



Season 2 - Episode 8 “Waste Less, Save More”

Welcome to the eighth episode of Season 2 of the NJFPA Stradley Ronon Food Forum Podcast. In this episode, [Bill Cornelius](#), Senior Commercial Banker at [M&T Bank](#) speaks with [Coryanne Mansell](#), Client Services Strategist at the [Center for EcoTechnology \(CET\)](#). They talk about their services matching businesses with solutions, NJ laws to be aware of and how easy it is to get started making changes today.

Guest Bio:



Coryanne Mansell is the Client Services Strategist at the Center for EcoTechnology (CET). Cory supports CET’s Wasted Food Solutions efforts by leading stakeholder engagement processes and providing on-site technical assistance to businesses and institutions. She currently serves as Chair for the Outreach Committee for the Young Professionals of the US Composting Committee, and the Chair for the Education and Outreach Committee for the NJ Composting Council chapter.

Coryanne has a B.S in Environmental Policy and a B.A in Planning and Public Policy from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and a Certificate in Sustainable Business from McIntire Business Institute.

Listeners will hear:

- CETs 40 year history as a non-profit helping organizations save time, energy and money. 2:29
- The public goals and grants that help them offer consulting services for little to no cost to businesses. 4:12

- NJ's current food waste laws may not apply to you now, but planning ahead can put you ahead of the game. 5:21
- Success stories of how organizations are seeing changes and savings in their business. 10:25
- The matchmaking they do between businesses and service providers. If your business provides services that support ESG goals (recycling, solar, waste, etc) make sure CET knows about you. 16:24

Edited Interview Transcript

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 0:52

Welcome to the next Stradley Ronon New Jersey Food Processors Association food forum. Let me introduce myself. My name is Bill Cornelius. I'm an SVP at M&T Bank, I'll be your host for this episode of the Food Forum. I've been involved with the New Jersey Food Processors Association for over 15 years, now on the board because you can see the value of the organization to its stakeholders, year over year. So we're very happy to be involved in this podcast.

Everyone in business is always looking to reduce costs, streamline their supply chain, reduce how much waste is in their process, but most of the focus is usually on the front end of operations, what it takes to make the product. But what are the benefits on the back end, and the savings to be had by looking at what happens after the product is made. So let me introduce our guest for this morning's forum, Coryanne Mansell of the Center for EcoTechnology. But before we get started, Coryanne, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Coryanne Mansell 2:00

I am the client services strategist at the Center for EcoTechnology. As you kindly stated My name is Coryanne Mansel. I actually grew up in New Jersey. I graduated from Rutgers University, the campus in New Brunswick. Now I'm living in Western Massachusetts, but primarily working on our wasted food solutions programming within the organization Center for EcoTechnology, or CET for short.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 2:27

What are some of their offerings?

Coryanne Mansell 2:29

At CET we are an environmental nonprofit that helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste. We've been an organization for over 40 years, helping people and businesses save energy and reduce waste through partnerships with utility companies, state agencies, federal government foundations, and also private businesses. A day in the life for each individual at our organization can look a little different.

Speaking for myself, I primarily work on our wasted food solutions programming, which offers a suite of services to businesses and institutions across the country to varying degrees. So for instance, in Connecticut, we administer ReduceWaste CT, which is a free recycling assistance program for businesses and institutions in Connecticut. This is with support from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. So that looks like tailoring solutions to businesses, walking through their operations, helping them find the match that's suitable for them. And I can definitely get into that more into that later. We know that food waste is such a priority for the US with the EPA and USDA's shared goal to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030. We've been working on this issue for over two decades. We know that we have a lot of expertise that we want to share with businesses and others that have these goals. And it's a two way street, right? So we're also learning from them as we go,

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 4:04

Wow, it's a lot. So your services, what's the catch, how are you involved, how do you get compensated or are you free?

Coryanne Mansell 4:12

That's where I say "across the country to varying degrees." So in Massachusetts, we administer [RecyclingWorks](#) under contract by Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and that offers that free assistance to businesses and institutions. But we know that we have plenty more information to provide to others. And so that's where we, with thanks to support from entities such as EPA, and USDA, we also offer this assistance to businesses in New Jersey, for instance, as well as Ohio, Philadelphia, and it's all in with shared partnerships with local entities. So that being the City of Philadelphia or the solid waste management districts in Ohio. I don't see the catch but I might be biased to our organization, because we really do want to meet businesses where they're most interested and then help them have the most impact on what they're looking for financially, environmentally or within their communities.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 5:13

So if we were to think, there's a lot of laws in Jersey around food waste, [what should] businesses be aware of to benefit?

