

## Turning waste into money? Innovation makes it possible!

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What is the key ingredient needed to turn waste in to money? Innovation, of course. As a researcher in wine chemistry and wine microbiology, Simona Bisboaca from Oradea (Romania) observed that during the wine-making process, very often the grape seeds, skins and pulp remains were left unused by the local wine-makers. As there were no available solutions for putting these natural residues to use in some way, they were regarded as waste. Ms Bisboaca identified that this so-called waste possessed a significant potential for reuse. As she has always had an interest in the medical benefits of wine anti-oxidants she came up with the idea of developing a pharmaceutical product rich in anti-oxidants. So Ms Bisboaca began to develop a new technology that was able to extract the anti-oxidants in a very high concentration.

It took her eight years and some considerable effort to convince producers and researchers to support her work to obtain the final result. Despite a lack of resources, she was lucky enough to find people willing to help her and the end result was indeed very rewarding. The product she created with the newly developed technology is said to be very useful in the normalisation of cholesterol, glycaemia, blood pressure and bowel transit and has proven anti-ageing benefits. And of course (equally important from an agricultural point of view) it also provides real opportunities for local wine producers to get paid for a by-product that was previously considered as waste.



*Simona Bisboaca, 34, is a Romanian food technology engineer and researcher with a specialisation in oenology. She studied at the University of Agronomical Sciences in Cluj (Romania) and at the University of Bologna (Italy) with an Erasmus programme. She runs her own business in the field of food technology research.*

The first time she participated in the International Salon of Inventions of Warsaw, Ms Bisboaca was awarded the gold medal and granted a special prize from the Association of Inventors of South Korea for the product which was designated by the jury as 'the most powerful antioxidant in the world'.

After launching her product on the market, Simona Bisboaca was touched by the reactions and real life stories from the people benefitting from it. "I cannot tell which is the most touching life story, there were many: from people who are struggling with cardio problems or are facing antitumor treatments. It makes me happy when people let me know about their positive experiences in dealing with their health issues like high cholesterol, blood pressure, varicose veins, peripheral circulation..."

Ms Bisboaca says she has been contacted by doctors who have noticed that the product intensifies the effect of other medicines. "For instance, if someone is following a cholesterol treatment, the results come into view as early as in one month's time. Normally the treatment needs to be carried out for at least 60 days. This is the synergistic effect, it makes medicines more efficient", says the young inventor.



Now that her product can be found in pharmacies all across Romania, Simona Bisboaca is looking to the future and is already developing new innovative ideas. For example, she is now working on a project to create a raw jam that does not require boiling and would better preserve the properties in the fruit. For this purpose she decided to invest in tailor-made machinery needed for the processing even though she cannot tell yet if the result will be successful on the market.

Simona Bisboaca considers that less bureaucracy and increased availability of support are instrumental if innovation is to thrive in agriculture and the food industry. Many difficulties in the developing and testing phase of new ideas could be overcome more easily. Motivating participation of relevant actors is also crucial to go from idea to innovation. In this regard, the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) could be a valuable opportunity for young innovators like Ms Bisboaca. By stimulating bottom-up cooperation, the EIP will effectively enhance the way new entrepreneurial ideas emerge. Furthermore, every time someone decides to test a new product or a new way of doing things, there are investments to be made which involve taking risks. "By supporting this type of investment, the EIP will certainly be an irreplaceable support instrument for innovators at the ground level", Simona Bisboaca confirms.