

## Episode 2: Don't Waste This | Pap in South Africa

### **Matlou Setati, Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA):**

I think porridge or Pap or starch-based products have a special place in my heart and also in the hearts of South Africans because we take it as a simple thing that was brought into the country and we got accustomed to it. But it's a mass feeder.

Sometimes we say we are addicted to porridge. We are addicted to potato. We are addicted to rice because it is the baseline of every event. Every event needs to have those as the mass feeder.

And to think that South Africa is self-sufficient in terms of, like I said, staple food and your starch heavy product like your potatoes. And we can actually supply and exceed and actually export. So we are safe there, but I'll have to have 10.3 million tonnes of food wasted across the commodities and across the chain. It is still a huge number

With the 10.3 million tonnes that is wasted, close to 15,000,000 South Africans suffer from food insecurity and a number of people experience poverty on the daily and if we bring in the nutritional aspect, over 1000 children die from malnutrition each year.

So when you tie it in in terms of that the, the, the abundance of food that is available and the huge number of waste that we are getting in the in the country, we need to balance off that when we there needs to be some transformation in the food system to ensure that you know, it makes perfect sense in terms of how it should be in the long run.

So that is that sits at the crux of why we are doing this. It needs to be out there, it needs to be known that this is a challenge and put measures in place of how we can resolve this.

### **Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Welcome to Don't Waste This. I'm Talya Shalev, International Partnerships Manager here at WRAP, and I'm joined today by Matlou Setati from the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa. And we're going to be talking about the food system crisis in South Africa, and also what's at stake if we don't fix it. So Matlou, thank you so much for joining us. We're very grateful for your time and your expertise. Let's start by getting to know you a little bit better. So can you tell us a bit about yourself and what it is that the CGCSA does?

### **Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

Thank you so much for having us here. And and I like that we we we off to a good start. "Don't Waste This" - that should be at the crux of everything that we're talking about today

and I think food sits at a very central place for South Africa. We love events, we love sitting together around the fire and discussing anything, and if there is no food that is not an event as far as South Africans are concerned.

My name is Matlou Setati, I'm the Executive heading up the Food Safety and Sustainability Initiative and the South African Food Loss and Waste Initiative is sitting in that division. We as the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa, we are an industry association, we are a collaborative space where we bring competitors in a space to ensure that we work towards common good and in issues that are of common importance for us. As you can imagine, these are economically enabled people that are in the space of business, in the space of manufacturing, the space of retailing and the solution providers. So we provide that space to ensure that they work together collaboratively and also have impact.

In what they are doing, because if we do not have these people in the future, I mean, you bring in the farmers, you bring the whole value chain in the consumer goods space. We need to make sure that it is sustainable and we, our our children can have this in the future.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

We're going to talk a little bit more about the specifics around what your team is doing to look at sustainability and specifically around waste in a little bit before we get into that, I wanted to know a bit more about what brought you into this space, what's got you on the journey to work at the Consumer Goods Council and now heading up a team that's looking at so many difficult and important topics.

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

What brought me here. I was reading one LinkedIn post of someone saying sometimes when you looking at a career you shouldn't look at the job that you will be doing. You must look at the purpose and I think the purpose found me in the food industry. I grew up my, my father was a merchandiser and we have always had an abundance of food, but we were not able to afford all that abundance. So I found myself drawn to this. How do they make these cookies? How do they make you know the crispies? How do they make all of these things? And as I was just doing research common to say.

An encyclopaedia? It wasn't Google at that time. And my sister was helping me and we found this food science and technology, and we were like, this is intriguing. And somehow somewhere we were like, we've always been around food and we got drawn to that. There was a choice between biotechnology and food technology and they mentioned blood.

And I was like, I do not want to be a doctor. I do not want blood. So let me stick to making food, and that's how I landed in the in the food industry. And I studied food science and technology. And I think I've come 360° because the journey started with the sector working in the industry. And then I went to become an inspector in the food space. And I went then to go and write legislation in the food space. And then I had to come back. Now I'm in the

space where I'm advocating, I'm getting the sector to do what is right. And I think the food sector found me, I didn't go out looking, it just shaped itself around me and this is where I am today to do this most impactful things that we are enabling from a Consumer Goods Council of South Africa. So it's been quite a journey.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

It's been quite the journey and it's really interesting. I just made a note. I had no idea that you studied food science and technology because that was something I also studied at university. I never had the intention of becoming a food scientist, but similarly to you, I was also very purpose driven and I was looking for whatever it might be that I would do that would lead me to a role in this space. You know, looking at sustainability, trying to work with the food system, but you know, also stumbled upon food science and also is never going to become a doctor. So glad to hear that we have that connection that I wasn't aware of.

