

German farmers struck by drought in heatwave

Host: Good morning and welcome to today’s show. Well, it’s been really hot for the last few days and this was also the case in Germany, where there were record-high temperatures and there was no rainfall from early April to late August, and that has led to a serious drought. Thousands of farmers are now facing bankruptcy because of crop failure. This week, the government pledged 340 million euros in aid. For many, that’s not enough. As Jane Nicholson reports, German farmers are starting to question whether they will be able to cope with climate change in future.

Jane Nicholson, byline: Farmer Tim Knobloch and his son are tilling the fields on their farm in Lower Saxony. The soil they’re cultivating is some of Germany’s richest. But this year it’s turned to dust, and as a result, arable yields are down. Knobloch Sr says he waited to sell his wheat until prices went up, and that’s helped him avoid disaster.

Tim Knobloch: While we harvested far less wheat than usual, the price exploded, and I was able to sell what I had at a 25 per cent mark-up. So I’ve only made a 10 per cent loss this year. And I’ve done well compared with other farmers around here.

Jane Nicholson: As he drives past his fields, Knobloch is not as confident about the corn. He points to plants that are only waist-high. He says they should be 10 feet by now. According to the German Farmers Association, 10,000 farms are facing financial ruin. Dairy farmers are slaughtering cows because there’s not enough feed. And in some areas, arable farmers have lost up to 70 per cent of their crops.

Bernhard Krüsken: We have to look beyond this summer. There has to be a second level of support. That means we need political measures to increase the resilience of farms.

Jane Nicholson: Bernhard Krüsken is general secretary of Germany’s largest farming lobby. He wants tax breaks for farmers and a detailed strategy about how to deal with climate change.

Bernhard Krüsken: What we’re seeing now is that farmers are paying the bill for other people’s emissions. We are ... we are making the point that agriculture can provide the solution to manage climate change.

Jane Nicholson: Back at the farmhouse, Knobloch says he constantly adapts how he farms because of climate change.

Tim Knobloch: We try to play our part here. I introduced crop rotation because it’s much better for the soil. And the corn we produce is turned into biogas. So we spray as little nitrogen as possible. And even our tractors are the latest fuel-efficient models. Frankly, ... I’m not sure what else I can do.

Jane Nicholson: Germany’s agriculture minister, Julia Klöckner, has promised farmers up to 340 million euros in financial aid. It’s a far cry from the billion euros demanded by the farmers’ lobby, but the minister says she has to justify it to taxpayers who could end up paying extra for food anyway.

Julia Klöckner: There’s no need for panic. Supermarket shelves are still full. But some supermarkets are already cashing in and raising prices. Farmers are not profiting from these increased margins. I am appealing to all parties to play fair.

Jane Nicholson: At a busy farmers’ market in Berlin, vegetable stallholder Tom Schirmer says he’s trying to cushion his regular customers from the effects of the drought.

Tom Schirmer: Take a look at these potatoes. They should be much bigger. But potatoes need water, so this is as big as they’re going to get this year, which is bad news for a nation of potato eaters.

Jane Nicholson: It's not only French fries that are set to go up in price. Breweries are worried about a shortage of barley and have warned that the shortfall will be reflected in the price of that other German staple – beer. For NPR News, I'm Jane Nicholson in Berlin.

2 b Aspect: survival stories

Track 3 + 4

Three things I learned while my plane crashed

Imagine a big explosion as you climb through 3,000 feet. Imagine a plane full of smoke. Imagine an engine going *clack, clack, clack* ... It sounds scary.

Well, I had a unique seat that day. I was sitting in 1D. I was the only one who could talk to the flight attendants. So I looked at them right away, and they said, "No problem. We probably hit some birds." The pilot had already turned the plane around, and we weren't that far. You could see Manhattan. Two minutes later, three things happened at the same time.

