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# **Why Stakeholder Engagement Should be a Top Priority for Agriculture**

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**standing**  
partnership

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Agriculture and food. While the two terms are often used together, there frequently is a significant disconnect in how they are related. Today, consumers not only want their food to taste and look good, but also to be good for them and the environment.

So, it is critical for companies and organizations working in agriculture to engage in conversation with their stakeholders, which includes everyone in the value chain – with consumers as the final link – to first understand what stakeholders expect and then to share how they are meeting those expectations through their business operations, social impact and financial stability.

We are living in a “reputation economy” where who an organization is matters as much or more as what it sells.



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**standing**  
partnership

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# 1

## What is Stakeholder Engagement?

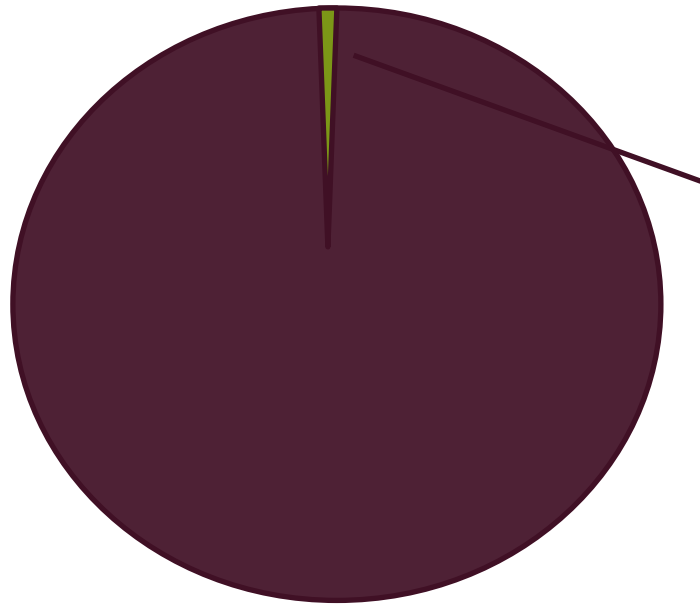
Building a positive reputation doesn't happen by accident or by luck. It requires looking beyond how an organization wants to be perceived to understanding how it *is* perceived.

This is achieved by listening to key stakeholders and engaging them in an ongoing, open dialogue, identifying gaps in understanding and perception, and assessing risk.

The list of stakeholders within the agriculture industry is both extensive and varied, with many different viewpoints to consider.

Increasing trust and confidence among stakeholders helps organizations ensure their freedom to operate.

More than  
**316 Million**  
people live in the United States.



Of that population, less than 1 percent claim farming as an occupation and only 2 percent actually live on farms.

**The average American is at least three generations removed from the farm.**

To combat that lack of first-hand experience, the industry has spent the last several years trying to bridge the education gap, but still isn't seeing the progress it needs.

**Education isn't enough; the agriculture industry needs engagement.**



# So, what *is* Stakeholder Engagement?

To understand, by listening and having **ongoing, open dialogue**, the expectations of those impacted by the decisions and actions of an organization.

Agriculture companies need to identify these stakeholders and then meet them where they are. By taking a collaborative approach, organizations can create relevant dialogue with stakeholders and ensure all parties have

***a voice in the conversation.***

# 2

## Why Does Agriculture Need Stakeholder Engagement?

The agriculture industry is very personal, complex and constantly evolving. Since the average American is at least three generations removed from the farm, there is a lack of understanding about agriculture that perpetuates misconceptions, impacting or delaying the continued advancement of the industry.

As the backbone of our economic system, agriculture plays a critical role in our livelihoods. Therefore, it is essential to engage stakeholders to help support the cause, inform others and serve as agriculture champions when necessary.

# food is personal

Whether it's hunger, health or safety, food is a highly personal topic. The agriculture industry helps to produce the resources used in the world's food supply, therefore it is under constant scrutiny as **today's consumers demand to know more about how their food is produced.**

58%

National study respondents cited *knowing the source of the product* as a reason for buying local food at direct markets or in conventional grocery stores.



# food is personal

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

– Theodore Roosevelt

Depending on the audience, *Friends and Family* rank either **first or second as a trusted information source or influencer** on food system issues. Organizations need to engage stakeholders on a personal level and demonstrate shared values.

# complexity

Agriculture is a **complex industry** requiring a thorough understanding of the:

- Basic and advanced agriculture practices.
- Latest business and technology advancements in plant science and agronomic practices to improve productivity and yield.
- Regulatory system to get products approved for market.
- Industry value chain.