Coryanne Mansell 5:21

In New Jersey, New Jersey's food waste law went into effect in October of 2021. This is a requirement where businesses that are generating over 52 tons of food waste per year, need to find an alternative to disposal and they also need to be within 25 road miles of an authorized food waste facility. So this means that New Jersey's law actually focuses on the pre consumer food waste. So that's more of the back of house, kitchen prep, the overproduction, that kind of volume. Then when we speak to the 25 road miles of an authorized food waste facility, there are two facilities that this speaks to in New Jersey currently, which is Trenton Renewables in Trenton, and Waste Management CORE in

Elizabeth. However, that doesn't mean that you need to go to either of those facilities, it just means that you are subject to the law and need to find alternatives to disposal that are not trash.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 6:29

So you say 52 tonnes. Is it a percentage of those tonnes or is it 52 tonnes of alternative disposal?

Coryanne Mansell 6:38

So if you are a business or institution that is generating 52 tonnes of food waste per year, you need to find alternatives to disposal. So it's not a percentage of. Ideally, you're looking at as much as possible. But in theory, maybe there are some materials that are not suitable for end sites that are available to you at that time.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 7:01

And that's a lot of waste. In addition to penalties associated with these laws, there are huge benefits to the companies reducing their waste. You talked about at least where the country wanted to go by 2030. But where are we now? How much food is wasted?

Coryanne Mansell 7:18

This goal that I spoke to earlier from the EPA and USDA of 50% reduction by 2030, stems from the finding that in the US 40% of our food is never eaten. So that means that there's a huge environmental opportunity associated with finding alternatives to disposal. Wasting food actually equates to 11% of the world's total emissions. That's a huge percentage when we think about the environmental impact. Then also, from a community standpoint, with pre COVID numbers, over 35 million people across America are food insecure. We also acknowledged about 40% of our food is wasted and a percentage of that could be recoverable, edible, safe for donation, and something that we could be sharing with our communities. Then also that economic loss as well. You're also going to naturally, if you're paying to purchase the food, and then also paying to dispose of the food, you're paying for it twice. So how can we address that as well?

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 8:26

I know back years ago, companies would have to pay for their waste to be removed. Are there ways now people will come and pick it up and pay some nominal fee for it? They get a carbon tax credit for it? How does that work if I'm selling my waste?

Coryanne Mansell 8:43

I think about it as somebody is still handling your waste. So how about we look at prevention first and foremost? So how can we make sure that that doesn't end up in that container, first and foremost? Then we look to, okay, it's still you're paying for the service for it to be disposed of. Then you acknowledge that there's recoverable, safe, edible food in that, how can you be working with food rescue organizations and food banks to recover it and donate it. Then also looking at other higher alternative beneficial uses, such as feeding animals, composting to create a nutrient rich soil amendment or anaerobic digestion, which creates energy from the decomposing food. All of that needs technology, needs processing, needs staff. So there still will be a cost. It's just when you look across those solutions, we can potentially help you find actual cost savings. And more cities, more states are recognizing that the value add of recognizing these businesses that are thinking about these solutions, and implementing certification programs or tax incentive, sustainability tax credit, and other advantageous opportunities when looking at alternative solutions,

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 10:11

More than enough value that could ever possibly be [unclear]. So examples of businesses, how they can reduce, recover, specifically, what could they do today to recover and recycle?

Coryanne Mansell 10:25

Businesses are definitely taking more and more notice of these opportunities. So companies are looking at innovative ways to use food waste as an ingredient for other products. I sometimes peruse them on my own free time, the [Upcycled Food Association](#). I love all the products that they're showcasing which look at those products that have another sale opportunity or market value. So one that comes to mind is avocado pit tea, I'm pretty sure, so using the avocado pits to create a new type of tea. I think there was also salmon skin chips. You think of salmon skin as something that you discard. Well, what if you create chips out of it? So you can get lost in all those technologies or those products that are available and more and more at your local, retail grocery stores as well.

