

Episode 5: Don't Waste This | Spices in Indonesia

Indonesian transcription

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, when we talk about spice islands, it's certainly closely tied to Indonesian identity. It seems we were colonized because of different understandings. So, for centuries, Indonesia was known as the Spice Islands. Ingredients like...

Like that, then cloves, pepper, turmeric and ginger...

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes, it's like an Indonesian identity that has economic value.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, that's right, and thousands of small farmers still depend on spices for their livelihood. So when we talk about spices, it's not just about the food. It's about our economic heritage and our identity as a nation. And based on a study from Bappenas, each person in Indonesia throws away between 115 and 184 kg of food per year, so that's equivalent to 23 to 48 million tons annually. So for us, the value of that is around 6 to 10 million rupiah per person per year. It's just thrown away. Yes, actually, when we throw away food, it's not just the economic aspect that we're throwing away, and also the visible aspects, but also the process behind it.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Hello, welcome. Good afternoon. On the Don't Waste This podcast, which in Indonesian means "don't throw away."

I'm Tiur Rumondang, WRAP Impact Lead for Indonesia.

And today I'll be speaking with Indah Budiani from the Indonesia Business Counsel for Sustainable Development (IBCSD). We'll talk about the food system crisis in Indonesia and what's at stake if we don't fix it. Welcome, Indah, and thank you for joining us. Let's start by introducing who Indah is and what you do on a daily basis.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, I have a life other than at ABC.

Outside my office is a mother of a 13 year old boy.

So the issue of foodways, especially institutions, has become a very interesting topic for a mother.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Can you tell me a little about IBCSD?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

IBCSD exists. It's an association, so we're not just calling ourselves CEOs. The association, led by CEOs, is very business-oriented, as its members are.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

So what does IBCSD have to do with food waste?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Because... Because the CEO of the Association is a CEO who has a commitment to building a sustainable business. So the issue of food waste or food waste is one of the issues that needs to be raised.

Because as producers, they are also responsible from upstream to downstream. So, if it's from upstream, it might be called a loss.

Yes, when you look at it, it becomes food. So that's why we ended up...

IBCSD established a platform together with the web.

The name is GRASP2030, so our journey begins playing in food loss and waste.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

But before we learn more about food loss in IBCSD, what are the compelling reasons for pursuing this career?

Taking care of food loss is perhaps taking care of another sustainability issue.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

First of all, of course, we were introduced because they say if you don't know someone, you won't love them, right? So, first of all, we were introduced. We were also a bit confused about what this was? It has to do with sustainable business, because at that time, our role was only to invite the private sector. There was an event about photography, and then from there, we saw... oh...

Indeed, they meant that these companies were very relevant when we talked about food loss and how, so we started inviting several companies to participate as pilots. So, the work started to become apparent, "Oh, this is the job."

It's suitable for 2019, right? Well, now it's 2025, we're still here because there's still a need for someone to work on this issue.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Apparently it is still rare in Indonesia.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

True, true, true.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Okay, okay, if it's another podcast, maybe when we talk about food, what we usually discuss are delicious places to eat in Jakarta or in Indonesia.

Or what delicious Indonesian food is like. But today we're going to talk a little more scientifically.

But often this scientific aspect is overlooked. So, I'd like to start with question 1: What is one Indonesian dish or ingredient?

It is very significant to the lifestyle and/or culture of Indonesian people which is perhaps relevant to this episode, namely, don't throw it away.

Could you please explain a little bit from your own beautiful experience?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Is the question difficult or easy? Oh, the question is easy. The answer is difficult. So if you ask me what food? Because at first I didn't like eating, Miss Tiur, so eating felt like a burden. Well, I liked eating it when I was studying in Germany at that time to take my Masters. Then the food only had salt and pepper. Yes, that's why they only eat whatever it is, whether it's fish or what? Yes, so there are and it's not easy, that's all. Then I started to miss Padang food, foreigners, like pempek chicken, so we tried it. Then there was a different taste, right? The taste of salt, pepper, and spices is different.

Then sorry then there is also what is it called?

Pempek we made pempek at that time.

What do you use? As long as there is flour, we will replace the vinegar with vinegar from oranges.

What should we replace the salt and soy sauce with? It's authentic, not just anything. It was then that I realized what it's like to live in Indonesia. It's so amazing, with the diversity of spices that can't be replaced. So, it's the old one.

Always eating whatever I can and now I miss it.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Indah has already told us that she had an experience in Germany, but is there any?