*“To improve is to change.”*

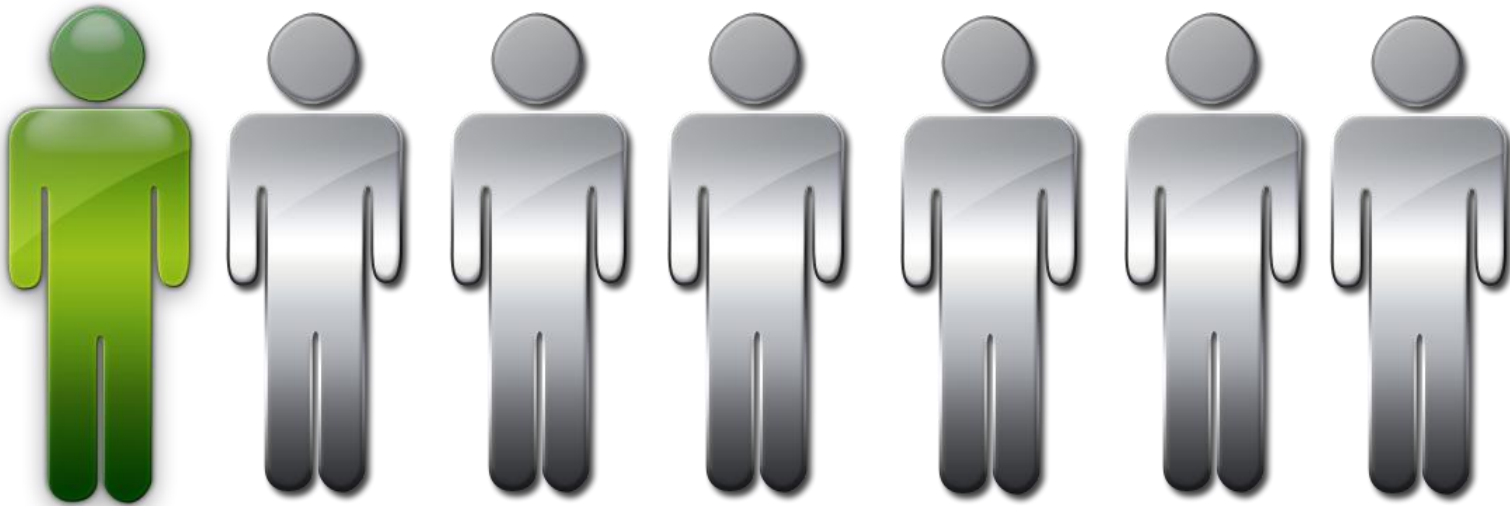
**- Sir Winston Churchill**

# complexity



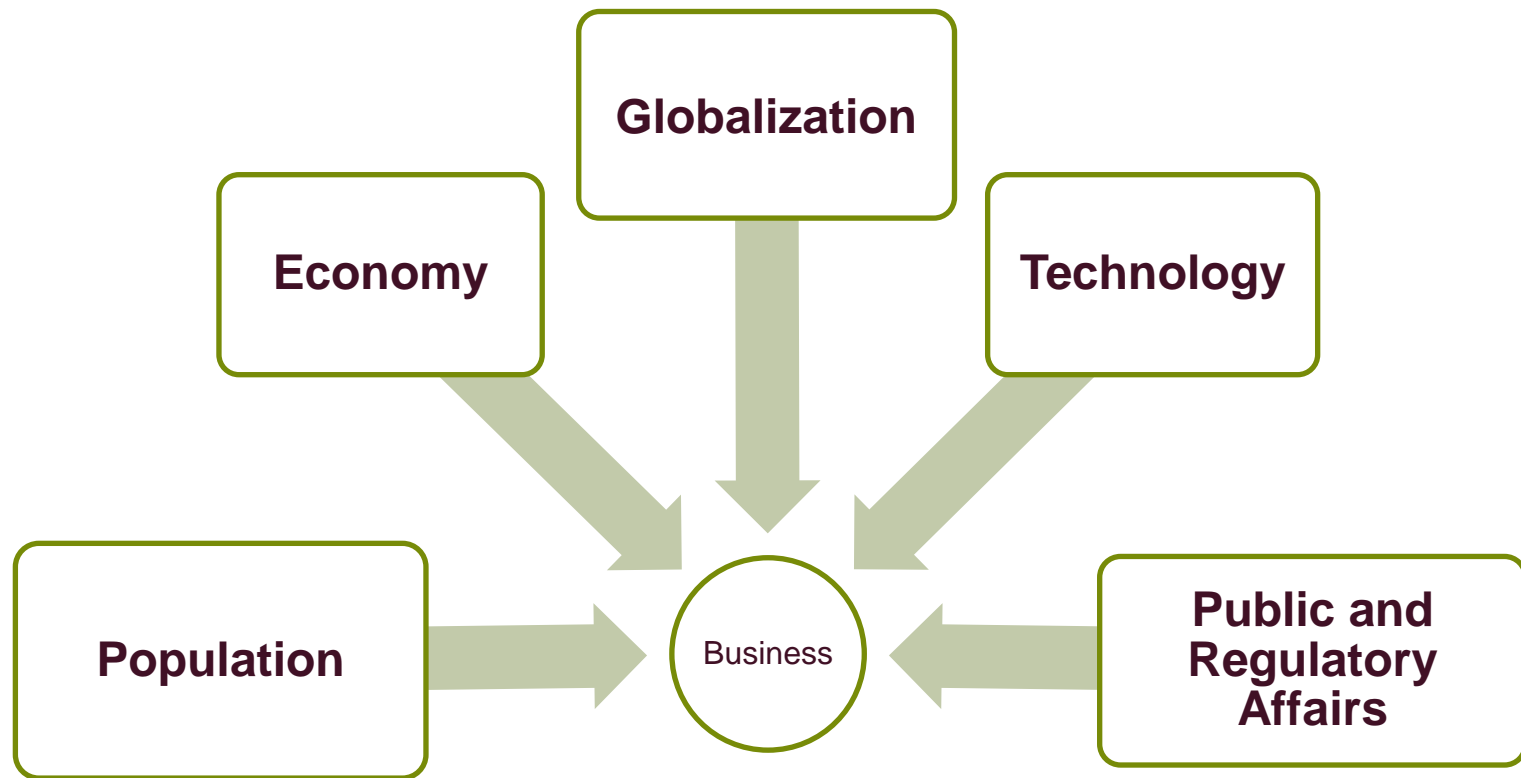
# complexity

Only **one out of seven** Americans believe it is possible to have complete control over the safety of their foods and beverages.



# constant change

The one constant in life is **change**. To stay relevant and continue to meet the needs of consumers in an ever-changing world, there must be constant dialogue.



# constant change

1

At the current birth rate, experts predict we will reach 9 billion people by 2050. To feed everyone, we'll need to double the amount of food we currently produce. But the challenge isn't just an issue of volume, it's also a question of what type of food is needed, and where.

**7 BILLION IN 2014**



**9 BILLION IN 2050**



We must **DOUBLE** food production in the next 36 years to meet demand.

# constant change

2

In 1700, only 7% of the earth's surface was used for agriculture. Today, it is more than 40%. With limited suitable land available for growing crops, the world needs to conserve the resources we have while producing more food than ever before.



