

choosing ~ eating ~ Living



Waste Not Want Not?

Horticultural growers are faced with increasing environmental, consumer and legislative pressures to avoid the use of peat. Food-processing companies must also reduce the quantities of food-processing waste that goes to landfill (222 million tonnes per year across Europe). It may be possible to address both challenges together if the food-processing waste can be used to create a high-quality horticultural growing medium as an alternative to peat. Current approaches involve the composting process.

Challenges currently facing the composters are:

- Composting these low-value co-products and wastes usually results in a total breakdown of plant structure
- The final product is generally unsuitable for use on its own as a growing medium
- Emulating the functional characteristics found in peat and prized by growers, such as aeration and good drainage in the composted material.

The Sustainability of the Food Chain Platform and the Microbial Ecology Platform (IFR) seek to develop **high-quality horticultural growing media** through the retention of plant structure in **composted food-processing waste**. The functional characteristics are currently being evaluated through close interaction with professional growers for exploitation in different horticultural sectors.

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