

Ep 3: Don't Waste This | Mole and tortillas in Mexico

English transcription

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Mole is never without tortillas, it is the dish that you always have with the family and as you say, when it was my birthday, the dish that my grandmother prepared was the one I liked and it was a mole, right? 30% of what is produced, it is not being consumed, that is, one out of every 3 tortillas that we have in our homes, we are wasting it, right? And really knowing that there are so many foods that are being produced and that we are not taking advantage of them, yes, it is something that hurts me, isn't it?

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

Welcome to Don't Waste This, I'm Carolina Fernandez, International Partnerships Manager for WRAP and today I'm here to chat with Claudia Sanchez from Red BAMX, national leader of Pacto por la comida about the food system crisis and what we stand to lose. Good morning clau thank you very much for being here, for joining us here with us. If you like, we start by getting to know you a little bit.

Could you tell us more about yourself, what your job is and how you got here?

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Thank you very much. Caro, first, first of all, thank you for the invitation to WRAP, we love to be able to share what we do in Mexico and above all, we have had the opportunity to have rap since 2021 and well, I'm going to tell you something about myself Claudia, I'm a biologist, then I had the opportunity to study a master's degree in biotechnology.

In the beautiful Balearic Islands. And then also, I was able to study here what public policy and climate change are. I have always loved them, I loved nature and by chance of fate too. I have always been mixing all my work with what is food and nutrition. That is, since the degree she was with tilapia, it was how we made her fatten with a high of beer.

And then, in my first job I was in the GMO part. So we have also always been in the eastern field part and see how we could protect what are the relatives in Mexico. And in the last stage that I was in the Government, I was in the part of environmental regulations, in the part of legislation, which is the primary sector. And that's where I learned about a wonderful topic that was food waste loss.

And it is from there that I began to get to know, well, people who were very passionate about institutions that were in a very incipient issue. It was in 2015 when I learned about the issue and well, I also had the opportunity to be in the food bank network and now I was directly dealing with what is food waste loss, right? So that's a bit of my story, well more on a professional and personal level.

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

All your training is very impressive, as well as your experience. It's clear that we have the right people in the team and also your passion for food, right? And is food also something quite emotional that is always at the center of our cultures, like that food that your grandmother reminds you of when you were a child, right?

If you had to choose a dish or an ingredient that represents that for you, something very special not only for you, but also for Mexican culture, but also at risk due to climate change, water scarcity, loss of food waste. What would it be?

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

I think that as a good Mexican I would make a combination, right? What is a mole and never leaving tortillas aside is not the dish that you always have with the family and just as you say, when it was my birthday, the dish that my grandmother prepared was the one I liked and it was a mole, no? So as always, then the prize also the gift, the family watering is the food. And why are we also in this problem? Tortillas are the culture of corn, we are people of corn and well.

We are in a highly degraded country, high desertification, climate change, despite the fact that we have more than 100 species of native corn, we are also seeing abroad what can happen with the change in land use, that the ingredients are not really being used. And well, all this is also there, because changing diets isn't it? It's no longer so normal for 1 to get those beautiful handmade tortillas. Not with different types of corn, but we are already going to the most industrialized, perhaps seeing other inputs that we can use and it is little by little that we are losing this type of tradition.

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

Of course you have chosen a fairly Mexican dish, like mole. It is evident that food is very special for you and for everyone. In reality, as we mentioned, it is a human condition, not a social one. We gather around food on any type of holiday, any occasion, birthdays, Christmas, Easter, etc.

Unfortunately we are experiencing this food crisis, not dial, although there is also at the same time the ethical and social problem of food insecurity as in Mexico, well, it is quite, quite pronounced, also with 300000000 people who suffer from this food insecurity.

No, and well, there are also foods that are quite a lot, they contribute a lot to this global warming, not during their production, etc. Could you tell us a little bit about how this dish that you like so much, this mixture of ingredients, as you said, is affecting the food crisis in Mexico?

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Yes, of course, of course, because it is really known, for example, already talking about the tortilla, corn, probably because it is 1 of the elements that we use the most in our diets. With information generated by Dr. Genaro Aguilar, he also commented that 30% of what.

It is produced, it is not being consumed, that is, one out of every 3 tortillas that we have in our homes, we are wasting it, right? So are all the supplies involved in having that beautiful kilo of tortillas in our house? Well, let's imagine that 300 g we are not going to take advantage of it, right? So it's part of how we can analyze this kind of thing, right?

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

It is clear that there are challenges, quite a few challenges, that we have to address in order to continue progressing, that need to be addressed in a systemic way. The BAMX network and Pacto por la comida are at the center of this fight against this loss of food waste with this transformation of the systems to feed this necessary.