**7% in 1700**

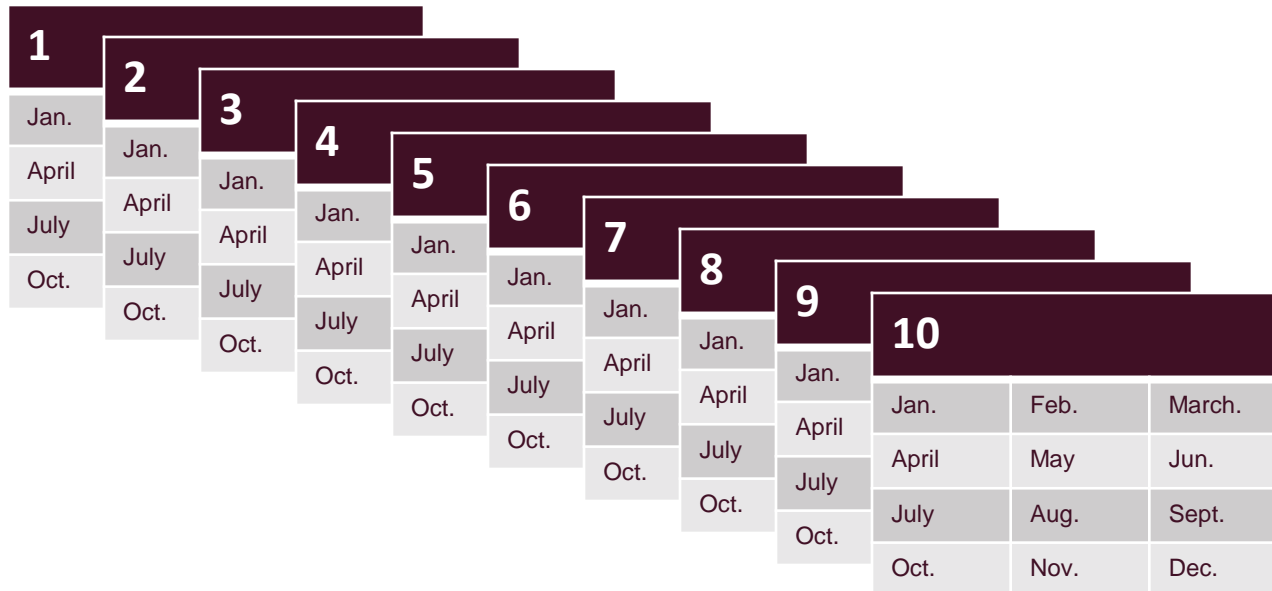


**40% in 2014**

# constant change

3

The R&D process, coupled with regulatory review and approval, can easily take more than a decade.





# 3

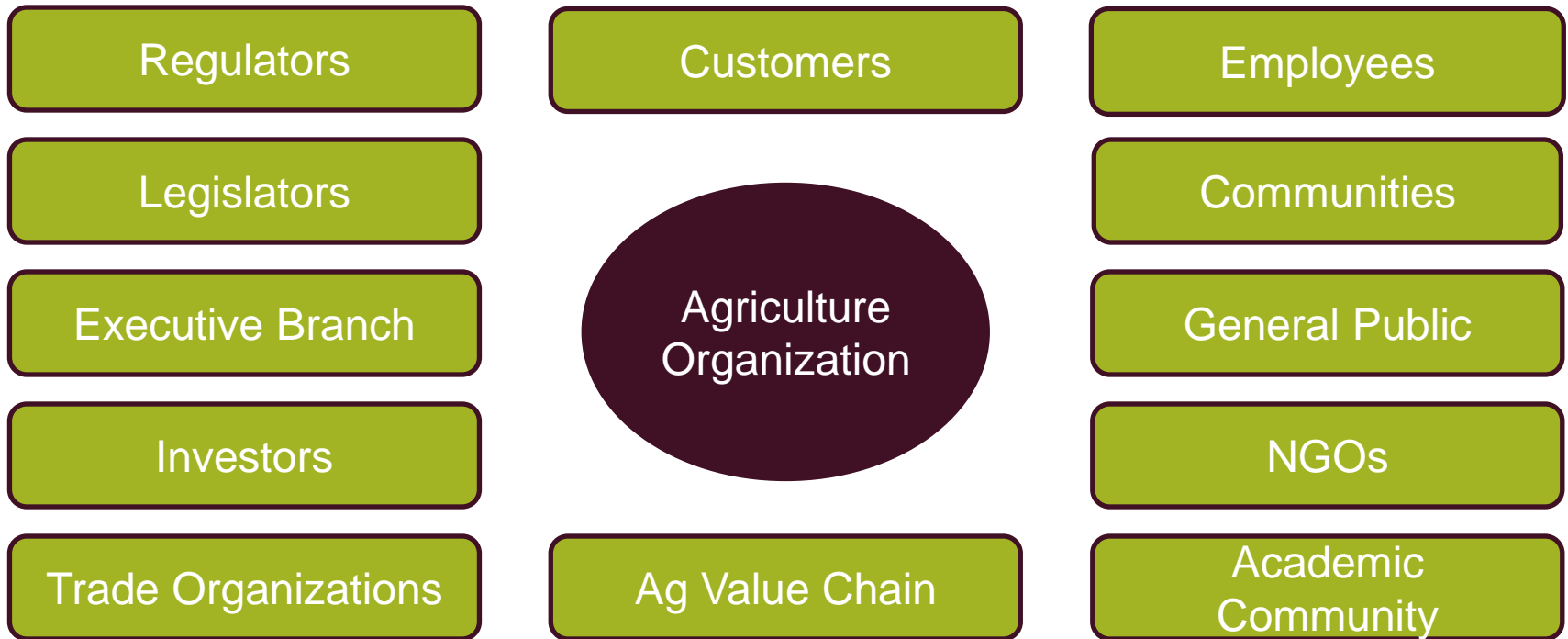
## How Do I Know Which Stakeholders to Engage?

Agriculture organizations interact with a diverse universe of stakeholders — from the direct beneficiaries of their offerings to the agriculture value chain — that includes all the segments of the industry that help bring their offerings to market. In addition, those in the agriculture industry come into contact with others who may be affected directly or indirectly by their business operations, products or services. A thorough inventory of these individuals and groups is critical before engagement can begin.

