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SPEAKER_01:
These days, increasingly, companies are publishing sustainability goals.

SPEAKER_01:
One organisation declares an aim to become carbon neutral or lower greenhouse gases, another to source sustainable raw materials and reduce their use of harmful ones.

SPEAKER_01:
But the question remains, how exactly do you measure all of this?

SPEAKER_01:
How can you really know you're making the most sustainable choices possible?

SPEAKER_01:
Hi, I'm Matt Eastland.

SPEAKER_01:
And I'm Lucy Wallace.

SPEAKER_01:
And welcome to the Food Fight podcast from EIT Food, exploring the greatest challenges facing the food system and the innovations and entrepreneurs looking to solve them.

SPEAKER_02:
When it comes to food, we talk about sourcing sustainable products a lot.

SPEAKER_02:
We're always looking for environmentally friendly alternatives and ways to reduce waste and promote healthy ecosystems.

SPEAKER_02:
But we don't often talk about how you determine if a product is sustainable and what exactly that research looks like.

SPEAKER_01:
And so today we are very happy to welcome Ethan Solovyev, the Chief Innovation Officer at HowGood, a research company with the world's largest database on food product sustainability, who's going to help us dig deeper into this critical area of the food system.

SPEAKER_01:
Hi, Ethan.

SPEAKER_01:
Hi, great to be here.

SPEAKER_01:

It's great to have you on the show.

SPEAKER_01:
So Ethan, you know, before we kind of get into your company, your technology and what you do, I'd just like to give our listeners a bit of context on the importance of this area.

SPEAKER_01:
So without access to Howgood's amazingly impressive database on 33,000 ingredients, chemicals and other materials,

SPEAKER_01:
How exactly does a company go about determining the sustainability of a certain product and is that even kind of possible or up until now is that possible?

SPEAKER_00:
Definitely possible but if you don't have a good data source and partner it's hard.

SPEAKER_00:
When we first started interviewing some of the largest food companies in the world, their product formulators, their sourcing teams and we asked them well

SPEAKER_00:
how do you get sustainability information about, you know, that raw material or about that product?

SPEAKER_00:
And they said, well, usually we Google it.

SPEAKER_00:
And so in many cases, the data that they're getting and the amount of time they're taking to get basic sustainability information is well beyond what it needs to be.

SPEAKER_00:
So it's a huge actual cost and confusion.

SPEAKER_00:
And now it's becoming more of a liability with the regulations coming in around what you can and can't say about your products.

SPEAKER_00:
As we have regulations that are requiring reporting on the impact for carbon and nature and human rights, if you don't have an authoritative, trusted data source that can meet the detailed needs of your company, there's some significant risks.

SPEAKER_02:
So you've mentioned sort of the reporting requirements of some of this, but why do you feel it's especially important for our food system to understand the environmental impacts of every ingredient

or product sold?

SPEAKER_00:
Look, I'm a farmer on a small scale in upstate New York in the United States.

SPEAKER_00:
We produce apples and grass-fed sheep and lamb and shiitake mushrooms,

SPEAKER_00:
And so I'm intimately connected to, you know, what it means to produce food and also the impacts that the choice that a food company of either small or large can have on individual farmers around the world.

SPEAKER_00:
And so understanding the impacts, the carbon, the water, the biodiversity, the labor risk, the animal welfare, the processing, understanding all of that and having it at your fingertips is incredibly important, not just for the billions of people that it might be touching around the world,

SPEAKER_00:
But also, if you want to innovate and lead in today's market, you can't just treat sustainability as like a second tier, maybe I'll think about it after flavor and price.

SPEAKER_00:
That doesn't work anymore.

SPEAKER_00:
The rising generations, the Gen Z's, even millennials, they care about the impact of food.

SPEAKER_00:
They want to know about it.

SPEAKER_00:
90% of consumers say they want to know more about it and they want the companies that they buy from to give them more information about it.

SPEAKER_00:
If you're going to innovate, if you're going to stay future fit, if you're going to maintain or grow your market share, this is now table stakes to understand the carbon footprint of your product, the impact it has on the natural world, and the impact it has on human rights and individual human beings around the world.

SPEAKER_01:
Is this kind of access to this data becoming more universal?

SPEAKER_01:

You say it's table stakes, but are you starting to see that more and more companies are desperate for this kind of information?

SPEAKER_01:
I mean, how much access do they actually have?

SPEAKER_00:
So access is still limited.

SPEAKER_00:
There are certain free available data sources that are out there, but they're often really aggregated.

SPEAKER_00:
So, you know, they might have a single number for a carbon footprint for milk or for wheat.

SPEAKER_00:
That's for the whole world.

SPEAKER_00:
And the reality is that it can vary up to 50x, not 50%, but 50x the carbon footprint of an individual, you know, cup of milk or, you know, bread made of wheat, depending on where it's coming from, what the agricultural practices were, what the manufacturing practices were, where did it travel.

SPEAKER_00:
And so there is some data freely and widely available out there.

SPEAKER_00:
but it's not detailed and granular enough to really make good decisions, especially if you're aiming for positive impact.

SPEAKER_01:
And I guess this is where how good comes in, right?

SPEAKER_01:
So if we then move on to talking about the technology that you've obviously created, so can you explain to our listeners what exactly is it that how good does?

SPEAKER_00:
How good is the world's largest product and ingredient sustainability database?

SPEAKER_00:
We pull from over 600 different data sources, 33,000 different ingredients, chemicals, and materials.

SPEAKER_00:
We have hundreds of metrics and attributes, carbon, water, biodiversity, economic livelihoods.

SPEAKER_00:
and we pull it all together into one massive, structured, harmonized database.

SPEAKER_00:
So all the other databases that are out there, we pull them into one spot so you don't have to go Googling or looking around for them.

SPEAKER_00:
We also make a tool, our main offering is a platform that essentially allows any product formulator or any procurement manager or any marketing manager or any executive or any sustainability team member to understand

SPEAKER_00:
at the click of a button within 15 seconds, what is the impact of this yogurt?

SPEAKER_00:
What is the impact of this chocolate bar?