So talking a bit more about you and what drives you and what fulfils you, I'm curious to know what is it that in terms of food that speaks to you the most, what is your favourite dish that you long for on a daily basis? And something that actually represents you as a South African as well?

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

Well, South Africa is has got an abundance of food and I think we cross pollinate across the cultures. We have a varied culture, but I think the common thing that brings us together, there was even a trend that was happening where everything was around Pap, the porridge maize meal, making of porridge and people are now diversifying in making how who can make the coolest Pap. And we are fighting about do you need to add sugar? Do you need to add salt? So there's there was a conversation around that.

And I think porridge or Pap or starch based products have a special place in my heart and also in the hearts of South Africans because we take it as a as a simple thing that was brought into the country and we got accustomed to it. And why it is important is that from a nutrition side of things, it has been dedicated as one of the vehicles to to push fortification in terms of getting the necessary micronutrients to the population, because we consume quite a lot of that you can bring in the rice even though we import the bulk that, and that sits at the cracks of every household. Sometimes we say we are addicted to porridge. We are addicted to potato. We are addicted to rice because it is the baseline of every event. Every event needs to have those as the mass feeder. If you have those, you know you're going to feed the bulk of the people, and I must say culturally it can replicate, you can use it to have fermented drink. You can have use that as having a fermented tea. That's what we call a traditional beer. So it is, it is a simple thing. But it's quite versatile and you can use it in in various ways, and I think for most of the people, if they haven't eaten porridge in in a week, they actually crave that. And I take it in its simplistic form, but it is actually a very

important thing. And if we look at the agricultural space. Most people in our yards we farm maize. I also have a small yard back at home in the rurals, where every year December I know. Now I must chase the good seed so that I can plant and I'm secured in terms of security of that basic need in the household for the whole year, through my own hands. So we have the farmers, but we also consuming that. So it is sitting at a very critical point and I also love to tie it in with all of the starch based issues either it is maize based or potatoes and I think it ties in and links up to to the UK culture potatoes just have to be on on the plate and that's what how we view the starch based foods such as those that I've mentioned.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

You're absolutely right that potatoes play much more of a critical role in our diet in the UK than one would like to admit. In the many, many forms we consume it. But it's really interesting to hear that in South Africa in terms of that core product being maize, that you have also most people have been able to also look at farming it for themselves so that they are not dependent just on mass production, but they can also provide that for themselves and their families. I'm curious to know, have you noticed in recent years any sort of trends or challenges in terms of your ability to farm maize, both for yourself but also across the industry?

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

We just do not know when the rain is going to come. Usually we knew that end of December, mid January, February.

We've got good rainfall, but of late, before we even get to December, we already seeing a lot of rainfall and comfortable rainfall that you can start to plant. So it we changing the way we have known seasons to be in the previous years.

And that has become a challenge because some people are still caught unaware and they plant or when they are about to plant it is raining heavily. In most cases if you are ready in most cases by September, October when the first rainfall comes, we usually just go around about it and plant it and you see some families are like. "Why are you doing it so early?" Because you know we we still, but we like if it rains, we are going and it has worked in our favour in most, I think three years in succession we have been getting back a whole lot of harvest because we were totally on the spot when it starts raining, we plant.

But there's still that cultural understanding that no rain is going to come by end of December and towards January. So there's been a whole lot of those changes that we are seeing and sometimes January throughout there's rain, sometimes some years there isn't any. So there's been that whole, we just take it by the ear and I think then the intel from the weather services as well has been helpful in South Africa. But I think nature is just a little bit

of playing tricks and I guess those are the impacts of climate change that we always talk about.

So it's all of those challenges and if the elders are also as confused as we are in terms of tapping into this it really creates that challenge to say the elders saying no, it's not the time to plant and you are saying we have to heat it now because we are, we can see suddenly things are changing.

Each province has got its own, you know, climatic behaviour and it is just about learning where you are and what are the type of activities that you need to implement, what type of seeds do you need to bring in to ensure that you get the best crop so.

