



HAL
open science

**Valorising olive waste and by-products in the
Mediterranean region: a socio-economic perspective**
Mechthild Donner, Taoufik Yatribi, Yamna Erraach, Feliu López-I-Gelats,
Judit Manuel, Ivana Radic, Sandrine Costa, Fatima El Hadad-Gauthier

► **To cite this version:**

Mechthild Donner, Taoufik Yatribi, Yamna Erraach, Feliu López-I-Gelats, Judit Manuel, et al.. Valorising olive waste and by-products in the Mediterranean region: a socio-economic perspective. 8th International conference on sustainable solid waste management, Jun 2021, Thessaloniki, Greece. hal-03275085

HAL Id: hal-03275085

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-03275085v1>

Submitted on 30 Jun 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Valorising olive waste and by-products in the Mediterranean region: a socio-economic perspective

M. Donner¹, T. Yatribi², Y. Erraach³, F. López-i-Gelats⁴, J. Manuel⁴, I. Radic¹, S. Costa¹, F. El Hadad-Gauthier⁵

¹ INRAE, UMR MOISA, 2 Place Pierre Viala, 34060 Montpellier, France

² ENA Meknès, S/40, Meknes 50000, Morocco

³ INAT, Avenue Charles Nicolle, Tunis 1082, Tunisia

⁴ University of Vic, C. Sagrada Família, 7, 08500 Vic, Spain

⁵ CIHEM-IAMM, 3191, Route de Mende, 34093 Montpellier, France

Keywords: circular economy; olive sector; socio-economics; multi-actor approach; Mediterranean region

Presenting author email: mechthild.donner@inrae.fr

In the Mediterranean region, the agrifood sector is considered as strategic for the socio-economic development in terms of employment and incomes, and as part of the cultural heritage. However, the increase in agricultural production, often through intensification and costly external inputs, is leading to negative externalities on the social and natural environment, such as abandonment of small-scale farmers, loss of biodiversity, land degradation, or greenhouse gas emissions (Antonelli *et al*, 2019). Agriculture is the main water consumer in this region where its scarcity requires intelligent agricultural growth schemes and efficient usage of all agro-resources produced (Capone *et al*, 2016). Moreover, agricultural and food waste and losses deteriorate the efficiency of the food chains and therefore contribute to food and nutrition insecurity (Di Terlizzi *et al*, 2016). There is a need for a more coherent and rational agrifood system.

This project seeks to address this challenge with a particular emphasis on the olive sector, which contributes with nearly 10 million hectares of plantation and cultivation and more than 2,5 million tons of olive oil produced per year in Europe and Africa (Vilar & Pereira, 2018) significantly to revenues and employment, especially in Mediterranean rural areas. More specifically, the project aims to understand the socio-economic processes and conditions under which groups of farmers and food SMEs develop new circular business models for valorising olive waste (wood, leaves and branches) and by-products (olive pomace and olive mill wastewater). Huge waste streams are generated by olive pruning and olive oil processing, amounting up to an estimated 21,4 million tons/year in the European producer countries alone (Berbel & Posadillo, 2018). These olive waste and by-products have the potential to be converted into new value-added and marketable ingredients and products, such as bioenergy and bio-fertilizers, bio-based materials, food and feed additives, or nutraceuticals (Roselló-Soto *et al*, 2015). A review of existing literature on circular economy principles and practices within the olive domain shows a strong focus on chemical or biotechnical aspects of waste and by-product treatment and valorisation (e.g. Galanakis, 2017), while a socio-economic perspective on this topic is very sparse.

In order to identify major success factors, opportunities and bottlenecks for valorising waste and by-products from the Mediterranean olive sector, an analysis of the conditions and processes is done at three different interconnected action levels: (i) at a macro-level, agricultural and environmental policies regarding waste and by-product valorisation are reviewed in Spain, France, Morocco and Tunisia; (ii) at a meso-level, case studies are performed on circular business models within olive oil-producing groups of farmers and food SMEs; and (iii) at a micro-level, individual farmers' and consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards olive waste and by-product valorisation are investigated.

First, results show that some policies and regulations for the protection of the environment and waste treatment exist in the four studied countries, but a common regulatory basis for olive by-product management is lacking and the treatment of olive waste is not regulated at all. It also seems that real political incentives and financial measures to actively support olive waste and by-product valorisation are yet insufficient. Second, while all resources of the olive tree and olive oil production process have the potential to be valorised, value-adding business activities are currently limited to one or several resources (principally by-products), and rather converted into low added-value (bioenergy or fertilisers). Third, a study conducted in Catalonia points out that small-scale olive farmers tend to apply some kind of circular economy strategies, however, mostly driven by the aim to get rid of their waste problem, rather than participating in cohesive circular production models that potentially create additional incomes. Fourth, a number of qualitative consumer interviews in Tunisia indicate that consumers are

aware of the olive waste and by-product problem and even know about their valorisation opportunities, but rarely use e.g. soap and cosmetics issued from olive residues.

Based on the project's final results, recommendations will be developed and shared with olive oil farmers, processors, and policymakers, with the aim to contribute to improving and innovating policies and practices for sustainable usage of all olive resources in the Mediterranean area. Continuous exchange and cooperation between different actors at various action levels seem crucial for co-creating value out of olive waste and by-products.

References

- Antonelli, M., Basile, L., Gagliardi, F., Riccaboni, A., Isernia, P. (2019). *The AGRIFOODMED Delphi Final Report. Trends, challenges and policy options for Water Management, Farming Systems and Agri-food Value Chains in 2020-2030*. PRIMA document, available online : <http://www.primaitaly.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AGRIFOODMED-Delphi-Final-Report.pdf>
- Berbel, J., Posadillo, A. (2018). Review and analysis of alternatives for the valorisation of agro-industrial olive oil by-products. *Sustainability*, 10, 237. doi:10.3390/su10010237
- Capone, R., Bennett, A., Debs, P., El Bilali, H. (2016). Food losses and waste: global overview from a Mediterranean perspective. In Lacirignola, C., Graziano da Silva, J. (eds.): *Zero waste in the Mediterranean. Natural resources, food and knowledge*. Presses de Sciences Po: Paris, France, pp. 197-254.
- Di Terlizzi, B., Van Otterdijk, R., Dragotta, A., Pink, P., El Bilali, H. (2016). Innovation for the reduction of food losses and waste. In Lacirignola, C., Graziano da Silva, J. (eds.): *Zero waste in the Mediterranean. Natural resources, food and knowledge*. Presses de Sciences Po: Paris, France; pp. 281-301.
- Galanakis, C.M. (2017). *Olive mill waste: recent advances for sustainable management*. Academic Press, Elsevier: London, UK.
- Roselló-Soto, E., Koubaa, M., Moubarik, A., Lopes, R.P., Saraiva, J.A., Boussetta, N., Grimi, N., Barba, F.J. (2015). Emerging opportunities for the effective valorisation of wastes and by-products generated during olive oil production process: Non-conventional methods for the recovery of high-added value compounds. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, 45, 296-310. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2015.07.003>
- Vilar, J., Pereira, J.E. (2018). *International Olive Growing. Historical dissemination, strategic analysis and descriptive vision*. Spain: Fundación Caja Rural: Jaen, Spain.

Acknowledgement

The COLIVE project (www.coliveproject.com) has been funded through ARIMNet2 (ERA-NET grant no. 618127).