The pilot lines up the plane with the Hudson River. That's usually not the route. (*Laughter*)

He turns off the engines. Now, imagine being in a plane with no sound. And then he says three words. The most unemotional three words I've ever heard. He says, "Brace for impact." I didn't have to talk to the flight attendant anymore. (*Laughter*)

I could see in her eyes, it was real, it was horrible. Life was over. Now I wanna share with you three things I learned about myself that day. I learned that it all changes in an instant. We have this bucket list, we have these things we wanna do in life, and I thought about all the people I wanted to reach out to that I didn't, all the fences I wanted to mend, all the experiences I wanted to have and I never did. As I thought about that later on, I came up with a saying, which is, "I collect bad wines." Because if the wine is ready and the person is there, I'm opening it. I no longer want to postpone anything in my life. And that urgency, that purpose, has really changed my life.

The second thing I learned that day – and this is as we clear the *George Washington Bridge*, which was ... by not a lot ... (*Laughter*) ... I thought, *Wow, I really feel one real regret. I've lived a good life. In my own humanity and mistakes, I've tried to get better at everything I tried. But in my humanity, I also allow my ego to get in.* And I regretted the time I wasted on things that did not matter with people that matter. And I thought about my relationship with my wife, with my friends, with people. And after that, as I reflected on that, I decided to eliminate negative energy from my life. It's not perfect, but it's a lot better. I've not had a fight with my wife in two years. It feels great. I no longer try to be right; I choose to be happy.

The third thing I learned – and this is as your mental clock starts going, "15, 14, 13, ..." You can see the water coming. I'm saying, "Please blow up." I don't want this thing to break into 20 pieces like you've seen in those documentaries. And as we're coming down, I had a sense of, *Wow, dying is not scary. It's almost like we've been preparing for it our whole lives.* But it was very sad. I didn't want to go; I love my life. And that sadness really framed in one thought, which is, I only wish for one thing. I only wish I could see my kids grow up. About a month later, I was at a performance by my daughter – first-grader, not much artistic talent ... (*Laughter*) ... Yet! (*Laughter*)

And I'm bawling, I'm crying, like a little kid. And it made all the sense in the world to me. I realised at that point, by connecting those two dots, that the only thing that matters in my life is being a great dad. Above all, the only goal I have in life is to be a good dad.

I was given the gift of a miracle, of not dying that day. I was given another gift, which was to be able to see into the future and come back and live differently. I challenge you guys who are flying today, imagine the same thing happens on your plane – and please don't, but imagine – how would you change? What would you get done that you're waiting to get done because you think you'll be here forever? How would you change your relationships and the negative energy in them? And more than anything, are you being the best parent you can? – Thank you. (*Applause*)

Insulin's high cost leads to lethal rationing

Scott Simon, host: In June, Nicole Smith-Holt lost her 26-year-old son Alec when he couldn't afford the insulin he needed to treat his diabetes. Since his death, Smith-Holt has been vocal about the rising price of insulin, which has more than doubled since 2012. Last month, she testified before Senate Democrats in Washington, DC.

Nicole Smith-Holt: I received a call that no parent ever wants to receive or expects to receive. I was told that my son was found dead in his apartment on his bedroom floor. He was found all alone.

Scott Simon: Bram Sable-Smith, who is health policy reporter and host of the podcast *The Workaround*, lives with diabetes, so this story hits close to home for him.

Bram Sable-Smith: Diabetic ketoacidosis is a terrible way to die. It's what happens when you don't have enough insulin. Your blood sugar gets so high that your blood basically turns to acid, your cells dehydrate, and your body stops functioning. Diabetic ketoacidosis is how Nicole Smith-Holt lost her son.

Nicole Smith-Holt: It makes me sad. It makes me very angry. It makes me feel frustrated. It shouldn't have happened.

Bram Sable-Smith: I met Nicole earlier this year when I started wondering why my own insulin prices were going up. In 2011, I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, which is what Nicole's son Alec had, too. Most people's bodies create insulin, which regulates the sugar in your blood. Us Type 1 diabetics have to buy our insulin at a pharmacy because our pancreases stopped producing it. My first vial cost \$ 24.56 after insurance. Now I pay more than \$ 80. That's nothing compared to what Alec was up against when he turned 26 and aged off his mom's insurance.

Nicole Smith-Holt: He had gone to the pharmacy prior to losing my insurance to get an estimate of, you know, how much he should plan for and they told him, \$ 1,300.

