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## Addressing surplus valorisation gaps through local processing hub

Small-scale processing facilities to valorise surplus fruit and vegetables are often missing in local food systems. This pilot initially explored the use of a mobile unit to address this gap, but found that the current mobile setup used in the pilot needs further development to fully serve its purpose. Therefore, the focus shifted to offering valorisation as a service through a local hub, supporting farmers, cooperatives, local businesses, and startups. Stakeholder interactions revealed a clear lack of local facilities to support innovation and valorisation efforts.

High investment costs are another barrier that limits small players' ability to act on surplus valorisation opportunities. This pilot showed that combining contract manufacturing with expert support for recipe testing, product development, and consulting offers a more viable solution.

Year-round operability and a focus on B2B services, rather than direct-to-consumer models, were also identified as key for long-term financial sustainability.

Additionally, a decision-making tool to guide recipe choices and address the unpredictable nature of surplus availability was developed.

These insights can help cooperatives, regional policymakers, and entrepreneurs create local hubs that lower entry barriers, encourage collaboration, and foster a more innovative agri-food sector ■