SPEAKER_00:
What is the impact of sourcing this palm oil for my chocolate bar?

SPEAKER_00:
What is the impact of sourcing this milk for my yogurt?

SPEAKER_00:
And then how do I improve it?

SPEAKER_00:
If I want to make a change, if I want to decarbonize my food product that's going to market, do I shift the cocoa sourcing from Ghana to Ecuador?

SPEAKER_00:
Do I go to regenerative agriculture for my milk?

SPEAKER_00:
And should that be from France or should it be from Turkey?

SPEAKER_00:
What are all the choices I have in front of them?

SPEAKER_00:
And then can I, at the click of a button, optimize my product to massively decarbonize?

SPEAKER_00:
I'll just give one example of sort of an output that comes out of our software.

SPEAKER_00:
We had one company that I can't name that took a single one of its

products and reformulated it using our tool and it dropped the carbon footprint of that one product by 33%.

SPEAKER_00:
Still tasted great, everyone was still excited about it, but the footprint dropped 33% within a couple hours in the tool.

SPEAKER_00:
Then they looked at what would the impact be if we rolled out all these changes for this one product?

SPEAKER_00:
How would that affect our, this is a major global food company, how would it affect our total carbon footprint?

SPEAKER_00:
And it turns out that changing that one product, not the hundreds of products they have, but that one product could have dropped the footprint of their scope three by 10% overall.

SPEAKER_00:
So that's one product, a few hours of work, 33% on the product, 10% total reduction in carbon footprint.

SPEAKER_00:
Just imagine if every food company in the world did that.

SPEAKER_00:
And that's the manufacturers.

SPEAKER_00:
Then imagine if the retailers took this same data, the grocers who are buying these products, and they optimize their selection for the lower carbon, low impact on biodiversity, higher positive impact on human rights, and they change their selection of what was even being offered to the top performers.

SPEAKER_00:
Now we have a multiplying effect through the food system that could drive change incredibly quickly, which is what we need right now.

SPEAKER_01:
Wow, my mind is blown.

SPEAKER_01:
Okay.

SPEAKER_01:
Lots of questions to follow on that.

SPEAKER_02:
I think but first sort of going back to you've mentioned a couple of the metrics that you measure within that obviously carbon being one of them.

SPEAKER_02:
What do you use to measure?

SPEAKER_02:
What the criteria do you use to measure sustainability?

SPEAKER_00:
Howgood has eight core metrics in its platform, and we're constantly building and adding new ones.

SPEAKER_00:
So unlike traditional lifecycle assessments, which are really great, and Howgood loves lifecycle assessment science, and we rely on peer-reviewed scientific literature, as well as primary data for most of our data sources, but lifecycle assessments is really good at carbon.

SPEAKER_00:
And it's pretty good at water and resources, but it doesn't get the full holistic picture of sustainability.

SPEAKER_00:
So, Howgood looks at the environmental impact, which is carbon, water, soil health, biodiversity, deforestation.

SPEAKER_00:
Then we'll look at the human element.

SPEAKER_00:
So what is the labor risk and the human rights risk?

SPEAKER_00:
What are the economic livelihoods associated with the product or ingredient or material and the manufacturer of it?

SPEAKER_00:
We'll look at animal welfare in terms of access to housing and type of feed and just what its life is like.

SPEAKER_00:
And then we'll also add in

SPEAKER_00:
processing information, how highly processed is the food, how much energy was used to do it, and combining all of those by adding in biodiversity and human rights and animal welfare with carbon, now you get a holistic picture of sustainability and can really judge, you ask that question early on, you know, can you really tell if a product is sustainable?

SPEAKER_00:
Well, I don't actually like the term sustainable.

SPEAKER_00:
And so we can break that down in a minute.

SPEAKER_00:
But you can track how far a product has gone towards sustainability or even hopefully beyond sustainability in a quantitative measured way using that set of metrics that I just laid out.

SPEAKER_01:
And Ethan, can I ask, as Lucy and I were talking at this before the show, so you've obviously boiled this down to these eight key metrics, but how have you kind of made, because you could have put like probably thousands of different metrics in here if you wanted to.

SPEAKER_01:
So how have you kind of been able to say, right, it's these eight, which really are the things that matter?

SPEAKER_00:
Part of it is looking to international standards to see what the world and what the top scientists in the world consider important.

SPEAKER_00:
And so Howgood's methodology is aligned with many of the international best practice methodologies in this realm.

SPEAKER_00:
It's aligned with ISO around carbon.

SPEAKER_00:
It's aligned with the European product environmental footprint legislation, covers some of the key categories in that.

SPEAKER_00:
So we're basically looking, what does science think we're also most, I think,

SPEAKER_00:
excited about aligning with planetary boundaries and the planetary boundaries framework and so our metrics feed directly into that.

SPEAKER_00:
We even go a bit beyond it because planetary boundaries again is just environmental and we really think that having an understanding of other beings, both human and animal, is really key in here.

SPEAKER_00:
So we chose them in order to have a holistic look and to align with international standards that everyone from the UN to individual countries to individual human beings care about and that's I think maybe the last bit I'll add.

SPEAKER_00:

When HowGood started this journey, we were primarily focused in grocery retail and helping individual eaters, individual shoppers make better choices.

SPEAKER_00:
You know, when they're walking, I have a six-year-old daughter and a one-year-old daughter, when I'm, you know, going through the grocery store and I've got to make a decision and one of them's screaming for something and one of them's running out the door and I'm going to say, which peanut butter do I choose?

SPEAKER_00:
Right?

SPEAKER_00:
How do I help people make the decision?

SPEAKER_00:
So how good started there?

SPEAKER_00:
How good started with what information can we give that will actually help people make better decisions?

SPEAKER_00:
And so all of our information, yes, we've got loads and loads of data, but all of that needs to be distilled down to something that works, that helps people choose a better product for them, for their family and for the world.

SPEAKER_00:
And so ultimately I would say, you know, why did we choose those?

SPEAKER_00:
Because those are the ones that resonate with people.

SPEAKER_00:
because those are the ones that people care about.

SPEAKER_00:
And we continue to see this demonstrated.

