

Swell AI Transcript: EIT_COPMini_FoodBanks_Version3.mp3

Matt Eastland:

Welcome back to the Food Fight Podcast. I'm Matt Eastland. COP 28, the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference kicks off on November the 30th. In preparation, here on the podcast, we're releasing a series of mini episodes celebrating the work of some of the most innovative, food-focused companies and organizations featured at the conference.

Ignacio Gavilan:

Hi there, my name is Ignacio Gavilan. I'm a Senior Director of Food Systems Partnerships at the Global Food Banking Network. In the lead up to COP28, I would like to talk to you about our food systems, which are clearly not working. Millions of people around the world are unable to access food, while one third of that food produced is lost or wasted. So if we look at roughly that one third of the fruit produced in the world for human consumption is lost or wasted, that alone represents about 8 to 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. So there's an environmental impact next to it. If food waste were a country, it will be the third largest emitting country in the world. So in other words, food waste emits more greenhouse gases than all single countries in the world except China and the U.S., right? So obviously what we do at the Global Food Banking Network is identify those surpluses or losses that we can capture and redistribute for human consumption. So the problem's still there. I believe we're one key solution for all of this. We provide the information, the space, and the connections necessary to ensure that the world's food banks, this is a network of food banks, have a voice in global conversations, moving us towards lasting food system change. To transform these food systems, we need consistent collaboration and innovation across sectors and geographies, which is what we do. It's what really matters for the Global Food Banking Network. You may be wondering as a listener, how do we collect all this food and put it in our distribution centers in order to get it to the public? And there are different ways. Think about a supermarket. At the end of the day, they might have product that is still not expired. They might generate a surplus of things that they cannot sell because something else is coming the next day. That surplus, when it's easily identified, there are trucks that will collect it. and they bring it to us. If you go one level back, manufacturing, you take these big brands, the Nestlers, the Kellogg's, the Unilever's. They sometimes run pilots and tests and batches that are not going to be sold. Those are batches that are perfectly edible. One level up in the chain, you go to the farmers. Same thing, they harvest according to specifications. There are products that don't meet the specs, whether it's an apple, a banana, or soybeans, because it might be a misshapen apple, or it might be apples that don't meet the size, the color, but it's perfectly edible. You might be wondering as well, what are the benefits of all of this work, right? So it's very simple. I'll give you three main reasons. Number one is hunger alleviation. Last year alone, we fed 32 million people around the world. Second one is reduction of food loss and waste. I mentioned one third of the food is currently going

to waste, so we need to reduce that number. We believe that we are the best solution to avoid that, and we encourage companies to spot those surpluses and losses quickly and give to us. And number third is climate change. Donating product is a fantastic climate change mitigation strategy. Just in 2021 alone, we mitigated 1,695 billion, with a B, kilograms of CO2 equivalent. That's roughly equivalent to removing 365,000 vehicles from the roads. So there's an obvious benefit from many angles. I think those three are the key ones. We're moving now into COP28. I would love if food loss and waste was included in the NDCs, the Nationally Determined Contributions, which are the heart of the Paris Agreement. Those NDCs basically embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Food waste needs to be in there. In addition, I would love more policies to be adopted to support food donation as a solution to food loss and waste and climate change. Some countries still face a lot of financial and fiscal limitations for donations. We need to remove those. We need to make this very simple and encourage companies and organizations, farmers to donate food very quickly and efficiently. The food bank model is distinctively designed to alleviate hunger while mitigating food loss and waste. And as a locally-led, community-led organization, food banks are deeply connected to and aware of unique community needs around the world. Food banks must be recognized as a response to these challenges, and they must be a part of a concerted effort among experts to effectively address the root causes of systemic problems like hunger and climate change. Only then this global food systems change will be possible. So if I could send one final message, a call to action to our food industry, I would say unlock the resistance to change. Companies need to be more agile, companies need to report on food waste, need to understand what the food losses and the food waste happens, and we need to actively collect those into human consumption through the food banks.

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. Also, please join the conversation via the hashtag EITFoodFight on our X channel, at EIT Food. And if you haven't already, please hit the subscribe button so you never miss an episode.