Bram Sable-Smith: That's \$ 1,300 every month without insurance for diabetes supplies – most of that for insulin. There are many reasons why insulin prices are rising so high. Patents have pretty much kept generics off the market. Middlemen in the supply chain take their cuts. The Eli Lilly Company, one of those so-called big three insulin makers, didn't make anyone available for an interview. But a spokesman noted the rise of high deductible health plans is exposing more patients to higher prices. Alec encountered those higher deductibles when he was shopping for insurance in Minnesota. His \$ 35,000 salary was too high for Medicaid, and too high for Obamacare subsidies. What he found was a plan that cost \$ 450 a month with a \$ 7,600 deductible.

Nicole Smith-Holt: At first, he didn't realize what a deductible was because he was like, "I can make it work. Maybe I'll pick a part-time job, you know, and help cover the cost". And I'm like, "But you have to pay the \$ 7,600 out of pocket before your insurance is even going to kick in".

Bram Sable-Smith: Alec decided going uninsured would be more manageable, but he didn't make it one month. His family thinks he was rationing insulin, taking less than he needed to try to make it last till he could buy more. He died three days before payday. Rationing is a dangerous solution, but 1 in 4 diabetics admits to having done it. I've done it. Actually, a lot of Alec's story sounds familiar to me. We were both diagnosed at age 23 – that's pretty old. And then there's this.

Nicole Smith-Holt: I've had people actually comment online that he should have married his girlfriend for insurance. I'm like, *Really?* It's, like, *What's wrong with that?* I'm sure you've thought about that too, right?

Bram Sable-Smith: It's crossed my mind.

Nicole Smith-Holt: (*Laughter*).

Bram Sable-Smith: It's more than crossed my mind. I'll be freelancing soon, without benefits. So my fiancé, Emma, and I did get married, last weekend, one year before our actual wedding, so I can get insured. Talking about Alec doesn't get any less painful for his mother.

Nicole Smith-Holt: The reality of the situation – it hurts every time I have to share this story, but I know that I am doing it for a good cause.

Bram Sable-Smith: It is worth sharing, she says, so long as it helps someone who hears it. For NPR News, I'm Bram Sable-Smith.

2 d Aspect: creator burnout

Track 7 + 8

The relentless pace of satisfying fans is burning out some YouTube stars

Mary Louise Kelly, host: Good morning. Today we're going to examine the gap between how we portray ourselves online and who we really are.

The story of Hollywood is rife with stories of celebrities who broke down under pressure to perform and please their fans. Well, that is happening to some YouTube stars these days. As Laura Sydell reports, the pressure has reached new heights in the age of social media algorithms.

Laura Sydell, byline: Being a YouTube star sounds glamorous to a lot of young people – fame, money, fun.

Elle Mills: Being a YouTuber is, like, my childhood dream.

Laura Sydell: And at 20 years old, Elle Mills has achieved her dream. She has more than 1.3 million subscribers to her YouTube channel. Her 2 1/2- to 6-minute videos are characterized by a self-deprecating humor somewhere between Lena Dunham in *Girls* and a Woody Allen film. Here she is after an attempt to levitate her childhood home.

Elle Mills: Getting a group of teenagers to blow up 4,000 balloons and put them on my roof might have been a bit too ambitious. ... Let's just say the end result was a bit underwhelming.

Laura Sydell: Elle Mills makes a living from selling her branded merchandise, hoodies and T-shirts with her signature logos, Canada's maple leaf – she's Canadian –, a soda pop bottle and a camera. She had deals with Samsung and Wendy's, and she tours to meet fans. That's on top of producing the videos, which can take 60-plus hours to shoot, produce and edit. While TV and film stars can take a break when the filming's over, Mills feels the pressure to post every week so she can keep her fans engaged.

Elle Mills: Yeah, I definitely was feeling drained because I was trying to pump out an amazing video once every two weeks or, like, once every week. And that's just not attainable, especially with the hours that go into each video.

Laura Sydell: It was not just the 60 to 70 hours a week that burned out Issa Tweimeh, known as *issa twaimz* to his viewers. He dropped out of college at 19 to pursue YouTube full-time. He enjoyed making up silly songs like the *The Llama Song*. That video got over 33 million views. *Twaimz* is now 23. He's changed over four years. He's now more interested in putting a positive message into the world than just getting clicks.