SPEAKER_00:
Actually, we just put out a press release from some work we've done in the UK at a small store called Cabana's.

SPEAKER_00:
It's in London, Belsize Park in London, where we put some of our labels.

SPEAKER_00:
We didn't put like detailed carbon and water footprints and all the geeky details, but we just put simple

SPEAKER_00:
climate friendly or water smart.

SPEAKER_00:
These very simple labels that draw on all the data but make it human digestible.

SPEAKER_00:
And the results, I mean we've seen them over and over again so we weren't surprised, but they were excellent.

SPEAKER_00:
The products that have an attribute that say climate friendly jumped you know 25 to 35 percent in sales.

SPEAKER_00:
The ones that said fair labor on them jumped 45 percent in sales.

SPEAKER_00:
So when you give people information at the point where they're making a decision, they will make a decision for a more sustainable and even perhaps a more regenerative future.

SPEAKER_01:
Oh, God, I'm going to geek out on all this.

SPEAKER_01:
If you gave me access to this database, I would just never go off it.

SPEAKER_01:
I'm always trying.

SPEAKER_01:
Every time I go to supermarkets or any kind of sort of shop, I'm always trying to say, well, if you've got like three or four products which are basically the same, which one should I be choosing?

SPEAKER_01:
And then, you know, I will go through all the labels and I will try to make an informed choice.

SPEAKER_01:
But it would be so much easier if someone could do that for us.

SPEAKER_01:
So that's brilliant that that's what you're doing.

SPEAKER_01:
So, yeah, thank you for that.

SPEAKER_02:
And I just want to rewind slightly to something you said a few

minutes ago around sustainability and your issue with the word sustainability.

SPEAKER_02:
And I think I know the answer to this because obviously we've talked about this before, Ethan, in quite some depth.

SPEAKER_02:
But what would you use instead of sustainability?

SPEAKER_02:
What's the, or sustainable, what do you think is more useful?

SPEAKER_00:
Look, the best way to think about this is to imagine a spectrum like a long line with arrows on either side and sort of think about what's it what's it either end of the spectrum and at one end of the spectrum is what you could call degenerative or extractive.

SPEAKER_00:
And this is most of the current global food system and business system for that matter, but we're sticking with food here today.

SPEAKER_00:
So degenerate, it extracts value from people, from the soil, from places, it degrades the ecosystem, and that's just how agriculture has been for at least the last hundred years or so.

SPEAKER_00:
if you move away from that degenerative end and sort of up the spectrum you think well what's what's at the far other end well as you go up the spectrum at some point you're doing less harm right it's lower water usage it's less impact it's lower carbon footprint i've reduced the amount of plastic i'm using but it's still a plastic bottle right i'm doing less harm and at some point i get to the middle like a net zero right there's there's like no impact or low impact that is the point of sustainability right there right in the middle

SPEAKER_00:
And that's good.

SPEAKER_00:
I'm not saying we shouldn't have it.

SPEAKER_00:
Like it'd be lovely to get there.

SPEAKER_00:
But if we aim for sustainable, this is like Zen and the art of archery, right?

SPEAKER_00:
If you aim for a point on the target, you'll either miss it or maybe

you'll get close, but not quite there.

SPEAKER_00:
So we don't aim for sustainability.

SPEAKER_00:
You have to go past sustainability.

SPEAKER_00:
And so the other end of this spectrum is regenerative.

SPEAKER_00:
 is where you're adding life back into the soil.

SPEAKER_00:
You're sequestering more carbon and greenhouse gases than you emit.

SPEAKER_00:
You're enhancing that.

SPEAKER_00:
You're not just stopping deforestation, which is important.

SPEAKER_00:
We've got to stop deforestation in the Amazon and everywhere.

SPEAKER_00:
That's very important.

SPEAKER_00:
But that's not enough.

SPEAKER_00:
We should be

SPEAKER_00:
 replanting.

SPEAKER_00:
We should be regenerating the Amazon and every rainforest around the world, right?

SPEAKER_00:
So you can't just stop at do no harm.

SPEAKER_00:
We have to, because there's so much damage already been done, we have to heal.

SPEAKER_00:
We have to regenerate.

SPEAKER_00:
We have to figure out how do you lift up human beings and not just

get them to a minimum wage in the middle somewhere.

SPEAKER_00:
So that's how I think about it.

SPEAKER_00:
And the goal, what you're aiming for then, the regenerative goal, is if you take that Zen and the Art of Archery metaphor,

SPEAKER_00:
I'm no longer aiming at the target, I'm aiming 300 yards through the target and to a point beyond that.

SPEAKER_00:
And then I'm much more likely to hit right through the bullseye, right through sustainability on my way to regeneration.

SPEAKER_01:
Yeah, I absolutely love that.

SPEAKER_01:
And I've always thought, you know, sustainability is like this highest goal, this highest thing that we're aiming for.

SPEAKER_01:
But you're absolutely right.

SPEAKER_01:
If you aim way beyond that into something which regenerates, then you're far more likely to actually get to the point of being super sustainable and hopefully go much further.

SPEAKER_01:
But yeah, I totally see what you mean.

SPEAKER_01:
If you aim for something, then you're already sort of setting a ceiling, right?

SPEAKER_01:
Exactly.

SPEAKER_00:
And it's also like sustainable, I don't know, it's not that sexy.

SPEAKER_00:
Look, if you get to your deathbed, and somebody says like, okay, so what, you know, what impact did you have in this life?

SPEAKER_00:
And you're like, about net zero.

SPEAKER_00:
Just sustained.

SPEAKER_01:
Yeah.

SPEAKER_01:
Right.

SPEAKER_01:
I've sort of come out, come out equal.

SPEAKER_00:
That's no good.

SPEAKER_00:
Nobody wants that.

SPEAKER_00:
 And that's why regeneration is the fastest growing agriculture and environmental movement on the planet.

SPEAKER_00:
Because nobody wants to just sustain.

SPEAKER_00:
Nobody wants to like just do 20% less bad.

SPEAKER_00:
People intuitively, humanly want to give back.

SPEAKER_00:
We want to heal and support and regenerate.

