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Action Plan against Food Waste and Side Stream Valorization: Environmental Relevance and crucial Role of LCA

LCA Discussion Forum in Wädenswil, 6. November 2026

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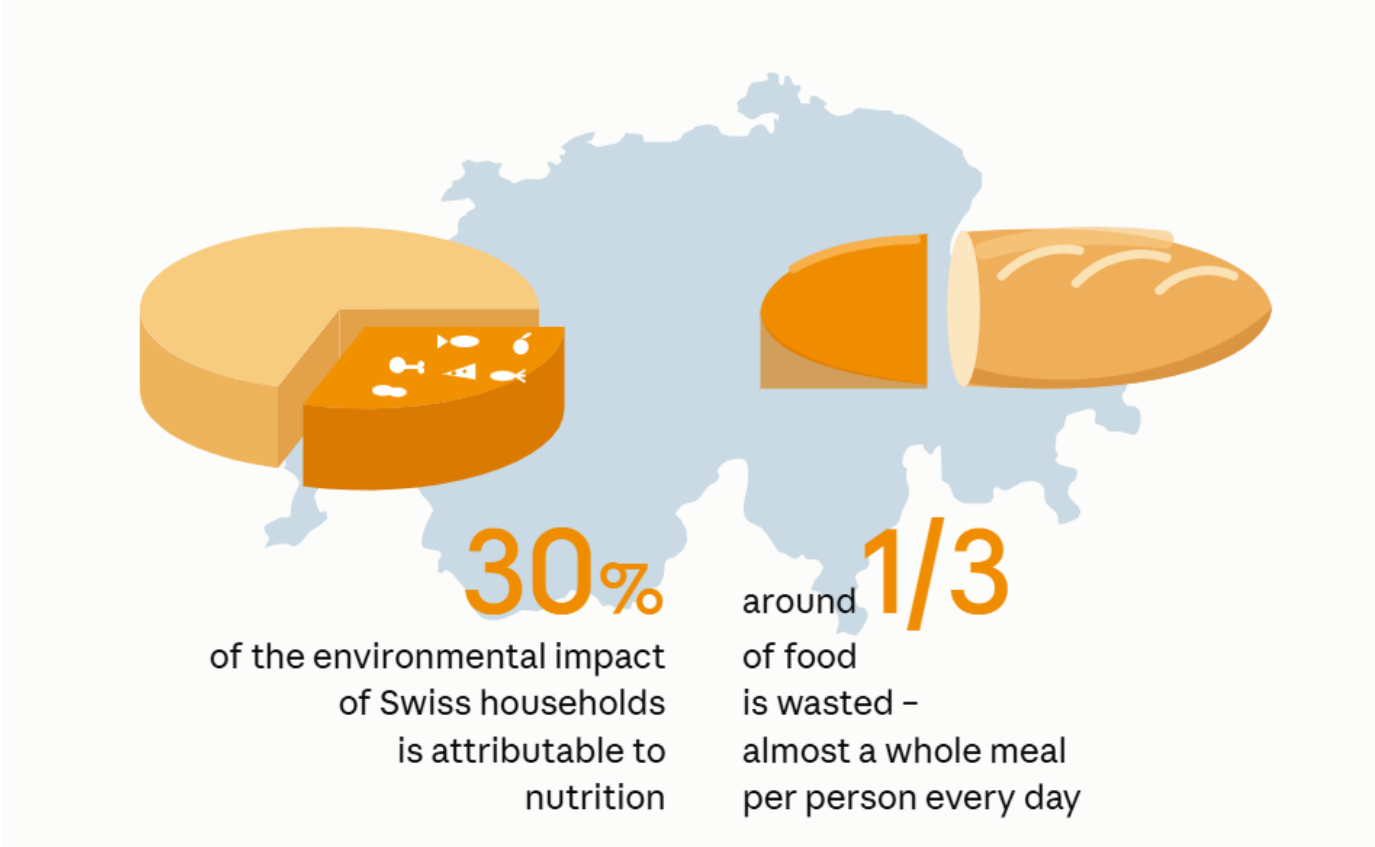
Economics and Innovation, Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN)