The most important message behind the experience is about Indonesia, about Indonesian food, about personal beauty, you know.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, when we talk about the spice islands, it's certainly closely tied to Indonesian identity. It seems we were colonized because of misconceptions. So, for centuries, Indonesia has been known as the spice islands. Ingredients like...

It was like that, then cloves, pepper, turmeric, ginger, well that formed a trade route.

I think it was there a few years ago, like 2 or 3 years ago.

From what the special envoy of the president also to learn more about.

Spices and how this commodity can also rise again as our country's identity.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

And more appreciated.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, that's right, because the loss is quite significant. Previously, we were colonized because of our spice image, until now we import a lot of spices.

So, yeah, so outside of culture, Indonesia is also famous for its spice culture.

It is still the image of Indonesia, even though it is historical and also economically.

Still has potential at this point. So.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes, it's like an Indonesian identity that has economic value.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, that's true and there are also thousands of small farmers who still depend on spices for their livelihood.

So, when we talk about spices, we're not just talking about food. We're talking about our economic heritage and our identity as a nation.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Okay, next maybe I want to ask about the challenges.

Based on IBCSD's experience and ongoing initiatives.

Is there any information you can share with our viewers in this podcast? Facts or stories that illustrate the challenges of food waste in Indonesia.

What are some significant factors that our viewers might need to be aware of?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Okay, maybe we should start talking about data, Ms. Tiur, so we can build some knowledge. So, in Indonesia, food waste is a huge problem.

But it's often overlooked. According to data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry at the time, because they were still affiliated, in 2018.

That's about 44% of our national waste. It comes from food waste.

So that's quite a lot, 44%.

And yes, and based on a study from Bappenas, every person in Indonesia throws away between 115...

And 184kg of food per year, so that's the equivalent of 23 to 48 million tonnes annually.

The value of the money is around 6 to 10 million rupiah per person per year.

Just thrown away like that.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

That's already one month's salary.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, and it's ironic. Even more ironic. Some people waste food, right? Meanwhile, 8.3% of our population still faces it.

Food memories and 23 million Indonesians cannot meet their nutritional needs and what is their daily food?

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

But sometimes it can't be avoided, people are so full that they don't finish their food. In fact, leftover food is unavoidable.

But.

Is it possible for both people to be more aware and understand that?

What is behind all that food?

This issue of food waste is becoming.

It has a big impact, but people don't realize it.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, actually, when we throw away food, it's not just the economic aspect that we're throwing away, and also the visible aspects, but also the process behind it.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

What is visible is what is visible, there is something that is not visible.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

We also waste energy and effort, as well as the ingredients that go into it. So, when we eat chicken curry, it's not just the chicken itself; it's the farmer.

Those or breeders who work behind it, which we then waste like that.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Because each commodity has a long supply chain, we don't realize how much energy is expended.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, that's right. So, the problem of food waste isn't just about throwing away trash or the environment.

The simple logic is that food waste also contributes to social issues. And if it's environmental, that means climate change.

And yes, there are a lot of greenhouse gases in the end because when food goes to the landfill, it produces methane gas, one of the gases that can also cause the changes to worsen.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Not to mention that methane ultimately leads to climate change.

Ultimately, the cycle adds to the farming and production cycle, so it might not be optimal.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

That's right. That's right, that's right.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Okay, so based on your own experience and maybe IBCSD, yes.

What are the most pressing consequences for humans in Indonesia?

Forget about all the risks that we briefly mentioned earlier, okay?

And how does this actually end up, I wonder, even affecting the daily lives of Indonesian people.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Hmm.

Yes, the most pressing consequence is the impact of food waste in Indonesia itself, both for humans and the environment.

For the planet, between 2000 and 2019, the food that was lost in Indonesia could actually feed around 60 to 120 million people.

So that's almost half of Indonesia's population, sis.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Wow.

Half of Indonesia's population.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, that's right. So, while many people in Indonesia are still facing food insecurity, there's so much food available.

It's still delicious, but it's thrown away and ends up in the trash. So, environmentally, when food ends up in a landfill, it releases gas.

Methane contributes around 7% of Indonesia's total emissions.

So addressing this food waste issue or these 5 foods is also about strengthening food security, improving nutrition and.

Reducing emissions like that, so many people.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

No it's not as simple as people think.

So, regarding all the risks or negative impacts that this waste could cause, what initiatives are there?

What is currently trending for IBCSD or perhaps it is also related to IBCSD's collaboration pattern with other organizations?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

If it's about hits, this is exciting, Ms. Tiur, because usually something that's currently popular is what's trending.