It is as diverse as that, not only from the food and the consumption, but indeed from the climatic changes that we are seeing.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

And what you've described is not only like challenges in terms of climate changes and what that's doing in terms of impacting your ability to grow, what you've always known to be able to grow in certain provinces and regions, but also the understanding of your local peers, your elders, you mentioned and their impression of the impact of climate change and the speed at which they're taking to catch up with those changes. In a way, might be detrimental to your ability to move at a fast enough pace when you know that there is this impact happening. There's also the additional layer, you know South Africa is able to grow so much beautiful produce in country across the many provinces, and feed its people with that food. But also you're known you're well known globally as a mass exporter of the products that you grow. I know that you supply a lot to UK and Europe in terms of your fruits that you grow and your vegetables. I wonder if you know from, you know, working with the industry whether the changes that you're seeing in certain provinces in terms of climate impacts is having an effect on your ability to meet the demands of your customers or the customer markets that you're exporting to.

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

You encounter rainfalls that you haven't even expected and there's humidity suddenly, so there's a need for all of those, you know, infrastructure changes and infrastructure investments that need to happen to ensure that people are, you know, prepared for any eventuality that could come. And I think in the main, those are the key issues that we normally get notifications for and the citrus sector has been working heavily in ensuring that, you know, when they get to harvest and export everything is done. Most of the inspectors from my previous years. I would know they would move to the citrus areas to ensure that they provide support to those farmers.

If they're not stored correctly, then there's mould that grows and then it gets to that situation. And sometimes it I've worked in the factory, you've got your whole truck that is waiting there to be delivered and suddenly rainfall just comes.

The climate just shows us that "I am the person that's going to dictate this" and you get met with those challenges. So I think in the main heavy rainfalls and all the challenges that we have seen in the coastal areas in terms of cyclones that we are not used to, that are happening has been quite an impact that's coming our way.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

You've given us such a powerful, such powerful context on how maize production is being hit by the environmental pressures that you're experiencing. But at the same time, we know that huge amounts of maize and other staple foods that you're farming are still being wasted, even though so many people in South Africa are facing food insecurity, unfortunately, can you just help us and the audience to understand what the scale of that problem is in terms of the amount of food that's being wasted in South Africa?

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

It is always a sad notion to articulate and to think that South Africa is self-sufficient in terms of, like I said, staple food and your starch heavy product like your potatoes.

And we can actually supply and exceed and actually export. So we are safe there, but I'll have to have 10.3 million tonnes of food wasted across the commodities and across the chain. It is still a huge number and this is why we strive to ensure that the reporting that happens from the signatories can give us, you know, relatable data that we can leverage off and why it is of utmost importance is that with the 10.3 million tonnes that is wasted, close to 15,000,000 South Africans suffer from food insecurity and a number of people experience poverty on the daily and if we bring in the nutritional aspect, over 1000 children die from malnutrition each year.

So when you tie it in in terms of that the abundance of food that is available and the huge number of waste that we are getting in the in the country, we need to balance off that when we there needs to be some transformation in the food system to ensure that you know, it makes perfect sense in terms of how it should be in the long run. So that is that sits at the crux of why we are doing this. It needs to be out there, it needs to be known that this is a challenge and put measures in place of how we can resolve this.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Can we talk a little bit about what it is that CGCSA is doing in this space in terms of supporting your food producers, your manufacturers? and what sort of programmes exist that you're running at the moment?

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

We have adopted the notion that in as much as we are not the people that action, let's have the tools in place, let's have the programmes in place where, as a collective, we can come together and say.

This is imperative in terms of the country and also in terms of our global alignment, and I think the work started when we first started doing the healthy food Options Industry initiative where there was a call, I think it is still existing, people need options in terms of when they go shopping. I need to know.

That you know, there's something in reduced sugar, there's something in reduced fat, so that consumers have got those things available in in their face. So there were learnings from that to say this is actually a good structure that we could adopt where we put a programme in place and we say for you to get to see your impact in terms of moving the narrative from a nutrition perspective, if we target reduction in salt, reduction in sugar, reduction in fat reduction, in, you know use of of key things that we need to enable the nutrition side of of our population, we put the programme together, we provide you with the tools of what to do and how we collab because it's a competitive space. Sometimes someone might say oh, I'm going to continue selling this because it is selling, but then we say let's come together, let's do what is right for the population because we need a healthy population in the future, so we also adopted this when the food loss and waste came and the Department of Trade and Industry said, in terms of responsible production and consumption, we need to be starting to work on this as a country and they gave us a directive to say kindly please work with your sector. Let's see what we can do collectively. We will be there to support you so that we don't want to regulate you. Just go ahead and have a sandbox and work together and figure out what are the challenges, what can be done and let's see if we can have traction and we've embarked on that journey since the conversations were happening 2015/2019, that's when we got to launch the South African food loss and waste initiative. And we started working on unpacking. At some point, people were saying no, we do not have waste.

