

## **Episode 4: Don't Waste This | Cheese Sandwiches in the Netherlands**

### **Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

In the Netherlands we have around 700,000 loaves of bread, which are baked everyday but not eaten, so that's a huge amount for such a small little country. About half of bread waste in the Netherlands happens at home. I always have people then telling me how they'd never waste anything, which from my work now I know that statistically, that's probably not true.

Bread is the most wasted products, not just in households, but also across the supply chain. So in retail and bakeries, where it often ends up as animal feed. Or at home, where people throw away their crusts and ends. So we really take the value for bread and all the ingredients, efforts and passion that goes into it for granted. And we also forget that we paid for all this waste as well.

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

Welcome to Don't Waste This. I'm Talya Shalev, International Partnerships Manager here at WRAP, and I'm here today to chat with Jip Jordaan from Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling, also known as Food Waste Free United in the Netherlands, about the food system crisis and what's at stake if we don't fix it. Jip, thank you so much for joining us today. I'd like to start just by getting to know you a little bit better. So could you introduce yourself and tell us what you do in the Netherlands?

### **Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

So my name is Jip Jordaan. Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling or Food Waste Free United. We work on a range of different topics relating to food waste. So the first is monitoring. So we do that together with the University of Wageningen. I do I work on this for several sectors and we have the second part is that we work and kind of yeah, focus a bit more in depth on certain topics. Bread is a good example of this.

I do quite a lot on bread waste as it's one of our strategic kind of focus points and also a project on circular animal proteins and lastly also take part in the WRAP network. But we've also set up a European network where we come together with practitioners from a couple of different European countries to learn from each other and try and help each other accelerate on food waste reduction.

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

And how long have you worked in the food waste reduction space, Jip?

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Uh. Since April of last year.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

How are you finding it so far?

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

I really like it, so I worked in the food industry before. I have a food technology background, so I really like, yeah, still working in the food space, but then also really linking it to sustainability and the fact that I think food waste reduction, it's such a no brainer in my opinion. It's a very yeah easy topic in the sense that I've yet to met someone who's really against reducing food waste, but that's what I yeah, I really find it interesting learning so much about the industry and yeah, the simpler something seems, the complexer it actually is is something I found out. But I quite like that challenge as well.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Well, it sounds like you're in the right space then. Food, as we all know, can be incredibly emotional for all of us. It's at the heart of our cultures, our countries, the way that we bring come together socially. If there's one ingredient or dish that you could choose that would represent you as a Dutch person or the Netherlands. Something that's really special to you, your family. But there's also maybe slightly at risk of climate change and the impacts of the food systems crisis that we're facing at the moment. What would that particular ingredient or dish be?

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

The thing that came to mind was really the sandwiches in the lunch box or specifically the cheese sandwich in the lunch box, which we think is really a, yeah, perfect example of Dutch culture and something. Yeah, that we really eat every day. Usually both breakfast and lunch. So we thought that has to be a a important dish for us so.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

And in terms of its impact in the food system within the Netherlands, can you speak to any of the the impacts that you're seeing across the supply chain, any specific crises that you're seeing in relation to the ingredients in the sandwich in the Netherlands?

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

So even though we love our bread, we've forgotten its value. So in the Netherlands, around 700,000 loaves of bread are wasted everyday. So bread is the most wasted products, not just in households, but also across the supply chain. So in retail and bakeries, where it often ends up as animal feed.

Or at home, where people throw away their crusts and ends. So we really take the value for bread and all the ingredients, efforts and passion that goes into it for granted. And we also forget that we paid for all this waste as well. 38:14

And yeah, the sandwich I think represents our unconscious habits around food. So we throw away food without thinking about it and realising what it took to get that food on our plates and to fix this, we really need to restore the value of food and change our behaviour. So bread is such a central part of Dutch culture but it's waste has been normalised so much. And yeah, I think this this the daily sandwich really shows how much we take our food for granted.

I think bread has really been impacted by geopolitical crisis crises in the past couple of years. So when the war started in Ukraine, the grain price really went up a lot or the wheat price went up.

Which really increased the price of bread significantly for a while. And yeah, it's really kind of I think the yeah, what would the the good way of describing be because it's actually like fundamental part of my diet. I think it becomes very noticeable when the prices of bread increase and yeah.

