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CFI Introduces Tools to Help Food System Optimize Sustainability Encourages Dialogue about Tradeoffs

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Wed., Sept. 26, 2018 – A new framework is now available to equip the food system with tools to make decisions that help optimize sustainability.

The [Center for Food Integrity](#) (CFI) introduced the Optimizing Sustainability framework Tuesday, Sept. 25, in Chicago. Invited speakers from the World Wildlife Fund, Maple Leaf Foods and the University of Arkansas presented information about the need to create productive food systems that meet the global need for food while conserving resources and meeting consumer expectations for social responsibility.

“Food companies are under increasing pressure to comply with growing demands for sustainability,” said Charlie Arnot, chief executive officer of CFI. “Initially sustainability was primarily focused on protecting environmental resources. Today’s consumers are concerned with a variety of issues, including health and wellness, animal welfare, food waste and more. A growing challenge is focusing on a single ingredient, process or practice without accounting for the potential impact on the entire food system.”

The tools unveiled at the Optimizing Sustainability Summit give food system stakeholders processes and resources to evaluate the growing list of sustainability priorities to determine the impact of potential decisions. In fact, CFI identified more than 250 separate attributes of sustainability and corporate responsibility in the food industry. The framework empowers companies to make informed decisions that align with their values, the values of their stakeholders and their business objectives.

“These tools help organizations analyze potential decisions and understand the real-world impacts they might have on their overall sustainability efforts,” Arnot said.

The framework includes three modules: Setting Sustainability Priorities, Evaluating Sustainability Tradeoffs and Responding to Requests for Commitments.

The first module, Setting Sustainability Priorities, is designed to help organizations set sustainability priorities if they don't yet have a sustainability strategy. The Evaluating Tradeoffs module helps evaluate the potential tradeoffs and consequences on existing sustainability priorities of adopting or rejecting specific practices or policies. Responding to Requests for Commitments helps organizations navigate the process of considering and responding if asked to adopt or reject a specific policy or practice.

“The Optimizing Sustainability framework complements segment- or species-specific sustainability initiatives and can be used to support decision-making and communicating principled positions within those programs,” Arnot said. “We look forward to working with all members of the food system to make the tools available and encourage their use.”

A website, www.optimizingsustainability.org, offers resources including interactive and downloadable versions of all three modules, templates, case studies and links to other sources for sustainability information. The framework and tools are available free of charge. CFI staff is available to assist organizations in using the tools and connect them with appropriate resources for informed decision-making.

In the coming months, CFI will launch an initiative to foster a broad food system dialogue about the need to consider the impact of individual decisions on the complex and interrelated dimensions of a sustainable food system.

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The Center for Food Integrity is a not-for-profit organization that helps today's food system earn consumer trust. Our members and project partners, who represent the diversity of the food system, are committed to providing accurate information and working together to address important issues in food and agriculture. The Center does not lobby or advocate for individual companies or brands. For more information, visit www.foodintegrity.org.