Could you tell us a little more first-hand what you are doing through Pacto por la comida and the BAMX network on this route?

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Well, the food bank network has been in our country for 30 years, we are in 30 of the 32 states of the Mexican Republic, there are 59 banks that are found.

Throughout the country and have dedicated themselves above all to the rescue of these food surpluses, from the countryside, in industries, the self-service sector, supply centers, hotels and restaurants. And what has been done was what I sometimes comment, that I did not have a name and surname, which was to combat the loss of food waste is not something that has already been done so much.

So regularly in the food banks that perhaps they did not see it with that perspective. The perspective was always more social. And when you begin to analyze that the loss of food

waste is also a problem, especially environmental and economic, you already have this triangle of how we are fighting with with reducing food insecurity by reducing food waste loss. That is why in 2021.

Was the food pact born with the support of WRAP? And what we do is like from a Food Bank, with what it implies with these great allies that we have within the companies, the great link that exists with other social organizations what we do is.

How do we reorder what we already do? Maybe in a not so systemic way and see how we can reduce together. Loss of food waste, invite businesses, invite other organizations. We also have several universities that are supporting us and what we do is in a transversal way. Can we all reduce the loss of food waste?

Last year alone, we rescued 182000 tonnes of food throughout the food production chain. And what does that mean? It stresses that 2.4 million people had a food package last year, no, that is, we are strengthening what it is.

The production chain and above all, how to deliver this food to the most vulnerable populations.

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

Congratulations on those 30 years and impressive work that you do from the BAMX network and from Pacto por la comida. Unfortunately, this problem we are talking about about food systems and the loss of food waste is not only in Mexico. As we mentioned, it is a global problem. Tú pacto por la comida is part of this global network of Food Pact Network.

It brings together organizations from all over the world with a common goal that is the fight against the loss of food waste, supporting goal 12.3, the United Nations sustainable development goal. Could you tell us how to be part of this network? Has part of the Community and avamex helped progress in this work?

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Of course, because above all it is sharing experiences. Being able to talk to other countries, 1 that are very similar to Mexico or two that have nothing to do with Mexico, and that also helps us, is to understand those differences and similarities to be able to transmit it to our partners and allies as well, no, and I think that also companies that are accompanying us is very valuable for them to see.

That in other countries they are doing this same activity with the support of WRAP and see how we can share experiences, maybe what they are doing. Can any company in England serve Mexico? What we are doing in Mexico is going to be useful to South Africa, it is not to say how with the knowledge acquired we can strengthen each other and we are not going to manage it either, maybe if we do not have the answer now, we can all have shared

knowledge, look for solutions, etc. We are very strengthened to say that we are supported by an international organization such as WRAP. That gives us a lot of renown, no, we don't have to always boast about it and also that our partners know that we have other pacts in El Mundo. Do they ask us for information on what is happening, how companies are improving, can it be the same company?

To see how it is improving in another country and that perhaps here they have not implemented it. So that is helping us a lot to make an analysis of what is happening in the other company worldwide, but also to be looking for alternatives of what they are doing, perhaps the same sector, how they are improving all their processes.

Yes, of course, that sharing experiences, case studies, things that sometimes the company itself does not have visibility, no, and that is a little.

What the network brings, even the same company that is in another country or competing companies that are implementing certain actions and that through this network they can have, are given more visibility and companies have access to all this knowledge. So it is clear and good, we can also see it in our sessions. We also have as part of the methodology of making a voluntary agreement in our steering committees.

And there we love to see how they begin to talk between companies that at some point may have seen themselves as competitors, but at the end of the day they also have to be dealing with the same problems. So, do they share experiences with each other? New alliances are made, perhaps between the industry sector, with a self-service sector, and they also begin to carry out projects with our support to improve everything that is their processes

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

That is the richness in the network, not sharing, sharing and working together, collaboratively. There will be some times when some are more advanced than others, there will be other times when no one knows, but together we can achieve it. So, this is exactly the essence of this network, of all these actors who are committed to fighting food waste.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Everywhere there is still a lot to be done, right? And awareness is still lacking. Urgent action is still needed, such as by some governments that do not yet have a regulatory framework on food loss and waste. This is 1 of the goals we are trying.

Trying to help these countries through some programs. How to exclude the loss of the food experience in the global commitments of the country agreement of those countries. So I would tell you how to these actors who are not yet aware. It can be the government, it can be other organizations, it can be citizens. What would you say to them to try to make them

understand? If we do not take urgent measures, what will happen, what are we going to lose?