That obviously makes it very visible and more difficult for people to then buy those products.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

No, I definitely would agree. We definitely saw something similar in the UK similarly to the Netherlands, we are very dependent on our sandwich. We love a good meal deal in the UK and there's often based around the sandwich or the salad depending on the kind of person you are. Me, I could eat sandwiches all day, every day. Three meals and a snack. But I would just need to make sure the filling is varied throughout the day to keep things interesting, but there's something very comforting about being able to fill two slices of bread. But anyway, food is incredibly special to everyone and sounds like it's something that you also

can connect with and you've talked a little bit about that food insecurity piece and then what's happened happening in terms of local, I guess to the Netherlands local geopolitical issues that we've been facing unfortunately, but that that might be being felt more globally too.

Can you tell us a little bit about what Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling is doing to tackle some of these challenges on a day-to-day or an annual basis at the moment?

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Well, specifically for bread, more generally, and then specifically bread as we started monitoring first with retailers. So the big supermarket chains in the Netherlands where bread was the most wasted product and we've also had consumer household food waste studies done over the past couple of years and their bread is also consistently the number one wasted product.

And then a couple years later, we also started monitoring with the industrial bakeries. So these are the bakeries that supply bread to the supermarkets. First of all, yeah, we so we follow the target Measure Act principle. So really seeing how much, yeah, bread waste is there and then kind of targeting that so.

Typically for bread, we set up a bread cluster as we call it, so the waste free bread and pastry chain where we really got the different some bakeries together, but also kind of the companies around that. So for example a machine company.

And automation and AI company but also upcycle initiatives for bread to really see how we can tackle this bread waste and see, yeah, what the next steps are, what the innovations are that can be possible. And then also, yeah, I think just for retailers kind of seeing the volumes of that bread waste has also really been a great incentive for them to also look at this significant waste and they've started reducing that as well.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

In terms of the businesses that you've engaged with, do you feel like you have been able to engage with a large majority of that part of the supply chain in the Netherlands? And are those learnings that in that those statistics that you started to gather are they, are they more widely available than outside of the Netherlands to inspire other countries to do the same?

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Yeah. So we've definitely been able to reach a large proportion of the market. So for the retailers, I think we're at over 90% of the retailers that supply their data and we're over 70%

of the industrial bakeries which supply their data to the monitors specifically for the cluster. That group is a bit smaller. The bakery sector is quite a conservative one. It's one where there's low margins and it's a really competitive industry. So that kind of makes having companies really share openly about what's working for them and what they're kind of struggling with, quite difficult. So yeah, we've really had to have a lot of one-on-one conversations and with all these different companies and what's really helped is that, so in the Netherlands, we have quite a lot of sector organisations.

So for example, there's a sector organisation for industrial bakeries and their director has been really helpful and really instrumental in kind of getting all of this going to have all this contact with the bakeries and yeah, this monitor is one of the most successful ones, when we're just gearing up to share the results for the fifth year in a row, which is really special. One of the first industries that's been doing that in the Netherlands and these results also become publicly available somewhere in November. So the University of Wageningen will also be making a bit more of a detailed report on that waste and what it looked like over the years. Yeah. And the different streams and stuff there are. So that's definitely something other countries can also look at. And also the template that we use is publicly available.

So that's also a good starting point for any other country that wants to start looking at their bread waste.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

That's brilliant. And thank you for making some of those tools freely available. We see that especially other initiatives around the packs around the world that are wanting to engage with specific sectors. Really appreciate having those resources available for them to not have to start from scratch. And we see that, that sharing of resources and tools across the Food Pact Network has been really helpful over the last few months since we started, so I can only say thank you for continuing to support those activities as one of those Pacts that are part of the Network. Do you have a specific success story in relation to some of the businesses that you've been working with and looking at?

Ways to reduction specifically that you wanted to share today, someone that you wanted to celebrate or highlight that's been doing a lot of work in this space?

**Jip Jordaen, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

We've been collecting food waste data from retailers and industrial bakeries and the sector benchmark was created for both, which gives insights for next steps. So with updated formulations, certain bread products can now stay fresh for two to three days instead of 1.

