**EIT Food Fight Podcast - S3 E3B - Essento V1.mp3**

**Lukxmi Balathasan** [00:00:06] Welcome to this bonus episode of The Food Fight podcast from EIT Food.

**Matt Eastland** [00:00:10] In these episodes, we want to shine a light on new projects and agri food, start-ups and hear about their efforts to fight for a better food future. This week, we're handing over to Christian Bartsch to tell us about Essento, a Start-Up creating delicious snacks and protein bars out of insects.

**Christian Bartsch** [00:00:36] Hi, my name is Christian Bartsch, I'm the founder and CEO at Essento and we're part of EIT's Rising Food Stars and we're fighting for the future of food because we believe that the food system needs to be circular and this can be achieved by insects.

[00:00:56] At Essento, we really work to make insects delicious, to put them into a form such as a protein bar, for instance, where we integrate this high value protein into this super tasty flavour. So we have two types. We have a raw cacao and we have a berry almond flavour that is really popular with athletes. But then we also do a range of snacks. So for instance, we do an alpine herbs locust snack. This is also really popular. The locusts are grown in the Alps. they're fed with grass. And then we add to the Alpine herb spicing to it and there we have other flavours such as paprika or a Thai spice and then we also have a more classic salt and pepper spice. And then for the people that are a bit more into savoury foods, main dish foods, we also do a hamburger that is available in retail, but it's also available in different restaurants where we do offer our hamburger.

[00:02:08] We work with insects because they're super efficient. We use Side streams that are coming out of our food system and we upcycle the products and put them directly back into our food chain. And we do that using insects. So I've been always really looking into how the future of food would be and what ways we can improve our food system. There are obviously technological aspects, but we can also work with nature. In 2013, I stumbled across a report by the FAO and they highlighted the potential of edible insects and this is where our journey of exploration started.

[00:02:54] The whole insect sector, obviously, right now is still at its infancy, so we really need to raise awareness. We need to get as many people to try insects and to convince them and give them the chance to find out how delicious insects are. And this is really one of the key elements that we're working on. It's the so-called yuck factor that we are supporting people to overcome. It's actually quite interesting because consumers often say, well, insects are disgusting. And then if I ask back, well, what do you think that insects taste like, then they say, well, I have no clue. But indeed, insects are really tasty. So they have to slight nutty flavour grasshoppers to locusts. They have a slight chicken flavour. So it's not that they would taste any different than what we already know, but in people's minds, they do not have that connection and obviously this is going to be an important part to really get people accustomed to that. Basically, there is this ongoing discussion and ongoing process to allow for insects in all the EU countries, and that's kind of an ongoing process. So we're having right now the first approvals should be in a couple of weeks. And that's really going to speed up the uptake of insects because there are a few countries that insects cannot be commercialised in. And these are processes that need to happen.

[00:04:29] We are involved with EIT Food as a rising food star, which really enabled us to be part of a broad European network with skilled fellow entrepreneurs as well as established companies to really get the network strength to improve the food system.

[00:04:51] I believe in the future, the food space is going to be much more sustainable, so the Alternative proteins, the circular economy, those are all going to be key elements in what we eat. That doesn't mean that the foods that we like today are not going to be available anymore. But they're going to be tastier, healthier, more sustainable choices on the market. So this one message that I would send out would be that we should be aware what has happened before a product comes to the market so that we are aware of the processes and the inputs that go into a food product before it gets onto our plates. My hope for the insect industry is that we reach mainstream, that we really have an impact by upcycling those side streams there are in the food industry and by doing that have the impact that we anticipate.

**Lukxmi Balathasan** [00:05:58] Thanks for listening to this bonus episode of The Food Fight podcast

**Matt Eastland** [00:06:02] to find out more and to learn how you can get involved in the fight for a better future, head over to eitfood.eu/podcast and join the conversation via #EITFoodFight on our Twitter channel @EITFood. For more information on Essento, head over to essento.ch