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Of course. Well, I think the most important thing is that many years ago we were all told that we had to produce more food because we had a growing population. The problem is not to produce more food, we have enough food for the entire population. What we have to analyze is the logistics part, how to distribute the food well.

There is a very vulnerable population that cannot access this type of diet. Also healthy. It's not just feeding them for the sake of feeding them that helps the part of reducing food loss is that it also reduces costs. We are paying the added cost together, not when we go to a store, for example, most stores do not lose anything.

Because we are really assuming the cost, right? So by combating what it is to lose food waste, can we help what is climate change, can we reduce the costs of food, the inputs that we require so much? Mexico is a country, as I was saying, with a high water deficit and Dr. Genaro Aguilar has also told us, of all the food that is wasted per year, which is between 20 and 30000000 tons.

It is the water that we would require every 1 of Mexicans for 2.4 years, that is, we do not have to be looking for water elsewhere or right now we have the excess that we have of rain as well, but we are wasting it in this overproduction of food.

The Inegi, which is our National Institute of Statistics, geography. He commented in 2024 that we had big losses on the field. In 2022 they commented that 72% was a climatic loss due to droughts and 12.76% to floods. That is, we have these two poles of what is a consequence of climate change, not floods and drought. And also going back to corn, we were also seeing that in that same year.

Is there damage to at least 40% of corn production? So that also has a lot to do with the economy. If we are a country that produces corn, but we also import, no, then it has a great impact on the cost of living of a lot of industry. Do you use corn, people consume a lot of tortillas, so we also see that in the pocket, right? So climate change?

It does not only have an impact, perhaps at a distance from what is happening with the little whale that no one is seeing anymore, but also in our diet. Doesn't climate change have a great impact on these great changes in temperature, great droughts and right now we are also seeing it, great floods?

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

Of course Claudia, yes, I totally agree, we are talking about environmental terms, about protecting.

Our ecosystems also talk about this social aspect, about reducing that food insecurity, but also, as they say in English, if next Business centres, not so much for governments as for companies. Working on food waste loss is also reducing costs. Thank you so much. Behind every movement they say that there are people with a lot of passion. I know you are.

But could you explain a little more? Could you tell us all what really motivates you personally to keep going with this fight and with this work

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Is it really food? It really is my country, I have always loved biodiversity, seeing how we cannot degrade it and I also believe that the cultural part is not the same as the cultural part of the country.

And really knowing that there are so many foods that are being produced and that we are not taking advantage of them, yes, it is something that hurts me, isn't it? That is, going to a supermarket and knowing that maybe there isn't any. The most precious and wonderful vegetables are not there, because maybe no one will want to buy them. I think that should also attract our attention, not the aesthetic part. I remember that chef Marema Orozco said, well, maybe we are also that vegetable that nobody wants to choose, right?

As we have been taught, even in what we buy, what we should not buy on an aesthetic part no, so it is one, it is such a complex problem that that is why I am fascinated by being able to be on the subject.

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

Imagine if tomorrow we solved all the food crisis in Mexico. What do you think what do you think it would be like? Would they change the situation for people, for the environment and for Mexico? What is your vision of what Mexico would be like with the problem solved?

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Well, those millions of people who right now do not have access to a healthy diet could already have it, businesses would also have better profits, that is, the economy would also improve.

At the population level, could employers hire more people? We would have laws that are really being carried out, we would be more aware, we would not have a refrigerator full of supplies that we may not consume. And I think that is also the part that each of us has to do, not being aware that that apple we have, everything that had to happen since it was a seed, used.



Fertilizers, water, etc. They packed it and it arrived at a supermarket and you chose it and that day you say I'm going to eat it because it's worth the whole process.

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

And we are going to finish one last question, we have talked about culture, community, environmental impact, food waste. We have heard what motivates you personally to do this inspiring work that is being carried out through the Food Pact and the Vamex network and the global Food Pact Network. Before we wrap up in just 10 seconds, could you tell us what would be the urgent message you would give to make sure people understand why we need to fix the global food system?

Claudia Sánchez, Red BAMX:

Because that way we can all really feed ourselves and that's how we're going to stop degrading what our planet is.

Carolina Fernández, WRAP:

Thank you Claudia for sharing all your ideas and the amazing work you do through the network. Banexi from Pact for Food to Combat Food Loss and Waste in Mexico we started this episode talking about mole, a food with a special meaning for Mexico.

By listening to your story and sharing all your knowledge in perspective, it becomes clear that if we act now, this dish and all that it represents can be protected and enjoyed for future generations.