"Data is the strongest weapon in the fight against food waste"

Jespers Torvekøkken will use new technology to ensure that the right amount of food is produced at the right time.

About 1.6 billion metric tons. This is the amount of food that ends up in trash cans every year - about a third of the global annual food production. The food waste causes a major additional cost for the producers and has significant negative impact on the environment.

Part of the food waste comes from catering companies that supply food to private customers, business customers, canteens, schools, institutions and hospitals every day. Even with the best intentions and highest culinary standards, it can be difficult to deliver the right amount of food since our knowledge about customer preferences is not sufficiently detailed, says Ronny Saul, CEO of the catering company Jespers Torvekøkken (English: Jesper’s Market Kitchen), which delivers more than 800,000 meals every year:

"The big challenge for the global catering industry is the large gap between the amount of food being produced and the amount actually eaten. Of course, we have an idea of what is being eaten and in which quantities, but our calibrations are based on gut feeling and experience. If we want to eliminate food waste once and for all, we need to collect more and better data."

Ronny Saul believes that customer insight will be one of the most important competitive parameters for the catering industry during the coming years:

"Companies that succeed in reducing food waste will not only reduce product con-

**Sustainable Development Goals at play**

**SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production**

Target 12.3: Halve global per capita food waste

By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at retail and consumer levels and reduce food loss in production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.

SDG Accelerator for SMEs is an innovation programme for small and medium-sized industrial enterprises created by the UNDP in 2018 with support from the Danish Industry Foundation. The programme focuses on developing and accelerating business solutions addressing the Sustainable Development Goals. The programme is implemented in collaboration with Deloitte and is tested in Denmark in 2018-2019 with 30 SMEs, after which the aim is to roll out in other countries.
sumption, they will also significantly reduce production costs and transportation costs. However, in order to achieve this, we need greater insight into our customers’ habits. It is no longer just about ensuring a good buffet. We have to know exactly what is being eaten and at what pace. We must understand what is getting thrown away and why.”

Through the SDG Accelerator for SMEs, Jespers Torvekøkken has had the opportunity to bring new ideas into play and receive help to develop them, says Ronny Saul:

“The accelerator process has given us a clear framework and has prompted us to take time out to work on this project, which is in itself a benefit during a busy week. Secondly, we have met with some razor-sharp minds from both UNDP and Deloitte. This has helped us frame our business case and really work through the whole solution.”

At the same time, the SDG Accelerator for SMEs was also the start of a collaboration between Jespers Torvekøkken and DTU Hardtech - a department under the Danish Technical University, which specialises in the development of innovative hardware and sensors.

“Collaborating with the students is a great opportunity to implement our ideas. Just the fact that we are fusing food production with the latest technology holds great potential. It has also prompted us to contact new external partners and apply for funding, for example through the Danish Innovation Fund.”

The next step for Jespers Torvekøkken is a validation of the prototype that is currently being developed at the Danish Technical University. Understandably, Ronny Saul will not reveal all of the details:

“The whole project depends on whether we can develop effective methods for collecting data about our customers’ habits. It is not enough to ask the customers or to conduct generic analyses. We must go all the way to see if we can measure the content of the individual tray. This is the puzzle that the experts at the university are trying solve.”

If the project is successful, Ronny Saul expects that Jespers Torvekøkken can reduce food waste by at least 10 per cent, equivalent to saving approximately 1.6 million Danish kroner every year:

“There is no doubt that we see a huge business potential in the new technologies. In our own little world alone, the new technologies can result in a significant financial gain. In a global perspective, the possibilities are endless. If we can roll out these solutions to catering companies all over the world, there are potentially billions of dollars at stake.”

Companies that succeed in reducing food waste not only reduce product consumption. They can also significantly reduce production costs and transportation costs and therefore also emissions. However, in order to achieve this, we need greater insight into our customers‘ habits. It is no longer just about making a good buffet. We have to know exactly what is being eaten and at what pace. We must understand what is getting thrown away and why.”

Ronny Saul
CEO, Jespers Torvekøkken