SPEAKER_00:
We want the world to be better when we leave.

SPEAKER_00:
 than when we arrived.

SPEAKER_00:
We want to heal the traumas and pains of the past so that we have more potential for our children and our children's children going forward.

SPEAKER_00:
And so regeneration taps into that.

SPEAKER_00:
It's a very human, it's a very natural living systems thing.

SPEAKER_00:
But for

SPEAKER_00:
 For the most part, we aren't doing it in the food system.

SPEAKER_00:
And that's why I think this conversation is so important.

SPEAKER_00:
I think the action that both large and small food companies are taking is important.

SPEAKER_00:
I think that's why the data has to be there to back it up.

SPEAKER_00:
But we really have to head in this direction urgently because the Mediterranean is boiling.

SPEAKER_00:
And right, there's more drought and more hurricanes and people's lives are at risk.

SPEAKER_00:
There are island nations that are going underwater.

SPEAKER_00:
So this isn't like a wait for regulation or wait for consumers wanting it or wait till it turns a little more profit.

SPEAKER_00:
This is like, we all have to be on this now.

SPEAKER_00:
This is urgent.

SPEAKER_00:
Yeah.

SPEAKER_02:
Regeneration is our legacy, isn't it?

SPEAKER_02:
That's what's going to be our legacy.

SPEAKER_02:
If we're going to leave something, it needs to be regenerative.

SPEAKER_02:
But just back then on that, you were talking about labels and the consumer choice part of this, but actually when we're looking at data and we're looking at data along the value chain,

SPEAKER_02:
then that's obviously very helpful for decision making along the value chain as well and for optimisation.

SPEAKER_02:

So do you see, you said where you started was looking at that consumer choice piece.

SPEAKER_02:
Has that then changed over time?

SPEAKER_00:
Yeah, I mean, so

SPEAKER_00:
When we started with retail, a retailer would come to us and say, I've got 20,000 products that I sell in my store.

SPEAKER_00:
Or big ones would say, I have 200,000 SKUs that I'm selling in my store.

SPEAKER_00:
Can you please tell me which are the top 5% of these, or the top 15%, or the top 25%?

SPEAKER_00:
Because that's how Good's eco-label rating system works.

SPEAKER_00:
We don't call out bad.

SPEAKER_00:
I actually think it's a mistake that some other programs make, is they say,

SPEAKER_00:
this is a terrible food, you know, don't eat this cookie, this chocolate chip cookie or don't eat.

SPEAKER_00:
That doesn't work.

SPEAKER_00:
People don't like being told what's bad, but they do like seeing what's good and having a scarce resource of like, oh, there's a best rated product.

SPEAKER_00:
I'm going to grab that.

SPEAKER_00:
That's going to be delicious.

SPEAKER_00:
So we had to figure out quickly how do you assess two hundred thousand products and find the top five to twenty five percent in order to highlight those so that people can make the right decisions.

SPEAKER_00:
After doing that for a number of years, we gathered this immense amount of data, 2 million products that we have checked out in our database already.

SPEAKER_00:
And then we began going upstream.

SPEAKER_00:
So we would go to the companies, we would go to the farms directly, and we would start gathering information at each step of the journey.

SPEAKER_00:
And there's some really key ones to look at that are a little surprising.

SPEAKER_00:
For example, transportation is usually not the largest impact of any food, nor is packaging.

SPEAKER_00:
Despite, you know, the tangible sensation we have when we have a plastic wrapper or we've got a, you know, a glass bottle and we don't, we kind of feel bad about it because I've finished my beverage and now I have to, what am I going to throw it in the trash?

SPEAKER_00:
What am I going to do?

SPEAKER_00:
Despite the feeling of that,

SPEAKER_00:
the largest impact on carbon, on biodiversity, on human rights, is not in the transportation and it's not in the packaging.

SPEAKER_00:
It's in the ingredients, it's in the raw materials, it's in the sugar, it's in the palm oil, it's in the beef, it's in the milk, it's in the specific, it's in the soy, for goodness sake, right?

SPEAKER_00:
It's where that is grown and how it is grown, that's where the impact is.

SPEAKER_00:
So Howgood now tracks data in what we would call a full cradle to grave life cycle.

SPEAKER_00:
So we can see exactly what happens even where the seed is coming

from or the fertilizer is coming from before it gets to the farmer's field.

SPEAKER_00:
We're tracking the impacts there and then every step, every transportation leg, every processing moment, every bit of packaging, we see the entire system so that we can pinpoint

SPEAKER_00:
Where should you go to make change?

SPEAKER_00:
And over and over and over again, in food, that comes at the source of the raw agricultural good or aquacultural good, I should also note.

SPEAKER_00:
That's where the impact is, and that's where to focus for the biggest shift.

SPEAKER_01:
And do you have, I mean, you mentioned an example earlier, and of course, please don't, you know, feel free not to name any names, but do you have any really interesting or fascinating examples of companies who've been using this data in this database and have really radically changed their approach?

SPEAKER_01:
Because I guess, you know, if you can get some, for example, some really big companies to change what they're doing, then, you know, you're going to be halfway there, right?

SPEAKER_01:
So any great examples that you have that you can share?

SPEAKER_00:
Well, I can share that HowGood works with six of the 10 largest food companies in the world, food manufacturers, and some of them have been quite public about their partnership with us.

SPEAKER_00:
Danone is an amazing company doing really incredible work.

SPEAKER_00:
We also work with General Mills.

SPEAKER_00:
We also work with Kraft Heinz.

SPEAKER_00:
So these are some of the scale of companies that are using the data from our platform to improve their decision making.

SPEAKER_00:

I think for a tangible example, I'd rather point to some of the small innovators that are really doing amazing work.

SPEAKER_00:
So we can look at companies like Alter Eco, which is a chocolate company that makes just the most amazing, delicious chocolate from regenerative agroforestry grown cacao in deep relationship with their farmers.

SPEAKER_00:
And that's an amazing example of the positive good that can be done.

SPEAKER_00:
There's another company called White Leaf Provisions that's doing these organic, biodynamic baby foods and other products.