Issa Tweimeh: I felt like people wanted me to do this one thing, and I was growing up and getting older. And I was like, ... I think I'm getting too old to be doing the same thing over and over again.

Laura Sydell: *Twaimz* fell into a depression. He still wanted to make videos. But he wanted to change his style, and the relentless pace of YouTube didn't give him the time to do that. Taking a break from your own YouTube channel can be risky. Jon Brencce, the director of talent at Fullscreen, helps manage careers for YouTube stars. Brencce says he's noticed that YouTube's algorithm favors those who post regularly.

Jon Brence: So, if you're not actively creating or if you're going on a trip and you haven't actively created content to publish during said trip, you will go effectively back to the back of the line.

Laura Sydell: In a statement, YouTube says it does not program to favor people who post more often. However, viewers on YouTube may prefer channels that post more often, and that does impact what the algorithm favors. Still, the company knows there's a problem. It's even got a whole section on YouTube where creators can get information about burnout and watch videos like this one about noticing the signs of it. However, YouTube also offers suggestions on how to avoid burnout and live a balanced life. Despite the risk of losing some of her audience, Elle Mills says she had to take a break.

Elle Mills: To be honest, at that point, I needed that break so badly that it didn't really matter.

Laura Sydell: In a moment of desperation, she turned to her fans to explain it to them.

Elle Mills: Now, I don't wanna worry anyone. I am getting the help I need, and I have a bunch of people looking after me. And I will be putting my mental health first for a bit.

Laura Sydell: Talent manager Brence says for certain stars like Mills, turning to her fans helps.

Jon Brence: She has a fan base that cares about her first and foremost. And when she's saying, "I'm gonna take a break," they're willing to take the break with her.

Laura Sydell: But Jon Brence says there are other stars who are much more dependent on the algorithm. Brence says some stars just burn bright and then burn out after two years, and you never hear from them again. Elle Mills says after one month off traveling and talking with friends and family, she's back and feeling better. On her return, Mills once again opened up to her fans.

Elle Mills: As long as I am having fun and I am passionate about what I'm making, everything's going to be alright. And now I finally feel content again.

Laura Sydell: And Mills says her fans have come back along with her. Laura Sydell, NPR News.

2 e Aspect: data collection

Track 9 + 10

Could the 10-year challenge on social media be putting your data at risk?

Lulu Garcia-Navarro, Host: Have you ever posted a picture of yourself from 10 years ago, side by side with a picture of you today? It's a thing that's quite popular on Facebook and Instagram these days. And our next guest says that you should think twice before joining in on things like the 10-year challenge on social media. Kate O'Neill explained her opinion on *wired.com*. She's an author and tech consultant. And she joins us now from New York. Welcome.

Kate O'Neill: Thank you.

Garcia-Navarro: So, we should be clear, Facebook says it didn't start this meme and that people are using photos already on Facebook. But you're saying it's more about how people should think about the potential for misuse.

O'Neill: Yeah, exactly. The particular scenario I talked about in my *Wired* article was the potential that someone could mine that data and use it to train a facial recognition algorithm.

Garcia-Navarro: What makes you really nervous about facial recognition technology in particular?

O'Neill: Yeah, and I mentioned three types of scenarios. One I described as *benign*. And that's the scenario where, you know, it could be used to help with recognising the progression of age in children who have been lost. So the police in New Delhi, India, had used facial recognition technology in an experiment for just four days. And they had recognised 3,000 kids who were missing. But the more mundane scenario and the more common scenario is advertising. More than likely, this will become commonplace where displays can have some sort of camera or sensor that can recognise visual characteristics and serve up a more relevant ad, which will be better performing for the business who's

advertising, which is potentially good, too, for us as consumers – that we’ll see more relevant messaging. But then as that kind of data kind of blends with everything else that’s downstream from that – all the location data, all of our movements and tracking through the world, all of our financial information, everything that’s out there about us – that does start to pose, I think, some risky consequences.

And then there was one last scenario that I had talked about, which was the potential that facial recognition, in particular age progression uses of facial recognition, could be used to, say, assess your risk for health-related problems and could say, maybe you’re not a good candidate for health insurance.

