Swell AI Transcript: EIT Food MAIN Fossil fuels ANNA LAPPE_2.mp3

Matt Eastland:
As you look down at the food on your plate today, consider this likely possibility. That what you're about to eat has been grown with fertilisers derived from natural gas, harvested by fossil fuel driven machines, travelled thousands of miles in petrol and diesel powered transportation, stored using power hungry refrigeration, and arrived at your local supermarket wrapped in oil based plastics. Our food system is deeply tied to one of the biggest drivers of climate change, consuming 15% of global fossil fuels. How did we get here? And how can we reduce our reliance on conventional energy sources to produce our food? Welcome to the Food Fight podcast by EIT Food, a series exploring the greatest challenges facing the food system and the innovators committed to solving them. I'm Matt Eastland, and today I'm joined by Anna Lappé, a leading voice in food sustainability and equity. Anna is an award-winning author, co-creating three major books and contributing to over 19 more, a James Beard Leadership Award recipient and a TEDx speaker whose talks and films have reached millions of people. As Executive Director of the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, Anna brings decades of expertise to today's critical question, how can we transition food systems away from fossil fuels while building a future that's fair and sustainable? Anna, it's a pleasure to have you on the show to discuss such an important topic.

Anna Lappé:
Thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to be here, Matt.

Matt Eastland:
Great stuff. Anna, I know on your recent Table Debate podcast series, Errol Schweitzer, who's a grocer and merchandising ops executive you spoke to, he described fossil fuels as the lifeblood of the food industry. Do you agree with Errol? And if so, can I ask you why?

Anna Lappé:
Yeah, I loved that quote from Errol in our podcast series. It is the lifeblood of a certain kind of food system, and I would argue it doesn't have to be the lifeblood. I mean, when I heard him say that, I thought, well, if you hear that, does it make you feel like, well, take fossil fuels out of our food system and it dies? And of course, no one wants the death of a food system, right? We all want the world to be well fed. And so I think the point that's really important to add to Errol's pithy quote is that, yes, fossil fuels are the lifeblood of a certain kind of food system and one that is in desperate need of transformation. So, you know, I imagine many of those listening to our conversation would also share my concern about the climate crisis and know that at root, it is a crisis driven by greenhouse gas emissions. At root, it's a fossil fuel,

gas, oil, you know, that really the need to phase out fossil fuels is critical to fixing the climate crisis. So I think what we want to put our finger on in the conversation about food systems transformation is that phasing out fossil fuels in food is just as important as it is phasing out fossil fuels in our cars, in our built environment, etc. So that's a bit of my twist on Errol's quote there.

Matt Eastland:
Okay, yeah, this just seems to be one of those areas which is no one talks about enough. I mean, 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from food production. It's crazy that it just doesn't get as much focus as it needs.

Anna Lappé:
Yeah, and I would add to that, Matt, so that 15% figure that came from a study that we worked on at the Global Alliance last year, and commissioned some research to help us tease out that deeper understanding of what is that nexus between fossil fuels and food. And if you dig into that percent, I think what a couple things struck me about it first is actually how much more we need to know about this. You know, when I look at the data that's out there, connecting the dots between food and fossil fuels is actually really hard. And so I think we need to know more. You know, I think 15% is a conservative figure. And then also to look at, you know, where across the food chain are most of those emissions coming from, are most of the fossil fuel use coming from? And that helps us as advocates and policymakers think about where there are real solutions.

Matt Eastland:
Amazing. And I really want to get into connecting those dots with you today as well. But before we jump into such a massive topic, can I just talk about yourself for a little bit? So you've been like a really prominent voice in sustainable food systems for a number of years. Can I ask you what first inspired your advocacy for this cause and how you came to do the work that you do with the Global Alliance?

Anna Lappé:
I mean, in a way, Matt, I sort of went into the family business. Some of your listeners may be familiar with my mother's work. Her name is Frances Moore LePay, and she, more than 50 years ago, wrote a really seminal book about food called Diet for a Small Planet. It was before I was born, and it was a book that was One of the first, although many folks have made this point since, but one of the first books to really help people understand that the root cause of hunger is not a lack of food. When she wrote Diet for a Small Planet, there was more than enough calories produced globally to feed all of us, but of course there was rampant hunger, but that the root cause of

hunger is actually a lack of democracy, that if you're talking about food, talking about who eats, who doesn't, what gets grown, what doesn't, how it's grown. All of those questions are more about how we organize ourselves as societies than they are a technological question. And so I was sort of born into this family. My mother was an advocate around food systems and my father was an epidemiologist and toxicologist.