SPEAKER_00:
And their depth of relationship with their suppliers and how they're quantifying the data and telling the story is just incredible.

SPEAKER_00:
And I think, in a way, we need to look to disruptors to change the food system, because they're the ones that consumers pick up and run with.

SPEAKER_00:
And that puts the pressure on some of the bigger companies

SPEAKER_00:
You know, here's one other just small example that you can check out that is a bigger company.

SPEAKER_00:
And that's Chipotle, which is a restaurant.

SPEAKER_00:
And we're talking about, you know, regenerative food systems and data here.

SPEAKER_00:
So restaurants and food servers are equally as important as the big food companies in terms of packaged goods.

SPEAKER_00:
And so Chipotle is an excellent and very public partner of ours.

SPEAKER_00:
And they did something called the real food print.

SPEAKER_00:
You can just check it out.

SPEAKER_00:

It's like just search Chipotle real food print.

SPEAKER_00:
You'll get the landing page.

SPEAKER_00:
It's very public.

SPEAKER_00:
They calculate for every single meal you purchase, they'll calculate the grams of carbon saved that are not going into the atmosphere, the milligrams of antibiotics that are not being used because of their sourcing, the square feet of soil health and organic land that you have supported by purchasing a

SPEAKER_00:
 a burrito bowl, you know, or something from Chipotle.

SPEAKER_00:
And that is not only calculated, you can see it on the site, but it prints it on every single digital receipt that they do.

SPEAKER_00:
And so, and then if you have a loyalty, you know, program with Chipotle, it adds it up for you over the year.

SPEAKER_00:
So you can see how much good you're doing by going with their excellent sourcing practices, which continue to evolve.

SPEAKER_01:
 And are you seeing that, I mean, I don't know if you've got any results on that, but are you seeing Chipotle customers are making more informed choices as a result of that labeling?

SPEAKER_00:
It's right on the edge of data that I can't share, but I think you should ask.

SPEAKER_00:
Here's what I can say.

SPEAKER_00:
Here's what I can say.

SPEAKER_00:
Chipotle continues the program after four years.

SPEAKER_01:
And so, you know, it's definitely having an effect.

SPEAKER_00:
 Everything that we talk about, what we're talking about here is regenerative and sustainable, all the things we want to be heading

towards.

SPEAKER_00:
There is this thing that runs the world right now that's called capitalism.

SPEAKER_00:
And people don't actually make decisions in capitalism that don't have some economic financial benefit.

SPEAKER_00:
So the testament of all the companies that I mentioned that we do work with and the many more we're adding each year says there is something here that's not just do-gooders wanting to assuage their guilt by having something a little more green.

SPEAKER_00:
Now there is business reasoning for heading towards regeneration, and those companies that aren't doing it are going to be left out, caught up, and not really be able to succeed in the business world going forward.

SPEAKER_02:
So that's, I mean, that's a really interesting point.

SPEAKER_02:
And obviously, something that's spoken a lot about in terms of regeneration is actually what are the economic, is regeneration economically viable, etc.

SPEAKER_02:
But would there be a case for adding some of that economic data into the analysis that you do into the different measurements that you take to show what the economic impact is?

SPEAKER_02:
So not just on the producers, but actually, you know, on the on the product as well?

SPEAKER_00:
Yes, so you can see economic data inside of HowGoods platform.

SPEAKER_00:
So you can see the sales of a given product that you're manufacturing.

SPEAKER_00:
You can see the cost of various goods that you're purchasing.

SPEAKER_00:
And so that economic figuring is worked into our system.

SPEAKER_00:
But the reality is that every company already has complex,

detailed, built-out economic reasoning that they're already making decisions with.

SPEAKER_00:
And so part of what we're doing is adding the data that they just didn't have access to before, and then they can incorporate it into financial decision-making, all the way up to the CFO level.

SPEAKER_00:
So yes, and to some extent, we don't need to help people out with the

SPEAKER_00:
 the money side of things, they already get how to do that.

SPEAKER_00:
What they're missing is the data to make a more holistic decision.

SPEAKER_00:
And that's exactly what we provide.

SPEAKER_01:
Awesome.

SPEAKER_01:
And just I mean, I'm a bit obsessed with the sort of trends and you must be sitting on such a wealth of data in terms of which you can then extrapolate trends from.

SPEAKER_01:
So you'd mentioned earlier that the one thing that you found, which is quite surprising, is it's more it's not about transport.

SPEAKER_01:
It's not about packaging.

SPEAKER_01:
It's actually about the ingredients.

SPEAKER_01:
 But are there any more well-known kind of products that, you know, the average Joe in the street would be able to recognise that people would be surprised about how sustainable or unsustainable that common product is?

SPEAKER_01:
Is there any kind of that you can draw on?

SPEAKER_01:
It's like, oh, actually, you think that's sustainable.

SPEAKER_01:
It's not as sustainable as you think.

SPEAKER_00:
I'm not going to name specific brands here, but there's a movement that I think is worth taking a good scientific critical look at.

SPEAKER_00:
And I'll just say that I ate vegetarian and vegan for a large part of my life.

SPEAKER_00:
I eat a plant forward diet that is all based around plants.

SPEAKER_00:
I eat a lot of beans because we're a supporter of the beans is how campaign, which is an amazing thing you should all check out as well.

SPEAKER_00:
And the current push towards highly processed plant-based foods has some interesting and maybe hidden impacts inside of it that I think by and large people have noticed the level of processing, the provenance of some of the ingredients, and the sort of concerns about where they're coming from and how they're grown.

SPEAKER_00:
We're seeing some really interesting data right now around some basic plant-based crops, things like oats and buckwheat in parts of the world that usually you wouldn't think of as having deforestation.

SPEAKER_00:
But there actually is significant amounts of deforestation happening.

SPEAKER_00:
It's not just in the Amazon.

SPEAKER_00:
As agriculture expands to produce more of these sort of grains and legumes, we're seeing deforestation show up in surprising places like in Canada surrounding the production of those.

SPEAKER_00:
Also, the whole thing around the lab-grown meat and the cell culture and the precision fermentation, there is potential in it.