Garcia-Navarro: It’s so hard, though, right? Because I see those memes pop up. And I’m like, *Oh. This is fun. Look at those pictures. It’s so funny. Let me go.* – I was, in fact, just looking back at my Facebook pictures from ten years ago because I was like, *Oh, wow.* I’d forgotten that happened. And ... and yet we’re having to learn how to protect ourselves more on social media.

O’Neill: You’re right. And it is – and I absolutely want us to have fun. And I want us to connect with each other. And I think that’s what the benefit of technology is. So, yeah – let’s participate. Let’s have fun. Let’s communicate, stay connected with our friends and family. But I ... I think one note of caution is we can look out for opportunities when we’re being encouraged to tag photos of ourselves. That’s one way we can opt out and maybe not always tag every photo with every face. We cannot necessarily participate in every game or meme that asks us to provide data about ourselves in structured, specific ways.

Garcia-Navarro: I’m assuming that you didn’t do the 10-year challenge.

O’Neill: Hm ... Well, my 10-year challenge response was the one that – that was the tweet that kind of started the whole thing that said, you know, 10 years ago, I probably would have participated and shared my photos. And now I look at it as an opportunity for harvesting all that data for a facial recognition training process.

Garcia-Navarro: I see.

O’Neill: Right.

Garcia-Navarro: That’s Kate O’Neill. She’s the author of the book *Tech Humanist*. Thank you so much.

O’Neill: Thank you.

2 f Aspect: Hindu festivals

Track 11 + 12

Welcome to the world’s largest gathering of humans

Simon Bings, Host: The biggest gathering of human beings anywhere in the world has kicked off in India. It’s the Kumbh Mela, an ancient Hindu pilgrimage to dip in the waters of the Ganges River. Up to 120 million people are expected to do so by March – among them, this past week, NPR’s India correspondent Lauren Frayer.

(Soundbite of music)

Lauren Frayer, Byline: There’s a huge, red sun just peeking out over the horizon. And I’m crushed in with men dressed in orange sarongs. They’re draped in garlands of marigolds. Sign of the times – these Hindu monks are also taking selfies on the way to the Ganges River. The Kumbh Mela happens every 12 years with dates set according to the stars and planets. This one is a half- Kumbh, six years since the last. But it’s expected to be the biggest yet. Organizers say 15 million people showed up on the first day. They included naked, dread-locked, holy men, families with infants and foreign tourists, like Santiago Merodio – on a spiritual journey from his native Spain. Do you feel anything here?

Santiago Merodio: I'm an atheist. But because of this, it's like changing my point of view a little bit. So I was coming here to see what I was feeling. Yeah. Yesterday, I got lost, but I didn't find anything. And ...

Lauren Frayer: Do you mean that metaphorically, like you're still searching for something?

Santiago Merodio: Yeah. I'm searching. I'm searching for something. I think there must be something there.

Lauren Frayer: I've made it through these crowds down to the banks of the Ganges River. They have lined the banks with sandbags so that it's easy to step down into the waters. But it's chilly. And people are dunking in here. You can see that they're absolutely shivering – you know, dunking and then running out. There's a little boy next to me who's just blue lips and shaking.

Niraj Shukla: The water's, you know, very cold all day. So but once you have a bath, it's sort of a miracle, you know?

Lauren Frayer: Engineer-turned-pilgrim Niraj Shukla says the waters wash away sin.

Niraj Shukla: You have work. You have tension. You seem to have committed some wrongdoings. You know this thing deep down inside. Now you come over here. You take a dip. You feel that, you know, I'm in the company of some holy people, some saints. And then you, ... you know, step into this holy water. And you feel inside that you have – you know, you've cleansed yourself. And now I'm going back to my home as a new person, you know?

Lauren Frayer: This holy water is found at the confluence of three rivers, the Ganges, the Yamuna – two of India's biggest rivers – and the Saraswati, a river some believe flows underground here. Another pilgrim, Gitanjali Verma, says she was awestruck by this flow of humanity down to the riverside. Is there a message to the rest of the world that we can take from this?

Gitanjali Verma: What should I say? We can show the unity, you know?

Lauren Frayer: Peacefully and ...

Gitanjali Verma: Yes, peacefully. Truth is there. Devotion is there and the purity of mind and heart. That's it.

Unidentified pilgrims: (*Chanting in foreign language*).