Environmental impact of the food system in Switzerland



Objectives of the Action Plan against Food Wase

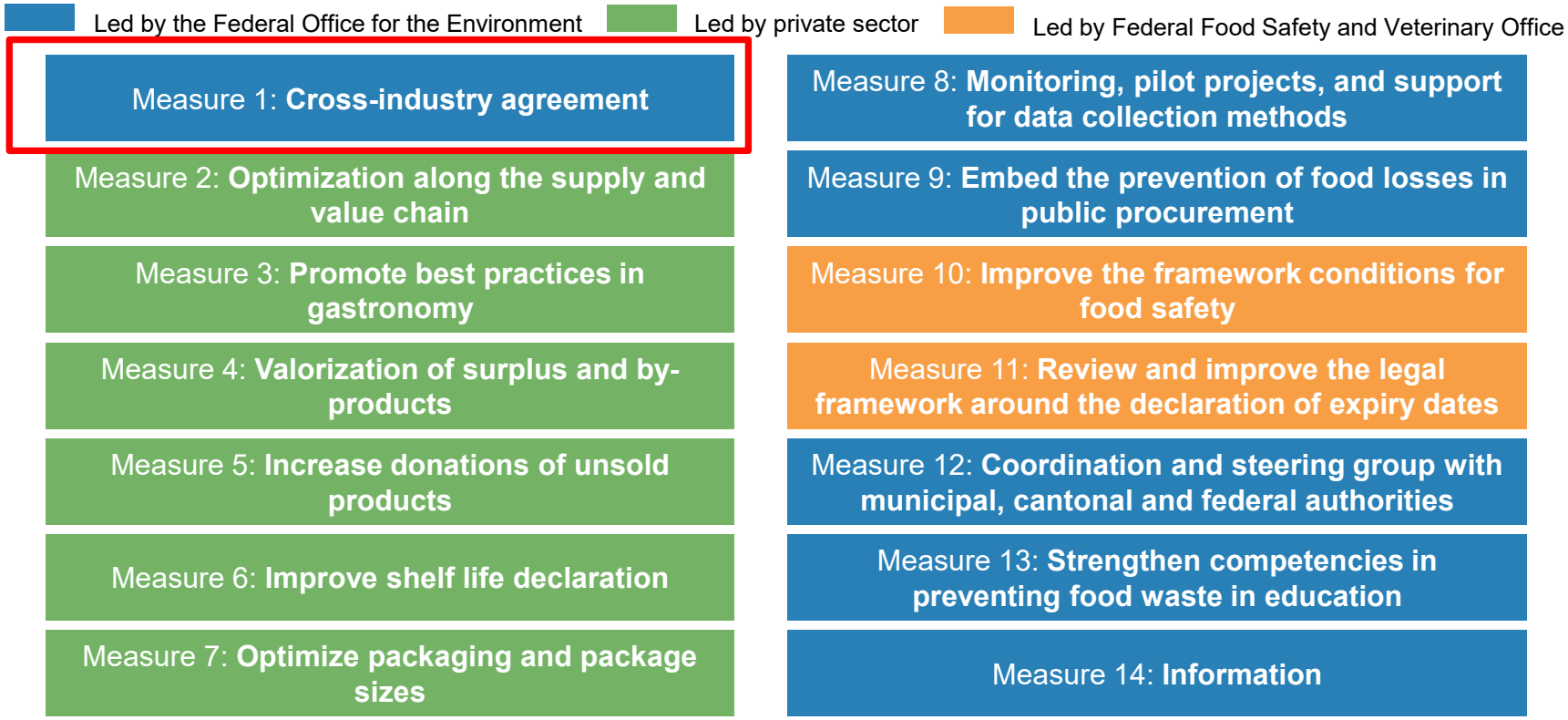


1. **Halving the amount** of avoidable food waste in Switzerland by 2030 compared to 2017
2. Definition of industry-specific reduction **targets** in collaboration with the industries
3. Maximum **reduction of the environmental impact** of avoidable food waste through appropriate design and prioritization of measures.