SPEAKER_00:
However, the current production, I think, is in some cases having more of an impact than the animal-based counterparts of it.

SPEAKER_00:
and that has to do with the amount of raw materials, you know, of glucose syrup that's needed to produce, you know, a single kilogram of that finished plant-based animal-like protein.

SPEAKER_00:
So there's some real careful things to just watch, like what is the actual impact as opposed to what the potential could impact be.

SPEAKER_00:
I think there's some interesting things to be careful of in there.

SPEAKER_00:
I think there's some other things just on the plus side, like,

SPEAKER_00:
 a lot of beverages do not have a really huge terrible impact even like

SPEAKER_00:
 sugary waters, for better or worse, they're just like the products are mostly made of water.

SPEAKER_00:
Now they have significant health concerns, which is a whole other realm when we get into nutrition, and nutrient density, that how good also has in its platform, that's important.

SPEAKER_00:
But in terms of raw sustainability impact, anything that is mostly water is going to have a lower impact overall.

SPEAKER_00:
So that's sort of nice and surprising in some ways.

SPEAKER_01:
 Ethan, can we just talk a bit about your vision for the future?

SPEAKER_01:
So how good, where are you going?

SPEAKER_01:
You're obviously doing amazing work already, but what would be your vision for the future?

SPEAKER_01:
If you can paint us a picture of where you want to go in the next five years, for example.

SPEAKER_00:
 Okay, well, we'll start in food.

SPEAKER_00:
But then before that, before the end of that five years, we're going to be beyond food.

SPEAKER_00:
So but within food, one thing that how good is doing is gathering supplier specific farm specific data.

SPEAKER_00:
So we already have, you know,

SPEAKER_00:
hundreds of thousands of different individual ingredients.

SPEAKER_00:
If you look at all the locations, and all the different farms that they could come from.

SPEAKER_00:
Now we're starting to gather from some of the larger suppliers in the world, because they're tracking the data.

SPEAKER_00:
And in some cases, they haven't been sharing it downstream to the food manufacturers to the retailers who want to see it.

SPEAKER_00:
So in the next five years, how good is that the center of this transformation in transparency, in visibility of where food comes from and what the impacts it has along the way.

SPEAKER_00:
As I mentioned before, the new EU deforestation regulation is going to push a massive amount of transparency for six

SPEAKER_00:
core commodities, things like palm oil and cocoa and soy and beef, but also they're going to require a level of traceability that HowGood is going to support in our platform and through our partners that you can see down to the individual farm where every single lot of goods is coming from.

SPEAKER_00:
Once that's done for six commodities,

SPEAKER_00:
it'll be easy and hopefully it'll happen that the push goes to all commodities.

SPEAKER_00:
So it won't just be those six with big impact, it'll be across everything.

SPEAKER_00:
So there is a massive shift coming in terms of what you can see and therefore the better decisions that will be made.

SPEAKER_00:
HowGood's in the center of that.

SPEAKER_00:

We're also looking forward in terms of decarbonization pathways.

SPEAKER_00:
So we've just released a new feature in our platform that allows food companies at any part, it could be a restaurant, it could be an ingredient supplier, to chart a decarbonization pathway to say, well, what if I went regenerative agriculture on my milk, and I switched to 100% renewable energy in my factories, and I started doing shorter transportation legs and sourcing more locally over

SPEAKER_00:
And I renovated my formulas, I reformulated my products, like we were talking about before, to drop the carbon footprint.

SPEAKER_00:
If I did each of these steps, how do I get a waterfall, a glide path, a chart that leads me towards my net zero or even my regenerative ambition?

SPEAKER_00:
And that part of our platform also includes detailed impacts from forest, land, and agriculture, according to the new global greenhouse gas protocol, land sector removals guidance, and science-based targets flag guidelines.

SPEAKER_00:
So that's in our platform.

SPEAKER_00:
What's coming up next, again I'm still sticking in food, is the integration of artificial intelligence into all aspects of the design of products, the reformulation of buying portfolios.

SPEAKER_00:
All of that can use what's emerging from large language models and machine learning to quickly optimize and even go beyond optimization to head towards regeneration.

SPEAKER_00:
We already have a number of AI-focused partnerships out in the world with companies like Vernique and Journey Foods, Regen Network, but there will be more coming that enable you to instantaneously, once your data is in the system, optimize for the greatest decarbonization and positive biodiversity impact.

SPEAKER_00:
So that's all coming.

SPEAKER_00:
That's some of the tech that's coming into our platform.

SPEAKER_00:
I think within five years, however,

SPEAKER_00:
HowGood won't just be doing food.

SPEAKER_00:
Food is actually really hard.

SPEAKER_00:
Food is the hardest, right?

SPEAKER_00:
There's 8,000 different food ingredients.

SPEAKER_01:
Well, he's just starting with the hardest thing.

SPEAKER_00:
Yeah.

SPEAKER_00:
No, it is because we figured out things in food, 8,000 ingredients in food.

SPEAKER_00:
When we go to textiles, how many ingredients are in textiles?

SPEAKER_00:
There's only about 30.

SPEAKER_00:
You've got wool and cotton and leather and a number of synthetics, but like it's just it's not as complex in some ways as understanding what happens in food.

SPEAKER_00:
So we'll go to textiles.

SPEAKER_00:
We'll go into health and beauty.

SPEAKER_00:
We actually already do a little bit of health and beauty, but more broadly into health and beauty and cleaning products.

SPEAKER_00:
And then beyond there, there's a lot to do.

SPEAKER_00:
Do we go to hard goods?

SPEAKER_00:
Do we rate cars and electronics?

SPEAKER_00:
Do we go to pharma and show the impact of different pharmaceuticals?

SPEAKER_00:
There's integrations coming up.

SPEAKER_00:
We're talking with some of the major financial systems players so that our data could be ported into the types of terminals where people are making investment decisions.

SPEAKER_00:
 or into a credit card so that you could understand each time you swipe your card what the carbon impact is down to the individual product.

SPEAKER_00:
So that's sort of like expanding our data out into the world is where How Good is Heading and a number of the partnerships that we have are going to really accelerate that in the coming years.

