation had become overwhelming. As one participant put it, in relation to food regulation, "I think they've [government] got a bit too

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carried away" (J40 rural; male). When asked to explain, he outlined a conversation in which a local grocer indicated that food regulation prevented him from selling cut watermelon. He continued:

> I think they probably needed to keep an eye on it [food regulation] but they've gone in too far. Yeah if they can't buy half a watermelon and stuff like that I think generally that – most of that's fairly safe; everybody else buys it in halves. (J40 rural; male)

Rural participants also made reference to the ways in which regulation or expertise took priority over tradition – the ways in which things used to be done – and, in so doing may have diluted trust people had in each other:

> We have all had to do a little [food handling] course where once upon a time you could run a casserole luncheon and have everybody come. Now you have to meet certain criteria for the kitchen, and who brought it and you have to place labels on it saying what was in it […] you would hope that wouldn't take away from the quaintness of being able to buy local by having it so regulated. (J32 rural; female)

The reference here to the threat regulation posed to charm ('quaintness'), where people were included ('have everybody come'), typified the viewpoint of rural participants. The extract speaks to a belief in a world – earlier times - where trust in others played a role in food provision. It is not difficult to see here an example of the ways in which local food practices embedded people in an environment of trust and reciprocity, the very features which a more modern food environment lacks (Enticott, 2003).

4. 2 Direct experience, own judgement and commonsense

There were frequent references by rural participants to the notion of local decision making and using one's own judgement. The idea that lay experiences now take second place to so-called 'expert information' was evident in the discussions with rural participants. The direct

contact participants had with the production end of the food chain provided them with a sense of trust and assurance built on know-how and commonsense. If we understand trust be a solution to a lack of knowledge or control, it may also be that these groups of participants do not need to trust because of their contact and knowledge of food production. This had now been usurped in favour of expert advice.

Interviewer: Do you think these things need to have all these rules and regulations?

It's a bit hard to tell, isn't it, because commonsense seems to have gone out of the window with a lot of people. (J40 rural; male)

The reliance on commonsense – and indeed other senses - was brought out by one rural participant who said:

If it's meat you can see and look at it and know – and smell – whether it's turning or whatever but I think a lot of products like cheese, if it's the best before and it's not mouldy or anything like that it's fine. There's nothing wrong with it. I grate it up and put it in the freezer. (J44 rural; female)

For another rural woman who relies on:

… trial and error; I can see they don't go off so I haven't – and I'm cautious with that so I haven't had anything that has caused us troubles. (J42 rural; female)

Some rural participants had direct experience of primary food preparation, such as butchering their own meats, and reflected on the trust they had in those practices in relation to the current need to follow more strict practices.

Interviewer: So when they were killing meat when you were a kid did they take all sorts of precautions around the meat?

Oh hang no. No, but we never got poisoned or anything. So sometimes I really do think, with our regulation, that we are over-regulated with our safety because little kids

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are not going to have a chance to be immune to – you've got to have a certain amount of dirt. (J41 rural; female)

Familiarity of food production also positively impacted many rural participants' trust in the food supply by virtue of them having experienced directly the ways in which regulation forced particular checks and balances. For example, when asked about trust in government, one rural participant from a farming family replied:

Well, you have – because it's so hard to do everything these days without all the red tape, I sort of – I suppose in my mind I expect certain standards because you know what it had to go through. (J42 rural; male)

This sentiment was echoed by a woman who worked in a supermarket in rural South Australia who argues that "because they've become stricter I think that you should feel safer" (J33 rural; female).

An appreciation of "red tape" and "knowing what it had to go through" mentioned above appears to provide a measure of trust in a system in which food standards and associated practices have to be adhered to. However, while the red tape does suggest to this consumer that food standards do work to make food safe, the participant's statement may also be interpreted as one that suggests that food is over-regulated.

