

Food Fight - S1E11B - Spotlight Wasteless.mp3

Matt Eastland [00:00:06] Welcome to this bonus episode of The Food Fight podcast from EIT Food.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:00:11] In these episodes, we want to shine a light on new projects and agrifood start-ups, and hear about their efforts to fight for a better food future. This week, we're handing over to David Kat to tell us about Wasteless. Wasteless are developing innovative technologies to help retailers reduce food waste.

David Kat [00:00:35] I'm David Kat – I do the business development for Wasteless – and Wasteless helps retailers become a lot more profitable by selling foods rather than throwing it into the bin.

[00:00:48] So the food system is broken.

[00:00:51] A system that throws out over 30 percent of what it produces – that's hardly a system. It's more like a farce! We come from a data-for-food background. We had a very long and hard look at where in the system things go wrong – and we discovered that in retail it's not where most of the waste happens... it is where the farm meets to fork. So in the UK, tens of thousands of producers come together in a couple of thousand retail outlets to meet millions of consumers. So if you're able to help retailers prove that food waste can be combatted, you will also make an impact for the food waste that happens at home.

[00:01:33] We're fighting for the future of food by making sure that good foods with a shorter expiration date, get sold rather than wasted. We make retailers a lot more profitable and we reward consumers for their sustainable behaviour.

[00:01:55] Imagine tonight you're going into your local retailer and you feel like buying a ready-made salad. Today is November 13th – and you see two dates on the shelf, one this November 20th and the other one is November 16th. But today is the 13th, right, so invariably, people pick the longest date because these two dates have the same price.

[00:02:18] Now what we do is, if the shorter expiration date needs to be marked down, our artificial intelligence marks it down to the exact right amount to give consumers the incentive to buy to shorter dates for products they're gonna eat tomorrow or the day after. The food is perfectly fine, it's perfectly healthy, it's fresh, and you pay a lower price and you get rewarded for your sustainable purchasing behaviour.

[00:02:45] We have an active funnel of about 50 retailers. We're talking to pretty much every retailer in the UK. The leading ones in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany. We're live in Italy at the moment with a store that's called Iper – it's a beautiful chain of hypermarkets – and there we work together with their supplier of poultry, and we've actually been able to reduce waste to near zero while also driving up margins substantially, as well as revenue. So the financial benefit is there, but actually we're hitting a "triple bottom line", which means that people get rewarded for eating sustainably, we reduce the carbon footprint of food that would otherwise be discarded. And we're adding just "plain hard British pounds" [euros] to the bottom line of an Italian retailer and this respect.

[00:03:41] To get into a store, it's a very light and easy pilot. It requires days work, not months work. It's not an IT projects – we offer very light integration. The most exciting [thing] is to actually have those integrations, have those pilot projects in store for a couple of months, and then sit back with the retailer look at the KPIs and decide whether they're ready to scale. After a pilot, we're totally integrated already, so there's no need for further integration, which offers a beautiful path to scaling in retail.

[00:04:16] We're recent member of EIT – we've been a "Rising Food Star" since the autumn of 2019. We've been coming to the events already today we've met with a couple of retailers, that are interested in running projects for 2021, which is really great. We have ample time to prepare, get good projects off the ground, bring in start-ups that can add to the equation (we have a couple of them that we're talking to already) and looking forward to actually have a project in 13, 14 months within the EIT Food framework.

[00:04:51] I think it's incumbent upon everyone in the food system to become more sustainable, to really look at what you're doing and help your suppliers and your customers improve the way they're running their businesses. It's key to prevent food waste in that respect, because as long as we're wasting one third of all the energy that goes into it, all the labour, all the resources – we're basically "mopping with the tap running". So food-waste should be our prime concern – and then we [should] continue to reduce our footprint with other technologies and solutions that we wholeheartedly support.

[00:05:33] Yes, I'm hopeful for the future. It's great to have a solution that works, that is profitable, that is easy to implement, that has no downsides. So, yes, I am optimistic, but it's taking too long. The damage we're wreaking, to the climate, to the planet, we're almost beyond the point of no return. So what I always say is we have no time to waste. We have to shift into gear now.

Lukxmi Balathanan [00:06:05] Thanks for listening to this bonus episode of The Food Fight podcast.

Matt Eastland [00:06:09] To find out more and to learn how you can get involved in the fight for better food future, head over to EITFood.eu/podcast.