SPEAKER_01:
 So you're not looking to do too much then?

SPEAKER_01:
Just a bit here and there.

SPEAKER_01:
 And Ethan, we asked this question to a lot of our guests.

SPEAKER_01:
It's always interesting to see what the answers come back.

SPEAKER_01:
So we're coming to the end of the show, but we'd like to finish on a bit more of a kind of a lighter, fun question.

SPEAKER_01:
So other than the amazing tech of HowGood and your database, if you had unlimited money, if I could just wave a magic wand and give you as much money as you wanted, maybe that's not what you want, but just assume that you did.

SPEAKER_01:
Sounds great, definitely.

SPEAKER_00:
 Send it my way.

SPEAKER_01:
Okay.

SPEAKER_01:
Well, what technology would you invent right now to help make our food system more sustainable?

SPEAKER_00:
I think there's a couple directions I'd go.

SPEAKER_00:
And the big theme of it is that the food system of the future will be relocalized.

SPEAKER_00:
So one place we see regenerative agriculture expressing itself in a way right now is in wine, where there's something called terroir, which is like the je ne sais quoi of the place, right?

SPEAKER_00:
The beauty of the particular taste of the exact grapes from that farm, right?

SPEAKER_00:
And that actually exists for all food,

SPEAKER_00:
In all places, if you cross the soil over with the culture and the history and the indigenous existence of that place, you get uniqueness.

SPEAKER_00:
You get a bioregional fingerprint on each farm and in each ecoregion.

SPEAKER_00:
And the food system of the future will express that.

SPEAKER_00:
It will express the essence of each place.

SPEAKER_00:
And so one investment that I would make would be in bioregional food hubs that help each place express the essence of the place.

SPEAKER_00:
So that's more of a human investment technology and not like a piece of tech.

SPEAKER_00:
but it's that's what creates you know that's why food's different in Thailand from the UK from Mexico it's because of that uniqueness of place and we need to go further into expressing that and food companies they do a little bit of it but it's like it should be targeted to each individual place the specific foods that they're making from the regenerative perennial agriculture goods of that place like that's what should be happening okay that's a big the big thought

SPEAKER_00:
A few other little bits of tech that would be useful.

SPEAKER_00:
I'd like a handheld nutrient density calculator that works on any food product.

SPEAKER_00:
We have that for fresh fruits and vegetables already coming online.

SPEAKER_00:
Check out the Nutrient Density Alliance.

SPEAKER_00:
And actually, it shouldn't be handheld.

SPEAKER_00:
It should just be in our phone.

SPEAKER_00:
You should just tap a product and it would give you the exact nutrient composition and say how that's fit to your personal unique

SPEAKER_00:
 individuality, microbiome, medical conditions, right?

SPEAKER_00:
So you should be able to get that sense just from like knocking the phone on it.

SPEAKER_00:
So that would be one thing.

SPEAKER_00:
And then there's a couple other investments.

SPEAKER_00:
And I do actually look for investments like this in my free time that are around the ag technology, which are like, how do you

SPEAKER_00:
 instantaneously assess for a bit of soil or a plot of land what is the exact carbon in the soil, what is the exact species composition and species richness of a place, what's the water holding capacity.

SPEAKER_00:
So technologies that accelerate our ability to track those metrics at farm level and then feed them in an automated way through the system that both protects individual farmers IP and everybody's along the way but also makes transparently useful information through the system

SPEAKER_00:
 There's a lot moving in this space.

SPEAKER_00:

When you get to sensor technology, remote sensing from satellites and blockchain and combine them, there's actually a good bit that is moving in this direction.

SPEAKER_00:
So I think I'd put more into that.

SPEAKER_00:
So there's a few little bits of tech I think I'd invest in right now.

SPEAKER_02:
So you'd need a few million then?

SPEAKER_00:
Yeah, we'll try and see what we can do.

SPEAKER_00:
I think one, two trillion would be plenty.

SPEAKER_01:
Yeah.

SPEAKER_01:
Well, I don't know about one or two trillion, but it's one of the things I love about this question is, you know, we've done, you know, 100 plus shows on the Food Fight podcast already.

SPEAKER_01:
But it's interesting, you know, some of the people we're talking to, you know, a few years ago, some of the things that they're saying, I hope in a few years this will happen, are already starting to happen.

SPEAKER_01:
You know, I really I'm with you.

SPEAKER_01:
I mean, I love the idea of the kind of the regional cultural piece as well.

SPEAKER_01:
But I'd love to be able to walk into a shop and just tap a product with my phone and it gives me everything personalized to me.

SPEAKER_01:
That would be amazing.

SPEAKER_01:
But I'm sure that's coming.

SPEAKER_00:
It's kind of amazing.

SPEAKER_00:
Give me 12, 18 months.

SPEAKER_00:
You're going to see a version of it at COP28.

SPEAKER_00:
There'll be a version of this in a little pop-up grocery store inside the Blue Zone.

SPEAKER_00:
So you'll get a version where you'll be able to see these types of tags in there, and hopefully even the carbon footprint of your entire basket.

SPEAKER_00:
So, you know, there's a lot happening in our partnerships in the data ecosystem that I think will accelerate these ideas.

SPEAKER_00:
We'll see if it's just in time and what kind of future our kids and their kids are going to have, but we're working as hard and fast as possible and are excited for others, both you all at EIT Food, but also everyone who's listening to join in and push us further and faster in this direction.

SPEAKER_02:
Well, I'll certainly be visiting when I'm in Dubai for COP later this year, Ethan.

SPEAKER_02:
Really excited about it.

SPEAKER_02:
Thank you very much, Ethan.

SPEAKER_02:
I mean, this has been an amazing podcast.

SPEAKER_02:
It's been an amazing conversation.

SPEAKER_02:
Where can listeners go to find out a bit more information about you and also about HowGood as well?

SPEAKER_00:
Howgood.com makes it nice and easy.

SPEAKER_00:
I especially recommend the resources about sustainability in the resources section.

SPEAKER_00:

We've got some incredible webinars recently on SPTI flag on the regulatory horizon and what's coming next.