Lauren Frayer: The Kumbh Mela festival lasts through March 4th. Lauren Frayer, NPR News, on the banks of the Ganges River in India.

2 g Aspect: virtual assistants in education

Track 13 + 14

Alexa can help kids with their homework

Debbie Greene, host: There's a video that went viral on Twitter recently. It has a mom sneaking up on her 6-year-old son as he's doing his math homework. And she catches him asking *Alexa*, Amazon's smart speaker, for help: "Alexa, what's five minus three?" – Well, *Alexa* gives him the answer. And his mom, who's listening in the background, chastises him. This is all pretty cute. But it gets at a deeper question, right? As kids have more access to virtual assistance, does that interfere with the learning process? Here's NPR's Jasmine Garsd.

Jasmine Garsd, byline: Clint Hill is an English teacher at Patrick Henry High School in Roanoke, Virginia. He says in his classroom, this often happens.

Clint Hill: Kids quietly talking into their phones and asking Google or other services, "*Hey. How do you spell ...*" – some complicated word that they don't know.

Jasmine Garsd: Hill, who co-hosts the education podcast *Schooled Ya!*, says he actually doesn't mind.

Clint Hill: I struggle with spelling. And spell check on my word processor has been a lifesaver for me. And I think being able to use those technological aids is not hurting anybody. I think it is just

improving our ability to use our brains for other things.

Jasmine Garsd: This is one of the big debates in education today. On the one hand, why deprive kids of technology most adults use every day? But some experts say it's not just about learning basic math or spelling.

Diane Levin: One of the best gifts we can give our children is doing that kind of problem-solving together ...

Jasmine Garsd: Diane Levin is a professor of applied human development at Boston University and the founder of the nonprofit TRUCE, or Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment.

Diane Levin: Because they will use those skills that they're learning for all kinds of things that come along, where, if they're good problem-solvers, they'll do better than kids who just try to go to a screen to get the answer.

Jasmine Garsd: Levin believes not allowing a child to even struggle a little for the answers leads to what she calls 'Problem Solving Deficit Disorder'. Dimitri Christakis is the director of the Center for Child Health, Behavior and Development at Seattle's Children's Research Institute.

Dimitri Christakis: There is reason to be concerned but not panicked. And there's also reason to be optimistic and hopeful. It's really about how we deploy these technologies.

Jasmine Garsd: Christakis says every wave of technology elicits a panic about its effects on children and nostalgia over a more wholesome past. He also points out that a child watching television – it's a completely passive experience. And he says, for children, the interactive aspect of new technology ...

Dimitri Christakis: It helps them understand how the world works. And whereas watching television, of course, doesn't allow that to happen because you play no role in the content, interacting with touchscreens and, for that matter, interacting with these voice-activated technologies, allows that to happen in spades.

Jasmine Garsd: Still, he agrees that this debate is about much more than knowing what five minus three is. It's about developing the patience to solve problems.

Dimitri Christakis: That ability to stay focused, particularly when something is not interesting, is one of the most important developmental skills that children acquire.

Jasmine Garsd: In other words, it's not just about having the answers. It's about the work you put in to get them. Jasmine Garsd, NPR News, New York.

2 h Aspect: classic brands

Track 15 + 16

From Campbell's to Kellogg's, classic brands are feeling the crunch

Audie Cornish, host: The world of mainstream consumer brands is in a slow-motion transformation. The companies that make products such as Campbell's Soup, Gillette razors, Crest toothpaste and Dove soap are going through major corporate changes, restructuring and hiring new CEOs. NPR's Alina Selyukh reports these mainstream brands are facing the challenge of adjusting to new shopping habits.

Alina Selyukh, byline: Think about the last time you went to the supermarket. You probably spent no more than a few seconds choosing from all the different brands of toothpaste or frozen peas or oatmeal. In retail, this is called, dramatically, the first moment of truth. For brands, these few seconds used to be their holy grail, but in the past decade, shoppers started saying they'd go by other things.

Juliet McFadden: Usually I buy what's cheapest. Like, I'm not a brand person.

Alina Selyukh: That's Juliet McFadden. She's an office manager in Boston, and she's 23. She's just starting to build her finances and lifelong shopping habits. This makes her a huge target for companies like Procter & Gamble, Kraft Heinz and General Mills, but she is not easy to win over.