However, the negative effects of too much regulation of food were also mentioned by some participants, using the example of a more hygienic food supply that was not fully optimising health and wellbeing. As identified above, for some rural participants a lack of exposure to food risk is viewed as potentially detrimental to health:

We've got also that other side of it where we're so paranoid about eating something that's out of date or that hasn't been monitored properly that we actually are getting less resistance from bacteria and that we've killed so much bacteria in our hospitals and things that we've got these super bugs and they've bred up, basically because we've

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been so paranoid about a bit of dirt or a bit of date. A lot of our previous generation were a lot stronger and a lot [more] tolerant about their foods than what we are. (J44 rural; female)

Another rural participant commented on the ways in which local, individual food providers used to be trusted, but this has been taken away by regulation.

…just an example: you used to be able to buy milk from a farmer but you can't do that unless they have a licence; just little things like that. (J33 rural; female)

The appreciation of the quality of food because of a recognition and direct experience of 'all the red tape' provided many rural participants with a belief that the food supply was to be trusted. This belief in the probity of the food system by rural participants is in direct comparison with the suspicions held by metropolitan participants whose views are reported below.

Metropolitan participants, in contrast to rural participants, generally voice a lack of overall trust in the food system, and raised concerns about the need for tighter regulation and surveillance. This was in not only in relation to the food practices themselves, like food handling, but also in terms of making sure that rules and regulations were translated into actual practice by manufacturers.

4. 3 Need for policing

The idea that the safety and quality systems in the food supply were only as good as the monitoring and surveillance that kept them honest was frequently mentioned by metropolitan participants.

It's certainly regulations need to be tightened up. And I guess the manufacturer is only do what is, he's not breaking any laws he's not breaking any rules, he's just using the

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laws to suit his purpose, to sell the product. That's all they care about is selling the product. (J15 metro; male)

There was also a common belief in metropolitan participants that while government involvement was crucial, having the regulation and legislation is one thing, but enforcing and policing it is something else.

You know, it's all very well you can write a piece of legislation but if you don't have the backup to it, it's not going to work as well as it should. (J09 metro; female)

I think it's gotta be about the way it's written. I mean very hard to police. (J15 metro; male)

Well I trust them to put the policies into place, but as to how far those policies and procedures are followed and what yeah no I don't know, I can't really comment on that. (J10 metro; female]

I mean they can always put the guidelines down but they're only going to work if you've got somebody who follows them up to make sure that they happen. So they can do all the guidelines in the world that they want but they've got to have people out there to enforce it. (J27 metro; female)

While for rural participants, there was a strong sense of trust in other people involved in the food supply and in a personal capacity to judge the safety of food, metropolitan participants held different views. For example, one participant doubted the integrity of others to do the right thing:

You know so I think it's some of that is individual sloppiness too opposed to, you can have all the best laid rules in the world but if the people don't follow them you know. (J10 metro; female)

Thus in contrast to the rural participants in our study who were more trusting of others and their judgement, metropolitan participants conveyed a level of suspicion of the role and

involvement of other participants in the food systems, whether these were associated with food production, manufacturing and retail.

Some metropolitan participants hinted at the ways in which farming practices in Australia may not be world standard and raised questions about the use of various inputs into the food supply.

> Yeah, I don't have a real, no, it does bother me from time to time when you hear about pesticides that are still being used here, they've been banned in America for 30 years and things like that and you think, yeah why would that be. That's a bit odd. So, but then I don't know if that's true you know, it may or may not be true. (J24 metro; female)

Concerns were also raised by some metropolitan participants about the role of government in regulating food additives. One participant states for example:

> We read a quite an interesting article on that, that it [aspartame] causes a symptom for multiple sclerosis and many, many thousands have been treated for MS and the symptoms disappeared when they stopped drinking Diet Coke or Diet Pepsi and I said why the Australian government allows that chemical to be used is beyond me (J17 metro; female)

In summary, there appears to be a difference in responses from rural and metropolitan participants in our study in relation to consumer trust and food. Metropolitan people argue for more regulation which assumes a lack of trust in themselves and other people (hence the need to regulate) and an alienation from the systems. They are more dependent on the government for regulation and safety of food production. Metropolitan participants were more likely than rural participants to register a suspicion and discuss the need for tighter regulation, and the importance of policing of legislation. There was a greater emphasis in metropolitan