SPEAKER_00:
 along with a number of papers on, white papers on granular emissions for carbon.

SPEAKER_00:
So there's a bunch there that you can see.

SPEAKER_00:
And then for me, you just look up at Ethan Soloviev on the artist formerly known as Twitter or LinkedIn, even better.

SPEAKER_00:
And then I have a small blog as well, that's leaning in on the more regenerative life side of things, not just regenerative food systems.

SPEAKER_00:
So regenerative business, regenerative investing, and that's just ethansoloviev.com.

SPEAKER_01:
 So that was another fascinating podcast with Ethan there.

SPEAKER_01:
And I think in terms of the things that really stood out for me, and Lucy, I'd be really interested to get your thoughts on this.

SPEAKER_01:
So one of the things which I really got the feeling this is what Ethan was saying is that the database allows

SPEAKER_01:
 organisations, big and small, to be able to pull the right levers to say, OK, well, I want to reduce, for example, my carbon impact in this area.

SPEAKER_01:
What levers do I need to be pulling on to make sure that I can get there?

SPEAKER_01:
And I don't think that organisations necessarily have always had that kind of information to hand.

SPEAKER_02:
 No, and I think so what he was saying really was around, you know, you might think, oh, I could source my oats from a different place and that would reduce my carbon impact, for instance.

SPEAKER_02:
So I think it gives you those options for you to easily make those

decisions about how to make your products more sustainable or more regenerative.

SPEAKER_02:
Which is really, really key.

SPEAKER_02:
And he mentioned that it obviously started with them looking at consumer decision-making, but then that's progressed and that's evolved into something which is more around business decision-making.

SPEAKER_02:
sort of further along the food value chain, which I think is a really interesting, you know, a really sort of interesting way of looking at things.

SPEAKER_00:
Absolutely.

SPEAKER_02:
It's not just about what the consumer is deciding when they're purchasing something in the store.

SPEAKER_02:
It's about actually how can you make better optimization decisions within your business to produce food which is more sustainable.

SPEAKER_01:
Absolutely.

SPEAKER_01:
And then he said, you know, in a few years time, I imagine he's already looking at it now.

SPEAKER_01:
And he said he was looking at it now, you know, you put AI, artificial intelligence over the top, and then it sounds like that AI is kind of helping you make those decisions more for you quicker, faster.

SPEAKER_01:
So actually, that's providing you with even more kind of tools to be more sustainable.

SPEAKER_01:
And then the second point, which, you know, we keep saying sustainable, and this is something that's totally blown my mind and changed my perspective,

SPEAKER_01:
He was talking about, he doesn't necessarily like the word sustainable because he sees this as a line from degenerative to regenerative and actually sustainability sits right in the middle.

SPEAKER_01:
So if you're at zero, you've not taken anything out, but you've not given anything back.

SPEAKER_01:
And what he was saying was, is actually if you aim for regenerative, which is to put more back than you've taken away, then really the worst you can do

SPEAKER_01:
 is to end up being sustainable.

SPEAKER_01:
Hopefully you do more, but actually that means it focuses your attention to go further, always go further.

SPEAKER_02:
 always go further, always leave a legacy, always make sure that what you're not just doing is being that net zero, you're actually going one step further.

SPEAKER_02:
I think it's such an important point and really one that is quite obvious, but it's not something you necessarily think about.

SPEAKER_02:
We're all very used to talking about net zero and sustainable.

SPEAKER_02:
 And then we also hear these conversations about regenerative, but actually the relationship between those and what we need to do in order to save the planet.

SPEAKER_02:
For instance, you know, we very much need to be regenerative in order to save the planet.

SPEAKER_02:
So we should be aiming higher.

SPEAKER_02:
We should be aiming for that regenerative.

SPEAKER_02:
And hopefully we hit somewhere in between sustainable and regenerative.

SPEAKER_01:
 Yeah, it's really totally changed the way I see things, so that's great.

SPEAKER_01:
And then the final thing, and I don't know if anyone will watch this

on video, but you know, the listeners, you certainly won't have seen this, but when Ethan was talking about terroir,

SPEAKER_01:
and the ability in the future to be able to kind of get a sense of the place and the culture of where the food comes from and being able to kind of really emphasize that to people.

SPEAKER_01:
You know, both Lucy and I kind of gave each other a look and a nod.

SPEAKER_01:
And I think that really kind of resonates as, you know, if you can if you can really show the great examples of where the food comes from and why it tastes like it does and what makes each of these places unique.

SPEAKER_01:
I can really see the value in that.

SPEAKER_01:
You know, I'd love to know that.

SPEAKER_01:
It's like you said, it's like with wine.

SPEAKER_01:
Why not with all food?

SPEAKER_02:
Yeah, yeah, they definitely that sort of that cultural flavour is so important.

SPEAKER_02:
And I think it's something we've lost it because that's what food was very much around culture in the past.

SPEAKER_02:
And it's become a lot more sort of homogenised.

SPEAKER_02:
and, you know, more sterile, I suppose, and not representative so much of culture.

SPEAKER_02:
So being able to taste the flavour of where that food has come from would be absolutely amazing.

SPEAKER_02:
And, you know, I think, as you said, it blew both our minds when he was talking about that.

SPEAKER_01:
Yes, I very, very much look forward to that being a thing in the

hopefully not too distant future.

SPEAKER_01:
So another fascinating episode.

SPEAKER_01:
Huge thanks to Ethan and all the all the work that he's doing with his team at HowGood.

SPEAKER_01:
And I just want to say thank you everybody for listening in.

SPEAKER_01:
This has been the Food Fight podcast as ever.

SPEAKER_01:
And if you'd like to find out more about our work improving the food system, head over to the EIT Food website at www.eitfood.eu.

SPEAKER_02:
 Also, please join the conversation via hashtag EIT food fight on our X channel at EIT food.

SPEAKER_02:
If you haven't already, please hit the follow button so that you'll never miss an episode.

SPEAKER_01:
And that's it for now.

SPEAKER_01:
Thanks, everybody.

SPEAKER_01:
See you all next time.