Then businesses are also looking at setting up food donation programs. So that means looking at, for instance, when we're prepping for a catered event. Understandably they're anticipating 100 guests, and really only 50 are in attendance so that other 50 meals, they never went out to the serving floor. They're completely prepped, kept at safe, edible temperatures. How can you be working with a food rescue organization to bring that potentially to a pantry that doesn't have the kitchen setup area that can create a full meal. You have that surplus and why pay for its disposal if it can go to your community?

Also looking at on site composting is another one, particularly of interest for K through 12 schools because there's an environmental education program and opportunity. Naturally, we've helped K through 12 schools understand that maybe at this time, they don't want to compost all of their food scraps that are generated. But let's take a small percentage of a small fraction and use that to talk to students about hey, look at all these half eaten apples. How can we change that? Do we need to slice them for you? Would you rather them in applesauce form? And those conversations can be had so that students can also be talking about what they're actually going to eat.

Then also working with animal feed operations, compost facilities, anaerobic digestion facilities. That's more so based on the product that you have, as well as the infrastructure that's available to you. So how far are those facilities or how nearby are those facilities to you? And that's where again, the perspective of matchmaking comes in. As well as working with your current waste hauler. They're taking your trash and recycling, they might also have a program for food scraps, designated food scraps as well.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 13:21

A lot of ways to give. So if I'm in business, I do want to donate, what are some of the liability protections in place for me, so I can feel good about giving?

Coryanne Mansell 13:30

From a federal perspective, there is the federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation act. This provides a federal baseline for protection for food donors, which includes businesses and institutions that are donating their edible surplus in good faith to nonprofit organizations. And that means if it's meeting all the quality and labeling standards that are imposed by federal, state and local laws. I like to translate that to: if you are treating the food donation as if you're giving it to a customer, then you should feel good about that food donation program. If you acknowledge that when you were prepping something or you have extra apples or bananas and you didn't treat them as if you're giving them to a customer, let's not start with the food donation program. Let's start with something else and then get you there, if appropriate.

In New Jersey, there's actually additional state protections that have been in place actually before the federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation act, and that includes coverage, so protections to businesses that are making food donations directly to individuals, as well as to nonprofit organizations that are charging a small fee for the donated food as long as that's kind of particular to covering the cost of storing, transporting or otherwise handling with food. That also provides an opportunity for the donation of items to a nonprofit who can create five Gallons of watermelon surplus into a marketable shelf stable product that then is distributed to their food pantries and other food rescue partners. That's really important because when you're dealing with such large volumes, who is going to store this product, who's going to get it out to the community as quickly as it's needed. So when you can make something that's a little bit more shelf stable, a jam, a sauce, a meal, then you're just getting it that much further and really supporting its value.

Then also, in New Jersey, it's explicit that if a product that is donated passed the best by date, but still fit for consumption, it's also protected. So New Jersey has done a lot to ensure that businesses and institutions are supported when implementing these food donation programs. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't be thinking about it, and ensuring that they're set up in the best manner. But at the same time, it's nice to be working in a state where there are those liability protections,

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 16:12

You make it easy to make it a better place. So if I'm a business in Jersey, what are some solutions? You know, how can I donate specific to where I'm at here in Jersey?

Coryanne Mansell 16:24

Sure. I'll think about it from a food recovery hierarchies perspective. So the EPA food recovery hierarchy has an inverted triangle that prioritizes prevention first and foremost. Then we look to food rescue: feeding our communities, feeding animals, industrial uses, such as anaerobic digestion, and then composting. I'll speak to the top tier: prevention. The good news is you can start today, you can be looking, visually look at your containers, see what's at the top of the bin. Wow, maybe I should work with my staff on cutting the carrots a little bit closer to the stem? Or how can we be using the potato peels for potato chips? We actually worked with a restaurant that noticed most of our waste is the potato peels. How about we just change our fries to incorporate the peels, and the consumers actually had rave reviews about their fries moving forward! Those are examples where you can really just get started today by thinking about it.

Then there's also source reduction technologies that help from a data perspective of on a regular basis, how much are you wasting and those technologies are [Leanpath](#), [phoodsolutions](#) (with a ph) and then [Winnow solutions](#). And that is helpful. We've worked with a number of institutions such as universities to implement those technologies, because in the dining hall, you have a lot of different staff working on it, bringing material back. But if you have a data capturing system that can help you, Hey, did you know that on a daily basis 20% of your eggs are going to waste? Well, you can work with your production team and your kitchen staff. Maybe we don't need to produce 20% more. We can right size our prep.