So in the Netherlands, the bakeries supply the bread to the supermarkets and then if they're not sold at the end of the day, it goes back to the bakeries and then it often or usually

becomes animal feed. And this has been kind of a focus point from both the retailers and also the industrial bakery sector. And we've seen that decrease around 40% over the past four years.

Unsold loaves are now also being sold the next next morning at a discounted price, which is also very helpful for kind of the more equality subject we've been speaking on. And retailers and bakeries have also been working together to improve forecasting to really make sure that their production closely matches the demand and to accelerate progress. We've established a waste free bread and pastry chain cluster, as we call it, where we bring together bakeries, machinery and automation companies, ingredient suppliers, but also upcycling initiatives. And this collaborative network exchanges, best practises, innovations and knowledge to identify kind of the next steps to reduce bread waste. But also dough waste in the bakeries. And with this cluster we also had a voucher scheme. So for example a with that we were able to financially support a project which a cracker company did with an AI driven automation company, which helped them to optimise their production lines and also to have them cut to have less waste but also reduce their reliance on manual labour, which there's quite a lot of shortage on in the Netherlands at the moment.

We've been working together with the bakeries and also the retailers to really also, yeah, highlight bread waste towards consumers. So about half of bread waste in the Netherlands happens at home. So for example, during our annual consumer facing campaign called the Food Waste Free Week in September, we again we always put a special emphasis on bread as well. So we had stickers which were put on all the breads sold in the supermarket. So we had around 8 million stickers by the different bakeries and supermarkets, which for a population of 18,000,000 is a significant amount of stickers. So I think it's, it's really just, yeah, we really try to work across the supply chain and I think just having all those actors participating in these kind of actions has been I think really the key success to what we're doing.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Amazing. And yeah, we saw some of the images from your campaign this year and it looks like a brilliant campaign, one that was very well attended even by royalty in the Netherlands, which is very impressive. I think the rest of the Food Pact Network are looking to see how they might be able to engage with their royal families for their next citizen engagement campaigns, because that's very impressive. In terms of, you you mentioned, you know that you've got some plans coming up in terms of publishing some of the data from some of this work we've been doing over the last few years sharing some of those resources and tools in terms of how to start other businesses can start measuring and reporting their bread waste. Specifically, do you have any other upcoming activities over the next year in specifically in relation to tackling bread waste both in the supply chain and in

the home that you're excited about or that you're maybe even looking for further engagement and support on that you might want to talk about on this podcast.

**Jip Jordaans, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Easter is always a moment when we also highlight bread waste because in the Netherlands that's also a very specific moment. We eat a lot of bread, so that's also kind of a targeted moment that we focus on that.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Tell me more about Easter. I've never known that bread was associated to Easter, especially not in the UK. So how is it that you consume more bread at Easter time?

**Jip Jordaans, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

I think it's more in general, people just eat a lot, so there's just a lot of bread and I don't know. So there's also always very specific kind of, like buns and pastries and things around Easter. So often we see that when there's kind of a different assortment for a holiday that there'll be more waste. So that's also why we try and focus on that as well. And I think well, at least in my family, everyone's always worried about having too little at holidays. So we'll have, I don't know, four, buns per person. When most people will have two, maybe three if they're really, you know, going crazy. So I think that's also a big part of it, that it's kind of making sure you're getting the right inventory, getting the right groceries. And then when it's leftover in my family, we really have the the big division of who gets the the breads and the sprinkles, of course. The leftover eggs. We have tonnes of those always as well, at least in my family. But as the statistics show, I'm not the only one who has a a family gathering and then has a lot of food leftover. There's still always that fear that you might run out so.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Yeah, especially around a holiday or a festive festive period. The worst thing that could happen is that we don't have enough and that all the people remember is that there wasn't enough for everybody that attended, which is a ridiculous concept. But even working in this industry and working in food waste reduction. We still are at the mercy of those societal pressures around having plenty to share around with our families and friends.

So you mentioned a little bit about your engagement in the Food Pact Network and how you've been sharing some of your learnings or insights and what you've been doing in the Netherlands with the rest of the Network and the problems that you described are not limited to what's happening in the in the Netherlands, which is what we're seeing when we're having our discussions in our community calls and have you, are you able to share any specific examples of what being part of the Network has helped you to do in terms of progress or insights over the last year?