Phase 1: 2022 - 2025: voluntary, interim report on progress towards the target

Phase 2: 2025 - 2030: the Federal Council has the option of introducing mandatory measures (obligation to measure and report, obligation to donate, etc.)

The 14 measures of the national action plan



Cross-industry agreement



- Voluntary agreement with the private sector
- Currently 38 signatories: companies and associations along the value chain from agriculture, processing industry, trade, retail and the food services
- Working groups within and across sectors
- Measurable reduction targets for each stage of the value chain are added step by step



2025 target clearly missed – much more momentum needed by 2030



ZHAW interim report (Beretta et al., 2025)

👉 The 5% reduction since 2017 is a start. Now we need broader impact.

Three major challenges for the second phase of the action plan (2026–2030)



Data / Monitoring

- Data collection in agriculture
- Food waste transporters
- Next analysis of household and green waste as of 2029



Reduction in households

- National Weeks against Food waste
- Awareness

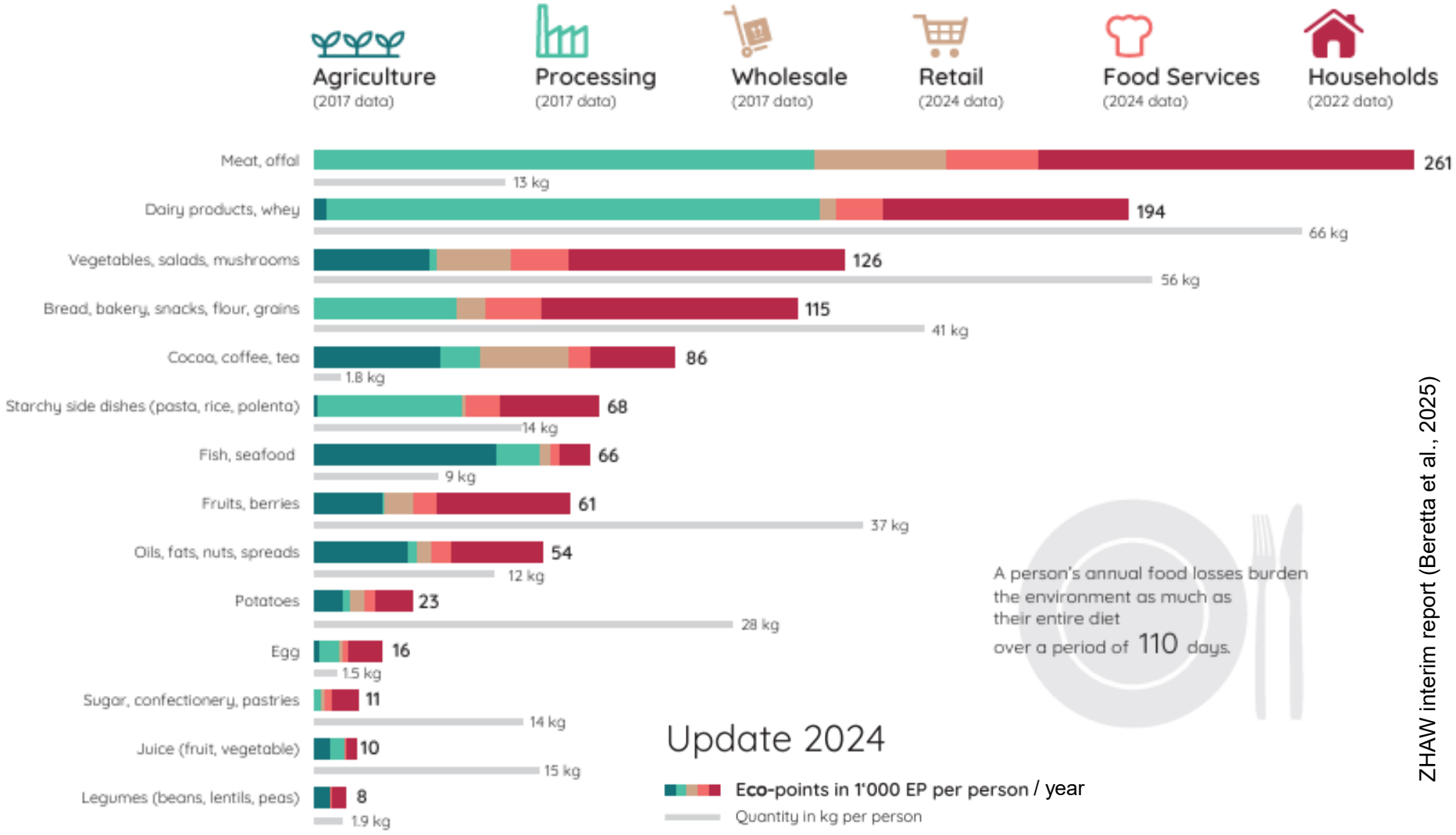
mach mehr draus!
Gemeinsam gegen Food Waste



