

# Swell AI Transcript: EIT Food Doc 1\_Stone Soup Story V2.mp3

Matt Eastland:

Hi everyone, I'm Matt Eastland. Welcome to one of our special docu episodes. In these explorative deep dives, we tackle the big questions within the food system, uncovering fascinating stories of innovation and change. Time to further explore the groundbreaking ideas and incredible people driving the future of food.

Dorothy Shaver:

Across generations, stories have been a universal tool for teaching lessons.

Dorothy Shaver:

I think if you were to look in my parents' house, you would actually see quite a few books that I had written.

Dorothy Shaver:

Passing down wisdom and helping us make a sense of the world.

Dorothy Shaver:

Storytelling can solve a lot of our problems.

Dorothy Shaver:

But here's something fascinating. Stories don't just entertain, they actually have the power to rewire our brains.

Dorothy Shaver:

Clifford the big red dog when he got too big to live in his house and that was absolutely devastating. And it isn't really a great lesson for children but I do remember thinking that maybe I would get too big for my house.

Dorothy Shaver:

Through storytelling we can change the way we see the world, shift perspectives and even transform the systems around us. And what better place to start than with the food system? What if storytelling could help us see food not just as fuel but as a force that impacts our health, sense of community, our environment and the people behind every bite we take? By sharing stories that bring these issues to life, we can change how we approach food, rethink our choices and begin to fix the flaws in the system itself. Hey, it's Connor here for EIT Food.

Dorothy Shaver:

I think storytelling has been a critical part of my whole life.

Dorothy Shaver:

You just heard from Dorothy Shaver.

Dorothy Shaver:

I'm Dorothy Shaver. I lead sustainability for the nutrition business group in Unilever. And that includes big brands like Knorr, Knorr, Unilever, Calvay, Pony Mix, and many others, including the vegetarian butcher here in Europe. So in my role, I work on setting the strategy around what we need to do for food system transformation around climate, nature, improving livelihoods and also improving our packaging, in addition to improving the healthiness of our foods. I also am a founding board member for the Food for Climate League, which is a 501c3 female run company based out of Chicago in the United States with employees all over the world, where we work together with a variety of companies to unlock the communication strategies to democratize climate friendly food.

Dorothy Shaver:

Today, she is here to share with us a timeless folktale, The Stone Soup Story. She'll explore how this powerful story offers a lesson in collaboration and community, and how we can use its message to bring people together and create meaningful change in our food system.

Dorothy Shaver:

Stone Soup is a popular folktale told across cultures in various ways. Once upon a time, a hungry traveler arrives in a famine-stricken village, and each of the villagers are unwilling to share their food stores with the traveler. The traveler then goes to a river, plucks out a stone, and puts it in a pot over a fire, claiming he is making stone soup to a passing villager. The traveler says he would be happy to share with the villager, but is missing one or two ingredients. Then the villager is happy to part with a couple of vegetables for a share of soup. Another villager comes by and also contributes another ingredient. The villagers, initially skeptical, each contribute ingredients to the pot and through their collective effort and willingness to share, they create a hearty and nourishing soup when they all would have been hungry otherwise. Now the lesson from Stone Soup as a folktale for children is simple. Sharing is good. And it's not clear exactly why the villagers of Stone Soup weren't able to eat and have food on their table, but hungry they were and food was certainly scarce. And likely something was out of their control, preventing their ability to have an abundance of food. And like the traveler, we now find ourselves in a world that is on the cusp of being a famine stricken village. The climate crisis, amongst many other challenges, pose a significant threat to our food system. We are on a path of destruction. So in this case, we can utilize the simple lessons from Stone Soup, which are collaboration is critical, innovation over ingenuity, and you

need to have a story worth sharing. And those lessons will help us collectively work together to transform the food system to enable one that is positive for all businesses, all people, and the planet going forward. So the intention behind Youmeli We're Telling the Stone Soup story from a food system perspective in relation to focusing on lessons, we look at collaboration, innovation, and a story worth sharing for the business of food. And if I go a little bit more into that, it's really about thinking about food as a system as opposed to the end result. It's about looking at who needs to be around literally the table and who needs to work together to collaborate in order to make this system shift. talking about what the individual role of everybody is, what everybody can give, what everybody needs to get. And that's really what collaboration is at the end of the day. And critical collaboration is a key lesson in this, right? I mean, they didn't want to collaborate and there was no reason to collaborate. And literally a carrot means nothing. If there's no soup to put it in and an onion means nothing if there's no carrot to join it with right and that's what what it's really about is, what is it that each of the players that need to come to the table can bring and what do they get in return, and in the story of stone soup that was so clear right if you give a carrot you get a share of soup. So that's what is really, really necessary for us to work together. And somebody is going to need to be that brave traveler, right? And then we need those villagers to come along. And in different situations, it's a different traveler and different villagers at the table. So that's lesson one, which is about collaboration. The second one is about innovation over ingenuity. And this one is really, really critical because I think we see a lot of products come to the market or ideas come forward, like growing a food garden in the middle of a city market, or growing foods on the top of a school, or a one-off paper bottle for a dressing or for a different type of product. And then we don't support it with marketing, with promotions, with getting others on board, with a media campaign that brings people together with us. And then we say, hey, it failed. And that's the end of that solution. And that's what ingenuity is. And we see that when you really think about it and you think about that concept, many can come to mind. And that's ingenuity. And what we need is long term innovation. So we need small changes that will last for a longer period of time. So it's about, you know, taking ingredients that people are already eating and making sure they're at least grown in the right way. It's about mixing in a little bit of a grain that requires no water together with grains that require a ton of water. Or it's about mixing in a little bit of beans together with the meat. Or it's about really creating innovative thinking where we think about these factors across the whole entire innovation cycle. So from the birth of an idea to the way that it's sold, you think about the different elements of food system transformation. And that's what really needs to happen. So that's the second one. And when we think about stone soup, it's really about innovation because he taught them how to make the soup. He taught them how to work together. When that traveler leaves that village, those villagers will still be able to sit together around a fire and make a soup because he taught them how to do it. And that's innovation. If he had decided to grow a