So it's gotten a lot of attention. So now we're running out. So now we have a platform called mutual cooperation for food losses and leftovers.

2030, if it is abbreviated as GRASP, it will be easy for foreigners to move like that. So, this platform brings together businesses, government, and communities for collaboration.

Reducing food loss and waste throughout the food value chain.

In Indonesia, the platform's mission is to reduce food loss by 1.5 times.

50% by 2030, because SDG 12.3 as well. The target is halving food.

Yes, so we facilitate it.

So we facilitate capacity building. We also share knowledge, encourage companies to measure and report their food waste, and develop them.

Piloting and of course we are not alone because this is a new issue and people or companies haven't heard much about it, so we...

Helped fortunately by an organisation called WRAP and based in the UK.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

So, why did IBCSD choose the name gotong royong?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Mutual cooperation (gotong royong) has always been a part of Indonesian culture, and yes, the platform is multi-stakeholder. Hence, gotong royong.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

So it has to be the same, IBCSD can't just move alone.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

That's right, that's right, that's right.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

So how long has this been going on?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

GRASP itself was launched in 2021 during the pandemic, Ms. Tiur. But it was actually a collaboration with... But the collaboration itself was actually before free, we had already collaborated with WRAP in 2019.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

The study began a long time ago, and the seeds were sown. This initiative has also been around for a long time.

Is there any until now?

The test story is positive, which is perhaps beautiful and can be shared, what IBCSD has done through grace.

This might be worth sharing with viewers, especially those from Indonesia, so they know.

Oh, it turns out.

This initiative has indeed contributed to Indonesia.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

There's something new, we just launched guidelines for effective partnerships on food redistribution.

So it's brand new and will be released on September 30, 2025.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Hmm. That's very new.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

So it hasn't even been a month yet so it's very new.

Well, in Indonesia there is no clear or specific law that protects and encourages food donations, so many companies are hesitant to donate food.

The excess food is ready.

Based on that background.

That's because they are afraid there will be legal risks later.

How will we protect ourselves if something like that happens to the food? So we created the guidelines.

This process goes through this restriction there.

We were asked to create the guidelines together. This gives them a practical reference.

So, yes, the name of the guideline is our guide, a practical guide that explains how to redistribute food safely so that there is more.

People can benefit and less food ends up in waste.

Landfill or end up leftover?

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Wow, that means GRASP's work is quite advanced, as similar regulations don't yet exist. However, this multi-stakeholder model could be produced by GRASP2030.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

It's true that in other countries there are already guidelines. But in Indonesia this is indeed the 1st.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

I'm proud of GRASP 2030.

Okay, then maybe this could be good information. Yes, maybe some of the audience for this podcast is from companies or perhaps from...

Certain groups, how do you join grade twenty thirty or.

There may be one movement about the food system that contributes to reducing food waste.

How do I join a community that can show me what I'm doing?

Positive impact in the future for Indonesia.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

So, at the global level, Ms. Tiur, there's something called the Food Pact Network. Through that network, we can connect GRASP2030 to the global learning community, as there are several countries that are already advanced. So, we can learn from them.

Well, so there we can also share our own experiences and to strengthen our approach with. Best practices at the global level so you can benchmark, share, and learn from this network. Well, this also reminds us that Indonesia's efforts are part of something bigger, so not just at the national level.

But also globally, because this is a collective movement to halve food loss and waste by 2030.

So that sense of global solidarity is really what motivates our work.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes, because in the end it turns out that this problem is not only a unique exclusive problem for Indonesia, but for all countries in the world.

Planet in this planet yeah.

Hopefully not if Indonesia fails, take urgent action.

What do you think will be lost and what should we all be most worried about as Indonesian citizens?

Especially.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

So, if we don't act now, we're not only wasting the food itself, but we're also wasting energy resources and human effort, whether it's from farmers, ranchers, or anyone else involved in production.

That's in the supply chain. So, in Indonesia, many people still face food insecurity. So, seeing food go to waste is like losing something precious to them.

For us, yes.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Other humans too.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, that's right, so it's not just time that can't be turned back, but this loss is also significant.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes yes.

Then, will there be any longer-term impacts for the generations after our generation, perhaps?

What might be lost if we take Indonesian spices as an example? It's possible that these spices will one day disappear from our culture.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

It could be, sis, so if the spices are more difficult to plant like before because...

Is it a prime chance or something? Another factor is that future generations might lose access to that feeling.

It defines our culture, you know. Maybe they'll have to create something like turmeric or something like that, but turmeric is a must.