Widespread impact

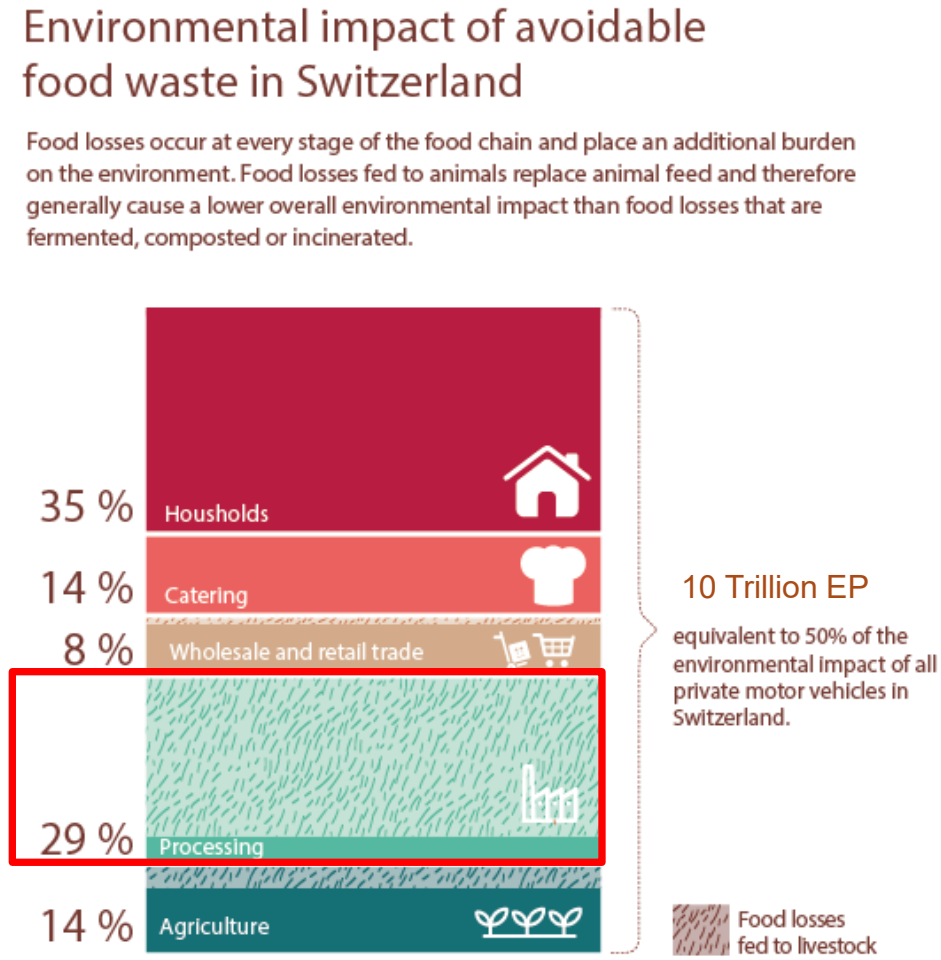
- New signatory companies
- New companies implementing measures