Juliet McFadden: I'm not a cereal person. I just usually don't eat breakfast. I don't really drink soda ever. I don't like the yogurts with a ton of sugar in them that are super sweet. Paper towels are expensive. Stuff like that adds up. We have reusable, like, rags that we use and then wash.

Alina Selyukh: McFadden's generation often gets the blame here, the tired trope about millennials killing breakfast cereals or napkins or canned tuna. But really, most Americans could make a similar list. Maybe you choose the store brand of toilet paper, buy a fancier condiment instead of Hellmann's mayo, order eco-friendly diapers on the Internet. Here's David Luttenberger of market research firm Mintel.

David Luttenberger: Rather than just relying on brand familiarity, consumers buy today what performs for them. They are much less brand loyal, and they are more driven by performance, by convenience, by price.

Alina Selyukh: At least two major things have changed us as shoppers. During the last recession, Americans warmed up to cheaper off-brand products like generic or store brands, and then they kept buying them even as the economy improved. And, of course, the Internet has completely shaken up our shopping. Think about how people used to learn about new brands. Only the biggest companies could afford catchy prime time TV ads. And so the boomer generation of shoppers grew up reaching for classic American brands. Now, Campbell's Soup, that symbol of the postwar era of processed foods, is restructuring as Americans are demanding fresher foods with pronounceable ingredients. Kraft Heinz got rid of artificial preservatives and dyes from its mac and cheese. Procter & Gamble lowered the price of Gillette razors for the first time in years to compete with the online start-ups like Dollar Shave Club. Unilever bought that start-up, Dollar Shave Club. The mainstream brands are being squeezed by rivals that are both cheaper and more personalized.

Professor Americus Reed: They're in a bit of a pickle.

Alina Selyukh: Americus Reed is a marketing professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. He says legacy brands have to both stay true to themselves for the older, loyal customers, but also attract new shoppers somehow.

Professor Americus Reed: It is a big challenge to reinvent yourself over and over again, right? You look at just, like, in the music industry, very few artists can continue being successful in the sophomore and junior album. You know, you have iconic artists like Madonna who can just reinvent herself every single time and speak to new audiences.

Alina Selyukh: But it is extremely hard to do when you're not Madonna, you're Campbell's Soup.
Alina Selyukh, NPR News.

2 i Aspect: energy affordability

Track 17 + 18

How we can make energy more affordable for low-income families

So, as a child, I used to spend all of my time at my great-grandmother's house. On hot, humid summer days, I would dash across the floor and stick my face in front of her only air conditioner. Looking back, that simple experience, though brief, was a privileged one in our community. During the winter, struggling to get warm, my neighbors would have no choice but to bypass the meter after their heat was shut off, just to keep their family comfortable for one more day. These kinds of dangerous incidents can take root when people are faced with impossible choices.

In the US, the average American spends three percent of their income on energy. In contrast, low-income and rural populations can spend 20, or even 30 percent of their income on energy. Last year, this caused over 25 million people to skip meals to provide power to their homes. This is when energy becomes a burden. But energy burdens are so much more than just a number. They present impossible and perilous choices: Do

you take your child to get her flu medicine, or do you feed her? Or do you keep her warm? It's an impossible choice, and nearly every month, seven million people choose between medicine and energy.

This exposes a much larger and systemic issue. Families with high energy burdens are disproportionately people of color. Nurses, veterans and even schoolteachers fall into the mass of 37 million people a year who are unable to afford energy for their most basic needs. As a result, those with high energy burdens have a greater likelihood of conditions like heart disease and asthma.

Look, given our rockets to Mars and our pocket-sized AI, we have the tools to address these systemic inequities. The technology is here. The cost of renewables, insulation, microgrids and smart home technology is all decreasing. However, even as we approach cost parity, the majority of those who own solar earn much more than the average American. This is why, when I was 22, I founded the nonprofit RETI. Our mission is to alleviate energy burdens by working with communities, utilities and government agencies alike to provide equitable access to clean energy, energy efficiency and energy technology.