Matt Eastland:
Oh my God, that must have been so amazing.

Anna Lappé:
This is in your DNA. Very much so. But I didn't think it would be my life's path until my mid-20s. I was a graduate student at Columbia University and I had a vision for a book that I thought my mother should write. This was 30 years almost after she'd written Diet for a Small Planet. She'd written many other books since. But I said to her, look, that's a beautiful insight. Hunger isn't caused by a scarcity of food, but a scarcity of democracy. But it sort of profoundly begs the question then, what does that really mean? Where in the world are there examples of kind of food democracy at work? Where can you see places where actually people are organizing societies in a way that are getting to those roots? So to tell the stories of a food democracy brought to life. And she said, that's a great idea for a book. And would you help me? So initially I was her research assistant, eventually got promoted to her co-author. But as my friends like to remind me, getting a promotion from your mother is not very impressive. But we ended up writing a book together. It's called Hope's Edge. And it is a story of a journey around the world to show where there are social movements and city governments and civil society groups really thinking differently about how we organize. our communities to really bring about real food, food access, food democracy, what many call food sovereignty. And that was the beginning of my journey. And there's been many twists and turns since, but that book really transformed my life. It helped me see the ripple effects of decisions made in the United States by our food corporations, by our federal government on trade policy, on ag policy, and activated me to really want to be part of what I see as a global movement to try to get to the roots of hunger, to try to make a food system that really reflects what I think are our shared values.

Matt Eastland:
Amazing. Wow, what a journey. And going back to the top of the show, I briefly mentioned it, but I really want to hear it from you. So we spoke about the journey of the food products from farm to fork, let's say, are very, at the moment, energy-intensive and not the good kind. But could you bring this to life for our listeners a bit? Can you talk us through how, I think we were talking about potato chips before or crisps in the UK, how they go from being produced to the packet in consumers' hands and what energy challenges that

particular potato chip goes through?

Anna Lappé:
Sure and I'll just give like the most cursory story of the potato chip because of course it's complicated and so you badge in your potato chip, you've got your bag of chips, you've bought it at the store, you probably aren't thinking twice about this story. So how does this intersect with that food energy nexus? The potatoes that you find in those potato chip bags, unless they're marketed as organic, they were grown with heavy amounts of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides. You mentioned at the top of the show, most synthetic fertilizer is, it's all very energy intensive. Most of it is produced with natural gas. There are still some synthetic fertilizer manufacturing facilities powered by coal. So even dirtier. And pesticides themselves are fossil fuel based. So synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, the kind of bedrock. linchpins of industrial agriculture themselves really need to be seen as part of the fossil fuel tree, another branch of that tree. And then there's the energy used on those fields, so there's the energy used for irrigation, there's the energy used for farm machinery. Yes, there's a push to try to electrify transportation and machinery, but most farm machinery is still powered by diesel fuel. Then there's energy used to collect those potatoes. There's the energy used to process those potatoes, to ship them first to where they're processed, then to process them. And then, of course, there's packaging, packaging them into those plastic bags. And as you mentioned, you know, plastic is basically fossil fuels in another form. There's energy used to ship to distribution centers. There's energy used to put them on our shelves. And then they eventually end up mostly in landfill. Landfill itself is another part of the climate story in that many emissions, methane emissions, come from landfills. So that is my attempt, trying to give you a little bit of a glimpse of the story. But that's not even the full story. But I hope it helps to paint a little bit of the picture. Because I think when you get on an airplane, or you get in a car, many of us have that sense of, yeah, we're using fuels right now. You open up a bag of chips, you might have second thoughts about how healthy it is for you, but you probably aren't thinking about this connection to climate.

Matt Eastland:
Thank you for bringing that to life. I mean, I kind of feel a bit sorry for the humble potato chip now because it feels like it goes through a hell of a journey. Can I ask on that journey of that potato chip, which parts of the journey are the most energy intensive and need solving first? Which area would you go after?