Imports become expensive, that's what happens, that's what happens, in fact.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

That's right, but it's not just food. It's also an ingredient in remedies, right? It's a common natural treatment, right?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, it is true.

It's really herbal, right? It's the same here, Miss Tion. That's right. So, yeah, it makes sense that rendang only uses salt or rendang only uses pepper, right?

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes, it's not just food.

It's not called rendang.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Rendang, yes, so that's the recipe later.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

So we will lose not just the food, but the taste itself, right?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, you know how many hours it takes to make a swimming pool until the spices are in.
Yes, it's 6 hours.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

6 hours I know 6 hours is rendang.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Well, don't let the recipe for making rendang change like that, right, Miss Tiur?

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes, yes, yes.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

So, because we'll lose more than just taste, but also our identity. So, it's related to tradition and so on.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes, that's right. That's right.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Even shared memories created by food.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes yes yes then.

What?

Earlier, there were positive values and positive expectations. Is that also what motivated Indah to do this?

And push for work on this food waste issue and maybe there is hope.

Personally or professionally, maybe something can be shared with all of us.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, I believe that humans are the caliphs on earth, so in the sense that humans are the ones who must protect it.

The environment, so if our environment is sick now.

So, we have to be able to make changes. That's what keeps me and IBCSD moving forward because we believe in it.

That these small, collective actions can make a real difference. So it's not just...

Understand but then why do you do that? So we understand. OK, it's important to do something.

Continue to make real changes, so it's true, Ms. Tiur. So when...

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

There must be action.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

We see community businesses and young people coming together under GRASP2030.

Well, this gives us hope that this collaboration still has a chance to succeed and that.

We can create a fairer, more efficient and more sustainable food system for everyone.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Okay well noble.

The thought is, but if for example we succeed in being positive, we are positive, yes, we have succeeded in overcoming the problem of food waste, what is it?

Rapid change means change in a short time. Perhaps tomorrow we'll feel the change. And what might be the most different?

According to Indah.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, perhaps what feels most different is related to the behavior chain, of course, Ms. Tiur.

Usually, when people change, this is what this professor at UI said when I was studying social studies.

Humans are basically difficult to change.

For urban areas, what must be changed is the mindset.

Because if it doesn't change, then we don't know when it will. So, if the food waste problem could be solved tomorrow, the impact would be felt.

It's directly impactful on many fronts. One of them is how we view food. So we'll stop seeing food as...

A commodity that can simply be thrown away. So, for individuals, today's excess food should be able to feed someone else the same day, or it could become...

Shopping money that can be saved, especially now that they say that if there is a war, you have to be prepared to save money, right?

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

There are also unlikely impacts on business like that.

What they can actually feel.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

So for businesses, the decision of the company's management to change its concern about food waste tomorrow could be the beginning of change.

Are the perpetrators the workers or the employees?

Then they start planning. Yeah, so they already have a mindset. Usually, they make a plan like that, right?

And maybe next year the business will be able to calculate how much ethic they will get when they make reduction efforts.

For example, close food methods are implemented in the kitchen. So, from these two examples, we can see significant savings across the entire supply chain.

Where's the food? For example, producers will spend less money because they produce food that doesn't require their ears. They buy it.

He said how much to buy, to get 7 potatoes, that person needs 10 potatoes, and they'll all be thrown away. So, if he already knows, that's it.

Okay, don't let 3 go to waste easily. We have to be efficient, so that's automatically the goal, or maybe 8 or 7.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Just buy 7.

So basically there are efforts to reduce it, right?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, that's right, that's right.

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Okay, okay, maybe this is the last question, Indah. Can you explain it in 10 seconds?

Why should the world care about improving the global food system?

Why is this important for all of us?

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Yes, because a healthy food system is closely linked to a healthy planet and people. So, when we, or humans, improve the way we produce and manage food.

We are actually safeguarding the future of humans and our earth. So it's possible the biggest win, yeah

Tiur Rumondang, WRAP:

Yes, okay, thank you very much, Indah, for the insights you have shared and for the incredible hard work with IDCSD and GRASP.



And efforts to address food waste in Indonesia. Today we've seen how key ingredients like spices tell a larger story about culture, community, and need.

It's urgent to improve our food system to prevent waste, and thank you to the podcast's audience. I hope this discussion has been beneficial for us all.

To be part of the improvement for our shared earth. Thank You.

Indah Budiani, IBCSD:

Thank you, Ms. Tiur, for inviting IBCSD with a very interesting topic.