The waste is happening on the other side. It's happening next door and not in in my house and it was a challenging conversation and but we had to shed off all the walls that we had break the walls amongst ourselves.

Even from a government perspective and that room, the point where we had government, we had to say who is really responsible, whose mandate is it to manage food waste from a government perspective and that's what we got to uncover. Government got to understand who needs to be doing what. And who's the responsible person so that we can see who do we tie our work in terms of the work that we intend to do in the sector and as you can imagine, naturally the CGCSA is heavy on the retail and the manufacturing member base and that's where we started. But then as we were engaging more and more people were saying this is the chain, there is a handover of responsibility as the farmer produces as the

logistics people come in as the manufacturers manufacturer and as retail gets to sell. Let's have all of this visibility.

And also not forgetting the informal sector, that is not as much organised and they're not in the space. So it was that whole journey that we took. And finally, we have a voluntary agreement that we have in place that tells us where we going and what are the steps that we are going to take.

Take in terms of the prevention and the reduction of food waste, that food loss and waste in South Africa by 2030. So we work through our Members, we give them the tools, we avail the platform for them to engage and outline issues that they might be helping having a mind.

Amongst themselves so that we can find common solutions that we can take forward and they have to go on the side and go and implement and report back to us so that we can see traction in terms of if we had set up to halve food loss and waste by 2030, are we really meeting that? And in terms of nutrition? Are we getting the reductions that we are seeing on salt or all of the other imperatives? So that's the adopted modus operandi that we have in place and that's how we work through the Members.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

How many signatories do you have now at this point across the supply chain? I believe you also have signatories that are not necessarily food and beverage businesses, but also supporting stakeholders across the industry as well. Do you know roughly how many you have at this stage?

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

At this stage we are like humbly surprised by the South African role players that came and said we're going to put our hands up and say this is what we aim to do. We have over 100 organisations that have committed. And what we are proud of is that over 70 producers and retailers, because this are at the crux of the manufacturing and you know the marketing of the product and with the previous research, those where they identified sectors where there was identified as the biggest waste happening from those and we are just excited that over 70 producers and retailers are currently committed and 48 of this are reporting annually in terms of for us to see the traction in terms of looking towards the halving of the food loss and waste by 2030 so and the comfort that we get is that with the companies that we have in, in the in the Member base or in the signatory base they are usually committed. They want to see this happening and it took awhile for some to say yes. I have ways someone will come and say it's just sweepings from the floor and we say that those sweepings you could have, you know, sold. So you need to change something and they're like, oh, now I understand that I have waste, so it's the little things that we are seeing in the change in their mindset that we really have waste and that's the best win for us to say the

identification and the acknowledgement for anyone, even the if they report or they do not report with us, but that first in sense where we reach each other when we visit them and they say, oh, finally we can agree that we do have waste because sometimes waste has got someone said that the wet waste is putting people off because you've got surplus food that you can donate or you can send to animal feed. They might not be taking it under the definition of waste. It's things that we are doing and things that are damaged which as a merchandiser's child I've been living off for the longest of my life. We do not take that as waste. But then you need to say I could have sold this, but now I have channelled it to this way. So first and foremost, once they identify and acknowledge that, oh, we are coming in, "we didn't realise we do have waste" to be like this is the best win and we work with them in terms of having plans in place and also the 48 that are working towards reporting also have plans in place.

We want to see this waste that we have the 10.3 million tonnes that have been identified by research, we need to say in terms of the sector, the production and the market share of the number of people that we are dealing with. Are we, you know, even making a dent in terms of what we had set out to do. So reporting is quite important because if we do not measure it as we normally say, you cannot manage it and we need to know if we are saying we are preventing and reducing it. Are we hitting the target in terms of the key commodities that South Africans value and need in their in their daily lives, because we could be just doing what we are doing, but we are really not impacting the most critical commodities. And if I can make an example, it gets shocking when we analyse the data.

That a whole lot of fruits and vegetables are hugely wasted. Then the starch products that we had mentioned earlier are heavily wasted. So then we need to say this data informs us that we can make a change where it is necessarily needed.