Anna Lappé:
It's a great question and one of the things that makes talking about energy and food really complicated is that's a different answer depending on the food you're talking about. So we're talking about potato chip, the answer would be different if we were talking about

the beef patty in a McDonald's burger, be different if we were talking about a non-ultra processed food like an apple, but Generally, what we're finding from the data is that food production is a significant portion of fossil fuels. You know, some of the figures put it at about a fifth of all fossil fuels in the food system come from the production side. I've seen some figures, which we quote in our study, estimate that about 40 to 40% of fossil fuels in the food system come on the other end, come from processing and packaging. Transportation often, again, we're generalizing here and there's exceptions, but often transportation is not the biggest energy use impact of our food. And this was something when I wrote my book on food and climate more than about 15 years ago. When I would talk about the links between food and climate, almost everybody I would mention this to, everyone would immediately think I was talking about transportation. And they would say, oh, right, it's all about eating local. And I would say, eating local is very important for so many reasons. Climate, it's not the biggest reason. When you're talking about transporting food, it's often done in quite efficient ways. You're talking about moving huge amounts of food, often also because increasingly we are cleaning up our transportation. So where do we need to focus? I would argue where we need to focus is those places where we can see both the biggest impact, biggest improvement on climate, with the most important co-benefits for other things we care about. So for instance, I talked about that humble potato ending up in that bag of potato chips. We're talking about the high use of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides to produce that food. We do not need to be using pesticides and synthetic fertilizers to produce abundant food. And even without shifting to those very ecological models, even just tweaking industrial agriculture around the edges, we can dramatically bring down the amount of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides we're using today without actually doing anything to impact food security. And in fact, the data is showing it's, in many cases, better for food security. In the US, just to give you one final example on this, Nearly 50% of the pesticides being used on produce in the U.S. were used just for aesthetics.

Matt Eastland:
Really? Good grief.

Anna Lappé:
Mostly because of pressure from retailers on those farmers to deliver only produce of a certain size, produce without any blemishes, etc.

Matt Eastland:
Definitely. And I like the fact that we're moving into solution mode, which is what I love about this show. We get to talk about the solutions rather than challenges. But just before we do that, just one other question. I'm interested. So What do you think are the risks that the food system remains so dependent on fossil fuels? Are

there other issues here about us putting all of our eggs in one particular fossil fuel basket, like supply chain fragility? Look at what's going around the world with geopolitics. What else is at play here if we continue to go on this path?

Anna Lappé:
There's lots of risks. I put them into two big categories. There's kind of ecological risk, and then you were just alluding to it in your question, kind of political risk. The ecological risk is that we are already witnessing a really catastrophic decline of biodiversity, of insect populations. One in three bites that we eat we can thank a pollinator for, and yet we're seeing how much pesticide use, for instance, is impacting pollinators. Continuing this way has profound risks to how well we will be able to feed ourselves. We're seeing dramatic decreases in soil health, which impacts how productive our food can be. We're seeing the dramatic impacts of this agrochemical use on aquatic species of all kinds. We know there are hundreds of dead zones being created in the oceans because of runoff from synthetic fertilizer. So I think there's this ecological risk that I think many people are taking very seriously. So there's that risk. I think the other risk you were getting at is a kind of political risk. You said, what's the risk of putting all of our eggs in that fossil fuel basket? What's important to remember about the fossil fuel industry, like a lot of the food industry too, it's highly concentrated. So producers are reliant on just a few companies for their inputs, whether those are seeds, whether it's pesticides, or synthetic fertilizer. So if you look at what happened just in these last couple of years to fertilizer prices, we saw this huge spike in fertilizer price. And what you heard from industry is, oh, this is geopolitics. It's because of Russia and Ukraine. And that's kind of the story that some of us consumed kind of the mainstream reporting on what was happening to fertilizer markets. What was really happening to fertilizer markets is a really concentrated sector kind of exploiting this geopolitical moment and charging a lot more. The fertilizer industry made record profits in these last couple of years. And on the other end of it, producers who are really at the mercy of a concentrated market, didn't have real competition, didn't see therefore prices really fair, you know, on a kind of fair free market. And so we're really impacted by that. So I think that we need to take both these risks seriously. And I think for food producers, when we're talking about the benefits of production models like organic, I mentioned, or agroecology, or regenerative agriculture, they're models that also help food producers not be so vulnerable to really concentrated markets.