Then we're also going to think about food rescue organizations. There are food banks in New Jersey as well as a food rescue organization like [Table to Table](#). And those are great options where you can as a business, feel free to reach out to them. They'll be more than happy to talk to you about what product you might have and if they can accept it. As an organization, we [CET] can also provide that free assistance so we can do that homework, if you will, for you.

Also, we're always excited to share really innovative stories of food rescue organizations and food banks such as [Philabundance](#), which is working to capture farmers surplus milk, create it into cheese, again, thinking about shelf stability. It's called abundantly good cheese. So it's essentially waste. That was an item that would have gone to waste now is a cheese that is also sold at retail grocery stores in addition to being donated to their partner organizations. And it's a great win-win-win for all.

Then also there's animal feed operations and composting sites, which there are a fair number in New Jersey. I won't go through each of those individually. And then as I mentioned earlier, [Trenton Renewables](#) and [Waste Management CORE](#) facility are the facilities that enact the law at this time. So if you're looking at Central Jersey, and North Jersey, you also do want to be thinking, Oh, am I impacted by this law? And how can I make steps towards compliance? We're a non regulatory organization but we're also happy to work through that with you. We have food waste estimator tools that can

calculate a baseline of how much total food you're getting, ratings based on the sector, limited versus full service restaurant, a hospital, a venue, K through 12, school, etc. So those are some of the solutions in the state and it's going to, it's not a one size fit all, but it is an opportunity for all, there's always going to be something that we can do small or large to meet your goals.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 20:22

Sounds interesting. So you made a comment that by 2030 we want to reduce that 40% [of food wasted] I guess by 50%? How heavy a lift is that?

Coryanne Mansell 20:34

You know, there are entities such as [ReFed](#), that are helping with the data perspective of, can we have a baseline of when we're halfway through that 2030 goal? What headway have we made? I don't think it's lofty from a logistics standpoint. As I noted before, you can start today. But from building awareness and recognizing the priority, especially giving these times, it might be a little... We have to work towards it. It's not a one size fits all, as I mentioned, it's going to take some time, but I don't think it's out of possibility.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 21:14

Well, we're pulling for you. So as I said, my son is very much into environmental science. So this all resonates with me, personally, because we talk about it daily. So we end it this way where I always have two questions, non business related here. I guess the best way to say it is 1) tell us something about Corryann we may not know and we talked earlier, you don't golf. So what is your bowling average?

Coryanne Mansell 21:42

My bowling average! I can't remember the last time I bowled. I just know how to get the ball down the lane.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 21:51

Do you use the bumpers?

Coryanne Mansell 21:53

No, I don't. It's been a while since I bowled so I couldn't confidently tell you my score.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 22:00

We're going to give you a 150.

Jessica Campbell 22:05

Well, okay, 50%. Right.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 22:07

Right, exactly.

Coryanne Mansell 22:09

I'll take it. It's not really passing. But I'll make my way there. Something about me that folks don't know is maybe Well, recently, in the winter months, we've been going skiing once a week, and then snowboarding once a week, alternating. So that's been a fun challenge. And skiing is a little bit newer to me. But it's interesting to go from a snowboard to skis on an alternative week basis.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 22:39

That's very nice. Well, well, thank you very much for joining us for this episode of the food forum. It was great to have you and I think, being a board member of NJFPA, I think there's a lot you can do for the businesses within our membership base. So I think they should be excited to connect with you. So that's what happens if there's a business they can connect just directly with you?

Coryanne Mansell 23:01

Yep, yep. And thank you so much for having me today. I encourage folks to either go to our <https://wastedfood.cetonline.org/> page that lists our hotline. So it's a phone number and email where you'll get our staff that will help you on your way, whether it's you're looking for a sounding board, Hey, I just I reached out to this entity. Can you tell me more about example businesses who have worked with them or case studies about how it works, as well as the more comprehensive tip recommendations that we can provide as well. So either my direct contact information is fine, as well as our wasted food solutions hotline.

Bill Cornelius, M&T Bank 23:42

All right. Thank you very much again.

Coryanne Mansell 23:44

Yes, thank you so much.

On behalf of the New Jersey Food Processors Association. We thank you for listening to this episode of the NJFPA Food Forum. For more information, you can visit us at www.njfoodprocessors.org. If you have an idea for a future episode, please email us at help@njfoodprocessors.org. We would love to connect with you and make your story and your experience part of this series too.