And we are, we are truly excited to see the change that is coming and I think we were fortunate in that the CGCSA already had a member base of, you know, in terms of market share. We had the bigger players. So if we tap into those, we know we've really hit the bulk of where South Africa needs to see change in terms of making these efforts in terms of the reductions. And I must say we couldn't really have done this by ourselves. We were just crawling in in baby steps. We've had amazing funders, including WRAP and the Ballmer Foundation of current, who are the funders, and we truly appreciate that. And we do realise that without the funds, we've got a bigger team. As you're saying, it is through those funds that are coming from all over the world that we can, we can make this advances because you need to sit with these people, you need to show them, you need to motivate and say to change their behaviour and to make them see it is a tall order, but you need the time and time means you need more resources to ensure that they sit and explain the impact to them.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

It does take time to win over the hearts and the minds of people in the industry that have otherwise not necessarily understood what it means to waste food by the standard that's been set globally and how we, as organisations are reporting against that, against SDG12.3, and that takes time, and that takes resource, and it takes a team to understand the issues and able to provide that hand holding to businesses to bring them and their colleagues and their employees on that journey too. So yes, similarly to you I'm grateful that there are funders that exist and there are partners that want to work together to really solve this problem at a global level.

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

For the over 100 organisations to come and say we need to work on this. It was quite, you know, a pat on the back to say we are doing something that is impactful and people are relating to it and also for the two departments that have worked with us, the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition to keep hanging on by our side, to say we're going to continue this journey to work with you and of late we have seen the national food loss and waste strategy coming for public comments so that they a big win to say we are moving somewhere as a country.

Also I think the work that we've done with the partners Food Forward South Africa and the Harvard Policy Advisory to unpack where as a nation we are in relation to other nations on the issue of the in South Africa we call it Ubuntu law, the protection that gets to be afforded to people that donate products, because currently in South Africa, when you donate product and you hand over the responsibility, you are not, the liability is not taken away from you as you have donated. "And I'm out of it". So most of the people are still shying our way to even engage in conversations such as this because of fear that "we don't want people to start poking holes in terms of what we are doing, we will manage the waste the way we know how." And I think the effort that we have made, we have made documents we have presented at the highest levels of government to say, "We need to relook at that regulation. Let's have measures in place to say this is a shared responsibility. We are not saying we need to not be responsible. But let's have a handover of responsibility so that we are not all implicated." Because that can have huge cost. If everyone is implicated and you have to prove beyond reasonable doubt that I was not the person that did wrong. So I think the food donation, a guideline, and the standard that is about to be finalised has come in as a key aspect in terms of the regulatory side of all the policy side, and I think for of late, the launching of the citizen campaign which we are getting great insights. People are talking on social media in terms of if they are they are have any waste to they are in their households. It's quite exciting because it's first of it kind, never been done in South Africa and also, as I always say it wouldn't been have done if we didn't have the funds that came to support us and also the insights that we are looking forward in terms of segmentation of where the minds of the citizens of South Africa in terms of this food waste, because the same way we started with the sector where the sector was saying "no waste is happening next door," we

need to get to that level from a consumer perspective because a whole lot of waste is happening in our households. Most people don't even know.

And as simple as saying you need to see it to believe it, a small bin by your sink before you can wash your dishes. See how much you're putting and discarding into that bin. So that's the education that we are imparting with the consumers to say you also have a role to play.

Not only you know the formal sector that has to play a role. Rest assured in that the work that we are doing, it ties in with the landscape and the scope of where the food production is in South Africa.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

And that, as you've mentioned that feeling of knowing that you have that purpose and that you are doing something purposeful that is supporting the wider industry and people on a day-to-day basis as well must be incredibly rewarding. It definitely is for me to be able to work alongside you and the team and to see all the progress that you're making support the industry in this area. So yeah, I'd say there's lots still to be done, of course, but to see how far you've come and what you're able to achieve even for example, as you said, starting to think about how to engage citizens, which historically wouldn't necessarily have been where the Consumer Goods Council would have prioritised their efforts, but you have put that forward as a priority through the initiative to make sure that we're covering as much of the supply chain as possible is, you know, a huge testament to your dedication to delivering, you know, against this target and to see this shift really happen across South Africa, so I guess I was going to ask you, you know what, what motivates you on a day-to-day basis? You know this isn't an easy space to work in and there are challenges that arise every day.