Matt Eastland:
Yeah, I get that. And let's talk about the positive stuff, so the solutions across the food supply chain. Thinking about that poor, humble potato chip, you know, food production, I think you alluded to this earlier. Are we talking and a large scale regenerative agriculture or focusing on soil health? Is it all of that? Because we need to move away from fertiliser use, obviously synthetic

fertiliser use. So do you think that something like regenerative agriculture is a good step in the right direction?

Anna Lappé:
For sure. And I think what's been really encouraging for me to see over the last 25 years I've been working on these issues is how much more research there is about the benefits of in the U.S. We have a really robust certified organic program. There's been a lot of research about organic agriculture on even large scale commodity crops showing, for instance, that organic field trials compared to conventional field trials of corn, for instance, that corn Yield was either equivalent to conventional or in times of drought or times of flooding did much better. So the evidence of kind of the resiliency of investing in these ecological models of agriculture is really clear. For me, the other critical piece of the solution story is not just how we're growing food, but what we're growing and what we're growing it for. In the US, most people are shocked to hear that less than 1% of the acreage of corn in this country is growing the corn that you and I eat off the cob. Nearly half of it is now being grown for corn-based ethanol, and then the rest is going into industrial livestock production or going into other kind of industrial uses of corn. So we're using some of the world's best farmland, like in the United States, in our Midwest, to make a questionable alternative to fuel in the form of corn-based ethanol. So a lot of the solutions I see as very common sense, you know, not radical at all, but these really common sense ideas of, hey, you know, farmland should be used to feed people directly.

Matt Eastland:
Yeah, I think we can all agree on that. But it's one of these things, isn't it, where I imagine, back in the day, when these decisions were made, that people probably thought that that was trying to solve another problem. Yeah, I guess somebody thought this was a great idea. And, you know, to kind of green up our fuels, but then we're like, hold on a second, you're diverting that away from humans.

Anna Lappé:
Right. And then you get the lock-ins, the political lock-ins, right? So we have a whole industrial built environment catering to corn-based ethanol. You have these farmers who've really, it's their livelihood now. You have policymakers who have no incentive to rock the boat. So you get into these kind of policy lock-ins that get really, really complicated to free ourselves from, which again, goes back to kind of my original point that so much of the thorny climate problems we face are less technological than they are political. How are we going to build that political will to make the change we need?

Matt Eastland:

Indeed. So let's carry the journey on then. So we get to manufacturing and processing. What are some of the most promising solutions you've seen there for reducing fossil fuel reliance?

Anna Lappé:
Yeah, one of the best things that we can do is to think about what are the ways that we can support communities, individual eaters, to eat more real food. Ultra-processed food, all the science is showing us it's not good for our health, right? And it also has, whether we're talking about the plastic packaging or all the additives, the energy it takes to produce the ultra-processed foods, it has this energy impact as well. So when we talk about how do we reduce fossil fuel use in the food system. It's really thinking about how do we promote more whole foods diets, which, you know, is a systems issue. Well, then that kicks up a question of how do people have the time for that? We're thinking about these potato chips, and we just had U.S. Thanksgiving, and I hosted many, many family members, and one of the things I made one of the first evenings of our holiday together was an amazingly delicious potato's tapas dish from the Ottolenghi cookbook. And it was delicious with a drizzle of a tahini dressing and pomegranate seeds. It was amazing. Oh, you're killing me. You're making me hungry. It took me a very long time to make that. Would it have been quicker if I got a Costco-sized bag of potato chips and a Costco-sized bag of dip? Yes, it would have been much quicker. Wouldn't have been as healthy. So, you know, we have to put these conversations into a bigger conversation about time. But I think moving away from ultra processed foods is a fundamental. And then to get away from gas stoves at home. So I cooked those delicious Otolingue potatoes in my induction oven. So, you know, all along the way, I did my best. But again, it took the ability of being able to have some policy incentives to support my family to purchase that induction stove, the knowledge that induction stoves exist, and the ability, again, to have the time to make it.

Matt Eastland:
Yeah, not easy. Is there a role for retailers in here? Because they have a lot of power and I've always found that retailers can influence down and up the supply chain. Is there anything in the retail space that they can do to reduce the fossil fuel consumption?