Measuring both the quantities AND the environmental impact of food losses



ZHAW interim report (Beretta et al., 2025)

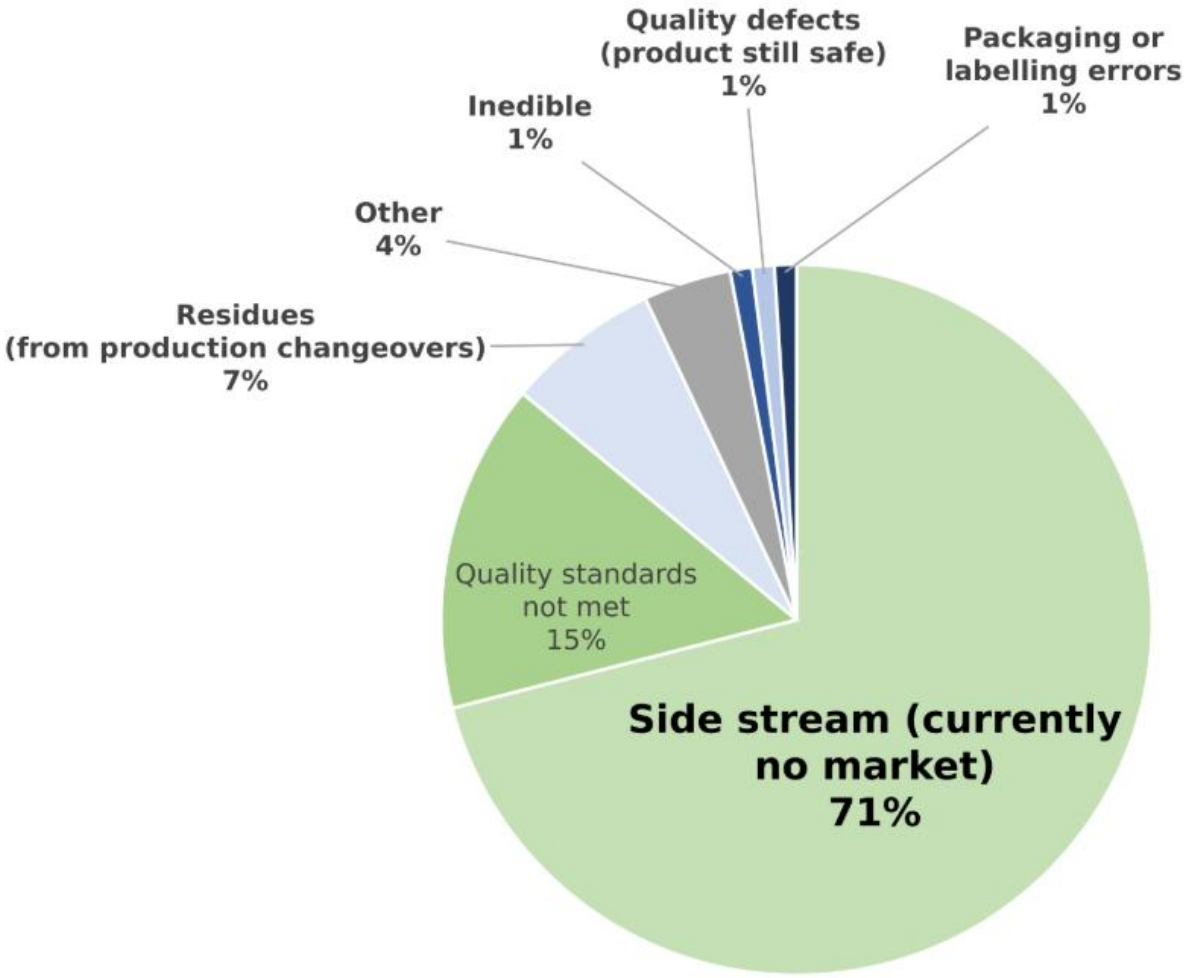
Avoidable food waste in Switzerland in environmental impact



