

Strategies and Perceptions of Small Olive Oil Farmers of By-Product Valorization

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Abstract : This paper investigates how small olive farmers and olive oil producers implement circular economy practices to manage olive related waste and how such strategies are perceived by the farmers themselves. While there is a lot of data and research about possible uses of olive oil by-products, the perceptions and related practices of olive oil farmers is a much less investigated domain. A total of 60 semi-structured interviews were conducted in one of the most relevant olive oil producing regions in the Iberian Peninsula -the region of Terres de Ponent (Catalonia - Spain) - to examine the different by-product valorization strategies the olive oil farms develop. We test the hypothesis that the strategies conducted depend on the nature and amount of resources available by the farm. The results obtained point that access to milling infrastructure is a determining factor. We also found that olive tree pruning biomass and olive pomace are the most common by-products valorized by farmers, the first one on-farm and the latter in mills. Results indicate that high value uses for olive oil by-products are rarely implemented by farmers. We conclude that olive farmers tend to perceive by-product valorization strategies as waste management practices rather than as additional sources of value for their farm.

Keywords : circular economy, discourses, Mediterranean region, olive oil by-products, farmers' strategies, olive pomace

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