Anna Lappé:
one of the key players in many food environments today are food retailers. They're absolutely driving decisions going all the way back to the farm field. So when you have a retailer like a Costco, for instance, that actually has a commitment to having organic lines, you have producers that have a market in the form of Costco that are incentivized to produce food organically. When you have a company like a Trader Joe's that I was just reading in industry press or kind of moving away from sourcing organic, that's going to have a huge impact on supply chain. And I hope that a company like Trader Joe's rethinks that. So, you know, I talked earlier about

pesticides being used just for aesthetic purposes, just to make their products look good. You could imagine what a powerful, positive impact it would have for retailers to say, we're going to do a marketing campaign to our customers that says, You know, Love Your Ugly Fruit, which has been a campaign, I think, in the UK and other countries. Love your ugly fruit and vegetables. And then, of course, there's the things that retailers themselves can do. Innovations in refrigeration, the supermarkets that have their cold storage with no doors, so they're just leaking all that cold into the store. So there's innovations there. And then the other thing I would say is that there's also how we can innovate to ensure that consumers can get access to good, healthy food, even bypassing supermarkets. So in COVID, this new coalition, I think it's called the Farmers Market Coalition launched, and it's a global network of farmers markets. all around the world and really helping policy makers to see farmers markets as a really key player in a domestic food system, not as just a bit player, but that they can really be a really key way for producers to get access directly to customers and for customers to actually get really direct access to good, healthy food.

Matt Eastland:
Yeah, and it's that classic model, which is effectively cutting out retailers. And we had a guy called Pete Russell on who's developed a platform for all small scale farmers in the UK and beyond to basically, he's just taken all of the challenges away from the farmer and said, you know what, you just focus on producing great food and I'll help you get it to the consumer and of course that means they get paid more. I really feel that disruption coming. Retailers must be probably scared by it. I think they should probably embrace that as well because I know that there's more that they can do on it. Can I ask the question? I mean, we've had somebody on the show before talking about this, but why are we still using plastic for packaging, given that the food industry knows how damaging it is to the environment? Is the obvious answer the right one, which is cost?

Anna Lappé:
It's funny, my mind went to, it's probably the obvious answer, which is corporate influence. of markets and policies. Which is probably cost in there somewhere as well. Right? So I was just listening to this author and filmmaker and brilliant thinker who I love, Astra Taylor, and she was talking about this idea of public luxury. What she was saying is that, you know, when often we talk about the changes we need to make to address the climate crisis or, you know, being more of an environmentalist, it often gets framed as sacrifice. actually, what if we thought of it more as public luxury? In her case, she was giving the example of like public swimming pools used to be really common in the United States, much less so today, but that's a public luxury, right? And I think the same framework can be brought to thinking about food. And this is bringing me back to plastics. So I think about why is plastic still

everywhere? It is ubiquitous in our food system. And partly it's, yeah, it's a really effective way to preserve food. But it's also because the plastics industry has lobbied heavily against any attempts to regulate it, any attempts to demand better production practices, any attempts to say, you know, no, actually, we want to have other pathways to get products to people and not have it all wrapped in plastic. So, you know, I think about my community now, just in the last couple of years, we have a network now of refill stores where instead of having to get my olive oil in a plastic container and many, many things in big plastic containers, I can go with my glass containers and fill it up with, speak of public luxury, like really delicious ingredients or really high quality detergents or really flavorful spices without having to get individually wrapped plastic containers. Now, is this a solution that I could have just done on my own? Absolutely not. I needed this network of stores to be able to support me in doing that. Could you imagine a society that actually incentivized the opening of stores like that in every community, that actually incentivized all of us to use less plastic? We could imagine that. We could imagine all kinds of policy mechanisms to make that more the norm. And Going back to public luxury, yeah, not only are those like better ingredients, but we're learning about all the microplastics and the toxins that leach from plastics into our food that are causing all kinds of health crises, whether it's fertility decline or certain cancers. That's not public luxury to all be getting sick when we don't need to. So I think that there's a way to get at this, but again, not to complexify everything, but it is about really needing to change a system and that it isn't fair for each of us to be like, oh, it's on my shoulders to fix this. There's lots of ways to make these changes happen. And again, my obvious answer of why we're not seeing more of that is because of so much influence on our policymakers by industry that really benefits from the status quo.