tomato plant or to eat a bug or to eat, you know, the moss, that's ingenuity. He would have been solving his own problem without solving the problem of the village. And that's what we really need to think about when we create our products, our media campaigns, and the way that we talk about what we're doing. The third one, of course, which is obviously critical, is making sure that we have a story worth sharing. I think that's something that really makes us need to think in a really creative way and think outside the box. It isn't about just a claim or a checkbox or, you know, it's accredited by blah, blah, blah association. It's about telling the story, telling the story about the farmer, about what's needed, about where the food came from, what it means to you, what it means to other people. All of us can think of what food means to us, right? If you close your eyes and think about your favorite food, you can probably think about millions of foods, but you don't think of just the food. It's a story behind it that makes that food what that food is. In Stone Soup, you know that at the beginning, when he just went door to door and said, hey, can I have any food? They were like, get out of here. And then when he said, can I have an ingredient for my soup? And we can do this other, and this is a story. They all provided those ingredients because he had a story worth sharing. So those are the three lessons that are taken away. I think there's many that can come from it if you really delve further into it. And the intention of Unilever doing this is to shape the story for the audience. So when we go to Climate Week on the 23rd of September, we have this event at the Regent House where we will be speaking about it to a variety of food system change makers. And the intention of it there is really to shape it and shift it so that they feel like they know how to talk about collaboration in a different way and they think in a different way. So that's the intention of it. We'll shape it like that. If we were to go to a government, we would change it to make it be something that would enable them to think in a different way about the policies that they're putting out there. For example, with the farm bill or with the different incentives that they have, the nature incentives, And then if we were going to suppliers or traders, we would say to them, this is your seat at the table. You need to bring all of these others around so that we can shift all ingredients to follow our regenerative practices. So that's the intention of it, is to really kind of shape and shift those lessons, keeping the base the same, keeping, obviously, the story the same, but enabling us to utilize this to get others on board, to create the ground, and to create the atmosphere in the community to enable us to all move forward for a better situation for climate, nature, packaging of food, livelihoods around food, and of course, personal health around food. I really hope that people start to think different. And I think if people think, does this pass the stone soup test? Did we look at every angle of collaboration in order to do this? Is this innovation and not ingenuity? Do we have a story worth sharing? And I think that's really what my intention is. So from a broad perspective, I hope that it helps people shift the way that they think about what they're doing and shift the way that they think about the solutions that they're trying to have. And I really hope that it hits people that aren't in food system transformation, but are in food business,

because we're all in the food business. So this is about the business of food, right? And this is about us looking at these lessons as being critical for the survival of a food business. So I'd love to see our sales team thinking about, does this pass the stone soup test? And I'd love to see people working in finance who are looking at different solutions in a variety of different areas, not just even in food, who are looking at finance, who are looking at all of our numbers to say, we actually would be better. We would have better numbers. Our shareholders would be happier if what we were doing passes the stone soup test. Because this is about business and food is about business. We will not be able to survive if food businesses can't survive. From a really granular level, I hope that we are able to utilize this story to really help shift policies and regulations, because that's something that is still really lacking in the space of food. And the regulations and the policies behind food are really behind. Even when we think about simple things, which is one of my passions outside of Unilever, which is school lunches. Like, you know, there's a real reason for all children to get a school lunch. And if we really follow these lessons, then we will be able to enable the government to believe that every child needs to have a school lunch. And I think, you know, if we utilize storytelling and we treat people like people, and we don't treat governments like just looking at policies, they're also people. And if we talk to them in a way where we tell these stories and utilize these mechanisms to get them to change things, then I think it can also really work on policies. And it goes all the way from school lunches to, of course, commodity crops, which are subsidized by government, which are not nutritious, all the way to, you know, practices, farming practices and farmers who are funded, which are doing things which are basically destroying our natural resources and disabling us to have food for the future. And I do feel like we can utilize this mechanism of storytelling and lessons from a story to really shift audiences that are challenged to shift. And that's also what I really hope that it does. Personal point of view, of course, I'm the storyteller in this story, but I kind of hope that in time, other people feel comfortable to tell the story as well and to utilize the lessons of this story to tell their own story and to bring it to the audiences that they have access to. So thank you for listening. And now it's time for us to collaborate, innovate, and tell stories. So I look forward to seeing you around the table.

**Matt Eastland:**

This has been the Food Fight podcast. As ever, if you'd like to find out more about what we do, head over to the EIT Food website at [www.eitfood.eu](http://www.eitfood.eu). Also, please join the conversation by the hashtag EIT Food Fight on our X channel at EIT Food. And if you haven't already, please hit the subscribe button so you never miss an episode.