**Jip Jordaen, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Yes, I think what's really nice is connecting with other Pact members on specific topics. So we'll be having a call on bread and on bread waste too now with some of the Pact Network members from the US and Mexico. And I think the other way around, it's also been interesting to hear what's happening in different countries, on different topics, we have our online meetings, so kind of hearing what's happening on that on for example, we had dairy and meat waste recently, which was interesting and I think also one of the yeah, just also realising what's out there already there is for example in the USA lot of work done on employee engagement, which is something that we are also kind of hearing around us and seeing that that's really kind of a interesting step that we can work on more as well to help the businesses in our country also, yeah, engage their employees more to get them on board with decreasing waste. So I think that's really nice also then knowing who's behind that information and being able to connect with them in a more in an easier way to kind of really figure out what worked for them, what didn't cause usually you see kind of the successes, but you don't really know what's behind and all the things they trialled which didn't work. So I think that's really, the key thing that helps when you have a Network like this is that you can come in contact with colleagues, so to say and really learn about the kind of trial and error that they had before they were able to set up a website with all the beautiful resources and everything. Because I think if anything, we can learn almost even more from that than from just the successes.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Yeah, agreed. And and you've also demonstrated that there is value in that that pre competitive sharing even through your EU member network that you've set up as well, which I know we're trying to see if we can connect the dots and bring everybody together, if it's possible or relevant depending on the topics that we're exploring. Which is great. Great that they exist and that we want to continue growing our Network so that I think as you said like the goal is to make sure that we're not duplicating our efforts, especially if there are learnings to be had where we don't want to make the same mistakes over and over again. Yeah. So again, gratitude for those networks and the championing of them that exists both in the EU and and globally too. We've talked a lot about the highlights and the successes of

the work that you've been doing, specifically around bread waste. Are there other topics that you're particularly interested in or excited about at the moment in the Netherlands that you're focusing on?

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Well, I mean, for me personally, I think one of the topics that I'm also working on is food-to-food as we call it. So seeing how side streams or surplus food can be, yeah, made into products so that it can still be consumed by people, and I think that's also just a really interesting topic as well. It's quite a difficult one and from the outside it might seem quite simple, but it's quite the, the input is very diverse. And then it's also quite, quite a difficult topic in terms of communication, so I'm really curious to see if we see some initiatives which are now hitting supermarket shelves which are quite successful. But to really kind of see that grow into kind of more standard products is something I'm also quite interested in and hope that that will kick off a bit more in the future.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

So today we've talked a lot about progress and opportunities that are arising in the Netherlands. I'm curious to know from your perspective. Especially when we talked a lot about bread and sandwiches, what do you foresee the the real issue being if we don't take this action, if we don't encourage others to engage with us on food waste reduction activities?

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Bread and all food carries in an environmental footprints and wasting it means wasting land, water and energy. And if nothing changes, we also risk losing the affordability and the accessibility of the daily bread based lunch culture that we have and everyone relies on here. And waste runs throughout the entire chain, but the costs are currently just absorbed into the price, which makes it a silent burden that we all pay, but that disproportionately effects those with a smaller budget.

Our sandwich culture is also, I think a good example of what we're like as the culture, it's very non hierarchical. So if you're at a company I used to work at a big dairy company before and yeah, you'll really see the CEO to the young employees, to everyone in between, all eating their sandwich with peanut butter and cheese and sprinkles with or whatever, not together. Not together. Different sandwiches. But I think if we're, yeah, if we don't start tackling these issues better, we'll also see that we'll lose kind of that kind of equal lunch culture that we have in the Netherlands, where you'll kind of start to see that division more and more in the workplace, but also at school, where yeah, I think that's quite a unique

thing about the Netherlands is that one, we have a cold lunch. And two, we usually bring it from home.

But everyone kind of almost always brings pretty much the same lunch. So I think that's quite a special thing to have. And I think that's something that we would lose if we don't. Yeah, figure out how to deal with this food waste crisis because in the end, we're paying for this waste in our supply chain, we've kind of accepted it without realising it. But of course if we, yeah, decrease this waste, we can also decrease the cost price and hopefully kind of buffer out all the crises that we're seeing across the world.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Yeah, I think that's a really good point and maintaining that equity in our food consumption in a culture like that in the Netherlands can really be felt if it doesn't continue.