ZHAW interim report (Beretta et al., 2025)

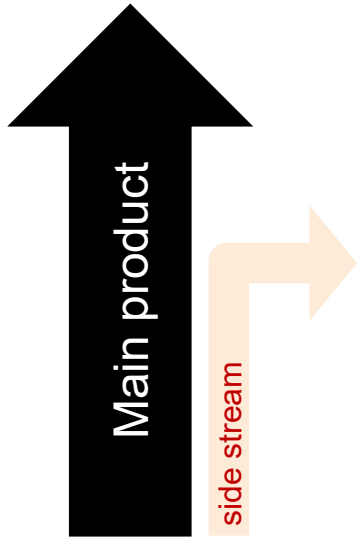
* Consumption perspective: including food losses due to imports; excluding food losses due to exports.

Overview of the processing sector: food losses by cause



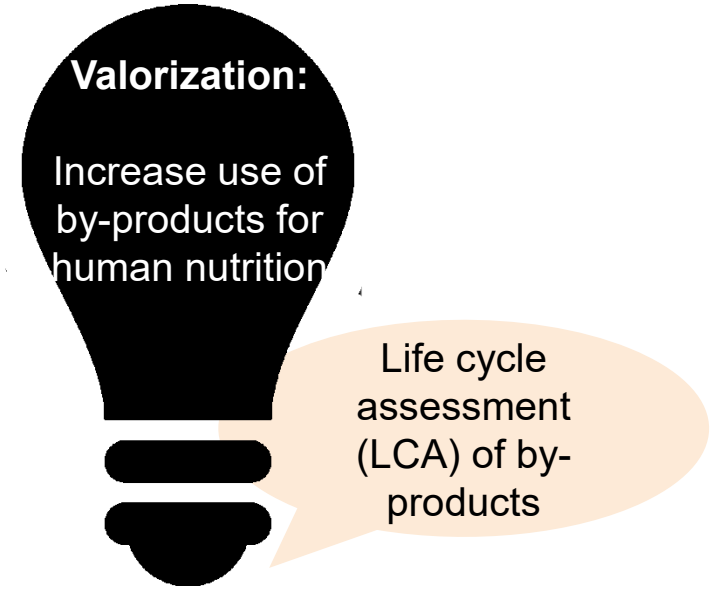
ZHAW interim report (Beretta et al., 2025)

Working group on processing industry: side streams



By-products are often edible.

High volume of food waste if not used for human consumption



For example through product innovation, marketing…

LCA project on side streams



(Maeder et al. 2025)

- LCA analysis for 15 important side streams
- For each side stream, an analysis of 2-3 valorization pathways and 5-6 alternative utilization pathways
- First version published in 2025, update about to be published
- Planned integration of inventories in BAFU database

Key messages

- **Food waste is an environmental issue.** About a third of food is lost between field and fork, causing roughly a quarter of the environmental impact of our diet. Halving it could cut Switzerland's environmental impact by around 10–15%.

- **Impact, not just tonnes.** Switzerland prioritises food categories and the implementation of measures with high environmental impact.

- **LCA is key for side streams.** Side streams make up about three quarters of losses in processing. LCA shows which valorisation pathway brings the greatest environmental benefit.