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participants on trust arising out of a well-regulated system that was carefully policed and monitored. Conversely, rural participants on the whole were more likely to invest in local producers of food and in their own capacity to use sensory information in judging the safety of food. Rural participants argued that they trust themselves and others around food safety and do not put as much reliance or trust in government as the metropolitan participants. In contrast to metropolitan participants, the rural participants believed that government was overdoing regulation and being heavy handed, and that regulation was getting out of control. For rural participants, trust was likely to come from one's own common-sense, or local networks and resources, some of which had been threatened or even taken away by government regulation and legislation.

5. Discussion

Rural participants, while more reticent about voicing the necessity of government regulation and legislation, were likely to be more sanguine about the trust in the food supply. For many, it was their direct experience of producing food, processing food and abiding by rules and regulations that governed food production ("red tape") that provided them with assurance and confidence in food quality and integrity. In other words, engaging with government requirements ('red tape') was in itself a trust-building experience. The belief that things had become over-regulated was common in our rural sample particularly among primary producers. For them, not only was regulation unnecessary, but could be potentially damaging to trusting relationships between people in small communities, where sharing food was often used in community functions, but also to the health of individuals, because of a belief that a 'bit of dirt' was important to building resilience and stamina in children. Alternatively, metropolitan participants suggested that more regulation is necessary to increase the safety and quality of food which may indicate a lack of trust in food production, or a dependence on

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government food regulation. We argue that these findings arise from the experiences of participants who are at different points in the food chain, with rural participants closer to sources of food production. Differences may be accounted for in part, by differences in age between the samples. However, previous Australian survey research demonstrates that older participants place greater emphasis upon food hygiene, food inspection and the origin of food and less on trust in food regulators (Henderson et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2012). This is contrary to findings from this rural sample that argues about the over regulation of the food supply and whose trust in food regulation arises from direct experience. Disposable income was lower in rural areas, particularly for farming families. Taylor et al. (2012) found that annual income of $30,000 or less had a significant relationship with concerns for food hygiene (OR=3.1) and food origin (OR=2.16) when compared with participants with an annual income of over $100,000. Again this finding is contrary to this sample and may reflect the comparable education level of the samples making it is hard to see how these differences might arise from other social experiences, such as education or income.

Our results point to the fact that consumers who are closer in proximity to the production of food (rural participants) are trusting of food production, procurement and preparation. Indeed rural participants who are culturally, biographically and socially embedded in the production of food have higher levels of trust. Rural participants' familiarity with, and knowledge of, the production of food made them more trusting in their own, and community members, capacity to regulate the safety of the food they eat. The absence of knowledge of or familiarity with the production of food has significantly impacted the way metropolitan participants view food safety and regulation. Metropolitan participants are less trusting of food because of the spatial, cultural and social distance from the production of food. However, these results may also suggest that rather than a lack of trust in food production, that the disembedded nature of

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the metropolitan participants' relationship with food production has rendered them dependent on government regulation for food safety assurance. Regardless, their trust or dependence on regulation appears to be the result of their lack of trust in the capacity of themselves, and others, to maintain the safety and quality of food in the absence or deficit of regulation.

We now move on to the central component of our article which moves forward from our results, to a discussion of their practical application (Starr, 2010). We suggest a way in which we might re-embed consumers in the production of food and consequently, work towards increasing trust in food production, building individual capacity to make food choices, and decreasing consumer dependence on regulation.

In order to address the problem of food distrust, a number of processes are being considered or implemented by government and food regulators. These include regulating production methods, protecting environmental quality, legitimising institutions of regulation and safety assurance, increasing systems auditing food production (Lyon, 1998), and increased traceability and transparency of food production (Hall, 2010). However, these solutions do not acknowledge that re-connecting producers and consumers may be an effective way of re-establishing consumer trust (Jackson, 2010).