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

I think for me, and sometimes we say it lightly, that there is no planet B. And working in the space of food loss and waste... Most people take it very lightly because it is not visible to your face. We don't always.

Come across a pile of food that has been thrown out elsewhere. Most attention has been given to know to, to solid waste. Your plastics, your glasses because you can see them with your visible eyes.

And for South Africa and for me personally, I associate food as something that is very critical, as we always say, a hungry man is an angry man.

And for South Africa to see a whole lot of people going hungry when, as you, as you said, we have got good production of food that is coming into the system. If we are not able to manage that efficiently, so that even if we do not sell it off, let's channel it through the chain to ensure that we feed the people that are most in need. So I think that is what drives me. And also looking at the economical impact that would come. And when we took our first

tour to to, to, to Europe, and we came and I could immediately see how there was management of food on the shelf space, because I think, the work that my father used to do, he was the best shelf packer. And when I saw it come to life and utilising the technology that that we have now to say, you scan on the ground in terms of where the product is and it goes to the manager and the manager can tell you we are now dropping the price of that product and the merchandiser then gets to put that on the product and it is marked down or it is channelled for donations. To see that in place and well planned. I was like, this is where we need to get to in our organisations, in terms of managing waste and we need to talk to each other. We should, I think the culture of having abundance should not continue to exist. You need to get what you need at the time that you need. And I always apply this in the household perspective to say simple things like we're doing now in the citizen campaign. Before you go shopping, make a note of what you need in the household. I can promise you there are people that share with us that they just go and use a basic and a standard list to go and shop every month and food gets to pile up and pile up. So it's small things that we change. Like I said, that being that you put by the sink before everyone must decant their food - they must see how much they are wasting. If you see it, you will believe it and if we measure it and it's right in our face, we are able to manage it. So I think I've always had a very close relationship with food and as I say, culturally we are known as South Africans to say if we haven't used it now let's create something out of it. Our forefathers or our elders used to can, they used to dry, and it is still existing. So those are the things that we need to impart in the younger generation to say this thing of just throwing. I get such an irk when I see someone throwing something out of their car, like just simply tossing it. There is no thought that comes with I'm just tossing it. It's not my problem. It can happen elsewhere, but not in my space. So I think those are the cultural behaviour that we need to work from a from a country perspective, because just throwing something and with our little kids, we see that happening because there's an abundance that that gets created as people grow in their life. We need to educate them to say you can take it home, let's go and feed the animals that we have at home. If you don't like it, tell Mummy, let's change the menu and you know, let's compost it. Then we can have more food coming from the garden. So simplistically, looking at the way we relate with food, because with a whole lot of people going hungry in the country that cannot continue, it is not sustainable. And I think that that's what fuels me because I tie it in to say I couldn't have afforded the most of the food that we had in the household because organisations at that time were able to provide their workers with that abundance of food go and consume at home because possibly the packaging is damaged and they would give that. That has since stopped. It pains my heart so much that you know the bulk of the workers are not able to even access the food that they are having in in, in, in their production and it is just said that you know, sometimes we try and manage the levers of food safety and the liability and protecting the consumers, but we're constraining things that were being enabled. So those are just the personal experiences that you know, fuel us in terms of, let's correct it. Let's manage it and then we can get to channel the excess food that we don't have either to the food banks or either to the people that need it, or the

otherwise compost. And then before we can send food, should not be going to landfill because the planets we are seeing, the challenges we are planting in, in odd seasons, the rainfall, there's typhoons which we never got exposed to. So I think we do have an important role to play.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Yeah. And some of those attitudes that you've described in terms of the disregard of food and packaging and products in general, they're not, they're not just specific to South Africa, they exist globally unfortunately. And that is why there are other initiatives that exist.

At a global scale, working also like the South African food Loss Waste initiative at a national level to try and make the impact that you're also trying to achieve, considering the local context and the cultural relevance as well. And part of that work has enabled the Food Pact Network to develop.

I was curious, you know, since we launched the Food Pact Network last year, is there anything in particular that you have found to be useful or motivating that has helped you to do to deliver on the activities that you're working on by being part of the Food Pact Network?