I would really be interested to hear a bit more about you and what motivates you to do this work every day, because behind all of this is there is a lot of challenges and whilst it sounds like you have a lot of support and you're engaging in some very positive and driven people across the industry in the Netherlands, it can also be on some days difficult to get that engagement and that drive from all the stakeholders that we feel that we need to be engaging with. So are you able to share with us what it is that motivates you to keep going and to keep working in this space?

**Jip Joraaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

So for me, I think I'd I really want to do something in my work where I feel that I'm contributing to something positive, particularly on the sustainability front. And I think, like I said before, you have food waste. To me, it's a very common sense topic to be working on. What I also really like.

About it is how tangible it is. So if I'm speaking with friends or family, they really understand what food waste is, why it's well, they don't always understand why it's important, but I think also from a Dutch perspective, we tend to be quite frugal. We want to kind of, yeah, we're not in general or historically, we're not a very wasteful bunch, so I always have people then telling me how they'd never waste anything, which from my work now I know that statistically, that's probably not true. But then also they kind of will sometimes look at things from a different perspective. And I think that connection is something that I really like that. Yeah, I think food is such a interesting topic. It's so yeah, it's really a daily moment that you can get to make choices, to make sustainable choices. Yeah. And I think that's what I really like about it.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

And long may I continue, I hope that obviously we all hope that we'll solve these issues in the next few years, but I hope that there's always for that passion and that excitement to connect with other people on this and that there'll be opportunities for you to continue supporting the industry to do better, whether it's reproducing food waste or something that needs fixing because there will always be something. I'm sure they'll need fixing. Let's imagine in an ideal world that we do fix the food system, whatever that looks like. Whatever fixing means to you. What do you think that would do for you, for your environment, for the people around you and the future of bread and sandwiches in the Netherlands.

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Yeah. So I think if we look at that for me, it would be really people start valuing their food more. So yeah, I think then also lead bread, less bread would be wasted. The money also would circulate fairly through the chain instead of going into the bin. We would pay a more honest price for what we eat and yeah, then I think also consequently the the planet wouldn't carry the cost of our waste anymore. Yeah, I think it makes it for a more, a more stable and resilient food system as well. If we don't have all this waste.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

Yeah, I think you're right in terms of that, our planet is really bearing the the cost of our decisions that we're making and that there are people within that system as well that are being deeply impacted both in our own countries in the Netherlands and in the UK, but also more globally across the network that we're engaging with, which we have discussed with some of the other Pacts as well. So I really appreciate that message.

So we talked about culture, we talked about your community and the environmental impact of food waste and why we're working in this space. And also thank you for sharing what's personally motivating you to do the work that you're doing in the Netherlands. And also the benefits of being part of an initiative like yours and also being part of the Food Pact Network. So before we wrap up in in 10 seconds or less, if you're able to, what is the most urgent message that you would like to make sure that people understand when it comes to why we need to fix our food system.

**Jip Jordaan, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Yes, I really think it's a great opportunity. So I think the threat is very clear. We're overburdening our planet. But food is really the most tangible and daily way you can make that change. So I think a food waste free world is possible and anyone and everyone can be a part of it.

**Talya Shalev, WRAP:**

I like that very much. So we started talking about the lunch box sandwich, which is a daily staple for you and also for me personally, and hearing your story and how you take action and the work that you're doing to really specifically target the waste that's arising from that dish and everything it represents for you as an individual, but also in your community and how we can protect that hopefully and make sure that we don't continue to perpetuate the issues that we're seeing arising in our communities

So I just wanted to say thank you for sharing all of that. It's been incredibly insightful. I've learned a lot about bread consumption, but also unfortunately, how much bread is being wasted or bread and pastries and other bakery products. I'm feeling motivated and inspired by the amount of engagement that you are seeing through your initiative and the stakeholders are engaged already. So thank you for sharing that today. And again thank you for your time. We really appreciate it.

**Jip Jordaen, Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling**

Yeah. Thank you so much.