Matt Eastland:
Yeah, indeed. Yeah, there's a lot that needs changing for sure. What does a fully fossil-free food system look like for you? And I guess the other question is, how far away from that, how far away from you achieving it? I mean, you're talking, a lot of what you're saying makes complete sense. A lot of it is actually very practical and simple. A lot of it also makes good corporate financial sense when you start thinking about the efficiencies. So, you know, what does that look like for you? What's the kind of things that you would really like to see changed? And, you know, do you think it's achievable? How confident are you that it's achievable?

Anna Lappé:
How confident am I that it's achievable? I mean, one thing that I learned 25 years ago when we worked on that book together with my mother was people would ask us after that journey whether we were optimistic or pessimistic. And I came to realize that either optimism or pessimism implies a certain hubris, because it implies that you know what's going to happen. It implies you either think

it's going to be really bad, or it's going to be really good. But it presumes that you know the future, whether you're an optimist or a pessimist. And what we like to call ourselves, we're possible lists.

Matt Eastland:
I like that. That's good.

Anna Lappé:
In the sense that we really have no idea what's possible. So, you know, let me give you an example from that journey. So 25 years ago, we arrive in Kenya to meet with a woman named Wangari Mathai, who is the leader of a social movement called the Green Belt Movement. It's led by women. You know, most people in the movement were women. And it was a tree planting movement to basically prevent desertification in Kenya. It was also about reclamation of traditional foods, of this real food diet, of growing food to feed communities, not food for export, not eating ultra processed packaged food. And the time we met Wangari, met women in the movement, it was incredible to see the network on the ground. But they were up against such political opposition. Agricultural experts that she was working with that were teaching community folks how to grow food organically were being threatened with arrest. They were under incredible political threat. They had just lost their biggest donor. It was a European donor agency. It just pulled out their funding. My mom and I left that visit thinking, wow, Wangari Maathai is one of the most amazing women we've ever met. We became really close with her family. And we said to ourselves, hopefully, the Green Belt Movement will exist for a couple more months. But we don't know. Flash forward a couple of years later, there was regime change. Wangari Maathai won her seat in Parliament. Flash forward a few more years, Wangari was driving down a Kenyan road with one of our friends in the car and her phone rings. And it was the phone call to say that she'd been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Matt Eastland:
That's amazing.

Anna Lappé:
And so my mother and I, when we think about Wangari and think about that story, we think, how can you exist in the world and not be a possible list? So when I think about what we're up against, which is very depressing. You know, we're soaring past our Paris Climate Accord agreement limits of warming. We're soaring past our, you know, threats of biodiversity loss. We're definitely careening in a bad direction at the same time. At the same time, we are seeing incredible solutions on the ground all around the world. Solutions that again, going back to what I kind of a theme, it's like, we know that actually it's better for our bodies, better for the planet, better for the climate, better for all of us to be eating fossil fuel free food. And we know there are pathways to get there. So I

like to retain a sense of possibility, even though most of the indicators around us are certainly pretty grim out there.

Matt Eastland:
What a lovely balanced, but I'm not going to say positive, but possible list way to kind of round up the show. And I thank you for that. I'm also I really like that possible is that it shows that there's hope no matter how, how difficult things seem. So yeah, for that.

Anna Lappé:
Yeah. And I'll say really, you know, so quickly on that note, I mean, the other thing that gives me hope is nature itself.

Matt Eastland:
Hmm.

Anna Lappé:
I remember going a couple years ago to a farm in Wisconsin that just a few years before had been absolutely soil destroyed with decades of fertilizer and pesticide use had just been row crop corn. There was no insects, no animals, just rows and rows and rows of corn. This farmer had taken it over and in just in a couple years using agroecological practices and biodiverse crops and really building back healthy soil. I was standing on the land, and I had my recording device. I was interviewing him. You can hear in the recording the sounds of the birds, the sounds of the insects. And he was telling me, he's like, Anna, it's amazing. The frogs have come back to the pocket ponds, and the birds are back. So we really need to remember that, that there is a natural inclination toward health in our bodies. We know this from our own studying the human body. When we get off of ultra processed foods, when we bring our bodies back to eating food that's good for our bodies, health is our kind of natural orientation as humans. The same is true for nature. So we need to remember that, you know, nature's resilience too.