Re-embedding consumers in the production of food may be challenging given that the geographic lives of some foods (distance from production to consumption) are very complex. However, in recent years there has been a drive to reconnect food production and consumption and "thicken the connections" between supply and consumption (Morris and Kirwan, 2010). One way of achieving this reconnection is through increasing the local provenance of food and increasing consumers' local knowledge of the places and methods of

food production (Morris and Kirwan, 2010). The key argument is that increasing provenance will enable producers and consumers to meet 'face to face' and encourage consumers to become more informed and educated about the methods of food production via communication with producers. Consumer interest in the methods of food production appears to have become more prominent in recent years which is evidenced by the growth of the organic food market (Schneider, 2008).

Given the results of this study and the background knowledge, it seems plausible that increasing local food production and consumption may be a means to resolving problems of disembeddedness and hence, distrust in, or dependence on, the regulation of food production.

5. 1 Local food

Local foods are considered to come from direct market venues which are not exclusive to but may include farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, vegetable box schemes, and other cooperative distribution and delivery programs have proliferated (Hinrichs, 2000). It is quite common in Australian supermarkets to find an abundance of local, in terms of geographical proximity, foods. However, in this instance, we are referring to the local food markets which act as the meeting place of the producer and the consumer. This connection does not exist in major retail grocers which has led to a process of displacement and disembodiment (disembedded consumers) which was in part, ignited by the progressive delocalization of food production (Dixon and Banwell, 2004). Indeed, it has been argued that a disconnection between food production and consumption has become the resulting product of the de-localisation of food production (Dixon and Banwell, 2004). An increasing proportion of the daily diets of developed counties are from distant places (Dixon and Banwell, 2004). This is problematic in terms of the development of trust because as Giddens

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(1990) argues, trust is sustained through face to face encounters (Giddens, 1990). The dilemma for food systems has become the lack of, or absence of, a 'face'. In the absence of a 'face' or representative of food production, it is likely that food systems responsible for production, procurement and preparation will be unable to acquire consumer trust (Giddens, 1991).

Encouraging 'face to face' encounters between consumers and producers may be a means of reconnecting the producer and consumer (Schneider, 2008). Encouraging the consumption of local food may be a solution; making the farmer or local producer the 'face' of food may be a means of (re)building trust (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Giddens, 1994). For example, in purchasing meat from a local butcher, the customer may grow to know the local butcher (the face of the food), and the meat may come from local providers which the customer may also be familiar with. In this sense, trust is established based on direct engagement in the food network (Kjaernes, 2006). Whereas, when meat is purchased at a large chain of grocers, the engagement with staff is likely to differ according to rostering of staff and the place of production is likely to be unknown; the 'face' of the food no longer exists. It may be argued that the face of food becomes the major grocers themselves; however, in fitting with our argument regarding consumer dependence, the monopoly held by major food chains in Australia may lead to (further) dependence on these given chains rather than trust in them. Dependence has been suggested to be a "defining construct of the buyer-supplier relationship" (Parker and Byron 2009: 293) and dependence is greater if there are no apparent alternatives (Parker and Byron, 2009) as is evident in the Australian grocery industry whereby two supermarkets, Coles and Woolworths, when combined, account for 62.6% of grocery business (Dapiran and Hogarth-Scott, 2003). Parker and Byron (2009) found that the buyer's power to choose suppliers is currently maintained. However, with the growing

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marketing of major chains via media (for example Coles brands being promoted by Master Chef and daytime cooking shows such as Ready, Steady Cook), the face of food will continue to fade and consumers will become less embedded in food production.

