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Unlocking opportunities for processing surplus for Food Banks

Small-scale processing facilities can help Food Banks by turning surplus fruit and vegetables into longer shelf-life products. This pilot explored how mobile units, or local hubs, could manage donation peaks and reduce food waste.

In Flanders, regulations prevent the processing of fruit and vegetables withdrawn from the market, aiming to avoid reintroducing them into commerce. This limits possibilities for waste reduction and support for Food Banks. In contrast, Catalonia allows such processing and allocates funding to cover costs, enabling Food Banks to turn surplus into products like juice.

A major challenge is that Food Banks rarely receive market-withdrawn produce, despite high demand. This is partly due to fragmented responsibilities across departments, leaving no one accountable for facilitating donations.

Key lessons include the need for policy adaptations to allow safe processing, encouraging auctions to donate withdrawn produce, and ensuring financial support for reprocessing costs. This would help Food Banks build sustainable models by covering

external processing expenses. The pilot also aimed to unite policymakers, stakeholders, and Food Banks to find practical solutions for reducing food waste and improving access to nutritious food ■