But there's no one way to solve this. I believe in the power of local communities, in the transformative effect of relationships. So we start by working directly with the communities that have the highest energy burdens. We host workshops and events for communities to learn about energy poverty, and how making even small updates to their homes like better insulation for windows and water heaters can go a long way to maximize efficiency. We're connecting neighborhoods to community solar, and spearheading community-led smart home research and installation programs to help families bring down their energy bills. We're even working directly with elected officials, advocating for more equitable pricing, because to see this vision of energy equity and resilience succeed, we have to work closely together for more sustainability.

Now, the US spends over three billion a year on energy bill payment assistance. And these programs do help millions of people, but they're only able to help a fraction of those in need. In fact, there is a 47-billion-dollar home-energy affordability gap, so assistance alone is not sustainable. But by building energy equity and resilience into our communities, we can assure fair and impartial access to energy that is clean, reliable and affordable. At scale, microgrid technology, clean technology and energy efficiency dramatically improve public health. And for those with high energy burdens, it can help them reclaim 20 percent of their income – 20 percent of a person's income who's struggling to make ends meet. This is life-changing. This is an opportunity for families to use their energy savings to sponsor their future.

I think back to my great-grandmother and her neighbors, the impossible choices that they had to make and the effect it had on our whole community. But this is not just about them. There are millions nationwide having to make the same impossible choices today. And I know high energy burdens are a tremendous barrier to overcome, but through relationships with communities and technology, we have the paths to overcome them. And when we do, we will all be more resilient. Thank you. *(Applause)*

2j Aspect: marine pollution

Track 19 + 20

Teenage diver finds tons of golf balls rotting off California

Mary Louise Kelly, host: Divers in California have stumbled on an unexpected source of plastic waste in the ocean – golf balls that come from coastal golf courses. Golf balls contain plastic and can emit toxic chemicals. And as NPR's Christopher Joyce reports, there are lots of them underwater, something discovered by a 16-year-old diver named Alex Weber.

Alex Weber: My dad – he raised me underwater.

Christopher Joyce, byline: Alex Weber is a free diver. She just holds her breath. Two years ago near Carmel, California, she and her father were diving in the Pacific just offshore from a golf course. She looked down and saw something weird.

Alex Weber: You couldn't see the sand. It was completely white.

Christopher Joyce: Golf balls.

Alex Weber: You look down, and you're like, *What are YOU doing here?*

Christopher Joyce: Thousands of golf balls.

Alex Weber: It felt like a shot to the heart.

Christopher Joyce: She was offended. She decided she'd haul them up. She put them in her family's garage.

Alex Weber: I had all of these golf balls in my garage, and they stunk. And I had no idea why.

Christopher Joyce: Then she heard about a scientist who studied plastic waste in the ocean. His name was Matt Savoca from Stanford University. She emailed him. And he came to look at her collection.

Alex Weber: Thousands of golf balls just sitting in the garage. He said I should write a paper about this. And I was like, *Matt, I'm 16 years old. I don't know how to write a scientific paper.*

Christopher Joyce: He said he'd help. And that meant diving with her – not easy.

Matt Savoca: The oceans off California are actually quite cold, and so you suit up in a pretty thick wet suit. It's incredibly demanding physically.

Christopher Joyce: They took kayaks out to ferry the golf balls back.

Alex Weber: We'll have the kayaks so filled with plastic that we'll end up just having to tow the kayaks back, and we'll have to swim it to shore.

Matt Savoca: While we were out there, we would hear *plink, plink*, and then we'd look up on the hill, and there would be golf balls flying in off the course right into the ocean where we were doing some collections actually.

Alex Weber: Whenever we have good conditions, we're able to pull out between about, like, 500 to 5,000 golf balls.

Christopher Joyce: Over two years, they found more than 50,000 golf balls. The source – five golf courses. Three were up at the Carmel River. The golf balls just rolled under water down to the ocean. In the journal *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, the team says chemicals from 50,000 or so golf balls will probably only have a small effect on the ocean, but they do degrade into microplastic pieces that marine animals could eat. Alex Weber says if those golf balls floated, people would be shocked.

Alex Weber: If a person could see what we see underwater, they would be shocked.

Christopher Joyce: Christopher Joyce, NPR News.

Textnachweis Listening tracks (MP3s)

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