Currently, there is a rise in the promotion of local food: for example naturally embedded food products (NEFPs) (Morris and Kirwan, 2010); community gardens; and farmers' markets. NEFPs are sold in a way to encourage direct 'face to face' encounters as a means of decreasing the spatial, social, and cultural proximity of consumers and producers and thus, shortening food chains (Renting cited in Morris and Kirwin, 2010). NEFPs are distinct in that the sales of commodities often bypass conventional channels of retail by situating and contextualising their production within distinct places, spaces and natural environments (Morris and Kirwan, 2010). Community gardens are a sustainable method of reconnecting consumers to food production, and have been suggested to be a "powerful way to bring back a sense of ownership, pride, connection to food" (Christiansen, 2007, p, 34 34 #910). Farmers' markets provide an alternative opportunity for engagement with local food producers. Holloway and Kneafsey (2000, p, 286) argue that the Farmers' Markets are associated in the public imagination with a space for the purchase of quality local food (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000). The consumer at Farmer's markets is reflexive not only about food but also about where and how they shop. Attendance at a Farmer's Markets connotes the consumer as a member of a network with shared moral values around "locality, artisan production techniques…and socio-environmental sustainability" (Moore, 2006, p, 417) with trust arising from this "shared collective identity and lifestyle" (Moore, 2006).

While it is evident that increasing the purchasing of local food is important for building trust, research demonstrates that despite consumer interest in local foods, a much smaller

proportion of consumers are actually buying them (Weatherell et al., 2003). Nevertheless, local food availability and accessibility may go some way in addressing consumer anxiety about the safety and probity of the food supply, and thus re-embedding for consumers the trust that may have been lost. We can connect this with the experience of the ethical consumer, who by shopping for goods and services that are ethically sound, assuage their anxieties about the integrity of their purchases (Botsman and Rogers, 2011).

5. 2 Points of further consideration

In presenting the above suggestions for reconnecting consumers and producers as a means of (re)building trust, we acknowledge the obvious limitations to put these suggested means into practice; namely, the financial burdens to consumers for whom buying locally and engaging with local food culture are neither time nor financially feasible. In addition, the purchasing of local food is also associated with symbolic and cultural capital and the acquisition of status (Soper, 2007). An effort to re-embed trust through localism must therefore not only address the affordability of local food but also promote cultural change to ensure the acceptably of a local food culture to a range of consumers.

Additionally, we also acknowledge the political and bureaucratic barriers to implementing these solutions. As suggested in a wealth of recent literature around food movements (Born and Purcell, 2006; Dixon and Banwell, 2004; Hunt and Frewer, 2001; McWilliams, 2009; Miles and Frewer, 2001), there are several concerns regarding local food movements. One of the most prevalent issues is the use of these 'local' messages by marketers: "Corporations seek to value-add 'health' to products to distinguish them from competitors' products. In this way, the symbolic value of health, acting as cultural capital, is used to accumulate finance capital" (Dixon and Banwell, 2004, p, 126). For example, Starr (2010, p, 486) argues that

"The growing green consumption movement seems in danger of a form of marketization." Corporations use three strategies to do exactly what we are hoping local food might accomplish; re-embed trust by: 1. Involve credible public endorsements; 2. Employ professional 'experts'; 3. Establish scientific bodies and government partnerships. These marketing strategies prove fruitful as "audience response to risk information is likely to be influenced by preconceptions about the source of the information, preconceptions that can be derived entirely from the name of the information source" (Hunt and Frewer 2001, p, 46). These marketing strategies are both the solution to, and cause of mistrust in 'expert' systems. However, if we can re-embed trust in local sources of food production, the so-called 'cycle' of mistrust may be broken.

6. Conclusion

A lack of consumer trust in food has been found to have detrimental effects on public confidence in the integrity of the food supply, leaving consumers vulnerable to misinformation and poor dietary choices (Lang and Heasman, 2004). Within this article we have suggested that distrust in food is in part due to consumers' decreasingly proximity to, and embeddedness in, food production.

Our results have identified that a consumer's proximity to and familiarity of food production, procurement and preparation may affect trust and may increase consumer dependence on regulation. From our results we have suggested that an increase in local food movements may reconnect consumers and producers. By reconnecting consumers to the methods and places of food production, we may increase food provenance and encourage consumers to become more informed, and consequently, more trusting of their food and forms of production, and less dependent on regulation.

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