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

Oh, that has been amazing. And I was just checking with our food, the project manager to say it is the team part of the Pact because you get so much insights and someone somewhere has already done the work. All you need to do is just to cross pollinate and get the best practises of what someone has done so that has brought in an aspect of, you know, a family that Co creates and shares what has been done or what is about to happen. Because I think we are stronger together and collaboration sits at the crux of what the CGCSA done and to have that at global level has been quite an amazing journey and I think we've got amazing people around the globe and young people that are passionate in terms of doing this work and it can only grow and grow better from here where we are. So it has been quite valuable and we're looking forward to having a closer growth in Africa. I know there's work that's happening and I think the African needs to tap into the resources that we have to ensure that the other regional partners can actually get to the stage where we are in South Africa.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

You and I both know there is examples of other local initiatives that exist across the continent that are working to solve the issues of food security, climate risk and food loss and waste as well across the food system in their own countries. And there is probably a benefit to think about connecting the work that's being done across the continent to try and drive progress quicker in the way that we're seeing that through the Network as well.

I'm curious, you know we today we've talked about you know climate change and the impact that's having on even you as a farmer in your own garden, in your own farm. We've talked a lot about the purpose of the impact of collaboration and how much that's brought industry on the journey to recognise what it means to waste food and then what the opportunities are to reduce that impact.

There's also the aspect of food security and that there are, there is the very real problem of not enough people have the food that they need to survive on a day-to-day basis, especially in South Africa, and that there is a disconnect in in the amount that we're producing and what is being wasted. And then what are people receiving on their plates as well. I would like to know from your perspective, if we don't take action and if you know, there are still some businesses or individuals that are hesitating as to what their role might be in this space, what is it that you think the impact the negative impact might be if we don't all take action as soon as possible? I'm thinking even you know, starting from yesterday, especially if you think about, you know, the access to dishes like the one that you described earlier, you know, being able to have access to Pap on a regular basis. What does that impact look like to you?

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

The climate change is already here and we are already seeing the impact. And if the inability to produce all of those key, I call them mass feeders, in the local context, we might find ourselves, even the diets changing. And if you know the most affordable and cost effective products are not able to be even produced by the locals themselves.

That has got a ripple in impact in terms of price increases. You know the affordability and the and the access of such product. But I think in the main from a business side if this are not resolved we continue to lose the resources that come at a cost as well the people, the labour force that we have, sometimes we just don't match the two to say I've wasted 10 tonnes of product. What does that mean in terms of the salaries that I've already paid?

And also you know the resources South Africa has got its own challenges in terms of water and energy. And if we do not apply the effectiveness of utilising those resources that come at a hefty price and they are also at a challenge locally. We are having a double impact on the system because we are utilising the already struggling resources and yet at the final point we are losing what we could have sold off and I think unemployment is very critical in South Africa.

And also we always like to bring in the element of nutrition because it sits at the crux of what we are doing. Sometimes we might take it lightly that it's just product that you know, affordable and we can easily throw them. But we need to look at the nutritional aspect that those products bring. And also to who does that bring? Because it brings it to the to the, to the main population. And I think the impact the impact is massive.

We cannot downplay that there are huge, huge, huge impact outside of the non-visible climate change impact that we are already seeing in terms of the rainfalls, the climatic things that we haven't seen in South Africa, we have snow now. So some are exciting, but sometimes you need to get reminded that it shouldn't be happening in this way. And it's quite important. We need to work on this.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

What we like to do is towards the end of the podcast, we'd like to ask our guests to give us in 10 seconds what the urgent message is that you have for the audience and for those that might be listening to this podcast. To make sure that you know we understand what it is we need to do to fix the global food system. So I wonder if you can give us that message in roughly 10 seconds?

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

Globally, we have sufficient food to feed our people. So we need to work with the planet, we need to work with the people on the ground. We need to keep educating. Because the change comes with each individual person, we need to know first and foremost in our own facilities in our households. What is the impact that we are bringing to this space because that little tossing away of waste can have a ripple effect in terms of what we are trying, what we are faced with in terms of the challenge. So it is all on us. We are all responsible and let's not waste this.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Thank you so much, Matlou, thank you for sharing both your experiences, working in the food industry from even at a young age and working closely with your father to the role that you're playing today at the Consumer Goods Council. It is very much appreciated and we can definitely see.

The impact that the South African food loss and waste initiative is having in South Africa and what good progress can look like with the support from the industry, from stakeholders, others like academics and experts in their fields, but also the support that you can get from, you know, international partners across the Food Pact Network and and we appreciate that sense of collaboration that you're championing as well. So thank you and thank you for your time on our podcast today.

**Matlou Setati, CGCSA:**

Thank you. It was good to be here.