Stakeholders can be influencers, providing additional validation to an organization's mission, strategy and actions. They also can be detractors with very different views. Regardless, any stakeholder could impact an organization's reputation.

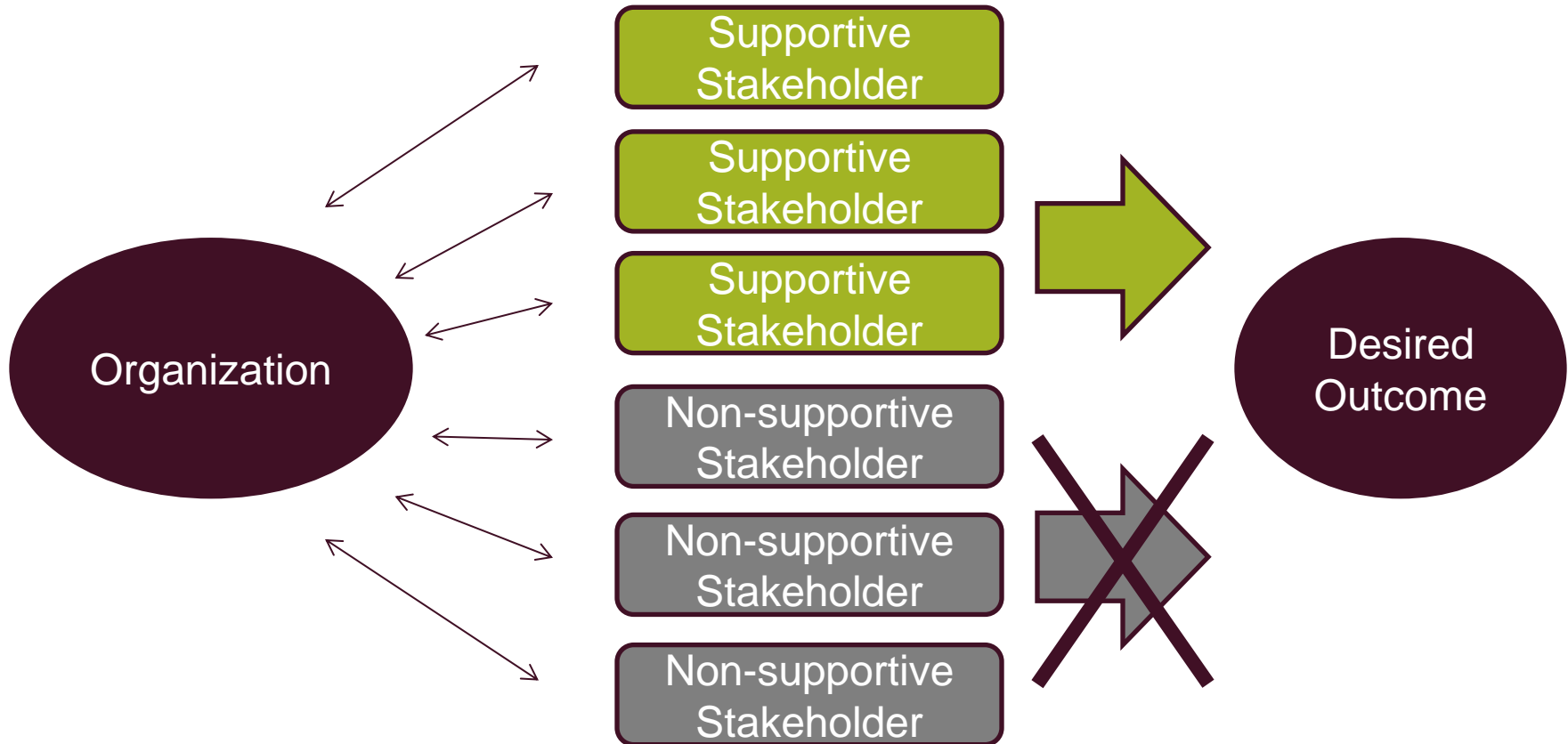
# Who Are My Stakeholders?

**Organizations that are affected by my business or that can have an impact on my organization's freedom to operate.**



# Which Stakeholders Should I Engage?

Mobilize supportive stakeholders to augment platform.



Engage with non-supportive or neutral stakeholders to educate and solicit feedback in order to earn their trust and mitigate risk.



Standing Partnership specializes in managing corporate reputation. Our firm creates influencer strategies that deepen understanding, build trust and mitigate risk in complex, ever-changing environments. Our comprehensive approach drives strategy and helps clients build, protect and restore reputations.

**[www.standingpartnership.com](http://www.standingpartnership.com)**