Matt Eastland:
Yeah, the word that always comes to mind is regeneration. You know, nature is really good at regenerating if you give it the opportunity and the chance. Anna, I could listen to you talk for hours. Unfortunately, we don't have time to do that, but I am going to read your books. So I'd like just to leave on, where can listeners find out more about yourself, your companies, or get in touch? And are there any final words of advice that you might have for anyone listening about what they can do right now to reduce that reliance on fossil fuels in the food system?

Anna Lappé:

Well, I'll start with that question and then say a few words about our work. But what you can do right now, I mean, like I said, please do not leave this conversation feeling guilty. There's no finger pointing here, finger wagging, you know, it's we live in food environments that don't encourage us. to make the right choices. But what can you do right now? You know, it is those really, in a way, basic things. It's, you know, when you are making food choices to the extent you are able to, choose food that was not grown with synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. So in the U.S., that's organic certified. Other countries have other labeling schemes. supporting your local food economy. So, you know, do you know your local food producers? You know, there are many, many ways to get connected to your local community, whether through farmers markets or community supported agriculture is something we didn't talk about, but another way in. If you are a renter talking to your landlords about electrifying your building, getting gas stoves out of your apartments, out of your homes. If you're a homeowner and you're in need of replacing your stove, you know, going for induction. So yes, there's things we can do individually. But again, please do not leave this conversation feeling like it is up to us as individuals to fix this. This is a complicated systems problem. So it's thinking about what you can do as an eater, and then as a voter, you know, voting for elected officials who share your values, and then thinking about what you do for your day job. You know, what is it that you do to try to be part of this community of possibleists, you know, trying to make the world a better place? As cheesy as that sounds, it's a fun line of work at the same time. So that brings me to just how you can find us. I currently run an organization called the Global Alliance for the Future of Food. We're a strategic alliance of philanthropic foundations, so we work with philanthropy, and our members are funding work all around the world that is very much about this place-based, often really local, as well as national and global work to change food systems. and we're at futureoffood.org. We have a lot of resources there, including this report on the food energy nexus called Power Shift, but lots of other resources on our website. You can find us there.

Matt Eastland:
Amazing. Anna Lappé, this has been a fascinating, fascinating episode. I really, really have enjoyed talking to you and learning from you. So, you know, thank you for sharing that. I know our listeners are going to love it too. And yeah, can't wait to read the books. So that's the next on my reading list. Thank you very much, Anna.

Anna Lappé:
Thanks, Matt.

Matt Eastland:
So what an amazing interview from Anna there. And I'm kind of left feeling inspired and hopeful. And we could talk about all of the

amazing takeaways there, the stats, the data, the challenges that are faced with the food system in terms of our reliance on fossil fuels, but also the many solutions that she's spoken about. But actually, rather than doing it this time around, I'd actually just like to finish on the sentiment that Anna left us with. I really liked her term, possiblest. It adds a certain sense of realism to it, but actually the story she shared about what is possible in this space was really amazing. And I would encourage us all to think more about being possiblest, about what is possible. and to do whatever we can in order to make the food system better from a fossil fuel perspective, like Anna spoke about a lot. Look down at your plate and give a consideration to the food that you're eating and think about how energy intensive is this? Could you have made better choices? And yes, like Anna said, this is not all on any one individual. But actually, if we all just make a few small changes, then together, collectively, that could make a massive change. So, that's what I'd like to leave everybody with now. And given the time of year that we're coming into in the season of Goodwill, once again, it's a time where we all traditionally, regardless whether it's a religious thing or not, we get round together and lots of us all sit down and we have family time across meals and food and just spare a thought for the food that you're eating. And have you made the best possible choices? And next year, could you make better ones? So happy holidays, everyone, from that perspective, and make sure you keep eating great food. That just leaves me to say, everyone, thank you all for listening in. This has been the Food Fight Podcast. If you'd like to find out more, head over to the EIT Food website at www.eitfood.eu. Also, please join the conversation via our LinkedIn channel at EIT Food. And of course, if you haven't already, please hit the follow button so you never miss an episode. Thanks, everyone.